

The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL



Shaw Film
Festival begins
with *Blinded
by the Light*
see page 3

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Good day for a dip

Boxing Day brought out about 20 participants for the traditional Penguin Dip at Ball's Beach, including Owen Bjorgan, a veteran of the event, which is also a fundraiser for Red Roof Retreat. For more, see page 12.
(Fred Mercnik)



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 Niaga-

ra-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)

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ENSEMBLE MADE IN CANADA'S

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St. Catharines

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-on-the-Lake”.

Shortly after, 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 she enjoys “tormenting”



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)



Tony Chisholm and Rick Meloen take their dishwashing job seriously, but enjoy some kidding while they work.

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 dishwasher knows what they’re doing and takes good care of it, because if that goes

how well they worked together. After a meeting one night, Meloen mentioned the soup kitchen, and Chisholm decided to come out and see what it was all about.

Chisholm, a retired publisher of trade magazines, jokingly adds that Meloen “couldn’t handle the job on his own, and needed somebody to pre-wash for him.” The back-and-forth ribbing of each other is obviously a huge factor in this regular Thursday evening outing.

He adds that he enjoys the fact that “it’s three or four of us coming up and working together. It’s a group effort, and we’ve been able to take over the kitchen, and do everything that needs to be done for at least

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 once a 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 is the Thursday night bus boy at the Community Reach dinner program.

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.”

Like 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

Both Chisholm and Meloen have brought their respective granddaughters to the soup kitchen to volunteer. As well, all three are happy to see that the next generations in their families have picked up on the volunteer spirit.

Meloen also points out that another volunteer tonight, Larry Higgins, recently retired from his position with the Town of NOTL. Though Higgins is a Niagara Falls resident, it

Continued on page 3



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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 should be an experience. 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 early birds will be arriving 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-

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 early birds will be arriving 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.

Levy can't wait to take the stage to introduce the first entry in this year's series Saturday.

He's had a chance, of course, to view all eight films ahead of time, and he's looking forward to the discussions that always ensue in the lobby following each screening.

8). It's based on a true story of a group of Inuit 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



Stephen Levy, founder of the film series, organizes the festival for the love of it. (File photo)

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/>.



Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood wraps up the series in February. (Photo by Ovidiu Hrubaru / Shutterstock.com)

films that are carefully chosen by Shaw Film Series founder and director Steven Levy are not likely to be found running alongside the usual blockbusters.

To Levy, the Shaw film experience is more about the community than the films themselves. Most of the regulars have been coming since day one, with many long-time Shaw Theatre supporters also attending the films. As well, a large number of them purchase tickets for multiple movies, if not the entire season.

And most of these regulars arrive early, stake their

tending since the first year, and claims to have seen at least 80 per cent of the films in the Shaw Series.

To Barwell, the success of the series comes from the fact that "it's a bit of a town event." He admits that its popularity has led to a higher percentage of film-goers coming from outside of the town's confines, but is adamant that it's still a chance to socialize with other locals on a weekly basis. As he says, "it's Saturday afternoon, in the winter, 3 p.m. What else are you going to do?"

Barwell wouldn't describe himself as a regular

Three of this year's films, including the season opener, revolve largely around music. *Wild Rose* (Jan. 11) is the story of a young mother, recently out of prison, trying to make it as a country music star. The Jan. 25 entry, *Rocketman*, probably the most well-known of this year's films, is the story of Elton John's rise to stardom, told as an epic musical fantasy.

Woman at War (Jan. 18) is an Icelandic/Ukrainian film with subtitles. It takes on the timely topic of eco-activism. The lone Canadian film on this year's slate is *The Grizzlies* (Feb.

Fellowship important

Continued from page 3

was the connection with Meloen 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 Thursday night 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, Bertschi 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 all 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. Bertschi 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 duties. Meloen, however, jokes he doesn't do a good enough job, so he doesn't bother.

At the soup kitchen, though, the wash technician, as Meloen calls himself, does a pretty good job every Thursday, along with Bertschi 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.




SHAW FESTIVAL FILM SERIES

JANUARY	
JAN 4	Blinded by the Light
JAN 11	Wild Rose
JAN 18	Woman at War
JAN 25	Rocketman

SATURDAYS - 3PM
DOORS OPEN - 1:30PM
FESTIVAL THEATRE

SINGLE TICKETS - \$12
8-PACK - ALL 8 FILMS FOR \$80

FEBRUARY	
FEB 1	The Biggest Little Farm (DOCUMENTARY)
FEB 8	The Grizzlies
FEB 15	Jojo Rabbit (TO BE CONFIRMED)
FEB 22	Once Upon a Time in ... Hollywood



Enjoy gourmet eats (\$) from GOODDINE CATERING before the films, starting at 1:30pm.

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Lord Mayor looks at past and future work of council

**Lord Mayor
Betty Disero**

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 bud-

get, and the third to finish unfinished business from previous years.

**ACCESSIBLE
AND ACCOUNTABLE**

One of the most frustrating 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 Join the Conversation has

increased community engagement. We also created an Inclusivity Committee and a Customer Experience and Technology Committee 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 com-

munity requests, attend community events and attend the outside agencies, boards and commissions to which they have been appointed.

**STRONG COMMUNITY
WITH A
SUSTAINABLE BUDGET**

Community-building is the very essence of local government. It is the reason local government was created. The Province sets the rules and local government works within those rules. To build a healthy community requires places where people can work, homes for people to live and services people need for a good quality of life, done in a way that is financially responsible.

We learned very early on that our constituents want (these are all equal in value): 1) a prosperous and diverse economy; 2) strong environmental stewardship; 3) an inclusive, integrated, healthy town; 4) a centre for culture, heritage and recreation; 5) mobility choices; 6) a well-planned built environment; 7) a prosperous and sustainable agricultural sector; and 8) well-managed municipal finances. These are the eight strategic pillars in the Community Vision in the Official Plan and are also included in council’s Strategic Plan.

We have worked with members of the community to ensure public engagement. We created the Lord Mayor’s Economic Development Task Force, the Community Wellness Committee and the Lord Mayor’s Youth Advisory Committee to bring forward advice to council. The Economic Development Taskforce has presented their final recommendations and the Community Wellness Committee will bring forward a report in January.

The Lord Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council have worked throughout the year to set their goals and objectives for 2020. They have been working with community mentors to achieve this. One issue we found of vital importance to our youth is mental wellness. In response, council established the Pathstone Program in Niagara-on-the-Lake to accommodate counsellors to give guidance to young people.

We adopted the Official Plan (now being reviewed at the Region) and a Strategic Plan that sets the direction well beyond the four-year term of council with accountability outcomes each year. The five objectives of our Strategic Plan are: 1) smart, balanced growth; 2) customer service excellence; 3) protecting heritage, agriculture, and other community assets; 4) excel in positive workplace culture;

and 5) strengthen two-way communications.

Other actions taken by council include the approval of the Niagara Nursery School Expansion Project and the establishment of the St. Davids Pool Fundraising

forward our ideas to staff to review these bylaws. Our goal is to have these come forward in the first and second quarters of 2020.

In terms of ongoing planning, and subject to the final budget deliberations

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

Betty Disero



Lord Mayor Betty Disero (File photo)

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Committee.

Niagara-on-the-Lake is also one of the two areas in the Region that established a Community Safety Zone along York Road. At the 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.

Council adopted an Official Plan amendment to introduce infill policies for Old Town and Virgil, requiring development to be compatible with the surrounding buildings and also requiring a tree replacement plan before any trees are removed.

To further protect our heritage, council amended the Property Standards Bylaw to introduce provisions under the Ontario Heritage Act to address demolition by neglect. This will enable the Town to address situations where owners of heritage properties do not properly maintain buildings and properties.

Our Communities in Bloom Committee will be competing again in 2020. The CIB Committee has been working hard to prepare for the competition by creating a sub-committee to bring forward fun ways to celebrate our winter season in an even bigger, brighter way, working with the NOTL Chamber of Commerce, the NOTL Horticultural Society and local residents. Communities in Bloom also worked with the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre and NOTL Hydro to celebrate our local artists by wrapping hydro boxes with public art.

**FINISHING
UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

This was the third objective for council. Over the past few years we have heard from the public on a number of issues that were not completed or needed review: the Tree Bylaw, Noise Bylaw, short-term rentals, long-term rentals and cannabis. We have spent the year listening to residents and put

in January, we will embark on a Master Plan for Transportation and complete the Irrigation Master Plan in 2020. Both of these are long overdue.

Council will complete the process to hire a new CAO by May or June of 2020.

Council will also review what are considered Heritage Districts in town.

Looking beyond 2020 is important. If we want to continue to maintain control of our future, we have to think beyond 2020. To name one example, the Region has been talking about the reconstruction of Niagara Stone Road for many years. As a town, we could just let it happen, and have the Region determine how Virgil will look over the next 20 years, but thanks to dedicated residents, the Urban Design Committee has created a subcommittee that has been working with the Region to bring enhancements to Niagara Stone Road. These enhancements will bring a pedestrian feel to the street including wider sidewalks and enhanced landscaping, lighting and benches. The concept is to have Virgil feel more like a village. The rich history of Virgil is unique, and should be celebrated. This construction is scheduled to happen in 2022. We will be ready.

Council will be deciding on the budget in January. It will be a budget that will assist in supporting our objectives of good customer service, a healthy community, preservation of our quaint neighbourhoods and agricultural community, and provide the resources to meet our Strategic and Official Plans.

I would like to wish you a healthy and prosperous New Year. And on behalf of my colleagues on council, Clare Cameron, Erwin Wiens, Gary Burroughs, John Wiens, Wendy Chero-pita, Stuart McCormack, Allan Bisback and Norm Arsenault, we look forward to working with you and for you in 2020.

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, demonstrated by doing the necessary homework and preparing for meetings; developing working relations with colleagues; and dealing with leftover bad actors.

excellent working relationship with Lord Mayor Betty Disero and the town councillors. Our priority was ensuring that NOTL was well represented, and its voice 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 serve on Planning and Economic Development and Public Works Committees and 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

dwelling.

With 2020 approaching, our community needs to have an appetite for development of apartment dwellings 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. Rentals 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



Regional Councillor Gary Zalepa (File photo)

"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 refocus the organization on its strategic priorities. Sounds simple, but was more difficult than expected.

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

With the recently released Provincial Ombudsman Report, *An 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 separate from town council, early on I developed an

budget was just finalized. Key priorities 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 per cent 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 styles, mainly apartment

is what we need to do. Niagara Region began with a independent review of service delivery by KPMG. That process identified several key recommendations which have been agreed upon, with others being reviewed further to identify an implementation process if approved.

I believe that a path forward to improve government service delivery in Niagara exists — one which ensures autonomy to cities and towns, leaves local decisions to locally elected people and leverages regional scale and knowledge clusters.

Niagara is a unique collection of very independent communities. That uniqueness is our strength, and a key ingredient into what makes us so desirable as a place to live, grow a business or visit. Going into 2020, let's leverage these strengths and find the solutions.

The discussion around governance, how many councillors, who they are, etc. is important, but needs to be separated from and come after the service delivery discussion. Those decisions on governance will be best made by local people, in their communities, after service delivery is settled.

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.



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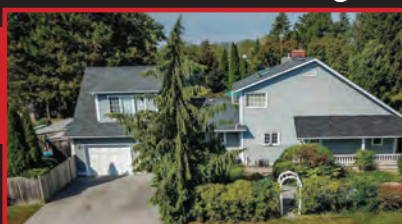


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EDITORIAL

Good news we hope to hear, and print, in 2020

So much for wishing for peace on earth and goodwill toward men.

News we absolutely didn't want to hear was the message spread on Facebook on Boxing Day regarding an incident in a parking lot of the Outlet 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 the 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 in the council chamber — the first to discuss planning

issues, the second the committee-of-the-whole, and then, on Jan. 20, a council meeting, when the budget is expected to be approved.

Since residents and councillors appear to be looking to the influx of tourists to bring in more revenue, there could be more talk about parking fee hikes to offset the tax increase, and there is likely to be a discussion of a municipal accommodation tax. While it's been debated several times, it looks to some councillors as the solution to bringing in more revenue to fund tourism-related projects, thus providing some relief for taxpayers. Look for a healthy exploration of the pros and cons, and opposition from the hospitality industry and the NOTL Chamber of Commerce, which generally views it as a deterrent to visitors from staying overnight, when what local businesses are advocating is longer stays.

While 2019 saw a new council, at the town hall and at the Region, we have every reason to believe the enthusiasm and energy of the elected councillors will continue into their second year of a four-year term.

There have already been several important accomplishments, as Lord Mayor Betty Disero and Regional Coun. Gary Zalepa pointed out to The Local in their updates to residents.

One of the best news stories to hit Niagara was the provincial decision not to mess with municipal governance in Niagara — the fear of amalgamation was lifted shortly after the federal election in October, but as Zalepa

has said, it opened the doors to talks of improved service delivery that will continue.

The approval of an Official Plan, spurred on by the threat of amalgamation, and the current council's Strategic Plan were both also significant achievements of 2019.

A strong direction toward improved communication with residents, on the part of the Town and the Region, is also noteworthy, and the further step taken by the lord mayor with the holding of public coffee breaks for informal 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 approvals 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 Comedy Festival 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 tobogganing, 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

LOCAL FINDS



CARNATHAN BAUR by Donald Combe Special to The Local

Robert Carnathan and his wife Anna Gray, their daughter Dorothy Carnathan, and her husband Charles Baur are entombed in the mausoleum, but there are neither birth nor death dates. A space was provided for Dorothy's brother Oliver and his wife, but never used. Robert and Anna were hotel proprietors in Niagara, and after Robert's death in 1868, Anna took their two children, Dorothy and Oliver, to Terre Haute, Indiana. The family lived far away, yet St. Mark's remained important to the family, and Dorothy returned here to be married to Charles Baur in 1892. Anna died in 1907, and Charles about the same time. Both bodies were brought to Niagara and interred in St. Mark's Cemetery. In 1933, Dorothy had the somewhat grand mausoleum constructed, and the bodies of her parents and husband were exhumed and placed there. Dorothy died in 1940 in Los Angeles, and was laid beside the remains of her husband Charles.

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 Dish With One Spoon Wampum agreement. Today this gathering place is home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and acknowledging reminds us that our great standard of living is directly related to the resources and friendship of Indigenous peoples.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake

LOCAL

The trusted voice of our community

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COMMENT

Keeping science and emotion separate important, but not easy



Owen Bjorgan
Special to The Local

Do biologists, climate scientists, and general nature enthusiasts have their hearts broken by their own work? Or are they professional and stoic while the world keeps spinning?

It would seem that things are literally always greener on this side. But biology, the study of life, is very broad. Let's remember that biologists study cells, humans, plants, illnesses, wine grapes, and deep sea creatures.

I have to wonder and daringly predict that anyone who is serious in the environmental field must sometimes have trouble falling asleep at night because of their work, thinking about the bigger picture of issues, such as our climate and biodiversity crises, which are fundamental to our human well-being. As a species, we just continue to self-sabotage.

And damn, that's got to be hard to watch.

Many areas of our workforce see employees take their work life back into their home. Sometimes for better, and sometimes like the monkey on your back.

It could be a sour relationship with a coworker, a claustrophobic work culture, or maybe it's all positive - and yet we still can't seem to get our minds off work.

I certainly feel my work being more than that when cruising around Niagara-on-the-Lake.

I have painful and also beautiful imaginations of a St. Davids bench provincial park, with dozens of streams cascading down the Niagara Escarpment's slopes into the valley below. It would have been a geographically complex ecosystem with plenty of micro-habitats and micro-climates tucked into the valleys. Several species of fish would have spawned in these streams and swam all the way up from Lake Ontario. Deafening tree frog calls would have been heard all along Line 9 below, amid rare tree species such as pawpaw and pin oak.

Anyone from outside of town must be baffled, driving up or down through St. Davids and seeing the sign pronouncing the entrance to a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve. Although this is definitely a title worth praising in town, the urban sprawl in St. Davids over the past decade has smothered any clue that the area's natural heritage was seriously protected. I see this and my resounding

thought is "what a quiet shame," that we missed an opportunity 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 generation, has caused the very environmental concerns we're battling. Scientists may have their facts and personal opinions, but they don't do too much actual finger-pointing, as that's usually not their job.

Every generation has a job, though. Workers and adults should lead by example, and youth are to follow, but stir the pot in healthy amounts along the way. What if the next generation doesn't get to experience what the prior did in terms of our natural wonders? Is this even a resonating priority with our society?

What if Niagara Falls was designated as a national park from the get-go, and never industrialized 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 biodiverse locale in all of Canada. It's a geeky, 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 issues like that have infuriated experts 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 scrutinize 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 Queenston, along the base of the Es-

carpment, but a lot of those natural features have been thinned out, had houses plugged 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 feel the agitation and missed opportunities to protect these landscapes, even if I never realistically had a chance to change the outcome. So yes, it's personal, 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 to 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 tears and lost sleep over their beloved Great Barrier Reef. And they know it's not even theirs. It's ours, and we all are seeing something precious and irreplaceable slip away due to human factors, as we head into 2020.

Damn, that's got to be hard to watch.



A recent morning hike revealed areas of lowland and oaks that have been further cleared along the base of the Niagara Escarpment, provoking thought about keeping science and emotion separate. (Owen Bjorgan)



Auchterlonie on Astrology

Bill Auchterlonie
Special to The Local

This week on Auchterlonie on Astrology I'll look at the first Quarter Moon in Aquarius on Jan. 2.

On my podcast I've got a brief history of astrology and the week of Jan. 5 through Saturday, Jan. 11, 2020. The website is <https://www.lookingupwithbill.com/podcasts.html>.

Now, the week ahead.

Thursday, Jan. 2: This is the day of the first Quarter Moon in Aries, which happens at 11:45 p.m. It's a day of building tensions between a fiery emotional energy (the Moon) and a serious get'er done Sun in Capricorn. And as with the eclipse of Dec. 26, we are again given a break, courtesy of Libra on the eastern horizon as this Quarter Moon

reaches its maximum. Still, it is wise to take a breath or two and count to 10, and then speak or act. On Jan. 2 in 1929, Canada and the U.S. signed an agreement to preserve Niagara Falls.

Friday, Jan. 3: This is the day that Mars moves from sexy Scorpio into all-knowing Sagittarius, setting in motion about six weeks when energy is confident, and when taking risks becomes easier to do. But today is another day to count to 10 before making any hasty moves. The brilliant producer of the Beatles, George Martin, was born this day in 1926. And it was Jan. 3, 1977, that Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs incorporated Apple Computer Inc.

Saturday, Jan. 4: The Moon moves from self-assured Aries into value-conscious Taurus late this morning, and then makes a powerful conjunction with Ura-

nus. An emotional surprise may come with financial overtones, but likely with quality and motherly aspects as well. The great Sir Isaac Newton was born Jan. 4, 1643. After inventing the Laws of Physics, it is rumoured no one ever saw him smile. And on this day in 2007, Nancy Pelosi was confirmed as the first ever female U.S. Speaker of the House.

Sunday, Jan. 5: With the Moon still in tranquil Taurus, Mars in Sagittarius connects with Chiron in Aries to provide an opportunity for healing of old wounds. Literally. And it was Jan. 5, 1920, when the New York Yankees announced Babe Ruth had been sold to the Yankees by the Boston Red Sox for \$125,000, in what became known as The Curse of the Bambino, a superstition evolving from the failure of the Red Sox to win the World

Series from 1918 to 2004. Before that point, the Red Sox had been one of the most successful professional baseball franchises, winning the first World Series and earning five World Series titles. After the sale, they went without a series win for 86 years, and the Yankees became one of the most successful franchises in baseball.

Monday, Jan. 6: It's a karmic start to the week, thanks to Jupiter and the north node of the Moon opposite each other in the sky. The Moon moves from Taurus into quickly changing Gemini at 9:10 p.m. While the past may feature in the day's events, a lively response comes before bedtime. Wheel of Fortune first aired on NBC on Jan. 6, 1975. The host was Chuck Woolery and the board was run by Susan Stafford. And the girl who

won the war, Joan of Arc, who became a saint and hero for her part in the French victory of the Hundred Years War, was born this day in 1412.

Tuesday, Jan. 7: The Moon continues through energetic Gemini all day, as the Sun in Capricorn gets a friendly nudge from imaginative Neptune in Pisces, bringing a warm, creative edge to practical concerns. And that's good because later on, Mars in Sagittarius has a stressful connection from surprising Uranus. This stress may result in valuable growth, if handled correctly. Having been impeached by Congress, it was Jan. 7, 1999 that Bill Clinton's impeachment trial began in the Senate. He was acquitted. And on this day in 1972 in the NBA, the Los Angeles Lakers defeated the Atlanta Hawks, 134-90, for their 33rd

straight win, the longest winning streak in major professional sports.

Wednesday, Jan. 8: Venus and Jupiter connect while we sleep. Sweet dreams? Maybe! And Mercury gets a helping hand from Neptune later on. Ideas are big and loaded with imagination, with a shot of good fortune to boost their chance for success. Elvis Presley was born on this day in 1935. David Bowie arrived 12 years later in 1947.

Next week is the Full Moon in Cancer. There is also a lunar eclipse.

Again a reminder - please check out my podcast on my website at <https://www.lookingupwithbill.com/podcasts.html>. It has a brief history of astrology and presents from me. As Joni Mitchell said: "We are stardust. We are golden." So shine on!

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The Niagara-on-the-Lake

LOCAL

The trusted voice of our community.



We're all interconnected and interdependent



Ted Mouradian
Special to The Local

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, "hindsight 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 eventually, 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 authentically 'us' 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 orga-

nized chaos? I accomplish this by using six basic tenets 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 it. That 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 respectfully 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 falls 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 mentally 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 inter-

connectedness, we all affect this stream in one way or another. Our problem as humans is we are continually 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.

Work at Queen's Park includes request for improved OHIP



Wayne Gates, MPP

While the Legislature only sat for six weeks this session, I did my very best to get as much work done for our community as possible.

In this session, I introduced legislation to have OHIP join eight other provinces in finally covering the cost of PSA testing for men. When caught early, the survivability rate of prostate cancer is 100 per cent. When caught late, it plummets to 28 per cent. In Ontario, this life-saving test should be covered by your OHIP card, and not your credit card.

I was proud to stand alongside local Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Maya Webster, age seven, and Niagara Falls resident Ava Emerson, age eight. These kids are at the forefront of the movement to ensure every man, woman and child has access to the same life saving devices that they have access to. These devices have meant that they no longer spend countless nights in the hos-



Maya Webster of NOTL visited Queen's Park with MPP Wayne Gates to ask the Province to fund continuous glucose monitoring devices for others like Maya who require them to control diabetes. (Photo supplied)

pital, reducing the pressure on our hospital system and improving their quality of life.

Beyond that, we also worked to ensure the Thorold tunnel remained open to two-way traffic this

winter, and continued our ongoing efforts to address serious health and safety concerns in workplaces across Ontario.

I would never have been able to accomplish so much this session without the

hard-work of residents just like all of you.

I look forward to seeing you at our many community events, but in case I don't, I hope you and your family had a Merry Christmas, and wish you a happy New Year.

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REAL ESTATE WILLS BUSINESS

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 Coun. Clare Cameron. LMYAC members on the committee are de Leonardis, Clara De Munnich, and Kaitlyn Lambert.

The outreach commit-

tee 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 fundraising initiatives, and oversaw the successful Youth Holiday Event held recently. Members of this committee include vice-chair Janvi Ganatra, Tannin Driedger-Bradshaw, 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 Poltl, 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.



Mykayla Brown, Gioai de Leonardis, Janvi Ganatra, Bethany Poltl, Hillary Fleming and town staff member Lauren Kruitbosch after a team-building exercise courtesy of Grape Escape. (Photo supplied)

"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 ad-

vocates, 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.

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Reflections on a father who will be missed by community

Jane Andres
Special to The Local

They say such nice things about people at their funerals 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 storyteller, 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 grandfather'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 girders 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 grandparents, 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 stashed under his hay-filled mattress while at work during the day. 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, otherworldly 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



Ruben Friesen, who died Dec. 10, will be missed by his family and the community. (Photo supplied)



There was nothing Ruben Friesen liked better than attending church services with the Caribbean farm workers, says his daughter, Jane Andres. (Photo supplied)

he 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 cashflow but with the help of a few friends and plenty of perseverance and ingenuity he built a Pi-etenpol, 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 Care and Grace 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 Leno Mori at the St. Jacob's 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 welcome 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 a 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 pilot's 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 much time to reflect beside his hospital bed over the last two months.

That long journey, illuminated by the brilliance of the Northern Lights was also a boy's introduction to grief for the first time in his young life. The feelings of joy mixed with grief remained clearly etched in his memory — and the certainty that we are not alone on our journey.

The delight he found in kinship with others and the gift to see beyond barriers of culture and privilege, is an inheritance that I will always hold close to my heart.

Dad will be remembered by many for his generosity, gentle humour, a tender heart and his ever-present harmonica.

I'll always remember him with his hand outstretched in welcome, and hope to honour him by continuing on that journey.

Colouring contest winners



Emma Saxton and Emmitt Nickason, the two winners of The Local colouring contest, are given their prizes, a beautiful gift basket from Mapleleaf Fudge, by staff member Lauren Cain. (Karen Skeoch)



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This year's 2019 Penguin Dip participants pose for a photograph before leaving the water for a third and final time. (Fred Mercnik)

Warm day, frigid water for annual Penguin Dip

Penny Coles
The Local

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 way 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 head-

ed 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)



Veteran Chris Bjorgan is followed by Clare and Mackenzie Cameron, on the way into the water for their dip. (Penny Coles)

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Feeding Christmas trees to goats becoming a new family tradition



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 Darte 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’s 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 eat-

ing 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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OBITUARY

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.

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PUZZLE ANSWERS

Down: 1 Lot's, 2 A hot, 3 Glee, 70 Tree, 66 Noah, 67 Hits, 68 Crags, 69 Amphibious, 64 Gala, 65 Nasal, A-line, 56 Sort, 58 A minor, 59 Viro, 49 British, 51 Essence, 53 43 Innate, 45 Real, 47 Tao, 48 38 Anew, 40 Trade, 42 Tomb, 34 Wet, 36 Hurt, 37 System, Earlier, 29 Net loss, 33 Linda, To come, 22 Dire, 23 Story, 24 17 Film, 18 The big bang, 20 14 Oral, 15 I A E A, 16 Audio, 1 Lame, 5 Sad, 9 Edith,

Across: 1 Lot's, 2 A hot, 3 Glee, 70 Tree, 66 Noah, 67 Hits, 68 Crags, 69 Amphibious, 64 Gala, 65 Nasal, A-line, 56 Sort, 58 A minor, 59 Viro, 49 British, 51 Essence, 53 43 Innate, 45 Real, 47 Tao, 48 38 Anew, 40 Trade, 42 Tomb, 34 Wet, 36 Hurt, 37 System, Earlier, 29 Net loss, 33 Linda, To come, 22 Dire, 23 Story, 24 17 Film, 18 The big bang, 20 14 Oral, 15 I A E A, 16 Audio, 1 Lame, 5 Sad, 9 Edith,

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

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68						69					70			

- Across:**

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 - 5 Baghdad's --- City
 - 9 Archie's wife
 - 14 Spoken
 - 15 U N nuclear watchdog
 - 16 Reproduced sound
 - 17 Thin coating
 - 18 Theoretical birth of the Universe
 - 20 In the offing
 - 22 Desperate
 - 23 Yarn
 - 24 Before this
 - 29 Business disappointment
 - 33 Yorba ---, R M H's birthplace
 - 34 Saturated
 - 36 Injure
 - 37 Methodology
 - 38 Once again
 - 40 Exchange
 - 42 Sepulcher
 - 43 Congenital
 - 45 Genuine
 - 47 Chinese ultimate reality
 - 48 Not entirely natural, if born in this
 - 49 Beaten by the Continental Army
 - 51 Gist
- Down:**

 - 1 Attics
 - 2 Hilarious
 - 3 Troublemakers, often
 - 4 "Get Shorty" author --- Leonard
 - 5 Place
 - 6 Expression of relief
 - 7 Property document
 - 8 Hydrophobia
 - 9 Enthusiastically
 - 10 Name
 - 11 Former name of Psiloritis, Cretan mountain
 - 12 Can plating
 - 13 Harley, often
 - 19 Retirement arrangement
 - 21 Legend
- 25 Itemize
 - 26 A way to disappear
 - 27 Watery swelling
 - 28 Sly fighter?
 - 30 Pear-shaped stringed instrument
 - 31 Ice hockey player Bobby ---
 - 32 Beatle married to Bach
 - 34 Forego
 - 35 Bill Cosby's late son
 - 37 Candidate's aim
 - 39 Merchandise
 - 41 Agnus ---
 - 44 Lymphatic tissues often removed after infection
 - 46 "Taken" star --- Neeson
 - 49 Strait west of Wales, AK
 - 50 Slender
 - 52 Stocky horse
 - 54 "Lorenzo's Oil" actor Nick ---
 - 55 Rub out
 - 57 Implement
 - 58 Arthur --- stadium, Queens, N Y C
 - 59 Military nurses' group (Abbr.)
 - 60 Besmirch
 - 61 Pro bono TV ad
 - 62 Crone
 - 63 The Emirates

SUDOKU PUZZLE

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Cardiac arrests outside of hospital — what we should do



Dr. Bill Brown
Special to The Local

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.

Outdoor fun on mild winter day



Ashley Kier and Troy Miller decided to enjoy some outdoor fun, surfing the Niagara River Parkway with their extended roller boards. (Photos by Fred Mercnik)



Vikas Balhara pitches to his son as they play cricket in one of the green spaces along the Niagara River Parkway.

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