

Since 1977 **FARM** **VIEW**

A newspaper with something for everyone | December 2025 | Volume 48 #12



**Inside this Issue: A Tribute to Bruce Smith · Fun Farm Science
4-H Dedication to Honour Laura and Bill Staples · Excellence
Shines at The Royal Winter Agricultural Fair
Seasonal Stories and Greetings**



Ready for adoption!



Sultan is a 1-year-old male Kangal

Kangal is a sweet and gentle dog. He is looking for a rural type home, experienced with livestock guardians and where he can be included as part of his family. He is at Brampton Animal Services. Contact by phone 905.458.5800 or email animal.services@brampton.ca

AGcalendar

Farm View's Ag Calendar is free to non-profit agricultural groups, up to a maximum of 40 words. All others are invoiced at \$25 per month. Please note the format of the listings below and submit your item by mail or email, in a similar fashion. Submission deadline is the 14th of the month for the following month's issue.

December 2nd - 4th: Forage Focus Webinar

Forage Focus early winter webinar series will be happening December 2nd, 3rd, and 4th this year. There is a fantastic line-up of speakers and topics for the three nightly webinars. Register for one, two, or all three of these free presentations! Details on page 27 and visit <https://onforagenetwork.ca>

December 14th: News and Advertising Deadline

The advertising and news deadline for the January issue of Farm View is Sunday, December 14th. *Don't forget to book your Happy New Year greeting ad!*

December 18th: Grey SCIA Winter Meeting

The Grey County Soil & Crop Improvement Association will host its Winter Meeting + Social and Tradeshow on December 18, 2025, at the Bognor Community Centre. The evening event includes a catered supper, networking with agribusinesses, and a keynote presentation by Senator Robert Black on the importance of soil to Canada's future. Pre-registration is required by December 9. Email: info@greyagservices.ca or call 519-986-3756.

April, May, June: Spring Auctions

Thinking of a spring or online auction? Have a look at the auctioneers ads in this issue and call to book ahead!

January 6th & 7th: SouthWest Agricultural Conference

Registration is open for the 2026 SouthWest Agricultural Conference "Planting Knowledge, Growing Prosperity." Pre-registration required by Dec. 9th. Full details in the ad on page 3 and also available at <https://southwestagconference.ca/swac1/swac-agenda/>

January 7th - 12th: Grey Bruce Farmers' Week Conference and Trade Show

Save the dates for the Grey Bruce Farmers' Week Conference and Trade Show! The conference will be held January 7th to the 12th. Many fascinating speakers and presentations! Topics covered are beef, dairy, goat, sheep, horse, eco day and crops day! More information can be found on page 6, page 18 and on their website <https://www.greybrucefarmersweek.ca>

January 27th- 28th: Guelph Organic Conference

Celebrating 45 Years of Growing Together 2026 Guelph Organic Conference! Whether you're a farmer, producer, advocate, or just passionate about organic food, this event is your chance to be part of Canada's leading organic movement. More information on page 14 and visit <https://guelphorganicconf.ca>

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

Thank you for your continued trust and support in us. Your support means so much to us and we look forward to serving you in 2026!

We wish you and your family a blessed Christmas season. May the season be filled with peace, joy and love.

From all of us at Charwen Farms



Tribute To Bruce Smith: Remembering A John Deere Legend

Article by Cathy Hamill-Hill, photo by Stephanie Stephenson Homeland Holsteins | Stephanie Lee Photography

There were approximately 135 tractors in a Memorial Parade to honour the John Deere legend, Bruce Smith. The parade began at the Smith farm near Sandford and ended at Heather and Michael Moore's farm. Many in the parade were green tractors of the John Deere brand.

John Deere was a huge part of Bruce's life. Beside his casket at his funeral, there stood a small John Deere tractor. He was a highly successful John Deere salesman employed by Green Tractors, now known as Premier Equipment in Port Perry with a legendary career of 56 years.

Arnold Kerry, at Bruce's funeral, told everyone how in 1969, Bruce, weighing in at about 115 pounds, came in to work at Utica Farm Equipment. Nobody was sure little Bruce even had the physical strength to work with big equipment-but he sure showed them by becoming a John Deere legend. Little young Bruce began as an apprentice and worked his way up to get his Class "A" mechanics license, his Heavy Duty mechanics designation, along with a third full license for Diesel. He earned his way up to Service Manager and then stepped into a salesman job selling the John Deere equipment line he knew so much about.

At lunch time, the workers would take a break and often played the card game of euchre. Bruce was competitive but he "never used swear words, when frustrated he would say, "dang it all any way."

"I was at the visitation for our Bruce for 2 1/2 hours because there were that many people. Bruce was a really magnetic person. He was really short and so cute, and up for anything. He always had a smile on his face. He was excited about our new venture (as Premier Equipment) and ready to tackle anything that came his way," said Stephanie Stephenson, Marketing Coordinator for Premier Equipment and former Marketing Manager for Green Tractors.

Bruce liked tractors and he liked people. He knew so many people from his work by first name in Durham and York Regions. He teamed up with his friend, the late Gary Hill and the two had a fine fun time announcing the Uxbridge Fair Tractor Pull for years. Bruce's quirky and always kind

sense of humour combined with massive knowledge of all things tractor made him hugely loved as an announcer adding so much to the Uxbridge Fair.

Joel Speers, a Director of the Uxbridge Fair arrived at the Sutton Fair one evening with the plan to watch the Tractor Pull. "Joel!" he heard and turned to see Bruce who quickly called out, "You are not watching the Pull, come up and help me instead!" and Joel spent the evening in the announcing booth with Bruce. "It was hard to ever say no to Bruce. We had so much fun, Bruce had me laughing all night," he remembers.

Isla, Bruce's granddaughter at the funeral said, "When we went to the Uxbridge Fair, we heard the announcer at the Tractor Pull and we said, "That is OUR Grampa." He knew the details about each puller there. Grampa loved farming. He loved to make hay. He would watch the clouds. He especially liked seeing rainbows in the sky."

Bruce's first born son, Les, at the funeral remembered one time, when he was a youngster, going with his Dad on a hay delivery with the pick-up truck pulling a load of hay. His Dad lost his calculator from his pocket and it went on the cab's floor. He went to reach for the calculator just as the truck hit an especially soft spot on the shoulder- and the truck slid, almost on its side into the ditch. "Dad calmly crawled out the truck and got me out- and said "this is what happens when you reach for a calculator on the floor of the truck while driving."

His granddaughter Teagan, at the funeral, remembered, "Grampa gave us all our first green toy tractor. We would go in Grampa's shop and sort of steal John Deere hats to give away at school. He caught us but then he just smiled."

"On trips, we had to stop at every John Deere dealership along the way- and Dad had to talk to everyone there," son Bryan remembered.

"Bruce was a petite man with a big heart," Paul Harder, a dairy farmer and maple syrup producer from Sunderland says. Paul took part in the Memorial parade. "Bruce was very good with people of all ages and took a real interest in

people. He had advanced knowledge from his farm background along with all he learned at Utica (Green Tractors now Premier Equipment). I have known him since the mid '70's and he was always highly respected. We all liked him a lot."

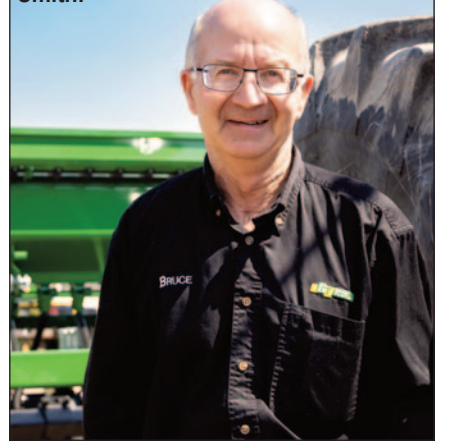
Ron Smalley was Bruce's neighbor. "Bruce was a remarkable man, he was a gentleman. I remember one night I got a call from older people who ran out of oil for their furnace. The automatic fill-up didn't happen and it was so cold that night. I called Bruce. Bruce worked at the furnace and I put in jerry cans full of fuel- and Bruce got that house warm for these people. Bruce could fix anything," he says. He added it was that fixing ability that led Bruce into getting a vintage 1930's car that he used to chauffeur people in the community around in.

It was no surprise to Bruce's neighbor that an incredible 135 tractors were part of Bruce's memorial parade, "Bruce had so many families, he had his own family, a work family, a Church family and a community family."

It was a Saturday and Bruce was on his home farm where he was totally content caring for the land that his grandfather and father once owned. He was a man of Faith with the Sandford United Church. He was called Home suddenly this Saturday, October 18th. He was 74 years old.

When we see a rainbow in the sky and hay fields ready to be cut, we will remember the great John Deere legend, gentleman Bruce Smith.

Green filled the road as 130+ tractors honoured the life and legacy of Bruce Smith.



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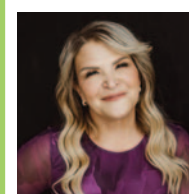
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EDITORIAL

A December Message of Appreciation and Holiday Warmth



Roslyn Watkins
Publisher/Editor
Farm View Newspaper
farmview@on.aibn.com

The December issue of Farm View is, without question, my favourite one to put together each year. It's the perfect way to ease into the spirit of the season. I love the colourful ads wishing clients and customers a Merry Christmas, the warm holiday greetings from our contributors, and the wonderful seasonal stories and articles. And of course, you'll still find a healthy dose of news mixed in.

Be sure to check out the ag calendar as you plan your events and seminars for the coming months. There are

plenty of educational opportunities to help carry you through the winter.

Clearview Township continues its battle with the Department of National Defense regarding the proposed Arctic Over-the-Horizon Radar project. If you're looking for more information on this important issue, please take a moment to visit the links below and consider signing the e-petition. Your support matters—not just for Clearview farmers, but for all of us. If the government is permitted to take productive farmland in Clearview, what's stopping them from doing the same elsewhere?

You can find coverage in the October and November issues of Farm View as well as the following links.

Creemore Echo coverage
https://creemore.com/2025/10/17/residents-launch-petition-in-fight-against-dnd-radar/

CTV News – MP Terry Dowdall
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2gIjB2cpRQM&list=PLLzHOgGvydCkft30K8grKY2C7o6jxrgr-&index=3

Senator Rob Black
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7P2jn7W0Ik

CBC News report
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DiMv3BvvJng

Sign the petition
https://www.ourcommons.ca/petitions/en/Petition/Details?Petition=e-6829

tions/en/Petition/Details?Petition=e-6829)

As this year comes to a close, I want to offer my sincere thanks to everyone who has supported the publication. To the writers who share their talent and insight, and to the advertisers whose support helps keep these pages going—I'm truly grateful. And to you, the readers, who continue to follow along, encourage, and engage with each issue—thank you. Your interest and loyalty make this work meaningful.

It has been a wonderful year, and I deeply appreciate each of you. Wishing you a joyful holiday season, a very Merry Christmas, and a happy, healthy New Year. May the season bring warmth, peace, and time with the people who matter most.

Take care of yourselves and one another,
Roslyn Watkins



At the recent Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, Farm View reporter Don Beaulieu caught up with writer Carolyn Morris and Iain Morris of Railfence Books, who were busy at their sales table sharing stories that delight readers young and old. Find out where Railfence Books will be next www.railfencebooks.com. More coverage of the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair on page 25.
—Photo by Don Beaulieu

Ad/News DEADLINE for the January Farm View is December 14th.

Farm View is available at the following agricultural businesses.

- ALLIANCE AGRI-TURF in Ivy, Bolton, Fenelon, Baxter and Lindsay
- BARRIE KOA (Seasonally)
- BRADBURY SMALL FAMILY FARM INC.
- BRADFORD GREENHOUSE Barrie
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- DOUBLE JB FEEDS
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- HAMILTON BROS.
- HARRIS FARMS (Seasonally)
- HOLMES AGRO in Stayner and Orangeville
- HURON TRACTOR, Stayner
- KEVIN BARKER AUCTIONS in Lindsay
- LEGACY FUNERAL AND CREMATION SERVICES INC in the Barrie Cedar Pointe plaza
- McLAREN EQUIPMENT Phelpston
- NEIGHBOURS COUNTRY DEPOT
- NICHOLYN FARMS
- ONTARIO STOCK YARDS
- PREMIER EQUIPMENT, Alliston
- RICHARDS EQUIPMENT INC.
- SOBEY'S in Angus and Bradford
- STEER ENTERPRISES
- STEWART'S EQUIPMENT in Cookstown and Stayner
- THE UPS STORE in the Barrie Cedar Pointe plaza

The Farm View is delivered to these business between the 25th and 29th of each month and copies are available while supplies last. If you would like the Farm View mailed directly to your home, one year subscriptions can be purchased for \$45.00. Contact Roslyn at 705-722-0138, by mail 8 Luella Blvd Minesing, ON L9X 0W7 or email farmview@on.aibn.com.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Farm View invites letters to the editor. They should be fewer than 300 words and deal with a single topic affecting farmers. All letters must be signed, including your full name, address and daytime phone number. All letters are subject to editing for brevity. Please no phone calls.

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Visit us on the web: www.farmviewonline.com

A forum for the Agricultural and Rural Community

The farm newspaper that covers Simcoe and Dufferin County, York, Peel and Muskoka Regions, keeping farmers and rural home owners informed about local and national news that affects their farm business, family and rural lifestyle.

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

\$45.00 including HST for 12 issues

The publisher shall not be liable for slight changes or typographical errors that do not lessen the value of an advertisement. The publisher's liability for other errors or omissions in connection with any advertisement or for omitting to publish an advertisement is strictly limited to publication of the advertisement in any subsequent issues or the refund of any monies paid for the advertisements.



In memory of
Jill Beischer

Farm View attempts to present a forum for varying points of view from the agricultural community. Editorial opinions are freely expressed by individual authors.

“Burn down your cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic, but destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets.”

W.I. Bryan

OFA Members Service Representative:

Leah Emms 1-800-668-3276 email: leah.emms@ofa.on.ca
Lisa Hern 1-877-343-5444 email: lisa.hern@ofa.on.ca

OFA Zone Director for Peel, Simcoe and York:

Paul Maurice: 705-427-3126 email: paul.maurice@ofa.on.ca

OFA Zone Director for Dufferin County:

Mark Reusser: email: mark.reusser@ofa.on.ca

2024-2025 Executive – Simcoe County

President: Dave Ritchie 705-534-4017
Vice President: Donna Jebb 705-623-8065
PAC Member: Colin Elliott
SCFA Phone: 705-726-9300 ext 1224
simcty.fed.agriculture@outlook.com

2024-2025 Executive – York Region

President: Paul Reesor 905-294-1485
Contact YRFA: york@ofa.on.ca

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1st Vice: Gail Little 519-925-2983
2nd Vice/Treas. George Van Kampen 519-940-2202

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Celebrating 60 Excellent Years at Grey Bruce Farmers' Week

Grey Bruce Farmers' Week (GBFW) is celebrating a major milestone — 60 years of agricultural learning, connection, and community! Since 1966, GBFW has been a January tradition for farmers across Ontario. The 2026 conference will run January 7th – 12th at the Elmwood Community Centre, with the option to attend in person or online via livestream from anywhere.

This six-day educational event includes Beef, Dairy, Goat, Sheep, Horse, and Crops Days — each packed with practical insight, industry updates, and networking opportunities. Participants attending in Elmwood can browse the tradeshow featuring local businesses, organizations, and equipment suppliers, enjoy a hearty roast beef lunch (plus local lamb and goat on their respective days), and pick up some exclusive 60th Anniversary GBFW swag!

All attendees — both in-person and virtual — will have access to recordings of the day(s) they registered for, as well as all On-Demand presentations, for 30 days after the event. This makes it easy to revisit sessions or catch any that were missed.

Organizers extend sincere thanks to the local agribusiness community, whose sponsorships and exhibitor support make the event possible. More than 120 businesses and organizations are expected to participate this year, underscoring the strong agricultural network that GBFW continues to build.

Agenda Highlights

Beef Day – Wednesday, January 7: Keynote presentation: Beef Market Outlook

for 2026 with Anne Wasko, Market Analyst from Gateway Livestock. To wrap up the day, Bullseye: Hitting the Mark in Sire Selection — an interactive afternoon panel exploring the art and science of choosing top-performing bulls. Topics will also include common nutrition issues in beef cattle, industry updates, and maximizing benefits from manure.

Dairy Day – Thursday, January 8: Veterinarian and dairy farmer Dr. Jodi Wallace presents Improving Dairy Herd Fertility, followed by a panel discussion, Raising Healthy, Thriving Calves, featuring respected producers and a veterinarian. Topics will also include dairy farm succession planning, updates on the industry, and economics of dairy farming.

Goat Day – Friday, January 9: Two keynote speakers on goat dairy nutrition, Jelle Vogels and Maksym Baranok from Netherlands based company, Vitalvé, will present Maximizing Return Over Feed. Topics will also include mastering goat kid weaning, insights from the meat processing industry, and goat research updates.

Sheep Day – Saturday, January 10:

Two keynote presentations: Solar Grazing with Justin Woodward from Good Energy Partners and Training and Using Herding Dogs on Your Livestock Operation with Steven Rosvold, Owner and Operator of Floating S Ranch and FSR Stock Dogs, Manitoba. The day will conclude with a producer panel on Grass & Pasture Management. Topics will also include turning fleece to fabric, sheep gastrointestinal parasitism management, and sheep feeding systems.

Horse Day – Sunday, January 11: Join one of Canada's first veterinarians to achieve Board Certification in Equine Dentistry, Dr. Ian Bishop, for his

keynote presentation Equine Dentistry. The day will also feature a panel discussion on favourite training drills with professional horse trainers. Topics will also include training driving horses, incorporating haylage into horse feed, and how different bits impact a horse's performance.

Crops Day – Monday, January 12: Keynote presentation: Road Safety in the Agricultural Industry with Cody Hammer and Ryan Nichols from the Ministry of Transportation. The Autonomous Ag Frontier panel will explore the use of autonomous

machines in agriculture. Topics will also include crop market updates, nitrogen management in corn crops, and reflections and insights about agriculture — past, present and future!

PLUS — so many more on-demand presentations, with topics ranging from mental wellness in agriculture and preventing rural theft and fraud, to emerging livestock technology, artificial intelligence in dairy management, and building a more sustainable dairy sector. You'll also find insights into regional crop performance through the Great Lakes YEN, updates on OSCIA programs, natural and home remedies for small ruminants, and an overview of local stewardship initiatives through the Georgian Farm Stewardship Collaborative.

For full agendas, speaker bios, exhibitors, sponsors and to register, visit www.gbfg.ca, email info@greyagservices.ca, or call 519-986-3756.

Livestream tickets must be purchased online, while in-person tickets can also be bought online or at the door (cash, cheque, or debit). Online ticket sales open in early December.

Follow GBFW on social media:

Facebook & X (Twitter): @GBFarmerWeek

Instagram: @GB_FarmersWeek

Hashtag: #GBFW26

Join us as we celebrate 60 years of Grey Bruce Farmers' Week — honouring the past, empowering the present, and inspiring the next generation of agriculture!



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A gentle glow of hope that settles
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In every small and simple act, a little
light is born,
Soft as candle flame that guides us
through the darkest morn.
For Christmas isn't found in gifts, but
in the love we share—
A timeless kind of miracle that lingers
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Season's Greetings!

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Leadership and Excellence: South Simcoe 4-H at the Impact Conference and the Royal Winter Fair

Reports and photos submitted by Simcoe County 4-H



Six South Simcoe 4-H members attended The Impact Conference held at Oakville on October 17th - 19th. 4-H members learned about careers, volunteering and making a difference in their community. An enjoyable time was had by everyone who participated in the conference.

South Simcoe 4-H Cookstown Beef Club

The South Simcoe 4-H Cookstown Beef Club had three 4-H members compete in the 2025 Masterfeeds National Junior Beef Heifer Competition on November 7th & 8th at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. Photos below are of Morgan Gilpin with his Hereford heifer, Ben Gilpin (bottom right) with his Shorthorn heifer and Kylee Chantler (bottom left) with her Hereford heifer.



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Fun Farm Science Presented by the curious Don Beaulieu

The farmer, his neuropathic pain and the cow fence

Electric catfish live in the waters of the Nile and other rivers in Africa. These electric catfish (*Malapterurus electricus*) are a high-voltage electric fish. Its shock can cause temporary numbness and pain relief, though this is more by accident than design. Ancient healers may have used, or at least observed, this numbing effect.

This natural electric discharge can temporarily interrupt or confuse pain signals in a similar way, though obviously without the precision or safety controls of modern devices.

The modern medical echo of this is TENS therapy (Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation), a safe, controlled descendant of those early experiments. Documented improbable electrical treatments for pain relief are not restricted to shocks from the Nile River catfish.

Shocking relief for farmer

Here in Canada, “An Interesting Case” is described by Professor Jock Murray of the Division of Neurology, Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia, Canada, in which he relates the bespoke treatment that a Canadian farmer had developed for himself, alleviating constant pain in his leg. It involved a novel use for a Canadian Cooperative Electrical Cow Fence Machine.

“When he awoke with pain each morning he would dress and walk to the pasture, take off the boot on his painful right foot, and place it on the damp earth. Then he would grab the fence wire with his right hand to experience a repetitive jolt of electricity. He would hold on until the pain in his leg waned and then disappeared over 8–10 minutes.”

In the winter months, he brought the machine indoors and rigged it up to a metal saw blade which he stood on to receive the shocks.

Professor Murray described a visit to the farm-

er’s house to witness the treatment as such:

“He led me to the basement where the electrical machine was sitting on a shelf. Shaking off his boot he placed his foot on the saw blade, grabbed the metal pipe with his hand, and flicked the switch with his free hand. His body stiffened briefly to the pulsating jolts from the clicking machine. He stopped the machine after a few minutes and turned to me. “Want to try it now, Doc?” “

The treatment evidently worked well and the farmer continued its use for many years. He did not feel the need for any further (conventional) medical assistance.

TENS therapy is used today for chronic pain, muscle soreness, arthritis, nerve pain, and sometimes even during labor; all controlled and adjustable, unlike early fish-or-fence-powered versions!

General warning

For anyone with or who knows someone with a pacemaker or defibrillator: Avoid electric shocks of any kind, whether from fences, faulty wiring, TENS units, or wildlife. Even brief exposures could cause temporary interference or, in rare cases, device malfunction. If exposure happens and the person feels dizzy, faint, or notices irregular heartbeats afterward, seek medical attention immediately.

Farm life is full of surprises, but some shocks are better left unplanned. Novelty/gag “shocking” pens, lighters, or hand-shake buzzers might get a laugh but if someone on the farm has a pacemaker or heart implant, these items are dangerous to them. Even a quick jolt can confuse a pacemaker, temporarily interfere with its pacing, or, in rare cases, reset it. The shock might be small, but the risk is real.

Moral of the story: On the farm, stick to practical jokes that don’t deliver electricity. No shock is a safe shock.



The Importance of Agricultural Engagement in local planning

By Leah Emms, OFA representative

As 2025 winds down, the changing weather reminds us that another busy year in the fields is coming to a close—a perfect time to reflect on challenges overcome and lessons learned. While 2025 has presented its share of challenges, it also offers a chance to prepare and plan for a strong year ahead.

Municipal Official Plans and Comprehensive Zoning By-laws shape the future of our communities. They guide how land will be used, what types of development are permitted, and how growth will be managed over the long term. For farmers, engagement in these planning processes is essential to protect farmland, support farm operations, and ensure municipal decisions reflect agricultural realities.

Official Plans outline a municipality’s long-term priorities, including growth, environmental protection, transportation, infrastructure, and land use. Zoning By-laws implement these policies through regulations governing permitted farm uses, building locations, on-farm diversified activities, and setbacks. Together, they form the framework within which farms operate. When agricultural perspectives are not considered, policies may unintentionally restrict farm operations or fail to accommodate evolving practices.

Agriculture often receives recognition in planning documents as a somewhat protected land use, but decision-makers frequently overlook a critical point: it is farm viability, not just zoning, that keeps land in agricultural production. Policies that reduce flexibility, limit diversification, or add unnecessary costs can leave farmland “protected” on paper but increasingly difficult to operate in practice. Understanding this distinction is essential for maintaining a productive agricultural sector.

Many policies may appear unrelated to agriculture but can have unintended consequences. Urban design guidelines can influence rural road standards and restrict movement of large farm equipment. Natural heritage policies designed to protect sensitive features can limit routine farm practices or

require costly studies. “Active transportation” initiatives, such as trails or cycling networks, can create challenges including trespassing, crop damage, garbage left behind, and biosecurity risks for crops and livestock. Even growth management policies in settlement areas can increase development pressure on surrounding farmland. These impacts often only become apparent after policies are implemented, when they are more difficult to address.

By participating early in the review process, farmers and agricultural organizations can identify where well-intentioned policies conflict with practical farm needs. Their input helps ensure planning decisions support, rather than hinder, farm operations, protect long-term viability, and recognize agriculture as a dynamic, evolving industry. Farmers are encouraged to stay informed and review proposed changes, and they can also reach out to see if their local Federation is preparing a response. Engaging through the Federation can strengthen individual efforts and provide a coordinated voice on key planning issues.

Farming is stressful, and mental health is critical to sustaining farmers and their families. In Ontario, resources are available through Agriculture Wellness Ontario. Accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, in English, French, and Spanish, farm families, farm employees, and spouses and dependents of farm employees can access free, unlimited mental health counselling by calling 1-866-267-6255. Simply search “Agriculture Wellness Ontario” to find more information and support. Reaching out is a sign of strength, and help is always available.

Municipal planning decisions directly influence the future of agriculture. Engaging in Official Plan and Zoning By-law reviews is a proactive way to safeguard farmland, strengthen operations, and ensure a sustainable agricultural sector.

Wishing you peace, joy, and love this season and a prosperous 2026!

Donkeys and the Christmas Story

Village stories

by Andrew Hind

The humble donkey plays an out-sized role in Christmas lore. A manger without a donkey would be incomplete, and the image of a pregnant Mary being carried toward the Christmas Star hanging over Bethlehem is iconic.

And yet, the Bible makes no mention of a donkey in any part of the Christmas story. So how did this animal become so intrinsically connected to the holiday?

It's important to recognize that simply because no donkey was mentioned in the Bible doesn't mean one wasn't present. In fact, common sense implies that a donkey was in fact an important part of the story of Jesus' birth. After all, a heavily pregnant Mary wouldn't have made it the 90 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem without a donkey carrying her.

In a more sacred sense, the presence of a donkey in the Christmas story fulfilled the prophecy in the Old Testament that the Messiah would come riding on a donkey.

The donkey also plays a role in another seminal moment in Jesus' life, his entering of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. While he could have ridden a horse, which would have been more befitting of a leader, he chose a donkey as a reflection of humility and humbleness. So, the donkey is very much tied to the character of Jesus, which likely helps explain why later church leaders began to include donkey in a prominent way.

The first written evidence that we

The donkey had become so sacred to the Christmas that in medieval France no holiday season was complete without the Feast of the Ass, which honored the role played in the Nativity by the humble donkey. For the ceremony a donkey was brought into the church for a special service. At the end, and before the congregants dispersed for their meals, the priest and the congregation joined together to bray like donkeys.

Eventually, this and other lighthearted celebrations became frowned upon by the church and by the time the Jesuits were creating their nativity scenes the celebration had all but disappeared from France.

The donkey became part of the secular holiday as well. In some parts of the world, such as Switzerland and Mexico, Santa Claus traditionally arrives on Christmas Eve via donkey.

And any child born after 1977 would have been raised with the Rankin-Bass stop-motion holiday special Nestor the Long-Eared Christmas Donkey, which blends the holy story with that of Santa and his elves.

Over the course over two centuries, the unassuming donkey cemented for itself an integral role in the Christmas story. If only for one season, it stands above any other barnyard animal in stature and importance.



have of the donkey being given importance in the Christmas story was in the 7th century Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew includes a donkey at Jesus' birth. In 1223, St Francis of Assisi created what is generally considered the first documented nativity, complete with a donkey. The Jesuits of Prague built the first nativity scene as we know it today, donkey and all, in the mid-16th century.

Agricultural Anecdotes from Farmer Tim

There's something about the first snowfall that hits a farmer a little differently.

As those first flakes drift down, the world seems to pause. The fields that worked so hard all season finally get their rest, and it's funny how the snow seems to cover not just the ground, but the noise of the world.

Everything slows down. The cows move a little slower, I definitely move slower, the barn feels a little warmer, and my morning coffee somehow tastes better. I feel less guilty about a long fireside nap.

It's a feeling of both relief and reflection. Relief that the year's field work is mostly behind us, the crops are in, the animals are fed, and the barns are full of feed. It is also a reflection about every early morning, every long night, every prayer for rain, and every moment the land gave back what we put into it.

The first snow reminds us that farming, like the seasons, is a circle. It is not an ending, but a gentle pause. It's a time to breathe, to be thankful, to take stock of all we've done, and to dream quietly of what next spring will bring. I have another year ahead to try again.

To a farmer, that first snowfall isn't just weather — it's peace.

Farmer Tim farms in Southern Ontario and has been sharing his stories through social media for many years. Tim is quoted saying "All farmers need to get their stories out there and have fun while they do it!"



Warmest wishes for a safe and happy holiday season. Thank you for your valued support.

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Worth a Chuckle... and life lessons

by Aunt Hazel

Festive Chuckles for the Slightly Chaotic Christmas Spirit

I'm trying to get into the Christmas spirit, but I can't get the darn bottle open.

My favourite winter activity is going back inside where it's warm.

If you are praying for a blizzard, go to Dairy Queen.

Dear Santa, I would like a new birthday suit this year. My current one is old, wrinkled and sagging.

If your birth year starts with 19... this is your reminder NOT to sit on the floor to wrap presents.

Sing Christmas carols at work until they send you home.

Don't go into debt showing people how much you love them, don't go home to friends or family if it damages your mental health, and if someone comments on your weight, eat them.



Celebrating the Season with Care and Caution

By Dennis Gannon



The holiday season is upon us. A time to connect with family and friends. It will be a time of travel, decorating, shopping and food preparation. Certainly a busy time and one where we should not let our guard down as far as safety is concerned. Here are some tips on how to enjoy the season and keep it safe at the same time.

Let's start with shopping. Many shop from the comfort of home using many of the online shopping sites. If a deal seems too good, it likely is. Watch for scammers offering top quality goods at a price so low you don't want to miss it. Chances are it is a scam and diligence is needed. When out shopping, try to do so during daylight hours and if you are out at night park in a well lit area. Protect yourself from theft by keeping valuable items out of sight and the doors locked. Never leave your wallet, purse or portable computer devices in your vehicle. They are items that can quickly disappear.

Keep your vehicle in good repair and it is a good idea to never let your gas tank get below half. When travelling any distance tell others where you are going and when you expect to arrive. Winter travel is unpredictable and having an emergency kit in your vehicle is a wise choice. Keep your cell phone charged and install the What3Words app. Not only can emergency responders use it but family and friends when you want to meet up.

Decorating makes a home very festive. A live Christmas tree requires plenty of water to keep it fresh. Check the water levels on a regular basis and when the needles are dropping consider that it is likely time to take it out. Lights brighten up the inside and outside. All lights and extension cords need to be checked for breaks and fraying. They also must be certified by an approval authority. The same goes for power bars. Overloading circuits can cause electrical fires. Candles provide a nice glow. Consider battery powered de-

vices and if using a burning candle keep it away from flammable materials and surfaces and blow them out when leaving the room, house or when going to bed.

Cooking is one of the leading causes of fires. There can be many distractions during the holidays. Remain in the kitchen while frying, grilling or broiling food. When leaving the kitchen, turn off the stove. Use a timer to remind you when the items should be done. Oven mitts and towels do not belong on the door of the oven. Keep a kids free zone around the range and where hot food and drinks are prepared of at least 3 feet. Alcohol and cooking don't go together. Refrain from using any cooking devices if you are drinking alcohol or using recreational drugs. Cooking requires your full attention and it should not be interfered with.

Checking your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors must be a regular practice. If you have guests staying over, make sure that you review your fire safety plan with them so they know at least 2 ways out and where the meeting place is.

The holiday season is a time to be filled with joy and excitement. Let's keep it that way by following the guidelines.

Happy Holidays and may the New Year bring you many blessings.

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We wish you a day of joy,
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and health and happiness
throughout the new year!

From everyone at the
Simcoe County Federation of Agriculture
It has been a pleasure serving you in 2025!



As the season of giving draws near, we're grateful for the hard-working farmers who keep our fields and communities thriving. Just like you, we're here to dig deep, lay strong foundations, and prepare for the future.

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Merry Christmas

AND HAPPY NEW YEAR



The end of the year brings no greater joy than the opportunity to express to you Season's Greetings and good wishes.

May your holidays and New Year be filled with joy!





MPP Dunlop Celebrating Our Agricultural Community This Holiday Season

I want to take a moment to extend my warmest wishes to the hardworking farmers, producers, and agri-food leaders across Simcoe North. This time of year offers a chance to pause, reflect, and celebrate all that we've accomplished together.

It has been another productive year for Ontario's agriculture sector with the recently announced \$41 million in new investments in agricultural research infrastructure through the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness. This funding will help build a new poultry research centre in Elora, and a feed innovation centre, and upgrades to the dairy education centre in Ridgetown. These projects are designed to strengthen our research capacity, support innovation, and ensure Ontario farmers have the tools and knowledge to stay competitive and resilient for years to come.

It is inspiring to witness the strength and adaptability of our rural communities. Whether it's facing unpredictable weather, supply chain challenges, or changing markets, the agri-food sector continues to demonstrate remarkable leadership, collaboration, and care for one another. Your dedication keeps Ontario's food supply strong and supports families across the province.

As 2026 approaches, I look forward to continuing to work with you to strengthen our agricultural communities, support local innovation, and ensure a strong future for the next generation of Ontario farmers.

Wishing you and your families, a joyful holiday season and a happy, healthy, and prosperous new year.



The Value Behind the Organic Price Tag

It's common to wonder: Why does organic cost more? But first, we want to bust the myth and note that organic doesn't always cost more, and is often comparable in price to conventional goods. In fact, this Canadian case study found that in some instances, common organic grocery items were actually cheaper than the conventional alternative.

When organic does cost more, it can be because:

- Organic farming is more labour intensive and requires more space. For example, there is a limit to how many organic animals can be in a designated space, and natural fertility building strategies like green manures mean organic farmland is not always planted with a crop destined for market.

- Organic producers and processors are required to keep meticulous records from seed to sale, and pay an annual fee for certification of their products.

- Conventional food benefits from a well organized supply chain with high volumes and competition among retailers. This can hide the true costs of growing and selling food.

This is all to say that when you buy organic, you are investing in more than just good food:

Organic is Good for the Planet

Organic farms do not use synthetic chemicals – promoting healthy soil, clean water, and strengthened biodiversity; benefits proven across Canada and [Ontario] alike. The Canadian Organic Regime (COR), established in 2009, ensures integrity and environmental stewardship across the supply chain. Organic agriculture is a viable mechanism for tackling climate change with lower energy use, reduced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, improved soil sequestration (a fancy word for holding on to carbon), and increased resilience. In fact, organic farming reduces GHG emissions by 35% per acre and 15% per unit of production. It also uses

up to 50% less energy and is up to 40% more energy efficient, based on long-term Prairie trials.

Organic is Good for Communities

Because organic is more labour-intensive, organic agriculture creates more year-round labour opportunities and stimulates rural economies. In Canada in 2024, the organic sector accounted for \$9.01 billion in retail food sales and supported small-scale farms and jobs.

Organic is Good for Farmers

While results vary by crop, organic production delivers 117% higher net returns on average. If that's not enough, farmers and farmworkers experience reduced exposure to synthetic inputs.

Good for Consumers

When it comes to long-term health, studies find that organic food exposes consumers to less pesticide residue. Additionally, consumers can know with certainty that organic certified goods adhere to increased standards for animal welfare including larger space requirements. Overall, organic is fixated on developing healthy soil without synthetic inputs or pesticides leading to healthy soil, healthy water and healthy communities.

Organic products may come at a higher price, but that cost reflects intentional choices: rigorous standards, enriched soil, healthy food, strong communities, and a resilient future. Especially here in [Ontario] and Canada, choosing organic helps build food systems rooted in health, fairness, and sustainability.

Each purchase contributes to farms that prioritize the environment, empower local economies, protect farmworkers, and promote long-term well-being.

In essence, the price of organic is an investment in a future where food, land, and communities thrive together.

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Amherst Island Family Receives 2025 DLF Sheep Pasture Award

Gayla Bonham-Carter and Scott Bade of Footflats Farm on Amherst Island are the recipient of the 2025 DLF Sheep Pasture Award. The award, sponsored by DLF, the Ontario Forage Council, and Ontario Sheep Farmers was presented yesterday at the Ontario Sheep Farmers Annual General Meeting and Lamb Banquet in Cambridge. For their exceptional pasture management, Footflats Farm received a cash award of \$250 and a bag of forage seed from DLF.

Gayla and Scott took over Footflats Farm from her grandparents, Mark Ritchie and Cherry Allen, four years ago. In addition to the 180 acres at the home farm, they lease several other pastures. Amherst Island, near Kingston, has a lot of marginal land with heavy clay soil, which means a lot of pasture land for those willing to fence it. Pastures are fenced in 4-wire electric and rotated through with the ewes and lambs. Their flock of 1,200 ewes is now entirely New Zealand Coopworth and Gayla notes that they chose the Coopworth for their strong maternal instincts out on pasture with minimal inputs. They target the light lamb market at around 70lbs. The Coopworths are a medium sized sheep, which is a good size for great feed conversion. Ewes are wintered outside and there is a feedlot at the home farm to finish lambs on. Gayla attributes part of their success to their Prattley mobile handling system, which can be taken out into the field to sort, drench, dock, wean, and vaccinate, allowing them to handle the sheep wherever they are and provide more grazing opportunities. Looking towards the future, they have started incorporating cattle into their grazing system to rotate with the sheep, helping to keep the parasite load down and freshen the feed up for the lambs.

Scott Fisher, Western Ontario Sales Manager with DLF, commented, "Gayla and Scott run quite the operation. It's always encouraging to see resourcefulness and hard work pay dividends. Some of the land used by their admission is less than 'stellar' but through management and hard work,



From left to right: Scott Fisher from DLF, DLF Pasture Award recipients Scott Bade and Gayla Bonham-Carter from Footflats Farm, Patricia Ellingwood from Ontario Forage Council, Art Alblas from Ontario Sheep Farmers.

they have created opportunity for themselves."

"On behalf of the Ontario Forage Council, I would like to extend our sincere congratulations to Gayla, Scott and family on receiving this well-deserved recognition," said Patricia Ellingwood, General Manager of OFC. "Excellence in pasture management is the foundation of a sustainable and productive livestock industry, and Footflats Farms' commitment to soil health, forage quality, and animal well-being sets an inspiring example for producers across the province. Their innovative approach and dedication to continuous improvement reflect the very best of Ontario's agricultural community."

Save the Date: 45th Annual Guelph Organic Conference January 27-28, 2026

For its milestone year, the 2026 conference will feature:

A New Venue: The historic Guelph Farmers' Market
A New Schedule: The trade show will run Tuesday afternoon and evening following the intensives, and continue all day Wednesday.

A More Grassroots Experience: With easier parking, improved opportunities to connect, and a community-focused atmosphere, the conference is returning to its roots while bringing fresh energy to the organic sector. The Guelph Organic Conference continues to be a premier national event, drawing farmers, processors, retailers, researchers, and sustainability leaders from across the country. This year, more than 500 participants are expected to attend.

Why Exhibit or Sponsor?

- Engage directly with 500+ farmers, processors, retailers, and changemakers
- Showcase your brand to one of Canada's most dedicated and knowledgeable organic audiences
- Benefit from conference promotions, media visibility, and onsite branding opportunities
- Support the growth and resilience of Canada's organic sector while forming meaningful, long-term partnerships

The Organic Council of Ontario invites innovative and passionate businesses, organizations, and advocates to participate as exhibitors or sponsors at this landmark 45th anniversary event.

Get Involved

To discuss trade show opportunities, sponsorship packages, or other ways to participate, please contact:

Courtney Rantz Events and Conference Coordinator

Email: conference@organiccouncil.ca

Phone: (519) 827-1221, ext. 119

<https://organiccouncil.ca>

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A Fresh Start in Bloom: A Visit to Flourish Barrie's Christmas Market

Story and photo by Roslyn Watkins

Quite a few years ago, I came across a gem of a flower shop tucked just outside of Minesing, only about a ten-minute drive from my home. I was delighted to discover that they not only created gorgeous floral arrangements, but also offered women in our community a remarkable opportunity through The Fresh Start Internship Program. At the time, Farm View published an article highlighting the positive impact this small business was already making.

Since then, Fleurish has continued to grow. They have recently expanded to include a beautiful boutique and coffee shop, creating an inviting space for both locals and visitors. My daughter and I were thrilled to have such a warm, welcoming place nearby, made even better by the talents of their exceptional barista, Jesselyn.

During the production phase of this December 2025 issue of Farm View, I took a moment to step away from page proofs for a brief but memorable break. My husband Shawn and I headed to the annual Christmas Market at Flourish Barrie—now one of the city's most inspiring community hubs.

Stepping inside, we were greeted by the comforting scent of evergreens and fresh coffee, along with the cheerful buzz of holiday conversation. The market was a lively tapestry of local creativity. A wide variety of vendors filled the space, offering Christmas crafts, beautiful knits, handmade jewelry, and one-of-a-kind artwork. Each table carried its own story, contributing to a festive atmosphere that invited you to slow down, browse, and truly enjoy the moment.

Yet what makes Flourish Barrie exceptional runs deeper than its holiday charm. At the heart of this social enterprise is The Fresh Start Internship Program, dedicated to supporting women who face barriers that have prevented them from

pursuing stable employment or meaningful life experiences. The program focuses on building economic independence, developing practical skills, and fostering a strong sense of community support.

Fresh Start offers far more than training in floral design or customer service. It provides a compassionate, encouraging environment where participants can rebuild confidence, uncover new strengths, and gain hands-on experience within the shop. The initiative works to dismantle systemic obstacles and promote a more inclusive, equitable workforce—ensuring each woman is met with mentorship, dignity, and real opportunities for growth.

As shoppers explored the vendor displays—trying on knitted mittens, admiring handcrafted ornaments, and chatting with local artisans—the positive energy in the room was unmistakable. There was a natural blend of creativity, purpose, and community spirit, all strengthened by the work Flourish champions every day.

In a season devoted to generosity, connection, and new beginnings, Flourish Barrie is a meaningful reminder of how small businesses can cultivate lasting change. Our visit was a heartening pause in a hectic month and a reminder that some of the most inspiring places are those where beauty and purpose flourish side by side.

Fleurish offers grab-and-go bouquets along with expert flower-planning services. They host workshops and events throughout the year, and their beautiful space is available for private rentals. You can visit them in person at:

Fleurish Botanical Goodness (Non-Profit)

1148 Snow Valley Rd

Minesing, Ontario

L9X 1J4

Or explore their offerings online at fleurishbarrie.com.



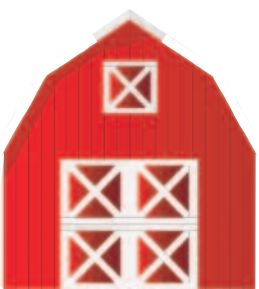
Emily Day, founder and florist of Flourish, shares a festive moment with Santa Claus at the annual Christmas Market.

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QUILTING

Crafting Joy and Quilted Memories for the Holiday Season

By Janis Hamilton

As I write this tonight, we are hearing the doom and gloom of impending storms with 10 cm of snow. Where did the fear factor come from with weather reporting? It just means we can quit watering our planters and hopefully you have cut them off at the soil and are thinking of arranging with pine, spruce and boxwood from your yard or your neighbours. The trick to get these arrangements to be secure is to make sure your summer plants are only cut to the ground (don't remove all the plant material) and then the new boughs will be anchored on those summer roots. Make sure you water them after you're finished so they will live longer without dropping needles and once the true frost comes it will hold them in place as well.

Well, enough about decorating outside. Let's have some fun with the grandkids, the kids visiting for the season or your own wonderfully excited kids that are waiting for the jolly old fellow to slide down the chimney any day.



Samples of cards for beginners



Cards are the simplest to make. Let the kids or you dig through your scrap bucket of fabric and trace out some shapes or free hand if you prefer. White or coloured card stock is perfect for making cards. Just fold in half and off you go with glue in hand. If you don't want to use glue, then trace the bird or tree (just an idea to start) on Heat and Bond LITE (Heavy will make your needle sticky and please do not use that thickness). So you've cut out the heat and bond now iron it on the wrong side of the fabric, cut out the shape exactly and pull off the paper and iron it where you want it right on to the card. You are done so now let your creativity take

over. Let the glue dry completely if that is your choice before going further. If the kids don't use the sewing machine, then you can embellish the cards for them. Change your needle for one you will just use on paper and off you go using straight stitch or any fancy stitch you want to use.

<https://www.allpeoplequilt.com/holiday-quilts/christmas/handmade-christmas-cards>

<https://www.allpeoplequilt.com/holiday-quilts/christmas/spruce-it-throw> or try

<https://ilovequiltingforever.com/christmas-greetings-quilt-patterns/> for a wonderful array of quilting ideas from stockings to pillows to mini wall hangings to full quilts. The decision is yours to explore and have some down time in your sewing world.

To the right are more adult or advanced cards. It doesn't give you the instructions, but you can see mostly triangles, diamonds cut out and placed to create these cards. Same way to make them but for these more intricate cards, I'd use Heat and Bond (lite) or Steam a Seam. OR just use your favourite quilt blocks on a card. What a unique way to show someone how much you love quilting and just how special they are to receive one of your handmade cards. I have cards a friend made even on their Cricut die cut machine that hang on my tree and they are very treasured ornaments. (well, that is what they've become.)



<https://metsminorleagueblog.com/creative-christmas-quilt-card-ideas/>

Now for the wish list that you're hoping someone will ask you about. Well first, we quilters are very tactile folks and so visual, so if someone buys you fabric it may not be your taste of quality of fabric, so take the time to write down exactly what you'd like: thread, needles, patterns or even fabric if you take a photo of the item so they know "yes, that is what they want!" If a list escapes you then maybe, ask for a small gift card from your favourite quilt shop. If you are looking for a present for a fellow quilter maybe a visit to a shop to ask indiscreetly if they like certain patterns, or panels or fabric or notion and then hope they don't pick it up to buy it. It would be fun to make them a quilted bag to save wrapping and use up some of your "stash" while in the process of gift giving.

Christmas is a very busy time for most, but take time to breathe, bake and plan how to make the season last longer (I like to spread out visits with friends over the holidays rather than do it all at once.) Sharing and making memories is priceless. Catching up with friends you don't normally see is a gift and if you love to bake then those receiving your baking will also be very thankful you thought of them. With all the doom and gloom in the world take time for those that matter the most in your life and know 2026 will bring us new smiles, new adventures and let's hope new quilting inspiration. Happy Holidays and enjoy those hobbies.



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Merry Christmas

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QUILTING

Guild Presents 25 Quilts of Valour

Story and photos provided by Senora Baldry

Another busy evening at Quilting Corners Guild beginning with our presentation of 25 Quilts of Valour to Elizabeth, our regional rep. The quilts are a combined effort of the QoV Sew Days at Country Concessions Quilt Shop and the dedication of our members and friends of the guild. Beautiful work and commitment by all. These quilts will become the hugs for military personnel to thank them for their years of service to Canada. A heartfelt thank you to the many hands that made this presentation possible.



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Two Trees Planted To Honour 4-H Dedication

Story and photo by Cathy Hamill-Hill

Two trees are being planted this fall at the Lindsay Fairgrounds to honour Laura and Bill Staples for their 25 years of commitment to Kawartha Lakes Haliburton (KLH) 4-H.

Laura Staples was introduced to 4-H by her Dad, Bill Mahood, 4-H leader of the Omeme Beef Club. Her Mom, Eleanor Mahood, made sure everyone got to meetings on time and encouraged 4-H at every opportunity. Laura went through the 4-H program and upon marriage to Bill Staples, the couple would become a "4-H family."

"My kids were involved in 4-H and my grandkids are involved in 4-H. 4-H is wonderful," Laura told Farm View before the tree dedication took place on Sunday, October 26th.

"Bill (my husband) and I led the Beef Club for years. We went right to the Royal with the kids (4-H members)," she remembered with a big smile.

Bill owned a gravel business and supplied material for the Lindsay Exhibition. He often volunteered his time,

driving one of the graders for the tractor pull or wherever help was needed, until his health began to decline. He helped, behind the scenes, getting the 4-H shows set up and he was always a huge supporter of his wife- at all 4-H times.

Laura is also a 4-H leader in the Life skills, dance and scrapbooking clubs. Her club is providing much of the food for the annual 2025 KLH 4-H banquet.

"We (4-H club) would take over Laura and Bill's top level of their house for our 4-H meetings. Bill would be in his chair greeting and teasing us. He always had a smile for us," past President of KLH 4-H Corrie Stender said at the Tree dedication.

"Bill and Laura gave countless hours to KLH 4-H. They encouraged and inspired (4-H kids) to go further into agriculture," she said explaining that today there are two of Bill and Laura's former 4-H club members now at National level in beef cattle. Jocelyn Kennedy is President of the Canadian Junior Limousine Association and Megan Prouse

is President of the Young Canadian Simmental Association.

"Laura is so dedicated to the 4-H kids. The kids just love her," she added.

Jeff Tompkins, a Board Director of the Lindsay Agricultural Society (LAS) explained that Bill gave so much of his time and his equipment to help out the LAS over the years. He said having a tree planted here with his name beside it "will keep him here in our memories forever." Bill passed away on June 21, 2025 in his 67th year.

"It is such an honour to watch the kids grow up in 4-H and to be part of their lives. 4-H is such a wonderful program," Laura told the group of well wishers that came to the event to honour her and her late husband's dedication to 4-H and the LAS.

Laura's daughter, Tricia is the recently elected 1st Vice President of LAS.



Pictured above are 4 generations of the Staples family who were huge contributors to Kawartha Lakes Haliburton 4-H. From left to right are: Laura Staples who has been a 4-H leader for 25 years and counting, Laura's granddaughter, Adele McConnell, Laura's Mom, Eleanor Mahood and Laura's daughter, Tanya McConnell.

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Christian Farmers enjoy Harvest Dinner

Story and photo by Sandy Kursis

It was a full house at the Schomberg Hall on Friday, October 24th as Central Ontario District, Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO) members gathered to enjoy dinner and give thanks for this year's harvest.

The evening was opened by District President Daniel Van Adrichem with a scripture reading and a 700 year-old prayer by Thomas Aquinas. Special guest, Jennine Grant led the assembled members in a number of inspiring hymns of praise and thanks. District Secretary Shelly van Heyningen said Grace before the evening meal.

MC and Director Sandy Kursis introduced CFFO President Henk Vaarkamp who gave an update of recent CFFO initiatives, including the publication of the Protecting Farmland and Farmers Task Force Report. He invited members to attend CFFO's upcoming Education Day in Barrie on November 27th.

After a delicious and bountiful hot meal, the group was treated to the award-winning film, "We Lend a Hand: The Forgotten Story of Ontario Farmerettes".

This film details a forgotten piece of Canadian history. It tells the extraordinary story of 40,000 teenage girls who volunteered on Canadian farms in Southwestern Ontario during World War II. The job of the Farmerettes, as they were called, was to ensure critical food production. They managed to produce hundreds of thousands of tons of food that were shipped off to the frontlines to feed starving European populations and even prisoners of war. Through reenactments and unique archival images, the film recounted the story of these amazing young women, now in their late 90s, bringing back their most cherished memories.

Members were in agreement that the film was excellent, and they were unanimous in their recommendation that this is a film that deserves widespread viewing.

After one last hymn of praise, Vice President Ted Woods closed the meeting with prayer.



CFFO members enjoyed a delicious and bountiful hot meal during the harvest dinner held in Schomberg late October.



Season's blessings!

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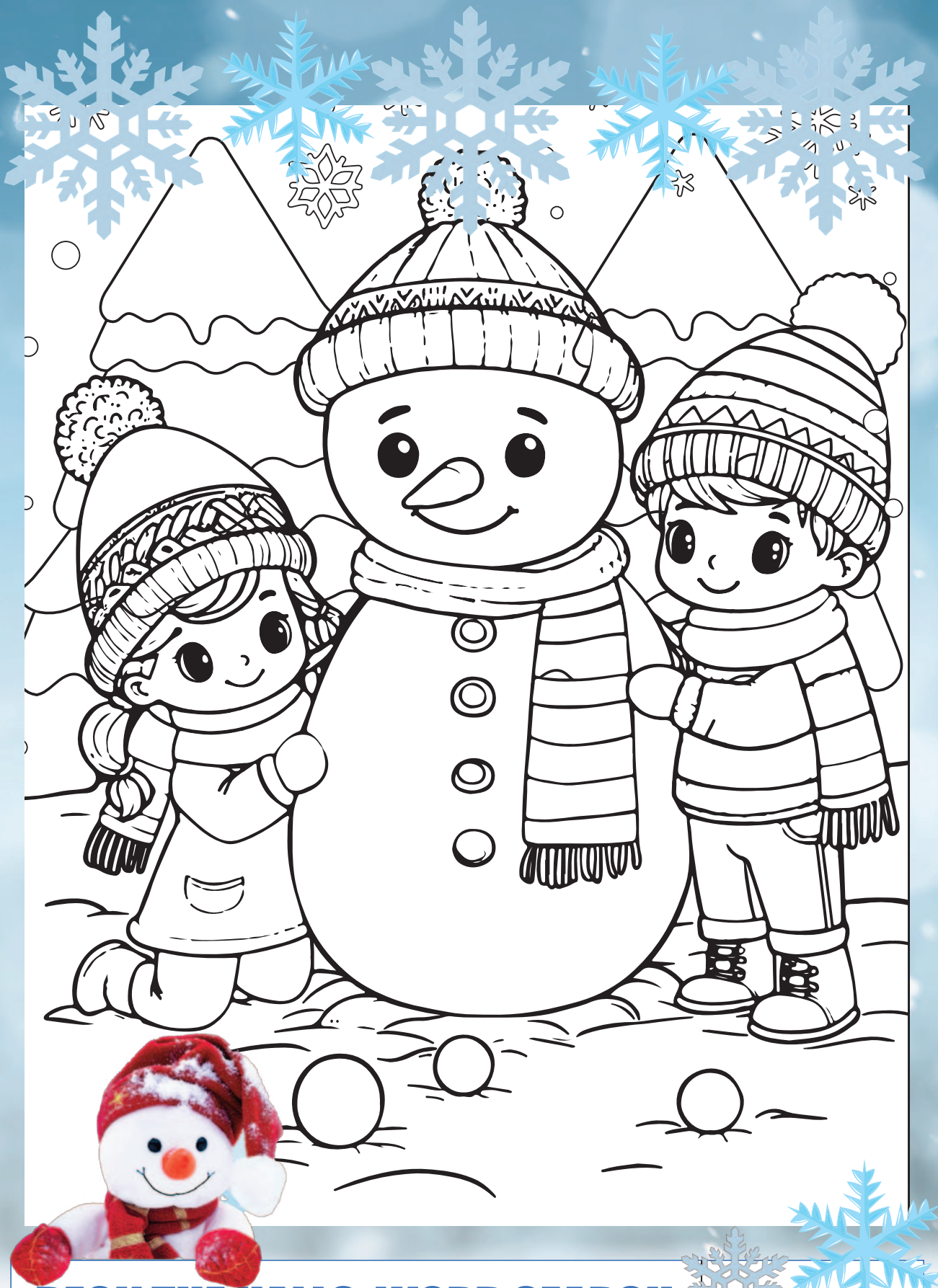
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Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

WORDS

- ANGEL
- BELLS
- BOUGH
- CHRISTMAS TREE
- DECORATE
- DISPLAY
- FIREPLACE
- GARLAND
- HOLLY
- INFLATABLE
- MANTEL
- MENORAH
- MISTLETOE
- NUTCRACKER
- ORNAMENTS
- POINSETTIA
- SANTA
- SLEIGH
- SNOWMAN
- STAND
- STOCKINGS
- STRINGED LIGHTS
- WINDOW
- WREATH

Festive Traditions from Around the World

Finland – Visiting the Sauna on Christmas Eve

In Finland, families relax together in a warm sauna before celebrating Christmas. It’s a peaceful way to clean up, unwind, and reflect before the big feast. Afterward, many leave out food for forest animals and watch for Santa, who’s said to live up north in Lapland!

Ethiopia – Ganna (January 7)

Ethiopians celebrate Christmas on January 7, not December 25. The day, called Ganna, begins with church services where people wear white cotton clothing called shamma. Afterward, families enjoy a feast with spicy stew, flatbread, and coffee.

United Kingdom – Christmas Crackers and Pudding

At Christmas dinner in the U.K., everyone pulls crackers—bright paper tubes that pop open with a snap! Inside are small toys, paper crowns, and jokes. Dessert is a rich fruit pudding, often set on fire with brandy before being served.

Philippines – The Giant Lantern Festival

In San Fernando, the “Christmas Capital of the Philippines,” the Giant Lantern Festival lights up the sky with enormous, colorful lanterns made of bamboo and paper. The Philippines also celebrates one of the world’s longest Christmas seasons—starting as early as September!

Iceland – The 13 Yule Lads

In Iceland, Christmas fun lasts for 13 days thanks to the Yule Lads—mischievous troll-like brothers who visit one by one before Christmas. Each has a funny name, like “Spoon Licker” or “Door Slammer.” Kids leave out shoes for them, and each night the Lads drop in treats—or potatoes for bad behavior!

Australia – Beach Day Christmas

Because Christmas falls in the summer in Australia, families celebrate outdoors! Instead of snow and hot cocoa, there’s sunshine, surfing, and barbecues on the beach. Santa even shows up in shorts or on a surfboard.

Venezuela – Roller Skating to Church

In Caracas, Venezuela, people head to early Christmas morning church services—on roller skates! The city even closes the streets so everyone can glide safely to Mass. It’s a joyful, colorful way to celebrate the season.

Norway – Hiding the Brooms

In Norway, an old superstition says that witches and evil spirits come out on Christmas Eve looking for brooms to ride. To stay safe, families hide all their brooms before going to bed. Today, it’s a fun, spooky twist on the holiday!

Mexico – Las Posadas

In Mexico, families celebrate Las Posadas for nine nights leading up to Christmas. The tradition re-enacts Mary and Joseph’s search for shelter, with people going door to door singing carols until they’re finally welcomed in for a festive party. Homes are decorated with candles, piñatas, and nativity scenes, and everyone enjoys food, music, and fireworks.



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After The Chores: In the Chicken Pen

By Cathy Hamill-Hill



I'm not a chicken person.

I am now a chicken caregiver as Sweetie for now is on a strict lifting ban. Chickens here are in two groups, the laying hens with a rooster and the young pullets which are basically teenage hens. There are 131 all together.

That first morning my new responsibility sent me into anxious "what if they all die under my watch?" I heard a loud cackle from the laying hen pen. I raced from my side of the barn and went into the hen pen assuming some huge predator was about to eat Sweetie's laying hens. I found a hen standing up in the nest boxes announcing to the world she had just laid an egg. What an annoying hen trait to make that much noise. I'm so not a chicken person.

The rooster said a loud cackle and then accommodated a hen that stood purposely right in front of him the first morning I was on chicken duty. This rooster has zero aggression to people even with the fact this is his fourth bunch of hens. Likely part of the reason he is not interested in being mean to people is because he is so busy all day with these lusty hens. There is next to no arguments amongst the hens as they are so busy getting attention from this rooster. He was supposed to have been a laying hen so he was a disappointment at first but now has turned into hen pen entertainer with a loud morning voice. He crows- a lot. If I could, I would put a muzzle on him, mornings really are bad enough without all his crowing added on top.

The first night chores had 100 teenage hens looking for

supper. My livestock are trained to respect closed- not always locked- doors as I go in/out of pens. I go into the chicken pen, get the water units and push the door behind me in place. Chicken water units are not for the stupid. I filled it, put it together and SPLASH! I had cold water all over my non-waterproof gloves and the water drizzled up my sleeves. I had to try again and this time slowly and carefully twisted the thing into place.

I went to go back to the pen after all this stupid water drama- and there I met the teenagers, many out of the pen. There were young hens scratching merrily under my rabbit pens, other hens were flying around like miniature planes and some hens zipping up and around the feed bags Sweetie had stockpiled for me. And still more hens were coming out like a red moving wall of feathers. Yelling at chickens is not one bit effective. Banging something and being loud does not work either. The chickens are in a wire pen and when they got scared, they pushed their heads in the wire. How does one move a row of feathered behinds facing the wrong direction? I had to get the pullets turned around then basically push them back into the pen, one red bundle of feathers at a time. I was wet and cold- and as grumpy as any wet hen playing this most annoying game with chickens. I'm no chicken person.

And there is the noise. I have been in chicken coops before but never twice a day every day like I am now. The cackling and clucking of hens is non-stop. For a chicken person, I'm told this is called "singing". I feel it is like constant shrieking. My sheep and goats are noisy- if they are waiting for something but chickens never ever are quiet. Even when they eat, they manage to clack their beaks to make a pinging sound. Cluck, cackle, ping- it just never ends. Last night it was even worse, the laying hens were cackling like they all laid eggs at the exact same time along with pinging their beak off the walls. The crisis was they were out of chicken food in the feeder.

Sweetie is now coming to the barn. He told me he closes

and locks up the doors every.single.time. He has no advice in chasing chickens as chickens cannot unlock gates. He also doesn't consider the coops "noisy" except for last night which was the exception and that really was not the hens' fault. He also thought that then hens "speaking up" to tell me they were out of food was rather impressive. He LIKES these chickens obviously.

I have decided I'm no chicken person. I appreciate eggs and chicken protein and all those people that work in the chicken industry. But my personal favourite chicken is a silent one in a KFC bucket.

Merry Christmas

I would like to say a personal Merry Christmas to all readers that take the time out to read this column each month. I do get an occasional comment from readers- and each one just makes that day bright for me. I also appreciate all of you that care enough to call me or send me a message with a story idea and to all those that I go after asking for more information. Our closest sizeable town has farm fields going under concrete at a shocking rate which makes me feel that telling our farming stories is so important. The real farming champion here is Farm View Publisher/owner Roslyn. Roslyn works incredibly hard in pulling these editions together and designing each single page, all for our farming community. It is an honour to work with Farm View and it is so meaningful to get waved in at admission gates when I flash my Farm View badge proving how respected Roslyn is.

Merry Christmas to all of you- and we all hope that winter this year is easy with no ice storms. God Bless you all.

Sincerely,
Cathy



Farms, art and 4H come together in community spirit

Report by Donald Beaulieu

The Orillia Opera House art class, run by Mike Howell, recently focused on local farms. Not only did the artists learn about tools and techniques, they learned the history of barns. These structures are disappearing from our countryside as technology has changed and upkeep of them has ceased in many cases. It was a natural move to support the 4H organization that does wonderful things for our youth.

At this art show held on November 17, 4H was supported financially by a couple of endeavours at this event. There



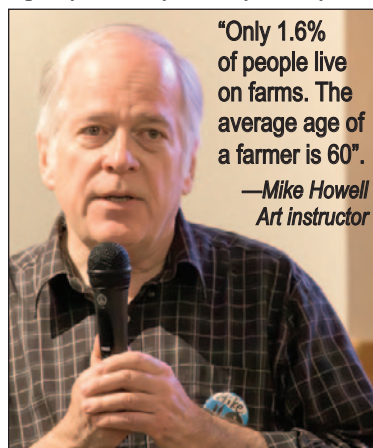
Here we see the art being enjoyed by attendees.

was a “quilt” of wooden blocks which had been painted by artists. If one made a donation to 4H, that person received a ticket for a draw to select one of those blocks. Some artwork on display was part of a silent auction from which funds supported 4H. The quilt draw alone drew \$238.60. The amount from the silent auction was not available at this issue’s deadline.

In addition to that support, this was an opportunity for people outside the farming community to learn about 4H, how it works, what ages of youth are involved and how they may enjoy volunteering.

President of North Simcoe 4H, Lori Chalmers, introduced a number of 4H participants on hand and then provided an enthusiastic overview of what 4H is all about. That crew also helped with the quilt draw. There are about 87 members in North Simcoe ranging in age from 6 to 21.

Chalmers believes the co-operative interaction between these ages leads to a “...better life of understanding and empathy” she says. They live by the model of “Learn by doing”.



“Only 1.6% of people live on farms. The average age of a farmer is 60”.

—Mike Howell
Art instructor

Cloverbuds are the youngest group (6 to 8).

The main group of 9 to 20 year olds are split into Livestock clubs and Lifeskills clubs. Community involvement is an important part of 4H, helping those who need assistance.

A large thank-you goes to the artists who gave their time and artistic talent to make the evening a success.

“When you see the age range of 4H members working together; the senior members and the intermediate members mentoring the younger ones, you get a sense of history. You get an understanding of how a one-room school house actually worked.”

—Lori Chalmers
President North Simcoe 4H

The four H's stand for: Head, Heart, Hands and Health



These are the wooden quilt blocks won by donation, on display.

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Piccadilly and Pappy McIver

By Joyce Ernyes

The old cat had never enjoyed a comfortable lifestyle. He was accustomed to being a barn cat, but now, in the twilight of his life, he found the Ontario winters to be almost unbearable. His additional growth of fur during the colder months was no longer adequate when temperatures dipped below -10°C. Fortunately, there had always been an abundance of food, providing he maintained his lightning speed reflexes, but they too were waning.

His life changed for the better, however, when Maisie and Colin McIver purchased the small hobby farm that had been his lifelong home. At the McIver's request, the previous owners agreed to leave him behind. Maisie was a veterinarian and had recognized the fact that the old cat needed care in his remaining years.

Soon after Maisie and Colin took possession of the home, the old cat discovered bits of something in a bowl down by the barn. His diet had consisted exclusively of mice, moles, and an occasional bird so he approached the contents cautiously.

As days went by, more bowls with the mysterious delicacies, which he now recognized as food, were placed closer to the house. He quite liked the new fare, and he especially liked the fact that he did not have to do skilful acrobatic maneuvers to secure his meals. Within a short period of time, he was enjoying the comforts of the back deck, which had been equipped with a padded wicker basket and his very own food and water bowls.

Best of all, Maisie and Colin had given him a name. He would never again be referred to as "the cat," or "the mouser," or simply "the old fella." He was now Piccadilly, a name that had special significance to the McIvers. Maisie and Colin delighted in recounting the story of how they had first met, some ten years prior, while independently vacationing in London. They had literally bumped into each other while both were attempting to take photos of the famous sculpture in Piccadilly Circus.

As the summer dissolved into autumn and temperatures dropped, he was introduced to the interior of the McIver's home, after first having had a total grooming by Maisie, whom he now trusted implicitly.

Piccadilly was enjoying his new life. His feline arthritis was less bothersome, and he slept peacefully every night as he no longer needed to be on alert for predators. Occasionally, he even got to tuck in with Jamie, the McIver's six-year-old son.

Late winter, however, brought an unexpected change once again in Piccadilly's life, and this time, it was not for the

better.

Colin's father, Shamus, or Pappy, as he was referred to by the family, came to live with the McIvers. Alone, since his wife's passing, and suffering from numerous medical conditions, which had necessitated his early retirement, Shamus was not in a comfortable financial position and needed assistance.

Colin and Maisie were kind-hearted and generous and were soon taken advantage of. Pappy made unreasonable demands of the family, insisting on time changes for meals, no noise after 9:00 p.m. and he was adamant that he would not live in the same house with a useless old barn cat that could no longer catch mice to feed himself. On several occasions, when visitors were present, he made fun of Piccadilly's name by verbalizing that Maisie and Colin had really "picked a dilly of a cat" and he would chuckle at his presumed cleverness with words.

As the weeks went by, Shamus became increasingly aggressive with the cat, vowing to shoot him at the first opportunity. Colin had been unsuccessful in persuading his father to be more reasonable. Maisie took on extra work to avoid the constant stress at home and little Jamie spent most of his time in his room with Piccadilly. He carried him everywhere, fearing that Pappy would harm his beloved cat.

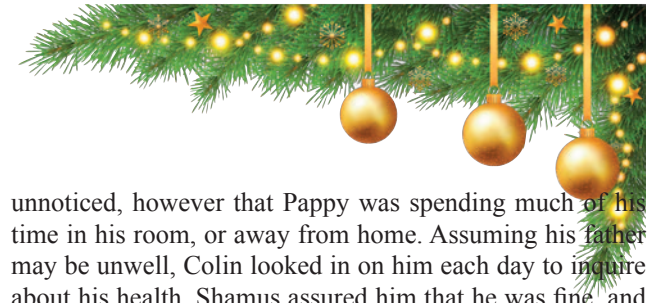
One afternoon when Jamie was home alone with Pappy, Jamie, with Piccadilly clutched in his arms, entered the kitchen as quietly as possible hoping not to encounter his grandfather. This was not to be, however, as Shamus was entering simultaneously from outside. Upon seeing the two, he bellowed at Jamie to get the useless "fur ball" out of his sight or he would shoot him on the spot.

It was then that Jamie turned towards his grandfather with tears in his eyes, his little face contorted in misery, and with all the wisdom of a six-year-old he said, "You are old too, Pappy, and you are sick and can't work anymore, but no one wants to shoot you."

Shamus reeled backwards, speechless, for what seemed to be several minutes. His face flushed with anger as he glared at his grandson in disbelief of the boy's insolence.

Then, as suddenly as his anger had flared, his vexed face appeared to crumble as an array of emotions flickered in his eyes. An overwhelming sadness seemed to envelop him as the significance of the young boy's words resonated deep within his soul. As he left the room, the sound of his wracking sobs could be heard throughout the house.

Christmas Day was fast approaching, and preholiday activities were consuming the McIver household. It did not go



unnoticed, however that Pappy was spending much of his time in his room, or away from home. Assuming his father may be unwell, Colin looked in on him each day to inquire about his health. Shamus assured him that he was fine, and that he had never felt better. Colin could not account for his father's uncharacteristic behaviour, but he was relieved that his usual belligerent demeanor was no longer present.

December 25th finally arrived and Jamie was consumed with excitement. By Colin and Maisie's estimation it was barely dawn when they were awakened by their pyjama-clad son, declaring that it was time to open the presents. All three, with Piccadilly in tow, made their way downstairs as quietly as possible, hoping not to awaken Pappy at such an early hour.

Much to their dismay, however, they discovered Pappy sitting in his favorite chair adjacent to the Christmas tree and the aroma of freshly brewed coffee wafting from the kitchen. The perpetual scowl was gone from Pappy's face, and he appeared to be genuinely happy.

After Christmas greetings were exchanged and coffee and hot chocolate consumed, the gift opening ritual began. Jamie's little hands were a blur as he removed wrapping paper from his first gift, a 1:32 scale John Deere tractor. The very one he had asked for in his letter to Santa.

Gifts had never been received from Pappy, who generally took a "Bah Humbug!" approach to Christmas. It was, therefore, most unexpected when he produced a beautifully wrapped package for each of them.

The gifts consisted of cat-themed pyjamas with matching slippers, for Jamie, an angora sweater for Maisie and kid-leather gloves for Colin.

Yet another, rather large gift, was then brought forth from behind Pappy's chair. Much to the astonishment of his family, the gift was for Piccadilly.

As the wrapping was peeled away the packaging revealed the contents to be a three-tiered cat "apartment" fully equipped with a scratching post, hammock, winding tunnels, and a cozy sleeping area. Large lettering on the box indicated that "assembly was required." Pappy smiled at his grandson and asked if he could help with the construction of the "apartment" after breakfast.

Not being privy to the exchange between Jamie and his grandfather some weeks prior, Maisie and Colin declared that Pappy's sudden transformation must truly be a "Christmas Miracle."



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

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Picture this: The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair



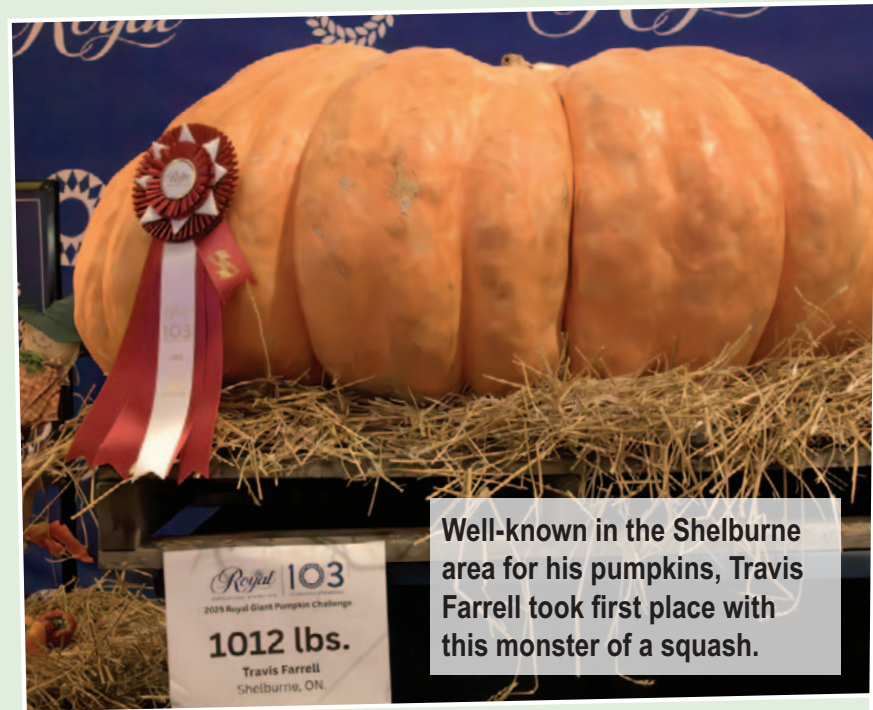
Throughout its history, the Mounted Unit of the Toronto Police service has used many sites within Toronto to house its horses. Currently, the horses and officers are located at the Horse Palace on the grounds of Exhibition Place.

The Horse Palace was built in 1932 to temporarily house horses during the Canadian National Exhibition, Royal Winter Fair and other events. The Mounted Unit began using the building in 1968.



Enjoying one of Carolyn j Morris' books at the fair is young Torontonians Elliana. She was visiting the Royal with her family and needed some quiet time, from trying to keep them from wondering off.

Photograph and text below contributed by Olivia Livingston.



Well-known in the Shelburne area for his pumpkins, Travis Farrell took first place with this monster of a squash.



Eight members from the South Simcoe sheep club travelled to the city to take part in the junior sheep show at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair on Saturday November 15th. It was a very early start, as we had to have the sheep in Toronto by 7:30 a.m. Our club worked hard to showcase what we learned this year as well as show off the animals we took time to train and grow. After the health check, we received our show shirts and started getting ready for our classes. Showmanship was in the morning, and confirmation in the afternoon. We had 4 members advance in confirmation: Keagan McCallum-Pinho, who placed 1st in Longwools, Alexa Livingston, who placed 2nd in Longwools, Lauren Cowan, who placed 4th in Cross-bred, and Olivia Livingston, who placed 2nd in the Cheviot class. It was a fun day for all. We would like to thank our club leaders, parents, and the generous farmers who let some participants borrow lambs. As well; The Pure Breed Sheep Breeders of Ontario for putting on the show and the sponsors who contribute to making it a success. We wouldn't be able to do all this without them.

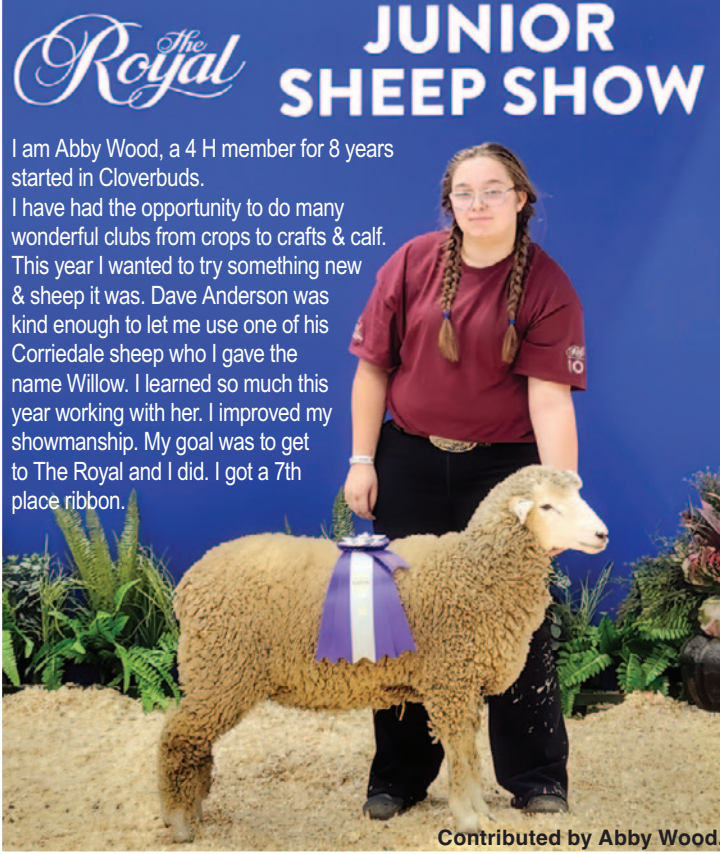


Left: Mad River Honey took 1st prize in the Liquid honey, White, Class 1 category at the Royal.
Below left: Taking a respectable 3rd place in the Chunk honey, Class 10 category is Collingwood Honey Farms.



Left: The team effort of Darcy and Nick McClure of Caledon was successful in taking second place in the giant pumpkin category.

Right: Showing their animals is a huge experience for 4H members. Abby Wood of North Simcoe 4H explains her background with the group and her recent win at The Royal. She says: "Can't wait to show sheep again next year!"



I am Abby Wood, a 4 H member for 8 years started in Cloverbuds. I have had the opportunity to do many wonderful clubs from crops to crafts & calf. This year I wanted to try something new & sheep it was. Dave Anderson was kind enough to let me use one of his Corriedale sheep who I gave the name Willow. I learned so much this year working with her. I improved my showmanship. My goal was to get to The Royal and I did. I got a 7th place ribbon.

Contributed by Abby Wood.



Soul Sisters Celebrations

Building a United Community Beyond Religious Boundaries

In the assortment of our spiritual landscape, the celebration of unity in diversity emerges as a cornerstone for building prosperous and harmonious communities. As neighbors sharing the same postal codes, sunsets and common aspirations, the rich landscape of religious and spiritual practices becomes a source of strength, fostering understanding, empathy, and a shared commitment to collective prosperity. The multitude of religious and spiritual denominations across Ontario is equivalent to a treasure trove, each facet contributing to the province's cultural wealth. In our neighborhoods, this diversity is not merely a reflection of varying beliefs but a testament to the collective resilience and adaptability of our communities. The coexistence of different faiths adds depth to our shared cultural narrative, creating a vibrant and inclusive tapestry that weaves together the stories of Canadians from all walks of life.

As December unfolds, the spirit of celebration becomes a unifying force that should rise above religious boundaries. The festive air is not confined to one specific tradition but permeates the entire community, encompassing the joyous echoes of Christmas, the reflective moments of Hanukkah, the serene practices of Buddhism, and the communal prayers of Islam. The shared spirit of celebration becomes a bridge, connecting us through a shared experience of joy, reflection, and togetherness. In our pursuit of prosperity, both as individuals and as a united community, embracing religious diversity emerges as a strategic imperative. The rich blend of beliefs fosters a culture of learning, where we gain insights from our neighbors' traditions and perspectives. This cross-pollination of ideas becomes a catalyst for innovation, encouraging us to approach challenges with a multiplicity of viewpoints and solutions.

Celebration of unity in diversity extends beyond religious and spiritual practices to the core values that bind us as neighbours and fellow citizens. Shared aspirations for kindness, compassion, justice, and community welfare become the common ground on which we build a thriving society. In this unity of purpose, the richness of our diverse religious and spiritual expressions becomes a source of inspiration rather than division. To foster a thriving community, open dialogue and understanding are crucial. Initiatives that promote interfaith dialogue, cultural exchange, and shared community events become opportunities to deepen our connections. By actively seeking to understand our neighbours' beliefs and traditions, we pave the way for a more inclusive and harmonious coexistence. As we learn, we can all begin to understand and embrace that regardless of what we call the God of our understanding, we are aligned and

guided by the some form of the "Golden rule." Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Worded differently, worth exploring in a future article, but the concept has the same meaning.

Revelling our similarities in religious and spiritual diversity is not just a seasonal observance but a endless journey towards building a prosperous and united community. As neighbors, let us cherish the richness of our collective cultural and spiritual heritage, recognizing that our diversity is an asset that propels us toward shared goals of success, understanding, and an enduring sense of unity. In embracing the beauty of our differences, we interweave a narrative of resilience and unity that transcends religious labels, forming the foundation for a vibrant and prosperous farming community.

Cheers and best wishes to your December celebrations.

In Gratitude, The Soul Sisters
Reverend Erin Wilson and Reverend Kelly Blakely
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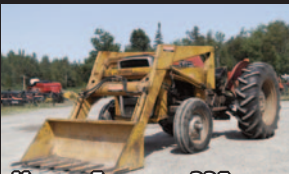
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Massey Ferguson 235
hours showing: 891.3, gas, 540 rpm, open station with no rops, loader and bucket , 6:00 x 16 front tires, 13.6 x 28, Unit is located at Stewarts Equipment in Erin. **\$5,800**



Case 570MXT
5151.4 hours ua, cab with heat, 4wd, with loader, 12x16.5 front tires, 17.5x24 rear tires, bucket and pallet forks, horst lasb400010 blade, and bauman 2260h sander, In Erin. **\$36,900**



Daewoo MG200-III
hours showing: 1124, original one owner! 4wd, loader, cab with heat and air, side mirrors , 20.5r25 tires, Unit is located at Stewarts Equipment in Erin. **\$78,500**



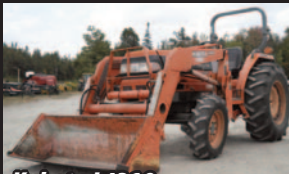
Can-am Defender XT
528.9 klm showing, cab enclosure with heat, camo unit, front bumper, front windshield wiper, manual dump box, winch, Unit is located at Stewart's Equipment in Erin. **\$18,850**



Kubota BX2680
hours showing: 242, diesel, 4wd, 540 pto, turf tires, hydrostatic trans, loader, manual quick attach with 48" bucket, work lights, rear wheel weights. Unit is located at Stewarts Equipment in Cookstown. **\$18,200**



Caterpillar IT14G
8761.7 hours ua , 2006 , cab with heat and air , 17.5r25 tires , auxilliary hydraulics , bucket with cat it24 quick attach, Unit is located at Stewart's Equipment in Erin. **\$63,900**



Kubota L4310
Hours showing: 1847.60, 4wd, open station w/foldable rops, 540 rpm, one remote, glide shift, 8-16 fronts, 14.9-24 rears, grill guard, kubota la682 loader with bucket, Unit is in Erin. **\$14,900**



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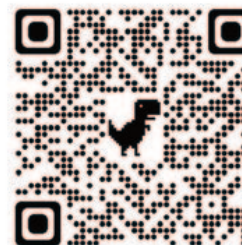
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