

WAITING FOR SANTA



Three-year-old Lily Dupree was patiently waiting for Santa outside the Lions Hall in Wyoming, at Christmas in the Village on Saturday night. Not only could Lily be easily seen with her many lights draped over her and she even had an umbrella, as rain greeted all those in attendance

BLAKE ELLIS/LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE PHOTO

Petrolia studies \$13K fees for new homes

Heather Wright
The Independent

A consultant is suggesting Petrolia could charge up to \$13,846 in development charges on new homes.

Lisa Courtney of BM Ross outlined the findings of her report council commissioned last year. Courtney says development charges help pay for the capital projects required because of the increase in population which comes with new homes.

As part of the study, Courtney worked with town staff to determine about \$11.5 million in capital projects - everything from a new fire pumper/tanker truck worth \$1.5 million, to a \$200,000 walking trail under Petrolia Line at Bridgeview Park to a \$350,000 Wheeled Sport Park to \$1.5 million in new playground equipment -

would be need over the next ten years. About \$7.18 million could be recovered from development fees.

“The growth percentage of the population in 20 years is 10 per cent...For other items like the fire trucks, typically, you’re buying a new fire truck for new growth, but it does have some benefit and it’s kind of based on what we think is a fair reasonable split. There’s no hard number to it, but it’s reasonable,” Courtney says.

The study also points out three vacant areas slated for development would need water main expansions, extensions or sewage and sewers. They’d be subject to a higher fee which would reach \$13,846 for each single family home developed. Multi-unit homes would face lower fees per unit.

SEE DEVELOPMENT PG 2

Petrolia okays \$3.5M Victoria Hall renovations

Heather Wright
The Independent

Petrolia has given Victoria Playhouse Petrolia the green-light to start fundraising for a \$3.5 million renovation at Victoria Hall.

The project sees two separate additions to the back of the historic site for elevators and some washrooms.

Laurissa Ellsworth, director of marketing, arts and communications, in a report to council says the renovation has been needed for some time. In 2017, the town studied the idea. It came up with a plan which would have moved municipal services out of Victoria Hall and renovated the space for small theater, newer washrooms and elevators

for patrons. The town went to Lambton County council hoping to secure a \$1 million grant, but it didn’t materialize.

The town has kept the project on the back burner, but Ellsworth says the theater gets complaints about “the single, small elevator used to transport patrons to the theatre and washrooms (six-eight persons at a time), and the lack of washrooms in the facility without visiting the basement via the elevator or three flights of stairs.”

She says if there are seats remaining for a performance they are usually in the balcony and patrons won’t buy them because they are up too many stairs or far from the bathroom.

SEE VICTORIA HALL PG 2

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Victoria Hall reno won't begin until the entire \$3.5 million cost raised

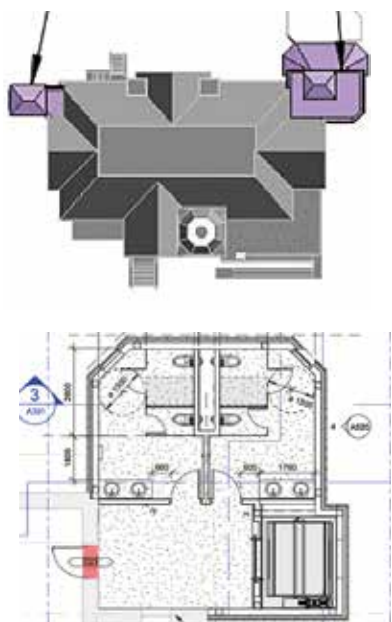
CON'T FROM PG 1

Ellsworth said right now, it does not provide “the experience we strive for, or the dignity that our patrons deserve.” This fall, with a \$5,000 donation from patrons, CIMA+ Engineering worked with Heritage Canada, Petrolia Heritage, patrons and staff to come up with a workable solution. It includes an exterior addition near the current bandshell which would house an elevator which would access all three floors and provide 10 new washrooms, some on each floor. Another addition would be added on the back of the building near the rehearsal hall to house an indoor lift for props and people. Currently Victoria Playhouse uses a scissor lift to

move props to the stage, a practice Ellsworth worries could lead to safety problems in the future. And she says that lift would provide “the ability for us to hire an artist in a wheelchair ...because right now, we just can’t and it’s not really very nice. It does not provide dignity to people and it has upset me for years.” One of the original concerns about building an addition onto Victoria Hall was due to its heritage designation. Politicians and members of the public wondered if it should be altered. Ellsworth says the engineer worked with the National Heritage Registry. “Their only objection to the changes were if they were substantially visible from the front of the

building, or they change the roofline. And so when we were able to send them a drawing showing that no, in fact, the additions mimic the roofline, and they’re not truly visible from the front of the building, they thought that was acceptable.” The exterior of the building will mimic the current hall including the brick and shapes of the windows and doors. Ellsworth adds the wrought iron spiral staircase at the back of the building will not have to be moved to accommodate the addition. Town council approved the plan but will commit no cash to the project. Ellsworth says there is about \$1 million in a reserve fund for the hall which can be used, however Victoria Playhouse Pet-

rolia has committed to raising the rest of the funding for the addition by applying for grants and holding fundraisers. She adds a number of patrons have been waiting for the plans to be unveiled to give donations to the project. In her report to council, Ellsworth says there is a plan to complete the work during the off season but adds the plans will not go out for tender until the entire \$3.5 million is raised. Above the two additions to be added to Victoria Hall. Below, the layout of one of three new washrooms on the main floor.



Development fee in Petrolia could be \$13k per home

CON'T FROM PG 1

While many municipalities in the area have development fees, Petrolia council has been split on the issue for a number of years. Monday, Councillor Ross O’Hara again voiced his opposition. “I have a problem with the fact that we’re being told by the province to build affordable housing...(this) makes it more expensive because if you’re going to add \$13,000 to build a house, the developer is not going to reach into his pocket and say ‘Oh I’ll pick it up.’ It’s going to go right on the price of that house,” he said. “The counter argument to that is if you don’t have growth pay for growth, your existing taxpayers have to pay for that and that affects the affordability through taxation,” says Courtney. Councillor Chad Hyatt questioned whether there was really a need for some of the capital items including \$1.5 million in parks equipment. Courtney said council could reduce those amounts - and by extension the cost of the development fees - before passing a bylaw. Members of the public also weighed in. Developer Bob Leaper is against charging the fee. He says developers already foot a large cost. “We

do pay for all our own costs, even lawyers fees for the town, engineering review fees, stop signs, everything.” Former Town Councillor Wade Deighton said “This bureaucratic money grab is nothing more than a red tape overstep.” Terry Blackmore is also opposed but was also concerned about the wording of the proposed bylaw which appeared to mean developers would have to pay all the fees for each house planned for a development, even if they only planned to build one home at a time. Blackmore asked council to work with the developers voicing concerns now, before the bylaw is put in place. There were also supporters for the fees. “I’ve seen no reason for current taxpayers to fund someone else’s infrastructure,” said Sherry Hamilton. “Current taxpayers do not help a new homeowner pay their land transfer tax. Current taxpayers do not help new home acquisition individuals pay the real estate Commission’s so why should a current taxpayer have their tax rate increased for the sole purpose of installing infrastructure that benefits those new home units?” Clerk Mandi Pearson said the issue is slated to return to council in February.

Best wishes for a joyful holiday Season.

From our families to yours.



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Picture taken during our annual P.A.W
Wildlife rescue Donations/Fundraiser

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Holiday Health Tips

To ensure you and your family can enjoy the upcoming holiday season to the fullest, there are a number of holiday health tips you can follow. As Bluewater Health is still experiencing some setbacks due to the cyberattack in late October, and the rate of respiratory illness continues to climb in Lambton County, local healthcare partners are coming together to continue providing residents with sufficient access to care during this busy season.

You can avoid unnecessary trips to the emergency department and longer-than-usual wait times with these helpful tips:

1. Call your primary care provider first. Your family doctor or nurse practitioner are your best care providers for non-emergencies including the common cold or UTI. They know your history, medications and are your best place for consistent healthcare.
2. For minor ailments, you can visit your local pharmacy to speak to a pharmacist and receive treatment.
3. Refill prescriptions before the holidays. If you run out during the holidays, contact your pharmacist to see if they can refill your prescription until you can see your primary care provider.
4. Find the holiday hours of your primary care provider and local walk-in clinics. You can call Rapids Family Health

Team Access to Care at 519-491-6188, or Rural Access to Care (for clients of Central Lambton Family Health Team & North Lambton CHC) at 519-882-2500.

5. Stay up-to-date on your vaccinations, including your COVID boosters and flu shot. And if you are a senior, please consider the pneumonia vaccine. Visit GetTheVaccine.ca to learn more and book and appointment.

6. For parents: Use the armpit to gage temperature for your little ones, or use the under-the-tongue thermometer. This method is more reliable than the ear or forehead thermometers if you feel your child has a fever.

7. The virus we are seeing is lasting up to three weeks – so be patient, drink lots of fluids, eat healthy foods, and get some rest.

8. Wear a mask in densely populated indoor areas.

Staff at Petrolia's ED are always here to help should you require emergency care. If you, your child, or a loved one is short of breath, please come see us in the ED.

Wishing you all a happy and healthy holiday season.

#PetroliaProud #WeAreBWH

Greenhouse neighbour gets standing at hearing for new cannabis rules

Heather Wright
The Independent

An Enniskillen man who has been fighting to keep cannabis from being grown at a greenhouse just 28 meters from his home now has permission to be part of a hearing at the Ontario Land Tribunal.

Trevor Brand and his mother, Cathy, have been filing complaints about odour and light pollution since Tilray opened High Park Farms across the road from their Enniskillen home in 2018. The Brands and other neighbours complained about excessive light and odour coming from the facility. The company put up light curtains and vapour cannons to reduce the problems, to no avail.

At one point, Brand filed a complaint with the Normal Farm Practices Protection Board hoping to have the company fix the problem. But before the hearing was held, Tilray closed its High Park Farms facility on Lasalle Line in August 2021.

There are no federal rules about how close cannabis production operations can be to homes. Many Ontario municipalities have changed their own zoning rules to gain some control over the common issues of light and odour pollution.

Municipal Councillor Mary Lynne McCallum and Deputy Mayor Judy Krall pushed for changes to the Enniskillen’s of-

ficial plan to deal with the issues the family faced.

In February 2021, the township placed an interim control bylaw stopping anyone from producing cannabis in the township until new rules were drafted.

Thirteen months later, in January, the township held a public zoning meeting to layout what was proposed - the zoning changes would limit the outdoor growth of cannabis 300 meters from homes. It would limit the indoor growth of cannabis 80 meters from homes for standard production of cannabis - less for micro cultivation which would take just over 2,000 square foot of floor space.

It is 28 meters from Brand’s home to the lot line of the greenhouse on Lasalle Line.

The new rules would also require air quality, light, noise and traffic studies in a five kilometer area around the cultivation facility.

But Enniskillen Pepper - which owns the greenhouse and had a long-term lease with Tilray - objected when the proposed rules were introduced saying they would effectively stop production of cannabis at the facility.

“This approach does not represent good planning as it fails to recognize existing operations like Enniskillen Pepper,” wrote the company’s lawyer Scott Snider in a letter announcing the appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal to county planning staff.

Snider said under the new rules, Enniskillen Pepper would have to go through “an onerous and costly planning process to obtain studies and approvals for a use that is permitted today. Our client simply wants to be able to continue its agricultural operation without having to obtain costly and unnecessary planning approvals and technical studies to continue an operation that was legal and for which considerable capital has already been invested to accommodate the use.”

Enniskillen politicians say they didn’t know at the time Enniskillen Pepper officials were already in talks with another commercial cannabis producer to rent the facility.

Monday, Snider was at the Ontario Land Tribunal for the first hearing about the issue. There were no legal arguments; but Brand, who supports the new zoning rules, was given the right to have standing at the hearing. That will allow his lawyer, Anthony Petrucci, to ask questions during the eventual hearing.

Enniskillen Pepper is also appealing a decision which stopped a site specific exemption to the rules.

County planning staff said even though the greenhouse had not been used since August 2021 to produce cannabis, it should be given an exemption to allow the crop to continue to be grown.

Brand’s lawyer disputed that in a letter written in February.

“Since Aug 2019 to the current date, no cannabis cultivation, production, or processing was in fact in use on the subject property,” said Petrucci.

“Truly, it cannot be considered good planning or in the public interest to exempt the only indoor cannabis facility from the Cannabis bylaw,” he wrote adding it “defeats bylaw’s purpose.”

Snider, in a letter to council, said Enniskillen Pepper would move any drying operations to the north end of the greenhouse, more than 250 meters from the Brand property, to reduce the odour problems if it was given the exemption.

But with only four members of Enniskillen council around the table, the exemption request failed with a tie vote in September, prompting Enniskillen Pepper to launch another appeal.

It is unclear how long the Ontario Land Tribunal case will take. Another hearing date has been set for Feb. 7, where it is likely lawyers will hash out whether the two appeals can be heard at the same time, as the lawyer for Enniskillen Pepper suggested.

Meantime, Cannim Canada - an Australian based cannabis company - has already received a licence to cultivate and process cannabis at the Lasalle Line greenhouse.

The company had been partners

in another cannabis operation in Chatham-Kent called Medisun, which went bankrupt.

Cannim, according to the bankruptcy filings, had already secured the Enniskillen greenhouse for its new location in December 2022.

Before township council even considered whether the greenhouse could have an exemption at its Sept. 18 meeting, Cannim had notified the township administration it was seeking a Health Canada licence for production there.

When *The Independent* revealed Cannim was onsite at the building, Mayor Kevin Marriott, McCallum and Krall all said they had not been notified another cannabis company was at work there despite the fact Cannim had sent a letter of intent to the township administration Aug. 28.

Health Canada granted the company a licence for the Enniskillen greenhouse Oct. 27.

The company has not answered any questions about when it will begin producing cannabis onsite.

Enniskillen Pepper officials say they plan to grow mini cucumbers onsite as well with the first crop being produced in 2024.

Tuesday, Councillor Mary Lynne McCallum said she believes that while the new Official Plan amendment is being challenged, the old rules still apply which may allow the company to start up production immediately.

Crash claims one life

One person has died after a single vehicle crashed on Confederation Line near Wyoming.

Lambton OPP were called to Confederation Line near South Plympton Road Monday afternoon around 4:30 with Wyoming fire and paramedics. The driver of the car was transported to hospital but died of his injuries.

The name of the driver is not being released by the OPP.

Petrolia Y not yet back to pre-pandemic membership

The Petrolia Y still has yet to return to pre-pandemic membership numbers.

That according to Wade Babula, manager of the local Y. “Our memberships up to 1,300; not quite up to pre COVID numbers. However,

I will highlight that it is up 200 people over last year and 100 over projected goal as well,” he told councillors in Petrolia Monday.

Babula said the total number of people visiting is less than before the pandemic, the people who are there

are coming more often noting there are no quiet times.

In all 200 people receive financial assistance for Y memberships. Twenty-five seniors also received a free membership because of a federal grant, Babula added.



Waste Management

Twin Creeks Environmental Centre

HOLIDAY HOURS

Monday, December 25th (Christmas Day): Closed

Tuesday, December 26th (Boxing Day): Closed

Saturday, December 30th: 7am-3pm

Monday, January 1st (New Year's Day): Closed

If a day is not listed it is regular hours 7 am – 4 pm

Wishing Everyone a Safe and Happy Holiday Season



MUNICIPALITY OF BROOKE-ALVINSTON
COMMITTEE OF ADJUSTMENT & CEMETERY BOARD MEMBER

1) Committee of Adjustment Vacancy
The Municipality of Brooke-Alvinston is looking to fill a vacancy on the Committee of Adjustment effective February 1, 2024. As a member of this committee, you will review and make decisions on applications for severances and minor variances and other planning issues. The appointment is for a three-year term. Previous municipal or planning experience would be an asset for the Committee of Adjustment vacancy.

2) Alvinston Cemetery Board Member Vacancy
The Alvinston Cemetery Board is seeking an individual to be a member of the Alvinston Cemetery Board. As a member you will act in an advisory role with other members on matters regarding the cemetery. The committee meets twice a year and may be involved on Decoration Sunday, the second Sunday in June. There is no fixed term to this appointment.

Interested individuals for both vacancies should send a letter indicating their willingness to be appointed to the Committee of Adjustment or the Alvinston Cemetery Board. You will be required to prepare for meetings on your own time.

Applications will be accepted until 12:00 pm on Friday, January 5, 2024 to the address noted below:

Municipality of Brooke-Alvinston
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We thank all applicants for their interest; however, only those selected for an interview will be contacted. In accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, personal information is collected under the authority of the Municipal Act and will be used for the purpose of candidate selection.



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- Firestone 7.5-16 front tires - 18.4-30/15-30 rear tires
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EDITORIAL

What does Petrolia need?

It’s no wonder there were howls of protest when a new study on development charges came to Petrolia council.

BM Ross recommended the town consider charging fees of up to \$13,846 per house built in Petrolia over the next five years.

For people who had already decided development fees are the devil, that number was enough to raise the hairs on the back of their necks. And even for those who think development charges are not a bad idea, the figure was a bit shocking. But council should not close the book on the idea of charging development fees.

Development fees are designed to make people moving to the area pay some of the upfront capital costs which the town will incur because there are more people who need more services.

Developers, who already pay for the infrastructure needed to begin making money by building houses, say adding development fees will drive the cost of housing up. Some add it will cause people to look elsewhere. But many municipalities across the province charge the fees including Plympton-Wyoming and St. Clair Township, two of the fastest growing communities in Lambton. The consultant rightly pointed out if Petrolia doesn’t charge development fees, current taxpayers will end up paying for it, leaving them poorer because of higher taxes.

There is a solution here. The eye-popping fees can be squarely blamed on the \$11.5 million capital wish list the town administrators and the consultant came up with to reach the final numbers. It comes across like a spoiled child planning to spend their inheritance while their parents are still living. The list includes capital projects such as a \$300,000 wheeled sport park - something which has been turned down by council numerous times in the last 10 years and a \$200,000 dog park. There is also \$1.5 million for playground equipment. Equipment which has been placed in parks in the last decade has been donated by service clubs.

There are some things which will be needed, like a new fire truck and water and sewer extensions into the new areas to be developed, so the fees are needed.

Council should take a hard look with an eye to pare down what the town wishes to buy and what it will actually need. We suggest doing that might make the fees a lot more palatable while still benefiting taxpayers.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Independent welcomes Letters to the Editor. Our preferred methods to receive letters are via email to news@petrolialambtonindependent.ca (please use Letter in the subject line) or through our website www.petrolialambtonindependent.ca. You can also deliver letters to The Independent at 4156 Petrolia Line, Petrolia or drop them in the mail at The Independent, Petrolia, ON, N0N 1R0. The Independent reserves the right to edit letters for brevity and clarity. All letters need to be signed and must have a phone number for verification.

OUR STORY



LAMBTON COUNTY ARCHIVE PHOTO

Construction began in 1892 on a post office building in Petrolia on the corner of Petrolia and Wingfield Streets. This would be a new home for the post office, which had been operating in various buildings around town since 1859. The three-story building was designed by London architect Thomas Fuller in a Romanesque-style, characterized by its heavy, brick construction and by rounded stone arches over the doors and windows. When the new post office opened in 1894, its top two stories were occupied by residences for the postmaster, Pat Barclay, and a caretaker. The postmaster’s residence was converted to offices, but the caretaker continued to live on the third floor. Postal operations continued here until 1964.

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Publications Mail Registration No. 42663514
Proud host of the Local Journalism Initiative

Funded by the Government of Canada
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SOMBRA TRIBUTE



DAVID "DERKZ" DERKATZ PHOTO

A new mural celebrates the tight-knit, supportive community of Sombra according to the artist who created it. David “DERKZ” Derkatz was among the people on hand at the Blue Willow in Sombra this week to unveil the mural which was commissioned by Matt Klompstra of Klompstra Construction several years ago however the artist was only able to complete it this year, after Klompstra died in an accident. Derkatz says Klompstra’s wife, Krista, helped with the project which depicts Sombra’s farming and logging community and features Klompstra’s favourite bird, a sandpiper. The project also received a Creative County grant from Lambton County.

Gladu wants to celebrate Christian Heritage

Blake Ellis
Local Journalism Initiative

Sarnia-Lambton MP Marilyn Gladu hopes to mark December as Christian Heritage Month in 2024. Gladu introduced a private members bill, which would see December recognized as Christian Heritage Month. “Canada is a country that celebrates all faiths. We have Sikh Heritage Month, Hindu Heritage Month, Muslim History Month, Jewish Heritage Month and so many more,” Gladu said in the House of Commons on Dec. 5. “It is only fair and right that we have

a Christian heritage month, since there are 19.6 million Christians in Canada according to the last census.” The Canadian Human Rights Commission released a discussion paper in October on religious intolerance. In it, it described statutory holidays, which mark Christian religious days as discriminatory. Gladu said this private members bill is not in a response to that, as she had already drafted her bill, before the discussion paper was released. Gladu said there has been an attack on people of all faiths in recent years. “All religions need to stand together,”

she said Gladu said getting a private members bill passed is a little trickier, but she is one of less than 50 MPs who have passed at least two private members bills. Gladu sponsored a private members bill in 2017 establishing a national framework for palliative care, while she sponsored another one in 2022 on pension protection. Both of these passed successfully and became law. Gladu is confident her private members bill designating December as Christian Heritage Month, will be successful, saying she is already receiving a lot of support.

PW councillors can’t ban corporations from owning rentals

Heather Wright
The Independent

Plympton-Wyoming can’t exclude corporations from running short term rental properties. That from the town’s lawyers as the municipality tries to implement a licensing system for the 59 rental properties in the community. Monday, Plympton-Wyoming councillors got a look at a revised licensing bylaw, after lawyers had looked it over.

“This doesn’t allow us to stop this as a business venture, which is not where I hoped this would be,” said Councillor Kristen Rodrigues after reviewing it. “Most of the stuff we wanted in there, they stroked out,” said Councillor Mike Vasey of the lawyers notes. “If we can’t stop them from being corporate owned, then, to me, that turns that residence into a commercial entity - it’s a money making entity that we don’t allow in our residential areas. So, how can we stop it? If we allow these

to go to Airbnbs - we can’t stop it.” Councillor Alex Boughen agreed. “If we can’t limit corporations, then it explains why a lot of municipalities are going to owner occupied (short term rentals) only,” he said. Council tabled the revised licensing bylaw asking staff to figure out if the town could limit the number of licenses permitted and to look at increasing the fines so it can figure out how to proceed.

Fix for the failing Watford firehall less expensive than expected

Heather Wright
The Independent

Fixing Watford’s firehall may cost a lot less than expected. The brick work on the historic hall have been falling apart for a number of years. In 2021, Township council asked for an engineer to look at the building to see how badly damaged it is and what could be done to fix it. Angelo Masciantonio of the firm MTE told Warwick Council Dec. 7 that many of the bricks are spalling. That is the breakdown of bricks such as crack-

ing, peeling, crumbling or chipping, which eventually lead to the surface of bricks breaking away from the main body with the insides exposed to the elements, leading to further damage. Masciantonio says many of the bricks around the top of the building are breaking apart. “We found basically that, yes, the south facade the south wall was bowing out and it was moving away from the wood members, the rafters and the big timber beams that formed the structure of the roof,” he said adding there is similar damage on the north wall. And he says, it needs to be fixed.

“It hasn’t fallen down but if there was ever a very strong windstorm, such as a tornado or something like that, then there’s the possibility that you could get damage.” Masciantonio expects the brick and steel work will cost between \$200,000 and \$250,000. Treasurer Trevor Jarrett says the township has been planning for the repairs for some time and has \$600,000 socked away already.



Damage at the Watford Fire Hall

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Santa comes to Wyoming

BLAKE ELLIS/LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE PHOTOS

Santa was given a key to Plympton-Wyoming Saturday during Christmas in the Village. One-year-old Audrey Eastman with her mother, Jen Eastman, greet Santa There were lots of Christmas lights decorating the 14 tractors in the first tractor parade held during Christmas in the Village. After a procession people were asked to vote for their favourite tractor.



Bees take first round of the Battle of Lambton

The Alvinston arena was hopping Saturday night as the Killer Bees took the first round of the Battle of Lambton County 5-2. The crowd packed the arena with people standing two deep around the boards. Many compared it to the Hunter Brothers Charity Game and the golden years of the iconic Alvinston 77's senior team. Hockey filled the arena with minor hockey games pitting Petrolia and Alvinston against each other all day.



BLAKE ELLIS/LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE PHOTO



Fiddick’s trial set for November

The Independent

A former Petrolia nursing home owner will go to trial on six criminal charges in November 2024.

Michael Fiddick was charged May 22 by Lambton OPP with three charges of assault, sexual assault, overcoming resistance by attempt to choke or strangle and mischief.

Nov. 30 he was committed to stand trial in the case.

Friday, Fiddick’s lawyer appeared at

assignment court and asked for between five to seven days for a trial. He’s elected to be tried by a judge alone.

The case will return to court Jan 10 to firm up the details of the trial date including the November timing.

There are two publication bans in the case. Fiddick stepped away from his work at the Petrolia nursing home shortly before the charges were laid. He sold Fiddick’s Nursing Home to Omni Quality Living earlier this year.

Warwick eyes five per cent tax increase

Heather Wright
The Independent

Warwick Township council got its first look at the 2024 budget which starts with a proposed five per cent tax increase.

Council had a special budget meeting Dec. 7 where Treasurer Trevor Jarrett explained some of the pressures facing the municipality and how Warwick compares to other Lambton County communities when it comes to taxes.

Warwick proposes to spend \$ 12,129,497 in 2024. That includes \$ 6,556,601 to run the local government, \$4,353,150 to fund capital projects for the year and another \$1,219,497 to pay off the debt incurred building the new East Lambton Community Complex. Councillors agreed earlier this year to try to pay off the multi-million dollar debt in just five years.

Jarrett says if council agrees to a five per cent tax increase it will increase revenue by \$143,000. There will be \$37,000 in new tax money from new homes built in the community over the last year. A five per cent increase would mean taxpayers would shell out \$34.73 more for each \$100,000 assessment on their home.

The largest chunk of the townships costs come from the parks and recreation department with 24.3 per cent of the budget spent on things such as the arena and community complex. Public works, which takes care of roads and infrastructure, spends about 21.7 per cent of the budget with the cost of government rounding out the top three spending 16.8 per cent of the budget.

Jarrett says “recent unprecedented inflationary pressures continue to impact operating and capital projections for the township. On top of this, insurance costs have increased by 100 per cent over six years including another \$38,000 increase in 2024.”

Jarrett says Warwick residents still pay the lowest taxes in Lambton for municipal services. On a home assessed at \$300,000, a Warwick resident would pay about \$1,408 in municipal taxes. Oil Springs residents pay the most at \$3,109 with Petrolia taxpayers next in line, forking out \$2,953 each year in municipal taxes alone.

Warwick council has yet to look through the detailed budget, however there are plans to spend \$6 million on roads alone - that’s a \$3.8 million increase. There are also plans to buy two fire rescue vehicles for Watford and Warwick.

HONOURING FIREFIGHTERS



Volunteer firefighters in Warwick Township were honoured for their service recently. In Warwick Chief Brad Goodhill and Mayor Todd Case presented Mike Clark with a plaque marking 30 years of service. Mike Esselment was recognized for 17 years service, and Scott Miner and Sean Sitlington for 15. In Watford, volunteer firefighters were honoured during their annual Christmas celebration. Pictured are from the left, Deputy Chief Scott Cran, Mayor Todd Case, Chief Rick Sitlington, FPO Sean Sweeney 10-year Gold Bar, Captain Jeff Sitlington, Captain Mike Couwenberg 25-year long service medal, and Captain Donald Hart.

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FROM THE STAFF AT THE INDEPENDENT



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Winter Branch, Lambton County

Knocking on Christmas’ door

Friends and readers;
It is hard to believe we were knocking on Christmas’ door already.
While there are plenty of signs of winter - the increasing darkness and the cooler temperature, Christmas parades and lights on every street - without snow on the ground, I’m always surprised how soon The Independent’s Christmas Greetings section needs to be completed.
Inside these pages you will find the best wishes of members of the community including the businesses and local leaders. You’ll also find stories and photos for the Christmas season. We hope you can find a comfy chair and perhaps a nice hot chocolate to enjoy the greetings, stories and photos in all the bustle of the season.
On behalf of the people who work at The Independent, thank you for your continued support of this community newspaper. We feel incredibly blessed by our supportive community in a time when many newspapers are having difficult times.
And, on behalf of all of us here, we wish you joy this season and peace throughout 2024.

Heather Wright
Publisher



Snowfall in Oil Springs

Seasons Greetings

Wishing you an abundance of glad tidings at this special time of year.

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WISHING YOU & YOUR FAMILY A
MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND ALL THE BEST IN 2024!

Mayer R. Brad Loosley, Council & Staff



Snow at Victoria Hall, 2010

Christmas on Derby Street

Henry ran the broom swiftly over the slats on the floor around the wood stove. The old men, who could be found there every afternoon warming themselves and talking politics, were shuffling out the door into the cold of early evening. It was just 5 o'clock, but the sun gave little light. It had been a cloudy, cold Christmas Eve and Henry was hoping for a thick blanket of snow. He wasn't a sentimental boy, but it really didn't seem like Christmas without snow.

Of course, this year Christmas did not seem that important to Henry anyway. He pushed the pile of dirt and grass into the dustpan, the last duty of the day at the general store on the East End of Petrolia.

Henry was just 9 when he started at working for Mr. Fairbank. After school each day and on Saturday morning, he would come to the store and do whatever jobs Mr. Fairbank asked him to do; sweeping, clearing out a back room, or carrying some parcels down the road for an elderly customer.

And Mr. Fairbank paid him handsomely - 10 cents a week. The money was handed over to his mother Saturday afternoon. Some days, usually after Father had returned from Oil Springs with his pay packet and there was a little money to spare, Mother would give Henry a penny whispering how he should get himself a peppermint stick as a treat. "Everybody deserves something sweet," said Mother.

It had been a while since Henry had used the penny to buy candy. He had been saving his money so his brother, Ben, and sister, Katie, could have something in their stockings this Christmas. Henry could not bear the thought of Ben and Katie, who had lost so much already, losing out on Christmas, too.

It became clear to Henry that Christmas in the Sharp home was unlikely to be happy that year in late October. Mr. Fairbank told him he could leave early to enjoy the brilliant Saturday sunshine in October. With his apron neatly hung on the hook behind the counter and his weekly wage jingling in his pocket, Henry started jogging to his home on Derby Street. Maybe Ben would want to head to the woods to see if their rabbit traps had worked.

But when Henry burst through the door, he stopped short. Mother sat on her chair, head in her hands. Two men dressed in oil spotted overalls, whom Henry had never seen before, and the pastor of Christ Church patting Mother gently, muttering some words softly. Three pairs of eyes turned to look at young Henry. The oil men looked at the pastor and he stepped forward to deliver the news. Father was dead, crushed by a fully loaded oil wagon that flipped when the horses were startled by the blasting of a well.

Henry didn't hear much after that. The entire week, he walked around in a daze.

Exactly a month later, a letter arrived from England. Granny - Father's mother offered Christmas greetings. It likely crossed paths with the card announcing Father's death.

Once the word Christmas was read aloud, it was all Katie could talk about. By dinner, Mother could take no more and told the family she was sorry, but there would be precious little this year for Christmas. Katie's eyes grew wide for a moment and as the words sunk in, Henry saw the tears well up her eyes before she looked down to hide her emotions. He wanted to cry - not for himself - but for his little sister, so devastated to be losing the small joys of Christmas.

Continued on Page 11

Wishing You a Safe & Happy Season

As you're dashing through the holidays, please take care and stay safe.



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Brenda McEachern & and Dana Vokes



Home Sweet Home



Bridgeview Park Bridge, 2010

Christmas on Derby Street

As Mother read devotions that night, Henry’s mind was working a mile a minute. He would save the penny or two his mother would give him from his pay and make sure everyone had something in their stockings that Christmas.

The little house on Derby Street fell into a dreary routine. Mother had taken in laundry from The Iroquois Hotel to make money; piles of dirty sheets cluttered the floors and clean ones hung on the line outside from early in the morning to late at night.

Henry’s birthday came and went with only a brief hug from Mother and baked apples with sugar and cinnamon for dessert as a treat. At 10, Henry was the man of the house and he knew he would need to bring in more than 10 cents a week. When he saw the sign in the window at the feed mill looking for someone to keep the office clean and free from rodents, Henry applied. Mr. Fletcher looked at Henry and reminded him the job needed to be done from noon to 2 pm. Henry said that would be just fine. He had already decided he would leave school to bring home more money for his Mother.

Henry worked hard and brought home the extra pay. When his mother asked why there was more money, Henry said Mr. Fairbank was a very generous man who raised everyone’s salary.

Mother, miserable from the back-breaking work of laundering hotel sheets, simply nodded and gave a weak smile before turning back to work without ever asking about school.

Little by little, Henry earned enough first for a little doll for Katie. Next there was a ball and bat for Ben, kept in the storage room at the general store in a bag with Henry’s name on it. He’d finished paying for it by the first week of November. By then, Henry had noticed his mothers hands were red and raw from all the time in the water while cleaning the sheets. Her usually shiny hair had grown dull. He found a cream at the general store for her hands and Henry used one more penny from his Christmas Eve pay packet to buy the horse hair brush.

With the dust swept away and his apron once again neatly hung behind the counter, Henry donned his coat, wished Mr Fairbank a happy Christmas and headed to the house on Derby Street.

Even on the East End on Christmas, the houses along the street were filled with light and as Henry passed, he could hear music coming from behind a few doors. He was sure his house at the end of the street would not be nearly as jolly, but he fervently hoped the gifts he bore would lift spirits, even just for a moment.

There was no music as Henry walked up to the front door, but there was a candle burning brightly on the table near the window. It was an unusual luxury since

his Father died and Henry smiled.

He opened the door and the smell greeted him; a chicken in a pot with potatoes and the last of the carrots from the garden. And somewhere, the apples were peeled and cooking into sauce. There were no sheets on the floor and mother was not working for the first time in a very long time.

‘Happy Christmas Henry,’ she said, smiling. ‘Dinner is just about ready. Go wash up.’

Henry put his bag with gifts in a corner tucked behind a chair and washed up. ‘Can I help with anything, Mother?’

She shoed him from the stove and handed him the utensils to put on the table.

Continued on page 12

Warmest Wishes for a Merry Christmas and a prosperous 2024

From Warwick Township
Mayor Todd Case,
Deputy Mayor John Couwenberg,
Councillors Joe Manning,
Jerry Westgate, Wayne Morris
and Staff.

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Ice in the Leaves, Lorne C Henderson Park, Petrolia

Christmas on Derby Street

Henry was surprised to find four beautiful oranges in the centre of the table. His mouth watered at the thought of the Christmas treat.

Before dinner was served, Katie, hair in a red bow, said a simple prayer. “Thank you God for baby Jesus. Thank you for our family. Thank you for this food - especially the oranges. Amen.”

Ben started to giggle as the family dug in and for the first time in months, the table was a place of happy chatter as they ate.

The oranges came last. Mother got them from one of her wash customers who had a great big bowl of them in the front entrance.

Henry giggled as Ben and Katie slurped up the juice from their fingers.

As Mother stood to clear the table, Henry nudged Ben and they took over the job telling Mother to sit down in her chair near the fire. When his work was done, Mother took out the Bible and read the Christmas story. She quietly closed the book and looked at her children.

“It has been a lovely evening children but I think we best get to bed for we have church in the morning.”

“Wait Mother.” Henry went to the corner and pulled out his bag. Ben’s bat and ball were on top. The little boy’s eyes grew wide as Henry handed it to him. “We’ll play with it tomorrow after church.”

Katie’s baby doll was next. She leapt up and down clapping her hands with joy as she saw it. Katie cradled the dolly, rocking it gently.

“Henry, that is such a lovely surprise. Ben, Katie, where are your manners - thank your brother.”

The pair smothered Henry with hugs and thank yous.

“Alright, to bed everyone.”

“There’s more,” Henry said as he walked over. He handed her the brush and the hand cream and watched as she turned them over in her hands and a slow smile crept across her face as she opened the cream, putting a small amount on her hands. “This is just lovely, Henry. But you shouldn’t have spent your money on me.”

Henry reached into his bag once more and pulled out a peppermint stick handing it to his Mother; “Everybody deserves something sweet.”



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Jesus’ Colourful Birthday Cake

“Mommy, me do. Mommy! MOMMY!” Calvin would not be ignored.

“Mommy, I can do baking,” he said loudly as Meryl beat the cake batter.

“Yes, Calvi. You can do baking but not this time, honey. Mommy is trying to get this birthday cake for Jesus done before Granny and Gramps get here.”

“It’s Christmas!” Calvin yelled twirling around, bumping into Spike who started barking.

“Calvin! Calvin!” Meryl turned off the beater and looked into the big brown eyes. “Honey, that is a lot of noise for inside.” And on cue, baby Cassie could be heard on the baby monitor. “Oh dear. I’m just going up to help Cassie. Be a good boy Calvin.”

Meryl took the stairs two at a time wondering if there would ever be peace on earth in the McAllister house this Christmas. Fat chance with two kids under three and a German Shepherd who wanted to be in the centre of everything.

When Meryl returned to the kitchen, Calvin was at the table with his crayons colouring in a book they’d picked out at the Dollar Store when they were shopping for wrapping. “Well, all is quiet on the western front for now Cassie girl, let’s get this cake in the oven.”

For as long as Meryl could remember, her mother baked a birthday cake for Jesus on Christmas Eve. The family would play games, have dinner of Kentucky Fried Chicken and a salad Mother made - none of that weird coleslaw for the Baker family. Then, when everyone had their fill, Mum would bring in the cake, everyone would sing Happy Birthday and have a giant slice of cake before opening gifts.

It was a tradition Meryl was determined to continue. Mum had done it last year. This year, dementia had stolen so much of her memory she only stared blankly when Meryl had asked if she was making Jesus’ birthday cake.

“Birthday cake? At Christmas? That’s a crazy idea,” Mum said before abruptly leaving the table.

Christmas Eve would be a delicate balance. Meryl wanted the kids to have fun and she loved Calvi’s silly antics but the noise bothered Mum. “We have to use our indoor voice when Granny and Gramps are here Calvi,” Meryl said for the millionth time since he came screaming down the stairs at 6:30 in the morning

Meryl put the cake in the oven and set the time and sighed, silently praying for the night that lay ahead. By 4:30 Meryl was sure Christmas Eve would be a disaster. Neither Calvin nor Cassie had their usual afternoon nap. Cassie was getting a tooth and Calvin was simply too excited for birthday cake.

Bill got home at work and distracted him for a while reading story after story in the big easy chair. Calvin’s little eyes blinked, blinked and blinked again and Meryl thought for a moment there would be at least a short nap. But no. As soon as the story was done, Calvin demanded “Read Frosty the Snowman Daddy!”

Granny and Gramps arrived at 4:45 - 15 minutes early - just in time to see Calvin running through the living room with Meryl pleading with him to stop to put on his pants. That just made him run faster, laughing at the great new game.

Gramps smiled briefly at the sight but quickly turned to help Granny get her coat off. Calvin ran right up to them shouting “Happy Christmas!” and wrapping his arms around Gramps’ legs.

“Hey there Calvin! Happy Christmas to you to young man. How about you get those pants on now.”

Meryl scooped him up and in a flash the pants were on. Calvin went to Granny. Meryl cringed worried what was coming next. Instead of a boisterous welcome, Calvin stepped up to his Granny and softly took her hand. “Hi Grammy. Happy Jesus’ birthday. Come sit down. We’re going to have chicken and cake.”

Continued on Page 14



Shed on Oil Heritage Road near Oil Springs, 2010

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Mrs. John Coyne’s Christmas

Reba glanced out the big picture window of the Shop-Mart as she finished packing the young mother’s groceries and felt the dread begin to seep in.

A tiny, five-foot nothing seemingly harmless old lady with a brown hat was marching toward the front door, purse clutched in her elbow just like the Queen. You could tell by her furious strides she was a woman on a mission. And Reba knew whatever happened next would not be pleasant.

“Oh Lord, not now,” Reba muttered under her breath as she tucked a chocolate bar in the young mother’s bag and wished her a Merry Christmas.

“Martha,” Reba whispered urgently. Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer was playing loud and Martha was scanning the groceries to the beat of the song while chatting away with Mr. Eldersma. “Martha,” she said loud enough for the cashier to hear. Martha looked up to follow Reba’s eyes to the door, where Mrs. John Coyne stood with her hand on the door, about to walk in. “Lovely,” she muttered and turned to Mr. Eldersma to hand back change. “I hope you have a wonderful Christmas, sir.”

“Thank you Martha - and to you and yours as well,” he said, walking toward the door.

“That will depend on the next half hour or so,” Martha said to Reba as they watched Mr. Eldersma attempt an act of Christmas kindness, opening the door for Mrs. John Coyne only to be told “Move along, I’m trying to get inside.”

“Merry Christmas Abigail,” Mr. Eldersma said with a twinkle in his eye. “What- oh, you old fool, Harry,” she

said, recognizing him. “I suppose you think it is.” And she straightened her hat and walked right past him. Harry Eldersma chuckled, “I do, Abigail, I do!”

Every employee at the ShopMart knew more than they cared to about Mrs. John Coyne. First, they knew to call her Mrs. JOHN Coyne, so as not to be confused with Mrs. Jacob Coyne whose husband spent a little too much time at the local watering hole and stumbled home on Friday nights for all the neighbours to see his “debauchery” as Mrs. John Coyne had once told a shocked teenaged boy restocking the shelves with toilet paper.

And they all knew she “wanted things the way she wanted things” whether that was the way they were sold or not.

Martha could deal with Mrs. John Coyne better than anyone in the store, which is to say she wasn’t reduced to tears by the old woman’s words. It wasn’t that Martha had a thicker skin; she just knew Mrs. John Coyne’s type. They enjoyed needling people and getting the better of them. It made them feel superior to others. Martha knew all about these type of people; her father had been just like her, minus the hat and purse.

As Mrs. John Coyne went to find a cart which suited her, Martha gave Reba a gentle push toward the back. “Reba dear, would you go to the back and fix up that display we were talking about earlier,” she said. The tension in Reba’s face eased and she smiled; “Absolutely.”

Continued on page 15

Jesus’ Colourful Birthday Cake

Granny looked confused but followed the mop of red curls to the couch where they sat talking quietly as Meryl let out a slow sigh.

Calvin was on his best behaviour all dinner, chatting happily to Spike and Cassie, even though she was sleeping in Bill’s arms, and Grammy and Gramps. Meryl cleared the table and put three candles on the birthday cake - one for each of the Wisemen who came to bring the baby Jesus gifts. As she lit them the memories of watching Mum’s face in the light of the candles as she carried the cake to the table flooded back to Meryl. Time could be so cruel, she thought. Meryl picked up the cake and turned to the table beginning to sing “Happy Birthday to you” Calvin joined immediately and off key. It made everyone smile.

The cake was placed in front of Granny, and for one flickering moment, Meryl saw her mother as it was so many Christmases ago. She stopped, freezing the moment in her mind.

“This is Jesus birthday Granny. Mommy made a cake and I helped,” he said proudly.

“Oh well, it looks just lovely,” she said ruffling his hair. “Well, you didn’t help with this cake, but yes, Calvin has helped before,” Meryl said as she cut into the cake. “No Mommy, I helped. When you went to get Cassie,” Calvin added as Meryl pulled out the first slice for and brought it to the plate in front of Granny. And then, Meryl let out a little shout, “What the ...”

“I helped! I coloured it!” Said Calvin proudly. Sure enough the cake was red with a little green along the bottom.

“Calvin, how did you ...” And then Meryl remembered the crayons. She picked up the pack of Crayolas on the window sill. The red and green were both gone.

“Don’t eat it!” Meryl shouted belatedly as Granny started to take a bite.

“That is fine cake Calvin, - smooth as silk,” she said quickly adding, “The colour is just lovely. Just like you lovely and colourful.”



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MERRY CHRISTMAS
A HAPPY NEW YEAR

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MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR

WE ARE CLOSED DEC. 23 - JAN. 1
*We'll see you in the new year Jan 2, 2024.
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CANADA

2378 Jane St., Brigden • 519-864-1211 • 519-864-4048



Leaves with Snow, 2023

Mrs. John Coyne’s Christmas

Reba headed happily out of the line of fire. Reba had a run in with Mrs. John Coyne last week after suggesting the weather - which was unseasonably warm for December - was lovely.

“Lovely? You stupid girl. It’s December, we’re supposed to have snow, perhaps you should look at a calendar before speaking to me.”

Martha wanted to shake the old crow but instead offered to help carry her bags out of the store, just to get her away from poor Reba who stood there stunned.

Martha greeted the next customer while keeping an eye on Mrs. John Coyne. Maureen in the produce department had already spotted her, pasted on her best smile and made an attempt to do the impossible, please the unpleasant woman.

“Good morning Mrs. Coyne, I have a lovely bunch of the brussel sprouts you like; just came in this morning,” she said with her best smile. Last week, Mrs. John Coyne was looking for them and Maureen made sure there were some in stock for Christmas.

“Brussel Sprouts? Why would I eat those rotten little cabbages. Really Maureen, you are still as thick as a brick,” she said. Mrs. John Coyne turned sharply, grabbed a bag of carrots and heading to the dairy department to wreak more destruction.

Martha knew that by the time the bitter old woman had made it around the store she would have berated and insulted staff and other customers in the store and then Maureen would check her out and hear about the “ridiculous people who work at this so-called grocery store.”

Martha had hoped against hope that Mrs. John Coyne would not come in on Christmas Eve. Most customers were happy and easy going - oh, there were a few who had left everything until the last minute and who were working on their last nerve - but by far the majority of people were jovial. It made for a good last day of work before the holiday. But, it was not to be. Martha couldn’t hear what was being said but she could hear the short staccato of her voice as she ripped into George in dairy and then some random customer near the potato chips.

Mrs. John Coyne was within eyesight now, so Martha watched as she took a box of cookies from the shelf and put them into her basket. But she must have missed the edge of the basket and they fell to the floor. A little girl beside her quickly picked them up. “Here you go,” she beamed with her accomplishment. Mrs. John Coyne glared at her; “Don’t you touch my cookies you greedy little girl!” The child’s mother pulled her away saying loudly enough for all to hear, “Don’t worry honey, she’s just a bitter old lady.”

While the store watched the mother and child, Martha saw something she had never seen before; a tear in the corner of Mrs. John Coyne eye. Regret. This woman who had made life miserable for all who crossed her path was not just miserable; she was lonely.

Continued on page 16

Merry Christmas

May love, warmth, caring and fun surround you all season!

From the
Sitek Family

SITEK
& Company

Mister B's

LEISURE
LANE

A World of Good Wishes.

One of the real joys this holiday season is the opportunity to say thank you and wish you the very best for the new year.

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519 845 3152

Dr. Paula Cassin, Dr. Bobby Chagger,
Dr. Jason Goldshlager, Dr. Perre Blais, Dr. Abdulfattah Masri

www.chaggerdental.com



Winter Owl, Aberfeldy and Forest Roads, 2020

Mrs. John Coyne’s Christmas

Mrs. John Coyne straightened her hat and headed to the checkout. “I can help you here,” Martha heard herself say. Three lonely items moved down the belt, a single pork chop, a can of beans and a single slice of pumpkin pie. It made Martha want to cry.


“You know, I have a granddaughter who is about that age,” she said rummaging around in her wallet for \$12.53. “I don’t know why I barked at her like that. Here,” she mumbled.

“Mrs. John Coyne, would you come to my house for Christmas.” Martha’s own words surprised her. But yes, she did want to have dinner with this

lonely old woman. “I mean, I’m by myself and the boss gave me a ham for Christmas, it will take me a month to finish it.” The older woman looked at her softly.

“And I really don’t like to be alone at Christmas,” Martha added. “Neither do I, Martha,” she said as a little smile formed on her face. “I think that would be just fine. As long as there is no drinking; never touch the stuff,” Mrs. John Coyne said. Martha leaned a little closer; “No ma’am, neither do I.”

“Well then, that would be just fine, as long as you call me Abigail.”



CHRISTMAS is the time of year, when we reflect upon the birth of Jesus Christ, and the Eternal ‘gifts’ of LOVE and SALVATION that He gave us.

May JESUS immeasurable ‘PEACE’, which surpasses all understanding, fill your hearts with ‘JOY’ and ‘HOPE’.

Merry Christmas and a Safe and Blessed New Year, to you and yours, from the Grogan Classics family.

The Perfect Christmas Gift

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”
Luke 2:11

Born in a Manger, the city of David, in Bethlehem.
To redeem a lost world, came this sacrificial lamb.
The “Creator of the Universe” to a baby, He lay.
“Unleashed Power” constrained, to “deliver” the way.

To the ungodly and blasphemous, He gave Divine Love,
As the Sinless servant, He Glorified His Father above.
Amidst ruthless brutality, he was nailed to a Cross,
Forever, that trickling Blood, covers the crimson stains of the lost.

One breath separates us and Only He can see the heart,
Lives led as men pleasers, are doomed for their part.
You see, “confession” brings “forgiveness”, a new creature cleansed from sin,
Jesus gift to you is “Eternal Life” and an “unquenchable peace” from within.

The Gift
Father, this Christmas, because of the sin in my life. I find myself separated from you.
I repent and invite you, Jesus, into my heart to be the Lord of all the areas of my life.
I will live for you, and “thank-you” for your forgiveness and the assurance of an eternal home, in Heaven, with you. Amen
Grogan Classics

It’s The Most Wonderful Time Of The Year

...And do you know why?
It’s because we get to thank you for your stopping by! **Merry Christmas!**

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We are open 7 days a week at noon.

www.blackgold.beer



Celebrate the Birth of Christ

At this time of reflection, we give thanks to the Lord for the many blessings we enjoy, including your patronage.

Merry Christmas!



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SPORTS



BLAKE ELLIS/LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE PHOTO

Brandon Biggers of the Petrolia Squires looks for a rebound in front of the Killer Bees' net Saturday during the Battle of Lambton. The Bees won 5-2.

Killer Bees sting Squires in round one

The Independent

The Alvinston Killer Bees rebounded for three goals in the second period including two goals 17 seconds apart late in frame on their way to a 5-2 win in Western Ontario Super Hockey League action Saturday in the first installment of Lambton's newest and most heated hockey rivalry.

Joey Ferrera of the Petrolia Squires had a shorthanded goal late in the

first period, Carson Perry, Josh Tidgwell, Jacob Chantler scored in the middle frame for the winners. After Petrolia's Steve Farlow cut the Bees' lead to 3-2 in the third, Michael Elliston and Caden Faulkner iced the game with goals two minutes apart later in the period.

Nolan DeKoning registered the win between the pipes for Alvinston. Sean Parker took the loss.

A fracas in the final minute of regulation time set the stage for the round two at Greenwood in Petrolia on January 12. Alvinston, now 6-3-1 on the season, take on the Irish in Stratford Saturday afternoon. Petrolia hosts Stratford this Friday at 8:30 before traveling to Woodstock for a contest with the Lakers on Saturday.

The Squires are 9-4 on the season.

Phillips wins OHL debut for Sting

Corunna's Logan Phillips will always remember Dec. 6. The Legionnaires goalie came off the bench to register his first OHL victory as the Sarnia Sting rallied to beat Barrie, 7-6. The 19-year-old former Mooretown Flags stopped all ten shots directed in his way in the final period after he took over the crease just 16 seconds into the frame. Phillips also appeared in relief in Owen Sound Saturday stopping the six shots against him.

LCCVI blanked Great Lakes, 6-0 to open the LKSSAA girls' high school hockey season. North Lambton lost its opener, 5-4 to Wallaceburg despite Taryn King scoring all four goals for the Eagles. In boys' action, the Lancers and St. Pat's tied at 4 and North Lambton blanked LCCVI, 4-0. The LCCVI and North Lambton squads both went 0-2-1 in girls' volleyball and John McGregor beat NLSS in junior and senior boys' basketball. The first half of the winter sports season continues to Dec. 21

Wrestlers from Forest's North Lambton Secondary School won five medals at a large high school competition in St. Thomas last weekend. Simon Schoeley won a pair of gold medals, Bailey Dortmans captured a silver while Addy Hodgson and Moses

Pusey both won bronze.

Dresden topped East Lambton, 4-2 in the C final at the U13 regional Silver Stick tournament in Watford. Petrolia reached the final four in the B pool but lost to North Lambton in the semi-finals. The U15 regional tournament opens on Thursday at noon and continues through Sunday with all games in Watford. Petrolia, Mooretown, Lambton Shores and the host East Lambton Eagles are all competing.

Wyoming's Marlowe Robinson and Declan Watson of Errol Village won their weight classes at the Ontario Youth/Junior Weightlifting Championships in Scarborough. Robinson, a graduate of LCCVI, is currently studying at McMaster. Watson, a 16-year-old from Northern, trains at a club in Burlington.

Forest's Tyler McGregor and Team Canada took silver at the Para Cup in New Brunswick over the weekend losing 3-0 to the Americans in the championship game. McGregor tied for third in tournament scoring with four goals and six assists in five games, including a hat trick against China in the semi-finals.

Kennedy notches two for Flyers

The Independent

Caleb Kennedy scored twice in the third period including the game-winner with just over four minutes left in regulation time to give the Petrolia Flyers a 4-3 win at Lucan Saturday night. Phoenix Timmington and

Wil O'Leary-Dilosa also scored for the Flyers. Ethan Everaert made 26 saves. Petrolia, also coming off a 6-6 overtime tie with Mt. Brydges Dec. 7, has now registered points in six in its last eight games.

The Flyers are now 8-12-2 on the PJHL season. Evan Morningstar scored twice in the game against the Bulldogs and Everaert made 31 stops. The Flyers host Port Stanley Thursday at 7:30 before taking Aylmer Sunday.

Legionnaires eclipse 2022 wins

The Independent

The Sarnia Legionnaires have eclipsed their GOJHL win total from last season. The Legion marked 5-3 win over the Nationals in London Dec. 6. Wyoming's Austin Harper scored twice and Jack Martin turned aside a season-high 44 shots. A night later in Sarnia, the Legionnaires rallied from two goals down to tie the game against Strathroy

through regulation time but eventually fell short 4-3 in a shootout to the Rockets. Martin made 35 saves to increase his unbeaten streak to seven games. Wyoming's Jace McGrail had a goal and a helper for Sarnia. Watford's Evan Van Gorp and Oil Springs' William Hull both registered an assist for the Rockets. Mooretown goalie John Chartrand was called up by Strathroy and was their back

up for the contest in Sarnia. The team is home to Kitchener-Waterloo in an inter-conference game Thursday night. Strathroy entertains Welland on Saturday night at West Middlesex.



Austin Harper

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canada's celtic Rock Warriors...

MUDMEN

- at -

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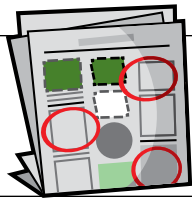
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J E W E L L E R S

This is an LLBO Mudmen Inc. Event. Visit: www.mudmen.ca

Classified Deadline:
Monday @ 12 noon

Classifieds



Word Classifieds: \$10 plus tax for up to 40 words
Stop in at the office 9am-3pm – Monday to Friday
4156 Petrolia Line – Call 226-738-0728
or email: office@petrolialambtonindependent.ca



Death Notices

Dec. 5 - Dec. 12, 2023

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5

COLLINS, Gerald Deane

Age: 90
Badder Funeral Home

WATTS, Dorothy Jean

Age: 94
Badder Funeral Home

DEMARSH, Patricia

Age: 68
Smith Funeral Home

ABBOTT, Beryl Kathleen

Age: 90
Smith Funeral Home

STEVENSON, Alan

Age: 59
Smith Funeral Home

CADE, Paul Jerome

Age: 75
Smith Funeral Home

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6

**SHIPLEY, Ronald Bruce
Ron "Pork"**

Age: 67
Denning's Funeral Home

**HOLMES, Susanne
Elizabeth**

Age: 70
Denning's Funeral Home

CHARRON, Doreen Jean

Age: 83
Badder Funeral Home

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7

**SCULLY, Joseph Lawrence
"Larry"**

Age: 88
Smith Funeral Home

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8

**AIKEN, Florence (nee
Wagner)**

Age: 86, formerly of Petrolia
Needham-Jay Funeral Home

WOLFGAM, Earl James

Age: 83 of Petrolia
Steadman Brothers Funeral Chapels

BUCHNER, Marinus John

Age: 78
Smith Funeral Home

**DUNCAN, Mary Lynn (nee
Robinson)**

Age: 54
Smith Funeral Home

McKERLIE, Elizabeth "Liz"

Age: 84
Smith Funeral Home

LAFRAMBOISE, Craig

Age: 44
Smith Funeral Home

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9

**MOULAND, Jeremy
Christopher Edward**

Age: 78
McKenzie Blundy Funeral Home

AERTS, Andreas

Age: 90
Denning's Funeral Home

DENEAU, James "Jim"

Age: 77, of Corunna
Knight Funeral Home

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10

**SANDERS, JoAnne "Ma"
Bernarda Maria (nee
Hendrikx)**

Age: 68, of Watford
Denning's Funeral Home

MONDAY, DECEMBER 11

**HAYWARD, Dorothy
Lorraine (nee Jeffrey)**

Age: 89
Steadman Brothers Funeral Chapels

JEFFREY, James

Age: 71
Smith Funeral Home

This information is provided as a community service.
For detailed information, please refer to the funeral home website listing.

Baby Announcement



*Baby's 1st
Christmas*

**Summer Rose Stasiuk,
born on March 14th
2023 is celebrating
her 1st Christmas
with Mom and Dad,
Celine & Nathaniel Stasiuk.**

Proud Granddaughter and Niece to Wesley & Sherrie
Schram, Sean Schram (Uncle) Judy & Wayne McIntyre,
Ben Stasiuk (Uncle).

Special Church Services

*"Come to me all who are weary and are carrying
heavy burdens... and I will give you rest"*

a Blue Christmas Service

Thurs., Dec. 21 at 6:00pm

*A gentle contemplative service for those
who are suffering pain or loss during
this holiday season.*

You are not alone.

*All are welcome to this
Community Service!*

Christ Anglican Church
414 Oil St., Petrolia
519-882-1430



Special Church Services



**Christ Anglican
Church Petrolia**
414 Oil Street, Petrolia

**Christmas
Services**

Advent Services - December 3, 10, 17, 24
Mornings at 10:00am

Blue Christmas - December 21 at 6:00pm

Christmas Eve Service - December 24
6:00pm Holy Communion

Christmas Day Service - December 25
10:00am Holy Communion

**Everyone welcome to join us during
this Christmas Season!**

Inquires 519-882-1430



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No postage required!!!
If we pass this on and
everyone sends one card,
think of how many cards
will be sent overseas to
these wonderful, special,
brave people, who have
sacrificed so much.



In Memoriam

In Loving Memory...
of a dear husband, father and papa,
Ron Strangway
who passed away December 17, 2018.




*There will always be a heartache
And often a silent tear
But always a precious memory
Of the days when you were here
No one heard the footsteps
Of the angels drawing near
Who took from earth to heaven
The one we loved so dear.*

**Lovingly remembered by,
Bonnie and Family**

In Memoriam

In memory of John Klapak
December 14, 1949 - December 18, 2018



Our lives were changed forever on December 18, 2018.
You are gone, but you will never be forgotten.
Love leaves a memory no one can steal.
You are missed and loved, but you're always in our thoughts and
forever in our hearts.
Donna and family

Classified Deadline: Monday @ 12 Noon

ADVERTISING POLICY

The publisher of this newspaper, *The Independent of Petrolia and Central Lambton*, reserves the right to clarify or refuse any advertisement based on its sole discretion. The publisher reserves the right to reject, discontinue or omit any advertisement without notice or penalty to either party. Liability for errors or non-insertion is limited to the amount paid for the cost of space occupied by the error. Claims of errors must be made prior to the next publication date.

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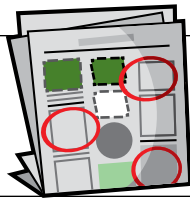
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Classified Deadline:
Monday @ 12 noon

Classifieds



Word Classifieds: \$10 plus tax for up to 40 words
Stop in at the office 9am-3pm – Monday to Friday
4156 Petrolia Line – Call 226-738-0728
or email: office@petrolialambtonindependent.ca



Holiday Hours

To enjoy this festive season with our families and friends, we will be closing for the week of **December 23-January 1st.**

We are closing December 22nd, 2023 @ noon and reopening @ 9am January 2nd, 2024.

THE INDEPENDENT

SERVING PETROLIA AND CENTRAL LAMBTON

Messages will be answered while we are closed.

Thanks for a great 2023 and looking to 2024!



The Independent
Serving Petrolia and Central Lambton

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Classified Deadline: Monday @ 12 Noon

Church DIRECTORY



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

416 Queen Street, Petrolia (Behind the Post Office)

In-Person Service
Sundays @ 10:00 am

Services also available online: www.standrews-petrolia.ca

Pastor Katherine Hawley

Christ Anglican Church

414 Oil Street, Petrolia

Join us for In-Person Services
Sundays @ 10:00am

Everyone Welcome

Church Office: 519-882-1430 | christchurchpetrolia@gmail.com

Rev. Dave Hewett



St. Paul's United Church

4169 Petrolia Line at Centre Street

In-Person Services
Sundays @ 10:30 am

Church Office: 519-882-1390
www.stpaulsunitedpetrolia.net

Rev. Carol Ferguson

First Baptist Church

In Person Church Service
Sunday Mornings @ 10:30 am

Pastor: Alex Craig

418 Greenfield Street, Petrolia | Church Office 519-882-2480
email: fbcpetrolia@gmail.com | website: www.firstbaptistpetrolia.ca
Find us on Facebook! www.facebook.com/First-Baptist-Church-Petrolia



Calendar of events

PLEASE CALL AHEAD TO CONFIRM DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Events are listed FREE for non-profit groups in Petrolia and Lambton County (space permitting).
To be included in this listing email the required information to: office@petrolialambtonindependent.ca
Subject: **FREE EVENT LISTING.**

UPCOMING EVENTS			
DATE	START TIME	LOCATION	EVENT/ CONTACT INFO
Oct 6 - Mar 16	Gallery Hours	Sarnia	A FAMILY PALETTE: FRANCES-ANNE JOHNSTON, FRANZ JOHNSTON & FRANKLIN ARBUCKLE Acting as a purposeful feminist recovery project, the exhibition focuses more deeply on Frances-Anne. For more info, please visit: www.jnaag.ca .
Nov 3 - Jan 12	Gallery Hours	Sarnia	RE VIEW - EXHIBITION 4: A series of exhibitions over the next year and a half titled Re View. For more info on the Re View exhibition series, please visit our 10 Year Anniversary page.
Nov 4 - Dec 16	Gallery Hours	Bright's Grove	GALLERY IN THE GROVE'S ANNUAL GIFTS OF THE SEASON Showcasing 15 local artists with a wide range of beautifully handmade pieces for sale. Gallery hours Mon-Thurs 2pm-5pm and Fri & Sat 11am-2pm. For more info visit www.galleryinthegrove.com or call 519-869-4643.
Dec	Various	Brigden	BRIGDEN LEGION DECEMBER EVENTS: December 15th - Pool at 7, December 16th - meat Raffle at 4:30pm, December 22nd - Pool, December 29th - Trivia, We are open Thursday Friday and Saturdays 6-9pm. On meat Raffle Saturdays we open at 4-9pm. 9:00 closing only if there are no patrons.
Dec	Check online or at Gallery	Sarnia	FAMILY SATURDAY OFFERS ART-INSPIRED FUN AT JNAAG THIS DECEMBER Family Saturdays take place year-round with changing themes each month. The program is free and open to everyone, though children must be accompanied by an adult. For more information on Family Saturday Studio Drop-Ins, visit the program and events page on the JNAAG website.
Dec 16, 23, 30	Sat 1-3pm	Sarnia	HOLLA-DAY CELEBRATION CARDS Join us this season for a captivating journey into the enchanting world of Art Deco as we create holiday cards. Immerse yourself in the beauty of this iconic artistic movement, create ornamental lines, stylized details, and geometric motifs. Register @ https://www.jnaag.ca/en/programs-and-events/family-saturday-studio-drop-in.aspx
Dec 21	6-8pm	Sarnia	FAMILY HOLIDAY PROGRAM - COZY CANDLE MAKING Free - Space Limited. Just in time for the holiday season. Register @ https://www.jnaag.ca/en/programs-and-events/holiday-art-drop-in.aspx?_mid_=106002

CLUBS AND REGULAR EVENTS				
DAY	START TIME	LOCATION	EVENT	CONTACT INFO
Mon	7p	Watford	Darts @ Watford Legion	519-876-2360
Mon	1-4p	Watford	Shuffle Up and Deal Bid Euchre @ E. Lambton CC	519-786-2808
Tues	7p	Watford	Euchre @ Watford Legion	519-876-2660
Tues	7p	Petrolia	Petrolia Toastmasters @ St. Andrew's Church	519-381-4910
2nd Wed	7p	Petrolia	Bingo @ Petrolia Lion's Hall	519-882-8728
3rd Wed	7p	Sarnia	Monthly Meeting @ Horticultural Society	519-332-5837
3rd Wed	1p	Petrolia	Music Jam, lunch at noon @ Petrolia Legion	519-882-1557
3rd Thurs	7p	Oil Springs	Optimist Meat Bingo @ Youth Centre	519-834-2152
Thurs	7p	Brigden	Pool Night @ Brigden Legion	
Fri	7p	Brigden	Pool Night @ Brigden Legion	519-864-1395
Fri		Watford	Meat Raffle, 50-50, CTA @ Watford Legion	519-876-2360
Sat	12p	Petrolia	Lunch 12-3 or until sold out @ Petrolia Legion	519-882-1557
Sat	2p	Petrolia	Meat Raffle @ Petrolia Legion	519-882-1557
Sat	3:30p	Forest	Meat Raffle @ Forest Legion	519-786-5357
Sat	6p	Alvinston	Catch The Ace @ Alvinston Legion	519-898-2100
Sat	4:30p	Brigden	Meat Raffle @ Brigden Legion. Dec. 2nd and Dec. 16	
		Brigden	NEW LEGION HOURS: Thurs 6-9p; Fri 6-9p; Raffle Saturdays 4-8p; Non-Raffle Saturdays 6-9p	

SPORTS



Brigden native Amy Thompson-Robataille says it was pure joy to cross the World Ultraman finish line.

Brigden native Ultraman champ Blake Ellis Local Journalism Initiative

“Pure joy.” That’s how Amy Robitaille describes it felt to cross the finish line in the World Ultraman Championship in Hawaii. The Brigden native was the top female competitor coming in second overall in the gruelling race, which included a 10 kilometre swim, a 421 kilometre bike ride and an 84 kilometre run, over three days between Nov. 24 to 26. Clocking in with a time of 25 hours, 55 minutes and 15 seconds, the 44 year-old Robitaille celebrated with her husband, Pat, her coach and her best friend, along with her parents and children, as she crossed the finish line. Her husband, coach and her best friend were part of the crew who followed her along in the race, helping her to set up and pack her equipment, keeping her hydrated and giving her emotional support along the way. This was a journey 10 years in the making, Robitaille told The independent saying she was hoping to compete in a triathlon. “I just wanted to do it and move on,” said Robitaille. But she found that she loved it. Robitaille, who now lives in Rockwood found a group of like minded-people to train with in Guelph. One of those people, Mike Coughlin, had competed in the World Ultraman Championship in 2015. He lead her into the world of Ultraman competition. “I like scary challenges,” said Robitaille. One of the keys to preparing for the Ultraman is to have a coach like Coughlin, who has done it before, said Robitaille. She put in hundreds of hours training, trying to anticipate things like swimming in the ocean or biking in the mountains. Robitaille competed in an Ironman competition in 2016 and started training for the Ultraman Championship in 2020. Robitaille had to qualify first for the World Ultraman Championships by competing in the Canadian Ultraman Championship in Penticton, British Columbia in July 2022. “Even when I was ready, I wasn’t ready,” she said of the feeling she had before the race. To her surprise, she came in first in the event in Penticton. “I was not expecting to place that high,” Robitaille said, finishing in 24 hours, 47 minutes and 16 seconds. For those who knew Robitaille growing up in Lambton County - she was Amy Thompson then - might be surprised by her amazing athletics. The LCCVI graduate was on the cross country team in high school. “I wasn’t a superstar,” said Robitaille, saying she like the idea of being part of the team and the social aspect of it. “I have been running ever since,” said Robitaille, who is now a high school teacher. When asked what it is like to come from a community like Brigden and excel at an international level, Robitaille pointed to people like Krista Duchene, a local athlete who went on to compete in the marathon at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. When you come from somewhere like this, it is not unusual, said Robitaille. Now that it is over, Robitaille is looking forward to enjoying Christmas with her family. She said it was a bit strange not to have her time filled with the hours she spent training. Robitaille is not sure what will be next for her. “I can’t say I am done with Ultraman,” she said with a laugh.

Flags snap six-game losing skid

The Independent

The Mooretown Flags snapped a six-game losing slide with a pair of victories against Amherstburg. Tristen Konrad had a season-high four points with two goals and two assists as the Flags prevailed 4-3 at home on Saturday. Dracen Campbell had two goals and two assists in Mooretown’s 4-1 road win a night later.

John Chartrand made 41 stops for the Flags in the Sunday contest against the Admirals. Lakeshore beat the Flags, 8-1 Dec. 6 downriver. Mooretown is home to the Essex 73’s Saturday at 7:30. It’s the back half of a home and home series. The teams played Tuesday in Essex but the score was not available prior to our press time.



Flag’s Goalie John Chartrand tussles with the Admirals’ Owen

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