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Plowing Match mascot gives greeting

Elly, the mascot for the 2010 International Plowing Match, greets Barbara Downer earlier this year at the Clovermead Bee Adventure Farm near Aylmer. Elly was handing out bookmarks and other souvenirs inviting people to this year's IPM, which will be held Sept. 21 to 25 just east of St. Thomas.

Patrick Brennan
QMI Agency



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Excitement building for 2010 IPM

JOHN PHAIR
Today's Farmer

As the tented city emerges on the horizon just outside the City of St. Thomas, one can feel the anticipation and excitement building in the air as a plethora of committees and volunteers are making the final preparations for the Elgin-St. Thomas International Plowing Match and Farm Machinery Show, which will be held from Tuesday, Sept. 21 to Sunday, Sept. 26.

IPM 2010 chairperson Duncan McPhail says that for he and wife Norma, along with a throng of dedicated volunteers, the event has become all-consuming.

"It's really become a full-time job for many of us and it's exciting to watch it mature," McPhail says.

"To a lot of us this group has become family. We have worked so closely together now we tend to know each other's likes and dislikes; we know each other's immediate families and things like when their birthdays and anniversaries are . . . it's turned into a very tight-knit organization."

McPhail, the former mayor of West Elgin, adds that many of the IPM 2010 volunteers will continue to be life-long friends, and he suggests that their involvement in the event will lead to them taking on other community projects in the future.

"When you look at the community and family aspect of putting on an IPM, it makes you realize what it's really all about. It's about everyone drawing together and doing something to benefit the entire community," he said.

McPhail credits his wife, Norma, for much of his success thus far.

"She didn't take on an official position other than my constant companion but is very interested in the event's success," he said, adding that she officially retired from her full-time job in Dec. so she could be fully involved in the 2010 IPM.

"She gets in the pickup each morning and we travel together to anything and everything. I really appreciate the fact that we enjoy each other's company."

McPhail notes that Norma often reads things in a meeting much better than he does and often pucks up on little things that he doesn't.

"Sometimes when you are so close to things you really don't see the whole picture and she is really good at reading body language and the feeling in the room," McPhail says.

"So many times on the way home from a meeting I have to ask her what really happened."

McPhail says he's been blessed with a large and diverse group of volunteers with a wide range of talents, which becomes obvious when one looks at the new and innovative events scheduled for this year's event.

And as that group heads down to opening day on Tuesday, Sept. 21, the enthusiasm of this group hasn't waned.

"We held a fish fry for our volunteers recently that we called the 'Final Lap,'" he says.

"It was kind of a pep rally and we fed 530 people. It was one of the most won-



John Phair/Today's Farmer

Duncan McPhail, with his wife Norma, is the chairperson for the 2010 IPM in Elgin County. Planning for the event has been all-consuming, he says, and has become almost like a full-time job for most of the dedicated volunteers.

derful nights we have ever had, there was lots of enthusiasm, lots of music and people, it just doesn't get any better than that."

McPhail suggests that entries for both exhibitors and plowing competitors for this year's match are near capacity, with plowmen expected from Europe, the U.S. and other countries.

"It will truly be an international event," he says, adding that one of the unique aspects of an IPM is that it's the one event where you will see people from the county interacting with their urban counter parts in working toward a common cause.

He stresses that this year's event is the Elgin and St. Thomas International Plowing Match, emphasizing the inclusion of the City of St. Thomas.

"We have some really fantastic people on our committees, as well as some terrific sponsors and they are the backbone of the whole thing."

"That experience of working with people carries on to other events that will be held in the future. It's a wonderful character-building opportunity for people to be involved and at the same time have some fun."

McPhail says that with 35 to 40 committees, each with five to six members, the event involves more than 200 official volunteers as well as hundreds more who have contributed to the event.

"Some volunteers come out for a day and others have been with us several years, and they're all important," he says.

McPhail notes that the International Plowing Match is not something new to Elgin County, pointing out that the county has held the event on three different occasions: first in 1940, again in 1960, in 1985 and now in 2010.

He added that being host for an IPM is definitely a long-term commitment.

"We've been working on this for four years now and sometimes I have to look back and say, boy, we've come a long way."

McPhail notes that when he was setting up his committee system he took that advice of Dave Shearer, the chair of the Perth IPM in 2005, who advised him to involve people he had worked with in the past and make them his vice-chairs.

To that end he appointed three co-chairs: Donna Lunn, Rien Van Breuk and Bill Walters, each with responsibilities for a number of committees under them.

McPhail said the plan was to allow those vice-chairs to appoint people to head the various committees under them with people they had worked with in the past and then allow those committee chairs to populate their groups with people they too has worked with

in the past.

"We basically built a hierarchy of people who were comfortable with working with each other. They not only work well together, they have fun as well," he says, adding that the system has proved to be very effective.

Among the new and interesting things happening at this year's event is a program that will formally recognize the contribution women have and continue to make to agriculture.

"The contribution women make today is much more than the work they do on the farm."

"Many women today have taken jobs off the farm to help support their family's farm operation."

McPhail points out as well that former plowing matches have always adopted a mascot with a male name, but this year Elgin's mascot is a female named Ely.

As well, a major theme at this year's match will encompass the concept of local food.

"Our committees are working very hard to expand the educational component from an agricultural perspective," says McPhail, adding that people want to learn about where their food comes from and Elgin's buy fresh, eat local concept provides an opportunity to promote the area's broad and diverse agricultural base.

He says that part of this year's plowing

match will be held on land owned by the St. Thomas Municipal Airport and among the new and unique features this year will be the opportunity for flying farmers to fly their planes on site and be provided with a place to park them while they visit the match.

McPhail says this year's match will also feature a large antique class headed up by well-known area farmer Tom Bradish.

"The antique class has become a huge hobby and within 100-mile radius of the site are hundreds of antique enthusiasts," says McPhail.

"We are looking forward to a very respectable showing in the class."

Another interesting twist to this year's program will be the 50th anniversary of the Queen of the Furrow competition, which began at the Elgin County IPM in 1960.

"The very first Queen of the Furrow was from Elgin County and will be on site for this celebration."

McPhail says there will definitely be something for all ages and walks of life at this year's event.

"Everyone involved in the Elgin-St. Thomas IPM shares the same motivation."

"We want to showcase our community and welcome people from all over Ontario and across the world."

**TODAY'S
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Sparling is Queen of the Furrow

Today's Farmer

Melissa Sparling of Varna, Ont., in Huron County, is the reigning Queen of the Furrow for 2010, and is looking forward to travelling around the province as a representative for the Ontario Plowmen's Association.

Sparling will be in attendance at the 2010 International Plowing Match in Elgin County where, coincidentally, the first Queen of the Furrow was crowned 50 years ago, in 1960.

Sparling is in her second year of post-secondary education, in the Horticulture Technician program

at Fanshawe College in London. She also works part-time as a work study student, performing a wide variety of tasks in the greenhouse.

Upon completion of the horticulture program at Fanshawe, Sparling plans to attend Olds College in Alberta to complete her applied degree in greenhouse production.

Sparling was raised on a Jersey dairy farm, Jaspar Jerseys, just south of Varna.

She represented the Huron County Plowmen's Association when she was crowned in September 2009 at the International

Plowing Match and Rural Expo in Temiskaming.

Sparling has spent the past 10 years as an active 4-H member of the local dairy club, along with taking part in many life skills clubs.

She has been a junior leader helping younger members meld into the 4-H program.

This year she looks forward to becoming a 4-H leader as her many years as a member have come to end, she is now ready to give back to the program.

Sparling has also been instrumental in forming the Huron Junior Farmers Club.



Melissa Sparling of Huron is the reigning Queen of the Furrow.

Aspiring Queens of the Furrow compete

Today's Farmer



Contestants for the 2009-10 Queen of the Furrow competition include:

Jennifer Charlton, representing Brant Six Nations; Tammy Fischer, Bruce County; Amber Reid, Elgin County; Amanda Moore, Essex County; Liny Repath, Frontenac (Wolfe Island); Hayleigh Kogel, Glengary County; Amy McKinley, Grenville County; Charlotte Curley, Grey (Keppel-Sarawak); Justine Lennox, Grey (Normanby); Dana Bell, Grey (North); Emily McIntee, Haldimand County; Samantha Bawden-Miller, Halldman-Oneida; Natalie Doornbos, Hastings County; Stacey Reinsma, Huron County; Eveline Kusters, Lambton County; Heather Ferrier, Lanark County; Mackenna Roth, Middlesex County; Bailey Gould, Northumberland County; Aaleigh Eastman, Ottawa-Carleton; Heidi Lamb, Oxford County; Alex Hesney, Oxford Blenheim; Meghan Van Kampen, Peel-Dufferin; Brittany Groul, Perth County; Ashley Calder, Peterborough; Amanda Laurett, Region of Durham; Bridget Graham, Renfrew County; Janessa Wardlaw, Simcoe County; Kelsey Smith, Stormont County; Stephanie Lachapelle, Temiskaming; Candice Ridler, Thunder Bay; Katherine Clyne, Wellington County; Sarah Seroski, Wentworth South; Sarah Mount, York Region.

IPM's quilt exhibition showcases hobby's growth

QMI Agency

These are not quilts your great grandmother used to talk about.

That's not to imply quilts from one generation or the other are better, but things have changed dramatically in the way today's quilts are planned.

Organizers at the 2010 International Plowing Match Quilt Competition Show held a display at the Keystone Complex in May.

There were 80 quilts hanging - enough to cover the floor of the hall - hung in custom-built display frames, borrowed for

the event.

Pat Palmer, a member of the 2010 IPM Quilt Committee, says those were the quilts that have been entered and judged for the IPM. They will be on display when the plowing match opens in September.

"All of these quilts have sewn since 2008," she said.

There were 18 categories available to entrants who decided to submit a quilt.

"They're from all over Ontario," Palmer said.

Quilts entered at this level are likely from the most skilled sewers, since the standards for judging are very high, Palmer

said.

While many Ontario communities have primarily church-based quilting groups, finished products entered in the IPM event would have been created by individuals or teams of two, Palmer said.

Shows like this are an indicator quilting is making a return as a sought-after hobby, Palmer said. "The interest in quilting is really growing," she said.

A typical quilt has an investment of \$300 to \$400 in materials and may be produced with specialized sewing equipment that speeds up the assembly process.

OPA was launched almost 100 years ago

Today's Farmer

The Ontario Plowmen's Association is the parent host of the International Plowing Match and Farm Machinery Show.

Each year, the OPA partners with a local plowing association to organize and host the IPM.

The International Plowing Match and Farm Machinery Show is a sanctioned member of the North American Farm Show Council.

The organization of a provincial association in 1911 gave life to

branches all across the province. The numbers grew until today the OPA has over 50 local plowing groups affiliated with the parent body.

The OPA has a board of 50 directors, each representing a Branch Association that has held a county or regional plowing match and has a membership of 20 members.

Plowing matches have been part of agricultural history in Ontario for well over a century. In the early days, they were sponsored by agricultural societies.



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John Phair/Today's Farmer

Joan Winfield (left) and Doreen Wilson have a good thing cooking. The duo are co-chairs of the International Plowing Match's Cookbook Committee, which has published a cookbook that showcases the best recipes available in Elgin County.

Cookbooks among IPM's traditions

JOHN PHAIR
Today's Farmer

The good old-fashioned cookbook is one of the oldest and endearing traditions of the International Plowing Match, and in Elgin County this year that tradition will continue.

Joan Winfield and Doreen Wilson are co-chairs of the IPM Cookbook Committee and with their combined professional backgrounds make a dynamic duo in that position.

Winfield is a professional home economist and food writer while Wilson is a registered dietitian.

The two worked together on the cookbook committee when the IPM was last held in Elgin County in 1985.

"When I was asked to chair the Cookbook Committee I immediately knew I wanted Doreen as my partner," says Winfield, who adds that the two of them have been working on the committee for about two years.

"It's been a lot of fun and we've been to a lot of places and been welcomed, so we are quite excited about this cookbook,"

she says.

Winfield notes that this year's cookbook is titled "Flavours of Elgin" and contains local recipes gathered from IPM chairs, local dignitaries, farm-gate businesses, home economists and dietitians as well as recipes from local wineries and at least one brewery from within Elgin County.

"The cookbook is one of the IPM's oldest traditions but in this book we really wanted to emphasize local food in this one."

"In our letters soliciting recipes we really emphasized that we wanted local recipes for locally-grown food."

Winfield says her committee has actually been working on the cookbook for about two years but notes that she's been a professional food writer for many years and knows by experience that it takes about nine months to develop a cookbook from concept to completion.

Wilson notes that the book also contains the IPM's own signature recipe, which is cornmeal muffins.

That recipe proved to be so popular that, along with sell-

ing cookbooks, the committee decided to make and market it's own cornmeal muffin mix as a fund raiser.

The muffin mix is packaged in plastic bags with Elly, the IPM mascot emblazoned on the package.

"In addition, every bag comes with a kitchen toy, similar to getting a toy with a McDonald's meal," says Wilson.

To date the committee has sold about 5,000 of the cookbooks, mostly on consignment at various Elgin County businesses.

They still have another 2,500 books to sell, which will be marketed through the IPM, notably in the Rural Lifestyles Tent as well as in all the information booths near the exits of the plowing match.

"That way if you don't want to carry a cookbook around with you all day, you can buy one on the way out," she says.

Winfield notes that because Doreen is a certified dietitian, little nutritional tips are added throughout the book.

"People often like cookbooks because they are a good read, so

we tried to make it interesting with little tips and hints from Elly.

"Even if they don't try the recipe, they might find a little hint that will be useful to them"

An example of a little tip in the book is: "If you microwave squash for a minute, it will be easier to

cube."

Winfield says one group that worked on the book extensively was the Port Stanley Lionesses.

"They are main group of volunteers and have worked extensively to promote the book," she says.

She notes that the recipes in

the IPM cookbook are exactly the same as in the Commemorative Cookbook that will be distributed among women visiting the IPM in recognition of women's contribution to agriculture.

Winfield says the commemorative books are more intricately bound but not for sale.



Bev Shipley, MP Lambton-Kent-Middlesex

Congratulations to the Ontario Plowmen's Association and all the organizers and the exhibitors at the 2010 International Plowing Match in Elgin County.

Best wishes for a successful match!

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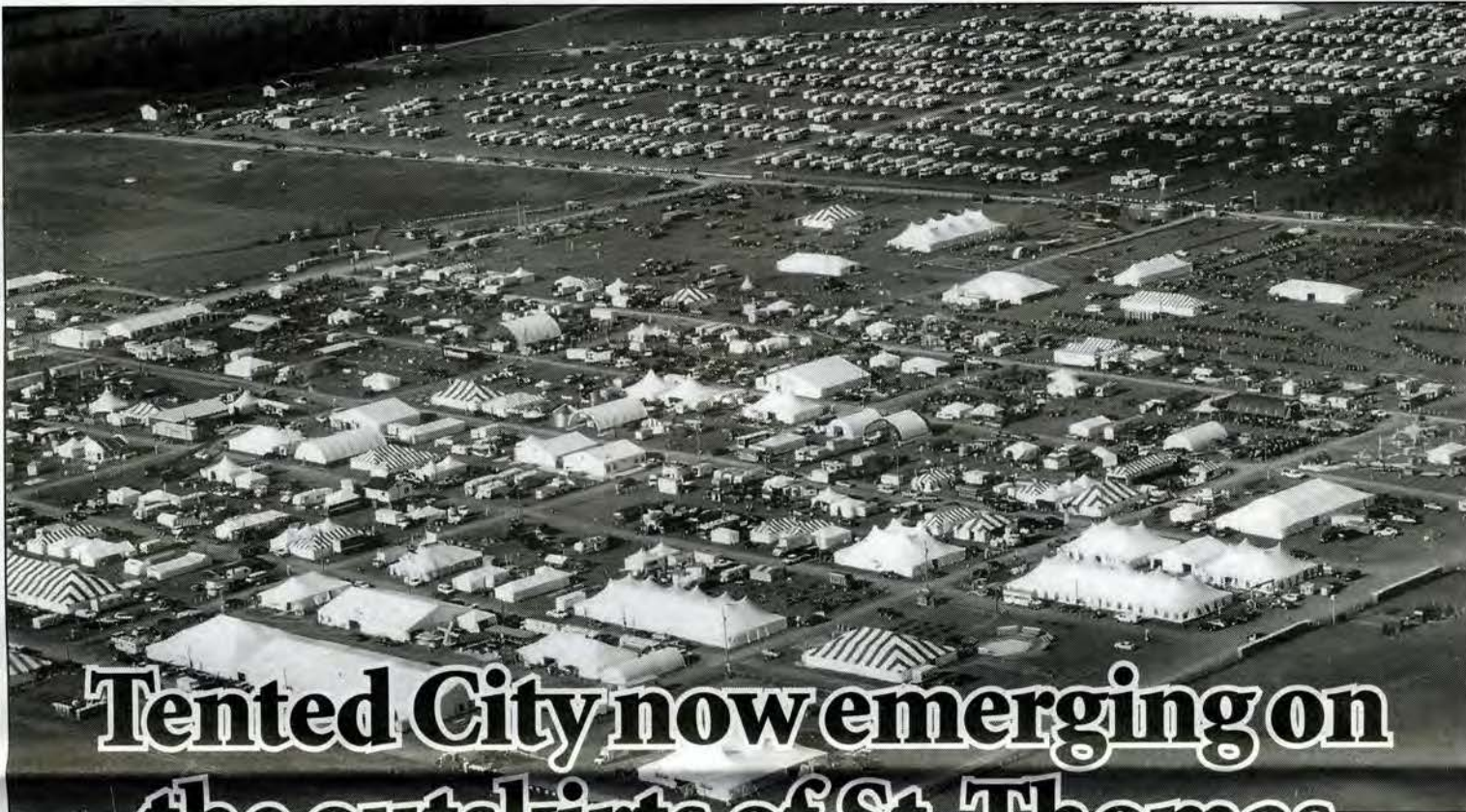
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Tented City now emerging on the outskirts of St. Thomas

JOHN PHAIR
Today's Farmer

Harry Mezenberg is the 2010 chair of the IPM Tented City and when we dropped in on him Aug. 30 he noted that tents and buildings were going up every day and they were just 21 days from opening.

With the excitement in the air palpable, the former reeve of Aldborough Township (now West Elgin) and former Warden of Elgin County (1996-97) was clearly enjoying the prospects of his creation coming together.

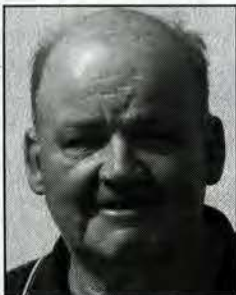
"Tented City is about the same size and layout as other years, about 100 acres," he said.

However, he says he thinks there may be an increase in exhibitors this year, noting that while there were more than 400 exhibitors registered, many have more than one tent or site.

"The agriculture and commercial tents, for example, could have more than 10 exhibitors organizations in them, so there really could be 600 to 800 exhibitors in total," he says.

He notes that last year's plowing match featured a lot of exhibits from mining and forestry companies due to its location in Northern Ontario.

"We don't have that so much



HARRY MEZENBERG
Heads up Tented City committee

here, it's more agricultural this year and tends to be a bit more local," he said.

Mezenberg noted that he and IPM chair Duncan McPhail served on municipal council together for many years and had always worked well together.

"Duncan was my deputy-reeve when I was reeve of Aldborough Township," he said.

"When Duncan became chair of the IPM he approached me about taking on the chairmanship of Tented City," he said.

He said one of his biggest challenges was getting the perimeter fence and posts up around the site.

"That was a huge job, the entire site must be fenced on the perimeter with posts and snow fence to ensure the site is secure," he said, adding that there are 13 gates on the periphery of the site that will be locked each night.

He notes that another major challenge this summer has been keeping the alfalfa (which is required by regulation) trimmed.

"It's been such a lush growing year, it's been an almost steady job keeping up with it," he said.

Mezenberg, who recently retired from farming after 40 years of cash cropping, says, with the help of about 12 on his committee, he's enjoying the challenge of over seeing one of the most important projects on site.

He notes that he also draws upon the Rodney Rotary Club for additional labour when needed.

"They can supply me with another 10 people when I need them," he said.

He notes that the Elgin-St. Thomas IPM plans to redistribute any profit it makes on the match among the various service clubs and organizations around the county.

"When the plowing match in Teeswater was left with a profit their organizations were paid at a rate of \$10 per hour for their labor," he said.

Hopefully, we will also have something left over for our communities. The decision was made that it would all go back into the local community projects . . . it's a way of distributing the profit back to the communities that were good enough to help us out."

He notes that he has never been a competitive plowman himself. In fact, he noted ironically, that he hadn't plowed since 1978.

"I practised conservation till-

age and no-till," he says, adding a chuckle.

Mezenberg notes that the site was completely staked out, waving his arm across a vista of white, wooden stakes methodically driven into the ground as far as the eye could see.

"Everywhere you see a stake in the ground, there will be an exhibitor, wither it's a food vendor or a whatever and they all have to come in here within the next two weeks," he says, adding that

every day the site changes with more people, tents and buildings arriving every day.

He adds that he and his committee were working on a system to help direct the arriving exhibitors to their sites without having them drive helter-skelter all over the site.

"It's an awful lot of people to get headed in the right direction but we'll get it done," he says.

Editor's note: Photo is from the 2003 IPM near Ottawa.



Pat Davidson, MP
Sarnia-Lambton

Congratulations to Elgin County for hosting the 2010 International Plowing Match!

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