

The Creemore ECHO

Friday, February 20, 2026 Vol. 26 No. 8 www.creemore.com

News and views in and around Creemore

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Let there be lights: crosswalk repaired

by Bonnie MacPherson

A pedestrian crosswalk on Mill Street in Creemore is finally operational. **Dan Perreault**, Clearview Township Director of Public Works says the device, originally installed last December, wasn't functioning properly due to a problem with the controller box.

"The box controls the solar panels and how the batteries are recharged," explained Perreault. "It was malfunctioning so the batteries were fried. The panel has been replaced by the manufacturer."

The crosswalk, located at the corner of Caroline Street, works with a pedestrian operated sensor that activates the crossing lights. The crosswalk has been in the plans since former councillor **Thom Paterson** presented his report titled Patios, Parking and Pedestrians back in May 2022. At that time, staff was asked to bring back a recommendation for upgrading the intersection. Their report, presented in September 2022,



Staff photo: Trina Berlo

Faulty equipment has been replaced rendering the crosswalk on Mill Street operational. *Echo* staff discovered the lights were not working in December.

included a recommendation for a crosswalk.

Perreault says there was a significant

delay in obtaining the required equipment. The total cost of the installation is around \$10,000.

Culture and sport Hall of Fame nominations open

Nominations are now open for the 2025 Clearview Culture and Sports Hall of Fame Awards.

Online nominations will be accepted until March 31 in the following categories: artist achievement; athlete of the year; athlete achievement; builder award; community volunteer; festivals and events; lifetime contributions to community; team award; young leader in sports; and young leader in culture.

New this year, the nomination process has moved entirely online. To submit a nomination, visit discoverclearview.ca/hall-of-fame.

Nomination forms, a list of past inductees and details about the award categories can also be found at www.discoverclearview.ca.

The award ceremony will be held in Stayner on June 10.

Cemetery costs begin to fall on the taxpayer

Clearview Township staff continue to advocate for legislative changes that would name the province as default owner

by Trina Berlo

Clearview council has agreed to establish a \$55,000 cemetery budget to cover the maintenance and operation costs of active township-owned cemeteries.

"Unfortunately, the cost to maintain township owned cemeteries are increasing and in some circumstances exceeding the available funds in cemetery general accounts," reported clerk **Sasha HelmKay-Playter** at last week's meeting. "We are a small, more rural municipality so our rates for buying interment rights or burials,

we have to make sure we are fair with the market and that we're fair with our comparators for municipalities and that people who want to bury their loved ones in our municipality are able to do so."

In 2024, Clearview council agreed to take ownership of the West Nottawasaga Church Cemetery, bringing the number of municipally owned cemeteries to 10. Four of those are still accepting interments – Stayner Union Cemetery, Dunedin Union Cemetery, West Nottawasaga Cemetery and Lavender Cemetery. Only the latter is managed by a board with volunteers looking after maintenance, administration and burials.

The fee for plots in the other three township managed cemeteries is \$1,500.

The township pays \$7,024.40 per

month for all three cemeteries.

"We've hit kind of a stalemate where we need to ask council, and essentially the taxpayer, for assistance with this," said HelmKay-Playter.

The new budget line, to be funded from the tax stabilization reserve, will be included in future budget years, growing over time and generating revenue.

She said the fund is really only to support Stayner Union Cemetery and West Nottawasaga Cemetery, as Dunedin Union Cemetery has funds available thanks to a generous donation.

HelmKay-Playter said once that fund starts to dwindle, Dunedin will also come to rely on the new fund.

Cemeteries are governed by the *Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act (2002)*, (FBCSA) with oversight from the Bereavement

Authority of Ontario (BAO).

Cemetery transfers and abandonments have been an ongoing concern for Clearview Township and other municipalities across the province.

Clearview Township has been calling for the *Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act* to be amended to name the province as the default owner and operator of a cemetery when it is abandoned.

"Since the initial resolution that was passed by council in 2023, requesting ministry support in the administrative and financial aspects of cemetery operations, staff have continued its advocacy on this issue," reported HelmKay-Playter. "Over 40 municipalities provided support resolutions and Clearview has joined forces with Tay Township to speak about the concerns."

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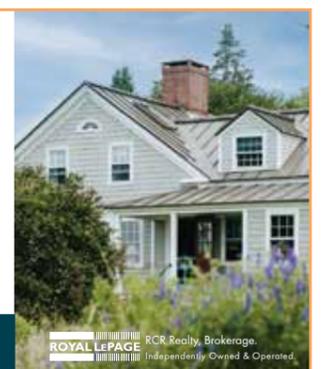
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COMMUNITY Calendar

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Friday, Feb. 20

- **Line dancing** lessons at Avening Hall this week from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. \$15 per person. Beginner-friendly; bring your water bottle. Sign up at the Creemore 100 Mile Store or call/text Linda at 705-794-0638.
- The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 457 Stayner hosts **dart night** every Friday at 7 p.m. Everyone welcome. Stayner Legion, 7149 ON-26. For more information, call 705-428-3809.

Saturday, Feb. 21

- **Black Friday Commemoration.** The Avro Arrow history needs to be remembered. This Black Friday, join host Greig Stewart, author of *Shutting Down the National Dream*, for a special book signing and commemorative event. Books will be available for purchase, with the author present to sign copies and discuss the legacy of the Arrow. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Edenvale Aerodrome. Free entry. Registration required.
- Stayner Legion hosts **DJ Rob Martin** from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
- The Creemore Skating Club is hosting a **bake sale** at the Creemore Arena in the lobby from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome. Stop by to find our skaters' favourite treats: cookies, brownies, tarts, squares and more.

Sunday, Feb. 22

- Purple Hills Arts and Heritage Society presents the first concert in the 2026 **Chamber Music Series**, featuring the Kestrel Quartet performing *Four Elements* by Elizabeth Raum and Maurice Ravel's *String Quartet in F major*. The concert begins at 2 p.m. at St. John's United Church in Creemore. Tickets available in advance at pahs.ca.

Tuesday, Feb. 18

- **Pub Trivia Night** takes place every Tuesday from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Old Mill House Pub, 141 Mill St., Creemore. A \$10 cover includes entry, answer sheets and a chance to win prizes. For more information, call 705-466-5244, visit theoldmillhousepub.com, or join the Pub Trivia Facebook group.

Wednesday, Feb. 25

- **Double Toonie Lunch** at St. Luke's from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Come and enjoy delicious soup and visit with your neighbours.

Saturday, Feb. 28

- **Coldest Night of the Year.** The St. Luke's Walkers will be walking in support of Home Horizon Collingwood transitional support for youth. The St. Luke's Walkers will be leaving St. Luke's and driving to the Mingay Trail. Meet at St. Luke's at 12:45 p.m. if you need a ride, or meet at 1 p.m. at the trail. Donations can be made to Coldest Night of the Year 2026 to team St. Luke's Walkers at www.cnoy.org.
- Stayner Legion hosts **Woody Woodburn** from 7:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. Become an active part of your community and join the Stayner Legion for 2026 and initiation fee will be waived for the year. Inquire today. For more information call 705-428-3809.

Friday, March 6

- St. Patrick's Catholic Church, 215 Pine St. in Stayner, will host the **World Day of Prayer** ecumenical worship service at 2 p.m. This year's theme, "I Will Give You Rest: Come," is based on Matthew 11:28-30 and features the program title "*Rest for the Weary*" by Nigerian artist Gift Amarachi Ottah. The service was originally prepared by the World Day of Prayer Nigeria and adapted for Canadian use by the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada. A light lunch will be served in the hall following the celebration.
- Canadian Tai Chi Academy **Introduction to Tai Chi** classes in Stayner will begin on March 6 through to June 26. Monday and Friday mornings. For more information please e-mail staynertaichi@gmail.com or visit www.canadiantaichiacademy.org.

Friday, March 13

- Luck of the **Irish Pub Night** at the Dunedin Community Hall. A warm up for St. Paddy's Day, get your green on and your shamrocks shined. Festive attire encouraged. 7 p.m. to midnight. 19+ event. Cash bar.

Saturday, March 14

- Station on the Green invites you to their **St. Patrick's Celebrations** with the Strange Potatoes and Shipyard Kitchen Party. Afternoon show is from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Tickets are \$20. Evening show 8 p.m. to midnight. Tickets are \$40. Tickets are available at ticketscene.ca.

Friday, March 27

- St. John's United Church hosts a **chili dinner** from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Family \$25, adults \$10, children \$5. All welcome.

Saturday, March 28

- **Yuk Yuk's Comedy Night** in Honeywood from 7 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. This laugh-filled night is more than just great entertainment, it's a chance to come together as a community while raising funds to paint new lacrosse and pickleball lines on the Honeywood arena floor. Tickers are \$40 per person at the Honeywood Arena (North Dufferin Community Centre).

Friday, Apr. 17

- Knox Presbyterian Church's **Quilt Raffle.** Hand stitched quilt. Tickets are \$5 each or 3 for \$10. Proceeds of sales are designated to the Knox Presbyterian Church, Dunedin property and maintenance fund. At 7 p.m. Nancy Loveless, guest speaker will be speaking on sleeping children. The draw will take place at 8 p.m.

Saturday, Apr. 25

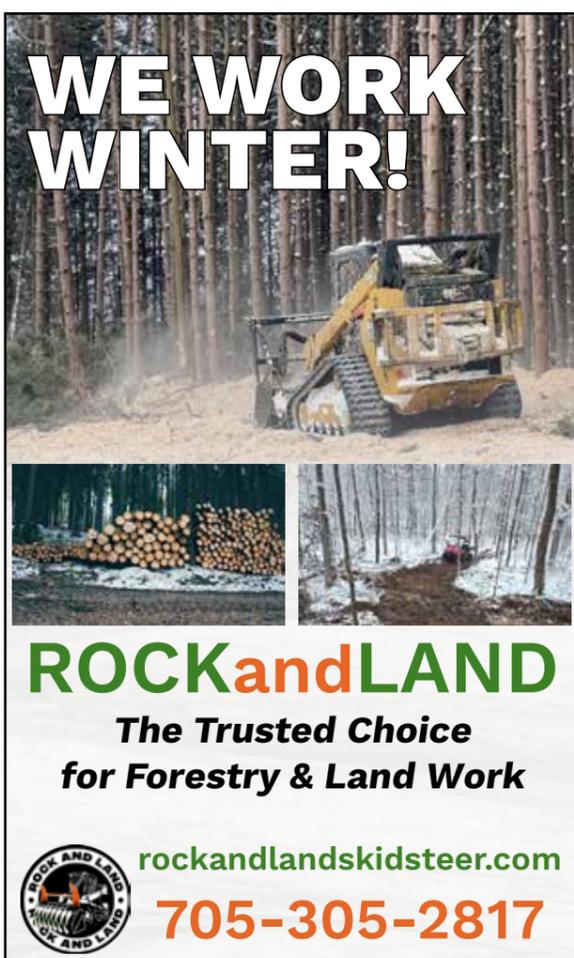
- *Date change* St. John's United Church's **Beef and Lamb Dinner** from 4:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. Adults \$25, youth 6-12 years \$15, and children 5 and under are free. All welcome.



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Women's shelter purchases transitional home

by Bonnie MacPherson

Last year, My Friend's House in Collingwood had to turn away 196 women and children according to executive director **Samantha Jones**.

"It's very hard to say no," she acknowledges, "but we have only 12 emergency crisis beds in our shelter and we received roughly 5,500 crisis calls last year."

Since 1991, My Friend's House has been providing support to women and children in the South Georgian Bay region fleeing domestic violence. Jones says the need is constantly growing. Each year, roughly 200 clients are helped through the emergency shelter program. Another 400 are served through outreach, transition and children's programs. While emergency shelter is critical, often it's only the first step in a long journey to rebuilding lives.

The lack of affordable housing is a huge challenge, explains Jones.

"Think about a woman who has gone down to a singular income," she says. "She wants to stay in the community where she works, and where her children go to school, but it's very difficult to find an affordable rental. Access to affordable childcare is another obstacle. There are many complexities that go against moms who are trying to rebuild their lives."

A new transitional home is the first step in addressing the gap between emergency shelter and permanent housing. The not-for-profit has purchased a

"This new transitional home will allow women who no longer need 24/7 crisis support to move forward while freeing up shelter space so more people can access immediate safety."

-Samantha Jones,
My Friend's House executive director

five-bedroom house in Collingwood and is scheduled to take possession next month. Following some minor renovations, it is expected it will be ready for occupancy by June.

"This should help free up space in the emergency shelter more quickly. We used to move women out of the shelter and into housing in two to three months, but right now, we're averaging 10 months. This new transitional home will allow women who no longer need 24/7 crisis support to move forward while freeing up shelter space so more people can access immediate safety," says Jones. "This is just one small stepping stone. We have increased supply by only five beds and the need is great. Our long-term plan is to continue to create more safe spaces."

Once operational, the transitional home will support

women and children with up to 12 months of housing, plus wraparound, outreach-based services focused on long-term housing stability.

A woman who benefited from the services of My Friend's House is quoted in their annual report as saying, "For women like me, those escaping unsafe situations with nowhere to turn, it is truly a lifeline. The support they offer can change lives. It changed mine."

Another client says, "I didn't think I would ever feel worthy again. Staying at My Friends's House showed me how many incredible women were going through similar struggles to me. We were able to help each other, connect with each other and grow into new people together."

Of the nearly 5,500 calls to My Friend's House's crisis line last year, 18 per cent came from Clearview Township, 30 per cent from Collingwood, 21 per cent from Wasaga Beach, 16 per cent from Town of the Blue Mountains and 15 per cent from Meaford.

My Friend's House receives some funding from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, but relies heavily on donations and grants for the bulk of it's roughly \$1.8 million annual operating budget. The next major fundraiser will be the annual Ultimate East Coast Kitchen Party in May. Tickets will go on sale March 10.

Donate at myfriendshouse.ca.

100 Men Who Care donate to My Friend's House

At its November meeting, 100 Men Who Care Southern Georgian Bay chose to support My Friend's House by donating \$11,914.

My Friend's House is a non-profit agency offering support for abused women and children living in the Georgian Triangle. Since opening in 1991, My Friend's House has helped thousands of women get the safety and support they need to rebuild their lives. My Friend's House supports some 600 women and their children each year through a Shelter Program as well as Outreach, Transition and Children's Programs.

"We are pleased to support My Friend's House and the great work it is doing to support abused women and their children within our community," said **David Trafford**, 100 Men Who Care Southern

Georgian Bay leadership team member.

Funding support from 100 Men Who Care Southern Georgian Bay will go directly to individual and group programming for children, youth and their mothers both residing in the shelter and living in community. My Friend's House children's programming aims to create opportunities for the family to build resilience and heal from the trauma they have suffered.

"We are greatly appreciative of the support through 100 Men Who Care Southern Georgian Bay. Their generosity will help us with our children and family programming and we will have provided direct assistance to 75 children by year end, with their help," said My Friend's House executive director **Samantha Jones**.



Contributed photo

100 Men Who Care Southern Georgian Bay donate \$11,914 to My Friend's House.

OPINION & Feedback

Feedback and old photos welcome
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 call 705-466-9906
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COLUMN

Mental health survey launched as farm issues intensify

It's been a decade since Canadian farmers' landmark mental health study quantified the undercurrent of anxiety and depression facing producers. So, over the past 10 years, has the situation improved? Become worse? That's what new research aims to find out.

FOOD & FARMING



Owen
ROBERTS

Prof. **Andria Jones** of the University of Guelph and her team are leading the study. This will be their third such survey; back in 2016, they surveyed 1,110 farmers across Canada, mostly from Ontario, to determine their mental wellbeing, then followed up in 2021. The 2016 study revealed that stress, anxiety, depression, emotional exhaustion and burnout were all higher among farmers than among other populations.

Inside and outside of agriculture, the findings were jolting and downright alarming. The very people that Canadians count on for food production, one of the country's most essential services, were struggling mightily. The research results prompted a flurry of discussions designed to figure out what was going wrong and how to address it. The follow-up study that took place in 2021 had a similar number of participants.

Again, the findings were alarming. This time, they were further accelerated by COVID: farmers with moderate to severe scores for any outcome before the pandemic reported worsening symptoms. As well, statistics for women were gathered for the first time. Results showed women fared significantly worse than men across all measures. More than twice as many women reported seeking mental health or substance use support during the pandemic than men.

The two studies succeeded in sparking momentum for change and action. Most lately, that's resulted in the Canadian Centre for Agricultural Wellbeing and the National Farmer Wellness Network Crisis Line 1-866-FARMS01) unfolding. These measures have direct ties to the research findings.

Now, with five more years having passed since the 2021 study, Jones and her team are again measuring farmers' mental health status. They'll be asking about depression, anxiety, burnout, suicidal thoughts, societal pressures and resilience, and more. Results from this online study, which takes under 30 minutes to complete and runs until the end of this March, will reflect how the current state of world affairs is impacting Canadian producers.

Jones anticipates a challenging situation.

"How do management decisions on the farm impact mental health, given specific sources of stress like extreme weather, emerging pests, politics, tariffs and upcoming trade negotiations and the pressure on supply management, among other realities that have piled on since our last survey?" she asks.

And it's not all about so-called "big" farmers.
 (See 'Study' on page 5)

THE WAY WE WERE



There's loads of room for winter fun, as this foursome will attest. They are Ruth Emmett, 11; sister Helen, 13; John Webster and collie Towser.

A 1949 scrapbook clipping depicts a 13-year-old Helen Blackburn (nee Emmett) playing in the snow with her siblings and dog.

LETTER

Better to build bridges

Editor:

I would like to thank Clearview Councillor Robert McArthur for advocating for better communication between farmers and "people from the city". In last week's article, *Council votes to strike ag committee*, Mr. McArthur noted, "Farmers and city people, there's a real lack of communication on what goes on out in the farming communities." I totally agree. I would also like to suggest that the lack of communication goes both ways.

My husband and I bought the old Ferguson farm in 2016 and have lived here full-time since 2018. We have been labelled "people from the city" and will likely always be seen this way, even though this is not how we view ourselves. We don't consider our property to be our playground. We do take seriously our responsibility to be good land stewards. We have transformed twelve acres of marginal farmland into tallgrass prairie that will soon be suitable for grazing, restored a wetland and regeneratively planted after the first thinning of our spruce plantation. We have followed 11 Ontario Federation of Agricultural best management practices.

Let's not make assumptions about people from the city. Many agricultural properties owned by non-farmers continue to lease land to farmers. If agricultural properties are not farmed, the township has the option of taxing the property at the residential rates to incentivize continued farming. Rather than forcing farming to continue, council could pass legislation to

require new owners – farmers and non-farmers – to complete an Environmental Protection Plan to be able to make good choices for the land. I suspect that many agricultural properties owned by non-farmers may not be prime agricultural land or may require regeneration

So, how can we improve communication between farmers and other members of our community? We can make sure we know the facts. The township already has the data about how many properties zoned agricultural are not farmed. Let's check whether it's a fact or a myth that properties are not farmed if bought by non-farmers. We could also increase opportunities to meet our local farmers to understand their challenges- and importantly, how we can help. I'd love to attend a local meet and greet where I could hear directly from farmers how I could support them. Finally, let's set up the agricultural advisory committee to be truly representative: include women farmers (who make up 30 per cent of the workforce), young farmers, large- and small-scale farmers and farmers who practise in new and innovative ways.

I can't speak for all people from the city. I can say that I love my home. I can also say that when I die, the land on my farm will be improved. Let's build some bridges here and talk about the positive things that both farmers – and people from the city – contribute. After all, we both need each other.

Monica Branigan,
 Creemore.

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Study to include agriculture students

(Continued from page 4)

Jones says farmers who grow for smaller markets are also stressing more about the likes of weather extremes, which some believe are changing the nutritional composition of their produce because bad weather means it must be harvested earlier or later than usual.

New to this study is the mental health status of upcoming farmers, specifically Ontario Agricultural College students who are from a farm.

As always, Jones and her team will make the results of the study available to provincial and federal decisions makers, to prompt support for mental health programs for farmers.

Visit ajresearch.ca to learn more about this study.

Owen Roberts is an agricultural journalist from Guelph. He regularly visits family in Creemore.

Send letters to the editor to editor@creemore.com. All letters must be signed with the writer's full name and include a phone number (which will not be printed.) Deadline is 5 p.m. on Tuesdays. We appreciate submissions for our *They Way We Were* feature. Bring in your old photos and we will scan them and get right back to you. We also accept submissions by e-mail to editor@creemore.com. Thank you.

Local organizations celebrate Non-profit Appreciation Week

More than 100 non-profit organizations across Guelph, Wellington, Dufferin, and Waterloo Region are coming together this week to recognize non-profit teams and raise public awareness about the vital role non-profits play in community wellbeing, connection, and resilience.

Participating non-profits have received activation kits that include posters, thank-you cards, and stickers designed to recognize staff teams and share why non-profit work matters. Posters are displayed at more than 150 non-profit organizations and community spaces across the region, creating a shared visual presence during the week and 10,000 stickers and 10,000 thank you cards distributed to recognize those who work in the non-profit sector.

Throughout Non-profit Appreciation Week, non-profits are also sharing reflections on what they wish others understood about their work, along with moments they are proud of from the past year.

“Charities and non-profits are at the very heart of our community. And the staff who power up the programs and services do it because they intrinsically care about people and believe in building strengths. This week gives all of us the opportunity to say, ‘Thank you. We see you and appreciate all that you do.’ Their impact on our community is second-to-none,” said

Michele Fisher, executive director of Dufferin Community Foundation.

“At the Dufferin Board of Trade, we work closely with businesses across our region and see firsthand how interconnected our non-profit and business communities truly are,” said **Diana Morris**, executive director, Dufferin Board of Trade. “Non-profit organizations strengthen our local economy, support workforce wellbeing, and help build the vibrant, resilient communities that businesses rely on. We are proud to participate in Non-profit Appreciation Week and to recognize the individuals and teams whose work makes such a meaningful difference every day.”

Non-profit Appreciation Week is formally recognized by the Government of Ontario through Bill 9, the *Non-Profit Sector Appreciation Week Act (2021)*. The legislation acknowledges the contributions of non-profit workers and organizations across the province and was championed by the Bhayana Family Foundation, Ontario Non-profit Network, and United Way Greater Toronto. With more than one in 10 Canadians working in the non-profit sector (Imagine Canada), this week provides an opportunity for communities to recognize non-profit workers and deepen public understanding of the sector’s importance.

Dufferin Community Foundation

Dufferin Community Foundation connects people who care with causes that matter in Dufferin County. It enriches and improves life by creating “Forever Funds” – endowed charitable funds that generate an annual income, which is used to support local charities, every year... forever.

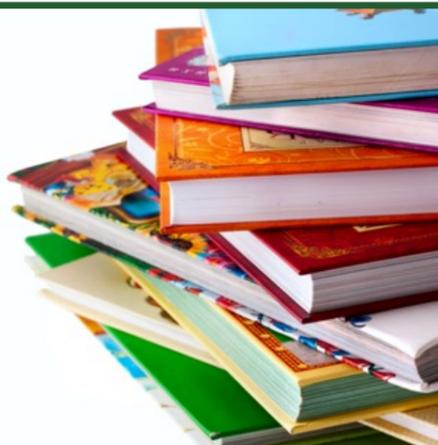
Since it began in 2018, it has funded the work of close to 40 charities across Dufferin County.

In 2025, it awarded grants of more than \$170,000, an amount that will continue to increase as the funds build and grow. Read more at dufferincommunityfoundation.ca.

Dufferin Board of Trade

The Dufferin Board of Trade exists to build up community by helping local businesses thrive. Through advocacy, connection, and collaboration, it supports business growth across the region. Its social enterprise, the Dufferin Biz Hub, is built on the belief in the power of small business to drive positive change. Through the Biz Hub it offers affordable, professional space rentals, training, and support services including videography, photography, marketing, and design. For more information, visit dufferinbot.ca.

The Big Book Bash is back!



Saturday May 2, 2026
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Creemore Station on the Green

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Drop-off location information coming in early March

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The Singhampton Memorial Park recently received a donation of \$2500 from Walker Aggregates towards the purchase and installation of new playground equipment. From left: Singhampton Community Centre Board member **Geoff Meadley**, **Ryan Dosch** representing Walker Aggregates, with additional board members **Andy Uden**, **David Mills** and **Seeta Ferris**. So far, \$14,000 has been raised toward the \$75,000 target. Anyone interested in donating is asked to email singhamptonhall@gmail.com.

Police searching for hit-and-run suspect

Huronia West OPP is investigating a collision in Clearview Township.

On Saturday, Jan. 17 Huronia West OPP responded to a report of a collision at the intersection of Highway 26 and County Road 10 in Clearview Township.

Upon arrival, officers found that one of the two involved vehicles failed to remain at the scene.

The collision took place at approximately 8 p.m., and no injuries were reported as a result.

Dash cam footage of the collision revealed that the suspect vehicle is a

four-door, white, newer style GMC or Chevrolet pickup truck.

The vehicle appears to have a service-style topper/ contractor cap on the bed of the truck with lettering on the side. It was last seen travelling southbound on County Road 10. The vehicle likely sustained damage to the driver-side front bumper as a result of the collision.

Police are encouraging the driver or any passengers to come forward and speak with investigators regarding the collision.

Anyone who may have witnessed the



collision or has any further information about this incident, is asked to contact Huronia West OPP at 1-888-310-1122, referencing occurrence E260075299. To remain anonymous, contact Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 or submit your information online at www.ontariocrimestoppers.ca.

Snow piles can be hazardous: OPP

Dufferin OPP is asking residents to err on the side of caution by keeping youth away from snowbanks.

With recent snowfall creating large, towering snowbanks, it's tempting to start digging and building, said police. However, snow structures built near roadways and driveways pose serious risks. Snowplows and passing vehicles can shift or collapse snowbanks without warning, turning a fun afternoon into a potentially life-threatening situation - especially if children are hidden from view.

Each year, emergency crews respond to incidents involving snow forts constructed too close to roads. Although roadside snowbanks may seem like the perfect building spot, they are not safe play areas. Drivers and plow operators may be unable to see a child playing in or around a snow structure near the street.

This is not just a local concern. Communities across Ontario face similar risks during the winter months. Municipalities throughout the province are encouraged to promote safe building locations and remind families to choose appropriate areas where children can enjoy winter activities without being exposed to traffic hazards.

Residents are urged to select safer spots for snow play, such as backyards, parks, or other designated play areas. With a little planning and awareness, families can enjoy the season while preventing avoidable accidents.

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Water First begins construction of operations hub

by Trina Berlo

A new operations hub for Water First Education and Training Inc. can be seen taking shape on Francis Street East.

A 3,400 square foot addition to an existing building will accommodate equipment storage, distribution and office space for the Creemore based registered charity that works alongside Indigenous communities to address water challenges through education, training, and collaboration.

The main floor of the addition will be accessible by a three-bay garage for easy loading of education and training equipment used in their experiential learning model and an upper level will mainly house offices and meeting space. The two buildings will be connected by a main lobby.

Water First employs 60 people, almost half of which will work out of the new hybrid style Creemore office a couple of days per week.

The build represents a \$1.25 million investment, which Water First founder and executive director **John Millar** says is fully funded by donations from a variety of sources specifically earmarked for the construction of the hub.

“These are folks who understand that we are growing very significantly. We’ve certainly outgrown our existing building and there is just a huge demand for our programming from coast to coast to coast. A lot of incredible donors got behind the equipment building to help us be able to serve communities who are asking for education and training programming,” Millar told *The Echo*.



A rendering of the new operations hub being built by Water First Education and Training Inc. on consolidated properties at 8 and 10 Francis St. E.

Currently, 18 per cent of First Nations communities across Canada are affected by a drinking water advisory.

Since 2009, Water First has collaborated with more than 95 Indigenous communities, supporting youth and young adults pursuing careers in water science through training and certifying drinking water operators, delivering workshops that address environmental water challenges, and engaging Indigenous students through hands-on STEM workshops.

“We’re really proud of all the

support and local champions here in Creemore. The water crisis in Indigenous communities is one of the most urgent and complex challenges in Canada today. Water First partners with Indigenous communities that have identified education and training as one part of the solution,” said Millar in a press release. “The new operations hub will help us to expand that critical work.”

The construction is expected to continue through to the end of 2026.

Although Water First was denied a commercial development charge

(DC) exemption last year, Clearview Township council did approve an exemption from recreation and library DC charges in the amount of \$7,119.80.

“We love being able to base our operations in the village of Creemore and it also provides a really effective springboard for us to be able to engage communities from coast to coast to coast,” said Millar.

“I want to thank the donors who have helped make it happen. Who believe in our mission... We’re excited to be better positioned to do our work on a broader scale.”

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Clearview to eliminate facility 'grandfathering'

by Trina Berlo

Similar to its ice allocation policy, Township of Clearview has approved a new Sports Field Allocation Policy outlining the allocation of soccer fields and baseball diamonds.

"As the Clearview community grows in population, the township must be mindful of the increased demand for recreational facilities and programs. The use of the township's sports fields is a privilege, not an entitlement. It must be allocated as fairly as possible while recognizing the challenges of providing diamond time and access to soccer fields in a high-demand user environment," reported **Terry Vachon**, Director of Parks and Recreation at the Feb. 9 council meeting.

"The other purpose is to guide users of township fields (Stayner, New Lowell, Nottawa and Creemore) in understanding the use of prime-time hours and to eliminate 'grandfathering' of historical schedules for user time allocation. The elimination of grandfathering is expected to be fully addressed by the spring of 2026."

Trevor Harris, president of New Lowell Minor Baseball, asked that new fees, specifically relating to the one-hour diamond youth rental fee, be phased in more gradually while still getting where they would be by 2028 (increasing from \$6.25 per hour in 2026, \$8.75 per hour in 2027 and \$10.56 per hour in 2028). Harris cited

financial planning and affordability as reasons for the graduated fee increase.

Vachon said Harris brought forward some valid concerns and had no issue with accepting his recommendations.

The new sports field allocation policy and updated user rates applies to all users and the following rates would apply by 2028:

- Diamond, adult per hour: \$22.66
- Diamond, youth per hour : \$10.56
- Diamond, lights per hour: \$10.30
- Tournament, diamond/day: \$126.69
- Tournament, additional diamonds: \$63.35
- Pavilion rental/day: \$79.57
- Soccer, youth per hour: \$10.72
- Soccer, adult per hour: \$16.17

Priority for sports field time allocation

The priority order for sports field allocation will be:

1. Clearview Township programs and services;
2. Clearview minor sport groups that provide programs serving youth 21 years of age and younger and that are not currently in a pre-approved license agreement;
3. Non-municipal minor sports groups;
4. Tournaments and special events;
5. Adult groups;
6. Commercial and occasional groups;
7. Non-municipal groups and occasional users.



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CREEMORE CURLING CLUB STANDINGS

Ladies

Team	win-loss-tie
Millsap	1-0-0
Scime	1-0-0
Jeffrey	0-0-1
Meulendyk	0-0-1
Fuller	0-1-0
Leimgardt	0-1-0

From the Hack: The third session of the Ladies' Curling League got off to an exciting start as Team Jeffrey and Team Meulendyk battled to a hard-fought tie, while Team Scime earned a win over Team Leimgardt and Team Millsap secured a victory against Team Fuller.

We're also pleased to welcome two new curlers to the league, Sophie Leyshon and Laurie Edes Irwin. Welcome to the ice, and good curling to all!

Daytime

Team	win-loss-tie
Gallaugher	1-0-1
Meulendyk	1-0-1
Loranger	1-1-0
Lambert	0-2-0



Contributed photo

Congratulations to Team Dunford on winning the second draw of Ladies' Monday night curling. Thank you to **Shannon Lemay** from Creemore Foodland for continuing to sponsor the Foodland Curling Trophy. From left: Shannon Lemay, **Randi Fisher** (second), **Celeste Dunford** (skip), and **Colleen Healey-Dowdall** (lead). Absent: **Abbey Leimgardt** (vice).

From the Hack: Back on the ice Monday, to start the last session of the curling season. Team Loranger welcomed Tammy, a curler who hadn't thrown a stone in many years, but managed to find her rhythm by the second half of the game. Team Loranger went

on to beat Team Lambert. Teams Gallaugher and Meulendyk played to a tie.

Wednesday had Teams Gallaugher and Meulendyk winning their matches.

Good curling everyone!

FUN & Games

Sudoku by Barbara Simpson

	8		2	3	5	1		
7		3						4
				7				9
	4		6	3				
6								8
			7	2		1		
8			3					
4						5		1
		2	9	5	4		8	

Answers on page 10

FRED'S FUNNIES

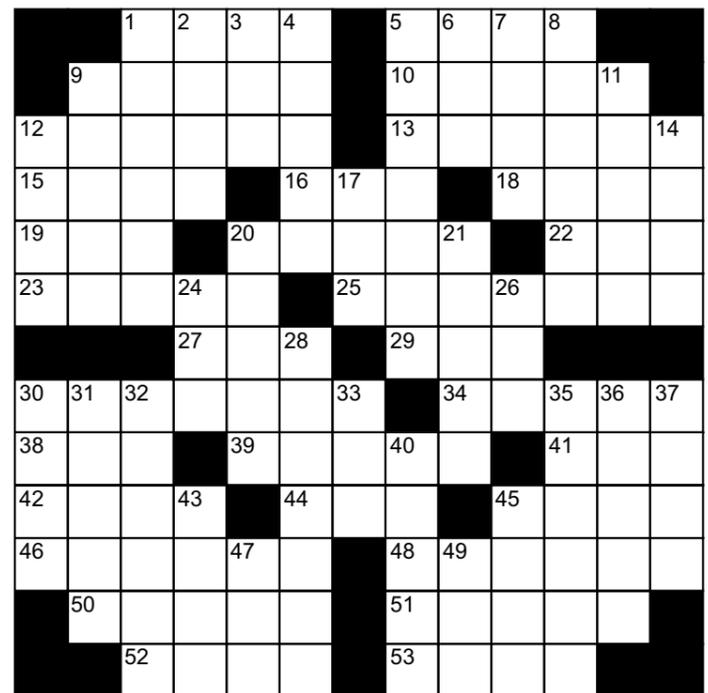
Why does
Peter Pan always fly?

He never lands

Canadian Criss Cross by Walter Feener

ACROSS

- Going into overtime
- Do some roadwork
- Swarming fly
- Due to be paid
- Ride a horse fast
- Playground toy
- Wheel shaft
- Place for a ring
- Amount of space a thing takes up
- Make sure
- Gesture of doubt
- Pick up
- Mentally prepare
- Some to-do list items
- Circle segment
- John Hancock: abbr.
- Pounds repeatedly
- Pin worn for Remembrance Day
- Be incorrect
- They grow where they are not wanted
- British washroom
- Smell ____
- Jug handle
- Mountain top
- Make up for a loss
- Simultaneously
- On edge
- Form words silently
- Animal with antlers
- Crooked



DOWN

- Father of Confederation
- Doing nothing
- Self-esteem
- Distance downwards
- Pretentious people
- Mixture of wonder and dread
- Competes
- Flag indicating nationality
- Uses up all the credit on a credit card
- Stared at stars
- Utter breathlessly
- Throws water on
- Metal-bearing mineral
- Mole relative
- Handymen on movie sets
- Mouse catcher
- Before now
- Plant that grows along the ground
- Carry the weight of
- Word on a French stop sign
- Drew an outline of
- Ocean
- All that a person needs
- Hunt illegally
- Crosspiece fastened over the necks of oxen
- Film genre
- Sound quality
- Rain heavily
- Wear and tear
- Pull behind

Trivia: What is the name of the coffee shop in Friends?

DEATH NOTICE



HODGE, Henry (Harry) J. – June 4, 1933 - Feb. 12, 2026. It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of “The Great Canadian Hero” Henry (Harry) J. Hodge of Lisle, Ontario, at the age of 92. Harry was the beloved husband of June Hodge (McKelvey), cherished father of Alison, Jennifer, and David, and proud father-in-law to Owen Croft and Aki Hodge. He was a loving grandfather to Liam (deceased), Ryan, Caitlin, Shauna, and Dragon. Harry was born on Allan’s Island, Lamaline Newfoundland and enjoyed a wonderful childhood growing up next to the ocean with his many siblings. Harry graduated from St. Francis Xavier University in

1959 with a Bachelor of Science, majoring in geology. He remained a lifelong supporter of St. FX. In April 1961, Harry began his career as a geologist at the Quemont mine in Noranda, Quebec, later becoming Chief Geologist at the Horne mine. In 1971, he relocated to Toronto, Ontario, to work for Conwest Exploration Company Ltd., and subsequently for Shell Minerals. In the early 1980s, Harry founded his own exploration company, Geocanex Ltd., and later established Moss Resources Inc. (TSX) as well as Canstar Exploration. He was also a member of the September and Tuesday investment clubs. After a distinguished career, Harry retired at the young age of 80, spending his final years in the country in Lisle, Ontario, where he remained an active investor in junior mineral exploration companies. An enthusiastic golfer, Harry was a member of the Islington Golf Club and later the Mad River Golf Club. He and his wife, June, were avid travellers, with their most treasured journeys being their annual trips to the British Open Golf Tournament. Harry cherished time with his children, taking each on a special trip: a cycling adventure in Italy with Alison, a journey to South Africa with Jennifer, and a trip to Argentina with David. A devoted Toronto Maple Leafs fan, Harry hoped each year to see his team win the Stanley Cup again, though he was continually disappointed. A celebration of Harry’s long and remarkable life will be held in June, near his birthday, at his country home in Lisle. The family extends heartfelt gratitude to the wonderful staff of SE Health, especially Rupal, Osei, and Otto, as well as to Trustwell Senior Care and the emergency services of Simcoe County. There will be no formal service. The family will receive visitors on Saturday, Feb. 28, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., with shared photo and memories at 2 p.m., at the Drury Funeral Centre, 519 Victoria Street East, Alliston, Ontario. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Link to donate: www.stfx.ca/alumni-affairs. Please select: University Fund - University’s Greatest Need.

DEATH NOTICE



PAWLECH, Vern William passed away peacefully at Campbell House Hospice in Collingwood, Ontario on Feb. 12, 2026, with his family by his side.

He was the beloved partner of Marie Rivière-Stephenson and was predeceased by his former spouse Barbara (nee Teneyck). Dear father of Timothy (deceased 1973), Kristy, Jennifer (Glen), Tamara (Keith) and Rhondi (Evan). Stepfather to Mark, Neil, Paul and Anne and loving grandpa “P” to Conner and Spencer, Russell and Marshall, and step-grandpa to Benjamin, Christopher, Samantha and Jack. Survived by sister Eileen Pletzer (the late Rod) and was predeceased by his brother Gene Pawlech (Edie). Vern will be fondly remembered by his nieces, nephews, other relatives, and friends.

Born in Nobel, Ontario Vern spent his early years in the CIL housing village before his family bought a farm just outside of Parry Sound when he was six. He grew up working hard - helping on the family farm, assisting neighbouring farmers, logging and driving truck. His strong work ethic carried into a 30-plus-year career with Imperial Oil (Esso Petroleum), where he held numerous roles within the distribution group, and ultimately retired as the Aviation Coordinator for Ontario. His career took him across the province, with postings in Parry Sound, Timmins, Wawa, Cutler, Thunder Bay and Don Mills. While in Thunder Bay he pursued his passion for aviation and a dream, to get his pilot’s license.

Vern valued family and friendships deeply. He worked hard to maintain connections and was well known for organizing lively gatherings in the Parry Sound area. He loved the outdoors-hunting, golfing, curling, baseball, and hockey, gardening, snowmobiling, ATving and anything involving tractors. He was an enthusiastic birdwatcher and could identify a tree simply by its bark. A natural problem-solver, he was affectionately known as a “MacGyver,” able to fix anything with whatever materials were at hand.

Vern found a second chance at love with Marie, and together they built a full and joyful life in Glencairn, where he lived for 23 years. Their home was a hub of friendship, family, and hospitality. They enjoyed travelling, entertaining, spending time in the Gaspé Peninsula, winter months in Florida and exploring destinations around the world. Maple syrup season was a highlight for Vern, and he delighted in sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm.

He will be remembered for his fun-loving spirit, his many “Vern-isms” (expressions and ‘little ditties’), his booming voice, his warmth, and steady presence. He was a man of few complaints, a supportive father, and a devoted grandfather who took great joy in watching his grandchildren, grow and pursue their dreams.

The family wishes to extend a heartfelt thank you to Dr. Engell and the nurses at Collingwood Marine Hospital for their care, and to the compassionate staff at Campbell House Hospice for the extraordinary kindness they offered Vern and his family during his brief stay.

Cremation has taken place. A Celebration of Life will be held on Saturday, Feb. 28, 2026, at Station on the Green in Creemore from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. He will be interred on May 2, 2026, at Hillcrest Cemetery in Parry Sound, followed by a Celebration of Life at Logan Funeral Home. In Vern’s memory, donations to the Hospice Georgian Triangle Foundation would be greatly appreciated (340 Erie St., Collingwood, Ontario, 705-444-2555, support@HospiceGT.com). Friends may visit Vern’s online Book of Memories at www.fawcettfuneralhomes.com.

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7	6	3	1	9	8	2	5	4
5	2	1	4	6	7	8	3	9
2	4	8	6	1	3	7	9	5
6	1	7	5	4	9	3	2	8
3	9	5	7	8	2	4	1	6
8	5	6	3	7	1	9	4	2
4	3	9	8	2	6	5	7	1
1	7	2	9	5	4	6	8	3

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S	E	E		S	H	R	U	G		G	E	T
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clearviewcommunity.church

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We celebrate the life of Ruby Klinck



Ruby Klinck passed away peacefully on February 4, 2026. She was the devoted wife of Herb for 59 wonderful years and a proud, loving mother to Karl Klinck and Krista (David) Fisher. Ruby was a cherished grandmother to Abigayle, Varynia, and Karyssa, who brought her immense joy. She is survived by her sister Doreen Dick, her brother Howard Ferguson (Lesley), and her brother-in-law Walter White. Ruby was predeceased by her brother Murray Ferguson and her sisters Donna White and Joyce Morgan. Ruby was a dedicated member of the Collingwood Legion and the Ladies Auxiliary, where she gave generously of her time and energy, firmly believing in giving back to her community. She enjoyed playing cards and darts, but above all else, Ruby treasured time spent with her family. In lieu of flowers donations in Ruby's memory may be made to the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 63 Poppy Fund.

Thank you for the flowers given from: Aunt Doreen Dick (sister), Howard and Lesley (Brother), Don, Bryan, William and Lesley (nephews), Barry and Jana Ferguson (nephew), Comrades in the Ladies Auxiliary, Elsa Wilson, Susan and Murray Hunt (and food), Julie and Lisa. Thank you for the cards from: Friday Bid Euchre, Mike and Kim (brought zucchini bread), Ladies Auxiliary Branch 63, Tammy and family, Dorothy and Julia, Wendy and David, Eleanor Hollingshead. Thank you for making a donation on Ruby's behalf to Collingwood General & Marine Hospital and the Royal Canadian Legion: Elsa Wilson, Barbara Shier, Lois Plummer, Barb and Mike MacDonald, Rae and Lorna Hockley.

God's Garden

God looked around his garden,
and found an empty place.
He then looked down upon the earth,
and saw your tired face.

He put his arms around you
and lifted you to rest.
God's garden must be beautiful
He always takes the best.

He saw the road was getting rough,
and those hills were hard to climb,
so He closed your weary eyelids
and whispered "peace be thine"

It broke our hearts to lose you
but you didn't go alone,
for part of us went with you
the day God called you home.

To my "wife" "Ruby" amen,
you can finally look down from
heaven to see this unjust world you
left behind.



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