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From the Publisher

Here we are again; another year has passed and our brief fall has faded into winter chill once more. In this seasons issue you can learn how to brighten up those dreary winter afternoons with a few tips on winter gardening for the green thumb by Kimberly Moreau. If the yard is not the only thing that could use a little cheer, and chronic winter blues have got you feeling low, then check out our article on Seasonal Affective Disorder by The Local Biz Magazine regular Heather Swanson.

Love your beer? Go along with A.J. Estridge as he explores the world of grass roots breweries located right here in Durham Region.

If you're searching for the perfect Christmas gift, we have got you covered; Lewis Brooks has a talk with Oasis Pet Shelter founder and CEO Janet Smith about how you can bring a happy, healthy pet home with you for the holidays.

The feature writers have not been the only ones hard at work; our beloved regular columnists have also been nose to the grind-stone cooking up winter advice. Shirley Ouellette's 'Tasteful Talk' has proved so delicious that it has now officially expanded and will be accompanied by a seasonal recipe under the heading 'Tasteful Recipes.' Corry Hamilton lays down some pain-free options for your pet's winter workout in 'Taking the Lead,' while Stephanie Porter tells you how to tame your winter hair in 'Treat Yourself.' Are you considering your real-estate future? Ryan Smith compares the worlds of renting and buying. Sue-Ann Bavlnka advices those jaded in love in 'Ask Sue-Anne,' and Dennis Brown touches on courageousness in 'Coaches Corner.'

It is going to be a very inspirational season for film, as you will find out in Emmanuel Lopez-Motivatorman's 'Film Talk' column. Music also boasts excitement on the horizon, and Sam Burtch is here to walk you through it in 'Tweens, Teens and In-between.'

As always, don't forget to join us on Facebook by liking our page, and to download your free PDF of any Local Biz Magazine issue at www.thelocalbizmagazine.ca

Antoine Elhashem
Publisher

In This Issue

- 7 Taking the "Sad" Out of Seasonal Affective Disorder** Heather V. Swanson
- 12 Winter Gardening** By Kim Moreau
- 17 No Kills, No Cages** Lewis Brooks
- 21 Daeung Sunim, Traveling Buddhist Monk** Patrick Wakisaka
- 29 Breweries in your Backyard** A.J. Estridge

Regular Features

- 15 Film Talk** Emmanuel Lopez
- 21 Winter Events Calendar**
- 25 Treat Yourself** Stephanie Pommells
- 30 Buying Vs. Renting** Ryan Smith
- 31 Teens, Tweens & Inbetween** Samantha Burtch Whitteker
- 32 Tasteful Talk** Shirley Ouellette
- 32 Tasteful Recipes** Shirley Ouellette
- 34 Taking The Lead** Corry Hamilton
- 35 Ask Sue-Anne** Sue-Ann Bavlnka
- 36 The Coach Corner** Dennis Brown
- 38 Horoscope** Noanie Beregi


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From the Editor

Hello Durham! Welcome back to another issue of The Local Biz Magazine. This Winter 2012 issue is especially close to my heart because it marks my one year anniversary as the editor-in-chief. This makes it a great opportunity for me to extend my thanks to the Local Biz Team, who are the ones responsible for our year of success. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a round of applause: to my amazing columnists, whose insightful content regularly enriches my life; to my feature writers, whose willingness to devote their time and creative prowess never ceases to amaze me; to the fantastic sales team, who are always hard at work, both behind the scenes and out in the community; to the art department, for their incredible layouts and their tolerance of me running around like a chicken with no head; to the publishing office, for their stalwart support and sage advice and, last but not least; to all of you readers, whose feedback provides us with invaluable direction and moulds the course of our growth.

Now that you have all been forced to endure my Oscar acceptance speech, we can get back to business. We took a little bit more of a serious tone this time than we usually do, since we decided to take a look at seasonal affective disorder. It can be a controversial topic because it involves discussion of psychopharmaceuticals, an idea which garners mixed public opinion. I think that Heather, our S.A.D writer, has done a great job just laying out the facts and not bringing that debate into the piece, which was our goal from the outset. As difficult a subject as depression can be, it is important to have an open forum for discourse and for public education. There have been many campaigns in recent years to increase awareness about all forms of mental illness and I am personally glad that we had this opportunity to contribute to that effort. If our article did not answer all of your questions, there are many resources out there, including, but not limited to your family physician, the Durham chapter of the Canadian Mental Health Association (durham.cmha.ca), and Durham Mental Health Services (www.dmhs.ca).

I think that I will wrap it up on that note and let you get to all the amazing content that we have in store for you in The Local Biz Magazine winter 2012 edition. Enjoy!

Sherry Hucklebridge
Editor

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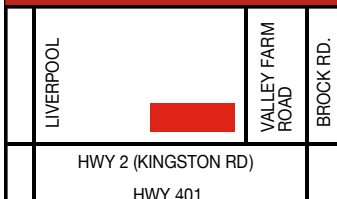
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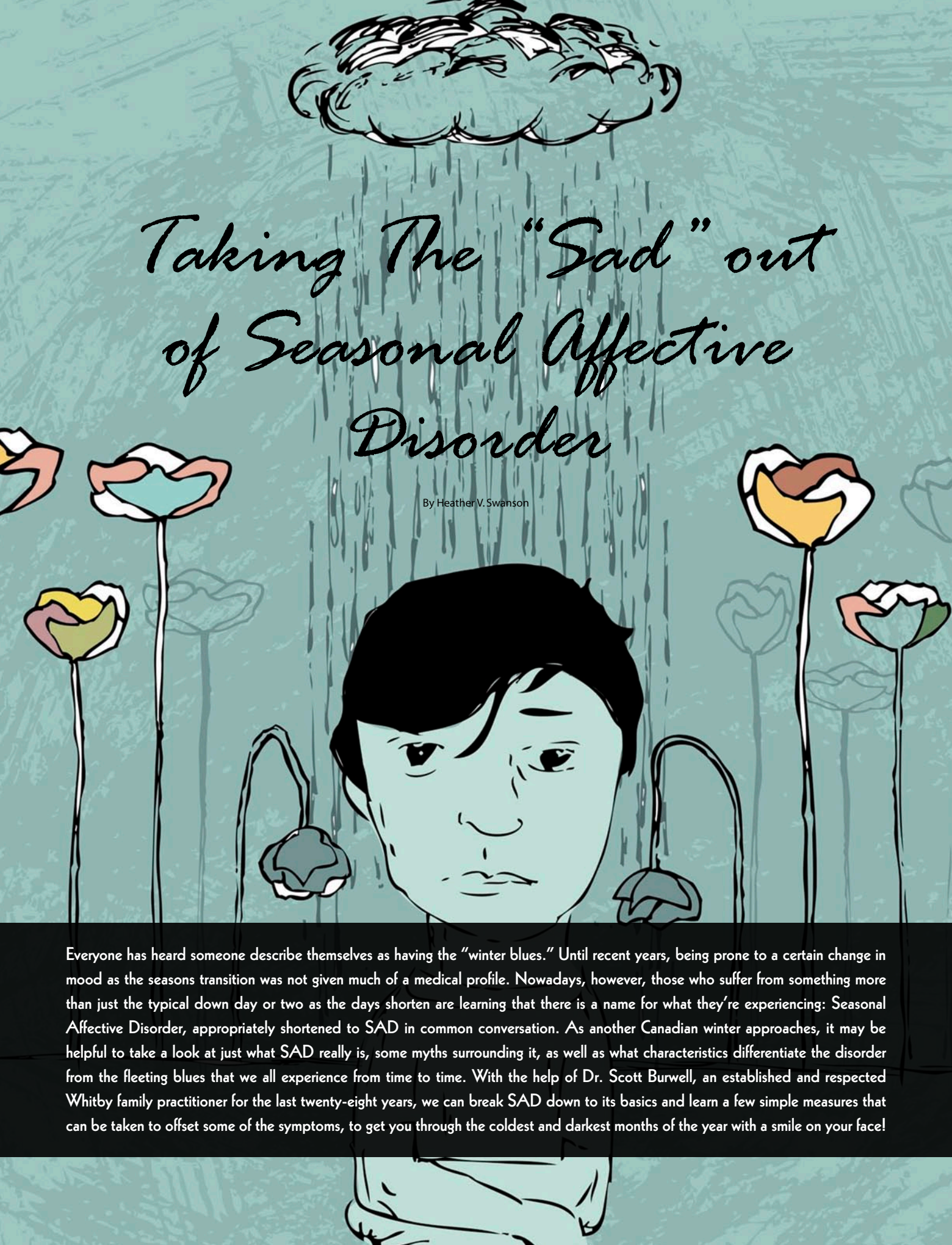
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Taking The “Sad” out of Seasonal Affective Disorder

By Heather V. Swanson

Everyone has heard someone describe themselves as having the “winter blues.” Until recent years, being prone to a certain change in mood as the seasons transition was not given much of a medical profile. Nowadays, however, those who suffer from something more than just the typical down day or two as the days shorten are learning that there is a name for what they’re experiencing: Seasonal Affective Disorder, appropriately shortened to SAD in common conversation. As another Canadian winter approaches, it may be helpful to take a look at just what SAD really is, some myths surrounding it, as well as what characteristics differentiate the disorder from the fleeting blues that we all experience from time to time. With the help of Dr. Scott Burwell, an established and respected Whitby family practitioner for the last twenty-eight years, we can break SAD down to its basics and learn a few simple measures that can be taken to offset some of the symptoms, to get you through the coldest and darkest months of the year with a smile on your face!



SAD Is A Real Condition

Seasonal Affective Disorder is defined as an element of depression in the diagnostic texts used by clinicians, chiefly the DSM-IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders). While not considered a mood disorder in and of itself, SAD is recognized as a distinct pattern in the way one's mood is altered as weather and daylight shift from one season to the next. For people who report normal levels of mental health during the rest of the year, finding that they are struggling to get up when it's still dark in the mornings or are given to feelings of sadness and lethargy as autumn draws to a close can be a strong indicator that SAD is something one's healthcare provider might consider.

While it hasn't been recognized as a real condition for very long, experts have begun compiling and comparing their data, leading them to legitimize SAD as something that impacts an estimated 1.4 to 9.7 per cent of the North American population, dependent heavily upon location (and therefore weather conditions year-round; for instance, those who live in more temperate regions, which get slighter differences from one month to the next and accumulate less snow than others, for example, tend to show a lower percentage of people who report being affected by seasonal changes. The more noticeable the climate change, from hot summers to frozen winters, the higher the number of people who report being impacted in a way that seriously affects their day to day lives). This figure is closer to falling within the 2-6% range in Canadians alone, although it's estimated that up to 15% of Canadians do feel some milder degree of the symptoms.

"Regarding the prevalence of SAD," Dr. Burwell says, "my gut feeling over my years of practice is that most of us have it to a greater or lesser degree. However, it does present a problem when severe, which would be when a patient's SAD is negatively affecting their lives on a continuous or almost continuous basis. I would estimate that this subgroup in my practice would be in the 5-10% range of those I see for general family practice problems."

Psychiatry has led the charge in validating SAD, but other branches of healthcare are catching up; family physicians, naturopaths and many other professionals are now able to diagnose and treat the disorder, often without the use of prescription medications.

Yes, It Really Is Harder To Wake Up On Dark Mornings

Our bodies' clocks are hardwired to respond to many things, helping us to automatically function on a daily schedule. One of the biggest factors to which we respond is light exposure, which explains why nearly all of us have issues with dragging ourselves out of bed once seven o'clock in the morning greets us with darkness instead of sunlight. The human brain recognizes light as a signal to wake up and become active; when we're deprived of that light, we must depend more heavily on other cues to get going. This naturally slows us down and can make for a tough transition as the days get shorter. "Few people feel better on a cold grey day than a warm sunny day," Dr. Burwell states. But for people with SAD, the transition is much longer, and in some cases is nonexistent without intervention. Those with typical brain chemistry will adjust to the changes in sunrise and sunset, and can right themselves within a week or two. SAD sufferers are less able to make that adjustment, and will find their sleep schedules, appetite, and mood altered significantly from the previous months. Just like the anecdotal evidence of more people being late for work or school in the spring and fall, right after we change our clocks during Spring Forward and Fall Back, those with SAD often report finding it more difficult to achieve the level of rest and motivation they need to stay on their usual schedules.

Winter Weight May Not Just Be Due To Lack Of Exercise

It's harder for all of us to exercise in winter weather, so a slight fluctuation in weight isn't unheard of once we start driving more than walking and can't engage in our favourite outdoor activities. For people with SAD, the situation is more marked than that. With the growing amount of study focusing on SAD, researchers have found that one of the symptoms the disorder shares with depression is a tendency for sufferers to eat more during the months that affect them most adversely. Given that winter is the more common adversary in the equation, it makes sense that those who report other SAD-like symptoms often complain of weight gain and casual (or comfort) eating at the same time. Similar to depression, SAD's overeating is frequently due to an unusually high craving for carbohydrates, with the working hypothesis being that, when a body feels itself lacking energy, it instructs us to seek out the foods that can give us an extra kick. Add in the lack of motivation to exercise and the prescription for extra pounds is complete. There may yet be other physiological reasons behind the desire for more food than usual, and the resulting weight gain, but for now science has settled on these common-sense answers. Fortunately, there are some natural measures to be taken that can help to offset the snacking compulsion, which we will cover as we dig deeper.

*SAD... impacts
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North American
population*



There Are Differences Between SAD And Other Types Of Depression

While many symptoms show overlap between major depressive episodes and bouts of SAD that are severe enough to negatively impact a sufferer's life, there are, as previously mentioned, some key elements that will help differentiate between the two during the diagnosis phase. Two of the principal differences lie in triggers and treatment. We've touched on the trigger issue of SAD's effects being visibly related to the changes in weather, and generally speaking, it's been found that symptoms abate in those with the "winter blues" when the seasons of favour - in this case, spring and summer - begin again. If you find that your symptoms are not easing even as the days get longer and the temperatures warmer, it is important to consult your doctor to ensure that you do have SAD, which is more transitory in nature, as opposed to having a more protracted, major depressive episode.

Treatment differs as well; while antidepressant therapy can be implemented in any form of depression where healthcare professionals see fit, a major depression will not likely respond as strongly, if at all, to the more natural treatments of light therapy and the addressing of vitamin deficiencies.

"The symptoms can be very similar to major depression in general," Dr. Burwell states. "I do tend to see more symptoms of apathy, loss of motivation and energy in SAD rather than in



major depression, which may include feelings of hopelessness, poor self esteem, or a sense of worthlessness. However, all or some of these symptoms can be found in both forms of depression." Again, only a professional should be trusted to make the call as to which your symptoms match most closely.

Your Doctor Wants You To Talk About It

As we will see in the sections below, there is a subset of patients who have a more difficult time approaching their healthcare providers with concerns they're having about changes in mood, energy or appetite. Dr. Burwell is quick to point out that physicians' doors are far more wide open than those patients may think, and that help is available from the moment the subject is broached. "I would like my patients to come to me early in their depressive symptoms and not wait until they are severe," he says. "They will be treated in a supportive and compassionate way, with there being absolutely no negative judgment. Early treatment works better and gives these patients back their lives sooner. So, if there is any message that I would give to my patients, it is to ask that they make an appointment to see me as early as possible when their mood is declining."

This is true for people who have struggled with SAD before, too. Sometimes it's not just a diagnosis that is an important talking point during an appointment. "Some patients know very well that they have SAD and if they were to visit me early in the fall, we could discuss a game plan together to keep them feeling well." Being proactive with the help of one's doctor can mitigate a great deal of the impact SAD has on one's life, so don't hesitate to make that call, whether it's for the first time or it's in anticipation of what may be to come again this year.

If you find that your symptoms are not easing even as the days get longer and the temperatures warmer, it is important to consult your doctor...

You Don't Need A Sunny Day To Perk You Up

One of the most successful therapies in use to combat SAD is light therapy (also known as photo- or heliotherapy), which is as simple as it sounds. Canadian winters can be tough, and most of us can't slip away to the sunny clime for a week's worth of regeneration. The sun is elusive at best even in the autumn months. In its stead, then, phototherapy - exposure to specific frequencies of light for a set period of time - can be just as effective as an afternoon in the summer sunshine. Light therapy is nothing new; for years it has been used to treat other, longer-known disorders, ranging from skin conditions to insomnia, and is even used in the treatment of jaundiced babies.

With the increasing recognition of SAD and how it ties into daylight, many healthcare professionals have taken a page from the Mayo Clinic's use of light boxes, and have begun to suggest phototherapy as a first line of offence against the associated malaise. Light boxes and their alternatives (specialized mirrors and windowpane filters designed to maximize the amount of light that is let into one's home, for example) are easy to research and access online, and most doctors (as we will discuss in the next segment) are knowledgeable in where or how to procure them. While not considered a complete replacement for natural sunlight, these measures actually boast their own benefits as well; filtering out the damaging frequencies of UV that are able to cause sunburn or eye damage in nature makes a light box safer in many ways than a stroll on the beach. It is thought that light exposure helps to make up for the hours of lost daylight we experience in winter, which resets our body clocks and helps to nullify some of the more crippling symptoms of SAD.

Family Doctors Do Have SAD Knowledge Beyond A Prescription Pad

You don't always need a psychiatrist's advice when dealing with something like SAD. Your family physician may have taken an interest in studying up on his or her own time, and most have access to resources. "Any training I have received for the treatment of SAD has been self-directed, and ongoing, to include medical articles, conferences, luncheon talks and drug reps [representatives from pharmaceutical companies who frequently visit doctors' offices with the latest samples and literature]. I can't recall any specific training about SAD in medical school or residency, although there was general psychiatric training. It may be taught more thoroughly now in medical school and residency." Dr. Burwell received his M.D. in 1981 and Family Practice Certificate in 1983.



While natural treatments for mood disorders aren't something that are standard in a family practitioner's training, Dr. Burwell explains how he ensures that his patients can stay informed with his help. For instance, he says, "I do not receive any formal information about light boxes. However, I do routinely receive advertisements from various companies that sell light boxes. If I choose, I can pursue further details by contacting the company myself." Doctors are also regularly sent medical journals with the latest research in many fields. "There will be an occasional article in the medical literature that I review about light boxes, as well. If patients are interested in learning about light boxes themselves, I either show them the advertising that I have received about them, or I direct them to what I feel are good quality sites for medical information on the internet, with a warning about scam articles that are very prevalent."

It's comforting to know that treatment options are part of a dialogue with your doctor, too, rather than a simple mandate. "If they want to do so," Dr. Burwell adds, "patients can bring what they have researched on the internet to me and I will gladly review it with them." Your health is a two-way conversation!

In addition to light therapy, Dr. Burwell outlines a few other measures he frequently takes when treating patients with SAD, ones that are almost always implemented before any talk of antidepressants begins.

"Other non-pharmacological treatment options for my patients are also arranged by me, such as advice, referrals to specialists when needed," and some of the more common therapies, which Dr. Burwell outlines here. "Treatment that can be tried and is successful in some prior to initiating medication include;

a) counselling, of which Cognitive Behavioural Therapy seems to be very helpful. Other forms of talk therapy with the family doctor, or support groups that deal with SAD treatment can be very helpful.

b) Exercise, particularly cardio, can be very energizing and help with mood.

c) Vitamin D. A few years ago, when this was looked at scientifically, many of my patients were requesting that their Vitamin D levels be checked. If done during winter, everyone that I tested who was not on a supplement was deficient in Vitamin D. I suggest at least 1000 I.U. (international units) per day for all my patients. This supplement has been medically proven to help improve mood."

Dr. Burwell's advice doesn't stop there, and again indicates that treatment of SAD should remain an ongoing dialogue between patients and their caregivers; "Many people take other supplements that they feel help them, and I have no objection as long as they are still eating a well rounded diet."

You And Your Doctor Can Weather SAD, But Sometimes Extra Help Is Needed

We've covered a lot of ground as far as diagnosis, treatment and management of SAD, nearly all of which can be addressed with a visit to your family doctor and some education about holistic, natural options. There are, however infrequently, cases of SAD that may call for something more specialized, at which point there is more that can be achieved by someone in the mental health field.

"I refer a patient to a psychiatrist whenever I feel I have tried all options at my disposal and the patient is not responding to treatment, or is worsening," Dr. Burwell says. If every avenue available to your healthcare provider has been exhausted and you're not improving, your doctor can refer you to someone with even broader knowledge



of SAD and other types of depression. These specialists maintain not only a relationship with you, but also with your family physician, which ensures that you'll continue to get the most thorough and effective care possible from all sides. There's nothing wrong with telling your doctor what is and isn't working for you, and requesting additional support.

SAD Can Affect Anyone

As we've seen, people in certain weather regions are more likely to present with symptoms of SAD, for obvious reasons. But while research has shown that some demographic numbers come back stating that its occurrence can be as high as eight times greater in women than in men, Dr. Burwell notes that there could be reasons behind such numbers that are not as simple as gender physiology; it may also be rooted in gender psychology.

"Unfortunately there remains a stigma about mental health that keeps many people away from the doctor with these symptoms," he explains. "In my experience

this is a bit worse in males who see mental illness as a 'weakness,' which of course it is not." The reason behind more women presenting with SAD, then, could be less about its actual occurrence and more about men having a tougher time feeling that they can discuss it with their physicians.

"I can only base a demographic with SAD based on my own experience," Dr. Burwell states of his knowledge compared to general statistics. "It seems to me that this condition is more prevalent in middle aged, fully employed patients. I, of course, have seen it in all demographics as well." In other words, while some people may be somewhat more at risk, you don't have to fit into any one checkbox for SAD to be a valid diagnosis for you.

It's Not Just Winter That Can Bring On The Blues

We're facing another winter in southern Ontario, which means these facts will be of most use to those who are beginning to feel the symptoms of winter-onset SAD. But it's important to note that, while the shorter days are certainly the most common triggers for those prone to the disorder, there is in fact such a thing as summer-onset SAD as well. A smaller but still very much existent handful of the population can read the aforementioned information and apply it to how they feel when the spring thaw is in full effect, and given that it is contrary to what common belief dictates about SAD, that can lead to confusion in its sufferers. Rest assured, the seasonal in Seasonal Affective Disorder can mean both ends of the weather spectrum, and is equally worthy of mentioning to a healthcare provider if the changes are disrupting daily life. Treatment may differ somewhat, particularly in the area of light therapy, but others are equally useful. If you find yourself able to relate to the symptoms, but for you it is instead the "summer blues," a consultation with a trusted professional may be of great help.

All of this information about Seasonal Affective Disorder may help you determine what's been getting you down as the leaves fall from the trees this year. More importantly, it can give you a jumping-off point to start a discussion with your doctor if you feel you may be one of the many Canadians affected by SAD. Dr. Burwell reassures us that physicians are knowledgeable and ready to help in whatever way is best for each of us, so now is the time to make that appointment, start the dialogue, and find a way to enjoy the snowy months this year as much as the sunny ones!

.....
Heather V. Swanson is a pop culture enthusiast and freelance writer who is currently working on her first novel. A Toronto native, she has now proudly called Durham Region home for nearly half of her life.

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From the Team at

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Winter Gardening

By Kim Moreau



The long, warm days of summer have come to an end. Afternoons spent sitting perched by your garden bed planting, weeding, watering, and enjoying the sweet aroma and appearance of the year's flowers are over. However, a new season of gardening, in a time not commonly thought of for planting and flowering, has begun. Although a typical Canadian gardening season runs from early March and extends into the fall, the frosted ground prevalent in Canadian winters allows gardeners the opportunity to complete other important tasks during the colder months of winter.

According to Maureen Hulbert, a Toronto Master Gardener and owner/operator of Down to Earth Gardens & Designs, the winter season allows gardeners an opportunity to plan and plant late-blooming flowers, evergreens and shrubs. They can also use greenhouses or cold frames to extend the season, browse through seed catalogues to plan garden beds for the following season, and prune. Winter planting includes not only evergreens and shrubs that hold their flower heads or fruit throughout the cold season (such as hydrangeas) but also perennials and grasses with interesting seeding. This provides an attractive addition to the winter backdrop for the gardener and their neighbours; it also provides habitat and food for wildlife such as birds. "Finding plants that bloom as late as possible in the fall such as aconitum, monkshood, or else as early as possible in the spring, such as hammamelis and witchhazel, is a fun way to extend the season as long as possible," says Hulbert.

Another way to extend the planting season through the winter and have the opportunity to grow more vegetables or plant more flowers is through the use of a greenhouse. Although greenhouses provide gardeners the opportunity to extend their planting season, they require a decent amount of space and carry the high costs associated with maintaining it. To avoid the hefty costs, opt for an unheated greenhouse that can house broccoli, lettuce, Brussels sprouts, carrots, celery, garlic, spinach, Christmas cactus, primrose, snapdragons, impatiens, and more.

Cold frames, resembling miniature greenhouses, are another affordable option for gardeners looking to stretch their planting season into the cooler months. As a cost-effective solution in comparison to a greenhouse, cold frames allow cold season vegetables to continue into the late fall and early winter, and allow gardeners to start planting earlier in the season. A cold frame can be made from old windows and cheap plywood, says Hulbert, who adds that starting seeds indoors or gardening with houseplants that you move outside during the summer are other ways to get hands dirty during the winter months. "I also do a lot of pruning in late winter," she continues, "when deciduous trees and shrubs are dormant and I can see the structure of the plant much better."

Many gardeners also use the winter as an opportunity to maintain their perennial flowers that, although returning each year, require proper care to survive the winter without disease or harm and fully bloom the following season. Some perennials such as echinacea, rudbeckia, buddleia, achillea, and eupatorium add beauty to the winter atmosphere and can be left for the winter months for an eye-catching view. They can be cut back the following spring during clean up. For other perennials, apply a four to six inch compost layer around the plant bed during the fall to release nutrients to plants after cutting them back to about six to eight inches above the ground. Remember adequate watering is needed during this time, especially if it is a dry fall.

Since the wintertime is about planning for the following spring as much as it's about winterizing the garden beds, Hulbert advises gardeners keep photos and a gardening journal to evaluate the success of their previous year and come up with ideas for the following

spring. "I have lost count of the times I said to myself that I need to replace one plant with another or expand a bed in this direction or whatever, but when you actually sit down in January you can't remember most of it," she said. "Write it down as you think of it and you will do much better." Hulbert keeps busy throughout the winter months, starting in October, by shredding leaves and putting them on the plant beds for winter protection. She also starts bringing in houseplants that spent the summer outdoors. Fall is also the time to set up cold frames, plant bulbs that were purchased in August and September, and sprinkle pelletized manure on top to fertilize the bulbs and keep squirrels away. In



December she ensures mulch is on all beds, broken branches are cleared, and her tools are cleaned, oiled and stored for the following spring. For others, winter and Christmastime may provide an opportunity to purchase tools that need to be replaced. Add tools and accessories to your Christmas list or shop for deals when prices are likely to be lower. In January and February, Hulbert takes time to review her photos and garden journal from the previous season and make plans for the following year. She looks at gardening catalogues, makes notes of new plants that she wants, always a few she admits, and attends gardening lectures and shows to learn new information, and then before she knows it the winter is done and the a new season of gardening has awoken with the springtime arrival.

For Pamela Love, coordinator of the Durham Master Gardeners (DMG) group, the winter gives her the perfect opportunity to enjoy some relaxation while she begins preparing for the following spring as well. "When planning for spring, I consider what I want to rearrange, get rid of and acquire. I look forward to the seed catalogues, gardening magazines, gardening books, take a course or online webinar, do some research and relaxing," said Love. The DMG group, founded in 1987 as the Durham chapter of the Master Gardeners of Ontario Inc., offers gardening advice and information specific for gardeners living in Durham Region through public presentations and their website (www.durhammastergardeners.ca). New gardeners or veteran gardeners with gardening questions about surviving the winter months and preparing for the following spring can contact master gardeners from the area by using the group's website.

In Canada, climate change is the biggest problem to be faced by gardeners. Mild winters with little snow cover are not beneficial to gardeners because the snow is used to insulate the garden beds. "When the temperatures stay mild and/or we don't get good snow cover, the plants may fluctuate in temperatures above and below freezing," said Hulbert. "They don't achieve proper dormancy and the cold will then kill the plant." Regardless of your gardening experience or preferences, there are various ways to extend your hobby through the cooler winter months and countless resources and assistances, such as the DMG group, to provide advice and education for making the most of your love of gardening in the Ontario. Wintertime may not provide the same colour and aroma as the summertime, but it allows gardeners an opportunity to evaluate their garden successes and failures and develop a plan to have a better garden in the following season, all while utilizing the beauty of plants and shrubs that remain attractive throughout the cooler months to create a beautiful winter scene.

Kim Moreau is a recent journalism graduate from Durham College working toward a career as an entertainment or travel journalist, currently building her portfolio as a freelance writer. She began publishing poems at the age of 13 and has always felt most comfortable with her pen poised, ready to write.

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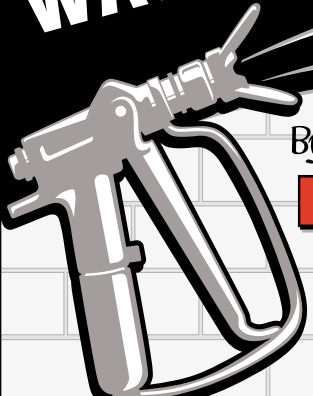
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Film Talk

by Emmanuel Lopez-Motivatorman

The Winter Movie Season

Hello movie lovers! I love movies and it is such a life-long passion that it thrills me every time I meet someone who shares this passion too. I recently attended a wedding and during the reception dinner I was seated at a table full of strangers. Once the topic turned to movies, my eyes lit up along with the two women sitting next to me. The energy in the air just shot up! We all enjoyed discussing our favourites and recommended titles that made meaningful impacts on us. Movies instantly bonded us and our table overflowed with enthusiastic conversations!

Here are some highlights of the winter movie season I am looking forward to; I hope you find a title that fills you with enthusiasm and becomes an exciting topic of conversation for you. For starters, the comedy-drama *Playing for Keeps* stars Gerard Butler as George, a retired soccer pro. Having fallen on hard times, George tries to redeem himself with his ex-wife (Jessica Biel) by coaching his son's soccer team. His life gets interesting when he starts to attract the other sexy and restless soccer moms! For fans of the epic *Lord of the Rings* trilogy comes the first instalment of the long awaited series *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*. This prequel follows a younger Bilbo Baggins (Martin Freeman), from the previous films, who must go on a mission with Gandalf the Grey (Ian McKellen) and thirteen fortune-seeking dwarves. The first trilogy was full of heroic characters demonstrating courage, perseverance and

teamwork and I hope this is also at the heart of the new trilogy.

One movie I wished I had seen during the recent Toronto International Film Festival is called *The Impossible*. It received positive reviews and is about the incredible true story of a vacationing family who were caught in the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. Starring Naomi Watts and Ewan McGregor, this highly emotional drama is filled with motivating messages about the need for hope when fighting against impossible odds. It's recommended to have many tissues at hand when you watch this one! Another drama comes from Kathryn Bigelow, who became the first female to win an Oscar for best picture and best director with the Iraq war film *The Hurt Locker*. Her follow up is called *Zero Dark Thirty* and is described as the story of history's greatest manhunt for the world's most dangerous man. Starring Chris Pratt and Jessica Chastain, the film is about the decade-long hunt for Osama bin Laden after the 9/11 attacks.

I had never seen the stage musical *Les Miserables* and now am happy it has been adapted into an epic movie. The film stars Hugh Jackman, Russell Crowe, Anne Hathaway, Amanda Seyfried and Helena Bonham Carter, who all sang their parts live on set. Set in nineteenth-century France, the story follows a paroled prisoner named Jean Valjean (Jackman) seeking redemption. The movie trailer scenes look and sound incredibly beautiful and grand!

The comedy *Parental Guidance* shows what happens when a grandfather named Artie (Billy Crystal) uses old-school style parenting with his three grandchildren. It also stars Bette Midler as Artie's wife and Marisa Tomei as his daughter; the movie trailer looks like a lot of fun. It was great to see Crystal host the Oscars again this year after a long absence and I hope this is a welcome return to the big screen for his fans.

If you are in the mood for something unusual here comes a dark spin on a fairy tale called *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters*. Jeremy Renner plays Hansel and Gemma Arterton plays Gretel, siblings who survived their childhood trauma in a witch's gingerbread house and grew up as expert bounty hunters of witches. Renner has been

successfully carving out an action hero status with roles in *Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol*, *The Avengers* and *The Bourne Legacy*. Let's see if this new action-comedy-horror film continues his success.

The comedy *Movie 43* is an anthology of over twenty intertwining comedic shorts with a slew of directors and a long list of stars that include Elizabeth Banks, Kristen Bell, Gerard Butler, Richard Gere, Hugh Jackman, Emma Stone, Uma Thurman, Naomi Watts and Kate Winslet. This film is reportedly filled with twisted jokes and is one of the most shocking, original and dangerous comedies ever made!

Just in time for Valentine's Day is an unusual love story. The romantic zombie film *Warm Bodies* stars Nicholas Hoult as the zombie R who, after eating the brains of a teen, is overcome with love for this teen's companion, Julie (Teresa Palmer). Wow! That was fun to write! This better be a comedy as well. For *Die Hard* fans comes Bruce Willis reprising his role as John McClane in this fifth instalment, *A Good Day to Die Hard*. This time he goes to Russia with his estranged son, Jack, played by Jai Courtney. I've enjoyed the *Die Hard* series since it first came out in 1988 and am looking forward to this film. Expect lots of action, thrills and his famous catchphrase, "Yippee ki-yay...bleep!"

So there's your latest batch of movie choices for the Winter Season. I hope you discover films that will add spark to your holiday conversations or online interactions if you enjoy social media sites like Facebook. Sharing a passion for movies is a great icebreaker and is also a great opportunity to express something that is meaningful to you. You'll feel good and you may make new friends who love movies too!

EMMANUEL LOPEZ a.k.a. MOTIVATORMAN is an author, speaker, social media consultant and movie blogger featured in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Globe and Mail*. He provides "movie prescriptions" for those going through difficult times. He has written over 500 tips on his *Movies that Motivate* blog and has done motivational talks at TD Canada Trust, Royal Ontario Museum, Lululemon Athletica and The Art Institute of Boston. Emmanuel recently released his first eBook "15 Movies To Help You Overcome Difficult Times" available as a free gift at: www.motivatorman.com

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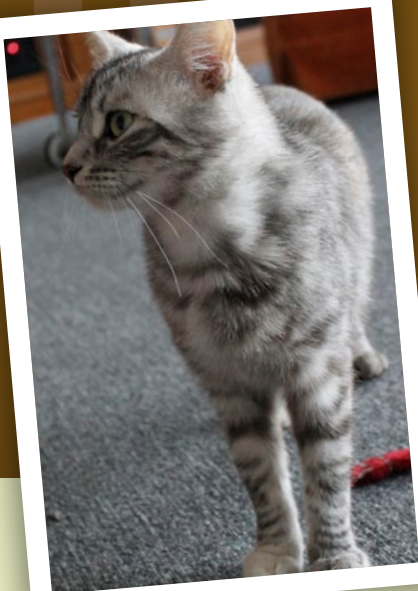
No Kills, No Cages

Oasis Animal Rescue and Education Center for an Animal-Safe Ontario

By Lewis Brooks



If you've ever adopted a pet from a typical shelter, you know what it feels like to walk into a room full of caged animals and immediately want to keep every one of them for yourself. How could you not feel for the little buggers? You have that pang of sadness when you enter the room, which smells exactly how you imagined it would - like pet food and wet fur. You look around, and every lonely old cat or adorable puppy in their little prison is staring at you. They all seem to be begging you to take them, looking up at you as though it's your job to get them out of there.



Well, there's a place in Oshawa that is about to change the way you think about animal shelters. Oasis Animal Rescue and Education Center is a place that does not believe in cages or in euthanizing its pets. Opening in January of 2011, Oasis was founded by avid animal lover Janet Smith, who has been running the center as the Executive Director ever since. It has had booming success up to date, largely thanks to the incredible hard work put forth by Smith and by those who volunteer with Oasis.

Smith is a long time pet owner, and has observed what becomes of unwanted pets first hand; "People get an adorable puppy, not realizing that when it grows up it may be a lot more work, and a lot bigger. Or they adopt kittens, forgetting that kittens grow up and must be spayed or neutered, they forget that this costs money." She emphasizes that people tend not to understand that animals need lifetime care, which can typically last for twelve to eighteen years, and sometimes even longer than that. They forget that animals require not only love, but also time and money. Because of this, Smith spent a long time seeing pets go unwanted and getting thrown onto the streets to fend for themselves, or sent to shelters that keep animals in small cages. Some of these shelters have euthanizing rates of almost half of the animals who ever check in! Desperately wanting to see policy changes for the creatures, Smith felt it important to set the precedent and come up with a better rehoming system for unwanted pets, and thus Oasis came to be.

There is a vast need for what the center has to offer, and it did not take long for Oasis to reach full flight. Despite seeing so much action, Oasis has managed well thanks to a volunteer team that does better than its best at keeping the gears turning smoothly. The shelter's hectic start can be in part attributed to its storefront location, which is extremely accessible and encourages passersby to stop in. This has promoted good business for the center and has made Oasis a well-known place.

Though the location has contributed to a successful program, being storefront has also led to many pets simply being tossed through the Oasis doorway or left outside to be found later by an Oasis volunteer.

Many pets are abandoned at Oasis in baskets and sometimes even crates that need to be pried open. Often these pets are in horrific conditions and require immediate medical attention just to stay alive. Boxes are sometimes left with entire litters of kittens with their mothers, or very sick animals that have not been cared for properly in a long time. The problem with dropping

Adopting a pet that has seen a vet gives you a much better guarantee of the animals health than say, a pet store...

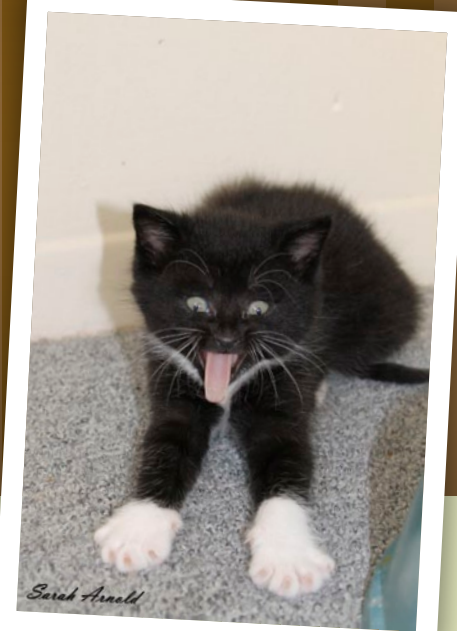
an animal at Oasis is that there is no housing for the animals on site, and in order for the animal to have somewhere to go, they would need to have a foster home readily available, which cannot happen until the animal has seen a vet. Most pets who come to Oasis are thankfully not abandoned, but are strays found in back yards or simply pets that are no longer wanted by their owners. Some owners claim to have developed allergies or have a child who has allergies, and can no longer keep the pet. Others have decided that the animal is too much work, some are downsizing and cannot keep the pets. There is a large list of reasons as to why people bring their pets to Oasis, but there are few valid excuses in Smith's eyes that lead to an owner getting rid of their pet once they have accepted responsibility for it.

Upon arriving at Oasis, all animals go straight to the

vet. An animal cannot be placed in a home until it has been given veterinary care. This includes being brought up to date on their age-appropriate shots, and animals between six and eight months old must be spayed or neutered. All males brought to Oasis are neutered before they are permitted to go into foster care. All pets re-homed through Oasis are healthy and up to date with their vaccinations. Adopting a pet that has seen a vet gives you a much better guarantee of the animals health than say, a pet store, where the animals' health cannot be guaranteed at all.

Oasis is set apart from most other shelters in that it has a no-kill policy and no animal is euthanized except when it is the only humane option (such as for a sick animal or an animal in severe pain). Because Oasis does not use cages, it cannot run out of space in the sense that another shelter might, and therefore can successfully operate a kill-free shelter. Oasis uses foster families to care for pets while they are being re-homed instead of keeping the animals in cages. "The problem with cages," says Smith, "is that eventually you run out of space. The humane society refers their clients to us when they're full." Oasis has devised a system that can house as many animals as there are people willing to help them, and so all animals that come to Oasis are held by whoever brought them in until a foster home is available, eliminating the need for a holding area and phasing out cages altogether. There are currently over 100 pets in foster care with Oasis, all of whom are in a foster home and being given proper care.

Foster parents with Oasis, just like the adoptive families, go through a screening process to ensure the safety and comfort of the pets that are re-homed. This leads to a very high success rate, as people looking to adopt or foster are checked on first-hand by Oasis, and so fewer irresponsible adopters are able to slip through the cracks. The screening process involves filling out comprehensive questionnaires, followed by a home inspection. All Oasis animals are put into homes that



have been deemed loving and pet-friendly by Oasis' high standards, ensuring a high quality of life for pets both while in foster care, and after being adopted. Animals typically stay in foster care no longer than a month before they are re-homed, though sometimes the pets' foster parents fall in love with them and adopt their furry friend for themselves! Because Oasis operates on a foster family network all over the GTA, when people open their homes to foster animals, they are directly contributing to the intake capacity of Oasis. In other words, the more foster homes the better!

When asked how someone can benefit from adopting an animal from Oasis, Smith replied, "You have the opportunity to save a life, for starters." Which is true, and it goes both ways. By adopting a pet from Oasis, you are adopting a lifelong friend, Smith advocates that the pros of being a pet-owner are extensive, for people with mental health issues, senior citizens, people who live alone, or anyone who is prepared to be codependent on an adorable ball of fur for a big chunk of time, it's worth it to adopt an animal from Oasis. Many animals come to Oasis in awful condition, and these animals are treated carefully and are eventually placed in a home where they will be loved and cared for properly. The value of a center like this one is unquestionable, and it is baffling that this is not the default rehoming process for animals when it seems to make such sense.

If you are not looking to adopt, but still want to help the animals, Oasis accepts food and money donations and is always looking for new volunteers. Oasis allows people to educate themselves about pets, especially young people. They offer nursery school visits to the center, where children can learn about the proper ways to care for animals and the importance of taking responsibility for your pet. Oasis also offers an animal food bank for owners with lower income. This service is highly-appreciated, as is made obvious by the seven-hundred people who currently use it. Smith understood that an animal food bank was incredibly necessary;

"Pets are part of the family. They deserve a food bank." Otherwise pet-owners who were facing financial difficulty would likely be forced to get rid of their animal, contributing to the rehoming problem. Oasis also offers services for senior pet owners, students needing community hours, teenagers looking to benefit from working with animals, people with mental health issues, and many others. Whatever your challenge, Oasis is here to make pet-owning possible for as many people as it can reach. "Whatever it is, Oasis will get you over your hurdle" affirms Smith, who believes that a pet is a

...she is hopeful and determined to make Oasis' no-kill and cageless policy the general rule....

positive contribution to any home that will love and give proper care to the animal.

Oasis has worked within the community to educate pet-owners and to reduce the number of unwanted pets, but Smith also points out that there are foster families all over the GTA, and the network is only growing. Three hundred pets have been adopted through Oasis to date, and the center is now looking at about twenty-five pets going through the adoption process a month. "I never realized what we are facing," Smith says of the sheer number of unwanted animals (which only continues to increase with time), but she is hopeful and determined to make Oasis' no-kill and cageless policy the general rule.

The next step for Oasis is to spread the word, and to reach out to as many people as possible. In order to do this, the center will be offering a number of new services including back yard poop 'n scooping, a service

for walking community dogs, an auxiliary service, an in-home pet sitting service, and more projects all geared to increase awareness for Oasis and provide services to the community. The shelter runs predominantly on donations, which come in the form of pet supplies and money (which is mostly used to buy more pet supplies). The more people who are aware of the center, the more people it can reach. Oasis is currently working towards opening up a gift shop in the front of the store to increase traffic. Smith believes that this will lead to more people going in and out of the center; "people will come in and see what we're all about." She hopes that people will take time to learn a little bit about the center while they stop in for souvenirs and gifts, and that having more traffic flow will increase awareness.

When asked what her ideal goal for the shelters future is, Smith stated that it went beyond just Oasis. "The main goal is to eventually create a no-kill Ontario," she explained. This means that animals would cease to be euthanized for anythings other than humane reasons like sickness and severe pain. Since most shelters are not no-kill shelters today, this seems like quite a task, but Smith believes that it is possible; "we believe that if we can put together the template, and do it properly, then that is achievable." Part of the template includes working closely with other shelters throughout Ontario to spread the word. "We will fight together" she concludes, in answer to the need to create an animal-safe Ontario.

For more information on how you can help please contact Oasis Animal Rescue and Education Center at: 905-728-8500, 86 Simcoe Street North, Oshawa, Ontario, L1G 4S2

Lewis Brooks is new to the GTA, having grown up in a small town in New Brunswick. He spent a lot of time writing stories and poems for local contests and newspapers. He hopes to make a name for himself as a writer to eventually publish fiction.

Photography by Sarah Arnold

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Winter Events Calendar

December 1st

Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer

St. Francis Centre
78 Church St. South, Ajax
Tickets: \$13.00
www.stfranciscentre.ca

Annual Seniors Holiday Dinner

St. Andrew's Community Centre
46 Exeter Road, Ajax
Tickets: \$18.00 + HST
905-619-2529 ext. 7243

December 1st - 2nd

Santa Claus rides the York-Durham Heritage Train

Uxbridge Train Station, 19 Railway St.

December 6th

Jeff Dunham

General Motors Centre
99 Athol St. E., Oshawa
www.generalmotorscentre.com/events/detail/jeff-dunham

December 7th

Moonlight Madness Tree Lighting

Downtown Bowmanville

Winter's Eve Live performance by Jay Pollock followed by Evening Hymns

The Robert McLaughlin Gallery
72 Queen Street Oshawa
905-576-3000 Ext. 109
jsevers@rmg.on.ca
www.rmg.on.ca

December 9th

Christmas in the Village:

Winter in the Woods
Pickering Museum Village
www.pickering.ca/museum

December 9th

Monthly Walks/Hikes - Lakeside Hike

Ajax Waterfront Trail East.
Meeting Place: South Patio of the Carruthers Marsh Pavilion
55 Ashbury Boulevard
905-426-3007
ajax.trails@gmail.com

December 12th

Mayor's Light Tour

Durham Region
Various Pick Up locations throughout Pickering
www.pickering.ca/greatevents

Gift-It Crafts - Ages 10-18

Oshawa Public Libraries
Jess Hann Branch,
199 Wentworth St. W., Oshawa
905-579-6111 Ext. 5862
nadams@oshawalibrary.on.ca
www.oshawalibrary.on.ca

December 13th - 31st

Fantasy of Lights

"Christmas in Elgin Park"

Optimist Club of Uxbridge
Uxbridge
uxbridgeoptimist@gmail.com

December 14th

Pickering's Tree Lighting Festival

Esplanade Park
Pickering
www.pickering.ca/greatevents

Mike Mandel - Hypnotist

Class Act Dinner Theatre
Whitby
www.classactdinnertheatre.com

December 15th

Cookies for Christmas - Ages 9-12

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199 Wentworth St. W.
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December 15th

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December 16th - 17th

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December 29th

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koreilly@oshawalibrary.on.ca
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December 31st

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www.pickering.ca/greatevents

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January 3rd

The Twisted Ones Balloon Show

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January 4th

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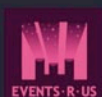
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Treat Yourself

by Stephanie Pommells

Winter Hair Help

So it's winter again and, of course, this means a different way of caring for your hair. The challenges of the summer sun and chlorine are done; now it's the blustery winds, dry air, and that forever dreaded static. This is a season of endless festivities and these few tips can help to keep your hair ready for those events.

Problem 1 - Static: When a buildup of positive charges accumulates on the hair strands they actually start to repel against each other, causing the hair to fly away. To counteract this, try using a conditioner that is lower on the pH scale. When conditioners are more acidic they help to make the cuticle of the hair lie flatter and smoother, which helps to give shine and weigh the hair down a bit. If that doesn't work, then try using a bounce sheet (yes, the ones for your dryer). Gently rub the sheet across your hair to get rid of static. Just be careful not to press too hard, as this can make the hair greasy. Another thing to try is spraying your brush or comb with static guard before you use it. Bamboo and metal brushes/combs don't contribute to the electric charges, and using an ionic ceramic blow dryer also helps to reduce the positive charges.

Problem 2 - Wind: Unfortunately, fighting against nature is a battle you can never truly win, but those tousled locks will suffer breakage if precautions are not taken to reduce the friction. No one loves hat hair, but hats and scarves are the best way to avoid the wind. Silk scarves are particularly amazing for the hair. The fibres of silk do not snag and it makes the hair smooth and silky (as an aside, the best pillowcases for hair are silk). Any material works however, just avoid too tight fits. Putting the hair up in a ponytail or up style will protect your hair from the wind thrashing. Do not leave the house with wet hair. The hair freezes and is more likely to break.

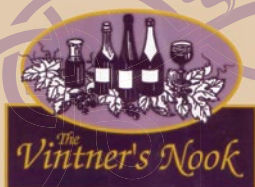
Problem 3 - Dry Hair and Scalp: Sometimes dry scalp can occur because of the seasonal change and will adjust after a couple of weeks. Sometimes it requires a little more TLC. Usually incorporating a deep conditioning treatment once a week will remedy both dry hair and scalp, but take care to not be over washing the hair. When doing a treatment, start by shampooing and conditioning the hair, apply the treatment and wrap with a plastic cap. Let it sit for 10 minutes and then rinse. Avoid using hot water in any of these steps, as this dries out the hair. Follow up with a light, leave-in conditioner. Steer clear of products that contain alcohol, instead opt for products that are water soluble and moisturizing. Dry shampoos are great as well and I highly recommend them. Fine hair can mix and match the products, considering that many hydrating products are heavy. For example, use a volume shampoo and then continue on with a moisturizing conditioner and treatment.

All other normal hair maintenance rules apply, such as trim every 8-10 weeks and, of course, avoid excessive heat styling.

Good luck and happy holidays!

Stephanie Pommells is a hair dresser and salon owner. With her artistic sense and impeccable attention to detail she enjoys working with clients to give them what they need. She enjoys writing and researching the latest techniques in order to expand her expertise.

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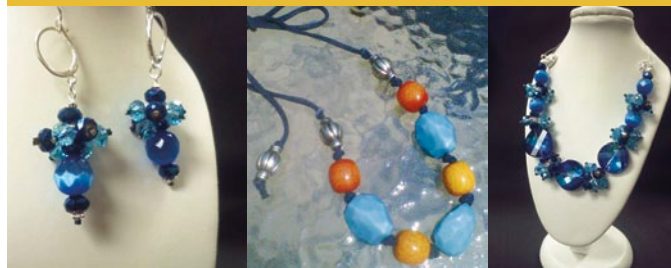
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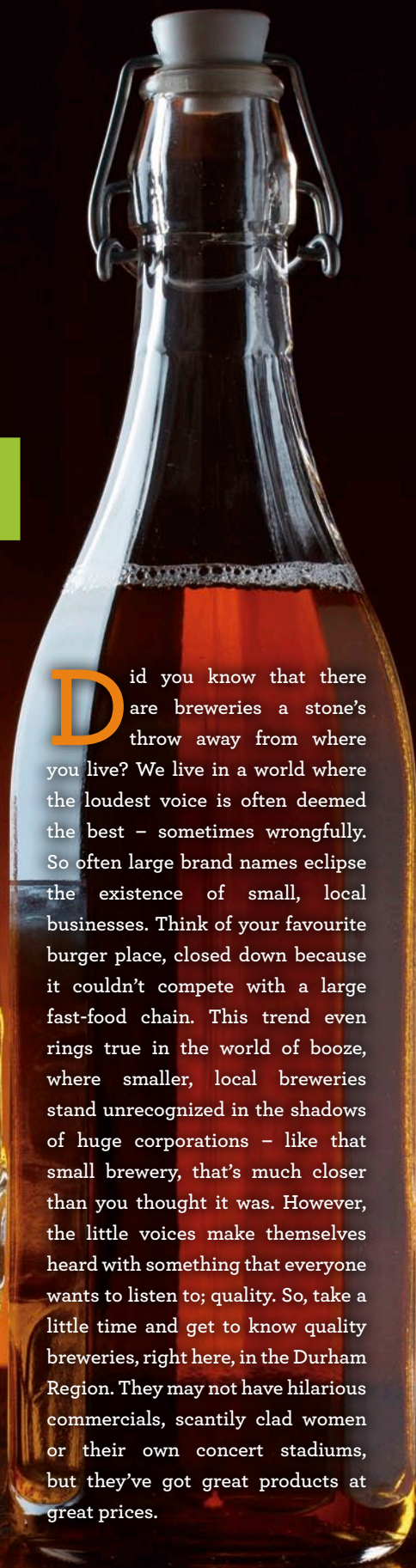
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Breweries in your Backyard

by A.J. Estridge



Did you know that there are breweries a stone's throw away from where you live? We live in a world where the loudest voice is often deemed the best – sometimes wrongfully. So often large brand names eclipse the existence of small, local businesses. Think of your favourite burger place, closed down because it couldn't compete with a large fast-food chain. This trend even rings true in the world of booze, where smaller, local breweries stand unrecognized in the shadows of huge corporations – like that small brewery, that's much closer than you thought it was. However, the little voices make themselves heard with something that everyone wants to listen to; quality. So, take a little time and get to know quality breweries, right here, in the Durham Region. They may not have hilarious commercials, scantily clad women or their own concert stadiums, but they've got great products at great prices.



The Process

As well as offering different kits and flavours, many local breweries allow you to take part in the creation of your own wines, hands-on. The Vintners Nook is one of many such locations and provides a summary of the kind of experience you can expect; After purchasing a kit, the contents will be mixed in a fermenter before your very eyes, right on location. Customers then get to add the yeast to their personal kits, which facilitates the fermentation process. After this is done, the wine must be stored, usually for around a week, in the brewery. This storage period allows the yeast time to break down the sugars in grape juice into alcohol and carbon dioxide. This initial storage is called 'primary fermentation,' and results in a layer of yeasty sediment at the bottom of your wine-to-be. The wine is separated from this sediment layer and stored for about two more weeks while the yeast finishes up the job - a period appropriately called 'secondary fermentation.' After this stage the fermentation process is officially complete and the wine is ready to be mixed with stabilizing and clarifying agents that will stop fermentation and clear it of any remaining sediment. In order to remove the carbon dioxide that results from fermentation, the wine must then be put into a degassing pump for several hours, a step which also increases the effectiveness of the clarifying process. The wine can then be stored for another two weeks to allow for further settling, or simply put straight into the filtration system, which will remove any excess sediment. Now it is time for more hands-on action, as the customer must come in and bottle their newly finished wine, a process which takes about an hour and involves not only bottling but labelling and corking.

Having a wedding? Many have wedding packages you can take advantage of, and impress your wedding guests with your own custom wines, which all have your personal label. Let's not forget the gift bottle packages, also available. Some coolers are also wine-based, and a batch can be bought, with bottles.





Other local Durham Breweries are also ready, willing, and able to help you with any and all of your wine and beer needs. These include, but are not limited to; B.Y.O.B. Spring Water Brewing, a young brewery founded in 1989 and located in southeast Oshawa, right off of Wilson Rd., south of the 401. The name is a clever twist on an old acronym, as the first “B” actually stands for “brew.” Another homegrown brewery is the County Durham Brewing Company, this time located in south-central Pickering, on Clements Rd. Founded in 1996, this particular brewery is less interactive in its approach, but every bit as serious about quality, with all of its beer being hand-brewed in small batches, using natural ingredients. County Durham Brewing Company specializes in beers, and brews fifteen different kinds in total, two of which are supplied to the LCBO and the Beer Store.

If interactive is what your looking for, the Brew Kettle, located in Ajax, boast modern facilities where you can bottle your own wine and beer. Another excellent option is Lakeview Beer and Wine in Port Perry, which is run by owner Paul Thaeter, who has seventeen years experience helping customers make wine.

Some breweries offer up to twelve different kinds of premium beers, as well as a few specialty beers. Whether you prefer ale, lager, or stout, lite, or full, bitter, or sweet, there is a beer for you. As with the wine, the process is interactive, allowing for you to take part in the brewing and packaging of your own beer. The amount of involvement is dependent on your desire, with the minimum being adding the yeast and bottling the product, as well as signing a production tag. With beers, you can have them canned or bottled, with canning being the slightly more expensive option.

The upside of brewing yourself is that you can augment the flavour of great wines, coolers, and beers with the satisfaction of knowing that you had a hand in their creation. Custom wine is a great way to bring up conversation at dinner with friends. Just think of all the impressed guests you’ll have.

A small, successful local brewery often goes up against large, well-known labels; that’s not just a brewery, it’s an inspiration. So, whether you’re aiming to make your own batch of booze, or just have a chat with the guy who did it for you, you can find what you’re looking for, right here, in Durham region.

A.J. Estridge is a freelance writer, who specializes in short fiction and poetry, as well as blogging, in his spare time. He was born downtown Toronto, has lived in Windsor, and currently resides in North Ajax. When he isn't writing, he's composing and arranging music, teaching piano, and volunteering at his local church.

Consumer Report

by Ryan Smith

Buying Vs. Renting

When it comes to life, one thing is for sure; we all know that we need a roof over our head. In most people's case they end up having to either pay rent for this roof or make mortgage payments (unless, of course, you are lucky enough to have a rich family that can offer you a place to say for FREE).

The real question you need to ask yourself is; do I really want to pay RENT for the rest of my life? As a general rule of thumb, a home makes the most financial sense if you are going to live in it for at least three, four, or preferably five years. This is when you usually start to see the most appreciation in value. When purchasing a home you need to take into consideration all the costs involved in buying and selling a home, from appraisal fees and home inspection to real estate commissions. These all play a large role in the decision to purchase or not and must be taken into consideration before buying.

One of the biggest reasons people lose money in real estate is because they did not own it long enough and they sold too quickly. This usually means within the first few years of the purchase. Some folks are lucky enough to be able to buy an under-priced home or, with a little bit of elbow grease, bring up the value. Depending on the timing of your purchase, the market may even fall after you buy your home. But keep in mind; the longer you own your property, as history has shown us, the higher the chance of an increase in value when the time comes to sell.

Real estate has proven to be one of the most stable long-term investments there is. It can provide you with one of your largest retirement securities. Overall, it is far better to own your own home than rent. Not only for the pride of ownership but because it is your only long-term hedge against inflation. With rental rates increasing constantly, there is no guarantee you will be able to afford them as the years go by.

As I always tell my clients, if you were to purchase a \$300,000 home in today's market, and for some crazy unknown reason, the market crashes twenty years from now and your home is only worth half of what you paid for it, you will still walk away with \$150,000 in equity and a roof over your head. If you were to rent for those same twenty years, at the end you probably will not have not put much away while paying someone else's mortgage. You usually walk away empty handed.

So you can see owning a home is not always right for everyone, but if you have a long term plan and you are looking for a safe investment then buying a home could be one of the smartest choices you have ever made. If you are not sure if buying a home is right for you, you should sit down with trusted professionals to help figure out if it's a good plan.

So what are you waiting for? Stop putting money in your landlords pocket and put it back into yours!

Ryan runs a real estate team serving the Durham Region. In his free time he is actively involved in many charities and community events. He is the current president of JCI Whitby and sits on number of local charity boards. When he is not selling houses he is giving back to his community.

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Teens, Tweens & Inbetween

by Samantha Burtch Whitteker

Without music, life would be a mistake.

- Friedrich Nietzsche

I agree with this quote completely! I feel like music is something I have never really talked about here, so I decided, hey, why not do that now? I once heard that music is like a legal drug, because so many people are addicted to it and I am one of those people.

Music, to me, is the most amazing thing. I listen to music non-stop. On my bus, when I do my homework, when I put away my laundry, when I write my articles; I always have music playing. Right now my favourite artists are Carly Rae Jepsen, and One Direction! I usually just listen to whatever new songs are out on the radio, but I have their songs downloaded on to my iPod, so I can hear them more frequently.

Now something I know I want to talk about is One Direction Infection. I have it and I love them so much! They are such a wonderful band and they sound so good together. Now I have a story about them, just to show how obsessed with them I am;

So, they had a concert in March 2012. I couldn't get tickets, which broke my heart but it was okay because I was going to try and get tickets for their next concert at the pre-sale in July 2013. Now I know that sounds crazy and believe me it is but I really wanted to go see them, so I woke up early with my friends and we all tried to get tickets. My friend texted me and said she got tickets and I thought I was going to die!

However she got 2, there were 3 of us wanting to go. So being the nice person I am, I gave the ticket up and said they could go. A week later the tickets went on sale to the public (you needed a code for the pre-sale, and I have my ways) so my other friend knew I was sad and was able to get tickets for me! I started crying. I am going to a One Direction concert in July 2013 and have been counting down for over a year now.

I know that is a bit wacky, but I just love them and people say by the time the concert comes I won't like them anymore but it has been over a year and I still get excited just thinking about it.

So that is my story about music and how obsessed I am with One Direction, just remember music really does make life a better place. There is literally a song for every mood you are feeling out there.

Samantha Burtch Whitteker is a 15 year old with long blonde hair and blue eyes. She loves to shop; babysit to make money to go shopping, read and write. When she can't express herself through words she writes. She loves living in Port Perry with her family.

Tasteful Talk

by Shirley Ouellette



For this Local Biz Magazine edition I wanted to continue the fall theme on preserving food, but in the context of not wasting the precious local produce you have purchased. The new worldwide trend is to strive for "Zero Waste." From a waste management standpoint this means everything that is put out for collection is either recycled or made into compost; nothing goes to landfill. Did you know that, globally, it is estimated that a third of the food produced goes to waste? This can happen during production, at retail stores, restaurants or in households. In Durham Region our food waste coupled with yard waste is made into compost, which is then offered back to the region's residents in spring, free of charge. On a global scale however, food scraps constitute around 19% of the waste dumped in landfills, where it ends up rotting, not only attracting disease but also producing methane, a greenhouse gas. As the holiday season approaches we should all strive to reduce food waste by not over purchasing, ensuring we store correctly and use every bit possible. This is easier said than done, I hear you sigh, as we pack our cupboards and fridges to the max in anticipation of seasonal gatherings and those fussy unexpected guests. Work on using up as much as possible from your fridge and freezer before purchasing your holiday fare to ensure rotation control. Many stores are open all hours so buy your fresh produce as late as possible so it will last longer. Unfortunately, a lot of grocery stores use a timed fine water spray that assault veggies, leaving them waterlogged; for maximum longevity rinse off in clean water. If they are leafy, use a salad spinner to dry then bag with paper towel, for other veggies dry with a clean cloth before storing. For veggies like cauliflower and broccoli, don't discard the stalk, either cut it into matchstick pieces and stir fry with other veggies or, if you have a dog, cook off and add to brown rice to bulk out their food. We do this with our dog using carrots, celery, cabbage and veggie stalks, add a pound of ground beef, top with crunchy kibble and you have a very happy dog, plus a cost effective food plan. Whatever you do this holiday season, enjoy and remember to buy local, Durhameers, and support our farmers. Salute!

Shirley Ouellette grew up in the far south west of England. Since living in Canada she has been actively involved in promoting the Local Food Movement. Sustainability concepts on a broad spectrum are close to her heart and she encourages everyone she comes into contact with to consciously practice sustainable living habits.

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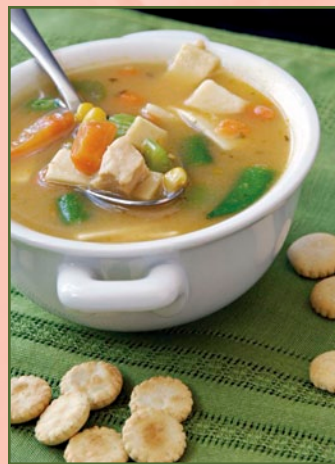
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Tasteful Recipes

by Shirley Ouellette



Turkey Stock

You will need...

Turkey Carcass
Carrots
Celery
Cooking Onions
Bay Leaves
1 tsp Peppercorns
Yep... that's it!

How it's done...

If you do not have a stock pot, use the largest pot you have. Take your turkey and pull as much meat as you can off the bones. Portion into freezer bags and drop into your freezer for a later date and use in stir fries or pasta dishes in place of chicken when you and your family will be happy to enjoy a turkey meal. Break the carcass into smaller pieces and put into the pan, add a couple chopped carrots, celery sticks and cooking onions (leave the skins on) top the pot up with water, add the bay leaves and peppercorns and bring to the boil. Turn down low and simmer for a couple of hours. Turn off the heat and let it sit, still covered. Strain your stock. If you have a dog, separate the veg and all the scraps from the bone (dogs should not eat onions) add some rice and freeze. Ladle the stock into containers and freeze. Use the stock in stir fries, curries, soups etc. and enjoy your turkey over and over. Oh by the way, did I remind you to buy local turkeys?

Did you know?

Turkey has zero carbs, is filled with good fats, vitamins and minerals. Go for it!

Wine pick for this dish?

Any dish with turkey stock works well with white wine. If we are having spicy dishes we love a Riesling/Gewürztraminer; Chardonnay is great for rich buttery dishes and Sauvignon Blanc when we add seafood. Happy Holidays Durhameers. Salute!

Taking the Lead



by Corry Hamilton

The Winter Blues

While most people think of winter as a time to hibernate, your pets still need to get out and exercise to prevent weight gain and boredom. Their fur coats allow them to withstand the bitter chill of winter and enjoy the great outdoors.

Going out snow shoeing and hiking is a great way to enjoy the winter weather. Dress in layers and put some invisible boots on your dogs and they are good to go. Of course, keep walks shorter if the weather is extremely cold. Playing snow games with brightly coloured toys can keep your pet focused on having fun and you might even forget how cold it is outside.

Setting up play dates with friends and neighbours holds you accountable for getting outside and staying active. You get to have some great conversation and exercise and your dogs get that valuable social interaction with their buddies.

If you are more of the indoor type, there are still plenty of activities to keep your pet active. Indoor games such as hide and seek, chasing laser pointers or even blowing bubbles can be hours of fun for the entire family. Nothing makes me laugh more than watching a dog or cat try to catch a light or a bubble.


Interactive puzzle toys that dispense food and treats can be a wonderful way to prevent boredom, especially if they are home alone for long periods of time.

Agility classes for your more active dogs can be a fantastic way for you to bond with your dog as well as burn off tons of energy; and you get to stay warm and dry.

Finally, look at volunteering; visiting local hospitals or nursing homes with your pets can be a wonderful way to cheer up someone. Your dogs will love all the attention and the treats. You may need to have a behaviour assessment completed as well as have their shots up to date, but it is well worth the effort.


There are so many ways to stay active this winter that I'm sure you'll find something that fits into your lifestyle and keeps those winter blues at bay.

We loved the name of Corry's business, so much, we decided to name her column Taking the Lead. Corry's furry family is full of special needs animals and when she isn't planning her next great international adventure, you can find her curled up with a book, snapping pictures or taking a nap with her cats. Corry would love to hear from you. You can contact her at info@takingthelead.ca



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Merry Christmas

from Shari, Terri, Arlene, Alannah, Linda,
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Wishing you and yours a safe and happy holiday season





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SEASONS GREETINGS

*from Mari-Ann Britt
and Debbie*



Mari-Ann Britt, DD

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Ask Sue-Ann

by Sue-Ann Bavlnka



Dear Sue-Ann:

I am a forty-eight year old woman with a great career and I have never been married. The right relationship just never showed up for me. I have worked hard and acquired material wealth and security. Now I am wondering if I ever really wanted a relationship at all and have come to realize that I never made it my top priority. Time for a relationship just seemed to have slipped away from me. I am not getting any younger though, and want to know... will I ever end up in a relationship?

Loveless in Bomanville

You are not alone. I have met many women like you in my work that have chosen a career over love. There are those women who have high paying careers and those who prefer to be available for a home cooked meal. Those are two completely different types of women...never or very rarely are those traits found in the same woman. Love presents itself when it is time and it comes in many ways. If you are taking the time to consider it, then it is time. I would suggest you consider what love would need to look like to you. How much of a commitment are you willing to make at this juncture of your life? Is it casual dating, or are you looking for a life partner? Considering that is a journey on its own. When you decide, then the next step is to decide how you would like to meet this person. We live in different times now and online dating is coming to the forefront as a way to meet someone special. Please consider all your options before venturing into that area, it absolutely has its pros and cons and needs to be done with eyes wide open. Picking up an old hobby or passion would absolutely assist in finding someone with similar interests. Truly considering what you want from the relationship is the key and the Divine will put that in your path.

Dear Sue-Ann:

I have been on a journey with my faith for the past several years. I was not born into a family that was religious but found as I got older I started to question life and my journey took me into addressing faith in God and what it meant to me. The journey has been confusing and I have not yet found my way. I am feeling lost. Any suggestions?

Looking for Faith

I believe that when we come into the human condition we agree to worship within this God system as it has been set up. Within that system there are many ways to worship but in the end you are really looking for your relationship between you and your God. I have found it very effective to go and sit inside a church when others are not there. Sit in silence and have a conversation with God or just sit and listen to what comes up from within. When you listen to your inner voice from the heart you will find your way into your journey with God. Each and every one of us worships and honours in our own way. Being mentored into your journey is a wonderful way to grow into faith and within every religious community there are those who are willing to do that. Your journey is a personal one, but I know from experience that all prayers are answered. I suggest you consider sending up a prayer asking for clarity and the people and places to be put in front of you to assist you with this journey. Keep eyes wide open and follow your heart and what you need will appear in your path.

Blessings,
Sue-Ann

Sue-Ann is a mother of 3 and resides in the Oshawa area. She chooses to utilize her undeniable psychic ability to assist you in resolving all of life's issues. You may see her on Divine Lane, Rogers Durham Cable 10, Tuesday's at 9pm. You can find out more and forward your submissions to Sue-Ann at www.divinelane.com

Are You Crazy?

That was my first reaction, a few weeks back, to an email my oldest son sent out to the family. The content of his email wanted to know who was interested in signing up for a sky diving day he was planning.

Up until this time, my only reaction to the thought of sky diving was limited to 'those people are crazy,' followed by 'why would anyone in their right mind jump out of a perfectly good airplane.'

My mind was made up. There was no way I would be part of this.

As the day got closer, my son sent out a follow-up email to update his numbers. Along with this second email he proceeded to attach a YouTube video showing an eighty year lady celebrating her birthday by sky diving. One small detail, however; the jump had gone terribly wrong. This certainly helped to solidify my decision. I would record the day's event from the ground.

Four days before the big day, the list of jumpers was now up to nine, including my four children, my wife, sister in law, my daughter-in-law, her dad and his sister. Perfect, more subjects to occupy my time taking pictures.

However, something amazing happened two days before the big event.

As I was meditating in the morning, a verse from the Bible popped into my head that I could not shake. The verse comes from 2 Timothy 1:7. It says this; God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind.

Well this got me thinking if God didn't give me fear why am I living with it? What he is giving me is far greater; power, love and a sound mind. Wow three great attributes in exchange for one that is totally unwanted. Well, as I absorbed what that meant, I pondered the idea of putting sky diving on my bucket list. Prior to this it was not even remotely close to being on my list.

I proudly called my son to add me the list. He laugh at me, knowing my prior stance, he was convinced I was pulling his leg. The day came and it wasn't until signing what seem like a five hundred page document, watching a video on the dangers of sky diving and putting on my orange jump suit did anyone in the family believe I was seriously going to do this. I was totally at peace as I kept reflecting on that verse.

I can now tell you that jumping out of a perfectly good plane at 13,000 feet is awesome. Skydiving has now been crossed off my new bucket list.

What a rush. Let me encourage you that you also have been given this awesome gift, three great attributes in exchange for one you don't need, if you choose to believe it.



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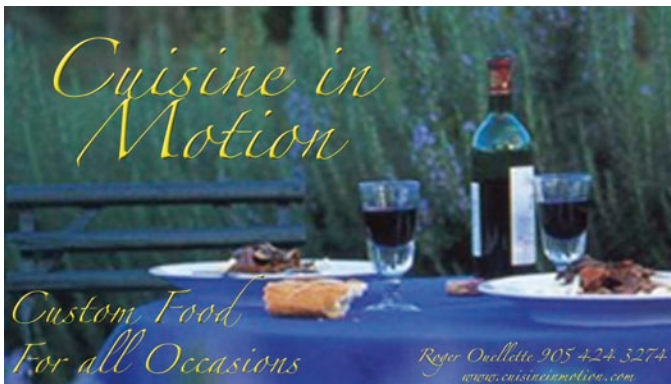
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Horoscope (December 2012 - February 2013)

by Noanie Beregi

Aquarius (Jan. 21st – Feb. 19th)

Transformation comes to mind for Aquarians in the next few months. You are in the process of self-discovery and self-knowledge through the ups and downs of life's rhythms. This has ignited a desire to learn more about yourself, and as you discover more you will be transformed physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Pisces (Feb. 20th – March 20th)

Break-through or realization at a very deep level will occur in the next months that will lead to changes in your life. The break-through is in relation to creativity, insight, or perception; it is a shift in your way of looking at the world. This shift will give you new direction and an utter sense of peace.

Aries (March 21st – April 20th)

Emotional abundance is over flowing deep inside your heart. It's time to communicate those feelings to three of the most important people in your life. You feel good about yourself and you have come a great distance with self-discovery and self-love and it's time for those feelings of appreciation and love to flow.

Taurus (April 21st – May 20th)

You are on a steep learning curve of spiritual growth. You now have the courage to explore new ideas and take risks in spiritual exploration. You recognize the stirring of spiritual energy, and you are drawn to experience Kundalini energy. With your inventiveness and originality will come mental clarity.

Gemini (May 21st – June 21st)

Good fortune comes your way in the next few months. You have mastered some possessiveness and feelings of jealousy and there is now an ability to love deeply in a loyal, committed way, but with detachment and non-judgement.

Cancer (June 21st – July 21st)

You have committed to burn out any negativity, blocks, obstacles or obstructions that have held you back from reaching your full potential. These energy blockages will exit in the next few months leaving you feeling lighter and more comfortable in your own skin.

Leo (July 22nd – Aug. 22nd)

Your year will end on a high note, as your gains are on all levels- mentally, emotionally, physically, financially, and spiritually, and these gains follow you into the New Year.

Virgo (Aug. 23rd – Sept. 22nd)

New beginnings are in the cards for Virgo, the birth of ideas, projects, identity and aspects of oneself and, if inclined, the issues of motherhood or fatherhood and pregnancy may be present.

Libra (Sept. 23rd – Oct. 22nd)

The idea that you cannot solve a problem on the same level that it was created comes to mind. This is a time of great mental expansion, and you have widened your awareness and ways of thinking. By looking at a situation differently you can find an agreeable answer. The best possible end result is a win/win situation for all.

Scorpio (Oct. 23rd – Nov. 21st)

You are feeling secure, satisfied, and comfortable, and your greatest gift at this time is a sense of wellbeing. Let the holidays help you share your good fortune and inner peace by entertaining all those that touch your heart at this time. People are attracted to you because you have a great ability to make others feel good. What we put out comes back, so enjoy the abundance of love that will return.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22nd – Dec. 21st)

In the next few months you have a strong desire to express emotional passion fervently. Until you put yourself out there, you will not know where you stand. Take that deep desire to spread passion to all aspects of your life; your relationships, your home, your family, and your job; make life worth living.

Capricorn (Dec. 22nd – Jan. 20th)

You have been in a place of limbo for some time. Your determination to break through this stuck place is now become the focus of your awareness. In the next three months the changes that you make in daily routines and behaviours will resolve these feelings of stagnation and clarity will appear.

I was born and raised in the country with aspirations to change the world. I promised my mother I would become Prime Minister someday; she is still holding me to it. Until elected, I enjoy helping people make healthy changes they wish to make in their own lives with the use of hypnosis, nutrition, and Reiki healing. www.earthgirlcentre.com

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