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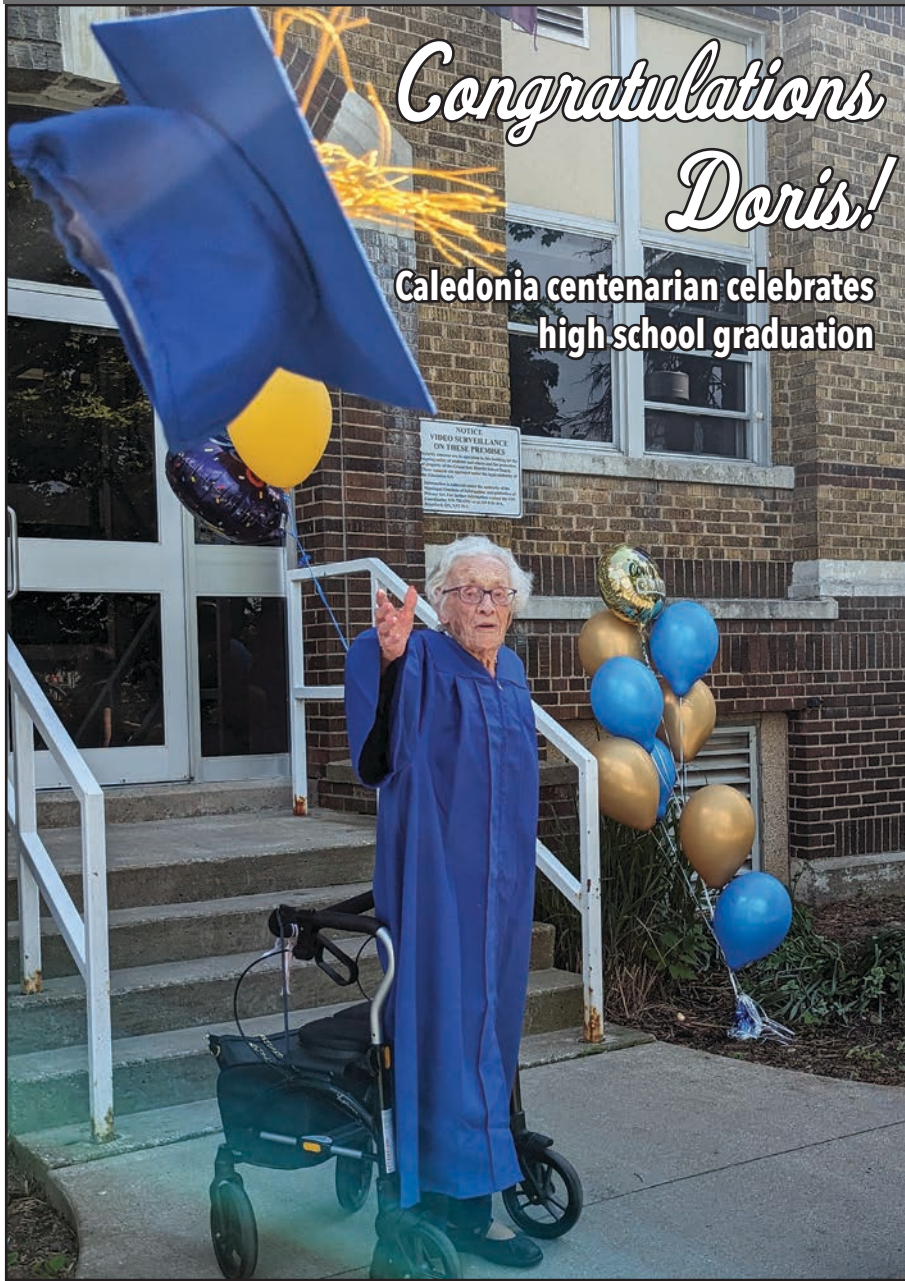


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*Congratulations
Doris!*

**Caledonia centenarian celebrates
high school graduation**

CALEDONIA—In an unexpected outcome from her Haldimand Press feature, Doris Young can now officially say she's a high school graduate at age 100. See the full story on Page 10. —Haldimand Press photo by Tamara Botting.

Gardens abuzz for youth project

Young gardeners invited to join Pollinator Pals planting sessions

By Tamara Botting
The Haldimand Press

TOWNSEND/DUNNVILLE—Aspiring gardeners are being invited to give their green thumbs a workout as Haldimand-Norfolk REACH is once again expanding its pollinator gardens.

"We're trying to connect kids with nature, as nature is a really great way to help kids to self-regulate," said Nancy Schuur, Group Services and Prevention Worker, who is spearheading the Pollinator Pals initiative. This is the second year for this targeted prevention program within the agency.

"Gardening is such a great tool to keep the mind busy ... with focusing on the flowers, they're not thinking about their worries or anything else," Schuur said.

Last year, two pollinator-friendly gardens were installed: one at HN REACH's 101 Nanticoke Creek Parkway, Townsend location, in partnership with Grand River Home Hardware in Caledonia and the Haldimand Horticultural Society; and the other at 110 Ramsey Drive, Dunnville, in partnership with GrandErie Home Hardware and Dunnville Horticultural Society.

"Every year, we'll be adding to these gardens," Schuur said.

There are two planting days scheduled, on June 5 in Townsend and June 19 in Dunnville. Both sessions will run from 4-5 p.m. and are open to any youths ages 7-11 years old.

"Every child that joins will help us plant some flowers; they'll also help us create some water vessels for insects and birds," Schuur said.

She added that pollinator gardens are import-

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This teaches the kids to not only be conscious of themselves, but also the environment around them.

Nancy Schuur, group services and prevention worker

ant because "right now, we are having a crisis with our bee population. And actually, southern Ontario is in the migrant pathway for the monarch butterflies, which also need a lot of help. These gardens can act as landing spots for the monarch butterflies in their migration, but they also create pollinator places for bees where they are safe and they can pollinate and hopefully flourish."

By teaching participants about the ecological role pollinators fulfill alongside a lesson about the importance of self-care, Schuur said, "This teaches the kids to not only be conscious of themselves, but also the environment around them; to be sustainable in their mental health is to be sustainable within the environment."

Schuur said the hope with Pollinator Pals is to get participants to come out each year, while also adding new gardeners to the group.

This year, as a special gift, participants at the planting sessions will receive a crocheted bee, made by Sam Overholt from HN REACH's Youth Mental Health Alliance.

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Hagersville Library & Active Living Centre to break ground this summer

By Mike Renzella
The Haldimand Press

HAGERSVILLE—The long-in-development Hagersville Library and Active Living Centre got a big update last week, revealing July as the scheduled start date for construction on the multi-use facility originally spearheaded by former Ward 4 Councillor Tony Dalimonte.

Mike Evers, Haldimand's General Manager of Community and Development Services, gave a comprehensive overview of where the project currently stands, and a timeline of what residents of the area can expect next: "(It's) nearing the finish line from the desktop, design, and planning end of things. We're very close to being at that point where we enter into the ground-breaking and construction phase of the project."

He said that staff have been busy over the past year and a half.

"That includes completing all of the architectural building plans, that was a milestone achieved in early May. The site plan process and the civil engineering plan have been completed. The site plan has been approved. That was also in early May," said Evers.

"As a team we've done a few facility visits to start to generate ideas and figure out some opportunities as it relates to

programming for the active living centre in particular. Those visits will continue over the next few months."

Evers noted that the building permit application has been submitted, calling it a significant milestone in the process.

"We're hoping to get the tender out in the next one to two weeks. That really wraps up the design stage of the project," he continued. "Once the tender is awarded, which we're hoping to do in July, that's when the real fun starts to happen."

Once the ground is broken and construction is underway, residents can expect that process to last through to roughly October 2025.

"That gives you a good sense of the construction timeline. It's lengthy, but it's a big project with lots of complexities to the site and the inner workings of the facility," Evers concluded.

A staff report provided further information on the many wheels spinning behind the scenes to bring the project to fruition, noting that the community fundraising campaign has accumulated \$1.7 million in raised/committed funds.

It also notes that occupancy of the site is anticipated to be, at earliest, late summer 2025. Program development usage schedules for the facility, which will also host private events in addition to offering community services, will be factored into the 2025 operating budget.

Stay tuned for more updates as they develop.

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Using nature as a tool to help kids to self-regulate

Continued from Page 1

Schuur explained that the committee members are area youths who meet once a month and share their experiences interacting with local mental health systems, which in turn helps to guide the work of HN REACH.

Schuur noted Overholt’s volunteering to make the bees for the Pollinator Pals program was “quite the contribution; we were so impressed with her work and her dedication to it.”

There’s no cost to participate in the Pollinator Pals program, but pre-registration is required. The crocheted bees will be distributed while supplies last. To register, call 519-587-2441, ext. 283.

For those who are unable to make it out for one of the planting days, or who are too old, there may still be an opportunity to get involved in the project.

Last year, Schuur took on the care of the gardens after the planting sessions, but this year, “We may be looking at developing some sort of youth group that’s into gardening that would want to do that.”

HN REACH offers a wide range of programs and services for area children, youth, and their families, including for autism, mental health, youth justice, and developmental services. For more information about what’s offered, visit hnreach.on.ca.



HALDIMAND—Local youth Sam Overholt volunteered to crochet bees for participants in the Pollinator Pals planting sessions, taking place in Townsend and Dunnville on June 5 and 19 respectively. —Submitted photo.

‘This is a day I’ll never forget’ says graduating centenarian

By Tamara Botting
The Haldimand Press

CALEDONIA—It’s thanks to a Haldimand Press article that Doris Young can officially say that she’s a high school graduate.

When reporter Olivia Snyder was interviewing Young for an article to mark her 100th birthday, Snyder asked the centenarian what her biggest regret in life was. Young said it was that she hadn’t been able to graduate from high school.

One of Young’s daughters, Ruthanne Spence, explained how Young’s asthma was exacerbated by a severe chalk dust allergy. In her final year of high school, Young was out sick the month of January, which she worked hard to make up for back in class, but when she fell sick again in May, and that stretched into June, “she didn’t get caught up enough to write her exams,” Spence said. This meant Young couldn’t graduate.

Kathy Adams, also Young’s daughter, knew her mom didn’t graduate but said, “I never thought it was that important to her” until she mentioned it in the interview.

Once the family realized how much it meant to Young, Spence, a retired teacher with the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board, got to work. Since Spence had spent many years working in the Student Services department, which in part works to remove barriers for students to help them successfully learn and eventually graduate, she was confident something could happen.

“Today, so many stops are pulled out to help students graduate,” Spence said, noting if her mom had been in high school today, she wouldn’t have encountered chalk dust in the first place, and even if she was sick and unable to attend class in person, there would be options for virtual study, and/ or she would be able to sit her exams at a different time.

“I saw an opportunity to fulfill the dream of another potential graduate,” Spence said, adding that age wasn’t a concern.

She contacted her former colleague, Kevin Graham, Superintendent of Education with Grand Erie District School Board (GEDSB), and a short while later, got word back that the graduation was a go.

Spence said when she told her mom what was happening, “this look of disbelief and joy came over her face.”

On May 21 there was a special commencement ceremony held at River Heights Elementary School, which had been the high



CALEDONIA—Grand Erie District School Board Director of Education JoAnna Roberto presents Doris Young, 100, with her diploma. —Haldimand Press photo by Tamara Botting.

school in 1943 when Young was supposed to graduate.

During the ceremony, Spence noted that for a high school graduation, “May is a little bit early in most situations,” however, “in this case, it’s about 80 years late.”

Young, clad in the blue cap and gown that her fellow scholars wore, said, “I never thought they’d go to all this” as she took in the crowd of well-wishers, the balloons, and her diploma. “The right person got working on it, I guess.”

Young said that while her life had its ups and downs, “I’ve got lots of good memories; that’s all that matters now.... This is a day I’ll never forget.”

She added that she hoped her graduating at the age of 100 would encourage those who are still in school now.

“Get your education; it’s far more important now,” she said.

When presenting Young with her diploma, GEDSB Director of Education JoAnna Roberto said, “Doris, you have exemplified what it means to have many accomplishments in life.”

She noted that when students graduate, it’s common to wish them the best for their future, but in Young’s case, “Your future is here; you’re surrounded by your children, your grandchildren, your great-grandchildren.”

Susan Gibson, Chair of GEDSB, added that Young “exemplifies the value of lifelong education.... Your journey inspires us all.”

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