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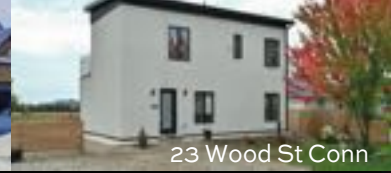
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CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY: The Revelation Worship Centre Choir performs during the Dufferin County Canadian Black Association's sixth annual Black History Month Celebration at Grace Tipling Hall in Shelburne on Saturday, Feb. 21. See more photos on Page 2.

Shelburne Free Press
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Saddle up for strikes at Bowl for Kids' Sake

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Dufferin and District to host Wii Bowling fundraiser

Written By **JOSHUA DRAKES**
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Dufferin and District is getting ready to roll out its largest annual fundraiser, with a Wild West-themed Wii bowling event designed to raise money for local youth mentorship programs.

"We are thrilled to invite the entire Shelburne community to join us for our annual Bowl for Kids Sake fundraiser. As an organization dedicated to serving the youth of Shelburne, this event is a fantastic opportunity to have fun while making a real difference in the lives of local children," said Nancy Stallmach, executive director of Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Dufferin and District.

"Every dollar raised helps us continue our vital mentoring programs and your participation shows the kids that you're in their corner."

Bowl for Kids' Sake 2026 will take place on Friday, April 10, in the ballroom at the Best Western in Orangeville. Instead of traditional lanes, organizers have created a virtual bowling alley using Wii bowling. Guests are encouraged to come in costume, embracing cowboy hats, boots and creative Western-inspired outfits.



JIM WADDINGTON PHOTO

BOWLING BECAUSE: Last year's Bowl for Kids' Sake featured a St. Patrick's Day theme, bringing vast shades of green to the virtual bowling alley. With 2026 being western-themed, expect cowboy hats, spurs, and leather boots as guests compete to be the best-dressed and win a prize.

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Shelburne seeking performers for 2026 Fiddle Park Concert Series

Written By **JOSHUA DRAKES**
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Town of Shelburne is preparing for a summer of live entertainment as planning gets underway for the 2026 Fiddle Park Concert Series.

The free, family-friendly concert series will be hosted at Fiddle Park, located at 105 Second Line. It will feature a lineup of live music and performances designed to bring residents together while showcasing local and regional talent.

Town officials say the series reflects Shel-

burne's ongoing investment in community programming and public spaces, with this year's concerts marking a special milestone as one of the first major events held at the newly redeveloped park.

The enhanced venue is designed to support recreation, community gatherings and special events, providing a dedicated outdoor space for residents to connect and celebrate.

The 2026 concert dates are scheduled for July 5, July 19, Aug. 9, Aug. 23, and Sept. 13. All performances will be open to the public, offering accessible entertainment for fami-

lies and community members throughout the summer season.

As part of the planning process, the town is inviting performers of all genres and styles to apply to take part in the series. Interested artists are asked to submit their name, type of performance, and links or samples of their work to town staff for consideration. The call aims to highlight the wide range of talent in and around Shelburne while creating opportunities for local artists to perform in a public setting.

Municipal staff will also be using the call for performers to build a roster of artists for

future community events, helping ensure local talent continues to play a role in programming in the years ahead.

Residents are encouraged to share the opportunity with local performers and attend the events as the town looks to foster creativity, community connection and cultural engagement through a summer of live entertainment.

To learn more and to apply as a performer, go to shelburne.ca/news/posts/town-of-shelburne-seeking-local-musicians-entertainers-for-2026-fiddle-park-concert-series/.

Applications open for Dufferin County's 2026 Community Grant Program

Written By **SAM ODROWSKI**

Each year, the County of Dufferin provides funding to local organizations through its Community Grant Program.

And this year is no different. Applications are currently being accepted for Dufferin County's 2026 Community Grant Program.

The program supports the county's strategic goals relating to climate, environment, community, cultural enhancement, access to food, youth services, senior services, economic development, and diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.

The Community Grant Program doled out \$122,630 in 2025, across 24 organizations.

The grants are evaluated based on three funding categories.

The multi-year Groundwork Grant provides community organizations with a funding agreement to strengthen them and ensure that established programs of vital importance can continue.

"Organizations may request Groundwork funds for up to a three-year term. This is accomplished by allowing applicable overhead and administrative and/or capital expenses as needed to sustain an organization as eligible expenses," reads a press release from the County of Dufferin.

"Applications for Groundwork funds must clearly demonstrate need and how the organization benefits residents of Dufferin and show how multi-year funding will address a funding challenge for the organization."

The Bloom Grant focuses on programs or

events that receive one-time funding for initiatives aligned with the Community Grant Program goals.

The Grassroots Grant is for unincorporated grassroots groups or newly incorporated not-for-profit organizations that require support for a new initiative. This stream provides up to \$3,000 in one-time funding.

The county's core values guide the Community Grant Program. They include collaboration, accountability, innovation, compassion and courage.

Dufferin County partners with Headwaters Communities in Action (HCIA) to administer the Community Grant Program. A grant team established by HCIA reviews applications and evaluates them against established criteria to ensure they align with the strategic

priorities.

Applications must be submitted by March 23 and can be completed online by visiting tinyurl.com/DufferinGrants.

Grant recommendations will be made at a Dufferin County council meeting in May, following a review by the HCIA Assessment Committee.

Anyone with questions about the program can email action@headwaterscommunities.org to learn more.

Questions concerning the application form, notifications or payments can be emailed to info@dufferincounty.ca or call 519-941-2816 ext. 2500.

Additional information, grant writing and eligibility requirements can be found at dufferincounty.ca.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

BLACK HISTORY MONTH MARKED LOCALLY: A Black History Month event held at Grace Tipling Hall in Shelburne on Feb. 21 featured performances, a speech from keynote guest speaker Master T, African drumming, dancing, musical performances from Richard C., and finger foods from Soulyve Catering.

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Big Brothers Big Sisters of Dufferin to host Wii Bowling fundraiser

Continued on Page 3

Stallmach explained that those collecting pledges and donations will be able to battle it out on the virtual lanes, all within costume if they so choose.

The way it works is people collect pledges, they collect donations for Big Brothers Big Sisters, and then they come out on the day and they dress up for our theme... this year [it's] Wild West," she said. "They come to the ballroom at the Best Western, where we have created a virtual bowling alley with 15 lanes of Wii bowling put through a projector to create the idea of actual bowling lanes."

Music, decorations and prizes will help set the mood, with awards planned for standout costumes. Teams from workplaces, service clubs, churches and the organization's own volunteers and families are expected to participate.

The goal this year is to raise \$30,000 in support of Big Brothers Big Sisters' mentoring programs.

The fundraiser supports an organization that has been part of the community for more than five decades. Big Brothers Big

"To allow us to match more children with Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and to provide our mentoring programs, we do really need money that we raise during Bowl for Kids' Sake. The money goes directly to those programs."

Nancy Stallmach, executive director of Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Dufferin and District

Sisters of Dufferin and District was founded in July 1972, with a mission that has remained steady even as its programs have evolved.

"At Big Brothers, Big Sisters, we match kids that are facing adversity, and that could be a variety of different things that they might be struggling with, and we match them with a caring adult mentor," Stallmach said. "This has a life-changing

impact on them, both in the short term and throughout their whole lives."

The Bowl for Kids' Sake event itself has a long history, originally held at a local bowling alley before being reinvented as a Wii bowling fundraiser when the alley closed. The virtual format has proven popular, with many participants returning year after year.

Stallmach said that funding from events like this is essential to keeping programs running, especially given the limited government support they receive.

"We don't receive a lot of government funding," she said. "To allow us to match more children with Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and to provide our mentoring programs, we do really need money that we raise during Bowl for Kids' Sake. The money goes directly to those programs."

Current sponsors include Best Western, RBC and Boston Pizza, and the organization is actively seeking additional corporate partners.

"For corporate sponsors, it's a great way to be part of the community," Stallmach said. "We're anticipating having up to 200 people coming out during the day, so it's a great way to get their name out. We'll also

be putting logos and sponsors' names on our website and on our social media, and it's a great way to connect with the community and with a charity that's able to make a big impact on the local community."

Looking ahead, Big Brothers Big Sisters is also planning its annual golf tournament in June, with details still to come.

At the same time, the agency continues to call for both sponsors and new volunteers, noting there is a waiting list of children in Dufferin County hoping to be matched with a mentor.

"We're always looking for volunteers," Stallmach said. "We can always use more Big Brothers and Big Sisters to be matched with children. We have a waiting list of children that could really benefit, and we'd love to hear from people if they would be interested in being part of that."

The Bowl for Kids' Sake event promises to be a fun initiative to bring people together in the name of making a difference for children across Dufferin County.

For those interested in learning more or participating, go to dufferin.bigbrothersbigsisisters.ca/event/bowl-for-kids-sake-2026/.

Town of Shelburne awarded grant for parks and playground reporting tool

Written By JOSHUA DRAKES
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Town of Shelburne has received a grant to help improve safety and maintenance reporting across its parks and playgrounds through a new digital system.

The town announced during a Feb. 20 press release that it had been awarded the All Risk Municipal Grant from Local Authority Services and Intact Public Entities, which supports and promotes innovative municipal risk management initiatives

aimed at improving safety, resiliency and community well-being.

The funding will support the launch of a centralized digital inspection and reporting tool for parks and playgrounds, along with new QR code signage to help residents quickly report issues.

The All Risk Municipal Grant – Investing in Municipal Risk Resiliency provides \$10,000 to three Ontario municipalities to implement risk-reduction projects. Applications are evaluated based on factors such as innovation, impact, transferability and risk

reduction.

Shelburne's project will focus on improving how concerns about parks and playground equipment are reported, tracked and addressed in real time.

The Town will develop a centralized digital inspection and reporting system within PSD Citywide that allows residents to submit concerns directly from their phones, while enabling staff to receive and respond to requests more efficiently.

As part of the initiative, QR code signs will be installed at local parks and playgrounds. Residents will be able to scan the code, select the issue they want to report — such as damage, cleanup needs or maintenance

concerns — provide a brief description, confirm the location and upload a photo if needed.

Each submission will automatically be logged as a service request, helping staff manage maintenance and inspections.

The system will also support formal playground inspections, maintenance scheduling and improved documentation, which the Town says will help reduce risk and enhance safety across its parks network.

Officials say the project aims to create an easier way for residents to report concerns while helping ensure community spaces remain safe, well-maintained and efficiently managed.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

REDUCING RISK: The Town of Shelburne received a \$10,000 grant to implement a safety and maintenance reporting across its parks and playgrounds. The All Risk Municipal Grant comes from Local Authority Services and Intact Public Entities, which selects three municipalities to receive funding to implement risk-reduction projects each year.

Starting in April, recycling in Dufferin County will be even more convenient with a new recycling cart.



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OPINION

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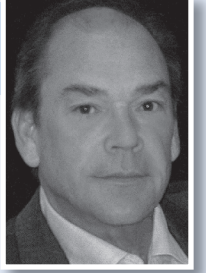
A hug is a rather personal thing. Generally speaking, you only embrace someone you know rather well or are very familiar with. Although sometimes there is a hug-by-proxy type of thing where you are introduced to someone who is close to someone you know, where they give you a hug because it's a way of saying they welcome you into their life, or you are distantly related. Several years ago, I noticed a trend in younger people – generally middle school or high school age – where hugging became the norm every time they saw someone they knew. Because of my job, I spend considerable time in places like local arenas where younger people congregate. I would see a group of five or six kids run into another group of five or six kids in the arena lobby, and they would all hug each other. Every kid hugged every other kid they just ran into. I thought that was a little much considering they all probably saw each other that afternoon in school, but they were always smiling and happy, so no harm done. Then COVID happened. Kids were learning from home, and there was a general 'no contact' rule pretty much everywhere. Kids were taught to never touch anyone and remain six feet away from other people.

Now, those younger kids have moved into middle school and high school. They still seem happy to see other people they know when they meet in the arena lobby, but the hugging culture seems to have disappeared. Kids were taught that touching someone else means you could get their germs, and they seem to have taken that seriously – no more hugging. I would imagine the whole 'cooties' thing has a lot more meaning in school yards these days. I bought my last vehicle during the height of COVID. It was a bit of a challenge because vehicles were getting scarce, and you had to make an appointment just to enter the dealership to look at a car. I bought a vehicle and made an appointment to go in and pick it up. A good friend of mine worked at the dealership, and when she saw me, she came out to say hello and gave me a hug because it had been a while since we had seen each other. The salesperson looked absolutely shocked that her co-worker had actually touched a customer. I didn't mind at all. However, later, I hoped this wouldn't turn into some kind of situation where the salesperson would run to the general manager

and announce that my friend had touched a customer and possibly set off a germ chain reaction that would result in the dealership being fined and shut down. The COVID era changed so many things, and I think we are yet to realize the final impact. I know of quite a few sports groups, clubs, and organizations that were either banned from meeting during the pandemic or members simply stopped attending out of fear of being in any kind of social setting. Many of those groups simply faded away and have never recovered. I also know of several service businesses that were forced to close and never reopened. Just a few days before the pandemic was announced and some businesses were ordered to close or greatly restrict their service, I interviewed a young woman who had just realized her lifelong dream of opening her own cafe. A few days later, she was forced to close her doors and was only allowed to serve pick-up orders. It wasn't enough, and she had to close shop. Her dream disappeared because of the pandemic. The pandemic has also drastically altered the way we say goodbye to loved ones who have passed away.

Funerals during COVID were very restrictive. My own mother died at the start of the pandemic, and initially, we were told we could have only five people attend any kind of funeral, including the officiant. That number was increased to 10 prior to the service. Her funeral ended up being a family meeting at the funeral home prior to a drive to the cemetery and a short service where the funeral director insisted we all stand six feet apart. The good part of that service was that many people actually did arrive, and parked their cars in a ring around the cemetery and watched from afar so as not to break distancing rules. Since COVID, many people have been eliminating funerals altogether. After announcing the death, the obituary states, 'a celebration of life will happen at a later date.' However, with rare exceptions, those celebrations never take place. It is sad to think we are losing a tradition of a fond final farewell. The COVID pandemic took many things away. Some things may return, but others are gone forever.

BRIAN LOCKHART
FROM THE SECOND ROW



Cuba: It's a matter of time

Fidel Castro and his Communist band of brothers have had a good long run in power (66 years), but they have run out of road. Most of the relatively small Cuban middle class fled to the United States after the 1959 revolution, but the new regime certainly had mass popular support for at least the next quarter-century. Then it began to erode, but only quite slowly at first. The Castro brothers and their allies always faced huge economic problems because of the US trade embargo, but things got much harder after the old Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, eliminating about 85 per cent of Cuba's foreign trade. The ensuing 'Special Period in Time of Peace' spanned the 1990s and brought great hardship to ordinary people – rationing, blackouts, even severe food shortages – but the economy stabilized (at a permanently lower level of prosperity) by 2000.

At that point 40 per cent of the population would probably still have fought to defend the regime, at least if the enemy was the United States. The enthusiasm was gone, but Cuban nationalism has always been a powerful force. However, the institutional rot in a ruling party too long in power continued, and after another 25 years of scraping along the bottom many Cubans are in despair: 2.75 million (out of 11 million) have left the country since 2020. Would those remaining really resist an American invasion? That may be what's coming next, if you believe the current American rhetoric. Since the recent US raid on Venezuela to kidnap that country's president, Washington has redoubled its threats against the Cuban regime. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio (the American son of Cuban exiles) said that if he were in the Cuban government he'd be "concerned", and President Donald Trump said Cuba "will

be falling pretty soon." Many of Trump's scattershot threats are just idle bad-mouthing of perceived enemies, but he may be serious this time. Cuba imported half its oil from Venezuela and another quarter from Mexico, but both countries have yielded to Washington's demand to stop selling it to Havana. Trump has also promised to put higher tariffs on any other country selling oil to Cuba, and the US Navy is seizing tankers bound for Cuban ports. It amounts to a total energy blockade of the country, and the result is hugely damaging. Rolling power cuts are shutting industries, transport and even schools for much of the time. Cuba is sliding rapidly back into the utter desperation of the 'Special Period', but it would still be a big risk for Donald Trump to stage a full-scale invasion of the island. There are undoubtedly several million Cubans who would still resist that, and they are the ones who have the guns. A more likely outcome is a deal of the sort that Trumps likes, as close as possible to the Venezuelan template. Find the people in the existing Cuban regime who are willing to sell out if the price is right, and make a deal that gives Trump the final say but protects their privileges and a good deal of their power. Meet the new boss, same as the old boss. It would be a squalid end for an era in Cuba that started with high hopes and big

ideas, but that was probably inevitable because like most Communist regimes it was ruthless and repressive. That formula usually works in the short term, but it generally fails in the long run. Indeed, sometimes you can see the upside and the downside of the package at the same time. Early in the Special Period I took a large chunk of my extended family to Cuba. Six of us were straggling along the Malecón in Havana when two young men on a bike sliced my mother-in-law's bag off her shoulder with a knife. The younger men in our party gave chase, of course, but the thieves were soon out of sight. No matter! There was a genuine 'hue and crime': people at windows and balconies all along the street shouting "they went thataway". Then we caught up with the bike – because the police had already stopped it and taken the thieves away. They returned her bag, containing her passport and money. The next day a different thief grabbed that same bag, knocking my father-in-law to the ground. He was only slightly injured, but they took him to the police station and held him there pretending to investigate. I had to bribe the chief detective \$100 to get him out. Social solidarity one day, brazen criminality the next. But I fear that the solidarity is now mostly gone.

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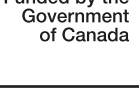
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COMMUNITY VOICES

Monthly Message: A comprehensive guide to the services and support FTP offers

Family Transition Place (FTP) is a vital community resource based in Orangeville, Ontario, serving women, children, and individuals impacted by gender-based violence, abuse, trauma, housing insecurity, and related challenges across Dufferin County and Caledon.

FTP's mission is grounded in providing safety, support, and hope to survivors so they can build violence-free lives, backed by compassionate, inclusive, and trauma-informed programming.

Since its founding in 1984, FTP has evolved into a multi-service organization, offering a range of practical supports, crisis services, counselling, outreach initiatives, education, and transitional housing supports. All the services provided at FTP are completely free of charge, thanks to generous Ministry and community funders and donors.

1. Emergency Shelter & Crisis Support

One of FTP's foundational programs is its emergency shelter for women and their children who are fleeing abuse or unsafe living environments. This shelter:

- Operates on a 24/7 basis with a support and information helpline available at all hours.

- Provides safe accommodation, food, and essential personal care items.

- Offers danger and lethality assessments, safety planning, and real-time advocacy during crises.

- Ensures accessibility through inclusive facilities for individuals of diverse abilities, with accessible units, a lift, and accommodations for pets.

This shelter is not just a safe physical space – it's staffed by trained professionals who help clients stabilize in a crisis and begin their journey to independence and security.

2. Transitional, Legal & Housing Support Services

FTP offers Transitional Support Services tailored to help individuals and families establish violence-free lives in their communities. This program includes:

- Housing support through navigating the housing system, referrals, application assistance, housing searches, and support to maintain current housing.

- Safety and transitional planning to reduce risk and foster independence.

- Connection to other community services, including legal, parenting, education,

job training, income assistance, and health and wellness supports.

- Skill-building and goal-setting support to help women envision and pursue short- and long-term life goals.

- A dedicated Family Court Support Worker who assists clients navigating the family court system, legal referrals, and court accompaniment when appropriate.

These services are flexible and responsive, designed to meet individuals where they are at, whether they're transitioning out of shelter or living independently in the community.

3. Counselling Services

FTP's counselling offerings are extensive and include individual, group, and specialized support for people who have experienced violence, trauma, or abuse.

Counselling Programs

- Woman Abuse Counselling: Confidential, supportive therapy to help women cope with and recover from violence. Counselling available in Orangeville, Shelburne and Bolton offices.

- Sexual Violence Counselling: Available to survivors of any gender age 16+, addressing both recent and historical sexual trauma. We also offer support for friends and family who are supporting survivors.

- Addictions Program: A non-judgmental program focused on helping women affected by substance use, including those parenting while managing addiction, with flexible, compassionate support offered throughout the region.

- Child Witness Program: Counselling and workshops for children who have been impacted by witnessing domestic violence, helping them process trauma and build resilience.

- Group Counselling Workshops: Skill-based and trauma-informed group sessions that offer community and healing.

- Support for Men: Available via FTP's 24/7 support and information helpline, connecting men who have been involved with or impacted by family violence to appropriate resources and counselling referrals. Together with Dufferin Child & Family Services, we also offer the Caring Dads Program – designed to support fathers who have used violence in



their relationships improve their relationship with their children and the children's mother.

Counselling can take place in person, by telephone, or virtually, and childcare support may be available for clients attending appointments.

4. Outreach Programs

FTP's outreach initiatives extend support beyond the shelter to individuals living in the broader community. Key outreach services include:

- Mobile and In-Office Support: Practical assistance with safety planning, housing navigation, legal referrals, goal setting, budgeting, and employment preparation.

- Rural Response Program: Targeted support for women in rural areas of north Dufferin County, reducing barriers to access and providing crisis intervention and counselling.

- Support Within Housing: For women experiencing trauma and struggling with mental health and housing issues, FTP offers ongoing support to maintain secure housing.

- Integrated Crisis Support: FTP's Mobile Crisis Counsellor collaborates with local partners — including healthcare, police, and mental health agencies — to respond to domestic violence and mental health crises throughout the community.

- FTP also works in collaboration with partners at the Hart Hub Dufferin to provide coordinated, wraparound services for individuals experiencing homelessness, mental health challenges and substance use concerns.

These outreach services ensure that individuals and families who may not access shelter directly can still receive meaningful support, safety planning, and referrals in the community.

5. Education & Community Engagement

FTP places a strong emphasis on prevention, healthy relationships, and community education:

- Youth Education Programs work in schools to teach young people about healthy relationships, respect, and equity, helping build safer communities from the ground up.

- FTP also participates in community workshops, events, and collaborations that

raise awareness about gender-based violence, anti-human trafficking, provide resources, and challenge stigma.

These initiatives extend FTP's impact beyond client services into community-wide healing and education. A future free of violence begins with educating the next generation.

6. Accessibility & Inclusivity

FTP strives to make all programs accessible and welcoming to everyone:

- Spaces that accommodate service animals, accessible parking, accessible shelter units, and a lift.

- Counselling available by phone, video, and in person, with access to an interpreter and translation services.

- Emergency transportation is available for counselling appointments and to access shelter.

- FTP staff receive ongoing training in accessibility, anti-oppression, equity, and trauma-informed care to ensure respectful and inclusive service delivery.

Family Transition Place is far more than a shelter. It's a comprehensive support network that helps people experiencing abuse find safety, develop resilience, navigate complex systems like housing and legal services, and heal from trauma. Through emergency shelter, counselling, outreach, transitional support, education, and community engagement, FTP meets people at every stage of their journey – from crisis response to long-term empowerment.

Whether someone needs immediate safety, emotional support or counselling, or long-term resources to rebuild a life free from violence, FTP's services are designed to ensure survivors are heard, supported, and connected to opportunities for healing and independence.

Sometimes it's difficult to call for help. Know that you'll be listened to with respect and without judgment. A counsellor is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week if you:

- are in a crisis
- are experiencing abuse and need to talk to someone or need to leave (Emergency transportation is available).

- are a concerned friend/family/co-worker looking for information to help someone who is being abused.

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SPORTS

Both CDDHS basketball teams to compete in District 4 championships

Written By **BRIAN LOCKHART**

Centre Dufferin District High School Royals boys' basketball teams will be going to the District 4 championship games after winning their semi-final games on home court.

Both the junior and senior teams have advanced after wins in the CDDHS gym on Friday, Feb. 20.

Junior

The Junior boys Royals team entered the semi-finals as the District's first-place team with a 7-1 record. The squad averaged 64 points per game this year.

In the semi-final playoff game, the Royals faced the Wellington Heights Secondary School Wolverines.

The Royals took an early lead in Friday's game and were ahead 37-10 at halftime.

With a strong showing on both offence

and defence, the Royals extended that lead to 47-17 by the end of the third quarter.

The final was a 60-31 win for the Royals, and they earned the right to advance to the District 4 championship game.

"It was a good game. I think we passed the ball around pretty good and got some nice open shots," summed up Royals point guard Lincoln Lannigan after the game. "On defence we ran our zone and it worked really well – they couldn't get by us."

Teammate, shooting guard Jayden Ferreira, said that spacing on the court and communication were key factors in the win.

"We had a rough start, but then after halfway through the first quarter we got our team back together and started playing as a team," Jayden said. "We were passing the ball, moving around and running our offence and playing good defence. On offence, spacing was a big thing. On defence, communication was a big part of it."

In the championship final, the Royals will be against Erin District High School.

Erin finished in second place in the regular season with a 7-1 record – the same as Centre Dufferin – so this final game is going to be a real battle between two really good teams.

The winning team will go on to compete at the regional CWOSSA level.

The District 4 junior championship was scheduled to take place at Centre Dufferin on Wednesday, Feb. 25, with results not available at press time.

Senior

The Centre Dufferin Royals senior boys basketball team will be going to the District 4 championship game after winning 72-49 over the Westside Secondary School Thunder from Orangeville in their semi-final playoff game.

The Royals arrived at the semi-final as the

second-place team in the District 4 standings with a 6-2 record.

Westside finished the regular season in third place with a 5-3 record and was considered a tough competitor for the Royals.

Over the season, the Royals averaged 60 points per game.

In the other senior semi-final game, first-place Erin District High School defeated Norwell District Secondary School 50-38 to earn the right to advance to the District 4 championship game.

Erin ended the regular season with a 6-2 record.

The final game between Shelburne and Erin will be a highly competitive match-up between two evenly matched teams.

The senior final championship game was scheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 25, in Erin.

Results were not available at press time. The winning team will go on to compete at the regional CWOSSA level.



BRIAN LOCKHART PHOTO

SEMI SUCCESS: The Centre Dufferin District High School Royals junior basketball team take on the Wellington Heights Secondary School Wolverines in the gym at Centre Dufferin on Friday, Feb. 21. The game was the junior division semi-final playoff game. The Royals came out on top with a 60-31 win and earned the right to advance to the District 4 championship game. Royals shooting guard Jayden Ferreira does a layup to score during the second quarter of the game.



BRIAN LOCKHART PHOTO

ADVANCING ON: The Centre Dufferin District High School Royals senior basketball team battled the Westside Secondary School Thunder from Orangeville in their semi-final playoff game in the gym at Centre Dufferin on Friday, Feb. 20. The Royals won the game 72-49 and will advance to the District 4 championship game. Royals forward Josh Pomeroy takes a shot at the hoop during the first quarter of the game.

Provincial Junior Hockey League playoffs are underway across the province

Written By **BRIAN LOCKHART**

The Provincial Junior Hockey League is in playoff mode as eight divisions across the province battle it out to see which teams will come out on top as this year's championship teams.

Division champions will move on to compete in the provincial Junior C Schmalz Cup to determine the top team in the province.

In the North Carruthers Division, all eight teams have entered the playoffs, which got underway on Thursday, Feb. 19.

Playoff series are best-of-seven matchups.

At least a couple of the quarter-final series will be a formality as the two bottom teams have no realistic opportunity to advance past the first round.

The first-place Stayner Siskins are up against the last-place Innisfil Spartans in

their quarter-final series.

The Siskins finished the regular season with 65 points. Innisfil managed to win only 10 games after 42 times on the ice this year.

The first game of that series took place on Thursday, Feb. 19, in Stayner and ended with a 3-1 win for the Siskins.

Finishing the regular season in second place, the Alliston Hornets are playing the Huntsville Otters in their quarter-final.

That series got underway on Friday, Feb. 20, in Alliston and ended with a 6-1 win for the Hornets in Game 1.

The third-place Orillia Terriers are battling the sixth-place Muskoka Bears in their quarter-final series.

That series got underway on Saturday, Feb. 21.

The fourth-place Penetang Kings are up against the fifth-place Midland Flyers in

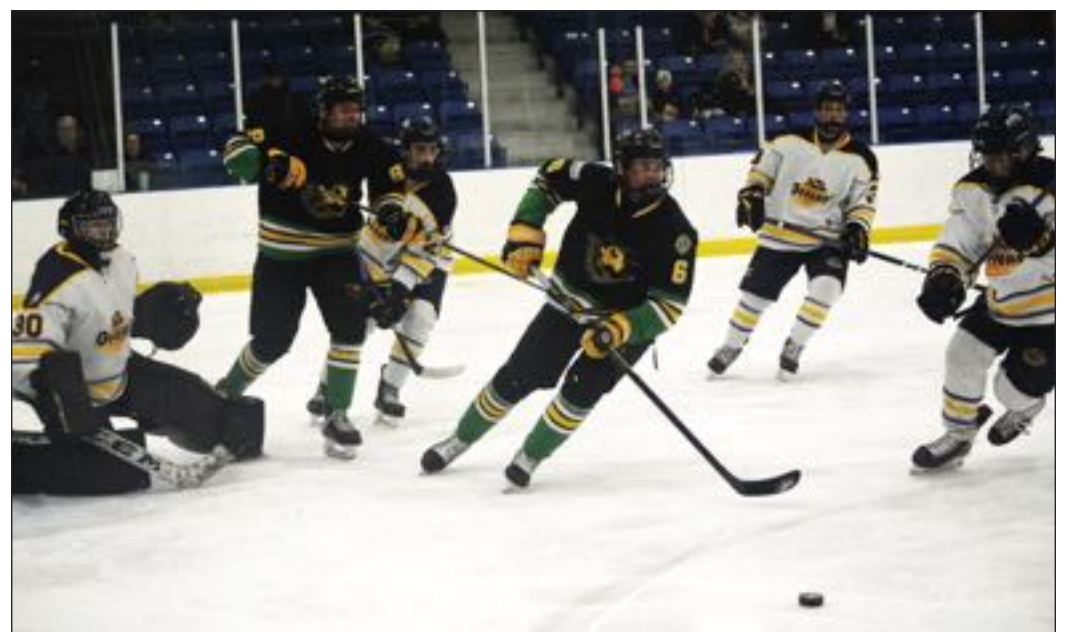
their quarter-final in a series that won't require much travelling.

That series opened on Friday, Feb. 20, and resulted in a 5-2 Midland win.

The quarter-final round of the North Car-

ruthers Division will wrap up by March 5, at the latest, if the series goes the full seven games.

Winning teams will move on to the semi-final round of the playoffs.



BRIAN LOCKHART PHOTO

PLAYOFF BATTLE: The Provincial Junior Hockey League has entered the 2026 playoffs with eight divisions battling out across the province. The Alliston Hornets take on the Huntsville Otters in Game 1 of their quarter-final series at the New Tecumseth Recreation Centre in Alliston on Friday, Feb. 20. The Hornets won this game 6-1.

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TEAM: CENTRE DUFFERIN DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL ROYALS JUNIOR BASKETBALL
POSITION: FORWARD

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

CHARLIE FRENCH

"I love the physical aspect the sport," said Centre Dufferin District High School Royals junior forward Charlie French of why he likes playing basketball. "I like playing the forward position and being able to box out, and playing some good defence. I think basketball is one of the most team oriented sports. You really need to rely on your teammates and you need to trust them."

Charlie plans to continue with the sport through high school.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

TOURNEY CHAMPS: The Shelburne Wolves U9 team are champions after winning the Schomberg Minor Hockey Association's Family Day U9 tournament in Schomberg on Feb. 16. The Wolves allowed only two goals over three games and shut out two of their opponents in the tournament. In their first game, they won 14-0 over the Georgina Blaze Team 2. In Game 2, they won 7-0 over the South Muskoka Bears. They won the championship game with a 9-2 win over the Aurora Tigers Silver team. The team is coached by head coach Syman Weatherall and assistants Tony Fick, Bryan Lemcke, and Adam Mitchell. The Wolves celebrate their win after the tournament.

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Ontario SPCA marks World Spay Day with more than 200 free surgeries

The Ontario SPCA and Humane Society is marked World Spay Day on Feb. 24 by providing 227 free spay and neuter surgeries across the province, preventing more than an estimated 12,000 unplanned puppies and kittens who may have ended up in shelters.

The Ontario SPCA was able to triple its daily spay/neuter capacity by dedicating additional resources and extending clinic hours to mark World Spay Day, across its five clinics

in Ontario.

Ontario SPCA Neuter Scooters were also running in Durham, Napanee, and Orangeville, transporting animals to participating spay/neuter clinics and returning them to their families at the end of the day.

Locally in Orangeville, 15 free spay/neuter surgeries were made possible through the Ontario SPCA's Neuter Scooter.

"World Spay Day gave us the opportunity

to remove cost as a barrier and reach families who might otherwise have struggled to access spay and neuter care," said Charmaine Brett, president and CEO of the Ontario SPCA and Humane Society. "That kind of support makes a real difference for animals and communities."

World Spay Day is a global movement, with animal welfare organizations around the world joining the Ontario SPCA's efforts to

reduce pet overpopulation. Organizations in Ukraine, Nepal, India, Romania, Bahamas, Sri Lanka, Mexico and here in Canada took part, collectively performing 1,200 spay/neuter surgeries.

As a registered charity the Ontario SPCA depends on the generosity of donors to make initiatives possible. To support spay and neuter programs or help provide care for animals in need, visit: ontariospca.ca/donate

United Way Guelph Wellington Dufferin raises \$2.4 million during 2026 campaign

United Way Guelph Wellington Dufferin celebrated the wrap-up of the 85th annual United Way Campaign on Feb. 24, joined by the workplaces, donors, volunteers and community partners that made it all possible.

"Today, we are celebrating your local love and we are honoured to share the many ways organizations and individuals came together, acting with kindness, hope and generosity, to create a community where everyone thrives," said Glenna Banda, executive director of United Way Guelph Wellington Dufferin. "Whether it was your time, your donations, your voices or your talents, you have made an impact on our community that we couldn't possibly have had without you."

"Despite another difficult and uncertain year, \$2.4 million was raised in 2025. These funds will support a diverse list of community programs and services that help over

145,000 people in our local community meet their basic needs, access resources and build a brighter future," said John Kelly, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness.

The campaign wrap-up event on Feb. 24 recognized a number of workplaces and volunteers for their contributions, including:

- Cornerstone Awards - Linamar Corporation, University of Guelph, the County of Wellington and The Co-operators
- Bright Star Award - OMAFA
- Local Love Award - R U Serious
- Leading the Way Award - Magic 106.1 & Hammond Power Solutions

"Every year we are amazed by the creativity, leadership and dedication of our workplace supporters," said Kelly, who also serves as the 2025 United Way Campaign chair. "It was incredible to see the excitement and en-

ergy throughout the community - whether that was a chilli cook-off, a burger battle or a football game - it's great to see the community come together in support of better."

The total announced today is short of where United Way had hoped to be this year, to ensure the current level of support to the community could be maintained or even increased to meet the growing demand for help.

"We are so grateful to all those who were able to give to the campaign this year, and we also understand why some weren't able to," said Banda. "But the reality is that our non-profit sector is struggling to meet the demand for programs and we received many applications for funding this past fall that we, very unfortunately, will not be able to support."

Community donations fuel United Way's

work - every single dollar that is invested in the community must also be fundraised in the community and that's why every donation is so important.

"After 85 years, United Way is ready for better. We are still here, working in partnership with those on the front lines of issues like poverty, homelessness, food insecurity and mental health, to ensure that the network of supports that our community has come to rely on continues to be there moving forward," said Banda.

"Thank you to everyone for another year of your support. Together we can continue to make better possible - one act of local love at a time."

Donations are welcome year-round from all community members and are accepted online at unitedwaygwd.com or by calling the United Way office 519-821-0571.

Dufferin OPP asks the public to build snow forts away from roadways and snow banks

The Dufferin Detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) is reminding residents that while building snow forts and

tunnels is a favourite winter pastime, it can become dangerous if proper precautions aren't taken.

With recent snowfall creating large, towering snowbanks, it's tempting to start digging and building. However, snow structures built near roadways and driveways pose serious risks. Snowplows and passing vehicles can

shift or collapse snowbanks without warning, turning a fun afternoon into a potentially life-threatening situation - especially if children are hidden from view.

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

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

Residents are urged to select safer spots for snow play, such as backyards, parks, or other designated play areas. With a little plan-



ning and awareness, families can enjoy the season while preventing avoidable accidents.

Dufferin OPP asks the community to work together to keep winter full of fun - not emergencies. Stay safe and make smart choices when enjoying the snow.

Members of the Dufferin OPP remain committed to public safety through proactive, community-focused policing and appreciate the public's ongoing support in helping keep neighbourhoods safe.

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APRIL 20, 1941 – FEBRUARY 13, 2026



Peter, born on April 20, 1941, in Brampton, grew up in Cataract. After just six weeks of high school, he decided that was enough and embarked on his career as an entrepreneur, exploring many options in his earlier years.

Peter sold and delivered baled shavings and hay from South River before he was even 16 years old. He hauled blocks for Peel Block, bought and sold cedar rail posts from Manitoulin Island, trucked potatoes from Alliston and hauled equipment for many from all over.

In 1968, Peter married Marjorie (nee Gray), who passed away in 2009. Peter and Marjorie had two sons, Craig (D-2013) and Darryl and blended their family with sons Gary, Brent (D-2021), Paul, and Mark.

Peter purchased 100 acres in Mono Township, five miles north of Orangeville on Highway 10 in 1966 and from there he began buying and selling farm and industrial equipment, which he continued to this day.

Peter possessed a sharp mind for numbers and a keen eye for a good deal. He frequented equipment auctions and sales across the province, never missing a Saturday auction and amassing a unique collection of goods. He was known for his hard bargaining skills and unwavering commitment to his prices.

Peter also provided valuable financial solutions as a private lender to many when traditional banks were not an option, helping to make homeownership a reality.

Peter was old fashioned and still enjoyed reading newspapers from all over and listening to radio broadcasts for the latest news and weather updates. Peter didn't mind driving many miles to pick up the papers from small communities and stopping to check out potential deals and tend to his many properties along the way. He was fond of drinking strong beer and had a wicked sweet tooth for chocolate milk and Chapman's ice cream.

He will be deeply missed and remembered by his numerous associates across the province, friends, neighbours, and family.

Peter is survived by his son Darryl (Coralee), daughter-in-law Debbie (Craig, predeceased), and stepsons Gary (Bettina), Paul (Patty), and Mark as well as grandchildren Jeffrey, Amy, Adam (Jayda), Tyler, Tonya, Sean (Melissa), Dustin, Rio (Kaleigh) and Carter, and eight great-grandchildren.

Peter was the son of Harold Thomas (D-1981) and Doris (nee Moore) (D-1961) Bell, brother of Diana (D-2018).

The family would like to thank the nurses of E Wing at Headwaters Health Care Centre, and Dr. Akula for their compassionate care in the last few weeks of Peter's life.

As expressions of sympathy donations to Bethell House Hospice or Matthews House Hospice would be appreciated.

A Celebration of Peter's Life will be held at In Memoriam Funeral Services Inc. (28 Main St N, Grand Valley). on Saturday, March 14, 2026. from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Online condolences can be made at www.imfunerals.com

In Memoriam Funeral Services Inc. has been given the honour of serving the Bell Family.

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Dufferin OPP lay impaired driving charges, encourage crime prevention

Impaired driving, cocaine possession charges laid following two-vehicle collision

Dufferin Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) officers charged a Grimsby resident with impaired operation-related charges following a two-vehicle collision on Airport Road.

On Valentine's Day (Feb. 14) at approximately 2:58 a.m., Dufferin OPP officers were dispatched to the area of Airport Road and 5 Sideroad in Mulmur for a two-vehicle collision.

Upon arrival, officers observed two heavily damaged vehicles. The driver of one vehicle was outside and walking around, while the second vehicle had sustained significant damage, requiring fire services to extricate all five occupants.

After speaking with the driver of the first vehicle, officers initiated an impaired driving investigation.

Shamar Foster, 23, from Grimsby, has been charged with:

- Operation while impaired - alcohol and drugs
- Possession of a Schedule I Substance- Cocaine
- Driving motor vehicle with open container of liquor
- Drive vehicle or boat with cannabis readily available
- Dangerous operation

The accused individual is scheduled to appear before the Ontario Court of Justice in Or-

angeville. His driver's license was suspended, and his vehicle was impounded.

None of the listed charges have been proven in court.

Man charged with impaired driving and travelling 61-kilometres over the speed limit

Dufferin Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) officers have charged a Singhampton resident with impaired operation-related charges following a traffic stop.

On Feb. 21, at approximately 12:43 p.m., Dufferin OPP were conducting traffic enforcement in the area of County Road 124 in Melancton. At that time, officers observed a vehicle travelling at 61-kilometres over the speed limit and conducted a traffic stop. Upon speaking with the driver, the officer initiated an impaired driving investigation.

Andrew Lecas, 35, from Singhampton, has been charged with:

- Operation while impaired - blood alcohol concentration (80 plus)
- Operation while impaired - alcohol and drugs
- Drive Motor Vehicle - Perform stunt - Excessive speed
- Drive vehicle or boat with cannabis readily available
- Driving motor vehicle with unsealed container of liquor
- Speeding 50+ km/h over posted limit

The accused individual is scheduled to appear before the Ontario Court of Justice in Orangeville. His driver's licence was suspended, and his vehicle was impounded.

None of the listed charges have been proven in court.

'Lock it or Lose it': Dufferin OPP remind community members to keep valuables protected

The Dufferin Detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) is continuing to promote the "Lock It or Lose It" crime prevention initiative throughout the county.

"Officers are receiving ongoing reports of thefts from vehicles, homes, and outbuildings. In many cases, doors were left unlocked and valuables were visible or easily accessible. These types of incidents are typically crimes of opportunity and can often be prevented through simple, consistent preventative measures," reads a press release from Dufferin OPP.

"Residents are reminded that living in a rural area does not eliminate the risk of crime. Criminals travel, and unsecured property can quickly become a target."

Key reminders under the "Lock It or Lose It" initiative include:

- Lock your doors: Secure vehicles, homes, sheds, barns, and garages at all times, even when stepping away briefly.
- Secure outbuildings: Ensure workshops,

trailers, and storage areas are properly locked. Heavy-duty padlocks and reinforced doors can provide added protection.

- Keep valuables out of sight: Remove or conceal wallets, purses, electronics, tools, and other valuables. Store equipment and recreational vehicles away from public view whenever possible.

- Do not leave keys inside: Never leave keys, key fobs, or garage door openers in vehicles or in easily accessible locations.

- Improve lighting: Install motion-activated lighting around driveways, entrances, and outbuildings to deter suspicious activity.

- Consider surveillance: Video cameras and alarm systems can help monitor your property and assist police if an incident occurs.

"Community vigilance also plays a critical role in crime prevention. Residents are encouraged to report suspicious behaviour. If you notice unfamiliar people or vehicles parked along roadways or in areas where they are not typically seen, contact police," said Dufferin OPP. "Your call could help prevent a crime."

A visible police presence will continue as officers conduct proactive patrols aimed at deterring criminal activity and enhancing public safety. Taking a few extra moments to secure your property can significantly reduce the likelihood of becoming a victim.

The OPP encourage all residents to remain alert, practice preventative safety measures, and work together to keep their communities safe.

Shelburne Public Library highlights Hoopla digital media service, shares staff pick of the week

Have you heard of Hoopla? We like to think of it as the library's version of Netflix, but even better because it has books!

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Staff pick of the week

Heart Shot #1 Bill Gastner Mystery by Steven F. Havill is the staff pick of the week and the first book in the Posadas County Mystery Series.

When a series of crimes disrupts the tranquil community in Posadas County, New Mexico, a group of small-town cops must fight for their lives to keep the county safe.

Posadas County, New Mexico, has very few main streets and no city-slick cop shop. But it has an earnest, elected County Sheriff and his aging Undersheriff — William C. Gastner. Pushing sixty, widower Bill has no other life than in law enforcement — and doesn't want one, even if he's being nudged gently toward retirement. Then big-time trouble strikes.

A car full of teens, running from a stop by

Deputy Torrez, goes airborne into a rocky outcrop, killing all five kids and revealing a package of cocaine under the seat. Has someone brought big-time crime to the small town?

Bill is now dealing with grieving parents — one of whom starts packing a gun. Then a second explosion of violence fells an undercover cop.

Why Trudy recommends it: A friend recommended author Steven Havill a few weeks ago. His *Posadas County Mystery Series* has 27 books, with the 28th coming out this May. The main character of the series is Undersheriff Bill Gastner. He's a twenty-year Marine veteran and has 21 years with the Sheriff's Dept. in Posadas County, New Mexico. Although he's aging, overweight, and weathered a quadruple bypass, he has no other life than in law enforcement.

This series is written in first person with humour and insight into the processes involved in catching a killer.

I am currently reading the fourth in this series on Hoopla. With February weather being so unpredictable, I know the next book in this amazing series is at my fingertips, just a click away.

This article was written by the Shelburne Public Library staff.



adopt a cat

Diana

Diana is our absolute stunning 8 year old long-haired princess. She was brought to FCR to socialize and in the past two years we have seen her come out of her shell. She is a peaceful girl who would prefer a quiet home. She gets along well with other cats and can co-habit with dogs without issue. She truly wants a home where she can receive pets and lounge in a warm bed.

Adoption fee is \$275. She is spayed, microchipped, vaccinated, dewormed and flea treated.

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SAVE \$3
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