



**Elgin County**  
Progressive by Nature

E-NEWSLETTER • MAY 2017

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## Community Profile

### The Township of Southwold is in Bloom



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Valerie Cron is a firm believer that a series of small actions has the potential to add up to something much bigger. It was because of this belief that in 2015, Valerie found herself the Chair of the [Southwold Township Communities in Bloom Committee](#). As a founding member of the Southwold Township Economic Development Committee, she knew that in order to grow Southwold, it

must have a superior quality of place, a cultural vibrancy, and a tradition of community participation. These elements she believed were essential components of a community that is attractive to potential businesses and residents alike. After some initial investigation Valerie was certain that participation in communities in bloom was a tangible way for Southwold to



improve its quality of place, and increase community participation, one small step at a time.

Communities in Bloom is a Canadian non-profit organization committed to fostering civic pride, environmental responsibility, and beautification through community involvement. Communities of similar sizes are compared to one another and awarded up to a total of 5 “Blooms”. These Blooms are awarded not only for beautification but overall tidiness, environmental action, heritage conservation, urban forestry activities, landscaping, and floral displays. The judges spend two days in each community considering everything from backyards to businesses. Communities first compete on a provincial level and then once they have achieved a certain level they are invited to compete at the national level.

The first year that Southwold participated, the committee focused on getting residents to do little things to improve their communities. Seminars were

held that encouraged people to tidy up their properties, paint their mailboxes, and create wreaths and floral displays to dress up their doors and verandahs. The committee began to notice people picking up garbage, taking care of their properties, and talking excitedly to their neighbours about the upcoming judges’ visit. That year Southwold was awarded 4 out of 5 Blooms which was a remarkable achievement for the community’s first year in the competition.

The one recommendation that the judges had for Southwold was that it needed to include a larger heritage component in its program. As a result the Southwold History Committee was formed and has since added its own vibrancy to the area by creating historical walking tours for many communities in Southwold Township and being involved in an exhibit to be held at the Canadian Museum of History in Ottawa depicting Southwold Township in its early years of settlement.

In 2016, after incorporating a heritage aspect into its programming, adding more environmental aspects, and undertaking a tree planting initiative, Southwold was able to achieve 5 out of 5 Blooms.

In 2017, The Southwold Township Communities in Bloom Committee has planned an event with a distinctly Canadian flavour in honour of Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Confederation. Community welcome signs and special planters at various locations have been decorated with red and white flowers and the committee has purchased 200 new Canadian Flags that will proudly fly across the Township this summer.

Every year on the final night of the judges' visit the committee holds a banquet at the Shedden Keystone Complex. Invited to the event are all committees of council and volunteer groups in the community including the Remembrance Day Group, the Canada Day Group, The Optimist Club, local soccer teams, local baseball teams, the Rosy

Rhubarb Festival Committee and more. Each group has a few minutes to speak about its contribution to Southwold. This is a great way to share information while celebrating community spirit and developing community pride.

The committee is very proud of what they have been able to accomplish over the past three years. At the beginning of the process committee members didn't know each other but after three years of dedication they have come together as a true team, each person bringing a special talent to the group.

"Everyone has put their heart and soul into this project," Valerie says proudly. "You don't have to have a big yard, a giant flower garden, or a huge home to participate. It's not what you have, but how well you maintain it."

This is a philosophy that has served the committee well and has planted the seeds for a spectacular bloom in Southwold Township.



## Business Profile

# Full Circle Ranch Bringing Together People, Animals, and Wellness



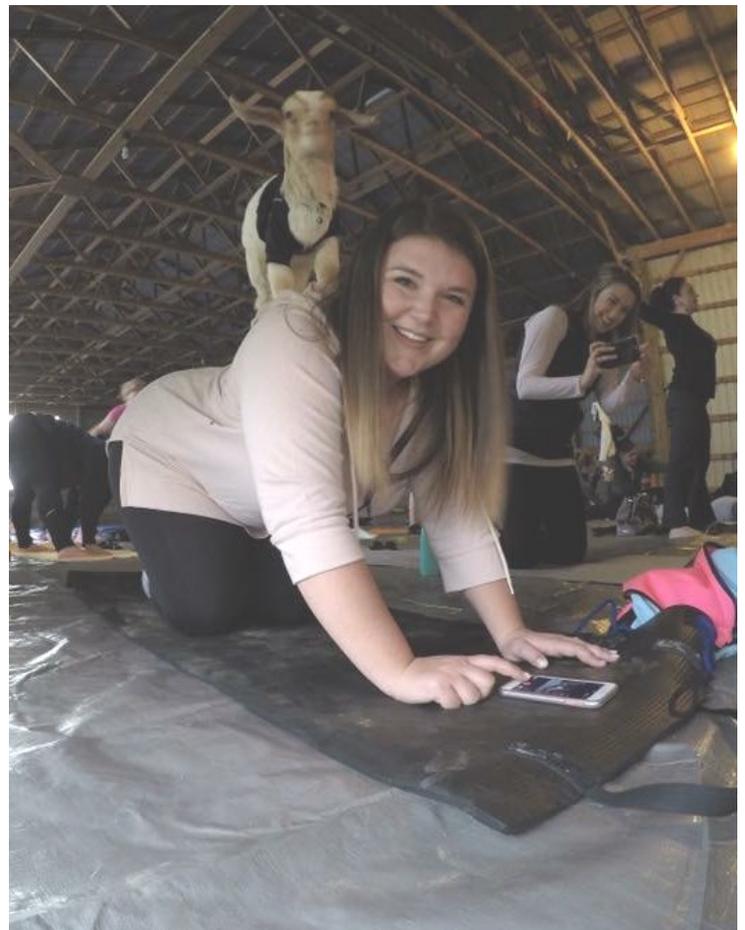
No “kidding” around, the newest phenomenon gaining momentum in Elgin County is Goat Yoga. Every Wednesday evening Full Circle Ranch hosts a Yoga class where participants are able to interact with these adorable, friendly little barnyard animals. Goats are naturally curious creatures who love to play, jump, and run and their presence makes for a lighthearted atmosphere during the weekly classes run by a Yoga instructor from Oceans Yoga and Pilates in London. The classes are held in an indoor arena so they run rain or shine and participants are encouraged to wear clothing they aren’t afraid to get a little dirty.

“The goats add such a sense of playfulness to these classes and lots of laughter as well,” says Morrigan Reilly-Ansons, Owner of Full Circle Ranch. “They allow participants of all ages and skill levels to relax and enjoy themselves while getting some exercise.”

Morrigan launched the Yoga program to help people connect with nature, animals, and themselves. She has a passion for working with both animals and people and has spent the last 10 years combining these two loves to help individuals achieve wellness with the aid of animals, especially horses. She

believes that with the pervasiveness of technology and the focus on productivity, society has become disconnected from the natural environment and anything that can bring people back to nature is a good thing.

Morrigan holds a Masters Degree in Counselling Psychology from Prescott College in Arizona, a Certificate in Grief and Bereavement from Continuing Studies at the University of Western Ontario and is trained in Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP). She started Full Circle Ranch in 2011 and moved the business to Central Elgin in 2013. In addition to Goat Yoga classes, Full Circle Ranch offers a series of counselling and therapy programs, community outreach programs, and horsemanship programs for both children and adults.





Horsemanship is taught through one-on-one or private group lessons. The Ranch works with students to achieve individualized learning goals and provides opportunities for trail riding and joining the Full Circle Ranch show team that competes in both the English and Western styles of riding. The facility also offers summer camps and other special events throughout the year.

Counselling sessions can be conducted individually or in a group setting and help clients to overcome anxiety, depression, grief, loss, and trauma, to navigate life changes, and to achieve personal growth. Morrigan's methods include talk therapy as well as Equine Assisted and Animal Assisted Therapies. Sessions are tailored to each individual and goals are entirely dependent on the client's wants and needs.

The Full Circle Ranch team also takes some of their animals into retirement homes, schools, and community agencies to provide therapeutic outreach. The animals are used to facilitate various activities related to mindfulness, wellness, leadership, and team building.

Morrigan explains that horses are ideal animals for assisting with therapy sessions because they are by nature prey animals. Most animals that people

interact with on a daily basis, cats and dogs for example are predators which mean they have a completely different mindset than horses. A prey animal must always be assessing its surroundings to determine whether or not it is safe, this makes it very in tune with its environment and everything and everyone in it. Horses can detect a person's emotional state and can sense when someone is feeling anxious. As a result, when interacting with horses, people must be in tune with how they themselves are feeling.

"It is a way for people to gain awareness of their own emotional states, patterns and thinking processes," says Morrigan. "It gives them the opportunity to do this in a safe and non-judgemental environment."

Additionally according to Morrigan there is an honesty to horses and animals that isn't found in humans. Animals don't pretend to feel one way when they don't actually feel that way and this honesty puts everyone involved at ease.

To learn more about Full Circle Ranch, and its programs visit the [website](#) or like Full Circle Ranch on [Facebook](#).



# Doing Business with Government



**COST:** FREE

**RSVP:** [info@elgin.ca](mailto:info@elgin.ca)  
<https://elgindoingbusiness.eventbrite.ca>  
(519) 631-1460 x168

**WHERE:** 320 Carlow Rd Port Stanley, ON

**REGISTRATION:** 8:15am - 8:30am  
**HOT BREAKFAST:** 8:30am - 9:00am  
**SPEAKERS:** 9:00am - 12:00pm

Doing business with the government can be seen as a daunting task. The Elgin County Conference, Doing Business with Government, is about breaking those barriers and encouraging small & medium sized businesses to bid on government tenders at all levels. Representatives from the federal, provincial & municipal levels of government will provide guidance, tips & tricks to help businesses in working with the government.

## SPEAKERS

### Menelaos (Manny) Argiropoulos



**Chief, SME Stakeholder Engagement**  
Public Services and Procurement Canada - Office of Small and Medium Enterprises

### Kevin Fox



**Senior Procurement Consultant**  
Ministry of Consumer and Government Services

Thursday, June 1, 2017  
Kettle Creek Golf & Country Club



## Plowing Match Scholarship Accepting Applications



Are you a resident of Elgin County or St. Thomas and studying in a post-secondary institution in Canada in a discipline related to agriculture? You may be eligible for the International Plowing Match Legacy Agricultural Scholarship.

The scholarship awards \$2,500 per year to one female and one male each who are already attending a college or university in Canada to study in an agriculturally-related program. Examples of such programs include agricultural sciences, agri-business, agri-tourism, nutrition, earth sciences and food sciences. The scholarship is provided as a result of the generous support of legacy funds from the 2010 International Plowing Match hosted in Elgin County.

The application form and eligibility criteria are available for download at [www.elgincounty.ca/ipmscholarship](http://www.elgincounty.ca/ipmscholarship)

**The Scholarship Deadline is June 1, 2017**