"bonum apporto nuntium, tristem nuntium, sed non malus nuntium"

THE BEACON

LONGTIME, LOVED LOYALIST LANDFILL LEADER

(left) Shirley Ann Miller and (right) Keith Miller.

Keith Miller

THANK YOU, KEITH MILLER!

For 25 years, Keith Miller has diligently maintained and worked at the Amherst Island Waste Disposal Site for Loyalist Township. If you are a resident of Amherst Island, it is highly probable you have encountered Keith Miller supervising things.

Keith is such an intrinsic part of the social experience that comes with visiting the dump, and many residents look forward to 'dump runs' because of their interactions with Keith.

Keith is so famous, he even starred in an artwork created by Terry Culbert, as homage to the excellent job he does at the dump (seen below, and on page 2).

Artwork by Terry Culbert (2011), depicting Keith Miller.

25 Years as the Island's 'Garbolegist'!

STATEMENTS FROM RESIDENTS

The following comments have all been submitted by different island residents who wished to thank and congratulate Keith on this achievement.

"Keith was one of the first people we met here, and he has always been so helpful with any questions we've had. His sense of humour is terrific, and we always leave with a smile. Our weekly trip to the dump us often the highlight of our week!"

~ John and Lisa Luker

"It is always a pleasure going to the dump and having a visit with Keith. Congratulations on 25 years working at the landfill. Hope to see you for many more years."

~ Jim and Sandra Reid

"Even though we've only been on the island a year, we feel like Keith is one of the people we've gotten to know more. How could you not love someone with a sense of humour like Keith's? MARS ROCK? Absolutely, I bought one! He wouldn't let me pay for it, but I insisted, saying that it was absolutely necessary to validate the experience. We continued the perpetuation of his 'conspiracy theories' and gave him a photo I took of a decaying roll of hay out in a field on Front Road that had the shape of a Sasquatch. I put it in a plastic envelope for him to add to his collection. Simply a charming man with a big heart full of mirth. Please, don't ever change!"

~ Mabyn Armstrong

"Keithy has ran the Stella exchange through thick and thin. Always there no matter the weather. He has even been chastised for not being open on statutory holidays. The site is beyond organized, he uses his own mower to cut the grass, he feeds feathered friends, plants flowers, and accepts 'air mail'. Keith celebrates every season or event with appropriate décor. He cheerfully acknowledges us all no matter how his day is going. Dr. Luv does truly deserve an award."

~ Anonymous

Read more about Keith's 25 Years at Amherst Island's Waste Disposal Site on page 2 & 3.

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RECOGNIZING CAREER ACHEIVEMENT

Keith Miller's 25 Years as the Island's 'Garbolegist', *continued*...

STATEMENTS FROM RESIDENTS

"Keith Miller, with his dry humour and 'don't come hither' attitude never fails to make me smile. He constantly educates me. I pride myself on knowing the mythical creatures who share our world, but the Jackalope was new to me the first time I saw it guarding Keith's lair. I was not surprised to read, in google, that legend depicts the Jackalope as the 'Warrior Rabbit', which can be very fierce and aggressive. I am not sure which sex our Amherst Island Jackalope is, but the legend goes on to say that the milk of the female has amazing healing properties, and is a very powerful aphrodisiac, so I think we should all find out. Keith also helps me keep up on current affairs. His hut was the first place I saw pot for sale after Justin legalised it (sure, I know it was a toilet seat, but it is the thought that counts). And what about those Mars rocks? NASA is still struggling with how to get the ones the Perseverance rover dug up back to earth – but Keith already has some for sale for us. Thank you, Keith, for making my weekly chore so enjoyable! Sincerely, Isla Viscount".

~ Isla Viscount

Artwork by Terry Culbert (2011), depicting Keith Miller.

"To Keith. Congratulations on this momentous occasion. Twenty-five years ago you were hired temporarily to bring calmness out of chaos, organization out of a mess, and you did it with comedy and kindness. We love your air mail and fan mail. We laughed at your artistic scenes of parties and frivolity. Newbies sought your advice. You made going to the dump a social occasion. Keep up the good work! Many, many thanks."

~ Janet Scott

"Keith Miller did a two day historic tour of our Island. We bid on this for the radio station fundraiser 8 years ago. Keith has volunteered for the radio station for years, and I love the banter between him and Janet. He is funny. Thank you Keith for working for our radio station. He drove us around the island for 2 afternoons. We got to go to the tips of the island, which I really enjoyed (he had land owners' permission to do this). One ride was 3 hours! He told us the names of the people who owned the properties, both past and present. He told us that lilacs in front of a place meant that there was a house there. We saw old school houses. I particularly liked the end of the Third and Second Concessions. The waterfront is so beautiful. We appreciated this so much. As for dump related stories, I do not have one. I am shy and I think Keith is too. I do like him very much. I admire his work ethic. Congratulations Keith. David and I love and appreciate you."

~ Sharen English and David Pickering

D – Debonair smile, always welcoming
U – Upbeat; even though it's a dump day, we leave with a smile from Keith
M – Marvellous wit, we love his spirit
P – Pillar of the community, a supporter.

Many thanks for years of service!

~ Wronski / Dignard household

"I always look forward to seeing Keith. He's always got something to say, good or bad. If I don't know who someone is, he always knows. We have had a lot of good talks on a Sunday afternoon, and I have to say, his hugs are the best when you need one."

~Reta Brown

"All I can say about Keith, is he can always make me laugh, whether he means to or not. Who else would have moon rocks for sale?"

~ Darrell Miller

"Congratulations Keith. I love you to pieces but will never forgive you for upsetting the outhouse."

~ Anonymous

RECOGNIZING CAREER ACHEIVEMENT

Keith Miller's 25 Years as the Island's 'Garbolegist', *continued*...

STATEMENTS FROM RESIDENTS

"Gosh, so many stories about Keith, some funny, some heart warming…which one to share? Wayne gathered up the garbage and headed off to the landfill. Shortly after I get a call and its from Keith, telling me that he sent a hug and kiss home with Wayne for me. He was calling to make sure I got it. Now, I ask you, how sweet is that?! When Wayne arrived home … nothing. So I asked him if Keith gave him something for me and that's when I got my hug and kiss. I'm going to be sending hugs and kisses back soon Keith. I hope someone is around to witness it. As Katherine Hepburn said to John Wayne in *True Grit*, 'you're a credit to the whole male sex and I'm proud to have ya' for my friend'. Love you, Keith. You and Shirley are both amazing people."

~ Karen Fleming

Next time you are at the dump, ask Keith if he has any Mars rocks available. The answer may surprise you!

Keith Miller

"Keith is the most important man on the island! When I first moved here and went to the dump, I asked him how long he'd been here and he said all his life, but I didn't dare ask how long that had been. He always looks out for me, and it is a pleasure to go to the dump and have a visit with him! Congrats Keith. You are very much appreciated."

~ Norma-Lynn Colson

"One of our first meetings with Keith (well any new islander, really) was pulling into the entrance of the garbage dump. Rolling up in our truck on a hot summer COVID-lockdown kind of day, out 4-year-old son Thomas noticed a Tonka crane truck sitting outside of Keith's booth. Thomas nodded to Keith and pointed at the crane with a beaming smile. With only an exchange of eyes, Keith picked up the crane, walked over and handed it to Thomas, telling him; 'this belonged to my son. But here, you can have it.' Oh the joy out boy felt. That crane is now one of Thomas' most cherished toys, and that moment is now a story of real giving, and a window into Keith and the island community's kind, generous, and welcoming ways."

~ Ian, Kaye, and Thomas Phillips

"When I pull up to Keith's shack with that big white truck…well it certainly doesn't make his day. I keep forgetting to phone ahead so he can mentally brace himself. The one time though, he told me that he knew that I had just got a new boat and wondered if I would be interested in a dingy in a bag. Sure enough, I dragged that home and have used it several times."

~ Dave McGinn

"A few years ago, a neighbour asked me to remove the source of a bad smell that was coming from partially under a building. I was about to give up, but then I noticed the shape of something fuzzy stuck beyond my reach. *The Back Kitchen* needed a dump run at the time, so I took a break from that job and headed to the dump before it closed. When I was at the dump, I spoke to Keith about it. He said, 'You've got to use your raccooooon hook', to which I replied, 'I don't have a raccoon hook'. Keith paused for a moment, looking rather thoughtful before he continued, then he said 'Huh. I thought everyone had a racooooon hook. You can use mine.' With that, he lent me his racoon hook. It worked like a charm. Thank you, Keith!".

~ Kyle Murray

UPCOMING MARCH DAYS

National Old Stuff Day

MARCH 2ND

March 2nd is National Old Stuff Day. Amherst Island is home to a lot of old stuff, and this means that it is also home to a lot of physical records of history. The Neilson Store Museum and Cultural Centre has a unique collection of historically significant items. Perhaps you have some in your own home too!

This March 2nd, go through some of your old stuff. Think about the history of the item, what it was used for. Maybe you can repurpose it to give it a new life, or maybe you can share the stories you have about the item with a neighbour. If you think you have a particularly interesting piece of old island stuff, email a picture and a story to editor@thebeaconpaper.com, and the story can be shared here next month.

Happy National Old Stuff Day!

One of the many dishes prepared to order by The Soup Can.

OBSERVE

National Soup it Forward Day, March 3rd

Soup it Forward Day is all about sending comfort food to a neighbour or friend. Cooking for people or delivering food is one way to show you care.

Founded in 2019, The Soup Can is a little "Mom and Pop Shop" that offers fresh homemade wholesome soup and sandwiches made to order. Located in downtown Kingston, The Soup Can is owned and operated by friends of Amherst Island. Find them at: https://thesoupcankingston.com/

EXPERIENCE

National Plant a Flower Day

MARCH 12TH

March 12th is National Plant a Flower Day. With spring around the corner, many gardeners have begun to plan their gardens and start their plants inside. You do not have to have a green thumb to attempt planting a flower. Hopefully it grows and provides a source of food for the pollinators.

Bee and butterfly gardens are increasing in popularity, as the need for more biodiversity in plants to help sustain our pollinators becomes more apparent. This is an encouraging trend! So, celebrate Plant a Flower day by planting a flower this March 12th (or as early as the weather permits).

THE BEACON

SPOTLIGHT SPECIES

Common Goldeneye

KAYLEIGH GRAHAM

The common goldeneye, or *Bucephala clangula*, is a species of medium sized diving duck with short tails. The goldeneye can grow to be 40-51cm long, and between 600-1300g. Adult male common goldeneye are relatively simple to identify, as they are mostly black and white with a white round spot near the bill, and they have a golden eye. Females have a brownish head with a grayer back, although they also have white patches on their wings.

The common goldeneye prefers to live in forests for nesting trees, or on clear northern lakes and rivers. They often travel as a flock, and when they dive, they dive together. The common goldeneye normally forages underwater for small fish, crustaceans, frogs, pondweeds, and aquatic insects. Their wings make a subtle whistling sound as they fly, which earned them the nickname 'whistlers' from hunters.

Common goldeneye nest in tree cavities between 5-60 feet off the ground. They can also nest on high buildings, or in nesting boxes. A clutch of eggs is normally between 6-15 and they are either olive green or bluish green in colour.

The current status of this species is listed as 'stable', as their habitat is mostly intact, and their populations have remained relatively stable.

The mating rituals of the common goldeneye are entertaining to watch, as the male goldeneye puts on a show. The male throws his head far back and pointing his head to the sky while making a mating call. The male can also be seen pumping his head up and down and making short flights with dramatic take offs and landings.

The male goldeneyes make a high pitched, loud, 'jeee-ep' sound. Female goldeneyes make a lower toned, quacking sound.

A male common goldeneye duck.

GOLDENEYE FACTS

- There is another species of goldeneye duck called the Barrow's goldeneye. The Barrow's goldeneye has an oval or crescent shaped white spot behind the bill of the males, opposed to the circular mark on the common goldeneye species.
- Goldeneyes are known to be aggressive hunters among duck species, and usually dominate the habitat they live within.
- The female goldeneye plucks feathers from herself to insulate the nest.
- They are famous for their yellow iris, or 'golden eye', for which they are named.
- This common goldeneye has nothing to do with James Bond, 007.

Sources: "Common Goldeneye". *Audubon, Guide to North American Birds*. 2022.

"The Common Goldeneye". *All About Birds: The Cornell Lab*. 2019.

A female common goldeneye duck.

A male common goldeneye duck.

Island Information

Ferry Schedule

The ferry leaves Stella (Amherst Island side) on the hour each day, 6:00am to 1:00am.

The ferry leaves Millhaven (mainland side) on the half hour each day, 6:30am to 1:30am.

Aerial view of the progress made to the Millhaven dock, from https://twitter.com/a_i_ferrydocks

Fares

*cash, cheque, and contactless payment options available now.

- Car, truck (under 1 ton), van, farm tractor or small school bus - $10.00
- RV or car with trailer, large vehicles requiring up to two vehicle spaces, or large school bus - $20.00
- Large vehicles and trailers or equipment requiring more than two vehicle spaces - $10.00 per space used
- Motorcycle - $2.00
- Bicycle - $1.50
- Book of 25 round-trip tickets - $100.00

Note: An administration charge of $20.00 will be added to the fare for any motorist with insufficient funds to pay fare. The administration charge is required to cover costs incurred to prepare an invoice.

Ferry Dock Construction Project

The use of the new docks has begun. The paving of the new docks has been completed.

The Amherst Islander II, the new electric ferry, has arrived in Canada. It is currently in the Picton area.

Factors that hinder the switch over date include; requirements for testing the new electric ferry, training staff at the new docks, approvals from Transport Canada, and ensuring reliable and uninterrupted ferry service to and from the island.

Information and updates can be found at http://www.amherstislandferrydocks.ca/ or https://twitter.com/a_i_ferrydocks

Instructions

- Please separate glass, plastics, paper/cardboard, and metal from garbage.
- Place a garbage tag ($2.50 each, or $25 for 10) on each garbage bag.
- The township offers two free large item drop offs (FILDO) per year.

COVID-19 Precautions: tags are normally sold at the landfill site but are not currently due to COVID-19.

LOYALIST LANDFILLS

Dump Hours and Protocol

Amherst Island Waste Disposal Site, 145 Dump Road, Amherst Island.
Garbage tags can be purchased at McGinn's General Store and Fast Freddy's in Bath, Foodland, and many other township retailers, payment at Amherst Island landfill is cash only.

Open Hours	
Wednesdays	11am – 2pm
Saturdays	10am – 12pm
Sundays	2pm – 4pm

Information and updates can be found at https://www.loyalisttownship.ca/index.cfm/residents/garbage-and-recycling/

STORE SERVICES

McGinn's General Store

POST OFFICE

Open Hours

Mondays	9-11:30am, 2:30-5pm
Tuesdays	9-11:30am, 2:30-5pm
Wednesdays	9-11:30am, 2:30-5pm
Thursdays	9-11:00am, 3:30-6pm
Fridays	9-11:30am, 2:30-5pm
Saturdays	Closed
Sundays	Closed

Phone Number: 613-519-2331

COVID-19 Precautions: face mask required, 1 person inside at a time inside (please call before arriving or knock).

GENERAL STORE

COVID-19 Precautions: curbside service only, masks at the curb would be appreciated.

Owned and operated by a 5th generation island family, Linda and Dave McGinn.

Open Hours

Mondays	9am – 5pm
Tuesdays	9am – 5pm
Wednesdays	9am -5pm
Thursdays	9am – 6pm
Fridays	9am – 5pm
Saturdays	10am – 4pm
Sundays	Closed

Phone Number: 613-519-2331

THE BEACON

ARTS AND CULTURE

Toronto Street, Winter Morning by Lawren S. Harris

DEREK OXLEY

This month I just want to talk about something breezy and nostalgic. Or maybe I should say fluffy and nostalgic? This February we're not looking at anything lighter or heavier than snow and concrete. With all the snowfalls around the Great Lakes this past month it feels apropos. Heck, as I write this, I'm watching a steady 3am snowfall outside my window, illuminated by tungsten streetlamps. Precious are the memories of being warmly tucked into a fireside blaze, gazing out from behind full curtains onto the moonlit crest of a snowy infinity. And although I can't take the cold like I used to, I still love to get out into a blizzard once and a while and pretend that I'm still limber enough to run about and make snow angels.

Ever since my late teens I have loved going on long, long walks, especially through big cities. Winter saw no exception. My appreciation for a metropolis in winter stems from my first few years living in Toronto. During my early years of study, I was only living in Toronto from September to May, and so my initial relationship with the city was only during the autumn and winter months. Winters were so different in the big city – snowbanks were mottled grey instead of fluffy white, plows on smaller streets just made the mess bigger, and everything was stained up to its knees in a permeating crust of salty slush that wouldn't wash away until Easter. Despite this, I came to love forging through February blizzards at midnight and wandering through slushy March Sundays in the Annex. Toronto was the first place I had ever lived where I couldn't pick a direction and just walk straight until I hit the countryside. No matter how many hours I walked, I always gave up before that city did. I think that walking through cities is one of the best ways to know them intimately. You create personal little connections with both the handsome and unflattering angles. A meaningful relationship develops with all the nooks and crannies, quick little shortcuts, ornaments, and energies of the whole place.

A major attraction for me in big cities is to see how light plays across the surfaces and different geographic spaces and sites. The play of light across open spaces and buildings is very important to the experience of the urban façade – the shadows, reflections, and gradations of light in modern cities like Toronto create unique and fascinating perspectives of the space. Especially when it's dressed in snow. But no matter the season, I enjoyed being in a place that constantly unfurled in different ways, whichever direction you chose. Sometimes when I was feeling couped-up I would ride the transit to a random intersection and then walk in any direction for a couple hours. I actively tried never to repeat the same exact route twice – there was always some yet unseen side street, alley, or bike path to turn down, filled with intriguing new angles to explore. To this day one of my favorite Toronto memories is of turning down the right street that led to discovering the top of the ridge near the Wychwood Barns in January, looking south as glints of light played across the core of the city on a winter dawn. Maybe that's how this month's artist found the unassuming angle we see here, by turning down a sunny morning side street he'd never seen before.

As I was shoveling snow last week, I stopped to admire how nicely the fresh, white drifts were collecting across the tall, ruddy façade of the local church. It was especially beautiful for those brief moments when the sky cleared enough to let the sun bring out highlights of orange and yellow. Seeing it got me thinking about walking through cities, so once back inside I was inspired to hunt for an image of a winter cityscape that spoke to me. I was initially looking for a painting where the artist was unknown, which would give lead to a good discussion of how the value of a painting is ascribed in the 21st century. But I wasn't able to find an anonymous painting that I really liked, so we're saving that idea for another time. This month is a painting from 1920 by Canadian artist Lawren S. Harris, that goes by the title *Toronto Street, Winter Morning*. Harris was a member of the Group of Seven.

Lawren S. Harris, *Toronto Street, Winter Morning*, oil on canvas, 1920. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada.

THE BEACON

ARTS AND CULTURE

Toronto Street, Winter Morning by Lawren S. Harris, *continued…*

DEREK OXLEY

Although he is my favourite artist from this collective, I tend to prefer his abstraction work that came much later than the Group of Seven era, which I would recommend looking into. I didn't even know this piece existed until last week, but I'm glad I found it.

Lawren Harris (1885-1970) was borne into the wealthy Massey-Harris family in Brantford, Ontario. He studied art in Berlin (Germany) from 1904 to 1908, which exposed him to the fast-evolving modern art styles and avant-garde ideas of that era, inspiration that he brought back to Canada. He developed a love of sketching land and cityscapes and made many of the Berlin and Toronto areas. As he worked and circulated among the members of letters clubs and societies Harris expanded his belief that artists should regularly work together and be exposed to eachothers' ideas, and so in 1913 the 28-year-old used part of his inheritance to co-finance the Studio Building in Toronto's Rosedale neighbourhood for artists to join up and work inexpensively together. The core group of the artists that came together during the WW1 era became the members of the now famous Group of Seven, officially founded in May of 1920. They were very concerned about what constituted Canadian-ness and national identity in the art of Canada – they wanted the work to carry a distinctly Canadian signature. To oversimplify it, the group turned largely to the natural, untouched Canadian wilderness as a subject, traveling throughout the 1920s to places including the Great Lakes, the Rocky Mountains, and as far north as Greenland. By the mid-1930s the Group of Seven had disbanded, and Harris moved to other projects, receiving a number of accolades over the years including a Governor General's Award and the Order of Canada.

This mid-sized oil on canvas piece was made at the point where Harris was just reaching early maturity in his work. Pieces like this would have helped him hone his brushwork skills and decide on the palettes he wanted to use. The technique of this piece is very similar to the Impressionism paintings that originated in the 1880s. And of late I've begun to find impressionistic paintings much more enticing than I used to. As I become more appreciative of aesthetic ideas and abstract forms, I am shaking off my initial dislike of many impressionist pieces. Once upon a time I would have grumbled that the technique was sloppy and the imagery uninteresting, but I'm mellowing in my old age. It is now the very normal and mundane quality of images like this that draws me in. Gazing at this painting reminds me of those day-long walks across Toronto, drifting in and out of its quarters, enjoying the stillness afforded by heavy snow, and on the lookout for new angles to enjoy. I want it to feel peaceful, and for a moment it does.

Here we have no obvious subject matter, no landmark features, and although it has the intimacy of a genre painting it does not seem to have the moral bent of a traditional genre painting. It could be a tiny block from almost any city in the world that sees snow and sports a few Italian renaissance windows. We see a horse-drawn buggy and figures in colorful, billowy coats, walking down to what might be a main street. The road is filled with the tracks of wheeled wagons, perhaps indicating that the morning rush has already passed. The lack of urgency conveys a moment of stillness and serenity. There does not seem to be any politics behind it, nothing recognizably significant about the location, and nothing asking us to measure up. It's just an image that lets you put yourself into the scene for a moment and reminisce about the shared experience of moving through a city on a cold day, slipping about and soaking your boots nowhere in particular. It would be a unique treat to be able to walk around a 1920 Toronto for an hour. Maybe try to find this spot and watch Harris sketch it. I'm not exactly sure where this picture was sketched but judging by the angle of the shadow, I would imagine it is looking east from somewhere in the old downtown, probably between Strachan and Parliament. If you'd like to see it for yourself, Harris gifted this painting to the National Gallery (Ottawa) in 1960, where it resides to this day.

I still need to get out for a walk this year in a blizzard, even if it isn't in a big city anymore. As much as I love walking for three hours within the boundaries of a city, I don't miss spending the same amount of time stuck in traffic, pedestrian or otherwise. Even though none of us love needing the extra time and effort needed to move about during the winter, I hope we each have at least one thing we find enjoyable about the cold and snow. Winter is a playground I would not soon give away.

Lawren S. Harris.

Sources:

- National Gallery – Lawren S. Harris, https://www.gallery.ca/collection/artist/lawren-s-harris
- Government of Canada Website, https://www.gg.ca/en/node/145

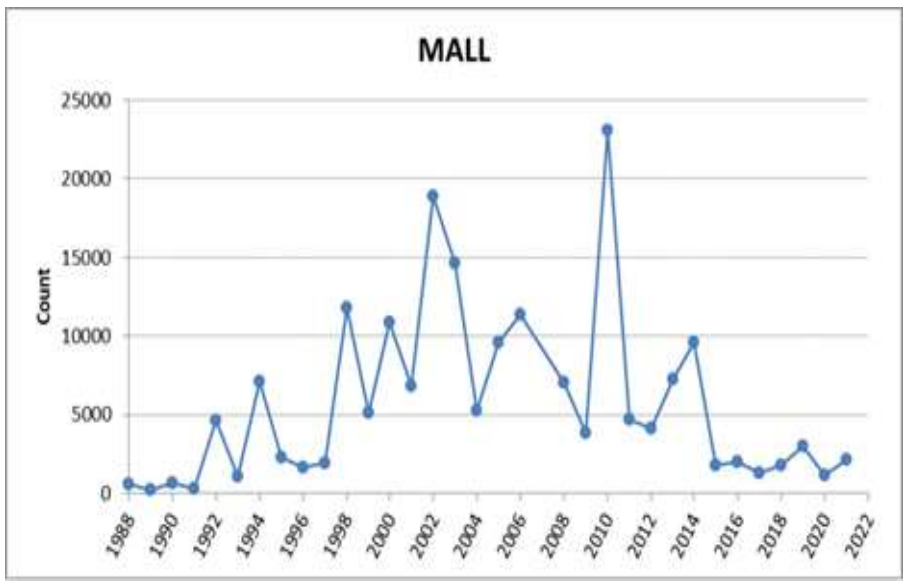
JANET'S JOTTINGS

Amherst Island Waterfowl

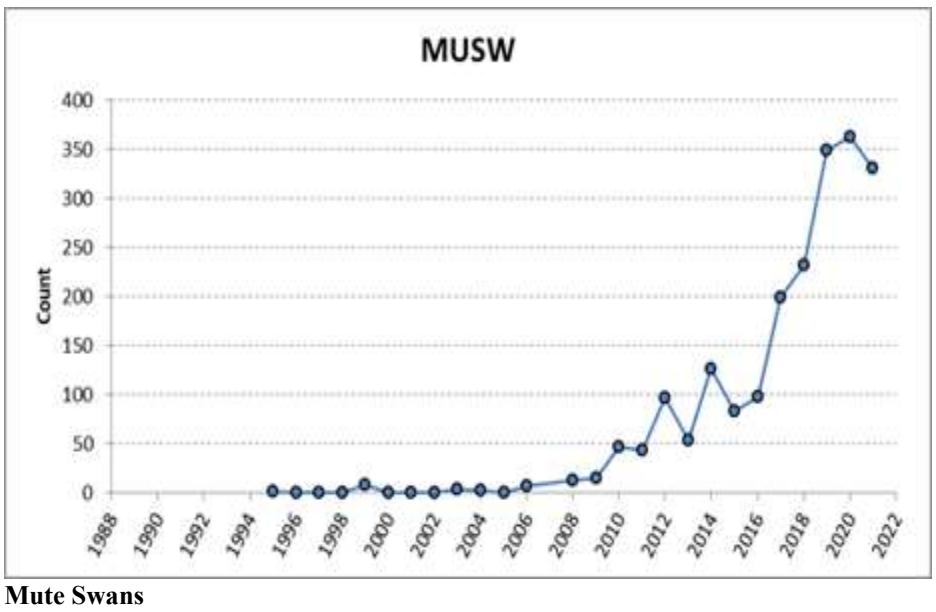
JANET SCOTT

Something is happening in our swamps and marshes. It is a beautiful change but unfortunately a tragic change for some of our best-known ducks and our familiar fall and winter swans.

For many years Susan Filson has carefully tracked and recorded the arrival of the tundra swans at Sandy Bay. Exciting years had as many as one hundred and fifty tundra swans arriving overnight to whistle and bubble away in that bay on the eastern end of Amherst Island. We noticed this mid-winter waterfowl count that next to no tundra swans were seen on January 9, 2022. Katherine Webb and Sharen & David comparing notes noticed the correlation of falling numbers of tundra swans and mallards with the rapid rise of the numbers of mute swans. Could this be a causal thing? Is it a climatic change thing? Is it an increase of human activity on our waterfronts? It will take several more years of study and hours of volunteers trudging, reviewing, and recording before it can be proven, but it is definitely exhibiting a change.



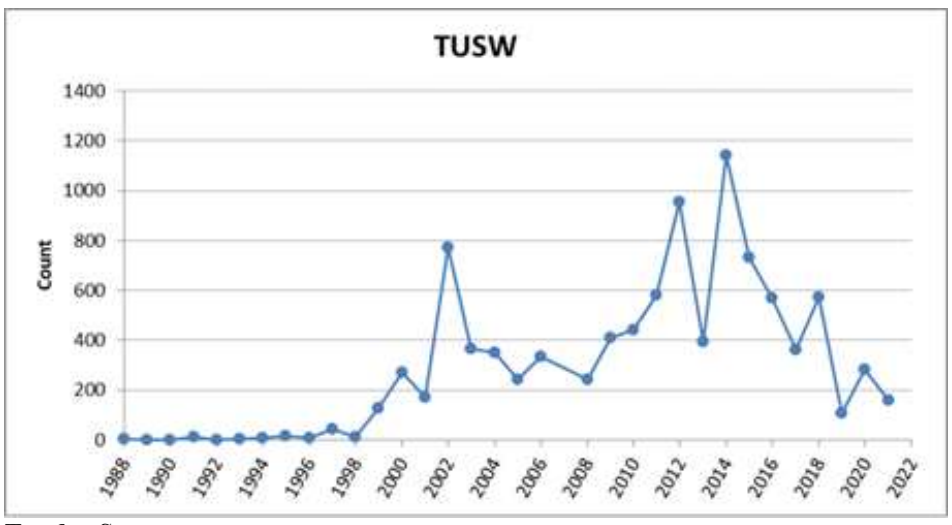
Mallards



Mute Swans

Mute swans were brought from Europe to North America to grace our parks and city waterfronts. At first, they had clipped wings to keep them at home, but they had young that could fly and escape their fenced moats and ponds. Nesting mute swans were at first an anomaly and I remember how excited I was when Riely Lambert first reported a nesting swan to me. How lovely that would be to have resident mute swans here on Amherst Island with their artistically raised wings and gracefully arched necks. They do not migrate since they have been introduced to North America in the same way as European starlings and house sparrows have been established on this continent. As our winters softened in the last few years the swans survived and multiplied on Lake Ontario. The tundra swans date back to the voyages of Samuel de Champlain who wrote of them near Loughborough Lake on October 28, 1615. They nest in the far north and usually migrate through our area in spring and fall. The latest seen on Amherst was July 3, 1995, when three were recorded by Alex Scott, senior. The earliest was recorded by Janet Scott on October 1, 1990 at the Millhaven dock. Since 2000 the tundra swans have been arriving usually by mid - November and leaving by December 27. This data comes from records kept by the Kingston Field Naturalists for over forty years and can be found in Birds of the Kingston Region by Ron Weir. From just a few birds in 1988 you can see on the chart that they peaked around 2015 at almost 1200 birds and then numbers dropped off again to below 200 on the Waterfowl Count of 2022. I was so blessed to be invited to the home of David Pickering and Sharen English to hear the Tundra Swans making their clear, melodic hooting and their gentle, musical murmuring as about a hundred hung out by their house one December.

Is the drop in numbers caused by the competition for feeding areas now that the larger, more aggressive mute swan has moved in and doesn't migrate, or is it cyclic and a normal rise and fall of numbers that would have happened anyway? I've been seeing them come and go on our beautiful island for thirty years. The waterfowl count also showed a similar drop in our familiar mallard duck. These three species eat the same diet, grazing on grasses and grains. Katherine Webb and our waterfowl counters wonder, is it a coincidence that mute swans rise as mallards and tundra swans fall? Sorry guys, I am 80 this year I can't watch another thirty years, so I pass the baton. You will have to watch over the birds of Amherst Island for me from now on.



Tundra Swans

Mute Swan.

Amherst Island Community Medical Clinic

AMHERST ISLAND COMMUNITY MEDICAL + CLINIC

WENDY SHELLEY

Happy Birthday AICMC!

It is hard to believe, but this month is the Amherst Island Community Medical Clinic's First Birthday as an organization. And, though we are still in our infancy, we are proud of what we have accomplished over the past year.

February 2021, we obtained a business number, and over the next couple of months, our organization was incorporated and received not-for-profit, and charitable status. Since then, we have been investigating and applying for appropriate Grants and looking for a temporary, accessible location for the Clinic. We have also toured another rural Medical Clinic, met with the Victorian Order of Nurses concerning local services and programs that we could potentially tap into and discussed and looked at different organizational models for running a Medical/Health and Wellness Clinic.

May 2021, we surveyed islanders about their interest in having a Clinic on the island. Over the summer, we collated the information from the surveys, and posted the results of the Survey in the September Beacon.

November 2021, we gave flu shots to 118 islanders over two days at our second ever Flu Vaccine Clinic at the Lodge. That same month, we hosted the Clinic's first Informative Talk on Living with Arthritis, attended by twenty people - great information, which created good discussion, encouraging us to plan more events like this in the future.

December 2021, we capped the year off with a very successful Covid Vaccine Clinic, held at St Paul's, in which 90 islanders were given their Covid vaccines.

All this in a world restricted by Covid! We feel we are justifiably proud of ourselves in what we have achieved in one year, yet we know we would not have been able to accomplish all these things if it had not been for you, the AI community.

Top of our Goals for 2022 is finding a temporary location for the Clinic's 'home base,' so we can continue to present Programs and Public Information Events on a variety of Health and Wellness strategies, including exercise and foot care programs. We will continue investigating and making Grant Applications, and hope to hold at least one Fundraising event this year. As well, we will continue to work on improving our Communications Strategy: updating our website, developing a presence on Facebook, advertising events in a timely manner, using the Beacon and CJAI to our best advantage and sharing information via mailings or a bimonthly Community Newsletter and developing an email 'mailing' list.

To accomplish these goals, we will need more Volunteers and Members. To this end, we are planning a Volunteer and Membership Drive in the spring. We will advertise our Volunteer Needs for the coming year and hold an information session and discussion at our Annual General Meeting in the early spring. More information to follow.

Do you have skills you think we might need? What are your areas of expertise? Do you like being involved and want to do something to benefit our Island Community? Ask yourself: "How can I help?"

Keep your eyes open for further information on our website: https://amherst-island-community-medical-clinic.constantcontactsites.com/

Should you want to contact us, our email address is: aicmc2021@gmail.com

Look for more information in next month's Beacon...

Your AICMC Team:
Ida Gavlas
Judy Greer
Wendy Shelley
Cathy Showalter

A colourful scene from Costa Rica. Photographed by Don Woodiwiss Photography, https://woodiwissphotography.com/.

AIWI UPDATE

Amherst Island Women's Institute

WENDY SHELLEY

The AIWI continues to meet monthly on Zoom during COVID. Our plan is to hold in-person meetings as soon as we can get together safely, following all COVID protocols. Guests are always welcome.

This year will mark the 125th anniversary of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario (FWIO). The FWIO is a not-for-profit charitable organization with affiliations around the world, working with and for women in Ontario. The Amherst Island Women's Institute, a branch of the FWIO will be celebrating 122 years!

We are always looking for suggestions on ways to support our community. Please let us know your ideas of how we can help out on the island. Recently, we donated $1500.00 for a new floor for *The Back Kitchen*.

Our COVID walking group continues to walk Monday and Friday mornings. This started in the summer of 2020 as a way to safely get together outside and get some much needed exercise. Here we are 2 years later, still going strong!

The AIWI meets the third Wednesday of each month. We invite anyone interested in learning more about the WI or becoming a member, to join us as a guest. Please contact Sharen English for more information, at (613)-384-6535.

Don't forget to check us out on Facebook for postings and updates.

Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario

fwio.on.ca

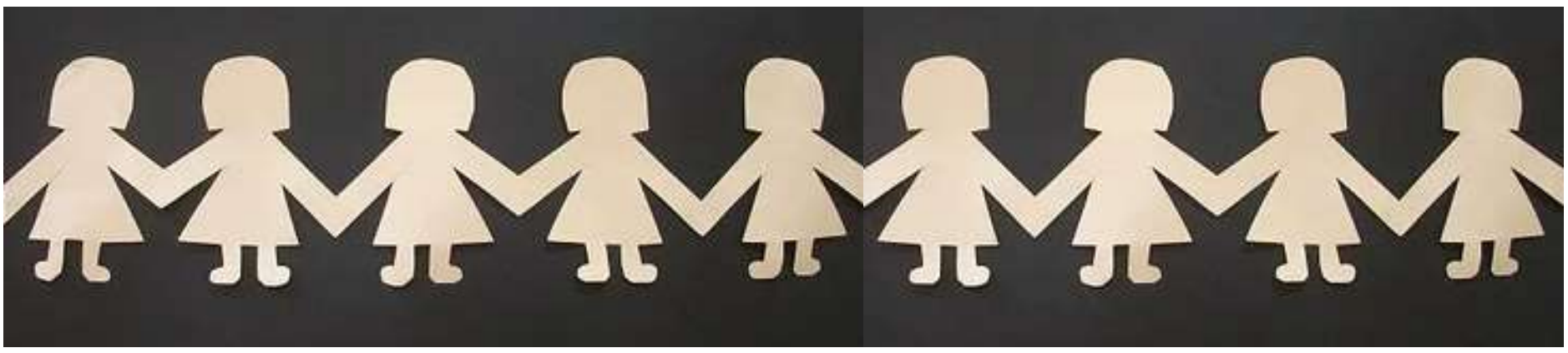
Women's Organization Celebrates 125 Years of Supporting and Inspiring Women

One of the longest standing sisterhoods in the world, founded in Ontario and now worldwide, is celebrating a major milestone. From the first meeting in Stoney Creek, Ontario on February 19, 1897 to today's global network of branches, Women's Institute (WI) has continued to provide a social connection, education source, and community service opportunity for women. Since founding, the mission and vision of the organization rapidly spread, as women everywhere embraced the movement for a better future for their family, their communities, and themselves. Now, in the era of social media and particularly during the pandemic, women are feeling isolated in a different way. WI answers this need.

Over the years, the WI has been at the forefront of multiple causes. The original goal of WI was to teach women how to keep their families healthy and well fed. Naturally, these educational gatherings also offered a much-needed social connection. By hosting community dances and card parties, they began to raise money and support community work, then later the war effort. Most recently, WI has embarked on education campaigns around such topics as gender, Indigeneity, and Black history, and have undertaken campaigns to eradicate Lyme Disease and advocate for victims of human trafficking. WIs are members of the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW), which holds consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

Local branches meet monthly, often with a guest speaker or group activity. Meetings include social time and a short business session to plan ongoing community involvement, support, and advocacy. Women are looking for a break! The regular meeting is time they can take for themselves to connect with friends and get to know new people. Women of every age and stage gather to support each other and their communities.

New branches are being formed by women who are interested in supporting and inspiring other women in their communities. Online options also are happening. If you'd like to start or find a branch near you, please go to fwio.on.ca or contact Sharen English of our local AIWI Branch at 613-384-6535.



COMMUNITY HISTORY

Building the Playground as a Community

SALLY BOWEN

Our Amherst Island community can be outstanding. The community raised money and built the consolidated community school in 1947, led by a committee chaired by Keith Miller's dad. They gifted it to the school board.

Then 30 years later, they built the community hall/gymnasium, again funding it, doing the building, and making it a gift. In the early '70's, the parent group ISLE (Island School Liaison Enthusiasts), planned, raised money, and built a natural playground, using mainly tires, logs, stumps etc. In the 80's that was starting to disintegrate – Jake (Jacob Murray) had a very large sliver from the playground removed in hospital. Then, in the late 80's, the L& A School Board decided to move our grade 6, 7, and 8 to the mainland.

The community emphatically opposed the plan to move these grades to schools on the mainland. We sat in on Board meetings on the mainland for several months, sometimes sending a busload. We formed a committee, chaired by Bruce Caughey, to articulate and solidify our opposition.

Meanwhile, the need for a better playground was increasing. ISLE decided it would be a positive way to battle the decision to remove our kids – to improve our school resources even more; to spend more money and effort. Dick Dodds recommended the best playgrounds in two counties, and Caroline Yull, Dianne Marshal and I surveyed them all, noting strengths and weaknesses. No models were appropriate for our wide age range. Nor could any be found in various playground building companies. We decided to design our own, to suit the capacities and interests of kids from JK to grade 8.

We surveyed the kids about what components should be included. We needed to keep it affordable and to fit our wide age and athletic range. We developed a budget then submitted our prioritized list to 4 playground manufacturers. The best response by far was Henderson Playground Equipment. The L&A Board of Education agreed to contribute site preparation costs (later estimated at $5000).

Marjory and Caroline cut twine and unwrapped the pieces, sent so carefully by Henderson Playground Equipment.

Somebody had to pick up the garbage! Helen, Shannon, Douglas, and Jacob obliged.

As the battle for the senior classes escalated, the fundraising plans to build the playground were confirmed. I chaired ISLE at the time. The Beacon, published by *Topsy Farms* for over 35 years, was the most effective medium of communication, building interest and involvement, keeping everyone up to date with Board meetings, buses travelling, committee meetings, planned fundraisers. Our population of about 450 people responded magnificently to the fundraising plans.

The biggest fundraising event was a summer auction. The community hall/gymnasium was absolutely packed. We all donated items (the largest was a camper van from Steve Hart) and we all purchased from each other. The auctioneer, Mr. Snider, donated his time. Other fundraisings activities included: a coin jar at the store, a letter-writing campaign to non-resident summer property owners, a ham dinner organized by the Women's Institute, the kids ran a food stand during the auction and held a bottle drive, a "Back to School Bawl" (the fall dinner/dance run by the Rec Committee) was a great hit, a raffle of a painting donated by Shirley Miller, and a beautifully crafted wooden rocking horse and a cradle donated by Earl Smith raised more money. The Recreation Committee guaranteed up to $1000 to cover any shortfall. We submitted a Recreation Facilities grant request to the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation and received approval in January 1990.

A model of the playground arrived from Henderson, spurring on the efforts. A weekend was set. We decided to hire a supervisor from Henderson, and to provide all the labour ourselves. The turnout was almost overwhelming, but the supervisor managed to put everyone to work.

The second day was still cold and occasionally wet. Jim and Ian mixed concrete for the 52 holes required.

Peter and John Vrooman were young labourers too.

THE BEACON

COMMUNITY HISTORY

Building the Playground as a Community

When Our Community Pulled Together

SALLY BOWEN

The community and kids worked hard on a wet, rainy weekend in May. As you can see in the photos, kids and a couple of moms stripped the wrapping that protected each separate piece, with little kids gathering the garbage. A concrete mixer from Topsy was on the job, and various folks shovelled, dug holes for footers, and mixed cement for each upright. For two wet, cold days, this playground came together.

Noel McCormick managed to get the pea gravel in place for the start of the school week, May 7, 1990. All costs were covered, well under $20,000. We have learned recently that over $20,000 was spend by the Board of Education just seeking a playground design, elsewhere.

And the Board of Ed decision? All Board members came to a meeting on the island for further argument and discussion. A huge storm came up (some say, thanks to the Presbyterian women meeting that night for praying it up) and all members were stranded on the island. They were of course, fed and accommodated, but they had a vivid illustration of why we didn't want little kids to commute. The Board members then came to understand how real the parents' concerns were, because a single storm could leave their children stranded on the mainland for a night if those grades were moved.

We still have Junior Kindergarten to grade 8 being taught on the island, with a functional playground.

Our small community, and even smaller school, can accomplish great things.

That Monday, Noel McCormick hurried in to spread the pea gravel just in time.

Sally Bowen, testing the slide and celebrating.

Dave and Susan shovelled concrete into one of the holes. Lynann returned in the background with more.

The solid wood boards for the platforms were lugged by kids and banged into the ground by bigger kids. Dave, Rosemary, Caroline and Marjory helped push them into the ground. Jacob and Mark carried the wood over.

The primary class immediately approved of the playground.

COMMUNITY HISTORY

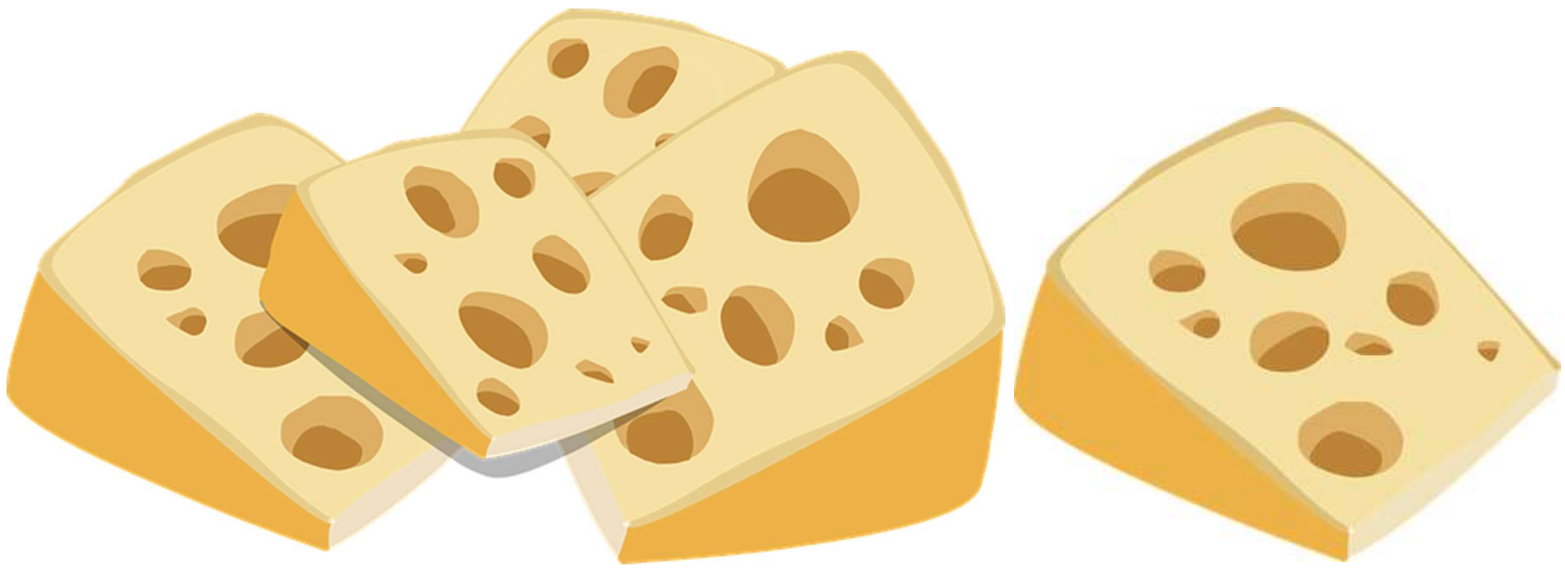
ISLE Cheese Order

ISLE CHEESE ORDER

Email your order to amherstislandisle@gmail.com

PRODUCT	PRICE ($ per pound approx.)
Extra Mild (tastes like curd in cheese form!)	$8.94/lb
Mild Cheddar	$8.94/lb
Medium Cheddar white / colour (please specify)	$10.00/lb
Old Cheddar white / colour (please specify)	$10.00/lb
Extra Old Cheddar white/ colour (please specify)	$11.42/lb
Colby	$8.94/lb
Mozzarella	$8.94/lb
Mozzarella- Grated	$9.36/lb
Grated Casserole (Cheddar and mozzarella)	$8.94/lb
Onion and Garlic	$10.00/lb
Hot Pepper	$10.00/lb
Marble	$10.00/lb
Swiss	$10.99/lb
Havarti	$13.06/lb

- The funds raised from the ISLE cheese order goes toward the Amherst Island Public School (busses for field trips, weekly lunches, and contributions to bigger ticket items such as playground upgrades).
- The cheese order happens every month, with pickup happening at the school.
- Contact amherstislandisle@gmail.com for more information, or to place an order!



THE BEACON

ISLAND VIEWS

Wildlife Photography

DON WOODIWISS

Common goldeneye ducks, Amherst Island, Ontario. Photographed by Don Woodiwiss Photography, https://woodiwissphotography.com/.

A blue crowned motmot, Costa Rica. Photographed by Don Woodiwiss Photography, https://woodiwissphotography.com/.

CLASSIFIEDS

Support Local Businesses

Pharmasave Bath Family Pharmacy
We provide free drop-off of prescriptions to the Amherst Island ferry.
We have a virtual walk-in clinic inside the pharmacy.
We are also providing the flu shot this season, no appointments necessary.

PHARMASAVE®

Bath Family Pharmacy
in your neighbourhood

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Bath
Email: bathfamilypharmacy@gmail.com
www.pharmasave.com

Tel: 613-352-7700
Fax: 613-352-1177

Store Hours:
Monday – Friday: 9am – 6pm
Saturday: 10am – 3pm
Sunday: Closed

Canada's community pharmacy

Store Services

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...and more! *see store for details

Seniors Save 20% OFF Regular Priced Items In-Store*
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*To be eligible for the discount, a customer must be at least 60 years of age. Valid at participating Pharmasave Ontario locations only. Does not include prescriptions, products with codeine, insulin, Ideal Protein products, lottery tickets, gift and phone cards. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Other restrictions may apply. See store for details.

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Collect points. Redeem and SAVE. Join today!

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*Subject to applicable taxes after discount. One coupon per customer. Not valid in conjunction with any other offer. Excludes codeine products, sale items, gift and phone cards. Valid only at Bath Family Pharmacy . Valid until December 31st, 2021.

CLASSIFIEDS

Support Local Businesses

The Lodge Coffee House

Visit The Lodge at 376 Main Street, Bath. Serving coffee, teas, artisan sandwiches, from-scratch baked goods, and more!

Currently open Tuesdays-Fridays 9am-2pm and Saturdays 11am-2pm. Check us out at www.lodgecoffeehouse.com

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Topsy Farms

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In 1972 a boatload of free-thinking, peace-loving hippies showed up at the West end of Amherst Island. Since then, Topsy Farms has prioritized stewardship of the land and harmony with nature above profit.

Topsy raises happy sheep; winter makes better wool. Topsy offers 100% Canadian sheep wool blankets and natural products to the eco-ethical kindred spirits out there. Our 'Connect to the Land' programs give back to the community by offering green spaces of calm and quiet to visitors.

Come see for yourself. Get dirty, leave happy, stay cozy. Follow the adventure @topsyfarms, and www.topsyfarms.com

Your Ad Here!

If you are interested in advertising and showing support in *The Beacon*, e-mail editor@thebeaconpaper.com for more information.

Services

Thank-you!
Many thanks to Chad Osmond, who re-lamped the star on Dayle's silo, where the various antennas are now. We all appreciate having that star shining once again.

Medical Supplies
The Amherst Island Women's Institute has a medical equipment lending cupboard. We have crutches, rollators, walkers, raised toilet seats, and wheelchairs. We also have an upholstered electric lifting chair. We ask that you kindly return the equipment when you are done with it. If you would like to donate to the W.I. that is appreciated.

Contact Sharen English or David Pickering at (613)-384-6535.

Thank-you!
Thank you to David Pickering, who diligently posts each issue of *The Beacon* as a downloadable PDF online at: http://amherstisland.on.ca/Beacon/ .

The Beacon

Available to Read at:

- Issue 496 of *The Beacon* will be available in print, for $5 at McGinn's General Store, Stella, ON.
- This edition of *The Beacon,* as well as archived editions will be available as a downloadable PDF files midway through the month on http://amherstisland.on.ca/Beacon/ .

Submissions:

The Beacon eagerly welcomes community participation! If you have **photographs, stories, events, articles, comics, drawings**, or anything else you would like to share in the newspaper, please send files to editor@thebeaconpaper.com
The submission deadline is the 25th of the month.

If you are interested in advertisement space, contact editor@thebeaconpaper.com for more information.

Thank you!

An afternoon photograph of the Amherst Island Beacon, the namesake of *The Beacon* newspaper. Photograph captured by Kayleigh Graham.