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2023 Year In Review

Attention Readers!

For our first edition of the Shelburne Free Press in 2024, we're taking you through all of the highs and lows over the first six months of 2023. The first half of our 2023 Year in Review will share some of the most significant stories impacting our readers from January to June. Next week we will publish the second half of our Year in Review with all of the highlights from July to December. Now, without any further ado, here's a look at the year that was!

January Feral Cat Rescue in Shelburne finds new permanent location

Feral Cat Rescue now has a new location for its feline shelter to call home. In a press release on Monday (Nov. 1) the rescue shelter, which is dedicated to re-homing feral cats, announced that owner, Sharon Morden, had purchased a piece of property on 7th Line near 260 Side Road in Melanchthon, to build a permanent location.

After moving to various temporary homes throughout the community, Morden in the press release said the decision to purchase a permanent spot was made at the risk of being asked to move again which is both costly and stressful on the cats and volunteers. Purchasing the property in early March, the shelter recently submitted building permits to the County of Dufferin that were officially issued on Oct. 29.

Before the new shelter can become operational with cats being brought in, Feral Cat Rescue will need to undergo go a number of steps including constructing a driveway on the property, placing pads for portables, installing portables, septic and hydro services placed, and an inspection finalized by the County.

The largest cost for the feline shelter will be the instillation of a septic system that is anticipated to cost around $20,000. The shelter will be holding fundraisers to cover the cost.

According to the press release, Feral Cat Rescue is the only one of its kind in the province, providing sanctuary and rehabilitation to feral cats that do not do well in shelters.

Morden said the permanent shelter will be a place for the community to visit the cats, with a large outdoor enclosure planned, as well as walk the paths and garden on the grounds.

Adopt a Charity winners named; Shelburne youth arts group selected

Dufferin Media has selected the winners of their 2023 Adopt a Charity campaign.

The local digital marketing company announced on Jan. 9 that Streams Community Hub, a youth arts-centered charity located in Shelburne, had been selected as the recipient of the 2023 Adopt a Charity campaign.

?It's always an honour to be recognized within our community and as a charity every little bit of support we can get goes a long way,? said Andrew James, co-founder of Streams Community Hub. ?We hope to utilize this support by furthering our communications and sharing more impactful stories about who we are and what we do.?

Since 2018, Dufferin Media has held its annual ?Adopt a Charity' campaign, which offers marketing services at no charge to a nominated charity. The campaign selects one local charity and one international charity to support. Through the campaign, Dufferin Media will assist Streams Community Hub by increasing their online presence and exposure through social media marketing and management. Dufferin Media will provide three posts per week to three social media platforms, along with management and engagement for the 2023 year. The value of each monthly package is $499.

?I am overjoyed to be able to once again help non-profit organizations increase the awareness of the good work, they are doing by giving our time and skillset from a marketing perspective to allow them to better communicate with their audience and reach their goals,? said Sarah Clarke, founder of Dufferin Media.

Founded in 2012, Dufferin Media is a team of online professionals that specialize in social media management, internet marketing, and public relations. Over the last decade, Dufferin Media has grown to service organizations both locally and internationally.

The international recipient of the 2023 Adopt A Charity is Allies, Inc located in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Previous recipients of the ?Adopt A Charity' campaign have included organizations such as Neighbourhood Information Post, All Paws Rescue, Million Dollar Smiles, and Dufferin Community Foundation.

February Museum of Dufferin launches exhibit on meteorite that hit Shelburne 120 years ago

With the vastness of outer space, it's hard to imagine the small town of Shelburne being the centre of a historical event from space.

On a cloudy summer evening nearly 120 years ago, a loud rumbling noise was heard across Shelburne, but it wasn't immediately clear what caused it. The next day the mystery was solved with the discovery of a meteorite fragment, Shelburne's very own visitor from outer space. The Museum of Dufferin (MoD) has launched a new online exhibit called ?Fallen Star,' which explores the arrival, discovery, and study of what is known as the 1904 Shelburne Meteorite.

?We knew that the meteorite had a really cool story, and was probably something that many people would find interesting,? said Sarah Robinson, curator for the MoD.

A digital exhibition for the Museum of Dufferin, ?Fallen Star,? was created as a way to allow the community to have a closure look at the piece of history from outer space.

?The fragment that we have in our collection is quite small ? about the size of your pinky finger ? and having an online exhibit meant that we would be able to include close up photos of it and let people see it in a way that they wouldn't necessarily be able to if we had it in a display case,? said Robinson.

One of the areas of focus for the ?Fallen Star? exhibit is the stories of the two local farmers, John Shields and George Johnston, who discovered fragments of the meteorite on their properties.

The first fragment of the meteorite was discovered beside John Shields' home on Aug. 14, 1904, weighing 12.5 pounds and embedded 18 inches into the ground. The second fragment was discovered two weeks later on Aug. 30, on George Johnston's farm. The second fragment of the meteorite was much bigger than the first, weighing almost 28 pounds and buried nearly 24 inches into the ground.

?Based on our research, we know that the meteorite falling on their properties was a significant point of pride for both farmers,? said Robinson. ?Their fragments were displayed in the window of the local hardware store; newspaper articles were written about them and even today, we know that their decedents know and love the story.?

Landing in a rural village with a population of less than 1,500 in 1904, the fragments of the Shelburne Meteorite have been used to study and further research.

?In a way, the meteorite is a ?local celebrity',? said Robinson. ?Pieces of it have made their way around the world into some of the most famous museum collection in the world, from the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C to the Museum of Natural History in Paris, France ? even the Vatican Observatory in Italy has a fragment.?

Those interested in finding out more about the ?fallen star? can explore the MoD's online exhibit by visiting www.dufferinmuseum.com.

?The online exhibition is a fun, engaging read. It brings science and social history together, and puts our small community on the map in terms of historic discoveries,? said Robinson.

Amaranth barn fire results in death of livestock

A fire that broke out at an Amaranth barn has resulted in the deaths of several animals.

Dufferin OPP, along with crews from Orangeville, Shelburne and Grand Valley fire departments, attended the scene of a barn fire on 8th Line in Amaranth shortly after 6 a.m. on Feb. 2.

Police said the fire claimed the lives of several farm animals, but there were no humans injured. Shelburne Fire is continuing the investigation of the fire but has deemed it non-suspicious.

Shelburne passes annual budget with one per cent increase

Shelburne Town Council has approved the 2023 budget, which will see a 1 per cent increase in the tax rate.

Carey Holmes, director of financial services and treasurer for the Town of Shelburne, presented a detailed report on the 2023 draft budget for the public during council's meeting on Monday (Feb. 13).

The 2023 draft budget recommended a 1 per cent increase in the tax rate, allowing for an overall tax levy increase of 5.3 per cent in tax dollars or $460,751.

The homeowner tax impact for the 2023 draft budget, based on an average single-family home assessment of $355,366, is a 1 per cent tax rate increase amounting to an additional $26.12 per year, or $2.18 per month on the town portion.

The estimated amount to be raised by taxation in 2023 is just over $9 million, calculated by taking the total operating expenses of $11.9 million for 2022 and subtracting the revenues of around $2.8 million.

The total estimate for the 2023 general operating expenses is $11,918,966, which is split up amongst eight expenditures, including police ($3,138,862); operations and transit ($2,278,896); general government and town hall ($2,493,313); recreation and culture ($1,225,861); planning and development ($1,376,301); fire protection ($638,425); council and committees ($179,190); and other protective services ($388,118).

The 2023 Draft Budget includes $5,339,089 for capital projects. The capital projects include; $3.869,796 for infrastructure, road projects, and capital equipment purchases; $814,650 to be spent on parks and recreation splash pad, improved amenities, playground equipment, and capital equipment purchases; and $654,643 towards gateway signs, economic development initiatives, Grace Tipling Hall revitalization and administrative equipment. Council also approved the request to use $400,000 from the 2022 surplus to put into an equipment reserve to cover capital equipment needs for 2023 and 2024.

March Physician Recruitment and Retention Task Force to address shortage

Hills of Headwaters Collaborative Ontario Health Team (HOHC OHT) has launched a Physician Recruitment and Retention Task Force to address the shortage of primary care physicians in Dufferin County and the Town of Caledon.

An inaugural task force meeting was held last Thursday (Feb. 23), with a number of community leaders and local politicians in

attendance. The task force outlined priorities in recruitment and retention of family physicians and aims to work with government and community stakeholders in creating a plan to improve the way the community receives care.

?We are thrilled to be part of the Task Force, acknowledging the important connection between primary care physicians, specialists and community partners in providing care to people across our communities,? said Annette Jones, co-chair of HOHC OHT. ?We see the benefits of a connected approach to encouraging health care providers to choose our region as their preferred place to practice. Our community has so much to offer.?

The task force's goal is to initially focus on recruiting family physicians, with the objective of expanding its work to recruiting other health care providers and specialists to serve the community better.

?We know that having a regular care provider greatly improves health outcomes, reduces mortality, decrease hospitalizations and reduces healthcare costs. We look forward to working with HOHC OHT and other community stakeholders to address this shortage and ensure equitable access the health care is available to everyone in our community,? said Orangeville Mayor Lisa Post.

In the last few months, there have been significant changes in the number of family physicians serving the Dufferin and Caledon area, with physicians moving their practices elsewhere, retiring or ceasing to practice altogether. The shortage has increased the number of patients seeking emergency care and urgent care clinics.

According to data from the Hills of Headwaters Collaborative Ontario Health Team (HOHC OHT), there are more than 4,000 people in the Dufferin and Caledon area who do not have a family physician. This accounts for about 5.3 per cent of the Dufferin-Caledon population.

?About one in 20 people within our OHT geographic catchment area don't have regular access to a primary care physician,? said Lianne Barbour, executive director of Dufferin Area Family Health Team.

The task force estimates that 14 more primary care physicians are needed in Dufferin and 29 more in Caledon by 2031 to meet the needs of the communities.

Indigenous exhibit unveiled at museum

The Museum of Dufferin (MoD) and the Dufferin County Cultural Resource Circle (DCCRC) have unveiled a new art exhibit featuring the works of Indigenous artists.

Artists, members of the DCCRC, local leaders and community members gathered in the Lodge Gallery at the Museum of Dufferin last Friday (Match 3) to celebrate the new exhibit called, Our Story: Past & Present.

The exhibit features 20 pieces of art from four Indigenous artists ? Sharon Rigby, Josh Morley, Josy Thomas, and Janice Toulouse.

Sharon Rigby is an emerging, self-taught Haudenosaunee/Anishinaabe artist from Akwesasne/Algonquin First Nations. Rigby's piece, Mashkiki Makak, envisions the ability to overpower the words contained in the Indian Act by weaving pages of it directly into the medicine basket.

Josh Morley is a self-taught Anishinaabe illustrator and screen printer from the Sturgeon Clan of Wabauskang First Nation and is based in Peterborough, Ont. Morley uses his work to raise awareness of environmental issues and sustainability and support the indigenous community. His series of five prints utilizes blacklight as a tool to encourage people to look beyond what they first see.

Josy Thomas began his journey as an artist at a young age, learning of the Longhouse Teachings from his grandfather while he carved traditional masks for ceremonies. He graduated from the Ontario College of Art & Design (OCAD) in 1998, and his latest solo exhibition, Twisted Spirit, was featured at the Leslie Grove Gallery in Toronto. Thomas' sculpture, Twisted Spirit, explores the

struggles of Indigenous men and women today to keep up with the modern way of life and stay true to their traditional ways.

Janice Toulouse is a senior Ojibwe artist, member of the Garden River First Nation and was raised in both Serpent River and Toronto. Toulouse was the first Indigenous graduate from Concordia University in Montreal, where she earned a Master of Fine Arts in 1985. She taught painting and art history for over 20 years before retiring in 2017. Toulouse's painting, The Native Children's Hidden Bones, is dedicated to the Indigenous children who didn't make it home from residential schools.

April Controversial figure to speak at local freedom rally

The Shelburne Freedom Rally will be hosting one of Ontario's most infamous anti-mask protestors and conspiracy theorists at their upcoming weekend protest.

In a Facebook post from Mar. 28, rally organizer Jeremey Glass announced that Chris Saccoccia, also known online as Chris Sky, would be guest speaking at the group's Apr. 8 protest.

Saccoccia rose to notoriety during the ?freedom' movement, which began as an anti-vaccine campaign and protest against COVID-19 restrictions, but it has since developed into a catch-all anti-government and pro-conspiracy group.

He is also known for a history of making antisemitic, anti-black, Islamophobic, and homophobic comments.

According to the Canadian Anti-Hate Network, an agency that monitors and researches hate groups, Saccoccia quoted Adolf Hilter's Mein Kampf in a 2014 post on his Facebook page, adding, ?Bang on, like he had a crystal ball into the future.?

He has also been documented writing, ?6 million Jews were murdered is the biggest lie created in the history of fake Jew history.?

The Canadian Anti-Hate Network also noted Saccoccia's referencing of Black Lives Matter activists as ?sub human.?

When asked by the Free Press whether he was concerned about Saccoccia's history of racist comments, Glass said, ?Absolutely not, because what we have in Canada is freedom of speech and that is why it has always been an open mic in Shelburne.?

Water main breaks on Main Street, flooding Shelburne's downtown

Shelburne's Main Street was closed for several hours following multiple water main breaks that caused flooding in the downtown core.

The Town of Shelburne announced the closure of Main Street in both directions, between William St. and Owen Sound St., due to the break on Tuesday (April 11) afternoon. The pressure from the water main breaks caused sections of Main Street to rise. The road was reopened on Wednesday (April 12).

Jim Moss, director of development and operations, told the Free Press on Tuesday that there were at least three breaks in the water main.

?Usually it's corrosion or frost related, and it doesn't help that frost is coming out of the ground right now,? said Moss. ?But, it seems to be over pressurizing from filling the new water tower.?

According to Moss, the drawings the Town of Shelburne has dated the water main to the mid-to-late 60s.

The water main affected by the breaks is one of the main lines through Main Street.

Shelburne Town Hall Art Gallery revitalization pilot project underway

The Town of Shelburne is looking to draw attention to the local art community with a revitalization pilot project of the Town Hall Art Gallery.

During their meeting on Monday (April 24), Shelburne Council received a report from chief administrative officer Denyse Morrissey regarding the exhibits pilot project.

The revitalization of the art gallery was based on recommendations from the Community Improvement Plan (CIP) and the Feasibility Study for Grace Tipling Hall on how to enhance the profile and use of the space.

The exhibit program was developed by town staff members as a pilot project that will run throughout 2023. The Town Art Gallery will showcase the creative work of local artists, including work by individuals, art organizations, instructors, and students.

The first exhibition to kick off the program was A Retrospective of Darlene Hassal Work in Oil, which began on March 31 and will run until May 7.

Since the launch of the pilot project, the town has booked an art exhibition for nearly every month.

Upcoming exhibitions include the Streams Town Art Gallery (May 19-July 9), Tracy Smith and Ellen Brakel (July 14-July 28), Brian Blakemand (Sept. 1- Sept. 22), Indigenous Art for the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (Sept. 30), and Unsung Heroes A Tribute to Veterans (Nov. 10-Nov. 24).

May Red Dress exhibit honours missing, murdered Indigenous women and girls

The Museum of Dufferin (MoD) is paying homage to missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited people with a red dress display.

?This is the first time that we've done a Red Dress Day display and we hope to continue to do this into the future, and that this is something that other sites, or community organizations might join in and do as well,? said Sarah Robinson, interim museum services manager.

The MoD's red dress display consists of around 30 dresses that were donated to the museum by members of the community during a callout back in March. The display is located on the front lawn of the museum and includes informational signage for those who drive a loop of the museum's driveway.

Red Dress Day was inspired in 2010 by Jamie Black, a Métis artist based in Winnipeg, who hung hundreds of empty red dresses in public places to represent missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, raising awareness

Red Dress Day is held annually on May 5, the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) and Two-spirited people. According to Statistics Canada, the rate of homicide of Indigenous women in 2014 was almost six times higher than non-Indigenous women.

As part of their recognition of Red Dress Day, the Museum of Dufferin had a special ribbon skirt created by Sharon Rigby, a local Indigenous artist. The ribbon skirt is on display inside the museum.

Concert honouring Gordon Lightfoot coming to Fiddle Park

The songs of legendary Canadian singer/songwriter Gordon Lightfoot have been heard across the country for more than five decades and will continue to be heard in the Shelburne community this coming summer.

Leisa Way and her Wayward Band will bring their ?Early Morning Rain? concert to Fiddle Park in Shelburne on August 13 at 7:30 p.m.

?It's a joy to be in our hometown area, so that the hometown crowds can come see the concert. We love coming here, the audiences are always so warm and friendly. We look forward to every show, but to be in Shelburne will be special,? said Way.

Written, produced, and performed by Leisa Way herself, ?Early Morning Rain' celebrates Gordon Lightfoot's legendary career through a comprehensive tour of his life and music told through stories and performance.

Way and her band originally debuted the ?Early Morning Rain' concert in February 2020, with a three-week sold-out run at Theatre Orangeville. Their plan was to tour the concert in 26 theatres throughout 2020, but those plans were delayed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reworking the concert for reopening, Way chose to delve deeper into her own personal reasons for producing ?Early Morning Rain,' specifically speaking about her dad, who died in 1999 and was a Gordon Lightfoot fan.

?My dad couldn't carry a tune in a bucket, but when he was in his workshop he'd sing Gordon Lightfoot,? said Way.

Way and her band reopened ?Early Morning Rain' on stage at the Orillia Opera House, in Lightfoot's hometown of Orillia, on May 6. The concert was held just days after news broke of Lightfoot's death at Sunnybrook Hospital in Toronto at the age of 84.

?It was overwhelming and powerful in many ways. We were more nervous than we've ever been because we knew the responsibility of giving Gord's fans a great send off for him,? said Way.

June Dufferin fire chiefs issue warning over recent dry and hot weather

Fire chiefs in Dufferin County have raised their concerns about the level of fire danger due to dry and hot weather conditions.

A high fire danger rating was issued on June 1, effective immediately, applying to all municipalities across Dufferin County.

?We ask that residents avoid all unnecessary outdoor fire burning until the weather conditions change and we are able to return to normal levels of fire danger,? said acting Orangeville Fire Chief Michael Richardson. ?When danger levels are higher than normal, fire can spread more easily. If an outdoor fire is necessary, please be mindful of your surroundings.?

The decision to enact the high fire danger level was made by a group of fire chiefs from local fire departments, including Grand Valley, Shelburne, Orangeville, Mulmur/Melancthon, and Rosemont.

Shelburne Fire Chief Ralph Snyder said the department's biggest concerns are uncut grass, fields, and the many forested areas in Dufferin County.

?We would like everybody to use extreme caution if they are having outdoor fires,? said Snyder. ?I would hope nobody would have a fire in any Dufferin County forests at this time of year or we might be fighting fires just like they are in Northern Ontario and Quebec.?

The Shelburne & District Fire Department has responded to five no-loss outdoor fires year to date. In May, the local department responded to no-loss outdoor fires that burned 150 acres of grass.

The fire department has also responded as an aid to grass fires for other local departments, including Grand Valley, Rosemont, Honeywood, and Dundalk.

North Dufferin Agricultural and Community Taskforce signs quarry agreement with Strada Aggregate

North Dufferin Agricultural and Community Taskforce (NDACT) and Strada Aggregates have signed an agreement regarding an application to quarry below the water table.

The agreement between the local community advocacy organization and the aggregate producer seeking a quarry license was announced in a press release from NDACT on Tuesday (June 20).

?Normally a community finds out about aggregate development plans once an application is submitted, often resulting in years of conflict and strife between the parties,? said Karren Wallace, chair of NDACT. ?This is a new approach in that the community and the aggregate company worked together pre-application designing the manner in which they will engage through the lifecycle of the aggregate project.?

The signed agreement gives NDACT input and decision-making into Strada's quarry application prior to being submitted. As part of the agreement, NDACT will not oppose the application until and unless the science shows the quarry could harm the environment.

The agreement includes six protocols designed to ensure collaboration and cooperation between the two organizations and the local municipality throughout all hoses of the property development. The six major subject areas include communication, peer review, wells and natural resources, recreation fund, land assumption, and licence assumption.

In January of 2022, NDACT released a list of key terms and conditions they were requesting Strada Aggregate follow, including the hiring of a community trusted consultant, creating a substantial fund to aid in court costs for residents who may experience water problems, and committing to annual funding of 10 cents per tonne of their extracted aggregate to the Honeywood Arena.

The three terms and conditions were included in the signed agreement.