

Rodney fair prince and princess
 New Rodney Aldborough Agricultural Society Ambassador Szanadue Brower congratulates the Fair Prince and Princess Phillip Downie and Katie Schweitzer.



Kittmer raising awareness of spinal chord injuries
 Colin Kittmer of West Lorne looks for support for the annual Wheels-in-Motion ride June 12.

Kittmer training for fundraiser ride

Jeff Kempenaar
 Staff

Colin Kittmer has been wheeling around West Lorne in his wheel chair, training for the Rick Hansen Wheels in Motion fundraiser June 12. Kittmer, the retired West Elgin Secondary School math teacher, has been wheeling for five kilometres a day, practicing for the big event. "I think of Rick Hansen who wheeled 120 kilometres a day wheeling around the world! All I have to do if five," said Kittmer.

None the less, Kittmer has been pushing himself to improve his time from 53 minutes to around 40 minutes. In 2000, Kittmer fell from a tree paralyzing him from the chest down. He is hoping to raise money to make a difference in the lives of people living with spinal cord injuries like himself and fund research in the London area. Anyone interested in helping Colin Kittmer reach his goal of can contact him at 768-1671 or visit www.rick-hansen.com.

Bach's Christmas comes to St. Mary's church

The West Elgin Choral Society, under Music Director Wayne Carroll, will present its 8th annual Christmas Concert on Dec. 3, at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church in West Lorne. The featured work this year will be J.S. Bach's Christmas Oratorio. The musicians are from the London Community Orchestra, augmented by a few specialists to cover the timpani and high Bach trumpet parts. In terms of international choral repertoire, the Oratorio represents yet another step up for the Choral Society. The role of Evangelist, or narrator, will be sung by London tenor, Gerry Egan. Many will recognize Egan from his

title role in Regina Mundi College's production of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolored Dreamcoat, which had sold-out runs at both the Talbot and Grand Theatre. Bach's Oratorio is the story of the Nativity as recorded in the Gospels of St. Luke and St. Matthew. The work is comprised of

recitatives, choruses, arias and chorales. The chorales are beautiful old Lutheran hymn-tunes. The text is all in English. The evening will also include an opportunity for the audience to sing Christmas Carols with the choir and orchestra. For tickets and additional information call 762-3865.

The Doctor's Bag depicts bond between a father and son

The Doctor's Bag, a story about a father watching his son become a man hit area shelves this week. Written by former West Lorne resident John Schlarbaum, the quick, easy read follows a sentimental journey of a son taken to task by his father. Over the years, the two push each other to understand the perils of aging while trying to maintain the family. Schlarbaum wrote the book for his own father, Rev. Norman Schlarbaum, a former Baptist minister in West Lorne and Rodney. Before his father turned 75, Schlarbaum interviewed him and discovered many sentimental belongings that may not have meant a lot to anyone else but marked the

most important and special events in his father's life. Now 85, Norman lives in London with his wife Dorothy. John lives in Windsor where he has completed two books and started his own publishing company. While the book is not about his father, it is a fictional look at the bonds between a father and son. The book starts with a promise made by the father to his son. As he struggles to keep the promise, which would mean his son has become a man, he recalls his own relationship with his father. In the end, the book depicts how it is never too late to reconcile with a family member. Schlarbaum has done a lot

of writing through his career after leaving West Elgin Secondary School. He worked for CHCH in Hamilton, working in lighting for the show Smith and Smith, which later became known as Red Green. From there he began directing segments on The Best is Yet to Come, which used to be on CFPL in London. He will be returning to West Lorne Library for a book signing Oct. 18 starting at 2 p.m. His second book, Aging Gracefully Together will come out next year. The Doctor's Bag is available at Fairles Foodmarket in Rodney, West Elgin Pharmacy, Crafts Plus in Dutton and at www.thedoctorsbag.com.

Midges emerge in droves

▶ Allergic reaction possible if tiny insects swallowed

Jeff Kempenaar
 Staff

Midges, tiny no-biting bugs swarmed the area last week in their final mating hurrah. Splattered on car windows, a variety of midges pestered residents last week. Two area bug specialists noticed the midges out in force for the fall mate. "There's not more than usual but there are lots of them," said Dr. Ron Griffiths from Dutton, who studies insects around the world. He'd been watching the little pale green insects fluttering around behind

his house and said this time of year, the insects are at their greatest density. The insects Griffiths has noticed are aquatic, living in lagoons, creeks and small ponds. They may only live a day or two before reproducing and leaving their larvae near water to hatch next spring. While the insects don't bite, they can be a nuisance and affect people's allergies. "If you walk into a high density of the insects and swallow a couple it may cause an allergic reaction," said Griffiths. Please see Various, page 2

Fire department to check alarms

West Lorne Fire Department will not be going door-to-door to check smoke detectors opting instead to respond to resident requests. In the last five years, the department has knocked on doors across their coverage area to inspect smoke detectors, provide detectors or batteries if needed and inform residents how best to place the detectors in their homes. The program has seen only a handful of home owners not contacted over the years. "It's been a very successful program," said Bob Bowery, fire prevention officer for the department. This year, instead of going door-to-door, residents wanting the fire department to check their detectors are asked to call the station. In the past, many residents have enjoyed the peace of mind knowing their detectors have been checked by a professional. Along with it being fire prevention week, the fire department is reminding people to change the batteries in their detectors.

Checking the detector, by pushing the button and listening to the alarm is not enough. The button only makes sure the battery works. Lighting a match and blowing it out, then letting the smoke go into the detector is the best way to determine its working condition. Having a smoke detector is the law and fines up to \$200 can be issued to people without a working smoke detector. The fire department is hesitant to levy fines but would instead provide a detector for free. Two dates are scheduled to have the fire department come and check smoke detectors. Fire department volunteers will inspect detectors in the township on Oct. 16 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. In the village of West Lorne, volunteers will go to homes and inspect detectors Oct. 19 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. To have your detector checked, call 768-1700.

Writer cracks best sellers list

A West Lorne area writer has cracked the amazon.com's top 10 hot new bestseller's list.

Writing under the pseudonym V.C. King, *Seven Sexy Tales of Terror* at one point reached number one under the erotic horror category.

Not porn, but horror stories with an erotic twist, the book has been selling around the world.

Richard Harding knew his wife's book deserved better than being stuffed in a drawer.

"But I never thought it would be this popular," said Harding in a release.

The couple has lived quietly north of West Lorne since 1992.

It was shortly after they moved from London to this area V.C. started writing.

A bit reclusive, "shy" as her husband Harding puts it, V.C. doesn't want popularity.

Also, her interest in writing horror and mystery led her to develop an alter-ego of sorts, a pseudonym in which she could explore erotic horror in her writing.

V.C. or Victoria, chose V.C. as an inside joke, for Vicious Circle, a nickname for her writers' group which includes area mystery novelist Terry Carroll.

Carroll also lent praise to her first published book.

"V.C. King manages the seemingly impossible and sometimes the unthinkable. She marries sex and horror with good writing to confound and transcend expectations. In these *Seven Sexy Tales of Terror*, the style of Dean Koontz meets Henry Miller with surprise end-

ings and sometimes more than one twist. This is recommended reading and genre-bending of the highest order," writes Carroll.

Seven Sexy Tales of Terror includes short stories of a woman energized by shock treatments to a poet speaking from the grave.

It started out of desperation looking for an outlet, an escape from reality.

While studying engineering in university she took a detective fiction writing course to take her mind off her major.

Not until years later did the 43-year-old leave her corporate job and commit herself to writing.

So far she's finding success. She won the Paul Gillette Memorial Award at the Pine Peaks Writer's Conference in Colorado in 2002.

David Morrell, writer of *Rambo* presented her the award for her book *Darkness Forlorn*, yet to be published.

It's a story of a female serial killer.

She plans to publish it soon along with *Titanic's Shadow*, in 2007.

Titanic's Shadow is a result of a fascination with the sinking of the *Titanic* and other disasters.

It looks at what would happen today if the *Titanic* sunk.

In *Seven Sexy Tales of Terror*, the dark characters in the 88-page book are not based on anyone she knows but are imagined by taking a normal scenario and giving it a twist.

Not fully understanding the niche market of erotic horror



Writer JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

V.C. King, a local writer's pseudonym, reached amazon.com's, an Internet book store, hot new best seller's list.

herself, V.C. has found readers around the world, strangely and particularly in Japan, said Harding.

It gets to the point of what we're all afraid of, said Harding.

One of the stories includes an oppressive mother.

At the root of the horror, the stories offer readers something

to relate to, said V.C.

The book was published by iUniverse, a print-on-demand company.

It's available at Chapter's Indigo, Barnes and Noble at www.amazon.com

What comes next for the newly published author is unknown but, "it's really cool to hold your own book," she said.



Girl ejected
Paramedics, Dutton/Dunwich employees and fire crews tend to serious injuries suffered by two teens after a rollover which ejected the female passenger on Pioneer Line May 1.

Girl not wearing seatbelt ejected from vehicle

Investigation continues

Jeff Kempenaar
Staff

A single-car rollover sent Dan Armstrong and Sarah Woolsey, Grade 12 students from WESS, to Four Counties Hospital in Newbury with serious injuries May 11.

Woolsey was not wearing a seatbelt when she was ejected from the car. Police had not released details of their investigation at press time.

Woolsey was stabilized at FCHS and taken to London Health and Sciences Centre, Victoria Campus and listed in fair condition Tuesday morning after surgery to fix broken vertebrae.

Armstrong was released

from FCHS that day with minor cuts and bruises.

Around 12:30 p.m. Armstrong's 1992 Ford Escort was travelling westbound on Pioneer Line when he lost control for unknown reasons, hit the shoulder, swerved into the eastbound lanes then came back across into the north ditch.

Narrowly missing a sign the vehicle rolled several times ejecting Woolsey from the vehicle and coming to rest on the passenger side.

Armstrong, covered in blood wandered north on Dunborough Road when a passing motorist found him. Another passing motorist had a cell phone and call 911.

Western Elgin could become ecocommunity

Low energy lightbulbs use up to 75 per cent less energy than incandescent lights and can last 10 times longer.

This savings not only reduces hydro bills, but can reduce changes in the Earth's climate.

Small steps like replacing light bulbs to reduce energy consumption can make a big impact on climate change and protecting the Earth's ecology, says Diane Van Dyk, who is working to see western Elgin County become an ecocommunity.

"There are easy things we can do to improve the environment at a community level," said Van Dyk, community health worker with the West Elgin Community Health Centre. "You can do easy things that don't take a lot of time, like changing a light bulb."

Newly reinvigorated, the West Elgin

Environmental Group is raising awareness of small changes people can make to sustain climate change and reduce greenhouse gases.

While the environmental group has been around since 1989, it has experienced a decline in membership over the last few years.

By cleaning up ditches, encouraging recycling and providing composters, WEEG has been raising awareness of environmental issues and trying to protect and restore the local environment.

The group is planning many activities to help the community take steps to improve energy efficiency.

Steps like making sure vehicle owners keep their tire pressure up.

A car with a tire under-inflated by six pounds per square inch can use three per cent

more fuel, according to the Canadian Office of Energy Efficiency.

Every extra litre of fuel unnecessarily burned pumps more carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, into the atmosphere pushing the temperature up.

With more greenhouse gases in the air, the danger of related health risks is on-the-rise.

That's why the WEEG and the WECHC is looking for people to help make western Elgin County an ecocommunity.

Ecocommunities engage the whole community in projects dealing with environmental and economical issues related to climate change.

A workshop on ecocommunities is being held May 10 from 9 a.m. to noon at the West Lorne Complex.

Red Hatters bringing antics to Elgin

Jeff Kempenaar
Staff

Women are often the organizers of family, community and society. However, as Cyndi Lauper says, they just want to have fun.

Hence a group of women seek to start a chapter of the Red Hat Society in western Elgin County.

The society has been growing in popularity with its simple creed of making people smile.

"Women give and give their whole lives and reach an age where they want to have fun in life," said Pam Page, a wife, mother, grandmother, nurse, volunteer and member of Glencoe's Red Hat Society.

She said she has heard from 17 women in the West Lorne and Rodney area, interested in starting a chapter here.

Adorned in purple attire, and capped in a silly red chapeau, the uniform of a Red Hatter, all women over the age of 50, brings a smile at first sight.

For women under 50, a softer mismatch of clothing is the general uniform.

Younger Red Hatters, wear pink hats and lavender attire at all meetings to keep spirits up for the purpose of disorganization.

"We don't just live life to one



JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

Colourful women bring smiles to community lunch
Pam Page, left, a member of the Red Hat Society talks with Rosalie Krebsz and Kate Okolisian, right, while Linda Dunn and Helen Kovacs chat before the Red Hatters made a presentation to the Soups On lunch for Seniors and disabled at the West Elgin Community Health Centre April 21.

day die," said Page. "We believe that aging should be something anticipated with excitement, not something we dread."

The Red Hat Society exists throughout the U.S. and Canada and was inspired by its Queen Mother Sue Ellen Cooper of

Tucson Arizona who one day bought a red fedora.

She had also recently read a poem depicting an older woman wearing purple and a red hat without worry of how people viewed her.

Please see Red, page 2



PHOTO BY REV. DEANE PROCTOR

Week of Prayer

The Rev. Canon Meurig Lloyd (left) chats with Terry Heaney (centre) and Lorne Milton (right) at the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity breakfast held last Saturday at Lakeview Gardens in Eagle. The ecumenical prayer gathering hosted by the West Elgin Pastor's Prayer Group drew members of various local churches and denominations together for a morning of prayer and fellowship.

Exotic animals banned in West Elgin

JEFF KEMPENAAR
staff

Council may have shared a few jokes about exotic dancers and whiskey but it was no joking matter when West Elgin council passed a bylaw prohibiting exotic animals in the wake of last month's tiger attack in near by Southwold.

"Let me be clear for the record," said Mayor Graham Warwick. "Exotic animals are not welcome in West Elgin."

The bylaw was passed with

support from the entire council. It prohibits anyone from keeping animals like tigers on their property.

People can have animals traditionally found on agricultural property including deer, and alpacas.

A child was seriously injured when a tiger mauled him last month at a private zoo in Southwold.

Southwold council promptly passed a bylaw prohibiting the ownership of exotic animals.

Internet arrives in western Elgin

Jeff Kempenaar
Staff

Streaming through the cool air, new wireless high speed Internet is available to businesses and residences in rural areas of western Elgin County like never before.

Last month the first customers were hooked up and receiving high speed Internet from antennas perched on the watertower in West Lorne.

"We're live and in service," said Ron Mervis director of network operations at Amtelecom, one of the parent partners in a project to bring highspeed Internet access to almost all areas of Elgin County. not just the urban centres where, until now, it could only be accessed.

Amtelecom, from Aylmer, spent much of December installing equipment at the West Lorne watertower and test homes and announced, what it calls, Airspeed is now transmitting 1.5 Megabytes of data on radio waves.

Like radio waves, some areas close to the lake can not access the high speed Internet, but otherwise, the service is available across the county.

Over two years, Amtelecom worked with Elginconnects, a county economic development project with funding from three levels of government.



JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

Internet comes to western Elgin

Steve Krebsz, Amtelecom technician checks the high speed Internet signal strength at a Thompson Line home.

Farmers and rural businesses have a need for transmitting and accessing information over the Internet at high speeds but could never do so in this area.

"There is a growing need to close the digital divide that is working against rural Ontario and Amtelecom will meet that need here in Elgin with our new wireless Internet product," said Michael Andrews, president and CEO.



JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

Snow fun at all

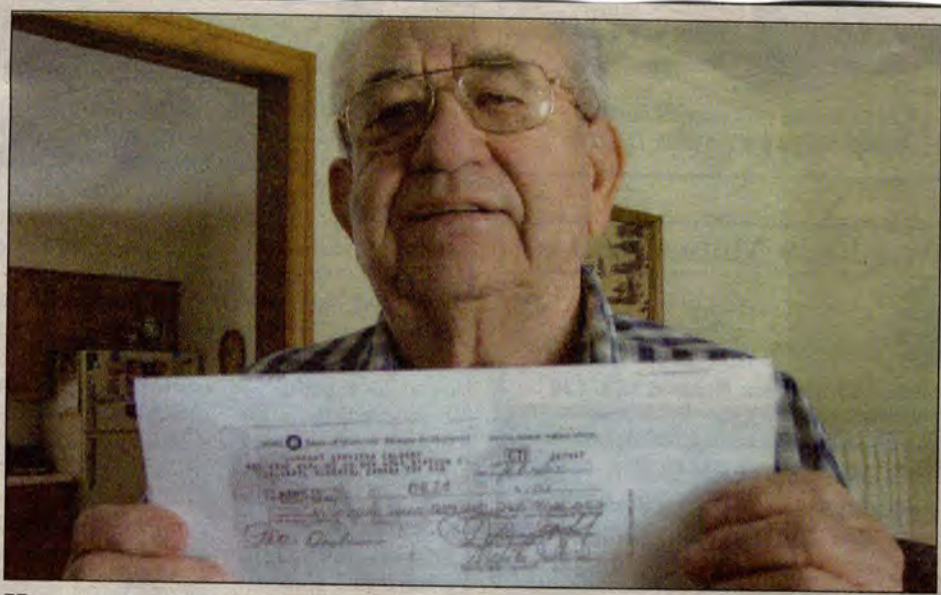
Steve Browne plowed his driveway in West Lorne on Monday while temperatures rose above 0°C.



Trilliums in bloom

JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

Trillium flowers were well in bloom at the West Elgin Memorial Nature Reserve for a Mother's Day walk put on by the West Elgin Nature Club and parks and recreation committee Here, little Colin Depuydt, from Frome walks with mother Christine, grandmother Marion, back, father Don, left and sister Kayleigh May 8.



Have you a penny?

JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

Peter Ocolisan, owner of Sandy Ridge Farm, next to West Elgin Secondary School holds a photocopy of a cheque for one penny from the Net Income Stabilization Account, prompting him to ask "why waste the stamp?"

Government keeps busy issuing penny cheques

Jeff Kempenaar
Staff

Peter Ocolisan is one cent richer.

After closing his Net Income Stabilization Account more than a year ago, he received an envelope from NISA's support service office in Calgary.

Inside was a cheque.

Not to cover his farm losses but a cheque for \$.01, one cent, signed by two NISA officers, as a remaining amount in his account before it closed for good.

The next week he received a notice from NISA reporting his account balance at \$.01.

"That's just a joke," said Ocolisan. "It must have cost \$10 to send it to me."

Bewildered, he took the cheque to the bank.

"I said to the teller, 'I've got a big cheque here. She asked 'how much?' I said, 'A million dollars,' and passed her the cheque," he said, getting a surprise reaction when she saw it was for \$.01.

"It's silly how the government works," said Ocolisan. NISA "should have just kept the penny."

Ocolisan owns 14 herford cattle at Sandy Ridge Farms at Graham Road and Marsh Line in West Lorne.

He has 162 shared acres of grains and harvests hay.

While he used the NISA program, a government agriculture subsidy program which matched

farmer contributions dollar-for-dollar, the program has since been replaced by the Canadian Agriculture Income Stabilization program in 2003.

He said he had no problem with NISA but the cheque represents how government can waste money to keep busy.

Considering he has experienced a loss each of the last five years, he doesn't think the penny will help him pay taxes this year.

"We're not making money off the farm anymore. In fact I've had to support the farm...with my pension," he said, adding his pasture land is listed for sale as he slowly gets out of farming.

Miller Park washrooms worth more than money

A washroom and food concession in Miller Park is too important to let money get in the way, says the West Lorne Optimist Club.

Representatives of the club presented their plan for a new pavilion at the edge of the soccer pitches in Miller Park to West Elgin council Feb. 24.

"Money should not be the only thing council is looking at," said Ken Neil, Optimist Club member. "It is important to the community."

He said the club

wasn't going to just apply for an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant for their portion of the pavilion but for the entire \$250,000.

Council was looking at just building the washroom, which would cost \$143,790.

The food concession portion of the building and a covered patio would cost around \$80,000.

Neil said the park needs a place where families can come to picnic or where possibly even concerts could be held.

The pavilion would have a storage room for soccer and baseball equipment, a kitchen (which the cost of the stove is included in the estimated cost) and the

washrooms.

The Optimist Club hopes to know how much money they will get before the end of the year.

"We're going to be optimistic that we'll get the full amount," said Neil.

The pavilion would be at the edge of the soccer pitches, near the hydro tower.

Council did not decide to move forward with plans to build the facility because Council Mike Mooser, who represents West Lorne was not present at the meeting.

Also, Recreation Superintendent Jeff Slater said he could erect a \$600 fence that would keep people out of the arena but still allow arena washroom access.

Railway for sale

► CN could abandon Southern rail line by next spring

For the Chronicle

Another piece of the area's rich railway heritage is nearing the end of the line. CN has filed notice it plans to abandon and discontinue service on the former Canada Southern rail line it operates in partnership with the Canadian Pacific Railway from St. Thomas to Fargo, Ont., north of Blenheim.

"We are starting the process for that," confirmed Ian Thompson, CN director of communications. "The serviceable customers aren't there anymore."

The line sees limited service to its sole customer, Thompsons Limited in Rodney.

"We're looking at creating options for people if they want to buy it," Thomson said. "And that's what the abandonment process does. It puts the infrastructure up for sale as an operating corridor."

Thompsons, who found out about CN's plans early this year, is looking at higher costs to transport grains from their elevator in Rodney by truck.

"It's unfortunate. It's a lot cheaper to ship by rail," said Steve Speller, branch manager at Thompsons. "CN said they would continue to provide service until next March."

Speller said it was cheaper to send grains to the U.S. via the southern rail line but now the company will have to look for more local markets.

Also, Speller said it will mean periodically there will be more truck traffic in Rodney.

"Not a lot," he said, adding sometimes 25 rail cars would be filled by Thompsons but occasionally CN would arrive with 25 cars and only have five filled.

Southeast Ag in Ridgeway also has fertilizer delivered via the rail line. "If we had our choice we'd love to see the rail continue," said Speller.

Under the notice of discontinuance, any party interested in acquiring the line for the purpose of continuing railway operations has until July 15 to contact CN.

MAY/05



Traditional Irish delights

JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

Mike Mulhern, plays guitar as Kate Emerson plays flute with Wayne Carroll in the group Calgorm at the West Elgin Dramatics Society Performing Arts Centre in Dutton March 12. A capacity crowd sang along to Irish ditties like Danny Boy.



About 280 came and \$18,000 was raised at the event boosting the total fund raising to more than \$20,000, with expenses for the evening still to be paid. The Dunn's set a \$12,000 goal so some of the money will go to National Service Dogs who provide the dogs to the families. "We're overwhelmed," said Linda Dunn. "Having a child with a disability means you do whatever you can to enrich their lives. The community has really got involved." About 30 students from West Elgin Secondary School volunteered time to serve the dinner.

More large donations were presented to the Dunn family the night of the dinner including a surprise \$1,500 cheque from the Shedden Odd Fellows. Also, Grace Lutheran Church in West Lorne presented a \$700 cheque for the money raised by the sale of dog treats around Christmas. Rodney Ambulance Equipment Fund gave \$500 and Rail Side View Stables of Dutton gave \$100. Local businesses contributed prizes for the silent auction and the Elgin International Club donated the use of the building for the event. "It was a huge success," said Dunn. She hopes Jacob will get his dog in May.

Summer reading programs to blast off

The library is the perfect place for you and your family to visit this summer.

We have something for everyone. Your library card allows you to borrow the latest books, CDs, DVDs, videos, magazines, and books on tape or CD (great for those summer road trips). While at the library you can use one of the seven on-line computers (one-hour booking limit), the photocopier, scanner or fax machine. Membership is free.

The staff are information specialists and will be happy to help you find just what you are looking for. If it is not in our branches we will be happy to order it in from another library.

The library's Summer Reading Club encourages children to read all summer long. This year's theme sponsored by TD Financial is Blast Off. Each member of the Summer Reading Club will go on a space journey and visit all of the planets as they read books along the way. Prizes are given out for the first eight books read by each child.

Children also receive a Space Dollar for

LIBRARY NEWS

By Mary-lou McMillan and Shelley Fleming

each book read to use as tickets for our weekly draws with lots of great prizes. Children from 5 to 12 years of age are invited to join the

Summer Reading Club. All you need is a library card for a ton of summer fun.

Lift Off is on June 30 at 1:30 p.m. Children can sign up, decorate their space ship, and the space journey begins. Books read are recorded in a Captain's Log. The Summer Reading Club ends on Aug. 13. All members will receive a ticket to our final party to be held at the library on Aug. 15 at 1p.m.

The Beirido Brothers, a musical duo, will provide rollicking fun for the whole family at the John Kenneth Galbraith Reference Library in Dutton. All non-members will be asked to pay a loonie to attend this celebration.

A separate celebration will be held for the Rodney and West Lorne libraries.

The Rodney Library is holding a book sale on July 9 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Contact your local library for more details.

EDITORIAL

Rail line a sad loss but potential remains strong for development

CN's plans to abandon a rail line between St. Thomas to the Blenheim area is unfortunate.

It's understandable there is a limited amount of customers using the rail line, making it unfeasible to keep it in operation for now.

However, rail transport remains a potentially less costly method of shipping goods across North American trade routes.

As our closest border crossing to the US continues to back up more and more each year with transport truck traffic, lost time becomes a valuable commodity that could be reclaimed with rail shipping.

Unfortunately, our local stretch of this rail line is not heavily industrialized yet.

The emphasis is on "yet". The West Elgin Chamber of Commerce is slowly working toward a more aggressive approach to attracting industry to the area.

Most recently, an issue raised over out-of-towners being billed for collisions in the City of London opened the door for dialogue between the city and our rural area in how we can fit into a larger economic development picture.

It could lead to partnerships that see, at the least, support industries locating here for larger ones existing in London.

For now, West Elgin is looking at purchasing portions of the rail line to preserve the greenspace and local parks.

It's unfortunate that it's not economically viable to preserve not only the greenspace but the line itself for future industry.

We're still blessed to have the Highway 401 corridor at our doorstep for the easy transport of goods, but the more infrastructure we can maintain and develop, the more appealing we are to industry.

(S.H.)

Events planned across area for Canada Day

Canada Day celebrations at Miller Park in West Lorne should be a non-stop good time, promise the organizing committee.

Months of planning are complete and the various service clubs that have come together to make the weekend full of events a success are ready to go.

It all starts July 1 with the Knights of Columbus Fish Fry and an evening of fireworks at Miller Park.

The organizing committee announced the Snake Lady will be in Miller Park from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday bringing her reptiles to be touched and held.

The Rodney Day Camp group is also organizing many kids activities Saturday at Miller Park.

As well, teams have been registering for the three-on-three basketball tournament being organized by the Centre Ice Youth Centre.

Saturday night features the Viva Las Vegas show at the arena in West Lorne in a weekend full of events.

Meanwhile, Canada Day events are being held in many villages across the area.

For the second year in a row, the Village of Newbury is holding a whole day of events for Canada Day.

Since 1972 the village hadn't had a whole day of events until last year.

Topping its success, Debbie Rankin, organizer hopes families will once again come out and celebrate the birthday of our nation.

It starts at Coltsfoot Road where the parade begins.

Local war heroes will be celebrated as this year's celebration ties into the Year of the Veteran.

The parade will wind into the village to the park where activities for people of all ages will be set up.

A DJ will be spinning favourites for the entire afternoon at the park.



JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

Royal Bank gives to WEDS

Dianne Downie, RBC Financial Group employee, from Rodney gives a \$500 cheque to Lesley Moll from West Elgin Dramatics Society Kids program. Downie contributes time to WEDS Kids and was able to obtain the donation from RBC Financial Group, Employee Volunteer Grants Program.

A slip n' slide and bubbles will be set up for kids.

Jingles the clown returns in the afternoon to entertain children with zany trickery.

A baseball tournament will be held along with fireworks in the evening.

A special ceremonial is also being planned, says Rankin.

Events have been scaled back to an evening program Friday in Dutton because the holiday falls on a weekend.

The Canada Flag will rise at 5:30 p.m. before the Choral Society performs.

Barb Trudell's dance crew will also perform.

St. Thomas band, the Fiascos will play 80s and 90s music throughout the evening.

Fingal continues with its tradition of Canada Day celebrations.

The Southwold Township is holding fireworks and children's activities June 30 starting around 7 p.m. at the ballpark.

Entertainers for children will be on site face painting, cake and ice cream.

Food donations are requested for Caring Cupboard.

Residents from the Duart area will once again celebrate Canada Day with fireworks and entertainment at the picnic shelter in Clearville July 1.

Library staff looking for temporary location

FOR THE CHRONICLE

Elgin County librarian Cathy Bishop said Feb. 14 there may be temporary staffing effects as a result of the fire at the West Lorne library last week.

Bishop gave a short verbal report on the fire to county council, after she and administrator Mark McDonald visited the scene.

"We do know it was very devastating to staff," she said.

West Lorne library staff have

been given temporary work at the Rodney branch or at the main library on Sunset Drive, she said and the search is on for a temporary home in West Lorne.

But Bishop cautioned there is not that much work available for the West Lorne staff and that the situation may have to be revisited.

There were 16,000 items in the 1,251-square-foot West Lorne library, worth \$500,000, Bishop said, adding she was relying on accurate computer

records. Also damaged was \$1,500 in computer equipment.

The most expensive items, shelves and furniture, still need to be costed out, she said.

Original historic newspapers stored at the library are fine and are being dried out, she said. Old municipal records that were part of the Village of West Lorne before amalgamation had been brought back to the county archives for storage and were not affected by the fire, Bishop said.

Insurance adjusters continue

to assess damages to determine what will be restored.

Out of print items and local history books that are few in numbers across the system may be restored while most of the collection may be replaced.

Currently, staff are searching for a new temporary location in West Lorne which is hoped to be found in coming months.

For more information call the Rodney library at 785-2100.

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Gas stolen with rise in prices

Jeff Kempenaar
Staff

Gas prices topped out near \$1.00 last week fueling an increase in gas 'n' dashes at the Highway 401 service station.

When prices reached 97 cents last Thursday, there had already been four incidents of people fueling their vehicles and leaving without paying at the Petro Canada on Highway 401.

"I've never seen the prices so high," said Melissa Rowe, attendant at the station for four years. "I was pretty surprised we had cars just drive off. Since the prices went up we've had more."

"We try to keep a close eye out and walk around watching the people," said Rowe adding she had to provide a description of vehicles to the police.

The station has no cameras over the pumps but with two people working at the station, Rowe is usually able to walk around and look at the people pumping gas and their vehicles.

"I think people don't realize the price has gone up. They fill up thinking it's just as cheap but then they realize they can't afford it," she said.

Across Highway 401, Dan Carr, owner of the Shell Canada gas station was hesitant to talk to the Chronicle about

gas 'n' dashes.

"Last time I talked to the media, after the story came out, it happened more frequently," said Carr.

He said more than \$10,000 worth of gas is stolen between his two stations on the highway and in London each year.

He said there is more than one incident a week where gas is stolen.

"It's a real issue. Unfortunately the retailer has to swallow it and it's a huge cost," said Carr.

While his station does have surveillance, Carr said a certain "element of people" will not pay for gas.

He doesn't believe a rise in gas prices cause more people to steal gas.

"It happens on a regular basis," he said.

Stations within western Elgin County's villages said they have not seen gas 'n' dashes with higher prices.

The four contacted said they never have gas stolen, mostly because they are full service stations making it harder for someone to take off without paying.

Also, most of the customers are local in the villages, so employees at the gas stations know and remember the customers.

World Day of Prayer services being held

Christians in more than 170 countries around the world and 2,000 communities across Canada will celebrate World Day of Prayer March 3.

In West Lorne, seven different denominations are taking part: The West Lorne Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran, Crinan Presbyterian, Eagle Pentecostal, West Lorne Melody Assembly and United who take turns each year to host the event.

This year's host church is the United Church, the service will be at 2 p.m., followed by a time for fellowship and refreshments.

Another similar event is being held at Bobier Villa in Dutton at 7 p.m.

West Elgin secrets found

Think you know everything about West Elgin?

Challenge yourself and drive across the municipality seeing the sights, learning local history and keeping up on current happenings.

Better yet, join the Rodney Aldborough Agricultural Society's Car Rally tour June 26.

"There's more to the community than you know," said one of the organizers Bernie Whiele.

Starting at the Rodney Recreation Centre around 1 p.m., the two hour tour promises to take you to places and show you things in the municipality you've never seen or known before.

The society has been working hard to collate facts, stories and locations for the tour which will take travels to all corners of the municipality.

Easy to drive, the tour does lead down gravel roads but these are back roads rarely travelled in

our day-to-day routines, said Nancy McGregor, with RAAS.

Small changes have been made to the route for those who may have driven it before, but with a poor turnout last year, many will be surprised by what they learn and discover on the route.

The event is an important fundraiser for the society, with a small fee per car and traveller.

McGregor encourages drivers to bring a navigator to read through the booklet.

Pails will be placed at several markers along the way with cards in them.

The car that ends up with the best poker hand wins a prize.

The car that answers the most questions on the quiz also wins a prize.

Anyone interested in taking the tour and joining the car rally, can start at the Rodney Recreation Centre June 26 at anytime.

West Elgin approves new police contract

West Elgin Council approved the Elgin County OPP preferred budget for four new officers, with little discussion.

"What are we going to do," said Counc. Mike Mooser. "We've got to have police."

The budget is not final, with the 2005 reconciliation outstanding but West Elgin's preliminary cost for policing in 2006 is \$695,129.

Staff Sgt. Ryan Cox attended the meeting to present the proposed, costly staff increase.

Mayor Graham Warwick

pushed Cox to improve how officers use their time.

"We don't want to pay for armed stenographers," said Warwick.

He wondered if Cox could hire more administration to fill out time consuming police reports.

Cox said it's law for officers to fill out most of the reports.

However he said some OPP detachments have electronic dictaphones which help reduce time spent converting officers notes to report forms.

Cox said he wants to see if

other detachments see positive results from the dictaphones.

Dutton-Dunwich has yet to pass a resolution supporting the preferred or status quo contracts.

"It's a tough decision for council," said Administrator Ken Loveland. "It's a lot of money."

Dutton-Dunwich Council was waiting to see how the other municipalities in the county acted.

So far, of the municipalities that share the contract Central Elgin has also supported the five-year contract.



Storm investigation continues
West Elgin Road Superintendent Paul Van Vaerenburgh stands before the large trees that were uprooted in windspeed of 120 km/hr May 13. Environment Canada initially said there was no tornado but has begun investigating sightings by local residents to reassess the storm.

Search warrants ready for prom parties

Elgin County OPP together with the Elgin St. Thomas Health Unit are spreading the word about the Party Pact program. The initiative is aimed at assisting OPP in dealing with out of control parties at homes or properties where owners/parents may be absent. This time of year, as we enter prom/graduation party month, parents are reminded that parties can and often will get out of control very quickly. Young people may have good intentions to keep the crowd to just a few close friends but before long word of the party spreads and as a last resort police are called to deal with the, largely intoxicated, belligerent masses.

Property owners can now take steps to ensure that the OPP will have easy and unrestricted access to a property or residence where a party is being planned. When the

party pact agreement is signed by parents the OPP are formally notified of the date, time, location and estimated size of the planned party. This early notice provides officers with valuable information, including contact names and phone numbers, should calls for service be received. In addition, the Party Pact ensures that parents speak with their teens about the responsibility and liability associated with hosting social functions. Furthermore, teens are made aware that the OPP has been notified and are prepared to respond to any concerns from neighbours, partygoers or passers-by.

The Party Pact is a way to promote safer parties in Elgin County at any time of year. To Pick up your Party Pact contract at the Elgin County OPP Detachment or the Health Unit.

Celebrities frequenting area

Highway 401 service centres a stopping ground for famous people

Jeff Kempenaar
Staff

Nights at the Highway 401 service centres can be quiet.

Imagine though, seeing a sleepy guitar player from the band Kiss, or coffee craving NHL hockey player enter the doors of the service centre after midnight.

It happens every week, a celebrity of some status stops at the gas stations or restaurants along Highway 401 in between Dutton and West Lorne late at night.

Ryan Sinclair of Rodney boasts about the time he met Emmy Award Winner James Woods.

"It was cool. I knew him for his more scarier roles (such as

Vampires), but he didn't seem too proud of those roles. He wanted to be known for his later works," said Sinclair.

Getting his photo taken with Woods, the actor began to get annoyed with the attention and autograph requests.

Recently, Sinclair, who works at the Wendy's on the eastbound station, saw WWE wrestler Christian.

"We made fun of him," said Sinclair, remarking the TV star has an entrance to the wrestling ring that is cheesy.

While Christian ate at the Wendy's, Sinclair and Dave Oliveira, janitor, mocked his entrance dance moves.

"It was hilarious," said Sinclair. "He wasn't impressed."

Employees at the service station are not as star crazed as the screaming fans on TV.

Long-time service station employee David Munn explains why the employees at the service station may not get over excited to see a celebrity.

"They're just like us. Celebrity mean you're famous but you shouldn't be treated any different. If Steve Yzerman (NHL hockey player) comes in here I'm going to treat him for who he is, not what he does," said Munn of the Rodney area who works at the Tim Hortons. He occasionally has asked for

autographs, such as when Karen Kane, Canadian ballet icon came in.

"I didn't know who she was so I asked for her autograph," said Munn.

In the 1980s though, Munn had the thrill of cooking with Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley of the band Kiss.

"They were cool. Really normal," he said, adding most bands stay in their tour buses and send an associate in to the restaurant to pick-up food.

Kiss had just finished a show in Detroit and was headed for Toronto.

Munn figured he would give the international superstars a chance of a lifetime - to make their own hamburgers at a fast food restaurant.

Please see Rural, page 2

Hundreds flock to Eagle to see rare bird



Scanning the trees

JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

Linda Cork, left, Karin Auckenthaler and Peter Auckenthaler, right centre, look into the trees for a Pyrrhuloxia on Walter Wojeck's property south of Eagle. The Pyrrhuloxia is a type of cardinal from Mexico that was spotted at a feeder on the property last week. Hundreds of people came to see the displaced bird.

Jeff Kempenaar
Staff

Hundreds of bird enthusiasts flocked to Walter Wojeck's property near Eagle last week to see a rare cardinal from Mexico make its first documented appearance in Canada.

The rare Pyrrhuloxia was spotted on Wojeck's property by Reinhold Pokraka on Christmas Day.

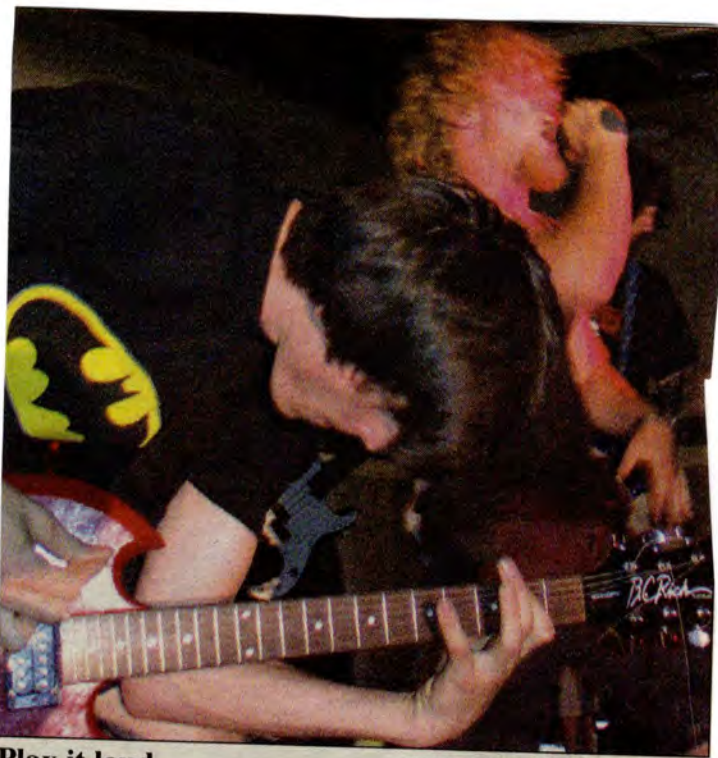
Once word got out across the Internet that for the first time in recorded history the bird reached Canada, birders from British Columbia, Ottawa, Tobemory and Alabama came to see it.

Joanne Reive, president of the West Elgin Nature Club said about 400 people came to try and get a sighting.

The Pyrrhuloxia looks very similar to a cardinal but has a beak like a parrot.

Pokraka was visiting Wojeck when he noticed the bird at a bird feeder at around 3:25 p.m. Dec. 25.

JAN 05 Please see Bird, page 2



Play it loud

JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

Dave McWilliam plays guitar while Corey Timmermans sings for the band Septic Tank at Wesstock June 10.



Bike safety learned at rodeo JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

Emily McDonald learns her hand signals at the bike rodeo held at Aldborough Public School June 10 by the Optimist Club of West Lorne. Medallion winners were Skylar McNeill, Calvin Dowling and Sheldon Downie. Other winners were Cathy Bergey, Brianna Downie and Jessica Hejna.

Wesstock featured local talented rockin' youth at the high school June 10.

The annual battle of the bands was bigger and louder this year, being held in the gymnasium at West Elgin Secondary School before more than 100 people.

Seven bands battled for a day in a Chatham recording studio.

Far from Freedom, a heavy punk band from Parkside Collegiate in St. Thomas won the battle with covers of bands like Alexisonfire.

While they didn't win, Septic Tank had dozens of students jumping on the dance floor.

"We wanted to have a good show and get all the frustrations out of our systems," said singer Corey Timmermans.

Exams start next week.

Members of Septic Tank are Dave McWilliam, guitar, Ryan Grant, guitar, Geoff Wayne, bass and Aaron Berry on drums.

Timmermans described Septic Tank's show Friday night as, "15-minutes equivalent to 10 parties at once."

In their debut at Wesstock was Magic, a classic rock cover band with Mark Godfrey, Aaron Berry and James Stone.

Magic played Foxy Lady, Communication Break Down, by Led Zeppelin and Spirit in the Sky, showing off Stone's impressive guitar skills.

Godfrey and Berry played in five bands during the hot night.

Mark's father, Tom Godfrey helped organize the event which raised \$500 for an Aids charity, yet to be picked.

"It was a success," said Jan Kool. He and Maryjo McWilliam helped organize the concert with Godfrey.

Tom operates a youth church in Duart called Kent Region Alternative Ministries.

"We put a lot of time into practicing and it all pays off when we get on stage," said Berry.

Their band Effendi played a country song called A View From Here, by Yellowcard.

"You can't get away with holding a concert in West Lorne and not playing a country song," said Mark.

Another Day, with members from Wallacetown and the Melbourne area impressed many with their pop/punk sound.

Garrett Stokes, Josh Grant, Brandon Wolfe, Michael Godfrey and singer Kelly Grant have been together only a few months.

They've played venues around the area including Call The Office in London.

"As soon as we get home from school we grab our guitars," said Stokes. "We've converted the loft in Brandon's barn into a jam space."

For P.J Kellestine, of Fall From Memory, getting on stage is a rush.

"I could never get in front of a classroom to do a presentation but getting up on stage is awesome," said Kellestine, a graduate of WESS. "Everyone here tonight got their chance to shine."

He, Zack Stokes, Mark Godfrey and Cory Ellis have been playing shows in the area.

Miller Park washroom to be built by August

A tender was received for the Miller Park washroom building in West Lorne.

Council learned about the estimated costs for the project at its June 23 meeting.

To the tune of \$87,847, a four stall washroom will be built this summer near the hydro tower in the park's wooded area for the public.

RLM, a small construction firm from London had the lowest tender and is hoped to have the project completed by the end of this August.

In other business:

Council gave direction for a backflow prevention bylaw to be drafted.

The new bylaw will give the drainage department the go ahead to install a backflow prevention assembly at every water and sewer connection in the municipality.

Currently, the department only installs them at every new line.

Prioritizing the backflow prevention project, industrial properties will be fitted with the assemblies first.

The bylaw could include fees for each

property owner to have the backflow preventor installed.

The backflow preventors are mandatory in the province, and save property owners from the liability of cleaning up after something hazardous enters the water system.

The issue was examined after Stratford's water supply was temporarily shut down by a backflow of chemical from a city car wash.



Vacation Bible School held

JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

Kathy Johnston and her grandson Joe play a game of passing a hoop over held hands July 8 at a Vacation Bible School held at the West Lorne United Church all last week.

CURRENT EVENTS 2005



Tony Vergeer, Carlos Oliveira, Gord Schneckeburger Bill Vanseader and George Van Dyk operate the fryers at the Knights of Columbus Fish Fry Friday night in West Lorne.



Viva Las Vegas to put big show on CONTRIBUTED
The Ultimate Tribute Show is set for July 2, featuring covers of popular music from the 50s to the 80s by award winning tribute act Viva Las Vegas.



The West Elgin Choral Society sang Oh Canada at the opening ceremonies to the Dutton/Dunwich celebrations July 1.



Harold Timson purchased a record from Angus McLain at the Rodney and West Lorne Kiwanian's Flea Market July 3.



West Elgin honoured its volunteer firefighters from Rodney and West Lorne with volunteers of the year awards given July 1 before the annual firefighter's baseball game by Rosalie Krebsz on behalf of the municipality.



Hundreds spend weekend in the park JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE
Tim Johnston of Rodney polishes his 1971 Chevy Nova at the Optimist Club's In the Woods Car Show July 3, the third day of Canada Day festivities in Miller Park, West Lorne. Johnston was one of more than 130 that brought their vehicles to the park for the show. More photos from the weekend are on page 16.



WASH OUT JEFF KEMPENAAR/CHRONICLE
Jack Fisher from the West Elgin road department washes cement dust from the bricked sidewalk in front of the Canada Post office on Main Street in West Lorne Monday. Residents have been complaining about sidewalk dust, weeds and a poorly maintained streets.