

# NOTEWORTHY

## IN NORWICH

A COMMUNITY NEWS PUBLICATION

### **Dr Lou Ferraro Calls It A Day**

A long time fixture at the Dr Russell Hall Medical Centre has officially retired. After the transfer of business Lou continued to work part time at the dental practise he once owned and operated.

At the start, back in 1976, Dr Ferraro was the sole dentist housed in the medical centre. As demand grew he brought in more staff to handle the greater patient load.

Once the centre was expanded the dental suite grew into the space occupied by Doctor Hall, turning that space into the hygienists area for cleaning X-rays and preliminary dental exams.

Lou told me he is not completely retiring just yet as he intends to continue his part time work at the university dental school helping bring new Dental Doctors into the system.

The turnout for this retirement party was, as expected, well attended. This kept Lou busy circulating around the room greeting guests and sharing stories, reminiscing his years of service to the community.

Best of luck going forward Lou, enjoy your retirement you've earned it and then some.



50 years in photographs

Dr Ferraro with Don Bruce as they discuss 50 years of Lou's dental practise.



A couple checks out the photo display. Many memories including photographs of Doc Hall and Bob Scott from Bib V Pharmacy.



No Surprise that one might find a bowl full of tooth brushes for the taking at a farewell gathering for a dentist.

## **The Big Month of May**

*By Matthew Lloyd, Curatorial Administrator of Norwich Museum*

May is always a big month for Norwich & District Museum. Winter is (usually) over and we're gearing up for the busy summer months – hiring staff and making plans. There are also three celebrations at the county, provincial, and federal level that make this month one of particular

significance at the Norwich Museum.

You may be familiar with the Oxford County Cheese Trail. Established in 2015, the Cheese Trail celebrates our dairy heritage by connecting together more than thirty sites across Oxford County including cheesemakers, restaurants, and museums. At the Norwich Museum, the local dairy

traditions are on display in our Dairy Barn.

In May, the Cheese Trail is taken to the next level with Big Cheese Days. Across the County, members of the Cheese Trail offer special offers, tastings, and experiences every Saturday. Here at Norwich Museum, we'll be hosting "Churn Back Time", our butter making experience.

This experience allows visitors to touch, smell, and taste butter they themselves have freshly churned. If you're interested in trying it out, call or email the Museum – advance booking is required to prepare everything for the experience. A family ticket is \$35.00 and other pricing options are available.

You can find out more about Big Cheese Days and the Cheese Trail on Tourism Oxford's website: <https://www.tourismoxford.ca/big-cheese-days/>

At the provincial level, May is Museum Month in Ontario. In May, the Ontario Museum

Association celebrates the contributions of Ontario's 700+ museums, 35,000 volunteers and 9,000 museum professionals. On 18<sup>th</sup> May, it's International Museum Day – which falls on a Monday this year, when traditionally many museums are closed, giving those volunteers and professionals a much needed rest.

The theme for Museum Month in 2026 is the value of Ontario museums. As Norwich & District Historical Society work on our strategic plan for the next five years, we would love for you to tell us the ways in which Norwich Museum and Archives have been valuable to you - or the ways in which you think we could be moving forwards. Another way to appreciate the value of your local museums would be to visit them – Norwich Museum is usually open 10am to 4pm, Tuesdays to Thursdays and Saturdays. There will be an opening event for the Otterville Station at 7pm on

Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May, after which it will be open Fridays, 9 am to 4 pm.

In Ontario May is also Dutch Heritage Month, with 5<sup>th</sup> May celebrated as Dutch Heritage Day across Canada. 5<sup>th</sup> May is the anniversary of the Liberation of the Netherlands towards the end of the Second World War in 1945. On that day, after an eight-month campaign largely undertaken by the First Canadian Army, the occupying German troops in the Netherlands issued their surrender. The event was also the catalyst for on-going Dutch-Canadian relationship after the war, including the bilateral immigration treaty that led many people from the

Netherlands to come to Canada in the post-war years.

Norwich's Dutch heritage didn't begin after the Second World War. Town co-founder Peter Lossing was the descendant of Dutch settlers in the New Netherlands colony in the seventeenth century, and many other families that emigrated from Dutchess County, New York, to Norwich in the 1810s had Dutch backgrounds. However, many emigrees from the Netherlands after the Second World War did end up making Norwich their home.

With these three celebrations, May is a great month to visit Norwich Museum!

## **Oxford Stewardship Award Winner**

### **Middle Grand Chapter of Freshwater Conservation Canada**

Submitted Article

Oxford County Warden Marcus Ryan presented the 2025 Oxford Stewardship Award to the Middle Grand Chapter of Freshwater

Conservation Canada this morning, honoring their contributions to land improvement and sustainability.

The Middle Grand Chapter of Freshwater Conservation Canada, a passionate volunteer group, unites behind a vision to renew and protect the health and biodiversity of cold-water tributaries along the Middle Grand River. Over the past three years, the Middle Grand chapter has planted over 2,000 trees along a stretch of Horner's Creek in Oxford County, between 8th and 10th Concession, just outside of Bright. The group pursues a simple goal: healthier water. Cool, flowing water equals healthy water. By planting trees, they create a buffer around the stream, reduce runoff and sediment, and, as the trees mature, provide shade that helps keep water temperatures down.

With support from the Oxford Clean Water Program, the group furthered these efforts by organizing a community planting event at a farm property along Horner's Creek last spring, where 250 potted and bareroot trees were added. The chapter collaborated closely with the Grand River Conservation Authority, Enbridge, and local landowners, who provided access to their properties to assist with tree planting and the implementation of this project.

Three short-listed candidates were finalists for the award, chosen from a pool of projects supported by the Clean Water Program. The program, funded by Oxford County and administered by the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority and the Grand River Conservation Authority, promotes water quality improvement and woodland and wetland conservation and enhancement. The finalists undertook various land improvements this year to protect the local environment.

Oxford County is honouring this year's Oxford Stewardship Award recipient with a \$500 gift certificate to purchase original artwork commissioned from an Oxford County artist of their choice OR an experience at a local destination featured through Tour Oxford. In addition to this prize, the Middle Grand Chapter has been added to the recognition wall at the Oxford County Administration Building, designed to honour all past and future recipients of the Oxford Stewardship Award.

The winner of the Oxford Stewardship Award is chosen by representatives of local stewardship organizations, with Marinda Gras, Soil & Crop Improvement Association, and Cher Sprague, Stewardship Oxford, leading the judging process. Find more information about the 2025 Oxford Land Stewardship Award candidates below.



(Left to right, Oxford County Warden Marcus Ryan, Middle Grand President Hajnal Kovacs, Middle Grand Project Director Scott Puillandre, Gord Ross, Director of Community Planning for Oxford County Paul Michiels) *Submitted photo*



Left to right, (Hanne Yager – Oxford County, Cher Sprague – Stewardship Oxford, Middle Grand President Hajnal Kovacs, Middle Grand Project Director Scott Puillandre, Louise Heyming – Grand River Conservation Authority) *Submitted photo*

## **Jim and Minnie Koteles — Protecting farmland and soil through practical stewardship**



Jim and Minnie Koteles take great pride in being good stewards of their Oxford County farm, guided by a long-term view of soil health, water management, and conservation. The couple acquired the 87-acre farm in 1990 and built their home on the property in 2004. Today, the farm has 58 acres of crop land and 30 acres of bushland that adjoin the Wildwood Conservation Authority/Trout Creek in Zorra Township.

The couple follows a three-year crop rotation of corn, soybeans, and wheat. Heavy rains and intense downpours had been causing them problems for years. Jim says things have really intensified over the past four or five years.

“We were getting a lot of erosion down that hillside. By the time the water reached the bottom, it was a foot or two deep. I had to repair the driveway eight different times in one summer.”

Neighbours suggested reaching out to the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) for support. Jim says that Brad Glassman worked with them to survey the property, create a topographical map, and design a solution to divert water safely and stop the erosion.

“He gave us alternatives. We could retire the land and plant trees or build a grass waterway. We decided a berm was the best way to conserve the soil without losing additional cropland. He gave us options for how steep it could be, whether we could mow it or even plant crops over it.”

Construction of the berm began in August 2024 and was completed in just two days. Minnie says the level of support surprised them.

“The engineering diagrams were very good, and they really helped us through the whole process. They even came out during construction.”

Jim says the results were immediate.

“The week after the berm was built, we had a rain that engaged the spillway. The water came so fast that it went right around it. It was amazing to see the difference.”

This project builds on a long history of stewardship with the UTRCA. In 2009, the couple participated in tree-planting initiatives that included local Grade 5 students, rehabilitating an old farmstead into a shelterbelt for wildlife and birds. They also installed windbreaks around their home and barn, supported by financial incentives.

Beyond erosion control and tree planting, Jim and Minnie have participated in Environmental Farm Plan programs, clean water initiatives, cover cropping, and no-till practices aimed at preserving soil health. Jim says they are actively trying to improve the quality of the soil for generations to come.

“With industrial farming the way it is now, you worry about the quality of soil 100 years from now. Anything we can do to protect and enhance the soil should be considered.”

Minnie agrees, noting the pride that comes with farming responsibly.

“I like being a farmer and potentially feeding a very small part of the population. We have to preserve our land.”

Over the years, they have enhanced the property’s tree cover, including a community tree-planting initiative in the late 2000s, where local school children helped plant trees on a sloped section of the land.

Their stewardship also extends into their shared forest. Part of an old gravel pit used during the construction of the Wildwood Dam lies on their property. Jim says when the UTRCA approached them about rehabilitating the area with prairie grasses, they didn’t hesitate.

“They asked our permission, and we said absolutely. It didn’t cost us anything, and now it’s beautiful.”

For Jim and Minnie, stewardship is about working with the land and with partners who share that vision.

## R.M. Matheson Farms – Improving the land for future generations



Farming is second nature to Ian and Scott Matheson, the owners of R.M. Matheson Farms. The family farm operation has expanded over the years, and the desire to be good stewards of the land has never wavered. Ian Matheson says they have completed several erosion control projects over the years under the Clean Water Program.

“Heavy rain has been a problem for us lately; the big rainfalls have been happening more frequently and causing some runoff issues on some of the rolling land that we have.”

R.M. Matheson Farms has undertaken several projects each year with land stewardship in mind. The farm operation has also participated in several cost-sharing programs through the Ontario

Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) and Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA). Ian says they have had great experiences working with the UTRCA.

“We have a great relationship with Upper Thames in helping us keep some of these more susceptible farms holding together the way they should be.”

They recently completed a project with the UTRCA on the back 30 acres of one farm, which had a significant slope, and heavy rainfall was causing land erosion. Tatianna (Lozier) and Brad (Hertner) from the UTRCA came out to survey the land and engineered a plan for installing a two-berm solution. Ian says the results have been great and recommends that other farmers utilize some of these programs.

“I wonder if sometimes people are hesitant to get the conservation authority involved, but we have had nothing but good experiences with them. They have been tremendous in helping us do these projects that are improving the land for future generations and helping us find the programs that are in place so that we can complete them without a high out-of-pocket cost.”

The Matheson family has [NWN] been farming for generations. Ian says they recognize that this is valuable land they are sitting on.

“We are in the business of farming and want the best land that we can get. We are fortunate to be in Oxford County, which is some of the best land in Ontario, and we want to keep it that way for the next generations to come.”

## Freshwater Conservation Canada – Middle Grand Chapter: Volunteers making an impact in our community



The Middle Grand Chapter of Freshwater Conservation Canada aims to enhance the health, functioning, and species richness of the network of cold-water tributaries along the Middle Grand River. They have done several projects to help cold-water tributaries in Oxford County, including Horner’s Creek, Washington Creek, Hillier Creek, Alder Creek, and the Nith River within Blandford-Blenheim and Norwich Townships.

The group of passionate volunteers has completed several projects, including tree planting, stream cleanups, bank deflectors, fish habitat creation, and the removal of fish barriers.

Over the past three years, the Middle Grand chapter has planted over 2,000 trees along a stretch of Horner's Creek in Oxford County, between 8th and 10th Concession, just outside of Bright. Project Director Scott Puillandre explains why they have planted these trees.

“The goal is simple: healthier water. Cool, flowing water is healthy water, and that is what we are trying to achieve. Trees provide a buffer from the stream that reduces runoff and sediment, and once they mature, they provide shade to help keep water temperature down.”

The chapter collaborates closely with conservation authorities, community partners, and local landowners to implement its projects. Scott says sometimes money's not the hardest thing to come by.

“Sometimes it's just getting access to property to be able to do the work. Being willing to allow this good work to happen is a big step, and we really appreciate the landowners and Enbridge for giving us that access to complete this project.”

With support from the Oxford Clean Water Program, the group organized a community planting event at a farm property along Horner's Creek, planting 250 potted and bareroot trees last spring. This effort builds on previous plantings by the Grand River Conservation Authority and other plantings supported by Enbridge. The group has been working with landowners to create a continuous buffer of trees along Horner's Creek to increase shade, stabilize banks, and create a wildlife habitat.

Middle Grand Chapter President Hajnal Kovacs says this project couldn't have happened without the amazing work of the volunteers and the support from the landowners and Enbridge.

"I have been doing stewardship projects for over a decade now, and I am continuously surprised by the number of caring people who come out of the woodwork to support these kinds of projects. Enbridge and the local landowners have been so supportive of our efforts and have made it easy for us to complete this project."

Hajnal adds that the results are already visible.

"We have already provided significant stabilizing benefits with the roots of the trees that have been growing there. I've seen bird nests in trees that we planted two years ago. These projects create little forests that get bigger year to year."

Through collaboration, volunteerism, and hands-on restoration, the Middle Grand Chapter continues to strengthen Horner Creek, one tree at a time.

## **Background**

- The Oxford Stewardship Award recipient is chosen by Stewardship Oxford and the Oxford Soil & Crop Improvement Association from the pool of projects that received financial and/or technical assistance through the County-supported Clean Water Program the previous year. The Clean Water Program, administered by the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority and the Grand River Conservation Authority, with direct funding contributions from the County, helps to fund and support the conservation and enhancement of natural heritage resources in Oxford County. In 2025, a total of 42 Clean Water Program projects were funded in Oxford County. This reflected over \$348,400 in total project value and \$214,700 in grants. Oxford County committed \$140,000 to the program. Technical

guidance for most of these projects was provided by the Conservation Authorities with a number of partners providing funding support.

The Oxford Stewardship Award was established in 2009 to recognize County landowners who have made outstanding contributions to protecting our natural heritage, such as woodlands, wetlands, streams and meadows and builds on the legacy of the former Landsaver Award, which was awarded between 1982 and 2003. The current stewardship award acknowledges the vital role that all landowners can play in preserving and enhancing the County's natural environment.

## **Changes Coming to Noteworthy**

Watch for details of the proposed changes taking place to the Noteworthy In Norwich.

Everything will be detailed in a future issue. I can tell you the changes begin in June.

Thanks for your continued support including story ideas, and events around the community.