Recycle your tree — feed it to a goat

Penny Coles
The Local

Who knew feeding Christmas trees to goats could be an annual family event?

First it was goat yoga, then goat movies, goat parties and coffee with goats. Now it’s watching the feeding frenzy that occurs when Christmas trees are thrown into a goat pen.

It’s becoming a new seasonal tradition, says Melina Morsch of Fox Den Yoga, who was gathered with friends and family Sunday at Benchview Farms in Niagara-on-the-Lake, where her 16 yoga goats are kept.

“We have to do something with the trees, and goats love them. People have been asking me if they can drop their trees off, so I decided to make it a party and start a new tradition.”

It’s good for the goats’ digestive systems, a natural de-wormer, says Morsch, and as food-motivated animals, they love the treat.

Pine trees are the sweetest-tasting and their favourite, she says, but they’re not fussy — they’ll chow down on whatever variety they’re given. They go for the needles first, but will work away at the bark as well.

And they’re fun to watch, as the small crowd demonstrated Sunday, standing under cover on Nicky, the smallest and hungriest goat (her nickname is Nicky the piggy) digs into a Christmas treat. (Penny Coles)
Local men lend a hand to dinner program

Mike Balsom
Special To The Local

They usually drive in from Niagara-on-the-Lake together, but this Thursday, Rick Meloen arrives first, having had to complete some errands before their usual shift.

He is greeted at the kitchen door by Niagara Falls Community Outreach Chair Chris Watling, who says, "here he is, the mayor of Niagara Falls Community Outreach food program in Niagara Falls. They are usually joined by Rick Durand, also of NOTL, while local Stephen Levy serves dinner."

Tony Chisholm and Rene Bertschi walk through the same door, don their aprons, and prepare for another busy evening working the dish pit at the nightly soup kitchen. The fourth member of the group, Rick Durand, sends his apologies, as the busy Christmas season took him away from the group's weekly volunteer shift.

From Nov. 1 through to the end of April, the four retired NOTL residents volunteer here, assuming the dishwashing duties for the supper shift.

Watling oversees about 300 volunteers who help serve lunches year-round, and suppers seven days a week for six months of the year. More than 42,000 nutritious meals are served free of charge each year to those who need them. At a cost of about $3.50 per meal, the program has an annual budget of slightly more than $100,000. Watling says she can't put a value on the work of the crew of men who make the drive from NOTL every week.

Meloen has been volunteering in the kitchen for almost 10 years, and slowly brought in the other three. Bertschi being the most recent addition to the dishwashing crew. Watling says he enjoys "horrorming" Meloen with the "mayor" nickname — she knows he's not actually the mayor, but it seems she feels he has been representing the town with his involvement every week.

"We thought, wow, these guys are driving all the way up here to do dishes. They have a little socialization after, which is nice," she says. But the "mayor" and his crowd handle the dishes and clean up, seeing it right through to the end, putting out the garbage every Thursday night, she adds.

"They're committed to doing a wonderful job," she says. "It's important that whoever operates that dish washer knows what they're doing and takes good care of it, because if that goes down, it's a major piece of equipment."

Following his retirement from the public works department of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Meloen quickly became involved as a volunteer in a number of initiatives. The 1812 bicentennial celebrations, Canada 150 Celebrations, and Heritage Trail Committee have all benefited from his volunteerism.

In fact, it was as members of the bicentennial committee where Meloen and Chisholm first realized this one night of the week.像 Meloen, Chisholm's volunteer spirit reaches beyond the Community Outreach soup kitchen. He has been a president of The Friends of Fort George, the chair of both the Canada 150 Committee and the Tall Ships 150 event, and is a long-time member of the Communities in Bloom Committee, among other pursuits.

Bertschi has also been involved in many of the same volunteer organizations and committees. He joined the other three at the soup kitchen for the first time about three years ago. Bertschi, who retired to NOTL after a career in electronics in Germany, is quick to deflect any praise to those who keep the kitchen running all year.

"These people in here are the real heroes," says Bertschi. "We just come here and help out one week. Their dedication to this soup kitchen, there's not enough words to describe it. They're here every day, lunch time, in the evening, arranging food, picking up food, buying food, bringing in the guests."

All three clearly have a commitment to giving back to the community, and that has become infectious.

Rene Bertschi, Tony Chisholm and Rick Meloen wash dishes once a week at a Community Outreach food program in Niagara Falls. They are usually joined by Rick Durand, also of NOTL, while local Stephen Levy serves dinner. (Photos by Mike Balsom)
Shaw Film Series begins with Blinded by the Light

Mike Balsom Special to The Local

With instant streaming of movies and television shows at everyone’s fingertips, going out to see a movie at the Shaw Festival Theatre this winter promises to be that, and more.

The theatre itself, of course, is part of the attraction. The Shaw Festival Theatre is definitely not your average run-of-the-mill multiplex, and the claim on their seats, then head out to the lobby to enjoy a drink and snacks, provided by GoodDine Catering. This Saturday, Jan. 4, the lobby will be serving around 1:30 p.m. (the movies begin at 3 p.m.), to renew acquaintances and to share their excitement about seeing the first film, Blinded by the Light, in which a young Muslim man learns about life through the music of Bruce Springsteen.

Peter Barwell is one of those regulars. He’s been at the Grizzlies (Feb. 8). It’s based on a true story of a group of youth who come together to form a lacrosse team. “It’s a wonderful story about how they turn themselves around to find success,” says Levy. Described by Levy as “fabulous” is the satire Jojo Rabbit (Feb. 15). “It follows a kid during the Nazi times,” he says. “It sounds very gloomy, but it’s a sweet story that sees things through the eyes of innocent children who get caught up in the events.”

For the second straight year, Shaw’s decision to offer theatre productions through the Christmas season has resulted in the cancellation of the Documentary Series, which ran alongside the theatrical films in previous years. Levy was able to squeeze one documentary into this year’s series, the Feb. 1 screening of The Biggest Little Farm.

It all concludes on Feb. 22 with Quentin Tarantino’s Once Upon a Time… in Hollywood, featuring Brad Pitt and Leonardo DiCaprio striving for success in Hollywood in 1969. As with other Tarantino films, there is a dark undercurrent to this one, with the rise of Charles Manson and the Tate-LaBianca murders looming large.

Though the films lead to much discussion afterwards, Levy has never scheduled a formal talk following a screening. Though he has no plans for it, the Tarantino film would be an interesting one to start, as Levy himself was starring in a Hollywood production at the time of those murders. “It was at the height of my acting career,” he says. “I was starring in Judd for the Defense, a legal drama. Sharon Tate lived around the corner from me. When that happened, everyone was scared, nobody owned a gun, and all of a sudden, everyone was going out to buy one. I didn’t want a gun, but a friend of mine who owned one moved in with me for three weeks.”

Reflecting on the many films screened at the Shaw series over the years, Levy says he is “very proud of the quality of the films. Not everybody likes everything, but there is a certain quiet, they’re pretty focused, and I rarely see anyone walking out.”

Levy, like the few others involved, is a volunteer, and organizes the series for the love of it. Any funds raised go right back to the Shaw Festival. “I get a kick if somebody likes (a film) that I think has gravitas,” he says. “When other people get it, that’s all I need.”

Tickets are $12 per film, or a season pass can be purchased for $80. Information about this year’s Shaw Film Series can be found at https://www.shawfest.com/event/film-series/.

One of Tonight’s Servers, Steve Durand, the drying technician, and pre-wash technician, Chisholm — otherwise known as the A-Team. Though the films lead to much discussion afterwards, Levy has never scheduled a formal talk following a screening. Though he has no plans for it, the Tarantino film would be an interesting one to start, as Levy himself was starring in a Hollywood production at the time of those murders. “It was at the height of his acting career,” he says. “I was starring in Judd for the Defense, a legal drama. Sharon Tate lived around the corner from me. When that happened, everyone was scared, nobody owned a gun, and all of a sudden, everyone was going out to buy one. I didn’t want a gun, but a friend of mine who owned one moved in with me for three weeks.”

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Fellowship important

Continued from page 3

was the connection with Meloon that brought him to the soup kitchen.

And Chisholm adds that one of tonight’s servers, Stephen Levy, is also a retired NOTL resident. Levy, also a regular, says: “Though you volunteer, greets each diner with a charming smile as he hands them their dinner. The fruits of their volunteer efforts are shown in the faces of those who sit down to enjoy tonight’s meal of steak, roasted potatoes, salad and dessert. As much as the four NOTL volunteers enjoy the camaraderie in the kitchen, the fellowship found among the less fortunate who rely on this meal on a regular basis is crucial to their well-being as well.

And though most of his time is spent in the kitchen, Bertichi says, “we do see some of the people, and a lot of times, it breaks my heart. Every time I come home, I tell my wife and daughter that we’re privileged, so to give a little back to this community that’s what it’s about.”

They do such a great job on the dishes in the soup kitchen, it begs the obvious question of how often they do dishes at home. Bertichi speaks fondly of time spent doing dishes, a chance to bond with his wife and daughter. Chisholm says he’s not allowed in the kitchen to cook, so he gets clean-up duty. Meloon, however, jokes he doesn’t do a good enough job, so he doesn’t bother.

At the soup kitchen, though, the wash technician, as Meloon calls himself, does a pretty good job every Thursday, along with Bertichi the bus boy, Rick Durand, the drying technician, and pre-wash technician Chisholm — otherwise known as the A-Team.

The soup kitchen runs out of the Niagara Falls Community Outreach building at 4865 St. Lawrence Ave.

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This past year, 2019, has not been one without its challenges for all of us, from all levels of government, but it has also been one of the most gratifying experiences and it is your voice that has given me strength. I thank you for that.

When council started in December 2019, we had three major objectives. The first council objective was to be more accessible and accountable, the second to build a strong community in a balanced way, with a sustainable budget, and the third to finish unfinished business from previous years.

One of the most gratifying experiences for constituents, with a council that is voted in “at large,” is to know which councillor to call on an issue. This year we created, and published, a work plan with target dates, and assigned members of council with responsibility to address specific issues so the public knows who to call.

Our communications to the town residents and businesses is more frequent, and the consistent use of the Town is doing, what council members are responsible to communicate.

We continue to work with our constituents to find solutions that are compatible with the surrounding buildings and also one of the two areas in the Region that established a Community Safety Zone (CSZ) along York Road. As a result of this, council will be forwarding a request of council in December of 2018, the Region approved the pilot. This was something that the St. Davids Residents Association had been asking for since 2016.

The third objective was to be more accessible and accountable, and to make recommendations to council about how to improve our communications.

This year, 2020, we will have monthly “Coffee with the Lord Mayor” meetings that will include members of council when their schedules permit, to have informal discussions about how the Town is doing, what constituents would like to see and where improvement is needed.

I am very proud of the fact that our council members are responsive to community requests, attend community events and attend the outside agencies, boards and commissions to which they have been appointed.

Lord Mayor looks at past and future work of council

If we want to continue to maintain control of our future, we have to think beyond 2020.

Betty Disero

January 2, 2020

THE NOTL LOCAL

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THE NOTL LOCAL
Region ‘willing to tackle complicated issues’

Regional Councillor Gary Zalepa

Looking back, 2019 was a year filled with challenges as well as opportunities. As regional councillor for Niagara-on-the-Lake, my priorities included restoring public faith in regional government, including its agency, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA), conducting business with integrity, and demonstrating by doing the necessary homework and preparing for meetings; developing working relationships with colleagues; and dealing with leftover bad actors.

I was fortunate to be selected for the original group of councillors to join the NPCA board.

Gary Zalepa

Also important was progressing on the issues of housing affordability, economic growth, transit delivery, GO implementation and service delivery review. Almost immediately after being sworn in, regional council found consensus on dealing with leftover bad actors. Council directed key staff changes, and several policies were implemented which improved staff morale, increased accountability of council and sent a much overdue signal that problems were being properly addressed.

I was fortunate to be selected for the original group of councillors to join the NPCA board. Our task was to reset that organization, stabilize the staff, and reforest the organization on its strategic priorities. Sounds simple, but was more difficult than expected.

Key evidence of success was that over nine months, staff issues had been cleared, an interim CAO, Gary Seeley, was hired to guide the resetting process, and as 2020 approaches, the organization has begun servicing residents according to its mandate.

With the recently re-launched Provincial Ombudsman’s Office, ONI, and Inside Job, regional council can now turn the page on speculation, and permit appropriate professionals to follow through on the issues uncovered, while council focuses on the matters of regional government.

Despite the fact that regional council meets separately from town council early on, I developed an excellent working relationship with Lord Mayor Betty Disero and the town council. Our priority was ensuring that NOTL was well represented, and its priorities heard at regional council, and this continues to be the focus of our joint efforts. NOTL is well represented at the Region. I served on the NPCA from January to October, 2019, and was on Planning and Econom ic Development and Public Works Committees as well as Budget Committee chair.

This past year, 2019, saw regional council develop two budgets. Election timing moved the process for budget last year into January 2019, and the 2020 budget was just finalized. Key points in the process have been accountability and transparency. Regional council has put forward two budgets since the election that are transparent with residents in the need to balance affordability of taxation with a sound financial plan for asset management, taking into consideration anticipated growth and council’s priorities around its Strategic Plan.

Housing affordability is an issue to which NOTL is not immune. In fact, with some of the Region’s highest property values and the important protection of our lands by Ontario’s Greenbelt legislation, NOTL has many residents experiencing core housing need. Core housing need is when people are paying more than 30 percent of their income on their housing costs. There are a significant number of NOTL residents which fall into this category, and with many experiencing lacklustre wage growth, and a large number on fixed incomes, this pressure on housing affordability is magnified in NOTL by a limited supply of a broad range of housing in all styles, mainly apartment dwellings.

With 2020 approaching, our community needs to have an appetite for development of apartment buildings in appropriate locations. A ‘not in my backyard’ approach is harmful to the greater community.

Housing styles which increase the availability and supply of housing improve affordability and provide more housing opportunities for all, not just the well-to-do.

Affordable is not limited to social housing, it must include rental housing. Renters provide options for lower-income residents and those entering the housing market for the first time. The solution to improve supply cannot rest solely on government. Private stakeholders and housing non-profits must be incentivized to participate in filling the housing need.

NOTL has an opportunity to make progress on this issue. The Town owns several pieces of land which could be used in conjunction with partnering with the private sector or housing non-profits to create an appropriate housing development to meet local core housing needs. We must ensure current development approval processes do not hamper the creation of a greater housing mix. By addressing barriers, government can make progress.

Another issue is how municipalities deliver services. This year saw the Province make some significant changes in both policy and downloading of services to municipalities. This placed significant financial and delivery pressure on services provided by the Region in the areas of community services and public health, including homelessness, children’s services and social services. The choice was to either cut programs, previously funded by provincial dollars, or continue programs by funding with local property tax revenue.

The essential need to provide services to those most vulnerable in our community made the decision to continue it the most responsible choice.

The Province has been clear that municipalities must find efficiencies in service delivery and that

There are many more issues confronting the Region and possibly some unknowns around the corner. It is my hope that residents recognize that there is a competent group on local and regional council that has a willingness to tackle complicated issues, keeping the betterment of our communities at the forefront. I welcome your conversations and recognize that together, we can achieve better outcomes.

Best wishes to you and your family for 2020. I look forward to the privilege of representing you in our work at the Region.
So much for wishing for peace on earth and goodwill toward men.

News we absolutely didn’t want to hear was the mesage of last week: Boxing Day regarding an incident in a parking lot of the Oakes Collection of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

It appears a woman, caught on video, was angry at losing a parking space to the woman recording the scene with her phone.

It turned ugly very quickly, with the woman being recorded hurling racial slurs and mocking the other woman’s Chinese accent.

Once the aggressive rant was spent, the victim of the tirade reported it to mall staff, and police were called to investigate.

The good news we hope to hear soon is the resolution of this incident, possibly leading to charges being laid.

The woman who recorded the incident and posted it on Facebook has now removed it, but not before it was shared many times and thousands of viewers had seen it.

While it wasn’t a great way to end the year in NOTL—it’s not what the friendliest town is noted for — there will hopefully be lots of good news ahead to celebrate.

At the top of the list, of course, is the budget.

While the new year is typically the time for resolutions, council ended 2019 with a resolve to find a way to reduce a projected increase of more than nine per cent.

Beginning Jan. 6, there are three Monday meetings of more than nine per cent. With a resolve to find a way to solutions, council ended 2019 news ahead to celebrate.

While 2019 saw a new year term, there was also a great deal of amalgamation.

Betty Disero and Regional Chairwoman of the Town and the Region, is also noteworthy, and the further step taken by the Lord mayor with the holding of public office in the town hall, is that public conversation is welcome.

And there is more good news to come, we hope.

There is of course the issue of a six-storey hotel proposed for Randwood to be resolved, with legal actions hopefully to be put to rest, a decision on the application from the Town, and whatever further action the developer sees fit to take as a result.

Welcome news would be a compromise that town representatives, neighbours of the John Street East development and heritage preservationists could live with, that the developer could agree to as well.

It hasn’t been found so far, but without some resolution, taxpayers already concerned about legal fees will become more outraged, although it should be noted, the majority of residents voted for a council that would work to preserve heritage, and that’s what they got.

The issue of cannabis should see some resolution. There are appeals to a Town interim-control bylaw, and clear lines have been drawn in the sand. Will they be upheld?

Those involved in creating legislation, and some in the industry itself, see this as a time of chaos, and if nothing else the Town has bought itself some time to see how other municipalities are handling the industry, and is allowing the dust to settle on an issue that one way or another will have an impact on the local agricultural industry.

Other matters that are important locally, and which residents hope to see unfold sooner rather than later, improved transit, the approval in place to allow development of the Glendale area, a final decision from the Province on rezoning for a new medical centre on Niagara Stone Road and the hiring of a new Town CAO would be good news we hope to hear in 2020.

Meanwhile, there is so much for locals to enjoy during this winter season. The upcoming Icewine Festival and Icebreakers Come-Down at Fort George are favourites for residents and visitors; there are activities at Fort George every weekend, including family events planned for the skating rink at the fort, there are great tobogganng, hiking and snowshoeing areas close to home, and before we know it, spring will be on the horizon.

That means our migrant workers will be arriving, and after the tragic hit-and-run that killed a Mexican farm worker, the spotlight will shine on safety for workers who help our agricultural industry flourish.

We look forward to increased initiatives as they arrive, and also to the heightened awareness and acceptance of migrant workers to continue, as we recognize them as our friends, neighbours and important members of our community.

Lots of good news ahead. Now bring on the new year, and may it be a happy, healthy, safe and prosperous one for all of you, your loved ones, and this amazing town that surrounds us.

Penny Coles
The Local

The NOTL Local acknowledges the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, many of whom continue to live and work here today. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and is within the land protected by the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, many of whom continue to live and work here today.

Our great standard of living is directly related to the resources and friendship of Indigenous peoples.

Good news we hope to hear, and print, in 2020
It could be a sour relationship with oneself, a chaste, altogether
amicable culture, or maybe it’s all
positive - and yet we still can’t
come to see our minds off work.
I certainly feel my work
being more than that when
wrangling around Niagara
ra-ra like a dale.
I have painful and also
beautiful imaginations of a St.
David’s bench provincial park,
with streams or streams, cascading
down the Niagara Escarpment’s
to the valley below. It would have been a
geographical
and
micro-climates tucked into the
valleys. Several species of fish
would have swarmed in these streams and
swam all the way up from Lake Ontario. Deaf-
ing tree frogs would have been heard all along Line 9 be-
low, amid rare tree species such as pawpaw and sarsaparilla.
Another outside of town might be batted, driving
up or down through St. Davids and seeing the sign pronouncing
the entrance to a UNESCO
World Biosphere Reserve. Al-
though this is definitely a title
worth basking in town, the ur-
ban sprawl in St. Davids over
the past decade has smothered
any that the area’s natural
heritage was seriously protect-
ed. I see this and my resounding
thought is: “what a quiet shame”,
and I can’t help but to more boldly protect these
areas, their soils and the water services they provide for us.
Be it St. Davids or the entire
world, there is no pointing the
finger at who, or which gener-
ous concerns our climate
but these people also must walk
the pot in healthy amounts along
the way. What if the next gen-
erations don’t get to experience
the prior thrill in terms of our
natural wonders? Is this
a resonating plea with our
community?
What if Niagara Falls was
designated as a national park,
and never in-
truded or commercialized?
Imagine having to walk through
humongous red oak trees and
over boardwalks to have to get
to see the Falls, with a gorge
arguably the most beautiful
in all of Canada. It’s a weak,
recurring dream of mine.
What if NOTL still
had a connected “ring of green”
habitat surrounding its urban
boundary; which it had up until
about two years ago? I know is-
sues like that have infuriated ex-
perts in the environmental field, but these people also must walk
the line of being professional
and not emotional.

Sometimes I look at the
damage to the various wetlands and
forest fragments along Line 9, as I have been able to
critique this area more than
anywhere else while growing up here. It used to have a bit of
a “wild” feel to it, that stretch
between St. Davids and Queen-
ston, along the base of the Es-
carpment, but a lot of those nat-
ural features have been thinned
down, bad houses plucked inside
them, and I can tell you a lot of
the usual animal residents aren’t
so usual anymore.
It’s a difficult balance, one of
which it’s easy to lose sight. I
still lose, agitation and missed
opportunities along this
ecosystem, and even if I nev-
eralistically had a chance to
change the outcome. So yes, it’s permi-
"t, but I also can grasp the pain
of the ecosystem based on years
of observation. As humans who
understand humans, we just

have to look at one another
remark, “gee, you look sick. “
That’s how scientists can
look at a wetland or forest,
and just know it’s sick.
I can also reflect on my work
last winter in Australia’s tropics,
where marine biologists shed
their tears and lost sleep over those
beloved Great Barrier Reef. And
they know it’s not even theirs. It’s
ours, and we all are seeing some-
thing precious and irreplaceable
slip away due to human factors,
as we head into 2020.
Damn, that’s got to be hard to
watch.
Welcome to 2020. They say that 20/20 is perfect vision, and that when we look back we sometimes see that we could have done something a little better. That is when we say, “Handicapped is 20/20”.

Let’s look at how to have 20/20 vision for this next year, and of course the next decade.

A lot of people use this time of year to make New Year’s resolutions.

You know, go to the gym, start a diet, travel more, etc. Although these are all great goals, after a few months most of them fail. I guess that’s why I don’t make them. Instead, I try to look ahead with as clear a vision as possible about what I can do better, and how I can become a more authentic ‘me.’

Back in the 90s, I created the Law of Cooperative Action at Brock University, that basically states that we are all interconnected and interdependent. If we look at the universe, everything seems to fit and work together, from the plants to the animals to the weather. Even when there is an issue in our lives or in the universe, it works itself out and something new or different comes into existence.

Our challenge as humans in this interconnectedness is how do we fit in, and how do we become authentic within that interconnectedness, without harming it or allowing it to harm ‘us.’ In other words, how do I become authentically me? What is my vision for myself and how do I fit into this organized chaos? I accomplish that by using six basic tenants or laws.

First, I celebrate and value the individual as the foundation of all relationships. This means it is not my job to judge, criticize or try to control who you are or what you want to be. I simply accept who you are. Of course that does not mean I agree or condone whatever that is, I simply accept that. ‘It allows me to be me as well.

Second, because it’s OK to be me and it’s OK to be you, then I do my best never to knowingly harm you. So as I strive for a clear vision of who I am and how I fit in, I do it respectively and cooperatively.

Third, I negotiate all of my boundaries by never telling the other person what they are doing wrong, but simply how their actions are affecting me. I am in control of myself without being controlling of you. So there is a clear vision of what I need, while respecting and understanding what you need. If we are in concert, we move forward, if we are not, we figure out what that means.

Fourth, I always look for a balance and equilibrium to create cooperative action without losing my sense of self. This one is a little more complicated as I must have a clear vision of what makes me toxic and what I need to do to avoid being in a situation that can harm myself or others.

Fifth, all relationships are based on mutual trust and respect. If that does not exist, then toxicity builds up and the relationship fails apart.

Finally, if the relationship is in fact toxic, I will let it go and walk away. This takes courage, and it is the last resort. Initially, I will do my best to walk away gently so I don’t have to walk away physically. Example: the way some people chew gum is annoying, but that is not their problem, it’s mine. It’s not my job to get them to chew gum the way I believe is correct. So who really has the problem?

Look at it this way. We are all in a fast-flowing stream, the river of life, and because of the interconnectedness, we all affect this stream in one way or another. Our problem as humans is we are continuously trying to control the stream. Stop worrying about what your partner is wearing to an event. Stop getting upset with traffic. Stop trying to tell that person how to chew gum. When you try to tell others what to do, you are trying to control the stream.

Instead, control how you navigate the stream, without harming the stream, and more importantly, without allowing the stream to harm you.

My wish for you is that your 2020 includes peace, kindness, joy, comfort and love.

Ted Mouradian is the president of the 2% Factor Inc. and creator of the Law of Cooperative Action. He is an author and professional speaker and can be reached at ted@the2percentfactor.com.
Youth council participate in grape escape room

Alexcia Cofell
The Local Community Advisory Board

One of the activities enjoyed by the Lord Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council was a recent visit to the Grape Escape Wine Tours in Virgil to participate in a 60-minute escape room.

It was a team-building exercise for the council — an escape room involves a lot of teamwork, and in us working together. We had fun, and we had to trust each other.

“Escape rooms, at least this one, involve jumping back and forth between riddles, and we must all be working. Nobody just stands and watches,” says Gioai de Leonardis, a member of the LMYAC.

De Leonardis describes the escape room as having many items which are part of the puzzle that lead to the solution — you just don’t always know which are important.

Figuring that out together allowed the LMYAC “to connect further and make sure we are all thinking together,” says de Leonardis.

Having all members of the LMYAC connecting is very important, especially this year, with so many new members, and to help us with the many events we hope will be successful.

This year the LMYAC has three subcommittees — the advocacy, outreach and wellness committees — and is predicting a great deal of success from them.

The advocacy committee is responsible for the consideration of government advocacy, including but not limited to civic engagement, local issues, and environmental concerns.

The mentor of this committee is Cous. Clare Cameron. LMYAC members on the committee are de Leonardis, Clara De Munnich, and Kaitlyn Lambert.

The outreach committee is responsible for raising community awareness about the LMYAC by way of social media, volunteer opportunities, community engagement, branding, promotions, etc.

This subcommittee will also consider potential funding-raising initiatives, and over saw the successful Youth Holiday Event held recently.

Members of this committee include vice-chair Janvi Ganatra, Tannin Drydger-Bradbaw, myself, and mentor Maria Mavridis.

Lastly, the wellness committee is in charge of considering the overall wellness of youth in Niagara-on-the-Lake and will find innovative ways and initiatives to promote mental, physical, and emotional wellness for local youth.

Members of this committee are council chair Bethany Pollt, Genevieve Moncion, and Mykayla Brown, with Hillary Fleming as mentor.

Members think they can take what they learned in the escape room and apply it to the work of the youth council.

“Now that I have done the grape escape puzzle, I can’t do it again, because I know how to solve it,” says de Leonardis, but while members were there, they were told there is a new escape room in the works they could do in the future.

This may bring more activities for youth in NOTL, something the LMYAC advocates, and this is an activity we support.

It was overall a great experience for the LMYAC and we believe will only further strengthen the council.
Jane Andres
Special to The Local

They say such nice things about people at their funeral that it makes me sad that I'm going to miss mine by just a few days. — Garrison Keillor

My father, Ruben Friesen, passed away on Dec. 10 at 94 years of age. He maintained his quirky, gentle sense of humour — much like his favourite humourist and story teller, Garrison Keillor — until his last few days.

He was born in Hepburn, Saskatchewan in 1925 to John and Emma Friesen, preceded by two sisters, Hilda and Evelyn. Grandma was surprised when, within minutes of his arrival, another sister made an unexpected appearance and they named her Ruby. Miriam, Josie and Stan followed in the decade known as the dirty 30s. The stock market crashed and dust storms plagued the western provinces, forcing most farmers off the land. My grandpa’s salary of less than $18 a week just wasn’t enough to keep everyone fed.

His mom found ways to make a few pigeons stretch into a pot of soup to feed the family. As a nine-year-old, he was small enough to edge his way along the griders under a bridge in Saskatoon spanning the South Saskatchewan River, where he could pluck young pigeons from their nests. He took them home and raised them for food. The next year, grandma put an end to it after another young boy attempted it and fell 75 feet to his death.

Independent, resourceful and loyal are the first words that come to mind about my father when listening to him reminisce. There were many experiences in his childhood that shaped his character and defined his values his entire life. With food in tight supply, he was sent out to spend summers with his grandparent's, P.J. and Marie Friesen, on their little farm in Hepburn. He became especially close to them and enjoyed the time away from the chaos and cacophony of a large family and boarders in their overcrowded home. His grandparents appreciated his help with the chores and he enjoyed the camaraderie of the men who worked on the farm. He was especially intrigued with one good-natured farm hand who played harmonica and left it under his hay-filled mattress in the winter. Dad taught himself to play on it while the men were at work, always careful to put it back in the exact same spot before they came home.

When he was 11, he was told that his grandfather was seriously ill. They had no phone so the only way to find out how his grandpa was doing, was to make the trip to Hepburn. He begged his father to take him along, and so they began the long trek on a shared bicycle, after his father had put in a full day of work. Thirty miles, bumping, along on gravel roads in the dark, would have been an impossible challenge to many, but family loyalty and devotion overcame any thought of turning back.

It was a clear night, with nothing but the stars to light the way, but halfway on their journey, the magic began. It started as a wisp of light, which undulated and grew in waves, until the Northern Lights stretched throughout the entire prairie sky like a shimmering curtain. The sound waves crackled and hummed a strange, other-worldly type of music that drew them onward, re-energizing them through the final hours of their journey.

They knocked on the door of the little farm house after 1 a.m., surprising his grandmother. It was an unforgettable experience that recounted to me in the hospital, one of many stories of hardship that shaped his character and forged a deep loyalty to family that remained with him until the end.

In 1941, my dad and his father, John Friesen, took the long bus ride to Niagara in search of employment. They rented a room on Russell Avenue and shared a single bed, taking turns to sleep while working different shifts. After saving for two years, Grandpa purchased Shaw Cleaners, a tiny dry cleaning shop on Lake Street, which offered a new start and employment for the entire family.

Their social lives pretty much centred on activities at Calvary Church, and in 1951, it was also where my dad married Velma Funk, the sister of his long-time friend, Pat Funk.

The Friesen clan expanded and by 1963 my parents were blessed with four daughters, each three years apart — myself, Debbie (Wiecha), Marilyn (Trout) and Cathryn (Peck).

For 44 years, my father continued to operate the family business, Modern Dry Cleaners. It didn’t prevent him from chasing other adventures, such as his love of flying. With little cash available but with the help of a few friends and plenty of perseverance and ingenuity he built a Piper Super Cub, an open cockpit, two-seater airplane, in our garage.

He played clarinet, but the instrument of choice right until the last few weeks was the harmonica. He always had one tucked into a pocket at the ready whenever a moment presented itself.

Growing up, we felt so lucky to have a dad who was just as excited about lighting off firecrackers as we were, could hide in a pile of leaves, and introduced us to the wonders of nature on the Bruce Trail or camping trips.

What made a lasting impression on me, was how he quietly served those who were invisible or living outside the boundaries of our comfortable community. He sought no recognition and preferred to be in the background. People could count on him to show up when there was a need.

After retiring, he was passionate in serving on the board for International Child and Care Children’s Hospital in Port-au-Prince, Haiti for many years. He relied more on his imagination than his pocketbook for fundraising, stepping out in faith in some extraordinary ways. One such example was the time he, my mom and twin sister Ruby, and Bill Murdoch set out with five Haitian vocalists on a tour across Canada, with little more than a map, some phone numbers and a credit card. Summer and fall weekends, he would sell hundreds of bushes and evergreens donated by Leni Morti at the St. Jacobs market, with all proceeds supporting ICC.

After they moved to Pleasant Manor, he loved accompanying me on farm visits. He felt a kinship with the men and took great delight in sharing stories when driving them around to shop for deals to ship home. He encouraged my vision of creating an event for farm workers that would make them feel welcomed in our community many times, when I was doubting myself or feeling the weight of opposition.

The high point of his week was attending the CWOP (Caribbean Worker Outreach Project) church services on Sunday nights in May or June.

He loved the lively singing which reminded him of his experiences in Haiti. The warm welcome and camaraderie was energizing, filling him with youthful enthusiasm. To observe him interacting with his many friends at the last Father’s Day service was a gift I will always treasure!

He lived humbly. His most prized possessions the last few years of his life were his harmonica, and pito-log books dating back to 1945. He loved to review its yellowed pages and study the dates and names of the people he took flying, most of them people that could never afford to experience flight in a small aircraft.

There was nothing Ruben Friesen liked better than attending church services with the Caribbean farm workers, says his daughter, Jane Andres. (Photo supplied)
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Warm day, frigid water for annual Penguin Dip

The sun was shining and the temperature a few degrees above freezing, making this Boxing Day almost balmy — certainly one of the warmest in the memory of Penguin Dip regulars.

But if it appeared a plunge in the lower Niagara River was merely refreshing on this mild winter day, those taking part were quick to dispel the notion that the water was anything but breathtakingly frigid.

Literally. Submerging takes your breath away, makes you feel like your heart might stop, and numbs your limbs, they say.

Yet each of the 20 stalwart dippers for 2019 took the plunge at Ball’s Beach three times, as befitting any Niagara-on-the-Lake Penguin, and most were vowing to return next year.

Veteran dippers Chris Bjorgan and Pat Quinn, both aged 62, would actually prefer to see a little snow and lower temperatures, just to make the dip look a little more challenging than it might appear to spectators, who outnumbered the swimmers about three to one, as they enjoyed the sunshine.

Bjorgan, who has taken on organizing the event, would also like to see the numbers rise — more in line with 40 to 50, as in some of the best years — but a change in the press late in 2017, he says, when the Niagara Advance closed, Boxing Day 2018 only brought out about a dozen diehards.

Andrew Ball, at 33, is also a veteran — he took his first dip at the age of 19.

While it’s good to see the shoreline protected with the addition of large boulders along the beach, it doesn’t make the Penguin Dip easy, he says.

“We used to walk on sand, but there is no more sand, just rocks. It makes it pretty hard on the feet. Proper footwear is important. But we’re hardy and we can adapt. It’s not going to stop us.”

There were helpers on hand to assist the penguins as they climbed down the boulders, and even more important, stepped up onto them with numb legs and feet on their way out of the water.

Ball echoes the others who say the air might have been warmer than usual, but the water was not.

“The water never gets warm. It’s still cold. That’s why we do it.” But at least there was no need for a rope, as there has been in other years, for swimmers to hold on to prevent them from slipping on ice.

Clare Cameron, a Niagara-on-the-Lake town councillor, and her husband Mackenzie decided to try the Penguin Dip for the first time, and took their three dips with the veterans.

To become a member of the NOTL Penguin Club, they’ll have to repeat that two more years, although it doesn’t matter if they are consecutive.

Both are up for the challenge, they said, determined to become official Penguins.

“Other communities do this, but not three times, like NOTL. This is just another way this town is exceptional,” said Clare, adding the time between plunges in the trailer was actually the hardest part.

“This was actually more fun than I thought it would be,” Mackenzie called it “a little more intense” than he expected, saying he admires those who have been doing it for years — they’re the tough ones.

“I aspire to do it again next year,” he added, as the spectators drifted off and the 2019 participants headed off to a local establishment to warm up, also part of the tradition.

Coun. Erwin Wiens was there with his wife Dorothy to cheer on the town councillor, as was Coun. Gary Burroughs, who was a regular Penguin about 20 years ago.

Steffanie Bjorgan, there to watch and gratefully accept donations to Red Roof Retreat, is not personally a fan of plunging into the freezing river, but said she’ll go in next year if all of town council gives it a go.

“That’s not going to happen,” said Burroughs, when he heard of the challenge — adding his Penguin days are over.

Coun. Erwin Wiens, his wife Dorothy, and Coun. Gary Burroughs were there to support Coun. Clare Cameron, the first member of council to take the plunge since Burroughs was a regular about 20 years ago. (Penny Coles)
Feeding Christmas trees to goats becoming a new family tradition

Continued from page 1

Samantha Miller and Gavin, with Deanna Mazachowsky and Charlie, watch goats dive into their Christmas tree treat at Benchview Farms. (Photos by Penny Coles)

Pat Dare of Benchview Farms helps unload trees with Melina Morsch of Fox Den Yoga.

Continued from page 1

a wet, dreary day to enjoy the entertainment.

“It just fun to be together,” says Morsch, with a spread of coffee and doughnuts for those who came out to drop off trees and watch them devoured.

Most of her goats are young. They’re all small — she has only Nigerian Dwarf or Pygmy goats — and they are never too old to have fun in her classes.

“A good goat is a yoga goat forever,” she says, and eating the trees will help keep them healthy.

Deanna Mazachowsky brought her Christmas tree for the goats to eat, and her 10-month-old daughter Charlie to watch.

“We used to put our trees to the curb for pick-up,” she says.

“This is way more fun, and a good snack for the goats. It’s a win-win situation.”

Christmas trees can be dropped off at Benchview on Queenston Road, but call Morsch first at 289-407-4965.

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PELOQUIN, MILDRED—Passed away peacefully at The St. Catharines Hospital on Tuesday, December 24th, 2019 in her 93rd year, leaving behind Paul, her loving husband for 62 years. Predeceased by her parents Hubert and Mary, and three brothers Warren, Kenneth and Clifford Skeoch. Aunt Millie will be sadly missed by her many nieces, nephews and their children. She also leaves behind a wide circle of friends.

Cremation has taken place and arrangements have been entrusted to Considerate Cremation and Burial Services. Funeral service will be held on Thursday, January 2, 2020 at 11 am. at Our Lady of the Scapular Church, 6557 Thorold Stone Road, Niagara Falls, Ontario. Many thanks to Dr. Rammohan and the excellent nursing staff at St. Catharines Hospital.

In lieu of flowers, the family would appreciate donations to the hospital.

SEASONAL

FULL TIME FARM WORKERS required for fruit farm April­October. No experience or education required. Must be available 7 days/week in all weather conditions. Job entails pruning, thinning, harvesting fruit plus heavy lifting and considerable ladder work. Must have own transportation, minimum wage $14.00/hr. Please mail resume with references to K.L. Farms, 100 Wall Rd., R.R. #3 Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON L0S 1J0. Only qualified persons will be contacted. (no walk ins)
Cardiac arrests outside of hospital — what we should do

Cardiac arrest is common outside of hospitals — about 15,000 occur each year in Canada — of which about 10 per cent of the victims survive.

The latter number, not an encouraging one, and worse with aging, can be improved with help.

The key to survival, and perhaps more important, the brain’s survival, is to act as quickly as possible.

That means bystanders should be encouraged to start resuscitation as quickly as possible, and not wait for EMS to arrive.

Those first several minutes are crucial to the survival of the patient. It’s estimated, for example, that for every minute patients go without cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and defibrillation with an automated external defibrillator (AED), the chance of the patient surviving drops by seven to 10 per cent — hence the critical importance of speed.

Unfortunately, many in the public are reluctant to take such direct action, feeling perhaps that it’s the business of EMS to do the job. There are other excuses such as uncertainty about whether the patient actually had a heart cardiac arrest — what if the patient fainted or had a seizure — or not knowing what to do, anxiety about whether they might do something wrong and perhaps be sued, afraid to bare a woman’s chest and breasts (necessary for AED) and even fear they might be accused of sexual assault. All are perhaps understandable, but fixable with proper training.

Current recommendations from the American Heart Association and the equivalents in Canada and Europe encourage early lay action, including CPR and AED, well before EMS arrives on the scene because those first few minutes are so critical to a successful outcome. There are of course other issues to address, such as ready access to AED. Many public venues, businesses and churches these days keep an AED device on hand, and just as important, clearly identify where it is.

A recent review of the subject in the New England Journal of Medicine stresses the importance of lay (that would be us) care for adult, out-of-hospital cardiac arrest.

A copy of the article will be kept in the library, from which you can make a copy for yourself. It’s an important article to read, and the whole subject will be reviewed at the next InfoHealth session on Jan. 8 at 2 p.m. in the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library, by medical students Hannah Kearney, Alysha Laviolette and Rayan Chadwick, and staff from McMaster’s Michael DeGroote School of Medicine in Niagara.
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