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Police investigating hate-motivated incident in Ingersoll

Downtown café targeted but turns hate into love

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Police are asking for help in identifying those responsible for vandalism that is being classified as a hate or bias-motivated incident.

On February 8 the Oxford OPP responded to a mischief at a business on Thames Street South. An obscenity was written on a window sometime between 7:00 p.m. on February 7, and 6:30 a.m. on February 8. Police are treating the matter as a hate/bias-motivated crime and the Hate Crime Extremism Unit has been called in to investigate.

The business targeted by the alleged vandalism was the recently opened Evergreen Coffee Lounge.

Jonathan Clow owns the café with his partner, Shelley Brownlee who does most of the day-to-day work. He said a sticker seemed to upset someone. "We've had a sticker on our window for about two weeks that says everyone is welcome here. It has a picture of a bunch of people with their hands up with different colours and on the wristbands, there are some LGBTQ symbols and whatnot." He added someone used a marker to deface the sticker by writing some homophobic wording across the window. "We are both people who don't have a problem with people living the life they want to live. We welcome people of all different orientations and identities, races, and faiths, it's just a place to come in and have a cup of coffee," he added.

Clow, originally from Ilderton, has a chiropractic

CONTINUED TO PAGE 15



(RON YUZARK PHOTO)

EARLY SPRING PREDICTION

Chilly Charlie and his entourage Mayor Jerry Acchione and Dave Clark make an early spring prediction. See more on page 11.

Martin named head of local board of health as potential merger on the table

Finances also a major issue in 2024

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Woodstock city councillor Bernia Martin has been elected by her peers to the top post at Southwestern Public Health's (SWPH) governing body.

Martin said she's looking forward to leading the board of health. "I'm thrilled to be chairing a board that in the last year I have worked with them has demonstrated such a commitment to public health with the investments made in our budget. That makes it exciting to take on this role to know that I'm surrounded by people who want to do what's best for public health in our community."

"Public health is not the only area where municipalities are seeing pressures like this from the province. We are seeing it across the board. The province wants growth, but it comes at a cost, and our local taxpayers shoulder much of that cost."

She added that from a public health standpoint the biggest opportunity and the biggest challenge in 2024 is the potential of more health unit amalgamations. "The province announced it would like to see voluntary mergers for any health unit with a population below 500 thousand, so that is Southwestern Public Health. We are exploring to see what a merger looks like and who would

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Martin named head of local board of health as potential merger on the table

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

the partner be. That will take up a good chunk of our efforts from a board perspective and from my perspective as the new chair. It will be a time-consuming project."

There are no fewer than seven health units that touch the SWPH border. Chatham-Kent, Lambton, Middlesex-London, Huron-Perth, Haldimand-Norfolk, Brant, and Waterloo. "There are discussions underway. Until any intent to merge is signed then of course nothing would be official. The province wants to see a geographic boundary with any merger. It would be someone who is our neighbour, so we have a lot of options," said Martin. She added the province is telling health units the goal isn't to save money but to increase capacity to make every one of them has a medical officer of health, an associate medical officer of health, a chief nursing officer, and a CEO. "There are a number of health units out there that don't have that depth. The province is trying to set us up for long-term success, I believe. It's a huge project. The province's goal is

January 2025."

Having health units merge in less than a year seems to be an unrealistic goal. Martin said after nearly four years of her health unit's merger, there is still unfinished business. "Oxford merged with Elgin-St. Thomas in 2019, and we have still not completely crossed every T and dotted every I. It takes years to bring everything up to the same level of servicing, standards, ratified agreements, everything."

Martin said despite the challenges ahead she is excited to get to work. "Public health services have an impact on every single one of us, every day, and I am really eager to get down to work in this role to improve public health for our communities."

Funding Shortfall

Oxford County's 2024 budget was approved with a 16.7 percent increase to the taxpayer, and that was in part due to an increase in the request for funding from the health unit. The county stated that SWPH asked Oxford County to increase their share by a whopping 56 percent to \$4.4 million, but the organization's financial boss says that is misleading.



BERNIA MARTIN

Monica Nusink, CFO and Director of Finance and Facilities said the number is accurate, but it represents the original ask last year. "The original levee in 2023 was set and then subsequently in June the board of health made the decision to increase it once again in order to move the needle. There were an additional eight priority items added as a result to be solely funded by the municipalities. The 2023 funding didn't account for a lack of funding from the ministry." She added the board set last year's budget at a 4.5 percent increase

and the government only agreed to one percent which required local governments to cover the shortfall. "The final levee increase is actually 37 percent."

The Ministry of Health provides the majority of funding for health units across Ontario while municipalities contribute a smaller portion. In this case, Oxford County, Middlesex County, and the City of St. Thomas. Oxford contributes more strictly due to a higher population than the other two.

Nusink explained the majority of their budget comes from salaries and benefits so without adequate funding the health unit would be forced to look at service reductions. "2022 was the first year we saw a one percent increase. It's been zero for a number of years which really is a decrease to our budget because as you know, everything goes up. Inflation last year was 6.8 percent and this year it's 3.6 percent. Even to make our basic commitments to staff salaries there would have been a shortfall."

This reporter spent three years working at the former Perth Pub-

lic Health Unit in Stratford as the communications manager about 20 years ago and one thing most people aren't aware of is that any financial ask from any unit in the province must be paid. No if's and's or but's about it. "They are obligated to pay what the board approves," she explained.

The Echo asked Nusink if SWPH was involved in any lobbying efforts for more money from the Ford Conservatives. Her answer was swift and simple. "Continuously. We are constantly reaching out and asking for an increase. At least for 2024, we did get word of the one percent increase in advance." She added the board decided to continue to try and meet the obligations of Ontario public health standards and continue to promote public health. Service levels this year are expected to remain at 2023 levels and focus on those eight priority levels Nusink mentioned. Those include emergency preparedness, harm reduction, youth substance abuse prevention, mental health promotion, and child immunization.

Woodstock police looking for academy participants

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Woodstock Police Service (WPS) is looking for applicants for its Citizens Police Academy. It offers residents of Woodstock an invaluable opportunity to gain insights into their local police service.

The academy is set to run Thursday evenings for 10 weeks beginning in late March with sessions scheduled for Thursday evenings. Participants will engage with officers and community partners in a blend of classroom settings and hands-on experi-

ences, delving into the diverse services and departments offered by WPS. The program includes a ride-along with an officer, education on training, forensic identification, criminal investigations, traffic collision reconstruction, and more.

Constable Shaylyn Jackson said the program runs yearly. "There was a bit of a pause during COVID however we brought it back last year completely, and the year before we had a smaller group." She added the academy offers a unique perspective on policing that no one else can see. "We truly give an open-door look at how the police service operates. Participants will see the services,

programs, and tools we have to help keep our community safe. We are trying to be as transparent and honest as we possibly can. We'll share the good, the bad, and the ugly."

Successful applicants will be required to sign an oath of confidentiality since they may hear information that shouldn't be repeated elsewhere. There are some criteria that applicants need to meet including being a resident of Woodstock. "We ask that people be 18 years of age or older, and you don't have to be looking at a career in policing. If you are this is a great opportunity, but we are looking for members of the community who have an interest in policing." The program also brings in close community partners such as Crimestoppers, Victim Services, and others which has paid off. "We have gotten employees, volunteers with our auxiliary unit, and some of those community partners as well. It's fantastic how committed and in-

vested some of our participants become with the community afterward," said Jackson.

When completed, graduates will emerge with a unique perspective on the policing profession, equipped with a deeper understanding of the challenges faced and the measures required to maintain community safety.

Interested Woodstock residents are encouraged to submit their application packages, comprising a resume, cover letter, and the application form that can be found at www.woodstockpolice.ca. Applications can be submitted electronically to community-service@woodstockpolice.ca with the subject line "Citizens Police Academy Application". Submissions can also be delivered to police headquarters at 615 Dundas Street, Woodstock. The deadline for application submissions is February 19, 2024, at 4:00 p.m.



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(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured are graduates of a recent Woodstock Police Academy. The deadline for applications this year is Feb. 19.

Handbags for Hospice event raises large sum for Sakura House



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Event Co-chairs Sarah Pimentel (left) and Jill Roberts address a crowd of over 800 people at the Handbags for Hospice fundraiser for Sakura House.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Over 100 volunteers helped raise \$365,000 at the event.

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

It was worth the wait. The 2024 Handbags for Hospice fundraiser achieved unprecedented success at the eleventh version of the event held at Woodstock's Oxford Auditorium on January 26, the first in four years.

This year's gathering, presented by Toyota Motor Manufacturing Company Canada, was attended by 825 guests and the total amount raised reached an incredible \$365,000. The funds were earned through sponsorships, donations, ticket sales, silent and live auctions, a Louis Vuitton raffle, a Thirty-One Bag

luggage raffle, and the newly introduced and well-received wine pull.

Committee co-chairs Sarah Pimentel and Jill Roberts shared their sentiments on the event's success. "We started the planning process about a year ago, and we are thrilled to bring the event back to this level of success. Once again, Oxford County has pulled together to ensure that our Sakura House will always remain available to our community. Thanks to all our sponsors, donors, volunteers, and support, we could not have done this without your commitment to this cause."

Roberts said their fundraising goal was to beat the last event's success back in January 2020 which raised about \$265,000, and that they did. "A little

over \$100,000 was for the Fund-A-Need program which will go toward updating patient rooms."

A different Fund-A-Need is done every year which addresses a specific item or need that Janine (Jackson, Manager of Home and Community Services) identifies. "In the past, we have bought 10 new sleeper couches for the rooms, and we have redone the nursing station. This year's was the biggest we ever collected." 100 Women Who Care, a local group, donated \$10,000 which was followed by a \$35,000 gift from Stance Healthcare, a manufacturer of medical-grade furniture based in Kitchener. The remaining money raised goes towards operating costs at the hospice.

A total of 105 volunteers worked tirelessly to ensure the smooth execution of the event along with local police and fire services. Roberts added it was a tiring night for everyone involved but well worth the effort. "I won't lie, the night is a little bit chaotic but it's exhilarating. All of us on the committee have some sort of personal connection to Sakura House so it feels amazing to see the community pull together to make sure it is here for us for years to come."

As for the future of the event, she explained there will be some conversations behind the scenes before any decision is made. "It's not booked for next year but stay tuned to see if it's scheduled."

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info@theecho.ca
www.theecho.ca

Publisher/Editor
Stewart Grant

Editor
Lee Griffi

Business Development
Heather Dunbar

Graphic Design / Layout
Sarah Cairns

Administrative
Wendy Lamond, Cindy Boakes

Advertising Inquiries
Contact theecho.ca
or call 519-655-2341

Contributors
Emily Stewart, Paul Knowles,
Nancy Abra, Gary West, Doris Weir,
Ron Yuzark (If interested in contributing to The Echo, send us a note at info@theecho.ca)



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

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Editorial

Thinking of watching Question Period in the House of Commons? Don't bother

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

I watch Question Period in the House of Commons almost every day. It starts right around 2:20 in the afternoon. Now that I have that off my chest, I am going to tell you why you shouldn't do the same.

Question Period is, by design, a historical and responsible way that the opposition parties take the governing party to task on their decisions. That is how it is supposed to work, and it is a pillar of our democratic way of governance. But the fact is, it is closer to an episode of Saturday Night Live than it is a forum for what is supposed to be democracy.

Justin Trudeau and the governing Liberals are well past their best-before date, and everyone, including them, knows it. We hear the same talking points that say they are making life more affordable for Canadians which couldn't be further from the truth. Does the ArriveCan app ring a bell? That only took about \$60 million (and counting) out of our pockets for absolutely nothing.

The Conservatives, barring the scandal of all scandals, will form our next federal government. They are no better. Pierre Poilievre stands up daily and spouts slogan after slogan. Save the slogans for when you are outside of the House and stop treating dialogue like a campaign commercial. I find everyone's behaviour disgusting. The House is a place where legitimate questions should be asked, and real answers should be given. The Liberals have their own pathetic talking points and 99% of the time never truly answer a question.

They will often attack the Conservatives instead of explaining why they are wasting our money time and time again. Part of the problem is they are not required to answer a question. The Speaker has no authority to make them and all he or she (there is more than one) can do is attempt to keep decorum in the House. Another issue is that opposition parties are required to provide the government with the topics they plan to address during Question Period meaning advisors and communications staff have time to prepare written statements Liberal MPs are obliged to read.

How about Jagmeet Singh and the NDP party? It is just

too easy to criticize them. They have been propping up a hopeless Liberal government for about two years in the name of implementing dental and pharmacare programs. Most recently they have said there would be consequences should the government not unveil a universal drug program to their liking by March 1. Singh stands up during Question Period and just hammers the Liberals on housing and affordability and how they are doing such a horrible job, yet they continue to be the crutch keeping this government from falling. The Parliamentary Budget Officer said this week that a pharmacare program could cost us \$11 billion. Where is that money going to come from? I'd be more excited if we didn't have to pay tens of billions to pay down out more than \$1 trillion debt.

Despite my advice to not tune into CPAC to watch a bunch of blowhard politicians bend the truth for their own political survival, I will give you another tidbit of advice. Keep an eye on what's happening at the federal level. Us minions are being affected more and more every day by decisions made in Ottawa. While I may sound pessimistic, I do, the odd time, have some hope. Rural Canada normally gets the short end of the stick on any government money but an announcement on funding to help recruit more doctors and nurses to small towns in addition to a tailored Housing Accelerator Program for rural communities could be something positive. But then again, it could just be more Liberal smoke-blowing.

Are there good people in government? Absolutely. Do they work hard to try and make things better for their constituents? Of course. The only problem is this – political parties are mainly focused on keeping or getting power that we just don't matter as much as we should. If we did, would the Liberals double down on the carbon tax and continue to raise liquor taxes? I think not. They do like to give us a cheque for a few hundred bucks now and then because don't you know, that makes life more affordable.

Oh, one more thing. Please vote in the next federal election. We Canadians have been sitting back idly for far too long. Your vote does make a difference and the more of us who hold our elected officials accountable for their actions the better. Let's take democracy back where it belongs - with the people.

Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

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Woodstock Public Library's calendar filled with lots of fun family programming

EMILY STEWART

Echo Correspondent

Woodstock Public Library has lots of activities for families to enjoy on Family Day, March Break, and beyond.

Nancy Bailey, the children's librarian at the Woodstock Public Library, outlined the upcoming events and programs. The library will host a Family Day Storytime and the Little Red Breakout Challenge escape room on February 17. In partnership with Operandi Gaming Community, the Woodstock Public Library will also an all-ages Retro Gaming Night on February 20 from 6 to 8 p.m.

March Break will be filled with lots of activities for children under the theme Colour Your World, including Seedy Saturday, a reading of "Dear Street" by Forest of Reading author Lindsay Vier-Vogel followed by a love letter to your neighbourhood writing workshop, a family-friendly movie screening, crafts, coding, and STEAM activities. Staff will be dressed in different colours throughout the week, beginning with all-blue clothing on Monday, March 11.

Theatre Woodstock marketing coordinator Sarah Hodgkinson, representing the David Suzuki Foundation and the Butterfly Project, will be speaking at the library about native plants best for local butter-

flies on March 14. The library and Theatre Woodstock have a strong partnership with collaborative programming reflecting the productions at the community theatre company, beginning with "Matilda Jr."

"Matilda was the perfect library connection with the Theatre because of her love of books," Bailey said.

The Woodstock Public Library, along with the Oxford County Library's Ingersoll branch, hosted Story Time with Cinderella on February 3 to promote Theatre Woodstock's take on the Rodger and Hammerstein production of "Cinderella". In celebration of Paper Bag Princess Day on March 2nd, there will be a story time reading in the library at 2:30 p.m. with Princess Elizabeth from the "Munsch at the Play/Giant in the Sky" production at Theatre Woodstock. The play celebrating the works of the beloved children's author Robert Munsch will run at Theatre Woodstock from May 2 to 5. More performers from the eight stories featured in the production will also be reading stories on April 20 in the library from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Bailey enjoys working with Hodgkinson of Theatre Woodstock and said both organizations pair well together.

"We are both non-profit organizations that tell stories and entertain people," she said. "This is a perfect pairing, and I look

forward to whatever future projects we can work on together."

Bailey added that programming such as story times with characters from theatre productions allow children and their families to see what else the library and the theatre have to offer besides their usual programming.

"Children realize that stories can be told

in a variety of ways, and they love meeting the characters from the stories that they enjoy," she said. "By working together to offer these programs to our community, we can offer unique and value-added programming for the families in Woodstock."

More information about all Woodstock Public Library events and programs can be found via mywpl.ca.

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shop. Customers embraced the joy of finding unique treasures that add a personal touch to their space. Potter and Mill is a proudly Canadian company founded in Southwestern Ontario. They are passionate about home design and believe in those small touches that make a space uniquely yours. (RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Pictured are Vendor Chateau Bornais Crochet's Andrew and Rebekah Bornais with owner Katherine Miller.



Vendor Chris Edwards of Streets Ahead Coffee Roasters welcomed customers with a cup freshly ground and brewed coffees.



Vendor Emma Gaffney of Dande Vintage and Thrift displayed her offerings.

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Public Health issues reminder about fluoride and sodium in Oxford drinking water

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Southwestern Public Health (SWPH) has issued a public reminder about levels of naturally present fluoride and sodium in some of Oxford County's municipal drinking water.

The organization said these may pose a concern for specific residents. Parents with children seven years of age and under should be aware of fluoride exposure to prevent dental fluorosis, while those on sodium-restricted diets should pay close attention to the sodium they may be consuming from municipal water.

Amy Pavletic is the Program Manager of Environmental Health at SWPH and said the health unit is responsible for letting the public know this information. "The drinking water in Oxford County is unique in the sense that the groundwater comes from underground aquifers that have naturally occurring levels of fluoride and sodium."

"Any drinking water that has a sodium level under 200 mg/L is considered safe. It's not that the water is unsafe for the gen-

eral public but if there are individuals who might be on sodium-restricted diets due to various medical conditions, we advise that if they are consuming water that has sodium levels above 20 mg/L they be aware they could be consuming more sodium than their health professional may advise." This includes people with kidney disease, heart disease, high blood pressure, or liver disease. These residents should speak to their physician or healthcare provider about how sodium in the water may affect their health. Communities with sodium levels that range above the recommended level of 20 mg/L are Tavistock, Bright, Brownsville, Embro, Ingersoll, Mount Elgin, Oxford South, Plattsville, Thamesford, Tillsonburg, and Woodstock.

Pavletic said when it comes to fluoride there is no health concern, but rather an issue of esthetics. "It is to protect against dental fluorosis or discolouration of teeth in children seven years of age and under. Because of the naturally occurring fluoride Oxford County does not add it to the drinking water. It is low and safe for the public to drink however when the levels do get high we want to make sure people

with children under the age of seven know they could have some small flecks or observed marks on their teeth indicating fluorosis."

While fluoride levels up to 2.4 mg/L are safe to drink, a reading above 1.5 mg/L could lead to discolouring. Fluoride levels above 1.5 mg/L have been reported in the communities of Brownsville, Ingersoll, Lakeside, Mount Elgin, and Oxford South during recent sampling events. The health unit recommends households with young children in these communities cut back on other sources of fluoride to prevent fluorosis, like choosing non-fluoride

toothpaste.

The Echo asked the health unit if people would be better off drinking water from a bottle or through various filtration systems on the market, but Pavletic said that isn't something she recommends. "You don't have to buy other sources (of water) if it's not something that concerns you. It's really about people taking their health into their own hands when it comes to these elevated levels."

Oxford County's 17 municipal drinking water systems are monitored 24/7 to ensure safety and quality.

FLOURIDE

Brownsville	Ingersoll
1.68 - 1.77 mg/L	0.77 - 2.12 mg/L
Lakeside	Mt. Elgin
1.59 - 1.65 mg/L	1.39 - 1.71 mg/L
Oxford South	
0.08 - 1.57 mg/L	

SODIUM

Bright	Brownsville
59.1 - 66.2 mg/L	61.9 - 81.6 mg/L
Embro	Ingersoll
19.3 - 20.2 mg/L	39.7 - 79 mg/L
Mt. Elgin	Oxford South
21.3 - 37 mg/L	17.9 - 52.5 mg/L
Plattsville	Tavistock
20.3 - 21.7 mg/L	18.7 - 21 mg/L
Thamesford	Tillsonburg
25 - 26 mg/L	2.55 - 40.8 mg/L
Woodstock	
14.4 - 93.5 mg/L	



Chocolate Lover's Tea



Helping with the event were Diane Clark, Sally Day, Chantal McDonald, Erin Curry, Angela Hess and Bev Rajani.

Tea and chocolatey treats were served Sunday, February 11 at South Gate Centre, Woodstock. Served were delightful teas, White chocolate cranberry scones, Brownies, Chocolate macaroons, Magic bars with coconut, Rocky road bars, Chocolate chip cookies and Chocolate fudge. With such a delightful selection,

it sure created a memorable and delicious spread for any occasion. South Gate Centre is incorporated under the Province of Ontario. They are also a not-for-profit registered charitable organization. The Centre is administered by a volunteer Board of Directors and holds a General Meeting once a year. South Gate members, staff



Attending for tea and treats were Donna Chalkley, Gail Monaghan, Dianne Sibbick, Marion Raddatz, Michelle Roper and Bonnie McVicar.

and volunteers are actively involved in many aspects of the community. Their programs and activities are fostered by a large volunteer base –possibly the largest in the area. Volunteers teach classes, cook meals and plan events. Local Roots is South Gate Centre's food services company. Chef Shelley and assistants Kristin

and Gail, along with many dedicated volunteers, prepare fresh and frozen nutritious and delicious meals for Local Roots Café. Meals can be ordered to eat in the Café, for takeout, for curbside pickup or to have delivered free of charge.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)

Burger It Forward with Finkle Street Tap and Grill

EMILY STEWART

Echo Correspondent

Buying the burger special at Finkle Street Tap and Grill for the month of February will support Canada Food Banks.

Canada Beef's Burger It Forward fundraiser for food banks returns for its second year. The fundraiser partners with restaurants across the country to donate the equivalent value of one meal to food banks for every purchase of a feature burger at participating restaurants. Finkle Street Tap and Grill on 450 Simcoe Street in Woodstock will be participating.

"We're really excited," said Jenny Pearce-Hall, owner and founder of Finkle Street Tap and Grill. "This is the second year that it has been put on and our second year participating. What we love about it is it focuses on helping the community by donating to the food bank as well as showcasing local producers and focusing on community and helping each other."

Finkle Street Tap and Grill's fundraising burger special, the Tulum Burger, is made with a brisket and chuck patty seasoned with herbs, curry, jalapeno, and

cumin. The beef is sourced from Harvest Together, a Southwestern Ontario beef producer focusing on pasture-raising beef on a regenerative farm without antibiotics or hormones. The burger, served on a toasted brioche bun, is topped with Gunn's Hill's Oxford Harvest toasted onion cheese, pickled red onion, avocado puree, organic tomato and mixed greens, and comes with a side of cilantro-lime aioli.

Pearce-Hall is looking forward to giving back to those supporting the restaurant and raise money for Burger It Forward.

"Giving back is the main thing," she said. "Especially to have an opportunity where you can be in a position where you can help be the change you want to see in the world is a really great thing. Hopefully, other people pick up on that and do the same and then we'll create a different world where we all have what they need to survive."

Jordan's Divine Dish and Catering in Norwich is also participating, offering a roadhouse burger for the cause. Visit burgeritforward.ca for more information.



(SUBMITTED BY JENNY PEARCE-HALL)

Buy a burger, support the food bank. Finkle Street Tap and Grill's Tulum burger is one of the featured burgers part of Canada Beef's Burger It Forward February fundraiser. Every burger special from participating restaurants like Finkle Street will be matched in value by Canada Beef to donate the monetary equivalent of one meal for Canada Food Banks.

Do you have time for tea, conversation, or to play cards to offer companionship to people who are experiencing isolation?

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Contact Name

JANET SOMERS

Phone Number

519-539-1231 EXT 232

Email Address

janet.somers@von.ca



PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice of Construction

Rehabilitation of bridge 59755 on Oxford Road 59

Oxford Road 59 (Vansittart Avenue) in Woodstock to be open to northbound traffic only between Devonshire Ave. and Tecumseh St., February to December 2024

Oxford County has awarded a contract to rehabilitate Bridge #59755 on Oxford Road 59 to Sierra Bridge Inc. of Woodstock, Ontario. Bridge 59755 crosses the Thames River and a section of the Canadian Pacific rail line between Devonshire Avenue and Tecumseh Street in Woodstock, Ontario.

The work includes rehabilitation of the bridge structure, including asphalt and concrete restoration works as required.

Construction is scheduled to begin mid-February and is anticipated to be completed by December 2024. Construction schedules are weather dependent and subject to change based on contractor availability and other operational demands.

For updates on this project, please visit www.oxfordcounty.ca/59bridge.

Traffic controls

To complete the required work, Oxford Road 59 from Devonshire Ave. to Tecumseh St. will be closed to southbound traffic, with northbound traffic maintained in a single lane throughout.

In consultation with local emergency services, Woodstock Transit and City of Woodstock Public Works, two (2) detour routes will be set up for southbound traffic at Oxford Road 17 (Detour 1 west to Oxford Road 30/11th Line, Detour 2 east to Oxford Road 4). Tecumseh St. will remain open to local traffic only.

The contractor will be required to maintain access as best as possible to all properties. Some short-term interruptions and delays can be expected during this work. Construction is anticipated to be completed in two (2) traffic stages with a northbound lane for traffic to be maintained at all times.

All transit buses southbound on the City's Route 4 are to be detoured for construction for this project. Northbound routes will remain unchanged.

Pedestrian access over the bridge will be maintained on one side of the bridge throughout construction. Sidewalk location is subject to change along with traffic staging.

There is no expected impact to regular household waste and recyclable collection.

Contacts

Dan Gyenes
Inspector
Oxford County
519-536-0218
dgyenes@oxfordcounty.ca

Ryan Vink
Project Manager
Oxford County
519-539-9800, ext. 3023
rvink@oxfordcounty.ca

This notice issued February 5, 2024

Two wind farms proposed for East Zorra-Tavistock

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A forecasted increase in energy demand in Ontario has an area windmill company looking at revisiting a site near Innerkip for a wind farm. They are also proposing a second site around Cassel.

Helmut Schneider is the Vice President of Renewable Energy Development at Prowind Renewables, an international company with an office in Woodstock. He said they are looking to help the province meet its power demands in the not-to-distant future. "Our vision is to build another community wind project in Oxford Center with 2 clusters of wind turbines in the Innerkip and Cassel areas. The reason for exploring the possibilities now is a recent announcement by the IESO that Ontario needs an additional 5000 MW of capacity over the next 10 years and is planning the next procurement of 2000 MW capacity in the next two years."

The original site is located between the 'Field of Dreams' and Braemar Sideroad on both sides of the 16th Line while the new proposed location is amongst the 14th and 17th Lines in the Cassel and Maplewood Sideroads area. Prowind brought the current Gunn's Hill wind farm online in 2016, a development located in Oxford Centre south of Woodstock.

Prowind is working with a co-operative, Oxford Community Energy, to

get the project going. Schneider said he is involved with both organizations. "I am an employee at Prowind but also the president of the co-op. It was formed in 2015 when the approval was given for the Gunn's Hill project. The co-op owns 49 percent of that wind farm meaning that members of the community own it and benefit from the electricity that has been produced." He added the people who invested in the project receive a solid financial benefit from it. The same type of model is planned for the two projects in EZT which would also see a landowner receive a lease agreement calculated at three percent of the gross revenue with a minimum guarantee of \$ 25,000 per year for about half an acre of land. "We see our landowners as partners and treat them with fairness," said Schneider.

The idea of a wind farm in EZT was first introduced by the same company about eight years ago. "We did talk to some landowners in the Innerkip area and after the FIT program was closed down, we had to move away from that but now that the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) is inquiring about our piece for the next six to eight years, we wanted to go back to the same landowners to give them the opportunity first." The highly controversial FIT was introduced in 2009 by the then-provincial Liberal government to encourage residents and business owners to install clean renewable energy projects.

Schneider explained planning is in its



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Gunn's Hill wind farm project, pictured here, was completed in 2016 by Prowind.

very early stages and the required procurement from the IESO means they don't know who they would be selling the power to yet. "We anticipate that to come in early 2025 and we wouldn't know until mid-year if a project is approved for development. In order to get that approval, we of course want to first see if there are landowners interested in working with us. We want to see if the municipal councils are interested in supporting a project."

Should the project proceed as Prowind plans, the final decision would fall on the lap of East Zorra-Tavistock Council. Mayor Phil Schaefer said the township has not been approached with any proposal for wind farms in the township at this point. "It is important to note that the process also includes the requirement that the applicant must submit to the IESO a resolution from the local municipal council that supports the application. The applicant will need to seek such a resolution from township council, and it will be council's decision whether to provide one." Schaefer said he has heard little from residents on this topic, most likely because it has just surfaced. "I do expect more discussion with residents as the process unfolds."

At least one area politician is intrigued about the possibility of a pair of wind farms in EZT. Oxford County Warden Marcus Ryan said the project fits into the recently approved strategic plan and a pledge of 100 percent renewable energy. "There is a commitment to advancing environmental sustainability, specifically climate change mitigation and adaptation. If Oxford County was asked, I suspect it would be pretty easy to give support in principle," he added.

Much of the controversy when it comes to wind farms involves what critics say are the health risks to those living nearby. Ryan hopes people will follow the

science which he said suggests the opposite. "There is always some amount of resistance to change in our society. With respect to windmills, I would differentiate between evidence-based and justifiable concerns which are legitimate. If you have a windmill close to your property it will be a visual change and that's relatively minor, I think." He added concerns people have about health risks due to vibration and noise are largely unfounded. "There are very large wind farms in very high residential density areas around the world. We also know this because there is a Gunn's Hill wind farm that's been there for a number of years with little to no complaints once it was up and running."

Not everyone agrees with Ryan's thinking, including a farming couple located in one of the proposed wind farm areas. They reached out to the Gazette asking that they not be named, at least for now. The couple was invited to an information dinner last week hosted by Prowind where area residents asked questions. She said despite that there are many unanswered questions. "They never talk about animal health or any effects on crops or the roads they plan to put in from one to the next turbine. If you sign the agreement (to have a windmill on your property) you give up the right to dictate how far it will be from your home." The couple said they are not interested at all in participating but are worried a neighbour may think differently. "I don't wish these things on any of them, whether they want them or not. I'm more concerned about the neighbours who don't want them." According to the couple, some people have already signed up to be a part of the wind farm project. "We live in a gem of a county. We fought against the high-speed rail through here and now they want that land for wind turbines. We just want to farm. We want to see our horizons."

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Ring A Ding Ding Chilly Charlie Predicts An Early Spring

Woodstock's resident Groundhog, Chilly Charlie was slowly waking up and ready to celebrate 2024's Groundhog Day on Friday, February 2 at South Gate Centre. The morning consisted of a Pancake Breakfast for \$6 served dine-in or drive-thru pickup from 7:30 am until 9:00 am. It was a cloudy morning, no shadow, early spring. Chilly Charlie, conceived by the late Mr. Don Engle, emerged as a

creative idea from the mind of a retired schoolteacher and dedicated South Gate Centre member/volunteer. Don Engle, intrigued by the global festivities that united communities in the midst of the dreariest month, was particularly captivated by the celebrations that brought people together for something fun and eccentric. The inspiration struck after Don had to miss the festivities in Warton due to a severe

snowstorm. Determined to bring the spirit of celebration to his own community, he reached out to Woodstock's Mayor with a proposal: "Why not celebrate Groundhog Day in Woodstock?" This marked the beginning of a unique tradition. In 2005, the first proclamation officially recognizing Groundhog Day in Woodstock was penned. The idea was not just about predicting the weather but about fostering

community spirit and injecting some joy into the bleakest days of winter. It became a fantastic way for the Woodstock community to come together, brightening up a day that might otherwise be overshadowed by the monotony of winter. Chilly Charlie, undoubtedly, became a symbol of the community's resilience and the joy found in celebrating the whimsical aspects of life.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Chilly Charlie and his entourage arrive.



Dave Clark (Chair Members Board) and Mayor Jerry Acchione prepare to welcome Chilly Charlie.

Police briefs in Oxford County

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Woodstock Police Service is asking for the public's help in locating a missing male. Cory, age 43, has been reported as missing and was last observed in July 2023 in Woodstock.

If you have information about Cory's whereabouts, please contact the Woodstock Police Service at 519-537-2323, or Crime Stoppers. (see photo below)

Drug trafficking charges

Three Woodstock residents are facing charges in connection to a drug trafficking investigation.

On January 17 the Woodstock Police Service Criminal Intelligence and Drug Enforcement Unit, with the assistance of the Emergency Response Unit, Canine Unit, and Uniform Patrol officers, executed a search warrant at a Woodstock residence. During the investigation, police seized a replica firearm, and suspected cocaine and fentanyl with an approximate street value of over \$19,600.

Two men and a woman from Woodstock have all been charged with possession of cocaine and opioids for the purpose of trafficking. One of the men faces additional charges of failing to comply with an undertaking, and possession of an identity document.

Oxford OPP

Zorra collision sends one person to hospital

A two-vehicle collision in Zorra Township has sent one person to hospital.

At 8 a.m. on Monday, the Oxford detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police along with members of Oxford County Paramedic Services and Fire Services from Zorra responded to a collision that occurred at the intersection of 37th Line and Road 84 in Zorra Township.

The investigation revealed that a hatchback and a dump truck collided in the intersection. No injuries were reported from either driver however the passenger of the hatchback was airlifted to hospital by Ornge. Police say the injured person was last reported as being in stable condition.

Anyone with information about this ongoing investigation

is asked to contact the Oxford OPP at 1-888-310-1122. No word yet on potential charges.

Over 50 traffic charges laid in one day in the county

On February 6 the West Region Traffic Incident Management and Enforcement Team of the Ontario Provincial Police were on patrol in various areas of Oxford County. The action resulted in 52 charges being laid.

Police stopped multiple drivers for speeding and stunt driving. Three stunt drivers were charged with travelling at speeds ranging from 153 to 191 km/hr in posted 100km/hr zones. Other charges included failing to stop on the right for emergency vehicles, driving without valid permits, and driving without valid insurance.

Police were not able to provide a breakdown of all the charges and where in the county they were laid.

Police warning the public about online marketplace fraudsters

Police are cautioning Oxford County residents about the dangers of online marketplace scams that are occurring in our communities.

On January 22 the Oxford OPP Ontario Provincial Police (were notified of a suspected fraud in South-West Oxford Township. A resident responded to an ad on an online mar-

ketplace advertising a couch for sale. The buyer sent a \$50 deposit through electronic banking. The seller stopped communicating with the buyer after the deposit was sent.

The OPP is warning all Oxford County residents to be extremely vigilant when searching online sites with items for sale. Some scam artists use stolen photos in their ads, claiming they are pictures of items that they have for sale. The seller will ask for the entire amount or a deposit in advance and once they receive the money they stop responding or delete the ad altogether.

Weekend Quiz

1. What number does M represent in Roman Numerals?
2. In the animated kid's show Franklin, who is Franklin's best friend?
3. Who was the longest serving host of the "Late-Night" show?
4. The Bay of Pigs invasion, planned to overthrow who?
5. What is the Super Bowl trophy called?
6. Wikipedia launched in what year?
7. What do you call the metal piece that separates the pencil and the eraser?
8. What are the three secondary colours?
9. What social media platform has the most users?
10. Which vertebrate animal has the longest lifespan?

This week's answers are found on pg. 37



Woodstock Police are asking for help locating Cory, missing since July of 2023.

Gunn's Hill Cheese Plant Tour and Tasting

It was a delightful experience at Gunn's Hill Artisan Cheese on a cold and bitter January 20th morning. The contrast between the chilly weather outside and the warm welcome indoors made the tour and tasting even more enjoyable. Gunn's Hill Artisan Cheese has a unique story and a Swiss influence that sets its cheeses apart. It's fascinating that Shep Ysselstein learned techniques and recipes in the town of Handeck, in the Swiss Alps, and

brought that expertise to the cheese-making process at Gunn's Hill. This international influence contributes to the distinct flavors and qualities of their cheeses. The artisan cheese plant is located in the picturesque setting of Gunn's Hill Rd. in Oxford County, Ontario, that adds to the charm of the experience. The dedication of the two full-time cheese makers and their team, combined with the Swiss-inspired craftsmanship, has resulted in the

production of high-quality, award-winning cheeses. It's also impressive to learn about the growth of the business, with the cheeses now available in over 300 locations across Ontario. This success is a testament to the hard work and passion of owners Shep Ysselstein and Colleen Bator. It's a source of pride for them to see their cheeses gaining popularity and recognition. Overall, Gunn's Hill Artisan Cheese offers not only delicious cheeses but also

a rich and immersive experience for visitors. It's wonderful to see small businesses like this thriving and making a positive impact in the world of artisanal food. Visitors are welcome to visit Gunn's Hill Artisan Cheese to experience the unique area, learn about dairy farming and local agriculture, take a tour (must be booked ahead of time) and most importantly, simply enjoy wonderfully delicious cheeses.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Welcome from Morgan DeGier, Shep and Willem Ysselstein and Brooke VanVliet.



Morgan at their smaller holding tank. This one is for goat, sheep or buffalo milk. Cow, goat and sheep milk are from local farms. Buffalo milk comes from a farm in Elgin.



This tank holds the pasteurized milk and with added cultures and fermentation additives and produces the cheese's distinctive flavor as the milk becomes curds.



Brooke at the station where the cheese wheels are extracted from their molds.



One of the many controlled rooms where the cheeses are aged.



The molds are filled with the cheese curds and pressed to evenly pack them into cheese wheels.



Rack of Buffalo Milk Cheese finished and ready for cutting and packaging.

EZT launches free transportation program Woodstock one of the destinations

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

East Zorra Tavistock Township has launched EZTransit, a pilot project operating to send riders to appointments, social and recreational activities. The bus hit the streets for the first time yesterday, Jan. 31.

Two different routes will operate from Wednesday to Saturday. Route 1 includes stops in Hickson, Tavistock, Innerkip, and Woodstock and runs Wednesday, Friday, and every other Saturday on even days of the month. Route 2 has stops in Hickson, Innerkip, Tavistock, and Stratford. It will be in operation on Thursday, and every other Saturday on odd days. No service will be offered on Sundays, statutory holidays, or civic holidays.

EZT CAO Karen DePrest said there will be no charge for riders during the pilot period. "The funding for the program is coming from the money that was set aside in a reserve from the 2021 budget for the initial transit pilot program proposed in that year. With the onset of the pandemic and changes in councils from the election, EZT decided to obtain a used transit bus and pilot the program on its own in 2023 to see what interest arises from it." The original pilot program was intended to run from December 14 to April 13, but insurance obligations and requirements delayed implementation. "It is still our intention to run a 4-month pilot program, which would see the bus running until at least the end of May. Council has reserved the right to extend the pilot if necessary and any impact on rates, dates or routes would be addressed sometime in April



or May accordingly," she added.

The savings from 2021 amounted to \$33,750 to cover the cost of the program. The township posted for a contract position or positions in December and two people were hired to drive the bus during the pilot.

Residents of the township were notified EZTransit would be starting this week on Monday, just two days before the launch. DePrest said they will continue to educate the public. "As far as sharing of the information, the social media news release is the first of multiple ways of getting the message out including posters, brochures, word of mouth, and updates will be provided to the council

over the next several months on its status." The bus can carry 10 passengers at a time with an additional three accessibly secured spaces. Ridership will be on a first come first serve basis.

From an accessibility standpoint, the bus is equipped with mobility aid ramps and multiple mobility aid spaces. "We offer priority seating on all transit vehicles and allow you to ride with a service animal. In the case where a bus stop is tem-

porarily inaccessible, riders will be able to board or exit the bus at the nearest accessible and safe location," said DePrest. Children under the age of 13 must be accompanied by an adult but there is no way to safely secure a car seat. The township said parents and caretakers should hold a child tightly or use a front-pack carrier and strollers must be able to fit through the front doors and down the aisles to board the bus.

EZT staff will be working with Oxford County's Rural Economic Development Corporation after the initial soft launch to do some survey work with passengers to provide some demographic information on ridership, destination, cost feasibility, and more.

The bus will not operate if weather or road conditions are deemed unsafe. Service cancellations and delays will be posted on the township's Facebook and X (Twitter) pages.

Riders will also have an opportunity to hitch a ride to Kitchener-Waterloo. The connection comes through an alternate provider that also stops in Stratford. "The timing of stops has been set to ensure that our bus arrives and departs from the various locations in order to make these connections," explained DePrest.

More information including exact routes and timing can be found at <https://www.ezt.ca/en/resources/EZTransit-Web-Brochure.pdf>.

Join the Woodstock Hospital Board of Trust

Woodstock Hospital is seeking to recruit two new members to join the Board of Trust. Board of Trust members are all volunteers that either live or work in Woodstock or its immediate surrounding area.

The Board serves as the governing body for the Woodstock Hospital and is a skills-based Board. We are seeking Board members that have an agriculture, and/or small business, and/or technology background.

The Board's governance responsibilities include strategic planning, financial stewardship, quality and performance monitoring. Please visit the hospital website www.woodstockhospital.ca to learn more about the hospital's strategic initiatives and mission, vision and values statements.

In addition to monthly meetings that occur on the last Tuesday of the month (except July, August and December) at 5:00 p.m., Board members may also be appointed to one or more Standing Committees of the Board.

Term of Office

The duration of each term is 3 years. Board members may serve a maximum of 4 terms.

How to Apply

Prospective candidates are invited to email their resume to Heather Scherer at hscherer@woodstockhospital.ca Please include a cover letter detailing why you would be the ideal candidate.

Deadline

The deadline for submissions is **Monday, February 19, 2024 at 4:00 pm.**



SOUTH EASTHOPE
MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the SOUTH EASTHOPE MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY

Notice is hereby given that the 152nd Annual Meeting of South Easthope Mutual Insurance Company will be held at **Grace United Church, 116 Woodstock Street South, Tavistock, Ontario, on Friday March 8, 2024** at 1:30 p.m.

The meeting will commence with a presentation "Managing Severe Weather Risks" by Glenn McGillivray, from the Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction.

The business portion will follow this special presentation for the purposes of:

1. Receiving and approving the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Corporation held March 3, 2023.
2. Receiving the Auditor's Report and Financial Statement for the year ended December 31, 2023.
3. Appointing Auditors for the 2024 fiscal year.
4. Electing three directors, each for a term of three years.

Any member wishing to seek election or re-election as a director must have filed their intention to stand for election in writing with the Secretary of the Corporation at least thirty days in advance of the Annual Meeting.

A complete version of the audited financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2023 are available for viewing on the company website at www.southeasthope.com. A member may also request a copy by written request at least 14 days before the Annual Meeting.

Jennifer R. Kearsey, CIP – President & CEO
For the Board of Directors



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Woodstock FC encourages PJs to Practice for childhood cancer awareness

EMILY STEWART

Echo Correspondent

Soccer players at all levels with Woodstock FC wore their pyjamas to support children and their families affected by cancer.

The Woodstock soccer club, which offers both competitive and recreational soccer, announced PJs to Practice Week for Childcan on Facebook. The post from January 26 said the week-long fundraiser began on February 11 and will run to February 17. Athletes were to bring \$2 to their coach and wear PJs, in honour of the children facing cancer who head to hospital treatments in their pyjamas.

"Kids are out there, wearing their PJs, playing sports, supporting kids who are unable to play due to their illness," Andrew Pogson, coach of the U9 girls competitive soccer team and director of social media, said.

Cancer has affected the lives of Woodstock FC members. Sharon Docherty, Woodstock FC President, is a cancer survivor. Pogson's co-coach, Jeff Freitas, has a son who has been battling cancer off-and-on. Elizabeth Freitas, who is involved with Childcan, approached Pogson and asked if the soccer teams would be interested in participating in PJ Day, an event Childcan runs every February

15 for International Childhood Cancer Awareness Day.

"When the idea was brought to the board, they were immediately supportive of it and really it was just 'This is something we would like to support and how can we best get behind it and what's a way that would resonate with our participants that made sense, so it didn't feel awkward or out of field?'" he said. "I think the idea of PJs to Practice fits perfectly and my hope and goal is that it's a tremendous fundraiser and that'll be something that we'll look at running each year."

PJs to Practice is a week-long fundraiser, as there are several teams who all practice on different days. The Woodstock FC social media campaign for the fundraiser received positive feedback with likes and shares. The coaches are also talking to the teams about childhood cancer and how it is affecting the Freitas family.

"It's one of those things where everybody's family or a lot of people's families have been touched by it," Pogson said. "So, the coaches are really doing a great job of putting out the support that we want to put behind these kids who are unable to play."

Woodstock FC hopes to raise between \$500 to \$600 for Childcan.

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Udderly Ridiculous' Cheryl Haskett speaking at Women's Day Breakfast

EMILY STEWART

Echo Correspondent

Just before heading to Brazil and Costa Rica to conduct research, Udderly Ridiculous Farm Life founder Cheryl Haskett will be the guest of honor at the Community Futures Oxford Women's Day Breakfast. The event is being held on February 27 at the Elm Hurst Inn in Ingersoll. Registration begins at 7:30 a.m. followed by breakfast at 8 and Haskett speaking at 9. The rest of the morning will be an opportunity to network.

Janet Wakutz from Community Futures Oxford said Haskett was her first choice for a keynote speaker. "I think she represents a lot of qualities that not just women can aspire to, but business owners. She has really explored the area of agritourism," Wakutz said. "She's very creative. She's not afraid to think out of the box and try new things and I also know she has a lot of experience speaking."

Haskett is looking forward to sharing her experience with the guests, as well as learning from others' experiences. "I'm really honoured to have been invited to speak at the breakfast." She will discuss marketing strategies, execution, and how to manage challenges that arise, relating to her own stories of what worked and what didn't. "As small to medium business owners and as women, we tend to take on everything," she said. "We're wearing every kind of hat there is and sometimes we don't have the opportunity to learn best practices or see what other people are doing and understand how that's being executed, so it's an opportunity for others to be able to say that's what's behind x or that's what behind y."

International Women's Day falls on March 8, but Community Futures Oxford is running its celebratory breakfast at an earlier date because of Haskett's schedule. She is one of the six Canadian Nuffield scholars, and a two-year research

project requires her to travel internationally for at least 10 weeks to gather information. While she is in Costa Rica and Brazil researching agritourism, another person will operate Udderly Ridiculous Farm Life.

Haskett said that while women running small and medium-sized businesses create significant revenue in Canada, it can still be difficult for women to receive funding for their businesses. She praised Community Futures Oxford for the services offered to small businesses in the region, especially helping women entrepreneurs like herself. "It's been really lovely to partner with Community Futures Oxford and have them really see my dream and my vision, and in the midst of the Pandemic, pivot with me," she said. "I really appreciate what they bring to the community."

Community Futures Oxford also has a wish list of items for Domestic Abuse Services Oxford (DASO) and attendees

are encouraged to bring donations to the event. "It's a great opportunity for supporting women in another way," said Wakutz. "We're supporting women business owners and women that need an extra bit of help at some difficult times."

The cause is meaningful for Haskett, as Udderly Ridiculous Farm Life's Wreck the Dress event raises money for Women Crisis Services of Waterloo Region. "Any way we can help support and educate women to stand on their own feet is an event worth being a part of."

Although the Women's Day Breakfast will be celebrating women, people of all genders are welcome to attend. Tickets are \$15 each and can be purchased at www.eventbrite.ca/e/udderly-ridiculous-success-tackling-challenges-with-innovative-marketing-tickets-804152209907?aff=oddtcreator. Visit www.daso.ca/wish-list to view a wish list of items to be donated.

Police investigating hate-motivated incident in Ingersoll

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

practice in Ingersoll while Shelley is a town native. He said he still has faith in Ingersoll to be an inclusive community. "It's disappointing but not surprising given where we are here and the history we've had over the past few years. You hope for the best in people and honestly, it's a small minority. The overwhelming majority of people don't have this as an issue in their lives. It's just the ones who disagree who seem more interested in inserting themselves into the lives of others instead of letting them live the life they want to live."

The support from the community has been heartwarming for the couple, who were tipped off about the vandalism by a customer. They were able to clean it up before opening that day and have turned something negative into a positive. "We had it off before any of our staff or patrons came in. The conversation then was about what to do about this, aside from letting the authorities know because it is a hate crime. We decided that whoever this individual was, they were going to be the inspiration for our Day of Love, Equality, and Coffee Day," added Clow. All the brewed coffee sold every February 8 will see the proceeds donated to Oxford Pride. Altitude Coffee Roasters, Evergreen's supplier out of Port Burwell, has agreed to match the dollar figure.

Ingersoll Deputy Mayor Lindsay Wilson released a statement on behalf of the town, saying the incident and the beliefs

that inspired it are deeply harmful to the aspirations and prosperity of Ingersoll. "A thriving community is one where all residents and visitors alike feel welcome to shop, explore, volunteer, work, learn, and prosper without discrimination. More importantly, all residents hold the very basic human right of living life to its fullest without questioning their safety or belonging. Until that is undeniably the case for everyone, there is much work to do."

She also has a message for 2SLGBTQIA+ residents. "We celebrate the joy and contributions you bring to the community. We affirm your identity exactly as you are and will continue to stand with you until your safety and well-being are unequivocal. Each of us is being called to stand against bias not just in our hearts and our words, but with our actions. Thank you to those who joined in such a peaceful response to a hateful act. These actions demonstrated that hate has no home here in Ingersoll."

Clow said the business, which opened a little over a month ago, has had a very positive response from the community. "People are happy there is a place they can come to. We had a Coffee Culture here but after it closed there was really nothing to replace it. It has filled a niche that hadn't been filled. It's been steady and we have had really good feedback. Ingersoll has always been a good, supportive place for business and the people have shown that this past month."



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Provincial Police are investigating a possible hate crime that occurred at Ingersoll's Evergreen Coffee Lounge.

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"Ceilidh" - A Scottish Gathering

The "Ceilidh" at Dundas St. United Church in Woodstock, ON, on February 2nd, 2024, was a delightful event filled with Scottish traditions and entertainment. The traditional Scottish roast beef

dinner and Scottish trifle added a delicious touch to the gathering, and the inclusion of haggis would have provided a truly authentic experience for those willing to try it. The entertainment lineup, featur-

ing the Sim School of Highland Dance, Dave Presswell and Catherine Stark on the bagpipes, and Bill Gibbons on piano, contributed to the festive atmosphere and showcased various elements of Scottish

culture. Events like these are not only an opportunity to enjoy good food and entertainment but also to celebrate and appreciate the rich cultural heritage that events like the "Ceilidh" bring to the community.



Sim School of Highland Dance from Embro were Meyra, Anita, Lilli, Tenly Eliza and Jayna. (RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Top: Pipers David Presswell and Catherine Stark.



Left: Mike Martineau entertained on guitar and song.



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Wedding GUIDE

Oxford County

SEW STYLISH

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(TRACEY SCHUTT - BLACKMORE MEDIAPHOTO)




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Karen has over 20 years of experience in the floral industry and opened her own business as an event designer in 2009! Her passion has forever been flowers and weddings so for her it seemed meant to be! Karen's expertise and knowledge was established and built by working in various wholesale floral companies and florists in addition to her years of freelancing as a floral designer.

If you or someone you know is getting married you can trust Karen and her talented team to create the wedding flowers of your dreams! Like us on Facebook or follow us on Instagram @sugarbloomfloral.

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Wedding Planning Checklist

12 MONTHS BEFORE

- Set a budget
- Make a guest list
- Choose bridal Party
- Hire a Wedding planner
- Decide style and theme
- Choose a venue
- Sample & select a caterer.

11 MONTHS BEFORE

- Choose color scheme
- Hire photographer & videographer
- Hire band or DJ

10 MONTHS BEFORE

- Wedding dress shopping
- Invitations

9 MONTHS BEFORE

- Buy dress

8 MONTHS BEFORE

- Choose bridesmaids dresses
- Choose flowers

7 MONTHS BEFORE

- Book rehearsal dinner venue
- Choose music for ceremony
- Order decorations
- Hire officiant

6 MONTHS BEFORE

- Book transport for guests
- Book transport for you

5 MONTHS BEFORE

- Book honeymoon
- Book or rent mens tuxedos

4 MONTHS BEFORE

- Choose cake
- Buy wedding bands
- Hair & makeup trial

3 MONTHS BEFORE

- Choose guests favors
- Write vows
- Select readings

2 MONTHS BEFORE

- Dress fitting
- Pick up marriage license
- Break in wedding shoes

1 MONTH BEFORE

- Assemble gift bags
- Pay vendors in full
- Create Seating chart
- Venue walk-through
- hair color refresh
- Mani/Pedi
- Final Dress Fitting
- Practise vows out loud

NIGHT BEFORE

- Eat Healthy meal
- Drink Water
- Get a good nights sleep



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Wedding To-Do List:

10 THINGS TO DO FIRST



1. Set a realistic wedding budget.
2. Find a seasoned wedding planner.
3. Secure your venue early.
4. Communicate the date to your bridal party.
5. Decide your wedding aesthetic.
6. Announce your wedding with your first stationery piece.
7. Get started booking the high-demand vendors.
8. Prioritize booking your photographer, entertainment, and rentals.
9. Book accommodations for your guests.
10. Go on a date!



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Vansittart bridge construction underway

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

It started. The construction project in Woodstock that no one wants but needs to be done. The Vansittart Bridge is being completely replaced which means only northbound traffic will be running until likely sometime in December.

There were two main options Oxford County had to choose from. One was closing the bridge for six or seven months. The second was allowing northbound traffic to flow and adding 3 or 4 months to the timeline. The latter was chosen.

Project Manager Ryan Vink said it's a big job. "The full deck will be replaced, right down to the girders which are the beams that go across the bridge from pier to pier. The entire deck will be ripped off and a new deck will be poured. It's more than your typical, minor rehab work."

The question that gets asked the most when this type of project begins is how it can take so long. Vink explained they considered many factors. "I understand people's frustrations but at the same time, the bridge needs to be repaired to maintain service. If we were to complete it in one stage with a full closure it would be completed sooner, plus or minus three or four months." He said the work is being done in two stages to keep northbound traffic flowing. A report was given to County Council last year outlining several options for the project and emergency services preferred the one-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The map, supplied by Oxford County, shows the available detours for southbound traffic.

way northbound idea.

"The additional time to construct is in part because of that but also because it

is a major infrastructure project. There's a lot of stuff involved. We can't just rip the deck off and pour a new one.

There's structural steel in there which takes weeks to place, and it needs to be checked to make sure it's in the right place. There's a lot of steel in that bridge and a lot of components just beyond the deck."

The county feels northbound traffic across the bridge will be business as usual, for the most part. Vink explained those coming into Woodstock or trying to get across from the south end of the city will be the ones facing a challenge. "It's going to be a pain and we know there are going to be issues, specifically at Oxford Road 4 and 17 and Oxford Road 2 and 30. Those are the worst points along the detour route. When you take a piece of infrastructure away that is so important to an area, there's no way to have major and negative impacts to traffic." The county will be examining the situation although the first two weeks won't provide a fair assessment as everyone is still adjusting to the detour. "We are doing everything we can to get the word out, so people don't come to the bridge and realize it's closed without knowing. After a few weeks, we will be monitoring those (detour) intersections to see if there is anything we can do to improve them."

The work is being performed by Woodstock's Sienna Construction at a total cost of \$6.3 million. Vink said he couldn't be happier a local firm won the contract. "We were excited that a local contractor gave us great pricing," added Vink.

Oxford's Best Kept Secret

CAROL BOSSENBERRY

Echo Correspondent

One of Oxford County's best-kept secrets is hidden away at 82 Light Street in the Governor's house located in the middle of Court House Square, Woodstock. Housed in the former residence of the Governor of the "Old Gaol" are thousands of books, documents, and microfilm reels; resources for those looking into the past and tracing their ancestral roots.

Oxford County Branch of Ontario Ancestors, founded in 1979, opened its doors at this location in January 2012. The group had been long-time residents in the area, first in the basement of 93 Graham Street and later in the Old Registry Office at the corner of Hunter and Graham Streets. The focus of the group is the collection and preservation of information that would be useful for anyone researching their ancestors who lived in Oxford County, surrounding counties, and beyond. The Oxford County collection is unique to the area and is not available online.

Genealogy is one of the fastest-growing pastimes in North America popularized by TV programs such as "Finding Your Roots" where professional genealogists look into the past of celebrities. Most of us have had questions about our own origins. Amateur genealogists and family historians tackle the "where did I come from" question by following the paper trail back generation by generation looking at birth, marriage, death records, obituaries, wills, church records, census records, and land records to prove the relationships between generations from parents back to grandparents, great grandparents and so on.

"Finding out about your family's past history can give you a sense of belonging to a larger group. You never know what you will find once you start researching. You may



discover ancestors and relationships you never knew existed. You definitely have to put yourself in the time and place of the era you are searching. Acceptable norms of the time may not be so in today's world. One must be prepared for the unexpected" says Cathy Bechard, a researcher for the Branch.

For anyone interested in learning more about researching their family history, drop into the Open House on Family Day, February 19th, from 10 am until 4 pm. Volunteers will be available to help you get started or answer your questions.

"Once you start researching your ancestors, you can become very excited with each piece of information you find

that gives you an insight into your ancestors' lives. With a bit of digging most people can trace their families back 150 years or more" says Patti Wallace, also one of the Branch research volunteers.

"Oxford County was first settled in the early 1800s. Those early settlers left their mark, maybe in a county directory, through the purchase or sale of land, in an obituary, on a headstone or in a will. Descendants of some of those early families have come back to Oxford County to uncover their roots. Many of these people have added their completed works to the branch family history collection – now numbering over 500. We have had visitors from as far away as Sweden, Australia, the United Kingdom as well as all across Canada and the US" says Pat Adam, also a research team member.

The research library is a non-lending, private library, open to the public on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 10 am to 4 pm. Volunteers are on hand to help, assisting with locating materials and providing instruction on the use of the equipment, etc.

For researchers unable to visit our library, our volunteer research team will do a limited search using available resources for a reasonable fee. All fees go to expanding the collection and maintaining the library. Genealogy classes are held at the Governor's House and speakers can be booked to give family history presentations to community groups.

Oxford Branch holds virtual meetings with speakers who present topics of interest to genealogists and family historians. The meetings are open to everyone – member or not. Register for free at our website <https://oxford.ogs.on.ca>

You will be sent a link to join the meeting. Hope to see you there!

Love is Love Valentine's Dance

Held at Unifor Hall Local 636 was Love is Love Valentine's Dance. Oxford County Pride hosted this event on February 10th. A lively atmosphere to the various activities like dancing, posing in the photo booth and participating in the silent auction. There was something for everyone to enjoy. And who could

resist the allure of a candy wonderland? It was a memorable experience for all attendees, whether they come alone or with friends. With prizes, swag, and opportunities to connect with others, it was a fantastic time.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



This whole gang made for a successful evening that included Kay, Trissa, Tera, Alicia, Chris, Parker, Sarah, Jordan, Steph and Tami.



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PLAY FOR KIDS' SAKE 2024 Big Brothers Big Sisters Bowling



On the ball were the BDO Canada LLP teams of Paige Carter, Kristen Leach, Abdulla Darso, Alex Cripps, Tyna Crockford, Jared Humeston, Stacey Larizza and Abbey Somers.



Team Journey Well Health and Wellness bowling were Melissa Garrett, Stephanie Goold, Amanda McCooye and Jane Martin.



Lanes were busy with bowling supporters.



Organizers of this fundraiser were Nicolle Killaire (Fund Development Manager), Erica Hughes (Volunteer Coordinator) and Liz Wismer-Van Meer (Manager of Communications).

Held at C&D Lanes, Woodstock, on February 8th supporters bowled for "Play For Kids Sake" fund raiser. They gathered their teams, rallied their families and rallied their coworkers because it was a

time to make a difference for a fantastic cause "Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oxford County. Get Ready to Play for Kids' Sake". They were rolling strikes on the bowling lanes that turned up the fun dial. They

came together to support the community and created lasting impacts for the youth in need. Teams had the opportunity to bowl and indoor golf simulation. Also curl in a Woodstock bonspiel (Curl For Kids,

February 24th). Bowling was offered in Ingersoll and Woodstock, with indoor golf simulation events in Tillsonburg and Woodstock.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



HAPPY FAMILY DAY
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Indoor Golf Scramble Tournament at Fore! Oxford



On January 20th at Fore! Oxford, Woodstock, teams of four golfers teed off for a Golf Scramble at the Indoor Golf Simulators for a challenging tournament. A scramble means that all team members tee off on each hole and then decide which tee shot they like the best. The other team members pick up their balls and place them (no closer to the hole) of the marked spot and repeat. The concept of an indoor golf facility like Fore! Oxford is intriguing and offers golf enthusiasts a unique and immersive experience. Fore! Oxford created a dynamic and enjoyable indoor golfing experience, attracting a diverse range of players and ensuring they keep coming back for more. More Scramble Tournaments are scheduled at Fore! Oxford on February 17 and March 16. For more information and sign up contact at 972 Dundas Street, Woodstock, 519-290-9535 or info@foreoxford.ca.

Winning Team of Chris Thompson G J Kuhn Liam Irwin and Paul Dickson with a score of -21 and 51 for their round.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)

Navy Vets head into final 2 weekends of regular season 1 point back of 1st place

JIM TAYLOR

Echo Correspondent

The Woodstock Navy Vets are in the thick of a pennant race and sit 1-point back of New Hamburg Firebirds in PJHL Doherty Division with a terrific 28-7-3-0 record as they head into the final 2 weekends of the regular season.

The Navy Vets host the Firebirds at Southwood Arena on Friday night February 16 in a huge "Battle for 1st place". A Vets win would move them into 1st place with a 1-point lead but a loss would put them 3 points back with just 3 games remaining for each team.

The Vets also host Paris Titans in their annual Family Day matinee game on Monday February at 1:45pm.

Their final home game of the regular season will be on Fan Appreciation Night on

February 26. They will also honour their 3 overagers who are graduating from junior hockey after this season ... Mitch Jenner, Ty Crombie, and Tyler Smeda.

It would be great to see huge loud crowds at the Reeves Community Complex for the final 3 home games cheering on the Navy Vets in their push for the pennant.

Sunday afternoon in Hespeler this past weekend was a milestone game for Vets goalie Tyler Bouck who recorded his 4th shutout of the season to tie the franchise regular season record set by Ken Kitching back in the 1968-69 season. It was also Bouck's 18th win of the season just 2 short of tying another record set by Kitching in the same season.

Davin Gray continues to lead the team and Doherty Division in scoring ... with 59 points on 16 goals and 43 assists thru 38 games as of Feb 11.

Nolan Brett leads the team with 25 goals.

Upcoming February games

Fri Feb 16 vs NEW HAMBURG @ 7:45 –

Sat Feb 17 at WELLESLEY @ 7:30pm

Mon Feb 19 vs PARIS at Southwood Arena @ 1:45pm (Family Day) – Minor Sports Day

Fri Feb 23 vs TAVISTOCK at Southwood Arena @ 7:45 pm – Fan Appreciation Night

Playoffs Dates TBA

WOODSTOCK NAVY VETS

Top Scorers (PJHL)

(as of February 12, 2024)

PLAYER	POS	GP	G	A	PTS
Davin Gray	F	38	16	43	59
Nolan Brett	F	37	25	26	51
Ethan Szabo	F	32	13	23	36
Brodie Kearns	F	30	8	21	29
Tyler Smeda	D	38	10	18	28
Chris Coulter	D	31	12	15	27
Ty Crombie	D	30	10	14	24
Cole Dann	F	37	11	12	23
Sam Barry	F	38	9	13	22
Nolan Burnside	F	32	8	14	22

THAMESFORD TROJANS

Top Scorers (PJHL)

(as of February 12, 2024)

PLAYER	POS	GP	G	A	PTS
Will Lewis	D	33	19	26	45
Alex MacLeod	F	37	17	24	41
Jack Weber	F	33	10	23	33
Ewan Meiklejohn	F	38	10	20	30
Matthew Pimentel	F	36	14	14	28
Ronan Panziera	F	31	14	12	26
Yusuf Jomaa	F	33	13	11	24
Carter Musselman	F	36	8	16	24
Owen Kernohan	F	35	6	16	22
Brett Busby	F	27	8	10	18

WOODSTOCK LAKERS

Top Scorers (WOSHL)

(as of February 12, 2024)

PLAYER	POS	GP	G	A	PTS
Kevin Hu	F	19	35	24	59
Christian Polillo	F	20	15	34	49
Hunter Dubecki	F	16	9	21	30
Mitch Britton	F	20	8	13	21
Mitch Randell	D	20	2	18	20
Justin Cheng	F	21	5	13	18
Damian Caringi	F	6	5	9	14
Karson Massey	D	16	2	12	14
Brad Krysko	F	15	8	5	13
Corey Flemington	D	16	3	8	11
Hunter Monkhouse	F	18	5	6	11
Andrew Randazzo	D	11	2	9	11

PJHL STANDINGS

South Doherty Division

(as of February 12, 2024)

	GP	W	L	OTL	T	PTS
New Hamburg Firebirds	38	29	7	2	0	60
Woodstock Navy Vets	38	28	7	3	0	59
Tavistock Braves	37	22	12	1	2	47
Norwich Merchants	38	16	16	5	1	38
Wellesley Applejacks	36	16	19	1	0	33
Hespeler Shamrocks	38	10	26	2	0	22
Paris Titans	37	8	26	2	1	19

PJHL STANDINGS

West Yeck Division

(as of February 12, 2024)

	GP	W	L	OTL	T	PTS
Mt. Brydges Bulldogs	39	28	9	1	1	58
Thamesford Trojans	38	28	9	0	1	57
North Middlesex Stars	36	26	8	0	2	54
Dorchester Dolphins	37	23	9	4	1	51
Petrolia Flyers	37	14	18	2	3	33
Exeter Hawks	36	14	18	4	0	32
Port Stanley Sailors	36	13	19	3	1	30
Lucan Irish	35	8	26	1	0	17
Aylmer Spitfires	38	7	30	0	1	15

WOSHL STANDINGS

(as of February 12, 2024)

	GP	W	L	T	OTL	PTS
Tillsonburg Thunder	22	16	6	0	1	33
Stratford Fighting Irish	22	14	8	0	2	30
Petrolia Squires	23	14	9	0	0	28
Alvinston Killer Bees	23	13	10	0	2	28
Tilbury Bluebirds	22	13	9	0	1	27
Strathroy Jets	23	12	11	0	2	26
Woodstock Lakers	21	12	9	0	0	24
Elora Rocks	22	10	12	0	2	22
Delhi Flames	22	9	13	0	1	19
Dunnville Aeros	24	8	16	0	3	19
Orangeville Blitz	22	2	20	0	0	4



(BILL POLZIN PHOTO)

Doherty Division's newest team livid about mandated move

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Provincial Junior Hockey League (PJHL) has announced changes to its divisional structure for the 2024-25 season. A new franchise, the Muskoka Bears, has joined the Carruthers Division in the North Conference forcing division realignment to balance the number of teams.

What that means locally is the Dorchester Dolphins will be joining the Doherty Division in the fall to play against Tavistock, New Hamburg, Wellesley, Woodstock, Norwich, Paris, and Hespeler.

PJHL Commissioner Terrence Whiteside said he's excited for new rivalries to be born and hopes the moves foster a high level of competition between teams. "We have discussed alignment for a couple of years trying to find a competitive balance of seven or eight teams in each division," said PJHL Commissioner Terrence Whiteside. "It allows for better scheduling balance and for all teams to play a similar playoff path to get to the Schmalz Cup. We are hopeful that our changes in alignment will create some new rivalries and opportunities for balance within the divisions."

Reaction from the Dolphins community has been swift and negative as a post on the team's Facebook page used some

very strong wording, but where exactly the voice is coming from is unsure as it was not attributed. "With this change, the league has put players in a position that most came to the Dolphins and the PJHL to avoid, which is extensive travel and time commitment as most of our players attend Western, Fanshawe, and/or work full-time jobs. Due to this, with our current roster, 63.63% of players live in or around Central London."

The Echo reached out to General Manager Mark Steele several days ago but did not hear back at press time. A group called the Dolphins Player Group has started a petition on change.org asking for the PJHL to "put a stop to this and let us focus on the game we love playing in front of a town we love playing for." To date, the goal of 1000 signatures has almost been met.

Whiteside disagrees that the extra travel will pose a hardship on the team's players, especially when you take into consideration what some others go through. "Their time commitment is nowhere near what most players in our league commit to. Not even close. To use that is not accurate." He added the furthest trip from Dorchester would be an hour to Wellesley or Hespeler, far from something substantial. "If you look at any other division, say Caledon to Huntsville. It's over three hours on a bus and has been happen-

ing for years. Schomberg to Huntsville, Kincardine to Fergus, nearly two hours. The Doherty and the Yeck have the least amount of travel."

The Facebook statement added "The Dolphins have been a part of the Yeck division predating the conglomeration that created what we now know as the PJHL. Over decades, generations of Dolphins have poured literal blood sweat, and tears into building entertaining and competitive rivalries with our divisional peers. Now the league wants to scrap it all."

The PJHL has been discussing realignment for about two years over a series of meetings and the league said the reason for it is to achieve more of a competitive balance, a balance of schedules, and creating the right scenario for all teams to be treated fairly. "There are divisions with nine teams, so some don't make the playoffs then we have the Todd Division with only six teams. The idea was to balance the divisions with seven or eight teams," explained Whiteside. He added change is

never an easy task to undertake and he understands the team's reluctance but the changes being made are for the better of the league as a whole.

Thamesford and Dorchester were both put on a ballot and every team in the PJHL voted for their choice to move from the Yeck to the Doherty. Whiteside the decision was made as fairly as possible. "It was member-driven. It's my job to look at the opportunities and then put them to the board. The board reviews it and puts it out to the membership. There was very little difference between (the two teams) as far as distance."

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Ingersoll Rural Cemetery Board

Tuesday, February 27th, 2024
at 6:00 p.m.

Being held at the Town of Ingersoll
Municipal Office
Everyone welcome.

Are you an immigrant who is 18 years of age or older?

Have you used settlement services in Woodstock, Ingersoll, or Oxford County in the past 3 years?

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- If you are selected, complete a 2-hour online interview about your experiences with settlement services
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Ingersoll Choral Society Presents ICS Radio

On January 26 and 27 the Ingersoll Choral Society transformed Oxford Square in Ingersoll (the former St. James Church hall) into a live radio studio. The Ingersoll Choral Society's themed performance, "ICS Hit Radio: Familiar Hits that Span the Years," was a creative and entertaining way to bring the community together through music. The choice of well-loved artists such as ABBA, Billy Joel, Simon and Garfunkel, Joni Mitchell, Carly Simon, and John Denver was a diverse and enjoyable playlist. The transformation of the renovated Oxford Square into a "live

radio studio" added an exciting element to the performance, creating a unique and immersive experience for the audience. This thematic approach not only showcased the musical talents of the society but also added a nostalgic touch by referencing the concept of live radio broadcasts. It was great to see cultural and artistic events returning post-COVID-19, providing a sense of normalcy and joy for the community. The Ingersoll Choral Society's performance was a resounding success, bringing people together to celebrate the power of music and the arts.



Live from the Grand Room was Foxy Lady on air.

(RON YUZARK PHOTO)

Lynn Cayen Trio At Ironworks Kitchen

With over 25 years experience entertaining audiences throughout Ontario, Lynn Cayen has established herself as a well respected and well known musician. Her Trio came to Ironworks Kitchen, Woodstock, the evening of January 18th to entertain the patrons. Lynn Cayen has had a rich and diverse musical journey, with a background spanning various instruments and genres. The fact that she has received numerous awards and recently won a competition leading to a country gospel CD speaks volumes about her tal-

ent and dedication to her craft. Performing in a three-piece band with her dad on bass adds a familial and collaborative element to her musical pursuits. You are sure to get a warm welcome to Ironworks Kitchen. Their commitment to providing a unique and celebratory dining experience is truly commendable. The emphasis on fresh, high-quality ingredients and the passion of their chefs for creating both delicious and visually appealing dishes is sure to make Ironworks a standout culinary destination.



Lynn Cayen Trio At Ironworks Kitchen.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)

Happy Family Day

HAPPY
International
Women's Day
Fri, Mar 8, 2024



Brandon Norm and Val Jary enjoying a meal and music at Ironworks Kitchen.



Making an evening of a culinary delight for their patrons are Paul Loura (Sous Chef), Hayley Morrison (Server), Carly MacQueen (General Manager), Matthew Oates (Line Cook) and Matt Power (Chef).

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St. Paul's Hosts Community Spaghetti Dinner

On Friday, February 2nd, St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Ingersoll opened its doors to the community by hosting a spaghetti dinner. For many of us, spaghetti is that wonderful comfort food that just tastes so good on a cold night. Rev. Allan Brouwer, the pastor at St. Paul's, shared that before the pandemic, St. Paul's regularly hosted special dinners, but all this changed with the COVID restrictions. Our habits had to change, but over time, many of us just found it is easier not to bother going to events like this, and we'd stay home. However, when we do, we re-

alize how good it feels to be in community with others. We may run into an old friend or meet some wonderful new ones over a great meal. Rev. Brouwer said that this is one of the goals of St. Paul's. "As a church, we would like to start doing more of these dinners. People are busy, and it can be such a treat to sit down for a meal that someone else has made. It's about enjoying a delicious dinner, in the warmth of community". For questions about future events, you can contact St. Paul's at 519-485-3390 or via email: stpauls@exculink.com.

Top right: Spaghetti and meatballs prepared by Maureen Nicholson, Rob Riley, Terry Mackintosh, Angus MacKintosh, Nancy Matthews, Lori McCarney, Kim Harrison (Elder) and Debi Vanderstelt.

Below: Sharon Tambeau and Malcolm selling tickets.

Bottom right: Waiting for their dinners were Peggy Johnson Margaret Breen Lena Beekman Isobel Thomson Erika Lorezen and Margaret Murray.



WOODSTOCK DUTCH THEATRE

The Woodstock Dutch Theatre group is back in full swing preparing for a new play! Every year around this time people start asking if there will be another production? Absolutely! Rehearsals are underway and this year is the 39th season. New to 2024 is the addition of an afternoon AND an evening show in Goderich and we are adding a new venue in St. Thomas!

This year the Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group will be presenting: **"High Tea in Bakkerij van Schie"** (**High Tea in the Van Schie Bakery**).

The playwrights are Cocky van Dijk and Michiel Geurtse.

Mrs. Van Schie has convinced her husband to go along with her brilliant idea that will breathe new life into the bakery. High Tea parties and an opportunity to enjoy a delicious lunch. A hilarious comedy about the ups and downs of a bakery unlike you have ever seen before!

A wonderfully entertaining play that you won't want to miss!

Please join us on the following dates at these venues:

Woodstock, Market Theatre
Saturday March 16th - 2pm and 8pm

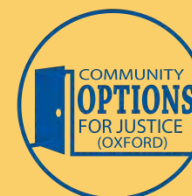
Goderich, The Livery Theatre
Saturday March 23rd - 2pm and 8pm

St. Thomas, Princess Ave. Playhouse
Saturday April 6th - 8pm

Tickets are \$20 in advance or \$25 at the door
Tickets can be purchased through ticketscene.ca or call Jolanda : 226-232-8200

Facebook@Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group
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Seeking Board Members



Community Options For Justice is seeking new board members to help guide our organization forward. Must be willing to attend monthly meetings.



Visit optionsforjustice.ca for details.

Route To The Past: Justus Miller, a leading lumberman

SCOTT GILLIES

Contributor

The white frame house at the corner of Oxford and Ann Streets in Ingersoll incorporates many of the fine architectural features of the High Victorian style, and this is perhaps only natural because it was constructed by a noted government contractor and local entrepreneur in 1895.

Justus Miller was born in Jerseyville Ontario in 1844. He moved to Ingersoll as a child in 1853. Some ten years later he ventured to the Salford area, and by 1872 he was operating a sawmill in Mount Elgin.

The late Alma Peters, in an article entitled "Forgotten Footsteps", states that Miller employed upwards of 100 men as log cutters, teamsters, and workmen in his planing mill, sawmill and factory for making cheese boxes. In another article by Ardel P. Morris found in Volume 1 of the Mount Elgin Tweedsmuir History, we learn that there was also a blacksmith shop on site where Miller's horses were shod, and wagons and sleighs were repaired by employee Peter S. Young. Years later, the office building was turned into a store, a barbershop, and later still an office for local veterinarian Dr. William Harrison. Some older residents of the area today may recall Layton's Abattoir in Mount Elgin and realize that this too was located on Miller's property.

Given the number of cheese factories in Oxford County at the turn of the 20th cen-



tury, (nearly 100), each producing tons of cheddar cheese in 90 pound wheels which were individually packaged and shipped to England in circular wooden cheese boxes, that meant that thousands upon thousands of them had to be made every year – a very lucrative business for Justus and his brother Roger.

However that was not their only line of work. In the 1880s the Miller brothers became successful contractors, landing such large public works projects as the

construction of canals, locks, docks and harbour improvements for the Dominion Government.

As a lumberman, Justus made frequent trips to different parts of the province including his other sawmill operations in Grand Valley Ontario, and to fellow operators in West Virginia and Ohio.

While living and working in Mount Elgin, Miller was an active member of the Baptist Church and was often given the task of emceeing innumerable public events. In 1895 Justus Miller returned to Ingersoll to live. He became a devoted member and trustee of First Baptist Church and was instrumental in resurrecting that building after a devastating fire. He also became involved in municipal politics. It was in that same year that he erected the stunningly beautiful house at the corner of Oxford and Ann Streets.

As part of his lumber operations included the mass production of wooden studs and joists used in framing a house, this dwelling at 244 Oxford Street is an example of "Stick Style" architecture. It incorporates a whimsical tower, bay windows, interesting roof angles and a veranda with softly curved arches and fancy woodwork.

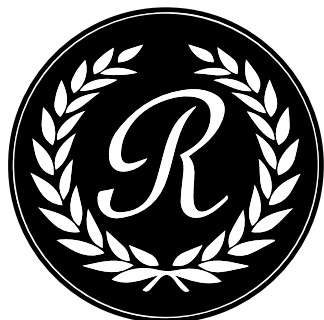
The exterior is covered in clapboard and fish scale siding while the interior was a showpiece of beautiful carvings crafted by noted Ingersoll carver Frank Leake.

A perusal through back issues of "The Ingersoll Chronicle" newspaper reveals that Justus Miller did not retire to a quiet life when he and his wife, the former Sophorona Elliott, moved to Ingersoll. He was actively engaged in owning and operating various commercial properties in town. At one point, in 1899, he sold the Bell Street planing mill property to fellow Ingersoll entrepreneur Orville E. Robinson who converted the property into the apple evaporator business which enjoyed quite the success in the European export markets.

Later that same year, Miller was reported as having constructed a carriage and blacksmith shop on Charles Street East near the former Russell Foundry (think Dairy Queen's location today). The newspaper editor gushed that this proactive member of town council "evidently has faith in the future of Ingersoll and is doing his share towards building up and improving the town. More power to his elbow say we!"

For many of those years on Town Council, Miller's federal experience was put to good use as chairman of the local Public Works Committee. Those years on council also put him in good stead to campaign successfully for the position of mayor in 1900 and again in 1901. His first "speech from the throne" on January 2, 1900 urged support for the first public hospital in Ingersoll and endorsing the construction of a major sewer line in the downtown core in order to maintain our reputation as a healthy community.

It seems that he was never too far from a construction project. In 1913 he was tending to a job site on Canterbury Street. The former Mansion House Hotel had been moved there from the corner of Thames and King Streets to make way for the new Imperial Bank of Canada (CIBC) building. While on site, he had a mishap and fell from the scaffolding, suffering a broken ankle. That, combined with his long suffering battle with diabetes, led to his unexpected death in April.



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Thamesford News

Trojans enjoy win at home versus Aylmer Spitfires



(DORIS WEIR PHOTOS)

The Thamesford Trojans beat the Aylmer Spitfires 5-1 at home last Friday thanks to goals by Panziera, Hay, Lewis, Kernohan, Busby. Halloran stopped 30 of the 31 shots that came his way. Kernohan, #20, is seen here in these action shots setting up and getting a goal. Saturday saw the Trojans play the Dorchester Dolphins where Thamesford came out with a 3-1 victory. Lewis started the scoring with a short-handed goal, followed by markers from Jomaa and Luepann.

Transformation at former Cold Springs site



(DORIS WEIR PHOTOS)

The former Cold Springs Farm Feedmill in Thamesford has gone through a radical change. Many of the silos are down and the front of the feedmill looks so different than just a few weeks ago. The wooden parts are being torn down as we speak and soon the silos will be demolished. The landscape will look so different by spring.

Thamesford Tidbits

As of February 12 the Ace has not been caught! The pot is sitting at over \$13,000! Get your tickets now for only \$5.00 a ticket. Check Thamesford Lions facebook page for places to purchase your tickets in Thamesford and Embro. Draw takes place every Tuesday at 8 pm.

On Monday February 19 the Thamesford Lions will be having Family Day events (it actually starts on Friday the 16th with a scavenger hunt).

Easter Bunnies are available again for \$5.00 each. You can get from a fellow Thamesford Lion or you can order them online (delivery only in Thamesford, pick up location will be the library in Thamesford).

More information on all above activities can be found on the website (Thamesford Lions Club - Lions e-Clubhouse) and the Thamesford Lions Facebook page

Bedrock of Beachville: Exhibition Launch

Attendees gathered in the Program Room of the Beachville District Museum on Wednesday, January 31st to mark the launch of their new online exhibit, "Bedrock of Beachville: The History of Our Limestone Quarries". Celebrating the launch of an online exhibit about the history of limestone quarries was a unique and engaging way to connect with the community and share valuable insights. The combination of in-person displays, browsing the online exhibit, and the oral

history station provided a well-rounded experience for attendees. The support from the Digital Museums Canada investment program was commendable, as it highlighted the importance of preserving and sharing cultural heritage through digital platforms. This initiative not only enriches local history but also contributes to building digital capacity in museums and heritage organizations. The attendees had a wonderful time exploring the exhibit and sharing their quarry memories.

The inclusion of light refreshments and free attendance was a thoughtful touch that enhanced the overall experience. It's fascinating to learn about the village's role as a central hub along the Old Stage Road and its significant ties to the limestone industry. The presence of limestone reserves in the Thames River Valley and the employment opportunities provided by the quarries played a crucial role in shaping the community's identity as "The Limestone Capital." The development of

hotels, stores, schools, and churches by the mid-19th century reflects the growth and prosperity of Beachville during that time. It's a testament to the importance of the village as a stop along the well-traveled route between Ancaster, Ontario, and Detroit, Michigan. The geological context of the Thames River Valley and the role of limestone in shaping the local economy add an interesting layer to the village's history.


(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Light appetizers tempted attendees and volunteers Teresa VanRees, Ruth Ingham, Sam Coghlan, Susan Clark (Chair of Board of Directors) and Eleanor Reeves.




Photographed in The General Store Exhibit room were organizers Sidney Williams (Interim Curator), Stephanie Radu (Curator) and Monica Van Ittersum (Curatorial Assistant).




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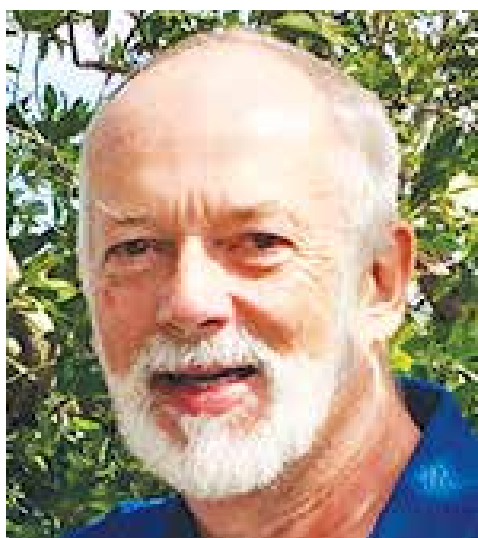
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PAUL KNOWLES

Echo Contributor

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Family-friendly must-sees in... believe it or not ... Sudbury

Enough about the ginormous coin. When you venture inside Dynamic Earth, you will find everything you could want to know about earth science and mining, most of it presented via hands-on experiences that perfectly combine entertainment and education. Highlights include a guided underground mining tour and an outdoor science park.

The facility closes in the coldest month, but re-opens for the season in mid-February.

Dynamic Earth is run by the same people who operate Science North, a well-known destination that opened in Sudbury in 1984. The official ribbon-cutting was actually done by Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip on October 4 of that year.

Science North is the second-largest science centre in Canada (Dynamic Earth is eighth-largest). Science North offers a wider window into all things scientific, but still emphasizes hands-on experiences for both kids and adults.

One of the highlights at Science North is the Vale Cavern. When I visited the facility, it was hosting a Travel Media Association of Canada conference, and one of our banquets was in this space. Frankly, it blew me away. This is a gigantic meeting space, also used for screening movies, which is blasted out of solid rock. It is one of the most magnificent rooms I have ever been in.

When I was wandering around Science North, I was fascinated by a beaver lodge located on the third floor and occupied by a lone beaver whose name, I learned, is Kash. Interesting, I thought, but unusual, in that this wild animal was kept in isolation from others of its kind. I have since learned that the beaver, who was born in a zoo, is being relocated to a facility which is home to other beavers. A loss for visitors, but undoubtedly the right decision for a science facility that is committed to being up to date, both in its exhibits, and in its overall philosophy.

The exhibit will now house turtles and fish.



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

Visitors to Science North can experience the odd sensation of lying on a bed of nails.

Kash's departure does not mean there is less to do at Science North. The facility is also committed to offering a creative and dynamic series of temporary and permanent exhibits. One of the most popular is the second-floor F. Jean MacLeod Butterfly Gallery, where the visitors are not allowed to touch the exhibits but the living, flying exhibits may well pay a personal visit to the visitors!

The institution is faithful to the second noun in its name. Much at Science North is about Ontario's northern ecosystems. Visitors will encounter (safely, of course), a porcupine, snakes, and even flying squirrels. A "scurry" of Southern Flying Squirrels was introduced at Science North less than a year ago, and has already proven to be a very popular draw.

An entire floor of Science North is dedicated to playful, hands-on experiences, including the chance to lie on an actual bed of nails. And there is also the Toddler Treehouse, a play area for infants

and toddlers from newborn to age five. I was impressed with this aspect of the facility, because many "family" destinations struggle to meet the needs of the youngest members of the family. That's not a problem in Sudbury.

But not everything at the destination involves indoor activities. Science North is located on the shores of Sudbury's Ramsey Lake, and in the warmer months, visitors can enjoy a one-hour boat cruise on The William Ramsay.

To return to my original premise in this article: it's likely that you haven't included Sudbury in your list of proposed family trips. But check out Science North and Dynamic Earth, and I am guessing you will change your mind.

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.

Let's be honest. When we hear the name "Sudbury", family entertainment is probably not the first thing that comes to mind. In fact, this northern Ontario is actually not on your "bucket list" radar at all.

But the truth is, Sudbury is home to two of the most intriguing family destinations in the country: Science North, and Dynamic Earth. Both offer hands-on, science-based activities for people of all ages, with a special focus on kids. Both are state-of-the-art facilities. Both deserve a visit.

The first thing you will notice, standing tall alongside Dynamic Earth, is Sudbury's iconic symbol, the Big Nickel. This sculpture – the largest coin in the world – was created in 1964 to symbolize the importance of nickel mining in Sudbury. Today, it is one of the most popular selfie-spots in the country. And it only made sense that when Dynamic Earth was launched, in 2003, it was built side by side with Sudbury's long-time attraction, the Big Nickel.

The sculpture is one of those unique things that just oozes trivia. The Big Nickel is an exact replica of the 1951 Canadian nickel. It weighs 13,000 kilograms. It's about 64,607,747 times the size of a real Canadian nickel. And by the way, today's actual nickel is only 2% nickel. Its other elements are steel (94.5%) and copper (3.5%).

Remember... When you see SNOW GO SLOW

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Woodstock Nostalgia Show & Sale

Woodstock Nostalgia Show & Sale at the Woodstock Fairgrounds on January 21st was a fantastic gathering for collectors and enthusiasts who appreciate nostalgia. The fairgrounds hosted a variety of vendors offering a diverse range

of items from the past, such as antiques, toys, and advertising signs. This event provided attendees with the opportunity to explore and rediscover rare and unique pieces that hold sentimental value. The atmosphere at the fairgrounds was filled

with excitement as customers flocked to the event. For those who attended, it was a delightful trip down memory lane, allowing them to reminisce about bygone eras and perhaps uncover hidden treasures. Nostalgia shows like these often

create a sense of community among individuals who share a passion for preserving and celebrating items from the past.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Chuck Scammell and Larry Henderson had a full table of items.



Marzia Vettoretto with Bandit and Bonnie Snow having success at the show.



Mark Wassing displaying one of stacks of vintage comics.



Sweaters for a cold day sold by Bonnie Armstrong.



Visiting from Port Perry were Eric Zap and Justice Colwell.



Woodstock Navy League and Sea Cadets

Have Fun, Build Skills, Make Friends

Cadets meet at the "Ship"
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Sea Cadets 12 -18 years, Tuesdays

Navy League 9 -12 years, Wednesdays

Boating, sports, music, special visits & celebrations are fun activities.

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519-539-2111 for info.


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Free!



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WOODSTOCK AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024

FEBRUARY 27 AT 7:30 PM
IN THE OXFORD AUDITORIUM

Annual financial report and status report
about society business to be discussed

All current society members and new
members are invited to attend



PART-TIME EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT PROGRAM

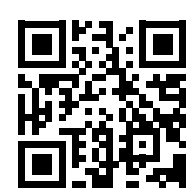


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Mar 1: Euchre Night 7pm
Apr 13: Celebrity Productions 1:30 pm
 Live tribute to Canada's best known artists. Tickets - \$25

COMING EVENTS Email to inquire info@theecho.ca

CARING HEARTS SUPPORT NETWORK

Living with Loss

The next 6-Week Grief Support Group will begin on **Tuesday, March 5th | 2:00 - 3:30 p.m.** St. David's United Church, Woodstock

Please call or text 519-536-3370 to register or email info@caringheartssupportnetwork.com. We offer a safe, supportive space to explore your grief, with the guidance of trained facilitators.

www.caringheartssupportnetwork.com

FOOD ADDICTS ANONYMOUS: The only requirement to membership in Food Addicts Anonymous is a desire to stop eating addictively. No fees, no dues, no weigh-ins. We meet on Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. at

Trinity United Church, 118 Church St. Ingersoll and on Saturdays at 10:00 a.m. at The Rock Church, 1140 Nellis St., Woodstock. For more information, call Patrick at 519-485-4146 or Gayle at 519-532-4254

NURTURING GRIEVING SOULS: TUESDAY, MARCH 5TH FROM 12:00 P.M.- 2:00P.M.

Nurturing Grieving Souls is a monthly grief support group for adults, 18 years of age and over, who are living with the death of a loved one. The group meets from 12 – 2 p.m. at the Ingersoll Services for Seniors and provides a safe, supportive environment with trained facilitators to meet others who are grieving the loss of a family member or friend, share a meal together, and discuss a topic relevant to the grief experience. \$10/M, \$12NM. Register by March 1st by calling 519-485-3869.

JUST \$10 + HST PER EDITION
Contact: info@theecho.ca or call 519-655-2341

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. 1000
2. Bear
3. Conan O'Brien
4. Fidel Castro
5. Vince Lombardi Trophy
6. 2001
7. Ferrule
8. Green, Purple, Orange
9. Facebook
10. Greenland Shark

SUDOKU

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

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SERVICES

Have you been affected by someone else's drinking? Al-Anon Family Groups could help YOU! Call for time and place. 1-800-706-9833 or App Available

DELIVERY DRIVER

With the Woodstock Ingersoll Echo going to a bi-weekly schedule in March, we are looking to add to our team and are seeking a driver to deliver copies of our newspaper to pick-up locations throughout the Woodstock, Ingersoll, Thamesford, Embro and Innerkip area.

Applicant must be responsible and have own vehicle.

Please send resume to Stewart Grant at stew@granthaven.com.



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HAVE A COMING EVENT COMING UP?

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Riddles

What driver doesn't have a license?
A screwdriver

What did the guitar say to the rock star?
Quit picking on me

Why did the tree see the dentist?
To get a root canal

What did the beach say when the tide came in?
Long time no sea

What has ears but can't hear?"
Corn

What has arms but can't hug?"
A chair

What has a head and a foot but no body?"
A bed

When is a car not a car?"
When it turns into a driveway

What is the best year for a kangaroo?
A leap year

Why did the police arrest the bird?
Because he was a robin

Sudoku

Sudoku by PeterS 2024

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

Solutions on page 31

Basic (8)

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



KIPPIE

Nap time for Kippie. A male three year old foster cat from Innerkip (hence his name) has a home that is safe, warm and cozy. He loves being petted and chest rubs. Constantly talking to me, I have identified 15 different sounds and corresponding wants. Because he was abandoned in winter as a newborn kitten, he is now afraid to go outdoors. Sitting on his window pillow he keeps watch of all the birds, squirrels and other animals that pass through our backyard. Treats and kibble are his favorites but has a real soft spot is for whipped cream.

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

Word Search

PIZZA TOPPINGS

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

- Pepperoni
- Bacon
- Pineapple
- Mushrooms
- Pepper
- Onion
- Cheese
- Sauce
- Ham
- Olives
- Tomato
- Sausage



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