

## Snow days weathered well

By Scott Hilgendorff  
The Chronicle

Unusually cold and stormy weather has added to a little pressure on teachers to get through the curriculum but local principals say the unusual number of bus cancellation days has not been too tough yet.

"To a certain extent, we can absorb a few days," said Larry Schneider, West Elgin Secondary School principal.

The high school has seen five days without busses including two between Feb. 2 and Feb. 6 but the semestered system has made it easier to cope with, said Schneider.

Of the five days, two were in January during the first semester, one was during exams and the last two were at the start of the new semester.

Had they all occurred this semester, Schneider said it would have been harder to absorb.

Regardless, he said this is the

most number of snow days he's seen since being at the school for 20 years, although he's been told there's been worse winters in the past.

The Avon-Maitland School Board which neighbours the local Thames Valley District School Board, has seen 14 snow days this semester and is facing a struggle of getting through the curriculum. Development and early dismissal days have been cancelled and teachers there are being asked to reduce non-essential components of classroom time.

Locally, Schneider said teachers just have to tighten up some components and are able to get through the crunch fairly easily.

"It's inconvenient but so far, the impact has been negligible," said Schneider, who is also hoping there aren't any more snow days with several more weeks of potentially snowy weather left.

It's been a little harder at the elementary level where class time is not semestered but Jane Falls,

Dunwich-Dutton Public School principal said they are also managing well.

They've had four days without busses but the school has been open to walkers. Only one day saw parents keeping most of their children at home and Falls said they've been operating as normally as possible on days without busses.

She said there's usually about 200 students, about half the student population, who can walk to school allowing teachers to carry on with the curriculum as normally as possible.

For those taking busses, she said it sometimes means some extra homework to get caught up but overall, one of the biggest challenges has simply been teachers living in London being able to get in when area highways have been closed due to the weather or accidents.

"We try to have as regular a day as we can," said Falls.

The Chronicle

## Open winter leads to rare sightings in annual Christmas Bird Count

By Scott Hilgendorff  
The Chronicle

A warm, snow-free start to the winter saw some unusual finds in the annual Canadian Christmas Bird Count, Dec. 27. Seventy-five volunteers helping the West Elgin Nature Club, counted 16,098 birds including several species that should have been further south by now.

Two included a house wren and a hoary redpoll.

A record high count of redbill hawks was also counted. One hundred and eighty-seven of those were found.

"They keep moving with the food supply. This has been an open winter. It holds our seasonal birds here a lot longer," said Ken Reinke, an organizer of this year's count.

For the hawks and other birds, an "open winter" means more food available and less reason to move further south. At the same time, there are other birds, such as tree sparrows, that migrate further north that haven't arrived in this area yet.

"Leaving here or getting here, it's all thrown off by an open

winter," said Reinke.

A brown thrasher and a northern mockingbird, which should be south by now, were also found while only a few snow buntings, normally common this time of the year, were seen.

Normally 1,000 to 3,000 snow buntings are tallied in the count but only a few were found this year.

The numbers vary slightly each year and Reinke said similar counts are done across North America, helping with research from migratory patterns to species in danger or making a comeback, like the wild turkey - 87 of those were found.

Reinke said a few generations ago, people used to have to travel to the Jack Miner's Bird Sanctuary to see Canada geese, but now, the birds are common.

Volunteers counted birds in a circular area surrounding Rodney, West Lorne and Dutton, extending north to the Thames River and south to the Lake Erie Shore.



Members of the West Elgin Choral Society perform a Valentine's Concert at the Elgin International Centre Saturday (left photo). Pat Campbell plays piano while Wane Carroll leads the choral group during the performance (right photo). The performance was held as a fund raising event for the Four



Counties Health Services Foundation. More than \$2,400 was raised at the event that saw couples dancing to romantic songs and music.

Chronicle photos

The Chronicle



Nicholas Knapp of West Elgin's Parks and Recreation Department works his way through chunks of frozen slush on the sidewalk on Graham Road. Last week's winter weather left sidewalks a mess and made clean up hard.

Chronicle photo

## Too much snow tough to clean up

By Scott Hilgendorff  
The Chronicle

West Elgin had to take some extra steps this week to try to make downtown sidewalks safer in West Lorne this week after a woman complained of a fall on the west side of Graham Street.

Within two hours of learning someone had fallen, Parks and Recreation Superintendent Jeff Slater had some help from the roads department to get some sand on the sidewalks.

"It's so cold, the stuff we use to melt the ice is not working really well," said Slater.

They don't use salt but a compound that doesn't track as badly into stores but Slater said what does melt refreezes over night because of the cold.

West Lorne resident Jean Fenn fell Wednesday on the slippery sidewalk.

"I went flat on my back," said Fenn who was not badly hurt but upset the sidewalks were still covered in snow.

"You have to walk really slow and be careful," she said of navigating the snow and ice-packed sidewalks.

While some businesses shovel and scrape, Slater said the municipality has looked after the sidewalks in the downtown core.

He said last week, it was impossible for them to cope with the wintry weather.

It's one of the worst winters in the past several years for cold and snowfall and while they try to keep the sidewalks cleared to concrete, Slater said it's been impossible this year.

After last Tuesday's winter storm, the sidewalks had been coated in a slush that froze and is now virtually unmoveable by the sidewalk plow and snowblower.

"Our equipment is having a hard time moving it," Slater said.

"It's like concrete balls out there," he said of the frozen slush that plows had pushed from the road to the sidewalk edges.

The Chronicle



## CHRISTMAS TUNES PLAYED

JEFF KEMPENAAR/CHRONICLE

The West Elgin Community Band played classical tunes and Christmas sing along as it presented It's a Wonderful Time of the Year in the cafeteria at West Elgin Secondary School on Nov. 29. About 80 people came to sing along and listen to music.

The Chronicle



KAREN CONCALVES/CHRONICLE

This Elgin County OPP cruiser was struck at the intersection at Graham Road and Pioneer Line and came to rest in front of the Bank of Montreal on Oct. 31

## Gas tax may relieve West Elgin transportation needs

JEFF KEMPENAAR

staff

West Elgin is receiving \$16,800 from a provincial gas tax transfer to fund public transit.

"This is great," said West Elgin Mayor Graham Warwick. "We have people who could use this money."

Rural transportation issues have long posed a challenge to the area.

Warwick said there is need for parents wanting to send their children to the Early Years Centre in Rodney where no public transit is available.

Three people moved to London to be closer to medical facilities for treatment because they could not commute from West Lorne said Warwick.

Then, most recently a Toronto man looking to move his family to the area contacted the

Chronicle. He had a job interview in West Lorne but could only get a bus to Wardsville.

Warwick suggested a transportation bus could take patients that are treated in London from West Elgin and paid for with this new funding.

"We need a bus to London," said Warwick adding Bobier Villa in Dutton expressed interest in tapping into the bus route.

The municipality signed a letter of intent to spend the money on the bus to Four Counties Health Services, Newbury, from West Elgin Community Health Centre.

The money will cover operating costs this year and a deficit incurred from the purchase of the bus.

It is part of around \$67,000 made available for transit from the province.

Future money's must be spent on capital expenditures that increase transit service and ridership.

Joanne Groch, West Elgin, administrator-treasurer, said the bus created a budget deficit around \$6,000 this year.

## Cruiser hit in West Lorne

An Elgin County OPP officer suffered minor injuries as the result of a crash between her cruiser and another vehicle at the intersection of

Pioneer Line, with emergency lights and sirens activated.

As the officer proceeded westbound on Pioneer Line

2001 Dodge Caravan, was not injured. The officer was transported by ambulance to the Four Counties Health Services in Newbury where

## Election called: local candidates hit the campaign trail

FOR THE CHRONICLE

Signs of a federal election sprang up in St. Thomas moments after Prime Minister Paul Martin announced Canada is to go to the polls June 28.

And leadership and accountability emerged as early issues in Elgin-Middlesex-London.

Incumbent Liberal MP Gar Knutson and NDP hopeful Tim McCallum said the election will hinge on leadership; Conservative rival Joe Preston called it an election about accountability.

"People have a choice in this election

whether they want Paul Martin to be prime minister, or Steven Harper — and I think everything else is secondary," said Knutson as he handed out election signs at his campaign HQ on Curtis Street at St. Catherine Street.

"I think it's going to come down to leadership, and Paul Martin, after campaigning for the prime minister's job for 13 years, has been a huge disappointment," said McCallum on the phone from work. His campaign office was being set up Monday on Talbot Street at Elgin Street.

"From my point of view, it's going to be accountable government — it's a govern-

ment that does what it says it's going to do," said Preston, assembling signs at his campaign headquarters on First Avenue at Wellington Street.

With the sponsorship scandal looming over the election, Knutson said, "Certainly our whole record will be an issue, including the sponsorship issue."

But he also added, "Paul Martin has said quite clearly he wants to get to the bottom of it and I think Canadians trust him to do just that."

Preston said sponsorship is a bigger issue than Knutson alludes. "We certainly have heard it at the door. It's the biggest issue

we've had; can governments keep their promises, can governments be honest with the people."

And McCallum added, "It's going to be a big deal in the sense there is a real unease on the part of the public how good Liberals are at managing dollars."

Both Knutson and Preston called for majority governments to be formed by their parties. McCallum predicted a Liberal minority with the NDP gaining a record number of seats (beating 43 in the 1988 election) — but even then, possibly, not holding their traditional balance of power, if

Continued on Page 17



ST. MARY'S AUCTION DRAWS OVER 100



JEFF KEMPENAAR/CHRONICLE

Left: Anne Bray bids to the excitement of Ruth Mooser at the St. Mary's St. Thomas More School auction Nov 7. Over 100 people bid on items at a silent and live auction held at St. Mary's Hall in West Lorne to raise money for the school. The amount money raised was not available.

## Road superintendent appointed in West Elgin

By Scott Hilgendorff  
The Chronicle

Paul VanVaerenbergh has been named the acting road superintendent for West Elgin.

He replaces Rick Jackson who retired from the position in December.

Formerly a foreman, VanVaerenbergh assumes the

position on a six-month trial basis as the municipality works for the first time with some changes in the road department's structure.

VanVaerenbergh is being replaced by the lead hand and the lead hand position no longer exists.

Instead, there is an on-call employee now who is available

in instances such as when a storm hits and extra work is needed plowing the roads.

The on-call person comes in and is paid an hourly wage, cutting down the amount of overtime paid to salaried staff and money saved by downsizing the position.

Mayor Graham Warwick said while it doesn't save an entire

salary because of the hours that will still have to be paid when there is extra work to do, it is still a cost-effective idea the municipality is trying.

"It's a good thing in a rural community to have," said Warwick of having a person available in times of extra need.

"It's a rural way of being cost-effective," he said.

# Kittmer to join world honouring Rick Hansen at Wheels In Motion



**WARM UP** MCLANDRESS/CHRONICLE

Colin Kittmer warms up near West Elgin Senior Elementary School. He is preparing for Rick Hansen Day.

**RYAN MCLANDRESS**  
for The Chronicle

Nearly 20 years ago, Rick Hansen set out in his wheelchair to travel around the world to raise awareness about spinal chord injury and people living with disabilities.

Two years, two months and two days later Rick completed the more than 40,000 kilometre journey.

On June 13, the world will commemorate Rick Hansen on Rick Hansen Wheels In Motion Day which is a chance for people to raise funds for spinal chord research.

West Lorne resident, Colin Kittmer remembers that day in 1986 when Rick Hansen wheeled through nearby Eagle. He, and a group of students

ran from the high school in West Lorne, all the way out to Eagle to catch a glimpse of Rick Hansen and hear him speak.

Kittmer recalls that there were other dignitaries there yet he can't remember their names. The only thing he can remember is that he heard Rick Hansen speak. He remembers feeling overjoyed at the opportunity to meet this international celebrity.

He also remembers thinking something else.

"At the time I never thought that I would ever be in a wheelchair myself," he says.

How times have changed since then for Colin Kittmer. He has since retired from West Elgin Secondary School where he taught math and computers

for 32 years. In an accident that occurred in September 2000, Kittmer fell from a tree. He was paralyzed from the upper chest down.

He has had to work hard since then, as being in a wheelchair requires immense upper body and arm strength.

Even though Rick Hansen Day is not a race, Kittmer still must be in good shape to complete the five kilometre wheel. He performs arm exercises daily on a weight machine that he stores in the garage. He also says that the most important preparation for events like these is just to get out and practice.

"The big thing is to just get out and wheel because there is nothing that replaces that, just like running... because you have to get your heart rate up," says Kittmer who tries to get out at least once a day.

He competed in a relay race this past April for the second straight year for the Canadian Paraplegic Association. The

teams of eight competed amongst each other on an indoor track and managed to raise over \$40,000 for spinal chord research.

Kittmer is now preparing for the Rick Hansen Wheels in Motion Day in which he and 25 of his friends and family will complete the five kilometre track.

Participants can walk, run, wheel or rollerblade with all pledges collected

going to spinal chord research in London at Parkwood Hospital.

Kittmer is very pleased with the care that he received at Parkwood Hospital so he is excited to be able to give back.

Anyone who would like to participate can visit the website [www.rick-hansen.com](http://www.rick-hansen.com). If you would like to donate, you can reach Colin Kittmer at 768-1671.

## The Chronicle



### HANGING BASKETS

SCOTT HILGENDORFF/CHRONICLE

West Elgin Parks and Recreation staff were out last week hanging flower baskets along West Lorne's Main Street, prior to the holiday weekend.



*Gar Knutson with West Elgin mayor Graham Warwick at the opening of the new medical facility.*

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Authorized by Ron Elliott, Official Agent for Gar Knutson, Liberal candidate



# Gas prices taking toll

■ One resident considers a move closer to work

RYAN MCLANDRESS  
for The Chronicle

Rising gas prices are taking their toll locally and have prompted one area resident to look at moving out of the area and closer to his place of work.

West Lorne resident, Paul Swick travels to Stratford five days a week to work and has already seen his expenses increase.

"It has increased my costs to twenty dollars more per week," says Swick, which in the long run can add up fast.

Prices locally have topped 89 cents/litre and have been as high as 93 cents in surrounding communities.

As a result, Swick has been forced to look at alternate ways of conserving fuel.

"I am looking at a smaller more fuel efficient vehicle or a camping trailer in order to stay up there during the week," says Swick, who admits that he has also been considering the possibility of moving closer to Stratford.

The increased cost of gas is also affecting local farmers who may see their profits suffer.

Matt Breen farms 200 acres of land outside of Iona and he is seeing the difference as a result of the fuel increases.

"It's going to affect me a bit. You get the same price for your crop whether fuel is cheap or not. My expenses will definitely increase this year," says Breen who admits that he can't make cutbacks on the farm because the crops have to be planted regardless.

"IT'S KIND OF DISHEARTENING WHEN YOU SEE THE PRICE OF FUEL INCREASING SO MUCH AND IT REALLY MAKES YOU WONDER,"

— Paul MacDonald, Earl MacDonald and Son Transport

He can make some changes on his truck however.

"I am going to put a different air filter in my truck to get better mileage, and just basically do an engine tune up," he says.

According to Breen, buying gas in bulk as his family does, used to save

them a large sum of money. He says lately though, there has been little difference in price as it cost his family nearly 83 cents a litre to fill their bulk tank up.

The rising gas prices are also putting a strain on the community's volunteer services, including the volunteer driving that residents like Dirk Buth do.

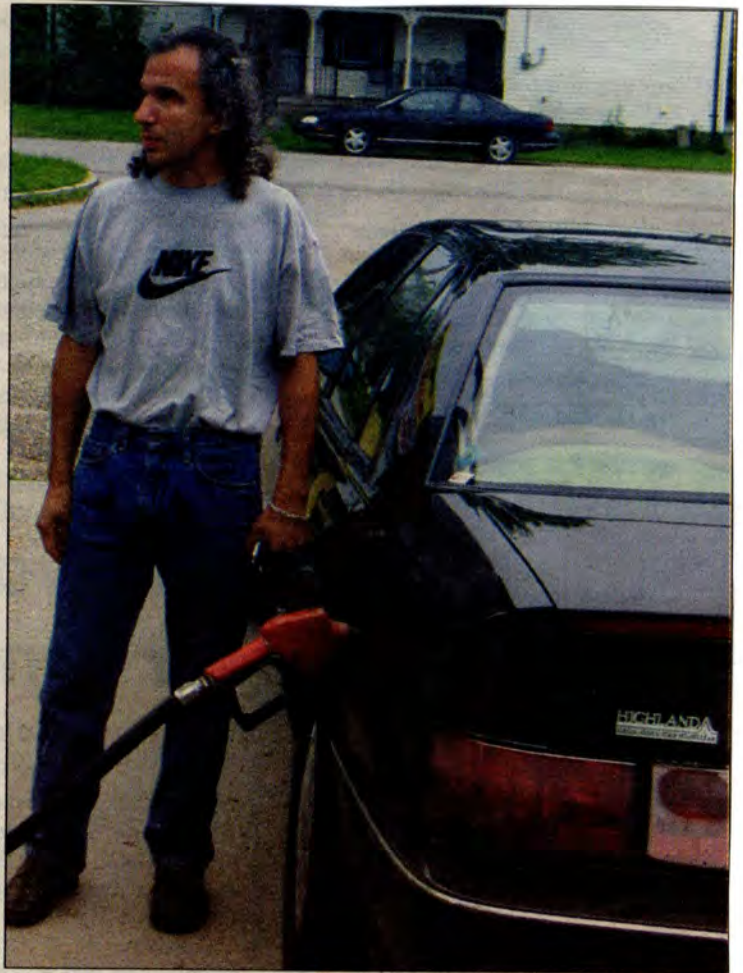
Buth drives for the Cancer Society and the West Elgin Support Services when he can. He drives patients to various appointments at the nearby hospitals and says that because of the necessity of what he does, cutting back is not an option.

"We have to take the patients no matter what. It's a labour of love. When someone has to be there, we go. We just have to live with it," says Buth who says that he does receive a percentage of his mileage but would not comment on how much.

Buth also says that the rising gas prices are a bad thing, not only for drivers like himself, but for the economy as well.

"I don't like the rising gas prices because it is bad for the economy as a whole. I think that it's bad for the

Continued on Page 2



ADDING IT UP

RYAN MCLANDRESS/CHRONICLE

Frank Ganhadeiro watches as the numbers add up Tuesday while he gets a fill-up in West Lorne.

# Safety first, before trees, says mayor

■ New tree/road committee formed

SCOTT HILGENDORFF  
staff

Safety has to come first but West Elgin council is joining with tree preservationists to form a new committee that will look at ways to protect local heritage trees or at least keep the lines of communication open if a tree has to come down.

"We don't take safety lightly," said Mayor Graham Warwick at council's May 13 meeting.

He defended the need to cut down an almost 300-year-old Shumard red oak tree that he said had been marked to come down two years ago.

It was cut down after Warwick said a "scientific approach" was taken to determine if the tree was unsafe or not.

The tree bore a plaque marking it as one of about 150 trees that were identified as significant by the Heritage Tree Committee in western Elgin County.

Individual maps were prepared for eastern and western Elgin County and St. Thomas identifying the best examples of each species of tree found in the areas.

Many of the trees are rare or unique like the Shumard oak that was cut down in West Lorne on Graham Road. That tree was the

only one of its kind from the original woodcover found in the county, a rare specimen normally found only as far north as Essex County in Canada.

Warwick said an expert opinion was sought before deciding the tree had to come down.

"If it's unsafe, a heritage sticker isn't going to make it unsafe," said Warwick.

Bill Prieksaitis, who attended the meeting to unveil a new sign marking trails at Joe's Bush, was one of the people involved in identifying the local trees. He said they

picked as many trees on municipal property as they could, thinking those trees would be protected and more easily accessible than some found on private property that could be cut down at a property owner's whim.

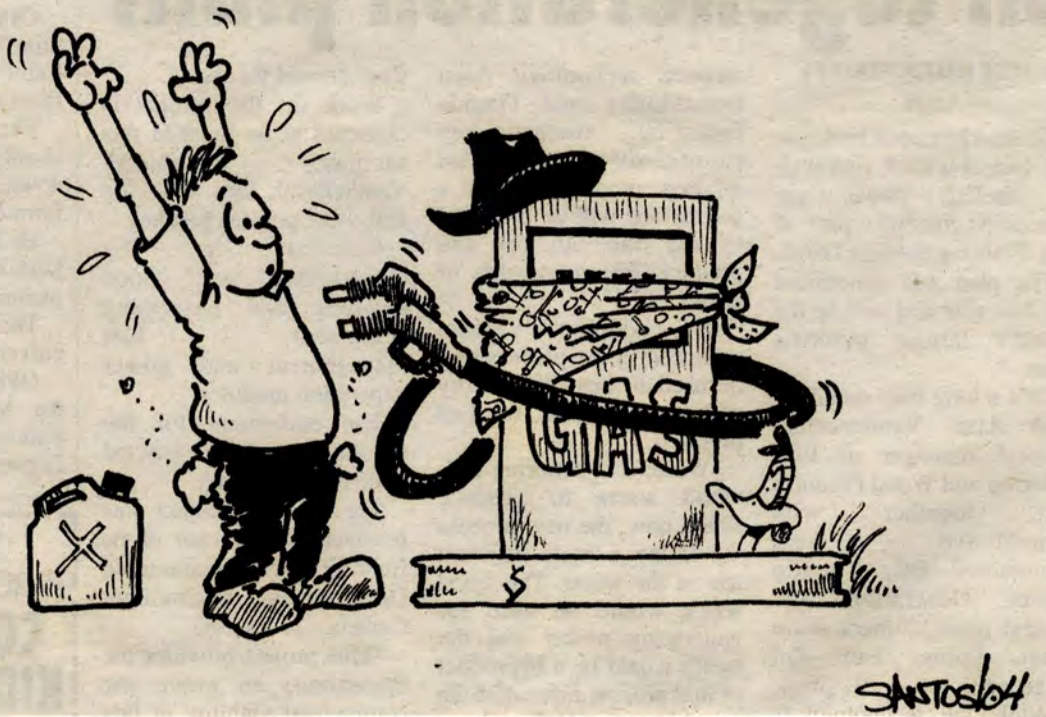
He presented council with an agreement that was originally set up several years ago to protect the trees but after reading it to council, agreed with Warwick that it really didn't set out any protection.

Warwick said the municipality also remains liable under any agreement if someone is injured should a dying tree fall or limbs be blown off causing damage.

"WE DON'T TAKE SAFETY LIGHTLY,"

— West Elgin Mayor Graham Warwick

Continued on Page 2



CANDLES LIT FOR THOSE LOST

JEFF KEMPENAAR/CHRONICLE

The Angel Tree Ceremony planning committee lit candles and stood by the Christmas tree at the West Lorne Complex Dec. 17 to honour loved ones lost. Back row: Jean Birt, left, Gwen Steward, Marion Redinger, Joy Scafe. Front row: Helen Okolisian and Anna Podebry

# CURRENT EVENTS 2004



JEFF KEMPENAAR/CHRONICLE



## WEST LORNE HOLDS NIGHT TIME SANTA CLAUS PARADE

Top, the West Lorne Girl Guides dressed as angels and sang Christmas carols during the Optimist Club Santa Claus parade that saw hundreds crowd Graham Rd. and Main St., Nov. 26 in West Lorne. Middle: Colton Arsenijevic, from West Lorne meets Santa Claus at the West Elgin Community Health Centre after the parade. Bottom left, Jessie Linton and Mackenzie Fink waved to Santa as he went by on the Optimist float to end the night time parade.



## SANTA VISITS WEST LORNE

JEFF KEMPENAAR/CHRONICLE

Ashley Lowes of West Lorne was feeling a little shy when she met Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus at the West Elgin Community Health Centre after the Optimist Club of West Lorne's Santa Claus Parade Nov. 26. Well over a hundred children told Santa what they would like for Christmas.



CONTRIBUTED

## Big band electrifys

The West Elgin Band, led by Sharon Little, above, performed stirring concert band pieces at WEDS Theatre of the Performing Arts in Dutton June 3. Below, the Prime Time Big Band from London also played at the show, performing jazz music to dancers and at full house. Sharon Beeler, vocalist sings with the big band.



## JOYFUL SOUND

SCOTT HILGENDORFF/CHRONICLE

Members of the West Elgin Choral Society, under the direction of Wayne Carroll, perform "There is no Rose". The society performed A Ceremony of Carols Saturday night at St. Mary's Church in West Lorne.

## Dutton and West Lorne host Cancer fund raising events

By Scott Hilgendorff  
The Chronicle

While the Great Ride 'n Stride for Cancer doesn't take place until Sunday in Dutton and West Lorne, some walkers, cyclists and even horse back riders have already completed the fund raising event.

"I've got guys out there riding bikes now," said Wayne Gaudon last Thursday.

He's organizing Dutton's event, hosted by the Dutton and District Lions Club.

Gaudon is expecting a big crowd this year.

One participant who recently lost his wife to cancer has 15 family members taking part this year.

The event was established by the Canadian Cancer Society and encourages participants across Canada to walk, cycle, job and even in-line skate along routes after collecting pledges to

participate.

Locally, the event takes place in Dutton and West Lorne on Sunday with registration at 12:30 p.m.

Registration in Dutton is at the Dutton Lions Den and in West Lorne, it's at the West Elgin Arena.

The walk begins at 1 p.m. in both communities.

West Lorne's route takes participants up Graham Road to Pioneer Line while Gaudon said in Dutton, participants generally pick their own route.

"Some ride to Wallacetown and back," he said, while seniors often choose to walk a route around the community centre.

While pledge sheets have been circulating for weeks now, Gaudon said people can write out pledges on a piece of paper or simply bring donations to the registration on Sunday.

Proceeds from the event go to the Canadian Cancer Society.

## Payne critically injured

By Scott Hilgendorff  
The Chronicle

A 64-year-old West Lorne man was critically injured after being hit by a car on Monday on Graham St. in West Lorne.

Ron Payne was crossing the street from the west side, near Home Hardware, when he stepped into the street in front of a car being driven by a 16-year-old from Rodney.

The accident occurred just before the lunch-hour and the downtown was busy with students getting lunch.

Witnesses saw Payne struck by the Oldsmobile Cutlass. He was lifted by the vehicle onto the windshield, breaking it, before falling to the pavement. Employees at PJs Pizza and Home Hardware called 911 and several people assisted Payne until paramedics arrived.

A witness said one 16-year-old student ran to a nearby apartment and got a towel which he personally held to Payne's bleeding head.

Other students stepped in to direct traffic and Payne was conscious, talking to the students and adults who gathered around to offer assistance.

He was taken to Four Counties Health Services in



Graham St. was closed for about two hours Monday afternoon to investigate an accident that critically injured a 64-year-old West Lorne man.

Chronicle photo

Newbury before being transferred to the London Health Sciences Centre's South St. Campus.

Police did not say whether the driver was male or female in a release, but the driver was not hurt.

Graham Street was closed for approximately two hours while OPP investigated and reported no charges will be laid.

The Chronicle



JEFF KEMPENAAR/CHRONICLE

Trucks lined up in West Lorne last Thursday and Friday while construction reduced one lane on the Highway 401 eastbound.

October 28, 2004

## Compensation needed for detours

EDITORIAL

Countless transport trucks detoured through West Lorne and

Dutton last week because of construction delays near Dunborough Road on Highway 401.

There was no official detour through the area. Trucks were warned by CB ahead of time of the delays and chose the detour.

The volume of truck traffic for at least three days was almost the same as the volumes seen when a collision on the super highway forces traffic to detour.

Local municipalities have long fought with issues surrounding these detours.

Hundreds of cars and trucks come off the 401 and hit local side roads not built for the traffic volumes or vehicle sizes of a 400 series highway.

To counter it, municipal staff have posted road blocks and lobbied to have emergency detour route signs clearly posted to Highway 3, a highway that can handle the traffic a little better.

Last week's detour was not planned and trucks were not directed off the highway but chose the quicker route around the construction.

That route took most of them down Pioneer Line and may have placed months of wear on these roads.

They were travelling at high speeds and in some places, chewing up the shoulders.

In addition to the excessive wear and tear, it placed a high volume of speeding traffic on a highway that sees minimal police presence.

MTO and OPP measures along Highway 401 have helped reduce the traffic volumes detouring through local roads but it again raises the issue of who pays for these roads.

The provincial government has some obligation to find a formula for providing grants to 401 municipalities whose roads need repair and upgrading more frequently from the extra traffic when detours occur.

SH



SCOTT HILGENDORFF/CHRONICLE

### HERITAGE TREE COMES DOWN

Bill Prieksaitis, who helped the Heritage Tree Committee identify this Shumard red oak, measures the stump of the tree, determining its age at approximately 276 years old. The tree was cut down after being determined unsafe by the West Elgin Roads Department but Prieksaitis disagrees with that assessment.

## Heritage tree cut down, preservationists upset

■ 276-year-old tree had to come down: road superintendent

SCOTT HILGENDORFF  
staff

When a tree fell in West Elgin, everyone heard it.

A 276-year-old heritage tree, the only one of its kind in the county, was cut down to the dismay of local naturalists and the Heritage Tree Committee.

Ironically, it was Earth Day when the rare, Shumard's red oak was cut

down.

"Let's see a little compassion for these old girls," said Bill Prieksaitis of the Rodney area.

He helped the Heritage Tree Committee identify more than 150 species of trees in western Elgin County.

The committee identified the best of the species but in the case of the Shumard, it was the only one they could find.

It's rare in Canada, most commonly found in Essex County but rare even there where the region has only three percent of its tree cover left.

The trees were put onto maps for local people interested in seeing the trees and tourists visiting the area.

Three maps were produced for each of eastern and western Elgin County and St. Thomas.

Continued on Page 2

CHRONICLE COMMUNITY



Hope Mytroen paints a pink flower on a canvass at Sue Gallant's art camp in West Lorne recently.



More than 150 people, many bikers, attended a special Christian outreach service at the West Elgin Arena in West Lorne July 26 with Dr. Jerry Savelle, an evangelist with the Chariots of Light Christian motorcycle club. The event was hosted by Melody Fellowship Church.



Eva Marton serenades Dutton residents at Music in the Park.



Heather Bell, right, Alicia Oliveira, Meagan Jeffries and Amy Oliveira were among the students learning to sew by creating a shoulder bag at Heather Bell's Sewing Studio where she held a sewing camp for children earlier this month.

JEFF KEMPENAAR/CHRONICLE

AUG 14/10



CYCLISTS COME A LONG WAY KEMPENAAR/CHRONICLE

Lynette Kobernik from California cycles into the West Elgin Secondary School parking lot last Thursday. She was one of 24 cyclists travelling with Cycle America. She started the tour in Seattle Washington and will finish in Boston Massachusetts. The group spent the night in West Lorne behind the school.

# Closer eye is required on Line Fences Act

BY PAUL MISTELE  
Ontario Federation  
of Agriculture  
Executive Committee

## COMMENTARY

Ontario's Line Fences Act contains details that are of vital importance to land owners, particularly farmers. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture keeps a close eye on the Act, monitoring compliance and any efforts to modify the details it contains.

A recent article in Municipal World, a magazine for and about different aspects of municipal government, suggests "Section 20 of Ontario's Line Fences Act needs to change." That's the section that sets out the responsibilities for fencing former railway rights-of-way in Ontario.

Wording in Section 20 states: "if a former railway right-of-way is acquired by a non-abutting landowner, then that person, Crown agency or municipality, as well as whoever acquires it from them, is solely responsible for constructing, keeping up and repairing the fences along the former railway right-of-way."

Recent court cases have upheld Section 20, making municipalities still 100 per cent responsible for these fences. This probably accounts for the Municipal World article suggesting "Section 20 of Ontario's Line Fences Act needs to change."

OFA, working in concert with local interests, played a role in gaining the court decision that upholds the Act as it is written. For Ontario farmers, that section of the Act is critical, especially for those who own land that abuts these abandoned railway rights-of-way. These strips of property are ideal for trails used by the general public seeking recreational areas.

On a regular basis, the use of adjoining farmlands is assumed to be included in the trails, and without constantly maintained fences, there is nothing to discourage such use. Farmers aren't interested in playing the role of the cordial host when it means dam-

age to crops and livestock escapes. They want a secure fence between their property and the trails, and they need

to know it is not their responsibility to build such fences.

The October, 2002, Divisional Court ruling made it clear when it stated the wording of Section 20 of the Act is "precise and unambiguous" and that "the municipality is liable for the entire cost of fencing when fencing is sought by the abutting landowners."

The author of the Municipal World article, Michael Graves, is director of corporate services and clerk for the town of Tillsonburg. Tillsonburg along with Bayham Township became owners of an abandoned railway right-of-way in the early 1990s. When the abutting landowners requested fences along the proposed recreational trail, the municipalities refused to pay, leading to the landowners taking the issue to the courts for resolution.

OFA worked with the farm property owners to defend their interests at that time, and continues its resolve to see Section 20 of the Line Fences Act remain unchanged and enforced. It protects a basic right of farmers to have security for their properties, and leaves it to the "non-abutting property owner who acquired the right-of-way" to provide that fencing.

The Municipal World article suggests abutting property owners - usually farmers - should be expected to pay a share of the cost of such fencing when it is requested. From a purely economic standpoint, farmers gain nothing but security for their property. An investment in fencing to separate abandoned railway rights-of-way from their farmland yields absolutely no economic return.

OFA supports Section 20 of the Line Fences Act and will continue all necessary efforts to keep it enforced across the province and unchanged!

# Petty vandalism costing thousands, community leaders have had enough

JEFF KEMPENAAR  
staff

Petty vandalism is costing west Elgin County residents more than \$13,000 in time and resources to clean up and fix damaged properties in the municipality say parks and recreation supervisors.

"Things are going to break and are expected to, but when they are broken senselessly we have to fix stuff that didn't need fixing. It is a pain and a waste of time," said West Elgin parks and recreation

superintendent Jeff Slater.

About \$5,000 will be spent to fix floorboards and benches at the grandstand in Rodney after vandals broke through the floor to get underneath the bleachers.

"God knows what they are doing under there," said Slater. "I remember when the trick was to soap people's windows"

In Rodney vandals have cut volleyball nets, stole the rope on the flagpole in the park and smashed windows at the pool in Rodney. In West Lorne, they have 'graphitized' the skate park and burned the picnic

tables in Port Glasgow.

"We won't replace most of these things if it is just going to happen again," said Slater. "We're just throwing money away."

Since the parks department removed the dug outs at the ball diamonds there has been a reduction in vandalism and Slater's crew usually leave the skate park alone unless there is something profane scrolled on the pads.

Dutton/Dunwich parks and recreation manager Connie Redmond said a community policing committee is being incorporated

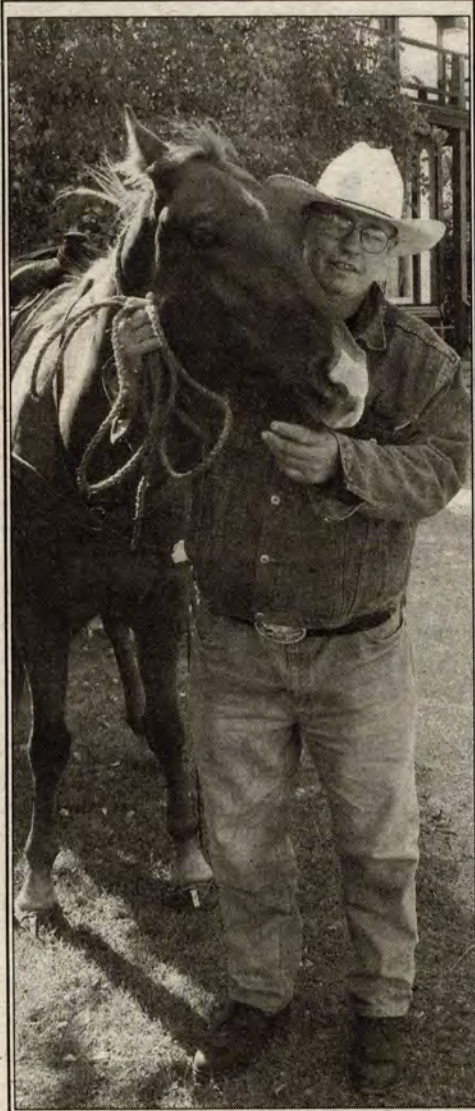
in Dutton in the next week and the municipality has taken action against vandalism by creating a bylaw that closes off municipal property to unauthorized people from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m.

Redmond said the municipality has spent \$3,000 in repairs not including labour.

She said the new gazebo has been a target of late. Rope lights were stolen twice, spindles were broken and vandals have carved into the wood.

Continued on Page 2

The Chronicle -



**JOURNEY** KEMPENAAR/CHRONICLE

Al Williams from Simcoe stopped in Eagle on Oct. 4 to feed his horse Kid Lightening. The two are journeying from Windsor to Niagara Falls to raise awareness on mental illnesses and depression. The ride is called the Southern Ontario Awareness Ride.

OCT/04



**CONTAINING THE BLAZE**

JEFF KEMPENAAR/CHRONICLE

Firefighters from Dutton/Dunwich, Southwold and West Lorne worked Friday afternoon to contain the blaze that destroyed the historic McIntyre Hotel.

**Cause undetermined**

■ Investigation results could take a month

JEFF KEMPENAAR  
staff

Cause of the McIntyre Hotel fire will not be known for about a month as the Office of the Fire Marshall and Centre for Forensic Sciences examine items from the scene.

There were no signs of arson, said Fire Investigator Bryan Fischer, but he would not speculate on the cause.

No one was injured in the blaze that destroyed the Dutton landmark but paramedics treated one firefighter for smoke inhalation.

Diane Van Bridger, the McIntyre building landlord and bar manager said the fire was started in a second floor laundry room near an office in the rear of the building.

It spread north in to the laundromat building before the wind blew the heat and flames southward, destroying the entire McIntyre

Hotel and threatening several other businesses to the south.

By 9 p.m. the south side of the hotel was a smoldering heap of rubble and the laundromat and one of two apartments above it were gutted.

Ten trucks from Dutton/Dunwich, West Lorne and Southwold along with 24 volunteer firefighters contained the fire to the two buildings by blasting 82 litres of water per second into the buildings.

The fire lasted eight hours and damage to the McIntyre was estimated at \$500,000 by Dutton fire chief Dan Lundy and Van Bridger but the financial toll to the business community could rise.

Insurance adjusters were still expected to be surveying each building for costs of damage and to decide what other buildings should be

demolished.

The apartment at the rear of the laundromat building was damaged heavily by smoke and water.

One building in question at press time houses Jerry Galbraith's Investors Group had extensive damage to the roof. The building suffered smoke damage.

McNeil Insurance suffered minor smoke damage and moved to the vacant building owned by Murray Brown. He is offering the store to other businesses that suffered damage or were evacuated Friday.

Apartments above Panther Products, Marg's Accounting and the Dutton Flower Shop had water and smoke damage. It was unclear how many businesses would open before press time.

**Mac's colourful history missed**

JEFF KEMPENAAR  
staff

As the McIntyre Hotel burned Friday, a congregation of lost regulars and sympathetic friends of the long-standing watering hole shared hamburgers cooked by a neighbour and toasted their destroyed home away from home.

"It was so much fun here on a Saturday night," said Diane McAlpine who had operated 'the Mac' for three years before selling it back to Tom Van Bridger, the McIntyre's current owner. "I put my heart and soul into that place, every last dime."

A. McMillan built the McIntyre Hotel in 1857 along the wooden boardwalks and mud streets.

J.H. McIntyre bought the hotel in 1888 and changed the name to the McIntyre House Hotel.

There were 26 bedrooms, several sample rooms for travelling salesmen, a dining room and a stable at the back. There was an overhanging porch and painted decadent woodwork on the facade that would be changed over time by various owners.

Before the fire there was four apartments and an office on the second floor above a dining area, banquet room, bar and dance floor on the main floor.

The hotel put Dutton on the map and was a place where generations of regulars and tradesmen would meet to share fables and truths, glory and pain and always a good laugh.

To many, it became an eyesore or a place with a rough reputation but to many others, it's a place that will be missed.

A group of regulars held a vigil behind the McIntyre as it burned.

McAlpine said she had a long love affair with 'the Mac' and it drove her and her husband to the brink of bankruptcy to keep it up to code. "It was a riot here. There would be line-ups, and honestly there were less fights than compared to the 150 or so peaceful people."

"People said it was a bad place because there was fights and bikers," said McAlpine. "But it was so much fun and everyone would be there. I'm going to miss it."

JULY/04

**Lutheran Church will build on God's Word at Vacation Bible School**

Grace Lutheran Church in West Lorne will be experiencing a bit of construction this summer during its Vacation Bible School Aug. 16 to 20 at 9 a.m. until Noon each day.

It's all part of this year's theme,

Construction Inc.

It is just one of the ways organizers hope to have children between the ages of four and 12 join the crew and become closer to God.

Brick by brick, leaders will build on

God's Word through a variety of crafts, stories, skits, music and other fun activities all free of charge.

Anyone interested in registering their child for Construction Inc. Vacation Bible School at Grace Lutheran can phone Joy

at 768-1097.

Registrations will also be accepted on Aug. 16 at the Church.

It's an excellent opportunity for children to have fun, hear the Gospel, and meet old and new friends.



**STAGE IS SET FOR FUN...**

Rob Pristas as Martin waves, unseen to Ethan's best friend who is trying to help him get on with his life after Ethan was widowed five years earlier. Pat Kell, right photo, plays Theresa Pike, who is trying to win Ethan's affections. Only seen by Ethan, played by Kevin Hull (right), Martin's "shadow being" is trying to make up for past mistakes in his own life. Joining the cast as young Ethan and Martin are Darren Downie and Kory Preston. The WEDS production runs April 16, opening night, April 17, April 23 and April 24 at 8 p.m. An April 19 matinee takes place at 2 p.m. The doors are open a half-hour before the curtain rises.



**FRESH FRUIT AT FARMER'S MARKET**

RYAN MCLANDRESS/CHRONICLE

Emily Moreau and Jake Fischer sold fresh blueberries at the Farmer's Market at the West Elgin Community Health Centre Saturday, July 31.