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Wednesday, Dec. 27, 2023

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PHOTO BY GAIL SJUBERG

JAZZED: Feeling great about the disbursement of \$1,800 for school music programs raised by the Newman Fund are Gulf Islands Secondary School musicians, members of the Newman family – Sue Newman, Patrice Bowler and Bruce Eason – School District 64 music teachers Michelle Footz, Heidi Cameron and Brandon Bronson, Salt Spring Jazz and Blues Society members Monik Nordine and Bob Delion, and GISS alumnus Atom Lazare, whose quintet played at a fall Newman Fund fundraising event at the Legion with Newman and Nordine.

GOVERNANCE

NSSWD seeks rate-saving path

District requests act change to make borrowing more affordable

BY GAIL SJUBERG
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

The North Salt Spring Waterworks District (NSSWD) is requesting a change to B.C.'s Local Government Act (LGA) that would reduce the cost of borrowing for its water treatment plants.

NSSWD chief administrative officer Mark Boysen sent a letter to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs (MMA) on Dec. 22 asking for an amendment to Section 711 of the LGA that would allow the NSSWD to access provincial lending rates, rather than relying on private bank financing, for a potential savings of \$4.5 million.

"With access to provincial lending rates, NSSWD ratepayers would realize savings of nearly \$2.5 million in loan interest charges for the Maxwell [water treatment plant]," Boysen states in the letter to Tanja Faganello, assistant deputy minister of the MMA Local Government Division. "If these preferred rates were also applied to our existing financing for the St. Mary Lake plant, there is a potential ratepayer savings of \$2 million in additional loan interest charges, resulting in a \$4.5 million total savings to our residents."

At present, only improvement districts that provide fire protection or street lighting are eligible for the preferential interest rates. The NSSWD is requesting that criteria be changed

to include "improvement districts that provide essential domestic and emergency water supply to communities."

Costs for the new Maxwell Lake treatment plant, which the province has mandated NSSWD to build by the end of 2025 due to health issues arising from the current treatment method, have come in at more than \$10 million, said Boysen. NSSWD ratepayers have already seen significant tax increases to pay for the St. Mary Lake treatment plant that was completed in 2018.

Trustees considered requesting the LGA change at their Dec. 14 meeting, following a staff report. NSSWD financial officer Tammy Lannan noted the change would shift tax-collection responsibilities from the district to the province, with the implications not yet clear. Despite some unanswered questions, trustees agreed the letter should be sent to Faganello, and especially since they said local MLA Adam Olsen has indicated support for the move.

"I don't think this is an unreasonable request for the district, and it's a question of fairness to our ratepayers as well," said Boysen. "I think we have a really strong point here to make to the province and a benefit for our ratepayers."

The NSSWD has tried on more than one occasion without success to be granted an exemption from provincial government rules that bar

improvement districts of any size from applying for federal-provincial government infrastructure grants.

Also at the Dec. 14 meeting, trustees agreed to provide a commercial water connection for domestic purposes only, that does not exceed one-inch internal diameter, for the new fire hall at 455 Lower Ganges Rd., which makes it an exception to the current water hook-up moratorium. As explained in a letter to the NSSWD from fire district CAO Rodney Dieleman, a domestic well and rainwater capture system will provide supplementary water supply to the facility.

Trustee elections for 2024 were also discussed. NSSWD will again use a combination of mail-in ballots and in-person voting. May 2 is the date set for voting and the annual general meeting.

Also included in the process this year will be an online information session for people interested in trustee positions scheduled for Wednesday, Jan. 24 at 7 p.m. Trustees and staff agreed that if that opportunity does not arouse much interest then another session could be set up. The additional outreach followed a discussion at a previous meeting where some trustees felt it important for potential candidates to have as much information as possible about the position before declaring their candidacy.

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ISLANDS TRUST

Spike in Trust harbour complaints bursts budget

Bylaw enforcement challenged

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

An extraordinary surge in complaints about possible bylaw infractions in Ganges Harbour has sent Islands Trust staff out to investigate in record numbers — and in excess of budget, according to enforcement officials, who say they are spending “hundreds and hundreds” of dollars each hour out on the water in response.

Appearing remotely before Salt Spring Island’s Local Trust Committee (LTC) for a regular report Thursday, Dec. 14, bylaw compliance and enforcement manager Warren Dingman noted multiple complaints about potential non-permitted uses in Ganges Harbour — 11 of them, he said, just since his last report. Those complaints included “liveaboards, the rental of mooring buoys, and the presence of floats and other non-permitted structures in the Shoreline 8 (S8)

Zone,” according to the document prepared Dec. 5.

“That is a high number of complaints for any file,” said Dingman. “In fact, it’s quite out of the ordinary.”

Speaking last week at the Islands Trust Executive Committee, chair Peter Luckham said he had received some communication concerning the harbour on Salt Spring as well.

“The liveaboard situation, and issues associated along the shoreline and Ganges village area, certainly are ongoing concerns as we experience this social crisis associated with housing,” said Luckham Wednesday, Dec. 20. “It’s not unique, but it’s certainly problematic in our small communities.”

According to Dingman’s briefing, bylaw staff are documenting non-permitted mooring buoys and Transport Canada is doing some enforcement in the harbour regarding those not in compliance with federal marking regulations; he said his understanding was that they had engaged contractors to remove them.

“I know some have raised con-

cerns about if we’re going to do any enforcement around the buoys, it will affect the liveaboards,” said Dingman. “That’s not what we’re doing at this time. If there’s a live-aboard vessel attached to a non-permitted mooring buoy, we’re not going to proceed on that.”

“Water taxis get expensive; we’re spending hundreds and hundreds of dollars per hour just to be out there, and we’ve gone over our current budget for travel this year . . .”

WARREN DINGMAN
Islands Trust bylaw compliance and enforcement manager

Dingman pointed to the LTC’s existing deferred enforcement

policy for non-permitted dwellings, which extends to people making their homes afloat.

“The fact of the matter is we don’t have the resources to do that kind of enforcement, or even investigation, on the liveaboards in the harbour,” said Dingman. “There’s such a large number.”

During that briefing, trustee Jamie Harris asked if Dingman could estimate how much money he would need to “do enforcement on the water.” Dingman said he hadn’t worked out a budget, but that it would realistically be a six-figure number.

“We don’t have a vessel we can use, we have to hire water taxis,” said Dingman. “Water taxis get expensive; we’re spending hundreds and hundreds of dollars per hour just to be out there, and we’ve gone over our current budget for travel this year — not just Salt Spring, but on multiple islands, we’ve had to hire water taxis and investigate uses out on the water.”

Trustee Laura Patrick expressed frustration about the cost, noting

the problem of enforcement on the water had been one of the reasons the Islands Trust Council had asked the B.C. government to review the funding model.

“I think if the expectation is that we’re supposed to be out there on the water and doing this, then how are we going to pay for it?” said Patrick.

Harris had earlier asked staff for an update on “the CASHI deal,” referring to proposed liveaboard regulations brought this spring to the LTC by a resident-led group called the Clean and Safe Harbours Initiative. In June, the LTC had asked staff to review CASHI’s proposed bylaw and “report back” at a future meeting.

Since the proposal is neither an application nor a project, staff said, its priority continues to be low — and will likely stay that way unless LTC directs otherwise, according to planner Chris Hutton, who reported they were “catching up” on their existing development application load but were still working on several major projects.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Pender connector road set for repair

February start planned at Canal Road

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

A damaged section of roadway on South Pender Island that has languished since the heavy rain and flooding in November of 2021 is finally set to be fixed after the new year, according to the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI).

In fact, according to MoTI officials, the repair work on Canal Road — including clearing, rock blasting and offloading the existing slide and roadway, realigning the road onto solid bedrock and placing a new larger culvert and reinforced retaining wall — is expected to improve the critical connection road’s resilience in “future extreme rain events.”

Crews are expected to begin in February 2024, according to MoTI, and a tender for the repair project has been posted. A temporary barge landing facility will be constructed at Boundary Passage Drive to transport equipment and materials.


After the 2021 floods, MoTI said it installed a number of

safety measures in and around the roadway, including slope deformation monitors that track earth movement and load restrictions. The single-lane-alternating traffic, with timed signals at each end of the site, will remain in effect during the project — and could disrupt drivers further, according to officials, as there may be a need to close the road “intermittently” for as much as four hours at a time.


“All efforts will be made to minimize traffic disruptions during peak travel times,” according to a ministry press release. “Advance notice of traffic disruptions will be provided via DriveBC.”

Crews will continue to monitor deformations and perform any necessary maintenance while the repairs are ongoing, according to MoTI.

The damaged section of road is roughly 2.5 kilometres east of Pender Canal Bridge, the link between North Pender Island and South Pender Island. MoTI officials said additional federal environmental permitting was secured due to the project’s proximity to the Gulf Islands National Park Reserve, and that revegetation and mitigation measures will be in place following construction.




Riley Kelly and Brook Speed collect brood stock for the hatchery.



Arlo, Emmett and Wiley Orser release Coho salmon fry.

ISLAND STREAM & SALMON ENHANCEMENT ASSOCIATION

are very pleased to thank all who contributed to the upgrade of the Cusheon Creek Hatchery: The Salt Spring Island Foundation, The Ling Weston bequest, Goldstream and Fanny Bay Salmon Enhancement Societies, the O’Donnell family, Rolf Hildred, Clint Anderson, Miller Roofing, Nancy Wigen, Brook Speed, Brian Pharis, Miller Plumbing, Arlo Emmett, Wylie & Dane Orser, Becky Acheson, and the Harbour Authority of Salt Spring Island.




2024 MARKS THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS CARING FOR ISLAND STREAMS AND WATERSHEDS.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Rescue groups mount SAREX

Burgoyne Bay exercise proves valuable

SUBMITTED BY RCMSAR STATION 25

People who were near Burgoyne Bay on the morning of Saturday, Dec. 9 might have noticed several search and rescue groups in action on land and on the water. The sight of these dedicated teams working together (in the wind and rain) likely piqued witnesses' curiosity about what was happening.

Three Royal Canadian Marine Search and Rescue (RCMSAR) organizations, including Salt Spring Island's RCMSAR25, Brentwood Bay's RCMSAR31 and Cowichan Bay's RCMSAR34, as well as members of Salt Spring Island Search and Rescue (SSISAR), who conduct ground searches and rescues, converged in Burgoyne Bay near Daffodil Point for a collaborative search and rescue exercise (SAREX). Beyond the intrigue of the moment, these exercises are vital in preparing the volunteers for real-life emergencies, ensuring swift and effective responses and strengthening inter-agency communication and cooperation.

The SAREX involved complex, true-to-life scenarios: shoreline searches, medical crises and rescue missions. The exercise started with RCMSAR25 discreetly positioning two rescue mannequins along Burgoyne Bay's shoreline.

Station leader Andrew Ross Collins elaborates: "After embarking a SSISAR communication liaison, we assumed on-



PHOTO COURTESY RCMSAR STATION 25

Salt Spring Island Search and Rescue and marine search and rescue volunteers practice transfer of a patient to a waiting rescue vessel in Burgoyne Bay.

scene command and tasked the other units with a shoreline search. Upon locating the mannequins, SSISAR administered first aid, then worked with the RCMSAR units to transport the patients via boat back to the government dock in Burgoyne Bay."

Wind and rain was a considerable factor in the training exercise.

"Inter agency training is critical for rehearsing possible real-life scenarios and identifying areas for improvement in inter agency cooperation," said SSISAR search manager Conrad Bowden. "In particular, increased familiarity with other agencies' command structures and communications systems leads to better operational out-

comes in the field, such as saving lives and reducing suffering."

Those who observed the exercises witnessed the dedication and skill of these volunteers, serving as a reminder of the continued efforts these search and rescue organizations put forth to protect local communities.

How to Get Involved and Support

If you are curious about the activities of these marine search and rescue groups and wish to explore joining their ranks, please visit rcmsar25.com/ for more information on volunteer opportunities. Additionally, you can contribute to their work by making a donation to rcmsar25.com/ funding.



Islands Trust

2024 Regular Meetings of the Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee

The Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee will be meeting to consider various matters of general business such as applications received, bylaw reviews and meeting notes.

Regular Meetings are scheduled for:

DATE	TIME	ADDRESS
Thursday February 15	9:30 AM	Salt Spring Legion, Meaden Hall, 120 Blain Road
Thursday March 7	9:30 AM	Salt Spring Legion, Meaden Hall, 120 Blain Road
Thursday April 11	9:30 AM	Salt Spring Legion, Meaden Hall, 120 Blain Road
Thursday May 16	9:30 AM	Salt Spring Legion, Meaden Hall, 120 Blain Road
Thursday June 6	9:30 AM	Salt Spring Legion, Meaden Hall, 120 Blain Road
Thursday July 11	9:30 AM	Salt Spring Legion, Meaden Hall, 120 Blain Road
Thursday September 12	9:30 AM	Salt Spring Legion, Meaden Hall, 120 Blain Road
Thursday October 10	9:30 AM	Salt Spring Legion, Meaden Hall, 120 Blain Road
Thursday November 14	9:30 AM	Salt Spring Legion, Meaden Hall, 120 Blain Road
Thursday December 12	9:30 AM	Salt Spring Legion, Meaden Hall, 120 Blain Road

The proposed meeting agenda is usually available one week prior to the meeting and may be obtained at the Islands Trust office or on our website.

Please note that correspondence received from the public may become part of a meeting agenda that is published online.

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27	707	3.6	11.8	31	0052	0.7	2.3
	1210	3.1	10.2		916	3.5	11.5
	1454	3.2	10.5		1555	2.6	8.5
	2304	0.2	0.7		1732	2.6	8.5
28	744	3.6	11.8	1 JAN	124	0.9	3
	1303	3	9.8		938	3.5	11.5
	1533	3.1	10.2		1646	2.4	7.9
	2342	0.3	1		1837	2.4	7.9
29	819	3.6	11.8	2	155	1.2	3.9
	1358	2.9	9.5		958	3.4	11.2
	1611	3	9.8		1725	2.1	6.9
	0018	0.5	1.6		2027	2.2	7.2
30	849	3.6	11.8	3	224	1.6	5.2
	1456	2.8	9.2		1017	3.4	11.2
	1648	2.8	9.2		1758	1.8	5.9
					2303	2.1	6.9

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Expert: Trysh Turgeon, Business Banking Expert—Ganges

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Congratulations to this year's winners and many thanks to all the participants for helping to make Salt Spring sparkle!

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OPINION

2022 CCNA Awards
Gold - Best Editorial Page | Gold - Outstanding Community Service | Silver - Best Front Page
Silver - Best Local Editorial (Gail Sjoberg) | Silver - Best Local Cartoon (Dennis Parker)

2022 BCYNA Awards
Silver - Best All Round (for circulation Category C)
Silver - Community Service Award



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Tony Richards, MANAGING DIRECTOR


Nancy Johnson
PUBLISHER
nancy.johnson@gulfislandsdriftwood.com


Gail Sjoberg
MANAGING EDITOR
gail.sjoberg@gulfislandsdriftwood.com


Robb Magley
REPORTER
robb.magley@gulfislandsdriftwood.com


Robert McTavish
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
production@gulfislandsdriftwood.com


Sky Marcano
ACCOUNT MANAGER
sky.marcano@gulfislandsdriftwood.com


Cindy Jacobsen
OFFICE ASSISTANT
driftwood@gulfislandsdriftwood.com


Johanna Walkner
OFFICE ASSISTANT
driftwood@gulfislandsdriftwood.com


Jane Gartrell
OFFICE ASSISTANT
driftwood@gulfislandsdriftwood.com

EDITORIAL

Electric switch

Salt Spring Island is electrifying.

Looking back at the year's stories, we are confidently ready to stop calling electric vehicles (EVs) "the future" of anything, simply because they are already here.

Electric bicycles have become more common on Salt Spring than wandering livestock. And it is surely news to no one that there are hundreds of privately owned EVs registered on the island, with more added each year.

But in 2023 it seems we finally moved the discussion beyond the benighted "a Tesla in every garage" retro-futurism into a reality recognizing it is our "public" vehicles that should be running fossil-fuel-free.

The Gulf Islands School District (SD64) began electrification of its bus fleet this year, with the island's first all-electric, diesel-free school bus delivering its first batch of students to school on the very first week in January. And BC Transit's transition to an all-electric fleet is underway, with \$400 million already earmarked for the first 115 buses and their charging stations.

Salt Spring is prepping its infrastructure to manage electric buses, and both school and transit buses will see double use, as BC Hydro has already begun a pilot project for vehicle-to-grid transmission that will enable electricity to be pushed back to the grid from the batteries of EVs. A few buses can provide enough emergency power to heat dozens of homes and maintain a local grid for hours.

Capital Regional District (CRD) staff are now driving electric work trucks around the island, as an aging fossil-fuelled fleet is gradually being phased out. The new fire hall is poised to be built alongside Salt Spring's first Level 3 EV fast chargers, and we just learned of a CRD project to add 14 more Level-2 chargers to almost 20 already on-island.

Harbour Air's CEO flew the company's first all-electric floatplane from Richmond to Ganges Harbour this year. While it was at its core a demonstration — and there are a lot of technical and regulatory hurdles for commercial electric flights to overcome — it gave us more than a glimpse into that future.

And while it will be some time before we see new all-electric ferries serving Salt Spring, the hybrid-electric Island Class boats will be here — a matching set of two — by 2027, dashing between Vesuvius and Crofton as an interim step while charging infrastructure big enough can be put in place.

However one feels about EVs, their integration into our lives has already happened. Thankfully, it's finally "public" transport's turn.

THE ISSUE: EV growth

WE SAY: Public sector focus needed



News publishers welcome Online News Act final regs

NEWS MEDIA CANADA
News Media Canada welcomed the final regulations associated with the federal government's Online News Act (C-18).

"Two years ago, in an attempt to thwart the need for legislation, large online platforms were picking winners and losers among Canada's news publishers," said Dave Adsett, chair of News Media Canada and publisher of the Wellington Advertiser. "Today, we have a solid regulatory framework with teeth that ensures Google compensates news publishers — large and small — for the exceptional reporting our journalists do, without fear or favour, on behalf of their fellow Canadians."

"We applaud the Honourable Pascale St-Onge, Minister of Canadian Heritage, for her active engagement with stakeholders and her tremendous leadership in delivering a durable, world-leading framework that is balanced and predictable for both news publishers and platforms," said Paul Deegan, president and chief executive officer of News Media Canada. "We thank Google for their constructive approach, and we look forward to a positive, mutually beneficial commercial relationship with them for many years to come, and we call on Meta to follow Google's socially responsible lead."

VIEWPOINT

"With the Online News Act and recent changes to the Canadian Journalism Labour Tax Credit, Canadians have shown the world how smart policy can support journalism."

PAUL DEEGAN
CEO, News Media Canada

"With the Online News Act and recent changes to the Canadian Journalism Labour Tax Credit, Canadians have shown the world how smart policy can support journalism," added Deegan. "We now call on corporate Canada to support fact-based, fact-checked Canadian journalism by advertising directly with our trusted news titles."

As reported by the Globe and Mail in its Dec. 15 "Ottawa caps broadcasters' share of Google funds under Online News Act" story, Ottawa is ensuring that almost two-thirds of the funds go to written media, including newspapers.

According to the Department of Canadian Heritage, \$63 million will be given to news publishers. Broadcast news outlets would be capped at \$30 million. CBC/Radio-Canada will be capped at \$7 million. Monies will be distributed on a per journalist basis.

Additional reading about the topic is available at canada.ca by searching for:

- "Minister St-Onge release final regulations for the Online News Act,"
- "Online News Act Application and Exemption Regulations," and
- "Online News Act Application and Exemption Regulations – Regulatory Impact Analysis Statement."

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THIS WEEK'S POLL QUESTION:

Are you feeling optimistic about 2024?

Yes No

LAST WEEK'S QUESTION:

Are you spending less on Christmas this year than last?



Cast your ballot online at www.gulfislandsdriftwood.com before Monday at noon or clip this box and drop it at our office before Monday at noon.

ISLAND VOICES

LETTERS to the editor

Joining a choir is good for your mental health

Like many others, I have found the last four years to be particularly rough for my mental health.

When I moved to the island 16 years ago, I joined a small choir, Women of Note. It was a small women's choir and I enjoyed it immensely.

When Viva Voce started in the fall of 2009 (at the helm of Deb Toole), I joined up. I wasn't great at it but I was eager. I could fundamentally read music and I practised. I had my issues. It took due diligence, getting hearing aids (so I could sing in tune) and a pan-

demie that made me realize how important singing is. For those 120 minutes, you can't concentrate on anything but the music in front of you. Viva Voce became Viva Chorale! and is now under the direction of Caroni Young. During the pandemic, we practised on Zoom and at the very first opportunity, we met in person (distanced of course). Singing made such a difference.

This year, with the increase in hostilities across the world, it became evident to me that I needed more music. This time, I joined the United Church choir. And it's perfect. It's added more joy to my life that in combination with my community choir, Viva Chorale!, has made those few hours that I sing, or practise, time to let go.

SUSAN WORRALL,
SALT SPRING

Supporting Salty Dog kennel

In response to recent stories about Salty Dog Retreat, I believe it is instrumental in helping stray and surrendered dogs by providing a rescue service for the placement of dogs, providing boarding services, etc.

There is no other place to go on Salt Spring.

We got our new puppy from there — vet checked and ready to go! Could not be happier!

Please get the paperwork rolling so all Salt Springers can use Salty Dog kennel as their go-to place.

MIKE MCCANN,
SALT SPRING

Letters to the editor are welcome, but writers are requested to keep their submissions to 350 words or less. For details about deadlines, and word limits for the Viewpoint and other longer opinion pieces, contact the editor at the email address below, or phone 250-537-9933. All submissions may be edited for brevity, legality and taste. Writers are asked to provide a telephone number where they may be reached during the day, and to sign letters with their full name. Letters published do not necessarily reflect the views of Driftwood Publishing Ltd., its staff or advertisers. Send letters to: news@gulfislandsdriftwood.com



Send your submissions to
news@gulfislandsdriftwood.com

Roses

• On behalf of Salt Spring Island Search and Rescue (SSISAR) we thank all of the businesses for their kind contributions to our Christmas dinner raffle. SSISAR is as dependent on the community as the community is dependent on our volunteers in a time of need. Country Grocer, Mouat's, Salt Spring Kitchen Co., Thrifty Foods, The Local Barbershop, Mondo & Company, Woodshed Provisions, Francis Bread, ArtSpring, Hastings House, Ganges Fitness, Wild Cider House, TJ Beans, The Band - Moonlighters.

• A big thank you from the staff at Lady Minto Hospital to community member Mike Best for providing staff safe rides to work during the snowy days of winter 2022-2023.

• Thanks to PARC and everyone involved in putting on the Christmas Market at SIMS. It was so nice to see the vendors and community members in a warm and dry, nicely laid out place to shop. The potters guild's Empty Bowls food bank fundraiser was a bonus!



QUOTE
OF THE
WEEK:

"The fact of the matter is we don't have the resources to do that kind of enforcement, or even investigation, on the liveboards in the harbour."

WARREN DINGMAN, MANAGER, ISLANDS TRUST BYLAW COMPLIANCE & ENFORCEMENT

Gear up for years of regifting possibilities in holiday seasons to come

Now that the Christmas holiday season gift giving orgy is behind you, it's time to take stock of all the unwanted paraphernalia littering your living room and work out a plan of action as to how you are going to get rid of this excess baggage.

This includes, of course, that silver-plated chafing dish from your great aunt, Cecilia, which made you force a giant fake smile after you unwrapped it and pretended that it was just what you were always hoping she would bequeath to you.

The cheapest and easiest way to deal with this problem involves the practice of regifting. This is an age-old ritual of giving gifts to people you may have overlooked before the holiday season while at the same time getting rid of those gifts you received for which you really have no use.

Nothing screams "cheap" louder than regifting a book that has a personal inscription written on the inside front cover by the original gift giver. What makes this even worse is if the inscription says something like "this story is a testament to the uniqueness of the love we found together" and you cross out the original name and replace it with your own. The presence, however, of a whole slew of crossed out inscriptions and names only goes to show how universal

is the theme and makes the regift all the more precious.

One of the unexpected dangers of regifting occurs when you lose track of the origin of gifts you want to get rid of, and end up regifting to the very same person who had given you that gift originally. If you are lucky, that person had also regifted that item and lost track of not only whom he had given it to, but also that it had ever been in his possession in the first place. There exists this beautiful "circuit of regifting" in which an item makes its way through a number of gift exchanges among several members of a community before completing the cycle by returning to its original gift giver.

While you are in the process of lightening your load, it may be the right time to dump all those VHS videotapes that have been collecting in your storage space over the years. You can just bundle them together and wrap them in that chafing dish for a nice combo regift. Don't forget to include that series of Jane Fonda fitness tapes that you never actually watched, but be careful as to whom you target them at or you may bruise someone's ego with an unintended body image insult.

Other possible sources for regifting can come from your personal warehouse of unused toys and puzzles that have



Shilo Zylbergold
NOBODY ASKED ME BUT

accumulated over the years. Dust off those Monopoly, Backgammon, Clue, Scrabble and other board games and send them off to their new homes. That 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzle displaying a lit-up Niagara Falls at night, that may or may not be missing a handful of pieces, would probably make for a fabulous regift, especially if you give it to someone whom you know will never try to finish the puzzle.

Other untapped reservoirs for regiftables are appliances that have not been plugged in or had their batteries replaced since Thomas Edison patented the light bulb. These include toaster ovens that don't turn off, blenders that leak, microwaves with broken timers and multi-disc changer CD players that will only play a disc for 10 seconds before switching to the next one. Malfunctioning lava lamps and fondue sets fall into this category, as does that Dust Buster that will only blow. When dropping off one of these special offerings, it is best that you do so when

nobody is home or you may meet the same fate as when you try to leave a giant zucchini with a neighbour.

Other choices that fit into the regifting category are those folksy "objets d'art" that have inexplicably made their descent into your possession from you know not whom or when. These include that folk art bedside lamp with a base constructed from sea lion vertebrae that have been fused together with super glue and that emits the distinct odour of a kelp bed when the light is turned on. Another fine example is that Group of Seven paint-by-number reproduction of an Arthur Lismer masterpiece in which you can still see the numbers faintly revealing themselves through the pigment.

Don't forget those gift certificates and gift coupons that have been collecting in your junk drawer in the unlikely event that you would actually wish to save 30 per cent on a set of radioactive taint-ed cobalt glazed dinnerware from China, or get a half-price admission discount on the 1993 Fall Fair. Equally useless but perfect for regifting are gift certificates to enterprises and commercial establishments that no longer exist. For instance, who wouldn't be thrilled with receiving a pre-paid mixed-media package

from the long-gone Ganges Video Ranch, which consisted of rental of five laser video discs as well as the latest (for 1986) 8-bit fourth-generation hand-held Game Boy console?

A side shoot of regifting is an exercise I like to call re-carding. This undertaking fits under the moral guise of recycling and involves cutting out the front picture or graphic from a Christmas or birthday card you have already received, and gluing it onto a blank piece of card stock so you can reuse it. This works beautifully and can save you big bucks in card expenses. Usually, the re-card is indistinguishable from regular cards unless it has been imbedded with food stains or you use a picture that is somebody else's family portrait photo.

Nobody asked me, but 'tis the season for giving and nothing says generosity better than the practice of regifting. How is there a better way to declutter, recycle and reconnect with friends and family all at the same time? Those who will be the recipients of your excess bounty will likely be forever grateful for your thoughtfulness, once they have stopped muttering vile curses under their breath. Anyway, it's someone else's concern now and not your problem anymore. That is until the next objet d'art beer bottle cap map of Canada winds up on your doorstep.

2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

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A month-by-month look back at 2023 through the pages of the Driftwood

www.gulfislandsdriftwood.com

JANUARY

- About 40 islanders participated in 2023's unofficial New Year's Day Polar Bear Swim at Vesuvius Beach. The lively group event had been a muted, dispersed affair in 2021 and 2022, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- A vehicle and garage were a total loss after igniting on a Horel Road property off Cusheon Lake. Twenty-two firefighters were involved in extinguishing a fire at a two-storey double garage and a vehicle on fire in front of the structure on Jan. 2. An investigation determined the fire was caused by an electrical problem.

- During a period from Friday, Jan. 6 until 7 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 7, Island Health asked patients with non-urgent concerns to return to Lady Minto "when our staffing levels improve," noting that the emergency department remained open for urgent cases and emergencies. A notice posted on the door further directed anyone uncertain as to whether they required a visit to the emergency room to call HealthLink BC (811) for advice from a registered nurse. Community reports indicated there was just one nurse on duty during this period, and while Island Health did confirm the emergency room remained open all night, officials could not confirm how many staff were on duty, at the time noting a statement was being prepared in response to Driftwood queries.

- Salt Spring's first baby of 2023 was Lillian Dragoni Goodbrand — "Lily"

for short, or "Lily the Little Dragon" — born Friday, Jan. 6, 2023 at 1:35 p.m. and weighing 8 lbs and 1/2 an ounce to proud parents Meghan and Tyler Goodbrand.

- Gulf Islanders got their first look at the province's assessment of home values with the new year, and while increases in value continued, the rate of growth at least seemed to have slowed. Between July 1, 2021 and July 1, 2022, the BC Assessment Authority assessed an increase in Salt Spring Island's residential property values of 10.3 per cent on average, with the average single-family residential unit increasing 10.1 per cent and strata units increasing 13.2 per cent in value.

- The bus fleet at Gulf Islands School District (SD64) officially began its transition to electrification after the winter break, as driver Rick Neufeld safely delivered the first students to Gulf Islands Secondary School at 8:37 a.m. Tuesday, Jan. 3 on SD64's new fully electric school bus. Three electric buses would be in the fleet by the end of 2023.

- A well-known community member was in good spirits but suffering from a number of injuries following a car accident on Stewart Road. Kathleen Horsdal said she lost control of her vehicle after trying to avoid hitting two deer on the road just before 3 p.m. on Jan. 24. She said she was grateful to all the first responders, and especially those who carried her up the 20-foot embankment on a spine board.



PHOTO BY ROBB MAGLEY

Salt Spring Island's first electric school bus delivers students to Gulf Islands Secondary School on Jan. 3.

FEBRUARY

- After more than a year of fundraising, organizers announced a \$2.1-million 45-acre parcel on Pender Island singled out for its rare habitat had been secured for conservation. The Raincoast Conservation Foundation and the Pender Islands Conservancy announced that the "globally rare and threatened habitat" of the KELA_EKE Kingfisher Forest would be protected in perpetuity. The two fundraising bodies said the land had been slated for development.

- An alert dog walker, speedy firefighter response and a pair of fire doors all received credit for helping keep a severe fire at a local business from being even worse. Salt Spring

Linen & Dry Cleaners owner Mary Gillies said she was thankful for the quick action of Salt Spring Island Fire Rescue crews, who spent six hours containing the fire at her building and business just after 1 a.m. on Feb. 7. Gillies also credited a late-night 911 call from Bart Terwiel, who had been walking his dog Olivia.

"Without his action, things could have been a lot worse," said Gillies.

- The first round of public engagement on the future of Portlock Park kicked off Feb. 17 with an online survey. Salt Spring's Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) project team was offering the Portlock survey as an initial step in developing an over-arching strategy for managing the island's parks.

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2023 YEAR IN REVIEW



PHOTO BY DIANA PATTISON



PHOTO COURTESY FANNY WIGHTMAN

Residents opposed to construction of a Rogers communications tower in their Channel Ridge neighbourhood try to block an excavator on an access road in March.

Members of a Salt Spring Elementary School class who were deemed one of Canada's kindest through a Depths of Comfort competition practise circus skills together.

FEBRUARY continued

- A project at the site of the former Fulford Inn met its conditions for development permit approval as Salt Spring trustees unanimously passed a resolution instructing staff to issue that permit to the developer — even as some expressed dissatisfaction with the process.

- The Salt Spring Island Foundation released a report analyzing living expenses for 2022, and working backwards reached a number estimating a "living wage" for Salt Spring at an hourly amount of \$24.36. That number was based on a hypothetical family of four — two parents, a four-year-old and a seven-year-old child — with both adults working full-time at 35 hours per week.

- The Nature Trust of British Columbia announced it was able to protect the Fisher Bluffs property on Saturna Island, a 31.2-hectare (77.2-acre) site, "thanks to the generosity and support from the local community."

MARCH

- A Friday ASK Salt Spring session had more star power than usual, with Deputy Premier Mike Farnworth joining MLA Adam Olsen to meet with Salt Spring constituents. Farnworth

is also the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, and his visit was presented as having a community safety/law enforcement focus.

- Months of visitor confusion finally ended as U.S. travel industry giant Expedia Group ceased accepting reservations for rooms at the former Seabreeze Inne. The hotel building was purchased in March 2022 by the Lady Minto Hospital Foundation (LMHF) and had been the centre of legal action between the foundation, current occupants and Salt Spring Island Community Services since November 2022. Despite being delisted upon its sale, there were scattered reports of visitors to Salt Spring arriving with seemingly worthless reservations hoping to check into rooms at the former hotel.

- A Robinson Road farmer hoped her grim discovery would be a reminder of the importance of keeping dogs contained wherever livestock is raised. At least six sheep — a ram and several ewes — were found killed on Jean Taylor's farm. The pattern of the attack, Taylor said, was consistent with an encounter with one or more dogs.

- A group of Salt Spring Elementary School students was named among Canada's kindest, according

to teacher Fanny Wightman — who never had any doubt about the matter. Along with fellow teacher Christina Novak and education assistant Sue Ann Donaldson, Wightman's class submitted their entries to advocacy group Depths of Comfort in February, alongside classes from all across Canada. The Salt Spring class was the only winning classroom in the province.

- Islands Trust Council (ITC) voted to abandon earlier efforts seeking provincial authority to let individual islands enact tree-cutting bylaws. The majority action, from a motion brought by Salt Spring Island trustee Jamie Harris, directed ITC chair Peter Luckham to "promptly inform the province that it no longer wishes to proceed" — and directed staff to remove the task from ITC's follow-up action list altogether.

- Capital and operating funding for a new supportive housing project on Salt Spring Island was secured, according to officials, but the construction timeline remained uncertain. BC Housing held an online community meeting to share progress and information about its project to build housing estimated at \$8 to \$9 million at 161 Drake Rd., a property held by the agency under a long-term lease from the CRD.

Baillie said BC Housing hoped construction would start in 2023. That did not occur.

- Organic gardeners stepped up to speak against a proposal to use the herbicide glyphosate to manage knotweed, a noxious weed found on CRD-held land near the Rainbow Recreation Centre and allotment gardens. CRD staff said they would work with volunteers to attempt to mechanically control the weed.

- Sign-wielding Canvasback Place residents tried to stare down an excavator as it made its way up a communications tower access road on March 24, but eventually let the machine pass rather than be arrested by Salt Spring RCMP. Efforts by the Salt Spring LTC to rescind a previous concurrence with a Rogers cell tower being erected in the residential neighbourhood had failed.

- Important steps to build Salt Spring's new Ganges fire hall were taken, with architecture and construction management contracts awarded by the Salt Spring Island Fire Protection District. Johnson Davidson Architecture and MKM Projects Ltd. were the successful contract bidders, submitting the most competitive proposals and having extensive experience in their fields.

WHAT A YEAR!

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2023 YEAR IN REVIEW



PHOTO BY DAVID BORROWMAN

Salt Spring Arts executive director Yael Wand addresses the crowd from the stage at Mahon Hall for the opening event of Archipelago: Contemporary Art of the Salish Sea.



PHOTO BY GAIL SJUBERG

Installing a native plant garden and art pieces at the site of the welcome figure on the edge of the hydro field was one of several Earth Day activities undertaken this year.

APRIL

- The provincial agency tasked with resolving disputes between landlords and tenants declined jurisdiction to settle some matters at the former Seabreeze Inne, paving the way for B.C.'s Supreme Court to hear the case. Residential Tenancy Branch arbitrator F. Lee dismissed a pair of applications for dispute resolution under the Residential Tenancy Act — filed last summer by two of seven people still living in the former motel — noting in the March 28 decision that both individuals have leave to reapply, but that the issue contained in the applications was “substantially linked to a matter that is before the Supreme Court.”

- One of the most widespread but short power outages in recent memory struck the Southern Gulf Islands on the afternoon of Thursday, April 6. Thousands of customers were affected, with outages reported on Salt Spring, Galiano, Mayne, Pender and Saturna islands. According to BC Hydro, in the Ganges service area alone more than 4,000 customers lost electricity just after 2:30 p.m. The outage was caused by a transmission circuit failure, said BC Hydro.

- The first leg of a fine art exhibition titled Archipelago: Contempo-

rary Art of the Salish Sea, framed as “twelve artists, six mediums, three exhibitions, two countries, one sea,” opened at Mahon Hall with work by six Southern Gulf Islands artists. The partnering organizations and venues were Salt Spring Arts, ArtSpring and the San Juan Islands Museum of Art, each hosting different elements of the exhibition. Salt Spring Arts displayed the works of six artists from the Southern Gulf Islands from April 14 to 30, while ArtSpring featured six artists from the San Juans from April 22 to May 24. The San Juan Islands Museum of Art exhibition ran from Sept. 22 to Dec. 4.

- A small fleet of campers that appeared on the corner of Blackburn and Fulford-Ganges roads set off alarm bells with passers-by, but Salty Dog Retreat owner Jaime Halan-Harris said the ad-hoc shelters were a creative solution to temporarily house rescue dogs and run a kennel while a new facility was being built on the recently acquired property. Halan-Harris assured the community via a Facebook post that a temporary use permit had been paid for and the pups would be moving into their new digs in a matter of weeks.

- A bit of Sunday night excitement sent a BC Ferries crew at Fulford Har-

bour scrambling to secure lines for a retired vessel that came loose from its moorings. The 7:50 p.m. sailing of the Skeena Queen from Fulford to Swartz Bay on April 16 was delayed nearly an hour as that ship's crew raced to secure the nearby Powell River Queen.

- Salt Spring trustees took another run at passing a bylaw allowing accessory dwelling units on the island, advancing an amended version of a measure that packed public meetings — and letters pages — last summer. But trustees hoped new changes to proposed Bylaw 530 — and an expanded information campaign — would satisfy islanders, clearing the way for this latest attempt to address the housing crisis.

- The race was officially on for Salt Spring's first Local Community Commission (LCC) election, and there was no shortage of candidates. As the nomination period closed April 21, 15 candidates were officially approved by the CRD to run for the four seats on the commission. They were Gayle Baker, Jesse Brown, Kylie Coates, Benjamin Corno, David Courtney, Lloyd Cudmore, Nejmah Guermodi, Jamie Harris, Jennifer Kerrigan, Jennifer Lannan, Eric March, Donald Marcotte, Jenny McClean, Earl Rook and Brian Webster.

- The Salt Spring Island Fire Protection District got back on track with traditional annual general meeting timing following a few years of pandemic disruption. The April 24 version was a straight-ahead affair, with the 2022 audited financial statements approved, written reports received and committee membership for trustees finalized. After the AGM, David Courtney was welcomed to the board as the newest trustee, elected by acclamation, along with incumbents Mary Lynn Hetherington and board chair Rollie Cook, voted by trustees to remain chair for another year.

- With a record number of votes cast through mail and in-person ballots, newcomers Elizabeth FitzZaland and Steve Lam were elected on April 27 to serve on the North Salt Spring Waterworks District board of trustees.

- A file server used to store student work at Gulf Islands Secondary School (GISS) was the subject of a “ransomware” attack, according to school officials, who said in a newsletter they were informing all students and families of the potential privacy breach “out of an abundance of caution,” although they deemed the incident to be a “very low-risk breach,” said GISS principal Ryan Massey.



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2023 YEAR IN REVIEW



PHOTO BY GAIL SJUBERG

Harbour Air's first electric-powered seaplane ties up in Ganges as part of Electrify Salt Spring! festival events held in May.



PHOTO BY VALEX HARRIS

Penelakut community members and Salt Spring residents who collaborated for new signage near Fernwood Dock gather for a photograph following an unveiling ceremony.

MAY

- BC Ferries announced Fulford Harbour would see additional sailings — and some disruption from construction work — going into summer. A new 10-sailing schedule between Fulford Harbour and Swartz Bay was set to start in late June and would likely overlap somewhat with urgent piling work. The 10-sailing plan — nine on Sundays — was an attempt to relieve strain during peak season, with the first sailings that summer departing Fulford at 6 a.m. and the last leaving Swartz Bay at 10 p.m.

- For the fifth year in a row, federal authorities implemented restrictions to protect southern resident killer whales, including a return of salmon fishery closures and the establishment of two interim "sanctuary zones" in the Southern Gulf Islands.

- Harbour Air staff greeted company founder and CEO Greg McDougall after he flew the company's first electric-powered floatplane from Richmond to Ganges Harbour. The visit was part of Salt Spring Community Energy's Electrify Salt Spring! Accelerating Pathways to Carbon Zero festival events.

- A last-ditch effort by the Islands Trust to relocate construction of a Rogers telecommunication tower was sidelined by federal regulators, who relied on a strict reading of their own policy and refused to start a dispute resolution process.

- A provincial shift in assessment reporting meant most School District 64 students would no longer see letter grades or percentages on their report cards — and a four-point scale would instead be part of a push to help students build a better relationship with their own learning beginning with the 2023/2024 school year.

- The Isabella Point Road construction work required after the November 2021 "atmospheric river" washed away part of the road was "substantially completed," according to a statement from the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, with finishing touches continuing. The construction team completed paving on May 2 and roadside barrier installation on May 4.

- A long-languishing affordable housing project on Salt Spring got new attention as the CRD advanced its efforts to establish a new local water service area for the Dragonfly Commons development.

The 30-unit project at 221 Drake Rd., which was first envisioned by landowners Fernando and Tami dos Santos in 2016, was expected to bear the costs of building the water system to CRD specifications and standards, according to staff — and the CRD was contemplating taking over the service once its requirements are met.

- As Salt Spring physicians spoke up to warn islanders of the severity

of the medical professional shortage, the health authority admitted plans to prioritize having doctors at Lady Minto when the hospital was busiest, and that patients could expect "an alternative model of care" in the emergency department at other times. For months, patients had reported arriving at Lady Minto Hospital some weekend nights to find a sign on the door — or warnings from staff — asking islanders to triage themselves or call 811 to evaluate whether their condition required immediate care; patients with non-urgent concerns were advised to return in the morning "when staffing levels improve."

According to a letter, signed by nearly a dozen hospital physicians and published on page 7 of the Driftwood, there were 25 12-hour shifts in the emergency department without an assigned doctor between then and the end of August. A solution to the problem was subsequently found.

- An official-looking document circulating on social media alarmed Salt Spring's liveaboard boater community, and LTC members rushed to put distance between themselves and a citizen-crafted bylaw proposal — itself then still in early draft form, according to proponents. The draft bylaw had not yet been formally presented to the LTC, but trustees were nonetheless peppered with questions from people who made their homes afloat in Ganges Harbour. Several expressed concerns, not just with the substance of the pro-

posed bylaw — which in its form then sought to establish a fee permit system and strict regulations for boats staying more than 48 hours — but also with the lack of engagement with the liveaboard community.

- On May 17, Penelakut and Salt Spring communities came together to witness the unveiling of new interpretive signage next to Fernwood wharf, and to share a celebratory meal on the lawn of the Fernwood Road Café. Four other Indigenous interpretive panels were installed near Ganges Harbour later in the year in collaboration with the Hul'qumi'num and SENCOFEN-speaking peoples of the region and the Salt Spring Island Historical Society and Archives.

- Salt Spring Island voters elected Gayle Baker, Ben Corno, Earl Rook and Brian Webster to serve on the island's first LCC. The four joined Salt Spring's electoral area director Gary Holman to form the five-person commission under the CRD. According to CRD chief election officer Kristen Morley, 3,262 voters cast ballots in the May 27 election.

- Millions of tent caterpillars appeared crawling up — and munching on — tree leaves across the Gulf Islands and much of Vancouver Island. South-ender Harry Burton, at his Apple Luscious operation, said it seemed to be worse mid-island — and grower Bob Weeden said the scene at his north-end Whims Farm orchard "looked like a war zone."



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2023 YEAR IN REVIEW



PHOTO COURTESY SSI GIRLS FASTPITCH

Salt Spring's girls fastpitch U-17 softball team members and coaches show silver medals earned at district finals on the June 16-17 weekend. The team then finished fifth out of 16 teams competing at provincial championships in Maple Ridge in July.



PHOTO BY ROBB MAGLEY

A liveaboard sailboat burns in Ganges Harbour near the sailing club as an Eagle Eye Marine Services vessel and crew comes to the rescue with water to extinguish the flames on June 8.

JUNE

- It was suggested 2023 might be the last year pedestrians and cyclists take their lives in their own hands by choosing to head up or down Salt Spring's Ganges Hill. Sharing the narrow roadway with vehicle traffic will be a safer proposition by next fall, Transportation and Infrastructure Minister Rob Fleming said, because the Ganges Hill project — to widen and improve shoulders along the first stretch of Fulford-Ganges Road south of town — was a go. Design of the project would be completed by the end of June, Fleming announced, with construction activity starting this fall and full completion before winter 2024. Fleming delivered the news and predictions, appropriately enough, during an ASK Salt Spring and GoByBikeBC Week event held Friday, June 2 at the Mouat Park meadow by the Lions Bike Park. Construction did not begin in the fall as Fleming stated.

- No serious injuries resulted from a dramatic boat fire in Ganges Harbour, which burned the vessel nearby to the waterline and brought RCMP, Coast Guard and local vessel-assist crews to the scene on June 8. Flames could be seen coming from the stern, and smoke poured from a forward hatch. The vessel quickly became engulfed in flames and a column of black smoke rose over Ganges.

- Even before it held its first meeting, Salt Spring Island's new LCC started

setting boundaries with CRD staff. Commissioner Gary Holman, who is also CRD director for the Salt Spring electoral area, brought an urgent motion to the CRD Board in Victoria on June 7 to halt spending from the LCC's budget that would take place before it even had its first chance to meet. At issue was a \$10,000 request for proposal to seek an independent contractor to facilitate an orientation session for the new LCC.

"I've already had expressions of concern from the LCC," said Holman. "This flies in the face of one of the intended purposes, which is to provide more local control over budgets and decision making."

- Friendly islanders appeared strolling through Ganges in green vests — the "soft" roll-out of Salt Spring's newest volunteer force: the Ambassador Program. The initial team was an assortment of dedicated Salt Spring volunteers many islanders might already know, who would be wearing name tags and with a plan to be as helpful as possible. Ambassadors were out in pairs with the goal of being approachable — but also approaching anyone in the community who looked like they could use a hand.

- Some Salt Spring Island trees were sporting a new shade of green this summer as a spongy moth trapping program shifted into high gear. More than 700 bright-green tent-shaped traps were set out in three different zones around Vesuvius and St. Mary Lake

where the moth population had grown significantly between 2021 and 2022. Some pheromone-laced traps, which attract the male moths, are always set out by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, but the rise in trapped moth numbers last year prompted a major response for 2023.

- A B.C. Supreme Court judge ruled partly in favour of the Lady Minto Hospital Foundation and partly with current occupants of the former motel the foundation now owns in a June 21 judgement. LMHF had sought an injunction that would have resulted in an ejection of remaining residents and a restraining order, giving the foundation "vacant possession" of its building and allowing contractors to begin converting the rooms to hospital staff housing even while the case was being tried.

Without ruling on the broader merits of the pending litigation, Justice Anthony Saunders dismissed the foundation's application against four of the hotel's current occupants, where counsel had alleged facts "more than sufficient to raise triable issues." Two others who did not respond to the application were ordered to vacate the premises by noon on June 30. It would be a few more months before the building was vacant.

JULY

- Canada Day long weekend ferry travel was chaotic on Salt Spring as else-

where on the south coast. Just before noon on July 1, BC Ferries announced a potential risk of cancellations on the Vesuvius-Crofton route due to crew shortages, threatening the loss of all route sailings from 1:45 p.m. to 10 p.m. The cancellations became "official" 15 minutes later, and many left Canada Day events early in a scramble to get to Fulford before those sailings could fill.

Salt Spring Cruisers car club president Abe Hohn said the group's 23rd annual Show & Shine event was abruptly cut short — needlessly, as it turned out, as sailings were reinstated — as word of the west-side island route's likely closure spread among the more than 100 car show participants.

- As Salt Spring's affordable housing crisis persisted, early data from one local nonprofit suggested the population of the most vulnerable islanders was growing.

Island Community Services (ICS), formerly Salt Spring Island Community Services, released numbers from its annual Point-in-Time count of the homeless population, finding a total of 165 people, including 56 "sheltered" and 106 "unsheltered" people. The new count indicated a 51 per cent increase in the number of sheltered homeless, and a three per cent decrease in the number unsheltered; the overall total increased by 15 per cent. In 2021, the province reported ICS found those numbers at 37 sheltered and 109 unsheltered, a total of 146.

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2023 YEAR IN REVIEW



PHOTO BY GAIL SJUBERG

Traditional Polynesian voyaging canoe Hökūle'a arrives in Ganges Harbour on Aug. 12, part of an expedition called A Voyage for Oceans, A Voyage for Earth.



PHOTO BY MATT KELLOW/SSISAR

Salt Spring Island Search and Rescue member Adam Lynes-Ford searches the shoreline near the Long Harbour ferry terminal on July 12, trying to find a missing boater.

JULY continued

- The Root Food Hub Kitchen opened, just in time for the summer growing season and in preparation for fall harvesting and processing. The commercial, publicly accessible, Island Health-approved kitchen at 189 Beddis Rd., owned and operated by the Salt Spring Island Farm-land Trust, will be an important resource for farmers and growers to process and add value to their produce, for local food entrepreneurs to develop, manufacture and scale up their products, and for chefs, teachers and caterers to cook in a professional kitchen.

- A multi-agency search for a missing man ended tragically as the body of Denny Corcoran was recovered from the shoreline in Long Harbour the morning after his empty boat and distressed dog were spotted the previous evening. Salt Spring Island Search and Rescue joined efforts that would include Salt Spring RCMP, Canadian Coast Guard and Royal Canadian Marine Search and Rescue vessels — as well as a CH-149 Cormorant search and rescue helicopter from Comox — on July 12. Corcoran had been building a home on nearby Clamshell Islet since 2021.

- Planners rolled out conceptual designs for Portlock Park's Master Plan process, with a public engagement effort planned around three designs, incorporating what they had heard islanders wanted most — including a new senior ball field. According to PARC staff — still "PARC," avoiding logo design and print-

ing costs by replacing the Parks and Recreation Commission name with "Parks, Arts, Recreation and Culture" — the first round of community consultation involved stakeholder and staff workshops, as well as a community survey that garnered more than 900 responses.

AUGUST

- A B.C. Supreme Court judge ended the latest volley in Mayne Island's racquet sports conflict, asserting the power of the society that owns that island's tennis courts to schedule pickleball access as it sees fit. The Mayne Island Community Centre Society had faced a lawsuit heard over three days from nine tennis enthusiasts representing the Mayne Island Tennis Association (MITA), who sought an order granting tennis players exclusive use of that island's two courts. In its pleadings MITA had relied heavily upon written and oral agreements it said were made with the society which abdicated control of the courts' use and ownership.

- The numbered corporation the Islands Trust said owned two luxury vacation rental properties — and a popular retail farm stand — on Salt Spring Island was the target of a lawsuit filed in B.C.'s Supreme Court on July 28. The LTC took legal action with a notice of civil claim against the registered owner of 600 Walker's Hook Road and the adjacent waterfront property, alleging both were the site of short-term vacation rentals in contravention of the property's zoning.

- Another victory for Galiano Island's Local Trust Committee came in B.C. Supreme Court, as a judge once again upheld that LTC's authority to regulate construction on forest land. Justice Alan M. Ross dismissed a lawsuit brought by a group of property owners, writing that a 2000 bylaw was reasonable, within the jurisdiction of the Galiano LTC, and not made unenforceable by provincial regulations passed since.

- No one was injured in a devastating fire, according to officials, but the blaze completely destroyed a Walker's Hook Road home as Salt Spring Island remained under "extreme" fire danger. Firefighters responded at 4 a.m. on Aug. 14, arriving to a "fully involved" structure fire that over the next five hours would require 18 crew, eight apparatus and more than 16,000 gallons of water shuttled into the scene with tender trucks to extinguish, according to Salt Spring Island Fire Rescue (SSIFR) Assistant Chief Mitchell Sherrin.

- A hang glider plucked from a cliff-side tree on Mount Bruce said he was recovering from his injuries, grateful for rescuers and would fly from Salt Spring's highest peak again "in the near future."

Kevin Searle crashed shortly after leaving the launch ramp at Mount Bruce on Monday, Aug. 7, ending an enviably long streak of accident-free flights from there with the experienced flyer hanging 60 feet in the air,

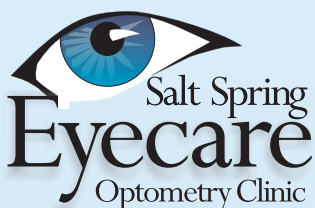
suspended upside-down from his damaged equipment.

- Salt Spring's deep connection to the Hawaiian Islands was reaffirmed as islanders welcomed a very special sailing vessel carrying a timely message into Ganges Harbour. Voyaging canoe Hökūle'a arrived in early evening Saturday, Aug. 12 to a warm greeting on Salt Spring Island as the iconic vessel finished a long day's crossing from Vancouver. Representatives from multiple First Nations as well as islanders of Hawaiian descent and well-wishers from across Salt Spring gathered at the Kanaka Dock bringing drums, food, smiles and heartfelt messages of support as the celebration was tempered by news of the deadly fires on the island of Maui.

- A pair of structure fires just four days apart kept Salt Spring crews busy. Quick action in the early morning Monday, Aug. 21 kept a fire confined to the outside of temporary supportive housing units at 154 Kings Lane, according to Fire Chief Jamie Holmes. Twenty firefighters were on scene from 1 to 4 a.m., he said, after receiving a report of a fire burning externally.

Just a few days later, fire personnel responded to a house fire on Maliview Drive where SSIFR Assistant Chief Mitchell Sherrin credited a "great save" to the on-shift crew, who he said were at the scene just 12 minutes after the dispatch call at 7:45 p.m. on Aug. 25.

Looking ahead to 2024.



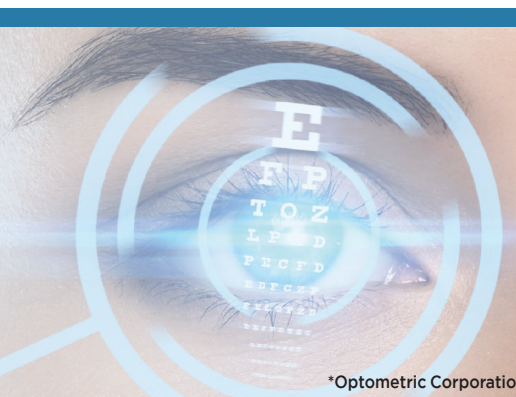
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2023 YEAR IN REVIEW



PHOTO BY GAIL SJUBERG

Members of the Stqeeey' Learning Society address the crowd at a Mateada Convergence event, describing the importance of the 'mi tse't'akw' (Coming Home) Campaign.



PHOTO BY SUSAN LUNDY

Salt Spring Fire Chief Jamie Holmes speaks at the groundbreaking celebration for the new Ganges Fire Hall at 455 Lower Ganges Rd. on Oct. 30.

SEPTEMBER

- A collision between an electric bicycle and a camper brought a medical helicopter to a Salt Spring Island farm on Sept. 9, prompting emergency officials to warn travellers to exercise caution on island roads. The crash closed Cusheon Lake Road for at least an hour as fire, police and local ground ambulance crews responded near the intersection with Lord Mike's Road just after 3 p.m.

- Meadowbrook seniors residence on Atkins Road celebrated its 20th anniversary on Sept. 9 with cake, the honouring of its founders and acknowledgement of the independent living complex's 205 past and present residents.

- Declining enrolment — and a corresponding operational budget deficit — spelled the end for Salt Spring's Phoenix Elementary School, with no students registered and an official closing set for fall.

- With only 34 students enrolled last year — down from nearly twice as many in 2018 — the alternative K-7 school operated within School District 64 would likely close without significant student disruption, the Board of Education heard at its meeting Wednesday, Sept. 13.

- A \$2-million fundraising effort by the Stqeeey' Learning Society, called the 'mi tse't'akw' (Coming Home) Campaign, was publicly launched Sept. 16

at the all-day Mateada Convergence event in Ganges. About half of the funds will be used to purchase a 10-acre parcel of land in Xwaaqu'um (Burgoyne Bay), with the rest needed to upgrade an existing residence for Quw'utsun Elders to live in, create a base of operations for a youth-focused, land-based education program, a native plant nursery and SLS staff housing.

- The Gulf Islands Families Together Society marked its 25th anniversary at an open house event held at its McPhillips Avenue building on Sept. 26.

- Members of different user groups that had seemingly been competing to advance their preferred visions for Salt Spring's Portlock Park master planning process — baseball, soccer, tennis, pickleball, walking and running — were collaborating to try to find consensus. In August, a new survey offered three conceptual designs for the community to pick from, incorporating changes that could have removed the extant running track completely, or avoided building the long-requested new senior ball field altogether.

- New 30 km/hr speed limit signs for Ganges village were installed on Sept. 26, due partly to a long advocacy process, most recently spearheaded by Salt Spring's new Local Community Commission. The slower speed went into effect on Fulford-Ganges Road at Seaview Ave to the north side of town, approximately 100 metres past

the intersection with Rainbow Road.

- The first meeting of Salt Spring Island's Ferry Advisory Committee since April was cancelled with little warning after ferry officials reported they had faced abuse and threats at similar meetings elsewhere. BC Ferries issued a notice cancelling — technically "postponing" — the typically biannual meeting abruptly on Sept. 28, saying the move had been made on advice of the company's corporate security personnel.

- Salt Spring philatelists had reason to celebrate as a new pictorial cancel stamp for the Fulford Post Office entered service. WENÁ,NEĆ and HWUNÉ'NUTS, the SENĆOŦEN and Hul'q'umi'num place names for Fulford Harbour, are included on the stamp, as a reminder of the First Nations traditional use of the island.

Postmaster Andrea LeBorgne said she was thrilled when Robert Bateman agreed to contribute a sketch for the project.

"His artful line drawing reflects the natural beauty of the harbour and Mount Maxwell," she said.

OCTOBER

- A proposal for new housing received a warm welcome from the Salt Spring LTC. The Gulf Islands Seniors Residence Association (GISRA) contemplated a change of use for its property on Kings Lane from a seniors-focused project to one that would serve a

broader demographic. GISRA executive director Harry Barnes said the notion was being shared with the LTC at an early stage of development to gauge that body's support of the concept, which could then be communicated to potential funding partners.

- The trend of hosting high-level officials at ASK Salt Spring continued with a visit from BC Ferries president and CEO Nicolas Jimenez at an Oct. 20 session at Lions Hall.

- The Salt Spring Island Disc Golf Association hosted its first Professional Disc Golf Association sanctioned B-Tier tournament on Oct. 21-22, with 80 players enjoying ideal fall weather and hospitality at the Salt Spring Island Golf and Country Club course.

- The fifth biennial Salt Spring National Art Prize (SSNAP) and fourth Parallel Art Show (PAS) events concluded on the Oct. 21 weekend with some \$50,000 in prizes disbursed. Winner of the top SSNAP prize, the \$20,000 Joan McConnell Award, was Sarah-Mecca Abdourahman of Ottawa, Ont. Award winners in the PAS show for Gulf Islands artists were Diana Sanderson, Garry Kaye, Sibéal Foyle and Jane Kidd.

- Ground was broken for the new \$13.7-million Ganges Fire Hall on Lower Ganges Road next to Brinkworthy Estates during a ceremony on Oct. 30. MP Elizabeth May was among honoured guests.



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2023 YEAR IN REVIEW



PHOTO BY GAIL SJUBERG

Vehicles lived in by people wanting a safe place to stay park on Drake Road property leased by BC Housing from the Capital Regional District.



PHOTO BY ROB LOWRIE

Caroni Young leads her Viva Chorale! choir at the Remembrance Day ceremony held largely on the road due to a Centennial Park construction project.

NOVEMBER

- Saying the site needed to be cleared to build permanent homes, BC Housing gave an encampment that had set up several weeks earlier at 161 Drake Rd. until Nov. 7 to vacate, leaving the “mutual community support” group there with few options. Spokesperson Nejmah Guer-moudi of the Green Ground Community Design Society expressed frustration with the process and appealed to the community to provide another property where the people could park their recreational and other vehicles or set up tents. The group later sought use of a CRD-owned property on Kanaka Road, but no permission to use that land was given either.

- Salt Spring’s Remembrance Day ceremony may not have taken place in exactly the same spot as planned, due to construction that began in Centennial Park on Nov. 7, but organizers said they were happy with how things turned out. A shorter parade and having most of the ceremony activities take place on the road in front of the park were the result of the usual area being torn up as part of a park renovation project.

- Raincoast Conservation Foundation’s whale sanctuary livestream, which broadcasts live video over the internet from a camera on North Pender Island, was wired for sound — through a hydro- phone, an underwater microphone situated in hopes of picking up whale vocalization from the interim sanctuary zone there.

- Regular users of Portlock Park were pressing CRD staff to go back to the drawing board with master plan concepts for the park. A staff report and recommendation to approve a concept that did not include an oval track, as currently exists, was presented to the LCC, but a delegation of park users helped convince the LCC that more work and consultation needed to be done before a decision is made.

- About 80 people — from farmers to government officials, business people and First Nations reps — attended the first Salt Spring Island Food Summit held Nov. 26 at Meaden Hall, hoping to find ways to increase local food production from the current four to six per cent level and make the island more resilient in the face of climate change.

- Two Salt Spring RCMP officers received recognition from Vancouver Island RCMP District personnel at a Nov. 30 event. Const. Felix Charette-Thibault and Const. Hardip Gill received certificates for their bravery and quick action during incidents that occurred during pre-Salt Spring postings.

DECEMBER

- A second Salt Spring property owned by Alicia Valerie Davenport (formerly Lee) and co-defendant Geordie “Skye” Lee was the subject of a newly created tool under the Civil Forfeiture Act. The province alleged a home at 435 Stewart Rd. was purchased in 2017 to launder

money from a \$200-million international stock fraud. The couple, along with then-co-defendant Vincent Manalastas, were earlier targets of a 2019 B.C. Civil Forfeiture Office lawsuit, alleging another Salt Spring property — on the water at 391 Baker Rd. — was acquired through a similar criminal effort.

- Islands Trust Council (ITC) heard that efforts to update the Trust Policy Statement were underway again and that a draft would be seen by trustees serving on the Trust programs and executive committees in early 2024, as the Islands Trust prepared to mark its 50th birthday. Staff said it would be stressed to the public that the first draft is just that — the beginning of a long process where change is likely inevitable — following volatile reactions to a working draft that was made public in 2021.

- ITC members came under fire at their quarterly meeting in Victoria on Dec. 6 for a reinterpretation of the Islands Trust mandate council had agreed upon, and the process from which it sprang: a closed-to-the-public meeting in September. As trustees met at the Coast Victoria Hotel, they were questioned during the public comment period on, as one person put it, the “how and the what” of that interpretation — specifically calling out the process for a resulting inability to hold individual elected trustees accountable.

“We strongly object to a trustee discussion, and decision, on a subject so integral to the entire operation of the Trust being made in a meeting closed to

the public,” said Galiano Island’s Jennifer Margison, speaking for the Friends of the Gulf Islands Society.

- Salt Spring’s Local Trust Committee said it would suspend enforcement on a kennel operation that had set up on property fronting Blackburn and Fulford-Ganges roads, after denying to grant a temporary use permit at its November meeting. Jaime Halan-Harris, the applicant and owner of Salty Dog Retreat, said she and supporters had been unable to attend and needed time to plead her case. Halan-Harris was advised she could try to make the land use lawful by first applying to amend the official community plan.

- As 2024 came to an end, Salt Spring’s LTC prepared to advance a new scheme to “legalize” a path towards allowing accessory dwelling units (ADUs) on the island, abandoning the latest iteration of Bylaw 530 — which had already been scaled down over fears of a legal challenge over whether its enactment would rapidly increase the island’s population.

The new Bylaw 537 — coincidentally numbered with the traditional Ganges area telephone prefix — is expected to be read three times during a special meeting in January 2024, and is designed to enact a map-based zoning process with only a few properties initially permitted for ADUs. The LTC tasked staff with crafting a simplified application process for islanders to request their properties be added to the map.

Happy New Year!

Wishing all the best to you and your family.

Looking forward to seeing you in 2024!

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BOWL BOUNTY



PHOTO COURTESY SSI POTTERS GUILD

Salt Spring Island Potters Guild president Wendy Squirrel, left, gives a cheque for \$2,860 to food bank manager Trish Hatfield, representing proceeds from the guild's fourth annual Empty Bowls fundraiser that saw guild members donate ceramic pieces to the sale, held this year as part of the PARC-sponsored Christmas Market at SIMS on Dec. 16-17. "In these challenging times there is more of a need than ever as members of our community struggle to make ends meet, and we are happy we can play a part in it," said Squirrel.

what's on this week

Thurs. Dec. 28

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

Open Mic. At the Legion. 7:30 p.m.
Craig's Karaoke. At Moby's Pub. 8 p.m. to midnight.

Fri. Dec. 29

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

Fridays With DJ Boomtown. Moby's Pub. 9 p.m. til 12:30 a.m.
Karaoke. At the Legion. 7:30 p.m.

Sat. Dec. 30

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

Ashton Bachman. Legion. 7:30 p.m.

Sun. Dec. 31

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

New Year's Eve at the Legion. Newfie NY with Valdy and dinner from 5 p.m. Followed by Rough & Tumble.
New Year's Party With Odd Luv. Moby's Pub. 9 p.m.
New Year's at the Mateada Lounge. With DJs Skywater and Andrew Interchill plus 9GHT4ALL. 9 p.m. Advance tix only through www.tickettailor.com/events/skywaterproductions/1095210

Mon. Jan. 1

ACTIVITIES

Polar Bear Swim. Vesuvius Beach. 12 noon.

CINEMA

• **Wish** runs Fri., Sat., Dec. 29-30, and Mon., Tues. Jan. 1-2 at 7 p.m. See thefritz.ca for more movie info.

EXHIBITIONS

• **Gallery 8** presents the **15th Annual Christmas Exhibition of Small Works** daily through Dec. 31.
• **Deck the Walls: Nature Prints at the Library.** New works by the SSI Printmakers are on display until Dec. 30.
• **Dulcy Wilson** shows paintings at Harvest Moon through December.

Festival of Trees
Bring food bank items to place under decorated trees at the Harbour House Hotel through Jan. 1st.

THRIFTY FOODS 
Ganges, Mouat's Centre 7:30am to 9pm
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FOR THE RECORD

• The actor playing a younger Scrooge mentioned in a Dec. 20 piece about the Christmas With Scrooge show was misidentified. The actor was Liam Hackett.

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The Gulf Islands Driftwood is excited to offer the first born baby their first print media appearance and keep sake: an 1/8th page, colour baby announcement. We look forward to announcing the special delivery!

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- In Memoriam
- Storage
- Announcements

When the sun of life sets, The stars of memory shine.



Nelly Weibel
January 9, 1932 - December 1, 2023

It is with love and deep sadness that we say goodbye to our beloved mother and grandmother.


Nelly Weibel was born on January 9, 1932 in Uster, Switzerland. As a young adult, she pursued her love of languages and moved to Denmark and later to England. In 1954 she married Bruno and together they raised a daughter and two sons - Christa (1959), Kim (1960) and Mark (1966). After a full life in Switzerland, Nelly and Bruno moved to Salt Spring Island in 1992. Here they enjoyed retirement and experienced many years of happiness. The open, friendly nature of Canadians inspired them and they formed lasting friendships.

In 1999 Nelly's husband died suddenly and in 2002, she had to cope with the painful loss of her daughter, Christa. Despite these huge losses, Nelly decided to live the last phase of her life in her new country, Canada. After many happy, but sometimes lonely times in her beautiful home on Chock Road, Nelly decided to start a new phase in her life. In 2016 she moved to Victoria to take up residence in the Berwick Royal Oak retirement home where she spent her last years in the circle of loving people.

On December 1, 2023 Nelly passed away peacefully in the presence of her sons, Kim and Mark. She will be missed by her five grandchildren in Switzerland. Her warm-hearted love, strength and tender care will live on in our hearts. Rest in peace, dear Mum, dear Granny.



Gregory Michael, Froome



It is with heavy hearts that we acknowledge the passing of Gregory Michael Froome (born November 28th, 1962). Greg passed away peacefully with his loved ones by his side on November 28th, 2023.

Predeceased by his parents Leora and Bill. Greg will continue to be held near and dear in the hearts of his family: his beloved wife of 37 years, Karen, his beautiful daughters Kayla (Jesse) and grandbaby Ella, Chelsea (Mark), his two brothers, Bruce (Carole), David (Tanya) and three sisters Eleanor (Steve), Christine (Glenn), Cathy (Don). He will be loved and missed by his many nieces and nephews.

We hope you are enjoying the things you always loved - fishing, playing X Box or riding one of your motorbikes.

You will be forever loved & greatly missed, Gramps/Fauz. Love, Karen (Spike), Kayla (Kallerz), Chelsea (Stonkz), Rylee (Bean)

In Memoriam



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END IMPAIRED DRIVING



Every year, the festive season is sadly overshadowed by car accidents that could have been avoided. A large percentage of collisions involve drivers who have been drinking over the legal limit or taking drugs.

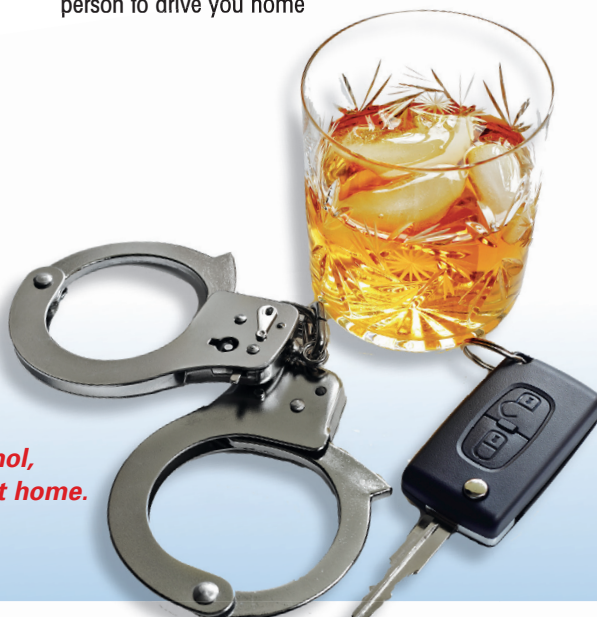
BE PREPARED

It's widely known that drugs and alcohol impair your judgment. Despite this reality, some individuals who've consumed these substances may believe they're fit to drive when actually they're not. In short, if you've had any amount of alcohol or smoked or ingested cannabis, it's not safe to rely on your own judgment.


PLAN AHEAD! No one wants to be part of another statistic or have someone's death on their conscience for the rest of their life. In 2023, there are no excuses for driving under the influence. You have plenty of choices to avoid putting your own safety and that of others at risk.

Here are a few options to consider for a safe holiday season and new year:

- Use public transportation
- Arrange to sleep at the party venue or stay somewhere within walking distance
- Call a taxi
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- Designate a non-drinking person to drive you home



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