

# On Main Street

A Newsletter From Main Street Middlesex, Canada's First Program for Countywide Downtown Revitalization

www.mainstreetmiddlesex.ca



## Parkhill's new summer festival secured...with duct tape

What happens when the summer festival supporting various groups in the community decides to no longer host an event? You come up with a new event using your biggest asset . . . a lake. The Parkhill Cornfest has seen declining attendance and a significant drop in volunteer support in past years, leading to its cancellation this year. However, many local groups depend on a summer festival to raise funds for their activities and attract visitors to the community. A public meeting was held to bring the community groups together to share ideas and The Parkhill Cardboard Boat Races came into being.



*Participants didn't let the wet weather dampen their spirits, but their cardboard boats were another story! It was a valiant effort by Angel Peterson representing CFDC but in the end the Parkhill Lions four-person team emerged victorious. The cardboard boat race final wound up the festivities for this event, the first of its kind for Parkhill.*

Cardboard Boats are just that, flimsy boats made of cardboard held together with duct tape and painted to a theme. The crew must board these boats and navigate through a 200-yard triangular course. Along with the cardboard boats, canoe and duck races were also held. There were vendor's booths, food tents and a beer tent as well as activities and sales downtown to round out the event.

This event was organized by the Parkhill Cardboard Boat Race Committee, a sub-committee of the Parkhill Main Street Committee. The event was a fundraiser for various groups in the community such as The Santa Claus Parade, The Lions Club, The Blades N' Sync Skating Club, local Church Youth Groups, The Girl Guides and the Parkhill Scouts. Their goal was to draw people into the community from outside the area to create an annual event that was fun and different.

The event received support services and two grants from Main Street Middlesex; a Festival and Event Grant and a Retail Promotion Grant. There proved to be a lot of interest in this new event.

## Students 'Break into Business'

Community Futures Development Corporations in Middlesex, Elgin, Lambton and Kent Counties, through their 'Break into Business Camp', in partnership with Youth Opportunities Unlimited, offered a one-week entrepreneurship camp July 9-13, giving local youth the opportunity to develop and implement entrepreneurial skills.

Students aged 11-14 interested in a camp atmosphere with a difference were invited to apply. The camp is focused around "Business for a Day," where campers start, run and close their own business. Participants come away with an increased financial awareness, confidence, teamwork and communication skills.

The process starts at the Next Wave Strathroy Youth Centre with 'Thinking Outside the Box', where campers begin to develop their own vision of an entrepreneur. They work through identifying and planning a business strategy, applying for a 'loan', creating then effectively selling their product. The final day also revolves around celebrating their achievements and evaluating what they will bring away from the program.

The belief that nothing addresses self-esteem and confidence among young people quite like the experience of running their own business for a day is a strong one among the organizers.

"This was a great group of kids; they've definitely exceeded my expectations," said Camp Coordinator Katherine Krakowski.

A second camp is scheduled for the week of August 12-17. Contact Cara Finn, CFDC and Main Street Middlesex General Manager at (519) 641-6100 for more details.



*Get a manicure, support a cause! Alana Vandersluis gives Bev Pfau's nails some glamour as part of her Business for A Day. Camp Coordinator Katherine Krakowski (top right) looks on with participants Charlotte Galloway and Sheldon Neely.*



## Main Street Spotlight

### Gillian Masse, Bella Vita spa, Thorndale



Gillian Masse of Bella Vita Spa in Thorndale has been a resident there for the past 16 years, and though she did look at possible locations in London, there seemed to be “a spa on every corner”. She was hoping the community of Thorndale would welcome an aesthetics business there as there didn’t seem to be any other businesses of this type in the area, and it seems Thorndale has done just that. Bella Vita translates to “beautiful life”, and her spa is indeed beautiful. Since her opening November 18, 2006, local comments have been extremely positive, and Gillian is often told the atmosphere, as well as her services, are welcoming and relaxing.

She has renovated from floor to ceiling; antiques and soothing music add to the comfortable atmosphere.

The biggest challenge in opening Gillian’s business was the effort to move forward while losing her father to cancer just as her business was getting started. Her dad had been very instrumental in helping her choose her location, and was very excited for her future plans. A stepping stone in the rose garden adjacent to Bella Vita is a loving tribute to Patrick Masse.

The tremendous amount of encouragement and support she has received from her family, friends, and the community makes Gillian confident in her decision to bring her business to downtown Thorndale. She’s confident Thorndale is on the brink of a growth spurt, and is happy to find herself in the midst of this expansion.

### Jim Vander Sanden, entrepreneur, main street parkhill

More than 150 years after the Grand Trunk Railroad brought the first wave of commercial growth to the town of Parkhill, Jim Vander Sanden sees an opportunity to return to those halcyon days.

A custom cabinetmaker by day, Jim committed to the extra work of restoring a century building into apartments and commercial units because it fit with his vision of Parkhill as “a town with a lot of potential.” What started out as a shell has now been renovated keeping many original elements intact, such as the pine floors, mouldings and brickwork. The hope is to recapture a lot of the area’s charm and history by acting as a role model. “Someone had to come along and take the chance in the hopes that others will follow and make a real change,” he asserts.

“We’re designing this as if our family were going to live and work here,” adds Jim’s wife Tammy. “It just goes from there: people are interested, they walk by and see you care and are investing in your own community. They start to be able to see how growth will do wonders. People who live here, go to church here, put their kids in sports here but work in London would also be able to stay at home to shop, which helps the town prosper.”



One such shop will be Sharon’s of Hyde Park, soon to be residing in two of the three available commercial spaces in the building. Sharon’s customers from outlying areas such as Forest and Grand Bend will now be able to take advantage of her closer venue. Jim agrees that Sharon’s presence will be a great addition to the town but feels ultimately, Parkhill’s strength will prove to be a cohesive downtown business area.

“Rent isn’t everything. It’s not simply getting as much business as possible here; you’ve got to have the right people in the right places so that one feeds another. If every store compliments the other in some way, you’re going to see results.”

### Strathroy Accountants Benefit from main street Grants

Earlier this year, an interesting vacant property with a Main Street Middlesex sign in the window led to the decision to relocate a local accountancy firm.

What followed was more than four months of extensive renovations on this impressive century building. A Main Street Middlesex Façade Grant and a Storefront Grant helped the process along.

*Stay tuned for more on the entire transformation in the October/November issue of On Main Street. . .*



*Grand Opening celebrations outside the newly-renovated building.  
(l-r) Jane Williams - Project Manager, Mallick Williams Holdings Limited, Cara Finn - General Manager, Main Street Middlesex, Don Pearson, David Mallick and Ken Williams, Woods Pearson & Associates.*

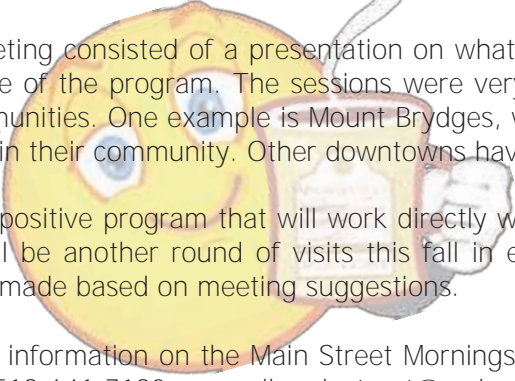
# Main Street Mornings

On June 5 Main Street Middlesex began Main Street Morning breakfast information sessions that continued until June 22 in every designated downtown. This program was a follow-up to the Visioning Workshops held in February and was a suggestion from our volunteer committees.

Each meeting consisted of a presentation on what Main Street is and discussion with participants on how to take advantage of the program. The sessions were very successful in building closer relations with business groups in our communities. One example is Mount Brydges, which is now forming a Business Association to work to improve business in their community. Other downtowns have already scheduled morning meetings for September.

This is a positive program that will work directly with businesses and the community to revitalize our downtowns. There will be another round of visits this fall in each of the downtowns to update the business owners on the progress made based on meeting suggestions.

For more information on the Main Street Mornings and how you can ensure you attend the next one, contact the office at 519-641-7190 or email [mainstreet@mainstreetmiddlesex.on.ca](mailto:mainstreet@mainstreetmiddlesex.on.ca).



## We've Got You Covered! Need a tent for your community event?

The Community Futures Development Corporation of Middlesex County has recently purchased a 10' x 10' canopy, available for special events. This tent is available as an in-kind contribution of \$100 to your organization.

For more information, call (519) 641-7190 or email [mainstreet@mainstreetmiddlesex.on.ca](mailto:mainstreet@mainstreetmiddlesex.on.ca)

# Main Street Clean Sweep

Main Street Middlesex sponsored their third annual "Clean Sweep" initiative to tidy up our Middlesex downtowns. The clean up project, part of an ongoing county wide revitalization effort, was brought to you by the Main Street Middlesex Design Committee in partnership with Middlesex Community Living and Quad County Support Services.

Participating downtowns included Ailsa Craig, Dorchester, Glencoe, Lucan, Melbourne, Newbury, Parkhill, Thorndale and Wardsville.

The crews consisted of four workers, one crew leader supplied by the partner organization and a Main Street Middlesex representative. We appreciate all of the kind words, smiles and waves as we spruced up the downtowns. Kudos to the hard working, fun loving workers from Middlesex Community Living and Quad County Support Services!



*The Clean Sweep Team, highly visible in their bright yellow t-shirts, were out once again on our main streets from June 19-22, collecting garbage, sweeping streets, cleaning windows and generally spreading good cheer.*

About Main Street Middlesex:

Contacts:

Marty Peterson  
Program Coordinator  
(519) 641-7190  
mainstreet@cfdcmiddlesex.on.ca

CFDC of Middlesex County:  
Cara Finn, General Manager  
(519) 641-6100

*In Your Downtown:*

**Lucan**

Greg Graham, (519) 227-2000

**North Middlesex**

Blake Bexon, (519) 293-3231

**Newbury**

Betty Gordon, (519) 693-4941

**Southwest Middlesex**

Julie Khan, (519) 287-5111  
Marilyn McCallum, (519) 289-2053  
Todd Trojand, (519) 693-0329

**Strathroy-Caradoc**

Andrew Meyer, (519) 245-0492  
Velta Baumanis, (519) 264-9271

**Thames Centre**

Bev Shulmanm (519) 268-3106  
Nancy Abra, (519) 461-0037

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*Details on our website:*

[www.mainstreetmiddlesex.ca](http://www.mainstreetmiddlesex.ca)

## Main Street Middlesex and CFDC Introduce New Staff Member

Our newest employee, Kelly Allistone, joined the team on July 9 in the position of Special Events / Communications Liaison.

She will be working with Main Street committees to identify, plan and host special events to reinforce the unique identity of each of our downtowns and to encourage increased traffic in these designated areas. She will be working most closely with Main Street's Promotion and Organization Committees.



Kelly has recently relocated back to the county from London, Ontario and looks forward to reacquainting herself with the people and places she remembers fondly. Soon you will see her out and about the county, fostering a love of close-knit communities and thriving rural spaces.

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Outgoing staff member Kathy Hodgins has returned to the Ministry of Natural Resources. We would like to thank Kathy for her dedication and enthusiasm and wish her well in her new position.

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Marty, Kim and Kelly may be reached at (519) 641-7190.

Their successes are your successes:

helping member community downtowns prosper and grow!

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### Real Estate on Main

Are you looking to buy, sell, rent or lease property within a Main Street Middlesex designated downtown? These include Ailsa Craig, Dorchester, Glencoe, Lucan, Melbourne, Mount Brydges, Newbury, Parkhill, Strathroy, Thorndale, or Wardsville. Contact Kim Gallant, Main Street Middlesex at (519) 641-7190 or email [kgallant@cfdcmiddlesex.on.ca](mailto:kgallant@cfdcmiddlesex.on.ca) for more details.

#### Increase your odds!

Our real estate database service provides a free forum to advertise your property. We post pertinent details, including a photo and a signboard to enhance visibility.

Visit our website at [www.mainstreetmiddlesex.ca](http://www.mainstreetmiddlesex.ca) and click Our Property Database