

Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

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Woodstock Hospital ranks highly on key metrics

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The media are constantly reporting horror stories of hospital wait times along with egregious fees being paid to nursing agencies, but an official at the Woodstock Hospital said that isn't the case there.

A recent report released by Ontario's auditor general showed on average patients wait two hours for a physician assessment and 24 hours for inpatient care. The report says one in five patients visit an emergency department because they did not have a family doctor. The audit also shows the government did not have a provincewide strategy to prevent temporary emergency department closures. Hospitals are also relying more and more on nursing agencies to fill shortages, which comes at a much higher cost and there were more than 200 unplanned emergency department closures in 23 hospitals between July 2022 and June 2023.

Cindy Smart is the facility's Chief Nursing Officer and said the situation at the Woodstock Hospital is significantly better than what is being felt elsewhere. The facility is in the 90th percentile in terms of admitting a patient to a bed and a patient being seen in the emergency room. "Our target is from the time the physician says you are going to be admitted and are in a bed. Normally it is less than 90 minutes but we have struggled a little bit with that just in the last month or so and have held a couple of people in emerg but normally that doesn't happen." One of the biggest criticisms of hospitals is the length of time it takes to be seen by a doctor in the emergency department, something Smart said they have a good handle on. "We are well within ministry guidelines and are number two among 74 hospitals in the province for wait times."

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2



HERE COMES SANTA

(RON YUZARK PHOTO)

Santa and Mrs Claus waving to the children, young and old, at the Ingersoll Santa Claus parade on November 18. See more photos on pages 12-13.

Sakura House fundraiser returns

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The number one fundraising event for Oxford County's only hospice is coming back in early 2024.

VON Oxford, VON Sakura House Hospice, and the volunteer Handbags for Hospice Committee are pleased to bring Handbags for Hospice back for its 11th year. Co-Chairs for the event are Jill Roberts and Sarah Pimentel, and Roberts said they're excited to hold the event after a pandemic pause. "We obviously had a bit

of a COVID hiatus, so this is our big comeback." She added the money raised is extremely important for the existence of the hospice. "It costs over \$1 million to operate Sakura House. We fundraised approximately \$175 thousand at our last event. That's almost 20 percent of the operating costs." While the operation does receive some government support it relies heavily on community support. "To ensure it is available to the entire community for free, we do have to raise substantial funds throughout the year."

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2

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Woodstock Hospital ranks highly on key metrics

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

While 20 percent of emergency room patients in Ontario do not have a family doctor, the same can't be said locally. "Nine percent of people who visited our ER over the last six months haven't had their own physician. I thought it would have been higher and one of the challenges is we are seeing people who have moved from the Toronto area into Woodstock. Those individuals have family doctors, but they are out of the region. They are going to come to emerg before going to their physician in the GTA."

Smart said the hospital has been very fortunate when it comes to staffing levels. "We have had some challenges, but we have been fortunate not to close our emergency department. We have also been able to maintain most of our quality indicators." The provincial government is coming under increasing pressure to limit and even ban the use of nursing agencies which have added an incredible amount of money to the nursing departments at health care facilities, including

some hospitals. Smart said it's something they haven't had to look at. "We have been fortunate and have not used agency nurses and, at this time, have no intention of using agency nurses."

The hospital's wellness initiatives have been an important factor in a successful retention program. Smart explained they work hard every day to make happy staff a priority. "We promote workplace wellness and make them feel valued. That's one of the things we have been able to do very well." She added they also offer flexible working conditions for veteran nurses. "We've looked at other ideas within the union contracts. For our more seasoned nurses at the end of their career, we have offered them a reduced work schedule and that helps retain staff."

The hospital has also been proactive in recruiting doctors in an extremely competitive environment as every municipality competes with each other. Smart explained their strategy. "For physicians, we just did an engagement session with residents to

see if we can get some ED physicians in. Our emergency department chief did a presentation in London to give highlights of what the organization looks like. There was a huge interest and I think we will get a few recruits out of that." She added they have successfully utilized locum coverage to cover summer vacations through a ministry program that tops up wages for the covering doctors.

The organization also uses what's called externs as a way to fill open shifts, something Smart said has been successful.

"We've brought nursing students in for the summer, and they work much the same as personal support workers. It gives them some insight into what it looks like when they become a nurse. This year we have been able to have some of them carry on into the school year as they have been able to work some weekends for us."

The Echo reached out to Nadia Facca, CEO of both the Ingersoll Alexandra and Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospitals to find out about the situation at both sites but did not receive a reply by press time.

Sakura House fundraiser

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Roberts explained she didn't know much about Sakura House until a close relative utilized the hospice service and she quickly realized how special it is. "It wasn't until my mother-in-law became very sick with cancer and decided she wanted to go there. I am telling you, from the moment we walked through the doors with her it was the biggest sense of relief I have ever experienced in my life. Our kids were little, and the staff would take go with them to watch movies. They would make us baked goods and meals. They not only took care of my mother-in-law, but they also took care of us." She added that once her experience was over it stuck with her and most of the members of the event's committee. "Anyone who chooses to use the services of Sakura House walks away with the same feeling of the impact it made, making a tough situation bearable, and almost peaceful." Roberts went on to say it may be a heavy cause, but it's an incredibly fun night. "We talk about it being about the power of the purse. A lot of companies will sponsor the event and they will use the tickets they get for a night out for the women at their office. People use it as team building because it's fun. Great food, drinks, awesome prizes, purses, candy, what else could you ask for?"

The night features the always entertaining Auctionista who is well renowned for their flamboyant style. "When Layne takes the stage, they command the audience really get that room hopping for sure. Layne's part of the evening is the live auction when they will auction off

some high-end handbags and also some live experiences." Some of those include an overnight glamping package which is a night for two with a spa and dining gift certificate. "We are also bringing back our local firefighters so we will be auctioning off a dinner where some of them come to your house, and bring all the fixings for a fantastic meal including a chef. They'll serve the dinner as well."

Tickets are on sale via Eventbrite are \$95.00 each. Each table will hold eight attendees. More details along with the link for tickets can be found at <http://vonsakurahouse.com/events/handbags-for-hospice-2/>. Nearly 1000 tickets are available and close to 800 have already been sold. "It would be a great gift for companies if they wanted to send some of their staff, or people buying it for their wives, daughters, anyone who wants to come out and have a fun night," added Roberts. Donations for the event's premium prize table are also still welcome and she added they also have a special fundraising portion of the night. "Each year we fundraise for a specific need and this year we will be looking to raise \$75 thousand to redo each of the 10 patient rooms. Paint, décor, fridges, new beds, everything. That's a really exciting part of the night."

Sakura House, located in Woodstock, is the county's only residential hospice and is operated by the Victorian Order of Nurses. It is a palliative care facility where 24-hour end-of-life care is provided by a skilled team of healthcare professionals with the assistance of professionally trained volunteers at no cost to patients or their families.



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Echo

Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

Established 2023

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Circulation Matters!

This month we will distribute **7,000 printed copies of the Woodstock Ingersoll Echo.**

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Editorial

Griffi named Echo editor

STEWART GRANT

Publisher

By Stewart Grant

The Woodstock-Ingersoll Echo is pleased to announce the appointment of Lee Griffi as editor of the Echo. The name won't come as a surprise to our readers as he has been a key contributor since the paper's inception earlier this year.

Lee started his career at CJCS Radio in Stratford as a reporter, newscaster, and sportscaster where he eventually went on to become news director. After 10 years he made the jump to the world of communications. "I spent a few years at the former Perth District Health Unit in Stratford, but Oxford County folks may remember me as the Manager of Corporate Communications for Caressant Care Nursing and Retirement Homes." Griffi spent five years as a board member at the Ontario Long-Term Care Association before becoming a self-employed communications professional and freelance journalist. "I am very fortunate to be a part of the team at the Echo and Grant Haven Media. The company has allowed me to get back to my roots in journalism and I couldn't be more excited to get to know the Woodstock and Ingersoll communities in addition to the surrounding Oxford County area. We have a great group of people who are committed to local news and keeping people informed."



Lee has been writing for the Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette for over two years and splits his time between Tavistock and Woodstock. "Not everyone likes it when a reporter practices journalism, but people have a right to know what's happening in their communities. I am developing solid, professional relationships with area politicians and leaders who have important stories to tell. I am committed to doing that."

Griffi said he is also hoping to restore faith and credibility in how the public views the media. "I like to think I am a true journalist. I attended Fanshawe College's School of

Broadcast Journalism in the early 90's when the political spectrum didn't have much of an influence on the news. It might today, but I can promise readers my only motivation is to tell both sides of a story and the truth, regardless of what the subject matter is."

The Woodstock Ingersoll Echo was launched as a monthly newspaper in June of this year. As a result of the community support received, we will be moving to a bi-weekly format this coming March. In the long-run, we hope to be a weekly newspaper serving the community.

Lee and the rest of the team at the Echo welcome news tips from the public and contributions of guest articles and photos. After all, it truly takes a community to make for a great community newspaper. Reach out any time by sending an email to info@theecho.ca.

Letters to the Editor

While stopping for a coffee in Woodstock on my way home from London, I was delighted to find free copies of the Echo on a table.

I have read it cover to cover and congratulate you on the outstanding job you are doing of covering events in the community.

It brought back many fond memories of when I started my own journalism career more than 50 years ago.

In spite of what today's newspaper moguls believe, there's no recipe for success in building circulation than publishing names and faces.

I wish you good luck with your future editions.

Denis Gibbons
Former editor of *The Burlington Post*
Burlington, Ontario

The Woodstock Ingersoll Echo is currently a monthly newspaper that, thanks to the support of the community, will be shifting to a bi-weekly newspaper in March 2024. The next editions are:



Friday, January 19, 2024

Friday, February 16, 2024

Friday, March 15, 2024

Friday, March 29, 2024

info@theecho.ca

Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

Guiding Principles

1. Everyone has a story
2. The news should be free for all to enjoy
3. Good news beats bad news
4. A Newspaper should be a community effort (contribute to your local paper!)
5. Newspapers document history
6. Newspapers strengthen communities
7. Advertisers, big or small, should profit from their ads (meaning sensible ad rates)
8. Newspapers should be locally-owned and operated

Tim Hortons Holiday Smile Cookie raises over \$65,200 in Ingersoll and Woodstock

A sweet treat from Tim Hortons brought many smiles to the faces of young people throughout Oxford County as we headed into the holiday season.

Tim Hortons throughout Canada launched their first ever Holiday Smile Cookie campaign November 13th, raising funds for charities and organizations across the nation, as well as the Tim Hortons Foundation Camps. The Ingersoll and Woodstock Tim Hortons storeowners selected Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oxford County (BBBSOC) as their charity of choice.

The festive cookie was an incredible success raising \$65,204.24 through the participating Ingersoll and Woodstock locations, with \$32,602.12 coming to BBBSOC.

“What an incredible gift for the agency, specifically the young people in Oxford County,” said Kristen Ralph, BBBSOC Executive Director. “We continue to see unprecedented numbers of requests for program and support, and these dollars will help us work to meet the rising need. Oxford County never ceases to amaze us with their support of local programs and initiatives. Thank you to everyone who bought a cookie, who helped us decorate, and the incredible owners and Tim Hortons staff who worked tirelessly to make this a success.”

The funds raised received from the Holiday Smile Cookie campaign will stay in Oxford County, directly supporting the free mentoring programs and services offered to young people and their families.

The inaugural Tim Hortons Holiday Smile Cookie campaign raised over 9.8 million dollars nationally supporting hundreds of charities and organizations, and Tims Camps throughout Canada.



HOLIDAY SMILES

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)
Candace Fowler (Tims Foundation), Karen Lefebvre (Owner/Operator, Tim Hortons, Woodstock), Leslie Farrell (Owner/Operator, Tim Hortons, Woodstock), Donovan Minshall (Owner/Operator, Tim Hortons, Woodstock), Paul Tyndall (Owner/Operator, Tim Hortons, Ingersoll), Kristen Ralph (BBBSOC Executive Director), and Nicole Killaire (BBBSOC Fund Development Manager).

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Oxford County woman wins prestigious travel scholarship

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A local agri-tourism guru has been awarded a \$15,000 scholarship from Nuffield Canada. Cheryl Haskett and her husband Greg own Udderly Ridiculous and Udderly Ridiculous Farm Life located near Bright. The travel scholarship is a prestigious rural leadership program available to anyone mid-career who is involved in agriculture in any capacity of primary production, industry, or governance.

Haskett said she felt a combination of emotions when she heard the news. "Shocked. Excited. Terrified. Pretty much every emotion." She added it is an incredible opportunity. "For me and hopefully for not only agriculture but tourism based on the project I am doing."

"Recipients research a topic of their choice and travel the world to find their answers. The scholarship lasts for 24 months, and they have to travel for at least 10 weeks in that time and six of those weeks have to be consecutive," said Teresa Whalen, Nuffield's Executive Director. "Part of the reason for it being consecutive is to take them out of their comfort zone and leave home, at home. They have to entrust the management of their farm or business to somebody else," she added.

While she doesn't yet know where the trip will take her, she is researching the best locations across the globe. "I haven't formalized that yet. Part of it is going through the orientation first and figuring out where the networks are to make sure I am going to places that are going to be the highest value. I have some ideas about where I want



AGRI-TOURISM GURU

Cheryl Haskett, owner of Udderly Ridiculous, has received a \$15,000 scholarship from Nuffield Canada.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

to be going but I want to do some research to make sure I've got the best of the best." Some potential destinations include Costa Rica, and some of Europe including Italy, France, Spain, Scotland, and possibly London, England. Haskett added from there a trip to New Zealand could be in the cards.

Part of her voyage will be to bring home ideas, insights, and best practices from around the world that will enhance Udderly Ridiculous in the future, but Haskett explained the main reason she applied was to support agri-tourism businesses here. "My real aim is to look at what the best practic-

es already in place, and how do we make Ontario and Canada really an agri-tourism destination. How do we enhance our standing in that? We have so much to offer geographically and in terms of different landscapes and people. There's a lot more to offer there." She added people want to get back to understanding food and agriculture and what better way to do that than educating the public through that tourism lens.

Haskett also believes that more tourism in the agricultural sector will go a long way in preserving the precious farmland

we have and, unfortunately, are losing on a daily basis. "A lot of people domestically could be travelling within Canada having these amazing experiences in rural parts of the world and really helping diversify and protect those family farms that are leaving. We are losing, I think on the CBC it was 319 acres of farmland every day. That's a shame." She added agri-tourism may be another avenue to diversify, educate, and to save and protect those areas while bringing joy to a variety of people.

Whalen explained why giving the award to Haskett was an easy decision for the Nuffield, including her leadership capabilities. "Cheryl's pretty outstanding. There is a lot of creativity, diversity, you can see the teamwork with her spouse and family, and they have strong roots at home. She's well spoken, well presented, and you can see and feel when you are in her presence that she is a leader, and we are going to fine tune those skills." She added she is confident that when Haskett sees what's going on elsewhere in the world she will be able to grow her skillset and come up with even more ideas.

Haskett's application was a combination of a written statement and a three-minute video answering a question she was provided. Once she has completed her travelling, she will be required to write a report between eight and 10 thousand words detailing what she learned and how she will be able to transfer that knowledge to her operation.

This isn't the first award for Haskett and Udderly Ridiculous. Her accolades include an Ontario Tourism Award of Excellence, and a number of Oxford Tourism awards.

All-party consensus on a new suicide prevention tool

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The creation of a National Suicide Prevention Hotline is drawing praise from all political stripes, including two area Members of Parliament. The hotline is for anyone having suicidal thoughts or emotional distress and is available to everyone in Canada. It is being led by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and is available by phone and text, provided in English and French, and accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Arpan Khanna, Member of Parliament for Oxford, said the initiative is a game-changer for those in need of help. "This life-saving service will provide Canadians who are struggling with mental health the opportunity to call or text 9-8-8 and receive free, confidential, immediate, and non-judgmental support, 24 hours a day." The motion that led to the initiative was introduced and passed in the House of Commons by Conservative Shadow Minister of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, Todd Doherty, on December 11, 2020.

Kitchener-Conestoga MP Tim Louis said he couldn't be happier that all parties worked and worked together hard to make it happen. "Putting partisanship aside is what Canadians want and this is a wonderful example. Like you said, this is a perfect example of how we can put politics aside and do what's best for Canadians." Khanna echoed Louis and is pleased to see an easy-to-use service in place. "It took a few years for this to get implemented into law, but it's good to see everyone come together around such a feel-good story. This is a big crisis that we are seeing in our communities with 200 people attempting suicide every day. We all have our battles and challenges, so just having somebody to listen I think goes a long way."

Louis said in addition to having a new resource for those thinking about taking their own lives, it also raises awareness of the issue. "People are starting to realize that suicide is a public health issue, and it affects people of all ages and backgrounds. An average of 12 people a day in Canada die by suicide. As a society, I think we are making progress talking about it." He added the message for any-

one struggling is that they are not alone. "It's a three-digit number to make it as easy as possible for people to get help when they need it."

Both members of parliament agree that while this is a positive step in combating a serious issue, there is much more work to be done. Louis said the last three years have shown how important mental health is. "We recognize the importance of mental health because we had a minister responsible for that and addictions, but it isn't federal, provincial, or local. It has to be all levels of government working together."

Khanna agreed and added that mental health usually gets a back seat from government and the community in general. "There is a stigma still attached to mental health, especially in some of the cultural communities. There is always this notion that physical health is more important than mental health, which I disagree with." He added a strategy is needed that will also touch on the homeless problem since often the two go hand in hand. "We don't have those kinds of supports in Oxford County and across Canada. There are

no crisis beds here. If somebody wants help or treatment, we can't even put them anywhere. By finding enough resources and making sure they go to the front line, to the people who provide help."

Louis explained the federal government is making sure there are conditions in health care transfer payments to the provinces. "Money needs to be earmarked specifically for mental health. On the ground, there are services and organizations in our communities doing that great work. We need to continue to support them and have all levels of government work together with these organizations and non-profits and the health care system itself. It has to be an all hands on deck approach."

"Please, if you are struggling with mental illness, know that you don't have to suffer alone. You belong here, and your life is worth living," added Khanna. Louis said everyone's heart goes out to people who have lost loved ones to suicide. "I appreciate you getting this message out there that people aren't alone. They can call or text 9-8-8 and people will be there with no judgment."

Police Briefs

Five young offenders in custody after incident at a Woodstock high school

Very few details have been released, but Woodstock Police arrested six youths in connection with a weapons investigation at College Avenue Secondary School (CASS).

On Tuesday, December 5 just after noon, the Woodstock Police Service received a report of a youth with a suspected firearm in the area of CASS. The school was placed under lockdown while the neighbouring elementary school, Oliver Stephens Public, was placed on a hold and secure. College Avenue, Fyfe Avenue, and East Park Drive were closed off during the investigation.

Police say uniformed patrols were assisted by members of the emergency response team and arrested five youths on the scene while one youth was arrested at another location. CASS remained in lockdown while police, with help from the London Police Service K-9 Unit, searched the school for possible weapons. No weapons were recovered.

There are no reported injuries, and the investigation remains ongoing. Police say no charges have been laid at this time.

The Woodstock Police Service is asking anyone with information about this investigation to contact them at 519-537-2323 or leave an anonymous tip for Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS.

Male facing weapons charges

Woodstock Police responded to the area of Burtch Street near Main Street last month for reports of a male approaching a woman and threatening her with a knife. Police located the suspect in the area of Dundas and Young Streets and made an arrest. As a result of the investigation, the 62-year-old suspect is facing charges of assault with a weapon, uttering threats, and possession of a weapon for a dangerous purpose. The victim did not sustain any physical injuries and no other details have been released.

Workplace fatality under investigation

Members of the Oxford OPP received a report of a workplace accident on the 15th Line in Zorra Township on Thursday, December 7. Police, Oxford County Paramedic Services, and Fire Services from Thamesford were called to the scene to assist a person who had sustained injuries from a fall. A 20-year-old from Norwich was transported to hospital via Air Ornge but was later pronounced deceased. The Ministry of Labour has been notified and is investigating. No other details have been released by police or the ministry.

Unveiling the latest additions to Oxford County's green fleet



(RON YUZARK PHOTO)

GOING GREEN

Warden Marcus Ryan connecting one of two Ford F-150 Lightning trucks to new EV charging

Oxford County has acquired two new electric vehicles (EV) and two new electric vehicle chargers that build on the County's "green fleet" infrastructure. Two Ford F-150 Lightning trucks were recently on display at the Southside Water Treatment Facility where the new chargers are located. These vehicles are the first of seven new battery electric vehicles being added to Oxford County's existing green fleet. The seven

trucks replace existing fossil fuel vehicles that are scheduled for regular replacement in 2023 and 2024, a transition that will save an estimated 24,500 litres of gasoline each year for the first seven trucks. Oxford County is also committed to adding 22 Level 2 chargers and five Level 3 fast chargers at eight different County sites over the next year. This charger deployment will support the County's planned EV transition over the next three years.

Local dentist pleased with federal dental program announcement

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The federal government rolled out details of its long-awaited Canadian Dental Care Plan on Monday, giving a leg up for low and middle-income residents without private insurance.

The plan, called the CDCP, was born out of the Liberal supply-and-confidence deal with the NDP in 2022, and offers dental care benefits directly to Canadian residents who are uninsured with a household income under \$90,000. It will cost \$13 billion over five years and is the biggest social program announced in decades.

Dr. Rob Bamrock practices at the Tillsonburg Dental Centre and is a political contact dentist for Oxford County as a part of his membership with the Ontario Dental Association. He said the announcement was good news. "We have been anticipating and waiting to see what was going to roll out. It looks quite good and quite interesting." He added the most positive takeaway is access to dental care will be improved. "There are gaps in the existing system and this program will hopefully fill them."

There is a definite relationship between good health and having a healthy mouth. People with poor teeth are at higher risk for heart conditions and diabetes, for example. Dr. Bamrock explained that connection in terms of physical, economic, and social health. "It's been proven that good oral health and good overall health are connected and when dental issues are left untreated that can affect general health. Adults can have difficulty securing and maintaining work. Children can be kept home from school." He added most people are very conscious of their appearance and if they have difficulty maintaining a healthy smile it could pose a very uncomfortable situation in public.

He added another downside is dental patients showing up at emergency rooms when the situation becomes unbearable. "As a statistic, I think it was reported that in Ontario there are 66,000 unnecessary ER visits for dental issues. That's a large number that takes away from other patients."

One concern that has been raised this week after Monday's announcement is whether demand can be met by the current supply. Dr. Bamrock said that is something that needs to be examined.

"That is a good question. I think locally, in Oxford County, most dental offices are very busy, and manpower has been an ongoing issue for dentists and staff as well. It is definitely going to tax the system and add load. I'm not sure if it's going to be a deterrent or not yet." He added bringing new dentists into the system will be needed, particularly in rural areas and smaller cities, but at the same time, it has been for a while. "A lot of the younger graduating dentists and professionals are attracted to the larger metropolitan centres. Toronto has more of an influx of graduates and is a growing area where more people want to live. Trying to attract people to more rural areas is going to have to be a strategy that the government is going to have to try and figure out."

Another area of worry for dentists across the county is one that often comes along with government programs, and that is the potential for administrative burden. Dr. Bamrock said he's hopeful the system put in place will be user-friendly. "I am hopeful it will be simple and not a huge burden for dental offices to administer. You probably know as much as I do from reading the details online but it sounds like patients will have to go online

through SunLife, who is administering it, and register. Hopefully, that information will be available to the dental offices." He added right now they can send a claim electronically to get feedback on coverage but if someone walks into a dental office and says they are enrolled in the program, offices may not have access to their information. "There is a range or a scale of coverage. Some people will be covered up to 100 percent with others at the 60 or 40 percent level depending on household income. That's one of my concerns but as long as that will be transparent through what's called an adjudication process when we send a claim electronically, it should work well."

Despite a few unanswered questions, Dr. Bamrock said the program is a move forward and will hopefully work in combination with existing private dental plans that are out there. "There's a good system now that is not costing the government currently and we don't want to jeopardize that and the existing provincial plans that are in place for low-income families. As long as the CDCP works in conjunction with them and fills those gaps, that would be the best outcome."

Deck The Halls Artisan Market



Geraldine Ketchum, Paula Hathawya, Barb Emms and Martha Fraser found treats and treasures.

The hugely popular Deck the Halls artisan market, presented by the Ingersoll Creative Arts Centre, was back again. The show ran for two days: Friday, November 17th from 1-8 p.m. and Saturday, November 18th from 12-5 p.m.. People from far and wide found great gifts for giving and getting. There were fibre arts, fine art, pottery, jewelry and much more. Also, their ever-popular Bake Sale was there, and there was a lovely tea room for an enjoyable and tasty pause.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Excited folks looking over the many handcrafted items



Donna Galbraith, Pat Palmer and Donna Vamos came from near and far to get their gifts.



Stuart Blower (Chair Ingersoll Art Centre) with Co-chairs of the Artisan Market Theresa Woolley and Marion Kramer.

Ask the Arborist

By Joel Hackett | 519 272 5742 | jtsquote@gmail.com



Dear Arborist,

I have a Colorado Blue Spruce that, up until about 2 years ago, was completely healthy. Sadly, recently, the needles have been turning orange and purple before falling off. It looks terrible. Please help.

Sincerely, Blue Spruce Troubles

Dear Blue Spruce Troubles,

It sounds like your Colorado Blue Spruce has a fungal infection. Blue Spruce (*Picea pungens*) is very susceptible to a fungal infection known as Needle Cast (*Rhizosphaera kalkhoffii*). Needle

Cast is a fungus which is spread by spores, normally affecting the lower part of the tree first. The treatment is spraying the tree with a fungicide (normally copper sulfate). Spraying will cure the fungus but not necessarily recover the dead branches, as a result, many tree owners chose to remove and replace.

Hope this helps, thank you,
The Arborist

Joel Hackett is a certified Arborist residing in the St. Marys area. Currently, he spends most of the year running Joel's Tree Service. For contact call 519 272 5742 or email jtsquote@gmail.com

Christmas recycling tips

Oxford County is hoping to see less holiday waste at the landfill this season.

A release from the county said gift wrap and excess packaging can have a significant environmental impact. It added residents can make a difference by choosing products with minimal packaging and gift wrap options that are easily recycled.

Frank Gross manages the county's waste management department and said they do see an increase in garbage at the curbside during the holidays. He has some advice for county residents to hopefully reduce the volume of waste. "We want to remind residents that they have some choices to consider products with minimal packaging like using reusable bags and using wrapping paper that is non-foil based so it can be recycled." He added items such as ribbons and bows can be reused over and over again to reduce the impact on area landfills. The county is also reminding us to remove all tape, plastic film, twist ties, and other objects before recycling cardboard packaging, and to break down, flatten, and bundle all cardboard boxes, with bundles no larger than 75 x 75 x 20 centimetres.

One waste product that often makes its way to the landfill is Styrofoam, but Gross said that doesn't need to be the case. "The

bulky Styrofoam you would see if you bought an appliance, or a television is not acceptable in the blue box program. There are drop-offs at the EnviroDepot in Woodstock and at the Tillsonburg Transfer Station." Gross added any Oxford County resident can use the Woodstock facility, although anyone outside is subject to a tipping fee but not for Styrofoam.

The county has also had to rejig a portion of its garbage and recycling schedule over Christmas, something Gross said will affect two areas. "There is no curbside collection on Christmas Day and on New Year's Day, which both fall on Mondays. Those municipalities that normally get collection on Monday, the north part of Ingersoll and Zorra Township, they'll get collection on alternate days." The two areas will instead have service on the two Saturdays beforehand, December 23 and December 30. The Oxford County Waste Management Facility in Salford is closed on Christmas and Boxing Days as well as New Year's Day. "The Woodstock EnviroDepot will have normal operating hours as well as a couple of bonus days on the Friday before Christmas and New Year's. Users can go to the Oxford County website for full details," added Gross.

12 Days of Giving with United Way Oxford

Double the Impact of your Donation this Holiday Season

United Way Oxford is 100% local and invests in programs and organizations across Oxford County that change people's lives and help build a brighter future for everyone in our community. These programs support 1 in 5 people in Oxford County, ensuring that individuals and families have access to the help they need when they need it most.

This holiday season, join United Way's 12 Days of Giving and engage in a variety of ways to give back to your community and directly support those in need. There are opportunities to learn more about community issues, share in ways to make someone's day a little better, and donate to support local organizations, and people, in our community through United Way.

Proudly sponsored by Maglin Site Fur-

niture, all monetary donations will be MATCHED, doubling your impact!

Give the Gift of Hope

Looking for something to get that special, hard-to-buy person in your life this holiday season? Why not share your Local Love and donate to United Way Oxford on their behalf? It's a thoughtful gift that gives back by supporting a network of programs and services across Oxford County.

You may also donate:

\$10 to provide a meal to someone in need. United Way works to address the immediate, basic needs of today while striving to reduce those needs in the future by investing in programs that help address food insecurity.

\$25 to support a child with a free, in-school tutor who will help them build

their reading skills and confidence in the classroom. United Way invests in programs that help kids reach their full potential.

\$50 to help a family purchase back-to-school supplies. United Way Oxford's Supplies4Students program supported over 1,300 youth this year with the increased cost of back-to-school shopping, helping ensure they had what they needed to start the school year off on the right foot.

\$75 allows a child, individual or family access to free mental health counselling when they need someone to talk to. United Way invests in programs that help build stronger communities by ensuring access to timely mental health support, especially as the holiday season is a hard time for many in our community.

Thank you for your support of United Way Oxford. United, we are building hope and opportunity for the future, and helping our family, friends, neighbours and coworkers when they need it most. Visit unitedwayoxford.ca to learn more, or scan the QR code here:



It's not too late to give. Please donate today.

Gardens of Ingersoll celebrates first anniversary

When you walk through the Gardens of Ingersoll, the new retirement residence at 423 Thames St. South, the question that comes to mind is, "why wouldn't you want to live here?"

It certainly seems that the Gardens has every amenity you could wish for; from a theatre room that has chairs specially made to hold your drink and popcorn, to a library that looks like a fantastic place to curl up, enjoy the fire and get into a good book or the fitness room that seems to have a hundred different ways to either get you fit or keep you fit. The massive deck in the back looks ready to host some very good parties and the wellness and spa area is very impressive.

The Gardens is celebrating their first an-

niversary. So, my question for the General Manager Suzane Mneimneh was, "why wouldn't you want to live here" and the answer that I got surprised me. She said, a lot of people feel that if they don't live in their own residential home, they feel they're losing their independence.

"Well, are they losing their independence if they make a move to the Gardens?". Suzane's response was an interesting one; "Let me give you an example, if you lose your license and you have to rely on family or friends or taxi or transit systems they may not be available when you need them. But you don't really have an option if you can't drive anymore, you have to rely on someone else to get you to your appointment or get you to the grocery

store. If you live at the Gardens, then we're going to do our very best to bring almost everything to you. From, social activities to healthcare; fitness, entertainment; they all come to you. So will a Doctor and Chiropractor, Chiropractor, Physiotherapist, Massage Therapist, Denturist, they'll all come in and you just need to sign up if you'd like to meet with one. Are you more independent waiting at home for someone to pick you up and drive you to an appointment or living here where you just sign up and walk down the hallway?"

"In the winter, it's easy to understand how people get lonely. If you have trouble getting around, don't have family and friends close by, those days in February are long. If you're here,

you're going to decide every day how social you want to be. You can be as private as you want on any given day, but you can be as social as you want as well, meals, activities, classes, entertainment. So, are you more independent if you're home alone or you're choosing what you want to do socially every day?"

"We also have some men who may be fiercely independent but they're also horrible cooks. You might be independent but you're eating Kraft Dinner when you could be choosing what you'd like off our chef's menu?" I think I'm back to, "why wouldn't you want to live there"? The Gardens is open every day and there's still suites available.



Weekend Quiz

- 1) Who directed Terminator 2: Judgement Day?
- 2) Which berries give gin its strong flavor?
- 3) How many ribs are in the human body?
- 4) What is the capital of India?
- 5) What do you call a group of crows?
- 6) Which country has the most winter Olympic medals?
- 7) The shortest day of the year is known as what?
- 8) Who was the lead singer of the band Queen?
- 9) What currency is used in Japan?
- 10) Blue and yellow mixed together make what color?

This week's answers are found on pg. 33

South Gate Centre in Woodstock – THE Place to Be

South Gate Centre, in Woodstock, is a welcoming place for adults over the age of 50 to partake in a variety of activities throughout the week. There are many misconceptions about what South Gate Centre is. It is NOT a senior's residence. South Gate is a registered Canadian charity. It is a place to come throughout the day to enjoy fitness classes, cards, darts, billiards, a choir, dance classes, work in the woodshop, do crafts, play Pickleball, badminton or Cornhole, take a tech literacy class or education class; walking and biking groups, baseball teams and golf league in the summer time. It is a place to socialize and make new friends.

It's a place to enjoy a home-cooked meal at a reasonable price at Local Roots Café, which is open to the public. That's right. Anyone can come and enjoy lunch, a snack, a bowl of soup and a sandwich or a hot meal... or take home some of the Bake Shoppe's daily treats.

It's a place to come and enjoy a cup of coffee or tea and visit with new and old friends.

It's a place to volunteer. South Gate Centre's programming is based on volunteers running the programs. All fitness instructors are registered, and the ones that teach the drop-in classes volunteer their time to run the classes.

Most of the programming is "drop-in," meaning that you do not need to register in advance. As a member of the public you can pay a drop-in fee or, if you are a mem-

ber, the drop-in classes are free as part of your membership. South Gate also offers registered programs for a fee for the public and a discounted fee for members of the Centre. The registered programs are run by a paid instructor. The fee charged covers the instructor's fee and costs of supplies for the program, if there are any. An example of this is when we pay a yoga instructor to come in and teach, or we have an art class taught by a local artist.

South Gate's mission is to engage the 50+ community in an open, active, social environment driven by volunteers and to promote wellness to fill one's mind, body and soul.

There's so much more to South Gate Centre... they have bus trips throughout the year to live theatre, casinos, and to points of interest in southwestern Ontario. There are dances throughout the year. There are monthly special dinners either in person or for pick-up. There are delicious frozen meals to fill your freezer for the times you don't feel like cooking. South Gate has fun events like Chilly Charlie predicting an early or late spring on February 2, a members barbecue in June to celebrate Senior's Month; a Garden Extravaganza in May, Afternoon Teas, and so much more.

If you've been looking for something to do and want to meet friendly like-minded people, visit South Gate Centre, 191 Old Wellington St. S., Monday to Friday between 8:30 am and 4:00 pm. There is always someone welcome you and show



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

STRIKE A POSE

All of the Volunteer Fitness Instructors at South Gate Centre. They are posing for the cover photo of our December newsletter, the Golden Nugget.

you around. Want more information? 519-539-9817 or www.southgatectr.ca or find them on Facebook at www.facebook.com/southgatectr. More information about Lo-

cal Roots, the restaurant and catering services at South Gate Centre visit www.southgatectr.ca/local-roots.

Olivia's shawarma, pizza, and platters a hit amongst customers

EMILY STEWART

Echo Correspondent

Olivia only opened in Ingersoll a few weeks ago, but their variety-filled menu is winning customers over.

The restaurant on 17 Thames Street South serves shawarma, pizza, burgers, platters, and fried chicken. Parandeep Singh, the owner of Olivia's, said there was no shawarma place in Ingersoll. He wanted to bring it to the town.

"It's something more exciting for people, more variety to choose from, rather than

just pizza."

Singh said that diners like the food so far. "It's something new for them, so they seem to like the flavors," he said.

Both the beef and the chicken shawarmas are the most popular items, followed by the meat blast extravaganza and the farmhouse elegance pizzas. The platters, which either feature chicken, falafels, or beef and lamb, are also popular.

Olivia is available for delivery on SkipTheDishes and Doordash. Customers can also call 519-303-8888 or visit olivia-caffe.ca

DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE



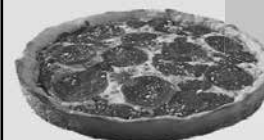
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Thamesford News

DOIRS WEIR

Echo Contributor

2024 Zorra Township Thamesford Lions Calendar now available

Back in the summer we had a Photo Contest for Zorra Township residents. They were asked to submit photos taken in and around Zorra. There was a tremendous response, with over 100 photos submitted. Among these photos, we created a 2024 Zorra Township Thamesford Lions Calendar. The photographers featured in this year's calendar are Kim Gilbert (1st place winner), Dave Couch (2nd place), Adriana Docherty (3rd place), Charlotte Docherty, Doris Weir, Janna Baigent, Jay Pee Iniego, Kurt Sawyer, Marg McKenna and Terry Layland.

We were thrilled to have had 15 sponsors participate in the calendar, with 12 adopting a month! Thanks to this support, we are able to sell these calendars for only \$10 each, with 100% of the proceeds going right back in to the Zorra Township community. The calendars are limited edition, with only 200 for sale and over half of them sold already. Calendars are available from Lion Doris Weir or Embro Highland Restaurant, Shell Gas Station in Thamesford, or Lion Rebecca Haggerty.

Check our website, e-clubhouse.org/sites/thamesford, for present and past



(DOIRS WEIR PHOTO)

SANTA IS COMING!

Lola Thorpe was excited to see and talk to Santa at the "Photos with Santa" in Thamesford on December 2nd

events we have had and sponsored.

Christmas Festivities in Thamesford

The Thamesford Lions club held two events on Saturday, December 2nd. The day started with morning activities for the more than children in attendance, as they were able to create crafts, do colouring, and meet and get their photos taken with Santa Claus. The free event included a volunteer donation option where \$400 was raised for InterChurch. Thank you to

everyone who attended and volunteered to make this event a huge success.

In the evening, the annual Christmas Carol Sing took place at Thamesford District Recreational Centre. This is an annual event that has been going for over 30 years! We had many wonderful local talented singers perform for an energetic crowd. Afterwards, the Oxford 4H club served up some yummy treats and the Lions served up some delicious hot choco-

late.

The Parade is coming December 17

The Cold Springs Farm Star has been lighting up Thamesford for over 37 years on the top of the feed mill silos. Although the star was removed from the silos in November, it has been relocated and it will be lit up on Sunday, December 17th for the Calithumpian Santa Claus Parade. Come find out where this star will be located, and also come and see all the wonderful floats that organizations, clubs and families have created. To top it off, Santa will be there! Our local firefighters, along with the Thamesford Lions, will be there to collect non-perishable food items for the local foodbank. Thank you to the Calithumpian Committee, whose volunteers work very hard to organize this parade!

Thamesford Trojans host Minor Hockey Night

A huge crowd was out at the arena on December 8th for Minor Hockey Night and to cheer on the Trojans against the Exeter Hawks. Before the game, minor hockey players were invited to meet with the players and to obtain autographs and take pictures. The evening of community spirit also included a free skate for all the players and their families, with donations accepted for the local food bank. The Thamesford Lions were on hand to serve a delicious BBQ and also tend to the bar and canteen.



(DOIRS WEIR PHOTO)

PEACE POSTER CONTEST

Thamesford Public School student Grayson Carvalho was winner of the recent Peace Poster contest, and in the above photo he is being congratulated by Lions members With Brian Voigt and Kristina Davis. Another local winner of the Peace Poster contest was Shelby Dakin of Sainte-Marguerite-Bourgeoys Catholic School in Woodstock.



(DOIRS WEIR PHOTO)

CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES

Be Sharp Academy singers Ellie Brock, Louella Embury, and Hazel Embury sang "Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer" during the Christmas Carol Sing on December 2.



(DOIRS WEIR PHOTO)

MINOR HOCKEY

Members of the Thamesford Trojans met with minor hockey players (such as Tyler Aylsworth above) before their December 8th game against Exeter.

PJHL STANDINGS

West Yeck Division

(as of December 12, 2023)

	GP	W	L	OTL	T	PTS
North Middlesex Stars	24	21	3	0	0	42
Mt. Brydges Bulldogs	25	17	6	1	1	36
Dorchester Dolphins	23	16	4	3	0	35
Thamesford Trojans	22	17	5	0	0	34
Exeter Hawks	23	11	10	2	0	24
Petrolia Flyers	22	8	12	1	1	18
Port Stanley Sailors	21	5	15	1	0	11
Lucan Irish	25	4	20	1	0	9
Aylmer Spitfires	23	4	19	0	0	8

Woodstock Santa Claus Parade

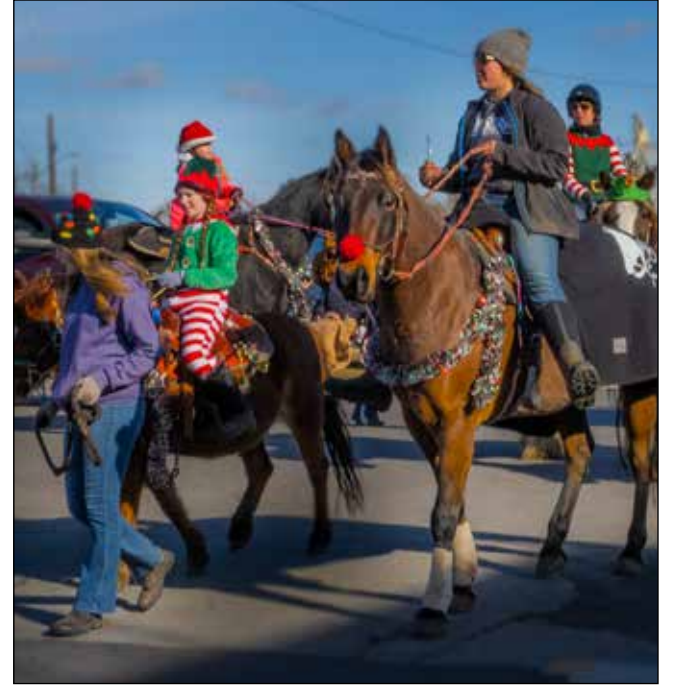
Santa Claus came to town on Saturday, November 18, at 6 p.m. The parade featured holiday themed floats, marching groups, bands and more. The grand finale was featuring Santa Claus himself, as he greeted thousands of spectators before returning to the North Pole.
(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Ingersoll Santa Claus Parade

On November 18th, The Rotary Club of Ingersoll was proud to present the 26th Annual Ingersoll Rotary Christmas Parade at midday. This was a free event for the town of Ingersoll and surrounding communities.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)





HAPPY 
New Year!

WISH YOU JOY

As we approach the end of the year, we want to extend our warmest wishes for a joyous holiday season and a happy new year.

We also want to take this opportunity to remind all retirees of our upcoming breakfast event at 9 a.m. on January 25, 2024.

It will be an excellent opportunity to reconnect with friends and former colleagues and catch up on the latest news from the union.

We hope to see you there and wish you all a safe and enjoyable holiday season! Cheers to a wonderful year ahead.

**126 Beale Street
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Oxford VON Appreciation Day

The Oxford VON held a Volunteer Appreciation event on December 5th from 1-3 p.m. at the Navy Club in Woodstock. International Volunteer Day takes place every year on December 5 to shine a light on the impact of volunteer efforts every-

where. The VON and Sakura House volunteers celebrated together at a Volunteer Christmas party complete with Karaoke and a hot chocolate bar. There was so much fun and laughter.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Welcoming and giving out a VON mug were Emily Dufton, Sarah Suddes and Kim Dew



Organizers for this event were Linda W, Kim D, Carolyn K, Robin K, Janet Somers, Jen H, Eliza R, Robyn M, Emily D and Sara S



Hot Chocolate served by Carolyn Kaufman and Mary Jane Schurman



At the Naughty and Nice table were Cheryl Hachborn, Elaine Becker, Penny Whitehead, Colleen Peat, Corinne Scott and Penny Stager

Lighting of Museum Square

Friday, November 17, 2023 from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. in Museum Square, the City rang in the holiday season with the Lighting of the Square. The event featured fun for both the young and young at heart, as they welcomed the most wonderful time of the year!

Activities included: Mr. and Mrs. Claus arrival, Official

welcome, Lighting of the Lights, Meet and get a photo with Mr. & Mrs. Claus to take home, Hot chocolate and cookies, Meet the Grinch, Cindy Lou Who and Ice Sister, Elsa & Anna, Live ice sculpture carving, Live Christmas choir, Woodstock Art Gallery community collaborative project, Winter Watercolour Artwork and take-home art

kits (limited quantities)

At the Woodstock Museum: Christmas Scavenger Hunt, featuring 'Find The Elf', Letters to Santa and activities, inside the Educational Room and Christmas Escape Room.



Ice Designs by Rich. See his ice sculptures at Festiveice.com



Santa and Mrs. Claus Lighting of the Square



Lighting up for Santa were Stacy and Lily Leenwestein



Roz Carpenter, Michael Lieber (Guest Town Cryer from Sister City Sylvania, Ohio), Mayor Jerry Acchione and Student Mayor for The day Ethan Fodor



Carols sung by Mayor Jerry Acchione and The Harbor Town Choir



Festive Lights lit up in Market Square



LIGHT UP THE MUSEUM

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Beachville District Museum enjoyed its annual Light Up The Museum event on December 1 with music, treats, activities, and lights galore! Despite the rain that day, their lights still shone. The museum will have its lights on till January, so drive by whenever you need a dose of Christmas cheer. The museum thanks its sponsors and community for showing support and a festive spirit.

Oxford Collegium Singers perform in Woodstock



(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)

Alexandra Hospital Foundation

Tree of Lights

**New* This Year*

We Are Lighting Potted Trees at our Entrances!

Every \$10 Donation Lights Up A Bulb!

Lights may be lit "In Memory Of..." or "In Honour Of..." Loved Ones

\$50 "In Memory Of..." Bulbs On Memory Trees

\$1,000 Stars Available

To Make An Online Tree of Lights Donation Go To
www.alexandrahospital.on.ca



Oxford Collegium Singers

Presented on Saturday, December 9th 7:30 – 8:30pm at the Church of The Epiphany in Woodstock, were the Oxford Collegium Singers and Cantate Iterum Orchestra under the leadership of artistic director Johann Van Ittersum.

The audience experienced the melodies of the Christmas season as they were presented with the timeless works of J.S. Bach and familiar seasonal carols arranged by John Rutter. The performance featured soloists who included Ariel Harwood-Jones, soprano Katie Walshaw, alto Marcel Van Helden, tenor and Michael York, bass.

Oxford Collegium Singers is a choral ensemble based in Oxford County. It meets from September through April at Oxford Reformed Christian School in Mount Elgin. The choir's mandate is to perform larger, sacred choral works from the canon of western choral music. It further aims to bring a message of hope and to support charities in its local communities and beyond.



The ensemble of the Oxford Collegium Singers and Cantate Iterum Orchestra under the leadership of artistic director Johann Van Ittersum performing

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Top-ranked Navy Vets reach 20-win mark

JIM TAYLOR

Echo Contributor

It took this year's Woodstock Navy Vets only 23 games to have reach the 20-win mark. Only the 1974-75 team reached 20 wins faster. They sit on top of the Doherty Division with a six-point lead over New Hamburgbut with a game-in-hand, and are by winning percentage the top-ranked team in the Provincial Junior Hockey League.

Davin Gray continues to lead the team and Doherty Division in scoring, with 44 points (9 goals and 35 assists). Nolan Brett leads the division with 18 goals, and Chris Coulter leads all division defencemen

with 10 goals. Tyler Bouck has been strong in the net, with 14 wins, a 2.47 GAA, and a .931 save percentage. Ethan Szabo

is currently on a 11-game point-scoring streak. Head Coach Darren Young recently became the fourth coach in team history to be behind the bench for 200 career games.

The Navy Vets play host to the Wellesley Applejacks this Friday, December 15th at Southwood Arena. This game, which gets underway at 7:45 p.m., is the team's Kid's Night and Toy Drive. On Sunday, the Vets travel to Norwich to take on the Merchants at 2:30 p.m.

Next Friday, December 22, Woodstock hosts the Paris Titans at 7:45 p.m., then play their last game of calendar year 2023 on December 23 in Wellesley at 7:30 p.m. The season gets back underway on January 5th, with the first Woodstock home game of 2024 coming on the 12th when the Tavistock Braves come to town on Alzheimers Awareness Night.



ENOUGH WITH THE FROZEN DINNERS.



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Location: 423 Thames St., South, Ingersoll

Call Us: (519) 425-9999

Email Us: info@gardensofingersoll.ca



PJHL STANDINGS

South Doherty Division

(as of December 12, 2023)

	GP	W	L	OTL	T	PTS
Woodstock Navy Vets	23	20	2	1	0	41
New Hamburg Firebirds	24	17	6	1	0	35
Tavistock Braves	22	13	7	0	2	28
Norwich Merchants	23	8	10	4	1	21
Wellesley Applejacks	21	8	12	1	0	17
Hespeler Shamrocks	23	8	14	1	0	17
Paris Titans	24	4	18	1	1	10

WOSHL STANDINGS

(as of December 12, 2023)

	GP	W	L	OTL	T	PTS
Tillsonburg Thunder	12	10	2	0	0	20
Petrolia Squires	13	9	4	0	0	18
Strathroy Jets	15	8	7	0	1	17
Stratford Fighting Irish	12	7	5	0	2	16
Tilbury Bluebirds	12	7	5	0	0	14
Elora Rocks	13	7	6	0	0	14
Alvinston Killer Bees	10	6	4	0	1	13
Woodstock Lakers	12	5	7	0	0	10
Dunnville Aeros	13	4	9	0	2	10
Delhi Flames	10	4	6	0	1	9
Orangeville Blitz	14	1	13	0	0	2

Youth basketball reaching new heights in Woodstock

JEFF TRIBE

Echo Contributor

Tina Kudia can see something of herself in her daughter Riley's growing love for basketball.

And then some.

"She's a better version of me," laughed the Woodstock Oxford Minor Basketball Association (WOMBA) coach. "That's for sure."

Kudia was introduced to basketball by an 'amazing' elementary school coach 'who truly loved the sport and cared about kids.' She went on to play competitively at the high school level, enjoyed basketball while attending Georgian College in Barrie, and returned to the court as a coach a year ago in conjunction with Riley's comparatively-tentative debut.

"This year she's right in there," Kudia said, expanded skills and confidence levels mirrored in her peers. "It's really not just for my daughter, but for all the kids out there," Kudia continued, alluding to one boy who struggled at the beginning of last year's season. He wouldn't have been considered the most valuable player on the team by its end, but certainly was the most improved.

"That to me was a huge win."

Riley has the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of athletics, part of a shared family commitment to a healthy, active lifestyle. Beyond providing a 'kick-start' to basketball should she choose to continue, there is heightened confidence in improvement, the recognized benefits of being part of a team.

"I think sports helps kids stay on the proper road," Kudia summed up.

WOMBA has been providing kids those opportunities for 26 years says Vice-President Wes Mitchell. A record 400-plus signed up for the 20-week 2023-24 season, up significantly from last year's 270.

Mitchell attributes the association's popularity to factors including the Toronto Raptors' 2019 NBA championship, affordability compared to other minor sports, that WOMBA Sunday afternoons are a more manageable time slot for families, and a league philosophy stressing inclusion, fairness, fundamental skills development and team play. Players are encouraged to treat competitors with respect and discouraged from any 'chirping' or less-than-clean play.

"We really focus on positivity and kids having fun," Mitchell emphasized. "Good people first, good basketball players second."

Each player receives equal playing time, there's a ban on fullcourt pressure after a 15-point lead, a 20-point limit on individual scoring and girls have their own division and gym from Grade 5 onward.

Registration is \$150 per player which covers WOMBA gym time, referees and insurance, along with a uniform, individual and team photo and discounted London Lightning basketball tickets for each player. Over 600 tickets have been sold for WOMBA day at the Lightning this season says Mitchell, enough to fill one section of Budweiser Garden seating.

Official referees are used in the high school divisions, with high school kids -



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

HAVING A BALL

From left, Woodstock Oxford Minor Basketball Association (WOMBA) coach Tina Kudia and daughter Riley; longtime executive member Irene Tiegs, and coach Jon Janssens son Drew. The popular basketball association has grown from 270 players to over 400 this year.

supported throughout the season in their own development as officials - paid a stipend or credited with volunteer hours for refereeing the younger age groups.

"We train our own in-house referees and advise them too."

Sponsors receive WOMBA's sincere appreciation along with a pair of Lightning tickets which they can pass along if they so choose.

"Or join us at the game and see all the kids in their uniforms."

Sponsorship also supports enrollment for financially-challenged youth, including 16 kids who might not have otherwise been able to afford playing this season.

The association features 36 teams in seven divisions. Co-ed minor and major atom (Grades 1&2 and 3&4 respectively) kids are hosted at Oliver Stephens Public School. Minor and major bantam (5&6 and 7&8) and high school boys (9-12) play at College Avenue Secondary School, while girls play in two divisions, bantam (5-7) and high school (8-12) at Huron Park Secondary School. Dividing the teams beyond the atom level ensures girls get a chance to fully engage.

Two teams were added in each of the minor bantam boys and bantam boys and girls' divisions over the previous year, stretching available resources and initiating the search for additional sponsors.

"It was a good challenge to have," said Mitchell, admitting WOMBA would welcome more volunteer coaches, not to mention additions to its five-member executive.

"We're always on the lookout for fresh talent."

There are kids who play in WOMBA who are on rep teams, looking to get a little extra time on the floor or work on various aspects of their game. As Mitchell puts it, 'Kobe Bryant never turned down

gym time.' However, the association's focus is unashamedly on development,

introducing kids to the sport - shooting, passing and dribbling and defence - in a positive, productive and safe environment.

It's an environment which both provides a base for those who wish to take their games further, and allows for equally-respectful celebration of a young, developing player's first basket.

"That's what really lights you up," Mitchell concluded. "That's what gets you excited."



WOMBA coach Tina Kudia shares a teachable moment with daughter Riley.



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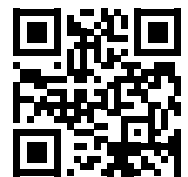
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Canada Let's Dance

On Wednesday, November 15th Judith Fleming of Lilybear Dance Boutique held a performance of dance students at Theatre Woodstock. It was a celebration of National Dance Week with an evening of inspiring performances by local studios and special guests. Students from Artistic Movement, Elite Dance Centre, Sim School of Highland Dancing, Dance In Style and G9 Bhangra

Academy put on an entertaining evening of dance. Special Guest was Allie Goodbun from Paris France.

Judith is an award winning dancer who has trained, competed and danced throughout Canada. She started dancing at the early age of three, from Ballet to Highland. She taught and choreographed dance for many years. Judith brings with her a unique and extensive grasp of the

needs of both children and dancers. Judith is an Early Childhood Educator, AECEO Certified. With combining both careers and translating her love of children and dance, the active life, mix in all her favourite things and following ones dreams, a new venture created Lilybear Dance Boutique.



On stage Emily Dix, Kassidy Davies and Allie Burns



Evan Lott and Sydney Holte show off their best moves



Proud dancers Julia Hobbs, Christina Cannella and Cerys Hook take to the stage



Above: Sim School of Highland Dance performed "Pas de Bas", "High Cuts", "Highland Fling" and "Heave Away"
Left: Opening remarks by Judith Fleming of Lilybear Dance Boutique and Sarah Hodgkinson (Marketing and Communications Coordinator Theatre Woodstock)



(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



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Woodstock Warriors U14 Volleyball Champions



U14 VOLLEYBALL

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

The Woodstock Warriors U14 volleyball team played their first tournament on Sunday, December 3 in Listowel. After losing just one game during round robin play, the team got on a roll, going on to win the final match in two straight games. Pictured above are in the back row, from left to right, coach Durval Medeiros, Alison Van Der Wyngaard, Avery Glanzmann, Meghan Jongert, Jaelyn Walker, Lauren Cumberland, Hope McMichael, Katie Hofstetter, Avery Hahn, Brooklynn Ruddy, Josslyn Gaffney Front Row L- R Hannah Law, Ajmer Poonia, Peyton Boddy. The team manager is Courtney Glanzmann.



Above: Durval Medeiros and Avery Glanzmann
Below: Katie Hofstetter



Locals post strong results in kata, kumite

Congratulations to the recreational athletes who competed in Markham on November 19th and our elite athletes who competed in Vaughan on November 26th. Ziad, Fiona, and Olivia have all secured their qualification for the Ontario Winter Games as well!

wanis Club of Ingersoll, Ingersoll Rent-All, and Backyard by Design Garden Centre.

Markham City Open Results
Kristian - 5th place kata, 2nd place kumite
Darius - 2nd place kata, 1st place kumite
Faith - 2nd place kata, 3rd place kumite

Elite Selection #3
Fiona - 5th place kata, 2nd place kumite
Olivia - 5th place kata, 2nd place kumite
Ziad - 7th place kata, 1st place kumite
Matthew - 3rd place kumite



Sensei Matthew Digulla, Senpai Ziad AlDaqaq, Hanshi Yabunaka, Olivia Maltby, Fiona Mills



Hanshi Yabunaka and Faith Dowdall



Kristian Persaud, Hanshi Yabunaka, and Darius Colley

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

Ugly Sweater Annual Bowling

The Oxford County Pride committee held their annual Ugly sweater Holiday Bowling at C&D Lanes, Woodstock. This took place on Saturday December 2, 2023 from 6pm until 7pm. The price included one hour of bowling, bowling shoes, two slices of pizza and a drink. There was also

a contest for best ugly sweater in three categories, child, youth, and adult. They were also be joined by Woodstock's very own Grinch! Cost was only \$10 per person. Teams were five to a maximum of six. However you did not need a full team to join.

In 2015 the Oxford Pride Committee evolved from the Oxford County Rainbow Coalition. The Oxford County Pride Committee is comprised of 2SLGBTQIA+ community members and allies. The objective of their committee is to develop an artistic and cultural Pride celebra-

tion. They recognize diversity of gender throughout Oxford County. In doing so, the Pride Committee highlights organizations, business', services and opportunities that support and promote positive outcomes for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and Allies.



Organizers were Tera Russell, Jordan Kent, Parker VanBelleghen, Alicia Sweeney, Kay Sweeney, Joanna Cameron, Chris Tanacs, Sarah Steens, Justice Sweeney, President Tammy Murray, Gryphon Sweeney, Michaella Harris, Krista Sweeney



Checking the decorations were Justice Sweeney and Kay Sweeney



President Tami Murray welcomes the Grinch with his best Grinchy smirk



In their Holiday Bowling attire were Henry and Julie Healy, Lisa Brown and Fern Middleton

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



The Family Bowling Team of Terri, Tammy Dunn, Isla and Mavi



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President Tami Murray with the sparkling Alistair all lit up for the night

Celebrating 50 years of Harris Heights / Harrisfield Public School

PAT (HILL) HARRISON

Echo Contributor

Eight Rural Schools closed and a new school in South Ingersoll opened in September 1973.

At the front of the school, the cairn (and the bell from Dunn's School) was erected by the Home and School Association to commemorate the opening of Harris Heights P.S. and the closing of the following schools:

- Clark's Corners P.S. (includes SS 2 and 6)
- Centreville P.S. (includes Foldens)
- Salford P.S. (includes SS 1 and 3)
- Dereham Centre P.S.
- Dickson's P.S.
- Dunn's P.S.
- Mount Elgin P.S.
- Verschoyle P.S.

This was a big undertaking for the Oxford County Board of Education!

The school population was divided into "houses" for house league sports and all other school wide activities.

The houses were the names of some of the schools that had closed to form Harris Heights!

Green and yellow were chosen as the school colours because of the nature surrounding the new school, built in the woods, on the former Harris and Caffyn farm. (the big playground filled with dandelions!)

The school was grades K to 6.

In 1998, the Oxford County Board of Education, amalgamated with London, Middlesex, and Elgin school boards, to form the new "Thames Valley District School Board."

All TVDSB schools became JK to Gr. 8.

During the 2010-2011 school year, a new addition was added to Harris Heights and the original school was renovated.

September 2011 marked the beginning of FDK (full day Kindergarten ...JK and SK, all day every day!)

The staff and students from Westfield P.S. (Ingersoll), joined Harris Heights and the new "Harrisfield Public School" was formed. School boundaries changed and many of our students and staff moved to the new North Ingersoll school, "Laurie Hawkins P.S."



Hard work and inspiration by organizing committee members Mark Seaton, Erin Hughes, Dilani Pieris, Pat Hanson, Julie Desa, Glenna Hart, Sharon Rattle, Katie Prouse, Ted Whitford and Gayle Kindurys



Twins Clair and Jill with Pat Hanson welcome guests to the event

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Aunt Anna Baigent and proud Mom Mary Baigent with young Marshall



Dale Bell was the first Vice Principal in 1973 and Pat Bell volunteered to amalgamate all the books into the new one library.



Sheila Powell, Superintendent, shared her experiences at Harrisfield Public School

Local students taking part in Robotics Challenge

On Thursday, November 30, more than 75 students from 16 secondary schools took part in the Oxford Invitational Youth Robotics Challenge. The event took place at Reeves Community Complex, Goff Gymnasium from 2 – 5:30 p.m.

Students set up their projects beginning at 2 p.m., with judging from 3 to 5 p.m. Students also had an opportunity to present their creations to the panel of judges from 5 to 5:30 p.m. “This is always such

fun event to be part of,” said Brad Hammond, Economic Development Officer for the City of Woodstock and co-chair of the competition. “The program allows students to tackle challenges and activities related to engineering, technology and skilled trade career paths. With those making up such a significant portion of the local employment market, it’s great they have an opportunity to explore areas they may not have previously considered.”

Participants had been working with their teams since September to build and program a robot to complete a real-life robotics scenario. Each team received a Lego Spike Prime Kit to build their robot and no additional materials are permitted. Teams also presented a written report and video outlining their learnings and the challenges they encountered along their journey. “Seeing how the teams learn and develop over the course of a few months is really

inspiring,” added Lisa Wells, Manager of Continuing Education and Contract Training at Fanshawe College Woodstock/Oxford Regional Campus, who also co-chairs the competition. “Not only can you see their technical expertise improve, but you can see growth in their problem solving, teamwork and leadership skills too.”

This marks the 16th year of the competition.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Jane Kempe (Director) and Co-Chairs Brad Hammond and Lisa Wells organized the competition



Brad Hammond presents a plaque of appreciation of Platinum Sponsor to Vuteq Canada, one of the many sponsors supporting the event.



Ingersoll District Collegiate Institute (Bomber Squad) displaying their first place Platinum Winner Cup for their Robot



Lord Dorchester Secondary School (Brick Bot Engineers) finalists receiving their Platinum Award



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Oxford 4-H Awards

The Oxford County 4-H Association Awards Night was held Friday, November 17th at the Embro Zorra Community Centre, with Emcees Grace & Rachel McKinlay of the North Oxford Dairy 4-H Club organizing the special event for the 4-H youth and volunteers to be recognized for their achievements. Photographers for the event were Amy Danen & Marian Sterk.

The evening started with a catered dinner supplied by Village Catering Deli from Thamesford and ice cream from Shaw's Ice Cream. Thank you to the George Thornton Bequest Fund making it a wonderful in-person celebration of 4-H in Oxford County!!

The Oxford Cloverbuds 4-H Club returning members (Andrea Langford, Hildie Langford, Henry McCoy, Maeve McGinnis, Annabelle McLeod, Benjamin Sterk, Trenton Sutherland, and Renee Walker) were presented their year plates. New Cloverbuds (Annika de Wit, Danielle Langford, Isabel McKinlay, Leda McKinlay, Toby O'Connor, Bodhi Sterk, Ada Sutherland, and Alaina Walker) were presented their plaques and congratulated on their first year in the program.

Marian Sterk presented the Embro Fair 4-H High Points Award to Jade Dill.

Grace Piper did a presentation of her experience at the 4-H opportunity Youth Adventure Camp.

4-H volunteers in Oxford received acknowledgement of their involvement in the 4-H program. First year volunteers: Julie DeBruyn, Sarah Pletsch, Terri Muir; Five years: Amy Brekelmans, Jane Danen, Frances Campbell, Susan Reda, Taylor Karn and Laura Langford; 10 years: Jack Danen, Mardine Pelders; and 15 years: Melvin Bergsma. There were two Oxford 4-H volunteers recognized for their long-time involvement with the 4-H program. Katherine Grieve, 25 years, received 4-H Ontario padfolio and a gift certificate for Ye Olde Fabric Shoppe; while Dwight Hargreaves, 40 years with the Bonds Dairy 4-H Club, received a custom-made walking stick by Dave Karn and a Tim Hortons gift card.

The 4-H Ontario Award of Achievement, sponsored by Gay Lea Foods Co-operative Ltd, was presented to Megan Ball and Grace Piper. The 4-H Ontario Award of Achievement is presented to youth who have completed 24 projects and five years in the 4-H program.

The Janet Wilson Memorial Outstanding 4-H Youth Awards were presented by Ryerson and Laura Green to Charlotte Ball and Logan Brekelmans (Novice), Grace Piper and Mathew McLeod (Junior) and Jade Dill and Nathan Bean (Intermediate). Each youth received a certificate and cheque.

The Your Neighbourhood Credit Union Outstanding Overall Senior 4-H Youth Award was presented to Jacob Bergsma.

Oxford County Plowmen's Association Out-

standing Senior Agricultural 4-H Youth Award was presented to Amanda Witmer.

The Oxford County Junior Farmers 4-H Scholarship was presented to Nicole Danen.

The Norman Dickout Memorial Judging Awards were presented by Sandra Alyea, sister of Norman Dickout, to Sophia Doan (Novice), Brynn Doan (Junior), Nathan Wilker (Intermediate) and Flynn Reinhart (Senior & Overall).

The Youth Leader Award, sponsored by Kubota Canada Ltd, were presented to Lauren Ball, Jade Dill and Erin Shrigley.

The Oxford County 4-H Project awards were presented to Megan Ball, Julia Brekelmans, Emma Pullen, Grace Piper and Lexi Dill for 30 projects completed. Lexi Dill received a wooden cutting board for 36 projects completed. Lauren Ball received a glass clock for 42 projects completed. Lauren Ball and Jacob Bergsma received a fleece blanket for 48 projects completed. Erin Shrigley received a framed certificate for completing 60 projects. Connor Tree received framed certificates for completing 78 and 84 projects completed. Jade Dill received framed certificates for completing 114, 120 and 126 projects.

The Project of the Year award was presented to the Pumpkin 4-H project by Hickson 4-H Club.

Emma Finch and Emily Spek received the Oxford County 4-H Youth Graduating Award. It was a framed collage picture of memorable experiences in their 4-H youth career.

The Longstanding Graduating Youth Award, sponsored by Kubota Canada Ltd, was presented to Emma Finch.

4-H Clubs also spoke about their club activities during the past year and into next year. There will be a Square Dancing 4-H project starting on January 5; contact jjdanen@net-flash.net to register or for more information. The Oxford County Junior Farmers are sponsoring a free skate for 4-H youth January 27 in Tavistock.

The Oxford Swine 4-H Club organized the Food Drive with donations accepted at the Oxford 4-H Awards Night or by e-transfer to oxford4htreasurer@gmail.com to be distributed to Oxford County Food Banks.

The Oxford County 4-H Association Annual meeting is January 24 at the Folden's Hall. There will be an 'In the Know' mental health workshop done later in January.

Oxford 4-H would like to thank their 2023 sponsors: George Thornton Bequest Fund, Oxford Agropro Ltd, Knoops Farm Service, Ayr Farmers Mutual, Township of South-West Oxford, ADM, TD Bank, Oxford County Plowmen's Association, Your Neighbourhood Credit Union, Ontario Mutuals, Ross Wilson & Family, Russell & Bernice Dickout & Family and Richardson Family.



CURLING FOR DONATIONS

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Committee members from the Ingersoll & District Curling Club were delighted with the support from curlers for the food drive for the Ingersoll and area Salvation Army. Members were very generous in the support for those in need at this time of year.



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Christ Church Huntingford's ACW

MARGARET WEBBER

Echo Contributor

The November Meeting of Christ Church Huntingford's A.C.W. (Anglican Church Women) was held in the Church Hall on November 16th at 1.30 p.m. President Barbara Bruce welcomed ten ladies to the meeting. The secretary and treasurer's reports were read and approved.

Our meeting was very brief due to

the fact that Professor Coady Groats from the University of Western Ontario came to give us a Presentation. Professor Groats teaches History and Indigenous Studies at the University of Western Ontario. He gave an in depth talk about Residential Schools. Thirty people attended, some A.C.W. members came from other Churches in the area. There were many questions afterwards and refreshments were served in the Church Hall following the presentation.

New Rhino Truck Lube Centre offers convenience for highway truck drivers

EMILY STEWART

Echo Correspondent

Truck drivers travelling on the Highway 401 can take a break in Woodstock.

Rhino Truck Lube Centre opened a new location in Woodstock on 240 Universal Road in October. John O'Donnell, the vice president of operations and marketing of Just Lubes Ltd., explained that the city was the best location to open a Southwestern Ontario truck stop because it is less than 2 KM from the Highway 401, which can merge with Highway 403, and it isn't nearby the congested traffic in the GTA. Woodstock is also a growing city.

"With Rhino, it's about being on highway," O'Donnell said. "So, we wanted to find a location that was going to be really accessible for the on-highway driver."

Since opening in the fall, the Woodstock Rhino Truck Lube Centre's received positive feedback and plenty of

word-of-mouth visitors and referrals. New customers constantly visit. The centre was renovated to include a kitchen, shower, and a lounge for the drivers.

"All of the technicians are licensed and there is no appointment required to check out Rhino Truck Lube Centre. The stop uses Rotella Canada Fuel, the top Canadian brand for heavy-duty oil. O'Donnell added that for both the truck drivers and for Rhino Truck Lube Centre staff, the new location is a time-saver.

"For them - especially now with electronic logbooks and mandatory rest periods and stuff - it's all about time and money," he said. "For us, no appointment necessary, drive-thru service. They can be in and out roughly in an hour's time. We can do pretty much all the maintenance services that they need."

Rhino Truck Lube Services also has locations in Moncton, New Brunswick, and Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. Visit www.rhinotrucklubecentres.ca.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)



Connect offers Saturday hours for holiday shopping

EMILY STEWART

Echo Correspondent

You can get your Christmas shopping done in several Southwestern Ontario municipalities in-between bus trips.

Middlesex County Connect announced on November 27 that the bus will run on Saturday, December 16. The bus also ran on Saturday, December 9. The initiative aims to help shoppers use the transportation service to complete their holiday shopping in a sustainable, frugal, and community-focused way.

"We want to emphasize the importance of sustainable and community-oriented transportation options, especially during the holiday season," Anum Maqsood, community transportation project manager for Middle-

sex County, said to the Woodstock-Ingersoll Echo. "We hope that residents will seize this opportunity and make the most of their holiday experience while considering the environmental and community benefits of using public transportation."

Route Two, connecting Woodstock to Ingersoll, Putnam, Dorchester, and London, will first travel between 9:10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and then from 3:40 p.m. to 7 p.m.

"This not only helps with budgeting during the often expensive holiday season but also supports local businesses by facilitating easier access to shopping areas and encouraging residents to explore the diverse offerings in and around their community," Maqsood said.

More information can be found middlesex.ca/ct.

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Christmas With The Winds 2023

On Friday, November 24th at Knox Church in Woodstock it was an evening of Christmas With The Winds concert. They performed a medley of classic Christmas favourites and recognizable modern works, all picked to have a Festive feeling and be ready for the holiday season. Program started with the Oxford Winds followed by the Senior Winds. After a brief intermission the Oxford Breeze performed followed by an encore of the Senior Winds. The Oxford Winds consists of musicians of all ages who play brass, woodwind and

percussion instruments at an intermediate to advanced level. This group includes members from Oxford County and beyond including students, retirees, music teachers, professional musicians and general recreational musicians. The Oxford Breeze was founded in 2001 for musicians of all ages to play brass, woodwinds and percussion at a beginner level. This group is perfect for less experienced musicians, musicians returning to an instrument after taking time off or those who are interested in playing a new instrument.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)

Right: Conductor and Music Director of the Oxford Winds and Breeze for the evening was Stephanie Riehl. Stephanie is a founding performing member of the Oxford Winds and currently serves as Music Director of the organization.



Christmas With The Winds performance. The Oxford Winds consists of four bands of various skill levels. There novice groups provide aspiring musicians of all ages with the opportunity to learn a new instrument in a concert band setting. They also offer intermediate and senior groups for those with more experience playing an instrument who enjoy performing music together.



Board members: Kent Biniface, Eugena Riehl, Stephanie Riehl, Jamie Fralick and Krist Foss. Absent from photo were Directors Marja DeBoer Marshall, Darla Manship and Abby Somers

A Good Old-Fashioned Big Family Christmas



Large cast and crew included David Butcher (Producer) Vanessa Page (Mildred) Rick Klein (Cliff) Greg Visser (Tom) Rob Coles (Lighting Design) Rebecca MacNeil (Assistant Stage Manager) Janny Hughes (Assistant Stage Manager) Violet Moon (Arlene) Karen Trick (Beth) Monique Nisbet (Judith) John Hammond (Hayden) Maria St. Laurant (Props Coordinator) Desmond Nanassy (Max) Lenore Butcher (Director) Mark Starratt (Jack) Lily Wijnker (Lighting Operator) Nikki Sloan (Carla) Ruby Wijnker (Blair) Abby Allen (Lainey) Ann Davies-Sutherland (Marjorie) Marshall Bedard (Microphone Technician) Chloe McGregor (Stage Manager) Val Shoemaker (Phoebe) Absent Ruthie Renee (Sound Operator) and Trinity Hilsden (Microphone Technician)

A Good Old-Fashioned Big Family Christmas by Pat Cook

Successful run at Theatre Woodstock, December 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 7:30pm and December 3, 10, 2pm, this play was acclaimed as the largest audience turnout of the season. Following the story when your parents' marriage seems to be in trouble, what's an adult daughter to do? With the help of her well-meaning but inept husband Hayden, Judith decides to set things right by holding a Christmas party and inviting her parents. Add in her sisters, their husbands, a pair of bickering nieces, a nosy neighbour and the unexpected arrival of her college age daughter and her in-laws, and Judith has her hands full as she tries to create the perfect Good Old-Fashioned Big Family Christmas from the ensuing chaos.

Director Lenore Butcher

(RON YUZARK PHOTO)

Route To The Past: Christmas Memories in Oxford County

SCOTT GILLIES

Contributor

The song “Christmas in My Hometown”, along with Ted Comiskey’s own “The Lights of My Hometown” are your invitations to join me on this trip down memory lane. As we near the big festive day the hearts of so many of us harken back to the days of our youth, to the happier days of long ago. Join me in a short trip back through the mists of time to relive some thoughts and memories of our hometowns.

Growing up north of Zenda, I didn’t really have a hometown. Instead, we travelled the roads to Ingersoll, Norwich, Woodstock and occasionally to London so perhaps I share some memories with all of you.

Do you remember the big evergreen bells that decorated the main corners of downtown Ingersoll? There are far more lights in town now than ever before, and yet I still miss those giant harbingers of Christmas.

Looking for some giftware? No better place to head than Carr’s Book and China Shop if you were looking for cards or china floral arrangements. Or how about clothes for Christmas? There were always plenty of options around the County. You could head to Jack’s Department Store on the main street of Ingersoll, or check out all that could be found at Irving’s of Norwich. If you couldn’t find what you wanted at either of these outlets, then you could always head to Hudson’s, or Reg Hall’s in Woodstock. Need a new suit or checkered sport coat for the coming Christmas party? Head to the nearby Hersee’s on Dundas Street or drive out to the Elks store at the new Blandford Mall.

Parties were held in a variety of locales. The Ingersoll Inn and the New Commercial Hotel were the swankiest places to go. I remember dining in both establishments, and ordering a Davy Crockett mocktail before the meal; it was probably the same as a Shirley Temple, but meant for boys.

Many parties of course took place at home. Glittering gold garlands stretched

from corner to corner while tables groaned from the weight of food. Perhaps a pool table served double duty thanks to a sheet of plywood, and TV trays were handy for kids who couldn’t balance a plate on their lap.

Whether you shopped at Wettlauffer’s in Burgessville, Poole’s in Woodstock, or Maedel’s in Norwich, there never seemed to be a shortage of festive treats. What our parents didn’t make from scratch they could buy from the likes of Zurbrigg’s Bakery. A special stop might include dropping into Boniface’s where you could get a paper bag full of Rosebuds, or chocolate bars in bulk.

Flipping through the pages of the ‘Wish Book’ helped to provide items for Santa’s list. A trip through the aisles of Eaton’s or Robert Simpson’s in downtown London helped to solidify that list and was always a treat. Presents were lovingly wrapped with childhood fumbblings and placed under the tree that stood in the corner of the living room—perhaps a Scotch pine that may very well have been purchased from

Hawkin’s Feed Store.

Back then, almost everyone attended a Christmas concert at their church. Children dressed in housecoats portrayed shepherds and the Holy Family. Choirs made the hallowed halls echo with their songs of triumphant praise. Personally I always looked forward to George Pearson’s booming voice when the Zenda choir sang “Go Tell It On The Mountain”.

Before there were festivals of winter lights, there was Walter Pullen’s home and yard. Hundreds of families piled into their cars to head out to Sweaburg to see his Nativity scene.

Christmas means so many different things to each and every one of us. It’s not just about the material things or the people you shared those days with, nor is it just the sights, sounds and smells we associate with, but perhaps it’s the whole experience that lingers in our minds. I hope that this little trip along one route to the past has helped to trigger some fond merry memories for you.

"We must never forget their sacrifice"

JEFF TRIBE

Echo Contributor

Chad Cornish does not glorify war.

The Woodstock military historian instead respectfully shares the stories and honours the sacrifice of ordinary men and women who did extraordinary things so all Canadians enjoy the freedoms we do today.

“In my own way I’m bringing the ones who never came home, back home,” said Cornish. “I’m doing my best to bring them home and tell their stories.”

His passion was kindled as a child, Cornish’s heroes wearing military instead of baseball or hockey uniforms. A casual request from wife Kim on what he wanted for Christmas combined with funds from a generously gifted sports card collection resulted in a guided European battlefield tour. A 2015 ‘dream come true’ through France hit the ‘highlights.’ A plumbing customer heard of the trip and impressed with the details, booked Cornish at the local legion.

Initially horrified, the normally-reticent Cornish acquiesced, gratified and encouraged by the hugely-positive reaction to his inaugural presentation.

“It snowballed from there.”

Subsequently, return trips have extended a personal, self-directed pilgrimage to sites of Canadian military importance, Dieppe, walking all 14 sandy kilometres of Juno Beach, at low tide.

“You just wonder how they did it - how anyone survived.”

He has visited paratrooper landing zones, followed routes of march. Cornish is also drawn to cemeteries, the ‘big Canadian ones’ at Brettville-sur-Laize near Falais, and Beny-sur-Mer behind Juno Beach, as well as a host of smaller ones across France and Great Britain.

“It’s overwhelming and very, very emotional,” he explained. “The vastness of it all, the amount of gravestones.

“Each one tells a story, not just those who lost their lives, but the folks who had to pick up the pieces after.”



Cornish meanders, and drawn to particular stones, snaps a photo, records details.

“Of the thousands buried there, a few call out to you.”

He takes those names back home, adding a face and family with input from descendants, letters and unsealed military documents, many including post-war plans.

“They never got to do any of that and every other Canadian gets to do that because of them.”

Stories on servicemen and women, anecdotes from locals sharing remembrances and photos form the basis of annual presentations at legions and pre-COVID, ten community and church groups. He leads Remembrance Day services in Otterville and Norwich in the absence of a chaplain. Cornish also helps fill in details for people seeking information on individuals and is working on ‘Far From Home, Canadian Valour and Sacrifice in WWII.’

He does not accept a penny for his efforts and any proceeds from the book will be directed back to veterans’ organizations.

This year’s trip was to Yorkshire in north-

ern England, home to WWII #6 Bomber Group airfields. The Stonefall cemetery in Harrowgate hosts 665 well-tended Canadian graves, aircrew lost to illness, training accidents, wounds suffered in action over Europe or crashes resulting from damage, mechanical failure or notoriously foggy weather upon their return.

His 2023 presentation included 29-year-old Squadron Leader Tom Kneale of Woodstock, caught between a 1,000-foot cloud ceiling, fog reaching up 500 feet and icing on the wings compounded by failed navigation gear following a successful mission over Berlin. Twenty-one Lancasters were lost over Germany Dec. 16, 1943 on ‘Black Thursday’ so named because an additional 31 crashed upon their return, 327 airmen’s lives in all.

Bomb aimer William Harold Wade of Ingersoll was the only child of Earnest and Annie, his death’s details inscribed on their family stone in Harris Street Cemetery. WH Wade died Nov. 26, 1943 from a mid-air collision, aircraft re-directed to his airfield by inclement weather elsewhere

‘stacking up’ dangerously. A former employee of Loblaws, Wade was described as a quiet, sincere individual who wanted to ‘do his part and not let anyone down.’

“Not what’s in it for me,” Cornish emphasized. “Hard to imagine in this day and age.”

Presentations feature women’s wartime contributions, this year nurses at the foundational history of military air ambulances. Protests from pilots and aircrew overturned a discriminatory ban from mess halls for the traditional breakfast of bacon and eggs. They would eventually receive eight pence-per-week active duty pay. Two of the 200 lost their lives on active duty and finally in 2008, all received full recognition for their military service from the Duchess of Cornwall.

“A wrong, righted,” Cornish summed up.

By intent, his exhaustively-researched presentations are precise and low-key rather than sensational. But to see the young faces on the screen behind him, to hear their stories, get some sense of their sacrifice, can lead to an emotional journey.

“I don’t mean to make people cry,” Cornish concluded. “But I do mean to make people aware.

“We must never forget their sacrifice.”



“Every Time a Bell Rings, An Angel Gets His Wings”

Bells were ringing and angels winging at Westminster United Church in Thamesford. Their annual production saw the classic Christmas story come to their stage in radio format with *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*. Telling the story of George Bailey who works all his life doing good for others in his home town, rather than exploring the world as he intended, the story takes a turn when a large sum of money accidentally goes missing from his business and he contemplates how much

better the lives of those he loved would be without him. Assisted by his affable guardian angel, Clarence, (who hasn't yet earned his wings,) George is shown how much worse things would have been had he never been born. The community chips in to help George back, Clarence gets his wings, and everything ends with a rousing rendition of “Auld Lang Syne.”

The Westminster production featured real-life couple Stephen Graham and Susan Cole playing the lead couple of

George Bailey and Mary Hatch. The story has long been Susan's favourite movie and Stephen's rendition of Jimmy Stewart's famous voice had many sitting back with their eyes closed to picture the movie in their mind. If they did, though, they missed the ‘behind-the-scenes’ hijinks as sound effects were made live at a foley table, scripts went flying, and the Stage Manager, played by the director and the church's minister, was dunked multiple times to replicate the sound of characters

falling into the water.

While a major fundraiser for the church, each year's proceeds also give back to the community. \$1000 was given to The Christmas Place in Woodstock to help buy gifts for those less fortunate – a program that has seen a huge leap in registrations this year. It is good to ring out such good news, because . . . “every time a bell rings, an angel gets his wings.”



THE CAST

Back Row: Don Millar, Molly Jones, Ian Masson, Kate Lockhart, Zach Zones
Front Row: Mark Marshall, Susan Cole, Stephen Graham, Lillianna Jones, Josée Rémillard



READING LINES

Stephen Graham, Kate Lockhart, & Susan Cole playing George Bailey, Violet Bick, & Mary Hatch

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Sun, sand, sea ... and scones



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Contributor

Odds are good that the autumnal cold snap has you thinking of travelling to somewhere warm. That's a very Canadian phenomenon. And, stereotypically, you may be dreaming of “sun, sand and sea.”

Let me suggest a fourth “s” – “scones.”

I know, baked goods are probably not top of mind when you think of spending a few days or weeks at a sunny resort. But that's because you haven't met Peg Mullin Laron, owner of Bay Harbor Lodge and Coconut Bay Resort, in Key Largo, Florida.

Peg is a former school teacher who has invested a lot of passion and creativity in developing her waterfront resort, which she started in 1994. Today, she runs the place in partnership with her son, Jonathan.

There are a lot of reasons to stay at Bay Harbor – including sun, sand and sea – but first on Peg's guests' daily to-do list each morning is “scones.” Peg's scones are famous – each morning, Bay Harbor guests can help themselves to one – or several – of at least eight varieties of home-baked scones. Over the course of a year, she will offer about 85 different kinds of scones.

Okay, so that means there are 85 different reasons to visit Bay Harbor and Coconut Bay. But actually, there are a lot more than that. This is no ordinary resort, and a far cry from the multi-storey, hundreds-of-units, condo style facilities that abound in any sun-and-sea destination. Peg's place offers what I would call cottage-style living. There are 22 options, including pleasant, single-storey water-front units and a few that are located in a two-storey building. All are steps from Florida Bay, where guests can enjoy spectacular sunsets almost every evening.

Not incidentally, those few steps will take you through an array of tropical plants – Peg and her team have focused on creating wonderful gardens throughout the property.

You can swim in Florida Bay, or you can use the lovely, heated

pool. If this all sounds like I was really impressed with Bay Harbor – well, yes, I was. It exudes relaxation, and has all of the pluses that come with hands-on involvement of owners who are passionate about their project. If a day goes by when a guest does not have a warm conversation with Peg or Jonathan, that would be a shock. They are there, and they care.

The location of Bay Harbor is also a plus. Key Largo is the northern-most of the Florida Keys, and has a lot of unique attractions in its own right. While we stayed in Key Largo, we made sure to take a cruise on the African Queen. This small boat is the authentic craft from which the famed, 1951 Humphrey Bogart-Katharine Hepburn movie got its name. And unlike the dramatic ending of the movie, the African Queen did not actually blow up – it's docked in Key Largo, where its captain, Dave Lawrence, is ready to take you on a cruise out into the Atlantic, and back in time about 80 years!

Another way to experience the Atlantic, about 10 minutes from Bay Harbor, is one of the very best scuba and snorkeling locations anywhere – John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park. You can visit the park – with great beaches, a visitor centre,

and plenty of water activities – or you can book an excursion through one of several dive shops throughout Key Largo.

Half an hour south of Bay Harbor is a quirky but important attraction – the Laura Quinn Wild Bird Sanctuary. Visitors are welcome (there is a voluntary donation jar), but the focus is really on the birds they are saving and protecting. Depending on time of year, you may see almost any of the amazing species that make the Keys their home – my favourites include the roseate spoonbills, and the night herons.

Perhaps the most eye-opening destination we visited was the Coral Restoration Foundation, located in an unprepossessing building a few minutes north of Bay Harbor. Visitors can choose to join a seminar on coral restoration, and the presentation is jam-packed with information on the extreme challenges facing coral, due to climate change, human interaction, pollution, and more.

Coral reefs are vital to the earth... and they are dying in unprecedented numbers. We learned that some reefs are experiencing 90 per cent loss of coral! This is disastrous news, because the coral reefs provide food and shelter to innumerable species of fish; they also clean

the ocean's water, and they protect waterfront land.

Organizations like the Coral Restoration Foundation are, through research and development, beginning to find solutions to begin to restore the reefs. We learned a lot about “coral trees” – underwater nurseries “at the forefront of innovation”, on which living coral are being grown, for transplanting back onto reefs, to bring them back to life.

The foundation is also active in encouraging individuals and governments to take steps to mitigate actions that damage reefs.

My notes from our session go on for dozens of pages. But instead of pretending to be an expert, I encourage you to visit the foundation, at www.coralrestoration.org.

That's just a sample (and I haven't even mentioned the wonderful, waterfront restaurants) of the activities you can find around Key Largo.

And did I mention Peg's scones....?

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

Riddles

Why did the tightrope walker visit the bank?
He wanted to get his balance

Why did Patrick eat money?
His mom said it was his lunch money.

Why can't computers play tennis?
They try to surf the net.

What does the Invisible Man drink at snack time?
Evaporated milk.

What kind of running means walking
Running out of gas.

What goes up and down but never moves?
The stairs

Why did the kid put his head into the piano?
He wanted to play by ear.

Why did the kid run to school?
Because he was chased by the spelling bee.

What did the tie say to the hat?
"You go on a head and I'll hang around here."

Where do snowmen keep their money?
In a snowbank.

Sudoku

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

Solutions on page 33

🐾 🐾 🐾 🐾 🐾 🐾 Pet of the Month 🐾 🐾 🐾 🐾 🐾 🐾



LOKI

Hi, my name is Loki, I'm an 8 year old good boy. Who has an obsession with my 18 tennis balls, and my mom. My bestfriend is my Dad, and I like to wake up my human child by jumping on his face in the mornings.

Nominate your Pet of the Month by emailing info@theecho.ca

Word Search

CHRISTMAS

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

- Christmas
- Merry
- Festive
- Santa Claus
- Elves
- Jolly
- Reindeer
- Carolers
- Mistletoe
- Nativity
- Yuletide
- Tinsel
- Stocking
- Presents
- Candy
- Rudolph
- Holiday

Matilda Jr. Rehearsal

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Silent auction at all shows
Doors open 30 minutes prior

ingersollchoralsociety.ca



(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)

MATILDA THE MUSICAL

Top: The very large cast rehearsing for the play

Coming January 12-13 at 7 p.m. and January 13 - 14 at 2 p.m. to Theatre Woodstock is Roald Dahl's Matilda Jr. the Musical.

The musical is based on the book by Dennis Kelly and the music and lyrics is by Tim Minchin

Rebellion is high in Matilda Jr., a gleefully witty ode to the the anarchy of childhood and the power of imagination. This story of a girl who dreams of a better life and the children she inspires will have audiences rooting for the "revolting children" who are out to teach the grown-

ups a lesson. Matilda has astonishing wit, intelligence... and special powers. She's unloved by her cruel parents but impresses her schoolteacher, the highly loveable Miss Honey. Matilda's school life isn't completely smooth sailing, however – the school's mean headmistress, Miss Trunchbull, hates children and just loves thinking up new punishments for those who don't abide by her rules. But Matilda has courage and cleverness in equal amounts, and could be the school pupils' saving grace.

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Matilda
THE MUSICAL
JR.

BOOK BY DENNIS KELLY
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On our way back to base, Major Mead decided to have a little fun. He looped through the clouds, flew upside down, rolled to the right, dived, and flew up again. When we landed, instead of staggering around like a drunken sailor or puking my boots up, I surprised him by asking, 'How do I get a transfer to this outfit?' He just laughed. 'You're too old!'

And so began Tom Williams' love for flying!


- World War I ACE Pilot
- Guinness Book of World Records - Oldest Licensed Pilot
- Inducted into the Canadian Aviation Hall of Fame

Written by Irene Crawford-Siano, and interspersed with Tom's own words, the book, "BY THE SEAT OF HIS PANTS" is the story of Sweaburg Ontario's decorated pilot, Captain Tom (Tommy) Williams.

Cost \$25.00



Order your copies of this book by contacting:
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COMING EVENTS Email to inquire info@theecho.ca



The Woodstock Ingersoll Echo is currently a monthly newspaper that, thanks to the support of the community, will be shifting to a bi-weekly newspaper in March 2024. The next editions are:

Friday, January 19th
Friday, February 16th
Thursday, March 14th
Thursday, March 28th

CARING HEARTS SUPPORT NETWORK
Living with Loss
The next 6-Week Grief Support Group will begin on Tuesday January 16 until Tuesday February 20, from 2:00 PM until 3:30 PM at St. David's United Church, Woodstock, ON. Please call or text 519-536-3370 to register or email info@caringheartssupportnetwork.com.
We offer a safe, supportive space to explore your grief, with the guidance of trained facilitators.
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Sunday, December 17, 2023 7:00 p.m.
Old St. Paul's Church 723 Dundas St., Woodstock
Singing/Solos/Duets. For ALL Ages
Refreshments to Follow

FOOD ADDICTS ANONYMOUS: The only requirement to membership in Food Addicts Anonymous is a desire to stop eating addictively. No fees, no dues, no weigh-ins. We meet on Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. at Trinity United Church, 118 Church St. Ingersoll and on Saturdays at 10:00 a.m. at The Rock Church, 1140 Nellis St., Woodstock. For more information, call Patrick at 519-485-4146 or Gayle at 519-532-4254

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- QUIZ ANSWERS**
- 1) James Cameron
 - 2) Juniper Berries
 - 3) 24 ribs
 - 4) New Delhi
 - 5) A murder
 - 6) Norway
 - 7) Winter solstice
 - 8) Freddie Mercury
 - 9) Yen
 - 10) Green

SUDOKU

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

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Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

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Zehrs Woodstock
Civic Centre Arena
Woodstock Ag Society
7-Eleven
Jesse's Breakfast
Coffee Culture
Rosso Barber-o Shop
Shoppers Drug Mart
City of Woodstock
Beantown Coffee
Dino's Dining Lounge
Union Burger
Royal Canadian Legion
Woodstock YMCA
Food Basics

Goodwill Community Store
Tim Hortons
Quesada Burritos
McDonald's Restaurant
Woodstock Hyundai
Honda Woodstock
Dubois Mazda
Woodstock Jeep
Peavey Mart
Haight's Garden Centre
Tim Hortons
Early Bird Coffee
WalMart
McDonald's Restaurant
Canadian Tire Service Dept
Scott's No Frills
Holiday Inn Express
Days Inn by Wyndham
Tim Hortons

Quality Hotel & Suites
Best Western Plus
Pharmasave Woodstock General Hospital
Lobby, Woodstock General Hospital
Reeves Community Complex
South Gate Centre
Daisy Mart

BEACHVILLE
Beachville Museum

INGERSOLL
Riverside Minimarket
Canadian Tire
Ingersoll Karate
Tim Hortons
Cooperators
McFarland Rowlands
Foodland
Miss Ingersoll
The Olde Bakery Café
Kraft Korner
Hometown Style
Ingersoll Public Library
Town of Ingersoll
Ingersoll 50+ Centre
Tremblett's Independent Grocer
Tim Hortons
Home Building Centre

Pedal Tractors are auctioned off

GARY WEST

Echo Correspondent

Farms and farmers of all types across western Ontario work the fields and handle their farming operations with all kinds of makes and models of every shape and colour of tractor you have ever imagined.

There is a couple from Beachville, in Oxford County, who decided that pedal tractors, of every colour, built for young

farmers to be, were something that peaked their interest many years ago.

Paul Seys said he bought a full sized Massey Harris "44" and thought of continuing to buy full sized Antiques and after purchasing a Massey "44" pedal tractor to match, he became hooked on only collecting the small sized ones.

Paul and his wife of almost 57 years, Monica Seys, say the love of collecting pedal tractors and a few pedal combines,

was a hobby they took up, and have made friends across Canada and even more in the U.S.A. ever since.

In a recent interview, as we talked about their collection of close to 100 pedal tractors on display at Shackleton Auctions, outside of Springfield, a person had to be amazed at the miles that were travelled to buy some of these "hard to find" toys that anyone can now purchase.

They said, with emotion, that having

the sale was not an easy decision to make, but thought at their ages, it was time to let somebody else have fun with their collection.

Going to 12 or 13 toy shows every year, was something the couple will never forget, and say the social aspect of meeting new people from every walk of life, in different small towns in America made their travels enjoyable ones, year after year.



THE COLLECTORS

Paul and Monica Seys, flanked by their family, in a room displaying their vast collection of pedal tractors up for auction recently.

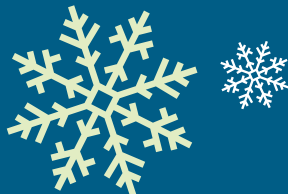


(GARY WEST PHOTOS)

THE COLLECTION

Showing the different models of pedal equipment that the Paul Seys family have collected over the last quarter century.

OxfordCounty
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2023-24 HOLIDAY COLLECTION GARBAGE AND RECYCLING



WILL YOUR COLLECTION DAY CHANGE?

Residences and businesses in Blandford-Blenheim, Tillsonburg, Norwich, South-West Oxford, and East Zorra-Tavistock will have regularly scheduled collection during the holidays.

INGERSOLL (NORTH) AND ZORRA TOWNSHIP CHANGES



ORIGINAL DAY	NEW DAY
Monday, December 25	Saturday, December 23
Monday, January 1	Saturday, December 30

Remember to have all garbage bags and recycling bins to the curb by 7:00 a.m. on your collection day. When severe weather hits this winter, collection may be delayed or cancelled. Monitor local news, visit www.wasteline.ca or download the wasteline app to receive service alerts.

LOCATED IN WOODSTOCK?

Please visit www.cityofwoodstock.ca for adjusted collection dates over the holidays.

DON'T LET YOUR HOLIDAYS GO TO WASTE

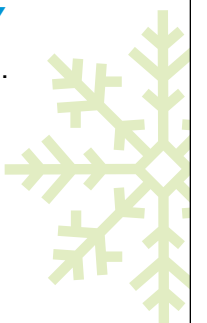
Follow these simple steps for recycling:

1. Remove all tape, plastic film, twist ties and other decorative objects before recycling cardboard.
2. Break down, flatten and bundle all cardboard boxes, with bundles no larger than 75 x 75 x 20 centimetres.
3. Wrapping paper can be recycled, except for foil-based paper.
4. Remove all ribbons and bows. Save and reuse for next year where possible.
5. The bulky Styrofoam often found in larger gifts can be dropped off at the Oxford County Waste Management Facility, Tillsonburg Transfer Station and Woodstock EnviroDepot for recycling.

HOLIDAY HOURS WASTE MANAGEMENT FACILITY

Monday – Friday from 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**CLOSED: Monday, December 25, 2023
Tuesday, December 26, 2023
Monday, January 1, 2024**



Theatre Woodstock presents "What If It Was Me?"

Coming to Theatre Woodstock January 20, 2024 at 7:30 p.m. is the premier showing of Woodstock resident, Director Matt Power's loving film *What If It Was Me.*, featuring local actors Laurel Gillespie and John R. Smith.

"This heart-wrenching feature film tells the remarkable true story of two brothers who were star athletes, and the devastating accident that affected their lives years later, putting their bond to the test, and forcing them to make the ultimate sacrifice. Join us for the premiere of this spectacular movie, with special guest appearances from some of the actors!"

*** This film is recommended for audience members 16 years and older

TITLE: What If It Was Me?

STORY BY: Mark Schneider

DIRECTOR: Matt Power

GENRE: Love story, Brotherhood, Devotion, Sacrifice, Drama, and Sports

LOGLINE:

The remarkable true story of two brothers, who were all-star athletes in high school, and the devastating accident that affects their lives years later, putting their bond to the test, and forcing them to make the ultimate sacrifice.

SUMMARY:

In 1973, Buddy Miley, a seventeen year-old star high school quarterback from a suburb of Philadelphia, played a fatal option that would leave him paralyzed from the neck down, and leave his devoted younger brother Jimmy with the guilt that it should have been him. Now a quadriplegic, and in



Director, Woodstock resident, Matt Power

(RON YUZARK PHOTO)

the care of his mother, "Saint Rosemarie" as Buddy would call her, Buddy struggles to redefine who he is from the neck up. Meanwhile, Jimmy is drafted by the Los Angeles Dodgers, and accepts an offer to play professional baseball, only to throw it all away because he could not leave his Brother's side. Believing that he doesn't deserve an opportunity that his brother could never have, Jimmy heads home to be with the one who matters most to him, his

brother Buddy. The film begins amid the backdrop of the brothers' youth, and mutual successes in sports, but the focus is on the last eight months of their lives together in 1996, when Buddy realized that he could no longer deal with the disappointment of false hope for medical advances to help him walk again. He also didn't want his mother and brother to have to care for him their entire lives, and wished for them to have a life of their own.

After twenty-three years of excruciating pain, it only took seven months for the brothers to find a solution: Dr. Jack Kevorkian. Buddy was ready to die, and the only person who had the courage to honor his wish to end his life was his brother Jimmy. The brothers had to keep their plan a secret, even from their mother. In a small Detroit motel room, Buddy and Jimmy waited, for what seemed like an eternity, for Dr. Kevorkian to arrive. Unable to regulate his body temperature, Buddy became very cold. To keep him warm, Jimmy laid his warm body on top of Buddy, and with a final kiss on his brother's lips, said a tearful goodbye to the one person he had sacrificed everything for, just as Dr. Kevorkian entered the room. The story chronicles intimate details of Buddy's life that have never been told before, as well as the life-changing decisions made by Buddy and Jimmy, with the help of Jimmy's girlfriend Lisa, the only one who could provide the strength and courage required to make Buddy's last wish a reality.

"What If It Was Me?" begs to ask the audience that very question. Would you do this for your loved one? If you were in so much pain that you could not end your own suffering, who would you ask for help, even if it meant risking the possibility of imprisonment?

As you watch this remarkable story unfold, you will experience brotherly love and devotion like no other film before.

"My brother Buddy was the quarterback, and he called the plays. I just ran them." — Jimmy Miley



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