

St. Marys Independent

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Issue #1191

Thursday, December 28, 2023

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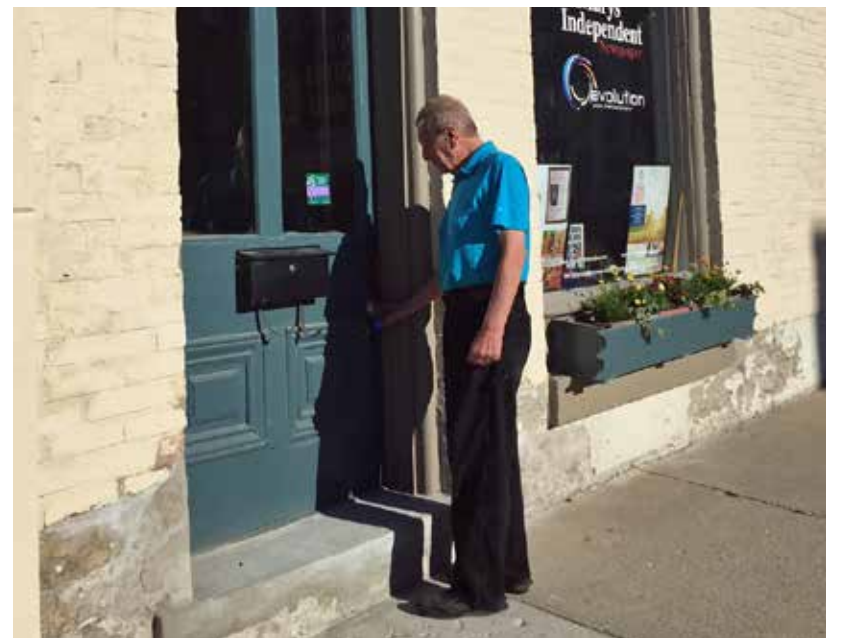
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A 2023 TOP STORY —

Several local businesses experience a ‘passing of the torch’

By Stewart Grant

Each year for this special edition, I look for special themes that seem to capture the year gone by. More than anything else, I think the theme for 2023 was “passing the torch”.

St. Marys is fortunate to feature many long-time, successful businesses. The entrepreneurs of these companies have worked tirelessly, in some cases for decades, in offering their goods and services to the community.

Surely, some of the toughest and most stressful years for these owners would have been the period of 2020 to 2022 where government-mandated lockdowns and social distancing restrictions threatened the survival of businesses that they’d worked so hard to build.

Having fought and won the battle to survive the pandemic, perhaps it’s no surprise that 2023 was the year that many business owners were ready to finally retire. Fortunately, in many cases, they were able to find energetic and qualified individuals to purchase their businesses and to carry the torch into the future.

In January, Ron McDonald concluded a successful run of 22 years as a grocery store owner in St. Marys. Ron and his wife Brenda had come to St. Marys in 2001 when they purchased the ValuMart at 588 Queen Street East (now the Dollarama building). In 2007, they moved down the street and into the McDonald’s Your Independent Grocer 40,000 square foot facility at 780 Queen Street East. In 2023, Robbie Tremblett was introduced as the new store owner of Tremblett’s Your Independent Grocer.

In July, Heather and Ed Parkinson sold their 12-year-old business at 143 Queen Street East, O’Grady’s Clothing and Accessories, to new owners Jennifer and Chris Dungo.

The following month, Julie Docker-Johnson announced that The Flower Shop and More, located at



Julie Docker-Johnson, long-time owner of The Flower Shop and More, posed with the O’Connor family upon the announcement of the sale of the popular downtown business.

147 Queen Street East, will have a new owner for the first time in 17 years. The business will be carried on by the O’Connor family: Christopher, Deb, Kate, Eli, and Toby.

Pass It On is a business of note that was also part of St. Marys life for 20 years. In May, store owner Carey Pope made the decision to close her retail location and focus online. Though the retail business is not continuing, the departure of her shop allowed other businesses to shift into new spaces and hopefully set them up for future success.

Your Independent Grocer, O’Grady’s Clothing and Accessories, and The Flower Shop and More are just some of the traditional St. Marys businesses who experienced a meaningful “passing of the torch” in 2023. In this respect, it was a transformational year for the town.

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2023 QUIZ

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- 1) What team won the 2023 Super Bowl?
- 2) What actor on the show "Friends" passed away this year?
- 3) What is the social media platform that was previously known as Twitter?
- 4) Who played the role of Barbie in the 2023 smash-hit movie?
- 5) What is the title of Prince Henry’s memoir?
- 6) The world population surpassed what milestone number in 2023?
- 7) Who was TIME’s person of the year?
- 8) Who owns ChatGPT?
- 9) What company had a submersible sub accidentally implode?
- 10) The U.S shot down a spy balloon from what country?

This week’s answers are found on pg. 31



Unit 1, 60 Water Street South
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3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
10	11	12	13	14	15	16		
17	18	19	20	21	22	23		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30		
31								

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A 2023 TOP STORY —

Gilly's Pubhouse fills an appetite in the downtown

By Stewart Grant

It might have been the most viral article that we ever shared on Facebook, when the Independent announced that Gilly's Pubhouse was moving into the old Customs House building at 17 Water Street.

At long last, our town would have a pub that would be consistently open past 8 or 9 p.m., and there'd be a place to eat downtown on a Monday. It would also be a well-run, professional operation that would finally be housed in this iconic building, with a variety of great food to suit every appetite.

Yes, to say that people were eager for Gilly's Pubhouse to open would be a huge understatement. When it did open, on May 17th, the crowds were lining up to experience the new restaurant and the traffic has continued to stay strong throughout the year. Mike Bayer, who owns the business along with his wife Cathy, said in the first week, "The welcome we have received from the community is just heartwarming and humbling. Everyone on our team has been nothing short of amazing, putting in long hours and dealing with the unfore-



Owners Cathy and Mike Bayer opened their much-anticipated Gilly's Pubhouse on Water Street on Wednesday, May 17th. (Wendy Lamond photo)

seen hiccups with incredible passion and care."

The Bayers brought with them a wealth of experience. This is the second location of Gilly's Pubhouse, as they have operated a location at 94 Downie Street in Stratford since 2017. They also own Stratford's iconic Erie Drive In which is known for ice cream and footlongs.

"We're here for the locals, seven days

a week, with extended hours," Mike Bayer told the Independent at the time of the Gilly's announcement.

As if establishing their new restaurant wasn't enough, the Bayers kept busy with a pair of new projects before the year was out. The closure of Cloud 9 Kids at nearby 13 Water Street (the next building to the north from Gilly's) created a synergistic opportunity for Gilly's to expand their offerings to the community. During

the summer, they opened G's Eats and Treats, complete with a separate patio, then in the fall they converted the space into a private dining and meeting facility known as G's Quarry Room.

Naina's Indian Kitchen brings some spicy new variety to town

Late in 2023, on November 29th, another new restaurant opened in St. Marys to universally rave reviews. Prahlad Meena, who had previously started successful Indian restaurants in Alberta and Niagara Falls, brought his talents to St. Marys to launch his own restaurant here, which he named in honour of his wife, Naina.

Naina's Indian Kitchen is located across from Tim Hortons at 202 Queen Street East, in the former location of China House Restaurant, and before that, Lai King Restaurant. Featuring authentic Indian cuisine, this restaurant was a significant boost to the variety of culinary options available within St. Marys. In the early weeks of the restaurant, it was commonplace to go onto social media and hear of yet another positive experience enjoyed by patrons who had enjoyed Naina's food and wished to share the news.



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Wishing you and yours all the best in 2024



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2023 was another year of toying with the emotions of Toronto sports fans.

I don't know whether to be excited or frightened about the arrival of 2024.

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

SWIM AND MOVIE NIGHTS
Dec. 29 & Jan. 5 | 4-7 PM | Pyramid Centre
Splash and kick, catch a flick at the Pyramid Recreation Centre from 4 - 7 PM. Start with a swim and then settle in for a movie with pizza and popcorn!
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A 2023 TOP STORY —

Lincolns' 'Renaissance Era' ends with conference final run

By Spencer Seymour

A lot can happen in 17 years. The St. Marys Lincolns were not immune from that, as the organization that travelled to the WOHL Finals in 2005-06 was very, very different from the one that got to the GOJHL Western Conference Finals earlier this year.

My first season calling the Lincolns' games was in the 2019-20 season, the first season of what I dubbed the team's "Renaissance Era." In the years before that, the future of the Lincolns looked dicey at best. However, that 30-win season put the Lincolns back on the map as a team to be taken seriously in the GOJHL.

After COVID-19 cancelled a season, the Lincolns were right back in the mix in 2021-22, losing to the Leamington Flyers in the semi-finals, though not before a magical moment



or two – see Max Mulder, forever velcroed against the glass after his iconic overtime winner.

Then came last season. Not only did the Lincolns return to the top three of the conference, but under the guid-

ance of Head Coach Jeff Bradley, the Lincolns went on their most magical playoff run in almost two decades. After sweeping the Strathroy Rockets, the Lincs took on their arch nemesis London Nationals. While many believed the Lincolns could win, few expected the Lincs to thoroughly outplay the Nats and sweep them as well.

The entire community, super-charged from the sweep of the Nationals, finally enjoyed a championship series after 17 years. Against the Leamington Flyers, the Lincolns threw everything they had at the Flyers in what was as close a series as two teams could play. Anyone who was in attendance for the Lincolns' game four victory at the PRC likely can still feel the electricity that was in that arena on that night.

With the last likes of the 'Renaissance Era' aging out, such as Ethan Lamoureux, Cole Schnittker, and Nathan Small, a new era has begun for the Lincolns. An era that appears like it could be the greatest one yet. But no matter what happens in the coming years or the bittersweet nature of the conference final result, the magic of their playoff run last season will forever be engrained in the minds and the hearts of Lincs Nation. A team whose mere existence was in question, in less than half a decade, came within fingertips of a title. Truly, a renaissance for the ages.

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LINCOLNS FACTS & FIGURES FROM 2023:

- Finished 2022-23 season with 34-13-0-3 record
- Swept London in playoffs and advanced to conference finals
- Ethan Lamoureux named 2022-23 MVP, Leading Scorer
- Nathan Small named 2022-23 Top Defenceman
- Jacob Chantler won D.R. Stevens Leadership Award
- Michael Elliston and Matteo Lalama named playoff MVPs
- Lincs are 2nd place in 23-24 season with a record of 18-7-2-1
- Top 23-24 scorers are Cohen Bidgood, Chase MacQueen-Spence, Ethan Weir, Luca Spagnolo, Noah VandenBrink, Josh Cornfield, Jaden Lee, William VanSumeren, and captain Adam Barkley

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May the spirit of Christmas bring you peace, give you hope and grant you love this year!

Merry Christmas and thank you for your continued support. We look forward to seeing you in 2023!

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The eight St. Marys Lincolns playing their final year of junior hockey were honoured prior to a game against the Leamington Flyers. Members of each player's family came onto the ice and presented each graduating player with a framed jersey. The players who are playing their final year of junior hockey with the Lincolns include Adrian Stubberfield, Josh Tidgwell, Jacob Chantler, Ethan Lamoureux, Cole Schnittker, Nathan Small, Michael Elliston, and Matteo Lalama. (Photo credit: Mike Chennette/McGinny Photography)

Steady year for downtown

By Stewart Grant

As alluded to in the earlier stories, two big wins for St. Marys' downtown in 2023 were the successful transition of some long-time businesses to new owners, and the introduction of much-needed dining options Gilly's Pubhouse and Naina's Indian Kitchen.

As the year-over-year comparison of Queen Street and Water Street illustrates, it was a relatively stable year for the downtown. In some of the highlighted areas below, the industries stayed the same, but the names of the businesses changed. In other circumstances, such as Square One Skate Shop and Roancroft, the businesses

are continuing but in new locations.

Stonetown Coffee (January 2017-May 2023) was a notable closure at the high-profile southeast corner of Queen and Water. This retail space remains vacant at year-end, although the upper floor of the building has been renovated into an attractive short-term rental called The National on Queen.

The month of May brought a new home for Campbell's Catering, near the Thames at the rear of 36 Water Street South.

Late in the year, Queen Street Dentistry opened in the downtown, becoming the town's third dental office.

Queen Street, St. Marys: business changes over the year			
December 31, 2022		December 31, 2023	
Queen Street from Peel to Victoria Bridge:			
NORTH SIDE	SOUTH SIDE	NORTH SIDE	SOUTH SIDE
Tim Hortons	Stirling Tattoo	Tim Hortons	Stirling Tattoo
Cenotaph	China House Restaurant	Cenotaph	Naina's Indian Kitchen
St. Marys Town Hall	Stonetown Physiotherapy	St. Marys Town Hall	Stonetown Physiotherapy
	Circle K		Circle K
	H&R Block		H&R Block
	Don Hamilton Royal Lepage		Benchmark Real Estate
	Stonetown Osteopathy		Stonetown Osteopathy
Church Street			
TD Canada Trust	St. Marys Lawyers (McCotter, White)	TD Canada Trust	St. Marys Lawyers (McCotter, White)
Solstice Vocal Studio		Sapphire Ink	
Peak Realty	GC Boyle Law Firm	Peak Realty	GC Boyle Law Firm
Tutt Co.	The Chocolate Factory	Tutt Co.	The Chocolate Factory
Hubbard Pharmacy	Shackleton's Real Estate	Hubbard Pharmacy	Shackleton's Real Estate
Vacant	Stone Home Creatives	Queen Street Dentistry	Stone Home Creatives
St. Marys Optometry	Dunny's Source for Sports	St. Marys Optometry	Dunny's Source for Sports
The Flower Shop and More...	Simply Sewing	The Flower Shop and More...	Heather Ringland Designs
Snapping Turtle Coffee Roasters	Stonetown Travel	Snapping Turtle Coffee Roasters	Stonetown Travel
O'Grady's Clothing & Accessories	Coldwell Banker	O'Grady's Clothing & Accessories	Coldwell Banker
Four Happy	Hyggeligt	Four Happy	Hyggeligt
Vacant	Bungalow on Queen	Vacant	Bungalow on Queen
Royal Bank	Vacant	Royal Bank	Vacant
	Bank of Montreal		Bank of Montreal
Wellington Street			
Scotiabank	Meridian Credit Union	Scotiabank	Meridian Credit Union
Vacant	Eclectic Treasure	Vitality Health & Fitness	Eclectic Treasure
Vacant	Sukie Lee's	Vacant	Sukie Lee's
Lyric Flowers	World's Coolest Music Store	Lyric Flowers	World's Coolest Music Store
Towne & Country Cheese Shoppe	Skippy's Pizza	Towne & Country Cheese Shoppe	Skippy's Pizza
Hairitage / Thomson Martial Arts	Urbshott, Galloway Insurance	Hairitage / Thomson Martial Arts	Urbshott, Galloway Insurance
Sun Rayz	Nail Effects	Sun Rayz	Nail Effects
Green Haven Bakery	ZenFire Pottery	Green Haven Bakery	ZenFire Pottery
Lauren Whitney	Troyer's Spices	Lauren Whitney	Troyer's Spices
Revive Holistic Health Centre	Mill Race Barber Shop	Revive Holistic Health Centre	MacPherson's Barber Shop
Roancroft	Jacklyn Seebach, PT	Vacant	The Physio Nook
	168 SPA		168 SPA
	Foot Care Freedom Clinic		Foot Care Freedom Clinic
	Stonetown Coffee		Vacant
Water Street			
MacPherson Crafts	The Flour Mill (main floor)	MacPherson Crafts	The Flour Mill (main floor)
Little Falls Artisan Crafters Market	The Yoga Chapple (upper floor)	Little Falls Artisan Crafters Market	The Yoga Chapple (upper floor)
Vacant		Vacant	
Vacant		Vacant	

Water Street, business changes over the year			
December 31, 2022		December 31, 2023	
Water Street from Green Bridge to McLean Taylor:			
EAST SIDE	WEST SIDE	EAST SIDE	WEST SIDE
Canadian Tire	McLean Taylor	Canadian Tire	McLean Taylor
n/a	Riverwalk Commons	n/a	Riverwalk Commons
St. Marys Insurance Group	Stonetown Financial Services	St. Marys Insurance Group	Stonetown Financial Services
Adult Learning Pgms of Perth (back)	Andemar Dust & Ice	Adult Learning Pgms of Perth (back)	Andemar Dust & Ice
Square One Skate Shop	Water Street Dentistry	Synterra Security Solutions	Water Street Dentistry
	Alliance Wellness Centre		Alliance Wellness Centre
Jones Street			
Salvation Army Family Thrift Store	St. Marys Independent	Salvation Army Family Thrift Store	St. Marys Independent
Paint & Palette	Food Station 39 (back)	Paint & Palette	Campbell's Canteen (back)
Pass It On	Sensations Salon	Square One Skate Shop	Sensations Salon
Stonetown Worship Centre	Cascades Cleaners	Vacant	Cascades Cleaners
Kalon & Co.	Angela Dawn	Kalon & Co.	Angela Dawn
Quantum Massage	St. Marys Family Chiropractic	Quantum Massage	St. Marys Family Chiropractic
Vacant (formerly Gordy's)	The Wine Lab	Gilly's Pubhouse	The Wine Lab
Cloud 9 Kids	Barista's	G's Quarry Room	Barista's
The Suds on Water Laundromat	Miss Jones Cannabis Outlet	Vacant (main level) / The National on Queen (upstairs)	Miss Jones Cannabis Outlet
Stonetown Coffee	Her Collab Co.		Her Collab Co.
	Betty's Book Shelf		Betty's Book Shelf
	Floor Mill (main) / Yoga Chapple (up)		Floor Mill (main) / Yoga Chapple (up)
Queen Street			
Roancroft	MacPherson Crafts	Vacant	MacPherson Crafts
MacPherson Crafts (storage)	Carpe Vinum	Vacant	Roancroft
	Bare Roots Wellness		Carpe Vinum
Famme & Co.	n/a	Famme & Co.	Bare Roots Wellness

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A 2023 TOP STORY —

Frank Doyle's legacy endures at the Independent

By Stewart Grant

Frank Doyle, who founded the St. Marys Independent many years ago, remained committed to serving the community as Editor-In-Chief of the local newspaper for literally as long as he possibly could.

As cancer took an advancing toll from his body, particularly as the months passed from May to August, he continued to visit the office at 36 Water Street every day, never once complaining about his condition. While we constantly worried about him, he didn't want to be a burden to others.

Frank's final week in the office was difficult. While he was determined to continue to work, his body would no longer let him, and the following week his was admitted to Hospice for his final days.

Frank passed away peacefully with family by his side on August 21, just 18 days after writing his resignation letter to myself at the Independent.

He began that August 3rd letter, "When I started the St. Marys Independent newspaper, the philosophy was to have a paper that would be educational, informative, and entertaining..."



"However, all good things must come to an end. Under the present circumstances which are out of my control, I must submit my resignation effective immediately. I do not take the decision lightly but have concluded I can no longer give at the standard the newspaper deserves."

Mary Smith wrote a lovely tribute to Frank in her August 31st Historic St. Marys column, and she noted that the very first St. Marys Independent was published 30 years ago on July 23, 1993.

"That first version of the Independent folded in the mid-1990s because it had lacked an adequate business plan and a strategy to attract advertisers and subscribers. But Frank remained determined to publish a second St. Marys newspaper, an alternate voice to that of the long-standing St. Marys Journal Argus. Vol. 1, No. 1 of the current Independent arrived on Friday, June 16, 2000 – a Frank Doyle millennium project. Once again, the emphasis was on local news and community engagement. Readers enjoyed such weekly features as Boos and Bravos, Riddle

Kid, and Senior of the Week. The early issues may have lacked journalistic polish but they were filled with humour and energy."

Smith added, "St. Marys owes the continuation of a local community newspaper to Frank Doyle and to the opportunities he gave the Independent's current staff and contributors."

The media landscape has certainly changed dramatically in the past 20 years. Frank's concept of a free distribution, independently-owned, community-focused newspaper turned out to be the secret for success that has allowed the Independent to outlast many other corporately-owned newspapers.

In recent years, utilizing these concepts learned from Frank, our team has been able to introduce newspapers in nearby communities such as New Hamburg, Stratford, Woodstock, Ingersoll and Goderich. Frank said of the future of the St. Marys Independent and these newer publications, "I have no doubt that each and every one of them will be a great success. Having played my part in this will always be for me a point of pride."

PROPERTY INFORMATION

VENDOR: Joyce McLeod

MUNICIPAL ADDRESS: 3315 Line 20, Stratford, Ontario

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Part of Lot 4, Concession 9, Downie Gore as in R383299; Subject to DOW14783, R82274, Municipality of Perth South (PIN: 53274-0013 LT), Stratford, Ontario

ACREAGE: 90 total acres, 87 workable acres, more or less

There is a 48'x96' driving shed in good condition also located on the property. This farm is systemically tiled and has two field entrances from the road.



FURTHER INFORMATION:

A tender package containing further information and instructions on how to make a bid can be obtained by contacting Andrew Phillips at phillips@stratfordlawyers.com or 519-271-6770 ext. 2226.

VIEWING OF PROPERTY

Interested parties may contact Linda Kelly at 519-301-7494 to arrange a viewing of the Property. Please provide 48 hours' notice for all viewings.

PROPERTY INFORMATION

VENDOR: Joyce McLeod

LOCATION OF PROPERTY: Property is on Perth Line 20 immediately to the West of 911 #3628, across the road from 911 #3643.

MUNICIPAL ADDRESS: No Municipal 911 number is assigned.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: West 1/2 of Lot 11, Concession 8, Downie Gore, Municipality of Perth South (PIN: 53270-0016 LT), St. Pauls, Ontario

ACREAGE: 54.5 total acres, 52 workable acres more or less

Approximately 29 acres of this farm is systemically and randomly tiled and there is one field entrance from the road.



FURTHER INFORMATION:

A tender package containing further information and instructions on how to make a bid can be obtained by contacting Andrew Phillips at phillips@stratfordlawyers.com or 519-271-6770 ext. 2226.

VIEWING OF PROPERTY

Interested parties may contact Linda Kelly at 519-301-7494 to arrange a viewing of the Property. Please provide 48 hours' notice for all viewings.

YEAR IN CONSTRUCTION —

Most St. Marys construction occurring in the north



The Hooper Street / Trailside Avenue development continued to fill in during 2023. A new playground set was also added.



A large section of the Grand Trunk Trail (east from Wellington Street) was paved during the year. A new pathway provided access from the Hooper / Trailside neighbourhood.



Phase 1 of the "On The Trail" subdivision on Egan Avenue was a busy area of construction in 2023



Looking east on Egan Avenue from Wellington Street North. (Stewart Grant photos)

PREDICTIONS —

2023 St. Marys Independent predictions revisited

2023 Predictions – Stewart Grant

Unfortunately, I was not able to duplicate the success that I had with my 2022 predictions. In 2023, I only got 4 out of 9 correct.

1. Although COVID still exists in some form, 2023 represents a “return to normal” in that no lockdowns nor social gathering restrictions will be issued by the federal or provincial governments. **CORRECT.** There are still cases of COVID, but the days of lockdowns and restrictions are over.

2. One way or another, Vladimir Putin will be dead by year-end. **FALSE,** unfortunately.

3. Russia will abandon its invasion of Ukraine. **FALSE,** unfortunately. Also, public opinion in the United States has started to shift on the level of financial and military support that should go to Ukraine. This is as a result of several factors, such as pro-Russia elements of the Republican Party and also the financial cost of supporting Israel in their 2023 war against Hamas.

4. With the Provincial and Municipal elections occurring in 2022, and the Trudeau minority government continuing to hold, we won't have any elections this year. **TRUE.** But opinion polls consistently show that Ca-

nadians are set to boot Trudeau and the Liberals from office when the time comes.

5. After a down year in 2022, the stock market will return to positive territory in 2023 with a modest gain. **TRUE.** As of press time, the S&P 500 was up 19% year to date.

6. For the first time since 1993, a Canadian team will win the Stanley Cup. After suffering crushing defeats in recent first-round playoff series, the Toronto Maple Leafs will finally win the Stanley Cup. **FALSE.** While the Leafs finally got past the first round of the playoffs, they were eliminated in round two by the Florida Panthers. The Panthers advanced all the way to the Stanley Cup Finals where they were defeated by the Vegas Golden Knights.

7. The St. Marys Lincolns will get further in the GOJHL playoffs than they have in many years, making it at least to the Western Conference finals. **TRUE.** The Lincolns defeated Strathroy in the first round, London in the second round, and then lost in the finals to Leamington.

8. As the American election cycle steams towards 2024, Ron DeSantis declares his candidacy for President and is the Republican frontrunner.

Donald Trump will be determined ineligible for the upcoming primaries due to his legal troubles, but the GOP have moved on from him anyways. **FALSE.** Amazingly, despite being indicted in 2023 in New York, Florida, Washington DC, and Georgia on a total of 91 felony charges, Donald Trump continues to have huge support within the Republican party and appears poised to easily win the 2024 party nomination. Ron DeSantis and Nikki Haley are battling for second place in the race.

9. Joe Biden announces that he will not run for re-election, as the time is right for the next generation to lead. **FALSE.** Despite a 38% overall approval rating in recent polls (the poor rating likely reflecting more of a concern with his age than his actual job performance), the 81-year-old Biden appears ready to run for re-election.

2023 Predictions – Spencer Seymour

Every year, I forget how bad I can be at predictions until I review the predictions I made at the start of the year.

I made an easy pick that it would be a big movie year, although somehow I didn't foresee Barbie and Oppenheimer being the perfect duo.

I thought that the housing bubble might burst causing the cost of having

a roof over your head to fall to something vaguely manageable. Maybe next year, I suppose.

The St. Marys Lincolns did indeed meet the Leamington Flyers in the Western Conference Finals as I predicted. Of course, I was wrong about who won that series, but it was still a magical run nonetheless.

I predicted Donald Trump would be prosecuted for his crimes which has at least started to happen. Who knew committing crimes was illegal?

I picked the Oilers and Maple Leafs to make big deals before the Trade Deadline which, fun fact, did happen. I also predicted they would then meet in the Stanley Cup Final which, fun fact, didn't happen.

While there wasn't a big music festival or gaming festival at the Flats as I predicted, there were some good events there and hopefully, we will see even more activity at the Flats next year.

Lastly, I predicted that people would be begging Pat Payton to come back and re-take the sports section. I'm going to say that I was wrong about that one because if you send all of those complaints to voicemail, they didn't really happen, right?



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MONTH BY MONTH —

An overview of the stories from St. Marys in 2023

JANUARY:

Just before Christmas, a nice story drew smiles throughout St. Marys and area when Mary Van Den Berge was announced as the winner of the Dream Home Lottery, which supports London hospital. The grand prize in this year's lottery was a beautiful new 3,254 square foot home in Talbotville, just west of St. Thomas. Van Den Berge opted for the alternate prize of \$1 million so that she could spend more time with her grandchildren.

The new Board of Directors of the St. Marys Business Improvement Area were named. Megan Feeney was appointed Chair of the Board for the 2022-2026 term, with Alex O'Shea serving as Vice-Chair. Sue Griffiths will serve as Treasurer for the BIA. The remaining Directors are Jan Scott, Claire Chaple, Dan Troyer and Lisa Fewster, and council representative Brogan Aylward. It was also determined that Dan Troyer will be the BIA's representative on the Heritage Festival Planning Committee.

Cecelia Lunn, a grade 9 student raised \$600 for the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation selling homemade Christmas ornaments. Her Uncle Remco and Aunt Becky matched the donation since Remco was very grateful for the excellent care he had received after surviving a serious head injury incurred on his farm near St. Marys. This is the 3rd year that Cecelia has raised funds for area charities.

Perth County's Jean Aitchison learned she is the latest recipient of the Order of Canada. One of the highest honours that a Canadian resident can receive is the Order of Canada and this Downie Township nurse and community leader for decades in the area has recently received word of that honour.

Saturday, January 28 marked the end of an era at Your Independent Grocer when Ron McDonald works his last day as Store Owner. Approaching 70 years of age this May and facing the decision of whether to sign up for another five-year contract, Ron and his wife Brenda decided that the time was right to retire.

Jackie Cousins likes to keep busy, therefore, when the Robinson Street resident broke her ankle last year and was confined to a hospital bed at home for an extended period, it wasn't long before she put herself to work publishing five different poetry books.

St. Marys Foodland underwent significant store renovations. Foodland celebrated Thursday, January 26th with an official "Grand Opening" of its location at 84 Wellington Street South.

FEBRUARY:

For McDonald's St. Marys, the best possible gift for their first birthday in the Stonetown was a donation to the United Way's Coldest Night of the Year ("CNOY") fundraising event. On Satur-

day, January 28th, 10% of all sales at the McDonald's location were donated to CNOY.

More than a century ago, The National Hotel was located right in the heart of downtown St. Marys, at the southeast corner of Queen and Water Streets. Marking the latest in a series of stunning renovation and restoration projects to have been completed in the Stonetown in recent years, Ryan and Tori Livingston have brought "The National" name back to St. Marys. The St. Marys couple announced the availability of their modern downtown two-bedroom penthouse apartment for short-term rental, situated at that same corner of Queen and Water, right above Stonetown Coffee.

Sandy Fifield retired after three decades at St. Marys Golf & Country Club. Over the last 30 years, the St. Marys Golf and Country Club has seen plenty of adaptations and improvements. One of the driving forces behind all of them has been Head Superintendent Sandy Fifield.

The St. Marys Library hosted their 2nd Living Library event in the Town Hall auditorium on Wednesday, February 8th that showcased the writing talents of four local writers. Approximately 40 people were in attendance to listen to these very talented and creative ladies share their personal experiences in their writing and the passions that got them to where they are today. The panel consisted of Emm Gryner (a singer, songwriter and author), Jan Scott (an author, blogger, and bookstore proprietor), Andrea Macko (media professional) and C.J. Banks (author). Moderating the evening was St. Marys Public Library CEO Sarah Andrews.

MARCH:

Matthew Rae, MPP for Perth-Wellington, announced over \$871K in funding for local public transportation. This funding represents a 7.7 percent increase in year over year funding levels.

United Way Perth-Huron (UWPH) and the St. Marys Community Committee announced the results from the Coldest Night of the Year (CNOY) event in St. Marys. "Thanks to our great community, we raised \$47,740 during CNOY and we're very close to our goal of \$49,000."

The GOJHL's regular season is over and the playoff brackets are set, with the third-place St. Marys Lincolns having home-ice advantage on the sixth-ranked Strathroy Rockets. The Lincolns finished their season with 34 wins and 71 points, while Strathroy finished with 22 victories and 53 points.

After extensive public consultation, the Town of St. Marys has finalized the design for its revamped skate park. The chosen design - known as Concept 1 - includes street elements, a quarter pipe, a bowl, and a pump track. The design separates "beginner" features from

those that are more suited to skilled riders.

Local entrepreneur and St. Marys native Kevin McCotter launched a platform to keep memories alive and us off social media. He launched an internet-based platform called LifeShare. This secure website, located at www.lifeshare.info, went live on February 4th. McCotter says that LifeShare though will not repeat the pitfalls that have emerged within Facebook and other social media sites. "My goal is to get people off Facebook and onto LifeShare."

Local curler Brady St. Louis competed in the 2023 Tim Hortons Brier in London, Ontario. Team Nunavut included Brady St. Louis of St. Marys, who plays second, and Jake Higgs of Strathroy, who is the team's skip. Team Nunavut had compiled a win-loss record of 0-38 heading into this year's event, but won their very first match, as the team prevailed 7-4 over Newfoundland and Labrador.

Gilly's Pubhouse announced they are coming to St. Marys. Local couple Mike and Cathy Bayer will be expanding their popular Stratford-based restaurant, Gilly's Pubhouse, to St. Marys. Gilly's will be based out of the historic Customs House building at 17 Water Street South.

In his final budget report to Council for this upcoming year, Town Treasurer Andre Morin, announced that the final tax levy will be \$13,566,544 which is a 3.69% increase over the previous levy. Morin said that this represents an aver-

age increase of \$130 for each household for the year. The three main income components for the tax levy are 53.7% from Taxes, 29.5% from User Fees and 5% from Grants. The main components for the expense spending are Capital Financing 21.85%, Public Works 13.95%, Health 10.25%, Police 7.65% and Community Service/Recreation 9.71%.

At the regular Town of St. Marys Council Meeting of March 14th, Councillors voted unanimously in support of the recommendation from the Heritage and Cultural Advisory Committee to expand the Heritage Property Grant Program to include designated heritage properties located outside of the Central Commercial District.

For the first time since 2005-06, the St. Marys Lincolns will challenge for a Western Conference Championship title after eliminating the London Nationals in four straight games.

APRIL:

Well over 250 people showed up to view the inside of the historic Mercury Theatre building on Church Street North. Many of the Town staff were on hand to answer questions and also to listen to suggestions for future uses for the building. Among the Town staff to welcome people were Amy Cubberley, Cultural Services Manager and Brett O'Reilly, Corporate Communications Manager.

Two announcements within the past week have brought further changes to the restaurant landscape in St. Marys.

Life Member Wayne Barber wins Kinsmen of the Year



Incoming president Cliff Sterritt (right) presented the Kinsmen of the Year trophy to Wayne Barber. Also in 2023, Barber was awarded the prestigious Life Membership award, which is one of Kin Canada's highest honours. (Contributed photo)

MONTH BY MONTH —

Food Station 39, which opened for business in August 2022 at 36 Water Street South, has now closed. Days later, a new tenant was announced for the space, and it came from a familiar name: Chris Campbell, who most recently has operated Campbell's Canteen from his food truck located in central St. Marys.

The Stratford & District Chamber of Commerce announced the nominations for their annual Business Excellence Awards and eight St. Marys businesses are included among the list of nominees. In the Non-Profit/Charitable category, the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation was one of seven businesses in the area that received a nomination. St. Marys Optometry earned a nomination in the Service category. In the Hospitality category, Broken Rail Brewery picked up a nomination. The Retail category had the largest St. Marys contingent, with three local businesses in the running for that award. The trio of St. Marys businesses in this category include Betty's Bookshelf, Lyric Flowers, and The Flour Mill Food Shop. Two of the three businesses vying for the Manufacturing award come from St. Marys, with the nominees including Delmar Foods and St. Marys Cement.

At a Council meeting, the report was issued by the Town regarding last year's cyber attack. On Wednesday, July 20, 2022, the Town experienced a cyber security incident in the form of a ransomware attack. The threat actor deployed LockBit 3.0 onto the Town's systems, encrypting various servers and files. The infiltration was discovered quickly by IT staff during their routine Wednesday morning back-up of systems. Town staff responded by immediately disconnecting all servers, which prevented the ransomware from further infiltrating the Town's systems. Because of quick

actions of the IT staff, the ransomware did not fully encrypt all the Town's systems.

Steven Manicom, director of Hillside Property Developments, has brought a new style to St. Marys. He built his own Mid-Century Modern home in 2022 and is now in the process of constructing two additional houses in the same style. These properties are located in the private Skunk's Hollow area of town, on St. Andrew Street North.

The St. Marys Lincolns gave their fans one more thrilling win on home ice last Tuesday night but back on the road, with their Captain suspended, the Lincs simply were overpowered by the incredibly skilled Leamington Flyers, who came away with the Bill Weir Trophy as this year's Western Conference Champions.

The community was deeply saddened in recent days to learn of the passing of Rev. Jason Richards following a courageous battle with cancer.

The landscape on Water Street will be changing once again over the next couple of weeks due to the closing of the Pass It On store in its 20th year. Owner Carey Pope has made the difficult decision to close up shop, finding it harder to compete with big box stores and online shopping which became more popular during and after the pandemic.

MAY:

St. Marys Memorial Hospital is set to undergo one of the largest transformations in its history thanks to the generous support of the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation and their donors. Some of the highlights include:

- New headwalls with updated clinical and communication services in all patient rooms

- Mechanical patient lifts
- New wheelchair accessible washrooms
- Improved accessibility for existing washrooms
- A negative pressure isolation room
- New clean and soiled utility rooms and new tornados
- Hand hygiene sinks throughout both patient wings and support areas
- Updated communications and security and safety systems
- Upgraded fire safety system
- New privacy curtains and window blinds
- Updated heating and cooling systems

Perth County Tourism, Destination Stratford, and the Town of St. Marys have joined forces to grow and promote cycle tourism across the region. These tourism entities recognized that cycle tourism is growing rapidly across the province and are actively collaborating to ensure their destinations can embrace this economic opportunity.

The innovative kayak-lending program offered through the St. Marys Public Library returned for 2023. From May 23 to September 2, borrowers had the opportunity to discover St. Marys' waterways through the free loan program.

The Town of St. Marys made it easier to find local amenities with the installation of 70 new directional signs. It was part of the municipality's Signage and Wayfinding Strategy, a multi-year project led by its Tourism and Economic Development department.

There is a new business at 528 Queen St. E. The Frozen Spoon, which is affiliated with Joe's Diner, will be a year-round business offering delicious options of ice cream, shakes, sodas and

smoothies. Owner Rebecca Taylor said that they have been planning the Spoon since last March and are very excited to see it opening.

Kinsmen Wayne Barber was surprised by his fellow Kin members, family, friends, members of Town Council and members of Parliament as he received Kin Canada's highest honour of a Life Membership.

In a lengthy report to the Strategic Priorities Committee, CAO Brent Kittmer outlined the Town's criteria as to what should be acceptable to hang in the downtown core. The debate started last June when Rev. John Goodwin, from the Stonetown Worship Centre on Water Street, appeared at Council and sent them a letter asking for consideration to hang an equal number of Christian Flags to equal the number of Pride Flags.

JUNE:

The 19th annual 5km walk for 'Create A Smile' in association with Community Living St. Marys and area was held on Sunday, May 28th at Milt Dunnell Field. Over 100 people were in attendance along with employees of the Community Living and many volunteers. Altogether over \$21,000 was raised.

Sunday night brought sad news for the downtown when Stonetown Coffee Co. announced on social media that they would not be reopening for business. The business, located at the corner of Water and Queen since January 2017, was a popular and attractive venue for residents to enjoy a coffee, meal, and fellowship.

The annual Wildwood Dragon Boat Challenge took place at Wildwood Conservation Area and two St. Marys teams picked up awards. In the 'B' Division Fi-

McDonald's celebrates first anniversary with CNOY fundraiser



The friendly team at McDonald's celebrated the restaurant's first birthday on Saturday, January 28, 2023.

Coldest Night of the Year in St. Marys celebrates success



"Thanks to our great community, we raised \$47,740 during CNOY and we're very close to our goal of \$49,000. Donations are being accepted until March 31, so there is still time to give if you want to help support vulnerable local people," said Leslie Edney, who along with Pam Zabel helped organize the St. Marys event. "We would also like to say thank you to everyone who volunteered, walked, and donated. It was an amazing night, and we couldn't have done it without everyone's energy and enthusiasm." In total 155 walkers, including 27 teams, participated in raising this year's total.

MONTH BY MONTH —

nal, the St. Marys Fire Department team came away as Champions. Meanwhile, the team named 'Winging This' won the St. Marys Community Challenge Cup.

For only the second time ever in the nearly 30-year history of the St. Marys Golf & Country Club Ryder Cup, and for the first time since 2006, the competition ended in a tie. Fortunately for captain Andy Cunningham and his team of "Old Guys", a 16-16 tie was just what they needed in order to retain the coveted Ryder Cup trophy that they had won in 2022.

The Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame inducted Jesse Barfield, Denis Boucher, Rich Harden and Joe Wiwchar in a ceremony at the Hall of Fame grounds on June 17. The four 2023 inductees will be honoured alongside John Olerud and Jacques Doucet who were elected in 2020 but have not been able to attend the ceremony until this year.

The County of Perth and the Perth County Information Network (PCIN) announced the launch of the NEW PC Connect Library Bus Pass Collection – a FREE PC Connect fare pass available for residents to borrow from their local library.

Kyra McLennan and John Stevens published their first book. Through collaboration on the children's book, "Hi, I Am Yakut the Cavalier," they are equally proud of their final product. Its vocabulary is suitable for ages between 2 and 6, but it is a pleasant read for everyone.

Town Wide Yard Sale had another successful year. It was perfect weather for a yard sale and buyers were eager to examine all items available at the 40

sale locations throughout St. Marys and area.

Mayor Jim Aitcheson and the Council of Perth South were pleased to announce the appointment of Fred Tranquilli as Chief Administrative Officer and Deputy Clerk. Tranquilli comes to Perth South from Strathroy-Caradoc where he served as that community's CAO and Clerk for nearly five years. Tranquilli is a graduate of Western University's Faculty of Law.

The St. Marys Presbyterian Church held a lunch and open house to acknowledge Rev. Gwen Ament's retirement and to celebrate her 13 years of faithful service in the church. Rev. Gwen has worked in the community in many ways and the church would like to give thanks to her contributions to the church and community.

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

After three decades as a teacher, coach, and mentor, Annette Wrigley's career came to an end as she retired from her teaching position. According to Wrigley, she feels that she is finishing at the right time – when she still loves the job.

St. Marys Mayor Al Strathdee received word on Friday that the two-year pilot of GO train service to London, Stratford, and St. Marys will come to an end this fall. The final day of service will be October 13, 2023.

JULY:

Cadzw Park had much to offer at the Canada Day celebrations - musical performances, the flag raising, children's arts and crafts, inflatables, food trucks, Hall of Fame BBQ, and the artisans' market.

Ian Moore, a Teacher-Coach and Athletic Director at St. Marys DCVI, received the Pete Beach Award for his coaching and director work at the local high school.

Residents of St. Marys were in for a treat as Giselle Duval unveiled her 'Ice Cream Cart' to the community. Since moving to town from British Columbia five years ago, Giselle has always been passionate about selling ice cream and cold sweets as she did in B.C.

The Front Porch show, hosted by John Stevens, officially announced its retirement after a successful multi-year run.

The Town of St. Marys introduced a new animal control by law. Under the new by-law, residents will be allowed to keep up to three dogs and three cats in their home. They will not be allowed to keep livestock, farm animals, or any animals used for agricultural purposes.

There is new ownership at O'Grady's Clothing and Accessories on Queen Street. Heather and Ed Parkinson have owned the business for 12 years and are excited to announce that new owners Jennifer and Chris Dungo will be taking over.

Thorndale Farm Supplies welcomed 225 invited guests of family, friends, customers, suppliers, past employees, and former owners to a special luncheon to celebrate their 20th anniversary.

The St. Marys Public Library and the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum are proud to announce their new partnership. Scott Crawford on behalf of the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum has provided the library with a pass that will allow free admission for two adults.

The St. Marys Kinsmen celebrated another successful Summerfest weekend.

AUGUST:

Generous donations will be resulting in Grand Trunk Trail upgrades such as lighting and asphalt being added to the stretch of the trail east of Wellington. Infrastructure Services Manager Jeff Wolfe shared that they've had quite a few significant donations this year, where the donors have specifically asked that their funds go towards improving the Grand Trunk trail.

The St. Marys Museum hosted its tenth Melodies at the Museum summer concert series.

The end of an era at the St. Marys Independent was marked as we paid tribute to founder and editor-in-chief Frank Doyle, who resigned from the newspaper to be closer to his family while he battles health issues.

St. Marys native Brooke Overholt was named to the Canadian National Track Team by Athletics Canada and will compete in the 400-metre Hurdles at the World Track and Field Championships to be held in Budapest, Hungary later this month.

After 17 years Julie Docker-Johnson announced The Flower Shoppe and More has been sold. The new owners are the

St. Marys welcomes new Ice Cream Cart



Giselle Duval unveiled her 'Ice Cream Cart' to the community this summer. Usually located at the Milt Dunnell Field (The Flats) Giselle offers a variety of treats such as: multiple Chapman's milk chocolate ice cream, healthy WholeFruit fruit bars, frozen Oreo bars and popsicles.

Members of Amish community bid farewell



On July 8, an auction sale was held at "the Graber place" on the 13th Line of Zorra Township, south of Brown's Church. It was the latest in a series of auctions over the past year-and-a-half at farms currently being vacated by members of the local Amish community. Many handshakes and kind words were shared by neighbours, friends and farming colleagues who knew they may never see each other again as the Amish planned to migrate to Michigan.

MONTH BY MONTH —

O'Connor family - Christopher, Deb, Kate, Eli and Toby.

Five St. Marys residents were recognized as part of the Town's Strong as Stone program on Tuesday, August 22, 2023. The program celebrates individuals who perform selfless deeds for the good of the community. Andrew Middleton, Gord Barnett, Grant Barton, Rev. Gwen Ament and Susan McCutcheon were honored this year.

Thanks to a group of dedicated volunteers and the support of those near and far, construction on the Rotary All Wheels Park is set to begin in the fall. The group has secured \$100,000 from the St. Marys Rotary Club, along with donations from supporters across the globe to help fund the project.

SEPTEMBER:

A new volunteer-run initiative, known as the Community Closet, opened its doors to serve the community of St. Marys and surrounding area with free clothing for those in need. Located at the St. James Anglican Church, locals will be able to access the clothes they need, free from any financial barriers.

Town of St. Marys CAO Brent Kittmer shared some positive news at the August 22nd Council meeting that, as a result of a successful government grant, three additional EV charging stations will be coming to town.

A letter from concerned resident Chris Swarhout sparked an interesting discussion during the August 22nd Council meeting regarding the overall Road Safety Network Plan. Swarhout submitted a letter to Council on August 14th about Park Street where it meets King Street at the curve, and the stretch of Park Street that goes past Cadzow Park to Water Street.

The Purple Hill Ram Rodeo and Country Music Showcase was a huge success, attracting thousands of spectators and participants to the Purple Hill Country Music Hall east of Thorndale. The event, which ran from August 25 to 27, featured thrilling rodeo action, children's activities, vendors, food, beer gardens and country music performances by some of Canada's finest artists.

The St. Marys Lincolns' 2023-24 regular season officially got underway when the Lincs hosted the St. Thomas Stars at the PRC. Two goals by Ryan Cornfield, a two-point night by St. Marys native Jimmy Schiedel, and a dominant overall team effort led the Lincolns to a 7-1 victory.

The Town of St. Marys commemorated National Day for Truth and Reconciliation with a week of activities focused on healing and education. On September 25, the St. Marys Museum hosted an exhibit titled 'Talking About Treaty 29'. On Wednesday, September 27 and Friday, September 29, the St. Marys Public Library showed "The Walk a Mile Film Project". On Thursday, September 28, local Indigenous educator Patsy Anne Day offered a "Sunrise Ceremony".

On September 14th, the St. Marys Veterinary Clinic held a surprise ceremony dedicating their surgical suite and pharmacy and acknowledging two senior veterinarians who have been a team since Ken hired Larry in the spring of 1981. Dr. Ken Schiedel and Dr. Larry Joosse were the recipients of this tribute, with the clinic dedicating the surgical suite to Dr. Schiedel and pharmacy to Dr. Joosse.

2023 marked the 43rd anniversary of the Terry Fox Run, and in St. Marys on Sunday there was a strong turnout of approximately 85 participants and 20 volunteers who together raised around \$9,200 for cancer research.

The Optimist Club of Kirkton-Woodham recently upgraded the second ball diamond at the Kirkton Community park. They built two new dugout shelters to match the ones previously built at the main diamond.

OCTOBER:

The Town of St. Marys launched a new feature to inform residents about its progress on addressing social issues. The Stonetown Supports Report is a bi-monthly community update designed to build awareness about the many social services available in St. Marys. Through education, the Town hopes to reduce stigma and ensure no one falls through the cracks.

At their October 10th meeting, St. Marys Town Council reviewed recommendations that arose from the recent Community Policing Advisory Committee meeting regarding the safety concerns at the Jones Street East and Church Street South intersection. On average, this intersection incurs an accident about once every three months.

To mark Fire Prevention Week from October 8 to 14, the St. Marys Fire Department opened their doors to the public on Saturday, October 14 from 10 am to 4 pm. Visitors enjoyed station tours, fire truck and equipment demonstrations, a new inflatable fire safety house and fire prevention displays.

A pilot project that brought GO train service to St. Marys came to an end on Friday, October 13. The project was launched in 2021 and provided weekday GO train service between London and Toronto, with stops in St. Marys, Stratford, and other locations. The project was operating on a two-year trial basis and has been discontinued by Metrolinx, GO's parent company.

NOVEMBER:

Brian Benner from Canadian Tire celebrated 35 years at the company. His Canadian Tire Family surprised him the day of his anniversary with letters from some of the previous Dealers, cards, and a cake.

McCully's Hill Farm held their annual Harvest Festival on Saturdays and Sundays throughout the month of October.

A transformation has taken place at 13 Water Street South formerly occupied by G's Eats & Treats. It has now been

revamped into the Quarry Room. This beautiful space is available to book private events, parties, group functions and meetings.

The holiday season began in St. Marys on Friday, November 17 as Santa Claus arrived in St. Marys via the Kinsmen Santa Claus parade.

On Sunday November 5th the Army, Navy and Air Force Branch 265 and Perth Regiment Legion Branch 236 held its Remembrance Day Parade marching the Colours from the Legion to the Cenotaph.

St. Marys Town Hall is getting a makeover. The iconic limestone building closed to accommodate renovations to its first floor. The work will include a full remodel of the space. Council Chambers will be expanded and the technology in the room will be upgraded. New wash-room facilities will be added, including one that is barrier free.

The St. Marys Healthcare Foundation (SMHF) announced that it has reached its campaign goal of \$3 million for the Here For You Today, Building For Tomorrow capital campaign. These funds are being used to renovate the East and West Wings of the St. Marys Memorial Hospital.

The Town of St. Marys is addressing the housing crisis head on with a new action plan. Called "Opening Doors," the plan was developed by a housing expert, following consultations with developers, builders, and community members. The plan aims to tackle St. Marys' shortage of affordable housing options.

Nail Effects celebrated 25 years in business. It was originally started by Maria Daniels at its previous location on

Church Street South. Kerri McIntosh took it over 11 years ago from Maria. Lyric Flowers also celebrated an anniversary. They have been in business for 12 years. Co-owners Lanny Hoare and Jay Harrison named the business after the old Lyric Theatre where the store was located for the first three years.

DECEMBER:

Construction activities have recently commenced on Phase 1 of "The Penrose Suites" at St. Marys Golf & Country Club. Phase 1 of the project includes 9 suite style units, each with a veranda overlooking the golf course valley. "Barring any unforeseen circumstances, we plan to have rooms available in August 2024," said Matt Staffen, President and GM of St. Marys Golf & Country Club.

St. Marys native Jeff Sager has retired after 42 years from his role as a paramedic, including 23 years with Perth County Paramedic Services.

On December 8, an electrifying performance by students of Studio Cirque, London, was held at St. Marys DCVI. The benefit performance was to enable Alina Skyshkivska to continue her training at Studio Cirque. Alina and her family arrived in St. Marys from war-torn Ukraine in 2022.

The second annual "To St. Marys with Love" Community Christmas was held on December 17 at the Pyramid Recreation Centre.

Harmony of Friends, a local musical band, hosted their annual concert with special guest Lanny Hoare at Holy Name of Mary Church. The event raised money for the Library Food Pantry in St. Marys.

SMCP delights audiences with two productions



"Opening Night" was one of two productions ("The 39 Steps" being the other) put on in 2023 by the St. Marys Community Players which received rave reviews. Pictured above is D'Arcy Irvine as Clayton Fry, Georgia Peacock as Libby Husniak, Gregory George as Michael Craig, Ryan Stewart as Richard Hyde-Finch and Jessica O'Connor as Cilla Fraser. (Photo by Bruce Zinger)

YEAR IN SPORTS —

Sterkenberg, McVittie, Parsons, Rittenhouse win Club titles at St. Marys G&CC



Darryl Sterkenburg won his first major individual tournament at the St. Marys Golf and Country Club this year when his 149 two-day total earned him the Men's Club Championship. Cheryl McVittie posted a 189 to emerge as the Ladies Club Champion while Rich Parsons took some the Senior Club Championship with a score of 152, and Jonathan Rittenhouse took home the Super Senior division with a 159. (Contributed photos)

Old Guys retain Ryder Cup with 16-16 tie



With a 16-16 tie in points in this year's competition, the Old Guys retained the Ryder Cup at St. Marys G&CC that they won a year earlier. From left, front row: Jamie Hodgins, Greg Wolfkamp, Rich Parsons, Andy Cunningham, Marty Rutledge, Troy Carter, Dan Murrell. Back row: Jimmy Craigmile, Stefan MacNeil, Eddy Seok, Tom Westerveld, Stewart Grant, Rick Fifield, Brian Humphrey, Bob Hearn. Not pictured: Jason Firby. (Ian Grant photo)

Hinz and Heinbuch claim men's Gowanbrae title



Steve Hinz and Kyle Heinbuch celebrate after Hinz's 25-foot birdie putt on the final playoff hole clinches the Battle of Gowanbrae title. (Stewart Grant photo)

Wolfkamps win scramble



Pictured from left to right are Nathan and Greg Wolfkamp, who won the Parent-Child Two-Man Scramble held at the Trump Doral Golf Course in Miami, Florida. This tournament followed the Optimists International Junior Golf Championship in which Nathan competed. (Contributed photo)

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YEAR IN SPORTS —

Murray, Jackson win Doubles Championship



Pictured above are Pat Murray and Jeff Jackson, who won the St. Marys Curling Doubles Championship in 2023. Murray and Jackson won in exciting fashion, taking a one-point final game by a score of 8-7. (Contributed photo)

'A' League curling champs



The St. Marys Curling 'A' Championship was awarded to the team of Morris Vanderwalle, Helen Thomson, Michael Visser, and Betty Visser. The championship game was tied going into the final end and Vanderwalle's team was able to steal two points for the win for a final score of 8-6. (Contributed photo)

Five SKC members qualify for Team Canada



Five Stonetown Karate Centre students represented Canada at the World Karate Championship this year. Pictured are the five who qualified for Team Canada, starting in the front with Jalyne Lorentz. In the middle row, from left to right, are Shannon Campbell and Isabelle Lariviere. In the back row, from left, are Lisa Sheldon and Darren Campbell. (Contributed photo)

Local curler key member of Nunavut team



Proudly carrying the Nunavut flag at the 2023 Tim Hortons Brier are, from left to right, skip Jake Higgs, vice Sheldon Wettig, second Brady St. Louis, lead Christian Smitheram, and fifth-man Terry Lichty. (Photo Credit: Curling Canada)

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YEAR IN SPORTS —

U15 B Boys win Silver Stick Championships & OMHA



The U15 B Boys had a historic year in 2023. They went undefeated at the Kincardine Silver Stick Championship, won the International Silver Stick Championship in Forest then went on to become OMHA Champions. In alphabetical order, the team consists of Evan Ballantyne, Jared Ballantyne, Myles Clinton, Isaac Cousineau, Ben Ewing, Sam Johnson, Zach Larmer, Grier Mahoney, Donovan McGregor, Andre Mollet, Danny Switzer, Reid Taylor, Simon Taylor, Nathan Wolfcamp, Finn Wright, and Hayden Wright. (Photo credit: Mike Chennette/McGinny Photography)

U11 B Girls claim silver at International Silver Stick final



The U11 B Girls brought home a finalist banner from the International Silver Stick in Sarnia this year. Pictured on the ice is goaltender Evelyn McAllister and in the front row, from left to right, are Delaney Bond, Ainsley King, and Brinley St. Clair. In the second row, from left, are Violet Holliday, Paige Johnson, Charlotte Matheson, Naomi Maxwell, Hailey Pickel, Lilly Forbes, Ellen Robson, and Eleanor Froud. In the third row, from left, are trainer Mellisa Bond, coaches Jamie Matheson, Jack Pickel, John McAllister, and trainer Jodi Froud. Absent were Brooklyn Haanstra and Eveline Haanstra. (Photo credit: Eileen Matheson)

Tenacious U13 B Boys win Shamrock Playoffs



The St. Marys Fire Department U13 B Boys St. Marys Rock won their Shamrock Playoff final. Pictured laying on the ice, from left to right, are Landon Lichti and Braydon Wheeler. In the kneeling row, from left, are Owen Harris, Luke Simons, Dominic Marzailli, Bowen Hillman, Will Richardson, Landon McDonald, Ryder Blight, and Ben Graham. In the back row, from left, are Sean Porter (manager), Luke Showers, Graeme Froud, Rick O'Donnell (Assistant Coach), Owen Muir, Quinn Porter, Jacob Saville, and Brett Graham (trainer). Absent were Head Coach Bob Davis and Assistant Coach Michael Davis. (Photo credit: Spencer Seymour)

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YEAR IN SPORTS —

Tribe, Booze Bros win Men's Slo Pitch year-end tourney



The St. Marys Men's Slo Pitch league held their annual year-end tournament. In the 'A' Division, the Tribe won their seventh consecutive division title, taking the final game 12-9. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Travis Small, Mike Glover, Owen Penney, and Luke Wiffen. In the back row, from left, are Louie Robinson, Ryan Magagnin, Jase Doucette, Josh Munro, Tyler Rae, Trevor Ward, Kenny Hutton, and Josh Drinkwaller.



The 'B' Division saw the Booze Brothers come out with an exciting 13-12 victory. Pictured in the front row, from left, are Donald Christopher, Michael Durette, Greg Aarts, and Steve Funk. In the back row, from left, are Kris Christopher, Dustin Welch, Reg Joseph, Kyle Morell, Andrew Elg, Hunter Ward, Devin Winters, and Zach Welch. Not pictured were Jermey McGrady and Joe Swarath. (Contributed photos)

U13 Blue Rockies win Division Three WOBA Championship



Pictured is the Veterinary Purchasing Company Limited U13 Blue St. Marys Rockies, who won the Division Three Championship this year. In the front row, from left to right, are Bryce Martin, Will Jacobs, Nolan Stewart, Seth Mountain, Lake Hodson, Ryder Blight, and Josh Gerber. In the back row, from left, are Coach Dan Anderson, Coach Jeff Stewart, Seth Brown, Zack Tubman, Dylan Chateauvert, Dan Dittmer, Coach Paul Jacobs, and Coach Todd Dittmer. (Contributed photo)

Six candidates inducted to Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame



The Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum inducted six deserving candidates last weekend, including four members of the 2023 Class as well as two members from the 2020 Class. Pictured from left to right are Rich Harden, John Olerud, Jacques Doucet, Denis Boucher, Joe Wiwchar, and Jesse Barfield. (Photo credit: Spencer Seymour)

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YEAR IN SPORTS —

U15 C Girls win Gold in WOGHL tournament



The Home Hardware Building Centre U15 C Girls St. Marys Rock won the Gold Medal in the WOGHL Championship Tournament. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Tegan Mace, Regan Jones, Valentina Linares, "Team Superhero" Melissa Rintoul, and Marta Rintoul. In the back row, from left, are Coach Jeff McCurdy, Cortney Linton, Georgia Edwards, Libby McCurdy, Madeleine Monisit Brown, Marin Chateauvert, Sophie Richardson, Leah Hachler, Cammie Lobb, Coach Scott Lobb, and Head Coach Nathan Brown. (Contributed photo)

U9 C Girls win Gold at Oshawa Winter Classic



A strong tournament by the St. Marys Kinettes U9 C Girls St. Marys Rock culminated with a 4-3 win in overtime at the Oshawa Winter Classic. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Sidney Hawkins, Aspen Bond, Kylie Blake, and Ellie MacDonald. In the back row, from left, are Addison Hudson, Ian Johnston, Emily Chateauvert, Emily Ewing, Brynlee Pickel, Jaynie Johnston, Samantha Matheson, Jessica Zwambag, and Sarah Ewing. Absent were Audrey Parsons and Jamie Matheson. (Contributed photo)

U9 MD Boys capture gold in Huntsville tourney



The U9 MD Boys won the Gold Medal in the ninth annual Knights of Columbus tournament in Huntsville. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Ryan Pickel, Jake Kittmer, Franklin Anderson, Cameryn Stokes, Jacob Hahn, and Kyle Johnson. In the back row, from left, are Jack Bilyea, Ashton Ropp, Edwin Froud, Aiden Hibbert, Logan Masselis, Finnley Harburn, Jaxon Wittig, and Dean Feeney. Absent was Kane Douglas. (Contributed photo)

U16 Snipers win Gold in Niagara Falls tournament



After dropping their first game of the tournament 2-1, the St. Marys team exploded for 18 goals in their last two round-robin games, both of which they won. This earned the team a rematch in the finals against St. Catharines, the same team to whom they lost in the opening game. The Snipers won the Gold medal with a 3-0 victory. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Stacey Anderson, Ella Taylor, Charlee Henderson, Arielle Barber, and Emma Carr. In the back row, from left, are Jennifer Ament, Rudy Taylor, Jill Strekenburg, Natalie Taylor, Leah Van Straaten, Kylie Robertson, Meg Richardson, Abby Martin, and Erin Strekenburg. (Contributed photo)



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YEAR IN SPORTS —

DCVI volleyball teams win Silver medals at WOSSAA

Junior Girls:

Senior Girls:



The St. Marys DCVI Junior Girls volleyball team finished their season with a Silver medal at WOSSAA, hosted at the St. Marys high school. Pictured above in the front row, from left to right, are Eden Sinnett, Adrianna Hollestelle-Black, Marin Chateauvert, Libby McCurdy, and Kiara McGregor. In the back row, from left, are Coach Tanya Thorup, Charlee Pickering, Olive Aarts, Katie Namink, Harvest Elliott, Abby Martin, Rylee Nethercott, Cammie Lobb, Gracy Schlotzhauer, and Coach Jess Chateauvert. (Contributed photo)



The St. Marys DCVI Senior Girls Volleyball team captured the Silver medal at the WOSSAA 'A' Championship held in St. Marys. Pictured above in the front row, from left to right, are Saelyn Firby, Lila Corby, Lydia Taylor, Ellen Thorup, Eve Greig, and Becky Walsh. In the back row, from left, are Coach Steve Chateauvert, Erin Massie, Reagan Silcox, Neave Goris, Audrey Littlejohn, Gwen Taylor, and Brooklyn Newman. (Contributed photo)

DCVI Jr. Girls become WOSSAA Champions



The St. Marys DCVI Junior Girls basketball team are your 2023 WOSSAA Champions! Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Charlotte Richardson, Regan Jones, Marin Chateauvert, Naomi DeVries, Holly Black, and Alanna Saville. In the back row, from left, are Ava Bettger, Libby McCurdy, Sophie Richardson, Marieke Van Lierop, Cammie Lobb, Claudia Laino, Chloe White, and Tim O'Connor. (Photo credit: Spencer Seymour)

DCVI Sr. Boys volleyball team captures WOSSAA title



The St. Marys DCVI Senior Boys volleyball team won a Gold Medal at WOSSAA, beating Monseigneur Bruyere three sets to one in the final game. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Trevor Richardson, Charles Black, Arthur Douglas, RJ Martin, Wil Boreham, and Sebastian Linares. In the back row, from left, are Steve Chateauvert, Ethan Connolly, Colton Hawkins, Oliver Black, Owen Littlejohn, Peyton Lobb, Trevor Aarts, and Cyler Pickering. (Contributed photo)

DCVI Curlers win Huron-Perth Championship



On Wednesday, February 22nd during the Huron-Perth finals held at the Lind Sportsplex the DCVI boys defeated Clinton 10-3 to advance to WOSSAA. At the WOSSAA Championships the team took home the bronze medal. Pictured above is the Huron-Perth champion boys curling team. From left to right: Matt Luyten (second), Ezra Bender (lead), Jake Grant (skip), Jack Switzer (vice), and Stewart Grant (coach).

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YEAR IN MUSIC —

The Year In Music

Below, the St. Marys Radio team of Stewart Grant and Spencer Seymour have again included their personal Top 10 songs of the year, but we've also invited journalist and St. Marys native Scott Maxwell to include his Top 10 songs. Each year Scott does a fantastic list (of which this Top 10 is just a snippet) that is always worth a read. He also includes a lot of background on each song that unfortunately we didn't have room to print in this space. Hopefully you'll enjoy a number of these song recommendations below

Scott Maxwell's Top 10 Songs for 2023:

1. Rocket – Ultra Q
2. Tomorrow is Closed – Nothing but Thieves
3. Birthmark – Dizzy
4. Parking Lot – KC Rae
5. My Body ft Your Lips – The Beaches
6. Evergreen – PVRIS
7. Tightrope – Movements
8. Memo – Your Neighbours
9. Free – Ellur
10. Baby Lay Your Head Down – Aly & AJ

(Check out scottroom.wordpress.com in the final few days of the year for a deeper dive into why I enjoyed these songs, along with 60 more favourites from the year as well as my favourite hit songs and albums of 2023.)

Stewart Grant's Top 10 Songs for 2023:

1. Vampire – Olivia Rodrigo
2. Truck Bed - Hardy
3. Cruel Summer – Taylor Swift
4. Last Night – Morgan Wallen
5. Escapism. – RAYE, 070 Shake
6. Get Him Back! – Olivia Rodrigo
7. A&W – Lana Del Rey
8. One Thing at a Time – Morgan Wallen
9. Kill Bill - SZA
10. Dial Drunk – Noah Kahan, Post Malone

Spencer Seymour's Top 10 Songs for 2023:

1. Bigger Houses - Dan + Shay
2. Everknown - NEEDTOBREATHE
3. Hold Me Like A Grudge - Fall Out Boy
4. When I Get There - P!nk
5. Not The 1975 - Knox
6. Honest - NOTD, Lou Elliotte
7. Then There's You - Dean Brody
8. The Missing Part - Scouting For Girls
9. Don't Get Me Wrong - Matchbox Twenty
10. That's Not How This Works - Charlie Puth feat. Dan + Shay

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HISTORY —

HISTORIC ST. MARYS: The St. Marys United Church's 175th Anniversary

By Mary Smith

As the year 2023 draws to a close, so do the services and events that have marked 175 years of the St. Marys United Church in this community. That length of time signifies a history that has been marked by many events. Or, as the Reverend Robert Lawson suggested at the special anniversary service on Sunday, October 29, by many milestones. It has only been known as the United Church for 98 of these 175 years. The date stone, set high on the west façade of this lovely building at 85 Church Street South, reads: Methodist Church of Canada A.D. 1879.

Methodism in Canada goes back more than 250 years. It was a British movement within the established Church of England, led by John Wesley (1703-1791,) a reforming theologian who believed that religion was too constrained by the hierarchy and formal rituals that increasingly characterized the Anglican Church. A true religious experience should be simple, joyous and personal. As the Canadian Encyclopedia explains, Wesley "encouraged personal holiness and a disciplined (hence methodical) way of life." His followers arrived to preach in Newfoundland and the Maritimes in the late 1760s and 1770s. There were also Methodists among the thousands of Loyalists who immigrated to Upper Canada from the United States following the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783.) Gradually, they made their way to our part of Ontario – to Middlesex and Oxford Counties and eventually across the borders into Blanshard Township in Perth County.

Among those who settled in Oxford County were Joseph and Rebecca Brown and their family. Their arrival can be considered a milestone: their son, Thomas Brush Brown (1804-1893,) became one of the great Methodist leaders in southwestern Ontario. According to his obituary, published in *The Christian Guardian*, May 4, 1894, he preached his first sermon in the early 1840s in the little settlement of St. Marys in George Tracy's log shanty. It stood near the site of the large, limestone house that Tracy later built on Church Street South – today, the St. Marys Museum. T. B. Brown, a Methodist Episcopalian, was licensed to conduct marriages, baptisms and funerals. He recorded these events – at times, a bit haphazardly – in a record book that is one of the treasures in the R. Lorne Eedy Archives at the Museum.

The founding of the St. Marys United Church was a milestone reached in 1848 when a congregation was established by the Reverend Thomas Williams, a Wesleyan Methodist and "an energetic Welshman, practical and of great endurance." This itinerant, pioneer preacher's circuit included the entire Township of Blanshard and parts



The St. Marys Methodist (United) Church in the early 1900s. The steeple on the tower was still intact at that time.

of Fullarton, Downie and Nissouri. According to a history of the Methodist Church, 1848-1908, published to mark the 60th anniversary of its founding, Williams reported: "In the centre of this work stands the new but flourishing Village of St. Marys, in which, and its vicinity, we have a society of between forty and fifty members, a growing confidence and good congregations and a prosperous Sunday School. Here we have four lots granted to us for sites of church and parsonage and burial grounds."

At first, the process seemed slow. But another milestone in 1856 was the construction of the first church building on the spacious property mentioned by the Reverend Williams on the southeast corner of Church and Elgin Streets. It was a simple, rectangular, limestone building with gable ends at the north and south. This early Wesleyan Methodist Church existed along with T. B. Brown's Methodist Episcopalian churches in a number of small rural communities nearby. For some years, a New Connexion Methodist Church and a Primitive Methodist Church also had congregations in St. Marys. By 1884, all these Methodist denominations had united to form a national Methodist Church.

But before that happened, another major milestone was reached in St. Marys: the building of the magnificent structure that stands today. Opened for services in 1879, it was four times the size of the pioneer, limestone church. It was oriented to the east and had large, round-headed windows on all four sides. There was a gallery for the choir at the west end as well as two entrances from Church Street. According to historian Larry Pfaff, a long-time member of this congregation: "Filled with light, (it was) described by some as undoubtedly the most beautiful interior space in the town." A landmark feature was the

high spire atop the tower at the northwest corner of the building, visible from a great distance. The new building was symbolic of the prosperity within the congregation, much of the wealth coming from grain harvested in abundance from the farms surrounding St. Marys. The grain was purchased by local brokers (many of them Methodists) and shipped by rail to Toronto and Montreal to be sold at great profit. Larry Pfaff also credits the Reverend Samuel Dwight Rice, the minister from 1878 to 1881. His energy and foresight inspired his congregation and eventually took him to leadership positions within the national church.

Another milestone was the building of the Sunday School hall in 1893. Constructed immediately to the south, it complemented the church in size and form, built of the same buff-coloured brick with similarly pitched roof and window placement. Its spacious interior included a large assembly hall, complete with stage, and smaller meeting rooms used by adult and youth groups as well as Sunday School classes. Originally the church and the hall were two separate buildings. They were linked in 1896 during major renovations that dramatically changed the sanctuary's interior. The 1879 church had placed the pulpit at the east end and the original pews were in traditional straight rows, separated by aisles running east and west. In 1896, the floor was removed and replaced with one that sloped gently to the south. New pews were placed in an amphitheatre-style, semi-circular arrangement with the pulpit at the south as the focal point. Preaching was the focus in the Methodist tradition. The new layout meant that the minister and his sermons were given additional prominence.

At the same time, the choir loft in a gallery above the west entrances was removed. The organ and choir were re-

located to the south, close to the minister. The courtyard between the sanctuary and the Sunday School hall was filled in to accommodate an enclosed room for the hidden workings of the organ – even more essential in 1907 when a magnificent new Casavant organ with myriad pipes was installed. From the earliest days of praise singing at camp meetings, music was a vitally important part of Methodist services. The milestone installation of the Casavant showed how this tradition continued. For decades, the church has had the reputation of having not only the finest organ but also one of the most dedicated choirs in this part of Ontario. Because of the sanctuary's acoustics, it is a popular choice as a concert hall for the community.

On June 23, 1925, the United Church was inaugurated, a union of Methodist, Congregational and many of the Presbyterian Churches in Canada – definitely another milestone! Although in the town of St. Marys, the majority of the members of the two Presbyterian churches voted to remain Presbyterians and not "join the Methodists," a number did transfer to the United Church, augmenting its numbers. The new church also had increased status as a strong, progressive, national organization.

Of course, not all milestones are happy ones. In the early 1940s, the beautiful steeple was damaged in a storm. In the midst of World War II, the practical and adaptable congregation decided it was more expedient to remove it than to repair it. The impressive tower remains. Recently, the pandemic has had an undeniable impact on church attendance although the St. Marys United Church was one of the first congregations to live-stream services and the only church to broadcast them on St. Marys Radio. A heavy cloud hung over preparation for the 175th anniversary year because of the illness of the church's much-loved minister, Jason Richards. His death from cancer at the age of 41 last April was grieved not only by his family and his congregation but by the whole community, moved by his determined struggle against this disease.

At the anniversary service in October, the Reverend Robert Lawson warned that milestones must not become millstones, heavy weights that grind down and hold back. The successes of the past can be celebrated but it is important to be aware of all that the church still does in the present. The opening of the church hall for bi-weekly community dinners is an important example. Another is the annual service of Lessons and Carols, with beautiful music from the organ and choir, a treat for any who attend this coming Sunday, December 31. And it is vital for the church to look to the future, to explore an evolving mission in the community. That is good advice for all as we start a New Year!



Hayden Rory Cole

Date of Birth: June 20, 2023
Place of Birth: Stratford General Hospital
Birth Weight: 5 lbs 10 oz **Weight Now:** 15 lbs
Parents Names: Curtis & Janice Cole
Siblings: Easton Cole (2.5)
Grandparents: Ken & Marg Cole, Marion & Fred Powell
What I like best about 2023: I loved getting to meet my big brother Easton & the rest of my family



Iris Evelyn Mercey

Date of Birth: June 17, 2023
Place of Birth: Stratford General Hospital
Birth Weight: 7 lbs 2 oz **Weight Now:** 12 lbs
Parents Names: Mike Mercey and Samantha Ulliyot
Siblings: Hugh Mercey (12)
Grandparents: Barrie Ulliyot (Late Sharron Tobin), Ray & Mary Mercey
What I like best about 2023: Cuddles, cuddles and more cuddles!



Oaklen Lawrence Schoeffel

Date of Birth: November 3, 2023
Place of Birth: Guelph, Ontario
Birth Weight: 5 lbs 10 oz **Weight Now:** 15 lbs
Parents Names: Derrick and Sarah Schoeffel
Siblings: None
Grandparents: Larry & Patsy Joose of St. Marys, Gerd Schoeffel of Maple Ridge, B.C.
What I like best about 2023: Meeting my cousins Colin and Rita!



Maeve Rosemary Muller

Date of Birth: December 14, 2023
Place of Birth: Victoria Hospital, London
Birth Weight: 7 lbs 7 oz
Parents Names: Paul & Rebecca Muller
Siblings: Gavin (2)
Grandparents: Larry & Elsie Coulthard (St. Marys), Nancy Muller & the late Gunter Muller (London)
What I like best about 2023: Meeting my big brother Gavin



Benjamin Balfour

Date of Birth: August 2, 2023
Place of Birth: London
Birth Weight: 8 lbs 4 oz **Weight Now:** 15 lbs
Parents Names: Ryan and Elizabeth Balfour
Siblings: Lydia Balfour (3)
Grandparents: Brian & Debbie Balfour, Barry & Tammy Hawkins
What I like best about 2023: Hugs and kisses from my sister

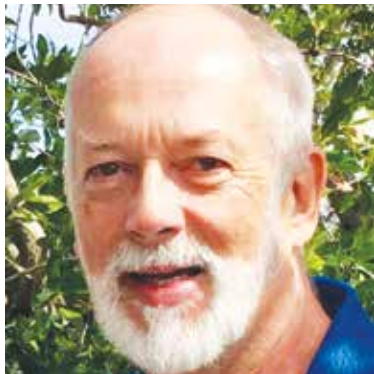


Emily Neeb

Date of Birth: July 15, 2023
Place of Birth: Stratford Hospital
Birth Weight: 8 lbs 2 oz **Weight Now:** 14 lbs
Parents Names: Eric Neeb and Kelly Wakem
Siblings: Rebecca
Grandparents: Bruce & Sharon Neeb, Rick & Cathy Wakem

COLUMN —

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: How to be an "open traveller"



By Paul Knowles

People travel for a lot of reasons. For Canadians, this time of year, the answer to "why do you travel" is often as simple as "to be somewhere warm!" We travel to have fun, to relax, to get away from the day to day.

These are all perfectly good reasons. But they are not the best reasons. Travel can do so much more than offer changes in climate, or in our mundane daily schedule. Travel can, in fact, change us. And change us in very good ways – as long as we are open to this experience.

And that is the best argument for travelling, when there are also environmental and political reasons not to travel. I do believe that we need to be responsible travellers, but that the positives continue to outweigh the challenges.

In my role as a travel writer, I get to travel a lot. And each

time I do, I become more aware of the meaningful ways travel affects me.

For example, I recently spent a week in Wales. The reason for the trip was to experience the food and beverage scene in that country and that was a ton of fun. But something more important than rack of lamb or Welsh whisky happened during the trip. Our group included people from eight different countries – Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, the United States, Wales, England... and Canada. In the course of the week, I gained insights into life in all of those countries. I caught glimpses of the ways my new friends think. And I discovered how quickly a band of strangers from eight different cultures can morph into a group of friends, eager to laugh together, ready to listen and learn. And yes, I learned a lot. I came home enriched.

Travel stretches and strengthens us. For instance, I have visited Ireland several times. As I talked to newfound Irish friends, I quickly learned that my perspective on the troubled history of that country has been skewed simply because I attended Canadian, English-speaking schools where the story of Ireland's "troubles" is presented through a decidedly

British point of view. I have since taken the time to read books written by Irish historians; I know my perspective has become much more balanced and well-informed because I travelled to Ireland and talked to Irish people.

I have had a similar experience right here in our country. Time spent with Indigenous people in Sault Ste. Marie, and more recently in Wendake, north of Québec City, has allowed me to listen directly to Native Canadians. That is a much more useful experience than getting second-hand information from news sources or poorly-informed friends.

What about visiting places where we disagree with their political or social systems? Well, I really love to spend time in the Florida Keys. This, however, causes some internal turmoil because there is a lot of political stuff happening there that I find repugnant. So – should I go? The thing is, when I get there, I find local people who are equally disgusted with what is going on and often, those people are dependent on visitors like me for their livelihood. So I have to ask myself if refusing to visit certain areas impacts the leaders I distrust or does it only punish folks with whom I share common values?



An international selfie at Cardiff Castle in Wales – four travellers, from four countries.

My most recent trip was to the Caribbean island of Grenada where tourism is the number one economic driver. If we don't travel, a significant number of Grenadians are out of work.

So, through travel, I have learned a lot; I have been inspired to seek a balanced view of history and I have helped to support the lives of fine people working in the tourism industry.

But one thing is key to all of this. You have to be open to interaction with other people. You won't grow a bit if you simply check into an all-inclusive resort and only interact with other North American tourists. When you travel, you have to listen, to

interact with others from different cultures and countries, to be open to opinions different from your own.

Have conversations and perhaps, while you are learning and growing, your newfound friends may be having the same experience, listening and learning from you.

And your decision to be an "open traveller" will enrich everyone.

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.



The author in the midst of Irish history.



Significant symbols as part of the decor at the Native Canadian-owned and operated Hôtel-Musée Premières Nations in Wendake, Québec.



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LOOKING BACK



By AMY CUBBERLEY

Too hot for hockey

25 years ago (1998)

The St. Marys Salvation Army expects to give out about 95 hampers in total this Christmas. This is comparable to the same date last year, although hamper requests continued right up until Christmas Eve last year.

The St. Marys Memorial Hospital Foundation recently donated \$100,000 to the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum to create a walkway through the site which would join with the Town's Riverview Walkway.

Crime Stoppers of Perth County and St. Marys OPP are seeking the public's assistance in solving this crime: on November 12 unknown person(s) entered a family home on Hillside Court in St. Marys. They stole approximately \$350 in cash, a Panasonic cordless phone, two large candles, and bank books.

50 years ago (1973)

Former Lincoln Jack Valiquette continues as the top goal scorer in the O.H.A. Major Jr. A League. Jack is with the Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds.

Board of Works personnel are doing some head scratching these days. The local Library Board has purchased fifteen bookshelves from the Stratford Board. Moving the shelves has presented some problems due to the close relationship between the bookshelf sizes and assorted doorway sizes.

Additions and changes scheduled for North Ward School in 1974 will include a stage at the north end of the gymnasium where the steps are presently located. A new entrance will be incorporated with a two-storey addition to house Home Economics and Industrial Arts classrooms to be built at the east side of the school.

75 years ago (1948)

The pants of the young folks are once again taking a beating on the Baptist Church and Knox Church hills. These slopes have been the winter sliding spots for Stone Town youngsters since the early days. Discarded sheets of paperboard lie everywhere on these hillsides. They are used in place of toboggans.

A handsome deer met death instantly on Saturday, west of Rannoch when it ran headlong into the car driven by Jack McPhail of Prospect Hill. Provincial Constable Chas. Anderson was called to the scene and removed the carcass to Stratford where it is expected it will grace the table of a county institution over the festive season.

If the efforts of Harold Everett, versatile radio technician at Tovell's are successful, St. Marys will be boasting of its first television set before long. Harold is busy these days converting a TV set to 25 cycles and expects to be able to view Detroit broadcasts when his setup is complete. Although St. Marys is quite a distance from the Motor City, Harold feels that the altitude will help a great deal in giving moderately good reception.

100 years ago (1923)

The Mayor is caned, but not in the usual way. The 1923 Council called a special meeting on Friday night and presented Mayor Constable with a gold headed cane.

The sad death of Miss Christina Bannerman on Monday cast a gloom over the Christmas festivities in many homes in St. Marys where she was highly respected. Miss Bannerman, who was in her 42nd year, lived with her sister. Previously she worked at the Webster photograph gallery but owing to the illness of her mother she had to discontinue her occupation. Miss Bannerman's death was tragically sudden and followed a week's indisposition caused by the constant care of her mother.

The hockey match scheduled for this week between the Glencoe and St. Marys Intermediate had to be canceled on account of there being no ice in the local rink.



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