

STRATFORD **TIMES**

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Good turnout for Alzheimer's walk

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

A sunny Saturday morning in Upper Queens Park saw more walkers raising funds for Alzheimer's Society Huron Perth than for the 2022 event.

The IG Wealth Management Walk For Alzheimer's returned on May 27. Teresa Weicker, the fund development assistant and CSS dementia educator for Alzheimer's Society Huron Perth, said there were about a third more funds raised in 2023 compared to 2022 at the time of the walk.

There were also twice the number of people registered, at 50 people online and more registering the day of in-person, and double the teams. There were eight teams participating in the 2023 walk, with four in the previous year.

"It feels great to know there's people out and coming to enjoy our walk," Weicker said.

Along with Stratford, Alzheimer's Society Huron Perth held walks in Clinton, Exeter, Goderich, Listowel, St. Marys, and Wingham.

Weicker pointed to a few reasons why the Walk for Alzheimer's had more people involved in 2023.

"Post-covid, I would say people are definitely more comfortable with attending events. The weather was fabulous which always brings more people out," she said. "We did more advertising this year just to get it out across more channels so we're hoping that we just reached more people as well. The demand is higher now more than ever to raise the much needed funds to support our clients - both people living with dementia and their care

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(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

LOVE IS LOVE

Hundreds took part in the Stratford-Perth Pride March in Stratford on June 4th.

A Strong Start to PRIDE Month

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

Pride Month started with a bang (literally) as staff popped rainbow-coloured confetti from the balcony of the Tom Patterson Theater on June 4th among onlookers patiently waiting for the Pride March to begin.

Martin Ritsma, Mayor of Stratford, along with Damon Bradley-Jang, and others announced the March with a countdown before the

crowd of an estimated 1,000 walked from the theatre location to Upper Queens Park, where a festival of tents, a children's area and even acrobatics from Cirquesmith enchanted the crowd before the mains-stage events began.

Participating in the Pride March this year, Matthew Rae, M.P.P. Perth-Wellington, was seen walking with the crowd to show his support for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

This year's Pride Stage, sponsored

by Home and Company real estate, hosted performers throughout the afternoon and included a stunning performance by Nestor Lozano Jr, Mrs. Whatsit and Rent actor at The Stratford Festival.

On behalf of the Home and Company real estate team, Marion deWeaver spoke, "This is an important event for this community. It is an opportunity to highlight not only the progress that has been made but also the work that still needs to be

CONTINUED TO PAGE 3



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Car Free Fridays return for 2023

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Whether you bike, walk, or bus, the Downtown Stratford Business Improvement Area (BIA) encourages you to use active transportation to get around the city.

The Downtown Stratford BIA held their first Car Free Friday for the summer on the morning June 2. Set up at the corner of Market Place and Wellington Street, the BIA provided free beverages and had a station set up to talk about active transportation.

"We're super excited here in Downtown Stratford to offer our first of four car-free Fridays for the summer. This year, we decided to make it bigger and better than ever by inviting different partners to join us," Kim Griffiths, member liaison for the Downtown Stratford BIA, said.

Community members taking part in the Free Car Friday booth included Sheila Clarke from Climate Momentum, Const. Darren Fischer of the Stratford Police (promoting the Project 529 bike registration program), Michael Mousley, the manager of Stratford Transit, and Ross Taylor, owner of Ross' Bike Works.

There was a contest between the Downtown Stratford BIA and the City of Stratford staff to see who had the most employees getting to work via active transportation.

Griffiths added that Car Free Fridays are in place this summer as many out-of-town visitors come to the city during the Stratford Festival season, and there is limited parking in the downtown core.



(EMILY STEWART PHOTO)

Ross Taylor, owner of Ross' Bike Works, participated in the Downtown Stratford BIA's first Car Free Friday of the summer. Taylor demonstrated small repairs using the Green Spoke station in Market Square

"It would be really nice if we could give up some of our spots to people who come and visit for the day. Secondly, it's good for your health," she said.

Taylor was demonstrating small bicycle repairs with the Green Spoke station in Market

Square, which has several tools attached to fix up bikes. The first Car Free Friday of the year coincided with World Cycling Day on June 3.

"I think it's a great time to take your bike out of the garage and dust it off and get out and have a ride to celebrate this wonderful thing

which helps the whole world in many ways," Taylor said. "It's great exercise. It's good for the environment and it's a very fun thing to do."

He listed other reasons why residents should cycle in Stratford this summer.

"There's always free parking," Taylor said. "I think it encourages family unity. It's nice if you have your kids going to ball or something. Ride your bike to ball or ride them to school in the morning and we did it as kids and I think it would be great for the kids to get back doing it again."

Mousley said that with service running every half hour and more than 300 bus stops, Stratford Transit helps residents leave their cars at home and stay active.

"Ever since day one when transit started, it's been promoting people keeping their cars at home or using other forms of getting to work or going shopping," Mousley said. "I've always been a promoter of being green, take the bus. It's very affordable, especially for a city the size of Stratford. I think we offer a great service for the size of the population."

Residents can also apply for the mobility bus online.

"We do everything from shopping, doctors appointments, social visits at all the homes in town. People really love the service and they love what the city offers from the mobility side," Mousley said.

Car Free Fridays will return on July 14, August 11, and September 8. Visit downtown-stratford.ca/car-free-friday for more information.



A Strong Start to PRIDE Month

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

done for the community at large. And so, as a local business, it is our pleasure to be able to play a small part, help out and give back," she spoke.

From Stratford Perth Pride, AJ Adams initially took the stage and expressed his gratitude to the crowd, "I'm so excited to see this event happening. So excited to see all your smiling faces. And just shows that life does exist in rural Ontario in rural Canada in a time of increasing hate. Just your presence here today is showing that love does win."

Adams also thanked Mayor Ritsma for attending and supporting the community, "It's wonderful to know our elected officials stand with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community," he noted.

Earlier that morning, the Stratford Festival invited members of 'Friends of the Festival' to a toast before the start of the PRIDE march.

Speaking that morning was Stratford Festival Executive Director Anita Gaffney. Her heartwarming speech brought

tears to listeners as she discussed the importance of inclusion within the festival, "I think that experiences, moments, exchanges, connection. Each of those things chip away at changing people and ultimately changing the world." She said, "We're working here to create a culture at the festival where everyone feels seen, feels valued and feels welcome for all that they bring to the organization," she said.

Gaffney ended with, "One day, one month, one event is not going to change the world. But I believe that each action accumulates and builds towards inspiring change, change that will ultimately change individuals and, by extension, the world."

If you're interested in upcoming Pride events this June, follow along with Stratford-Perth Pride on their Instagram page, @stratfordperthpride

Register a float in the Canada Day Parade

There's still time to apply to be part of this year's Canada Day Parade in Stratford.

The event, hosted by the Stratford and District Saddle Club and Bethel Pentecostal Church, will take place on July 1 starting at 6 p.m.

Setting out from the corner of Lakeside Drive and Waterloo Street, the parade will travel along Waterloo Street to Mornington Street, then west on McCarthy Road West to the Rotary Complex.

About 50 floats are expected to participate.

If you would like to register a float in the parade, please fill out the application



form online at <https://bit.ly/stratfordparade>

The deadline to apply is Monday, June 26.

More information about Stratford's Canada Day celebrations can be found at www.stratford.ca/canadaday

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STRATFORD TIMES

Stratford's Community Newspaper

Established 2021

The Stratford Times is published monthly on the second Friday of each month and is free to all citizens either in print format or online at stratfordtimes.com.

The newspaper is published by Grant Haven Media, a local business who also publishes the St. Marys Independent, Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette and Woodstock Ingersoll Echo.

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

www.stratfordtimes.com

Editor

Stewart Grant

Graphic Design / Layout

Sarah Cairns

Administrative

Wendy Lamond, June Grant, Cindy Boakes

Advertising Inquiries

Contact stratfordtimes@gmail.com

or call 519-868-1290

Contributors

Spencer Seymour, Hayden Bulbrook, Betty-Jo Belton, Julia Schneider, Gary West, Paul Knowles, Emily Stewart, Lisa Chester, Fred Gonder, April Taylor, Sheila Clarke, Irene Roth, Lauren Eedy, Lee Griffi, Stuart Lender, Amanda Modaragamage, Thomas R. Verny, Kate Orland Bere
(If interested in contributing to the Stratford Times, send us a note at stratfordtimes@gmail.com)



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Letters to the Editor: Please email to stratfordtimes@gmail.com, or send to our physical office at the St. Marys Independent, PO Box 2310, 36 Water Street South, St. Marys, ON N4X 1A2.

Circulation Matters!
This month we will distribute
7,300 printed copies of the
Stratford Times.

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Is it time for a more frequent Stratford Times?

STEWART GRANT

Publisher

Next month's issue will mark our 24th monthly issue of the Stratford Times, so I figure that the time is appropriate to provide an update on how things are going.

In short, they are going well!

The first year, not unexpectedly, lost money. It takes time to build up a readership, establish credibility, and gradually change advertising habits.

In the second year, we've really been able to make some strides. Our print circulation, which started that first month in August 2021, is now up to 7,300 (and growing), and we are still finding that we are replenishing it as often as we should at certain high-traffic spots in the city.

We've had so many people reach out to us to write columns – some have wished to contribute regularly and some have contacted us with one-time articles, photos, or ideas. To everyone who has contacted us, we thank you and we encourage you to continue doing this. Think about our paper and ask yourself, "What are we missing, and how can we be better?" For example, I'd like to see more minor sports coverage and would love to have some extra local help in this regard. To anyone who has reached out on any topic and found that we haven't taken action, I hope these situations are rare and I hope that we haven't discouraged you. Occasionally, I make mistakes, and things occasionally get lost in my multi-tasking efforts.

Our model as a free newspaper is truly a community effort where three groups are working together to make it happen: In publishing the newspaper, we want to put out quality and relevant local content for the benefit of readers. Our readers, as they grow in numbers, provide a desired audience for local businesses and organizations who wish to inform them of their offerings. These businesses and organizations, by placing advertisements in our newspaper, provide valued local content that makes the newspaper an even better read,

and their advertising dollars cover our printing, employee, and other operational costs. That's how we all work together.

I have committed that as advertising grows, the newspaper will grow. There have been times already this year when specific instances of new advertising have funded higher page counts and higher print circulation.

The next logical step in our growth is to increase the frequency of our issues. Instead of once a month, our next step is to go to twice a month. From a news and events standpoint, there is certainly more than enough locally to cover.

As you can imagine though, doubling our newspaper frequency also doubles our printing costs and increases many other operational costs.

Therefore, I'm looking for some honest feedback from the other two key groups of our community circle as I wrestle with this financial decision:

- **Readers:** Please send us your encouragement and let us know if you'd like to see the Times go to a twice-a-month format as a next step. Or email us with ideas on how the newspaper can improve to make it even more relevant for you and your family. Remember that this is very much a "work in progress" and you can help us make this a better newspaper in the future. Our email is stratfordtimes@gmail.com.

- **Business and Organizations:** You are so important to helping us grow; because ultimately it all has to add up financially. If we double our print frequency, will you consider supporting us through either advertising or sponsorship? I know that we all try our best to support local, and we are a newspaper that is 100% local, from our writers, to our graphic design, to our in-person sales support. Please contact us at stratfordtimes@gmail.com and let us know you are open to supporting a stronger community newspaper.

I want to sincerely thank everyone for all of your support so far. You have made this business a going concern and we want to continue to grow this together with you for the benefit of the community.

Letter to the Editor

THANK YOU citizens of Stratford for a great 30 year run and for supporting our parades.

Dear Citizens of Stratford, Mayor, and Council

The Kinsmen Club of Stratford were happy to have been able to play a part in having Santa and the Santa Claus parade returned to the downtown streets including Ontario Street where he rightfully belongs. The Kinsmen were extremely disappointed that the Canada Day parade was not.

In a presentation Kinsmen made to Council April 11th and in our written submission to council March 30th Kinsmen requested that council return Canada Day, Santa and Remembrance Day parades to their original pre-pandemic routes.

Council and the staff management report left many unanswered questions and never gave a detailed reason for excluding the Canada Day parade from downtown. Forbidding the parade from travelling through Downtown Stratford, removes the tradition and nostalgic sense of the past that is so important to our citizens.

For close to a quarter of a century, prior to Covid, Kinsmen hosted the Canada Day and Santa Claus parades in downtown Stratford. It was our sincere pleasure to serve the citizens and merchants of our community at these special celebrations each year. As stated in our presentation to council the Canada Day and Santa Claus parades have been travelling or crossing over Ontario, Erie and Huron streets and through the picturesque heritage district in Downtown Stratford for the past thirty plus years.

In the first week of January our Kinsmen President enquired about the parades and received emails on January 12th from two city staff - The first - "The Saddle Club and Bethel Pentecostal Church are co-hosting the parades this year", the second - "Thank you for your ap-

plications I would like to advise that other local service organizations are hosting both the Canada Day Parade and Parade of Lights this year and therefore, your application to host the same event cannot move forward." The 2023 management report goes on to say "event parade applications for Canada Day and Santa's Parade of Lights have been received and processed by staff, with the continued participation and commitment of the Stratford and District Saddle Club and Bethel Pentecostal Church to both events. This was reconfirmed by a staff member at the April 11th meeting.

Kinsmen were extremely disappointed to hear this. Council at the March 30th meeting was there to discuss the direction given to staff back in May of 2022 and staff had already decided? It begs the question how are Events prioritized and awarded By nepotism? First come first served as noted by City Staff. Or do they go back to the traditional holders of the event first?

After much discussion at the Kinsmen meeting in April the decision was made it was time for the Kinsmen Club to move on.

The Stratford Kinsmen will concentrate its efforts on the Father's Day Car Show, continue to celebrate Canada Day at our family event at SERC on July 1st with entertainment and fireworks and introduce a new family event and Car Show planned for Labour Day. The club also will be getting Rudolph and his fellow reindeers ready for a new home. The club has decided to pay it forward and donate the float materials as they will no longer be hosting parades.

Once again THANK YOU citizens of Stratford for a great 30 year run and for supporting our parades. We wish the new organizers much success.

Sincerely,
Kinsmen Club of Stratford

12th annual Stratford live music and food

Stratford Live Music & Food is excited to bring the 12th annual weekend of spectacular music, mouth-watering food and market shopping to the community in a family-friendly gathering on the banks of the scenic Avon River along Veterans Drive Bandshell & York Street on June 16-18, 2023 in picturesque Stratford, Ontario.

The 2023 line up is stellar with many talented musicians. With so many incredible musicians the list was difficult to narrow down to the selected with the headliners: Bill Durst, Romeo Sex Fighters, MonkeyJunk and Forever.

Seger. Sunday is a "We LOVE Stratford" line up featuring Eric Mahar with Hidden Stratford Gems and many other local musicians in the lineup throughout the festival! This is the second year they are proud to honor a founding member with the Stew Laing Youth Band Foundation. Thanks to your donations, Saturday's line up starts with Max Morgado & The Hoerdts Brothers, Evie & The Tools and the Johnny Ballard Band. Be sure to come out supporting the next generation of artistic talent.

The historic bandshell provides an intimate outdoor musical experience -a place to meet friends or make new ones, enjoying cold beverages in the licensed area while listening to amazing music with a huge dance floor!

York Street parking lot will cover all your cravings this year with many food trucks including the traditional rib trucks. From there a short walk to the event's gate is the "Vendors Alley" with so many other vendors and artisans who will be selling unique craft and other specialized merchandise.

The committee heard your feedback last year and this year the "Kids Zone" is now located just outside the gated area. Stratford Library and SplatZ Art (sponsored by Arden Park Dental) will be there to entertain the children with crafts, stories, facepainting and balloon art.

The festival is thankful to the surrounding restaurants and businesses in the downtown area who welcome and support the event in their neighbourhood.

Stratford Live Music & Food is a Not-For-Profit event organized by a volunteer committee. The festival is successful due to our loyal patrons and the support of local businesses, partners in our community and grants. Equally the volunteers perform a very vital part to the success of the event with their time donated in so many capacities.

Stratford Live Music & Food is extremely proud of the founding members' vision: to provide high quality entertainment, a variety of food, and a family friendly experience for the community and surrounding area to enjoy over the weekend.

Stratford Live Music & Food Committee Members are Rick Attridge, Carrie Clark, Tina Groenestege, Toni McLean, Kati Peck, Matt Peck, Barb Smith, Vic Smith, Pam Toman and Steve Toman.



2023

FRI JUNE 16

Gates Open 4pm-11pm

Romeo Sex Fighters

Bill Durst
LONDON MUSIC 2022
BLUES ARTIST OF THE YEAR

Stevie T

The Jacks

Steph & The Roadhounds
Jevon Coxon Band

SAT JUNE 17

Gates Open 11am-11pm

Forever Seger

MonkeyJunk

Wild T and the Spirit

La Grove

Small Town Strip Club

Morgan Davis

Downie Street Collective

Stelle & Carter

Puslinch House of Blues

Johnny Ballard Band

YOUTH BAND SUPPORTED BY
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Evie & The Tools

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Max Morgado & The Hoerdts Brothers

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SUN JUNE 18

We ♥ Stratford!

Gates Open 11am-6pm

Eric Mahar

with Hidden Stratford Gems

Tom Waschowski Band

Paragon

Big Jon &

The Honkin' Swans

First World Problems

HWY 19

FRI TO SUN
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1st Annual General Meeting & Volunteer Appreciation
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Alzheimer Society Huron Perth has completed its first year serving the communities of Huron and Perth. We want to celebrate our new unified agency and our accomplishments.

Please join us on
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6:00 pm at the Mitchell Golf & Country Club
Guest Speaker: Cathy Barrick, CEO Alzheimer Society Ontario
Light refreshments will be served.

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An estimated 40+ community members show up to plant native trees and shrubs along the Avon River

ReLeaf Stratford, a subcommittee of the Stratford and Area Master Gardeners Association, held a community volunteer event along the Avon River at McLagan Dr on June 3rd.

"We could not take on this kind of project without volunteer support from our community. It was awesome that we had over 40 volunteers come out to plant last fall, and we hope many people will come to help us plant on June 3," said Stratford and Area Master Gardener Co-ordinator Don Farwell in a statement released before the event on June 3rd.

Luckily a similar turnout was seen at the June event, with over 40 volunteers showing up before 10 a.m. to help plant native trees and shrubs along the Avon River.

"We're delighted when we get volunteers. We have publications and email different groups, and then people who are on our volunteer list also get an email," stated Elizabeth Spedalieri, a valued Stratford and Area Master Gardeners member.

One notable volunteer was Mayor Martin Ritzma, who picked up a pick-axe and got to work on planting trees and shrubs in a seemingly tough area that was dry and



(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

RELEAF STRATFORD

Community members and volunteers planting native trees and shrubs along the Avon River during the ReLeaf Stratford event.

un-watered; "it's a hard area to dig, so he's got his work cut out for him," one onlooking volunteer noted.

A statement from the Stratford and Area Master Gardener's Association said in a statement, "This local environmental stewardship action is recommended in the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) Watershed Report Card.

Riparian habitats support high numbers of wildlife species and provide an array of ecological functions, including water quality protection. Native trees and shrubs provide important biomass and biodiversity to create pollinator pathways."

Funding for the purchase of native shrubs is made possible with a grant of \$5,200 from the Donald McTavish Con-

servation Fund held within the Stratford Perth Community Foundation and allows the subcommittee to purchase native trees and shrubs that support local wildlife and pollination.

The committee noted that recommendations were also put into the funding proposal, and the UCTRA and the City reviewed that species list. "It is not always possible to get all the species you want, and then substitutions need to be made," noted Nancy Burnette, Stratford and Area Master Gardeners member

"We wanted to do a project that will help the river and help local biodiversity. Wildlife, such as deer, rabbits and birds, eat the berries of native shrubs. The caterpillars eat the leaves, then grow into butterflies, and then those caterpillars feed the birds, so it's kind of like a whole connected ecosystem," noted Elizabeth Spedalieri.

The subcommittee hopes to run similar future programs to help care for and preserve the Upper Thames River.

For more information about the ReLeaf Stratford Project, please visit their website at www.releafstratford.ca. or visit them on Instagram and Facebook.

Stratford PRIDE Crosswalk

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

In an inspiring turn of events, just in time for Stratford Pride celebrations, a brand-new Pride crosswalk graced the streets of Stratford after the original crosswalk underwent hardship due to vandalism and a harsh winter.

What began as a heartfelt initiative shared by Kelly Ballantyne, Sirkel Food Owner, on her social media account back in June 2021 soon sparked an outpouring of enthusiasm and support from the Stratford community.

Joined by Stratford-Perth Pride, the two forces united to fundraise for the powerful symbol of acceptance. "There was a lot of excitement and buzz around it," AJ Adams, from Stratford-Perth Pride, said in a comment to the Stratford Times.

The team received a number of donations by the fall of 2021, including a generous donation from Magest Inc., which provided them with enough money to initiate the crosswalk installation.

However, the path to progress was not without challenges and within 12 hours of the crosswalk being installed, it was mindlessly vandalized with tire marks, household paint and spray paint.

Luckily, with the resilience of the Stratford community and propelled by amplified voices on social media, the community came together to clean up the graffiti and restore the symbol of inclusivity by the following day.

"The Stratford Police and Public Works Department spent the night power washing it off," Sirkel Foods noted in an Instagram post the following day. "For the people or person who did this, guess



(JOHN NATER PHOTO)

SHOWING THEIR PRIDE

From left to right Mayor Ritzma, AJ Adams of Stratford-Perth Pride and John Nater showing off their pride.

what? I'm still gay and proud, and no amount of tire marks or paint will ever silence me!" Ballantyne noted.

"The fire department came out; the police came out. Different community members and downtown business owners all came to help scrub the crosswalk to get off as much paint as possible. The crosswalk was in decent condition after that," stated Adams.

Unfortunately, the crosswalk's resilience was tested again that winter due to abnormally cold temperatures. Adams commented on this and said, "There wasn't enough time before the winter season for the crosswalk material to fully adhere to the road."

"We don't know if it was the graffiti,

the cleaning of the graffiti, the snowplows or the salt," Adams said, "we can't really narrow it down to one specific rationale for why the crosswalk got damaged. There's a variety of factors that could have contributed to the crosswalk's disrepair."

In the Fall of 2022, Stratford-Perth Pride and Sirkel Foods came together once again in support of a new Pride crosswalk. Adams noted, "It means a lot to the community here in Stratford and not just the 2SLGBTQ+ community but the community as a whole."

The team got to work and put a fundraiser together on social media, hoping to raise \$7,000 for the installation of a new crosswalk. "Within 24 hours, we

had reached our goal, and we actually exceeded the goal quite a bit," Adams stated, "it was fantastic. We have a very generous community here in Stratford,"

"We ended up hiring a professional contractor to remove the old crosswalk and install the new crosswalk using road paint – instead of the previously used thermoplastic," said Adams, "as a proactive measure, we also switched up the design of the crosswalk. So instead of having a solid flag, a striped flag design that still represents not just the queer community but different intersections of the community, such as trans people and queer people of colour, is represented."

With this new design, Adams notes, "If one colour gets damaged through graffiti, we only have to worry about that one section of colour instead of replacing the whole crosswalk."

Adams will be presenting to City Council on June 12th regarding the crosswalk and the City's involvement and support of the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

Adams noted that speaking to Stratford City Council is a step in the right direction for the 2SLGBTQ+ community, "What we really want to say to council members is: take ownership of the crosswalk so local non-profits and small businesses are not the ones responsible for maintaining it if anything happens again," Adams went on to say, "I've already met with Mayor Ritzma, and he's very supportive of the idea."

The team is hopeful that Stratford-Perth Pride, Sirkel Foods and the City of Stratford can work together to ensure that Stratford has this symbol of inclusion for the 2SLGBTQ+ community downtown in front of our city hall forever.

Walk for Alzheimer's sees more participants and funds raised in 2023



(EMILY STEWART PHOTOS)

WALK FOR ALZHEIMER'S

Left, Josh McNeigh, Jessica Thomson, Veretta, and Poker the dog were part of the many walkers in Upper Queens Park for the IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's on May 27. Right, Val Musselman and Mary Burbidge walking together at the IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's in Upper Queens Park.

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

partners.”

The organization hopes to raise \$128,000 for more than 3,100 Huron Perth residents living with dementia.

Isabelle Withers walked with her team “The Forget-Me-Nots” and raised more than \$4,000. She was walking for her father, who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. Her grandmother passed away from Alzheimer's.

“They call the disease ‘the long goodbye,’ and I can understand that for a reason. You're saying goodbye to someone who is still here,” Withers tearfully said. “There's a lot of good days. There's a lot of bad days and he's getting more and more confused, but he still has an amazing sense of humour and we still see - he's still the same person so we're lucky it's been a slow progression.”

Withers' parents participate in the

Minds in Motion program run by the Alzheimer's Society. She is thankful for the support the organization provides for those living with dementia and Alzheimer's and their caregivers.

“It really gives my mom a break, she said. “It gives my mom a sense of community as well and my dad really, really enjoys it and they have been so wonderful in providing us with information and support. It's an organization that this community would be lost without.”

Donations will be accepted until July. In a follow-up with the Stratford Times on June 2, Weicker said that more than \$113,000 was raised between the seven walks across Huron and Perth counties. There is still time to donate, visit <https://alzheimer.ca/perth/en>. To find out more about the Alzheimer's Society Huron Perth and their programs, call 519-271-1910.

Police warn of fraudulent ads on Facebook

The Stratford Police Service has received several reports of fraudulent advertisements for sale on local Facebook groups, including advertisements for a lawnmower for sale at a residence in Stratford.

Police were contacted by several complainants who had responded to the lawnmower ad and were now out several hundred dollars. The buyers had been requested to send a deposit via e-transfer prior to picking up the lawnmower, however when they arrived at the residence, they discovered that the homeowner did not create the advertisement or have a lawnmower for sale.

At this time, police have received four

complaints who are now out several hundred dollars. It is believed that others have fallen victim to this scam who have not yet contacted police as reports of many other people attending the residence to pick up the lawnmower have been made by the homeowner. Those individuals are encouraged to contact the Stratford Police Service at 519-271-4141 to file a report.

The Stratford Police Service would like to remind the public that when making an online purchase it is always best to payment at the time of exchange with the seller.

And always remember, if it sounds too good to be true... it likely is!



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Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame induction ceremonies to take place June 17 in St. Marys

Blue Jay greats Barfield, Olerud among those to be honoured



The Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum

INDUCTION DAY

Saturday, June 17, 2023

CLASS OF 2023



JESSE BARFIELD



DENIS BOUCHER



RICH HARDEN



JOE WIWCHAR

CLASS OF 2020



JOHN OLERUD



JACQUES DOUCET

The Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame will induct Jesse Barfield, Denis Boucher, Rich Harden and Joe Wiwchar in a ceremony at the Hall of Fame grounds in St. Marys on Saturday, June 17.

The four 2023 inductees will be honoured alongside John Olerud and Jacques Doucet who were elected in 2020 but have not been able to attend the ceremony until this year.

Long-time Canadian Press and Expos beat writer Richard Milo will also be presented with the 2022 Jack Graney Award. The Hall presents this award annually to a member of the media who has made significant contributions to baseball in Canada through their life's work.

"Each of these inductees has had a significant impact on the game of baseball in Canada in their own distinct way," said Jeremy Diamond, chair of the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame's board of directors. "We're also proud to honour Richard Milo, whose articles were essential reading for French-speaking baseball fans in our country for more than two decades."

A ceremony will also be held at 10:15 a.m. in front of the museum at the end of the driveway to commemorate the roadway through the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame being renamed Ferguson Jenkins Way, in honour of the legendary right-hander who won 284 major league games in 19 seasons.

The induction ceremony will be part of a series of activities that will also include a meet-and-greet with the inductees and other special guests called "The Opening Pitch" in Toronto (June 15) and the Hall's 25th annual celebrity golf tournament and banquet (June 16).

Induction Day Schedule (June 17):

9 a.m. to 8 p.m. – Baseball games will be played on the Hall's diamonds.

9:30 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. – Inductee press conference inside the museum (386 Church St. S.) (media only)

10:15 a.m. – Ceremony at the end of the driveway in front of the museum for official unveiling of Ferguson Jenkins Way.

11:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. – Museum open to public for regular admission fees.

1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. – Induction Ceremony on the Hall of Fame grounds (386 Church St. S.)

3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. – Autograph session (Please read rules below) with inductees, past inductees and other special guests. Members should bring their membership card. Members \$20 each to enter, non-members \$30 each to enter the autograph session.

Autograph Session Rules:

Hall of Fame 2023 members will enter the autograph line first. The autograph session is 90 minutes long. Autographs are limited to one item per person per inductee/special guest. Autographs will be signed on a first-come first-serve basis. Hall of Fame staff reserve the right to cut the autograph line at any time. Autographs are not guaranteed. NO posed photos.

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Fatal Crash Takes Life of SDSS Student



LEE GRIFFI

Times Correspondent

Perth County Ontario Provincial Police are investigating an accident that has taken the life of a 16-year-old Tavistock girl. The single-vehicle crash occurred on Line 29 near Perth Road 107, just east of Tavistock, in Perth East Township on Sunday, June 4.

Lillie Riehl was the lone occupant of the car and was pronounced deceased at an area hospital. Police are continuing their investigation with the assistance of the OPP West Region Traffic Incident Management and Enforcement. An Ornge helicopter was dispatched to the scene, as was the EZT fire department.

Police are releasing very few details at this time but are hoping that someone witnessed the accident. Sources tell the Times police will be looking at some security camera footage from residents on Line 29 in the hopes of learning more about the cause. Anyone with information is asked to call the OPP at 1-888-310-1122 Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 or leave an anonymous online message at www.P3tips.com.

Riehl was a grade 11 student at Stratford District Secondary School, where a letter from principal Kimberley Crawford was sent to students, parents, guardians, and staff members. "We have arranged for additional support people to

be in the school for students and staff to help during this time. The school board has a Tragic Events Response Support Team who will be at the school to provide support and counselling this week and will continue to do so as needed." The letter added that students may wish to discuss the loss with parents and guardians. "Please provide this opportunity. It is very important that students have the chance to express their feelings and feel a circle of support." A condolence book has been placed in Student Services for anyone wanting to share their memories and condolence messages with the family. The school's flag is also being flown at half-mast. "Our condolences are extended to Lillie's family and friends," added Crawford.

A GoFundMe page has been started by one of Riehl's friends, and it says the money will be used to cover funeral costs. At press time, over \$14,000 dollars had been raised.

Queer Book of the Month Club

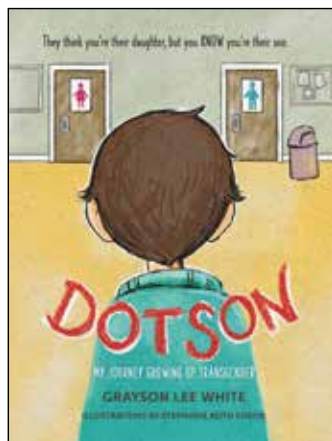
Dotson, by Grayson Lee White
@SPL: J306.768092

Dotson is an autobiographical and inspirational story from a young trans boy. It examines what it's like to feel you are in the wrong body, and how early in life some children realize this. The title is the author's own word - an amalgamation of the words daughter and son.

Grayson Lee White was born Zoe, but he knew for a long time that he was meant to be a boy. At the age of two he made a wish to become a boy, and at three he remembers he felt uncomfortable at his dance recital wearing a tutu.

At seven he gave the speech to his class, explaining that he would like to be known as Grayson. His twin sister Gabby stood up at the front of the class to support him.

This book would be a tremendously brave achievement from any trans individual. It's candid, heartfelt, and it's filled with joy and hope. But what makes it all the more courageous is the fact that it's been written by



a thirteen-year-old boy. Grayson's parents have supported him from the outset in his wish to transition, and the love of his family is evident throughout.

Grayson discusses some of the harder things about both transitioning and coming out. Things like which bathroom to use at school, and how to tell his best friends about himself, since they never knew him when he was Zoe. The front cover of the book shows Grayson staring at two bathroom doors and wondering which one to use. The illustrations by Stephanie Roth Sisson are whimsical and engaging

This is a book everyone should read. Not just children asking about gender, but also parents, teachers, and all kids who want to understand the life of someone growing up transgender. Grayson has provided a glossary of terms at the end of his story as well as useful links to resources for transgender kids and their families.

Heather Lister

Public Service Librarian, Stratford Public Library



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Expiry: August 31, 2023

Weekend Quiz

- 1) What is the only domesticated animal not mentioned in the Bible?
- 2) Okinawa is a volcano in which country?
- 3) When facing forward on a ship, which direction is starboard?
- 4) In the 60s what was the first name of John F. Kennedy's wife?
- 5) What is the largest country in South America?
- 6) Who was the first country artist to sell over 10 million copies of an album?
- 7) How many flowers are in the design stamped on each side of an Oreo cookie?
- 8) Black-eyed peas are not peas. What are they?
- 9) What was the first city to be levelled by a plutonium based atomic bomb?
- 10) What sport did Herve Filion top with a record of 14,084 wins?

This week's answers are found on pg. 35

LOCAL MATTERS.



Remember that time when **Amazon** sponsored your church fundraiser?



Remember when **Facebook** bought a case of Girl Guide cookies to support your daughter?



Remember when **Google** provided free pizza to your child's soccer team when they won the championship?

Neither do we!

Local businesses live here. They play here. They invest here. They need our support, now more than ever.




L'Arche Stratford Celebrates 50th Anniversary with a 1 Million Dollar Pledge

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

L'Arche kicked off its 50th Anniversary this year in Market Square, celebrating 50 years since opening its doors for the first time.

L'Arche Stratford is an organization that welcomes adults with intellectual disabilities and assistants who live, work, and learn with them. "In a world that often sees people with intellectual disabilities as less than whole, L'Arche celebrates their creativity, transparency, and a great capacity for joy as important gifts to be shared," a quote shared on the L'Arche's website.

Stephanie Calma, Community leader/ Executive Director of L'Arche Stratford, gave the opening remarks where she thanked the community and those involved in the development and history of L'Arche.

"As I look back over the 50 years, I'm inspired by the creativity and determination of those who made up our structure. Our founding community, Marjorie Pinkerton, and our founding core member Gary McRae. And the original board had the vision that has blossomed into the community you see before you today," stated Calma.

This year is extra special because L'Arche Stratford received a 1-million-dollar pledge towards their Be Belong Become campaign, which is an initiative to raise \$7 million to help build a brand new centre for the community at 426 Britannia St here in Stratford.

This pledge of 1 million dollars is just



(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

Mayor Martin Ritzma with friend and member of L'Arche, Stratford, Cory Maschke, at the 50th Anniversary party of L'Arche Stratford

what the L'Arche community needed to kick off the community fundraiser, as the donor will be matching all contributions made by the public.

"What an amazing anniversary gift!" stated Elaine Clark-Siberry, Campaign Chair, "all of us at L'Arche Stratford are profoundly grateful for this generous donation," she noted.

Matthew Rae gave his remarks at the

celebration, "The amount of people here this morning really is a testament to the connection you [L'Arche] have in our community." He noted, "On behalf of the province of Ontario, I just want to thank L'Arche for inviting me this morning and thank you for all that you do for the community."

Also attending today was Ken Sparks on behalf of John Nater, who noted on Nater's

behalf, "It is truly a milestone for an organization to reach its 50th anniversary, and I am proud to celebrate this year with you. Sincerely, John Nader, Member of Parliament Perth Wellington."

Mayor Ritsma also thanked the L'Arche community while staying with his arm around L'Arche community member and friend Cory Maschke (pictured).

"I am deeply involved with the project," said Ritsma, "the pandemic took us on a little bit of a different path, but now we're back on the correct path. So, to all those that volunteer for L'Arche day after day, I thank you for your work and your volunteerism to provide a safe, welcoming environment. On behalf of the City of Stratford, thank you, everybody, for being here, and have a wonderful afternoon," Ritsma said.

The L'Arche community purchased a property at 426 Britannia St back in 2017; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the progress of the project was put on hold.

At the beginning of 2022, the L'Arche board decided that the risk involved in renovating the old Montessori school was too much of a risk and decided to demolish the existing building and start fresh.

The next step at this time is to work on demolishing the current structure and the L'Arche community records following along on their social media to keep up with updates about the project as more milestones are met.

At this time, L'Arche has raised over half the amount of money needed to continue the project. If you'd like to support L'Arche, please visit www.larchestratford.ca or call 519-271-9751.

CS8: A walk to remember Carter Schoonderwoerd

LISA CHESTER

Stratford Times Correspondent

On a beautiful Saturday morning, June 3rd, family, friends and the community at large gathered in the Lion's Park in Mitchell for a five kilometre walk in remembrance of Carter Schoonderwoerd. Tragically, he lost his life on June 7, 2021, at the age of 19.

Carter is remembered as big tall, fun loving burly guy, a hockey player, but, as his Aunt Beth Schoonderwoerd says, he is more than that.

"He was like a big brother, a cousin, he had nicknames for everyone. They really looked up to him," said Beth.

"It didn't matter how big or small you were, he embraced all. He was a gentle giant," adds Pam Schoonderwoerd, another of his aunts.

He was the first one, if you needed a hand with something to volunteer to help. There may be many hockey stories out there about Carter, but there are also just as many stories about how he would be there to help out if needed. He was a friend to all.

"It just seemed that anyone that met

him, didn't forget him. Since this has happened, we've come to realize just how many people's lives he touched. A person came to me that said his child had struggles, and Carter always was one to say how you doing, how's your day, and she still remembers that. They weren't close friends or anything, but he just had that way of reaching out and touching people," said Beth.

This is the second annual walk for Carter. The first walk was the inspiration of Rose Gilmore, who was a colleague of Carter's mother Heather.

"I felt for Heather, I couldn't imagine going through that as a parent and I thought, 'what can I do?' as a co-worker. We worked closely for a couple years.



I just wanted people not to forget, that we could start something that would continue on and people wouldn't forget the gentle giant that everyone describes Carter as. It's something to help others, we all had struggles, the pandemic wasn't easy, and sometimes people that have the struggles they don't share with others that they have struggles. And it's ok not to be ok, and to let others know you know

what? You're the person that's always out helping everyone else, it's ok to say some days, you're not ok either," said Rose.

Last year, the walk raised almost \$10,000 for the United Way and St. Columban. This year, the beneficiary

is the Tanner Steffler Foundation. TSF aims to enhance and improve mental health and addiction resources and support networks for youths between the ages of 12-24 in Huron and Perth Counties. Their mandate is to assist youth navigate the available support services and options that may be appropriate for them at the time.

This year, the walk raised \$2406 at the time of writing. The walk brought together approximately 220 people of all ages that loved Carter, remember him, shared stories and support for each other. By continuing on, the Schoonderwoerd family hopes to bring awareness to mental health in youth.

Anyone wishing to donate in Carter's memory can do so using the link found at the CS8 Carter Schoonderwoerd Memorial Walk Facebook page. This link will attribute the donation to the Tanner Steffler Foundation in memory of Carter. If you are a youth or family of a youth that could benefit from peer support, email the foundation at admin@tannerstefflerfoundation.com

Juliet, the Therapy Ferret, is making her rounds around Stratford

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

Typically, dogs are used as therapy animals due to their soft and docile nature, but a new pet is making her rounds around Stratford. The residents at local retirement homes, students across Perth County schools and downtown businesses are having a blast with Juliet, the Therapy Ferret!

Janita Fowler, owner and operator of PAWS Pet Sitting here in Stratford, adopted Juliet from a breeder in Manitoba with the intention of using her to educate the public on small animals and their affectionate and loving nature, "If you introduce children to these small animals when they're young, they'll have a better appreciation and be more compassionate towards them as adults," states Fowler.

So far, Juliet has visited Greenwood and Cedarcroft retirement homes, where she has been quite a hit with both the residents and staff alike.

The two-year-old ferret has also stopped in at many local downtown Stratford stores, including Bradshaws, Got it Made, MacLeods Scottish Shop, as well as Tourism Stratford, where she was met by happy tourists, excited to see such a sweet face, "they really loved her!" Fowler stated.

Juliet has also made her rounds by visiting Eddie Mathews at The Stratford Chamber of Commerce, "Juliet is really



(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

Juliet the ferret, therapy pet peeking out of her purple carrier

friendly, and I don't think many other people can claim they have a therapy ferret," Mathews commented to Stratford Times.

Due to their high intelligence and trainability, ferrets are great therapy animals and can help to relax and build trust

and understanding with those who meet them, "she's really helped to break the ice with a lot of people and given them a better understanding and empathy towards the smaller and lesser-known creatures that we share this planet with," Fowler states.

"Ferrets are incredibly clean too. A lot of people have the misconception that ferrets smell bad, but they do not. They are very clean animals and have their own order, no different than a dog or a cat."

At home, Juliet is on a natural diet consisting of raw meat, organs and bones from chicken, turkey, beef and salmon. Like all ferrets, she needs an exceptional amount of out-of-cage time to get the exercise and mental stimulation required to keep her happy and healthy.

"She loves playing with the cat toys, and she'll just make herself busy by getting into things, so you have to keep a close eye on her; it's like a playful little two-year-old that you constantly have to watch," Fowler notes.

Another initiative currently run by Fowler is the Paws Outreach Program, where lower-income households and people in need within the community can contact her directly for help with basic pet essentials, such as food, cat litter, pet supplies and treats in order to assist people so that their pets can stay in their homes. "It's all 100% free. You just have to contact me and explain what your needs are," she said.

If you'd like more information or are interested in donating to the Paws Outreach Program, please contact Janita Fowler at pawsstratford@gmail.com or visit her website at www.pawsstratford.com

Perth County Council Awards Contract for Courthouse Campus Project

Perth County Council recently awarded the contract for the 5 Huron Renovation and Connecting Link Addition project to Dakon Construction for just over \$5 million. This decision marks an important step toward a renewed Courthouse Campus for the County's Administration.

Over the past 16 months, staff and the project design team have been working on the 5 Huron Reno & Connecting Link project. The construction tender was issued in April 2023 to eight pre-qualified contractors and closed in early May 2023. A total of six bids were received on the project. This project will renovate both floors of the 5 Huron Street building (former home of Service Ontario) for the purposes of housing the County's administrative staff along with a new connecting link addition which will provide the main entrance and central reception for

both the Courthouse and 5 Huron facilities.

In a report to County Council Director of Public Works, John McClelland, reviewed the progress on the project to date and shared his excitement about reaching this important milestone. "I am pleased to receive Council's continued support for this project," said McClelland "It has been a long journey to reach this point and it is exciting to see this project move forward."

"This is a historic project for the future home of the County of Perth," said Warden Rhonda Ehgoetz. "Council has shown great leadership in moving the project forward. A tremendous amount of preparation and hard work has gone into bringing the project to this stage and I am eager to see the plans come to life."

"I am delighted with the support of Council to expand the County's central administration facilities," said Lori Wolfe, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). "County staff are committed to excellence in service delivery and this renewed facility will further support the exceptional work we do for our community."

The project is expected to break ground in Summer 2023 with an anticipated completion date of Fall 2024.

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At the William Allman Memorial Arena
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Join us for a 3k walk around the Avon River

Registration starts @ 9:30am

Email for more information
southwestslp@gmail.com

Or find us on Facebook,
Perth Brain Injury Group Walk

Stratford's controversial bandshell?

BETTY JO BELTON

Stratford-Perth Archives

Stratford's bandshell, next to the river on Veteran's Drive, has been the venue for many community events over the years. So many that it seems like this small, handsome structure is a natural part of the landscape that's been there forever. But its design and location were actually quite controversial choices back in 1929. Adelaide Leitch tells the story as well as anyone could in her 1980 book, *Floodtides of Fortune: The Story of Stratford*. She writes:

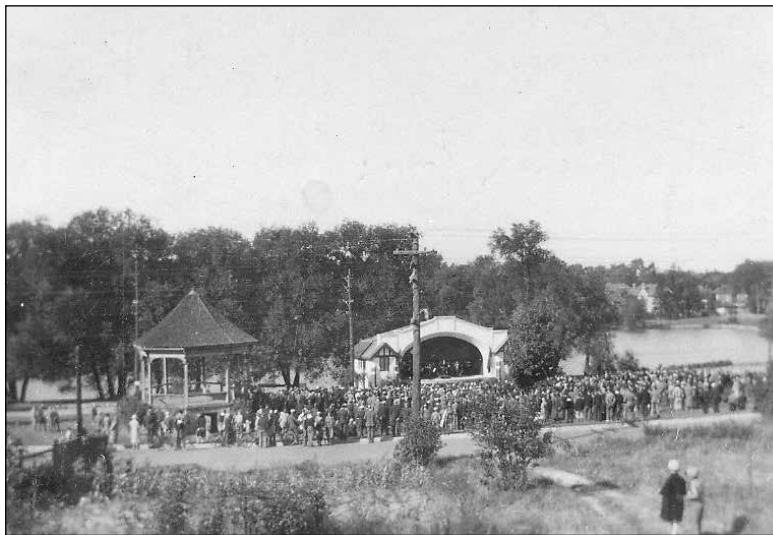
Like many small cities, Stratford built a handsome downtown bandstand in the nineteenth century, a fine, open octagonal stand that aged gracefully with concerts, the skirling of bagpipes and the martial music of the bands. Like the village pump before it, it became a meeting place for the whole community, and there was an outcry when the aging bandstand was slated to be moved and probably replaced. Three sites were possible for a new stand: in the willows by the river, facing the river on York Street, or abutting on Cobourg Street. There were two choices of style: another open stand or the new shell, which was just becoming popular.

In 1929, the matter came, innocently enough before the parks board, and it quickly fanned the biggest row Stratford had seen since the C.P.R. had tried to usurp the tranquil parklands by the river.

There was much ado about a bandstand as they battled over location and over style. Opposing sides seemed about evenly matched. All of them circulated petitions, demanded that council intervene, and wrote long, windy letters to the newspaper. The city engineer added the information



Stratford's bandshell as it appeared by moonlight on the day it opened in 1929.



The original bandstand stood in Battery Park, between Downie and Waterloo Streets, opposite the YMCA. The stand was moved to the intersection of Ontario and Erie Street and remained there until it was placed on park property.

that the proposed bandstand chiefly of wood. Even within the parks board, since it was to be constructed there was disagreement, and, in

their stormiest session in over two decades, the commissioners finally voted, four to one, for a shell and a location among the willows of Lakeside Park.

The boaters were irate. The shell would face away from the river, they protested, and they would be unable to hear, as they floated upon the water. Also opposed, were the people in the trades and labor council and the ratepayers association. The Musicians' Protective Association was worried about mosquitoes. Besides, the association slyly pointed out, big cities like Toronto, Chicago and San Francisco didn't have shell stands did they?

As for the musicians, who would be most affected, the Perth Regiment Band didn't want a shell stand, but the C.N.R. Employees' Band did, although not

in the mosquito-laden willows. The Local Council of Women objected. Alderman Wigglesworth argued plaintively that, as council was paying half the bill, it should have something to say about design. And it did, finally. It approved an open stand to the disgust of Dr. E.H. Eidt, "Father of the Parks Board", who then came out in favor of a shell.

After the smoke cleared, the parks board had the final say and clinched it. On June 4, by majority vote, the commissioners accepted a tender, over howls of anguish and shouts of glee, for a band shell, and set about erecting it in the willows.

It opened, on schedule, on September 21, 1929.

The Royal Canadian Regiment band came over from London and played lustily afternoon and evening, its leader claiming he had never played on a better stand. There was a display of living statuary. There were Scottish dances and Scottish pipers, and several numbers by the Brunswick Male Quartet.

It was proclaimed "Tom Orr Day", in honor of the man who had introduced the idea of a shell stand, after seeing them in southern United States. Later, he was vindicated in his choice. When the Canadian National Exhibition was considering a bandstand, they came up from Toronto and looked over what the Classic City had chosen. Toronto, in 1938, also built a shell. As for Stratford's old stand, it was given to the Agricultural Society and moved to the fair grounds.

As always, Stratfordites had abhorred the unimaginative, the static, the trite and the mass-produced!

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



Union leaders speaking from the bandshell and the crowd that gathered to hear them during Stratford's infamous furniture workers' strike in 1933.



Parades at Stratford's bandshell in the 1950s and 1960s.

Stratford artist takeover at Matilda Gallery

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

The Matilda Gallery & Art Bar at 85 Downie Street opened its doors on Friday, June 2nd, for the first-ever Stratford Artist Takeover and Grand Opening Celebration.

“Stratford turned out in droves in support of our local artists,” stated Kevin September, local artist and Matilda Gallery & Art Bar employee.

The gallery opened to a waiting crowd of Stratford Locals wanting to get the first look at the new location and set eyes on over 225 pieces of local artwork.

The Stratford Artist takeover will run from June 2nd until July 23rd, with 6 full weeks to enjoy art from over 50 local artists. Additional shows will run for a 4-week period.

Sara Filton, the owner of Matilda Swanson Gallery & Art Bar, noted in a statement to Stratford Times, “It is exciting to consider the many visitors to Stratford, through the spring and summer festival season, who will soon be introduced to other creative talents this community has to share with the world.”

The Matilda Gallery & Art Bar, named after the 1996 film, *Matilda*, adapted from the children’s story by Roald Dahl, opened its doors for the first time in May however will now be fully opened to the public with a full gallery starting this month.

The grand opening night was a complete success, with Stratford residents lining up before the doors even opened, “I’m just so



overwhelmed I can’t even think,” Filton stated the night of the show.

The evening started with popcorn and champagne and also featured music by DJ Nineteen Ninety Nix.

The gallery team took to Instagram with their gratitude to attendees, artists and gallery staff stating, “Thank you so much to everyone who joined us last night for (our) first opening of the Stratford Artists

Takeover Show! Congratulations to all of the artists who are a part of the show & give it up for the Matilda team who made it happen.”

One notable artist appearing at the event was Stephen Jackman-Torkoff, lead actor of *Richard II* at this year’s Stratford Festival. They showcased two pieces of art, one being sold before the end of the evening.

“I’m in the theatre, but when there are other things going on in Stratford, it feels so alive in the town, and it’s a very unique place. It makes the town feel small and huge at the same time.” Jackman-Torkoff said about Stratford.

Katie Micak, a local artist and Art Gallery employee, notes another unique feature of the gallery is that they offer a trial program for all of the art, “we are a sales gallery, but we want to make sure that whoever is buying a piece really loves it. So, we offer free trials; people are welcome to take home a piece, even something from this show or from our larger artists roster, for about one to two weeks free of charge. We deliver to most local places in Ontario, such as the GTA and Kitchener.” Micak notes that this can be very helpful for those unsure if the colours or size will work in an at-home space.

The Matilda Swanson Gallery & Art Bar is open Wednesdays and Thursdays from 11 a.m. until 5 p.m., Fridays and Saturdays from 11 a.m. until 6 p.m. and Sundays from 12 p.m. until 4 p.m. They are located at 85 Downie Street, right beside the Avon Theater.

World Crokinole Tourney an Enormous Success

LEE GRIFFI

Times Regional Reporter

After a three-year hiatus, the World Crokinole Championship made a comeback of epic proportions on Saturday at the Tavistock and District Recreation Centre.

Over 400 participants from across the globe took part in the one-day tournament that saw a record 133 tables set up by committee members and volunteers. Linda Bender is in charge of registration and sponsorships and said participants came from everywhere to take part including several American states. “They were from Alaska, California, Florida, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, and Texas.”

Tom Everett made his first appearance and travelled all the way from Jacksonville Beach, Florida. “About five years ago I went to a local board game convention and found this crokinole game and really got into it. I bought a board, got my neighbour into it and have been planning this trip ever since. It was infectious.” He added the hospitality from everyone involved has been incredible. “We brought our wives along, the area is beautiful, and the people have been nothing but nice. “We have been impressed with the level of competition here, it is very strong. We have realized we are not nearly as good as these people,” he laughed. When asked if he would return, Everett had a quick reply. “Oh of course. We are going to try and



bring more people.”

Michael Drog is Everet’s neighbour and said he couldn’t wait to finally make the trip north. “This is our first time here. We’ve been talking about getting up here for about four years now and we’re having a great time. All the boards, all the people, and everybody we have met have been great.” The American involvement played a huge role as Connor Reinman of Grosse Pointe, Michigan won the single’s title after a thrilling final match against Kitchener’s Andrew Hutchinson. Reinman defeated five-time and defending champ Justin Slater in the semifinals.

The international participation included Magnus Rundström from Engelholm, Sweden (previously featured in the *Gazette*) as well as competitors from England, Spain, and Hungary. A film crew

from Los Angeles also took part as director Brian Spillane of Above Board TV, an upcoming lifestyle show about tabletop gaming, participated in the tournament and filmed throughout the day. Spillane expects the footage from the tournament to be released in a few months and it will be available on the Above Board TV YouTube channel.

As always there was a family flavour to the event. “I think of crokinole as a family game. It’s really neat when young people can play, and really old people can play. There were four families that had five members of their family playing,” said Bender. She added the committee is always looking to make the tournament better for those participating and they will look to improve their registration system next year, but she added overall

everything went well. She added more committee members and volunteers are needed going forward. “We are always looking for help because our committee numbers are low. It would be nice to have more members to take on a role like sponsorships for example. I also want to say a big thank you to the committee members and all the other volunteers and a big thank you to Tavistock.”

Anne Curtin and her husband Tyler Boyes from London made their first appearance in the tournament’s Rec Division and Curtin said after years of playing for fun they thought they would try a tad of competition. “We’ve played crokinole for years during the winter or at the family cottage and we just found out about the tournament, so we decided to see what it was like.” She added that they entered a competition in London to get ready for the event. “We were really surprised to find there is this whole underground crokinole world we didn’t know existed. There were clubs coming from all over Ontario and the states, and we have a club in London we didn’t know about. We are really excited to see something we care about really has grown and exists beyond what we knew.” When asked who would win if the husband-and-wife team ended up playing head-to-head, Curtin said she’d be in trouble. “He’s really good. I don’t know if we’ll be at the same table, but you never know, I might get lucky today. I’ve been doing my little finger push-ups.”



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Tahini's Grand Opening on Huron Street in Stratford

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

Tantalizing tastebuds across Ontario, Tahini's Restaurant has now opened one of its newest locations in Stratford. Thanks to its delectable Middle Eastern menu and an impressive array of shawarma options, Tahini's Grand Opening had Stratford residents lining up to get a taste.

The franchisee owner, Ankita Patel, held an open house to welcome Stratford residents on May 14th at the new location at 581 Huron St, beside Sobeys. The restaurant offered half-price shawarma wraps all day, from 11 a.m. until 11 p.m.

Patel opened the new location only five years after immigrating to Canada from India. She wanted to open a Tahini franchise location because of the need for something new in the community. "I opted for Tahini's because the food is very good, and it's brewing in the market; right now, the company is already doing so well," she expressed.

The fusion cuisine restaurant prides itself in offering a Middle Eastern menu and a wide range of sauces and flavours that will excite anyone looking for a quick yet delicious meal. "We have butter chicken and Jamaican jerk flavours, so it's more like a mix of everything," stated Omar Hamam, CEO/



HUNGRY? GET SHAWARMA!

Muhammad Malik, Kashifa Muddassir and their children Haaniya Malik and Yousuf Malik after enjoying a meal at Tahini's Grand Opening.

(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

Co-Founder of Tahini's Restaurants.

The franchise has opened 27 new locations across Canada, and Hamam has more ambitious plans of opening more locations this year, "Over the next three years, we are hoping to open 60 stores, and we have 15 stores in development right now," he said.

Emphasizing the importance of community, the new Stratford establishment has hired local employees, fostering a sense of family that is integral to the franchise values. "Each franchise location is like a family," Hamam said, "It's very important for us as a franchisor; we want to help and see our franchise owners and the staff succeed."

Tahini's signature dishes, their irresistible shawarma wraps and rice bowls have become instant classics. Whether indulging in their Jamaican jerk rice bowl, a blend of Jamaican chicken, basmati rice, pineapple and fried onions or enjoying their messy fries topped with their signature messy sauce, the options are sure to satisfy any craving.

Not to be missed, their Arabian bites are a unique twist on the shawarma wraps, featuring bite-sized portions of their chicken shawarma topped with garlic sauce.

Feeling hungry? Don't hesitate to visit Tahini's for your next meal at 581 Huron St.

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Annie's Seafood Restaurant is now Certified Gluten Free

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

Annie's Seafood Restaurant has been serving a wide range of gluten-free menu items for over 10 years but recently became a certified, gluten-free restaurant.

"To the best of our knowledge. We are the first combination restaurant west of Toronto ever to get this certification," noted Virginia Robinson, co-owner of Annie's Seafood Restaurant.

"This became important to us because years ago, when we sat down with some of our celiac customers, we learned about the fear they experienced when they were dining out. We were quite moved by the fact that they had been so limited," states Robinson.

Annie's Seafood restaurant is the only Ontario combination-style restaurant serving a large-scale gluten-free menu alongside regular menu items. "This gives families the opportunity to dine together, gluten-free or not, without worry," Robinson said.

It is important to the owners that the food is not only safe but also tastes good, "it's not just about the food safety, but it has to taste great too. Gluten-free has come a long way in the last few years." States Sean Robins, co-owner.

The restaurant owners noted that customers from all over Ontario are coming to visit them because of their double-sided gluten-free menu, "we're already a destination restaurant. People drive for an hour or two every single day to come here. Now, with this certification, it's just going to be one more reason for tourists to come to this city."



(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

GLUTEN-FREE

Annie's Seafood Restaurant NEW double-sided, gluten-free menu

The Gluten-free Certification is a voluntary process by which ingredients and food services are rigorously tested, and those handling foods are trained and cer-

tified yearly. The National Celiac Association also endorses the program.

Taking the initiative to become a gluten-free, certified restaurant is not easy. It's a costly process where every staff member has to be trained yearly, and there are regular inspections to confirm that restaurants are upholding their certification.

According to the Gluten-free Food Program (GFFP) website, "Consumers are looking for trust and reassurance that a product contains the lowest level of gluten possible in a product. GFFP gluten-free certification will reassure consumers with celiac disease or gluten sensitivities that the products are safe to consume."

Annie's Seafood Restaurant has offered celiac and gluten-sensitive customers a comfortable, worry-free environment, and people from across Ontario are showing their appreciation online:

"They had a very extensive GF menu; they even labelled his meal with a GF sticker when they bought it out to avoid confusion. The food was absolutely amazing," one online reviewer states.

And another five-star reviewer noted, "They make excellent gluten-free fish and chips. They also take all the precautions needed for those with celiac disease to feel comfortable and remain safe."

Keep an eye out for the next addition to Annie's Seafood Restaurant: a gluten-free, mobile food truck making its rounds around Perth County. The food truck is expected to have its grand opening in the near future and offer a gluten-free, customizable menu for special events and celebrations.

Stratford Chefs School congratulates their 2023 class as it enters its 40th year of educating the best chefs in Ontario

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

Known for its intense programs and world-class chef training, Stratford Chefs School has been a world leader in culinary education, attracting students from all over Ontario and the world for almost 40 years.

The graduation ceremony was extra special this year as the staff said goodbye to the smallest graduating class yet at the tail end of the COVID-19 Pandemic students.

"The past few years have been very challenging and brought unprecedented change and upheaval to restaurants worldwide." Noted Randi Rudner, program manager and a clear favourite among the Stratford Chefs School students, "Throughout the Coronavirus pandemic Stratford Festival has retained the integrity of its curriculum, and we've been able to deliver our program largely intact."

The intense, two-year program is delivered to the class, sometimes running for more than 15 hours a day in the kitchen. The students get a wide range of culinary experience, making an array of foods and pastries that will set them apart in their future after graduating from the esteemed school.

One student graduate, in particular, this year stood out. Jonathon Farrell took home three awards, including the BMO award for commitment to Industry and Academic Achievement, the Eleanor Kane Award for Outstanding Achievement in Gastronomy and the SCS Award for Excellence in Wine Theory and Service.

Farrell was also appointed Valedictorian by his classmates and spoke highly of the school, their reputation and the staff alike, "The intersection of education, hospitality and passion at which all of these live and work is phenomenal, and the dedication and care

that they each bring to every aspect of their role at the chef school is the reason why this institution is so special."

Farrell dedicated much of his speech to the teachers at the Stratford Chefs School and noted, "The biggest lesson that I will take away from any of this is the importance of giving a damn. All of you give a damn, and it has changed lives at this place since 1984."

Graduates are moving on to finding their passions in different careers, such as Yacht Chef and others interested in parties, baking, and fine cooking.

The graduation ceremony was held at the Stratford Festival Paul D. Fleck Marquee Hall, where graduates, along with family and staff, gathered to celebrate, mingle and drink champagne together and finally say goodbye to not only two years of Chefs School training but to the pandemic that brought such a small class closer together than any year before.



(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

GRADUATION

Stratford Chef School Graduates at the 2023 ceremony held at The Stratford Festival, Paul D. Fleck Marquee

New Business Spotlight: Danielle O'Connor Jewellery

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

The new Danielle O'Connor Jewellery boutique is conveniently located across from the Avon Theater at 96 Downie St. and is the first of its kind in Stratford.

The unique jewellery is crafted by Danielle O'Connor, who started her jewellery career when she was in high school.

"I started making bracelets out of forks and spoons and butter knives of all things, and before I was done high school, I had a sales rep pick them up, and they were being sold in 40 shops," O'Connor told the Stratford Times.

After graduating, O'Connor continued her passion for jewellery making and enrolled in Georgian College's Jewellery and Metals program, leading to a goldsmithing postgraduate program.

"I have been inspired by the natural beauty of coloured gemstones, the ability to form, fabricate and texture metal to create meaningful pieces of art that can be worn every day." The designer states on her website.

O'Connor moved to Stratford shortly after finding out about her mother's Alzheimer's diagnosis, "we just needed a community that had more support for her," she stated.

After the pandemic and finding her mother a fitting nursing home, O'Connor was able to focus on business and found the perfect location on Downie St. right across from the Avon Theater.



JEWELLERY BOUTIQUE

Danielle O'Connor outside of her new boutique, Danielle O'Connor Jewellery

(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

The store currently displays a unique gemstone line, not available anywhere else, even online. These handcrafted necklaces, earrings and bracelets and unique to each piece of jewellery, "it's one of a kind, so I've never really been able to showcase it this way before," O'Connor states.

Before opening her new location on Downie St., O'Connor worked out of her home. She notes that having a new space is inspiring and comes with interesting new experiences, "I find people peek in and then knock on the window; they want to come in early to purchase something they see in the window. I've never experienced that before," she said.

Because of the expansion, O'Connor was able to bring in a line of high-quality watches that is very popular with the Stratford crowd, "they're just flying out the door," she expressed.

The boutique also offers a range of select, hand-picked bath and body products made by Canadian companies.

O'Connor said her line of coin jewellery is her best seller: "I make the coins, and they have a vintage flair; they are very popular."

Another main feature that O'Connor offers is her custom jewelry design, "I do custom work and repairs; the custom work is kind of my forte. People can bring in their stones, and we can redesign a beautiful piece."

Stop in at Danielle O'Connor Jewellery at 96 Downie St. to see her full jewellery line or discuss custom work.

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D&S DOWNHAM EQUIPMENT LTD.

Big Opening

D&S Downham Equipment hosts Grand Opening June 24th in new 19,000 sq. ft. facility

STEWART GRANT

Publisher

A local business for 62 years and spanning three generations, D&S Downham Equipment Ltd. celebrates a key milestone this month as they move into their brand new 19,000 sq. ft. building at 3981 Perth Line 26, Stratford.

Downham invites the community to stop by for a visit on Saturday, June 24th for the company's Grand Opening – right across the road from the "old school-

house" where they've operated since moving there in 1974.

"It's going to be an exciting day," says Mark Downham, third-generation owner of the business, following in the footsteps of his father Bob and grandfather Cecil. "We are going to give away a \$7,000 Kubota lawn mower to somebody that shows up, and a \$1,400 Karcher sweeper. We'll have live music, a 4-H barbecue, a photo booth, registration table to participate in the draw, bouncy castle, and lots of equipment on display."

The new building, which they started working out of on Monday, June 5th, is representative of how the business has grown and evolved over the years.

D&S began in 1961 on the west end of Stratford as a Massey Ferguson dealership. Co-founder Cecil Downham moved the growing business to Perth Line 26 in 1974, where since then they've occupied and expanded upon the former SS No. 5 Downie school which dates back to 1857.

While primarily a Massey Ferguson dealership in the early years, different

product lines were added over the years. Most notably in 1985, D&S Downham added the Kubota Tractor Sales and Service agreement. As Kubota has grown its offerings over the decades, so has D&S Downham.

"Kubota's expanding lineup of turf, construction and agriculture equipment allowed us to restructure in 2015 as a Kubota-only stand-alone store serving Perth and Oxford counties," said Mark. "Traditionally, Kubota was a compact tractor company, that's where their core roots are,



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Bob Downham (left) and Mark Downham in front of the brand new 19,000 sq. ft. D&S Downham facility at 3981 Perth Line 26, Stratford. Bob Downham purchased D&S Downham from his father Cecil in 1987, while Mark became the third-generation owner in 2021.

but through the years they've acquired other companies, including Kverneland, Land Pride, and Great Plains, and those are all sub-categories of Kubota."

Kubota product line now includes tractors, mowers, utility vehicles, mini excavators, skid steer loaders, compact track loaders, wheel loaders, tractor loader backhoes, track carriers, K-Haul trailers, implements, and construction attachments.

Also operating as a division of D&S Downham Equipment is Karcher Professional Wash Systems. "When we merged in a location in Brunner, they sold Karcher products. One of the guys there really spearheaded selling the Karcher line and by 1995 it had really taken off," described Mark.

"Karcher is big on any kind of cleaning equipment - industrial pressure washers, industrial floor-care such as scrubbers, sweepers and all of those products. We do a large chunk of business on the Karcher side, covering much of the southwestern Ontario territory. Like with Kubota, we offer both sales and service."

It became apparent over time that a new building would ultimately be needed to accommodate the growth of D&S Downham Equipment Ltd.

"We were land-locked and we couldn't grow the business any further out of the schoolhouse," said Mark. "In 2017, we purchased seven acres across the road from the schoolhouse for future expansion. In 2022, we offi-

cially broke ground."

Among other benefits, the new facility provides the company the space to more effectively complete final assembly and display of the larger implements of manufacturers such as Kverneland and Great Plains that Kubota has acquired over the years.

Though the business has grown and evolved over the years, Mark says that some of the constants that have remained over the years has been their strong relationships with their community and with their loyal staff.

"We've also maintained being local owner/operators, close to our community. We've tried to support as many community events as we can, whether it be financial help, equipment needs, or just helping out wherever we can." D&S Downham is also a key supporter of the Stratford Warriors Hockey Club and sponsors local minor sports teams.

"Our staff is very dedicated, with several years of experience not only in the industry but also with D&S - most of our current staff have been with us for 10 years or more. Even many who have retired with us came back to help us with the move. We're pretty proud of our staff."

Come on out to see the new D&S Downham Equipment Ltd. facility for the Grand Opening at 3981 Perth Line 26, Stratford, on Saturday, June 24th. The event will run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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KARCHER PROFESSIONAL WASH SYSTEMS

(STEWART GRANT PHOTOS)

D&S Downham Equipment Ltd. owner Mark Downham and Karcher Professional Wash Systems sales representative Chris Clifford stand amongst some of the industrial cleaning units offered by Karcher. The company provides sales and service support for Karcher products throughout southwestern Ontario.

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RankMyAgent Best of Stratford 2022

Stratford students win Gold at H-P, WOSSAA Tennis

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Times Regional Reporter

Stratford District Secondary School (SDSS) was the overall winner on May 18th at the Huron-Perth Tennis Championships, where 10 qualified to advance to WOSSAA. St. Michael Catholic Secondary also sent a competitor to WOSSAA.

In Girls Singles at the H-P Championships, two SDSS students finished in the top two spots with Felicity Sibold earning

the Gold Medal while Milena Barlow took the Silver. On the Boys Singles side, St. Michael's Matthew Furlong came away with a Silver Medal. Furlong later came in fourth at WOSSAA.

Meg Feore and Ava McMillan of SDSS picked up the Gold Medal in the Girls Doubles division. In Boys Doubles, brothers Aidan and Liam Benton captured the Gold, with the Silver going to fellow SDSS duo Ryan Cassone and Harrison Robinet. Feore and McMillan then found another Gold at

WOSSAA.

The Gold Medal in the Mixed Doubles category went to the SDSS duo of Dayna

Schildrop and Mark Barton. At WOSSAA, Barton and Schildrop picked up another Gold in the Mixed Doubles.

TENNIS CHAMPIONS

Stratford District Secondary School was the overall winner of the Huron-Perth Tennis Championships, with 10 qualifying for WOSSAA action. Matthew Furlong of St. Michael Catholic Secondary also qualified for WOSSAA. Pictured is the SDSS Tennis team, including the front row, from left to right, of Harrison Robinet and Liam Benton. In the back row, from left, are Aidan Benton, Josh Heaton, Mark Barton, Justin Malott, Meg Feore, Ava McMillan, Georgia Neely, Ella de Graaf, Coach Stephen Fischer, and Sophie Keene. Absent from the photo were Dayna Schildrop, Ryan Cassone, Felicity Sibold, Milena Barlow, Henry Tuer, Kien Gerber, and Lucy Chung.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)



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.

The Buddy Coffee Check Programs continue every Tuesday at 10:30 am. Good chance to talk to other veterans. The Fall Veterans Dinner is coming up in late September, paid for by the Poppy Fund, all Vets welcome. More info to follow. Contact the Branch at 5192714540 for any questions or concerns and Bill will get back to you. Have a good summer.

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(STEWART GRANT PHOTO)

SOCCER CHAMPS!

The St. Mikes Junior Girls recently won the Huron-Perth soccer title. For more see page 22.



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St. Mike's Senior Boys dominant in march to H-P, WOSSAA titles

SPENCER SEYMOUR

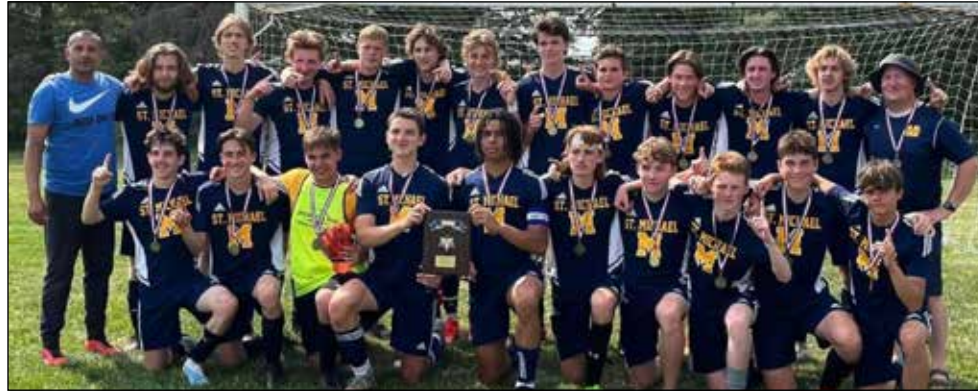
Times Regional Reporter

Putting up 37 goals over the course of the regular season and Huron-Perth playoffs would be impressive enough, but perhaps even more astonishing is the fact that the St. Michael Senior Boys soccer team didn't give up a single goal all year en route to capturing the H-P Championship on May 30th.

The H-P playoffs started with a clash of neighbouring schools, with St. Mike's battling Stratford District Secondary (SDSS) in a semi-final matchup that St. Michael took by a score of 3-0. This led to a Championship clash against St. Marys DCVI for the Stratford squad, which once again they won by a score of 3-0 to claim the regional playoff title.

Owen Holloway, Jack Murphy, and Ben Piro DeFehr scored against DCVI while goalkeeper Cole Iacobellis capped off his incredible run with the shutout, with zero goals getting by him during the H-P season.

With the H-P championship and a Gold Medal secured, the boys readied themselves for WOSSAA on Thursday, which began with their toughest test up to that point in St. Mary's College from Woodstock. Regular time ended with neither time finding the back of the net so the boys entered additional time with a chance at the finals on the line. With St. Michael pressing, Vincent Voros received a pass, danced through two



The St. Michael Senior Boys soccer team are Huron-Perth and WOSSAA Champions! Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Owen Holloway, Wilem Dewit, Cole Iacobellis, Ethan Barel, Kain Mills, Brennan Vanderkuylen, Jack Kuisar, Jack Murphy, Owen Gaylor, and Owen Holmes. In the back row, from left, are Coach Eddie Lopez, Luka Pereira, Josh Ballantyne, Milo Marquette, Ryan Haines, Ben Piro DeFehr, Issac Nickel, Zach Van Stratten, Vincent Voros, Andrew Corsaut, Andrew Van Bakel, Dylan Vrbanc, and Coach John Corsaut.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

of St. Mary's defenders, and beat the opposing keeper with a goal scored from outside the eighteen-yard box. The St. Michael boys hung on the rest of the way in extra time to secure a 1-0 win and a birth in the final game.

The next challenger for St. Mike's was London South Collegiate Institute with WOSSAA Gold and the opportunity to move onto OFSAA at stake. St. Michael started strong and seemed to surprise London South with their talent and level of play. Issac Nickel scored first and early for the team, followed by a second goal by Nickel soon after.

Additional goals scored by Owen Holmes, Jack Murphy, and Dylan Vrbanc saw St. Mike's with a 5-0 score towards the end of the second half. London South did rally with two late goals, but that was not enough to defeat the Stratford side.

Head Coach John Corsaut talked to the Times following the WOSSAA victory, saying this team is a calibre of which he's never had the pleasure of being a part.

"I have never coached a team with such an outstanding record," raved Corsaut. "They demonstrated so much talent, tenacity, and synergy. They trust each other completely

which leads to a very effective team."

Corsaut also mentioned what one of the opposing coaches told him after a game about the other coach's conversations with his players about trying to break through against St. Mike's.

"One of our opponent's coaches said to me that when his boys came off the field at half they couldn't figure out how to play against us. His players commented that '[St. Michael's] strikers are too effective and can't be left alone. If we can get by the strikers, there seem to be midfielders everywhere challenging us. Then, we have to face their defence which acts like a solid wall. And that's on top of their keeper who hasn't let a goal in'. The coach also mentioned to me that 'then you substitute players who are just as good. It's really not fair.' I think having another coach of a strong team saying that indicates how well-rounded and deeply talented our team is."

The team competed at OFSAA after the Times went to press, which was held in Bradford from June 8th to June 10th. In addition to the high talent level on the team, Corsaut also praised the group for their character.

"Not only are coach Eddie Lopez and I extremely proud of how well the boys have played, but they are also a very coachable group of young men. Many game officials have commented on the respect they receive from the team on the field and we receive the same respect as coaches."



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PADDLE!

The 2023 Dragon Boat Challenge saw a strong turnout with plenty of teams competing in beautiful conditions. Bruce's Dragons won the Family & Friends Cup, while the Stratford Juniors came away with the Youth Challenge Cup. Both the Thames River Paddling Club's adult rec team and U24 team are paddling all summer and are open for more people to join.



CHAMPIONS

(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTOS)

The Wildwood Dragon Boat Challenge took place on Sunday, May 28th, at Wildwood Conservation Area, with the Stratford-based Schaeffler Canada Bearing Arms winning the Industry Cup and 'A' Division Champions. The Schaeffler team beat out the Ritz Dragons, Rusty Dragons, and Stratford Silver Masters to win the 'A' Division title.



WARRIORS CLAIM JUNIOR GIRLS' HURON-PERTH SOCCER TITLE

(STEWART GRANT PHOTO)

On Wednesday, May 24, the St. Michael Catholic Secondary School girls put on a dominating display in winning the Huron-Perth title over St. Marys DCVI. Though the Salukis kept the Warriors off the scoresheet in the first half, St. Mike's players broke through with four unanswered goals in the second half to claim the gold medal. Pictured above following one of the Warriors goals are Avaleen Flood, Vanessa Van Straaten, Olivia Leppington, Anne Nickel, Addie Nickel, Victoria Campbell and Olivia Van Straaten.

Drag Queen Story Time audience grows in Stratford amidst controversy in other regions

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

Pride Month in Stratford started strong with a number of Pride-filled events, including Drag Queen Storytime at the Stratford Public Library (SPL) in partnership with Stratford Pride Community Centre (SPCC) and Fanfare books.

A number of Drag Storytime events across the region sparked a new wave of hate, including threats of protest, states a library associate. However, the SPL was not worried, "We contacted the Stratford police just in case, but thankfully, we were told there was no concern here in Stratford," she noted.

"There's something about Stratford that makes it an island of sanity while similar events across Canada and the USA are being bullied into cancelling by misinformed, mistaken and malicious people claiming there's something harmful about Drag Storytime," said Bruce Duncan Skeaff, president of the Stratford Pride Community Centre & Pride Guide.

Past Drag Queen Storytime events were held at the SPCC; however, the Stratford Public Library offered their location, which was much more spacious for the event.

"We've hosted storytime events three times in the last nine months and had full houses of 20 each time, said Skeaff, "A move from our available space in the community center to the larger auditorium at the Stratford Public Library saw this morning's audience of parents and children skyrocket to 120," he went on to say.

At this event, children enjoyed the company of Galaxy Rose and Brattery Acid, two Drag performers from London, Ontario.

The library staff, parents and children alike were excited about the event. Krista Robinson, CEO of Stratford Public Library, noted, "We believe that drag



STORYTIME AT THE LIBRARY

Galaxy Rose and Brattery Acid, Drag Queen Performers reading to the children and parents at Stratford Public Library during the Drag Storytime event.

(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

Storytime helps inspire a love of reading while teaching lessons of diversity, self-love and appreciation of others."

Many parents showed their support, including Kate Beath, Stratford mom of two, "I really think it's important to show the current generation and the next generation to be inclusive and accepting of all individuals. We're here to support everyone. I'm glad that my children's views are more progressive than anything I ever had in my life because of the resources and the community we live in, and I learn from them every day. I just really appreciate having that at our fingertips," stated Beath.

The event started with songs and dancing led by the SPL staff, and the children were later introduced to Galaxy Rose and Brattery Acid, whom each read a number of inclusive stories such as We are all Neighbours by Alex-

andra Penfold.

"What is a community? It's a place for you and me. Come along and see. We are all neighbours here," read Galaxy Rose from Penfold's children's book.

SPL and the SPCC plan to offer Drag Storytime three times each year, the next being around the Christmas holiday season. Please keep an eye on updates from the SPL website.

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Southern Ontario's only rural-based LGBTQ2S+ community centre marks its first anniversary this Pride Month

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

The Stratford Pride Community Centre (SPCC) is celebrating its one-year anniversary on June 4th. After the anniversary celebration, Bruce D. Skeaff from Stratford Pride Community Centre will head down to the Pride March and Pride Festival, with a stop at the Stratford Public Library for Drag Queen Story Time.

The Stratford Pride Community Centre (SPCC) works to advance the community as a progressive, inclusive, and welcoming place to live, work, visit, and do business for the LGBTQ2S+ community.

The physical centre, located upstairs at 24 Downie St, is a place for businesses and organizations wanting to learn how

to be more LGBTQ2S+ positive in their interactions with clients/customers and staff to find support and resources.

The LGBTQ2S+ community centre is also a major support system for the Stratford community to engage with each other. It also offers a safe space to host events, meetings and discussions with like-minded individuals.

Community members can access SPCC online or by visiting the location with questions related to Stratford community resources, "What's a gay-friendly neighbourhood? Can I find a gay-friendly real estate agent? Are their gay-friendly doctors in Stratford, you know, if you're a same-sex couple, you don't want somebody who's going to laugh at you behind your back," Skeaff stated.

Another celebratory factor is that the SPCC will officially onboard their first paid staff member, Heather McDowell, on July 3rd as the new Executive Director. McDowell plans to expand the program for more accessibility for the community, "we're looking to do a podcast to make sure that our programming is accessible not just to people who come physically to the space but also we want to make sure that there's accessibility to our programming for everyone that cannot come into the space as well," McDowell stated.

The SPCC is also hosting the first of 13 total "Stratford Gay Bar" at Rockwell Lounge starting on June 9th, just in time for The Stratford festival.

Skeaff noted, "We're going to take over the bar every night when one of the

three gay plays is running at the festival. As well as any evening where there's one of the pride events going on."

The bar is expected to be a busy place as the SPCC is advertising the event to Stratford locals, theatregoers and actors, as well as those coming into Stratford for other Pride-related events.

If you'd like to support the SPCC, they appreciate monetary donations, and McDowell also notes the importance of having open discussions, "the more voices that add to that conversation, and move that conversation forward, the better."

The SPCC offers two meeting rooms free of charge to host LGBTQ2S+ related meetings or events; if interested, please reach out to pride@stratfordpride.com.



Improving Forest Cover and Watershed Conditions in Perth County

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.

The SDSS Eco Club has had a wonderful year! We've completed many new initiatives and continued some old ones. This year, we started the process of creating an SDSS Urban Farm off O'Loane Avenue to make use of unused land, connect with the local community, and provide opportunities to learn about sustainable agricultural practices. We put together and gave away plant kits to help people start growing their own indoor plants; we continued the annual tradition of the Student Swap, where students exchange clothing and other items to discourage fast fashion and consumerism; and organised guest speakers and fun games for Earth Week at our school. However, our most notable achievement this year was winning the Canadian Youth Climate Action Award, out of many youth climate groups from all over Canada. We hope to put the money we received from this award to good use with our future initiatives and look forward to continuing to make positive changes in our community. We here at Seeking Sustainability are as committed as ever to providing the public with local environmental news, so here is our latest story, written by our newest team member, Kieran Albrecht.

The Upper Thames Conservation Au-

thority published a recent Watershed Report Card for the Avon River, which flows through Perth County, in April. According to the report, the surface water quality in the Avon River has remained relatively steady but receives an overall grade of D. Phosphorus levels have improved significantly since the 1970s but still remain elevated, with a slight increase in recent years. Forest conditions in the Avon River watershed have slightly improved in the past seven years, but still receive an overall grade of D. Most woodlots are too small and narrow to provide habitat for area-sensitive birds and other particular wildlife. Forest cover has increased slightly from 10.5% to 11%, primarily due to improved mapping and natural succession. The Environment Canada (EC) guideline for sustaining species and water quality in southern Ontario recommends a minimum of 30% forest cover. Currently, the Avon River has a forest cover of 11.0%, significantly below the EC guideline. Additionally, the forest interior, which represents the protected core area inside a woodlot necessary for the successful nesting of certain bird species, only accounts for 2.5% of the watershed, falling short of the EC guideline projection of 10.0%. The measure of forest cover within a 30 m riparian/buffer zone adjacent to all open watercourses, known as a Riparian Zone Forested, stands at 30.6% for the Avon River. However, the Environment Canada (EC) guideline suggests that it should be at a rate of 50.0%.

Globally, there has been a steady decline in urban trees and forest cover. There are five compelling reasons why cities need a healthy tree cover: environmental, health, social, biodiversity, and economic benefits. Urban trees provide a natural climate control mechanism, acting as a carbon dioxide vacuum and shielding residents from pollution. They also play a crucial role in protecting and enhancing urban biodiversity. By providing tree cover for the Avon River, we can contribute to slowing down climate change. Trees absorb carbon dioxide from the air, store carbon in their trunks and soil, and release oxygen into the atmosphere. To improve the Avon River Watershed, trees must play a significant role in establishing a robust environment.

Individuals, communities, groups, businesses, municipalities, and agencies all play a crucial role in improving the health of the watershed and the Avon River. In and around Perth County, individuals and communities have taken local actions to enhance the watershed. One example is the establishment of native trees and grasslands along watercourses, which helps to cool streams. Elaine and Roger Cook, landowners in Stratford and founders of the Upper Avon River Conservation Club, have been planting trees along the banks of the Avon River for twenty-five years. Roger Cook emphasises the importance of trees, stating, "No matter where they're planted, trees help enhance streams by reducing wind erosion in the wintertime

and water erosion. They are essential for water quality and aesthetics as well" (Beacon Herald). It is the local community's responsibility to protect and preserve trees along the Avon River's banks. Other local actions include providing food sources for aquatic species to stabilise banks and absorb nutrients. Additionally, efforts to improve stream health and fish passage involve the removal of dams and barriers, while the continued implementation of agricultural Best Management Practices (BMP) is crucial. Communities have also taken on the role of establishing cover crops to prevent soil erosion, reduce nutrient loss, and improve soil health, thereby mitigating nutrient loss from cropland.

With the help of local individuals, communities, groups, businesses, municipalities, and agencies in and around Perth County, the city of Stratford has made significant progress in improving the Avon River. However, to further enhance the watershed, it is crucial to plant native trees and shrubs along the river's edges. This approach will facilitate an increase in forest interior, allow woodlots to grow larger, and enable the Avon River Watershed to naturalise on its own. By employing Good Forestry practices and hiring a Certified Tree Marker to mark the woodlot and oversee harvesting, Stratford and Perth County landowners can play a vital role in assisting the Avon River to naturalise autonomously.

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

Cast members hit the red carpet for the Stratford Festival 71st Grand Opening Night

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

The main performance, King Lear starring Canadian actor Paul Gross is opening the Stratford Festival for the 2023 season.

It's been over 23 years since the actor last started in a Stratford Festival performance, and he is excited to be back, "This is one of the great theatre companies in the world, certainly the largest and most important theatre company in North America," the actor told reporters at the red-carpet event.

On May 30th, cast members of the festival and theatregoers showed up in support of the opening night of the Stratford Festival.

The event was the first to host a full crowd since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the excitement was felt by everyone attending.

At the event was a special guest, The Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, The Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell. Who sat front and centre during King Lear at the main festival location.

"She's a supporter of the festival and a big supporter of Stratford, Ontario. She also has a staff member with her tonight," states her Honours aides-de-camp during an interview with Stratford Times.

Another special guest appearing just days before opening night at The Stratford Festival was Eric Idle, English actor and comedian and original writer of Spamalot, who stopped in to see Monty Python's Spamalot at the theatre, according to The Stratford Festival's social media page.

The Stratford Police Pipes and Drums played a number of melodies as they walked up the iconic driveway to the festival gardens, where they stood around the pond to play while actors and Festival attendees watched on, took pictures and



RED CARPET TREATMENT

The cast of Rent on the red carpet opening night at The Stratford Festival

(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

listened in.

The cast of Rent was a hit on the red carpet, first talking to CTV news and then popping champagne to commemorate the event.

The group clearly has a chemistry that will shine on stage, and Masini McDermott, an actor in Rent, noted, "It's honestly easy getting along with each other. It doesn't feel like hard work. That's the bonus of the job."

This year there will be 13 productions on the playbill for the 2023 season, and the theatre will run at full capacity until the end of October.

Although a number of the performances have been viewed by Stratford residents and Festival members beforehand, most plays will host their opening nights over the next couple of weeks.

King Lear, along with Monty Python's Spamalot, Casey and Di-

ana, Rent and Grand Magic, will open the season, which starts on May 30th.

After that, eight more openings to follow in June, July and August: Much Ado About Nothing, A Wrinkle in Time, Richard II, Wedding Band, Women of the Fur Trade, Les Belles-Soeurs, Frankenstein Revived and Love's Labour's Lost.

Those interested in tickets can purchase them online or at the theatre box office.

Rebello reflects on Stratford's impact on his interest in film

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Justin Rebello, a film producer and the CEO of Vortex Media, recently returned to his hometown of Stratford, Ont. - where his love of film began.

Rebello said he was always interested in music, theatre, and cinema. His teachers at Stratford Central Secondary School in the 1990s also sparked his interest in media. The high school launched a media program at the time.

"I started playing around with the cameras and we started thinking about different films that we were enjoying at the time. Of course, at the time it was a really amazing time for film."

The first film Rebello saw in theatres was "Star Wars: Return of the Jedi" as a child. He saw lots of movies in Stratford and in London, as well as browsed the Videos Plus Books aisles and studied filmmakers, films, and VHS boxes in his spare time. Rebello also worked in another video store during high school.

"I remember opening a box when the first DVDs showed up and I remember opening the box and seeing the cover of 'The Matrix' when the first DVDs arrived."

The film "Twelve Monkeys" inspired him the most.

He saw the movie in Stratford and felt blown away.

"I remember seeing it in Stratford Cinemas and was like 'Woah, that's cool. You can do that for a career?'"

Rebello moved to Toronto in 1997 to study Film and Television at Humber College. He would return to Stratford in the summer to work bar at the cinema. After finding work after graduation, he's worked in film and television in Toronto ever since.

As first reported by the Stratford Beacon Herald, the producer recently returned to Stratford to host a Q&A screening of the Vortex Media film "The End of Sex" in Stratford Cinemas on April 29. Rebello told the Stratford Times that the event went well.

"I haven't lived there for a long time now, but I have a lot of friends and family including my parents and my in-laws so it was a very friendly audience and they seemed to really enjoy themselves," he said. "It's a comedy, so it's a lot more fun to watch a comedy with an audience - a community of people laughing together."

Vortex Media is a boutique studio in Toronto responsible for the production, distribution, and international sales of the films. The studio hopes to make two to three more movies before the end of the year and has six films in the post-production stage. Learn more about Vortex Media by visiting vortexproductions.ca.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Local Rotary Clubs support the Adventure in Citizenship Program in Ottawa

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

Nathan Bean, a grade 11 student from Stratford Secondary School, attended a 4-day "Adventure in Citizenship" program in Ottawa to learn "What it means to be Canadian."

The Rotary Club of Ottawa established an annual program in 1951 that welcomes over 150 senior high school students from across Canada to spend four days in Ottawa, experiencing tours, lectures, discussions and social events that are designed to enhance their understanding and appreciation of Canadian citizenship.

The group of students toured the parliament buildings, "We actually got to sit at the desks of the members of parliament," said Bean. "We listened to the speaker of the House of Commons give a presentation. And that was quite incredible. We did that only about half an hour before they actually had to meet for the day."

This annual tour provides a unique opportunity for a select group of young Canadians to come together and better understand Canadian citizenship through discussions and presentations.

Bean noted his experience meeting Canadians, such as John Nader and many other influential leaders, "We talked to a survivor of the Hungarian holocaust. He came in to talk about his experiences, which was quite incredible. We had an indigenous presentation by Bob Watts, a lecturer at Queen's University. And we also had some other presentations from



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Nathan Bean (back, middle) and other student participants at the annual Adventures in Citizenship program, Ottawa, ON.

more political figures; a senator and a Member of Parliament," he said.

Through meeting one another and having discussions among themselves, the students learned to appreciate diversity within Canada and the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship.

"It was quite incredible to see the di-

versity within Canada," Bean expressed. "I met a lot of people from coast to coast. Students from Yarmouth, people from British Columbia, and then someone from Nova Scotia. It's been an interesting experience listening to what their life is like. A lot of people on the trip had immigrated to Canada, and for me, listening

to their journey was moving," he noted.

Bean talked about other students who immigrated to Canada and their bold choices to do so: "Out of all the different countries that could have been chosen, it was Canada. It made me realize that what we have in Canada, freedom and democracy, are so sought after that people are willing to give up everything that comes here," he expressed.

Bean also noted that he sees potential in his own school, community and country to help, "I think it's more beneficial if we have more conversations rather than yelling; it's good for the government to work together not just for me but for everyone. There's more work that can be completed by collaborating rather than competing," he said.

Bean is working towards choosing a career path that he believes will suit his desire to be close to his farming background as well as a potential political future, "soil science would be a big one for me," he noted, "It is something that I can still be connected to the farm and help new farmers, learning how to try more regenerative practices. That's always been a passion of mine. And then another career choice I've thought about is government or teaching."

The Adventure in Citizenship Program is an outstanding program offered to youth throughout Canada. It is clearly the way to set a precedence for students who are looking for political or social careers in the future, such as Bean.

Hundreds of trees sold before 9 am at the annual Tree and Shrub sale at Avondale United Church

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

ReLeaf Stratford, a subcommittee of the Stratford and Area Master Gardeners Association, held a community volunteer event along the Avon River at McLagan Dr on June 3rd.

"We could not take on this kind of project without volunteer support from our community. It was awesome that we had over 40 volunteers come out to plant last fall, and we hope many people will come to help us plant on June 3," said Stratford and Area Master Gardener Co-ordinator Don Farwell in a statement released before the event on June 3rd.

Luckily a similar turnout was seen at the June event, with over 40 volunteers showing up before 10 a.m. to help plant native trees and shrubs along the Avon River.

"We're delighted when we get volunteers. We have publications and email different groups, and then people who are on our volunteer list also get an email," stated Elizabeth Spedaliere, a valued Stratford and Area Master Gardeners member.

One notable volunteer was Mayor Martin Ritzma, who picked up a pick-axe and got to work on planting trees and shrubs in



(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

ReLeaf Stratford Tree and Shrub Sale taking place at Avondale United Church.

a seemingly tough area that was dry and un-watered; "it's a hard area to dig, so he's got his work cut out for him," one onlooking volunteer noted.

A statement from the Stratford and Area Master Gardener's Association said in a statement, "This local environmental stewardship action is recommended in the Upper Thames River Conservation Au-

thority (UTRCA) Watershed Report Card. Riparian habitats support high numbers of wildlife species and provide an array of ecological functions, including water quality protection. Native trees and shrubs provide important biomass and biodiversity to create pollinator pathways."

Funding for the purchase of native shrubs is made possible with a grant of

\$5,200 from the Donald McTavish Conservation Fund held within the Stratford Perth Community Foundation and allows the subcommittee to purchase native trees and shrubs that support local wildlife and pollination.

The committee noted that recommendations were also put into the funding proposal, and the UCTRA and the City reviewed that species list. "It is not always possible to get all the species you want, and then substitutions need to be made," noted Nancy Burnette, Stratford and Area Master Gardeners member

"We wanted to do a project that will help the river and help local biodiversity. Wildlife, such as deer, rabbits and birds, eat the berries of native shrubs. The caterpillars eat the leaves, then grow into butterflies, and then those caterpillars feed the birds, so it's kind of like a whole connected ecosystem," noted Elizabeth Spedaliere.

The subcommittee hopes to run similar future programs to help care for and preserve the Upper Thames River.

For more information about the ReLeaf Stratford Project, please visit their website at www.releafstratford.ca. or visit them on Instagram and Facebook.

PuppetWorks! Playtime Party: a SpringWorks fundraiser for World in a Weekend

LISA CHESTER

Stratford Times Correspondent

Saturday, June 24th will see the Stratford Perth Museum provide the venue for the first fundraiser for PuppetWorks! World in a Weekend this coming August. This fun filled family event will help raise money to once again provide free programming as part of the weekend festival.

Featured will be puppeteer Robin Polfus who was wildly appreciated by attendees of last year's World in a Weekend Festival puppet making workshops. PuppetWorks! Playtime Party will feature self-paced sock puppet making workshops throughout the day. Children can create their own sock puppet using materials provided and imagination as they pattern their puppets after Polfus' RoRo sock puppets as inspiration.

Also making an appearance will be WhatWhat the puppet, the alter ego of Robin Polfus who will perform at the top of each hour.

"She's a delightful sock puppet and she has a cute little character. She does

little entertainments like cooking shows and educational activities. Her mom, the puppeteer, is the one leading the puppet making workshop, so she will take a turn on the hour (to perform) then go back to facilitating the workshop," said Eileen Smith, artistic producer of SpringWorks.

Also available is do it yourself face painting stations where children and adults alike can paint each other. There will be a puppet tea party zone and a pop-up puppet stage where everyone can create their own puppet show with their handmade sock puppets.

Attendees of the fundraiser will also have access to the museum's exhibits and their Hands On Tour, a new exhibit featuring hundreds of handmade artifacts. You can also try your hand at doll making using hemp, printmaking, try out the skills of wood etching or rope making.

For those needing a break, there will be local pizza available for purchase.

Tickets can be purchased online in advance and at the museum the day of. There is no rain date necessary as programming will be both inside and outside



(BREANNE TICE, SPRINGWORKS PHOTO)

under tents. Tickets are \$50 for a group of five maximum, of which there must be at least one adult in the group. Individual tickets for single attendees are also available for \$25 each.

The Huron Perth museum is located at 4275 Huron Rd, and the event runs from 10 am till 4 pm June 24th. Tickets can be purchased online in advance at <https://app.arts-people.com/index.php?show=184094>

Under the Spotlight: Friends indeed!



JULIA SCHNEIDER

Times Contributor

Laura Pogson was there at the beginning, she helped in the development, and she knows all the players past and present. Who better, then, to tell the story of the Stratford Festival and the history of its volunteers?

The remarkably self-effacing and congenial Stratford native did just that at a recent Friends of the Festival information session in the theatre's Eaton Lounge. She captured her audience's attention immediately with the question: "Who was the visionary of the promise of the theatre" back in the early 1950's when the search was on for something to replace the about-to-close CNR shops?

Not a trick question? The audience shouted out: "Tom Patterson!" but there was no response from Pogson.

"Tom Orr," a more tentative voice said, and then "Tyrone Guthrie," also to no response.

"How about Rose McQueen?" said Pogson. She explained that this revered English teacher at Stratford Central High School



(JULIA SCHNEIDER PHOTO)

Laura Pogson (on the right) with fellow Friend Kathy Minor

had asked her students to come up with ideas for potential Stratford industries and a theatre featuring Shakespeare was one of their proposals. Stratford native, journalist and budding theatre entrepreneur Tom Patterson had been a student of McQueen and was mentored by her. When the shops were about to be closed, he was inspired to carry the idea forward, but it originated in her classroom, in response to her question.

Patterson ran with it. He went to city council to ask for money and was given \$125.00 for an exploratory trip to the Big Apple, New York City.

"Most of that must have been spent on long-distance phone calls," said Pogson.

Patterson tried to interest Laurence Olivier in his idea, without

success, but Olivier suggested he call Tyrone Guthrie, the famed Irish director, who proved more receptive. In fact, he was very interested and came to Stratford with stage designer Tanya Moiseiwitsch to guide the operation.

Both Guthrie and Moiseiwitsch had a great deal of experience in the theatre and knew what they wanted. When Guthrie heard that an open-air tent was planned, he immediately said no to it because of rain and winds. Digging started for something more substantial soon after.

"We'll put gardens around it, so people don't think it's a circus," he said.

Guthrie also insisted that professionals act in the plays and not volunteers; for him acting was a full-time job and needed to be paid.

"Soon my brothers had jobs as ushers" when the first season opened, said Pogson.

So great was the response to the new theatre that accommodation for what Pogson insists on calling 'theatre guests' and never 'tourists' that housing became a big problem. Glenn Gould and Louis Applebaum were welcomed in Pogson's family home across the river from the theatre, while further along on William Street Dama Bell and her husband put up Tanya Moiseiwitsch.

It was Moiseiwitsch who decreed, "We will build everything here," said Pogson. "Since there was no 401, in practical terms it made sense."

Hostess and volunteer extraordinaire Dama Bell took carloads of Moiseiwitsch's costumes down to Michigan to show potential theatregoers there. Pogson attributes the beginning of the strong American following at Stratford to those trips, but also said those south of the border were very receptive.

"Americans longing for British style came to Stratford and found British china at Bradshaw's Travel Hall, British linens at Prout & Lamont, and British cheese at Leslie's Cheese House," she said. It goes without saying that they also found British Shakespeare on the stage.

"Why would they fly across the pond," she asked, when Stratford, Ontario, was so much closer.

The theatre grew and with it a

band of faithful helpers; whenever a need along volunteers came forward to help. They began to host tours, of the backstage, of the warehouse, of the gardens. Under Betty and Walt McGibbon an Information Desk was set up to guide visitors inside the theatres. Table Talks, which evolved into today's Meighen Forum, needed volunteers to provide accommodation for speakers, among other things, and volunteers were there.

Pogson said that the role of the Friends was always to help the Festival, never to take jobs away from anyone already employed there. By the time she was President, from 1998 to 2002, there were so many activities that Friends needed multiple publications for guide them, inform them, and standardize their procedures. These were all done in print form until computers came along in the 1990's and vastly simplified operations. Along with her knowledge Pogson brought boxes of procedural blue binders, job descriptions and information, like how to handle wigs (very carefully!) to her talk, material that is ripe for an archive of its own.

Next year the Friends of the Festival group will celebrate its 40th anniversary under that name. It now numbers 142 active members. You will see some of them this summer, for sure, whenever you visit the Festival theatres.

Let Me Introduce...

Ann-Brailsford-Child ("ABC") - Renaissance Woman

APRIL TAYLOR

Times Contributor

Live Life by the ABC's

If I were to describe a Renaissance woman to you, I would say that she has a wide range of abilities and interests in the arts and sciences etc. That description certainly describes this month's subject for my column. Now, let me introduce you to Ann-Brailsford-Child, affectionately known as "ABC".

"A" stands for Adventurous & Articulate

Ann was born in Lincoln, England, where she trained to be a Tax Inspector and enjoyed that job very much. On April 1, 1975, Ann pulled up stakes, quite literally running after the last train before British Rail went on strike, on route to a whole new world and life in Canada. "I had a good position on the Inspector of Taxes training course with the Inland Revenue," said Ann. "I came to benefit my husband and seven-year-old son as we were living without heat and light thanks to all the strikes against Margaret Thatcher by the unions and the IRA was bombing public buildings including where I worked."

On arrival in Canada and building on her legal and taxation training from the UK, ABC worked in Estates and Trusts at a trust company and later a large law firm. After 10 years in the law firm assisting the Hon. Mr. Justice Cullity (as he later became), she decided to do a Canadian law degree at University of Western Ontario, graduating in 1994. Ann remarried that year, moved to Sarnia and opened her practice soon after. Eventually, she settled in Stratford - the beautiful houses reminded her of England. While in Stratford, she worked as a Children's Lawyer and also continued to do refuge work in Toronto.

"B" stands for Bravery and Books

"Be brave, little soldier... my father said when he died and 50 years later, I am still trying to do that."

It's interesting how our childhood influences us throughout our entire life. ABC lost her mom at the early age of nine. This is particularly traumatic for a child so young, but Ann learned to embrace change out of necessity - which is a wonderful ability and a healthy way to view life. Ann does seem to be able to go with the flow; moving to other places



for love, for work, and always having the courage to move on when necessary.

ABC took a break from her law practice to write. In 2021, she published 'The Runt of the Litter or Memories of a Lad from London', a biography on subject Gerald Andrew.

"My next book is a children's book due out in June 2023. It's called SantaClyde and is about Clydesdales. I used to be a children's lawyer. Reading can be great therapy if encouraged by parents," Ann said.

"I am working on two others. One is a reworking of the pirate book I wrote in the 1980s when working on Bay Street. It was accepted for publication by Virgo Press and was part of a trilogy, but the publisher had to close three months before the publication date. My other book

is a family history from our Viking heritage up to my father's participation in the Burma campaign of WWII."

C stands for Creative, Caring & Craic

Aside from Ann's obvious academic mind, she is always up for some good craic (the girls I work with are always talking in our bad Irish accents saying, 'it'll be good craic', or 'it's cracker' when we mean it'll be fun). Ann has a passion for travel, camel rides, and belly dancing. She is the first person that ever answered "camel rides" when I asked what they enjoy. But that is what travel does, it opens the mind and spirit.

I asked ABC what makes her happy. "Anything beautiful; I am an artist at heart." This includes music. Ann can sing Handel's Messiah entirely by mem-

ory.

In England, her family was in the theatre working as costumiers. This peaked Ann's interest in textiles and embroidery, dance, historic architecture, nature, and the list goes on. Ann is never bored. And if she is... well, she learns something new!

I include Caring because ABC is interested in Mental Health Care. Being a lawyer, she has seen how badly people are treated when they cannot advocate for themselves. During COVID, Ann used her time wisely, taking 60 health courses, including some in trauma, depression, and nutrition. It seems impossible to separate the mental health epidemic and the justice system. Maybe our society should tackle the problems of addiction and homelessness as a mental health crisis first and there would be less need at the justice level. I think people like ABC who have knowledge in both areas could be a great resource in creating a new system. So, what do you say Ann, are you up for that challenge?

I leave you with this inspiration which Ann refers to as a reminder to make the most of each and every day. I really like it too. This Sanskrit poem by Kalidasa written in the 5th century illustrates that we are all sharing this human experience, and though things are constantly changing, in the big picture everything stays the same.

Look to this day:

For it is life, the very life of life.

In its brief course

Lie all the verities and realities of your existence.

The bliss of growth,

The glory of action,

The splendor of achievement

Are but experiences of time.

For yesterday is but a dream

And tomorrow is only a vision;

And today well-lived, makes

Yesterday a dream of happiness

And every tomorrow a vision of hope.

Look well therefore to this day;

Such is the salutation to the ever-new dawn!

STRATFORD TIMES

Sebringville Esso
Dave's Diner - Sebringville
Stratford-Perth Museum
Cozyn's
Stratford Rotary Complex
No Frills
Sobey's
Wightman
Shoppers Drug Mart
Tim Hortons
Mornington Variety
Buzz Stop

Union Barber
Stratford Public Library
HH Delea
Balzacs Coffee
Queen's Inn
Arden Park Hotel
The Bruce Hotel
Stratford Motor Products
Stratford Legion
Festival Marketplace
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Shakespeare Brewery
Shakespeare Esso
Joe's Variety
Zehrs
Food Basics
Stratford Variety
Foodland
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Pick Up Locations

Stratford Hyundai
Stratford Chamber of Commerce
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McDonald's - Erie St
Expressway Ford
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Stratford KIA
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Erie Street Esso
Stratford Medical Pharmacy
Erie Convenience
Stratford Mazda

Stratford Hospital
The Livery Yard
The Parlour Restaurant & Inn
Erie Convenience
United Way Perth Huron
AJ's Hair / Festival Square / Features
Joe's Diner
The Urban Barber
Graham Energy - Hwy #7
Delmar Foods

UNTIL SOON. LIVE WELL: Putting aside childish things



STUART LENDER

Times Contributor

EPISODE 1 (Denial of humanity) / Once, when I was little, I saw an angel on the sidewalk with broken cotton wings. At the time, I didn't know what kind of angel it was. I hadn't ever seen one like it before; or any angel at all, really. I thought they were white. But it was grey like a raven; grimy; shiny and wet. From far away I thought it was a great bird at first, that must have fallen from a great height - maybe flew into one of the windows of one of the buildings that stretched up beside it, in downtown Toronto. I wanted to run to it, but my mom's hand

tightened; held me in place, next to her. Our steps remained steady even though I had to take two for every one step my mom took, and we crossed the street before we could get to it. I guess she was afraid. It was only when I looked back that I could see it was an angel, because the "wings" had pockets, and so, had turned into a long coat that unfolded out from underneath it, spread out like a puddle, that everyone stepped over or walked around, because they didn't want to get their shoes wet. Face down on the pavement; it couldn't fly anymore because of the fall, so it became like us, I guess. It must have been a bad angel. I never understood why no one stopped and tended to it, made sure it was okay. I mean, there was an angel on the street! What stories it could tell!

EPISODE 2 (Denial of death) / My grandmother walked slower than my mom. When you're not walking downtown, you walk slower anyway. You can look at things longer. On the way to the park, we walked hand in hand and talked of silly things. The day was bright, like our voices.

There was no sadness in it. No hidden hurts. I was very young - I didn't know real hurt. I was loved. We watched the leaves dance as the cars "poofed" them up into the air with their wheels, never able to flatten their autumn colours into the concrete page of the street. Then I saw the squirrel dancing with them on the curb. Plump and animated. Full of joy. I asked Oma if she had anything to feed it, but she didn't. We joked that maybe it was a German squirrel, because it was little and fearless, like her. And as such, it danced out into the traffic, so full of life and tango - starting, stopping...starting.....stopping! The wheels of the cars couldn't catch the leaves that day, but one caught that squirrel, and it ended itself like a puppet that a child drops after play. I remember the suddenness of it. The shock. The stillness afterward. I didn't know anything about dying. Oma talked about it like it happens to old people. And I was young. It couldn't happen to me. All I knew at that moment is that dying stopped things. We passed by, shaken. Oma's voice changed.

Her movements, stilted. Our day in the park was somehow heavier.

EPISODE 3 (Denial of love) / Yukari was beautiful and very quiet. Whenever I saw her in school, I felt strange. I remember looking out for her on weekends when I was playing on the street, because I didn't know where she lived. She had straight black hair without even a hint of the beginning of a curl. The kind of hair that was SO black it looked deep blue in the sun. I found out later that she came from Japan. I had heard about China, but Japan sounded special to me. She was special too. New to the school, I wondered how I could talk to her because I felt weird, and I knew it had to do with her. She didn't say much. I think she was shy. She must've been shy; new school and all. But I was shy too, and it was MY school, so what was my excuse? Anyway - one day she was standing with a group of girls she kind of made friends with. It was hard to move closer to that, being girls, and me being the only boy, but I saw her moving her lips and talking a bit. She never spoke to

me, but then I never spoke to her either. I tried to make it so that I could hear something, find out what she was saying, because I saw her looking at me a lot - so I dropped the ball I had in my hand and let it roll, closer to where they were standing and went to pick it up. I could hear one of them saying "do you know Japanese?" And when she opened her mouth and spoke words and phrases I had never heard before, well, it sounded like singing; and that tickle inside my stomach made me feel empty and full at the same time. I wanted to sing like that with her, with those strange words and sounds. But I never did. When she moved to another school after only one month, I felt like that squirrel that suddenly stopped when I was with Oma. But I didn't really stop. I pretended she was the one who stopped.

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: It's a Jungle in There



MARK HERTZBERGER

Times Freelance Columnist

To say that I'm not a gardener would be gravely understating the situation. I have one plant, a croton, and his name is Arthur. He is named after the potted plant that inexplicably popped up every so often in Mad Magazine cartoons. This also gives you some idea of my adolescent literary influences.

Yvonne is the Master Gardener in our household. She has created a miracle of nature out of our formerly drab and boring yard. As the gardening catalogues promise, we experience "a riot of colour" throughout the spring and summer months. Many yards consist of lawn with a few flower beds and veggie planters. Ours is garden with a few patches of lawn. Unfortu-



nately, Yvonne is awaiting hip surgery and is currently unable to do much of the gardening she so enjoys. This is where I step in (it). I have been granted the honorary position of Apprentice Gardener.

I am learning a lot, most strikingly how much exhausting work my wife invests in creating a beautiful home and garden for us. I have also discovered that there are rules of green thumb which apply in this little jungle. For example, you know a plant is a weed if it pulls out HARD and snaps at the base. This leaves the root to fester and continue merrily along in its own infectious little way. Treasured flowers, however, pull out niiiice and eaassy...until, too late, the cry is heard: "Not that one!"

Gardens are also full of subterfuge. You'd imagine that something called "Lily of the Valley" would create an idyllic setting, gently weaving in and out of a Disney landscape, singing softly in a fairy-like voice to her fellow plants. In fact, Lily is a marauder and deceiver, pillaging the countryside and strangling her unsuspecting bedmates. Oh, Lily, you were once my love.

Then we have something called Bishop's Gout Weed. You will note that a specific bishop

is not named in this title. That is because no religious figure would ever want to associate their name with this creeping underground menace. It may be herbaceous but it is also pernicious, establishing it's own little reich in our yard.

Actually though, I'm beginning to enjoy being planted in the garden. At first my body felt like it had been involved in a marathon Twister party game, but the muscle kinks are gradually coming out. It's best to get outside early in the morning before the traffic starts or the neighbours' tiny dog with the big shrill voice starts yapping; before the first accidental car alarm goes off or the first kid's meltdown occurs.

I enjoy the morning sunshine and I do enjoy listening to the birds... except when they mock me: "Amateur! Amateur!"

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

Summer Reset: Reclaiming Balance and Renewal in this Season



IRENE ROTH

Times Freelance Columnist

Having a well-balanced summer involves finding a healthy mix of relaxation, personal growth, socializing, and staying active. This can be hard to do without a bit of planning and commitment. By following the tips below, you can have a well-balanced summer and feel refreshed in the fall.

Taking time to refresh during the summer is important to our health and well-being. Yet, it isn't easy to make time for ourselves since the summer months can be so busy and they can go by quickly. Maybe it's time to revise our perspective on the summer by taking a different approach.

Summer is a time when the

days are longer, the weather is warmer, and there is an abundance of natural energy. Taking advantage of this vibrant season allows us to recharge our batteries and replenish our energy levels. By engaging in activities that bring us joy and relaxation, we can restore our vitality and approach life with renewed enthusiasm.

Summer also offers an opportunity to break away from our routines, which can sometimes feel monotonous and draining. By taking a break and engaging in activities that bring us pleasure, we can ease stress, reduce anxiety, and improve our overall mood.

Set goals

Start by setting specific goals for the summer. Consider what you want to achieve in terms of personal, professional, or educational growth. Having clear objectives will help you stay focused and ensure a balanced approach to your activities.

Prioritize self-care

Summer is a great time to prioritize self-care. Take care of your physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Get enough sleep, eat nutritious meals, exercise regu-

larly, and practice mindfulness or relaxation techniques. Taking care of yourself will provide the foundation for a balanced summer.

Explore new hobbies and interests

Use the summer to explore new hobbies or interests that you've been wanting to pursue. Whether it's painting, playing a musical instrument, gardening, or learning a new language, engaging in activities that bring you joy and fulfillment can help create balance in your life.

Maintain social connections

Summer is often a time for socializing and connecting with friends and family. Plan outings, gatherings, or trips with loved ones to foster meaningful relationships. Balancing your personal time with social interactions is essential for a well-rounded summer experience.

Learn and grow

Use the summer as an opportunity for personal growth and learning. Enroll in an online course, attend workshops or seminars, or read books on topics that interest you. Expanding your knowledge and skills will add depth and balance to your summer.

Find time for relaxation

Balance is not just about constant activity. Ensure you have dedicated time for relaxation and rest. Schedule downtime for yourself, such as reading a book, meditating, taking naps, or enjoying a hobby that helps you unwind. Giving yourself permission to relax is crucial for maintaining balance.

Plan vacations or staycations

If possible, plan a vacation or staycation during the summer. Taking a break from your routine and exploring new places or even enjoying a relaxing staycation can bring a sense of adventure and rejuvenation.

Disconnect from technology

Summer can be a time for us to take breaks from our screens and disconnect from digital distractions. Set aside designated "tech-free" time where you can engage in offline activities, connect with others face-to-face, or simply enjoy the present moment without constant digital stimulation.

Foster creativity

Nurture your creativity during the summer months. Engage in artistic pursuits like painting, writing, photography, or crafting. Creative activities can be both re-

laxing and stimulating, allowing you to express yourself and tap into your imagination.

Practice mindfulness and gratitude

Incorporate mindfulness practices into your daily routine to cultivate a sense of balance and gratitude. Set aside a few minutes each day for meditation, deep breathing exercises, or journaling. Reflecting on what you're grateful for can shift your perspective and enhance your overall well-being.

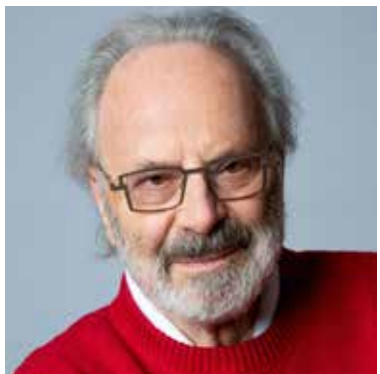
Embrace solitude

While socializing is important, don't underestimate the value of spending time alone. Embrace solitude and engage in activities that recharge your spirit, such as reading, taking solitary walks, or pursuing solo hobbies. Solitude can provide an opportunity for self-reflection, introspection, and personal growth.

By incorporating these tips, you can further enhance the balance in your summer and make the most of the season ahead. You can also enjoy your well-rounded and fulfilling summer.

Summer is such a hopeful time. May we embrace the hope and let it seep into our hearts and lives.

PUSHING BOUNDARIES: We are the Architects of Our Lives



THOMAS R VERNY, MD

Times Contributor

Introduction

Steve Cole, Professor of Medicine, Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences UCLA School of Medicine, has written much on the subject of self-regulation. He holds, and I totally agree with him, that we are architects of our own lives more than we realize. Our subjective experience carries more power than our objective situation. If we feel good about ourselves, not only will our health improve but so will our relationships. As a result, our friends and colleagues will like and respect us which in turn will make us feel even better about ourselves. Thus, we create a self-reinforc-

ing reward system grounded in epigenetics.

Enjoying Life is Good for Your Health

According to a new study from the University of Helsinki, classical music fans when listening to Mozart's violin concerto No. 3, G-major, were found to upregulate the activity of their genes involved in dopamine secretion and transport, synaptic neurotransmission, learning and memory, and down-regulate the genes mediating the destruction of neurons, which is all for the good. What this means is that if you find something pleasurable, it can change your gene expression. Not Mozart per se.

How we live our lives can have significant effects on how we age and develop diseases including cancer. On the physical side of the equation, if we look at colon cancer, researchers from the University of Basel found that aspirin and hormonal replacement therapy reduced the methylation rate of colon cancer related genes, whereas smoking and high body mass index (BMI) increased it.

A study from Oregon State University on aging found that how people thought about them-

selves at age 50 predicted a wide range of future health outcomes up to 40 years later -- cardiovascular events, memory, balance, will to live, hospitalizations, even mortality.

In general, optimistic people live longer than pessimistic people. A thorough review of the medical literature to determine the strength of the association between optimism and physical health revealed that optimism was a significant predictor of health outcomes in cardiovascular disease, including immune function, stroke, cancer, complications related to pregnancy, physical symptoms such as pain and risk of disease.

People who feel enthusiastic, hopeful and cheerful – what psychologists call 'positive affect' – are less likely to experience memory decline as they age. It does not necessarily mean they will never get ill (mentally or physically), but optimists diagnosed with bipolar illness are able to manage the disease better than pessimists. A recent meta-analysis confirmed these associations.

A recent study from Poland explores the relationships between psychological variables

such as health behaviors (HB), sense of coherence (SOC), level of optimism (LOO), and self-efficacy (SE) among 455 college students. These separate measures were used to create a novel construct of positive health attitude (PHA).

The results indicate statistically significant differences ($p < 0.001$) between these four variables: for example, healthier health behaviors lead to a stronger sense of coherence, level of optimism and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, behave and motivate themselves.

Summary

These and many more studies add to a growing body of research on the contribution an optimistic outlook makes to health.

Cultivating creativity, imagination, self-reflection, living a meaningful and engaged life takes work but is an investment in our overall well-being — and potentially the well-being of our children.

Key Points

- Good health behaviors promote a stronger sense of coherence, and higher levels of opti-

mism and self-efficacy.

- Pleasurable activities can change your gene expression for the better. The opposite also applies.

- If you want your friends and colleagues to like and respect you, feel good about yourself.

- Optimism is a significant predictor of beneficial health outcomes.

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: The complete surprise of the Six Mile Cypress Slough



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Contributor

The Six Mile Cypress Slough came as a complete surprise. Who would have imagined that there would be this astonishing nature preserve, right in the heart of Fort Myers, a Florida city known for beaches, and resort hotels.

But there it was – and is. The highly unexpected “Six Mile Cypress Slough”, just waiting to show the wonders of natural Florida... and to do it for free, at that (you will pay a small fee to park here, never more than \$5 for the day).

So, some basics, first – a “slough” – which is pronounced “sloo” – is a long-narrow wetland with slowly flowing fresh water. Despite the number in its name (which has some historic origins), the slough is actually 11 miles, or 17.7 kilometers, long. The entire preserve includes over 3,500 acres.

The heart of the place, for visitors, is the 2 km boardwalk – a walk that you could probably do in less than half an hour, but which should really take several hours. There’s just that much to experience. In fact, the Boardwalk Trail Guide (also free) specifically suggests that you “walk slowly”.

So we did. Accompanied by Program Specialist Adrienne Martin, we took a leisurely, often-interrupted stroll all along the

boardwalk – and enjoyed every minute.

There are two major categories of interesting things in the slough – the flora and the fauna. We saw plenty of both – unique vegetation, an incredible number of air plants (including many bromeliads), cypress trees, and much more.

But I was most interested in the fauna category. There are alligators here, including two large beasts in the appropriately named “Gator Lake”. We didn’t see those gators, this time, but we did spot their trails, and an alligator nest from last season, and farther along the boardwalk, we saw a smaller alligator in the “Wood duck pond.”

We also spotted a curled up cottonmouth snake, cleverly camouflaged, a couple of meters off the boardwalk.

I was especially entranced with the variety of birds we encountered. Adrienne explained that the wildlife has become quite accustomed to the presence of human visitors – as long as we stay on the boardwalk. She told us that if she or her colleagues ever have to leave the walkway to go into the wetland, the animals and birds scatter in an instant. They have figured out that we’re okay, if we stay inside our wooden boundaries!

That meant that, not only did we spot birds, we got to observe them, close-up, as they went about their lives. We saw woodpeckers – the slough is home to six of the eight species of woodpecker found in Florida.

We watched a little blue heron do its fishing dance – spreading its wings to create shade, and thus a sense of shelter for small fish... which the heron promptly ate.

The oddest moments

involved an anhinga that had caught quite a large catfish. We wondered how it would eat it... it was too big to swallow whole, and, since the fish was still alive, too active for the bird to release it from the bird’s beak.

But the anhinga was smarter than I – it started beating that fish on a log; the percussive display lasted longer than a drum solo in a rock concert. Eventually, the fish was dead, and the anhinga could proceed to eat it in a more leisurely fashion. Fascinating.

Even though the slough is in the heart of an urban area, it is a true sanctuary for many living things. There are otters and raccoons, and from time to time, larger creatures including whitetail deer, panthers, bobcats and even bears.

Fifty years ago, it wasn’t at all certain that this very precious ecosystem would survive. But a group of Fort Myers students created a petition calling for a referendum on a Lee County municipal ballot. And even though a “yes” vote to save the slough was going to add to their tax bill, the residents supported the students and the slough, and this natural treasure was declared protected land.

The boardwalk was built 2008, and is very popular. The slough features guided tours – yep, free of charge – at 9:30 a.m., every day in season. They are usually conducted by volunteers – and the very dedicated and knowledgeable volunteer brigade at Six Mile Cypress Slough numbers 87. These volunteers, by the way, have to endure what Adrienne described as “a robust training program”, including writing an academic paper on some plant or animal related to the slough. One recent bit of

research discovered a new species of plant!

You could argue that most visitors to the Fort Myers area are unaware of the Six Mile Cypress Slough – but those who know, are instant fans. The slough attracts over 10,000 visitors a month, in season,

more than that in February and March. And yet for many – including friends I talked to who spend time in the area – it is a complete unknown.

Therefore, I decided to do my small part to correct that situation. So I tell you – if you are in the Fort

Myers area, the Six Mile Cypress Slough is a “must-do.” Trust me. You’re gonna love it.

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



June 26, 2023 at 7 p.m. via Zoom

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Annual General Meeting of the Members of the **Clinton Public Hospital, St. Marys Memorial Hospital, Seaforth Community Hospital and Stratford General Hospital** will be held on Monday, June 26, 2023 to:

1. Receive Annual Reports of the Board of Directors, including Financial Statements, together with the Auditor’s Report thereon.
2. Appoint Auditors.
3. Amend each of the Hospital Corporation’s By-Laws.
4. Receive the Ad Hoc Nominating Committee Report.

Only members of the hospital corporations shall be entitled to vote at the Annual General Meeting.

Members of the public are welcome to attend!

RSVP to Sue Davey, Executive Assistant at 519-272-8205 or susan.davey@hpha.ca to receive the Zoom link in advance of the meeting.



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

The 2 kilometer boardwalk – with something fascinating at every turn.



www.hpha.ca

Bimini Camp welcomes hundreds of youth for another summer camp experience in Perth County

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

With summer time quickly approaching, so is camp time for area youth who would like to attend camp and one of them could be “Camp Bimini” south of Stratford on the Embro Road in Perth County.

Camp Bimini was established in 1947 and is one of the approximately 55 United Church of Canada camps across Canada. It has a unique history and following World War II., there was a new interest in doing something for the youth of the country. The United Church was caught up in this interest and Perth Presbytery embraced the idea.

Each spring the camp welcomes over 1,000 students through the school program and each summer there will be over 650 campers in the summer program. Bimini Camp employs 60 teenagers as counsellors in training, counsellors, program leaders and much more.

Camp begins July 2-7 for 9-12 year olds and

runs through many age groups throughout the summer and ends with 11-13 year olds from August 20-25. Youth leadership is held September 22-23 for youth born in the years 2009 and 2010.

The camp has projects over the next few years that will include replacing the siding on the mess hall, renovating washrooms to be more inclusive, bridge, repair, and tree management.

According to Bimini camp coordinator, Carol Young, their goal is to give every child and youth a camping experience, where they feel loved and valued for who they are. She said they strive to be welcoming and inclusive of each individual and provide a safe and nurturing place, where campers may experience nature, grow spiritually, and create lifelong friendships.

The camp will be hosting a 5 km walk, ride or run in late June and they will be having an online auction in the fall to help raise funds for the camp.

For more information on registration, fundraising events and ways to be involved. Please visit www.campbimini.ca or call 519-271-4129.



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Riddles

What's green and makes holes?
A drill pickle

What's big, black and eats rocks?
A big, black rock eater

What has long hair and purple feet?
A lion that makes his own wine

What's another name for a grandfather clock?
An old timer

What goes best with a white wall?
A hub cap

What do you call an ice cream truck operator?
A sundae drive

How do you stop a dog from barking in the back seat?
Put it in the front seat

How do you make a sausage roll?
Push it down a hill

What did the big phone say to the little phone?
You are too young to be engaged

Sudoku

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

Solutions on page 35



Pet of the Month



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Word Search

SUMMER

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

- LAKE
- SHELL
- BEACH
- HAT
- WAVES
- SUNGLASSES
- SUNSHINE
- TAN
- SURFING
- ICE CREAM
- PICNIC
- CANOEING
- SEASON
- SWIM
- LEMONADE
- TRAVEL
- SUMMER CAMP
- CAMPING
- HUMID
- POPSICLES

Local environmental activist receives TD Scholarship for Community Leadership

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Sammie Orr, a soon-to-be Stratford District Secondary School graduate, earned a scholarship for her work in environmental activism in the city.

A press release from MSL Group announced Orr was one of the recipients of the TD Scholarship for Community Leadership. The scholarship, worth up to \$70,000, will cover tuition and living expenses as well as provide connections for leadership, networking, and paid summer employment.

"It honestly is kind of surreal. It's crazy," Orr said. "It hasn't quite kicked in yet just because I haven't really started university yet. But honestly, it's just so amazing and kind of unbelievable."

Orr previously held the position of the

youth representative for the City of Stratford's Energy and Environment committee. She also founded an Eco Club at her high school. The students part of the club shared ideas that she then presented to city hall and collaborated with similar groups in the community.

Orr also created a Waste Reduction Group to combat the rise in takeout container waste during the COVID-19 Pandemic. She consulted 10 restaurants and found the Friendlier reusable takeout program.

She will head to the University of British Columbia's Vancouver Campus for the Forest Sciences program. Orr hopes to find a career focusing on conservation or nature-based solutions to climate change.

"I really want to find a career where I can work with communities like I've been able to so far in my journey through the

environmental movement. I really enjoy working closely with community members so I hope to somehow continue that in the future."

Orr's childhood was filled with outdoor adventures, including canoe trips with her mother and brother and visits to her grandma's cottage.

"I think that base experience built a deep love for the outdoors. It wasn't so tangible that I could place it back then, but being outdoors so much was a really great base," she said.

Learning about climate change further sparked her interest in environmental activism.

"It kind of hit me pretty hard because I was shocked that something that was so close and I love so much and I value so much was really being hurt and harmed by human nature and society, so I really

wanted to do something about it."

She started sitting at the Energy and Environment Committee before applying to be the youth representative when she was in Grade 8.

Orr said that the support of the community groups, teachers, and fellow students led her to winning the scholarship. While she is sad to leave the sustainability groups she's gotten to know in Stratford, she's looking forward to seeing what the Energy and Environment Committee, Stratford District Secondary's Eco Club and Climate Momentum, are up to next.

"They're really flourishing right now and it makes me so happy to see how many people are now involved in that movement in our area because it definitely started off pretty small and now it's growing which is really exciting to see," Orr said.

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Saturday, June 10; 8 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Come visit dozens of garage sales across the Town of St. Marys for a partial listing of locations, see www.stmarysindy.com and read the June 8th edition (pg 28).

ANNUAL FOOD DRIVE FOR HOUSE OF BLESSING

Saturday, June 10; 8:30 a.m.-1p.m. & Sunday, June 11; 9 a.m.-12p.m.

Parkview United Church, 470 Ontario St.

Drop off donations. Call 519-504-0494 for more information.

LOVE ACROSS BORDERS

Wednesday, June 14; 7-8:30 p.m.

Avondale United Church, 194 Avondale Ave.

Author Anna Lekas Miller will read from her new book. All proceeds go to Stratford Hope to support a refugee family. Register at provocation.ca/2023-events-stratford

FOREST ROAD NEIGHBORHOOD GARAGE SALES

Saturday, June 17; 8 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Treasures for everyone!

SUDOKU

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

QUIZANSWERS

- 1) A cat
- 2) Japan
- 3) To the right
- 4) Jackie
- 5) Brazil
- 6) Garth Brooks
- 7) Twelve
- 8) Beans
- 9) Nagasaki
- 10) Harness racing

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