



Local teen gets pilot's licence through air cadets
page 8



Winner David Dankowski takes aim at the basket on the ninth hole in the first ever disc golf tournament on the NOTL Rotary Club Course at the community centre, held Saturday. (Mike Balsom)

NOTL disc golf tourney considered huge success

Mike Balsom
The Local

The first-ever disc golf tournament on the grounds of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre was a soaring success this week-end. And the course itself is earning rave reviews from the disc golf community.

A total of 58 golfers competed in the Holiday Buster Bonanza between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. Saturday at the NOTL Rotary Club nine-hole course. Based on pre-registration, organizer Andrea Michaud expected to have about 46 competitors divided into amateur and professional categories in the open tournament.

When the day started, however, Michaud was surprised to meet a dozen more interested golfers who walked up to the tent erected at the edge of the community

centre parking lot, each hoping to enter the tournament at the last minute. In typical disc golf fashion, no one was turned away.

"We had a bigger turnout than we could ever imagine," co-organizer Joe McCormick of Port Colborne told The Local. "It was so great to have everybody together. After the snowstorm before Christmas we were worried we wouldn't get too many people out if it was still snowing. With this weather the turnout was great."

"Everybody loves the course," he added, the sound of cheers behind him as one participant almost aced one of the holes. "For most people here today this is the first time seeing the course, the first time playing it. They love everything about it. It's really beginner-friendly, too."

Continued on page 14

Residents dying of COVID in NOTL long-term care homes

Symptoms not always mild, family members report

Penny Coles
The Local

Despite the assertions from Niagara-on-the-Lake long-term care homes that cases of COVID-19 have been mostly mild, the three homes have all had residents die from the infection during the recent

outbreaks.

Two families have reached out to tell The Local they have recently lost a family member to COVID, one at Pleasant Manor and one at Upper Canada Lodge, and one family believes there has been one more death at Upper Canada due to

COVID.

The executive director of Pleasant Manor said in an email to The Local on Jan. 3 that residents were experiencing mild symptoms, none were hospitalized, and they had had a good Christmas.

Similarly a regional employee told The Local Jan. 3 that currently at Upper Canada Lodge "each impacted resident is presenting with mild symptoms and no

one has required a transfer to hospital."

A Niagara-on-the-Lake woman whose mother was at Pleasant Manor told The Local her mother, 91, had been healthy, although frail, when she was diagnosed with COVID. She died two and a half days later, on Dec. 21. She had not been hospitalized, at the family's request.

A family member of a woman in Upper Canada Lodge described a similar

situation with his mother-in-law, who was elderly, and had been "going downhill" over the last six months due to her age, but was healthy Christmas morning, became sick with COVID and passed away. She too was not hospitalized at the family's request — Upper Canada Lodge has 24 nursing staff giving the necessary drugs, including pain relief, "so there's nothing more they could do at the hospital,"

the family member said.

Her death certificate, he added, gave "respiratory failure" as the cause of death, although to the family there is no doubt that she passed away from COVID.

He said from the coughing he and his wife heard as they walked the corridor of the wing he believes had 15 patients with COVID, their symptoms

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Youth Collective opens drop-in centre Monday

Information meeting this Wednesday

Penny Coles
The Local

After seven years of discussions and eight months of intensive planning, Caroline Polgrabia is extremely excited — and a little overwhelmed — to announce the Niagara-on-the-Lake Youth Collective is ready to launch its winter 2023 program, set to begin next Monday.

“It feels a little surreal, but it’s happening,” she says. “We’re shifting from planning to operating.” She and others who have worked hard to get the program to this stage “have

been emailing back and forth, and that’s what we’re saying. It’s happening!”

It will start off with an after school drop-in from 3 to 6 p.m., at the Cornerstone Town Campus on Niagara Stone Road.

Those wanting to attend must be registered, and that will begin Wednesday evening, Jan. 11, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., combined with an information night to fill parents and youth in on plans for the eight-week sessions, and some special programs that are planned, such as St. John Ambulance courses for kids on babysitting or staying home alone.

It will also provide information about volunteer opportunities with the collective.

Everyone is invited to the info night, says Polgrabia.

Although most of the program will be offered free of charge to youth in Grades 7 to 12, registration is required to ensure all who participate have a formal waiver, code of conduct and emergency forms completed.

It’s important for parents to understand, says Polgrabia, that they are not signing their kids up for camp — there will be a minimum of two parents supervising, but it is a drop-in program, where kids from Grade 7 and up will be able to come and go.

In addition to registering youth for safety purposes, the collective has an extensive volunteer vetting process in place to ensure qualified and trained supervision, and has been able to partner with Cornerstone Community Church and their vetting process, says Brenda Ferguson, lead for volunteer recruitment and application processing.

As a formal community partner of the church, “we are required to follow their volunteer application and training policies.”

The collective, Ferguson says, is grateful to the church staff for their support to make the program compliant with youth supervision and health and safety policies. “We are lucky we didn’t have to create these from scratch.”

In addition to the rigorous application process, volunteers will have completed a two-hour youth supervision Plan to Protect training session, with a final review by the collective before Cornerstone staff conduct their final review for compliance.

“The safety and well-being of our youth is the top priority for our group. Although it has taken us over six months to complete the first round of volunteer applications, we feel very confident it was worth it to ensure our ability to confidently provide a safe and welcoming space for all NOTL youth,” said Polgrabia, the collective’s planning committee chair.

There are 19 vetted volunteers to help run the program, she says, and she is hoping they will start with about 30 kids.

When this sessions ends and before the spring program begins in April, she says, “we’ll be able to look at it and see if we got it right, and if necessary refine it for the next eight weeks.”

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Pandemic not over, but better than this time last year

Continued from page 1

did not seem mild — it sounded as if some of the residents “were really having a hard time.”

Both families praised the staff for the warmth and attention their loved ones received at Upper Canada Lodge and Pleasant Manor — they had only positive comments and gratitude for the level of care given to their family members.

But the message of mild symptoms, as one family member told *The Local*, “distorts a picture of what’s happening.”

Tim Siemens, executive director of Pleasant Manor, addressed the question of referring to the cases during the recent outbreak as mild, although one family considers her mother to have died from COVID.

The outbreak in Pleasant Manor was declared by Niagara Public Health on Dec. 22, and the long-term care home remains in outbreak.

There have been four deaths in Pleasant Manor’s long-term care home between Dec. 1 and Jan. 8, Siemens said.

“Two of the deaths occurred during the period of the declared respiratory outbreak, but were not attributable to COVID-19.”

The definitions of mild, moderate or severe symptoms come from public health and the Ministry of Long-Term Care guidelines, Siemens explained. “We consider the duration of symptoms and whether or not the resident’s symptoms are worsening or improving. The definitions of symptoms on that spectrum from mild to severe are not set by Pleasant Manor, but rather by public health. Pleasant Manor has complied with all public health rules, guidelines and protocols in this regard.”

Under the same guidelines, he continued, “we report to public health and the ministry whether or not a resident has been diagnosed with COVID and whether or not COVID contributed to their death. If COVID is a contributory factor to death, it is included in the death certificate as a secondary cause. It is not uncommon that residents who die with COVID as a contributory factor were already very frail, had numerous co-morbidities and had been declining over time.”

“Whether the cause of death was COVID-related or not, Pleasant Manor shares in the grief of the loss of loved ones,” he said.

Vaccination, adds Siemens, “is one of the most effective ways to protect our residents against COVID-19. Evidence indicates that the vaccines used effectively prevent severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19. Most of our residents have had their fourth dose.”

Niagara Long Term Care had the earliest COVID outbreak in NOTL, declared Dec. 12, with 30 residents having positive PCR test results. It’s now over, but the home still has residents suffering from other respiratory illnesses.

Chris Poos, executive director of Niagara Long Term Care, told *The Local* this week that “due to a vulnerable senior population in long-term care, many of whom have pre-existing health problems, COVID, even if at its mildest, can be too much for an individual to manage and recover from. We have had two resident deaths related to COVID-19 and two related to RSV since Dec. 1, 2022.”

To the best of his knowledge, he added, “the cause of death is listed and reported on all death certificates. This would include COVID-19 as a primary or secondary cause. Sometimes, respiratory symptoms are present, however, a specific infection may not have been identified.”

Dr. Mustafa Hirji, Niagara’s acting medical officer of health, said that while the number of people getting COVID, being hospitalized and dying is not nearly as bad as this time last year, there have been a “significant number” of people lost to COVID over the last five weeks. “We still need to take COVID seriously,” he said.

There are deaths that could have been prevented, he added. If we were doing more in society, such as getting booster shots and wearing masks, “it would be less likely elderly people would get sick and pass away.”

Using “mild” to describe the severity of cases depends on judgement, he said. “It’s not a hard and fast definition.”

From Dec. 1 to Jan. 6, 32 people in Niagara died of COVID, 10 of them in long-term care homes. But when he checked the records and discovered none of those 10 people had been hospitalized, he agreed that hospitalization, while more objective, cannot be used as a measure of how serious cases are in long-term care homes.

Statistics on the re-



Dr. Mustafa Hirji, Niagara’s acting chief medical officer of health. (File photo)

gional website don’t break down deaths to separate the number of people who passed away of COVID in long-term care or retirement homes, just the number of outbreaks.

“Some people do get severe enough that they need to be hospitalized, and unfortunately pass away,” he said, and “absolutely,” COVID is still a severe illness for some people who will require hospitalization, but agreed many long-term care residents “would rather not experience the trauma of hospitalization.”

Since the start of the pandemic in March 2020, 689 Niagara residents have died from COVID, 405 of them residents in long-term care and retirement homes, and only 94 were hospitalized.

He said he feels COVID is now being underplayed at upper levels of govern-

ment, and in society, by those who want to believe the pandemic is over.

Hirji believes his is “one of the few voices raising concern, and thinking we need to be more aggressive about managing it,” he said.

The “broader framing” by the public is that the pandemic is over, and that we’re getting back to normal. “There is some truth to that, and the province and federal governments are supporting that.”

Many people are seizing on the hope that things are better and the pandemic is finally over, “but it remains the number three cause of death in Canada, and there were more deaths in 2022 than in 2021 or 2020 across the country.”

The pandemic isn’t over, and there needs to be more of a focus on doing what we can to prevent it, without harming the economy, but also not ignoring

that COVID is still a problem, he said.

That’s especially true for those in long-term care, where there has been a high proportion of deaths.

“There are still lessons to be learned,” said Hirji, including “having much stronger actions from the province regarding booster doses.”

He suggests the province could offer incentives, such as a tax break for those who have had their booster shots. Since they would have a better chance of not requiring health care for COVID,

that would be appropriate, he said.

He would like to see all ages get whatever booster shots are available to them.

And he would like a provincial policy, or at least a much stronger recommendation, on masking, which would prevent deaths.

As well, addressing the fact that COVID spreads through the air, and improving ventilation, especially in long-term care and retirement homes, would be helpful, and all of those measures together could “really get this pandemic to an end.”



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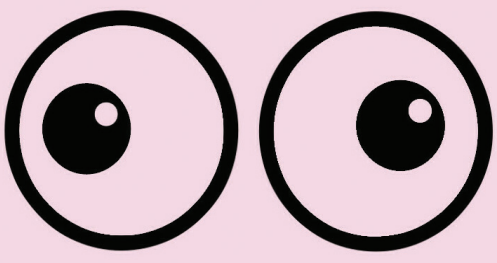


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Jean Cochrane loved her life in NOTL

Penny Coles
The Local

Jean Cochrane, the last of the old guard of Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society members who contributed so much to the gardening culture of NOTL, has died.

She passed away Jan. 7 at Upper Canada Lodge, her home for about four years.

Her daughter Sue Reece says they hadn't been able to see each other over Christmas due to COVID-19, but her mother had recovered, and her death of heart failure came as a surprise.

Shirley Madsen, president of the horticultural society when Cochrane was presented with her 25-year pin, was saddened to learn of Cochrane's passing.

Saturday, the day she died, gardening friends were attending the funeral of Sheila Hirsch-Kalm, who shared their passion. Jean and Sheila had been good friends, both involved in the Garden of Hope plantings, beginning in 2003.

The Garden of the Week contest that began in Niagara-on-the-Lake more than 20 years ago was Cochrane's initiative during the town's first entry into a Communities in Bloom contest. It was organized to encourage homeowners to help beautify their neighbourhoods, and it was as a result of the involvement with Communities in Bloom that Niagara-on-the-Lake became referred to as the prettiest

town in Canada.

As Madsen recalls, "the town, the Niagara Advance (the community newspaper that was shut down in 2017), and some members of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society put their minds together, and up bloomed the Garden of the Week contest. Lydia Szukis, Jean Cochrane, Nan Ford and Hilja Rannala participated in this weekly program over the summer months."

The four women went out to scout gardens and judge them "week after week in the rain and humidity to pick the best residential and commercial garden."

The winning gardens and their owners were photographed by the Niagara Advance, the pictures published on the front page, and at the end of the season, Madsen recalls, contest winners were invited to a gathering organized by the town to receive a certificate for their win.

"Jean, Lydia, Nan and Hilja for years enjoyed meeting weekly, judging gardens and then would meet for coffee, conversation or lunch," says Madsen.

In 2005, when Cochrane decided it was time "to pass on the branch," Madsen says, she took it on, deciding it would be a great way "to get involved not only with the community, but also learn from these well-seasoned gardeners." She says she did her best "to fill Jean Cochrane's gardening boots," and was always amazed at the exper-

tise these women had, knowing most of the horticultural names of many plants they judged in the gardens. She remembers Jean telling her to make sure she didn't discuss her points or opinions with the other judges — "it had to be fair and square."

During a Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society meeting in October 2006, Madsen recognized Cochrane as founder of the Garden of the Week contest with a plaque and token — she had then dedicated 10 years to this program.

"Reluctantly, in 2013 the Garden of the Week contest went dormant," says Madsen, although it was resurrected in a slightly different format over the last couple of years.

Cochrane also wrote a weekly column for the Niagara Advance, all four seasons, continuing from 1998 until 2015. Although the goal was always to help others with their gardening problems, her sense of humour and personal touch was appreciated by her readers.

Reece says her mother wasn't just interested in beautifying the town through gardening, she was also intensely proud of the town's heritage, and fought many battles to preserve it. Cochrane was concerned about what she considered unsightly and inappropriate development, and actively fought against it, including going to town council and voicing her opposition.

"If she thought something was wrong, she spoke up about it," says Reece.

The family — Jean and her husband Tom; Sue, aged three; and her brother Bryan, seven — arrived in Canada on a boat from Scotland in 1967, where the couple had met in a town called Greenbrook, and married in 1956.

They settled in Montreal, and eventually moved to Niagara Falls, where Tom had been offered a job he wanted to accept.

Jean loved Niagara-on-the-Lake, and operated a store on Queen Street called The Gingham Patch through the '70s and '80s, first at the corner of Regent Street, and then across the street beside the Royal George.

Eventually they found a house in town and moved from the falls, and Jean became involved in many activities in town, including the restoration of the former pumphouse to an arts centre. She was also heavily involved in the NOTL Chamber of Commerce, and the early days of organizing the Candlelight Stroll.

She was a member of the Albainn Society (now the St. Andrew's Society), and loved to plan elaborate parties, including an annual event at the Court House on New Year's Eve, says Reece.

When Quebec experienced a devastating ice storm and many trees were broken from the weight of the ice, Cochrane organized an initiative to send



Sheila Hirsch-Kalm and Jean Cochrane shared many interests, fought causes together and received awards together. (Supplied)

small trees to Quebec to be planted, recalls Reece.

She jokes that although it was her mother who took up so many causes, her father was always called on to help. "My mother would come home from some meeting or another, and he'd say, 'what have you got me into now?'"

But he never said no, and helped out willingly, she says.

In later years, Reece jokes, when Sheila arrived in town and the two women would take on a cause together, "they'd walk into a room and there would be an audible groan."

They were both strong women, with strong opinions, who battled for what they believed to be right — they were both characters and together made a formidable pair.

"Anything worth a fight, my mother would fight for. She was

not afraid of anything. If something was wrong to her, she said so. And she would have done anything for anybody."

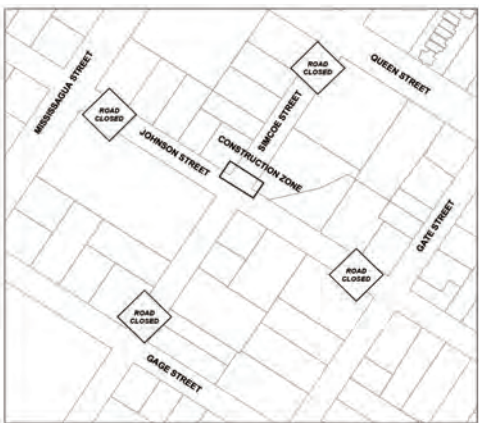
Her parents did everything for her and her brother, says Reece, and adored her daughter, Sara, but what she remembers most is their love for each other. "They had a phenomenal marriage. They were two different sides of the same coin."

Tom died in 2011, and Reece says, "my mother never got over losing my father. They were incredible together."

They both loved to dance, and were good at it. "When they danced, they looked like they were one person."

Their marriage, and love for each other "is what songs and poems are written about. They were very lucky — they had a great life together. I'm glad they're together again."

Niagara Lake -on-the- EST. 1781 PUBLIC NOTICE ROAD CLOSURE - JOHNSON STREET AND SIMCOE STREET



WHAT: The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, through its contractor Anthony's Excavating, will soon begin the removal and replacement of a road crossing culvert on Simcoe Street at Johnson Street.

The section of road over the structure will be closed to all traffic for the duration of construction. This closure is necessary to facilitate a shorter construction schedule for the construction of the structure. Road closures are to take place on Mississauga Street at Johnson Street, Queen Street at Simcoe Street, Gate Street at Johnson Street, and Gage Street at Simcoe Street.

A detour route will be provided around the site for traffic.

WHEN? The work is scheduled from Monday, January 16, through Friday, April 28, 2023.

CONTACT: Any inquiries concerning this project may be directed to Mike Komljenovic, Engineering Supervisor for the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, at mike.komljenovic@notl.com or **905-468-3266 ext. 240**.

Emergency Services will be notified of this closure by the contractor prior to work commencing.

Your co-operation is appreciated. Thank you.

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Celebrate Seniors Golden Years Guide

4 ways to support your health this winter

(NC) Winter is a wonderful season, but it's also a time of year when more of us tend to get sick. When we're not out tobogganing or making snow angels, we're often spending more time indoors where there can be greater risk of spreading colds, the flu and COVID-19. Here are some tips to help protect yourself and others this year.

1. Stay up to date with your vaccinations

Keeping up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations continues to be one of the most effective ways to protect yourself against serious illness, hospitalization and death from COVID-19. If it has been six months since your last dose or since being infected with COVID-19, it is time to get vaccinated with an Omicron-targeting booster dose. This is especially important if you are at high risk for severe illness from

COVID-19.

2. Follow individual public health measures

Protect yourself and others by continuing to clean your hands frequently and disinfect high-touch surfaces. Let in outdoor air by opening an exterior window or door to improve ventilation in your home. Wearing a well-constructed, well-fitting mask or respirator in public indoor settings continues to be recommended for COVID-19.

3. Work on healthy habits

Though they do not pro-

tect against COVID-19 or the flu, behaviours such as regular exercise can support your general long-term health. Winter doesn't mean we have fewer opportunities or choices for healthy habits, either. If skating or snowshoeing aren't your thing, try climbing the stairs or having a living room dance party. If you are mobility impaired, there are many exercises you can perform while sitting down, too.

4. Give yourself a break

In the rush of a busy winter, remember to go easy on yourself sometimes.

Though not the cause of illness, being extra tired and stressed may weaken your defenses. Support your mental health by proactively scheduling breaks from chores and commitments, keeping

in touch with family and friends, and planning things to look forward to. Try to get a good night's sleep by settling into a routine. If you're struggling to sleep, don't let the fact that you're awake stress you

out more - the more you relax and let go, the more likely you may be able to drift off.

Find more information about COVID-19 vaccines at canada.ca/covid-vaccine.

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EDITORIAL

Helping hands needed all year long

Christmas has passed, and Niagara-on-the-Lake residents have been incredibly generous. We've heard from Newark Neighbours about their very successful holiday hamper and gift program, and from Shirley Madsen, who was scrambling to deliver gifts, food and household items to newly arrived Ukrainians, and they are both overwhelmed by just how much our residents have opened their hearts and wallets to help others. It's never a surprise — we know how caring this commu-

nity is. For those who find themselves in dire straits, whether due to a temporary situation, an employment problem or having landed in a strange country with all worldly goods left far, far behind, Niagara-on-the-Lake folks surround, cocoon and care for those in need. However, although the holiday is behind us, the need continues. There are more than 300 Ukrainian families trying to make a home here in the Niagara region. Every few days Madsen is meeting new

arrivals from Ukraine — in Virgil, in St. Davids, in Niagara-on-the-Lake and in St. Catharines. And she learns from them that there are more on their way here to Niagara. They hear about our area, welcoming and safe from all they are fleeing, from relatives already settling here, and from social media sites where people trade information about life in Canada. Madsen hears all of their heart-breaking stories, about terrifying escapes and elderly and wounded family

members left behind. They have come here with nothing, and they are proud people. Ukrainians don't like to ask for assistance, and they don't like to take it, but when it is offered, they will accept, as long as they can give something in return — something they've baked, maybe some borscht — even when they have so little themselves. We can't just feel good about helping others over a holiday. The need in our community continues, and will keep growing.

There is a need for food, but what Madsen has discovered is our Ukrainian neighbours like to make meals themselves, from scratch, as they did at home. They appreciate canned herring, sardines, tuna and salmon, but they are not keen on processed canned soup and stews. To make their own, they like plain rice, hulled or pearl barley, buckwheat or Kasha, oats, cornmeal, rye, wheat, millet, plain breadcrumbs, egg noodles, dried mushrooms (Costco has large containers) and dill pickles. For baking, sugar, honey,

all-purpose flour, baking powder and gelatin are needed. As well, cornstarch; plain vinegar; oil, either vegetable, sunflower, canola or peanut; mayonnaise; ketchup; mustard; tomato paste; coffee, instant and regular; tea; walnuts; almonds; jam; cookies; vegetable, chicken or beef broth; and sauerkraut. Spices could include salt, plain or coarse; pepper, plain or peppercorns; garlic powder; onion powder; celery salt; cinnamon; bay leaves; poppy seeds and raisins. Bags of potatoes, onions, lemons, cabbage, carrots, beets, apples and oranges would also be appreciated. Food items must be unopened and before their expiry date. Toiletries needed include soap (no Irish Spring); shampoo; hand cream; toothpaste and toothbrushes for adults and kids; cold medicine for adults and kids (unopened); feminine hygiene products; and toilet paper, Kleenex and paper towels. New only — towels, pillows, bedding, and gently used sleeping bags if available. Clothes are not a priority. Gift cards would be wel-

Newark Neighbours moving to Virgil this spring



Cindy Grant
Newark Neighbours

Newark Neighbours, Niagara-on-the-Lake's local food bank and thrift store, has been proudly and successfully serving local residents for more than 50 years. As many are aware, Newark Neighbours has far outgrown its current space. The board and volunteers are very pleased to announce that we have secured a new space for our services and operations at 1534 Niagara Stone Road, Virgil (the former Lincoln Interiors store). Our thrift store and food bank will remain in full op-

eration at our current location on 310 John Street East (on Riverbend Inn property) until our re-location; we will continue to gratefully accept all donations on John Street until our re-location. Planning is currently underway for design and construction of our new space to meet the needs for both segments of our operations. Interior renovations will occur in the next few months with the goal of moving to our new location on Niagara Stone Road this spring or early summer. We are excited about the possibilities that this new and improved location and space will provide for our thrift store customers and our food bank clients. We are confident they will greatly appreciate our new and improved facilities and surroundings.

The Newark Neighbours board and volunteers thank the staff and management of Riverbend Inn for being gracious and supportive neighbours for the last 30 years. We will miss our current home and are confident our new location will continue to serve our community for many years to come. *Newark Neighbours' mission is Serving our Community with Compassion, Care and Concern; our vision is that no resident in Niagara-on-the-Lake need be hungry. Newark Neighbours is a registered not-for-profit organization with an elected board of directors and entirely volunteer staff that relies solely on donations and thrift shop sales. To donate, or to learn more about our organization, please visit www.newark-neighbours.ca*

View from the couch

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

The blackness in Roald Dahl's work is always overpowered by light and hope. In this tale, *Matilda, the Musical* (Netflix, 2022), a young

schoolgirl armed with a sharp mind and extraordinary determination takes a stand against her aggressive parents and the formidable headmistress of her school. This musical is immensely worth seeing.

English teacher who loves to go to the movies. Until he resumes going to theatres, he has graciously agreed to share his opinions, through "short and sweet" exclusives, of Netflix series and movies for The Local.

Donald Combe is a retired

Where's Ben?

The Local co-op student, Ben Foster, is discovering new locations in NOTL and wondering how familiar others may be with them. If you know where this photo was taken, email penny@notllocal.com. Suzi Martino knew Ben was at York Road and Tanbark, in Lowrey Park, in the Dec. 28 edition of the Local. "It's our favourite spot for neighbour pups to meet up and play," she says.

P.O. Box 430, 1596 Four Mile Creek Road, Virgil, L0S 1T0

Editor:
Penny Coles
penny@notllocal.com
905-246-5878

Publisher:
The Niagara-on-the-Lake Local

Village Media Regional Publisher (online sales)
John Hammill
John@villagemedia.ca
905-988-5599 ext 1157

Advertising Sales:
Julia Coles
julia@notllocal.com
905-934-1040

Graphic Designer:
Rosie Gowsell
composing@notllocal.com

News Tips: news@notllocal.com

notllocal.com facebook.com/notllocal instagram.com/thenotllocal twitter.com/thenotllocal

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Local LETTERS

Government needs to increase funding for forces

I was pleased to see a brief reference to the military by MP Tony Baldinelli when he pointed out that the interest on the national debt was more than the military budget. First time I have heard any politician mention the military, even during the elections.

The defence of our country has been put on the backburner for far too long by all political parties. The government has just changed the regulations to allow those with face tattoos or brightly coloured hair in a desperate attempt to increase membership in the forces. This poorly-chosen path will produce no more recruits than trying to get hippies back in the '60s to join.

Advertising such as "Be all you can be" or "no life like it"

would produce better results. Patriotism and the ability to learn skills through military training should also be emphasized. Military personnel should also be recognized through discounts and other distinctive ways to show the citizens of this country appreciate their service. Currently the military is at least 10,000 below the authorized strength, which in itself is way below what it should be.

Money also needs to be spent on equipment for the forces. Only recently did the Second World War pistols be replaced with up-to-date weapons. We have no ships capable to patrol the Arctic. While ships are being built they are years away from deployment. Only recently has the govern-

ment indicated they will buy up-to-date aircraft, although a firm order has yet to be placed.

Mr. Baldinelli, I would hope all politicians recognize that money needs to be spent on the military so that our slide in reputation on the world scene with regard to our NATO participation does not continue. We had agreed to spend two per cent of our GDP on defence. We currently spend 1.3 per cent, toward the bottom of NATO members. I hope you and your party will push the government to recognize the state of our forces and to spend the money to bring it up to where it needs to be.

Doug Johnson
Virgil

Angel's Rest says thanks for the support

Angel's Rest Dog Sanctuary, located at 1079 Queenston Road in Niagara-on-the-Lake, would like to publicly thank all the kind people of NOTL who came to the door with dog supplies, gave us financial support, etc., over the Christmas season.

A huge shout out to Main-

tenance by the Yard — Mike and Sheena — and everyone else who built the parade float, walked in the parade and helped to make the day a success.

And, of course, we can't forget Vanessa from SLAPS, the Bruno Project, who is always working hard to coordinate

all these events for us. Penny Coles, The Local reporter, did a great job; I love the article!

We appreciate you all, from Christine and Nick at Angel's Rest.

Jane LaVacca
NOTL

Local LETTERS

Many Chautauqua residents concerned about trees

The headline of the article, Two Circle St. residents concerned about trees (The Local, Dec.14) was misleading at the very least.

Both the heading and the entire article failed to take into account the concern of not just two, but numerous Chautauqua residents, and others, who were justifiably disturbed by the failure to adequately protect the two trees in question at the 6A Circle Street lot prior to the start of excavation.

Trees not only offer sanctuary to critters and birds; they also contribute to our well-being in numerous ways. They undeniably form an integral part of the sustainability of our neighbourhood and our town. Every tree matters. That is why we take measures to protect them from potential harm inflicted on them.

As Victor Tarnoy has expressed in a document about the Chautauqua area, "Narrow, tree-sheltered streets define the unique character of Niagara-on-the-Lake's Chautauqua neighbourhood. We are protected and charmed

in every season by our towering oaks and maples, catalpas and pines, privet and cedar hedges that line our friendly streets... In Chautauqua, every street is our street. Every street feels like home. And every tree is our tree. The loss of each is a loss to the whole community.

"When proposed homes exceed municipal bylaws, the neighbourhood unites to ensure that important trees are not harmed and to encourage an appropriate, or at least non-destructive development that will enhance the neighbourhood — something that every community deserves.

"When services have been upgraded, municipal and public works in charge have been mindful of why we choose to live in Chautauqua, and respect our reasons for wanting to preserve our old trees, our old vegetation and our sense of the timeless quality of this beautiful neighbourhood."

The following Chautauqua residents and others concur that a more accurate headline of the article of De-

cember 14 should have read "Chautauqua residents concerned about trees." Far more than two people are concerned about the protection and preservation of Chautauqua's trees.

Margret Walker
Mary Kilmer
Wade Davis
Victor Tarnoy
Dianne Werner
Peter Simon
Nicole Simon
Benj Koffman
Ruth Denyer
Chris Earl
Kerri Sant
Robin Patterson Judd
Michael Burns
Christopher Allen
Sally Adamson
Jim & Jane Thackray
Kate Sullivan
Ian & Sharon Gillespie

Editor's note: The original story and headline were written to respect a request of the president the Chautauqua Residents Association that the story not appear to be the views of all the residents or the association.

PG lesson about the birds and the bees



Owen Bjorgan
Special to The Local

Holidays are full of conversations. I hope you had some enlightening ones, and relished the opportunities to speak with others about our daily lives and deeper thoughts as the planet circumnavigates the sun yet again. Happy New Year, Niagara-on-the-Lake Local readers! It has been a pleasure to write for you during all of 2022 and beyond.

Statistically speaking, when we find extra time to communicate and share ideas with our fellow humans, a lot more interesting conversations come up. For me this year, a handful of my holiday chats both directly and involuntarily sparked some deep thoughts about what other animals, like our dogs, my

pet gecko, deer or horses think about the holidays. Which, of course, are an entirely fabricated human construct.

I heard celebratory and heartwarming stories of people who are about to embrace a new child coming into their world. My biology brain is inclined to think, well, this is mating, for people.

With a humanized aspect to it, reproduction is perceived as something agreed-upon between two people, typically with love, and a centralized goal of a beautiful and emotional addition to someone's life.

Let's keep it PG but biologically inquisitive for a moment here. Imagine you are an insect.

I must ask, what two people look each other in the eye and say, "Babe, we need to bring a new life into this world to sustain the human population. I would like to have as many spawn as possible to ensure that our species remains strong and endures, even if most die. I need

you to help pass on my genes, even if we never see how the kids turn out." Yeah, right. Okay, well, to each their own.

But seriously, if one of the basic principles of being a living thing is reproduction, what goes through a cicada's, a toad's, a fish's, or a black bear's mind when they mate — and afterwards? It's worth the question, because they all do it, and Earth is the only planet on which this marvel occurs.

Let's stick with insects, the most numerous and biodiverse group of organisms on the planet.

By the way, not all insects are bugs, but all bugs are classified as insects. A true bug is merely a type of insect who contains piercing and sucking mouthparts for nutrients. This includes cicadas, aphids, leafhoppers, planthoppers and even bed bugs — but totally excludes butterflies, ants, wasps and beetles. So next time you want to call any six-legged creature a bug, think twice.

Thinking twice, what goes

through a bug's mind, body and soul as they engage in reproduction? Can we scientifically quantify that the bugs, or even we humans, have souls? Do they feel love? We may never truly know, but the science says they just have sex. However, this clearly happens for some reason.

Not to feel selfishly ecstatic. Not to feel a powerful release. Not to feel protected, warm or secure. Not for payback, not for love and not for sale. They have sex to survive. If there's no apparent libido in animals other than ourselves (except arguably among higher primates and dolphins), then what makes them tick? Instinct is a reasonable answer, but do they know that they need to survive? And why they need to survive? What is the mysterious, unforeseen force behind this, I wonder.

The most logical explanation for this is that the vast majority of animals come hard-

wired with thousands of years of DNA blueprint, simply instructing them that it is time to reproduce by means of environmental cues. But making a new life is stressful for all animals, as it is energetically taxing and socially competitive. So why do animals who don't love their children forever, let alone some who die moments after reproduction (like praying mantises and mayflies), even bother?

Evolution has steered certain animals and plants into a world of unmistakable hints that it is time to procreate, including temperatures, longer days of sun, plentiful food, high water flows or stable weather conditions.

It begs a deeper question, though. What is the purpose? Can any parents out there imagine not being able to see the results of your children growing and succeeding in the world? Yet we are one of the few species who not only emotionally, but dare I say spiritually, often seek this.

A black bear raises her cubs as they grow older and stronger and eventually walk their own path in the world's forests. One may argue that such animals could be sentient and emotionally charged, like a person, giving a more profound sense of purpose to reproduction. Let's contrast that to the salmon who lays her eggs in the gravel beds of our local creeks, only to roll over, bloat and die just days later.

From the birds to the bees to ourselves, we can all agree that there is a unifying and evolutionary drive to reproduce. To me, it is as biologically understandable as it is wildly mysterious that it only happens on the third rock from the sun, which just spun around all over again.

With a biology background and as a literal thinker, I can't help but flirt with the idea that there are unique themes in the world of nature that we will never fully understand.

FREELANCE JOURNALIST WANTED:



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Virgil Air Cadet flying toward a future in the skies

Mike Balsom
The Local

At 17 years old, Virgil resident Shay Vidal already has his pilot's licence and knows exactly what he wants to do with it.

The member of 809 Newark Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron, which meets every Wednesday evening from September to May at the Croatian National Centre on Line 3, is hoping to become an aerial firefighter.

"My goal is to go to university and get my commercial pilot's licence," Vidal told The Local during the squadron's bottle drive last Saturday. "Then I want to get certified on the big jetliners. I'll then do aerial firefighting for a few years, hopefully travel all over doing that, then maybe come back and learn to fly for an airline."

Vidal earned his pilot's licence last July and August at the London Airport as part of the Power Pilot Training Course offered through the Air Cadet League of Canada.

"It was a really hard

program to get into," says Cory Abt, current chair of 809 Newark's squadron sponsorship committee. "About 800 cadets apply for it usually, and there are only 40 spots. He's the first one from this squadron to get in in a long time. They consider their grades as well as their performance in flight programs. He rocked it."

"There were three stages to get into it," Vidal said. "We had to do ground school, then a test that I got 79 per cent on. Then we had to submit our school grades. After that came the interview. I got my acceptance call on a Tuesday morning in May. I was so over the moon."

Vidal and the other cadets were flying on the first day of the seven-week program, taking to the skies five or six days a week, sometimes twice a day, in a DA20-C1 single engine aircraft.

"It was out of the Diamond Flight Centre," says Vidal. "It's connected right to the plant that builds the aircraft. It was a great opportunity. I learned tons about aircraft. I can't even

describe the feeling of going up there for the first time. And my first solo was an amazing experience."

Vidal's face lit up as he described the reception he got from his fellow cadets when he landed that day. He continues to keep in touch with most of these fellow aviation enthusiasts through online chats.

"We were all serious about flying," Vidal said of the cadets he met last summer. "We would study together in our common area. Our ground school location was an old World War II Air Force bar called 427 Wing. We'd talk and joke around, but it was all focused, and in depth. It was so easy talking to them all. They just all got it."

The Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School student is also enrolled in the Aerospace and Aviation Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) through the Niagara Catholic District School Board. The SHSM is a program of specific high school courses and experiences that are geared toward students interested in a particular field.



Shay Vidal, 17, of the 809 Newark Squadron Air Cadets got his pilot's licence this summer. (Supplied)



Shay Vidal, helping at a bottle drive Saturday, sees a career of flying and helping others in his future. (Mike Balsom)

"It was developed to kind of assist in the need for employment in the aviation industry," says Aaron Vasas, who runs the program for the school board. "We see a lot of students with an interest in this field. We try to give them a direct link to employment that is available to them in an amazing field."

"It was at the Dorothy Rungeling Airport (in Fenwick)," explained Vidal, who spent half of his school day there during his second semester last year. "It wasn't really heavy on the piloting side. It was more about general aviation. I was one of the only cadets in the program. We learned a lot about airport management, engines, the theory of flight, and we got our drone licences. It was definitely worth it."

Vasas says Shay was a huge asset during the semester, helping his teacher deliver lessons and providing constructive criticism and insight when appropriate.

"He's an amazing advocate for the cadet program," Vasas adds. "His knowledge base not just about aviation but also about the cadet program is second to none. He's always looking to promote the program to anybody. He's a great leader, too."

Vidal's more 'grounded' friends at school refer to him by the nickname Pilot. They know about his enthusiasm for aviation and will often come to him with questions about his favourite pursuit. What many of them might not know,

though, is that he comes by his love of flight quite naturally.

Vidal's father, Darryl, is a cyber security specialist with Airbus Aerospace Corporation. And his great grandfather was a pilot who was involved in the famous Avro Arrow project of the 1950s that had the potential to cement Canada's reputation as world leader in aviation.

"It's definitely generational in my family," admitted Vidal. "I believe my great-grandfather worked on the engines, helping to engineer them. I have some memorabilia from his time there. A bunch of pins, some books, photos and a coffee mug."

That particular family connection has given Vidal a great appreciation for Canada's aviation history. He's familiar with most of the aircraft flown in the two World Wars, as well as the names of Canada's flying aces. He has also researched the Silver Dart, the first powered aircraft to fly in Canada.

Vidal credits 809 Newark for giving him the opportunities to pursue what he loves. He's been involved since he was 12 years old after finding out about the squadron from some St. Michael Catholic Elementary School classmates.

"Through the summer program, I was able to do ground school, and get my licence, and cadets paid for the whole deal," he says. "Everything I've learned about flying so far has come through cadets. And there's

other things, including leadership, public speaking and discipline."

"He's really come into his own," Abt says about Vidal. "He's quiet and unassuming, but a great leader."

Vidal has taken a leadership role with the local squadron, with the goal of setting up younger cadets to have the chance to follow him into the skies.

"On Monday nights I run an aviation night," Vidal added. "We sit down and talk about planes for an hour. We'll talk about specific aircraft. Helicopters have been a popular topic. I want them to know what they need to know to get their licences."

He enthusiastically participated in the bottle drive this past weekend, along with his mother, Linda, who was helping with the collection at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124. And the proceeds from the drive will further help local cadets with the same aspiration as Vidal's, as they are slated to go toward two flight simulators for the squadron.

Once he's off to the next step in his aviation journey, Vidal foresees volunteering to help other cadets wherever that journey takes him. And he's hoping his interest and his skills can help more than just cadets.

"I want to use my pilot's licence to make a difference," Vidal said. "I love flying first and foremost, but I want to use it to help people. Firefighting or MedEvac are the best ways to do that."



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Learning adventure about Dock Area railway history

David Gilchrist
Special to The Local

In Niagara-on-the-Lake, as in many small Ontario towns, the fact that railways were an important factor in their growth has not always been too noticeable. In town, however, this has changed recently, thanks to the research and dedication of members of the community who live in the Dock Area.

In the early days, steamers would unload passengers from Toronto who could continue on to points south from the Dock Area on the train lines. Freight was shipped back and a lot of Niagara's tender fruit was brought to the area by train for shipping to Toronto and beyond.

A recent walk with my grandchildren through the Dock Area provided us a learning experience about our local railway history. Visitors to the town today wouldn't realize that a rail line once ran down King Street towards the lake, turning where Delatre Street joins it on the bend and continuing down to the docks, where a walking path is located now.

Walking along this path one might notice that they cross a slightly raised bridge. This structure can be viewed if one steps off the path and down onto the beach. Looking back toward



Bella, Lachlan and Elise Gilchrist learn about the former engine house in the Dock Area of NOTL. (Photos by David Gilchrist)

the path, one can see the stone work of this structure, which is quite well preserved. Much effort has been made recently by the town

to stabilize the area along the shore from erosion, and to protect the bridge structure and surrounding land. Continuing on the path

to where it intersects with Turntable Way, two more sites of the former railway line are now more prominently marked, again thanks

to local residents.

The first structure noticeable is a series of flat stones and white markings on the road. Arranged in a complete circle they delineate the base of the former turntable. When the locomotive had finished its run to the area, it could be placed on the turntable and turned for the return trip. Once overgrown and barely noticeable, the foundation can be seen clearly and an historical plaque mounted on the site describes the use of the turntable in good detail.

The next structure is a short set of rail tracks mounted on railway ties. Further on, a longer set of tracks, also mounted on ties, marks where the engine house was once located. This structure allowed

two locomotives to stand on tracks side by side overnight, where a watchman could keep an eye on them and keep one fired up. A pit allowed for maintenance. Again, a new historical plaque describes the engine house and its use in detail.

While my grandchildren were aware of the turntable from prior hikes, our recent outing was the first time they had seen the two plaques placed there, and the location of the engine house.

It is wonderful that these two historic sites are marked and designated under the Ontario Heritage Act. Another piece of the town's past has been highlighted, providing more opportunity to teach the next generation about its history.



The area around Turntable Way holds some interesting railway history in NOTL.



The location of the historic railway turntable is marked by stone.



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Predator goalie Ryan Santini excels in two weekend games

Mike Balsom
The Local

Niagara Predators number one goalie Ryan Santini backstops his teammates with a sense of calm. Peek closely behind his protective cage any time in the game and you are likely to spot a beaming smile on his face.

That calm confidence and joy exuded by the Montreal native came in handy this weekend as he faced 115 shots over the team's two games. Santini stopped 45 of 51 off the sticks of the second-place Bradford Bulls Friday, for a 6-2 loss and turned away all 64 Saturday in a 4-0 road win in Tottenham.

"I'm sure I never faced that many shots before," Santini said

over the phone from his billet home in Virgil. "It was definitely a lot of fun. The more shots you face, the more entertaining the night becomes. It was hard work, but we came out with two points over the weekend."

The metaphorical brick wall created by Santini was the biggest factor in the Predators keeping Friday night's Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League home game against Bradford close.

Some speedy challenges by the Bulls in Niagara's zone caused a few turnovers early on, but Santini kept shutting the door. The Preds had an early opportunity on a two-on-one break but the puck bounced over newcomer Andras Kehl's stick and into the

corner. Minutes later, forward Declan Fogarty rang a shot off the goalpost in another missed chance.

With captain Max Bredin in the penalty box, the Bulls Esa Patton got his team on the scoreboard at 10:03. Only 52 seconds later, Keegan Darragh added another Bradford goal on a wrist shot from the blue line that beat a screened Santini.

Despite being outshot 20-6 in the first period, the Preds found themselves behind only 2-0 when the first 20 minutes ran out.

But Bradford's Jake Alton and Andrew Reynolds both scored in the first eight minutes of the second period, putting the Bulls up 4-0. It seemed like

the game was potentially headed toward a lopsided blowout, but Santini kept finding ways to shut the door.

Finally, Jaroslav Dohnal beat Bulls goalie Dominic Marquis on a four-on-three power play situation at 12:15. Then late in the period Preds forward Anthony Tropea skated into the Bradford end and buried a wrist shot from the boards on Marquis' far side to close the gap back to two goals.

Patton put the Bulls up 5-2 at 10:55 into the third during a Bradford power play. The Predators tried hard to claw back, and head coach Kevin Taylor pulled Santini in favour of an extra attacker with 1:35 remaining. Darragh, though, notched his second goal of the

night on the empty net to seal the victory for the Bulls.

The Bulls outshot Niagara 51-25 on the evening.

"Ryan is unreal," Taylor said, when asked if Santini would win his player of the game honour Friday. "He gave us a chance to win. We didn't play good enough to earn it, though, when it comes right down to it, but he kept us in the game for sure."

The Predators travel to Bradford this Wednesday for a rematch, and Santini made sure Taylor knows he wants to start in that rematch.

"That's my battle again," insisted Santini. "That's my fish to fry. I'm looking forward to that one, it's going to be a fun one. I hope to get better results than

the last game."

Though numbers are not available, Friday night's attendance was the highest since the home opener back in September. Many fans were flocking to the finally opened concession stand to pick up a coffee or hot chocolate between periods. There's something about a hot chocolate in a cold arena that completes the experience of a hockey game.

The Predators had another hockey game the very next day, as they were off to Tottenham to face the fifth-place Thunder.

Santini kept up his hot play Saturday night, turning back 17, 21 and 26 shots period by period to pick up his first shut-

Continued on page 11



Predator goalie Ryan Santini makes one of many stops against Bradford. (Mike Balsom)



New Predator forward Andras Kehl chases the puck in the Bradford zone.



Predator Anthony Tropea tries to bury the wraparound behind Bulls goalie Dominic Marquis.

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Santini loves NOTL, billet, fans and teammates

Continued from page 10

out of his junior hockey career.

The line of Cameron Savoie (two goals, one assist), Declan Fogarty (one goal, two assists) and Anthony Tropea (three assists) also stayed hot, while Cole Ellis scored an unassisted goal in the second period in the 4-0 victory.

"It's a fun feeling to win with these guys," Santini said, "and really great to get that first shutout. Really, it's all about keeping the guys invested in the game, keeping it as tight as

possible, that's my role."

The 21-year-old attended Concordia University last year where he played for the Sting-ers brand new Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec Division 2 team.

"I was in human resources there," Santini said, "but decided after last year that it wasn't really for me. So I'm taking a gap year and I'm hoping that hockey gets me into a good school where I can study kinesiology or exercise science."

The biggest adaptation for Santini has been realizing that

he can actually turn right on a red light in Ontario. He had a few impatient drivers honking at him in his earlier days in Niagara. But overall he's loving his time here.

"I'm really happy with the team that I'm on," he told The Local. "I have great teammates, and I've been lucky with my billets. There are really great people here in Niagara-on-the-Lake. We've got great support from our fans, too."

Santini's been a goaltender since the age of eight, but it was a hard sell for his father, who

originally didn't support his son's decision.

"I had to fight my dad about it," he laughed. "There was one day when all the neighbours were going out to play on the local pond. I had my street goalie gear. I told him I was going to play goalie that day, and he told me I would have to bring all my gear on my own. It was about five blocks away. I was stopping pucks in my street hockey equipment for about four hours. After that he broke down and bought me equipment so I could play goal-

ie on my team."

Hailing as he does from Montreal, it's no surprise that his goaltending idol is Carey Price.

"By far he's the best goaltender we've seen lately in the NHL," he explained. "He is phenomenal. I know he's not playing this year, but I think he'll be back. It's his calmness, his poise, that I aspire to have in my game."

Santini is well on his way to emulating his favourite goalie on both fronts.

"It's simple," Santini

summed up. "Why play if you're not having fun? My job is as simple as it can be, to stop six ounces of rubber coming at me. I just do that the best I can every night to give the guys the best shot at winning. No matter how many shots we take, it's all about the next shot."

The Predators will be back home this Friday night, hosting Tottenham at 7:30 p.m. at Virgil's Meridian Credit Union Arena. Then on Sunday, seventh-place Niagara travels to Streetsville to visit the 3-27-0 last place Flyers.

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Battle of the Bands coming up at Irish Harp

Mike Balsom
The Local

Six local bands will be vying for a cash prize of \$1,000 and a regular monthly booking at the Irish Harp's first Battle of the Bands, to be held over the next four Mondays.

It begins this Monday, Jan. 16 at 7:30 p.m. with solo act Ray Maurice taking on modern rock band Admiral.

It's part of a commitment to presenting live entertainment that the pub has embarked on since the first loosening of COVID-19 restrictions last winter.

"We just want to support local talent," says general manager Adam Brooker. "We want to get as many eyes on these bands as possible. We figured if we had anywhere from six to nine bands here they could use us as a platform and we could pick maybe two or three up to appear here regularly."

Brooker has enlisted a few regulars who know a little about music to act as judges. Jack Sawatsky from Jack van Ginger, Ayron Mortley from The O'Deadlys and Patrick



Barrel Down plays Jan. 23 in the Battle of the Bands, with Mike Cocco on acoustic bass, Troy Butler on acoustic 12-string guitar and Dan Nicoletti on acoustic 6-string guitar. (Supplied)

Vandersluys from Patsy and The Muscle, bands that Harp patrons are surely familiar with, will fill that role.

Brooker explains the first three weeks will see two bands competing head to head, with the judges and patrons chiming in on their

favourites. The performances will also stream live via the Irish Harp's Facebook page so others can have their say.

"You can tag your vote on our live stream videos from each evening," Brooker says. "Voting will close at the end of day on Thursday with

the winner of each week being announced on Friday mornings."

After the first three weeks, one band from each night will square off for the championship, scheduled for Feb. 6.

Mike Cocco's acoustic trio Barrel Down takes on New

Rising Sun on Jan. 23.

"We play music from the '60s and '70s through to current stuff," the bass player tells The Local. "We cover Imagine Dragons, Tragically Hip, Johnny Cash, the Animals, all kinds of variety."

Cocco is a veteran of a


number of local bands, including Groovy Food, Yukon Jack and Millennium Down. He also currently gigs regularly in a Bruce Springsteen cover band called Hungry Hearts. He found out about the battle when he visited the Harp for dinner recently.

"If we win, we'll be using the \$1,000 to buy a new P.A. system," he laughs. "But even if we don't win, it will just be cool to play the place. It's going to be fun to get the feel and the vibe. The fact that there will be people hearing us that night will attract them to other venues we play, too."

Monday, Jan. 30 will feature the bands Black Sheep and Spared No Expense in the last round before the finale.

Overall, Brooker says the six bands represent the gamut of the type of musical entertainment the pub likes to offer.

"There's a little bit of rock and roll, some East Coast music, some alternative and a little bit of Irish music," he explains. "And every band that participates will get a prize the night they perform."



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Top finishes in 2022 bode well for coming year

Mike Balsom
The Local

Racing's off-season allowed Stewart Friesen to spend some time reconnecting with family back in Niagara just before Christmas.

The NASCAR Camping World Truck Series and big block modified stock car driver and his wife, Jessica, also a competitive driver, took their six-year-old son Parker to see Niagara Falls for the first time during their week-long stay.

"We had some fun with some cousins and had a great time," Friesen says from his home in Sprakers, New York. "Parker was in awe and amazed by the falls. It was a really cool experience. We bopped around a little bit on Clifton Hill, too. Growing up here you take it for granted. Being away for a few years and coming back, it was great to experience it as a family."

It was a rare week off for the son of Jamie and Yvonne who grew up on the region's dirt tracks as much as he did in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Jamie is a former driver and race promoter himself, along with his brothers Joel and Alex. And another generation back, Stewart's grandfather Stan Friesen raced in the 1960s. The family owned both Merrittville Speedway in Thorold and Ransomville Speedway in New York.

Last year, Stewart continued

the family tradition of success on the tracks with nine top five finishes and a checkered flag in his Halmar-Friesen number 52 truck, and dominance on the dirt in his number 44 modified in upstate New York. That bodes well for Friesen heading into 2023.

"To run top five in the truck series is a big accomplishment," he says. "I would have liked to have won a couple more. We were very close to making the final four in the championship. Our sights are set on the 2023 season — hopefully we'll get a couple more wins."

Friesen finished in sixth place in points in the truck series for the second straight year. He's hoping that the return of the key players on his team and the addition of a few new crew members will help take him even further in the upcoming year.

On the dirt circuit, Friesen has become a bit of a legend at both Fonda Speedway and Utica-Rome Speedway, where his father grooms the much-loved oval. He competes in a number of different dirt car circuits in upstate New York and elsewhere.

Highlights from 2022 included wins in the Firecracker 50 at Fonda, the Labour Day race at Utica-Rome and an early season win in Florida.

"We lost two big races at the end of the year, at Port Royal and Orange County," Friesen says. "We led until very late in both

but finished in second place. A lot of top three finishes this year, too. We had some motor problems that set us back a bit. We're trying to remedy that so we can get back to our 2021 numbers."

At his garage in Sprakers, two new dirt modifieds are being built this month and are almost ready for testing on the tracks. He'll be running in the Sunshine Nationals at Florida's Volusia Speedway in the late model division Jan. 18 to 21.

Friesen splits his time this month between Sprakers and Statesville, North Carolina. That's where his team, led by general manager Tripp Bruce, is getting the trucks prepared for the start of the NASCAR season.

"I shoot back and forth a few times a month," Friesen says. "I love living in upstate New York, but having that facility there in North Carolina is key for success in NASCAR. I talk to Tripp a couple of times every single day. He's a good man, it's a great partnership, he takes great care of us."

And he's proud of his team's accomplishments on the charitable front as well. Stewart and Jessica's son Parker was diagnosed on the autism spectrum. The couple work tirelessly to support a number of autism-related charities, including the Crossroads Centre for Children in Schenectady, New York. Their annual barbecue at Fonda Speedway last year raised more than \$20,000 for that cause.

Friesen will celebrate his 40th birthday this July, a milestone in itself, of course. But another milestone is within reasonable reach this year. Friesen is not far off the target of 400 career wins heading into his 24th year of driving competitively.

"It's a pretty awesome career stat," he says. "Ten to 15 years ago I never would have dreamt of putting up those numbers. But having great teammates, great supporters and working with Halmar the last seven years has helped. Hopefully we can keep it going and keep the numbers rolling for another 10."

Friesen has reached a point in his career where sponsors are lining up to be a part of his success. His contract with Halmar has paid dividends, especially on the NASCAR truck circuit. As well, in 2021, Spire Motorsports teamed with Halmar to put Friesen behind the wheel for his first NASCAR Cup Series event, the 133 mile, 250 lap Food City Dirt Race at Bristol Motor Speedway.

At a press conference last week, Friesen unveiled a new red version of his Toyota truck that he will drive in six Truck Series races this year. It's part of a new sponsorship deal he has signed with Ferris Commercial Mowers of New York State.

"Bill Shea was one of the executives there," explains Friesen. "He passed away last year. He was involved in northeast mod-



Stewart Friesen celebrates a 2022 win in Texas. (Supplied)

ified racing for years. He had started the process for this and we met last July to iron out the deal. We're proud and excited to represent and to be partnered with a company that's so close to home."

As he looks forward to the upcoming racing season, Friesen is optimistic his travels might bring him back to his old stomping grounds.

"I think we'll be back at Oshtwicken (near Brantford) again," he says. "We'll be back at Ransomville for some big races. The border has opened up so it's easier now to make the trip across. A trip back to Merrittville has got to be somewhere in my future. I'm going to do the best I can to get back there."



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Disc golf supporters hoping for concrete tee pads

Continued from page 1

The open nature of the NOTL layout is what entices newcomers to the sport, ac-

cording to McCormick. He also cited the fact that it's one of the shorter disc golf tracts that he's seen in his years playing.

Beginner and experienced competitors alike came from near and far to vie for more than \$400 in cash prizes as well as other

awards, including one for closest to the basket on the scenic eighth hole. That's the longest hole, the one situated between the lawn bowling green and the vineyards just beyond the parking lot.

Sean Galbraith was part of a group who came to NOTL from Toronto to play the course. Galbraith is a year-round disc golfer who plays two or three times a week. It was his first time on the NOTL course and he loved it.

Competitors also visited from Hamilton, while Shelley Kingma-Kitchen hailed from Paris. She's sponsored by the Lindsay, Ontario, disc golf store called Discy Chicks, who had a booth set up at the tournament.

David Dankowski, a registered pro through the Professional Disc Golf Association (PDGA), explained some of the strategy when taking on the more challenging holes. He demonstrated a number of different launches to The Local, including the tomahawk, scooter, thumber, flex shot, hyzer and anhyzer. Each varies in grip, stance, windup and release.

Jeff Marchese of Chippawa usually plays at Fireman's Park in Niagara Falls. That course was spoken of fondly by many of Sunday's competitors, including some from outside the region.

The second-year amateur player explained the array of different discs that every disc golfer carries in his or her bag.

"There's a driver, a control or fairway driver, a mid-range disc and a putter," said Marchese, who normally doesn't play in the fall or winter. "Each disc has numbers on it, signifying the disc's rating for speed, glide, turn and fade. The higher the speed number is, the harder you have to throw it."

"Anybody can play," added Marchese, who also plays in the GHL co-ed hockey league in Virgil. "The disc golf community is so welcoming to everybody. The better players encourage you to play, they give you tips. It's a really fun sport."

When it was all over, St. Catharines native Dankowski edged fellow PDGA pro Steve Soucy of St. Thomas by

just a single shot to win the top prize in the pro division, \$180. Soucy, by the way, has been playing disc golf since the 1990s.

Ten-year-old Alasdair Robertson of Toronto captured the amateur title Sunday, worth \$225 for his efforts. He beat his father, Dan, by five points, said Michaud, as she announced the youngster's victory.

Both Dankowski and Robertson also took home beautiful charcuterie boards as their trophies for their efforts.

"There's nothing better than eating meat and cheese off of your trophy," joked Michaud as she presented the prizes at the end of the day.

Michaud, who works in Niagara Falls but lives in St. Catharines, was happy with the way the day turned out, though competitors did have to fight through some drizzle and even a few flurries at one point.

She lauded town staff, especially supervisor of rec-

reation Dan Maksenuk, for their support. She was also very impressed with the support of the local business community, who chipped in prizes for the closest to the hole winners.

She and McCormick are working together to build up the sport in the Niagara area. They have been in talks with Maksenuk about the installation of concrete launching pads at each of the Rotary Club nine holes. These pads improve the year-round playability and are popular at other disc golf layouts. The pair are also aiming to help McCormick's hometown of Port Colborne establish a disc golf tract there.

"We are hoping to present a Canadian Women's Championship right here in Niagara," added Michaud. "We've got lots more events to come. Today's tournament was really a test in a way. We hope to be back on this course in the spring with another tournament."

CROSSWORD (ANSWERS ON PAGE 15)

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56						57	58				59			
60						61					62			
63						64					65			

- Across:
1 Portion
6 Totals
10 Champion
14 Hot chocolate
15 Deck division
16 Styptic pencil ingredient
17 Countertenors
18 Heroic tale
19 Unconventional early 20th century art movement
20 Occult
22 Two fins
24 Very fine-grained soil
25 Suffix for a focused event
26 For ever
29 Puff
30 Huckleberry Finn's pal
33 Boyfriend
34 Split fifty-fifty
36 Prefix: very small
37 Admits
38 Faint
39 Book ID
40 Small amount
41 Roman Earth
42 Lecher
43 Technical degrees
44 Quarry
- 45 Fashionable
47 Adverse criticism
48 Little Joe
49 Hit hard
52 Editions
56 Global auction website
57 Bong
59 --- Hawkins Day
60 Stain
61 Wicked
62 How golfers want to finish every hole
63 Spanish kiss
64 Funnyman --- Carvey
65 --- as a lobster
- Down:
1 Bunco
2 Sacred
3 Deeds
4 Underlying reason
5 Without difficulty
6 Analyze
7 Two-fold
8 Excavate
9 One of a hundred in D C
10 In case you --- noticed ...
11 Panache
12 Bad-mannered
- 13 --- Bradley, five-star general
21 Broke
23 Sibyl's power
25 Act of kindness
26 Big banger
27 Jerry Lee ---
28 Collector's list
29 State of high honor
30 Skipper of the Argo
31 Out of favor
32 British W W II general
35 Had eight days according to the Beatles
36 Residents of Abuja, for example
44 Gaza Strip grp.
46 World's largest land
47 Reach by air
48 Chap
49 "Dragnet" creator Jack ---
50 Competent
51 Its capital is Vientiane
52 Conceited
53 Scent
54 Diamond team
55 New plant in the making
58 Walking in space

				9	7	8	4	
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	6					1	7	
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		9		6				
8				5			6	
				1				
	1				3			2
	7	4			2			6



Amateur winner Alasdair Robertson, 10, launches a disc, his dad in the background. (Photos by Mike Balsom)



Sean Galbraith launches with Alasdair Robertson watching.

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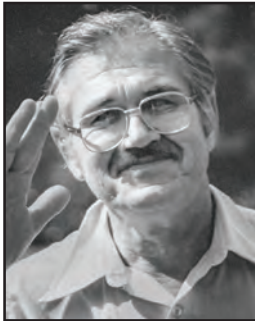
COCHRANE, JEAN MONTEITH 1932 – 2023—It is with deep and profound sadness we announce the passing of Jean Cochrane at Upper Canada Lodge on Saturday Jan. 7, 2023. She is survived by her son Bryan Cochrane (Diane), daughter Sue Reece, granddaughter Sara Reece (Jean Langlois) and honorary daughter, Ida Lowas. She is predeceased by her loving husband and soulmate, Tom. Although Mum had slowed down considerably in recent years, she lived a very full, active life, traveling, writing, painting, and enjoying Scottish dancing and gardening. Our parents moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake in the 1982, after buying a store on Queen Street in the late 1970s called The Gingham Patch. They loved the town and the life they built there. Over the years Mum was involved with the Chamber of Commerce, Beta Sigma Phi, the Garden of the Week contest, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society Garden tours, the restoration of the Pumphouse, wrote a gardening column for the Niagara Advance for years and was a lifetime member of the NOTL Horticultural Society. She and Dad were also members of the Albainn Society, and were long-standing members of St. Andrew's Church, where they both volunteered — they were both always exhausted after their work at the annual Strawberry Festival.

From the very beginning Mum fought diligently to preserve NOTL as it was, along with many others. They were successful for a while but it couldn't last. The recent changes and developments to her little town were heart-breaking for her. Although Mum had an impressive list of accomplishments, awards and accolades, the one she cherished and was most proud of was being 'Tom's wife.' Mum, give Dad a big hug for us - we know you're finally together again. We love you dearly and are utterly heartbroken you are gone. A celebration of Jean's life will take place on Saturday January 21, 2023, 11am at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, 323 Simcoe St, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON.

Inurnment to follow the service in St. Andrews Cemetery.

Arrangements have been entrusted to MORGAN FUNERAL HOME, 415 Regent Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. As per Jean's wished cremation has taken place. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com

Interment to follow the service at St. Andrews Cemetery.



ENNS, GERALD—Gerald Enns, 99, of Virgil, ON passed away peacefully on January 6, 2023 in Pleasant Manor, Virgil, attended by his children.

Celebration reception will be held at Redbrick Church (1775 Niagara Stone Rd, Niagara-on-the-Lake) on Wednesday, January 11th, 2023 from 4:00-8:00 pm. A private family burial will take place on Thursday at Lakeshore Rd. Cemetery. Tallman Funeral Home will be handling the funeral arrangements.

Gerald was born in Landskrone, Molotschna Colony, South Russia to Katerina and Jakob Enns on June 19, 1923. He, along with his family, escaped Russia in 1930 to a refugee camp in Germany. In 1931 the family went to settle in Brazil and in 1947, Gerald along with parents and siblings came to Canada, settling in Virgil. He married Sinaida Janzen at Niagara United Mennonite Church on July 28, 1951.

He had a long career as a tool and dye maker, employed by Tri-Sure Products. At the age of 67 he retired, being the last employee of the company as he completed last special projects for the International office. At this point he took on the role of chauffeur for his newborn grandson. Gerald is best known in the region for being a professional photographer who photographed countless weddings and family portraits.

Gerald is survived by his son George, St.Catharines, daughters Ellen (Robert) Smith of NOTL, Christa (Ken) Wright of Virgil; sisters Ramona Crickmore and Kaethe Fieguth. He is preceded in death by his wife Sinaida, grandson Christopher Enns, brothers Herman Enns and John Enns.

Memorial donations can be made to The Mennonite Committee. The family wishes to extend their gratitude to the amazing and caring staff of Pleasant Manor and to Dr. Al-Jarrah for kind and considerate care.

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BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT

Laura Fraser and
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Frances**
born December 17, 2022.
Katie is welcomed by her
proud grandparents Frank
(Sandy) and Donna Lynne
Fraser, Queenston, Frankie
O'Connor and Doug Bradley,
Larder Lake, and Charles
Bowman, Montreal.



GERTRUDE (TRUDY) WALDIE (LAIDLAW)—January 30, 1920- January 3, 2023

Trudy passed away on January 3rd, 2023 in her 103rd year at Upper Canada Lodge (UCL) in Niagara-on-the-Lake where she succumbed to COVID. Many thanks to all of the wonderful staff at UCL who helped care for her, especially the PSWs and nursing staff in St. David's House. She told family often that we chose a very good place for her to live.

Trudy lived a long, happy life and valued her family and her Christian faith above all else. She loved music and sang in choirs for most of her life. She was born near Aylmer, ON and lived in St. Thomas and Strathroy. An elementary school teacher in her younger years, Trudy will be remembered for her kindness, service to others and her sense of fun.

Trudy was predeceased by her husband of over 60 years, Gordon Waldie, and is survived by her five children: Betty Farris (Rob), Don (Wendy deceased in 2017), Louise (Andrew Porteus), John (Karen) and Keith (Laurie) as well as 14 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

Rest in Peace Mom, Grandma, Great-Grandma. You are loved and will be remembered for all of our days.

A Celebration of Life will be held in Strathroy at a later date.

PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from
January 4, 2023

7	5	1	6	3	8	9	2	4
2	6	8	5	9	4	7	3	1
9	3	4	1	2	7	6	5	8
3	2	9	8	7	6	4	1	5
5	4	6	9	1	2	8	7	3
1	8	7	3	4	5	2	6	9
6	1	2	4	5	9	3	8	7
8	9	3	7	6	1	5	4	2
4	7	5	2	8	3	1	6	9

Across: 1 Share, 6 Adds, 10 Hero, 14 Cocoa, 15 Suit, 16 Alum, 17 Altos, 18 Saga, 19 Dada, 20 Mystical, 22 Tenner, 24 Clay, 25 Fest, 26 Airways, 29 Gasp, 30 Jim, 33 Beau, 34 Halve, 36 Nano, 37 Owms, 38 Swoon, 39 I S B N, 40 Mite, 41 Terra, 42 Goat, 43 B Ss, 44 Prey, 45 Trendy, 47 Flak, 48 Four, 49 Wallop, 52 Versions, 56 Ebay, 57 Peal, 59 Sadie, 60 Blot, 61 Evil, 62 In one, 63 Besso, 64 Dana, 65 As red.

Down: 1 Scam, 2 Holy, 3 Acts, 4 Root cause, 5 Easily, 6 Assay, 7 Dual, 8 Dig, 9 State senator, 10 Hadn't, 11 Eian, 12 Rude, 13 Omar, 21 Cash-strapped, 23 E S P, 25 Favor, 26 A-bomb, 27 Lewis, 28 Wants, 29 Glory, 30 Jason, 31 In bad, 32 Monty, 35 A week, 36 Niggarans, 44 P L O, 46 Russia, 47 Fly to, 48 Fella, 49 Webb, 50 Able, 51 Laos, 52 Vain, 53 Odor, 54 Nine, 55 Seed, 58 E V A.

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