

STRATFORD TIMES

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Santa Claus Parade will return to the Traditional route

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

The beloved Stratford Santa Claus parade will be permitted to stay on the traditional route on the downtown roads, including Ontario Street this winter.

The March 27th Infrastructure, Transportation and Safety Committee continued into Thursday, March 30 where it reconvened at 6:00 p.m. to discuss outstanding matters, including the Stratford parade routes.

The Kinsmen Club could not attend the city council meeting and therefore was not present at the meeting on March 30th. The Kinsmen were, however, able to present their delegation at the April 11th council meeting. Bob Malcolmson, Life Member Kinsmen, spoke on The Kinsmen's behalf.

Last May, concerns related to COVID were brought forward about the Christmas and Canada Day parades; therefore, the city council decided on new, proposed routes for Stratford Parades.

The Kinsmen Club, along with Stratford residents, were opposed to the new routes and wanted other options.

In a statement provided by Malcolmson, he states, "The action or direction the Kinsmen Club of Stratford is requesting would be to have Council pass a motion to have Canada Day, Santa and Remembrance Day parades returned to their original pre-pandemic routes."

CONTINUED TO PAGE 5



WINNERS OF THE CHERREY CUP

(TANYA TAYLOR/CENSATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY)

The Stratford Warriors are your 2023 Midwestern Conference Champions, winning the Cherrey Cup on April 7th in front of 2,200 spectators at the William Allman Arena. See the full story on page 16.

Revera and HPHA Teaming Up on Long-Term Care Home for Avon Crest Property

LEE GRIFFI

Regional Times Correspondent

The Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance (HPHA) and Revera Canada have publicly announced plans to enter into a long-term land-lease agreement which would see Revera eventually build a new 128-bed long-term care home on the Stratford General Hospital property,

The space currently houses the 132-year-old Avon Crest building. A news release from HPHA says the project is aligned with the primary accountability of the HPHA to provide local, high quality, accessible health care.

Revera was awarded licenses for additional beds from the province for the expansion of its Hillside Manor Long-Term Care Home,

which currently has 90 licensed beds, located west of Sebringville. After assessing various redevelopment options, Revera, in collaboration with HPHA, has determined that building the larger, state-of-the-art Hillside Manor in nearby Stratford is in the best interests of both current and future residents and staff.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2

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Revera and HPHA Teaming Up on Long-Term Care Home for Avon Crest Property

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

“We simply do not have enough local Long-Term Care beds,” says Andrew Williams, HPHA President and CEO. “As a result, patients end up staying in hospital far too long waiting for the specialized long-term care they actually need. This chronic situation leads to longer wait times for other patients requiring hospital services. Once all necessary government approvals are secured, our long-term land-lease agreement with Revera will contribute to the solution by creating increased local capacity.” He adds it will improve hospital care by freeing up beds for those patients waiting for surgeries or requiring admission through the emergency department. “Revera’s tangible, time-sensitive, funded proposal will allow our former Avon Crest site to be the setting for yet another century of health care.”

“With its proximity to the hospital and to local amenities, this is an ideal location to renew Hillside Manor to support the needs of current and future generations of local seniors,” says JP Cadeau, President of Revera Canada. “The larger

new home will not only provide a bright, welcoming, comfortable home for more local seniors in need of specialized long-term care, it will create new employment opportunities during its construction and once open. We’re proud of the legacy of compassionate care at Hillside Manor and excited to be getting closer to making the renewed home in Stratford a reality.” The current home is an eight-minute drive away from the hospital site.

To make way for the new long-term care home, Avon Crest, the original Stratford hospital which has been vacant since 2018, will be demolished. Locating the new Revera home there will serve as a catalyst to redevelop the remaining available land. The HPHA will initially focus these discussions on increasing accessible housing options in hopes of complementing the City of Stratford’s efforts to address this important need. Williams says they are open to a number of options. “The major focus of the city is on housing and we felt this particular piece of property could be part of the solution so we will enter into discus-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

REDEVELOPMENT PLANNED

A new long-term care home is being proposed for the current Avon Crest site along with other potential housing developments. The building is expected to be demolished.



sions with them. Whether, at the end of the day, it pans out in a way that makes sense is to be determined but the actual piece is well-suited for that type of development.” The site is just under 6.7 acres and includes apartments, Centennial House, and associated lands. “It’s a large piece of land and the thinking right now is Revera will have the phase once focus and anything we developed will allow sequential development of the rest of the property. When you look at the existing hospital, regardless of all of the issues around cost, it’s the location on the property that is a barrier to development. Its right in the middle and would severely impact any developer in their plans.” An HPHA presentation given to council says it would cost \$24 million to bring the Avon Crest building up to code and adds the former hospital is a physical liability requiring considerable hospital resources to sustain.

Up until now any discussions between

HPHA and Revera have been behind closed doors, but Williams says the time was right to go public. “We have been clear over the last couple of months that we have been in discussions with a potential developer, but we didn’t really get into any serious conversations until city council last year dealt with the heritage motion. We then ramped up conversations because we felt we were on the right track.”

Williams adds HPHA’s involvement in the long-term care home will be minimal. “Our intention is to enter into a long-term land lease with Revera and really with anybody who ends up developing on the property. We need ministry approval before we do anything of this nature with our property. Revera will be working with the Ministry of Long-Term Care for their approvals, and we would not be involved in any of those discussions.” There is no timeline yet for when the project could break ground.

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The Swans make their way back to the Avon River

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

On April 2, the annual swan parade, hosted by the Civic Beautification and Environmental Awareness Committee and the City of Stratford, took place down Morenz Street toward the river.

The Swan release is a charming and unique event that celebrates the importance of preserving the natural heritage for Stratford Citizens and has been cut back over the years due to not only the COVID-19 pandemic but to allow for a smaller, local audience.

The swans, led by the Stratford Police, Pipe and Drums, were led down the route from the winter quarters on Morenz Street to the river at the end of North Street.

Hundreds watched as the swans made their way to the water for the first time this year.

This year's event was smaller than years past, Quin Malott, Parks, Forestry and Cemetery Manager for the City of Stratford, stated, "There will be no extra entertainment around the swan release this year, so it will be more of a local event for citizens to watch the release and welcome the unofficial start of spring in Stratford."

Although the audience this year was smaller than in past years, hun-

dreds still gathered down Morenz Street to watch. Onlookers from Stratford, Toronto, Kitchen and Cambridge were still in attendance and patiently waited to watch the swans. Don and Gayle Wellsman from Cambridge regularly make their way to Stratford to visit family and attend local events, such as the swan parade. "Stratford is a special little place, and we will find any excuse to come and visit," states Don.

Others watched in anticipation with their children for the first time, coming all the way from Toronto and North York to get a look at the 12 white swans as they waddled down the street and into the Avon River.

The swans are kept in their winter quarters with shelter, food, and open water from October 31st until their release in April. Once the mating season starts in April, the swans are happy to get out and spread their wings in the open waters for the spring and summer seasons.

Although the swans can mainly be spotted in the Avon River, Stratford citizens may see them in other locations, such as the Stratford Country Club, as they regularly migrate back and forth says Malott.

Those visiting the Avon River this year are asked to refrain from feeding the swans and other wild fowl as this can cause dietary problems.



SWANS ON PARADE

Swans walking toward the Avon River during the Annual Swam Release, 2023

(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

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STRATFORD TIMES

Stratford's Community Newspaper

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Stratford Council Briefs

STEWART GRANT

Publisher

Stratfords of the World

At the Stratford of the World Advisory Committee meeting of March 22, 2023, the Committee requests that Stratford City Council proclaim Thursday, August 3, 2023 as Stratfords of the Worlds Day; that August 2-9 be proclaimed Stratfords of the World Week in Stratford in celebration of all attending Stratford delegates from around the world; and that Council authorize flying of the Stratfords of the World flag at City Hall from August 1-10.

Council Compensation and Expenses

The Annual Statement of Council Remuneration and Expenses was presented at the Council meeting of March 27. In total, \$291,299 was paid in base remuneration to Council members, plus \$43,518 paid in lieu of benefits, \$15,780 in per diems paid, \$20,553 in amounts paid and paid on behalf of for conference and meeting expense, \$20,398 paid by local boards, \$20,317 paid on behalf of for employer remittance costs, for a total of \$411,865 paid.

Mayor Dan Mathieson was paid the most at \$71,799 in base amount, followed by Martin Ritsma who was paid a base amount of \$29,190 for his work as Councillor and later as Mayor. Councillors who served all 12 months of 2022 (Brad Beatty, Jo-Dee Burbach, Bonnie Henderson, and Cody Sebben) were each paid base amounts of \$20,887 while those whose terms ended during the year were paid \$18,556. New councillors, who started their terms late in the year, were paid \$2,330 during 2022.

Budget amended

Karmen Krueger, Director of Corporate Services/Treasurer, presented an amendment to the draft 2023 budget at the March 27th Council meeting, following five meetings of the Finance and Labour Relations Committee that have occurred in 2023. The 2023 operating budget consists of \$144,727,223 in total expenditures, including transfers to fund the capital program of \$13,647,758. Non-taxation revenues of \$71,702,709 are anticipated to fund the City's activities, leaving \$73,024,514 to be raised from taxation. The 2023 funds to be raised from taxation is \$4,760,388 (or 6.97%) higher than in 2022. This largely reflects investment in capital assets and partially reflects inflation in goods and services.

PC Connect ridership up

Mike Mousley, Manager of Transit, and Stephanie Potter, Corporate Initiatives Lead, presented a report to Council on March 27th regarding ridership levels of the PC Connect service. Through nine months (April to December) of the current funding year, PC Connect ridership across the five routes totals 7,977, though the most recent six-month period is averaging just over 1,000 monthly riders. This trend compares favorably to the prior funding year (April 2021 to March 2022) which averaged less than 400 riders per month, albeit affected by COVID restrictions. The report summarizes that "PC Connect is vital to the social and economic prosperity of this region. The service allows residents to affordably access employment, health care, critical services, recreation, retail, and visit friends and family in other communities," and requested that Council authorize the continuation of the program for a further two years to March 31, 2025.

Pride Month proclaimed for June

At the April 11 meeting of Council, it was proclaimed that June 2023 is "Pride Month" in the City of Stratford in support of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and that the Pride flag will be flown at City Hall during the month.

In the request made to Council, Stratford-Perth Pride referenced that Pride Month is recognized worldwide each June, commemorating the Stonewall riots that took place in New York City on June 28, 1969. "Raising a piece of fabric on a pole and written statement recognizing Pride Month may seem like small and simple gestures but these actions are not only celebrating the rights and struggles of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community but also recognizing the need to work towards a more inclusive and accepting society," Stratford-Perth Pride President/Board Chair AJ Adams wrote.

Avon Crest fails to gain support as heritage property

Regarding the contentious issue of the Avon Crest, City Council decided during the April 11th meeting to not issue a notice of intent to designate the site of Stratford's first public hospital as a heritage building. A motion made by Councillor Cody Sebben failed to be seconded by any other councillor.

Delegations on both sides of the issue made presentations before Council, including Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance President Andrew Williams, who strongly emphasized that demolishing the building was the best use of available funds to improve local healthcare.

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The Canadian Dairy XPO comes to Stratford

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

The Canadian Dairy XPO, also known as CDX is an annual event that brings together dairy farmers, industry experts and suppliers from across the world to show off the latest in dairy innovation.

The 2023 CDX occurred on April 5th and 6th at the Stratford Rotary Complex and attracted over 16,000 attendees.

"We thank the city of Stratford for welcoming us. We've had a good day today with people viewing exhibits, and we've also been live-streaming AG classrooms online for people across Canada to view," says Dr. Tim Henshaw from the Department of Reproductive Solutions.

This year was extra special because not only did the event host farmers from across the world, they raised money through a live cattle auction in support of Calves for a cause that raises money for the London Children's Hospital.

The auction opened with words from Mayor Ritzma, who stated, "As you dig into your wallets tonight, remember Brooks; we are doing this for him."

Daryl and Sarah Markus, dairy farmers themselves, started Calves for a cause after their son, Brooks, spent the first 120 days



SOLD!

Onlookers and bidders participating in the Calves for a Cause event at the Canadian Dairy XPO

(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

of his life in the NICU and PCCU at the Children's Hospital in London. "We have felt a strong urge to give back to the hospital in order to help other families who are going through similar experiences," Markus states during his speech before the auction.

This cause has already raised over \$100,000 and started strong at the Canadi-

an Dairy XPO, with the first live calf being sold for over \$14,000.

Jordan Underhill, the owner of the Canadian Dairy XPO, states that the 2023 Dairy XPO was expected to be the largest event to date. "We have over 30 different countries involved and 300 vendors."

The Canadian Dairy XPO offers attendees the opportunity to connect with exhib-

itors featuring the latest products, services, and technologies in the dairy industry. Exhibitors come from various sectors, including genetics, animal health, nutrition, milking equipment, and more.

The event also features a range of educational sessions and seminars covering topics such as animal welfare, milk quality, and farm management. Attendees have the opportunity to learn from leading experts in the industry, including veterinarians, nutritionists, and business consultants.

One of the highlights of the event is the CheeseFest, where industry professionals and producers host a bar and cheese buffet, including grilled cheese, featuring the best in Canadian Cheese all held in the cow coliseum following the first day of the event.

CheeseFest was open to the public, offered live music to attendees, and was meant to bring together community members from every walk of life, farmers, and industry professionals.

The Canadian Dairy XPO offered a unique opportunity for farmers to network and connect with industry peers. It also provided a platform for farmers and industry experts to come together, share knowledge, and explore new opportunities for growth and innovation.

To learn more, visit <https://dairyxpo.ca/>

Stratford Trashion Week returns for first time since COVID-19 Pandemic

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Designers will use pre-loved textiles and post-consumer waste to create clothing and accessories in the return of a local event encouraging sustainable fashion.

Stratford Trashion Week will run two fashion shows on April 23 at Factory 163 on 163 King St. The event kicks off at 2 p.m. with the Trashion Show, where designs use post-consumer waste including - but certainly not limited to - cereal boxes, plastic bottles, shopping bags. At 7 p.m., the ReFashion Show will feature designs made out of pre-loved clothing and textiles in front of a panel of judges.

"We're really excited to be able to offer a couple of the favourite events this year," Jessica Guy, co-founder of Stratford Trashion Week, said. "We know that some folks were looking forward to an entire week, but just getting back out of the lockdowns and different things, we just opted to offer a couple of the main events."

Both fashion shows will have a cash bar and snacks provided by The Little Prince Cinema. Pazzo Pizzeria will host the afterparty. The event has been in the making for the past few years with the COVID-19 Pandemic restrictions delaying it.

"We basically thought we were going to do it last year and then things came to a halt with another lockdown so we've been sort-of half-preparing for something for the last three years and now this year we've finally decided that it was all good to go for it," Guy explained.

Stratford Fashion Week was founded by Guy and Pamela Coneybeare, owner of La Osa Jewellery. Guy is also the owner of Green Hair Spa in Stratford and has always been interested in style and sustainability. She thought an event like Stratford Trashion Week would be a fun way to encourage eco-conscious actions.

"Sometimes when we discuss environmental issues it can be all doom and gloom and feel like there's not a lot that anyone can do, but having something like this that leaves such a positive feeling on people when they leave," she said. "I just find it myself very inspiring watching others and how they create things and how they choose to upcycle, recycle, and reuse and I think it's just a really great way to share that knowledge with the community."

Outside of Stratford Trashion Week events, Guy encourages everyone to search for used clothing items before purchasing them brand-new.

"We're overloaded with textiles and fashion in general as things come in and out of style and in and out of season and fast-fashion has steered us in the direction of purchasing and tossing and not paying any mind to it," she said. "If you can consider buying something used before going out to buying something new, that would be the first and most important way to put an end to the overload of textiles on the planet."

Tickets for the separate fashion shows are \$20 in advance and \$25 at the door. Visit stratfordtrashionweek.ca for more information.

Santa Claus Parade will continue on the Traditional route on downtown roads

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

He goes on to state, "For close to a quarter century with the exception of 2020 and 2021 due to COVID restriction and last year, the Stratford Kinsmen have hosted the Canada Day Parade celebrating Canada."

Councillor Larry McCabe voiced his support and said at the March 30th meeting, "In my opinion, there are very few things that everybody participates in this city anymore; we don't necessarily go to the same churches, we don't gather in the same places, this has been a historic route that ended up at city hall with the lighting of the tree, it is well loved by everybody in this community."

City council reconvened and proposed three options in the management report:

Option one: Parades on local streets rather than travelling down connected link routes (highways);

Option two: Permit Ontario Street for the Santa Claus parade only as the only connected link permitted;

Option three: Huron Street parade route, "basically all the parade routes being as they were in past years," summarized Councillor Jo-Dee Burbach.

At the March 30th meeting, Councillor Burbach called the Infrastructure, Transportation

and Safety Committee meeting to order and proposed the three options to the city council.

The motion was then carried out, and all council members agreed on new routes as follows:

The parades shall continue on local roads with the exception of a brief closure on Ontario Street and Erie Street for the Remembrance Day parade, and the Santa Claus parade be permitted to stay on the traditional route on the downtown roads, including Ontario Street subject to the approval of the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario, and future costs be taken into consideration in the budget.

This decision was then agreed upon at the April 11th City Council meeting. Therefore, Stratford residents and visitors will see the Santa Claus parade travel on pre-pandemic routes through Stratford for the 2023 Christmas season.



GREEN BIN PROGRAM EXPANSION

The City of Stratford is continuing to expand its green bin program to include commercial, institutional and multi-residential buildings in Stratford.

If you're a business owner, school principal or landlord, and you are interested in participating in our curbside green bin program, we want to hear from you.

Please contact Waste Reduction Coordinator Emily Skelding at 519-271-0250 extension 279, or email eskelding@stratford.ca to discuss participation and eligibility.

Comedians Rebecca Northan and Christy Bruce come to Stratford to host Women's Day Event at the SCC

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

98 women from across Stratford attended the first annual Stratford Perth Centre for Business Women's Day event on March 21st.

Hosted by hilarious best friends and award-winning comedians Rebecca Northan and Christy Bruce, the pair lit up the stage with their hilarious commentary surrounding the theme, "Everything is Awkward: how to navigate awkward conversations."

"Christy and Rebecca were just incredible and fun," states Nicole Wagler, owner of Coles and Keys Optical, a new independent eyewear boutique in downtown Stratford. "Honestly, we were so impressed with the whole event from top to finish."

In attendance was Councillor Lesley Biehn, who showed off her drawing skills in an improv workshop and Councillor Larry McCabe and Mayor Ritzma, who laughed the night away with the women of Stratford.

The hosts dug deep into being awkward when trying to navigate the workplace as a woman and how to combat the negative self-talk women face every day. The event focused on leaning into the awkward feeling and embracing the role of women in the workplace.

Kelly Lindsay, owner of Corner Store Candy Co., stated, the event was "probably the best event like this I have ever

attended."

The Stratford Perth Business Centre "Everything is Awkward" event was a powerful and hilarious celebration of women across Stratford in support of International Women's Day. It provided an inspiring platform for women to relax, laugh and connect over comedy and their professional journeys as entrepreneurs.

Holly Mortimer, business advisor at the Stratford Perth Centre for Business, author and entrepreneur, took to Instagram to thank the attendees and discuss how the business centre is there to help women in Stratford Perth start and manage their businesses throughout the year, "Taking about women and supporting women in the entrepreneurship space all year long is what we do."

The event served as a reminder that while the road to gender equality in the workplace and as an entrepreneur may still face challenges, women can overcome anything, even if facing awkward conversations.

The Stratford Perth Centre for Business supports entrepreneurs from every walk of life and offers classes and programs to support entrepreneurship in the Stratford-Perth community. This April, the centre will be hosting a free live workshop on starting a podcast for your business. If interested, please visit <https://www.stratfordperthbusiness.ca/event/building-your-business-podcast-from-scratch>



LAUGHING TOGETHER

Best Friends and comedians Rebecca Northan and Christy Bruce at The Stratford Perth Centre for Business Women's Day event

(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

Stratford's Home and Leisure show

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

It was a busy weekend for those involved in the Stratford Home and Leisure show March 25-26 at the Rotary Complex in Stratford.

Sponsored by the Rotary Club of Stratford and the Perth-Huron Builders Association, there was something for everyone at the show.

With over 100 exhibitors and service organizations involved, visitors to the show, enjoyed information from window companies to doors and interior decorating, to communications, insulation and many home decorating ideas for inside and outside the home, as well as secondary school students showing their technical skills.

Organizers said they were more than satisfied with the large number of patrons who came to the two-day show, which has been building back up after missing the 2020 and 2021 years due to the COVID restrictions.



(SARAH CAIRNS PHOTOS)

HOME AND LEISURE SHOW

Above left, Colton Downham shows off one of the lawn tractors sold by D&S Downham Equipment

Above right, Tyson Litchi and Nick Mohr prepare cotton candy for the sweet tooth attendees.

Left, Maynard Klein (8) and Wilson Young, grade 11 at St. Michael Catholic School worked together to build a tool box.

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Stratford Perth Museum Agriculture Wall of Fame

Dennis Nuhn of Nuhn Industries 2023 honouree

Dennis Nuhn, who oversaw the transformation of a family-owned blacksmith shop in Wartburg into a global farm equipment manufacturing and design juggernaut in Sebringville, is the 2023 Stratford Perth Museum Agriculture Wall of Fame honouree.

Nuhn Industries, a four-generation company, can trace its roots to Simon Nuhn who started a blacksmith shop in Wartburg in 1902. Simon's son Wilfred took over the business just after the Second World War and then in 1962 Dennis, then just 17, began working with the company.

The Wartburg facility would see five expansions over the next 20 years and found an incredibly successful niche market - manure management equipment.

In 1982, the company moved to a new 15,000-square-foot facility at the corner of Highway 8 and the

Wartburg road at the west end of Sebringville.

Since Dennis became involved with the company there has been one constant - growth! The Sebringville facility grew to 25,000 square feet in 1998 and now, after six expansions, the footprint is 132,500 square feet.

Nuhn's impact on the agriculture industry is readily evident. Just take a drive along the rural routes of Ontario and there's a good chance you will see one of Nuhn's iconic red tanks being towed along the road or spreading manure in a field.

But Nuhn's impact goes much further afield as the company has become an international leader and supplier - not only in the design and production of manure tanks but also as an innovator in other manure equipment including pumps and lagoon agitators.



And that speaks to the strength of the company's fourth generation. Dennis's son Ian joined the company in 2009 as a 19-year-old and has gained a reputation as an industry-leading designer and innovator.

Dennis, along with the 2022 and 2020 Agriculture Wall of Fame

honourees, were introduced at the 2023 Stratford Rotary Club Rural-Urban Dinner that took place Thursday, April 13 at the Stratford Rotary Complex.

Because of COVID, the Rural-Urban Dinner was cancelled in 2020, 2021 and 2022.

Bert Vortstebosch, of Mitchell, won in 2020 and Antony John and wife Tina Vandenheuvel, from just outside Sebringville, were the 2022 winners. There was no winner in 2021.

The Stratford Perth Museum Agriculture Wall of Fame was started in 2013 and seven Perth County residents who were named to the Ontario Ag Hall of Fame, were the charter members. They were Terry Daynard, Kenneth Lantz, Peggy Knapp, Robert Carbert, Norman

McCully, Samuel Nelson Monteith and Gordon Bell.

In 2014, Stewart Anderson, Willy Keller and Eric McLeod were the first people named to the Stratford Perth Museum Agriculture Wall of Fame and Dennis will be the 16th honouree.

The Wall of Fame is open to current or former residents of Perth County who have made outstanding contributions to agriculture in Perth County. Nominations are solicited from the public and a committee determines the honourees.

For more information contact:

John Kastner,
General Manager, Stratford Perth Museum

519-393-5312 or johnkastner@stratfordperthmuseum.ca

United Way breaks fundraising record

United Way Perth-Huron (UWPH) had a reason to celebrate. After a successful campaign raising \$2,292,557, it was time to honour the spirit of community at the Best Western Plus, Arden Park Hotel.

"We appreciate the incredible support of our region throughout the campaign," said Ryan Erb, UWPH executive director. "Despite the economic challenges our community faced, donors stepped up to help us not only reach, but surpass our goal of \$2.289 million. Another record-breaking year! We are humbled by the generosity and caring of Perth-Huron and see a brighter future ahead for the people we help support and the organization."

"It was great to celebrate our campaign, as well as the volunteers, donors and communities who gave so much to UWPH," said Rob Edney, UWPH campaign co-chair. "It takes a collective effort to ensure vulnerable people get the help they need, and

the spirit of Perth-Huron was really on display tonight and throughout the campaign."

"Thank you to everyone who attended tonight's event," added Leslie Edney, UWPH campaign co-chair. "To hear firsthand some of the ways UWPH's work positively impacts local lives thanks to the generosity of our community is inspiring. We're looking forward to returning next year as co-chairs and continuing UWPH's work across our region."

Two hundred and fifty-six guests enjoyed dinner generously provided by the Hayter family and heard about the positive impact their support has on local lives from speakers including Elise Metcalf, Andrea Loohuizen, Gwyneth Woods, and Tanya Hefkey from the United Way Connection Centres in Exeter, Listowel, Stratford and Wingham. UWPH executive director Ryan Erb spoke about the organization's Community Renewal

Company initiative. Singer-songwriter Stephanie Sellers also performed.

UWPH presented volunteer spirit awards to Caroline Baker, Dariel Bateman, Gwen Bradley, Joan Brady, David Clarke, Cheryl Dunn, Kara Greydanus, Marilyn Holmes, Shawn Lawler and Randy Schwartzentruber. Home & Company Real Estate received a workplace spirit award, Blackcreek Technologies picked up a sponsor spirit award and Saputo Dairy Products received a corporate spirit award. The top 10 workplace fundraising campaigns were also highlighted, with FIO Automotive Canada topping the list by raising over \$101,000 in employee donations. FIO also provided a dollar-for-dollar corporate match.

UWPH would also like to thank event sponsors Best Western Plus The Arden Park Hotel, Famme & Co., IA-TSE Local 357, Sherwood Music, investStratford and Samsonite.

City of Stratford to Join Earth Day Tree Planting Relay

The City of Stratford has partnered with Earth Day Canada for its Mobilizing Municipalities Campaign, and will be taking part in the Tree Planting Relay to celebrate Earth Day on April 22, 2023.

Stratford joins more than 90 other Canadian cities in making this commitment.

This year, the City is partnering with Upper Thames River Conser-



vation Authority (UTR-CA) to plant 250 native trees and shrub saplings in the T.J. Dolan Natural Area.

Local businesses have volunteered to participate in this community event and contribute towards our collective efforts to address the impacts of climate change.

This planting and continued maintenance of trees in the city will support our shared goal of improv-

ing the urban tree canopy cover, and providing co-benefits such as moderating local climate, improving air quality, increasing wildlife habitat, and helping us advance climate adaptation.

The City of Stratford will also be participating in an Earth Day "street party" being organized by Climate Momentum in Market Square April 22 from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Please stop by the City of Stratford booth to give us your ideas on the actions we need to take to address community emissions.

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Organist Earl Clark celebrates sixty-three years behind the keys

LISA CHESTER

Stratford Times Correspondent

It was January 1960 when Earl Clark first sat behind the keys of the organ at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. Now, sixty-three years later, at the age of 88, he is preparing to retire. While he may be stepping back from the helm of his choir and music responsibilities, he will continue to relish in the fellowship and community of his congregational family.

Clark first became interested in music as a child. His sister started taking music lessons at the age of six or seven, and he would sit at the piano and copy what she was learning after each lesson.

"Mother said that I would often go to the piano and copy her, and I ended up taking piano lessons too. We moved around a bit so there were some years that I had no musical training as we were on the move," said Clark.

Eventually, he went to Western University in London and studied music, highlighted by playing a Beethoven concerto with the London Symphony Orchestra.

"That was a great thrill for me."

He started playing with the Church around grade eleven, playing the music and directing choirs. The first one was in Otterville, and then he went to Ingersoll Baptist, and played through his university years.

"I think fate has a lot to do with my life. I was working the tobacco fields after I finished University, and I had no idea what I was going to do. An ad appeared in the paper and it was Kincardine United Church looking for an organist. So I applied, they gave me an interview and I got the job! I was then able to teach music at the high school. So that's kind of how I got started," said Clark.

Then Stratford came looking. The previous organist was a University friend, and he highly recommended that I come. "The



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

people here were very persistent, shall we say," Clark laughed at the memory. "I was giving a concert in Kincardine and a group from St. Andrew's showed up and sat in the back row. The minister there, who spoke exactly how he felt, gave a prayer at the end to thank us for the concert, and went on to pray, 'and we regret people from other communities coming to try to steal our organist,' he finished." After some persuasion, Clark agreed to join St. Andrew's

A LIFETIME IN MUSIC

88-year-old Earl Clark has served as organist at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church for the past 63 years.

(LISA CHESTER PHOTO)

Presbyterian Church as organist and choir director. That was January, 1960.

"The church has been wonderful to me. When I was in Kincardine, I loved it there, but there wasn't much of a musical future there. Coming here, things were happening and I was glad that I came, and I decided within the first month that I was not moving anywhere else," Clark said.

He became a teacher, and had 22 schools that he would travel to and provide lesson plans for the teachers. He went over to Central Secondary as they needed a French teacher, and that year Northwestern school was about to be built and opened. Clark was invited to go there and teach English.

"In my homeroom, I had 38 young men, and they were energetic! But I really enjoyed them," laughed Clark. When King Lear school opened as a grade seven and eight school he went to teach music there. From there, his musical role expanded.

"I then became music consultant of the county after the school boards amalgamated, and I did that job for 26 or 27 years. So I've had a good career in music in the schools, and of course teaching French and English gave me something else to think about," said Clark.

Clark's sixty-three year career as St. Andrew's organist has been celebrated in several ways. He proudly wears the Queen's Platinum Jubilee pin, celebrating then Queen Elizabeth II for seventy years as sovereign, and distributed to outstanding members of the community. In his home is a framed letter from Her Majesty's Lady-in-Waiting, Jane Marie Mitchell, commemorating sixty years of service at St. Andrew's. He has also been awarded a lifetime membership in the National Convention of Organists in July of 2019. He was given an award for his lifetime

contribution to the College of Organists.

His favourite memory of his time at St. Andrew's is when he was there thirty-five years. In the choir room, were three windows in terrible shape with twisted metal.

"I said to them one day, I can't stand those windows anymore, we have to do something with them. What they did was they put in three new stained glass windows for me to celebrate thirty five years of service," beamed Clark, "that was pretty special. It will last a long time."

There was a church, St. John's Church, that had the best choir in the city, in competition they always won first place. So, Clark determined to change their second place choir to winners, and selected very difficult music for the competition. They practiced hard and learned the challenging music.

"I said, 'you're going to have to be patient, because this is what we are going to do. And if we get it right, we might even beat St. John's.' And you know what? We won! I felt that quite an honour."

Aside from his responsibilities as organist and choir director, Clark has been very involved in the Church at the highest levels. He taught Sunday school for a number of years, has been on the session, the board, and foundation, the three top boards within the Church. His contributions to St. Andrew's has been many and varied.

"This is my Church family, they have given as much to me as I have to them," insists Clark.

Now, after sixty-three years, he has begun the task of cleaning out his office and donating his music to the University. He will find a new seat to sit in, and enjoy Sunday service from a new perspective. It may be hard to retire, but Clark will pass the baton along this summer.



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Chamber of Commerce holds 163rd annual general meeting

LISA CHESTER

Stratford Times Correspondent

The Stratford and District Chamber of Commerce held their 163rd annual general meeting on April 6, in-person for the first time in three years. It was held at the Army Navy & Air Force Association in Stratford.

The meeting began with a welcome from the Board of Directors Chairperson, Dana Walton, and a Call to Order.

The following will comprise the slate of directors for the upcoming year: Dana Walton (Board Chair), Michael McCutchen (Treasurer), Natalie Moore (Co-Vice Chair), Greg Orr (Co-Vice Chair), Travis Blum (Past Chair), Directors Patrick King, Anthony Jordaan, Eddie Matthews, Trena Hough, Nick Preikschas, Michelle Webber, Mike Anderson, and Meaghan Robinson. Representing Stratford Council will be Brad Beatty, while Dave Lucas represents St. Marys Council and Mark Bell represents Perth South Township Council.

After ratification of the new Board, General Manager Eddie Matthews gave his report reflecting on the past year.



Fifty-one new members joined during 2022 and the Chamber hosted twenty-six events which provided excellent marketing and networking opportunities. The Business Excellence Awards, a major event of the year, was not sold out in 2022 but was extremely successful.

"This year, it is looking like the awards night will be sold out, and this will probably be our most diverse year yet," shared Matthews.

The golf tournament, another high-profile event during the year, was well-attended, and in 2023 will be held at the St Marys Golf and Country Club. There remain sponsorship opportunities and volunteers are welcome.

The Chamber also hosted debates this

past year, as there were elections both municipally and provincially. Some other events were geared young professionals, including mentorship opportunities available with those who have been through the trenches and learned from experience.

Inside the Chamber offices, there is a new membership showcase, while online they have overseen digitizing of the membership area and made upgrades to the website. Pandemic response continued with the provision of Rapid Test Kits. In 2022, over 120,000 test kits were distributed to area businesses.

Business Booster videos continue to feature Chamber members on all social media avenues and partner-

ships are maintained with local media.

"The Stratford and District Chamber of Commerce exists to promote the interests of the local business community and provide access to valuable resources discounting relationships that helps business save money," said Matthews. "2022 has been an exciting year and I just want to say it's great to re-introduce everyone to in-person events. This is the first one we've had since COVID started and we're thrilled to have you here."

Chairperson Dana Walton also gave her address, saying this past year has been filled with cautious excitement for the business community. The Chamber expects to get back to its regular schedule of Business After 5 events and is thrilled to see growth in its activities overall.

Walton also expressed thanks and pride in the work that Matthews and office manager Shannon Stewart do for the Chamber. The executive committee will remain the same for the coming year.

Queer Book of the Month Club

By *Way of Sorrow* by Robyn Gigl
@SPL: FIC Gigl

Erin McCabe is a defence lawyer who has just received the most prominent case of her career. She has been asked to defend Sharise Barnes, a young, trans prostitute, against charges of first-degree murder. Barnes admits to killing William Townsend, the son of a wealthy politician, but she claims it was self defence. Erin has been chosen to represent her in part because she is also trans. However, in agreeing to take the case, Erin knows that the harsh glare of the media spotlight will come to rest on her, as well as her client, something she doesn't want to happen.

Erin soon discovers that the case is actually bigger than it had initially appeared, and that there are links from Townsend to

a number of murdered trans women in the area. Witnesses are also mysteriously dying or going missing, and Erin begins to fear for her life.

This is Robyn Gigl's debut novel, and she has crafted a fast-paced legal thriller, written from the heart. Gigl is both a lawyer and a trans woman, and she skillfully leads the reader through the intricacies of legal procedure, while at the same time giving an insight into what it means to be trans in an unaccepting world.

By Way of Sorrow is the first novel in a series by Gigl, and I'm excited to see how Gigl develops the character of Erin McCabe in future stories.



Heather Lister
Public Service Librarian
Stratford Public Library

Weekend Quiz

- 1) Which former US Secretary of State took up a new post in 2009 teaching at Stanford University?
- 2) The world's first vaccine was created against which disease?
- 3) Wine barrels are most commonly made from which wood?
- 4) Which Book of the Old Testament tells the story of the birth of Moses?
- 5) What measure is equivalent to 2 standard bottles of champagne?
- 6) Scallions is another name for which vegetable?
- 7) English poet William Wordsworth wrote about which flowers?
- 8) Cartoon character Fred Flintstone is a fan of which sport?
- 9) MICEX is the stock exchange in which country?
- 10) Which cereal crop is used to make Scotch malt whisky?

This week's answers are found on pg. 31

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Bell's Custom Leather a hidden gem

STEWART GRANT

Publisher

If you've led a 4-H calf before, there's a good chance that you used a show halter made at Bell's Custom Leather here in Stratford.

"To my knowledge, we make the majority of Canada's halters," says Jim Bell, who founded the family business back in 1992. Prior to that, he had worked 21 years with Griffith Saddlery and Leather where he started at the age of 20. "We send our halters coast to coast, and we also have a customer who sends them all over the world." Bell's is also proud to sponsor local saddle clubs and 4-H clubs.

While round strap show halters are the company's mainstay, Bell's Custom Leather is well equipped to handle a large variety of jobs involving leather products. Their industrial machines also work well with other materials, including nylon and vinyl.

During COVID, while walk-in traffic slowed at their store location at 302 Erie Street, business continued with organizations such as Perth County Paramedics, who would have Bell's do repair work such as that on leather defibrillator cases. Bell's has also done chaps and holsters for productions at the Stratford



SHOWTIME

Jim Bell, Sarah Bell, and Gia Riordan pose with two of Bell's most popular products – the slim line show halter and round strap show halter. There are 17 steps that go into making one of Bell's sought-after show halters.

(STEWART GRANT PHOTO)

Festival, leather restraints for the Stratford and St. Marys hospitals, harnesses for the Ontario Hydro Safety Associa-

tion, and repair work for the local Fire Departments.

Bell's Custom Leather also performs a

variety of jobs for individuals. The list is far-ranging but some examples are reupholstering of kitchen chairs and rocking chairs, zippers for leather coats, custom dog collars, waist belts, saddle bags, axe covers, and straps for antique car restoration.

"It's a broad spectrum," says Sarah Bell, who works alongside her father in the business. Sarah describes their shop as a having 'a little hometown feel'. "We get so many amazing people that walk through the door, that's the nice thing."

"I'm really proud of both my daughters," said Jim. "Sarah has worked in the business for 25 years and my eldest daughter Julie has started her own leather business here in Stratford. And I'm really grateful to my wife Ingrid for putting up with me all of these years."

Jim added, "I find you've got to have fun at what you're doing, that's half the battle. If I didn't enjoy what I do, I wouldn't be here."

Stop by Bell's Custom Leather at 302 Erie St, Stratford, between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., Monday to Friday, to look through their selection of leather goods or to speak with them about any custom work that you would like done. Bell's can also be reached at 519-271-8138 or through their website at www.bells-custom-leather.business.site.

"Refill, not landfill" Toner & Ink Shop celebrates 15 years

STEWART GRANT

Publisher

For the last twenty years, I've worked out of my home office. Due to the nature of my work, I do a fair bit of printing and have spent a lot of money on print cartridges. I'm sure many of you share this feeling that it always seems painfully expensive to buy new print cartridges, and perhaps like me you're never really sure what to do with the old cartridges.

However, what I learned just recently is that I should have discovered the Toner and Ink Shop in Stratford years ago. After all, local proprietor Rob Clipperton has been operating the business here since 2008, and is celebrating 15 years this May.

"I decided that I wanted to start my own business," recalled Rob, who had previously worked in advertising with the Beacon Herald. "I didn't know what I wanted to do, so I just started searching online, and I really got into thinking green. I wanted something to help save the environment but at the same time help people save their money."

The longevity of his business has shown that Rob made an excellent choice for his business venture, and he's adding new clients all the time, including myself.

I told Rob that I've been using an HP OfficeJet Pro 8710 for the last few years. The unit has been pretty reliable, but the print cartridges are annoyingly expensive. I was shocked when Rob did the



REUSE, RECYCLE

Proprietor Rob Clipperton of Toner & Ink Shop.

(STEWART GRANT PHOTO)

price comparison on my 952 XL cartridges. In my specific example, I could save roughly 45% in costs versus what I had been paying, and I could help the en-

vironment at the same time, making it a true win-win situation.

I took my recycled print cartridge home that day and was thrilled to see it worked

just as well as the more expensive ones that I'd used previously.

"All my product is 100% guaranteed," said Rob. He explained that most of his customers come in once their cartridges are empty; they drop off their used cartridges and exchange them for refilled ones.

"Reuse, recycle; refill, not landfill," is the company's motto. "If we can recover most of the cartridges that would otherwise go in the garbage, then we are doing our part." Rob explained that although industry estimates project that each ink cartridge will take 250 years to break down in a landfill and each toner cartridge will last up to 400 years, he believes that in reality it will take even longer.

As a successful entrepreneur and as a local guy who has spent his whole life in Stratford, Rob stands behind his product and is there to support his customers and his community, which includes the City as well as surrounding areas including St. Marys, Mitchell, New Hamburg, Milverton, Tavistock and Shakespeare. "You might be able to get cartridges cheaper online, but where do you go if you have an issue? It's easier to come to a local person and get them to take care of the problem."

Toner & Ink Shop is located at C-2, 804 Ontario Street, also known as the "A&W Plaza". The store is open Monday to Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. For more information, give Rob a call at 519-273-5777 or visit his website at www.toner-and-inkshop.ca.

Who's Who in the Region

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You can also shop online at www.actionhealthcare.ca If you require help in product selection please visit one of their first-class showrooms, or call their team of experts to discuss the options, they are always happy to help.



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At **Black Angus Bakery & Catering** a community-minded business their mission is to spread smiles by sharing their impressive home cooking and home baking.

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Times Past: Memories of Coronation

BETTY JO BELTON

Stratford-Perth Archives

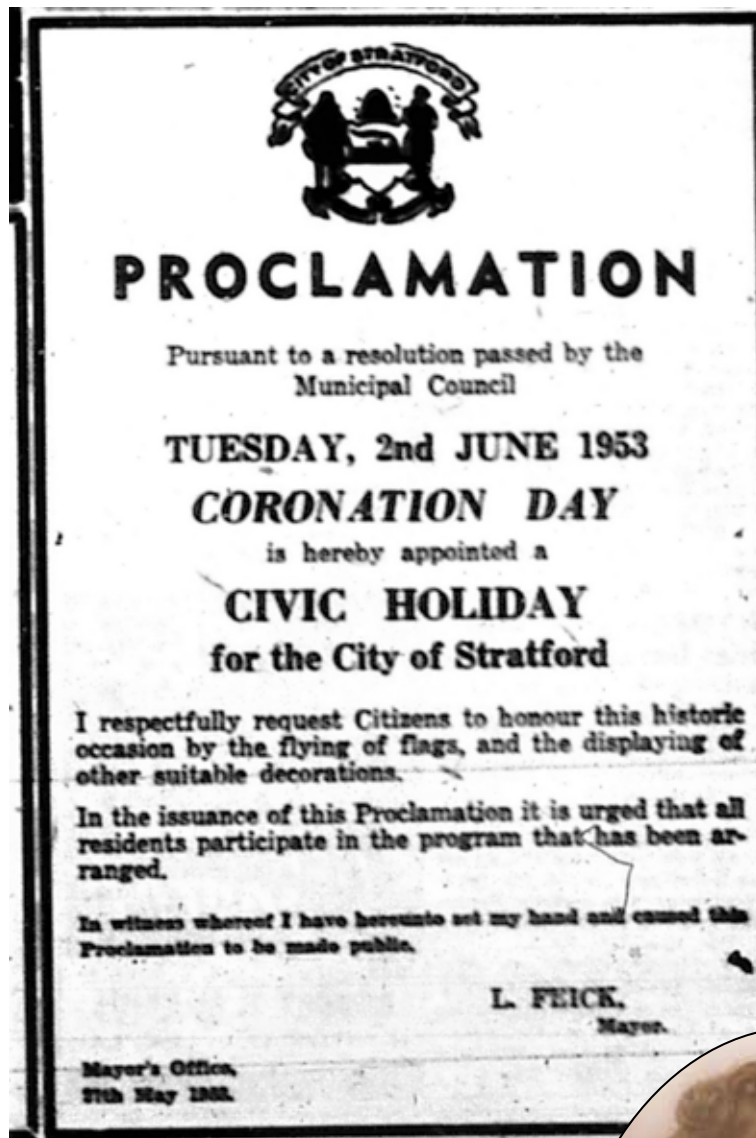
With the coronation of Charles III as King scheduled to take place on May 6 this year, there might be some interest in looking back at how Stratford marked the coronation of the late Queen Elizabeth II on June 2, 1953.

Mayor Lawrence Feick and City Council issued a proclamation that it was a civic holiday. The Stratford Fire Department used their aerial ladder to help with draping about 70 yards of red, white and blue bunting around City Hall. It was reported that "nearly every store in Stratford has some decoration in the window" to mark the event. One of the drug stores had pictures of every British monarch since Alfred the Great. Another merchant covered their display window floor with "shiny new Coronation pennies." Flags alongside a portrait of the young monarch were popular. One set up a fan so that the Union Jacks appeared to flutter in the breeze. Others had fresh flowers.

Community celebrations included a nondenominational thanksgiving service led by the Stratford and District Ministerial Association. There were interschool softball games in the afternoon with the winning teams playing off at 7:30 in Queen's Park. Fireworks were set off from what is now Tom Patterson Island at 9:30 with nearly 2,000 people watching from the street. The radio station was asked to record the proceedings at Westminster Abbey to play for the crowd before the fireworks started.

Stratford opted not to have a parade that day but over in Mitchell they had a fine one with fifteen floats decorated to represent different parts of the British Commonwealth. Children were given prizes for the best decorated bicycles, tricycles and doll carriages. Marion MacDougald was Queen of the Celebration, riding in her own golden coach. It was built by Albert E. Robinson on the chassis of a 100-year-old farm wagon and drawn by a four-horse-hitch owned and driven by William and Oliver Bannerman of Monkton. Riding behind were footmen Alvin Kemp and Edwin Sookel from the Agricultural Society. Later, Lloyd Wright and his Radio Rangers played for a Jitney Dance. Admission was fifty cents. There was also a street dance in front of the post office.

In Stratford, there was a choice of Coronation balls. At the Legion "as the ladies entered the ball room in their graceful gowns in pastel shades with



Above, 1953 Proclamation Civic Holiday
Right, portrait of Stratford resident Olive Griffith, who attended the Queen's 1953 coronation.

their escorts they each received a single rose corsage as a favor. They danced to the music of Casa Villa orchestra." The Perth Regiment hosted more than 300 guests, including Festival stars like Alec Guinness and Tyrone Guthrie, at the Armoury. Paul Cross and his orchestra provided the music for "waltzes, fox trots, schottische and rye waltzes."

For those who wanted a new TV to see the Coronation from the comfort of home "with all its splendor and pageantry" Pletsch Electric in Tavistock guaranteed installation of a twenty-one inch screen Westinghouse deluxe model before the big day for \$299.95. (Some estimate that the equivalent cost in today's currency would be two to three thousand dollars!) If you wanted to host a tea party, Standard Drugs offered Coronation China with a cup and saucer set priced at forty-nine cents.

At least one Stratford resident was lucky enough to be in London and able to watch the goings-on from her seat outside of Westminster Abbey. Olive Magwood was born on August 20, 1896 in Mornington Township. Her parents, Thomas and Elizabeth Magwood, moved their family to Stratford in 1907 where

Magwood became Sheriff of Perth County. Olive married Harry Griffith, a Stratford manufacturer, in 1917. One of their grandchildren, Becky Douglas, recently donated a number of family photographs and papers to Stratford-Perth Archives. We thank her for this generous contribution. Included was Olive's mimeographed letter describing what she saw on June 2, 1953.

Dear Everybody,

Coronation day began for us the night before. We retired at 8 o'clock after taking sleeping pills and they worked well for when we were called at 3 o'clock we felt rested and ready for the day.

After a hurried breakfast we began our journey from Wembley to Westminster Abbey by car and underground, carrying with us a thermos of coffee and some lunch. We had as our guide Richard Wells who is Doris's



Pletsch Electric ad for new TV for Coronation

brother-in-law and who seems to know all about London... Charing Cross was as far as the Tube took us, and there Richard left us to find our way along the Thames Embankment to the Parliament Bldgs., then right to the Square where our seats were. Our red tickets were inspected many times before we were

seated and we found ourselves opposite the side of Westminster Abbey. Lucky us? We even had red plastic cushions to sit on. It was 5:15 when we arrived and by six the stands were completely filled. Behind our stand was a lunch room and a washroom both kept spotlessly clean all day.

We didn't see anyone we knew but the people around us were from Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton & Westminster, most of the women were wearing Maple Leaf Pins. The man beside me had a new movie camera which gave him plenty of trouble, twice I saw him stuff handfuls of tangled film into his pocket. There was an entrance to the Abbey right across the road from us and early as it was guests were arriving wearing a great variety of costumes. Many women wore brocades the most popular colours being rose, blue, gold & grey. Nearly all wore short fur capes. This was once when the men outshone the women, judges in legal robes and long grey wigs, white uniforms from the

tropics, velvet coats with knee breeks & matching stockings, long red velvet cloaks topped by short white ermine capes with black tails, clergy in their robes... About two dozen Peers who had been seated in the Abbey got tired awaiting the arrival of the Queen & came out into a small enclosure, old, young, thin, fat, handsome and not so handsome, their lovely red cloaks blowing in the wind. I looked through field glasses & it was a most interesting study - My Lords of England strutting around in their best clothes enjoying themselves. I shall never forget the sight.

When the very important guests began to arrive in horse drawn coaches with liveried footmen in gorgeous uniforms, we were thrilled & from then on we felt we were living in some fairyland. The Queen's coach is so beautiful. She & Philip looked as if they were a picture in a golden frame. The BBC was on the job broadcasting suitable music and when the service started we heard it too. I did wish the old walls of the Abbey could be folded back so we could see it all, we were so near. After the service the Parade of the Commonwealth troops began. I cannot describe the colour & pageantry of it all. You will likely have seen it on T.V. or in the movies and will understand how it must be to really see it and to hear the bands play. We clapped all the troops, (my wrists are sore today) and we cheered the Mounties and [Canadian Prime Minister Louis] St. Laurent. He was pleased and leaned out of the carriage to see us. (Even I cheered him). We had to stand by him over here... We had a good view of the Duchess of Kent & Gloucester and their children, Queen Mother and Margaret Rose & at last Elizabeth & Phillip looking very solemn and no wonder after their experience.

Well it was over and we just sat still & waited until some of the crowd left. It was 4 o'clock and we had been cold & in spite of our warm clothing we shivered. The weather was awful. It did everything but snow. As we made our way back to Charing Cross we found London had begun to clean up, the roads were being swept & some of the stands were being taken down. We reached home at 5:30 tired out but feeling it had all been so worthwhile. Olive.

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



Is This Bank Really “As You Like It”?

HAYDEN BULBROOK

Times Contributor

The effects of the recent pandemic impacted Stratford's downtown. On the other hand, the tenacity of small businesses to evolve, along with customer loyalty, growing local tourism, and a generous sprinkling of government money has helped Stratford's downtown core to survive and transition into what will hopefully be a new phase of growth. Thus, it is difficult to imagine a downtown with under utilized commercial space and a city council fearing blight. However, this was the case in the late 1970s. The effects were devastating.

In a short span in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the big bad banks would wreak havoc on sweet small Stratford demolishing prime heritage buildings on the Downie Street approach to City Hall. The blame does not sit entirely with the banks for it was an overzealous and, frankly, tone deaf city council that allowed for such a hollowing out of the city's historic core. By the mid-1970s, a handful of buildings comprising 26-32 Downie Street sat vacant, even after the city purchased what it considered to be blighted old buildings. These included the former locations of the Tamblin Drug store, Shapiro Shop, and To Do Shop. Of even greater significance was the majestic and stately Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. All would fall prey to the wrecking bowl by 1980.

The old Bank of Commerce, which dated to 1911, was designed by Victor Horsburgh, a Scottish-born architect who upon his death was described as a “kindly, courteous and scholarly gentleman.” Horsburgh designed at least 75 Canadian Bank of Commerce buildings over two decades. Stratford's was a Classical Revival style building. This style was common for commercial buildings in pre-First World War Canada. Faced with Bedford stone from Bedford, Indiana, it featured fluted Doric columns and pilasters; modillions; a recessed entry; and an entablature inscribed “The Canadian Bank of Commerce”. Rustic Gibbs surrounds arced around the upper, south-facing windows which would have ensured plenty of light in the banking room. Overall, the design was fairly subdued and proportionate to Stratford's stature as a smaller city but it was nonetheless elegant - and tremendously unique to the overwhelmingly brick Victorian-era downtown.

In the 20th century, cities and towns across Canada witnessed a significant building campaign of banks. By 1918, there were nearly 4,000 purpose-built banks in Canada, with roughly two-thirds of them constructed between 1908 and 1918. Architectural historian, Harold Kalman, noted that the bank design was meant “to promote the bank by means of a design that conveyed permanence and stability, qualities individuals and corporations look for when deciding where to entrust their money.” Construction magazine remarked in 1918 that this phenomenon of purpose-built banks “bears evidence to a marked period of expansion and is convincing as to the country's commercial and industrial growth and importance.”

Fast-forward nearly 70 years and Canada's largest banks, along with Stratford's city council, viewed such buildings with far less admiration. Before ideas of a “modern” bank branch surfaced in City Hall, the city



The Canadian Bank of Commerce in 1914. Courtesy of CIBC Archives.

had borrowed heavily in the quixotic hope that a developer would erect a \$4-5 million hotel (approximately \$23-29 million today) in place of the blighted 26-32 Downie Street blocks. This ambitious and colossal plan came at a time when downtown retail committee members threw around words like “frightened”, “decay”, and “ghetto” to describe the block. Of course, the hotel development fell flat.

Then came the idea to redevelop these blocks for a new Bank of Commerce building. Some at the bank were proponents of retaining the Horsburgh's Bedford stone bank building. Citing a shortage of space in the old bank, manager of the Bank of Commerce's representation department, John Sautner, in July 1977, remarked on the “beautiful old buildings” north of the old bank. He also mentioned possible expansion of office space into the upper stories of the old bank.

Plans did forge ahead and in December 1977, the Bank of Commerce purchased three buildings north of the old bank with a \$50,000 deposit and a remaining \$165,000 owed by May 15, 1978. The Bank of Commerce, however, had ultimately decided to demolish and build anew. Spokesperson for the Bank of Commerce, Ken Roth, noted on December 14, 1977, “We'll be making the building look like it sits in the town.”

Others challenged that sentiment. Referring to initial drawings of the new Bank of Commerce, City Centre Committee Chairperson, Neil Matheson, said, “It looks like it was transplanted from Mars. There's been no attempt to integrate the community into its design.” The criticism continued. Architect James Anderson wrote, “The base of Stratford's downtown problem is complex, but city council (part time) has too long perpetuated the situation through neglect of city property and indecision.” In this instance, the city took the blame for the decaying blocks.

Pleas to retain the old Bank of Commerce were made. Chairperson of the Heritage

eight months to complete. Demolition of the old bank was underway in March, 1980. Almost simultaneously, buildings had been cleared for the Erie Street municipal parking lot which, by June 1978, was to be paved and metred. The Royal Bank of Canada was also pursuing plans to demolish its former branch for the present one on the opposite corner of Downie Street. Toronto Dominion bank would follow suit, demolishing a gorgeous block south of the old Bank of Commerce, replacing it with a short-lived design that was later remodeled.

The current Bank of Commerce building has some eye-catching brickwork and is an interesting example of the transition from Modern to Postmodern architecture. On its own, it is actually a fascinating building. It does not, however, compare to the Classical design of the previous bank. The “new” (now forty-three years old) Bank of Commerce that was designed by Mofatt, Mofatt and Kinoshita and came with a price tag of \$500,000 (\$2 million today), is simply at odds with the Victorian downtown.

By the early 1980s, some people had recognized that the post Second World War sprawl and suburbanization had negatively impacted city centres which had long been the heart of commerce. Speaking after the Bank of Commerce debacle, Laurel Armstrong, a local Norman Street resident, argued in 1981 that “charming old buildings can be a viable alternative to this “mall sprawl” syndrome, if the consumer supports this kind of retail environment.”

The prescriptions to alleviate urban blight, as advocated by Modernist architects and supported by acquiescent politicians who possessed neither the wherewithal nor imagination to think for themselves or act in the interests of the communities they served, were rather fruitless. Former Stratford city planner, Philip Brown, directly criticized the Modern movement so prevalent after the Second World War, whose proponents with zealous fervour and bellicosity, hollowed out historic downtown cores for so-called “urban renewal.” Brown wrote “Don't forget that tourists enjoy Stratford's historical flavor, and don't want to see just another hodge-podge of characterless glass, steel and concrete “modern” buildings.”

The new Bank of Commerce branch opened on February 11, 1980. Bank of Commerce vice president and general manager of the bank's Ontario Central Region, Bert Mills, hoped the new bank was “As You Like It.” Ask any Stratfordite and they will have an opinion on the bank.



The new Bank of Commerce, c. 1982, with the old bank to the left. Courtesy of CIBC Archives.

The Stratford Chefs School attracts interest from Students across Ontario and even Belgium

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

The Stratford Chefs School in downtown Stratford hosted an intensive five-day cooking program last week for the first time since its closure during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year, the school welcomed 12 students, some from Stratford, Kitchener-Waterloo, London, and other locations across Ontario.

Most notably this season was a student from Brussels, Belgium, who came to learn from the best. "I couldn't believe it when he told me he came from Brussels, Belgium; it's interesting and encouraging," Chef Eli stated. The student had been looking for an intense program online when he came across the Stratford Chef School and immediately booked a flight to attend the program.

The program is designed for individuals with a cooking background or home cooks interested in learning more about the culinary arts. Chef Eli said, "We explain the why in cooking right so you can understand the rules and that way, you can massage them or break them to make a recipe your own."

Chef Eli inclusively teaches the students and states, "There are students straight out of high school and some



LOOK WHO'S COOKING

The Spring Explorer Program Graduates at The Stratford Chefs School with Chef Eli and Student teacher, Greer Marriott

(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

with 10 years experience cooking." The program is designed for every level and every chef looking to learn kitchen skills.

Helping in the kitchen this year is Level One student Greer Marriott, a teacher's assistant who completed semester 1 of her program at The Stratford Chefs School. Originally from Sarnia, Marriott grew up watching the Stratford Chefs School show and, since the age of 6, wanted to follow in her father's footsteps and work in the food industry. "It's like a dream come true," she states

about being a student at the Stratford Chefs School.

Marriott's grandmother originally immigrated to Ontario from Latvia,

and Marriott states, "Food was everything in our family; we even solved arguments with food." She discusses the intense, level 1 chef program as something she didn't expect and states she now is leaning towards working in fine dining when she completes her program. "I appreciate the rush; you're in the kitchen for 5 hours and then theory at the end of each class; it's a lot, but it's rewarding."

The Stratford Chefs School is now accepting applicants for their 16-week summer program, equivalent to the level 1 apprenticeship program. "This year, it has a summer vibe," states Elizabeth Kerr, Director of Marketing and Admissions Development. "It's a stand-alone program, which is wonderful, but you still have the opportunity to advance to the next level if you'd like."

For more information, please visit the website at <https://stratfordchef.com/>

Ontario's waters inspiration for Fear's writing

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Author Ivanka Fear always enjoyed mysteries.

She read "The Hardy Boys" series growing up and likes the works of Agatha Christie. Fear says that that one of her favourite activities outside of reading and writing is watching mystery series.

"I was always drawn to something that was mystery or suspense. Something where you need to keep turning the pages and you're kind of always on edge what happens next."

Fear released her debut novel "The Dead Lie," the first of five books in the "Bluewater Mystery" series on February 28. The series, published through Level Best Books, is about a young woman from Hamilton, Ont., named Lana, who is under a new identity after a traumatic event. She loses her parents in a car accident and travels to a Croatian village to find out who her parents really were.

Prior to writing, Fear was a teacher for 34 years before retirement. Her writing career began after she finished her teaching career.

"Writing has just been something I always wanted to do - just didn't necessarily have the time until I retired to pursue it full-time" she said.

Fear published several poems and short stories and has written eight novels. She resides in Moorefield, which is about 40 minutes away from Stratford. She was born in Slovenia and grew up in Kirkland Lake.

Her books are based on places familiar to her and all of her books take place in Ontario. "The Dead Lie" begins in Hamilton, which Fear picked because she knows the area from visiting family. She also wanted to pick a different city from Toronto, which she felt is represented of-

ten in Canadian literature.

"All of my books are based on a location that's close to the lakes, the water," she said.

"Hamilton was a choice for me because it was a place that I knew somewhat from my childhood."

The second "Blue Water Mysteries" book takes place in Northern Ontario because she lived nearby a mine that eventually closed down and her father worked in a gold mine.

The third, fourth and fifth book in the series are set in a fictional town based on Goderich, Ont., where Fear likes to visit to spend time at the beach. London is also referenced in the series. According to the bio on her website, Fear earned her B.A. and B.Ed. from Western University.

The scenes in "The Dead Lie" that take place in the Croatian village are also inspired by her past. Fear has family in Croatia and lived on the border between Slovenia and Croatia.

Before writing novels, Fear wrote a short story about her memories at the Avon River in Stratford before her mother's passing. They spent their last day together on a day trip walking nearby the river, not realizing it would be the last day.

"I was really glad we were able to do that because she was at that point - able to walk around and do all those things that we would do when we were younger. She'd always used to come," she said. "It was a special day for the two of us to be out one last day."

Tantor Media will publish three of the "Bluewater Mystery Series" in audiobook format in a couple of months. Fear's first book in her JK Mallory Mysteries series, "Where is my Husband?" will be released in October by Level Best Books.

To learn more about the author and to purchase "The Dead Lie," visit ivankafear.com.

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Introducing Avon Nails & Beauty Spa

LAUREN EEDY

Times Correspondent

Stratford has been graced with a new nail salon located conveniently at 155 Erie Street, located in the Joe's Diner plaza.

Recently opened by Thi Ha, Avon Nails is her first and only salon, giving her undivided attention to local clientele. When asked why she chose Stratford, she replied, 'Stratford is a nice city with Avon River and famous theatres which attracts a great number of tourists every year. Stratford's downtown is a good location for us where we can serve both locals and tourists as customers. Besides that, I would like to move to Stratford eventually, so I chose this location to open my business!'

Business has been successful so far, especially with their grand opening offer of 20% of all services.

'I have been open for one month now and everything is going so well!' Ha says, 'The people in Stratford are really supporting

new businesses like us by posting their feedback on social media or recommending their friends. We also have walk-in appointments available and have gained new repeat clients that way.'

Services offered at the salon are artificial nails, pedicure, manicure and deluxe treatments as well as waxing and eyelash extensions. I treated myself to a much-needed gel manicure which has held up for two weeks, they can easily accommodate any designs you bring with you to replicate. The customer service was friendly and welcoming and the salon itself boasts all new equipment and is exceptionally clean.

For more information and booking, call 519-273-6668 or reach out to them on their Facebook and Instagram pages. You're in for a pampered treat!



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Warriors win Cherrey Cup as Midwest Champions

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Times Regional Reporter

The Stratford Warriors have returned to the top of the Midwestern Conference, winning the Cherrey Cup on April 7 with a 3-1 win in Game Six over the Kitchener-Waterloo Siskins.

Before getting to the conference final, the Warriors had to go through the Caledon Bombers in the quarter-final, followed by the defending Midwest Champion Cambridge Redhawks. Stratford swept both series, but as Head Coach Dave Williams told the Times, it certainly wasn't an easy road to make it past Caledon and Cambridge.

"Even though we got through the first two rounds in four games, they each offered their own unique challenges," Williams said. "Caledon was a very scrappy team and they've got a really small, tough rink to play in so I think it was good for us to have to go into that small rink and have our competitiveness turned up in order to win."

"Then, in the second round against Cambridge, we may have won four straight but it wasn't easy at all. The Redhawks were one



(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

point behind us in the regular season. They won last year and had plenty of experience on their team. They knew how to win and we had to adapt to how physical the series was. All four games against Cambridge were hard-fought battles, so to get through those two rounds boosted our confidence."

In the Midwest Final, Stratford met the first-place Siskins. As expected, the series was incredibly close, with the first two games being decided in overtime and every game having either one- or two-goal differentials. When discussing the conference championship series, Williams knew that his team had been through "a real battle."

"All of the top teams probably feel like they have a real shot at winning it all, so you know that every night, you're in for a hard-fought game. One big concern for us was going to the big ice at their rink, so that was something we were trying to minimize as it could have been a strength for them. K-W is a very fast, skilled team and they're able to use their home ice really well so for us to have taken two games on that big ice, was good for us."

Stratford took Game Six against Kitchener-Waterloo by a score of 3-1, with all three of their goals coming in the second period. Zach Hatch, Patrick Cole, and Zac McCann scored for the Warriors. Williams said that exe-

cuting on the details of the game was a key factor in the Warriors earning the Cherrey Cup.

"We keep focusing on the details of our game. The game, oftentimes, is won on those details, on the small things, on the one-on-one battles. As much as we keep working on the structure of our game, we also have to reinforce how important every individual battle is."

The Warriors came away victorious despite being outshot 40-25 in Game Six. Owen Willmore made 39 saves in the Stratford crease and Williams credited Willmore for his stellar play throughout the entire post-season, punctuated by his strong performance in Game Six.

"Owen played exceptionally well and gave us a great chance to win every night. He kept games close. You're going to make mistakes as the game goes along so it's good for our guys to know that we have Owen back there and know that, when we do make mistakes, Owen is capable of cleaning many of those up for us. When you're getting goaltending like that, it gives everyone more confidence."

When asked if anyone surprised him or whose contributions were going a bit underrated, Williams lauded the efforts of one of his 20-year-old blueliners.

"A guy that sometimes gets overlooked for his play is Nolan Adkins, who has been with us for four years. I think Nolan has quietly been very good and very consistent every night. He's had some tough tasks defending some highly skilled players and he's handled it extremely well. As a coaching staff, we're talking about how good he was every game."

Getting to this point clearly indicates that your team is truly a special one, which Williams attributes to how close the team is on and off the ice.

"They really, really enjoy being around

each other, whether that's playing hockey together or spending time together. We as coaches get to see that up close and how they are around the rink with each other and see the genuine passion and care for one another that they have. I think having that makes them want to win together and it's important for everyone to have success for each other, more so than anyone's individual success."

The recorded attendance of Game Six was 2,200, which Williams said was an environment he was incredibly thrilled that his players had the chance to play in.

"Teams always want to play in front of crowds like that and we had great support in Games Two and Four, but I think we felt as we came back home for Game Six, on a Friday night, with a chance to end the series, that it was going to be an even bigger and more boisterous crowd, and that's exactly what happened. I think it creates some nerves and we had to calm down and settle into it but it made it so much more special to experience that atmosphere at the Allman."

When the final buzzer sounded, Williams said that he was overjoyed for everyone involved with the Warriors.

"I was ecstatic, first and foremost, for the players because they're the ones who have to go out and play and do all the work. We give them a plan but they have the hard job to go out and execute it. Then, there are the people who put in the work behind-the-scenes, the equipment and training staff, the support staff, management, scouts, and the executive. And, of course, the community, who allow us to spend this time at the rink, and we're truly so grateful for the support."

Of course, amid the celebration, everyone in Stratford, including Williams, had their former number eight in their hearts and on their mind, knowing that even though he wasn't there in person, he was there in spirit.

"The one other person that was on our minds a lot that night was Carter Schoonderwoerd. Not everyone on our team played with Carter but many of our guys knew him personally and had the privilege of playing hockey with him. He was on everyone's mind and as excited as we were, it did feel like someone was missing from that celebration. I certainly hope and think that Carter would have been pretty proud of what we accomplished."

Stratford began the Sutherland Cup round-robin on Wednesday, April 12th with a visit to the Hamilton Kilty B's, who swept the Caledonia Corvairs in the Golden Horseshoe Championship Final. The Warriors then return home on Friday, April 14th to host the Leamington Flyers, who won the Bill Weir Trophy as Western Conference Champions in five games over the St. Marys Lincolns.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Congratulations!



The Family of Bentley Dundas is proud to announce that effective January 1, 2023, Bentley has joined the Partnership of Marcus & Associates Chartered Professional Accountants in London Ontario.

Bentley, is a graduate of St. Marys DCVI high school, has earned his honours of Bachelor and Commerce degree from the University of Guelph, diploma in accounting from the University of Wilfred Laurier, and passed the Uniform Final Exam in 2013 to earn his CPA, CA designation.

We are very proud of all your accomplishments and hard work.

Love, Mom and Dad, Stacey, Stefan, Morgan, Kiefer, Pierce, Neve, Grandma Ann and Grandma Roberta

St. Mike's pull off stunning comeback to win OFSAA title

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Times Regional Reporter

The St. Mike's Warriors are your OFSAA Champions after just about the most improbable 5-4 overtime victory imaginable.

On March 23rd, the Warriors took on St. Mary's College from Sault Ste. Marie in the final game of the OFSAA tournament. With six minutes left on the clock, the top-ranked St. Mary's Knights led the contest 4-0 and it appeared that they were going to cruise to a provincial title.

Warriors' Co-Coach Mark Price told the Times that his and Bryson Filipetti's squad wasn't playing terribly through the first two periods but it just seemed that momentum wasn't on their side.

"It was pretty good, back-and-forth hockey for most of the first, and they were able to bury a couple near the end of the period," said Price. "We weren't getting drastically outplayed or making a bunch of bad mistakes, it was a pretty even game that they managed to get a lead in."

"Guys got a little bit down on the bench and at the end of the first, we talked about tightening up defensively," Price continued. "We'd made a couple of mistakes and had a goal disallowed, rightfully so, so we didn't have the momentum on our side."

But then, the unthinkable happened. Starting with 5:44 left in the third, St. Mike's proceeded to storm back to life and tie the game with four unanswered goals, the first of which was scored by Cody Bach.

Within the next minute and 22 seconds, the Warriors found the back of the St.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

OFSAA CHAMPS

The St. Mike's Warriors erased a four-goal deficit with under six minutes left in the third period to come back and win 5-4 in overtime to become OFSAA Champions. Pictured above in the front row, from left to right, are Aidan Hill, Rylan Hall, Aaron Green, Colin Slattery, Ryan Ganselves, Austin Musselman, Blair Stokes, and Josh Ballantyne. In the middle row, from left, are Colin Schultz and Isaac Nickel. In the back row, from left, are Co-Coach Mark Price, Connor Brooks, Dominic Marshall, Carter Petrie, Cole Baier, Jackson Campbell, Cody Bach, Cole Humphrey, Caleb Templeman, Nolan Miller, Vincent Voros, Mark Pyzowski, Beckham McLeod, and Co-Coach Bryson Filipetti.

Mary's net twice, in the blink of an eye cutting the deficit to a single goal. Price said you could feel the atmosphere on the Warriors' bench change when the game was made 4-3.

"The first goal definitely lifted the bench," Price explained, who had started mixing up the forward lines in an effort to find a spark. "We'd had some pressure in the offensive zone here and there but largely, we seemed to be going through the motions. But when we got our first two goals, it lifted our spirits."

"The third goal was the one where we really started believing that we could pull this off. That third one made it a one-goal game, essentially erasing the first 35-

40 minutes of the game. Our guys really bought in at that point and you could feel the momentum shift for us. When we got the fourth goal, I don't think our guys ever sat down after that. Our bench was electric."

With 1:13 left in regulation, Isaac Nickel potted the game-tying tally to complete the four-goal resurgence and force overtime. In the extra frame, the miracle comeback was capped off with Colin Slattery scoring the OT winner, giving St. Mike's an OFSAA title with a win for the ages.

"Even if we had pulled off this comeback in pool play and then lost before getting to the finals, it would have been a great story," Price said. "But to do it in the

final game and to get the championship out of this, it was an unreal moment for all of us."

Price praised the team for their commitment to each other and the up-tempo, high-energy style preached by Price and Filipetti.

"Pulling out that win was a testament to the depth of our roster and the buy-in of all of our players. We ran four lines and three defence pairs all tournament long and with the way our team plays, there aren't any guys that we don't feel confident in starting in either zone of the ice."

"It was a total team effort and this team came at their opponents in waves, even if they didn't score, they were bringing hard shifts every time they went over the bench, knowing that their line might not score, and the next line might not score, but if that's two hard shifts, then the third line we send out might score."

St. Mike's had a very young team this year, with no grade 12's on the team, meaning they were usually going up against bigger, more experienced teams. Price credited the group with having the mental toughness and resolve to battle through those potential disadvantages and come out as OFSAA Champions.

"They never shied away from the tough moments and the hard battles. Our message all year was playing our game and making everyone chase us, and they did a great job focusing on us and being the best we can be. And in the moment, that's what they did. They focused on having each other's backs, skating hard and fast, and it paid off with the comeback and the championship."

Figure Skaters from across Ontario attend the three-day Championship in Stratford

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

The Skate Ontario Provincial Championships was held at the Stratford Rotary Complex from March 24th through 26th, where competitors across Ontario competed against others in 50+ categories.

Skate Ontario Provincial Championship is a highly competitive event with skaters vying for top positions and a chance to move onto the national level. The competition is a qualifier for the national competition.

Mason Clemmer from the New Hamburg Skating Club competed this year in the Star 5 over 13 competition. "I started to skate in preschool," he states. Clemmer hopes to continue to skate and is even interested in becoming a coach one day. "It's fun, and you get to do something different and not very well known." Clemmer has worked hard to make it to the provincial championship and wants younger kids interested in skating to know it's "important to have fun and keep trying to improve daily."

The Provincial Championship competition brings together the best figure skaters in the province and features skaters from numerous categories, including singles, pairs and syncro. Each skater or team had the opportunity to perform their routines in front of a panel of expert judges.



(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

BLADES OF GLORY

Mason Clemmer competed in the Star U14 competition at the Ontario Provincial Championships.

The Skate Ontario Provincial Championship is an important event for Stratford. It brings in nearly 900+ competitors, their families and coaching staff to the city over the course of the weekend. "We have skaters from across Ontario, including Toronto and Sarnia," states Kevin Winter, Skate coach and event organizer.

All competitors qualified to perform for the event throughout the season at several Provincial series events held throughout

the province since November 2022. "There were many events before this, and depending on your score, you get to move into Provincials," Clemmer said.

The event was open to the public and saw a wide range of attendees throughout the weekend. The event and its organizers were happy to

bring the competition to Stratford and hope to have the opportunity to do so again in the future. "This is the first time Stratford hosted the event, and we hope to host again," states Winter.

The competition is important for those competing as the winners will now move on to compete at a national level and represent Ontario later in the year. The highly anticipated event brought together skaters, coaching staff and figure skating enthusiasts from across the province and is an important event of which Stratford was privileged to be a part.

For more information and all of the stats from the event, please visit <https://skateontario.org/>

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Fighting Irish three wins away from Super League Cup

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Times Regional Reporter

The Stratford Fighting Irish have been red-hot in their march to the Super League Cup Final and after taking Game One, find themselves just three victories away from achieving their ultimate goal.

Through their nine playoff games, Cameron Stokes leads the team in playoff points with 17, including seven goals and 10 assists. Stratford's leader in goals this post-season is Cooper Leitch, who has nine goals in as many games.

Game One of the Super League Cup Final took place on April 8th and a dominant first period by the Fighting Irish would prove too much for the Tillsonburg Thunder to claw back from. In the opening frame, Stratford scored four times, three of which came within a four-minute-and-14-second span. Brody Smith had a pair, with the other two goals in the first period coming from Stokes and Ray Robbins.

In the second period, Jamie MacQueen got the Thunder on the board with a pair of goals. He completed the hat trick in the third. But Stratford's offence continued to produce in a big way, with Robbins, Stokes, Leitch, and Graham Brulotte all adding another goal, en route to an 8-3 victory.

Game Two of the Super League Cup

Final takes place Saturday, April 15th in Tillsonburg, followed by Game Three on April 16th back at the William Allman Arena. Game Four returns to Tillsonburg on April 21st. If necessary, Game Five will be on April 22nd in Stratford, followed by Game Six on April 28th in Tillsonburg and Game Seven on April 29th in Stratford.

To reach the Championship series, the Fighting Irish had to first overcome the Erin Blitz in the opening round, which was a best-of-five series. After Stratford took the first two games, the Blitz pulled off an upset in Game Three, beating the Fighting Irish 5-1 on Stratford's home ice to keep their playoff hopes alive. Back in Erin for Game Four, a four-goal second period propelled the Fighting Irish to a 6-2 victory and a birth in the second round of the WOSHL Playoffs.

After their post-season ended, it was announced that the Blitz would be relocating from Erin to Orangeville.

The taste of their one loss in the first round appeared to stick in the mouths of the Fighting Irish, who used the taste of defeat to fuel a strong run through the second round against the Elora Rocks. Stratford swept Elora in four straight games, and in every game, the Fighting Irish managed to hold the Rocks to just two goals, while averaging four goals per game themselves.

U14 Stingers take home Bronze



BRONZE MEDALISTS

(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

Pictured from left, back row: Head Coach Abby Campbell, Aaliyah Carnegie, Brinlee Wall, Rylee Canning, Sydney Campbell, Teresa Schuster, Savannah Pereira, Abby Betto and Assistant Coach Nicole Mazzanti
Front row: Sage Dow, Hailey Modaragamage, Jessica Lerch, Sophia Pereira and Emerson Mazzanti

Missing from picture: Lilly Meyer

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

Held at Stratford and District Secondary school, the U14 Stratford Stingers took home bronze in the Invitational Tournament on Saturday, March 25th.

Teams from London, Cambridge, Norfolk and Stratford participated in the one-day tournament.

After a tough start, Head Coach Abby

Campbell led the Stingers to rebound after two losses and win all three afternoon games, beating the London Fire and advancing them to participate in the Bronze Medal finals.

The Stingers came out strong against London Fire and won their first set, 25-19 and went on to win the second set, 25-18.

The girls will be moving on to compete in Mississauga for the OVA finals from April 20th to 23rd.

NHL Pro Stars and Stratford Fire Fighters put on entertaining show



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

FRIENDLY HANDSHAKE

Stratford firefighters and NHL Pro Stars entertained the hockey crowd recently at the Allman Arena and are shown as "good sports" shaking hands at the games' end.

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

The Stratford Firefighters invited local hockey fans to the Allman Arena recently to come out and enjoy a game between the firefighters and the NHL Pro Stars from the past. It was all in good fun and was great to see the NHL pro stars, some of whom are in the Hockey

Hall of Fame, sign autographs and put on a show for the crowd.

Money raised is donated to the Stratford-Perth Hospice and is held every year in March on a Saturday evening.

Hospice volunteers and staff would like to thank everyone that came to the game and helped raise thousands of dollars for the local Stratford-Perth Hospice.

Stratford Branch 8

ATTENTION: CANADIAN VETERANS AND EX-SERVICE PERSONNEL

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

Introducing our new Branch Service Officer William Rothernel, who can be contacted through the Branch Office for questions and consultations. Every Tuesday continues to be Buddy Check Coffee at 10:30 am till noon, all vets welcome. Next month, Branch 8 will be visited by our Acting Provincial Service Officer Brittany Campbell starting at 2 p.m. on May 18, 2023. Please make an appointment with our office.

Please contact the Legion 519-271-4540 for a consultation.

804-B Ontario St., Stratford N5A 3K1
stratfordlegion008@gmail.com

Ogilvie, Feltham brothers shine at Track & Field Championship

SPENCER SEYMOUR

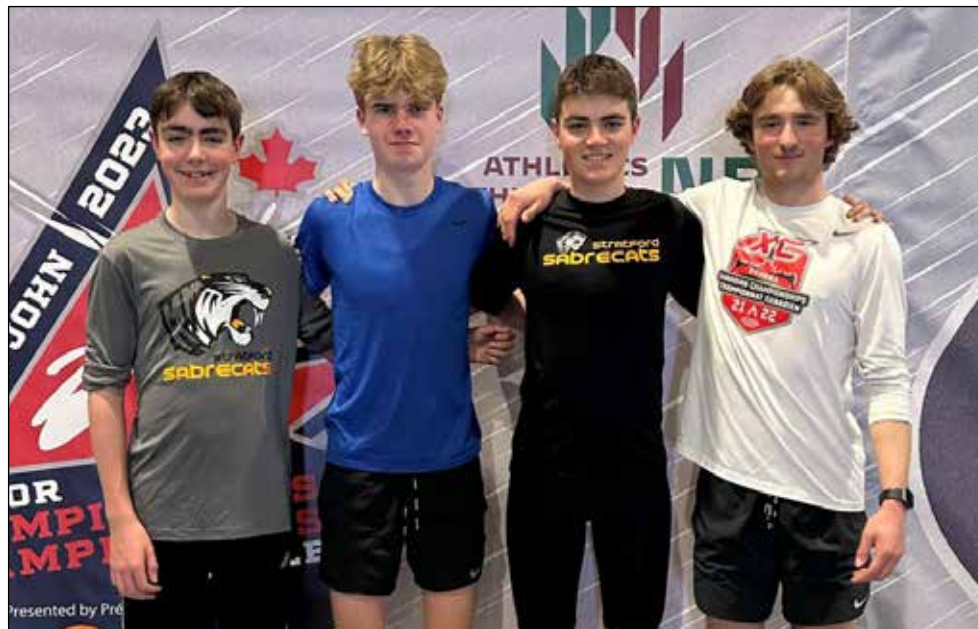
Times Regional Reporter

Luke and Noah Feltham, both Stratford residents and members of the Stratford Sabrecats track and field program, were among the four athletes who found success at the Athletics Canada Indoor Track and Field Championships.

Starting with Noah, a Grade Nine student who attends Stratford District Secondary School (SDSS), he won the 1200-metre/2000-metre double and set a new Championship record in the 2000-metre event. Sabrecats' Distance Running Coach Matt Feltham told the Times that Noah represents the best of what could be a strong crop of young track and field athletes for years to come.

"Noah and several other kids in the distance group have a lot of potential to develop over the next few years," said Coach Feltham. "There's an enormous pool of running talent in this area and within our club and it just needs to be developed. Having some of our older kids get national-level results and exposure will hopefully bring more kids into track and cross country and pursue it as their primary sport."

"There are so many opportunities in track and cross country at the post-secondary level. At younger ages, it is im-



SABRECATS ROAR

Stratford's Luke and Noah Feltham, Sebringville's Daniel Ogilvie, and St. Marys' Ezra Bender represented the Stratford Sabrecats program at last month's Athletics Canada Indoor Track and Field Championship in Saint John, New Brunswick. Pictured, from left to right, are Noah Feltham, Daniel Ogilvie, Luke Feltham, and Ezra Bender.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

portant to play a lot of different sports and develop different skills. But to be successful at provincial and national levels distance running is a 12-month-a-year effort. Noah's results show that he is a great example of what we hope the future

of this program could be."

As for Luke, he finished third in the U-18 3000-metre event and finished the indoor season ranked in the top 10 U-18 athletes in Canada in both the 1500-metre and the 3000-metre. Fellow Sabrecats'

athlete and Sebringville resident Daniel Ogilvie took second in the same U-18 3000-metre event and also ranked in the national top 10.

Feltham said that the success of the two Grade 11 athletes is an incredible feather in the cap of the Sabrecats' program.

"Daniel and Luke are very unique in that they have essentially been training together since they were in grade eight," Feltham said. "In a smaller club like this, they don't have the benefit of a cohort of older and more established elite athletes to push them, so they rely on each other. They run together probably five-to-six times a week so in essence they are each other's training partner but also each other's closest competitor and rival.

"It's great to see their hard work paying off. They both are already getting a lot of interest from university and college programs from both sides of the border. As a coach, it's really cool to see them on the national rankings lists next to all the big established track programs from across the country."

Ezra Bender of St. Marys also participated at the Indoor Track and Field Championship, setting new indoor personal bests in two events including the U-20 3000-metre, in which he placed fifth, and the 1500-metre, in which he took seventh.



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Stratford Dragon Boat Paddlers vying for spot on National Team

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

The Dragon Boat festival paddlers take to the water in April in anticipation of the National competition later this year in Thailand.

"We have a strong team and great paddlers," Gene states. Three local teens are trying out for the National team this year, Emma Gordon, Aralyn Smith, and Alexandra Stephens, who all have a great chance to compete in Thailand later this on the National Canadian team.

Ken Gene, Stratford Dragon Boat Festival Coach and founder, runs the club all year round, where he offers indoor paddle machine practice and weight lifting to help paddlers through the winter months until they can get out on the Avon River in early April.

Aralyn Smith will be 17 this year and is trying out for this year's National team after making the team in years past. "She is a strong paddler and ranked number one in Canada juniors," states Gene.

"I started paddling because a family friend did it, and she loved it, so I wanted to try too," states Smith. "In 2019, I initially went to the tryouts for the national team just to gain experience, but

I kept doing really well and making it onto the next trial, so I ended up sticking with it."

Smith has been working year-round to build strength and work toward her goal of making the national team for 2023. "I just keep working at it and getting better."

Smith has tryouts throughout the year, competing against others across the country in September, December, and March and then the final tryout takes place in May in Montreal. "I've been doing really well; I became the top female junior, so I would say I've been doing pretty good at the tryouts."

This competitive sport dates back 2000 years and has roots in ancient Southern China. "It's so fun; you get to travel and meet new people from all over the world," states Smith.

Those interested in Dragon Boat racing can come to the water and try the sport anytime. Gene is an enthusiastic coach but also is very passionate about Dragon Boat racing and has built quite a group of passionate paddlers in Stratford.

Those wishing to follow along on the Junior Dragon Boat National Team or learn more about how they can get involved, can reach out to Ken Gene at the Stratford Dragon Boat Club.



TAKE IT AWAY

Aralyn Smith participating in a Dragon Boat Festival Race.

(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

Here for Now Theatre returns to open-air performances for Season of Mercy

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

A local independent theatre company will combine elements of its past two seasons together for its upcoming season.

Here for Now Theatre, which showcases new works, will return to outdoor performances in a tent outside of the Stratford Perth Museum. The 2021 season was the last time the company held open-air performances.

Fiona Mongillo, the artistic director of Here for Now Theatre, is looking forward to the new season and the return to outdoor performances. Each performance will be capped at about 60 people. The seating will be arranged so the audience is closer to the stage with a more intimate feel, reflective of the indoor 2022 season.

"It's going to be a really special one for sure," Mongillo said.

A March 1 press release announced the upcoming season will feature six one-act plays with five world premieres. The season opens with "The Myth of the Ostrich" (June 28 to July 15), followed by the world premieres of "Margaret Reid" (July 12 to July 29), "Frog Song" (July 26 to Aug. 12), "Life Without" (Aug. 9 to Aug.

28), "The Fox" (Aug. 23 to Sept. 9) and "Queen Maeve" (Sept. 6 to 23). All of the plays feature the theme of mercy.

"Mercy is this idea that we're all in the muck of our humanity," Mongillo said. "We're all doing the best we can. We're all

not doing perfectly, and so recognizing that other people are doing the best they can and trying to extend a little bit more compassion to each other - even if we have different political ideologies or different backgrounds or different understandings of what should be happening in the world."

Mongillo enjoys new work because of its reflection of current events. For example, the 2021 season of Here for Now Theatre showcased love stories. All of the stories were written during the height of the COVID-19 Pandemic, when people were longing for connection during isolation, restrictions, and lockdowns.

"There's just something so lovely about how present that theatre experience can be when the plays are brand new because they are sort of reflecting what's out in the ether," she said. They're reflecting how people are feeling anyway and what's going on in the collective, so I just think it's really fun and really exciting."

Mongillo added that with the Stratford Festival running large-scale productions, it makes more sense for Here for Now Theatre to focus on smaller,

independent works.

"I think in order for us to be in the ecosystem that makes a lot of sense in that context - doing new works that are really stripped down adds another tone or feeling to that creative atmosphere in Stratford."

The Season of Mercy will be the company's fourth annual season. Here for Now Theatre held productions sporadically with Mongillo as the sole-proprietor starting in 2012 up until its first full season in 2020. After Mongillo graduated from University of British Columbia, she wanted to create work opportunities for herself and her colleagues.

"A lot of really, really brilliant people who are incredibly talented go their entire lives without having careers in our industry in Canada. It happens all the time," she said. "I've watched it happen to people that I've graduated with out of theatre school who are absolutely geniuses and never ever work. I decided I didn't want to sit back and be at the whim of that and so I started producing theatre to work myself as an actor and to hire my friends and colleagues that I wanted to see working."

Mongillo also wanted to bring women-driven stories to the stage.

"I've always been interested in telling women's stories and having difficult women at the centre of narratives," she said. "That's just always been a passion of mine and so the theatre company ended up being a feminist theatre company because I was programming shows that I thought were interesting"

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Stratford Festival reflects on successful 2022 season, generating moderate surplus

The Stratford Festival held its annual general meeting on April 1st, celebrating the successes of the 2022 season. It announced a moderate surplus, as it exceeded attendance targets for its first fully indoor season since 2020.

"In 2022, the Festival celebrated its 70th season – seven decades of performances that have attracted more than 29 million visitors from around the world," said Executive Director Anita Gaffney. "With such an enduring track record of success, it's easy to forget that each season is a miracle. Since the early days, we have relied on three revenue pillars – ticket sales, donations and government support – together with the careful management of expenses to support the Festival financially. Not since the very first season in 1953 has our financial balance been as delicate as it is now, as we work to thrive once more in a world changed by the pandemic."

A noteworthy 325,524 people attended the Festival in 2022, nudging past the season goal of 320,000. The Meighen Forum added another 160 events to the season, including concerts, comedy, lectures, panel discussions and more, generating attendance of a further 12,000.

Strong sales, generous donations and extraordinary government support combined for total revenue of \$66.2 million. After expenses, the Festival posted a surplus of \$638,711. Contributions from donors totaled \$14.7 million, and the Endowment Foundation payout was \$3.2 million. Government contributions totaled more than \$13 million.

"The pandemic that closed our theatres for the better part of two seasons was a formidable enemy," said Artistic Director Antoni Cimolino. "Quite apart from the grievous toll it exacted on human life around the globe and the havoc it wreaked on our economies, it damaged us as a society. It isolated us, confining us to our homes and distancing us from each other—and not just physically. Psychologically and emotionally, it eroded the bonds of human connection, forcing us to turn more and more to social media, the growing power of which only exacerbated our divided condition."

"The whole point of theatre is to build community, to bring us together and create new understandings. That's why we've never needed theatre more than we did during the pandemic years – and that's why it was so exciting to be able at last to bring it back into our lives."

The AGM provided an opportunity to pause and look back at last season's accomplishments.

The new Tom Patterson Theatre was officially opened in 2022, a launch that had been delayed by the pandemic in 2020. With productions of Richard III, All's Well That Ends Well and Death and the King's Horseman, as well as a multitude of Meighen Forum offerings, this wonderful new venue proved to be every bit as versatile and as transformative as it had promised to be. It also delivered on its promise to draw audiences, with more than 64,000 tickets sold for performances there, 40% more

than in the last season in the old TPT in 2017.

This new, world-class venue has been honoured around the world, winning multiple architectural accolades.

The TPT alone had an estimated economic impact of \$19.6 million in 2022. The entire 2022 season is estimated to have generated an economic impact of \$87.9 million, almost 10 times that of the small, largely outdoor 2021 season, which generated \$8.9 million in economic activity.

Rounding out the 2022 playbill were Hamlet, Chicago and The Miser at the Festival Theatre, Little Women at the Avon, and Every Little Nookie, Hamlet-911 and 1939 at the Studio.

In total, there were 481 performances of the 10 productions on the Festival's four stages. Newcomers to the Festival accounted for 25% of total sales, up from 18% in 2019.

A commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion can be seen on stage, with such productions as Death and the King's Horseman and 1939, which featured culturally specific casting and stories that brought new insights and appreciation to existing audience of theatregoers, and also attracted new audiences. And the work of the talented and diverse acting company reached far beyond these titles to all of the 2022 productions: an excellent example of how EDI ideals can enrich art.

What happens on stage must be supported behind the scenes, and so the Festival introduced a number of initiatives to make it a more inclusive place. 2022 saw the creation of the First Nations Inuit Metis Circle to build community with Indigenous artists both within the Festival and across the country.

For audiences, the Festival introduced new forms of accessible pricing, including the pay-what-you-will program for designated performances, with prices starting at just \$10. It has addressed other barriers to attendance by offering such services as audio description and ASL performances.

People coming to work at the Festival and to visit this city need to feel – and be – welcome. So EDI work cannot stop at the theatre doors. The Festival is making significant strides with community outreach as it builds and diversifies its audiences.

This work also provides for a more inclusive student experience, which will be an important focus moving forward. Attendance by students for shows like Hamlet, 1939 and Chicago represented 6% of sales in 2022. That compares with student attendance representing 10% of sales in 2019. Education is seen as vital to the Festival's future and many initiatives are being put in place to bring back this important audience segment post-pandemic, including earlier performance times for some student matinees.

In addition to hosting visitors in person in Stratford, the Festival continues to invest in digital content for the subscription-based streaming platform Stratfest@Home. Six of the 2022 productions were filmed, in addition to a number of new pieces of original

content created especially for Stratfest@Home.

"It's easy to forget what an incredible leap forward we took in 2022," said Cimolino. "We celebrated our 70th season. We opened our new Tom Patterson Theatre. And we welcomed indoor audiences back into all our venues, for the first time in two years. It was truly a milestone season. Nevertheless, it remained a season of challenge and uncertainty. Cross-border travel was still problematic, and people were still very concerned about getting sick. The Omicron variant brought a new wave of infections,

and we had no idea how that situation was going to evolve. We had to figure out how to function—how to rehearse, how to perform, how to accommodate our audiences—within that unpredictable environment.

"We needed to take meaningful steps toward rebuilding our pre-pandemic momentum with work that would invite a broad audience, without exposing that audience – and ourselves – to risks that would undermine the Festival's whole future. Considering all that, I'd say the 2022 season was nothing short of miraculous."

Wellspring to host more creative workshops following positive feedback from members

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

After Wellspring held two creative workshops for their members, participants are looking for more.

Poet Heidi Sander ran a four-week poetry workshop and Vanessa De Groot, founder of Kind-HeARTed Studios ran a six-week art therapy workshop that received positive feedback.

"It was such great feedback that we decided to hold these two workshops again," Lisa Stacey, the manager of Wellspring Stratford, said.

Both classes had full groups of 10. The classes had a mix of cancer survivors, caretakers of someone with cancer, and those who lost someone to cancer. Stacey added that while the workshops are usually mostly women, a few men participated in the recent poetry and art therapy workshops.

Wellspring Stratford was closed or under tight COVID-19 restrictions for the past couple of years. The centre slowly reintroduced classes back, starting with a soft-launch featuring reiki and therapeutic touch in one-on-one sessions. Wellspring then held an art therapy workshop with De Groot and Kind-HeARTed Studio. The art studio ran workshops with Wellspring for a couple of years.

"It was a six-week workshop where people were just able to feel part of a group again, part of a community again after isolation for so long and what a wonderful way to do that with expression of art and being creative," Stacey said.

De Groot introduces different visual art formats like drawing, collage, and sculpture on a week-by-week basis to workshop participants. The last art therapy workshop went well and gave those participating a chance to express their emotions.

"We use art as a tool to explore various themes and everybody is at a different point within their journey," De Groot said. "What it does is creates a really valuable container to hold space and share and reflect what they've been through - what they're going

through - and it's really so supportive and beautiful to see how connection is formed through that."

Stacey and Sander met at the WordSung fundraiser at Revival House, where proceeds went towards Wellspring and L'Arche Stratford. Sander ran a contemporary and freeform poetry workshop.

"Heidi was just so lovely and so welcoming to the group," Stacey. "A lot of them had never wrote poetry before and by the end of the four weeks, people were writing during the week at home just on their own."

Wellspring's cause is important to Sander, who met many people on their cancer journey before running a workshop with the organization. The workshop touched Sander's heart.

"Within those few weeks we were together, we learned from each other," Sander said. "It was so powerful to see their writing develop and the sharing that came out of that was just a whole other level of the writing component itself."

Anyone can participate in the creative workshops and do not need previous experience. Stacey said some were intimidated to engage with either the craft of poetry or visual art at first, but were pleased with what they created.

"I think it's just taking that chance and taking that step through the door and coming in here to experience something new and knowing that there's a lot of people here that are in the same doubt that it's their first time coming here and experiencing something like this and that we're all in it together and it's such a very safe space here," she said.

Along with creative workshops, Wellspring Stratford runs aquafit classes with the Stratford YMCA, meditation, yoga, and online grief support.

The next art therapy workshop is expected to happen at the beginning of May and the next poetry workshop is expected to start at the beginning of June. To register, either call 519-271-2232 or email lisa@wellspringstratford.ca. To learn more about Wellspring Stratford, visit wellspring.ca/stratford.

Rent hits the stage in Stratford – first performance of the season!

The Stratford Festival's 2023 season began April 8th with *Rent* directed by Thom Allison led by Andrea Macasaet, Robert Markus and Kolton Stewart. Jonathan Larson's sensational rock musical is staged with heart and purpose at the iconic Festival Theatre.

Inspired by Puccini's opera *La Bohème* and set in Manhattan in the 1990s, *Rent* follows a group of young East Village artists, performers and philosophers as they struggle through the hardships of poverty, societal discord and the AIDS epidemic in the search for life, love and art. With a song list that includes the iconic "Seasons of Love," *Rent* tells a story as relevant today as when it took Broadway by storm more than 25 years ago.

"The community of characters in *Rent* fight and feud and laugh and love as any other family would," says Allison. "That is the magic that Jonathan Larson offers us. If we can sit with someone who seems completely different than us and understand – even just a little – that they are not that different from us, we make the universe a little cosier, a little less scary."

Rent features Andrea Macasaet as Mimi Marquez, Robert Markus as Mark Cohen, Kolton Stewart as Roger Davis, Jahlen Barnes as Benjamin Coffin III, Nestor Lozano Jr. as Angel Dumott Schunard, Erica Peck as Maureen Johnson, Lee Siegel as Tom Collins and Olivia Sinclair-Brisbane



RENT

Clockwise: Erica Peck, Nestor Lozano Jr., Andrea Macasaet, Kolton Stewart and Robert Markus.

(TED BELTON PHOTO)

as Joanne Jefferson with Gabriel Antonacci, Noah Beemer, Malinda Carroll, Celeste Catena, Christine Desjardins, Nick Dolan, Kelly Holiff, Matthew Joseph, Masini McDermott, Danielle Verayo, Alex Wierzbicki and Travae Williams.

This all-new production is choreographed by Marc Kimelman, making his much-awaited return to Stratford and the Festival for his fifth season. Allison and Kimelman are joined by Music Director Franklin Brasz, Set Designer Brandon Kleiman, Costume Designer Ming Wong, Lighting Designer Michael Walton, Projection Designer Corwin Ferguson and Sound Designer Joshua D. Reid.

Rent has its official opening on June 2 and runs until October 28 in the Festival Theatre. Tickets are available at stratfordfestival.ca or by calling 1.800.567.1600.

The 2023 season also features *King Lear*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Les Belles-Soeurs*, *Monty Python's Spamalot*, *A Wrinkle in Time*, *Frankenstein Revived*, *Grand Magic*, *Richard II*, *Wedding Band*, *Casey and Diana*, *Women of the Fur Trade* and *Love's Labour's Lost*. For more information, visit stratfordfestival.ca.

Production Co-Sponsor is RBC.

Production support is generously provided by the David & Amy Fulton Foundation.

Support for the 2023 season of the Festival Theatre is generously provided by Daniel Bernstein & Claire Foerster.

Off the Wall (OTW) Receives a \$29,000 Resilient Communities Fund Grant

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

Bob Parker, Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) member and Stratford resident, awarded Off the Wall art group a \$29,000 resilient community fund grant on March 17th – St. Patrick's Day.

Over the last 40 years, The Ontario Trillium Foundation has invested nearly \$209 million into 2,042 community projects and partnerships.

The Off the Wall art group celebrated with a St. Patrick's Day dance which doubled as a celebration of the grant receipt.

Perth-Wellington MPP Matthew Rae made an appearance at the event and congratulated the Off the Wall art group on the work being done since receiving the funds. "I look forward to seeing what [Off the Wall] will accomplish in the future; it's wonderful to be here, and Happy St. Patrick's Day."

Funds from the grant are being used to help OTW create an outdoor teaching space and purchase needed outdoor furniture, hire a Health and Safety Coordinator and buy health and safety equipment and supplies to benefit participants and staff.

"This grant will support our Health and Safety program, both inside the classrooms and outdoors in our fresh

air teaching space," said OTW Board Co-Chair Michele Boniface. "We've learned so much already about how to leverage our strengths and deliver programs when the odds were against us."

For 19 seasons, Off the Wall art group has attracted students of all ages from all over the world interested in a diverse range of courses ranging from set design and prop building to artistic welding and shoemaking.

The group helps build confidence in their students and paves the way for them to enter theatre arts as set designers and prop builders if they choose. Many success stories have come from the training at Off the Wall, and students repeatedly return to build on their knowledge of the theatre arts.

With a range of talented instructors, the group offers bespoke training that cannot be found anywhere else, "Many of the instructors are behind-the-scenes artists who help stage the large and complex productions at the Stratford Festival." States Boniface.

Boniface notes that the upcoming summer will see OTW restored to a full roster of theatre production arts courses and will allow for more students to enjoy a safe working environment with outdoor space and proper health and safety measures. To learn more, visit www.otf.ca.



OFF THE WALL

Bob Parker, Ontario Trillium Foundation representative; Michele Boniface, OTW Board Co-Chair; and Mathew Rae, Perth-Wellington MPP.

(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

Creator's Collective hosts a "no theme" art show at the University of Waterloo, Stratford campus

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

The Creator's Collective attracted University of Waterloo students and those from across Stratford to their annual Art Show in March.

The exhibition featured a wide range of works from student artists, all demonstrating the collective's dedication to exploring new and innovative approaches to art. The art was hung through the campus rooms and the University campus' bright hallways.

The Creator's Collective is a student-run initiative to empower and support our creative communities at the University of Waterloo.

The Collective was founded to help showcase student portfolios and help build confidence once graduates enter the working world. Sam Woo, gallery director and student of UofW, states that for her, it's something she wants to be able to look back on and help build her confidence in her future career. "This is something that



I put together that really passionate about, and I can be proud of."

The members of the Creator's Collective are all passionate about art and strive to inspire others to appreciate and engage with art in their daily lives.

The art show at the University of Waterloo's Stratford campus was an excellent opportunity for the public to experience the collective's artwork firsthand.

The art show event attracted Stratford residents and students from the Waterloo

campus. "We had students from Systems Design Engineering, and then there's also some who came from legal studies to see the art show," said Woo.

Woo is currently a third-year Global Business and Digital Arts (GBDA) student and has also been leading the program. "I'm learning a lot of basic things, like planning, budgeting and funding," she says about her work bringing the event together.

The Global Business and Digital Arts Program, GBDA, is run through the University of Waterloo at the Waterloo and Stratford campuses. It's a multidisciplinary program that can lead to work in web design, graphic design, videography or photography and is mainly run out of the Stratford Campus.

The opportunity for this group of students to showcase their work and promote the GBDA program was a great opportunity for the community to learn more about the program and see first hand what is happening at the University of Waterloo, Stratford campus.

Perth County Stewardship Program receives \$25,000

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

The Perth County Stewardship Program was approved for a \$25,000 budget for developing a Clean Water Project in Perth County. The County's corporate strategic plan guides the program.

Local farm consultant and freelance project manager Mel Luymes was hired as project lead and has headed the program by gaining insight into what is important to the community. She has led sessions to hear from rural and city community members across Perth County to better understand what is important to the folks that live in Perth County.

The program considered a broader scope of environmental concerns beyond clean water, including stewardship activities, such as planting trees and waste runoff.

Community engagement is vital to the success of the program, and Luymes states she's "heard from over 200 people and has had over 40 people at 5 different input sessions" to learn more and understand what the community needs and wants to help with local environmental impact.

"The goal [of the project] is to have a positive impact on the environment in Perth County," states Luymes.

The Stewardship Program takes into consideration the top concerns of landowners and what they believe to be the most pressing concerns in the current environmental state of Perth County.

"Across the board, there is a shared concern for preserving and improving the environment here in this place we call home," Luymes states.

The feedback thus far has been regarding concerns regarding loss of farmland due to urban sprawl, litter and garbage alongside the roads and a lack of household composting programs in the area. The team also heard from farmers concerned about soil erosion and manure management, along with concerns about salt use on roads in the winter and the capacity of Perth County sewage treatment plants.

The biggest and most pressing issue noted by community members was the lack of tree coverage in Perth County. People are concerned about dying ash trees and invasive species that are a health risk for native trees.

The information collected by Luymes and her team will be directed to the county's agricultural group. Then the recommendations will be brought to the city council for final assessments and votes.

"The main concern at this point is the cost," Luymes states. The program will be designed with cost in mind and set up to address all concerns by starting small and working toward future growth. They are hoping to slowly build upon the team they currently have by looking to implement grant writers and stewardship advisory services to help grow a sustainable system and increase financing for the future of the program.

Luymes sees a promising future for Perth County Stewardship, "I've seen there is an opportunity to build a stronger connection between farmers, rural and urban residents to learn more about stewardship and agriculture especially."

The project website is www.perthcounty.ca/stewardship. Those interested in learning more can subscribe to the page and receive updates.

STRATFORD & DISTRICT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

OUR 2023 BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS NOMINEES

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- Downtown Stratford Business Improvement Area (BIA)
- Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth
- St. Marys Healthcare Foundation
- Stratford Perth Humane Society
- The Centre for Employment & Learning Stratford (Avon Maitland District School Board)
- United Way Perth-Huron

Professional

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- GRIT Engineering Inc.
- Heaton Health, Beauty and Wellness
- James A. Rutherford Funeral Home / Rutherford Cremation & Funeral Services

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- Pawsitive Difference Professional Pet Care
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- Stratford Cygnet Cooperative Pre-school
- Stratford Dog Walkers
- Town Crier Marketing

Hospitality

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- Broken Rail Brewing
- El Cactus Taco Shop
- Shakespeare Brewing Company
- The Parlour Inn

Innovation

- Perth County Ingredients inc.
- EVERMORE Compassionate Pet Aftercare
- GreenSeal Cannabis Co.
- Stratford Perth Museum
- Stratford Summer Music

Entrepreneur

- Studio Q Designs Inc.
- Black Creek Mobile Veterinary Services
- Ivy Rose Creative
- Redhot Creative
- Revival by Martin & Co
- Whiter Smiles Dental Hygiene Clinic
- Your Way to Play Ltd.

Retail

- The Little Shed Flower Company
- Ande Store Inc.
- Betty's Bookshelf
- Got it Made
- Little Leaf Cannabis Co. Inc.
- Lyric Flowers
- Perth County Moto
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Let Me Introduce...

Terry Griggs. Nine Books Published and Counting!

APRIL TAYLOR

Times Contributor

Like a snowflake... no two people are identical. Every one of us has an interesting story, we all have thoughts, ideas and life experiences that create an individual character. Isn't that marvelous! All 8 billion of us on this planet and no two of us are the same. But what we all share is the need to be loved, accepted, and valued for who we are. So, why is there so much violence and prejudice? In my humble opinion, I think it's fear. Fear of the unknown and our own personal insecurities. Getting to know one another and celebrating our differences can change this.

When I pitched the idea for this column to the editor of this paper, my idea was to bring the community together by introducing you to some interesting folks in our city. There's evidence that getting to know our neighbors and feeling a sense of community has oodles of health benefits, such as improved heart health, lessened anxiety and depression, and improved cognitive ability.

Now let me introduce you to someone I met at work and who I now would call a friend. Terry Griggs: author of nine books, including a few novels for younger readers, plus a couple of chapbooks, and a number of stories that have appeared in anthologies and literary magazines.

Have you ever thought about writing a

book? Well, it's a heck of a lot more difficult than it appears. One day Terry was in the shop, and I said to her, "I have the best first line for a book." Then we laughed together when I told her I had no idea what to do next. Imagine how exciting it must be to see the book that you have written displayed in a bookstore?

What we the reader don't see is the endless hours... heck, the endless months of research, writing and editing that goes into it before it reaches our hands.

Terry moved to Stratford with her husband David and son Sandy from Manitoulin Island about 20 years ago. David was



a film librarian and taught film at Western and now you can find him working at the liquor store and Sandy is an incredible illustrator and a budding philosopher.

I have read some of Terry's work. She has a unique style; her use of the language is beautiful, poetic as if every word has been specially chosen, slowly considered like a sommelier

rolls the wine on his tongue appraising every flavor. Terry hand selects every word. For example, I asked her, "What attracted you to writing as a career?" Her answer...

"My interest in writing was cumulative, sort of like an infection that burbles away quietly in one's bloodstream, then at some point becomes terminal. There's no escape. As a child, I may have picked up the bug from Lewis Carroll, whose Alice books were a thrilling discovery for me. So funny and verbally rich. Or, who knows, perhaps a fascination with words and storytelling is simply a kink in one's genetic package that gets teased out somewhere along the line."

"Sort of like and infection that burbles away quietly in one's bloodstream." Isn't that brilliant? It's impossible to read that sentence and not feel how much writing is just part of who she is.

The Early Days:

Terry grew up outside of Little Current, Manitoulin Island where her parents owned a tourist camp. Eventually, they sold, leaving her childhood paradise behind, and moved down to Southern Ontario. After high school, Terry set out to collect some life experience and inspiration and traveled to Europe and Morocco before attending UWO and earning a couple of degrees in English Literature. More importantly, she met lots of writers and professors with published creative works, fiction writers and poets who came from all over the country to give readings. "Which led to parties! Writers do like to party. Seemed like a perfect life to me," says Terry. Sounds perfect to me too.

"I love the freedom that comes with a writing life—I am the boss! And the plunge into deeper waters, as it were, exploring the undercurrents of meaning and emotion that flow through peoples' lives. It's really interesting, too, to work with the language we all share and understand in such a way that it can be almost like speaking in a different tongue."

What is Terry Working on Now?

She has recently completed a novel titled, so far, *Contrariwise*, that's set in Sixties Yorkville. It's stylistically different from her other novels, with short concise chapters, a form that has become somewhat popular lately. *"You might call it a meta-mystery, formally irreverent, basically turning the genre on its head. I'm thinking about self-publishing this one, which would be something new for me. It might work out. Or not."* says Terry. I'd like to read this one; the 60's in those hippy days in Yorkville were an interesting time.

Now that leads us to the difficult bit about being a writer. Negotiating deals with publishers, editors, and agents. Everyone wants to put in their two cents of how things should go. Often the process goes smoothly but sometimes not so much. Promoting and touring the book can be fun but also can be grueling, hoping people will show up for readings and of course selling, and oh, the reviews. As Terry says, "Reviews follow, good or ill. I've been fairly lucky with those, but sometimes you get a real stinker." Not to mention working on a manuscript for months or sometimes even years only to have it rejected by a publisher. I am sure every writer has a few lost projects that never saw the light of day.

Life's Delights:

It's often easier to focus on the negative that life throws at us, but we have all had wins and losses along the way. I like to ask people about their wins. I asked Terry what she is most proud of regarding her career. "What am I most proud of? Hmm. There have been some good moments, for sure. My very first book, *Quickening*, was nominated for a Governor General's Award and that was a real thrill because it was so unexpected and also a big deal at the time. I didn't win, but hey, Margaret Atwood was on the shortlist too and she didn't win, either."

"Just to mention something I find pretty cool... a few years back Project Bookmark Canada erected a plaque in Owen Sound inscribed with a quote from my novel Rogues' Wedding—later republished as The Iconoclast's Journal—on the very spot by the town docks where one of my main characters, in 1898, accidentally boards an ill-fated ship. This ongoing project is such a wonderful way of honoring Canadian literature and place. There are now 29 such plaques ranging across the country. Your readers can check them out at projectbookmarkcanada.ca."

Where can You Find Terry's Books?

Another nice thing Stratford has to offer is our wonderful local bookstore Fanfare Books. They sell Book Titles from many of our local writers and will order anything you wish; even offering a discount for book clubs. I have seen some of Terry's books there. She is also available at Amazon, Thrift Books, and the publishing house Biblioasis sells some of her books from its website, as does The Porcupine's Quill. Check out the list of Terry's Books at Good Reads.



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UNTIL SOON. LIVE WELL: Blink of an eye



STUART LENDER

Times Contributor

It happened around 1982 for the first time. Then again, in 2009. Only twice in my lifetime. Maybe there will be more. The events stayed with me and so I remember them well. Both times, grace filled. I remember the cavernous silence between words, the echo of them in my head, unsure if they were mine. Yes, only mine – but as if thrown from the throat of some distant expanse I felt growing in the room. Thought... silence... words... silence. An immense sky of memory lifting itself up into the sheltering stillness above the bed.

And I didn't think of time or place or the events of the day. I was emptied and filled at once, over and over and over again with the moments in front of me; time expanding out then slingshot back to the breathing. Always the breathing. I watched for the chest, rising and falling. I watched for it, taught and constricted. I held my own breath between the in and the out of the movement, aghast at the gap of motionless air. How long? How long between the holding... the letting go. Holding... letting go.

There are three things adjusting your awareness at a time of someone's dying. Three things present in the bubble of the room. Memory, presence and words. It's the words that ground you whether spoken in a whisper or heard through the mind's great voice. Presence floats and focuses on the rising and the falling of the blanket, the pattern of the carpet, the light filtered through the curtain, the freckle perhaps, at the base of the chin that you never noticed before. And memory, that squeezes under the closed door of the room

and into that presence, taking you away momentarily, from the waiting.

An entire lifetime can be lived out in the room. And when you enter that space, you want to enter clean. But you never do. You bring in the threads of your own life to the occasion. The costume of who you are in the world, that the one in the bed is in the process of leaving behind; the clothes they have shed lying at your feet. You can't help it. It's not your fault. There are far too many roles you are still playing, far too much clothing to drape yourself in. But at some point in the proceedings, you wish, you pray, you long to be naked. You hope for clarity. Please, let them know who I am and how I have loved them. Let the reality of what matters wash over me, at least a little; their reality - so that when I walk back out through the door, I walk out more alive, more grateful, more aware of the frail and removable skin.

I know the sanctity of the room. Holier than a church. Limitless sky and black earth. Fragile firmament and rich soil. No real

walls to speak of in the mind. No rules. And maybe even the sound of trumpets, albeit only in the head, that proclaim to the new ground, the new frontier, that he/she is dying. Prepare to receive them! While time is a ball that bounces in and out of questionable moments of now?... now?... now? The blink of an eye where the past is present, the present has passed, and the future is forever coming.

It's that room that informs me of my freedom. The amount of love possible. The hopefulness of human beings to change the décor of the spaces they find themselves in, change the helplessness of despair. It's the room I walk out of that allows me to walk into the world fresh. It's the ghosts in the rooms I've left behind, the loved one's spectres, free and flying; and my own, still bound – that opens fissures of possibility to make the world I walk through here on this earth, more welcoming.

Hundreds of thousands of rooms and ghosts; and I have been in and with two of them. And how many, I wonder, who were torn from

the fabric, have never set foot in one of them? The sanctity of their personal passages needing to be entreated to love alone without a physical presence watching over them. Just a sense of love. Deep, yet incomplete.

And anyway - this love that exists in the ephemeral span of a lifetime, how long should it last? It's never undone. Never completed, even upon departure. That is what is to be understood; there's always some left behind to pay forward to those just like us – namely those who will die; namely, everyone. And for those we cannot know, in faraway lands, in all the neighbouring houses, all of us out on the street - those who will, despite all coverings, also shed their clothes... it is for their sake and ours too, that we must care enough to imagine each other's lives.

UNTIL SOON. LIVE WELL.

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

MUSINGS: Roses are red?



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 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.

April is **National Poetry Month** and there are a number of exciting events in Perth County, many of them free. These are for those who write poems, like to hear or read poems, or are just curious about poetry. We hope you will join us or perhaps even attempt a verse or two yourself!

In Stratford, there is a Poetry Stratford Live! event featuring Kitchener spoken word poet Arletta Murray on **April 21st**, 6:30 pm at Brch & Wyn Coffee Shop and Wine Bar, 245 Downie Street. There is an open mike portion

if you would like to read some of your own poetry – or you can simply order something to eat or drink, sit back, and enjoy! Admission is free but seating is limited so be sure to register early by emailing me at hertzbergerhrc@gmail.com. Please let me know if you would like to participate in the open mike session or just listen to the poetry readings.

In St. Marys, there are number of public events on offer.

- **Friday April 14**, 7 - 9pm; Friendship Centre in the PRC, 319 James St S: Reading with projected photos from 'The Minimalist Eye', refreshments, followed by panel discussion, hosted by The St. Marys Library. Tickets available in advance from the library or at the door if there are still seats available.

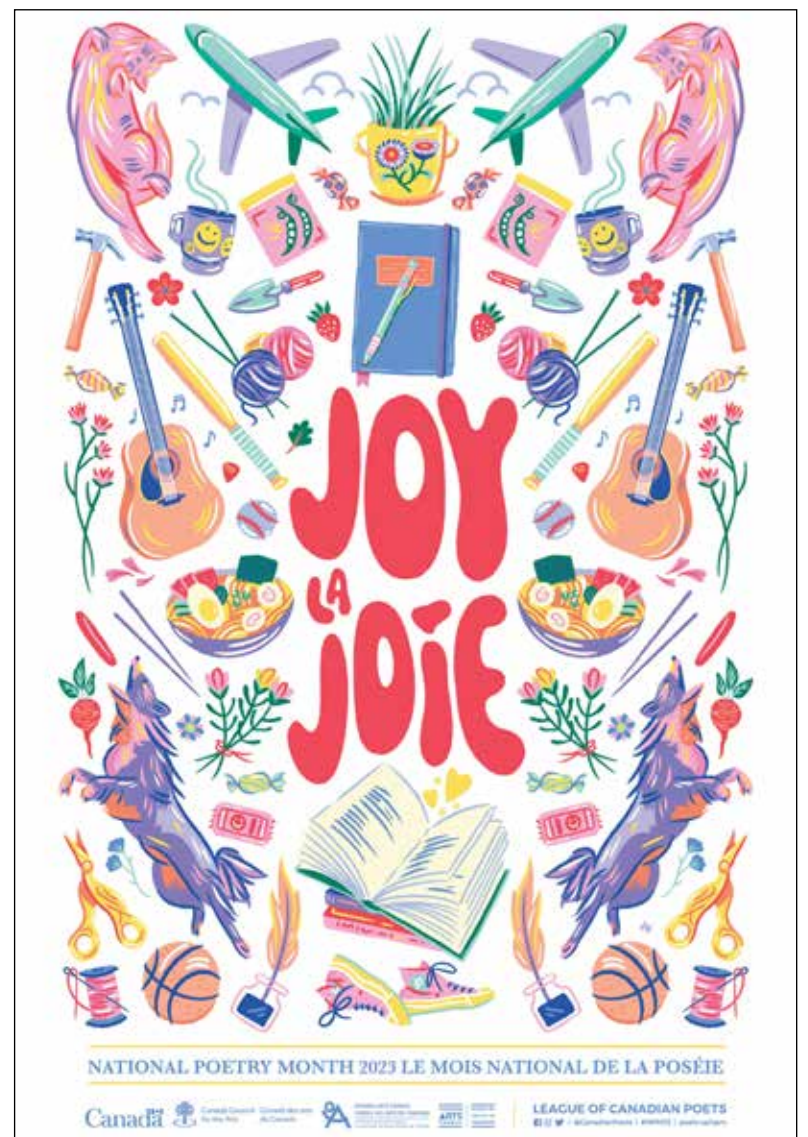
- **Saturday April 22**, 1.30 - 3.30 pm; St Marys Library Garden, Queen St. E: Poetry Busking - Members of The St. Marys Poetry Circle read their favourite poems - classics and moderns, including poems which will appeal to children. Drop a coin in the hat for St. Marys Public Library Childrens' programs.

- **Saturday, April 29**. Riverwalk Commons Event 84, Water St S, St. Marys: Lunch with the Poets. 1pm -3pm Food, joy & spontaneous poetry \$45. Tickets from rwcommons.com

Mark Hertzberger is a former social services supervisor, hu-

man 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.



Sprinting into Spring



IRENE ROTH

Times Freelance Columnist

Spring is often associated with hopefulness because it is a time of renewal and new beginnings. After a long, cold winter, the arrival of spring brings warmer temperatures, longer days, and the re-emergence of plants and animals from their winter slumber.

The sight of new growth, such

as buds on trees and flowers pushing up through the ground, can be a powerful symbol of hope and the promise of new life. Spring also represents a time of change and transformation, as the world around us shifts from the cold and dark of winter to the warmth and light of spring.

Additionally, spring is a time for celebration, with holidays such as Easter and Passover that are associated with rebirth and renewal. All these factors combine to create a sense of hope and optimism that is often associated with the arrival of spring.

Here are some tips to help you sprint into spring and make it your best ever!

Set Goals

Take some time to reflect on what you want to achieve this spring, and set specific, measurable goals to help you get there.

Whether it's improving your fitness, learning a new skill, or making a positive change in your life, having clear goals can help you stay focused and motivated.

Get Outside

As the weather gets warmer and the days get longer, try to spend more time outside. Whether it's taking a walk in the park, going for a hike, or simply sitting outside and enjoying the sunshine, getting some fresh air and vitamin D can do wonders for your mood and energy levels.

Practice Self-Care

Make time for self-care activities that help you feel refreshed and rejuvenated. This could include things like getting a massage, taking a relaxing bath, or simply spending some time alone to read or meditate.

Declutter and Organize

Use the season of spring cleaning to declutter your home

and organize your space. Clearing out clutter and creating a more organized living space can help reduce stress and increase productivity.

Try Something New

Use the spring season as an opportunity to try something new and step out of your comfort zone. Whether it's trying a new hobby, taking a class, or making new friends, embracing new experiences can help you grow and develop as a person.

Practice Gratitude

Spring is a season of renewal and growth, making it a perfect time to focus on gratitude and positivity. Take time each day to reflect on the things in your life that you're grateful for, and focus on the positive aspects of your life rather than dwelling on the negative.

Plan a Springtime Adventure

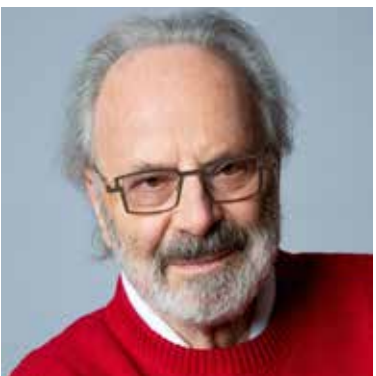
Whether it's a weekend trip to a nearby city, a camping trip, or a day trip to a nearby beach, planning a springtime adventure can help you break out of your routine and create new memories.

Remember, the key to sprinting into spring is to focus on personal growth, renewal, and positive change. By setting goals, getting outside, practicing self-care, decluttering, and trying something new, you can make the most of this exciting season and achieve your full potential.

As I look out today, we are experiencing a throw back to the winter season. But I know in my heart and soul that soon we will have warm and sunnier days.

So, starting today, put a spring in your step because its time to sprint into spring!

PUSHING BOUNDARIES: Loneliness Is Failed Solitude: Meditation as a Way to Personal and Social Transformation



THOMAS R VERNY MD

Times Contributor

How do we counteract the effects of stress on our existence at the molecular level? What are the concrete things we can do to actively promote more favorable gene expression, particularly in the immune system?

One possible answer, as Steve Cole, professor of medicine, psychiatry, and biobehavioral sciences at the UCLA School of Medicine has shown, is through mind-body practices like meditation. Cole's research has linked meditation to higher antibody production, reduced negative inflammatory activity, increased positive antiviral response, and improved function of specific strains of immune cells.

Through a series of studies, Nobel laureate Elizabeth Blackburn, a biochemist at the University of California, San Francisco, and her colleague, psychiatrist Elissa Epel, found that meditation could affect the ends of DNA known as the telomeres, which act as protective caps for genes. Once a cell's DNA loses its telomere

it can no longer divide and dies. Massive cell death brings about aging. Telomeres, like immune cells, respond to emotions. Negative emotions shorten telomeres, while happy feelings and activities that promote relaxation, like meditation, help to maintain them.

I recently spoke to Fr. Laurence Freeman OSB, Director of the World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM). Freeman meditates four times a day. Meditation is central and foundational to his life. He recommends that people meditate twice a day, morning and evening, which has a transformative effect on our sense of time and, and our way of living. One can meditate by oneself or within a community, Freeman's preference.

Meditation is a very simple practice. Many people, when they first begin, feel that they don't have time to meditate. But the time that they give to meditation comes back. It pays to be patient.

Usually, when you meditate, you sit down - you sit still, you breathe normally, and you close your eyes. And then you begin to repeat a word, or mantra, continuously, faithfully during the time of the meditation. In the beginning, you may find yourself getting distracted from saying the mantra and you start daydreaming, falling asleep, fantasizing, or chewing over your problems and anxieties. As soon as you realize this has happened, you drop the thought. And you return to the mantra.

The mantra over time, gently but very effectively, with regular practice, takes you as it were, from the head to the heart. And by heart, I don't mean just our emotional center. The heart, in the mystical tradition, is the spiritual point, a center of integration. In the heart, we find our essential wholeness.

Choosing the word for a mantra, a word that you focus on while meditating, is important. The mantra is usually a sacred word or a sacred phrase. This method of meditation is universally expressed in different ways, but essentially the same practice in all the major religious and spiritual traditions is not to give you something to think about. Quite the reverse. Its purpose is to lay aside your thoughts.

Freeman suggests the word maranasa made up of four syllables ma ra na sa as a mantra. In the Christian tradition, it means Come, Lord and is considered the oldest Christian prayer in the language Jesus spoke (Aramaic). But it also is fairly universal, because the syllables that you find in ma ra na sa is what the Indian tradition calls seed syllables that have a calming effect on the mind. And the four syllables also mean that you can say the mantra in rhythm with your breath. As you meditate, the breath becomes slower. And you find that you're saying the mantra more gently and subtly, and listening to it. And eventually, it may lead you into silence, complete silence. But by

silence, I don't mean just feeling quiet and calm, which is a good thing. But also, by silence, I mean a place without thought or self-reflection.

And the interesting discovery is that when we enter solitude, for example, in the time of meditation, we leave images and conversations with ourselves behind then we find ourselves more and more deeply in this solitude. And the curious and wonderful discovery is that meditation leads us to a much deeper and richer sense of relationship with others.

Solitude is the cure for loneliness. Loneliness is a failed solitude. It's the failure or the inability to really be oneself and accept oneself in one's uniqueness. We embrace our own uniqueness by disregarding images, conversations with ourselves, or problem-solving as they arise.

We have this very Western attitude to be active, to do something, anything but to be still. Doing nothing is often considered passive, vulnerable, and accepting victimhood. With meditation, we need to focus on doing nothing, on the power of silence. Although it appears that meditation does nothing, the opposite is true. Meditation changes the meditator and changes us. By changing ourselves, we change others and the world. By focusing on silence in meditation, we can change our perspective.

Doing nothing, therefore, does produce results: it heals the wounds of division within ourselves. This is where we need to

start. Doing nothing. Being rather than doing.

After continued practice, meditation may take us beyond the ego to what some call the spirit or the self. And this is where we really enter into a kind of embodied transcendence grounded in our own reality and reality itself.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Meditation is a very simple practice, and choosing the right mantra is essential.

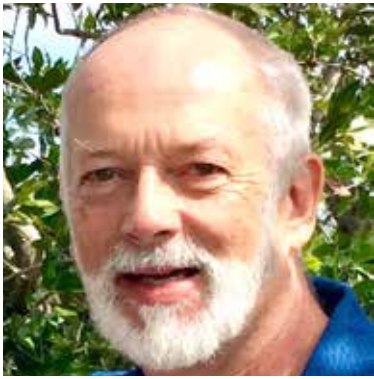
- The mantra has this gift of very gently and naturally, taking us into our hearts, the center of wholeness.

- One of the fruits of the practice of meditation is to discover that we are living with an embodied mind.

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

In Pushing Boundaries, Dr. Verny will report on pioneering research and breakthrough discoveries in science and the arts as they impact our lives. He will try to address the question of readers everywhere, "Why should I care, of what value is this to me?"

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: A Nova Scotia golf getaway off the beaten track



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Contributor

Listen... do you hear that? It's the sound of moaning and gnashing of teeth, as golfers wait impatiently for the opening of golf season! Soon, it will be replaced by the sound of breaking hearts – and the smashing of drivers – as golfers realize that all of their hopes for a better game, this year, have once again been shanked into the underbrush.

I can personally attest to this, as a dedicated and fairly incompetent golfer.

The bottom line is, golf season is almost upon us. Some courses may already be open. And many golfers will be planning a buddies' golf get-away. Some will dream of iconic courses Ireland or England; others will look within the borders of this country. Many will say the words "Cape Breton", with a certain reverential tone, but a simultaneous concern for the balance on their credit cards.

Well, if you are thinking "golf in Nova Scotia", I have a suggestion – or three, to be precise. There is no doubt that the Cape Breton courses deserve their well-earned reputations. But last year, I played some really interesting golf courses at the



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

A display of heritage golf clubs at West Pubnico golf course.

opposite end of the province – less expensive and welcoming clubs in the Yarmouth and Acadian Shores region. They ranged from the West Pubnico Golf Club, a real bargain at about \$35 for 18 holes, to the charming Clare Golf & Country Club (weekday green fees, \$42 for 18), to the iconic Digby Pines, where 18 costs between \$70 and \$85, but where you can also stay in a beautiful, heritage inn with terrific cuisine.

All three courses are worth playing. West Pubnico is a municipal course in very good shape. Water is a factor on 10 of

the 18 holes, clear evidence of the amount of thought and planning that went into the course design. That amount of thought is also reflected in the challenging greens – and by challenging, I mean "devilish", at times.

A real highlight is the island green on the 15th hole.

But what struck me most about West Pubnico was the friendliness and hospitality offered by staff members and local golfers alike. In the clubhouse, in the typical bin of used clubs for sale, was an ancient fairway wood. I commented on its heritage and the manager immediately sug-

gested I take it out and have fun with it on my round. Which I did – and it did not improve my game one whit.

One other amenity intrigued me – West Pubnico players are given a very handy, 48-page course guide, with illustrations of every hole and spaces for player's notes. That's a bonus that would usually be associated with courses that cost more like two hundred bucks a round.

Clare Golf & Country Club is a fine course, and an obvious bargain. The layout is good – the club has hosted several major provincial championships. Clare was founded 50 years ago, but retains a focus on continual improvements to its facilities (like the up to date clubhouse) and to the course itself. An interesting side note is that, being in the heart of Acadian Nova Scotia, everything at Clare is thoroughly bilingual – English and Acadian French.

Clare plays 6102 yards from the back tees; 5415 from the reds. As an avid but less than brilliant golfer, I found that the course plays long – so swallow your pride, and enjoy 18 from the red tees.

And speaking of enjoyment – this is Acadian Nova Scotia, so the cuisine in the clubhouse is terrific; seafood chowder (lobster, scallop, haddock and shrimp), lobster poutine, and clam burgers are on the menu, and should be on your plate at the 19th hole. Enjoyed with, of course, Clare's house brand of cream ale.

Digby Pines is admittedly the jewel in south-west Nova Scotia. This is a Stanley Thompson course, designed prolific Canadian course designer who also did Banff Springs, Cape Bre-

ton's Highland Links – and Westmount, in Kitchener-Waterloo. But the secret to Digby Pines is, no one has messed with the design since Thompson first began to build it in 1929. It is a beautiful, pristine course – challenging with the usual Thompson touches that create undulating fairways and subtly maddening greens.

There have been plenty of tournaments at Digby Pines, attracting top golfers, but undoubtedly the best-known fan of the course was baseball legend Babe Ruth; the story of the Babe connection is proudly displayed in the lobby of the resort.

In addition to playing the course, I had the opportunity to stay at the Digby Pines Resort. It's a classic – guest rooms, Churchill's Restaurant, and comfortable and lounges are all in a Norman-style chateau built circa 1929, and there are also Maritime cottages around the grounds.

Even if you're not a golfer – although, why not? – Digby Pines is an attractive destination, replete with heritage, yet boasting amenities like a modern spa, superb – I mean superb! – cuisine, and easy access to all of the fascinating sights in south-west Nova Scotia.

And for golfers looking for something good, off the beaten track, and a genuine bargain, you could not do better than to plan a golf getaway in this beautiful and culturally diverse part of our country.

Tell 'em Paul sent you. And that he's sorry about all the divots.

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



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

The rolling fairways at Clare.



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

West Pubnico proudly flies the Canadian flag, the Nova Scotia flag, and the Acadian flag.

Under the spotlight: Public issue, Private view



JULIA SCHNEIDER

Times Contributor

Medical care is a great concern in Ontario, and Canada generally. In the past few years, an already overtaxed system of medical services has been besieged by pandemic pressures and demands that have left hospitals understaffed and scheduled operations alarmingly delayed.

That being the case, I looked forward to my pending hip operation with some trepidation. Along with knee surgery and cataracts, Premier Doug Ford has proposed that hip surgeries could be transferred to privately managed clinics to ease the load on the public system. Though common, these

operations do still have risks, and no one likes to think they are getting less than expert care. What was I in for in these uncertain times in which a postponement or even a cancellation was possible? What would I experience at Stratford General Hospital, where surgeries continue to take place?

My experience with osteoarthritis in my left hip goes way back to 2011 and before. That is when I was teaching at an international school in China and the medical insurance there covered an MRI at a local hospital.

"You need to go home and have an operation," I was told at that time, "the sooner the better."

That didn't happen. I left China a year after that pronouncement and got around on my hip for the next eight years without mishap at jobs in Brampton, Mongolia and, most recently, a reserve school in northwestern Ontario. After arriving back in Stratford in 2020, however, my hip's deterioration seemed to accelerate and what had formerly been a pronounced limp turned into a perennially

gimpy leg that seriously impaired my mobility. I asked my family doctor about this – I am very lucky to have one, because 6.5 million people in Canada do not -- and was sent for an interview process that led to a referral to Dr. James Guy, one of three orthopedic surgeons in Stratford.

My first meeting with Dr. Guy took place in his office in February 2022. His assessment confirmed that neither drugs, nor physio nor any other therapy was going to give me the relief and mobility I needed. On leaving his office his nurse told me I would be contacted in 6-18 months with a date for surgery.

The first call came in October, for a date in November. I had fractured my right elbow in September, however, and couldn't deal with two problem limbs at once, so I needed to postpone the operation. The second call came in December for an operation on January 4 for which I was now more than ready. I arranged for care for my pet and a respite stay following my surgery (rec-

ommended for those who have no one at home to help with their recovery), and mentally prepared for surgery right after New Years.

On January 4, I arrived at SGH. By 11:30 I was in the operating intro area. I was asked basic questions - my name, my next-of-kin, and which hip was being operated on - and then prepared for my 12:30 appearance in the operating room.

Two hours later I woke up. There were bright lights shining from a constellation of them above where I lay; they were shining on me, the star of the show, and yet I hadn't done a thing. Even in my post-operative state I knew the credit belonged to my team in the operating room; they were the ones who deserved the credit, not me.

It was 4 p.m. when I was wheeled out of the recovery room. I stayed overnight in the hospital's post-surgical unit, where the staff also impressed me with their care before I left the hospital the next day as I began the road to successful healing.

When I think of my experience

with the public system responsible for my operation, I wonder how a private clinic could have done it. How would it handle my care? Would I have more out-of-pocket expenses (my main one was for post-surgical respite care)? How could they duplicate the care I got from the team of specialists at SGH? Those who advocate for private care suggest using underworked doctors to take up the slack in the current crisis, but current estimates say 12,000 hip replacements were postponed during the pandemic and no orthopedic surgeon in Stratford is underworked. Where would additional surgeons come from?

Many questions arise about the government's ideas about how to fix the stress on the medical system. Some, like the more effective use of pharmacists and nurse practitioners, certainly make sense. But those related to hip and knee replacements certainly do not and, from my perspective, would be impossible and perhaps even dangerous to implement.



SEEKING SUSTAINABILITY

Re-imagining your home landscaping

Welcome to Seeking Sustainability! This column is written by the Stratford District Secondary School Eco Club for the purpose of sharing environmental news and initiatives with the public.

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The SDSS Eco Club has an exciting new project on the go right now! In collaboration with Lucas Tingle of the Local Community Food Centre, we are creating an urban farm right here in Stratford, between O'Loane Avenue and the west end of Smith Street. It will be cultivated by Eco Club members, students in the Green Industries class, and members of the community who want to learn more about regenerative agricultural techniques such as field planning; cover-cropping; composting; crop rotation; successive planting; and weed management without the aid of herbicides.

The goals of this project are to promote community development, agricultural education, and environmental activism to deepen the connection between SDSS and the community. Agriculture is an essential part of our local culture, with 93% of the land in Perth County being dedicated to raising animals and growing crops. By implementing this project, we are providing students and community members with an opportunity to learn how to make agriculture in Perth County sustainable, so that future genera-

tions can partake in this legacy.

In 2020, Stratford City Council declared a climate emergency. As you might have noticed, our winters have become mushy, brown, and warm. One of the main contributors to this change in climate is the overuse of fossil fuels—our city council is dedicated to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2030, and to become net-zero by 2050. Currently, fossil fuels are used to power engines, such as in cars and buses; heat homes; and produce materials like plastic, waxes, and even some medicines. Although it may seem like an overwhelming issue, there are ways to create energy without polluting our planet—these are called clean energy sources. You may have heard of some, like wind power and solar power. Energy from the sun can be absorbed into solar panels, creating electrical charges and causing electricity to flow, and wind can turn large turbines to produce energy. There are other sources of clean energy, too, such as hydroelectric and tidal energy. Tidal energy is pretty straightforward: a massive turbine is installed underwater, and the Earth's natural tides send it spinning, which creates plenty of electricity for us to use without harming the planet.

There have been ongoing efforts in Stratford to retrofit buildings and replace gas-guzzling machines with electric ones, as well: during Spring 2022, two natural gas-powered ice edgers at the Rotary Complex were replaced with electric units, and plans to install more electric car-charging stations are in the works. Want to help? You can invest in

energy efficient lighting like LEDs, purchase an electric car for your next vehicle, or plant trees, which helps absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. You can also speak out against decisions made by our governments that promote fossil fuel usage.

Saturday, April 22nd, 2023 marks the 53rd Annual Earth Day, an international day of environmental action, activism, and awareness that commemorates the start of the modern environmental movement.

The first Earth Day occurred in 1970, when 20 million Americans took part in protests across the country against the negative human health impacts of industrial development. Since then, over 190 countries and 1 billion people globally take action every Earth Day to continue the fight against climate destruction.

According to earthweek.org, this year's theme for Earth Day is Invest in Our Planet, which "highlights the importance of dedicating our time, resources, and energy to solving the climate crisis". As consumers, it is important to remember that what we choose to invest in reflects what we value, and we can use this power to impact global markets. This refers not only to the individual purchases we make and the sources they come from but also to larger institutions we financially support, such as banks and universities. Four Canadian banks—RBC, TD, Scotiabank, and BMO—are listed in the top 20 banks continuing to finance fossil fuels. Although these investments receive short-term profits, investing in renewable energy

generates more long-term profits. In addition, according to CBC, renewables-based investment portfolios have significantly and consistently outperformed traditional energy stocks for the past 10 years.

However, investing in a sustainable future does not always have to be about money. Your time, energy, and other resources are just as valuable and can be put toward environmental action in a variety of ways. Planting trees or pollinator gardens, reducing your plastic consumption, advocating for the environment, making sustainable fashion choices, and volunteering for or donating to an environmental organization are some of the many ways you can get involved this Earth Day.

Check out the QR code for more ideas on how to get involved this Earth Day:

Come back in June to see what's new with Seeking Sustainability!



Riddles

What is the greatest worldwide use of cowhides?
To cover cows.

What do sea monster eat?
Fish and ships.

What can you catch but not throw?
A cold.

Which word in the dictionary is spelled incorrectly?
Incorrectly.

What time is it when 12 cats chase a mouse?
12 after 1.

What is so fragile even saying its name can break it?
Silence.

What goes up but never goes down?
Your age.

What do lazy dogs do for fun?
They chase parked cars.

What city has no people?
Electricity.

Sudoku

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

Solutions on page 35



CRÈME BRÛLÉE

Meet 7-month-old cuddle bug - Crème Brûlée. He is a super adventurous and playful pup who loves his toys. Bru is looking for a home with older children or a single family since he is going to grow into a big boy! Our Bru is looking for a special family to call his own that will take some extra steps to ensure his medical needs are met. Bru had become ill with Steroid-Responsive Meningitis Arteritis (SRMA), which is an auto-immune illness that can often affect young dogs. He was treated and responded very well to treatment, and his condition has resolved. He is currently being weaned off his medication slowly. This means he will still be on medication at the time of adoption.

If you think you have a big heart and lots of love to give Bru, consider submitting an adoption survey at <https://kwsphumane.ca/adopt/process>. Bru is super excited to meet you!



Pet of the Month



Word Search

SPRING

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

- BIRDS
- BLOSSOM
- BUGS
- BUNNY
- BUTTERFLY
- CALE
- CATERPILLAR
- CHICKS
- FLOWERS
- FROG
- GARDEN
- GRASS
- HATCH
- INSECTS
- LADYBUG
- LAMB
- NATURE
- NEST
- RABBIT
- ROBIN
- SNAIL
- SPRING
- SPROUT
- TULIP
- WORM

Brian Anderson - a tireless Perth County 4-H leader and Ontario Arbor Award Winner



4-H leader Brian Anderson (middle in black), guiding local 4-H members, leading their dairy calves at an achievement day in Stratford.

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

One of the great opportunities that we have locally for young people is an amazing 4-H program.

This paper has reported many stories in the past number of months, on not

only the enthusiastic youth who participate in the program, but also the club leaders that go above and beyond to donate their time and efforts to ensure a viable future for those young, active members who have chosen to get involved.

One of these tireless leaders is Brian Anderson, who recently received one of



Brian and Wendy Anderson with their Perth County dairy herd, displaying Brian's Ontario 4-H "Arbor Award" recently presented to him.

the highest honours a 4-H leader in Ontario can receive: the 4-H Ontario "Arbor Award".

A highly energetic person, Brian has been a dairy calf 4-H leader for over 30 years. Anderson, along with help from his wife Wendy and family, manages a well-regarded, high-production herd of dairy cows in South Easthope Township.

He himself was a graduate of the 4-H program in the 1970's, and served as a Perth County Jr. Farmer President in the early '80's. He has also handled secretarial duties with the Perth County Milk Committee and the Perth County Holstein Club.

Even though many of his activities involves various areas of farming, Anderson still finds time to volunteer as a curling coach and chairs his local church board of trustees.

He has also been a director of the Stratford and District Agricultural Society for 20 years and was recently named its President. It is interesting to note that he is the fourth generation in his family to carry that honour, following his late father, Stewart Anderson; his grandfather, Alex Anderson; and his great grandfather, William Anderson.

The Arbor Award is not his first award because in 2021, Anderson became the recipient of the Keith McLagan Outstanding Leader Award given to a prolific 4-H leader in Perth County.

In words of acceptance from this award winner, Anderson stated he "has been very satisfied to be able to include 'city kids' in Perth County dairy clubs." He said a chance conversation at an area

Rotary Club event led to one young lady visiting the farm because her Mom had been a 4-H member, and she was keen to give it a try. Word about the chance to borrow a calf from the Anderson farm spread from friend to friend and sibling to sibling. Eventually, the farm had as many as seven calves going to achievement day. This has been going on for several years although the numbers vary from year to year.

Anderson said "this is an important opportunity for a couple of reasons, in that 'city kids' benefit from seeing firsthand what real farm life is like and they see the hard work and the care that farmers take with their animals. He said no matter where they go in life, they will have that experience to draw on."

He also said it is important because it spreads the appreciation for the 4-H program!

He did say he "hasn't led 4-H clubs he's been involved with, alone." He's thankful to his co-leaders over the years and the 4-H families who have supported young members in reaching their goals. He was also thankful for his family and employees who have, in his words, "cut [him] some slack," at home so that he could get to a show early and stay late to make sure everything was looked after properly.

In closing, he said, "4-H is about teamwork and learn to do by doing." He said he was sure that he learned more over the years than the kids in 4-H have, and "hope that his family and co-leaders will put up with him for a few more years to come."



(SARAH CAIRNS PHOTOS)

THE HUNT IS ON

After a three year hiatus on Saturday, April 8 at 10:00 a.m. hundreds of children hunted for their Easter treat at Upper Queens Park put on by CJCS/2DayFM and Rhéo Thompson Candies raising monetary and food donations for Stratford House of Blessing. McDonald's provided coffee and treats Age 5 and under were able to have a head start before the older children were able to join in.

Right, Lydia Balfour age 2 joined in the Easter fun and enjoyed the chocolate.



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COMING EVENTS

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STRATFORD WARRIORS
April 14 & 18; 7:30 p.m.
Allman Arena, 15 Morenz Dr, Stratford
Come out and support the Stratford Warriors

STRATFORD FIGHTING IRISH
April 16; 6:30 p.m., 22*; 4:30 p.m., 29* 3 p.m.
Allman Arena, 15 Morenz Dr, Stratford
Come out and support the Stratford Fighting Irish
*If necessary.

INFORMATION MEETING
Saturday, April 15; 9 a.m.
Shakespeare Optimist Hall, Galt St.
Shakespeare Optimist Walking Path & Exercise Area. All are welcome.

MOTHER'S DAY SHOPPING EVENT
Saturday, April 22; 10 am. – 3 p.m.
Stratford District Secondary School
Looking for something for Mother's Day? Come out to Stratford District Secondary School and find something for the special mom! There will be over 50 vendors with a variety of items.

VARIETY SALE
Thursday, April 27; 7-9:30 p.m.
& Friday, April 28; 11 a.m. - 2

p.m. & 7 - 8 p.m.
St. James Anglican Church, 41 Mornington St
Clothing, toys, kitchen items, treasures, jewelry, books and much more.

GARDEN STRATFORD MEETING
Monday, May 1; 6:30 –9:00 p.m.
Army Navy Hall, 151 Lorne Ave. E., Stratford.
The meeting will begin with a Garden Chat led by Diane Wheler: "Freeze, Dehydrate and Preserve Your Produce" Feature

Speaker: Chef Murray Zehr, "Cook What You Grow"
Meeting open to Everyone; free admission.

MOTHER'S DAY MARKET
Sunday, May 7; 10 am. – 3 p.m.
Stratford District Secondary School
Come shop a wide variety of

handmade vendors along with some mon to mom tables!
Feeling hungry after you shop? We've got you covered, grab a bite to eat at the food trucks available in the side parking lot from 11am-3pm!

HAVE A COMING EVENT COMING UP?
Let us know! Call 519-655-2341
or email stratfordtimes@gmail.com

- QUIZ ANSWERS**
- 1)Condoleezza Rice
 - 2)Smallpox
 - 3)Oak
 - 4)Exodus
 - 5)Magnum
 - 6)Spring Onion
 - 7)Daffodils
 - 8)Bowling
 - 9)Russia
 - 10)Barley

SUDOKU

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

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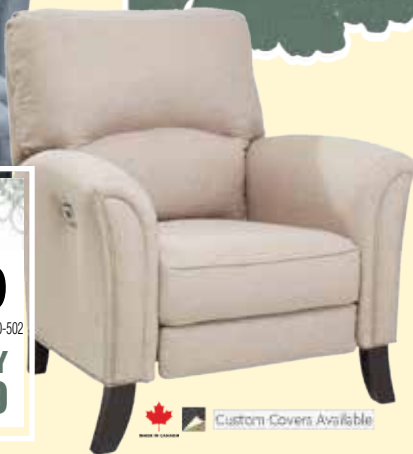
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Home furniture

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Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
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OUTLET OPEN every 2nd & 4th full weekend

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