

# Life is Beautiful in Elgin County



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At Nourishing Hearts Wellness Care Farm, the serene rural environment provides the perfect setting for families to put their screens down, and reconnect in a natural environment. As a small social work based therapeutic farm, owner Julie Casey opened her business in Rodney, Ontario to help people improve their health and well-being under the aegis of caring for animals and nature.

With a menagerie of animals, the farm provides a supportive, understanding, and adaptive environment for people of all ages and abilities to be able to learn, heal, and grow. Cultivating food security and fostering wildlife conservation, while promoting and nourishing community health, has been Julie's mission for her farm from day one.

When Julie found this picturesque countryside property in Rodney 2 years ago she knew this was the ideal location to start her next journey. Not only is this location fitting for her as a long-time resident of Elgin County, but it also enables her to attend to the vast needs of those living in Elgin-St. Thomas, Chatham-Kent, London-Middlesex, and Sarnia-Lambton.

With a large demographic to serve, Julie offers an extensive array of services to foster resiliency, empower personal uniqueness' and to strengthen a sense of belonging for the people she supports. Whether it be social work counselling, animal assisted therapy, wellness events, or simply nature-based activities, Julie's precatory is for all to feel welcomed at her family farm.

Nourishing Hearts Wellness Care Farm follows a green care model for community health, which provides a continuum of services offered in the same green space to meet diverse needs.



Owner, Julie Casey

# A Safe Space to Nourish Your Heart in Rodney! (Continued)



Not only does Julie open her farm for therapeutic services but she also welcomes the community for farm visits, market gardening, children and youth programs, corporate wellness events, self-care glamping retreats and community days. By offering these services in one location, Julie hopes to reduce the stigma of mental health and disabilities while building relationships with the community at large. The farm now offers Friends of the Farm memberships for individuals and families to participate in the farm activities and to encourage families and friends to freely explore the farm together where they can create shared memories, deepen connections, and nurture a sense of belonging while tending to their self-care needs.

Julie is especially mindful of the financial needs and barriers experienced by families. “By participating in our events and having a wonderful time yourself, you’re also helping to support children, youth, and adults with mental health challenges or disabilities.” As a social enterprise, her main focus is on the

clinical services, the hosting of wellness events, farm stays, and the selling of vegetables helps to fund affordable rates for families. Julie is attentive to the unique needs of children, youth, and adults living with conditions including

those on the Autism and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity, Developmental Disabilities, Dementia, and diverse Mental Health concerns that include trauma, depression and anxiety. It is Julie’s hope that Nourishing Hearts Wellness Care Farm can provide a safe place for people to receive support in a way that feels comfortable to them and to participate in a way that is meaningful.

Follow Nourishing Hearts Wellness Care Farm on Facebook and Instagram to keep up with all of the latest events happening at the Farm. From their Spring Fling event with Barnyard Yoga on May 25th, the Friends of the Farm memberships, to the Caring Kids Adventure Club, Nourishing Hearts is “a place where your spirit can explore and your heart can be nourished”. Contact Julie Casey at [julie.ac.casey@gmail.com](mailto:julie.ac.casey@gmail.com) or call (519) 859-1574 for more information.



## Aimlessly Wander into Downtown Port Burwell

For Erin Oud, life is about finding a balance. Erin balances her everyday job as a group leader at the Toyota Motor Manufacturing plant in Woodstock, with being the owner of the Aimless Wanderer, a gift shop in Port Burwell, Ontario. Although her everyday job is fulfilling in its own ways, Erin quickly discovered how entrepreneurship would allow her to be more hospitable and social. As a lifelong resident of Port Burwell, Erin sought an opportunity to increase interaction with the public in her own community. Thus began a new and exhilarating excursion for Erin.

When a local restaurant moved across the street, this left a vacant commercial space on Main Street for Erin to bring her business venture to life. This quirky and quaint old bank, with a historic vault in the back, was what drew her to the space.

In the summer of 2018, Erin opened the doors to

the Aimless Wanderer. The appellation, Aimless Wanderer, came about from Erin's abundant desire to wander. When Erin is not working, she spends her time seeking adventure; whether it's a waterfall, a trail, or even a beach, you can find Erin aimlessly wandering and discovering new places.

With a large sandy beach, a Carolinian forested Provincial Park, and a lighthouse built in the 1840s, beach goers and adventurers alike are able to discover Port Burwell, a hidden gem of Elgin County. Every beach town in Ontario sees the majority of its residents and visitors exploring in the spring and summer months. Erin knew that bringing stylish bathing suits for children, men, and women, as well as cover-ups, would be a good business venture. Erin was excited to offer these essential beach items that are not available elsewhere in the village to her beloved customers.



Owner Erin Oud and her Children

## Aimlessly Wander into Downtown Port Burwell (Continued)



The store also offers an endless selection of nautical home décor items. Nautical signs, dishes, and picture frames, perfect for any space, can be found throughout the store. Homeowners in the area are able to spruce-up their cottages and homes, while supporting local, a quality that Erin so dearly values.

When Erin envisioned her store-front sign, she knew she needed something as unique as the name itself. Erin found a local gentleman from Brownsville, just north of Port Burwell, to design a beautifully crafted wooden sign to make her historic store-front stand out. He also made an outdoor Connect Four board, which attracts people of all ages to the store, and entertains gentlemen as their wives shop.

Family is an important component of Erin's life.

When Erin described what makes her business unique, she described how the Aimless Wanderer is family run business, "If you don't see me there, you will see my children there. Part of the reason I opened the store was to allow my children to learn what it means to work hard and to be responsible"

Meet Erin and her family for yourself on weekends in April, or seven days a week after the Victoria Day Weekend until the fall at 34 Robinson Street, Port Burwell. New this year, visitors and residents are able to purchase sweatshirts, open-back long sleeves, tank tops, and V-neck t-shirts that have Port Burwell on them to cherish the memories made in the portside village. Keep up to date with her Erin's new treasures arriving weekly by following the Aimless Wanderer on Facebook!

## Taco Bout A Culinary Delight!

Dan and Lisa Froese live every day like it is Taco Tuesday! As the owners of Dan's Taco Wagon in Aylmer, this duo, alongside their children Kayla, Tyler, and Christopher, spend their days preparing local Mexican delights not only for the residents of Aylmer, but for people all over Southwestern Ontario.

In 2013, Dan was driving truck for St. Thomas Messenger when the opportunity arose to purchase a food truck from the whilom owners in Mount Salem, southeast of Aylmer. With a stationary truck, and the opportunity to work in the same town as heir family home, Dan knew this was an admirable decision not only for himself but for his entire family.

Although Dan enjoyed driving truck, he soon realized that cooking was a true passion of his. Dan developed this passion from his Mother, Agatha, who also loved to cook for others. Just as his mother's did, Dan's eyes light up with joy when he catches a glimpse of other's enjoying his culinary creations.

Through word-of-mouth, and of course mouth-watering cuisine, Dan's Taco Wagon burgeoned, and as a result, outgrew its Mount Salem location. In 2015, the food wagon made its move to its present location on Main Street in Aylmer. This location has allowed the Froeses to be closer to their core cliental, family, friends, school, and church, all things that are near and dear to the Froese's hearts. This move also helped their business to become more prosperous due to its central and prominent location.



Dan, Lisa, & their Children



Hawaiian Burger



Famous Tacos

## Taco Bout A Culinary Delight! (Continued)

On the menu you will find tacos, burritos, burgers, fries and much, much more. Although, the Froeses put their own spin on these traditional menu items, which keeps people coming back time and time again. With their own seasoning powder, with the appellation slow heat, and a salsa that Lisa stresses is Dan's homemade "HOT" salsa, foodies can enjoy their meal at any level of spice they so choose. Diners can also turn up the heat by ordering bacon wrapped jalapeño poppers, just one of Dan's special creations.

If spice isn't your forte, there are other signature items such as their Hawaiian bacon burger or fries supreme, two of the most popular items, closely followed behind their famous ground beef tacos. In the summer months, Dan's is the perfect one-stop-shop for dinner and dessert. With signature soft serve ice cream, milkshakes, sundaes, and deep fried Mars Bars, a stop at Dan's will leave your taste buds tantalized.

The Froeses are proud to be a family run business and treat all of their customers like family. They want people to know that "Food is our passion and we like

to innovate, so if you have any unique suggestions, let us know, you might just see it as a special to try out. If there's one thing you need to know about Dan's Taco Wagon, it's that almost everything is

handpicked from the source by Dan himself. "Everything is also cooked on the stove," Lisa Froese stated "we don't have a microwave". Dan prides himself on supporting the local community, whether it's purchasing fresh meat every day from the local butcher, or produce from a local market, you can be assured that the quality of food being served is nothing but the best.

The Froeses are happy to see both new and familiar faces each year when they open in April until mid-November at 550 Talbot Street W, Aylmer. Open Tuesday – Saturday from 11am -7pm for food, and 11am – 9pm for ice cream, visit Dan's Taco Wagon to try one of his culinary delights for yourself!



# Elgin County Awards Funding in Support of Local Culture and Events

Festival and event season has officially begun in Elgin County! To help kick-off the most anticipated time of the year, Elgin County Economic Development and Tourism will be providing funding to four local events as part of the 2019 Festival and Event Partnership Program (FEPP).

This year's successful FEPP grant recipients are the Rosy Rhubarb Festival, Off the Wall Art Show, Bayham Beachfest, and the Sparta Scarecrow Festival, who will receive a combined total of \$4,000 in funding.

"Elgin County's towns and villages come to life during festival and event season," said Tourism Services Coordinator Megan Shannon. "With a vast array of events held by various community groups, residents and visitors alike are able to gain an insight into our area's cultural roots, while providing

recreational and educational experiences for individuals of all ages and interests."

This is the ninth year that Elgin County has encouraged organizations to apply for FEPP funding. This funding is put in place to help enhance the quality of events offered in Elgin County. Applicants are selected based on program criteria, which includes, but is not limited to, attracting visitors to the County; retaining local spending; and enhancing the quality of place by organizing festivals and events within the community.

Elgin County encourages all local festivals and events in the area, and congratulates them for their significant contributions to the cultural landscape.

To learn more about all of the festivals and events happening in Elgin this summer, visit: [www.elgintourist.com/events](http://www.elgintourist.com/events).

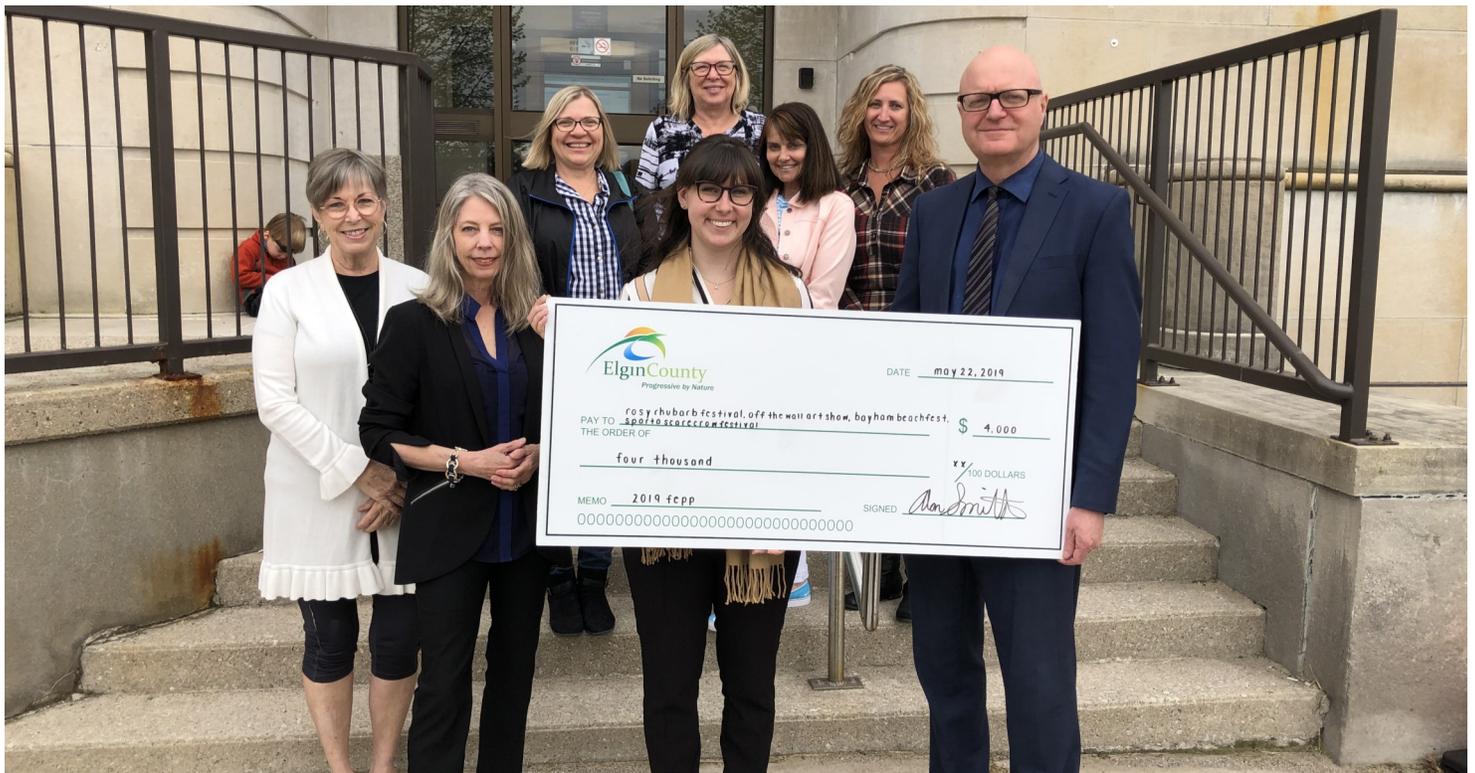


Photo: Megan Shannon, Elgin County Tourism Services Coordinator; Alan Smith, Elgin County General Manager Economic Development; Marcia Pensa, Penny Crichton, Off the Wall Art Show; Kim Poole, Pat Stannard and Carol Olmstead, Rosy Rhubarb Festival; Trudy Bunde, Sparta Scarecrow Festival. Absent: Terri Vansevenant, Bayham Beachfest.

## Summertime and the Living is Easy in Elgin County

Although it may not officially be summertime just yet, here at Elgin County Tourism we are ready for summer! Over the past few months we have been working diligently to prepare for the most anticipated time of the year, when Elgin's landscape and culture comes to life. We are happy to share that our 2019 Visitor's Guide is out on the shelves, our 3 summer students have settled in at our tourism kiosks, and our tourism cruiser has undergone a makeover. Now we just need some sunshine and warm weather to come our way...

To help plan your adventure packed summer, there are numerous ways to stay informed and up to date. Our 2019 Official Visitor's Guide is your one stop shop to everything Elgin! From arts and entertainment to shopping and restaurants, wineries and farmers' markets to services and events, we couldn't be more thrilled to share one of the most beautiful parts of Southwestern Ontario with you. Our Visitor's Guide can be found at most tourism attractions across the County, but can also be picked up at one of our 2 tourism kiosks (the Port Burwell Lighthouse, or the Port Stanley Visitors Centre), or at our Main Office (450 Sunset Drive, St. Thomas). Stop by and you'll be greeted by our summer students, Brian, Courtney, or Paige, who will provide you with a plethora of information, and a smile! If you want to plan your #ElginEscape before you trek to Elgin County, you can also call our Main Office to request a copy to be mailed to you at (519) 631-1460 x168.

Our website [www.elgintourist.com](http://www.elgintourist.com) is updated regularly with great tidbits of information to get you excited about your next Elgin adventure. Our "Elginsider" section provides an excellent insight into life in Elgin County, from none other than locals who are ready to provide you with the inside scoop. The events calendar is an excellent resource to help you explore new parts of the County, as well as discovering our cultural roots!

Our Facebook and Instagram accounts have become the face of Elgin County Tourism and we encourage you to follow us at @elgincounty to see Elgin's true beauty.

With 120 kilometers of pristine Lake Erie shoreline, more than 100 kilometers of meandering hiking and cycling trails, and 9 Carolinian-forested Provincial Parks and Conservation Areas, there's adventure around every corner this Summer in Elgin County.

