



The
RAMARA
Chronicle

APRIL 2010

Ramara's quarries rock on



Sound decision 2

Jim Hopson's Lake Effect Studio in Lagoon City is making beautiful music



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The Ramara Fire and Rescue Service is ready to roll 24/7



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Unless they moved away, sons followed fathers in their occupations in Longford Mills



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Tracing the history of a quirky Ramara landmark



Our cover

Photographer Gail Smith shot this rockface at the Lafarge Canada quarry south of Brechin on the afternoon of March 4. She used a Canon EOS Digital Rebel XT, f/5.6 at 1/1250th of a second.

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Rocking in Ramara

As a leading industry in Ramara, quarries play a significant role in the landscape and makeup of both our community and our province. In this issue, through several articles and accompanying graphics, we have taken a look at the aggregate industry over time, from an historical perspective through to the present. We have examined both sides of an age-old conflict between naturalists and quarries and reported on the peaceful co-existence that exists today. Photographer Larry Kirtley has captured the significance of the alvars with his photos of birds at risk.



Our goal is to inform and entertain you with locally produced content. We delight in being able to profile the talent of our volunteer writers, illustrators and photographers.

confirmed 15 artists, one studio, and three locations. This is a community event, free to artists and the public. In promoting the artists of Ramara, everyone benefits, from community groups offering their space and serving refreshments, to the public at large who will have something different to do on a long summer weekend. Rob and I think of it in terms of an old fashioned barn raising, with the community getting together and creating something of benefit. To find out more, check out our update on Page 32.

Beginning this month, you can see The Chronicle in full colour on our website, ramarachronicle.com.

In celebrating the life and times of Ramara Township, our goal is to inform and entertain you, with locally produced content.

We delight in being able to profile the talent of our volunteer writers, illustrators and photographers. So sit back, relax and enjoy your read.

Darleen Cormier, publisher



Darleen Cormier

We have quantified the economic impact of this industry on Ramara, and discovered some surprises along the way. Photos taken by Gail Smith, immediately following a blast, will bring you along with us, as we uncover the quarry industry in Ramara.

With April being Volunteer Month, we are pleased to present Chief Ted Conway and the volunteer men and women of The Ramara Fire and Rescue Service. We will also introduce you to Bret Shier, a young volunteer who has received provincial recognition for his service. Speaking of volunteers, The Rotary Club of Washago is celebrating its fifth anniversary this year. After reading these stories, if you feel the urge to volunteer your time and your talents, our Community Calendar includes opportunities you will no doubt find rewarding.

We have had an overwhelming response to our call for artists for the ArtPark & Studio Tour, to be held July 3 and 4. To date we have

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Pick one up

Where you can find your complimentary copy of The Ramara Chronicle:

Atherley

Allan Byers' Equipment, Highway 12

Bayshore

Postal kiosk

Beaverton

Fisher's Your Independent Grocer

Brechin

Ramara Township Offices

Brechin Foodland

Brechin Library

Lagoon City

The Harbour Inn

Lagoon City Community Association

General Store, Laguna Parkway

Rama

Rama Culture & Research Department

Rama Government Building

Rama Health Center

Rama Library

Ramara Centre

Township Library, Highway 12

Sebright area

Hawthorne Grill, Highway 169

Sebright General Store

Uptergrove

Leska's Meat and Delicatessen,

Highway 12

Washago

Home Hardware

Ben's Pharmacy

**See The Ramara Chronicle online
www.ramarachronicle.com**

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*The Ramara Chronicle is printed
by Rose Printing in Orillia.
Website by Downtown Computers in Orillia.*



Rob McCormick

Jim Hopson and Taylor Abram, with Riley, the studio dog, at Lake Effect Studio in Lagoon City.

North of Nashville

Sophisticated recording studio in Lagoon City carves out 'interesting niche' in market

By **ROB McCORMICK**
Managing Editor

For several years now, some big sounds have been coming out of a quiet neighbourhood in Lagoon City.

Their source is a house undistinguished from those around it, except for a small sign on the front lawn that reads Lake Effect Studio. Inside that house is one of the most sophisticated sound studios in the industry.

"I love that name," says Jim Hopson, 55, the studio's owner and president of Wellcraft Music Group. "It used to be called Studio at the Lake, and that was just getting a little weird....Studio at the Lake....nobody really got the 'at.' So I did a search and found Lake Effect Studio. I bought it for \$50 and registered the name."

There's a drum room, a guitar room, vocal/writers' room, a digital control room and the "mother ship," the master control room, packed with high-end analogue and digital recording equipment. There are banks of speakers, amps and pre-amps everywhere; a locker full of high-end, sometimes rare microphones; guitars, keyboards and session drum kits, all connected by an internal television system and wired for sound.

Some of the finest session musicians in the world cut tracks here. The studio has produced work by Michael Burgess of Les Miserables

"This is the studio that people are gravitating toward...People who record here just love it. Everybody talks about it as a sanctuary."

*Jim Hopson,
owner of Lake Effect Studio*

fame, Sass Jordan, Ronnie Hawkins, The Good Brothers and multi Grammy Award-winner Norah Jones, to name some.

"Twenty-five years ago I was an artist," Hopson says. "I went to Nashville and got a small record deal and recorded two albums, but I was too old. I was in my 30s. I wasn't a good enough guitar player or singer and I wasn't a songwriter. But I had always loved the tech stuff. I'm a tech junkie, and I thought I could do what these guys do."

Hopson, 55, has been producing music for more than 25 years. He opened his first studio in his native Oshawa. He has been in Lagoon City for about 22 years, and has owned the home that houses his studio for nine. Several weeks ago, he put the Oshawa facility up for sale.

Hopson and his then wife used to keep a boat in a local marina. "One day we went for drive and drove into Lagoon City and said, 'Oh, my God,'

This is unbelievable. Within a week we had bought a one-bedroom condo, and it was the weekend escape place. Then our daughter came along and we bought a larger place across the road." Later, after his first marriage ended, he and his current wife decided they wanted a house in Lagoon City.

Hopson originally intended to open a small studio so he could do a little work when he was here. But within a short time, he says, "this one became the premier studio. It quickly took over."

The Lake Effect facility grew in stages. At first, it occupied what had been an in-law suite. Then it expanded into the first bay of the three-bay garage. Walls were knocked down and beams put in.

A new transformer was installed to provide more power. Now the entire garage is part of the 1,800-square-foot facility. Interior brick walls and two feet of insulation ensure no sound escapes the studio, which is protected by multiple security systems.

Hopson says Lake Effect Studio really "kicked off" off about five years ago.

"We are not a hobby," he says.

"We are not a converted bedroom. We are recognized as a studio. The fact that it's in part of our house is a moot point.

(Continued on next page)

Technology changed music industry

(Continued from previous page)

“When they look at your gear rack on the website, when they look at the mike locker and the console, they determine very quickly whether you are a real player in the business.

“Now, we don’t need the Oshawa studio any more. This is the one that people are gravitating toward, and we advertise it as a retreat package. People who record here just love it. Everybody talks about it as a sanctuary.”

In his time as a recording engineer, Hopson has witnessed, and ultimately benefitted from, an evolution in his industry triggered by the advent of digital technology.

“Ten years ago there were 14 music labels,” he says. “There are three now. E-commerce and free downloading pretty much destroyed the industry, but the new technology also forced the industry to reinvent itself and go e-commerce. I needed to get into that.”

Hopson set up a website, wellcraftmusic.com, and now hosts more than 30 sites for artists who record at Lake Effect.

He has also embraced digital recording technology, recently adding a “mix-in-the-box” component at the studio.

“There are two domains in recording music in a studio,” he says, analogue and digital, with analogue being noted for its warm sound.

“Now, a lot of studios have gone into total mix-in-the-box, where everything is done in the computer. There’s no outboard gear, and it has its benefits, but statistically it is nowhere near as warm, so for rock, country, jazz and blues, analogue is still where it’s at.” Digital is the preferred technology for genres such as dance, hip-hop and urban music, Hopson says.

Digital technology has also produced a new breed of young engineers with an approach to music that Hopson finds perplexing.

“The new engineers that they’re churning out of schools, they’re trained to look at the pretty lights. What does the compressor meter say? Minus six dB. That looks good. What does ‘look’ have to do with anything? But they don’t get it. So I have that era to bring to the party. These kids don’t understand what a pre-amp is. Mike placement. The right mike for the right voice. The right pre-amp for the right mike. All of that stuff has become a bit of a lost science.”

Hopson is passionate about drum and guitar sounds. “Drums and bass, and the rhythm guitar, the rhythm section, are really the roots,” he says. “If the rhythm section of a band is not working, nothing’s going to work. I don’t care how good the vocals are or how good the song is.

“I’ve been hanging around Nashville for so long, and I’ve watched some of the best drummers and engineers in the world. After a while, your ears acclimatize as to what sounds right and what sounds wrong.”

At Lake Effect, Hopson has blended old school techniques with new technology. The result is a merger of analogue’s warmth and the wizardry of digital. “We have fused them,” he says. “There are a lot of studios that have never made that leap. It’s massively expensive and a horrendous learn-



Chronicle file photo

“I started hanging around here and it was like, OK, I could get used to this. Then I started meeting these session guys.”

*Taylor Abram, engineer,
Lake Effect Studio*

ing curve.”

Assisting Hopson in this amalgamation is Taylor Abram, a 20-year-old Barrie native who now works full time as an engineer and the studio’s e-commerce manager. Taylor, also a musician and songwriter, came to Hopson’s attention at 17, when he entered a talent contest Hopson was running in Barrie. Hopson was impressed with the young man and approached Abram’s parents about having their son work for him. Abram now plays a critical role at Lake Effect as the resident specialist in mix-in-the-box production.

Abram also contributes creatively to the work of many of the newer artists who record at the studio. He is working on his own record. He runs the website and designs graphics for the CDs the studio produces.

“I take him to Nashville every time I go,” Hopson says. “He hooks up with some songwriters and when we get new artists here that have a cool song idea but don’t know how to translate it into a song, they sit with Taylor in our writers’ room and they’ll come up with a tune.”

“I started getting more responsibilities as far as recording and working with the bands,” Abram says. “It’s cool to sit here and create from scratch. You take the idea and you have the ability to make it so much more than what it is. Now, with all the e-commerce stuff and the mix-in-the-box, which is my forte, it’s like I can just take it to a whole new level.”

“I just spent \$35,000 in the last six months” outfitting the digital control room, Hopson says. “I would not have spent a nickle of that without Taylor here.”

Without Abram, “I would have just kept the business going by itself, and in 10 years or so I probably would have fizzled out and got rid of some gear. But Taylor has taken on such a huge interest in this that my plan is to be pretty much done in about three years. I’m hoping by that time, he’s running the studio.”

If and when that happens, it will be because of

Abram’s talent and attitude, but a bit of luck was also involved.

“Thankfully, a girl I knew in high school kind of kicked me in the butt to do the talent contest,” he says, “because I almost didn’t. I had hockey and volleyball going on at the same time and I wasn’t going to do it. So if it wasn’t for that girl, I’d probably be in university right now.”

Instead, he’s getting a hands-on education, working with some of the most accomplished musicians in the industry.

“I was going to be a phys-ed teacher. This was totally a career path I had not thought about,” Abram says. “But I started hanging around here and it was like, OK, I could get used to this. Then I started meeting these session guys.

“People don’t understand when you are talking about session players. Say I wrote a song. They’ll listen to my recording of the song once, just a rough scratch tape, and they’ll go in and play it in two takes better than I could ever play it in the next 85 years of my life.”

Abram would appear to have a bright future in a business where jobs are almost impossible to come by. “Ontario colleges that offer recording arts programs are turning out 1,200 kids a year,” Hopson says. I will bet you there aren’t four jobs available in the industry right now, and they would be making coffee at the CBC.”

Abram isn’t making coffee for any one these days, but he is making music, with, among others, producer Orin Isaac, whose credits include the Mike Bullard Show, Canadian Idol, Hockey Night in Canada and the Olympics

“He’s a genius and we’ve hooked up with him on a co-project,” Hopson says. “He has really enlightened us about some of the new trends that are going on, and he’s as hip as it gets.

“We were in his studio about a month ago and Taylor played him one of his songs,” Hopson says. “He was blown away, so now they are talking about him producing a couple of songs with Taylor. He’ll have on his resume that he co-produced with Orin Isaac. That reads pretty well.”

Hopson says the key to his success has been his ability to adapt to change.

“You have to be nimble if you are going to survive in the music business. In the old days, there were studio owners, engineers, producers and musicians, and everybody took a piece of what a record cost. But there are no more \$400,000 budgets to do a record. They are totally gone.”

Lake Effect’s beauty, Hopson says, is in its versatility.

“We don’t carry any debt, and we do everything ourselves. I sing all the background vocals, Taylor has the MIDI room covered and gets on with the bands really well. If they want graphic design work done, he does that. We manufacture and burn CDs here. We do websites.

“I think we have carved out a very interesting niche in the marketplace,” he says.

And with the sounds being produced in that house in Lagoon City, you could say business is booming.

**Rob McCormick can be reached at
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Special to The Chronicle

Members of The Ramara Fire and Rescue Service.

Going 'way beyond'

Fire and Rescue volunteers are about more than fighting fires, but they do that, too

When people think of volunteer firefighters, they often conjure up the image of a Keystone Cops-type of group, hanging off a horse-drawn contraption and pumping water by hand when they arrive at a fire.

The Ramara Fire and Rescue Service is anything but.

Our fire service traces its roots back to 1958, when it started as the Mara Fire Service. In 1992, that service amalgamated with Rama's to become today's department.

The service, staffed by two Township employees and 60 volunteer fire professionals and led by a chief with more than 40 years of experience, has seen a rise from 409 fire and emergency calls in 2004 to 512 in 2009, an increase of 25 per cent. Structure, chimney and outdoor fires represented only six per cent of the total calls.

"We credit the small number of fires to our use of the newest technology and the very aggressive fire prevention campaigns that we practise," says Tony Stong, Ramara's fire services administrator. "These campaigns include an active school program that partners with the Children's Safety Village out of Orillia.

"The service provides inspections with regard to home safety, wood stove installation and vendor licensing."

There is also a public safety awareness program in which volunteers go to rural fairs and community events to demonstrate the "fire house"



By **KEVIN LEHMAN**

*Community
Correspondent*

and advise residents on home safety. The Township website has links to safety pamphlets and a section of frequently asked questions for residents.

The service has a six-year history of partnering with Stepan Canada to produce an educational program. With the financial support of Stepan, the department trains all Grade 8 students in Ramara in first aid and CPR.

Vaughan Hansen, president of Stepan Canada, says his company is pleased to support the effort, but points out that the personnel of Ramara Fire and Rescue are the real heroes.

"They go way beyond their standard requirements to ensure the safety of Ramara residents. By training 120 to 130 eighth graders each year, Ramara Fire is guaranteeing that a large percentage of the population is trained to save lives. This can't help but pay off in the future."

While the Fire and Rescue Service's primary function is to deal with fires within our commu-

nity, it is also involved in emergency rescue on land and water. About 70 per cent of the calls handled by the service are either medical assists or motor vehicle accidents.

In 2009, the balance of all calls was made up of burn complaints (37), false alarms (33), Hazmat or Co2 calls (16), ice/water rescues (14), downed electrical wires (8), and 11 other miscellaneous emergency situations.

When a call is made to 911 in Ramara and the surrounding area, it goes to a Central Emergency Response Bureau in Orillia. Radio dispatch then relays the call to the responding services.

Ambulances that serve Ramara come from the Simcoe County service in Orillia or Rama EMS. Any time there is a threat-to-life situation in Ramara, Fire and Rescue responds, consistently arriving at scenes before local ambulance services.

Ramara Fire has three stations, the largest and busiest of which, Station 1, is at Highway 12 and County Road 47 in Brechin. Station 2 is at the corner of Patricia and Balsam streets in Atherley and No. 3 is at Highway 169 and Switch Road in the north.

Equipment is highly maintained, and consists of three pumpers, three tankers, five rescue vehicles, an airboat, three marine units (12-foot, 15-foot and 26-foot), a reserve pumper, two ATVs and a 50-foot aerial unit.

(Continued on next page)

Fire-rescue volunteers on call 24/7

(Continued from previous page)

The 2011 capital forecast for the Township currently shows the addition of a 95-foot aerial unit expected to cost \$750,000.

Volunteers are on call 24/7. They carry pagers, and whether at their regular job or at rest on the weekend, they respond to as many calls as possible. The service has 60 volunteers, 20 assigned to each of the three stations, and when a call goes out, it is hoped that 30 will show up.

The need for co-operation from employers is high. In August last year, a thank you was posted on the Ramara Township website from the mayor and council and members of the Ramara Fire and Rescue Services to show their appreciation to all the businesses and corporations that employ the firefighting staff.

"Our greatest asset is our people, our volunteers," Stong says.

The Ramara Fire and Rescue Service holds the distinction of having highest percentage of female personnel in Simcoe County. Of the 62 in the service, 11 are women.

"Chief Conway put Ramara on the map with his progressive attitude toward female firefighters," says Marianne Mask, an educational assistant for the Simcoe District School Board. "Sometimes you don't need a six-foot-tall firefighter. Sometimes a smaller person is better suited to work in a confined space."

"The province mandated that at least 10 per cent of our service had to be female," Conway says.

Ramara's percentage is about 20.

"Female personnel have worked out very well for us," he says. "They are very dedicated and hard working."

Volunteer firefighters come from all walks of life: an airplane mechanic, a manager at a manufacturing company, plumbers, mechanics, electricians and a furnace repair technician to name a



few. All bring their work and personal skills to the volunteer position.

They don't do it for the money. The average firefighter earns about \$6,000 a year.

So why do they do it?

"I became a volunteer firefighter because I

wanted to see what it was about," Mask says, "and to give back to our community."

Leanne Marshall, a Ramara Township employee and secretary for Fire and Rescue, is also a volunteer firefighter. "One of the main reasons I signed on to be a volunteer was to help people," she says. "I admired the people I worked with on the roster before I applied. (Fire Chief) Ted Conway, Tony Stong and Dave McCarthy are all wonderful men in the community, to their families and their peers — hard working, honest people. I am proud of all of our firefighters."

Fire and rescue is a serious business, but it can have its lighter side. Stong tells the story of an incident when the local service was helping in the testing of life rafts on Lake Simcoe.

"A deHaviland Dash 8 aircraft would fly over Lake Simcoe and drop rafts and we would pick them up with one of our marine units so that they could be examined.

"We forgot to co-ordinate with police and some well-intentioned citizens were concerned with this air-drop-pickup activity and called them. When we arrived back at our dock we were met by an OPP SWAT team.

"Not one of our finest hours."

Volunteers in the Ramara service train and maintain the same standards as all services across the province. "Our service is very focused on training" Stong says.

"We feel our personnel rate among the best trained in the country. Our personnel meet the same standards as Orillia, Barrie or Toronto. If that weren't so, we would not be practicing our due diligence."

All volunteers train according to the curriculum of the Ontario Fire College, working toward a minimum of a Level 1 certification. This certification involves training in 22 different modules and a volunteer must have at least seven modules completed before they are allowed to engage in active fire suppression. Ramara's service currently has 70 per cent of its personnel with at least Level 1 certification.

Level 2 certification involves training for specialty areas such as aerial work or hazardous material handling.

Attending courses at the Ontario Fire College is essential to the continuing education of fire and rescue staff. "I attend because it allows me to meet others in the same field," Mask says. "We all have something different to bring to the table."

The service continues to grow and evolve.

On Nov. 15, 2008, Ramara was awarded a fire department water tanker shuttle accreditation for all three stations, resulting in lower insurance costs for residents not serviced by hydrants.

A survey is currently under way by Underwriter Laboratories that is expected to show there should be at least two full-time personnel on duty at Station 1 at all times.

"I believe that the future growth of this township will dictate that we need some full time people," Stong says.

In the meantime, fire and rescue duties are carried out by these dedicated volunteers.

Volunteer and Washago resident Kevin Lehman can be reached at jkev0721@yahoo.com.

Chief celebrates 40 years with local service

By KEVIN LEHMAN

A surprise celebration was held by the Ramara Firefighters' Association earlier this year for Chief Ted Conway to mark his 40 years with Ramara Fire and Rescue.

More than 80 well-wishers gathered at Fire Station 1 in Brechin on Jan. 13 to celebrate the milestone. Guests included Mayor Bill Duffy, councillors John Appleby, John O'Donnell and Erica Neher, the chief's family and friends, firefighters and their spouses.

Conway was described as a kind and gentle man who would give the shirt off his back to someone in need, and who is seen by his staff as a leader, decision maker and motivator.

"Ted is a man of integrity and selflessness, and he leads by example" said Tony Stong, Ramara's fire services administrator and fire prevention officer.

"His firefighters will follow Ted into the dragon's belly, not because of some mandated



Ted Conway

legislation, some obscure standard or best practice, but rather because they support his vision of fellowship to all, and to answer a neighbour in need. Ted exemplifies the true meaning of a leader, holding his leadership not merely in title but rather by the respect and support of his followers," Stong said.

Conway's specific start date is a little obscure. Back in the late 1960s, he developed an interest in becoming a member of the Mara Fire Department, so he joined its ranks. In a time of perhaps less scrupulous efforts in tracking start dates, his name wasn't etched into the membership pages until Oct. 1, 1969.

Within 10 years he became a captain, and on June 13, 1986, he was promoted to the rank of Deputy Chief. In 1992, after the retirement of his predecessor, Chief Clarence Steele, Ted Conway

became Chief Conway, and following the amalgamation of Rama and Mara in 1994, continued his role under the newly named Ramara Fire and Rescue Service.

In his 40-plus years, Conway has seen and done much.

"I recall some great highs and lows" he says. "One was the loss of Jesse Armitage, a firefighter, in a fire in 1981. Another was the loss of 10 people to fires in one year back in the 1970s. Five were from a fire in Uptergrove, two from Joyland Beach and three more in a fire that we assisted at in Brock Township."

The Chief also talked about success.

"Back in 2003 we had a major derailment in Gamebridge," he said. "We contained a sulfuric acid spill and put out all of the spot fires within two hours. It went just like it was supposed to because everyone did their job well."

At 64, Conway has confirmed that he has no immediate plans to retire.



Rolling stones

More than two million metric tonnes of aggregate leave Ramara each year, most of it destined for the GTA

By ROB McCORMICK
Managing Editor

Each day in the busy season, April through December, the fleets of trucks rumble through the early morning, leaving Ramara under the weight of thousands of metric tonnes of gravel and other varieties of crushed stone.

In 2008, Ramara produced more than 2.4 million metric tonnes of aggregate, part of Simcoe County's production of 12.1 million tonnes. The county was and is the most prolific aggregate-producing municipality in the province, according to production statistics compiled by the Ontario Aggregate Resources Corporation. Within Simcoe County, Oro Medonte and Severn townships, at 2.7 and 2.5 million tonnes respectively, led Ramara in production.

As growth in the GTA continues, local production numbers can only be expected to rise in the

future, industry experts predict.

"We have already used up most of the available reserves close to market for Toronto," says Moreen Miller, president of the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association.

"The city hasn't produced stone for decades," she said, "because we've mined it all out, so it's largely a rural sort of GTA fringe business now."

"Production and output are based on supply and demand, and we respond to demand. Strong growth in the last decade in Ontario means higher demand. Growth, while not as robust perhaps, is expected to continue, so Ramara will increase its contribution to the production in the greater Toronto area as sources closer to market continue to dwindle. As resources are used up, we have to move farther away from source, and Brechin is one of those sources for the GTA."

(Continued on Page 8)





Photos by
GAIL SMITH

Chronicle photographer Gail Smith paid a visit to the Lafarge Canada quarry south of Brechin in March to get these shots. In the main photo at the top of Page 6, trucks are loading rock from a 37-metric-tonne blast. The red drill in the top left corner of the photo drills holes in the rockface which are then filled with explosive. The insert photo shows a closer view of the trucks loading the rock.



Demand for aggregate growing

(Continued from page 6)

"Absolutely," Miller said, "the pressure will continue to be on Simcoe County and Ramara. There is no question."

In February, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources released a report, *The State of the Aggregate Industry in Ontario*, which addresses, among other issues, future growth and demand.

Over the past 20 years, it states, Ontario has consumed more than three billion tonnes of aggregate, an average of 164 million tonnes per year.

"Given projected levels of economic and population growth, future consumption projections average about 186 million tonnes per year over the next 20 years, or 13 per cent higher than in the past 20 years."

The report notes that the GTA uses about one third of all the aggregate consumed in Ontario each year. And while overall use has increased, usage on a per capita basis, about 14 tonnes per year, has declined slightly, a trend that is expected to continue as the province's population density increases.

Any discussion of the aggregate industry revolves around one simple point: We all need it.

"People come in contact with aggregate in so many different ways every day and they don't even realize it," says Andrea Bourrie, property and resource manager for Dufferin Aggregates. "It's the roads we drive on. You turn on the tap, and the water is coming through some sort of a concrete pipe. The schools, the hospitals, the arenas, the swimming pools, the houses, factories, offices, they all need aggregate."

"We have so much to contribute to the quality of life we enjoy that people don't necessarily always make a connection. They see the big trucks, and get concerned about noise and blasting. But sometimes we need to understand that this is an industrial activity, and conscientious operators strive to go beyond the minimum compliance in order to minimize impact on our neighbours and our communities. But at the end of the day, we all need this material. We have to find a way to work together to make sure that we can have it."

Admittedly, working together has not always been the top priority of either the industry or those who oppose quarries on environmental grounds, but that has changed.

Marlene Yakabuski, vice-president, corporate affairs for the Bot Construction Group, which opened its first quarry last year in Ramara, points to the aggregate association's meeting in February.

"It ended with a joint panel of representatives from environmental groups and natural scientists with various commercial operators alike, speaking about how (we) go forward together."

"That's a real movement over time, from what may have been a far more polarized relationship. It's a recognition on all sides that sustainability has to acknowledge that we all live on this planet, and we have a need for and a demand for resources, so it really is about a communal responsibility to manage them well. I think that speaks to a real movement to a more collaborative, collective awareness of what the issues are and approaches to resolving them."



David A. Homer

"There was a standoff kind of approach to it," says Jeremy Chessell, plant manager at Lafarge Canada's 1,300-acre Brechin quarry.

"Neither side really wanted to see eye to eye on what needed to be done," he said.

"There's a right way and a wrong way of doing what we do. There is a very large cost to doing it the right way, and I think our point of view has been that we don't mind doing things the right way, and it's the responsible way to be a steward of the land."

"We earmark a lot of money as we are extracting material. We know what our rehab costs are going forward in order to rehabilitate the mine site."

That's accrued right from day one, when we start extracting.

"We are trying to look very far ahead."

"At one point, at least at the community level, people were pretty polarized," says Ron Reid, the Carden program co-ordinator for the Couchiching Conservancy.

More recently, both the industry and environmentalists have developed a less contentious approach, he says.

"It's been an evolution in terms of the degree of maturity within the environmental groups and an evolution in attitude within the industry," he says.

"Environmental groups and organizations have discovered that there is a lot of value in sitting down and talking directly with their counterparts on the industry side, and that it is often possible to work out some kind of a compromise through a more collaborative approach."

In 1990, Ontario's Aggregate Resources Act came into effect. It is considered significant because it consolidated and strengthened existing legislation and introduced more stringent rehabilitation requirements. It also formalized a deeper understanding of the need to take a longer view, which Miller says had already started to become more common in the industry.

"The act was a streamlining," Miller says, "and a recognition that the industry had grown and changed, and that the legislation should be more

strict, prescriptive and should raise the standards of the industry."

Earlier legislation did not require, for example, that "progressive rehabilitation" be completed, Miller says.

"It was a dawning understanding that there were two things: One was that many of the early sites were licensed without detailed geological information, and as time went on we understood better as an industry that we needed to test the deposits before we mined in certain directions on the site. There was an emerging understanding of how we could run our sites better environmentally and economically, and we understood more clearly that rehabilitating a site progressively was better from both perspectives."

Even prior to the act, Miller said, "the industry had largely begun to practise progressive rehabilitation, and the industry and government said we should put this into legislation because we believe it's a better way for a number of reasons."

The act, she said, "raised the bar."

In arriving at the point where progressive rehabilitation became the norm, the aggregate industry took a lesson from agriculture, Miller says.

"We are a resource-based industry based in the rural parts of Ontario, where landowners understand how land should be managed," she said. "For example, in agriculture, you can do intensive agriculture for a little while, but you need to let the land rest. So you can put heavy duty crops on it and then let it sit fallow for a year, or you can manage that progressively."

"The aggregate industry started to understand that having a 100-acre pit and only using 10 acres and having 50 acres sit without anything growing on it didn't make sense. So they said we are going to put this back into active agricultural at one point in time, so why not do it now?"

The advantages of progressive rehabilitation are twofold, Miller says.

"Economically, when you have to take stone or sand and gravel out of the ground you have to strip off the topsoil and overburden that isn't used, and have to store it somewhere. You can store it in a big pile, but it only makes sense to take that and move that material only once, and put it in its final resting place on another part of the site where you have already finished extraction."

On the environmental side, she said, "it also makes good sense because we have issues to contend with on site. Sometimes dust can become a problem, and largely dust comes off roads and stockpiles, but if you can minimize the amount of your landscape that's not covered by vegetation, then you can significantly reduce the amount of dust."

"Those are the kinds of things that began to become part of our consciousness as we grew as an industry, so we understood that we weren't just there to mine the deposit for the day. We were there to take care of the land while we owned it and create a new landscape when we were finished."

Rob McCormick is the managing editor of The Ramara Chronicle. He can be reached at ramara.chronicle@rogers.com.



David A. Homer

The Land Between

By **RAE FLEMING**

Our relationship with the aggregate industry is complex and complicated. We complain. We organize. We hold up signs. We often spend inordinate amounts of money in attempts to stop or slow down development of the industry.



By **RAE FLEMING**

And yet we have built our civilization on gravel. The very roads we drive on are built on beds of gravel, and the town or city to which we are heading could not have been built without gravel. Each house, each skyscraper, each sports stadium, hospital, sewage treatment plant and so on is sitting on gravel.

We live here in a small part of a great ribbon of limestone bedrock, often called The Land Between, that extends, more or less, from Georgian Bay to Kingston. It is now one of the most important sources of aggregate in Ontario. The industry in Ramara can only grow.

The Land Between is also, as Mike Hendren, executive director of the Kawartha Heritage Conservancy (KHC), points out, one of the most biodiverse regions of Canada. Birders congregate from all parts of the world to marvel not only at the rare birds but also at the unique and vibrant landscape, plants, animals, reptiles and amphibians of the area. The Carden Plain is known around the world. Parts of it, however, are designated for aggregate purposes. Clashes between environmentalists and the aggregate industry are inevitable.

These differences are nothing new. Even though there were ministry standards and regulations in the 1970s and '80s, many citizens worried that the government of Ontario exercised little control over the industry. The Pits and Quarries Act of 1984, for instance, is deemed today by the office

of the Environment Commissioner of Ontario, to have been "not entirely successful." As well as water, noise and dust levels, environmentalists, who grew in number during the 1970s and '80s, were concerned about "rehabilitation." In other words, aggregate companies often failed to plant trees and ground cover to erase the scars left by the industry.

Hence the Aggregate Resources Act of 1990, which was designed to give regulators from the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) more teeth, as well as to indicate clearly to the aggregate industry what government expected from them. The Act, for example, gave the MNR the power to appoint inspectors, who might enter, "at any reasonable time, any land, vessel or business premises that is or appears to be used or has or appears to have been used in respect of a pit or quarry or any activity or used related to aggregate or rehabilitation." The Act continues for some 36 pages.

A few years ago, I was asked to testify at one such hearing held by the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) at the request of a group of people in a village near where I live. The OMB always attempts to head off a costly hearing by bringing together the warring parties for a form of mediation. However, in this case, the citizens refused to talk to the pit owner. Had they hired a good lawyer, he probably would have advised compromise.

As I sat in the hearing room, where an OMB official heard arguments and rebuttals, I realized why, in most cases, the public has little chance of completely stopping aggregate development. On one side was a knowledgeable lawyer who had a financial interest in the pit in question; and on the other, an artist who acted as his own lawyer.

I was asked by the artist to testify that gravel pits and heritage are not compatible. The residents were afraid that trucks would damage the built heritage of the village, and that the blasting would destroy water supplies. "The trucks will destroy the very fabric of this village," I argued earnestly. The lawyer for the defence kindly pointed out that his trucks would not go through the village. He wondered if I had examined route maps, and whether I had visited the pit itself. "No," I answered sheepishly.

The lawyer for the defence kindly pointed out that his trucks would not go through the village. He wondered if I had examined route maps, and whether I had visited the pit itself. 'No,' I answered sheepishly.

Of course the quarry side won the long hearing, but with conditions. Today the owner follows the regulations of the Act of 1990, as well as the conditions established by the judge's report. For instance, he lets the nearby residents know in advance of any blasting, and he constantly rehabilitates the area by planting trees, shrubs and groundcover. There has never been a problem with ground water. And the buildings have survived intact.

Since we will continue to need aggregate, what of the future? Will these confrontations continue? Will the OMB be overwhelmed by appeals? One lawyer I talked to was pessimistic. "The Act of 1990 did nothing to mediate the differences," he told me.

On the other hand, there are glimmers of hope, and Ron Reid, in his accompanying article, points to the Couchiching Conservancy's Carden Community Forum.

We need the aggregate industry, and the industry knows that it needs our goodwill. And of course we all need to protect the endangered species of the Carden Plain and elsewhere. These creatures and plants are, in a sense, the canaries in the coalmine. If they disappear, will human beings be far behind?

Rae Fleming is an Argyle historian and biographer who is eagerly awaiting the publication of his biography of Peter Gzowski. He can be reached at rb.fleming@bell.net.

Buying by the slab

Local company provides dimensional stone for use in landscaping, shoreline work

By **ROB McCORMICK**
Managing Editor

Compared to the large aggregate companies in Ramara, A Cut Above Natural Stone is a small operation with big stones.

The 14-year-old company on Concession B-C off Highway 169 employs 10 full-time workers from April through December, supplying armour stone in various widths and thicknesses for uses such as landscaping and the construction of retaining walls, shorelines and retention ponds.

Technically, A Cut Above is not part of the aggregate industry, but it is in the same basic business as the quarries: extracting rock from the earth. The main difference is that the dimensional stone is sold in large pieces, while the aggregate companies specialize in making little rocks out of big ones.

The other difference is that the aggregate companies blast their product from the rock face. A Cut Above, on the other hand, peels the rock off in layers.

"Everything we pull out is extracted with an excavator," says Gerald Ross, the company's quarry manager. "The bucket goes into the layers," he says. "We just go in and pull the stone right up."

Depending on its use, the rock is sold in thicknesses ranging from three to 24 inches.

"We sell to customers who just want to do landscaping and we sell to big commercial companies in the city and all through southern Ontario. We did a big job for the casino in Niagara Falls and we did a riverbed in Oakville."

There was also a shipment of 50 tonnes of large stones a couple of summers ago that were used in a landscaping project at an amusement park in South Carolina.

The company, which is licensed to ship 100,000 metric tonnes a year, is planning to upgrade its licence, intending to sell some of its waste rock to be crushed and sold as aggregate.

"It's just a side venture for us right now," Ross says, "but hopefully it takes off, and we will have to upgrade our licence to do that."

Ross, a former aggregate trucker who used to haul for companies like Dufferin Aggregates and Lafarge, has worked at a Cut Above for 10 years.



Rob McCormick

Gerald Ross, quarry manager at A Cut Above Natural Stone, with excavating equipment.

He runs a fleet of four to six trucks that make two trips daily, often starting well before the crack of dawn.

"The guys are usually on the road bright and early," he says. "Most of our deliveries are 7 a.m. deliveries, so they would leave around 4:30 or 5 a.m., and are usually back here about 10:30. Then they get loaded and go back out to do a second trip."

Most of A Cut Above's product has the rough, rustic look of natural stone that appeals to landscapers. But there are exceptions.

In a quarry parking area, he looks down at the surface he is standing on. It looks man-made, but it isn't.

"I asked our geologist how come it's so smooth," he explains, "and he said at one time the glacier moved and just kind of polished the top of the rock. It goes through the entire quarry. We sold quite a bit of it. People like the nice, smooth top on it."

"You'd almost swear someone had come in and paved it or poured concrete on it."

That's pretty natural.

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Quarrying traced to 1830s

By **ADRIENNE DAVIES**
Community Correspondent

When Mara was surveyed in the early 1800s it was disparaged as a land of swamps with little arable land between. Rama, surveyed from the east, was much the same, with some timber stands and outcroppings of stone between the marshes. But hidden beneath a thin layer of soil was a resource that would lead to the development of the manufacturing base which extends into the present day.

Our local quarries provide stone for building roads or landscaping. Blasting breaks tonnes of rock away from its bed and the crushers create various sizes of stone for industry. Heavy trucks haul from daybreak to dusk.

Some 150 years and more ago, the process was a lot simpler — get the stone out of the ground and break it up. It was also more complicated — feed the growing demand in the south from undeveloped land in the north without the aid of modern transportation methods.

In 1835, Allen McPherson and his family settled at Appins Place on Lake Couchiching. When their original log home at the lakeshore burned down, he built a substantial house of the stone quarried from his land. The family farmed some 600 acres, but demand grew for stone and lime, and the quarrying business in Rama had begun. Soon, other companies opened quarries in the area, shipping limestone and some marble on barges from the shores of Lake Couchiching to the south of Lake Simcoe

Because it is so readily prepared by heating limestone, it made sense to complete the process of lime-making locally. One of the kilns was built down the face of the cliff at Table Rock (in modern-day Geneva Park). The processed lime dropped down onto the shoreline where it was



Pioneer memorial by the former United Church in Longford Mills.

loaded for shipping.

With the coming of the railway, operations moved farther inland. Blasting operations started at the edge of the Carden plain in the Brechin area. Some smaller businesses came and went throughout both townships, as revealed by abandoned quarries and vine-covered lime kilns in evidence today. At one time there were at least four quarries and lime operations in the Longford area alone, with boarding houses and homes for the workers. Longford stone was chosen for many building projects such as the Provincial Parlia-

As long as the means and the demand remain, Ramara will continue to be an important supplier of limestone products for our community and beyond.

ment buildings, the Martyr's Shrine in Midland, and locally the Church of the Guardian Angels.

In 1970 the Longford Lions Club retrieved a set of stones hand-cut by pioneer quarrymen and erected them in a memorial to Longford pioneers by the United Church, placing on top of them the bell from S.S. No. 7 Rama School east of Ramona.

In recent years the limestone business has been under attack from those who object to the noise and the destruction of habitats as well as the carbon dioxide released by the liming process. However, the industry spends huge amounts of time and money on addressing these problems. The by-products of their trade are an important part of our lives — from cement and aggregates to toothpaste, glass, gum, plastics, crayons, paper and acid neutralizers. As long as the means and the demand remain, Ramara will continue to be an important supplier of limestone products for our community and beyond.

Chronicle file photo

Adrienne Davies is the secretary of the Ramara Historical Society. She can be reached at bamdavies@yahoo.ca. The society meets the third Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at the Ramara Centre.

Aggregate companies support local causes

Area aggregate companies place a high value on community involvement, spokespersons for the companies say.

The Dufferin Aggregates Carden quarry hosts bi-annual open houses that have drawn up to 400 people, and participates in the annual Carden Nature Festival, which will be held June 4-6 this year.

The Carden quarry is on Ramara's border in the City of Kawartha Lakes.

It employs about 20 people in the local plant,

says Andrea Bourrie, Dufferin's property and resource manager.

Each year during Earth Week in April, the company participates in a tree-planting program with local public school students, who have planted more than 4,000 native tree species supplied by the company over the years.

Local groups benefitting from the company's policy on community involvement include the Brechin Public School literacy program, Ramara Youth Soccer Club, the Ramara FunFest, Royal

Canadian Legion Branch 488 in Brechin, the Carden Snodrifters snowmobile club and the Foley Catholic School breakfast program.

The Lafarge Canada Inc. quarry in Brechin sponsors or contributes to a number of local groups and events including the Ramara FunFest, the Royal Canadian Legion, the OPP Safety Village, Ramara Youth Soccer, Brechin Public School, Foley Catholic School, the Carden Old Tyme Fiddle Contest and the Ramara Fire and Rescue Service.

Life after quarries *Rehabilitation projects can lead to spectacular results*

By **ROB McCORMICK**
Managing Editor

At the February annual meeting of the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association in Toronto, the City of Brampton received the association's Bronze Plaque Award for the park system that now inhabits former quarrying sites in that city.

The Esker Park System, a series of interconnected parks stretching over seven kilometres throughout the city, was created from 12 former gravel pits.

"It's a premier example of how our industry should rehabilitate, says association president Moreen Miller. "Brampton, through having a very comprehensive vision of what they wanted to achieve with the industry, saw that they had a deposit that ran through the city, and they said we're going to take the sand and gravel out and build our city and when we are finished, we would like to have a linear park system.

"They sat down with the industry and said this is what we want you to build for us. Can you build this? And the industry said yes, we can."

The park system is the result of 40 years of planning, Miller said.

"With a vision and an understanding of what you're mining to in the long run, we can all achieve a really great park system like Brampton did. It's within the grasp of every municipality in which we operate. But the key in Brampton was that the industry and the municipality were able to

"We can create pretty much anything the public wants to see there, as long as we have that collaborative effort and long-term vision."

OSSGA president Moreen Miller

get together and sit down and talk."

The Esker Park system is just one example of quarry rehabilitation projects that have led to spectacular results.

Among them is the Eagles Nest Golf Club in Maple, Ont., a converted sand and gravel quarry. The 235-acre course is ranked among the top 10 nationally by GolfClubAtlas.com, a site devoted to golf-course architecture that describes Eagles Nest as "arguably the best modern course in Canada."

Professor's Lake, also in Brampton, won the Bronze Plaque in 1976. The former sand and gravel pit was produced by extracting sand and gravel below the water table. The 100-acre pit was first opened in 1918, later closed for a time and re-opened again in 1954. The operation ceased in 1973.

Today the 65-acre, spring-fed lake is surrounded by a residential community, and is used for sailing, windsurfing, fishing and non-motor-

ized boats. Other recreational pursuits include the beach, waterslide, volleyball, tennis, playgrounds, a lakeside pathway for walking, bicycling or in-line-skating, and ice-skating in the winter.

"There are lots of other examples, Miller says.

"Christie Pits, Conn Smythe Park, there are all kinds of examples in Toronto where former aggregate operations have provided public open space. That's long standing.

"The difference is that before, we were thinking about soccer pitches and baseball diamonds and grassy area. Now we're building Class 1 wetlands and staging areas for migrating birds, and participating in recovery plans for endangered species.

"We can create pretty much anything the public wants to see there, as long as we have that collaborative effort and long-term vision."

In Ramara, much of the limestone lies below the water level, which is why many of its quarries are destined to become lakes, anywhere from 75 to 200 years from now.

"Where Ramara has a fantastic opportunity," Miller says, "is that they are able to look to the future and figure out how they want those lakes to exist. Do they want them to be fisheries, or pristine wildlife habitat for aquatic birds? There is a lot of vision that can go into creating those types of things."

Could Ramara some day see something like the Esker Park System here? "Absolutely," Miller says.

Quarries pay levies, taxes to Township

The larger aggregate companies in the township include Lafarge Canada Inc., Dufferin Aggregates, James Dick Aggregates, Bot Construction and the Miller Group.

Conservative estimates put the industry's local work force at about 150.

The Lafarge quarry just south of Brechin, among the Township's largest in terms of area at 1,300 acres, employs 27 people, says plant manager Jeremy Chessell. Last year's payroll was \$1.5 million.

"Typically that number would be quite a bit higher, but last year we had a lot less overtime because construction was having a bit of a slow year last year," Chessell said.

The quarry was opened in the late 1970s by Standard Aggregates, which was taken over by Lafarge in the 1990s.

"There are quite a few quarries in the area that are staffed similarly to ours, so that figure (150) wouldn't surprise me," he said.

As well, the quarries provide work for hundreds of truckers, local and otherwise, who transport their product out of the township.

Quarries pay a levy of 11.5 cents for every metric tonne of aggregate they truck out. Of that, six cents goes to the Township.

In 2008, Ramara received about \$147,700 in per-tonne levies, according to figures provided by The Ontario Aggregate Resources Corporation

(TOARC), which was incorporated in 1997 to act as trustee of the Aggregate Resources Trust. The trust bills and collects the aggregate levy, some of which goes to the province, as well as to TOARC's Abandoned Pit and Quarry Rehabilitation Fund.

In addition to the levies, quarries make a significant contribution to the local tax base. Lafarge, for example, paid \$53,660 in Township taxes in 2009.

A study released last year by the Canadian Urban Institute attempts to quantify the economic impact of the aggregate industry by profiling a hypothetical plant producing \$2 million tonnes a year.

The study, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Understanding the foundations of Ontario's built future*, forecast numbers over the next quarter century. It concluded that its model quarry would produce more than 1,980 person-years of employment, labour income of \$90.3 million in Ontario and a contribution of \$134.9 million to the province's gross domestic product over that time.

The hypothetical quarry would also pay an estimated \$13.9 million in municipal property taxes, and generate tax revenues of \$20.8 million for the province and \$23.1 million federally.

There are more than 4,400 acres of land licensed for aggregate extraction in Ramara, split among 22 licenses.

The operators, TOARC says, may have additional land held for future licensing.

— Rob McCormick

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Bringing people together

Carden Community Forum addresses issues affecting environmentally significant area

Much of Ramara is founded on shallow bedrock. While that rock may have been a curse to early farmers, it is a valuable resource to companies in the aggregate business.

At least half-a-dozen aggregate operators, including some of the biggest in the business, now haul crushed stone and landscape rocks out of the township. Over the past decade, Ramara has become a major supply area for aggregate in the Greater Toronto Area, and that trend is almost certain to continue. As environmental restrictions tighten in traditional supply areas on the Niagara Escarpment and Oak Ridges Moraine, demand in our area will grow.



By **RON REID**

Carden Field Naturalists

The main attraction is the Carden limestone plain, which includes much of Ramara south of Monck Road and Lake St. John, as well as former Carden Township to the east. Beyond their existing operations, quarry companies have purchased large tracts of farmland and forest, especially in southwest Carden and northwest of Sebright. Applications for new or expanded licenses, along with the contentious battles and Ontario Municipal Board hearings, are the inevitable result.

As anyone who has been part of these battles can attest, the process is lengthy, costly, complicated, and intensely frustrating. Local residents worry about truck traffic, noise, dust, and effects on their water supply and the value of their homes. Environmentalists worry about the loss of the natural habitats that make the Carden Plain such a special place.

The Couchiching Conservancy, a land trust organization based in Orillia, has been instrumental in developing a new way to address the conflicts that come with quarries.

The conservancy was among the first to document the ecological values of the Carden Plain, and to recognize the threats posed by expanding quarries. Three different types of ecological significance come together here:

Where soils are very shallow, primarily in the central parts of Carden Township, specialized communities of plants called alvars have formed. Alvars are globally imperilled, so they are a high priority for conservation.

Much of the Carden Plain is used for cattle grazing, which helps maintain extensive grasslands. These areas are excellent habitat for grassland birds such as upland sandpipers and eastern meadowlarks – a group of species that is fast declining across North America.

The Carden Plain hosts at least 15 designated species-at-risk, from endangered loggerhead shrikes to Blanding's turtles to Whip-poor-wills.



Photos by Larry Kirtley

Clockwise, from top left: an eastern meadowlark, an upland sandpiper and an eastern loggerhead shrike, some of the species that inhabit the Carden Plain.

Starting in 2005, the conservancy began bringing these natural features to the attention of both the community and the aggregate industry, in the hope that future quarry development could avoid the critical areas as much as possible. Both the Conservancy and industry reps recognized that other important community concerns had to be addressed as well. The result was the formation of an ongoing discussion group called the Carden Community Forum, which continues to meet several times a year.

The idea behind the forum is simple: By bringing together people with a range of conflicting interests, can we break down some of the barriers and try to find new and better ways of resolving our differences? While the government-based processes such as Official Plans and OMB hearings are still essential, this resolutely non-government approach seemed to also offer some promise.

The Forum began by inviting representatives from community and environmental groups, aggregate companies, ranchers and landowners to a day-long session that identified their most urgent concerns. Three public workshops followed, to look in more depth at issues such as groundwater and planning designations. Eventually the Conser-

vancy produced an integrated strategy based on input from the forum, as well as a more detailed analysis of where the most important natural habitats are located.

These results, while far from perfect, have been major steps forward. The forum generally accepted that future quarries will be an inevitable part of this landscape, but the key is locating them in the right places, preferably in clusters. Forum participants highlighted the strong linkage between a viable beef grazing industry and grassland birds, leading to financial assistance programs to help farmers replace fences and create new water supplies. One of the key tasks for 2010 is to strengthen the information base on grassland birds and species-at-risk in Ramara, where less ecological work has been done in the past.

The Carden Community Forum is open to anyone with an interest. For more information, contact the Couchiching Conservancy at ronreid@couchconservancy.ca.

Washago resident Ron Reid is the Carden program co-ordinator for the Couchiching Conservancy. He can be reached at the above email.

Fossils found next door

Fossils are remains or imprints of living creatures from an earlier geologic age.

There are many places in Ontario where you can hunt for them, but they can also be found right under our noses, adjacent to Ramara, at the Dufferin Aggregates Carden Quarry, six kilometres east of Brechin off County Road 47.



By **GAIL SMITH**
The Nature Nut

The quarry does not allow individuals on to the site, but they will accommodate larger groups by appointment, which enables them to offer a much safer environment.

They will blast the rock, then move it to a flat confined site within the quarry to be combed through for fossils. Staff supervise and answer any questions.

People from all over Ontario and beyond have been to the quarry in search of fossils.

Some, such as crinoid fossils, which were originally marine organisms, have graced the oceans for more than 500 million years, when the Carden Plain was a reef under a shallow, tropical sea.

Fossil enthusiasts come for the thrill of the hunt and hope to find a prized specimen among the rubble.

They get dirty, but they don't care. Scuffed knees and dusty hands are just part of the fun. Sturdy footwear is a must.

I had the opportunity to join one of these groups at the Carden Nature Festival last year, a very informative outing led by Giovanni Pari, an avid collector from Ottawa who has studied fossils extensively, in particular the ones found in quarries around Carden and Brechin.

The fossil hunt will again be on the list of activ-



Rob McCormick

Fossils can be polished (above) and made into jewellery or other pieces.

Serious collectors abound, and most have a multitude of tools for cleaning and polishing their fossils.

ities at the June festival. Information can be found at www.CardenGuide.com/Festival.

Although I didn't find anything on my hunt, a few people in our group did, and had their finds identified by Pari.

As well as the crinoids, other fossils can also be found including the asteroids, or starfish, brachiopods which are similar to a clam, bryozoans, which are minute animals living in tubes of calcium carbonate, crystoids that look like flowers and trilobites, which are similar to a small crab.

Serious collectors abound, and most have a multitude of tools for cleaning and polishing their fossils such as grinders, fine sandblasters, cutting tools and microscopes.

They are very proud of their treasures, and display them as decorating accents and art in their homes, as well as keeping smaller specimens catalogued and arranged in drawers.

Fossils can come from all over the world and can be purchased at rock shops and shows, and some are also made into jewellery, so even if you don't like to get down and dirty in a quarry, you can still enjoy the beauty of a fine piece which has been made into a necklace or bracelet, and appreciate the time and work involved getting it from its natural state at the quarry to the crafted piece you are wearing.

Lagoon City photographer and nature enthusiast Gail Smith can be reached at artsygail@rogers.com.



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A sketch of the exterior of the planned Township administration building.

Rights issue sped up plans for admin centre

By **KEVIN LEHMAN**
Community Correspondent

The settlement of a complaint to the province's Human Rights Tribunal has forced an acceleration in the construction of a new administration centre for Ramara Township.

Expansion to nearly triple fire hall space

The expansion to the Atherley Fire Hall is a 4,200-square-foot addition to the existing 2,328 square-foot structure.

After renovation the building will have two new bays, office space and men's and women's washrooms. There are currently only men's facilities.

The new fire hall will have training facilities and a meeting room that will be made available to non-profit and community service organizations.

The current structure has three bays housing four bays' worth of equipment.

When a new aerial unit is purchased in 2011, it will be stored at the No. 1 station in Brechin, and the service's existing 50-foot aerial unit will be in Atherley.

The tender for the Atherley expansion was expected to go to Township council approval in late March. Work is expected to begin by the end of this month and be completed in September.

— Kevin Lehman

"We have to do it, or the matter goes back to the tribunal" says Rick Bates, chief administrative officer for the Township.

"Non-compliance could result in the imposition of fines up to \$100,000 a day," he said.

The 2010 draft budget for Ramara Township shows a total expenditure increase of about \$2.9 million, of which \$2.6 million is being spent on two projects: the new administration centre and the expansion of Fire Hall No. 2 in Atherley.

The \$1.1 million for the fire hall has been in the capital forecast for several years.

What was not in the current capital forecast was the building of the new municipal offices/administration centre, which had been forecast to start in 2011 and finish in 2012.

Instead, the 2010 budget has allowed for the construction to begin a year early, and has allocated \$1.5 million for the project, which is expected to cost up to \$4.5 million.

Ontario's Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, which became law on Jan. 1, 2008, requires "all businesses or organizations that provide goods or services to the public or to other third parties in Ontario are legally required to comply with the requirements of the standard. Public sector organizations must comply with the standard by Jan. 1, 2010, and file their first accessibility report by March 31, 2010."

The Township of Ramara was unable to comply with those requirements, but was able to avoid penalties by agreeing to have a plan in place to build a new administration centre as soon as possible.

"We have worked hard to accommodate those who could not attend at our offices," Bates said.

"I went to people's houses when they could not come to us and I have lost count of the number of times I stood in the parking lot, sometimes in bad weather, to sign an affidavit."

The current municipal building

- Built in 1958 when Mara was part of Ontario County.
- Housed the Mara municipal offices, the Brechin OPP detachment and had a fire hall on the south side of the building.
- Council chambers and the clerk treasurer's office were upstairs.
- Council chambers doubled as the local court house.
- Ontario County dissolved in 1974 and Mara became part of Simcoe County.
- OPP moved out in 1978.
- Became Ramara Township Municipal Building in 1994 when Mara and Rama amalgamated.

The agreement with the province gave the township some breathing room, but that disappeared late in 2008, when a complaint was filed by a Ramara resident with the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal. The township was required to respond and the matter went to mediation in May 2009, and was handled behind closed doors.

The mediated settlement forced an acceleration of the timing. In order to avoid paying fines of up to \$100,000 a day for each day of non-compliance, Ramara agreed to have a shovel in the ground by fall 2010, and to open the doors to a completed new facility by fall 2011.

The estimated cost of the facility is between \$3.8 and \$4.5 million, shared equally among the township, the province and the federal government.

The 14,363-square-foot, single-storey building will almost double the square footage of the current municipal building.

The planning department will move to the new building, leaving the current planning building to environmental services, the department that handles water and waste water management.

Volunteer and Washago resident Kevin Lehman can be reached at jkev0721@yahoo.com.

A garden's skeleton

Plants and trees will fulfill their seasons in time. Eventually, structures and fences will crumble and fall. The only lasting element in the garden is stone; enduring the passage of time in its stately stubborn way. Stones are the bones of your garden. Like a skeletal structure, they support every-



By **SUZAN
BERTRAND**

Gardening

thing else. Good bone structure is the quintessential basis of beauty, so getting the stone placement right will make everything else you do practically fall into place. Even during the bleak winter, their cloaked undulation will provide visual interest and inspire recollection of spring's eternal promise.

Gravel is a small but mighty member of the rock family. Used as mulch, it has a crafty way of cheating your heat zone because it absorbs heat through the day and slowly releases it during the night. The Township of Ramara rests between zone 4b and extends to zone 5a as we approach the lakes. With the clever utilization of gravel mulch and taking advantage of the more temperate micro-climates in your garden you can increase your zone tolerance to a solid 5b. I have attempted to push the envelope to a 6, but this is not for the faint of heart. Losing expensive perennials and trees after years of nurturing can bring even the most seasoned gardener to tears.

Crushed rock comes in a variety of colours which can be put to inventive use. For example, you can create an optical illusion for plantings that lay in deep shade. Surrounding Hostas planted beneath a tree with white gravel mulch will draw the eye to the formerly dim area. Use bright gravel to help to accentuate shade loving plants wherever additional sparkle is required.

Moving up the size scale, larger rocks are indispensable for constructing raised beds. This type of garden has some definite advantages. Your back will thank you profusely. Since the garden sits higher than ground level, cultivating and weeding are made easier because you don't have to bend over so far. If your soil needs amending, filling in a raised bed is certainly a lot easier than digging down and forking-under countless loads of manure and peat moss. Be certain to avoid the "string of pearls" effect if you are only raising your garden a little. Using rocks as edging went

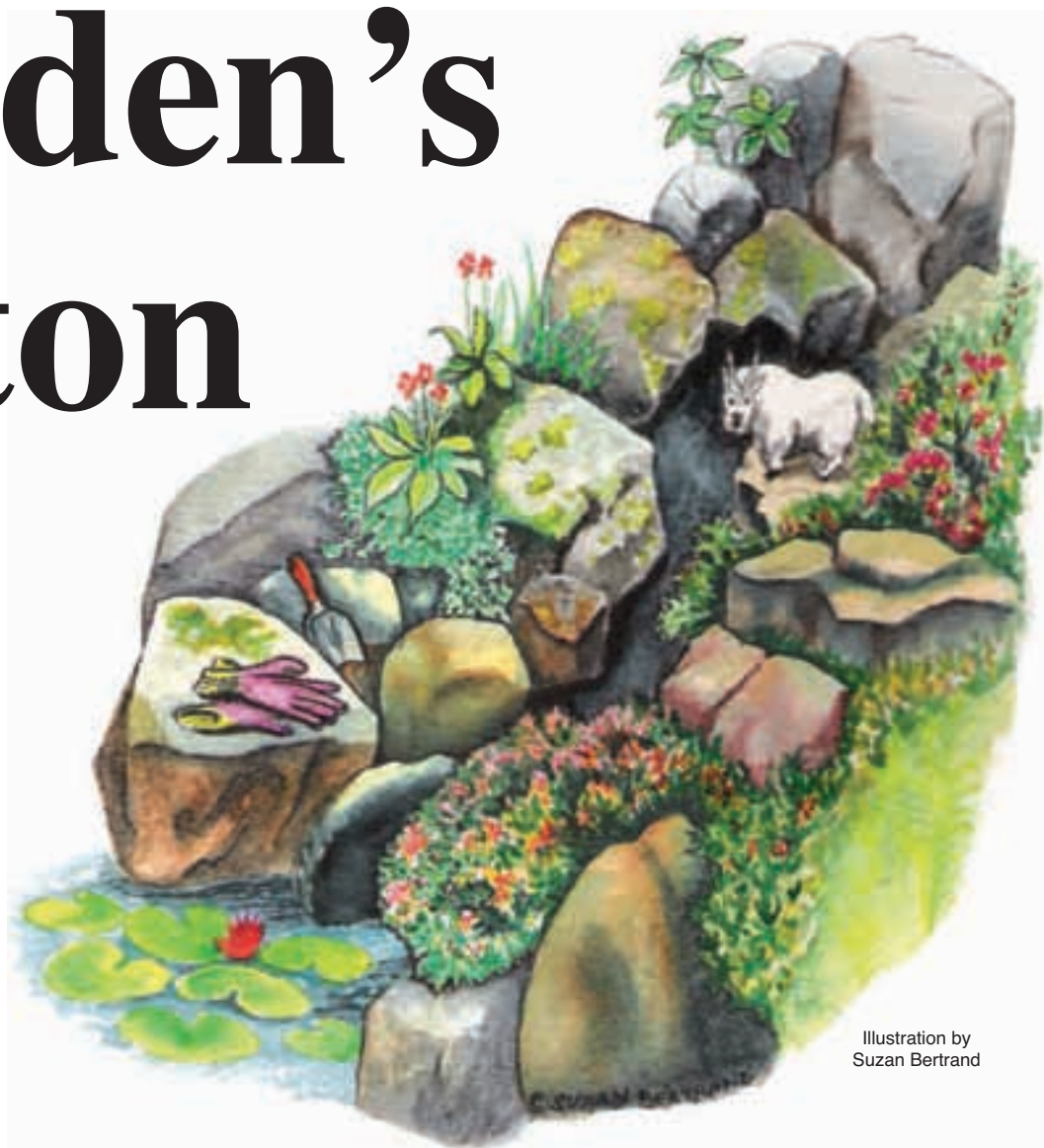


Illustration by
Suzan Bertrand

Take the time to artistically group rocks in asymmetrical arrangements. There should be an utter lack of uniformity or regularity.

out with the Flintstones.

While we're on the subject of what not to do, painting one of nature's works of art is a discredit to Mother Nature. However, it's perfectly acceptable to give nature a helping hand in stone decoration. Certain craggy rocks just cry out to be moss covered and it's quite simple to take matters into your own hands. Firstly, find a small hunk of moss and toss it in your blender. Next add a few globs of yoghurt and pulverize into a thin gruel. Pour or paint the starting solution onto your selected rock. It will need to be misted whenever conditions are dry. Moss will magically make its appearance within two to three weeks.

If you are going to specifically build a rock garden, consider the design carefully. Unlike other beds, it can't be changed without undoing everything and starting over. Keep the rocks you employ to a similar type but of varying sizes. Observe the grain of stratification in your specimens and try to keep them all flowing in the same direction. What you are creating is a mountain-

scape in miniature. When in doubt, ask yourself if you would ever see such a configuration in nature. As you'll want to build height into your rock garden, do it at strategic locations such as beside pathways.

When placing stones around, visually anchor them. Rocks that are scattered and perch upon the ground look awkward and artificial. Avoid the "meteor shower" effect by striving for the impression of permanence and unshakable stability. Rocks should appear as if they are three quarters buried. This doesn't mean that you have to go out and purchase a stone four times the size that you actually need. Just arrange it so that it appears to be mightily emerging from the earth. Take the time to artistically group rocks in asymmetrical arrangements. There should be an utter lack of uniformity or regularity. If you're looking to purchase a truly huge boulder, the same rules apply with the additional caution that big rocks need lots of greenery to justify their presence.

Finally, when acquiring gravel, stones or boulders, be sure to use local material. Indigenous rock will look more natural and buying locally will reduce your carbon footprint by avoiding the cost of hauling across country.

Lagoon City resident Suzan Bertrand is president of the Flower Buds Garden Club. She can be reached at suzanb@rogers.com.

Sons followed fathers

In Longford Mills, the companies built homes, a company store, recreational facilities

By **ADRIENNE DAVIES**

Community Correspondent

In 1867, at an auction in Toronto, Peterborough timber merchant John Thompson bought the right to cut timber in Longford Township (north of Rama Township), later purchasing the township outright for \$30,000. This purchase was to support the lumber business, which he then established at "The Pines." Buying a whole section of property from Lake St. John to Lake Couchiching, he opened the Longford Lumber Company, with the headquarters called Longford Mills.

After the opening of the logging canal from the Black River, other groups followed suit with saw mills, a shingle mill and boarding houses. They joined the quarrying and liming operations already in the area.

Thompson pushed a road through from Atherley and the railway followed, reaching Longford Mills in 1873. By this time families had moved into the area to support the mill workers, and the only two-room schoolhouse in the township was built in the 1880s. As a tribute to Thompson after his death, the Memorial Presbyterian Church was erected in 1885 with a shared congregation until 1909, when St. Peter's Anglican Church was built of Longford stone next to the school, its patron being Allen McPherson of the Longford Quarry Company.

By 1898 the population was about 210, most families owing their livelihood to the quarries and the Standard Chemical Company (formerly Longford Lumber Company) which produced charcoal, wood alcohol, acetone, flotation oil for mining and processed hemlock oil for tanning leather. Longford stone was wanted throughout Ontario for new buildings. How many small communities could boast such a solid manufacturing base?

William Thompson increased the land holding by purchasing the peninsula, which he named after his sister, Gen, and his wife, Eva, building his own home, The White House, across the bay. He purchased a steamer, the Longford, to provide excursions from Orillia, Atherley, and Rama to Geneva Park, the 150-acre property which he operated as an amusement park with animals and a small railway for children's rides.

Unless they moved away, sons followed fathers in their occupations, and Longford Mills became known for strong hockey and baseball teams participating in local leagues. The companies built homes, a company store and recreational facilities, and supported local activities. When McRae's store moved to Rama Road, the building became Longford Hall and many box socials, square dances, and talent shows took place there. As summer camps opened in the area, employment was offered to some of the local population. A bus ran four times daily from Orillia, carrying workers to their shifts or teenagers home from school or an evening in town. The Longford Lions Club took on projects such as erecting a



Rob McCormick

St. Peter's Anglican Church was built of Longford stone.

This was a company village whose fortunes were totally tied to those of the quarrying and manufacturing operations. As their fortunes went, so went the community.

memorial to pioneer quarrymen in the United Church yard.

But this was a company village whose fortunes were totally tied to those of the quarrying and manufacturing operations. As their fortunes went, so went the community. By the 1960s, at the end of a long period of decline, most of the quarries had been abandoned. The school closed with centralization in 1965, and the company-owned

homes were demolished as the workers were retired or let go from "The Chemical."

Who remembers Rose Watt and her beautiful crochet work?...Marnie Robertson entertaining enthusiastic audiences?...the skating rink on the ice?...Morton's Store?...the shift whistles heard from Floral Park to Rama?...dances and Christmas concerts?...trains delivering goods and people to the station?

Stepan Canada purchased the chemical plant from Domtar in 1998, producing chemicals and blends for cleaning supplies. Quarrying continues farther north on Lake St. John. Longford Meats, Ltd., established in 1981, has become famous for cowboy steaks and burgers as well as other meat products. The Community Centre continues to host dances, dinners, card parties, and craft shows. Both churches have become picturesque private homes. And time marches on. Who knows what will come next to the village that remains?

Adrienne Davies is the secretary of the Ramara Historical Society. She can be reached at bamdavies@yahoo.ca.

Forgotten words

The Ojibwe language is disappearing from the community, and hope for its survival is faint



By KORY SNACHE

Language defines all of us: who we are, where we came from, our history, stories, songs and traditions.

Languages are dying all around the world, which presents a dilemma not only for the global community but also for Ramara residents, specifically for the people of Rama First Nation. The Ojibwe language is disappearing from the community and hope for its survival is faint.

Many languages are spoken in Ramara, and this helps create a diverse and vibrant area in which to live. This is true when speaking with people from Rama First Nation.

In Rama, the people are part of a nation called the Anishnabek. The Anishnabek are part of the Algonquian linguistic stock, which includes many tribes such as the Algonquins, Ojibways, Odawas, Pottowatomies, Missisauagas, and even the Micmac on the east coast, just to name a few. All the tribes speak the same language, but each has their own dialect.

The Ojibwe language is part of this stock, and is spoken in Rama, although there are only 30 to 40 people left, out of an on-reserve population of around 800, who speak Ojibwe on a fluent to semi-fluent level. That's about five per cent. When a known language speaker passes in Rama, it is felt community wide, and extra respect is accorded that individual for being a speaker of the language.

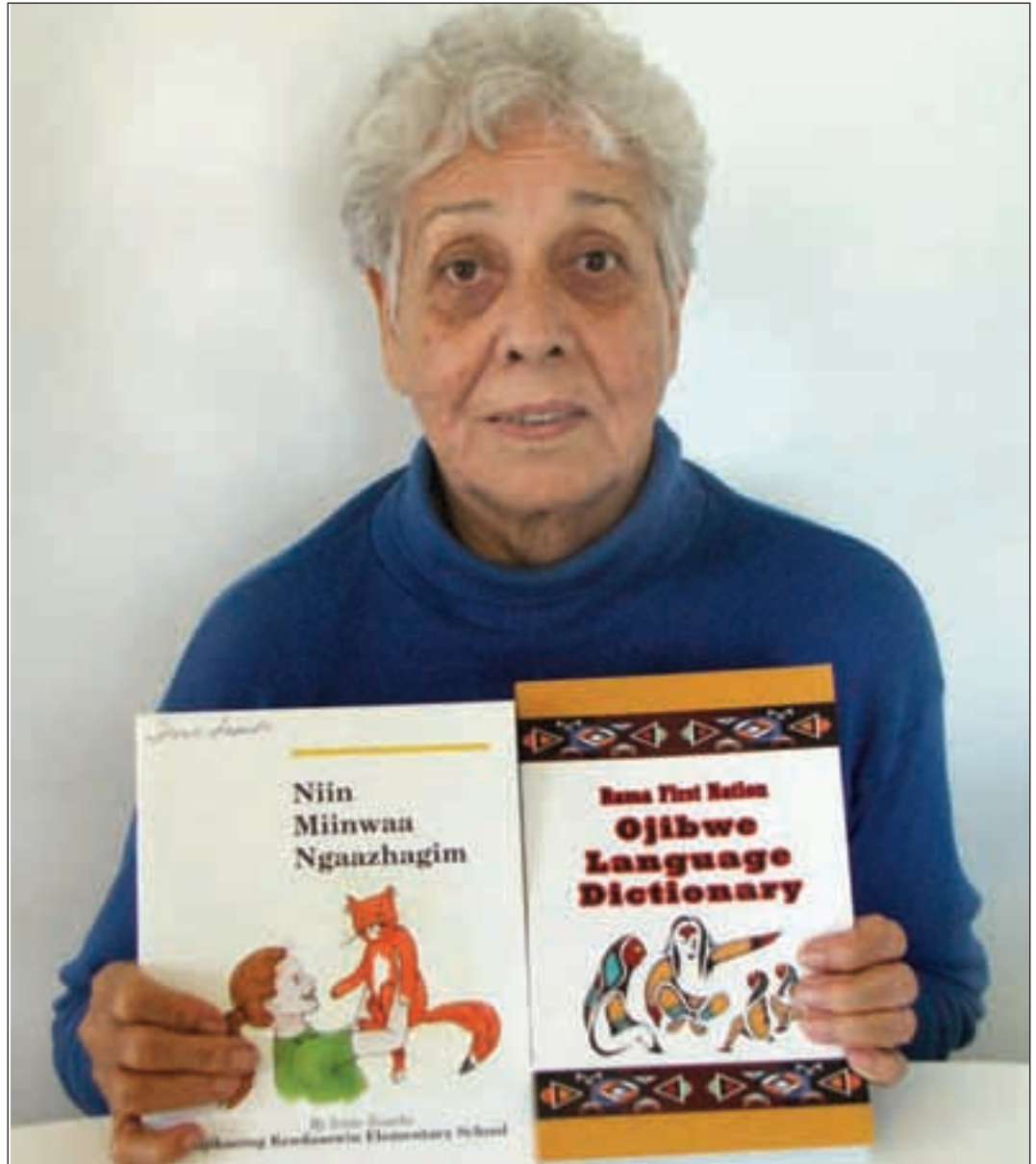
In the past 30 years there have been many initiatives to revitalize the language within the community, and the path has been difficult.

Irene Snache, 74, is a lifelong Rama resident, a respected language keeper and retired teacher of the language. She completed her native-as-a-second-language teacher's certificate at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, and has had an Ojibwe dictionary and a children's story published in the language.

When she first attended elementary school, she spoke Ojibwe, and not a word of English. She has great doubt for the survival of her native language.

"We didn't pass the language on to our children because we were told not to by the Indian agents," she says, Indian agents being government officials who dictated all aspects of life on the reserve. "We were told that English is what our children should speak." The result, she says, was an inter-generational gap within families. Parents of today's children didn't learn the language, so they could not pass it on. In some cases, people left the reserve to find work and forgot the language because they had no one with whom to speak it when they left, and when they returned, the language within the community was already disappearing.

Ojibwe language in the local public school system first started at David H. Church Public School and branched to Regent Park and Orchard Park. "The schools would supply the materials, but we had no curriculum to follow," Snache recalls. "Everything we did we had to make on our own: the games, the songs, we made them up as we went



Rob McCormick

Retired teacher Irene Snache has great doubt about the survival of her native language.

along. The chief and council at the time got the language into the school because that's where our kids went."

Community-wide, the reinforcement of the language is apparent. Buildings are aptly named in the community's traditional language. Posters that encourage speaking the language are posted in every building. Language classes take place within the local elementary school and within the community, and road signs are also named in the language.

But is this enough? What else can be done?

First Nations across Ontario are taking a tough stance and strong initiatives to retain the language. Six Nations has pay scale increases for its employees who become more fluent in the languages. Some First Nation schools have full immersion programs for the youth at both the elementary and

secondary school levels.

But with a lack of available language teachers and effective curriculum, these initiatives cannot move ahead in Rama, and the future is looking bleak.

The language teacher at the local Kendaaswin Elementary School is also set to retire this year after years hard work and dedication to the language.

Ojibwe is spoken across Canada from Ontario to Alberta, and also in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, a state whose dialect is most closely related to Rama's.

Each reserve has its own "slang" that is added to certain words, so a listener can pinpoint what area or even what reserve the individual is from when he or she speaks.

(Continued on next page)

Objibwe language full of laughter

(Continued from previous page)

This is a part of native identity. For example, a speaker from Rama may say “aaneen” for hello, whereas a person from a reserve on Manitoulin Island may say “aanee.” Also depending on what letters are replaced in certain words, speakers can identify what tribe the speaker is from. For instance, a person from Rama may say “mukwah” for bear and an Odawa speaker may say “mukwo”

The Objibwe language is full of laughter and humour. It is part of native culture and you hear it when someone speaks Objibwe. “Other people say when we speak the language it sounds like sing song” Snache says. “It is how people know we are from Rama.”

One of the things that distinguishes the Objibwe language is that it is not based upon gender, as are the majority of languages, but rather on seeing things as inanimate or animate, living or dead. The language also has only 19 letters instead of 26, and does not have any insulting words or word for goodbye. When Objibwe words are translated, they are very descriptive, such as the word for horse, “bazhigoozhee,” which means “one nail.” The word for cow, “bzhiki” has to do with how the animal stands and goes to the bathroom.

The Enduring Voices Project, a National Geographic study, estimates that by 2100, half of the estimated 7,000 languages spoken in the world may disappear, and that every 14 days, another language dies. It is predicted that in Rama, Objibwe will disappear within the next 20 years. Other First Nations will surely follow suit: Alderville, near Peterborough, lost its last language speaker two years ago.

“Some say the language is 75 per cent of the culture because it is tied to everything” says Snache.

If the language disappears from a community, so do the history, culture, and identity that have for so long held it together. When a language is forgotten, diversity and individualism are the casualties.

Kory Snache is a Ramara resident and writer. He can be reached at jiibaynini@hotmail.com.



Rob McCormick

The truth about turtles

Patricia Davidson (top photo), of Kids for Turtles, shows models of turtles to schoolchildren at the Ramara Township Public Library at the Ramara Centre during March break. About 30 children saw the presentation, which included games and information about how to help protect turtles.





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Need a boost? *Five simple strategies for strengthening your immune system*

Our immune system is essentially our body's line of defence against disease, bacteria, viruses and parasites. With the changes of each season, there is often an increased risk of infection due to circulating seasonal viruses. Our exposure is often inevitable, and it is then up to our body's immune system to deal with the onslaught and defend us. A weakened immune system is a common concern for some individuals, "weakened" meaning there is an increased susceptibility to illness and infection.

Here are some simple yet effective strategies for a healthy, strong immune system.



By ALISA
HERRIMAN

Eat fresh food: Enjoy fruits and vegetables the way nature intended them. Including fresh fruits and vegetables on a daily basis will not only provide your body with a broad spectrum of nutrients essential to healthy immune function, but also with anti-oxidant protection and a healthy dose of fibre, which acts like a broom in the body by aiding in the elimination of substances the body is trying to rid itself of. Choosing organic varieties is a great way to reduce chemical exposure. Organic foods are also dense in nutrients due to healthier soil quality.

Eat only lean cuts of meat and healthy fats: Chicken, turkey and fish are all relatively low in saturated fats, which in excess can cause an unhealthy body composition, resulting in an over-taxed immune system. Fish should be included two times weekly, especially Omega 3-rich species such as salmon and mackerel. Essential fatty acids such as Omega 3 help reduce inflammation in the body, and support healthy immune, glandular and neurological functions. There can be contraindications with some medications and fish oil. Be sure to check medications and supple-



Rob McCormick

Peter Keith, of Longford Mills, cycles in Geneva Park. Exercise is one way to help keep your immune system strong.

ments for contraindications.

Avoid processed and refined foods: This is much easier said than done in our fast-paced world. It is often easier to buy a readymade meal than make it from scratch, but this trend is seriously affecting our health and as a result causing weakened immune systems. Refined sugar can suppress your immune system for up to six hours.

Our bodies require natural foods, which supply natural doses of nutrients that support healthy immune function. If more than 50% of your diet is composed of fast, processed foods including refined grains, processed meats, frozen entrees and junk food high in sugar, you are seriously compromising your health and immune function.

Enjoy a Healthy Lifestyle: One of the biggest factors for a healthy body is a healthy lifestyle. Stress management, regular exercise, and a good night's sleep are all essential to health and a healthy immune system. If any three of these lifestyle factors are suffering, perhaps it is time to

take a moment to focus on how you can improve them. Love your body and it will love you back.

Add Nutrients with Quality Supplements: We need to consume a spectrum of about 90 nutrients daily for glandular, immune, digestive and neurological function, cardiovascular health and metabolism, to name a few. Adding a full spectrum multivitamin/mineral supplement that fits your profile is one of the easiest ways to ensure you are supporting healthy immune function. Adding an essential fatty acid supplement and a probiotic are also beneficial for those who suffer from the symptoms of a weakened immune system. It is always best to speak to a professional before starting a new supplement regiment to ensure you are incorporating safe and appropriate supplements.

Ramara resident Alisa Herriman is a registered nutritionist and the owner of Nutrinity Health Services in Orillia. She can be reached at nutrinityhealth@hotmail.com.

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Crash course

Understanding a computer's components helps reduce the intimidation factor

Spring is in the air, and in the spirit of new beginnings, you've decided that this is the year that you finally buy yourself a new computer.

You don't want anything too expensive, just a machine that will allow you to get on the Internet, retrieve email and organize your family photos.



By **STEFANIE MOY-SHUSTER**

Computers

With great anticipation, you head out to the computer store to see what's available. As you walk through the doors, you're overwhelmed by row after row of shiny laptops, flashing monitors, lots of chrome and polished black and blinking lights.

Your heart starts to pound a bit at all the glitz and gloss and you start comparing prices. One shiny computer with a dual core processor is priced at \$600 while another with a core 2 duo processor is selling for \$800 and a third with a core i3 processor is even more. They all have four GB of RAM but two have DDR2 and the other, DDR3.

You start feeling panicky. You thought this was going to be simple, but now the task seems overwhelming.

Before you run out of the store and invest in



Stefanie Moy-Shuster

reams of paper and boxes of pens to keep touch with everyone in your life, read on to familiarize yourself with some of the major components of a computer system and understand what their functions are.

The CPU, or central processing unit, is often referred to as the brains of the computer. It's responsible for executing all the instructions and calculations it receives from other components in the system.

How quickly it deals with these calculations determines the speed of the computer. The latest processors to hit the market, the Intel Core i series, are designed to be the most responsive.

When someone refers to a computer's memory, they are referring to the random access memory, or RAM.

It's a computer's short-term memory where programs and data in current use are kept so they can be quickly reached by the computer's processor.

The more RAM a computer has, the less often it has to go back to the hard drive to retrieve information and the more efficient it is. RAM is rated in a variety of gigabytes and speeds: DDR2 is rated as high as 800 MHz and DDR3 is commonly rated at 1066 MHz or 1333 MHz. If a computer's response time is slow, you can help it along by installing more RAM.

Finally there's the hard drive, or long-term memory storage area of a computer system. Hard drives are also rated also in gigabytes and usually

Make sure that the computer has enough hard drive space to accommodate any new programs you may want to install in the future, as well as files you create.

start at 160 GB, going up as high as 1 terabyte.

Remember that everything on your computer has to be stored on the hard drive, not just your data files. Today's operating systems and software programs take up far more storage space than ever before.

Make sure that the computer has enough hard drive space to accommodate any new programs you may want to install in the future, as well as files you create.

Armed with this information you should be able to proceed confidently with your next computer purchase.

Ramara resident Stefanie Moy-Shuster is the retail and web co-ordinator for Downtown Computers in Orillia. She can be reached at stefanie@downtowncomputers.ca.

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'An invaluable volunteer'

Brechin teen has logged more than 400 hours of service a year since he was eight

At 19, Bret Shier may just be Ramara's busiest volunteer.

The young Brechin resident returned home in early March from a youth volunteer program that took him to Tanzania and Canmore, Alberta for about three months each.



By SHANNON
O'DONNELL

In April 2009, he received the Lieutenant-Governor's Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers.

He's been volunteering since he was eight, and since that time has logged more than 400 volunteer hours a year.

Fellow Brechin resident Jessica Clayton, 84, who wrote a letter nominating him for the provincial award, said Shier "has become an invaluable volunteer in our community. He has put in more hours before the age of 19 than most people would in a lifetime."

When he received his medal he was described as a "friend of the Veteran." His nomination came from the Legion, a local veteran and Foley Catholic School.

Teachers from Foley Catholic School commended him in their nomination letters for his time committed to coaching and refereeing various sports and tournaments, as well as making and maintaining the school skating rink, which often meant late-night floods in bitter cold temperatures, the best time for making ice.

Shier started volunteering his free time at the Legion, where he would spend his Sunday mornings helping prepare the weekly breakfast. Becoming as comfortable in the Legion kitchen as any other longtime volunteer, he started helping out at other events, serving dinners and awards banquets, and once he reached age of majority he helped bartend after school, during Friday night darts and over the weekends.

If you see him in the Legion, you would think he lived there. He knows where to find just about everything, he knows the name of everyone who walks in the door, and he'll help out with anything you need with a smile.

When I brought the Canada World Youth group to Brechin in February 2009, he was nothing but a help to me and the 18 youth volunteers who had come from across Canada and Honduras to live and learn in the community that winter. The group referred to him as our honorary 19th participant.

Shier's own CWY experience began when he applied for the program that sent him to Tanzania.

The CWY program places nine young people from different provinces, backgrounds, languages and experiences on a team with nine others from one of its southern country partners. The team of 18 then travels to a community in the exchange



Special to The Chronicle

Bret Shier carries Tanzanian exchange participant Khalidi Mdugiokay on his back in the village of Mwika, in the Kilimanjaro region, during his recent exchange program.

country, where they live and volunteer with local community-based organizations for three months, and then do the same in a Canadian community. Ramara has twice hosted the program, a joint effort between CWY and ASONOG, the Association of Non-Governmental Organizations in Honduras.

To pay for his trip, Shier raised \$2,500 through events including a golf tournament, and made a quilt with a group of quilting ladies in the community, which was then raffled off.

Shier's exchange was a newly developed partnership with UVIKIUTA in Tanzania, which has an educational theme in environmental sustainability. Its mission is to build communities that are self-reliant and able to address the social and economic challenges which they are facing using available local resources. So that's exactly what young Shier was doing.

For three months he lived with his team between two different communities in the country.

In the village of Chamazi, team members worked on forest regeneration projects, which included clearing an area for a firebreak to help the local villagers better react in case of a forest fire, as well as transplanting various fruit trees, with the hopes of repopulating the monkey and rejuvenating the wildlife population in the area overall.

In the village of Mwika, Kilimanjaro, the work was not as strenuous, but just as interesting.

Similar environmental projects were happening in the community, but rather than transplanting mature trees, they prepared and grew seedlings, and rooted branch cuttings. Once the seedlings matured enough to plant, the community members would plant them in the forest.

(Continued on next page)



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Special to The Chronicle

Bret Shier (right) with fellow participants in the his exchange program, in traditional Maasai dress.

Traditional feast a highlight

(Continued from previous page)

But it wasn't all hard work. Shier had a lot of fun and memorable moments as well. He also volunteered some time at a school in Kilimanjaro, where he made himself famous by playing sports and arts and crafts with the children. "One time I made a paper airplane. Then all the kids would come with paper to get me to make them one. The kids would almost get in fights over them," he chuckled.

His favourite moment in Tanzania was experiencing a traditional Maasai feast. The Masai is a tribe whose people are mostly located in Kenya and Tanzania. Their cultural customs and practices are very intricate, and the men are especially known for their great warrior skills, dress, legends and heroes.

Along with two other Canadian men, Shier was invited to feast as a Maasai warrior. Wearing traditional Masai dress, the crew slaughtered, cooked and ate a goat together.

Although the slaughter and feast were great, the best part really came after the meal when they went to town. Shier said he was a bit nervous that some local people might be offended to see a white in their traditional clothes, but it was just the opposite. "At first, some were pointing and laughing and then they approached us and started singing Masai songs and then we were all dancing."

The celebrating and cultural learning continued to his Canadian host community of Canmore. The

group was equally as active out west, volunteering at various sports championships in preparation for the Olympic Games. They were even part of the Torch Relay, where Shier was responsible for separating the crowd from the runner in what he referred to as The Human Corridor.

On top of these events, the team also organized their own events in the community to help raise awareness about the UN Millennium Development Goals, including issues such as the eradication of hunger and poverty. Shier and his counterpart, David Mahoo, of Tanzania, volunteered daily at the Morley Community School, on the Stoney Nation Reservation. Shier said he particularly enjoyed working with the Grade 1 class. "At first we were helping them with their reading," he said. "Eventually the kids would read to us. When we left they gave us this really big card they made with a huge sad face on the front that had giant tears saying 'Don't leave. We will miss you.'

Shier, who graduated high school in 2008, says the experience has made him think about pursuing a career in teaching. For now, he's looking for work, and plans to attend college in North Bay in September.

And of course, he plans to do some volunteering along the way.

Ramara resident Shannon O'Donnell is the Girl Engagement Co-ordinator for the Girl Guides of Canada-Guides du Canada. She can be reached at odonnells@girlguides.ca.



Special to The Chronicle

Ray Vinerskis, of Jarvis, Ont., winner of the grand prize in last year's Orillia Perch Festival, with the boat he won.

Festival offers fun, prizes

Annual three-week perch party draws thousands to the area on both sides of the Narrows

By BOB and PAM POYNTZ
Community Correspondents

The ice is out, and an armada of fishing boats will invade Lake Simcoe's narrows this month.

The quarry is *Perca Flavescens*, also known as yellow perch, who are schooling in the narrows between Lake Simcoe and Lake Couchiching to spawn.

Spawning occurs from mid-April to the beginning of May. Each female perch will deposit between 10,000 and 40,000 eggs on the weeds, and if the eggs have been fertilized, they will hatch in about 27 days.

This new generation of perch will be mature enough to spawn in three years. A few lucky ones will live 11 years and could achieve a length of 21 inches.

The annual Orillia Perch Festival is a live-release event, sponsored by the Orillia Chamber of Commerce, held this year from April 17 to May 8.

Organizers say it is North America's largest registered fishing derby, attracting entries from as near as Ramara to as far away as British Columbia, Florida, New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Ohio.

Entries have been increasing steadily since a slow year in 2003, and organizers say this year's event could draw more than 4,000.

The Orillia Perch Festival was conceived 29 years ago by Orillia city councillor Ralph Cipolla and businesses in the area as a way to boost tourism by starting the season earlier than the May 24 long weekend.

From its inception, the festival has had an impact on both sides of the narrows.

Steve Clark, owner of the Blue Beacon Marina on Highway 12 in Ramara, says one of the side benefits is that anglers from the festival quite often return to the area with their families to enjoy the summer season.

So why would anyone go fishing this time of year, when the water temperature is not much above freezing and the air temperature on a good day might hit 10 C?

The simple answer is that perch are fun to catch, and it's a day out with friends and family.

And you can win stuff.

The \$40,000 in prizes includes a grand prize this year of a Lund 1625 Rebel XL SS fishing boat. Second grand prize is a \$2,000 shopping spree at Walmart, and the third grand prize is a

Kiwi' kayak and accessories.

These prizes are awarded in draws. A live perch brought to the festival headquarters in Tudhope Park is good for ballots in the daily, weekly, smallest perch, and grand prize draws.

The other way to win is to catch a tagged fish. There are more than 60 tagged perch released just before the festival start date. These tags have a serial number on them which corresponds with a prize.

The highest tagged fish has a prize value of \$2,500 and the remaining tagged fish are worth \$500.

Tagged fish are brought to festival headquarters, where the serial number will be verified against a master list.

All live fish brought to the festival headquarters are released by the Orillia Fish and Game Conservation Club.

During the weekdays approximately 1,000 to 1,500 fish are typically brought in, and on the weekends that number rises to 3,000. As soon as the holding tank is full, the fish are returned to Lake Couchiching.

Typically, between 35 and 55 percent of tagged fish are caught in any given year.

In past years, Clark says, the prize fish have been caught in Ramara Township just off the Blue Beacon docks. They are then tagged and, shortly before the derby starts, they are released along the narrows.

Fishing tips: Fish the narrows using a No. 6 to 8 hook tipped with a shinner minnow weighted down with splitshot....on inactive days, try using small spinnerbaits with a slow retrieve....and don't forget to sharpen your hooks.

Bob and Pam Poyntz are volunteers and Lagoon City residents. They can be reached at poyntz@rogers.com.



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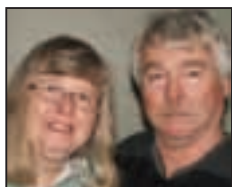
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Last dino standing

Pharmacist's cement sculptures, artifacts museum drew busloads to Gamebridge

The age of the dinosaur has long passed, but 52 years ago, on the banks of the Talbot Creek in Gamebridge, a small herd of dinosaurs reappeared, of which one remains today.

We first noticed this landmark some 20 years ago on weekend trips to the cottage. It was always something we had the kids look out for as we travelled north along Highway 12.



**By BOB
and PAM POYNTZ**

*Community
Correspondents*

Passing over the Talbot Creek Bridge at Gamebridge, take a quick look east and you will see the lone dinosaur standing in a field near the Ramara welcome sign with the locomotive, at the rear of a property owned by retired sales manager Don Prenevost. You will miss it if you blink.

Prenevost, 67, is a third-generation owner of the property, as well as the lone dinosaur. He says his grandfather, Fred Kerr, purchased the property from an engineer from Europe sometime in the early 1950s.

The engineer, Leonard Newton, reportedly from Europe, was unable to find employment in his field and trained to become a druggist in Orillia, Prenevost says. When he retired, he moved to Gamebridge and constructed the four dinosaurs. He also opened a small museum with displays of local artifacts, such as arrowheads.

People visited by the busload, paying a quarter each to see these displays, which included an Easter Island-type head, and swim in the creek.

Prenevost does not know how long these museum tours took place. But at some point after buying the property, his grandfather, who liked his privacy, tired of busloads of people showing up at his front door, and over the years tore down and removed all but one of the dinosaurs.

Last year, Prenevost, with the help of his friends, made major repairs to the tail section. He says he's amazed the dinosaur is still standing. Constructed of a wire mesh and log frame coated with concrete, it is hollow, and stands 15 feet tall and 40 long. It is about half the size of a brachiosaurus, a herbivore from the late Jurassic pe-



Rob McCormick

The lone cement dinosaur on the property of Don Prenevost can be seen from Highway 12 at Gamebridge in the south end of the township.

riod.

A few of Prenevost's former Gamebridge neighbours, Roberta Mitchell, Helen Currie and Helen Alsop, remember Newton. But they believe he owned and ran a furniture store in Beaverton.

Currie, who was born in Gamebridge, remembers the park was called Newton's Prehistoric Garden, and in the front yard was what she called a Tiki god that lit up at night, which not all the neighbours appreciated.

Currie and Alsop, who also grew up in Gamebridge, say they went to the theme park many times, looking at the dinosaurs and viewing the artifacts.

They believe the dinosaurs were built in 1957 and 1958, and that the mini-theme park opened up shortly after that.

Newton's Prehistoric Garden remained open until Kerr purchased the property, which the former neighbours believe was in 1978.

Prenevost thinks the statue is a brontosaurus, but another good bet would be the brachiosaurus, meaning "arm lizard."

It was so named because its forearms are longer than its hind legs, and was one of the largest dinosaurs to live during the late Jurassic period. There is also a bit of a crown on top of its head, a feature of the brachiosaurus.

But this is folk art, so it's up to the viewer to decide.

Bob and Pam Poyntz are volunteers and Lagoon City residents. They can be reached at poyntz@rogers.com.

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David A. Homer

Whooo are you looking at?

A great grey owl perches on a fencepost on Kirkfield Road east of Ramara Road 46 in early March. Chronicle correspondent David Homer, of the Carden Field Naturalists, says great greys come south for the winter when there is limited food in the north. He was about 16 feet away when he shot the photo with a Canon 20D camera with Sigma 50-500mm lens, f6.3 at 1/1250th of a second. The owl had been seen in the area for about a month before the photo was taken.

Lakeshore swing bridge to open in May

By **BOB and PAM POYNTZ**
Community Correspondents

Lakeshore Road Swing Bridge 50 on Ramara Road 47 near Gamebridge will be open to boaters when the Trent-Severn Waterway's season begins on Friday, May 21, Parks Canada says.

"The bridge will be opened to vessels for the 2010 Trent-Severn Waterway navigation season and open to vehicular traffic by mid-June, 2010," states a release issued in March by Parks Canada.

Work is under way now at the site.

The century-old bridge, which was closed for safety reasons in August 2008, is being removed and replaced at an estimated cost of \$1 to \$2 million.

Removal of the old steel bridge by the project's main contractor, Western Mechanical, of Barrie, began in March.

Inspections were then expected to tell engineers how much of the concrete structure will have to be removed and replaced, or repaired.

The design of the new bridge was completed near the end of 2009 by McCormick, Rankin Corp. The new bridge will be a replica of the old one.

A Western employee on the site last month said all the assembly that could be done off site had been completed and was ready for transport, and that all the other components of the bridge were ready for delivery once site preparation and concrete repairs had been done.

Also needing to be replaced are all the electrical cables, and they, too, are ready for site delivery.

The new bridge is being built by a subcontractor to Western Mechanical, Ross Steel, of Sarnia.

Parks Canada says the steel in the old bridge appears to have come from three suppliers, one of which was from Scotland.



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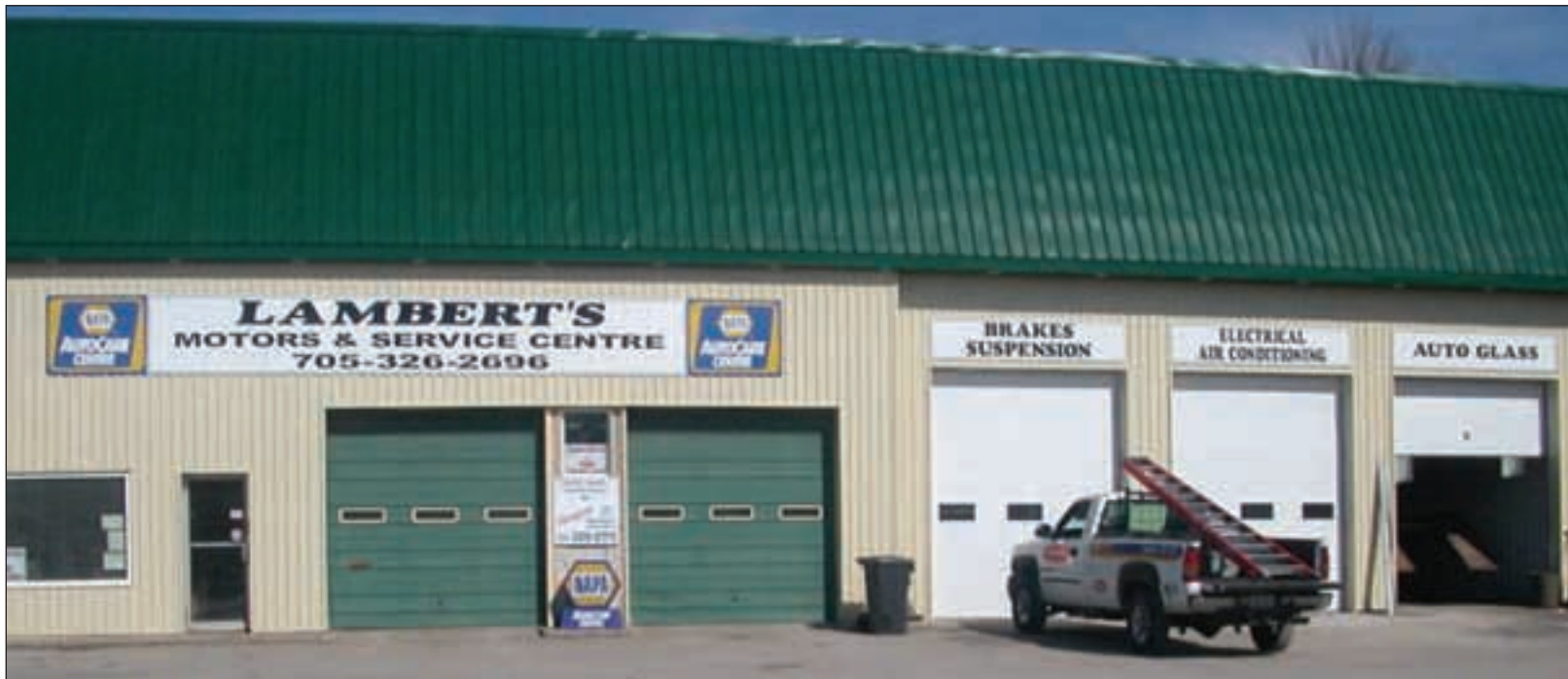
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Kevin Lehman

Lambert's Motors and Service Centre (above) recently added three bays to its existing two in a \$200,000 expansion.

Auto service centre expands

By **KEVIN LEHMAN**
Community Correspondent

An automobile service and repair business that has been in Ramara since 1970 has more than doubled in size with a \$200,000 expansion.

Lambert's Motors and Service Centre, on Atherley Road, near the bridge, added three bays to its existing two.

Four years ago, then-owner Earl Lambert retired and the business was purchased by Roger Hotoyan, a resident of Bayshore Village in Ramara.

At the time, Hotoyan, a mechanic since the age of 13 in his native Romania, was concerned about whether Lambert's loyal customers would continue to patronize the business after his retirement.

"I did not know how a new owner would be accepted," he said. "Many people had been Earl's customers for years.

"But those customers and many more keep

**"We specialize in everything...
As long as it has wheels and
a transmission, we will fix it."**

*Roger Hotoya, owner
of Lambert's Motors and Service Centre*

coming back."

Hotoyan retained Lambert's long-time employees when he bought the business.

Dave Smith has been with Lambert's for 15 years.

"It was an excellent transition," he said.

"My customers are comfortable to come in and see me or Roger. He is a good, hands-on guy and they keep on coming back."

"He's a good guy to work for," said Jamie

Cairns, a 10-year employee.

"He has brought growth to the business and area, not just with our current expansion, but by adding air conditioning service and glass repair."

Hotoyan says Lambert's is a family affair.

"I am pleased that my two sons, Tav and Dan, have moved to this area to join the team and bring with them 20 years of experience in the auto and glass repair business," he says.

"We specialize in everything. We turn nothing away; as long as it has wheels and a transmission we will fix it.

"We have the most up-to-date diagnostic equipment in the business.

We are capable of working on all makes and models of cars and trucks, foreign or domestic."

In addition to the full slate of repair services offered, Lambert's sells what Hotoyan calls "top-quality pre-owned vehicles, cars and trucks.

"We have a good used inventory. People like to buy local."

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The Orillia Area Community Development Corporation (CDC) is a non-profit organization that supports local business and builds strong communities. We serve the City of Orillia, Townships of Oro-Medonte, Ramara and Severn and the Chippewas of Rama First Nation.



Young students talk it up

Seventeen students from local elementary schools participated in the annual Brechin and District Lions Club and Brechin Mara Royal Canadian Legion Public Speaking Contest at the Legion in March.

The speakers came from Rama Central School, Uptergrove Public School, Brechin Public School and Foley Catholic School.

This is the Lions' fifth year hosting the event, with the Brechin Mara Legion co-hosting for the last four.

Dale Whalen of the Lions Club was the event chairman, assisted by Heather Shier, the Legion's Zone F4 youth education chairperson.

All the students received trophies and prize money from the Lions Club and certificates and money from the Legion. The top three from each division received gold, silver and bronze medals.

In the primary division, first place was awarded to Abbey Whalen, second place to Andrew Turlej and third to Noah Bruner-Legault, all from Foley Catholic School.

In the junior division, first place went to Nate Sternberg, second to Matilda Wilson, and third place to Kyle Heitzner, all from Foley Catholic School.

In the intermediate division, first place went to Jacob Lasci of Brechin Public School, second to Shannon Banfield of Brechin Public School and third place to Emily Mansour of Foley Catholic School.

The first-place finalists in each division were to speak in the Zone F4 Royal Canadian Legion competition hosted by the Brechin Mara branch of the Legion on March 28.

— Chronicle staff

Four schools represented in public speaking competition



Special to The Chronicle

Clockwise, from top: Students in the intermediate, primary and junior divisions in the annual Brechin and District Lions Club and Brechin Mara Royal Canadian Legion Public Speaking Contest.

Dads and Kids do breakfast in Brechin

Beginning this month, Jeff Clark, principal of Brechin Public School will introduce a new program to the area called Dads and Kids Breakfast.

Clark ran this well-attended program at his previous school in Ardtrea for three years, bringing school children and their fathers together to share a light breakfast and listen to presenters on a variety of topics.

"This program keeps lines of communication open between the school and dads, allowing them to be informed about school issues, upcoming events and such," Clark says. "It allows us to bring informative programs to dads and their children."

The program is typically run on the last Wednesday or Thursday of each month and starts at either 7 or 7:30 a.m., depending on the time required for that presentation.

The first presentation, planned for Thursday, April 29 at 7:30 a.m., will be on Internet safety,

"This program keeps lines of communication open between the school and dads, allowing them to be informed about school issues, upcoming events and such."

*Brechin Public School
principal Jeff Clark*

and will feature OPP volunteer Kevin Lehman, a volunteer a who teaches children how to avoid cyber risks.

Subsequent presenters are planned to include Clark's version of a real-life Bob the Builder doing a design and tech project, musicians, con-

servationists and public personalities such as Rick Ball, who carried the torch and lit the Paralympics Games cauldron in Ottawa at the recent games, the first to be held in Canada.

After the morning presentation, dads head off to their day while the students are engaged in a monitored gym activity until their school days starts at 9 a.m.

Clark is still waiting to hear from the provincial ministry of education on the status of his Parents Reaching Out (PRO) grant to fund the program. The program will go forward with or without the funding," he said.

"Thanks to extremely community-minded sponsors like Bob Wilsey at Mariposa Market in Orillia, who has supplied this program in the past, I know we will be able to provide breakfast items for those who attend."

— Kevin Lehman

Washago Rotary marks fifth year

The Rotary Club is celebrating its fifth anniversary in Washago this year.

The idea for the club was hatched on a golf course by local real estate broker Rod Harth and Dan Herbert, who owns and operates a collection agency in Barrie.

"Dan was new to Washago and we began playing golf together in 2004," Harth says. "During our golf games, Dan asked me if I thought a Rotary Club could be established in Washago. That was the seed that eventually grew into the Washago club."

The two began recruiting members with a target of 20, the minimum required by Rotary International to establish any new Rotary Club.

Within a few months, Herbert and Harth had recruited enough members to charter their club. By coincidence, the 100th anniversary of Rotary was coming up, and they decided to charter the club on Feb. 23, 2005, exactly a century after the first Rotary Club held its inaugural meeting. Hence the club's distinction of being called The Rotary Club of Washago and Area – Centennial. There are only a handful of clubs in the world chartered on Rotary's 100th birthday.

"We've come a long way in five years," Herbert says. "Our members conceived and developed the idea of covering Washago's deteriorating water tower with a decorative mural. We achieved our goal and have not stopped there."

The club grants youth scholarships every year to graduating elementary school students. It has also financed young people who have travelled to Africa to build homes for Habitat for Humanity, purchased ball team jerseys for youth teams and contributed thousands of dollars for Project Umbrella Burma, a refugee community on the Thai-Burmese border.

Soon after the club was formed, the number of



Special to The Chronicle

Members of The Rotary Club of Washago and Area – Centennial.

members dropped from 21 to 12. Herbert says,

"We had many couples who were charter members who did not realize what is involved in running a Rotary Club. So when we lost one member, we in fact lost two."

The club has continued to recruit, and membership now stands at 21.

Meetings are held every Wednesday at 7:15 a.m. at the Washago Community Centre.

Visit the club's website, www.washagorotary.ca for more information.

– Chronicle staff

Our Ramara, SALT plan health expo

A Spring Health Expo will be held April 29 at the Ramara Centre on Highway 12 in Atherley.

The expo is the second in a series of presentations by Seniors and Law Enforcement Together (SALT) and the Our Ramara coalition. It will run from 1 to 3 p.m.

The event is open to all interested residents. It offers the opportunity for people to learn about services provided by organizations in Orillia for those in Ramara and the surrounding area.

Presenters from Information Orillia and 211 Ontario will co-present a session on information services available in our area. Another presentation will be made by a contact from Community Care Access Centre (CCAC). Following these short talks, exhibitors will be on hand to give out information and answer questions.

Other participating organizations include the Adult Diabetes Education Centre, Alzheimer Society, Canadian Cancer Society, Canadian Hearing Society, Helping Hands, Hospice Orillia, Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Geriatric Health Unit, SALT, Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit and the Victorian Order of Nurses.

A third presentation is being planned by SALT and the Our Ramara coalition later in the spring at a time and place to be announced.

– Chronicle staff

Ramona Winterfest sets records

The 14th annual Ramona Winterfest in February set records for proceeds, attendance and participation in the festival's poker run.

The fundraising event for the Ramona Agricultural Society netted \$1,800 and drew about 250 people, an increase of about 25 per cent in each case. Participation in the poker run rose to 148 from 120 last year.

"The best indicator that we had a lot of new faces at his year's event is the fact that I did not know any of the winners," said Glenn Spriggs, president of the agricultural society and Ramona Hall. People came from all over Ramara, including new people from the southern end."

Spriggs said advance coverage in The Ramara Chronicle was a factor in the record turnout.

Visitors were greeted by two life-size ice carvings of Inukshuks, in keeping with the festival's theme, The Olympics in Canada. The carving was done by Ramona volunteers.

Sticking to the Olympics theme, the poker run winners were awarded gold, silver and bronze medals along with their cash prizes. The gold medal and \$50 went to Donna Sweetner, while the silver (\$30) was awarded to Chris Sherwood



Special to The Chronicle

One of the Olympics-inspired inukshuks at the Ramona Winterfest in February.

and the bronze (\$20) to Lee Cole.

The annual Ramona Hall Pancake Supper will be held on Thursday, April 15 at Ramona Hall from 5 to 7 p.m. (See the Community Calendar listing on Page 31.) All proceeds go to the Ramara Fire and Rescue Service. Last year's event raised \$900 for the service.

To date, Ramona Hall has donated more than \$25,000 to the local fire department.

– Chronicle staff



Special to The Chronicle

Legion donates \$6,200 to Fire and Rescue

The Charitable Foundation of the Royal Canadian Legion presented a cheque for \$6,200 to the Ramara Fire and Rescue Service on Saturday, March 20. The foundation supports projects such as fire and health-related services throughout the province. From left are Legion Zone F4 Commander Joe Kelly, fire services administrator Tony Stong, Ramara Fire Chief Ted Conway and Brechin Legion president Len Shier. See Kevin Lehman's feature story on the fire department on Page 4.

Community calendar

Friday, April 2

Ramara Seniors' euchre: Every Friday, Longford Mills Community Centre, 1-4 p.m. All welcome. Call Harold (705) 325-8053

Washago Bridge Club: Learn to play bridge, or improve your game every Friday at noon, 4108 Canal Road, Washago. Call Anne (705) 689-8845.

Lunch: Brechin Legion. Every Friday from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Call 484-5393.

Darts: Brechin Legion. Every Friday, 8 p.m. Call 484-5393.

Saturday, April 3

Jam session: Longford Mills Community Centre, every first Saturday of the month, 8 p.m. All welcome. Call (705) 325-2084.

Meat roll: Brechin Legion. Every Saturday, 4 p.m. Call 484-5393.

Sunday, April 4

Sunrise service: Atherley United Church, at Atherley Park, 8 a.m. Refreshments at the church after service.

Monday, April 5

Line Dancing: Every Monday 1- 3 p.m., year round, except for statutory holidays. Beginners welcome. Call Anne (Washago) (705) 689-8845.



By SANDRA JOYCE

Calendar Girl

Ramara Seniors bid euchre: Longford Mills Community Centre, every Monday, 1-4 p.m. All welcome. Call Liz (705) 325-3571.

Line dancing, Washago Sunshine Seniors. Every Monday, 1:30 p.m. Call (705) 325-0680. Guests and new members Welcome. Call (705) 689-1277.

Dalrymple & Countryside Seniors bid euchre: Every Monday, 1 p.m., Carden Recreation Hall, Dalrymple Road. Everyone welcome.

Tuesday, April 6

Washago Sunshine Seniors euchre club: Every Tuesday, 7 p.m. Call (705) 689-1033, Guests and new members welcome.

Dalrymple & Countryside Seniors: Regular monthly meeting, first Tuesday of the month,

1 p.m., Carden Recreation Hall, Dalrymple Rd. Everyone welcome.

Wednesday, April 7

Foot Clinic: First Wednesday of the month. By appointment. Call (705) 689-9464.

Thursday, April 8

Coffee House: Spring Coffee House 4 Youth fundraiser by the Ramara Youth Committee, Ramara Centre, 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Open to Grade 8 and high school students. Local artists/music lovers are invited to attend. Money raised will go to support the Canadian Cancer Society. Entry fee of \$5 at the door for both performers and spectators.

Lunch: Brechin Legion. Every Thursday from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Call 484-5393.

Saturday, April 10

Dance: Longford Mills Community Centre, every 2nd Saturday of the month. Elvin Eastcot's Country Memories Band, 8 p.m. All welcome. President: Call (705) 325-2084.

Lions euchre tournament: Brechin Legion, 8 p.m. Call 484-5393.

(Continued on next page)

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Community calendar

(Continued from previous page)

Saturday, April 10

Musical Variety Night: Brechin United Church, 7:30 p.m. The Jenish Family from Oshawa, fiddling and step dancing and a barbershop quartet, Acappella Unplugged from Barrie. Refreshments to follow concert. Adults \$12.50, Family rate \$30. For tickets call Bob at 484-5771.

Fastball: Ramara Youth Fastball Registration, Ramara Centre, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Tuesday, April 13

Spring program registration: Washago Community Centre, 6-8 p.m. Baton twirling, gymnastics, karate for wee warriors, defending dragons, aerobics, dance fitness, ballroom dance, tai chi levels one and two, yoga. One-day workshops on bike safety and maintenance, soap stone carving, babysitting essentials. For more information e-mail wccc@rogers.com or call 705 689 6424.

Wednesday, April 14

Carden Field Naturalists: Every second Wednesday of the month. 7 p.m., Carden Recreation Centre, Lake Dalrymple Road. For further info., call David Homer (705) 833-2571

Thursday, April 15

Ramara Seniors: General Membership meeting and lunch, every third Thursday of the month, 10 a.m. Longford Mills Community Centre. New members welcome. Call Jim (705) 327-5126.

Annual pancake supper: Ramona Hall. 5-7 p.m., \$6.50 per person. All proceeds go to Ramara Fire Department. Pancakes, sausage, bacon, coffee, tea and juice served with pure local maple syrup. Fairgrounds Road, off Highway 169. Everyone welcome.

Saturday, April 17

Roast beef dinner: Longford Mills Commu-

ity Centre, every third Saturday, 6 p.m. Country western dance, live band, Western Strings. Cost \$15. All welcome. Call (705) 325-2084

Spring program registration: Washago Community Centre, 10 a.m.-noon. E-mail wccc@rogers.com or call 705-689-6424.

Fastball: Ramara youth fastball registration, Ramara Centre, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Wednesday, April 21

Friends of the Ramara Library: Annual General Meeting, 7 p.m., VH Room at the Ramara Centre. Refreshments will be served. Everyone welcome!

Saturday, April 24

Turkey Dinner: Brechin United Church. Settings at 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. Take outs available. Advanced tickets recommended. Call 484-5398. Adults \$13, children 6-12 are \$5.

Lunch with MP, MPP: In the Hayloft, Bayshore Village, 1 Hayloft Lane, 11:30 a.m. to -2 p.m. Bruce Stanton, MP, Simcoe North, and Garfield Dunlop, MPP, Simcoe North. All residents of Bayshore Village, Brechin, Lagoon City and Ramara invited to attend. Find out what's really happening in Ottawa and at Queen's Park, and what's new in Simcoe North. Voice your concerns and/or get answers to your questions. Reserve a seat by calling 484-0754 or 484-0221, or emailing bayshorevillageassociation@cottagecountry.net. A \$5 donation would be greatly appreciated towards the cost of the lunch.

Sunday, April 25

Earth Day Service: Atherley United Church, 9:30 a.m.

Wednesday, April 28

Washago Sunshine Seniors: Speaker, business meeting and election of officers to follow Every fourth Wednesday of the month, 1:30 p.m., 3222 Muskoka St., Heritage United Church Hall. Call (705) 689-1277.

Thursday, April 29

Spring Health Expo: Ramara Centre, 1-3 p.m. Seniors and Law Enforcement Together and the Our Ramara Coalition. An afternoon of community information about services provided by organizations in Orillia for Ramara area residents. Two keynote speakers and organizational booths for information.

Lagoon City volunteer Sandra Joyce can be reached at sjoyce22@rogers.com.

Volunteers needed

■ Ramona Hall Agricultural Society. New Volunteers are always welcome. Come as a neighbour — leave as a friend. Highway 169 and Fairgrounds Road, Washago. Call Glenn Spriggs at (705) 689-8881.

■ Ramara tee-ball looking for volunteers. Call (705) 325-3091.

■ The Our Ramara Coalition is looking for a volunteer who has computer skills and would be interested in making phone calls, sending emails and entering data into the database. Contact Janet Banfield, at 325-5776 or jbanfield@ramara.ca.

■ The Brechin Community Center Board is looking for new directors. Anyone interested in information or volunteering is welcome to attend the board meeting April 14 at the Township offices in Brechin, 7 p.m. Call Darleen at 484-1576 for details.

The
**RAMARA
Chronicle**

Send information about your community event in Ramara to sjoyce22@rogers.com, or call 484-0949. Listings for May must be received in the first week of April.



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Be prepared

May 2 to 8 is Emergency Preparedness Week this year, a good time to think about how we can be better prepared to deal with emergencies.

Ramara has an emergency response plan in place that can be activated in an instant. The Township's emergency management team is ready to act and help where necessary. Working closely with other levels of government, this team has prepared for more than 20 different hazards for our community, including transportation, agricultural, human health and extreme weather emergencies.

In the fall of 2003, the Township expanded its emergency team and updated the local hazard identification and risk assessment. It has also refined its emergency plan and carried out several desktop exercises to test it.

With G8 summit in Huntsville June 25 to 27, thousands of people are expected to flood into or through our community, and Ramara's emergency team is prepared to deal with the anticipated influx. The team is made up of members of council, Township staff, volunteers, first-response and public health agencies.



By **JAMIE MASK**

As part of the Township's overall emergency preparedness plan there is a detailed plan to deal with transportation emergencies. The plan identifies measures, such as alternate routes and public communication, to mitigate the impacts of traffic disruptions and potential road closures.

Visit the Ramara Township website at www.township.ramara.on.ca to see the Townships plan, or call the Township office and request a copy of their emergency preparedness brochure.

Jamie Mask is a resident of Ramara and a volunteer with the Township's Emergency Management Team.

Quick tips

A 72-hour emergency kit should have:

- First aid supplies, medication and prescription list
- Flashlight, radio, batteries, candles, matches
- Knife, whistle or other signalling device
- 50-foot length of rope
- Sleeping bag, clothing, back pack or duffle bag
- Address book with phone numbers
- Cash, spare car and home keys
- 4 litres of potable water per person per day
- Dried food, chocolate or granola bars
- Canned food, honey, sugar and soup
- Disposable plates, cups and cutlery
- Toiletry and personal hygiene supplies
- Pet food
- Playing cards or other games

Simple steps to prepare for the G8:

- Expect delays and schedule extra time for your own travel.
- Avoid unnecessary travel
- Familiarize yourself with alternate routes that don't rely on main highways.
- Check local radio and television stations for up-to-date travel reports.
- Update your emergency survival kit and stock up on must-have medical supplies.

Ramara ArtPark & Studio Tour

Dates and locations have been confirmed.

Dates:

July 3 and 4.

Group locations:

Brechin ball park and pavillion,
Royal Canadian Legion, Brechin.
St. Columbkille Catholic Church on
Highway 12 in Uptergrove will also be
open to anyone wishing to see the
stained-glass work.

Studios:

So far, one studio has signed up and will
showcase the work of two artists.

The Ramara Chronicle is organizing the
event, and will publish more details in the
coming months. In June's issue, we will
publish bios of the artists, photos of their
works and a map showing all the tour
locations.

Call for artists

To date, 15 artists have confirmed their
participation. We continue to seek artists
and artisans of all kinds, who may either
come to the group locations or open their
studios. The tour is free to the artists and to
the public.

We hope to see you there.

**Interested artists are invited to contact
Chronicle publisher Darleen Cormier
at ramara.chronicle@rogers.com,
or call us at (705) 484-1576.**

The
**RAMARA
Chronicle**

Easy elegance



Rob McCormick

Chicken Breast stuffed with Ricotta and Goat Cheeses.

Spinach and cheese stuffing gets flavour boost from dill

Here is an easy and elegant stuffed chicken breast that gets a nice flavour boost from the dill. The ricotta and goat cheeses combine with the spinach in a creamy, delicious stuffing. The stuffed breast is complemented by a quick cream-based sauce.



By CHEF KONSTANTINE

Chicken Breast stuffed with Ricotta and Goat Cheeses

- Extra virgin olive oil
- 2 chopped shallots
- 2 chopped green onions
- 1 cup fresh spinach, lightly steamed
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh basil
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh mint
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill
- 2 ounces ricotta cheese
- 1 ounce goat's cheese
- 1 egg white
- 1 large boneless, skinless free-range chicken breast

Method:

Sautee shallots, onions, spinach, basil, mint and dill in olive oil over medium-high heat for several minutes, until the spinach wilts.

Add about a tablespoon more olive oil and let the mixture cool down for a few minutes.

Mix together egg, ricotta cheese and goat's

cheese, add to the mixture in the pan and stir to make stuffing for the chicken.

Butterfly the chicken breast and season with sea salt and pepper.

Place stuffing on chicken breast and roll up or fold it over.

Bake at 350 for 15 to 20 minutes. Serve with vegetables and potatoes of your choice.

For the sauce:

- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon butter
- pinch of nutmeg
- 1 ounce dry white wine
- 1/2 cup 35% heavy cream

Mix sauce ingredients together and reduce over medium-high heat, about 5 minutes.

Pour over chicken breast and serve.

Chef Konstantine is the chef at the Harbour Inn restaurant in Lagoon City. He can be reached at chef.konstantine@rogers.com.

Wine match *by Shari Darling*

■ **Stoney Ridge Cellars 2007 barrel aged chardonnay, VQA, Niagara, (CSPC # 172965), \$15.**

The predominant taste sensations of this dish are subtle tanginess from the goat cheese and bitterness from the spinach. The ricotta adds creaminess. Chicken is medium in weight.

The ideal wine companion is a chardonnay medium in weight with creamy texture and similar tanginess and bitterness.

This grape and therefore wine has natural acidity, light to medium weight (depending on the wine and its vinification) and pleasant bitterness on the finish. Chardonnay also complements basil and mint.

I believe this is one of the best value-for-price chardonnays available today.

The wine has good acidity (tanginess) with lush creamy texture and a decent finish.

Flavours of apples and pears come through on the nose and palate.

Syndicated food-and-wine columnist and author Shari Darling can be reached at Themoanfactory.blogspot.com.

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