

DECEMBER 2025

the Hummer

Arts,
Entertainment
& Ideas

free

p.20 & 21



December's Events



The 2025 Gift Giving Guide



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A Musical Celebration



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A New Chapter



The Art of Toller Cranston p.5



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Toonies for The Table

Support Perth's Good Food Bank

The beloved community campaign “Toonies for the Table” is running again until December 19. 2023’s successful campaign raised \$17,000 for The Table Community Food Centre — this year the need is greater than ever and the goal is to raise at least \$20,000. As the season of giving begins, residents of Perth are encouraged to show their support for neighbours facing food insecurity by dropping their spare change, especially those handy toonies, into collection jars placed at local businesses throughout town.

With the rising cost of food and an increase in the number of people relying on the Good Food Bank, every coin truly counts. This simple act of generosity can help stock shelves, fill plates, and bring a little hope to those who need it most.

“We’ve seen a significant uptick in demand this year, and community initiatives like Toonies for the Table are critical in helping us keep up,” says a spokesperson from the Good Food Bank. “A single toonie may not seem like much, but when a whole town comes together, the impact is remarkable.”

Whether you’re grabbing a coffee, doing your holiday shopping, or stopping by your favourite local spot, keep an eye out for the Toonies for the Table jars and consider making a small donation. It’s a simple, tangible way to make a meaningful difference in someone’s life.

Together, let’s help ensure no one in our community goes hungry this holiday season. Thank you for your good will and support.

“WINTER” HUMM DEADLINE!

Just a reminder that we are changing up our distribution schedule again in the beginning of 2026, when we will publish a “Winter issue” that comes out in mid-January and covers you through to the end of February. The deadline for submitting ads, editorial and calendar listings to the Winter issue of theHumm is:

TUESDAY, JANUARY 6

We plan to distribute that issue during the week of January 12. We will resume regular monthly publication with our March issue (which follows our normal deadline of February 20 for editorial and calendar listings, and February 22 for ads).



Who's Reading theHumm

In August of 2024, actor **Mark McKinney** (best known for his roles in “The Kids in the Hall” and “Superstore”) made a stop in Almonte to learn about puppeteering for his CTV documentary series “Mark McKinney Needs a Hobby.” He hung out with some of the Puppets Up! organizers and puppeteers, made an appearance at the Saturday night Cabaret, and then was kind enough to send in this photo of him reading theHumm on his way out of town.

We humbly recommend checking out the hilarious series “Slings and Arrows,” which Mark co-created, wrote and starred in. It’s available to stream on CBC Gem.

Humble Thought

One potent way to fight climate change is to enjoy yourself. Attention spent relating with others, learning things, appreciating the world, enjoying art, music, dance and other such life-based pursuits requires little or no material input. Products responsible for carbon emissions become less appealing. “More Fun, Less Stuff.”

— Mike Nickerson <sustainwellbeing.net>



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theHumm is a monthly arts, entertainment and ideas newspaper delivered free to businesses and visitor attractions in Almonte, Perth, Carleton Place, Westport, Pakenham, Carp, Arnprior, Smiths Falls, Burnstown, White Lake, Balderson, and Merrickville. Our mandate is to connect and promote people and events in the small towns and rural communities of the Ottawa Valley — where the arts flourish and entertaining characters run amok!

Submissions
By email to editor@thehummm.com

Content Deadline:
20th of the month prior to publication

Advertising Deadline:
22nd of the month prior to publication

TICKETS
Please

What's Happening This Month

Live music, theatre, festivals & more – tickets made easy.



WORKSHOP
Introduction to Weaving: Holiday Edition
Dec. 3 • 6–9PM
CP Gallery • Carleton Place

MISSISSIPPI MUDDS present
Annie
Dec. 4 & 5 • 7:30PM | Dec. 6 & 7 • 2:30PM
Carleton Place Town Hall Auditorium

WORKSHOP
Watercolour: Florals and Foliage
Thursdays • Dec. 4–18 • 7–8:30PM
Carleton Place Collective

ALMONTE IN CONCERT presents
A Piano for Christmas
Dec. 6 • 7:30PM **SOLD OUT**
Almonte Old Town Hall

THE TOWN SINGERS OF CARLETON PLACE present
The Heart of Christmas
Dec. 14 • 2:30PM | Dec. 16 • 7PM
St. Paul's United Church • Perth

CONCERT
Mudmen
Dec. 27 • 7PM | Dec. 28 • 2PM
Studio Theatre Perth



MEN & WOMEN OF THE TAY present
On This Winter's Night
Dec. 3 • 7:30PM
St. Paul's United Church • Perth

STUDIO THEATRE PERTH presents
The Lion in Winter
Dec. 4 & 5 • 7:30PM | Dec. 6 & 7 • 2PM
Studio Theatre Perth

FUNDRAISING CONCERT
Nathan Slonowski Trio
Dec. 6 • 7PM
CP Gallery • Carleton Place

RIVERSONG THEATRE presents
A Christmas Story: The Musical
Dec. 12–14 • 1PM & 7PM
Almonte Old Town Hall

THE VALLEY VOICES present
Peace & Joy
Dec. 14 • 7PM
Almonte United Church

OTHER HAND TAROT presents
Read-It-Yourself Tarot Workshop
Jan. 3 • 10AM–6PM
Carleton Place Collective

Opinions and information published in theHumm in letters, press releases, or individual columns do not necessarily reflect the opinion of this newspaper.

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Subscribe to Hummail – it's Free!

Do you know about our weekly e-newsletter called “Hummail”? We use it to further promote independent local performers, creators, businesses and community initiatives. It's also a great reminder of what's coming up on the weekend, in case someone has stolen your copy of theHumm...

So far we have sent out over 275 editions of Hummail, and we have over 2000 subscribers.

We would love it if you would subscribe too, and we promise not to share your email address with anyone. You can subscribe at <thehummm.com>, or by emailing <kris@thehummm.com>.

Browse our full event list and buy tickets in minutes at **TicketsPlease.ca**

Magnificat! Love's Pure Light

Vivaldi's Magnificat, Christmas favourites from Willcocks, Rutter, Forrest and others

the Kanata Choral Society
 Scott Auchinleck, conductor

Saturday December 6, 2025 at 7:30PM
 St. Paul's Anglican Church,
 20 Young Road, Kanata

Adults: \$25.00 (\$22.00 pre-sale), Seniors (65+) \$20.00
 Students \$10.00, Children 12 and under Free





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Holiday Magic Returns to Mississippi Mills

Mississippi Mills is set to sparkle with festive cheer from December 5–7 as the community welcomes Santa Claus for a weekend packed with music, parades, and joyful traditions.

Light Up the Night

The weekend kicks off on Friday, December 5 with the return of the enchanting Light Up the Night concert on Mill Street in Almonte. This open-air celebration transforms the downtown core into a winter wonderland, drawing thousands for an evening of music and magic.

Emceed once again by Ottawa Valley favourite Wayne Rostad, you can sing along to your favourite Christmas tunes from entertainers including Rachelle Behrens, Nelson Colt, Braiden Wyman (and more!), and watch in amazement as The Snow Queen and her Twinkle Fairies wave their magic wands to bring Santa Claus to town. Stick around after the concert for a truly magical fireworks finale to light up the night sky!

Mill Street will be closed to traffic, so arrive early to grab a drink or bite from the food vendors in Candy Cane Court (Ultramar parking lot). Vendors will be set up at 6:30PM with the concert beginning promptly at 7PM. For details about entertainment, vendors, parking and more, please visit <mississippimills.ca/LUTN>.

Pakenham Santa Claus Parade

The festive fun continues in Pakenham with the annual Santa Claus Parade at 1PM on Saturday, December 6. It will wind through the charming village streets twice to ensure no one misses the magic.

The parade leaves the Stewart Community Centre (112 MacFarlane Street) at 1PM sharp and will travel to Jeanie Street (toward the fire station), then turn right onto County Road 29, and make another right on Renfrew Street, leading back to MacFarlane Street and the community centre.

The Pakenham & District Civitan Club will be collecting food and cash donations for the Lanark County Food Bank — The Hunger Stop during the parade, so please bring your non-perishable food items.

Afterwards, the Pakenham & District Civitan Club will serve free hot dogs and hot chocolate to visitors. Families are encouraged to stick around for free public skating until 4PM courtesy of the Municipality of Mississippi Mills.

Almonte Christmas Parade

Wrap up the weekend on Sunday, December 7 with the dazzling Almonte Christmas Parade, a twinkling procession of lights and music that winds through the heart of town.

The parade assembles and leaves from the Rexall parking lot (430 Ottawa Street) at 5PM. It will head down Ottawa Street, through Main Street to the bottom of Mill Street. It will then travel up Mill Street, turn right on Bridge Street and end at the John Levi Community Centre.

Be sure to bring along some non-perishable food items as the Almonte Scouts will be collecting food and cash donations along the route in support of the Almonte Lions Club/Almonte Civitan Club Christmas Food Hampers.

Following the parade, come to the upper hall of the John Levi Community Centre for free hot dogs and hot chocolate, courtesy of the Almonte Lions Club. Free public skating will also be offered, courtesy of the Municipality.

For more on the Mississippi Mills parades, please visit <mississippimills.ca/ChristmasParades>. If you have questions about either parade, contact the Mississippi Mills Recreation and Culture Department at 256-2064 or <events@mississippimills.ca>.

Bundle up and bring your cheer — Mississippi Mills is ready to welcome you for a weekend of holiday joy from December 5 to 7!

Gifts for Lovers of Sweet Treats

"Just Chocolates," Ottawa Valley Gift Baskets.....	\$84.95
Locally produced artisan chocolate, The Granary	\$5-20





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The Magic Realism of Toller Cranston

The spotlight is back on Canadian icon Toller Cranston, but this time it is brilliantly focused on Toller's amazing, fiercely original "Magic Realism" art. This is the second time his older sister (and Arnprior resident) Phillippa Cranston Baran is committed to ensuring that "Canadians remember Toller as a creative genius, who worked like a demon, chased his destiny without fear, and continues to inspire others to dream big."

by Sally Hansen

On January 25, Phillippa is celebrating her brother's fantastic art with the launch of her beautiful coffee table art book tribute. Titled *Toller Cranston: Artistic Impressions*, it "explores a stunning body of work through the perspectives of the artist who created the work, the gallerists who represented the work, the collectors who fell in love with the work, and the sister who bought for \$15 the first piece he ever sold — a pen and ink drawing of a dead chicken that he did at age fifteen."

Her new book does more than that. It gladdens the heart. Phillippa succeeds in her mission. Her book makes us even happier and prouder than we already are to be Canadian. Most of us remember Toller primarily as an outrageously talented and irrepressible world figure skating champion. In addition to being six-time Canadian champion and 1976 Olympic bronze medalist, he single-footedly* revolutionized men's skating. He coached, choreographed, designed costumes, conceived and produced and starred in ice shows and television spectaculars.

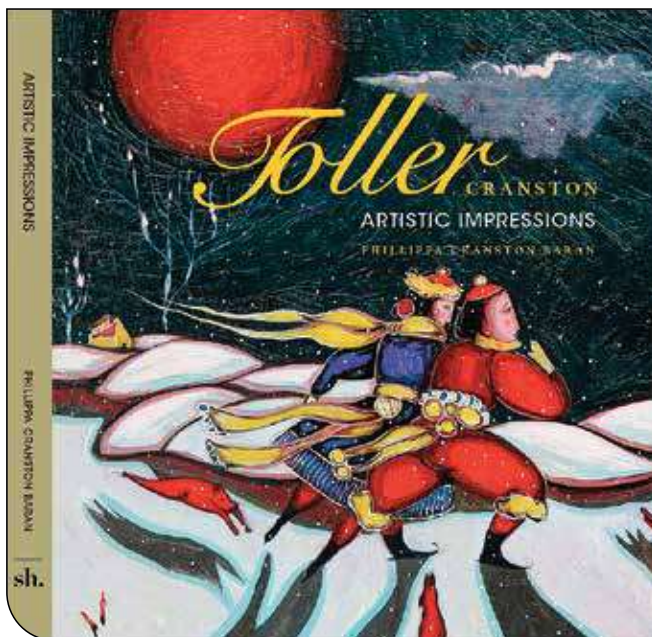
Many of us, however, are not as aware of his extraordinary life and accomplishments as an artist. Phillippa's gorgeous presentation of Toller's paintings is interspersed with his quotes, and this one seems particularly revealing of his ambition: "Da Vinci was never the figure skating champion of Italy." After feasting your eyes on Toller's art, you may be persuaded that this Canadian icon is indeed the Da Vinci of the figure skating world.

Toller was absolutely passionate about his painting. He stated it very succinctly: "We're all born with an inclination in the genes about who we are and what we're supposed to do. It's in the DNA. I had full knowledge as to what my destiny was from a very early age. I was a painter." He always painted, and he brought the same discipline, work ethic, conviction and creativity to his art that brought him fame as a skater. Long before he retired from his varied skating activities, his paintings were showing up in homes and galleries around the world.

He painted like he skated — flamboyantly, brilliantly, unrestrainedly; the canvases are instantly recognizable as Toller's. He wrote, "As an artist, I don't question images or themes. I never question my hand. I never doubt it. It starts and that's what comes out." His art off the ice was his main source of income throughout his life. He painted incessantly, producing work for more than 300 exhibitions in galleries and shows around the world. It is estimated that he

created more than 20,000 paintings, many of which are treasured possessions in the homes of people whose lives he touched. At the time of his death, he was planning a Canada-wide exhibition of his art, to be titled "A Terrifying Obsession."

The further I read about his amazing life and astounding accomplishments, the more research I was enticed to do. It was an exciting journey, and we have his sister to thank for much of it. In our January 2024 issue, Humm editor Kris Riendeau interviewed Phillippa to report on the launch of her first book — *Toller Cranston – Ice, Paint, Passion*. It is an extraordinarily researched and heart-warming compendium of tributes and factual data, citing over 150 contributors and sources celebrating the life and unique gifts of her brother — "a creative genius." I encourage you to find Kris's article at <thehummm.com>. You will learn about the deep family connections to the Ottawa Valley, and the enormous challenges Phillippa faced



when Toller dropped dead of a heart attack at the age of 65, intestate, at his fabulous estate property in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. He spent the last 23 years of his life creating magnificent canvases there, and became a local treasure.

Toller authored four books, and they provoked a wide range of responses from critics. One wrote that Toller's "... incisive, literate, shriek-aloud funny autobiographies present the artist far better than any tribute could." My perusal found that they also reveal the wild demands and consequences of his creativity and perfectionism, the insecurities that plagued him, and his self-imposed emotional isolation. He deserves much better, and his talented sister has risen to the challenge with her two books celebrating her brother's hard-won and fully deserved stature as a Canadian icon.

Phillippa Cranston Baran

...has a BA from Queens University and an MA in Film from UCLA. She is an award-winning writer, producer, former university film professor and for a few glorious years back in the day, a dairy goat farmer. Her 2025 biography, *Toller Cranston, Ice, Paint, Passion* won ten book awards in its first year.



Phillippa is also a competitive Duplicate Bridge player and holds the rank of Ruby Life Master. She lives in the historic family cottage on the Ottawa River near Arnprior.

Since her brother's death in 2015, Phillippa has dedicated her life to celebrating "... a man who embodied, in every single thing he did, the values of courage, creativity, and expression." She hopes that by getting to know the artist as a person, becoming more familiar with the influences and experiences that impacted his work, and gaining a better understanding of his thinking and attitudes, readers will have a richer, deeper, more complete experience with his artworks. She welcomes every opportunity to speak about her brother. Her coordinates are on the back of her Artist Trading Card at the top of this page.

January Book Launch

On Sunday, January 25, Phillippa Cranston Baran invites us all to the launch of her beautiful art book at historic O'Brien Theatre at 147 John Street N in Arnprior, to share her brother's signature "Magic Realism" with her Ottawa Valley friends and neighbours. Admission is free. Her indefatigable brother strove to leave a mark on the world stage; Phillippa's second tribute to him — *Toller Cranston: Artistic Impressions* — makes it absolutely clear that he was a champion in both of his artistic pursuits.

Copies of the book, brilliantly designed by Robert Hughes of Robert Hughes Design and Print in Arnprior, will be available for sale. Both books will soon be available from Amazon and local booksellers, as well as by order from the publisher at <sutherlandhousebooks.com>. For more information or to inquire about Toller Cranston original paintings, contact Donna Child at Donna Child Fine Art, Toronto by email at <donnachildfineart@gmail.com>.

**Sorry. Sometimes I just can't help myself. And he used both feet...*

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Who Phillippa Cranston Baran,
on behalf of Toller Cranston

What Author: *Toller Cranston: Artistic Impressions*

Where <phillippacranstonbaran.com>;
<phillippabaran@gmail.com>;
<TollerInternational.com>

When Sunday, January 25th, 2PM, book Launch event at
the O'Brien Theatre, 147 John St. N, Arnprior

Why "Moments after learning that Toller had died
suddenly at his home in Mexico, I had a power-
ful realization that it was up to me to ensure that
Canadians remember Toller as a creative genius,
who worked like a demon, chased his destiny
without fear, and continues to inspire others to
dream big."

ARTIST TRADING CARD

Need 'em... need 'em... got 'em...
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Joanne Beaton



Welcome to 2989 Concession 3C, where Christmas greets you at the door and every day feels like a holiday. This 2021 bungalow sits on over 3 acres of countryside, offering space, privacy, and a cozy setting year-round. Picture unwrapping presents by the fire in the living room with 9' ceilings and luxury vinyl plank flooring. The kitchen has quartz countertops, stainless steel appliances, and ceiling-high cabinetry—ready for holiday feasts and cookie-baking.

From festive gatherings in the dining area, retreat behind a rustic barn door to two cheerful bedrooms and an elegantly finished bathroom. The primary suite offers double closets and an ensuite with double sinks and a walk-in shower. A mudroom and insulated double garage keep winter boots and toys organized.

The mostly finished basement adds room for games, crafts, and memories, with walk-out access to trails, chicken coop, and woodshed. Just minutes from town, this home is a gift your family will treasure.



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Youth Centre Benefit Concert at CP Gallery

A benefit concert at the Carleton Place Gallery featuring The Nathan Sloniowski Trio will be raising much needed funds for the Carleton Place Youth Centre. Nathan (guitar and vocals), Bill Serson (drums) and Barry Buse (bass and vocals) will be performing songs from Nathan's acclaimed solo album *The Lost Love Letter to a Small Town*.

Nathan also plays with The Ragged Flowers and The Maywoods, so he may sneak in a couple of tunes he contributes to those bands. Tickets for the 7PM show on Saturday, December 6 are available at <TicketsPlease.ca> or at the gallery, and all funds raised from tickets and performance-night edibles prepared by youth centre volunteers will go directly to the centre.

"I approached Ginny Fobert, the owner and human cultural sparkplug at the Carleton Place Gallery, about doing a Christmas benefit," explains Nathan. "I'd played there earlier this year with The Ragged Flowers, and it's a magical place for a show among the paintings and sculptures. Ginny was instantly supportive, and suggested that the band direct funds from our concert to the Carleton Place Youth Centre, which her research showed is often overlooked by local fundraisers."

Ginny set up a meeting for Nathan to meet with Sharon Ruth, the Executive Director of the Carleton Place Youth Centre, and Nathan was "blown away by the programming there," with after-school drop-ins on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays; evening crafts and cooking programs; summer camps and special outings throughout the year for 8- to 15-year-old children. The gallery is also supporting *Three-Fifty Squares*, a special holiday exhibition featuring a diverse selection of original 12x12 artworks and sculptures all priced at \$350, with 10% of all proceeds being donated to the Youth Centre.

Nathan's original compositions blend the groove of Jesse Winchester with the down-to-earth wit and wisdom of John Prine. In his latest album, *The Lost Love Letter to a Small Town*, Nathan spins artfully crafted tales of neighbourly kindness, hopeless romanticism, community rivalries, guitar obsession, and aspirations for a better world that start with the world we create at home.



The Nathan Sloniowski Trio (l-r Nathan, Bill Serson and Barry Buse) will play a fundraising concert for the Carleton Place Youth Centre on December 6

Carleton Place's Barry Buse and Arnprior's Bill Serson make up the band's rhythm section. "Barry and Bill helped me launch the album at a sold-out Folkus concert series show in 2024, and we played another sold-out show to kick off last fall's Music at MERA Series in McDonald's Corners," says Nathan. "They're incredible musicians."

Barry's a road-tested bassist who's played with gospel and blues legend Diunna Greenleaf, and toured North America and Australia with stops at major festivals from Ottawa BluesFest to the Tremblant International Blues Festival with Trevor Finlay. Bill teaches percussion at Arnprior's Main Street School of Music, and his students have gone on to study music at the university level and then launch amazing careers. He is a two-time Canadian Snare Drum Champion whose musical mastery is influenced by legends like Buddy Rich and Steve Gadd.

"Bill and Barry are also well known throughout the Ottawa Valley for their blues band Redneck Limousine," adds Nathan. "Though they like to tease me that I use up all their feelings when we play my acoustic repertoire, I'm really grateful whenever we get to play together."

Concert presenters would agree. Violet Bova from the Folkus Concert Series wrote that: "Nathan's voice is as haunting as the tale he just told. It's enough to tempt tears to start falling," while Peter Cochrane from Music at MERA said: "The band was tight and Nathan was in the groove. It was a great live show and a wonderful kick-off to our Fall series."

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Gift certificate for 60-minute massage, Meristem Massage Therapy.....\$135
A selection of luxurious scarves from FRAAS, Acquisti Life.....\$99 & under
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La Vigne Mayan Magic, 60ml & 100ml, Foodsmiths.....\$22.99, \$30.99



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St. Paul's Presents A Musical Celebration of Christmas

The Music Team at St. Paul's United Church in Perth is presenting "A Musical Celebration of Christmas" on Sunday, December 21 at 2PM. The first half of the concert will feature the St. Paul's Senior Choir singing *Emmanuel, God with Us* — a contemporary "Lessons and Carols" telling the Christmas story through music and readings.

The second half of the program will feature a variety of vocalists and instrumentalists. Joel LeBlanc, long-time member of the St. Paul's choir, will sing *Huron Carol*, the oldest Canadian Christmas carol, written in the mid-17th century.

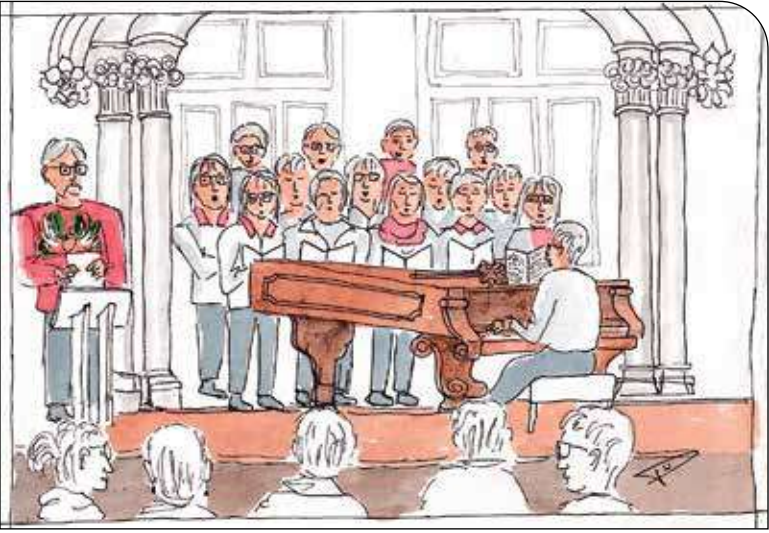
Don McLean, the minister at St. Paul's, is also a cellist in the Kingston Symphony. Along with Director of Music Brad Mills on organ, he will perform arrangements of *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* and *Divinum Mysterium*.

Kelly Hood will perform a medley of two Christmas songs, *Away in a Manger* and the Irish traditional reel *Christmas Eve*, on the Uilleann pipes (Irish pipes).

Six members of the St. Paul's choir are in a barbershop octet called "High Octane." They will be harmonizing together on barbershop arrangements of *O Holy Night* and *Go Tell it On the Mountain*. High Octane consists of Terri Henderson, Leslie Hoyle, Rick Comrie, Sue Upham, Brad Mills and Bill Elgie from the St. Paul's choir, joined by Tineke Doornbosch and Dan Woods.

The "Charlie Brown Trio" will be returning this year to perform more music from the much-loved *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. The Emmy award-winning jazzy arrangements from the soundtrack, written by Vince Guaraldi, will be performed by Brad Mills on piano, Cam Gray on bass, and Terry Kirkpatrick on drums. The St. Paul's Junior Choir and the women of the Senior Choir will join the trio on *My Little Drum*, which is a swinging version of *The Little Drummer Boy*.

One of the St. Paul's Junior Choir members, Mathew Smith, will be joined by his mom, Karen Smith, in a rendition of Alan Jackson's *There's a New Kid in Town* (and he's lying in a manger down the road).



The choir at St. Paul's United Church in Perth (depicted above by Peggy Schenk #pegmeister_art) will be part of "A Musical Celebration of Christmas" on Sunday, December 21

Interspersed amongst all of this will be an opportunity for the audience to join the choir in singing some favourite carols, accompanied by the St. Paul's mighty pipe/digital three manual organ, one of the finest instruments in the region. Brad will pull out all the stops for a rousing *Toccata* on the tune *O Come All Ye Faithful*.

Following the concert, everyone is welcome to join the choir for refreshments. There are no tickets or admission charge, but donations for the work of St. Paul's will be accepted at the door (suggested donation of \$20). St. Paul's United Church, a centre for creativity, discovery and growth, is located at 25 Gore Street West in Perth <stpaulsperth.ca>.

Star So Bright

Fifteen years ago, singer/songwriter Jackie Bennett was approached and told that her song *Star So Bright* from her first CD should be made into a story. Ten months later the story was completed along with ten original pieces of music. The story, although occurring during the birth of Jesus, tells of a woman's journey of faith that is relevant today as we all search for where we belong and how our faith leads us there. This storyline undoubtedly captivates your attention, while the enchanting musical score draws you to a spiritual place.

Jackie Bennett currently resides outside of Orillia, but was born and raised in the Carleton Place area and is the daughter of well-known naturalist Cliff Bennett. With her young adult novel *When Am I Sup-*

posed to Sleep, her play *Get What You Need*, and *Who Needs Drama: A Guide to Teaching Primary and Junior Drama*, she has proven to be a versatile writer.

Star So Bright has been performed in countless churches over the past 15 years, and this will be the first time it has been presented in the Ottawa Valley. The performance will be hosted by St. Paul's Anglican Church in Almonte on Saturday, December 6 at 7PM. Women of the congregation will read the story, and the music will be provided by the *Star So Bright* band and members of St. Paul's. A freewill offering will be accepted. For more information, please contact Jackie at <starsobright14@gmail.com>.

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mudmen.ca NON LLBO Mudmen Inc Event studiotheatreperth.com

The Perth Citizens' Band
CHRISTMAS CONCERT
 Guest performer: **The Perth Town Crier**
 Sunday, December 14, 2:00PM
 Perth Legion, 24 Beckwith St., Perth
 Free Admission
 More information at 613-264-3611 or www.perthband.ca



TOWN SINGERS

Sunday, Dec. 14, 2:30PM
Tuesday, Dec. 16, 7PM
 Snow Date: Sunday, Dec. 21, 2:30PM

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The Father of the Christmas Bird Count

By Lise Balthazar
"To the bird lover, a world without birds is a dead world; a mere shell of a world."
 — Frank M. Chapman, 1864–1945

Frank Michler Chapman was born on June 12, 1864, in Englewood, New Jersey. His father was an attorney for an important bank on Wall Street. His mother was a gardener, piano player and artist. Although he had no musical talent, Chapman always maintained that his mother's love of music made him "deeply responsive to the songs of birds." His lifelong love affair with birds started at eight years old, when he encountered a bright red cardinal.

After graduating from Englewood Academy, Chapman started working at a New York bank to follow in his father's footsteps. However, his true passion was nature and birds, but he didn't know how to earn a living from it.

A fortuitous meeting on a commuter train with other enthusiastic birders served to deepen Chapman's passion and longing for a different life. An article published in January 1884 was a stepping stone: the American Ornithologists Union needed volunteers to work on a nationwide bird migration study. Chapman applied and was accepted into the program.

While working at the bank six days a week, he devoted every spare moment to the bird migration study. Ultimately, the call of the wild was too strong, and at 25 Chapman left his banking job and became a freelance naturalist.

In 1888 he became assistant to Dr. Joel Allen, bird curator at the American Museum of Natural History. Chapman's dedication allowed him to become head of the museum's new Department of Ornithology in 1920.

Throughout his 54-year career at the museum, Chapman demonstrated his brilliant skills as an administrator and writer. He roamed the earth to explore and research the world of birds in their most secluded retreats.

Chapman's contribution to bird research is doubtless invaluable. However, he lived in an uninformed time period, where the common tool used to learn about birds was the shotgun. It is difficult to understand and accept that this lover of birds joined his counterparts in the slaying of birds.

Fortunately, the camera started to replace the gun as a research tool, and Chapman had a change of



Young and old, watching a backyard feeder or out with a group — the Lanark Highlands Christmas Bird Count is for everyone! Pictured above is Frank Chapman, the "Father of the Christmas Bird Count."

heart and views, particularly when confronted with an appalling 19th century Christmas tradition called "side hunts," in which participants would compete in shooting the most birds in order to be declared winner.

In 1900, Chapman took it upon himself to put a stop to the carnage by suggesting a much better and beneficial option: counting birds instead of killing them. He wrote in *Bird-Lore*: "a new kind of Christmas side hunt, in the form of a Christmas bird census... we hope that all our readers who have the opportunity will spend a portion of Christmas Day with the birds."

And so the Audubon Christmas Bird Count was born.

As an ornithologist, researcher, explorer, naturalist and writer, Frank Chapman has innumerable accomplishments to his credit; and yet, 80 years after his death, he is still remembered primarily as the Father of the Christmas Bird Count.

125th Anniversary!

Over the last 125 years, the invaluable data collected during the Audubon Christmas Bird Count has allowed researchers, conservation biologists, and wildlife agencies to study the long-term status of bird populations across North America.

Everyone is invited to join a team in one of the bird counts in the area. Participation is free and open to all ages and skill levels.

- December 26 – Pakenham/Arnprior. Contact Michael Runtz at <michaelwruntz@gmail.com>
- December 27 – Carleton Place. Contact Iain Wilkes at <iain.wilkes@hotmail.com>
- December 28 – Kemptville. Contact Emily Young at <kvillebc@gmail.com>
- December 30 – Lanark Highlands. Contact Jeff Mills at <jeffmills2017@gmail.com>
- January 5 – Sharbot Lake. Contact Andrew Keaveney at <uofgtwitcher@gmail.com>

You can also count the birds in your backyard as part of the Lanark Highlands count. To add your name to the list, please contact Lise Balthazar at <lbalthazar@xplornet.com>. Let's make it count!



Gifts for Husbands & Significant Others

Sports jerseys and memorabilia, Almonte Antiques & Collectibles\$5 & up
 "Gift of Cheese" club subscription, Pêches & Poivre\$55 & up
 Wooden boxes by Deni Forest, Riverguild Fine Crafts\$40 & up
 Leather belts, Rowland Leather\$58-65

Gifts To Lift the Spirits

Scented candles in handmade vases by Candle Tree, A Bunch of Whimsy\$15-48
 We'll find the perfect book to warm your heart!, Mill Street Books\$15-40
 "Apple Blossoms" by artist Peter Wood, Sivarulrasa Gallery\$800
 All natural candles blended to match classic book titles, The Book Nook\$25
 Grooming and shaving products, The Granary\$10-60
 Small paintings with easels by Thérèse Boisclair, Arts CP Art Hub\$15-35



A New Chapter for Jeff Banks of JB Arts

For the past fifteen years, JB Arts has been a creative anchor in Almonte — a place where kids and adults alike have learned to “dress for a mess,” embrace mistakes, and discover their own artistic voices. As owner and founder Jeff Banks prepares to close the business and sell the building on Mill Street, I sat down with him to talk about how it all started, the special relationship JB Arts has had with the community, and what he hopes people will remember.

by Kris Riendeau

theHumm: When you think back to your early days in Almonte, what stands out most clearly?

Jeff Banks: One of the biggest draws, honestly, was Noreen Young and the puppet festival. I actually owned her puppet DVD before we moved here. When I heard there was a puppet festival in town, that really pulled me in.

Not long after, someone on the street said: “Have you talked to Noreen yet?” I said no, and they pointed across to Baker Bob’s and said, “She’s right there.” So I just walked over and introduced myself. That was a pretty great way to start off in a new town.



Did you have a specific model in mind when you opened?

Before Almonte, I ran an art school in Oakville just for kids. When I opened here, I did the same thing at first — kids only. Then I realized adults really wanted to take classes too, so I expanded. At first we primarily taught painting. Then people started asking for more, so I added more. I started small and let demand build. My first summer camp here had six kids. This past summer, we had around 48 kids a day — over 400 unique kids came through.

And that’s just camps. With all the school bookings in the area, we calculated that we reached about 1,700 kids last spring alone. Creatively, this town has been fantastic. It just takes time and consistency to build that.

When did JB Arts stop being just you and become more of a team effort?

For years I never thought of myself as an artist — I described myself as an “edutainer”. There came a point where JB Arts got so busy that I had to choose between focusing on management or accepting that I am an artist and my teaching *is* the art. I had the realization that as an artist I needed a manager so that I could focus what I love most — teaching art.

One of the best decisions I made was hiring Jessica Plager. I originally brought her on so I could repaint the basement. It turned out to be cheaper to hire someone to help me organize classes than to hire a painter.

She filled my classes so quickly that the basement painting didn’t get done for years. Then when I opened the lower level, I could teach pottery downstairs while others taught drawing and painting upstairs.

Since then, we’ve had many people be part of the team over the years. There have been so many wonderful teachers, and I am grateful to them for sharing their talents and enthusiasm with our students. I do want to give a special shout-out to staff member Roz Weisberg, who’s been with us for something like twelve years. I couldn’t have done it without all those folks.

What influence do you think JB Arts has had on young people and their artistic journeys?

I think the biggest thing is giving kids permission to get messy. As soon as they’re allowed to get clay up to their elbows or pastel all over their faces, they really engage. “Dress for a mess” has been our motto for years. Once kids are allowed to get messy, they stop worrying so much about being perfect. They need places where it’s okay to try, fail, and try again.

You have offered courses in a wide variety of media. Why is that important to you?

Because everybody has an artistic passion, even if they don’t realize it. It might be painting cars, decorating cakes, doing nails, building sets, making puppets, throwing pots — these are all artistic outlets.

That’s why JB Arts offers so many things. If the pottery wheel isn’t your thing, maybe you’ll love hand-building or sculpture. If clay isn’t it, maybe glass will grab you. The key is to help people find what clicks for them.

In your recent letter to the community, you said that JB Arts has become more than a small business. What did you mean by that?

What I wanted to say is that JB Arts is really a community space. It doesn’t matter who you are or what your skill level is — if you want to come in, have fun, and you’ve got even a tiny bit of ambition, you’re welcome.

Recently an older British couple who had just moved here told me they felt like they’d finally found their place in town at JB Arts — and then two weeks later they heard I was closing. That kind of thing hits hard.

Your letter also said you’ll be doing art and teaching in some capacity forever.

Absolutely. If I won the lottery, I’d probably repaint the bathroom — but I wouldn’t change what I do.

The real question is how to keep doing it without working 24/7. Camps, classes, managing a building — that’s a lot. I need to separate the business side from my personal life and figure out a better balance.



Jeff Banks (standing at left) and Roz Weisberg (far right) pose with a bunch of kids dressed for a mess at JB Arts in Almonte

But I can’t see myself doing anything else and being happy. Teaching art — helping people discover what they can do — that’s the part I love. The building was just the vehicle. I can always find another vehicle.

What do you most hope students will remember about JB Arts?

I hope they remember that it’s okay to make mistakes.

I often tell my students that they’re here to have fun, to try something new, to learn the technique by playing with it and messing it up a few times, and then, yes, to go home with a piece of art they’re proud of. With older students I add that the first job is just to try it and accept that it won’t be perfect, the second is to like it themselves, and only after that should they worry about whether anyone else likes it.

For instance, once a student made this beautiful bowl, then accidentally cut a big chunk out of the rim and was devastated. I sculpted a tiny cat and put it on the rim so it looked like the cat had knocked that chunk out and then fallen asleep there. She loved it. The bowl sold right away, and later she started doing that intentionally on other pieces.

So often the “mistake” isn’t the problem. The problem is a lack of imagination about how to fix it.

As JB Arts moves into its next chapter, Jeff is clear on two points: he loves Almonte, and he hopes to stay.

“I call it my town,” he says. “If I can stay, I will. Mostly I just want to say thank you. So many friendships and creative journeys started in that space. If you liked art, that was the only prerequisite.”

Whether JB Arts returns in a new form or Jeff finds another way to keep teaching, his influence will live on in every kid who learned to love the mess, every adult who dared to pick up a brush again, and every so-called mistake that turned into something unexpectedly beautiful.



Have Yourself a Merry Literary Christmas

by John Pigeau

if they had just stumbled in from a blustery snowstorm. When folks are thinking about finding a special gift that will make their loved ones happy, their default is cheerful. They look lit from within by joy. And that joy is contagious. It's a truly lovely thing.

Now, I'd say half those people knew *exactly* what they wanted to gift their loved ones. Roughly half, though, had only a vague idea, and they were never shy about asking me for help.

"My wife wants a good cookbook," a gentleman would tell me. "Trendy or classic?" I'd ask. "Definitely classic."

I'd lead him to *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* by Julia Child, Louiseette Berthole and Simone Beck.

It is for people like this that I enjoy recommending books for the holidays — books I've enjoyed this year, books other writers can't stop raving about, books with glowing reviews, books readers and critics alike seem to have thoroughly enjoyed, and even a few books not too many people are talking about (yet). So, here we go.

My top, absolutely no-doubt, five-star recommendation is *In the Field*, a superb collection of essays written by Kingston's Poet Laureate Sadiqa de Meijer. De Meijer — who won the 2021 Governor General's Literary Award for Non-fiction for her

memoir, *alfabet/alphabet* — has recently been touring *In the Field* at festivals and bookshops across Ontario, and the one word I keep hearing to describe the book (from booksellers, writers, and audiences alike) is "brilliant." And that it is.

In *The New Quarterly*, Pamela Mulloy observed that de Meijer's essay *After Etty* is, as an act of curiosity and homage, "a philosophical pilgrimage." It's true that all nine essays in this collection are philosophical in nature. They are also gorgeously, poetically written, insightfully and intimately observed, compelling, and at times playful. Whatever the subject — losing a notebook; an enlightening, exhausting stint in medical school; a spiritual journey retracing the steps of a Dutch Jewish writer and Holocaust diarist — de Meijer's inquisitiveness and sharp mind shine; throughout this exceptional collection she writes with warmth and skill, and we're gifted views of the world through her keen eyes and empathetic voice. These are world-class essays by a writer with extraordinary powers. I found *After Etty* — de Meijer's heartfelt essay about Esther Hillesum — so deeply powerful and moving, I immediately started looking for Hillesum's diary and letters. Thankfully, they remain with us in Hillesum's book: *An Interrupted Life and Letters from Westerwork*.

You can buy *In the Field* online directly from its publisher, Palimpsest Press <palimpsestpress.com>. They currently have it on sale. The book happens to be 169 pages and smaller, as trade paperbacks go, so that it fits snugly into the back pocket of my carpenter jeans — that to say, it's the perfect fit for a Christmas stocking!

Next up, I heartily recommend two fascinating memoirs by acclaimed writers: Cameron Crowe's *The Uncool* and Susan

Orlean's *Joyride*. Crowe's journey has been a remarkable one — from his teenage years, when he toured America with some of the most famous musicians of the '70s and wrote for *Rolling Stone* (he was fifteen years old!), through to his career as a beloved Hollywood writer-director — and he very charmingly chronicles all that (and a lot more) in *The Uncool*. In a quirky, charming way, Crowe's writing is masterful storytelling and — precisely because he's not trying to be, I think — singularly cool.

Susan Orlean's story is not unlike Cameron Crowe's. Both got some lucky breaks along the way, and both worked very, very hard at something they loved and dearly wanted to do. They followed their creative callings, and at an early age they each found exhilarating success. *Joyride* gives us an intimate look at Orlean's fortunate and sometimes tumultuous personal life and her storied career as an ambitious, unflinching, and masterful journalist. This memoir would be the perfect gift for the aspiring writer in your life. Like her previous best-selling books — *The Orchid Thief* among them — this one is filled with joy, fascinating people, and unforgettable stories as well.

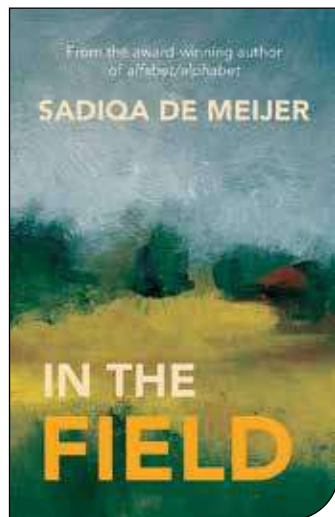
I think the best novel I read this year was Lily King's *Heart the Lover*. So when it comes to fiction, I certainly recommend it. The novel tells the story of three people caught in a love triangle. Essentially. And it begins as a campus novel that hooks you from the

get-go with vivid, intimate writing. The middle part of the book takes place decades later, when "Jordan," the narrator (Jordan is her nickname), is a successful writer with a family and gets a visit from one of her lovers from college days. That's gripping as well. But it's the third section of this superb novel that will have you sobbing and sobbing, breathless, even frightened. I'll stop there. *Heart the Lover* is a masterpiece of raw emotion, intense storytelling, and all the beautiful and scary complications that come with love and life's most difficult realities.

Poetry collections always make a fine gift, I think. Often people won't buy them for themselves, but they appreciate them as meaningful gifts. I have two stellar collections to recommend, both by talented contemporary Canadian poets — *We're Somewhere Else Now* by Robyn Sarah and *Wellwater* by Karen Solie. Both collections shimmer with insight and truth about the beauty, sorrow, and contradictions of the human experience.

Our congratulations, too, to local author Alyssa Delle Palme, as her 2023 novel *Summer at Pine Lake* has been named a finalist for the 2025 Canadian Book Club Awards, one of the country's largest readers' choice awards.

Whatever books you're picking up as gifts this holiday season, may they be warmly received and thoroughly enjoyed. Happy reading, and happy holidays, everyone!



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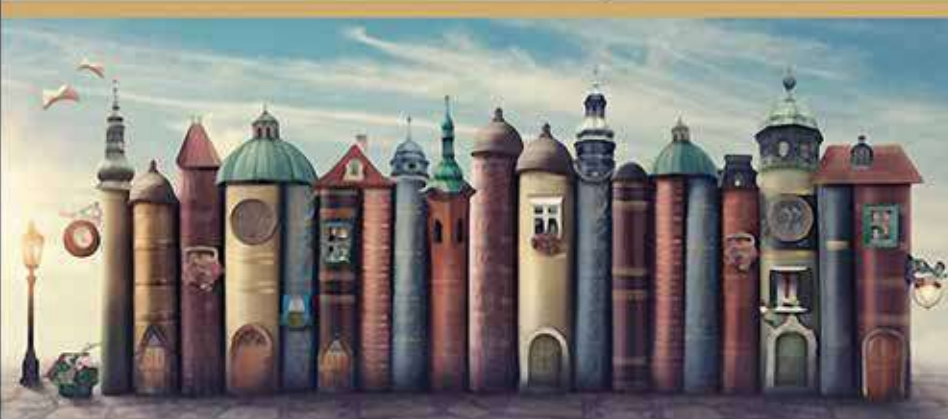
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A Christmas Story: The Musical

Riversong Players Bring Holiday Magic to Almonte in December!

This December, Riversong Players invites audiences to relive the warmth, laughter and nostalgia of the beloved holiday classic *A Christmas Story*, brought to life as a full-scale musical!

This intergenerational production features a talented cast of local children, teens and adults from across Mississippi Mills, capturing the heart of community theatre: neighbours, families, and friends coming together to create something joyful for all ages.

Set in 1940, *A Christmas Story: The Musical* follows young Ralphie Parker on his determined quest for the ultimate Christmas gift — a Red Ryder BB gun — amidst all the hilarious mishaps, heartwarming moments, and timeless traditions that make this story an enduring favourite.

With catchy songs, fun choreography and plenty of laughs, the show promises an evening of family-friendly entertainment that celebrates community, nostalgia, and the spirit of the season.

Performances take place from December 12–14 at the Almonte Old Town Hall, and tickets are available from Tickets Please (TicketsPlease.ca, 485–6434). Come on out and make it part of your family's holiday tradition! For more information, please visit <riversonplayers.com>.

Riversong Players is a grassroots, intergenerational theatre company grounded in creativity, spirit, and healing. They offer a safe and vibrant space for self-expression — through voice, movement, ritual, and collaboration.



Almonte's Riversong Players are preparing to bring their family-friendly production of *A Christmas Story: The Musical* to the stage this December

The Heart of Christmas

Holiday Concerts by the Carleton Place Town Singers

By Nancy Higham

The Carleton Place Town Singers look forward to sharing another season of beautiful choral music with you — our community! From Christmas favourites to rich choral arrangements, you will leave with your spirits lifted and your soul singing...

Our holiday concert, entitled "The Heart of Christmas" offers a matinée on Sunday, December 14 at 2:30PM, as well as our regular evening performance at 7PM on Tuesday, December 16. Both shows take place at Zion-Memorial Church in Carleton Place. As always, children 12 and under have free admission, and our ticket price remains a bargain at \$15. Tickets are available at <TicketsPlease.ca>.

Give yourself a gift — come and join us. We guarantee your Christmas spirits will be lifted!

About the Choir

The Carleton Place Town Singers are a vibrant community choir whose members share a love of singing. Our repertoire ranges from traditional to contemporary pieces, all sung in four-part harmony. We round out our sound with the addition of percussion, cello, and flute accompaniment. Under the direction of Laurel Tye and accompanied by Ian Guenette on piano, we aim for excellence while sharing lots of laughter and stories.

New members are always welcome!

Our next startup will be on Tuesday, January 13, with weekly practices until the concerts on May 24 and 26, 2026. Find more information at <cptownsingers.ca>.



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- Exotic spices gift sets and exquisite olive oils, Pêches & Poivre.....\$30-80
- Colourful bowls and mugs by Bhajan Pottery, Riverguild Fine Crafts.....\$60 & up
- Gorgeous cutting boards & charcuterie boards, The Gift Boutique.....\$100-160



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Sunday, December 21, 2025 at 2:00 PM

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Peace & Joy with the Valley Voices

By Becky Schweizer

The holidays are here! While 2025 has been a challenging year for many, the Valley Voices invite you to reserve a night to put the world aside and enjoy yourself with music and stories. Our holiday concert entitled Peace & Joy will take place on Sunday, December 14 at 7PM the Almonte United Church. This year we are continuing a beloved part of our Christmas concerts — the stories. Stories of the season with hopeful and loving messages to charm and relax us as we prepare for the final rush of the holidays. Music of the season will be sung by the Valley Voices and promises to leave everyone with smiles on their faces. Unlike the music in the mall, you will not know all the music ahead of time! However, you might find yourself looking it up afterwards to add to your holiday playlist.

Tickets for the concert are \$20, and are available at Baker Bob's and Tickets Please (TicketsPlease.ca, 485-6434). This year you can also catch us at Light Up the Night,



The Valley Voices of Almonte will present their Christmas concert on Sunday, December 14

where we will be performing a tiny sample of the music to get the season started.

The Valley Voices are Almonte's original community choir. We sing in harmony accompanied by the wonderful Kathleen Deck. We have two concerts a year, this Christmas one and another in June. We do have openings for new members, especially bass and tenor parts, so if you are interested in joining in January, email <valleyvoicesofalmonte@gmail.com> to arrange your audition.

Neda's Creation Book Launch by Local Artist at Carleton Place Library

Neda Laketić is a multidisciplinary artist and author whose work encompasses sculpture, painting, and contemporary multimedia forms. Drawing on her heritage from the former Yugoslavia, and Canada, her art reflects a deep engagement with both cultural history and modern expression. On Saturday, December 13, she will be at the Carleton Place Public Library at 2PM to speak about her new fine art book entitled *Neda's Creation*.

Neda holds Master's and Bachelor's degrees in Fine Arts from the Academy of Fine Arts, University of Sarajevo, credentials recognized by the University of Toronto as equivalent to Canadian standards. Her work has been presented in solo exhibitions throughout Europe and North America, including Paris, New York, Belgrade, Sarajevo, Toronto, Ottawa, Windsor, and other cities. Notable exhibitions include a solo exhibition at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris, France, Space-Time Gravity at the S.H. Museum, and Art for Life at the Sha Gallery in Toronto.

Neda's dynamic career includes participation in numerous group exhibitions, from Artcité's Summer Arts Festival in Ontario to artist residencies and exhibitions in



Multidisciplinary artist Neda Laketić will speak about her new fine art book at the Carleton Place Library on December 13

Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and Portugal. Her artistic and creative journey has been featured in Canadian media outlets such as *Windsor Life Magazine*, *BizX*, *Slovo Magazine*, *Vesti* newspaper, RTV Serbia and the *Windsor Star*. Now living in Carleton Place, she is fully dedicated to her art; she embraces time with her two children, tending to her lush garden, travelling the world and enjoy-

ing the quiet company of her cats. Her work is in private collections across Canada, Europe and the UK, reflecting an oeuvre that continues to explore dynamic intersections of form, texture and cultural narratives.

Visit <nedascreation.weebly.com> to see more of her art, and meet Neda at the Carleton Place Library at 2PM on December 13. Signed copies of her book will be available for \$35 after the event.



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24 Mill Street, Almonte

Back Forty Cheese Holiday Open House

Back Forty Farm, known for its award-winning artisan cheeses, invites the community to its annual Holiday Open House, a festive day to enjoy the season and shop for local products. Specializing in unique raw sheep milk cheeses, the farm will offer free samples, seasonal treats, and special holiday sales on select cheeses.

Owners Jeff and Jenna Fenwick, along with their daughter Beatrix, will be on hand to greet guests and share the holiday spirit on Saturday, December 13 from 11AM to 4PM.

The open house will feature handcrafted cheeses, charcuterie, holiday gift baskets, local gifts, and specialty drinks. Fine chocolatier Ludwig Ratzinger will be on site with his exceptional chocolates, and the riverside bistro will serve fireside comfort food made with the farm's own meats, along with vegetarian options, hot and cold beverages, and seasonal wood-oven dishes.

A bonfire will burn all afternoon, providing a cozy spot to enjoy the holiday atmosphere. Guests can also shop for grass-fed meats, including pastured lamb and whey-fed heritage pork, available as individual cuts or assorted boxes.

Inside the shop, visitors will find a curated selection of locally made foods and one-of-a-kind gifts, making Back Forty's Holiday Open House a celebration of artisan craft, local flavour, and community spirit.



Come to Back Forty Farm on December 13 for their annual Holiday Open House!

Back Forty Artisan Cheese is located at 1406 Gully Road in Mississippi Station. Find more details at <artisancheese.ca>.

Kanata Choral Society Presents *Magnificat*!

The Kanata Choral Society will open their 39th season with a performance of Vivaldi's *Magnificat*. In contrast to Bach's *Magnificat*, Vivaldi's arrangement is somewhat more subdued, although no less intense.

The concert features many other wonderful composers such as John Rutter, Morten Lauridsen, Bob Chilcott and Mark Sirett, as well as lovely arrangements of *The First Noel* by Dan Forrest, and *When a Child is Born* by Fred Jacobson and Zacar. The audience will also get a chance to sing along with well-known carols.

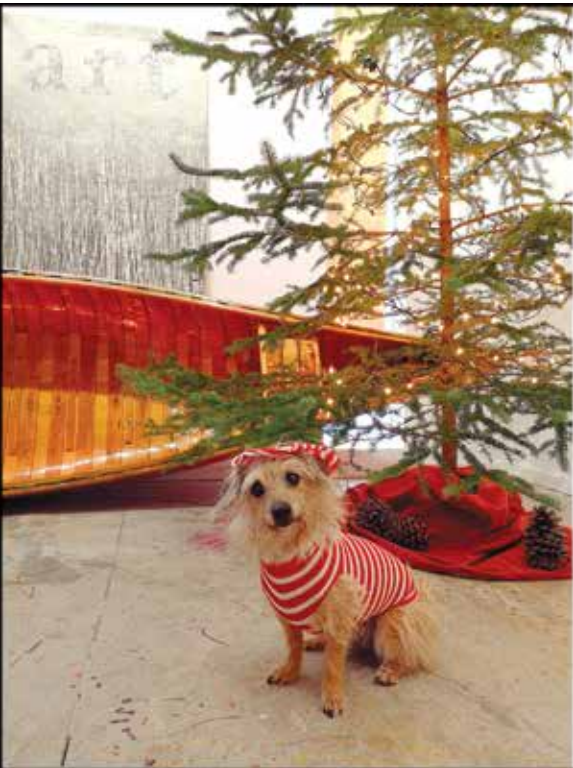
The choir will be under the direction of Scott Auchinlek and accompanied by Eliana Kurilov de

Castro on piano as well as a small orchestra of strings. Soloists include Cameron Hunter (soprano), Bryanna Vanderlek (soprano), Preston Smith (tenor), and Justin Willnette (bass). The emcee for this performance will be Don McLeish.

The concert takes place on Saturday, December 6 at 7:30PM at St. Paul's Anglican Church, located at 20 Young Road in Kanata. There will be a silent auction and a reception following the performance. Tickets are \$22 for adults in advance or \$25 at the door, \$20 for seniors, \$10 for students, and free for children under 13. Tickets can be ordered online by visiting <kanatachoralsociety.ca>.

Gifts for Outdoor Enthusiasts

Golden Spice pear tree, Home Hospice North Lanark.....\$63
Donation / membership in their name, Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust.....various
OBOZ insulated boots, Vamos Outdoors.....\$195-245



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Over 40 folks are getting ready to present *Miracle on 34th Street* in Smiths Falls, beginning on December 5

Miracle on 34th Street

Experience the Magic at The Station Theatre!

The Smiths Falls Community Theatre truly believes in miracles, so they're bringing this timeless holiday classic to the stage beginning on Friday, December 5 for two joyous weekends!

Susan Walker (played by Emery McLean) doesn't believe in Santa Claus. Her mother Doris Walker (Laura Robinson) works at Macy's and hires someone to play Santa Claus every year. This year is no different, except the person hired to play Santa has big problems. Fortunately, a man named Kris Kringle (Michel Doyon) comes along and agrees to help out. The Macy's employees are concerned, because the gentleman believes he is the *actual* Santa Claus, and they certainly don't believe it themselves.

Little by little, after some miracles begin to occur, they start to wonder if it's possible. Well, except for one employee — Macy's guidance counsellor Alice Sawyer (Danielle Brkovich). She convinces Doris, along with her assistant Ms. Shellhamer (Ashley MacFarlane), that Kris is delusional and potentially violent. Alice arranges for Kris to be put in an institution despite assurances from Kris's doctor Dr. Pierce (Emily Rams-

dale). However, Fred Gayley (Chad Wolfe), a lawyer and Doris' neighbour, decides to fight for Kris and prevent him from being permanently committed. It all comes down to the Judge (Linda Pipher) to determine if Kris is in fact the real Santa Claus.

Join the cast of over 40, including 17 young people, for a heartwarming performance that captures the spirit and magic of the season, perfect for families and friends looking to create cherished memories together.

The play runs for seven performances over two weekends, with 7:30PM performances on December 5, 11 and 12, and 2PM matinees on December 6, 7, 13 and 14. Order your tickets and select your seats online at <smithsfallstheatre.com>. Orders can also be made at Special Greetings, 8 Russell Street East in Smiths Falls, Monday through Saturday from 9AM to 5PM. You can also call the store at 283-2244. Adult tickets are \$24, student tickets are \$10, and 2026 Season Vouchers are now available for sale. Get ready for a fantastic season of plays in 2026! Visit <smithsfallstheatre.com> to find out what's coming up.

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Mississippi Valley Textile Museum



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- "Silly Boy" by artist Marina Raïke, Sivarulrasa Gallery.....\$300
- Fun & funky socks for men and women, The Book Nook.....\$10.99 & up
- Vinyl records, Almonte Antiques & Collectibles.....\$5-25

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- Vintage sequin dress, Electric Catwalk Vintage.....\$40
- Vinyl records (new and used), Smiths Falls Music.....\$5 & up / \$25 & up





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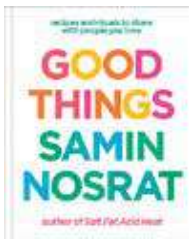


Mill Street Books



Your guide to Holiday shopping for all the Book Lovers in your life.
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Cookbooks for the Foodies



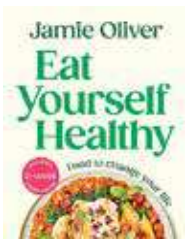
Good Things
Samin Nosrat



Turtle Island
Sean Sherman



Sally's Baking 101
Sally McKenney



Eat Yourself Healthy
Jamie Oliver



Anna Cooks
Anna Olson

Beautiful Books to Warm Your Heart



Always Remember
Charlie Mackesy



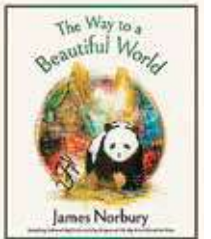
Dog Only Knows
Alison Friend



Winter's Song
Angela Harding

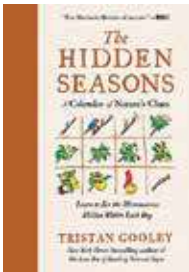


An Almanac of Birds
Maria Popova

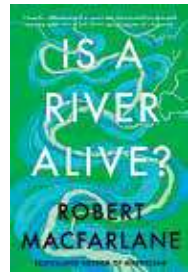


The Way to a Beautiful World
James Norbury

Nature Lovers



Hidden Seasons
Tristan Gooley



Is a River Alive?
Robert Macfarlane



Raising Hare
Chloe Dalton



The Genius of Trees
Harriet Rix



Life on a Little Known Planet
Elizabeth Kolbert

For Lovers of Books and Book Stores



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Mill Street Books Tote



Book Babe Corduroy Cap
by Out of Print

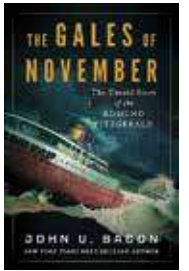


Socks

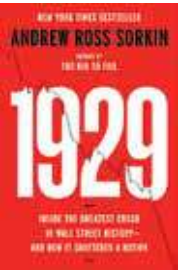


Book Lover Sticker Book
by Christina Chu

History



The Gales of November
John Bacon



1929
Andrew Ross Sorkin



Till We Meet Again
Brandon Marriot

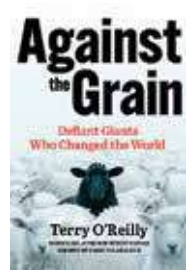


Finest Hotel in Kabul
Lyse Doucet

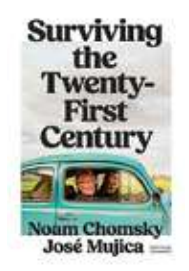


A Short History of Nearly Everything, 2.0
Bill Bryson

Current Affairs



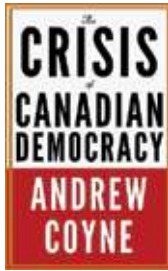
Against the Grain
Terry O'Reilly



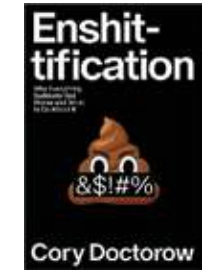
Surviving the 21st Century
Noam Chomsky



Ottawology
Tonya Davidson



Crisis of Canadian Democracy
Andrew Coyne



Enshittification
Cory Doctorow

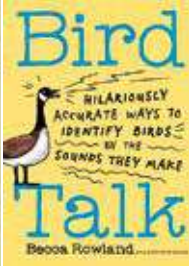
Quirky and Brave Animals



Lessons from Cats for Surviving Fascism
Stewart Reynolds



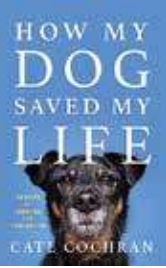
Little Frog's Guide to Self-care
Maybell Eequay



Bird Talk
Becca Rowland

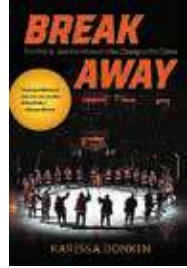


Trash Animals
Rachel Federman

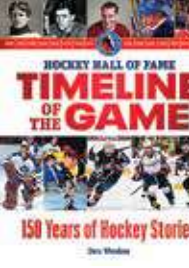


How My Dog Saved My Life
Cate Cochran

Sports Fans



Breakaway
Karissa Donkin



Hockey Hall of Fame Timeline of the Game
Don Weekes



Curling Rocks
John Cullen



We Breed Lions
Rick Westhead

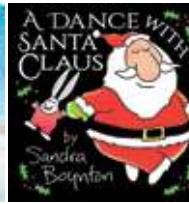


GOLF: The Iconic Courses
Frank Hopkinson

Baby's First Christmas



Knight Owl's Little Christmas
Christopher Denise



A Dance with Santa Claus
Sandra Boynton



One Wild Christmas
Nicolas Oldland



Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Sleigh
Mo Willems



The Mitten
Jan Brett

Beautiful Picture Books for Toddlers



Christmas is Coming to Town
Freya Hartas



Cat Family Christmas
Lucy Brownridge



Coziest Place on the Moon
Maria Popova

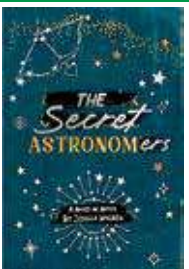


The Most Beautiful Winter
Cristina Stija Rubio



If We Were Dogs
Sophie Blackall

Great New Books for Young Adult Readers



The Secret Astronomers
Jessica Walker



The Same Backward as Forward
Jennifer Lynn Barnes



The House Saphir
Marissa Meyer



Grim and Oro: Dueling Crowns
Alex Aster



Sunrise on the Reaping
Suzanne Collins



Dog Man: Big Jim Believes
Dave Pilkey



Refugee: The Graphic Novel
Alan Gratz



The Last Resort
Erin Entrada Kelly



I survived the Japanese Tsunami
Lauren Tarshis



Darkstalker Wings of Fire
Tui Sutherland

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Photo courtesy of JD Labelle

Some of the Plantagenets (l-r Michael Couchman as Richard, Emmet F. Cameron as Geoffrey, John Kenny as Henry II, Christian Glas as Philip, Paige Hurley as Alais, and Grace Main as Eleanor) prepare to welcome in the Christmas of 1183

A Lion of a King!

By Jane Stott

Who will you encounter in Studio Theatre Perth's production of *The Lion in Winter*, written by James Goldman and directed by Chrystine Williams? A lion of a king unleashed with a resounding roar. A queen uncorked from her prison and overflowing with deceit. Three ambitious sons so dysfunctional and conniving that you won't know who to trust, along with a beautiful princess and her young brother the King of France. These characters will all be on stage to welcome in the Christmas of 1183. There

may not be family joviality and good will, but there will be witty dialogue, a couple of love stories, an almost wedding, and possible swordplay. But be warned — whatever this family does, it's certainly a far cry from a Norman Rockwell Christmas.

The Lion in Winter runs from November 29 to December 7, with tickets available at Tickets Please. An opening night special offers \$5 off regular prices, and tickets for patrons 30 and under are always half-price.

Christmas Sale at Pine Ridge

On December 6 and 7, come to Pine Ridge Studio at 6114 Carp Road for the Christmas sale you have been waiting for! All handmade Pine Ridge Studio pottery — mugs, bowls, teapots, platters, plates and more — will be 50% off the regular prices. Find those special pieces for yourself or for gift-giving at super

low prices. The sale runs from 10AM to 4PM both days.

Three artist friends will be bringing their special Christmas offerings as well. Janice Johnston will be offering her awesome dill pickles and other preserves as well as original hand-painted notecards, Christmas decorations, and hand-made artists' books. Brenda Beattie will be showing her watercolour paintings and pen-and-ink drawings, and she may have some notecards and decorations as well. Brenda specializes in painting local scenery, so you may see places you know! Martha Fraser will be bringing some new original note cards using collage techniques and naturally dried materials. There will be lots of great choices for gifts for everyone on your list!

As part of this annual tradition, there will be a selection of free fresh-cut greenery, pinecones, grapevine wreaths and other natural decorating materials from the woods of Pine Ridge. Free hot chocolate and cookies will also be on offer. For more details, visit <pine-ridge.ca>.



Find cards and folios by Janice Johnston (above), pottery by Lis Allison, and more at Pine Ridge Studio on December 6 & 7

Art Works Perth Pop-Up

The artists of Art Works Perth are delighted to offer a very impromptu pop-up Art Show for the first two weeks of December in one of the most historic locations on the main street of Perth. From Thursday through Sunday, December 4-7 and 11-14, five artists will be showing (and possibly painting!) at 40 Gore Street East, from 11AM to 4PM each day. Stop by and indulge in a little eye candy, and find perfect Christmas presents for lovers of local art!

Participating artists include Caroline Evans, Barb Rielly (whose painting appears at right), Benn Bennett, Jenn Raby, and Donna McPhail.



HERITAGE LOG HOME ON THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER RUSTIC CHARM & ENDLESS POTENTIAL!



For the first time in generations, this beloved 3-bedroom squared log home is being offered for sale, a rare chance to restore & reimagine a true piece of local history. Handed down within the same family since the early 1800s, this authentic heritage home sits on a beautifully level two-acre lot with 200 feet of private Mississippi River frontage in the quiet hamlet of Ferguson's Falls. Originally situated further back on the property, the home was carefully moved closer to the river in 2009 & set on a new poured concrete foundation with a new septic system. Since then, the home has seen additional updates including a newer metal roof, newer wood stove, updated wiring, & an electric furnace, while much of its original character remains intact with wide-plank wood floors & exposed log walls. This property offers a wonderful opportunity for someone with vision, whether you're looking to restore its heritage features, update for modern comfort, or simply enjoy it as a rustic four-season retreat. Upstairs you'll find three bedrooms, a 3-piece bath, & a convenient laundry area, while outside a two-level barn with a concrete floor provides flexible space for storage, hobbies, or a workshop. Set in a peaceful natural setting with direct access to swimming, kayaking, canoeing, & fishing, this property celebrates the simple beauty of riverfront living. Just 30 minutes from Terry Fox Drive, it offers the perfect balance of country charm, privacy, & accessibility. Bring your ideas & craftsmanship, this historic log home is ready for its next chapter.

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It's *The Perfect Time...* to Audition!

When Almonte residents James and Kelly Torck set out to write a musical, they didn't quite know what they were getting themselves into. Says Kelly, "James had written a couple of gorgeous character-centred tunes that sounded like they belonged in a musical. Our initial instinct was to shop them around to other artists and producers. It wasn't until we got involved with the creative team behind *The Wizard is... Odd!?* that we thought — heck, why don't we just make a home for those songs and write our own show?!" James and Kelly met doing theatre at university. After decades of performing, composing, and just "making stuff up," writing a musical together seemed like a logical progression. "Plus, we're both hopeless romantics, so that doesn't hurt."

To prepare, Kelly and James analyzed dozens of musicals, pinpointing what they liked and didn't like. James describes their approach this way: "What's unique about musical theatre is the depth of emotion you can convey when you marry a character's words with music. When done right, it lets you connect with the audience on a visceral level." They wanted their show to have a contemporary feel, with a nod to some of the longstanding traditions of the stage musical. "We've always loved classics like *My Fair Lady*. At the same time, the innovations and irreverence of composers like Stephen Sondheim (*Into the Woods*), Johnathan Larkin (*Tick Tick... Boom!*, *Rent*), and Jason Robert Brown (*The Last Five Years*) were particularly inspiring. And I'm a sucker for strong melodies. Success is when the audience wakes up the next day humming the tunes. The more earworms the better."

The Perfect Time weaves together the stories of two generations — high school seniors and their parents — each grappling with how and when to be true to themselves and follow their hearts. With a principal cast of twelve, this intimate, original musical features rock-inflected arrangements. There are even a couple of rap tunes, courtesy of their son Phoenix.



James and Kelly Torck are excited to announce audition dates for their brand-new musical, *The Perfect Time*. It is being put on in 2026 in conjunction with Humm Team Productions.

The show will be directed by Kris Riendeau of Humm Team Productions <hummtteam.ca>, with James as musical director. Says Kris, "We've witnessed such incredible talent in this region — both on stage and behind the scenes — and we know we've only scratched the surface. We're thrilled to be partnering with James and Kelly and their production company, The 20 Bureau, to showcase even more local talent and help Canadian independent theatre continue to grow."

The Perfect Time will run May 22–24 and May 29–31, 2026, at the Almonte Old Town Hall. Auditions are being held on January 10 and 11 in Almonte. To register for an audition timeslot, email <auditions@the20bureau.ca>. You can find all the details at <hummtteam.ca/news>.

Are you more of a behind-the-scenes person? There will be opportunities there, too! Just drop us a line.

"Honestly," laughs Kelly, "James had joked for years about writing a musical someday. Now just seemed like the Perfect Time."



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Cheeky Bee Candle Co. beeswax candles, The Granary\$20-70

Amisco custom dining & bar stools, Under My Roof\$299 & up



Words That Heal, Inspire & Nourish, by Almonte's Own Lilly White

Discover the heart and spirit of local author **Lilly White**, whose books invite you to reflect, laugh, and awaken your soul.

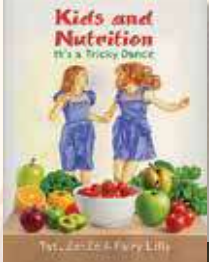
Kids & Nutrition: It's a Tricky Dance
A playful and heartfelt guide that helps families bring balance, laughter, and love back to the table.

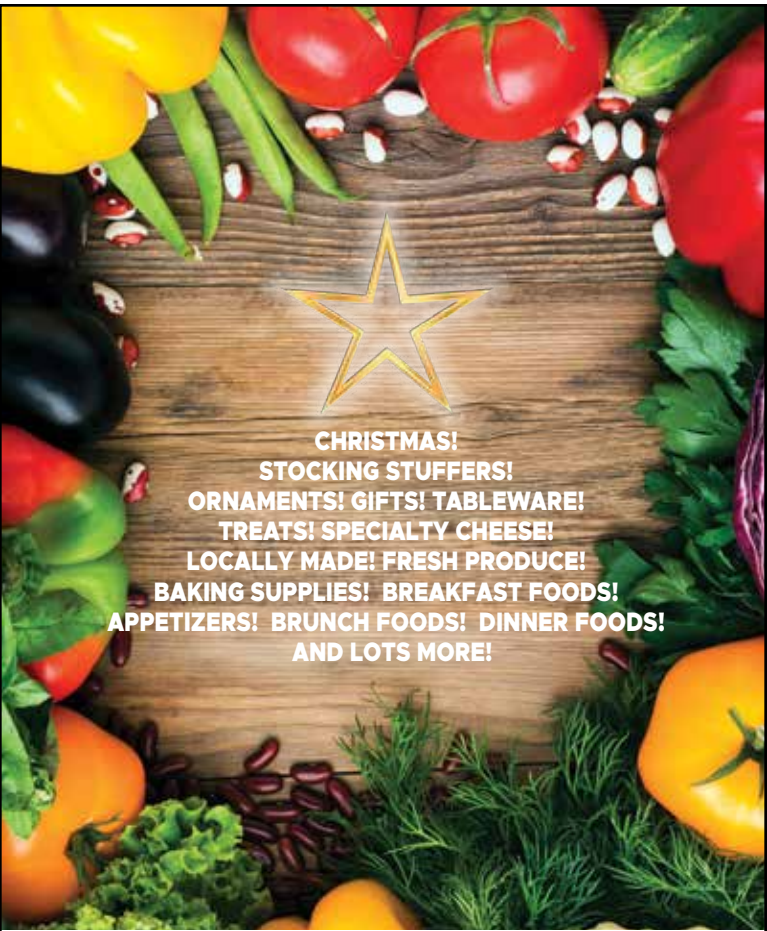
Radiance Verse: The Edge of Light
A luminous collection of poetry that dances between spirit and story, light and shadow.

She Who Remembers Herself
A powerful awakening for women ready to reclaim their worth and their voice.

Join us for a launch of all three books at Mill Street Books on Thursday, December 11.

Find Lilly's books on Amazon or through Broken Keys Publishing, Ottawa. and visit lillywhite.ca for upcoming events, workshops, and Breakfast with Soul gatherings.





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A white cardboard box, labeled 'CRAFT CYCLE' on its side, is filled with a variety of craft supplies. Visible items include a ball of brown yarn, a spool of yellow thread, a container of colorful beads, a small wooden bowl, and several bags of dried herbs or flowers. The box is placed on a light-colored, textured surface.

Craft Cycle is currently exploring grant applications to support opening a physical space where crafters can donate items, explore supplies, and create projects. They want the centre to be a hub where environmental responsibility meets artistic expression, and where the community can come together to learn, create, and share in the joy of making new things from old materials. Craft Cycle will be holding workshops during December at A Bunch of Whimsy during the Shop Late | Shop Local event. For more information, find them at <craftcycle.ca> or email <hello@craftcycle.ca>.

18

CHIP's "Raise the Walls!" Campaign

Affordable Housing Fundraising Campaign in Full Swing

Backhoes and bulldozers have been busy at work on construction of Perth's newest affordable housing project at 63 Halton Street. Crews from the Saumure Group, the project's contractor, have completed foundation work on the 15-unit structure located in the Perthworks neighbourhood, across from the Perth Fairgrounds. With approval of final permits, workers hope to complete the building shell before the heavy winter weather arrives. The plan calls for a 2-storey structure consisting of 11 one-bedroom units and 4 two-bedroom units.



\$100,000 has been donated to date for the Halton Street Affordable Housing Project in Perth. Pictured here (l-r) are Community Housing Initiative Perth Co-Chair Claire Smith, Brian Perkin, Alison Newson (Carebridge Community Support), Co-Chair David Kroetsch, Mac Girouard, and Co-Founder Rev. Ken Davis.

The \$4.6 million project was spearheaded by the local volunteer group CHIP (Community Housing Initiative Perth). CHIP now plays an advisory and fundraising role, with their partner, Carebridge Community Support, managing the project. Carebridge is

a non-profit agency that operates nine similar buildings throughout Lanark County offering affordable housing, support for individuals with developmental disabilities, and senior services.

CHIP Co-Chair David Kroetsch is excited to see the work finally underway, stating, "To see shovels in the ground after four years of proposals and planning is really gratifying. There are over 450 applicants on Lanark County's waiting list desperately searching for affordable housing. This project will be a modest but important step in providing safe and affordable housing for those in need right here in our own community."

Lanark County is contributing \$2.5 million in funding for the project, while the Town of Perth has donated the surplus land, valued at \$190,000. Carebridge Community Support, who will own and operate the building after completion, is contributing \$500,000 in the form of a cash investment and loans, while other funding sources are being finalized. The last step is a \$300,000 local fundraising campaign.

CHIP Co-Chair Claire Smith says the steady support of the community has made a big difference. She explains: "We've come so far and now we're in the home stretch. We're one-third of the way to our goal, with \$200,000 left to raise locally. This project is proof of what's possible when people come together. Every dollar raised brings us one step closer to welcoming local families in need who have been waiting for a place to call home."

The project has seen a new face added to the team, as Carebridge's Director of Operations, Stewart

MacNabb, retires after a distinguished career at the non-profit agency. His position is now filled by Alison Newson, Carebridge's new Director of Housing.

Ms. Newson states: "I'm thrilled to join Carebridge at such an exciting time. Breaking ground on our new housing project in Perth, working alongside the amazing group at CHIP, represents not just walls and a roof, but real progress toward inclusive, affordable homes where people can thrive. I'm proud to be part of a team so deeply committed to strengthening our communities and supporting the people who call them home."

You can learn more or contribute at <perthhousing.ca> or at CHIP's website <chip-housing.ca>.

A safe and affordable home is the foundation for a better life!

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service



Tuesday,
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Almonte United Church
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Perth's Festive Skies

Festival of Lights & Drone Show on December 5

Perth Tourism invites the community to celebrate the magic of the season at the annual Festival of Lights and Drone Show on Friday, December 5 at the Tay Basin. This free evening event brings together families, friends, and visitors for music, warmth, and a stunning aerial display lighting up Perth's night sky.

Festivities begin at 5:30PM with a performance by Rubies in the Rough. The Table Community Food Centre will be offering refreshments, with donations welcome in support of their community programs. At approximately 6:15PM, dozens of coordinated lights will rise above the Tay Basin for the Festival of Lights Drone Show, offering a spectacular display from the Tay Basin parking lot. After the show, guests are invited back inside the Crystal Palace to enjoy the beautifully lit Community Christmas Trees — spon-

sored and decorated by local businesses, organizations, and community groups — which will continue to shine throughout the holiday season.

To ensure safe viewing, Basin Lane, Tay Street, and Market Square will be closed to traffic during the event. Visitors are encouraged to use the Herriott Street or Museum parking lots, the Wilson Street lot, or nearby on-street parking and walk to the Tay Basin. Dressing warmly and arriving early is recommended for the best viewing experience.

Perth Tourism extends heartfelt thanks to event sponsors H&R Block and the Michale Fyke Real Estate Team. Their generous support helps bring this annual holiday tradition to life for the community.

For more information, including the schedule of events, visit <Perth.ca/FestivalofLights>.

Gifts for Art Lovers

- 2026 Art of Gray calendars in support of Art for Aid, Arts CP Art Hub.....\$40
- Small paintings by gallery artists, General Fine Craft.....\$190-400
- Introductory pottery wheel lesson for two, JB Arts.....\$140
- Gallery gift certificates, Sivarulrasa Gallery.....\$100
- Canvas prints in all sizes, Under My Roof.....\$59 & up

Gifts To Calm & Soothe

- Health First wellness candles with pure essential oils, Dandelion Foods.....\$29.95
- Inis perfume and hand & body creams, Frangipani Boutique.....\$24.99 & up
- Massage and indoor sauna & soaking tub session, Meristem Massage Therapy..\$190
- Lavender sachets, wraps, and pillows by Lavender Lane, MVTM Gift Shop..\$15 & up
- Compression socks by Sockwell, Foodsmiths.....\$37.99
- "Fragments - Blue" by artist Mary Pfaff, Sivarulrasa Gallery.....\$400



The Smiths Falls Community Theatre Presents

Adapted by Mountain Community Theater from the novel by Valentine Davies.
Based upon the Twentieth Century Fox motion picture *Miracle on 34th Street*.

PRODUCED BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY OF WOODSTOCK, ILLINOIS
The Dramatic Publishing Company. Reprinted by permission.

Directed by Anne-Marie Doyon
Produced by special arrangement with THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois

December 5 & 11, 12 at 7:30 pm
Sat & Sun Matinees
December 6, 7 & 13, 14 at 2:00 pm
• Adult \$24 • Student/Child \$10
Group rates available for 15 or more for the same performance

Tickets available at:
• Special Greetings, 8 Russell St. E., Smiths Falls (cash, credit, debit, voucher)
• smithsfallstheatre.com (credit, debit, voucher)
• By Phone - 613-283-2244 (credit, debit, voucher)
• At the Door - 1/2 hour before performance (cash, credit, debit, voucher)

53 Victoria Avenue, Smiths Falls, Ontario

Nathan Sloniowski & Friends, Jan 15, Union Hall
Elinor Frey, Jan 25, Almonte
Amos the Transparent, Jan 31, Almonte
Hadestown, Teen Edition, Feb 13–21, Carleton Place
The Weber Brothers, Feb 28, Almonte
Scandalous Romantics, Mar 7, Almonte
Broadway Showstoppers, Mar 20-22, Carleton Place
Old Man Luedecke, Mar 28, Almonte
Vnukowski/Odin Quintet, Apr 11, Almonte
Danny Michel, Apr 18, Almonte
The Play that Goes Wrong, Apr 30–May 3, Carleton Place
The Perfect Time, May 22–31, Almonte

Festivals

Light up the Night, Dec 5, 7PM. A heart-warming outdoor Christmas concert in downtown Almonte. Light Up the Night, Almonte. mississippimills.ca/events
Festival of Lights & Drone Show, Dec 5, 5:30PM. With live music and decorated Christmas trees. Perth.ca/FestivalofLights

Literature

Christmas Book Sale, Dec 5 (12-5PM), 6 (10-4), 7 (11-3). Books of all genres in good to near-new condition. Fundraiser for Friends of the Mississippi Mills Libraries. Rexall Mall, Almonte
Author Signing Allan McCarville, Dec 6, 10AM–2PM. A Bunch of Whimsy, Carleton Place. Free. abunchofwhimsy.com
Lanark Lit Award Gala & Reading, Dec 6, 2–4PM. Celebrating the winners of the 2nd annual Writing Competition. Almonte Public Library
Michael Dupuis, Author Visit, The Halifax Explosion talk, Dec 6, 1PM. Carleton Place Library. Free admission. Books for sale at \$30 each. carletonplacelibrary.ca/programs-events
Lilly White Book Launch, Dec 11, Mill Street Books. Check millstreetbooks.com for time and details
Author Signing, Danielle C. Baker, Dec 13, 12–4PM. A Bunch of Whimsy, Carleton Place. Free. abunchofwhimsy.com
Author, artist Neda Laketic Soc, Neda's Creation talk, Dec 13, 2PM. Join local artist for a talk about her new fine art book. Carleton Place Library. Free admission. Books for sale at \$35 each. carletonplacelibrary.ca/programs-events

Local Food

Chocolate Party, Dec 5–7, 10AM–4PM. Specials on local, fair trade, and sustainably-sourced chocolate. The Granary, Carleton Place. granary.ca
Holiday Open House, Dec 13, 11AM–4PM. Fireside food and drinks. Raw sheep milk cheeses. Local foods, gifts, & baskets. Back Forty Artisan Cheese, Mississippi Station. artisancheese.ca

Monday

Monday Music Residency - December with Kentucky, The Cove

Monday Music Residency - December with Kentucky, The Cove

Monday Music Residency - December with Kentucky, The Cove

Monday Music Residency - December with Kentucky, The Cove

Monday Music Residency - December with Kentucky, The Cove

Tuesday

Jon McLurg, The Cove

Teagan McLaren, The Cove

Nolan Hubbard, The Cove
The Heart of Christmas, Carleton Place

Tuesdays with Eric and Meghan, The Cove

Lanark Highlands Annual Bird Count

Wednesday

Song Circle with Lisa Kopil, Carp
Christmas Tea, Appleton
Wings 'n Tunes, The Cove
On This Winter's Night, Perth

Wings 'n Tunes, The Cove

Wings 'n Tunes, The Cove

Christmas Eve and Candle Lighting Service, Almonte

New Year's Eve Party with River City Junction, The Cove
Civitan Club of Perth New Year's Eve Party, Perth

Thursday

The Lion in Winter, Perth
Annie, Carleton Place
Junk Journaling, Carleton Place
PAWS Karaoke with James Kirkham, The Cove

Miracle on 34th Street, Smiths Falls
Lilly White Book Launch, Almonte
Colour Your Cup, Carleton Place
Candlelit Christmas, Smiths Falls
Christmas Karaoke, Carleton Place
MonkeyJunk, The Cove
Carleton Place Toastmasters Club, Carleton Place

Christopher Jackson, The Cove
Craft Cycle – BYO Project, Carleton Place

Perth Community Christmas Day Dinner, Perth

Visual Arts

Junk Journaling with Craft Cycle, Dec 4, 6–8PM. A Bunch of Whimsy, Carleton Place. Pay what you can. abunchofwhimsy.com
Nick of Time Artisan Show, Dec 6, 10AM–3:30PM. Handmade gifts for your family and friends. Donations accepted for The Table. Crystal Palace, Perth. Free admission. facebook.com/nickoftimePerth
Christmas at Pine Ridge, Dec 6 & 7, 10AM–4PM. Local artisans; browse art; 50% off pottery. Pine Ridge Studio, Carp. pine-ridge.ca
Christmas 2025 in the Gallery, Dec 6 (11AM-10PM) & 7 (11AM-5PM). Multiple artists and loads of cheer! S.M.art Gallery, Carleton Place. sarahmoffat.com
Colour Your Cup with Craft Cycle, Dec 11, 6–8PM. A Bunch of Whimsy, Carleton Place. \$10 (or pay what you can). abunchofwhimsy.com
Craft Cycle – BYO Project, Dec 18, 6–8PM. A Bunch of Whimsy, Carleton Place. Pay what you can. abunchofwhimsy.com

Theatre

The Lion in Winter, Dec 3 & 4, 7:30PM and Dec 5 & 6, 2PM. It's Christmas, 1183 with drama and comedy afoot. Studio Theatre Perth. \$12 - \$24 from TicketsPlease.ca
Annie, Dec 4 & 5, 7:30PM, and Dec 6 & 7, 2PM. One of the world's best-loved musicals presented by the Mississippi Mudds. Carleton Place Town Hall. \$25 from TicketsPlease.ca. mudds.ticketsplease.ca/annie
Miracle on 34th Street, Dec 5, 11 & 12, 7:30PM and Dec 6, 7, 13 & 14, 2PM. Smiths Falls Community Theatre presents their family-friendly holiday play. The Station Theatre, Smiths Falls. Adult \$24, Student/Child \$10. smithsfallstheatre.com/online-tickets-plays
A Christmas Story: The Musical, Dec 12 (7PM), 13 & 14 (1PM and 7PM). Presented by the Riversong Players. Almonte Old Town Hall. TicketsPlease.ca

Youth

Kids Crafternoon - Holiday Edition, Dec 7, 10AM–2:30PM. A Bunch of Whimsy, Carleton Place. \$5 (or pay what you can). Registration required. abunchofwhimsy.com

Music

On This Winter's Night, Dec 3, 7:30PM. Christmas Concert by Men & Women of the Tay features new music and favourites sure to delight! St. Paul's United, Perth. \$20 through TicketsPlease.ca
The Once, Dec 5, 7:30PM. Live music. Carleton Place Arena. \$40 (+HST and fees). ontariosmallhalls.com
Sing Noel, Dec 5, 7:30PM; Dec 6, 2PM. Presented by the Arnprior Community Choir. Glad Tidings Pentecostal Church, Arnprior. \$20 for adults; \$10 for children 12 and under. arnpriorcommunitychoir.com
Nathan Sloniowski Trio, Dec 6, 7PM. Benefit concert in support of the amazing work of the Carleton Place Youth Centre. Carleton Place Gallery. \$35 (plus fees) available at TicketsPlease.ca
Whitehorse, Dec 6, 7:30PM. Live Music. Carp Agricultural Hall. \$45 (+HST and fees). ontariosmallhalls.com
Masters in the Hall — Celtic Music for Christmastime, Dec 6, 7PM. Advance tickets from the church office and online at justinkylesusan.ca. St. John's Anglican Church, Smiths Falls. \$25, adults and \$10, children under 12

Star So Bright, Dec 6, 7PM. A presentation of word and song by Jackie Bennett. St. Paul's Anglican Church, Almonte. A freewill offering will be gratefully accepted. starso-bright14@gmail.com
Bluegrass Christmas with The Barrel Boys, Dec 6, 7:30PM. Live music. Trinity United Church SF, Smiths Falls. thebarrel-boys.com/shows
Christmas Karaoke, Dec 11, 7PM. A Christmas carol singalong led by St. James Choir and friends. St. James Anglican Church, Carleton Place. Freewill donation and/or an item for the food bank
Peace & Joy, Dec 14, 7PM. Valley Voices' Annual Christmas Concert. Almonte United Church. \$20 from TicketsPlease.ca or Baker Bob's
Bells of Hope Concert, Dec 14, 2:30–4PM. Experience the spirit of the season! Community Presbyterian Church, Almonte. A freewill offering will be gratefully accepted
Civitan Club of Perth Monthly Jam-boree, Dec 14, 1–6PM. Get ready for an afternoon filled with amazing music and good vibes followed by a delicious full course dinner. Perth Civitan Club & Hall. \$20 per person for dinner and dance. civitandclubofperth.com

Friday	Saturday	Sunday
🌟 Light up the Night, Almonte 🎭 The Lion in Winter, Perth 🎭 Annie, Carleton Place 🎆 Festival of Lights & Drone Show, Perth 🍫 Chocolate Party, Carleton Place 🎵 Holiday Primer with The Plaid Basterdz, The Cove 🎵 Sing Noel, Amprior 🎭 Miracle on 34th Street, Smiths Falls 📖 Christmas Book Sale, Almonte 🎭 The Once, Carleton Place	🎭 Annie, Carleton Place 🍫 Chocolate Party, CP 🎵 Sing Noel, Amprior 🎵 Nathan Sloniowski Trio, CP 📖 Author Signing, CP 📖 Christmas Book Sale, Almonte 🎄 Christmas Family Day, Appleton 📖 Nick of Time Artisan Show, Perth 📖 Christmas 2025 in the Gallery, Carleton Place 🎄 Christmas at Pine Ridge, Carp 🎄 Pakenham Santa Claus Parade, Pakenham 📖 Lanark Lit Award Gala & Reading, Almonte 🎭 Miracle on 34th Street, Smiths Falls 🎵 Christmas Concerts, Smiths Falls 🎵 East Coast Experience, The Cove 🎭 The Lion in Winter, Perth 🎵 Perth Pop-Up Show! Star So Bright, Almonte 🎵 Whitehorse, Carp 🎄 Yuletide Boutique Days, Carp	🎭 Annie, Carleton Place 🎭 The Lion in Winter, Perth 🍫 Chocolate Party, Carleton Place 📖 Christmas Book Sale, Almonte 📖 Christmas 2025 in the Gallery, Carleton Place 🎭 Miracle on 34th Street, Smiths Falls 📖 Christmas at Pine Ridge, Carp 🎄 Kids Crafternoon - Holiday Edition, Carleton Place 🎄 Advent to Christmas by Candlelight, Perth 🎄 Almonte Christmas Parade, Almonte 🎄 Holiday Heritage House, Smiths Falls 🎵 Sundays with Eric and Meghan, The Cove
🎭 Miracle on 34th Street, Smiths Falls 🎵 Mikhail Laxton, The Cove 🎵 MonkeyJunk, Neat Coffee Shop 🎭 A Christmas Story The Musical, Almonte	🎵 Come see Santa, Pakenham 🎭 Miracle on 34th Street, Smiths Falls 🎵 MonkeyJunk, Neat Coffee Shop 🎭 A Christmas Story The Musical, Almonte 🎄 Holiday Open House, Mississippi Station 🎄 Kintail Country Christmas, Almonte 📖 Author Signing, Danielle C. Baker, Carleton Place 📖 Neda Laketic Soc, Author Visit, “Neda’s Creation” talk, Carleton Place 🎵 Holiday Rock Show with Young Petty Stones, The Cove	🎵 Come see Santa, Pakenham 🎭 Miracle on 34th Street, Smiths Falls 🎭 A Christmas Story The Musical, Almonte 🎵 Civitan Club of Perth Monthly Jamboree, Perth 🎵 Sunday Funday Chicken Pickin’ Matinee Band, The Cove 🎵 The Perth Citizens’ Band Christmas Concert, Perth 🎵 Bells of Hope Concert, Almonte 🎵 The Heart of Christmas, Carleton Place 🎵 Peace & Joy, Almonte
🎵 Ambre McLean Christmas Concert, Smiths Falls 🎵 The Grunge Stole Christmas with Generator Party, The Cove	🎵 Ambre McLean Christmas Concert, Smiths Falls 🎄 Yuletide Boutique Days, Carp 🎵 Comfort and Joy, Kemptville 🎵 Crooked Wood – 20th Anniversary Tour, The Cove	🎵 Soulfire Sunday, The Cove 🎵 A Musical Celebration of Christmas, Perth
🎄 Pakenham / Arnprior Annual Bird Count	🎵 Mudmen, Perth 🎵 Cabin Fever Holiday Hoedown with The Adam Knapp Band, The Cove 🎭 Neat Comedy Night, Neat Coffee Shop 🎄 Carleton Place Annual Bird Count	🎵 Mudmen, Perth 🎵 Sunday Funday Chicken Pickin’ Matinee Band, The Cove 🎵 Alan Cross, Neat Coffee Shop
The artists of Art Works Perth present a pop-up Art Show, Dec 4-7 and 11-14, from 11AM to 4PM each day, at 40 Gore Street East <artworkspertth.ca> General Fine Craft presents new works by Barbara Mullally (contemporary jewellery), Saskia Praamsma (hand-crafted pottery), and Jay Li (oil paintings) <generalfinecraft.com> Mississippi Valley Textile Museum presents <i>A Lifetime of Collecting Part 2: Canadian Handwoven Overshot Coverlets from the Dennis and Sylvia Mills Collection</i> [to Dec 18] <mvtm.ca> Sivarulrasa Gallery presents their 11th Anniversary Show with multiple artists [to Dec 21] <sivarulrasa.com> The Arts CP Art Hub presents the group show <i>Twinkling Hearts</i>, featuring multiple artists [to Dec 24] <artscarletonplace.com> The Corridor Gallery at the Almonte Library presents works by Tamara H. Campbell [to Jan 3]		

The Perth Citizens’ Band Christmas Concert, Dec 14, 2PM. Featuring guest performer, The Perth Town Crier. Perth Legion. Free admission. perthband.ca

The Heart of Christmas, Dec 14, 2:30PM and Dec 16, 7PM. the Carleton Place Town Singers’ Christmas concert. Zion-Memorial United Church, Carleton Place. \$15 from TicketsPlease.ca

Ambre McLean Christmas Concert, Dec 19–20, 7PM. The return of a cherished local tradition, with local openers. The Station Theatre, Smiths Falls. \$27 (+ HST and fees) from Eventbrite. smithsfallstheatre.com

Comfort and Joy, Dec 20, 2PM. Tripoly and the Grenville Troubadours perform a sing-along concert of traditional carols and songs of the season. St John’s United Church, Kemptville. \$20 (plus fees) from TicketsPlease.ca

A Musical Celebration of Christmas, Dec 21, 2PM. Christmas Carols presented by St. Paul’s Music Team. Refreshments available. St. Paul’s United - Perth. Freewill offering

Mudmen, Dec 27, 7:30PM and Dec 28, 2PM. Canada’s Celtic rock warriors! Studio Theatre Perth. \$35 from TicketsPlease.ca

Pub Listings 🍷

The Cove (Westport, 273-3636): 5-8PM unless noted; Mon Kentucky; Wed Wings ‘n Tunes w/Shawn McCullough; Sun Eric Uren & Meghan Balogh

Dec 2 Jon McLurg

Dec 4 PAWS Karaoke with James Kirkham, 7–10PM, \$20 Music Cover + Charity

Dec 5 Holiday Primer with The Plaid Basterdz, 6–10PM, \$60

Dec 6 Holiday Sociable with East Coast Experience, 7–11PM, \$90 + HST & gratuity

Dec 9 Teagan McLaren, 5–8PM

Dec 11 MonkeyJunk, 7–11PM, \$95

Dec 12 Mikhail Laxton, 6–9PM, \$10

Dec 13 Holiday Rock Show with Young Petty Stones, 7–11PM, \$90 + HST & gratuity

Dec 14 Sunday Funday Chicken Pickin’ Matinee Band, 1–4PM

Dec 16 Nolan Hubbard

Dec 18 Christopher Jackson

Dec 19 The Grunge Stole Christmas with Generator Party, 8–11PM, \$30

Dec 20 Crooked Wood – 20th Anniversary Tour, 6–10PM, \$70

Dec 21 Soulfire Sunday, 1–4PM

Dec 23 Tuesdays with Eric and Meghan

Dec 27 Cabin Fever Holiday Hoedown with The Adam Knapp Band, 8–11PM, \$30

Dec 28 Sunday Funday Chicken Pickin’ Matinee Band, 1–4PM

Dec 31 New Year’s Eve Party with River City Junction, 7PM, \$130 + HST & gratuity

Neat Coffee Shop (Burnstown, 433-9960): 8PM

Dec 12 MonkeyJunk, 8PM., \$60

Dec 28 Alan Cross, 8PM., \$40

Community 🌿

Song Circle with Lisa Kopil, Dec 3, 10–11AM. No drop-ins, register in advance. Ninth Wave Arts, Carp. Free. ninthwavearts.ca/offerings

Christmas Tea, Dec 3, 11AM & 1:30PM. Festive Christmas Tea surrounded by history and holiday charm at the North Lanark Regional Museum. \$20 / person. northlanarkregionalmuseum.com

Yuletide Boutique Days, Dec 6 & 20, 11AM–4PM. Festive shopping day at Ninth Wave Arts, Carp. Free admission. ninthwavearts.ca/offerings

Christmas Family Day, Dec 6, 10AM–3PM. Crafts, a Christmas raffle, a delicious hot chocolate bar, and home baked goodies! North Lanark Regional Museum. \$15 / family. northlanarkregionalmuseum.com

Perth Pop-Up Show!, Dec 6, 10AM–4PM. Find unique treasures with timeless charm. Perth Civitan Club & Hall. \$2 admission donation. jimwinton@ripnet.com

Artisans Christmas Market, Dec 6, 10AM–4PM. The Three Sisters Collective presents an Artisans Christmas Market. Portland Community Hall. threesisters-market2025@gmail.com

Pakenham Santa Claus Parade, Dec 6, 1PM. Pakenham & District Civitan Club will be collecting food donations along the parade route and are also sponsoring hot chocolate and hot dogs at the Stewart Community Centre after the parade. Stewart Community Centre, Pakenham. mississippimills.ca/events

Trinity-St. Andrew’s Annual Treats Sale, Dec 6, 10AM. Homemade baking, candy, and frozen turkey dinners (if still available). Silent Auction. Trinity-St. Andrew’s United Church, Renfrew. \$22 each or 2 for \$40. tsarenfrew.ca

Almonte Christmas Parade, Dec 7, 5PM. Almonte Scouts will be collecting food donations along the parade route. After the parade, head to the John Levi Community Centre for hot chocolate and hot dogs sponsored by the Almonte Lions Club. John Levi Community Centre, Almonte. mississippimills.ca/events

Holiday Heritage House, Dec 7, 1–3PM. A Victorian Christmas celebration with horse-drawn wagon rides, crafts and holiday cheer. By donation to Heritage House Museum, Smiths Falls. heritagehouse@smithsfalls.ca

Advent to Christmas by Candlelight, Dec 7, 4PM. A candlelit service of readings and music. St. James the Apostle Anglican Church, Perth

Candlelit Christmas, Dec 11, 7–9PM. Learn about Victorian Christmas traditions from period actors dressed in costume. \$10 / \$5. Heritage House Museum, Smiths Falls. heritagehouse@smithsfalls.ca

Carleton Place Toastmasters Club, Dec 11, 7PM. Learn how to improve your public speaking and leadership skills. Carleton Place Toastmasters Club. carletonplace.toastmastersclubs.org

Kintail Country Christmas, Dec 13, 12–6PM. Mill of Kintail Conservation Area, Almonte. mississippimills.ca/events

Yuletide Boutique Days, Dec 20, 11AM–4PM. Ninth Wave Arts, Carp. Free. ninthwavearts.ca/offerings

Christmas Eve and Candle Lighting Service, Dec 24, 7PM. Everyone is welcome! Almonte United Church. almonteunited.com

Perth Community Christmas Day Dinner, Dec 25, 12PM. Everyone welcome to this free event! Code’s Mill, Perth. Free. perthcommunitychristmasdaydinner.org

Audubon Annual Bird Counts, Dec 26 (Arnprior, Pakenham, michaelwtruntz@gmail.com); Dec 27 (Carleton Place, iain.wilkes@hotmail.com); Dec 30 (Lanark Highlands, jeffmills2017@gmail.com) Spend time in your favourite places watching birds. In as little as 15 minutes notice the birds around you, identify & count them.

Civitan Club of Perth New Year’s Eve Party, Dec 31, 8PM. Inaugural New Year’s Eve Party featuring live music with the band ‘Limit’. 19+ event. Perth Civitan Club & Hall. \$30 per person. civitanclubofperth.com

Give the Gift of Entertainment!

Film Society Offers 2026 Subscriptions

By Wendy O'Keefe

Looking for something for that hard-to-buy-for friend or family member? Read on!

The Mississippi Mills Film Society has been screening Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) films in the area since 2023. Our venue is upstairs at the Almonte Legion, 100 Bridge Street (there's an elevator). It's great — there's a good-size screen and the sound system is terrific.

Our committee works diligently to choose a nice variety of films from TIFF's "hot list" — an alternative to Hollywood. A lot of things have to line up — TIFF must release the films, the format must align with our equipment, the distributor has to distribute in this part of the world, and a few other details. Some of our best-received films have been *Driving Madeleine*, *The Penguin Lessons*, and our last film, *Being Cyrano*, which was met with rave reviews — 83% of attendees gave it five stars. We know this because of our unique "penny for your thoughts" rating system. We literally have folks drop a Canadian penny into a little box that corresponds with one to five stars on their way out.

Not only that — all profits are donated to the Mississippi Mills Public Library!

So, back to the gift-giving idea.

For the first time, we've decided to offer a subscription for our upcoming Winter/Spring 2026 series (February 22, March 22 and April 19) — three movies for \$42 (fees included). Individual tickets are \$15.

All movies are shown on Sunday afternoons at 2PM. The committee is now screening possible choices for the upcoming series so we don't have the titles yet, but we wanted to catch theHumm's publication deadline so readers would know about this great gift idea. We'll be releasing the details on social and local media as soon as we've nailed them down. We're aiming for before Christmas, so keep an eye out at <tinyurl.com/377ydzf>.

Subscriptions are available now, so simply go to Tickets Please (TicketsPlease.ca, 485-6434) and get them instantly (perfect for last-minute shoppers), which will allow your lucky recipient to enjoy three wonderful movies. And here's an even better idea — buy two sets, so your favourite person can bring a friend. Maybe they'll pick you. Win-win!

See you at the movies!

Puppets Up! 2026 Flash Sale for Holiday Gift-Giving

The Puppets Up! International Puppet Festival will return to magical downtown Almonte on August 8 and 9, 2026. This beloved two-day celebration brings together master puppeteers, emerging artists, and families from across Ontario and beyond. With seven stages across indoor and outdoor venues, Puppets Up!, sponsored in 2026 by Minto, continues to grow as one of Canada's most imaginative community festivals. More information about the festival and the performers will be shared in the coming weeks and months, but you can expect to see some festival favourites as well as many new and exciting troupes.

This year, for the first time ever, tickets are available in time for Christmas! A limited-time Flash Sale (running until December 24) offers deeply affordable prices with early access tickets, perfect for holiday gifting. Ticket options include child day passes (ages 3-12) for just \$10, adult day passes (13 and over) for \$20, and family day passes (two adults and two children) for \$55. The Flash Sale tickets are limited in number, so puppet fans are invited to purchase early to avoid disappointment. Puppets Up! is committed to keeping the festival affordable and inclusive, and these low prices help with that goal.

Until December 24, Flash Sale tickets can be purchased at Tickets Please (TicketsPlease.ca, 485-6434). If these tickets sell out, prices will automatically shift to Early Bird sales.

A limited number of paper tickets will also be available for sale in Almonte at Baker Bobs on Little Bridge Street and at Almonte Print Shop on Ottawa Street in the grocery store plaza.

Weekend passes and group sales will be added to the mix in Early Bird pricing, which runs from December 25 to March 31. Regular prices will apply from April 1 onwards, with



Passes to the 2026 Puppets Up! Festival are on sale now at terrific prices

a slight rise in price at the gate during the festival.

As always, in addition to the paid shows, Puppets Up! will feature free outdoor programming: parades, street entertainment for all ages, an exciting vendor's market, and a town full of fun.

Puppets Up! celebrates storytelling and creativity while strengthening Almonte's reputation as a vibrant arts hub. The festival generates tourism, supports local businesses, and provides a platform for artists of all ages and backgrounds. With an emphasis on accessibility, family engagement, and local partnerships, Puppets Up! 2026 continues its mission to bring joy and wonder to audiences of all ages.

More information on the pricing structure can be found at <puppetsup.com>. Subscribe to the newsletter to stay informed of programming and other updates!

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7 Days a Week 9am - 5pm

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December 24

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www.carletonplacenursery.com

An Environmentally Friendly Message

The Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust (MMLT) is a conservation organization taking direct action to legally protect and steward ecologically sensitive lands across the Mississippi River watershed, north to the Madawaska River. Some of their properties are open to the public to enjoy the trails and nature, while others are reserved for research and educational purposes. As 2025 draws to a close, President Steve Kotze shares his thoughts with MMLT friends, members, and potential supporters.

Dear friend of MMLT,

As we approach the end of 2025, I wanted to celebrate all that we have achieved this year with your support. The act of acquiring properties for conservation is an inspiring positive action, leaving a legacy far beyond our own lifetimes, and it is key in mitigating the effects of climate change.

We protected over 800 acres of ecologically valuable wilderness across four new properties, including two that were purchased after our community responded so generously to our spring/summer appeal.

Our 16 properties now span over 4,000 acres, and those open to the public welcome thousands of visitors each year. The lands we protect provide carbon storage equivalent to the emissions of 850 cars every year.

We held 13 outreach events including seasonal nature walks, a family festival, concerts, and an art workshop. These events bring our community together and showcase the natural beauty of our properties.

We expanded our team, adding a third full-time staff person and four new members to our Board of

Directors, each bringing valuable knowledge, skills, and experience.

We established an outdoor classroom at High Lonesome Nature Reserve — an inviting space that will welcome students, educators, and community groups for hands-on learning and help foster environmental stewardship.

None of this would have been possible without your support and that of numerous funding partners. We are deeply grateful.

As MMLT grows, so does our need for ongoing financial support. In this season of giving, I ask you to consider donating to MMLT before the end of the year so that we can achieve even more in 2026. The first \$20,000 raised through this appeal will be matched, dollar for dollar, by the generosity of some key donors.

Please go to <mmlt.ca/donate>. Tax receipts are issued for all donations.

Now is also the time to renew membership for next year, become a new member, or gift a membership to someone who shares your love for nature. Membership is an important way to show your support and join a community of conservation-minded people. Membership is \$30 for one person and \$50 for a family, and is eligible for a tax receipt. Renew, join, or gift a membership at <mmlt.ca> by clicking the Membership button in the top right.

Thank you for all you do to conserve nature and for your support of MMLT and our important work. I wish you and your family a happy, healthy, and peaceful holiday season and New Year.

Sincerely,
— Steve Kotze, MMLT President



The first \$20,000 raised in the new MMLT appeal will be matched by other generous donors! Read about their latest acquisition on page 28.

Gifts for Eco-Friendly Friends

Vintage patches, Electric Catwalk Vintage.....	\$8
Batik cotton table napkins, set of 4, Fine Batiks	\$27
HoneyCrisp apple tree, Home Hospice North Lanark	\$69
Donation / membership in their name, Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust.....	various
Wool Glerups slippers, Vamos Outdoors.....	\$99

Gifts for Local Food & Drink Lovers

Holiday cheese & charcuterie basket, Back Forty Artisan Cheese.....	\$110
4- and 7-course Tasting Menu Experience, Black Tartan Kitchen.....	\$96 & 144
The Downtown Carleton Place Gift Card, Downtown Carleton Place BIA.....	various
The Gourmet Basket, Ottawa Valley Gift Baskets.....	\$88.95

Annual Home Hospice Tree Fundraiser

The perfect Christmas gift!

**“The true meaning of life is to plant trees,
under whose shade you do not expect to sit.”**

- Leave a legacy
- Honour a loved one
- A perfect gift
- Enhance your property
- Mark a special milestone

Order a tree for a Christmas gift,
and we'll send you a gift card to
give your lucky recipient.
Delivery will take place in the Spring.

hhnl.ca/trees

**EVERY PURCHASE WILL SUPPORT HHNL'S ABILITY
TO DELIVER COMFORT, COMPASSION AND SUPPORT
TO PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITY.**

To order just take a
pic with your cell phone

Help Us 'Raise the Walls'

We are building 15
affordable apartments at 63
Halton Street in Perth
creating safe, secure homes
for 15 local families in need.
We ask for your support in
raising the final \$300,000 in
community funding.

Together, We Can Turn Hope Into Homes

Please donate at:
perthhousing.ca

Give the Gift of Local This Holiday Season!

The holidays are on the way, and it's never too early to start
planning your gifts — especially if you're treating your clients.

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Each Ottawa Valley Gift Basket is filled with handcrafted,
locally made products from small businesses right here
in our community. Ordering early ensures the best
selection and helps support the makers who make
the season bright.

Shop early, shop local, and make your holiday
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Growing Gardens, Growing Community

The 2025 gardening season presented many challenges, not least of which were drought and an early frost. Was the glass half-full? Being an incurable optimist, I'm remembering the successes and planning for greater success next year.

I have been reflecting on the role of gardening in my life. In many ways it has always been a constant, helping me through periods of major illness, relationship upheavals, and the everyday stresses of family and career. Putting my hands in the soil, planting and nurturing a seed or a young plant, engaging the senses of touch, smell and vision have always put me "in the moment."

by David Hinks

While recent scientific research has demonstrated that plants respond to the human voice and can communicate in many ways, I suspect that the interaction has much stronger benefits for the human participant. Getting our hands in the soil and nurturing plants has tremendous benefits.

At our peril we ignore our "animal" side and our deep connection to the earth. A half-hour in the garden takes me away from the craziness in my mind and brings me clarity, objectivity, and a sense of peace and contentment.

Not surprisingly, these benefits of gardening have been observed by others. The Canadian Horticultural Therapy Association defines horticultural therapy as a formal practice that uses plants, horticultural activities, and the garden landscape to promote wellbeing for participants. It has proven beneficial in a wide variety of healthcare, residential, school and rehabilitative settings. Care of hospitalized war veterans after World War II greatly expanded the use of gardening and horticultural activities in structured, rehabilitative programs. It is now a discipline taught and practiced throughout the world.

Now we have even more justification for an obsessive pursuit of our favourite hobby!

While a solitary pursuit of gardening has salutary benefits, gardening collaboratively can multiply those benefits. Humans (even gardeners) are social beings and often join with like-minded individuals to share their passion and do good works together.

Community gardens are, of course, a great spot to grow a few tomatoes, but I feel that there is a whole lot more going on, such as an awesome sense of satisfaction in seeing the excitement as a new gardener you have been mentoring reaps their first harvest. A collection of garden plots in close proximity is a great catalyst for the development of com-

munity as neighbours help one another. There are many gardeners who need a challenge. Some like to research, seek out expert advice, and experiment with new techniques. Satisfaction may be found in the journey rather than being bound up with a successful result! For many, their labour is part of a larger sense of purpose as they work towards a social goal such as educating youngsters, encouraging pollinators, or growing food for the food bank.

But how to get a start? The knowledge required can seem daunting. It seems to me that transferring knowledge about growing food from one generation to another is just not happening in our modern society. This has been brought home to me when dealing with student volunteers. It is not possible to assume even a minimum of knowledge. When I ask a volunteer to weed a row of peppers, I can't assume that the difference between a pepper plant and lamb's quarters is obvious to them. My eye can easily pick out just-germinated carrot seedlings in a bed covered with weeds; to a new gardener those seedlings are completely lost in a sea of weeds. This was expressed beautifully in a column a few years ago by *Ottawa Citizen* columnist Steve Maxwell: "I've never seen anyone learn to be a great gardener quickly. In my experience, getting good with soil, plants and sunshine is something that takes decades. That said, you can shave years off your learning curve

if you keep your eyes open, keep your heart teachable and your mind alert to worthwhile ideas."

While you can learn a lot from books and the internet, in my experience you can't beat real-time, real-life, hands-on learning. My advice is to get out and meet gardeners, folks with decades of experience who are delighted to share their knowledge. If possible, work side by side with them.

What better place to meet helpful gardeners than our Lanark County Horticultural (Hort) Societies? These are groups of enthusiastic gardeners that in their own quiet ways make our communities come alive. "Hort" members can be seen planting tulip bulbs at the Cenotaph in Almonte, adding some plants at the Victoria School Museum Garden in Carleton Place, taking care of gardens at several historic properties in downtown Perth, planting flowers at the Legion and Library gardens in Smiths Falls, and planting flowers at the Five-Span Bridge in Pakenham.

Where would you find a local Society? What is amazing to me is the number of them that are within easy driving distance. Within a fifteen-minute drive from the Almonte Old Town Hall there are four societies to be found; an additional ten lie within 45 minutes. Society membership often brings other perks, such as discounts at local garden centre. Many work closely with municipal authorities to beautify our towns. Go to <gardenontario.org> to find the society nearest you!

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Celebrating the Winners of the 2025 Lanark Lit Writing Competition!

By Jessie Carson and Jenn Snider Cruise

We are thrilled to announce the winners of the 2025 Lanark Lit Writers Competition. But first, what is this competition about? Produced by Almonte Readers & Writers, the 2nd annual Lanark Lit Writing Competition launched in April of this year, with a focus on non-fiction for 2025. The goals of the competition are to connect with local writers of all ages to offer an opportunity to share their work in print and in person, as well as win a monetary prize. With the call for submissions for this year focused on works of short creative non-fiction, we're thrilled to report that the local writing community delivered an impressive tour de force of powerful, imaginative, and compelling stories that transported us and captured our hearts!

After a two-month-long process of deliberation by a total of 9 judges, and a total of 57 submissions across two categories, we are excited to announce the winners of the competition! Note that we will be celebrating the winners, and indeed all the writers who submitted stories, on December 6 from 2–4PM with an Awards Gala, which will be held at the Almonte Public Library (155 High Street, Almonte). Please join us, enjoy some refreshments, and hear the winning writers and the runners-up read from their stories.

So without further ado, we are thrilled to announce the winners of the 2025 Lanark Lit Writers Competition, as well as our well deserving runners up and honourable mentions, along with a nod to the short-listed 18+ category finalists, all as selected by an independent jury of local literary experts.

Drumroll please...

Ages 17 and Under

- Winner — *Code Duello*, by Mattea Crabtree (Perth). Mattea is an aspiring writer who, at age 13, has already written several unpublished books and short stories that showcase her imagination and love of adventure. Mattea was a winner in the 2024 Lanark Lit competition for her short story, *The Apartment*, and was recognized for her “whimsical and fresh voice with excellent character work.” She continues to develop her craft through ongoing learning, writing daily, and attending workshops.
- First Runner-Up (2nd place) — *In and out of the Water*, by Arya Burkart (Carleton Place). Arya is an 11-year-old aspiring author living in Carleton Place, who has a deep passion for creative writing and meaningful storytelling. She often finds inspiration in the beauty of nature and everyday moments. In quieter moments, she loves to read and dabble in carpentry, illustration and other little crafts.
- Second Runner-Up (3rd place) — *Fresh Milk*, by Neve Kuchinad (Perth). Neve is 9 years old and lives in Perth. She enjoys playing sports like soccer, hockey and tennis. She also likes to bake with her grandma, go camping and travel with her family, and she absolutely loves cats!
- Honourable Mention — *Red Horse Lake Monsters*, by Benji Hawkey and Noah Cordick (Perth)

Adults 18+

- Winner — *Hold On*, by Kimberly Lemaire (Carp). Kimberly is originally from Pembroke but has called both Halifax and Kingston home. She spent the last three years living in a swamp not far from Carp... because every ogre needs one. Kimberly is currently completing a Master's in Fine Arts in Fiction from King's College University, which keeps her neck-deep in revisions most days. *Hold On* is her first foray into non-fiction.
- First Runner-Up (2nd place) — *Brush with the Moon*, by Michael Gibson (Perth). Michael is a writer living in Perth with his wife and co-pilot, Teddy. He is the author of several produced screenplays and award-winning interactive digital media. He is currently working on his first novel.
- Second Runner-Up (3rd place) — *Grief and Relief — Holding Close to Let Go*, by Jane Olivier (Pakenham). Jane has lived in Pakenham for several years and is active in the Arnprior and Lanark communities where she volunteers as an English tutor and contributes to museum projects that document local stories. A lifelong wanderer and wonderer, as a writer and editor she draws on a life spent in many countries, and her nonfiction often examines memory, responsibility, and the ordinary moments that shape us.
- Honourable Mention — *Clarence*, by Marcia Taylor (Ashton)

Short-List (Finalists)

The following submissions were short-listed in the Adults 18+ category (in alphabetical order by author):

- *walking & awakening — from woe to wonder*, by Chris Cavan (Almonte)
- *Happy Go Lucky*, by Ron W Coristine (Perth)
- *She'll be coming round the mountain...*, by Sally Smith (Smiths Falls)

About the Lanark Lit Competition

With a total of 45 submissions from adults, and 12 submission from youth under 17, stories were sent from all over Lanark County (and a bit beyond), including Almonte, Arnprior, Ashton, Balderson, Beckwith, Carleton Place, Carp, Lanark, Lombardy, Merrickville, North Gower, Pakenham, Perth, Rideau Ferry, Smiths Falls, and Westport.

This region is absolutely chock full of writerly talent, and the judges definitely had their hands full. The creative non-fiction entries to this year's competition took the judges into the minds, hearts and lives of the local writers who submitted their work. Written with exploratory, vivid and evocative language to transport the reader to a different point in time and place, the vast range of human experience was well reflected, with stories on childhood, travel, loss, and other profound or more subtle impressions.

Our esteemed panel of jurors each participated in a round of blind consideration of the submissions. All author names were removed prior to circulation, and



Above (clockwise from top left): Kimberly Lemaire (winner, Adults 18+), Mattea Crabtree (winner, 17 and under), Michael Gibson (2nd place, Adults 18+), and Jane Olivier (3rd place, Adults 18+)

discussions maintained anonymity of the writers and where they were from until the decisions were finalized. Each juror thoughtfully considered every story they read and took their role seriously. As members of the literary community, they knew the courage taken by every writer to submit, and appreciated elements of every submission. On behalf of our community and all participants we wish to thank our jury for their time, dedication, and thoughtfulness.

For the 17 and under category, jury members were Amanda West Lewis and Robert Childs. For the Adults 18+ category, first round jurors were Jane Ellens, Jill Walters, Krista Foss and Parrish Wilson; second round jurors were Aaron Hutchins, Peter Dixon and Kris Riendeau.

A huge thank you to all those who submitted a story. Without you, there would be no competition, and we know it takes creativity and focus to write and finish a story, not to mention bravery! We encourage all writers to continue sharing their work. This is how you can connect to your peers and develop your skills. We look forward to seeing you on December 6.

Almonte Readers & Writers wishes to thank the Lanark Lit project funders, the Elizabeth Kelly Foundation, and the Municipality of Mississippi Mills.

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Exploring the Photographic Arts

By Sue Evans

I am fortunate to live in downtown Almonte where it often takes me fifteen to twenty minutes to walk from my condo to the post office and back. Depending on what is happening, people (whether friends or not) often stop to chat. When this almost eighty-year-old (apparently crazy) lady says hello to their dogs and babies, they pause and smile without judgement or anxiety, and I am caught by the way their everyday beauty shines through. Would I like to record what I see on my camera? Yes, but in some ways it doesn't really matter. My internal lens picks up an image to return to on a rainy day.

Sometimes there are tourists on the street as well, quickly snapping "drive by" photos on their cell phones of the Old Town Hall and selfies with James Naismith. This is great advertising. They take home visual trophies to show friends the neat place they visited. And yet, as I watch them wander down the street, I am left wondering whether they are just looking or do they really see?

There is a difference between looking for photo ops and actually seeing what has attracted you. In some sense the former is exploitive. Note the language: capture, take, shoot. Photography begins with a contemplative attitude. It begins with learning to see. It becomes a conversation between the photographer and the subject. It is listen-



Photo by John McCarthy

ing without your answer running, and then using the camera to express what you have experienced. Some would say it is painting with light. Happily, it is an inexpensive art form that allows for lots of creativity and experimentation.

The Centre for Creative Living (CFCL) has a photography group that meets Friday afternoons in the hall at St. Paul's Anglican Church from 1:30-3:30PM. We are very fortunate to have a mentor, Rod Trider, who volunteers to help us with our photographic skills. Rod is a past president of the Canadian Association of Photographic Arts. His passion is creating unique photographic and multi-media art works. He exhibits frequently in art galleries, art shows and public spaces. His works are in collections in over 12 countries. He also has curated or co-curated over 25 art exhibits and is a national and international photographic competition judge.

While Rod's professional experience is impressive, he is a very down-to-earth encouraging mentor. He comes once a month and teaches some very simple

principles; for example, what is the main subject? Is there anything superfluous that takes away from the subject? He says: "my hope is to be able to inspire others to realize their artistic potential, to elevate their skills and maybe encourage them to push their boundaries." He provides a challenge each month which members may pursue if they wish. The following month he gives feedback on whatever photographs people want to show.

In between Rod's visits, members of the photography group work cooperatively, sharing their photos and learning from one another about such things as composition, camera settings and post-processing. Anyone who is interested in moving beyond taking pictures to exploring photography as an art form is welcome to join the group. We have lots of patience for beginners. To get connected, email <cfcfstpauls@gmail.com> to learn more about the Centre for Creative Living and the photography group.

— Sue Evans is the Coordinator for the Centre for Creative Living in Almonte

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A Gift Goes Home

My father was proud of his Ontario roots. He'd tell us stories of his family in Owen Sound and how his father left home with seventeen dollars to go to B.C., only returning to Ontario to claim his bride. Ontario was far away when we were kids, and never did I think we'd actually get to Owen Sound one day. There was more though. On a visit to Upper Canada Village, we discovered that he was also related to the Loukes family whose remains are in the cemetery there, and who were the original owners of the farmhouse. Dad was pretty emotional when we walked the streets of Upper Canada Village where he felt the tie of family so close.

by Glenda Jones

We loved the Village, seeing the woodworker, riding the canal boat, and especially the woollen mill. It was a noisy place: clanging looms, water rushing, and the constant hum of activity. The aroma of lanolin hung in the air as the wool was spun and finally put on the giant loom, creamy white and royal blue yarn ready to be woven into thick blankets.

During a day's visit we returned several times to see the progress of the weaving. It first looked like a scarf, then a lap robe, and then finally a full-sized blanket. It looked stiff and scratchy, and I couldn't imagine it being at all comfortable sleeping with that next to the skin. The weaver assured me it wasn't finished yet and proceeded to run it through rollers padded with dried teasel heads that fluffed the blanket to a soft finish fit for a king.

Our afternoon was winding down, but I couldn't get enough of that blanket. The miller told me the blanket would go up for sale, and by then I was obsessed! Before anyone else had a chance to claim it, I had the weaver sew on its label, and followed it to the shop, where we proudly took possession of the very one we'd watched all day. That being about 1976 or so, I can't imagine we paid more than \$200 for it. I've long ago lost the bill. It seemed like a lot at the time, but what a treasure we had!

For years that blanket was our bedspread, a warm and welcoming reminder of the Village, a connection to ancestors, and a craft worth celebrating. Even in the summer the blanket was folded at the foot of the bed.

But times changed and we moved. New décor meant that quilts and blankets were relegated to storage boxes. Occasionally I'd take them all out and air them on the clothesline, and vow to use them. They'd sit on a shelf for a week or two, before I'd reluctantly return them to the storage boxes. We thought our kids might want them, but they have their own style and it certainly isn't antique quilts or blankets. It seemed the Village blanket would remain an antique — preciously preserved, but not used as it should have been.

You might recall that I'm pretty good at tossing things. I give most things about five years to rest unused, and after that their days are numbered: clothing, books, china and linens live in fear of the black plastic bags. However, the blanket and quilts were secure in the knowledge they were safe. Still, I felt the blanket deserved better. I couldn't sell it, I couldn't give it away, so what to do?

In a moment of curiosity, I wrote to the curator at Upper Canada Village, laying out my plight and wondering if by any chance our blanket could be returned. I didn't want any sort of payment or even recognition, just the knowledge that it was back where it belonged. I knew it was monetarily worth a lot more than the amount we'd paid, but money isn't everything. Peace of mind counts for a lot. To my great relief, he replied that even though they never take donations of items, this one they would gladly accept.

So we packed our lovely blanket, and off we went to take it home. A group from the curator's office who'd been on the committee to accept it was there to meet us as we lovingly turned it over to their care. I felt like I was leaving a family heirloom, and I guess we really were. Come summer, we will go to the Village to see it again on public display at the mill where it will be enjoyed by visitors from far and wide. We'll be happy that we are leaving this legacy to the Village — and in some respects to our own ancestry, whose ties are there too.



Alan and Glenda Jones (second and third from the left) present their blanket to curatorial staff at Upper Canada Village

Holiday Events at Heritage House Museum

The Smiths Falls Heritage House Museum invites you to take in the sights and sounds of the holidays at 11 Old Slys Road.

On December 7, the **Holiday Heritage House** welcomes you to explore the museum as it would be dressed up for a Victorian Christmas. Running from 1–3PM, you will find magical horse-drawn wagon rides, a special jolly old soul dressed in red and white, period actors in costume, baked treats and warm drinks, children's crafts, and some good old-fashioned holiday cheer. The entry fee is a donation to the museum and wagon rides will once again be free. Please come equipped with a festive attitude and a twinkle in your eyes!

The **Annual Art Show** will be on display in the museum's galleries until Saturday, December 20. The show features a variety of media and art from Smiths Falls and area artists. Celebrate local art as expressed through the visions of your neighbours.

On Thursday, December 11, the museum invites the community to tour through the beautifully

decorated Victorian home lit by candlelight for a **Candlelit Christmas**. Take a guided tour from a period actor dressed in costume and learn of the many Victorian Christmas traditions and their origins. Tours will take place between 7 and 9PM, a perfect time to see the cozy candlelight. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for ages 5-12, and free for ages 4 and under.

The museum will have a special mailbox set up outside for residents to drop off letters to Santa. The mailbox is located on the front deck of the museum, and each letter received by December 8 will receive a personalized message from Santa.

The museum will be open Wednesday to Friday from 10:30AM to 4:30PM, and Saturday and Sunday from 1–4PM, with wares from local artisans available at the gift shop. Entry will be by donation for the rest of the year. For more information, please contact the museum by phone at 283–6311 or by email at <heritagehouse@smithsfalls.ca>.

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MMLT Secures More Wilderness in the Madawaska Highlands

The Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust (MMLT) has permanently protected Aird Creek MapleCross Nature Reserve, an 80-hectare (198-acre) expanse of rugged wilderness in the heart of the Madawaska Highlands.

Defined by towering pines, mature hardwoods and stands of old-growth cedar, the property's forested ridges are bisected by the meandering Aird Creek and a broad wetland valley. The diverse habitats, old-growth characteristics, and intact forest and wetland ecosystems make it a vital refuge for wildlife.

The reserve supports a rich diversity of life, including black ash (threatened) and eastern wood-pewee (special concern), as well as Blackburnian warbler, yellow lady's slipper, fen orchid, leatherwood, and moose — species that reflect the property's exceptional ecological value.

Aird Creek MapleCross Nature Reserve is located near three existing MMLT nature reserves — Rose Hill, Chatson Woods at Rose Hill, and MapleCross Newlands — together forming nearly 465 hectares (1,150 acres) of protected wilderness. This growing cluster of conservation lands enhances habitat connectivity and wildlife corridors across the Highlands, ensuring species can move and thrive in a changing climate.

"Aird Creek MapleCross Nature Reserve captures the essence of the Madawaska Highlands — wild, rugged, and ecologically rich," says Steve Kotze, President of MMLT. "Protecting this land ensures that its forests, wetlands, and wildlife will continue to thrive for generations to come. This achievement reflects the dedication of our donors, funders, and community who make lasting conservation possible."

The Aird Creek project was made possible thanks to generous contributions from community donors, and major financial support from the MapleCross Fund, Echo Foundation, the Government of Canada's Natural Heritage Conservation Program (part of Canada's Nature Fund), and the Greenlands Conservation Partnership program, an initiative funded by the Government of Ontario and administered by the Ontario Land Trust Alliance. These same funding partners also contributed to the recent protection of the nearby MapleCross Newlands Nature Reserve, further strengthening conservation outcomes in the region.

"Thanks to the leadership of the Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust, the permanent protection of Aird Creek MapleCross Nature Reserve marks a meaningful step forward in conserving species at risk habitat and safeguarding ecologically rich wilderness in Ontario's Madawaska Highlands," says the Honourable Julie Dabrusin, Minister of Environ-

ment and Climate Change. "The Government of Canada is proud to support projects that protect lands with exceptional biodiversity and climate-regulating benefits for future generations."

MMLT will undertake baseline species inventories and ongoing stewardship at Aird Creek MapleCross Nature Reserve to guide long-term management. The property also holds potential for low-impact public access, including a modest footpath for nature appreciation and education.

About MMLT

Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust is a charitable land trust dedicated to conserving ecologically significant lands in the Mississippi River and Lower Madawaska River watersheds. MMLT currently protects nearly 4,200 acres of forests, wetlands, and other vital habitats in eastern Ontario, ensuring they remain wild and healthy for future generations. Learn more at <mmlt.ca>.

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He's Getting Done What He Wants to Do

By Sally Smith

He seemed a bit reticent when we first sat down, but he bought coffee for the two of us at The Lighthouse Café and we began to talk.

I already knew that Jim Ferrier's family was the seventh generation on his Scotch Line Farm; if his grandchildren carry on, they will be the ninth.

The farm isn't large by today's thinking — 300 acres total. It's hard to know, he says, "if anyone past this generation will actually farm because — in the grand scheme — that's not really enough to support a family."

But, musing a bit, he suggests the possibility that his family farm might possibly become part of a bigger operation."

Jim's married, has been for 44 years. He has three children, he comes from a line of long-lifers, says "longevity is good" with a grin, adding that "this life is just a glimpse, anyway, whether you live 40 years or 100..."

He says this a bit matter-of-factly now, because three years ago he was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease.

Looking back, he remembers a few other indications of what was to come: he lost his sense of smell in about 2014 — "that's often seen as an early sign," he says, adding "I've always had some degree of tremor," but was told it might be essential tremor brought on by exercise. Jim is a runner.

He remembers very clearly, though, that even in his 40s when he was the first one at the hockey arena, he had trembles and trouble fitting the key into the lock.

There were a few other "neurological episodes," but nothing showed up... "and this is going back 30 years."

That long ago? "I think so. I think the physiology was starting then."

Thinking even further back, he remembers there was always some degree of tremor. "It was kind of destined," he adds. "My mom was diagnosed with Parkinson's."

Still, when his doctor told him, he wasn't convinced. "But the first day he saw me, he asked me to walk and diagnosed me immediately."

Today, three years in, how does this affect him? He admits that fine motor activities, like putting a screw in, "are getting harder to do, but basically I still do everything I want to do."

And that's a lot.

Jim thinks positively about making his life as good as it can be. "I'm more focussed on relationships," he notes, "especially with my grandchildren." He spends lots of time with them. "I want to do all I can for my family. That keeps you passionate."

He has a strong faith in Jesus Christ. "I believe He's who He said He was — and to me that gives me a whole different perspective. "This life is just a small part of what's to come — and it's only going to get better. I believe that."

Jim also boxes with the Boxing Ties group in Smiths Falls, having seen a poster in his neurologist's office. A gerontologist friend told him there's a link between slowing the progression of the disease and boxing movements, so he decided to give it a try.

He still runs — has done so since high school at PDCI — he ran the Glen Tay Block Race when he was



Jim Ferrier exercises with the Boxing Ties group in Smiths Falls, after hearing that boxing movements may help to slow the progression of Parkinson's Disease

50, and then again at 60, and decided to do it a few more times before he turns 70. He's 68 now.

And now, coming up to the end of his seventh decade and having to navigate the ongoing work of Parkinson's, I ask him what's he learned.

He grins. He's not sure he's learned it yet... but it's happening — patience.

Jim worked as a veterinarian for 15 years, farmed for 15 years, worked for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency for 15 years, retired in 2020, and now has time to reflect.

Each third of that time gave him a different perspective, he says. "I learned a lot everywhere. I have no regrets," he says, and admits that he does try to pass his learning on here and there.

As for patience?

"I like to think I got a lot better."

He adds, with a quick laugh, "I'd never say I've achieved 100 percent patience... but I think there have been big gains."

Parkinson's Group Provides Support and Education

The Parkinson's Support Group in Smiths Falls was founded in 2018 to provide support and education for people with Parkinson's, as well as care partners and family members from the Lanark and North Leeds area.

The group provides a safe, welcoming space to share experiences and challenges, and connect with others who understand.

The group meets on the third Wednesday of most months, from 11:30AM to 1:30PM at ConnectWell, located at 88 Cornelia Street West in Smiths Falls.

If you are interested in finding out more about this group, please contact Parkinson Canada at 1-888-664-1974 or check out the Parkinson's Community Network website at <parkinsonscommunitynetwork.org>.

Gifts Made in the Valley

Wool, yarn & kits by Cheesemaster Cottage Fibre Arts, A Bunch of Whimsy... \$4-70
Fresh wreaths and planters, Cedar Hill Christmas Tree Farm..... \$63-184
The Downtown Carleton Place Gift Card, Downtown Carleton Place BIA..... various
Northern Nuggets by Village Treats (made in Lanark), Foodsmiths..... \$14.99-27.99
Walking stick crafted from fallen branches, Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust... \$30
The Lanark County Sampler, Ottawa Valley Gift Baskets..... \$70.95
Stained glass panels by Sampson Glass Studio, Riverguild Fine Crafts..... \$350 & up
Avril Bag by Michael Rowland, Rowland Leather..... \$119
Classic leather valet tray & coasters, The Gift Boutique..... \$42-75
Windblest Apothecary tallow soaps, salves, bath bombs, The Granary..... \$10-30

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Christmas in the Gallery

Sarah Moffat is excited to be hosting another edition of Christmas in the S.M.art Gallery, at 50 Bennett Street unit 1 in Carleton Place. Taking place on Saturday, December 6 from 11AM to 9PM and on Sunday the 7th from 11AM to 5PM, it will feature Sarah's latest work as well as that of several local artists and artisans. On Saturday evening, come out for some rockin' around the Christmas tree with the Mario Trio and yummy catering by Ethan's Greens. Find more details at <sarahmoffat.com>.

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SMALL BUSINESS, BIG IMPACT.

Downtown Carleton Place Gift Card

Last December, Downtown Carleton Place Business Improvement Area (BIA) launched a new Gift Card to support local businesses and help the community to thrive.

The Downtown Carleton Place Gift Card replaces the BIA Bucks paper program which operated until 2023. Cards can be used at multiple participating businesses downtown, including stores, restaurants and services.

Paisley Woods, Coordinator at Downtown Carleton Place BIA, says the Gift Card offers enhanced inclusivity, flexibility and a “feel-good” factor.

“Nestled near the Mississippi River, downtown Carleton Place is a wonderful shopping district with an incredible selection of restaurants, boutiques, stores, a hotel, and many other businesses. An upgrade from our previous paper BIA Bucks, the new Gift Card is something people can enjoy spending, and

they can feel good too knowing they’re supporting local businesses.”

One of the many businesses that accepts the Gift Card is Foundry Collective & Coffee Bar. Owner Kaitey Cosgrove explains: “I’m excited about the Downtown Carleton Place Gift Card because it gives the recipient the joy of exploration. Downtown has something for everyone, and the Gift Card has something for everyone. Not only will it keep dollars local, it will drive tourism too. We have amazing businesses in town, from craft breweries and great restaurants to kids’ boutiques, and it is our businesses that give the town its unique identity. For small businesses, every penny counts, and by supporting them through initiatives like the Gift Card, you’re supporting families and keeping unique businesses open.”

Another participating business is Black Tartan Kitchen. Chef and owner Ian Carswell adds: “By being part of the Gift Card program, we hope to encourage more people to visit our downtown and experience our eclectic shops and eateries. There are some pretty incredible shops downtown and we all hope this program will encourage local shopping and dining and introduce folks to our beautiful main street. We feel this program will help draw in new customers from in town and out, and highlight shopping in our community. Keeping dollars in our community is a fantastic way to help all the lovely businesses on our beautiful main street thrive!”

Find out more by visiting in person or online at <downtowncarletonplace.com>!



Handmade Gifts

- Laser-printed cellphone stands by **Steve Hewer**, Arts CP Art Hub.....\$25
- Locally handcrafted wood cheese board with **cheeses**, Back Forty Cheese\$125
- Batik tulis cotton tablecloth 56" x 80," w/ 6 napkins, Fine Batiks.....\$110
- Blown glass ornaments by **Alexi Hunter**, General Fine Craft.....\$25-50
- Felted finger puppets & ornaments handcrafted in **Nepal**, Mill Street Books.....\$17-50
- Bags, hats & pillow cases by **Rashtidouzi Narsis**, MVTM Gift Shop.....\$35 & up
- Garneau slippers, Rowland Leather\$99 & 129

Gifts for Kids & Teenagers

- Keychains, posters & anime figurines by **Bonus Heart**, A Bunch of Whimsy....\$5-85
- 2025 Teenage Mutant one dollar coin, Alliance Coin & Banknote\$24.95
- Rebels Refinery 100% natural refillable lip balm, Dandelion Foods.....\$9.65
- Vintage toys, Electric Catwalk Vintage.....\$5-30
- Music lessons (voice, piano, guitar, violin, drums), Smiths Falls Music.....various
- Innovative building block, model kits and train sets, Spark Books & Curios....\$10-120
- Canadian-made TenTree hoodie, Vamos Outdoors.....\$69



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Ambre McLean's Christmas Concert

The holiday season in Smiths Falls wouldn't feel complete without the return of a cherished local tradition: the Ambre McLean Christmas Concert. Now in its seventh year, the annual celebration will take over the Smiths Falls Station Theatre for two festive evenings on December 19 and 20.

Known for her warm, expressive vocals and intimate, heartfelt performances, Ambre McLean brings audiences a set of beloved holiday favourites alongside reflective seasonal songs that capture the quiet beauty and emotional depth of winter.

Each evening features a special opening act, showcasing outstanding regional talent. Nathan Smith opens the show on Friday, December 19; and The Family Name will take the stage on Saturday, December 20.

Presented in the cozy, historic Station Theatre, the concerts have become a holiday gathering point for audiences across Lanark County and beyond — part concert, part tradition, and part homecoming.

Doors open at 6:30PM, with the show beginning at 7PM. Tickets are available now via <Eventbrite.ca>.



Ambre McLean presents her annual Christmas Concert in Smiths Falls on December 19 & 20

Art by Tamara H Campbell

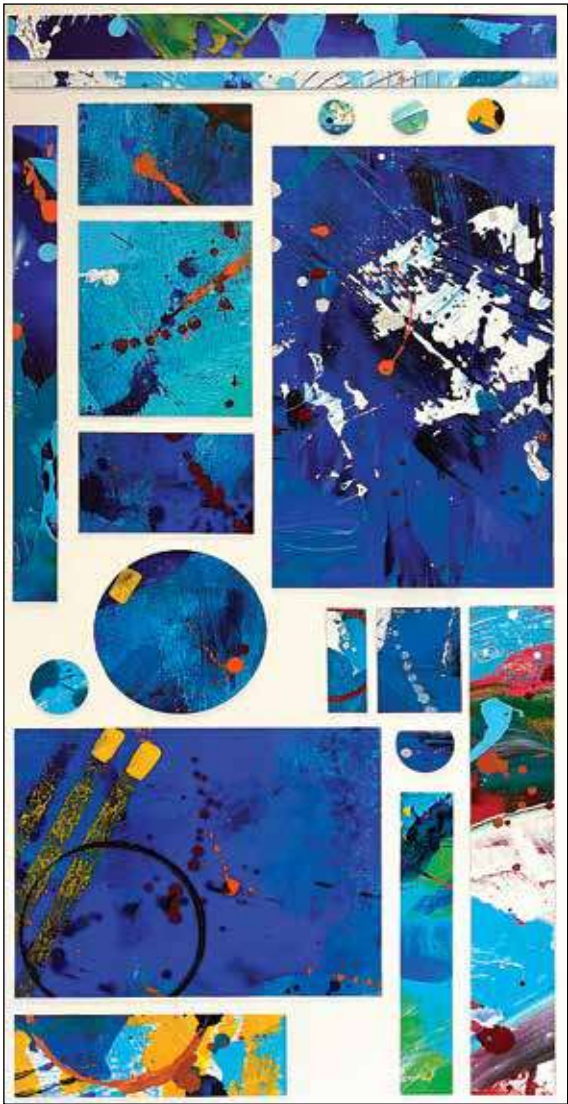
Creation, Destruction, Re-creation

The Corridor Gallery at the Almonte Library is pleased to present the work of artist Tamara Campbell until January 3, 2026. Tamara is an abstract artist, working primarily in mixed media. Her paintings are bold, colourful, and full of details. She is inspired by nature with its abundance of colours, textures and forms; these details emerge through the many layers that build upon each other as she creates her paintings.

She likes to work in collections, and the main one that has captured her attention right now deals with creation, destruction, and recreation involving the give and take of letting go of control and taking control. She creates five large paintings using a chosen palette, photographs details from them, and then she turns the paintings face down and cuts them into strips of varying widths. The 90 or so resulting strips from the paintings are then mixed and reassembled into new, colourful assemblages.

Tamara has experimented with art since she was a child, and as an adult she has taken a wide variety of art courses. Her unique style blends playful creativity and experimentation with learned techniques. Her life experiences, both wonderful and difficult, inform her perspective. She uses art as a process to search for peace, happiness, and healing within herself. Tamara's goal as an artist is to provide a visual escape for her viewers — a place to get happily lost in the details.

She shares her creative process and art on her Instagram profile (@tamara_h_campbell) and Facebook art page (Tamara H Campbell Art). Tamara has lived in many different places in Canada, including in the Arctic. She now lives outside of Burnstown, nestled in the woods. Her art can be purchased directly by emailing her at <tamarahcampbell@gmail.com> or calling her at 407-7145.



The Good Food Column

Inspired Hummus

When theHumm heard that Petra Graber was stepping back from The Good Food Co, we decided that a semi-regular column would be a perfect way for readers to get a taste of Petra's signature dishes. If you have a particular hankering for one of her recipes, email <editor@thehummm.com> and we'll pass on the request!

by Petra Graber

The Good Food Co hummus was inspired by my dad's extra-garlicky concoction that he would occasionally whip up in a blender at home. I started selling it at the Carleton Place farmers' market before opening the café and it became a well-loved staple in our deli fridge along with our tabbouleh.

Good Food Co Hummus

- ½ cup garlic cloves, peeled
 - 1¼ teaspoons salt
 - 4 x 398 mL cans chickpeas, drained + rinsed
 - ¼ cup olive oil
 - ½ cup lemon juice
 - 2 teaspoons ground cumin
 - ½ cup tahini paste
 - ¼ cup parsley, washed + chopped fine
- Process garlic with salt in food processor or blender; Add remaining ingredients and process until smooth — drizzle in more olive oil if thinner consistency desired; Adjust salt as necessary; Store in sealed container in fridge for up to 1 week.

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- Artist canvas and painting supplies, JB Artsvarious
- Guitar accessories (strings, straps, picks, polishes), Smiths Falls Music.....various
- Miniature DIY dollhouse room & wooden model kits, Spark Books & Curios....\$50-80
- Games and puzzles for adults and kids, The Book Nook.....various
- Home theatre seating from Elran & Palliser, Under My Roof.....\$1999 & up
- Vintage board games, Almonte Antiques & Collectibles\$10 & up
- Gift Cards, Black Tartan Kitchen.....various





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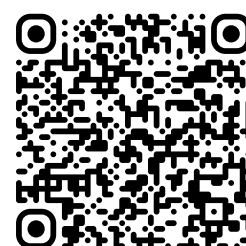
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