A BRAVE NEW WORLD
Our innovators will continue to change the world.

InvestDurham.ca/innovation

Durham Region, Ontario, Canada

Photo courtesy of Ontario Tech University

SPARK
BUSINESS & INNOVATION MAGAZINE

SPRING 2022
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Innovators in Ontario are giving us hope for the future of the environment.

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The pandemic inspired these five organizations to change the way we connect — for the better.
THE FUTURE OF WORK
From how we clock in to how we take meetings, the workplace is in the midst of a major revolution.

ON THE COVER
ILLUSTRATION CREDIT
iStock/aelitta.

MEETING THE NEED
The past two years have forced us to rethink how we access essential services.

NEW AND IMPROVED
Celebrating new businesses and new opportunities.

COLDWELL BANKER COMMERCIAL
First established in 1906

Coldwell Banker Commercial
Graham Healer
Broker / Managing Director
289-634-1525

Sерvakіs wе оффег
- Office Leasing
- Retail Leasing
- Industrial Leasing
- Commercial Property Acquisition/Disposition
- Industrial Property Acquisition/Disposition
- Business Brokerage

cbcrmr.com

Life with SUBSKRYB is REWARDING.
Vehicle As A Service

subsksryb.com

THE SPARK // SPRING 2022
Instability

When you look at the major events in Canada’s history, and the period of time that immediately follows each era, you can clearly see a country in transition. You can pinpoint the ebbs and flows of the economy, of growth and innovation, of rethinking and reinvention. And you can see how companies, sectors and people adapted to the demands of the day (in other words, how Canadians pivoted in times of yore, even if they didn’t call it that).

The COVID-19 pandemic is no different, of course: Every aspect of our nation has been affected. Every sector is changed — some companies are completely unrecognizable from March 2020. But the interesting thing is, in many cases, that’s actually kind of awesome. We’re certainly not denying that the current public health crisis has made for a very tough time, for everyone, but this issue of The Spark proves that it’s not all bad.

When we were planning this magazine, themed around “a brave new world,” our editorial team was reminiscing about reading the namesake Aldous Huxley novel in school. We all remember Brave New World as a book that stays with you. It is oft-discussed and controversial, there’s no denying that, but it makes you think long after you finish the last page.

One of the lines in the story is, “Stability isn’t nearly so spectacular as instability.”

Think about that for a minute: We all aim for stability, in one way or another, but the last two years have been an exercise in instability. At times, that has felt terrifying. But if you really drill down and look at the ways in which Canadians discovered untapped resources, new products, ways to fill gaps in services, better ways of doing things...it’s nothing short of spectacular. It’s more than resilience in action — it’s ingenuity under pressure. These companies are painting the silver linings on this time in our history, and we say that’s definitely worth celebrating.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed making it.

Until next time...

Lisa Van de Geyn
Content Director

Katie Dupuis
Content Director

In praise of

Under pressure

You wouldn’t believe some of the everyday items that were invented in times of turmoil.

World War I: Kleenex, zippers, sanitary products, teabags, stainless steel
The Great Depression: Sliced bread, Scotch tape, car radios
World War II: Radar, computers, penicillin, duct tape
The Cold War: GPS, the credit card, Tupperware, hairspray, cat litter
$20 Million Our Cancer Campaign Launches in Durham Region

We can’t fight this cancer battle on hope alone. Community support will upgrade technology and bring new, innovative treatment options to cancer patients and their families.

Lakeridge Health Foundation has launched Our Cancer Campaign with an ambitious $20 million goal to raise funds for research, education, capital projects and equipment that will advance cancer care across our hospital, region and beyond.

1 in 2 of us will develop cancer in our lifetime. It’s one of the biggest and most life-altering foes our world and community have ever faced. It’s not your cancer or mine. It’s our cancer. And it’s time to back up hope with action.

For more information visit: www.OurCancer.ca

Partnership Opportunities:
From sponsorship, corporate events, cause marketing and point of sale fundraising, there are many options for your business to get involved. Partnering with our Foundation can be beneficial for your brand:

• reach new audiences
• promote your business
• align with one of the largest charities in Durham Region
• give back to your community

Your support will accelerate the ongoing work of our expert medical teams. All cash donations, of any amount, will make an impact.

Please contact Rita at rnave@lh.ca to learn how your business can help change the course of this disease.
Wherever business takes you

The business landscape has changed. No matter the industry sector, market location or specific areas of business you need addressed, MNP is there… where and when you need us.

Niko Anastassakis, CPA, CA
905.579.4926 | niko.anastassakis@mnp.ca

MNP.ca

Isaac Wanzama

The founder of geekspeak Commerce told us about his a-ha moment, what he’s reading and his greatest asset.

BY LISA VAN DE GEYN

On geekspeak Commerce. It’s an e-commerce services agency focused on helping our clients sell more online with product content, data services and custom e-commerce programs and solutions. We enable companies to succeed in the online channel, which is increasingly important, especially given the rate at which e-commerce has grown and continues to grow.

On his “a-ha” moment. geekspeak started off as a one-person writing company. I had a contract with the Ontario Ministry of Family Services as a technical writer, writing about software they were releasing within the ministry. I quickly realized there was a market for people with this technical writing skillset. I had worked for ad agencies in Toronto previous to that, and so I knew where copywriting fit in, and the fact that taglines helped sell products. In that moment, I realized I could build a firm around this technical copywriting expertise.

On current reads. Homo Deus by Yuval Noah Harari. It’s a futuristic philosophy that dives into what life would look like once we’ve conquered things like war, famine and disease as a species. It’s very interesting.

On worst habits. Having the patience to let ideas work themselves through to fruition is something I see as an opportunity to work on.

On must-haves. Other than the people in my life, I would say the technology pieces that are always in reach. I generally like to be pretty connected, even on the weekends, so tech is a big part of my life both from a consumer and a business standpoint.

On love for the team. I get to work with people of so many different skillsets and backgrounds, and everyone brings a different component to the team due to the nature of the work we do.

On office life. Our office in Whitby is actually a former nightclub that we transformed into a really unique office space. Everything from the artwork to the equipment to the private workspaces we’ve built are awesome. All I ever have on my desk is my notebook, phone and laptop. I like to keep my desk very clear because it helps me think in an uncluttered way. You may find parts of my office space cluttered, but you’re not going to find much other than the essentials on my desk.

On on great business advice. Always be prepared to pivot. Understand that ideas need to change, and they need to change quickly.

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Spark’s Picks

Our team loves Durham Region something fierce, and everyone has their favourite places and products in the area. In this issue, we asked members of our crew for their recommended restaurant, spa and garden centre.

From The Archives

BY KATIE DUPUIS

General Motors Canada has strong roots in Durham Region. The Oshawa Car Assembly plant was opened in the early 1900s by a local company that was known for making carriages. More than a century has passed and yet the company remains a mainstay of the community.

Sometimes we have a hard time remembering that our country has weathered storms equal to the COVID-19 pandemic before. At this point, very few Canadians remember the Great Depression and how it affected the prosperity of entire communities, or just how the World Wars changed the landscape of the economy from coast to coast to coast.

We feel like we’re unique in our experience, but the fact is, our grandparents and great-grandparents also endured prolonged turbulence and the periods of transformation that followed.

The City of Oshawa is home to a living, breathing example of this, of how the events of the day can lead to change: GM Oshawa.

Believe it or not, GM’s legacy in Oshawa dates back to when carriages were the main mode of transportation. The McLaughlin Carriage Company Limited, founded in 1869, was the largest carriage manufacturer in the British Empire. It wasn’t until 1905 that they became interested in building automobiles under the McLaughlin banner, and two years later, the McLaughlin Motor Car Company was formed. The first cars were McLaughlin models with Buick engines. McLaughlin Buick cars were built out of the Oshawa facility until 1915, when the company began producing Chevrolet vehicles for both the Canadian and U.S. markets. In 1918, McLaughlin and Chevrolet merged with General Motors to form the company that is now General Motors Canada Limited.

In the decade that followed, the company grew in size and began to produce a variety of vehicles for both domestic and international markets.

Check it out:
1621 Pebblestone Rd, Courtice, Ont.
witzkesgreenhouses.ca

THE SPARK // SPRING 2022

Spark’s Picks

If there’s a more relaxing place in Eastern Ontario than Uppliva Sauna and Steam, I don’t know what it is. From the steam, sauna and cold plunge circuit to their incredible treatment options, it’s pure bliss from the second you walk in the door.

“I love Spicy Affairs Indian Cuisine in Oshawa. When I want a meal that’s just for me, without considering my children’s palates, this is always my pick. My favourite dish is the mango chicken, and I love that it’s served with aromatic rice and naan.”

“One of my happy places in the area is Witzke’s Greenhouses. They have a fantastic variety of annuals for any garden, and I love the succulent planters. They’re so easy to take care of, and I love that they can provide greenery indoors all year long.”

From Carriages to Cars

The Nordic-style set-up of Uppliva’s spa circuit includes warming up with vapour and steam, cooling off under cool rain showers, plunging into cool waters and finally resting fireside. Add a massage or facial for ultimate relaxation, and don’t forget to check out the selection of handmade bath and body products.

The Spark’s Picks

Check it out:
1140 Wellington St. W., Suite C100, Ottawa, Ont.
uppliva.ca

Check it out:
84 King St W, Oshawa, Ont.
spicyaffairs.ca

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Marketing Director

Marketing Director

Marketing Director

Marketing Director

FROM THE ARCHIVES

BY KATIE DUPUIS

MELANIE MARLER

Design Lead

Combine decades of experience with seven acres of growing space, and you’ve got Witzke’s. The family-owned and operated company has been serving the community for more than 50 years, providing customers with everything they need to create the gardens of their dreams. Witzke’s operates three seasons of the year and will reopen for 2022 in March.

Check it out:
1621 Pebblestone Rd,
Courtice, Ont.
witzkesgreenhouses.ca

SUNDAY LEK

Design Specialist

This quaint, cozy restaurant specializes in authentic Indian cuisine and will accommodate all kinds of requests and functions. They cater, host group events, offer gluten-free and halal options and so much more. Spicy Affairs is also wheelchair-accessible.

Check it out:
84 King St W,
Oshawa, Ont.
spicyaffairs.ca

KRISTINA SVANA

Marketing Director

Check it out:
1140 Wellington St. W.,
Suite C100, Ottawa, Ont.
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Illustration Credit: iStock/Ekaterina Vakhrameeva.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

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Illustration Credit: iStock/JHVEPhoto.
leaps and bounds, expanding the facilities, product lines and staff. They altered the landscape of the auto industry with patented innovations like the adjustable seat and brake lights. By 1928, the Oshawa facility was churning out a car a minute. But then, in 1929, when the stock market crashed and plunged the country into an intense recession, GM felt its effects. With car purchases on the decline, the company had no choice but to scale back production. The community felt this hit, as many area families lost their livelihoods. Recovery was long and slow, and only began to show signs of growth in the mid-1930s – just in time for World War II to take hold.

While the Second World War was underway, Oshawa’s GM plant was retooled to produce vehicles for the Allied war effort, as well as aircraft fuselages, machine guns and other equipment for military firearms. The automobile industry in Canada, including General Motors, was instrumental in supporting the troops overseas, but it completely changed the industry across the country. At the end of World War II, the Oshawa plant ceased wartime production and was rejigged again to go back to producing civilian automobiles, but over the course of the company’s history, military vehicles were still rolled off of assembly lines simultaneously. The Oshawa assembly plant witnessed, and adapted to, many other ups and downs in history. Recession, changes to product demand, current events and other factors impacted the leadership, personnel, operations and more. In June 2009, the company declared bankruptcy, before the federal and provincial governments stepped in to help. By 2010, the company was turning a profit again.

General Motors announced in November 2018 that they would be closing the Oshawa plant as part of their global restructuring plan. This was, of course, unfortunate news for the community, given that GM had been a mainstay of the economy for more than 100 years. What was thought to be the last vehicle produced in the plant was completed in December 2019, and in the months that followed, the facility was retrofitted as a parts manufacturer and auto test track. But, like we’ve all learned during the past two years, nothing is ever really permanent and the Oshawa assembly plant was reopened in November 2021, overhauled to produce the popular Chevrolet line of pickup trucks.

What’s ahead for GM, and the auto sector in Oshawa, remains to be seen, but to stand back and consider how the company has changed over more than a century is truly a Canadian history lesson, and a case study in flexibility. To think, when you look at a 2022 Chevy Silverado pickup truck, it all started with a carriage in 1869.
For the companies profiled in the following pages, the pandemic was an exercise in ingenuity under pressure. Read on to learn more about how these businesses and organizations pivoted for the positive.

**SILVER LININGS**

**LISA TOWN**

This Whitby author is one of 17 women to contribute to WOVEN: A Collection of Stories Weaving the Fabric of Motherhood, Womanhood and Humanity, an anthology of short stories that hit stands in September 2021. The collection, published by YGTMedia Co, focuses on how we are impacted by generations past and how we will impact generations yet to come. The chapters, which each offer a different perspective on womanhood, address how our experiences—who we meet, the things we go through—are like threads in the tapestry of our lives. They make us who we are. Town’s chapter is “a love story, because of course it is,” as she told Neighbur Whitby last summer. Town donated $2 from the purchase of every book pre-sold before the publication date to the Durham Children’s Aid Society.

**SUSANNA KEARSLEY**

For this New York Times-bestselling author, Durham Region is home. Kearsley writes historical fiction and mysteries, as well as thrillers under the pen name Emma Cole. She has been the recipient of a Catherine Cookson Literary Prize, a number of Romantic Times Reviewers’ Choice Awards for Historical Fiction and a RITA Award for Best Paranormal Romance. Kearsley’s most recent book, The Vanished Days, is set in Edinburgh in 1707 and features a young widow named Lily Aitcheson who comes forward to collect her late husband’s lost wages. A former soldier called Adam Williamson is assigned to investigate her claim. This stunning tale delivers everything a great read needs—intrigue, adventure, romance and more.

**KEVIN CRAIG**

A double-threat author and playwright, Craig is no stranger to success. In addition to writing several young adult LGBTQ novels, as well as 12 plays that have been produced for the stage, they have racked up awards for their work. Their most recent novel, The Camino Club, was the 2021 Silver Winner of the Independent Book Publishers Association’s Benjamin Franklin Award. They have also taken home the Best Novel Award at the Muskoka Novel Marathon five times. The Camino Club, which debuted in October 2020, was inspired by Craig’s first walk across Spain on the famous Camino de Santiago. The novel features a group of wayward teens who are given the choice between juvenile detention and making the pilgrimage. The destination is the Cathedral in Santiago but the journey ends up mattering so much more than the end point. (Craig also has two more upcoming novels—Book of Dreams and Where is Ethan Sinclair, due out in 2022 and 2023 respectively.)

If you love to shop local, you might like to read local, too! We’ve rounded up three great picks from writers in the area to add to your bookshelves.
The pandemic inadvertently had a positive impact on the environment, with many nations reporting significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in 2020. Will this little bit of progress edge us toward flattening the climate curve? Innovators right here in Ontario are giving us hope.
CHEMICAL AND HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

Ten years ago, a group of firefighters discovered that the traditional foam products used for firefighting and deemed environmentally safe or biodegradable weren’t actually safe at all. In fact, these foams contained toxic, cancer-causing chemicals that were not only harmful to the firefighters that used them but to the environment as well.

These “forever” chemicals (like PFAS, FFO and ammonium phosphate) can absorb into human tissue. They also solubilize with water, meaning that these chemicals can run off into nearby rivers, lakes and wells. When they do eventually decompose, which takes centuries, they can absorb into human tissue. They also solubilize with water, meaning that these chemicals can run off into nearby rivers, lakes and wells. When they do eventually decompose, which takes centuries.

“Where we once had to try and squeeze in the door to have a conversation about how the chemicals in firefighting foam is impacting climate change and current wildfire tactics, communities and fire chiefs are now contacting us to learn more about how Eco-Gel is a safer solution for our firefighters and the communities they protect.”

REUSE/RECYCLING

End-of-life lithium-ion batteries and the battery manufacturing scrap that’s generated along the way are proving to be a global issue. Ontario-based Li-Cycle is on top of it.

Chemical engineer Ajay Kochhar and mechanical engineer Tim Johnston are the co-founders of Li-Cycle. They met while working at Hatch, a global multidisciplinary company that focused on hydrometallurgical and chemical plants to produce battery materials. During their time at Hatch the pair realized that there was a glaring lack of environmentally and economically sustainable recycling solutions for lithium-ion batteries. This prompted them to join forces and form Li-Cycle in 2016, to develop their own solution.

Together they created their patented Spoke & Hub Technologies which recover up to 95 percent of the valuable materials contained within end-of-life batteries and battery scrap waste generated during production. They then recirculate them back into the economy in a truly sustainable way.

This is a two-stage process. The first step is to take scrap from end-of-life batteries and battery manufacturing to their Spoke facilities where the material is reduced in size through a submerged shredding process. This generates three product materials: plastics, aluminum/ copper and “black mass” (a substance that contains highly valuable materials like lithium, nickel and cobalt). This unique process reduces harmful emissions, and as the water from the process is recirculated, it works to eliminate water waste, too.

The battery material is then taken to Li-Cycle’s Hub facilities (their first commercial Hub facility is expected to be operational in 2023) and put through a hydrometallurgical circuit. Here the materials are isolated in a water-based solution and transformed into battery-grade lithium, cobalt and nickel, which are the same quality as their original counterparts (if not better) and can be put directly into new batteries.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, Li-Cycle’s accomplishments over the last year are many. Not only did Li-Cycle make its debut as a publicly traded company in the U.S. listing on the NYSE, but it also struck agreements with key players in the industry like Ultium Cells (a joint venture of General Motors and LG Energy Solution) and LG Chem/LG Energy Solution. They also received several awards including Fast Company’s “Next Big Things In Tech” and announced new upcoming facilities in both North America and abroad.

But that’s just the beginning. By 2025 Li-Cycle plans to have 20 Spoke facilities and four Hub facilities around the world, to prevent end-of-life lithium-ion batteries from ending up in landfills and to further support sustainable global electrification.
I was so fortunate to have RioCan Yonge and Sheppard Centre as a client and eventually a partner who allowed their facility to be my testing ground,” Bhattacharjee says. “Testing in a lab can be very artificial. When you develop a product in tandem with a live client, like I did, it’s an integral part of the product’s success.”

Reipower now has its sights set on completing the MVP this year and adding features that will enable buildings to utilize government incentives to reduce emissions and costs while generating revenue at the same time.

In terms of Reipower’s effectiveness, RioCan Yonge and Sheppard Centre has only great things to say: “We implemented the recommended measures on the Reipower analytics platform and the measures reduced our annual cooling energy consumption by 25 percent,” says David Nobile, operations manager for RioCan REIT. “My initial reduction benchmark was 15 percent and Reipower achieved more than anticipated. We are planning to implement more measures as suggested by the platform in the near future.”

**Sustainable Development**

Access to clean water has long been a major issue but innovative companies like Purafy Clean Technologies are on a mission to change that. Launched in January of this year, Purafy’s multidisciplinary team was inspired to utilize the graphene-based materials manufactured by their parent company, Grafoid Inc., to develop turnkey products that are safe, easy to use and can be deployed quickly for water-related problems in Canada and beyond.

Just this past year, Purafy became the first company to utilize certified graphene-based materials for drinking water applications. By immobilizing graphene (a form of carbon that’s derived from graphite) within polymer matrices, Purafy is able to make polymers (molecules) last longer with changed surface properties. Using these specific polymer and graphene combinations, they are then able to enhance membrane filtration to efficiently tackle the problems that polluted water creates. While this system is useful for the filtration of home and commercial water, it’s crucial for rural areas heavily impacted by natural disasters or facing long-term challenges with polluted groundwater and boil-water advisories.

For example, one of Purafy’s products, the Portage, contains filters that can treat up to 300 litres per hour of contaminated water into clean, drinkable water. The filtration technology housed inside an indestructible case is extremely beneficial at disaster sites and for remote Canadian communities, some of whom have had boil-water advisories for more than 20 years.

“When you think of the abundance of fresh water that we have here in Canada and then think of the communities that must boil water for everything...that’s appalling,” Cameron Runte, vice-president of product development with Purafy says, “Imagine if we could change that. With our filtration systems we believe we have something that can change lives.”

**SUSTAINABLE ENERGY**

This year, Kingston-based SWITCH is celebrating its 20th anniversary. The organization was formed back in 2002 with the goal of promoting the economic development opportunities of sustainable energy adoption across eastern Ontario and, more specifically, the city of Kingston. It now connects with 2,000 partners within the Kingston community and, at its peak, included 140 private and public institutions, industry leaders and individual members that have included the likes of Quantum Renewables, Queen’s University, St. Lawrence College, RMC, Utilities Kingston and Sustainable Kingston.

From the very beginning, SWITCH’s mantra has been, “What can be done to lower greenhouse gas emissions?” and knowledge sharing has been the key component. This has been done by way of information sessions on solar electricity and wind energy, government grant programs to incite the adoption of sustainable energy methods, conferences focused on energy, technology literacy and economic opportunities, and monthly open meetings featuring thought leaders and new technologies, products and services in the sustainable energy space.

“Twenty years ago there wasn’t technology as ready as it is now to assist. There was no FIT program, no net metering, there wasn’t an abundance of solar panels and wind farms.” explains David Hyndman, chairman and president of SWITCH. “Helping our community understand these emerging technologies was key. As technology has become more mainstream, our mandate has changed from education for the sake of education to, ‘What’s new, what’s coming, what are the emerging trends?’ We want to keep up with what’s happening in this broad bubble of sustainable technologies, and knowledge sharing is key to the organization’s success.”

That said, one of the biggest benefits of SWITCH is the networking opportunities we can connect multiple resources to facilitate change. These opportunities have been a big draw for tech innovators who are able to educate everyone about the benefits of their technology.

When asked whether the pandemic has created more opportunities to make environmental progress, Hyndman replied, “The pandemic was key. The world that when there is a true crisis, government and society can react very quickly. The hope is that we’ll take that mindset and apply it to climate change. But it’s going to take getting out of our comfort zones and embracing change. Encouraging sustainable energy adop- tion is one technical component of the solution and SWITCH is good at that.”

**ENERGY REDUCTION**

Having consulted for large engineering companies, conducted energy audits for businesses like Square One Shopping Centre, and having acted as a shared energy manager for utility companies, Kaushik Bhattacharjee knows all about optimizing energy systems.

Today he’s the brain behind Reipower, a metering and monitoring platform powered by AI and machine learning designed for small to mid-sized industrial, commercial and institutional buildings to help them manage, monitor and optimize their power and energy consumption. Reipower helps buildings to reduce their energy costs and carbon footprint.

Here’s how it works: A sensor is placed into a building’s automation system (the system that controls the building’s HVAC). From the sensor, Reipower is able to collect data and train the AI component to know exactly how the building is operating and seek out better practices. Similar to the smart thermostats we use in our homes, Reipower can determine when an industrial building is occupied or unoccupied and can adjust the temperature based on the weather outside.

“When climate change there’s a lot of pressure for things to cut down on their emissions and move towards electrification,” Bhattacharjee says. “This can also cost a lot of money. Reipower’s optimization helps them to cut down on their basic energy requirements, reduce their carbon footprint and, through managing their cooling systems, lower their costs.”

With funding from Ontario Centre for Innovation (OCI) and support from Spark Centre and Durham College’s Al Hub, Reipower was able to develop its prototype with RioCan Yonge and Sheppard Centre being Reipower’s first energy audit. They were so impressed with the project that they’ve officially partnered with Bhattacharjee, offering their facilities for further testing and development.
It’s been a tough two years all around, but in any bad situation you can look and find the people who are doing good amidst it all. Whether it’s organizations like Hülpr who found a way to care for and combat isolation for those most at risk, or stores designed to make it easier for people to shop local and support those in their community, the pandemic has highlighted the importance of finding ways to help one another through it. Sometimes it takes thinking outside the box and getting creative, like the Art Gallery of Northumberland offering virtual programming and at-home art kits to provide a creative outlet when it was needed most, or the Capitol Theatre finding resourceful ways to re-unite artists with live audiences. Over the past two years we’ve been forced to determine what’s important to us and the resounding answer here is that the silver-lining is in the people, relationships and support that forged their way through a challenging time to keep us all connected.

Isolation has been a major issue during the past two years, with many struggling to stay connected to the people and activities they love and the services and support systems they need. These five companies found ways to help us support each other through a challenging time in history.

BY KAILEE SOMERS
ARTS & CULTURE
Appreciating various forms of art is often described as an enriching experience, so it’s no wonder that societies ground-ed in the arts tend to have enriched communities. Picturesque Northum-berland County halls as home to two historical treasures: The Capitol Theatre in Port Hope, Ont. and the Art Gallery of Northumberland (AGN) in Cobourg, Ont. which debuted in 1930 and 1960 respectively.
While both organizations felt the strain of the pandemic and had to find ways to adapt and reconnect, both are coming out on top with a renewed sense of appreciation, both for their place within the community, and for their community itself.

As a popular tourist destination, the Capitol’s artistic producer Rob Kempson says, “We are an anchor business that brings tourists to the region and populate our restaurants and shops and hotels, and we’re so thrilled to be doing that. We love the people here.”

Whether you look at the volunteers who have been with the Capitol for more than 25 years or hear of patrons who had their very first date in the original cinema and now bring their grandchildren to the theatre’s holiday production, those sto ries really reflect how the Capitol is woven into the heartbeat of the community. “We are about sharing stories, we are about creating memories, and we are about making connections,” says Kempson.

And those three pillars are really who we are as an organization.”

In order to stay connected, organi-ations had to get creative and at a time when people couldn’t access supplies that weren’t deemed essential, the AGN created Art-To-Go kits that were tailored for kids of all ages, and to the curriculum to aid students, teachers and parents alike. As Olinda Casimiro, the AGN’s executive director says, “When you engage with art, you’re also promoting well-being and creating that space or that niche for social connection. It’s really what we’re all about.”

When it was difficult to find safe places for artists to perform live for an audience, the Capitol introduced “Under The Marquee” — an event that saw the street closed for guests to enjoy live music. This community-focused event encouraged attendees to support a local restaurant (The Social Bar + Table) and dine at their reserved table in front of the theatre, or get a general admission ticket to listen without dining.

Of course many events were still cancelled or postponed for both, but both Kempson and Casimiro echoed that as busy organizations, it’s easy to get caught up in planning for tomorrow rather than the long-term, and both felt the silver-lining that came out of the pandemic was the time and opportunity it provided to reflect on who they are as an organization, what they provide to the community, and what they want to focus on moving forward.

Both organizations have exciting plans ahead and are looking forward to experiencing them alongside the people that mean so much to them. “We have this wonderful collection and this beautiful space,” says Casimiro, “But you know what? We’re nothing without people; they are our most important asset. Our community is so generous with their time and their conversation. The engagement piece there is so inspir-ing, and when a whole community can engage with what you’re trying to do and the messaging you’re delivering, plus the supporting of artists, that’s amaz-ing. Then you know the work that you’re doing is meaningful and can grow. I just love the people here.”

The pandemic has been eye-open-ing in many ways, thankfully with many positives mixed in amongst the negative. “We’ve really seen how important the Capitol is to the residents of Port Hope, Cobourg and Northumberland County at large. Those people have never wav-ered.” […] says Kempson. “We have the best audiences in the world and they’re sticking with us through this pandemic and that, I think, is the most beautiful piece. It’s the dream of any arts organi-zation, but particularly during a pandem ic to have that unwavering support from the community is huge.”

COMMUNITY CARE
When it comes to providing the utmost level of care for those in their communi-ty, the team at Hülpr are as passionate as they come. Kingston, Ont.-based Hülpr (pronounced “Helper”) is a niche transportation service tailored to those...
that need a little extra help (more than a taxi provider, but not a private ambulance). But calling them a transportation service does them a disservice because they do so much more than merely transport clients. As a team comprised of many retired healthcare professionals and those with careers in the service industry, they’re on a mission to enable people to age well at home and in the communities that mean so much to them.

Having recently launched with their current business model in January of 2021, Hülpr is now helping a large variety of people within the community. And as co-founder and CEO Tim O’Hara says, “The best thing about Hülpr is we help not just the client, we’re also helping the agencies, the caregivers, the families, the loved ones. And we’re linking with a lot of different support agencies throughout Ontario right now. We work with ODSP, Veterans Affairs, Indigenous Affairs, and a lot of the social workers at the actual hospitals and clinics and our services and name is getting out there and growing.”

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Supporting Local

Many small businesses have struggled to stay afloat amidst the pandemic, but the call to support local has been heard and we’re seeing a shift in consumer trends as many are choosing to support smaller, local companies over the big-box stores. Whether their aim is to shop more sustainably, opt for natural alternatives, discover unique products, receive better customer service, or simply help their community, today’s consumers are becoming more community-conscious and we’re here for it!

To aid in this, businesses like Markets Ontario (Markets) and Urban Market Oshawa (URBN MKRT) offer one-stop shops to bring the best goods from local makers together in single, convenient locations.

With locations in Bowmanville and Pickering, Ont., Markets features artisanal home goods, food, clothing and more from more than 150 local vendors. And URBN MKRT, dubbed “an elevated farmers’ market experience,” is located in downtown Oshawa and features some of the region’s finest vendors amongst their diverse array of cuisine and goods.

Supporting local entrepreneurs has never been easier, and as people re-think what they value and how they spend their money, we hope the shop local movement is here to stay.

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Supporting local entrepreneurs has never been easier, and as people re-think what they value and how they spend their money, we hope the shop local movement is here to stay.
From the way we clock in to the way we participate in meetings, the workplace is in the midst of a major revolution. Read on to learn about three of the companies leading the charge in tech, accessibility and employee benefits.

BY KATIE DUPUIS
B I G  D I G I T A L

Prior to the pandemic, BIG Digital was renowned for its bespoke experiential projects, largely using digital billboards and interactive displays to help agencies and companies build out physical marketing campaigns in the real world.

But, considering that the pandemic had a permanent effect on their services and offerings, their positioning in the market, their messaging and more. Read on for more about how their ingenuity, forward-thinking and perseverance has paid off.

“We recognized that there was going to be a lot more outdoor activity happening, and in order to capitalize, we saw that our innovation of elegant, indoor/outdoor displays deployed on-demand [could be gamechangers],” says Lampert.

BIG Digital had been developing an analytics platform to use with their existing technology, to get a sense of how people were interacting with their activations. But without the need for crowd intel, the focus became using the existing technology to help organizations through this challenging time. So, BIG Digital took a step back to look at its offerings — which include hardware (indoor/outdoor digital displays and billboards, etc.), integrations (gesture control, payment terminals, etc.) and software (what you see on the screens and how you interact, as well as analytics) — and figured out how its products could be adapted. “We took those digital billboards and came up with a concept called SafeChek, which is an amalgamation of technology we’d already used. It has a digital display and a sensor that looks at your face to see if you’re wearing a mask. It also has a temperature gauge to see if it’s within the acceptable range. It then asks you to enter your information for contact tracing,” says Lampert. The digital unit sends a message to the person monitoring visitors to say that the guest has met all of the public health requirements and can be allowed access to a building or business.

This change turned out to be a boon. “SafeChek got us thinking about how we might standardize and scale up, as opposed to having to build bespoke solutions for every client,” says Lampert. From there, BIG Digital created a standard line of products that are immediately ready for use, only requiring a forklift or pallet jack for installation. The units are easily moveable, completely weather-proof, wind-rated and more. Battery-powered units are also in the works.

“We recognized that there was going to be a lot more outdoor activity happening, and in order to capitalize, we saw that our innovation of elegant, indoor/outdoor displays deployed on-demand [could be gamechangers],” says Lampert. This streamlining of the business allowed BIG Digital to do more than just survive. These units can be found everywhere from condo sales galleries to government offices. And to think, two years ago, they didn’t know how the company was going to make it. Quite a pivot, indeed.

CLOSED CAPTION SERVICES (CCS)

When Larry Gavin retired from his broadcasting career in the early 1990s, he saw a pioneer-ing opportunity in his midst: closed-captioning services. During his years in broadcast, Gavin attended meetings at the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommun-i-cations Commission (CRTC) and could see that more networks and production companies would need to start incorporating closed captioning services to meet accessibility guidelines. With this in mind, Gavin founded Closed Captioning Services (CCS) in 1994.

“When his background in broadcast, he had colleagues in management positions across the country, so he kept an eye on the regulations to know who was going to have to start providing captioning when,” says Brooke Woboditsch, Gavin’s daughter and the president of CCS.

The visionary kept the company small, working out of his home and hiring freelance court reporters to keep up with the fast pace of live TV. “I was brought up in this company, starting out as a transcriber for off-line captioning,” says Woboditsch. “I eventually worked my way up to the general manager position.” But in 2015, Gavin’s health was declining and a period of transition saw Woboditsch step in as president; Gavin passed away in 2018, leaving the company in his daughter’s hands. CCS was re-evaluating their offerings at this time, given the industry-wide introduction of automatic or voice captioning (which is less accurate but

THE NEW OFFICE...AT HOME!

Working at the dining room table or your kid’s desk just won’t cut it if you’re permanently WFH. We asked interior and prop stylist Andrea Ford for some of her favourite home office product picks.

THE SPARK // SPRING 2022

PHOTO CREDIT: (previous spread) iStock/LightFieldStudios.

PHOTO CREDIT: (this spread) Brooke Woboditsch.

PHOTO CREDIT: (this spread) Brooke Woboditsch.
takes less time to train), Woboditsch spearheaded a rebrand of CCS as an accessibility company, offering a range of accessibility services in media, including remote Communications Access Realtime Translation (CART) work for remote and virtual events.

Fast-forward two years and the pandemic changed the game again. “We were just starting to get clients that were non-broadcast,” says Woboditsch. “When the pandemic hit, we lost maybe 30 to 20 percent of our work because live events were cancelled.” But then over the next few months, events like meetings, conferences, film festivals, panel discussions, and more shifted from in-person to online and CCS was poised to capitalize on the demand. “We went from 26 clients in 2020 to 96 clients in 2021,” she says. On the work front, CCS found itself troubleshooting the different modes of communication to offer the best possible service. Learning to integrate with different communications platforms wasn’t without challenges. CCS often uses StreamText to connect its captioners to different types of events, for example, which allows individual users to personalize their experiences. “Users can change the language, font size, contrast and other options in order to get a solution that works for them,” says Woboditsch.

CCS has come a long way from its early days, but more than 25 years after its founding, one thing remains the same: Quality is paramount. That, and to take a page out of founder Larry Gavin’s book and be willing to adapt to whatever’s next.

**BEFFI**

Patrick Dunn is a self-described “career insights and product development guy.” What that means is he’s spent his career helping other companies uncover unmet consumer needs and then helping them to create products to meet those needs. Before starting Benefi, he spent a handful of years working for a major insurer and provider of employee group benefits in Canada. It became clear to him that there was a really big problem that no one seemed to be tackling: consumer debt. “If you look at the income to service debt ratio, Canadians are in more debt than at nearly any point in the history of the country,” says Dunn. “It’s a pre-COVID problem, but for big chunks of the population, it has gotten a lot worse. This includes younger professionals, newcomers to Canada and other groups that often don’t have a good credit history established.”

Whether people have lost their jobs to the pandemic or other negative factors have taken their toll, many people have been driven further into debt during the past two years. As a result, says Dunn, they don’t have great borrowing options and feel they have no choice but to seek out predatory lenders.

Knowing this, many economists are predicting a K-shaped recovery, which means that for some of the population, the pandemic has been a good thing, limiting the amount of money they’re able to spend and bolstering savings. But for those in precarious financial situations, it has been quite destructive. “That’s why we exist,” says Dunn. “We help Canadians keep more of their money through better borrowing tools, better saving tools and financial literacy.”

Benefi, which is both an employer-sponsored lender and a financial literacy platform, partners with companies to offer employees as a part of their benefits packages (Benefi has three signed clients, with about 500 employees each). As the first employer-driven program that empowers people to become more financially stable, businesses can be sure they’re optimizing the full potential of every employee. Benefi has freemium and premium models and companies can get the platform at no cost under certain circumstances.

“What’s interesting about Benefi is that we’re the first lender that actively tries to wean you off of consumer debt. It’s a strange position to be in, but our relationship is with the company,” says Dunn. "That means that our happy path is driving great employee outcomes at the end of the day."
Icelandic horses, exotic chickens, four Nigerian Dwarf goats on the farm, full-time 13 years ago, and in 2015, with a place to relax on weekends (the two and Jaffe was keen to have a peaceful place to relax on weekends), they’re each poised to continue making a splash in their respective fields.

HAUTE GOAT
Debbie Nightingale and Shaw Jaffe didn’t start out as farmers. In fact, they were busy working in TV and film production, living in Toronto. But decided they needed a change of pace. They bought a farm in Campbellford, Ont., 15 years ago. Nightingale wanted to raise animals and the couple had been fully booked for experiences. “We found people were super supportive, telling us not to worry about issuing a refund and said they’d reschedule. That sure helped a lot.” After the closure, when things started to open back up, they had to re-evaluate how they’d deliver their experiences. “They’re the heart and soul of the operation — connecting and engaging with the animals. We knew we’d have to operate on a smaller scale, since, at the time, just five people were allowed to be together and we were used to taking out groups of 60 to 80 for shmurgling,” she explains. The couple raised their prices by $20 per person to mitigate having smaller groups. “We knew we had a unique, high-quality offering so we decided to see if the market agreed with us. We were shocked and delighted that people didn’t miss a beat. They were appreciative that they could socially distance. They felt comfortable coming back.”

During COVID they’ve come up with inventive ways to welcome locals and visitors. Not only are shmurglies and knuffle shuffles continuing, they’ve added a disc golf course to the property and have started alpaca sleepovers, where guests can stay overnight in the bunkie right inside the alpaca pen. In August 2021, the team hosted Goatchilla, which included a pick-nik dinner, live music, goat races and vendors. The cafe transitions to takeout when indoor dining is closed; chefs created a menu filled with farm-to-table wraps and soups. They got licensed last fall and sell primarily local wines and ales.

“We have all sorts of plans in the works for 2022. It’s important to us to make our animals and nature accessible to guests,” Nightingale says. “We’re coming out guns blazing and have really stepped up. We have all sorts of plans in the works for 2022. It’s important to us to make our animals and nature accessible to guests.”

GIRL BOSS CHESS
Irigid Gayle had been teaching chess to Toronto elementary-school students before March 2020. She was working for a male-dominated chess company that saw few women like her teaching. — in fact, she was one of the only mothers in the organization. When the pandemic hit, she was asked if she could pivot online. So, within a few days, Gayle had a host of online classes she had to deliver.

Around the same time, news of a derogatory remark made by one of Gayle’s male colleagues was circulating — the comment was that women and girls shouldn’t play chess when on their periods. “I have two daughters and I couldn’t imagine this person teaching my girls. This was the straw that ultimately broke the camel’s back. I knew I needed to create a space just for girls — a space that wasn’t male-dominated where girls could thrive.”

Girl Boss Chess was born on a camping trip. Gayle and her partner Patrick Kavanagh talked about the company and sat by the fire coming up with names. They envisioned Girl Boss Chess as the only online collective that could empower girls through playing chess. When they got home, they had to see if the idea had legs. “There’s a virtual group for the Black community in Toronto where you can post business listings. We found them — would we have to shut down?”

They recently created a new program called Girl Boss Chess Playland, which allows students to gather on Sunday afternoons to play other girls and practice their skills. “What’s really beautiful is to see these girls who weren’t given the opportunity to play chess and to see how many of them love it and just want to play. Who knows how this will impact their lives as they grow. Chess has been proven to help with math and reading skills, it builds so much confidence,” says Gayle. “I wish I’d had it growing up.”

COMMANDA COLLECTIVE
There’s a deep meaning behind Commanda Collective’s work. It started with Susan Espeanlin, the matriarch of Taylor and Madison Fox’s family. Susan was a bead weaver and her great-granddaughters have followed in her footsteps.

“Our great-grandma grew up in the Nisqually First Nation region. Her maiden name is Commanda, our namesake. Sadly, we don’t know a ton about her early life, other than the fact that her father died when she was about two, and she attended St. Joseph’s Residential School for Girls in Spanish, using the six chess pieces as the stars of each case. We tell a story that deals with Medieval history of the piece so there’s a holistic understanding — so players don’t just see a plastic piece, they see a castle and mortars. We talk a lot about the queen and empowerment. We excite them about playing chess and the stories are positive exponential gateways,” says Gayle. Students range in age from four to 74, but the average age of girls who is eight, which Gayle says is prime time to get girls interested in chess.

Gayle and Kavanagh are also busy working partners that are aligned with their mission and values, including Advancing Girls in San Diego, Girls Inc., Girl Up (the United Nations foundation for girls) and Ingenium Museum in Ottawa. They recently created a new program called Girl Boss Chess Playland, which allows students to gather on Sunday afternoons to play other girls and practice their skills. “What’s really beautiful is to see these girls who weren’t given the opportunity to play chess and to see how many of them love it and just want to play. Who knows how this will impact their lives as they grow. Chess has been proven to help with math and reading skills, it builds so much confidence,” says Gayle. “I wish I’d had it growing up.”
“We have loved watching people trust our art enough to be one of the only pairs of big, bright earrings in their collection. It has been a reflective journey to unpack this, but it has inspired a lot of growth in both of us.”

Ort...,” says Taylor. “During her life, she never opened up about her experiences at school, but one silver lining is that she held onto her Ojibwe language and was a fluent speaker for the rest of her life. Our favourite part of her story is her beadwork. In her life, she made hundreds, if not, thousands, of beaded leather moccasins and mits.”

Taylor and Madison didn’t grow up beading. Susan didn’t teach any of her seven children how to bead (probably because ceremonial expression like beading was against the law, and she didn’t want to put them at risk). It wasn’t until Taylor lost her job and moved home to Kingston in March 2020 that she taught herself her great-grandmother’s art using Instagram videos, YouTube tutorials and her intuition. “After a few months of practice, I taught Madison and we started to create for friends and family. For us, it was so much more than just making earrings. We wanted to create a platform to share wisdom and create common ground for learning and sharing. That’s why our designs are rooted in story and meaning,” she says. The pandemic allowed the sisters to get their business going. They use glass seed beads, ethically sourced silver and 14-karat gold-plated findings, as well as semi-precious gemstones in some pieces. Their earrings are all fully handmade. Design time can take 30 minutes to five hours, while creating the product can run three to seven hours.

“One of the ways the business has affected us is by strengthening our relationship with each other. Our beading table is a portal of sorts — a safe space to share and grow. Through the act of sitting with each other and beading, we have opened deep conversations about intergenerational trauma, the future of Indigenous communities, residential school legacies and more,” says Taylor. “The other avenue it has opened is a growing network in the Kingston Indigenous community.” Madison says learning to create bold designs was one thing but having the confidence to wear them is another. “We have loved watching people trust our art enough to be one of the only pairs of big earrings in their collection. It has been a reflective journey to unpack this, but it has inspired a lot of growth in both of us.”

Feedback on their stunning art has been impeccable. “Our ancestors viewed everything as having a living spirit. We know our earrings have a living spirit. We weave them with intention, and we deeply believe that each pair finds the person it is meant to be with. We have heard this back from our customers. We hear people say their earrings give them confidence, make them feel energetically protected, and make them feel more like themselves.” As they say on their website, commandacollective.com, bead by bead they are weaving a way forward — a way into the new world.

POHO BOHO
Port Hope’s Poho Boho atelier was born about a year after Kim Miller had an ah-ha moment. Her friend, a tattoo artist, has a shop on busy Walton Street in Port Hope, but when the pandemic hit, she had to close. “We were chatting, and I had a great idea — I told her I’d help her out by leasing the space for six months to do a pop-up because retail was still allowed to be open,” says Miller. “I’m an entrepreneur and I’d always wanted to open a community hub where I’d have Northumberland artists showing their wares. I wanted to celebrate everything bohemian and local. It seemed like the perfect time, since a lot of artists didn’t have anywhere to sell their work with markets closed during COVID.” She reached out and pitched her proposal to local artists. It was a hit and Miller took a leap.

In July 2020, she started Poho Boho with 12 local artists, including Carolyn Scatterty, founder of On Second Thought Upcycling and her current business partner. “I adored Carolyn’s upcycling. She reimagines textiles, thrift and vintage pieces and turns them into one-of-a-kind pieces,” says Miller. “We launched and the shop did really well. Carolyn was selling more out of Poho Boho than any other outlet. She would hang out at the store. She liked interacting with the customers and we became fast friends.”

When December rolled around and Miller’s lease was up, she and Scatterty got talking about how they could keep Poho Boho alive. “I was destroyed when the six months was over. I didn’t want to stop doing what we were doing — it was just going so well,” says Scatterty. Around the same time, Scatterty had to move out of the studio space she was leasing. “All I could find was retail space. Kim and I talked about it, and we decided to find a storefront downtown and keep the business going — we’d partner to keep Poho Boho, and I’d have my studio right in the store.”

The pair found the perfect location, right across the street from the tattoo shop. “We kept the same concept and sustainability angle. We are all about re-loved, reclaimed and reimagined pieces with a boho vibe. Whether it’s clothing or furniture, everything is a one-of-a-kind piece,” says Miller. Both partners say customers love coming in to hang around the store and shop, try things on and just enjoy. “We wanted a place where people would come and hang out — a community hub of likeminded people who could express themselves here,” says Scatterty. There are currently about 30 makers in the space, but the store is always changing. “As things sell, I redesign. I love to look at the space and try to figure out how to transform it,” says Miller. “All textiles and furniture have a history and energy and when you give it more energy and love, people are attracted to it.” The makers in the shop — Scatterty included — are just as thrilled as the customers; many had to pivot to social media when the pandemic hit, but Poho Boho gets them in front of clients. “We’ve been told there’s a joyful energy in the store,” they both say. “We tend to live in the moment and let it evolve.”
At times during the past two years, many people have found themselves struggling to access essential services. For the four companies that follow, this concern inspired them to find better ways to keep people connected to the care they require.
THE SPARK // SPRING 2022

Stories, a not-for-profit virtual health guide to help people who’ve been there.

GRIEF STORIES
Grief is the emotional response we feel following a loss. It can be caused by a host of situations, from divorce to losing a loved one. It can be caused by a challenge. It can be caused by a loss from both trained healthcare professionals and people who’ve been there. When co-founder Sean Danby’s wife died after battling breast cancer, he suffered from insomnia. “I asked him what he did at 3 a.m. and he told me he goes online and searches for something to make sense of it all,” says Danby’s friend and co-founder Rob Quartly. “What he was finding was all in text form and the last thing he felt like doing at that time of night was reading. So, I said, we’re both filmmakers — why don’t we make a couple of films for people like you.” Those three films have become more than 500. They average about two to three minutes long, and they’re a blend of professionals and lived experiences. The idea, as Quartly tells it, was to support people at whatever stage of grief they were in, but also to make them feel less alone. Users can watch clips that pertain to trauma, suicide and perinatal loss, for example.

The Grief Stories team has created a variety of offerings on its platform—videos, blog posts and a podcast. (They also offer music and art therapy as coping tools for healing.) “Grief is a universal thing, but it’s also a very individual thing. We don’t talk about loss or dying in North America, and we want people to feel like they can talk about it or listen to stories about it in their own way. Grief Stories is a community health resource, vetted by healthcare professionals, that’s available 24/7.”

The timing was nothing short of ironic: It had always been seen as a virtual project, but when the pandemic hit, everyone was pushed online. “We knew how to create the content remotely,” Quartly and the team weren’t going into hospitals, dealing with funerals and memorials when you can’t gather and other pandemic-related issues,” says Quartly. The new content aims to help visitors to the platform navigate isolation and loneliness, as well as deal with the anxiety brought on by the pandemic. “People share their stories and insights and 99 percent of the time they tell us how cathartic and validating it’s been,” Quartly says. “People receiving the content are finding a huge benefit, too. I can see the need for this being executed anywhere. There’s universality to it and we’re on the leading edge of building this kind of community resource.”

EMRO.CLOUD
Imagine receiving a cancer diagnosis during a global pandemic. Doctors are overworked. Employees are full. You feel isolated and alone. It’s a scary time, and now you’re saddled with the news that you have an aggressive disease.

EMRO.CLOUD is a new cancer-care-on-demand service that was developed by EMRO.Doctors to help patients through their cancer experience. It’s an innovative virtual consulting platform for cancer patients and their families, as well as for cancer-care professionals. The podcast — which is a significant part of the platform — launched in February 2020, just before the lockdowns. It’s hosted by registered social worker Maureen Poltard. She says sharing stories can be very therapeutic. “When we hear stories, we often connect with aspects that resonate with us. When I have a guest who talks about a particular type of loss, such as the death of a partner, there will be some listeners drawn to these stories because they are trying to make sense of their own experience with a similar loss.”

Grief Stories recently launched a new program funded by the Northumberland United Way to expand and develop their content around coping during COVID. “We have videos of professionals talking about how to cope with loved ones in hospitals, dealing with funerals and memorials when you can’t gather and other pandemic-related issues,” says Quartly. The new content aims to help visitors to the platform navigate isolation and loneliness, as well as deal with the anxiety brought on by the pandemic. “People share their stories and insights and 99 percent of the time they tell us how cathartic and validating it’s been,” Quartly says. “People receiving the content are finding a huge benefit, too. I can see the need for this being executed anywhere. There’s universality to it and we’re on the leading edge of building this kind of community resource.”

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but Szabo and her team have reached out to more than 8,000 in North America, and they’re hoping to ramp up in the next couple of months. “We’ve been getting great feedback. We’ve been told that it’s easy to use and simple for everyone to be on it together. Physicians like the fact that they can take notes, generate reports, and a lot of information can be shared between their patients and colleagues. It’s truly a one-stop shop for everything related that patients need.”

If this wasn’t reason enough to support EMRO.Cloud, Szabo says it’s the perfect tool for advocating. “As a patient, it’s up to you to take charge of how you’re going to get treated, just like you take charge of every other aspect of your life. You need to know you can take charge here, too. You’re not just a passenger in this process.”

**RECOVERY TECH**

It was back in 2018 when Dr. Kasra Afsahi started discussing new ways to help stroke patients using virtual reality and artificial intelligence with other professionals and virtual reality specialists. A physician and entrepreneur with more than 20 years of experience in management, marketing, business development, and operations, Afsahi was no stranger to the process of designing and developing products that helped patients. He believed there was more that could be done to help those who had suffered a stroke recover more successfully. According to the Heart & Stroke Foundation, 62,000 strokes occur in Canada every day. While 13,000 Canadians will not survive the stroke, about 60 percent of sufferers are left with some disability, while 40 percent need intense rehabilitation and support.

Recovery Tech Inc. was founded a year later with Afsahi taking the helm as CEO. He and his team are on a mission to help patients with neurological disorders get back to their normal life using a host of new technologies, including virtual reality, mixed reality and AI. “We designed the product from A to Z with stroke patients in mind,” he says, adding the company designed and developed a game-based VR interactive rehabilitation application that focuses on therapeutic motions that are most beneficial post-stroke.

What they designed is a game-based product that focuses on upper extremity rehab and aims to get patients to increase their range of motion in the shoulders, wrists and elbows. Here’s how the game works: Players grab balls of different colours that are shown on the monitor. They hold them and toss them into baskets of the same colour at the bottom of the screen. The difficulty increases as the game goes on, and players are rewarded after each successful movement.

Virtual reality therapy is at the cutting-edge of research. According to the Heart & Stroke Foundation, a five-year study of six tele-rehabilitation projects found that “technology can be just as effective in delivering post-stroke therapy.” Published in the Journal of Telemedicine and E-Health, research shows that more than 40 percent of stroke sufferers need some rehabilitation, and more than 60 percent need support with daily activities when they leave the hospital. Tele-rehabilitation interventions like virtual reality, computer gaming, video conferencing and wearable activity monitors have been shown to be sometimes even better than traditional face-to-face therapy.

Some experts believe playing video games can hasten a person’s recovery. Plus, video games are more enjoyable and can be done at home.

When COVID-19 hit, Afsahi thought of patients, and how they might need significant physical, psychological and cognitive rehabilitation post-illness. Recovery Tech researchers studied two clinical research projects (with the cooperation of McMaster University) and found patients of COVID-19 related strokes and post-COVID stroke rehabilitation who used the company’s VR product had better, more successful outcomes. “A VR program implemented on a COVID-19 stroke rehabilitation unit for patients and healthcare providers was rated as highly satisfactory with perceived benefit by survey respondents. Participants commented that the use of VR was useful in coping with isolation and loneliness and could be implemented within the context of clinical care for COVID-19 patients as part of a comprehensive rehabilitation model,” the company’s findings say.

Afsahi has been busy presenting Recovery Tech’s VR products at conferences in places like Vancouver, Paris and New York, where he often receives accolades for his work. “It’s a very exciting time,” he says. “We are working on so much more to come in the future.”

**SAGA-LGBTQ**

Belleville, Ont.-based non-profit SAGA (Sexuality and Gender Acceptance) LGBTQ Education and Support Services of Canada Inc. was created in November 2020 by executive director Slacey Love-Jolicoeur, a transgender woman who has a storied history. She came out at the age of nine back in 1968, at a time when her parents and the medical community weren’t ready for trans people. After facing years of discrimination and bigotry (and eventually after having her gender-affirmation surgery), Love-Jolicoeur was working at a mental health organization when her supervisor was asked if she’d be willing to visit a prison to see a trans person there. She immediately agreed and had an eye-opening experience at the facility—the individual told her there were many people inside who needed someone trustworthy to talk to. She realized how mental health supports for LGBTQ-identifying people were so desperately needed in the prison system.

“So, I decided to put together a proposal to start a group. I started in 2014 with 12 people at that institution and word spread through the system like wildfire.”

Today, Love-Jolicoeur works with 13 institutions, seven halfway houses and supports more than 350 LGBTQ offenders. She provides invaluable prison support and educational services for the people she meets inside institutions (via group facilitation and one-on-one peer counselling), she also offers competency training for prison staff, pre- and post-operation support and assistance, and a thriving reintegration program for transgender offenders. She’s the coordinator of TRANSForum Quinte, helping Belleville’s transgender community, and sits on the city’s Inclusion Committee.

Prior to COVID, Love-Jolicoeur typically had group sessions of 25 to 30 offenders in prisons and ran two groups: LGBTQ and friends (for anyone interested in supporting someone who identifies as LGBTQ) and for people in transition, considering transition or who have already transitioned. “When March 2020 hit, it became a devastating effect for the offenders not to have the support they were used to. I felt for them and decided to purchase a 1-800 line and it had approval through Corrections Canada so it could be on the regular call lists. I allowed them to call, and they could call me, and I would call them back,” she explains. “Since starting the line, I’ve more than 2,900 phone calls and I take every one of them myself. It’s been a huge transition to adapt in a world where we’re so restricted, but I’ve been able to help people using the number and I’ve continued to do a lot of educational presentations to many organizations— including Corrections Canada, school boards, the Parole Board of Canada and others—via video.” She says she’s spent countless hours speaking to families, lawyers, the Crown, parole officers and more. “It’s been a constant amount of work and I embrace it as an opportunity from the comfort of my home.” Her program has even started to expand across the country—she’s helped trans people from Nova Scotia and British Columbia.

Outside of her work in prisons, she provides post-op recovery assistance to trans people that includes transportation to and from the hospital in Montreal, and a three-week respite care program offering meal preparation, housework, laundry services, etc. as patients recover from surgery. Over the course of the pandemic, she provided this service to six trans women.

A champion of diversity, inclusion and acceptance, Love-Jolicoeur’s programs are clearly working and making a huge difference in the lives of so many. “It’s a never-ending amount of work to navigate through the system and find the resources to provide the services,” she says candidly. “I do it because it’s so needed. These people are so appreciative of the help and mental health supports we’re able to provide for them. It’s turned into a tsunami of amazement.”
Startups are the largest independent startup community, actively educating, inspiring, and connecting more than 5 million entrepreneurs in over 125 countries through fireside chats.

**Educate » Inspire » Connect**

Let’s be honest with each other: It’s been a long winter. (Well, if we’re being perfectly transparent, it’s been a super-long two years.) More than a few of us could use a few pick-me-ups. Here are five ways to elevate your attitude.

### 1. Volunteer Outdoors

This is a two-for-one. Being outdoors in the fresh air on a sunny day can work wonders for your mood, but research has also shown that volunteering can lead to improved well-being and benefit your mental health. So why not combine the two? A very small study conducted by the Institute of Mental Health at the University of Nottingham in England, found those who volunteered in nature reported better self-esteem, more connections with others and a greater sense of freedom.

### 2. Indulge in Lavender

It seems every household (and office) should have a diffuser and lavender essential oil. For centuries, lavender has been for both its oils and flowers; historically, it’s been used as a sedative, antibacterial and an antidepressant. According to the *Natural Medicine* Journal, lavender can be used therapeutically in aromatherapy to relieve anxiety and stress.

### 3. Get Moving

We know you’ve heard it before and it’s not revolutionary, but perhaps you were like us and didn’t realize just how important moving actually was for your overall health. Walking for an hour a day reduces your risk of major depression by 26 percent, according to a 2019 Harvard study published in the journal *JAMA Psychiatry*. So put on those sneakers and hit the trails. It’ll do you a world of good.

### 4. Declutter

Cleaning isn’t super relaxing for all of us, but those who use it as a way to clear the mind swear by it. You know what they say: Declutter your space, declutter your mind. “If our surroundings stress us out, we feel the impact. Reducing the clutter in our lives — be it physical, digital or otherwise — allows us to tackle stressors head-on and that benefits our mental health,” says the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

### 5. Put on Your Favourite Playlist

Downloading your favourite tunes can put pep in your step. There have been studies done on the benefits of music and music therapy, including one published in the *Journal of Positive Psychology* that showed folks who listened to upbeat, happy songs improved their mood and overall happiness in a few weeks.
ROUNDUP

A Walk in the Park

Whether you’re just looking to get outside for the day or researching places to set up camp for a few nights, we’ve rounded up some of our favourite spots in and around Durham Region. For each of these provincial park and conservation area options, check out the individual websites for more details, as well as special events and program offerings.

BY KATIE DUPUIS

Darlington Provincial Park
1600 Darlington Park Rd, Bowmanville, Ont.
ontarioparks.com/park/darlington

This gorgeous park is a favourite of locals and out-of-town visitors alike. It’s open year-round for day use, with camping access in the summer months. With a fantastic trail system and a sandy beach along Lake Ontario, you can enjoy birding, hiking, biking, canoeing, swimming, fishing, cross country skiing, snowshoeing and more. Park facilities include a playground, picnic shelters, campsites with and without electricity, latrines, showers, laundry facilities and a park store.

Sibbald Point Provincial Park
26071 York Rd 18 (Park Road), Sutton West, Ont.
ontarioparks.com/park/sibbaldpoint

While not in Durham Region, this provincial park isn’t far and it’s the perfect destination for a day trip or weekend camping adventure. Located on the shores of Lake Simcoe, you can expect sandy beaches and forested hiking trails, as well as a range of campsites. Amenities include a boat launch, several docks, two playgrounds and two dog beaches. If you’re pitching a tent for the night, you’ll enjoy electrical and standard site options, latrines and showers. Sibbald Point is perfect for hiking, biking, swimming, boating, fishing, and more. Canoes and kayaks and stand-up paddleboards are available for rent in the park. Other amenities include an amphitheatre, two boat launches, nine docks, a dog beach, picnic shelters – everything you need for a spectacular day (or week) in the great outdoors. If you’re camping, you can expect all manner of campsites (car camping, RV pull-through and car camping) are plentiful, with nearby latrines and showers. Other amenities include a boat launch, a playground, a dog beach and other pet exercise areas.

Emily Provincial Park
797 Emily Park Rd., P.O. Box 340, Omemee, Ont.
ontarioparks.com/park/emily

Located in the heart of the Kawarthas, this seasonal provincial park is open from mid-May to mid-October (it reopens for the summer on May 13 this year). The perfect summer escape, Emily offers activities that include hiking, biking, swimming, canoeing, kayaking and more. Canoes, kayaks and stand-up paddleboards are available for rent in the park. Other amenities include an amphitheatre, two boat launches, nine docks, a dog beach, picnic shelters – everything you need for a spectacular day (or week) in the great outdoors. If you’re camping, you can expect all manner of campsites (car camping, RV pull-through and car camping) are plentiful, with nearby latrines and showers. Other amenities include a boat launch, a playground, a dog beach and other pet exercise areas.

McRae Point Provincial Park
4366 McRae Park Rd, Ramara Township, Ont.
ontarioparks.com/park/mcraepoint

Like Emily, McRae is a seasonal park open from mid-May to mid-October for both day use and camping access. Located near Orillia on the shores of Lake Simcoe, this idyllic park offers everything you need to unwind in the summer: hiking and biking, boating, fishing, swimming and more. Campsites with and without electricity, RV pull-through and car camping) are plentiful, with nearby latrines and showers. Other amenities include a boat launch, a playground, a dog beach and other pet exercise areas.
Durham Conservation Area
323198 Durham Rd. E.,
Durham, Ont.
onterioconservationareas.ca
You can play and stay in this conservation area located along the Saugeen River, within the town of Durham. This gorgeous, 150-acre spot boasts hiking trails, boating, fishing and swimming, as well as activities like horseshoes and badminton. Campsites with water and power are available, and Wi-Fi is accessible at a central location. The beautiful McGowan Falls (named for Robert McGowan, who was instrumental in building the Durham community) are a must-see in this park.

Long Sault Conservation Area
9293 Woodley Rd.,
Bowmanville, Ont.
cloca.com/long-sault
If you’re looking for a place to hike specifically, this is your spot. Located in the spectacular Oak Ridges Moraine, this conservation area boasts 18 kilometres of terrain with varying degrees of difficulty. Long Sault also includes mature forest, plantation, wetland and meadow. It’s an important wildlife area as well, as it is home to tributaries that are a part of the Bowmanville and Soper Creek Watershed.

Durham East Cross Forest Conservation Area
4531 Boundary Rd.,
Nestleton Station, Ont.
kawarthaconservation.com
Much of the land for this conservation area, located in Scugog Township, was donated to Kawartha Conservation in the 2000s. The area had been severely damaged by off-road vehicle use and required significant effort to clean up the forest and nature habitat. Activities you can access in this conservation area include hiking or mountain biking (there are seven kilometres of marked trails to explore on foot or by bike), birding, snowmobiling (with a valid permit), snowshoeing, cross country skiing and more. If you have access to a horse, you can enjoy the sandy soils for riding, too.

Lynde Shores Conservation Area
625 Halls Rd. S.,
Whitby, Ont.
cloca.com/lynde-shores
This beautiful spot is the place to go if you want to see wildlife. Choose from a number of different trails — most of which are stroller and wheelchair accessible — and check out the various viewing areas throughout the site. This conservation area is home to many varieties of nesting birds, as well as being an excellent stopover point for migratory waterfowl and shorebirds. Kayaking and canoeing are permitted in the marsh from July 15 to September 15, with a permit; the season is shortened to account for marsh bird breeding.

Investments, mentorships, and achievements of our Angels strengthen the ecosystem, bringing entrepreneurs and startups closer to realizing their goals. In pursuit of higher returns, Angel investors subsequently fuel the entrepreneurial spirit and propel society forward.

Ontario’s Angels make a positive impact on their communities and the future of their local economy. If you are looking to be involved and apply your expertise to Ontario’s innovation economy’s recovery, please visit angelinvestorsontario.ca/recover
A Chat with Liam Potvin

With two restaurants clamouring for his attention, executive chef of The Social Bar + Table, Liam Potvin, is busier than ever. We caught up with this Port Hope culinary maestro to hear what he’s been dishing up (including the easiest, tastiest pickerel ceviche!).

BY MELISSA NOWAKOWSKI

If you’re looking for internationally inspired, contemporary Canadian, farm-to-fork cuisine, chef Liam Potvin is your man. Im-passioned about supporting local farmers, Potvin takes inspiration from the global marketplace; he enjoys Mexican, Japanese, French food and more, and uses local ingredients like venison, bison and fresh local produce to create eclectic dishes with Canadian flair.

Potvin’s passion for cooking started at the age of 10 when he began helping his parents cook meals in the family kitchen and would jot down recipes he made in little notebooks (he still has those notebooks to this day). He continued to develop his culinary skills in the years that followed with part-time jobs in food service, like flipping burgers at fast-food joints and working his way through various roles at an Italian restaurant. But it wasn’t until his wife encouraged him to follow his passion and talent for cooking that he began to take a serious look at turning his culinary skills into a career. That route eventually led him to The Social Bar + Table in Port Hope, Ont., a popular community favourite that utilizes its strong relationships with local farmers, producers, breweries and wineries to serve up tasty, unique cuisine. Potvin was drawn to The Social Bar + Table for its ethos: delicious, DINING OUT

Ceviche Served with Aguachile

Fresh Lake Erie pickerel cured in citrus juice and mixed with tomato, jalapeño and onion is served with aguachile (“chill water”) to add an extra layer of flavour. It’s a dish that’s not only visually appealing but exciting on the palate as well.

Ceviche

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2 pickerel filets, 8 oz each</th>
<th>2 bundles cilantro</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 red onion (about 60g)</td>
<td>8 cherry tomatoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 jalapeños</td>
<td>1.5 tbsp garlic purée</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinch salt</td>
<td>4 limes, juiced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 lemons, juiced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aguachile

| 4 jalapeños                  | ½ tbsp garlic purée |
| 3 bundles cilantro          | 4 limes, juiced and zested |
| ¼ tsp salt                   |                   |

TO SERVE: Use a slotted spoon to portion ceviche equally into four shallow bowls. GARNISH with cucumber ribbons (use a vegetable peeler along the length of a fresh cucumber) and FINISH with aguachile. Enjoy on its own or with tortilla chips if desired.
We asked Potvin what positive culinary transformations he has seen emerge from the pandemic.

**Pandemic Positives**

- **INCREASE IN MINIMUM WAGE** for servers and a much higher appreciation for staff.
- **MORE SUPPORT** for local and sustainable businesses including restaurants, wineries, breweries and farmers.
- **THE POPULARITY OF VIRTUAL** restaurants and ghost kitchens is on the rise and will likely be popular long after the pandemic ends.

**INCENTIVE FOR SERVERS** and a much higher appreciation for staff.

*INCREASE IN MINIMUM WAGE* for local and sustainable businesses including restaurants, wineries, breweries and farmers.

**MORE SUPPORT**

*The Social Bar + Table’s “Tipsy Elixer”**

Mint and lemongrass-infused wyborowa vodka, St-Germain and house-made black pepper tincture.

“Keint-He Chardonnay, Prince Edward County
A palate of lemon drop with a healthy limestone-derived minerality.”

*The Social Bar + Table’s “Tipsy Elixer”***

Mint and lemongrass-infused wyborowa vodka, St-Germain and house-made black pepper tincture.

**Bianco di Evró, Sicily**

Crisp, dry, lots of minerality to it, and the slight saltiness pairs well with most fish.

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**Ramps!**

Similar to wild leeks but with a smaller bulb, tall stalk and long, broad leaf at the end, ramps were once a lesser-known, under-utilized ingredient but have grown in popularity because of their garlicky flavor.

“I think they’re really unique and interesting and also quite versatile,” Potvin says. “You can use the tops to make pesto or throw the bottoms into pasta. If you have some left over, you can pickle them for infusions in the fall.”

Though the pandemic hit the culinary industry hard, Potvin is excited for what’s to come. He’s been devoting much of his time to creating new menus for a new restaurant that launched in June 2021 called TwentySix. We have no doubt that Potvin will put TwentySix on the map, just like everything else he has touched.

“So you can go to Pingle’s Farm Market for fresh produce and then there are the local wineries, cideries and breweries,” says Potvin. “We have so much available in this area.”

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OUT & ABOUT

Day-tripping in Cobourg

We’re big fans of this sweet town in Northumberland County. Here are a few of our favourite haunts. Be sure to come hungry and get ready for plenty of fun experiences to be had.

BY LISA VAN DE GEYN

GRAB A BITE

The El Gastropub

Here’s the Coles Notes version of the restaurant’s story. Greg and Amanda da Silva moved to the area looking for that “small-town life.” They opened the El to give locals and visitors an immersive experience — they have an eclectic menu and offer a comfy place to lounge and relax with friends old and new. Allow us to recommend the Brussel Sprouts (fried and served with house-made chipotle aioli, bacon, Parmesan, red onion and crispy jalapeños) to share. You’re welcome.

74 King St. West.
theelcobourg.com

DRINK LOCAL

William Street Beer Co.

Feel like a pint? We hear you! William Street Beer Co. offers Northumberland residents and beyond the most delicious brews, including its Cliff Top Pale Ale (an ode to West Coast North American pale ales) and Farmstand Lager (a homegrown version of a Munich Lager that makes for a refreshing beer). You can order online and if you’re in Northumberland County, you’re eligible for free beer delivery to your door. (Now that’s a deal.)

williamstreetbeer.com

INDULGE AND RELAX

Northumberland Heights Wellness Retreat & Spas

If you’re looking for a getaway but don’t want to venture too far from home, Northumberland Heights is calling. This place is all about awakening your senses and allows you to feel truly rejuvenated — you’ll leave feeling fully rested, pampered and happy. Do a little yoga, hike one of the trails, experience the Cavelier Indulgence facial, take a cooking class or just bask in the glory of the rolling Northumberland Hills.

795 Northumberland Heights Rd.
northumberlandheights.com

STAY HEALTHY

Market & Smor

Cobourg’s downtown fresh market is the brainchild of two folks who were visiting town and noticed there was nowhere to buy fresh produce in the downtown area. Today, this community hub is buzzing with customers, and it’s all about providing locals with healthy fare. Not only do they have an incredible selection of veggies, fruit and herbs, they also have an incomparable fresh-to-go section, too.

thestemarketsmor.com

EAT FOR DAYS

Cucina Urbana

Mike and Teresa owned a restaurant in St. Martin, but they lost it during Hurricane Irma. That’s when they chose to move back home to Ontario, and we’re glad they chose Cobourg. Their kitchen and wine bar caters to folks who just want a really good Italian meal. They serve the classics (think arancini and chicken parmagiana), but we have it on good authority that their pizzas are next level (the Angry Bee, with spicy capocollo, fontina cheese, chili flakes and honey is tops). 165 Division St., #201. cucinaurbana.ca

TREAT YOURSELF

Café Happenstance

Café Happenstance is absolutely where you want to go if you’re craving a good cuppa and something sweet. It has two sister locations in nearby Port Hope that serve fresh baked pastries (we’re talking scones, muffins, cinnamon rolls, etc.) and breads daily. The java and tea offerings are to die for — order the Spice Route Latte (with wildflower-creamed cinnamon) or the Lemon Ginger Tea Latte.

203 Third St.
thishappenstance.com

BUY SOMETHING OLD

Little Underground

This store is all about awesome vintage and retro finds. There’s a plethora of men’s (leisure jackets, etc. and accessories among many other cool pieces). (There are also sections dedicated to crystals and tarot, plus little oddities you didn’t know you needed. You’ll have to visit to see what we mean.)

11 King St. East.
little-underground.myshopify.com

STAY OVER

Victoria Park Campground

This coveted campsite is what you get when you pair unobstructed views of Lake Ontario and tree canopy near a pretty park and sandy beach. Bring the kids and hang out at the splash pad or rent bikes and explore the town. We like nothing more than plunking down in a comfy chair and getting lost in a good book.

138 Division Street.
cobourg.ca/campground

HIT THE BEACH

Cobourg Beach

This is surely one of the most beautiful parts of Lake Ontario. Word has it you forget you’re in Ontario when you walk the boardwalk, listen to the waves and feel the pristine white sand. It’s safe and clean and perfect for a swim or sit on the shore and take in your surroundings. (We suggest a mindful walk — shoes off for the ultimate beach experience.)

138 Division Street.
cobourg.ca
ONE TO WATCH

Sarah Habibi

Whitby science communicator Sarah Habibi is using the power of social media to share her love for STEM (and STEAM!) with people around the world.

@SCIENCE.BAE

BY KAILEE SOMERS

Dr. Sarah Habibi, Ph.D., in molecular biology, originally started her Science Bae platform to give insight into her day-to-day work as a graduate student at Ontario Tech University in Oshawa. In sharing her work, alongside the honest highs and lows of grad school, Sarah has earned an impressive and ever-growing following. Now, as a full-time science communicator and digital content creator with more than 23,000 and 133,000 followers on Instagram and TikTok respectively, Sarah represents household brands like Vicks and Olay and continues to be a highly sought-after public speaker.

As an Ontario Certified Teacher (OCT) with years of teaching and curriculum development experience, her family-friendly experiments and teachings are effectively designed to be both educational and engaging. And as an advocate for STEAM (which incorporates the arts into STEM), Sarah says: “I’ve always liked to incorporate art into my work, and art sparks creativity, imagination and thinking outside of the box, and all of those things are really important for all of the disciplines in STEM. I think art is the discipline that ties everything together.”

As a new mom, Sarah’s looking forward to exciting new content and being able to share science and sensory experiments with her young son, all while releasing a new merch line and writing for her recently signed book deal.

She says, “You just really have to take the plunge sometimes. Don’t shut out an opportunity just because you’re scared, try it first!”

Favourite message for kids?
A quote that I use all the time is, “Never close a door that you haven’t tried walking through.”

Who was your biggest influence growing up?
My dad (a retired high school biology teacher!).

Favourite hobby?
Yoga.

Favourite local restaurant?
Avanti’s in Oshawa.

Favourite outdoor activity in the region?
I love camping.

Stereotype that needs to end?
That you can’t be girly in science.

What do you love about science?
Creativity.

Favourite speech you’ve given?
My first — a TEDx talk in my final year of university.

Favourite part about social media?
How you’re able to connect with people all over the world.

Least favourite part?
The negativity that comes along with it.

Your proudest moment?
Giving birth to my son in January 2022.

Favourite season?
Spring.

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How you’re able to connect with people all over the world.

Least favourite part?
The negativity that comes along with it.

Your proudest moment?
Giving birth to my son in January 2022.

Favourite season?
Spring.

Something on your bucket list?
My husband and I want to travel Asia.

Who do you admire?
An inspiration for me is Emily Calandrelli (@thespacegal).

Epic experiment gone wrong?
I was going to be on a morning show and I quickly tried the experiment before I was going to go on and it didn’t work. I had to quickly change some stuff up!

Best way to de-stress?
I love my reality TV.
More than ever, entrepreneurs need our support. Spark Centre continues its commitment to supporting technology and innovation businesses with high-level programming, advisory services, office space and access to funding opportunities to help drive economic growth and sustainability in Durham Region & Northumberland County.

Contact us today to find out how Spark Centre is supporting Eastern Ontario's innovation and entrepreneurial communities.