

OUTLOOK

Owen Sound & District Chamber of Commerce



OWEN SOUND FARMERS' MARKET

Add visiting the Owen Sound Farmers Market to your regular Saturday morning schedule, whenever possible. You won't regret it.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Agriculture and agri-food businesses are alive and thriving in Grey County. According to data from Grey County, there are over 2,300 farms in our area and almost 500,000 acres of farmland.

WHY LAVENDER?

Excited by the growth in the Agrotourism industry. The fields at Bluewater Lavender farm are an extraordinary site to see.

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OWEN SOUND FARMERS' MARKET

Owen Sound is widely regarded as a particularly vibrant community. High on that list of outstanding contributors is the Owen Sound Farmers Market. And it's been doing so for over 150 years.

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AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD CLOSE TO HOME

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WHY LAVENDER?

Excited by the growth in the Agrotourism industry the fields at Bluewater Lavender farm are an extraordinary site to see.

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Pictured: Richard Thomas and Morag Budgeon Owen Sound Farmers Market
Cover photo: Candra Schank Photography



YEARS OF SERVICE

Celebrating local businesses and their achievement in years of business.

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NEW MEMBERS

Look whose joined us! Read up on the new members of the Chamber.

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JUST SAYING

One of the first things I learned when I came to Owen Sound, 50 years ago this autumn was how dependent the city and the region were, *and are*, on farming. I think there was always a "farm to table" opportunity in our neighbourhood, but it was somehow different in some undefinable way.

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OUTLOOK

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OWEN SOUND FARMERS' MARKET: LOCAL PRODUCE AND MUCH MORE

Owen Sound is widely regarded as a particularly vibrant community – a great place to live, learn, work, create, listen, play, and retire! While too many vulnerable residents have not shared equitably in this prosperity, they have strong advocates across the community who work passionately to enhance their inclusion, and that's exemplary too. This enviable status is the direct result of the combination of a number of building blocks that engaged citizens have put in place and reinforced over many years. High on that list of outstanding contributors is the Owen Sound Farmers Market. And it's been doing so for over 150 years.

In 1868, after decades of informal gatherings, Owen Sound became home to one of the first organized, regularly recurring farmers' market in Ontario. Located on the ground floor of the then new Town Hall it was a key gathering point for the community as the central place for farmers to sell and consumers to buy fruit, vegetables, meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products on a seasonal basis. An equally important benefit was the face-to-face, personal social interaction, and information sharing that occurred each Saturday morning in an era before electronic communication of any kind.

Imagine the bustling scene at Town Hall on any Saturday morning in the late 1800s and early 1900s - rain, snow or shine. Horses and wagons are lined up around the marketplace in all directions; farmers and their families sell or barter their produce to "Townies" and to each other; friendships are renewed; news and gossip is shared; kids frolic; and teenagers get to know each other. Only Sunday church services at "Sal-

vation Corners" rivalled and reinforced the social importance of these weekly gatherings. Food for the belly then food for the soul.

Now fast forward to 2022. Perhaps the famous phrase "the more things change, the more they stay the same" sums things up best. Certainly there has been lots of change. The Farmers Market is now year round. Since 1936 it has been housed in an historic building which was recently renovated. Horses and wagons have given way to cars and trucks. A wide variety of non agricultural products and are now available – all the way from cookies and candies to handmade arts and crafts, jewelry, books, toys knitting and artistic health and herbal products. Music is a constant. And vendors, consumers and visitors alike now make full use of electronic communications of all kinds.

But for all of this "progress", the fundamentals persist. Farmers still bring their products to the Market, including vegetables and berries in the summer; apples and pumpkins in autumn; and meat, poultry, eggs and dairy products at every gathering. If anything the deemed value of such transactions to farmers and consumers has increased over the years. Farmers save money relative to selling to wholesalers and pass these savings onto buyers; and they appreciate being paid quickly and directly. Consumers value the freshness, choice and person-to-person connection and the opportunity to "put a face on their food" and ask questions about how it was grown or raised. This applies particularly to young residents who demonstrably are more aware and supportive of the reduced carbon footprint, associated with their locally sourced Market purchases. They care about the environment, the cost of fuel to ship products, and chemicals being used.

Similar personal considerations apply to other Market purchases. For example, buyers can speak with an artisan and get details of how that one-of-a-kind item was made so when it is gifted, there's a story that goes along with the future heirloom.

Before taking a more intimate look at the many enticing aspects of today's Owen Sound Farmers' markets, lets look a bit at the bigger picture. According to Farmers' Markets Ontario, which represents farmers markets across the province, over the past 10 years, farmers markets sales in Ontario have increased 10 – 12% annually to about \$800 million per year with an economic impact of over \$2.5 billion. The cur-



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OWEN SOUND FARMERS' MARKET - continued

rent total of more than 180 Ontario farmers markets greatly exceeds the only 60 such venues that were struggling to remain afloat in the 1980s when shopping malls were in ascendance. Now it's malls, not farmers markets that are floundering.

This is clear evidence that farmers markets have found their niche as highly effective sales outlets for agricultural and other products across our province. Something that Owen Sound has known for over 150 years is now catching on! It's increasingly realized that farmers markets play a vital role in enabling producers and consumers to come together in a dynamic commerce experience that combines economic exchange with social relationships. For the vendor, whether producer, artisan or baker, farmers markets offer an opportunity to improve net revenues; consumer benefits from the choice, high quality, and sometimes uniqueness of their purchases. And all enjoy the therapeutic benefits of the relaxed but yet energetic social atmosphere that is at the core of the farmers market experience.

And now let's get better acquainted with the current Owen Sound Farmers Market, starting with the Co-Managers. Morag Budgeon and Richard Thomas have shared this role since August, 2019, reporting to the volunteer Board of Directors of Owen Sound & District Farmers' Market Vendor Association. They succeeded Tom Pink who, over 20 years, lead many transformative Market initiatives including the addition of inspiring stained glass panels above the transoms. Like Tom before them Morag and Richard cherish living in the unique 3000 square foot apartment situated at the top of the Market building. Market Managers have always lived in the apartment as stewards of the historic building and to be readily available for rentals and emergencies.

After graduating from the Jewellery and Metal program at Georgian College, Morag pursued a successful career fabricating and selling her original jewellery. She is committed to the Owen Sound community and has worked constantly to advance the local arts scene particularly recently with The Georgian Bay School of the Arts which she and a partner started in 2019.

Like Morag, Richard Thomas is well known to and respected by Owen Sound residents. After solid contributions on City Council over two terms, he recently ran a strong campaign for Mayor. Richard is a gifted communicator, author and video producer who has 21 books in print. He has served 19 years on the Owen Sound and North Grey Union Public Library board, and was founding President of the Community Waterfront Heritage Centre, which formed in 2013 to save the marine and rail museum from closing.

Morag and Richard had a baptism by fire beginning shortly after assuming their Managerial responsibilities. On March 14, 2020, they were forced to close the Market because of the onset of COVID. This was devastating for the Market's then 65 vendors and for regular patrons. But the Co-Managers pivoted quickly and over the next two years adeptly made the best of a bad situation. Their key steps involved first creating a highly successful online store featuring pre-ordering and scheduled pick-ups; and then phased re-opening of the marketplace itself in accordance with each lessening of protocols. This year, the inside of the market building and the compelling new canopy space have been returned to their pre-Covid configuration. All's well that ends well but as Morag understated: "Between construction in 2019 and Covid, the Market has been in a state of flux for over 3 years. It's good to get back to normal."

But what is "normal"? It's enjoying: an early morning breakfast sandwich from Birgit's Bakery Cafe; just-caught fish from Howells; apples from Dykstra Orchards; and butternut squash from Brenda and Jack Bolle. It's discovering used book treasures from Arwen Greenwood; bamboo socks from Michelle Biggins; teapots from Rockrose Pottery; and Miners pure Ontario Maple Syrup. All of these vendors have been participating in the Market for at least 20 years, and some 30!

Normal too is festive Christmas preparations and celebrations at the Market. "This year you will be able to find everything you want for a local focused holiday season", says Morag. "There's food and drink for your comfort plus art, craft and eclectic items to lift your spirit". Many new and existing vendors are already displaying a wide variety of local products – some unique, some traditional and all enjoyable. The Christmas buskers are tuning their instruments, soon to entertain.

Every seven years, Christmas Eve falls on a Saturday, and 2022 is one of those special years. The market will be open on December 24th, sparkling with lights, decorations, and happy vendors. The Market will be giving away warm holiday beverages and cookies to all who attend. As well, the Market sells 'Market Bucks' for the would be buyer who just can't choose among so many enticing options. We've waited more than two years to fully enjoy the Market at Christmas, so just don't miss it! In fact, add visiting the Owen Sound Farmers Market to your regular Saturday morning schedule, whenever possible. You won't regret it.



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Roots are an important reminder that home is where your clan is.

My wife, Jen and I went to Scotland to explore our roots. We had a blast, and found our clans! We also found our roots again, when we got back to Grey Bruce. Home is where the heart is. My heart, and clan are here. 'A Blithe Yule' to you, and yours!



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AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD CLOSE TO HOME

By Courtney Denard

Agriculture and agri-food businesses are alive and thriving in Grey County.

Not only does the region provide access to natural resources, including productive farmland and fresh water, it also has a ready market with an appetite for innovation.

As a dairy farmer in Owen Sound and chair of Catapult Grey Bruce, a non-profit organization that works with local entrepreneurs looking to scale their business, I work within agriculture and agri-food on a daily basis.



Denard runs Valleykirk Farms in Owen Sound with her in-laws, husband and daughter.

It's amazing to have an inside look into an industry that I am extremely passionate about, and one that is constantly evolving, for the better, in my opinion.

According to data from Grey County, there are over 2,300 farms in our area and almost 500,000 acres of farmland. The average capital per farm is \$1.7 million and the diversity among commodities is broad.

The numbers show that 42 per cent of Grey County farms raise cattle, 23 per cent grow cash crop, and 23 per cent are mixed operations. The area is also home to dairy, sheep and goat farms, as well as fruit, greenhouse and floriculture businesses.

Between 2016 and 2021, Grey County experienced an increase in total gross farm receipts, particularly for farms reporting revenues of over \$500,000. Meanwhile, international exports of beef, grain, lamb, apples and compressed hay are valued at \$308 million.

This means what's happening locally is having an impact globally.

Looking at Catapult Grey Bruce specifically, the organization has been offering mentorship to 14 food-based businesses in Grey Bruce as part of the Food Venture Program.

FVP is a multi-week workshop that was launched in 2021. It's a partnership between Catapult, Grey County, Georgian College, Business to Bruce and BDC.

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WHY LAVENDER? A CONVERSATION WITH BLUEWATER LAVENDER FARM

By **Tiffany James**

Why Lavender? That is the first question I asked when I spoke with Bluewater Lavender Farm owner Christine Arezzi.

Christine and her husband Mass moved to Georgian Bluffs in May of 2021 from Toronto with the hopes of putting the big city noise behind them. Both are very familiar with agriculture and farming as Christine herself grew up on a hobby farm near Elora and Mass near the Lavender fields in France. A trip to the Lavender farms in Prince Edward County Ontario “sealed the deal” Christine said.

So why Lavender? “There are so many properties of Lavender... it’s very calming, relaxing, and destressing, and there are so many different products you can make with Lavender” you can hear the passion in Christine’s voice when she talks about lavender. So why not?

A popular method of processing lavender is the distilling process which allows you to capture the essential oils within the lavender to make the lavender products. Christine and Mass are new to the distilling process having just purchased distillation equipment this year. She noted that the young plants need time to mature as the oil is very precious. The oil is being used within their products with the hope to bottle Bluewater Lavender farm essential oils in the future.

Bluewater Lavender has many amazing products from dried bundles, to candles, bath salts, linen and cleaning sprays and roller balls. In the future we will see a fabulous lavender store on the property located just south of Wiarton but for now all Bluewater Lavender farm products can be found at local



*Christine and Mass Arezzi
owners Bluewater Lavender Farm*

markets and Pop-up shops including a Community Pop up at Heritage Place Mall December 16, 17, and 18.

Calling all Photographers, the fields at the farm are an extraordinary site to see and Bluewater Lavender offers tours by appointment throughout their gorgeous lavender fields. Did you know that lavender blooms from late June to the middle of August? With 5 different types of lavender on the farm and plants blooming at different times, from English lavender in full bloom in July to French Lavender in full bloom in August, it is always a great time to visit Bluewater Lavender Farm.

I am excited to see the growth in the Agrotourism industry and when I spoke with Christine you could tell she was passionate about her farm and the potential it has to offer our local area. “Lavender looks beautiful, smells beautiful and the destressing and calming properties of lavender are like no other” Christine proudly told me as we ended our conversation. So, add Bluewater Lavender Farm to one of your next stops when you head up the peninsula, a nice soothing stroll through their fields will make anyone’s day brighter.



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These advisors are trained to help you evaluate your child's future needs as well as drawing in other professionals like lawyers, accountants and bankers as well as community organizations to help you navigate the benefits systems and track down local resources.

For example, earning the Chartered Financial Planner (CFP) designation provides an advisor like Rachel with the understanding, knowledge and proficiency in the various insurance and investment products and the role each plays in providing customized benefits for individuals and families in building a comprehensive financial plan for their protection and wealth-being.

Qualified legal and accounting help can provide customized solutions using a range of special needs planning tools such as establishing trusts, addressing guardianship issues for now and in the future and saving plans without disqualifying them from government benefits as a child or later in life as an adult.

Key in all this is to evaluate your child's future needs in terms of medical care and financial need. As a first step, a handle on this can be obtained by talking to your child's doctor or medical team. Needs will change over time especially today with better medical care, people with disabilities now have much longer lifespans than they once did.

On a personal note, make time for your marriage. Marriage is hard work, period. Parenting is hard work, period. Parenting a child with special needs is especially hard work, period! For those of you who are married or in a relationship, make time for that relationship away from your children.

One last point: Don't forget to plan for yourself. It's easy to spend most of your time and money on your child and neglect your own finances. But you may need to save for college for other children, and you certainly need to prepare for your retirement - especially because your child with special needs could be dependent on you long after you retire. Long-term care insurance for yourself is also a good idea - and it will allow you to preserve your savings for your child's care.

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AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD - continued

The program educates agri-food businesses on that often-complicated journey of bringing a new product to market. It helps farmers take an idea and understand the process all the way from concept to finished product.

“Participants gain access to food industry professionals, product development education, mentorship and peer-to-peer learning so they are well positioned for retail distribution,” says Cathryn Love, executive director, Catapult Grey Bruce.

By tackling everything from food trends to packaging to labelling, the Food Venture Program is an extensive course curated purposely for farmers and food entrepreneurs to succeed in our area.

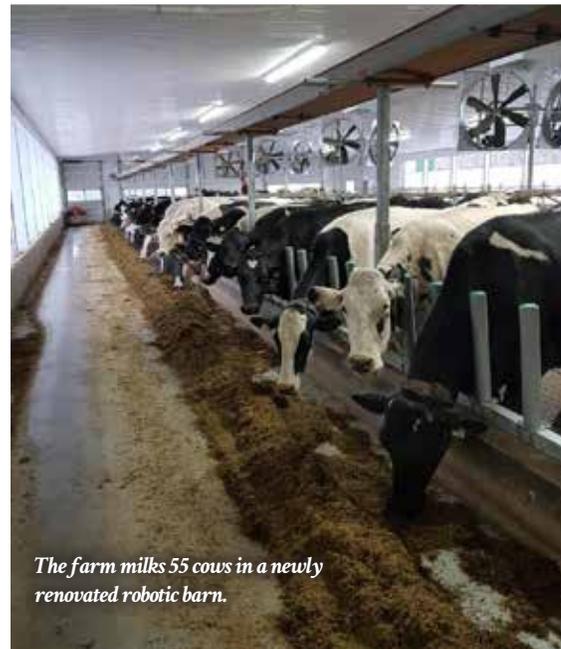
This past October 31, my family farm, Valleykirk Farms, officially celebrated 40-years of success in the dairy business in Owen Sound. It is an accomplishment that brings a huge amount of pride and one that comes with many valuable lessons learned.

Running a business that revolves around livestock and produces a food product isn't easy in 2022 just like it wasn't easy in 1982 when my in-laws started the farm from nothing.

The rewards, however, continue to outweigh the challenges and we cannot wait to see what the next 40-years bring at home on our family farm and within the greater agriculture and agri-food industry in Grey County.



Courtney Denard is a dairy farmer and chair of Catapult Grey Bruce.



The farm milks 55 cows in a newly renovated robotic barn.



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By: Savannah Dawson

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAMBER – CALLING ALL EMPLOYERS, HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONALS AND SUPERVISORS!



Diane Austin CEO

The Owen Sound & District Chamber of Commerce, Welcoming Communities Grey Bruce and the Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership are launching a new collaboration project called Diversity and Inclusion in Rural Workplaces. The first workshop was held on Tuesday, November 1st at the Sydenham Campus, Owen Sound. An overview of the project was presented on how businesses and employers can get

involved. More workshops will be provided over the next few months.

The project is designed to support employers, human resources professionals and supervisors from all sectors (private and public) to learn how to successfully build connections, and address racism and discrimination, creating positive and meaningful workplaces for all.

The guest speaker Dr. Izumi Sakamoto, Associate Professor at the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, led a critical reflection on the discriminatory practice of requiring “Canadian Experience” and presented her research that contributed to the decision of the Ontario Human Rights

Commission to create a policy stating that requiring Canadian experience is discriminatory. Sakamoto led the “Beyond Canadian Experience Project,” which contributed to developing the Ontario policy, which made Ontario the first province in Canada to denounce the Canadian experience as a job requirement.



The Chamber is pleased to announce that Adriana Salazar has been hired to spearhead this project. Adriana has her degree in Psychology and is currently working on her Masters degree in Community Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo. She has knowledge and understanding of social issues faced by marginalized and immigrant populations. We are very excited that Adriana is bringing her expertise to this project.

Please follow our website for these very informative and important workshops. If you need more information you can reach Adriana at: adriana@oschamber.com



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UPCOMING CHAMBER EVENTS

19 WOMEN'S WELLNESS RETREAT
Nov 19, Best Western 9am

01 CHAMBER HOLIDAY PARTY
Dec 01, Best Western 6 pm

08 ALIVE @ 5 NETWORKING
Dec 08, D.C. Taylor Jewellers 6 pm

Events



Check out www.oschamber.com/event for more details

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NEW MEMBER PROFILES BY SAVANNAH DAWSON

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Nick & Jenny

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JUST SAYING

by Dave Carr



One of the first things I learned when I came to Owen Sound, 50 years ago this autumn was how dependent the city and the region were, *and are*, on farming. My background is mixed ... starting life in big city Chicago, growing up in wheat-rich Saskatchewan (even working the wheat harvest when I was 13!), then back to urban life in Hamilton. Radio there from 1959 till 1972 consisted of hit-rich CKOC and CHUM and at night those big American clear-channel rockers. They didn't talk about beef & hog prices or soybean futures or degree-days of heat for growing corn.

But CFOS did. And CFOS made me learn those things, and say those things, and understand just how vital that information was to the same people I would see later in the day in the bank, or getting gas, or at the Woolworth lunch counter on 2nd Ave. E. – same folks I see today, or more likely now, their kids.

I think there was always a “farm to table” opportunity in our neighbourhood, but it was somehow different in some undefinable way. The Owen Sound Farmers Market was already such a long-time fixture that has only grown and cemented its vitality for our community. But I think most every local community now has a farmers' or community market that perhaps didn't exist before. I can now go find a Mennonite selling fresh-picked corn at a roadside not so far away. I know where to go to get fresh strawberries, corn and apples and other such fruits and vegetables of various seasons. Our much larger neighbourhood is Apple Country writ large!

Garlic, honey, game meats, other meats, fruits and vegetables, cheeses, beer, wines and more: yeah, they're all waiting for you at a variety of supermarkets and grocery stores. But they are also waiting for you right at the farm-gate and at the small market and increasingly in the specialty store just around the corner!

It takes some very special planning for this to be available in the bigger cities in Ontario, and it often comes with a price that would make a banker choke. But here, *right here*, maybe in a local restaurant and maybe in your own kitchen, the bounty of our harvest may be in the field in the morning and on your plate by supper time.

Oh yes ... I was asked about a favourite “farm to table” experience, and I hate to disappoint, but I just can't isolate one in particular. Such is the generous bounty of this amazing rural neighbourhood. But I do know there is something special that we here share that others sadly do not – it's the real value of knowing and embracing where our food came from ... almost certainly from someone we know!



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