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THE Orléans Star

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This is just one of the houses on Taffy Lane in Orléans that attracts hundreds of Christmas display enthusiasts to the small street every year. See story on page 17. FRED SHERWIN/PHOTO

2025 budget approved with 3.9% tax hike

By Fred Sherwin
The Orléans Star

Ottawa city council passed the final operating and capital budgets for 2025 last week, which included a 3.9 per cent tax increase and a five per cent increase in transit fares for OC Transpo and O-Train users.

More than one quarter of the tax increase, or one per cent, is accounted for as a direct result of an eight per cent hike in the transit levy.

For the owner of an average home with a market value assessment of \$415,000, a 3.9 per cent tax increase will equate to an additional \$168 on the municipal portion of property tax bill. The amount could be higher or lower depending on the market value assessment of your home. Keep in mind that your tax bill also includes a school board levy which is set by the province.

In practical terms, the five per cent increase in transit fares will see an adult monthly pass jump from \$128.75 to \$135. Passes for youth age 13-17 will increase from \$99.25 to \$104.

One proposed change to transit fares was ultimately rejected by city council. Thanks to a motion put forward by Beacon Hill-Cyrville councillor Tim Tierney, OC Transpo passes for seniors will remain at \$49 until Feb. 1 when they will rise to \$58.25. The City had been considering a 120 per cent increase.

User fees and facility rentals will also go up by five per cent in the new year.

The 2025 capital budget includes funding for a number of projects in the east end.

In Orléans East-Cumberland a number of roads will be resurfaced including Taylor Creek Drive, Mathieu Way in Fallingbrook, and Cameron

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 ►



*Merry Christmas
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City to invest more money in parks and roads in Orléans

Continued from page 3

Street in Cumberland Village where the signalization at the intersection of Cameron and Hwy. 174 will also be improved.

Funding has also been approved for improvements to the Cumberland Heritage Village Museum and the Ray Friel Recreation Complex, as well as a new pathway at the Apollo Crater Park in Fallingbrook and a speed enforcement camera on Valin Street.

Elsewhere in the east end, residents in Orléans South-Navan will see the following in 2025:

- \$4 million for the detailed design of the Brian Coburn Extension/Renaud Road realignment;
- \$8.1 million in funding for Transit Priority and High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes on Innes Road;
- \$575,000 for the renewal of the township bridge on Wilhaven Road;
- Funding for a roundabout at Navan and Milton Roads;
- New signals at Innes/Lamarche and advance design work for the Mer Bleue/Copperhead/Decoeur intersection;

Meanwhile, residents in Orléans West-Innes Ward can expect the following in 2025:

- \$1.8 million for improvements to the Bob MacQuarrie Recreation Complex;
- \$175,000 for an accessible washroom in the Orléans Library;
- \$26,000 for replacement of the Bearbrook Park pool washroom;
- Funding for rink pad renewals at both Bearbrook Park and Barrington Park;
- Replacement of the play equipment at the south end of Father Richard Ward Park;
- Replacement of the outdoor rink boards, and renewal of the asphalt rink pad at Jeanne d'Arc Park;
- Road renewal on Northpark Road from Bearbrook to Ridgeburn Gate); Notre Dame Street from St. Joseph to Orléans Blvd.; Gaultois Avenue from Boyer to Notre Dame; Loire Drive from Boyer to Gaultois; Richer Drive from Notre Dame to Leblanc; Cholette Circle from Dusserre East to Dusserre West; and Dusserre Street from St. Joseph to Cholette.

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2024 marked by wildfires, a total eclipse and the Summer Olympics

By Fred Sherwin
The Orléans Star

While 2024 will forever be remembered as the year of the first total eclipse to pass over Canada since 1979, it will also be remembered for the devastating wildfires in

**2024:
The
year in
review**

Western Canada and intense rain storms in both Toronto and Montreal, and the ongoing Canada Post strike.

Here in Ottawa, 2024 will also be remembered as the year the LRT expansion moved one step closer to becoming a reality.

Thankfully, 2024 was also an Olympic year with the Summer Olympics in Paris providing the perfect mid-summer distraction from reality. Unfortunately, Canada was also responsible for the biggest scandal of the Olympics when the Canadian female soccer team got caught using a drone to spy on the team from New Zealand resulting in three coaches being banned from the sport for three years and sent home, including head coach Bev Priestman.

Mercifully, the scandal was overshadow-

ed by the performance of Canada's athletes who won nine gold, seven silver and 11 bronze medals, with the highlight being the gold medal won by Canada's 4x100 men's relay team.

The Summer Olympics also provided the stage for 16-year-old swimmer Summer McIntosh to become Canada's latest sporting sweetheart when she won four individual medals, including three gold.

The only thing that could have surpassed Canada's performance at the Olympics in the hearts of Canadians would have been a Stanley Cup win by the Edmonton Oilers who came back from a 3-0 deficit in the final series against the Florida Panthers to force a Game 7, only to come out on the losing end of 2-1 score, breaking the hearts of millions of Canadian hockey fans in the process.

But the biggest event by far of 2024, by far, was the total solar eclipse which took place on April 8. Totality could be seen along a wide swath of Ontario which ran from Niagara Falls across Lake Ontario and along the St. Lawrence River into Quebec, which had people flocking to every small town along the St. Lawrence Seaway from Kingston to Cornwall. In Ottawa, there was 95 per cent totality.



The March 14 edition of the *Orléans Star* featured a story on Fallingbrook resident Janet Hart who took more than a year to complete a 40,340 piece Disney puzzle, left, and in June, Michelle Treacy returned to her alma mater at St. Clare Catholic School to speak to students there after making it to Hollywood Week of American Idol. FILE PHOTOS

Closer to home, 2024 was marked by a two-week LCBO strike in the middle of July and the news that there are hundreds of unexploded bombs buried in the Mer Bleue bog that are left over from the Second

World War when it was used as a practice bombing range.

The biggest story in Orléans in the past year was the news of Orléans East-Blue bog that are left over from the Second

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20 ►

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2024

“What can be said about the year we’ve just been through? I’ve been contemplating this editorial for several weeks now trying to come up with some positive pearls from the past 12 months, but I’m hard pressed to find any except for the fact that it’s over.

There is nothing positive to say about a year that began with the ongoing war in Ukraine and will end with the continuing military action in Gaza that has so far resulted in the deaths of over 12,000 people including more than 6,000 children.

2023 began with Canada and much of the western world sliding into a recession. By February we were already in one.

The pandemic years were already tough enough on small businesses, but at least there were government programs available to keep most of them afloat. 2022 was supposed to be a bounce-back year, but lingering supply chain issues caused by the pandemic and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine resulted in runaway inflation which brought any expectations of rebound year crashing to the ground. Still, most small businesses were just happy to be open again even if sales weren’t what they had hoped.”

Those were the opening four paragraphs of my year-ending editorial in 2023. Sadly, they can just as easily be used as my opening four paragraphs to describe the last 12 months, except the death toll in Gaza is now over 44,000, including more than 18,000 children according to the UN Human Rights Office.

Oh, yes. And the year that was also included the re-election of a two-time impeached, misogynistic, racist, narcissistic, convicted felon as the next president of the United States and supposed leader of the free world. Could things possibly have been any worse?

Justin Trudeau is still our Prime Minister. Doug Ford is still the premier of Ontario. And we somehow keep marching on. Unfortunately, a number of businesses declared bankruptcy in 2024, including the Upper Room furniture store and a handful of restaurants and with them, a number of people lost their jobs and the ability to provide for their families in a way they had been accustomed to.

Of course, there were some positives in 2024 – the performance of our athletes at the Summer Olympics and paralympics in Paris, the Edmonton Oilers almost winning the Stanley Cup and Paramount+ finally released the fifth season of “Yellowstone” after a nearly two-year wait.

I enter every new year with the hope that things will get better than the previous year. What can I say, I’m an eternal optimist. In fact, I still make New Year’s resolutions I know I will never be able to keep.

What lies ahead in 2025 is anybody’s guess. The hope is that the recession will end soon, people will start spending their money and all will be right with the world. You and I can help turn that hope into a reality by supporting local businesses here in Orléans. Not just during the holiday season but over the coming months as well. Make it your New Year’s resolution and let’s both keep it this time.

– Fred Sherwin, publisher

THE
Orléans Star

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Improving primary care at Orléans Health Hub a welcome step forward

Ontario’s healthcare system is at a breaking point. Across the province, more than one in four people – up to 4.1 million – do not have access to their own family doctor. CHEO just reported the longest ER wait times in Ontario and here in Orléans, 15,329 residents are struggling without a family physician. This isn’t just a statistic, it’s a reality that affects the well-being of our families, friends, and neighbors.



**Queen’s
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Corner**

Stephen Blais

What’s more, the situation is poised to worsen. In the next five years, 2,336 physicians—serving more than 3 million Ontarians are expected to retire. This crisis didn’t happen overnight, and it won’t be solved without immediate action and meaningful investments.

That’s why I am fighting to ensure our healthcare system delivers what Ontarians need: accessible, timely, and patient-focused care, close to home. Our plan will address the challenges head-on by training, attracting, and retaining 3,100 new family doctors by 2029. These family doctors will be supported by modernized practices that connect patients to care close to home, available during evenings and week-ends, and fully integrated with home care and mental health services.

We’re not stopping there. To build a foundation

for the future, we’ll create two new medical schools and double the number of residencies to train the next generation of family doctors. We’ll also ensure that healthcare finally steps into the 21st century by modernizing medical records, improving specialist referrals, and, yes, ending the reliance on outdated fax machines.

For patients, this means fewer hurdles and more choices. We will eliminate penalties for those who need to use walk-in clinics, ensuring care is there when it’s needed most.

Here in Orléans, I’m encouraged by the Montfort Hospital’s new audacious strategic plan released in November 2024. The #1 point in the new plan – Primary Care services in Orléans at the Aline-Chrétien Health Hub – and I am committed to seeing this project succeed. Montfort’s commitment to world-class healthcare aligns with the priorities of our community.

Health care is a right, not a privilege. Ontario can no longer afford to under-invest in the lifeline of our communities. It’s time to fix the system – ensuring that no one in Orléans, or anywhere in Ontario, is left behind. Together, we can rebuild a healthcare system that works for everyone.

Let’s get this done.

Presenting the 32nd annual Fredzee Awards

Welcome to the 32nd edition of the annual Fredzee awards. This is where I get to name some of year's biggest winners and losers and hand out a few awards.

When I came up with the first Fredzee Awards 32 years ago, I did so to avoid having to write a real column. I figured, "How difficult could it be?"

Turns out, in the years when there's been a lot going on, it almost writes itself. Unfortunately, 2024 has not been one of those years. In fact, aside from the solar eclipse and the election south of the border, it's been a pretty boring year, especially here in Canada, and particularly here in Ottawa.

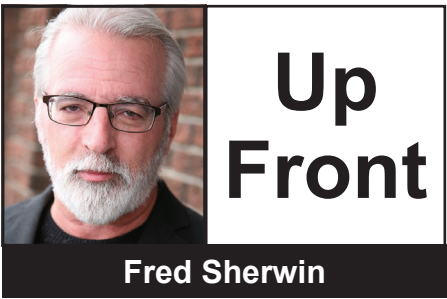
So it was a Herculean effort to come up with this year's selections but here they are... the 2024 Fredzee Awards. Please hold your applause until the end.

Biggest Winners of 2024

- 1) Elon Musk. After hitching his wagon to Donald Trump's re-election campaign, the richest man in the world is now one of the most powerful men in the world.
- 2) Cryptocurrency investors. Since Trump's re-election, cryptocurrency stock has soared to dizzying heights with Bitcoin leading the way.

The Biggest Losers of 2024

Anyone who believes in common decency and the notion that good will always triumph over evil. Trump's re-election has destroyed once and for any thought that America is still a shining beacon of exceptionalism.



Biggest Local Stories of 2024

- 1) The solar eclipse on April 8. The event of the year had everyone who was anyone running out to buy special viewing glasses to watch the eclipse, including 90 per cent of the population of Orléans.
- 2) In February, two victims of convicted sex offender and former St. Matthew High School teacher Rick Despatie launched a \$220 million class action lawsuit against Despatie and the Ottawa Catholic School Board for aggressively down-playing, diminishing and discounting" multiple complaints brought against Despatie between Jan. 1, 1989, and Apr. 30, 2022.
- 3) In July, Orléans East-Cumberland city councilor Matt Luloff withdrew his name as a candidate for the Conservative Party in the next federal election after being charged with impaired driving. He immediately contested the charge which is still before the courts.

Saddest Stories of 2024

- 1) "Johnny Hockey" Gaudreau and his

brother Matthew are killed by an alleged drunk driver on Aug. 29 in New Jersey. The former Calgary Flame and his brother were out cycling when the accident happened – a day before they were supposed to attend their sister's wedding.

- 2) Wildfires destroy nearly half of the buildings in Jasper, Alberta and devastated more than 33,000-hectares of trees in Jasper National Park.

Newsmaker of the Year

Summer McIntosh – The Canadian swimmer became a household name at the Summer Olympics in Paris where she won three individual gold medals and a silver, becoming the first Canadian athlete to accomplish that feat at an Olympic Games.

The Sign Me Up Award

To the Florida-based cruise company that started marketing a four-year "skip forward" cruise immediately after the U.S. election.

The Cat of the Year Award

To Beans – a ginger and white cat – who went missing in late October after leaving its home near Glasgow, Scotland and was found weeks later in Coventry, Scotland more than 300 miles from home.

The One-Upmanship Award

To the emperor penguin that was found in Australia after traveling more than 2,000 miles from Antarctica where it had been tagged by researchers.

The Things That Make You Go Hmmm Award

To the 28-year-old South Korean dude who was caught trying to smuggle 320 tarantulas and 110 centipedes out of Peru by strapping them to his body.

The WTF Award

To cryptocurrency entrepreneur Justin Sun who bought an art piece consisting of a single banana duct-taped to a white wall for \$6.2 million at auction and then proceeded to eat it. You can't make this stuff up, folks.

Dumbest Idea of the Year Award + The Worst PR Move of the Year Award

To the union leadership at PSAC who thought it was a good idea to ask their members to boycott downtown businesses after Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe criticized the decision to allow federal employees to work from home two or three days a week.

Cheesiest Story of the Year Award

To the 63-year-old man who was arrested and charged for stealing more than 48,000 lbs of artisanal cheddar cheese worth approx. \$389,000.

A Special Place in Heaven

To Donald Sutherland, Kris Kristofferson, James Earl Jones, Willie Mays, Pete Rose, Fernando Valenzuela, Quincy Jones, Teri Garr, Dr. Ruth Westheimer, and Richard Lewis, to name just a few of the celebrities who passed away in 2024.

Season's Greetings!

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City councillors need to play a bigger role in shaping the budget

Now that the budget has passed, I want to speak up about a trend I am seeing in budget negotiations at all levels of government: using wedge issues and outrageous first proposals to manage expectations. I raised this issue at Council as well.

The practice of putting non-starter and dramatic changes in the draft budget in order to whip the public into a frenzy as a tactic to turn a comparatively moderate change into a political win is dishonest, disrespectful and unnecessary.

For example: Raising seniors bus pass process by 120 per cent and removing free ride days should have been a non-starter.

City staff know when something they are proposing is controversial. You only get one chance at a first impression, and in that sense, this budget was a flop. "Look how much worse it could have been," is so disingenuous.

Councillors, in consultation with you, are here to help guide decisions. We should not merely be the last line of defence when bad ideas make their way into a public

document. The drama is unnecessary and debases our offices while reducing what little confidence Ottawans still have in us.

Policy on the fly is not a good way to govern and pretending to consult is disingenuous.

I often get asked: who runs this city? Sometimes I wonder this, too, and that's not a great sign is it?

By the time staff present a budget or a report, the range of options have been narrowed to such a point that we argue at the margins. All of us around the city council table come from a broad variety of experience and expertise. Every single one of us has insight and ideas that can help shape policy and budgets before it hits the council table.

Council should not be used as a simple checkbox on the path to approving a budget that does not reflect what you have asked for. You chose us to make decisions and pays city staff to provide advice and implement decisions made by council.

You deserve better and I am pushing for it.



Matt Luloff

Orléans East-Cumberland

Budget 2025 advances Ward 19 transportation infrastructure

The City's 2025 budget has been approved, and I'm pleased to report meaningful progress for Orléans South-Navan.

Last year, I was very critical of the transportation budget, which fell short for the east end, and I demanded better. This year's budget reflects a noticeable improvement, with more growth-related transportation funding this year than in the past six budgets combined!

The 2025 budget reflects this shift, securing \$4 million for the detailed design of the Brian Coburn Extension/Renaud Road Realignment and \$8.1 million in funding for High Occupancy Vehicle lanes on Innes Road.

Road safety is also a priority in this budget, with funding for a roundabout at Navan and Milton, new signals at Innes/Lamarche, and advancing design work for the Mer Bleue/Copperhead/Decoeur intersection.

These investments lay the groundwork for better infrastructure to support our rapidly growing community. However, I'm not letting my foot off the gas. Many of these projects are in the design phase, meaning extra

capacity in our network is not immediate. As someone who hears daily about the frustrations of navigating our growing ward, I understand the urgency and I will continue to advocate for increased investments through the Transportation Master Plan.

Additionally, the list of road renewal projects in 2025 includes both Birch-

grove and Sarsfield Roads. Our parks and recreational facilities are also benefiting. The Navan pavilion project is advancing, supported by \$236k from the City, while plans for the district park expansion at François Dupuis Recreation Centre and a cricket pitch at Millennium Park continue.

City-wide we are making important investments in transit, policing, paramedics, affordable housing and other essential services.

I'm grateful for the collaboration of Mayor Sutcliffe and my council colleagues, and for all of your valuable feedback that helped inform this budget.

Wishing you a very happy holiday and cheers to a New Year! Wishing you a very happy holiday and cheers to a New Year!



Catherine Kitts

Orléans South-Navan

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Caring community answers the call yet again

By Jody Maffett
The Orléans Star

Orléans residents have proven once again that they are among the most giving people in Canada, as they have opened their hearts and wallets to help the less fortunate members of our community this holiday season.

The season of giving started with Santa's Parade of Lights where parade-goers filled the firefighters' boots and used the *Tap the Boot* app to donate more than \$22,000, which has already been used to buy thousands of toys for children whose families are facing financial hardship.

Although Orléans residents have always been generous in the past, parade organizer Bob Rainboth was blown away by both the sheer number of people who came out to see the parade and the money and toys they donated.

Ottawa's firefighters were at it once again on Saturday, Dec 7, when they held their annual Firefighters Food Drive at area grocery stores in support of the Orléans-Cumberland food bank.

The firefighters collected more than 26,500 food items and over \$14,500 in monetary donations which will go a long

way to meet the demand not only over the holiday season, but well into the New Year.

Orléans residents and business owners have also donated several thousand dollars in support of the Orléans-Cumberland Community Resource Centre's Christmas program which will be used to support more than 400 families.

While Christmas is only a few days away, the OCCRC is still encouraging members of the community to donate to the program and the food bank by visiting their website at www.crcoc.com.

This past Sunday, more than 200 people dropped by Taproom 260 to support the Christmas Angels program and help raise more than \$10,000 in the process. The money will be used to purchase gift cards for children who are being treated for severe illnesses such as cancer.

Last, but by no means least, Saltwater Santas Tony Sullivam and Bob Presland had already collected more than \$15,000 in donations from visitors to Sullivan's Christmas light display on Sugar Creek Way with two more weeks left to go.

The money raised will be distributed to various charities in Ottawa and Orléans over the coming weeks.



(Top) Firefighters, volunteers and staff at the Orléans-Cumberland Community Resource Centre all pitched in to make this year's Firefighters Food Drive another huge success. (Right) Sobeys Trim & Innes owner Dereck Sawh pitches in to help firefighters. FRED SHERWIN PHOTOS



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Former Colonel By student realizes dream of playing Division1 baseball

Special of the Orléans Star

After suffering a significant arm injury in the summer of 2023, Ottawa teen Sam McKay, a right-handed pitcher, resolved to build a new physical frame and adopt a more intense frame of mind. He has now achieved his goal of playing NCAA Division 1 baseball in the United States.

McKay was one of the youngest of the 140 baseball players from across Canada who were selected to play at the Blue Jays Futures Showcase in 2022. However, the next season he suffered a shoulder injury that set him back on his development journey.

“I was unhappy with how I was performing, so from the summer of 2023 to the 2024 season, I

worked to elevate my game,” McKay explains.

“I played with the Toronto Mets in the Canadian Premier Baseball League and worked to improve my mechanics. I became more ambitious and focused on being more college-ready.”

A product of the Ottawa-Nepean Canadians baseball program, McKay managed to bulk up to 205 lbs on his 6-foot-3 frame during his final year at Colonel By and increased the velocity of his fastball to 90 mph which put him back on the radar of U.S. college baseball.

Working with his coaches at the Toronto Mets, McKay reached out to his number one choice for a college team, Canisius University. He called Golden Griffs head

coach Matt Mazurek, visited the campus in Buffalo, New York, and ultimately committed to play at the school next year.

McKay credits the amazing support from his coaches at the Toronto Mets, the openness of Coach Mazurek, and the support of his parents in giving him the opportunity to succeed.

By signing with Canisius, McKay will soon realize his dream to play Division 1 baseball.

“I’ve wanted to do it since I was a kid,” McKay says. “I was always someone that wanted to play at the next level. When I got up to U15 and went to a Prep Baseball event I saw I was someone that can get to the highest level. I want to play as long as I can.”



Sam McKay signs his commitment papers to play at the Canisius University next year. PHOTO SUPPLIED

With his first dream about to become a reality, McKay is still a long way from daring to dream about one day playing in the Major Leagues.

But as McKay has already found out, sometimes dreams can become a reality.

*Happy holidays!
Joyeuses fêtes!*

MATTHEW LULOFF
Orléans East-Cumberland
Orléans-Est-Cumberland

LAURA DUDAS
Orléans West-Innes
Orléans-Ouest-Innes

TIM TIERNEY
Beacon Hill-
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An illustration of a blue Waste Connections garbage truck with the company logo on its side. Next to the truck is a cartoon Santa Claus in a red suit, holding a red bag and waving.

Outstanding youth recognized at special ceremony



13 of this year's Orléans Outstanding Youth Award recipients proudly stand with their trophies following this year's award ceremony at École secondaire Béatrice-Desloges on Dec. 8. FRED SHERWIN PHOTO

By Fred Sherwin
The Orléans Star

Twenty young people from across Orléans and the surrounding area were honoured for their accomplishments in 2023 and 2024 during a special ceremony at École secondaire catholique Béatrice-Desloges on December 8.

The Orléans Outstanding Youth Awards were first established in 2006 as a way to recognize the outstanding achievements of local youth.

Twelve of the 20 recipients were in attendance, as were nearly 100 family and friends, the award sponsors and local VIPs.

The presentations were punctuated with

performances by Julianna Labelle, 9, and Mila Lomatski, 14, from Sing House Studios in Orléans, two dance routines performed by students from the Cumbrae School of Dance and an Improv comedy demonstration by the Cairine Wilson Secondary School Improv team.

Unlike other awards which have various categories, the Orléans Outstanding Youth Awards have no categories. Instead, they recognize youth who are outstanding in a number of areas including academics, athletics, community service and personal character.

This year's recipients are:

- Sami Mufti, 14, St. Matthew HS
- Laetitia AbouAssali, 17, St. Matthew HS
- Daniella Ihezor, 18, St. Matthew HS
- Lona Kandil, 17, St. Matthew HS
- John Izioman, 13, École secondaire publique Gisèle-Lalonde
- May Element, 16, Cairine Wilson SS
- Asif Rahman, 17, Sir Wilfrid Laurier SS
- Mekhi Simpson Falcao, 17, Cairine Wilson SS
- Stephen Blais Jr., 16, St. Peter HS
- Aanreen Reza, 17, St. Peter HS
- Anna Feltmate, 16, St. Peter HS
- Anthony Nguyen, 18, St. Peter HS
- Zoé Cliche, 17, École secondaire catholique Garneau

- Lara Prud'homme, 18, École secondaire catholique Garneau
- Cedric Prud'homme, 18, École secondaire catholique Garneau
- Sophia Mrak, 18, Ashbury College
- Kai Haché, 20, La Consortium Centre Jules-Léger
- Corina Carballo Maduro, 18, École secondaire publique Gisèle-Lalonde

For the first time ever, a pair of twins were among the award recipients. Lara and Cedric Prud'homme received their award for achieving on overall average mark of 96.17 and 95.85 percent respectively in their final year at École secondaire catholique Garneau while balancing their challenging academic schedule with other activities at the school and tutoring other students

This year's awards would not have been possible without the support of presenting sponsors Collège La Cité, Collège Boréal and Université St-Paul; Platinum sponsor Richcraft Homes; Gold sponsors M.L. Bradley and Sobeys Trim & Innes, as well as the various individual award sponsors.

The accomplishments of each recipient will be published in the *Orléans Star* over the coming weeks. You can also see them at sponsors.orleansonline.ca/pages/OYA_recipients_2024.

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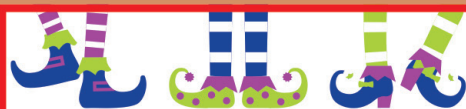
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Take a tour of Orléans’ best and brightest light displays

By Fred Sherwin
The Orléans Star

Orléans has always had a reputation for having some of the best, most brightly decorated houses in Ottawa largely due to the residents of one street in particular – Taffy Lane. The small street in Convent Glen North has become a mecca for fans of exterior residential Christmas display enthusiasts for more than 40 years.

One of the most brightly decorated houses on the street belongs to Peter Abercrombie, who is one of the four original residents who bought houses on the street in 1977.

The home is easily identifiable by the eight-foot wooden cutout of Frosty the Snowman carrying a candy cane in the front yard and a second cutout showing the Grinch tying a horn on the head of his faithful dog.

One of the things you will notice about the Abercrombie’s front yard Christmas display is that he doesn’t use a lot of inflatables. Instead, he relies on wooden cutouts and motion lighting to create a captivating experience that has stood the test of time.

The best way to enjoy the light displays on Taffy Lane is to leave your car on Sugar Creek Way and proceed to the street on foot.

It should take you anywhere from 30 to 40 minutes to stroll down the street and return to your vehicle.

After driving or walking down Taffy Lane, turn left on to Sugar Creek Way where you will find the home of Tony and Jocelyne Sullivan who, along with family friend Bob Presland, decorate their house every year to raise money for local charities. Last year, visitors to their display donated more than \$18,000.

When you eventually get back into your car, take Orléans Blvd. south to Lumberman Way on the other side of the Hwy. 174 overpass. Turn left on to Lumberman Way and then right on to Grey Nuns Drive.

Follow Grey Nuns to Fieldstone Crescent where you will see two brightly lit residences – one at 1678 Grey Nuns Drive and the other just on the corner at 1692 Fieldstone.

From there, find your way back to St. Joseph Blvd. and turn left. Drive two blocks eastbound and turn left again onto Dussere Street across from the St. Hubert.

Dussere runs into Cholette Crescent where you will find the Giroux residence at 1143 Cholette Cres. on the left. There is another nicely decorated house beside it at 1135 Cholette Cres.



This is just one of the many brightly decorated houses on Taffy Lane in Convent Glen North. STAR PHOTO

From Cholette, take Dussere back to St. Joseph Blvd., then take a right and drive back to Orléans Blvd. where you will turn right again as if you’re heading back to Taffy Lane. You can also stop at the Tim Horton’s St. Joseph and Orléans Blvd. for a hot chocolate before continue north to Jeanne d’Arc Blvd.

Once you get to Jeanne d’Arc Blvd.,

turn right and head east until you come to Lawnsberry Crescent. Turn right on Lawnsberry and then right again on Pintail Terrace which will take you to the Albert residence where the father and son team of Brian and Patrick Albert have combined more than 40 inflatable figures with over 20,000 lights.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19 ▶



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Take advantage of 48 years of watch and clock repair expertise



Vantage Jewellers owner and master repairman Gamal Mansour stands outside his St. Joseph Blvd. location. FRED SHERWIN PHOTO

By Fred Sherwin
The Orléans Star

When it comes to repairing timepieces – whether they be a family heirloom or a watch you might have received as a graduation present or retirement gift – you can never undervalue experience.

Vantage Jeweler owner and master repairman Gamal Mansour, has been repairing watches and clocks for more than 45 years.

He learned his craft while working for his father back in his native Egypt. When his father died suddenly in 1988, Mansour took over the business at just 29 years of age.

He immigrated to Canada in 2001 in search of a better life for himself and his young family. He and his wife chose to settle in Ottawa, or more specifically Orléans, which they’ve called home for the last 20 years.

After arriving in Canada, Mansour got a job repairing watches at Eaton’s, where he remained for five years. He later worked for a high-end watch company in Ottawa until one day he slipped on some ice and broke his femur.

Although he spent a month in the hospital and wasn’t able to work for nearly a year, the accident turned out to be blessing in disguise and completely changed the course of Mansour’s life. Because the company he had been working for had their office on the second floor, his injury prevented him from walking up the stairs.

With few options to choose from, Mansour decided to open his own watch repair business on St. Joseph Boulevard.

“It was nothing at the time, just an empty space,” explains Mansour. “I had to do all the work, making the walls and the ceiling, and I only had three showcases for the jewellery.”

The first year wasn’t easy. He didn’t have much of a budget to advertise and he didn’t have any sort of customer base. Instead, he built the business one client at a time.

What Mansour was lacking in these other areas he made for with an unparalleled work ethic. (He worked six days a week for the better part of seven years until his grandson was born last spring. Since then he’s cut down to five days a week.) He also had a wealth of experience and the desire to make sure his clients were 100 per cent satisfied – Mansour offers a one-year warranty on all his repairs, but it’s rarely ever needed.

“This is the most important thing. We don’t send anything out to get repaired by someone else. I do all the work so the buck stops with me,” says Mansour. “I am responsible and I stand behind everything I do. If you have a problem I am here.”

Because of Mansour’s focus on customer service – along with competitive prices – the business has grown leaps and bounds, largely through repeat customers and referrals.

Mansour specializes in repairing older watches, including family heirlooms, but he can repair any make or model of watch or clock, usually in just a few days. He can also resize jewellery and he carries a complete line of watch batteries.

If you have a watch, clock or jewellery in need of repair, then your first and last stop should be to Vantage Jewellers located at 2866 St. Joseph Blvd., beside the Service Ontario office. They are open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. from Tuesday to Saturday (closed Sunday and Monday) and there is always a free parking space in front of the store.

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Take a tour of Orléans’ best and brightest light displays

Continued from page 17

The Albert house is also a popular destination during Hallowe'en.

From Pintail, get back on to Jeanne d’Arc Blvd. and turn right to get to Tenth Line Road where you will turn right again and head south to Charlemagne Blvd. Turn left on to Charlemagne and left again on to Princess Louise Drive where you will find a nice beautiful display at 475 Princess Louise.

Continue along Princess Louise until you get to Montcrest Drive where you will turn left and proceed to Cheverny Crescent. Turn right on to Cheverny and then left on to Brissac Way where you will find another wonderfully decorated house.

From Cheverny, I recommend making your way to Trim Road and heading south to the village of Navan, where you can

see the newest addition to our list at the Zintel residence on Henn Drive. Trust me, it’s well worth the 10-minute drive from Orléans and you will see a number of nicely decorated houses on Trim Road along the way.

Other houses that are worth checking out if you have the time are at 1646 Trim Road between Watters and Portobello, and 412

Larkhaven Cres. in Queenswood Heights. So pack the kids in the car. Fill the thermos up with hot chocolate and take the kids on a magical Christmas light tour. Who knows? It may just become a family tradition. And if you see any other nicely decorated houses during your travels, please pass them along with a picture and we’ll be sure to include them next year.



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Presenting the 2024 Outstanding Youth Award recipients

Mekhi Simpson Falcao, 17

Mekhi Simpson Falcao is a Grade 12 student at Cairine Wilson Secondary School where last year he was able to maintain a 94.4 per cent average while taking on a leadership role in a myriad of ways including: tutoring other students, being a member of the student council, the Tech Crew, the Improv team and various school clubs. He also helped organize a series of coffee houses. He has won the Drama Award for top student three years in a row (including last year), and he received 99% in Grade 11 Applied Chemistry.

This fall, Mekhi began tutoring students in the Grade 11 chemistry class and dedicates his spare period each day to support students in their learning. To be clear, that's over six hours per week volunteering. He also tutors others in math outside of school. He is a leading member of the Cairine Wilson's math and science clubs as well. To top it all off, Mekhi practises acts of kindness everyday. He is beloved in drama class as he constantly praises his peers and looks out for their well-being. Last June, he wrote, directed and performed in scenes as part of a Drama Collective with residents from the Bruyère Home, showcasing their stories and building deep connections with our elderly neighbours. Overall, Mekhi defines the best of what it means to be a leader with his myriad of talents and huge heart. For taking on a leadership role at his school in mentoring others and for balancing his activities in drama and the arts with his academics at such a high level, Mekhi Simpson Falcao was selected as a recipient of the 2024 Orléans Outstanding Youth Awards.





May Element, 16

May Element is a Grade 11 student at Cairine Wilson Secondary School where she is a well-respected leader in the drama program and in the school as a whole. She was an integral member of the school's Improv Team that placed third in the city championships last year and ninth at nationals. In November 2023, May delivered an outstanding performance in the Carine Wilson student production of the Hannah Moscovitch play, "Where Poppies Blow" in which she played a Canadian mother during WWI. Her performance earned her top honours at the STAR Festival last December.

In the spring, May was part of a group that interviewed residents at the Bruyère Home and wrote plays based on their lives. Her relationship with the women she interviewed continues to this day as she began a weekly knitting program with them this fall. May also lead her team to a first place result at Regional Poetry in Voice recitation last spring and she was the sole reciter to be invited to perform at the National Poetry in Voice Competition. In April, May joined a group of leadership students to plan and execute an arts night at their school. Not only did she perform her award winning poem and wow the crowd with her hilarious Improv skills, she also organized the vendors selling raffle tickets, food and drinks. Finally, May was a leader on Cairine Wilson's student council, planning spirit weeks and dances. For her activities and leadership in the dramatic arts while maintaining an excellent academic standing, May Element was selected as a recipient of the 2024 Orléans Outstanding Youth Awards..



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2024 marked by wildfires, a total eclipse and the Summer Olympics

Continued from page 3

Cumberland city councillor Matt Luloff being charged with impaired driving in July, causing him to relinquish his nomination to run for the Conservative Party in Orléans in the next federal election and focus on contesting the charges which are still before the court.

In other legal news, former St. Matthew High School teacher Rick Despatie and the Ottawa Catholic School Board were slapped with a pair of \$220 million class action law-suit launched by two victims of the disgraced former teacher who was found guilty of four counts each of sexual assault and sexual interference, two counts of criminal harassment, and one count of sexual exploitation in September 2024.

The Ottawa Catholic School Board was named in the suit for “aggressively down-playing, diminishing and discounting” multiple complaints brought against the disgraced former teacher between Jan. 1, 1989, and Apr. 30, 2022.

But there were several good news stories in Orléans in 2024 as well, starting with two announcements of projects that many people thought would never happen.

The first was the announcement that the City of Ottawa and the NCC had reached an agreement to extend Brian Coburn Blvd. west of Navan Road to Renaud Road which would allow the city to close the current Renaud Road at the Prescott-Russell Trail so that it would no longer act as a bypass through Bradley Estates.

The other long-awaited announcement was the news of a three-year phased plan for the province to take back responsibility for maintaining the 174 from the split to the city limit with Prescott-Russell.

During the three-year period, the province has agreed to spend up to \$3 million a year for maintenance costs and provide a capped capital contribution up to a maximum of \$47 million. At the end of the three-year period, the province will assess the situation to decide if they will takeover responsibility for the 174 on a permanent basis.

A third unexpected announcement was the news earlier this month that the Montfort Hospital plans to open a clinic at the Orléans Health Hub by 2028 for residents who don’t have a family doctor.

An estimated 12,000 residents in Orléans are currently without a family doctor, including 2,758 children. Most ending up going to the Orléans Urgent Care Clinic on Place d’Orléans Drive or a hospital emergency room, which bogs down the health care system for emergency situations.

In other news in 2024, the planned roundabout at Jeanne d’Arc Blvd. and Fortune Drive raised the ire of local residents who believe it will put local children going to and from the nearby Convent Glen Catholic School in danger. But city officials explaining that the roundabout was necessary for buses ropping passengers off at the future Jeanne d’Arc LRT station, said that every precaution would be taken to keep pedestrians safe.



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Ring in the New Year at Caravela Restaurante on Innes Rd.

STAR STAFF – Can't afford to go down south this holiday season? Then take a culinary trip to Portugal by visiting Caravela Restaurante on Innes Road, where you can enjoy the very best in Portuguese cuisine.

When owner Fernando Diniz first opened the restaurant in December 2016, his goal was to bring a "Taste of Portugal" to food lovers in Orléans.

Born and raised on the island of Terceira in the Azores archipelago, Diniz put together a menu that is heavy on seafood dishes native to the Portuguese islands, mixed with favourites from the mainland like Piri-Piri Chicken, Alcatra Pot Roast and Braised Rabbit. He also hired his friend Henrique Sousa, who worked at the popular El Meson restaurant in the 90s, to act as maître d' and chief sommelier.

The response from local diners continues to be overwhelming, and for good reason – the food is plentiful and delicious.

Whether you order traditional dishes like the Cataplana, which is a type of seafood stew native to the Algarve region, or the Bacalhau, which is oven roasted cod served with potatoes and caramelized onions and

peppers, you cannot go wrong.

Other house specialties include Seafood Rice, Shrimp and Scallops and Grilled Octopus.

Fernando's Platter, which is a mix of lobster, tiger shrimp, clams and 20 mussel served with rice is another very popular item on the menu.

For starters, you can try the traditional Canja chicken soup, the Seafood Chowder, or the Cod Cakes. Other appetizers include flambéed Chorizo and Grilled Shrimp served in a delicious tomato based sauce.

Most of the items on the menu can be ordered either spicy, medium spice, medium light, or with no heat at all.

And no meal at Caravela is complete without dessert and coffee. Choose from Fernando's Cake, Rico's Cake, Crème Brûlée, or the Portuguese Custard Tarts

If you still haven't made plans for New Year's Eve, then you should consider spending it at Caravela where they are taking reservations for seatings at 5 p.m. and 8 p.m.

The *à la carte* menu includes the Soup of the Day, Chef's Salad with Shrimp Cakes and your choice of either the Oven-baked



Caravela owner Fernando Diniz is looking forward to welcoming guests to his restaurant this New Year's Eve. FILE PHOTO

Cod, Shrimps and Scallops, Fernando's

Platter, Lamb Shank, Seafood Pasta with Salmon, Alcatra Pot Roast, or Seabass. It also includes dessert, coffee or tea, and a glass of champagne. The cost is \$120 per

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Fernando's Platter, Cataplana,
Alcatra Pot Roast, Sea Bass,
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Excessive cardio is often seen as the go-to strategy for weight loss, but this approach has limitations. The new year often brings new fitness goals, and for many, that means lacing up their running shoes and hitting the treadmill. But here's the truth: cardio alone isn't the golden ticket to lasting weight loss. Forget endless hours of cardio—combining strength training, nutrition, mindset, and accountability is essential to delivering long lasting results. At 180°Fitness, I like to say our clients don't just lose weight; they **transform their lives**.



Adrian Delorey

Why Cardio Falls Short:

While cardio burns calories, it's only part of the equation. Studies show that your body adapts to repetitive activities like running or cycling, reducing their effectiveness over time. As efficiency increases, calorie burn decreases. Plus, excessive cardio without strength training can lead to muscle loss, slowing your metabolism and hindering long-term weight loss. According to Dr. Eric Helms, author of "The Muscle and Strength Training Pyramids", incorporating resistance training is essential. He recommends moderate weights and 10-20 sets per muscle group weekly to preserve muscle and enhance fat loss.

Real Clients. Real Results.

Take Sarah, a busy mom who tried running to shed postpartum weight. "I'd spend hours on the treadmill, but I wasn't seeing the results I wanted," she says. After joining 180Fitness, Sarah embraced bootcamp style resistance training. "Not only did I lose 25 pounds, but I also feel stronger and more energized."

Then there's James, who plateaued after losing 20 pounds through cardio. "I didn't think lifting weights was for me," he admits. "But 180°Fitness showed me how to combine strength training elements along with HIIT and now I'm down 45 pounds and finally see definition."

The Secret Sauce: Variety and Accountability

It's important to remember that exercise alone cannot outpace poor dietary habits. At 180°Fitness, we tailor programs to keep your body guessing and your motivation high. Add our nutrition guidance and mindset coaching, and you'll see why so many clients say: "This program changed my life."

Ready to revamp your fitness routine? Join our **New Year's Resolution Revolution Challenge** this January! Sign up now at 180fitness.ca and transform your health with expert guidance and a supportive community. Don't just wish for change—make it happen. Your best self is waiting.

2024 was a busy year in local sports

By Fred Sherwin
The Orléans Star

For a lot of local athletes, 2024 was an amazing year they will never forget, starting with the members of the 2023-2024 Navan Grads which won the first Central Canada Hockey League Junior A championship in franchise history.

In fact, it was the first time the team had made it past the semi-finals.

But the Navan Grads weren't the only team that reached the pinnacle of success in 2024. The boys' hockey teams from Collège catholique Mer-Bleue and École secondaire publique Louis Riel both won their respective divisions at the francophone provincial high school championships in April.

Les Loups de Mer-Bleue won the AAA championship and the Louis-Riel Rebelles won the Quad-A title.

Elsewhere, the St. Peter Knights varsity girls rugby team won the 2023-2024 Tier 1 city high school championship and the U14 Cumberland Panthers football team won the Ontario Summer Football League title.

The Cumberland Panthers Football Club's success carried into the fall season when the U12, U14 and U16 teams were a perfect 3-0 in the National Capital Amateur Football Association A-Cup championships.

Last but by no means least, the Louis-Riel had one of the most successful weeks any east end school has had in recent memory in November when they won three high school titles in three different sports over four days, including the senior boy's AA volleyball championship, the senior girls AA basketball championship and the junior boys Tier 1 soccer title.

Two of the top individual athletic performances of the year were delivered less than 24 hours apart at the National Capital high

school track and field championships in June by Zachary Jeggo from École secondaire Louis-Riel and Tansei Tan from École secondaire catholique Béatrice-Desloges.

Both young men smashed records that have stood for over 25 years.

Tan set a new meet record in the junior boys 300-metre hurdles that had been held for the past 28 years by former St. Matthew High School student Matt Stenson. He also set a meet record in the 100-metre hurdles.

Jeggo, meanwhile, set a new meet record in the senior boys 400-metre hurdles that had been held for 38 years by Philip Hughes from Earl of March, and he bettered it by nearly half of second.

What's even more impressive is that Jeggo was competing in his first year at the senior level which includes athletes in both Grade 11 and Grade 12. Hughes was in Grade 13, which was still in place back then, when he set his mark, meaning he was two years older than Jeggo.

The Louis-Riel run then went on to win double gold in the senior boys 400-metres and 400-metre hurdles at the OFSAA provincial championships later that same month and a gold medal in the U18, 400-metre hurdles at the National Youth Championships in July.

He also won both a silver and bronze medal at the Canadian U20 championships in late June competing as a 17-year-old.

In other sports, Navan skip Dominique Vivier lead her team to the U18 provincial curling championship, 13-year-old Samantha Couture won a silver medal competing on beam at an international gymnastics event in Germany, and golfer Isaiah Ibit, 17, continued to shine on the links, winning two tournaments including the Ontario Junior Boys Spring Classic.

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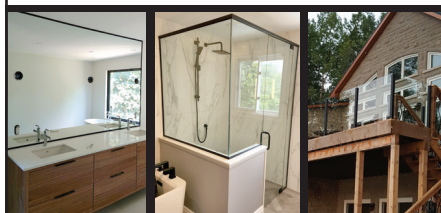
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