

AYLMER EXPRESS

THE VOICE OF EAST ELGIN FOR 140 YEARS.
PUBLISHED BY THE AYLMEER EXPRESS LIMITED - J.H. HUESTON, PRESIDENT
PM40012174 390 TALBOT ST. EAST, AYLMEER, ONTARIO PHONE: 519-773-3126

WHERE THE COMMUNITY MEETS

14 PAGES, No. 50 December 9, 2020
www.aylmerexpress.com

\$125
Includes 5% HST 6 27843 25426 3

Express-O-Gram Martin Haalstra, 44, would do anything for his family

NOT ONLY STATISTICS

A few days ago we listened to a recent Henry Hildebrandt sermon, rant, screed, tirade - your choice - in which, as a challenge to accepted pandemic wisdom, he invoked the deaths of ONLY 200 (I think the number was).

The capitols on "only" are mine but the dismissive reference to the death count was his. And I'm fed up. Perhaps he and his lawyers will be reading this and that's fine.

The overall death count for COVID-19 currently is 3,816 in Ontario as of Tuesday, Dec. 8. That's a real disease - a real killer disease.

This week we have in this newspaper the very brave words of new widow Lisa Haalstra of Belmont. Her husband, Martin, just 44, recently contracted the disease. Less than two weeks later he died in hospital.

He leaves his wife and three children - Caleb, 17; Ethan, 14; and Avery, 9.

"Our Christmas plans look very different from what they did two weeks ago," said Ms. Haalstra.

Her conversation with this newspaper was to put a very human face on this disease and a caution that it can be deadly serious. We appreciate her wisdom and sharing in a time of deep grief.

We don't know what a supposed man of God would be doing dismissing the value of one human life let alone hundreds. Thousands? Tens of thousands? Where does the number gain meaning? Those preaching reckless behaviour around this disease betray their family, friends and their whole community.

There seems to be a significant difference between the God that some pray to and that who others invoke.

I liked the one in the childhood hymn we once

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Martin Haalstra

by Brett Hueston of The Aylmer Express

"Our Christmas plans look very different from what they did two weeks ago," said Lisa Haalstra last week of her Belmont household. Her husband Martin, 44, died Sunday, November 29 after contracting COVID-19 just over a week earlier.

"It's not like the flu," she warned others who might be taking the pandemic casually.

Ms. Haalstra posted a message online a day before her husband died - after he had been intubated - addressed to anyone who dismissed the global COVID-19 outbreak as similar to the flu or wondering why "we are taking all these measures when 98% of people are fine." The message has received a lot of public and media attention.

She wanted to bring attention to the 2% who aren't fine, including Mr. Haalstra, a father of three.

"It's important to tell Martin's story. Good for people to know there's a person behind every statistic on a website," Ms. Haalstra told the Express last week.

Ms. Haalstra, also 44, is a native of Belmont and met Martin - originally from Port Hope - through a mutual friend at the University of Waterloo. Martin graduated as a structural engineer and had been working for the provincial Ministry of Transportation.

They had just celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary in July and have three children; Caleb, who turns 18 in a couple weeks, Ethan, 14, and daughter Avery who just turned 9. They had enjoyed camping and hiking this past summer.

Ms. Haalstra said her husband was devoted to their children's hobbies, diving right in and learning as much as possible. With hockey, he was a team manager and on the Belmont Minor Hockey board. He was active in fundraising there and when he decided some smaller items were needed, he would "just go do it" and pay from his own pocket, like pins at hockey tournaments.

She said he even tried to skate - once - but "that didn't go so well." So, he occupied his passion off the ice instead. He took similar interest in son Ethan's soccer skills and was just starting to learn about horseback riding, which daughter Avery had become interested in.

"He just wanted his kids to have a good time and be kids." But, she added, it was also important they learned to "respect the coaches and be part of the team."

Ms. Haalstra described Martin as outgoing, but in a way that he was always looking to learn as much as possible from others. At the first intermission at a hockey game, he would disappear and start talking with other people. He wanted to

hear other perspectives and was "always interested in other people's opinion and learning from them."

She explained his philosophy that guided him at work, home and anywhere else: "Sometimes the right way is the

hard way. He'd always choose the right way. He didn't care if it was hard, or ruffled feathers."

Ms. Haalstra said Martin first started showing symptoms with a sinus infection around Nov. 17. That progressed to a cough and extreme fatigue. By

Thursday, Nov. 19, Ms. Haalstra told him to get a COVID test, which he got that day. He received a positive result the next day. By Saturday, Nov. 21 she called an ambulance to take him to the hospital "because

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Santa Claus made a special appearance in Springfield, and adapted to pandemic guidelines, by offering two options for families to see the Jolly Old Elf on Saturday afternoon, Dec. 5. First at Malahide Community Place (pictured below), he greeted those driving by and listening to gift requests from children. Then, escorted by Malahide fire trucks, Santa paraded through

the village's streets waving to residents (above). "We've received many thank yous from around our village for putting a smile on everyone's face," said organizers Kelly Pearson and Rosemary Kennedy. "They certainly loved seeing Santa." Springfield Santa Claus Parade Committee volunteers organized the event and helped direct traffic flow.

(AE/Veronica Reiner)

Bushell estate gives \$130,000 to Aylmer-Malahide museum

The Estate of Donna Vera Evans Bushell has donated \$130,000 to fund a new "digital archivist" position at the Aylmer-Malahide Museum and Archives.

The money will also support the purchase of new technologies to boost the use of the museum's "On This Spot" smartphone application (app) in the community.

The museum, in the statement, said a large-scale mural would also be installed in downtown Aylmer, and part of the donation would go toward a "relocation fund" for a new home for the museum.

Curator Amanda VandenWyngaert said, "We are so thrilled to be receiving this generous donation."

The new digital archivist would allow the museum to translate all of its archival collection into digital files, she said, "providing an invaluable

resource for our community and researchers worldwide."

Specialized equipment would be purchased to aid in that process, she said.

The museum was also happy to be able to augment its smartphone app, which allowed users to take self-guided tours of Aylmer, using phone cameras to bring up information on historic buildings and sites.

"This will be an incredible free and interactive resource available to locals, visitors and educators."

Andrew Gunn, consultant for the estate, said, "The new digital archivist will transform the current archives into digital access for the community, and the technologies to be acquired by the museum will allow staff and volunteers to provide a more compelling experience for guests and students."

"We look forward as well to adding a new position to

art to the local landscape. All of this should help to strengthen the museum as the organization seeks to relocate and continue to grow and serve the community in the coming years."

The museum was established in 1977, and in addition to archives is home to over 40,000 artifacts related to local history.

Donna Vera Evans Bushell died on November 9, 2019, at the age of 99, and was the last surviving member of her ancestors, which had helped pioneer this area.

She was one of three sisters, who all shared of love of history as descendants of the Westlake, Penhale and Gilbert families who settled along the North Edgeware Road in Yarmouth (now part of Central Elgin).

Donna's estate has made more than \$2.5-million in donations to causes in Elgin County and St. Thomas.

COVID-19: Eighth death, EESS cases, unity appeal

by Rob Perry of The Aylmer Express

In a busy week for COVID-19 developments, Southwestern Public Health (SPH) recorded the area's eighth death related to the pandemic, and two new confirmed cases appeared at East Elgin Secondary School.

The total number of ongoing cases being tracked by the health unit peaked at 102 on Monday, Dec. 7, but the next day dropped to 90.

The death, of a man in his 80s, was announced by the health unit on Friday, Dec. 4. No other details were made public.

Thames Valley District School Board on Monday night, Dec. 7, announced two more confirmed cases of COVID-19 at East Elgin Secondary School in Aylmer, bringing the ongoing total to four.

However, that dropped down to two the next day after the

first two cases were cleared, the health unit said.

The board stated that all staff and parents of students had been notified.

EESS is to remain open and

school buses will continue to run.

The health unit reported that workplaces and social gatherings were two of the area's biggest sources of infections,

followed by community transmission.

Medical Officer of Health Dr. Joyce Lock recommended avoiding close contact with

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County homes "toxic" workplaces

by Rob Perry of The Aylmer Express

Elgin's three long-term care homes are "toxic workplaces," leading to high staff absenteeism and turnover, and the county is considering spending \$75,000 over the next three years to try to correct that.

County council's budget committee held its first session on Monday, Nov. 9.

Changing the county's "organizational culture," particularly in its long-term care homes, was brought back for further review at a second session on Tuesday, Nov. 24.

Human Resources Director Amy Thomson said the ultimate goal of her department was to ensure a safe and healthy workplace for all county staff, and "organizational structure" played a big role in that.

Her goal was to institute more progressive HR policies, rather than simply meeting minimum requirements under Ontario legislation, she said. To help do that, she suggested bringing in outside facilitators and consultants.

"Overall a toxic structure

is unhealthy for staff. It created organizational risk and it is costly," but a "constructive culture" had the opposite effect, she said.

Making change would require a sustained effort, she predicted. The root causes of high employee turnover and absenteeism had to be tackled, problems that often caused homes to be short-staffed.

"We know there are issues related to workload and disrespectful behaviours being tolerated," Ms. Thomson noted. The county couldn't afford to keep losing staff and management to that.

Long-term care workers were in shortage across the entire industry, she said.

The tone of an organization's culture flowed downward from the top, so councillors and managers had to accept responsibilities for existing issues.

Working in a long-term care home was an "emotionally and physically draining job," she said. And working continuously because of short staffing created stress.

The Ontario Ministry of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Health unit plans educational blitzes in Aylmer, Woodstock

by Rob Perry of The Aylmer Express

Southwestern Public Health, already conducting a COVID-19 restrictions educational and enforcement blitz in St. Thomas in conjunction with city police and bylaw enforcement officers, is planning the same for Aylmer and Woodstock.

Medical Officer of Health Dr. Joyce Lock revealed that at a meeting of the public health board on Thursday, Dec. 3.

For now, the St. Thomas campaign is focused on ensuring all businesses are aware of and follow pandemic restrictions and rules. That's expected to carry over into enforcement if needed.

Earlier in the meeting, Chief

Administrative Officer Cynthia St. John had told board members that pharmacists were reporting higher levels of requests for influenza vaccinations than in past years.

Pharmacists continued to do a great job of immunization "with what they're shipped," even if that was just regular doses and not "high dose" shots usually given to seniors and others at greater risk from complications due to flu.

Oxford ambulance paramedics were administering immunizations both to their own staff and in homes to residents who couldn't get out to do so.

"I think that is great," she said.

South-West Oxford Mayor

David Mayberry asked if the health unit had seen any confirmed flu cases yet.

Ms. St. John said none had shown up yet, and low levels were being reported across Canada.

She continued the health unit was now working out how to administer COVID-19 vaccines when they arrived.

"It's all about being ready," she said.

Dr. Lock, in her own report, said that while cases were appearing in schools in the SPH region, they appeared to "reflect what's going on in the community" rather than being sources of further infection.

Keeping children in school

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Cerna criticizes pastor

by Rob Perry of The Aylmer Express

Malahide Councillor Rick Cerna at a meeting on Thursday, Dec. 3, tore into Aylmer Church of God Pastor Hildebrandt over the latter's opposition to pandemic restrictions.

Cerna started by saying "because I took a strip off (Aylmer Police) Chief (Zvonko) Horvat and it got into the paper, thank you," (apparently directing the last at an Aylmer Express reporter nearby). He was glad to see Aylmer and other police services were "finally

moving forward" with laying charges against organizers of anti-restriction protests.

Hats off to them, he said, "finally, finally."

Then Cr. Cerna turned his attention to Pastor Hildebrandt and others who allegedly continue to "break the law and endanger other people's health."

He said he watched an online streamed service involving Pastor Hildebrandt recently, and the entire half hour was basically about COVID-19.

Cr. Cerna said he didn't understand how a pastor "can get

so confused. "He never said one prayer through the whole thing. He was just fixated on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms."

Cr. Cerna continued, "I can't believe this man is trying to destroy this area."

"How hard is it to put one of these things on," he demanded, holding up a face mask.

"Let's hope this (a charge laid in connection with a "Freedom Rally" in London) closes him down, because he's really hurting us."



Front, Kathi Vandermeer, left, and Amanda VandenWyngaert of Aylmer-Malahide Museum and Archives received a \$130,000 donation from the Estate of the late Donna Bushell

from, back, Emily Stage and Andrew Gunn of Andrew Gunn Consulting recently. The money will help fund a new position for a "digital archivist" at the museum. (AE/contributed)

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Martin Haalstra, 44, would do anything for his family

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
he couldn't breathe." He died Sunday, Nov. 29.

Ms. Haalstra said Martin, who had mostly been working remotely instead of going in to work, was typically cautious about the coronavirus. He wore a mask and used hand sanitizer. He was a safety advocate at work and vocal about taking the pandemic seriously. The family wasn't sure where he had caught it.

In explaining why she shared her post about Martin and COVID-19 skeptics, Ms. Haalstra noted she wasn't normally the type to make public statements online. She first posted the statement on Saturday afternoon, Nov. 28. Martin had been intubated and sedated. She had been thinking about it all week while he was in critical care at Victoria Hospital in London.

"You hear people saying things like 'it's not that big a deal,'" or other dismissive comments, she said, especially in Aylmer. Instead of so much attention paid to the people who were fine, she wanted to

put a face to the statistics. "I'm speaking on behalf of the 2% who get it worse."

"He didn't deserve it. No one should have to go through what he went through."

She noted her household experienced both ends of the spectrum with one child testing positive and experiencing a sore throat and a cold. "He was very worried for the kids and me," about their test results.

She said Martin left "a huge hole that will never be filled."

"That's the part that gets me," she said, when COVID skeptics downplayed the number of deaths or serious illness caused by COVID-19. It was important that people had a name and a person to put to the pandemic instead of a statistic.

"People aren't taking it seriously and don't think it can happen to them. It can." If speaking out publicly and online prevented a loss for just one family, that's what Martin would have wanted.

"Think about Martin and our story when you make Christmas plans this year," she wrote.



Lisa Haalstra says her late husband was represented well by this photograph - "he loved the Steelers, Star Wars and Disney." Martin Haalstra, 44, of Belmont, died Sunday, November 29, just over a week after testing positive for COVID-19. He was particularly proud of their three children, Caleb, Ethan and Avery, and of his Dutch heritage. (AE/contributed by Lisa Haalstra)

Elgin to rejoin SCOR after seven years

by **Rob Perry of The Aylmer Express**
Elgin County, a charter member of the South Central Ontario Region, will rejoin the economic development group on a one-year trial basis after dropping out in 2013.

The group was formed in 2010 by Elgin, Brant, Middlesex, Norfolk and Oxford counties, largely to find ways to counter the loss of major tobacco-related businesses like the former Imperial Leaf Canada processing plant in Aylmer to the area's economy. In 2013, unhappy with a

proposed annual membership increase to \$35,000 from \$25,000 and what Elgin saw as an unreasonable widening to the scope of its effort, the county left the group, though Bayham continued to belong in a separate annual \$5,000 agreement.

WOWC now had a much more focused approach to its work. A county employee was spending a year seconded to the group.

Central Elgin Mayor Sally Martyn suggested that, "in the overall scheme of things," a \$25,000 investment in SCOR might be worthwhile.

Every year since, SCOR representatives have come to Elgin council, pointing out that the focus of the group had been sharpened and that the membership had been reduced in cost, pleading for the county to rejoin.

Elgin has steadfastly refused to do so until this year, believing SCOR duplicated the work of other groups the county belonged to and represented an unnecessary expense.

In fact, Warden Dave Mennill, mayor of Malahide, continues to believe that, but other councillors voted to rejoin, if Elgin could do so on a one-year trial basis.

Based on information provided by SCOR, Mr. Smith said, the group was providing planning and coordination for addressing regional issues, identifying funding sources from outside the area, lobbying higher levels of government and pursuing economic development.

SCOR was also bringing together communities on issues that specifically affected them, such as the planned closing of a rail line that served this area, including parts of Elgin County.

The work done by SCOR complemented but didn't replace that of the county's economic development department, he added. The county was also well-served by the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC).

Mr. Smith recalled 2013, when Elgin decided not to renew its membership in the nascent SCOR.

Two issues of governance raised concerns for county council, he said. First, SCOR was supposed to give 90 days notice before seeking any increase in funding from its members, but didn't before seeking a \$10,000 increase in what had been a \$25,000 annual membership.

Second, a provision in SCOR's bylaws at the time required members to give one year's notice before quitting, and he had recently checked and found that was still true.

He suggested seeking approval from SCOR to waive the one-year notice period, and if that wasn't granted not rejoining.

Warden Mennill said his position hadn't changed. Elgin council had decided in 2013 that SCOR was a duplication in services being offered by other agencies, and that the \$25,000 was far better spent locally.

Southold Mayor Grant Jones agreed, adding that

very good work in the last year." West Elgin Mayor Duncan McPhail asked how much Elgin contributed to WOWC each year.

County Administrator Julie Gonyou estimated that at \$5,000 annually for economic-development activities.

Mayor McPhail said that reports from the caucus tended to just be about its activities. He'd like to hear about actual results as well.

Warden Mennill said that could be arranged.

Bayham Mayor Ed Ketchabaw quipped, "Obviously I'm going to be tilting at windmills here."

(He's long advocated for Elgin to rejoin SCOR, without success.)

"Bayham stepped in when the county exited," he said. During the last year, during difficult times, SCOR had been tremendously busy, achieving a fair amount for this region.

The annual investment seemed large, but since Elgin was funding a staff secondment to WOWC, "You're paying a lot more than that (\$5,000) at the moment."

Achieving strategic goals meant working with neighbours, he said. The Southwest Transportation Initiative had brought public transit to Bayham.

"We have a bus," he said. "Do you?"

Central Elgin Deputy Mayor Tom Marks, saying he liked to consider himself "a team player," supported rejoining SCOR for a year.

He'd grumbled when St. Thomas Elgin Health Unit had amalgamated with Oxford's to form Southwestern Public Health two years ago, but as a county representative to the new health board, "I'm starting to enjoy going to meetings."

The only way to really determine how much SCOR could do for Elgin would be to join for a year, he stated. "I think there's a benefit in giving it another shot."

Aylmer Mayor Mary French agreed. In trying times, "We need to collaborate with other areas. "We're not a one-man army."

Restoring economic vitality to this region after the pandemic passed would be a long road to travel, she predicted.

Councillors, except for Warden Mennill, voted to rejoin SCOR on a one-year trial basis so long as its board waived the one-year's notice if Elgin decided not to renew after that.

THANK YOU

Thank You

I would like to thank my neighbours and friends for their best wishes in cards, phone calls, flowers and sweets on my special social-distancing birthday party. A day to treasure and remember.

*Thank you,
Madeleine Jenkins*

IN MEMORIAM

CAROL SHACKLETON

DECEMBER 15, 2019



You left us so quickly,
No time for goodbyes,
All we have now,
Are your memories to keep alive.
Your love and kindness for family and friends,
Has left a hole that will never mend.
We love you and miss you dearly!
Until we meet again.

*Forever remembered by,
Ron and families*



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A full position description and listing of qualifications and responsibilities for the Public Works Operator position is available on the municipal website.

Candidates are invited to submit a complete resume and cover letter outlining how the applicant satisfies the provisions of the job posting and job description to the undersigned no later than **1:00 PM, Monday, December 21, 2020**

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Personal information collected in response to this notice will be managed in accordance with the requirements of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and will be used only to determine eligibility for employment.



THANK YOU AYLMEER KINSMEN!

The Council of the Town of Aylmer wishes to recognize the Aylmer Kinsmen for organizing and holding a successful drive-by Santa Claus Parade on November 28, 2020. The Aylmer Kinsmen demonstrated a high level of flexibility and cooperativeness to ensure this annual tradition was able to proceed for a 76th consecutive year.

This was a unique way to continue to support the community and their families during this time - well done Aylmer Kinsmen!

Sincerely,
Mayor French and Members of Council

2020 has been challenge for all of us.
The Springfield Santa Claus Parade Committee sends out a huge

THANK YOU!



To Malahide Township for approving our plans to have Santa come to Town.
To Santa - for your ongoing support of Springfield's parade - no matter what.

To Malahide #3 - Springfield Fire Department for always being there, for your help Saturday and for leading Santa on his tour of Springfield this year.

To Adam McIntyre for chauffeuring Santa - what would we do without you?!

To Jamie Harwood for the loan of the sleigh for Santa.

To Dianne, Maria & Richard - thanks for your help. Even the littlest thing makes the day go smoother.

And to SPRINGFIELD - thank you for embracing our revised parade. Seeing all the smiles and waves from young and older was so worthwhile.

**Stay safe. Stay well. May 2021 be a better year for all.
Hope to see you on the 1st Saturday in December 2021!**

****MERRY CHRISTMAS****

Springfield Santa Claus Parade Committee
Rosemary Kennedy & Kelly Pearson



REID, CLARENCE - In loving memory of a dear father, Clarence who passed away December 10, 2008.

We often sit and think of him, when we are all alone,
For memory is the only friend, that grief can call its own.

Like ivy on the withered oak, when all other things decay,
Our love for him will still keep green, and never fade away.
Give our love to my brother "Doug" who passed away September 26, 1966.

Forever remembered by Doris (Rod) Corey and family

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WHERE THE COMMUNITY MEETS

12 PAGES, No. 22 June 2, 2021
www.aylmerexpress.com

\$125



Includes 5% HST 6 2784325426 3

Express-O-Gram

THE PLEASURES OF SPRING

Victoria Day weekend was an almost-perfect gateway to the promise of the imminent summer.

Despite having our Sunday morning noisily interrupted, that was lovely weekend weather, more late June than May. Okay by me.

In the attempted-garden, the tulips, supposed to be vivid contrast to the daffodils, were squirrel snacks weeks ago, long before full bloom but the river of daffodils, evidently not so tasty, flowed for a month and then a tidal wave thick of yellow I-don't-know-what-they-ares threatened to consume the backyard.

If they were liquid instead of floral, you could have surfed on the flow.

Now as the last yellow petals fall, some other four-metre collection of flowering bushes has erupted in geysers of pink and white. I don't have a clue what are they either.

Did I hear the peonies are on their way?

High winds have made it a tough year for nesting birds, with whole and broken robin eggs and other mystery shells littered around the yard. Even the Catfish Creek ducks nesting unseen in the undergrowth had bad luck when a neighbourhood skunk, raccoon or even opossum made a meal of their attempted family. The only evidence of the wildlife drama was a forlorn collection of smashed empty eggshells.

It's been a pretty amazing spring. We've heard of the 'cottage challenge' of swimming in the lake on May 24 weekend but rather than a frigid dare, it was a chance for a refreshing cool-off. Some took the plunge in Lake Erie.

We stayed close to home, making several trips by various routes to Port Bruce by bicycle, motorcycle and the French car. The roads were quiet and I don't think I've pedalled as far without one incident with a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Immunization clinics a "great community effort"

By Veronica Reiner,
Local Journalism Initiative
reporter

"We would be nowhere without these wonderful volunteers, and the community spirit, and it makes people feel good," said Sandra Hoffer, a vaccine clinic volunteer coordinator. "It's a great community effort."

Ms. Hoffer was referring to the over 120 volunteers that, since March, have been helping

at one of three COVID-19 immunization clinics in the Southwestern Public Health (SWPH) region of St. Thomas, Elgin and Oxford. The hard work of many volunteers from the community plays a big role in ensuring the clinics, overseen by SWPH, run smoothly and efficiently, while health unit staff and medical professionals administer the medications to thousands of area residents.

At the St. Thomas Mass Immunization Clinic, three volunteer groups help out, consisting of about 120 overall; the Knights of Columbus, the Gujarati Club, and the Retired Teachers Association.

"It's really great that the community has come together in this way, to heal and recover," said SWPH Registered Nurse Samantha Fox. "There are different generations working to-

gether: a lot of volunteers have retired so they're older, others are summer staff in university, so it's a big age range."

Volunteers are involved with nearly every step of the clinic, with the exception of administering the vaccine. The helpers work Monday to Friday and occasionally Saturdays, in separate morning shifts (8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.) and afternoon shifts (12 p.m. to 4 p.m.).

In addition to helping out at clinics stations (screening, registration, staging and seating prior to vaccination, post-vaccination and checkout), volunteers also direct visitors throughout the clinic.

"Our volunteers are essential to our operation and we are extremely grateful for all that they do," said Ms. Fox.

Anyone interested in volunteering should be reliable and

able to manage the tasks assigned. They are required to sign confidentiality agreements to protect sensitive information from being distributed.

"Positive experience"

Sandra and husband Case Hoffer of St. Thomas lead the Knights of Columbus volunteer group. The couple, formerly of Aylmer, are both retired; Sandra worked as a nurse about 10 years

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



Two people were aboard this 33-foot Beneteau sailboat, attempting to exit the harbour when it became damaged and began to sink in Port Bruce late Friday morning, May 28. The boat suffered significant structural damage to the stern on the day that was plagued by foul weather, heavy winds and resultant high waves. After the pair made it to shore and their safety was ensured,



Malahide Fire, Elgin OPP and Auxiliary Coast Guard worked together but were ultimately unable to secure the boat. It sat partially submerged against some rocks for the weekend, and was removed using a crane on Monday.

(AE/left-Veronica Reiner, centre- Deb Hamilton, right- George DeWaele)

Church, pastors fined an additional \$66,000

by Brett Hueston of
The Aylmer Express

The Church of God (Restoration) Aylmer and its two pastors were fined a combined \$66,000 on Monday, May 31 for continued contempt of a February court order to follow gathering restrictions during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The gathering in question took place on Sunday, May 16, just two days after the same court fined the same parties \$117,000 for contempt the first time, for hosting a large indoor gathering at the Aylmer church on April 25.

Regional Senior Justice Bruce Thomas, in virtual court on Monday, fined the church as a corporation \$35,000, Pastor Henry Hildebrandt \$20,000

and Assistant Pastor Peter Wall \$6,000, with all fines due "forthwith". The three parties are also responsible for \$5,000 in court costs. Those fines are on top of the May 14 contempt finding where the church was fined \$35,000, Pastor Hildebrandt \$10,000, and Pastor Wall \$3,000, all payable in 90 days. The three parties were assessed court costs of \$69,000.

At this second hearing, Justice Thomas noted most of the mitigating factors he cited in his first contempt finding "have evaporated."

The second hearing was first brought to court on Friday, May 21, just five days after the church hosted a large outdoor service at its John Street North property with hundreds of people in at-

tendance.

Lawyer for the respondents, Lisa Bilty, asked for a two-week adjournment, complaining that she'd only been served notice of the hearing earlier that morning. She wanted to cross-examine the police who were submitting evidence.

Justice Thomas, who also oversaw the first contempt hearing, offered a May 31 date to return, to which both Ms. Bilty and Lisa Brost of the Attorney General's office, agreed.

On May 31, Ms. Brost began her submissions by noting that on May 14, the court fined the three parties (the church, and pastors Hildebrandt and Wall) for contempt of an order directing the church follow the provincial regulations on gatherings.

Then, just two days later, over 300 people were gathered on the church property with no face coverings. They "made no effort to comply with the law."

"More significant fines are required," continued Ms. Brost, and must be paid "forthwith."

Citing Justice Thomas's earlier findings of contempt, she noted deterrents should be the primary focus of a sentence.

She also said police described the May 16 scene at the church as resembling an "outdoor concert venue."

In his address to the crowd, she continued, Pastor Hildebrandt said, "I am not locked down this morning," and later invited "burly men" to join him on stage. That was followed by

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Two make it to shore after sailboat sinks

By Veronica Reiner,
Local Journalism Initiative
reporter

A sailboat sat overturned and partly submerged in the channel to the Port Bruce harbour for several days after it was damaged due to rough weather conditions on Friday, May 28.

There were two people on board the vessel at the time of the incident, who made it to shore uninjured.

The 33-foot Beneteau boat, labelled 'Le Bateau' Oakville, was leaving Port Bruce at about 11 a.m. after refueling at the marina. While exiting the marina, "the vessel ran into trouble in the very high winds and ended up against the pier," said Elgin OPP constable Troy

Carlson. Attempts were made to tie up at the pier.

The pair aboard, both wearing life jackets, got onto the pier and did not enter the water.

Malahide Fire, Elgin OPP and Auxiliary Coast Guard members attempted to secure the vessel, but were unable to due to weather and wave conditions.

The owner is responsible for recovering the sailboat from the mouth of Catfish Creek, said Cst. Carlson.

Since Friday and over the course of the weekend, the boat remained partially submerged in the water against some rocks, which drew a steady stream of spectators.

There was no indication of a

fuel spill, but some debris, such as a life preserver, surrounded the boat.

On Monday, May 31, the

boat was removed from the channel using a crane and was placed on vacant property next to the creek.

No COVID-19 cases in Aylmer and area

by Rob Perry
of The Aylmer Express

Southwestern Public Health was reporting only four new confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Elgin, St. Thomas and Oxford on Tuesday, June 1.

Ongoing cases being tracked by the health unit dropped to 49 Tuesday compared to 88 a week previous, and none

of them were in Aylmer and area. The infection rate for the SWPH region stands at 23.2 per 100,000 of population

Ongoing case numbers in Elgin were: St. Thomas and area, 12; Bayham, two; and West Elgin, one.

As of Tuesday, three SWPH region residents were hospital-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



Margaret Harms, left, and Anna Wall of Aylmer teamed up recently to make 172 dresses and T-shirts to donate to relief missions in Haiti. About three years ago, they were involved in a similar effort that resulted in 1,000 dresses. Ms. Harms

said she'd been on mission relief trips to Haiti twice. "Once you've been to a place like that, you see the need and it makes you want to help out." She encourages others to tackle similar projects.

(AE/Rob Perry)

Deer tick tests positive for Lyme disease

Southwestern Public Health announced Wednesday, May 26, that a deer tick collected from Port Burwell had tested positive for the agent that causes Lyme disease in humans.

While this was the first such positive test in Elgin County this year, the health unit stated, Port Burwell has been considered a "risk area" for Lyme disease since 2019.

Environmental Health Manager Amy Pavletic said, "This serves as a reminder to be vigilant when enjoying the outdoors in the area."

According to the health unit, Lyme disease is transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected deer tick.

The best way to protect yourself from Lyme disease is to avoid tick bites. Ticks are often found in areas with tall grass and bushes and they attach to people who walk by. They cannot fly or jump.

Steps to avoid tick bites:

- Wearing long sleeves, pants tucked into socks, and fully closed boots or shoes when

walking in areas ticks prefer.

- Wearing light-coloured clothes to help see where ticks land.
- Using a bug spray with DEET (always read and follow the label).
- Doing a "Tick Check" after walks: shower and towel off to remove loose ticks, then check body for any attached ticks.
- Be aware of Lyme disease risk areas in Ontario.
- If a tick is found on a person, it is important to remove it as soon as possible.
- Transmission of Lyme disease is not likely to occur if the tick was attached for less than 24 hours.

Removing a tick

If you find a tick on you, remove it carefully:

- Use fine-tipped tweezers and grab the tick as close to the skin as possible. Pull it straight out without squeezing the tick.
 - Clean the bite with rubbing alcohol and/or soap and water.
- In Ontario, the health unit continued, only deer ticks could transmit Lyme disease.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Southwestern is not accepting ticks for identification. However, "eTick" is a free electronic identification service available online or by downloading a mobile application.

Send in a photo of your tick and an expert will identify it within 48 hours. The service will contact you with the results and provide necessary public health information.

Lyme disease symptoms

Symptoms of Lyme disease

usually show up between three days to one month after being bitten by an infected tick.

Early symptoms may include fever, headache, muscle and joint pain, fatigue, and a "bullseye" rash, but not everyone gets this rash.

If left untreated, Lyme disease symptoms can progress to cardiac symptoms including central and nervous system disorders, although this is rare.

If you are concerned about your health following your exposure to a tick, please consult with a health care provider.

Betteridge new Malahide CAO

Malahide Township announced Monday morning, May 31, that Adam Betteridge, the municipality's director of development services for the last year-and-a-half, will become chief administrative officer as of June 28.

He is replacing Michelle Casavecchia-Somers, who is

retiring. Mr. Betteridge, a graduate of University of Waterloo with a Bachelor of Environmental Studies (Honours, Planning) degree, is pursuing his master's degree in Public Administration from Western University.

He was first hired by Malahide in November of 2020.

Immunization clinics a "great community effort"

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
ago before retirement, while Case worked as a millwright at Ford 15 years ago.

The 20-person team is split evenly into two groups, who work morning and afternoon shifts. They began on Tuesday, March 23, and worked the first five weeks in a row; now, they alternate weeks because other groups have joined.

At first, "It seems like it's very overwhelming, but it's not," said Sandra. Volunteers need to be able bodied, as there can be a lot of walking and standing involved in the work.

To train the volunteers, Sandra will walk them through the clinic to give them a feel for the task, and explain what is done at each station. She also introduces them to other volunteers and SWPH workers.

When they first began in March, volunteers mostly came from areas in between St. Thomas and Aylmer. Now, they come from opposite ends of Elgin County and everywhere in between, from West Lorne to Tillsonburg (which is in neighbouring Oxford County).

Many are retired nurses, retired teachers, or regular volunteers at other organizations, such

as the Canadian Blood Services. The volunteer attendance can vary depending on individual schedules, but Sandra said she has a list of people she can call upon if needed.

Case said there are varied moods of visitors who come through the clinic, ranging from happy and upbeat to apprehensive. Volunteers are ready to deal with whatever reaction comes their way.

"When people come in and they're very nervous, our job is to settle them down, help with the flow, keep them moving through the whole thing, get them in and out and keep them happy while they're there," said Case. "It's a positive experience for everybody involved."

Visitors have even high-fived volunteers at the end of the process, added Sandra.

Paul Jenkins, Chief Executive Officer at the St. Thomas & District Chamber of Commerce, encouraged the couple to volunteer Friday afternoon, March 19. "He knew that we were big on volunteering, and they didn't have a service group that had taken it on," said Sandra.

They called some of their contacts, discussed the matter with SWPH, got a group of vol-

unteers together, and got to work four days later.

The couple has historically been involved in community service and volunteering, including at St. Anne's Community Festival, the Knights of Columbus and singing in a Florida church choir. Sandra was part of an effort that sewed and distributed about 3,000 masks to frontline workers in Elgin County.

Another group, the Retired Teachers Association, is run by John Laverty. They work morning shifts on alternating weeks.

"A great example for our children"

St. Thomas resident Bhavin (Bob) Patel leads the volunteer group, Gujarati Club, for the St. Thomas Immunization Clinic.

"The nice thing about volunteering is that we're setting a great example for our children, and they're helping out," he said.

Mr. Patel resides on Lake Margaret Trail in St. Thomas with his wife, Avani, his 19-year-old son Raj, and his 12-year-old daughter Ritu. His wife and son also volunteer.

He works at Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada, as well as owns Wayside Restaurant in Talbotville. The family im-

migrated from India to London in 1998, then later moved to St. Thomas in 2003.

"As an immigrant, this country gave us everything. It is our duty now to give something back to this country," he said, on what motivates him to volunteer.

His group of volunteers works afternoon shifts from Monday to Friday, occasionally Saturdays, alternating weeks. Volunteers help to screen clients, direct them through the arena, and sanitize touch points.

"They tell us, 'wow you're doing such a phenomenal job,' which gives us a lot more encouragement," said Mr. Patel.

He also wants to help in whatever way he can in hopes of seeing the end of the pandemic as quickly as possible.

The majority of volunteers heard about the program through word-of-mouth. Anyone is invited to volunteer, with a requirement to be age 18 or over. They can do so by calling Mr. Patel at 519-615-0678.

Mr. Patel has offered community supports in various ways throughout the pandemic. Since early May, he and his Wayside business partner and chef Soman Sreedharan offer meals to people without shelter and food in

downtown St. Thomas. The program runs at Flora and Talbot Streets, running every Monday from noon until 1 p.m. Meals are distributed at Wayside and consist of both Indian and Canadian food. He plans to continue the program until the end of the pandemic.

Before that, in April, Mr. Patel and his team dropped off about 8,500 meals to people across Southwestern Ontario, including Port Stanley, London, Windsor, and even Toronto. With six volunteers at the beginning, they struggled, but more joined as the initiative went on.

"Different groups, but same goal"

Stacey and Sara Gaudette of Aylmer had a positive experience getting vaccinated at the St. Thomas clinic in late April.

"It was so well done, a really positive experience all the way around," said Stacey. "From the security team guiding people in the parking lot, to the volunteers, and medical workers giving their time to get everybody through the system."

"I've been vaccinated before - this was seamless, darn near painless."

They recognized some familiar faces while in the clinic, including a doctor that was a former neighbour of the Gaudettes, who has her own practice now in Port Stanley.

Stacey also attended while wearing a Kinsmen jacket and mask, as he volunteers with the Aylmer service club. While booking their second vaccine appointment at the end of the process, a Knights of Columbus member gave him a thumbs up and a wink.

"Because we're both in service groups. It was really neat. Different groups, but same goal, service to the community," said Stacey.

There was slight hesitation before getting the vaccine as Sara has lived with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) for about 25 years. The condition affects the brain and spinal cord. She typically does not get a flu shot for fear of side effects.

While her neurologist recommended she get the COVID-19 vaccine, Sara still had her con-



Swarndeep Singh took a selfie that included him, left, Sadia Bukhari, Parameshi Vyas, Trudy Kanellis and Bhavin (Bob) Patel. They are members of the Gujarati Club volunteer group that helps at the COVID-19 immunization clinic in St. Thomas. This group works four-hour afternoon shifts Monday to Friday, and occasionally Saturdays. Volunteers are involved with nearly every step of the SWPH-run clinics, with the exception of administering the vaccine. (AE/contributed by Bhavin Patel)

cerns about the potential reaction. She sat unsure of what to do for almost one week.

"I said, 'do you need me to just be decisive?' And she said please," said Stacey, adding Sara typically makes these types of decisions when it comes to MS. "So I said 'all right, tomorrow morning, make your appointment, and we're going to go.' It was a rare moment."

After they got their shot, Sara felt slightly fatigued for the rest of the day, and slight soreness in her arm, but felt fine other than that. Stacey experienced a harsher reaction, feeling tired and soreness in his arm for several days.

"It was interesting because she was the one we were concerned about. When it was all said and done, she did great. I was the one who ended up getting kicked in the pants," said Stacey.

The Gaudettes are involved in volunteering with the community themselves. In addition to Stacey's involvement in the Kinsmen Club, the couple have three sons, Joseph, Josh and Jack in the band Moore Avenue Underground, which hosts an annual food bank benefit concert.

They pay insurance out of pocket to rent the bandshell in Aylmer and play music. All the proceeds go to the Aylmer Corner Cupboard. The group is working on a livestream option for the event to proceed around Father's Day weekend on June 20.

"When we first moved here, I had to go through a few layoffs at Freightliner. So we used the food bank ourselves a couple times and that was really something that stood out to the boys as being important to them," said Stacey, on why Corner Cupboard was selected as a benefactor.

"For them, just the idea of being able to put food into hungry bellies was something that was really practical to them." The couple advocates for

giving back to community, and encourage others to get involved in whatever capacity they could - whether that be through joining a local service club; hosting or donating to fundraisers; offering assistance with charitable causes; or doing smaller individual acts of kindness and volunteerism.

Many events put on by service clubs involve gathering in public places, which likely won't resume until the threat of the pandemic fades, so helping out in at vaccination clinics might be one step towards getting back to those landmark community events.



A shift of volunteers for the SWPH-led St. Thomas Mass Immunization Clinic assembled before returning to help at the busy hall. Front row, from left: Diane Somerville, Judy Holtby, Terry Collins, and Alanah Mitchell; back row: Otis Clifton, Case Hoffer, Pat West, Harald Schraeder, Gary Long and Sue

Bowie. Some shown, including Mr. Hoffer, are members of the local Knights of Columbus service club, which has been coordinating a volunteer team to assist at the clinic regularly since March. (AE/contributed by SWPH)

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MUNICIPALITY OF CENTRAL ELGIN
NOTICE OF AN APPLICATION AND PUBLIC MEETING
CONCERNING PROPOSED OFFICIAL PLAN AND ZONING BY-LAW AMENDMENTS

Applicable to all lands within the Municipality of Central Elgin TAKE NOTICE that:

a) pursuant to Subsections 22(6.4)(a) and 34(10.7)(a) of the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, as amended, concurrent applications have been made by the Municipality of Central Elgin for approval of a proposed Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment. Access to the information and material provided under subsections (10.1) and (10.2) in support of the application is available for public access, and

b) a concurrent Public Meeting, pursuant to Subsections 22(1)(b) and 34(12) of the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, as amended, will be held by the Council of the Municipality of Central Elgin on the **28th day of June, 2021 at 6:45 P.M.** to consider a proposed Official Plan amendment to the Municipality of Central Elgin Official Plan, and respective zoning by-law amendments to the Village of Belmont By-law No. 91-21, Township of Yarmouth By-law No. 1998, and Village of Port Stanley By-law No. 1507. The purpose of the Public Meeting is to afford any person that attends, an opportunity to make representation with respect to the zoning proposal. The meeting will be conducted by **Zoom Webinar** and detailed information for this meeting can be found at <https://www.centralelgin.org/en/businessdevelopment/current-planningapplications.aspx>, under 'Current Planning Applications'

Through the Municipality's previous update to its Official Plan, policies were put in place that provided direction on "Secondary Residential Units" in the municipality. The Province, through the More Homes, More Choice Act, 2019, made several legislative changes related to secondary residential units (now Additional Residential Units). These changes support the use of additional dwelling units in single detached, semi-detached and townhouse dwellings, and ancillary buildings thereto.

The municipality is proposing to amend the Official Plan to be consistent with Provincial direction. Further, while the Official Plan was permissive of "Secondary Residential Units", the policy direction was never implemented through the three zoning by-laws in the Municipality of Central Elgin (Village of Belmont No. 91-21, Township of Yarmouth By-law No. 1998, and Village of Port Stanley By-law No. 1507).

The purpose and effect of the proposed amendments are to amend the Municipality of Central Elgin Official Plan to be consistent with Provincial direction on Additional Residential Units and amend the three zoning by-laws by including general provisions for Additional Residential Units to implement the Official Plan policies.

ANY PERSON OR PUBLIC BODY may attend the Public Meeting and/or make written or verbal representation either in support of, or in opposition to the proposed Zoning By-law Amendment.

Please note that the Province, through the Planning Act, has made additional dwelling units mandatory for municipalities. Subsection 16(3) of the Act states that an official plan shall contain policies that authorize the use of additional residential units by authorizing the use of two residential units in a detached house, semi-detached house or rowhouse; and the use of a residential unit in a building or structure ancillary to a detached house, semi-detached house or rowhouse. Subsection 34(19.1) of the Act further states that there is no appeal in respect of the parts of a by-law that give effect to policies described in subsection 16(3), including, for greater certainty, no appeal in respect of any requirement or standard relating to such policies.

If you wish to be notified of the decision of the Council of the Municipality of Central Elgin on the proposed zoning by-law amendment, you must make a written request to the undersigned.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION relating to the proposed Zoning By-law Amendment is available for inspection daily, Monday to Friday, 9:00 AM to 4:00 P.M. at the Municipal Offices and at the Central Elgin Planning Office, 9 Mondamin Street, St. Thomas.

DATED at the Municipality of Central Elgin, this 29th day of May, 2021.

Dianne Wilson, Deputy Clerk
Municipality of Central Elgin
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WHERE THE COMMUNITY MEETS

14 PAGES, No. 26 June 30, 2021
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SPORTS TO SATISFY THE SOUL

This is a great time in sports if you have any interest.

As we've said before, there are two kinds of Canadians when it comes to "National" League Hockey - fans of the Toronto Maple Leafs and fans of Les Canadiens.

As a youngster I had no clue, just slightly more now, about NHL hockey but have never forgotten the ridicule received for trading straight across the hockey card of, memory fails now, either Maurice "Rocket" Richard or his brother Henri "The Pocket Rocket". I discovered it was a rare piece, and worth decks of cards in return. Live and learn. And I did fast, becoming a Canadiens fan - they somehow seemed more reflective of a multi-faceted country and their red, white and blue sweaters were the best. We were honoured to wear them as a minor hockey team - indeed it's the only sweater I can remember wearing.

Plus, it's easier and more rewarding to root for a team that dominates its sport - iconic like baseball's New York Yankees and English soccer's Manchester United.

Besides, I couldn't handle the heartbreak as a Leafs fan. What is it? Half a century since a Stanley Cup? At the pool hall I used to make fun of the Leafs' fans, most of the other players, who would be all bravado and big talk in October, but much quieter by Christmas, and not long after, well, we didn't hear much about hockey in the new year. So, I'd rub it in a bit.

Year, after year, after year (I could go on quite a while here).

For the last decade, Canadian teams of any description have been absent from the Stanley Cup finals so there hasn't been anyone to cheer and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Dead last in COVID-19 vaccinations

by Brett Hueston
of The Aylmer Express

Aylmer and most of Malahide bring up the rear when it comes to COVID-19 vaccinations in Ontario.

With 42.4% of the population having received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccination, the N5H postal code (which covers Aylmer and much of Malahide) has a lower vaccination rate than remote, sparsely populated regions of northern Ontario like Dryden and Red Lake, where vaccination distribution is more challenging.

The low rate is specific to this immediate area. Less than 30 kilometres away, the N5L postal code of Port Stanley area is 72.87% vaccinated. It is the highest vaccination rate in the Southwestern Public Health region of St. Thomas-Elgin-Woodstock and the 16th highest postal code in Ontario out of 514. The data is released on June 20 by ICES (Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences) and the Ontario Health Data Platform. Most of the rest of the Elgin-St. Thomas region

is around the 60% vaccinated (first dose) range.

The data demonstrated that as the population got younger, the gap widened between the region's rate and that of the provincial average. For those over age 85, N5H was at 79.93% vaccinated, while the Ontario average was 85.92%, a difference of 2.81%.

As the age brackets get younger, the gap widens. For ages 50-54, Aylmer-Malahide was at 59.80%, about 16% below the provincial average of 75.68%. For all the age brackets

under 30, down to age 12, the Aylmer area was 25-34% below the average.

Over 50% of 12-15 year olds in the province had received their first vaccination, while those residing in N5H were at 19.47%.

Aylmer Mayor Mary French said on Tuesday, June 29 that

she was holding out hope that a mass-vaccination clinic at East Elgin Community Complex in Aylmer on July 8 would help get the local numbers up. The clinic is open to anyone and is being organized by the health unit with East Elgin Family Health Team.

In explaining the low local

numbers, Mayor French said, "I think part of it is, people feel more comfortable in our own community. I'm being optimistic this will help encourage people. That it's a convenience thing."

She encouraged anyone who was vaccine-hesitant to ask

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Ontario enters Step Two

by Rob Perry
of The Aylmer Express

The Ontario government in a statement announced Thursday, June 24, that the province would move to Step Two of its "Roadmap to Reopen" plan effective Wednesday, June 30, two days earlier than previously scheduled.

Premier Doug Ford said, "Because of the tireless work of our health care heroes, and the record setting success of our vaccine rollout, we are able to move into Step Two ahead of schedule on June 30 with the support of our public health experts. We are proceeding safely with the reopening of our province and will continue to work around the clock until the job is done."

To move to Step Two, the government had previously set minimums of at least 70 percent of the adult population having at least one dose of COVID-19

vaccine and 20 percent having received the second, booster shot.

As of June 23, over 76 percent of the adult population had at least one dose and 29 percent were fully vaccinated.

The province had also wanted to see hospital and intensive care unit admissions down before taking the second of three steps in its reopening plan.

Step Two of the Roadmap focuses on the resumption of more outdoor activities and limited indoor services with small numbers of people where face coverings are worn, with other restrictions in place. This includes, but is not limited to:

Outdoor social gatherings and events with up to 25 people;

Indoor social gatherings and events with up to 5 people;

Essential retail at 50 per cent capacity, non-essential retail at 25 per cent capacity;

Personal care services where face coverings can be worn at all times, at 25 per cent capacity;

Outdoor dining with up to 6 per table, with exceptions for larger households;

Indoor religious services, rites, or ceremonies, including weddings and funerals at up to 25 per cent capacity of the room;

Outdoor fitness classes limited number that can maintain three metres of physical distance;

Outdoor no-contact sports, with no specified limit on number of participants;

Outdoor sport facilities, concert venues, theatres, cinemas, horse racing, motor speedways fairs, rural exhibitions and festivals at 25 per cent capacity;

Overnight camps for children.

No cases in Elgin

Elgin County, for the first time in months, has no ongoing cases of COVID-19 being tracked by Southwestern Public Health as of Tuesday, June 29.

The health unit did report four

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

Family loses everything in house fire

by Rob Perry
of The Aylmer Express

The Klassen family, father Cornelius, mother Helena and their children still living at home, Jake, Felipe, Jose, Samuel and Priscilla, the youngest and just turning 16, lost everything they owned when their home was destroyed by fire on Monday, June 21.

While insured against fire, the family is scattered among several homes of friends as they look for a house to rent until they can rebuild.

Jake, in an interview with the Express, said getting through the insurance claim could take 8 to 12 months alone.

Meanwhile, they have few clothes, a couple of couches a neighbour has already given

them, and nothing else to furnish a rental house if they could find one.

He's asking anyone who might be able to provide them with household items, such as beds, to telephone him at 226-973-6270.

Malahide Acting Fire Chief Don MacLean said firefighters were called out on Monday, June 21, at 1:45 p.m. for a structure fire at 51170 Woolleyville Line, north of Summers Corners, after a neighbour noticed the fire.

All three Malahide stations were dispatched, with 30 firefighters responding with nine trucks, and a tanker called in to help from Central Elgin's Yarmouth Centre station as well.

Firefighters were confronted

by a single-storey house with the main fire almost fully in flames.

Fortunately, he said, the occupants were not home at the time. They arrived soon after.

The damage to the house was estimated at \$500,000, he said. The fire was investigated, but the cause could not be determined.

Jake said he rushed home from work, and saw the house being destroyed by flames. "We lost everything."

The family had resided in the home since 2005, he said. "It's hard for us to be apart," particularly after such a traumatic event.

His father, a truck driver, had woken up at 11 a.m. after hearing noises inside the house,

but couldn't find the source. Soon after, he was called into work.

When Jake got to the fire, "It's horrific to come to your home and realize all you own is the clothes on your back," but he was just glad no one was hurt.

His parents' Dodge Caravan was destroyed in the fire, except for one thing—a Bible. The edges of the book were singed, he said, but everything inside could still be read. An owner's manual had gone up in flames.

In addition to their belongings, they were mourning the loss of all their memories, such as photographs, of Jake's late brother Abe, who died in a car crash near Aylmer 11 years ago.

Vienna Community Centre will be sold off to fund Straffordville work

By Jeff Helsdon

Bayham councillors on Thursday, June 17, approved putting the Vienna Community Centre up for sale in order to help fund \$2-million in improvements to the Bayham Community Centre in Straffordville.

The sale would effectively leave the Straffordville hall as the only one owned by the municipality in all of Bayham.

Grants from the provincial and federal government will cover about \$1.4-million of the

Straffordville work, leaving Bayham to pay \$534,881.

Bayham Treasurer Lorne James said, "This is very good news for a large project for the municipality."

While normally such an expenditure could be covered to a large degree through increased tax revenue from property assessment growth, Mr. James said assessment changes had been deferred for now.

"Where we usually use some money from assessment growth, we won't see that portion. Council has also been advised of some other financial pressures facing the municipality."

He presented council with two funding options. The first would pay for the municipal share through the sale of non-core assets, specifically the Vienna Community Centre,

and by tapping various reserve funds.

The second option was a five-year loan, which the municipality would have to repay at a cost of \$110,000 a year.

Even with that, the sale of the Vienna hall was recommended, since \$665,000 in repairs and renovations would be needed there in the near future to meet accessibility requirements, fix

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Richard Tobola, 62, dies after pinned by backhoe

By Rob Perry
Local Journalism
Initiative reporter

Elgin Ontario Provincial Police reported that Richard Tobola, 62, of Malahide died after a mishap involving a backhoe in a wooded area on the north side of Nova Scotia Line between Richmond Road and Carter Road on Wednesday, June 23, just after 11 a.m.

OPP, Malahide firefighters and Elgin County paramedics were called to the scene, and found Mr. Tobola trapped between the boom and rear of the backhoe.

Investigation determined that Mr. Tobola had been working in the area of the backhoe when he became pinned between one of the rear stabilizer legs of the backhoe and its boom.

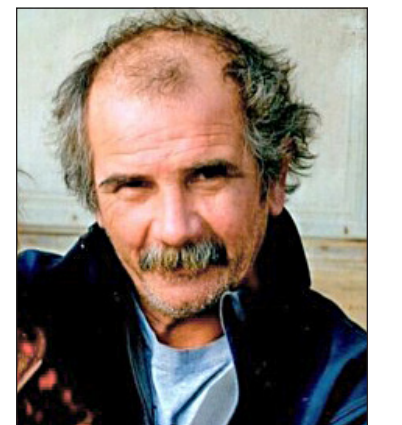
Mr. Tobola was pronounced dead at the scene.

No foul play is suspected. Elgin OPP Constable Troy Carlson said Mr. Tobola had been working on his own, accompanied only by his dog, gathering firewood for personal use and clearing brush.

A neighbour driving by on a lawn tractor heard Mr. Tobola's dog barking continuously, went to investigate, and then called for help.

Since the death was not considered workplace-related, the Ontario Ministry of Labour had not been called in to investigate, he added.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Fire destroyed this house at 51170 Woolleyville Line, north of Summers Corners, on Monday afternoon, June 21. Malahide firefighters were called out by a neighbour at 1:45 p.m., but when they arrived, they found the home already almost fully engulfed in flames. (AE/Rob Perry)

Celebrate and share Canada Day memories

Readers are reminded to display your Aylmer Express Canada Day flags for all to see - found in the June 16 paper, with extra copies available for free at the Express office.

Are you doing something interesting or special to celebrate Canada Day in 2021? Send us photos of your patriotic portrait - Simple to fold and pack, you can easily bring the flag poster on your travels, whether you're going on a local adventure or a big trip. Snap a photo holding the flag and send it in with a brief description.

We welcome readers to share other ways they are celebrating Canada Day this year, whether that be special recipes, camping, crafts, backyard parties, fireworks displays, sporting events or vacations further afield. If you planted a special red and white garden, have a favourite Canada Day tradition or a treasured memory of a holiday past, let us know.

Send your stories and photographs to info@aylmerexpress.ca or share with us on social media.



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a safe & happy
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The full-time staff members for the Aylmer Pool have been undergoing training in preparation for its opening to the public on Monday, July 5. They include, front, from left, Rachel Shea, Jillian Krahn, Tristan Stover; back: Elle Yaw, Erica Zimmer, Cadence Neusteter and St. Thomas Elgin YWCA Aquatics Coordinator Melissa McDowell. The staff, which will also be supplemented by part-timers, is about half its usual size due to COVID-19 restrictions. Anyone interested in lessons or public swims must register online, by telephone or in person at the community services office at 20 Talbot Street E. in Aylmer. (AE/Rob Perry)

Dead last in COVID-19 vaccinations

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
 questions of the health unit or of their healthcare provider.

She said she and her husband had both received their second of the two shots needed to be fully vaccinated. She got hers at a pharmacy.

She noted the mass vaccination clinic would be air conditioned, which might be appreciated considering the current heat wave. Some residents had a hard time arranging transportation, so she hoped a nearby clinic (instead of in St. Thomas) would provide one more reason to get vaccinated.

Malahide Mayor Dave Mennill, who had just returned from his second shot, said he couldn't understand why people didn't want to get the vaccine.

Just this week he'd talked to two different people and came away scratching his head. One man asked Mayor Mennill if he was sick after his first shot, as the man had heard the vaccine was worse than contracting COVID-19. Another told him he heard rumour that a mass number of nurses developed herpes after

receiving the vaccine.

Both rumours are false. Some reactions to the vaccine include fever and chills, part of the body's immune response functioning properly.

In Elgin-St. Thomas-Woodstock, 83 deaths have so far been attributed to COVID-19. No deaths are linked to vaccination.

Mayor Mennill wondered what more could be done to educate people about the effectiveness and safety of the vaccine. The health unit had gone to communities to address and ease any fears about the vaccine, and efforts were being made so getting a shot was as convenient as possible. But, certain elements of society just refused to vaccinate.

"It's beyond me why," he said. The vaccine was proven to be safe and effective. "How do you convince them?" He compared it to the U.S.A. where a significant portion of the population thought the 2020 federal election was rigged, without foundation. "Why risk going into an airplane?" he asked, if someone

was afraid of the effects of the vaccine.

"Unfortunately, someone is going to die before they get the message."

Despite massive education and encouragement campaigns on television, radio, newspapers, and in person, some segments of the religious community held anti-vaccine sentiment.

Dr. Joyce Lock, medical officer of health at Southwestern Public Health, noted the N5H area had a higher rate of children (no COVID-19 vaccine is approved for children under 12), which might push the vaccination rate down (as a proportion of the entire population).

She said the key message to anyone who was worried about the low vaccination rate, "The best thing you can do is get vaccinated." Everyone who got the jab helped decrease death, transmission, and hospitalization. She added, "The vaccine isn't just for you. You can also take it for those you love."

Just about everyone wanted businesses open, schools back to normal and to get rid of face masks. "Don't just think of yourself."

She said residents were still signing up for first vaccine doses. That included some seniors who hadn't gotten a first dose yet, despite it being first

offered to them. Not everyone was an "early adopter" of the new vaccine.

As for tracking adverse reactions to the vaccine, Dr. Lock personally reviews all of them in the region. A few have reported fever, chills, or a rash, though all reactions were reportedly managed well. No long-term adverse effects had been seen.

As of June 28 in the Southwestern Public Health region, the number of residents immunized with at least one dose stood at 132,480. That's 62.2% of the overall population.

The number with two doses as of the same date was 41,795 or 19.6% of the population.



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Richard Tobola, 62, dies after pinned by backhoe

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
 Mount Salem businessman Scott Lewis was a friend of Mr. Tobola's.

Mr. Lewis said when he first opened his garage, almost 20 years ago, he first met Mr. Tobola. Later, when Mr. Lewis moved to Nova Scotia Line, he discovered that Mr. Tobola was his next-door neighbour.

Mr. Lewis said Mr. Tobola first acquired the nickname "Boosky" as a child. Then, at his garage one day, both Mr. Tobola and Mr. Lewis's cousins were visiting. Just hearing each other's voices, without laying eyes on each other, "One said 'Boosky?' and the other side 'Anderson?'"

Mr. Tobola was a professional painter. "He took all the jobs nobody wanted to do," including the last two years at the Bruce Nuclear Power Plant. Mr. Tobola graduated from Fanshawe College as a certified

welding operator in 1979, and was also a member of International Union of Painters and Allied Trades Local 1590.

"He's one of the hardworking men I know. He could outwork anybody."

"The little man could sure move a mountain. Just a heart as big as gold."

Mr. Lewis said, "If he liked you, he liked you, and if he didn't, he didn't." Mr. Tobola "just loved cutting wood every day," which he used to heat his home.

"He lived a good life. He'd be happy going like he did, in the bush."

Ironically, Mr. Lewis, they'd recently had a conversation along those lines.

"He was about the best neighbour a guy could have."

Mr. Tobola loved his family. "He set them up good" in life, Mr. Lewis said.

Aylmer Police report

Aylmer Police Chief Zvonko Horvat reported the following on Monday, June 28:

Pedestrian hurt

Both the driver and the pedestrian were charged after an incident involving a 2006 Dodge Van on Talbot Street East on Friday, June 25, about 4:45 a.m.

Chief Horvat said a Malahide man, 53, was driving the van west on Talbot and an Aylmer man, 33, on foot, was crossing the street.

The mirror of the van struck the Aylmer man, causing a minor injury. He was taken by ambulance to St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital, where he was treated and released.

The driver was charged with failing to yield to a pedestrian, and the pedestrian man with failing to use a crosswalk.

Google card fraud

An Aylmer woman, 91, lost

\$1,500 in a scam perpetrated by two men who contacted her in a case reported to police Saturday, June 26.

The men got in touch and convinced her that her bank account was overdrawn.

They instructed her to purchase \$1,500 in "Google" gift cards, and then to provide them with information from them so they could supposedly correct the situation.

"Residents are reminded that banking institutions do not request their customers to purchase any products to correct any banking irregularities. Culprits use pressure and scare tactics in order to convince victims that their information is legitimate and they need to act on the information immediately."

He offered the following tips for such situations:

1. Slow it down - Scams are often designed to create a sense of urgency. Take time to ask

questions and think it through.

2. Spot check - Do your research to double check the details you are getting. Does what they're telling you make sense?

3. Stop! Don't send - No reputable person or agency will ever demand payment or your personal information on the spot.

Assault

An Aylmer man, 48, has been charged with assault after an incident at a Fath Avenue home on Sunday, June 27, at about 7:50 p.m.

Chief Horvat said police received a complaint about an assault, and an investigation determined that a St. Thomas man, 60, and the Aylmer man had been arguing.

That escalated when the Aylmer man allegedly lunged toward the St. Thomas man and hit him in the throat.

Electrical fire extinguished, moderate damage to house

**By Rob Perry
 Local Journalism Initiative Reporter**

An electrical fire in a home at 9443 Richmond Road in Bayham was put out Monday, June 21, about 6:40 a.m. with relatively moderate damage to the kitchen.

Bayham Fire Chief Harry Baranik said the homeowner entered the kitchen, smelled something like plastic burning

and immediately telephoned 911.

Twenty firefighters from both Bayham stations responded, and on arrival found the kitchen filled with light smoke, with more smoke coming from an electrical receptacle above the kitchen counter.

The counter was removed by firefighters and the wall opened, revealing that a wire's insulation had melted and electricity had

sparked against the exterior sheathing of the home, which was still smoldering.

Water was applied to put out the fire, and a portable fan used to extract smoke from the house.

Chief Baranik said the owner's quick action reporting the fire had resulted in limited damage to the house, though repairs were still estimated to be in the range of \$25,000.

No one was hurt.

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WHERE THE COMMUNITY MEETS

14 PAGES, No. 37 September 15, 2021
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Express-O-Gram "Journey for Change" aims for \$50,000

LET'S HAVE A PARADE
Aylmer's Kinsmen have asked the town for its assistance to make this year's Santa Claus parade a success. One hopes that council does everything possible to bring this annual feature back to a semblance of normalcy.

We don't know where we will be with COVID-19 developments, but if everyone is masked and vaccinated, there should be no problem. Of course, that won't be possible in Aylmer with the worst vaccination record in the province, but there should be ways to manage.

Almost every business in town has figured out a safe work-around to function. Surely, the town will be able to recommend something that will please the children, while keeping them safe.

VOTE: IT ALWAYS MATTERS
I was recently a bit too flippant about this election, failing to recognize the rise of a very ugly strain of Canadians. The core seems based on anti-mask, anti-vaccine beliefs.

They defiled the streets of Aylmer last fall, protest around hospitals and even on our way to North Bay this week, a couple of miscreants with some unidentifiable flags and F__K Trudeau signs were gesticulating to drivers from an overpass on Highway 11.

I was especially alarmed to view on television news a demonstration in London, Ontario at a campaign stop for Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. The mob of protestors around the Prime Minister was dotted with purple People's Party of Canada signs and shrieks of No More Lockdowns, F__K Trudeau and worse. It was the sort of thing we see more often in politically unhinged countries but I found particularly unnerving

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

by Rob Perry of The Aylmer Express
A four-, 10-, 20- and 30-kilometre "Journey for Change" Saturday, Sept. 18, starting at 9 a.m. from the Family Central in downtown Aylmer will benefit that organization and the programs it delivers, including food service training, subsidized apartments and mentoring for those in need, as well as a couple of more recent additions.

As of Thursday, Sept. 9, the Central became the permanent site of Aylmer's homeless shelter, and also wants to hire addiction councillors.

Mount Salem Community Church is the titular organizer of the event, and Pastor Albert Loewen is a board member at the Family Central.

The mission of the Central from the start was to find ways to make permanent improvements to the lives of anyone in need, whether that involved job training, temporary housing or counselling to help find work.

A restaurant at the Family Central had helped cover some costs but, given the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, has had to shut down, though it's now reopened in a different capacity. The meals being served there now at breakfast and lunch are free to all comers, and could average from 30 to 40 diners daily, most with an average household income of under \$1,500 or \$1,600 a month.

The free meals were much more popular than expected,

and with winter coming, demand might continue to increase, Pastor Loewen said.

Karolyn Friesen, food services manager for the Central,

said volunteers were always welcome to help with preparing and serving the meals.

They were divided into two shifts, from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m.

for breakfast and from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. for lunch.

Pastor Loewen said the Family Central had ongoing food costs to cover but no revenue coming in, so the Journey for Change was envisioned to help with money for that as well as addiction counselling.

So far, over \$18,000 in

pledges have been made to participants, and the organizers hoped to bring in as much as \$50,000 to allowing for the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Doug Gibbons holds a chainsaw after spending all Monday, Sept. 13, cutting up several tall trees that fell in his front yard on Jackson Line east of Spank Road in Bayham in a violent storm on Sunday night. All the fallen trees, he noted, were healthy, as could be seen where they split near the ground while, ironically, the one dead tree in his yard was seemingly untouched. Much of Bayham and parts of Malahide were without power Monday as Hydro One crews restored lines that had been knocked down. Mr. Gibbons noted he'd had to replace the connection from his house to the power lines at the road, but at about 4 p.m. was still waiting for electricity to come back on. (AE/Rob Perry)

Anti-vaxx badges are "a profound insult to the Jewish community"

by Brett Hueston of The Aylmer Express
Yellow, six-pointed star stickers declaring "UN-VAXXED" offered for sale online by a local anti-restrictions activist closely mimic the yellow badges used to identify Jews in Nazi-controlled Europe during the Second Great War.

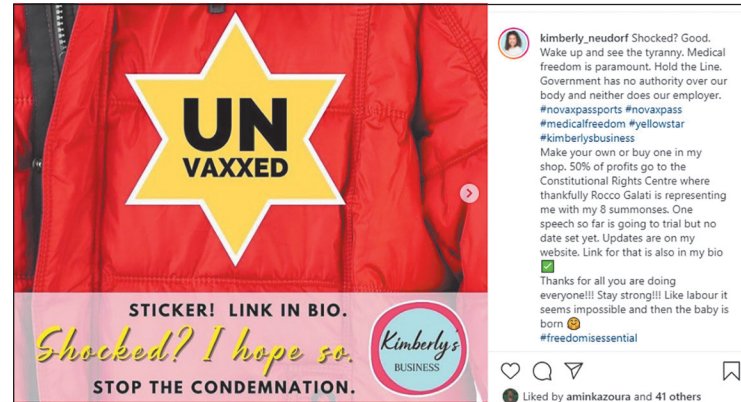
A spokesperson for a national Jewish advocacy group said selling and promoting an item like this "is an exploitation of our community's tragedy and pain." That included victims of the Holocaust and "those who gave their lives to defeat the evil of fascism."

About six-million Jews were

murdered by the Nazis during that war. The yellow star badges were used to identify, round up and ghettoize them before ultimately killing them. The badges have been used at other times over the last few hundred years to segregate, discriminate against, and dehumanize Jews.

The online storefront "Kimberly'sBusiness" was offering the stickers for sale last week for \$5 each with a "bulk discount available." Kimberly Neudorf, of Aylmer, has been an active proponent of COVID-19 restrictions and vaccines. She organized a rally at the town bandshell in October and was

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Local vaccine protestor Kimberly Neudorf recently offered these "UNVAXXED" stickers for sale. A spokesperson for a national Jewish advocacy group condemned the use of the iconography, which resembles the yellow star badges Jews were forced by the Nazis to wear as identification.

(AE/screen capture: Instagram.com/kimberly_neudorf)

"Discoloured" water remains drinkable

The Town of Aylmer issued brief statement Monday, Sept. 3, warning that, while residents might experience "slight discoloration and/or odour in their tap water," the water remained safe to drink.

A notice by Lake Huron & Elgin Area Water Supply Systems stated the following:

"Late last week, Lake Erie experienced a considerable thermocline inversion causing the lake water to 'turn over'. This brought up water with very low oxygen levels from the deeper part of the lake to the surface. Coupled with a constant wind and storms over the weekend, this has caused a number of issues including sizable fish-kills, algal die-off, increased amounts of manganese in the

raw water, strong odor, and high turbidity (cloudiness) in the raw lake water. This water is very difficult to treat and has affected nearly all water treatment facilities on Lake Erie, especially those in the central basin."

This included Aylmer, St. Thomas, Bayham, Malahide, Central Elgin and London. LHEAWSS assured residents

"that the treated water supplied to the area municipalities continues to meet the stringent water quality standards established by Ontario Regulation."

"To address the low oxygen levels and higher manganese content, the water treatment plant has made some temporary operational changes to address the current circumstances.

These include an increase in chlorine levels to compensate for the higher-than-normal chlorine demand and ensure adequate disinfection prior to the supply of water to area municipalities, as well as increased the use of powder activated carbon to combat the strong taste/odors associated with the event."

One way or another, Santa Claus is coming to town

Aylmer Kinsmen Club plans to host Santa Claus in Aylmer once again for their annual holiday parade on Saturday, November 27. While they'd prefer a traditional parade along Talbot Street, if that wasn't possible then they would start plans for a drive-by style stationary "parade", as was done last year due to pandemic restrictions.

Aylmer councillors, at a meeting Monday, Sept. 13, referred the club's request to the town's Emergency Operations Control Group to review and advise on the matter at its next meeting.

Kinsmen Parade Marshal Andy Beck submitted a letter to the town, dated Aug. 31, asking for council to "inform us on which parade will be allowed."

He said that, "with optimism," the club has begun planning for this year's parade, admitting that "COVID may alter our plans once again."

The Kinsmen adapted to pandemic restrictions last year by hosting a drive-through Christmas celebration where children were greeted by Santa Claus from family cars at East Elgin Community Complex, during which 450 vehicles participated. Mr. Beck said that, "Although not the same, this parade was a success."

He expressed the club's desire to return to a traditional parade, asking for council consider that possibility.

If a full parade isn't possible, then the Kinsmen were open to

organizing a stationary parade again, with the letter stating, "If this option is what we have, so be it."

If the town required a stationary parade, the club asked that it be expanded to add more floats and use more of the Complex parking lots, as the scope was limited last year. The club offered to present a layout of the plans, and assured that all pandemic safety protocols would be adhered to.

The letter noted that "planning a parade takes a lot of time and effort," for many involved, and that "informing these groups of the plans well in advance is important."

Discussion by council was limited to Deputy Mayor Sheri Andrews suggesting the request be referred to the EOCG, which was agreed to.

After the meeting, Aylmer Director of Corporate Services Josh Brick, responding to a follow-up question from the Express, confirmed that the request was referred to the committee and "will be discussed at the upcoming meeting on Tuesday September 21." He continued, "we should be able to issue follow up correspondence to the Kinsmen Club either later that afternoon or the next morning."

Four of 50 current cases in hospital

by Rob Perry of The Aylmer Express
Southwestern Public Health was tracking 50 ongoing cases of COVID-19 in Elgin, St. Thomas and Oxford on Tuesday, Sept. 14, four of which are hospitalized, with one in an Intensive Care Unit.

Of those 50 ongoing cases in the region, 41 are in people under 50 years old. The health unit does not provide the age ranges of those hospitalized.

The current cases in the region are up from 32 a week earlier, with local numbers at: St. Thomas and area, nine;

Aylmer and area, six; Tillsonburg and area, five; West Elgin, three; and Bayham, two. The infection rate for the region stands at 23.6 cases per 100,000 of population.

Across Ontario, 577 new cases were confirmed on Tuesday, similar to the 564 the same day last week.

As of Monday, Sept. 13, 69.6 percent of Elgin County's population aged 12 and older had been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, compared to 76.4 percent in Oxford and 82.3 percent in St. Thomas.



Phil Wait of Woodstock brought his Percheron team of Molly, 7, a dappled grey, and Ruby, 17 to the Elgin Plowing Match held south of Belmont on Saturday, Sept. 11. He's been competing with draft horses in plowing for nine years. The horses "pay for themselves," also being used for wagon and hay rides. He noted the Molly's distinctive pattern would turn completely white as she aged. More pictures are inside. (AE/Rob Perry)

“Journey for Change” aims for \$50,000

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
hiring of addiction counsellors.

Everyone was welcome to participate in the Journey, and could complete the routes by any means they chose, including walking, running, bicycling or in at least one instance by motorcycle.

The shortest course, four kilometres, would be from the Central to Elm Street and then back along a path in the parks beside Catfish Creek in town.

The 10-kilometre route would be down John Street South and then Imperial Road to the Malahide South Fire Station and back, the 20-km route to Copenhagen and back, and the 30-km route to the pier at Port Bruce and back.

Both fixed and mobile aid stations would provide water as needed.

Pastor Loewen said the Aylmer area was “unbelievably generous,” and the Central welcomed the financial support it would receive.



Patrick Stanat, left, Albert Loewen and Karolyn Friesen hope that a “Journey for Change” walk, run, bicycle or even motorcycle ride on Saturday, Sept. 18, starting at 9 a.m. from the Family Central in Aylmer will raise up to \$50,000

to help support its work. The Central, already home to a food service training program, free meals, subsidized apartments and mentoring for those in need has also become the site of Aylmer’s homeless shelter. (AE/Rob Perry)

Central Elgin fire truck and car crash

by Rob Perry
of The Aylmer Express
One person was seriously injured following a crash involving a Central Elgin aerial fire truck and a car at the intersection of Belmont Road and Ron McNeil Line on Thursday, Sept. 9, at 2:51 p.m.

Ontario Provincial Police Sergeant Jeffrey McNorgan of Elgin Ontario Provincial Police said the fire truck was being driven south on Belmont Road, and was not on an emergency call so its lights and siren were not on.

The car was westbound on Ron McNeil Line, driven by a woman, 33, who was seriously injured in the crash.

A Central Elgin firefighter was also taken to St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital as a precaution.

Everyone involved in the crash was wearing a seatbelt at the time, Sgt. McNorgan noted. The car sustained major damage and the truck minor damage.

He said on Tuesday, Sept. 14, the crash investigation was ongoing, and he could release no further details at this time.

At Central Elgin

Central Elgin Fire Chief Ray Ormerod said the same when questioned about the incident during a municipal council meeting on Monday night, Sept. 13.

Councillor Bill Fehr said he had heard rumours the aerial truck, purchased by Central Elgin only two years ago, was on the road because it was going to be sold.

Central Elgin Administrator Paul Shipway said councillors

had given no direction to do so, and such a sale would require their okay.

Sometimes, he noted, another municipality just wanted to have a look at one of Central Elgin’s trucks.

Cr. Fehr asked how badly the truck had been damaged.

Chief Ormerod said the municipality’s insurer was sending an appraiser to determine that in the next few days.

Cr. Fehr wanted to know why DNO Towing, a business based in Central Elgin, hadn’t been called in to tow the fire truck, and instead that went to a company from Woodstock.

Chief Ormerod said the company that did the towing was local, but had to bring in a special truck from Woodstock because of the weight of the fire truck.

Mayor Sally Martyn said she’d had another towing company complain to her about not getting any calls when crashes occurred. Elgin Ontario Provincial Police was reviewing its policy when it came to that.

Cr. Fehr complained DNO had gone to the scene and been told its services weren’t needed.

Mayor Martyn said towing companies listened in on police radio communications and went to crash scenes without being called, “something they’re not supposed to do.”

The OPP was coming up with a new way to determine which towing company should be called in. Businesses would have to certify they were licensed and capable for certain types of calls, and then they would be added to a list, with each called in order.



A car and a Central Elgin firetruck crashed at the intersection of Belmont Road and Ron McNeil Line Thursday, Sept. 9, at 2:51 p.m. The driver of the car, a woman, 33, who was seriously injured, had been westbound on Ron McNeil at the time, and the firetruck southbound on Belmont Road. The intersection is controlled by stop signs on Ron McNeil Line. (AE/Rob Perry)

Anti-vaxx badges are “a profound insult to the Jewish community”

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
part of a second one in November at East Elgin Community Complex, drawing over 1,000 anti-lockdown supporters.

While the anti-restrictions and anti-vaccination movement has used plenty of Second Great War and Nazi imagery, this is one of the first times during the pandemic a symbol of Jewish genocide has been repurposed and marketed for sale publicly.

“Appalling”

Jaime Kirzner-Roberts, director of policy with the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies said the Holocaust and opposition to vaccines during a pandemic weren’t comparable.

“The Holocaust is not a metaphor for anything we don’t like in the world. It’s not a metaphor at all. It was a real experience that happened in living memory

that involved the worst kind of barbarity and horror that human beings are capable of.”

She called comparing government actions during the pandemic to the Holocaust “a profound insult to the Jewish community and the tragedy we experienced. It’s also an insult to our veterans who fought so bravely in the face of the horror of the Nazis. And it’s an insult to our freedom and way of life in Canada. We’re just sick of it.”

She explained the use of the yellow badges in the war: “During the Holocaust, before they began kidnapping Jews and bringing them to the camps, the first step of that was forcing Jews to wear stars to identify as Jews. This was a fascist, violent, military society, nothing like the wonderful country we’re privileged to be living in here.”

“Drawing parallels from this

to what the Jews endured is appalling.”

About a week after first becoming aware of it, the sticker was no longer listed on Ms. Neudorf’s website, which also sells t-shirts with slogans like “The media is the virus” and “Unmasked, unvaxxed, unafraid.” There’s also a shirt that teases Aylmer Mayor Mary French for admitting she cried when she saw the hundreds of people descending on Aylmer for the November rally that also marched through town and past her house.

The Express asked the online host of the storefront if it was taken down for violation of terms of service but has not heard back.

Ms. Neudorf, who has not responded to multiple emails and phone calls, said online on Instagram, “Etsy deactivated

my listing! They must’ve been offended. If you want some just let me know and I can make a direct order but otherwise I’m sure you can make them yourself.”

In an earlier post, showing the yellow badge she was selling, she announced “Shocked? Good. Wake up and see the tyranny. Medical freedom is paramount.”

On a Facebook link to the stickers, Kimberly Charlton Neudorf liked a comment by Abe Wall that stated, “Is the iconography meant to resemble the badges the Jewish community was forced to wear during WW2 before being sent to their death?”

The listing was also shared through FreedomNews Canada, which is a social media account that appears to be operated by Herbert R. Hildebrandt.

COLOURING CONTEST

WIN \$20

BIA Dollars

Donated by Mainstreet Aylmer

Send your entry or drop it off at The Aylmer Express, 390 Talbot St. E., Aylmer by October 1, 2021 at 5pm. The winners will be announced October 6, 2021. Prizes will be randomly drawn for: Ages 4-7, Ages 8-11, and Ages 12-17. Employees and family members of The Aylmer Express are not eligible for this contest.

Name: _____

Age: _____

Address: _____

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AYLMER EXPRESS

RIGHT AT HOME

INVESTING IN ELGIN

ELGIN COUNTY 2022 BUDGET SURVEY

The Elgin County Budget Committee wants to hear from you! We would like to understand your priorities for the 2022 budget.

To complete the survey, visit www.engageelgin.ca/investinginelgin

The Budget Committee will incorporate your input into their recommendations to County Council about what services, programs and infrastructure projects should be included in the budget.

The survey closes September 20, 2021.

www.elgincounty.ca

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