

the Humm

free

Arts,
Entertainment
& Ideas

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A New Year's Letter



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Want to Thrive in 2025?

Since you're reading theHumm, I'll wager that you're always on the lookout for more. More vibrant and engaging performances. More personally curated and enticing local shops. More connection through community groups.

Here are a few of my favourites in the area:

Learning in Almonte's workshops and lectures <learningagainalmonte.ca>

Plays and concerts at Studio Theatre Perth <studiotheatreperth.com>

Concerts, workshops and art at CP Gallery <cpgallery.ca>

And if you're looking for a home in this thriving area, give me a call!

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Reconciliation Through Art Now on YouTube

Reconciliation Through Art was a unique and uplifting event that took place at the Mississippi Valley Textile Museum in Almonte this past fall. It united communities through art, performances, dialogue and truth telling from Ontario and local First Nations, Métis and Inuit artists. Videos from the event are now available on a new YouTube Channel: <youtube.com/@ReconciliationThroughArt>.

The 27 videos totalling nearly 11 hours of taping feature cultural teachings ranging from Inuit throat singing and drum dancing to Métis fiddle music and First Nations Jingle Dress dancing. Attended by over 1000 visitors, the event began with a water walk and an offering to the water, and featured numerous Indigenous visual and performing artists.

The event, which was organized and managed entirely by volunteers, raised \$10,000 for the newly formed Kooshkopayiw Métis Artists Collective. Major sponsors included the Métis Nation of Ontario and the Indigenous Reconciliation Fund. Donations were also made at the door and online by individuals and numerous local businesses.

For information, please visit <reconciliationthroughart.ca>.



David Charette was one of many artists who participated in Reconciliation Through Art last fall



Back in October of 2023 we got this lovely note and photo: "Hey Kris! **Kathleen Williamson** here. I bought a subscription for my sister in Iroquois Falls... she is loving it! I thought I would send you this picture of the October issue. Take care and thanks to you and your amazing team for all your hard work! P.S. even our kitten loves theHumm!"

Thanks very much for the pawpositive feedback, Kathleen!

Humble Thought

Real generosity toward the future lies in giving all to the present.

— Albert Camus

The present is the only time in which any duty can be done or any grace received.

— C.S. Lewis



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theHumm is a monthly arts, entertainment and ideas newspaper delivered free to businesses and visitor attractions in Almonte, Perth, Carleton Place, Westport, Pakenham, Carp, Arnprior, Smiths Falls, Burnstown, White Lake, Balderson, and Merrickville. Our mandate is to connect and promote people and events in the small towns and rural communities of the Ottawa Valley — where the arts flourish and entertaining characters run amok!

Submissions

By email or on disk.

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Do you know about our weekly e-newsletter called "Hummail"? We use it to further promote independent local performers, creators, businesses and community initiatives. It's also a great reminder of what's coming up on the weekend, in case someone has stolen your copy of theHumm...

So far we have sent out over 230 editions of Hummail, and we have over 1900 subscribers.

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CP Gallery Workshops and Creative Classes
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Ongoing



Almonte in Concert presents
Trio Uchida-Crozman-Chiu
Almonte Old Town Hall
January 26



Shane Pendergast
with Billy MacInnis
Oakfield Rugby Park, Perth
January 31



B Movie Saturday
Classic cult films
Studio Theatre Perth
February 8



Rose Graceling-Moore & Hypatia Lee
Almonte Readers & Writers
February 13



Valentine's Dinner
with live music
Stonefields Estate
February 15



Suze
Mississippi Mills Film Society
Almonte Legion
February 16



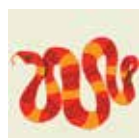
Off the Rock
Tribute to Great Big Sea
Farrell Hall, Perth
March 1



The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)
Studio Theatre Perth
January 23-February 2



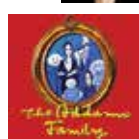
Vicki Brittle
Art house music series
CP Gallery, Carleton Place
January 30



Lunar New Year Celebration
Food & activities
Code's Mill, Perth
February 1



Mystery of the Human Voice
with Dr. Mark Wilkinson
Learning Again in Almonte
February 10 to March 3



The Addams Family
Mississippi Mudds Youth
Carleton Place Town Hall
February 14-22



All You Need Is Love
Mix & Mingle Dance
Code's Mill, Perth
February 15



George Turcotte
Art house music series
CP Gallery, Carleton Place
February 27



Anna Ludlow
Energetic East Coast music
Oakfield Rugby Park, Perth
March 1

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Bryant Schwartz — Is It Art?

Our editor, Kris Riendeau, read an interesting and beautifully written article by Heather Atkinson in the December 5th edition of *The Millstone* describing the fate of her son's metal sculptures. Her son is Bryant Schwartz, an auto mechanic and co-proprietor of Volkhaus Auto, an automotive parts and service business located on the east edge of Almonte.

by Sally Hansen

A few months ago I wrote about pareidolia — the tendency to see faces or other patterns in response to an ambiguous visual stimulus. Bryant has an unusual gift for visualizing extraordinary critters when he is surgically removing defunct parts from his customers' ailing cars. About eight years ago he was disassembling an engine and conducting a post-mortem to determine why and how the failure had occurred. A few engine parts fell in a heap, and "When the pistons caught the crankshaft at just the right angle, it reminded me of a dog." On a whim, he gathered them up and welded the pieces into a dog sculpture. When he showed the customers his spur-of-the-moment artwork, he was blown away by their reaction — they wanted to buy it. He gave it to them.

That chance inspiration has morphed into a "hobby" that brings him a great deal of satisfaction. He displays his occasional artworks in the public spaces in his automotive shop, and enjoys the appreciative feedback and offers of purchase they generate. So far he has not sold any. Kids love them, and Schwartz is delighted to join his grandmother, a painter, and his mother, an author, in their artistic pursuits. Bryant's photo at the top of the page shows him next to a portrait of him and his mom that was painted by her mom (Pearl Atkinson).

What IS Art?

The title of the article by Bryant's mother, Heather Atkinson, raises the fascinating question of "Art — What's It For?" Before we go there, I'd like to digress to the equally intriguing question — what IS art? A January 1st article at <theconversation.com> asks: "Can animals make 'art'?" They provide numerous examples from nature that beg the question, citing the intricate and attractive endeavours of bowerbirds, elephants, whales and even mollusks. For many aficionados, some forms of modern art stretch the question to the breaking point. At <Artnet.com> I read recently that "Passion for Abstract Expressionism Endures." To prove their point, they noted that an almost 80-year-old, seven-foot-tall abstract painting — *Untitled (Yellow, Orange, Yellow, Light Orange)* — by Mark Rothko sold at Christie's on November 9 for \$46.4 million. To the "uneducated" eye, it appears as several horizontal stripes of yellow and orange. It brings to mind the furor over the National Gallery's 1989 purchase of Barnett Newman's *Voice of Fire* for \$1.9 million. That piece was recently valued at \$40 million.

Degas is quoted as saying "art is not what you see, but what you make others see". Bryant Schwartz's creations definitely meet and exceed that criterion. Yes, some of them require a little imagination on the viewer's part, but that is precisely the point, the challenge, and the entertainment.

To See or Not to See

To Schwartz, his sculptures are inspired by and a gift to the people of Almonte. He has lived his life in this friendly and artsy town, and wants to make a contribution. He is cleaning up the environment; otherwise his raw materials would end up in a junkyard. He wants his art to be noticed by people who are really looking. This past November he decided to try an experiment. After more and more people praised his sculptures, he wanted to pay a tribute to his hometown. Sometime in November, Bryant surreptitiously placed a metal sculpture inside the corral by the Naismith statue in downtown Almonte. The only bought component in the piece was an object purchased from an Almonte antique shop in honour of the town's small businesses.

The gift survived for three weeks before it went missing. Bryant was unperturbed; his response was, "Don't take it to destroy it; take it to enjoy it!" But Heather decided to dig deeper, and eventually contacted Operations Manager John Gleeson of Missis-



sippi Mills Municipal Services. Much to her delight, Gleeson informed her that Bryant's artwork was safe. It had been removed as a result of three complaints, including that it "didn't go well with the Christmas theme." Fortunately, Gleeson appreciated Bryant's art and set it aside in the hopes that someone might show up to claim it. Bryant retrieved it, and it has found a new home. After speaking with him, I am relatively confident that his gift to the town was meant sincerely, even if he failed to apply for a permit. Nevertheless, if he decides to go into the art business, it was a brilliant marketing move!

Automotivated

Schwartz grew up in Almonte and knew he wanted to be a mechanic by the time he was three years old. His dad, Michael Schwartz, was an aircraft mechanic at Carp Airfield, and Bryant worked on farm equipment and airplanes throughout his teens. He credits the



Co-operative Education program he participated in as a student at the Almonte District High School with his career as an automotive mechanic. He hopes to train and mentor another student as soon as the program is reintroduced. With his partner, Marek Oczkowski, he became an entrepreneur in 2014 with the founding of Volkhaus Automotive, an automotive parts and service business focusing on the European car market.

His priceless (they're not for sale, at least so far, and the parts don't cost him anything) artworks can sometimes be found at the shop. He has repurposed a Porsche cylinder head into an office table, and excess oil drums provide the housings for his burn barrels with character. Some of his automotive customers appreciate their burn barrel sculptures so much they bring them indoors and refuse to light fires in them. Others display their Halloween candles in them. He gifts them on the condition that you never sell or throw them away. They are appreciated by people who have developed the gift of seeing what is not immediately obvious. They are art.

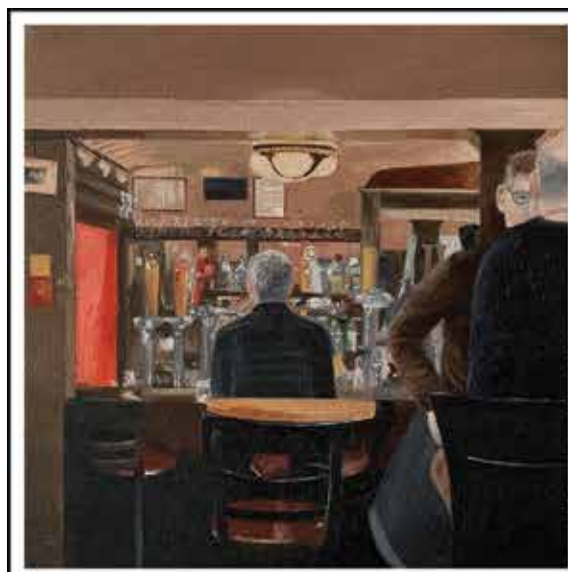
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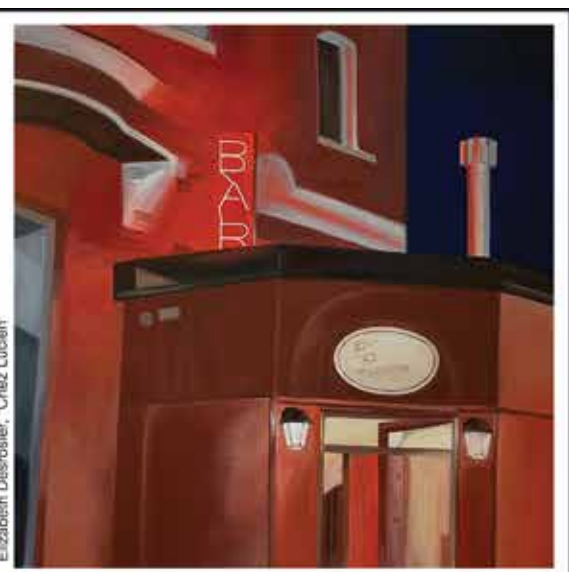
Looking In

February 8 - March 14, 2025

Artist Reception: Saturday February 8, 2pm-4pm




34 Mill St, Almonte ON
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WHO Bryant Schwartz
WHAT Metal Sculptor, Automotive Parts and Service
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WHEN Whenever defective automotive parts inspire him.
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Photo courtesy JD Labelle

In rehearsal for the totally madcap production of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged) (revised) (again)* are (l-r) Karen Bernique, Kristy Angel and Lara Klymko.

A Wackadoodle Mashup of Will's Works

Studio Theatre's *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged) (revised) (again)*

By Jane Stott

Not so much a play as a vaudeville performance, less a play than a wackadoodle mashup, this play within a play (a bit of a *Hamlet* reference there) is an innuendo-filled romp that gallops through 37 of the Bard's finest in record time. And speaking of record time and *Hamlet*, in this production (where the three actors encourage lots of audience participation), once they complete their performance of *Hamlet* they notice they have a little extra time, so they do it faster, then faster again, and then backwards. This play is the 2nd longest running comedy in West End history for a reason — it is hilarious!

Director Chris Angel is a master of diplomacy. "Okay," he says to actor Lara Klymko, "you get to take the ladder off stage in this scene, but I still want you sitting on her lap." When this writer asked why he wanted to do this show, Chris replied "I love the madcap energy of the show, and part of the appeal of directing it was the challenge... seeing if I could channel that energy into something for audiences".

Words yours truly would use to describe this play about. Immersive. Physical. Bawdy. Unexpected. Colourful. Immersive in that the fourth wall disappears as the actors get their direction from the audience. Physical in how the actors never seem to stay still for more than a few seconds. Bawdy in the jokes that probably should not be repeated. Unexpected when *Titus Andronicus* is interpreted as a cooking show. Colourful when different coloured converse sneakers and red and green scarves are used to represent blood and vomit.

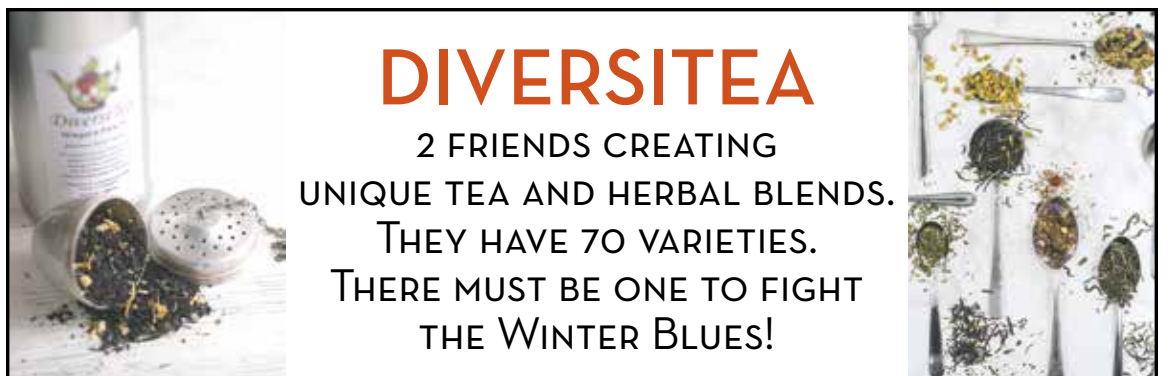
The three actors encourage lots of audience participation, including a round that has them shouting "Get

thee to a nunnery" and "Maybe. Maybe not!" Kristy Tate Angel says you won't be able to resist Karen, Lara and herself going full steam as they interact with numerous props — including plastic severed arms and foam swords. There is amazing energy between Kristy, Lara Klymko and Karen Bernique. Lara loves fast-paced physical comedy — "It's visual, bypasses analysis, and goes straight for the laughter centre of the brain". Karen wears knee pads because she is often on her knees either dying or crawling.

All three actors don and doff weird and wonderful costume accessories as they portray all the characters in Shakespeare's canon. The canon — described by Webster as the authentic works of a writer, an authoritative list of books — is a huge tome of a book that is brought on stage with great pomp and circumstance and leafed through for reference with gusto.

The New York Times calls *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*: "Pithier-than-Python parodies... Irresistible." *Time Out London* says it's: "Wig-flinging, wisecracking, twinkle-toed mayhem... Tirelessly funny and accessible." And the *Los Angeles Times* reports that it is: "Ridiculously nutty. And foolish. And original."

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare runs for eight performances. Opening night tickets are \$19 on Thursday, January 23 with a 7:30PM curtain. Regular tickets are \$24 (and only \$12 for ages 30 and under!) for evening performances on January 24, 30 and 31, and for 2PM matinées on January 25 and 26, and February 1 and 2. Tickets are available from Tickets Please (TicketsPlease.ca, 485-6434) and at the door one hour before each performance.



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Warm Up Your Winter with the Sounds of Chamber Music

By Maureen Nevins

Mark your calendars and be sure to join us for Almonte in Concert's next two concerts!

On January 26 we welcome distinguished soloists, orchestral and chamber musicians Robert Uchida, Cameron Crozman and Philip Chiu as they come together to explore the rich and diverse repertoire for piano trio.

Robert Uchida, Concertmaster of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra since 2013, has been praised for his "ravishing sound, eloquence and hypnotic intensity" (*Strings Magazine*). He performs on a rare 1770 Guadagnini violin known as the *Dawes, de Long Tearse*.

Cameron Crozman has been hailed as "Canada's next big cello star" by CBC Music. He currently plays on a c. 1750 Gagliano cello, generously on loan from the Canada Council for the Arts Instrument Bank.

Pianist Philip Chiu is a JUNO award winner acclaimed for his brilliant artistry, sensitive listening, and deep passion for creation and communication.

This powerhouse trio will captivate your ears with a fascinating program of music beginning with *Soir! Matin!* (evening and morning) by Mel (Mélanie) Bonis (1856–1937). With a body of over 300 works, Bonis was one of the most important female composers from France. She used the pseudonym Mel-Bonis because she felt that women composers of her time were not taken seriously as artists. Composed in 1907, *Soir! Matin!* is a work in two movements presenting two different moods.

The piece by Bonis will be followed by British composer and violist Rebecca Clarke's striking Piano Trio (1921), one of her most successful works featuring the piano. Although famous in her day, by the time Clarke died in 1979 at the age of 93, very few people knew she had ever been a composer at all. The second half of the program will be devoted to folk-inspired music, with Swiss composer Frank Martin's *Trio on Irish Folk Tunes* (1925), and Antonín Dvořák's Piano Trio No. 4 "Dumky" (1891). Composed at the request of an Irish American benefactor and amateur musician, *Trio on Irish Folk Tunes* received its world premiere in Paris in April 1926, with Martin at the piano. Dvořák's Piano Trio No. 4 ranks among the most beautiful and enthralling compositions in the piano trio genre.



Almonte in Concert welcomes the New Orford String Quartet (above) and Trio Uchida-Crozman-Chiu (at left) in the new year

On March 8, do not miss the opportunity to hear the JUNO award-winning New Orford String Quartet, comprised of violinists Jonathan Crow and Andrew Wan, respectively concertmasters of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and Orchestre symphonique de Montréal (OSM), the dynamic violist Sharon Wei, and Brian Manker, the OSM's principal cello. Formed in 2009, this acclaimed ensemble took up the mantle of one of the best-known and most illustrious chamber music ensembles, the Orford String Quartet, which performed more than 2,000 concerts from its inception in 1965 until its final concert in 1991.

The New Orford String Quartet promises you an exceptional musical evening as they perform Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's String Quartet in D minor, K. 421, *Yume (Dreams)* — a piece commissioned in 2024 from composer Ian Cusson, of Métis (Georgian Bay Métis Community) and French-Canadian descent, as well as Franz Schubert's famous *Death and the Maiden*. Mozart's String Quartet in D minor, K. 421 is the second in the series of six that he ultimately dedicated to Joseph Haydn. They were Mozart's greatest in the genre, arguably the greatest quartets by any composer up to that time. Cusson's work consists of three movements, each inspired by a vignette from Akira Kurosawa's 1990 film of the same name. Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* is considered to be one of the pillars of the chamber music repertoire.

Tickets for both concerts are available now from Tickets Please (TicketsPlease.ca, 485-6434). Don't delay in purchasing yours today!
— Maureen Nevins is the Artistic Director of Almonte in Concert



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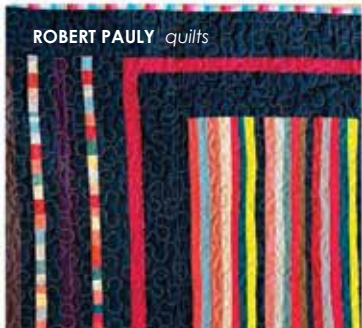
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Four New Books to Keep You Cozy 'til Spring

In the fall of 1964, Anne Tyler's first novel, *If Morning Ever Comes*, was published by the illustrious New York publishing house Alfred A. Knopf. The chief book critic for the *New York Times*, Orville Prescott, called the book "a brilliant first novel," written by a "rarely talented" novelist who seemed to have been "born knowing how" to write. Other glowing reviews followed. Tyler was twenty-two years old. She was, it seemed clear, a literary wunderkind.

by John Pigeau

And now, she's a literary legend. A humble, even reluctant one, at that. But thankfully for us — for readers everywhere — she keeps writing, and every three years or so we're blessed with another beautifully written and keenly observed Anne Tyler novel. And on February 11, we'll be treated to another: *Three Days in June*, Tyler's 25th novel.

Three Days in June is a funny, touching, hopeful story about love, marriage and second chances, as Gail Baines, the socially awkward mother of the bride navigates the days before and after her daughter's wedding. It is said to be "a triumph" that "gives us the perennially bestselling, Pulitzer Prize-winning writer at the height of her powers."

For me (a fervent, nearly lifelong fan of Tyler's), it's the thing that's helped me hold my head above the icy waters these long winter months — through major spinal surgery too. That is to say: I can't wait. And *Three Days in June* will feel like a gift, a kind and thoughtful gift from a dear and loyal old friend.

There are other books coming out in the next three months, of course. There are many of those "Most Anticipated Books of 2025" lists in magazines and floating about social media. This is not one of those.

Instead, I like to picture a small stack of good books on my nightstand, the books I've heard are coming out soon and find intriguing — the books I know will keep me busy and warm and cozily entertained until Spring (which is March 20th this year, by the way). And if I was still a bookseller, these are the books I'd be telling my customers about.

Atop my small stack will be *It Must Be Beautiful to Be Finished: A Memoir of My Body* by Kate Gies, a book I first read about on Instagram. At the start of the year I love to immerse myself in a good intimate memoir, and this one fits the bill perfectly. According to the book's trailer, *It Must Be Beautiful to Be Finished* is a "raw, moving memoir of a girl born missing an ear, a medical system insistent on saving her from herself, and our culture's desire to 'fix' bodies."

I talked to Gies and asked her if writing this memoir was in any way healing, and what she hoped readers might take away from reading about her experiences.

"For years, I didn't talk about my experiences or my missing ear because I was certain these things made me unlovable," she said. "Shame is a powerful thing. Writing the book was a way of making sense of my experiences, and it helped me uncover a more authentic and loving connection to my body. I hope readers, especially those who have experienced body shame, will see themselves in this book, and recognize the ways our world has shaped their own ideas of their bodies (and the bodies of others)."

Published by Simon & Schuster, *It Must Be Beautiful to Be Finished* will be in bookstores — and on my nightstand — on February 4.

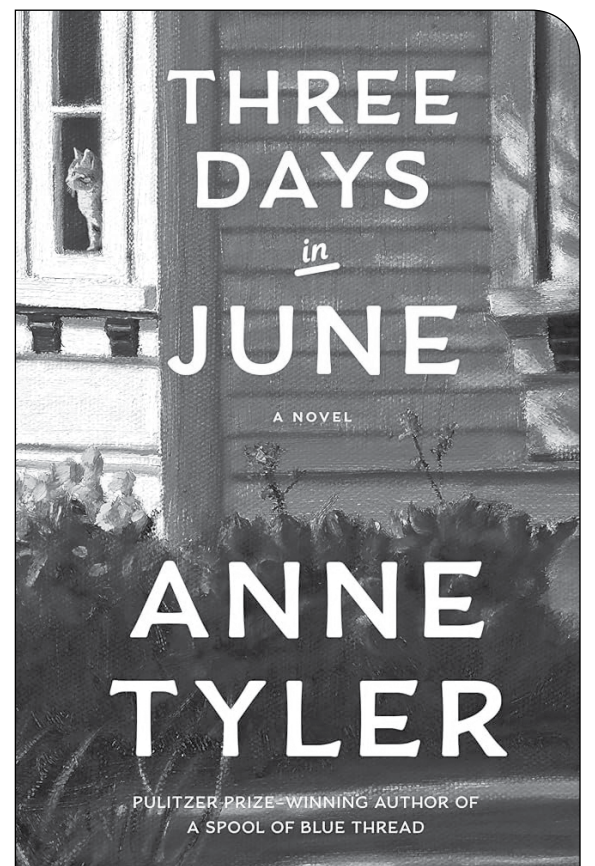
There's another memoir that has me completely intrigued: *How to Survive a Bear Attack* by Claire Cameron. Cameron is the bestselling author of the novels *The Bear* and *The Last Neanderthal*; this is her

début memoir. In it she confronts the rare genetic mutation that gave her cancer, by investigating an equally rare and terrifying event — a predatory bear attack.

"It's the story of living with — rather than dying from — cancer," Cameron writes. "It's also a love letter, of sorts, to my favourite animal, the black bear. Not the story of the species, but one bear. He was an individual with a personality who made a decision that I struggled to understand for years."

The description of the memoir from Cameron's publisher, Knopf Canada, makes it sound almost otherworldly: "Seamlessly weaving together nature writing with true crime investigation in this unflinching account of recovery, *How to Survive a Bear Attack* is at once an intimate portrait of an extraordinary animal, a bracing chronicle of pain, obsession, and love, and a profoundly moving exploration of how we can understand and survive the wildness that lives inside us."

Cameron is an exceptional writer. Both her novels were extraordinary. Helen Humphreys calls *How to Survive a Bear Attack* "a transcendent, powerfully moving, brilliant literary achievement." I can't wait to dig into Cameron's first memoir, which comes out on March 25.



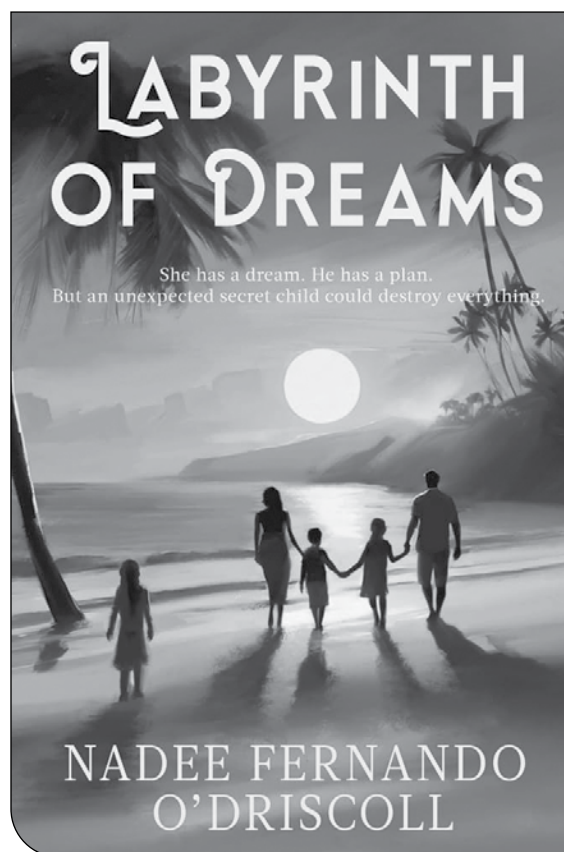
After the postal strike ended in late December, I received a novel in the mail called *Labyrinth of Dreams*, written by Nadee Fernando-O'Driscoll, who lives in Carleton Place. Because my body is still in surgery recovery mode, I've been unable to read the book. But I will. I look forward to it, and to speaking to the author. And I will recommend it now, as well.

Labyrinth of Dreams is a début work of fiction based on true events, and, at its heart, it's a complex story about women making life-altering choices — and it also looks at some parts of the world where women aren't free to make those choices; rather, those "decisions" are made for them by a judgmental society.

First-time author Nadee Fernando-O'Driscoll, a native of Sri Lanka, is deeply aware of social pressures in conservative societies. She is a passionate advocate for change. In *Labyrinth of Dreams*, she explores the biases that victimize countless people throughout the world. In this urgent novel, she aims to give them a powerful voice. I believe that's worthy of a hardy recommendation.

You'll find all these exciting new titles — and many, many more — in your local independent bookshop. Remember: Indie booksellers will always happily special order a title for you.

Here's to a new year of enjoyable reading!



Our literary columnist's recommendations includes works by Anne Tyler, Kate Gies, Claire Cameron, and Carleton Place author Nadee Fernando O'Driscoll

The Mystery of the Human Voice

Learning Again in Almonte presents "The Mystery of the Human Voice" — four classes about the science of the voice and the sublime sounds it can create.

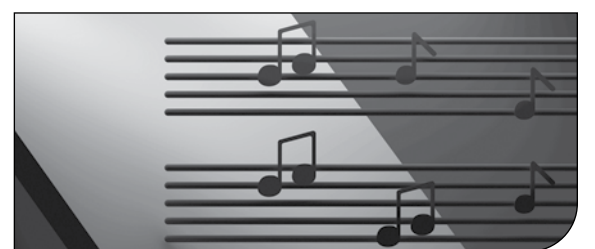
Instructor Dr. Mark Wilkinson is a man well versed in this subject. As a baritone soloist he has performed across North America, and as a scholar he holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Voice Performance and the Singing Health Specialist certificate from The Ohio State University. He is a pure delight as a teacher and in demand around the world for his down-to-earth approach.

After earning his Doctorate in 2020, Mark was poised to take up academic life as faculty at Ohio State. In a twist of fate, what arrived at the same time was a global pandemic, which saw his visa revoked and his plans turned upside down. This led him, like so many others, to pivot and return home to Ottawa, where he has established extensive collaborations with the community. His joyful presence has been evident at the Rainbow Bistro, Rideau Hall, The Ottawa School of Speech and Drama, as well as multiple universities and choral groups. He performs, trains, does vocal therapy and facilitates workshops, lectures and master classes

for individuals and groups from all walks of life. His warmth and enthusiasm for his subject are infectious.

At the urging of those who have experienced his lectures, Learning Again in Almonte is thrilled to present this course. Whether you want to sing in a choir, perform as a soloist, modulate your speaking voice or just feel comfortable singing along to your favourite tunes, there will be a lot to learn and enjoy in this fun and stimulating combination of theory and practice.

Classes will be held Monday evenings from February 10 to March 3 from 6:30–8:30PM at the Almonte Branch of the Mississippi Mills Public Library. Go to <learningagainalmonte.ca> to register for this rare opportunity.



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Road Warrior: Jack de Keyzer at The Cove

Acclaimed guitarist, singer, songwriter, band leader and producer Jack de Keyzer rarely sits still. With 12 records, 1 DVD, 2 JUNOs and 7 Maple Blues Awards, de Keyzer delivers the goods wherever and whenever he plays. He has performed with the likes of Bob Dylan, Etta James, Otis Rush, John Hammond Jr., Ronnie Hawkins, Duke Robillard, Ronnie Hawkins, Bo Diddley and Blue Rodeo. He usually plays over 100 shows a year, and his music is steeped in Chicago blues, London England blues rock,



The perennially popular Jack de Keyzer plays Blues at The Cove on January 17 and 18

by Seamus Cowan

Detroit Motown, Muscle Shoals deep soul, Memphis rock and roll, and Philadelphia's funky soul jazz. For over 50 years — or roughly a couple million miles — de Keyzer has been hitting the road to bring his brand of guitar-driven blues around the globe.

On January 17 and 18, Jack will be playing back-to-back nights in Westport as part of the Blues at The Cove series, so I caught up with him to find out what keeps this road warrior rolling.

Seamus Cowan: You have been doing this for so long, releasing all kinds of material and playing with a who's who of famous blues musicians. What allows you to keep it fresh and gripping?

Jack de Keyzer: Last year marked my 50th year as a professional musician. I feel like learning music offers infinite possibilities. I never get tired of learning songs, writing songs, performing them, practising the guitar, practising vocals and working on lyrics. It's the most amazing job I could have and I'm very grateful to be able to do it!

Your career took you so many places during the fertile live blues and rock music scene in North America. Tell us about some of the most influential experiences that have stuck with you, on or off the stage.

I started my career with Richard Newell (aka King Biscuit Boy), who had great success in the blues world in the 1970s. Biscuit Boy had one of the world's largest blues record collections, so when we were driving to shows he'd play cassettes in the car and I learned so much about all the different styles and great artists. It was a real education.

My next professional gig was with Ronnie Hawkins and The Hawks. With Ronnie, we played everything from country to rockabilly to blues and even some folk music, so it broadened my musical vocabulary. The other thing I learned from Ronnie was how to run a band and how to interact with fans and people in the biz. Probably my next greatest influence was when I joined the rockabilly band The Bop Cats in the early 80s. That's when I first got signed to a record label, started writing and learning how to write songs, and learned how to record and put on a very high energy show. There have been many more influential people and musicians in my career, but those three are the seminal ones.

Being a touring musician gives you an opportunity to see the world. What is one of your favourite places to play across this great globe of ours?

I have travelled a lot. Ultimately though, you don't get to see that much, as most of it is from a car or airplane window! So it's the gigs that I really find memorable. To me any place that's full of people having a great time is my favourite place to play, and The Cove ranks right up there.

You have accomplished so much in your life, musically and personally. What is next for you?

My latest project was recorded during the darkest days of the pandemic, when we weren't allowed to leave home. I recorded a bunch of songs that have now been released on an album called *Solo*. A lot of the songs are country blues, Delta blues, and songs from masters like Leadbelly, Robert Johnson, Blind Lemon Jefferson and a few surprises. It's about the roots of the blues and the roots of most of North American and popular music. I live and love it!

A perennial favourite in Westport, Jack's shows usually sell out in advance, so reserve yours now by calling 273-3636 or emailing <thecoveinnwestport@gmail.com>.

January's Events

All Month

- Arts Carleton Place Art Hub** presents *Breakaway*, a group art show [to Feb 9] <arts.carletonplace.com>
- Mississippi Valley Textile Museum** presents *Signs of the Time*, works by Egils Rozenbergs [from Jan 18] <mvtm.ca>
- The Corridor Gallery** at the Almonte Library presents *Dreaming of Spring* — works by Marni Friesen

Community

- Seed Sorting Volunteer Workshop**, Jan 14, 21, 28, (3-5PM); Jan 25 (12:30-3:30PM). Help sort seeds for this year's seed library! Perth & District Union Library, Common Room. RSVP at perthunionlibrary.ca
- Climate Workshop**, Jan 17, 4:30PM. Intergenerational program with climate game for 16+. St. Paul's United Church, Carp. stpauls-dunrobin.ca
- Pakenham Frost Festival**, Jan 17-26. Skating, SnoPitch, Movie Night, Family Dance and more. Pakenham. mississippimills.ca/events
- Cooking Class**, Jan 19, 2-4PM. Craft veggie tacos and Mexican salsa. North Folk Cafe, Perth. northfolkcafe.ca
- The Five Elements**, Jan 26, 3-4:30PM. An interactive experience similar to an escape room, limited to 15 players aged 18 & up. Register and pay at the Almonte Library. Almonte Library, \$25. friends@missmillslibrary.com
- Almonte & District Horticultural Monthly Meeting**, Jan 27, 7:30PM. Lost Lanark Legacy Fruit Trees. Cornerstone Community Church, Almonte. adhsmailbox@gmail.com

Literature

- Open Mic**, Jan 23, 7-9PM. Come on out to read or hear what local poets and authors have to share. Ottawa Valley Coffee Almonte. almontereadersandwriters.org
- Silent Book Club**, Jan 29, 6PM. Quiet reading; mingle with fellow book lovers, if you wish. Bridge Masters Brewing Company, Perth. sbcpert.ticketleap.com

Theatre

- Michael Conway Magic**, Jan 18, 2PM. Magic show. The Station Theatre, Smiths Falls. \$25. smithsfallstheatre.com
- The Count of Monte Cristo**, Jan 23, 2PM & 7PM. Film Night International. The Station Theatre, Smiths Falls. \$12 at the door. smithsfallstheatre.com
- The Complete Works of Shakespeare**, Jan 23, 24, 30, 31 (7:30PM); Jan 25, 26, Feb 1, 2 (2PM). Wig flipping, wisecracking, twinkle toed mayhem! Studio Theatre Perth. Tickets from TicketsPlease.ca, 485-6434. studiotheatreperth.com
- Auditions**, Jan 29, 2-8PM. Audition for a staged reading of the comedic play *Get What You Need*, to be performed in April. Con-

tact Jackie Bennett at 905-751-3251 or gwynbyjb@gmail.com to book a time. Almonte Library.friends@missmillslibrary.com

VisualArts

- Still Life Sessions**, Wednesdays, 10AM-1PM. Rendering of inanimate objects using your own personal medium. Arnprior Art Loft. Free. arnpriorartloft.godaddysites.com
- Art Circle Saturdays**, Saturdays, 10AM-1PM. Bring a current project with you and create with others. Arnprior Art Loft. Free. arnpriorartloft.godaddysites.com
- MVTM exhibit opening: Signs of the Time**, Jan 18, 2-4PM. Works by Egils Rozenbergs. Textile Museum, Almonte. mvtm.ca
- Almonte Quilters Guild Meeting**, Jan 20, 7PM. Guest presenter and showcase. Via Zoom. \$35 annual membership; guests \$5. almontequiltersguild.ca
- Lanark County Camera Club presents **Creative Ways to Show your Images**, Jan 21, 7PM; and **2024 Photo Essay #2**, Jan 28, 7PM. Drummond Centre, Perth. Free. lccameraclub.com

Music

- Oakfield Traditional Session Sunday**, Sundays, 2-5PM. Live Celtic music in an informal setting. Oakfield Rugby Park, Perth. Free
- SRO Tea Dance**, Jan 19, 1:30-4PM. Dance to big band Standing Room Only. Entry (\$15) & snacks, cash only. Almonte Old Town Hall. facebook.com/srobighand
- Social Swing Dance with Revival Swing**, Jan 23, 7-9PM. Lesson, social dance. No experience or partner needed. Hillside Reformed Presbyterian, Almonte. \$5 entry, cash. facebook.com
- Trio Uchida-Crozman-Chiu**, Jan 26, 2PM. Robert Uchida (violin), Cameron Crozman (cello), Philip Chiu (piano). Almonte Old Town Hall. \$44 from TicketsPlease.ca, 485-6434
- Vicki Brittle**, Jan 30, 7PM. Folk singer/songwriter. Carleton Place Gallery. \$30 from TicketsPlease.ca, 485-6434. cpgallery.ca
- Shane Pendergast**, Jan 31, 7:30PM. In concert with special guest Billy MacInnis. Oakfield Rugby Park, Perth. \$25 from TicketsPlease.ca, 485-6434
- The Cove** (Westport, 273-3636): 5-8PM unless noted; Mon Jon Jones; Wed Wings 'n Tunes w/Shawn McCullough (5:30-8:30); Sun Eric Uren & Meghan Balogh
- Jan 16 Nolan Hubbard
- Jan 17, 18 Jack De Keyzer, 7PM. \$95 Dinner, Show + Charity
- Jan 19 Country Pickin' with Shawn McCullough Band, 1-4PM. \$10 cover
- Jan 23 Teagan McLaren
- Jan 24 Shenanigans with Anne Archer and Jon McLurg
- Jan 25 Robbie Burns Supper, 6-10PM. \$70 dinner+show
- Jan 30 Steve Stacey & Pat Robillard
- St. James Gate** (Carleton Place, stjamesgatecp.com): 7-10PM
- Jan 17 Chris Strang
- Jan 24 Tom Watson

ALMONTE Readers & Writers JANUARY & FEBRUARY PROGRAMMING



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Lunar New Year 2025

Celebrate with Food, Fun, and Family Activities

Come on out for a vibrant and unforgettable celebration of Lunar New Year in the heart of Perth. On Saturday, February 1, from 11AM to 4PM, Code's Mill (7 Wilson St. E) will come alive with a fantastic fusion of food, culture, and fun for the whole family.

Delicious international cuisine will be available — savour a blend of Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese and Chinese food, crafted to tantalize all taste buds. Family-friendly activities will engage the little ones with games, crafts, and exciting prizes designed to delight children of all ages. Cultural experiences will also be front and centre — try your hand at calligraphy, marvel at cultural displays, and don't miss the crowd-favorite 2nd annual Chopstick Challenge!

This event is a wonderful opportunity to immerse yourself in the rich traditions of Lunar New Year while spending quality time with loved ones. Whether you're looking to enjoy authentic food, learn about diverse cultures or simply have fun, this celebration has something for everyone.

Advance tickets are available at Tickets Please (TicketsPlease.ca, 485-6434) for \$10 (ages 4+) and \$15 (adults 18+). Kids under 3 get in for free. At the door, tickets are \$25. Don't wait — get your tickets now and save.

Come together with the community to welcome the Year of the Snake!



On February 1, Code's Mill in Perth will be transformed to celebrate the Year of the Snake!

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The current owner is ready to retire and pass the baton (or perhaps the staple gun), and is willing to provide training. The equipment? Let's call it "experienced but dependable" — recently serviced and still more than capable of getting the job done. For \$25,000, you'll get over \$40,000 worth of equipment and inventory, a loyal customer base, and a business with lots of potential for growth.

Whether you're the type who's itching to add new services or content to keep things humming as-is, this is a great opportunity to step into business ownership without breaking the bank.

If you're ready to take the next step, get in touch. After all, opportunities like this don't stay on the shelf forever (unlike that one frame in the back no one's claimed).

RE-FRAME YOUR FUTURE YOU'LL BE HOOKED!

INTERESTED? CONTACT CARMELBROUGHTON@GMAIL.COM FOR MORE DETAILS AND TO SCHEDULE A TIME TO DISCUSS THIS OPPORTUNITY.

Back Forty Winterland

Winterland 2025 invites visitors to experience the season at its finest. Hosted by Back Forty Artisan Cheese, this annual event has become a cherished destination for those who appreciate artisan cheese, exceptional food, and the beauty of the outdoors.

Taking place on Saturday, February 15 from 11AM to 5PM at the Back Forty farm in Mississippi Station, the event promises a day filled with winter activities and relaxation. Guests can explore the snowy trails, gather around a roaring fire, and enjoy warm comfort food and drinks in the company of family and friends.

With fun farm hill toboggan runs and more than five kilometres of groomed trails winding through the farm's forests and fields, Winterland offers the perfect blend

of outdoor adventure and indulgent fireside treats. The self-guided snowshoe trails reveal breathtaking views of the Mississippi River and the surrounding winter landscape. Visitors are encouraged to bring their own snowshoes or toboggans, but rentals will also be available on-site.

Adding to the experience, Cardinal Café of Sharbot Lake returns this year, setting up along the trail to serve delicious hot food and beverages, offering a convenient and delightful mid-hike treat.

Winterland 2025 provides something for everyone, from outdoor enthusiasts to food lovers, creating a seasonal celebration to remember. Find more details at artisancheese.ca.



Enjoy delicious local food and drink, as well as fun outdoor activities, at Back Forty's Winterland!

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Emotions are running high on the morning of Judy's wedding. Catch all the action at The Station Theatre in Smiths Falls, starting on Valentine's Day!

There Goes the Bride... Hilarious British Farce Starts the Season at The Station Theatre

There Goes the Bride by Ray Cooney and John Chapman is the first play in the Smiths Falls Community Theatre's 2025 season. This comedy is set in the London home of the Westerby's on the morning of their daughter's wedding.

Timothy Westerby is determined to give his daughter Judy a wonderful wedding, even if his business and health worries are more prominently on his mind. He has been more and more absentminded lately, and his wife Ursula is getting quite worried about him.

Focusing on his work at an advertising firm that he runs with his best friend Bill, Timothy has come up with a brilliant campaign for Mr. Barrington's Bra company that includes a life-size cutout of a 1920s flapper. All of this would be fine, except that Timothy got a bonk on the head and suddenly believes that his flapper, Polly, has not only come to life, but that they are now in love and ready to audition for a prominent Broadway producer! Of course, no one else can see Polly, which certainly leads to much confusion.

Add some in-laws to the mix (one who isn't terribly fond of Tim to start with and one with a bit of a hearing issue), and the confusion mounts. Once the father of the groom arrives — all the way from Australia — to see what is keeping this household

from getting to the church, he becomes more and more convinced that his son should not marry into this group of crazy people.

Will Judy and Nicholas ever get married? The pace is fast and furious as people dash in and out, and the laughs are non-stop. You will recognize regular contributors to Station Theatre shows onstage, as well as some new cast members. Directed by Jamie Schouler, this show is sure to make you forget about the winter weather for a couple of hours.

The play runs for seven performances over two weekends, with 7:30PM performances on February 14, 15, 20, 21 and 22, and Sunday matinées on February 16 and 23. The Station Theatre now offers seat selection when you order your tickets online at <smithsfallstheatre.com>, even if you have season vouchers (just use the voucher code in your order). Orders can also be made at Special Greetings at 8 Russell St. E in Smiths Falls, Monday through Saturday from 9AM to 5PM, or you can call the store at 283-2244. Adult tickets are \$24, student tickets are \$10. The full season of plays has something for everyone, and season vouchers are still available. Visit <smithsfallstheatre.com> to find out all that is coming up at the Station Theatre.

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A New Year's Letter from Mom

In January 1991, at age 71, my stoic Mom died too early of lung cancer. Dad and five kids, spread about the planet, were left wondering.

Thirty-two years later, working through some of my own climate grief, I have imagined a late-stage letter, juxtaposed as if penned not by my Mom in 1991, but instead by Mother Earth, by Mother Nature, writing to her family in 2025.

by Scott Hortop

Kids, Bob,

I know you are all busy with your lives, but I am quite concerned about what is happening to me. I don't like to bother you, but you'll be upset with me later if I am not frank with you now.

Do you remember as children, you imagined yourselves saving the world? Well. It's here. It's now. Gird up. Seize the moment.

I thought I could weather these modern new trends. You know me: adapt, adjust, accommodate, absorb; keep calm and carry on.

Well it doesn't seem to be working. I am feeling quite overwhelmed.

There is a new breed of doctors who are called climate scientists. They are taking my case quite seriously. They are calling it a polycrisis and a metacrisis. They've diagnosed a whole laundry list of things that are exhausting my ability to recover:

- My temperatures are destabilized. During the past many millions of years, I was able to put below-ground a storehouse

of ancient sunlight energy in the form of oil, coal and natural gas. In a VERY brief 100 years, one half of that bank account has been burned, currently at the rate of 100 billion barrels/year. The gases from that burning are giving me extreme mood swings.

- My hormones are going bananas. Microplastics are invading every part of my body. Turns out they are not as inert as we thought. Bits break off our synthetic clothing when they are washed and flow into our waters and then into living organisms, disrupting my endocrines and reproductive fertility.
- My electrolytes are screwy. Synthetic nitrogen and herbicides applied annually to my topsoil are throwing my complex microbial functions into confusion. My food production is not nearly as nutritious as it

used to be. My pollinators don't know what hit them. I had made decentralized and fault-tolerant arrangements for everyone to be fed, but centralization is making my food supply scheme wobbly.

- My species are declining. I had designed a very wide variety of creatures to share this space, but now nearly half of them have quit.

So here are a few things I hope you could each try to do... soon:

- Vote. Ask persistently that your municipal, provincial and federal candidates make action on climate their number one concern. For my sake, use your own vote carefully. Elect people who are thinking about their grandchildren.
- Learn. It would warm my heart if you would each spend some time doing some



“google doctor” type searching, to wrap your heads around this big thing that is happening to me. If you can handle a deep dive, take a look at some of the YouTube interviews by Nate Hagens of the many doctors investigating the polycrisis. You could start with this one: Exceeding Earth's Safe Limits with Johan Rockström. I think if more of you understand the complexities of my case, we may get to effective solutions sooner. Share what you learn with your political representatives/candidates.

- Talk to your neighbours. Get to know their names. Get to know the name of their dog. There are going to be times ahead when you will need each other more than ever. Find ways to lift the veil of silence that blocks us from talking with each other about this elephant and the policies needed to address it.
- Preserve my wild side. Put a hold on expanding your footprint into any of the

remaining 50% of “intact” nature that hasn't been stepped on yet.

- Manage methane. Since time has largely run out for me, they say our priority needs to focus on the things that have the biggest immediate impact. Methane leaks from natural gas infrastructure are big and actionable. So are refrigerant leaks from old refrigerators. Canada is WAY behind on this, despite our longstanding pride in the Montreal Accords to protect the ozone layer.
- Embrace your purpose. Kids; ironically this metacrisis is offering you an unprecedented scope of purpose and meaning for your lives. Do you remember as children, you played with your swords and imagined yourselves saving the world? Well. It's here. It's now. Gird up. Seize the moment.

Just have a think.

I love you so much.

— Mom

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ANNIVERSARY

In Praise of Volunteers

We had the land. We had the equipment. Now we needed the people.

The Lanark County Food Bank was approached in the fall of 2020 by landowners in Blakeney offering to donate two acres for the Food Bank to grow food. After getting approvals all-around, an eight-year lease was signed and we had land and a barn. A neighbouring farmer plowed and tilled the land, but the only tools we had were shovels and rakes. However, the stars lined up and we got

heroic efforts to help, but his lungs, compromised by decades of work in a polluted environment, left him gasping for breath.

And then there was Joe. Ordered to do community service due to a run-in with a police officer, he chose to work in the garden. A garrulous sort, he settled in on his first day to convey his complete life story to anyone who would listen.

And then there were volunteers who were just not up for hard work in the sun. Three of the volunteers signed on thinking that they would be helping in the Carleton Place community garden, within walking distance of their homes. They did not come back a second year.

Over the four years we have seen a fair number of people come and go, but we have built a solid base of volunteers — some coming back for a third or fourth year, and a few volunteering for two shifts a week. We have benefited from media reports, a supportive Board of Directors, and volunteers who show up with family and friends.

The folks who have volunteered come from a variety of backgrounds. For example, in 2024 there were current and retired law enforcement officers, a retired criminal lawyer, serving and retired military personnel, serving and retired civil servants, retired teachers, local entrepreneurs, and on and on.

I try to get a chance to chat with the volunteers, particularly when they are just starting. I like to find out their gardening experience and get a feel for why they are there and what they hope to get from the experience. A volunteer survey found high levels of satisfaction with the experience, citing the joy of working outdoors in a beautiful setting, learning about growing food, working with like-minded colleagues, and giving back to the community. There is general agreement that the least favourite jobs are squishing bugs and weeding.

Asking folks to volunteer for the whole season seems to have worked out well. Volunteers like to see the crops progress from planting a seed, through weeding and nourishing seedlings, to picking the

produce and the final clean-up in the fall. I believe that it fosters a sense of connectedness and a commitment to the project.

I have been moved by people who express thanks for the opportunity to experience the thrill of harvesting something that they have grown, and who wonder why they didn't experience it earlier in their life.

Has the project been successful? Beyond our wildest dreams. Over our first four years we have delivered 55,000 pounds of fresh organic produce to Food Bank clients. And in the process, we have developed a cadre of committed and experienced gardeners. In 2024 we had 40 keen volunteers and happily we had to scramble at times to make sure that they all had tasks to keep them busy.

If you are interested in being part of our project in 2025, please phone the Lanark County Food Bank (the Hunger Stop) at 257-8546 or send an email to <lcfb.thehungerstop@gmail.com>.

by David Hinks

\$30,000 in federal Covid money that allowed for the purchase of a lawn tractor, a large yard cart, a large tiller and an irrigation system. We were good to go... if we could find the people-power.

The word got out primarily through local media and our existing volunteer base. Applications came in slowly, but by planting time in mid-May we had about thirty keen volunteers. One of the best things we did was to put the General Manager of the Food Bank in charge of organizing volunteers. Her previous gig before joining the Food Bank was organizing two thousand volunteers for Blues Fest. After that



Volunteers are key to the success of The Blakeney Project, which grows food for The Hunger Stop

gig, this was a piece of cake. She made sure potential volunteers filled in the appropriate forms, got them to volunteer for a specific shift, and sent me the results in a spreadsheet.

We had set up five shifts and asked volunteers to commit to one three-hour shift every week throughout the growing season. Holidays were allowed and of course, Mother Nature is not to be ignored. For example, in the first three months of the 2024 season, we had to cancel ten shifts due to rain.

It was a learning curve for all of us. We did not have any experienced market gardeners, and truth be told, most volunteers had very little gardening experience. Gerda (another Master Gardener) and I spent a lot of our time teaching and demonstrating.

Food Bank clients were encouraged to participate. It did not always go well. Hard work under a hot sun was more than folks with disabilities could handle. My heart went out to one guy in particular. He made



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Escape Reality at the Library!

The Friends of the Mississippi Mills Public Library have joined forces with The Escape Reality Company to bring you a unique, interactive, upcycled art experience similar to an escape room. There are clues to be discovered and solved, but you won't be running around or locked in. Entitled **The Five Elements**, this game has a steam punkish vibe and can be played sitting down. Unique game clues have been created from upcycled components (i.e., stuff) from the Civitan monthly auctions, garage sales and the Hub. Who knows, you might be playing with some of your old treasures!

The Scenario
A lawyer has summoned you and all those receiving inheritances from your late uncle WEG's estate to a meeting tonight. The trouble is, you don't have an uncle WEG. The lawyer, however, is quite insistent that you should come and that there is much at stake — more than you could ever have thought possible. But when you arrive things are not quite as they seem... What have you gotten yourself into?

The game is limited to 15 players and is geared to players aged 18 and up. Tickets are \$25 each. Register and pay in advance at the Almonte Branch of the Mississippi Mills Public Library. The Five Elements will take place at the Almonte Library on Sunday, January 26 from 3-4:30PM. All proceeds will help the Friends support and promote the services of the Mississippi Mills Public Library.

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349 Rue Main, Shawville, QC Vernissage: January 12, 2025 1:30-3:30

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Register Now for Winter Lectures and Courses

Signs of the Time

by Egils Rozenbergs

January 18 - April 5, 2025



Mississippi Valley
Textile Museum

www.mvmtm.ca



LANARK COUNTY SEEDY SATURDAY

March 15, 2025
Almonte Civitan Club
10am-3pm

Get your garden growing! Seed exchanges, seed swaps, seed vendors, workshops, gardening centres, nurseries, garden supplies, farm products, educational lectures, movies, all in support of Lanark County Interval House.

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ALMONTE IN CONCERT 2024-25

TRIO
UCHIDA-CROZMAN-CHIU



Robert Uchida *violin* Cameron Crozman *cello* Philip Chiu *piano*

Sunday, January 26, 2025
ALMONTE OLD TOWN HALL 2:00 PM

SINGLE TICKET \$44

Tickets available online at ticketsplease.ca



A Play with a Difference

A Staged Reading for the Friends of the Library

By Glenda Jones

On April 26, the Friends of the Mississippi Mills Public Library will be presenting playwright Jackie Bennett's original play *Get What You Need* as a staged reading. There are roles for 6 men and 6 women in this light-hearted look at volunteer fundraisers who hire the Rolling Stones to keep their church afloat.

On January 29 from 2-8PM, Jackie will be at the Almonte library to hold auditions. Whether you're new to acting or have done it for years, all comers are welcome. To book an audition time, or for more information, please contact Jackie Bennett at 905-751-3251 or email gwynbyjb@gmail.com.

The advantages of participating in a staged reading are that rehearsals are minimal, scripts are in hand,

no memorizing volumes of lines is required, and a one-day, two show presentation in April will be the total performance commitment.

Ms. Bennett, an accomplished singer/songwriter, drama teacher and author based in Orillia, has staged this play in several venues in Ontario. Her local connection is through her father, the noted naturalist Cliff Bennett, who resides in Almonte. To keep the production close to home, this play reading will be staged in the United Church in Pakenham in April. Says Jackie, "Whether I am singing or presenting a production, I try to find ways to raise funds to benefit the community".

This event will be a spring highlight not to be missed. Keep an eye out for further details!

Two February Shows at Sivarulrasa Gallery

From February 8 to March 14, Sivarulrasa Gallery will present two new exhibitions. To kick things off, they are hosting a combined Vernissage/Artists reception on Saturday, February 8.

Elizabeth Desrosier: Looking In will run in Gallery I. Raised in Almonte, and currently based in Ottawa, Elizabeth earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Ottawa in 2021. Her practice reimagines local neighbourhoods and passing moments in day-to-day life to explore themes of voyeurism, isolation and belonging.

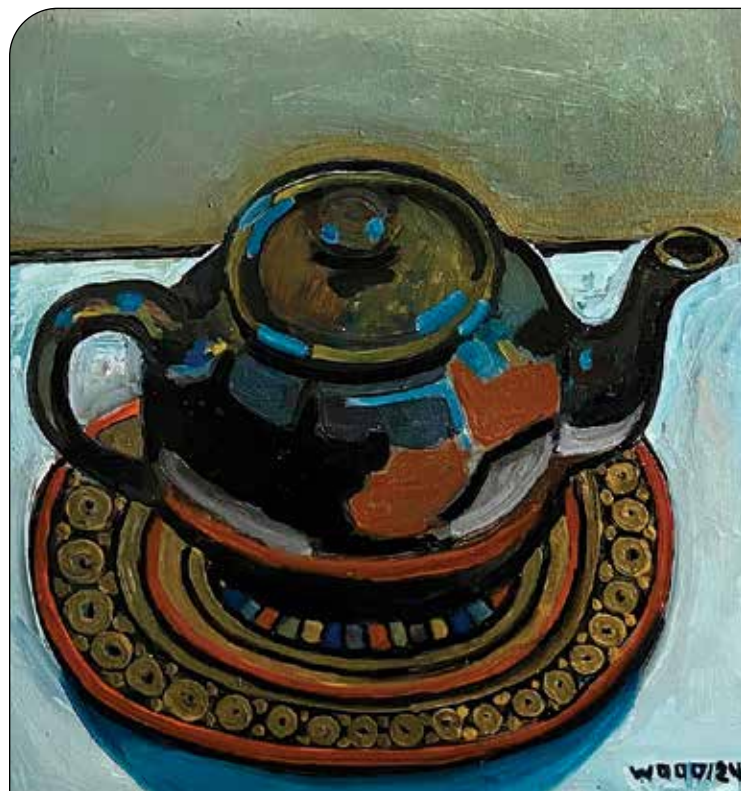
Taking inspiration from architectural landscapes, local shops and restaurants, and people both known and unknown, the artist creates a timeless familiarity in her work. Working primarily with oils, she brings a fine attention to detail while distorting perspective and lighting to emphasize the themes that she is working with. Desrosier's works have been exhibited in group exhibitions in Ontario. *Looking In* will be her first solo exhibition, and Sivarulrasa Gallery is delighted to present her work.

Peter Wood: Still Life, Still Speaking will run in Gallery III. Peter studied philosophy at Queen's University and Fine Art at NSCAD University. This exhibition features several of his new still life works which boldly proclaim the continued relevance of this genre in contemporary art.

"Through still life, I'm not just painting objects; I'm investigating the way they hold space in our lives", he explains. "In a world that moves so quickly, the act of slowing

down and paying attention is itself a radical choice." Wood's artwork has been exhibited in Nova Scotia, Ontario and Quebec, and is held in numerous private collections. He currently works from his studio in Constance Bay.

Everyone is invited to meet artists Elizabeth Desrosier and Peter Wood on Saturday, February 8 from 2-4PM. Sivarulrasa Gallery is located at 34 Mill Street in Almonte, and more information can be found at sivarulrasa.com.



Brown Betty Tea Pot by artist Peter Wood is featured in his solo show at Sivarulrasa Gallery

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Signs of the Time at the Textile Museum

A new year signals a new exhibit at the Mississippi Valley Textile Museum (MVTM). *Signs of the Time* by award-winning Latvian artist Egils Rozenbergs will be on display from January 18 to April 5. The vernissage will take place on Saturday, January 18 from 2–4PM. The exhibition is dedicated to the interesting and dynamic times in which we live. Each era has its own signs and symbols, and through these tapestries Rozenbergs tries to find those which are characteristic of our time.

Rozenbergs' large-scale tapestries are woven with a mixture of natural and synthetic materials, reflecting the complicated relationship we have with the natural world around us. Through a variety of styles, techniques, fibres and materials, Rozenbergs weaves various "stories" into his tapestries; the patterns of the sea waves, observations of distant lands, the marks left by people in nature, the impressions of contemporary technology — signs that reveal and revel in the changing times.



Egils Rozenbergs' *Scars*, *Signs of the Time* will be on exhibit at the Mississippi Valley Textile Museum

This exhibit is presented in partnership with the Embassy of the Republic of Latvia to Canada.

"It is a great privilege to have the opportunity to exhibit and bring to Canada the tapestries of prominent Latvian textile artist Egils Rozenbergs," says Kaspars Ozoliņš, Ambassador of Latvia, Embassy of the Republic of Latvia to Canada. "I'm glad that the exhibition will take place in a Museum known for and dedicated exclusively to textile art. The Embassy of the Republic of Latvia was pleased to cooperate with the Mississippi Valley Textile Museum in the creation of this exhibition. I hope that the loyal patrons of the Museum, as well as first-time visitors, will be as thrilled as his admirers around the globe to immerse themselves in Egils Rozenbergs' world of tapestry art."

"We're very pleased to partner with the Embassy of the Republic of Latvia to showcase the brilliant work of Egils Rozenbergs," echoes Michael Rikley-Lancaster, MVTM Executive Director/Curator. "His tapestries are striking in their scale, colour and technique, and we're happy to share his art with the community. We live in unprecedented times, and Rozenbergs has done an excellent job of capturing this, allowing viewers to sit in the moment. This is a fantastic start to the Museum's 40th anniversary. We're excited to reflect on how far the MVTM has come, and look forward to where it's going."

Check out mvtm.ca and sign up for their newsletter to stay up to date on all things MVTM!

A Community Fund is Coming to Mississippi Mills

By Margaret Miller

Join your friends and neighbours to explore the Mississippi Mills Community Fund, coming our way in 2025!

Community Foundations were initiated 100 years ago in Cleveland Ohio. Since then, they have spread throughout the US, Canada and the world. Their mission is to attract donors and use funds donated to help local charities meet the specific needs of their communities. There are now over 200 Community Foundations in Canada. In 1986, the Community Foundation of Ottawa ocf-fco.ca was founded, and they have been instrumental in the development of new community funds in our region. Now a community fund is coming to Mississippi Mills to serve our community.

The Mississippi Mills Community Fund is a new initiative created by local community builders who are passionate about strengthening and supporting Mississippi Mills. The Ottawa Community Foundation has been chosen as our partner to provide expertise in fund administration and investment. Mississippi Mills Community Fund is responsible for all local activities and decision-making. This collaboration ensures that our fund grows sustainably, respects donor wishes, and provides impactful grants tailored to Mississippi Mills' unique needs, fostering a

flourishing community where every resident has access to essential resources. It does not compete with other fundraising efforts; rather, it provides a vehicle to make your charitable dollars grow.

The local Mississippi Mills Community Fund founding committee welcomes everyone to an information session at the Mississippi Valley Textile Museum (3 Rosamond Street east in Almonte) on Thursday, February 20 from 7–9PM. Details about the fund, how it works, who is involved, and the experience of other Community Foundations will be presented with ample time for questions.

Speakers include Janet Adams, Manager, Philanthropic Services & Community Building for the Ottawa Community Foundation; Daren Givoque, Chair of the North Grenville Community Fund; and Benjamin Haskins, Managing Partner, Quadrus Investment Services Limited.

This event is free but as space is limited, we invite you to register at Tickets Please (TicketsPlease.ca, 485–6434). Refreshments will be served. For further information, please visit mmcommunityfund.ca or email info@mmcommunityfund.ca. Sign up to receive news and updates from the Mississippi Mills Community Fund at mmcommunityfund.ca/newsletter.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 17

Mississippi Mills FAMILY DAY ACTIVITIES

FAMILY MOVIE - FREE!

Almonte Old Town Hall (14 Bridge St.) at 10AM. MMYC is running the canteen. Movie title will be announced closer to the date. *Stay tuned!*

PUBLIC SKATING - FREE!

John Levi Community Centre 1PM - 3PM (Almonte)
Stewart Community Centre 2PM - 4PM (Pakenham)

MILL OF KINTAIL CONSERVATION AREA - FREE!

Family Day Special - FREE admission/parking
Enjoy hiking, snowshoeing or cross country skiing (BYO equipment)

NORTH LANARK REGIONAL MUSEUM - FREE!

647 River Rd., Appleton
Open 10AM - 3PM

MISSISSIPPI VALLEY TEXTILE MUSEUM - FREE!

3 Rosamond St. E., Almonte
Open 10AM - 4PM

MOUNT PAKENHAM

Open 9AM - 5PM
Skiing, snowboarding & snowshoeing!

WINTER FEST IN DOWNTOWN ALMONTE

February 15-17
For a list of activities & events visit destinationalmonte.com

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Mississippi Mills



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All You Need is Love

A Fundraiser to Support the PDCF Community Granting Fund

This year, the Perth and District Community Foundation (PDCF) is distributing more money than ever before in Community Grants. In January, 29 grants totaling over \$300,000 will be distributed.

Historical book preservation, emergency shelter creation, a community dog park, hospice care, services for homeless youth, writing workshops, and free recreation programs for children are just a few of the projects that PDCF grants support. Community Grants touch the lives of many.

To celebrate this achievement, foster community, and raise money for its Community Granting Fund, PDCF is hosting a fundraising mix and mingle dance on February 15 at Code's Mill on the Park in Perth.

All You Need is Love

All You Need is Love will be a 1960s-themed evening of groovy music and inspiring décor that is guaranteed to be one of the best parties of 2025. It will be a chance to shake off the winter blues, visit with friends, and maybe even win some prizes!

Code's Mill on the Park will be taken back in time to an era of peace and love, martinis, mellow lounges, and elegant nights at the supper club. There will be light snacks, great cocktails, interactive games, and of course, dancing the night away for those who like to do the Twist! The winning ticket for the PDCF raffle will also be drawn. The prize is a trip for two to see Billy Joel in concert in Toronto, complete with VIA Rail transportation, and a night at the Toronto Hilton Downtown.

Tickets for All You Need is Love are \$100 (with a \$50 tax receipt issued for each ticket)

and are available through Tickets Please (TicketsPlease.ca, 485-6434). Raffle tickets are \$20 and are being sold by PDCF board members or at Picnic Café (1865 Rogers Road in Perth). Only 500 raffle tickets are available, so get yours soon! All proceeds from the dance and the raffle will go directly to the PDCF Community Granting Fund.

Grant Recipients

The 2025 PDCF Community Grant Recipients are:

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Lanark County — mentoring program
- Lanark Highlands Youth Centre — programming for youth
- Climate Network Lanark and the Salal Foundation — developing a plan for growth
- PEP Seniors Therapeutic Program and The Hospice Hub — weekly day-away hospice program
- Lanark County Interval House — perseverance pantry for women
- The Table Community Food Centre — community meal cultural celebrations
- ConnectWell Therapeutic Riding Program — expansion of the program
- Stewart Park Festival — promotion, safety training
- Rideau Ground Search and Rescue — replacement GPS devices
- Queer Connection Lanark and Interval House — promotion and launch of a new documentary
- Perth Community Dog Park — building a shelter and benches
- Lanark Highlands Public Library — increasing the adult fiction collection
- Perth Curling Club and Drummond North Elmsley Township — club's 150th anniversary display
- Almonte Readers & Writers and the Perth and District Union Library — writing workshops and literary festival
- Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust — video promoting engagement with nature
- Middleville and District Museum — local historical wedding dress exhibit
- Watson's Corners Community Hall and ConnectWell — noise reduction and blackout curtain installation
- PEP Seniors Therapeutic Centre — physiotherapy for clients
- Youth Action Kommittee (YAK) — operating costs to allow time for program development
- Linden Cooperative Housing and Lanark County — affordable co-op housing in Perth
- Guatemala Stove Project — masonry stoves built by local volunteers
- Perth Fire Dawgs and the Town of Perth — free youth sports program
- Cornerstone Landing Youth Services — outreach and support to homeless youth
- ConnectWell Diners Club — in-person dinner gatherings for older adults
- ConnectWell Volunteer Tax Program — free income tax support
- Lanark Basic Income Network and The Town of Perth — awareness program
- McDonalds Corners Agricultural Society and MERA — renovations to allow emergency shelter designation



Grants from the Perth & District Community Foundation have helped the Stewart Park Festival bring terrific performers like Jess Wedden, David Francey and Chris Murphy to town!

To find out more about the Perth and District Community Foundation, please visit <pdf.ca>.

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The phenomenal KellyLee Evans (above) will be joined by local powerhouses Cait Porteous and Vicki Brittle for a concert on Saturday, March 1

Women in Music

Amazing Concert Coming to Carleton Place

The Town of Carleton Place invites you to celebrate International Women's Day at the Women In Music Concert on Saturday, March 1 at the historic Carleton Place Town Hall Auditorium. This will be an unforgettable evening of music and storytelling featuring JUNO award-winning artist KellyLee Evans with special guests Vicki Brittle and Cait Porteous.

2018 JUNO nominee KellyLee Evans is a high-octane, chameleon-like performer whose natural charm and improvisational vocal style embody jazz, soul, pop, and hip-hop. The singer-songwriter won a 2011 JUNO Award and has been captivating audiences ever since, opening for stars such as John Legend, George Benson and Willie Nelson.

Singer-songwriter Vicki Brittle is paving her own path through the Ottawa Valley with solo performances and shows with fellow bandmates in The Maywoods. With a mixture of storytelling and original songs, Vicki leaves audiences captivated wherever she performs.

Carleton Place native Cait Porteous is a familiar face (and voice) in the Lanark County region, and

is a regularly-requested performer for many of the major events and festivals throughout the County. Cait's vocal range and upbeat personality makes for a truly enchanting performance.

"Celebrating women in music has been a personal goal for our Town Hall Concert Series, and it felt most appropriate to do so during the week of International Women's Day," says Community Development Coordinator Jessica Hansen. "We also look forward to celebrating a few local female-led businesses who will be on-site to sell refreshments for attendees. This is an event that is not to be missed."

General Admission tickets are \$30 per ticket and can be purchased online at online.carletonplace.ca. This event is sure to sell out, so interested attendees are encouraged to purchase soon to avoid disappointment. Doors will open at 7PM with a start time of 7:30. The Carleton Place Town Hall is located at 175 Bridge Street. Attendees are encouraged to follow the event page for additional event details: facebook.com/share/15nZxpLBcT.

Valley Youth Singers

By Helen Rutledge

As Dr. Seuss said: "Think left and think right and think low and think high. Oh, the things you can think up if only you try!"

We can't be sure, but maybe Dr. Seuss was thinking about children and the joy of singing when he spoke about thinking low and high. The Valley Youth Singers think of fun, teamwork and music education all rolled into wonderful experiences for kids!

On December 8, 2024, the Valley Youth Singers had their first concert in Perth, and they are now preparing for their next term starting in February. This wonderful children's choir is led by Alana Cliften, a music educator who began her musical career with the Perth Community Choir and Orion Theatre Company. After completing her music studies at Queen's University, Alana trained with Dr. Mark Sirett in the Cantabile Conductor Apprenticeship Program in Kingston. She loved working with the Cantabile children's choirs and has now returned to Lanark County, ready to bring the joy of music and singing to the children of Perth and area.

Val Leavitt accompanies the children on piano. Many will know Val from her years of working in Perth as a piano teacher and accompanist, as the musical director for St. James and St. Paul's Junior and Youth Choirs, and as a pianist performer in Perth. Helen Rutledge, a choral singer and theatre performer,

supports Val and Alana with the administrative tasks of the choir.

Valley Youth Singers operates from two locations, so families can register their children either for the Perth Choir or the Lanark Choir. Both choirs will learn the same songs and will come together for the dress rehearsal and concert in May.

Valley Youth Singers welcomes children aged 7-12. The Perth Choir will rehearse at St. James Anglican Church in Perth on Friday afternoons from 4:30-5:30PM (February 7 to April 25). The Lanark Choir will rehearse at Alana's Music Education Studio at her home just outside of Lanark Village on Saturday mornings from 9:30-10:30AM (February 8 to April 26). Both choirs will come together for a dress rehearsal and spring concert in May at St. James Anglican Church in Perth.

Meet and Greet

A Meet and Greet for new choristers only will be held on Saturday, February 1 at St. James Church in Perth. To confirm a time slot for the Meet and Greet, please email the choir at valleyyouthsingers@gmail.com. Information for current VYS singer registration will be sent by email in January.

The cost to join Valley Youth Singers is \$75 per term, and bursaries are available to families who would benefit from financial assistance.

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The next SRO Tea Dance takes place on January 19 at the Almonte Old Town Hall

SRO Big Band Tea Dance

On Sunday, January 19, the classic big band Standing Room Only (SRO) with guest vocalist Helen Glover will stage the next in its series of Sunday afternoon "tea dances" for ballroom and swing dancers. The dances are held in the historic Almonte Old Town Hall at 14 Bridge Street.

Tea dances are afternoon dances that were popular in the 20s, 30s, and 40s, when big bands were king. They were held in hotels and, of course, featured a live band. As implied by "tea", beverages were non-alcoholic.

SRO launched their popular dances in 2006. They give guests a chance to listen and dance to live big band music in a period atmosphere. They attract ballroom and swing dancers from the Ottawa area and as far away as Brockville and Deep River.

The January 19th dance will be held in the auditorium on the third floor of the Old Town Hall, a

beautifully preserved venue with a clean and spacious wooden dance floor, natural lighting, and wonderful acoustics. Doors open at 1PM and dancing is from 1:30-4PM. Admission is \$15 per person at the door, cash only. Reservations are not required. Light refreshments including delicious treats and a range of non-alcoholic beverages will be available at reasonable prices, cash only.

The remaining Sunday afternoon tea dances in the 2024/2025 season take place on March 2 and April 13.

For more information about SRO and their tea dances, visit <srobigband.ca> or <facebook.com/srobigband>. You can receive notification emails (sent out about two weeks before each tea dance) by sending an email to <srobigband@bell.net> with the Subject "Subscription Request".

THANK YOU
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Save the date!

The Friends of the Mississippi Mills Public Library are pleased to present a staged reading of the comedy, *Get What You Need* by Jackie Bennett.

Saturday
April 26
2025



St. Andrew's United Church · Pakenham

To All of You: Songs of Remembering

A Winter Concert by the River Resonance Choir

River Resonance is quickly becoming a notable Perth choir, known mostly for their singing on the shores of Otty Lake to an audience of neighbours and friends listening from the water on their kayaks, canoes, stand up boards and motorboats! They began singing together in 2019, and just as they began, Covid halted them. They are finally up and running in full force once again.

On Saturday February 1 at 11AM, you can hear them in a more conventional setting, at St. Paul's United Church as they sing *Songs of Remembering*, including a world premiere of a new piece — *To All of You* — by Phil Oddy and arranged by Katerina Gimon of Vancouver, commissioned especially for River Resonance. They will be accompanied

by pianist Aidan Shenkman with guest violinist Shannon Deavy.

River Resonance will be joined by Kingston's Martello Alley Cats, which consists of eleven singers and two instrumentalists, all with a background in choral singing, folk, jazz, gospel styles, doo wop, rock, folk, and anything else that swings. This morning concert is sure to send you out the door humming through the rest of your day!

Tickets are \$20, and you can reserve by emailing Chuck Shenkman at <chuckshenkman@gmail.com> or purchase them at the door. All proceeds over and above concert expenses will be donated to The Table Community Food Centre. Please contact Nicola Oddy at <nicola.oddy@me.com> for more information.

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KELLYLEE EVANS



WITH SPECIAL GUESTS



Cait Porteous



Vicki Brittle

CARLETON PLACE TOWN HALL AUDITORIUM
TICKETS: ONLINE.CARLETONPLACE.CA



Perth's fabulous Frost & Fire event returns on Saturday, February 15

Frost & Fire in Perth Winter Festival on Family Day Weekend

Perth Tourism is thrilled to present the Frost & Fire Winter Festival, happening on Saturday, February 15 as part of Family Day Weekend.

This year's festival promises an unforgettable day packed with activities for all ages. From thrilling outdoor adventures to cozy indoor experiences, Frost & Fire has something for everyone. Events and attractions will take place throughout Perth, both indoors and outdoors.

Dive into the fun with outdoor laser tag and axe throwing, available from 10AM to 4PM. Weather permitting, you can enjoy outdoor sledding and skating, perfect for creating family memories. Stop by craft stations at the Perth Museum to let your creativity flow, and explore the Vendor Marketplace at the Crystal Palace, show-

ing treats and handmade goods from talented local artisans. Take in live music throughout the day, warm up at indoor and outdoor warming stations, and pop into one of Perth's delightful restaurants for a hot drink and a meal.

The fun doesn't end when the sun goes down! In the evening, join the Perth & District Community Foundation for the **All You Need Is Love** fundraising dance at Code's Mill. Want to kick-off your weekend early? Put your knowledge to the test at the **PEP Trivia Night** on Friday, February 14 at the Crystal Palace, sponsored by Lanark Lifestyles.

Come explore Perth and experience a weekend filled with frosty fun and fiery entertainment. For more details and updates, please visit <Perth.ca/FrostAndFire>.

2025 Art House Music Series in CP

Hosts Mel and Don Bray are excited to start the 2025 Art House Music Series off with the fabulous folk singer/songwriter **Vicki Brittle**. On Thursday, January 30, come on out to the Carleton Place Gallery and immerse yourself in a fantastic evening as music and art collide in the first concert of this series featuring top musicians and artists from surrounding areas.

Blessed with a soulful voice that pairs perfectly with her willingness to fully put herself into her songs, Vicki Brittle effortlessly brings newcomers into her world. Her music explores the trials and tribulations of becom-

ing who you are. Amidst the uncertainty, she offers herself — and anyone listening — the grace and patience to take their time.

Born in Arnprior, Ontario, Brittle began playing and writing music at a young age, woodshedding her craft at the town's hockey games and bars. Vicki has performed at incredible venues around Canada such as the RBC Ottawa Bluesfest, Cityfolk Festival and Canadian Small Halls Festival, and has opened for numerous established artists. She was also previously nominated for "Album of the Year" by *Faces Magazine*.

The Art House concert on February 27 features **George Turcotte** (aka J'Ukebox George) — a one-man band with a big bag of tunes. Catering directly to his audience, he delivers popular tunes from folk, rock, country and jazzy blues as well as some spicy originals.

March 27 brings **The Ragged Flowers** to town. This five-piece polyrhythmic funky and folk-ish band plays mostly original tunes interspersed with a few covers that they make their own. Featuring George Birchall, Ian Douglas, Steve Reside, Rob Riendeau and Nathan Slonioski, the Flowers have played the Folkus Concert Series, Blue Skies Music Festival, The Blacksheep Inn and other fine venues.

The series continues with **Lynn Miles** on April 24 (she will also be hosting a songwriting workshop on the 23rd), **Bray and MacLean Trio** on May 29, and **TRiPOD** on June 26. They take a break in July and August and then start up again in September with more great acts. You can find tickets for all 2025 concerts at Tickets Please (TicketsPlease.ca, 485-6434).



Don't miss the chance to hear Vicki Brittle at the Carleton Place Gallery on January 30

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TICKETS \$100
available at TicketsPlease.ca

New Orford String Quartet, Almonte, Mar 8
Seedy Saturday, Almonte, Mar 15
Holmes and Watson, Perth, Mar 20-30
The Ragged Flowers, CP, Mar 27
Whitehorse, Almonte, Mar 29
Maria Doyle Kennedy, Almonte, Apr 5
Maple Run Tour, Pakenham, Apr 5-6
Fierbois, Almonte, Apr 12
Songwriting w/Lynn Miles, CP, Apr 23
Lynn Miles, CP, Apr 24
Get What You Need, Pakenham, Apr 26
Jonas and Barry in the Home, SF, Apr 25-May 4
Waiting for the Parade, Perth, May 1-11
Bray and MacLean Trio, CP, May 29
The Savannah Sipping Society, SF, June 20-29
TRiPOD, Carleton Place, Jun 26

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
<p>Arts Carleton Place Art Hub presents <i>Breakaway</i>, a group art show [to Feb 9] <artscarletonplace.com> General Fine Craft presents new works by Roger Mattiuz (turned woodwork), Leta Cormier (reduction-fired pottery), and Stroud Studio (kiln drop glass) <generalfinecraft.com> Mississippi Valley Textile Museum presents <i>Signs of the Time</i>, works by Egils Rozenbergs [from Jan 18] <mvtn.ca> Sivarulrasa Gallery presents <i>Elizabeth Desrosier: Looking In</i>, and <i>Peter Wood: Still Life, Still Speaking</i> [from Feb 8] <sivarulrasa.com> The Corridor Gallery at the Almonte Library presents <i>Dreaming of Spring</i> — works by Marni Friesen</p>			
3	4	5 Still Life Sessions, Arnprior	6
10	11	12 Still Life Sessions, Arnprior	13 Delve — Author Conversation, Almonte
17 Almonte Quilters Guild Meeting, Almonte Family Day Activities in Mississippi Mills, Almonte	18	19 Still Life Sessions, Arnprior	20 The Addams Family, Carleton Place There Goes the Bride, Smiths Falls Launch & Info Session - Miss Mills Community Fund, Almonte
24 Almonte & District Horticultural Monthly Meeting, Almonte	25	26 Still Life Sessions, Arnprior Silent Book Club, Perth	27 George Turcotte, Carleton Place Social Swing Dance with Revival Swing, Almonte

Festivals

Perth Lunar New Year Festival, Feb 1, 11AM-4PM. Family-friendly event. Code's Mill, Perth. \$10-\$15 from TicketsPlease.ca. facebook.com/share/157gddanca
Frost & Fire Winter Festival, Feb 15. Indoor & outdoor winter activities & entertainment in Perth. Downtown Perth. perth.ca/frostandfire

Literature

Silent Book Club, Feb 26, 6PM. Quiet reading; mingle with fellow book lovers, if you wish. Bridge Masters Brewing Company, Perth. sbcperth.ticketleap.com
Delve — Author Conversation, Feb 13, 6:30PM. With authors Rose Graceling-Moore & Hypatia Rae. Ottawa Valley Coffee Almonte. pay what you can at TicketsPlease.ca. almontereadersandwriters.org

Visual Arts

Still Life Sessions, Wednesdays, 10AM-1PM. Rendering of inanimate objects using your own personal medium. Arnprior Art Loft. Free. arnpriorartloft.godaddysites.com
Art Circle Saturdays, Saturdays, 10AM-1PM. Bring a current project with you and create with others. Arnprior Art Loft. Free. arnpriorartloft.godaddysites.com
Meet the Artists, Feb 8, 2-4PM. Meet artists Elizabeth Desrosier and Peter Wood. Sivarulrasa Gallery, Almonte. sivarulrasa.com
Almonte Quilters Guild Meeting, Feb 17, 7PM. Guest presenter and showcase. Via Zoom. \$35 annual membership; guests \$5. almontequiltersguild.ca

Theatre

The Complete Works of Shakespeare, Jan 23, 24, 30, 31 (7:30PM); Jan 25, 26, Feb 1, 2 (2PM). Wig flipping, wisecracking, twinkle toed mayhem! Studio Theatre Perth. Tickets from TicketsPlease.ca, 485-6434. studiotheatreperth.com

B Movie Saturday, Feb 8, 1:30-7PM. *Them!*; *Little Shop of Horrors*; *Plan 9 from Outer Space*. Tickets from TicketsPlease.ca, 485-6434. Studio Theatre Perth. studiotheatreperth.com
The Addams Family, Feb 14, 15, 20, 21 (7:30PM); Feb 16, 22 (2PM). A comical feast that embraces the wackiness in every family. Presented by the Mississippi Mudds Youth. Carleton Place Town Hall. \$15 at TicketsPlease.ca, 485-6434. mississippimudds.ca
There Goes the Bride, Feb 14, 15, 20, 21, 22 (7:30PM); Feb 16, 23 (2PM). Farce by John Chapman and Ray Cooney. The Station Theatre, Smiths Falls. \$24 Adults; \$10 Students. smithsfallstheatre.com
Suze, Feb 16, 2PM. Canadian comedy-drama film. Almonte Legion. \$15 from ticketsplease.ca. ticketsplease.ca
My Fatal Valentine, Feb 21, 6PM. A murder mystery dinner performed by the Mississippi Mudds. Tickets from almontecivitan.com. Almonte Civitan Hall. \$50 + HST. almontecivitan.com/civitan-hall

Youth

Valley Youth Singers Meet & Greet, Feb 1. Find out about a new choir for kids aged 7-12 in Perth and Lanark. RSVP to Valleyouthsingers@gmail.com to book a time. St. James the Apostle Anglican Church, Perth. valleyouthsingers@gmail.com
Almonte Black History Teen Dance Party, Feb 1, 8-10PM. In collaboration with the Mississippi Mills Youth Centre. Free, register at TicketsPlease.ca.

Music

Oakfield Traditional Session Sunday, Sundays, 2-5PM. Live Celtic music in an informal setting. Oakfield Rugby Park, Perth. Free
Shane Pendergast, Jan 31, 7:30PM. In concert with special guest Billy MacInnis. Oakfield Rugby Park, Perth. \$25 from TicketsPlease.ca, 485-6434
The Hip Experience, Feb 1, 8PM. A tribute to The Tragically Hip. The Station Theatre, Smiths Falls. \$35 + tax and fee. smithsfallstheatre.com

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

<p>31</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Complete Works of Shakespeare, Perth Logan Brown, The Cove Shane Pendergast, Perth Rick and Lindsay, St. James Gate 	<p>1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Complete Works of Shakespeare, Perth Perth Lunar New Year Festival, Perth Black History Teen Dance, Almonte Black History Family Dance, Almonte Valley Youth Singers Meet & Greet, Perth River Resonance Choir Concert, Perth Westport Senior Living Fundraiser, The Cove Alana Brown, Urban Angus Steak & Wine The Hip Experience, Smiths Falls Art Circle Saturdays, Amprior 	<p>2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Complete Works of Shakespeare, Perth Country Pickin' with Shawn McCullough Band, The Cove Oakfield Traditional Session Sunday, Perth
<p>7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cait Porteous, St. James Gate 	<p>8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> B Movie Saturday, Perth Meet the Artists, Almonte Texas King, Neat Coffee Shop Year of the Snake event, Almonte Art Circle Saturdays, Amprior 	<p>9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oakfield Traditional Session Sunday, Perth
<p>14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spencer Scharf, St. James Gate The Addams Family, Carleton Place There Goes the Bride, Smiths Falls 	<p>15</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frost & Fire Winter Festival, Perth Back Forty Winterland, Mississippi Station The Addams Family, Carleton Place There Goes the Bride, Smiths Falls John V W, Westport Brewing Co. Valentine's Dinner, Carleton Place Cashman Ford, Urban Angus Steak & Wine Retro Night, Amprior All You Need is Love Mix and Mingle Dance, Perth Art Circle Saturdays, Amprior 	<p>16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suze, Almonte Black History 19+ Dance, Almonte The Addams Family, Carleton Place There Goes the Bride, Smiths Falls Oakfield Traditional Session Sunday, Perth
<p>21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Addams Family, Carleton Place There Goes the Bride, Smiths Falls My Fatal Valentine, Almonte Bahoo & the Brat, St. James Gate Matthew Barber, Neat Coffee Shop 	<p>22</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There Goes the Bride, Smiths Falls The Addams Family, Carleton Place Coldest Night of the Year Fundraiser, Carleton Place Art Circle Saturdays, Amprior 	<p>23</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There Goes the Bride, Smiths Falls Oakfield Traditional Session Sunday, Perth
<p>28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Miss Emily Band, The Cove Brock Zeman, St. James Gate 	<p>1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women In Music Night, Carleton Place Off the Rock, Perth Anna Ludlow, Perth Art Circle Saturdays, Amprior 	<p>2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SRO Tea Dance, Almonte The Grapes Of Wrath, Neat Coffee Shop Oakfield Traditional Session Sunday, Perth

River Resonance Choir Concert, Feb 1, 11AM. Local choir presents their winter concert *To All of You: Songs of Remembering*, with special guests the Martello Alley Cats from Kingston. Tickets at the door or from chuckshenman@gmail.com. Proceeds to The Table Community Food Centre. St. Paul's United Perth. \$20. stpaulsperth.ca

Retro Night, Feb 15, 6:30PM. Music, dancing and community spirit fundraiser. Nick Smith Centre, Amprior. \$50. foundation@arnpriorhealth.ca

George Turcotte, Feb 27, 7PM. One-man band. Carleton Place Gallery. \$30 from TicketsPlease.ca, 485-6434. cpgallery.ca

Social Swing Dance with Revival Swing, Feb 27, 7-9PM. Intro lesson followed by social dance. No experience or partner needed. Hillside Reformed Presbyterian Church, Almonte. \$5 entry (cash). facebook.com

Anna Ludlow, Mar. 1, 7:30PM. In concert. Oakfield Rugby Park, Perth. \$25 from TicketsPlease.ca, 485-6434

Women In Music Night, Mar 1, 7PM. Music and storytelling with KellyLee Evans, Vicki Brittle and Cait Porteous. Tickets from online.carletonplace.ca. Carleton Place Town Hall. \$30

Off the Rock, Mar 1, 8PM. Great Big Sea tribute. Farrell Hall, Perth. \$35 in advance/\$40 at the door. TicketsPlease.ca, 485-6434

SRO Tea Dance, Mar 2, 1:30-4PM. Dance to big band Standing Room Only. Entry (\$15) & snacks, cash only. Almonte Old Town Hall. facebook.com/srobignband

Pub Listings

The Cove (Westport, 273-3636): 5-8PM unless noted; Mon Jon Jones; Wed Wings 'n Tunes w/Shawn McCullough (5:30-8:30); Sun Eric Uren & Meghan Balogh

Jan 31 Logan Brown

Feb 1 Westport Senior Living Fundraiser, 6-9PM. \$30 to WSL

Feb 2 Country Pickin' with Shawn McCullough Band, 1-4PM, \$10 cover

Feb 28 Miss Emily Band, 5-9PM. \$95 Dinner, Show + Charity

Neat Coffee Shop (Burnstown, 433-9960): 8PM

Feb 8 Texas King, \$35

Feb 21 Matthew Barber, \$35

Mar 2 The Grapes Of Wrath, \$55

Westport Brewing Co. (Westport, 273-2739): Tunes on Tap, 2-4PM

Feb 15 John V W

St. James Gate (Carleton Place, stjamesgatecp.com): 7-10PM

Jan 31 Rick and Lindsay

Feb 7 Cait Porteous

Feb 14 Spencer Scharf

Feb 21 Bahoo & the Brat

Feb 28 Brock Zeman

Urban Angus Steak & Wine (Amprior, 558-5050)

Feb 1 Alana Brown, 6PM

Feb 15 Cashman Ford, 6PM

Community

Almonte Black History Family Dance Party, Feb 1, 5:30-8PM. Free, register at TicketsPlease.ca.

Year of the Snake event, Feb 8, 11AM-2PM. See the new 2025 "Year of the Snake" coins, visit with live ball pythons! Alliance Coin, Almonte. alliancecoin.com

Back Forty Winterland, Feb 15, 11AM-5PM. Local food, drink, and outdoor fun. Back Forty Artisan Cheese, Mississippi Station. artisancheese.ca

All You Need is Love Mix and Mingle Dance, Feb 15, 7PM. 60's theme with cocktail lounge and coffee house. Dance lessons, party games, contest. Code's Mill, Perth. \$100 from TicketsPlease.ca, 485-6434

Almonte Black History 19+ Dance Party, Feb 16, 7-11PM. \$25 from TicketsPlease.ca.

Family Day Activities in Mississippi Mills, Feb 17. Mount Pakenham open (9-5); Museums (Appleton & Textile Museum free); Free Family Movie at the Old Town Hall (10am); Free Skating: Almonte Arena (1-3pm), Pakenham (2-4pm); Mill of Kintail free for hiking, snowshoeing, x-country, BYO equipment. Town of Mississippi Mills. mississippimills.ca

Launch & Info Session - Mississippi Mills Community Fund, Feb 20, 7PM. Discuss the new Mississippi Mills Community Fund. Mississippi Valley Textile Museum, Almonte. Free - register at TicketsPlease.ca

Coldest Night of the Year Fundraiser, Feb 22, 4-7PM. Family-friendly fundraising walk for Cornerstone Landing (youth homelessness). Carleton Place Canoe Club. cnoy.org/location/lanarkcounty

Almonte & District Horticultural Monthly Meeting, Feb 24, 7:30PM. The Ornamental Kitchen Garden. Cornerstone Community Church, Almonte. adhsmailbox@gmail.com

The Birth of a Business

By Yvonne Harrington

Why do businesses begin? What is the impetus behind a start-up? There are many reasons. Mine were simple.

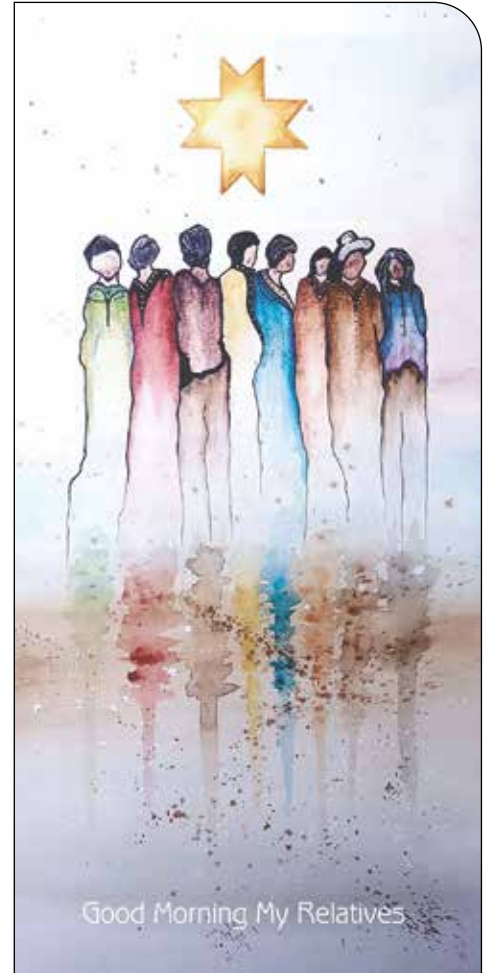
My husband was given an incurable, progressive disease diagnosis with a short-lived prognosis. He delighted those he loved with his desire to live longer than expected. During this very trying time, a friend suggested that I needed something outside of the caring for my husband, something that would bring me joy.

And thus my home-based business, The Gift Boutique, was born. The goal of The Gift Boutique was to provide an outlet for area artists and artisans to display their works of art. What a joy it was meeting the various creative forces in my hometown area! The creativity that these special people have is sometimes mind-boggling. I was in awe and very thankful that I was accepted as a professional entity who cared about their work and gave it a home where lovers of art came to purchase their various forms of art. Joy at that time of my life was fleeting due to the difficult circumstances in which I found myself: retired, caregiving, despairing as I faced the fact that I would need to sell our house due to the cost of long-term care. Every day The Gift Boutique took me to another world in which I thrived and survived. It saved me on a daily basis. This phase of my life ended on December 10, 2015.

On November 24, 2020, I moved to the Almonte area. I finally purchased a house — what a ride that was due to the escalating cost of houses. I worked at getting settled, getting rid of my storage units, and finally arriving at a place where I needed something to utilize my skills and abilities. Enter The Gift Boutique 2.0.

I knew how to put together the 2.0 version of the boutique, and did so by finding amazing Maja at the Almonte Print Shop for all of my marketing materials. She worked tirelessly to meet my self-imposed deadline.

On November 14, 2024, The Gift Boutique was in business once again. At this writing, the works of art for twelve local artists and artisans, plus several other Canadian designers, are displayed and catching the attention of those who venture in to see what the space is all about. What they find is a professionally appointed up-scale boutique filled with colour, joy, and warmly felt enthusiasm for all that is within. It may be outside the normal hours of a downtown storefront, but it is indeed a business that the curator/owner takes very seriously. This is a year-round, home-based, lifestyle-accommodating business that includes occasional breaks to enjoy family and visiting friends, rest and relaxation, and even some new adventures along



Good Morning My Relatives

Located in Almonte, The Gift Boutique carries works by local artists, including prints and gift cards that raise funds for Art for Aid (above)

the way. It has been said that if you choose something you love to do, you will never work a day in your life. How true this is! What better life than presenting a gift-giving opportunity for all occasions: birthdays, visiting family and friends, anniversaries, retiring colleagues, Valentine's Day, Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Grandparents Day, and "just because" occasions. Every day is a day to celebrate. How will you celebrate this day?

For those who haven't yet ventured into The Gift Boutique, you still have the opportunity to do so. The space that presented a "Christmassy" flair has now been re-dressed to a "Winter" refuge full of art, made by hand, created with passion, along with a celebratory wave to Valentine's Day, and the vintage flair of long-ago treasures. If you love art, I encourage you and your Valentine to visit The Gift Boutique!

— Yvonne Harrington is the owner and curator of The Gift Boutique, located at 348 Honeyborne Street in Almonte. Open Monday through Wednesday by appointment, Thursday and Friday from 10–5 and Saturday from 10–4, you can reach her at <yharrington@xplornet.ca> or 921-6001.



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Get Back in that Box!

Here comes your newest electronic gadget — packed tightly in its box, nestled in Styro-foam, molded cardboard, wrapped in plastic, taped on all four sides. Ah, the excitement of getting it out! Bits and bobs fly everywhere as cords, casings, batteries and assorted parts are strewn on the counter. There's more wrapping than actual item in that box. It's very tempting to simply gather it all in a heap and toss it. But wait! If it doesn't work, did you read that tiny line that says it has to be returned in original packing? Nothing ever fits back in the box.

by Glenda Jones

When we were putting Christmas to bed for another year, the first thing was the tree itself. We bought it in a sturdy storage cardboard box, and the moment we opened it the tree grew massive branches that defied ever getting back in that box, no matter how we shoved and tugged. The box finally exploded, leaving us mired in several sections of tree. I made a huge cover for the thing, and now it covers like a growing thing in the basement for most of the year.



I'm crazy for those little strings of lights, all neatly displayed in tiny boxes. As careful as I am when I pull them out, they never go back in the box. I end up with tails of lights dangling off the shelf. I'd like to meet the person who put those in there the first time, knowing no one will be able to do it ever again. "Ha ha, Mrs. Consumer!"

There are other things that can't be repackaged. My lovely set of sheets came attractively boxed and tied with a satin ribbon, no less. One shake, and never again was it so pristine. That fitted sheet with elastic completely around the edge defies orderly folding. Here's what I do. I fold it over along what could be the centre, then I carefully fold in the side pieces, and then I fold it over on itself... and then I squish the whole thing into a tidy ball, and stuff it in the cupboard. This from the woman who worked in a laundry folding sheets for a whole summer!

The set of dishes that came in a partitioned orderly box must have multiplied during the holidays, because not even the plates fit now. The cup handles are all askew and the bowls aren't nesting together. The flap won't close properly, and I need my tape gun to make it come close to meeting.

I opened a bag of lettuce that would make one or two meals, but it burst out of the bag in a cloud of green fit for a rabbit warren. All I wanted was one leaf for a sandwich, and there I was trying to fork it back into the bag, which of course tore as I stuffed. How did they get it in there in the first place?

Our heavy-duty pump has a thick cord that is supposed to wind around the top into the space around the handle, and all fit back in its box. I could see it was designed to do that, so I took it out carefully, thinking that if I really looked at it I could reverse the process and have some hope of the box being intact for awhile. Two outings later and there was no hope of that thing ever again being in the box with the lid closed.

Have you ever seen what happens with a vacuum-packed mattress? Cut one corner of the plastic wrap, stand far back and watch the magic! You know you're never returning that, thanks to the impossible repacking.

We have one appliance that forty years on is still in its original container, and I'm very proud of my ability to get it out and return it without damaging the box. Our coffee urn box is the ultimate in design: fixed bottom into which the legs fit, the cord is stored in the pot itself, the lid is turned upside down, and Bob's your uncle: the coffee pot can always be guaranteed to go back into its carton. I'm loath to loan the pot to anyone for fear they can't conceive of repacking it. I want to go with it myself to ensure its safe return.

I think it's a conspiracy to prevent people from returning things. "No carton, no packing, no return. Tough luck." I'm waiting for the day I get something back into its original container. In the meantime, I'm up to my knees in wrappings and cardboard, and all the detritus left over when an item gets delivered. I'll never be able to return anything. There should be a manual just for that!

Summer Positions At Camp Lau-Ren

By Bruce Patterson

Camp Lau-Ren is a children's sleep-away camp located just west of Deep River, Ontario. It is a summer camp of the United Church of Canada and is accredited by the Ontario Camps Association. Children and youth from ages 6–16 have been going to Camp Lau-Ren since 1952.

The 2024 summer camp season had barely ended when Camp Lau-Ren Executive Director Steve McCulloch's thoughts turned to planning for 2025. At the conclusion of the 2024 meeting with camp directors, challenges and successes of the summer were reviewed and preparations for the next summer began.

With online registration going live on December 1, 2024, so did the opportunity to apply for summer 2025 jobs at Camp Lau-Ren. Applications are being accepted for all summer positions including the new Camp Program Assistant position. Other positions that need to be filled include Head Cook, Assistant Cook, Waterfront Director, Assistant Waterfront Director, Lifeguard, Caretaker, Lead Counsellor, Counsellor-Lifeguard and Counsellor. For details, visit <camplau-ren.com> and look for the Job Postings tab.

With many jobs to fill, the hiring process will stretch over several months. Interviews for returning summer staff begin in January. New applicants will start to be interviewed in February. By late March and early April,

most summer staff positions should be filled. There is a planned group interview for new counsellors in early April.

It will be mandatory for all summer staff to attend the Training Weekend on May 31 and June 1. Steve finds that having all staff together before campers arrive helps with team building.

He believes that young people can learn leadership, responsibility, teamwork, communication and time management skills while working at camp. There are physical and mental health benefits to working outside as well. Being a counsellor or senior staff member provides the opportunity to mentor younger staff or campers.

Steve believes that camp can be a great opportunity to build professional connections, especially if you're looking to work in education, childcare, outdoor recreation, or even non-profit work. "Working at a summer camp is valuable work experience that shows future employers you're capable of handling responsibility, managing challenges, and working with people, especially children or youth," he notes.

Steve encourages anyone with questions about working at Camp Lau-Ren to contact him at <executivedirector@camplau-ren.rocks>. Interested applicants are invited to apply early. Campers can register for the summer of 2025 now at <camplau-ren.com>.

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 • By Phone - 613-283-2244 (Visa/Mastercard/voucher)
 • At the Door - 1/2 hour before performance (cash/debit/voucher)
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theHumm Interview

Fiona Stevenson

Knitting Community, Creativity, and Connection

For Fiona Stevenson, knitting is much more than a craft — it's a way to connect with creativity, community, and even to herself. Her journey into fibre arts is one of rediscovery, resilience, and a lifelong love for making and community.

by Kim Lulashnyk

Since moving to Newboro, Fiona has created spaces for knitters to connect. She founded The SheepOver, a weekend Fibre Fest featuring a Fibre Market and classes at Stone Manor Studios. A large group of knitters even took over the historic Poplars Resort, likening the experience to adult summer camp. Fiona also teaches knitting at Stone Manor Studios and hosts monthly Knit-Alongs at the Stagecoach Restaurant.

I recently had the opportunity to sit down with Fiona and find out more about her background and her passion.

Can you tell me a bit about your journey into knitting?

Fiona Stevenson: I grew up in Stittsville, and while I always had a love for art and craft, life took me in a different direction. I became a mental health counsellor and poured myself into helping others, but it was incredibly demanding. At the same time, my family needed me — a brother had a newborn, and my sister was pregnant with twins. For 19 years, I cared for my twin nephews in Newmarket. While it was a busy time, something transformative happened: I discovered knitting.

What sparked that discovery?

It started with a simple visit to a yarn store. I walked in just to get out of the house, and when I picked up the needles, it was like coming home. That moment turned into an obsession. Within months, I was teaching classes. Then, a trip to Scotland revealed a family history in the sheep and wool industries, which cemented my belief that knitting was my medium — a way to express creativity and connect with others.

You describe knitting as sculptural. Could you elaborate on that?

Absolutely. Knitting is like working with marble or wood — the yarn tells you what it wants to be. My designs are inspired by nature — the colours, the textures — and the process often starts with the yarn itself. I see patterns as recipes to modify, combining imagination with mathematical precision. Math, which I didn't enjoy in school, has become a language I love because it's essential to creating patterns.

What have you learned from knitting beyond the technical skills?

So much. Knitting has taught me that there's always a chance to fix a mistake — nothing is set in stone. It's also about community. People think knitting is solitary, but for me, the best part is sitting with others,



Fiona Stevenson is busy knitting community by founding fibre festivals, hosting events, and teaching classes

sharing knowledge, and supporting one another. It's a deeply social activity.

Speaking of community, you've done a lot of teaching and retreat organizing. Can you share more about that?

My recent move to Newboro has been incredible. For me, teaching isn't just about technique; it's about helping people overcome their fears and find joy in the process. I started The SheepOver in Newboro, a weekend Fibre Fest featuring a Fibre Market and fibre-adjacent classes at Stone Manor Studios. A large group of knitters took over the historic fishing resort, Poplars Resort, and it felt like going back to camp — but for adults. My retreats are designed to emphasize relaxation and connection over rigid schedules. Watching people arrive stressed and leave refreshed, bonded by their love of yarn and craft, is one of the most rewarding parts of my work. Beyond that, I teach knitting classes at Stone Manor Studios and have launched a Knit-Along monthly in the historic Stagecoach Restaurant in Newboro.

How does knitting fit into today's fast-paced world?

It's a counterbalance. Knitting is meditative, grounding, and deeply personal. There's a growing appreciation for slow fashion — valuing the time and effort behind handmade clothing. When you knit a sweater, it's not just something to wear; it's a legacy. You pour time, energy, and expertise into it. It's also a way to slow down mentally and emotionally. I've seen people come into retreats or classes wired with a million thoughts and leave calm and centred.

How do you see technology shaping the knitting community?

Technology has been a great tool. Platforms like Ravelry allow us to connect with knitters around the world and share ideas. But during the pandemic I realized the limitations of online interactions. There's a magic that happens when knitters gather in person. It's spontaneous, layered, and deeply human — something that can't be replicated online.

What's next for you?

I'm working on a book that captures the humour, warmth, and artistry of knitting in Canada. I'm also expanding my teaching and design work, planning more retreats, and creating new opportunities to connect with the knitting community. I am also working with a fibre hand dyer to curate a collection of yarn inspired by the artists of the Rideau Lakes that will feature in my online yarn store. For me, knitting isn't just a hobby. It's a way of life, a way to connect with others, and a way to leave a tangible mark on the world.

You can find Fiona at <thefionaknits@gmail.com> or @fiona.knits. For more information on her SheepOver Retreat visit <sheepover.weebly.com>, and to find out about upcoming courses at Stone Manor Studios visit <StoneManorStudios.ca>.



Café 349 Launches Gallery Season

On January 6, Café 349 opened its doors in Shawville with the first of its new series of monthly exhibitions featuring well known textile artists Meredith Filshie, Nancy Garrard, Wendo Van Essen and Karen Samanski.

This first show of the year, *Leaving Marks III*, is a dynamic collection of fibre art that lights up the room with a wide array of colours, textures and diverse techniques.

Each artist has a unique style. Karen draws inspiration from the results of indigo and walnut dyeing; Nancy is fascinated by bark and elements from nature. Many of Wendo's pieces draw on her successful career as an animator. Small beads and interesting fabrics and threads inspire Meredith's work.

This show also "marks" the formal opening of Gallery 349, a new business venture managed by printmaker and painter Cheryl Beillard and fabric artist Linda Roy. Café owner Ruth Hahn has done

some renovating over the holidays — updating the walls and lighting system and installing a state of the art hanging system.

Ruth has been a strong supporter of fine arts and crafts in the region since she took over the Café in 2002. She has provided space on the walls for members of artPontiac over the years, and her customers have enjoyed the work of dozens of emerging and professional artists. Cheryl and Linda have been scheduling shows and managing set-up and sales for the past two years, on a volunteer basis with artPontiac. In August, partnering with Ruth, they created Gallery 349 as a small business nested within that of the Café.

As part of this new initiative, they have also upgraded the shop area with new shelving to accommodate new artists and add more variety to the gift shop. The roster includes longstanding contributor Clement Hoeck's fine pottery, and Jeanne McTiernan's stained glass and mosaics.

The Gallery and shop are always looking for new artists to promote. The Café charges a modest commission on sales and sales are brisk, as is the traffic for the Café, which has a sterling reputation as the premiere spot for lunch in the region.

In February, the Gallery will feature a solo show by acrylic landscape artist Karl Kischel, who is well known for his realism in depicting scenes of the Ottawa Valley. Based in Dunrobin, Karl's name will be familiar to many as he has been painting for a lifetime and has a large following of fans.

Art lovers and outdoor enthusiasts alike should be aware that there are other destinations and things to do in the Pontiac, should you want to make a day of it. The area features many venues for art, craft, and local food lovers on both sides of the Ottawa river.



Café 349's first exhibition of 2025 features works by textile artists Meredith Filshie, Nancy Garrard, Wendo Van Essen and Karen Samanski

Follow Café 349 at <facebook.com/cafe349> to find out more about this welcoming and artsy space. If you are interested in having work on the walls or in the shop at the café, please send an email to <cheryl@wakerobinstudio.ca>.



Beat the Winter Blues at MERA!

This winter, MERA has plenty of fun activities for all ages. Come out to 974 Dalhousie Conc. 9A in McDonalds Corners to stay connected to your community.

The Saturday Café returns to MERA in the new year! From 9AM to 1PM each week, everyone is invited to come for a \$2 cup of coffee as well as soup and a bun for \$5. Children's activities will be available.

The Speaker Series also returns, featuring seven local artists and craftspeople who excel in their fields. Talks are scheduled from January 23 to March 6. Cozy up at home, as the Speaker Series will be held via Zoom on Thursday evenings from 7-8:30PM. Speakers include blacksmith Tim Wheeler, artist Fred Fowler, fibre artist Zoë Lianga, musician Jenny Whiteley, textile artist Adrian Baker, ceramic artist Susie

Osler, and printmaker Frank Van Oort. Registration information can be found at <meraschoolhouse.org>.

MERA's regular programming includes art circle, fibre arts, heritage weaving, pottery and quilting. There is always a lot going on! Join their newsletter to stay in touch and learn about regular programs as well as upcoming events and workshops. Please email their friendly administrator at <meraschoolhouse@gmail.com> to subscribe.

MERA is committed to facilitating and promoting activities and programs for all ages which help bring this rural community together, and to promoting awareness and understanding of the arts and wellbeing. For more information, please visit <meraschoolhouse.org>.

Call to Artists

Arts Carleton Place (ACP) is celebrating its 20th anniversary by hosting a 3-stop art exhibition for its Fine Art Show & Sale, with stops at the Art Hub Gallery, the Carleton Place Canoe Club and the Carleton Place Arena, as well as a Friday night "pARTy" with coffee, tea and cake. ACP is looking for 55-60 talented artists for their Fine Art Show & Sale, which takes place from May 3-5.

This year's show will again be a juried show. Artists may be assigned a venue based on art form (e.g. abstract art) so that artists producing the same form are not all at the same venue. The judges' decision is final, and a waiting list may be compiled. Some of the judging criteria may include visual appeal, originality, creativity, use of medium, degree of difficulty, due diligence, composition, use of colour, attention to detail, ability to provoke thought, and quality of presentation.

Visitors will receive a weekend passport which will be stamped at each location. To be eligible for the fantastic door prizes, a visitor must visit all three locations.

Four booth sizes are available starting at 2x8x2. The use of the Canoe Club and the Arena's Upper Great Hall will guarantee 12-foot aisles and make all venues very spacious; fewer artists at each venue, with more space for visitors to truly view the art. More than 65% of the booth price will be spent on advertising.

The application deadline is midnight on January 26. ACP membership dues for 2025 (\$30) must be paid prior to submitting your application. More information and the application form can be found at <artscarletonplace.com/2025-acpfineartsale>.

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