



**Better late than never.** JESSE CNOCKAERT/THE CHRONICLE  
 Norma McMillan of Dutton was given the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal Feb. 28 by MPP Steve Peters. McMillan was supposed to get the medal in 2003, but she and Peters missed each other that year. The two finally got together at the grand opening of Caledonia TWO in Dutton last week and McMillan was given her long-overdue award. The medal is given to people who demonstrate exemplary service to their municipalities. When Peters was looking for a candidate for Dutton/Dunwich, McMillan was strongly recommended.

MAR 5/09

## Church has gone to the dogs



PHOTO SUBMITTED

### Blessings for our furry friends

Oct. 4 was the annual Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi, a day celebrated by the blessing of animals. At the Grace Anglican Church in West Lorne, people brought in their canine companions to be blessed at the regular service.

By David James, Church Warden

Oct. 4 was the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi and in many churches it was celebrated with the blessing of animals. This past Oct. 4 Grace Anglican Church in West Lorne invited people to bring their pets to

church to be blessed at the regular 9.30 a.m. service. The Reverend Canon Brenda was a little nervous beforehand not knowing what kind of pets people would bring. "If anyone brings a pet snake, I will be happy to bless it, but not to touch it," she said.

As it happened all of the pets were dogs so she did not have to confront her fear.... this time.

St. Francis of Assisi is the patron saint of animals and the environment as well as charity and social justice, and founder of the Order of Friars Minor better known as the Franciscans. He died on the evening of Oct. 3, 1226, at the age of 44 and was canonized by Pope Gregory IX on July 16, 1228. Italy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was a place of constant war, political scheming, and, often, outright cruelty. People treated animals with even worse cruelty than they treated their neighbours. The unnecessary infliction of pain and suffering on animals was a social norm right up until the latter half of the nineteenth century, when the legal system began to adopt anti-cruelty laws. Francis anticipated these laws by over six hundred years.

The service drew from those passages of the bible that refer to all God's creatures and our responsibility to care for them. We are to be good stewards of God's earth and all the creatures therein; a challenge that we do not always live up to. The ten dogs that attended church were very well behaved although a couple of them did try to join in with the singing of hymns. They ranged in size from two great Danes to a number of lap dogs. Refreshments were provided after the service for people and dogs alike.

Reverend Brenda says we will make this an annual event, so perhaps we shall see a wider range of pets next year.

OCT 22/09



JESSE CNOCKAERT/THE CHRONICLE

### Do you know what this town needs? More scarecrows!

Randy and Vickie Grosse were out in West Lorne on Sept. 16 decorating streetlamps with corn stalks and scarecrows on behalf of the West Lorne Horticultural Society. The decoration was in preparation for the Rodney-Aldbrough Agricultural Fair, which was held Sept. 18-20. Check out some images from the fair on Page 8.



PHOTO SUBMITTED

### October is Pastor Appreciation Month

After the church service at West Lorne Baptist Church Oct. 18, the members showed their appreciation for Pastor Adam Hall and his wife Rosalee by having a surprise luncheon for them and presenting them with a large decorated cake.

OCT 29/09 CHRONICLE



JESSE CNOCKAERT/THE CHRONICLE

**Suicide Awareness walk in West Lorne**

The 2nd annual Suicide Awareness walk was held Sept. 6 in West Lorne. Banner holders Erika Eckersley and Mikalya Myers lead the way as people marched from the West Elgin Community Health Centre to the Scout Hall on Chestnut St. The annual walk tries to raise awareness of suicide and lets suicide survivors come together. Read more on page 3.



JESSE CNOCKAERT/THE CHRONICLE

**Up to the sky**

The 2nd annual Suicide Awareness walk was held in West Lorne Sept. 6. At the conclusion of the walk, organizer Penny Knapp (Centre), and others did a memorial balloon release. Each balloon had a name written on it of a person who died by suicide. The balloons were biodegradable.

SEPT 10/09



CONTRIBUTED

**Welcoming the Wardens in Toronto**

County of Middlesex Warden and Municipality of Thames Centre Mayor Jim Maudsley, left, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and Elgin-Middlesex-London MPP Steve Peters and County of Elgin Warden and Municipality of West Elgin Mayor Graham Warwick are pictured in the Ontario Legislature at the Speaker's Chair during a recent visit to Queen's Park by the riding's municipal officials. The visit included a tour of the Legislative Assembly.



**West Lorne Baptist Church youth Works with Homeless in Toronto**

Members of the West Lorne Baptist Church took a two-day trip up to Toronto to visit the Salvation Army Gateway. They went out on a walk with a recovered drug addict who showed them the ropes of street life. They handed out bag lunches, socks, bottled water, and other items.

SEPT 10/09

■ RURAL ROOTS: Residents in West Lorne hope The Arts and Cookery Bank will give a much-needed boost to local econ-

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Grace McGartland, chairperson of The Arts and Cookery Bank, stands in front of the site in West Lorne. She hopes people will be wowed when the site opens next year.

# Banking on homegrown heritage

BY DEBORA VAN BRENK  
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WEST LORNE — Signs on century-old storefronts here make empty promises of furniture and appliance sales.

Few vehicles line the wide parking lane on the main road through town.

But there's a group in the area that's banking on the belief there's hope for rural communities such as this one.

And more than just hope: prosperity.

The Arts and Cookery Bank, expected to open in early 2010, will be a showcase of homegrown heritage and cuisine.

It's not a museum or a cafe, explains chairperson Grace McGartland, but a local hub of culture and celebration.

"It's about bringing the community alive . . . The whole thing is about wowing people when they come here."

The converted 1914 former Bank of Montreal building will feature historic and current photographs on various themes — haying season or family reunions, for example.

An 1895 barn to be moved on site will include hands-on cooking instruction by certified chefs in a state-of-the-art kitchen studio, using locally produced foods.

The project is a co-operative venture among the municipalities of West Elgin, Dutton-Dunwich, Newbury and South-west Middlesex. It began about two years ago in an effort to boost the local food economy, increase tourism and tout

“It's about bringing the community alive . . . The whole thing is about wowing people when they come here.”

Grace McGartland

regional heritage.

The non-profit group envisions some package deals that will show off the best of the communities: visitors will be able to book a weekend that includes a stay at a bed-and-breakfast, a play at the drama hall, a tour of local farms and a chef-taught class with recipes made from ingredients fresh off the field or farm.

Participants can meet here, pick fruit from an orchard and

then bake old-fashioned apple pies under the tutelage of a fall fair winning cook, McGartland says.

It's down-to-earth, real, rich. "People want authentic experience, not plastic," she says.

The photo displays, some of them using touch-screen technology, will be a living record of the rural way of life, past and present.

Digital photography classes will also take place here, and ensure residents can continually refresh the gallery of images.

Bringing the project to life will require about \$750,000.

The province recently provided a grant of \$286,925 to help make it happen. A federal grant of \$40,600 is helping to

build an elevator.

Small communities don't have to languish, the group believes. With good planning, enthusiasm and community support, they can be destinations in their own right.

Still, it's a risk, McGartland readily admits, casting her gaze out to a street that is almost traffic-free on a weekday afternoon.

"(But) we believe this is a calculated risk. If not us, then who?"

Debora Van Brenk is a Free Press reporter.



MORE: Tour the building at [lfp.com/videos](http://lfp.com/videos)



JESSE CNOCKAERT/THE CHRONICLE

## Donation to Arts and Cookery Bank

MP Joe Preston visited West Lorne Sept. 2 to announce a donation of over \$265,000 to the Arts and Cookery Bank. The donation is made through the Community Adjustment Fund, and is a portion of over \$5.2 million that is being given to support projects in communities in Southern Ontario. The money will be used to restore and equip the Arts and Cookery Bank building on Graham Rd. From L - Duncan Morrison, Grace McGartland, Arts and Cookery Bank Chair, Jerry Galbraith, MP Joe Preston, Bill Denning.

SEPT. 10/09

# West Elgin discusses four-way stop

An intersection in West Lorne is a four-way stop when it shouldn't be, so now West Elgin Municipal Council is trying to decide what to do about it.

It has come to Council's attention that one of the four stop signs at the intersection of Gilbert St. and Finney St. is supposed to be a Yield sign. Neil Badder of Badder Bus Lines told council about the four-way stop. Council Clerk Norma Bryant looked into the history of the intersection and confirmed that one of the signs should be a Yield sign.

"The first by-law was for the village of West Lorne in 1989. It said the intersection of Finney St., facing Gilbert St. would have a Yield sign installed. Then in '91 it says that at the northeast corner where Gilbert meets Finney, and at the southwest corner where Gilbert meets Finney, there shall be erected stop signs, and that corner shall be designated as a three-way stop intersection," said Bryant.

Council speculated at a meeting March 12 that the sign may have been changed by a road worker under the former Road Superintendent, but no one

is sure exactly when.

"At some point 'Yield' was taken out and replaced with a Stop sign, but there's no by-law to go with that," said Administrator/Treasurer Joanne Groch.

Council spent some time March 12 discussing if the intersection should be left as a four-way stop. The present Road Superintendent, Paul VanVaerenbergh, said that the four-way stop might be good as is. He said that Council has received letters from residents near that intersection who are concerned about traffic, and an extra stop sign could be a good thing.

"They had concerns about safety, concerns that maybe a child could possibly be hit down there. What you should keep in mind is: those concerns were raised and if you take a stop sign out, you're opening up the bus traffic to head right on through. They're stopping now... maybe it would be a good idea to keep that stop sign there at this point," he said.

Deputy Mayor Bernie Wiehle didn't fully agree with this point, saying that a Yield sign should slow down bus traffic, so it should be about as

good as a stop sign.

VanVaerenbergh suggested a traffic count should be done to get an idea of how much the intersection is used. Some major businesses in West Lorne, such as Erie Flooring, make use of the intersection, so Deputy Mayor Wiehle recommended Council ask them what they think.

"We should get some comments from businesses because it is an industrial area down there," said Wiehle.

Council will be considering making a bus throughway at that intersection and it will be discussed further at future council meetings.

"It's decision making time. Either we leave it alone, fix it so it says what it is, or we make some drastic changes and make a bus thoroughfare," said Mayor Graham Warwick.

Councilor Jonathan Wolf expressed some liking of the bus through-way idea.

"I just think the configuration of those roads doesn't really lend itself well to turning on those streets. So that would be another practical reason for a through-way," he said.

MAR 19/09

# West Lorne woman wins gold with Dragon Boat team



PHOTO BY JESSE CNOCKAERT/THE CHRONICLE

## Rowbust gives it their best!

Linda Kuska from West Lorne is a member of Rowbust, a London Dragon boat racing team. On Aug. 15-16, the team won three gold medals at the London Dragon Boat Racing Festival. Above, the team pulled ahead during one of their races.

A West Lorne woman brought home the gold after she and the Dragon Boat team she's a part of took 3 gold medals and won all the championship races at the London Dragon Boat Festival Aug. 15-16.

This year's race event was done in partnership with the Rowbust Breast Cancer Survivor Dragon Boat Racing Team. Rowbust marked their 10th Anniversary at the event. "It's amazing actually. When we

Oxford and Perth.

Now that the London Dragon Boat race is behind them, the team is setting their sights on the Canadian Nationals, which will be held in Whistler, north of Vancouver, in July 2010.

"Our coach has a whole training regime that we peak at the right time. We'll finish our water training, probably around Thanksgiving, and then we go to the London Athletic Club for the winter training"

Kuska herself was diagnosed with breast cancer ten years ago, shortly before Rowbust was founded. Her experience as a breast cancer survivor has been very positive, according to Kuska.

"My kids were six and nine when I was diagnosed. It's one of those things where you're diagnosed and you don't think you're going to get to see your kids grow up. You find out that you do what you have to do. You do your treatment, you get through it," said Kuska. "I'd have to say being diagnosed is one of the best things that ever happened to me. It's opened up so many doors and so many possibilities I wouldn't have had if I hadn't had it. It's been a good ride."

Members of Rowbust also address community groups with presentations about their journeys with breast cancer and talk about the benefits of exercise through boat paddling.



Rowbust, a London based team of Breast cancer survivors, won 3 gold medals at the London Dragon Boat Race Festival Aug. 15-16.

The London Dragon Boat Race Festival has been held annually since 1993. Linda Kuska, a 46-year-old West Lorne native, and the rest of her team, Rowbust, were awarded 3 Gold medals for the 200 meter, 500 meter and the 2 kilometer races. The annual festival features competing teams from across Canada and the U.S.

Rowbust is a London based team of made up of breast cancer survivors. The team was founded 10 years ago. Eight original members, including Kuska, still make up the team's current roster of 47 members. Members range in age from 30 to 72.

first started (ten years ago), we had no idea what we were doing. We were very resourceful and very determined, but we had no idea what we were doing," said Kuska.

Kuska said since the team was founded, they've gained two coaches, one of whom is a former Canadian Bobsledder, who've really helped the team become as strong as it is today.

"They've really bumped up our training, so we've really stepped up to that next level and have become much better paddlers," she said.

Members of Rowbust come from London, St. Thomas as well as the counties of Middlesex, Elgin,



JESSE CNOCKAERT/THE CHRONICLE

## Successful boot drive.

Members of the West Lorne Fire Dept. raised \$2148 for Muscular Dystrophy Dec. 20 during their volunteer Boot Drive. They thank volunteers Luke Rastapkevicius and Chad McGahen (above) as well as Andrew Cruichshank, Gino Maniaco, Shawn McMurphey, Brad Oliveira and Dan Soos. The Fire Dept. also offers thanks to everyone who supported the boot drive with donations and who brought coffee and cookies to the volunteers. Muscular dystrophy is a name for a group of neuro-muscular disorders that are characterized by progressive weakness of the voluntary muscles that control body movement.



## Fish Fry!

Mona Nephin served some french fries to Don Page during the annual Fish Fry at Grace Anglican Church in West Lorne May 16.

JESSE CNOCKAERT/THE CHRONICLE

# Church becomes Bed and Breakfast

The property formerly used by Melody Fellowship Church in West Lorne will be re-zoned so it may be used as a two-room bed and breakfast.

Pastors Rick and Brenda Gordon of the church, located at the corner of Elm Street and Graham Road, have decided to sell the land. The prospective owners, Thomas Druyan and Alice Ladner, want to turn the building into a single unit dwelling. They also propose to operate a bed and breakfast there with two guest rooms in the building.

Pastor Rick Gordon was at the West Elgin Municipal Council meeting May 28 and said a few words about the closure of the church.

"Due to lack of response in the church or financial backing, we were just forced to sell. At this point we're not doing anything, as far as the church," he said.

Mayor Graham Warwick commented on the decreasing number of churches in West Lorne. The municipality's Planner Ted Halwa said that the land could be re-zoned in a way that would allow the building to become a church again should someone wish to do so, although that's not very likely.

"Six months ago, we were in a church shortage, and now we're in a church surplus. I just want to make sure that six months from now we're not saying we need a new church because we don't have any in the village," said Warwick.

The proposed bed and breakfast would have parking available for four vehicles. Ted Halwa called a bed and breakfast establishment "both desirable and appropriate" in a memo to council, and that it would be in conformity with the West Lorne Official Plan.



**Playful funding.**

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Elgin-Middlesex-London MP Joe Preston and MPP Steve Peters announced funding for 10 successful projects under the Recreational Infrastructure Canada in Ontario and Recreation Ontario programs on June 26 at Waterworks Park in St. Thomas. From left: Preston, Municipality of Central Elgin Deputy Mayor Tom Marks, Peters, Municipality of Bayham Mayor Lynn Acre, St. Thomas Alderman David Warden, Town of Aylmer Mayor Bob Habkirk, Municipality of Dutton-Dunwich Mayor Bonnie Vowel, YMCA of Western Ontario Vice-President Development Heidi Peever Bain and Municipality of West Elgin Councillor Jonathan Wolf.

July 2/09



*Before this church became the Melody Fellowship Church it was the Church of Christ which closed in 2004. Now it is to become a Bed & Breakfast.*



**Madison Murray, age 8, and Selaena Hayward, age 4**

MAR. 12/09

The After School Story Hour for kids ages 6-12 is held every Monday at the West Lorne Library. On March 9, the kids made some birds from paper bags, and went on search for animals hidden around the library.

MAR. 12/09



**Story Hour.**

JESSE GNOCKAERT/THE CHRONICLE

Around the table - Emily Arn, Harley Melkert, Librarian Sandra Fischer, Madison Murray and Selaena Hayward. Out of frame is Caryssa Hayward.



**A helping hand.**

Emily Arn got some help with the glue from Librarian Sandra Fischer.



**Harley Melkert, age 9**

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PHOTO BY JESSE CNOCKAERT/THE CHRONICLE

**West Elgin's RDO**

As Rural Development Officer for West Elgin, Monica Pelcz networks organizations and businesses to enhance the rural community. She spearheaded the improved Community Calendar on the municipal webpage, and is working on a Community Expo to showcase local businesses, service clubs and non-profit organizations.

**West Elgin gets Rural Development Officer**

Monica Pelcz has hit the ground running as the Rural Development Officer (RDO) for West Elgin.

Pelcz started as RDO in January 2009 and has been giving monthly reports to West Elgin Municipal Council since June. As RDO, Pelcz tries to coordinate and facilitate partnership development between nonprofit organizations and the Municipality to coincide with the "municipal" economic development and tourism initiatives. The position is a one-year contract of the Foundation for Rural Living, so Monica has been working hard to accomplish all she can before the end of her term.

One accomplishment Pelcz would like to emphasize is the new Community Calendar available at the municipal webpage [www.westelgin.net](http://www.westelgin.net). The Community Calendar now has category headings making it easier for people to read about what events are coming up in the community.

The Foundation for Rural Living is looking at funding options to try and continue the RDO position for more than one year.

The Municipality of West Elgin has been chosen to be part of a pilot project to continue with an RDO officer for another 3-5 years. Pelcz said the position is great

because it gives businesses, clubs and non-profit organizations one person to go through. "It's all about networking. It's all about connecting. And it's great that there's one person that they can call to inquire," said Pelcz.

Pelcz completed and submitted a funding application for Tiny Tots Nursery school in Rodney. Just last week, Tiny Tots was awarded a \$5,000 grant for membership development and for developing a website.

Another major project Pelcz is working on is the Western Elgin Community Expo. Pelcz came up with the idea to hold an expo for local non-profit organizations, service clubs and businesses, so they could all gather in one place and show themselves off to the community.

Pelcz is meeting with organizations and ironing out the details, and is aiming for the Expo to take place Nov. 7, 2009 at the Elgin International Hall. Anyone interested in having an exhibit may call Monica Pelcz at 519-785-1910 or email her at [mpelczrdo@hotmail.com](mailto:mpelczrdo@hotmail.com). The mandate of the RDO was developed with the help of the Municipality of West Elgin, the West Elgin Chamber of Commerce, the Mpower group, and the Arts and Cookery Bank.



JESSE CNOCKAERT/THE CHRONICLE

**Completed Municipal Administration Program.**

James Blackmore (R) was congratulated by West Elgin Mayor Graham Warwick Jan. 15 for successfully completing the Municipal Administration Program.

**Elgin elects Graham Warwick as Warden**

Mayor of the Municipality of West Elgin, Graham D. Warwick, was elected Warden of the County of Elgin for the year 2009. He defeated Mayor Bob Habkirk, Mayor of the Town of Aylmer for the job in a rare departure from recent acclamations for the top political post in the County. Here is his inaugural address delivered to County Council following his election on December 9th, 2008.



gone before me for setting the standard high. I am so happy to have this new opportunity to serve further the residents of this great County of Elgin. I particularly look forward to meeting with many residents of this wide and diversified County. There is

much to do this year and I am eager to get started. The ratepayers of Elgin County are well served by a Council and staff that, like Elgin County itself, is progressive by nature. Elgin County's new logo 'Progressive by Nature' is much more than just a great phrase. It is so very true.

"Members of Council, Past and Present, Staff, Distinguished Guests, Friends and Family, thank you all for coming

Thank you fellow Councillors for your support. I humbly accept the position of Warden of Elgin County. I would like to thank those who have

Without our excellent staff continually bringing us innovative ways to do business better, we as Council could never have achieved what we have for the residents of Elgin. The recent streamlining of the administration by our CAO and the new approach to running our three long-term care homes are just two examples. Council has shown its ability to think progressively by supporting the 2010 International Plowing Match along with the City of St. Thomas in a venture that will conservatively draw 12 Million Dollars into Elgin-St. Thomas in 2010. I look forward to working with the IPM Committee this run-up year.

A new initiative to study county-wide planning is another progressive step that this Council has supported and will see results in 2009.

The progress Engineering has made in replacing infrastructure must continue, as a strong roads

*Continued On Page 7*

**St. Mary's**

An evening of seasonal sounds and sing-a-longs was held at St. Mary's Church Dec. 18 with students from the Catholic School.

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**Ultimate Board Game night.**

On Feb. 19, Ultimate board game night was held at the West Lorne Library. (L-R) Chris Geisler, Cody Boyd, Etienne Van Zyl, and Daniel Wittek were among those there and they played a game of 'Canada-opoly', and the Lord of the Rings version of Risk.