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This photo of the Imperial Market and Eatery building illuminated at night was posted to the Show Us Your Wilmot Facebook page by member Carol Weicker. Photo courtesy of Show Us Your Wilmot

High-speed internet projects completed in Oxford County

By Lee Griffi, Local Journalism Initiative reporter

Several high-speed internet projects in Oxford County have been completed.

Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) has announced what it called the marking of a pivotal achievement in the advancement of broadband infrastructure in the area.

With a combined investment of \$10.5 million, SWIFT, in partnership with the county and local service providers, has extended high-speed internet service to 1,718 homes and businesses that previously lacked access. These network expansion projects promise significant benefits, including enhanced educational opportunities, better healthcare access and increased potential for remote work for residents and businesses throughout Oxford County.

"The completion of the network expansion under the SWIFT initiative in Oxford County represents a significant leap forward in our ongoing mission to advance digital infrastructure throughout the region," said Barry Field, SWIFT executive director. "Through strategic collaboration with our partners and a combined investment of \$10.5 million, SWIFT has extended vital internet services to nearly 2,000 homes and businesses, enhancing connectivity and fostering economic growth. This achievement exemplifies the power of collective action in building more connected and prosperous communities in southwestern Ontario."

"Connected people and places are central to our ability to build strong, vibrant communities with high-speed connectivity, in particular, enabling our rural areas to fully participate in the social, educational,

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No new information but the OFA continues to work behind the scenes for Wilmot and other farmers

By Lee Griffi, Local Journalism Initiative reporter

The Waterloo Federation of Agriculture (WFA) and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) continue to be disappointed at the ongoing lack of transparency and consultation in the land-use situation in Wilmot Township.

OFA president Drew Spoelstra said farmers in the area remain exasperated with the absence of any information from those behind the potential acquisition of 770 acres of prime farmland in Wilmot Township by

the Region of Waterloo.

"It's frustrating for them because they don't know what the future holds for farm businesses and their land and how things are going to go down. I think all they want is to be a part of the process, to be treated fairly and to know what the next steps are," Spoelstra said.

The federation said it is continuing to work behind the scenes through conversations with government representatives about the future of the land in Wilmot and elsewhere in the province.

"We are trying to make sure as much prime ag land in Ontario is preserved. We are also doing some internal work on expropriation, what that looks like for farmers and how they can be better treated throughout that process," added Spoelstra.

The OFA wants to ensure landowners receive fair compensation.

"Farmers getting a lowball offer and the threat of expropriation isn't the right way to do business."




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COMMUNITY —

OFA continues support for Wilmot farmers

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Municipalities implement official plans to establish strict guidelines on, among other things, future development. Spoelstra said his organization is extremely concerned at how the Region of Waterloo's plan has been completely ignored throughout the pooling of shovel-ready land in Wilmot.

"They are there for a reason. We want to see them upheld."

He admitted the wait-and-see game as to what will eventually happen to the 770 acres of land is concerning for everyone involved and added Premier Doug Ford's strategy of wanting willing hosts across the province to develop land quickly has created a level of unfairness.

"While the municipality is a willing host, landowners probably aren't. We need to continue to talk about the fact that economic development doesn't just have to come from new and shiny things like battery

plants. It can be right here in agriculture. We are a huge economic driver in the province."

He added if governments properly invest and collaborate with the agriculture industry, many things could be moved forward.

"Supporting farm businesses is important to the future of rural communities across Ontario."

The agri-food sector, built around productive agricultural land, contributes \$47 billion to the provincial economy and \$20 billion in agri-food exports annually, and employs about 10 per cent of Ontario's workforce, supporting more than 750,000 jobs.

While Wilmot Township is the hot topic of the day, the federation wants to see prime agricultural land protected more stringently across the province.

"It isn't just a one-off in this region, it's across Ontario. There is a lot of competition for land for uses other than farming and,

as an advocacy group, we would entertain any option that promotes and protects farm sustainability. In the meantime, we will keep trying to move the ball forward," said Spoelstra.

Under the Region of Waterloo's land-purchase offer, any landowners who do not agree to sell have been told their farmland will be expropriated for industrial development. The Waterloo Federation of Agriculture's requests to delegate to Wilmot Township council and Waterloo Region council have both been denied and interactions between both councils and individual farmers have been minimal.

"Farmers in the area have had a positive working relationship with local and regional government for more than 30 years, so it is deeply disappointing that we haven't been allowed to be part of this process, have our voices heard and contribute to a solution workable to all," said Nic Weber, a local farmer and WFA president.



Drew Spoelstra, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, said his organization continues to be miffed with the secrecy of the land collection in Wilmot. Photo courtesy of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Oxford County network expansion completed

Continued from page 1

cultural and economic opportunities around them," said county warden Marcus Ryan. "As we reach the completion of our goals under this program, we extend our thanks to past councils who supported this work, the other municipalities we've partnered alongside and the board and staff of SWIFT. Oxford County's partnership with SWIFT has been transformational for so many of our residents and businesses."

One of the initiatives involved was the Fibre-to-the-Home Project with Execulink Telecom. They were able to expand service along more than 60 kilometres of underserved roadway. These projects have provided high-speed internet access to 816 homes and businesses across various communities, including Hickson and Huntingford.

Quadro Solutions has completed the construction of two fiber-optic projects in the county. It covered over 118 kilometers of rural roadway and gave high-speed internet access to 418 rural homes and businesses across the communities of Kintore, Fairview, Maplewood, Brooksdale, Youngsville, Bennington, Braemar and

their surrounding areas.

These completed projects represent a significant investment in digital infrastructure and underscore SWIFT's commitment to bridging the digital divide, promoting economic growth and improving the quality of life for residents and businesses in Oxford County and surrounding areas.

Oxford County was on the receiving end of \$10.5 million in broadband upgrades, with over \$5.7 million contributed by service providers.

SWIFT is a non-profit regional broadband project initiated by the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus to subsidize the construction of high-speed broadband networks across southwestern Ontario, Caledon and the Niagara Region.

The project was approved for funding up to \$127.4 million under the New Building Canada Fund – Small Communities Fund, a joint federal and provincial infrastructure funding program, and leverages additional funding from municipal partners and private-sector investors to bring improve access to broadband services across the region.

Let's Tree Wilmot "May the Forest be with you."



Let's Tree Wilmot (LTW), a project of Garden Wilmot, enjoyed a beautiful, sunny morning May 4 planting trees at Riverside Park in New Hamburg. The theme was, "May the Forest be with you." Fifty volunteers comprising members of Zion United Church's Youth Group, LTW volunteers, community members from Wilmot and Kitchener and local MP Tim Louis helped plant and spread mulch for 165 native trees to increase the local tree canopy. Hardware cloth was installed on the trees close to the Nith River to discourage hungry beavers from nibbling on the new trees. LTW will be watering the trees when needed for two years and monitoring their health. For more information about Let's Tree Wilmot and to join in the group's efforts, visit letstreewilmot.ca.

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COMMUNITY —

Locals welcome provincial limits on school cellphone use

By Lee Griffi, Local Journalism Initiative reporter

Ontario has unveiled a plan to reduce cellphone use in classrooms across the province.

Education Minister Stephen Lecce said the goal is to reduce distractions in classrooms and improve the health of children.

Students in kindergarten to Grade 6 will be required to keep phones on silent and out of sight for the entire school day unless explicitly permitted by an educator. For students in Grades 7 to 12, cellphones will not be permitted during class time unless explicitly directed by the educator. Social-media websites will also be removed from school networks and devices, and report cards will include comments on students' distraction levels in class.

The Gazette had conversations with a parent and student and the feedback from both has been nothing but positive. Hickson-area resident Jody Vos has three children including a son in Grade 8.

"None of my children have cellphones and I have never been in favour of letting them have one. I've been thinking about allowing my son who is going off to high school in September to have one just in case of emergency. He has autism and it worries me about how high school will pan out for him, if you know what I mean. High school isn't what it used to be when we were in school."

Vos added there is no doubt in her mind children are being heavily distracted by the use of electronic devices while at school.

"I honestly think teachers will be in favour. My son goes to Hickson Grade 8 and, on the last field trip, I heard a number of times, 'Put your phone away or it will become mine.' My son is going to Camp Celtic in June and they have a no-electronics rule, which I think is great. Kids need to learn to live without those things."

Vos added society has become hooked on electronic devices and said phones should never have been allowed in the classroom. "In my opinion, it's such a distraction. They are there to learn."

The Gazette reached out to the Thames Valley District School Board for comment and Director of Education Mark Fisher provided the following written statement.

"As a board, we are in support of measures taken by the government that prioritize the safety and wellbeing of students, and support improved student achievement and engagement in the classroom. We look forward to learning more as details become available by the ministry."

The Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) also provided the Gazette with a statement, saying they are committed to providing a supportive and enriching learning environment for all students.

"The collaborative and ongoing efforts in many WRDSB schools to implement shifts in cellphone use demonstrate our commitment to supporting student achievement and wellbeing."

It went on to say, in partnership with students, staff and families, a number of

WRDSB secondary schools have changed their guidelines regarding cellphone use.

"This effort supports our commitment to centering student voices as outlined in the WRDSB Strategic Plan. WRDSB staff have begun working through the new cellphone expectations from the Ministry of Education and will be ready to put it in place for September 2024. We know that students, families and staff may share differing views on this direction and we look forward to working in partnership with our stakeholders to continue creating learning environments where all students are able to achieve their full potential."

Tavistock resident Connor Murray is a Grade 10 student at Waterloo Oxford and welcomes the new regulations.

"I think some regulation is needed. I find a lot of teenagers and high school kids aren't capable of regulating themselves with the cellphones. Something needs to be done. A lot of people aren't going to be happy because they like to be on their phones a lot." Murray is hopeful the new rules will have a positive outcome on the mental health of his fellow students.

"I think in class it will be better. I hope kids start socializing more. That's part of the issue with phones. I feel like it (has) caused a whole anxiety epidemic."

He added the pandemic was another cause of not only more teenagers getting cellphones but also spending more time on them.

"Some teachers may not change what they've done. I know my civics teacher was saying he's not going to do anything different in the way he enforces phones. It may force some teachers to enforce it more. A lot of the tech and substitute teachers enforce it now, I find," he added.

Murray's main concern when his Grade 11 year begins is teachers enforcing the rules equally.

"I would like to see every teacher following the same rules and every student following the same rules. Teachers and students alike shouldn't be on their phones in class."

Murray admitted his phone is a distraction and added he can be his own worst enemy. "I am not very good at regulating myself. Sometimes I go on my phone if I am tired and don't feel like doing work even though I have a lot of work to do."

Despite the negative aspects of cellphone use in the classroom, he said sometimes a cellphone can play a role in learning.

"With guitar, I actually use it as a tool for tuning the instrument and, in other cases, phones can do good things. I just find that most of the time people are playing games or going on social media."

The government is also strengthening the rules around students caught using or carrying vapes or cigarettes. Students will be required to surrender these products and parents will be notified immediately of the situation. The government also officially announced \$30 million in the 2024 budget to install vape detectors and other security upgrades in schools.

With files from Cadence Mailloux

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COMMUNITY —

Steffan Yantzi joins Yantzi Building Supplies and Tavistock Home Hardware as new dealer



Steffan Yantzi has joined the family business as a new dealer with Yantzi Building Supplies and Tavistock Home Hardware. Contributed photo

Submitted by Home Hardware

Yantzi Home Building Centre and Tavistock Home Hardware are proud to announce Steffan Yantzi is an official shareholder of both businesses.

Growing up, Yantzi watched his father, Jim Yantzi, operate Yantzi Building Supplies and dreamed of joining the family business one day. Since the age of 10, he was sweeping floors, collecting garbage and flattening cardboard – anything to be part of the day-to-day operations of the store. This year, at the age of 27, his dream of becoming a dealer at the family business came true.

“I grew up studying my father in the store,” said Steffan Yantzi. “I watched what he did and how he did it, absorbing as much as I possibly could. This made taking on more responsibilities over the years easier as I felt I had his expertise in my back pocket to rely on.”

When Steffan Yantzi’s father passed away in May 2021, it rocked the family business and the Tavistock community. Yantzi Building Supplies was founded by Jim Yantzi’s parents, Andrew and Doris Yantzi, in 1951 and, alongside his sisters Joyce Ropp and Darlene Yantzi, Jim Yantzi had been operating the family business for close to 40 years. With decades of family history in the hardware industry to look up to, Steffan Yantzi knew he had big shoes to fill.



A young Steffan Yantzi with his father, Jim Yantzi, who passed away in May 2021. Contributed photo

“I’m extremely proud of my family and the way they’ve operated their businesses over the years, and I’m thrilled to officially be joining my aunts at the helm,” said Steffan Yantzi. “I can’t think of a better, more supportive town than Tavistock to continue growing our family business. Our customers are loyal and

play a valuable role in ensuring the success of our business in the community.”

Yantzi Building Supplies is in its 73rd year of operation and joined the Home Hardware banner in 2016. The Yantzi family purchased Tavistock Home Hardware in 2018.

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The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette

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Mountainoak Cheese brings quality to every step in the cheesemaking process

By Galen Simmons

Before Adam and Hannie van Bergeijk transformed their Wilmot dairy farm into a field-to-barn-to-table cheesemaking operation in 2012, the Dutch farming couple couldn't find the quality of cheese they'd grown used to and had begun making themselves before they immigrated to Canada from Holland in 1996.

With the confidence that, on their farm, they could control the quality of every ingredient that goes into a wheel of gouda, the van Bergeijks set themselves up to begin producing and selling the highest-quality and most flavourful cheese they could make.

"I have a passion for cheese and I want to make a real product without any gimmicks, any things that are not natural, so we keep it as natural as possible and we try to make cheese with the smallest carbon footprint," Adam van Bergeijk said.

"We grow our own crops for the cows. We harvest it ourselves so we have a better handle on timing and we can feed our cows better. All those things are part of making a good cheese. I always say, 'You can make a bad cheese from good milk, but you're never going to make a good cheese out of bad milk.'"

By knowing what goes into their cattle feed and keeping it consistent with the right mix of nutrients for each of their cows, and ensuring their cows are both happy and healthy, the van Bergeijk's dairy cows produce the quality of milk necessary for cheeses that bring customers to Mountainoak Cheese and the hundreds of retailers across southern Ontario that sell Mountainoak Cheese time and again.

With goudas ranging in age up to three years and flavoured cheeses made with the highest quality ingredients sourced from around the world like their black truffle cheese, wild nettle cheese and Friesian cheese, just to name a few, customers and cheese connoisseurs have a wide variety to choose from and find their favourites.

Adam and Hannie van Bergeijk, their kids and their grandkids all work hard to make the best-quality cheese they can for their customers, but they are also passionate about educating their customers, friends, neighbours and anyone else about the realities of on-farm life, animal agriculture and the cheesemaking process.

This month, the van Bergeijks are encouraging everyone to visit Mountainoak Cheese, a stop on the Oxford County Cheese Trail, as part of Big Cheese Days every Saturday in May.

"All four weeks we have tours in the cheese plant and we will be serving ice cream. On the second Saturday, we also have a food truck. There will be all sorts of games for the youth," Adam van Bergeijk said. "It's quite important to educate our youth about what we are doing and what's



Hannie and Adam van Bergeijk, along with their kids and grandkids, are committed to quality in every step of their cheesemaking process at Mountainoak Cheese in New Hamburg. Photo by Galen Simmons

the importance with what we do with our animals, what we do with our cropping, what we do to make our cows comfortable."

In addition to the cheese-plant tours, Mountainoak Cheese will be offering barn tours May 11th and 25th, tastings, a colouring contest for the kids and so much more during Big Cheese Days, all at a cost of \$15 per person or \$45 per family.

For more information on Big Cheese Days and the Oxford County Cheese Trail, visit www.tourismoxford.ca/big-cheese_days.aspx.

While the van Bergeijks are focused on building their family business so it can continue offering natural, fresh and tasty cheese in an environmentally sustainable and animal-friendly way well into the future, their livelihoods have recently been thrown into question as the Township of Wilmot, Region of Waterloo and Province of Ontario continue their efforts to purchase or expropriate 770 acres of prime Wilmot farmland, a portion of which is used by the van Bergeijks to grow feed for their cows.

"As a farmer, you are a steward of the land," Adam van Bergeijk said. "We bought this farm(land) just over a year ago. We lost some other rental land because there's a lot of need. Other farmers want to have land as well, so we were able to buy this farm. ... You need to get your crop rotation, place your nutrients. You put effort into it.

"We own 190 acres of the (farmland) in question and we rent the farm beside it, so we could lose over 300 acres. It's threatening our business."

While the van Bergeijk's are encouraging everyone to support the local Fight For Farmland movement against this potential expropriation of land, they say customers can also help Mountainoak Cheese and other on-farm businesses affected by this land grab by continuing to buy fresh, local produce from the people that make it.

To learn more about Mountainoak Cheese and see a full selection of their products, visit mountainoakcheese.ca.

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COMMUNITY —

Shakespeare's Optimist and Opti-Mrs Bike Rodeo a huge success

By Gary West

It was a busy day in Shakespeare May 4 as the Shakespeare Optimist and Opti-Mrs clubs held their annual bike rodeo for kids of all ages in the area.

There were more than 40 bicyclers ranging in age from two and up, and every

biker who attended received a prize for participating. The clubs also gave out grand prizes of three mountain bikes to three lucky riders.

Many received gift coupons for a free ice cream at the village's Moo's Ice Cream Shop.



Three Shakespeare youth were happy to ride home on their new mountain bikes following the annual bike rodeo at the ball park pavilion in Shakespeare. Photo by Glen Weitzel



Bike rodeo chairman Greg Ankenmann demonstrates proper road safety and hand signals to young cyclists May 4. Photo by Gary West

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Tavistock's Optimist Club members help clean Optimist Park

By Gary West

Members of the Tavistock Optimist Club were busy recently putting finishing touches on their cleanup of the Optimist Park west of Tavistock on Woodstock Street South.

Besides getting their park and pavilion ready for soccer and ball games, the members were also getting their Fry Wagon ready for another busy summer of Friday Night Frys at the park, which has turned into one of their most rewarding fundraisers.

Club president Terry Rozendal was happy to see energy saving LED lights installed recently and hopes everyone in the area will attend the Optimist Club's ParkFest June 1.

He said this is a free event and will include bouncy castles and many activities for the kids, with food available from their Fry Wagon.

Pictured are some of the members of the cleanup crew from the Tavistock Optimist Club showing off their new sign. In the front row from left are John Markle, Adam Weicker, Rod Ramseyer and Eric Stewart. In the back row from left are Matt Lambing, Brady Roth, Terry Rozendal (club president), Dennis Kuepfer, Ken Meadows, Ed Danen and Marty Griensven. Contributed photo



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COMMUNITY —

Oxford County OPP gives crash course on scams and frauds

By Laura Green

It was an intense more-than 45 minutes as Const. Randi Crawford, community safety and media relations officer with Oxford OPP, tried to educate locals on frauds and scams with her presentation, "Protect yourself and your loved ones."

This education event was presented by the Braemar Women's Institute at Christ Church Huntingford May 1. Crawford outlined several types of frauds and the common tactics used by the scammers. Phishing, vendors, grandparent scams, romance scams, identity theft, and government official impersonations were discussed.

"I am sorry to say that in today's world it is ok to not answer your phone or open your door, even in our small communities," Crawford said. "Fraud is becoming increasingly sophisticated, making it essential to be vigilant in protecting ourselves and our loved ones from falling victim to schemes."

No one wants to feel violated or "to be taken", so education is the key to prevention. There are many resources available to help locals recognize and avoid fraudulent activity.

Keep informed of the latest fraudulent activity happening locally by listening to the radio or watching television.

Talk with family or friends about weird phone calls, emails or letters received and keep track of those calls that just didn't seem right - write down the date, time and phone numbers.

Remember the saying, "When in doubt, throw it out." This applies to emails or phone calls.

Anyone who suspects they may be a victim of a fraud should contact OPP at 1-888-310-1122 or the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre at 1-888-495-8501.

Crawford also spoke about the importance of area residents protecting their homes. Remember to lock homes, garages and cars. Safe Guard Ontario is a community based crime-prevention program that was developed to help citizens "lock criminals out of your houses and homes". More details are available on their website.

CAMSafe is a new program adopted by OPP in 2023 across all detachments. CAMSafe is a CCTV and security video registry aimed at keeping our community safe and assisting police solve crime. Think of it like Neighbourhood Watch. Visit the CAMSafe website for more details.

Crawford can be contacted at randi.crawford@opp.ca for more details about the topics discussed.



Braemar Women's Institute member Norma Howe thanked Const. Randi Crawford for her very informative presentation. The presentation was held at Christ Church Huntingford and 33 people from the surrounding areas are now more informed. Photo by Laura Green

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COMMUNITY —

Sunflower-growing competition in Shakespeare aims to brighten village this summer

By Gary West

The Shakespeare Optimist Club is embarking on something completely different this summer.

The goal is to distribute sunflower seedlings to every household in Shakespeare and the surrounding area, with 4,000 seedlings going out in total.

The seedlings are free of charge and the hope is residents will plant them in their front yard for everyone to enjoy as they pass by their property.

The club has decided to make it worthwhile and have over \$1,000 in cash prizes to be won.

Categories will include largest sunflower, brightest colour and a variety of others.

The final judging will take place in late August for everyone to enjoy when the flowers are in full bloom.

Shakespeare Optimist Club members will be distributing the seedlings between the middle of May and the beginning of June.

“The goal of the competition is to bring the community together to create something very unique,” said Shakespeare Optimist Club president Michael McNeil.

“It will certainly be a sight to see when the entire town and surrounding area are filled with the bright sunflowers in late summer and early fall.”



Shakespeare Optimist Club president Michael McNeil is shown in his yard with 4,000 sunflower seedlings which will be distributed from the middle of May to the June 1 in the Shakespeare area. Contributed photo

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COMMUNITY —

Wellspring Stratford fundraises for local cancer support

By Galen Simmons

Two upcoming fundraisers, one an online auction and the other an annual golf tournament, will help Wellspring Stratford Cancer Support Centre continue to expand its programming and better serve cancer patients and their families in Stratford, St. Marys and well beyond.

Not only is the cancer-support centre hosting its 17th annual Wellspring Stratford Golf Tournament May 30 with a 5 p.m. shotgun start at River Valley Golf and Tube, but the organization that provides free cancer-support programs and services is also launching an online auction May 16-29 thanks to an influx of items donated to be auctioned off during the golf tournament.

"We started off having the golf tournament in May, and then when COVID came with all the restrictions, we changed it to September," said Wellspring Stratford manager Lisa Stacey. "It seemed to go pretty well except it was hard getting silent-auction items from organizations and businesses in Stratford during summer months.

"... So we decided this year, 'Why don't we try and go back to May?' ... We've had an amazing response with a new volunteer, Nancy Davidson. She used to run the MyGallery Auction and she volunteered last year. She bought some silent-auction items and when she came to pick them up, she said, 'Would you like help next year with the auction?' We gladly said yes and she, along with our amazing group of volunteers, managed to bring in 170 items."

While some of those items will still be auctioned off during the golf tournament and others will be held in reserve for future fundraisers, Stacey said Wellspring Stratford had more than enough to host an entirely separate online fundraiser in the lead-up to the tournament.

A few of the key auction items that will be available for bidding either online or in person at the golf tournament include a round of golf for four at the Hamilton Golf and Country Club, two tickets for the RBC Canadian Open at the Hamilton Golf and Country Club, two rounds at the Blue Mountain Golf and Country Club, and a pair of point shoes signed by Jenna Savella from the National Ballet of Canada, as well as a whole host of other, local items.

"I think, because the Canadian Open tickets and the Hamilton Golf and Country Club items can reach a wider audience, we'll offer those items online, and some of the other items like packages from the Mitchell Golf and Country Club and River Valley will be auctioned off at the golf tournament," Stacey said.

While those who would like to participate in the online auction can check the Wellspring Stratford Facebook page for details as they're released, tickets for the golf tournament can be purchased for \$95 apiece by visiting wellspringlondon.akaraisin.com/ui/StratfordGolf2024.

The cost of the tournament includes nine holes of golf, a golf cart and dinner, as well as a \$30 charitable tax receipt. Those who would like to attend the tournament but don't want to golf can purchase just the dinner at a cost of \$45.

All proceeds from the event will go to support Wellspring Stratford's plethora of cancer-support programs including the new, Just Show Up program for area kids who have a parent or grandparent living with cancer, as well as a new Wellspring Stratford poetry book with pieces written by the Stratford-and-area residents Wellspring supports.

"This year, the Optimist Club of Downie sponsored a room here ... and one of their requests was if we could do a program for children, which we haven't done in the past," Stacey said. "Wellspring London has done a program called Just Show Up and we are now doing this program in Stratford in the fall. It's for children whose parents or grandparents are going through cancer. We've already



Wellspring Stratford Cancer Support Centre manager Lisa Stacey and volunteer Ange McNeen hold two of the 170 auction items donated by local businesses and organizations that will be up for bid during an online auction May 16-29 and in person at the 17th annual Wellspring Stratford Golf Tournament at River Valley Golf and Tube May 30. Photo by Galen Simmons

set in stone different organizations to help us with this program. We've got a program at the Local Community Food Centre; they'll do a cooking class with us. Pursuit Climbing is going to do a morning with us. The Falstaff Family Centre, Cozyn's Garden Gallery, the list goes on.

"This is another way for us to connect with the community, help us bring these programs to our members and now be able to help children, which is absolutely next level."

In addition to those new programs, Wellspring Stratford offers a host of other programming focused around therapeutic arts, education and self-development, symptom management, individual and group support, exercise and movement, and so much more.

Show us your Wilmot



Show Us Your Wilmot Facebook group member Donna Downs-Atkinson recently posted this photo shot from the Mike Schouts Wetlands May 1. Photo courtesy of Show Us Your Wilmot

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COMMUNITY —

Women Walked the World for international organization

By Nancy Birss and Emily Layng, New Dundee Women's Institute

April 29 is international Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW) Day, celebrated around this date by women around the world with Women Walk the World events.

On April 27, a group of hardy Women's Institute (WI) members and friends enjoyed a lovely but damp heritage walking tour of New Dundee in support of Associated Country Women of the World/Rural Women in Action project funding.

Their walk took them from New Dundee Community Centre with stops at the New Dundee School, Memorial Park Gates, the bandshell, Alder Lake and downtown heritage buildings and churches in New Dundee, returning to the community centre for a brown-bag lunch, a short meeting and a documentary film on food waste. The non-walkers remained at the community centre and learned more about the ACWW organization and its projects around the world. Donations for this walk support all of ACWW's work including projects, advocacy, education and awareness-raising.

The documentary film, Just Eat It, relayed the food journey of a Vancouver



A group shot of most in attendance at the Women Walk the World event in New Dundee April 27. Photo by Nancy Birss

couple in their 30s who lived for six months spending less than \$200 on food. The majority of their food came from gleaning, culling from vendors and grocery stores, and so much of it came from dumpsters. The amount of food waste in our country and all over the world is overwhelming. The humour in the film revealed that one doesn't starve from getting food this way, rather weight gain was an issue. The whole issue of food waste by so many and the experience of food shortage for so many in the world is mind-boggling. Next time you shop or clear your table, be mindful of what is wasted and how you can stretch your food dollar.

Reducing world food waste is one of three resolutions passed by ACWW at its 30th Triennial Conference last May in Malaysia. The local initiative was proud to support this resolution.

The Women Walk the World event was co-sponsored by the New Dundee Women's Institute and the Southern Ontario Support society for ACWW. In attendance were SOS members who travelled a good distance and members of the board for Federated Women's Institute of Ontario along with local New Dundee WI members and friends. Wilmot Mayor Natasha Salonen dropped by to share congratulations on the work of WI and ACWW.

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May 14, 2023
on Mother's Day

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Her afghans and slippers
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COMMUNITY —

The Wilmot-Tavistock
Gazette Weekly Quiz

1. What is the U.S federal minimum wage?
2. What percentage of Earth is land?
3. Anthropology is the study of what?
4. May the 4th celebrates which movie franchise?
5. How long is a marathon?
6. How long did the Han Dynasty rule China?
7. When was the American Revolutionary War?
8. How many points does it take to bowl a perfect game?
9. What color is Garfield the cat?
10. Are cocoa beans a fruit or a vegetable?

Answers found on page 22

BIRTHDAYS AND
ANNIVERSARIES

Does someone in your family have a special day coming up? Let us know at thewtgazette@gmail.com to appear in our Birthdays and Anniversaries listing or to arrange for a special announcement ad.

May 9: Happy birthday to Callum Adamson (10) and Rosalie Bender, and anniversary for Kris and Christine Ferguson.

May 10: Happy birthday to Peyton Christie (14), Alyssa Lupton (22), Alexis Anonech (22), Max Kalbfleisch (24), and anniversaries for Lyle and Susan Rozendal (49th), and Daryl and Angie Bender (27th).

May 11: Happy birthday to Avery Scott (4), Nash Munro (13), Emry Hallman (14), Sawyer Brennan (20), anniversaries for Bryan and Polly Kalbfleisch and Walter and Connie Scholz (61st)

May 12: Happy birthday to Liam Odette (12), Tom Odette (12), Ainsley Koch (15), Amaya Snyder (16), and anniversaries for Scott and Heather Alexander (23rd), and Chad and Kaitlin Gerber (17th).

May 13: Happy birthday to Naomi Puklicz (13), Delaney Zehr (21), Owen Hill (21), and Tanner Horst (23).

May 14: Happy birthday to Henry Trachsel (4), Michael Fuller (7), Michael Griffioen (22), and Jakob Hill.

May 15: Happy birthday to Maverick Keller (9), Levi Wiegand (13), Alexander Hammer (17), and Nicholas Raymer (20).

The Old Gazettes

By Jake Grant

Slowly but surely, I'm reading through the past pages of the Tavistock Gazette (est. 1895). Within this weekly column I'd like to share with you some of my findings.

May 8-15, 2019, Edition (5 years ago)

Congratulations to Tavistock Fire Chief Paul Roth for retiring after 35 years of duty with the Tavistock Firefighters. The community thanks you for your dedicated service.

Tavistock students participated on Friday, May 3rd, 2019, in Jump Rope for Heart. This nationwide event gets students active and empowers them to help others by fundraising for life-saving heart and stroke research.

A transport truck failed to make the turn north off Woodstock Street South to Jane Street on Monday, April 29th around 11:30 p.m. The Driver took the corner too tightly and managed to hook his trailer on a set of stairs, damaging the heritage building known as The Glass Swan at 52 Woodstock Street South.

May 6-13, 2009, Edition (15 years ago)

A phone call received at the Jones' farm on a mid-January afternoon ended as the household erupted into "hooting and hollering" when it was learned that Tanner Jones' calf Willdina Amedeo Cathy had just been named All-Canadian summer yearling by Jersey Canada. The award was the culmination of a

year of 4-H showmanship by 13-year-old Tanner Jones, son of Shayne and Val Jones of RR 1, Tavistock.

Tavistock Minor Ball hosted another successful Softball Skills Camp on Saturday, May 2, 2009, with cool but sunny weather. Registration was the highest it's ever been with nearly 200 kids.

Workers were called to repair the Crystal Wireless Internet (CWISP) tower in New Hamburg a week ago after high winds which were estimated at 110 km/h toppled a section of their Wilmot 0 tower.

The first Rainbows program in Tavistock was completed at the end of April. Ice cream sundaes, games and songs helped to celebrate. The Rainbows program offered peer support groups for children dealing with loss either because of death or divorce/separation.

There may be a recession going on, but Tavistock and Hickson remain as generous as ever. Once again, the multiple Sclerosis Carnation Campaign sold out of flowers, raising nearly \$3,000 for the Oxford Chapter. This money goes towards research funding and helps those living with MS in our community.

Organizers of "The Quilt" are preparing to hold their annual Quilting Marathon this year at the Festival Marketplace Mall on June 5th and 6th.

May 4-11, 1994, Edition (30 years ago)

East Zorra-Tavistock roads department employees have been busy these past few weeks planting a total of 625 trees

along Township roads. In 1993 alone, they replaced roadside trees at a ratio of better than 10 to 1 with about ten different varieties.

The Official Opening of the new addition to Tavistock Public School has been scheduled for Thursday evening, June 2nd from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

As part of Education Week activities, students of Hickson Central School had the pleasure of meeting with local children's author, Felicity Finn, of Wellesley whose first book, "Jermey and the Aunties" has become an instant hit with youngsters 8-12 years.

May 8-15, 1974, Edition (50 years ago)

The Tavistock Volunteer Firefighters had their 1st call in two years last Friday afternoon when they were summoned to Martin Feed Mills. Thirteen Men and two trucks answered the call when an overheated drier in the dog food department set fire to the ceiling above. The firefighters had it under control in 15 minutes.

Over 300 enthusiastic young people attended the Oxford County Junior Farmers annual membership night held April 11th at the Recreation Hall at the Woodstock fairgrounds.

Shop & Save at Wilker's: 1 lb. Minced Ham for 89 cents, 2 roll pack of Toilet Tissue for 43 cents, 28 oz of Aylmer Tomatoes for 43 cents, 1 lb. Christies Fudge-O Chocolate Cookies for 79 cents and 6 oz of Maxwell House Instant Coffee for \$1.49.

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SPORTS —

New president faces big changes in the minor-hockey system

By Lee Griffi, Local Journalism Initiative reporter

Tavistock Minor Hockey has a new president and he has signed up at a time of major change in the system.

Brad Witzel is a former player and coach with Tavistock Minor Hockey who, most recently, was in charge of the U7 beginner program before taking the reins as leader.

The Ontario Minor Hockey Association (OMHA) has been less than subtly persuading member associations over the last few years to become more competitive, which has resulted in the watering down of talent and the number of teams in smaller centres such as Tavistock. The push is on for associations to amalgamate, creating a stronger talent pool at the A level, something that has been done by many associations in the Southern County League, including Ingersoll and Tillsonburg which joined forces to create South Oxford Storm.

Witzel said while the OMHA has been communicating with member centres and welcomes feedback, the hometown hockey slogan boasted by the organization is not something small centres necessarily agree with, particularly following the abolishment of provincial playdowns.

“Do we think this is what’s best for that hometown hockey? I would say probably not. Decisions are being made at that level and we are implementing them and making it work. I do know small centres have presented to the OMHA to reinstate the playdowns, but that’s not the direction they have gone.”

Witzel said there is some value in revisiting that decision, but if it isn’t changed, then he and his executive will do the best they can to make the existing framework work.

“We certainly heard some complaints from parents and coaches who know what it used to be like. It’s one thing for a kid in U11 or U13 who has never participated in a playdown against Twin Centre or Ayr and went on a play-off run. They don’t know any different. I know what it’s like to do that as a player and a coach of the U15 team or



bantam back then.”

He added when Tavistock teams advanced to the provincial semi-finals with back-to-back games on a Saturday, the arena was filled with family and community members alike.

“It’s a great experience for those players but this generation won’t find out what it’s like and that’s unfortunate. We will keep sharing our thoughts on how to make it better but I’m not sure they will revert to the old ways.”

Another concern when it comes to being competitive against larger centres comes from what’s called the second entry teams, formerly known as additional entry. These teams play at a level between rep and house league and have traditionally helped some players develop to reach the rep hockey level. Witzel explained it is getting more difficult to ice that level.

“There are fewer associations that have it. What we are hearing is they would play in the same league as the rep teams so we would be playing them until the first opportunity to seed teams. So, the second teams would have to play all the first teams and that’s not fair.”

Witzel added there is a lot of value in losing a good, close, hard-fought hockey game, but no team benefits out of a 20-0 score, something he worries could happen more often.

“It’s not good for the team doing the scoring and it’s not good for the other side. That’s likely our second entry team if they are playing an A team from Aylmer, for example.”

He added the additional entry of minor hockey, one Tavistock has won many OMHA championships in, is being lost but from a local-league perspective, it could help.

“The goal is for every player to be challenged. It’s not ideal to have a few kids who could be playing at a higher level controlling the puck and the kids not at that level playing with them and not able to get better themselves.”

Tavistock entered into preliminary amalgamation talks with Embro several years ago but no deal was signed. Witzel said there are options, but nothing is on the table at this point.

“New Hamburg is already an A centre so there’s not an option there. There have been talks with Embro in the past and maybe something bigger than that if you were to look at Plattsville. It can be a very complicated thing to pull together.”

Any amalgamation would need support from not only the associations involved but also the membership of each group. Witzel said Tavistock is open to having conversations to see what may or may not make sense.

“One problem is neither centre is overly close geographically and how far is everyone willing to drive? I wouldn’t say it’s off the table, but it isn’t something we are actively working on,” he added.

A resurgence of girls hockey?

Witzel said they aren’t able to share much yet, but girls hockey could be back in Tavistock this fall.

“We are being careful with how much we are sharing right now. We are trying to protect the organization we are working with as well. We applied, we were denied, we applied again and were not successful.”

The OWHA told Tavistock that a girls program here could impact nearby organizations, something Witzel said is unfortunate.

“We are just trying to find an option for the girls to stay here if that is their preference. We had an association from nearby reach out to us and they are in a situation where they almost have too many participants. They have similar challenges around ice time, so we started exploring the possibility of a partnership to create a Tavistock brand under their umbrella.”

Witzel added he and his fellow executive members are excited but cautioned there is much work left to do to make it a reality.

“It will come down to how many girls we have in our program at the different age groups. Each team would need a minimum of 10 players and a goalie. We are optimistic but it will depend on where the players are in their situations as we know some of them are trying out elsewhere for more competitive teams.”

Should the Tavistock Jets be resurrected, any team would play at the local or house-league level. The current minor-hockey program has players registered from Embro, Shakespeare, Woodstock and other areas. Witzel said they are more than open to welcoming more female players into the fold to bolster the girls’ numbers.

“It would be great if that came to fruition. As you know, hockey is a great way to meet people and make new friends, so if we get kids from the surrounding area to make this work, that’s a good thing.”

Looking ahead

Witzel, like every other member of the executive, are volunteers who work hard to provide a positive experience for the boys and girls taking the ice. He explained one challenge this coming season will be finding ice time for everyone involved.

“We can all agree there is tremendous value in hockey and organized sports. We are fortunate, or unfortunate, to have a growing minor-hockey program with a registration of over 300. We have big numbers in the younger years with our lower figures in the U15 and U18 age groups and, if we keep growing at the younger ages, we will be even bigger.”

He added they are competing for ice time with figure skating along with a junior and senior hockey team, something unique to Tavistock in the area.

“That’s a challenge. We hear from our members about a constant demand for more ice time. The skating club is growing and they need more ice. Looking for ways to accommodate that is going to be tough.”

Witzel said minor hockey is working with Matt Lamers at the arena to perhaps leverage weekday morning practices, which he admits presents its own set of challenges but could be a way to find more ice time. He added the executive has some new members and is larger than in years past, something he is confident will be a positive going forward.

“At the AGM, we decided to expand. There’s a lot to do and historically only a few people to do it so we are trying to spread it out more. That brings new ideas which is exciting but it’s a new team and we have to find our way as a group because we haven’t worked together before. That’s not a major concern of mine, but it’s something we are going to work through and find what works well.”



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SPORTS —

Firebirds bow out in PJHL semi-final

By Lee Griffi, Local Journalism Initiative reporter

It was a heck of a ride, but New Hamburg's Provincial Junior Hockey League season is over.

The Firebirds lost their Schmaltz Cup final-four series to Lakeshore in five games. The Canadiens will battle the Clarington Eagles in the championship series beginning May 9.

New Hamburg forced a game six in the series with a 4-2 home-ice victory last Friday. The Firebirds jumped out to a 2-0 lead by the seven-minute mark of the second period on goals from Owen Sculthorp and Owen Bruder. The two teams traded goals the rest of the way with Owen Fischer and Tyler Reid finding the back of the net for the Firebirds.

New Hamburg looked like they might force a seventh game when they had a 2-0 lead after 20 minutes in Lakefield on Sunday, but the Canadiens would score the next five markers to earn a 5-2 win and a berth in the Schmaltz Cup final. Sculthorp and Antonio Pasqualino found the back of the net for the Firebirds.

The Gazette spoke to team captain and Kitchener native Owen Fischer recently to get his perspective on the season and playing in New Hamburg. The 20-year-old will return and said he'll be even hungrier for a title come the fall.

"You know it. The last few days haven't been the easiest, that's for sure. I keep hearing the word, 'historic,' come up to describe our season and, by all means, I am proud of what we've done and that's

not lost on me. We know we lost to a good team, but we also know we could have beaten them," said Fischer.

He added he and his teammates have great memories. It's not the ending they wanted, but it will provide motivation for the upcoming campaign.

New Hamburg was undefeated in the last 15 games of the regular season and, as a result, took first place in the Doherty Division. They ended up with 33 wins in 42 games. General manager and coach Shane Gerber is well-respected around the league and by his players. Fischer explained Gerber's hands-off style of coaching gives the team some freedom.

"It gives every guy with different games the ability to be themselves. The first thing that comes to my mind when I think of Shane is professionalism. He treats everyone with kindness and respect, and we give it right back to him. That's also what makes our communication work because we know if he wants to change anything, we listen."

Fischer added Gerber doesn't micromanage his players, rather he manages how everyone is feeling in the moment.

"He asked me throughout the year how everyone was feeling with each other. He's always checking in and, based on the comfort we have with each other he makes changes, moves or keeps on going with what's working," added Fischer.

Fischer was traded from the Hespeler Shamrocks during the 2021-22 season, something brought on by a friend of his already on the team.

"I worked with Zach Mark and he texted me saying the Firebirds were looking to add some players and they had a spot for me. Some things happened in Hespeler that I didn't like, so I said let's go play with my friends."

Fischer said he knew some other players on the team and respected the success the organization had, making it an easy decision. He's never looked back.

"I think it was a mixture of the team believing in me, giving me an opportunity and also me looking in the mirror trying to better myself. What's happened from then on, I can't complain about, but I'm never satisfied and always want to do better."

Kitchener is home for the captain but he didn't hesitate when asked if New Hamburg was his second home. Fischer said once he was traded and the team went on a playoff run, he was hooked.

"We weren't expected to beat Woodstock in the second round but, when we pushed them to game seven, I saw how supportive the fans were. Social media was blowing up and fans were texting us, wishing us luck. I realized playing here was special."

He said he's made many new friends from the community and can't thank the support the team gets enough.

"What they do for us is quite honestly amazing. We are so thankful for everything the community has done for us."

The Firebirds are losing four players to age - Riley Benko, Graeme Noyes, Tyler Reid and Carter Niall. Everyone else could be back in a New Hamburg uniform next season.



New Hamburg captain Owen Fischer will be back for a final season with the Firebirds and is ready to go after a PJHL title. Contributed photo

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SPORTS —

Wilmot Aquatic Aces swimmer heading to Olympic Trials in Toronto

By Galen Simmons

A 15-year-old Wilmot Aquatic Aces swimmer is heading to Toronto to see if she can qualify to compete in Paris, France at the 2024 Summer Olympic Games.

Mia Tomic has been swimming competitively since she was five years old, and she has been a member of the local Aquatic Aces – a swim club that helps athletes of various skill levels and abilities prepare for competition – for the past seven seasons. Recently, Tomic qualified to compete in the Olympic Trials at Toronto's Pan Am Sports Centre May 15-16.

"I gave up doing track last year so I could go to a swim meet (in Etobicoke)," Tomic said. "It was just a very random swim meet where all my races ended up being very good that weekend. I was already 0.2 (seconds) off the Olympic Trial cutoff when I raced two weeks prior to that, but then I just randomly (beat that time) by a second or so and just made it."

"It was really exciting. I didn't even know I'd made it at first, but then everyone was telling me, 'Congrats on your trial cut.'"

Though Tomic is a strong swimmer across the board, her best event is junior backstroke and that's what she will be competing in when she heads to Toronto in a couple weeks.

While Tomic had set her sights on one day making it to Olympic Trials and then, perhaps, the Olympic Games themselves, she had no idea she'd get the chance to try and achieve that goal so soon.

"I did want to make it because it's kind of the highest you can go. I did have nationals and provincials and all that, and I was so close to (qualifying for Olympic Trials),



Mia Tomic, 15, practices her backstroke at the Wilmot Recreation Complex pool as she prepares to compete at the Olympic Trials in Toronto May 15-16. Photo by Galen Simmons

it was a goal of mine," said Tomic, who most recently won gold with a personal-best time in the 200-metre backstroke at the Western National Championships in March.

As she looks ahead to the trials, Tomic is making sure she stays in peak condition

by not missing any practices at the Wilmot Recreation Complex pool and by maintaining her conditioning outside the pool.

"I do distance track, so I think that helps me with my conditioning overall," Tomic said. "Stretching is important too, but I think that's all I've been doing to prepare."

While she's prepared to give the Olympic Trials her best shot, Tomic knows if she doesn't make the cut this time around, there will be plenty more opportunity to swim on the world stage. If she does qualify for the games however, it could mean she will be packing her bags and heading overseas as part of Team Canada.

"It is an Olympic year, so it will be a lot harder than nationals because there's no age category. It's all just everyone mixed together," Tomic said. "There is junior and senior, but realistically you're racing against everyone. I'll be racing (Olympic gold-medalist) Kylie Masse. It's the best of the best from across the country."

"Yeah, I am nervous. My biggest goal is probably to make it to finals in top 20. I just want to get a best time."

Athletes who are successful at the Olympic Trials will be put through Team Canada training camp before heading to Paris for the games in late July.

"I feel like when I (joined) the Aces, that's when I really started taking off with swimming and competing," Tomic said. "I'm pretty proud of how far I've made it, and I just want to keep moving forward and not plateau."

"Mia is great," added Tomic's Aquatic Aces coach, Joni Maerten-Sanders. "She is actually very talented in backstroke. It's amazing how well she can do. Some of her other strokes; we have more work to do on them, but they're not bad. Her IM (individual medley), which is all four strokes in a single race; she put together a really good race last year out of the blue. There's a lot there and I think we're just hitting the beginning of what Mia can do."

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COMMUNITY —

Wilmot Lions to host Pet Valu Walk for Dog Guides

By Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette staff
Residents will have an opportunity to participate in an uplifting and vital event that provides assistance to Canadians waiting to be matched with a dog guide.

The Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides (LFCDG) is an accredited organization that relies on the upcoming fundraising event, the Pet Valu Walk for Dog Guides, to empower people living with disabilities or agencies assisting people who have experienced trauma by providing Dog Guides at no cost and supporting them in their journey together.

"In 2017, approximately 6.2 million Canadians were living with a disability. Fast forward to 2022 and the disability rate has grown significantly with 8 million people living with a disability - and we expect that

number to continue to increase as our population ages," said LFCDG manager of events Travis Forbes in a press release. "Dog Guides are already in high demand and are not provided by the government; they come from organizations like LFCDG - a non-profit that provides the dogs at no cost despite each of them costing \$35,000.

"In order to continue to transform the way people live by matching them with Dog Guides across seven different programs, we need the public to join our fundraising event and help us reach the Pet Valu Walk for Dog Guides' goal of \$1.6 million."

Thanks to our national sponsor, Pet Valu, and the Wilmot Lions / Lioness Club, all proceeds from this event will go back to assisting more people receive a Dog Guide at no cost. LFCDG relies on the success of all Pet Valu

Walks for Dog Guides to continue to create an impact for Canadians.

The Wilmot and New Hamburg Pet Valu Walk for Dog Guides is taking place May 26 at the Wilmot Recreation Complex's Schmidt Woods Trails. Registration is from 12-1 p.m. and the walk starts at 1 p.m.

To make an impact today, register or donate to the Wilmot and New Hamburg Pet Valu Walk for Dog Guides at www.walkfordogguides.com.

LFCDG is the only accredited ADI and IGDF organization in the world that provides Dog Guides in seven programs. Each Dog Guide takes approximately \$35,000 to breed, train and place with applicants. To learn more about Dog Guides and their fundraising initiatives, visit www.dogguides.com.

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Dogs are absolutely welcome with proper leashes, collars etc.
Pledge forms, posters, colouring pages available at:
New Hamburg Pet Valu, Sobey's Plaza, New Hamburg
Contact: Paul Mackie - Wilmot Lions / Lioness Club 519-498-9302
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OPINION —

EXPERT ADVICE: *Coffee crazy*

By Mercedes Kay Gold

According to the Coffee Association of Canada, coffee is the most popular beverage in Canada, beating out water.

A whopping 71 per cent of the population, including this java junkie, regularly powers life on a bounty of brew. Coffee is very personal. From drip to French press, instant to pod-based machine and big-box drive-thru to mom-and-pop business, the options are over the top. Dark or light roast? What country do your beans hail from? Love leaded (caffeine) or unleaded (decaf)? For some, coffee is a morning jolt, a meet-and-greet, first-date beverage, an exercise boost or a ritual in their personal mug.

Coffee is rich in an array of antioxidants, contains various B vitamins and some key trace minerals.

Coffee has been in-and-out of the news for years and, more often than not, vilified. Die-hard drinkers stayed true to their body-boosting beloved cup of Joe and thrived. Yes, it's true, coffee is beneficial.

Java is jumpstarting! The caffeine content acts as a stimulant on the central nervous system, explaining why it's a grand go-to for fighting fatigue.

Studies linking coffee consumption to lowered risk of depression are somewhat controversial, but when caffeine consumption was between 68 and 509 milligrams per day, the risk of depression decreased faster. The amount of caffeine in one cup varies, and the type of beans, growing conditions and the brewing method all impact the caffeine content. An average cup contains 95 milligrams of caffeine.

Recent research suggests coffee is linked to developing a decreased risk of Type 2 diabetes. It appears coffee may be able to preserve the function of the beta cells in your pancreas, the organ responsible for producing insulin. Regulating this hormone is essential for optimal health. Helping control blood-sugar levels eliminates the roller coaster of sugar highs and lows while also supporting a healthy weight. After a 24-week investigation where 126 overweight, non-insulin sensitive adults drank regular coffee versus a coffee-like placebo, the study by researchers at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health concluded coffee could re-



Coffee is proven to be a healthy boost, perfect for jumpstarting your day. Photo by Mercedes Kay Gold

duce body fat by about 4 per cent.

For decades, this personal trainer has fueled fitness fun with black coffee, the ultimate pre-workout energizer. For all the gym rats who bring a coffee to their workout, studies show it increases exercise performance by 11-12 per cent on average.

More great news. Studies are showing promise between drinking coffee and a lowered risk of developing both Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease, as well as a lowered risk of dementia and cognitive decline.

All java junkies across the globe would agree coffee is a valuable commodity, and unfortunately spraying pesticides protects crops. That being said, I favour organic coffee beans and suggest researching which companies test their beans for mold. As a holistic nutritionist, I urge you to avoid toxic artificial sweeteners and spoonfuls of sugar. Excess sugar in any form, although natural, creates inflammation in the body, feeds cancer cells and creates hordes of health issues. Don't forget to love the environment and choose compostable coffee pods.

Cheers to the coffee drinkers!

Navigating the market as a first-time homebuyer

By Isabel Livingston, Jennifer Gale Team
Gale Group Realty Brokerage Ltd.

There is no doubt that buying your first home is an exhilarating experience. It is the start of a new chapter, a newfound independence and a huge milestone, but it can also create a sense of fear and uncertainty. Today, I want to break down the experience, touching on choosing a realtor, navigating the offer process, understanding the complexities of mortgages, leveraging incentives and ultimately how to make the process seamless and enjoyable.

Knowledge is experience, consulting with a local realtor ensures your best interests are taken care of and eliminates the stresses that coincide with entering into the market for the first time. You don't have to fear missing out on expertise due to additional costs; in most cases, the costs associated with a buyer's realtor are fronted by the selling party. You want someone that will foster a positive relationship and keeps your best interests top of mind. Using a local industry professional can often eliminate the unknowns that come with someone who may not be familiar with the area. Take your time interviewing realtors and choose the best fit for you.

Real estate is a competitive market and it can often feel discouraging. Keeping a

competitive edge is very important in the negotiation phase of purchasing a home. Your realtor will work with you to draft an offer that supports your needs while still being aggressive. If you know you are getting ready to enter the market, talk to a mortgage professional and obtain a pre-approval, which is valid for up to 90 days. A pre-approval will not only help you establish a budget but will provide peace of mind in knowing that you can acquire a mortgage.

Mortgages can seem complex if you haven't had one and don't understand the basics. I encourage you to consider this guideline for your downpayment. Five per cent on \$500,000 or less, 5 per cent on the first \$500,000 with 10 per cent on the remaining balance up to \$999,999, and 20 per cent on \$1 million or more. A downpayment of less than 20 per cent will often require mortgage loan insurance, which is set in place to protect the lender in the event that you are unable to make your payments. Consider variable versus fixed rates. Variable rates fluctuate and change as the interest rates rise and drop, whereas fixed rates hold for the entirety of your term.

Nationwide, there are a number of incentives that you as a first-time buyer can leverage to benefit from and save

money. As of April 16, RRSP withdrawals for first-time homebuyers to use towards a downpayment have been increased from \$35,000 to \$60,000. Things like the Land Transfer Tax Rebate and the First Time Home Buyer Tax Credit are ways that you may be able to earn some money back.

Take the time to research and consult with professionals like your bank, financial advisor, mortgage lender, realtor and tax expert to ensure you are making an informed decision. After all, this is a huge purchase and you deserve the best team.



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TRAVEL —

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Exploring centuries of history in the US's old city



By Paul Knowles

The tagline for every promotional piece about St. Augustine declares it to be "Florida's Historic Coast." Unlike many hyperbolic mottos, this one happens to be spot on. Nowhere else in the United States can you explore such a depth of history.

By the way, there is a lot to discover in St. Augustine that does not fit under the category of heritage, and we'll visit those features in a subsequent feature. Today, we're going way back in time.

St. Augustine proudly claims the title of "the Oldest City in the United States" with European settlement beginning there 459 years ago.

Let's acknowledge there were people living in the area now known as St. Augustine long before that and there is an effort made at historic sites to acknowledge this.

For example, this phrase from a printed guide: "Before European settlement, Timucua people occupy most of northern Florida for several hundred years. They grow crops, hunt for food, and trade with other tribes and newcomers from Spain until relations deteriorate."

However, there is not much physical evidence left behind by these first peoples. The concrete residue of habitation still in existence in this small city dates from the eras since the first Europeans arrived.

There are two historic forts – the Castillo de San Marcos, which sits at one end of the historic downtown, and Fort Matanzas, several miles south of the city.

The Castillo de San Marcos is an enormous structure that, today, welcomes visitors who can marvel at the architecture, enjoy the harbour view, interact with costumed interpreters and explore a gallery of rooms which reveal bits and pieces of the history of the place.

It was built by the Spanish who initially arrived in around 1513 led by Ponce de Leon. The Spanish began construction of the Castillo in 1672 as a defense against other Europeans – the English and the French.

Visitors to the Castillo and other historic sites in town can learn all about this history, well presented with a genuine attempt at accuracy.

Today, the Castillo is generally well populated with visitors. Fort Matanzas, on the other hand, is sparsely occupied because it sits on an island in the mouth of the Matanzas River where the river meets the At-

lantic Ocean. To reach the fort, visitors have to book a ferry ride and join a ranger-led tour. The boat runs every half hour from the mainland, but reservations fill up quickly on busy days. The site also includes a nature trail on the mainland.

Both forts are constructed using a unique form of building block called coquina or shellstone made up of millions of seashells, a material no longer allowed to be used in building today for environmental reasons.

These forts are the anchors to the historic attractions in St. Augustine, but there are many other sites, some dating back to the Spanish and others where visitors can catch glimpses of St. Augustine's history through the subsequent centuries.

In the heart of the historic quarter, you will find the Oldest Wooden School House, built prior to 1763. A short walk from downtown takes you to the Authentic Old Jail which, after the forts and the school house, seems almost modern. It was, after all, built as recently as 1891. However, after spending a few minutes in a primitive cell, you'll realize we have come a long way since then.

Two must-sees are Flagler College and the Lightner Museum. Flagler College was built in 1887 by Henry Flagler, the father of modern Florida. Flagler was the visionary entrepreneur who built the first railway through Florida, all the way to Key West, and then built luxury hotels at the main stops along the way. The railway is partially gone – a hurricane destroyed the tracks through the Keys in the early 20th century – but



The ferry to Fort Matanzas, with the fort on the far shore. All photos by Paul Knowles

the ahead-of-their-times hotels remain. In this case, Flagler's hotel has been transformed into Flagler College, an active post-secondary school. But visitors can still take tours and marvel at the luxury from this golden age, including Tiffany windows illuminating what is now a student dining hall.

Directly across the street is the quirky Lightner Museum, which displays the eclectic collections of Otto C. Lightner, a man who apparently was interested in just about everything and amassed a vast collection that mirrored his passion. The exhibits range from complex music boxes to rooms filled with cut glass and crystal, though there is also a stuffed lion and other eccentric finds to be discovered.

Perhaps the best way to launch your exploration of this town replete with centuries of his-

tory is to hop on the Old Town Trolley for a tour through the entire town. You can enjoy the entire circuit or take advantage of the hop-on, hop-off feature. I always take these kinds of tours – you learn a lot. But you won't be wrong if you simply choose to stroll through historic St. Augustine discovering the deep-rooted historic building by building, story by story. You can learn more at FloridasHistoricCoast.com.

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



The Castillo de San Marcos is well supplied with friendly, costumed interpreters.



Armament on the Castillo.



The historic district of St. Augustine now has lots of shops, restaurants and bars.



Flagler College, built by the legendary Henry Flagler as a high-end hotel.

OPINION —

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK: *Finding nutrition in my own backyard*



By Galen Simmons

Did you know dandelions, that weed most of us try to eradicate from our yards by any means possible each spring, are edible?

Not only is each part of the dandelion – the flower, the leaves and the root – edible, apparently, they have an unbelievable amount of nutritional value and even have potentially cancer-fighting qualities.

While I knew dandelions are edible, I had no idea scientists have been studying the medicinal qualities of dandelions for more than a decade (and possibly longer). Recently, the topic of

dandelions came up in conversation with my girlfriend (I can't remember how), and she mentioned she'd seen a news article about their use in fighting cancer.

According to a post on the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center website, the flower, leaf and root of dandelions are used in traditional medicine for their diuretic, cholagogic (encourages the discharge of bile), antirheumatic (assists with inflammatory arthritis) and appetite-stimulating properties.

Studies suggest that dandelion has bad-cholesterol-lowering, liver-protecting, antiviral, anticoagulant, diuretic, anti-inflammatory and antioxidant activities. Even more amazing, dandelion-root extract has demonstrated anticancer effects against melanoma and leukemia, as well as pancreatic- and colorectal-cancer cell lines.

Now don't get me wrong, I am not a doctor and I cannot recommend that anyone begin eating dandelions for their purported medicinal benefits, especially since dandelion-root extract can

cause allergic reactions and may interact with some prescription drugs. Science has more work to do in that respect.

However, I also learned that dandelion greens, which can be eaten raw or cooked, are an excellent source of vitamins A, C and K, and they also contain vitamin E, folate and small amounts of B vitamins, as well as minerals including iron, calcium, magnesium and potassium.

Dandelion roots, meanwhile, are rich in the carbohydrate, inulin, a type of soluble fiber found in plants that supports the growth and maintenance of healthy gut bacteria in your digestive tract. The root is often dried and made into tea or a caffeine-free coffee substitute.

After reading all of that, I looked out my back door and realized all that nutritional goodness is available in abundance every spring in my own backyard.

So, what did I do? I spent three hours frantically and gleefully pulling up dandelions from their roots, washing them in our kitchen sink and separating the



greens, roots and flowers for future use.

While I'm a little nervous about how they might taste, I'm excited to incorporate all three components into our diets in whatever way I can.

If you're still reading this and I haven't lost you in my dandelion obsession, I may write a second part to this column with the culinary and nutritional results of my foray in dandelion foraging.

Stay tuned.



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OPINION —

Our lives need negative space

By Erin Wildsmith, submitted by Interfaith Counselling Centre

Except for the point, the still point,

There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.

- T.S. Elliot, The Four Quartets: Burnt Norton

There's a concept in visual art and design called negative space. Negative space means, essentially, the part of a composition that is not taken up by the piece's main subject. In a painting of a vase of tulips, it is the table the vase sits on and the wall behind the flowers. In a photograph of your son on his third birthday, it is the dark room surrounding the adorable toddler and his big eyes as he takes in the candles on his cake.



Art or photography without enough negative space feels busy and chaotic. In a painting with no negative space, it is very difficult to determine what the piece is supposed to be about. You get lost. You get confused. You forget what you were looking for.

Our lives need negative space too.

A number of years ago, I was moving through a significant transition at work. It was a promotion, really, and I was excited to be stepping into this new and more challenging role. Yet along with my excitement, I also had other more complicated feelings I didn't know how to name. Fine threads of anxiety, inadequacy and fear had interwoven themselves with the excitement and healthy feelings of accomplishment. My inner world began to feel like a ball of knotted up necklaces one finds in the bottom of the jewelry box, so tangled that there seems to be no hope of wearing one gold chain ever again.

This knot of complicated feelings also impacted my relationships both inside and outside of work. None of us are only one thing. On top of my work as the pastor of a local church, I was and am a partner, a parent, a daughter and a friend and the lack of negative space in my life was impacting my ability to engage in all of those arenas. I had started to forget the subject of my painting, the things my life was supposed to be about.

It's funny when you think about it. As a faith leader, I refer people to counselling all the time. I have seen what a significant difference it has made in the lives of people I care about. Yet it was so hard to make that first appointment; I'm not sure quite why. Perhaps because in my growing-up years, counselling was only for extreme situations. Things had to be really bad before you would consider something like that.

I see things differently now. Counselling is not some sort of epi-Pen, applicable only in emergencies. Nor is it a sign of weakness. Instead, my counselor helps me find the negative space I need in my life. Counselling helps me hear myself think. By sitting in his attentive, caring presence, my counselor helps clear away the background noise so that I remember the subject of my painting again. It helps me find my bearings when I get lost. Counselling is now a regular part of how I take care of my mental health, not because I am in crisis (though counselling is good for that too) but because I am human and my humanity needs adequate respect – not to mention more than a little negative space.

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- | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| A Song for Mama | Look What You've Done | The Best Day |
| Dear Mama | Mama I'm Coming Home | The Perfect Fan |
| He Gets That from Me | Mother | Thought You Should Know |
| I Hope You Dance | My Wish | You Raise Me Up |
| In My Daughter's Eyes | Sweetest Devotion | You Can't Lose Me |

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Pet of the Week

MEMPHIS

Memphis is a Golden Retriever that will be two later this fall. He can often be spotted peaking between the neighbouring fences looking for treats, and is the self appointed neighbourhood watch president. His owners, Brody and Julia spend time with him at the local dog park, where he has made many new friends. Memphis wants it known that his favourite person is his Papa Roy!

Nominate your Pet of the Week by emailing: thewtgazette@gmail.com

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR - MAY/JUNE 2024

FRIDAY, MAY 10

The Community Players of New Hamburg presents: Anne of Green Gables
7:30 p.m.
Price C\$37.00
tickets@thecommunityplayers.com
1-800-827-7524
Trinity Theatre at the New Hamburg Community Centre
251 Jacob St., New Hamburg

SATURDAY, MAY 11

The Community Players of New Hamburg presents: Anne of Green Gables
2:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.
Price C\$37.00
tickets@thecommunityplayers.com
1-800-827-7524
Trinity Theatre at the New Hamburg Community Centre
251 Jacob St., New Hamburg

SUNDAY, MAY 12

Optimist Club of New Dundee Mother's Day Brunch
10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
New Dundee Community Centre
1028 Queen St., New Dundee

The Community Players of New Hamburg presents: Anne of Green Gables
2:00 p.m.
Price C\$37.00
tickets@thecommunityplayers.com
1-800-827-7524
Trinity Theatre at the New Hamburg Community Centre
251 Jacob St., New Hamburg

MONDAY, MAY 13

Garden Wilmot's Making soaps with nature's bounty
7-9 p.m.
Wilmot Recreation Complex, Meeting Room A
1291 Nafziger Rd., Baden

TUESDAY, MAY 14

Township of Wellesley council meeting
6:45 p.m.
Council chambers
4805 William Hastings Line, Crosshill

WEDNESDAY, MAY 15

Township of East-Zorra Tavistock council meeting
7 p.m.
Council chambers
89 Loveys St. Hickson

WEDNESDAY, MAY 22

Community Care Concepts Lunch and Fellowship
12 p.m.
Join us for lunch and fellowship.
Linwood Community Centre,
5279 Ament Line, Linwood

THURSDAY, MAY 23

Community Care Concepts Lunch and Fellowship
12 p.m.
Join us for lunch and fellowship.
Wilmot Rec Complex,
1291 Nafziger Rd, Baden

FRIDAY, MAY 24

New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale
5:30 p.m.
New Hamburg Fair Grounds
251 Jacob St., New Hamburg

SATURDAY, MAY 25

New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale
7:00 a.m.
New Hamburg Fair Grounds
251 Jacob St., New Hamburg

Foxboro Green's Gigantic Multi Family Yard Sale
8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Rain or Shine. Bargains galore!
2975 Erb's Road West,
Baden

SUNDAY, MAY 26

Optimist Club of Petersburg Breakfast in the Park
8:30 a.m. to noon
Petersburg Park
1338 Notre Dame Dr., Petersburg

MONDAY, MAY 27

Township of Wilmot council meeting
7-11 p.m.
Council chambers
60 Snyder's Rd. West Baden

SATURDAY, JUNE 1

World Crokinole Championship
8:00 am. to 9:00 p.m.
Free Admission (Registration fee for players). For more Information:
worldcrokinole.com
Tavistock Arena,
1 Adam Street

SATURDAY, JUNE 1

Tavistock Fire Department Drive Thru Chicken BBQ
3 time slots: 4-5 p.m., 5-6 p.m. and 6-7 p.m.
\$25 per meal. Includes BBQ chicken, potatoes, veggies, cole-slaw and dessert. For tickets call 519-221-6414.
Tavistock Fire Hall
260 Woodstock St. S., Tavistock

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5

Tavistock Men's Club Fish Fry
Serving 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.
Adults \$30 Children (6-12) \$15
Pickerel dine-in or take out.
For tickets call 519-655-2286 or 519-655-3573 or
email: info@tavistockmensclub.ca
Men's Club Hall,
78 Woodstock St., N

THURSDAY, JUNE 6

KAIROS Blanket Exercise
7 p.m.
Experience history from an Indigenous perspective by participating in a KAIROS Blanket Exercise. A free event hosted by the Wilmot Ecumenical Working Group on Indigenous/Settler Relationships. Register at:
<https://bit.ly/WilmotBlanketExercise>
Questions? Contact:
ecumenicalworkinggroup@gmail.com
New Hamburg Community Centre,
251 Jacob Street

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Weekly Quiz Answers

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1. \$7.25 USD | 5. 26.2 miles | 8. 300 points |
| 2. 29% | (42.2km) | 9. Orange |
| 3. Humanity | 6. 406 years | 10. Fruit |
| 4. Star Wars | 7. 1775-1783 | |

REAL ESTATE

80 Acre Farm For Sale

Through our Customized tender process, 2300 Gerber Rd, Wilmot Twp. Region of Waterloo, (1/2 km west of Wellesley Home Hardware, in Wellesley), for the Stu Vogel Estate, Initial offer deadline Monday, June 24th at 6:00 p.m.

80 acres, more or less, 70 acres workable. Borders the Nith River. Systematically & randomly tiled – majority medium clay loam. Barn – 54 X 60ft. bank barn, attached 50 X 40ft. addition. The upstairs is spacious & has good floor. Implement shed with lean approx. 50 X 60ft. House – 2 storey field stone house with attached single storey addition and entry. Good steel roof, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, kitchen, dining room, living room and sitting room with wood stove, propane furnace, adjoining covered patio, drilled well, updated hydro service.

Note – Plan to view this intriguing farm property. A stone house with lots of character and a ton of potential to go with a nice chunk of workable land that overlooks the Nith River. A short walk to Wellesley, 15 minute drive to Waterloo and New Hamburg.

To view – Open Houses Sat. May 25th & June 1st, 10 – 2pm or by appointment.

For More Info Call Auctioneers – Gerber Auctions Ltd.
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