

EDUCATION

‘Our vision is to inspire people to see the humanity in everyone’

Westfield students delve deep into diversity, inclusion with assistance of Unlearn workshops

DAN MCNEE

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NORTH PERTH – The quickest way to observe that North Perth is becoming a much more diverse and multicultural community each and every day is by simply taking a walk through the halls of its schools.

And it is within these institutions that critically shape the young minds of the future that an ongoing educational revolution is taking place. For three days last month, North Perth Westfield Elementary School welcomed Abhi Ahluwalia to lead a series of workshops designed to initiate critical thinking and new conversations in an effort to better understand different ethnicities, sexual orientations, mental health circumstances and the countless social issues that adolescents contend with daily while at school.

Ahluwalia founded Unlearn in the early 1990s, with the primary focus of ‘unlearning’ the principles behind racism, prejudice and discrimination, while challenging people on the way they think of the world around them. Ahluwalia’s parents, of South Asian heritage, fled the racial discrimination surrounding the military dictatorship rule of Idi Amin in 1970s Uganda, becoming refugees in Great Britain for two years before immigrating to Kitchener-Waterloo in 1974.

Ahluwalia’s mother was a huge influence on his life’s work; she was a passionate public speaker who worked tirelessly to bring discrimination and racism to the forefront of conversations, especially in the urban schools of her new city.

“My mother always marched to the beat of her own drum,” said Ahluwalia. “She would challenge a lot of those gender norms and stereotypes of a South Asian woman. She did a lot of volunteer work in our community, and one of the positions she held as vice-chair of the race relations committee in the early nineties.”

While attending Kitchener Collegiate Institute, Ahluwalia recalled often hearing from friends that his mother had spoken to their class, and he became more interested in what she was saying. Upon hearing her speak for the first time in a formal setting, he admits that he was surprised when she addressed that he and his brother had experienced racism growing up in the K-W school system.

“I remember being taken aback by that, because I didn’t have any recollection of those experiences at first,” said Ahluwalia. “I later realized that sometimes it’s a coping mechanism when you’re dealing with difficult times, you want to block it out of your mind.”

“I was clearly looking at the world through these

rose-coloured glasses. We were a diverse community but I didn’t realize this stuff was happening. But the beauty of equity work is that once you see something, you can’t unsee it; once you hear something, you can’t unhear it.”

Unlearn utilizes a method of presenting unique images to students – in Westfield’s case Grade 7-8 students – that prompts them to write and speak about what each poster means to them. A map of the world presented as a tree with intricate roots intertwined; a small puzzle with three similarly-coloured pieces fitting together and one in a different shade not; four students with various battery levels above their heads. All are designed to spark conversation, and all invoke complete different perceptions from each student, with the underlying goal to make the school environment safer, better and more inclusive for all.

“There’s something really powerful about these designs,” said Ahluwalia. “Rather than coming in to places and spaces and telling people how to think, they engage people in critical thinking around a number of different topics and ideas.”

“As a father myself, parents and caregivers want their children to achieve at the highest academic potential, they want them to succeed in school and do well. But if a child and a student shows up at school



Contributed Photos

(Top) Abhi Ahluwalia leads a workshop for Grade 7-8 students at North Perth Westfield Elementary School in late February. For the last 30 years, Ahluwalia’s Unlearn organization has been leading efforts to promote safer, better and more inclusive school environments for all through a variety of methods designed to prompt change and spark crucial conversations. (Above) Students participate in a visual representation exercise.

and they don’t feel like they’re safe, cared for or included, they’re not going to achieve to their highest academic potential. So that drives the work of Unlearn. “I’m not here to give you the answer – that answer has to come from you. A big part of our work is listening.”

Unlearn has participated in countless workshops across Ontario and Canada since its inception, and has also been utilized by other countries like the U.S. and Australia.

Prior to her appointment as Westfield’s vice-principal ahead of the 2022-23

school year, Amy Kipfer spent nine years as the Avon Maitland District School Board’s equity lead. She became quite familiar with Unlearn and its benefits to all ages, scheduling professional development workshops with teachers through the organization in an effort to expand diversity and inclusivity education from the top down. Westfield teachers participated in Unlearn workshops prior to the student sessions that followed.

“This was the first time I got to experience it with kids, which was really great,” said Kipfer. “It real-

ly gives students an opportunity to all have a voice and say what they feel they need to say without the influence of their peers, which is a big thing when it comes to adolescence, and adolescent pressure. A lot of great things came out of those workshops.”

After receiving the students’ input on the visual displays presented to them, Ahluwalia then ‘unpacks’ those responses, leading to some in-depth conversations among adolescents at a critical learning age.

“It was beautiful, powerful and very moving what people were sharing,” he said.

“I think engaged,” responded Kipfer when asked how she believes the intermediate students responded to the Unlearn workshops. “And for some of our diverse population, I think they saw themselves represented in things that we were showing them. I saw and heard students sharing things that I certainly wasn’t aware of. It seemed like those students felt more open to share more about their faith, their identity or their families. Here it was kind of an open platform to talk more about those struggles and differences, which was really great.”

“As a school, we’re excited about the growth of diversity, and that we’re really trying to welcome new experiences and welcome new voices to the table anytime anyone has something to share.”

More information about Unlearn and its ongoing efforts can be found online at www.unlearn.com.

“There’s an incredible need and desire for this work, with schools and school boards reaching out and saying ‘we need your help, we need your support,’” said Ahluwalia. “During the pandemic, our team grew, we’re starting to work across the country when more things went virtual.”

“Overall, our vision is to inspire people to see the humanity in everyone. We all have so much we need to learn and unlearn about ourselves and each other – myself included. I’m on a lifelong journey of learning and unlearning.”

LDSS alumnus releases second children’s book

MELISSA DUNPHY

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NORTH PERTH – A local author has released her second children’s book just in time for Easter. The *Banner* sat down with Delicia Miller, a former student at LDSS, to learn more about her book, the character Mozart the Clinic Cat, and what inspires her creative process.

Listowel Banner: Tell me more about what prompted you to become a children’s author?

Delicia Miller: Many things prompted me to dream about being an author but honestly I never thought it was a reasonable goal for me. Who am I to write a book? Why should I even try since there are so many other people who have more skills and abilities to write than myself? These were some of the many thoughts that would cross my mind every time I would even try to entertain the idea of pursuing this random thought I continued to have. Eventually I was tired of just thinking about doing it and I challenged myself to really seek out if this was even a possibility, and within

months everything fell into place.

LB: Tell me about your book character, *Mozart the Clinic Cat*?


DM: I was previously employed as a veterinary technician at Laurelwood Veterinary Hospital in Waterloo where they adopted Mozart as their clinic cat. Mozart is a Himalayan filled to the brim with personality and whom everyone adores! Mozart can be found sleeping everywhere around the clinic, seeking attention from the staff or being noisy with the pets visiting the clinic for appointments.

LB: What’s your latest book about?

DM: My latest book called *The Lost Bunny* is based on Easter Monday, where the clinic is getting back into its busy routine after a long weekend and Mozart is busy bugging the staff, playing around the clinic and then decides to check out the animals visiting the hospital. When he checks all of the patients he notices that Dudley the bunny is missing. Mozart frantically searches the clinic for the lost bunny. Where did Dudley go? Will Mozart find him?

Continued on page 8

Easter Deadline



PLEASE NOTE our office will be CLOSED on Friday, April 7, 2023 for Good Friday.

Deadline to book ads for the Thursday, April 13th edition of the Listowel Banner is Thursday, April 6th at 5 p.m.

Listowel Banner
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'Freedom is the key word... it's what my country wants'

Church members hear perspective on war from Ukrainian presenter

DAN MCNEE

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LISTOWEL – It has been 15 long months since Russian forces first advanced across the border in an unprovoked invasion of neighbouring Ukraine, and the passage of time has not made the ongoing conflict any easier to bear for Listowel's Alex Kyrychenko.

Kyrychenko and his wife, Lesia, made the move to Canada in 2017, well before the current war began. Both employed in the financial sector, they have since raised two children after settling in Listowel. But like all Ukrainian immigrants, they continue to follow what's happening in their home country closely, and have a large number of family and friends living in what is still an active warzone in most of the eastern European nation.

Kyrychenko shared his perspective on the war in Ukraine to interested attendees at the Trinity United Church in Listowel on May 25, hosted by the Trinity Men's Fellowship Club. His presentation was also attended by members of the local Calvary-Wallace-Zion pastoral congregations, following an authentic Ukrainian meal.

"Freedom is the key word of my presentation," opened Kyrychenko last Thursday evening. "It's what my country wants, and that's why there is a war in Ukraine now."

Alex, assisted by Lesia who handled the digital video and



Dan McNee Photo

Alex Kyrychenko, a Ukrainian living in Listowel for the past six years, delivered a powerful presentation on his perspective of the Russian invasion of Ukraine to an interested audience at Trinity United Church in Listowel on May 25.

photo portion of the presentation, opened the discussion by sharing a video of the stunning visual highlights of Ukraine before the beginning of the 2022 war with Russia. Sprawling green fields and landscapes were punctuated by aerial representations of modern cities dotted with centuries-old architectural elements.

Later on, Kyrychenko showed a second video of his native city of Bucha – including his former

neighbourhood – before the Russians arrived last year, and then the aftermath. Crowd members were visibly disturbed by the juxtaposition, as was Kyrychenko himself. Vibrant parks and public spaces were replaced by shattered buildings and destroyed vehicles in debris-filled streets littered with artillery impact craters.

"It is really hard for me to watch this video," he said.

Shortly after the war began last year, Bucha became a well-documented site of war crimes and crimes against humanity, in which a massacre occurred that saw hundreds of civilians killed by invading Russian forces. Reports of the mass rape of women and children as young as two also came forth after troops withdrew from the area, allegations which the Russian government has denied outright despite the

extensive media coverage and testimonies of the public.

"Can we call them humans? Can we consider them humans?" Kyrychenko asked those in attendance of the Russians' conduct against Ukraine. "I hope it is close to the end. Because now they see Ukraine can fight; our soldiers have liberated many territories. I hope it will end soon."

Kyrychenko was born in Ukraine as part of the former Soviet Union before its complete collapse in 1991, and said that the principles the USSR operated under for seven decades are still very much alive in modern-day Russia.

"They will refuse eating, but they won't refuse to fight," he said of Russia's history of famine and aggressive tendencies towards its neighbours. "Now (the war) is around 500 days, and the Russians still don't have victory. And they probably never will."

Kyrychenko accepted questions from the audience after his presentation, and was also thanked by organizers for his forthright commentary on a situation many may have a hard time relating to in Canada.

A humanitarian collection was also received for the Canada-Ukraine Foundation, a charitable organization launched in 1995 that targets specific aspects of aid including food relief, medical supplies and emergency response equipment.

"We wish for your country to have a better future," said Bill Butt, Trinity Men's Fellowship member, to Kyrychenko at the conclusion of the evening.

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New build proposed on Rocher Road

MELISSA DUNPHY

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NORTH PERTH – A proposed industrial subdivision could be coming to Listowel's south end, as an application for an industrial plan of subdivision is being submitted to Perth County.

The concerning lands are south of Rocher Road and are approximately 12.1 acres with frontage on Rocher. The lands are vacant, flat and currently used for cash crop. There is no intention to change the current industrial zoning on the lot.

Previously, H&J Donegan Holdings submitted an application that was given final approval by Perth County in 2019. However, the developer is requesting to further subdivide the lot into smaller industrial lots, as there is a demand for these smaller lots in North Perth.

The application for plan of subdivision proposes nine lots for industrial development and a new municipal street. The developer is planning to build a new road connection for the interior lots, and it will be named to the satisfaction of the municipality. Further, it proposes that four of these lots will front directly onto Rocher Road East and the remaining five would have frontage on the new street.

The report was provided to North Perth council prior to the consideration of the file by Perth County.

However, there are concerns surrounding impact on the neighbouring residential area, as well as pedestrian traffic.

"There are concerns of safe pedestrian access and active transportation options for this area. There are no pedestrian sidewalks provided on any surrounding street."

Continued on page 13



Melissa Dunphy Photo

FIREFIGHTERS IN TRAINING – The North Perth Fire Department's Monkton station held its firefighters' breakfast on June 11 at the Elma-Logan Recreation Complex. The event had a lengthy lineup but was well worth the wait, as firefighters served the hungry crowd a delicious breakfast. Pictured: Jack, 1, and Cohen McEwen, 3, smile with Lincoln McCulligh, 5 months, while awaiting their turn to dig in and enjoy a hearty firefighter-made breakfast.

North Perth raises Pride Flag for second year

MELISSA DUNPHY

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LISTOWEL – With Pride Month in full swing, North Perth has raised a Pride flag at its municipal office for the second time in history.

A group of community members, public sector employees and allies gathered at the municipal office in Listowel on June 8 to celebrate the raising of the flag. The flag was raised in honour of Pride month and will fly until the end of June.

Mayor Todd Kasenberg took the podium to address the crowd gathered.

"So, as representative of the council of the Municipality of North Perth and as mayor of

this community, I am honoured to be here again today, the second annual raising of this Pride flag at this municipal building. I am here with pride, that this flag raising can take place in our small community."

"I want to wryly take note, the sky has not fallen since we first raised the flag here a year ago," joked Kasenberg. He then spoke to the opposition received from the municipality's flying of the flag.

"There was opposition a year ago to this flag flying here with some sense of dire consequence. Some in our community continue to work to block this activity, to move it to the periphery and perhaps to sustain the comfort of their privilege. Often, this is positive in the context of religious

belief or cultural background. But governments and the municipal corporation here, are secular institutions not vehicles for proselytizing."

"I will be forthright in my calling out this notion. That somehow we must curtail the celebration of Pride that recognizing the rights and dignity of each individual is somehow a bad idea. It is wrong headed. I remain frustrated by those who cannot look at the problems of intolerance and privilege in the eye and who busily assert that by recognizing groups who have experienced intolerance and prejudice so that we may show solidarity with efforts to see real change."

Kasenberg then issued a call to action for all those in attendance.

Continued on page 2

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Police charge school board employee with sexual offences

SPECIAL TO THE BANNER

NORTH PERTH – The Perth County Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) has laid charges in relation to a sexual offence investigation that occurred in the Municipality of North Perth.

On Sunday, May 21, 2023 just before 1 p.m., the OPP responded to a report of inappropriate communication between a youth and an adult employee of a local school board, that occurred in May of this year. The Perth County Crime Unit completed an investigation, and a 48-year-old resident of North Perth has been charged with: Luring a person under 14 years of age by means of telecommunication, and invitation to sexual touching under 16 years of age.

The accused was held in custody pending a bail hearing.



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30,987 km., Anniversary Leather Keyless Entry, Stk# 372961

North Perth celebrates Pride Month throughout June

Continued from front

“What it is is a call to us, to commune more, to be part of the community, to make efforts towards the community, to seek comfort in community. And I personally think that pride is, in fact, a critical element of that effort.”

Next, local Reverend Sarah Bruer addressed the crowd and told them her personal experiences with being a part of the 2SLG-BTQIA+ community.

“Although I didn’t grow up here in Listowel, I grew up in another small, Ontario town. There, I got the message loud and clear. That being gay was not OK.

“Yet amidst that hatred. Many continued to love.”

She then goes on to explain what she is thankful for.

“Every day. I am grateful. I’m grateful to them that I can live the life I do as a married lesbian woman who works as a church minister. I’m grateful as well that my queer peers can live the lives they feel called to live.”

Bruer then goes on to explain that more work needs to be done in North Perth’s community for those who are part of the 2SLG-BTQIA+ community.

“We have come a long way. At the same time, there are still queer kids growing up in this community. Who are getting the message that being gay is not OK. They are hearing it from

their peers, who make fun of things that are gay. They’re hearing it from teachers and coaches and parents, whose implicit or explicit biases reinforce heterosexism and binary gender norms. They’re reading about it on social media posts. When Pride decorations get vandalized, town councils refused to fly flags. And protesters overwhelmed drag storytimes at libraries.”

The Reverend then closed by encouraging those in attendance that they aren’t solitary in their existence.

“(The Pride Flag) says to them, to me, and to everyone else who needs the reminder. You are not alone.”



Mayor Todd Kasenberg addresses the crowd gathered at the North Perth municipal office in Listowel prior to the raising of the Pride flag on June 8. *Melissa Dunphy Photo*

June is Seniors Month

Protect your eyes with high-quality sunglasses

Sunglasses are meant to protect your eyes from ultraviolet (UV) rays and prevent glare from reflective surfaces. Although you should wear sunglasses all year round, it’s even more important to wear them during the summer, when you spend more time outdoors in the heat. Here are a few good reasons to protect your eyes.

DANGERS ASSOCIATED WITH UV RAYS

Not wearing sunglasses or wearing ones that don’t provide adequate UV

protection can increase your risk of the following:

- Premature retina aging
- Corneal degeneration
- Cataracts
- Temporary blindness called photokeratitis
- Eyelid sunburns
- Formation of growths on the surface of the eye
- Cancer

TIPS FOR CHOOSING THE RIGHT SUNGLASSES

Here are a few criteria to consider when purchasing a pair of sunglasses to ensure your eyes have adequate protection:

- The lenses block 99 to 100 per cent of UVA and UVB rays
- The lenses fit around your eyes and protect the delicate skin around them
- The lenses are polarized
- The lenses are uniform and free of imperfections



Although you can buy sunglasses in many stores, it’s a good idea to invest in a high-quality pair from an optometry clinic to ensure the best protection for your eyes. What’s more, you can get personalized advice and book your next eye exam.

5 mistakes to avoid when choosing a seniors’ residence

Even though you may be forced to find a seniors’ residence quickly because of your circumstances, don’t let that prevent you from making the right decision. Avoid these five mistakes when looking for a place to live.

- 1. Don’t make the decision alone**
Even if you’re pressed for time, ask your family and friends for their opinions. This can help you gain the perspective you need to make the right decision.
- 2. Don’t neglect your needs**
Make sure to consider your current level of independence, health and daily support needs. Make a list so you don’t forget anything.
- 3. Don’t forget to think about the future**
The needs you’ve listed are likely to shift

over time. If possible, select a facility that can adapt to these changes.

4. Don’t forget to visit the property
Visit the residence you’re considering before making your decision. It’s even better to check several establishments and compare them.

5. Don’t downplay your criteria
Your choice should be based on more than just a facility’s ability to meet your basic needs. For example, consider the monthly cost, the location of the residence and its distance from your family members. Also, consider the leisure activities offered and the overall atmosphere.

Do you need to decide quickly or need help making a final decision? Contact a housing consultant today.

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Cory Bilyea Photo
POWERFUL PULL – Listowel's Cole Brubacher came through in fine form for It Takes A Village and the Tanner Steffler Foundation through the Challenge Accepted Foundation on Sunday, June 25. The 19-year-old fundraiser pulled a 7,000-pound pickup truck for 10 kilometres alongside the Steve Kerr Memorial Complex in support of the two organizations, raising nearly \$7,000.

Van Allen Insurance victim of Pride flag vandalism twice over 24 hours

Perth County OPP treating June 21 incident as hate crime

DAN MCNEE

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LISTOWEL – Despite all the local progress that has been made in recent years in relation to inclusivity, it would appear that some individuals still can't bring themselves up to speed.

Van Allen Insurance Inc. discovered this in a very personal way when staff arrived for work on the morning of June 21. Sometime overnight, a male suspect assaulted a telescopic pole flying the Pride flag out front of the Listowel business, located on Elma Street West. The individual

at first tried to scale the pole, partially succeeding, pulling the flag and pole down and then removing it completely with a knife. He then proceeded to destroy much of Van Allen's front flower bed, including a number of hosta plants located there.

The incident was captured by

the business's frontal surveillance camera, footage that was turned over to police for investigation last Wednesday.

"Our staff was furious, they were irate," said owner Shane Van Allen of his team's reaction to seeing the act firsthand. "It feels like an encroachment on your space... and when you

Continued on page 2

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See page 16

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Perth County receives report on school bus arm cameras, penalty system changes

MELISSA DUNPHY

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter
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PERTH COUNTY – Perth County is taking action when it comes to school bus safety. Annette Diamond, director of legal and corporate services for the county, presented a report to county council on June 15 surrounding the issue of school bus stop arm cameras in the region.

County staff have investigated the feasibility of implementing an Administrative Monetary Penalty System (AMPS) for automated enforcement of camera-based vehicle infractions, which would include Automated Speed Enforcement (ASE), Red Light Cameras (RLC) and Automated School Bus Stop Arm Cameras.

Further, staff have researched the issue of proceeding with school bus arm cameras without the implementation of the

AMPS program.

"Specific to school bus arm cameras, municipalities, police services, school boards, and transportation providers need to work together to pool resources and develop a framework to implement an Automated School Bus Camera System with appropriate funding," explained the report. However, the county has options to just install school bus arm cameras or to also implement an AMPS program.

AMPS is an alternative to the provincial court system, which moves enforcement of some offences to the municipality.

"At this time, there are no municipalities that have implemented an AMPS for camera-based vehicle infractions. Some municipalities use AMPS for parking and by-law enforcement," explained Diamond in her report.

The types of charges covered under the AMPS program for automated enforcement of camera-based vehicle infractions include speeding, red light violations, and more. In 2022, there were 4,418 of these types of charges in Perth County and approximately \$492,000 in gross revenue collected from these charges.

Continued on page 3

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Hours count for high school.

GIANT PARADE - 12:30
Register your float by sending a message to the Atwood Lions Facebook Page or email atwoodlions@gmail.com OR register before the parade starts - James St. Atwood.

After the parade: Mush Ball
• Cake Booth • Beer Garden 1:30-11 p.m.
• FREE Public Swim • FREE Kids Games
• Legends of Lions Elimination Draw
• Pork Chop BBQ 4-7 p.m.
• Fireworks 9:45 p.m.

Youth ATV operator killed following June 12 collision

SPECIAL TO THE BANNER

NORTH PERTH – The operator of an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) has died as a result of a two-motor vehicle collision that occurred in North Perth.

On June 12, Perth County Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), the North Perth Fire Department and Perth

County Emergency Medical Services responded to a collision involving an ATV and a pickup truck on Line 87 at Road 175 in the Municipality of North Perth.

An individual was transported to hospital following the collision; the 16-year-old ATV operator of Gowanstown succumbed to their injuries.

Perth County OPP is continuing to investigate with the assistance of the OPP West Region Traffic Incident Management and Enforcement Team.

For the protection of emergency responders and to facilitate the investigation, Line 87 between Road 171 and 176 was closed for several hours.

Two arrested, charged in June 20 Listowel drug bust

SPECIAL TO THE BANNER

LISTOWEL – Police have charged two North Perth residents with a plethora of drug-related charges following the execution of a search warrant in Listowel earlier this week.

On Tuesday, June 20, OPP executed the warrant at an Elm Avenue North address.

Police say a quantity of suspected fentanyl, methamphetamine, cocaine and hydromorphone were seized at the scene. Police estimate the street value of the drugs to be \$10,570.

Also seized at the scene was an unspecified amount of Canadian currency, and offence-related property.

Two North Perth residents, ages 37 and 31, have both been charged with the following:

- possession of a Schedule I substance for the purpose of trafficking – methamphetamine;
- possession of a Schedule I substance for the purpose of trafficking – cocaine;
- possession of a Schedule I substance



for the purpose of trafficking – hydromorphone;

- possession of a Schedule I substance for the purpose of trafficking – oxycodone; and;
- possession of a Schedule I substance – fentanyl.

Both accused were released from custody, and are scheduled to appear in Stratford court on July 24 to answer to the charges.



Dan McNee Photos

Van Allen Insurance Inc.'s new Pride flag flaps outside the Listowel business following an incident on June 21 that saw a suspect destroy the original flag that had been flying out front of its Elma Street West property. Police are treating the vandalism as a hate crime. (Inset) The suspect also inexplicably destroyed a number of plants growing in the flower bed adjacent to the flag pole.

Pride vandals plague Van Allen Insurance

Continued from front

realize that it was more specific to an actual cause or movement, it's very disheartening. We were all beside ourselves."

After Van Allen posted the incident to Facebook, the community quickly showed its support. Lyn Housser provided the business with a new Pride flag (the original was not recovered, and it is believed that the suspect stole it upon leaving the scene on a bicycle) which Van Allen promptly put up, this time affixed to the side of the building.

Upon coming into work the next morning, he found the new Pride flag lying on the ground nearby. Van Allen reviewed the surveillance footage, seeing that a pair of teenagers – later identified as high school exchange students – had ripped it down, making it two separate incidents inside 24 hours.

"We're not going to let the few ruin it for everybody else," said Van Allen of his resolve to get the Pride flag back up immediately, and it was indeed flying without issue as of Friday morning. "It really makes me realize that I'm a little naive to the whole situation, and didn't realize it's as bad as it is in our community. We need to be more aware and accepting. This is just ridiculous."

"The ignorance is still out there." On June 23, North Perth Mayor Todd Kasenberg addressed the incident through a message on the municipality's website.

"To those who have perpetrated this, I

invite you to educate yourselves about the value of addressing solidarity with Pride, and to be mindful that our laws prohibit trespassing and acts of intolerance of this nature," said Kasenberg in the release. "All efforts will be made to identify you and bring justice in this unfortunate situation."

The Ontario Provincial Police investigation into the incident is ongoing, with Van Allen saying that the authorities are treating the matter as a hate crime. He added that he appreciated the support the public has provided for both the business and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community since making the incident known on social media.

"You don't want to let that fester, because it doesn't help the cause any," said Van Allen. "How do we turn this into good, and not let him ruin it for anybody else quickly became our next way of thinking."

"I had a strong gut feeling that as soon as we put it out there, the community would rally together. And sure enough they did, everybody just came out to support."

Pride flag removed, damaged in Perth East

In related news, the Perth County OPP reported on June 20 that it had been notified of a mischief incident on Line 61 in Perth East, also involving a Pride flag.

Investigation determined that on June 15, at approximately 9:50 p.m., two unknown suspects attended the address and removed a Pride flag from the flag pole and damaged it.

Members of the Perth County OPP are continuing to investigate and is seeking the public's assistance. If anyone has any information, they are being asked to contact police at 1-888-310-1122.

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