



Discovering VERSeFest, pg. 4



Baby therapy for seniors, pg. 8

CENTRETOWNBUZZ

The birds are back in town

But buildings present dangerous hazards



JUDITH GUSTAFSSON / THE BUZZ

Hopefully spring has arrived after a brutal winter: the birds are actually singing again! Photographer Judith Gustafsson was on Somerset Street, where she found about six American goldfinches feeding on some spring buds in a tall tree.

GAIL MCGUIRE

Among the heralds of spring is the return of migratory birds to the Ottawa area. Included in our collective joyful anticipation is the sighting of the first beloved robin with its orange-red breast, or the honking of Canada geese drawing our eyes skyward to observe the familiar V-shaped flight pattern of the flock.

Examining our city from a bird's point of view has led us to consider not only the need for habitat preservation, but also the hazards which birds encounter in our city.

To that end, volunteer groups such as Safe Wings Ottawa have highlighted the injuries and deaths of birds when birds mistake transparent glass for a clear flight path, or are confused by glass which reflects sky and trees.

Safe Wings estimates that 250,000 birds die each year from window collisions.

Those species of birds which migrate for the winter and return in spring, or that migrate through Ottawa to breeding grounds further

north, are most at risk of being confused by glass.

Species such as northern cardinals and blue jays remain with us year round. They are somewhat adapted to their urban environment, but they are also sometimes found injured or dead. Young birds are especially vulnerable.

At City Hall on March 20, a European starling was rescued by a Safe Wings volunteer. This poignant incident occurred during a Safe Wings event held at City Hall, where an array of birds that had been victims of window collisions was displayed for public viewing.

While it is not known if the starling was injured as a result of colliding with a window, the bird was found on the ground at the base of a large plate of glass at the eastern side of the building, a location known to Safe Wings for bird collisions.

A Safe Wings volunteer transported the bird to the Wild Bird Care Centre, where it is being treated for a pelvic injury.

Safe Wings volunteers advocate for solutions which have proven effective in reducing the confusion ex-

perienced by birds. These solutions include a dotted grid pattern of a certain density, frosted glass where appropriate, and other measures both to retrofit existing buildings or to incorporate into new building designs.

Additionally, they collect statistics on locations of bird injuries or fatalities, and they continue to study these issues.

According to Ottawa Bird Count (ottawabirds.ca), Ottawa has a population of two million birds and 182 distinct species within its urban area.

Birds are significant to the quality of life we experience. They are also significant to the pollination of flowers and food crops. They are also seed distributors and consumers of insect pests.



GAIL MCGUIRE / THE BUZZ

Former city councillor Diane Holmes volunteers with Safe Wings, including at the annual display at City Hall of birds killed by collisions with buildings.

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Discover hidden gems during Jane's Walk, May 4-5

by Laura Mueller
Jane's Walk Ottawa

Have you ever wondered where to find wild food growing in the city? Have you discovered Ottawa's rare urban sand dune or wondered about one of the Capital region's many monuments? Have you hoped to explore the revitalization of Sparks Street? Or is there something in your own backyard that you want to share with others?

If you like to get outside and you're enthusiastic about learning about your community, its history and its future, join Jane's Walk to explore Ottawa-Gatineau through free walking tours on May 4 and 5.

Last year, 3,000 people joined us for this "sidewalk ballet," a community-driven festival of more than 60 free walking tours celebrating the work of late urban thinker Jane Jacobs. Jane was a writer and activist who studied how cities work, how they grow and change. Her work helped define what makes cities livable, how to promote street-life vitality and how to design attractive, uplifting places where people

feel safe.

Jane's Walk is a pedestrian-focused event that improves urban literacy by offering insights into planning, design, local history, and civic engagement through the simple acts of walking, observing, and discussing.

This year, Jane's Walk Ottawa-Gatineau expects to offer more than 60 free walks to choose from as the local event celebrates its 11th edition.

Jane Jacobs considered citizens to be the experts on their own communities and our walks are all led by volunteer leaders who have something to share: you could be one of them! Visit our website, janeswalkottawa.ca, to find out how we can help turn your advocacy efforts into action as part of Jane's Walk.

A typical Jane's Walk tour is given once during the weekend, takes about an hour, and covers around one to two kilometres. Jane's Walk also relies on help from volunteer marshals who attend the walks, carry a flag, and assist the walk leader.

If you're planning to attend walks this year, consider carrying the flag and helping as a marshal. There is more info on the marshal's



JANE'S WALK OTTAWA

Jane's Walk participants in Confederation Park. Walks offer a chance to explore the city's history, heritage, social concerns, politics, natural environment, and much more.

role and how to sign up at janeswalkottawa.ca.

As a highlight of the May 4-5 weekend, we are planning a celebration marking what would have been Jane's 103rd birthday: stay tuned for details.

To get updates on the festival, be sure to watch

our website, janeswalkottawa.ca, and follow us on Facebook, Twitter (@JanesWalkOtt) and Instagram (@JanesWalkOttawa).

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The Sparks Street Mall's meandering pathway... will it be a bumpy trail?



Sparks Street was thronged in the 1970s. Will the Mall ever regain the popularity of its heyday? Most of its stores and services are gone, and the new Sparks Street Public Realm Plan re-imagines it as an urban oasis of greenery and carefully curated attractions.

by Robert Smythe

The dominant design theme for the new plan to rejuvenate the Sparks Street Mall is called a “meandering pathway.” After years of neglect, when many were suggesting that we should give up on the whole venture, it’s reassuring to see a recommitment to Ottawa’s boldest experiment in urban design.

Last month, the City of Ottawa released its Sparks Street Public Realm Plan. It is a compendium, a strategic wish list of component parts. They set the directions for a new “downtown oasis... to create comfortable public spaces that encourage people to relax and linger.” Two new light rail stations on Sparks Street will bring the people. Will the plan be sufficient for lingering?

The Sparks Street study is one of those aspirational everything-but-the-kitchen-sink planning documents — long on optimism with terms like “authentic” and “alluring,” and short on the hard realities of implementa-

tion. While it tries to include every conceivable amenity and attraction, as a finished product of urban landscape architecture it is still curiously flat and underwhelming. As a foundation for further tweaking and refinements it is a promising start.

This plan likens the meandering alignment to a “progressive discovery of the public realm through a series of outdoor rooms.” Putting these pretensions aside, here are some of the highlights:

Car and truck menace: Nothing had degraded Canada’s first pedestrian mall more than the constant car or truck parking and illegal traffic that had invaded Sparks Street. Last year the Mall Authority was shamed into installing bollards to control this. A more gimmicky solution for controlling the unwanted traffic has been devised — bollards mounted on a swinging platform which would be rotated to an open position for authorized delivery vehicles allowed before 10:00 a.m.

The 50 trees promise: The Sparks Street plan pledges to stick them in the

ground to the greatest extent possible. It’s a laudable goal, but no street allowance is more densely honeycombed with underground services, conduits, and wiring, and this is capped over by a thick layer of concrete that was meant to protect the major water main that was laid when the mall was last reconstructed in 1987-88. Previous versions of the mall have resorted to raised beds and tubs.

Waterworld: the redesign includes multiple fountains. In the past, Sparks Street’s water features have turned into leaky temperamental follies that ran dry shortly after installation. Unless there is a commitment to constant maintenance and repair, caution is advised.

Wired for sound: Free WiFi, charging stations, integral loudspeakers for performances (a.k.a. the “carefully curated calendar of special events”), tour apps, and digital kiosks are some of the electronic offerings on this menu of desirable options. As with water fountains, these marvels are finicky, date quickly and require continuous upgrading.

Winter warming: The plan proposes pockets of weather protection. Warming stations and heated sidewalks could make the mall more comfortable in the winter months, when it is least hospitable.

Moving the furniture: Some fixed seating will be on the low planter walls, but most of it is on moveable chairs that can be arranged at will. None of the renderings depict the fenced-off beer-drinking pens necessitated by the liquor laws which are currently the mall’s primary use. How this conflict can be resolved is unclear.

Respecting history: Sparks Street is officially designated as a heritage conservation district and contains the city’s largest concentration of important historic buildings. The draft plan claims to “acknowledge and protect heritage aspects along Sparks Street and the surrounding backdrop of



The Metcalfe-to-Elgin block in cold weather. Sparks Street’s winter woes would be alleviated by warming stations and heated sidewalks.



The Metcalfe-to-O’Connor section, at night. Loose tables and chairs, outdoor performances and public art on display.



The O’Connor-to-Bank block. Shelter from the rain, and dancing water. Please walk your bike. Actually, pedestrian-paced cycling will continue to be permitted, which will require bylaw amendments.

buildings and landscape.” The redeveloped mall’s concept for a meandering pathway could be a jarring intrusion, abandoning any sympathy for its built heritage environment and substituting a design vocabulary of jagged edges or irregular bulbous curves. If it is to be defiantly modern (as was the

1967 design) it needs to be of a higher order.

A long wait: After two years of consultation, the city has scheduled a further three years until construction can actually begin, no sooner than 2022. This is for the development of a final design, financing and cost-sharing between the trilateral

parties. Given a notoriously stingy City Council, an NCC that can’t seem to get anything done, a federal Public Works Department that has been less than dependable in its support for the mall, and the competing short-term interests of business owners, what could possibly go wrong?

View the Sparks Street Mall design at:
ottawa.ca/en/city-hall/public-engagement/projects/sparks-street-public-realm-plan
 Send your comments by e-mail before May 1, 2019 to mysparksstreet@ottawa.ca

Your name here:
 be a volunteer writer or
 photographer!

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Planet of the Scapes

Hibernating

by Pearl Pirie

It is a good time of year to hole up while we can under excuse of late winter storms or poor weather with some good friends, quiet music and warm conversation. Adding a little sweetness and ease to the evenings are these two recipes. Enjoy.

Hors d'oeuvres: Peter Gillies' date night

Having had these at a Raging Grannies fundraiser, I urge everyone to try this. The crisp offsets the soft and the salty, the sweet, while the aged balances with the fresh leaf. It is a flavourful bite.

Split a date and fill with:
a smear of soft goat cheese
a leaf of fresh mint
a half raw walnut.



Dessert: four-minute cake (1 serving)

Forget the dense, gooey lava cakes for the time being. This is truly cakey and light. Butter a ramekin (or two if you want to double or have a small serving).

Mix in the ramekin:
1/3 cup unbleached white flour
1 1/2 tsp white sugar
1 1/2 tsp cocoa powder
pinch of salt
pinch of baking soda
1/8 tsp baking powder

Add:
1/2 a beaten egg
4-5 tbsp milk (almond milk or whipping cream)

It should be as thick as cupcake batter. If not, add a little water or more milk.

Microwave for two minutes. Let sit for a minute and place on a plate.

If you want to do a quick sauce over it, microwave equal amounts of a good chocolate bar and milk or cream for half a minute and stir until melted.



VERSeFest: the sound of beauty, memory, pain and joy



STEPHEN THIRLWALL / THE BUZZ

The hall at Knox Church clearing out after a presentation at VERSeFest, Ottawa's annual poetry festival.

by Stephen Thirlwall

Ottawa hosts a wide stream of arts and cultural festivals every year. VERSeFest has been part of the scene since 2011. But who knew?

Ottawa is like this — you often hear about events only after they happen. And when you do hear, it may take a few years before you pay attention and realize their significance. This happened

to me with VERSeFest, Ottawa's exceptional poetry festival. If it had not been for a large ad in the March issue of *The BUZZ*, my opportunity to attend would have been delayed for at least another year.

VERSeFest opened at City Hall on March 23. It continued March 26 to 31 at Knox Presbyterian Church on Elgin Street at Lisgar.

The first day's events, with poetry in both English

and French, were all free. During the week, the prices for single sessions or passes were very reasonable, making the programs very accessible to the public. Each session ran for about one and a half hours, during which a series of authors gave a few remarks and then presented poetry readings.

The poets came from various countries and diverse backgrounds, leading to a wide range of poems.

VERSeFest is all about different forms of poetic expression, from the pastoral and romantic, to slam and protest, to flights of imagination and moments of calm reflection.

As well as the audio aspect of the program, there was a visual arts display entitled "Concrete is porous." In it, drawings, prints, photographs and multimedia were used to play with words, letters, and images to create visual poems.

In the bookstore at the back, you could purchase books and be able to read the poems over and over in your own voice.

Albert Dumont, a well-known indigenous poet, was the very first presenter. He spoke about his life and the experience of many indigenous peoples — residential school, discrimination, low self esteem, poor jobs, and accidents. In spite of this, his spirit still soars with hope.

Dumont spoke of an accident, falling 45 feet from construction scaffolding on to hard ground. In the instant of falling, he decided that he would survive if he landed on his feet. This happened, although he broke his back and, seemingly permanently,

damaged one arm. He was so strong in his belief in recovery that he did recover in time. He read poems about this, as well as about periods of his early life spent in the forest.

The other poets in this session also took the audience on explorations of memory. Blaine Marchand spoke about memories of Afghanistan, in which poetry is highly respected, and Pakistan, which is chaotic and colourful. Sarah MacDonnell wrote poems about grandparents and outdated technologies. In contrast, Gilles Latour read eight poems in French to accompany eight preludes for piano by a French composer.

Personal memories are a common element for many of the poets throughout the festival. In the Thursday session of poets, all involved with *ARC Poetry Magazine*, local and national award winner David O'Meara recited several 14-line poems all entitled "Autobiography." O'Meara has done a lot of mentoring young poets, but he sees this as a dialogue between equals, not one of master and student.

Doyali Islam also encourages others to write

through visiting with groups of school children. Her poems spoke of astrology, memorable places (including Glebe restaurant Jericho), and personal family and love relationships (some of which were very strained). She explores ruptures and resilience in our lives.

Jenny Haysom's readings were about homes, moving to new homes and the many feelings that underlie our lives in these settings. Her first poem dealt with the previous owner of her house in Old Ottawa South, who came back every night for a month or so and parked his car a short distance away from the house. He could not easily leave the neighbourhood and house.

These are just a few glimpses of the poets and poetry presented.

The first session of the festival ended with an organizer's comment, "The train has left the station," indicating the festival is now underway and in motion. Hopefully this also means it will continue to grow as well.

PROVINCIAL AFFAIRS

An accessibility wake-up call

by Joel Harden, MPP

From time to time, a report comes along that rouses us from complacency and shows us the need for action. The release of Hon. David C. Onley's *Report on the Third Review of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) is one of those times.

As the official opposition critic for accessibility and people with disabilities, I have heard repeatedly from disability advocates that Ontario is woefully behind the goal, established by the AODA, of full accessibility by the year 2025. In fact, new barriers continue to be erected, some of which are funded by public investment.

The Onley Report confirms and expands upon these warnings from the disability community. In blunt and eloquent language, the report excoriates the slow pace of change and characterizes it as a civil rights issue. In his introduction, Onley movingly lays out how this slow pace of change negatively impacts people with disabilities:

"Every day, in every community in Ontario, people with disabilities encounter formidable barriers to participation in the vast opportunities this province affords its able-bodied resi-

dents...For most disabled persons, Ontario is not a place of opportunity but one of countless, dispiriting, soul-crushing barriers."

This is more than a report, it's a wake-up call. Nearly two million Ontarians with disabilities are fed up with waiting for their rights to be respected. It's time for urgent action to dismantle barriers – physical, attitudinal, architectural or technological – that prevent people with disabilities from living their fullest lives.

In his report, Onley lays out 15 recommendations for how Ontario can get back on track towards becoming a fully accessible province. Among the most notable is implementing a requirement that public money is never used to erect new barriers.

New buildings, including those constructed on the public dime (Ryerson's Student Learning Centre is one particularly egregious example), are being erected that are simply not accessible. Moreover, residential housing is generally exempt from accessibility standards.

Onley suggests developing new comprehensive standards for the built environment covering new and newly renovated buildings. He also identifies a need to provide mandatory training to design professionals, including architects, so that ac-

cessibility is also top of mind during the design phase of a project.

Finally, he advocates reform of the way public sector infrastructure projects are managed by Infrastructure Ontario to promote accessibility and prevent new barriers.

We're calling on the government to move swiftly in implementing all 15 of Onley's recommendations. I'm pleased that after an open letter from our office urging him to do so, the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility acted on one of them by unfreezing committees working to make health care and education more accessible. This is a first step, and one that must be followed by action on the other recommendations.

Our office hosted an accessibility town hall at the legislature to hear directly from those affected by Ontario failing to meet AODA targets on April 10. We were glad to have the chance to hear from experts and those who have lived experience encountering and working to dismantle barriers.

Do you have ideas to share with us about how to improve accessibility in our community? Send us your thoughts at jharden-qp@ndp.on.ca.

Catherine McKenney
City Councillor for Somerset Ward

Minto Park Sale

June 8, 2019

8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Stay tuned for more details!



Keep in touch!

For the latest news on Somerset Ward, sign up for my newsletter on my website and follow me on social media:

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Questions? We can help!

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OCDSB TRUSTEE REPORT

Update from the school board

by Erica Braunovan,
OCDSB Trustee, Somerset-Kitchissippi

On April 2, at the OCDSB Committee of the Whole meeting, we held a discussion regarding an Operational Review of Learning Support Services, the department in charge of special education.

This discussion was an opportunity for trustees to give input into the scope of the review. The Special Education Advisory Committee was able to offer feedback to the review at their recent meeting.

A request for proposals will go out shortly and we are hopeful to have an update on the timeline late in this school year, or early in the fall, once an external consultant has been selected.

We also held a discussion regarding employee well-being and absenteeism on April 2. We understand how important this issue is to the quality of education that we

are able to deliver.

Our human resource department is working with our federations to help better understand this complex issue and find ways to support our staff, so that they in turn can support students.

There will be budget meetings through April and May, and possibly into June. We expect to see the Grants For Student Needs from the Ministry of Education on April 14. On April 16, trustees will have an opportunity to hear initial thoughts from finance staff and give input regarding priorities prior to staff producing their recommended budget.

On May 13, staff will present their initial recommendation, and delegations will be welcome to give input at the Committee of the Whole budget meeting starting on May 29.

I am currently working with a couple of my trustee colleagues to host a joint community budget meeting at a school on May 14 (there will be more details to fol-

low). These joint community meetings are an excellent opportunity to have a dialogue with your local trustee and Mike Carson, chief financial officer for the board, in a less formal setting than is available at meetings in the board office.

At our April 16 meeting, we will also have before us a recommendation from the Advisory Committee on Equity that states "that the Board [should] explore funding to support mental health through an equity lens especially for students who self identify as First Nations, Inuit and Métis and for male students of African descent."

As always, I welcome community feedback on motions in front of trustees, and ask that you email your thoughts to me at Erica.braunovan@ocdsb.ca.

We are hopeful that a draft of our next strategic plan will be available for feedback in early to mid May. Please keep an eye on my public Facebook page for this.

Ottawa Story Tellers

SIGNATURE SERIES

CANTERBURY TALES'

LUSTY, LONG-SUFFERING, AND DEVOUT WOMEN

with storytellers Gail Anglin, Daniel Kletke, and Phil Nagy

April 25, 2019 at 7:30pm

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DALHOUSIE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Climate emergency, summer gardens at the DCA

by Anne Bell

In recent years, Ottawa has experienced extensive flooding and destructive tornadoes. At the April DCA meeting, it was agreed that the Dalhousie Community Association will support a motion for Ottawa City Council to declare a climate emergency.

The motion will be presented at the mid-April meeting of the Environment Committee and calls on the City of Ottawa to make climate action an official term-of-council priority.

Members of CAFES (Community Associations for Environmental Sustainability) have led an initiative to support this motion. If the motion is supported, Ottawa would be joining over 400 cities and local governments worldwide, including Kingston, Vancouver, Halifax, Montreal, and over 300 municipalities in Quebec.

Balsam and Rochester

Also at the April meeting were the current owners of the decrepit lot at Balsam and Rochester Streets. Along with representatives of a local architecture firm, they presented their vision for a low-rise building for the site.

While still at a prelimi-

nary design phase, the concept is for residential rentals aimed at senior citizens. When a development application has been submitted, the DCA will evaluate the proposal for its fit with the neighbourhood.

Gardening season returns

Spring is finally almost here, and the Dalhousie Community Association Community Garden (at the corner of Somerset and Preston) is back for another season.

The DCA Community Garden is a volunteer organization offering the opportunity for members of the ward to try their hand at gardening. If you are interested in learning more, or would like to be on the waiting list for a plot, please sign up for the garden newsletter by writing to dacommunitygarden@gmail.com, or calling 613-791-8753.

All are welcome at the garden's AGM at Plant Bath Recreation Centre on Sunday, April 28 at 3:00 p.m. This season the garden will also be a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) pick-up point for Ferme Agricola, a new organic vegetable and flower farm. (See page 8 of this issue for more information.)

The DCA is gearing up for gardening as well. Visit 236 Booth Street for a sale of perennial plants between 9:00 and 11:00 a.m., Saturday, May 25. Proceeds will support community gardens and planters along Booth Street and Somerset.

Sewer replacement on Cambridge

A public information session to discuss a combined sewer replacement project planned for Cambridge Street North will be held Tuesday, April 23, 2019, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Cambridge Street Community Public School (250 Cambridge Street N.), in the library.

The project involves the upsizing of the combined sewers and installing inlet control devices in catch basins to reduce the risk of basement flooding during large storm events.

Contact us

We'd love to hear from you! Visit us at www.ottawadalhousie.ca where you can sign up for email updates, and more. We're also on Twitter and Facebook.

CENTRETOWN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

"Game of Cones" on Elgin, built heritage at the CCA



GAIL MCGUIRE / THE BUZZ

Earth Day 2018 event in Dundonald Park.

by Jack Hanna

Right now, more than 30 shops, bars, restaurants and other businesses along Elgin Street are participating in "Game of Cones." Shop on Elgin and you can enter your name in a draw for a \$1,500 prize pack of coupons for Elgin businesses.

Shop Elgin Street – win \$1,500

As well, you are supporting local businesses that are hurting because Elgin is closed to cars for a year of construction.

Ask for a "shopping passport" in a participating business or print it online at: www.idigelgin.ca. Get a stamp each time you spend \$10. Collect 10 stamps by May 12 and you can enter the draw.

And yes, the "Game of Cones" campaign is referencing the famous television series, right down to its slogan: "Spring is coming."

Efforts to conserve Centretown's heritage

The city plans to do a lot this year to protect heritage buildings – in Centretown specifically.

The City wants to update heritage plans, which guide development in Centretown's two existing heritage districts, and possibly create new one.

Public consultations are Tuesday, April 23 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. and Saturday, April 27 from 10:00 a.m. to noon. Both will take place in Jean Pigott Place on the main floor of City Hall.

In the coming months, heritage plans will be updated for the Centretown Heritage District (which stretches from Elgin to Kent) and for the district comprising the buildings facing Minto Park.

At this point, the city is mulling over whether to create new heritage districts, possibly in the Golden Triangle (between Elgin and the canal) and in the neighbourhood surrounding Dundonald Park.

Residents can register for either session at www.ottawa.ca/centretownheritage.

Celebrate Earth Day in Dundonald Park

The CCA's Earth Day celebration is Saturday, April 27, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in Dundonald Park at Somerset and Lyon.

There will be activities for kids, live music, display booths (including one on the life story of bees), refreshments, and even the chance to get your hands in the dirt with a bit of gardening in the park's flower beds.

If it rains Saturday, the celebration will be the following day, Sunday, April 28.

Very visible new tower

A new 18-storey tower is proposed for one of Ottawa's most prominent and visible sites. It would be on the crest of the hill facing the Library and Archives Canada building and the Ottawa River, and between two of the city's most beautiful stone churches.

The proposed tower at 412 Sparks Street, housing a 152-unit seniors residence, would be between Christ Church Cathedral to the west and St. Peter's Lutheran Church to the east. The slightly curving front wall of the new building would be a prominent feature of the Ottawa skyline when viewed from Wellington Street or from across the river in Gatineau.

A public open house is scheduled for Wednesday, April 17 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. in the Great Hall of Christ Church Cathedral, 414 Sparks Street.

Jane's Walks – May 4 & 5

The list of walks was not firmed up at press time but the CCA's Tom Whillans is planning to lead one in Centretown on urban pollution and plastics in the city. For more info: www.janeswalkottawa.ca.

Gardeners: bring us your seedlings

Gardeners, do you have a few seedlings in your window box to donate to the annual CCA plant sale? Hosted by CCA's Trees and Greenspace Committee, the sale is planned for June 8 (in conjunction with the Minto Park Sale). As well, when you divide your perennials this spring, think about donating the spare plants. To make a donation or to volunteer to work the sale, contact Tom at treesandgreenspacecca@gmail.com.

Thirteen Strings Chamber Orchestra Orchestre de chambre

The Seven Last Words Les Sept Dernières Paroles

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Music Director
Directeur musical

JOSEPH HAYDN

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CELEBRATING 17 GREAT YEARS IN THE GLEBE

THE BUZZ CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Have you got natural history items to trade with the Museum of Nature? You can bring them to the museum on Saturdays and Sundays, from 10 a.m to 4:00 p.m. and Thursdays from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Visitors can bring in their personally collected, natural history items (shells, minerals, rocks and fossils) to trade for items from the museum's collection.

Join Bike Ottawa on April 20 from 1:00-4:00 p.m. at City Hall for Spring.Bike.Ottawa, our annual celebration of the end of winter cycling and the start of spring! The event will feature exhibitor tables, talks on the state of cycling in Ottawa, and time to celebrate the season with fellow cyclists. Speakers will include Safer Roads Ottawa, Envirocentre and the NCC.

Snacks and coffee will be provided. Admission is free, but please register: www.bikeottawa.ca.

On April 25, Ottawa Storytellers presents **"Canterbury Tales' Lusty, Long-Suffering and Devout Women"** at the National Arts Centre. Aided by recorder specialist Femke Bergsma's medieval musical magic, three contemporary storytellers, Daniel Kletke, Phil Nagy, and Gail Anglin, bring to life a cross-section of Chaucer's women. Tickets and information: www.ottawastorytellers.ca.

Le Chœur gai d'Ottawa Gay Men's Chorus is proud to present its 2019 spring concert "This is Me," a fun and uplifting celebration of overcoming struggles and challenges to become the proud, thriving and fabulous members the LGBTQ2+ community that we are today.

The concert takes place on Sunday, May 5 at 3:00 p.m. at St. Brigid's Centre for the Arts, 310 St. Patrick Street in the Byward Market in Ottawa. A licensed bar will be open during and after the concert. Tickets are \$25 and are available at www.eventbrite.ca.

The Ottawa Children's Festival will be taking place from May 8 to 12 at Lebreton Flats. Events and performances for children aged two to 15. For the festival lineup and program, visit ottawachildrensfestival.ca.

Take a morning stroll over to The Good Companions, 670 Albert Street, on Saturday, May 11 between 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. for a **book, bake and plant sale**. Pick up your collection of summer reads, get some new plants to freshen up the look of your home inside and out, and don't forget to pick up some sweets before you leave! The event will take place rain or shine. All of the proceeds will be used to make modifications to The Good Companions' front entrance, ensuring it is accessible to all. This includes adding a wheelchair lift in our reception area!

The Anglican Church of St. John the Evangelist at the intersection of Elgin and Somerset Streets will host a **wine tasting event** on Saturday, May 11. The Refugee Assistance Group (sponsoring refugees from overseas and assisting them and their families in adjusting to their new lives in the national capital region) will be featured during the evening.

Tickets are \$40 and may be purchased online via www.stjohnsottawa.com/events/wine-tasting or in person at the St John's office during business hours. For more information or donations, contact Adrian Cloete, cloete.adrian@gmail.com

Latin Sparks Festival is transforming Ottawa into Havana for the weekend! Latin Sparks is a four-day festival from Thursday, May 30 to Sunday, June 2. Join us for a weekend full of music, live shows, food trucks and a whole lot of dancing.

For more information and a list of events and performers visit www.latinsparks.ca.

Advertise your community event for free in The BUZZ. Send your information to ads@centretownbuzz.com. Ads are subject to editing for style and space. First come, first served. For paid advertising rates, please contact ads@centretownbuzz.com or visit www.centretownbuzz.com/advertising.

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Connecting with seniors, one baby at a time

by Stephen Thirlwall

What happens in a room full of adults with a baby in its midst? The baby makes the rounds of almost every pair of hands in the room and is cuddled, cooed at, talked and sung to, rocked and swung. This is basic human behaviour at work. Most people adore babies and feel revived by them. They experience joy in their presence. Only a few keep away. And even they may coo from a distance.

While on parental leave, Jessica Turner, an Ottawa mother, discovered the effect that babies have on the elderly in long-term care homes. Seniors with dementia and other disabilities sparked to life. They became more animated and happy. Most

importantly, their memories clicked into gear.

As nature kicked in, the seniors began to smile, talk, sing and tell stories while snuggling the little ones. This response was often immediate and strong.

Within a short time, Jessica built up a non-profit organization (Babies who Volunteer) with a team of over 700 volunteer parents and babies who visit seniors in need at over 20 care home locations across the city.

There are now also a couple of locations in Kingston and one in Kemptville.

All seniors experience challenges as they get older. For some, these are more acute, resulting from major accidents, increasing disability, dementia, isolation, loneliness and depression.

Research and practical experience show that there

are several known methods that can help large groups of seniors without necessarily needing drugs or even professionals. Jessica's method aims at "changing the lives of seniors one baby at a time."

The experts in this case are the babies. They know naturally what to do — just be themselves. It is not just elder women who respond to the use of babies but also elder men. The babies also benefit from extra love, attention and socialization.

Another therapy uses young children instead of babies. In this case, the children and the seniors they visit can exchange stories and songs. The older children play simple games and make simple crafts along with the elders or at least have the elders watch them as they create.

All of this stimulates the minds of the ailing seniors and can increase their social interaction.

Grandparents, of all ages, who see their grandchildren at least occasionally are well aware of this. They eagerly prepare for visits, engage in numerous activities with them and fondly miss them when they are gone.

There are several other similar therapies that can be considered, which use surrogates for babies and young children. These could be pets, baby dolls, human-like or pet-like robots, or even computer programs with synthesized human voices and on-screen characters.



STEPHEN THIRLWALL / THE BUZZ

A mother and baby get ready for a visit with a senior.

Pets can be good for any seniors (ailing or not) who are living alone and risk being isolated and lonely. Dogs help them get outside and get exercise.

Pets, like babies, can be excellent living companions often helping seniors to reduce stress, feel safer and even lower their blood pressure. There are daily routines in caring for animals that assist seniors to keep their bodies and minds more active.

Care has to be taken in finding dogs with a calm and friendly temperament or cats that are very social with humans. They must not be too young or too old and be of good health themselves. Certain elders might need specially trained pets.

It may be a little easier for some adults to interact with dolls rather than babies, in case they are unable to cope with a living baby. However, their responses to dolls can be very similar to their reactions to babies.

Dolls need to be introduced casually and slowly and as if they are real babies. If the elder takes to the doll, then there is great potential for a lot of soothing, easing of sadness and loneliness, and reconnecting with memories and other people.

Dolls can be kept at the senior's own home and, as with pets, can become part of their daily routine.

Beth McCormack, a woman in New Brunswick, had both her parents fall into dementia. As a result, she has developed very lifelike "cuddling dolls" and now has a business making therapy dolls, sold in three provinces in Canada. She found that, for her mother, "her nature was to nurture," and that this could happen with dolls too.

Robots and computer agents have proven very successful for certain specific seniors because the robot or agent is infinitely patient. There are both human-like

and pet-like robots. They also speak with a calm steady voice, without fussing or crying or getting upset. But they are not as cuddly in the elder's lap.

They probably serve those elders best who are more severely ailing and erratic.

Research so far shows positive effects but some potential dangerous side effects, such as the senior giving up too much control to robots instead of increasing their own abilities.

The common factor of all these methods is that they all help create a sense of human interaction that stirs memory and revives the patient. Repeat visits in a scheduled pattern, especially with babies, can gradually assist seniors to improve their mental faculties, feel less isolated, become more engaged and stave off rapid decline. This can also mean having to spend less time in total care facilities.



STEPHEN THIRLWALL / THE BUZZ

The author visits with his granddaughter.

Community supported agriculture comes to the Dalhousie Community Garden

by Natalie Childs

I grew up on Anderson Street and ours has always been an incredible neighbourhood to eat in. Endless pho options, the samosas from Nasa Food Centre, and the focaccia from the House of Fresh Pasta were some of my childhood favourites. But for all the incredible food options, it's not always easy to find fresh, local, produce in our neighbourhood.

As a new farmer with roots in the community, I'm hoping to help change that. This year, Agricola Cooperative Farm will be offering a 16-week Community Supported Agriculture program,

with a drop-off at the DCA Community Garden, on the corner of Preston and Somerset.

Agricola Cooperative Farm began as the shared vision of four friends: Heather Syposz, Caleb Langille, Hannah Hunter and myself.

Like many first-generation farmers, we're often asked how we got into agriculture, and why. With less than two percent of the population in Canada currently engaged in agricultural work (as compared to 100 years ago, when farming was the single most common occupation in Canada), farming is seen by some as an unconventional choice.

The four of us met at university in Halifax in 2006

and quickly became close. We studied (between the four of us) international development, social work, philosophy, and ecological thought.

In learning about the systems that shape our political and social worlds, we found injustice, ecological destruction, and economic disparity throughout. In the face of an uncertain future, we wanted to create something positive and concrete: for us, that looks like growing food for people.

We grow our vegetables and flowers at the Plateforme Agricole de L'Ange-Gardien in Buckingham, QC. We grow organically, which means we don't use chemical pesticides or fertilizers, we look for biological solu-

tions to pest and disease issues, and we strive to reduce our carbon footprint at every stage of our growing process.

Our bio-intensive systems are aimed at growing food on a human scale, and we use hand tools, cover crops, and compost to grow abundant quantities of fresh vegetables in a relatively small space.

We believe that food should build community, be ecologically sustainable and be a pleasure to grow and eat. As part of this mandate, we're excited to be partnering with the DCA Community Garden.

Started in 2017 with the help of the Vietnamese Canadian Centre, the City of Ottawa and a volunteer

board, the community garden hosts 72 gardeners sharing 36 plots on the site, and have graciously allowed us to host our weekly farm share pickup on the site.

Community Supported Agriculture is a model that connects local farmers and eaters, and allows us to share in the joys and realities of small-scale agriculture. In this system, individuals or families sign up and pay us at the beginning of the season for a share of vegetables. Your support helps us buy seed, compost, and equipment for the year ahead.

In return for your early contribution, we provide you with weekly shares of fresh, delicious produce all season long.

In urban environments, it can be a challenge to connect with land and the sources of our food. Participating in the community garden is a great way to do this, and we hope to connect with you at our weekly dropoffs.

We want to demystify what goes into growing vegetables in our climate, share what we know, and learn from you!

We hope that whether you're a member or not, you'll stop by the community garden to chat on Thursday evenings this summer.

Learn more about the farm at fermeagricola.com.