

# The Herald

Serving Thamesville, Dresden and Bothwell



Vol. 132, Issue 31 • Wednesday, August 1, 2018

Established in 1886

The Herald • \$1.25 per issue (HST incl.)

## VanDamme ends his bid for second council term

Heather Wright  
*The Herald*

There will be at least one new East Kent councillor after the Oct. 22 election.

Incumbent David VanDamme, who had already declared his intention to seek a second term on Chatham-Kent Council, withdrew his name from contention as the nominations closed Friday.

VanDamme was elected in 2014 and says he dedicated a lot of time to politics. His biography on the Chatham-Kent municipal website says he had fulfilled a life-long passion by becoming a councillor.

VanDamme was reluctant to talk about it saying it was a very difficult personal decision.

"Sometimes, you have to put family first," VanDamme told *The Herald* Monday.

"I spent a lot of time at it, I did it because I love it," he added saying he has two teenaged boys and a wife and "that's the most important thing."

But VanDamme says "I'm going to miss it."

There are now three people running for two East Kent seats. Incumbent Steve Pinsonneault, Ridgetown community booster, MaryAnn Hawthorn and John Wright who is from Ridgetown and was the head of the Canada 150 celebrations in his community.

In North Kent, Joe Faas has decided to seek a fifth term. Faas was first elected to office in 1977 in the former Town of Dresden. He was the last mayor of the community before amalgamation. He ran in the first Chatham-Kent vote, but failed to win a seat. After two terms on council, he decided to try again and won.

The incumbent was one of the last people to declare his intentions in the ward.

Faas says he waited to see what candidates were coming forward this year. "Nobody really from Dresden jumped forward and with Leon (Leclair) leaving as well, that would leave a whole new slate in North Kent," he says.

SEE NORTH KENT PG 2

## HANGING ON



Danielle Lamont holds on tight as her sheep is let free during the Dresden Exhibition's Muttin Bust'n contest Saturday. She was one of about a dozen children who took their shot at the thrill-seeking activity. For more on this year's Ex, see page 8.

Heather Wright Photo

## Elderly Dresden man accused of stalking local woman for a month-and-a-half

*The Herald Staff*

An elderly Dresden man faces criminal harassment charges after a woman was stalked.

Chatham-Kent Police say between early June and July 24, a man parked his car outside a Dresden restaurant to watch an employee. While she walked home,

he followed her very slowly in his car.

*The Herald* has learned the man was seen around the woman's home several times.

Last week, a 58-year-old Dresden man also saw someone following him around Dresden.

Chatham-Kent Police arrested William McFadden, 80, and

charged him with two counts of criminal harassment. He made his first court appearance July 24.

He's out on bail until his next court date Aug. 15.

## New Office Hours

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## Petrolia councillor doesn't want to be reelected

Heather Wright  
The Independent

Her name will be on the ballot, but Petrolia Councillor Mary-Pat Gleeson says she doesn't want the job anymore. "Although my name will appear on the ballot, I will not be campaigning," says Gleeson in a statement released Tuesday. The three-term councillor said she recently came to the realization she wanted to focus her energy in other directions. By that time, it was past the July 27th deadline for candidates to remove their names from the ballot. "I want to refocus my energy. I was in the middle of doing a lot of catch up reading on papers about health care, etcetera, etcetera and I thought 'there is so much to do; I need to focus.' And it took me quite some time to come to that conclusion." But she added; "It has been a very difficult and unsettling decision... but sometimes you just come to the point where you say 'Wait a minute, I'm going to need all the energy I have for what comes next.'"

Gleeson is the chair of the Central Lambton Family Health Team's board of directors but adds she wants to be able to advocate for rural medicine.

"In rural communities we have a difficult time getting attention sometimes; we need the support of the government and we need to keep our eye on that."

Gleeson has also been an advocate of the Health Hub model fostered by the town and Bluewater Health which includes a complete renovation of Charlotte Eleanor Englehart Hospital.

In her statement, Gleeson says "I am very proud of the work we have accomplished over the past several years, and hold Mayor McCharles, councillors and staff in the highest regard."

SEE GLEESON PG 2

## SERIOUS INWOOD CRASH



HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTO

Brooke Fire Service volunteers work with Petrolia/North Enniskillen firefighters and paramedics to lift the victim of an accident at the corner of Inwood Road and Rokeby Line Tuesday. Two vehicles collided at the corner just before 9 am. A pickup truck was upside down in the deep ditch on the northeast side of the road. The other, vehicle, a van was heavily damaged. The OPP is investigating the accident. The driver of the pick up had minor injuries which were treated at the scene. The van driver was taken to hospital with what police say were life-threatening injuries.

## Tilray ramps up Enniskillen production for Ontario market

Heather Wright  
The Independent

Tilray is ramping up production at its Enniskillen Township greenhouse as it prepares to supply Ontarians with recreational marijuana come October.

The Ontario Cannabis Store which will sell cannabis online starting Oct. 17, has signed supply agreements with 26 licensed producers - including Tilray.

"These agreements are a significant milestone that signals our readiness for the legalization of cannabis in Ontario," says Patrick Ford, president and chief operating officer of OCS. "These agreements will allow us to safely and securely provide a broad variety of cannabis products."

Tilray was among the suppliers approved by Health Canada bidding for an opportunity to supply the recreational market. Adine Fabiani-Carter, Tilray's chief marketing

officer, says the High Park facility in Enniskillen is ramping up production with over half of the 13-acre greenhouse in production. "Our Ontario facility is going to be for the recreational market and Naniamo will supply the medical and specialty market," she says.

As High Park Farms was named a supplier, Lambton College was hosting a job fair to keep pace with the growth.

SEE HIGH PARK PG 3

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# The Herald

Serving Thamesville, Dresden and Bothwell

Vol. 132, Issue 9 • Wednesday, February 28, 2018

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Mitch Bushey and his friend paddle through a new lake on the outskirts of Thamesville Friday. Chatham-Kent declared a state of emergency and asked residents to leave their homes after the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority predicted the Thames River could leave a foot of water on the community's streets.

Heather Wright Photo

## Thamesville avoids the worst of 2018 flooding

Province likely to help 10 to 20 homeowners who had water in their homes

Heather Wright  
The Herald

It could have been much worse. Ministry of Municipal Affairs officials say about 10 to 20 homes in the Thamesville area reported flooded basements after a state of emergency was called in fear of major flooding. Warm temperatures and rain began the week of flooding along the Thames and Sydenham Rivers. Both rivers were swollen with water by Thursday. Wallaceburg's downtown had some significant problems and the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority decided to activate the Darcy McKeough

Floodway to ease the pressure in the riverfront community. It worked. Few in Dresden had problems with rising water on their properties.

But by Friday, the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority had concerns about the fast-rising waters of the Thames.

Both school boards cancelled classes in Thamesville schools and high school buses in the community Friday.

The municipality declared a state of emergency and Thamesville firefighters started going door-to-door to explain what was happening and asking homeowners to voluntarily evacuate.

Chatham-Kent Assistant Fire Chief Chris Case says models showed Thamesville underwater. Conservation authorities were expecting up to one foot of water covering the streets of Thamesville.

"When you are presented with a map of your town, you naturally

look for your home," says Case. "I could see all the firefighters looking and I said 'if any of you need to go and make arrangements... if you have to solve problems at your own house, go.' Every single one of them said 'No chief' and they got on these trucks and went straight out to talk to the community."

Case says it was one of his proudest moments as a firefighter. "It was quite breathtaking to watch."

Case says homeowners were glad to see the firefighters and appreciated the information, but many decided to stay put.

Harry Verberg was one of the people choosing to stay. He, his wife and three dogs live on River St and by Friday afternoon, the water was just a few feet from his house.

He says his basement was still dry and he would rather stay. "I can get worried about it, and concerned about it but I can't do anything about it." He added his home is elevated enough that the water



Wayne Rivest in his Magnaville Road yard near the Thames River.

Heather Wright Photo

would surround him but not cause a problem in the house.

Wayne Rivest also decided to stay in his Magnaville Road home even though the water was just feet from his house.

Rivest had evacuated 30 chickens from a roost about 50 meters from the house Friday night, but didn't

think he would have a problem in his home. "The water would have to crest the bridge before I would be concerned," he said pointing to the soon-to-be-replaced structure on Victoria Rd. "I've lived here 23 years and I have not had a drop of water in the house."

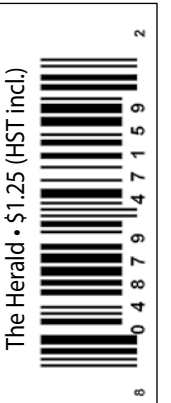
SEE FLOODING PG 2



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# The Independent

Serving Petrolia and Central Lambton

Vol. 5, Issue 43

Newsstand Price \$1.50 per week

Thursday, June 28, 2018

## McCharles bows out

Heather Wright  
The Independent

Petrolia will have a new mayor in 2019. John McCharles announced Monday night at council he won't seek a fourth term as mayor.

McCharles was first elected to town council in 1980. He's served 12 years as mayor, 17 as a councillor, and three years as both a member of the public utilities commission and the local school board.

"I have thought a lot about it for a long time... It's maybe time to take a break," the mayor told his colleagues.

McCharles defeated Brian McManaman in his first term in 2006, then ran unopposed in 2010. In 2014, he defeated Jeff Johnson.

McCharles says there have been a lot of hours put into town business over the nearly four decades he's been involved in politics.

"There have been good things and there have been things that have been not so good, but the thing that I look at today, with our CAO and our clerk and our senior staff, we have come a long way."

McCharles noted over the last nine years,

the value of the town's assets have increased from \$55 million to \$90 million. "That's 80 per cent in nine years."

McCharles says the town has been able to complete some major projects including Petrolia Line and the waste water treatment, because town staff has been able to secure major grants from both the federal and provincial government. "I appreciate what the senior staff has done... We do have great staff; they're very diligent and very dedicated."

"We as a municipality have done really, really well in that time frame. And that's all because of the staff up here."

The mayor added many surrounding municipalities aren't as successful because they don't have their financial house in order. "We do have our financial picture in order... when you go to apply for a grant you have to have your ducks in a row."

McCharles went on to say he's had "no regrets for his years being on council."

"It has been an immensely great learning experience."

SEE MCCHARLES PG 2

## SOAR HIGH



HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTO

Students at South Plympton Public School said their final goodbye to their old home this week. Tuesday, students - including Ella McCallum and Natalie Booy, took 80 homemade kites out into the field and let them Soar High. Each kite carried the memories of the students of the school. In September, the 55 year old building will be vacated and students will attend the amalgamated Plympton-Wyoming School.

## Historic Petrolia Topic closed

Heather Wright  
The Independent

Petrolia's historic newspaper is closing its doors.

Post Media announced to its employees Tuesday it would be closing "unprofitable titles" in Ontario and Alberta. *The Petrolia Topic* is one of six newspapers which will be shuttered. It's not clear from the internal staff memo when that will happen.

The memo added the company will cut 10 per cent of its payroll by Aug. 31.

*The Topic* has a long and storied history. The paper can trace its roots back to 1869 when, according to former *Topic* Editor Charlie Whipp's book, a Wyoming druggist opened up the *Wyoming News Letter* and *Petroleum Advertiser*. The paper eventually moved to Petrolia, where most of the advertisers were based.

In 1879, two Toronto printers arrived in Petrolia and began publishing *The Topic*. At one point both *The Advertiser* and *The Topic* were located in the same building - Lan-ney's Folly.

Over the years both papers faced tough financial times, and *The Advertiser* was sold a number of times. In 1915, *The Topic* owner Arthur Ellis walked up the street and offered to buy *The Advertiser*. They merged the papers and operated successfully for decades.

In 1962, Whipp and Bruce Tomlinson joined the firm and eventually took over.

After Whipp's ownership, a succession of media companies bought the weekly.

Denise Thibeault, who still makes her home in Petrolia, came to town to be the editor of *The Petrolia Topic* in 1987. She helped the company return the production of the paper back to Petrolia. And, when Chris Cooke (now owner of Huron Web in Wyoming) started up a rival paper, threatening to put *The Topic* out of business, Thibeault started a new Monday edition.

Thibeault heard the news of *The Topic's* closure from *The Independent*. She expressed some surprise, but noted it was clear from the time the paper moved its office out of Petrolia that the writing was on the wall.

SEE TOPIC PG 3

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## Mandaumin Library closed

Heather Wright  
The Independent

After more than 100 years, there won't be a library in the hamlet of Mandaumin.

Plympton-Wyoming Council, which owns the library, decided to close its doors after a water leak.

Chief Administrative Officer Carolyn Tripp says when the leak was found in the kitchen of the Confederation Road building, the town thought it would close for a fix and then reopen. But after disaster restoration workers started looking around, the town realized it had a bigger problem than it thought. "The damage to it is now to about \$25,000 and its an old building," says Tripp.

The roof would need repaired, drywall would need to be replaced and Tripp says they also

found the building, which at one time had a fire, had charred roof trusses which need to be replaced. "And that's right now, just to reopen. The furnace in it is over 20 years old, old building, there are septic problems potentially... nothing is going to be cheap going forward."

And Tripp says traffic at the library wasn't very great. Officials with the Lambton County Library - which operates the building - says about 50 people consistently use the library the 12 hours a week it is open.

Mayor Lonny Napper says while he hated to see the little library close, it seemed like the right decision.

"You have to be realistic sometimes. We crunched the numbers and looked at the usage it was pretty hard to justify

SEE LIBRARY PG 2

## Alvinston to spruce up millpond

Heather Wright  
The Independent

You may not even notice it when you drive into Alvinston. Tucked away behind some trees, in the Hydro One right of way, is a small pond which was once part of a mill.

The street beside it was named after it.

Now, the Alvinston Community Group plans to spruce up the area to make it a more attractive entry point to the town and to allow people to use the area.

Helen Lomax says the group has been working for some time on the project with the majority of the time spent trying work out an agreement with Hydro One for the use of the land.

Recently, the company agreed to allow the group to use the

area for the next five years provided it pay about half the taxes - about \$235 per year and cut the grass in the area. Lomax says the community group can cover the taxes.

"There will be no burden on the town's people for that at all."

But she admitted the community group would have problems maintaining the lawn.

Brooke Alvinston Public Works Manager, Randy Hills, says Hydro One only cuts the area about two times a year, so the municipality should be able to keep track of the grass.

The community group will also put a sign up to remind people not to fly kites or drones in around the power lines.


SEE MILLPOND PG 2

## LANCER LEAP




Logan MacRae of the LCCVI boys' rugby team got the jump on the season during a game with St. Patrick's High School in Sarnia. The Lancers lost 31-0 in the first game of the year.

HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTO




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