



# THE BEACON

of St. Clair Township

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## Operation Christmas Tree a resounding success

The Operation Christmas Tree hamper program in north St. Clair Township was a resounding success again this year. Program president Ron Skreptak says the support received from the community resulted in the delivery of over 112 food hampers, serving over 312 people for whom the holidays would have been grim. Each hamper, valued at about \$475, included a turkey, ham, milk, potatoes, oranges, apples and bread in addition to many non-perishable items. Santa was also able to make an appearance, with 61 toy hampers bringing joy to about 134 children. When the final tally was taken, volunteers found that approximately 8.5 tons of non-perishable food had been received, plus hundreds of toys and clothing items. The food was sorted by students from SCITS and Sir John Moore Community School. "It was a huge job," said Skreptak.

All five north St. Clair Township schools did their share to gather items for the hamper program. When combined, the items weighed almost six tons. They were collected by St. Clair Township emergency responders, including the Corunna volunteer firefighters and local OPP officers. The OPP Corunna station also hosted its third annual Operation Christmas Tree drive-through donation event, collecting 875 food items, \$565 in cash and 75 toy items within a four-hour period. OPP officers were joined by local members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corunna scouting group, members of the Corunna Community Policing Committee



Corunna resident Karen Smith (in vehicle) was pleasantly surprised when she dropped off her donation of food during the third annual OPP Operation Christmas Tree drive-through event on Dec. 15 - she received a gift certificate to Gerry's Pizza. The certificates were awarded every half-hour. On hand for the presentation were OPP Cst. John Vince, left, Operation Christmas Tree president Ron Skreptak, and the head honcho himself, Santa Claus.

(CCPC), and the jolly old elf himself, Santa Claus. A live remote broadcast by 99.9 Fox-FM helped publicize the event. Organizers have already set the date for next year's drive-through - December 13, 2008. Skreptak says the community not only expressed its generosity with food donations, but in other ways as well. "Never before have we seen so many toy and new clothing items donated as we have this year," he said.

The two south St. Clair Township schools, plus several community groups, carried out similar Christmas collection activities. No final totals had been reported for these initiatives at the time of publication.

### January is Alzheimer's Awareness Month.

The Alzheimer Society of Sarnia-Lambton provides help and support in coping with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia. For more information, counselling, support groups, reading materials, and help with future planning, or to arrange for a guest speaker, call 519-332-4444 or go online to [www.alzheimer.sarnia.com](http://www.alzheimer.sarnia.com).

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The Beacon is edited by Bonni Stevenson and published monthly by St. Clair Township as a public service to residents of the municipality.

### TO CONTACT US

Individuals, schools or organizations that wish to publicize a non-profit event, write a letter to the editor, or applaud the efforts of someone in the community, can do so free of charge by e-mailing: [beacon@twp.stclair.on.ca](mailto:beacon@twp.stclair.on.ca) or writing to: The Beacon, c/o St. Clair Civic Centre, 1155 Emily St., Mooretown, Ont., N0N 1M0.



## COUNCIL NOTES

# Concerns aired over coast guard billing

### Coast Guard billing raises concerns

Bluewater Ferry service owner Lowell Dalgety came before council to ask for assistance in addressing fees levied by the Canadian Coast Guard for ice-breaking services over the winter months. The fee charged for such services amounts to approximately \$56,000 per year. Mr. Dalgety stated that if the fees were imposed as proposed by the coast guard, the ferry would have to stop operation from mid-December to early April to avoid the charges. He noted this cessation of service would prove disruptive to the many people who use the ferry daily to commute to their places of employment, as well as to tourists who frequent Sombra village and the St. Clair Township area in general. In addition, it was pointed out that the ferry helps support the economy and commercial health of Marine City, Michigan and the surrounding area. The Bluewater Ferry service accommodates approximately 100 vehicles each day on a year 'round basis. Mr. Dalgety says demand for the service is becoming even greater due to long wait times at the Bluewater Bridges and other border crossings.

Council agreed to support Mr. Dalgety in his effort to cancel the ice-breaking fees. A resolution has been forwarded to the federal transportation minister, MP Pat Davidson, MPP Bob Bailey, Walpole Island First Nations, the City of Sarnia, and the County of Lambton with a request that it be supported.

### 2008 water/sewer rates to be set

St. Clair Township staff is currently compiling a report regarding financial requirements for 2008 water and sewer utilities. Council will be considering this report in January.

### Property issue draws heated debate

The fate of the parcel of land directly north of the St. Clair Township Civic Centre on Emily Street continues to be a subject of concern for some township residents. A group of ratepayers opposed to the immediate development of the property were on hand at the Dec. 3 and Dec. 17 meetings to make their concerns known to council. The group, represented by Doug Henderson, is opposed to council's decision to pass an official plan amendment that facilitates the possible residential development of the land in question. Mr. Henderson read a statement outlining the group's concerns over the immediate development of the land.

Prior to Mr. Henderson's statement, Mayor Arnold advised the meeting of guidelines that have

been developed to protect council members against personal liability that may arise from their service on council. He also expressed disappointment that there had been some apparent intimidation of certain members of council which could be construed as personal threats. At the conclusion of the meeting, Mayor Arnold also pointed out some inaccuracies contained in the letter the group had circulated to local residents.

During the Dec. 3 meeting, several other members of the group stated their wish to be heard by council, however, they were informed that, in the interest in conducting an orderly meeting, those who wish to speak must be put on the agenda beforehand. This is an accepted policy that has been in effect for many years and is employed by many Lambton County municipalities during their open meetings.

At the Dec. 17 meeting, the group was represented by spokesperson Gaston Drapeau, who read a prepared statement in which he noted that he had inquired about the availability of the land in question earlier in the year. He expressed dissatisfaction about the way the past meetings regarding the Emily Street property had been conducted.

The development of the land, now redesignated from 'open space' to 'residential,' would require two more major legislative steps before it could take place. It would have to be rezoned by the township, and a suitable site plan would have to be approved by the township and the county planning department.

### Chinook property rezoning

The rezoning of the former Chinook Chemical manufacturing site south of Sombra is currently under consideration. A public meeting in early December was attended by many area residents concerned that the property would be rezoned from M3-1 to M3, a move that would still allow heavy industrial use of the property. The residents expressed concern that any new heavy industrial operation on the site might lead to renewed odour and environmental issues.

County planner Jeff Baranek said that the proposed rezoning of the property would see it divided into two different zones to accommodate two buyers. It was proposed that the first, smaller parcel of land would be rezoned to M2 (Industrial Type 2) for use as a contractor's yard and the second, larger parcel of land would be rezoned M3 (Industrial Type 3). He added that, hypothetically, the M3 zoning change could allow industries such as waste transportation, a 'Clean Harbors type' facility, or some other type of product manufacturing company to use the site, but

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**COUNCIL DIARY****Challenges of council service gratifying**

*Councillor Jeff Agar is the author of this month's council column. Watch for this column each month for insights directly from your municipal council.*

I hope that the residents of St. Clair Township had a Merry Christmas and I wish all of you a prosperous New Year. With a New Year comes a fresh, new beginning. As I reflect on my first term on council and the accomplishments that we have made, it certainly has been a rewarding and learning experience. I look forward to the new challenges that face us in the coming year. I have been gratified by my time on council - it is an honour to serve the people of this township.

Although I reside in the village of Corunna, I am concerned about St. Clair Township as a whole. Over the past few months I have learned that, no mat-

ter how hard we try, we will probably never make a decision that is pleasing to everyone. However; by consulting with our ratepayers in different areas, we will try to do our best. On a positive note, it is nice to finally see, not only as a member of council but as a taxpayer as well, all of the projects that have been accomplished over this past year from one end of the township to the other. In my opinion, we have all benefited. I look forward to the upcoming endeavours that council is about to undertake.

In conclusion, I would be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity, with the OMHA playoffs coming, to wish all involved the best of luck and to say thank you for participating. Hats off to our youth and to all of our community volunteers. **Go Storm!!!!**

**COMMUNITY POLICING****Danger lurks on Internet**

Police are warning parents to pay careful attention to the Internet sites their children visit. Internet chat rooms attract sexual predators because children are willing to divulge information that can be used to victimize. There are also sites that encourage the posting of photos and biographical information that can, in the wrong hands, be used to stalk and victimize children *and their families*.

Bullying is also a problem online. It is very easy for one child to victimize another while remaining anonymous, and parents need to be aware that this is happening. OPP Sgt. Paul Futers cites the example of a young child who committed suicide as the result of constant online bullying. The child's parents were unaware that this was taking place.

The Lambton OPP is planning an Internet safety course for the St. Clair Township area in the near future. But in

**Be alert to Internet dangers**

the meantime, police are urging parents to talk to their children about being safe online. Sgt. Futers says it's important to encourage children to be open about the people they meet and the information they impart on the Internet.

**Exercise snowmobile safety**

The Lambton OPP caution snowmobile drivers to beware of weather conditions and ice surface conditions at all times. A thick layer of snow may be hiding ice that is too thin to support a snowmobile. The snow may also be just deep enough to conceal a wire fence, a deep ditch or rocky outcropping. Police officials say that a safe return from any snowmobile trip starts with proper planning beforehand. Let others know where you will be going and when you are due to return. Pick up trail maps and information about any trail you travel. Information on trail conditions is available from the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs (OFSC) at [www.ofsc.on.ca](http://www.ofsc.on.ca).

**MORE COUNCIL NOTES****From page 2**

these would be subject to Ministry of the Environment approval.

One resident argued that the site should not be allowed to operate and should be cleaned up. Another resident, new to the area, objected to any industrial designation being granted to the site. To register their opposition to the proposed M3 rezoning, the residents submitted a petition bearing about 60 signatures to council. Chinoook representative Ronald Breen pointed out that the noxious odour-causing product, trimethylamine (TMA) and all amines previously produced on the site could not be made there again since the company had entered

into a non-competition agreement to cease their production. He argued that, in the last six years the company had been in operation, it had worked to clean up the operation and improve community relations. He said the M3 zoning would, hopefully, increase interest amongst potential buyers of the property. He also stated that, should the property be sold to an industrial operation, local employment opportunities would be created and the municipal tax base would benefit. Mr. Breen noted that a buyer has not yet been found.

**St. Clair Township council meets every first and third Monday of the month.**

**The next council meeting is slated for Monday, Jan. 21 at 7 p.m. Anyone wishing to speak before council can call 519-867-2021 to be put on the agenda.**

## Much more than just books at you local library!

Now that the holiday rush is over, why not check out all that your local library has to offer?

All 26 Lambton County library branches, including the seven St. Clair Township branches, have a free library card waiting for you. Children in Grade 8 or under require the signature of a parent or guardian.

Your card is the key to a wide range of resources. Not only can you borrow books, magazines, CDs and DVDs, but you'll have access to high-speed Internet and wireless technology. Even from the comfort of your own home, you can still access the library's online databases and receive Live Homework Help, too. Pre-schoolers can enjoy entertaining and educational programs through the local library branch. New sessions of these programs begin the week of Jan. 6 at the Brigden, Corunna, Courtright and Port Lambton library branches. Tales for Tots is a 30-minute program for children ages one and two and their caregivers. Story Hour is a one-hour program for children ages three through five. These sessions usually run for six weeks. French Story Hour is also offered at the Corunna library branch. Registration is required.

For more information about programs offered by the Lambton County libraries, visit [www.lclmng.org](http://www.lclmng.org).

### St. Clair Township library hours

**Corunna**, 417 Lyndoch Street: Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Program information at 519-862-1132.

**Courtright**, 1533 Fourth Street: Tuesday and Thursday, 3 p.m. to 8 p.m.; Saturday, 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Program information at 519-867-2712.

**Mooretown**, upper level of Moore Sports Complex: Monday and Wednesday, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Program information at 519-867-2823.

**Brigden**, 1540 Duncan Street: Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, 4 p.m. to 9 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Program information at 519-864-1142.

**Sombra**, 3536 St. Clair Parkway: Tuesday and Thursday, 3 p.m. to 8 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to noon. Program information at 519-892-3711.

**Port Lambton**, 507 Stoddard Street: Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.; Saturday 9 a.m. to noon. Program information at 519-677-5217.

**Wilkesport**, 1349 Main Street: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m. to noon. Program information at 519-864-4000.

### St. Clair River Trail update

Guthrie Park north of Corunna may soon be the perfect place for an evening stroll, even after dark. The finance committee of the St. Clair Township council has approved a motion in principle to permit the installation of walkway lighting for the park. The proposal calls for 39 lighting stations along the trail from Lincoln Drive to the north side of the Talfourd Creek bridge. The committee is hoping the lights will be powered by a solar system.

The project has received support from Shell Canada. Shell representative Kristina Zimmer attended the meeting to present council with an initial pledge of \$20,000. Under an existing matching policy, council will match these funds two-to-one for a total of \$60,000. Committee spokesperson Peter Cassel says it is hoped that the project will get underway this coming April. However, this will depend on how quickly the extensive shoreline restoration project, also slated for Guthrie Park this year, can be completed, since one project could interfere with the progress of the other. Any comments or reactions to this information can be directed to Peter Cassel at 519-862-1605 or Mary Jane Marsh at 519-864-1531.

### AROUND THE TOWNSHIP

#### Locally Lambton map project seeking participants

The Lambton Federation of Agriculture is seeking advertisers and sponsors for its *Locally Lambton Food and Fun* map. The map will feature farm businesses within Lambton County that sell locally-grown products or host activities of interest to the public. It is distributed as a way of letting the public know about interesting agricultural attractions. For more information call 519-828-5028.

### Contact The Beacon!

If you belong to a non-profit organization or group, why not let the community know what you're up to? E-mail The Beacon at:

[beacon@twp.stclair.on.ca](mailto:beacon@twp.stclair.on.ca)

**Free of charge**, we'll give the community advance notice of your up-coming fundraisers, activities and events. To make sure your submissions aren't late, please note that your information must be submitted no later than the third Monday of each month.