Beginning a new day

Marty, Ty and Shane Sherlock walk their dog Rufus early in the morning across Queens Royal Park, the quintessential photo of Niagara-on-the-Lake, with the gazebo in the background. (Fred Mercnik)

Lauren O’Malley, Penny Coles and Karen Skeoch are thrilled to present the first edition of The Niagara-on-the-Lake Local. (Julia Buxton Cox)

Hope you’ll help us be voice of the community

By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

If you are now holding our first print edition of The Niagara-on-the-Lake Local, hot off the press, we couldn’t be more thrilled. We have had so much fun getting to this point, and the support that has brought us here has been incredible.

Last week, we held our first community advisory board meeting in preparation for our print launch and it was a huge success — a group of smart people from various sectors of town gathered to listen to what we hope to accomplish, and to offer suggestions on how to get there. They had such great ideas for us. It was exhilarating and such a blast, we can’t wait to meet again.

The goal of having an advisory committee is to encourage community collaboration and transparency — we believe we live in a time when both are crucial. We aim to be the voice of the community. Our mandate is to represent everyone, whether you live in Old Town, the rural areas, or one of our other neighbourhoods; whether you’re interested in politics, want to know what’s going on around town, or like to read about the fascinating people who are your friends and neighbours. And kids — we want to tell you what they’re up to, what their schools are doing, how their sports teams are faring.

We live in a town of neighbourhoods and residents of varied and sometimes competing interests, so we decided to ask for help.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Tis the Season

We’re celebrating Icewine all month long. Visit konzelmann.ca for more info.

konzelmann estate winery

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6
Town report to answer hunting, fishing questions

Lauren O’Malley  
The NOTL Local

“Honestly, what are we becoming? It is frightening, and it’s hitting home. We can’t just let these things happen,” says Coun Gary Burroughs about a hunting incident that robbed the town of five of its eight ‘mascots of the waterfront,’ as described the Embden geese who have made their home on the land of the former customs house in the dock area.

The geese have built a profound relationship with those who visit them regularly. Locals such as Dory Karr and Sarah Burroughs among others have made pilgrimages to feed and connect with the growing flock every morning over the last several years. Some of the birds come running to greet their human friends. Gary to this day is greeted enthusiastically by Mac, the senior male, whose foot the animal lover borsa released from an ice patch several years ago.

How to best protect them and ensure the safety of people close to the waterfront is unclear, said the councillor, who believes a Niagara-based man took a young acquaintance out in his boat for a hunting expedition on the Niagara River on Boxing Day. As they approached a group of decoys at the base of East and West Line — in the area of the Smugglers Cove Boat Club — the man apparently spotted the unusual geese, and tried to scare them away, telling his companion not to shoot. The young man allegedly shot anyway, killing four of the eight geese. A fifth bird was injured, likely by a boat, perhaps this same one.

The story continues, says Gary, that the hunters collected three of the dead birds, with the fourth being pulled downriver by the current. He says it has been reconfirmed that local men, also hunters, were stationed in a blind at the water’s edge, and chastised the men in the boat for their actions. While hunting with proper paperwork and training is not illegal on the river, there are several issues that are unsettling in this particular incident that the councillor sees as safety concerns and are part of the reason behind his request to Town staff.

First, it should be made clear these were treated animals, neither wild nor entirely tame but pets nonetheless to the many who have fed them and cared for and about them in the decade or so they have been nesting in the dock area. Embden geese are typically livestock: the big white bird we see in storybooks and on farmsteads. This particular flock found its way to the water’s edge and into the hearts of many locals, including both Gary and Sarah Burroughs, Marion McMicking, and many others.

Another issue at stake is the fact these are not migratory birds. According to the laws and licences of seasonal hunting, only migratory birds can be killed legally. However, a call to the Ministry of Natural Resources wasn’t particularly edifying. When asked if Embden geese are legal targets, the employee looked the bird up online and said, “It looks like a snow goose — I’m going to go with migratory.” This particular breed is not built for flight, and, having stayed in one location year-round for a decade, is clearly not migratory.

Other potential legal infractions include shooting from the water towards the shore, which is obviously dangerous, given the fact there are residences, public trails and parkland, and other serious casualty risks, says Gary. But again, without tangible proof or a first-person account, there is little to no legal recourse.

Another significant issue is the reason Gary believes the birds had travelled up-river from their former home on the former customs house land. He tells of a glut of fishermen from all over Ontario overcrowding the water’s edge, and deliberately defying the birds their path of access to and from the water over the rocks between the jet boats operation and the concrete wall that is part of the adjacent Town-owned property.

Because this breed of birds is not built for flight, they need to be able to walk into and out of the water. “This issue can’t be left alone, and does tie in to the fishermens,” Gary says. “When the birds were in danger they couldn’t find safety on that land before the fisherman crowded them out.”

“Everything is too late,” the concerned councillor continues. Fishing grounds have been decimated. It can’t be normal to allow this stuff to go on.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3
‘Immense sadness’
over loss of geese
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2
It may or may not be too late for the three remaining birds. The fifth, injured bird was collected by an officer from the Niagara Falls Humane Society, who was notified by concerned residents. The bird’s leg was broken in several places and her wing was severely damaged. “I believe she was hurt by the boat while trying to protect her flock — Jill was very protective,” says Gary. According to Marson McMicking who made the call to the NFHS, the bird was in so much pain she was easily rescued and taken away. A rehabilitation expert in marine wildlife inspected the goose at the Humane Society, says McMicking, and deemed her beyond saving. The bird — named Jill— has been euthanized.

Some locals fear the attention to the entire story will put the diminished flock at risk — either by the efforts of well-meaning residents wanting to re-home the geese, or by government officials seeking to follow the letter of the law, which some fear could mean removing the geese.

The councillor — along with many others who have joined very lively commentary on social media — is deeply concerned about the safety of our residents, and the inherent risks in the practices of the hunters on and off the river. He believes all levels of government need to take action. “The role the Town should and will play is we have to keep this story alive,” he says. “Assuming local government cares, we need to make those at the provincial and federal level do so as well.” Both Sarah and Gary Burroughs tell of garbage, tangled fishing lines, decapitated fish heads and other detritus scattered along the waterfront. Sarah says when she asked the fishermen to clean up after themselves, they simply swore at her. When she approached local bylaw officers, she was told there was nothing to be done. “Now we’re dealing with coyotes down there,” she says. “I don’t blame them, there’s garbage everywhere.”

“There is an immense sadness that’s going on,” Sarah concludes. Karr echoes the despair, and says, “I hope this makes people think about what’s all around them. To appreciate it while they can. Because it can all disappear in an instant.”

It’s important to thank donors and sponsors when you’ve come to ask them for something,” says Tony Chisholm. “Especially when you know you’ll be coming back for more,” he jokes. The member of the Friends of Fort George presented a gift of gratitude to Niagara-on-the-Lake Realty co-owners Tom Ettfoft and Chris Bowron. “A plaque they can put up in their lobby to remind them of their generosity and our gratitude,” says Chisholm. Chisholm wears period dress — including a kilt made of the Chisolm tartan — for events related to Fort George, as a tribute to the era of the fort’s heyday. “It’s a personal choice,” the retired publisher says, “based on a) comfort, and b) cost.”

The Friends of Fort George have plenty of events planned for the year, including a whisky tasting, and a first-ever collaboration with Fort Niagara across the river. For more information visit friendsoffortgeorge.ca and/or follow the group on social media.

Tony Chisholm (centre) of the Friends of Fort George presents a plaque to Tom Ettfoft and Chris Bowron of Niagara-on-the-Lake Realty for their ongoing support. (Lauren O’Malley)

Lauren O’Malley
The NOTL Local
Chautauqua proposal better, but not perfect

By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

Chautauqua residents see their neighbourhood already changing, and are asking the Town to do a better job of controlling inevitable development.

It’s a neighbourhood full of charm, where many of the homes were originally cottages, built by people who would come for the summer to attend concerts and lectures — the streets were laid out like spokes in a wheel, with an amphitheatre in the centre. The beach offered recreational activities, including tennis courts and croquet, and small boat rentals were available.

The sandy beach has eroded over time, and the amphitheatre is long gone, eroded over time, and the land is still required, but less than originally un-touched by tourists or progress, and residents say they want to keep it that way. But large lots are being divided, and new homes built, said Victor Tarnoy, who was representing his neighbours and members of the Chautauqua Residents Association at a public meeting Monday to discuss a Circle Street severance proposal.

It is only one more lot and one more new home, but residents are afraid of what it means for the future of their neighbourhood. Members of the CRA understand development is out of their hands, but they want the Town to protect the trees, the streetscape, village character and heritage silver maple on the town boulevard, which was in danger because of the proximity to the house where it was originally situated, would be protected.

“Wheeler presented a revised application, which sought to alleviate some of the issues raised at the earlier meetings. I believe we have a better plan, more in keeping with the neighbourhood,” she said.

A reduced front setback is still required, but less than originally proposed, the design of the house is substantially different — it’s now showing a Victorian-style two-storey house with a smaller footprint — and the heritage silver maple on the street is still required, but less than originally un-touched by tourists or progress, and residents say they want to keep it that way. But large lots are being divided, and new homes built, said Victor Tarnoy, who was representing his neighbours and members of the Chautauqua Residents Association at a public meeting Monday to discuss a Circle Street severance proposal. It is only one more lot and one more new home, but residents are afraid of what it means for the future of their neighbourhood. Members of the CRA understand development is out of their hands, but they want the Town to protect the trees, the streetscape, village character and heritage silver maple on the town boulevard, which was in danger because of the proximity to the house where it was originally situated, would be protected.

“This process has produced a better design,” she said.

Tarnoy said the CRA is no longer opposing the severance. Given the changes to the proposal, he said “it would be unfair to object. There is also a benefit to severing the large lot, rather than leaving it for one huge out-of-character home to be built, he added.

Tarnoy did however offer what he sees as a better alternative to the proposed lot sizes and shapes, and said he has an issue with the planning process — he believes it did not include sufficient analysis of the impact of the proposal on the Chautauqua neighbourhood.

“Rather than two unequal-sized lots, the larger one with a smaller, older house and a new, larger house on the smaller lot, he proposed two equal lots, which would require the removal of the older existing home.”

The CRA feels certain the owner’s plan is to take it down eventually and build what residents are “bending over backwards” to improve the existing setback.

He said as an architect he isn’t personally crazy about the new design of the house, which is too “pretend Victorian” with too many curlicues. He’d like to see cleaner lines, but it’s an improvement over the original design.

In addition to the lack of detail in the planning impact analysis, the CRA was also critical of an architect’s report, both were incomplete and misleading, he said, yet the planning department recommended the original proposed setback be allowed.

Michael Burns lives across the street from the Circle Street lot the owners want to build on. He objected pretty strenuously to the proposal from the time he first learned about it, concerned about the trees, the streetscape, and the precedent that could lead the way to drastic changes in the Chautauqua neighbourhood.

His concern for the streetscape is that it should be done with a plan that is thought-out and coherent — which he doesn’t believe has occurred in this application.

“These criteria for much new development is simply ‘how can we get away with building the biggest thing allowed by zoning bylaw,’ he said.

Although he recognizes the owners are “bending over backwards” to improve the proposal, he still objects to the front setback.

But most of all he objects to the lack of planning analysis. “Where is the sober depth analysis that is designed to consider the impact of such developments on the character of the neighbourhood?” he asks.

“Where are the reports that will assist in the protection of cultural heritage resources and ensure that new development is compatible with the existing streetscape, not only for this development but for the precedent it sets moving forward.”

Wheler, when complimented by Coun. Wendy Chiropita for showing “the gold standard of co-operation” in revising the project to address neighbours’ objections, replied the revised proposal “might not be the perfect solution, but it’s a step in the right direction.”

Chautauqua resident Kevin Collins, however, offered what he believed to be an even better solution. He told councillors he understands the severance request for a new house, with money to be made by splitting up large properties, but he asked that an increased setback be refused.

What he doesn’t understand is how someone can ask for a severance but then say the house they hope to build is too big, and expect an increased setback to accommodate it. “Don’t come and ask for pushing it forward, even by an inch. Get with the program. Everyone else in Chautauqua is living in these tight spaces. Go with it. Join the club.”

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January 17, 2019
THE NOTL LOCAL
notlocal.com
Students thrive in small classes at Royal Oak

By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

Royal Oak is not a private school, parent and board member Robin Ridesic told Town council Monday, it’s a registered charity that ensures access to any student who wants to attend.

With council debating budget items and grant levels leading up to a February approval date, Ridesic was representing one of several organizations in town weighing in on their financial requirements. Ridesic was responding to a discussion last week that suggested Royal Oak is a private school and should not receive funding in the way of a discretionary grant from the Town.

Not all councillors agreed, with Coun. Clare Cameron speaking on Royal Oak’s behalf, reminding council it is the only school in the Old Town, and the new council has made a commitment to look after youth.

“I don’t envy you having to decide how to divvy out what money you have,” Ridesic told councillors, thanking them for their consideration.

To continue to support the school, which is currently leasing the Town-owned hospital building on Wellington Street, Lord Mayor Betty Disero suggested staff instead look at other ways for the Town to help out financially.

Ridesic told councillors Royal Oak came about after a long battle to save Parliament Oak School, which has since closed. Some of those involved in fighting its closure looked at ways to keep education for elementary students in the Old Town partly to ensure its sustainability, vibrancy and balance, but also to address the issue of public school capacity.

The three publicly-funded schools in town have a combined capacity of about 1,200 students, while serving a community with 1,500 elementary school-aged kids, she said. Royal Oak has become a “place-holder” for public education in the Old Town, as a service to the community and to help retain families.

Forty-six of its students receive bursaries, said Ridesic, assuring council no student would be turned away because of financial issues.

Royal Oak has attracted many children who weren’t thriving in NOTL’s public schools, she said. Crossroads has almost 600 students and large class sizes, creating challenges for some students, especially those who need extra attention, she said.

Royal Oak has 35 kids with eight full-time staff providing a safe and supportive learning environment, and also provides ample opportunity for students to be part of the community - they use the library and the community centre gym, clean up garbage in near-by parks, attend Remembrance Day ceremonies and recently sang O Canada at an Ice Dogs game.

The school’s discretionary grant application was focused on funding for community wide programs, she said, such as a free camp on Easter Monday and after-school clubs to allow children from all communities and schools to play and learn together.

Although the majority of council decided against a grant for the school, Ridesic said the board is pleased councillors agreed to ask staff to look at rent reduction options instead.

She is confident when staff review the details they will drop an planned rent increase. “This would allow the Town to still make money from the rent charged to the school but maintain the school’s costs at last year’s levels,” she said.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero presented Queenston firefighter Rob Copeland, also a former town councillor, with his plaque for 30 years of volunteer service to the NOTL Fire Department. She also asked for one of his bear hugs before making the presentation. Also recognized were Frank Pearson for 32 years of service with the St. Davids station; Simon Drakeford who volunteered with the Virgil station for 25 years; and Sean Pearson, for 16 years with the St. Davids station. (Photo submitted)
Our mandate: to represent every corner of our community

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

from a group of locals we feel have their fingers on the pulse of different sectors in town, to ensure we stay on our chosen path. With their help we want to strengthen our ties to each corner of the community and make sure we are accountable to all areas and interests.

Imagine Joe Pillitteri sitting at a table for a serious discussion — at our first meeting he had us in hysterics one minute with a story about ripp ing his pants at a wedding, (likely to be included in his next comedy routine), and then he had us in tears as he told us how much faith he has in us in our new endeavour.

Sean Simpson, a successful and clever businessman with a young family, zeroed in on council stories — what’s important about them, he said, is how council decisions impact people’s lives. A good reminder.

Janice Thomson is one of the wisiest people on this planet, known for doing what is right. She’s an ardent support er of the business community, which some would say is in the long run good for the commu nity as a whole. She’ll be sure to keep us on track.

Julia Buxton was our first top-notch social media modera tor, always striving for fairness and objectivity — qualities also essential as a news source.

Andrew Niven lives in St. Davids with his young family and works for Kon nelmann Estate Winery. He is also chair of the NOTL Wineries, which promotes the local industry, and so under stands better than most the balancing act between creating sustainable tourism and developing great communi ties for raising families.

Marcia Pennen of Penner Building Centre is an active member of the Virgil Business Association, a business person raising a family, and knows the people and the communi ty of Virgil and the rural area inside out.

Debbie Krause, a NOTL native who has also raised a family in town, talks to a lot of people during the course of the day. Or rather, she says, through her job as program co-ordinator at the NOTL Public Library, listens to a lot of people, who have varied ideas of what the community needs and doesn’t need. She’ll know what stories we need to tell.

Joan King, well, what can we say. There aren’t many events in town where she isn’t volunteering in some capacity. While she’s best known for organizing the Terry Fox Run and raising a ton of money, her involvement spans every corner of the community. Mike Balsom has also agreed to help us out. He’s a St. Catharines high school teach er and a great interviewer for YourTV Niagara — whether the event is a fundraiser, political or sports related, he does a great job presenting community news.

We also have a member of the NOTL Youth Advisory Committee on board. Alexcia Cofell has signed up, and we are delighted to have her. She’s bright, smart, motivated, and wonderfully talented journalist, loves to tell the people stories, to write about events, music and the arts, and we’re so proud to have her put her skills to work for The Local.

Members of our community advisory board have been asked to be judges of whether we are fulfilling our mandate and achieving our goals. We expect them to tell us how we can do better, and to be part of our team. We hope they will love being part of forging strong connections between The Local and their communities.

That invitation extends to all of you, whether you have a story to tell, an event to share, or any suggestions about how we can be your voice — please email penny@notllocal.com.

The trusted voice of our community

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Some of The Niagara-on-the-Lake Local community advisory board members were able to meet last week in the Market Room of the Court House, including Andrew Niven (back, left) Julia Buxton Cox, Sean Simpson, and (sitting), Joan King, Janice Thomson, Debbie Krause and Joe Pillitteri. Alexcia Cofell, Mike Balsom, and Marcia Pennen are also board members, but are missing from the photo. (Lauren O’Malley)
One of things I frequently do in the provincial legislature is encourage my fellow members to take a trip and come visit us in Niagara-on-the-Lake — and many of them actually take me up on the offer. Niagara-on-the-Lake wasn’t the busy tourist destination that it is today. The reason people came from around the world to experience our beloved town is because of the work that residents did to preserve its unique historical nature and character.

That is why I’m so concerned about Bill 66.

Bill 66 covers many pieces of legislation, but there is one piece that particularly worries me and that is the provision that will allow municipalities or the province to override The Greenbelt Act on the rural heritage. That would make way for possible developments in the Greenbelt. Approvals to develop on the Greenbelt would not require public consultation or review periods, simply just approval by the Ford government.

The Greenbelt protects almost two million acres of our land. It protects farmlands that are the backbone of communities, natural areas that have become wonders of the world and vital sources of our clean drinking water. Given that Niagara-on-the-Lake is home to many smaller farms, there are certainly discussions Ford government needs to have with local farmers to ensure their needs are being met.

However, I firmly believe that most residents support the intent of the protective measures of the Greenbelt Act and recognize its importance to our region’s beauty.

Don’t get me wrong, I am not opposed to development. Some of the biggest job-creating projects we’ve brought to Niagara in the last few years have been because of extraordinary developments we’ve worked together to achieve. However, I support meaningful development. That means we recognize the special gifts our communities have and value input from residents who already live in those communities. When we do that we can develop in a way that protects our heritage and environment while expanding the local economy.

I understand there’s a great deal of money to be made in paving over the Greenbelt and building high rises, but I argue there’s something more valuable lost when you pave over our natural heritage.

By Wayne Gates, MPP
By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

Meredith Raso tries to be responsible when it comes to putting out her garbage. She wants to do what is right for the environment, and is pretty conscientious about using her grey and blue boxes. But she has two challenges—a large family, and an aversion to maggots.

With four kids from the ages of nine to 13 living at home, some weeks she puts out a second garbage bag for collection. And although she has a lot of organic waste from feeding a large family—when she peels potatoes it’s usually half of a 10-pound bag—she doesn’t always use her green bin. “I hit and miss with that, especially in the summer,” she said. “I really have a problem with maggots.”

In a perfect world, rather than seeing garbage collection reduced to every other week, she’d prefer it more often.

But if the Region decides to pick up residential garbage every second week, as it is considering, and continues weekly recycling and organic waste pickup, she would adapt. “I’d do what I need to do. It would be hard, but I wouldn’t be opposed to it. It is better for the environment.”

Reducing her garbage to one bag every other week would be a challenge, and would force her to work harder at recycling, she said, “but I still have that issue with the green bin.”

One concern she has is a possible increase in people tossing their garbage out of trucks on rural roads after they see a lot of it already. “I’m not sure why people choose to do that. Hopefully it won’t get worse.”

With a new garbage contract looming in 2021, the Region is asking municipalities to consider some curbside collection changes, with a goal of increasing recycling and composting, and streamlining costs.

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Women ready for global march Saturday

By Lauren O’Malley  

The NOTL Local

“Tam taking a leadership role — and if I can do it, anyone can,” Jacqueline Thair says modestly, regarding her part with Women’s March Global.

WMG is a grassroots network of people around the world aspiring to create equality of all kinds through action and events. Their annual days of action, dubbed #WomensWave, take place this Saturday and Sunday, with marches and gatherings scheduled in more than 15 countries.

Thair, a Shaw Festival actor, is no stranger to roles, but activism is a new element in her life. “A couple of years ago my sister and I went to Detroit for a wom-en conference,” she says. “There was 5,000 of us standing in unison, and it inspired me and made me want to be part of something like that.”

Her sister went on to take a job with Women’s March Global, and that

made Thair want to make a difference here in Niagara-on-the-Lake. While the organization’s name contains the word “women,” the focus is on all genders and issues. “The general population in NOTL is older and white. Tram people, persons of colour are not the average NOTL person. We want to help them be exposed to different types of people through things like this.”

Thair and event organizer Amy Jewell have planned a march and experience that will present different perspectives for those who might not be familiar with a broad range of issues. Speakers will include Mel Thivierge, who is a transgendered person working in NOTL. They will be speaking about simple day-to-day things most people might take for granted, like entering a public washroom.

“Natalha Mumba will be thanking her parents for helping her go to Canada,” says Thair. Mumba is an actor at the Shaw Festiva-

val, Elizabeth Zimmerman, director of the YES Group at the YWCA Niagara Region, will discuss economic security for women.

Lord Mayor Better Dis-ero is also on the list of speakers, because “she is a woman in a leadership role — specifically in politics — which is part of the WMG mission,” says Thair.

“I look forward to par-ticipating in this peaceful protest,” Di sero says. “It’s something that will be bene-ficial to the town. I’ve always believed with that good role models we learn more quickly.”

Jewell says, “I can’t keep yelling at my TV screen and hope things are going to change.” She joined the helm of this local fac-et of the global movement, feeling that “because of my background as a trans-ident rights, rights are being taken away from women. If women, as well as LGBTQ and other minorities, all speak out together we have a stronger, louder voice.”

On Saturday, Jan. 19, participants will congregate at the bandstand in Simcoe Park at 11 a.m. The march will move from there to King Street, taking Johnson Street to the Voices of Free-dom, then down Re-gen Street to Prideaux and back to the bandstand where the speeches will begin.

There will also be mu-sical performances by drag queen Maya Notary, singer-songwriter Ange Nether-sole, and possibly an Indigenous women’s drum circle. Thair and Jewell feel this event is important to pro-voke a “sustainable momentum of change.” Jewell refers to a “grey zone,” where we tolerate “cat calls, comments on our appearance, and in-tolerance.” She tells of Black actors at the Shaw being har-assed in town, and relates the story of a guy friend. “I never thought if he walked down the street holding hands with his partner, she says. His tear-inducing answer “It depends.”

“Sometimes you need to step outside the grey zone to propel yourself into activ-ism,” says Jewell, who feels she has found her voice in the passion she has discov-ered for the issues involved.

She quotes writer Dustin Lance Black: “If you want to change a mind, you have to start with someone’s heart.” She’s hoping this event will move people toward change.

The women say they will deem the event a success by small increments. “I hope people walk away saying ‘Maybe I’ll hold an event of my own, maybe I’ll show a meaningful movie’,” says Jewell. “I hope they talk to someone else and say ‘You know what? I don’t believe what I expe-rienced.’ They also hope people will be moved to join the Niagara-on-the-Lake chapter of Women’s March Global, which can be found through the organization’s website.

“Right now they hope the day will be mild, and fami-lies and friends will stroll over to Simcoe Park on Sat-urday with open minds and open hearts. For more infor-mation contact Thairjacque-line@gmail.com.”
By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

Gary Zalepa, Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority’s interim board member of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, said the new board is on track to governance reform.

And the work of examining an auditor general’s report released last summer citing several governance issues, can now begin, said Zalepa.

Some changes have already been made as a result of that report — the current Niagara board members were appointed to provide leadership while determining a governance back in place.

The next task for the interim board members will be to go through that report, “looking at what’s already been accomplished by the past board and staff, and see what else needs to be done,” said Zalepa.

“Once the board members will be to go through that report, ‘looking at what’s already been accomplished by the past board and staff, and see what else needs to be done,’” said Zalepa.

Zalepa aiming for transparency at NPCA

The initial task of the agency’s interim board went as expected at Monday’s first meeting at Balls Falls, with the election of an interim chair and vice-chair, followed by the unexpected: the former chair and vice-chair, followed by the unexpected: the former chair and vice-chair, followed by the unexpected: the former chair and vice-chair, followed by the unexpected: the former chair and vice-chair, followed by the unexpected: the former chair and vice-chair, followed by the unexpected: the former chair and vice-chair, followed by the unexpected: the former chair and vice-chair, followed by the unexpected: the former chair and vice-chair.

The procedure under NPCA bylaws is to fill those positions at the annual general meeting. But members voted to depart from that procedure to help them get to work on some of the many issues facing them — staffing and legal issues were on the agenda to be discussed at a closed-door session.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12
Crossroads Medical Centre delayed by appeals

By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

The new tribunal designed to speed up appeals to municipal planning decisions is doing just the opposite, says a local developer anxious to start work on the new medical clinic town doctors hope to call home.

Lloyd Redekopp’s project, a two-storey building on Line 2 designed for the Niagara-on-the-Lake Family Health Team and related services, was first delayed while waiting for rezoning approval from the Town. Now it’s facing further setbacks, but this time the impediment is the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal backlog, with no end in sight.

Town approval came last fall, but two appeals to the provincial body were then filed. One came from the owner of a medical clinic on a site already zoned for commercial development, who is arguing that rezoning Redekopp’s Line 2 property was unnecessary and a poor use of the land.

The second appeal was filed by a neighbouring residential developer who is still dealing with storm water drainage issues from Redekopp’s property, and hoping for a resolution so he too can move forward with his plans.

Last April, the province introduced a new process for appealing planning decisions and the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) became the scaled-down LPAT. The new board was intended to be streamlined, quicker with its decisions, encouraging negotiations to eliminate the need for hearings and giving more weight to the decisions of municipalities.

But as Redekopp and a few other developers — including Two Sisters Resort — waiting for a decision on a John Street hotel planning application, and John Hawley with his village centre proposal on Niven Road — have discovered the reality to date has proved to be just the opposite.

Planning town director Craig Larmour explains why not only NOTL projects but developments across the province are stalled: Soon after the OMB became LPAT its procedural rules were questioned by the developers of large a Sudbury proposal under appeal. At issue was who could give evidence at the hearing — the rules were more restrictive than during the days of the OMB. Unable to make a decision, LPAT referred the matter to a divisional court. Appeals might begin to move quickly through the system, as originally intended, he said.

Meanwhile, although it’s not his responsibility, he’s concerned about the doctors who will be in limbo, with no leases where they are currently located to see them through the delayed appeal process and the construction of the new building.

“I’ve offered to open for any assistance I can provide,” he said.

While he won’t speak to their plan, he knows they’re working on one. He has also assured they want to remain in town and are still looking forward to a central health care building on the Crossroads site, he said.

Mary Simpson, executive director of the Niagara North Family Health Team, which includes NOTL doctors at the Old Town hospital site and the Niagara Medical Clinic in Virgil, emailed this: “The team is working on a contingency plan. In this plan every effort will be made to not disrupt the provision of health care services to our patients”.

Simpson says she really has no idea when he’ll be able to begin construction on a new medical clinic on Niagara Stone Road. (Photo submitted)

While he has some hope the appeal process could be finished by the summer, developer Lloyd Redekopp says he really has no idea when he’ll be able to begin construction on a new medical clinic on Niagara Stone Road. (Photo submitted)
Walkers lead Perfect Pack through streets of Virgil

By Lauren O’Malley
The NOTL Local

"I run a tight ship," says Jessye Disher as she negotiates the sidewalks of Virgil with her pack of nine dogs, along with her assistant and sister-in-law Jessica Paul.

The group is an impressive sight, with all of the pups maintaining a well-trained heel and being very polite to one another.

The multiply-accredited dog trainer is a member of the International Association of Canine Professionals. "I’m working on two more certifications," Disher says. "Apparently I like to have a full plate at all times," she laughs.

And full it is. The recently married 28-year-old exercises upwards of 30 dogs a day, over the course of 10 to 12 hours. Paul, a high school student, helps in the summers and on weekends, and Disher has just hired Sam Augerman to help with the growing business.

"When I announced that on social media, 15 new clients signed up that same day," says Disher with a mixture of amazement and relief. Typically her waiting list is between four and six months.

While she has always worked with animals — taking after her mother, Virgil-based animal chiropractor Dr. Susanne Langdon — Disher adapted her dog walking business after adopting Zoey, an Anatolian shepherd cross.

"Zoey had such bad dog aggression and human aggression she was a liability to the world," she says. "She would have killed all of these dogs, maybe twice, just to make sure she killed them right the first time."

Zoey was a rescue from the Welland Humane Society two years ago, and required so much of a commitment in terms of time and training that the process dramatically changed the lives of both dog and owner.

That’s when Disher pivoted toward acquiring serious dog training qualifications, and made that service an integral part of her offerings with The Perfect Pack. Her business model goes beyond basic dog walking, and deep into training. "Ninety per cent of our dogs started reactive," she explains, meaning they were not socialized, and/or had behavioural issues. The sight of the animals — including Zoey — in a calm and well-ordered pack is a testimony to Disher’s skills and dedication.

Disher’s business can be found online and in order-ly fashion on sidewalks in Virgil, Old Town, St. Davids and St. Catharines.

"The selection of chair and vice-chair will be confirmed at Thursday’s annual general meeting, board members agreed.

"But before the board cleared the room for their in-camera meeting, Hamilton representative Brad Clark made a motion to censure his colleague, vice-chair James Kaspersetz, also from Hamilton.

Kaspersetz recently re-posted an anti-Muslim comment on social media, and although he had apologized and removed the post, it did not reflect the values of the NPCA or the areas it covers, Clark said.

"We want to make it clear such behaviour is not acceptable."

Following a three-and-a-half hour meeting behind closed doors, which was a “good work session,” said Hylsma, a motion was made to instruct interim CAO Dave Barrick to freeze hiring, firing and promotions without board approval.

Zalepa, who has pledged to keep the process going forward as open and accountable as possible given the controversy plaguing the organization, explained and although he had apologized and removed the post, it did not reflect the values of the NPCA or the areas it covers, Clark said.

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Actor’s introduction to NOTL begins with Corks concert

By Lauren O’Malley
The NOTL Local

Things seem to fall into place for George Krissa. When he was facing a difficult decision, fate—or a poster—gave him a nudge.

At the time Krissa was working at Earls, a restaurant/bar chain in Edmonton. He was a recent graduate of Grant MacEwan College, holding a diploma in vocal performance, and wondering which would accelerate his career further: more education, or a one-way trip to Toronto.

“There was a poster on the wall at the bar that said, ‘Do you want to move to Toronto?’ says Krissa. The chain was expanding to the Big Smoke, and wanted to hire from within.

On the one hand, it sounds so easy: Krissa gets his travel expenses paid, and is set up with a job and an apartment. On the other hand, “I had no idea how to actually start moving,” he says. “I had no connections, no agent,” he says. “Looking back, I had a lot of guts.”

So “seem” would be the operative word. Like most overnight sensations, there was a lot of hard work, risk-taking, and courage prior to the “overnight” that suddenly turned the world’s head in Krissa’s direction.

One thing that made heads swirl might have been a leopard-skin Speedo. Krissa has just finished a turn as Rocky in the Stratford Festival’s smash success production of the Rocky Horror Show. His performance was a tour-de-force, and netted him attention from far and wide—and from Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Rob Burke is the co-founder of Something Something Productions, which is known in part for its staging of the Rocky Horror Show at Corks Playhouse on Queen Street. Burke and his partner Dina Mavridis had come up with the idea of having an intimate, one-person concert featuring a musical theatre actor. “We were thinking of who we wanted to bring in for the first of this kind of concert,” he says. “We were following the stories at Stratford this year, hearing about the success of the Rocky Horror Show, and asking about the cast. Everyone kept saying how good this actor playing Rocky was. He did the character work, wasn’t just a muscle man.”

Burke did some research, and learned Krissa had quite a bit of experience singing in repertory theatre, playing Elvis in Million Dollar Quartet, Tony in West Side Story, and performing The Songs of Sinatra. Burke had his man. When he reached out to Krissa’s agent to make inquiries, he was very intrigued, but couldn’t reveal why until some ink had dried on a contract.

In that hard-work-plus-effortlessness way of Kris- sa’s life, it turns out he was in the process of confirming two lead roles at the Shaw Festival this upcoming season. A solo concert at Corks in February would be a lovely way to introduce himself to NOTL.

“I had always dreamed of being at Stratford and the Shaw,” says Krissa. But he never imagined starting out with feature roles in Rocky Horror and The Music Man in year one at Stratford, and leads in Brigadoon and A Hand in His Boy in his first year at the Shaw.

Krissa says he went to a general audition at the Shaw in 2017. “I didn’t hear anything back,” he says. “Then earlier in 2018 I got an offer from them. That’s the first time that’s ever happened to me,” he says with some awe. Interestingly, he auditioned with a song from Brigadoon. “It’s one of my favourite shows ever, and no one ever does it — anywhere,” he says. “Stuning music — it’s a role I’ve always wanted to play.”

In the meantime he also auditioned at Stratford. “It was a Donna Feore dance call, famously impossible,” he recalls. “I got a dance callback for the first time ever. Then I sang, and got a callback. Then I got a call saying I had been accepted — it was one of the most exciting moments of my life,” says the 30-year-old.

“I was struggling to even be brave enough to enter the room to audition. To have someone I’ve always wanted to work for ask me…. I only cried for a couple of minutes,” he says with a chuckle.

“My life goals were to work at the Shaw and Stratford, both notoriously hard to get into,” Krissa says. “It was a Donna Feore dance call, famously impossible,” he recalls. “I got a dance callback for the first time ever. Then I sang, and got a callback. Then I got a call saying I had been accepted — it was one of the most exciting moments of my life,” says the 30-year-old.

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Art instructors show their work at Pumphouse

By Lauren O’Malley, The NOTL Local

One of the current exhibits at the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre allows patrons to get to know the work of the people who teach at the centre.

The Pumphouse Instructors’ Exhibition features the oeuvres of several artists who teach classes and workshops at the gallery, including locals such as David Anticler. The artist is a former physiotherapist and human anatomy researcher, giving him profound insight into the inner workings of the body for life drawing.

Other artists in the exhibit include Patricia Haftar and Kayla Benner. One of Haftar’s pieces demonstrates the acrylic pouring class she will be teaching next month. The artist describes her work in relation to “rhythm, movement, pattern, texture and colour,” and says, “The Pumphouse is an excellent example of a structure that encapsulates the rhythm, patterns, textures, colours and movement of the community in which it is situated.”

Banner is a potter based in Port Colborne, who will be teaching an introduction to pottery series in January and February.

The exhibit, which runs until March 31, “offers a glimpse into the diversity and creativity of our instructors,” says Rima Boles, the art centre’s director. “It also shows students examples of what type of work they can expect from any given course.”

Boles says, “Some of these people have been teaching at the Pumphouse for a good 20 years — and we’re always looking for new instructors to bring new course offerings.”

“We are so fortunate to have this local art centre which focuses on education in all aspects of visual art for new and experienced artists of all ages. This historical building and space is such a great place to go to explore new creative ideas and to make paintings, sculptures, and many other arts and crafts. I love teaching in their big bright studio at the banks of the river. It’s all so inspiring in itself,” says instructor Sandra Iafrate.

Some winter programs have begun. A full list of courses is available at niagarapumphouse.ca.

The arts centre has also put out a call to artists for its Walker Industries Art Competition. The competition is juried by a panel of six locals and art academics, and will culminate in prize money of up to $2,500. Deadline for submissions is March 30, 2019; details can be found on the arts centre’s website.

By Lauren O’Malley.
By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

As the temperature chills (hopefully) for the weekend, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce is preparing for two weekends of celebrating the harvest of frozen grapes and the nectar they produce.

It was 24 years ago that the chamber began celebrating what quickly became known as ‘liquid gold,’ a sweet wine made by local wineries from grapes harvested and pressed while frozen, and served chilled, often with desserts.

The festival acknowledges the importance of the local product to the local wineries and the regional tourism industry, but nowhere is it as valued as in NOTL, where the celebration has been named the Original Icewine Festival, now going back to its roots, says Janice Thomson, chamber president.

In past years, it had become more of a winter festival on Queen Street, with craft beer and red and white wine also being served, she said.

But the wineries decided a few years ago to revert to serving icewine only — since that was what was being celebrated.

The Sparkle and Ice gala, the Friday evening event, is a celebration of icewine-makers and their VQA wines, paired with culinary tastings prepared by chefs from NOTL restaurants, which have formed a group known as Signature Kitchen Chefs.

The gala will be held at the Prince of Wales Hotel’s Royal Cambridge, with an evening finale of fireworks and an icewine toast to follow.

The Icewine Village opens to the public Saturday, Jan. 19, on Queen Street, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and again on Sunday, Jan. 20, from noon to 5 p.m. Shimmering ice sculptures stretch from King Street to Regent Street along Queen Street, which is closed to traffic, and under a dozen tents 23 wineries serve samplings of icewine, with culinary treats again prepared by Signature Kitchen Chefs.

Queen Street takes on a completely different atmosphere Saturday evening for the Flash and Panache Icewine Cocktail Competition. Bragging rights are important to local chefs who put their skills to the test of creating new and amazing icewine cocktails, at an event which locals love to attend.

The street will remain closed between the two weekends, with ice sculptures and a dozen tents left on the roadway, said Thomson, in preparation for the second weekend, Saturday, Jan. 26, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, Jan. 27 from noon to 5 p.m. About 15,000 tourists are expected to visit the festival over the two weekends, she said.

The prelude to the second weekend will be the 5th annual White on Ice Dinner Friday, Jan. 25, again celebrating all things icewine. It begins with an outdoor reception before moving into the ballroom in the Court House. VQA wines will be served with cuisine from the Signature Kitchen Chefs, accompanied by live music and dancing.

The evening concludes with fireworks and an icewine toast under the stars.

Admission to the Icewine Village is free, with tokens available for purchase of the food and wine tastings.

Throughout the month of January, local wineries join in the festivities by offering weekend events of icewine samplings and culinary adventures — check the chamber’s calendar of events at https://www.niagaraoonthelake.com/event-calendar for more details.

The Original Icewine Festival opens with a gala Friday and an Icewine Village on Queen Street Saturday and Sunday. (Elena Gayley-Pride)

Visitors vote town ‘most welcoming’

By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake is a town of awards and distinctions, topping lists in all kinds of categories — the prettiest town, the best hotels, best fine dining, best in heritage preservation and volunteerism, and the friendliest — that was from expedia.

It can now add one more to the list. NOTL has been named one of the most welcoming places on Earth.

‘It is very gratifying to see the long-term investment made in hospitality recognized,’ said NOTL Chamber of Commerce president Janice Thomson. It’s especially rewarding to see the town regarded so highly by visitors who have expereienced its hotels, restaurants, events and hospitality first-hand, she added.

The accolade comes from visitor surveys, she said, through booking.com. The surveys indicated 73 per cent of global travellers say that friendly and interesting locals are one of their top considerations when selecting a destination for their next trip.

NOTL made the list along with Goreme (Turkey), Sianji (Croatia), Elu- anbi (Taiwan), Lake Tekapo (New Zealand), Bendigo (Australia), Newport (US), Nozawa Onsen (Japan), Fernando de Noronha (Brazil) and El Chalten (Argentina).
Social media moderator provides ‘party line’ for 1,300 locals

By Lauren O’Malley
The NOTL Local

Some 1,300 locals know Julia Buxton Cox as the moderator of the members-only (i.e. Niagara-on-the-Lake residents only) Facebook group NOTL Today.

“It purely came about because of all the goodness we’ve seen in this town,” says the 48-year-old transplant from Oakville. She sees this as a volunteer role, a way for her to give back to the town she has grown to love deeply.

“The Facebook page represents my passion for this town, for connecting residents and providing a platform for them to speak to each other,” she says. The page is something of a version of people opening up their windows and yelling out a question to their neighbours, or hanging out at the local coffee shop or pub. “I see it like the old fashioned party phone lines,” says Buxton Cox — which allowed several people to speak at once — “or like having coffee with your neighbours, but you can do it in your PJs.”

Before choosing to move to Niagara-on-the-Lake, Buxton Cox was the owner/operator of a travel agency in Oakville. With her warm and gregarious nature, it’s no surprise she found herself in that industry.

She fell into it unexpectedly. “We were preparing to attend a destination wedding in Punta Cana, and I got to talking with the travel agent who was organizing it,” she says. “I was discussing sales and deals at the time, and didn’t like the hours — evenings and weekends.”

But the move to town was in the works. “We were married here,” says Buxton Cox. “We bought our house on Costa Rica. “It was so inspiring — how close to nature people can live,” she says. “Pura vida.”

“Buxton Cox seems to have found her own version of ‘pure life’ in her house surrounded by mature trees, the grounds dotted with bird feeders and attracting all kinds of fauna.”

“Not a day goes by that we don’t feel blessed to live here,” she says.

That statement is not often heard coming from dedicated followers of politics — a tribe which Buxton Cox was surprised to find herself joining when she moved to town. “I started following council because we are a small town and it was just an interest,” she says. “I went along to meetings, and now we’re live streaming the meetings at home, cooking dinner and enjoying a glass of wine while watching them. It gives you a really good sense of what’s going on, who councillors are, how they vote.”

However, policing is not allowed on NOTL Today. “The page’s description is very specific about rules and protocol,” she says. “This is a forum for residents of NOTL to come together to promote events, share photos, look for recommendations and discuss issues facing our town. We welcome lively debate but it must be in a mature and respectful manner. We will not tolerate any form of bullying or vulgar comments,” states the mandate written by Buxton Cox.

“People are seeking a community where everyone is seeking it face-to-face,” says the extroverted recent local, who has met “hundreds of people” as a result of the forum.

She spends about seven to 10 hours a week moderating NOTL Today, and says, “Overall it has been a great experience. I really do have a passion for the town. As a travel agent I know what we have here. I just want the goodness of the town to come through on the page.”

Posts on NOTL Today include shots of local beauty, questions about power outages; requests for recommendations for dentists, driveway pavers and restaurants; and lost and/or found dogs. The page bypassed a call to Ken Reid, the local “dogcatcher,” when a message of a found dog was posted and the owner was found and picked up his pooch within less than an hour.

“I’m always looking for good people to endorse,” says Buxton Cox. “We’re open to suggestions on how we can improve. I just want to see people happy.”

Recently she decided to ask residents for photographs of their pets to use as the page’s profile image, rotating seasonally. The current “winter” image is a moody shot of bare trees on the Commons by photographer David Gilchrist. Gilchrist also often posts striking nature shots, most recently of a “coywolf” spotted by Butler’s Burial Grounds.

Other familiar posts on the page include links to stories Buxton Cox shares from the many local media sources, as well as member posts about events from everything from ice wine picking to the sad announcement of the passing of Thomas the cat at Petland.

NOTL Today, as curated by Buxton Cox, is a real snapshot of our diverse and yet connected community.
Gratitude among friends

Tony Chisholm, president of the Friends of Fort George, is excited to express his gratitude to supporters of the non-profit organization of volunteers who work so hard to support the works of Parks Canada and local historic sites.

“I ask for something, he says how much,” Chisholm says of the generosity of Doug Rempel and Bosley Real Estate. “And he always reminds me to come back soon.”

Rempel is a sales representative who believes deeply in the inherent and historical beauty of Niagara-on-the-Lake. “We can never really ‘own’ Niagara,” he says. “We are simply caretakers of its history and participants in a very special lifestyle.” He also finds it important to focus on education and community, so the students hired by the FoFG for seasonal work at the fort are an ideal initiative for Rempel to support. “It’s all about respecting the impact of what the Friends of Fort George do to continue education,” says Rempel.

“You never know,” he continues, “you sow a seed here and you sow a seed there, and then you’ve fostered something.” The realtor generally donates gift certificates from local restaurants for the silent auction fundraisers held by the FoFG. As Chisholm points out, “This way he’s supporting local businesses, as well as a local non-profit.” Chisholm continues, “He certainly deserves this award, and Bosley certainly deserves this award.”

The plaque presented by Chisholm to Rempel features a dramatic and moody photograph of fog rolling over the ground of the fort seen through the frame of the dark, daunting gates, and will take pride of place on an entryway wall of the Bosley Real Estate office on King Street.

Other top supporters of the Friends of Fort George can expect to receive awards in the weeks and months to come, as Chisholm goes about showing the group’s gratitude to the community.

By Lauren O’Malley
The NOTL Local

Tony Chisholm, president of the Friends of Fort George, presents a plaque to Doug Rempel of Bosley Real Estate for his support of the volunteer organization. (Lauren O’Malley)
January 17, 2019

By Lauren O’Malley
The NOTL Local

1800 meets 2019 on ice

Eras collided — but people didn’t — on the ice at the Fort George rink for the first annual Regency Skating Party on Saturday.

The rink and the fort were both a-bustle all afternoon, with demonstrations, musket firings, Regency-era fashion shows, and skating. Sentinel Carriages ferried people on the bumpy path between the two locations, and added to a real sense of what life was like in the early 1800’s.

Reenactors made their way to the event from all over Ontario, many having made outfits specifically for the skating party. Abel Land, a period costumer based in Guelph, hand stitched a spectacular gentleman’s overcoat with mink trim and wooden buttons. Both Land and local Rick Meloen even wore period skates.

Dozens of regular skaters seemed to enjoy the anachronism of the Regency enthusiasts, and stayed to watch the skating contest, judged by Parks Canada’s Scott Finlay as Sir Isaac Brock. Meloen won as the best (and only) amateur; three reenactors were also given prize baskets of goodies from local shops.

You have almost a whole year to plan your outfit for next year’s event — the gift shop at Fort George has patterns to get you started.

Expect the unexpected

Continued from Page 13

When Krissa was growing up in Lashburn, Saskatchewan, population 750 (“I laugh when people say the town of 100,000 people”), he and his friends had a favourite pastime. “We were super-duper popular,” he says. “A group of us would get free movies for five days for $5 and watch them all — the worst horror movies.” In another full-circle achievement, “Another crowning moment of my life was when I got to be in one of those really campy scary movies,” he says. Another high point was being given the Guthrie Award at Stratford last year. “They give out awards at Stratford,” he explains. “Some are financial, like small grants. ‘Everything I had was stained orange on the inside,’ he laughs. “I had to be spray-tanned every day. I had to replace all of my clothing, and spent a lot of money on supplements and protein powders” to develop the perfectly-sculpted body of a mad scientist’s embodiment of the perfect man. “I asked for money to replace it all, and they awarded me the Guthrie,” he says with his typical combination of humour and humility.

That humility is further evidenced by Krissa’s unwillingness to share his own songs on stage. “I love playing guitar and writing songs,” he says, “but just for myself, mostly because I don’t think they’re very good.” He goes on to make an insightful point: “You’re not really creating when you’re trying to teach you anything. I just want to entertain you,” he says. Although he does have special guests in the show, so he won’t be entirely on his own.

Krissa becomes an honorary local in February, taking up residence just down the street from the Festival Theatre. Rehearsals start on Valentine’s Day, so the Toronto-transplant sees this concert as a great lead-in to the season.

The concert is at Corks Playhouse Theatre on Feb. 9, 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. Tickets are $40, general seating, and can be purchased online or by phone at 289-668-0482 to save service fees, says Burke.

The triple-threat performer is looking forward to his first ever solo concert. “This will be nice because I’m not trying to teach you anything; I just want to entertain you,” he says. Although he does have special guests in the show, so he won’t be entirely on his own.

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Shaw film series builds on sense of community
By Lauren O’Malley
The NOTL Local
Locals know how it works on Saturday afternoons: Get to the Festival Theatre at about 1 p.m. Line up with some friends on a seat to reserve your favourite spot, and then go back out into the lobby for a sip and a sup. These are the Shaw Festival Film Series rituals. And yes, there’s a movie in there too.

What has become its real centerpiece is maybe not so much the movies, but the social community feel,” says Steve Levy, founder and director of the series. Of course the films themselves are relevant and important, he affirms. Levy spends 10 months of the year selecting and chasing down the films that ran on the Royal George theatre, between December and February—every year for thirteen years.

Levy and his wife Rita moved to town from Toronto to California almost 20 years ago. “We used to come to Niagara-on-the-Lake to see plays at the Shaw,” the youthful 80-year-old recounts. “One afternoon we saw a show at the Festival Theatre. During the intermission we stood on the back patio and looked out and said, ‘Why not move here?’” They bought our house that afternoon.”

He loved the sense of community, but as an actor and film producer, he found he really missed seeing foreign and independent films. “The only films you could see around here were blockbusters in St. Catharines or Niagara Falls,” Levy recalls. He decided to approach the Shaw festival about using the Royal George theatre as a cinema in the off-season. The George was built in 1915 to entertain the troops, and Levy thought it fitting to put it back to use as a film house.

“I thought the most difficult thing would be to get the films,” Levy says. “That turned out to be the easiest part.” He approached the Shaw Festival with his idea, and was given a hard no.

Perhaps using the skills he learned selling aluminum siding in his youth, Levy didn’t give up. “I don’t know why I thought I should try again, but a couple of months later there was a new regime at the Shaw, so I spoke to them—and they were all for it,” he says. There were two conditions: They couldn’t offer the Royal George theatre, because it wasn’t equipped with heating, and this was planned for the winter months—but the Festival Theatre was available, being winter months—but the Festival Theatre was available, being empty for several months between seasons. Problem solved. But, they wouldn’t supply the screen and projector required, and estimated the cost for both at $75,000.

Levy, undaunted, reached out to Carol Walker on the advice of some friends. “They said she loved film, and was well-connected within the community.” Walker was just the ticket. “Through her help we raised the money necessary to buy the screen and projector.”

Now to source the films. Levy approached the Toronto International Film Festival. “I thought TIFF would be the perfect source—not for films from their own festival, but for their connections to distributors.”

Levy says he went to the organizers of TIFF and said, “I’m trying… I’d like… is there any way…?” The response surprised him. “They said sure, you can access anything you want.” It turns out they were just launching a mandate to reach out to smaller communities.

“It’s been a joy,” says Levy. “I enjoy choosing the films and feeling the community thing—it’s giving back to the community, but it’s also giving to me. I get an ego rush in picking the films.”

His criteria? “One, that I like the film. Two, taking into consideration the overall audience—which is changing from an older demographic to a younger one, more open to subtitles,” he says. And they must be entertaining and well made.

A local element has been added last year and this, with Barbara Tranters’ short film series Historical Gossip being screened before some of the films. Tranters’ films focus on stories local such as Blanche Quinn, Norm Howe and Don- ald Combe.

The film series has shrunk slightly this year, with the cancellation of the documentary component. The trea- sured by many Saturday afternoons also came under threat this year, but patrons and Shaw supporters were up in arms, and the film series survives.

“The best goes on,” says Levy. “A schedule of upcoming films can be found at shawfest.com/films. Tickets can be pur- chased online and at the Shaw Festival box office.”

Town youth council looking for needs of peers
By Lauren O’Malley
The NOTL Local
Some of Niagra-ra-on-the-Lake’s brightest young minds are looking after the youth of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

A dozen young people, met at the town hall Monday to discuss ways to meet their mandate of giving youth a voice in NOTL and encouraging community involvement. This meeting of the Lord Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council featured three special guest speakers: Lord Mayor Betty Disero has promised activities for the Lord Mayor’s Advisory Council, at their January meeting. (Lauren O’Malley)

Disero has promised support to the LMYAC, and brought in community leaders Bjorgan and Mavridis to help champion the youth and share their wisdom.

“Lord Mayor Betty implemented ideas about having a economic plan, housing plan, new activities, and new jobs in Niagara-on-the-Lake,” says Alexcia Cofell, a council member. “She also mentioned she can thrive as a committee by reaching out to Maria and Steffanie, who would provide us with many resources.”

“She also said the youth are the future of our town,” says Bethany Poltl, another member. “She is trying to keep us here, wants us to stay.”

Maria Mavridis and Steffanie Bjorgan talked about potential opportunities for the Lord Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council,” says Cofell.

Some of the group will be attending an upcoming vision board workshop run by the Red Roof Retreat’s mental wellness initiative. “Our next project is the second an- nual Mental Health and Wellness day to help bridge the gap between Grade 8 and high school,” says Poltl. The group is working hard to secure a wide variety of speakers and activities for the event.

LMYAC meetings are held monthly. Locals between the ages of 13 and 18 are encouraged to join, applications are available online through jointconversa-
tionnotl.org.
Norm Howe earned a place in hearts of locals

By Penny Coles

**THE NOTL Local**

Norm Howe, a man who earned a place in many hearts in Niagara-on-the-Lake, died Dec. 6 at the age of 93.

A beloved father of four and husband to the love of his life, Margherita, who died in 2006, he was also a friend to many in town.

Next month, at the Shaw Festival Film Series, a short video about him will be shown before the feature movie, providing a glimpse into his life as a fighter pilot in the Second World War.

“He was intelligent, lovin’ funny, engaging, generous, witty, empathetic, creative and self-sacrificing. He saw the best in others and gave the best he had,” wrote his son, Michael for Norm’s obituary, also describing him as a champion tennis player, amateur watercolour artist and a bird-watcher.

Those who were fortunate to call him friend knew him as a great story-teller and a bird-watcher. His son Michael, Robin and Peter, added.

“He instilled in us a great love for humanity.”

A glimpse of those years in the Old Town has been recorded in the first part of two videos by film-maker Barbara Tranter, who grew up living beside the Howes. Her parents were part of the “party scene” with 20 to 30 couples, she said, which went on for 10 to 20 years.

And the kids, she added, also had fun, mostly unsupervised and “free to develop our own scenes. Life was so different for kids those days.”

It was the party atmosphere of those decades, which she considers part of the social history of NOTL, that she wanted to capture in talking with Norm. Although Margherita was the extrovert and Norm the quiet one, he had a great sense of humour and lots of entertaining stories of the era to pass on — stories which would have been lost eventually without that recording.

“I’m trying to capture the stories and the people before they’re gone.”

Her first interview with Norm was done in 2017, and the resulting video was shown last winter as part of Tranter’s Historical Gossip series during the Shaw Festival Film Series one Saturday afternoon, before the feature movie. It’s a wonderful glimpse of him at his finest, reminiscing and joking about some of the best days of his life.

Tranter interviewed Norm again about three weeks before he died, and is in the process of editing the footage in preparation for showing it at this year’s Shaw Festival Film Series in February. This second part will focus on his war years, when he served as a fighter pilot in the Royal Air Force, based in Britain and flying bombing missions over Germany.

He had aged considerably since the first video was made, she said, but his mind, and his familiar and much-loved wit, were still sharp. He showed a different side, one of the pragmatism required of a young man who understood the devastation caused by about 80 solo bombing missions, for which he was much decorated, and which he could describe without emotion as doing the job he was sent to do.

The five-minute films are meant to show a “vignette” of the people she has interviewed, but the first one focused on Howe as much about life in NOTL in those decades, as seen through his eyes, said Tranter. His stories and some of the photos she includes in the film provide a sense that it was a time of great fun and celebration — the war was over and although many lives had been lost, these young men and women had survived to marry and raise their families in a community they had chosen to call home, and in a way that was surprisingly normal given what they had lived through, she said.

The film to be screened in February will show the veteran looking back on a very different time, but one which shaped the lives of the generations to come.

During the years after the war, Norm was Margherita’s biggest supporter, her passionate activism an accepted part of family life. It led to several awards, including her being named to the Order of Canada for her fight to clean up the Great Lakes and the Niagara River.

At her funeral at St. Mark’s Church, Norm spoke of her with great love and admiration, while holding on to a beautiful wooden box that had been a gift to her from the Great Lakes Society, and which held her ashes. He said when his turn came, he hoped she would “scooch over” to make room for him. He’s there with her now, said Louise, following a private family service. A public celebration of Norm’s life is being planned for the spring.

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Rest is best treatment for concussion

By Lauren O’Malley
The NOTL Local

A head injury used to be lightly known as “hav- ing your bell rung,” and was more often than not treated by just “walking it off.” But so these days, with concussions being top of mind — as it were — for parents, athletes, and, rea- lly, most people.

Essentially, your head is a big heavy flower sitting on top of a relatively weak stem. “You can put as much protection on your head as you like, but the neck is what you have to brace for,” says Sean Simpson, compounding pharmacist and owner of Simpson’s Pharmacy and Simpson’s Apothecary. Simpson is known for his expertise in and alternative treatments of traumatic brain injuries (TBI).

The pharmacist’s first piece of advice is to try to prevent your risk of concussions. You can’t pre- vent them, but one way to diminish the chances is to strengthen the muscles in your neck — make that stem stronger. Simpson also makes an argument for an “optimal state of health versus a sub-opti- mal state. You can mini- mize the damage to neuro- logical processes through diet and supplementation.”

Much of his advice for prevention also applies to the treatment of head inju- ries. “Magnesium is a min- eral that that most of us are deficient in to begin with,” he says, and encourages adding it to your suppli- ments. “One of the foun- dations or cornerstone is omega-3 fatty acids, as they are anti-inflammatory. It’s not just something that’s for heart health even though that’s typically what people think of, but it is important for neurological processes as well.” He also recom- mends curcumin, vitamin C, zinc, B complex, and branch chain amino acids.

Regardless of supple- ments, athletes are even more vulnerable to brain injuries. “The worst in- juries are the ones where both people are looking everywhere and collide at high speed: their necks and bodies aren’t braced for the impact, so the damage is amplified,” says Simp- son. He believes the inci- dence of TBIs in football, and hockey is six to seven times higher than what ac- tually is reported, because so aren’t diagnosed.

Mouth guards can help by absorbing some of the shock, but another problem is your brain. “Keeping it relaxed from the very beginning is even more important,” says the pharmacist. “You can’t make the brain stop impact, but you can make it more resilient.”

Simpson’s Apothecary also makes a point of sharing his knowledge on the sub- ject with patients, parents, and schools.

“If a patient comes to me with a diagnosed con- cussion I want to be sure they’re doing everything they can to make the brun- ning heal,” says Friesen. He echoes Simpson’s advice for a well-balanced diet, supplementation, good sleep hygiene and cop- ing mechanisms for stress management.

TBI patients tend to feel a great deal of anxiety, with nothing visibly wrong with them and yet they are under strict instructions to do virtually nothing. Simpson describes con- cussion as “an excitatory state,” and recommends trying supplements such as L-Theanine, “a calming type of amino acid that can support people who are suffering,” and melatonin which he says helps with sleep and is also a very poten- tial antioxidant.

He also recommends meditation to focus and cal- m the brain with minimum effort. Any apps or guid- ed meditations relax and allow for healing, he said. “The simple idea is that it relaxes your mind — you’re taking control of your brainwaves and calm- ing them from the exci- tatory state. Calming your brain allows it to heal.”

“Sugar is inflammato- ry in nature and so by re- moving it we’re reducing some of the damage,” he adds. He recommends high-quality unsweetened electrolyte drinks.

And when the time is right to begin resuming activity, he suggests yoga as an excellent mind-body re-integration.

Friesen also warns of trying to get back to normal activity too quick- ly. “As your concussion symptoms start to lift, you wake up one day thinking, ‘Hey, I feel pretty good,’” he says. “But just because you feel better doesn’t mean you’re healed.” The chi- ropractor urges people to err on the side of caution. Take it more slowly than you want to, he advises. Do less, not more.

“When you’re abso- lutely symptom-free, try a very light workout and see how the body responds,” says Friesen. “Try some light reading, and see how the body re- sponds.” He encourag- es parents to understand that kids with concussions are not going to be able to study for tests, or get back on the team for that important game. He says most concussions can heal well, 85 to 100 per cent can get better — but he stresses that any subsequent blow can do major damage.

Supplements can be used to prevent and treat concussions. (Lauren O’Malley)

CONCUSSIONS BY AGE GROUP

PER 1000

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Source: Concussions Ontario

The problem is, as Friesen notes, when the brain allows it to heal. “Consult a health pro- fessional immediately after an injury,” says the phar - macist. “Symptoms don’t always happen right away — they can take several weeks or even months to manifest.”

Consult a health professional immediately after any kind of head or neck injury to confirm whether or not it’s serious and re- quires treatment. “Not so these days,” says Friesen. He adds, “Not so these days, treated by just ‘walking it off.’”

High-quality unsweetened electrolyte drinks. And when the time is right to begin resuming activity, he suggests yoga as an excellent mind-body re-integration.

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The family of the late Eleanor Ep, who passed away Jan 1-2019, would like to thank the Niagara Medical Centre team and Dr. Bested for the amazing care they provided during a difficult time. Also like to thank the incredible staff of Bethany Memory, Church, Simpsons Pharmacy, and all the family and friends that provided so much love and care.

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January 17, 2019

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Across
1 Distant
6 Apex
9 Jobs
14 “ER” actress --- Tierney
15 “--- Beleve”
Monkees hit
16 Start playing!
17 Tap
19 “Fear of Flying” author --- Jong
20 Snow runner
21 Less common
22 Buoyant
23 Old-fashioned cab
25 Lightweight tropical hats
27 Elite group
28 Gene Pitney was only 24 hrs from here
29 Downloadable program
32 Small lake
34 Natter
35 Tenor --- Bocelli
37 Sidestepped
39 Splendors
40 Demeanor
41 Total
42 Capital of Norway
43 Source of fumaric acid
44 Jambalaya ingredient
46 Little one
47 “Band of Gold” singer - Freda
48 Miscreants
51 Economistizer

Down
1 Pennsylvania Mennonites
2 Say --- formerly Ceylon
3 Ahead of the field
4 Mineral source
5 Litter of pigs
6 Tracery
7 Stimulus
8 Security detachment
9 Anna Paquin won an Oscar for this film, aged 11
10 Spanish winds
11 The pen
12 Tracery
13 Remain
18 Rotating engine part
24 Welcome
26 Old Testament song
29 Nobleman
30 Rind
31 --- doble (dance)
32 One of the “Three Bears"
33 “--- Almighty”, in which Morgan Freeman played God
34 Nixon’s successor, informally
36 Drivel
38 At peace
39 Rev up
41 --- Todd, barber
45 Chest pain
46 Am disposed
47 Serenity
48 Pro
49 Gun handle nick
50 Notices
51 Get outta here!
52 “--- want is a room somewhere…” (“My Fair Lady”)
53 Bridal wear
55 Start of a Hamlet soliloquy
59 Geological time composed of periods

SUDOKU PUZZLE

The family of the late Eleanor Ep, who passed away Jan 1-2019, would like to thank the Niagara Medical Centre team and Dr. Bested for the amazing care they provided during a difficult time. Also like to thank the incredible staff of Bethany Memory, Church, Simpsons Pharmacy, and all the family and friends that provided so much love and care.

Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124
Our upstairs hall is available to rent for weddings, birthdays, meetings, and as a commercial venue.
Contact the Branch office weekdays 10am to 4pm or leave a request with our staff.
418 King Street
905-488-2353

January 17, 2019

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Across
1 Distant
6 Apex
9 Jobs
14 “ER” actress --- Tierney
15 “--- Beleve”
Monkees hit
16 Start playing!
17 Tap
19 “Fear of Flying” author --- Jong
20 Snow runner
21 Less common
22 Buoyant
23 Old-fashioned cab
25 Lightweight tropical hats
27 Elite group
28 Gene Pitney was only 24 hrs from here
29 Downloadable program
32 Small lake
34 Natter
35 Tenor --- Bocelli
37 Sidestepped
39 Splendors
40 Demeanor
41 Total
42 Capital of Norway
43 Source of fumaric acid
44 Jambalaya ingredient
46 Little one
47 “Band of Gold” singer - Freda
48 Miscreants
51 Economistizer

Down
1 Pennsylvania Mennonites
2 Say --- formerly Ceylon
3 Ahead of the field
4 Mineral source
5 Litter of pigs
6 Tracery
7 Stimulus
8 Security detachment
9 Anna Paquin won an Oscar for this film, aged 11
10 Spanish winds
11 The pen
12 Tracery
13 Remain
18 Rotating engine part
24 Welcome
26 Old Testament song
29 Nobleman
30 Rind
31 --- doble (dance)
32 One of the “Three Bears"
33 “--- Almighty”, in which Morgan Freeman played God
34 Nixon’s successor, informally
36 Drivel
38 At peace
39 Rev up
41 --- Todd, barber
45 Chest pain
46 Am disposed
47 Serenity
48 Pro
49 Gun handle nick
50 Notices
51 Get outta here!
52 “--- want is a room somewhere…” (“My Fair Lady”)
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SUDOKU PUZZLE
Niagara Motors skates to win over Pelham

By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

The Niagara Motors novice house league team looked strong on the ice as players skated to a 6-1 win over the Pelham Panthers Saturday afternoon at the Centennial Arena in Virgil. (Fred Mercnik)

NOTL Nationals won 7-3 against Windsor Saturday, the third-place team in the South Division of the GMHL, putting the Nationals in sixth place as the local team heads into the final stretch of regular season play. The game was at home in the Meridian Credit Union Arena Friday. The next home game for the Nationals is this Friday, Jan. 18 at 7 p.m. (Fred Mercnik)

NOTL Nationals in sixth place leading up to divisional playoffs

“We were unsure going into the season, but top five or six going into the playoffs would be a big accomplishment for our first year.” They will play their last regular season game at the Meridian Credit Union Arena in Virgil Feb. 15, with the playoffs beginning shortly after. The new franchise team of the Greater Metro Hockey League started off strong, and has continued building momentum in the South division. Two losses mid-December were followed by three wins, putting them in a tight race to the post-season.

Their most recent game Sunday was a 6-1 loss to North York but they remain in sixth place, said DeWolfe.

Having developed such a competitive team for its first year, DeWolfe hopes to keep his core players going into the Nationals’ second season, but he knows he will lose one who will age out and others as they go off to post-secondary school or leave to pursue other opportunities. Tryouts for next season will begin in April, he said, for players 16 to 21 years old.

The team has already lost one skilled player to a professional team in Nor-way, and has gained some additions this season as well, sending four players to representing the Nationals at the Quebec all-star showcase this weekend.

For more information about tryouts or game results visit notlnationals.com.
Welcome to this beautiful property tucked back from the Parkway in a quiet area of Niagara-on-the-Lake. This property is perhaps most impressive for its incredible setting. With views of your own vineyard outside your door, this cultivated land is simply overwhelming. The Century Old Town and a stroll away from restaurants, trails and restaurants. The kitchen and living/dining room have an open plan interior layout, with large sliding doors to a balcony overlooking a ravine.

This extraordinary property offers a unique lifestyle with substantial living space and its specification level of the highest standards. It is located on a half acre directly across from the 9th hole of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Course the oldest golf Club in North America. This home has been refurbished with fastidious attention to detail. Developed over some years the main property has three substantial guest Bed & Breakfast suites all with ensuites and outdoor decks and/or balconies. The master suite comprising a spacious ensuite steam shower, walk-in closet and a balcony with a hot tub is its own oasis. The property further entails a Great Room with a see-through fireplace to the covered outdoor kitchen with a fully equipped BBQ, dining room, private office, 2 laundry rooms, professionally equipped kitchen, and gym. The terraces offer an outside living space overlooking a pond, gazebo, putting green and water feature. Enhanced with a 3+ car garage and parking for an additional 6 cars, this is a one-of-a-kind home.

This Gatta home overlooks a wooded backyard and offers a serene oasis with a waterfall and a variety of spaces guaranteed to appeal. Located in the heart of Niagara-on-the-Lake, this custom built bungalow spans 1875 sq. ft, and hosts a den and 2 bedrooms on the upper level, including an impressive owners suite.

Nestled in the four season Garrison Village community, the reproduction facade blends seamlessly with the chic, clean-lined open floor plan, which is perfect for modern living on a grand scale. A gracious entrance foyer leads to the expansive Great Room featuring an abundance of windows, a fireplace, a custom kitchen and dining area.

This fully furnished Bed & Breakfast ½ Storey was built in the 80’s and is set just outside the sought after village of NOTL. The spacious Guest suites are rooms filled with light and open spaces, sought after village of NOTL. The spacious Guest suites are rooms filled with light and open spaces, all encapsulating a perfect place, a custom kitchen and dining area.

This property backs on to Two Mile Creek was built in 2015 and designed for 2 level living in a Bungalow. The condominium development is located steps from the Old Town of NOTL, wineries, trails and restaurants. The kitchen and living/dining room have an open plan interior layout, with large sliding doors to a balcony overlooking a ravine.

This 5 Bedroom Inn is in a prime location across the street from the Pillar & Post Inn and Conference Centre. It is walking distance to all the fine/casual dining, live theatre, boutique shops and parks that Niagara-on-the-Lake has to offer. The Weatherpine Inn is an elegant retreat nestled in a beautiful garden setting and the property was designed in the tradition of a fine country inn with wide plank pine floors with a focus on privacy: Vaulted wood-beamed ceilings and a double sided fireplace complement the traditional architecture of the Inn. The large wrap around porch and second storey balcony offer the perfect setting for guests to relax and enjoy a coffee or glass of Niagara wine. Many aspects of this property have been grandfathered and are not achievable in Niagara-on-the-Lake anymore. The new gardens being created by Vintage Hotels down the street will only drive more business to this Inn. Have a look and be the master of your own business.

This contemporary home has been designed with remarkable attention to detail in every respect. It offers many comforts for leading a quality lifestyle, whether this is your second home in Niagara-on-the-Lake or a space you live in year-round. Highlights include a gorgeous galley kitchen with high-end appliances and granite counters.