

# Belleville shows solidarity with Ukraine

By Ron Lavoie

From fundraising events and donation drives to displays of Ukrainian flags and mural art, Belleville is stepping up and showing moral, physical, and financial support for the people of Ukraine.

On Sunday, residents attended a poetry reading fundraiser at Christ Church Anglican on Coleman Street. The event featured readings of the poetry of Ukrainian patriotic poet Vasyl Symonenko. The fundraiser was organized by Corinne Sykes and Myra Symonenko. The latter was born and raised in Cherkassy, Ukraine. She and Sykes have a son, Gordiy, who was also born in Ukraine.

On March 5, nine days after Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, they also organized a successful fundraising and donations drive at Market Square during the Saturday Market.

Sykes was overwhelmed by the response at the drive: "We thought we might get a few carloads of items and a few dozen people. Hundreds came through, and 20 pallets (of donated items) and \$12,000!" The donated items are currently being shipped to Ukraine via Poland.

There are other signs around town of Belleville's support for Ukraine. Ukrainian flags can be seen all over, including at the CAA Arena, Loyalist College, and private houses about town. Local artists are also getting involved.

Chris Bennett paints a lot. Bennett is a local artist and instructor. One of his recurrent themes is the butterfly. To show support, Bennett recently completed a Ukraine-themed example. Bennett comments on the greater meaning of the work: "It was made as a reminder that life is precious and should not be taken

for granted." Not for sale, it remains on display at his studio, Art Works, on North Front Street.

Ruby Curtis-Cowen is a London-born illustrator who immigrated to Canada in 2018, settling in Belleville. When the invasion began, she immediately started to think about what she could do to help, "given that I was only able to donate a small amount and volunteer online."

Curtis-Cowen put the word out: she would volunteer to paint Ukraine-themed art on any business for a confirmed financial donation to help efforts in support of Ukraine. The Yoga Hub on Pinnacle Street requested a mural, but Mrs. Rees' Vintage Beauty Parlour on Dundas Street was the first to take her up on the offer. Michele Rees' husband has family in Ukraine, and several of her clients have Ukrainian roots. For Rees, the mural outside her business has resonance beyond the crisis in Ukraine, and it serves as a reminder: "The pandemic has been so hard on the community and the world, including Ukraine. Small businesses across the globe have struggled, families have lost loved ones, and many are feeling emotionally taxed. We only have to look at what Ukraine and its people are now having to live through, on top of the years of pandemic struggles, to see how much worse it could be and how blessed we are."

Rees appeals to the Belleville community: "I would ask that 'Bellevillians' try to put themselves in a position of helping within their community and if possible sending anything that might help the families that have had to flee their homeland... Together we can make a BIG difference."



Photo by Ron Lavoie

Chris Bennett displays his Ukraine-themed butterfly painting, "All War is Bad," painted to show solidarity with the besieged country. Belleville has shown strong support for Ukraine as it copes with the Russian invasion. Bennett says, "It was made as a reminder that life is precious and should not be taken for granted." For more photos, see page 6.

# Graduating photojournalism student takes his placement abroad to Uganda

By Paige White

Felix Chagnon, like so many other photographers, prefers to be behind the lens telling stories. As a graduating student of photojournalism at Loyalist College, it's atypical to flip this script around. Yet as many peers, parents, and those close to graduating students will tell you, it is important to celebrate your successes along the way.

Chagnon's story in this instance, however, starts with a failure instead of a suc-

cess. Chagnon joined Loyalist College after completing a diploma in photography from the Cégep of Matane, when he was planning the opportunity of a lifetime following graduation to work abroad for an assignment in Morocco. Like so many travel plans, the pandemic caused Chagnon to cancel his trip.

For so many photographers, a camera is a reason to go somewhere with purpose, witness something, and as Chagnon points out, photography at its best can be used to amplify lesser heard voices. The

lost opportunity in Morocco, and the significance of working abroad was not lost on him.

When Loyalist College co-ordinator, Frank O'Connor sent information to students before a class outlining the opportunity to work in Uganda with an NGO, Chagnon submitted right away. He had luckily had a portfolio ready to go and with a new website refresh, he began the application process while O'Connor taught his online class.

Chagnon got the call to work with

Cal Bombay Ministries to document the "Gardens of Hope" project, which works with South Sudanese refugees in planting gardens to work towards food security. Cal Bombay Ministries also does church-related work and has worked on urban farming.

After the organization has done their own documentation, Chagnon is being brought on to document work with fresh eyes. Chagnon explains his job is to show donors where the money is going and the impacts that donations can have on peo-

ple's lives by contributing to causes like food security.

One thing Chagnon made sure to pack was a new soccer ball and pump. He knows that beyond his core directives from Cal Bombay Ministries, there are more stories to unfold. Chagnon says, "I want to see what people do to stay happy despite the hardships" while living as refugees. He knows that soccer is an activity that he play with kids while connecting and learning more about the community.

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# Brunch is back, baby!

By Luke Best

Peterborough's newest restaurant, The EL[P] added some glitz and glamour to its weekend service as it hosted two sold-out drag brunch events on Sunday.

The EL[P] is a newly opened gastropub in the heart of downtown, taking over the former location of Hot Belly Mamas. Owned by Greg and Amanda da Silva, The EL[P] is the second location to their popular establishment in Cobourg, simply named "The El."

"We're new to Peterborough, and the community has seemed to embrace us. We've been open for just over 10 days, and it's going great!" said Greg da Silva.

The EL[P] was packed with onlookers, ready to welcome back drag brunch in Peterborough on Sunday afternoon. The event, Hot As El, had an all-ages 11 a.m. show followed by an adults-only version at 1 p.m. Both were hosted by Just Janis and featured three additional drag queens, Banshee Waylon, Sahira Q and Betty Baker.

"I've performed at the El Cobourg before, but this was my first time at their brand new Peterborough location, and it was such a stunning and welcoming environment," said Baker.

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Photo by Luke Best

Betty Baker works the crowd during a drag performance in Peterborough hosted at the EL(P).



## Student...

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Chagnon says, "I just want to meet the people and tell their stories as best as I can while trying to do their stories justice. If my pictures can help someone, donate a little more, or to help people, at the end of the day, I did my job, right?"

From mid-March to early April Chagnon will be working in Uganda at the tail end of his final semester at Loyalist. After Chagnon's first international assignment is complete, his work will be featured on the Cal Bombay Ministries website. Along with photos and video work from this project Chagnon's work can be found online at <https://felix-chagnon.pixpa.com/>.

**Felix Chagnon, a graduating photojournalism student from Loyalist College, stands outside Toronto Pearson Airport as he prepares to leave for his placement abroad.**

Photo by Ethan Cairns

# Brisk dip raises money for charity

By Saddman Zaman

Josh Pearsall (29) fire fighter of city of Belleville made some interesting comments about Polar Plunge special Olympic sports.

He said, "It is for a good cause. People come out and we cut a hole in the ice, and they are able to jump in for a quick dip and are able to handle it."

Every year, money is being raised for the special Olympics in this area and its being held depending on ice conditions.

Pearsall said, "More and more people come out every year."

Pearsall also said, "You gotta make sure there is enough ice for people to walk out safely and we are able to cut holes in the ice to get smoking water for people to get into."

"Definitely, you want some guys in the water that's what we are kind of doing today," said by Pearsall.

Pearsall discussed about safety issues, "When you jump in cold water, it kind of takes your breath away a little bit. You lose your meaning movement and extremities."

When asked about the success of the event, Pearsall said, "Everybody did pretty good today. We did not have to help anybody too much."

With warmer temperatures coming, it's a reminder for people being safe on the ice.

Belleville fire department checked this whole area and made tests results to make it safe for everyone.

"We always treat any ice like its unsafe and that's why the fire depart of Belleville is here on standby," stated by Pearsall.

Going forward, Pearsall like to encourage people to wear personal floatation device on the ice anytime they on the ice. Because no ice is considered safe ice especially at this warm weather coming.

Pearsall also stated, "You want to make sure people are vigilant about ice conditions and if they don't know about it, its better not to go out on the ice."

Anytime you go on the ice, you should be wearing personal floatation device.

Pearsall quoted, "It is super important."

If someone go in this water with the temperature right now, he will have



Photo by Saddman Zaman

Participants jump into the frigid water on the Bay of Quinte for a Polar Plunge fundraiser for the Special Olympics on March 11.

about ten minutes of movement. After that, you will start sinking. Your muscles get so cold that you will not be able to move. In this water, you got about an hour to survive.

Kyle Christopher (34) fire prevention officer with Belleville fire emergency services stated interesting facts about safety precautions on the ice.

He said, "If you are wearing a per-

sonal floatation device, it gives rescuers an hour to get to you when you are still alive. If go in without a PFD on, you will start to lose movement in your extremities and start drowning if you are unable to reach ice surfaces."

When asked about how water temperature conditions, Christopher said, when the water becomes isothermic and ice starts to form, its about 4 degrees

Fahrenheit.

If someone falls into the water without a PFD on, the person should try to get their arms on the ice. With this cold temperature it will try to freeze yourself on the ice so that you don't go back in the water, and it will help you float on the water.

Christopher also wants to remind people about, "With the time change

this weekend, we like to encourage the residence of Belleville to check on their smoke alarm batteries and carbon dioxide alarm system. We recommend changing them to every six months."

To see more on the polar plunge, click on the link:

<https://vimeo.com/loyalistphotoj/freezin>

# Artist offers pet portraits in support of Ukraine

By Paige White

A Toronto artist is putting her talents to use in support of Ukraine.

Natalie Very B is equal parts illustrator, muralist and most recently an art therapist. In her words, these things all combine to create one big Natalie. Recently, she has put out a call on social media: "Ukraine needs our help now. Donate at least \$30 to any Ukrainian fundraiser, send me your receipt, and I'll draw your pet's portrait."

Another part of Natalie's identity is that she grew up in Poland and moved to Canada at 18. Just like Natalie's creative endeavours, both are essential to her identity as a Polish Canadian. This means Natalie grew up with many Ukrainians at her border, many of whom remain friends today.

"To know that all of a sudden, there's a war that is pointless, and not in any way reasonable... this reminds me of exactly what happened to Poland in World War II."

Natalie never expected to get as many responses as she did, needing to cap it at 100 pet portraits. That meant sending over \$5,000 in support of Ukraine.

"I just want a sense of justice. And since I'm an artist, that's one way of doing it, I decided that I know how to draw," said Natalie, who also thanked her social media following for taking action.



Submitted Photo

Natalie Very B's pet portraits have brought in over \$5,000 in donations towards any cause that supports Ukraine during Russia's ongoing invasion.

Natalie says that donations receipts she received showed that money went to many different causes within Ukraine, ranging from the military, pet shelters or directly to the Red Cross. Most people who donated asked for files to print their digital pet portraits in order to bring them off a screen and into the world.

Natalie thinks "that they will also be a little memory for them of something that they did that was meant to help others."

When speaking more broadly about her creative practice, Natalie says that "one of the most important parts of my practice is to create a sense of empowerment for people, especially for female-identifying folks. As well, through artwork, through creating these paintings, that people can resonate with and that people can see themselves with."

After speaking with Natalie, she took to social media again on March 14 saying that pet portraits are back in action. For this second time around, she is upping the ante with a \$50 donation up to an additional 50 portraits that will again support Ukraine.

When not making pet portraits, Natalie's work can be found both online and in person at the many murals she has completed in her home base in and around Toronto. She also sells work online and offers various workshops all while balancing equal parts illustrator, muralist and art therapist.



(Above) Betty Baker does the splits during a performance to I Am Cow, by The Arrogant Worms.

(Right) Just Janis mid lipsync during a performance at Hot as El, Peterborough's newest drag brunch.

Photos by Luke Best

## Drag...

Continued from Page 1

"The staff was so lovely, the venue is gorgeous, and being onstage again feels amazing. The El[P] is honestly just the kind of venue that downtown Peterborough needs. Some where that everyone can feel welcomed, somewhere exciting and electric, and somewhere to enjoy yourself and be with others," added Baker.

"I can't wait to visit Greg and Amanda soon. They've created an amazing place that feels like a step into somewhere magical," said Baker.

While drag has become a staple in Peterborough for a while, there hasn't been a set venue where you can see it consistently. Da Silva is happy to leverage his past experiences to fill that void.

"We had worked with Betty Baker over in Cobourg, and we had three drag brunches there already, and it's always been phenomenal, it's just great energy, and we really we appreciate it. So when Janice reached out to us and asked us if we want to do it, we're 'like yeah, of course, we're down,'" said da Silva.

During the sold-out shows, the drag

**'It feels amazing to be back on stage and performing again. (I can finally pay my bills again!) I thought the El show was a total hit. I hope to be doing more as the year continues and I am very grateful that the Peterborough audience loves drag and enjoys what we do.'**

Sahira Q

queens paraded around the venue lip-synching and dancing to songs, while guests enjoyed their choice of breakfast and offered up cash tips to the queens. The closing performance, a group number to the song Time Warp, had the audience out of their seats dancing beside the performers.

"I have to say they're kind of the leaders of doing safe shows throughout the pandemic, and it's just so much

fun! Like you come here, and there's just pure joy. It's so great. That's what I have to say coming to a drag show is pure joy," says Shawna Blackwood, who brought her mother with her to see the show.

Drag performances were on and off during the pandemic as Peterborough's Queens followed all the safety protocols that were in place. More so than not, shows had to be cancelled. It's challenging to lip-sync while wearing a mask, and after spending hours doing their makeup, most wouldn't want to cover it up anyways. But as of recently, the stages have opened back up.

"It feels amazing to be back on stage and performing again. (I can finally pay my bills again!) I thought the El show was a total hit. I hope to be doing more as the year continues and I am very grateful that the Peterborough audience loves drag and enjoys what we do," says Sahira Q, who performed and worked as a DJ during the performances.

Peterborough has made it clear that they love drag. The Gordon Best Theatre sold out last weekend when the second season winner of Canada's Drag Race, Icesis Couture, came to town.



Photo by Annie Duncan.

Stephen Matyasfalvi fixes the hair of husband Matti Matyasfalvi who sports a multi-coloured 555 Brewing Co. sweatshirt. The owners of the PECish Baking Co are partnering with 555 Brewing Co in Picton to raise funds for local charities.

## Bakery fundraises for charities

By Annie Duncan

Local bakery in Milford, PECish Baking Co, owned and operated by Matti Matyasfalvi and his husband Stephen Matyasfalvi, have partnered with 555 Brewing Co in Picton to raise funds for local charities.

Spent grain, which is used in the brewing process, is given to Matti and Stephen to incorporate into their bread. They make a dedicated loaf with the spent grain, and a dollar from every loaf is donated to a charity in the area.

"It was very important to us, starting the business and buying this place, that we are a part of the community," says Stephen.

In addition to their funds produced by the bread, they are also hosting a bake sale and raffle called Bakers Without Borders on Mar. 27 at the 555 Brewing co patio.

They have engaged roughly 40 local restaurants, kitchens, chefs and bakeries in the area to come together in support for the events occurring in Ukraine. A hundred percent of the proceeds from the event will be donated to the Canadian Red Cross.

"It's making sure that we aren't just here open handed taking from the community, we want to be able to give something back as well," explains Matti.

For more on the bakery, click on the link:

<https://vimeo.com/loyalistphotoj/feelingpecish>

# Opera company returns to stage

By Kayla Isomura

Amplified Opera is returning to a live audience in Toronto, Ont.

This weekend, the arts organization is premiering AMPLIFY 1.0, a live concert series “highlighting diverse stories and perspectives within classical music” at the Museum of Contemporary Art.

“Each concert is a unique grouping of artists where their shared identities are coming together to unpack the theme that we proposed,” said Teiya Kasahara, co-founder of Amplified Opera. “One is called MisogyME, one is called Wreck-onciliation and one is called Spotlight: Out on a Limb.”

This year’s themes focus on toxic masculinity, Indigenous claim on Western classical music and the experiences of disabled persons within the opera world.

Each show is double-billed, said Kasahara, meaning audiences will experience two concerts per show. They will also be recorded with the possibility of Amplified Opera streaming them in the future, she said.

Aria Umezawa, Kasahara’s Amplified Opera co-founder, said the concert series follows AMPLIFY Beta, the organization’s first concert series in 2019.

“Not only is it about representation and feeling seen, but having a space to express these really, sometimes, very challenging experiences and memories, whether they’re traumatic or they’re joyful or anything in between,” she said. “And to be able to not only share, but to learn from others who are having similar or adjacent experiences.”

“I think one of the most meaningful pieces of feedback I’ve gotten from one of our artists was [when she] came up to me and said, ‘Is this what it feels like to be respected in a workspace?’”

The pair said they first founded Amplified Opera nearly six years ago after working in the industry for over a decade.

“We each had been experiencing frustrations about the inequities in the opera

industry, being racialized and also seeing our colleagues . . . being overlooked, pushed aside, judged and criticized for different things [including] gender,” said Kasahara, who is also an opera singer. “We decided to create a space where we could really centre equity-seeking artists of these backgrounds, so they could have a voice and tell their stories in the way that they want to tell them.”

Working in the opera industry, Umezawa, whose background is in directing, said she also felt conversations around equity and inclusion were impossible due to an emphasis on artists being “high-calibre.”

“All of these invisible barriers were being put into place around creating accessible opportunities, all of these invisible hurdles like we just can’t see the artists that are there, they don’t exist,” she said. “So I think part of it was just not only let’s create the space but let’s be a shining beacon for what is possible when artists are given the permission to express themselves authentically and in ways that feel creatively fulfilling to themselves.”

While Kasahara and Umezawa said Amplified Opera is filling this gap, they said they are still learning how to support, give space and get people to the stage.

Prior to the pandemic, the organization was focused on production, but Umezawa said 2020 forced them to pause and readjust.

As a result, she said they began to focus on education, advocacy, research and culture change, in addition to producing work.

Although returning to a live stage, Umezawa said Amplified Opera will continue the work they started during the pandemic.

Additionally, Umezawa and Kasahara said they both look forward to live performances again despite navigating changing health restrictions.

“I almost started crying in one of the rehearsals just because it was such a healing bond to hear live music,” said



Photo by Kayla Isomura

**Teiya Kasahara, 36, and Aria Umezawa, 34, sit inside Ethica Coffee Roasters, a café near the Museum of Contemporary Art, after working on installing their upcoming opera concert series called AMPLIFY 1.0, which will be performed at the museum from March 17-20.**

Umezawa.

As for Kasahara, they said performing live, regardless of the audience’s energy, is a powerful experience.

“That in-person connection and interaction is so ephemeral and special

and unique, and you can’t repeat that moment or that experience ever again,” they said. “You don’t get that in doing a video recording . . . so I think that’s really exciting but it’s also very daunting because it’s we just came out of a very

high peak of Omicron and now it’s back to live.”

AMPLIFY 1.0 runs from March 17-20, 2022. For more information about Amplified Opera, visit [amplifiedopera.com](https://amplifiedopera.com).



## Moments in time

Photos of Hiroshi Okuda are seen in a family photo album owned by his daughter, Sachiko. In 1942, Hiroshi was living in Vancouver, B.C. when nearly 22,000 people of Japanese descent living on the west coast of B.C. were forced to leave their homes, many interned in camps in B.C.’s interior. While Sachiko grew up in Montreal, Que. with a sense of Japanese Canadian community, she said her father’s wartime experiences were largely unknown to her until she received a box of his items from her sister who was downsizing. Now living in Ottawa, Ont., Okuda reflects on what she discovered in Mr. O’s box and what she learned about her father. For more on this story by Kayla Isomura, click on the link:

<https://vimeo.com/loyalistphotoj/sachikookuda>

# Realistic-looking items created by Picton artist

## Unique art created with clay

By Annie Duncan

Chelsea Seymour is a polymer clay artist located in Picton, who creates tiny polymer clay models of realistic-looking items to make into keychains, jewelry and other custom pieces.

Seymour was always very artistic growing up and learned to sculpt while her mom was working as a cake decorator, teaching her to work with modelling fondant. She always enjoyed drawing and creating things with her hands.

“Playing with clay has always been an interest to me. It’s really about learning how to take something and replicate it in a smaller scale. Sizing is everything,” explained Seymour.

Seymour started working with polymer clay when her daughter requested proportionate food to feed her dolls. The pair worked to cre-



Photo by Annie Duncan

**Chelsea Seymour looks to her customized glass piece filled with octopus and other sea creatures. The piece took her roughly four days to complete.**

ate tiny intricate food that was more size appropriate for her daughter could play with.

“We are both pretty tiny, I only stand four foot eight, so we decided tiny models would be our thing,” explained Seymour.

Polymer clay is a moldable and versatile material that when baked properly, becomes hard plastic.

Seymour decided to try and sell her art after her boyfriend asked one day, ‘why not?’ Slowly but surely, she has seen interest in her business grow and continues to create new ideas for tiny trinkets.

After leaving one of her models in a local dispensary in Shannonville called Better Buds and tagging them in a post on Instagram, the owner of Better Buds reached out to Seymour about selling a small selection in their stores for her.

Another dispensary called Urban Green also caught wind of her work and took a selection of her designs to a location in Toronto to sell.

Seymour created an Instagram, tinytrinkettime, where you can find a selection of her artwork for purchase and order custom pieces.

# Enthusiasts gather for reptile expo

By Ethan Cairns

"I can't pick which one I want; they are all so cute!" said a girl staring at containers filled with baby tarantulas.

Reptile enthusiasts and herpetofauna fans from all over the GTA come to see what the exhibitors have worked so hard to show off. The Toronto Reptile Expo was held on Feb. 27 at the International Centre in Mississauga and was the first event with less strict COVID-19 regulations.

"Everyone's happy to be back for our post-COVID show," said Grant Crossman, president and pet event director of the Canadian Pet Expo, along with the Canadian reptile expos.

"We've been putting on consumer events promoting responsible pet ownership now for over 25 years." Crossman owns many pets and has a long history of speciality and owns Port Credit Pet Centre.

The Toronto Reptile Expo is a huge marketplace for breeders from all over Ontario to come to show off their challenging work, skills and exotic pets.

"We are here promoting the message of responsible pet ownership and that captive breeding is the key to successfully conserving a lot of the species and animals that you have here today," said Crossman. "Breeders are here this weekend to promote the offspring and the breeding they've had."

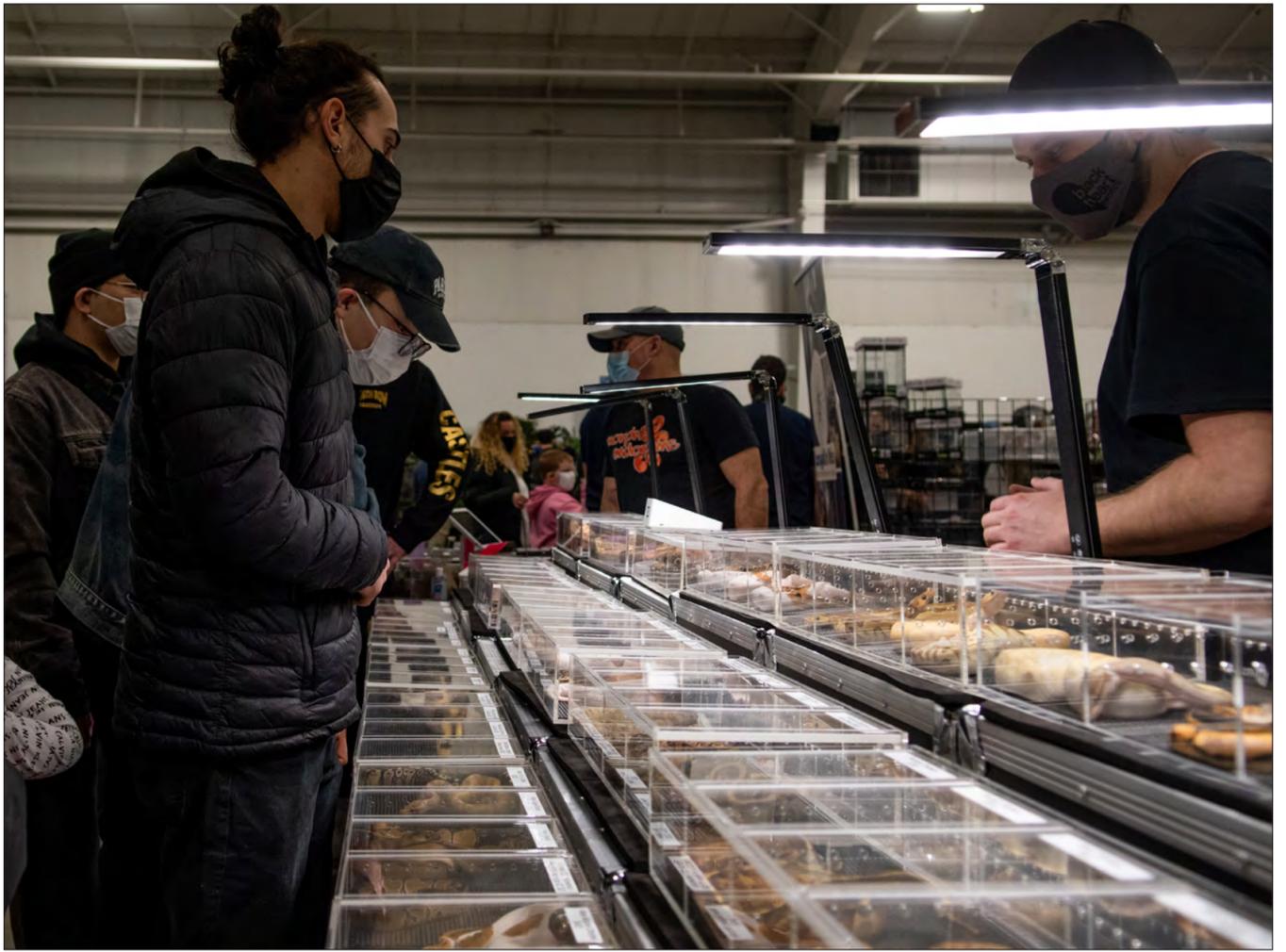
Reptiles that have been bred in captivity have never lived in the wild. The benefits to having captive bred reptiles are that they are normally easier to tame, healthier, and can be bred to have sought-after genetics.

"One of my favourite reptiles is the crested gecko. They're an example of a species that nine years ago was considered endangered, if not extinct, and now it's fulfilling a lot of the special ones and people's families and companions, and has been brought back into a larger population, thanks to the captive breeding by many of the breeders here in Canada," said Crossman. "Habitat loss is a major factor of how the human population is endangering more animals."

There were many new pet owners buying their first exotic pet on the weekend.

"Responsible pet ownership is a lifetime commitment and our message to anybody that's actually looking at bringing a companion pet or companion speciality pet into their families every day, you have to understand that it's a lifetime commitment," said Crossman.

"These are not novelties. These are



(Above) Reptile enthusiasts came out in full force for the Toronto Reptile Expo at the International Centre in Toronto.

(Below) A small bearded dragon is being shown off to a potential buyer at the Toronto Reptile Expo where many vendors come to sell their reptiles that they have spent time breeding in captivity to sustain endangered species.

Photos by Ethan Cairns

not one-offs. These are unique beings and animals and lives. We want people to understand that support mechanisms are out there, product knowledge, veterinarian care, or advocacy groups."

"We are putting our heart and passion. We want to see the families as well put their heart and passions and understand 100 per cent that it's a long-term commitment," said Crossman. "People really want to learn about the animals and are committed to the companionship. The event brings the awareness of how much enjoyment a companion pet brings to everybody."

The Toronto Reptile Expo is planned to open for another weekend on April 3.



# Artist follows her passion for illustrations

By Luke Best

Everyone can relate to getting their art put up on the fridge as a kid, but how many people had their masterpieces hidden inside the freezer? Brooklin Stormie is a Peterborough artist who used to have precisely that experience.

"Growing up, my parents had this big chest freezer in the basement that didn't work anymore, and they filled it with my art. I don't know why they did that, but it was just this chest freezer full of art," Stormie remembers.

"When I asked them why, instead of saying they just need storage, they told me, 'because it's fireproof, and if the house burns down, we would still have your art.'"

Stormie graduated from the Ontario College of Art & Design in April of 2021 but has been drawing for as long as she could hold a pencil. It's been a significant aspect of her life for as long as she can remember.

"I've always loved to draw, and before I could write, drawing was how I told stories. I would draw, and sometimes I'd get my parents to like scribe things for me. I couldn't read them, but it was just important to me that I got it out, and I got it down somehow," she said.

Following that passion, Stormie decided to apply to the illustration program at OCAD. With a sense of purpose, she was sure that that program was right for her, and didn't apply to any other programs or schools. If she didn't get in, she would just apply again next year.

Many artists don't believe in structured learning for the arts, but Stormie excelled at working within the program's structure.

"I kind of thrive in that environment, where there are a lot of parameters to work within. I feel like it's a fun challenge. The design aspect was really nice because I felt like it was more about visual communication rather than emotional transcendence. It was more of something that I could route my head around and more like principles that I was trying to follow," Stormie said.

Attending college helped Stormie develop her unique style of artwork, inspired by the works of Noelle Stevenson and Rebecca Sugar.



Brooklin Stormie, a Peterborough based artist works on her current project. Stormie graduated from the Ontario College of Art and Design in April 2021.

Photo by Luke Best

"I didn't really have a style when I started, to be honest. I just kind of was messing around and sort of making it up as I went along. I was reading a lot of comics and watching a lot of animated movies, so it was probably like a mix of all that. Now I feel like many of my influences influence me conceptually rather than visually. When I think about the times before when I was drawing things that felt very

derivative, I felt like I wasn't listening to my own inclination for how I wanted to draw things, and then now that I am, it's a little easier for me to just kind of let it happen with it thinking too much," she says.

For Stormie, creating art doesn't come from a spurt of inspiration. She describes it instead as more of an exhale. It is a way to process the experiences you take in

and let them back out in a productive and therapeutic way.

"I think there's this really weird societal perspective that art is sort of like silly to devote time to, or it's not a good career, it's not impressive, it's not going to go anywhere. My family wasn't like that, but I've known a lot of other people who have that sort of the perspective. I think that's really sad. I feel like we should all get the

chance to chase what makes us feel like we're all lit up inside," Stormie shared on the importance of art.

"I feel like a lot of people just quit before they get to a point where they really feel fulfilled. I don't mean it has to be a career. I just think making time for it is really important. I encourage people to follow whatever makes them feel like them."



Volunteers at Market Square organize donations made in solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

Photos by Ron Lavoie



(Above) Belleville resident Myra Symonko reads Ukrainian poetry at Christ Church Anglican. The event was a fundraiser to support Ukraine. (Left) In solidarity with the people of Ukraine, Ruby Curtis-Cowen painted a mural at Mrs. Rees' Vintage Beauty Parlour.



(Above) A Ukrainian flag is pictured outside a home in East Hill Belleville. The city has made many gestures in support of Ukraine during the invasion by Russia.

(Right) Anne Marie Wolf, a yoga instructor at Yoga Hub, walks past a mural painted in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. Belleville's support for the people of Ukraine has been extensive, including a donation drive last Saturday at Market Square.

