

FREE

A WEST PERTH PUBLICATION

the Heronry

Issue Includes

Ted & Yvette Schinbein: Music & Adventure

Ordinary Extraordinary People

1952 Catamaran Adventure

The Way it used to be

The Stacy Legacy

Our History

Country Dreaming

County Business Stories

Vol. 3

February 2026

Photo submitted by Cheryl Prouse



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ABOUT THE FOUNDERS

A graphic designer by trade, Christina tB Hotz is our designer and editor. She and her family have lived in Mitchell since July of 2016. She has a love for small towns and a passion for community building. You can often find her helping out at the local pottery studio, or working outside her century home as she tries to wrangle her gardens into shape.

Amelia McFarlane and her daughter are relatively new to West Perth, but since moving to Mitchell in 2023 she's been itching to get connected in the community. In her role as The Heronry's Business Manager, and Social Media Guru, she ensures we stay organized and that people get informed about our publication! In her spare time she plays the bagpipes and loves to share her music at special events.

Bert Vorstenbosch Jr has the super official sounding job title of "General Hype Guy." He's been determinedly outspoken about West Perth's need for a community publication, and got so tired of waiting for someone else to do it that he decided he would do it himself. As the owner of several printing companies, Bert is in charge of distribution and printing, and his business, Mitchell Office Pro, is our primary sponsor.

Special thanks to:

Yvette Schinbein, Clare French, Jonathan, Ryder, & Bella Borho, Christopher Creighton, Danny Bree, Taylor Eisler, Marin Kirk, Cheryl Prouse, Brian Hanny, Dr Carolyn Deck, Visnja Cuturic, Tiffany Harbinson, Angie Moore, E.K. Johnston, Cathy Hutson, Jennifer Bar, Pam Morgan, Greg Judge, Michelle Brenneman

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Love and Other Things

What would a February Issue be without collection of love stories? Well, we tried? Turns out the people of West Perth are rather shy! Here we thought that making sure people could submit love of all types would make it less of a scary proposition! Alas, it seems that our reputation has not yet been built enough to warrant that level of trust.

No matter. Another February will come! In the meantime, our feature story hopefully makes up for the lack. Ted and Yvette's story is no Disney fairytale. Their story is a real one. It has triumphs and failures, romance and sadness, and it's messy - just like life.

Yvette was generous enough to let me take Ted's memoirs home with me for a few weeks, which allowed me to do an extra deep dive into the stories that she also told me. This issue features several examples of his writing.

Having had the privilege of working with my grandmother to write and publish her own book of memoirs, it was an honour to be able to read through and source content from Ted's. I am hopeful that with enough prodding, someone in the Schinbein family will find the time and the inclination to source the digital file that matches the binder I was loaned, so that Ted's writing can officially be published. *(Please feel free to gently harass them.)*

In that binder I was loaned, interspersed with songs written by Ted and others, the stories and photographs that Ted shares in "Songs from my Lone Ranger Guitar" paint a picture of a charismatic couple fought for their relationship and who didn't shy away from strangers, no matter how they looked or what their beliefs were.

People might argue that it's not as easy these days to build friendships and community the way that Ted and Yvette did. I would disagree. Due to their "rebellious" interests, the Schinbeins were never the most popular among the regular folk of West Perth.

Despite that, or maybe because of it, they've done their best to "welcome

the stranger" and make music with whoever showed up on their path. This, in my opinion, is the fundamental tenant of building community. You've got to welcome people as they are and figure out what kind of music you have in common.

It can be intimidating and even scary, to invite someone into your life. But, while yes, it comes with risks, it is so incredible to see how communities can grow when someone takes that first step of welcoming the new person.

The Heronry's group of writers and contributors is growing. We've had a few hiccups here and there, and I'm sure some of us will butt heads occasionally, but I can't wait to see what this community space becomes. Thanks for coming along for the ride!

Distribution Locations

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!

- Mitchell Office Pro
- West Perth Village
- Wieterson's Country Store
- West Perth Public Library
- Stratford Perth Museum
- Goettler of Dublin
- Dublin Mercantile
- Mitchell Pottery Studio
- Dublin's Family Restaurant
- Wieterson's Country Store
- Cartwright Chiropractic
- Ontario Gun Shop
- Deep Roots Collective
- Koertland Auto Care
- McDonald's Valu-Mart
- The Sugar Maple
- Eidt's BMR Express



- JMS Auto
- YNCU
- Monkton Diner
- Deck Dentistry
- Farm to Family
- 101 Bar and Grill
- Kirkton Market

Amelia's Piping her own Tune

In 2009, when I was growing up in Goderich, my mom gave me a choice: cadets or the local bagpipe band, *The Celtic Blue Highlanders*. I tried cadets for a weekend retreat which was more than enough time to know it wasn't for me. But I thought bagpipes were stupid. Loud. Embarrassing. Kind of ridiculous, honestly. My mom insisted. I didn't understand her reasoning at the time. Now I do. She wanted me busy as I moved into high school. She wanted me focused.

She wanted me out of trouble. She was right. Learning the bagpipes is rough. At first, it sounds like a bag of angry geese fighting a vacuum cleaner. It's uncomfortable, humbling, and a little (or a lot) embarrassing. But then you learn how to tune them. You learn control. And suddenly, that noise turns into something calming and beautiful. A lot of things kept me going. The music, the people, the places it took me, and the stories I heard along the way. Bagpiping has even brought me to the USA to play in parades, and into competitions, both in bands and on my own. In solo competition, I moved from Grade 5 to Grade 4 in just one year. Something I worked incredibly hard for.

Playing at weddings and funerals has given me some of the most meaningful moments I've ever experienced with my pipes. Being asked to play during the biggest moments of people's lives, whether joyful or heartbreaking, the music isn't about performance at all. It's about presence, comfort, and honouring something words can't quite reach. Playing at my grandma's funeral is one moment in particular that will stay with me forever. I was crying the entire time. Sobbing, really. Trying to breathe, trying to play, trying to hold it together. Maybe I failed at it all, but I played for her. I don't think I could ever explain what that meant to me, but I know I'll never forget it.

And now, my 7 year old daughter has taken an interest. She's slowly started learning, and watching her step into that world is incredibly special. Something my mom once pushed me into has turned into something I get to share with her. A connection I never saw coming.



Bagpipes didn't just teach me discipline and confidence. They taught me that it's okay to be different and still have a place, that family isn't always the one you're born into, and that becoming yourself takes time. Learning to play has taught me how to become someone I'm proud of being.

Today, I play with the Clinton Legion Pipe Band, and being part of that group has added yet another layer of connection. After moving to Mitchell three years ago and not knowing anyone, piping helped open doors. Through the band, I've met other local West Perth residents and formed friendships I might not have found otherwise.

Lately, I've even found myself dreaming about what could come next. Maybe one day I'll be starting a pipe band right here in Mitchell. The idea of building something local, welcoming, and rooted in community feels like a natural continuation of everything the bagpipes have already given me. I've truly found that music has a way of creating community wherever I land.

1952's Catamaran Adventure

When I was going into grade 9, I met Edmund Wituschek, who lived with his mom. They had just moved into town from the Andy Goss farm where they had lived with family since fleeing from Yugoslavia during WW2. Ed's mom, Barb, cooked in the Cosy Grill which was owned by Bill Cheoros, and Bill's father before him.

With our similar interests in electronics, "Mechanics Illustrated" projects, and a desire to play guitar like Duane Eddy and the Ventures, we embarked on many fun, educational, creative, and perhaps "some"... reckless adventures.

Probably one of our craziest stunts that got us front page attention, was the time we built a couple of catamarans from a Popular Mechanics magazine project. They were simple frames, about 4ft wide by 7ft long, with four stretched inner tubes on the

An excerpt from the memoirs of Ted Schinbein

"Songs from My Lone Ranger Guitar"

Life & Times of Ted Schinbein & Kin

four corners. They had a couple of cross members, a raised seat like a kid's snow runner, and a foot operated rudder, with a big kayak paddle. They were quite well designed and we built them exact to specs.

We built them in the big empty room that once housed the bakery and when they were done, carried them up the steps and down the road to the bridge that connected Toronto St to Hwy 23 south, which was under water at the time due to the spring flooding.

The Eizerman Lumber and Coal Yard was under water, reaching the tops of six foot bushes along the riverbank; turns out the water was faster than it looked...

(Below is the article in the London Free Press, recreated for increased legibility)

The London Free Press

THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 1959—SECOND SECTION



Mitchell Voyageurs Pooh-Pooh Idea Danger Threatened When Pulled Ashore

MITCHELL, APRIL 1 — Two Mitchell teen-agers who ventured in to the Thames river on a homemade raft today were pulled back to shore by roped manned by fireman, policemen, and PCU employees this evening, "pooh-poohed" any suggestion that they were in at any time in danger of being swept away by flood waters.

• • •

Teddy Schinbein, 15 one of the boys, said "We were just floating around a back-water

whirlpool and trying to figure a way back to shore when somebody spotted us and phoned firemen to rescue us"

He said he and his pal, Edmund Wituschek; 14, were not in danger, but admitted that the firement with their rope did some the "return-to-shore problem" a little more quickly then they (the boys) could have solved it alone.

• • •

The boys made a raft of piece of wood and two automobile inner tubes. They launched

their craft near Eizerman's Bridge about 100 yards downstream from the main Mitchell Dam on the Thames River.

• • •

"We were not planning any long voyage down the river," Teddy said. (Not many years ago two Mitchell Canoeists travelled down the Thames from Mitchell to the Fanshawe Dam.

• • •

The boys' raft did not get into the fast flowing main current of the river today, it was in a small

backwash. However, the water movement in the river created a whirlpool situation and the raft started moving in circles and would not obey the tree stick oars.

• • •

When the "rescuers" arrived, one fireman waded hip-deep in to the water so he could toss a rope to the boys and the shore crew hauled them back to land,

Teddy said the boys had wet feet, nothing more serious.

Ted & Yvette Schinbein: Music & Adventure

When Teddy Shinbein met Yvette Feuillartre on a blind date back in 1967, neither of them were giving much thought to the future.

Ted had been a raised a strict Lutheran for the first fifteen years of his life, but as he used to tell it, he developed a fondness for the reputation of being “the wild and crazy guy” that came to the forefront whenever he’d drink.

His zest for life, alcohol, and music kept that boy moving. By 1966, he’d had already traveled halfway across Canada, making a living by selling magazine subscriptions, playing music, and making friends. Never a reluctant traveler, he’d even followed an all girls band all the way to Europe. He brought some friends with him, and made more along the way as his outgoing nature and constant need to make music opened doors and the occasional pocketbook.

Back in Canada in 1966, while working as a time-keeper in northern Alberta and making music with anyone he could find, Ted got the itch to travel back to small town Mitchell, Ontario for Christmas. He was on the train heading for a visit to Winnipeg when a conversation with a new friend’s boyfriend got him interested in the mining industry. Next thing anyone knew, he ditched his job near Fort McMurray and was on his way up to Lynn Lake.

On January 13, just a day after moving up north, Ted met Yvette. Yvette was up in Lynn Lake cutting hair for the occupants of the camp, having just completed her training at hair-dressing school. Ted’s gentle but fun vibe and his rebellious nature appealed to the young girl whose family tree features

the well known name of “Louis Reil.” Sooner than anyone expected, Ted was writing home about his “French Roman Catholic Metis Sweetie” and Yvette was sewing her wedding dress.

Despite his mother’s reluctance to have “an Indian for a daughter-in-law” Ted and Yvette were married less than five months after their first date. He was 22 and she had just turned 18. Their relationship had its ups and downs as everyone’s does, but they met life and adventure head on until Ted passed away in 2022.

If you ask Yvette if she considers herself an interesting person, she’d laugh and say “Not really!” While yes, she’s lived a full life, she didn’t (and probably still doesn’t) consider her experiences anything worth bothering anyone with. If you ask me, this woman and her husband have had more adventures than most people would have in five lifetimes.

Her apartment still shows the signs. Violins hang on the walls, guitars sit in the corners, and I’d guess about ten didgeridoos are propped in various places around her sewing area. Inuit soapstone sculptures and other carvings are strewn about the various shelves, indigenous art hangs on the walls, and a well used but still beautiful fringed bag (She calls it her “Hippie Bag”) adds visual interest to a living room corner. She’s constantly apologizing for “the mess” as she calls it, but all I can see is memories. Each object has a story attached to it, and they come from all over the world.

That adventuresome spirit that brought Ted and Yvette together in Lynn Lake, didn’t desert them when they tied the knot. After working and saving for a bit more



Ted & Yvette Schinbein

than a year, Ted, Yvette, and their buddy Brian, left the mines and flew to England. There they rented a small “flat” (aka apartment), got tired of the damp, wandered over to France and from there, traveled down to Spain.

Paying for tickets and housing by selling their blood to the blood banks, they’d occasionally get turned away for being too anemic! Thankfully Ted and his buddy Brian’s music was almost guaranteed to get them paid – the only problem being, that Ted would play whether he was being paid or not!

Their travels brought them to Morocco, India, and Yugoslavia. Greece, and Turkey followed later with friends and music made in all of them. Not everyone can tell a story about getting stuck in Pakistan for five months due to all the borders being closed as the people overthrew their despotic leader. Nor do many of us have memories of a time when we were basically forced to leave off wandering by the Canadian Embassy once it was discovered that we had had amoebic dysentery for months!

Back in Canada the Schinbeins weren’t quite ready to settle down. Moving to Winnipeg, near Yvette’s parents, Ted and his buddy Brian tried to make it in the music scene. Fame was not forthcoming, but friendships were! In 1971, Yvette and Ted were invited up to Rankin Inlet in the Northwest Territories to help build a co-op. Ted was concerned about the way people were taking advantage of the northern artists and trappers, and the co-op became a way to ensure that wasn’t happening.

Several years of building and managing the now successful co-op went by and then it was time for a change. With many tears, they moved back to the more populated parts of Canada.

After once again trying to break into the music scene (this time driving all the way to Sharon Connecticut to bring a tape to Sandy Patton who said Ted’s Sound was “Too

Country” and suggested he try Nashville), the duo (now with a baby to watch out for) heading back to Mitchell and opened a “Van-scaping” business.

Taking over the old Barthol Garage at 256 St George St, they opened in November of 1974 and sold gas, oil, and washer fluid while Ted worked on expanding the van customizing business. Taking a few risks with some clients resulted in them winning

the Award of Excellence the day their son Jon was born at Stratford Hospital. The hype and local publicity was enough to convince the Federal Business Development Bank representative to approve their mortgage on the building they’d been renting. This allowed them to stop pumping gas and instead focus entirely on the “van-scaping”.



Ted & Yvette, 1969

Despite joining Alcoholics Anonymous late in 1976, Ted writes that his main clientele for the van customizing business were usually the partying type - and of course it’s only good business practice to join your customers in whatever good time experiences they dain to offer you.

Eventually the Schinbeins joined the bikers in the area and fell in love with riding around the countryside and glamming up their rides. Those troublesome Schinbeins and their hippy store, now had the addition of loud Harleys and people dressed in leather. The lifestyle took its toll, and the economy was slowing down. Something had to give, and Ted was determined that it wasn’t going to be him!

North End Auto Cleaners was his attempt to diversify, but washing cars just wasn’t his speed; *North End Variety* came next. Arcade pinball machines and a coin-operated pool table helped make ends meet. Yvette says the locals weren’t too fond of the fact that the community teenagers liked to hang out at the shop, and remembers being called up by the principal and told to send a student back to class! While they tried to keep things clean during the day, after hours was a different story.

Too much partying and not enough time spent on

business meant that various vehicles had to be sold in order to pay the debts. Ted lost his license for a year due to driving under the influence, and Yvette had to get a job working nights at Richardson Foods in St Mary's to keep them afloat.

Yo-Yo-ing between despair and party-mode, with the pressures of alcoholism and debt, they made the decision to walk away from their business in 1987. Interest rates were over 20% and they just couldn't see their way forward. Going through counseling, debt amalgamation, and taking a serious look at their relationship made them both realize that some significant things had to change.

It still took several years before Ted would give up alcohol for good. After years of struggling with trying to keep things moderate, he finally decided on Remembrance day 1990, that it was a good day to not have the first drink - and he kept that up until he passed away.

Yvette worked steady at F.A.G. Bearings, while Ted did all manner of things, trying to find his place. A "Carve a Duck with Chris Wynbrow" class piqued his interest, and his joy in the process was so strong that he eventually got skilled enough to teach the art himself.

Yvette also had a love of "making" and together they partnered with Linda Kakulsky to sell Ted's carvings, and Yvette's stained glass. Ted taught carving not only in his studio, but also throughout the surrounding area. His work sold so well that they were able to rent out what is now "Skyline Studios" in downtown Mitchell.

Next thing anyone knew, the Schinbeins were giving "learn to play the didgeridoo workshops and the Schinbeins Woodcarving and Guitar Shop was born! After a few years the music teaching became the primary focus of the shop, and Ted was no longer carving much, the "Carving" was dropped and "Music" replaced it.

The music and teaching business thrived until one

of their most popular teachers ended up being deported back to the States for overstaying his visa by a LONG time. In the chaos that followed, many of their students transferred their classes to a different studio. A new music teacher was mighty appealing to their younger clientele, and it seemed best to just let the business die a natural death.

Of course that didn't mean that the adventure ended. From playing in the park, to hosting regular jam sessions every Saturday, Ted and Yvette were still central to the local music scene until Ted passed in 2022.



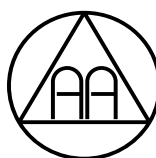
Yvette in her apartment with her Jack-Russel, "Charlie"

Since then Yvette has stayed put in the building that she and Ted taught and lived in for so long. The space has gotten smaller as new landlords always mean changes, and she's had quite the time sorting through the acquisitions of fifty-five years worth of adventurous living, but her apartment is home, and "unless she wins the

lottery and can buy a cabin in the bush somewhere, she won't be moving any time soon"!

Despite their ups and downs, Yvette has no regrets. She says she and Ted "did what they could and made the choices they made, and plenty of good friendship, good music, and stories came out of it." May all of us be so lucky.

Ordinary Extraordinary People is an ongoing series that highlights community members of West Perth. If you know of someone whose positive influence on their friends and neighbours should be celebrated, please nominate them by sending us an email.



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

Alcoholics Anonymous: 1-800-706-9833
Meeting locations found at
web@aad4.org

Fifty Years Ago

Ted Schinbein

D G D
Till death do us part, those words break my heart
D E7 A7
Just thinking about it, tears me apart
D G D
There'll be sadness and sorrow, for the ones left behind
D A D
Just pictures and memories, and the ties left that bind

Chorus

G D G
We'll share love and laughter, stay young, and have fun
D A7
And when death separates us, regrets we'll have none.
(Instrumental: repeat chorus chords)

Oh the ties that once bound us, will no longer be blessed
And the pain bein' alone, worse than anyone guessed
The love, that we both take, for granted inside
Will be ripped from a heart and go out with life's tide.

To be with somebody, just because you choose
An old love like we have, no one wants to lose
The hills and the valleys, the ups and the downs
We shared them together as the years rolled around

It's gonna be painful for the one left alone
But family will be there and hold together the home
There's just no explaining', without goin' to tears
What it's like being married, for fifty some years

Back then...

Clare French

Home, **back then**, meant
Our farm kitchen, old wood stove,
Always coffee simmering in the chipped enamel pot.
Coffee time was family time.
Back then,
Church focused our rural community
And brought us together.
Church social night - what excitement!
Farming cares behind us,
We left our winter wrappings in the tiny church entrance.
Bethseda United Church welcomed
All faiths, all families, all ages.
A welcome night of home-made entertainment.
Sixty folks in that tiny red brick church -
And time passed on community wings.
Soon the Ladies Aid Lunch Committee
Retired to that tiny entrance, and,
Scarcely heard the measured applause,
Cleared the tiny fortress with hushed efficiency.
Big old copper boiler put on to boil,
Shoe box sandwiches lined up for serving
On the little overhead shelf.
Soon, **back then**, the wonderful coffee,
Rich farm cream and sugar lovingly added,
Wafted through Bethseda's contented pews.
Finally, the Chairman, Charlie, from the next line north,
Led us in Grace, and the saintly lunch ladies
Passed shoe boxes of sandwiches, poured our coffees,
And again disappeared for dishwashing.
Bethseda United Church had united us all
In the ecstasy of friends, full stomachs,
And true community
A little glimpse of heaven
Back then.

Zephyr & Cookie

Zephyr is a three year-old husky something who is scared of many innocuous things. You'd think, based on his name, that he just "goes with the flow" or something similar, but no. Animals and people are fine, but leaves? Leaves are terrifying.

Cookie, on the other hand is scared of nothing and no body! And she'll let you know. Despite being a dachshund who is about a third of the size of her buddy Zephyr, she's definitely the boss of this duo. She was introduced to the Borho family after Zephyr was, but quickly established her place in the hierarchy: aka the top.



If you happen to have a canine friend with you, Zephyr will be MUCH more comfortable! He loves pretty much any dog he comes across.

At home the dogs are polar opposites as well. Cookie considers herself the guard dog, and lets every possible noise know that she's willing and able to defend her turf! (She demonstrates this by viciously destroying any toy she's given).

Zephyr is too busy taking naps to pay attention to any signs of home invasion, but that's okay; Cookie's got it covered.

In true husky fashion, Zephyr has been enjoying the snow we've been "blessed with" these last few months. He'd be happy to gambol in the snow all day, but Cookie won't allow it. Her dignity is at risk due to the way she founders in the drifts.

When it comes to new humans, both these pups are quite friendly. Cookie wants to be everyone's friend – and of course to receive the attention that being "top dog" deserves. She's not had a lot of doggie interaction outside of Zephyr, so any interactions should be handled on leash so that no "miscommunication" can happen. She'll definitely be verbally letting any nearby animals know that she's not going to be a push over if they try to usurp her authority!

Zephyr on the other hand, will probably cower behind his people if you try to approach him. If, on the other hand, you stay quiet and calm, he'll eventually realize that you aren't trying to eat him. Let him come to you, he's happy to receive all the love and attention you shower on him. He's a snuggly dude.

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

Community Events

These events are open to the general community and are free unless otherwise indicated. An asterisk means preregistration is required.

February 2026

February 1

Parent & Tot Skating | 9:30am - 10am | Mitchell Arena
Public Skating | 10am - 11am | Mitchell Arena
Fullarton Baseball Registration Opens
Men's Community Breakfast | 8:30-9:45am | Grace Lutheran

February 2

Parent & Tot Skating | 11:30am - 12pm | Mitchell Arena
Public Skating | 12pm - 1pm | Mitchell Arena
Drop-in Shuffleboard | 12:45 - 3pm | Arena Event Hall

February 3

Senior's Fitness | 9:30am | West Perth Community Centre
Adult Skating | 12pm - 1pm | Mitchell Arena
Parent & Tot Skating | 1pm - 2pm | Mitchell Arena
Mahjong | 1pm | West Perth Public Library
Crafter's Circle | 2pm - 3pm | WPPL (Library)
Friendship Bracelets | 3pm - 5:30pm | Youth Centre

February 4

Parent & Tot Skating | 9:00am - 10am | Mitchell Arena
Tales & Tunes | 10:15 - 10:45 | West Perth Public Library
Public Skating | 11:30am - 12:30pm | Mitchell Arena
Adult Skating | 12:30pm - 1:20pm | Mitchell Arena
Parent & Tot Skating | 9:00am - 10am | Mitchell Arena
Chocolate Dipped Treats | 3pm - 5:30pm | Youth Centre

February 5

Tween Crochet Club* | 4:30pm - 5:30pm | WPPL (Library)
DIY Bath Bombs | 3pm - 5:30pm | Youth Centre

February 6

Parent & Tot Skating | 9:00am - 10am | Mitchell Arena
Public Skating | 10am - 11am | Mitchell Arena
Adult Skating | 11am - 12pm | Mitchell Arena
Drop In | 3pm - 5:30pm | Youth Centre

February 7

Pink Pony Crafts | 11am - 12pm | WWPL (Library)

February 8

Parent & Tot Skating | 9:30am - 10am | Mitchell Arena
Public Skating | 10am - 11am | Mitchell Arena

February 9

Parent & Tot Skating | 11:30am - 12pm | Mitchell Arena
Story Time with Teddy | 5:45pm | Library
Public Skating | 12pm - 1pm | Mitchell Arena
Drop-in Shuffleboard | 12:45 - 3pm | Arena Event Hall

February 10

Senior's Fitness | 9:30am | West Perth Community Centre
Adult Skating | 12pm - 1pm | Mitchell Arena
Parent & Tot Skating | 1pm - 2pm | Mitchell Arena
Mahjong | 1pm | West Perth Public Library
Crafter's Circle | 2pm - 3pm | WPPL (Library)
Valentine's Craft Night | 3pm - 5:30pm | Youth Centre

February 11

Parent & Tot Skating | 9:00am - 10am | Mitchell Arena
Tales & Tunes | 10:15 - 10:45 | West Perth Public Library
Public Skating | 11:30am - 12:30pm | Mitchell Arena
Adult Skating | 12:30pm - 1:20pm | Mitchell Arena
Homemade Bruschetta | 3pm - 5:30pm | Youth Centre

February 12

Tween Crochet Club* | 4:30pm - 5:30pm | WPP Library
Valentine's Party | 3pm - 5:30pm | Youth Centre

February 13

Parent & Tot Skating | 9:00am - 10am | Mitchell Arena
Public Skating | 10am - 11am | Mitchell Arena
Adult Skating | 11am - 12pm | Mitchell Arena

February 14

Family Day Public Skating | 11am - 11:50am | Mitchell Arena
Celebrate Family with Free Activities | 10am - 12:30pm

- **10am** Fire Safety Story Time
- **10:30am** Senior Fitness Demonstration
- **11am** Stories and Songs
- **11:30am** Cookie Decorating

All events take place at the West Perth Community Centre
Hawaiian Steak Dinner Theme | 12pm | Mitchell Legion

February 15

Parent & Tot Skating | 9:30am - 10am | Mitchell Arena

February 16

Parent & Tot Skating | 11:30am - 12pm | Mitchell Arena
Public Skating | 12pm - 1pm | Mitchell Arena
Drop-in Shuffleboard | 12:45 - 3pm | Arena Event Hall

February 17

Senior's Fitness | 9:30am | West Perth Community Centre
Adult Skating | 12pm - 1pm | Mitchell Arena
Parent & Tot Skating | 1pm - 2pm | Mitchell Arena
Mahjong | 1pm | West Perth Public Library
Crafter's Circle | 2pm - 3pm | WPPL (Library)
Drop-In | 3pm - 5:30pm | Youth Centre

February 18

Parent & Tot Skating | 9:00am - 10am | Mitchell Arena
Tales & Tunes | 10:15 - 10:45 | West Perth Public Library
Public Skating | 11:30am - 12:30pm | Mitchell Arena
Adult Skating | 12:30pm - 1:20pm | Mitchell Arena
Sugar Cookies Cups | 3pm - 5:30pm | Youth Centre

February 19

Nintendo Switch Day | 3pm - 5:30pm | Youth Centre
Tween Crochet Club* | 4:30pm - 5:30pm | WPP Library

West Perth:
Discover,
Connect &
Belong

2026



Join us in discovering a range of community groups, service clubs, and volunteer opportunities. You'll also find out about upcoming summer programs, swimming lessons, and so much more!



Friday, February
27th

5:30-8:00 pm

and

Saturday, February
28th

9:00-11:00 am

West Perth
Community Centre
185 Wellington St.
Mitchell, ON



www.westperth.com

February 20

Parent & Tot Skating | 9:00am - 10am | Mitchell Arena
Public Skating | 10am - 11am | Mitchell Arena
Adult Skating | 11am - 12pm | Mitchell Arena
Night Drop-In | 7pm - 9:30pm | Youth Centre

February 21

Open Mic | 12:30pm | Mitchell Legion

February 22

Parent & Tot Skating | 9:30am - 10am | Mitchell Arena
Public Skating | 10am - 11am | Mitchell Arena

February 23

Senior Book Chat | 11am - 12pm | Ritz Manor Lounge
Parent & Tot Skating | 11:30am - 12pm | Mitchell Arena
Public Skating | 12pm - 1pm | Mitchell Arena
Drop-in Shuffleboard | 12:45 - 3pm | Arena Event Hall

February 24

Senior's Fitness | 9:30am | West Perth Community Centre
Adult Skating | 12pm - 1pm | Mitchell Arena
Parent & Tot Skating | 1pm - 2pm | Mitchell Arena
Mahjong | 1pm | West Perth Public Library
Crafter's Circle | 2pm - 3pm | WPPL (Library)
Slime Making | 3pm - 5:30pm | Youth Centre

February 25

Parent & Tot Skating | 9:00am - 10am | Mitchell Arena
Public Skating | 11:30am - 12:30pm | Mitchell Arena
Adult Skating | 12:30pm - 1:20pm | Mitchell Arena
J.Ex: Comic Book Crafts* | 6:15pm - 7:15pm | WPPL
Heart Waffles & Pancakes | 3pm - 5:30pm | Youth Centre

February 26

Tween Crochet Club* | 4:30pm - 5:30pm | WPP Library
Drop-In | 3pm - 5:30pm | Youth Centre

February 27

Parent & Tot Skating | 9:00am - 10am | Mitchell Arena
Public Skating | 10am - 11am | Mitchell Arena
Adult Skating | 11am - 12pm | Mitchell Arena
Connect & Belong | 5:30pm - 8pm | West Perth C. Centre

February 28

Connect & Belong | 5:30pm - 8pm | West Perth C. Centre
Make your own Wizard Wand* | 10:30am - 11:30am | West Perth Public Library

What's old is new again

I first became interested in early photographic processes in 1974 and I read everything I could find on the history of photography. The search for information was more difficult then as the internet was still a couple of decades in the future, so libraries were my sources. Occasionally I could find a vintage darkroom manual or other, esoteric publication that had recipes for long-abandoned processes but those finds were rare.

It wasn't until I was in the third year of the Visual Arts programme at Western that I discovered that there were others who were also interested in this topic. My photography instructor presented us with a project that included the preparation and use of chemicals to make our own emulsions. It was like I'd finally found my place in the world, and it has directed my creative endeavours ever since.

In the next few issues of *the Heronry*, I will try to share with you the excitement that I felt by presenting a few projects that you can take on. None of these will require anything more than a modest investment of time or cash (and if you can find one or two interested parties, that modest cash investment will be even more modest...).

First in the series will involve taking a digital photograph made with your phone or digital camera and converting it into an enlarged 'negative' that you will use to make an alternate process print.

The term alternate process is used for prints made using archaic (old) methods. You will make the negative using the free editing software on your computer. Once you have your negative(s) ready, the second part in the series will describe the steps required to prepare the chemicals, including coating the paper, exposing, and processing the contact print to make a cyanotype print—also referred to as a blueprint. This process was first used in 1842.

The third installment will involve another simple but deeper dive into the world of alternate process

photography. Pinhole cameras have been around for a long time, and you may have even made one in a science class. I will provide a step-by-step guide to making your own camera and while the instructions will be for a simple, workable camera, a later installment will discuss suggestions for cameras that not only produce art, but may be considered as art in their own right.

Additional projects will be considered if the response to the first few are positive. There will be some materials required for some of these projects and because you will need to do a bit of digging to find them, *I will offer some of those materials to any interested readers and I will supply a list of sources for the others.* As mentioned previously, if you can find one or two friends who would be interested in these experiments, the costs – although not significant—can be shared.

If the practical applications don't catch-on, then I will return my series to topics related to the history of photography.

Either way, I hope that I can catch your interest because after all, photography has a very long and interesting history that started more than 150 years before any of us had a phone with a camera in it, and whether it's practical or historical stories you're interested in, I'm looking forward to sharing my enthusiasm with you.

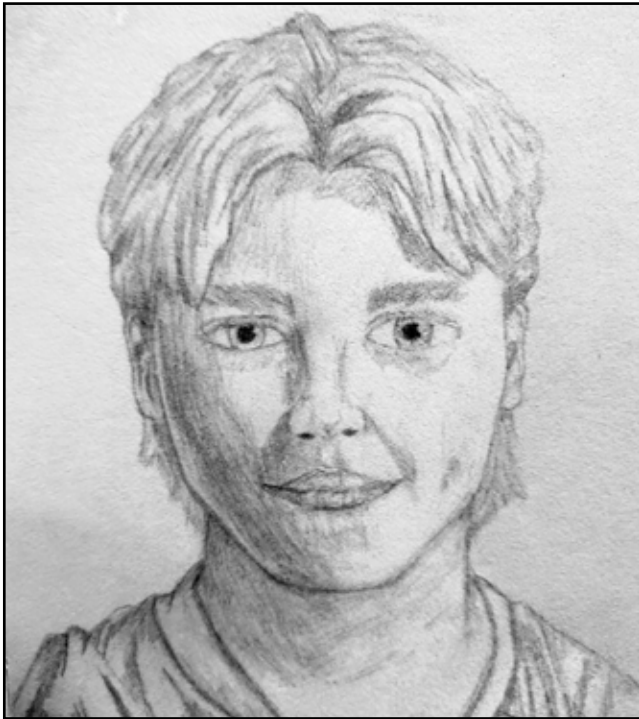


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Danny Bree



Self Portrait, Danny Bree, Age 13

Danny has been known as the class artist amongst his peers for quite a long time. While many kids don't see the point of putting in the effort required to learn the techniques required, Danny has been honing his craft since he was tiny.

"I like to look at reference photos online that I think will be a challenge and help me understand lighting and shading better so I can improve my technique and overall artistic ability."

It's easy to understand how Danny got his artistic reputation, and we're so grateful that he's submitted his artwork to this publication!

Moments in Life

by Taylor Eisler (age 15)

Moments come, moments pass.
So fragile, not built to last.
What's done is done. A life
is a precious one. Moments
come, moments go. We're
so fragile, not built to last

A New Home

by Marin Kirk (age 15)

In a new house, louder than
mice; ocean's our view, barely
any ice. The floating of fish,
the sound of a wish, my new
life is looking quite nice.



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cartwrightchiro.ca
519-348-4690

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Quick Fix Burrito Skillet

This old Kraft recipe has become a family favourite recipe for the days where we come home from work tired, not wanting to think about or prepare a more extravagant meal. When we feel squished between commitments and need something quick and delicious.

Served with a salad, you can be good to run off to pickleball or book club in a hurry! You can buy taco seasoning at the Bulk Barn, but I worked out an equivalent amount of my own "Mexican Spice" recipe and that's what this list of ingredients features. It's the equivalent of 1 package (35g) of "Taco seasoning"

Ingredients:

- 3/4 extra lean ground beef
- 6 tsp chili powder
- 2 1/4 tsp cumin
- 2 1/4 tsp oregano
- 2 1/4 tsp garlic powder
- 2 1/4 tsp ground coriander
- 1 1/2 tsp seasoning salt (optional)
- 1 19oz can of red kidney beans (rinsed)
- 1 cup salsa
- 1 cup water
- 4 small flour tortillas, cut into 1 1/2 inch pieces
- 1 cup shredded Tex-Mex cheese
- 1/3 cup sour cream
- 1/3 cup chopped green onions

Directions:

1. Brown meat in a large skillet on medium high heat; drain any extra fat
2. Add all dry spices, kidney beans, salsa, and water; stir.
3. Bring to a boil, then simmer on medium-low heat for 5 minutes
4. Stir in tortilla pieces; top with cheese. Cover.
5. Remove from heat and let stand for 5 minutes or until cheese is melted.
6. Top with Sour Cream and Onions.



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Snowy Owls in Perth County

Snowy Owls are a spectacular seasonal visitor to Ontario. Specifically both Perth and Waterloo counties usually get a significant amount of these gorgeous birds during the winter months. You can often see them perched at the top of hydro poles or sleeping far back in a farmers field.

Snowy Owls usually sleep during the day and hunt at night - cleaning up all the rodents. Knowing this, it's a great reminder not to use rodent poisons to get rid of any pests. The owls will do that for you and the last thing we want is our beautiful Eagles, Hawks or Owls being poisoned. If you see one, enjoy their beauty from afar and don't stay long. Let them sleep so they can preserve their energy for their evening business.



A young male snowy owl

This particular young male Snowy Owl that I saw recently was very close to the road in a ditch. He did not seem too bothered by me however I only stayed for a few quick photos and left him to rest.

You may have seen a Snowy Owl with dark grey bars, these are the females. Males are a pure snowy white. Male owlets are born with grey bars that

quickly disappear as they mature. This photo shows a few dark marks hence why I stated young male. Before spring arrives I hope you get an opportunity to witness the incredible scene of a Snowy Owl in its natural habitat. They truly are incredible birds!



"Feeding Frenzy" Submitted by Brian Hanny



"The Squirrel had other ideas" Submitted by Brian Hanny

Please submit your bird and wildlife photos to this publication! Email us at wp.heronry@gmail.com

Why Baby Teeth Matter

When we diagnose decay on baby teeth, often times parents want to ignore treatment because they think that it doesn't matter because they fall out anyways. But baby teeth, also called primary teeth, are far more important than many people realize. They play a vital role in a child's health, growth, and development.

Your Child's Teeth Have Big Jobs

Baby teeth may only be temporary, but they do many essential things:

- Help with eating: Healthy teeth let your child chew properly, which helps them get the right nutrition.
- Help with speaking: Teeth help children learn to form sounds and speak clearly.
- Guide adult teeth: Baby teeth hold space in the jaw for the permanent teeth that follow. When baby teeth are lost too early, adult teeth can shift and cause crowding or bite issues later.
- Boost confidence: A comfortable, healthy smile helps kids feel confident talking and socializing.

Cavities Are Not Just "Baby Problems"

Tooth decay in baby teeth can cause real pain and infection, making it hard for children to eat, sleep, or concentrate at school. Cavities can also lead to more costly and invasive dental work if left untreated.

So when we restore baby teeth, we're not just keeping them "temporarily intact" — we're protecting your child's comfort, function, and future oral health.

Perth County and Tap Water: What Parents Should Know

Here in Perth county, we're lucky to have lots of naturally occurring fluoride in our ground water -but can there be too much of a good thing?

Fluoride is naturally found in groundwater: The geology in our area means that some wells and municipal systems have

fluoride at levels higher than what's considered optimal for cavity prevention. In many communities, naturally occurring fluoride can be above 1.5 milligrams per litre (mg/L) - which is also the maximum level allowed under Ontario drinking water standards.

Why the concern for young children? Excess fluoride exposure while a child's permanent teeth are forming (from birth until about age 7-8) can lead to dental fluorosis - a cosmetic condition that can change the appearance of the enamel, typically causing white spots, streaks or even in sever cases brown spots.

What the public health unit recommends: When fluoride levels are above the optimal range, public health recommendations in our region suggests using a lower-fluoride water source for young children's drinking and for making baby formula. This helps reduce the chance of fluorosis during the years when permanent teeth are developing.

This advice isn't saying water is unsafe - it's perfectly safe to drink - just be mindful of how much fluoride young developing teeth are exposed to. If you're unsure what your tap water's fluoride level is, contact your municipality or the public health unit to have your well tested. If levels are high and you have young children, consider alternatives like bottled water or a reverse osmosis filter for making formula or drinking.

For more info refer to the Huron Perth Public Health website:



Again – we'd love to hear from you! Send your questions to office@deckdentistry.com and we might feature them in a future column.

Until next time – keep smiling

- Deck Dentistry

Grammer Tidbits: A Brief Intro

As an immigrant child, I learned English in a special ESL classroom in Grade One, and then magically, in Grade Two, I could speak it fluently. The young brain is so amazing! Many years later, when I trained to become an English language instructor, I came to realize that there are so many things that I was taking for granted as an English speaker. Even later, as a grammar instructor to ESL students, I realized that I had to learn and unlearn some aspects of this crazy, huge, confusing language so that I could help my students to understand and speak it more clearly and accurately. It was an eye-opener, let me tell you.

I'd like to share some interesting tidbits with you here in The Heronry. So here we go...

It's vs Its

It's a beautiful day in West Perth. It's never too late to learn a bit of grammar!

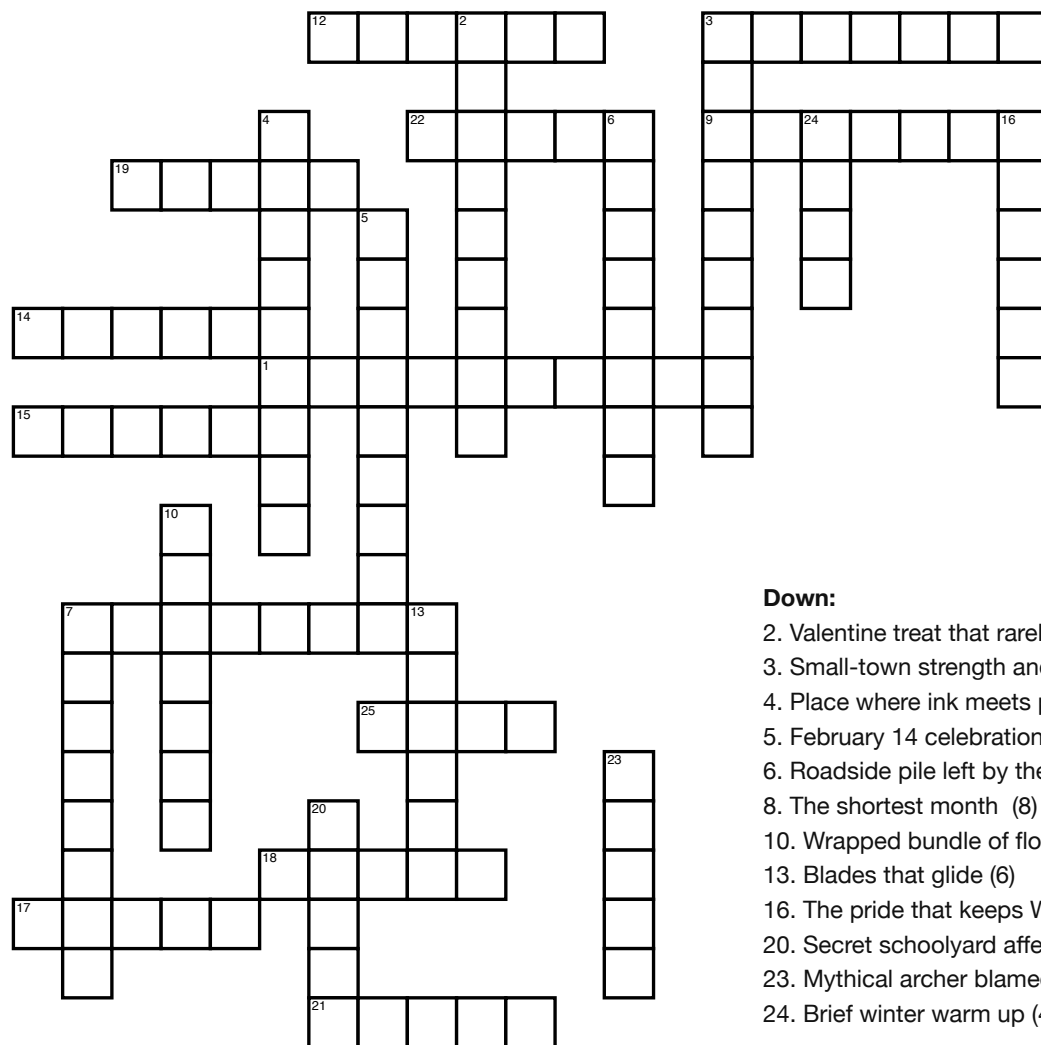
That's a contraction for it is; the apostrophe replaces the 'i' in 'is', just as 'he's' is a contraction for 'he is'.

The heron is a lovely bird. Its legs are very long.

That's a possessive before a noun (legs), just like my, your, his, her, our, their. No apostrophe here!

It's just that English thing!

Crossword Puzzle



Across:

1. Classic term of endearment (10)
7. Light, swirling snowfall (8)
9. Cozier than gloves on a frosty day (7)
11. Soft glow for a romantic dinner (7)
12. Frozen drip hanging from the eaves (6)
14. Weekend spot for local goods and friendly chats (6)
15. Coziest place to warm up indoors (6)
17. Where skates scrape and cheers echo in winter (5)
18. Lacy pattern on windows at sunrise (5)
19. Knitted defense against biting wind (5)
21. Long-legged wetland bird (5)
22. Traditional red blooms given with affection (5)
25. Dinner for two with candles (4)

Down:

2. Valentine treat that rarely lasts long (9)
3. Small-town strength and neighbourly spirit (9)
4. Place where ink meets paper (9)
5. February 14 celebration of love and friendship (9)
6. Roadside pile left by the plow (8)
8. The shortest month (8)
10. Wrapped bundle of flowers (7)
13. Blades that glide (6)
16. The pride that keeps West Perth thriving (6)
20. Secret schoolyard affection (5)
23. Mythical archer blamed for sudden love (5)
24. Brief winter warm up (4)

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**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

VON Perth Huron

Listowel Office: 519-291-5898

Stratford Office: 519-271-7991

www.von.ca

West Perth Village

Phone: 519-348-8612

www.westperthvillage.ca

Country Dreaming

When I was a child, my vision of country living was: windmills, white and coloured tops on concrete silos, bank barns, round bales of wheat, cows grazing in fields, gingerbread moulding on field stone houses, and large gardens.

Growing up in Stratford and driving between the small towns in Perth County allowed me to survey my favourite properties and find details of country living I wanted to have someday in my adult life. I took every opportunity I could to be a part of country life. I loved gardening around my family home. I would happily take part in chores at my country friends homes and the barn I rode at. I knew that someday I would want to have my own piece of land.



Country living was a dream that my partner shared as well. He grew up in Milverton, but had fond memories of his grandparent's family farm. Like many family farms, his grandparents had sold their 100 acres to an extended family member. Had he not been a child, I am sure he would have bought it if he could. We would often talk about our life if we could ever live in the country and realized our vision of country living was very specific to farms of Perth County.

Shortly after our 30 th birthdays, our discussion of country living persisted. The idea of homesteading, sustenance farming, owning livestock, and living within while supporting ecosystems remained discussions in our house. We realized that if we were ever going to make this change in lifestyle, now was the time. We began looking into our options. Small country properties in Perth County were a gem and difficult to find, let alone afford. Realizing our vision was a tall order, we were looking beyond provincial boundaries and were ready to make a giant leap of faith.

In 2016 we somehow stumbled into privately purchasing a piece of property we never thought we could have, so close to our families and where we grew up. We sold our house in Stratford (and were

very sad to leave our Morgan St neighbours) and moved our young family to West Perth. Our homesteading dream had begun, and we had two weeks to get ready for winter!

The previous homeowners had left us four laying hens. We were so excited to have eggs from our own hens; their yolks so rich in colour and nutrients; their flavour, so delicious. The hens would range freely around the property and we would watch them be a part of life on our farm.

It didn't take long to expand our dream. Vegetable gardens doubled in size and an orchard was planted. Food preservation was a must. We started growing broiler chickens and turkeys on pasture. We hatched chicks in our incubator. Fencing and heritage pigs were added. I would make dinner at night and feel proud to look at the food on our plates; to know I was feeding my family from the gifts of the land in our backyard. This excitement builds momentum and the projects continue.

Almost a decade has passed by and we still shake our heads and wonder how we got so lucky. We have had great fortune in having the nicest neighbours who have been eager to help if ever asked. Our children have been given the opportunity to learn about the living world and the gifts it gives when you put in the work. Our friends and family have watched our struggles and success while being our cheerleaders. I hope that we are able to make our grandparents proud by following their traditions in keeping the family farm alive.

Follow our shenanigans on Facebook & Instagram @ TheSquareH

The Stacey Legacy

In the heart of Perth County, the story of Ontario's dairy industry is written in more than just industrial records; it is etched into the Stacey family genealogy. While the modern Lactalis facility in Mitchell stands today as a global processing powerhouse, its roots reach deep into the soil, anchored by over a century of family grit, devotion, and—undoubtedly—a lot of early mornings.

The story began in Fullarton Township in 1866 with the birth of John E. Stacey. At the time, few would have predicted that by age 28, John would find his calling as an entrepreneur. In 1894, he purchased a modest cheese factory at Willow Grove, near Bornholm. It was a perfect “right place, right time” moment; Ontario was shifting its focus from wheat to dairy, and the Willow Grove site quickly became a vital link for the local community.

John and his wife, Mary Lander, were busy building more than just a business. Already parents to a daughter, they welcomed a son, Norman W. Stacey, on August 12, 1895, followed by Howard J. Stacey on October 13, 1902. By 1908, the family was complete—a bustling household of two sons and five daughters. One can only imagine the dinner table conversations in a house that large!

Raising a family in the creamery business is never easy, and the Stacey boys were put to the test early. When John passed away in 1921, the business fell to his sons. Norman was 26, but Howard was just 19, hardly old enough to vote today, yet suddenly responsible for a creamery. Howard had married Fern H. Francis only a year prior, and from that point on, his life became a lifelong balancing act

A Century of Dairy and Devotion in Mitchell

of building a business while nurturing a community.

The brothers didn't merely maintain their father's legacy; they revolutionized it. In 1929, they branched out by acquiring a cheese factory in Monkton, followed by further expansions into Fullarton and Mitchell in 1938. By 1939, they constructed the landmark plant in Mitchell—the very site that remains operational today. In 1940, they officially became Stacey Brothers Ltd.



Willow Grove Cemetery: later renamed Stacy Bros.
Stratford-Perth Archives, Campbell Family Photo Collection

Under their leadership, the plant's butter became the gold standard. They didn't just make butter; they made award-winners, consistently taking home top honors at the Canadian National Exhibition and the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair.

Beyond the churns and cold storage, Howard was a pillar of the Mitchell social fabric. Whether he was serving as chairman of the Mitchell Hospital Board or engaging in his extensive Masonic work with

the Mocha Temple Shriners and the Alma Lodge, he lived his values out loud. His residence on Napier Street was the heart of a growing family tree that eventually included his sons, Wendell and Dwight, and their wives, Auldeen and Audrey.

In 1981, Norman Stacey passed away, marking the end of a remarkable 60-year partnership. Three years later, on July 27, 1984, Howard joined him at the age of 81. He left behind a legacy of resilience that wasn't just measured in pounds of butter, but in the strength of his family and the health of the community he helped build.

AI: A Series Introduction

Welcome to *the Heronry's* five part series on Artificial Intelligence Awareness. Over the course of the next few newsletters, I will introduce you to AI as we know it today, and raise four issues to be aware of as we move into the future.

First off, who am I and why should you listen to me? My name is Kate Johnston, Mitchell resident and internationally bestselling author. This means that I have a life-long grounding in Huron Perth, but research things and use my imagination for a living. AI is a pretty big deal in publishing right now, so I read a lot of articles about it. I will do my best to reference them as we go so that you can look them up if you like.

The next thing we should clarify: What is Artificial Intelligence? The term itself was coined in 1956 by John McCarthy, who died in 2011 still optimistic that AI would be used for good. Depending on your age and what kind of television you watch, you might think of Commander Data from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Skynet from the *Terminator* movies or *The Matrix*. While these things represent AI in fiction, they are not what AI looks like in real life.

Currently, AI breaks down into two separate types, Analytic AI and Generative AI.

Analytic AI operates on what's called a "small language model", and is trained by feeding it specific information. An example is the system recently announced by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) in the United States. It will use their accumulated climate data to predict the weather in a way similar to the *Farmer's Almanac*: analyzing trends and associated factors.

Generative AI operates on a "large language model", and is trained by feeding it thousands and thousands (mostly stolen) works (including most of my own novels). It uses that data to make up answers and is not required to be factual. For example, this is what happens if you Google "natural remedies for appendicitis":

(Note: please go to the hospital ASAP if you have appendix



pain. It'll start near your belly button and then move down and to the right. If you poke it will hurt more. Sometimes women think it's just normal cramps, but that pain is more generally spread across your abdomen.)

Though "AI" has become something of a blanket term lately, it is important to know which type of AI you're using. This series will mostly focus on Generative AI, because it is the most problematic.

The last thing to consider in establishing our terms is why you, fellow Michellite (Mitchellian?), should be aware of AI. That answer is actually pretty simple: it's everywhere. It's being added to existing apps and computer programs. It's why Google searches are increasingly unreliable and why things like internet recipes or knitting patterns are bad. The Government of Canada has a Minister of AI now, and in the most recent budget announced fairly massive investments in various foreign tech/AI companies, which will include selling government data. It can be used to fake pictures and videos to a scary degree. It definitely should NOT be trusted to tell you if a given mushroom you've found while foraging is edible.

And most of all, you can use it accidentally, and never even know.

In the issues of the Heronry, we will look at four main issues to be aware of with regard to Generative AI: the environmental cost, the unsustainable business model, the social problems, and the effects on other developing technologies.

The Echo of Tradition

The winter season in rural West Perth wears coats of many colours. Our days can be bright, white and crisp as the cold burns our cheeks to red. They can be stale, gray and damp as icy paths turn our legs to stilts.

On this early February day, as I sit by the wood stove in my cozy farmhouse living room, thoughts flood my mind. I plan: to add to fitness routines I set in January, to make more headway on de-cluttering and organizing living spaces, to explore more closely the ideas for renovations to come, which seeds I will soon start on my windowsills. With these days less full than during the recent holiday season, there is more mental capacity for hopes and plans!

Spring is coming, where on a rural property hustle and bustle will prevail. More importantly, at this quieter time of year, I take my thoughts back down the road “from whence we came”. This leads me to a place of gratitude.

This year, 2026, marks thirty six years of life on our rural property in the former Fullarton Township, now a part of West Perth. There are no regrets. You see, West Perth’s natural resources: the rich soils, the diversity of weather, beauty of the landscape, ease of access to social services, caring neighbours, the list of which is whole and superb have all been given to us here. We live in the comfort and safety of a traditional century old Victorian Farm House.

Yes, it has been renovated (by us) but its charm has been kept. Its beauty warms the heart while its wood heat warms the soul. It is steeped in tradition. We began to repopulate the old farm site here with windbreaks and shade trees in 1990. These now protect, shelter us and the birds, keep our home cool in summer and warm in winter while adding

new life to every season. Our fertile garden grows all we need with plenty to share. Our barn houses our hens, our horse and our pets. Two successful businesses were founded here in 2012, experiences which broadened our perspectives on many levels.

Raising our family here in rural West Perth and now, watching them live, work and play close-by evokes an enormous sense of joy and pride.

A “tradition” we have come to know about this rural area is that, if you purchase and live your life on an “old farmstead”, for as long as you are there, it will be known to locals as the previous homestead “in name”. In our case it is “the old Harper Place”. I am certain that when we pass it on someday and a new owner takes over, it will finally wear a new label as

in “the old Hutson place”! This is tradition; The echo of the past is ever present.

No matter the name our home is known by, I will always be reflective and most of all, thankful, for the experience of life in rural West Perth.



Origami Paper Folding

Ever heard of origami? It's the Japanese art of paper folding. It sounds fancy, but really it just means folding paper into cool 3D shapes. No scissors. No glue. Just paper, hands, and a bit of patience.

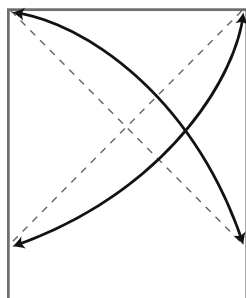
Origami is a great activity for winter days. It's calming, it keeps hands busy, and there's something really satisfying about turning a plain piece of paper into something. If it doesn't work the first time that's okay; unfold it and try again! There are so many things you can make with origami.

This month we're making a Paper Heart. When you're done, you can give it to someone special for valentines day, or make a bunch of them and string them up to make a festive garland!

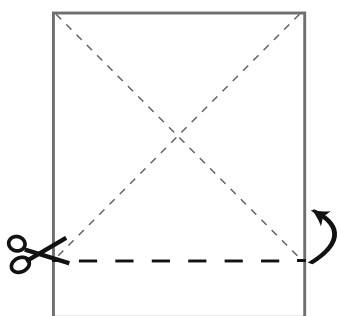
You'll need: One piece of paper

Steps:

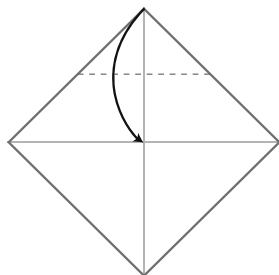
1. Fold the paper corner to edge so that the sides are aligned.
2. Open it back up.
3. Repeat Step 1 and 2 in the opposite direction — you should see an "X" made by the fold lines.



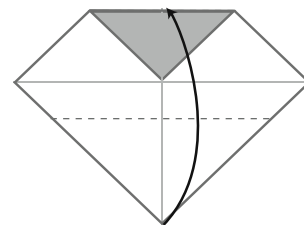
4. Fold the unmarked section of paper up so that the paper is in the shape of a square
5. Use scissors to cut along the fold line - leaving you with a square piece of paper with an X across it



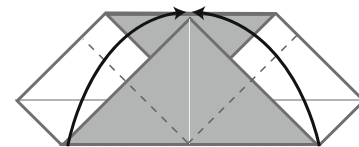
6. Take the top corner and fold it down to the middle where the lines cross.



7. Now take the bottom corner and fold it up until it touches the edge of the fold you just made.

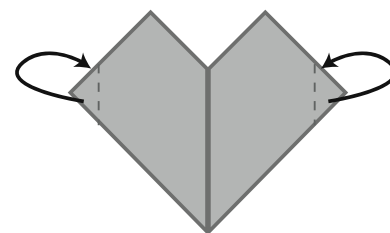


8. Fold the left side in toward the centre line and then fold the right side in toward the centre line too.

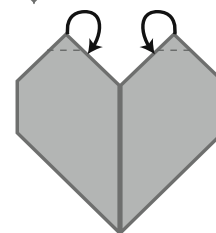


9. Flip your paper over.

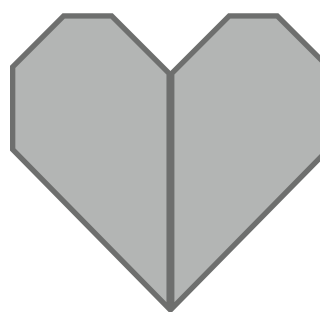
10. Gently fold the two side corners down to round the heart shape.



11. Tuck in the top points slightly to smooth it out.



Origami helps us slow down and focus. It's a great way to relax, especially on cold winter days when we're stuck inside. You can give your paper heart to someone you love, tape it to your wall (with permission!), or keep it as a reminder that something ordinary can turn into something special.



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Dear Residents of West Perth;

“Thank You”, according to Google, has evolved from some Old English meaning “I remember you favourably.” Those two little words seem trivial compared to the magnitude of service I witnessed during Community Christmas Care 2025. This West Perth-wide, month long event in the season of Christmas includes many, *many* hands serving those in need of assistance over the holiday.

This list is not exhaustive but gives some idea of the community involvement in the campaign. We would like to issue thanks to: Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church for being the headquarters for application processing, toy sorting and packaging, Mitchell District High School and the Mitchell Hawks for organizing toy drive events and collection, Community businesses and churches for hosting Angel Trees, The Mitchell Food Bank and West Perth Library for application distribution, Valumart staff for processing gift cards and vouchers, Your Neighbourhood Credit Union and the Rotary Club for pickers, packers and drivers.

We also extend our thanks to the experienced core of individuals for their tech and logistics expertise – Pastor Gery Luck, Barb Rose and Rob Steinbach, those who sort – Helena and Jason Beuerman, and pick – Lydia Power, Upper Thames Missionary Church for providing

storage space in the off season, and, of course, each person who thoughtfully donated financially or purchased clothes, gift cards and toys.

Those are a lot of moving parts all coming together to bring about Christmas cheer, all helping side-by-side and providing aide to fellow community members. Along with the experienced volunteers this year’s new recruits: Declan Campbell, Heather Bauer, Melissa Steinbach and Michael Power, were a great addition to the team.

From a even more ancient text than the old English “Thank you,” the Bible states in Philippians 2:4 “Let each of you look not only to your own interests, but also the interests of others.” In that spirit, Community Christmas Care 2025 served 125 registrants which included 207 children. Each of you who connected with this event served each other with willing hearts and talents and also served fellow community members requesting assistance. This “Thank you” is more than a polite expression, but is instead the type that is meant to express our deep appreciation for the people of West Perth.

Sincerely,
Juanita Power, Community Christmas Care



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Library Program News

With the departure of our wonderful CEO Rosemary Minnella, in December, things look a little different at the West Perth Public Library, but they are moving along smoothly. While the search for a new CEO happens, each of the library staff are collaborating to cover the void left by the amazing former leader. Rosemary will be very much missed!!

In lieu of an update from the CEO this month, we would like to give you a little background information about programming at the library! As West Perth Public Library programmers, we use the 21st Century Literacies to guide a creative blend of programs for the West Perth Community. We offer programs in the Library and in the community that provide information, invite public discussion, encourage creativity, and promote literacy and reading. Our programs expand visibility of the Library, within the community, and offer us opportunities to engage with community members. Our programs support the mission, vision, values and strategic priorities of the Library; they also align with the strategic priorities of the Municipality.

Along with some of the regular hits in library programming, there are several new items on the calendar for February!

Celebrate Family returns for the 3rd year, focusing on inclusion; this program aims to highlight that: All Families Play, Learn and Belong. Spearheaded by the programming staff at the West Perth Public Library, this collaborative partnership incorporates activities for people of all ages. Several community groups including OPP, West Perth Fire Department, Recreation Department of West Perth, Perth Care for Kids, Mitchell and Area Community Outreach, West Perth Youth Centre/ YFC Mitchell, PFLAG and more will be on hand with booths and FREE family fun. This year, Celebrate Family will be located at the West Perth Community Centre on February 14th from 10am-Noon.

Fitness Demonstration, 11:00 am - Stories & Songs, 11:30 am - Cookie Decorating and Open Skate from 11:00 am - 12:00pm. There will also be scavenger hunts, colouring, accessible bowling, and more!

Pink Pony Crafts will have you singing in your head while you craft together as a family, on Feb 7th. Tween Crochet Hour is a new program that will allow registered tweens to learn the basics of crochet from local crafter Joanna Osborne, and for the fantasy book aficionado, Make Your Own Wizard Wand will round out the month on February 28th, don't forget to register for this, as space is limited!

For details about these programs, please visit our website: westperthpl.ca, visit the library, or call the desk at 519-348-9234. Keep an eye out for our upcoming March Break calendar, and if you have ideas about library programming, feel free to pop in to let us know, or complete the form found at the qr code (*Just use your phone camera to look at the code and it will bring up a link for you to click on*).



Good luck to our talented West Perth Dance Club competition team as they kick off their season this March in Niagara Falls. Dance competitions give these athletes the chance to showcase their hard work, creativity, and teamwork while gaining confidence and experience on stage. Go shine and have an amazing time!

Greg Judge



A Friend's Father in Europe right after the end of WWII. Ink Stipple

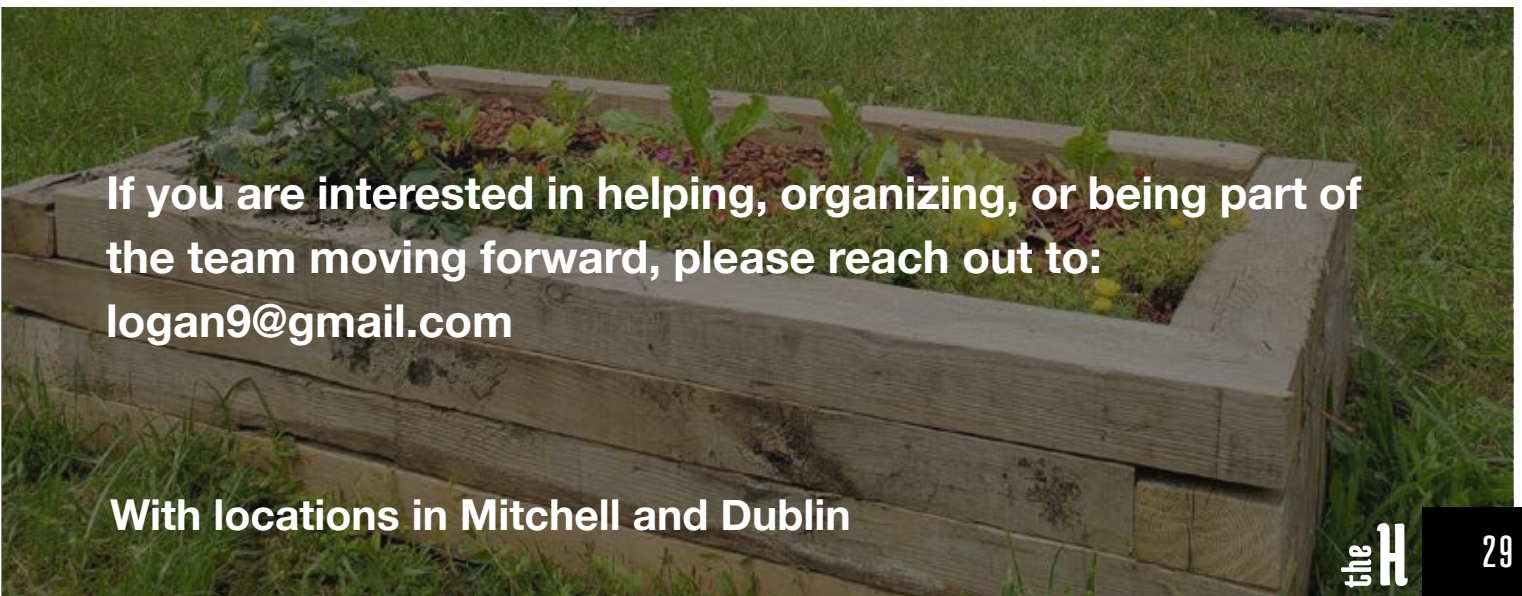
Greg Judge is a secondary school teacher who teaches visual art, construction, and geography. A Mitchell resident for the past 12 years, he likes to challenge himself on the regular. Any time he wants something, he first tries to figure out if he can make it himself!

From an acoustic guitar build that grew into a repair business, to hand-made leather bags and custom ceramic sculptures, there doesn't seem to be a medium that this guy won't touch.

While he's up to do artist commissions, he's not bothered with a website yet. For him, the joy is in figuring out what it'll take to accomplish the next project! You can reach him by email at gregorytjudge@gmail.com.



Volunteers Needed for West Perth Community Gardens!



If you are interested in helping, organizing, or being part of the team moving forward, please reach out to: logan9@gmail.com

With locations in Mitchell and Dublin

The Gas Jerry Can

This story began in the early 1980's at 204 Willow Lane. I had a small push mower to mow the lawn, and a small red plastic gas canister to hold the gasoline. So one day, I was mowing behind the house, with the gas can handy (we had a big lawn to mow over there!). I finished mowing the lawn and returned the mower and the gas canister to the garage into their accustomed places. Then I went back behind the house, probably to sweep grass clippings and reattach downspouts. I returned to the garage and changed into my house slippers to relax inside the house.

The next time I went to mow the lawn I couldn't find the gas cannister anywhere! Naturally, I assumed that some brazen thief had just walked into my garage and left again, gleefully carrying away my little gas cannister, complete with the gasoline it contained. Nothing for it but to buy a new one, so I did.

Fast forward to May of 2019, 35 years or so later. The town garage and yard sales were to take place the following weekend, so, as part of our downsizing in preparation for our end-of-year move, we were working in the garage trying to organize our sale items. Darrel Horan drove into the laneway and asked if he could have my horseshoes, since he was joining the Wednesday night Horseshoe League. Sadly, I had to tell him that since I had quit the Horseshoe League, I tried to find a new home for my several sets of shoes, but nobody wanted them. Finally I had taken them to the steel bin at the dump a couple of years ago.

Then Joanne said that she thought she had seen my horseshoe hook (so you don't have to bend over and pick them up all the time) somewhere in the garage lately. That launched a thorough garage search for the hook, which we eventually found hiding behind

something else hanging on a nail. Darrel happily took it home and we went back to getting ready for the garage sale.

We were up bright and early on the day of the town-wide garage/yard sale, and we took turns in the garage, making sure one of us was there at all times. Later in the morning, Joanne stuck her head into the house and asked what I was asking for the little red gas cannister. I couldn't figure out what she was talking about because there was only one cannister out there, but she kept insisting there were two. Still believing there was only one, I told her it wasn't for sale.

When I went out later to take my turn minding the goodies for the sale, I was astounded to find two gas jerry cans - the one I'd been using for the last many years and the one that had disappeared so many years ago. What's more, there was no dust on it, and it was about 2/3 full of gas! Where did it come from? Where was it when we searched the whole garage for the horseshoe hook several days earlier? No one had entered the garage except us in the days leading up to the sale!

Anyone who can shed light on the mystery of the reappearing jerry can, is encouraged to get in touch with Clare!

Previous Issue Puzzle Answers

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

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

Valentine's Day Word Scramble

Unscramble the love-themed words below.

1. RSESO _____

2. PIDCU _____

3. THARE _____

4. OCCHTLAOE _____

5. TSAED _____

6. HSURC _____

7. ETWEASRHTE _____

8. CAOMRNE _____

9. SSEISK _____

10. UOQETBU _____

11. LYFROTSI _____

12. LDELANCSE _____

13. RCAED _____

14. EOVL _____

Event Submission Link



Submit your club meeting or community event to the Heronry and expand your reach! Submissions are due by the 15th of the month prior to publication!

Pink Shirt Day Wear it for a reason.



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Photo submitted by Michele Brennenman

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Contact us at wp.heronry@gmail.com, stop by Mitchell Office Pro (ask for Amelia or text her at 519-955-3210), or call and text Christina at 519-994-1431. We can't wait to bring you on board!

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