

The Uxbridge COSMOS



Volume 16 No. 38

YOUR UNIVERSE

Thursday, October 1, 2020



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Patrick Bryant, Broker of Record

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A PICTURE-PERFECT WALK - Raquel Lazenby and her pup enjoy John McCutcheon Way (also called the Trestle Bridge Trail) just north of town during a gorgeous early-autumn walk on the weekend. Fall colours are appearing everywhere quite quickly, with temperatures slowly dropping to more seasonal ranges. *Photo by John Cavers*

Uxbridge encouraged to slow onset of second COVID wave

by Justyne Edgell, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Now that it's completed its six-week pilot project, the North Durham COVID Assessment Centre (NDCAC) is staying open for swabbing in Prince Albert, just outside of Port Perry. Testing volumes at the NDCAC have been so high that the centre is currently reporting about a 72-hour wait for a swab appointment, and it is taking between five and seven days to receive the lab results. The NDCAC has recently increased its open hours in order to test the highest number of people possible.

Anyone exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, including very mild symptoms, is encouraged to self isolate and get a COVID-19 swab. To book a swab, visit covidswab.lh.ca, fill out the registration questionnaire, and a swab appointment time will be emailed back.

At press time on Tuesday evening, Durham Region reported 114 confirmed cases currently in home isolation and three hospitalized cases. In Uxbridge, there is one active case in home

isolation. Earlier on Tuesday it was reported that there have been one million confirmed COVID-19 deaths worldwide.

"While the Township has not seen a rise in cases just yet, we know the second wave is here," says Mayor Dave Barton.

Ontario is indeed into the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the provincial government. After processing 41,111 COVID swabs on Monday, Sept. 28, the province reported 700 new positive cases, which is the highest single-day increase since the beginning of the pandemic.

Currently, over 60 per cent of new COVID cases are reportedly occurring in younger adults between the ages of 20 and 40. This spike is suspected to be the result of too many people congregating with friends and relaxing physical distancing and social bubble guidelines.

Mayor Barton says the township is staying on its toes when it comes to how Uxbridge will respond to changing health precautions.

"While many of our amenities are currently open, we are constantly monitoring usage and

are ready to act quickly should we get indications that the province or the regional health unit requires us to restrict use of amenities or close them altogether."

According to a Monday press briefing, Premier Doug Ford said that "we know this wave will be more complicated, more complex. It will be worse than the first wave we faced earlier this year." The premier encouraged all Ontarians to "follow the health guidance, please download the COVID-19 alert app, please get your flu shot this year."

As Uxbridge continues to face the pandemic, Mayor Barton encourages all Uxbridge residents to do their part to stop the spread.

"If we all work hard we can protect our vulnerable population and keep COVID from spreading. I cannot stress enough how important it is to do your part to minimize the impact of this surge so we can keep enjoying the freedoms we have earned in phase 2 and 3 reopenings."

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Council & Committee Meetings

Meeting Schedule for September and October, 2020

Monday, October 5
10:00 a.m.

COMMITTEE MEETING
1:00 p.m.

COUNCIL EDUCATION SESSION –
ELECTED OFFICIALS AND SENIOR
STAFF TRAINING FOR
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
– CLOSED TO PUBLIC

Monday, October 12
THANKSGIVING MONDAY
-NO MEETING

Monday, October 19
10:00 a.m.
COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, October 21
7:00 p.m.
COMMITTEE OF ADJUSTMENT
MEETING

Monday, October 26
10:00 a.m.
COUNCIL MEETING

Proclamations for the month of Oct.

Saturday, October 22
Childhood Educator Appreciation Day
Saturday, October 24
World Polio Day

Uxbridge at a Glance

The Corporation of The Township of Uxbridge
51 Toronto Street South, P.O. Box 190
Uxbridge L9P 1T1
905-852-9181 info@uxbridge.ca

OBEY SCHOOL ZONE SIGNAGE TO HELP KEEP OUR STREETS SAFE

Parking restrictions in school zones aid with safe arrival and dismissal at local schools.

As children transition back into the school routine, the Township of Uxbridge is reminding motorists to obey the parking restrictions surrounding our local schools. The parking and stopping prohibitions posted in school zones are in place as a safeguard, assist with keeping the flow of traffic moving, and the travel lanes clear for buses and emergency vehicles. The congestion created by parked and stopped vehicles in the prohibited areas is the cause of major traffic disruptions and poses a risk to public safety.

Residents should check for parking signs carefully and leave extra time when planning to drive to school for drop-off or pick-up. Walking to school when possible is another great way to ease the burden of traffic congestion.

Our friendly By-law staff will be conducting regular patrols of local schools over the next few weeks to ensure drivers are parking safely and abiding by the posted signage.



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PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given that the Council of the Township of Uxbridge hereby proposes to dispose of the following lands and transfer the lands to the adjacent property owner at 20 Main Street. The property legally described as Part 2 on Plan 40R-31044 is surplus to the needs of the Municipality.

FURTHER NOTICE is hereby given that the Township Council, at its regular meeting held on September 28, 2020, declared by Resolution No. 2020-07 the aforementioned lands to be surplus to the needs of the Municipality. A copy of the plan showing the location of the lands may be viewed in the Office of the Clerk.



HAPPY THANKSGIVING

The Township offices are closed Monday October 12th



Township of Uxbridge documents are available in alternate formats upon request.
Please fill out the Request for Alternate Formats Form at uxbridge.ca/accessibility

email: accessibility@uxbridge.ca
phone: 905-852-9181 ext.209

Senior saved from gift card scam

by Roger Varley

A sharp-eyed cashier at Uxbridge's Shopper's Drug Mart saved an elderly customer from being scammed out of \$2,000 last week.

The cashier, whom Shopper's Drug Mart would not allow to be identified, questioned the customer when she attempted to purchase \$2,000 worth of Google Play gift cards. It appeared the customer had received a phone call that caused her some alarm and was told she needed to purchase the cards to alleviate whatever problem the scammers had convinced her existed. The cashier managed to explain to the customer that it was a scam and she did not need to

buy the gift cards.

The gift card scam - (one of many) - uses seniors' vulnerability and lack of tech savvy to persuade victims to purchase the cards, usually in large dollar amounts, and use them to make phony payments or add security to their bank accounts. After purchasing the cards, victims are told to provide the cards' identification numbers.

The gift card scams take many forms, but they are taking hundreds of thousands of dollars out of victims' bank accounts.

One way to avoid the scam is to realize that no legitimate enterprise, be it a bank or a government institution, will even ask you to buy gift cards for any reason.

Leaskdale Manse is looking for votes

The Leaskdale Manse National Historic Site, home of Lucy Maud Montgomery, has been nominated in the Best Museum Category of the *Toronto Star* Readers' Choice Awards, and is asking for the Uxbridge community to support this claim to fame!

Other museums in the category include the Aga Khan Museum; Bata Shoe Museum; Gardiner Museum; Hockey Hall of Fame; Royal Ontario Museum; and the Toronto Railway Museum.

"What an honour for our site to be included in a category with such distinguished Toronto museums!

The LMMSO humbly asks for your support."

Vote online until Sunday, Oct. 11, at <https://www.thestar.com/readerschoice-toronto/categories/entertainment/subcategories/museum?fbclid=IwAR1xPuGk7IEpThaXc-PqAZe2nc6aUOYWmxSJ23QaSHOZA-IQE2cVihXCrn74>



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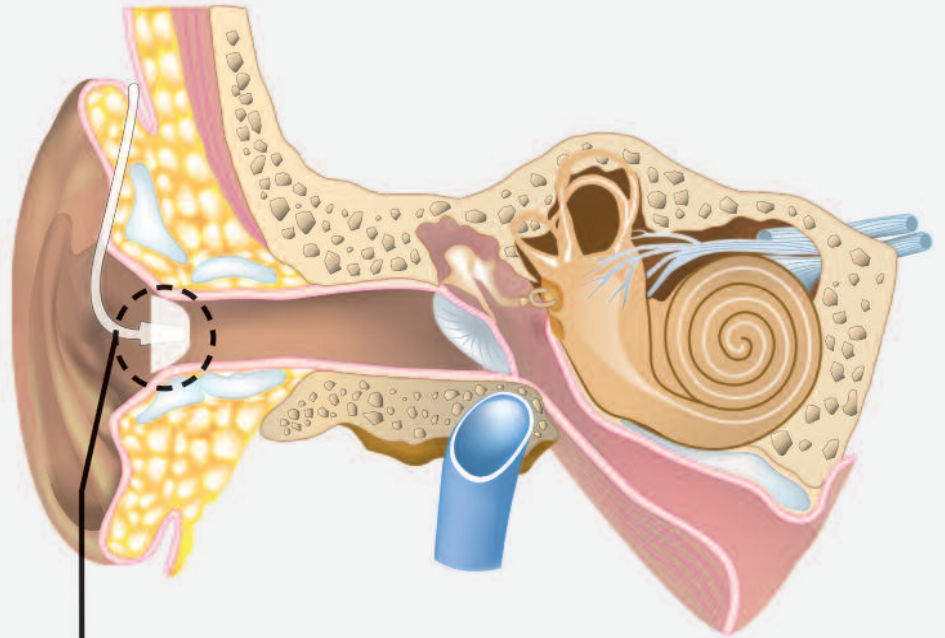
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Our two cents

Why can't we get it right the first time?

We human beings aren't a very bright bunch, are we? Here we are in Month 6 of a global pandemic, and a second wave of COVID-19 cases is waxing as we write this. And as we watch new case numbers increase to record numbers here in Ontario alone, we have one huge concern: WHY?

Why are we entering a second bout of heightened alert regarding this highly transmittable disease? Why are our governments threatening tighter restrictions and imposing huge fines for transgressors? But most importantly - why did we not get all this right the first time, starting back in March?

Yes, yes, we know that, as this situation has progressed, we've all learned more about COVID and what/how/where it is, and that knowledge has been put to use. You'd think that we would take what we know, couple it with our common sense (crazy idea, that), and just buckle down and do what the experts say should be done. If we had really paid attention the first time, back in the spring, and not just pushed "the curve" down a little but really squashed it flat, we wouldn't be in the state we are now - facing possible non-essential business shut-downs again, regular institutional outbreaks (schools or other), and a really quiet Thanksgiving weekend, maybe Christmastime too. But no, we were all in such a stinkin' big hurry to get back to "normal."

Even as the "first wave" was cresting, there was already talk of a "second wave" later on in the year. It was just a given that the general population wouldn't do enough for itself to keep a second wave at bay. We just don't seem to learn the first time. With anything. The First World War was supposed to be the war to end all wars. Twenty-two years after it ended... The Industrial Revolution caused untold chaos and change in the world, especially the western world. Now we're in what is called the Digital Age, and we all act like it's the very first time the world has ever had to try and catch up to itself technologically. Look at climate change - we're told almost *daily* what needs to be done to help our poor planet, but does anything on a grand scale actually happen? No. Because we don't pay attention to what we're taught, what we're told, what we've experienced.

This isn't a case of history repeating itself - it's a case of not learning from it. So now we have to ride out this second wave, and maybe, just maybe, we'll learn enough to prevent a third. We all want COVID-19 to go and be gone - let's just do what it takes to make that happen. It won't kill us to try.

When one of these disappears, A LOT disappears.

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9,500 copies of The Cosmos are published each Thursday in the Township of Uxbridge: 8,800 delivered by mail, 700 available in stores and boxes.

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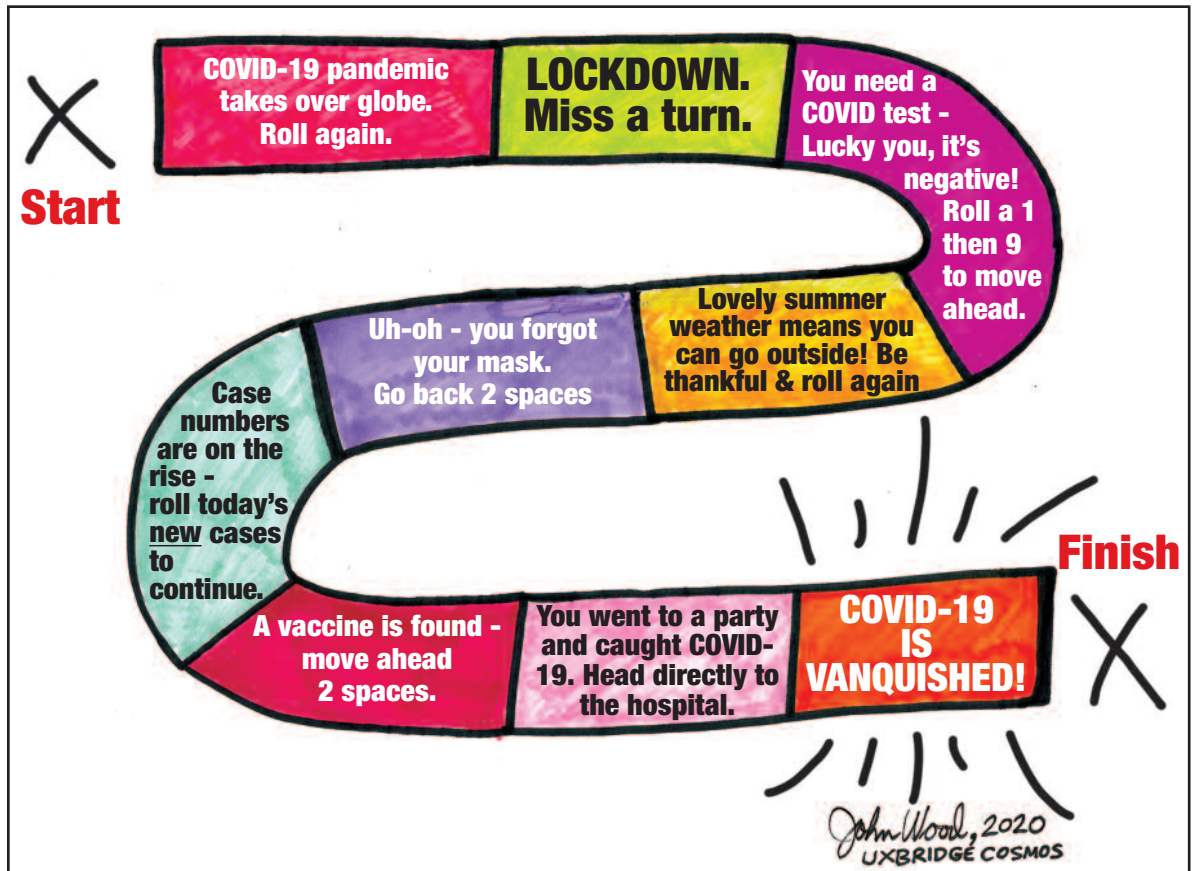
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Canada



Letters to the Editor

With so much negative news greeting us every day, I want to give a big shout out to the staff at the Uxbridge pool. They have done a fantastic job of making the pool a COVID-safe place to go; things are being run smoothly and efficiently. Many of us, myself included, depend on swimming as our main (only?) form of exercise and often also as rehab after surgery or injury.

I hope our council will recognize that the pool is a safe place to go and, for many people, a very essential service.

Many of us have paid for memberships; we are now also paying for each visit. We also pay (very high) taxes, some of which go towards keeping our pool open. I don't think Uxpool should be seen as a money maker for the town, but as an essential service for which we are happy to pay.

Please, please, please keep Uxpool open!

*Susan Elsworth
Sunderland*

I'm perplexed by the letter from Mr. Nitschke [Letters, Sept. 17 edition], which ends with the directive, "do your own research."

Biomedical scientific research has been my career for the last 30 years. I am a research scientist who studies the biology of the membranes that surround all our cells. I've published my research, shared it internationally and I also teach research methodologies and critical thinking.

In his letter, Mr. Nitschke shares his opinion on the topic of masks and other aspects of COVID, but there is a difference between opinion and informed opinion. So, having done my own research and having an informed opinion, let me correct some of his misinformation.

Humans are hosts to trillions of viruses which range between harm-

less (the bacteriophages who seek out and kill bacteria) to the potentially fatal (Ebola, SARS, MERS, etc.). Viral infections can kill, and children and the elderly can be particularly susceptible.

We can and must use science and research to develop approaches to saving lives, especially when illness and death is preventable. We have acquired a good understanding of many aspects of viral infections over years of research so we know how to treat many, but not all, infections. We still do not know enough about SARS-CoV2, the virus that causes COVID-19, but the research community is doing its research as fast as it can. We need a vaccine and we need other types of infection controls to reduce the burden of illness, the long-term impacts (which can be severe) and deaths.

The mis- and disinformation shared by Mr. Nitschke undermines the efforts of legitimate research done by many and puts everyone at risk. Vaccines are a critically important part of the toolbox that we use to protect ourselves, our loved ones and our communities.

If you care about Uxbridge and those of us who live here with vulnerable family members, you will engage willingly and enthusiastically with hand-washing, mask-wearing and regular vaccinations. If face coverings were as dangerous as Mr. Nitschke proposes due to "cutting down our oxygen intake," entire generations of Canadian children would have died every winter because of the scarves or neck gaiters their parents forced them to wear! Entire operating rooms would be full of comatose doctors and nurses, unable to take care of patients because they had passed out due to lack of oxygen. Obviously this is not the case.

You know what does cut down your oxygen intake? A SARS-CoV2 infec-

tion. It is a nasty disease that can be particularly damaging to the lungs - even for those who recover. Are masks all you need to prevent infection? No, but they are certainly very helpful in reducing the spread of the droplets that act as the vectors for moving the virus from person to person.

Science-informed policy making means using the best available information at the time to make the best possible recommendations, and then adjusting those recommendations as more information becomes available.

Mr. Nitschke demonstrates many aspects of entitlement and survivor bias, as well as a lack of humility with regard to the expertise of others who are working extraordinarily hard to take care of our community in Uxbridge and beyond. And describing people who wear masks as being "dumb" is simply unacceptable.

Please stay safe and look after each other.

*Imogen Coe
Uxbridge*

Re: "Grandparents" letter, Sept. 24 edition

Children and grandchildren are gifts. That said, instead of presents this year, I'm giving everyone my opinion. As a mother and grandparent - I am not a doctor nor a scientist - I believe it best to listen and abide by our healthcare professionals.

My children and grandchildren are not replaceable. To have the mentality that "herd immunity" and "children don't need to wear masks" is akin to opinions south of our border (and you see what's happening there). I'd rather be part of the solution than part of the problem.

*Cathy Cosentino
Mom & Nanny
Uxbridge*



Am I Wrong?

column by Roger Varley

Freedom to be foolish?

One million!

That's the number of deaths now attributed to COVID-19 world-wide.

Seven hundred plus!

That's the number of new COVID-19 cases being declared in Ontario every day for the last few days, where, not that long ago, the daily new case count was below 100.

Just exactly what number or numbers is it going to take before people begin to absorb the message that this coronavirus is not only highly contagious, but deadly, too?

We recently saw thousands of people descend on Wasaga Beach to have some kind of car party. So many people, in fact, that police from York and Peel Regions were sent to the town to help OPP and local police shut down the community to out-of-towners. At the same time, thousands of people jammed London's Trafalgar Square to protest against wearing masks - and taking vaccines! As for the U.S. (which is quickly becoming a basket case), Trump continues to hold mass rallies and the governor of Florida has removed all restrictions on restaurants, bars and night clubs.

In discussing this issue with my editor a few days ago, both of us, as veterans of the stage, could not resist pulling quotes from Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Quotes such as: "I think I'll retire to Bedlam" and "if they are like to die, let them do so and reduce the surplus population."

Trying to get through to these selfish, ill-informed people is akin to beating one's head against a brick wall, although at times I feel like beating their heads against a brick wall.

A couple of days ago, I found myself in the emergency department of the Cottage Hospital, where the attending doctor told me I had a serious, although not life-threatening, condition. The doctor told me what I needed to do and who I needed to see and I have followed that advice. I'm sure all the other patients in the emergency department sought advice for one reason or another and most likely followed that advice or recommended treatment. Now think of all these anti-maskers and anti-vaxers and what they will do if they find themselves sick or injured. More than likely they will take themselves post-haste to a doctor to seek help.

And yet, when it comes to battling this pandemic, they refuse to accept doctors' recommendations to wear a mask and take the vaccine whenever it becomes available. As someone told me the other day, "it's all propaganda!"

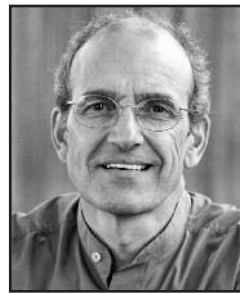
One of the main rallying cries of these buffoons is "Freedom!", as though they were living in the *Braveheart* movie. I've got news for them: the only freedom any of us enjoy is that which is granted by the government. You cannot name one so-called freedom that wasn't granted by a government or ruler and that cannot be rescinded anytime said government or ruler decides to do so. The War Measures Act, invoked by the late Pierre Trudeau years ago, is a case in point.

You'll probably point to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and I'll just point out that that worthy document came to us from ... government. Freedom of assembly? Only if the police decide it's not a riot or that you can assemble at any given spot. Freedom of speech? Only as long as government decides it is not hate speech or sedition. Freedom of movement? Have you been oblivious to all the travel restrictions that are in place right now? I could go on, but I hope you get the point.

And it's not only the selfish boors who are the problem. Governments aren't helping with their confusing and conflicting pronouncements. On the same day (Monday) that Premier Ford more or less called the Wasaga Beach crowd idiots and demanded stiff fines for those breaking provincial protocols regarding the coronavirus, his government allowed the re-opening of casinos. If I want to avoid contracting COVID-19, you can be sure the last place I'll go is to a casino or sports event. What is one to make of people who apparently can't survive without these venues being open?

We have, we are told, entered the second wave, something that has been talked about almost since the beginning of the pandemic. We all knew it was coming, but apparently didn't care. It seems to me that it is going to take a shutdown even more restrictive than the original back in March to bring (most of us) to our senses.

Tell me, am I wrong?



The Barris Beat

column by Ted Barris

Luck is 33 eggs

It was kind of like the last breakfast for a condemned man. Whenever Canadian and other Second World War aircrew got word they were facing a tough bombing mission over enemy territory in Europe, the crews were invited to enjoy the most precious breakfast in all of Britain at that time.

"Bacon and eggs. You got bacon and eggs," my veteran friend Bob Middleton told me on the weekend, "because you didn't know if you'd be coming back."

Those nights when Bomber Command aircrews boarded their Lancaster, Halifax, Whitley or Mosquito aircraft to fly most of the night over Nazi-occupied Europe, seem oh so long ago. But at a small gathering of family and friends of Bob Middleton, at the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum in Hamilton, on Sunday, the 97-year-old RCAF veteran navigator shared some wartime stories, mostly the funny or quirky ones. Though they happened over three-quarters of a century ago, former Flying Officer Middleton gave life to those stories, memories of events that changed his life and restored peace that the world craved so desperately then.

Born in 1923, raised and educated in east-end Toronto, Bob learned in the spring of 1942 that Danforth Tech was wrapping up classes early to allow young men to enlist. Bob took advantage. He'd always loved flying and wanted to serve in the RCAF as a fighter or bomber pilot. When it came to the final level of pilot training, however, his Air Force instructors decided he'd make a better navigator. So, it was math, astronavigation, and map-reading that became his training focus. Overseas, on operational training, they put Bob - and scores of other pilots, navigators, radio operators, and gunners - in a large hall to make up their own crews on their own.

"Kind of like going to a high school dance and finding a partner to dance with for the night," I suggested. Bob nodded and smiled.

But that's when it got serious. Eventually, Middleton and his crew were assigned to RCAF 431 "Iroquois" Squadron at Croft, England.

"They called it 'the Chop Squadron,'" he said. "The losses (of aircraft and crews) at the squadron were so severe. Not exactly a welcome thought."

To put things in perspective, about 50,000 Canadians served in Bomber Command during the war. More than 10,000 were killed, missing in action, or died in POW camps.

F/O Middleton flew 33 bomber operations to and from enemy targets. He called himself "the nosey navigator" because he was always mindful of getting the job done and navigating his

crew home safely. He said one time that got him into trouble. On a bombing op to Munich in 1944, they were flying so high, the crew used oxygen masks. On this particular operation, they'd dropped their bombs, taken photos of the results, and Bob's pilot, Don Rombough was waiting for Bob's directions to get back to England.

"Shouldn't we be turning for home, Bob?"

No answer. Somebody checked Bob at his navigator's position and found Bob's oxygen line had been disconnected. He'd momentarily been unconscious. When they reconnected, Bob blurted out, "I'll tell you when to turn... Now!" And their navigator came through once again, getting them out of Europe through searchlights, anti-aircraft fire, and night fighters.

Bob Middleton didn't expect to be on the spot for some of those stories last Sunday. He just thought his family was taking him out for the day to the Warplane Heritage Museum to escape self-imposed pandemic isolation. When I dropped in, nothing seemed out of the ordinary. Bob and I are friends and are both fascinated by those museum warbirds. But then we sprang a surprise on Bob. Because the RCAF 431 Squadron Snowbirds demonstration team adopted Bob's old Bomber Command squadron number, they decided to make him an honorary "Snowbird." He took it in stride. "Icing on the cake," he said. And Bob was given an inscribed plaque, commemorative photo of the Snowbirds in formation, and a Snowbirds ball cap. "What an honour," he added.

While so many women and men of his generation are either gone, or are hesitant to recall those humorous and harrowing moments of the war, Bob Middleton has recognized their importance. Better to set the record straight and share them with the world while he can. Inspired by his father's willingness to do that, son Dan Middleton has assembled a collection of F/O Middleton's remembrances.

"The book is called *Luck is 33 Eggs: Photographs and Memories of an RCAF Navigator*," Dan said. The book comes out this fall.

On Sunday, when the Snowbirds team surprised Bob with honorary membership in the squadron, Bob kept shaking his head at those 33 bacon-and-eggs breakfasts during the war, never knowing if he'd get his bomber crew and himself home safely at the end of the night.

"You could be the best," he said finally, "but without a bit of luck, it didn't matter."

For more Barris Beat columns, go to www.tedbarris.com



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Running your pooch in the off-leash dog park? Here are a few things to remember

Submitted by Margaret Langlands
Uxbridge Off Leash Dog Park
Committee Chair

Thanks to the efforts of a number of people and the Township of Uxbridge, however, Uxbridge has a wonderful off-leash dog park. Located just south of the Uxbridge Historical Centre on Conc. 6, humans can bring their dogs out for exercise, play, mental stimulation and socializing with like-minded dog owners and their dogs.

This article, and others which will follow in the future, provides guidance to dog park etiquette, take a look into dog body language/behaviour, discuss safety in a dog park, and take a look forward

as to fundraising for additions/improvements to the dog park over the next three to five years.

But let's take puppy steps here, and start with etiquette in a dog park:

1) Please keep your dog(s) leashed while coming and going from your car to the park.

2) Unleash your dog inside the two-gated enclosure before entering either the small dog park area or the main dog park area. When leaving, leash your dog in the same gated enclosure.

3) Do not enter the gated enclosure if someone is already in it. Wait your turn.

4) If there are other dogs at the gate into the main dog park or small dog

park areas, open it quickly, let your unleashed dog out and quickly walk away from the two-gated area so the dogs have a chance to run.

5) Note the size of the other dogs when entering the park. If you have a small dog, there is an area fenced off for small dogs, older puppies and for training purposes. Should you wish to use the larger park with the larger dogs, be aware that size differences may contribute to problem behaviours and could put your dog at risk.

6) Do not bring puppies under four months old. Puppies this young still need to finish their vaccinations and may be at risk for contracting illnesses from other dogs

7) Always keep an eye on your dog. Pick up after it – poop bags must be dropped in the waste container in the parking lot and nowhere else.

8) Leave your toys at home – other dogs will participate in chasing, etc., which could escalate into a dog fight.

9) Children in the dog park – some parks stipulate that children under a certain age are not allowed in the park. Preferably, children under the age of eight should *not* attend the park. If you bring a child with you, they must always be under your supervision. Do not let them feed, touch or interact with strange dogs, even if your own dog is amongst them. Do not let them play, yell, skip rope, throw stones, etc. Children playing is easily picked up by dogs as an invitation to join in and could end up with a child being hurt or pushed over unintentionally. Not all dogs are familiar with children.

10) It goes without saying, but please pay attention to your dog at all times. Dog park trips should be about time spent with your dog. Problems happen when least expected and when pet owners are not paying attention to their animals. Keep your dog safe by being a watchful pet owner.

11) If you have an intact male or a female in heat – DO NOT bring them to the dog park. This just invites a whole new set of problems.

Hopefully this article helps you and your dog have a safe and enjoyable dog park experience.

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Following some simple rules can make an outing to the off-leash dog park better for both dogs and their humans.
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Farmers' Market helps Food Bank with 'mask'ed donations

by Nancy Melcher

When the Uxbridge Farmers' Market reopened in May, it had to follow strict COVID-19 protocols given by the Durham Region Health Department, including the instruction that all vendors and volunteers must wear masks. Several volunteers offered to make reusable cloth masks to ensure every vendor had a daily supply. Soon there were enough to provide them to customers too.



A sampling of the masks available at the Uxbridge Farmers' Market for a donation to the local food bank.
Photo by Ngan Chan

The masks are free, but donations are appreciated. Market directors decided to collect funds for the Loaves and Fishes Food Bank from those who wanted masks.

"We are doing this to provide a service to the community. Whoever wants a mask can have one," said market manager Lisa Cooper. "Having the Farmers' Market support the Food Bank is a great fit."

To date, over 630 masks have been made and over \$3,200 donated. They are available in kids and adult sizes in a variety of colours at the entry booth.

The Market runs every Sunday until the end of October on Victoria Street from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Many thanks to the volunteer sewers Joy Baptista, WaiHin Chan, Mary Chansophon, Hannah Cooper, Vi Pollari and Ursula Sweeney.

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Mission Xena by Claire Miller

The following is the first installment of the winning submission to the Uxbridge Youth Centre's Pick-a-Prompt writing contest.

"Fight, coward!" I yell at the top of

my lungs.
"Now, now Commander Emilia, this is training, remember, don't get ahead of yourself," Landon says with a snicker.
"Come on, Landon, just because it's

training doesn't mean we can't have some fun with it," I say while throwing a punch at him.
He dodges and responds with "Close quarter combat is important and should not be taken lightly."
He lunges at me. I dodge easily, leaving his back wide open for a counterattack. I take my opportunity and grab his arm, swinging it swiftly behind his back, and flipping him to the ground aggressively.
We wrestle on the ground for a bit before I pin him.
"I WIN!"
He taps out, and I let him go. We both stand up and are out of breath, panting. I laugh at him for losing to me again. Another training session ends with his defeat.

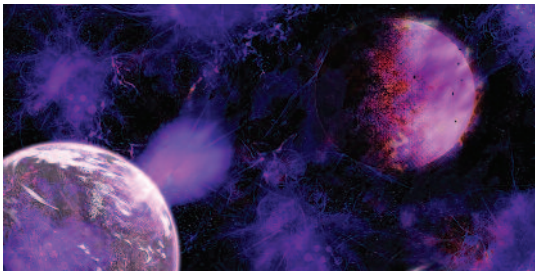


Photo courtesy maxpixels.net

I look at the time and see it is getting late. We head out of the training room, talking and teasing each other about the dumb mistakes we made. As we walk, a massive tremor hits the moon, shaking the buildings and the ground. Landon and I fall, covering our heads in the process. We wait for the tremor to stop. Once it does, I slowly stand up, looking around to see what the cause was. But all I see are cracked walls, broken lights, and scared people. I look to Landon and know that he is ok. As soon as I see it is safe to move, I head straight to the mission control room.
I push the door open, and I find everyone a mess, scrambling to their feet. Wires hang from the ceiling,

panels and screens sit at different angles. I yell at the operator, "Status update. NOW!"
"Various sections of Districts One, Two and Five have lost power, power plants seven through 15 are operating at half capacity, minor injuries to the citizens."
"Good. Do we know the cause of the tremor?" I ask with a slight tone of concern in my voice
"A new planet has formed in our solar system and is moving toward us; it's 86,000 kilometres away from us. We are calling the new planet Xena."
A door opens, and the captain walks in. He looks in my direction with disdain: I'm wearing dirty training gear. I look down, he looks away and asks, "Emilia what is going on?"
"A new planet called Xena has appeared in our solar system and is moving toward us."
With this new information, he turns to the operator with a stern look in his eyes.
"Operator, how long do we have until Xena makes contact with the moon?"
"Based on the course and the rate of speed, we have 24 hours before it reaches the moon."
"Emilia!" he thunders, scaring me. "You are to form a team and take 12 charges. You must plant them along Xena's surface and detonate them remotely, which will break the planet into smaller pieces."
I nod and exit, heading down the corridor to the hanger bay.

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