

# EDITORIAL

with Traci Gardner

## Remembering what to be thankful for

Like so many holidays and celebrations these days, Thanksgiving Day has lost its meaning to many of us. Thanksgiving Day was essentially established as a day to give thanks for the multitude of blessings we have received in our bountiful Country. However, with the hustle and bustle of life and the commotion of getting organized and planning for the arrival of family, the shopping, the meal prepping, we tend to forget just how fortunate we are, and how thankful we should be.

Perhaps this is partially due to with the loss of so much of our "roots" Our world now consists of so many more urban centres, commercial and residential developments, it is harder to fully grasp the significance of the yearly harvests and their contributions to our welfare, and our lives in general.

The origins of Canadian Thanksgiving are more closely connected to the traditions of Europe than those of the United States. Long before Europeans settled in North America, festivals of thanks and celebrations of harvest took place in Europe in the month of October.

The very first Thanksgiving celebration in North America took place in Canada when Martin Frobisher an explorer from England, went in search of the Northwest Passage (a seaway connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans), arrived in Newfoundland in 1578. He wanted to give thanks for his safe arrival to the New World. The first Thanksgiving in Canada was celebrated 43 years before the pilgrims landed in the U.S.

For a couple hundred years, Thanksgiving was celebrated in late October or early November, before it was declared a national holiday in 1879. November 6 was then set as the official Thanksgiving holiday. But then in January of, 1957, Canadian Parliament announced that on the second Monday in October, Thanksgiving would be "a day of general thanksgiving to almighty God for the bountiful harvest with which Canada has been blessed."

So, for all those celebrating, have a Happy Thanksgiving. Enjoy your time with family, friends and neighbours. Enjoy the bounties of this year's harvest, be thankful for all your blessings and all that you have, but please, do not forget those less fortunate who are not able to enjoy a feast of thanks, or who may be alone on this day.

And, don't forget to give thanks - to a farmer!



**YOUTH DONATION:** Daniel Guthro (second from left), owner of Guthro's nofrills in Acton, presenting a \$430 cheque for the Links2Care Youth Centre to Mark Spence, Chief Financial Officer for Links2Care. Also present from left to right are Scott Morris, Dylan Gould, and Heather MacKay, of Guthro's nofrills. - Submitted photo

## Emotional outcries for stronger sentences

Last week there was a tremendous amount of media coverage of a horrific collision in Vaughn in which four members of a family, including three children, were killed. Currently, a King Township man remains in custody, accused of being responsible for the deaths. He is facing 18 charges including impaired and dangerous driving causing death. He is in custody awaiting another bail hearing, which is to be held two days after he was to be married. One very bad decision has torn apart the lives of two families and impacted anybody who read about it or even saw it on television.

This past Friday, October 2 was Wrongful Conviction Day. It is now a worldwide acknowledged day - not a celebration - of those who have been wrongfully convicted by a court of law. Some have had cause for celebration. There have been a small group of persons that were wrongfully convicted and have had successfully, after lengthy battle, been proven they were wrongfully convicted and cleared of their charges and released from imprisonment. The day is not to



By Angela Tyler

celebrate. The day is to bring awareness and to educate "the public as to the consequences of wrongful convictions."

On Friday, I was very fortunate to be in attendance of reception in Toronto with AIDWYC. The Association in Defence of the Wrongfully Convicted is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to assisting in the exonerations of those who are convicted of a crime they did not commit.

I am not advocating that the person who is charged in the deaths of the three young children and their grandfather last week is innocent or has been wrongfully charged. However, immediately following the release of the accused name there was an outpour of anger for stronger sentences and sometimes the recall of the Death Penalty.

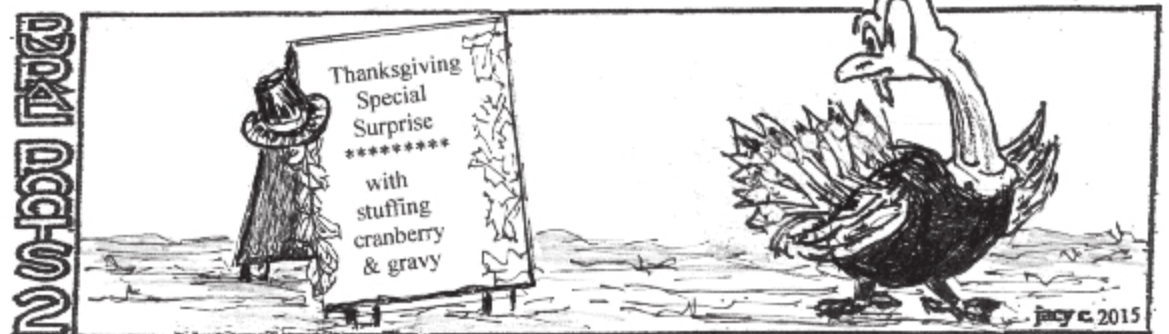
Years ago, I would have been one of those persons waving the

so called flag agreeing to 'bring back the electric chair'. I'm disgusted now that I used to think that way. What I am advocating is before we jump to conclusions yet, we need to listen to the entire story.

I want to trust our justice system to do the right thing. I want to trust them to convict those who have done the crime. However, mistakes are made and like the accused in last week's collision, one wrong decision can ruin many lives.

Since 1983 there have been 25 Canadian Exonerees. Twenty-five people who had been wrongfully convicted because of a wrong decision. Twenty-five people who had spent a combined 250 years in prison. If we had the death penalty like the United States the chances are that most of the people on this list were convicted of crimes that would have resulted in the death penalty and they wouldn't have been here to tell their story.

Before we say a person is guilty we need to be sure and not just jump to conclusions because we saw it in a newspaper or on the late night news.



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**PUBLISHER/EDITOR**  
Ted Tyler

**ASSISTANT EDITOR**  
Traci Gardner

**EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS**  
Dawn Brown, Jane Dougan,  
Vivien Fleisher, Angela Tyler

**ADVERTISING AND CIRCULATION:** Marie Shadbolt

**PRODUCTION:** Iain Brennan

**TYPESETTING:** Jessica Wilson

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373 Queen Street East, Unit 1  
Acton, Ontario L7J 2N2  
519-853-0051 Fax: 519-853-0052

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email: [thenewtanner@on.aibn.com](mailto:thenewtanner@on.aibn.com)

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