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2024 Year In Review

Rewinding Back To The Top News Highlights of 2024

Attention Readers!

For the first edition of the Shelburne Free Press in 2025, we're taking you through all of the highs and lows over the final six months of the year. The first half of our 2024 Year in Review, published on Dec. 26, shared some of the most significant stories impacting our readers from January to June. This week, we're publishing 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.

July

Shepherd's Cupboard volunteers recognized with awards from province

Volunteers from the Shelburne Food Bank, Shepherd's Cupboard, have been recognized for their time and efforts in supporting the local community.

Seven volunteers from the food bank were presented with certi¬ficates and pins celebrating their years of dedication to volunteering at a ceremony held in Barrie on June 19 as part of the 2024 Ontario Volunteer Service Awards.

The seven recipients from Shepherd's Cupboard Food Bank were Barb Elgie, Ovalet Yousef, Shelley Doney, Beth Brown, Phyliss Robinson, Diane French, and Gwynn McGhee.

The Ontario Volunteer Service Award is an annual award from the provincial government that honours adult and youth volunteers for their contributions and continued service at non-profits, schools, community centres, hospitals, libraries, and community associations.

This year the government recognized 6,650 community leaders at 45 local award ceremonies held between April and July.

Shelburne-Orangeville transit ends September

Shelburne residents who use the weekday transit system to travel to and from the Town of Orangeville will soon need to ¬ find new transportation.

Shelburne council plans to discontinue the bus service between the municipalities in September.

During its July 22 meeting, council received a report from Denyse Morrissey, Shelburne's CAO, about the future of the transit service.

The report came to council after town staff received a letter on July 17 from Kim Wingrove, CAO for Grey County, that indicated the neighbouring county's intention to end the Grey Transit Route (GTR) pick-ups and drop-offs in Shelburne.

?This route is currently operating above capacity, which unfortunately prevents some Grey County residents from utilizing the service when they need it,? Wingrove wrote. ?As the GTR is funded by the Grey County tax levy, we have made the dif¬ficult decision to prioritize the availability of this service for Grey County residents.?

The report noted that for the service to continue for Shelburne riders, a second vehicle of the same size and seating, which is 10 passenger seats, would be required for Route 2 and would need to be funded by the Town of Shelburne.

According to the report, the estimated cost to operate Route 2 for the four months starting in September would be nearly $57,000. The service would cost a total of $14,246 per month to operate and $170,952 for one full year of service.

Shelburne Food Bank fundraising for van to help with deliveries

Shelburne's local food bank is looking to expand its efforts to tackle rising food insecurity in the community while also relieving the demands put on volunteers by purchasing a vehicle for the food bank.

Shepherd's Cupboard Food Bank and the Rotary Club of Shelburne celebrated the official launch of their new sponsorship campaign on Monday (July 8) at Trillium Ford in Shelburne. The goal of the campaign is to help raise funds to purchase a 2023 Ford E-Transit Cargo Van T-350 for the food bank.

The campaign sees local businesses choose from a selection of sponsorship tiers, each of which comes with different perks. The five tiers that businesses can pick from to sponsor the van include: Community Partner ($20,000), Team Partner ($10,000), Friend ($5,000), Fan ($2,500), and Pal ($1,000).

The fundraising goal for the sponsorship campaign is $100,000.

Centre Dufferin rugby team congratulated for silver medal at OFSSA

The Centre Dufferin District High School (CDDHS) girl's rugby team has received recognition from the Town of Shelburne for their silver medal ¬ finish at the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Association (OFSAA) tournament.

Shelburne Town Council presented the girls team with certi¬ficates ahead of their meeting on Monday (July 8) at Town Hall in commemoration of their achievement.

The Girl's Rugby program at Centre Dufferin District High School is in its third year, and for the last two years the team has returned from OFSAA as bronze medalists.

With many players returning for the 2024 season, the team of 48 girls set forward with one goal ? make it to the OFSAA ¬ finals.

The team started the season off strong with a win over St. James Catholic High School from Guelph during their home opener game on April 24. The CDDHS girl's rugby team carried the momentum throughout the rest of the regular season, remaining undefeated until their district ¬ finals, where they took a loss against John F. Ross Collegiate.

The girl's rugby team went on to bring home a Central Western Ontario Secondary Schools Association (CWOSSA) championship after winning 29-0 over Holy Trinity Catholic High School in the ¬ final game.

The win marked the third consecutive year that CDDHS has won CWOSSA.

The CDDHS girl's rugby team closed out the season by competing against teams from across the province at the OFSAA championship held in Courtice, Ont. from June 3 to June 5. The team beat out Napanee District Secondary School in the semi-¬ finals and concluded the tournament with a silver medal after losing to Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School, who have been OFSAA medalists since 2006, in the finals.

August

Two Bacchus Motorcycle Club members, one associate facing criminal charges

An Orangeville man and an Amaranth man are facing charges in connection to crimes they allegedly committed with the Bacchus Motorcycle Club.

Two full patch Bacchus Motorcycle Club (MC) members and one associate were arrested and charged with a total of nine Criminal Code offences in connection with an auto theft investigation.

The Ontario Provincial Police (OPP)-led Biker Enforcement Unit (BEU) received information in June of last year that members of the Bacchus MC were in possession of stolen vehicles with fraudulent vehicle identi¬fication numbers (VIN).

On Nov. 16, 2023, BEU members executed search warrants in Burlington, Orangeville, Etobicoke, Hamilton, Mississauga, and Paradise in Newfoundland and Labrador. A search warrant was also executed at the Bacchus MC Clubhouse in Oakville.

Police recovered six stolen and re-vinned vehicles, ownerships, insurance, key fobs and fraudulent VIN plates.

Robert Janes, 39, of Orangeville, has been charged with possession of property obtained by crime over $5,000 - three counts and fraudulent concealment - two counts. Alan Miles, 37, of Amaranth, has been charged with possession of property obtained by crime over $5,000.

Local grandfather and grandson fundraising for kids fighting cancer

A Shelburne resident and his grandson are hoping to make a difference for children facing cancer as they prepare to gear up and peddle their bikes in a month-long cycle challenge.

Throughout August, Michael Wright and his eight-year-old grandson, William, will be cycling the streets of Shelburne as part of the annual Great Cycle Challenge ? a national fundraising initiative for SickKids Foundation.

?Kids should be living life, not ¬ fighting for it,? Wright told the Free Press, explaining why he supports the initiative.

Wright initially joined the challenge last year with his grandson to help teach William to ride his bike without training wheels. The challenge eventually became a nightly routine for the duo as they attempted to reach their fundraising and distance goals.

Last year, the grandfather and grandson set the goal of raising $500 and cycling a total of 100 km, and by the end of the month, they had raised more than $1,200 and peddled roughly 250 km.

Coming off the success of the challenge last year, both Michael and William decided they wanted to take up the initiative for another go at it.

Inaugural Dufferin Film Festival showcases local talent with 16 original films

Filmmakers, writers, and movie buffs flocked to the Opera House in Orangeville on Aug. 9 and Aug. 10 to celebrate the inaugural Dufferin Film Festival (DFF).

Created by Kelly McDowell and Nick Rose, the Dufferin Film Festival looks to ?create a platform where Canadian filmmakers and audiences can connect, inspire, and engage in meaningful conversations.?

The two-day film festival featured 16 original films that ranged in genres including comedy, dramas and documentaries.

The 16 films included: Heap, Beyond the Reins, For Roy, Handsy, Lakeweed, Cancelled, Red String of Fate, On the Windowsill, Kofi, Prism, Good Girl, Cinching Saddles, Charlie, Triage, The Two of Us, and Waterman's Ballad.

Two of the films showcased at the festival screenings ? Lakeweed and Handsy ? were selected from a screenwriting competition hosted by the Dufferin Film Festival.

Small facility offering supportive senior housing marks grand opening

Seniors living in Shelburne now have access to a new supportive senior housing opportunity.

Golden Agers Take A Break Inc., a supportive senior housing facility located in a residential home on Colonel Phillips Drive in Shelburne, celebrated their grand opening on Saturday (Aug. 10).

The residential facility consists of five private rooms on the main and upper levels of the house for senior residents and an additional unit in the basement where Leslie-McKenzie and her family reside.

Each of the five rooms has its own name: Love, Hope, Faith, Happy and Believe.

While the rooms are available to all residents, Leslie-McKenzie explained that the room called ?Love? is a master bedroom space marketed specifically for senior couples, and the room known as ?Faith? has been designed with accessibility in mind.

Leslie-McKenzie will be operating the supportive housing facility for seniors and provide services that include transportation, medication administration, laundry, meal preparation, housekeeping, and emergency assistance.

The facility will also be utilizing the services of a recreational therapist, who will help run daily programs and activities for the seniors to help stimulate their brains and bodies.

September

Orangeville-Shelburne transit receives funding

Dufferin County Council has approved a motion to fund the Grey Transit Route (GTR) that runs between Shelburne and Orangeville on a month-to-month basis up to the end of the year.

During their meeting on Aug. 22, Dufferin County Council discussed a letter received from Brian Milne, Warden of Grey County, regarding the discontinuation of the route as of Sept. 2.

In the letter, Milne said Grey County had made the decision to discontinue the stops in Shelburne due to over-capacity use from Shelburne residents.

The letter noted that for the service to continue for riders catching the bus in Shelburne, a second vehicle of the same size and seating, which is 10 passenger seats, would be required for Route 2 and would need to be funded by the County of Dufferin.

According to the letter to County Council, the cost to provide the service ¬ five days per week would be $13,500 per month plus HST and a fuel cost of approximately $500.

Dufferin County Council approved a motion to provide subsidy funding for the Grey County Transit Route 2 in the amount of $15,000 on a month-to-month basis for up to four months.

The goal of the subsidy funding is to continue the service until the County's transit task force, who are expected to meet in early September, can begin exploring the feasibility of the service and explore other options.

New pickleball courts ready for play

The Township of Mulmur unveiled its new tennis and pickleball courts in Mans¬ eld on Aug. 28, and they are now ready for public use.

The courts are located at Thomson Trail Park.

Made possible by a $150,000 Capital Grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation that was fi¬rst awarded in 2023, tennis and pickleball are sports that can be enjoyed by a variety of residents.

The grant will help the Township of Mulmur to diversify recreation opportunities for residents by funding the construction of this project which includes four new tennis and pickleball courts at the park.

Local doctor helping recruit physicians in Dufferin?Caledon

A local family doctor is taking on the role of helping recruit more physicians to Dufferin County and the Town of Caledon.

The Hills of Headwaters Collaborative Ontario Health Team (HOHC OHT) announced in a press release on Sept. 17 that Orangeville-based physician Dr. Lydia MacFarland would be taking on the new role of physician recruiter.

In the new role, Dr. MacFarland will be tasked with leading the recruitment of new doctors as well as continuing efforts to support existing physicians.

The physician recruiter position was created through partnerships between local government representatives, family physicians, health providers and community members. They joined together to form the HOHC OHT's Physician Recruitment and Retention Task Force. The task force's goal is to add to and support existing primary care and physician services in Dufferin County and the Town of Caledon.

Over the ¬first three months, Dr. MacFarland will focus on initiatives to strengthen local physician recruitment, including developing strategies to enhance the ef¬ficiency and effectiveness of the current recruitment process for the local hospital.

The recruitment efforts will aim to address physician shortages in the community and needs within the hospital.

Shelburne to honour Alex Carter with memorial plaque at Greenwood Park

The Town of Shelburne is honouring one of its residents with a memorial plaque that will be installed at Greenwood Park.

Alex S. Carter was very involved in the community in various events and committees. He was especially involved with the Shelburne Soccer Club where he was the sponsorship director and spent countless hours visiting local businesses to ensure sponsorships so kids could continue playing the sport.

Alex was also on the Town Arts and Heritage Committee and involved with the Board of Education.

Alex passed away on September 27, 2023.

In honour of his contributions to the Town, a memorial plaque will be placed on a bench to remember him. The plaque and bench are in Brians Field at Greenwood Park in Shelburne.

October

Local children featured in Hallmark Christmas movie

Parts of downtown Orangeville have been made up of artificial snow and ice throughout September as film crews flip the community into the backdrop for an upcoming holiday movie.

But, this holiday season the Town of Orangeville won't be the only one making an appearance on the silver screen.

Seven local youth ? Logan Coombes, Alex Feret, Westin Amaya, Greysin Amaya, Sophie Lauria, Arianna Salonga and Noah Bayne ? will all find themselves on screen as background characters in the Hallmark Christmas movie ?Trading Up Christmas.?

The young actors hit the set located on Mill Street in Orangeville on Friday (Sept. 27) evening for the last scheduled day of filming. For the budding young actors, it was the first time they'd experienced stepping onto a movie set.

The seven youths in the movie were selected from a call put out by talent agency Bonkers Casting, requesting kids between the ages of eight and 12 years old in the local community.

?Trading Up Christmas? will premiere on the Hallmark Channel on Dec. 10 at 8/7c.

Shelburne girl to be featured in upcoming TVO Kids show

Shelburne residents young and old will need to set a reminder to turn on their televisions on Tuesday (Oct. 15) as one of Shelburne's very own makes her silver screen appearance in a new TV series geared towards teaching youth about the trades.

Akeylah James, a 13-year-old Shelburne resident, will be co-hosting an upcoming show on TVO Kids called ?Trading Skills.?

?Trading Skills? follows co-hosts Akeylah and Brody as they tackle a unique challenge in each episode. With the guidance of their friend Anna, they head out to meet skilled trades professionals who share their expertise with them. The duo then returns to their maker space to apply what they've learned and solve the problem using practical, hands-on skills.

The series, geared towards children aged 6 to 9, aims to introduce young viewers to the world of skilled trades, sparking early interest in hands-on careers. The show highlights a wide range of trades to showcase opportunities within the trades ¬field.

Filming for the show began at the end of March and over the months, James has travelled to different communities in the Toronto area as well as Thornbury, Meaford and Sudbury.

Trades featured in the show include ironworker, Porsche auto technician, mining millwright, chocolatier, dairy herdsperson, chef, arborist, steam¬fitter, cabinetmaker, fruit grower, horticulturist, hairstylist, elevator repair technician, and welder.

Victim of armed robbery at gas station shot, faces life-threatening injuries

An armed robbery at a gas station in Amaranth earlier this week has resulted in life-threatening injuries for one individual.

Dufferin Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) is now requesting the public's assistance with their investigation into the shooting and robbery.

A masked individual entered an Esso gas station on County Road 109 in Amaranth with a ¬ rearm at roughly 11:30 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 7. OPP of¬ficers then responded to a report of the incident around 11:40 p.m.

?The individual discharged the ¬ rearm during the robbery and a victim sustained a life-threatening injury,? said Dufferin OPP in a press release on Oct. 8. ?The victim was transported by Air Ornge to a Toronto area trauma centre, where they remain in life-threatening condition.?

The person who committed the robbery and shooting was wearing a three-quarter length winter jacket with a fur hood, black pants, black shoes, and a blue medical mask.

The investigation is ongoing by the Dufferin OPP Crime Unit under the direction of the Criminal Investigation Branch.

Person shot during armed robbery at gas station dies from injuries

Dufferin Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) of¬ficers has elevated an armed robbery that occurred at a gas station in Amaranth to a homicide investigation.

Of¬ficers from the Dufferin OPP Detachment responded to a report of an armed robbery at a gas station on County Road 109 on Oct. 7, at approximately 11:40 p.m. A masked individual discharged a ¬ rearm during the robbery and a victim sustained a life-threatening injury. The victim was transported by Air Ornge to a Toronto area trauma centre.

The victim has been identi¬fied as Mehakdeep Singh, a 25-year-old from Amaranth and on Oct. 10, Mehakdeep succumbed to his injuries and was pronounced deceased.

The individual responsible for the homicide was wearing a dark-coloured, three-quarter length winter jacket with a fur hood, black pants, black shoes, and a blue medical mask.

The investigation is ongoing by the Dufferin OPP Crime Unit under the direction of the Criminal Investigation Branch, with assistance from the OPP Emergency Response Unit, OPP Canine Unit, in conjunction with the Of¬fice of the Chief Coroner and the Ontario Forensic Pathology Service.

Legion temporarily closes after president resigns

The Shelburne Legion, Branch 220, will remain closed throughout the majority of November following the resignation of their current president.

Chuck Arrand, Zone Commander for E-3 of the Royal Canadian Legion, told the Free Press that he received the resignation of Shelburne Legion President Judy McCarrol on Oct. 22, before their 7 p.m. monthly general meeting. Unable to elect a viable candidate, the Zone Commander was forced to enact a temporary closure of Branch 220.

Traditionally, when a local legion is unable to or fails to elect a president to oversee the branch it is closed permanently. The permanent closure means that the building, along with all of its assets, are sold and the revenue from the sale is donated to charities within the community it resides.

In the case of the Shelburne Legion, instead of permanently closing, Arrand was able to receive permission from Ontario Command to have a temporary closure for 30 days and allow for an election of a new president at their next meeting on Nov. 26.

Hockey fans throughout Dufferin County meet Mats Sundin at book signing

A sea of blue and white jerseys descended on one of Orangeville's local arenas as Toronto Maple Leaf fans and hockey fans alike gathered for a moment to meet NHL legend ? Mats Sundin.

Local book store, Booklore, hosted a special book signing event with Sundin on Oct. 23 at the Alder Arena as part of a tour celebrating the launch of his newly released autobiography, Home and Away.

Booklore sold 300 copies of Sundin's book ahead of the book signing, with a portion of the profits going to the Orangeville Wolves.

Home and Away, is an unfiltered look at Sundin's time playing hockey in Sweden and across North America. Starting with his childhood growing up in the outskirts of Stockholm Sweden, Home and Away explores Sundin's experiences being drafted in 1989 at 18 years old to the Quebec Nordiques, his trade to the Toronto Maple Leafs in exchange for the highly popular Leaf captain, Wendel Clark, and the 13 season he spent with the team.

November

Shelburne Scouts celebrate 100-year anniversary

The 1st Shelburne Scouts Group has hit a milestone in their group's history as they celebrate 100 years of scouting in the local community.

The local scouting group commemorated the milestone on Monday (Nov. 26) at Centennial Hylands Elementary School, by bringing together current scout members, volunteers, and former scouts from the 1st Shelburne Scouts Group.

?I'm proud of this accomplishment that this group in Shelburne has been able to make, and especially for the number of years they have given back to the community,? said Brenton Kennedy, group commissioner of the 1st Shelburne Scouts Group.

Established in early 1924, there is limited historical information about the formation of the 1st Shelburne Scouts Group and its formative years, with the loss of paper documents and members eventually leaving the program. Most of the information that is known about the 1st Shelburne Scouts Group is from the last four decades and comes from the stories of previous Scout Leaders and members

The mission of Scouts Canada is to help prepare participating youth to become well-rounded citizens and individuals in their community. Local youth in the program experience a variety of outdoor activities including hiking and camping, while also learning skills such as how to start ¬ res, building shelters, identifying fauna and flora, tracking animals, reading compasses, and how to survive if you're stuck in the wild.

The 1st Shelburne Scouts Group currently has nine youth in their Cub Pack Program and six youth in their Scout Troop Program.

CDDHS Royals senior boys win District 4 volleyball championships

The Centre Dufferin District High School Royals senior boys' volleyball team are District 4 champions after a stellar undefeated season.

The Royals went 10-0 in the regular season for a ¬ first-place ¬finish before heading into the playoffs.

The Royals defeated Erin District in their morning semi-¬ final game. The Royals won three sets to win the District championship.

The Royals will now go on to regional competition at CWOSSA and face other District champions for the regional title.

Shelburne man completes 11-hour Remembrance Day walk

When Steve McNeil hosts one of his marathon fundraisers, it typically starts with the tying of his skates and a swift glide onto the ice. This time, it began with the tying of his boots and one step in front of the next; for more than 11 hours of walking.

The Shelburne resident arrived at Fiddle Park at midnight on Monday (Nov. 11) to partake in a gruelling 11-hour and 11-minute walk around the park's 1-kilometre loop in the hopes of raising funds for the Royal Canadian Legion.

A few months ago, McNeil started walking the Fiddle Park loop to help stay active after sustaining an injury to his shoulder. It was during one of his walks that he came up with the idea to organize the 11:11 Laps for the Legion Marathon.

?My career with Canada Post means I have Remembrance Day off and I thought about how I wanted to spend my day off. The public pays me to be off today, so this is my way of giving back,? said McNeil.

As part of the marathon walk, he asked community members to donate $11.11 to their own legion branches or more broadly, the Royal Canadian Legion.

?Across our country so many of our legions have closed over the last 10 or 15 years because of ¬ financial constraints. All I'm trying to do is raise some awareness for our legions and try to get more people to get involved and be volunteers like I am,? said McNeil.

After completing more than 10 hours of countless laps of Fiddle Park, McNeil ¬ finished his 11:11 Marathon by walking to the cenotaph outside of Town Hall in Shelburne.

Mulmur's Pine River Institute wins 2024 Defender Services Award

Pine River Institute is receiving a boost to continue helping youth facing addiction and mental health struggles after winning the 2024 Defender Services Award.

The local organization announced in a press release on Monday (Nov. 25) that they had won the Outdoor Accessibility and Education Award category of the 2024 Defender Services Award. As the winners of the Outdoor Accessibility and Education Award, Pine River Institute is taking home the grand prize ? a 130 Defender vehicle, $25,000 USD and an additional $5,000 USD for being in the top ¬ five ¬finalists.

?It has been a long process to get to this win, ¬ filled with a lot of suspense and excitement. It was absolutely thrilling to be there and hear our name called and to be able run up on stage to accept this wonderful award,? said Jill Palmer, executive director of development for Pine River, who was in California for the announcement at Destination Defender on Nov. 23. ?This is an amazing win for Pine River, and it will really help propel us forward. A lot of people helped us get to this win.?