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**Tourism Profile**

**The Savour Elgin Passport - A Culinary Journey**



Summer is truly a time when Elgin County's agricultural bounty is evident. From tomatoes, sweet corn and cucumbers to

raspberries, peaches and cherries, the variety of fresh produce available is astounding. It is the perfect time of year to browse farmers' markets in search of the ripest, most delicious fruits and vegetables; learn the secrets of winemaking at one of Elgin's wineries; and finish off the day with a relaxing and hearty meal at one of the area's fine dining establishments.

In celebration of local food, Elgin County is pleased to announce the first annual Savour Elgin Passport Tour, a culinary adventure for tourists and locals alike. The passport encourages people to hit the road with friends and family to passport stops across the County. At each location participants

will get their passport stamped for a chance to win a weekend getaway in Elgin County. Participants must visit at least four locations to be entered into the draw. Elgin County encourages participants to take photos along the way and use the hashtag **#savourpassport** to record their journey.

"The passport encourages people to get out and enjoy Elgin County's quality culinary attractions while offering them the chance to win a great Elgin County getaway," said Tourism Services Coordinator Lindsey Duncan. "Whether you are a visitor to the area or a local, a getaway to one of Elgin's tranquil inns or B&Bs is a relaxing and welcome escape from the pressures of daily life."

Passports can be picked up and dropped off at any Savour Elgin location or at the Elgin County Tourism office at 450 Sunset Drive, St. Thomas until February of 2016. For more information visit the [Savour Elgin website](#) and click on events.

## Tourism Profile

### Solitude Nature Reserve – A Reprieve from the Digital Age



Every year Canadians are spending more time indoors in front of screens and less time in the great outdoors. We spend an estimated 90% of our lives indoors and as a result we have disconnected from the natural environment. According to the [Connecting Canadians With Nature study](#), done by the Canadian Parks Council, this disconnect has caused higher levels of depression, chronic anxiety and learning issues in adults and children across the country. This disconnect is what prompted Phil McNamee and his wife Mary Hanley to open Solitude Nature Reserve in Central Elgin.

McNamee has 10 years of experience leading wilderness backpacking adventures for adults to

locations such as Gros Morne National Park, the Grand Canyon and Killarney Provincial Park. This experience has made him keenly aware of the positive effects that nature can have on people.

“People slow down when they spend time in nature,” said McNamee. “They don’t worry about what is happening at the office, and they are more relaxed.”

Solitude Nature Reserve seeks to provide campers with a true backwoods, wilderness camping experience close to home. Visitors won’t need to travel hundreds of kilometres to have authentic encounters with nature.

Campsites are located far away from one another – the idea is to enjoy nature and not your neighbours. The use of electronic devices is not permitted except in the case of an emergency. McNamee wants Solitude Nature Reserve to be a reprieve from the stresses and distractions of the digital age. He wants families to reconnect with nature and with one another.

It took two years of searching before McNamee and Hanley found the perfect property. They chose 35 acres of natural bush and trails located at 45388 Dexter Line between Quaker and Yarmouth Centre Roads. McNamee increased the hiking trails and added six campsites each equipped with a 16'x16' tent deck, a picnic table, an iron fire ring with a grill and a composting toilet. Fire wood is available on-site but campers are required to bring their own food and drinking water and a wagon will be available to help transport camping gear from the parking lot to the campsites. Currently three of these sites are

available to the public with three more scheduled to open by late August. Campsites will be free of charge on a first come first serve basis but interested campers will need to get a permit from McNamee to be on-site. The campsites will only be available Friday and Saturday nights from July to September but the property is open for day-use from dusk until dawn seven days a week, year-round.

Solitude Nature Reserve is conveniently located with in close proximity to a number of Elgin County tourist attractions, giving campers the opportunity to explore the area when not on-site at Solitude Nature Reserve. The area is home to fantastic roads for cycling, wineries, quaint fishing villages and the scenic coast of Lake Erie.

For more information about Solitude Nature Reserve including trail maps and campsite bookings visit their [website](#) or like them on [Facebook](#).



## Business Profile

### Remedy Massage Therapy Helps to Alleviate Pain and Increase Client Mobility



Julie Fisher, Registered Massage Therapist has over six years of experience alleviating pain and increasing her clients' mobility. In June of 2015, she realized a long-time dream of starting her own massage therapy clinic when she opened Remedy Massage Therapy at 14114 Belmont Road in Belmont.

Fisher was practicing in Dorchester when her dream property on the main street of Belmont became available providing her with the perfect opportunity to go out on her own. Having grown up near Belmont, Fisher considered the village to be a perfect location to open Remedy Massage Therapy. The property was located in the heart of a small and welcoming community, on a main transportation route, was zoned commercial, was wheelchair accessible, and was close enough to London and Dorchester to attract a good client base.

Fisher is the sole practitioner at Remedy Massage Therapy and offers her clients a variety of services including standard massage therapy, deep tissue therapy, massage therapy for pregnant women, and massage therapy to treat

Carpel Tunnel, headaches and a variety of other ailments.

Fisher aims to make accessing her services as easy as possible for her clients. She is open on select evenings and on Saturdays to accommodate those who work nine-to-five jobs and she accepts cash, cheque, credit and debit. A full list of treatments and their prices can be found on the Remedy Massage Therapy [website](#) where clients can also schedule an appointment from the comfort of their homes with an online booking service.

Fisher has known since the age of 13 that she wanted to become a Massage Therapist. Her passion for her work is evident and she has big plans for Remedy Massage Therapy. Fisher's long-term goal is to transform her massage therapy business into a full-service wellness clinic with reflexology, dietary services, osteopathy, physiotherapy and of course massage therapy.



## Business Profile

### Talisman Guitars - Creating Unique Musical Masterpieces

A love for music at a young age is what ultimately led Mike Kerkvliet to a career in custom guitar fabrication. A guitar player since the age of 14, he started out slowly by repairing his own guitars and the guitars of his friends. He was eventually inspired and encouraged to start building his own custom guitars.

Kerkvliet does guitar repairs including fret work, set-ups, modifications and wiring repairs on electrical guitars; however, hand-crafted guitars are at the heart of his business Talisman Guitars. He creates one-of-a-kind custom masterpieces out of his workshop in Elgin County. From traditional styles to his own unique designs, Kerkvliet works with clients to make sure they get the look and sound they want.

“My focus in general is on creating a really high quality product,” said Kerkvliet. “I want to give people as many choices as possible and provide them with exactly what they need.”

Hand-crafting a guitar is a complex and multi-step process that begins with a design. According to Kerkvliet a good design is one that not only looks good but also functions as a top-notch musical instrument. Ergonomics also play a role in the design as a musician will spend many hours playing his or her guitar.

The next step is the rough woodworking phase where the guitar is constructed from a mix of domestic and exotic woods. Maple, Walnut and Ash are commonly used domestic woods and Rosewood, Ebony and Mahogany are exotic. Rosewood and Ebony are commonly used for the fingerboard to prevent wear and the guitar neck is frequently constructed using Maple or Mahogany.

The guitar is then contoured and sanded followed by a finish. Kerkvliet employs both French Polish and Polyurethane finishing techniques. French Polish is labour intensive but its thin coating allows

for a better sounding guitar because it adds less mass to the guitar. A Polyurethane finish is the most durable and looks the shiniest.

Finally, the guitar is fitted with its wiring and hardware. Pick-ups and circuits are crucial to how versatile a guitar is. The Pick-up is the metal part on the body of the guitar that sits under the string and picks up the sound of the string, turning the physical movement into electrical movement in a process called “Magnetic Transduction”. Kerkvliet makes the pick-ups himself so that he can really dial into the sound the customer wants.

For more information about Talisman Guitars, to view examples of Kerkvliet’s work, or to commission your own custom one-of-a-kind creation, like Talisman Guitars on [Facebook](#).



## Business Resource

### Jump-Start Your Business with the Enterprise Elgin Business Plan Contest



The County of Elgin and the Elgin Business Resource Centre (EBRC) are proud to announce the launch of “Enterprise Elgin”.

Enterprise Elgin is a business plan competition designed to foster business development in the County of Elgin through new business initiatives as well as business expansions.

Contestants may submit business ideas in any field, including services, manufacturing, distribution, health care, Internet, consumer products, retail, technology, and other fields of commercial endeavor. Every submission will be reviewed by the selection committee and five finalists will be selected. These finalists will be asked to present their business plan before a panel of judges on October 22, 2015. From these five contestants, the judges will select one winner who will receive a prize package worth over \$10,000. These prizes that will help take the winner’s business to the next level. The package includes over \$3000 in cash, graphic design and website services, free banking, one-year of rent-free office space and memberships in local business organizations.

The Competition is directed at for-profit businesses including start-ups as well as

expansions of existing companies. To be eligible for the prize, contestants of the business plan competition must agree to locate the company’s principal place of business in Elgin County (outside St. Thomas city limits) at the time of the award.

The submissions will open August 1 and close on September 30. Finalists will be notified shortly after, with the ultimate winner being announced after the finals held at on Thursday October 22 at the New Sarum Diner.

Applications will be available at Elgin Business Resource Centre locations in Aylmer (516 John St. N, Aylmer), Dutton (99 Currie Rd., Dutton) and St. Thomas (300 South Edgeware Rd.), at the Elgin County Economic Development office (450 Sunset Drive, St. Thomas) and [online](#).

Entrepreneurs needing assistance in creating a business plan or wanting a business plan template please contact the Elgin Business Resource Centre at 1-877-450-2128.

Sponsors of this contest include Meridian Credit Union, Redding Designs, Black Cat Concepts, the St. Thomas & District Chamber of Commerce, the Aylmer & Area Chamber of Commerce, the Elgin Innovation Centre, the Elgin Business Resource Centre and the County of Elgin.