

## Tragedy averted by quick-acting Ash Grove Inn server

DANIELLE PAUL  
BARRY'S BAY

A young family who spent the afternoon of July 2 at the public beach on Kamanisseg Lake are grateful that they — and others who attempted to help them — escaped harm after an innocent ride on an inflatable drifted into dangerous territory.

Pastor Mark Graham said his wife Mandy took their children, Gabriel, 13, and Naomi, 6, to the public beach in Barry's Bay on July 2. Mandy gave Gabriel permission to go out on their friends' giant inflatable bird and saw that he was floating not far from shore. When she called out to him, Gabriel responded, "I'm fine, Mom." But in the space of "two minutes" the wind caught the floaty and the next thing Mandy heard was a panicked Gabriel shouting for help.

Mandy said, "As parents you always want to be watchful for your kids but this [time I] was completely caught off guard. I didn't even know it was possible that wind could take my son Gabriel out — it didn't even enter my mind. It's not like we were out on the ocean."

Leaving Naomi with their friends on shore, Mandy plunged into Kamanisseg to try to catch up to him but as she neared the Ash Grove Inn she tired and knew it would be impossible to reach Gabriel. A man on the Inn's dock saw that she was in difficulty and immediately dived in to assist, but he, too, was soon in difficulty. After asking for help from any patio diners with a boat, a woman jumped in to try to rescue him. Sarah Dombrowski was serving on the patio and saw the inflatable pass by.

As Sarah tells it, "It was a group effort. People at a patio table jumped into action and rescued the three swimmers



Sarah Dombrowski points out her route.

in distress. When I heard him, I realized the boy was terrified. I knew the adults were okay with the boat, so I ran across the yard, down the highway and over the embankment. I tore off my hat and my apron, and just started swimming." Sarah entered the water ahead of the inflatable, swam out and brought Gabriel back to shore. Saying she hoped someone would help her in the same situation, Sarah said, "I was a competitive swimmer with the Candus in Deep River for years and then I was a lifeguard in the States for a little bit at a kids' camp."

Interviewed two weeks later, Gabriel said when he couldn't bring the inflatable back to the beach by kicking, he called for help. As he floated further away from his mother he said, "I got scared. I thought I was going to be with Jesus."

Gabriel's father says they moved to the Valley last September when Mark took over as Pastor of the Family Life Christian Centre in Barry's Bay. He admits as city folks they are on a learning curve and says although they had a backyard swimming pool in Montreal, they are not strong swimmers. He says that when the nice weather began after lockdown, they started exploring the area and visited different beaches.

### GRATEFUL PARENTS THANK GOD AND THEIR RESCUERS

He said, "We want to say thank you to Sarah, and all who helped.... One thing that stands out in this story is that there was a great willingness for people just to be selfless and to help. That guy on the dock just dove in, then the guy with the boat and somebody called the police and the — *Continued on page 2*

*Continued from page 1*— ambulance. There was just a fast reaction to try and help. We thank God for watching out for everyone, the story ends well with everybody safe.”

“Being Christian we are thankful to God. We believe He orchestrated behind the scenes that Sarah would be there on that day. She didn’t hesitate at all.... I don’t think things like that happen just by chance.”

Mandy agrees, “I remember while I was swimming I was praying. And I said, ‘God, just send your angels.’ And what are the chances that a competitive swimmer and lifeguard would be working at the Ash Grove that day? She didn’t even think twice or hesitate to go in and get him. And the man who almost lost his life for us; they don’t even know us.”

Has this incident changed them? “Big time,” says Mandy. “We go over the rules before we leave, and if they don’t follow the rules while we’re there we go home. I think people need to be aware, especially on the lake, because I see people all the time with these flotation things.... They don’t realize.”



Clockwise from front left: the Graham family, Naomi, Mandy, Mark, Gabriel, and the family lovebird Twee-twee on Mark’s arm.

**PARENTS ISSUE WARNING**

In deciding to speak to *The Current*, an important factor for the Graham family was increasing public awareness. Mark says, “A mistake that we made too is that Gabriel didn’t have a life jacket on because he was on that flotation device, but sometimes you just think you’re safe because you’re afloat. We’ve seen families with little kids on flotation devices not wearing life jackets.... they should know.”

Citing recent news reports of similar incidents with inflatables, the Grahams think another part of public awareness is signage on the public beach and suggest, “If there was a sign [saying] that parents should be aware that if your kids are on a flotation device strong winds can come across the lake. There has to be awareness.”

Mark adds that although he understands there cannot be a lifeguard all the time, “There should be at least a life preserver thing, maybe it could be useful.”

After the traumatic events of July 2, the Graham family returned to Montreal for a time to visit Mandy’s family. Mandy said, “After that, when you realize my life could have been gone ... I hadn’t seen my parents since the



Sarah Dombrowski. PHOTO: WENDELL HENRY

lockdown.” While there, Gabriel talked to his grandparents about the incident. He’s thinking he might take swimming lessons next year.

Sarah Dombrowski, insisting it was a huge group effort, says, “As a mom I know the panic that she was probably feeling.”

And her boss at the Ash Grove Inn, Wendell Henry, posted on Facebook, “Way to go Sarah! You really are a hero and we are lucky to have you on our team!”

(She went home to put some dry clothes on and came back for her shift! What a trooper!)”

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# Dr. Jack Kitts appointed to Long Term Care COVID-19 investigation

ONTARIO NEWSROOM  
QUEEN'S PARK

On July 29 Premier Doug Ford and Dr. Merilee Fullerton, Minister of Long-Term Care, announced the launch of an independent commission into COVID-19 and long-term care in Ontario. Among the three commissioners who will conduct the investigation is Barry's Bay native, Dr. Jack Kitts. Dr. Kitts retired last month as President and CEO of the Ottawa Hospital.

The commission will look into how COVID-19 spread within long-term care homes; how residents, staff, and families were impacted and the adequacy of measures taken by the province and other parties to prevent, isolate and contain the virus. The commission will also provide the government with guidance on how to better protect long-term care home residents and staff from any future outbreaks.

In appointing the three commissioners, Premier Ford said they were chosen for the expertise and experience they bring to addressing the commission's mandate:

Associate Chief Justice Frank N. Marrocco (Chair) appointed to the Superior



Dr. Jack Kitts

Court of Justice in 2005 and holds a distinguished career practising criminal law and civil litigation law spanning 33 years.

Angela Coke served as a former senior executive of the Ontario Public Service where she spent more than 27 years committed to the transformation of government operations, consumer protection reform, and the development of a strong professional public service.

Dr. Jack Kitts served as President and CEO of The Ottawa Hospital from February 2002 until his retirement in June 2020. He is known nationally for his focus and expertise in patient experience, performance measurement and physician engagement.

This independent commission has the power to conduct an investigation, including compelling persons to give or produce evidence, issuing summons, and holding public meetings. The commission's findings are delivered within the timeframes set out by the Minister of Long-Term Care in the Terms of Reference, allowing investigations to be completed in months, rather than years. The commissioners are expected to deliver their final report by April 2021.

## The Predicament

GIL GLOFCHESKIE  
BARRY'S BAY

It was the 1960s, I was 13 years old and growing up way too quickly. In those days a boy was a man at 13 but that kind of thinking got me into a predicament.

You see, I was thinking about a huge bass, the one I had seen earlier in the year feeding around my secret fishing hole. My idea was to catch that trophy bass and get my story into the sports section of the local paper. Maybe then the tourists would pay me well to be their fishing guide. I could make some serious money with that reputation, but

first I needed a plan to catch that bass.

There were obstacles to overcome and timing was of the utmost importance. The problem: On a regular day the area was always busy with people fishing and competition was fierce. If you caught a decent sized fish, the guys would crowd you and the big guys would just push you out. I decided that a Sunday morning was the best time to fish my secret honey hole. Nobody fished on Sunday as most everyone attended church; the problem was I also had to be in church. So what if I missed one Sunday? Was that such a bad thing? And just how would I man- —Continued on page 4

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*Continued from page 3*— age that? I needed a plan, a perfect Sunday morning, some luck — and the will to stuff my guilt into my back pocket.

That Sunday came. I got up early, put on my going-to-church clothes and stealthily readied myself, slipping a plastic bag of worms into my pocket I headed for the door. As I was going out, Mom called, “Where are you headed,

young man?” I innocently declared, “Oh, I’ve decided to go to early Mass today; it’s not as long as the later Mass and that way I can get more things done today.” Mom seemed pleased that I was being responsible and she did not have to push me to go to church. I yelled out my goodbye as the screen door slammed at my heels.

As I walked down the street the guilt sat heavy in my back pocket but I continued on down the street. It was a perfect morning to go fishing! Arriving at the church I walked up the steps and inside. Head down, I grabbed a church bulletin, left just as quickly and made for the lake. The closer I got to the water, the less guilty I felt. Relief washed over me — the toughest part of my plan had succeeded.

I reached the spot where I had stashed my fishing rod the night before, surveyed the lake and – with nobody around — hurried to my secret honey hole humming with excitement. I baited my hook with two humongous dew worms, set the big red and white bobber four feet from the hook and with one cast the bait landed in the honey hole. The waiting game had started: Was this my lucky day? Would I hook into that huge bass?

I sat on a big boulder at the shore and pulled the bulletin from my pocket, one eye on the bobber and the other studying the bulletin.

Now you might wonder why I would bother to read the church bulletin but I knew when I got home there would be the “test.” Questions like “What was the sermon about?” “What are the upcoming events?” “Which priest said Mass?” “Who did you see there?” It felt like I was on a quiz show. A thorough reading of the church bulletin had saved my hide on a few occasions.

Sitting on the rock my thoughts were

easy; I wondered if this is what heaven is like. I was totally care free. It was perfect. But disaster was about to strike.

Twenty minutes ticked by before my big bass inhaled the glob of juicy bait and my hook. I jerked the rod back and set the hook. The battle had begun! This beautiful bass that God had created was putting up a tremendous fight: jumping, running, diving, and dancing on the water. I worried whether my hook would hold or my line might break; was the drag set properly or would the rod break? I hung on and at one point I almost fell off the boulder into the lake. That would have been a hard one to explain, why I was soaking wet after church.

What a fight, maybe I’d set a new record. It sure felt like this monster from the deep was a true trophy. A fish to be proud of! Wait till everyone sees this beauty — maybe I would make the front page of our local paper! My plan was coming together, all I had to do was land this monster. These thoughts flashed quickly through my mind. Finally the bass tired — inch by inch I gained line, he was almost in the bag.

Just when I thought he was done, my bass gave another jump and ran like a rocket. The line and rod were straining; doubt crept into my mind. This was a powerful fish; did I have what it took to land him? Was I going to lose him? Then, just as suddenly, he gave up the fight. I reeled him in, grabbed him through the gills and hoisted him high into the air. Victory was at last mine — the plan was a success. I had caught my trophy and I was one heck of a fisherman! Wow, wait until I show off this big bass, this will give me bragging rights for a lifetime.

Then it slowly dawned on me that I couldn’t tell anyone this story. I couldn’t be caught out — thus my predicament. All thoughts of glory were suddenly struck down. What was I thinking? No

one could know about this trophy fish — I was supposed to be in church!

My hopes of making some money as a reputable fishing guide evaporated as I realized my dilemma. What could I do? Church was almost over, the fish was almost dead and I could be in trouble. There was no way I could take the fish home and try to explain how I skipped church to go fishing. I could not put the fish back; it would die anyway. My parents would ground me for a lifetime and probably confiscate my fishing equipment. On top of that, I'd have to go to confession and tell the priest what I had done. That would be worth a few Hail Marys, for sure.

That's when I heard the words, "Hey there young fella, that sure is a dandy bass you got there." I turned to see a man with a beard, a friendly smile and a twinkle in his eye. I liked him immediately. "Yes sir," I explained, "I just caught him, but I have a problem."

What was I saying? I don't know this guy.

"What's the problem?" he asked me. I sadly told him what I had done to catch this fish and how I was caught between a rock and a hard place.

He chuckled and agreed that it sure was an unfortunate turn of events.

We talked awhile and then I just offered him the fish, "Do you like fish, cause you can have this here bass."

"I love fish," he said, "but that wouldn't be fair to you, you caught that beauty and you deserve the credit for the catch."

I answered him in a sad tone, "This fish seems to be more trouble than I reckon I need." The stranger chuckled, "Tell you what, I'll give you 50 cents for the fish, would that be fair to you?"

I thought for awhile and answered, "Jeez, mister, that would be really nice of you but you don't have to." Happily he felt he did have to, we shook on the deal man-to-man which made me feel like a grown man.

Just then the bell tolled, Mass was over. Time to pack up. There will be a test when I get home; now where is that bulletin? I thanked the old timer and we parted ways.

He walked up the hill through the towering red and white pines on the road. I took the short cut across the more open field, up past the church and down the street. As I walked home, hands deep in my pockets, I thought



about what I had done; my happiness helped override any guilt. On one hand I had missed church; on the other, I had gained a life lesson. I was trying to reason it all out.

Hopeful that things would go in my favour, I walked through the door, "Hey, I'm home." Dad turned to me and asked, "Did you learn anything today?" I could answer truthfully, "Yes, I did, Dad." Dad smiled back at me; whenever he smiled that way I was left with the impression he knew more than he was saying. I believe he knew something unusual had happened and that it would eventually come out. How long would it take before Dad heard about a big bass caught by a young man down at the lake on a Sunday morning? I guessed the old gentleman would eventually tell that story to his buddies. How long would I have to worry about this? What a morning it had turned out to be. I didn't think I'll

play hooky from church anymore but at least Mom didn't "test" me that day. I pictured the big fish I had caught, my excitement, my disappointment and my guilt. Life is like that — you never know if, how or when it's going to bite.

For a long time I worried that the stranger would tell the story of the boy and the big fish. I never did hear anything about it in town and strangely enough, never saw that man again. To this day I wonder who he was and where he came from but I do know he saved my hide that day.

To assuage my guilt I donated that 50 cent piece to the church and felt it was a fair exchange. One never knows, maybe that older gentleman I met was God's way of keeping me on the right path in my life.

Fishing can be exciting, relaxing and spiritual in so many ways. Keep casting, keep dreaming, life really is an amazing adventure.



## EDITORIAL

# Nonprofit news brings its own rewards

DANIELLE PAUL  
MADAWASKA VALLEY

Regular readers know that *The Current* operates on a not-for-profit basis relying on the support of volunteers and local advertisers to cover costs of production. As such, we are part of a growing movement collectively known as “Nonprofit News.” This has resulted in the formation of an organization, the Institute for Nonprofit News, which promotes the value of publications, whether community-based or global, that are “committed to transparency and independence in public interest,

investigative journalism.” *The Current's* editorial policy has reflected this commitment since its inception.

So why remind our readers about this now? It is because recently two competitors, the Valley Gazette and the Eganville Leader have both prominently published the results of the annual Ontario Community Newspaper Association (OCNA) awards. The Valley Gazette, in the headline above its article, highlighted that two [of the three] local newspapers received such awards, drawing attention—whether intentionally or not—to the fact that *The Current* was not one of them. Given the

many compliments we have received about the quality and scope of our articles, as in past years some readers have asked why *The Current* is never also recognized by an OCNA award. This is understandable as confusion can arise from publicity about awards that can be interpreted as applying to all “Ontario Community Newspapers.” However it is the case that ONLY members of OCNA are eligible for their awards and members must submit their own entries in order to be considered. This arises from the fact that the OCNA is a trade association which promotes itself as providing the means for members

## VALLEY HERITAGE

### Whitney Red Devils — 1959 champions



1959 MVHL Pic of the Past !! Champions

The Whitney Red Devils won the Madawaska Valley Hockey championship in 1959 by defeating Barry's Bay four games to three. The champs pictured above, front row from left to right are Richard Dubreuil, Carl Lacombe, Bernie Stubbs, Doug Holmberg, Norm Easto, Mike Barnes, Donald Kuiack, and Nick Kmith. Back row are Blake Boldt, Richard Shalla, Jack Murdock, Coach Allen Shields, Dennis Lukasavitch, Tom Linklater, Leslie Kuiack, Dick Lukasavitch, and Art Bissonnette. We thank Mrs. Walter Sawyer for sharing this historic part of the past with our readers.

BOB CORRIGAN  
BARRY'S BAY

Until hockey fans can watch NHL action again, here's a local newspaper clipping that involves many well-known Whitney names. The Whitney Red Devils won the Madawaska Valley Hockey championship in 1959 by defeating Barry's Bay four games to three.

Front row (from left): Richard Dubreuil, Carl Lacombe, Bernie Stubbs, Doug Holmberg, Norm Easto, Mike Barnes, Donald Kuiack and Nick Kmith.

Back row: Blake Boldt, Richard Shalla, Jack Murdock, Coach Allen Shields, Dennis Lukasavitch, Tom Linklater, Leslie Kuiack, Dick Lukasavitch and Art Bissonnette.

The clipping credits Mrs. Walter Sawyer for sharing the photo.

NOTE: If you are interested in having a picture and story featured in *The Madawaska Valley Current*, please submit the information to Bob Corrigan at [madvalleycurrent@gmail.com](mailto:madvalleycurrent@gmail.com) (subject *Heritage Photos*) or mail your photo to Bob c/o *The Current* at PO Box 1097, Barry's Bay KOJ 1B0 (originals will be returned).

to increase their advertising revenue including by being recognized in its annual "Better News Competition." It also permits its members to devote up to 70 percent of their content to paid advertising, leaving just 30 percent for news.

As *The Current* is not, and cannot be, a member of OCNA whose membership is restricted to newspapers who

## Valley food and drink in Stage 3

THE CURRENT  
MADAWASKA VALLEY

Now that Ontario has entered Phase 3 of its reopening, here is a convenient list of local food and drink establishments and their telephone numbers for more information. Many post hours of business or menus on Facebook. Please note that masks or face coverings are required while ordering, waiting for food, using washrooms, etc. but may be removed while you eat and drink.

### BARRY'S BAY

Ash Grove Inn (613) 756-7672

Barry's Bay Dairy Ice Cream

Parlour (613) 756-2018

Barry's Bay Legion Branch 406 Patio  
and Club Room (613) 756-3018

Bay Coin Laundromat  
(613) 210-0550, (647) 830-6944

Charlie D's (613) 756-7162

Dairy Freez (613) 756-7116

Madawaska Coffee Café (613) 756-5282

Madawaska Kanu Centre  
(613) 756-3620

Pizza Pizza (located inside Yuill's  
ValuMart) (613) 756-2023

Spectacle Lake Lodge and the Lakeside  
Smokehouse 1-800-567-4044

Subway (613) 756-9988

Tim Hortons (613) 756-0008

Vito's Pizzeria (613) 756-5252

### COMBERMERE

Bent Anchor Bar & Restaurant  
(613) 869-8159

Heartwood Restaurant (613) 756-9169

The Old School Cafe Laundromat  
& Greenhouses (613) 756-9729

### WILNO

Wilno Tavern (613) 756-2029

certify that they operate for profit, we are therefore not eligible for its awards. *The Current* is however a proud member of the National NewsMedia Council which, unlike the OCNA, imposes ethical standards on its members and backs this up with a complaint resolution procedure including mediation and arbitration.

Also, nowhere on the OCNA's website will you see any mention of its members being expected or encouraged to perform a watchdog role by being "committed to transparency and independence in public interest, investigative journalism."

Remember, your elected officials are required by law to govern their municipalities with "integrity, accountability and transparency" and that taxpayers pay them to do this. If they fail to meet these standards and also resort to covering up their non-compliance, then community newspapers should, as recommended by the federal government's Local Journalism Initiative, investigate and report without fear or favour. *The Current* believes that nonprofit community newspapers ought not be the only foot soldiers shining a light on inappropriate conduct, regardless of whose feathers end up being ruffled.



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### THE CURRENT WELCOMES LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please address letters to [lettersmadvalleycurrent@gmail.com](mailto:lettersmadvalleycurrent@gmail.com) or The Madawaska Valley Current, PO Box 1097, Barry's Bay, ON K0J 1B0. Please include your first and last name, address and phone number for verification. Only your name and municipality appears in print. Online, readers can comment using the "Reply."

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This downloadable version of *The Current* is available free from our website. Please consider printing copies for any friends and family without internet, especially those in self-isolation that you may be helping.

Check online for COVID-19 related announcements and all the need-to-know information for Valley residents at: [madvalleycurrent.com](http://madvalleycurrent.com)

## PORCH VIEWS

# Corrective lenses, COVID-19, OHIP underfunding and the future of eye care



MARK WOERMKE  
BARRY'S BAY  
*My first glasses, at left*

*Editor's note: Welcome back, Mark Woermke! We're grateful that Mark found time for this Porch Views during his summer "holiday" as we know that between gardening and historical research there aren't any real holidays at his house. His views on eye care in the province – particularly in rural Ontario – are timely as, given the recently announced departure of Dr. Atfield, The Current plans more articles about local recruitment of healthcare professionals.*

MARK WOERMKE  
BARRY'S BAY

The ways we live, work and do business have changed. Each time we venture from our homes, we experience new protocols designed to protect personal and public health. Masks, for example, are now de rigueur for public events and venues across Eastern Ontario. Personally, I find them a little inconvenient – they fog my glasses and make it a little harder to breath, but when you compare mask-mortality rates with COVID-19 mortality rates, it's a no-brainer. I can live with a little fog on my lenses.

Speaking of lenses, I have been wearing them since 1974 when my teacher, Mrs. Bernarde, called home to report I couldn't see the chalkboard. In short order, an appointment was booked with Dr. St. James. He ascertained I was near-sighted; fitted me with sensible frames from the discount rack since I was only nine and likely to break them; and provided my eye care for the next fifteen years.

Last month I learned that an eyeglass dispensary in Ottawa's Glebe neighbourhood was booking appointments and charging a \$50.00 fee to select frames. I was initially annoyed, but after some thought, I concluded that, given the risks of COVID-19 transmission, staff must be provided with PPE,



Dr. Chelsea Bray wears PPE. PHOTO SUBMITTED

customers must be socially-distanced and everything to which they come close—countertops, mirrors, seats and the frames themselves—must be sanitized after each session. All things considered the fee seemed justified. I also learned that the fee would be reimbursed should the individual purchase frames.

Then, I heard from Chelsea Bray a young optometrist with deep roots in the Madawaska Valley. She works in Guelph, but was in Barry's Bay visiting her mom, Camille Conway. She shared her COVID-19 experience as a health care professional and provided insight into an OHIP billing issue that has been troubling Ontario optometrists for years but which the current pandemic has exacerbated. After exchanging a few emails with Dr. Bray, I also reached out to my optometrist, Dr. Agnieszka Cudowska Franzmann from Kanata, and Dr. Les Galek who practices optometry two days a week at the St. Francis Health Centre in Barry's Bay.

Bray was off work from March 15 to May 31. When her clinic reopened June 1, it was with significant staff and scheduling changes. While the clinic hasn't lost staff, only three of the six optometrists work each week to limit the number of staff and patients on the premises. New protocols have been established. When patients arrive, they

text or call from the parking lot as there is no indoor waiting area. Patients are required to wear masks and wash their hands upon arrival. After screening, they go directly to an examination room. Optometrists wear PPE when examining patients and a new cleaning regimen of regular sanitizing and deep cleaning has been adopted in the clinic.

Pre-COVID-19, Bray saw between 16 and 20 patients per day and squeezed in emergencies as necessary. Now she works week-on-week-off; and because appointments have been increased to 45 minutes, she only sees 10 patients per day and she can't squeeze in emergencies. They are directed to hospital emergency departments.

Galek doesn't work in a clinic; he has his own practice and works alone in two locations—one in the Roncesvalles neighbourhood in Toronto and the other, two days per week, at the St. Francis Health Centre in Barry's Bay. "Things are a little different for me," he says. "I run a small location, so it is easier for me to limit contact with patients than for the large clinics." While Bray and Franzmann report 50 percent reductions in the number of appointments, Galek says his appointments are down 30 to 40 percent, but that is still a significant reduction. He noted that urgent need appointments are problematic given all of the new protocols and that, in Barry's Bay, emergency cases will likely be sent to emergency departments in Ottawa.

Readers are probably imagining how these changes will affect their own experience of eye care in terms of increased wait times for appointments and the loss of dispensary walk-ins for adjustment, repairs or shopping. But the effects of COVID-19 are much more than just an inconvenience. The Ontario Association of Optometrists (OAO) estimates that during the next year two million eye appointments will be postponed or deferred. Emergencies present more serious consequences as patients may not get immediate care. And if they are redirected to hospital ERs, these cases will create a new health care problem.

Perhaps the most dramatic effect of post-COVID-19 changes in optometry relates to the bottom line. Normally Dr. Franzmann and I chat about Barry's Bay and Kaszuby because her family has a cottage on Wadsworth Lake, but recently our conversation centred on money – specifically the billing formula from OHIP.

Franzmann explained that OHIP “covers” eye examinations for Ontarians who are under 20, 65-plus, who have health conditions like diabetes and glaucoma, and who are on some forms of social assistance. However, the provincial insurance only reimburses optometrists for about half of the actual cost of the service.

Bray provided specific numbers: “The Ontario Association of Ontario (OAO) has determined the basic cost for providing an eye exam is \$80.00. OHIP pays \$47.00 for a senior's eye exam, \$42.50 for a child's eye exam, and \$43.80 for a patient with an eye disease or diabetes. As you can see, the OHIP remuneration doesn't cover the cost of providing the service, and the optometrist or clinic is subsidizing the rest.”

Franzmann pointed out that over the last 30 years the OHIP rate has only increased by 8 percent while during that same time, inflation has increased by 75 percent. Galek who has been practising for over 30 years agreed: “Over the course of my career, I have only seen two increases in OHIP rates, the last one being in 2009.”

As noted by the veteran optometrists Franzmann and Galek, the billing issue existed well before COVID-19. So now, consider the additional effect of fewer appointments and the cost of PPE and deep cleaning regimens on an optometrist's business. Yes, optometrists, like other health care professionals, are also business people. They are committed to the health of their patients, but to serve their patients they must employ staff, manage properties, and make a profit. The current system of OHIP billing, however, is making that difficult. An OAO survey on the impact of the current pandemic on optometry practices revealed that 95 percent reported a revenue drop between 75 and 80 percent since mid-March. This prompted its president, Dr. Sheldon Salaba, to state on the association's website: “Op-

tometrists can't reopen practices that have been financially devastated by COVID-19, only to provide OHIP-insured services at an even greater loss. If this happens, practices in both rural and urban communities will struggle to survive.”

When I read that, the phrase “practices in both rural and urban communities will struggle to survive” struck a nerve since I recently learned my physician is closing his practice in Barry's Bay and moving to Peterborough. I think the last thing we need in rural Ontario is to lose more access to health services, and not being reimbursed for the true cost of examinations is a real disincentive for optometrists anywhere.

I took a look at the 2016 federal census data for Bray's home, Guelph, which is an urban location and my home, Madawaska Valley, which is rural. The percentage of the population in Guelph that was under 20 and over 65 was 38 percent. For MV, the percentage was 48 percent. Now, I am not a statistician, but it seems that these numbers demonstrate that in our rural community an optometrist would be significantly more reliant on OHIP billing than in an urban setting. It's already difficult to recruit and retain health care professionals here, but such dependence on OHIP rates that don't cover the true cost of services must certainly make the area less appealing for optometrists.

Dr. Salaba of the OCA says, “We are fighting not just for our survival, but for a long-term solution that protects patients and public health. We ask the government to come to the table with a commitment to succeed where previous governments failed. Either cover the true cost of eye exams or give optometrists more flexibility in our billings. Optometrists are ready to adapt to ensure Ontarians get the accessible and quality eye care they deserve.”

Dr. St. James helped me see the chalkboard. Dr. Franzmann keeps my vision clear in the age of progressive lenses. She and her fellow optometrists Bray and Galek also helped me see how historic underfunding of optometry examinations by OHIP risks access to eye care for Ontarians.

For more information on this issue, or to show your support for Ontario's optometrists, visit [saveeyecare.ca](http://saveeyecare.ca)

[www.madvalleycurrent.com](http://www.madvalleycurrent.com)

# My veggies are in — now what?

RITSUKO HONDA  
WILNO

I hope both you and all your plants have survived the extreme weather this season. We had rollercoaster temperature shifts in mid-June, from the frosty mornings to over 30C in a couple of days, high winds, a downpour with spotty hail, and tropical heat without rain for weeks in early summer. This is definitely a challenging year for gardeners, especially beginners.

Luckily, I used this extreme weather as an excuse to postpone my big work day of transplanting heat-loving tender vegetables so I didn't have to cry over any frost damage, but now my shoulders are aching from carrying buckets of water. Once plants are in your garden, unfortunately it is not the end of your work — endless work has just begun. I'm sharing what I do to maintain my garden in summer to give you some tips and ideas.

Everybody has their own gardening style. My mishmash garden is interplanted with different vegetables, flowers and herbs all together. Some weeds are even allowed to stay in. They all help each other in a way.

## SUMMER GARDEN MAINTENANCE

### 1. WATER DEEPLY

Quantity and frequency of watering depends on plant varieties, weather, mulch, soil condition and plant density, but whatever these variants are, water deeply and less frequently. This will save you time and water. If you water to a shallow depth every day, your plants will get lazy and the roots will grow only close to the surface where soil gets hot and dry quickly. As a result, you would have to water even more often.

Plants mainly take in water through their roots; so, direct the water at the base of your plants. A sprinkler may be convenient, but you would lose lots of water that evaporates in the air before it reaches the roots. I use buckets, a hose, and soaker hoses depending on plants and areas. I make an indentation (a well) around each plant or a trench for a row when planted or sowed. This helps to collect and hold water better.

How deep? That depends on veg-

etable or flower varieties. For example, tomatoes develop roots 1-1/2 feet deep and below; that's where I have planted. To reach that deep, you need a bucket of water if the soil is completely dry. I give my tomatoes half a bucket in each hole before planting and another half in the well after planting, and a half each day for the next three days or so, then I reduce frequency. Once tomatoes get established, I water a half to a full bucket every week. Lettuces require more frequent watering, maybe every day in the mid-summer. Cucumbers and eggplants also need more watering than tomatoes.

Ideally, water in the early morning or the evening to avoid evaporation, but if plants are suffering or wilting, don't wait. Rescue them immediately. Saving rain water is a great way to conserve water. Plants love warm water that has sat in a barrel for a while, instead of cold water straight from the well.

### 2. MULCH A LOT

All gardens need and benefit from mulch. Mulch keeps moisture in and weeds down. Consequently, it saves lots of your time. It also helps regulate the soil temperature and invites more microbes which build your soil better and fluffy. I use hay for vegetables and natural wood chips for flowers. Some people prefer straw over hay because straw has fewer weed seeds, but hay is more affordable and available — so that's what I use. What about weeds? Mulch thickly and don't disturb; then, the weed seeds usually don't germinate.

### 3. WEED

If you mulch your beds a lot, your weeding job will be easier. Weeds will only come up in spots and the soil should be soft; you should try to pull them out with roots attached while they're still relatively small. If the weeds are already big, pulling them out may disturb and damage the root systems of nearby plants. In that case, you need to water the plants after weeding.

Weeds can also be beneficial. Some, including lamb's quarters, sorrels, Johnny-jump-ups, and purslane, are edible. Their flowers can attract pollinators and beneficial insects like parasitic wasps.



Mishmash garden. PHOTO RITSUKO HONDA

Weeds can provide some shade to your plants as well as shelter for garden snakes and toads who eat unwanted bugs. After pulling the weeds, of course, you can pile them to mulch your garden too! After all, they are not that bad.

### 4. INTERPLANT FLOWERS AND HERBS

All vegetable gardens need flowers and herbs. Companion planting can control pests, enhance vegetables' growth rates or flavour, attract pollinators and other beneficial insects, and maximize use of space. My favourite companion flowers in vegetable gardens are borage, calendula, marigold, nasturtium and Tithonia (Mexican sunflower).

### 5. FEED

If you have worked lots of well-rotted manure or compost into your garden, usually you don't need to feed much. However, a new garden has usually not built up the soil well yet, and it is always good to give some booster once in a while. You can make manure/compost tea in a barrel or bucket. Save banana peels which contain potassium to make flowers and fruits, and make a flower booster by simply letting them sit in water for 48 hours. Epsom salt is another common item you can feed your plants with.

Part of our gardens is 20 years old, and every year it has been fed with plenty of manure. I still like to give my vegetables extra organic fertilizer. My absolute favourite is comfrey tea. Comfrey is a super perennial; its leaves speed up the composting process and

make potassium rich fertilizer; its flowers are a magnet for bees; its giant taproot makes fantastic salves and poultices. To make comfrey tea, I tear up the leaves, put them in a rain barrel, fill up with water, mix once in a while, and let it decompose until it gets dark and stinky. Apply it just like water, or spray it on your plants.

## 6. PROVIDE SHADE

Greens like lettuces will not appreciate the hot sun we've been having. They prefer gentle morning sun, but the strong afternoon beating sun tends to make them bolt; that is, they get tall to form flowers and become too bitter to eat. You can protect them by providing some kind of shade. Shade cloths, cardboard boxes, old sheets, and upside-down large pots would work. I usually sow peas on the south-west side of lettuces. When peas grow high on the trellis, they shade and protect lettuces from the strong late afternoon sun.

Root crops like potatoes love to have cool feet to grow. Hill your potatoes as many times as possible. Bury their roots in the deep shade. If you are growing potatoes in a large pot, it's a good idea to place the pot where it gets afternoon shade to avoid baking the pot with your tubers in it.

## 7. SOW MORE

Succession planting promises you continuous harvests. We still have lots of time to grow carrots, beans, and greens. Sow lettuces and cilantro every three weeks. If the soil is too hot for seeds to germinate, place a board over the row. Check every so often till germination, and then remove it.

## 8. KEEP A GARDEN JOURNAL

Your garden journal can be a learning tool, a memory stick, a supportive friend and an entertainment. Every evening I open my garden journal to record what

happened in the garden on that day including the weather, what I have done and in which garden, what bloomed, what I saw and heard, good and bad, and of course, what I harvested. I record frost on what and in which part of the garden: this has helped me understand not only different varieties of plants but also our landscape. This has also helped me to determine what to cover at what temperature with a frost warning, and where to install a wind break to change cold air flow. I often go back to my old notes for the name of a plant that I have forgotten. I write down my questions in the journal and do research later when I have more time.

It is a delightful time to reflect on my efforts and hard work. Because I often feel like nothing has got done with piles of things to do still sitting around me, it is wonderful to have a good reminder. And, this is definitely my winter entertainment!

## 9. ENJOY!!

Walk around in your garden to appreciate what you've accomplished, smell your plants, taste your harvests, and read about your plants and gardening. A crop failure? You can cry and complain, but you will also gain knowledge and experience. Every year is different, and I certainly learn something new in my garden every day.

Also, share your experiences with your friends and neighbours. Unfortunately, we all have to miss our monthly horticultural meetings due to the COVID-19 restrictions, but you can post your story or question on the Madawaska Valley Horticultural Society Facebook Page or send to *The Current*. Then we can be richer in gardening knowledge by the time we emerge together from this pandemic.

A future gardening article will cover animal control. Happy gardening!

## OBITUARY



### Mary Lyn (Frederick) Beatty July 10, 1940 — July 4, 2020

The family of Mary Lyn (Frederick) Beatty are very sad to share the news of her passing on Saturday July 4, 2020. Born in Toronto on July 10, 1940. Mary Lyn was faithful wife to Gary Beatty for 40 years until his death in 2005, mother to Kristan (Joseph) Hamon, Erika (Michael) Beatty, Hank (Sandra) Beatty, Claire Beatty, Aaron (Marian) Beatty; 13 grand-children Andrew (Sarah), Marissa, Joanna, Anthony, Isaac, Katrina, Francisco, Maria, Miriana, Gwen, Aiden, Matthew, Thomas; one great-granddaughter Aria. She is also survived by sisters Margaret, Susan and Paule; sister-in-law Jolanta; predeceased by her brother Paul, her mother Mary (Burri) and father Paul.

There will be visitation at Heubner Funeral Home on Wednesday evening July 8 from 7pm to 9pm with Funeral Mass at St. Hedwig Catholic Church in Barry's Bay on July 9th at 10:30 for family and extended family. The service will also be live-streamed at [www.sainthedwigchurch.com](http://www.sainthedwigchurch.com). A burial will be at St. Joseph's Catholic Cemetery, 660 Manitoba Street in Bracebridge, on Saturday, July 11, 2020 at 1 pm.

In lieu of flowers the family welcomes a memorial gift to the Canadian Down Syndrome Society, <https://cdss.ca/get-involved/> donations or Madonna House Apostolate, [www.madonnahouse.org/donate](http://www.madonnahouse.org/donate).



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HELP

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Bernadette McCann House

24-hour Crisis Support Line

1-613-732-3131 or 1-800-267-4930

or TEXT 613-602-6588

Bernadette McCann House

# There but not there — honouring those who served

DANIELLE PAUL  
BARRY'S BAY

Visitors to the Barry's Bay Legion Branch 406 may have noticed a new sculpture permanently mounted beside the Cenotaph. The metal silhouette was donated by Mrs. Theresa Bryant of Bracebridge, Ontario in memory of veterans Anthony Puchalski and his son-in-law, Joseph Voldock. Above: "There But Not There" photo Heather Poliquin

Heather Poliquin, Branch 406 President, related the story that inspired this moving artwork. She said that a CTV interview with General Rick Hillier, former Chief of Defence Staff with the Canadian Forces, in July 2018 explained that dozens of life-size silhouettes were being erected in public spaces across Canada to commemorate 100 years since the end of the First World War. In the interview Gen. Hillier explained that the soldier silhouettes were part of the "There But Not There" campaign, designed to help people "to better understand how the war came to affect millions of people from countries around the world." He said, "They are the ghosts of those who came before us."

The program launched in the UK in February 2018 and by that summer had brought in more than \$4 million in donations. In Canada, there are silhouettes at several landmarks, including outside Parliament Hill and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Ottawa and at Nathan Phillips Square in downtown Toronto.

## TAKING THE NAMES OFF THE WALL

*The Current* dug a little deeper into the story to find out about the artist behind the "There But Not There" campaign. The first silhouettes were created in Perspex by Martin Barraud, an English conceptual photographer. Barraud had the idea of "taking the names off the wall" as he passed by the memorial to 50 young men in Peshurst Church, near where he lives in Kent. "I needed to do something. I wanted to get them back into the village," he said in an interview with the *Evening Standard*. He went to the vicar and asked to put the lost boys—the youngest was just 17—back in the pews. "He hadn't a clue



"There But Not There" sculpture at the Barry's Bay Legion Branch 406. PHOTO HEATHER POLIQUIN

what I was on about but he said yes."

Barraud created silhouettes in Perspex for every one of those men—the 17-year-old a little shorter than the rest—and placed them sitting around the church. Local schoolchildren put the men's names by each one. Three cousins from the Hardinge family sat together; as did two brothers. And alone in the church he had the uncanny feeling "there was someone there."

That was in 2016 and from there the project took off. Word got around—other communities wanted to do the same and the Army was interested. In the UK the goal was to have a figure to represent every one of the 883,246 men from Britain and Ireland who died. From the Commonwealth as a whole, the total was 1.5 million.

## SILHOUETTE SALES SUPPORT VETERANS



British photographer Martin Barraud in Peshurst Church. PHOTO: STANDARD.CO.UK

Poliquin said that sales of the silhouettes have raised money for several international charities that support veterans. The benefiting charities include the True Patriot Love Foundation, which supports Canadian veterans, and the Invictus Games Foundation, which uses the power of sport to help rehabilitate ill and injured veterans.