

# STRATFORD **TIMES**

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## WinterFest organizers excited to bring family fun on Jan. 27

LISA CHESTER  
*Times Correspondent*

The return of WinterFest is always highly anticipated for family fun and excitement at Upper Queens Park. The event, on Jan. 27 is set to bring the community together to experience all that winter can offer plus some.

Organizers have been hard at work for many months planning WinterFest and hope to have some cooperation from Mother Nature this year. Last year, held in February, it was challenged by a warm spell, so more seasonal January weather should make for a successful event.

“We really try to extend our season as best we can and not be just the Shakespeare Festival through the summertime,” said Jamie Cottle, chair of the WinterFest organizing committee. “... Stratford could be quiet (in past winters) whereas now, with Lights On Stratford and WinterFest in January, and a film festival coming in February and Winter Pride, there’s life. So, we try not to be a ghost town in winter and extend the season some.”

Fridays kicks off with an invitation to participate in a game of Pepper, a trick-taking card game similar Euchre with the Stratford Lakeside Active Adults Association at the Burnside Agriplex from 12:30 to 4 p.m. Those interested in joining in the fun can call 519-271-4310 to register for free.

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(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

### WINTERY MESS

As snow turned to sleet and sleet turned to rain on Tuesday, Leslie Timmermans spent part of the afternoon shovelling slush from her driveway on Lloyd Crescent in Stratford.

## Stratford petition against proposed tax hike gains traction

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

*Local Journalism Initiative Reporter*

Stratford resident Rebecca Finch Gracey has raised concerns about the proposed 12.5 per cent tax hike and has started an online petition with over 2,300 signatures.

The petition, titled “Stop the Stratford 12.5 percent Property Tax increase”, has gained attention on several social media channels, with the number of signatures continuing to rise over the last three weeks since the last

Stratford budget meeting in late December.

Finch Gracey, a multimedia designer and manager in various industries, has been running her own small business for over a decade. She says she understands the financial complexities council faces but believes they could be doing a better job.

“We elect our officials with an implicit trust that we should not have to look over their shoulders for every decision made between elections, and this proposed tax rate hike is eroding the public trust,” she said.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2

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## Arrest made in Paris Jewellery 'Smash and Grab'

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Niagara Regional Police Service has arrested two males who were identified as being involved in the Robbery at Paris Jewellers in Stratford that happened last Wednesday.

The two males were found in possession of items stolen in the robbery at Paris Jewellers.

One of the two males arrested was also found to be in possession of a loaded 9mm handgun at the time of the arrest. Both males are facing numerous charges laid by the Niagara Regional Police Service and remain in custody in that jurisdiction.

The two males have been identified as both being 21 years of age and of No Fixed Address. Both males will be facing robbery-related charges by the Stratford Police Service.

On Jan. 3, shortly before 6:30 p.m., the Stratford Police Service received numerous

911 calls regarding a robbery at Paris Jewellers, located in the Stratford Mall at 1067 Ontario Street, in Stratford.

Just before the police were contacted, four people entered the Stratford Mall heading directly to Paris Jewellers. They then smashed the glass cases in the store and stole an unknown amount of jewellery.

"They started to smash the glass out right away," said Const. Darren Fischer, the police service's community resource and media relations officer. "It looks like one individual was doing the smashing while the other three were grabbing."

"The suspects were in and out of the store in less than one minute before leaving the mall."

All four suspects were completely covered in black clothing, including gloves, masks and hoods. They all appeared to be males of

CONTINUED TO PAGE 3

## Petition to repeal the 12.5 per-cent tax

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Stressing that the tax increases will likely hurt those who are already facing tight budgets due to rising interest and rising costs of food and goods, Finch Gracey is worried about others in Stratford who will ultimately be pressed even more financially because of council's budget decisions.

"These tax hikes will hurt middle- and lower-income earners more than others, but even for high-income earners who may not notice the difference so much, we all deserve more responsible fiscal management."

"The entire country has been tightening its belt and losing its shirt the past few years with all the economic challenges we have faced, and our governments at every level need to lead by example."

Comments on the petition thread show much support and alignment with Finch Gracey's argument.

"With salaries not keeping pace with inflation for most people, making ends increasingly difficult to meet, this proposed increase is tone deaf at best and downright offensive to the people who live here at worst," one commenter wrote.

Another read, "Cost of living compared to wage in Canada is ridiculous. We are already taxed to death in nearly every aspect of our life."

Others note that if this proposed tax increase is approved, they may have to leave Stratford altogether.

"I may be unable to stay home if this increase goes through," a commenter wrote. "As a pensioner with a fixed income, it is becoming more difficult to make ends meet. With housing becoming more difficult to find, this may result in me selling and leaving Stratford."

The petition reads that the 2023 residential property tax rate in Stratford was 1.5 per cent based on the most recent MPAC (Municipal Property Assessment Corporation) property assessments in 2016. With the proposed 2024 increase, the new property tax rate will be nearly 1.7 per cent.

This means property owners could be paying hundreds of dollars more per year on their properties.

"I am a progressive person by nature, and I normally would never disagree with any taxes because I believe in our society supporting each other and our infrastructure," noted Finch Gracey in a statement to the Stratford Times. "But I don't believe in lazy accounting or unprofessional applications of recommendations that aren't fully understood. The city is a corporation, and if it wants to be successful, it needs to act like it."

The petition concludes with a demand that Stratford council repeal the 12.5 per cent proposed tax hike, publicly release a detailed line-by-line itemized expense sheet, and make a concerted, measurable and transparent effort to

find and implement efficiencies to restore public trust and act in a fiscally responsible manner. Finch Gracey says she hopes she can help council take a hard look at who this hike will impact the most.

The next 2024 finance and labour relations committee will be held on January 15, starting at 9 a.m.



# Arrest made in Paris Jewellery 'Smash and Grab'



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

Stratford police are investigating after thieves made off with an estimated more than \$100,000 in jewellery during a smash-and-grab robbery at the Stratford Mall Wednesday evening.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2  
average height with slim builds, however no other descriptors were provided by police. Fischer says that there have been reports of similar smash-and-grab robberies in other cities to the one that happened at Paris Jewellers, but it's unknown if the crimes are related. "We are aware that there are similar incidents that have happened in Kitchener and Hamilton," he said, "however I cannot say that they're the same individuals, but there are similarities."

The suspects were last seen in a black, four-door sedan, believed to be a Chrysler 300, travelling out of Stratford heading east on Ontario Street. The stolen items from Pais Jewellers were worth \$135,000, and the items have now been returned to Paris Jewellers. It was noted in the police report that the two staff members working in the store at the time were not physically injured during the robbery as they were able to seek safety behind the checkout counter.

# Stratford Winterfest

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# STRATFORD TIMES

Stratford's Community Newspaper

Established 2021

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# A return to my roots

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

For more than a decade – my entire adult life – I've worked in community news.

First in rural Saskatchewan and then in Stratford and Perth County, I've dedicated my life to telling the stories of the people, places and events in small towns and cities often ignored by media in larger urban centres – stories that play a big role in helping locals understand how their community functions and who the major players are within it.

Yet while I've worked to ensure friends, neighbours and total strangers are well informed, the media companies I've worked for and many others across the country are focused on profits.

When I began my career in 2013 in Nipawin, Sask. – a town of 4,100 people – I worked in a newsroom with one other general assignment reporter. While there were only two of us, I felt as though we had the tools we needed to do our jobs and keep residents informed.

In 2017, when I began working at the Stratford Beacon Herald, I was hired along with two other news reporters. Even though it was a far cry from the 12-14 reporters and photographers that once worked out of the print newsroom in this city, with an editor that was onsite at least twice a week and another reporter focused on sports, I felt we had the tools to do our jobs.

Since then and in the interest of slowing the rapid decline of traditional advertising revenue, larger corporate media companies like my previous employer have stripped away resources from newsrooms across the country, large and small.

In Stratford, I lost my newsroom and I lost my co-workers as a result of cost reductions and downsizing. Our advertising and administrative staff was also laid off, leaving

me to field questions I don't know the answers to and feeling like a one-man show.

I no longer felt like I had the tools to do my job – at least not at the quality Stratford deserves.

At the same time that large news organizations are stripping local newsrooms of their resources, trust in mainstream media continues to erode. Whether it's real or perceived, many people don't believe journalists and the companies they work for have their best interests in mind, leading them to seek their news from alternate and often much-less reliable sources.

As trust in traditional media shrinks, the dangers of weaponized misinformation become more of a threat to communities and a free and fair democracy.

So that's why I decided to return to the world of independent community news.

As the new regional editor of the Stratford Times, St. Marys Independent and Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette, I'm looking forward to leading a team of talented, local journalists in gathering the news and reporting the stories locals want and need to read about in a way that is both transparent and accountable to our readers and our communities.

I am committed to developing and driving an editorial strategy collaboratively with our reporters and with feedback from readers that gives locals what they need to navigate their daily lives and gain a better understanding of the communities in which they live.

Instead of settling for thinner and thinner papers with less local content, I hope our readers share my and Grant Haven Media's vision for redefining what community news is and how it can serve the public.

If you have any questions, want to pitch a story, or just want to get to know me better, feel free to shoot me an email at [galen@granthaven.com](mailto:galen@granthaven.com).



GALEN SIMMONS

## Letter to Editor

I attended the City's Public Consultation on Housing and Homelessness on Nov 23. I flagged, both at the public meeting and after it, that our Housing Department's presentation has misrepresented the Attainable Housing Project (AHP)'s definition of "Attainable Housing". The "Clarifying Terms" slide that Housing Manager, Jeff Wilson, presented at the consultation states that "Attainable Housing includes the entire breadth of housing options" that "Affordable Housing (is) a form of attainable housing" and that "Community Housing, (which is) synonymous with social housing (is) a form of attainable housing."

However, by the Attainable Housing Project's own definition, attainable housing can be none of those things. Their definition of Attainable Housing clearly states that an attainable residential unit "is not an affordable residential unit" and "is not intended for use as a rented residential premises" They also state that "the AHP does not address housing needs managed by the City of Stratford Social Services Department. The Social Services Department is mandated to coordinate and deliver programming related to homelessness, emergency shelter, supportive housing, and affordable housing."

We followed up repeatedly with Jeff Wilson, on behalf of the Stratford Affordable Housing Alliance (SAHA), asking that the "Clarifying Terms" slide be corrected, before being disseminated, in order to accurately reflect how

our City and the AHP (regulated by our province) define these terms. I expressed concerns about the public being misinformed. We did not receive a reply. On December 21st I received a follow up on the public consultation from Kehlar Hillyer, Housing Policy & Program Coordinator for Social Service, with a slide deck reiterating the same misinformation.

We're left to wonder if our City is purposely trying to mislead the public on the scope and mandate of the Attainable Housing Project?

Also concerning, was the omission of Community Land Trusts (CLTs) from the summary of the Community Consultation. Given that multiple SAHA members and supporters, myself included, were in attendance on the 23rd and that we advocated for the use of public land and property to create a Community Land Trust (CLT) program for affordable housing, I was surprised it did not make the list as a type of long-term housing missing from our community. SAHA has already collected nearly 500 signatures advocating for the implementation of a CLT program in Stratford. Our petition continues to circulate. Your readers can sign our petition and find out more about how communities across the country are using Community Land Trusts to address the housing affordability crisis on our website: [bit.ly/SaySomethingSAHA](https://bit.ly/SaySomethingSAHA).

Niki Andre

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# City of Stratford currently accepting applications for Green Recognition Program

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The City of Stratford is once again looking to recognize and showcase local people, businesses and industries that are helping the city reduce greenhouse gas emissions through its Green Recognition Program.

The City of Stratford's Energy and Environment Advisory Committee launched the Green Recognition Program last year and is again launching the successful program for 2024. The program aims to highlight the efforts of those helping Stratford move towards its target of a 30 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

The program last year received numerous applicants, and Sadaf Ghalib, the city's climate change program manager, said she's happy to see it run again this year.

"Last year was the first year of the program. We received an overwhelming amount of applications and interest in the program itself, especially from the business community. This showed us that businesses are thinking about their impact on the climate and improving the environment moving forward," she said.

The Green Recognition Program is intended to support the city's green leaders, promote various sustainable practices and raise awareness of how the community works toward a net-zero future.

Submissions are being accepted from individuals, businesses, industries and organizations in several categories, including waste reduction and diversion, energy management and electrification and the green building award.

A new category this year is the tourism category, aimed to

recognize those who have made conscious efforts to make the visitor economy low carbon.

"Because Stratford is dependent on the visitor economy, it does come with substantial amounts of greenhouse gas emissions," said Ghalib, "This new category is a way to encourage visitors, as well as residents who live, work and play here, to start to think about their carbon footprint. We're hoping to become a low-carbon vacation destination."

Applicants are asked to ensure they are a city resident or lead a business, industry or organization operating in the City of Stratford and that there is an investment of either time, money or both. The initiative must also not result from mandated changes as required by the Province of Ontario or the Government of Canada.

With regard to last year's applicants, Ghalib says it really showed the commitment the community of Stratford has to improving greenhouse gas emissions.

"It was heartwarming to see that people within the community, without any incentive whatsoever, were doing great things when it came to improving their buildings. [The City of Stratford] is very much interested in enhancing this program further and having more residents or businesses participate and contribute towards our goal."

Applications can be submitted online at [www.stratford.ca/green](http://www.stratford.ca/green). The submission deadline is March 15, after which the city's selection team will arrange site visits and interviews with applicants.

The presentation of winners will be during Earth Week, April 22-26. Each winning business or organization will be recognized and presented with a certificate or plaque of recognition.

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# WinterFest organizers excited to bring family fun

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Friday night is the now sold out comedy night presented by Yuk Yuk's at the Arden Park hotel.

Saturday will see festival goers welcomed to the Kiwanis Band Shell and Upper Queen's park from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. with games for children, a petting zoo llamas, a colouring contest with the artwork of local artist James Colbeck and warming stations. There will also be mini-putt and hockey shootouts for kids, as well as the snowman walk, a joint effort of school children throughout Perth County. Wooden snowmen, made by the shop class of Stratford District Secondary School, are decorated to the theme of superheroes.

Live shows are planned for Saturday that will enchant and mesmerise. The first presentation kicks off at 10:30 a.m. with a birds-of-prey demonstration by the Canadian Raptor Conservancy, an organization that cares for and rehabilitates injured birds and educates the public with demonstrations and open houses. Subsequent demonstrations are at noon and 2 p.m.

"They take birds that have been injured or damaged somehow and use them as an educational tool. They teach kids how to deal with wild animals. They will probably do a flyover from thirty or for-

ty feet away. They will probably feed them. (The person leading the demonstration is a) very low key guy that's very passionate about what he does and he's been doing it for years," said MJ Thomson, WinterFest organizing committee member.

Next up at 11 a.m. is Brant The Fire Guy who is recognized by the Guinness Book of World Records for the feat of eating 101 fire torches in 60 seconds. He has been undefeated since 2018. His show is always creative and entertaining and will be a treat for young and old alike. Subsequent performances are at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.

"We had him probably ten years ago. He's very animated and incredibly entertaining," said Thomson.

Throughout the day will be blacksmith demonstrations put on by Fallen Willow Forge. Join John Walker as he talks about and fabricates metal into something useful and recognizable. Children have always marvelled at the work he does and the methods he employs.

"He's great with the kids. They are constantly learning from activities like that," said Thomson.

Again this year, the Avon Co-op Nursery School will be attending with games for the children and the colouring contest. Entries to the co-



(LISA CHESTER PHOTO)

**Jamie Cottle and MJ Thomson of the WinterFest organizing committee invite you to come and play in the park during the annual weekend event Jan. 27.**

louring contest can be obtained at the radio station CJCS/2day FM or by downloading the artwork from the website stratfordwinterfest.ca.

"Entries are due in at the radio station the day before, Friday Jan. 26, or you can bring them to the event on Saturday. There's nice little prizes from Chocolate Barr's for the contest. We get a really great response to the colouring contest, more than I would have thought," said Cottle

Thomson adds, "It's still something kids enjoy doing and it's a 20-minute, half-hour activity a parent can have them do."

Also this year, the Stratford Public Library will be in the park with their interactive programming.

11 a.m. will mark the commencement of the ice sculpting demonstration by HURmetal Ice & Wood Designs. The custom design will be sculpted out of blocks of ice on site to the delight of all who

have ever experienced ice carving before. There will be two more sculptures assembled for the crowd to appreciate.

Onsite will be food trucks to satisfy any craving. Take the opportunity to try out Feature's new Barbecue & Country Style Catering serving smoked brisket on a bun, pulled pork on a bun, brisket poutine, banana toffee pudding and smoked chocolate chip cookie. Prefer a burger or hotdog? Bru Garden Barbie Truck will be on site as well. Tim Hortons, as a festival sponsor, will be giving out free coffee, Bake My Day and the Bean Bakery and Café will be there with their delicious butter tarts, and Krazee Kernels will be serving popcorn by the bag.

WinterFest continues Sunday with a free skate afternoon beginning at 2:30 p.m. at the Dufferin Arena. This is an excellent opportunity to get out together and get a little time on the ice.

Volunteers are crucial to the success of the event, and the organizing committee is always looking for more volunteers to help out. If you have the time and spirit of community, contact infostratford-winterfest@gmail.com about opportunities to volunteer for WinterFest 2024. Community Service hours available.

## Applications still being accepted for Perth County environmental stewardship program

WENDY LAMOND

Times Correspondent

Perth County landowners and non-profits have a couple more weeks to apply for support for local environmental-improvement projects through the county's new stewardship program.

On Dec. 1, 2023, Perth County and its member municipalities launched the Perth County Stewardship program, which focuses on protecting the air, soil and water of Perth County. The program is based on grant initiatives that will support landowners in keeping the sustainability of the environment with tree-planting projects. The program provides resources and financial assistance to landowners and community groups that are looking to commit to cultivating a greener future.

Applications are being accepted by the county until Jan. 19 and grants will be awarded to the successful candidates on Feb. 23. Following this intake, the county is planning a second round of applications in the fall depending on how much money is left in the



stewardship program budget for the year.

There are three grant streams available for tree planting projects, tree distribution programs and forest-health checkups. The first is for private planting, which is for individual landowners looking to plant 50 or more trees or shrubs. The second is for community planting. This is for non-profit groups, conservation authorities or municipalities planting or distributing trees for planting. The last is for forest-health checkups which focus on woodlot-management plans or woodlot assessments.

When asked if the program will become annual, county resiliency and stewardship coordinator Hannah Cann, commented, "Depending on the success and uptake, this will hopefully be an annual program. This is the first year of the program and we are so excited to see the outpouring of interest from landowners, partner organizations like the conservation authorities, and from community groups."

The location for all projects must be within the municipalities of Perth South, West Perth, Perth East or North Perth but exclude the City of Stratford and

Town of St. Marys.

To apply for the grants, you will need to provide detailed reports that include a planting plan, a project budget and a thorough description of why you are interested in participating in this program.

According to Cann, there are two important parts to the program. The first is that it provides financial incentive to landowners wanting to improve their property by planting trees. The grant program could allow a landowner to expand tree-planting efforts, or, for smaller landowners, it will make it more attainable.

Secondly, the stewardship program is great way to showcase important projects in the community.

Some benefits of tree-planting include protecting croplands and roads from wind erosion, increased soil organic matter and providing habitat corridors for a variety of species.

"If folks are dreaming up a unique tree planting project or have been waiting a couple years to have a woodlot assessment done, 2024 is your year. The closing date for applications is quickly approaching. I encourage anyone with questions about whether their dream project qualifies or how to apply to contact me at the county or their local conservation authority for assistance" said Cann.

Perth County is committed to a greener future and the stewardship program is one way of maintaining a healthy ecosystem and preservation of agriculture land in our area.

To apply and to find tips and criteria needed to qualify, you can access the website at [www.perthcounty.ca/stewardship](http://www.perthcounty.ca/stewardship).

# Out with the old, in with the new: ONEXBUS now offers transportation to Toronto and London

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The recent conclusion of Metrolinx's GO train pilot in southwestern Ontario has left the door open for a new bus service to begin meeting the transit needs of Stratford and area residents.

Shortly after the cancellation of the southwestern Ontario GO line, which connected Stratford residents to Toronto, London and Kitchener-Waterloo areas, many people were left wondering how to get around without the intracity connection they relied on.

After hearing about this, Andrea Medeiros, ONEXBUS Dispatch Manager from Mississauga, contacted the City of Stratford Transit Services and was able to offer a solution to the problem with their locally owned and operated city bus service.

ONEXBUS, a leader in Ontario's intercity bus service, was founded by John Samuel and his brother James Sam after they decided they had had enough of corporate bus services. They set out to change how bus operation works in Ontario by introducing their family-owned Ontario corporation dedicated to supporting local communities.

"We were looking at ways we could connect smaller communities that didn't have any transportation means, and we wanted to provide a much-needed service," said Samuel.

With the goal of enhancing customer experience, ONEXBUS currently offers services throughout the week and on weekends, with routes scheduled to leave as early as 6 a.m. and arrive home as late as 11:15 p.m.

ONEXBUS offers reasonably priced tickets. Stratford to London or Kitchener will start at \$12.99 one-way, and a Strat-

ford to Toronto ticket will start at \$20.99.

Currently, the services connect London, Stratford and Toronto. As usage of the service picks up, Samuel says they plan to increase services as needed and connect other cities within the area. "We are planning to operate in Stratford starting the week of January 2," said Samuel, "The schedule will run until the end of April and, by then, we will have a clear idea of the need for changes in the schedules."

Being a family-owned and operated Ontario business, Medeiros says the ONEXBUS team can relate a bit more to the lived experiences of community members in smaller towns.

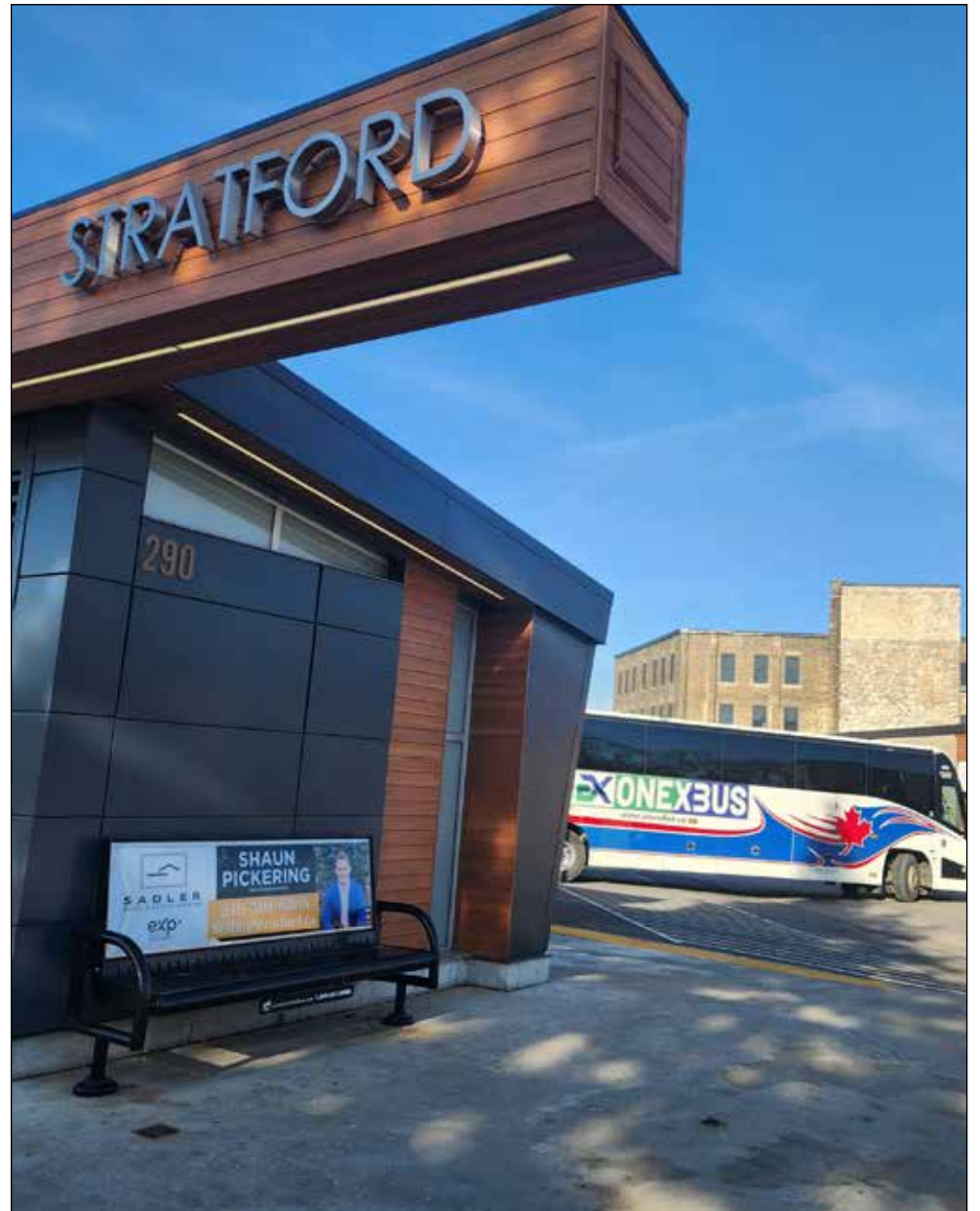
"As a mother of three, going to the airport and parking my vehicle was expensive," said Medeiros. "I spent almost \$200 just to park my car so the convenience of having this service will be huge for people in Stratford."

"We want to make everyone's lives a little bit easier. Whether people are going to the airport to visit with family, students are trying to make it to class on time, or business people are getting in and out of the city, we just want to enhance their experience with a smile on our driver's face when they walk on our busses."

Medeiros also noted her appreciation to citizens and the City of Stratford for their effort in making this collaboration happen.

"The city of Stratford was so lovely to work with," she said, "I'm really looking forward to putting in our best work and our best customer service ahead. I'm really excited about it."

For full schedules and more information, please visit the ONEXBUS website at [www.onexbus.com](http://www.onexbus.com) or the Stratford Connect Facebook page for a full schedule.



## NEW ONEXBUS

ONEXBUS is now offering bus service to Stratford and area residents looking to travel to and from larger urban centres like Kitchener-Waterloo, London and even Toronto.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

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## Seven people charged with impaired driving during recent Perth County OPP Festive RIDE campaign

TIMES STAFF

[stratfordtimes@gmail.com](mailto:stratfordtimes@gmail.com)

Seven drivers landed themselves with impaired-driving charges over the holiday season, three of whom had their licenses suspended, say Perth County OPP after its annual Festive RIDE campaign ended earlier this month.

This year's Festive Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere (RIDE) campaign ran from Nov. 16, 2023 to Jan. 1, 2024. During the campaign, the Perth County OPP increased its presence on Perth County roads and highways as officers conducted 180 RIDE program stops across the county.

In total, local OPP officers spent more than 430 hours checking drivers for signs they've consumed alcohol or

drugs and whether they are unfit to drive.

Though the Festive RIDE campaign is over, Perth County OPP remains committed to taking alcohol or drug-impaired drivers off local roads through enforcement and public education. Drivers will continue to see officers patrolling local roads, setting up RIDE program stops and stopping unsafe drivers year-round.

"The enforcement of impaired driving laws will continue to be a priority for our members in Perth County," said Staff Sgt. David Sinko, operations manager for Perth County OPP. "Keep our roadways safe for everyone. Plan ahead. Don't drive impaired."

If you suspect someone is driving while impaired by alcohol or drugs, call 911 to report it.



# Arrests made after a robbery on Cawston Street

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Stratford police arrested and charged three people last week after a woman was allegedly assaulted and robbed at a home on Cawston Street in Stratford.

Just before 2 a.m. on Jan. 2, officers from the Stratford Police Service were flagged down by a woman on the road. She appeared to have visible injuries on her face and head.

It was later learned that the victim had attended a residence on Cawston Street in the City of Stratford, where she was dragged inside by three individuals and assaulted.

The three accused demanded that the victim hand over her property, which included her purse, cash, and identification. During the assault, one of the accused threatened to shoot the victim while in possession of what appeared to be a handgun.

The victim told police that she attempted to call 911 on her cell phone, which was taken from her and smashed by one of the accused.

After the assault occurred, the victim was pushed out of the residence, where she was able to escape and flag down police, who were on patrol in the area.

Members of the Stratford Police Service Emergency Response Unit arrived and contacted the three accused the following

day. They were each placed under arrest and transported to Stratford Police Headquarters.

Const. Darren Fischer, community resource and media relations officer with Stratford police, said one of the three accused was from Stratford, one was from Woodstock and the other was from Hanover.

A search warrant for the residence was conducted later that morning, which resulted in the seizure of four replica pellet guns, a .38 Special bullet, brass knuckles, bear spray, \$240 in counterfeit Canadian currency and a bag containing over one gram of suspected methamphetamine.

All property belonging to the victim was located and returned to her.

As a result of the investigation, the three accused persons were charged jointly with forcible confinement, assault, assault with a weapon, robbery with a firearm, careless storage of ammunition, unauthorized possession of a weapon (brass knuckles and bear spray), possession of a controlled substance, and possession of counterfeit money.

In addition, one accused was also charged with numerous firearms offences, including possession contrary to the prohibition order, which was issued after previous convictions for firearms-related offences.

All three accused were held in custody to attend a bail hearing at a later date.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Counterfeit cash and weapons seized after robbery in Stratford last week

# 9-8-8 Suicide Helpline now available from anywhere in Canada

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Canadian government has now implemented a new, three-digit number -- 988 -- to call or text to help prevent suicide and offer crisis support.

John Nater, Perth Wellington MP, told the Stratford Times he's happy to see the program in place for those in need.

"I am relieved that three years after the House of Commons called for the creation of a national suicide prevention hotline, 988 has finally been launched," he said.

To prepare for the launch of 988, the Government of Canada announced in August 2022 that the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) will lead the coordination of 988 service delivery, building on its experience delivering Talk Suicide Canada.

CAMH is Canada's largest mental health teaching hospital and one of the world's leading research centres. CAMH's role in developing 988 service delivery in Canada builds on their experience delivering Talk Suicide Canada.

Nater says the program is a welcomed and much-needed service that aims to enhance mental health support across Huron-Perth.

"I truly believe that 988 will save lives," said Nater, "... For too long, people in need have not had access to help when they need it most. I have heard from far too many families and loved ones who have lost someone to suicide, and it is my sincere hope that this number will help prevent families in our community from dealing with that terrible loss. When someone reaches out, their call will be answered."

Although this is a much-needed and effective step in the right direction, Nater notes there is always more work that can be done to improve the mental health of Canadians. "In recent years, great strides

have been made in lessening the stigma related to mental health," he said, "However, until mental health is treated in the same way that physical health is treated, there will still be much work to be done."

Discussing the increased need for mental health care, Nater said, "One of the biggest gaps continues to be access to treatment. Wait lists are far too long and is one area where additional resources are needed."

"Conversations around mental health are not always easy, but are essential," said Nater, "Whether in workplaces, schools, sports teams, or around the dinner table, being able to talk openly and honestly about mental health can have a supportive impact on those who are struggling. On a positive note, I am heartened by the number of local groups and individuals who are talking about their own stories and advocating for meaningful change."

The Hope for Wellness Helpline will also provide support to 988 callers in Cree, Ojibway, and Inuktitut upon request.

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, please call 911. If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, call or text 988. Support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



## Weekend Quiz

- 1) Who is the inventor of the passenger elevator?
- 2) A torx screwdriver, is designed for what kind head-shaped screw?
- 3) What do you call a group of cranes (bird)?
- 4) What do you call a group of mechanical cranes?
- 5) In what year did Canada cease the production of pennies?
- 6) Acrophobia is the fear of what?
- 7) What branch of philosophy deals with morality?
- 8) Who won the Golden Globe for best actor in a drama motion picture in 2024?
- 9) In the 10 commandments, what is the 6th?
- 10) When was the beginning and end of the American civil war?

This week's answers are found on pg. 31

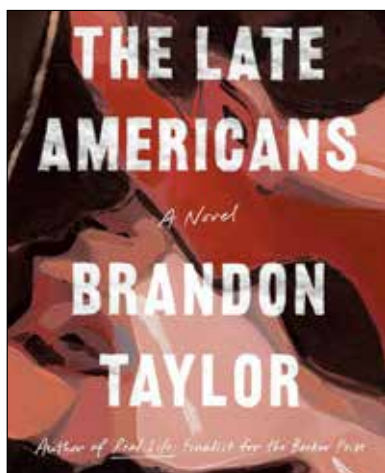
## Queer Book of the Month

*The Late Americans*, by Brandon Taylor

@SPL: FIC Taylo

Tenderly told between the pages of *The Late Americans* are the stories of a loosely connected group of Iowa City friends and lovers. The large, complex cast of graduate students, academics, and townies includes poets, artists, dancers, landlords, kitchen staff, and meatpacking workers. Their relationships – both with themselves and others – are touched by their deeply intimate experiences with class and race.

A companion to anyone who's found their life and relationships at a cross-



roads, *Americans* digs into its characters' feelings of alienation, precarity, belonging, and loss. A character-driven work for lovers of contemporary literary fiction, *Americans* is a fitting next-read for fans of a good campus novel. If you enjoyed Sally Rooney's *Beautiful World, Where Are You?* or Hanya Yanagihara's *A Little Life*, check out this latest feat of Booker Prize finalist Brandon Taylor, which is adorned with gorgeous prose and evocative character studies.

Emma Brommer  
Public Service Librarian  
Stratford Public Library

# Stratford Honda Wraps up the Holidays with a Donation to the House of Blessings

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Stratford Honda was happy to announce that they were able to match a \$5,000 donation during their 'Drive Our Community' Shop Local campaign.

All donations, up to a maximum of \$5,000, were matched by Honda, and the additional amount was above and beyond their goal.

The dealership donated a total of \$14,874 in cash donations and another 360 pounds of food to Stratford House of Blessing.

Janet Keen, Marketing Specialist at Stratford Honda, said the event exceeded their expectations and Honda was thrilled to give back to the community in such a big way.

"All the money came from our amazing customers," she said. "We had more online donations than ever before and that's because so many people shared our social media posts and received our email blasts."

Their fundraising efforts not only supported the House of Blessing, but Honda also offered an incentive for those who came in and donated by offering a local gift card draw at the end of the event.

"One thing we did to help drive do-



(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

## CHEQUE PRESENTATION

Pictured are Eva Hayes, Director of Stratford House of Blessing and Kathleen Duiker from Stratford Honda presenting the cheque.

nations is we bought gift cards to local House of Blessing but also helped drive stores, so we not only supported the sales within the community."

Some of the businesses Stratford Honda purchased gift cards for during their Drive Our Community Shop Local campaign were The Touchmark Shop, Athens Greek Souvlakia Restaurant, Swanson's Jewellers, Wild Hog Country Market, MeMe's Café in New Hamburg,

Ziebart/Uniglass Plus - Stratford, Stratford Cycle Centre, Grounded Vegan Kitchen and Stratford Honda.

Keen said that every donation of food and cash earned a ballot for prize draws and the dealership feels humbled by the support it received during the holiday fundraiser.

One notable donation Honda received at the last minute was from Peter Maranger from Peter Maranger & Associates Inc.

"Peter heard that we were so close to our goal, and he ended up stopping in during the final days to give us a great donation," said Keen.

Keen noted that this campaign wouldn't have been possible without the community's support.

"Seeing the donations come in from all over Stratford is so great," she said. "We had more online donations than ever before, which shows people were sharing our posts online and visiting our website to donate. It's a community effort, really."

# Illume Wellness Spa wins Canadian Spa of the Year award

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A Stratford spa has gained national recognition through this year's Canadian Choice Awards.

The Canadian Choice Awards are an annual celebration of the heart and soul of Canada's business community. The awards spotlight the small and mid-sized businesses that drive the nation's economy, foster innovation and enrich our communities annually.

This year, Illume Wellness Spa took home the title of Top Spa in Canada in 2024.

Founded in 2019 and located at 36 Ontario Street, Illume is a certified green multi-level spa specializing in organic service, eco-friendly practices and products. It offers services from scalp massages to pedicures.

Founder and owner Elsa Fähræus Seigner says she was overjoyed when she heard that the spa had won this prestigious



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

## SPA OF THE YEAR

Founder and owner of Illume Wellness Spa, Elsa Fähræus Seigner outside the spa, conveniently located at 36 Ontario Street, downtown Stratford. Submitted photo.

of their success is continuous learning and building a team that enjoys what they do and wants to be a part of a team that truly cares about their clients.

"We're always learning together and always there for each other," she said. "The team is built upon support for each other, and that's what makes our space run so well."

"It's not just about, 'Let's just do a quick service and leave.' These girls really care about their jobs and their careers, and they want to build within Illume. We have exceptional service because we care about what we do."

Coming up in 2024, Fähræus Seigner says clients can look forward to a new online clean beauty market that will now be its own brand within the Illume Wellness Spa umbrella. Illume will also offer an eco-friendly refill station for products to help reduce bottle waste.

"Sustainability is huge within Illume. We've recycled over 6,000 containers since launching our recycling program two years ago. I wanted to expand on that, so I'm adding the refill station service to the spa this year."

Fähræus Seigner underscores her gratitude to the community, noting the award wouldn't have happened without the support of Stratford.

"I just want to thank the community," said Fähræus Seigner, "Because of how supportive everyone here in Stratford is, we're being recognized on a larger scale, and that's so great."

"This is the best start to the year, that's for sure. I'm really looking forward to serving Stratford in 2024."



## The Army, Navy & Air Force Veterans in Canada (ANAVETS)

Inviting all eligible Canadian Forces Personnel, Ex-Service Members, their respective spouses, widows, and dependents seeking assistance for programs and services offered by Veterans Affairs Canada to meet with our Service Officer the last Saturday of every month between 10:00am and 1:00pm (by appointment only).

All interested parties are asked to contact President Stephen Cooper at 519-271-3113 to book a date for a consultation.

151 Lorne Avenue, East Stratford, Ontario N5A 6S4

award.

"It's just so exciting that Illume is being recognized on this scale. We even get a trophy," she said.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, spas were hit particularly hard, and Fähræus Seigner notes her gratitude towards the community for consistently showing up to support the spa, whether it be purchasing products from the clean

beauty market, sharing posts on social media or booking holistic services.

"We're just so lucky to have what we have. It's such a small little community, and everyone, including other local businesses, are just so supportive of one another."

"We have such a beautiful clientele and community within our space. Whenever I need to contact someone for advice or nominations, everyone seems to be there, no matter what."

As far as the team at Illume Wellness Spa, Fähræus Seigner says that a big part

# New Ontario Legislation aims to protect dogs and introduce fines to unethical breeders

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

In early December, the Ontario government introduced a new, proposed legislation to stop unethical dog breeding operations, otherwise known as puppy mills.

The Preventing Unethical Puppy Sales Act (PUPS Act) aims to stop unethical dog breeding practices, impose penalties and make sure that dogs across Ontario receive the care they deserve.

Puppy mill operations across the province could now be subjected to fines if they are found to be in violation of new rules set by the PUPS Act.

"This legislation is a welcome and important step towards protecting dogs from unethical breeders and addressing the issue of puppy mills throughout our province," said Doug Brooks, President & CEO of Ontario SPCA and Humane Society. "The Ontario SPCA and Humane Society looks forward to continuing to work with the Solicitor General to further develop the detailed regulations that will provide the greatest protection possible for both dogs and the public."

These regulations prevent breeding a female dog more than three times in a two-year period, prevent breeding a female dog that is less than one year old, penalizes failure to keep a dog with a contagious disease away from other animals, ensures a dog's environment is sanitary and free from waste, and prevents the separation of a puppy from its mother before the age of eight weeks.

These regulations are meant to deter harmful and unethical breeding and the local Humane Society agrees that the new regulation is a step in the right direction.

"Coupled with the PAWS Act and legislation included in there for any businesses

using animals for profit being subject to inspections, elements for psychological distress and the current standards of care, it's a step forward for protection for animals," said Nasreen, Marketing and Communications Specialist at The Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo and Stratford Perth. "We would welcome continually strengthened legislation for animals in our communities."

As far as impacting local shelters, Nasreen says the Humane Society does believe this new legislation, could impact local shelters as they would then house and care for dogs from unethical breeding facilities. "We support Provincial Animal Welfare Services when they need space to house animals, so we could see animals come into us from investigations of this nature."


"We provide stray and surrender services to 13 municipalities, and through those services, we could see animals that are former breeding dogs being surrendered or unfortunately abandoned come into our care," she continued, "We hope that this lessens the number of animals that are abandoned."

Caring for animals that are from puppy mills is not new for local shelters, however, and Nasreen notes that even last year they received eight dogs that were found abandoned in farmer's fields in Perth and Huron counties.

"It was believed that based on their breed, age and conditions they could have been possibly from a facility used for breeding," Nasreen said.

The new legislation aims to keep animals across the province safe. Ontario also intends to consult on regulations relating to medically unnecessary procedures for dogs and cats, such as declawing, tail docking, ear cropping and debarking, and

establish a framework for administrative monetary penalties under the PAWS Act.

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Maria, employee; Terry Voukaridis, Owner of Athens Greek Souvlaki; Richard Honcharsky from The Salvation Army; and Pamela, employee, exchanging a cheque donated, thanks to the community's generosity.

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**A BIG THANK YOU TO AMANDA FROM STRATFORD TIMES AND  
107.7 RADIO FOR THEIR HELP GETTING THE WORD OUT.**

**AND LASTLY, THANK YOU TO ALL THE BEAUTIFUL HEARTS IN  
STRATFORD.**

**GOD BLESS YOU ALL.**

**AND REMEMBER SALVATION ARMY IS ALWAYS THERE FOR  
US.**

**- TERRY AND THE WONDERFUL EMPLOYEES OF ATHENS**



# The 'Old Barn' celebrates 100 years

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

After marking its 100th anniversary in December, a Stratford arena is now said to be the oldest operating arena in the world.

Built in 1924 and renamed in 1996, the William Allman Memorial Arena was named in honour of its long-time building manager, Bill Allman.

Jamie Nigro, President of the Stratford Hunter Steel Warriors, notes that, like many other Stratford residents, he grew up coming to the arena with his father to watch hockey throughout the winter. Over the years, there have been quite a few changes, but the iconic building, known locally as the "Old Barn," remains the same because of the community.

"There have been a lot of renovations over the years. I remember coming here as a kid with my dad and the dressing rooms were one on top of the other," he said.

Considered by locals as the place to be on Friday night, Nigro said the community is what makes the William Allman Memorial Arena special and it's because of the people that it thrives.

"When there's a game going on and this building is full of people, it's just amazing here," he said.

The iconic Old Barn has a unique heritage that dates back to its beginnings when the Stratford Flash, Howie Morenz, played there before becoming one of the first stars of the NHL.

Famous for its barn-like style and classic look, the William Allman Memorial Arena has been used for film and television and famously for Bauer's "Leave an Impression" advertising campaign.

Many NHL stars started or played in the



(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

## 100TH ANNIVERSARY

Stratford's William Allman Arena will celebrate its 100th anniversary January 27 with a day of special hockey games and a skating exhibition.

old barn, including Boyd Devereaux, Brian Smolinski, Chris Pronger, Craig Hartsburg, Ed Olczyk, Dave Shaw, Garth Snow, George Hay, Greg de Vries, Jeff Halpern,

Kevin Dahl, Louie DeBrusk, Marc Potvin, Mark Bell, Mike Peluso, Mike Watt, Nelson Emerson, Nick Libbet, Rem Murray, Rob Blake,

On top of that, many other hockey players moved on to become successful college juniors throughout Canada.

The Old Barn is currently home to the Stratford Hunter Steel Warriors (formerly the Stratford Cullitons) junior B hockey club. The venue hosts the club's home games every Friday night throughout the winter.

On January 27, the iconic arena will celebrate with Stratford Day: William Allman Memorial Arena 100th Anniversary, an event where the community is invited to attend throughout the day for special hockey games and a skating exhibition.

A \$10 fee will give attendees access in and out of the arena all day. The money raised will go towards a number of organizations that use the arena including Stratford Hunter Steel Warriors, Stratford Minor Hockey, Stratford Skating Club, Stratford Ringette, Stratford Girls Hockey Association and Stratford Figure Skating Club.

Starting at 8 a.m., the anniversary celebration will begin with a house league hockey game. Later that day, at 2 p.m., the Fighting Irish will take to the ice and at 5 p.m. the Stratford Warriors will take on Culliton Alumni for a fun and exciting evening of hockey.

A community breakfast will be hosted in the upper lobby between 7 a.m. and 11 a.m., lunch will be served between 11:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., and dinner starts at 4:30 p.m. and ends at 7 p.m.

The William Allman Memorial Arena is also celebrating 100 years with collectors' t-shirts. The 100th anniversary shirts can be purchased at the souvenir booth at the Allman Arena during game times or during the anniversary celebration.

## Stratford Perth Museum calls for nominations for Agriculture Wall of Fame

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

The Stratford Perth Museum is looking for residents of Stratford and Perth County who have made an impact on regional agriculture.

A press release from the museum announced that nomination forms are now available for the 10th Agriculture Wall of Fame. Nominations will close on Feb. 28. The 2024 honouree(s) will be announced at the Stratford Rotary Club's Rural-Urban Dinner on April 18.

"There are stars out there and they deserve accolades as much as some of the great and wonderful famous people who live in Stratford," Kelly McIntosh, general manager of the Stratford Perth Museum, said.

The committee in charge of selecting the winners is looking for those in the agriculture industry who demonstrate excellence in

entrepreneurship, technological growth, contributions to the community and innovation. The Wall of Fame has honoured 21 Perth County residents for their work in agriculture and farming, along with seven charter members from Perth County who are featured in the Ontario Agriculture Hall of Fame. There were no honourees in 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions at the time.

Previous honourees include Nuhn Industries owner Dennis Nuhn, whose work in the family-owned blacksmith shop is part of a history spanning four generations, Soiled Reputation owners Antony John and Tina Vandenheuvel for their contributions in organic farming, and dairy farmer Ken Scheerer for bringing dairy education programs to Grade 5 students in Perth County. Scheerer was also honoured for his role in the Rotary Club of Stratford by establishing what is now known as the annual Rural-Urban Dinner.

"The idea around that was to really try to bridge a road between rural and urban members of our community," McIntosh explained. "It is an unbelievably successful dinner to this day."

The Stratford Perth Museum hopes to include more programming in the future that highlights the agricultural history and contributions of Perth County.

"I can't think of a better way to gather those literal stories by really receiving nominations and applications," McIntosh said. "Because I want to personally - as does the committee - find out about who are doing things out there so we can talk about it in a story way."

More information about the previous winners and the nomination forms for the Agriculture Wall of Fame are available at stratfordperthmuseum.ca/stratford-perth-museum-agricultural-wall-fame-directory.

## Optimist Club of Downie Inc.

### OPTI-CASH CALENDAR DRAW

Dec. 24 Nick Wouters, St. Pauls	\$50.00
Dec. 25 Kevin Davidson, Cambridge	\$1000.00
Dec. 26 Gail Scheerer, Stratford	\$50.00
Dec. 27 Kim Pearson, St. Mary's	\$50.00
Dec. 28 Lynn Van Middle Koop, St. Marys	\$50.00
Dec. 29 Joe Paul, New Dundee	\$50.00
Dec. 30 Pete & Sam Nyenhuis, Sebringville	\$200.00
Dec. 31 Ron Dunseith & Rob Leyser, St. Pauls	\$50.00
Jan. 01 Declon Small, St. Marys	\$50.00
Jan. 02 Tamara & Chance Hunt, Mitchell	\$50.00
Jan. 03 Scott Savage, Stratford	\$50.00
Jan. 04 Chris & Keith Wiffen, Woodstock	\$50.00
Jan. 05 Margaret Archer, London	\$50.00
Jan. 06 Corrina McKay, Tavistock	\$200.00

**2024 CALENDARS ARE GOING QUICKLY**



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# Alzheimer Society

HURON PERTH



## John and Susan's Story: The Benefits of Getting Involved with the Alzheimer Society

In 2000, John and Susan noticed some changes after visiting John's Mom. Over the next year, John and Susan watched with growing concern as changes in her behaviour and memory became apparent. When "Alzheimer's disease" was suggested, they decided to take action.

John and Susan stopped by the Alzheimer Society in Stratford. "We were welcomed at the office and given all sorts of information, for us and our family. By the time we left, we knew what to watch for, what to expect and what to plan for. We could talk to the doctors about Mom and ask the right questions."

Twenty years later, John and Susan noticed some subtle changes for John. Several appointments later, John and

Susan were not getting a medical answer or help managing these changes. "We knew the Alzheimer Society was the place to go. So, we walked back in the doors in 2020. We were provided support and help to navigate the system. We were connected with geriatrician Dr. Peel who provided us with a diagnosis of Mild Cognitive Impairment."

John and Susan shared, "We took the client education program, Learning the ROPES for Living with Mild Cognitive Impairment right away. So many helpful things that helped us both - memory strategies, always a good exchange of opinions and questions, understanding what was happening and how to best manage. It made all the difference."

John and Susan went on to "take every public education session we could. We just registered ourselves for any topic that looked interesting. This was during the COVID lockdown, so it was all on Zoom. Every educational thing we have attended has been excellent."

The following year, Dr. Peel updated John's diagnosis: Mixed dementia. "We knew from all that we had learned that he was not fitting perfectly into one category. So, a diagnosis of Mixed dementia made sense to us. We felt like we were well-informed and able to engage in meaningful conversations with the Doctor."

Susan shared, "I am not typically 'a joiner'. But I had no one in my immediate circles who understood what I was going through. It took me a bit, but I finally joined a caregiver support group. It was so much more than I hoped for! Sharing was possible

because it was a safeplace, and the other attendees were respectful and willing to share their own experiences and things they have learned. When I recently missed a month, I missed it! I was reminded that attending the support group is something that I need to do for me. I am so glad I finally took her our First Link Counsellor up on the offer."

John joined the Alzheimer Society Ukulele Group. Despite having tendonitis and some pain, he has no plans to quit playing every Tuesday morning! "It's something different, the challenge of playing new music, the group is friendly, and the leadership is really good. It's a change for me. I used to play drums. I was missing music, Uke helped me reconnect with my musical side."

Together, John and Susan joined the Minds in Motion Group. "Getting out once a

week for physical exercise and brain exercise and fun and laughter, it's just so good for both of us. We look forward to it every week."

In terms of the Alzheimer Society services and support, Susan shared, "Everything we get from here has been so good for us. We learned so much. Information makes such a difference to people. You can cope better when you know you're on the right course. I definitely recommend to everyone to get involved."

John adds, "If you need any information about Mild Cognitive Impairment or Alzheimer's disease or any other diagnosis involving brain changes, please connect with the Alzheimer Society team. Everyone is helpful, from the receptionist to the educators to the counsellors and social recreation staff. All the staff here are excellent. So really, please connect. You will be so grateful you did."

Thank you John and Susan for sharing your story.  
\*Names changed for privacy

### 10 warning signs

#### Sign 1 Memory loss that affects day-to-day abilities

It is normal to occasionally forget appointments, colleagues' names or a friend's phone number only to remember them a short while later. However, a person with Alzheimer's disease may forget things more often or may have difficulty recalling information that has recently been learned.

#### Sign 2 Difficulty performing familiar tasks

Busy people can be so distracted from time to time that they may forget to serve part of a meal, only to remember about it later. However, a person with Alzheimer's disease may have trouble completing tasks that have been familiar to them all their lives, such as preparing a meal or playing a game.

#### Sign 3 Problems with language

Anyone can have trouble finding the right word to express what they want to say. However, a person with Alzheimer's disease may forget simple words or may substitute words such that what they are saying is difficult to understand.

#### Sign 4 Disorientation in time and space

It is common to forget the day of the week or ones destination - for a moment. But people with Alzheimer's disease can become lost on their own street, not knowing how they got there or how to get home.

#### Sign 5 Impaired judgment

From time to time, people may make questionable decisions such as putting off seeing a doctor when they are not feeling well. However, a person with Alzheimer's disease may experience changes in judgment or decision-making, such as not recognizing a medical problem that needs attention or wearing heavy clothing on a hot day.

#### Sign 6 Problems with abstract thinking

From time to time, people may have difficulty with tasks that require abstract thinking, such as balancing a chequebook. However, someone with Alzheimer's disease may have significant difficulties with such tasks because of a loss of understanding what numbers are and how they are used.

#### Sign 7 Misplacing things

Anyone can temporarily misplace a wallet or keys. However, a person with Alzheimer's disease may put things in inappropriate places: for example, an iron in the freezer or a wristwatch in the sugar bowl.

#### Sign 8 Changes in mood and behaviour

Anyone can feel sad or moody from time to time. However, someone with Alzheimer's disease can show varied mood swings - from calmness to tears to anger - for no apparent reason.

#### Sign 9 Changes in personality

Personalities can change in subtle ways over time. However, a person with Alzheimer's disease may experience more striking personality changes and can become confused, suspicious or withdrawn. Changes may also include lack of interest, fearfulness or acting out of character.

#### Sign 10 Loss of initiative

It is normal to tire of housework, business activities or social obligations, but most people regain their initiative. However, a person with Alzheimer's disease may become passive and disinterested, and require cues and prompting to become involved.

## Library Talks

Dementia is not a normal part of healthy aging. Although age is the most significant risk factor for most causes of dementia, not everyone will develop it over time. In fact, even at the age of 85 and older, approximately 3 in 4 persons have not been diagnosed with dementia.

Each year, the Public Education Coordinators from the Alzheimer Society Huron Perth travel to local libraries in Huron and Perth Counties to meet with you in your local communities and provide information about dementia, brain health, and a variety of other topics.

### 2024 Awareness Month Library Programs

January 19	11:00 AM	North Perth Public Library
January 19	2:00 PM	West Perth Public Library
January 25	10:00 AM	Perth East Public Library
February 8	6:30 PM	St. Marys Public Library
February 9	2:00 PM	Goderich Public Library
February 15	2:00 PM	Brussels Library Branch

To learn more about dementia, visit [www.alzheimer.ca/huronperth](http://www.alzheimer.ca/huronperth) or stop in at one of the Alzheimer Society Huron Perth offices in Clinton or Stratford. To book a presentation for your group, e-mail [info@alzhp.ca](mailto:info@alzhp.ca) or call 519-271-1910.



**Alzheimer Society**  
HURON PERTH

## EDUCATION HOUR ONLINE

Join us for our FREE one hour virtual education sessions. Dementia Basics, Brain Health... we cover the topics you want to hear about most. Register and start learning online today!

See Calendar → Register here →

**FREE ONE HOUR EDUCATION SESSIONS ON ZOOM**

[www.alzheimer.ca/huronperth](http://www.alzheimer.ca/huronperth)

## Memory & Aging Program™

*What is her name? What did I come down here for? Where did I put....?* The Alzheimer Society Huron Perth has your back! This winter, the Memory and Aging Program will be offered on ZOOM. The Memory and Aging Program is designed for anyone experiencing normal age-related changes in memory or anyone interested in learning more about this topic.

The Memory and Aging Program describes what memory is, how it changes with age, and when to be concerned. Brain healthy lifestyle choices and practical memory strategies are reviewed and practiced, improving your ability to remember those everyday things – *including those pesky names and things you intend to do!* Equally important, the Memory and Aging Program is enjoyable and seeks to build confidence in your own memory ability.

The Memory and Aging Program consists of four weekly sessions, with many opportunities to attend in the upcoming months. There is a fee of \$25, which covers the cost of the program workbook and materials.

**Virtual program on ZOOM** from 1:30 – 3:30 pm on Mondays, January 29, February 5, February 12, and February 19. Register for this program at [www.bit.ly/MAP-Winter24](http://www.bit.ly/MAP-Winter24).


**In-person program at Ritz Villa/West Perth Village in Mitchell** from 9:30 – 11:30 am on Thursdays February 8, February 15, February 29, and March 7. Note: No session on February 22nd. Register for this program by calling 519-271-1910.

**In-person program at Stratford Lakeside Active Adults Association** from 9:30 – 11:30 am on Thursdays March 21, March 28, April 4, and April 11. Register for this program by calling 519-271-1910.

For information about these or other programs, please call the Alzheimer Society Huron Perth: 519-482-1482 | 519-271-1910 or email: [jeanettes@alzhp.ca](mailto:jeanettes@alzhp.ca) | [christyb@alzhp.ca](mailto:christyb@alzhp.ca)

## January is Alzheimer’s Awareness Month

Education sessions are available to help answer your most pressing questions. If you or a family member are living with the impact of Alzheimer’s or dementia, don’t hesitate to reach out. When you have the information you need, you can cope better. Register for the following sessions on the Education Hour page at [www.alzheimer.ca/huronperth](http://www.alzheimer.ca/huronperth).



### Knowledge Changes Everything

Looking for a starting point? A **Dementia Overview**, offered at 10:00 am on January 17, presents an introduction to dementia, what to expect, and where to turn. If you only attend one dementia education sessions, make it this one.

The **Dementia Basics Series** is comprised of four free one-hour sessions designed to answer our most frequently asked questions. These sessions, scheduled for 1:30 and 7:00 pm on Thursdays in February, are equally valuable for families and healthcare professionals.

- February 8** 10 Warning Signs – Should I be Worried?
- February 15** Types of Dementia
- February 22** Brain Changes – 8 As of Dementia
- February 29** Communication Tips

Do you want to learn how to best support someone with Alzheimer’s disease or other dementia and make the most of your time together? **Meaningful Visits** will teach you tips to engage, how to navigate memory changes and confusion, and how to foster connection.

**March 5** Meaningful Visits

**Wednesday January 3**  
10:00 A.M.  
Your Journey of Support Starts Here

**Wednesday January 17**  
10:00 A.M.  
Dementia Overview

**Thursday January 18**  
1:30 P.M.  
Stage of Dementia

**Wednesday January 24**  
10:00 A.M.  
What is MCI?

**Thursday January 25**  
1:30 P.M.  
How is Dementia Diagnosed?

**Thursday February 1**  
1:30 P.M.  
Demystifying Memory Clinics

## Building Dementia Friendly Communities Across Huron and Perth Counties

*“It felt great being able to better explain and support my patient and his wife. And a referral was sent in for ongoing support from the Alzheimer Society.”*  
-paramedic first responder

*“This was a real eye opener for me. Knowing more about dementia, I feel more confident to serve our members even better.”*  
-Credit Union employee

*“I really learned so much and I think our entire church group will benefit and be able to better understand and support folks here. Thanks so much for doing what you do.”*  
-Member of local faith-based group.

These are responses after community members attended dementia education. There is a growing number of organizations who are helping the Alzheimer Society Huron Perth to create Dementia Friendly Communities by engaging in dementia education.

### What is a Dementia Friendly Community?

A Dementia Friendly Community is a place where people living with dementia and their care partners are welcomed, included, and supported.

In Huron and Perth Counties there are over 3300 people living with dementia. By 2030, that number could be close to 5000. Dementia education is crucial.

If you are interested in becoming involved with Dementia Friendly Communities, please reach out about what regularly occurring and free public education sessions are available.

It is a community that pays attention to the social and physical needs of the person living with dementia and the people that support them.

Our communities need to feel confident in supporting family members and friends living with cognitive change.

For more information visit [www.alzheimer.ca/huronperth](http://www.alzheimer.ca/huronperth) Or call 519-482-1482 or 519-271-1910 to book an Educator to come speak to your group.

# Alzheimer Society

HURON PERTH

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Dr. Alexandra Peel, Geriatrician

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- Nutrition • Daily routine

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**1:30 PM**  
**WEDNESDAY**  
**JANUARY 24**



To register: <https://bit.ly/Doc-Talk24>

Call the office at 519-271-1910 or 519-482-1482  
[www.alzheimer.ca/huronperth](http://www.alzheimer.ca/huronperth)

Forward any questions for the Doc to Christy [christyb@alzhp.ca](mailto:christyb@alzhp.ca)

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## Fighting Irish end three-game losing skid

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Times Regional Reporter

There was no shortage of drama as the Stratford Bentley's Fighting Irish returned from the holiday break with a 7-6 win over the Strathroy Jets, scoring the game-winning goal with just 31 seconds left in the game.

The Fighting Irish hosted Strathroy on January 6th in their first game of the new year and despite doubling the Jets in shots in the first period, 14-7, the two teams traded goals and went into the first intermission tied at two. Colin Martin and Cooper Leitch both scored for Stratford. On both Stratford goals, the Jets came back quickly to tie the game, first with a goal one minute and 20 seconds after Martin's, then later with a goal one minute and 19 seconds after Leitch's.

Strathroy took their first lead of the game just 30 seconds into the second but it only lasted for a minute and 45 seconds before Ben Hawerchuk tied the game at three apiece. The quick-strike offence continued with Ray Robbins finding the back of the net just 96 seconds later. Less than two minutes after the Jets brought it back to even, Stratford got another quick response in the form of a Matt Fuller goal. The Jets tied it at 5-5 going into the third period, although once again were heavily out-shot in the period, this time by an 18-8 deficit.

The Jets continued to defy the shot clock which read 22-12 in the final



(FRED GONDER PHOTO)

### PUCK SNEAKS THROUGH

Ray Robbins #9 chips this puck past goaltender Derek Malcolm #33 to put the Irish up 4-3.



20 minutes and grabbed a 6-5 lead less than four minutes into the third. Right before the half-way point of the period, Cameron Stokes tied the game for Stratford and the game appeared destined for overtime. That was, until, a late powerplay for the Fighting Irish saw Dylan Buchholz deflect a point shot with half a minute remaining in regulation that

held up as the heroic game-winner.

With the win, the Fighting Irish sit one point ahead of Tilbury for fourth in the WOSHL. They are one point behind the third-placed Jets and four points back of the top spot, currently occupied by the Petrolia Squires.

Before the new year, the Fighting Irish rounded out 2023 with games against the Delhi Flames on Dec. 23 before hosting the Woodstock Lakers on Dec. 29. Against the Flames, a four-goal second period lifted Stratford to a 6-3 win. Stokes had two goals and two assists while Robbins had a goal and three helpers and Graham Brulotte scored twice in a three-point effort. Matt Henderson posted three assists. Darren Smith earned the win in between the

pipes, making 46 saves on 49 Delhi shots.

Against the Lakers, the Fighting Irish once again scored four times in the second frame but this time, failed to secure the victory. Their four straight goals in the second erased a 3-0 Woodstock lead created in the first. In the third, with the game tied at five, it was the Fighting Irish who took a late-game penalty that resulted in a powerplay marker by the Lakers that went down as the eventual game-winner. Stratford lost by a score of 6-5 despite outshooting the Lakers 41-25.

Stratford is looking to avenge that loss when they visit the Lakers on Saturday, January 13. The Fighting Irish then go to Alvinston on January 19 to take on the Killer Bees.

### GOJHL STANDINGS

#### Midwestern Conference

(Standings through January 7, 2024)

	GP	W	L	OTL	T	PTS
Listowel Cyclones	32	23	7	1	1	48
Elmira Sugar Kings	34	23	9	0	2	48
KW Siskins	32	20	8	1	3	44
<b>Stratford Warriors</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>43</b>
Cambridge Redhawks	33	17	13	3	0	37
Ayr Centennials	33	17	15	1	0	35
Brantford Bandits	34	6	27	1	0	13
Caledon Bombers	35	4	30	0	1	9

### WOSHL STANDINGS

(Standings through January 7, 2024)

	GP	W	L	OTL	T	PTS
Petrolia Squires	18	13	5	0	0	26
Tillsonburg Thunder	15	12	3	0	1	25
Strathroy Jets	20	11	9	0	1	23
<b>Stratford Fighting Irish</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>22</b>
Tilbury Bluebirds	17	10	7	0	1	21
Alvinston Killer Bees	15	9	6	0	1	19
Woodstock Lakers	17	9	8	0	0	18
Elora Rocks	17	8	9	0	2	18
Dunnville Aeros	19	6	13	0	3	15
Delhi Flames	16	6	10	0	1	13
Orangeville Blitz	19	1	18	0	0	2



# Warriors' strong showing goes unrewarded in first game back

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Times Regional Reporter

The back half of the season began with a potential playoff preview for the Stratford Hunter Steel Warriors last Friday when they took on the Cambridge Redhawks in their first game back from the holiday break. Despite what Head Coach Dave Williams saw as a net-positive performance by his squad, the Redhawks left Stratford with a 5-2 win that included two last-minute empty-netters.

"I was really pleasantly surprised," Williams told the Times about his team's lack of rust last Friday. "As a staff, we were all really happy seeing how the guys came out and started that game and they deserve full marks for the start. I felt like it was a period where we should have come out of it with a 3-0 or a 3-1 lead. It just shows the ebbs and flows of the game where I thought we were so good in the first and deserved to have a lead but less than a minute into the second period, we're actually down by a goal."

Carson Harmer opened the scoring just under halfway through the first period on the powerplay, his 18th of the season assisted by Jaxon Broda and Drew Agnew. However, despite being outshot 14-6 in the first 20 minutes, with 33 seconds left in the period, Jack Martin scored an unassisted goal for Cambridge to tie it at one apiece. Redhawks goaltender Leland Gill held Cambridge in the game, making 13 saves in the first period.

Matt Fries netted a go-ahead tally merely 17 seconds into the second to put the Redhawks ahead 2-1. The Redhawks outshot Stratford 14-8 thanks in large part to a trio of penalties taken by the Warriors.

"Giving up a goal late in the first and another early in the second took some momentum away from our group," Williams noted. "We also played short-handed for six minutes in the second. Those are hard minutes and it can be quite difficult to play in those situations. I think it's even more taxing on your group when you've had that extended layoff."

Before the end of the second, Camden Daigle scored his 14th of the campaign, tying the game at 2-2 heading into the third. The goal put Daigle one point away from a major milestone as the hometown forward now sits at 149 career points.

In the final period, a quick chance off of a faceoff deep in Stratford's end by Cambridge's Cameron Fries found the

back of the net. The goal held up as the game-winner with the Redhawks hitting the empty net twice in the final minute.

Williams saw several positives in the game but admitted what ultimately made the difference between winning and losing were details in Stratford's game not being executed well enough.

"As a coaching staff, you're always looking for those positives within the game. It's easy to get caught up on the results and have that influence you, sometimes positively or negatively, in regard to how you played. We complimented the guys after the first period and even after the game we felt we did a lot of positive things."

"Their first goal; I think we needed to do a better job managing the puck," added Williams. "On the game-winner, we had a bit of a misread off of a faceoff that Cambridge capitalized on. I think it was less about what Cambridge did and a little bit more about our details not being where they need to be."

The game marked the debut of two new Warriors, forward Bryce Grandbois and defenceman Kaeden Burger, acquired in sep-

arate trades last week. Grandbois, a six-foot-five native of Detroit, Mich., was brought in from the OJHL's Niagara Falls

Canucks, while Burger was acquired from Midwest rival, the Kitchener-Waterloo Siskins.

"Bryce is a big body that I think can provide some good, heavy minutes for us and contribute physically. We also hope he can provide some depth scoring. I think we need to find more scoring from different sticks and not just our top-six guys. I liked how physical Bryce was on Friday and as he gets more accustomed to how we're trying to play, I think he will have an even more positive impact."

"Kaeden is a guy we had to camp a few years ago so we were a bit more familiar with his game. He is also pretty familiar with our group. He's got personal relationships with some of the guys on our team. We're looking for him to be a steady, two-

way defenceman for us – a guy that can defend hard and get pucks up the ice and out of our zone."

With the season entering the home-stretch, Williams mentioned several focuses for his group ahead of the playoffs.

"We want to try to find as much consistency as we can in all facets of our game but especially five-on-five. I think we need to find a way to generate more offence when we're playing at even strength. There are moments when we are really good territorially in the offensive zone but we have to find a way to get rewarded more often."

"You need really good special teams," Williams continued. "You need the powerplay and penalty kill to be impactful every night. Those two areas can win you games sometimes when you don't necessarily deserve it five-on-five. Lastly, we're continuing to focus on being better and more consistent defensively as a group. Scoring goals is a hard thing to do so if the details and the effort are where we need them to be, we'll be more consistent defensively. On those nights when we do have challenges scoring, maybe we don't have to score as many to be successful."



## STRATFORD FIGHTING IRISH

### 2023-24 Player Statistics

(through January 7, 2024)

PLAYER	POS	GP	G	A	PTS
Graham Brulotte	F	13	7	14	21
Ray Robbins	F	13	10	10	20
Matt Henderson	D	16	4	13	17
Sean O'Brien	F	10	3	13	16
Warren Gorman	F	14	4	13	17
Cooper Leitch	F	15	6	8	14
Cameron Stokes	F	10	6	8	14
Dylan Buckholz	F	16	6	7	13
Matt Fuller	D	15	3	10	13
Ryan O'Bonsawin	D	13	5	6	11
Ben Hawerchuk	F	4	6	5	11
Justin Murray	D	8	4	5	9
Matt Granger	D	15	2	4	6
Riley Coome	D	13	3	3	6
Mav Petrie	F	16	2	3	5
Brody Smith	F	14	3	2	5
Colin Martin	F	17	2	2	4
Spencer Mills	F	12	1	3	4
Sebastien Nogueira	F	17	0	3	3
Steven DeGroot	F	8	1	2	3
Zachery Tierney	D	3	1	2	3
Michael Finlay	D	9	1	1	2
Calvin Thomson	D	6	0	2	2
Michael Blue	D	3	0	1	1
Curtis Nogueira	F	11	0	1	1
Mason Goldie	F	1	1	0	1
Mckenzie MacQueen	F	1	0	0	0
Matt Martin	D	2	0	0	0

PLAYER	RECORD	GAA	SV%
Darren Smith	4-2-0	4.00	.898
Zach Weir	6-4-0	3.36	.899

## STRATFORD WARRIORS

### 2023-24 Player Statistics

(through January 7, 2024)

PLAYER	POS	GP	G	A	PTS
Carson Harmer	F	31	18	22	40
Braydon Stumpf	F	33	8	32	40
Michael Denney	F	33	25	14	39
Camden Daigle	F	33	14	23	37
Cole Lewis	F	33	14	18	32
Jaxon Broda	D	30	7	16	23
Joey Brehmer	F	33	9	12	21
Casey Bridgewater	D	26	5	13	18
Drew Agnew	F	31	5	10	15
Haden Frayne	D	29	2	11	13
Dylan Dundas	F	26	4	4	8
Jacob Wiseman	D	24	2	5	7
Kaeden Burger	D	24	1	6	7
Liam Gorman	F	28	3	2	5
Rhyse Brown	F	21	2	3	5
Wyatt Adkins	D	16	0	5	5
Tristian Huinink	F	16	3	1	4
Zach Bell	F	26	3	1	4
Evan Hjelholt	D	26	0	4	4
Owen England	D	26	1	2	3
Zachary Schooley	F	27	1	2	3
Stuart Sinclair	F	9	1	1	2
Cole Brooks	D	21	0	2	2

PLAYER	RECORD	GAA	SV%
Matthew Perdue	13-10-1-0	3.23	.907



## STRATFORD Hunter Steel WARRIORS

### UPCOMING GAMES

Friday, January 12 - 7:30pm  
vs Brantford - Allman Arena

Sunday, January 14 - 1:30pm  
at Kitchener-Waterloo - Waterloo Memorial Recreation Complex

Thursday, January 18 - 7:30pm  
at Ayr - North Dumfries Community Complex

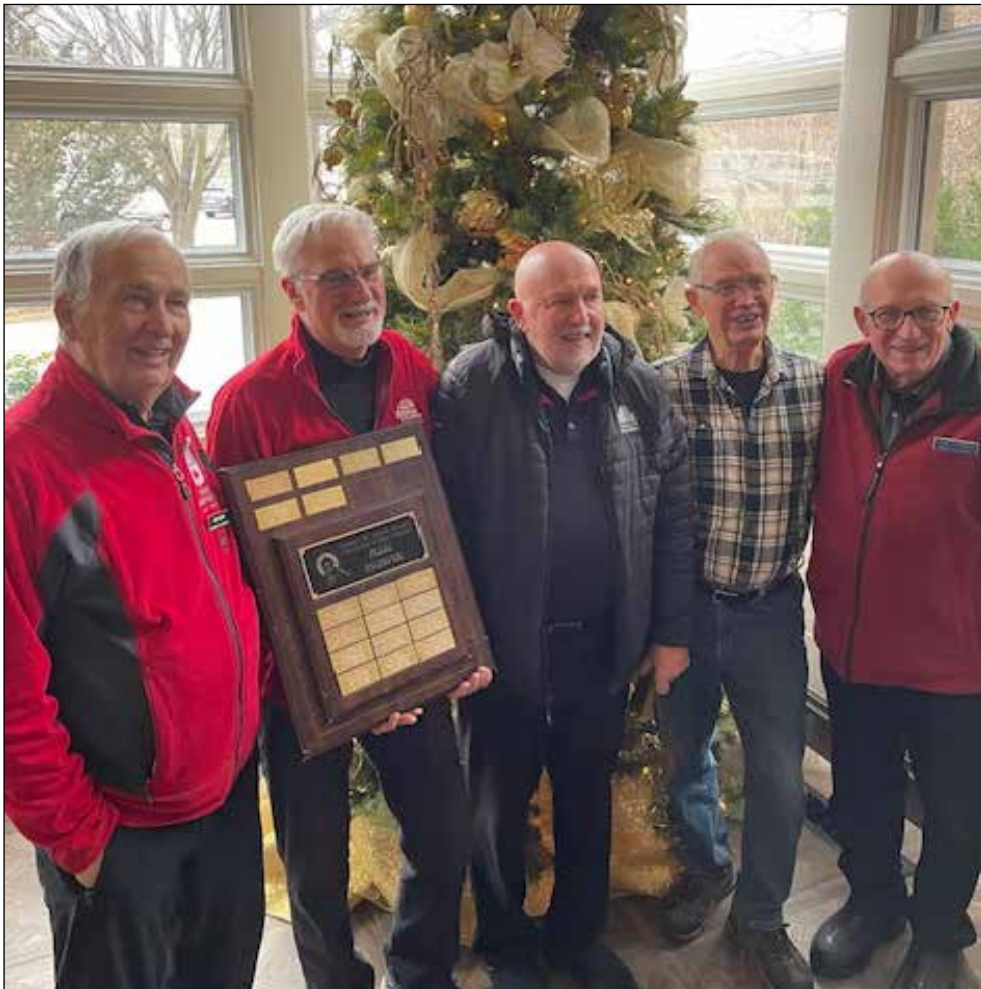
Friday, January 19 - 7:30pm  
vs Caledon - Allman Arena

Sunday, January 21 - 1:30pm  
at Listowel - Steve Kerr Memorial Complex

Friday, January 26 - 8pm  
at Caledon - Mayfield Recreation Complex

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**ANNUAL CHRISTMAS MINISPIEL CHAMPIONS** (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Annual Christmas Minispiel Champions an annual fun filled morning competition with two - 6 end games followed by a traditional Christmas luncheon. The winning team pictured from l to r - Bob Pilon, Skip Mark Romph, Julian Piwowarski, Cam Fraser, John Patterson

# Special Olympics Ontario Stratford and Area's Curling Team wins A division of SouthWest Tankard Qualifier

**EMILY STEWART**

*Times Correspondent*

Special Olympics Ontario Stratford and Area's curling team cinched first place in the A division of the SouthWest Tankard and will be moving on to compete in the CurlON Special Olympics Ontario A Division Provincial Final.

Jane Larkworthy, coach and community coordinator of the Stratford and Area chapter of Special Olympics Ontario told the Stratford Times that the team won their division of the South-West Tankard on Jan. 7 in Tillsonburg. There were eight teams divided into A and B divisions with Stratford competing against Barrie, Brantford and Kincardine (Brodhagen). Stratford beat Brantford 5-4, Barrie 5-1 and Kincardine 4-2. Lead Meghan O'Donovan was absent from the games due to a family illness.

The Special Olympics Ontario Strat-

ford and Area Curling Team advances to the Provincial Finals during the 2024 Milk Every Moment Scotties and Tankard Women's and Men's Provincial Curling Championships. The Ingersoll Curling Club will be hosting the event on Jan. 27 at the FlightExec Centre in Dorchester. Stratford will be competing against Milton.



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STRATFORD KIA



# Our Buildings Tell a Story

## The Nut Club

The Nut Club at 96-100 Downie Street was originally the Victoria House Hotel which was built in 1867. It was deliberately situated near the railway when it was built for the Honourable Donald McDonald who had earlier been the Canada Company surveyor who laid out the plan for Stratford and who sold the land to the town that would become the site of the first town hall and our present city hall. From 1881-1884, the site was operated by John O'Donoghue, who would later become Mayor of Stratford (1897-1898) and who laid the original cornerstone for the current city hall.

The Nut Club seen here in the Stratford-Perth Archives photo from 1973 was first a business at 24 and then 26 Brunswick Street after the second world war, run by brothers Leonard and Harry Whittemore. In 1951, they moved The Nut Club to Downie Street directly across from the Avon Theatre and in the next year, 1952, it was purchased by Kae and Nick Waterman who came to Stratford from Toronto where they had

operated a variety store.

That was to be the home of The Nut Club for the next 26 years. When the building was sold in 1975, The Nut Club remained, but soon moved in 1978 to a location on Brunswick Street. Three years after buying The Nut Club, the Watermans put in a lunch counter with 10 stools and that was the

beginning of the dual nature of their business. Both sides of the operation grew, with the Watermans expanding the coffee shop and both wholesaling and retailing candy.

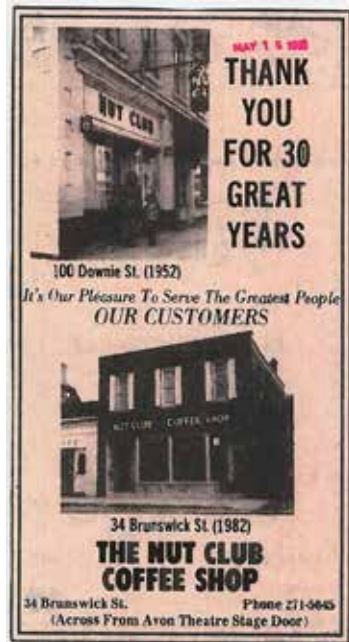
Even after Mr. Waterman died in 1967, Mrs. Waterman continued the tradition, only dropping the candy-making part of the business when she changed location in 1978.

In the meantime, the Watermans became involved in another business venture, the operation of Stratford's first steak house. It was called the Tall T Steak House and opened on Ontario Street in 1960. In 1970, Mrs. Waterman sold it and it became the Ali Baba Steakhouse. Sources: Stratford-Perth Archives;

The two storey brick building reflects the Georgian, Gothic and Italianate architectural styles. It has the balance, symmetry and formality of the Georgian Revival style of architecture but a Gothic gable and Italianate brackets add ornamental details. These styles were



The Nut Club circa 1973.



An ad for the Nut Club Coffee Shop circa 1982.

gaining popularity at the time of its construction in 1867. Canadian Historic Places

For more on Stratford's built history, visit [www.streetsofstratford.ca](http://www.streetsofstratford.ca).

Contributors: Paul Wilker and Gord Conroy [www.streetsofstratford.ca](http://www.streetsofstratford.ca)



(STRATFORD-PERTH ARCHIVES PHOTOS)

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**The Stratford Branch 8 Veterans Service Officer William Rothernel, with the support of Veterans Affairs Canada continues to serve the needs of all Canadian Veterans in need of assistance or advice on all service-related situations.**

**Call our Branch office at 519-271-4540 to speak to Bill.**

**804-B Ontario St., Stratford N5A 3K1**  
**[stratfordlegion008@gmail.com](mailto:stratfordlegion008@gmail.com)**

# Avondale United welcomes 2SLGBTQIA+ community conversations

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Avondale United Church invites members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and allies to their space for conversations about lived experiences and how to offer support.

The church's affirming team is working with the Stratford Pride Community Centre (SPCC) and PFLAG's Stratford chapter to host Community Conversations on Jan. 10 and Jan. 17. The first event will be in-person at Avondale United Church and a separate online event will follow a week later. Both events run from 7 to 9 p.m.

"The purpose of it is to help the community at large have a conversation and dispel any misconceptions, but also to have real, honest, conversations about the 2SLGBTQ experience," Heather McDowell, executive director of the Stratford Pride Community Centre, said.

The Community Conversations follow

the results of the SPCC's Needs Assessments Survey conducted in fall 2023. The survey found that 2SLGBTQIA+ youth between the ages of 11 to 18, followed by ages 19 to 24, needed the most support. Allies also indicated in the survey that parents of 2SLGBTQIA+ children needed to be directed to resources. Trans people were also in need of support, the survey found.

"One, we as an organization have a responsibility for the call of the community," McDowell said. "Two, philosophically, I wholeheartedly believe this is an opportunity for the general public to build their capacity and build their knowledge."

The events will feature de-personalized stories from members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, meaning no names or other identifiers will be revealed. Each event will feature a panel sharing their own stories, including SPCC chair Brock Hart. Rev. Keith Reynolds will moderate the Jan. 10 event and Mc-

Dowell will moderate the Jan. 17 event.

There will also be information about public health and mental health support services, along with 2SLGBTQIA+-friendly and affirming organizations. Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma and South Perth Deputy Mayor Sue Orr will attend the in-person event.

The online event gives interested participants a chance to attend if they wish to have more anonymity, or in the case of inclement weather or socio-economic reasons that prevent attendance.

"We're trying to make sure the information is as accessible as possible," McDowell said.

Aleah Graff, community engagement coordinator of Avondale United Church, said the event was created after meeting with McDowell and chatting about Avondale's work as an affirming church – meaning those of all abilities, genders, sexualities, ethnicities, ages, mental and physical health, and economic backgrounds are

welcome. She is looking forward to the Community Conversations providing education and the church welcoming more people.

"If one or two people can go away from this event feeling like they have more education and more ways to support themselves or those they love, then this will be a successful experience," Graff said.

No other Community Conversations events are scheduled so far, but Graff is open to future discussions.

"As community engagement coordinator," she said. "Once I'm in partnership with an organization for the church and I have a good experience working with them, I'm always open to explore new opportunities in the future."

Registration for the in-person event runs until January 8 and the online event will run registration until January 15. Anyone interested can register by sending an email to [eventsavondale@wightman.ca](mailto:eventsavondale@wightman.ca).

## Five Week youth program offered for 2SLGBTQI+ Youth at the Stratford Pride Community

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The results of a recent needs assessment conducted by the Stratford Pride Community Centre (SPCC) show there is a significant gap in the services specifically geared to local 2SLGBTQI+ youth.

SPCC executive director Health McDowell told the Stratford Times that the results of community centre's recent needs assessment survey indicates that local youth between the ages of 11 and 25 are most in need.

"Obviously this was on our radar and we wanted to do something about it," McDowell said.

"We not only want to be inclusive for the 2SLGBTQI+ community, but more age-inclusive as well. We're trying to make sure that everybody who's in the larger community under the rainbow feels like this is a place of belonging, and that includes everyone of all ages."

Because of this, the SPCC is hosting a five-week youth night with support from United Way's Youth Action Grant starting on Jan. 30.

Run by two local youths, Ollie Roy and Dylan Corbett, the program is meant to help connect local youth who fall anywhere under the 2SLGBTQI+ umbrella.

The Youth Program, formally named the Generation Rainbow Collective, will host evenings starting at 5:30 p.m., where youth can sign up or drop in to enjoy dinner and activities with fellow 2SLGBTQI+ community members.

Each night will offer those in attendance a different dinner and event. The first is the McDND night, where youth will enjoy McDonald's and play Dungeons and Dragons together.



(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

### STUDENT LEAD PROGRAM

Event organizers, Ollie Roy (he/they) and Dylan Corbett (she/her) are preparing for a five-week program geared towards LGBTQ2S+ youth hosted at the Stratford Perth Community Centre starting this month.

The second night is Pasta and Picasso where attendees will dine on pasta, which Fellini graciously donated, and enjoy an evening of painting on small canvas together.

Week three will be the Love Pizza and Love Simon night. Youth will have all-you-can-eat pizza and then dine on popcorn, snow cones and cotton candy while enjoying the 2SLGBTQI+ movie, Love Simon.

Thai and Teamwork is held the following week, where Stratford Mone-Thai has donated food, and participants will play a

version of an escape room game in partnership with the Stratford Public Library.

The last night will be the 'Sandwiches and Showbiz night,' where attendees will dine on sandwiches donated by Sirkel Foods and participate in Improve Circle together.

Although the program was born from the Need Assessment Survey, Roy notes that this is more than just a connection.

"Knowing that I'm part of the LGBTQ community is really important to me, and that made me want to involve myself in (the Generation Rainbow Collective) so

I can get out and meet more people like me," they said. "Seeing more representation is number one, and more acceptance in the community is important to me."

"I think SPCC events are directed towards adults," added Corbett. "The LGBTQ youth are looking for something to do and I want to help with that."

The SPCC aims to offer inclusive events for all ages, including youth and newcomers to Canada, in 2024. McDowell says she believes that with the right community connections, the SPCC can be a welcoming space for everyone who fits somewhere under the 2SLGBTQI+ umbrella.

"The big, wonderful, lovely goal at the end of 2024 would be that representation is just a foregone conclusion and that there's space in this in our community for everybody," McDowell said.

If you or someone you know would like to register for the Generation Rainbow Collective 5-week events, please visit <https://forms.gle/LJRqYN2uSfzY8nFL9>. Although drop-in attendance is welcome, pre-registration is recommended.



# Art in the Park Stratford opens call for artists

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

Art in the Park Stratford is once again calling for new artists for its upcoming season with hopes that an additional 20 artists can be added to its roster.

Applications are open from Jan 1 to March 15 and can be made online.

"We had 64 members last year and dropped down to 48 re-signed members on the books. The online application is available right now through [artinthepark.ca](http://artinthepark.ca) and any applications that come in will be processed," said Bev Hewitt, Art in the Park juror convenor.

The exhibition takes place from mid-May through September and is a major part of the cultural landscape in the city. Membership offers artists access to not only the local market, but also the interna-

tional visitors Stratford attracts.

Application criteria is strict and can be found in detail on their website [artintheparkstratford.ca](http://artintheparkstratford.ca). With each application the artist is required to submit six images representing their work in one of their chosen categories. Acceptable categories are clay, wood, leather/fabric art, photography, sculpture/carving/collage, glass, jewellery, painting/printmaking, and digital art (no AI). There are participation limits for each category and for the 2024 season, both wood and jewellery categories are full.

"There is a requirement that you can only have 10 per cent of membership in a category. So, for example, if there's 60 members, you can only have six in a group. However, that doesn't always work. We don't have anyone in pottery, but we have six in jewellery, so that's full, but

painting is unlimited," explained Hewitt.

Once completed applications with required payment are received, Hewitt will take each photo and create an anonymous file with the artist bio for the jurors to judge based on specific criteria. This way each image is judged on its own merit without knowing the name of the artist. The volunteer jurors are also anonymous to all involved with the exception of the convenor.

Successful candidates can expect to hear back early springtime and from there they will be included in Art in the Park Stratford's website and social media marketing. Each artist must commit to appearing at the exhibition a minimum of ten times during the season. There are just over 50 show days in the season.

"The executive will sign you in and sign you out. You have to be setup by 10 a.m.

and take down at 5 p.m. You can't pack up in the afternoon because it is slow," said Hewitt.

Once a member of Art in the Park Stratford, artists are automatically included in subsequent seasons as long as their membership status is current according to membership requirements. The jury process only applies to new artists.

Those that were unsuccessful and have been turned down will receive a helpful critique explaining why their work was denied, how it could be improved and sometimes they will be encouraged to try again after further development of their art.

"We don't want to reject them outright, we want to work with them. I have six applications already which is pretty good given we only opened the call Jan. 1," said Hewitt.

# Stratford Winter Film Festival announces film lineup

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

The inaugural lineup of the Stratford Winter Film Festival (SWFF) has been announced and promises to bring light to an otherwise dark time in February.

There are nine films, five venues, one pass to access it all. The event takes place Friday Feb 9 to Feb 11. Event space includes Grayson Mills, first and second floor, Factory 163, Revival House and Avondale Church. Little Prince Micro-Cinema will be doing some adjacent, "secret" stuff.

"We are planning something that we are keeping quiet, but it is something that is extremely interesting adjacent to our core film theatres that is on top of SWFF, so off-SWFF, kind of like off-Broadway," teased Craig Sangster, SWFF co-founder.

The films featured were curated collaboratively through sending out letters to people that have been helpful in the creation of the event, with great response.

"We sent a letter and said we are curating the films now and each film fits in the category of food, music or history; you tell us what would be super interesting for this festival in our inaugural year. We got all these responses back so part of what you'll see is derived from that. There's also things we thought were interesting and other people suggested," said Sangster.

They wanted a mix that was interesting enough but not what would be consumed on a regular basis. Some old, some new, but nothing too esoteric. Based on the theme of food, music and history, there is something for every taste and style.

"This is really about community, and getting out of our house, and something to do collectively," said Bruce MacInnis, SWFF co-founder.

"We think our films are super interesting, we've had a super response. Here's a lovely collection built by people who really care about the experience. It's the whole experience thing," adds Sangster.

The themes have been developed using both documentary style and feature films. They are intended to encompass things that everyone cares about. What they thought made sense for the festival is having very universal, not exclusionary, appeal.

In the music category, the organizers bring 'Mr. Jimmy', '32 Sounds' and 'Have you got it yet'

"These films have just been released, so for our first outing to have these, we have done well. They have been shortlisted (for awards)," said Lesley Marsh, third of the trio of co-founders. "We're really excited. We have a bit of a vibe to have something sort of exclusive."

In the food category is 'The Truffle Hunters', 'Otto-lenghi and the Cakes of Versailles' and 'Percy'. In the

history category is 'All is true', 'The Last Vermeer' and 'The End of Time.' Previews of each of the films can be viewed at [stratfordwinterfilmfestival.ca](http://stratfordwinterfilmfestival.ca).

There will be intentional collaborations within local business relating to each of the films that will hopefully drive audience members into accommodations, restaurants and coffee shops while attending the festival. For example, Revival House will continue to serve while the festival is ongoing and through introductions to films, local opportunity to cross-promote will be enjoyed.

Passes are available for \$99 each and are valid for all nine films. They are available online at [stratfordwinterfilmfestival.ca](http://stratfordwinterfilmfestival.ca) and offers the choice of six different itineraries. Festival goers are encouraged to visit the site.

Volunteers are also sought for the event. They are actively seeking ten or twelve more volunteers to act as ushers, merch table, and greeters, for example. Those interested can contact [info@stratfordwinterfilmfestival.ca](mailto:info@stratfordwinterfilmfestival.ca).



(LESLIE MARSH PHOTO)

(L-R) Leslie Marsh, Craig Sangster and Bruce MacInnis are the trio bringing the new Stratford Winter Film Festival to Stratford.



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### PARTNER ANNOUNCEMENTS

Monteith Ritsma Phillips Professional Corporation is pleased to announce that Catherine McCorquodale and James Burns have each joined the partnership effective January 1, 2024.

Cate's practice will continue to focus on the areas of family law, real estate, wills and estates, and farm succession planning. James' practice will continue to focus on the areas of corporate and commercial law, real estate, and wills and estates.

We look forward to continuing to provide legal services to the communities of Southwestern Ontario through our partners and associates: Kathryn Ritsma, J. Andrew Phillips, Matthew Orchard, Ryan Bagnell, Cate McCorquodale, James Burns, Lori Millian, and Michelle Jowett.



Cate McCorquodale



James Burns

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## Little Prince Micro-Cinema to open second location

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

The world's smallest cinema will open a second home in Cambridge.

Stratford's Little Prince Micro-Cinema, which can seat up to 12 people, announced through social media on Dec. 9, 2023 that the second location will be part of the Gaslight District public square in Cambridge.

Leigh Cooney, founder of Little Prince Micro-Cinema, said he is both nervous and excited to open a new location.

"It feels right, organic and a natural next step," he said. "As well as that, we've received so much positive feedback from guests that we can't wait to be given the opportunity to bring this experience to a whole new audience. The challenge comes from being such a small business with so few staff. It's a lot to juggle and it's impossible to know with any certainty how things will go."

The decision to open a second location comes after demand soared.

"I always use the analogy that the Little Prince is like a restaurant with one table," Cooney explained. "We get a call and someone wants to schedule all twelve seats for, say, Saturday at 7:30 p.m., and that's it, we're booked solid. The next person who calls has to be turned away. The result is that we're often booked for months in advance,

which doesn't allow for any kind of spontaneity."

Before meeting the co-founders of the Gaslight District, Cooney was looking at other small towns. When he saw the space for himself, it was the best fit for the micro-cinema.

"I went to visit the newly established Gaslight District and was awestruck by what has been established there," he said. "A truly community oriented creative project that felt like it had always belonged. It is like a community within a community."

With 13 seats, one more seat than the original location, the Cambridge Little Prince location will be the world's second-smallest cinema.

"We didn't want to compete with ourselves for the Guinness Record," Cooney said.

He added that the Little Prince brings a unique experience to the community that can't be found online.

"Yes, you can Netflix and chill, and there are times where that's exactly what we need, but, perhaps just as often, we need an excuse to get out into our communities, to find a shared intimate experience that we can bond over in a place where everyone truly knows your name," Cooney said.

Visit [facebook.com/thelittleprincecinema](https://facebook.com/thelittleprincecinema) or [instagram.com/thelittleprincecinema](https://instagram.com/thelittleprincecinema) for updates.

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# Celebrate the Magic of Love with Our Little Band at Fundraiser Gala

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

By Lisa Chester

Local classic jazz and pop enthusiasts and supporters of the Stratford Concert Choir (SCC) will have the opportunity to celebrate the Magic of Love at the SCC's annual fundraiser gala next month.

The Stratford Concert Choir's (SCC) annual fundraiser gala is set to take place Feb. 10 at Arden Park Hotel and will feature dinner and a silent auction with an evening of outstanding entertainment by Tim Elliott and his quintet, Our Little Band.

"We were brainstorming ideas about entertainment for our gala, and we'd been getting rave reviews about Our Little Band," said organizer Lynda McGregor. "Tim Elliott started the band, and we knew him

well because he hosted our fundraiser last year. His group seemed like the perfect fit for us."

Elliott will be known to the St James Anglican Church congregation as the inspiration behind the introduction of Jazz Vespers several years ago. He is also an avid volunteer of non-profits such as The Local.

For now, however, he's a pianist and with his band will get toes tapping and hearts thumping with the wonderful stylings of classic jazz and pop music from the 1930s, 40s and 50s. The band first came together in 2019 and is made up of Elliott on piano, Dan Crocco on saxophone, Steve MacDougall on bass, Tim Adair on drums and Dave Manning on trumpet. Accompanying vocals are by Beverly Maranger.

Our Little Band has been making a name for itself around town through live perfor-

mances at the Kiwanis Band Shell at Upper Queens Park, fundraising for local organizations like L'Arche and SCC and by performing regularly at McCarthy place.

"The look on people's faces and the toes tapping and the energy of having people listen to you because music is made and music is received and you need both. When we play live you can see in their eyes and see the connection, especially with Beverly singing. When we play at the band shell, people are up dancing," Elliott said.

Looking forward to the gala, Elliott is the emcee as well as the band leader and is keen to perform for other musicians, namely the members of the SCC. The calibre of the audience will challenge them to bring a level of excellence.

"The Stratford Concert Choir is a great group of musicians, highly committed to

choral singing and dedicated to excellence. So, when you are in a venue like that with musicians, you want to do your best and you know they are going to appreciate it," said Elliott.

He is also looking forward to the silent auction. It is an amazing opportunity to get up, chat with others, monitor bids and be a part of the experience. It brings a lot of energy to the room.

"We will be performing two sets and people can check the silent auction in between and visit with each other. It's just a great evening and a wonderful way to get together," said Elliott.

Tickets to The Magic of Love fundraising gala can be purchased online at stratfordconcertchoir.org or at Blowes for \$65 apiece. Dinner is included in this price and doors open at 5:30 p.m.

## Grant Haven gets back into Farms

STEWART GRANT

Publisher

Last week, Grant Haven Media got back to its roots in completing a transaction that brought two farm publications into the fold.

Effective Jan. 2, 2024, we acquired Norfolk Farms and Brant Farms, two newspapers that were founded by David Douglas of Waterford, Ontario. Mr. Douglas will remain with the newspapers for the next year as he plans for retirement and brings with him considerable knowledge and expertise that our team plans to soak up in the months ahead.

With the Norfolk and Brant publications, which are published quarterly and semi-annually respectively, we now have the beginning of a "farm division" within Grant Haven which I anticipate will grow and ultimately result in improved farm coverage locally here in the Stratford area.

One of the initiatives that we are considering is a special Farm section of the Stratford Times which would come out in March. Within this section, we'd like to focus on local stories of interest, including family farm



features and trends and innovations within the agriculture sector here in Perth County. If you have ideas or nominations for interesting content in this edition, please reach out to me at [stew@granthaven.com](mailto:stew@granthaven.com) or call our office at 519-284-0041.

As I alluded to above, farming is where the name "Grant Haven" originated. Ironically, it was 81 years ago to the day, on Jan. 2, 1943, that my grandparents, Earl and Margaret Grant, bought their own farm near the Trafalgar Bridge in Fullarton Township. My grandfather told me that it was by good fortune that they had met a man by the name of Billy Nairn who agreed to give them a private mortgage (\$5,000 for the farm at 4 per cent interest) to allow them to buy the property that would become Grant Haven Farms.

My parents, Murray and June Grant, succeeded them as second-generation owners of Grant Haven Farms, which was honoured as a Master Breeder by Holstein Canada in the early 1990's.

While I didn't have the skillset or desire to continue the family tradition of farming, it does give me some pride and enthusiasm to see that Grant Haven will again have an association with the farming community.

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## Web-crawling in a Climate Alphabet Soup



SHEILA CLARKE

*Times Freelance Columnist*

Climate Alphabet soup indeed! Join the ranks if you're a bit confused after COP 28 with new and different terms flying every which way. They might have you spinning- and spin might be involved. We've heard of advertisements that use "spin", defined by Webster's Dictionary as a special point of view presented to influence opinion. Spin is sometimes a major problem in Social Media (One of my favourite lines is "Interesting! What's your source?")

As industries and governments try to resolve economic arguments with soaring greenhouse gases and global warming, it's not just a question of listening to the science and acting accordingly. We began recognizing the web of life that we're "web-crawling" and trying to preserve the connections between life forms. Now that money is a large part of the discussion, it has become a public relations battle that depends, in part, on what words you use to talk about the issues. Let's look at a few of the terms that you may hear:

**Mitigation:** Mitigation is pretty straightforward. It means to reduce harm from an

undesirable event. In climate terms, mitigation means stopping the causes of the climate emergency- fossil fuel carbon emissions. They have been accumulating in the atmosphere and not allowing heat to escape (greenhouse gases). Mitigation could mean finding other energy sources, such as solar panels or alternate forms of transportation such as public transportation (trains and buses) to minimize the fossil fuel we need. Stratford has engaged in mitigation by hiring a Climate Change Programs Manager, Sadaf Ghalib, to recommend ways for us to lower our fossil fuel use.

**Adaptation:** Adaptation is the process of changing to meet different conditions. In climate terms, adaptations means finding ways to adapt to changing conditions brought about by the climate crisis. Some of the changes recommended might be attempts to find ways to live with increased heat, limited water resources, forest fires, air pollution and food security. Agricultural methods that enhance soil health and increase green cover and hedgerows are examples. Any planting of native trees, shrubs and perennials will not only help other species at risk because of diminishing habitat and retain soil water, but will also act as carbon sinks, to take carbon out of the air. Stratford engaged in adaptation by upgrading its storm water systems, to accommodate increased severe rainstorms that come with climate change.

**Carbon Sinks:** -an interesting one that is sometimes the object of "spin." A carbon sink is anything, natural or otherwise, that accumulates and stores carbon from the atmosphere.

Natural carbon sinks have been an important part of the carbon cycle in our atmosphere: the ocean (carbon as a dissolved gas or sediment on the ocean floor), forests and soil (through plants).

**Carbon Capture:** -a term used to describe capture of fossil fuel emissions at points of production, and to store the carbon in a facility safe from escape into the environment. This is a CCS- Carbon Capture System. Another term is CCUS – Carbon Capture and Utilization System. Although governments are allowing for tax and employment support in this process, experimental efforts have so far failed to come close to the large scale levels that are necessary to stop global emissions in time to stop atmospheric heating beyond current crisis levels. In fact, this new technology solution is touted by the fossil fuel industries as a reason for increasing fossil fuel production, not decreasing it. Climate scientists have stated that the proposed technology has not lived up to the proposals and is not a valid solution.

**Crash course in climate terms!** -with apologies, but listening through the sea of initials and words maybe helped a bit!

I'll finish with a quick summary of COP 28. That was the "Conference of the Parties 28" referring to the United Nations Climate Change Conference. You probably know that previous COP conferences have tried to get promises from participating nations to hold the global warming level (from fossil fuel emissions) to 1.5 degrees beyond pre-industrialization levels. The Kyoto Protocol raised hopes that participating countries would be able to lower their fossil fuel emissions- and

some did. In ensuing years it became more difficult as emission levels increased, and some countries removed themselves from the Kyoto agreement, including Canada. The Paris Agreement followed, although the world is still very far from reaching the aim of the agreement: limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees. In order to do this, fossil fuel emissions must peak by 2025.

This time, for the first time, reduction of fossil fuel emissions was mentioned in the COP 28 final statement. There were no binding agreements and no levels identified, but this statement was seen as an opportunity for member states to increase the intensity and amount of discussion directed at shifting away from fossil fuel production and use.

And that's a window of opportunity for all of us. Canada has the second-highest GHG emission rate per person among the top 11 emitting countries and regions. And the oil and gas industries are by far the greatest contributor to our fossil fuel emissions. That message is pretty clear. We- all of us- as individuals are the second highest emitters among the top emitting nations. The other part of the message is that our fossil fuel industries are the major part of our emissions as a country.

We can all try to stop our individual level of fossil fuel emissions.

**Reduce fossil fuel products:** plastic bags and wrap, tape, food and juice containers, plastic water bottles. Speak up!

**Reduce fossil fuel fabrics:** polyester, fleece, acrylic – think cotton and wool.

**Big change:** change heating and driving systems. – think

heat pump and EV or hybrid. Use public transportation.

Similarly we can all try to encourage reduction of the fossil fuel industry.

**Reduce consumption of fossil fuel products.** No market, no production.

**Move finances to institutions** that do not heavily support the oil and gas industry.

Let your government representatives know that you want a just transition to low carbon energy: alternate energy sources with employment opportunity.

Let your government representatives know that you want more trains, fewer highways, and grant encouragement to consider other energy sources for cars.

Happy New Year! Let's take advantage of the COP 28 acknowledgement of the need to back off from fossil fuels! We can do it!

Updates:

1. Carbon parts per million (ppm) as of the end of December 2023: 420.7 (safe level 350 ppm, passed in 1990- climbing steadily. In March of 2023, the level was 418.5)

2. An awesome twist: The Hallelujah Chorus, a version in praise of the blue-green jewel - Earth. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VqLOBz8UIX4>

*Sheila Clarke is a Stratford advocate for the environment, of our community and of our planet. She has a BSc Zoology from the University of Illinois, and a host of courses beyond in disciplines that inform ecology, the science of how everything living fits together in nature. She is a member of CFUW Stratford, Stratford Climate Momentum, and the Perth County Sustainability Hub.*



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# A Kaleidoscope of New Possibilities



IRENE ROTH

*Times Freelance Columnist*

As the clock strikes midnight, the transition from one year to the next signals not just the passing of time, but the advent of new beginnings. Each New Year brings with it a unique blend of anticipation, hope, and the promise of a fresh start.

In the symphony of life, the opening notes of the year create a melody of possibilities, much like the ever-changing patterns in a kaleidoscope. We all have so much to look forward to and so much we want to improve upon.

And the new year offers this kind of new canvas for us. It opens up 365 days of new pos-

sibilities to make a difference in our lives. In this article, I will offer some tips on how we can enter into the new year with resilience.

## Embrace Change

The start of a new year is an opportune moment to reflect on the chapters that have unfolded and to contemplate the narrative yet to be written. It's a time when individuals, organizations, and societies alike set their sights on aspirations and resolutions, driven by the desire for positive change. The kaleidoscope of opportunities that a new year presents invites us to embrace transformation, to shed the old and welcome the new with open arms.

## Treat the New Year as a Blank Canvas

Picture the new year as a blank canvas, awaiting the strokes of your intentions and actions. It is an open invitation to us, as artists of your life to create a masterpiece that reflects your dreams, values, and ambitions. Your canvas doesn't have to be limited by the constraints of the past. Instead, it beckons you to explore uncharted territories and express your unique self.

## Reflect on the Past

Before diving into the kaleidoscope of opportunities, it's essential to take a moment for introspection. This need not be a time to beat yourself up for past mistakes. Instead, try to reflect on the lessons you learned this past year. They can provide valuable insights that can shape the choices we make in the coming months. What worked well? What challenges did you overcome? What lessons did you learn? Armed with this self-awareness, you will be better equipped to navigate the intricate patterns that the new year's kaleidoscope unfolds.

## Set Some Goals and Intentions

The beauty of the new year lies in its potential to be a catalyst for positive change. Setting intentions acts as a compass, guiding your journey through the myriad opportunities that present yourself. Whether it's personal growth, career milestones, or contributing to societal well-being, the act of consciously setting intentions aligns your actions with your aspirations, transforming the kaleidoscope of possibilities into a purposeful journey.

## Set Goals to Grow Personally

On a personal level, the new year invites you to embark on a journey of self-discovery and personal development. Whether it's acquiring new skills, pursuing passions, or fostering meaningful relationships, the kaleidoscope of opportunities includes the potential for personal fulfillment and well-being. It can be a time to prioritize mental and physical health, cultivate resilience, and nurture a positive mindset that can withstand the challenges ahead.

## Engage With Your Communities

Beyond personal and professional spheres, the new year opens new possibilities to engage with your communities. You may want to volunteer, support local initiatives, and contribute to collective well-being by creating a tapestry of interconnectedness. The kaleidoscope of opportunities extends beyond individual pursuits, encompassing the chance to make a positive impact on the broader tapestry of society.

## Navigate Challenges

While the kaleidoscope of opportunities is dazzling, it's es-

sential to acknowledge that challenges are an inherent part of any life journey. The unforeseen twists and turns in life's kaleidoscope may test our resilience and adaptability. However, it is precisely at these times that we have to face challenges with strength and resilience.

As we enter a new year, the kaleidoscope of opportunities before us is endless, with hues of potential, waiting to be explored. Embracing change, setting intentions, and navigating challenges are the threads that weave a tapestry of purposeful living. I always love the hope of a brand-new year unfolding with so many possibilities to live a better life.

Each turn of the kaleidoscope brings forth a unique pattern, reminding us that the journey of life is as significant as the destination. So, let us step into the new year with open hearts and minds, ready to embrace the symphony of possibilities that awaits—a kaleidoscope of opportunities that beckons us to create, explore, and live with purpose.

Wishing you and your family a happy and healthy New Year!

## UNTIL SOON. LIVE WELL: the funeral director automaton



STUART LENDER

*Times Contributor*

There is a certain decorum that is upheld within the world of funeral service, and rightly so – but it should be upheld only to the degree that it comforts and does not alienate. There are ways of handling things in my world that can give solace or add to someone's discomfort, depending upon the viewpoint of the onlooker and the sensitivity of the funeral director. I must admit, in the novice years, the “way of behaving” formula in funeral service that is largely taught is a source for “status quo,” but this should change with

experience, growth, and with the thousand and one interactions someone like me has in the public experience.

For those of you who have been reading my posts on Facebook, you probably are aware that I am not the formal funeral director type: “My sincere condolences sir, in the loss of your... (fill in the blank). I'm more the hello neighbour type: “I'm so sorry you had to call me today, John. I know nobody wants to call me!” A different tone.

I recall going into a funeral home in Toronto to give my condolences to the family of a friend. I was greeted at the door by a starched and stiff individual who kept their hands behind their back the entire time while leaning forward slightly, in some kind of half-bow, giving me directions as to where to find the visitation suite. When I found the room, the lady outside the door of the suite, stood motionless, eyes forward, silent – about as lively as the decedent inside the room. That sense of rigidity didn't make me feel terribly comforted. Quite

honestly, it put me off a bit. Perhaps it was me? The funeral home was old and respected. It had its reputation.

What I see when someone comes in to obtain my services or simply wants to talk about things, is someone who, while surely an individual, is also connected to this very personal journey of coming to terms. Being older now, I have had to reckon with that coming to terms myself, several times, through deaths and shared stories. I balance perspectives. It's personal, it's universal – this dying we all experience. They may be processing a death just as I have done. They may be in a cloud of questions, as I have been. They may feel smothered under a torrent of changes that are not yet fully understood, as I have felt myself to be. And this empathy is as it should be.

I can't tell you how many times these vignettes I've heard have ballooned out into my understanding that this will come to us all. It's that back-and-forth fluctuation of you are me and I am you in this, that allows a funeral di-

rector, as far as I'm concerned, to adapt to and understand the very specific feelings of those who have come to them for help. It's that very real voice that tells me I am not immune that makes what I do very personal and of service to people. And it's that service that I'm blessed to give that makes me grateful. And of course, it's that self-same thing that makes me unable to act like that rigid funeral director automaton.

And so, you can imagine that I am completely opposed to some directors I've known who feel that directing things is our primary job and how the job should go. Stand apart. Keep focused on the goal of the day and on achieving it, whatever that might be. Follow the plan. But the very nature of what I deal with is sometimes unpredictable, sometimes takes a pause for emotion. What we are dealing with binds us as human beings. Stressful? Emotional? Sad? Yes – sometimes. That all gets cleansed through the privilege of the job. Professionalism is always there, but fluidity and shared understanding should never be com-

promised by that professionalism. And yes, the odd time I will have someone say: “I don't know how you can do what you do,” thinking it depressing, thinking it morose. But that's okay so long as I know how to do it! I smile. I say: “it's not for everyone.”

There's a saying I heard once that goes: “To be a good fisherman you must detach yourself from the dream of the fish.” Well, in my world and particularly on funeral day: “To be a good funeral director you must detach yourself from the dream that you are the one who knows everything, directs everyone, and will not die.” That brings anyone's personal grieving into my own personal space and that is where it may be held between us, walked alongside and shared in any way necessary, for the both of us to comprehend how profoundly the world has changed.

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

# OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: A historic home furnished with ethical questions... and inspiration



PAUL KNOWLES

*Times Contributor*

For me, no travel experience is complete without a visit to an historic house or two. Especially if that particular travel experience is in a country like England, where heritage buildings are thick as Canada geese on a Canadian golf course.

But I have to qualify this, by pointing out that there are at least three categories of historic homes. There are the ancient buildings that are preserved, more or less, as an architectural structure, and furnished with period pieces, not originally related to the site, supplied by the National Trust or English Heritage. (The same thing happens in Canada, by the way – Woodside, Mackenzie King's childhood home in Kitchener, is mainly furnished with items typical of the era but not original to the house.)

Then, there are the great homes opened to the public by the aristocratic families who still live there, who, frankly, need the money. These often make for rather awkward visits – although there are certainly exceptions – where you are ushered through a limited number of rooms, while the fam-



The 17th century home, Bateman's, fronted by a garden pond.

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

ily sits, unseen but resenting the need for the income from visitors, in another part of the house.

But my favourite places, by far, are the homes where a well-known person was the final occupant, and where today, visitors can tour the place as it was when that person lived there – experiencing not only the building and appropriate décor, but actually getting a sense of the former owner, himself or herself.

There are some spectacular examples of these homes, all over the United Kingdom. I have written about a few of them, over the past months – Churchill's beloved Chartwell, for example, and Sissinghurst, the home (and gardens) of Vita Sackville-West. These are places where you feel the presence of these former residents.

And one of my very favourites of this kind is Bateman's, now a National Trust property, in East Sussex. Bateman's (named for its builder) is a beautiful 17th-cen-

tury home, but for me, the most interesting stuff doesn't come from the 1600's, it's much more recent. Because Bateman's was the home of English author Rudyard Kipling. He and his wife Caroline lived here from 1902 until he passed away, in 1936. After he died, Caroline bequeathed the house to the National Trust, furnishings and all.

So a tour of Bateman's takes the visitors through Kipling's completely furnished writing studio, his library, and, outdoors, his gardens. Perhaps it's obvious why this Canadian writer, who among other things has written four gardening books, finds this destination so appealing.

I simply can't think of a more enthralling visitor experience. To use an over-used term, it's an holistic encounter with Rudyard Kipling – you discover his taste in décor, his love for the outdoors, and his chosen environment to spark creativity.

But let's be honest, here – Rudyard Kipling has rather fallen out of favour in our more enlightened times. The author of "The Jungle Book", "The Man Who Would Be King", and the often-quoted poem "If", was also a man who said and wrote a lot of problematic stuff. An Englishman of his time, who was born in India, and who lived and worked as a journalist there during Imperial Rule, he has been quite correctly accused of racial prejudice.

In fact, noted author George Orwell was flat-out blunt: "During five literary generations, every enlightened person has despised him... a jingo imperialist... morally insensitive and aesthetically disgusting."

This, of course, raises a familiar question, yet again – how do we, in 2024, judge a writer from another era? There is no easy answer – we obviously cannot condone racism or defense of colonialism, which has been the cause

of enduring suffering around the world, including right here in Canada, among indigenous people from coast to coast to coast. On the other hand, we would be hard pressed to find any man or woman writing a century or more ago who would satisfy our current demand for absolute political correctness.

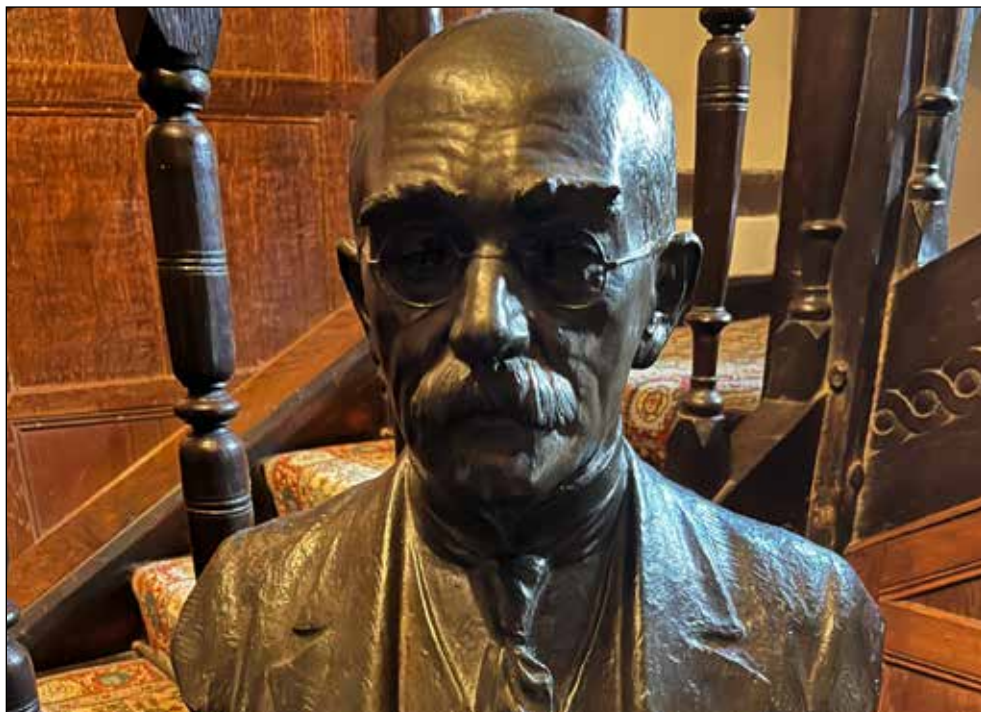
I apologize for this digression into ethics, but it is an issue that crops up as we travel. My personal bottom line is – every experience that helps me to understand the history of culture, of politics, and of social mores, is an experience that helps me to be a more informed, perhaps even better, person today.

So – back to Bateman's. As I lingered in Rudyard Kipling's study, I did feel inspired. Not inspired to defend British rule in India, but inspired by the spirit of creativity that still infuses the room.

As I perused the samples of Kipling's work on display throughout the house, I was able to recognize the sheer talent of the man.

As I wandered around the gardens – and walked through the woods on the path that leads to an old water mill – I reveled in the sense of peace and tranquility that was undoubtedly the reason Rudyard and Caroline purchased the place, more than 120 years ago. More than a century... yet there is something about them that lives there, still.

*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](mailto:pknowles@golden.net).*



A bust of the famous owner, Rudyard Kipling.



Rudyard Kipling's study, where he created many of his well-known books.

# Welcoming Ukrainians: War Means Trauma

VJ KNUTSON

*Times Freelance Columnist*

Imagine it is the New Year, and you are full of the excitement of youth, working in a job you love, anticipating an upcoming wedding, rejoicing in life. You notice the army tanks lining up just a kilometre from your home, but do you dare allow yourself to think the worst. Surely this is just a bluff. Life, as you know it will carry on.

We all know what came next. February 24th, 2022, life for many Ukrainians was upended. Whatever plans people were making was set aside for thoughts of survival.

Ric and I recently sat down with a young woman, who came to Canada in the fall, alone and pregnant. Although she did not want to leave her fiancé, it was no longer safe to remain.

"I don't want the baby exposed to bombing," she told us. We completely understood.

Like many Ukrainians, this young woman, whom I will call 'Mom', is strong and independent. She found a host and accommodations through Facebook, and made the lengthy journey on her own. I know from many others we have helped, that landing in Canada is like landing on an alien planet. Mom agrees.

The accommodations were not

what she had expected and other complications ensued. What was she to do? She didn't know anyone here. A month before the baby arrived, her Mother-in-law (MIL) flew to Canada to join her. On the day we met them, the baby was just weeks old, and MIL's departure was imminent. The women were overwhelmed.

One's life cannot be shattered in such a way without ensuing trauma. Both Mom and MIL felt they had run out of options. Their experience in Canada had not given them hope, so Mom felt she needed to go back, but the thought of exposing baby to a Winter of war conditions was also daunting.

Ric and I have been helping Ukrainians since the war started. We recognized early on that every one of them would need more than just housing – they need moral support, sound guidance for maneuvering through our governmental processes, and more.

I suggested we make a list of their needs, but like many Ukrainians, they denied needing anything. They just wanted to talk about paperwork. Ric excels in that area. He had already been in contact with a local MP's office, and made several emails during our visit. They needed their medicals for immigration (all newcomers do within 90 days of arriving). Ric handles that.

In our two hour lunch date, I was able to establish that Mom's greatest fear is being alone. I thought back to the birth of my own granddaughter, over a year ago, and how often they needed me while adjusting to their new life. Anticipating that this new mom would need supports, I had already connected with a few of my fellow hosts. Everyone was on board to help and one even offered to host.

I broached the possibility with Mom gently. "We don't want you to be alone, either," I told her. MIL looked relieved. But could they trust us?

We will have to tread softly. The kindness of Canadians is odd to Ukrainians, and can, at times be suspect. I've encountered the hesitancy before.

As we rose to leave, a couple at another table slipped a \$50 bill into each of the women's palms. The women looked at me, not knowing how to respond. "Thank you," I said to the couple and the women echoed, still eyeing me quizzically.

"Canadians really are decent people," I said. "You just haven't experienced it yet."

On our way home, I messaged my son and daughter-in-law. Do you have a bassinet? I asked. Yes! they responded. The next day we delivered the bassinet along with some baby clothes, blankets and other things a new

mom might need.

Finally, after months of despair, I think hope is taking seed

again.

(Reach me at english.knutson@gmail.com)

## OBITUARY



### BETTY RICHARDS

It is with deep sorrow and love that we mourn the passing of our mother, grandmother, and great grandmother Elizabeth (Betty) Francis Richards, who passed away at age 90 at her home in Knollcrest Lodge in Milverton, ON, on December 21st, 2023.

She will be lovingly missed by her children Jamie (Nancy), Ruth (Norm), Jennifer (John); her grandchildren: Jamie (Rachel) and Aidan (Kendra); and her great grandchild: Oakley. She will be also dearly missed by the Knollcrest staff and residents.

Betty was predeceased by her husband of 53 Years, Ray; her brothers Matthew, Andy, Hugh, Raymond; her sister Nora; and her parents: Matthew and Elizabeth.

Betty was originally born in Wingham and trained as a nurse in Stratford, where she met her husband, Ray.

Betty's years of working revolved around care of people in her community. She was trained as a nurse ending her nursing career working with the elderly at People's Care. For many years she worked at Optimism Place advocating for women experiencing physical and emotional abuse at the hands of a partner. She proudly wore and lived the slogan; "For the hand that rocks the cradle, Is the hand that rules the world".

In mid-life, Betty became devoted to physical activity to help manage her diabetes. Betty became an avid walker wearing out many shoes as she literally walked around Stratford. In her 40's she learned how-to cross-country ski and subsequently introduced the sport to her husband Ray and her children. She was also an aspiring tennis player, spending countless hours playing with her husband Ray.

Her later years were spent devoted to her family and their children in their life's journey providing wisdom, support, and encouragement.

At the request of Betty there will be no public service. A private family service will be held later.

Memorial donations may be made in Betty's name to the Canadian Diabetes Association or to the Heart and Stroke Foundation through W.G. Young Funeral Home [www.wgyoungfuneralhome.com](http://www.wgyoungfuneralhome.com)

# COMING EVENTS

Email to inquire [stratfordtimes@gmail.com](mailto:stratfordtimes@gmail.com)

**GARDEN STRATFORD MEETING**  
Monday January 8; 7:15 –9:00 p.m.  
\*\*New Time\*\*

Army Navy Hall, 151 Lorne Ave. E., Stratford.

Featured Presentation: "Planting for Biodiversity - medicinal and food plants for well-being", Anna de Vries, European Gardener and Homeopath Meeting Open to Everyone; Free Admission.

**GOURMET POUTINE & BEER FUNDRAISER**

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<p><b>2021 HYUNDAI ELANTRA PREF</b></p>  <p>Auto, Bluetooth, cruise, alloys, CarPlay, fuel saver! 24,989 kms <b>\$24,989</b></p>	<p><b>2019 LEXUS IS</b></p>  <p>AWD, 3.5L, Heat Seats, Rear Cam, Leather 73,496 kms <b>\$34,599</b></p>	<p><b>2021 HYUNDAI VENUE PREFERRED</b></p>  <p>Auto, Bluetooth, cruise, CarPlay, fuel saver! 26,946 kms <b>\$23,398</b></p>	<p><b>2021 FORD F-150 XL</b></p>  <p>4WD SuperCrew, CarPlay, Adv Safety, Rear Cam 57,248 kms <b>\$45,598</b></p>	<p><b>2021 CHEVROLET SILVERADO 1500</b></p>  <p>LT1, CarPlay, Heat Seat/Steer, Conv Pkg, WiFi 71,762 kms <b>\$45,998</b></p>



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# Riddles

It belongs to you, but your friends use it more. What is it?  
Your name

I am so simple that I can only point, yet I guide people all over the world.  
Compass

What can you catch but not throw?  
A cold

What begins with T ends with T and has T in it?  
A teapot

What has thirteen hearts, but no other organs?  
A deck of cards

What is easier to get into than out of?  
Trouble

Remove my skin and I won't cry, but you might!  
An onion

What can fill a room but doesn't take up space?  
Light

What has many keys but can't open a single lock?  
A piano

# Sudoku

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

Solutions on page 31



## Pet of the Month



### THOR

Meet 3-year-old Thor. He is all about new adventures and loves the great outdoors. He eagerly embraces every opportunity to explore the world around him. Whether it's hiking through the trails, playing fetch in the park, or simply lounging in the yard, Thor's zest for outdoor activities knows no bounds. He is looking for a home with a single person, couple, or family with older children as he can be touch sensitive and lacks some basic manners. If you're an outdoor enthusiast seeking a loyal and adventurous furry companion, Thor would be your perfect match. He's looking for a patient, loving home that appreciates his uniqueness and can provide him with the outdoor experiences he craves. Submit an adoption survey at <https://kwsphumane.ca/adopt/process>.

## Word Search

### TOP 15 2023/24 NHL SCORERS

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

- Kucherov
- MacKinnon
- Panarin
- Pastrnak
- Nylander
- McDavid
- Miller
- Reinhart
- Rantanen
- Hughes
- Pettersson
- Makar
- Aho
- Matthews
- Forsberg

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## JANUARY BLOW OUT SALE

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**LOW KMS**  
53,627 km All-Wheel Drive

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**\$23,995** + HST & lic  
**LOW KMS**  
8,557 km Front-Wheel Drive

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**\$36,995** + HST & lic  
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57,544 km All-Wheel Drive

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2020 Chevrolet Blazer True North



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2021 Kia Forte EX+



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**WINTER TIRE SPECIAL DEALS**

**FREE 1 YEAR STORAGE!**

**KIA** Stratford

2022 Kia Forte EX



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2023 Chevrolet Malibu 2LT



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Bad or Challenging Credit? No problem! Everyone is approved, some conditions apply.



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General Manager: Bobin Mathew  
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STRATFORD KIA



\*While every effort is made to ensure accuracy, we are not responsible for any errors and omissions. Please see your dealer for current pricing. Plus tax and licensing. Some terms and conditions may apply.

# BUSINESS DIRECTORY Email to inquire stratfordtimes@gmail.com

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www.jandjconst.com

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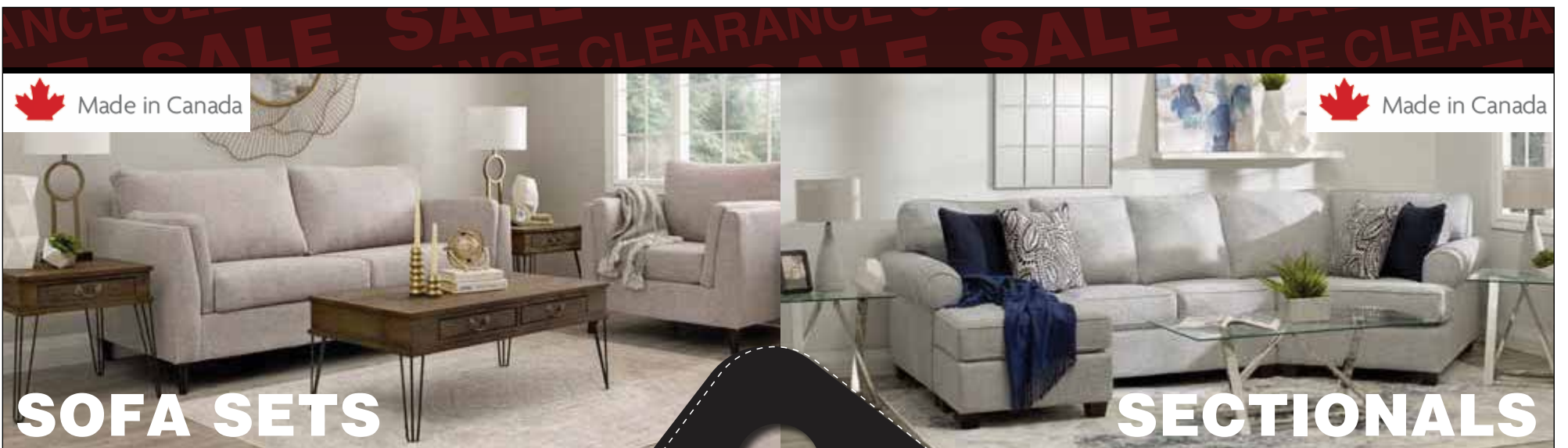
## SUDOKU

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

## QUIZ ANSWERS

- 1) Elisha Otis
- 2) Star
- 3) A Siege
- 4) A fleet
- 5) 2012
- 6) Heights
- 7) Ethics
- 8) Cillian Murphy (Oppenheimer)
- 9) You shall not murder.
- 10) 1861-1865

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