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New Tecumseth



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Saturday:  
Mix of Sun  
and Clouds



Sunday:  
Scattered  
Flurries



Monday:  
Mix of Sun  
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## Vinces

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CHECK OUT OUR TOP FLYER SPECIALS ON PAGE 7!



## Charity Puck Drop

The Alliston Hornets hosted a special night, raising funds for the Ronald McDonald House during their home game against the Innisfil Spartans on Friday, Feb. 6. Lincoln and Amelia Whiffen dropped the ceremonial puck to start the game. Both children spent time in the hospital, and their families stayed at the Ronald McDonald House. Joining them is their mother, Kristina Earle, McDonald's representative Thomas McKinnon, and Alliston Hornets President Ken Cowen. Taking the faceoff are Alliston Hornets captain Nick Lamont and Innisfil Spartans captain David Durbano. Read more about the Alliston Hornets on Page 13. BRIAN LOCKHART PHOTO

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# New Tecumseth opens applications for 2026 Senior of the Year Award

BY BRIAN LOCKHART  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Town of New Tecumseth recognizes the remarkable contributions of older adults in our community through the annual Senior of the Year Award.

This prestigious award honours one outstanding resident aged 65 or older who has significantly enriched the social, cultural, or civic life of New Tecumseth. This can include notable contributions in areas such as arts, literature, community service, voluntarism, education, fitness and sport, recreation, or humanitarian work.

“Our seniors are the heart of our community,” said New Tecumseth Mayor Richard Norcross.

“Their wisdom, generosity, and commitment have shaped New Tecumseth into the

vibrant town we know today. The Senior of the Year Award is our way of saying thank you and celebrating those who continue to make a lasting impact.”

Applications for the Senior of the Year Award can be submitted at the New Tecumseth Administration Centre in Alliston or completed online at: [newtecumseth.ca/en/living-in-our-community/senior-of-the-year-award.aspx](http://newtecumseth.ca/en/living-in-our-community/senior-of-the-year-award.aspx)

Submissions will be forwarded to New Tecumseth council. Council then selects the inductees for that year.

Awards presentations will be held at a future council meeting or at an event to be determined by council.

The deadline for nominations is 4:30 p.m. on Friday, March 6, 2026.

For more information, email: [awards@newtecumseth.ca](mailto:awards@newtecumseth.ca)



**2025 WINNER** – Carla Lea Beckett (right) was nominated by the Town of New Tecumseth in 2025 to receive the Ontario Senior of the Year Award. Simcoe-Grey MPP Brian Saunderson provided Beckett with the award last July. The award is provided to local seniors, over 65, who have significant contributions to their communities' social, cultural and civic well-being. Nominations are now open for the 2026 Ontario Senior of the Year Award. The nomination period closes on March 6 at 4:30 p.m.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

## Beeton-based Procyon Wildlife calls on the community to support animals by volunteering

BY BRIAN LOCKHART  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

If you like animals and have an interest in helping sick or injured wildlife, Procyon Wildlife is looking for volunteers to help with the upcoming baby season.

As spring approaches, it will be the season for new life in the forests. Unfortunately, animals can become injured, sick, or orphaned and require human intervention for their care.

You can help care for raccoons, rabbits, squirrels, porcupines, and many other animals that are brought to Procyon.

Spring is an especially busy time of year for Procyon Wildlife as animals are giving birth and becoming more active.

You don't need much knowledge of ani-

mals; all training is provided.

Volunteers are typically scheduled for one five-hour shift per week, so volunteering doesn't have to take up a lot of your time. Although some volunteers request more hours, as they really enjoy being around the animals.

“Officially, we start baby season on April 1, but we try to get all of our volunteers trained starting in March,” explained Debra Spilar, executive director of Procyon Wildlife. “That way, as the babies come in, volunteers have already been with us for a couple of weeks to get familiar with where everything is, to know how to follow our protocols, make formulas, and know all about our nurseries. We provide all the necessary training, all the equipment, and all the PPE.”

Once trained, volunteers will handle many different animals.

“We show them how to feed a baby raccoon, how to handle skunks without getting sprayed, we teach them all that stuff,” Debra explained. “We get all sorts of animals including raccoons, skunks, squirrels, foxes, coyotes, deer, and porcupines. We have five snakes that have come in and 25 bats, and they are still coming in. A lot of times the babies are orphaned. Sometimes the mother is out foraging for food and gets hit by a car. Sometimes babies can fall out of trees during storms.”

Most of the animals that arrive at the shelter are brought in by members of the public. If someone doesn't drive or can't bring an animal in, Procyon Wildlife will work with them to find a way to get the animal to the shelter.

Procyon Wildlife works only with wildlife and doesn't take in domesticated pets, such as cats and dogs. The shelter only accepts species that are native to Ontario.

“We do have an education program,” Debra said. “We have Girl Guides, Scouts, and Brownies. They come to the centre and we educate them on all wildlife. We go to fairs and community events to share the knowledge.”

Many younger people enjoy working with animals, and teenagers are welcome to apply for a volunteer position.

Anyone under the age of 18 isn't allowed to handle the animals, but they can help with everything else and make sure the animals are well taken care of.

If you are interested in volunteering and working with wildlife, visit the website at [www.procyonwildlife.com](http://www.procyonwildlife.com).

There is a section about volunteering.

Once you fill out the application, Procyon Wildlife will contact you and let you know when the next training date is scheduled.

Volunteering with Procyon is a terrific opportunity to work with wildlife and help during a time of year when many young animals are at risk.



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## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Beeton Tottenham Business Improvement Association will hold our annual general meeting to review 2025 and present our 2026 budget.

The meeting will be held on

**Thursday, February 26, 2026 at 6:30 pm.**

at the Tottenham Community Fitness Centre  
139 Queen St. N., Tottenham. RSVP to attend.

For information please contact Susan Iacoucci  
905.936.3424 or email [info@btbia.ca](mailto:info@btbia.ca)





# Town of New Tecumseth seeks nominations for Virtual Wall of Honour

BY BRIAN LOCKHART  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Town of New Tecumseth celebrates individuals who have made a lasting impact on the community by honouring them on the Virtual Wall of Honour.

This initiative recognizes residents who have demonstrated exceptional dedication, leadership, and service.

The Town is now accepting nominations for this honour.

This is an opportunity to honour those who have gone above and beyond, whether through volunteering, philanthropy, advocacy, or other meaningful contributions that strengthen the fabric of the town.

"The Virtual Wall of Honour is a meaning-

ful way to recognize the individuals who inspire us through their commitment and generosity," said New Tecumseth Mayor Richard Norcross. "These honourees represent the very best of New Tecumseth, and their efforts make our community strong and more vibrant."

To be eligible for nomination, candidates must be a resident of the Town of New Tecumseth or an individual who volunteers or has significantly contributed to the life of the town.

Nominees can be submitted posthumously. In such instances, the family of the nominee must, where possible, consent to the nomination.

No activities or achievements related to political appointments are eligible. No Town staff member in connection with their employ-

ment position or sitting politician is eligible.

Previous recipients of the Virtual Wall of Honour are not eligible. Individuals may not nominate themselves or family members.

To nominate someone, you must use the prescribed Virtual Wall of Honour Nomination Form, which can be completed online or manually by picking up a copy at the Town administration centre.

To be eligible for nomination, a nominee must have a distinguished, well-rounded record of community service demonstrated through participation and leadership in and for various community organizations and institutions that have had a positive impact on the lives of the citizens of New Tecumseth.

A limited number of attachments providing evidence of the nominee's accomplishments

will be accepted.

When nominating a person, consider newspaper articles, no more than two letters of support, peer commentaries, and supporting photographs.

The nomination should also include a biography of the nominee, including the nominee's contributions to the Town through participation and leadership of community organizations, and the nominee's volunteer contributions, which significantly contributed to the life of the Town.

Also include a professional-quality colour or black-and-white 8x10-inch photograph of the nominee.

Nominations for the Virtual Wall of Honour must be submitted by March 31, 2026, for this year's consideration.

## Matthews House Hospice in Alliston receives Ontario Trillium Grant to replace flooring

BY BRIAN LOCKHART  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Matthews House Hospice (MHH) in Alliston received a \$107,000 capital grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation that enabled the Hospice to make necessary flooring updates to the main and lower levels of the building.

Simcoe-Grey MPP Brian Saunderson dropped by the Hospice on Thursday, Feb. 5, to see how they had used the funds to improve the facility.

"Strong communities are built on compassion, and the staff and volunteers at Matthews House Hospice exemplify that every day," said MPP Saunderson. "This provincial investment supports practical improvements that will make a meaningful difference for everyone who walks through the door. I want to thank Margaret Bachle and the entire Matthews House team for their dedication and for the incredible work they do in supporting clients and families with dignity and care."

Some areas of the hospice posed mobility

challenges. Repairs to the main-level rooms have enhanced safety and made it easier for clients and visitors who use mobility aids to navigate the space.

"We are so appreciative and grateful to have the opportunity to receive this support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. These projects will help the hospice enhance the care and service to our clients, their family, and friends," said Margaret Bachle, CEO of MHH.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation's Capital Grant streams help organizations improve their infrastructure so they can continue delivering programs and services that Ontarians need to thrive.

Whether it is purchasing equipment, building a new space or completing renovations, retrofits or repairs, these grants support projects that are making a difference.

"Whether it's providing compassionate end-of-life care, supporting families through difficult moments, or creating a comforting and dignified environment, organizations like Matthews House Hospice deliver services that truly make a difference," said Stan Cho, Ontario Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming. "That's why grant support through the Ontario Trillium Foundation is so important. This funding will help ensure that it remains at the heart of the community for decades to come."

Last year, the Ontario Trillium Fund invested nearly \$105M into 732 community projects and multi-sector partnerships.

Projects aim to enhance economic well-being, foster more active lifestyles, support child and youth development, provide spaces for people to come together and connect, and create a more sustainable environment.



**FUNDING BOOST** – Simcoe-Grey MPP Brian Saunderson and New Tecumseth Mayor Richard Norcross visited Matthews House Hospice on Thursday, Feb. 5, to see how the hospice benefited from a \$107,000 capital grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The hospice used the funds to replace flooring and make the building safer for clients and visitors.

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# Editorial, Letters & Opinion

*"The window to the world can be covered by a newspaper."*

~ Stanislaw Jerzy Lec

## Communication

I have always thought that if everyone had spoken the same language, the First World War might have turned out very differently.

If you were in a trench and saw an enemy soldier approaching and yelling, "Nicht schieben. Wir sind unbewaffnet. Wir wollen nicht kämpfen," most likely that soldier would have ended up dead, and rather quickly.

However, if the same soldier approached and in perfect English said, "Don't shoot. We are unarmed. We don't want to fight," that same soldier who would have shot him likely would have eased up on the trigger finger.

Communication is an important tool in life. It allows you to stay in touch with others and share your thoughts.

It can be the difference between life and death in extreme circumstances.

I was working at a large company in Toronto when I went to the cafeteria for a break and a cup of coffee.

A man was holding a piece of paper and speaking to the cafeteria lady.

She saw me and waved me over.

"You're a manager," she said. "This man would like to apply for a job. Can you help him?"

I don't know how the man managed

to get to the cafeteria in a rather large secure building, but I offered to help. We sat down at one of the tables, and he showed me the work application.

It was not a complicated document. All you had to do was fill in the required information and hand it in to the HR department.

He was having a real problem figuring out how to complete the document.

It finally occurred to me that the man could not read.

I didn't ask him about that. Instead, I took the pen, read out the questions, and filled in the application for him. He was grateful for the help.

I wondered what struggles this man faced in life if he couldn't even fill out a job application?

Without the ability to read, a newspaper would be useless to him. How would he get a driver's license if he couldn't read and pass the written test?

Even if he did drive, how could he read the street signs to know where he was? He couldn't even appreciate a birthday card if one was given to him.

When I was a kid, I received a radio with a tape deck for my birthday.

This unit was unusual as it was able to pick up shortwave radio. I spent

many late nights tuning in to Radio Free Europe and Voice of America just to hear what was being broadcast.

Those stations were designed to counter propaganda put out by countries behind the Iron Curtain.

I always found the news on those stations to be fair, accurate, and honest.

It was fascinating to think that some people in a communist country could tune into these stations and find out what was really happening in the world, rather than believe the lies they were told by their communist governments.

Most people already knew they were being lied to. Especially when the government reports the economy was doing great, yet grocery store shelves were empty, and finding necessities like a pair of shoes was a major challenge.

The way people communicate will have a major impact on their lives.

In Afghanistan, possibly the most backward country on the planet, the government, if you can call it that, has pretty much shut the doors of education to all females.

Depending on where they live, some girls can go to school – but only until around Grade 5. After that, they cannot continue their education.

Even then, education in an Afghan school is mostly religious indoctrination.

There is an entire generation of girls who will be barely literate, if at all, and have no knowledge of real history, math, geography, or language. They will not be able to aspire to have any kind of meaningful career.

They will not be able to communicate effectively.

There have been interviews with some of the girls, who spoke out, albeit nervously, because they knew it could mean trouble for them.

They are a generation that wants to attend secondary school and university, but now sees nothing but a black cloud hanging over their future.

Where is the outrage? International human rights groups have been very quiet about this situation.

In North America, if a prominent person uses a politically incorrect word – a single word – it makes headlines.

Yet an entire generation is being denied what should be a human right, and no groups are even addressing the situation.

**BRIAN LOCKHART**  
FROM THE SECOND ROW



## Whatever love means

Feb. 14 is just around the corner and love is in the air!

At least, that's what Valentine's Day enthusiasts will have you believe.

Don't get me wrong, I have no objection to Valentine's Day in and of itself – it's a chance to celebrate the individuals you love, however you define the feeling.

It might be romantic love, familial love, or even the bond that exists between a human and their pet – and all that is to be celebrated.

To borrow a phrase from the iconic theme to The Mary Tyler Moore Show, love is all around and celebrating it shouldn't be concentrated to one day in the year like so much frozen orange juice they're promising to pry from our cold, parched hands.

Personally, I'd be happy if people spread the effort they put into Valentine's Day out a little bit more liberally throughout the remaining 364 days a year.

Nearly 45 years on since the infamous engagement interview between the then Prince of Wales and Lady Diana Spencer when the now-King Charles

III responded to the concept of being in love with the famous three words, "Whatever 'in love' means," I think it's a valid question in our current context.

Love can be defined in many different ways, whether it's spelled out by a dictionary or a very personal and individual definition you hold close to your heart.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary has no less than 14 definitions of "love" – and that's strictly its use as a noun; the list is far longer when we add verbiage into the equation. So, in the sake of brevity, among the nouns are as follows: Strong affection for another rising out of kinship or personal ties; attraction based on sexual desire, or affection and tenderness felt by lovers; affection based on admiration, benevolence, or common interests; an assurance of affection; warm attachment, enthusiasm, or devotion; the object of attachment, devotion or admiration; a beloved person (SEE: Darling); an informal term of address; unselfish, loyal and benevolent concern for the good of another, such as the concern of God for humankind – empathy,

concern or care for others; a god (such as Cupid or Eros) or personification of love; an amorous episode; sexual intercourse; and a score of zero (SEE: Tennis)."

When it comes to the strict definition of love, it really can be a Choose Your Own Adventure, but it's one definition above, succinctly boiled down by the unlikely source of dictionary.com on which I'd like to zero in on this week: "active, self-giving concern for others."

While we're fortunate to live in communities where active, self-giving concern for others is exemplified every day by active and engaged neighbours, it's something that feels to be in increasingly short supply in the wider world.

Sadly, we're seeing examples of this every day, whether it's the systemic denial of basic human rights ongoing in some parts of this world, the exclusion of certain individuals or groups from the table of public discourse for reasons as numerous as they are nonsensical, and examples enough that could fill this entire column space.

But suffice it to say that Minnesota's Mary Richards might have had a different reception today had she stood in the middle of a busy crosswalk throwing her hat in the air with joyous, reckless abandon.

One example I find particularly galling is the lack of love for one's country, a very different thing from hyper patriotism and nationalism. Sure, the ongoing trade wars between Canada and the United States, plus several other factors south of our border, have seen a renewed wave of patriotism. Yet, in our alarmingly hyper-partisan world, it seems that all too many are rooting for our current leaders to fail in the face of these challenges simply for validation and the ability to say, "I told you so" rather than helping move the dial forward in a positive direction.

Rooting against the country in the interests of partisanship benefits no one.

**BROCK WEIR**  
BROCK'S BANTER



Continued on Page 19

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# The curious case of disappearing generals

Armies can be used against both foreigners abroad and citizens at home, but the two roles require quite different equipment and tactics. The same applies to their commanders: you need a different kind of general if you think that the primary task of their troops will be controlling dissent at home.

With that in mind, what has been happening in China is quite interesting. Slowly at first, but now in a rush, the senior command of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been purged of its highest-ranking generals.

It's not like Stalin's great purge of Soviet generals in 1937-38, just before the Second World War, when at least 780 generals were shot. The Chinese generals are not being executed, although many are ending up in jail. Nobody outside the intelligence services knows what is happening to lower-ranking generals, but at the highest level, it is almost a clean sweep.

China's highest military body, the Central Military Commission (CMC), normally has seven members, with President Xi Jinping himself in the chair in his parallel role as general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party. (It is the Party, not the State, that controls the armed forces.)

These six men should be loyal to Xi because he appointed each of them after the 20th Party Congress four years ago. Yet last week, all six were dismissed on suspicion of corruption, including the CMC's vice-chair, Zhang Youxia, one of Xi's oldest friends.

Xi and Zhang were childhood friends whose fathers had served together under Mao in the Liberation War, and they regarded each other as Honorary Brothers. Moreover, Zhang was the last serving PLA officer to have seen actual combat (in border clashes with Vietnam in 1979 and 1984).

Now they have all been accused of "serious violations of discipline and law" (the standard phrase for corruption) and removed from the CMC. Why?

The accusation of corruption is probably true for some of them, as it is for many or most PLA officers, but that would have been true already when they were appointed to the jobs. Something else must have changed.

In most dictatorships, the first suspects are those who control the troops and might try to stage a military coup. However, that really seems unlikely in a country where the Communist Party has been in power for 77

years, and almost every military officer is also a Party member.

It's not that the Party can never be overthrown. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Russia) was removed from power by a nonviolent popular revolt after 74 years in 1991, so you could speculate that China is in the same situation now. But that's probably much too simplistic: history may rhyme, but it rarely repeats quite that accurately.

However, this is precisely the historical analogy lurking at the bottom of the psyche of most true-believing Communists (a rare breed) whom I have known in China. This rarely admitted spectre even drives a good deal of state policy in China – including, perhaps, this stunning reshuffle.

We know that the Chinese economy is in big long-term trouble and that many young people are disaffected with the state ("lie flat"). Maybe China's rulers know more than we do about growing dissent, or maybe they are just imagining it – but if domestic repression is going to be necessary, then they need different people on the CMC.

It's only a hypothesis, but it is one possible explanation for why the real military people have been removed from the existing CMC. The Chinese Communist Party could do as thorough a job of suppressing dissent in the streets as Iran's Revolutionary Guard, no doubt,



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but it would probably require a change in China's current military leadership.

Speaking of which, have you noticed how many senior American generals have been removed from office in the past year? President Trump has fired or otherwise relieved at least 15 very senior officers, most of them 3-stars and 4-stars and replaced them with men (all men) he considers more aligned with his values.

This happens a little bit in most administrations, but never on the scale seen in the last year. Moreover, Trump has said that in future he will personally interview all prospective four-star nominees in every service.

It doesn't necessarily mean he's putting in the right people in case he needs to use the army to suppress large-scale domestic dissent at home in future, but an unfriendly observer could certainly construe it that way. There are definitely people around him who think that far ahead, although at this stage it would be just one contingency among many in their forward planning.

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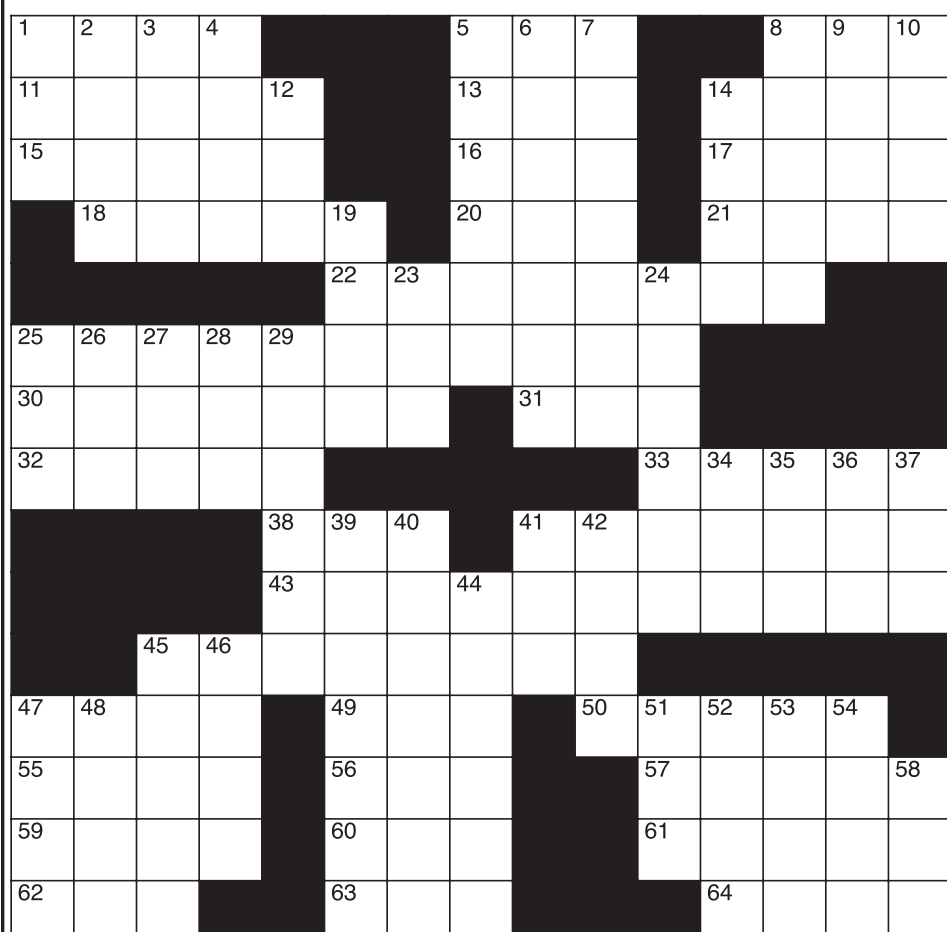
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## CROSSWORD

Puzzle No. 262210 • Solution in CLASSIFIEDS



### CLUES ACROSS

- Breezed through
- Consumer protection agency
- Criminal syndicate
- Moves back from
- Satisfaction
- Feel concern or interest
- Monetary units
- Congressman (abbr.)
- Israeli city
- Restaurants
- 2,000 lbs.
- Grandmother
- North, South and Central
- In an early way
- Foes
- Social networking platform
- Early term for basketball player
- Another name for

sesame plant

38. Disallow

41. Provide greater detail

43. Inaccessible

45. Evoke emotions

47. Ancient kingdom near Dead Sea

49. Celtic punk rockers

50. A fencing sword

55. Actor Idris

56. Affirmative (slang)

57. Afflicted in mind or body

59. One point north of northeast

60. Born of

61. Social media hand gesture

62. Hong Kong food

63. Opposite of

beginning

64. Email function

CLUES DOWN

1. Sign language

2. Fashionable

3. Borough in Helsinki

4. Inability to hear

5. More quickly

6. An idea accepted as a demonstrable truth

7. Shrewdly

8. Rooney and Kate

are two

9. Mediterranean port

10. Benedictine monk

12. Midway between south and southeast

14. Town in Galilee

19. Satisfy

23. Mice genus

24. Brass instrument

25. Chest muscle (slang)

26. Transmits genetic information from DNA

27. Records electric currents generated by the brain

28. Woman (French)

29. Short route aircraft

34. Pitching statistic

35. Pointed end of a pen

36. Popular sports league

37. Body part

39. Inoffensive

40. Yellowish cotton cloth

41. Feline

42. Does not tell the truth

44. Seduced

45. Spiritual leader

46. Abba \_\_, Israeli politician

47. Repair

48. Olive genus

51. Swiss river

52. Prejudice

53. C. European river

54. Keep under control

58. Father

*No one has more self-confidence than the person who does a crossword puzzle with a pen.*



# COMMUNITY VOICE

## Monthly Message: Volunteers are CONTACT Community Services’ superpower

For close to 50 years, CONTACT Community Services has been a beacon of stability in the communities of South Simcoe by providing full, wraparound services to our most vulnerable friends and neighbours. From our Housing Supports team to our award-winning Employment Services staff, our Clothes Line community thrift stores, and our free Seniors Programs, CONTACT has been the go-to organization in South Simcoe to help families and individuals when they need it most.

In 2024, CONTACT, with the support of the County of Simcoe, opened our first 24/7 seniors’ Supportive Rapid Rehousing Program, providing homeless seniors with a warm place to land and the tools they need to find a place to call home.

At the core of CONTACT Community Services is a dedicated group of volunteers whose compassion, commitment, and quiet strength make a meaningful difference in countless lives. Our volunteers are the heartbeat of CONTACT, offering support, understanding, and hope to community members during moments of vulnerability, uncertainty, and crisis.

CONTACT Community Services exists to ensure that no one has to face life’s challenges alone. CONTACT’s volunteer team may work directly with local families and individuals at our Clothes Line thrift stores, provide vital support at our free seniors’ programming, be an ambassador at numerous events and local fairs, or assist in the background, providing much-needed admin support. They may be board members, helping to guide and support our organization. Our volunteers represent more than a service — they represent human connection at a time when it is needed most.



CONTACT volunteers come from many walks of life. They are students working to obtain much-needed volunteer hours, local retirees, professionals, parents, and community members who share a common desire: to help people in need and bring our community together. This diversity strengthens CONTACT, allowing volunteers to provide compassionate support through a wide range of backgrounds and life experiences.

Despite their differences, volunteers are united by a sense of purpose. Every interaction is guided by the belief that every individual deserves to be heard without judgment.

Through the generous support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation, CONTACT has had the opportunity to provide valuable free training for our volunteers.

CONTACT understands that supporting others can be emotionally demanding, and we prioritize volunteer well being through ongoing support and continued education. We have been fortunate to offer valuable learning opportunities with local community partners, including Uplift Black, The Gilbert Centre, and Parents Against Racism, as well as important self-care programs and first-aid training. These sessions have given our volunteers the opportunity to learn, to grow and to provide an even more compassionate approach to helping people in need in our communities.

The impact of CONTACT volunteers is profound. A calm voice during a moment of

crisis, a compassionate listener for a senior experiencing isolation, or a timely referral to essential services can change the course of a person’s life. For many families and individuals reaching out for support, volunteers can make a remarkable difference in their day. Our volunteers help to build a more connected, resilient, and caring community.

While volunteers give generously of their time and energy, many describe the experience as deeply rewarding. Volunteering with CONTACT often leads to personal growth, lifelong friendships, and a valuable sense of purpose.

For some, volunteering becomes a calling; for others, it is a meaningful way to give back. CONTACT has been honoured to have volunteers who have served as long as 35 years! This year, we are thrilled to celebrate three people from our volunteer family who are celebrating 20 years with our organization! Regardless of how long they serve, every volunteer leaves a lasting imprint on the organization and the lives they touch.

CONTACT Community Services recognizes that its success would not be possible without its volunteers. Their dedication — often given quietly and behind the scenes — deserves recognition and gratitude. Every hour volunteered represents a commitment to compassion and community care.

As CONTACT continues to evolve and respond to

growing community needs, volunteers remain our strongest asset. Their willingness to show up, listen, and care ensures that, as a team, we can continue to provide enthusiastic and empathetic support to families, individuals, youth, and seniors in need in our communities.

If you are looking to give back to your community, make some new friends and make use of your valuable skills, we would love to speak with you. Whether you are interested in donating a few hours a week at one of our Clothes Line stores, jumping into our fun and creative seniors’ programs or sharing your much sought-after administrative skills, we have a great place in our organization for you.

To learn more about volunteering at CONTACT Community Services, visit our website at [contactcommunityservices.ca/volunteer/volunteer-with-contact/](https://contactcommunityservices.ca/volunteer/volunteer-with-contact/) or call our Volunteer Coordinator, Linda, at 705-435-4900.

We look forward to welcoming you.



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# County of Simcoe releases highlights from January meetings

BY BRIAN LOCKHART  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The County of Simcoe has released highlights from recent council meetings during January.

County council reviewed several reports, discussed items, and presented to motions.

## Age-friendly initiative update

The county's age-friendly initiatives continued to advance with the Age-Friendly Housing Grant approving 93 applications supporting 112 accessibility-focused projects.

The Municipal Grant Program approved three submissions totalling \$23,390.

The Business and Individual Recognition Program honoured 13 businesses and seven community champions.

Ongoing collaboration with municipal and community partners continues to strengthen these initiatives, and preparations are underway for the 2026 program cycles.

## Review recycling collection for small businesses and organizations

County council supported a motion calling on the province to expand recycling collection to include small businesses and community organizations in the County.

Council directed the county's Solid Waste Management staff to report back on whether

the county could independently provide recycling collection to these users, acknowledging that doing so would require the county to cover potentially high costs for transfer, haulage, and processing.

## 2026 Borrowing by-law

County council authorized the Borrowing By-law that permits the County to temporarily borrow on its line of credit throughout the year as needed to meet current payment obligations until taxes and other revenues are received.

As allowed under the Municipal Act, this By-law enables the County to secure short-term borrowing for operating cash flow and

is also required for any additional debt necessary to support infrastructure projects.

## Paramedic Services honour guard update

During 2025, the Honour Guard participated in 21 events ranging from local celebrations and memorial ceremonies to national and international responses honouring fallen emergency service personnel.

Supported through volunteer fundraising and a modest annual County contribution, the Honour Guard continues to strengthen its organizational structure while serving as an important ambassador for Paramedic Services, the County, and the broader emergency services community.

# OPP cautions the public on increasing reports of police impersonation scams

BY BRIAN LOCKHART  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Ontario Provincial Police is alerting residents across the region about an emerging scam in which suspects pose as police officers to defraud victims of substantial sums of money.

In recent reports, fraudsters have contacted victims by phone, claiming to be members of the OPP.

In each case, the suspect used fabricated names, titles, and badge information to gain credibility.

Victims were instructed to withdraw large sums of money and either send the funds through cryptocurrency platforms or hand over cash directly.

These tactics have resulted in significant financial losses, including incidents where victims paid between \$6,000 and \$13,000 to individuals falsely claiming to be police officers.

cers.

Police confirm that the names and ranks provided by the scammers do not correspond with any OPP members.

Fraudsters used urgency, intimidation, and fear to pressure victims into complying with their demands.

To protect yourself against police impersonation scams, the OPP is reminding the public of the following fraud prevention strategies:

- Police will never request money, cryptocurrency, gift cards or financial transfers over the phone.
- Police will never demand immediate payment, threaten arrest, or pressure you to act urgently.
- Do not provide personal information, banking details, PINs, or identification numbers to unsolicited callers.
- Pause and talk to a trusted family member or friend before making any financial decision under pressure.

sion under pressure.

If you receive a call from someone claiming to be an OPP officer and you are unsure of its legitimacy, you can contact the OPP non-emergency line at 1-888-310-1122.

This number can be used to:

- Confirm whether an officer has attempted to contact you.
- Report suspicious calls or attempted fraud.
- Speak directly with the police about fraud-related concerns.

Residents who have been targeted or victimized by fraud are encouraged to contact police and report the incident to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre at 1-888-495-8501, or online at [www.antifraudcentre-centreantifraude.ca](http://www.antifraudcentre-centreantifraude.ca).

Police continue to monitor fraud trends and remind community members that awareness is one of the strongest tools against financial victimization.



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# Arts & Local Events



**WINTER WONDERLAND** – It was a celebration of the season at Winterfest 2026, hosted at the New Tecumseth Recreation Centre on Friday, Feb. 7. Although it was one of the coldest days of the year, everyone still had fun. Visitors had fun in the parking lot, meeting the vendors, enjoying rides on the train or a horse-drawn carriage, and playing various games. To warm up, attendees went to the recreation centre and participated in additional activities. Winterfest is put on by the Town of New Tecumseth each year. **BRIAN LOCKHART PHOTOS**



## Put on your blue suede shoes, Elvis is coming to the Alliston Legion

BY BRIAN LOCKHART  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

If your ears perk up when “Love Me Tender” or “Suspicious Minds” is played on your favourite radio station, you will enjoy A Night with Elvis, presented by the Alliston Legion.

Elvis impersonator Terry Chisholm, a two-time Canadian National Elvis Champion, will be performing at the Legion on Feb. 14 and bringing a full line-up of Elvis songs to the stage.

“It’s not the original Elvis. We asked

Graceland, but the people running it now said ‘no’,” joked Legion member Scott Cooke. “Our entertainer, Terry Chisholm, has performed with a lot of well-known people over the years, like Ronnie Hawkins, Bobby Curtola, The Good Brothers, Anita Parras, The Duprees, Gary Reynolds and his Orchestra, the Brampton Symphony Orchestra, and Faron Young. He played the Calgary Stampede, the Medicine Hat Stampede, the Onion Festival in Innisfil, and the Potato Festival in Alliston.”

Mr. Chisholm is celebrating 52 years as an entertainer, singer, and musician.

He performs tributes to over 160 artists, including Roy Orbison, Vince Gill, Engelbert Humperdinck, the Righteous Brothers, Conway Twitty, and Wilson Pickett.

This will be a special Valentine’s Day performance, so couples who are feeling a ‘Burning Love’ can enjoy the music and spend an evening together.

“He’s performed all over Canada and in Long Island New York, and Florida,” Cooke said. “He plays five different instruments and has played in bands all over Canada.”

This sold-out show is a fundraiser for the

Alliston Legion Branch to replace its parking lot.

The event runs from 7 p.m. to midnight.

Next up for the Alliston Legion is the Down East Kitchen Party and Jiggs Dinner.

This event will feature local performers from the MacMurchy School of Highland Dance, local piper Terry Cleland, and a DJ.

There will be a Mummies competition, lots of prizes, and a traditional jiggs dinner. The Kitchen Party will take place on Saturday, March 21.

Tickets are \$30 per person and doors open at 5:30 p.m.

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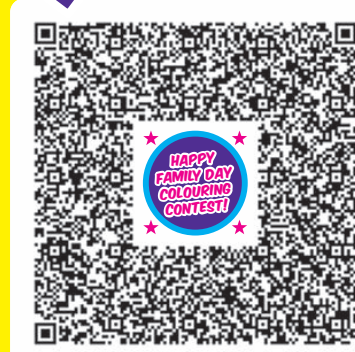
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# SPORTS

## NEW TECUMSETH TIMES



## Alliston Hornets in second place with three games remaining

BY BRIAN LOCKHART  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

After winning both games over the past week, the Alliston Hornets remain in second place in the North Carruthers Division of the Provincial Junior Hockey League.

The Penetang Kings were in town on Wednesday, Feb. 4, for a game at the New Tecumseth Recreation Centre.

After a scoreless first period, the Hornets blasted into the second period, scoring six unanswered goals.

Alliston's goals came from Nick Lamont, Ben Smith, Duncan Grube, Gunner Kirk, and Tristen Pitt for two.

That was all the scoring for the night.

Neither team could hit the back of the net in the third period, and the game ended with a 6-0 Alliston shutout.

The Hornets were back on home ice on Friday, Feb. 6, to host the Innisfil Spartans.

Alliston opened the scoring in the first period on goals from Gunner Kirk and Nick Lamont.

Duncan Grube got the only goal of the second period at 10:14 into the frame to give the Hornets a 3-0 lead with one period remaining.

Grube scored again at just 36 seconds into the third period.

The Spartans avoided the shutout when they scored at 3:11 into the third period.

Grube got the hat-trick for the night when he scored his third goal at 15:52 into the third period.

Noah Larmon scored the final goal of the game to give the Hornets a 6-1 win.

With three games remaining on the regular season schedule, the Hornets are in second place with 58 points – one point behind the Stayner Siskins.

The Siskins also have three games left, so first place this season could come down to one of these teams taking a single loss.

In third place, the Orillia Terriers have a 26-12 record, including one shoot-out loss and one overtime loss.

The Penetang Kings are in the middle with 50 points.

All of the top four teams will be major contenders going into the playoffs.

The Midland Flyers are in fifth place, followed by the Muskoka Bears, the Innisfil Spartans, and the Huntsville Otters.

The Hornets will play three games over three days at home to finish the regular season.

On Saturday, Feb. 14, they will host the Midland Flyers, starting at 7:30 p.m. They will



**STAYING STRONG IN SECOND** – The Alliston Hornets take on the Innisfil Spartans on the ice at the New Tecumseth Recreation Centre on Friday, Feb. 6. The Hornets left the ice with a 6-1 win. The Hornets remain in second place in the North Carruthers Division of the PJHL with three games remaining on the regular season schedule.

BRIAN LOCKHART PHOTO

be back on home ice on Sunday, Feb. 15, to host the Penetang Kings with a 7:30 p.m. start.

The final game of the regular season will get

underway on Monday, Feb. 16, with the Stayner Siskins arriving for a 2:30 p.m. start on Family Day.

## St. Thomas Aquinas Stingers junior boys maintain first place in basketball standings

BY BRIAN LOCKHART  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The St. Thomas Aquinas Stingers junior boys' basketball team is having a hot season, currently in first place in the CSASC standings.

The Stingers have a 5-2 record and ten points. The team has averaged just over 58 points per game this season.

St. Thomas hosted the St. Theresa's Catholic High School Thunder in the gym at STA on Thursday, May 5.

It was a very competitive game with St. Theresa's taking a 30-28 lead at the halfway mark.

The third quarter saw the Stingers really buckle down and put out a huge effort.

At the end of the quarter, the Stingers were leading 50-33.

STA kept up the pressure for the remainder of the game and left the court with a 65-53 win.

"I think we're doing well, our team is very good," said Stingers' player Kingston McCaffrey after the game. "We just have to play as

a team – as a unit... that's where our success is. We work together as a team and do a lot of practice and help each other grow as a team."

Teammate Zikora Mbonu said the team regrouped after the first half to put on a strong effort going into the third quarter.

"In today's game, I think it was pretty good but we could have played better," Zikora said after Thursday's game. "In the first quarter they (St. Theresa's) had a lead and we had to pick things up. We kept going and got the lead, and I think we did pretty good. We seem

to be a second-half kind of team, it's the third quarter when we usually start picking things up. I like how we started scoring and talking to each other and talking on defence. We had a chat in the locker room after the first half – we had to pick it up and play a better defence."

The chat at half-time worked, and the team came out strong and steady for the remainder of the game.

It was the Stingers' final regular-season game, and they will now get ready for the playoffs.



**STINGING SUCCESS** – The St. Thomas Aquinas Stingers junior boys' basketball team take on the St. Theresa's Catholic High School Thunder in the gym at STA on Thursday, Feb. 5. The Stingers won the game 65-53 and have clinched first place going into the playoffs.

BRIAN LOCKHART PHOTO



**ON THE ICE** – The Banting Memorial High School Marauders boys varsity curling team play a match against the Bear Creek Secondary School at the Alliston Curling Club on Monday, Feb. 2. The team of Will Werenich, Dean Bailey, Ryan Bedford, Owen Jarvis, and Rohan Carter have been enjoying a good season on the ice sheets. High School curling is now going into the playoffs.

BRIAN LOCKHART PHOTO



# CONTACT Community Services to launch birdhouse decorating session

BY BRIAN LOCKHART  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

With spring just around the corner, CONTACT Community Services has announced its free March seniors program. This program features Mini Log Cabin Birdhouse Decorating sessions. If you enjoy having birds visit your backyard, this is an opportunity to make a home

for a family of feathered friends to nest. This class offers a hands-on creative experience where participants transform simple little wooden birdhouses into charming, rustic ‘log cabins’ for birds to call home. Please note that registration for these sessions is limited to 10 participants. There will be six sessions at six different locations. • Tuesday, March 10. 1 p.m. – Beeton

Legion (55 Tecumseth St. N., Beeton) • Monday, March 16. 1 p.m. – Everett Legion (6190 County Rd. 13, Everett) • Tuesday, March 17. 1 p.m. – Innisfil Legion (1017 Robinson St., Belle Ewart) • Wednesday, March 18, 1 p.m. – Alliston Legion (111 Dufferin St. S., Alliston) • Tuesday, March 24. 1 p.m. – Bradford Legion (115 Back St. Bradford) • Wednesday, March 25. 1 p.m. – Totten-



ham Legion (25 Richmond St. E., Tottenham) To register and save a program location that is best for you, email: [programs@contactcommunityservices.ca](mailto:programs@contactcommunityservices.ca)

# Awaken Aurora builds on inaugural success with focus on International Women’s Day

BY BROCK WEIR

More than 65 women came together at the Aurora Cultural Centre last month for the inaugural Awaken Aurora – The Dawn Within, a new program spearheaded by three local residents to “give women in the community a dedicated space to pause and feel supported and connected” while focusing on their health and wellbeing. Given the tremendous success of the first session, which included yoga, mindfulness, guest speakers, and a bevy of local vendors,

Awaken Aurora founders Lauren Hanna, a health policymaker, digital marketer and mental health advocate Skai Spooner, and realtor Krista Hall, are looking to build on their success just in time for International Women’s Day. “I had a feeling that women in Aurora were kind of craving more opportunities to come together as a community, connect with each other, and also spend a little bit more time focusing on their health,” says Hanna. “That said, I think there’s still a degree of pressure that comes with organizing an event, and you

put money and time into it, so certainly we were relieved to see that ticket sales were positive and that we sold out. “We wanted to donate \$500 to the CMHA (Canadian Mental Health Association of York Region and South Simcoe), so selling out also meant that we were able to do that, which was really special and a key measure of success.” Being able to support the CMHA and their local mental health services was a key priority for the trio behind Awaken Aurora and with the January success, they aim to raise \$2,000 for the organization through their four signature events, the next of which is set for March at Royal Rose Gallery to align with International Women’s Day, sponsored by realtor Krista Hall. Ticket sales for the event went on sale last week and were already more than 25 per cent sold out by press time this week. “It’s really nice that people were watching and keen for details on the next event,” says Hanna. This time around, we’re hosting it at Royal Rose Gallery, so it is a nice chance to support other local businesses and event

facilities.” Newmarket-based author Carly Ottaway, she adds, will be a keynote speaker at the event with a talk focused on “coming back to and celebrating your authentic self.” Looking back at the success of the first event, Hanna says one participant described the experience as “life-changing,” a piece of feedback that has put a lot of wind in the sails propelling them forward. “It was pretty incredible to receive that email,” says Hanna. “We had a feeling that something a bit magical was happening – the vibe, if I can call it that, when people were coming in was very electric and special, having people connect with each other, just carving out the space to focus on their health and then hearing from two incredible speakers. “We had a feeling there was something really special transpiring, but the feedback after the event, on the day of, that we received by email, and then in post-event survey was all extremely positive.” For further information and to keep track of upcoming events, follow them on Instagram @AwakenAurora.ca.



## Looking to showcase your business in the Shelburne community?

To reserve your spot in the Shelburne Recreation Guide Spring/Summer 2026 Edition, please contact Debbie Freeman.



# Simcoe County Museum will host Skate and Sweets outdoor event on Valentine’s Day

BY BRIAN LOCKHART  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Bring your sweetheart and celebrate Valentine’s Day on the ice at the Simcoe County Museum’s Skate and Sweets outdoor event. You can enjoy a winter evening with a skate along the beautiful skate trail that winds through the museum’s forested grounds. Warm up at the hot chocolate bar, play

some fun games, enjoy candy, and take part in the festive photo opportunity, perfect for capturing a special moment. Registration is required. Visit online at [museum.simcoe.ca](http://museum.simcoe.ca) to register. Skate and Sweets will take place on Saturday, Feb. 14, 2026, at the Simcoe County Museum at 1151 ON-26, in Minesing, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Special event admission is \$15.



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## Tottenham resident charged in illegal gambling investigation

BY BRIAN LOCKHART  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

A Tottenham man was arrested after a multi-jurisdictional police investigation dubbed Project Scala that resulted in charges being laid against nine suspects.

Police seized gaming machines, illicit tobacco and alcohol, controlled substances, and proceeds of crime following a two-year investigation.

Beginning in 2024, officers launched an

investigation into illegal gambling operations in the cities of Vaughan and Toronto.

Member of the York Regional Police Traditional Organized Task Force, in collaboration with the South Simcoe Police Service, identified suspects responsible for collecting money from these illegal gambling establishments.

Search warrants were executed at a residence and gaming house in Vaughan, as well as two residences and two gaming houses in Toronto.

Additional warrants were executed at a business and a storage locker in Toronto, along with two motor vehicles.

As a result of these warrants, investigators seized video gaming machines and related accessories, illicit tobacco and alcohol, a large quantity of bulk currency, a crypto wallet, silver bars and coins, two vehicles, and a quantity of controlled substances.

As a result of this investigation, Salvatore Blanda, 50, of Tottenham, was charged with: Found in a Gaming/Betting House.

Eight others from Toronto, Vaughan, Cambridge, and Innisfil have been charged with various offences.

These charges include: Possess Property Obtained by Crime over \$5,000, Traffic in Proceeds obtained by Crime over \$5,000, Keep Common Gaming/Betting House, Possession for the Purpose of Trafficking, and Possession of a Controlled Substance.

Anyone with information is asked to contact the York Regional Police Major Projects Unit by calling 1-866-876-5423, ext. 6970.

## Man charged with impaired driving after attempting to flee from police

BY BRIAN LOCKHART  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

A man has been arrested and charged after an impaired driving investigation that began in Essa and concluded in Clearview on Feb. 4.

Shortly after 8:30 a.m., police received a report of a possible impaired driver in a white Honda Civic in Essa. Nottawasaga OPP officers located the vehicle a short time later as it attempted to leave the area.

Police attempted to stop the driver who fled

at a high rate of speed.

Around 9:30 a.m., police were notified that the vehicle had arrived at a construction site in Clearview Township.

Four occupants fled the vehicle.

Officers located the driver hiding behind a building. The person attempted to flee on foot but was arrested after a brief foot pursuit.

Three passengers were later located and found to not be involved in the driving offences.

As a result of the investigation, Bruce

Churchill, 45, of Barrie, has been charged with:

- Operation while impaired – alcohol and drugs
- Operation while impaired – blood drug concentration
- Operation while prohibited under the Criminal Code
- Flight from a peace officer
- Fail to comply with probation order

The accused was held for a bail hearing and had their driver's license suspended for



90 days and their vehicle impounded for 45 days.

None of the listed charges have been proven in court.

## Nottawasaga OPP charges three people with impaired driving over the weekend

Members of the Nottawasaga Detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) have arrested and charged three more impaired drivers in three separate occurrences this weekend after conducting R.I.D.E programs and responding to a motor vehicle collision.

On February 8th, 2026, shortly after 4:30 p.m., police were conducting a R.I.D.E program on County Road 13 in Adjala-Tosorontio Township when a driver at the R.I.D.E was suspected of being impaired. An impaired investigation began and the driver was arrested for impaired operation.

On February 9th, 2026, shortly before 12:30 a.m. the Nottawasaga OPP received a call for service reporting that a south bound vehicle on Sideroad 10 in New Tecumseth had ended up in the ditch, and the driver had walked away from the vehicle. The driver was located and arrested for impaired operation.

On February 9th, 2026, at approximately 1:00 a.m., police were conducting a R.I.D.E program on Sideroad 10 in New Tecumseth when a driver at the R.I.D.E was asked to pull over to the side of the road. The driver began to continue driving through the R.I.D.E. The driver was stopped and was suspected of being impaired. An impaired investigation began and the driver was arrested for impaired operation.

As a result of the investigations, the first driver, Kenneth BALL, a 40-year-old of Etobicoke has been charged with:

- Operation while impaired - blood alcohol concentration (80 plus)

- Having care or control of a motor vehicle with liquor readily available

The driver of the second investigation, Jeffrey Da Silva, a 39-year-old of New Tecumseth has been charged with:

- Operation while impaired - blood alcohol concentration (80 plus)

- Operation while impaired - alcohol and drugs

The driver of the third investigation, Daniel Beauchemin, a 39-year-old of New Tecumseth has been charged with:

- Operation while impaired - alcohol and drugs

- Failure or refusal to comply with demand
- Having care or control of a motor vehicle with liquor readily available

- Have care or control of vehicle or boat with cannabis readily available

- Disobey officer directing traffic

- Drive motor vehicle, no currently valid permit

All three accused parties had their drivers licence suspended for 90 days, had their vehicles impounded for 7 days and were released on a Form 10 Undertaking with a future court date at the Ontario Court of Justice in Bradford to answer to the charges.

None of the listed charges have been proven in court.

If you suspect someone is driving while

impaired, please call 9-1-1 immediately. You can also provide information anonymously by contacting Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS

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## 708 OBITUARIES

### Bonsi: Mario

Peacefully passed away at his home in Beeton, on Thursday, February 5, 2026. Mario Bonsi at the age of 82 years, beloved husband of Gianna Bonsi (née: Galli). Loving father of Claudio (Crystal), Angelo (Christine) and Marco (Tarah). Dear grandfather of Alyssa, Jacob, Luke, Daniel, Sandro and A.J. Forever in the hearts of his extended family and friends.

The family received friends at Rod Abrams Funeral Home, 1666 Tottenham Rd., Tottenham 905-936-3477 on Wednesday, February 11, 2026 from 6:00pm – 8:00pm. Donations in Mario's memory to the Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation would be appreciated. Online condolences and memories may be shared with the family at [www.RodAbramsFuneralHome.com](http://www.RodAbramsFuneralHome.com).

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## 708 OBITUARIES



### Butler, Colleen

Passed away gracefully, surrounded by family and friends at Matthews House, Alliston on February 2, 2026 at the age of 50. Much loved daughter of Jay and Peggy, loving wife and partner to Craig, and the best Mom to Lily (Alessandro), Nathan (Diana) and Owen. She was an amazing sister to Jamie (Anne), Mary, and Trish (Elise). Colleen was the "cool" aunt to Ellery, Calleigh, Maya, Lia, J.J., Ellis, Lukas and Niklas. Beloved daughter in law of Anne Butler (the late Doug), and dear sister-in-law of Geoff (Johnna), and Rod (Jessica).

Colleen is remembered by friends and family as a strong, graceful and especially kind woman, whose roots and ties ran deep to her hometown community of New Tecumseth. After graduating from St. Thomas Aquinas in Tottenham, she attended King's College at Western, where she met her husband-to-be Craig, while she worked as the after hours receptionist, and he as the after hours security guard. She completed a degree in Political Science, and continued her education at the Universities of Ottawa and Carleton, earning a Law degree and her Masters of International Affairs.

After graduating, she began her law career at Fraser, Milner, Casgrain in Toronto, and then moved north, back to Tottenham, to help raise her growing family. She continued her law practice as a partner at Feehly Gastaldi, and threw herself into various volunteer endeavours in the community. Over the years, she has volunteered on the boards of many non-profit and community organizations, such as Stevenson Memorial Hospital, CLASS, Next Step Literacy Council, CANAAF (Alopecia), and the Adjala Credit Union.

In her spare time, you could usually find her reading next to HER dog, Ringo, aiming to maintain an uninterrupted and successful Wordle streak, working on a puzzle, travelling to places near and far or hiking local trails with family and friends. She was a genuine, whip-smart, empathetic, funny woman whose infectious smile and laughter could not be dampened even, as she would say, "by stupid cancer".

The family received friends at Rod Abrams Funeral Home 1666 Tottenham Rd., Tottenham 905-936-3477, on Sunday February 8, 2026 with Visitation from 10am-1pm and 3pm-6pm. Funeral Mass was held at St. James Church Colgan 2118 Adjala Tecumseth Townline Tottenham, on Monday February 9, 2026 at 10:30am. Reception followed at The Gibson Center 63 Tupper St. W. Alliston.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Stevenson Memorial Hospital Foundation or CLASS, in memory of Colleen Butler. Your contributions will support vital healthcare services in our community. Condolences and memories may be left for the family at [www.RodAbramsFuneralHome.com](http://www.RodAbramsFuneralHome.com).

### Sandra von Hunnius



After a long battle with dementia, Sandra Elizabeth von Hunnius passed away surrounded by loved ones and caring staff on Saturday Jan 31, 2026, at Sunset Manor in Collingwood at the age of 83. Sandra was the beloved wife of Sigurd (Sigi) and the loving mother of Jennifer (Jamie Parry), Marc (Jacquie) and Tanya (Graham Matthews). She was also the cherished Oma of Eric and Justin von Hunnius and Raymond, Alexander and Eowyn Matthews. Survived also by her brother Don and his wife Jacquie Lowe and predeceased by her parents Delsie (Drover) and Harold Lowe.

Sandra grew up in a busy multi-generational house in New Toronto where she maintained a precious lifelong friendship with her cousin Jackie Clancy, who was also by her side when she passed away. It was in New Toronto where she met Sigi while working at LePage's Glue. The two were married Dec 11, 1965. They recently celebrated 60 years of marriage in December at a party thrown for them at Sunset Manor full of music and cake.

Sandra and Sigi brought up their three children in what was then considered a small village known as Tottenham. There didn't seem to be a cause she didn't volunteer for (e.g., soccer, figure skating and baseball leagues, the school, the Anglican Church and the Food Bank to name a few) and the door was always open for their many friends and family, as well as their children's friends. Sandra was a familiar face at the Tottenham Post Office where she worked as a desk clerk but retired as a Postmaster.

Sandra and Sigi went on to run a small cottage rental property on the shores of Lake Kushog in Haliburton called Kushog Korners. When full retirement finally came, they found a home in a quiet neighbourhood in Wasaga Beach that was only a short bike ride away from the shore. Sandra loved to be by the waterfront.

Sandra's baking was top-notch and admired by those who were lucky to partake. When she wasn't getting mad at her sewing machine, she created fashionable outfits and amazing quilts. Sandra was an avid gardener and a genius with indoor plants. In later years, she enjoyed her outdoor time in the courtyard at Sunset Manor where she shared many peaceful sunny afternoons with her family. It would bring her and her family great happiness to contribute additional trees and plants to this very same courtyard so that other residents may also enjoy it for many years to come. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Sunset Manor Courtyard Fund in Sandra's memory, either by phone 705-445-4499 x6001 (easiest) or by cheque payable to the County of Simcoe/Sunset Manor (Courtyard Fund on the memo line) or through the County of Simcoe website - Sunset Manor (<https://simcoe.ca/ltc/homes/donations/>). Alternatively, donations may also be made to the Simcoe County Alzheimer Society ([https://alzheimers.ca/simcoecounty/en/contact#DONATE\\_NOW](https://alzheimers.ca/simcoecounty/en/contact#DONATE_NOW)).

A special mention to all the staff at Sunset Manor who came to be such a large part of Sandra and Sigi's life. They always treated her with dignity, and they championed her care until the very end.

At the family's request, cremation has taken place with a Celebration of Life to be held at a later date. Friends may visit Sandra's online Book of Memories at [www.fawcettfuneralhomes.com](http://www.fawcettfuneralhomes.com)



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Continued from Page 4

## Brock's Banter: Whatever love means

As I started to write this week's column, I admit that I was feeling in a bit of a negative mindset about the state of the world and the direction that so many of the constants in our lives seem to be going. I have to say, however, as the week drew to a close, I was feeling far more wind in my sails.

The first instance was a sit-down Q&A with former Prime Ministers Jean Chretien and Stephen Harper at the Royal Geographical Society. While the duo traded the usual mild partisan jabs here and there, they were united in their message: unity in the face of challenges presented to us by the United States.

Themes of collaboration and unity were only underscored through the balance of the week as I had the honour of attending a number of Black History Month events

throughout the community.

While the different events approached the subject from their own unique angles, they too were united in the idea of unity and in looking forward.

Heck, perhaps it's a sign of the world we're living in where a simple remark by Brampton MPP Charmaine Williams, the Progressive Conservative Government's Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Development Opportunity at Saturday night's Black History Gala hosted by the Aurora Black Community Association paying tribute Liberal cabinet minister Marci Ien and her myriad accomplishments was nothing short of a heart-warmer.

For Williams, it might just have been a matter of giving credit where credit was due, but, as someone who actively follows

politics, it was a nice change of pace – and sadly refreshing at the same time.

Themes of unity were also underscored by Ghanan cultural leader King Nana Yaw Osam I.

"We must rise above the voices that seek to divide us and instead embrace the power of unity and inclusivity," he said. "I urge each of you, as leaders and as members of this great community, to reach out to one another with open hearts and open minds."

"Let us lift each other up, support each other's dreams, and champion the cause of justice and equality wherever we go," he continued. "Let us create spaces of belonging where no one is left behind and every voice is heard. Our future depends on our ability to work together, to share our knowledge, our resources and our love.

Let us be bold in our activities of progress, fair in our commitment to inclusion, and devote our dedication to the legacy of our ancestors."

"Together, let us be the architects of a new era, one defined not by fear, but by hope, not by doubt, but by determination, not by exclusion, but by unity."

His message may have been framed for Black History Month, but, as is the case with Black history, it's a universal theme.

And we can all take it to heart.

While I started the week feeling slightly disheartened, these instances and these poignant words helped lift the cloud and give me a bit more optimism.

Love might not necessarily be all around at this particular moment in time, but to borrow another quote from Mary Richards, it just might be nearby.

## Federal offender apprehended in Alliston after year-long search by the provincial ROPE Squad

The Repeat Offender Parole Enforcement (R.O.P.E.) Squad would like to advise the public that a federal offender who went unlawfully at large on Jan. 15, 2025 has been

apprehended in Alliston.

Thomas Hackett was arrested by the Notawasaga OPP.

He is serving a 2-year sentence for;

- Assault - Intentional Use of Force
- Operate Motor Vehicle While Impaired
- Operate Motor Vehicle While Prohibited
- Fail to Comply

- Fail to Provide Breath Sample

The Provincial R.O.P.E. Squad would like to thank the public for their assistance in this investigation.



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