

Independent Shorts

Ontario's Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week runs from November 1-7, and the St. Marys Fire Department reminds you to prevent carbon monoxide (CO) in your home by getting all fuel-burning appliances inspected annually and installing CO alarms. CO is known as the silent killer because it is an invisible, tasteless and odourless gas that can be deadly. CO is produced when fuels such as propane, gasoline, natural gas, heating oil or wood do not burn completely in fuel-burning appliances and devices such as furnaces, gas or wood fireplaces, hot water heaters, stoves, barbeques, portable fuel-burning heaters and generators and vehicles. You should also install CO alarms in your home if you have a fuel-burning appliance, a fireplace or an attached garage. Fuel-burning appliances can include furnaces, hot water heaters, gas or wood fireplaces, portable fuel-burning heaters and generators, barbeques, stoves and vehicles.

The Town of St. Marys is holding another "Coffee with Council" on Saturday, Oct. 29. It is a drop-in event running where residents can share a cup of coffee with their councillors and discuss municipal matters in a casual setting. The event will take place in Town Hall Council Chambers, and attendees are welcome to drop in anytime between 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. via the Queen Street front steps or Memorial Park elevator. The theme is "Looking back and moving ahead." There will be displays about the past year and 2017's major projects and budget plans.

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Business of the Week Partners in Employment St. Marys

By Dan Rankin

Our Business of the Week is Partners in Employment St. Marys, the local office of a not-for-profit organization (located at 26 Wellington Street in St. Marys) offering services throughout Huron and Perth counties to people who are looking for employment and employers who are looking for employees.

"In Perth County we have offices in Listowel, Stratford and St. Marys," said Executive Director Deb Hotchkiss, who has been with the organization for over 20 years. "This resource centre is mainly supported by Employment Ontario, which has services throughout the province."

An example of the types of services offered by Partners in Employment would be the help they're offering workers affected by the closure of the Heinz plant, she said. "We're helping some individuals get resumes prepared so that, when the closure happens on Nov. 30, they'll be ready to go into other employment opportunities in the area," said Hotchkiss. A smart place to bring resumes next week is the Stratford Rotary Complex, where a huge job fair will be taking place on Tuesday, Nov. 1 from noon to 5:00 pm. Partners in Employment is involved with organizing the job fair, Hotchkiss said.

"There are over 30 employers that have already registered," she said, adding that registration remained open until yesterday afternoon. "It's automotive, manufacturing,

retail, service, health – it totally runs the gamut; a full range of employers who are looking."

According to a press release about the job fair, about 500 jobs will be immediately available in Stratford and area. Some of the employers set to be present at the jobs fair included, in the field of administrative, sales and service: Heart and Stroke, Sears, Samsonite Canada and Tim Hortons; in manufacturing and trades: Shepherd Gourmet Dairy and Hayashi Canada; and, in health and social service: Family Services Perth Huron, Stratford Children's Services, Spruce Lodge, Hillside Manor.

"Perth County is experiencing a labour force shortage," Hotchkiss said. "We have more jobs than we have people. We're trying to look at it as a countywide initiative to try and recruit people to come and live and work in this area."

Part of that initiative was the creation of OpportunityLivesHere.ca. "If you go on that website, you can see lots of things about why it's good to live and work in Perth County," she said.

For the past few years there has been a definite downturn in the number of people in the area looking for work, Hotchkiss said. Consequently, there are more 'Help wanted' and 'hiring' signs up in businesses around St. Marys than there have been in years.

"We are concerned," she said. "For the job fair next



week we're trying to encourage buses to come from areas that have a high unemployment rate. Right now, we're working with Toronto in the Scarborough area, Niagara Falls, we're trying to get a bus that would come from Goderich and pick up in Clinton and Exeter along the way. We're also trying to have a property management company at the job fair to tell people about available apartments for rent in the area, because we need to get people in to fill these jobs."

Free bus rides are available to job seekers in the area, and interested attendees can reserve a spot by calling the Stratford Partners in Employment Office at 519-272-1946.

While the area has a low unemployment rate overall, there are programs in place to address the high local youth unemployment rate, Hotchkiss said. "The government is offering lots of services for young people to get skilled up so that they enter the work force," she said. "We have a number of programs. A lot of them happen in Strat-

ford, but we offer transportation to the St. Marys youth to get to Stratford to participate."

Right down the hall from the resource centre, there's also the Adult Learning Centre of Perth, which offers opportunities for people to upgrade their skills, Hotchkiss said. "If they don't have their Grade 12, they can work at getting their General Equivalency Diploma (G.E.D.)," she said. "Right now, the Adult Learning Centre for Perth is offering some specialized computer courses for people from Heinz. They're offering them after the traditional work hours and on Saturdays so that the Heinz employees can participate and gain those skills."

Anyone interested in these services is free to drop in during business hours, Hotchkiss said, "but making an appointment is probably the best idea to make sure there is the right staff to assist people at the time."

The phone number for the St. Marys office is 519-284-0112. Hotchkiss can be reached at 519-272-1946 ex. 1223.

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