

OS programs

Helping to weather the pandemic storm

By Eric Schmiedl

OXFORD COUNTY — Running the various programs of Operation Sharing presents different challenges at the best of times. And those challenges have been increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Even so, Operation Sharing's staff and volunteers are doing their best to help people in need get through the times of the coronavirus.

The Inn homeless shelter, which operates out of Old St. Paul's Anglican Church in Woodstock and serves all of Oxford (and is primarily funded by the County of Oxford), continues to run from 7:30 p.m. to 7:30 a.m. seven days a week. However, there have been changes – as an example, guests come in one at a time and are asked screening questions to ensure they are free of the virus. If someone is suspected of having COVID-19, they are quarantined.

There is plenty of hand sanitizing within the Inn, while masks are made available to the guests, and there has been additional cleaning daily. Bed spaces have been separated two metres apart.



The Inn sign pointing to the entrance to the homeless shelter at Old St. Paul's Anglican Church.

Darryl Watson, Inn coordinator, said the facility has had up to about 14 guests a night during the pandemic.

Donations have continued to come in.

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“We thank those who have donated. It’s really made a difference,” Watson said.

Boston Pizza, Swiss Chalet, Little Caesars and the Bullwinkle’s Eatery and Hospitality Training Centre (another Operation Sharing program) currently provide food for the Inn guests, he added.

As for Bullwinkle’s, it continues to run Tuesdays to Thursdays temporarily at College Avenue United Church in Woodstock for takeouts only. The hours of operation are noon-1 p.m. Patrons are asked to pay a minimum donation of \$1 on Tuesdays and Thursdays while the meal is free on Wednesdays.

As with other Operation Sharing programs, physical distancing protocols are in place with Bullwinkle’s.

The Food for Friends food card program also runs out of College Avenue on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9 a.m. to noon. In Ingersoll, the program runs Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to noon at Trinity United Church.

Food cards can be used for non-taxable items like produce and milk at Foodland and Giant Tiger (Woodstock and Ingersoll), the Independent in

Ingersoll as well as Food Basics and Sobeys in Woodstock.

Vanessa Page, who heads Operation Sharing’s Woodstock Food for Friends and Bullwinkle’s programs, also thanked those who are making donations in these troubled times.

It’s important to keep the food programs going not only for those who have used them in the past but also for those who newly need them due to the pandemic, she said.

“Operation Sharing is an anchor in the storm,” Page said, adding the organization is a source of stability for patrons during COVID-19.

Even though the Writers’ Café program – a joint effort of Operation Sharing and the Canadian Mental Health Association – was put on hold when the association cancelled programming temporarily at its Peel Street location in Woodstock,

participants in the writing program were invited to make submissions to this newsletter.

The Extended Family Project, an Operation Sharing program that links volunteers with people in need in a variety of ways, was put on low rev by the pandemic. However, some matches through the program have been able to go on remotely – for example, a retired teacher is helping a student with the latter’s studies.

***Darryl Watson***

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Love you all

Take care in all our memories
shared

See over us heavenly ones keep
us resolute

While picking supplies from your
step is wise.

No doubt, occupied minds, keep
ourselves astute

Hands clean, be safe, stay within
boundaries declared

Not wanting to watch in helpless
fashion as another dies.

Honour, pride, consideration,
caring, impart Canada DNA

Setting examples for those unable
to consider laws of life

Greed intellectual absence their
betrayal bent minds eh!

Canada stands proud with
Queen's prolonged message

Health workers engage enemy
through COVID strife

Mr. Trudeau shines, setting
direction in dressage.

This prose was for sister, brother,
now all of us

We to read and contemplate our
future onward

Hardest tasks volunteering or self
isolation thrust

With escape we will stand
proudly, worldly stalwart

To consider majestic Samaritans
and the words of Tam

Canada then, wave our much-
loved flag proud and grand

Retired in hermitage home with
indefatigable wife of love

Our battles against infection,
boredom, that cabin fever

More than Scrabble, reflective
lives continue our bond

A life of laughter, loving,
parenting, turmoil second

My life, her life, kids' life, your
life will be forever

Heritage, history, never
forgotten, future sure.

- *Poem by Reginald E. Graves,
Writers' Café participant*

Rewriting George

I am George and I suffer from a rare brain disease. It has symptoms similar to Alzheimer's ... bit by bit, my personality is being erased.

A professor at a prestigious university, I teach modern languages, particularly German and Italian, with a bit of French of the side. But my job has been getting tougher and tougher as the words seem to slip through the neurons of my brain.

I don't feel like myself most days. That's why I signed up for a radical therapy. It involves imprinting computer information selectively on my brain tissues. The treatment basically rewrites bad sections of my mind and replaces them with electronically enhanced information.

At first, it was great. My power of languages improved greatly and I could carry on conversations

once again in a variety of tongues. I returned to work and felt on top of the languages world.

But then, the disease began to accelerate and I required more and more treatments. Increasingly, my personal memories began slipping away.

Sometimes, I have a recollection of an event and I'm not sure if it's something from my past or something somebody has inputted into my brain. As the process continues, it is becoming increasingly difficult to say where my own memories end and where the new information begins. Sometimes I feel like a walking computer with a reformatted hard drive for a soul.

But I am still George ... or am I?

- *Short story by Eric Schmiedl, Writers' Café
coordinator*

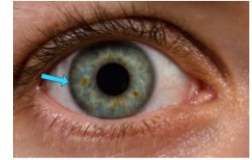
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*By Ian
Robinson
of the
Writers'
Café*

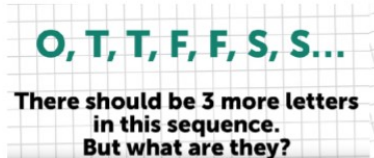
NOMOPHOBIA, the fear of going without your mobile phone.



My friend James Cameron and I made three films together – True Lies, The Terminator and Terminator 2. Of course, that was during his early, low-budget, art-house period
~ Arnold Schwarzenegger



What's the dark circle around the iris called?



Aconcagua is a mountain in which country?

Strawberries aren't actually berries at all, but avocados are – T/F?

Humans share 50% of their DNA with bananas – T/F?

Ian's A.P.S.A..C.M.

Stop it

Staying safe
Staying in touch
Helping others
Stay inside to be safer
COVID-19 virus
We want to be healthy and strong

So be calm and love each other
Help people to beat the virus so we can help people everywhere in the country
Support people to stop the virus and we can be back in the community

So all stores can be open again and we can never get sick
We can be together again and be a part of who we are
We are those to stop the VIRUS.
- Poem by Tara Myers, Writers' Café participant

In time

Corgus entered the heavily-shielded corridor, breathing in deeply from the suit he was wearing – a suit designed to withstand the intense cold of deep space. Neither it nor his oxygen supply would last forever, however, so he had to keep moving until he reached the ship's bridge.

He walked further through the corridor, his gravity boots clanking on the throughway's metal plates like gongs at a festival. But this was no festival, he thought to himself, *I'll drop dead if a don't move quickly. I'll never see Fraya again.... NO....*

Corgus reached feverishly for his control device as

he reached the huge doors at the corridor's end. He furiously pushed buttons on the device and the doors opened with aching slow speed. He was through the newly-open accessway and in the ship's bridge.

There she was, in the command chair. *Fraya. Thank God.*

The doors closed, leaving husband and wife alone for their reunion. They had just passed through a stressful few moments in time and now was their time to celebrate each other.

- Short story by Eric Schmiendl, Writers' Café coordinator

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