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ISSUE THIRTY

BRIAN BENDIG
PRESIDENT AND CEO
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ROOTED IN TRADITION, DRIVEN BY WHAT'S NEXT



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This Fall / Winter issue of FREEDS IMAGE is a reflection of the people, stories and ideas that continue to shape our community and the world of fashion.

At the heart of this edition are stories about people who understand the value of tradition while embracing what comes next. Our cover story features Brian Bendig of Cavalier Tool & Manufacturing, whose leadership has helped transform a family-founded Windsor company into a global player while keeping its people and its roots at the centre of the business.

That balance between tradition and progress carries throughout the issue. In fashion, we explore the changing relationship between style and sustainability, looking at how some of the brands we carry are rethinking materials, manufacturing and the life of the clothing we wear. We also look at the evolving definition of confidence and hear directly from young women about identity, beauty standards and finding their own sense of style.

Closer to home, we celebrate the people who make our community—and FREEDS—what it is. From our Girls' Night Out event and its support of a local cause to the father-daughter story of Mike and Marissa Osborne, this issue is filled with examples of connection, commitment and community.

Our FREEDS IMAGE profiles continue that tradition of telling the stories behind the businesses and individuals who contribute to the character of Windsor-Essex and Chatham-Kent. These are people who are building, creating, leading and finding new ways to move forward.

For us, that is what FREEDS IMAGE has always been about. Fashion is certainly part of the story, but so are the people who wear it, the businesses that shape our community and the ideas that influence the way we live.

As FREEDS continues to evolve, our commitment remains the same: to celebrate quality, individuality and the people who make a difference.

Thank you to our readers, our customers, our contributors and our community for continuing to be part of the FREEDS story.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

Warmly,

Ari Freed, Evan Freed, Derek Freed & Dan Orman

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FREEDS IMAGE MAGAZINE

ISSUE THIRTY

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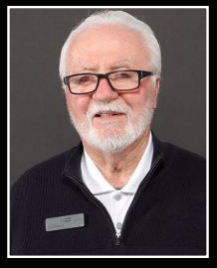

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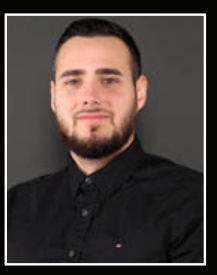

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BRIAN BENDIG
PRESIDENT AND CEO
CAVALIER TOOL & MANUFACTURING

ROOTED IN TRADITION, DRIVEN BY WHAT'S NEXT

By Paula Just

Brian Bendig's leadership philosophy puts people first while bringing together process and technology to keep Cavalier moving forward.

Resilient and driven, Brian Bendig has spent the last 20 years finding new ways to advance Cavalier Tool & Manufacturing Ltd., a Windsor-based mold-making and tooling company. As President and CEO, he has helped shape it into a global player in the industry, combining skilled people, advanced technology, strong processes and a drive to improve.

The business was founded in 1975 by Brian's father, Ray Bendig, along with two partners. Today, it employs 250 people across three plants totalling 132,000 square feet. It builds tools for presses ranging from 250 to 6,000 tons and produces more than 300 molds each year.

"We often solve the problems our competition has not been able to solve, and that's a big thing," he says. "I'm very proud of what we have done as a team."

The company's services span the full tooling journey, from feasibility and product development to design, mold flow analysis and manufacturing. It also provides mold modification and repair, start-up support and tryouts to small production runs, helping customers move from concept to a tested, production-ready tool with assistance at every stage.

Cavalier's reach extends far beyond the Windsor-Essex region and even Canada. The company operates in a global market, facing manufacturers in China, Japan, Portugal, Italy, Germany and Mexico. "Even with the intense competition, I feel like we can do things that others can't," he adds. "We're at a very high level."

Despite everything he has accomplished over the years, Brian's road to becoming President and CEO was anything but a straight line. Long before he was leading Cavalier and making strategic decisions, he was a boy growing up in Woodslee, surrounded by motors and hands-on work.

"I grew up in a farming community, and I was always around dirt bikes, snowmobiles, motors or anything mechanical." When he was just 14 years old, his father encouraged him to work at the company. He started sweeping floors and cleaning up the shop on Saturdays. By 16, he was working there during the summers as well.

Still, joining the family business was not originally part of his plan. Brian dreamed of owning a car dealership one day and worked in car sales as he pursued that goal. But fate had other plans: his father became seriously ill and asked him to return to Cavalier in a sales role.





“We’ve done something that others have not been able to do.”

Brian is wearing
Suit: Coppley
Shirt: Eton
Tie: Canali



“I was a salesman, but over time, I just aspired more to management. I started looking at other areas and processes, and began to move the business in a different direction. So I took ownership in 2008,” he recalls. What started as an unexpected turn in his life would ultimately change the course of his career.

Even with the pressure and responsibility of leading the company, Brian has also built a family of his own that remains a vital part of his life. He has been married for nearly 24 years and is the proud father of two daughters and a grandfather to one granddaughter. “My family is my basis. Knowing that I have their support allows me to take on challenges and stay focused on the business”, he declares.

That belief in the importance of a strong foundation extends to the way Brian leads Cavalier. For him, the business’s success rests in three pillars: People, Process and Equipment. While each is essential, he believes People come first. “Without the professionals we’d have nothing,” he says. “When we find candidates with strong work ethic, drive and skills, we make sure to find them a seat on our ‘bus’.”

For Brian, leadership is about putting people in positions where they can succeed. He describes himself as the “head coach” of the Cavalier Army, responsible for bringing the team together and keeping everyone focused on the same goal.



“I always use the description that I’m the head coach and I want to win the Super Bowl. But I’m not a defensive or offensive player, nor the kicker,” he explains. “I need to select all these people and put them in the right spot to get to this goal.”

The second crucial pillar is Process. From consultation to production support, Cavalier manages every step of the tooling process under one roof. Sales and engineering teams assess each project’s feasibility and determine the best approach. At the same time, program managers oversee each project, designers develop the tool, machinists manufacture its components and mold-making teams handle assembly.

“We’ve set up this big operation that moves very, very quickly with the business,” he says. “We’ve done something that others have not been able to do.”

Equipment is Cavalier’s third pillar. The company has continued to invest in advanced machinery and technology to expand its capabilities. Brian is particularly proud of the operation’s use of automation, comparing new manufacturing equipment to buying a new car: the old one may still work, but the newer model offers features and capabilities you didn’t have before.

“Machines are kind of like that. There are new processes and you can do things differently. We’re always looking for the latest technologies that help push us forward.”

When asked what his definition of the company’s success is, Brian gives a straightforward answer: “Some people think it’s financial, others think it’s growth. But for me, it’s stability.” Cavalier operates across multiple markets, which has helped it navigate economic downturns while avoiding some of the severe disruptions experienced elsewhere in the industry.

“Even with the current economic challenges, we don’t have layoffs; we are still hiring, we are growing,” he affirms. “To me, knowing that we have been able to survive in the very tough conditions is a measure of success.”

Yet for Brian, the most meaningful proof of success is Cavalier’s ability to keep evolving. With the business on stable footing, he sees growth as the company’s natural next step. He envisions opportunities to expand further into the United States, potentially through acquisitions, while exploring additional capabilities that could complement Cavalier’s operations.

“Our whole process is built around delivering the best value for our customers, from the first step through the life of the tool,” he explains. “We understand what needs to be done, we do it right the first time and we do it better tomorrow.”

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Sarah Sergi
Patagonia, Classic Retro-X-Jacket, Den Brown
John + Jenn, Grey Turtle Neck
Maui, Jean



Brianne Tiessen
Patagonia, Synch Snap, Den Brown Jacket
DL 1961, Jean

FALL / WINTER 2026

Haley Mai
Patagonia, Retro Pile Jacket, Basin Green
John + Jenn, Turtleneck, Cream
Mother, Jean



Victoria O'Beid
Patagonia, Nano Puff Hoody, Berry Fig
Astrid, Black Sleeveless Turtle Neck
Mother, Black Jean

FALL / WINTER 2026

Brooke Filiault
Patagonia, Classic Retro-X Jacket, Snowshoe Hare, Natural
John + Jenn, Cream Turtle Neck
Kaffe, Jean, Coffee Bean



Thanh Tran
Patagonia, Nano Puff Hoody, Vellum Green
Astrid, Green Turtle Neck
Mother, Jean

FALL / WINTER 2026

Anil Abdul Latif
Patagonia, Durable Down Hoody, Black
Patagonia, Fjord Loft Shirt, Salt Grey
Patrick Assaraf, Grey T-Shirt
Maui, Jake Slim-leg Jean, Smoke

FALL / WINTER 2026



Haley Mai
Mackage Coat, Cream
John + Jenn, Turtleneck, Cream
Mother, Jean
Michael Kors, Black Boot



Z Supply, Sunglasses



Cole Haan, Handbag

Anil Abdul Latif
Horst, Charcoal Coat
Blue Industry, Brown Shacket
Polo, Cream Sweater
Maui, Jake Slim leg Jean, Smoke
Boss, Messenger Bag, Brown
Bugatti, Brown Boot



FALL / WINTER 2026

Haley Mai
Meilleur Moment, Jacket, Dark Grey
John + Jenn, Turtleneck, Grey
Meilleur Moment, Black Pant
Michael Kors, Black Shoes

FASHION



Anil Abdul Latif
Polo, Khaki Jacket
Polo, Black Hoody
Paige, Black Jean
Robert Barakett, Desert Suede Boot

FALL / WINTER 2026

Haley Mai
For all Mankind, Black Leather Skirt
L'Agence, Black Lace Top
Michael Kors, Black Leather Shoe



Anil Abdul Latif
Regency, Black Leather Coat
Blue Industry, Navy Sweater
34 Heritage, Jean
Bench Craft, Black Belt
Cole Haan, Black Shoe

FALL / WINTER 2026

Haley Mai
Simkhai, Dress, Fig.
Michael Kors, Patent Leather Shoe



Florsheim, Brown Boot

Anil Abdul Latif
Regency, Brown Leather Coat
Blue Industry, Black Turtleneck
AG, Jean
Brave, Brown Belt

FALL / WINTER 2026

Haley Mai
Oui, Off-White Sweater
Kaffe, Skirt, Coffee Bean



Michael Kors, Chocolate Boot



Anil Abdul Latif
Tagliatore, Sport Jacket, Green and Black Check
Dion Puff
Tiger of Sweden, Green Dress Shirt
Sunwill, Black Dress Pant
Bench Craft, Black Suede Belt
Magnanni, Inverna Green Shoes

FALL / WINTER 2026

Haley Mai
Sanctuary, Green Crop Wide Leg Jean
Sanctuary, Green/Black Sleeveless Sweater
Meilleur Moment, Black Jacket
Steve Madden, Black Boot

FALL / WINTER 2026





Anil Abdul Latif
Soul of London, Wine Sports Jacket
Bugatchi, Multi Shirt
Brax, Dark Navy, Modern Fit Pant
Robert Barakett, Blue Sweater
Anderson's, Navy Suede Belt
Boss, Watch
Eton Puff
Magnanni, Navy Shoe


Sorel, Whitney III Tall WP Black Boot


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BACK TO YOUTH





TRENDS WITH THANH

Written by Thanh Buu Tran
Photography by Christina Buu Tran

I am back with the second article for Trends with Thanh, so thank you for tuning in and for all the support of the Women's Department at FREEDS! In the fall and winter season of 2026, FREEDS will be adorned with rich and neutral colour tones that compliment a diverse range of skin tones and embraces each body with love. Espresso brown is the colour of the season, along with the variations of chocolate and coffee tones. You will be seeing it from many designers, from women's to men's wear. Pairing exquisitely with the brown tones, off-white and neutral creams will bring wonderful contrast and transform any outfit into a statement. We are combining greys and charcoals to soften the rich browns. Nostalgic colours have also been making a strong comeback with classic navy, precious shades of green like emerald and olive, alongside the beautiful burgundies.

Colour theory aside, why are the soft neutrals like browns, creams, and greys making a comeback? The monochromatic look has also been heavily trending, with designers like Brunello Cucinelli mixing tonal shades and textures together to elevate simple looks by creating layers and depth. He balances contemporary elegance with timeless styles through his Fall-Winter 2026 collection. However, this trend is not just a



Thanh Buu Tran is wearing
Point Zero: Souffle Yarn Cardigan in White
Favorite Daughter: The Favorite Baseball Cap in Sangria Nights

product of the fashion industry. Fashion, like all other industries such as agriculture, automotive, or food, reflects changes from political movements to economic conditions. Periods of rich economic success often inspire vibrant colours and bold patterns, while economic uncertainty tends to bring more subdued shades such as beige, brown, black and grey into the spotlight. This shift can be described as “recession core,” which suggests that fashion choices can serve as an informal indication of the broader economic cycle. Why does this phenomenon occur?

The psychology behind our colour choices may be heavily tied to financial security. When we feel uncertain about our economic future, we tend to invest in timeless and versatile pieces that can be mixed and matched with multiple other items in our wardrobe. Neutral fashion pieces offer longevity and adaptability, which are important when our disposable income lessens with rising costs of living.

As I have stated before, fashion is more than just clothing – it is a living reflection of culture, identity, and change. Our mission at FREEDS is to present fashion that feels good and to create confidence with every outfit, but we also want to prove that style is not just about what you wear, but how you live, how you move, and how you show up in the world. The last issue focused on a journey of becoming the Women of Freeds; becoming a version of yourself that you can wear with confidence, whether it was a student finding her sense of self, an educator guiding students and rising with confidence, or an established business owner whom many look to with admiration. We have seen the diverse, dynamic, and authentic versions of confidence, but what about the journey before the confidence? Today’s society fluctuates greatly with social media and economic uncertainty; how does a young woman navigate through impossible beauty standards and stay resilient? How do youth partake in modern society to become confident young women despite financial crises?

Women have long been objectified and rendered down to just our size and shape. My goal for this photoshoot was to make these beautiful girls feel comfortable, warm, and cozy in fall looks that drew upon their youthful presence. I fitted the girls in sweater looks with baseball caps to showcase nostalgic aesthetics rooted in collegiate and early ’90s streetwear. Favorite Daughter, Numph (brand new to our store this season), Oui, Meilleur Moment, and Canada Goose are a few brands that incorporate elements that create a fresh, energetic, and contemporary aesthetic to reflect the style and spirit of a younger generation. I wanted to show the girls that they can feel beautiful and comfortable in a simple sweater without having to subject themselves to societal expectations and trends by worrying about their size. These youth demonstrate the vast diversity in body types, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, skin tones, and ages. These girls, like many others, are the future leaders of tomorrow.

Thus, I asked them about beauty standards and finding one's confidence in today's society. This article will explore the facets and inquired thoughts of six youth who will be answering a series of questions about their journey in finding style, confidence and individuality amongst this ever-changing world.

What are the biggest barriers for women's beauty standards today?

The standards of beauty have been heavily dominated by Western and Eurocentric values and perspectives. For example, body types that are thin and slim were highly valued for the longest time, and it took many years for society to accept more curvy figures in women. Sometimes when you try to fit into the beauty standard as a Black woman, you get called out for "black enough or not loving yourself," but those same standards do not currently favour certain races or ethnicities. It seems like beauty standards and fashion cycle through, and when it becomes popularized by a prominent figure in the West, it is accepted.

When beauty standards shift to favour features and trends of another ethnic group, you find yourself wondering if you need to also join in because everyone else is on the new beauty train. Whether it be curvier bodies, thin bodies, fit bodies, bigger lips, big eyes, lifted eyes, minimal makeup, maximal makeup, sleek hair, or voluminous hair, there is no winning for women.

There is also the battle of beauty standards and fashion trends around the world that oppose one another. There are vastly different beauty standards in South America, the Middle East, Africa and even in Asia compared to North America or Europe. When moving from your home country, you are used to one way of dressing, and then you find yourself internalizing whether you should adapt to the beauty standards here in Canada, or should you keep your own cultural styles. It is about finding the balance between finding comfort in the styles here in Canada while keeping your cultural roots alive.

What are the beauty standards today, and are they attainable?

The beauty standards today revolve around the picture perfect life where everyone is striving to become an influencer. Overconsumption is a worldwide issue where there is a product that you can buy for every single problem. For example, having flawless skin has always been the beauty standard, but nowadays, there is no grace given to anyone on the internet because of the wide access to innovative skincare. Sometimes we feel like the beauty standards these days are not accessible to families that are subject to additional economic burdens. Therefore, the beauty standards these days are not attainable, like lip injections, fox eye lift, botox treatments, facial treatments, expensive pilates studio memberships, viral fashion brands, and the list goes on. However, we have learned that you do not need every single product out there on the market, you do not need to hop on every trend, and you can get creative while finding new ways to style yourself on a budget.

How has social media affected your decisions in fashion and beauty?

Amid the varied beauty standards around the world, there is so much noise and commentary on social media about how you should or should not look. The algorithms can be toxic because you could be searching for some inspiration, and then the next ten videos you see on Instagram or Tik Tok will be about de-bloating your body, or how to dress to look slimmer, or it will show you one type of body, and it just keeps being fed to you. There seems to be less autonomy on social media now because you cannot avoid certain trends being massively pushed out. You have to intentionally adjust your settings or train the algorithm to avoid being constantly exposed to a highly curated social media feed.

There are so many tips and tricks or guides to achieving a certain look, and it is draining the individuality out of everyone. Sometimes we will see a trend and want to try out certain styles of makeup or clothes, but if it does not flatter our body types or facial features, we take a step back and try something else. However, this journey took us a while to reach this stage where we are comfortable in our bodies and can shut out the extra noise. When we were younger, we cared more for external validation, and we have learned and realized that achieving a certain look will not make you happier. Happiness is something that radiates from within when you have amazing family, teachers, and friends to uplift you.

What is confidence to you, and has that changed as you become older in terms of adhering to beauty standards?

Confidence is feeling comfortable with who we are without feeling like we have to change ourselves to fit someone else's idea of what is beautiful. When we were younger, we thought being confident meant looking a certain way, such as having clear skin, being thin, or dressing like the people on social media. Sometimes we would compare ourselves to celebrities, influencers, and even people at school, which made us feel like we were not good enough.

As we have gotten older, our idea of confidence has changed. We realized that beauty standards are constantly changing and are often unrealistic. Social media can make everyone seem perfect, but many photos and videos are edited, filtered, or carefully chosen. We have started to understand that we do not need to meet every beauty standard to feel confident. Thus, we are learning to focus more on what makes us feel comfortable and happy rather than what we think other people will find attractive. Confidence, to us, is accepting that we do not have to look perfect to feel good about ourselves. Growing older has taught us that confidence comes from accepting ourselves rather than from trying to fit into a certain mould.

Ultimately, the journey toward confidence is not about achieving perfection or conforming to a single definition of beauty. It is about learning to recognize our individuality and finding comfort in who we are, even when society tells us how to look, dress, or live. The voices of these young women remind us that confidence takes time and is shaped by our experiences, cultures, communities, and the people who support us. Fashion can be a powerful form of self-expression, but it should never determine our worth.
As we move through an ever-changing world of trends, social media, economic pressures, and shifting beauty standards, the most meaningful trend may be one that never fades, which is accepting and celebrating who we are from the inside and out. In the Women's Department at FREEDS, we strive to create a space where young women feel seen, celebrated, and empowered to be unapologetically themselves and not influenced to fit into a mould, but to create their own. I hope every young woman has the opportunity to flourish into a strong, confident, and authentic woman – one who challenges the status quo, embraces her individuality, and helps redefine the beauty standards that future generations will inherit.



Back row left to right: D. Paez Castellanos, F. Anto, M. Adekoya, M. Brown, A. Al-Alaliwi.
Front row: A. Desbiens.

D. Paez Castellanos is wearing
Numph: Nuriette Pullover in Caviar
Favorite Daughter: The Favorite Baseball Cap in Sangria Nights
Canada Goose: Clair Vest in Linen

F. Anto is wearing
Favorite Daughter: Embroidered Heart Sweatshirt in Black and Cherry
Favorite Daughter: Classic Logo Baseball Cap in Black

M. Adekoya is wearing
Favorite Daughter: Embroidered Collegiate Sweatshirt in Heather Grey and Navy. Favorite Daughter: Mom's Favorite Baseball Cap in Navy

M. Brown is wearing
Favorite Daughter: Collegiate Sport Classic Sweatshirt in Navy and White. Favorite Daughter: The Favorite Baseball Cap in Black

A. Al-Alaliwi is wearing
Oui Souffle Yarn: Pullover in Whitecap Grey. Favorite Daughter: The Favorite Baseball Cap in Sangria Nights. Meilleur Moment: Hybrid Sweater Jacket in Grey

A. Desbiens is wearing
Favorite Daughter: Embroidered Club Sweatshirt in Forest and Sugar.
Favorite Daughter: Classic Logo Baseball Cap in White and Pink Heart



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Fashion With a Future

How the Industry Is Rethinking Sustainability

Written by Olivia Vrsaljko

Fashion has always been about what's next. The next season, the next trend, the next piece you add to your wardrobe. But today, what's next in fashion is about more than style. It's also about taking a closer look at where our clothing comes from, how it's made and the impact it leaves behind.

At FREEDS, quality has always been at the heart of what we do. Since 1929, we've built our store around clothing that is well-made, worth investing in and designed to be worn for more than a single season. As the fashion industry evolves, we also recognize the importance of considering the planet and the impact the brands we carry have on the world around us.

That means asking bigger questions. How are materials sourced? What is being done to reduce waste? Can products be repaired, reused or kept in circulation longer? And are brands actively working to do better?

No fashion brand is perfectly sustainable. Creating clothing requires resources, and every company has room to improve. But across the industry, brands are finding new ways to reduce their environmental impact, rethink traditional manufacturing and create products with greater consideration for what comes next.

At FREEDS, we're proud to carry brands that are part of that progress. From Patagonia's decades-long commitment to environmental action and Canada Goose's focus on responsible materials to the work Vuori and Xacus are doing to rethink fabrics and manufacturing, these brands show how fashion can keep moving forward.



Patagonia: Putting the Planet at the Centre

For more than 50 years, Patagonia has challenged the idea that a clothing company should focus only on making and selling more clothes. Instead, the brand has built environmental responsibility into how it designs products, chooses materials and does business.

Patagonia is also open about an important reality: making clothing impacts the planet. In response, it continually looks for ways to reduce that impact, from using recycled and preferred materials to supporting Fair Trade Certified™ factories and designing products made to last.

For Spring 2026, 94% of the polyester fabric Patagonia used was recycled, while more than 90% of its products are made in Fair Trade Certified™ factories.[1]

One of Patagonia's most recognizable approaches to sustainability is encouraging people to keep what they already own for longer. Through its Worn Wear program, Patagonia repairs clothing and provides resources to help customers care for their gear rather than automatically replacing it. In fiscal 2025 alone, the company repaired more than 174,000 products worldwide. [2]

As Patagonia founder Yvon Chouinard has said, "If we have any hope of a thriving planet—much less a thriving business—it is going to take all of us doing what we can with the resources we have." [3]

Patagonia is one of the newest brands to arrive at FREEDS, and we're incredibly excited about what this new relationship represents. Beyond bringing its iconic styles to our men's and women's collections, we look forward to building a relationship rooted in a shared desire to make thoughtful choices and help create positive change.

Vuori: Progress in Performance Wear

For Vuori, creating better performance apparel starts with the fabric itself. The California-based brand has been working to incorporate more responsible materials into its collections while delivering the comfort and performance it's known for.

"We want our clothes to feel great, but we also want those clothes to make you feel great in all the ways you live your life. Fabric is at the heart of that," says Vuori Founder and CEO Joe Kudla. [4]
Vuori prioritizes what it calls Preferred Fibres, materials selected using industry standards and lifecycle data to identify options with lower greenhouse gas emissions than conventional equivalents. The program also considers regenerative agriculture and



recognized standards for recycled, organic, responsible wool and responsible down materials. [4]

You can see that approach in some of Vuori's best-known fabrics. DreamKnit™ is made with 89% recycled materials, while Vuori BlissBlend™ is made with 75% recycled materials. Its VCycled™ fabric also incorporates recycled materials such as plastic bottles. [4]

But Vuori's approach isn't only about what goes into a garment. The company also emphasizes creating clothing designed to stand the test of time, reflecting a broader shift toward getting more life out of what we wear.

Canada Goose: Rethinking Luxury Outerwear

Canada Goose has been taking steps to rethink the environmental impact of luxury outerwear, with a growing focus on responsible materials, sourcing and manufacturing practices.

In its FY25 reporting, the brand shared that 87% of materials sourced for its domestic manufacturing were Preferred Fibres and Materials, including recycled, organic and certified options. Canada Goose also reports that 100% of the down it purchases is Responsible Down Standard certified, while 89% of its fabrics were bluesign® APPROVED, a certification focused on reducing the environmental impact of textile production. [5]

The company has also changed materials historically associated with the brand. Canada Goose ended the purchase of new fur in 2021 and stopped manufacturing products with new fur at the end of 2022. [6]

It has since continued exploring recycled and lower-impact materials across its collections.

These changes reflect a broader shift within fashion, as even brands with long-established products and manufacturing traditions look for ways to evolve and reduce their environmental impact.

Xacus: Italian Craftsmanship Meets Responsibility

For Italian shirtmaker Xacus, sustainability is becoming part of the evolution of traditional craftsmanship. The brand is working to reduce waste, use more responsible materials and introduce certified production processes designed to lessen its environmental impact. [8]

One example is its Active collection. Xacus works with innovative textile partners, including Aquafil, to give existing materials a new purpose. Recovered waste, including fishing nets, can be regenerated into ECONYL® nylon, which Xacus uses in select fabrics and shirts. [9]

It's a modern approach to a traditional category of fashion. By bringing new textile technologies into classic shirtmaking, Xacus demonstrates how established brands can continue evolving and become more conscious of the resources used to make their products.

A More Sustainable Future for Fashion

Sustainability in fashion isn't about finding one perfect solution. It's about progress: rethinking the materials used to make our clothes, reducing waste and emissions, improving manufacturing practices and finding new ways to lessen the industry's impact on the planet.

The brands highlighted here are approaching that challenge in different ways. Some are developing innovative recycled materials, others are changing how they manufacture and source products, and some are using their businesses to support broader environmental initiatives. What matters is that these efforts keep turning conversation into meaningful action.

At FREEDS, we recognize that retailers have a place in that conversation, too. The brands we choose to bring into our store matter, and we're proud to work with companies that are examining their environmental impact and finding ways to improve.

We still have a long way to go. But every new material, improved process and more responsible decision represents another step forward. As the industry evolves, we look forward to evolving with it and supporting brands working toward a more sustainable future. Because looking good and doing better for our planet should never have to be separate conversations.

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Patagonia: Style with A Purpose

Written by Olivia Vrsaljko

A new name has arrived at FREEDS, although it's one you probably already know. Patagonia is now available at FREEDS of Windsor, bringing its iconic outdoor style, exceptional quality and commitment to protecting the planet to our men's and women's collections.

For nearly a century, FREEDS has built its reputation around bringing quality brands to Windsor-Essex. Since the store's opening, generations of customers have come through our doors looking for clothing that feels good, looks great, and, most importantly, is worth investing in. That's exactly why we're so excited to welcome Patagonia to FREEDS.

Patagonia has spent more than 50 years proving that great clothing can be about more than what you wear. It can be thoughtfully made, designed to last and created by a company determined to use business as a force for positive change.

For Patagonia founder Yvon Chouinard, that philosophy comes down to this: "We're in business to save our home planet." It's a statement that has helped shape Patagonia into the company it is today, and one of the reasons we're proud to bring the brand to FREEDS.

Quality You'll Reach for Again and Again

At FREEDS, we've always believed there's value in buying better. The best pieces in your wardrobe aren't necessarily the ones you buy for a single season. They're the jacket you reach for year after year, the sweater that somehow works with everything and the everyday staples that still look and feel great after countless wears.

Patagonia shares that philosophy. From its recognizable fleece and outerwear to sweaters, jackets and everyday layers, Patagonia designs clothing with longevity in mind. As Chouinard once said: "Whenever I am confronted with a business problem, the answer is to improve the quality." That commitment to quality has remained at Patagonia's heart for decades. The brand focuses on durability, functionality and timeless design rather than creating products meant to be quickly replaced.

Our customers know the difference quality makes. Whether it's a beautifully constructed suit, a premium dress shirt, a great pair of denim or a Patagonia jacket built for years of adventures, investing in pieces that last has always been part of the FREEDS experience.

A Different Approach to Fashion

What makes Patagonia particularly special, however, is what happens beyond the clothing. Sustainability has been woven into the company's philosophy for decades, long before it became a major conversation within the fashion industry.

Patagonia has continually looked for better ways to make its products, from expanding its use of preferred materials to supporting Fair Trade Certified™ factories and creating programs designed to extend the life of its clothing. More than 90% of Patagonia's current product line is made in Fair Trade Certified™ factories, benefiting more than 90,000+ workers. Beginning with its Spring 2025 collections, 100% of new Patagonia styles are also made without intentionally added PFAS.

The brand also encourages customers to keep their clothing for as long as possible. Through Patagonia's repair initiatives, the company repaired 174,799 products globally in fiscal 2025 alone. It's a refreshing philosophy in fashion: take care of what you own, repair it when you can, and choose products made to stay in your wardrobe.

And for customers who are becoming increasingly thoughtful about what they purchase and the brands they support, Patagonia offers something meaningful: great style backed by a greater purpose.

More Than a Clothing Company

Patagonia took their purpose even further in 2022. Founder Yvon Chouinard and his family transferred ownership of the company to structures created to protect Patagonia's mission and direct money not reinvested into the business toward addressing the environmental crisis.

The announcement came with a statement that captured worldwide attention: "Earth is now our only shareholder." It was an extraordinary move, but one that felt completely consistent with the company Patagonia had spent decades building.

Chouinard explained the thinking behind the decision: “If we have any hope of a thriving planet, much less a thriving business, it is going to take all of us doing what we can with the resources we have.” Patagonia wasn’t simply introducing another sustainability initiative. The company was building its environmental mission directly into its future.

Patagonia, Now at FREEDS

Since 1929, FREEDS has been built around a simple idea: offer our customers quality clothing from brands we believe in. Patagonia is a natural addition to that tradition. Known for exceptional quality, thoughtful design and effortless style, Patagonia creates clothing that is made to be worn, and worn often. From iconic fleeces and everyday sweaters to versatile outerwear, the collection moves easily between the outdoors and everyday life.

That might mean a fleece for a cool fall morning, a jacket you throw on for your daily commute or a favourite layer that comes along for every weekend away. Patagonia pieces are practical, comfortable, and easy to wear, with a timeless design approach that extends far beyond a single season.

But what makes Patagonia stand out is that the story goes deeper than the clothing. Its longstanding commitment to sustainability, responsible practices and creating products with longevity in mind gives customers another reason to feel good about what they’re wearing. It’s that combination of quality, style and purpose that makes us especially proud to welcome Patagonia to FREEDS.

For generations, our customers have trusted us to introduce them to brands and products worth investing in. We’re excited for Patagonia to become part of that story, and part of wardrobes across Windsor-Essex for years to come.

Discover Patagonia for men and women, now at FREEDS. Shop the collection in-store and online.

Sources: Patagonia, “We’re in Business to Save Our Home Planet”; Patagonia Stories, “Thinking Like a Mountain Climber When Fighting Environmental Crises”; Yvon Chouinard, “Earth Is Now Our Only Shareholder,” September 14, 2022.



> “We’re in business to save our home planet.”
>
> - Patagonia founder Yvon Chouinard





Girls Night Out

Written by: Olivia Vrsaljko

This spring, FREEDS of Windsor gave a longtime tradition a fresh new look. Previously an invitation-only event, Girls' Night Out opened to the public for the first time, welcoming women from across Windsor-Essex for an evening of food, fun and fashion.

The community embraced the event, with a sold-out crowd filling FREEDS for an unforgettable evening. Beyond the celebration, Girls' Night Out was an opportunity to give back, with 100% of ticket proceeds supporting the Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society Foundation and a matching donation from FREEDS.

"There was such an incredible energy in the store that night. Seeing so many people come together, have a great time and support an important local cause made the evening really special. We're excited to continue growing Girls' Night Out each season," shared Thanh Buu Tran, Manager of the Women's Department, and Olivia Vrsaljko, Manager of Marketing.

FREEDS would also like to extend a heartfelt thank-you to Spago for the incredible food, drinks and service, and to CLYK Studios and Created By Gabbs for generously donating their time and services.

Interested in attending the next FREEDS Girls' Night Out? Contact events@freeds.com to learn more.


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Faces of FREEDS

A Father Daughter Team at FREEDS



Marissa and Mike Osborne

"I'm extremely proud of my daughter," Mike says. "She's been the most hardworking, independent, career-driven person I know."

Written by Paula Just

Nearly three decades ago, Mike Osborne began building his career at FREEDS. He could not have known then that someday, one of his five daughters, Marissa Osborne, would walk through the same doors and forge a professional path of her own. Today, father and daughter share not only a family name but also a workplace and a passion for retail.

Mike started at FREEDS in 1998 in the shoe department. Within a year, he became a full-time employee and soon trained as a buyer, a role he has held for more than 25 years. Today, Mike manages the department as both buyer and salesperson, working six days a week. "My day off is because we're closed," he declares. "I love the buying and dealing with all my personal customers."

At 59 years old, Mike has built a long career at FREEDS. His daughter, meanwhile, is just beginning hers. Marissa, who turned 25 this month, entered the retail industry as a sales clerk at a dollar store and quickly worked her way into management.

"I realized how much there was to learn," she says. "Every person you interact with brings something new and exciting, and the skill set behind it is so vast."

When a position at FREEDS became available earlier this year, Marissa applied without her father's help or guidance. "I saw the opportunity, and I decided to jump on it because it was something new that I could explore," Marissa shares. "So far, it's been fantastic."

In her new role, Marissa manages the Class Act department, serving students, handling orders, organizing the area, and hiring and training seasonal staff. "I really enjoy dealing with students every day, hearing their stories and making sure they have the right uniforms."

Marissa believes that having her father at the same company has been an advantage rather than a challenge. His experience has given her someone she can turn to as she continues to grow in the business. "He's able to guide me with everything he's learned over the years," she says. "He also taught me so much about day-to-day operations."

According to Mike, his daughter quickly proved herself. "Marissa seems only ever to have to be told something once. She soaks up the knowledge, and she always seems to remember."

Now, as father and daughter continue in their separate roles under the same FREEDS roof, they have found a new chapter in their family story, this time as colleagues.

"My father taught me how to be professional in the retail world. Being able to learn from him while building my own path has been really special," Marissa adds.

"I'm extremely proud of my daughter," Mike says. "She's been the most hardworking, independent, career-driven person I know."

JOSHUA CHEIFETZ

Profile by Paula Just I Photo by Pat Scandale

With more than 14 years of experience, lawyer Joshua Cheifetz is embarking on what may be the most significant chapter of his professional journey: launching his own law firm, Cheifetz Business Law LLP. And he is not alone. His partner is also his biggest influence: his father, Stephen Cheifetz, called to the Ontario bar in 1982 and with whom he has worked throughout his career.

The partnership is built on years of experience working together and an established understanding of each other's strengths. "We've developed a really good flow together. We know what each of us does best, and we complement each other in a way that ultimately benefits our clients", he says.

Joshua practices in corporate and commercial law, wills and estates, and commercial real estate, serving clients across Windsor-Essex. His services include advising clients on business purchases and sales, contract reviews, commercial real estate transactions and complex estate planning. His approach is grounded in a simple philosophy: identify problems early, communicate clearly and, whenever possible, offer a solution alongside the problem. "I have a very problem-solving method of practice".

For Joshua, effective service is about more than delivering high-quality legal work. It is about making the process clear for the client. "Clients don't necessarily care how the legal matter is done. They want excellent and quick work, and primarily want respect."

Still, the lawyer takes the time to explain deal documents and ensure clients understand exactly what they are agreeing to, an approach he describes as making transactions transparent. "I try to explain everything to the best of my ability and just make sure there are no surprises later," he adds.

Joshua is a member of the Law Society of Ontario, the State Bar of Michigan, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan, and the District of Columbia Bar. His experience with both Canadian and American legal concepts also helps him communicate with U.S. clients doing business in Canada. He is also a member of the Essex Law Association and completed CPA Canada's In-Depth Tax Course, further strengthening his knowledge in tax matters and enhancing the breadth of services.

Joshua's first degrees were joint degrees in engineering and business, and he says he has never stopped thinking like an engineer. "I look at how the work gets done, not just what the answer is." That instinct has shaped his practice for years, and it is a large part of why the new firm exists. "I've spent fourteen years building technology around my own practice, and it works", he explains. "But going further meant changing how an entire firm operates, and that takes everyone agreeing. On our own, those decisions take weeks instead of years, and we can choose software that fits the way we actually practise."

The result, he says, is that work that once took three weeks now takes days or hours, and is more thorough for it. "Everything the machines do well frees us up for the part that needs a lawyer, which is judgment."

Joshua sees technology not as an end in itself, but as a tool to deliver higher-quality services. "I'm excited about continuing to adopt more technology in my firm, using it to improve efficiency, deliver results faster and ensure the highest level of accuracy possible."

Cheifetz Business Law LLP is located at 8400 Twin Oaks Drive in Windsor. Joshua can be reached at 226.782.0703 or josh@cheifetz.law. More information is available at cheifetz.law.

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Joshua Is Wearing
Jacket: 7 Downie St.
Shirt: Soul of London
Pants: Brax



Profile by Paula Just I Photo by Pat Scandale

BRAD HOTCHKISS LISA LUCIER JEFF COLOMBE



For Brad Hotchkiss, the hot tub business goes far beyond selling a product or a service. He wants Windsor Hot Tub & Sauna Store to continue being a trusted resource for anyone looking for advice on hot tubs or saunas, whether they are buying their first one, replacing an old unit or simply looking for a solution to a problem.

As the founder and owner, Brad brings years of industry experience to Windsor and Essex County. Having previously worked in the hot tub and sauna industry in Toronto, Brad returned to his hometown to offer something he believes is essential: straightforward advice from people who know the business.

“We love educating people, whether they’re our customers or not,” Brad says. That philosophy is at the heart of his approach. Even if you’re not planning to purchase a product from them, the company offers complimentary consultations with professionals who will come directly to your backyard to answer questions about space, electrical requirements and different types of hot tubs.

“My team and I are happy to provide all the information to help customers before making a decision”, he explains. Today, the store’s Walker Road showroom features a selection of new and used hot tubs and saunas, as well as supplies including filters and chemicals.

Customers can arrange pickups or deliveries throughout the county, with flexible payment options and access to products beyond what is displayed in the showroom. “We are centered on knowledge, accessibility and personal service”, he adds.

The business also offers hot tub moving and removal services and purchases used hot tubs from homeowners who no longer want or need them. “If you’re looking to get rid of your hot tub, give us a call,” Brad explains. “We’ll give you a fair price and have it out of your backyard within 48 hours”.

The commitment, services and products have helped establish the business as a trusted name in the industry, while Brad takes particular pride in the reviews customers leave about their experiences. “We work tirelessly for our customers, and that can be seen in our Google reviews. The positive feedback is incredibly rewarding and it reassures us that we’re on the right track”, he says.

To explore their products and schedule a visit or consultation, you can stop by the showroom on Walker Road, call them directly or visit the Windsor Hot Tub & Sauna Store website. windsorhottubstore.com.

WINDSOR HOT TUB & SAUNA STORE Inc.

Brad Is Wearing
Sweater: Polo by Ralph Lauren
Pants: Heritage Jeans
Shoes: Florsheim

Lisa Is Wearing
Top: Meiller Moment
Pants: DL1961

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Shirt: F/X Fusion
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JIM & JAMES LUCIER

Profile by Paula Just | Photo by Pat Scandale

Jim Lucier is a trusted authority on workplace safety. After 42 years in construction sales and leadership roles, he understood the importance of giving businesses access to reliable products and knowledgeable support. That hands-on experience eventually led him to found his own business: in 2009, Jim launched Lucier Glove & Safety Products Inc. (LGS) in Windsor, turning decades of industry insight into a dedicated safety-supply company.

“I wanted to build more than a store, but a place people could rely on for safety products, practical advice and service,” Jim says.

James Lucier, Jim’s son, has been part of the operation for 15 years, helping shape its growth and direction. “We take pride in knowing our customers and understanding what their jobs require,” James says. “If we don’t have something they need, we’ll make every effort to find it.”

The venture grew steadily, and four years ago it expanded with a second location, Dover Duds/Lucier Glove, in Dover Centre, Chatham-Kent. Today, an 18-person team keeps both stores running, combining deep product knowledge with attentive customer service.

Jim and James also credit the organization’s success to its loyal employees: Office Manager Kris Mann, with LGS for 13 years, and Dover Centre Manager Tanya Beselaere, who has sustained a loyal clientele base built over their history.

The company’s extensive selection covers many aspects of workplace safety, including protective eyewear, hard hats, hearing protection, fall protection, respirators, harnesses, footwear, high-visibility and flame-resistant clothing, outerwear and gloves. LGS also carries traffic-control equipment, medical and first-aid supplies, and workwear from recognized brands such as Carhartt.

Beyond the products on its shelves, LGS provides practical services designed to help clients stay prepared. The team offers on-site medical supply refills, while Lucier Fence provides safety fencing, traffic barrels and air-monitor rentals. The company also works with businesses on uniform contracts.

“We don’t just sell equipment, we help people understand what they actually need for the job in front of them,” Jim explains. “A lot of our customers became friends first, and that’s the kind of relationship we want to keep building.”

Over the past two decades, LGS has become a go-to resource in the county, earning a reputation as a Community Votes Windsor winner and a Consumer Choice Award recipient. “Watching this company grow alongside the people who trust us with their safety, that’s what makes the work meaningful,” James affirms.

To explore LGS’s selection of equipment, workwear and services, visit the Windsor location at 1701 Provincial Road or the Dover Centre store at 25442 St. Clair Road in Chatham-Kent. More information is also available online at LucierGloveAndSafety.com.

RYAN POULIOT

Profile by Paula Just I Photo by Pat Scandale

When Ryan Pouliot founded SunBuilt Custom Homes in 2018, the goal was straightforward: build great homes, communicate clearly and create an experience people could feel good about. More than 100 homes later, that philosophy continues to shape the company as it grows throughout Windsor-Essex and Chatham-Kent.

“We’ve always believed that quality shouldn’t be defined by the size or price of the home,” says Ryan. “Whether we’re building a townhome, a ranch for someone downsizing or a larger family home, the details matter, but so does the experience of getting there.”

SunBuilt recently introduced three new home collections, including SunBuilt Signature, the company’s interpretation of attainable luxury. Signature brings together elevated finishes, expanded design choices and greater personalization while maintaining the same construction standards found throughout every SunBuilt project.

“Luxury doesn’t necessarily mean building the biggest or most expensive house,” Ryan explains. “It can mean investing in the things you interact with every day and creating a home that feels exceptionally well finished.”

That philosophy has particular relevance for retirees and empty nesters. “We’re seeing people who want less maintenance and maybe less square footage, but they don’t want less quality,” Ryan says. “They want to simplify their home without compromising their lifestyle. Luxury doesn’t always have to mean bigger. Sometimes it means having exactly the amount of space you need and making every part of it something you’re proud of.”

The same attention is being applied to the building process through the SunBuilt Guided Milestone Experience. At key stages of construction, homeowners are guided through their home—in person or virtually—so they can see the progress, understand what is happening and remain connected to the build.

“A premium home shouldn’t just have premium finishes,” Ryan says. “It should come with a premium experience. Building a home is a major investment, and we want our customers to understand the process and enjoy watching their home come together.”

Behind that experience is a culture defined by five core values: Do the Thing, Straightforward Communication, Solution People Not Problem People, Take Ownership, and The SunBuilt Standard. Each reflects a principle, from “If it’s hard today, it will be harder tomorrow” to “There’s never ‘we can’t,’ only ‘how can we?’”

Perhaps most representative is The SunBuilt Standard: “Our standards are dictated by what we are willing to accept.”

“They’re hanging in our office, but they’re not there just to sound good,” Ryan says. “They come up in our meetings, in how we solve problems and in how we make decisions. They guide how we operate every day.”

That philosophy extends into the community through The Future Is Bright Initiative, a non-profit organization co-founded by Ryan. Sharing its name with SunBuilt’s longtime tagline, the NPO has raised more than $150,000 in support of local organizations, including Fight Like Mason, the Windsor/Essex County Humane Society, CMHA, Downtown Mission and Windsor Goodfellows.

Eight years and more than 100 homes later, SunBuilt continues to evolve, but its focus remains clear: build homes people are proud of, create an experience worthy of the investment and maintain a standard worth putting your name on.



Ryan Is Wearing
Jacket: Downie St.
Shirt: Serica Elite
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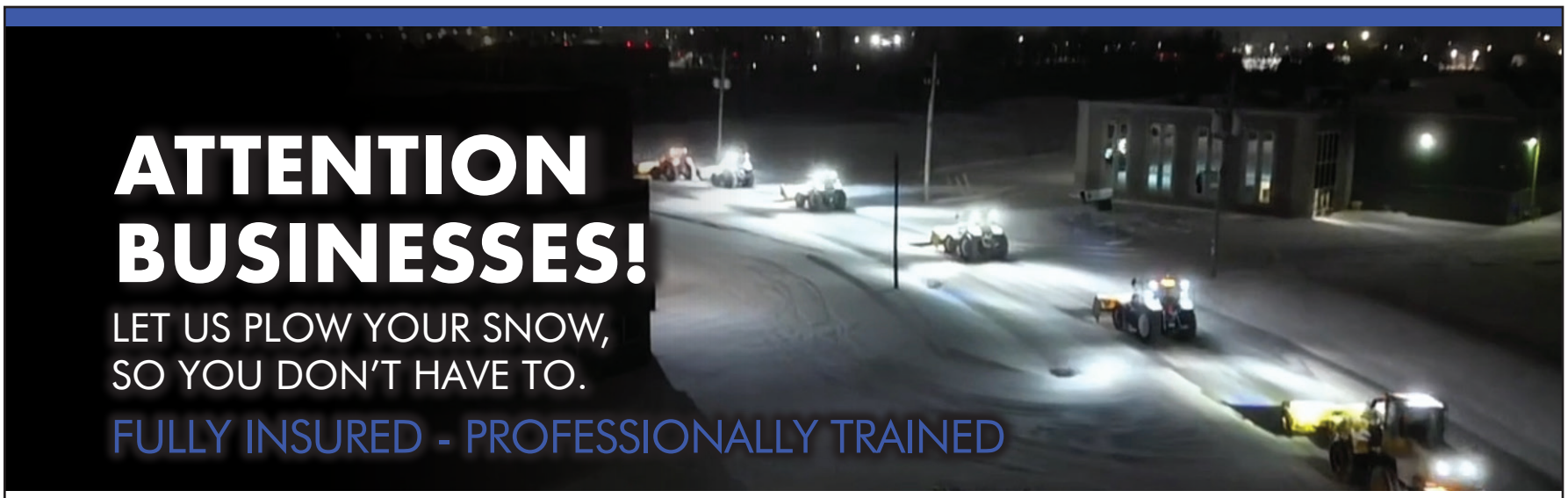
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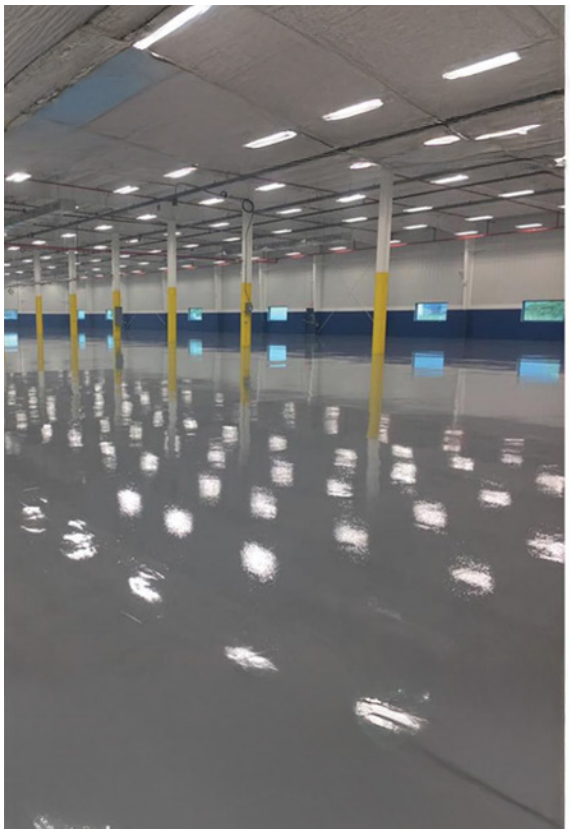
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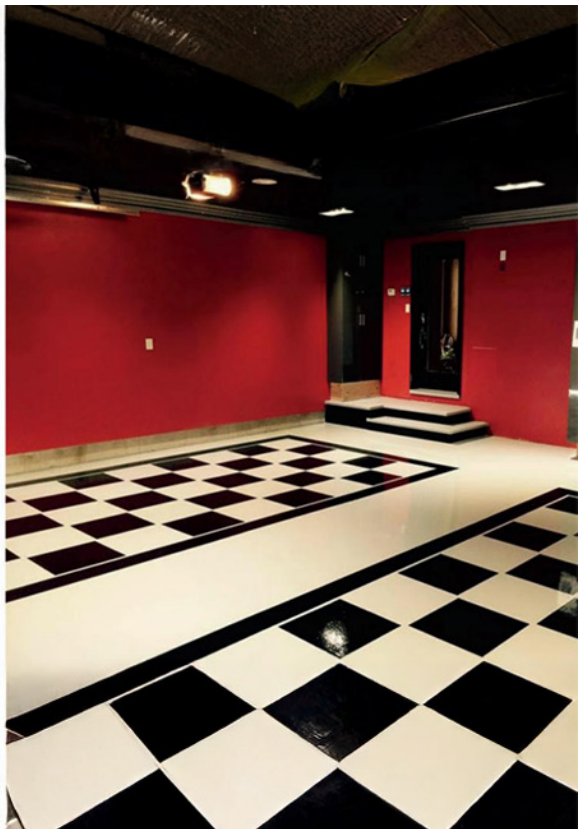
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ERIC FLORJANCIC

Eric Is Wearing
Suit: Lief Horsen
Shirt: Blu By Polifroni

Profile by Paula Just I Photo by Pat Scandale

A lawyer with nearly a decade of experience, Eric Florjancic believes his role goes beyond simply advocating for clients; it is about helping them make informed, strategic decisions when the stakes are highest.

Called to the Ontario Bar in 2017, Eric is a senior litigation lawyer at Legal Focus LLP in Windsor, where his practice centers on complex civil disputes. He regularly navigates business and contractual conflicts, employment and tax matters, property disputes, and estate litigation. He also possesses deep expertise in municipal, administrative, and drainage law. Drawing on his experience serving as Chair of the Appeals Committee for the Town of Essex, Eric brings an invaluable adjudicator's perspective when representing clients before tribunals and regulatory bodies.

"People come to me when they are already dealing with highly stressful situations and are looking for guidance and someone who will look out for their interests", he says. "My responsibility is to take that burden off their shoulders and ensure that the problem is no longer entirely in their hands."

For Eric, effective litigation does not automatically mean going to trial. His first step is often to help clients determine whether a dispute is truly worth pursuing and what approach makes the most sense for their circumstances. "Litigation is expensive, time-consuming and stressful," he explains. "You need to really consider where your priorities are."

When a matter does require a courtroom, however, Eric brings extensive trial and advocacy background to the table. Over the course of his career, he has appeared before various levels of court, including Small Claims Court, the Superior Court of Justice, the Divisional Court and the Court of Appeal for Ontario.

He has also represented individuals and businesses through arbitrations and mediations and has experience guiding matters through every stage of litigation, from the initial claim to appeals. "I provide a very tailored, common sense approach and ensure that people's needs are protected and taken care of", he affirms.

Eric's practical mindset is rooted in the Windsor-Essex legal community, which he credits for its strong sense of collaboration. He pays that forward today by actively mentoring law students and articling clerks. "Because local lawyers trust one another and know agreements will be honoured, a great deal of time, energy, and money is saved for our clients," he notes.

Outside the office, Eric balances the demands of his legal practice by spending time with his family and friends, staying active, unwinding with complex strategy games and exploring the communities and local businesses across Windsor-Essex and Southwestern Ontario. If you are facing a high-stakes dispute and need strategic guidance, schedule a consultation with Eric by contacting Legal Focus or visiting legalfocus.ca.



LEGAL FOCUS LLP

SHAWN LAPORTE SCOTT MCINTOSH

Profile by Paula Just I Photo by Pat Scandale



Pioneers in the landscaping industry for 35 years, Matrix Landscaping continues to broaden its commercial and residential services throughout Windsor-Essex while maintaining the hands-on approach that has shaped its reputation.

Led by Scott McIntosh, Director of Operations, and Shawn Laporte, Project Manager and the son of founders Rene and Brandy Laporte, the company is expanding its services to give property owners a reliable partner for everything their outdoor spaces need.

"We can provide whatever they might need and be a one-stop resource for anything," explains Scott.

On the commercial side, the firm provides full-service maintenance, including lawn cutting, snow removal, irrigation repairs and blowouts, helping businesses keep their properties safe, functional and well preserved throughout the year.

Matrix has also expanded its plaza care capabilities, working directly with landlords to coordinate a variety of property needs. Beyond landscaping and regular maintenance, the team can arrange site repairs, lighting maintenance and other solutions required to keep corporate properties operating smoothly. For residential clients, Matrix offers complete landscape projects, from initial design through installation, with services including irrigation and outdoor lighting. The company also provides ongoing care for homeowners who want their outdoor spaces consistently cared for throughout the seasons.

"Our goal is to make things easier for our customers," Shawn adds. "We have a team they can rely on to take care of it properly from start to finish." That commitment is backed by a staff of approximately 12 employees whose work is essential to the business's continued success. While Scott and Shawn guide the company forward, its field team plays a key role in turning the company's standards. "We can have the best plans and services in the industry, but it's our staff who bring everything to life", says Scott. "Their dedication is what allows us to deliver the level of service our customers have come to expect."

As Matrix continues to welcome new clients, its focus remains on offering dependable service while extending the ways it can support property owners. With Scott and Shawn at the helm and a dedicated crew behind them, the company is looking forward to another season.

"We're excited about what's ahead," says Shawn. "Every season brings new opportunities to grow, strengthen the relationships we've built and continue creating spaces we can be proud of."

To learn more about Matrix Landscaping and its comprehensive landscaping and maintenance services, visit their website at matrixlandscaping.ca or call (519) 800-5565.

Shawn Is Wearing
Shirt: Bugatchi
Pants: Ag Jeans
Shoe: Blundstone

Scott Is Wearing
Shirt: Point Zero
Pants: Mavi
Boots: Blundstone

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TRISH CURRIE

Profile by Paula Just I Photo by Pat Scandale

For more than 30 years, Trish Currie has dedicated her career to caring for others, working as a nurse, primarily in oncology and healthcare settings in the United States and Canada. Today, as a board-certified nurse coach and founder of Revive Restore Health & Wellness, she supports nurses, healthcare professionals, caregivers, patients and families navigating burnout, compassion fatigue, illness and major life transitions.

Through her practice, Trish creates a safe, compassionate space where people can slow down, be heard and reconnect with themselves. “My work focuses on caregivers caring for caregivers, because you cannot pour from an empty cup,” she explains.

Her services include nurse coaching, stress management, healthy lifestyle support, accountability and navigation through complex health and life experiences. Trish’s approach extends beyond professional caretakers to family members attending to loved ones with cancer or other serious illnesses.

Her work is rooted in both professional expertise and personal experience: she had burnout herself, an event that changed the direction of her career. “I’ve walked those shoes and lived that life,” she says. “And I never want to have somebody ever feel the way I did.”

That realization shaped her belief that healthcare professionals and caregivers need compassion and assistance. According to Trish, this responsibility can lead to burnout symptoms, the most common of which are absenteeism, irritability, difficulty concentrating, or changes in behavior. “These are signals that someone needs help.”

That is why she developed a Burnout Caregiver Assessment Tool to better understand where clients are in their wellness and recovery journey. The tool evaluates areas including capacity, self-awareness, recovery, restoration, empowerment and support.

Its scoring system allows her to identify whether someone is flourishing, stable, at risk, feeling exhaustion, or in severe distress, allowing her to tailor coaching to each person’s needs. “Those who spend their lives looking after others need care and help, too.”

Looking ahead, Trish hopes to expand Revive Restore through partnerships with healthcare organizations, employers, and communities, particularly around healthcare worker retention, burnout prevention and supportive navigation.

For her, healing begins with seeing the person behind the role. “I believe kindness is not a weakness; presence is powerful and true care begins when people feel seen.”

If you are responsible for caring for someone else and need assistance, you can schedule an appointment with Trish at www.reviverestorehealthandwellness.com or contact her on social media.



Trish Is Wearing
Shirt: Joseph Ribkoff
Pants: English Factory

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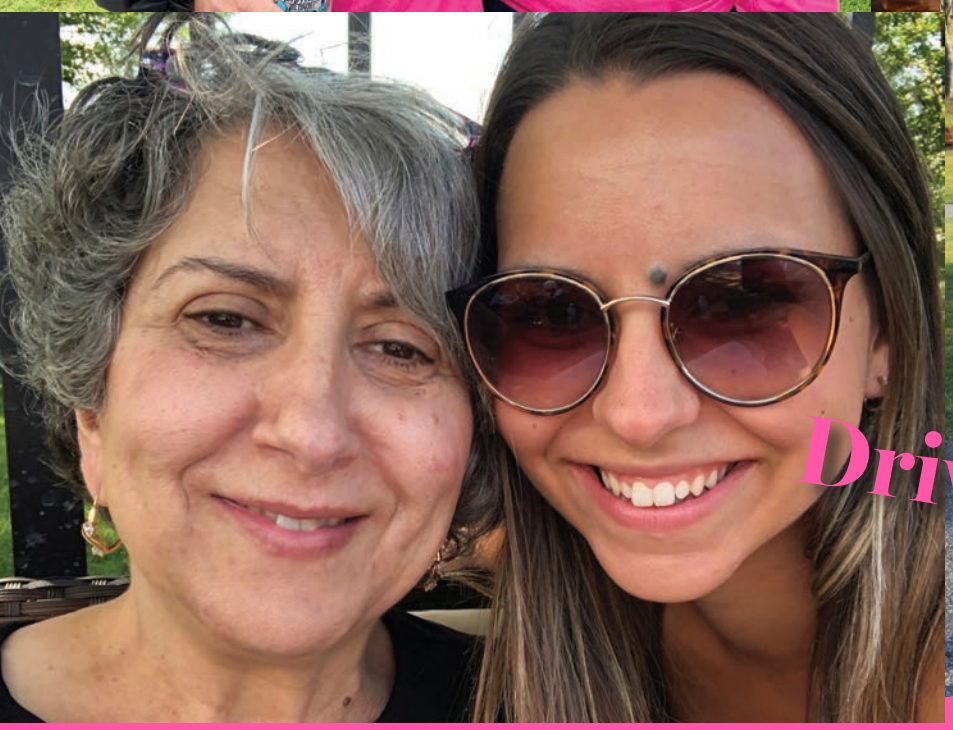
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Drive Out Breast Cancer

It Starts with Something Personal

How personal connections inspire extraordinary support for Chatham-Kent Health Alliance.

For Monica Couto, the reason to give back had a name: Mom.

When her mother, Maria, was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2020, the Wheatley resident wanted to do something to help. A former employee of Talbot Trail Golf Club, Monica drew on a place and a community she knew, organizing a golf tournament that would become an annual tradition.

Her decision to direct its proceeds to Chatham-Kent Health Alliance Foundation was rooted in her family's experience.

"All of my mom's treatment took place at CKHA, Monica explained in an earlier Foundation interview.

CHATHAM-KENT Health Alliance FOUNDATION

The hospital that cared for her mother became the hospital she wanted to support.

Maria passed away in 2023, but Monica's commitment continued. Today, Mamma Maria's Drive Out Breast Cancer Tournament honours her memory while helping other families facing their own uncertain moments. Its 2026 edition in Wheatley supports CKHAF's Mammography Campaign, helping fund replacement breast imaging technology at Chatham-Kent Health Alliance.

Behind the golfers, sponsors and donated prizes is a daughter who found a meaningful way to act on something deeply personal. Her story offers a glimpse into how community fundraising begins.







STRONG STARTS FOR TINY HEARTS







A reason to take the first step

A hospital can become important to someone through a single experience or a relationship built over years. For some, the connection comes from care received by a parent or partner.

For others, it grows through the work they do every day. Shannon Verschraegen and Kristen Fife know that connection well. Both are Registered Nurses in CKHA's Women & Children's Program, where supporting patients and families is part of their daily work.

They also saw an opportunity to contribute beyond their shifts. Together, they founded Strong Starts for Tiny Hearts, a community 5K run, walk and stroll supporting women's and children's care at CKHA. The inaugural event brought families, colleagues, volunteers and supporters to Chatham's Mud Creek this spring, raising more than $24,000.

Speaking to the Chatham Voice ahead of the event, Shannon explained the motivation: "We really do care about what we do and we really do care about the people we treat and that we help.

That care became an invitation others could answer. Participants could run, walk or bring their children along in strollers.

Volunteers could lend their time. Businesses could contribute. The nurses created a way for people with different abilities and resources to work toward the same goal.









Giving people a way to help

This is where a personal commitment can gather momentum. An organizer takes the first step, then others find their own place in the effort.

In Wallaceburg, the A Night of Comedy organizing committee has demonstrated just how much that shared effort can accomplish.

Over two sold-out events, the volunteer-led initiative has raised more than $71,000 for CKHAF's Our Hospital, Our Future Wallaceburg Redevelopment Campaign. The campaign supports the redevelopment of CKHA's Wallaceburg hospital site, helping prepare it to serve patients and families for generations to come.

The laughter fills a room for an evening. Making that evening possible takes months.

Committee members approach sponsors, collect silent auction items, sell tickets, promote the event and coordinate the details that make guests feel welcome. Their commitment gives local businesses, performers and attendees a practical way to invest in the hospital's future.

The same willingness to contribute runs through Monica's tournament and Strong Starts for Tiny Hearts. Someone supplies a prize. Someone invites friends. Someone volunteers for a job that needs doing. An idea becomes a shared undertaking because people are given a way to participate.

A connection that continues Through Chatham-Kent Health Alliance Foundation, those efforts support equipment, improved hospital spaces and patient care at CKHA's Chatham and Wallaceburg sites.







The connection is tangible. A tournament rooted in one woman's breast cancer experience now supports mammography. Nurses turn their understanding of patients' needs into support for women's and children's care. A committee brings neighbours together to help build the future of Wallaceburg's hospital.

Each event also creates relationships that can outlast the day itself. Participants return, sponsors renew their support, and a cause becomes part of a community tradition.

For Monica, that tradition keeps her mother's memory connected to the care of others. For a first-time organizer, it might begin with a much smaller step: talking to friends about an idea, bringing a suggestion to work, or asking how a favourite activity could support CKHA.

You do not need to arrive with a sold-out event or a committee already assembled. A conversation with the CKHA Foundation team is a place to begin.

If there is a person, an experience or an area of care at CKHA that matters to you, your connection could become an opportunity for others to help.

To explore organizing a fundraiser in support of CKHA, contact Tracy Oswald at toswald@ckha.on.ca or learn more about Chatham-Kent Health Alliance Foundation at ckhaf.ca.

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6,968 VISITS

WOMEN & CHILDREN
931 BABIES BORN

ONCOLOGY
4,369 VISITS

215,454
TOTAL PATIENT VISITS
*FROM WALLACEBURG & CHATHAM SITES

DIALYSIS
5,850 VISITS

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11,668 VISITS

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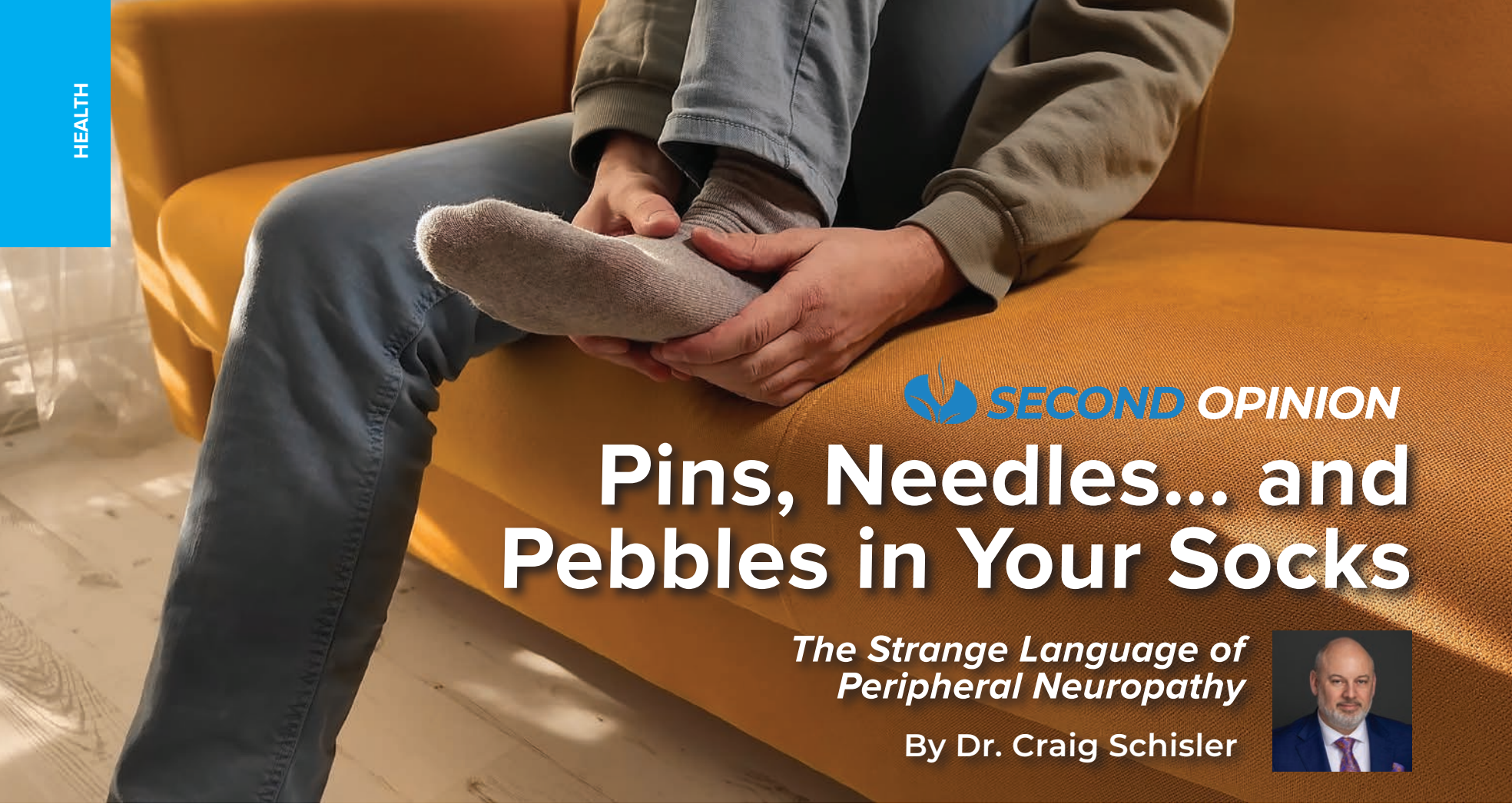
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SECOND OPINION

Pins, Needles... and Pebbles in Your Socks

The Strange Language of Peripheral Neuropathy

By Dr. Craig Schisler

"I keep checking my socks because it feels like there's something bunched up underneath my toes."

That's something I hear from patients more often than you might imagine.

Others describe walking on pebbles, having insects crawling across their feet, or feeling as though their socks are wet—even though they're perfectly dry. Some complain of burning feet that become particularly bothersome at night. Others describe electrical zaps, buzzing, prickling or the peculiar sensation that there's a layer of cardboard between their feet and the floor.

Then there's the seemingly contradictory complaint:
"My feet are numb...but they hurt."

It sounds impossible. How can something hurt and be numb at the same time?

Welcome to the strange language of **peripheral neuropathy**.

When Your Nerves Become Unreliable Messengers
Your nervous system is essentially your body's extraordinarily sophisticated communication network.

Sensory nerves constantly transmit information about pressure, temperature, vibration, pain and body position back toward the spinal cord and brain. Normally, this happens so effortlessly that you don't give it a second thought.

You don't need to look at your feet to know they're touching the floor.

But when peripheral nerves become damaged or dysfunctional, those messages can become distorted.

Imagine having a phone conversation with a terrible connection. Sometimes information doesn't get through at all. Other times you hear static. Occasionally you hear something that wasn't actually said.

Neuropathy can behave similarly.

When sensory information is **lost**, you may experience numbness or reduced ability to feel temperature, vibration or touch. Doctors sometimes call these **negative sensory symptoms** because normal sensation has disappeared.

But irritated or damaged nerves may also generate abnormal signals.

That's where we get **positive sensory symptoms**: burning, tingling, prickling, buzzing, electrical shocks and other sensations occurring without an obvious external stimulus.

So yes, strangely enough, your feet really can be numb and painful at the same time.

"It Feels Like I'm Walking on Pebbles"
Consider someone we'll call Susan.

Susan keeps feeling as though there's a wrinkle in her sock beneath the ball of her foot. She takes off her shoe, straightens the sock and puts everything back on.

The wrinkle is still there. Eventually she realizes there never was a wrinkle.

What Susan is experiencing may be **paresthesia or dysesthesia**—altered sensory information being interpreted by the brain as something occurring in the foot.

Another person might describe walking on cotton wool. Someone else says the floor feels strangely soft. Another insists their toes feel swollen even though they look perfectly normal. These descriptions aren't silly. In fact, they're useful clinical information.

The words people use to describe their symptoms can provide clues about which sensory pathways aren't functioning normally.

Why Does It Often Start in the Feet?

Many forms of peripheral polyneuropathy are length-dependent.

Put simply, the longest peripheral nerves are often affected first. Since some of the longest nerve pathways travel all the way to your toes, symptoms commonly begin there before gradually progressing farther up the feet and legs.

That's why clinicians sometimes refer to a **"stocking" pattern** of sensory loss. If the process continues, a person may gradually lose more than comfortable sensation. They may also lose some **protective sensation**.

Imagine stepping on a small stone inside your shoe. Most of us immediately stop and shake it out. But what if you couldn't feel it properly? Or imagine getting into a bath without accurately sensing how hot the water is. That's when numbness becomes more than an annoyance.

And Then There's Balance.

Your eyes aren't the only things telling your brain where you are in space. Sensory receptors in your muscles, joints and other tissues continuously provide information about body position—a system broadly associated with proprioception. Try standing comfortably and then closing your eyes. You have just removed one major source of information your brain uses for balance. Normally your nervous system compensates remarkably well.

But if sensory information coming from the feet and legs has also become unreliable, particularly in more advanced neuropathy, balance can become increasingly difficult.

This helps explain something else I sometimes hear: ***"I'm fine during the day, but I'm much less confident walking around the house in the dark."***

That's worth paying attention to.

But Here's the Bigger Question: Why?
This may be the most important part of the conversation. Peripheral neuropathy isn't one disease with one cause. Diabetes is a well-known cause, but neuropathy can also be associated with vitamin deficiencies, certain medications and chemotherapy, alcohol exposure, autoimmune and hereditary disorders, infections and other medical conditions. Symptoms resembling neuropathy may also occur with peripheral nerve entrapments or problems involving spinal nerve roots. Sometimes more than one factor is present.

That's why simply saying, ***"Well, I guess I have neuropathy,"*** shouldn't necessarily be the end of the investigation.

It may be the beginning.

Listen to What Your Feet Are Telling You
Burning. Buzzing. Numbness. Pins and needles. Electrical shocks. Cold sensations. Hot sensations. Pebbles that aren't there. Socks that mysteriously feel wet.

Your nervous system has quite a vocabulary when something isn't working properly.

The mistake is assuming that these strange sensations are simply something you have to learn to live with—or trying to treat every case of neuropathy exactly the same way.

At **Schisler Spine Centre / NeuroDoc Ontario**, we start by trying to understand the individual in front of us: the pattern of symptoms, how the nerves are functioning and what factors may be contributing to the problem. From there, we can discuss whether our treatment approach may be appropriate for you.

If you've been experiencing numbness, burning, tingling, balance changes or those peculiar ***"pebbles in my socks"*** sensations, consider having them properly evaluated.

Call our office and book a free consultation.

Bring us the strange descriptions. Tell us about the wet socks that aren't wet, the invisible pebbles and the feet that somehow manage to feel both numb and painful.

Because those odd sensations aren't just complaints.

They're clues. And understanding the clues is where a sensible conversation about your options should begin.

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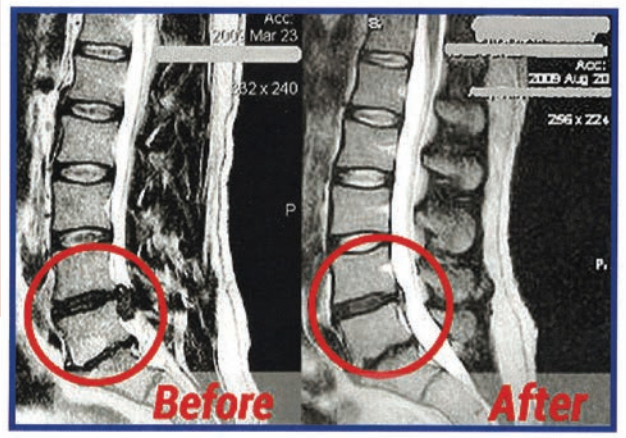
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Actual reduction of disc bulge using Non-surgical spinal decompression.

Windsor: Windsor's premier centre for non-surgical treatment of spine related pain has just undergone an upgrade. Inclusion into the prestigious Disc Centers of America (DCOA), the largest group of non-surgical spinal decompression doctors in the world, puts Windsor's own Schisler Spine Centre at the forefront treating conditions such as severe back, neck, and sciatic pain.

The very first Disc Centre of Canada has opened and Dr. Craig Schisler of the Schisler Spine Centre couldn't be happier. "The association with DCOA gives us access to all the latest cutting-edge research and technologies related to the non-surgical treatment of the spine. Why shouldn't Windsor have the very best the world has to offer?"

Chronic back pain and sciatica have reached epidemic proportions affecting millions of people worldwide. Chances are you or someone you care about is suffering from debilitating back or neck pain and have tried many different medications and therapies that simply didn't work. Right now, there is a way for all of that to change, right here in Windsor, Ontario. A technology called Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression offered at the Schisler Spine Centre is offering an alternative path for those who may end up needing surgery.

For the last 20 years, Dr. Craig Schisler and his team have been dealing exclusively with chronic and serious cases of Back pain, Neck pain and Sciatica and have kept hundreds from needing surgery.

"Our approach differs from traditional methods because we use the latest technologies proven by research to offer long-term relief and correction of bulging and herniatied discs," says Dr. Schisler.

It's true. Published studies show an amazing 85% success rate for those who qualify for this revolutionary treatment.*

"Now as the first Disc Centre of Canada, we'll be able to improve on our record. "One of the secrets to our success is we treat each patient individually and only accept those patients who we feel will benefit from our unique approach," says Dr. Schisler.

In the last 20 years Dr. Schisler has developed proprietary protocols to treat such painful conditions as bulging and herniated discs, spinal stenosis, facet syndrome and sciatica.

At the cornerstone of the technology is the DRX9000- the state of the art, gold standard for all decompression devices.



DRX9000

How it Works: the process creates a negative pressure within the disc drawing in any bulge or herniation. This stimulates "fibroblast activity" producing fresh cells and tissues within the disc. This restorative action allows the damaged disc to heal naturally, and proper function is restored to the spine.

More information can be found at The Disc Centre's of Canada website, www.ontariodisccentre.ca, where you can get a free copy of The Patient's Guide to Severe Back, Neck and Disc Pain immediately.

If you or someone you care about is suffering and looking for a non-surgical solution for back neck or disc pain, there's great news. Mentioning this article will get you a free, no-obligation consultation with Dr. Schisler. Call 519-988-0220 right now, or request your appointment through our website www.windsorspineandlaser.com. *References upon request.

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