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MAKING A LIST, CHECKING IT TWICE...

Christmas is here! And it's been a busy holiday season for Santa, sorting through the naughty and nice lists, overseeing toy production with his elves, readying the reindeer, and prepping the sleigh. The Orangeville Citizen recently spoke with the jolly man in the red suit, and he said Dufferin County is known for the quality of its cookies. He added that the county is among the nicest communities in all of Canada, with next to no children on the naughty list this year. Santa said he's looking forward to travelling far and near, delivering presents and Christmas cheer.

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Shelburne leaders reflect on 2025, share plans for 2026

Written By JOSHUA DRAKES
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The year 2025 was busy for Shelburne, full of projects, events, and plenty of reasons to be proud of the community.

On the town side, work continued on some ongoing projects. The Fiddle Park reconstruction project moved forward despite a few weather delays. Upgrades across parks and trails also made them safer and more accessible for residents to enjoy.

Shelburne Mayor Wade Mills reflected on the year.

"It's been a busy and productive 2025 for the Town of Shelburne," he said. "We've continued to see exciting commercial development growth, which will offer residents more retail amenities close to home along with the added benefit of additional employment opportunities."

He also highlighted some prominent community projects that made significant progress this year.

"We have seen our focused investments in the parks and recreation sphere take shape with significant enhancements to playgrounds, the paving of our trails system, and of course, the redevelopment of Fiddle Park."

The mayor also highlighted advocacy efforts. He said that the town continued to push for provincial support for a wastewater treatment plant expansion and the ongoing truck bypass project.

"I think we've gained some significant

traction on both files this year," he said. "We're really hoping to see some positive results of those efforts come to fruition in 2026."

The town also welcomed some first-time events that brought the community together, including the Northern Dufferin Auto Show, which supported Special Olympics Ontario. And of course, annual events returned; Fridays in the Park brought summer energy to Jack Downing Park with live music, family activities, and local vendors, while Pumpkifest filled Natasha Paterson Memorial Park with seasonal activities for kids and families.

Councillor Len Guchardi reflected on the year and the people behind the scenes, noting that their work often goes unseen.

"I am incredibly proud of our administrative and public works staff," he said. "Without their hard work – which often goes unnoticed – they commit daily to keeping Shelburne a great place to live, work, and play."

He highlighted not only large events, but also the importance of routine work such as groundskeeping and snow clearing. He also pointed to progress on parks and trails under the Parks Master Plan.

Looking ahead, he said the Fiddle Park project remains a source of excitement.

Above all, Guchardi said the defining feature of the year was community support for one another.

"It brings me joy to see how this community supports each other," he said. "Nothing happens without volunteers."



FILE PHOTO

LOOKING BACK ON 2025: Shelburne Mayor Wade Mills shared his thoughts on what the town accomplished in 2024.

This was seconded by Mayor Mills, who also took the time to thank the public and wish Shelburne happy holidays.

"As always, I'm tremendously proud of our town and thankful for the sense of community that is embodied by our residents," he said. "On behalf of the council, I wish everyone a Merry Christmas, a safe and joyful holiday season, and all the best for a healthy and prosperous new year."

As the year comes to a close, Shelburne moves into 2026 following a year of continued projects, planning, and community activity.

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Dufferin Community Foundation announces grant recipients for fall 2025

Written By JOSHUA DRAKES
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The grants are part of the DCF's ongoing commitment to supporting community initiatives.

The Dufferin Community Foundation announced on Wednesday, Dec. 17, its fall 2025 grant recipients.

Shirley Boxem, grants committee chair, said these charities were chosen for their ongoing outstanding service to the community.

"This year's grant applications underscored the incredible work being done by organizations in Dufferin," Boxem said. "It motivates all of us to work harder towards supporting their tireless dedication to our community."

The six charities chosen will receive grants ranging from \$2,000 to \$8,250 to support initiatives that range from socks for people in need to watershed education for kids, all uniquely important to the community. The grants will be used primarily for programs in 2026.

The Arts, Culture & Heritage Grants,

which were made possible by the W. & M. Edelbrock Fund, include Dufferin Film Festival and Streams Community Hub, which each received \$5,500 and \$8,250, respectively.

For the Dufferin Film Festival, the grant funding will be used to deliver more screenings at the Orangeville Opera House, host filmmaker Q&A sessions, host a speaker brunch, and expand inclusive workshops, all at a reduced price compared to other film festivals.

For Streams, the grant money will be used to purchase pottery wheels and laptops, support photography and music programs, purchase BeaverBot cardboard cutters for makerspace programs, and buy new 3D printers for creative STEM programs.

The Environment Fund Grant, made possible by local donations to DCF's Environment Fund, will allocate \$2,000 to the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority. Grant funding will help bring curriculum-linked programming on the watershed and the significance of wetland preservation to students in grades 2 to 4 in Dufferin County schools.

Lastly, the Dufferin Vision Fund Grants, funded by public donations to the Vision Fund, will see a \$2,500 grant being sent to Community Living Dufferin, Headwaters Communities in Action, and Socks 4 Souls Canada.

Community Living Dufferin assists adults with intellectual disabilities by providing low-cost, supported access to recreation, such as arts, music, crafts, yoga, swimming, horseback riding, and other group activities, all intended to promote creativity and reduce isolation.

Headwaters Community in Action will use the grant funding to support its Grounded & Growing program. HCIA's Headwaters Food and Farming Alliance supports and promotes food literacy by provid-



DOUG SCHAEFER PHOTOS

SUPPORTING RECREATION: A Dufferin Vision Fund Grant for \$2,500 was awarded to Community Living Dufferin through the Dufferin Community Foundation's 2025 fall grants. The funds will be used to assist adults with disabilities in accessing low-cost recreation activities, such as arts, music, crafts, yoga, swimming and horseback riding.

ing schools with growing equipment, seeds, soil, and instruction. The team at the HFFA visits schools to set up seed kits and Earth Boxes, and they check back in to supervise growth and harvest.

Socks 4 Souls Canada will use its grant money to help deliver 7,000 socks at no cost to local community initiatives that need them. These will include Choices Shelter, The Salvation Army, and the Orangeville Food Bank.

The Dufferin Community Foundation donated over \$23,000 to local initiatives across Dufferin County.

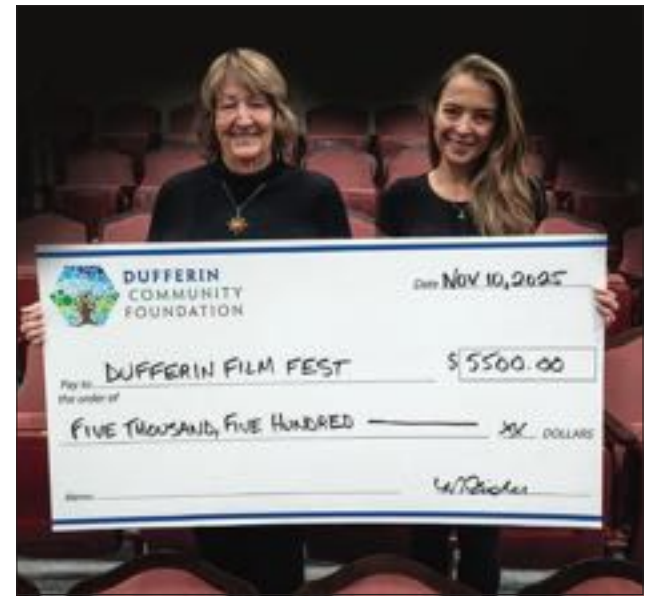
Michele Fisher, executive director of the DCF, said choosing the six winners was not easy, as there were many great applications. She thanked the reviewers for their dedication and tough choices.

"Our grants reviewers had the challenging task of scoring the applications and coming to a consensus on which would be fund-

ed," she said. "We are grateful for their dedication – it's not an easy job when all of the charities do such good work."



FOOD LITERACY: Headwaters Communities in Action received a \$2,500 grant for its Grounded & Growing program, which promotes food literacy in local schools.



FUNDS FOR FILM: The Dufferin Film Festival received an Arts, Culture & Heritage Grant for \$5,500, which will support the organization in holding more screenings, filmmaker Q&A sessions, and expanding workshops.



SOCK SUPPORT: Socks4Souls received a \$2,500 grant to support its delivery of 7,000 socks to residents in need at no cost. The socks support unhoused people in Dufferin County who are particularly in need of new, dry socks around the wintertime.



UPGRADING PROGRAMS: Streams Community Hub received a \$8,250 grant to support the purchase of a new 3D printer, pottery wheels, BeaverBot cardboard cutters and laptops.



CONSERVATION EDUCATION: The Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority received a \$2,000 grant to support teaching curriculum-linked programming on the watershed and the significance of wetland preservation at Dufferin County schools.

Shelburne Rotary Club reflects on its activities through 2025, looks ahead to next year

Written By JOSHUA DRAKES
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Shelburne Rotary Club took a look back at the year, reviewing some of its fundraisers and community events, while looking to keep the momentum going into 2026.

Caroline Mach, director of publicity for the Shelburne Rotary Club, said that while it has been operating business as usual for 2025, it's changed a lot since she joined.

"It's changed a lot in terms of membership," she said. "Our membership is much more diverse now and is, I would say, on average, actually younger than when I joined, and it's expanded."

"Rotary originally started as a club mainly for local business people to get together and do things for their community, but it's

kind of expanded beyond that, to anybody in the community who's interested in serving the community," Mach added.

This has been reflected in the activities the Rotary Club operated throughout Shelburne over the last year.

This year, the Rotary Club hosted its second Pumpkinfest over Thanksgiving weekend. It's a relatively new, family-oriented event featuring bouncy castles, inflatable attractions, a photo row, food vendors, and more. Held on the Saturday of Thanksgiving weekend, it drew an estimated 700 people and is expected to continue expanding each year.

The Pumpkin Fest runs alongside the Thanksgiving food drive for the local food bank, which has been operating for roughly 15 to 20 years.

The club also held its 2nd annual Nut-

cracker Gala this year, following last year's inaugural event.

Mach said that the event was extremely successful.

"We're very, very proud of our Nutcracker Gala this year," she said. "We raised \$20,000 from that event, and that all went to the food bank."

Both of these events are still relatively new to the Rotary Club, and they are still waiting to see if they take off enough to sustain themselves. As a result, they haven't found any new events in the last year.

Of course, there are still plenty of long-running events that returned in 2025.

In partnership with a local Tim Hortons, the Rotary Club again participated in the spring Smile Cookie campaign. The store donates the proceeds from cookie sales to the club, which then distributes the funds

within the community. This year's campaign raised nearly \$20,000, described by Mach as a local record, with the main beneficiaries being the food bank, the community backpack project, and Christmas hamper initiatives.

Another key initiative for the Rotary Club was its June golf tournament, organized jointly with the Town of Shelburne's Economic Development Committee.

Together with Pumpkin Fest, the Nutcracker gala, and the Smile Cookie campaign, the tournament, according to Mach, exceeded the club's expectations in terms of success this year.

With so many initiatives running, the club is at capacity for what it can manage while they wait to see if the new events take off.

Continued on Page 7

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OPINION

Memories

There used to be a magical place called Crystal Beach Amusement Park. It was located in the small town of Crystal Beach near Fort Erie.

The park had opened in 1890 and, for the next 100 years, was a thriving, fun summer place.

Where I grew up, it was the place to visit every summer.

At one time, a ferry travelled across Lake Erie, bringing visitors from Buffalo, New York.

What made this place so special was that it was old school. There was a dance hall from the 1940s, where old-time big bands used to play.

There was an arcade called The Penny Arcade, which had all these old games from the 40s, although in later years they brought in some more modern video games.

There was the fun house, which, for some reason, was the last thing you visited before leaving.

It was an unwritten rule that you had to ride the smaller yellow roller coaster first, then try the big grey one called The Comet, which provided a great view of the lake and the entire park on the way up to the top of the first drop.

The fun included the HeyDey, Caterpillar, the Ferris Wheel, and a few other rides that would make your head spin.

There was also a roller skating rink in town, and I spent many nights there trying to roller skate like I had a lot of skill.

The parking lot at the Amusement Park was filled with as many New York license plates as those from Ontario.

As teenagers, we could always tell which girls were American. It's hard to explain, but they just had a different vibe.

One summer night, I took my girlfriend to the park for a night of fun.

We were in line, waiting to get on one of the rides.

I turned around, and standing behind me was the most beautiful girl I had ever seen in my entire life. She was wearing a sweater and had her dark blonde hair pulled back in a ponytail. She had beautiful, sparkling blue eyes.

This girl was a year, maybe two years older than me at the time – that makes a difference when you're a teenager. She was an American girl, no doubt, probably from one of those towns near Buffalo – Cheektowaga, Lackawanna, or Orchard Park.

She was with two attractive friends, but somehow it seemed a special light shone

down on this girl.

I turned around a few times to take a look at her. She took no notice of me at all and was always looking up at the ride or off in the distance.

I was hoping to at least get a smile out of her.

I realized she probably was used to getting a lot of attention. I was just one more admirer, and she just didn't care and deliberately avoided my gaze.

A minute later, it was our turn to get on the ride, and I never saw her again.

A memory is a funny thing. Some things, events, or people, you will forget, and never think about again.

I saw this girl for only a few moments, yet decades later, I still clearly remember her face, those beautiful eyes, and her radiant smile.

It is now Christmas, the time when making memories is important.

My earliest Christmas memory is being placed on Santa's knee, probably in some department store, when I was four or five years old, and having this big man with a big white beard asking me what I wanted for Christmas.

I replied, very quietly, "A G.I. Joe doll." Sure enough, on Christmas morning, G.I.

Joe was wrapped up and waiting for me under the tree.

Maybe you will have the best Christmas memory this year. It could be because those special relatives you haven't seen for so long finally had a chance to visit.

Many couples get engaged at Christmas, and that would be a moment they will never forget.

Maybe someone will do something special for you this season that will create a lifelong, lasting memory that makes you smile every time you think about it.

Maybe you will do something nice for someone else, and the memory of making someone happy will stay with you always.

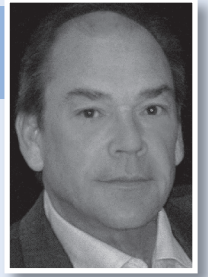
I'm going to take a cue here from Mr. Rogers, and a speech he made at a TV awards ceremony several years ago.

Take ten seconds during this Christmas season to think about someone special who has made a difference in your life, and give thanks for having known them.

May you have the best holiday season ever.

Merry Christmas to all, and to all, a good night.

BRIAN LOCKHART
FROM THE SECOND ROW



Rubio's strategy – the tail wags the dog?

US President Donald Trump has ordered "a total and complete" blockade of all 'sanctioned' oil tankers entering and leaving Venezuela ports, which is technically an act of war. How seriously should we take this?

Trump has certainly threatened war with Venezuela in the past. Former US National Security advisor John Bolton reports that Trump said during his first presidential term (2017-2020) that invading Venezuela would be "cool" because it is "really part of the United States."

Andrew McCabe, former Deputy Director of the FBI, says that Trump told him in 2019 that Venezuela was "the country we should be going to war with. They have all that oil and they're right on our back door."

Gustavo Petro, the current president of Colombia, says that his predecessor Iván Duque was approached by Trump in 2020 with a plan to invade Venezuela via Colombia. (No need for an amphibious landing

operation. Just disembark the US troops in Santa Marta and march them across the border.) Trump's advisors talked him out of that one.

He was still at it two years ago, when he said at a press conference in North Carolina: "When I left [the presidency in 2020] Venezuela was about to collapse. We would have taken over it, we would have kept all that oil."

It sounds pretty damning, until you recall that Trump is a blowhard who almost never acts on his threats. ('TACO' – 'Trump Always Chickens Out') Or just count the numbers and realise that there are not enough American troops in the Caribbean region at the moment to make a full-scale invasion of Venezuela a viable military option.

And if you are still in doubt, remember that Trump is politically allergic to wars. His promise to his own MAGA base was 'no more forever wars' in exotic places.

He is famous for echoing the views of the last person who spoke to him, but it would take some truly masterful manipulation to persuade him to go against his own gut instincts.

On the other hand, blockade alone is unlikely to bring down the Maduro regime. Losing the oil income will hurt the regime, but Venezuela has already seen its oil production collapse (now less than one million barrels/day) for purely domestic reasons. They did it to themselves through incompetence and corruption, and they are already sort of used to being poor.

Moreover, the Venezuelan regime is not so foolish that it will give the warhawks in the US administration a pretext for invasion by trying to break the blockade by force. The frustration will build up on both sides, but it is unlikely to explode into major violence unless some senior figure in the Trump administration goes rogue....

"In my opinion, the three regimes that exist in Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Cuba are enemies of humanity," said US Secretary of State Marco Rubio in Costa Rica early this year. He was making a special point of saying it there because Nicaragua is Costa Rica's next-door neighbour, but he actually says it almost everywhere he goes. That is the bee in his bonnet.

Marco Rubio is a second-generation Cuban-American whose parents immigrated to Miami in the mid-1950s, several years before Fidel Castro's Communist regime took power, but like many other Cuban-Americans his politics have been

defined by that event. Reversing it has been his life's goal.

For a very long time there seemed no clear path to that goal, although all three of those regimes are unpopular and all three countries are impoverished. (John Bolton calls them the 'Troika of Tyranny'). But Rubio had lots of access to Donald Trump as a senator for Florida, and he was sharp enough to see that Trump might be his instrument to end those regimes.

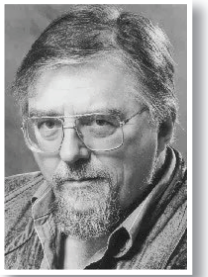
His plan of campaign (if that's what it was) ended triumphantly with his elevation to Secretary of State last January, in charge of America's foreign policy. That clearly is a large part of the reason why the focus of US foreign policy has shifted to the Western Hemisphere this year.

Is it also the reason why there has been a strong and particular focus on Venezuela, a country that rarely features at the top of anybody's priority list? Possibly so, because there is a pseudo-strategic analysis which holds that the road to Havana and the overthrow of Cuba's Communist regime runs through Venezuela.

It is complete nonsense, of course. If the Cuban revolution managed to survive even when the Soviet Union collapsed, it is unlikely to fall just because Venezuela suffers violent regime change. If and when it goes under, it will fall of its own weight.

But Rubio's fantasy could lead the United States into a forever war in Venezuela if Trump doesn't keep him on a short leash.

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COMMUNITY VOICES

Monthly Message: FTP reflects on 40 years of compassionate care in the community

As 2025 draws to a close, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to our community partners, donors, and supporters who have stood alongside Family Transition Place (FTP) throughout our 40th anniversary year. Reaching this milestone has given us a moment to pause and reflect — not only on how far we have come, but on the incredible staff and community that have carried this work forward for four decades. As we prepare to welcome 2026, we do so with deep appreciation for all who have made this anniversary year so meaningful.

For 40 years, FTP has always been a place where individuals are met with care, respect, and understanding during some of the most difficult moments of their lives. Behind every program and every statistic is a human story—a woman seeking safety, a survivor finding her voice, a dad reading to improve the relationship he shares with his partner and children.

Because of the unwavering support of so many in our community, these stories—and many more — continue to unfold at FTP. Rooted in our values of compassion, integrity, respect, inclusiveness and continuous learning, we meet anyone needing help where they are and support them on their

healing journey.

This year:

- Emergency Shelter: Provided immediate safety to 60 women and 33 children, offering a calm and caring space in moments of crisis.
- Second Stage Housing: Supported 8 women and 7 children in achieving stability.
- Third Stage Housing: Offered wrap-around support to 6 women and 5 children as they moved toward greater independence.
- Support Within Housing and Outreach Programs: Walked alongside 48 women, offering guidance, advocacy, and connection.
- Crisis and Information Line: Answered 5,385 calls—a 33% increase from last year—providing empathetic support to those in need.
- Counselling Services: Supporting 261 women through Woman Abuse Counselling, 139 women and 24 men through Sexual Abuse Counselling, and 87 women through Addictions Counselling.
- Child Witness Program: Helped 45 women and 62 children navigate the impacts of violence.



• Transitional Support Services: Assisted 252 women and 4 men, while Integrated Crisis Services supported 72 women and 1 man navigating complex and urgent needs.

• Rural Response Program: Reached 115 women, ensuring geography is never a barrier to safety or support.

• Prevention and Education: Engaged 2,139 students in our Youth Education Program and 1,110 participants in Sexual Violence Education, fostering awareness, respect and meaningful change.

• Caring Dads Program: Supported 15 men.

• Housing Stability Programs: Assisted individuals and families facing housing insecurity through the Housing Allowance Program and Community Homeless Outreach.

• Pet Support: Helped 21 households with cats and 24 with dogs remain together while accessing housing—because pets deserve safety, too.

None of this work is possible without the dedication and care of so many.

To our remarkable staff and volunteers: thank you for showing up every day with

compassion, grit and unwavering commitment. Your presence, patience, and care are felt in every conversation and every safe space you create. You are the heart of this organization, and we are deeply grateful for you.

To the women, children, youth, and families who place their trust in us: thank you. Your courage humbles us and guides our work. It is a privilege to witness the strength, growth and resilience demonstrated in our programs, and we honour the immense courage it takes to reach out for support.

To our donors, funders and community partners: your generosity makes all of this possible. Your belief in a safer, more compassionate community has carried us through 40 years. We couldn't do it without you.

As we look ahead, we wish everyone a season of rest, warmth, and connection. May 2026 bring renewed hope, gentle moments and a shared sense of purpose. Together, we will continue building a community where safety, equity and hope are possible for all.

This week's Community Voice submission was written by Brennan Solecky, Family Transition Place's director of development and community engagement.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

PAW-SOME VISIT: Headwaters Health Care Centre welcomed a group of puppies and their handlers from Therapeutic Paws of Canada on Dec. 10. Staff, volunteers and patients enjoyed interacting with the four-legged furry friends, named Lottie, Sadie, Whimsy, and Night.



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Former Mono mayor and Dufferin County warden passes away

Written By JAMES MATTHEWS
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Mono and Dufferin County lost a stalwart contributor to the community.

Former Mono Mayor Laura Ryan, though she'd last been on council a number of terms ago, remained a friend to the town's decision-makers, said current Mayor John Creelman.

She died in early December in Prince Edward Island, where she relocated following her retirement.

Flags at Mono Town Hall and Dufferin County's administrative offices at Zina Street flew at half-staff in her memory.

"It came as a great shock to me and probably to all of us," Creelman said.

She was a great public servant in her own right during her years on council, Creelman said.

Ryan served her Mono community from 2010 to 2021 when she resigned as mayor. In that time, she represented the municipality at the upper tier and as the county's

warden twice.

She served on the county's community services committee four times.

Creelman said at the start of town council's Dec. 9 meeting that Ryan also held a seat as a school board trustee for nine years.

She served on the county's economic development committee and as Dufferin's representative on the Hills of Headwaters Tourism Board, as well.

She participated in efforts to raise funds for the Friends of Island Lake to build a boardwalk connecting the south and north sides of Island Lake.

Ryan was an Amaranth Lions Club member, and she was a significant force in the formation of the Dufferin Community Foundation.

"We were deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Laura Ryan, one of our founding directors," the foundation posted on its social media pages. "She was a strong advocate for our community."

The post continued, "Laura was a bright light, a community leader and a special

friend to all who knew her.

Deputy Mayor Fred Nix said many people loved Ryan.

Councillor Ralph Manktelow served on council when Ryan was mayor. Her going-away party was hosted at his farm, in fact.

"I thought she handled the mayoral duties very well," Manktelow said. "She was a pleasant person to work with. She was deeply embedded in this community and was a powerhouse here."

Mike Dunmore, the town's CAO, said Ryan was on council when he started with the municipal staff.

"Staff knows of her professionalism when she came to the office and she will be missed by all staff, that's for sure," Dunmore said.

Coun. Elaine Capes said Ryan was a very good neighbour and friend.

"She was missed when she moved down east, and now she will be missed even more and I'm grateful to have known her and learned a lot from her," Capes said.



LORRIE BAKKER PHOTO

LOSS OF LOCAL LEADER: The former mayor of Mono and warden of Dufferin County, Laura Ryan, recently passed away. Flags at Mono Town Hall and Dufferin County's administrative offices at Zina Street flew at half-staff in her memory.

New Year's Polar Dip returning to Grand River in support of Food Bank

Written By SAM ODROWSKI
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Grand Valley Lions Club is gearing up for its 35th Annual Polar Bear Dip, taking place on New Year's Day.

A group of brave dippers will plunge themselves into the Grand River at Hereward Park on Jan. 1 at 1 p.m., surrounded by a crowd of supporters. Funds raised will support the Dufferin Food Share (Grand Valley Food Bank).

"It's a fun event for the people going in the river," said Grand Valley Lion Randy McClelland. "Plus, it raises money for our food bank, and definitely right after Christmas and New Year's, our food bank needs funds and donations."

Registration begins at noon, and each dipper must raise at least \$20 in pledges to participate.

A little over \$5,000 was raised through the event last year, with approximately 40 people participating.

All of the funds raised by the Grand Valley Lions from the polar dip and other events stay in the community, supporting local charities, community projects, and families in need.

Canned food items will be accepted at the polar dip in support of the Grand Valley Food Bank.

McClelland said the event itself is quite a spectacle, with people plunging into the Grand River.

"I enjoy seeing people go in, especially the ones who do it for the first time. Most of them don't realize how cold the water can be, and they find out really quick," he said. "The expressions on some of the people's faces are priceless."

People travel from all over the region to participate in the New Year's polar dip.

"We have people from Kitchener, Guelph, Fergus, Bellwood, you name it...come and participate," said McClelland. "It is great to see everybody come out."

For more information on the polar dip, or to get a copy of pledge sheets, contact McClelland at 519-943-5471 or at randy@grandvalleylions.com.

Participants should bring a warm change of clothing, a towel, and a camera to capture the moment.

"Come on out and try it," he said. "I think you'll enjoy it."

The Grand Valley Lions, which has about 20 members, is always looking for more.



FILE PHOTO

TAKING THE PLUNGE: Participants of the Grand Valley Lions' past Polar Bear Dip make their way in and out of the Grand River. The annual event takes place on Jan. 1 every year, and funds raised support the Grand Valley Food Bank.

Anyone interested in joining the club can reach out to McClelland at the email address above.

"We realize that family and jobs come first, but if you can help out in any way at all, we're more than pleased to have you," he smiled.

Rotary Club of Shelburne shares reflections on its activities over the last year

Continued from Page 3

"We are trying to give things a little bit of traction and see if they're going to work before we think about expanding into new events," Mach said. "At the end of the day, there's only 12 of us, consistent members, I mean, so our reach is limited there."

That's not to say they have no help. Mach said they are extremely grateful to have the community's constant support, with volunteers always willing to step up.

"We have 12 members now, but we can count on more to help," Mach said. "We get a lot of help from people, especially the partners and spouses of members, because they get roped into stuff, but also other people in the community who they don't have the time or the ability to make the commitment to actually be full members, but they are happy to come and help us with different events. So we're able to actually do a lot in the community."

Moving into next year with a supportive

community, Mach said rotary events that Shelburne is used to will return.

"So we are again planning the EDC and Rotary Golf Tournament for the early part of June, the Pumpkin Fest in October, and the gala in November," she said. "That and the smile cookie campaign at the end of May, those are probably the big events to be looking out for."

With decades of community service behind it, the Rotary Club of Shelburne is ready to head into 2026 with the same commitment to giving back to the community that defined its founding mission.



FILE PHOTO

ROTARY FLAG RAISING: The Town of Shelburne raised the Rotary International flag to mark April 22 as Shelburne Rotary Day. The Rotary Club of Shelburne was established on April 22, 1938.



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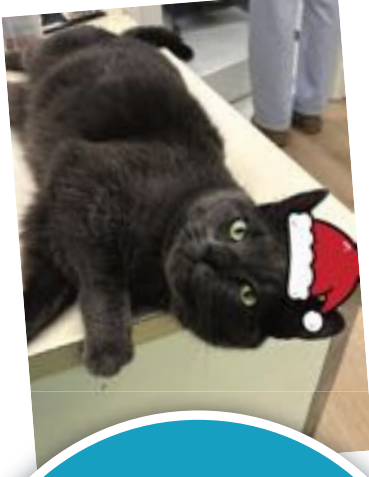
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SPORTS



BRIAN LOCKHART PHOTO
MOVING ON UP: The Centre Dufferin District High School Royals junior basketball team take on the Eagles from Emmanuel Christian High School in Fergus on Monday, Dec. 15. The Royals left the court with a 77-14 win. Centre Dufferin forward Will Verduin does a layup and scores during the first quarter of the game.

Centre Dufferin junior boys basketball team moves to second place

Written By **BRIAN LOCKHART**

The Centre Dufferin District High School Royals junior boys' basketball team is starting out the season with a good showing.

They are now in second place in the District 4 standings after four games.

The first game of the season ended with a 59-26 win over Westside Secondary School from Orangeville on Dec. 1.

In game two, the Royals took a 50-30 loss to Erin District High School on Dec. 3.

CDDHS secured second place in the standings when they travelled to Fergus on

Dec. 15 to take on the Eagles at Emmanuel Christian High School. The Royals dominated the court and left with a 77-14 win.

The Royals won game four of the season when they hosted Wellington Heights Secondary School in the gym at CDDHS on Wednesday, Dec. 17.

Centre Dufferin left the court with a 74-21 win.

Over the four games, the Royals averaged 60 points per game.

They allowed an average of only 28 points against over those four games.

There are five high schools entered in

the District 4 junior competition this season, with a schedule that runs through Feb. 11, before heading into the playoffs.

The playoffs will get underway on Feb. 18, with semi-final games. Only the top four teams in the District will secure a playoff berth, with the winners of the semi-final games going to the District championship game on Feb. 23.

Erin District High School is currently in first place, going undefeated after three games. They have averaged 57 points per game.

CDDHS is in second place with a 2-1 re-

cord. In third place, Westside Secondary School has a 2-2 record and has averaged 44 points per game.

Wellington Heights Secondary School is in the number four spot with a 1-2 record.

Emmanuel Christian High School is in fifth place and is winless after three games.

Returning in the new year, the Royals will have a couple of road games before returning to their home court on Wednesday, Feb. 4, to host Emmanuel Christian High School. Game time is 2:30 p.m.

Highly competitive season underway in PJHL's North Carruthers Division

Written By **BRIAN LOCKHART**

It is proving to be a highly competitive

season in the Provincial Junior Hockey League, as Junior C teams across the province have passed the halfway mark in the

regular season.

Some of the stronger teams from last season have returned with another good performance this year, while other weaker teams are having a better season.

That's the way it is in Junior C hockey, where a year can make a big difference.

Locally, in the North Carruthers Division, there is a real battle taking place for the top spot in the standings.

The Alliston Hornets have been in first place for most of the season. They briefly dropped to second place after going into a sudden, unexplained slump in November.

After going on a 13-game winning streak to start the season, the Hornets dropped five of eight games, and the Stayer Siskins took over the top spot in the division.

The following week, the Hornets were back on top after winning two more games,

while Stayer lost a couple.

The Alliston squad now has 40 points – three ahead of the Siskins.

The Penetang Kings are having a good season and are currently in third place with a 15-10 record. Three of those losses were OT losses, and one was a shoot-out loss.

In fourth place, the Orillia Terriers started out the year strong and were in second place. However, they struggled in November and took some losses.

Orillia now has 29 points, but can't be counted out as they are still playing well.


The Midland Flyers, Muskoka Bears, and the Huntsville Otters are all trying to get on the plus side at the midway mark in the season.

Midland has an 11-14 record and 22 points. Muskoka has a 7-19 record, and Huntsville has a 7-18 record.

In the basement, the Innisfil Spartans are having a tough season, winning only six games after 22 times on the ice.


The regular season wraps up with the final games on Feb. 16, before heading into the playoffs.

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ATHLETE OF THE WEEK



MIKEY LEGRESLEY

A basketball player for most of his life, Centre Dufferin District High School Royals centre Mikey LeGresley brings a lot of skill to his team.

"I really like the training. It keeps me fit and helps my endurance," Mikey said.

Also a skilled baseball player, Mikey sees a connection between the two sports.

"They're two very different sports, but they both help each other with team chemistry and working together."

On the baseball field, Mikey plays the catcher position.

TEAM: CENTRE DUFFERIN DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL ROYALS SENIOR BASKETBALL
POSITION: CENTRE

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Theatre Orangeville reflects on 2025 and looks ahead to 2026

Written By JOSHUA DRAKES
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

It may come as no surprise that 2025 has been a busy year for Theatre Orangeville. From mainstage productions to youth programming, the not-for-profit organization has spent the year finding new and innovative ways to bring stories to life, while continuing its steady recovery from the pandemic.

As the year winds down, Theatre Orangeville Artistic Director Jennifer Stewart and Executive Director Sharyn Ayliffe sat down with the Citizen to reflect on the past year and look ahead to what's coming in 2026.

From the end-of-year pantomime *Rapunzel: A Braid New World* to earlier productions such as *For The Wonder of It All*, Theatre Orangeville continued to raise the bar throughout the season. But when asked to choose a standout moment, Stewart pointed to a production that exceeded even her own expectations.

Coming from Theatre Orangeville's Young Company, *Hadestown: Teen Edition* emerged as Stewart's favourite production of the year.

"I think it's my new favourite musical, actually. The Young Company just jumped on board and exceeded expectations beyond anyone's belief," she told the Citizen.

Stewart said she was deeply impressed by the level of commitment the young performers brought to the production, not just during performances, but throughout the rehearsal process.

"They just worked so hard," Stewart said. "There were some days where their brain was bleeding out of their ears because they were just like, 'oh my gosh, these harmonies are so difficult.'"

She added, "The growth that they experienced as performers was immense. When it comes to theatre, you only get out of it what you put into it, and they put so much into it."

The success of *Hadestown* came during Stewart's first season as artistic director – a role she stepped into without fully knowing what to expect.

"I had no idea what to expect coming into this, I didn't know anyone on the team," she said. "I just sort of came here open and ready

for anything and everything. I was just going to ask questions and observe and learn as much as I could, as fast as I could."

Stewart said becoming an artistic director has long been a goal, even before she had the language to define it. Now, she's fully aware of how special the opportunity is.

"This is my dream job, I have been working my whole life to become an AD," Stewart said. "This is something I've always wanted to do, and I've gotten to put everything I've learned in my whole entire life and career into practice."

She also acknowledged the weight of following in the footsteps of former Artistic Director David Nairn, a legendary figure at Theatre Orangeville. Rather than trying to replicate his approach, Stewart said she's focused on bringing her own strengths to the role.

"David was his thing, and I just have to be my thing. I try to pick up and use everything that he's created and just sort of launch us into the next era," Stewart explained.

For Ayliffe, who has been with Theatre Orangeville for years, the leadership transition brought understandable uncertainty.

"We all collectively in the organization went into this calendar year a little bit unsure of how the transition was going to roll out," she said. "And as is the Theatre Orangeville way, some greater theatrical power seems to always have our back, because it's been such a fantastic transition."

That transition has unfolded alongside the theatre's ongoing recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, which devastated live performance organizations across the country. Ayliffe said the challenge forced Theatre Orangeville to reflect deeply on its identity and purpose.

"It really was a time where we came together as a community beyond Theatre Orangeville to collaborate and make sure that everybody got through," she said. "We fought really hard to remain relevant over those years. And I think we did a really good job of that, of continuing to be there for the community. We supported other not for profits by helping them have virtual fundraisers and things like that."



FILE PHOTO

TAKING THE STAGE: Cast, crew, creative team, and staff from Theatre Orangeville gathered on the set of *Rapunzel: A Braid New World*. With an all-star team of actors, set designers, and support staff, Theatre Orangeville has every ingredient in a recipe for success.

While the recovery has been gradual, signs of progress are clear. Attendance is increasing, and with it, revenue.

"Artistically, the company is thriving," Ayliffe said. "Last year, we had over 25,000 tickets sold... that was a 25 per cent increase over the year before. So we are seeing that steady return to theatre."

Although a full recovery will take time, Theatre Orangeville is not slowing down. Stewart and Ayliffe said the upcoming 2026 season is packed with productions designed to entertain, surprise and draw audiences back through the doors.

"Our next show on the main stage is called *Common Ground* and it's a romantic comedy," Stewart said. "I decided that I thought it would be fun to set it in the 1980s... it's going to be date night, girls' night out, come in your 80s best. There's going to be 80s music playing. It's going to be an experience, a party."

Following that production, the theatre will present *Murder at Ackerton Manor*, a murder mystery inspired by the style of Agatha Christie.

The season will wrap up with *The Wedding Party*, a production that blurs the line

between audience and performers.

"We finish the season with *The Wedding Party*," Stewart said. "The twist is that the audience is the wedding, and they are wedding guests... it's like you're not only coming to a show, but you're coming to a wedding."

Stewart added that audiences should not expect a picture perfect ceremony, promising plenty of drama, humour and audience interaction.

Looking ahead, Ayliffe said the theatre's strength lies in the people behind the scenes. "We are extremely lucky, because we really do have the dream team," Ayliffe said. "It's been really, really hard to do what we've done, and they're all at 110 per cent every day, even on the days where it's really difficult."

Heading into the next year and season, Theatre Orangeville is building momentum as it continues to deliver innovative performances while climbing out of the pandemic slump.

With a rich list of productions on the horizon, the theatre company is positioning itself to continue being an innovative cornerstone of Dufferin County's culture.

Early-bird registration opens for Women's Day Celebration Breakfast

Written By JOSHUA DRAKES
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Family Transition Place is calling on residents and partners to join them on March 5, 2026, for their Women's Day Celebration Breakfast at the Hockley Valley Resort.

"We're thrilled to gather with our community for this special celebration," said FTP Executive Director Lynette Pole-Langdon. "International Women's Day is a time to honour women's achievements, uplift one another, and continue advocating for equity and safety."

Guests can expect to be served a gourmet buffet breakfast and a cocktail to start off the morning. But there's more to be featured as well.

There will be a silent auction on site, offering guests the chance to spend money on FTP and potentially win unique items to take home. There will also be some prizes handed out, and much more.

All the proceeds raised from the day will be going straight back to FTP and used to support their essential services and programs

that strive to build safer, healthier communities for women and their families.

Family Transition Place is a local organization that focuses on providing support services to women and children, helping them to escape from violent or unhealthy relationships. They don't stop their mission there, however, and continue to offer support as their clients begin to rebuild their lives.

FTP strive to provide a warm and welcoming space, where personal safety and well-being are the core focus. The organisation provides shelter services for those who need a place to stay, and has professional staff, including trained counsellors.

To maintain their high standards and services, FTP relies on community donations, which are part of this breakfast event.

Early-bird tickets are currently available online for \$75 each and will be available until Jan. 26.

Visit familytransitionplace.ca/events/international-womens-day/ to learn more.

For any further information about the breakfast, contact kelly@familytransitionplace.ca.

How to find a doctor or nurse practitioner

Written By BRIAN LOCKHART

There are currently many people in Ontario without a primary health care professional.

A family doctor or nurse practitioner is your primary health care clinician. This means they are the person you make an appointment with for a new, non-emergency health concern.

A family doctor or nurse practitioner can provide diagnosis and treatment for common illnesses and injuries, referrals to a health care specialist for a specific condition, and support in managing a chronic condition such as diabetes or high blood pressure.

They can also prescribe medication and provide regular check-ups, including physicals and routine screening tests.

There are two options for finding a new doctor.

You can contact an Ontario physician and ask if they are accepting new patients.

You can also register with Health Care Connect.

Health Care Connect will search for a doctor or nurse practitioner who is accepting new patients in your community.

If you were on the Health Care Connect waitlist as of January 1, 2025, you will be connected to a family doctor or nurse practitioner by spring 2026, as part of Ontario's plan to connect every person in the province to primary care by 2029.

You may receive an official letter, email, or text message from Health Care Connect asking you to confirm if you still need primary care and if your information is up to date.

Joining Health Care Connect does not guarantee that a family doctor or nurse practitioner will be found for you immediately. Those who need urgent care will be placed first.

To use Health Care Connect, you must have a valid Ontario Health Card and have an up-to-date mailing address associated with your health card.

To sign up for the program, you will be asked for your name, address, health care number, and some basic health information to help determine your health needs.

Your request will be given to a Health Care Connect nurse, called a care connector, in your community, and they will review your request, try to find you the right family doctor or nurse practitioner in your community who is accepting new patients, and contact you if a match is found for you, and give you their contact information.

They will connect you to local health care services to help you with your health care needs while they are looking for a family doctor or nurse practitioner in your community who is accepting new patients.

You can contact Health Care Connect by phone at 1-888-579-6707, Monday to Friday, between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., or via email at: HealthCareConnect@ontariohealthathome.ca.



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- Outdoor Pool Deck Supervisor
- Lifeguard/Swim Instructor
- Camp Supervisor
- Camp Assistant Supervisor
- Summer Day Camp Counsellors

For more information on the including employment period, wage range, duties, responsibilities and submission deadlines, visit the link: shelburne.ca/cdrc

Eligible candidates are invited to submit their resume to Emily Francis, Recreation Program Coordinator, Centre Dufferin Recreation Complex, 200 Fiddle Park Lane, Shelburne, ON L9V 3C9
 Email: cdrc@shelburne.ca

Please note the position applying for on cover page or in the email subject line. We thank all the applicants who apply and advise that acknowledgement will only be forwarded to those applicants who are invited for an interview

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Ice River is currently looking for twenty (20) Material Handler/QA Technician(s) to join our team. You will be working at our Blue Mountain Plastics Recycling facility, located at 485387 30 Sideroad, Shelburne Ontario L9V 3N5.

A Production Operator (Material Handler/QA Technician) is responsible for sorting products on the production line, operating forklifts to move materials, ensuring quality assurance compliance, and performing equipment calibration. The operator is also tasked with data interpretation, software interfacing, and maintaining accurate records. Working as part of a team, the operator focuses on meeting production goals while maintaining safety, efficiency, and quality standards.

- These are full-time positions, based on 88 hours of work per 2-week cycle, with occasional overtime. At this time, we are only looking for individuals who can work a 12-hour rotating continental shift, including nights and weekends.
- Salary \$24.50 - \$25.40 per hour, with possibility of bonus; 10 days vacation plus extended medical, dental, and long-term disability insurance & participation in our retirement savings plan.
- Inbound transportation costs for out of province applicants.
- Completion of high school required.
- At least two years of experience in the plastics recycling industry required; previous manufacturing experience is preferred.
- Demonstrated ability to work independently on specific tasks and collaboratively within a small team to achieve production goals in a fast-paced, high-volume setting.
- Certified and experienced in operating various forklifts, including models equipped with clamps, with a strong emphasis on safety protocols, efficient loading techniques, and adherence to load capacities.
- Strong working knowledge of Microsoft Office Suite (Excel, Word) for data tracking, reporting, and analysis, with the ability to quickly learn and utilize industry-specific software (e.g., Presage) for operational data management.
- Competent in interpreting production data, identifying operational trends, and providing insights to improve sorting efficiency, production speed, and material quality.
- Knowledge of quality assurance methodologies, including experience with calibration tools and procedures to maintain sorting equipment's accuracy and reliability.
- Familiarity with PET/HDPE material handling, recycling processes, and industry-specific standards for processing and sorting recycled materials.
- Experienced in following shipping protocols, generating, reviewing, and organizing shipping documentation (BOLs), and ensuring compliance with transport and regulatory standards.

To view a comprehensive overview of the position, please go to <https://jobs.dayforcehcm.com/en-US/irrs/CANDIDATEPORTAL/jobs/3305>. Interested candidates please send a copy of your resume and cover letter to cstewart@icerversprings.com or write to:

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Shelburne Public Library shares holiday hours, recommended read

Happy holidays from YOUR Library!
 Reminder – we are open:
 • Dec. 27 (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.)
 • Dec. 30 (10 a.m. to 5 p.m.)
 • Jan. 3 (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.)
 The Shelburne Public Library's regular hours resume Jan. 3. Take the opportunity to visit and stock up on our open days, visit our Kiosk, which is refreshed weekly, or try out Hoopla & Libby for your reading needs.
 The New Year is a great time to sign up for a Library card or make sure your account

is active to enjoy all the benefits that come with membership! We have a great selection of passes (Ontario Parks, Credit Valley Conservation, the Museum of Dufferin, and the ROM (blackout dates apply), stories for all ages, and so much more.
 Those who live or work in Shelburne, Amaranth, Melancthon, Mono, or Mulmur are eligible for membership with us at no charge, and we'd love to meet you.

Dungeon Crawler Carl by Matt Dinniman: You know what's worse than breaking up with your girlfriend? Being stuck with her prize-winning show cat named Princess Donut. And you know what's worse than that? An alien invasion, the destruction of all man-made structures on Earth, and the systematic exploitation of all the survivors for a sadistic intergalactic game show. That's what. Join Coast Guard vet Carl and his ex-girlfriend's cat as they try to survive the end of the world—or just get to the next lev-

el—in a video game-like, trap-filled fantasy dungeon.
Why Jade Recommends it: After seeing this book come through my social feeds with such high ratings, I decided I had to see what all the hype was about. From the start, it's slapstick comedy set against perilous stakes, reminiscent of a great D&D Campaign. I listened to the audiobook, which had exceptional narration and reminded me how much I love a snarky AI character as the narrator. Place your holds in Libby today.

STAFF PICK OF THE WEEK

Vehicles targeted for theft, impaired driving charges laid and police conduct ATV patrols

Toyota Tundra trucks targeted in Orangeville

Dufferin Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) officers are investigating three incidents involving Toyota Tundra pickup trucks in Orangeville and are seeking the public's assistance in identifying those responsible.
 On Dec. 16, between 1 a.m. and 3:30 a.m., Dufferin OPP responded to reports of suspicious activity and vehicle damage involving Toyota Tundra pickup trucks in Orangeville.
 Two vehicles were damaged during attempted thefts, with windows smashed and dashboards taken apart. In a third incident, suspects were observed attempting to gain entry to another Toyota Tundra but were unsuccessful. Investigators believe the suspects were attempting to start and steal the vehicles.
 The suspects are described as wearing dark clothing, with hoods up and face coverings. The suspect vehicle is believed to be a newer model black Honda CR-V. No licence plate or identifying markers were obtained.
 The Dufferin OPP are asking residents to remain vigilant, report any suspicious activity, and ensure vehicles are locked and

secured. Anyone with information, dash camera footage, or security video related to these incidents is encouraged to contact the Dufferin OPP.
 Anyone with information regarding this incident or other suspected unlawful activity is asked to contact the OPP at 1-888-310-1122 or Crime Stoppers anonymously at 1-800-222-8477 (TIPS), or online at www.crimestoppersdm.com.

Shelburne woman charged with impaired driving

Dufferin Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) officers have charged a Shelburne resident with impaired operation-related offences.
 On Dec. 12, just before 6:40 p.m., an officer observed a vehicle failing to maintain its lane while travelling on Highway 89 near Shelburne. Officers conducted a traffic stop and subsequently initiated an impaired driving investigation.
 Amanda Stroud, 41, from Shelburne, has been charged with:
 • Operation while impaired - blood alcohol concentration (80 plus)
 • Fail to surrender insurance card
 The accused individual is scheduled to appear before the Ontario Court of Justice

in Orangeville. Their driver's licence was suspended for 90 days, and their vehicle was impounded for seven days.
 None of the listed charges have been proven in court.

Dufferin OPP SAVE Unit conducts patrols on local ATV trails

Dufferin Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) officers were glad to have the assistance of the OPP SAVE Unit during the final weekend of the ATV riding season in late November. Officers conducted patrols along the local ATV trail network from Shelburne to Flesherton.
 During their patrols, officers engaged with local riders, providing positive warnings, education, and safety information to ensure compliance with regulations and to promote responsible trail use. These efforts help maintain a safe and enjoyable trail system for all users as the ATV season winds down.
 "With snowmobile season just around the corner, it's important to remember that trail safety and responsible operation are key, whether on an ATV or a snowmobile," said Dufferin OPP.
 "We are grateful for the assistance of the

SAVE Unit, whose dedication helps keep our trails safe and prepares the community for the upcoming winter season."
 Dufferin OPP would like to remind residents to operate all-terrain vehicles responsibly, obey trail signage, and wear proper safety gear. Unsafe or unlawful activity can be reported to the OPP at 1-888-310-1122. For emergencies, call 9-1-1.



This holiday season, we celebrate the community that makes every story worth telling. From all of us at the Shelburne Free Press, thank you for reading, supporting, and trusting us to bring you the stories that matter. May your holidays be filled with hope, connection, and meaningful moments.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

from the staff of the Shelburne Free Press

PLEASE NOTE OUR OFFICE IS CLOSED AND WILL RE-OPEN JANUARY 2ND.

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