

2007 - Top stories from the year that was

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Today, as we look ahead at 2008, January provides an early indication of what some of the West Parry Sound District's top stories will be. In two weeks, the Near North District School Board's local accommodation review committee will meet again while considering which of four area schools could close this spring. The school board, meanwhile, won't sit idly, waiting for the culmination of the school review process to hit the boardroom – they will spend the next two months deciding where else to make cuts and negotiate with teacher unions in the face of declining enrolment and budget shortfalls.

The Town of Parry Sound will also spend much of January talking budget, coping with the soon-to-be-revealed cost of updating aging infrastructure, the rising cost of social services and an ongoing debate over how much municipal governments should spend on arts, culture and recreation. At the forefront of Parry Sound budget deliberations will be the future of the Charles W. Stockey Centre for the Performing Arts. Surrounding municipalities will be encouraged to enter the debate over who should pay, what entertainment the Stockey should or shouldn't provide at taxpayers' expense, and whether the building's economic spin-off makes any range of municipal investment worthwhile.

But before we wade too far into predictions for '08, let's take a look at the year that was. Overall in 2007, surprising acts of goodwill were the bookends for a year in which education cuts and looming school closures permeated the local news. The year featured a regular dose of unfortunate tragedy, including the sudden deaths of several residents. It included an interesting, but not unpredictable local race during the provincial election. There were **success stories** – local brothers taking over the Don Cherry's restaurant chain, the local airport's expansion, the **Ontario albacore championships** and World Enduro held here. There were also some losses – the closure of the Station Gallery and the local animal shelter, and the death of hockey legend Bobby Orr's father Doug. But most of all, there was generosity. Donations, large and small, made the year a remarkable one capped off by a record-breaking holiday season for food banks and toy drives.

If January's lineup is any indication, 2008 will certainly include its fair share of controversy and emotion amid, at least short-term, an uncertain economic future. But 2007 proves a few acts of unexpected kindness can go a long way towards mitigating any gloom and doom.

Here's a look at just a few of the top stories from the pages of 2007 issues of the Parry Sound North Star, and Parry Sound Beacon Star.

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Parry Sound to host albacore champs

Sail Parry Sound announces it will build on the area's reputation as a world class sailing regatta venue by hosting the 2007 Ontario Albacore Championships in June. The event successfully draws some of the country's best Albacore racers to the waters of the Big Sound.

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A gift for Sail Parry Sound

Sail Parry Sound received its largest community donation to date for its sailing centre near the old town beach as the Parry Sound Optimist Club donates \$30,000 to the sailing centre, supporting the centre for its Youth initiatives, including a sailing school.