Monet-inspired garden open to public

Vaccinations should roll out in Niagara this week

Some will be delivered by Public Health to long-term care homes

**Penny Coles**

Dr. Mustafa Hirji isn’t “super-thilled” with the amount of Pfizer vaccine coming to Niagara this week, but he is very excited that the group suffering the most amount of deaths, the very vulnerable residents of long-term care and assisted living homes, will be getting it in the coming days.

The province won’t allow the public to have access to the number of vaccines being shipped, and although the “amount is not terrific, it’s something we can work with.”

Niagara Health received its vaccines at its St. Catharines Hospital site Tuesday to begin administering shots Wednesday, also handing off vaccine vials to Public Health, to be transported to long-term care homes and high-risk retirement homes. Public Health nurses will be providing support for staff as they vaccinate their residents, following a protocol carried out every year for seasonal influenza, says Hirji, “building off something we know works.”

It means getting the vaccine quickly to a group of people who are dying from COVID-19, he adds, in order to prevent more tragedies.

“Throughout this pandemic, residents of long-term care homes and retirement homes have suffered the brunt of this pandemic,” says Hirji. Almost 80 per cent of those who’ve died in Niagara — 150 people in our community, as of Monday — have been among these residents; 72 of them have died in the last three weeks alone.

Once residents and their care providers are immunized, he said, lives will be saved.

The challenge of using the Pfizer vaccine outside of the hospital setting is the need to keep it frozen and stable, but kept in a fridge once it’s thawed it’s stable for about five days but you really can’t move it far from that fridge. At room temperature it’s good for about four to five hours and then it’s spoiled, so keep it in the fridge, and then take it out just before you’re ready to use it, he says.

There is a prioritization of long-term care homes, looking at their history of outbreaks how difficult to manage they’ve been, and looking at the set up of homes in terms of how difficult it is to manage outbreaks.

He expects to have residents of all 34 long-term care homes vaccinated in about three weeks, he says.

**Dog rescue a calm, coordinated success**

**Penny Coles**

A Read Road family now has their beloved pet home safely, thanks to a well-coordinated rescue by the Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire Department, and its Virgil station volunteers.

When the call came in Sunday afternoon, says Fire Chief Nick Ruller, it was for emergency assistance. What unfolded after they met the family, who had tried to rescue their pet before calling for help, was not something firefighters have directly trained for, but have had lots of “parallels” to what has transpired during other rescues they’ve been involved in.

The golden doodle, Jazmin, was trapped in a crevice formed by shoreline erosion, says Ruller. The crevice was very narrow, only about 10 inches wide at the top, down a steep embankment near the lake, and Jazmin was lodged eight to 10 feet down inside the crevice. Her family had tried to rescue her with a pole and a loop that they were able to attach to her collar, but she was too tightly jammed in the narrow confines of the small space to pull to freedom.

Ruller says when they first arrived, with a pumper, a heavy rescue truck with specialized rescue equipment, and a pickup truck that allows access to remote locations, he used satellite imagery on their mobile data terminal to look for better access routes, and found a farm road with access from Firelane 15.

The best option seemed to be to remove the lake-side of the crevice, says Ruller.

Neighbour Joe Pillitteri arrived on his gator, after hearing the sirens on Lakeshore Road and following the trucks to the lake.

Pillitteri says his first thought when he heard fire trucks heading toward his Hospital site Tuesday to begin administering shots Wednesday, also handing off vaccine vials to Public Health, to be transported to long-term care homes and high-risk retirement homes. Public Health nurses will be providing support for staff as they vaccinate their residents, following a protocol carried out every year for seasonal influenza, says Hirji, “building off something we know works.”

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Fire department benefits from community, council support

At one point, firefighter Jason Disher (left) helps Brad Disher carry Jazmin up the embankment. (NOTL Fire Department photo)

Joseph Pillitteri explains how the Jazmin rescue unfolded.

Fire Chief Nick Ruller coordinates the rescue from the top of the embankment, where he can see the entire operation, including the crevice where Jazmin was lodged.

Joe Pillitteri

Firefighter Jason Disher (left) helps Brad Disher carry Jazmin up the embankment. (NOTL Fire Department photo)

Fire Chief Nick Ruller coordinates the rescue from the top of the embankment, where he can see the entire operation, including the crevice where Jazmin was lodged. (Joe Pillitteri)

Weston Miller has joined our team!

We would like to welcome Weston Miller to Niagara-on-the-Lake Realty, Brokerage. Born and raised in the heart of Old Town Niagara-on-the-Lake, Weston has the knowledge, experience, and attitude that will enable you to experience the Niagara-on-the-Lake lifestyle. Educated at Trinity College in the University of Toronto, Weston spent four years immersed in the bustling and exciting living in Downtown Toronto. However, one of the most important lessons he learned while living in Toronto was to make time to appreciate the beauty of the Niagara-on-the-Lake truly is. Weston has the knowledge and skill not only to help you find your dream house, but also to help introduce you to your dream Niagara-on-the-Lake lifestyle. From wine clubs to social clubs, Weston can connect to the very best that our beautiful town has to offer.

Weston Miller

January 14, 2021

Dr. Kevin Clark and Dr. Rebecca Zabek-Clark

NEW PATIENTS WELCOME

Niagara-on-the-Lake Dental

Dr. Kevin Clark and Dr. Rebecca Zabek-Clark

Dentists

and their registered Dental Hygiene Team

369 MARY STREET

Niagara-on-the-Lake

www.niagaradental.ca

Although our Branch is closed during the COVID-19 situation, we will continue to provide support to our Veterans and their Families.

If you require any support, please contact us by email or phone message, and someone will be available to assist you.

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 124 NOTL

Legion124@gmail.com | 905-468-2335

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THE NOTL LOCAL

notlocal.com
CAO gives COVID update at Monday’s meeting

Penny Coles
The Local

At Monday’s planning meeting, town CAO Marnie Cluckie spoke about the local lockdown, and the welcome reduction in the number of people travelling from outside the area.

Premier Doug Ford’s announcement of increased measures was expected “Tuesday night, but you know what that looks like,” and promised the town would pass the information on as soon as it becomes available.

The plan for the vaccine roll-out, which should get underway in Niagara this week, is determined by the province, she explained.

The Niagara Health system takes over from there, and Public Health has been asked to play an enhanced role with distribution of the vaccine to long-term care and retirement homes.

Town staff and members of the emergency control group had offered their services to work with the region in identifying potential locations that could be available for mass immunization, she said.

The town has had to start laying off contact staff, Cluckie said, although “we’ve been working hard to keep people working”, deploying staff where necessary.

“We’ve told our people to work from home as much as possible, except for those in essential services who have to come into the office, up until Aug. 31,” to reduce chances of contact and passing on the infection.

The good news, Cluckie said, is that the town is clearing a backlog of 49 per cent from the region, 26 per cent from the GTA, 14 per cent from NOTL, and again eight per cent from Hamilton.

For the period after the shutdown changed to 49 per cent from the region, 26 per cent from the GTA, 14 per cent from NOTL, and again eight per cent from Hamilton.

When asked about recent fines as a result of COVID regulation infractions, Cluckie explained that six of seven recent tickets issued were to visitors staying in a short-term rental. Although the reservation had been made before the lockdown, their arrival in town was after it went into effect, and the six people ticketed were all from different households.

She said the town is seeing an uptick in the number of complaints it receives, “not necessarily valid complaints, but we’re experiencing a number of opportunities to educate the public.”

The vast majority of business owners are in full compliance of regulations, she said, although the town continues to deal with mask issues.

Lags occurring in follow-up calls

Continued from page 1

Public Health nurse teams will be working seven days a week on the long-term care vaccination rollout, just as all Public Health staff are now.

Niagara Health is running the vaccine clinics at the hospital, he says, and prioritizing health care workers within the hospital staff. Those working on COVID wards, in emergency departments and intensive care units are likely going to be considered at a higher risk, he says.

After the first stage of health care workers, long-term care residents and Indigenous populations, he expects to see adults with chronic care issues, and essential workers with EMS staff “a bit earlier because of course they’re just like other health care workers. They’re probably going to end up being vaccinated relatively soon.”

The number of people recorded as testing positive Monday was twice as high as any other day since the pandemic began, but at least 200 of the 471 cases were catch-ups that had been building up since the holiday, and became a backlog on Christmas one last time before staying within their households, “and we’re seeing the negative impact of the behaviour now. I really do think once that shutdown was announced, the clock should have started ticking at midnight that night.”

The region is behind on following through with the cases because of the number of new ones, he says, but social gatherings are a big part of them, and many cases are in long-term care homes.

The region is prioritizing follow-up long term care residents and staff, “because that’s where we’re seeing the most illnesses and death.”

“There were fewer cases of workplace transmissions, he says, but with people returning to work after the holiday, that could change.

When the numbers go up in the community, the risk is greater in long-term care, but also in other places, including essential workplaces, stores, and schools.

In addition to staying home to stop the opportunity for infection to spread, Hirji says his other message is to those who have been tested but haven’t heard from the region. Be patient, sometimes it will be a couple of days before they hear from someone in Public Health, he says, “because our cases are so high.”

And also to be patient while waiting for the vaccine, he says, by focusing on what we can do right now to stop the spread of infection, and once that vaccine is here, hopefully everybody will be very excited to get it.”

“Let’s get everybody at one holiday gathering, but had nowhere to go when they got here. Their choices were unhealthy and disturbing to many residents.

“While we are not encouraging tourists to come in, and in fact they should not be, we know that is happening,” said Cluckie, and the town is taking a proactive measure, and trying not to repeat the situation that occurred with the first shutdown.

“The town is responsible for creating them regularly,” she says. The Bell Media campaign showed between Dec. 22 and the Dec. 26 shutdown, 60 per cent of those entering NOTL were from the region, 19 per cent from the GTA, 12 per cent were NOTL residents, and eight per cent were from Hamilton.

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Doctors should have new home this time next year

The Niagara-on-the-Lake doctors currently in offices in the former Old Town hospital building hope to have a new home by January, 2022.

The group has formalized an agreement with John and Adam Hawley of The Village to construct a medical centre behind the CIBC bank. A single-storey building will provide ground-level access to health care, in an accessible location in an established commercial area.

It will have offices for Dr. Iram Ahmed, Dr. Tim Bastedo, Dr. Karen Berti, Dr. Samreen Malik and Dr. Pratik Kalani.

The rest of the doctors in the Niagara North Family Health, currently in the Niagara Medical Clinic, will stay there, or find other locations, says Mary Keith, executive director of Niagara North Family Health Team.

Residents gathered in the community centre in 2016 heard a health care steering committee, formed in 2013, was looking at options for a health hub, with all doctors of the health team under one roof, and options for locations were investigated.

Keith said the delay of that development, with no idea when it would be resolved, left doctors "unable to commit" to that project.

The lack of other locations with sufficient parking for patients of all the doctors provided a stumbling block to having them all together under one roof, says Keith.

A proposal by Lloyd Redekopp to build a medical centre beside Crossroads School that would accommodate all the doctors and health services has been stalled, waiting for a hearing before the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal, still with no date yet to be heard.

Efforts to find a home for the medical group have been ongoing for more than seven years, says a release from the health team, beginning with news of the eventual closure of the NOTL Hospital.

The Village site will have sufficient parking for the patients of the Old Town doctors, but not for the entire Niagara-on-the-Lake health team.

"There are not a lot of options for the doctors, and we are looking forward to having a new home next year," Keith said.

Continued on page 5
Doctors in Virgil clinic are staying where they are

Continued from page 4

spaces that would accommodate 11 physicians, the full team and adequate parking,” Keith says.

The design for the new building is not finished yet, she adds, and she’s not ruling out that there might be space for a specialist physician, but there won’t be room for all the family doctors.

In addition to the Old Town physicians, it will house nurse practitioners, a diabetes support team, registered dietitians, a mental health team, chiroprapy and foot care, nurse educators and occupational therapy. The building will also be home to family health team group programming, administration staff and the executive director of the team.

“The decision of the doctors to move from the old hospital to The Village is a welcomed step in creating stability for the doctors, Niagara North Family Health Team and the community,” says Lord Mayor Betty Disero about Wednesday’s announcement from the health team. “While the pandemic brought to light what health care in town should look like.”

Lloyd Redekopp

Redekopp says LPAT has been slowed by the pandemic, and he’s heard nothing about when the appeal will be heard. “I thought we would have this get through sooner. But because of COVID, that hasn’t happened,” he says.

There were originally two objections to his plan, one about storm water management that has been resolved. The remaining challenge comes from Anthony Annunziata, the owner of the Niagara Medical Clinic in Virgil, who had plans to expand the Niagara Stone Road and Line 2 building to accommodate all the doctors. He objected to the rezoning of Redekopp’s property from residential to commercial, necessary for the project to proceed.

Redekopp says he’s disappointed that this wasn’t dealt with “in a timely fashion.” He doesn’t know yet if Annunziata will remove his objection, but Redekopp says he plans to proceed with his project, although the design and size of the building may change.

“There’s still a real need for a medical centre,” he says, possibly attracting specific medical services, such as a lab and X-ray department. “The pandemic brought to light what health care in town should look like. I look forward to a resolution to this. I see no reason to stop right now.”
What can we do to make people listen?

Premier Doug Ford promised us early this week that Onta rio was on its way to a scary place, and Tuesday, he followed through with his announce ment on how to prevent getting there.

The modelling presented showed the current restrictions in place aren’t working, and where we could be headed, which is indeed frightening. Ford said the province is in crisis, health care systems on the verge of being overwhelmed.

The aggressive variant could make it worse.

Ford has announced a sec ond state of emergency, and a provincial stay-at-home order, which is new, and carries new restrictions. The stay-at-home order is effective Thursday at 12:01 a.m.

While it seems much like a cure, it’s not, Ford says. We won’t have police pulling us over while we’re driving home from work at night.

We will, however, face fines if we don’t follow the rules.

People are required to stay home except for essential pur poses, such as going out for groceries or medication, or to work.

We’re also allowed to ac cess health care or go for a walk.

Outdoor gatherings will be limited to five people. Masks are required indoors and rec ommended outdoors when you can’t keep a two-metre distance.

Non-essential retail stores, including hardware stores, alcohol retailers, and those with curbside pickup or deliv ery, must close by 8 p.m. This doesn’t apply to stores that sell food, pharmacies, gas stations, convenience stores or restaur ant takeout.

Students in Niagara will re turn to school, but not in some other hotspot regions such as Toronto.

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The majority did their part to limit the spread of COVID, but that wasn’t enough for the people who continued to get sick, or those who have died in the majority in long-term care homes. In the last two weeks, 198 long-term care residents, and two staff people, have died. Because of this, Ontario residents couldn’t stay at home.

The answer seems so sim ple. Stay home. We need the other 30 per cent to get on board. obey the rules and we’ll be finished with them.

So much to look forward to.

Family to visit and hug. Par ents knowing they can send their kids off to school safely. Better weather, restaurants and stores reopening. Shaw Festival plays to see, life getting back to normal.

For some, it means so much more. For those work ing to keep the rest of us safe, an end to the exhausting burn out they must be experiencing.

For others, the knowledge their business has survived, possibly. The ability to return to work, if their jobs still exist. Job security for the lucky ones, after a year without it.

There was some talk from the province that bylaw officers will be given more enforcement powers.

We know they’ll be needed, because some people are just not taking this seriously.

This is real. The horrible numbers we have witnessed. people, those with COVID and those dying. And those without COVID who are not getting into homes.

The vaccine has arrived in Niagara, ready to be adminis tered Wednesday. But it was a long way from keeping us safe and letting us get back to living. Stay home. Please.

Pennie Coles

The Local

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COVID teaches adapting to change

Of course there is lots to be positive about regarding 2020, but because there was so much unfamiliarity, fear, and ambiguity, we may be tending to focus on that. Many people are saying, “Thank goodness 2020 is behind us,” but I am sure we all can draw some good from this past year, (fingers crossed in 2020).

Several years ago when I was a young parent, I remember being challenged into responding to the age-old question, “What is the most important thing we can teach our children?” Hmmmm, well, how to love, be patient, find courage or self-esteem, consideration of others, on and on, so many things. Then someone suggested, “We need to teach our children how to adapt to change.” Ahhh, yes, of course. In times of uncertainty (which there will always be), they/we must learn to adapt, to land on our feet, to think fast, re-adjust and carry on. I always remembered these words, “learn to adapt to change.” Never did I have the opportunity presented to me so clearly, as this past year when I acted as office manager at the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre in NOTL.

With the introduction of COVID-19 in our lives, there was no choice but to think on your feet, adapt, shift, change, pull a 180, change again, all the time moving forward providing opportunities, programs, and services to our local Art Community, and never knowing where it would all end.

I hope my children have learned this valuable life-lesson along their way. I hope we have all learned it, as not before 2020, then certainly now, as we move into 2021.

Gail Kerr
Resident of NOTL

Love your neighbour

There has been much made recently of the photos showing refrigerated trucks and containers ready for the overflow when hospital morgues are full. So many people are surprised that morgues fill up. This is nothing new. I recall one particularly memorable night shift, early in my nursing career, when the job fell to me to take a recently deceased person to the hospital morgue.

This was a small rural hospital, with cooler space for approximately six. I happened to be bringing person number eight. Working inside the cooler, I arranged the tables so they'd all fit. Tetris-style. It was cold, unsettling work, but each of those eight people deserved to be treated with dignity. I managed to get everyone arranged safely and continued my way.

However, what is very new, is that we now have refrigerated containers waiting, anticipating, knowing there’s going to be a run on morgue space. Because, you see, people are dying from things apart from COVID-19 cancers, accidents and other life-ending non-COVID things continue. Morgues are still being used. As unsettling as it was for me to spend time inside the morgue cooler so many years ago, the sight of the waiting cooler units and now field hospitals, shakes me to my core. I’m shaken because I know that behind each of those people who will ultimately reside inside the field hospital and, unfortunately, the refrigerated containers, are scores of health care providers, environmental cleaners, diagnostic technicians, admitting staff (and many, many more) who are working until they have no more to give. They’re working with inadequate PPEs, withparentNode, with painful, abraded faces from tight-fitting masks and shields, literally dying their very best to care for people, obscenely under-equipped and under-sung. They’re working in a war zone between the outside, looks surreal normal. These warriors are wearing armor unfit for the fight they’re in. They’re giving of themselves, and they’re failing. We are failing them. (The system isn’t helping either, but that discussion for another day.)

The sight of field hospitals and waiting refrigerated containers should shake us, should galvanize us into action. The war has spilled out from hospital corridors into plain view and cannot be negated or shrugged off as “not concerning.” And yes, I do personally know people who have been sick with the virus. Very sick.

For those without exhumating circumstances, wearing a mask isn’t hard. It doesn’t muzzles, infringe on one’s ability to speak, work, think, or participate in life. It’s a symbol of loving your neighbour. One cannot not stop love for humanity and refuse to wear a mask citing rights infringements. It is blatantly hypocritical.

The vaccine won’t invade and alter DNA, won’t do any of the things professional fearmongers are reporting. Thanks to vaccines, the list of diseases Canadians aren’t dying from any more is as long as my arm.

Let’s support our health care warriors and each other by doing what we can to reduce the virus transmission. Together we can work to ensure those field hospitals and cooler trucks remain as unused as possible. Loving our neighbours has never been easier.

Audrey Wall

Speak up about long-term care

The neglect, underfunding and overcrowding of Ontario’s long-term care facilities under the watch of numerous governments over many decades has been tragic.

The situation has only worsened with the COVID-19 pandemic. Send a letter to your MP and MP urging action now at https://www.thestar.com/long-term-care/ltc-crisis.html?ref=691714340922184671.e0.2

Robert Bader

View from the couch

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

Pieces of a Woman (Netflix, 2020), is a pow- erful saga of a woman who gives birth to a “blue baby.” The child would probably have lived if the birth had occurred in a hospital; however, the mother-to-be had chosen to give birth at home with the assistance of a midwife. Lots of repercussions, guilt and suffering, but a strong and correct ending.

Donald Combe is a re- tired English teacher who loves to go to movies. Until he resumes going to the- atres, he has graciously agreed to share his opin- ions, through “short and sweet” exclusives, of Net- flix series and movies for The Local.

Letters! We want letters!

If you have a letter to the editor you’d like to see published, please send it to penny@notllocal.com. Please try to keep it to about 350 words. Sorry, but we won’t publish anonymous letters. And please stick to the issue at hand, rather than attacking those involved. The deadline is Monday at noon.

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**Shaw proceeding with plans for season to begin in May**

**Penny Coles**
**The Local**

Tim Jennings is desperate to see the Shaw Festival return to what it was intended to be.

"The season won't be following many of its past traditions, but he'll be preparing for a season to occur, unlike last year, when play openings were postponed several times due to the pandemic, and eventually cancelled at time ran out."

This season is expected to see seven plays that were intended to be part of the 2020 season, with previews beginning in May, and openings in June, about a month later than most years.

Jennings, Shaw CEO, says plans are being made based on 30 per cent capacity — what is anticipated by May, but he was as all throughout last season, he'll be readying for "up or down" if needed.

It might have to be 25 per cent, it could be 100 per cent, "what's important is he says, "it's important from our point of view to be the anchor we are for the Niagara region, in terms of economic impact. As an employer, we want to make sure our folks have jobs, and as a charity we want to return good to the world. But the importance of all of this. I truly believe, is that theatre serves a bunch of basic human needs we are simply not meeting at the moment, and we need to. That's why this is a charity, and why we're trying desperately to get back up and running, because the sooner we start meeting those needs again, the better off we'll all be."

The mental health issues people are having from isolation, from not gathering, from a lack of empathy and human contact, says Jennings, "we're seeing everywhere. The advantages we're getting from the arts, and performing arts, especially, are big. That's why I've dedicated my career to this. We're desperate to get back in some small way, just like we did with the concerts all fall. They had a real impact on people who needed that, needed that kind of gathering, and finding there is a way to open safely."

He's been seeing on things open up quickly once the vaccine starts to be distributed, once the season ends, and when the situation improves during the summer, as it did last year.

"He's also basing his optimism on what he's seeing in most public health models, and the government's plan for the vaccinations are happening until June, at least as this

**Tim Jennings, CEO of the Shaw Festival (Photo supplied)**

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"Some cast members' life choices and circumstances have changed since last year, and we have a few people who are not able to join us in 2021, but the vast majority are going to be back," says Jennings.

"On the craft side, some have decided to retire, and on the arts side, some have gone back to school for a master's degree, some decided to stay closer to home, have gone back into film, and a couple of young ladies are having babies, all choices they're letting us know about. We're not worrying about finding options. We can move over others from the cancelled plays, but the vast majority of the ensemble will look very much like it was intended to last year."

"With this being a lighter year of productions, with five fewer than on last year's playbill, "it makes a difference in how much space we need, and how fast we can get the other shows happening. It feels like it's enough time right now, and if something happens between now and then that makes us reconsider, we'll do that, and we'll fix it. It's how we've been existing for a year now, It's what we all have to do to keep that optimism, to be ready to change again. Hopefully we won't need to, and it all works out better than we think.”

At the end of the day, "it feels a little like our job is to keep people engaged with art, and use art as a way to make a better world. Right now it's a very rough world, and we want to be there when we come out of it. It's an important part of my job, to make sure we are able to do whatever we can do, and obviously we have to do that safely," says Jennings.

"That's the gig right now, to figure out how to make art as best we can, and as safely as we can."
Local man publishes his first book

Randy Klaassen
Special to The Local

“My children have often asked me to write about our family,” says a local man whose professional career spans four continents, Africa, Europe, Asia and North America.

Abdulahmed Kaderali took up the task of fulfilling his children’s request with My journey; my story, my life, a book recently completed and published.

Abdul and his wife Lata moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake a number of years ago. To learn more about the NOTL community, Abdul joined the bridge club at the community centre, and during a game, this person happened to be a member of the NOTL Writer’s Circle, and she suggested he attend a gathering.

“After a discussion with another member, my interest in finding assistance to write about my life experiences was sparked,” said Abdul. “The group not only helped me with critiquing my writing, but also where to find help to get it published.”

Abdul’s story begins when his grandfather, who at the age of eight, sailed from India to East Africa in search of distant relatives. He settled in the City of Dar es Salaam, Tanganyika, where Abdul’s father, and later Abdul, was born. As a young man, Abdul studied architecture at Leicester School of Architecture, near London, where he obtained his professional distinction as a member of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

When Abdul returned to Dar es Salaam to begin his professional career, he was joined by Lata. She was from India, and the two met while studying in England.

In the early 1960s, Tanzania separated from India to East Africa. This caused political upheaval. The turmoil resulted in the Kaderali family leaving the country, with Abdul and Lata relocating in Pakistan. The reprieve from political change of Tanzania only lasted a few short years in Pakistan, when conflict between India and Pakistan shut down major building projects. Eventually, Abdul was able to immigrate to Canada in the early 1970s.

While it was a challenge to re-establish his work as an architect in Toronto, it was not long until a number of major building projects involved his work. Libraries, theatres, schools and civic centres and more have all been part of Abdul’s passion for how we interact as communities.

Another passion of Abdul’s is painting. Their home is decorated with a number of his artworks. In spring of 2019, he shared them with a display at the NOTL Library. The image selected for the cover of his book is a painting of Abdul’s, Turmoil. With it he envisioned a tree on their property, overlooking Lake Ontario, while expressing his feelings of dealing with the COVID pandemic. The light on the horizon reveals his hope for the future.

Abdul Kaderali holds his memoir, standing in front of his painting, Visit to Taj. In his book, the author thanks writer Randy Klaassen for advice and help with editing. (Randy Klaassen)
Local man heads national food bank organization

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

Eradication of hunger across the country is the ultimate goal for Chris Hatch, CEO of Food Banks Canada.

And, since moving to Niagara-on-the-Lake with his wife Karen in November, he is working toward that goal from his home office on John Street.

Food Banks Canada is a national charitable organization that supports a network of 650 provincial associations, affiliate food banks, and food agencies all working at the community level to relieve hunger. Their work is focused on maximizing collective impact, strengthening local capacity, and reducing the overall need for food banks.

“We provide national leadership to relieve hunger today and prevent hunger tomorrow, working with a food bank network across Canada,” Hatch says of his organization’s mission statement. “Our mandate is both a short-term one, making sure people who are hungry to-day get the food they need. And on a more long-term basis, we work with the federal and provincial governments trying to enact social policy changes to alleviate hunger in the future.”

Hatch is clearly the right man for the job. He took the helm of the national organization in December, 2017, after nine years as executive director at the Mississauga Food Bank. While in that role, he was instrumental in developing a sophisticated inventory management system.

“It just dawned on me that we needed something better than pencil and paper,” Hatch explains. “So we put in a barcode-scanning inventory system just as sophisticated as you would find in grocery stores. It would predict shortages, help us find where things were, it automatically rotated the stock. We had scanning guns and were able to control inventory.”

Another innovation he introduced was a state-of-the-art aquaponics farm, raising tilapia to assist in growing fresh vegetables. “I read about it (aquaponics) and thought we might be able to use it in the food bank,” he tells The Local. “I found an organization in Wisconsin that’s an expert on aquaponics. I got a large grant to buy the equipment, install it and train people.

We built a full-scale system and supplied 50 other food banks with boxy, dozy and romaine lettuce year-round. And we made an arrangement with a company that would fill, clean and package the fish for us. We would flash-freeze them and ship them off to the food banks.”

This business-like focus on innovation and improvement in food bank systems might lead one to assume that Hatch has spent his working life in the corporate world. On the contrary, it is most likely his 25 years as a human resources consultant that has allowed him to see the changes that needed to be made.

A native of Boston, Hatch’s corporate career took him around the world, working for three large global multi-million dollar consulting firms, including Wyatt Worldwide and Mercer.

In 1990, he came to Canada to run the national operation of one of those firms. The family (his first wife and their three boys and one girl), fell in love with the country immediately, and never left.

In 2005, Hatch stepped down from his fast-paced, high-pressure consulting career as his first wife was attending graduate school. He became what he calls a house dad, running the kids to school and events and doing all the household chores. It was during that time he decided to volunteer at the Mississauga Food Bank.

“When I walked in, I was shocked,” he remembers. “I had no idea how big it was. I thought it was going to be a little pantry with a couple of shelves of food.”

Soon, his business background led to an invitation to sit on its board of directors. When the executive director was terminated, he threw his name into the hat and after a long search process, was offered the job. He immediately brought his business focus to the organization. “I feel very strongly that the charitable sector needs more people with a business background,” Hatch says. “We need to have IT, HR, finance, marketing, risk management. All the things that a company has needs to be in a charitable organization as well.”

He got to work reorganizing, rebranding and relaunching that food bank, and it grew dramatically. His success there was noticed by the national organization, which called coming three years ago. Upon being hired by Food Banks Canada, Hatch was handed the strategic plan developed by the board and got to work beginning to execute it.

During the pandemic, Hatch and his staff of 35 employees have been instrumental in helping meet the increased demand for food bank services. “Demand has gone up dramatically across the country,” he says. “The good thing is we’ve had tremendous support from the federal government, the provincial government, and the corporate world.”

In March, when Premier Doug Ford announced an $8 million grant to support food banks across the province, Hatch was involved in helping the provincial organization Feed Ontario source food and distribute hampers to all the food banks in Ontario. It was instrumental in alleviating difficulties posed by early supply chain issues.

Hatch and his staff have been responsible for sourcing and moving 39.1 million pounds of food during the pandemic. They work mainly in food procurement and distribution, soliciting donations, distributing surplus food across the country and purchasing in bulk, which is available. Logistics is a major focus, moving food by rail, ship, plane and truck, and even serving remote communities in areas such as Iqaluit. They have a network of large warehouses across the country, and also rely on food banks in larger cities to help distribute to those in smaller communities.

Food insecurity and hunger is a poverty issue, says Hatch, and Food Banks Canada advocates to solve that problem. “I have staff that work in Ottawa lobbying with the federal government and the provincial governments,” Hatch says. “We’re currently working with the federal government to try to get in a national, subsidized daycare system. We’re fighting for housing benefits, and minimum wage policies, too.”

The pandemic has resulted in the Food Bank Canada offices near the Pearson Airport being closed, so now is the perfect time for Chris and Karen to make the move to NOTL, where he can do most of his work from his home office.

“Karen has cousins who live down here, and we have been coming to visit them for years,” he explains. “We fell in love with Niagara-on-the-Lake and have always dreamt of living here. We came down this summer and fell in love with the house and decided to buy it.”

They love the walkability of the community, and Hatch says he can feel the stress of the big city already being lifted from his shoulders. “I know it’s off-season for tourism, but we love how quiet it is,” he enthuses. “We love the feeling of community. We’ve only been here two months and we’ve already con- nected with people from Rotary. We couldn’t be happier.”

He looks forward to meeting people post-COVID.

The former varsity rug- by player at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, is full of energy and enthusiasm, and has brought those traits to his new community. He is eager to meet people and make connections within the town and to get involved. It surely won’t be long until that energy and enthusiasm have a direct impact on NOTL.
Local asks for cannabis petition support

Debbie France, a resident of Norfolk County, and Irene Murray, a Larkin ident of Norfolk County, also can have a huge impact about commercial medici-

worsen. She’d like the town to think the situation won’t ray, and there is no reason heard anecdotally, says Mur-

ready occurring, as she has communities. It is likely al-

Looking at for the future of fears it may be what we are situation in Norfolk, Murray rected to improving a serious planning staff. Although di-

Norfolk councillors and media, and in speaking with Norfolk councillors and planning staff. Although di-

rected to improving a serious situation in Norfolk, Murray fears it may be what we are looking at for the future of rural. Niagara-on-the-Lake communities. It is likely al-

ready occurring, as she has heard anecdotally, says Mur-

tav, and there is no reason to think the situation won’t worsen. She’d like the town to be prepared.

Neither are talking about commercial medici-

nabulous growth as reg. ulated by Health Canada. Although such operations also can have a huge impact on neighbourhoods, Health Canada is the regulator and needs to enforce the regu-

lations it sets, says Murray, applauding the residents of St. Davids for taking on the issues with Tweed, and wish-

them success.

Murray and France are concerned about designated growers who operate with licences to grow medicinal cannabis, in quantities that may be legal but end up be-

ing sold illegally.

Murray began her inves-

tigation into the legalities of growing when there was such an operation down the road from her a couple of years ago. It was shut down, but it wasn’t the first in town and it’s likely not to be the last, she says.

“The problem is people don’t understand what is happening. They need to be educated about what to look-

for.”

The petition will remain open until January 20, 2021. Those wishing to partici-

pate in the petition can visit it https://petitions.ourcom-

mons.ca/en/Petition/Details/Petition-e-2920, to add their name in support.

The petition says the ex-

isting regime governing the production of medical mari-

juana, particularly by des-

ignated growers, is rife with abuses as a result of loopholes in the current legislation that impede local officials’ and law enforcement’s investiga-

tions of growing operations that appear to be in violation

of the law.

It also references “a lack of oversight from Health Canada of growing facili-

ties,” and of individuals “ob-

taining extraordinarily large prescriptions” to be grown by designated growers, as excess of what a normal medical use prescription would be.

Many have reached the scale of commercial growers but are subject to the same controls, the petition says, and a growing number are linked to organized crime and are suppling the contra-

band market.”

Petitioners ask the Minis-

ter of Health to take immedi-

ate action, eliminating exist-

ing loopholes and providing law enforcement with the tools they need to investigate and prosecute unlawful des-

ignated grow operations.

In addition, both France and Murray are concerned about their municipality’s difficulties with controlling cannabis operations, which are federally regulated. Murray says one of the municipal issues is that there is no form of inspections that would allow bylaw officers to walk onto a property and in-

vestigate what is occurring. “The petition might be a way to at least get the conver-

sation started.”

One of the best protec-

tions for residents is for mu-

icipal setbacks that can be enforced, she says.

NOTL has been trying to pass a cannabis bylaw for years, and at the moment, has an interim control bylaw in effect while the most cur-

rent attempt is under appeal.

While there are many provisions for control, the proposed setback was one of the most discussed items, as councillors tried to strike a balance between a distance that would afford the best protection for residents and that would hold up under appeal.

What they agreed to is that “no lands, building or structure or portion thereof used for cannabis produc-

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tion and processing purposes that is equipped with air
Business looking up and out for Meyers Fruit Farms

In a time when many business owners are experiencing myriad challenges to their livelihoods, forcing some to seriously consider the viability of continuing, it can be refreshing to see a local company pushing on with expansion plans despite the pandemic.

Standing at the construction site of Meyers Fruit Farms’ soon-to-be 590,000 square foot greenhouse, about 10 acres under glass, Jim Meyers admits that sluggish Easter sales forced him and his family to push back the timing of their expansion.

“Things were looking a lot better in June, and that’s when we decided to go through with it,” says the vice-president of sales and logistics for the organization. “So far, it’s been a lot more stable. It does change with every season, and there’s still some uncertainty, so we’re very careful with the decisions that we make. But we had a good fall and Christmas season.”

Meyers says the early uncertainty about COVID-19 did put a damper on their outlook, but even with the second wave occurring, they feel confident going ahead with the project. “We’ve been fortunate to be able to continue operating in a safe manner,” he says. “For the most part people have adjusted. It doesn’t mean it’s easy, and it doesn’t mean things aren’t difficult, but we know more about it (COVID19) and all the safety measures are in place.”

When completed, the impressive new Stewart Road facility will expand Meyers’ production capacity for potted plants, including kalanchoes, Easter lilies, chrysanthemums and poinsettias.

To make room for the greenhouse, a nectarine orchard on that site was bulldozed. “It was a difficult decision to make,” Meyers laments. “But we see a lot of growth on the greenhouse side. Being a food producer is something that we take pride in, and we enjoy that part of the challenge. This particular site was the area best suited for this type of project because of its size, configuration, and where the land is located.”

“A larger portion of our business is dedicated to the greenhouse,” Meyers continues. “It’s a four-season market, whereas tender fruit, it’s one season, one crop. The nice thing about having both is that it’s a nice complement to each other. The greenhouse demand is not very high in the summertime. It works out well for our labour force and our farm to have a good balance.”

Meyers says his labour force has included seasonal workers since the inception of the program, back when his grandparent’s, Jim and Clazina, who started the business in 1955, were at the helm. The year-round nature of that portion of the business, though, means they also hire a number of local people to keep things running all year. In their peak season they employ more than 100 people.

Jim is the third generation of the family, following his father Fred, president of operations, and aunt Elly Hoff, who is the vice-president of human resources and administration. Elly’s son Aron took over the role of vice-president of production in 2006, about a year before Jim joined the leadership team after graduating with a political science and history degree from Western University.

Neither cousin was new to the family farm on Irvine Road, as they spent much of their early years growing up amongst the orchards and greenhouses there.

The 40-year-old Meyers is proud that local contractors are involved in the construction, and is excited about the possibilities the expansion brings. “It will be a modernized facility,” he explains. “An important part of any greenhouse is the movement of product. This greenhouse will be using conveyor belts for the first time. We’ve tried a few pieces of other technologies at our home site, but now we’re able to apply them here on a larger scale. This (new facility) will hopefully allow us to take opportunities that might be able to come our way in the future.”

Besides the new greenhouse space, the Stewart Road location will also house the organization’s packing and shipping operations. As well, their offices that are currently located on Irvine Road will be moving to the new facility.

“We didn’t really have the space for an office expansion at the home farm,” Meyers tells The Local. “Because we will have the shipping here, we wanted to have our offices close by. It actually allows us the opportunity to create an office space that will make for a better environment for the team.”

Those offices should be occupied some time in August, 2021, when the construction wraps up.

And Meyers’ two young children and their cousins, potentially the fourth generation of the family to get involved in the business, will begin spending a lot of their time at Stewart Road, just as their fathers did at the home farm.
Monet-inspired garden open to the public

By Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

Even on a dreary, grey January afternoon, the new garden at Pillar and Post can brighten spirits.

The Local had a chance this week to traverse the landscape with Vintage Hotels’ vice-president of operations Paul MacIntyre early this week.

“It’s actually laid out like Monet’s garden,” explains MacIntyre. “We went to France to visit the Monet garden, and we actually have 7,500 different types of species in this garden. A lot of them are typical to the Monet gardens, but many of them are also normally found here in Niagara as well. There’s a lot of overlap.”

Upon entering the open gate, one is struck by the pathway leading to the centre court area, currently occupied by a 26-foot-tall Christmas tree. MacIntyre explains that come summer, the archways along this promenade will be adorned with roses.

To the left of the promenade sits the pond that truly captures the spirit of a Monet painting. Crossing the Monet Bridge, MacIntyre explains that though the angles have been shifted a bit to fit the space, the pond is true to form. During the warmer months this area will be adorned with hydrangeas which will climb up the metal obelisks dotting the landscape. On the King Street side of the pond, a gently-flowing waterfall cascades down under a lower walkway that is currently closed due to icing.

According to MacIntyre, the almost six-acre property can host three weddings at a time. The barn at the south corner of the Monet garden, built with reclaimed boards from farms across Ontario, has a capacity of 120 people (under non-COVID times). A wedding gazebo is planned for another section of the garden as well.

More than 350 new trees were brought in and added to the canopy on the block. The Christmas tree, however, is temporary, and was brought in with a giant crane. MacIntyre says, though, that it fits perfectly they may decide to plant one in that same space, known as the promenade circle.

MacIntyre has been involved with the multi-million dollar project from the start. He is clearly proud of the way it has all turned out. “It took about seven years to get approved,” he says, “and another year and a half to clean up the site. C & C Yachts left behind a lot of resin and chemicals that we had to clean up.”

There are plans to construct a new conference building beyond the south wall facing Anne Street. That project was originally scheduled to start this year but has been pushed back. “This was going to help take the Pillar to a place where it would be a little more busy. But now (with the pandemic) we have extra conference space, and it will most likely be like that until at least 2024. We may end up not even needing that extra space.”

Though the main purpose of the garden is to host weddings and other special events, MacIntyre promises that Vintage Hotels will continue to open the space to the public when it is not in use for bookings. Once all the flowers are in bloom this spring and summer, there will be no shortage of selfie stations suitable for all social media platforms.

The Gardens at the Pillar and Post are currently open to the public each day from 10 a.m. until about 2 p.m. The entrance is on John Street through the main gate onto the promenade. 

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Youth advisory committee has ideas for virtual events

Penny Coles
The Local

When Jani Ganatra put out a call for new members to the Lord Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council last fall, she was hoping to hear from at least six to eight Niagara-on-the-Lake students from public high school to high school. She is delighted to have built the membership to 15 young people from the community, the largest council since the committee began meeting in 2017, all anxious to be a voice for the youth of NOTL.

The Grade 12 A.N. Mey er student from Glenlade has been a member from its formation, when she was in her first year of high school, and took over from previous chair Bethany Poil, who is now in university. At the beginning of this school year, there were just two returning members, Ga-natra and a Crossroads Public School student. They also have three advi-sors on the committee, town community engagement co-ordinator Lauren Krüttolsch, local business woman Maria Mavridis and Coun. Clare Cameron.

The committee welcomed youth from NOTL from public school to high school, ages 13 to 18. She’s grateful for the new members, and the new ideas they bring with them to the new committee.

They have had to meet virtually, and have been brainstorming ideas about how to reach teens virtually, and how to pivot events held in past years to formats that can be held online.

The council met once in November and December, and in the new year, plan to meet every other week, she says.

Their virtual meetings came together pretty easily, with students already adapting to online classes.

They’ve divided the group into three subcommittees, in-cluding outreach, advocacy and mental wellness, following on a decision made last year, with five members on each.

Mental wellness includes physical and mental health is-sues; advocacy refers to local issues, including social engage-ment; and outreach focuses on social media and events for the enjoyment of the youth community.

“We’re trying to come up with things we can do usual-ly, such as a games night on Zoom,” says Ganatra. “We’re still looking into how we can do that as a way to get together.” Although it poses some problems to overcome, “we think we still can make an impact on youth in town,” she says.

“In the past one accomplishments of the council, the Mental Health and Wellness Conference for Grade 8 stu-dents from all NOTL schools, was held as a virtual series of speakers earlier this year, once COVID shut down schools. For 2021, says Ganatra, the council is hoping to hold a virtual meeting, with break-out rooms on specific subjects, which is closer to the format of the meetings held in the community centre in 2017 and 2018.

“In January, we’ll be doing more brainstorming for new ideas,” she says.

The group has been get-ting “great support from the Town,” and from the Niaga-ra-on-the-Lake Rotary Club, which wants to be more in-volved with youth in the future.

“The Rotary Club is part-nering with us again this year,” says Ganatra. “They have of-fered assistance in funding, and adult mentors for our wellness subcommittee. And we are also looking into an opportunity of making an Interact Group with LMVC through the Rotary Club.”

There is delight in the way the group has evolved, she says. “Although it poses some problems to overcome, “we think we still can make an impact on youth in town,” she says.

The council is hoping to hold a virtual meeting, with break-out rooms on specific subjects, which is closer to the format of the meetings held in the community centre in 2017 and 2018.

“In January, we’ll be doing more brainstorming for new ideas,” she says.

Janvi Ganatra, chair of the Lord Mayor’s Youth Advisory Com-mittee, is excited about new ideas and events to explore, begin-ning this month. (Photo supplied)

A group of museum and Friends of Fort George representatives were ready to hand out three-course gourmet takeout meals during a December fundraiser at Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery. (Penny Coles)
ALVAREZ, DENISE—Denise (Nini) Margaret Alvarez left us peacefully on the morning of Sunday, January 3rd, 2021, at the Niagara General Hospital.

On the 13th of March, 1952 in Quebec City, Denise became the second-born child of seven to the late German & Berthe (de Chavigny de la Chevrotiere) Alvarez. Denise was a woman of many talents - jewelry making, sewing, knitting, cooking, and writing. Her creativity was greatly appreciated by those who loved her.

She is predeceased by her loving partner Rick (Thomson), and her sister Helen. She is survived by her son Matthew, and his father Mark (Hanlon), and also her siblings German, George (Lon), Michael (Sandra), Louis, & Suzanne (Stephen). She is survived also by her nieces and nephews Justin (Lindsay) and their sons Zach and Nate, Jeanine (Antonio), Gina (Ryan) and their kids Anika & Hendrickus, Robert (Karen), Damien, Michael (Laura), and Louis (Hannah). Finally, she is survived by her many loving cousins in Quebec & Mexico.

One of her last sentiments before passing was how overwhelmed she felt by the love and affection from various friends and family who contacted her upon finding out that she had taken ill. She also wanted to acknowledge Mark, and her brother Louis, for dedicating their time every day to care for her, and to provide her the things she needed to be comfortable.

There will be a dispersal of ashes, held at a later date as yet to be determined.

ENNS, SINAIDA (SINA)—Sept. 18, 1924 - Jan. 6, 2021

After a life filled with faith and family, she received her Angel’s Wings at the age of 96 on January 6, 2021 at Douglas Memorial Hospital. Sina was called into the arms of her Lord while in the company of her husband Gerald, and children George, Ellen (Bob) Smith and Christa (Ken) Wright. She was predeceased by her loving grandson Christopher. A family-only service will be held 10 a.m. January 12 at Tallman Funeral Home. If you would like to view the live stream, please head to the Tallman Funeral Home Facebook Live service following at Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery. For those who wish, memorial donations may be made to Operation Smile. Online condolences at tallmanfuneralhomes.ca.
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