

Independent Shorts

- The St. Marys Social Tennis Club's third annual Fall Singles Classic is slated for Saturday, Sept. 19. Male and female adult players of all skill levels are invited to play in this fun, double-elimination tournament, which includes prizes, camaraderie and (friendly) competition. The tourney begins at 9:00 am, and a barbecue lunch is included in the \$20 registration fee. Members are asked to check their email for a discount code! For more information or to register, visit stmarystennis.ca or call the club at 519-280-1240.
- Ever wondered what it would be like to instantly, at the click of a button, be teleported to a random location in the world? You can do that now (on-line), by visiting the website RandomStreetView.com. Alternatively, GeoGuessr.com does the same thing, but makes a game out of it, as you can try and guess where in the world you have just been dropped by walking around Street View and looking for clues. The closer your guess is to the actual location, the more points you get.
- The 13th annual Taking Steps Against Breast Cancer walk to support breast cancer research takes place at Milt Dunnell Field in St. Marys on Saturday, Sept. 26. Register online at TakingSteps.ca. All participants that raise \$200 or more online will be entered into a draw to win a Fitbit wristband. A breakfast fundraiser gets underway at the Creamery at 8:00 am, while registration begins at 9:00 am at the Flats.

BUSINESS OF THE WEEK

Stonetown Travel Ltd.



Pictured are, from left, Stonetown Travel Ltd. travel consultants Jocelyn Hinz, owner Louise Bell, Darcy Wheal, Darlene Dundas and Steph Hodgson.

Our Business of the Week is Stonetown Travel Ltd., your local travel destination experts, located at 150 Queen Street in St. Marys and owned by travel consultant Louise Bell. The agency has been in operation in St. Marys since 1988 and open at its current location for about 20 years. Bell became owner in 2009. Each of the travel consultants working at Stonetown Travel have undergone training and are registered with the Travel Industry Council of Ontario (TICO). Bell said that the speed

of the business has changed a lot since they first opened their doors 27 years ago. "Before, it was a lot of phone calls to the suppliers to get the information, and then relaying it by phone or in some sort of paper form to the clients," she said. "It's much faster to get information nowadays." But even though the internet is home to hundreds of thousands of travel sites, Bell said coming to a travel consultant is still a worthwhile experience for would-be travellers. "You don't know the quality of those travel

sites, whether they're reputable or not," she said. "And with the number of them out there, it can be overwhelming to people. Pictures can look wonderful, but travel consultants have training. They have knowledge; they've been to a lot of destinations and sent clients to destinations and had feedback. So, we're much more aware of what's good and what isn't." Travel consultants can use their firsthand knowledge of the destinations and their face-to-face conversations with travelers to "find exactly what's appropriate for the client," she said.

even if it looks appealing from something they've seen on the internet. We make sure the experience is really what the customer is looking for." After the trip is booked, a travel consultant's job is not done yet, as they can notify travellers of any changes to their itinerary and, "If there's an issue after they get to their destination, we're just an email or text away," she said. "We can contact the hotel or supplier on their behalf and deal with any issues that do come up." Bell said that Cuba and the Dominican Republic are, year after year, the most popular destinations for St. Marys-area travellers. "Then, people are looking for other experiences because they've done Dominican Republic and Cuba a lot, so they're going to other destinations, they're doing Panama and Costa Rica, St. Martin, St. Lucia, and some of the other islands as well," she said. "There are lots of deals into the Caribbean at this time of year, because it's the off-season, but it's also hurricane season, so you have to be aware of that when you book something at this time of year." Stonetown Travel is open from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday to Friday, and beginning in October through to the end of March, will also be open Saturday mornings from 9:00 am to noon. Reach them by phone, at 519-284-2332, or email at agent@stonetowntravel.com. Find them online at StonetownTravel.com.

"We factor in everything: whether they're beach people or pool people, if they're going to a southern destination, for example," she said. "There might be things they're interested in doing on their vacation that you can't do at a certain that destination -

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