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A WEST PERTH PUBLICATION

the Heronry

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The Robinsons: Turning Outward

Ordinary Extraordinary People

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Time Changes

Young Writers

Open the Door

A Rural Resident Reflects

Vol. 6

May 2026

Spring Flowers: Photo taken by Angela Walker



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Spring Growth

Spring has arrived in West Perth! All over the county the grass is green, buds are forming, and daffodils are doing their best to stand up under the frequent rain and occasional snow that we've been experiencing. Spring is the season that's known for growth and change, and here at *the Heronry*, we're experiencing it as well!

It seems like every day people are stepping forward, offering to write articles, conduct interviews, or make connections with local community members. It's incredible and, I'll admit, somewhat overwhelming to be in charge! There are so many different elements to coordinate, and I'm slowly developing systems that should help ensure that we stay organized!

This month, Amelia, who had been taking a more active role in writing our county business stories and creating our games, let us know that she needs to take a step back from her role. While she loves being involved, it's just too much to juggle *the Heronry* responsibilities when she's also got a full-time job and an up-and-coming dance star that needs driving back and forth to competitions! She'll still be handling invoicing and coordinating with Norm who is delivering *the Heronry* for us, but she might eventually phase that out as well. We are so thankful for all the support she's been able to give so far, and hope she'll be able to submit some writing when dance competition things slow down.

Cathy Hudson, who has been writing "A Rural Resident Reflects" every month, has decided to branch out. She's been spreading *the Heronry* around Fullarton, and is going to be interviewing several businesses and community members and writing about them over the next few issues!

Melissa Koert is our newest contributor. She didn't grow up in the area, but she joined the Koert Clan and is helping it grow! She's starting a series where she highlights farmstands around the area. Of course, when dipping one's toes in the writing waters, it's always good to start with the familiar, so her first interview is

with her sister-in-law, the owner of Koert's Korner. She's looking forward to helping raise awareness about the many farmstands that often get missed by locals.

Last month's interviewee, David Doyle, has decided to join us, and is starting on a series about painting! He's considering starting some open air paint sessions, but while he waits, he's going to try get more people interested in painting! His new series will be an attempt to show that painting is an accessible hobby for most anyone - and like any hobby, it just requires practice! We feel the same way about writing, and hope that more of you will start submitting your musings, poetry, and art to this publication!

For those of you who absolutely will NOT be submitting writing or art any time soon, we have a new way for you to get involved! We've opened up the ability for residents inside and outside West Perth to submit announcements and greetings! The submission deadline is the 15th of each month, but you can always submit them in advance!

Do you know someone who is having a birthday or anniversary who happens to read *the Heronry*? Now you can surprise them with a customizable greeting within their (and your!) favourite publication! Contact us for pricing, or check it out on our website; we also offer design services for those of you who want something a bit more artsy than what David Kemp chose (He submitted our first greeting - see p13).

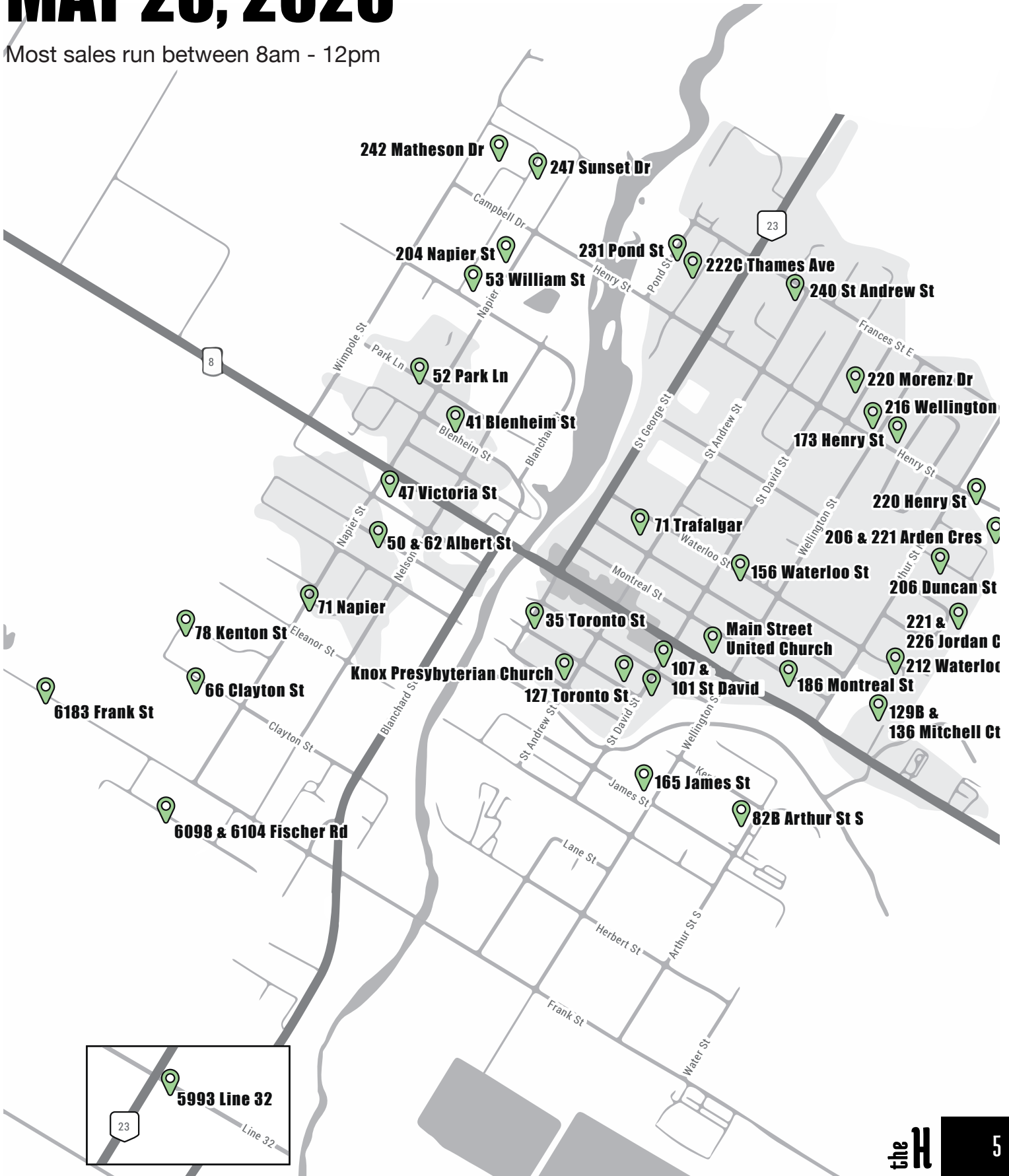
Thank you to everyone who submitted their address for the garage sale map; we hope next year we get even more submissions!

Back in December, We started with a 22 page magazine and printed 500 copies. April's issue was 36 pages and we printed 850! This issue has 40 pages and I could barely squeeze everything in! It's been an incredible six months and I can't wait to see what the next six bring! Thank you for all your support!

Town-Wide Garage Sale

MAY 23, 2026

Most sales run between 8am - 12pm





May Horoscopes

Aries: Your livelihood is a main focus this month. Be your bold and brazen Aries self, but keep in mind, how you show up professionally in attitude and personality could make all the difference.

Taurus: Happy Birthday, Taurus! Celebrate your humble self this month. It's okay to boast a bit, not every accomplishment or activity needs to stay behind the scenes. You deserve a good ol' pat on the back and a delicious cake to indulge in.

Gemini: A burst of innovative and original ideas will keep your mind on overdrive, Gemini. Bounce anything new and unorthodox off of friends or acquaintances before taking the plunge. The planet of love and beauty could also bring some extra attention your way.

Cancer: Career and publicity is coming to the forefront this month. Don't be afraid to put yourself out there, mingle and meet new people. Networking might just open up new avenues for the shy and home-bodied Cancer.

Leo: Have you been learning something new on an academic level or through life experiences? It's time to put that knowledge to the test. It could even take you to greater heights and you might even make some new friends along the way.

Virgo: You are currently going through a transitional phase. Take the ups and downs from that process as a learning experience. This is the perfect month to get back on track Virgo, because things are looking up.

Libra: This month you are weighing out your options. You might be clearing up debts, thinking about taking out a loan, or making investments. Be smart with your money, do what makes the most sense for yourself and your future - not because someone else told you so.

Scorpio: May starts with a full moon in your sign Scorpio! You are reaching a turning point and starting to see your full potential. Don't stop now; make a commitment to yourself. By doing so, relationships will also grow and flourish along with you.

Sagittarius: You may find work, day-to-day routine, or even health matters are taking up all your time. You'd probably rather play and have fun instead of dealing with any of it. Make sure you are finding time to do both, this will help ease and alleviate any extra stress.

Capricorn: I know you need to be serious and work hard, but try something fun or take up a new hobby this month. Why not take the whole family on a day trip or weekend adventure? Who knows you may just enjoy yourself.

Aquarius: The main focus is on your home and property. It's a great time of year to come up with new and exciting projects that could add a lot of value to your home. You shouldn't have any trouble adding aesthetically pleasing and unique designs to your landscape or inside your home Aquarius.

Pisces: Want to learn something new, get your small business started, hang out with siblings or travel this month? You may feel an urge for a change of scenery and want to do it all! Just make sure your dreams match your reality.

Maggie Turner is a local professional astrologer, who loves to help heal and support people along their path in life with the amazing tool of astrology. Want to know more or book a personal reading? You can e-mail Maggie at magzturner9@gmail.com or find her on social media @mysticmaggzastro



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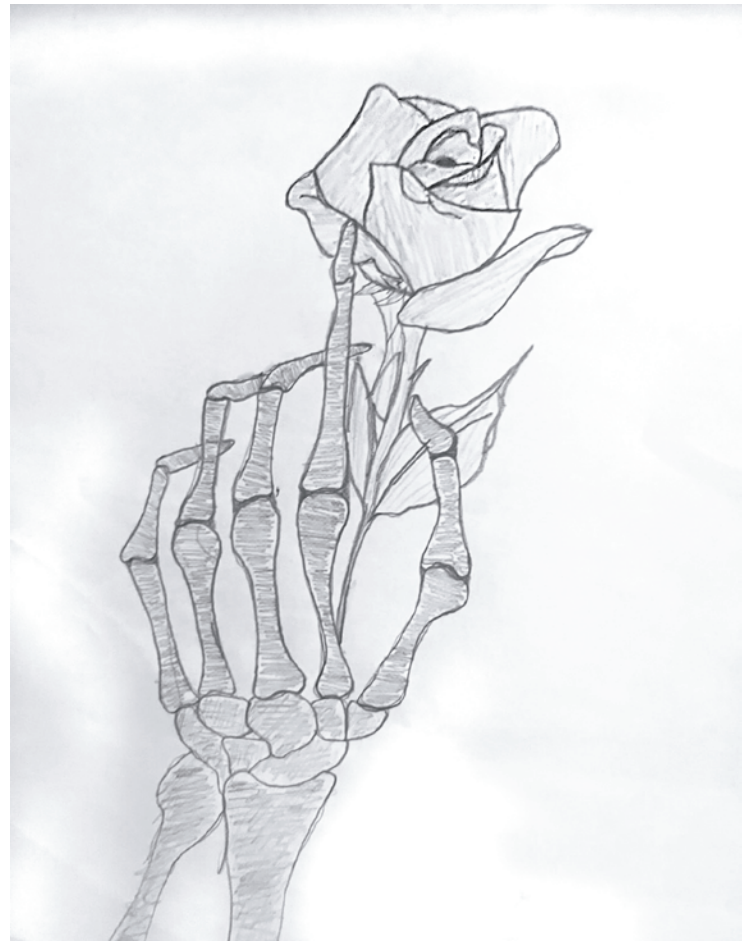


Tequila Davidson



"Butterflies"

I drew this because butterflies are one of the clearest examples of growth. They demonstrate how something can completely transform and still carry its beauty. It reflects the idea that change can feel slow or uncomfortable, but it's still leading somewhere meaningful.



"Hand with Rose"

I drew this to show protection in an unexpected form. The bones represent something seen as cold or empty, but the way they hold the rose shows care. The rose isn't just a flower; it represents a person. The piece is about how even the most guarded people can still care deeply and protect others in quiet ways.



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Feebe

Feebe is a curly bundle of wiggle. A mixture of a Poodle and a King Charles Spaniel, she's a bit smaller than her people expected her to be, but her twelve pound self is chock full of love and kisses. You'd never guess that she's eight years old as she still exudes the puppy energy she had when Jen and Zack drove all the way up past Bancroft to get her.

She's a bit of a shared dog. When her people were first talking about getting a dog, it was agreed that Grandma, who lives near Paradise Campground, would be a co-owner. Feebe spends plenty of time at both houses, spreading the love to any human who crosses her path.

She's a bit of a neighbourhood dog as well.

When she was young, an elderly gentlemen next door would take her on walks every day – ensuring that the two of them got their exercise. These days, when her people are away for the day, a neighbour is always willing to let her outside to stretch her legs, and of course will give some belly rubs at the same time.

Feebe LOVES, people. While she's a bit jumpy, she's small and light enough that her exuberance is endearing. If you give her the attention she's so fond of, her whole body reflects her enthusiasm! She'll vibrate with energy as she tries desperately to make sure every spot gets pets.

She's also an excellent traveller - which comes in handy, not only with all the trips back and forth to Grandma's house, but also when her people go camping throughout the summer. She loves being in the car, and will happily go on long road trips,

While she does well on trips, Feebe only likes being outside when it's nice out. She's a bit of a high maintenance pup, who does NOT like getting her paws all dirty. If she's playing with a group of dogs and they run through a puddle, Feebe will delicately

pick her way around – making sure not to get the least bit wet. Getting her to do her business in the rain or snow is quite the challenge, but a treat as a bribe will usually do the trick; like most dogs, Feebe is very fond of treats!

She's as careful with her toys as she is with her fur. She plays so delicately that her very first toy, a bear, met its end only last summer - and that end was met via the lawnmower rather than through any efforts on her part.

Feebe's only flaw is barking. Something about seeing another dog come near her people makes her go into overprotective mode! She's working on it and getting better, but it's still a challenge for her. If, however, a dog is already present when she shows up to the party, for some reason that's okay! It's only when one enters after she does, that she has a hard time. The same principles apply when going for walks around town, if you come up to her without a pup, she'll be your best friend, but if you've got a dog, please let her come up to you first; she'll make friends, but only if she gets to be in charge of the introduction!

If you have a animal friend, please reach out to wp.heronry@gmail.com and tell us about them!



Feebe is the very best kind of Easter Gift!



Koert's Korner

Do you want to know one of my favourite things about living in rural Ontario? Being able to shop and support local! And it doesn't get any more local than the farm gates down the road! So come along while I shine a spotlight on some of the local talent in Perth County!

We're starting off this series with Koert's Korner. Located at 3393 Road 155 outside of Fullarton. I've known Brooke for many years, and if there are two things I know about her, it's one: she likes to keep busy, and two: boy is she good at it!

She was a stay-at-home mom to four under four when she told her husband she needed something to not only keep herself busy, but something that she could do with the kids from home. "I am a retired massage therapist who became passionate about what I was feeding my family and the importance of teaching my kids about where it all comes from. So I thought, 'Why not share the experience with the public?'"

What started as selling the eggs of only six chickens in the shop, has turned into selling the eggs of what one can only describe as an entire *flock* of chickens. This flock lays eggs in a variety of beautiful colours which are available daily at the stand. There are duck eggs for sale as well!

In addition to the eggs, through the spring and summer, you can keep an eye out for seedlings, which are grown in Brooke's own greenhouse. In summer you'll have the opportunity to enjoy the fruits of her labours, picked fresh from her garden.

Her passion project quickly turned into a "what about this" idea. The stand is always growing in what it has to offer. It not only runs roadside during

the warmer months, but she has kept the sales going all winter through her social media outlets. Check out her posts online to see the handmade seasonal bath products, customizable cups, and odd baked goods she has for sale!



Brooke holding up a sign inside her newly constructed stand

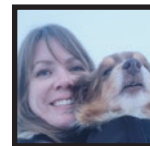
Her stand is a family project. Brooke's kids love going out daily to visit with the chickens. "They collect the eggs themselves, feed the chickens kitchen scraps by hand, and of course, chase them around."

If stopping by, be prepared to say hello to the friendly furry greeters when you stop in. The two Bernadoodles always appreciate a good tummy rub from the customers!

Brooke's goal in 2026 is to celebrate the small wins and be ok with the small imperfections. She's striving to let go of the picture-perfect Pinterest stand idea and really embrace the *Made With Love* vibe. Koert's Korner is also giving back to the local community by donating seedlings and plants to the West Perth Community Gardens in Mitchell and Dublin where locals can access fresh vegetables at no cost.

Brooke says, "This was never meant to be a get-rich project. It was about creating a community, inspiring my kids to be involved, and being passionate about something. There are two other roadstands within 5km of mine, and I've actually purchased from both of them! It's not a competition, it's about making new friends and supporting what others enjoy doing from their own backyard."

As the farm stand season gets underway, be sure to check out Koert's Korner!. Look them up on Facebook, Instagram and the *Discover More Flavour: Farm Gate Program* and see what they have to offer!



Wake Up! It's Spring

As I wrote in February's issue of *the Heronry*, our country dream became a reality ten years ago, when our family moved to a 25-acre country property in West Perth. We had big dreams. We wanted to do everything ourselves and attempted to be as self-sufficient as possible. I was already an avid gardener and always kept a garden while we lived in the city. I had also started canning and learning food preservation methods.

My husband's grandparents had lived on a family farm and he had experience working in commercial pig barns. Thankfully, he is a handy person, is mechanically inclined and has education and experience in designing, building, and fixing most things. Our plan: grow and preserve our own food, have less reliance on the grid, enrich and preserve the environment around us, have all the animals we couldn't enjoy in the city, and provide a life for our children that we always dreamed of. We had our homestead. To our neighbours and friends, we had a funny farm.

In the last ten years, there have been lots of mistakes, frustrations, and stresses that have occurred along the way, but they have helped us identify patterns and schedules of life on the farm. I am an older millennial, but I still love a good paper calendar on the fridge and journal to record my progress in the garden.

April is a busy month on the calendar. Worm the barn animals, get vet appointments for yearly vaccinations, start seeds for the garden, prepare for and receive our first batch of broiler chicks, yard clean up... the list is long. I usually love a good list. It's satisfying to scratch an item off when it's completed. I feel productive and you can see the results. This year, it has been harder to find that motivation to start completing the list.

From January to March, our family is in hibernation mode, and I blame the weather for that. I feel very Canadian when I say, wasn't that a long winter? Seriously, it snowed every other day for two months.

Outside of our full-time jobs and transporting kids to their activities, the only thing my husband and I had energy for is snow blowing (thank you Pete!) and barn chores. We intended to complete other projects, but they never seemed to come to fruition; I don't get too upset about this because I know how hard we work in the non-winter months. Winter is also the time where we get to enjoy the fruits of our labour, and re-charge our batteries as a family on the couch.

Suddenly, it's April, and we need to get a move-on, but this rain is messing things up. It's literally a mud pit out here. This gloomy weather has not motivated us to do much around the farm. In reality, there are some things we just can't do because of how wet things are.

The tractor would rip up the lawn if we attempted to move manure. We cannot replace fence posts for the same reason. The pigs have never had such deep mud holes in their pens before. This is delaying us from moving our young pigs to their outdoor home. Likewise, there are young layer chickens that have outgrown their indoor pens and are ready to move to their outdoor spaces, but we are waiting for some warmer/drier days.

After what seems to be a month of straight rain, there have been one or two sunny days this month, and we have forced ourselves to address the list. Get outside and start the manual labour. I'll be honest, it felt good. I got a sunburn, but I'm not complaining about that. It seems that all we needed was to feel the sun on our skin, hear the sound of song birds and frogs return, and see the early spring flowers bloom to get motivated. Helleborus orientalis/Lenten rose is my favourite.

Hibernation is officially over. It's time to get your rain boots on and enjoy those first days of sunny spring weather. After all, we are one month away from planting the garden. Time's ticking before weeding season begins.

Follow our shenanigans on Facebook or Instagram-
@The Square H

The Robinsons: Turning Outward



Christina tB Hotz
Editor

What do you do when you expect to interview one person at a local café, and then when you arrive the booth has two extra people? You interview all three of them! Jason Lloyd Robinson, his wife Catherine, and their daughter Ashley met me at the Sugar Maple one early day in April. Jason had reached out via facebook, offering to share his story of becoming an amputee, and together, all three of them gave me an overview of the medical journey they've been on as a family.

Their path has been a rough one. Jason developed Type II diabetes in his early twenties, has had a heart condition for years (it runs in the family), experienced liver failure, and dealt with water behind his retinas that left him legally blind for years.

His daughter, Ashley, was born without a fully developed hip socket and at 18 months was apparently the first Canadian recipient of the new type of hip implant that grows with children as they age. When in the full body cast that was a requirement for healing, she fell onto her mom's collarbone, fracturing it. That unknown fracture healed incorrectly, which has led to its deterioration. After years of hard work holding down three jobs to keep the family afloat, Catherine was told to stop working unless she wanted to lose the use of her arm completely.

The most dramatic part of their story hasn't even been mentioned yet! It all started about eleven years ago when Jason stepped on a plastic screw while getting into the shower. As a Type II diabetic, he didn't have much sensation in his feet anymore

and he didn't even notice the injury until he looked down and saw the mess on the shower floor. The screw was such a small thing, but the long-term ramifications of that small wound were huge.

The biggest warning sign that things weren't going to go well was the fact that it wouldn't stop bleeding. Catherine had had the unofficial role as



Ashley, Catherine, & Jason (provided by the interviewees)

nurse for most of their marriage, but even with her experienced efforts, it was clear that something else would have to be done. Off to the emergency room they went, and various doctors and nurses weighed in regarding the correct protocol.

The next few months were full of trips back and forth to various medical centres

where they tried everything they could to get the foot back to normal. Despite multiple rounds of antibiotics and other interventions, it was obvious that something wasn't going right. The injury was infected, (diabetics often have a more difficult time healing), and there didn't seem to be many options left to try.

Finally the day came where the doctor told them that Jason was likely going to have to have his foot removed. Due to the severity of the surgery, the doctors wanted to be sure that the family understood the risks and ramifications. They were concerned that this level of dependency would fracture Jason and Catherine's marriage.

(Continued on next page)

Catherine found this idea laughable. Jason's previous health issues had resulted in him being unable to work full time, and the idea of him losing some mobility just seemed like par for the course. Catherine remembers reassuring the doctor and Jason, saying "If I didn't leave during the last 30 years despite everything we've been through – I'm not going to do it now!" While of course it would be challenging, if it were a choice between losing her husband and his losing a foot, it seemed like a "no brainer" to her.

Timing is everything. Trying to get rides coordinated, surgery booked, and recovery plans sorted led to the infection getting out of control. Jason was put on oxygen due to dropping blood pressure, and Catherine went home to get organized. Through some kind of mix-up, she got a call letting her know that Jason had flat-lined. Thinking he had died, she called her mother-in-law and was weeping on the phone when the doctor called to let her know that the infection was reaching for Jason's heart and he was being transferred to Stratford. Turns out he HAD flat-lined, but they were able to bring him back from the brink. Two days later, once they'd gotten Jason stabilized, they did the surgery. They had to remove not only his foot, but also his lower leg; it was Ashley's birthday.

Next came recovery. Jason spent the next six months in the hospital, eventually transferred to Seaforth and learned to use a wheelchair to get around while he healed. Despite having no accessibility supports installed, he was sent home to wait for a prosthetic-fitting appointment to come available. At this point he was able to get around with the use of a wheelchair, but their home has steps up the front and back door and it wasn't feasible or affordable for them to install a ramp. He ended up learning how to maneuver himself up the stairs on his backside and was able to transfer to an indoor walker to sort of hobble around after that. Then came the wait.

Acquiring a prosthetic leg isn't as simple or as quick as some people might think. Once you're properly measured and fitted and it's made, you need to wait for an available space as you need to stay at the health facility for over a month. This time is used to learn

how to use your prosthesis and to ensure that the pressure and friction isn't going to cause additional damage to your healing limb. Jason ended up surprising everyone when he adjusted to his new leg in record time. Usually it's a minimum of six weeks before you're released from the facility, but Jason was able to walk like a champion right from the get-go. Before four weeks were up, Catherine got the call that he was ready to go home!

That was eleven years ago this coming July. Since then he's been back and forth to the Parkwood Institute once a year to get a check-up, and other than the time he broke the ankle on his carbon fiber prosthetic, things have been pretty smooth sailing. He's up for another replacement in July, and this year he hopes to get one that's waterproof since that will allow him to shower standing up! He also dreams of getting a swimmer's leg (with a flexible ankle) that will allow him to move through the water without going in circles.

The leg Jason lost was his left, and he was able to get laser surgery on his eyes (returning his vision to 20/20), so these days he's able to drive himself and the rest of his family around. Catherine can no longer drive due to her collarbone injury, so she relies on Jason for transportation.

This whole family has been "through the ringer" physically and emotionally, and yet all three of the members I talked to are finding ways to give back to the community they're part of.

In addition to her hip issues, Ashley was in a car accident several years ago, which left her with damage to her tail-bone and extensive arthritic back pain. She also has a heart condition that makes her prone to sudden fainting – which means she's also unable to work or drive safely. Despite all these challenges, she's joined the Mitchell Optimists. She loves seeing the excitement of the kids at events like the Easter Egg Hunt, and even lends a hand at baseball events over the summer. She wants her daughter to see and experience the joy that can come from being part of service groups.

Catherine volunteers at the Vanastra Church in Clinton. Every other Tuesday she and Jason are

helping out at the community dinners, providing extra hands and listening ears to the people who come out. Catherine specifically has discovered that she has the gift of connecting with people who have mental health and addiction challenges. She's determined to help people feel less alone in their struggles, and hopes that she's doing some good.

Jason drives Ashley and Catherine to and from their various meetings, and of course lends a helping hand as well. He says he specifically reached out to us at *the Heronry* because he wants to start a support group for amputees. He knows how isolating it can be and doesn't want anyone else to feel like they have to navigate this journey on their own. He had his family as his support, but he knows that other people aren't always so lucky and he wants to help fill the gap. You can reach him by email: jasonrobinson071@outlook.com.

By the time all the stories were told, my head was reeling. Here was a family that had experienced challenge after challenge and yet they were finding a way to keep moving forward. So many people become hermits when faced with these kinds of hurdles, either withdrawing socially in order to spare themselves looks of pity, or getting angry at the hand they've been dealt, but not Jason, Catherine, and Ashley. This family is turning outwards instead and doing their best to make a difference. People like Jason and his family are the unsung heroes of our communities. They bear the physical and mental scars of their trials, but they're doing their best to overcome them, and the way that they're managing to do so is truly extraordinary.

"SPRING HAS SPRUNG"
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That English Thing

Affect vs Effect

Most of the time (around 90%):

Affect is a VERB, aka an action word. It means 'alter or change'.

E.g. *The climate **affects** how plants grow.*

Effect is a NOUN aka a thing. It means 'end result'.

E.g. *The climate has an **effect** on how plants grow. Music has a positive **effect** on most people.*

About 10% of the time:

Affect can *also* be a noun

E.g. *Psychologists are trained to look for changes in a patient's **affect**. (emotional signalling)*

Effect can *also* be a verb

E.g. *We must work together to **effect** positive changes in our community.*

Visnja Cuturic

Mitchell Pottery Owner





My Recipe Book

In a world where one can type into a search engine for a recipe and have thousands of possible options pop up instantly, or have hundreds of menu plans pinned on a digital board, having a recipe book with handwritten recipes may seem to some a little antiquated.

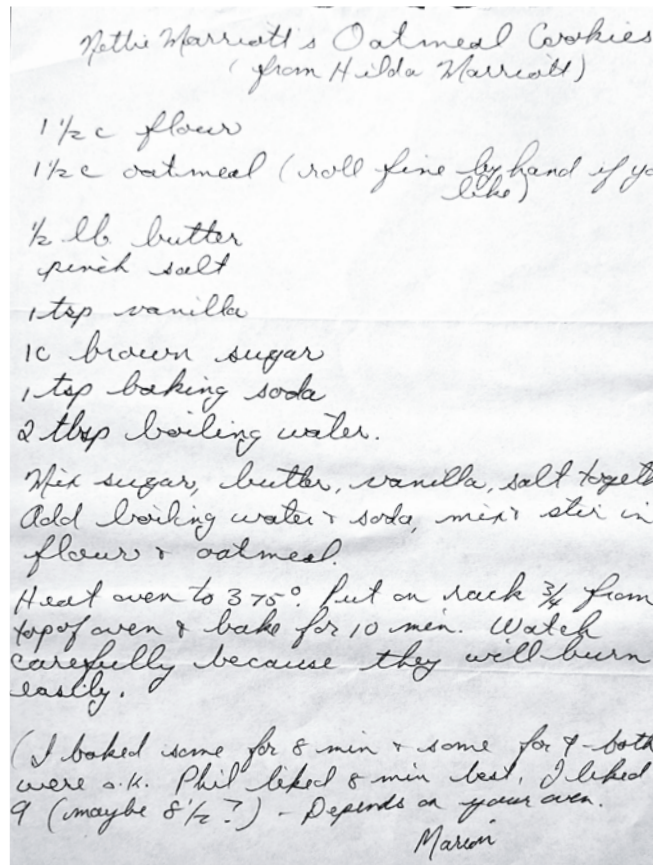
In our ever disconnected modern world, sharing food and recipes is an important tie to others, an almost radical act of intentional community creation. Flipping through my recipe book, I revel in as many memories as I do flipping through a photo album. Each recipe is connected to shared meals, deaths, births, parties. Each time I eat with friends, family, or even strangers, we build our bonds and break down barriers.

Every day we are interacting with others in many seemingly minute and unimportant ways, but these moments are the almost miraculous creation of community. The energy we put into every action comes back to us in the most unexpected ways. We create community, and then community creates and sustains us right back.

My favourite example of this, from my recipe book, is a folded recipe given to me by a former colleague.

In my twenties, I started my career supporting adults with special needs with their daily living. Through that work I met an amazing group of people. One of these wonderful humans was Marion. Now, those of you who know me, know I am a 'bit' of a talker. I love to meet new people, learn about them, and watch

how they create community. I literally have a degree in it – Sociocultural Anthropology. So it likely won't surprise you that Marion and I had some lengthy discussions at times, she was passionate about Tai Chi, a compassionate support provider, and wonderfully likeable.



Nettie Marriott's Oatmeal Cookie Recipe

One cold winter morning, Marion's husband Phil popped in to our workplace to pick her up, and Marion took that moment to introduce us. That small act of introduction is linked to my recipe book.

He and I had one of those small town moments, whereupon hearing my last name, he became suddenly invested and realized we may share a connection. Phil asked if I knew a woman named Nettie Marriott, whose maiden name was, if he recalled correctly, also Barr. She was a woman he had known some 30+ years before. That moment

could just as easily have been an unremarkable introduction, but what followed was a sharing of information that has stuck with me.

Nettie was my great aunt, the elder sister of my paternal grandfather. Due to some stretched out generations, she passed away long before my parents married. I knew her only from pictures and stories. As it turned out, when Phil was in his early twenties, he had rented a room from Aunt Net. He lived with her for enough time to get to know her cheeky humour, generous nature, and to enjoy many a meal at her table. These stories he recalled to me in our discussion that cold morning.

This act of feeding someone, aiding in the

continued nourishment of their body and very being, is something we underestimate and undervalue. By cooking for Phil, Net made a ripple that miraculously reached through time, to me, her great niece. Several days after our introduction and discussion, I received a handwritten note from Marion, with Aunt Net's Oatmeal Cookie Recipe on it. This isn't a recipe I use regularly, but it is one that warms my heart. Through this recipe, Marion and Phil had become a bridge to a part of my family that I would never have had the chance to know otherwise. I can make my father the cookies that his aunt made him as a child. In sharing them with my daughter, I am passing down stories, community, and food.

Whether Aunt Net shared this recipe, having received from her Scottish great grandmother, or like the famous FRIENDS TV scene plays out for Phoebe Buffay, it came from the Nestle Tollhouse packet, isn't the point. The sharing of food over generations matters; it creates something undefinable.

I made friends, connections, community and they made me. The humble handwritten recipe is a mode of cultural sharing, community building and connection, and I want more that these days.

"If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world."
- JRR Tolkien

"Food, in the end, in our own tradition, is something holy. It's not about nutrients and calories. It's about sharing. It's about honesty. It's about identity."
- Louise Fresco

NETTIE MARRIOTT'S OATMEAL COOKIES

Ingredients



- 1 1/2 cups flour
- 1 1/2 cups oatmeal (roll fine by hand if you like)
- 1/2 lb butter
- Pinch of salt
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 2 Tbsp boiling water


Directions

Mix Sugar, butter, vanilla and salt together.
Add boiling water and soda, mix
Stir in flour and oatmeal


Heat oven to 375. Bake on rack 3/4 from top of oven for 10 minutes. Watch carefully as they will burn easily.

Baking for 8-8.5 minutes turned out well in Marion's oven.


The Salvation Army Stratford-St. Marys Regional Community Ministries
POWERS OF ATTORNEY: PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE AND PROTECTING YOURSELF FROM ABUSE
PRESENTED BY:
ANGELA YENSSEN
from

May 22nd
1:30-3:00pm
Municipal Office
160 Wellington St. Mitchell
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH 



- Different kinds of powers of attorney in Ontario
- What happens if someone gets sick and has no power of attorney
- Options to set up powers of attorney to lower the risk of abuse

Sexual Violence Prevention Month Event
TACKLING SPORTS CULTURE TOGETHER :: **FREE ENTRY**

STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF PERTH COUNTY
WE BREED LIONS
CONFRONTING CANADA'S TROUBLED HOCKEY CULTURE
RICK WESTHEAD
WITH A FOREWORD BY STEPHEN BRANT
Join award-winning journalist and bestselling author Rick Westhead for an important conversation about sports culture, consent, and respect. Rick's investigative reporting helped spark a national conversation about abuse and silence in sport. *We Breed Lions* tells the story of what went wrong in hockey but the lessons reach every sport, team, and community. Together we'll explore what respectful and accountable team environments look like and what each of us can do to help create them.
EVENT HIGHLIGHTS:
✔ Panel discussion
✔ Audience Q&A
✔ Book sale and signing
✔ Connect with community resources
Tuesday May 5th 6:30 to 8:30pm
Burnside Agriplex Community Hall (357 McCarthy Rd, Stratford)
For more information: stopvaw@optimismplace.com

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COMPOSING INTERESTING (or at least better) PHOTOGRAPHS

Digital technology has made the taking, viewing and keeping of pictures so easy that we don't think twice about pointing our phones at anything (and everything) that catches our eyes-- what we're having for lunch, the cat doing something catty, our friends doing something stupid, the lovely sunset... Usually, our main concern is to fit everything into the available space on the screen and move on to the next picture

Unfortunately, in our rush to 'capture' the moment, we usually don't take the time to think about how we could better arrange the elements in the photograph. That is, we don't often take a few moments to think about what the end product—the picture—will really look like. The reason we don't tend to go back and look at pictures that have been viewed once or maybe twice is that usually, these 'snapshots' (to borrow a term from film photography days) are generally not all that interesting to look at. The subject may be special for us, but the photo itself doesn't come close to capturing the feelings that we had when we pushed the shutter button.

We are drawn to images that in some way surprise us, make us curious, shock us, and the best of these were not made by chance but by thoughtful and careful composition. The not-so-secret secret of composing a good image is that you should take your time. Unless the image is fleeting and it's a quick exposure or no exposure, a few extra seconds of looking and thinking will result in images that will still be visually interesting, even after repeated viewings. It will take a bit of practice to learn how to slow down and look but the results are well worth

the effort.

The first 'rule' that I'll discuss is the Golden Mean. It was practiced by most—if not all of the great artists from the Renaissance onward. Formally, what the Golden Mean proposes is that any space (including the image on your phone's screen) when divided into the ratio of 1.617 to 1, will provide the most visually pleasing division possible. It's safe to say that almost every serious artist was and is aware of this proportion as a method of composition in their artwork. The ratio is found aplenty in nature—everything from leaves to nautilus shells to the shape of our heads exhibit this interrelationship of length and width.

It's impractical to try to measure out 1.617 as a line of division on your phone's screen so for the sake of convenience, the Golden Mean has been simplified to what is referred to as *The Rule of Thirds*. To use this, imagine that the screen has been divided into three more-or-less equal parts both horizontally and vertically (see sketch).

When you're composing your image, you should move the screen around so that any prominent vertical object (a tree, standing person, sign, etc. is positioned onto one of the two vertical lines, rather than in the centre of the screen. If there are two strong vertical elements, you may have to move or change your angle until the two elements are located on the two vertical lines. You should do the same for any strong horizontal elements in your composition. Shift the horizon line (the place where the sky meets the ground) up or down to the

Free Community Event Promotion!

Want more people coming to your local events? Submit your club meeting or community gatherings to the Heronry and expand your reach! Submissions to our community calendar are due by the 15th of the month prior to publication. Service Clubs and Community interest events like concerts, choir practice, sports sign-up deadlines, etc are published for free! Scan the QR code to submit your event today!

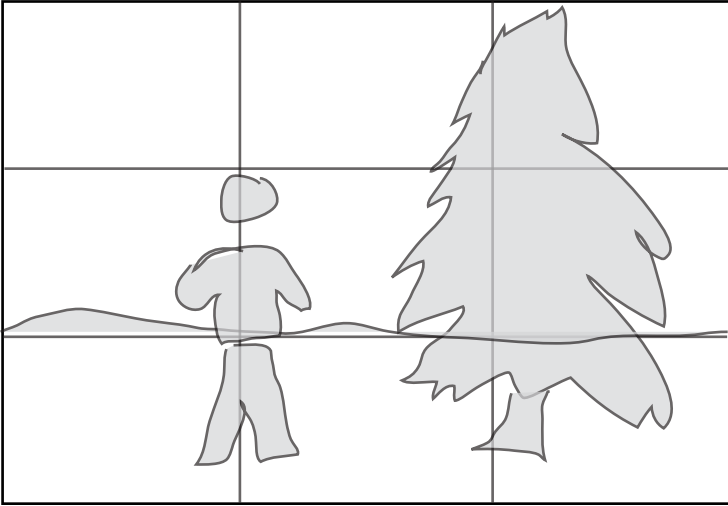


Christopher Creighton

Process Photography Enthusiast



imaginary rule of thirds lines to include more sky (using the lower line for the horizon) or more ground (using the upper line).



The grid we imagine to help us follow the Rule of Thirds

If this sounds a bit confusing it's just because it's new. As stated above, with a bit of practice, you'll start to see how you can use the rule of thirds to make more interesting and maybe, with a bit of thought, artistic images. An advantage of digital photography is that you can spend time experimenting with composition using the rule of thirds and you don't have to pay for film and processing to judge your progress.

Next time, I'll discuss a few of the other compositional tools that will help you to take more interesting pictures.



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Sudoku Puzzle

Fill in the grid with digits so that every row, every column, and every 3x3 box have the digits 1-9 (no repeats allowed).

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

West Perth Commun

These events are open to the general community. An asterisk means preregistration or an appointment is required. A “-*

May 1 - Friday

Group Exercise | 9am | Upper Thames Missionary Church
Mitchell Foodbank | 9:30-11:30am, 1:30-4:30pm | 80 Rowland St
EarlyON Play and Learn | 9:30 - 11:30am | Mitchell Arena
Astros OBA Tourney | 11am/1pm/3pm | 185 Wellington St
Early ON Baby Time | 1 - 3pm | West Perth Public Library
Wii Games | 2pm | Manor Lounge
Family Carnival | 4 - 7pm | Crystal Palace
Catch the Ace Draw #1 | 4pm | Mitchell Legion
Council Nominations Due | 5pm | 160 Wellington Rd
Drop-In | Closed | Youth Centre

May 2 - Saturday

Men's Community Breakfast | 8:30am | 101 Restaurant
Kin Rubber Duck Race | 11am Sharp! | Hwy 8 Bridge Mitchell
High Tea (\$15A, \$10C) | 2pm | West Perth Community Centre
Citizen of the Year Banquet* | 6pm | Mitchell Legion Hall

May 4 - Monday

Early ON Play and Learn | 9:30 - 11:30am | Mitchell Arena
Group Exercise | 9:30am | Upper Thames Missionary Church
\$10 Drop-In Yoga | 10am | Live Well 4 Life
Active Wellness | 1:30pm | Manor Lounge
Golden Gryphon Interactive Night* | 5:30 - 8pm | Youth Centre
West Perth Council Meeting | 7pm | 160 Wellington St
West Perth Singers Practice~ | 7pm | Main Street United
Cards | 7pm | Manor Lounge

May 5 - Tuesday

Rotary Club Meeting | 7:15am | Deck Dentistry Basement
Senior Fitness | 9:30am | West Perth Community Centre
Mahjong Meet Up | 1pm | West Perth Public Library
Farkle | 1:30pm | Manor Lounge
Crafter's Circle | 2 - 3pm | West Perth Public Library
Nerf Night* | 5:30 - 8pm | UTES GYM
**Tackling Sports Culture | 6:30 - 8:30pm | Community Hall
at the Burnside Agriplex (357 McCarthy Rd, Stratford)**
Legion Band Practice~ | 7:30 - 9:30pm | Mitchell Legion
Drop-In | Closed | Youth Centre

May 6 - Wednesday

Farmer's Market | 9am - 12pm | West Perth Village
Group Exercise | 9:30am | Upper Thames Missionary Church
Progressive Euchre & Fun Pool | 1pm | Mitchell Legion
Active Wellness | 1:30pm | Manor Lounge

\$5 Pottery Frame Making* | 3:30 - 5pm | Youth Centre
Cards | 7pm | Manor Lounge

May 7 - Thursday

Group Exercise | 9:30am | Upper Thames Missionary Church
\$10 Drop-In Yoga | 10am | Live Well 4 Life
EarlyON Play & Learn | 10 - 11:30am | Kirkton Arena
\$12 Euchrama | 10am | Mitchell Community Centre
Active Wellness | 1:30pm | Manor Lounge
Tween Crochet Crew | 4:30 - 5:30pm | WPPL
Youth Week Drop-In | 6 - 9pm | Youth Centre

May 8 - Friday

Group Exercise | 9:30am | Upper Thames Missionary Church
EarlyON Play and Learn | 9:30 - 11:30am | Mitchell Arena
Mitchell Foodbank | 9:30-11:30am, 1:30-4:30pm | 80 Rowland St
Songs & Stories: Mother's Day Craft | 1pm | WPPL
EarlyON Baby Time | 1pm - 3pm | WPPL
Wii Games | 2pm | Manor Lounge
Catch the Ace Draw #2 | 4pm | Mitchell Legion
Charity Fashion Show | 6 - 10pm | Mitchell C. C.
RSVP Deadline for Pie Social, & Manor/TRP Dinner
Drop-In | Closed | Youth Centre

May 11 - Monday

EarlyON Play & Learn | 9:30 - 11:30am | Mitchell Arena
Stories with Teddy | 5:45pm | West Perth Public Library
Group Exercise | 9:30am | Upper Thames Missionary Church
\$10 Drop-In Yoga | 10am | Live Well 4 Life
Active Wellness | 1:30pm | Manor Lounge
\$4 Pie Social | 2:30pm | Manor Lounge
Cards | 7pm | Manor Lounge
West Perth Singers Practice~ | 7pm | Main Street United

May 12 - Tuesday

Rotary Club Meeting | 7:15am | Deck Dentistry Basement
Group Exercise | 9:30am | Upper Thames Missionary Church
Social Share: Theatre/Arts | 10am | Manor Lounge
Drop-in Blood Pressure Clinic | 1pm -3pm | WPPL
Mahjong Meet Up | 1pm | WPPL
Mitchell Foodbank | 1:30-4:40pm | 80 Rowland St
Crafter's Circle | 2 - 3pm | West Perth Public Library
Bingo Night | 3 - 5:30pm | Youth Centre
Kin Club Meeting | 7pm | Mitchell Legion Basement
Lions Club Meeting | 6:45pm | 160 Wellington
\$5 Euchre | 7pm | Brodhegan Community Centre
Legion Band Practice~ | 7:30 - 9:30pm | Mitchell Legion

Community Events: May 2026

* indicates join-up is seasonal. A dollar sign or price indicates the event is not free.

May 13 - Wednesday

Group Exercise | 9:30am | Upper Thames Missionary Church
Police Week BBQ | 11:30am | 132 St George
Progressive Euchre & Fun Pool | 1pm | Mitchell Legion
Active Wellness | 1:30pm | Manor Lounge
Sing-a-long | 2:30pm | Manor Lounge
Drop-In Autism Info Session | 1 - 2pm | 185 Wellington St
Mini Apple Pies | 3-5:30pm | Youth Centre
Service Clubs & Orgs Meeting | 7pm | W.P. Municipal Office
Cards | 7pm | Manor Lounge

May 14 - Thursday

Group Exercise | 9:30am | Upper Thames Missionary Church
EarlyON Play & Move | 10 - 11:30am | Downie Optimist C. C.
\$10 Drop-In Yoga | 10am | Live Well 4 Life
Manor/TRP Dinner | 12pm | Manor Lounge
Active Wellness | 1:30pm | Manor Lounge
Tie-dye Day | 3-5:30pm | Youth Centre
Tween Crochet Crew | 4:30 - 5:30pm | WPPL
Legion Members Meeting* | 7:30pm | Mitchell Legion

May 15 - Friday

Group Exercise | 9:30am | Upper Thames Missionary Church
EarlyON Play & Learn | 9:30am - 11:30am | Mitchell Arena
Mitchell Foodbank | 9:30-11:30am, 1:30-4:30pm | 80 Rowland St
Open Mic | 12:30- 4pm | Mitchell Legion
EarlyON Baby Time | 1pm - 3pm | WPPL
Wii Games | 2pm | Manor Lounge
Catch the Ace Final Draw | 4pm | Mitchell Legion
Night Drop-In | 7pm - 9:30pm | Youth Centre
*RSVP to Brunch n' Bunch

May 16 - Saturday

STE(A)M Stations | 11:00am | West Perth Public Library
Craft for a Cause (Legion Poppy installation)
12-2pm | Itty Bitty Yarn Co. 89 Ontario Rd

May 18 - Monday

West Perth Singers~ | 7:00 PM | Main Street United

May 19 - Tuesday

Rotary Club Meeting | 7:15am | Deck Dentistry Basement
Senior Fitness | 9:3am | West Perth Community Centre
Group Exercise | 9:30am | Mitchell Community Centre
\$11 Brunch n' Bunch* | 10:30am | Manor Lounge
Mahjong Meet Up | 1pm | West Perth Public Library

Crafter's Circle | 2 - 3pm | West Perth Public Library
Summer Crafts | 3 - 5:30pm | Youth Centre
Legion Band Practice | 7:30pm - 9:30pm | Mitchell Legion
West Perth Council Meeting | 7pm | 160 Wellington St

May 20 - Wednesday

Group Exercise | 9:30am | Upper Thames Missionary Church
Community Coffee Hour | 10:30am | Manor Lounge
Progressive Euchre & Fun Pool | 1pm | Mitchell Legion
S Active Wellness | 1:30pm | Manor Lounge
Spring Waffles & Pancakes | 3 - 5:30pm | Youth Centre
Cards | 7pm | Manor Lounge

May 21 - Thursday

Group Exercise | 9:30am | Upper Thames Missionary Church
\$10 Drop-In Yoga | 10am | Live Well 4 Life
Early ON Play & Learn | 10 - 11:30am | Kirkton Arena
Active Wellness | 1:30pm | Manor Lounge
Drop-In | 3-5:30pm | Youth Centre
Tween Crochet Crew | 4:30 - 5:30pm | WPPL
Fastball Fest | TBD | Keterson Park

May 22 - Friday

Group Exercise | 9:30am | Upper Thames Missionary Church
Early ON Play & Learn | 9:30 - 11:30am | Mitchell Arena
Mitchell Foodbank | 9:30-11:30am, 1:30-4:30pm | 80 Rowland St
Power of Attorney Workshop | 1:30 - 3pm | 160 Wellington St
Wii Games | 2pm | Manor Lounge
Video Games Day | 3 - 5:30pm | Youth Centre
Fastball Fest | TBD | Keterson Park

May 23 - Saturday

Thamesview Plant Sale | 8am -12pm | 221 Arden Cres &
204 Napier St
Town-wide Garage Sale | 8am - 12pm | see page 23
EarlyON Play & Learn | 10 - 11am | Perth Care for Kids
Lions Club 90th Anniversary Dinner & Dance* |
Doors: 4pm, Dinner: 6pm, Dance: 8pm | 185 Wellington St
Fastball Fest | TBD | Keterson Park

May 24 - Sunday

Dog Guides Walk & BBQ* | 10am -1pm | Lions Park/Barn

May 25 - Monday

Group Exercise | 9:30am | UT Missionary Church
\$10 Drop-In Yoga | 10am | Live Well 4 Life

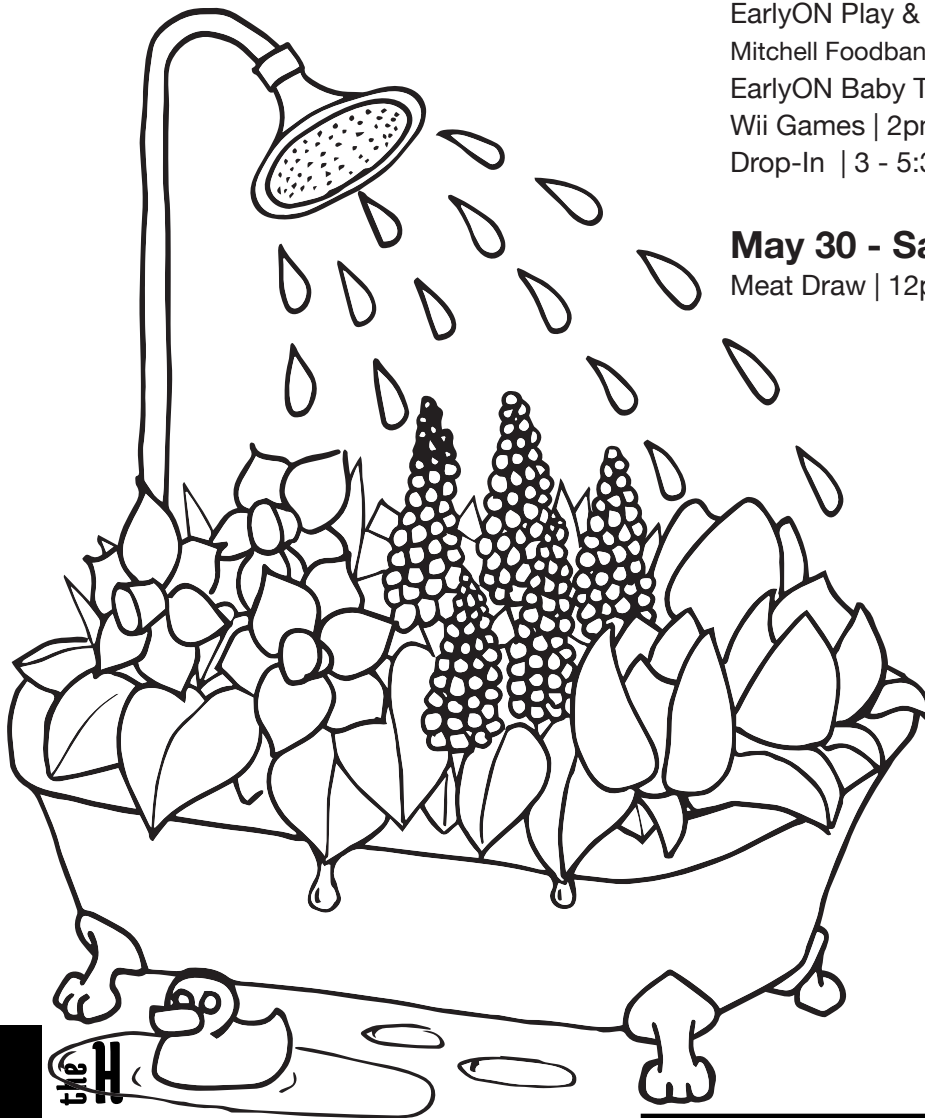
May 25 - Monday Speech & Language Early ON
| 10am - 11am | M. Arena
Seniors Book Chat | 11am | Manor Lounge
Active Wellness | 1:30pm | Manor Lounge
Cards | 7pm | Manor Lounge

May 26 - Tuesday

Rotary Club Meeting | 7:15am | Deck Dentistry Basement
Senior Fitness | 9:30am | West Perth Community Centre
Tea & Coffee Meet Up | 9:30am | Main Street United
Yahtzee | 10:30am | Manor Lounge
Mahjong Meet Up | 1pm | West Perth Public Library
BP Clinic (by appt.) | 1 - 3pm | Manor Lounge
Mitchell Foodbank | 1:30 - 4:40pm | 80 Rowland St
Crafter's Circle | 2 - 3pm | West Perth Public Library
Drop-In | 3 - 5:30pm | Youth Centre

Colouring Page

April Showers



Mitchell Legion Concert | 6:15pm | Corner of Wellington &
Rowland St

Lions Club Meeting | 6:45pm | 160 Wellington St
Legion Band Practice~ | 7:30 - 9:30pm | Mitchell Legion

May 27 - Wednesday

Group Exercise | 9:30am | Upper Thames Missionary Church
\$5 Golden Oldies Dance | 1:30 - 3:30pm | Mitchell C.C.
Progressive Euchre & Fun Pool | 1pm | Mitchell Legion
Fruit Smoothies | 3 - 5:30pm | Youth Centre
Cards | 7pm | Manor Lounge

May 28 - Thursday

Group Exercise | 9:30am | Upper Thames Missionary Church
\$10 Drop-In Yoga | 10am | Live Well 4 Life Agilec
Employment Services | 1pm | WPPL
Active Wellness | 1:30pm | Manor Lounge
Folk Music from 60s - 80s | 2 - 3pm | Lions Park Bandshell
Sidewalk Chalk Art | 3 - 5:30pm | Youth Centre
Tween Crochet Crew | 4:30 - 5:30pm | WPPL

May 29 - Friday

Group Exercise | 9:30am | Upper Thames Missionary Church
EarlyON Play & Learn | 9:30 - 11:30am | Mitchell Arena
Mitchell Foodbank | 9:30-11:30am, 1:30-4:30pm | 80 Rowland St
EarlyON Baby Time | 1 - 3pm | WPPL
Wii Games | 2pm | Manor Lounge
Drop-In | 3 - 5:30pm | Youth Centre

May 30 - Saturday

Meat Draw | 12pm | Mitchell Legion





Open the Door

Are we ready to “open the door” to welcome the summer season in West Perth? As the month of May coaxes tender shoots from the earth with the secret language of awakening, her door is swinging wide, ready to usher in our summer.

The month of May is named after “Maia”, the Roman Goddess of fertility and growth: evidence of which is all around us as life rises once more, as growth and renewal abound. We see it in the blades of green grass, in the buds of bloom, in the mating songs of birds! Fresh energy is everywhere, even in ourselves, as the season seems to revive our youth. We breathe in the warm late spring air, our lungs expand, and energy floods our limbs with newfound vitality.

May is a month in which my days are spent largely outdoors. I take in the landscape, seeing greens (my favourite colour) of every shade dotted by a brilliant kaleidoscope of colour: tulips, daffodils, cobalt blue scilla. I hear the symphony of birdsong; no music sweeter than the Jenny Wren’s serenade. I smell the fragrances, none more delightful than the blossoms of lilacs and catalpa bean trees.

As referenced in past reflections, our family purchased our rural homestead in 1990 and were not yet “moved in” to the house by May of that year. However, following much yard clean up during the early spring, we enjoyed longer evenings and weekends outdoors here on our new property.

May brought many surprises! Flower bulbs that had slept beneath the earth sprang forth with brilliance. Older trees and shrubs erupted in bloom. One of the most unique surprises was the long rows of peony flowers that had burst forth from the ground. It was obvious they had been established here for a

long, long time, likely planted when the home was built around 1910.

The peony is a symbol of prosperity and fortune. As their timeless elegance graced our landscape, how fortunate we were to have inherited so many. Their delicate beauty and fragrance, with the help of May was welcoming in our summer.



Our garden path

Rhubarb plants had also appeared and prospered along the foundations of existing outbuildings. Asparagus shoots emerged as remnants from an old and untended vegetable garden. It was obvious there had been a productive orchard on this property at one time.

A couple of aged and dense apple trees, crowned in glorious bloom, were home to several mourning doves. They sat comfortably in their nests, low enough that we could easily monitor the emergence of soft gray puff balls with beaks! We loved the sense of peace that exuded from their soft cooing.

With every visit to the property, we witnessed something new, something colourful and usually fragrant in this season of growth and renewal.

This past winter of 2025/26 was a long, cold and snowy one. I believe the residents of rural West Perth are more than ready to “open the door” to welcome in our summer season. I know I will be cheering on the month of May as she opens the door for summer to step through!



Time Changes

Time seems like a thing that's meaningless, and more always rolls along. We always have the next hour, and the next day; the next month, the next year, right? Not quite. Time is ironic: it changes everything and we don't even notice 'til too much has passed and too much has changed. We can never go back to those "good old days".

I hold onto the tall railing, sweating and breathing heavily. A sea of pine trees that doesn't seem to end stretches out way below us, taking my breath away. From the old, wooden balcony, I can really feel the cool breeze that flows from the river that surrounds the one whole side of the scout camp. We stopped here to catch our breath after racing up the huge sand dune that's as big as a building. The birds sing, and the sky above us is a brilliant blue. It's the kind of quiet that makes you nervous to make any noise, in hope you could listen to that quiet for as long as possible. My friends, fellow scouts, don't seem tired. They never are and can't stay still for long. They're already good to go, so the question arises: Should we go back down the sand dune, or go the opposite way down the long trail with so many forks that if you don't know your way around you get lost? This time, we chose the confusing trail.

Crunch, crackle, crunch. The dead leaves crumble under our feet as we go along. We pick up things by the muddy creek the trail follows- cool rocks, huge feathers, old animal bones and beautiful shells. Sometimes, we find small beaches. These little pockets of paradise, a perfect place to take a rest.



The Sand Dunes

Back up the trail, and to the sand dune. My friends, being the wild bunch they are, run down the dune, hollering, laughing and falling face first in the sand or rolling all the way down.

We go down the dirt path lined with pine trees and all the way back to the huge, sandy clearing surrounded by green hills and pointy trees. The sand is soft and sinks under my feet. It seems warmer down here. At least there's still that cool breeze that dances around the trees, wafting the rich, green scent of pine to my nose. The scout and Canadian flag waves in the wind up high, and I look to the ground to watch out for the small gardener snakes that almost everyone is too scared to pick up but me.

There's another scout group playing a game with an old, fraying ball in the volleyball court. We hang with them for a bit, talking about the differences of the places we live, or how strict our leaders are. We talk to them like old friends, even though we don't know each other's names - because we're all the same. The odd bunch of kids that still like to go outside, that have way too much energy and this is the only place they feel welcomed to burn it out, or are hungry for knowledge of the great outdoors. Suddenly, we finally remember we were meant to go back to camp, so we run back up the old, steep metal stairs that bring us to the camp sites, leaving the sand dunes behind.

The campfire crackles, and the old camping grill whistles quietly. We get in a bit of trouble for almost being late once again, but not too much. The few who stayed behind are sitting around the fire, and a couple of us start to help make dinner. The rest of us sit around the campfire, whittling and talking about the hardships of middle school, wishing we could

throw all of that life away and stay here forever. My friends talk about their futures, seeming so sure of themselves that I feel more sure of myself. We don't know what we want to be, but we know we want to be rich. I wonder how they are so sure.

The stars are out now. There's a crisp, cool air that bites at my face and fingertips. My friends are roasting the oddest things over the fire, apples, bananas, and even small fruits like strawberries. I stick to hotdogs and marshmallows. They also throw paper airplanes into the fire. After a while, once we're full, someone shoots out of their chair and challenges everyone to a game of manhunt in the woods. We all accept, and when the seeker is chosen we all run off. I go find somewhere to hide, a small flashlight the only light to guide me.

After a long, amazing day, we'll all go to bed in our tents. I'll lay awake for most of the night, listening to the creepy noises outside. Owls hooting, branches snapping, things I can't quite name. I'm not sure why.

As we get older, things are changing. More of my friends are staying at camp, whittling and talking about how stressful high school is, and how bad the world seems to be slowly getting. They pick up fewer things off the ground. They don't want to play manhunt, and find a few of the new younger kids annoying, even though we used to be them. Most of them are now gone, gone maybe because they don't want to go outside as often, or maybe don't have that bright energy they need to get out. Maybe they don't feel that hunger for knowledge. Or maybe simply don't have time, or their parents won't take them anymore. I don't even know the reason why for some of them right away, one day they just weren't there anymore. Then a few weeks later I'll hear that I won't see them again. I don't blame them. My time in scouts will be ending soon, too, because I've grown older and have new interests. It's also not the same without my horribly annoying, loud friends. A few of us have stayed, and now we go to camporees.

It's night, maybe around nine. It's a bit cold, but I don't mind. There are kids all around us, older, our age and younger. The camp is packed with as many kids as there are trees when there's a camporee.

I watch the younger kids, who seem to have that bright, endless energy I have lost. Even if we all lost who we were before, when we first started coming to camp, we're all better versions of ourselves.

We find another group of about two dozen kids. We join them. We run all around the dark camp with them, screaming songs so loud I bet they could hear us in Australia. Someone starts playing an upbeat rock song on their phone, which they would've had to sneak in. We tell each other about where we come from and what we do, more confident than any of us really are. The confidence isn't really there, but fake it till you make it, right? We tell each other about our futures. We try to be sure of what we want to be, but we do know we want to be happy. We'll joke about how bad the world has really become, mocking the people who made it that way, because it's all we can do about it for now. We pretend to have no worries, no fear, that stress and high school don't even exist, because it comes easily in the middle of a forest with about a hundred other kids around your age.

After one hell of a moving party, we all head back to camp. The fire crackles, and there's a group singing a song around their fire beside us. A few little girls, younger scouts in my group, run up to me with the cutest little smiles and ask to play a card game. I say sure, even if I don't really want to. They remind me so much of myself when I was younger, and I know they look up to me.

The next day, after morning activities, we go to the sand dunes, something we hadn't done in so long. I lean on to the railing that's not so tall anymore, calming my racing heart. That familiar sea of pine trees that doesn't seem to end stretches out way below us. From the wooden balcony, I can feel the breeze and see a few kids running around way down below. The birds sing, and the sky above us is a brilliant blue. I listened to that quiet that makes me nervous to make any noise, but at the same time makes me want to scream out into the silence. My friends are tired too, so we decide to stay here for a while and sit in the shade under the balcony. I watch the dense, spiky scrubs of marram grass wave lightly and think about the past and present. Everything that's happened, good and bad, and how that's changed me. Time really does change everything, but maybe for the better.



The First Furrow: The History Begins at Hicks' Corner

It's hard to imagine now, but there was a little corner of Logan Township that once carried the pulse of early settlement. Before Mitchell had a name, before the roads were more than rutted tracks through cedar and swamp, there was John Hicks and the Hicks House. John was a man who understood that travelers needed more than a roof. They needed a place to steady themselves, to feel human again, they needed a place to rest. It became his dream to make that a reality.

In the year 1837, the wilderness still pressed in on every side, John and his father William Hicks built a small hotel near the point where the early Huron Road crossed the Thames River. Some historians note that John and his father, William, erected the first building within what would eventually become Mitchell. It wasn't grand, but it wasn't meant to be. It was a tavern built of logs for the employees and early settlers of the *Canada Company*. It was a place where weary travelers could warm their hands, share a story, and gather the courage to continue their journey.

The original hotel stood at the corners of St. George and Huron Street, on the river's edge. At the time, the land wasn't even available for lease through the *Canada Company*; that wouldn't come until 1844. Only then did the Hicks family become the legal owners of the property they had already poured their labour and their lives into.

Families like the Hicks weren't just settlers, they were community anchors. They were the kind of people who kept a kettle on the stove because someone might come by. The kind who knew every horse's gait

on the road long before they saw the rider. Their tavern wasn't simply a business; it was a seed for a community that was starting to grow.

Fortunately for John, he was not alone. William, his father, was by his side. William had the kind of resilience that is written into the soil and the stories of the families that had been here since the beginning. The kind of man that held things together. And hold things together he did - as long as he could.

On February 16, 1848, William passed away due to fever. William Winslow Hick Sr. (1790-1848), in his 68th year; he left behind his family, his friends, and the community that respected him. As I began researching,

I learned that most people believe he is resting peacefully at the Trinity Anglican Cemetery in Mitchell, although no picture of his grave has surfaced. FindaGrave.com has him listed there but I found it unusual that his entire family was listed on the marker and not him. I began digging and managed to locate his obituary.

The obituary for William, reads as follows: "DIED On the 16th inst., at Stratford, Huron District of Fever, William Hicks Sen., aged 67. He was a native of Bridgewater, England. He was among the first settlers of Huron, and the respect in which he was held was sufficiently indicated by the large concourse that accompanied his remains to the place of interment in Goderich."

It is my belief that William rests somewhere in Goderich and not in Mitchell. Further research has strengthened this belief. After contacting a friend that focuses on the Huron County cemeteries, she

Stratford-Perth Archives, Campbell Family Photograph Collection



1003 The Hicks House stable and buggy yard "on a busy day." The stable, the building to the right, sat adjacent and ran parallel to Montreal Street, directly behind the hotel, which anchored the north side of Mitchell's business block. The other building in the photo, bearing the Sherwin Williams Paints sign, was part of the Hewitt furniture business.

confirmed my suspicions.

According to her, William was in fact relocated but from the original Canada Company Burial Ground, on Victoria St. N, between the streets Nelson and Bruce in Goderich, On. We're not 100% sure why. It's possible that as the town grew, like so many others the cemetery location was not beneficial to the town's development. By 1858, this cemetery was no longer in use, and the Maitland Cemetery became the new location of many of the former bodies.

Records were not kept well during the relocations; some stones were saved and moved, others were stored in basements or used as building materials. This makes it almost impossible to know for certain where William rests. In the basement of the Bradley building at 53 Hamilton St. Goderich, there is a vault that contains his memorial stone. It lies as part of the building, protected from the elements, no longer marking his place, but giving us a chance to see it for many years to come.

After William's death, John and his wife Elizabeth continued along the path that he had started down. After many years of providing a light along the road to many tired and weary traveller, they chose to expand their influence.

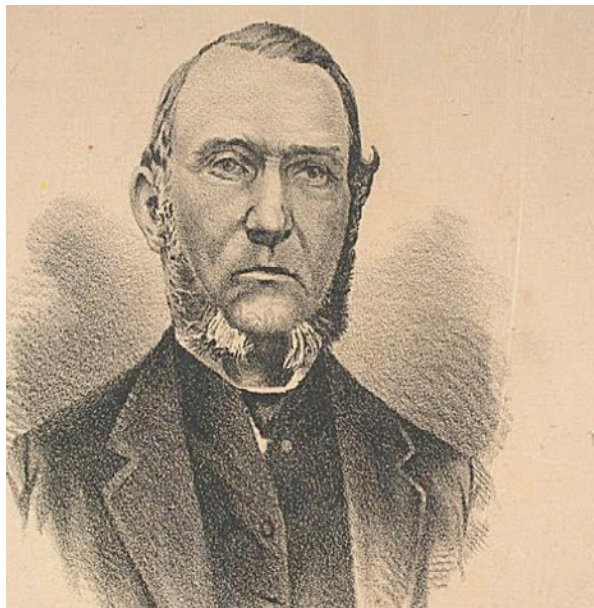
By 1857, they had erected a new commercial hotel; it was marvelous to see all their hard work pay off, but it was also a huge investment that required hours of hard work to ensure they maintained the reputation they had built. This was not that difficult as John and Elizabeth had many friends and were involved in the community in many ways.

Sources say their personal presence at the hotel made it feel like home. They were always inviting and welcoming, making you feel relaxed and providing great conversation to a stranger or a friend.

For John's 50th birthday, the town celebrated. An article located in the *Perth County Herald* published the 3rd of February 1864 details the events as follows:

THE OLDEST MAN LIVING – The Perth Reformer

says the Bi-Centenary birthday of John Hicks, Esq., of Mitchell, was celebrated last week. We are well acquainted with Mr. Hicks but were ignorant of his having entered of his two hundred and first year, till we learned it from the Reformer." *Clearly making fun of another paper that referred to John's 50th birthday as a bi-centenary, thus making him the "oldest living man". The article continues to describe the evenings events.* "OYSTER SUPPER – On Monday



John Hicks, first settler in Mitchell

last, about fifty of our most prominent citizens met at the "Commercial" to do honour to the fiftieth anniversary of our oldest settler and most respected citizen – Lieut. Col. Hicks, Proprietor, of the "Commercial Hotel" – by partaking of an Oyster Supper, which was gratuitously served up by the "guest of the evening".

The article elaborates about how the plates are replaced by glasses and drink flows freely. Entertainment included toasts, speeches and songs. James Hill, toasted John and celebrated the friendship and good times he had had with one of the first settlers of the area. Knowing each other for at least 20 years, he remarked that he has always found him ready to assist the needy. He ended his toast by closing with "No man deserves greater praise for the strides that Mitchell has made than Mr. Hicks." If only that night could have lasted forever.

Sometimes life has a way of pushing back, of taking what it wants and not caring how much you have given to others. Eight years after the Oyster Supper, *The Commercial* burned to the ground. Less than seven days later, at the age of 58, John Hicks

passed from stomach cancer. The Hicks legacy was in ruins and all its weight was now solely on the shoulders of the eldest son.

At just 29 years of age, young John Thomas Hicks faced to facts and realized it was solely up to him to carry on the dreams his grandfather and father had established. But first he had to say goodbye to the man the entire village admired.

John Hicks was laid to rest in the village he had helped establish. Mitchell was the community where he fed and lodged so many exhausted travelers. Here he built two hotels and the reputation of a determined businessman and trusted friend. Mitchell was where he should stay. John Thomas (J.T.) selected the Trinity Anglican Cemetery as the location to inter his father and John still rests there today.

With the ashes of the Commercial still fresh, it was time for J.T. to take his turn. Mitchell had grown from a scattering of hopeful settlers into a true village and the loss of the old tavern made room for something grander. The hotel could not be forgotten, it was a vital part of the community, a legacy of their family. To honour his father, it must be rebuilt, bigger and better than ever.

By 1874, a new structure rose on Main Street, the building that would come to be known as the *Hicks House Hotel*. It wasn't just a replacement; it was a sign that the settlement had found its footing. Where the first tavern had been a lifeline in the wilderness, the new hotel became a landmark.

facade stretching confidently along the street. Its windows caught the morning sun. Its doors opened onto a lobby that must have smelled of wood polish, pipe smoke, and the faint sweetness of whatever was simmering in the kitchen. John Thomas and his wife were excellent hosts and descended from a long line of hospitality providers.



The Hicks family home

In the year 1876, they built their beautiful home that remains to this day. Believed to be the oldest surviving house in Mitchell, it's called DUNELG - perhaps in homage to his Scottish roots where Dunelg means *Beauty*

of the Hills.

The family legacy continued for another 10 years,

Stratford-Perth Archives, Campbell Family Photograph Collection



as the Hicks dream etched itself in the beams. Even after the family themselves stepped back from its daily running, you could feel their memories soaked into the wood, like the layers of stain. In 1883, the hotel passed into the hands of George Davidson, thus ending the Hick's ownership of this historic building.



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Library Program News

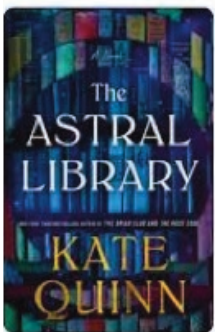
Spring has arrived, and with the warm weather and clear roads the chance to get out and explore Southwestern Ontario! Did you know about the library's community passes? If you're eager to put down your books (if that's possible!) and head outside after a seemingly endless winter, stop by the library to borrow one of our passes for Perth County and the surrounding area.

For an outdoor adventure, we have passes for Ontario Parks, Upper Thames River Parks, Lower Thames Conservation Areas, and the West Perth Lions Pool. If you're looking for a more cultural experience, we have passes for the Stratford Perth Museum, the Stratford Festival Treasures Tour: Costume Warehouse, Region of Waterloo Museums, and London Children's Museum. For sports fans, check out the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum Pass or the Mitchell Golf Club Pass.

We are able to offer these passes through generous collaborations with our community partners, expanding the scope of library materials in a wonderful way! Give us a call or stop by to learn more about our passes, our programs, or for suggestions for your next read!

What I'm currently reading:

The Astral Library by: Kate Quinn



Alix Watson is desperate for an escape from her disappointing and increasingly precarious existence when she finds herself in the Astral Library, a library that allows its patrons to live inside their favourite novels. But the library is under attack, and Alix will have to navigate the worlds of her favourite books to save it.

The Heronry Distribution

Our distribution locations are always expanding! Many of our partners will have a sticker in their window, letting you know that you can pick up your free copy of *the Heronry* directly from them! If a distribution location is out of copies, please text Amelia at: 519-955-3210 so we can deliver some as soon as possible! You can also find us online at theheronry.ca and wpheronry.substack.com

- Mitchell Office Pro
- Wieterson's Country Store
- West Perth Public Library
- Stratford Perth Museum
- Edward Jones Financial
- Van Bakel Homestead Meats
- Goettler of Dublin
- Mitchell Pottery Studio
- Dublin's Family Restaurant
- Home Town Variety
- Cartwright Chiropractic
- Deep Roots Collective
- Koertland Auto Care
- McDonald's Independent
- Black Donnelly's Brewing Co
- Hoegy's Farm Supply Ltd
- West Perth Village
- The Sugar Maple
- Eidt's BMR Express
- Culligan's Real Estate
- Dental Hygiene Clinic
- JMS Auto
- Dublin Mercantile
- YNCU
- Monkton Diner
- Deck Dentistry
- Farm to Family
- 101 Bar and Grill
- Kirkton Market
- Ontario Gun Shop

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Register via: westperth.recdesk.com

Community Resources

Municipality of West Perth

Phone: 519-348-8429
westperth.com

Emergency Services

Perth County OPP

132 St George St. Mitchell, ON N0K 1N0
Administration: 519-348-9700
Emergency Services: 9-1-1
Non-Emergency Services: 1-888-310-1122

West Perth Fire Hall

170 Wellington St, Mitchell, ON N0K 1N0
Non-Emergency Services: 519-348-9031
Fire Safety Question: 519 595 2800 Dial 4

Local Hospitals

Stratford General Hospital

Stratford, ON
Phone: 519-272-8210 Website: www.hpha.ca

Seaforth Community Hospital

Seaforth, ON
Phone: 519-527-8404 Website: www.hpha.ca

St. Marys Memorial Hospital

St. Marys, ON
Phone: 519-284-1332 Website: www.hpha.ca

General Health Information

Huron Perth Public Health

Address: Stratford ON
Hours of Operation: Mon - Fri: 8:30 am - 4:30 pm
Toll-free: 1-888-221-2133
www.hpha.ca

Health Care Connect

A free program connecting Ontarians without a healthcare provider to providers accepting new patients.
Phone: 1-800-445-1822

Health811

Immediate health advice 24/7 from registered nurses.
Phone: 1-866-797-0007

Unattached Care Clinics

Non-Emergency Care for individuals who are without a family doctor

Stratford Family Health Team:

Phone: 226-766-0510

Bluewater Area Family Health Team,

**Exeter Medical Clinic,
Maitland Valley Medical Centre**
Phone: 519-870-9034

Listowel-Wingham and Area

Family Health Team: Phone: 519-291-4511

Mental Health Supports

Ontario Structured Psychotherapy

Provides support for Ontarians age eighteen and over with depression, anxiety, or related symptoms.
Phone: 1-833-944-9966

Mitchell & Area Community Outreach

Providing supports to enable disabled or elderly people to continue living independently
Phone: 519-348-9765

City of Stratford: Social Services Department

Phone: 519-271-3773 ext. 200

211

A helpline that easily connects people to the social services, programs and community supports they need.
Call or Text: 2-1-1
www.211ontario.ca

United Way, Stratford, ON

519-271-7730 / Toll-Free: 877-818-886
www.perthhuron.unitedway.ca

Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline

Phone: 1-833-900-1010

www.canadianhumantraffickinghotline.ca

Farmer Wellness Initiative

24-hour support for farmers and their family members.

Phone: 1-866-267-6255

www.farmerwellnessinitiative.ca

Good2Talk

Free, confidential support services for post-secondary students in Ontario.

Phone: 1-866-925-5454

Text 'GOOD2TALKON' to 686868

www.good2talk.ca

Huron Perth Helpline and Crisis Response Team

Phone: 1-888-829-7484

www.hpha.ca/mentalhealth

Kids Help Phone

Phone: 1-800-668-6868

Text 'CONNECT' to 686868

www.kidshelpphone.ca

One Stop Talk

Phone: 1-855-416-8255

www.onestoptalk.ca

Optimism Place

24/7 Support Line: 519-271-5550

Toll-Free: 1-800-265-8598

After-hours: 519-272-2294

www.optimismplace.com

Counseling Services

Alcoholics Anonymous

If you want to drink, that's your business, if you want to stop, that's ours.

1-800-706-9833

Meeting locations found at web@aad4.org

Alateen

Support for teenagers with alcoholic adults

Online meetings every Wednesday on Zoom

HopePrevailsAlteen@gmail.com

Huron Perth Centre

Accredited community-based mental health centre for children and youth.

Stratford Office: 519-273-3373 ext. 2221

www.hpcentre.on.ca

Medavie Health Services

Mobile mental health program offering immediate help and referrals for people dealing with mental illness.

Phone: 1-877-872-6350

Email: ontariommh@medaviewhs.com

Family Services Perth Huron

FSPH provides individualized counseling, support services, advocacy, education and referrals.

Phone: 519-273-1020 / Toll-free: 1-800-268-0903

www.familyservicesperth-huron.ca

Shelterlink

Phone: 519-272-2294

Email: info@shelterlink.org

www.shelterlink.org

Victim Services

Phone: 519-600-4108

www.victimserviceshuronperth.ca

Canadian Mental Health Association

(CMHA) Huron-Perth

Phone: 519-271-6819

Toll-free: 1-888-261-9350

www.cmhahuronperth.com

Senior Services

Alzheimer's Society Huron-Perth

Phone: 519-271-1910

www.alzheimer.ca/huronperth

Mitchell and Area Community Outreach

Phone: 519-348-9765

Email: maco@ritzlutheranvilla.com

One Care

Phone: 1-877-502-8277

www.onecaresupport.ca

West Perth Village

Phone: 519-348-8612

www.westperthvillage.ca

Local Food Banks

Mitchell Food Bank

80 Rowland St, Mitchell ON (Upper Thames
Missionary Church building)
Phone: 519-703-4880
Email: mitchellcfs@salvationarmy.ca
Hours: Fridays: 9:30am - 4:30pm
Appointments preferred

Monkton Food Bank

Delivery Only - Independently Run
Phone: 1-780-222-5050
Email: tiggerdigrr@gmail.com

St. Mary's Food Bank

Phone: 519-284-2760
Email: st.marys@salvationarmy.ca
220 Queen St. E, St. Marys, ON

Stratford Food Bank

Phone: 519-271-2950
Email: stratfordcfs@salvationarmy.ca
230 Lightbourne Ave, Stratford, ON



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NOTICE OF NOMINATION FOR OFFICE

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS ACT, 1996

**The 2026 Municipal and School Board
Election in West Perth will be open as of
May 1st, 2026, for nominations for the
following positions:**

Municipal Positions:

- Mayor (1)
- Deputy Mayor (1)
- Councillors (9) divided into wards:
 - Fullarton (2)
 - Hibbert (2)
 - Logan (2)
 - Mitchell (3)

Nomination Details:

Submit Nomination **Form 1** in person or
through an agent from
May 1 to August 20, 2026, during business
hours 8:30 am - 4:30 pm, and on August 21
from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Include Endorsements **Form 2** with at least
25 signatures and a filing fee:

\$200 for Mayor

\$100 for other offices

Withdrawal deadline: August 21 at 2:00 p.m.

If insufficient candidates are nominated,
nominations reopen
on August 26, 2026.

School Board Positions:

- Avon Maitland District School Board (1)
- Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board
(1)
- Conseil Scolaire Viamonde (1)
- Conseil Scolaire Catholique Providence (1)

**If there are more certified candidates
than positions, an election will be held
via telephone/internet from October 19
to October 26, 2026.**

For further information, visit
www.westperth.com

Dated April 22, 2026.

James Hutson,

Municipal Clerk / Returning Officer
160 Wellington Street, P.O. Box 609
Mitchell, ON N0K 1N0

Tel: 519-348-8429 ext. 224



The Avon Theatre Ghost

The Avon Theatre, located at 99 Downie Street in Stratford, is one of Perth County's iconic buildings. Built by Albert Brandenberger in 1900, it was originally known as Theatre Albert. The Stratford Festival began renting the building in 1956 and as the Festival expanded, they purchased the building a couple years later and have been using it ever since.

For over a century, a wide variety of performances have taken place at the Avon Theatre – from operas to vaudeville shows to movies and live theatre – the building has seen it all. And if the stories are to be believed, the theatre is also home to its fair share of ghosts!

After an evening performance a few years ago, a custodian named Jim was cleaning up and getting the theatre ready for the next day's performances when he noticed a little girl sitting on the stage. She looked lost, so Jim decided to approach her to see if he could help. He called out to the girl and asked her if she needed help finding the exit, but the little girl did not reply. Jim walked up closer to the stage and continued calling out to the girl, but she didn't answer him. Jim finally got up to the stage when suddenly, the little girl vanished. She disappeared right before his very eyes. Jim wasn't much of a believer in ghosts and didn't think too much more about the incident. He shrugged it off and thought that perhaps the stagehands or the actors were playing tricks on him. It was the Stratford Festival after all.

A couple of weeks later, Jim once again saw the little girl. It was a late-night show and he was attending to his duties when the girl appeared on the stage. This time however, two of Jim's coworkers were present and they confirmed what Jim saw: they also saw the little girl. The three men approached the stage and called out to her. They asked if she needed help. Was she lost? Did she need help finding her parents? But once again, the little girl did not respond. The men walked towards the stage and suddenly the little girl vanished right

before their very eyes. All three men described the girl in the same way – she was about 10 or 11 years old, she wore a long flowing old-fashioned gown, and a hat adorned with flowers sat upon her head.

Over the years, other employees at the Festival have recounted their encounters with the ghost of the little girl. They say that she is not a sinister spirit but that she can be mischievous. Sometimes she nudges them as they are working at the concession stand; other times, they feel an unexplained breeze as they're walking down the stairs. No one is sure who the little girl might be – perhaps she is a long-lost soul from one of the many theatre troops that graced the stage of the Avon over the years. Or maybe she lived in the house that used to be on the site of the Avon Theatre before it was built.

The little girl at the Avon Theatre is just one of the spirits associated with the building and she is just one of the many spirits associated with Stratford. There are many haunted stories in Stratford's past just waiting to be explored.

Lauri Leduc holds a Master of Arts degree in Public History from the University of Western Ontario. She has a passion for local history and she loves telling stories about our past. Lauri grew up in Monkton and attended MDHS. She operates Stratford Walking Tours where she leads guests on guided (and ghostly!) tours of the downtown. Details about Stratford Walking Tours and tickets for her upcoming ghost walks in Stratford and St. Marys can be found at: stratfordwalkingtours.ca



Stop V.A.W. Hosting Event

The Stop Violence Against Women Coordinating Committee of Perth County is proud to host a free community learning event, *Tackling Sports Culture Together*, featuring award-winning journalist and TSN senior sports correspondent Rick Westhead, as part of our Sexual Violence Prevention Month campaign. The event takes place on Tuesday May 5th from 6:30 to 8:30pm in the Community Hall at the Burnside Agriplex (357 McCarthy Road, Stratford).

This event brings together Westhead's landmark investigative reporting with an urgent and timely discussion about what respectful, accountable sports culture can and should look like for players, parents, coaches, and communities. An in-depth conversation with Westhead will be followed by a panel discussion with local community advocates who work with sports-involved youth, and an audience Q&A.

In his book, *We Breed Lions: Confronting Canada's Troubled Hockey Culture*, Rick Westhead delivers a hard-hitting look at hockey's moment of reckoning in Canada, exploring how hockey has been shaken in recent years by court cases involving sexual assault and disturbing incidents of hazing and abuse. He gives voice to those impacted, while drawing attention to the systems and individuals willing to sacrifice player and community well-being for the sake of the game. Westhead also offers hope by highlighting people and organizations committed to educating players on consent and putting an end to hazing.

The event will also include a presentation from Interval House of Hamilton on Coaching Boys Into Men (CBIM), an evidence-based program that aims to prevent sexual violence by supporting coaches in building positive, safe sports cultures. The program trains and motivates sports coaches to have meaningful conversations with male athletes about healthy relationships, consent, mental health, peer pressure, and challenging attitudes and behaviours

that can contribute to violence. Representatives from StopVAW community service organizations will be on hand to offer support and information.

The event is proudly sponsored by the Stratford Warriors, Stratford Municipal Golf Course, Optimism Place Women's Shelter and Support Services and Stratford, St. Marys, North Perth, West Perth, Perth East, Perth South Community Safety and Well-Being Plan.

We hope everyone involved in youth sports will join us for this powerful event that will shine a light on persistent issues within sports culture and spark a conversation about how we can move together from awareness to lasting change.

*For media inquiries and event details, please contact:
Jen Olenewa, PhD
Manager of Public Education, Optimism Place
jen@optimismplace.com | www.stopvaw.ca*

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The Need to Create

People who don't paint always say, "I could never do what you do!" but I wonder, why not? I understand their reluctance and lack of confidence to try something new or challenging. I myself have failed miserably in dance - despite taking lessons!

Still, I maintain that painting is like most anything else, it is for the most part, a learned experience. While we are not all Lawren Harris, we can all learn to paint something that we enjoy. And on that note, I have to insert my benchmark philosophy - "It isn't the final product that is most important, it is the process." For me, any time spent painting is time well spent.

With this in mind, I would like to write some thoughts each month on painting, specifically painting as a way to spend time in an enjoyable fashion.

To punctuate the idea that painting is a process, I would like to direct anyone who is interested to my facebook page where you can view many paintings in their step-by-step progression. This may be interesting to would-be painters, as it illustrates that there are mistakes and failures in the process. It is not always a linear progression.

As a starting point, let's have a look at the setup required to get started. I'll provide some suggestions on what tools and supplies you might need and other little things that may help you get started.

You don't need a professional setup, nor all the bells and whistles, but you should get some basic supplies that can get you rolling. These include acrylic paints, brushes, canvas, water containers, rags, an easel and a place to work.

I highly recommend that you get the best paints, brushes and canvases that you can afford. In the past, I have taught watercolour as an artist in residence for Killarney and McGregor Point Provincial Parks. I was fortunate that the parks allowed me to buy decent watercolour kits and

good paper for the students. With decent materials there is a far better chance of success. So please, stay clear of dollar store supplies.

As a starting point, (and for now forgetting about supplies and so on), let's focus on the "why". Why do we need to create and why should we share the process? This question is particularly aimed at those of us who are retired, but it can also be relevant for the young. Creating is like reading. It engages the mind, it focuses your thoughts and can, at least temporarily, help you forget cares and concerns from the outside world. Creating is also an expression of one's personality and as such is good for mental health.

But creating anything involves some risk. We risk failure. However, I believe that failure is the pathway to success! We have to start somewhere and we all need to exercise our brains by learning. Making bad paintings is the expected outcome, at least for a while. The more attempts you make, the better you will get and the more enjoyable it will become. Again, it is time well spent.

During your creative journey it is important to avoid isolation. Sharing what you do helps you to articulate what you see as your strengths and weaknesses and with others you will learn together. You and everyone you encounter will contribute to the learning process. As an instructor I quickly learned that I am not the purveyor of knowledge. I am merely the facilitator. The real knowledge comes from everyone in the group. So, grab some paint and brushes and take the plunge! You will not regret it.

I am considering offering a few outdoor plein air sessions using acrylic, watercolour and gouche that interested individuals can join.

*Please email me if you are interested.
mrcanoehed@icloud.com*



Garden Questions

Our first article about the West Perth Gardens has raised some very good questions about how we function and what guidelines we have for the community and our volunteers. The Gardens are a community effort. No one owns them, and besides Councillor Fournier and our Chairperson Logan Brinn, no one is required to do anything. Any assistance is welcome, but we make no demands.

Here are answers to some of the most frequently asked questions:

Weeding: if you see weeds in the garden, feel free to pull them or not. Entirely up to you. If you do decide to weed, please make sure that you correctly identify the weeds. It would be unfortunate to have sprouting food plants pulled by mistake. If you don't feel like weeding, that's fine. I don't know about the rest of you, but weeding for a long time makes my back hurt.

Who is the food for/where does the food go? The food is for whoever wants it, and for whoever needs it. The Gardens are a small step in dealing with food insecurity in West Perth, and free vegetables can be the difference between being able to have a healthy diet or not. Our only request is that you don't take everything. If there is only one tomato, take the tomato. If there are one hundred tomatoes, don't take one hundred tomatoes.

Garden problems, and who to contact: we can be contacted through our webpage at westperthgardens.ca, or our Facebook page at West Perth Gardens. If it feels urgent, text Councillor Fournier at 519 691 5645. That's me, and I'll try to help as fast as I can.

Produce that needs harvesting: feel free to harvest it. We will be providing harvest hutches so that someone can stop by the gardens and get what they want very easily. If you want to harvest some extra to give to a friend, please do so.

Planting your own seeds: you certainly can, but we'd appreciate it if you contacted us first, so we can coordinate where you will be planting. We have quite a lot of space, but if needed we will make another garden bed or three. If there are specific crops you would like to have available, let us know and we will do our best.

Can you have your own garden planter/bed? If you want a planter or garden bed for yourself, we can arrange that – but we can't stop someone from taking the produce. If you want to take responsibility for a specific bed or planter, that's great – but the whole garden is for the whole community. No ownership, just shared effort and shared results. If you are specifically interested in having your own just for you space, we are working on making that available, but it is going to take us a while to achieve. We will have a petition form on our website that you can sign, and once we have enough signatures, we can start making that happen.

Sponsoring the garden, or donating plants yes please. Plants can be dropped off at the Municipal Office, and if you want to make a donation to sponsor the gardens, contact us through the website or Facebook page. If you fill a planter, and want your name on it, not a problem. Let us know, we will make it happen.

Our Mascot: Sir Digs-a-lot is the resident groundhog at the Husky Flats, and the official protector and symbol of the Gardens. Be respectful, he's a Knight.

Volunteering: helping with the gardens does count towards volunteer hours, and we would be thrilled to have younger people helping us out. They have knees that work, and energy we can use.

In conclusion, we want to thank you for your interest. Honestly, really thank you. We started this with \$80 and a shovel, four years ago. Having the community take the project as their own was always our dream, and we can help more people with more people helping.



AI: The Social Impact

Welcome to the fourth installment of the Heronry's five-part series on the topic of AI. So far, we have discussed what AI is, the environmental cost, and the flawed business model. In this month's edition, we are going to talk about the social impact. I'll be real with you: this one was the hardest to keep around 500 words.

The social impact of AI is somehow both the easiest to explain and the hardest to quantify. In part, this is because we're still peer reviewing the studies about it. Another aspect is that social ramifications are complex and multi-faceted, two things that are not exactly suited to political discussions. No matter how you look at it, the evidence that is starting to emerge is pretty stark: generative AI is causing cognitive decline, and relies heavily on exploitation.

In 2005, Sudoku became popular in North America. Coincidentally, this was also when Baby Boomers were getting to the age where dementia was less an eventual threat and more a clear and present danger. While the brain itself is not a muscle, you can treat it as one, and the more you practice thinking, the better at it you get. Sudoku, and other puzzle activities like it, are how adults can help maintain their neural pathways as they age. But what about how children form those neural pathways in the first place?

It would be extremely convenient to say that kids use AI because they're lazy and always seeking the easiest possible way to do work, but the inconvenient truth is that AI is being forced into our education system (because the tech companies lobby the government to do it). In allowing this, we are all but ensuring that students will graduate from university, not just unable to write, but unable to think.

If the first social cost of AI is thinking, the second is dignity. Companies chasing their own bottom lines have fired full-time employees in favour of using AI to do the job. Unfortunately, AI can't actually do the job, so those same companies hire freelancers

to check the AI's work (commonly referred to as "slop"). Freelancers receive inferior pay and benefits, and lacking a steady income makes it hard to get approved for things like mortgages. And that's if they're in North America. It's easier to exploit workers in the Global South, and tech companies frequently jump at the opportunity to do so. Shareholders might be making more profit, but when you read the fine print, you realize that the only place they're saving money is payroll.

And what does this give us? Kids who can't think critically. Exploited workers around the world. A population more and more likely to accept the lowest possible effort from their government, because it's all we've been trained to expect. Sam Altman (CEO of OpenAI) wants to sell us intelligence like it's a utility*, which sounds ridiculous, except he's entirely serious.

Fortunately, we can fight back. We can lobby all levels of government to keep generative AI out of schools (at minimum; generative AI is also bad at a lot of other things+). We can avoid companies that rely on generative AI and support ones that don't. We can do sudoku. We can ask questions and we can look for real answers (not AI generated ones). We can write our own emails. We can pay people fairly. We can be human, as far from "artificial" as it's possible to be.

*<https://www.businessinsider.com/sam-altman-ai-utility-electricity-water-openai-2026-3>
+<https://macleans.ca/society/canadian-immigration-has-an-ai-problem/>



Migrating Spring Birds

Spring is in the air and the Mitchell West Perth Wetlands are just the place to witness it! So many different migrates are arriving and leaving from day to day. The Tundra Swans came and went and what a joy it was to see them there. Probably close to three hundred were present one day when I went. A sure sign of spring migration!



Tundra Swans



A fantastic showing of "fancy ducks"

We also have every kind of duck imaginable in our area: Northern Shovelers, Redheads, American Wigeons, Ring Necked Ducks, Buffleheads, American Coots, Horned Grebes and the list goes on and on. The West Perth Wetlands are a great place for a family walk and a fantastic opportunity to learn about birds.



YOUR MESSAGE HERE!

Submit your birth announcements, birthday greetings, anniversary celebrations, or special events to *the Heronry* today!

Email us for pricing details!
@wp.heronry@gmail.com

Submissions are due by the 15th of each month!



Local Poets

Pyramid of Being

by David Kemp

I am great
At nothing.
Good at a few things
Decent at a bunch more
Getting by with others' help at many
Bad at far more than stars I can count
Totally inept at almost
everything under the sun
But I'm having a blast



A Life of Service

For me, happiness in life comes from service. I believe the best way to serve God is by serving others and that the most effective way to do that is by working together in groups. Service clubs like Rotary provide a structured way to do exactly that.

I joined the Rotary Club of Mitchell in 2014 after learning about its “Don’t Meth With Us” program. At the time this initiative involved teams of Rotarians who would visit Grade 5 classrooms across Perth and Huron counties to talk with students about making good decisions. Through interactive, half hour sessions, we encouraged children to think about everyday choices and how those choices shape their futures. We emphasized that good decisions move us closer to our goals, while bad decisions can hold us back. One of the most important messages was the need to avoid methamphetamine, a highly addictive drug that can devastate lives, and the worst choice a person can make.

This program resonated deeply with me because I had known two boys from my Sunday School class who had become addicted to meth. Watching the damage it caused to them and their families was heartbreaking. I wanted to help reduce that risk for other young people. Speaking to students as “grandparent-aged” adults rather than authority figures helped create an atmosphere of trust and openness, and the children were very receptive. Although the subject was serious, the sessions were positive, hopeful, and often joyful.

For over six years, I served as a member of the “Don’t Meth With Us” team and was consistently impressed by the dedication of my fellow Rotarians. They volunteered week after week during the school year. Unfortunately, increasing restrictions on school access eventually forced the program to end, but its impact remains meaningful to those who participated, including the kids we spoke to.

As my involvement with Rotary grew, I came to understand that Rotary is more than just a service club—it is a way of life. Rotarians are guided by the motto “Service Above Self” and by “The Four Way Test”, which asks whether what we think, say, or do is truthful, fair, builds goodwill, and is beneficial to all concerned. These values strongly align with my own beliefs.



I also learned that Rotary is a global movement. With over a million members involved in tens of thousands of clubs worldwide it remains focused on friendship, community, and effective service, at the local level. I found great satisfaction in working alongside people from diverse backgrounds who share a commitment to making their community better.

In the end, my experience with the Rotary Club of Mitchell has confirmed something I have long believed: happiness is not something we consume, but a byproduct of helping others. Service benefits the community, but it also enriches the lives of those who give it. That is the true gift of Rotary, and of all the service clubs.

Rotary is involved in all sorts of community projects that are meant to benefit the local residents. Anyone who is interested is welcome to join us at a meeting in the basement of Deck Dentistry. We meet most Tuesday mornings at 7:15am and we’re usually done about an hour later. Come find out what we’re all about!

If you’re part of a local service club in West Perth, please consider emailing us with your story about it! wp.heronry@gmail.com

Previous Issue Puzzle Answers

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

Raising Support

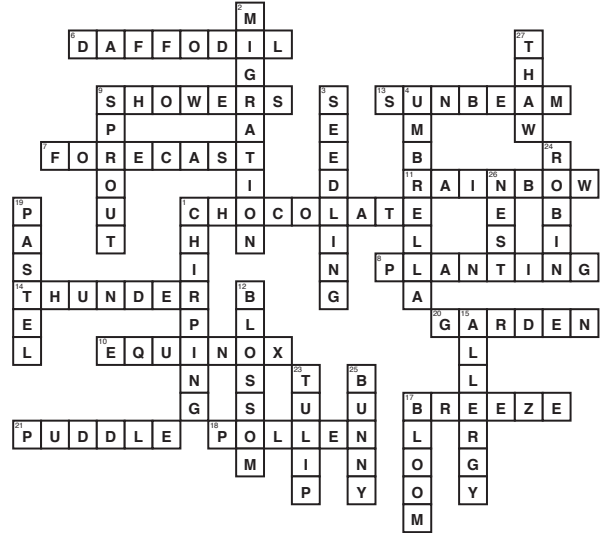
CONTRIBUTE TO THE HERONRY

Here are some ways you can help!

- **Submit your art, poetry, and stories!** We're here to share the good things that are all around us but it's much easier when we have a bank of submitted content to choose from! Encourage your friends, family, and neighbours to submit their good things too!
- **Talk about our publication!** Whether discussing it with your friends and family, sharing and commenting on our social media posts, forwarding emailed articles, or tagging us in selfies of you holding up the magazine when you're on vacation - every part helps!
- **Encourage Local Sponsorship.** Suggest that businesses you work at or frequent advertise in the Heronry and, more importantly, thank the ones that do advertise with us for supporting this initiative!
 - **Take out an advertisement or write a sponsored column.** If you're a business owner or someone who has a side-hustle,

Crossword Answers:

The corrected numbers/clues for April's Crossword can be found on our facebook page! Sorry for the technology glitch!



Logic Puzzle Answers:

- Ben — 9:00 — Honey — Coffee
- Anna — 9:30 — Bread — Lemonade
- Ethan — 10:00 — Jam — Water
- David — 10:30 — Maple Syrup — Hot Chocolate
- Carla — 11:00 — Tulips — Tea

you can contribute to good things in your community by becoming a regular submitter of content or advertisements. Our readership is constantly growing and residents love to see local businesses celebrating the good things and people found in West Perth.

- Donate directly to *the Heronry*! We've enabled donations on our online substack (scan the QR code to be taken to our donation page), but like all online payment services, a cut of the substack payments goes to the service provider. The best way to donate will be to send or bring your donations directly to Mitchell Office Pro. We're looking into ways to represent individual sponsors and welcome your ideas! (T-Shirts anyone?)



We want to thank every person who has called or written to let us know how much they enjoy *the Heronry*! Your support is so encouraging and we appreciate every one of you!



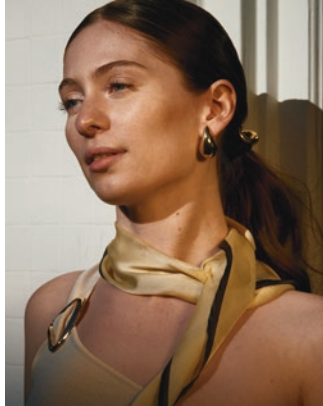
Portrait Photographer

I like to say I am a people person and a people photographer! I was raised in Mitchell and am now focusing on my work in Perth County and Southern Ontario.

My passion for photography comes from a place of loving to document; I loved scrap-booking as a young child, enjoying memorializing moments of life. I loved taking photos with the small digital cameras my parents owned or using my iPod once I had one. I bought myself my first DSLR camera at 15 after realizing how much I indulged in photos. I quickly realized how much I truly enjoyed it. Not long after purchasing the camera, I found my love of portraiture.

From my perspective, portraiture is a unique experience of connecting and creating a photograph that is representative of both my creative eye and of the person I am photographing. It is important to me to create imagery that resonates with both myself and the sitter because portraiture is a collaborative effort.

While my photography and art have many facets now, I consider creative portraiture to be the core of my work. A deep appreciation for cinematography and narrative drives and inspires my imagery. I like to create from real moments and familiar experiences, turning it into imagery that has feeling and emotion behind it. I find I unintentionally look for a sense of odd, different, or unpredictable, which results in imagery that people often describe as dreamy or surreal. This often comes across in unique crops, often a part of my editing process, and



calculated lighting. Light is everything. When it comes to photography, knowing how to use and manipulate light, whether it is the sun, a lamp or a flash, is one of the most powerful skills you can have.

When I approach photographing people, from portraiture to events to street photography, I am always looking for a way to present the person, or peoples, in a way that conveys the narrative and emotion of the moment.

I hope you enjoy viewing my work. My creation is as much for me as it is my attempt to give back to the world which inspires me.

If you have an artistic hobby that you'd like to share with the community, please reach out to wp.heronry@gmail.com with some photos and tell us about it!





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