

The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL



NOTL dog groomers not considered essential — yet

page 5

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Another activity cancelled by COVID

NOTL resident David Gilchrist in his scuba gear is ready for a dive at the Welland Scuba Club, although the pandemic cancelled his traditional New Year's Day dive this year. For story see page 12. (Jim Lockard)



Sailboat safe at Navy Hall dock

Residents can help best by staying away from the dock

Penny Coles
The Local

For those who have seen a solitary sailboat anchored in the Niagara River and wondered why it was there, the mystery has been solved, at least in part.

After weeks of not moving, the sailboat disappeared from its usual spot last week, and is now tied up at Navy Hall dock.

A local humanitarian who has been helping the lone man living on the boat spoke to The Local on a couple of conditions. He didn't want to be named, and he couldn't stress enough how important it is that the man on the boat — he called him John — be left alone.

The story he and his wife shared is of a man who prizes his solitude above all else. If he is approached, he may feel threatened and decide to head back out into the river, and the

good samaritan who has taken him under his wing says that's the last thing he wants to happen, after all the efforts to get John safely to shore. "At this point he's safe where he is, and should be able to stay there all winter."

Going out into the river could be disastrous, not only for John, but if something happens to him, for anyone who tries to save him.

The couple who are helping him describe John as a man who seems a genius from the way he talks, but definitely struggles with mental health issues, and lives in his own reality.

He and his wife haven't been alone in his efforts to help. The U.S. Coast Guard, authorities from CFB Trenton, and the local police have all been involved. They know about the

Continued on page 8

Outbreak at NOTL facility spread quickly

Penny Coles
The Local

COVID cases in Niagara-on-the-Lake have been growing at an alarming rate, mainly due to a rising number of cases in local seniors' facilities.

An outbreak at Niagara Long Term Care Residence was reported Saturday, Jan. 2, with the home's first positive staff case discovered through regular testing. By Mon-

day evening it had grown to include 52 residents with active cases, with one resolved, and 19 staff members with active cases, and two resolved, says Chris Poos, executive director of the facility.

"Sadly, four residents have passed away due to COVID-19-related issues, and our condolences have been extended to the families."

Poos says staff are in regular contact with Pub-

lic Health, along with Niagara Health partners, and continue ongoing weekly testing for staff and previously COVID-negative residents.

"We are also in regular contact with all residents, families, and staff regarding the status of COVID-19 in our home," he says.

"We remain diligent in all our infection prevention and control measures, including

twice-daily screening of residents and staff for any signs of the COVID-19 virus, and regular testing. Residents are isolated to their rooms, receiving in-room meal service, and are being cared for by staff on contact droplet precautions. We have appropriate staffing levels, and all staff are wearing full personal protective equipment at all times, which is well stocked in the home."

Poos says he is work-

ing with the Ministry of Long Term Care to secure COVID rapid tests, producing results in 15 minutes, "which will give us real time information to assist us in managing this outbreak," along with additional resident and staff vaccinations.

While the home did have some rooms with three residents previously, Poos says changes have been made so those rooms now accommodate only

two residents.

"Sadly, once the virus enters a congregate living environment, this often silent and invisible enemy spreads fast," says Poos. "This is not unique to Niagara Long Term Care," he adds, and is seen in many senior residences across the province, and the country. "We know there is a much greater risk to our homes when there

Continued on page 2

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Upper Canada Lodge residents vaccinated early

Penny Coles
The Local

Last Thursday, 96 per cent of the residents of Upper Canada Lodge were given the Pfizer vaccination to protect against COVID-19. They were the first seniors' home in Niagara-on-the-Lake to receive their share of the vaccine. Marg Lambert, the long-term care home administrator, says they are waiting for Public Health to confirm the official date for the important second dose. A news release from Niagara Health Monday says that supply shortages of the Pfizer vaccine are resulting in changes to Niagara's vaccination plan, with the directive that all first doses of vaccine are to be used to vaccinate residents, staff and essential caregivers in long-

term care and high-risk retirement homes, with the second dose to be administered 21 to 27 days later. With vaccinations starting in Niagara just last Wednesday, Upper Canada Lodge didn't have long to wait. "We were fortunate to actually receive the vaccinations early. We worked really hard to get everything in place right away, including consents from the residents or their substitute decision-makers," says Lambert. The lodge also had its doctors review every resident's chart to confirm if it was safe for them to receive the vaccination, she says. "We were able to let Public Health know that we were ready prior to the start of the resident vaccination program, and we really appreciated the efficient work

done by the nursing team and the doctors to make this happen." The vaccinations, she says, "went amazingly well. Public Health staff were on site to assist with preparing the vaccine for the residents, and completing the necessary paperwork." The resident vaccination clinic was organized by Denise Murphy, the home's director of care, and Dr. Tim Bastedo, the home's medical director, was invited to participate along with staff of the home. The actual vaccination of the residents took only two hours, she says. "Following the vaccinations, our nursing staff were completing follow-up checks on every resident throughout the day, and of course documentation in the residents' charts." Appointments are now being booked for staff to get

their shots at the Niagara Health St. Catharines Hospital site. "At this point," says Lambert, "we have close to 80 per cent of the staff booked to get their vaccination." Having residents vaccinated, she says, "provided a feeling of optimism for everyone living and working at Upper Canada Lodge." It was exciting to see the vaccine arrive, "with all the staff cheering as it made its way into the home."

Residents were also excited to get their vaccination, which "gives them hope that in the future, things may be able to get back to normal, and they can once again visit with and hug their family members," says Lambert. The vaccine "is one extra step to protect our residents and staff from having serious outcomes if they get COVID-19, and of course we will have to do the second dose and wait another two weeks before we are at

maximum protection." At this point, she adds, "we will continue to maintain all of our infection prevention and control practices and testing. It is extremely important that everyone continues to wear a mask, social distance, wash your hands, keep your social contacts just to your household and stay home if you are not well. This is another step in the right direction," she says. "We cannot let our guard down now."

Pleasant Manor also has small COVID outbreak

Continued from page 1

is significant community spread. We have also learned that the ability to receive quick test results for residents and staff gives us a clear picture of the virus in our home, and the advantage of being able to cohort staff and positive residents." On Saturday, a Public Health team was at the home to administer the first Pfizer vaccine doses, for COVID-negative residents. "We are thankful for the ongoing support of our families, staff, and the community," says Poos, adding he couldn't be more proud "of the team here at Niagara. From the onset of this outbreak, everyone has worked tirelessly to provide the best possible care and services to our residents."

Dr. Mustafa Hirji, acting chief medical officer for Niagara, says once the outbreak was reported, an inspector went in to the home, and daily meetings have been held between staff at the home and Public Health, "to do as much as we can to help them." The biggest challenge

is usually around getting enough staffing in place, when a large number have tested positive and are isolating, he says, but Niagara Long Term Care is doing "relatively well." It's not unusual with corporate-owned homes to move staff in from other areas when needed, he added. Typically inspectors may discover proper protocols are in place, but they may not be followed correctly, and once pointed out by inspectors, improvements are put in place. In this case, there were issues with personal protective equipment not being worn at times needed, not properly removed and disinfected, and not properly stored or disposed of, according to Public Health. Disinfection protocols were not in accordance with manufacturer instructions. Both Niagara Long Term Care and the region-owned Upper Canada Lodge have already had their residents vaccinated with the first Pfizer dose, with the second dose expected in three to four

weeks, says Hirji. A shortage of vaccine means staff at the homes, and residents and staff at retirement homes, will have to wait, he says, although Niagara Health is working on having long-term care home staff vaccinated as quickly as possible. Radiant Care Pleasant Manor long-term residents in Virgil were expected to receive vaccines this week, says Hirji, and he expects to have all long-term care residents in Niagara vaccinated by the end of next week. Pleasant Manor has also declared an outbreak, going back to Jan. 1, but it remains a small number, reported only as less than five staff or residents, and restricted to just its long-term care facility. The privately-owned Wellington Street home is often referred to as Chateau Gardens, or Chartwell. It became a Chartwell home several years ago, and was purchased in 2020 from Chartwell by a limited partnership, DTOC II LTC LP, and is managed by Responsive Health Management.



The first resident to receive the vaccine at Upper Canada Lodge last Thursday was Maria Dos Santos, with Dr. Tim Bastedo in attendance. (Photo supplied)



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Shortage causing delays in Niagara vaccinations

Region ready to move forward as doses become available

Penny Coles
The Local

Niagara Health doctors and nurses will have to wait longer than expected for their vaccinations, with a schedule of vaccine shipments to Niagara reduced from what was anticipated. There is enough Pfizer vaccine for Public Health to vaccinate residents, staff and caregivers in long-term care and high-risk retirement homes, but not all retirement homes, and to ensure sufficient supply, there will be a pause in vaccinating Niagara Health's staff and physicians, says Dr. Mustafa Hirji, Niagara's acting chief medical officer. He's concerned the shortage and resulting change in plans will endanger the remaining retirement home residents, "also at risk of dying. Having all retirement home staff and long-term staff with close contact with residents is another part of the protection we want, and we're not able to provide that yet." Pfizer's European production facility is being retooled to increase capacity, creating a Canada-wide shortage of vaccine, which has been part of the prob-

lem. However, Hirji believes the province had enough doses in December to have vaccinated all long-term care residents, but it wasn't "optimally distributed." In some areas, administrative and PR hospital staff were being vaccinated, "where elsewhere we were struggling to get the really high-risk people in long-term care homes vaccinated." He pointed out there are other regions which haven't received any doses of vaccine yet, and that it's important for the highest-risk people to be vaccinated, even in regions with the lowest case numbers. The Moderna vaccine has also been delayed in arriving in Niagara, likely being reallocated to regions with highest numbers in long-term care homes, he says. He doesn't expect to see it in the region before the end of February. The provincial government has also adjusted its direction on second doses to maximize the number of individuals benefitting from a first dose, with long-term care and high-risk retirement home residents, staff and essential caregivers receiving their second dose 21 to 27 days after

their first dose. All other recipients of the Pfizer vaccine, including hospital staff and physicians, will receive their second dose between 21 and 42 days after their first shot. The region is ready and waiting to move forward on its vaccination schedule, but is limited by the amount of vaccine being delivered, says Hirji. It is actually ahead of schedule for long-term care home residents, with those vaccinations expected to be completed two weeks from the start date last Wednesday, instead of three, says Hirji. The number of cases continue to rise in Niagara, mainly through long-term care home outbreaks, he says. The numbers had flattened somewhat across the region early this week, with recent daily increases of between 108 new cases Tuesday, and a high of 176 last Saturday. Niagara-on-the-Lake, also reflecting mainly the jump in long-term care cases, has jumped to 236 total cases since the pandemic began, with 101 still active Tuesday. CAO Marnie Cluckie

said Monday town staff are working with the region on a location to administer vaccinations in NOTL when doses are available, with the Virgil arena under consideration. With shut-down orders making reopening the facility unlikely, the plan is to remove the ice pads and make the building available to the region.



Dr. Mustafa Hirji



CAO Marnie Cluckie

Artists put their art together, with stunning results



Gail Kendall loves to take photographs on her walks through her village of Queenston with her dog Willow, and post her beautiful pictures on Facebook for all to enjoy. She's never met artist Nancy Wardle, and was pleased when Wardle asked if she could paint one of Kendall's photos of a Queenston home. The response has been so positive the two women are now considering working together on commissions. (Photo supplied)

AWARDS

NIAGARA

1

TONY PARKER
SALES REPRESENTATIVE

2

LISA PALMER
SALES REPRESENTATIVE

3

KEVIN STOKES
SALES REPRESENTATIVE

4

LAURIE & JOHN SOBIL
SALES REPRESENTATIVES

5

ROBERT WILKINSON
SALES REPRESENTATIVE

1

LISA PALMER
SALES REPRESENTATIVE

2

KEVIN STOKES
SALES REPRESENTATIVE

3

ROBERT WILKINSON
SALES REPRESENTATIVE

4

TONY PARKER
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5

CHRISTINE CULLY
SALES REPRESENTATIVE

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Residents asked to share feelings of diversity, inclusivity

Survey now available online to identify key concerns

Penny Coles
The Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake's inclusivity and diversity committee is looking for feedback to help steer its focus and initiatives through the next two years.

To do that, members of the committee have been working through several drafts of a survey that is now available online, to gain a better understanding of the people who make up the community, their experiences, and the diversity and inclusivity issues that exist in town, says committee member Richard Mell.

The survey is on the town's website at Join the Conversation, and will be available until Feb. 5, with a summary of results expected to be provided to council in March.

The town committee, new to this term of council, had expected to hold a public forum early last year, similar to the one at the community centre held by the town's wellness committee. When it was postponed by the

pandemic, committee members decided to move forward with the survey to help them identify the key areas of concern in the NOTL community, says Mell.

"We hope to get an idea of some of the personal experiences people have had when it comes to all different forms of 'isms,' and areas where a group can feel particularly marginalized, to help us focus on some areas for the committee to move forward with some recommendations to council," says Mell.

As an example, he mentions universal washrooms and other similar accessibility issues that might come to light.

Without the feedback that's expected from the survey, he says, "our focus might be in some areas that are not as high a priority to the community."

There are some "have you ever" questions, he says, as well as questions with boxes for people to elaborate where they feel comfortable.

Not all questions are compulsory, with the intention that people "will

find their own comfort level with what they want to share with the committee."

The survey requires registration, but email addresses will not be connected to answers, says Mell. At the end the survey asks if people are interested in participating in a focus group and at that point, if they agree, they will be asked for their email again.

Hopefully the focus groups to be developed as a follow-up to the survey will help the committee dig a little deeper into the identified issues, says Mell.

Committee members have been paving the way to the survey by networking with marginalized groups in town, "trying to create some connections. It's key we get a diverse group of people answering the survey so we can have our focus directed to the right areas, and we're hoping people will share their true and heartfelt feelings with their responses to these questions," says Mell.

The survey is on Join the Conversation on the town's website, at <https://www.jointheconversationnotl.org/inclusivity>.

www.jointheconversationnotl.org/inclusivity.

Residents of the inclusivity and diversity com-

mittee are co-chairs Niki Walker and Jamie Knight, and committee Members Kiera Sangster, George

Webber, Bex McKnight, Virginia Head, and Richard Mell. Coun. John Weins is the council representative.

Councillors agree to look at Ryerson Park solutions

Penny Coles
The Local

Ryerson Park is suffering from overuse, too much traffic and several other associated issues it would like the town to address.

John Scott spoke to councillors Monday night about the growing number of problems in this unique neighbourhood, and asked for a number of solutions before tourists begin to return in increasing numbers.

The Friends of Ryerson Park, a group of residents advocating for change, has developed what it calls "reasonable and positive remedies" for the town's consideration, some recently updated to reflect changes made after consultation with town staff, councillors and other residents, says Scott.

He described the Chautauqua neighbourhood as a special area of town with many unique characteristics, including narrow streets that are really lanes, no sidewalks, many cottage-style residences "and a truly different street layout." The residential neighbourhood doesn't have public facilities or nearby commercial outlets as other town parks hosting visitors, he says.

Unlike other NOTL parks, Ryerson has no services, is completely within a residential area, and has limited capacity with respect to both the park and street infrastructure.

The Friends group now has the support of 146 households in the immediate park area, for a total of 195 in the Old Town, and all residents are "extremely concerned" about the inten-

sity of the issues of safety, traffic flow and park overcapacity. All are fully supportive of his requests to council, Scott says.

The problems he detailed were exasperated by the pandemic last season, but they have been increasing for a number of years, and have now reached the point where very few residents feel comfortable using the park.

"I underscore that we are in total disagreement with those who have suggested that the problems experienced last summer were only as a direct result of the societal changes dictated by COVID-19 protocols. We know that these problems will intensify once restrictions have been lifted and both the U.S. border and Shaw Festival have resumed normal operations. Accordingly, our community requires immediate, firm and positive action to both mitigate and minimize several serious issues."

He also spoke of the advertising on social media, including sites such as Trip Advisor and those promoting short-term rentals and bed and breakfasts, which tout the park as a beach and swimming area with full services, giving misinformation about what is available.

His specific requests to council included: restrict parking on all Chautauqua streets to only NOTL residents, and even then to one side only, with one household pass for visitors; increase fines for bylaw infractions to at least \$100; reduce the speed limit on all streets in Chautauqua to 35 km/hr; close the park at 10

p.m.; install clear signage of the lack of facilities, as well as unpermitted uses, including no fires, barbecues or tents; redevelop directional signs at the Queen/Mississagua Street intersection to encourage visitors to make a left turn toward the QEW; establish a no stopping/tow away zone at the hairpin turn at Shakespeare Ave. and Niagara Blvd; ensure bylaw officers are equipped with clear information about infractions in Chautauqua area and enforce them; and that the Town be innovative with signage to maintain the aesthetics of the community.

Scott said the residents' group has been meeting with town staff to discuss a report prepared by the group in the fall, and has modified their requests in response to staff comments, stressing the group wants to work with the town on solutions.

After a brief discussion about the need to thoroughly investigate the group's requests to be sure the town has sufficient data to make good decisions, council approved a motion by Lord Mayor Betty Disero to look at some temporary measures that could be implemented for the coming tourist season, and have staff report back to council for consideration of long-term, permanent resolutions to the Friend's concerns that are fair and equitable to all residents.

To the question of incorrect information and promotion of the park on social media, council agreed to ask the NOTL Chamber of Commerce help solve that problem.

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Todd received his degree in Physiotherapy from McMaster University in 1994 and also has a Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology from the University of Waterloo received in 1992. He has been working in private practice in the Niagara Region since graduating. This has involved the assessment and treatment of people involved in motor vehicle accidents, workplace injuries, sports injuries, and post-surgical patients.

As well as his orthopaedic skills, Todd also uses acupuncture and exercise prescription when creating individualized treatment programs. When not at work Todd will hopefully be found on the golf course and has a passion for the local food and wine industry.



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NOTL dog groomers in limbo, hoping for good news

Penny Coles
The Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake dog groomers have once again been struggling with provincial restrictions, trying to understand why they are not allowed to open.

Liz Chorney, of the Grooming Boutique in Virgil, is not alone in her frustration, having created a safe “curbside” service for her canine clients last spring, during the first shut-down, only to be told the recent stay-at-home order does not permit her to operate.

There has been some confusion about the interpretation of the provincial order, which allows for businesses that provide health and wellness services for animals to continue, and which some Niagara municipalities say encompasses dog grooming.

Town CAO Marnie Cluckie briefly discussed the issue during Monday’s committee meeting of councillors, saying she has

received a “huge number of questions regarding dog grooming” since the provincial state of emergency and stay-at-home orders.

“Our interpretation is that it’s not permissible,” she said.

“We’re not permitting dog grooming.” But she added staff would approach the ministry in an attempt to get more information.

Unfortunately for Chorney, other locals in that industry and their clients, the town has chosen to interpret dog grooming as a non-essential business, despite what she considers a clear health and wellness aspect of their work.

That decision, says Chorney, seems to have been made with no understanding of her industry.

“We’re not looking at opening for a free-for-all,” she says, by which she means taking appointments for dogs who require grooming purely for aesthetic reasons.

“We’re looking at our clients we know need it for

health and wellness issues.”

The fact that other municipalities in Niagara, such as Niagara Falls and Lincoln, are considering that an essential service, while NOTL is not, is “extremely frustrating,” she says. “We can’t wrap our heads around it. We’re prepared for curbside service, and we have no plans for non-essential appointments, but for those clients with a health and wellness issue, it just doesn’t make sense.”

During the first shut-down last spring, Chorney had a two-compartment receiving area built for pets, with gates to each section.

Pet owners enter through the first gate and close it. Inside there is a second gate which they open, let the dog enter, and close it, at which point the dog owner can leave safely, and the pet’s treatment begins. There is no physical contact with dog owners, says Chorney.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero explains each municipality is left to interpret provincial orders, and they may not end up with the same interpretation.

She finds it frustrating that Public Health won’t get more involved and offer an interpretation to be followed across the region, but even in one occasion where that occurred, regarding the opening of indoor ice rinks and the number of people allowed in the building, not all 12 municipalities chose the same route, she says.

In NOTL, the town’s planning director Craig Larmour saw no room for interpretation, Disero says. To him, it was a straight no to all dog grooming. His reasoning was that previous grey zone lockdown or-



Liz Chorney cares for one of her clients, before the lockdown. She is hoping to be able to reopen as an essential service. (Photo supplied)

ders allowed dog grooming with curbside service, but although many of today’s restrictions are the same, dog grooming is to him one of the exceptions. He points to it being omitted from the current list of essential services as evidence of the province’s intention to prohibit it, says Disero.

“It was deleted, and to him, that means you can’t do it, and there is no room for interpretation.”

And there isn’t “an easy mechanism” for getting an answer from the province, she says, although she thinks it would be easier across the region if Public Health weighed in. “It’s not as easy to get an interpretation from them as I’d like it to be.”

Chorney says that’s where the lack of understanding her industry comes in, and the difference between grooming for aesthetics and grooming for health and wellness issues that need to be taken care of regularly, or they will worsen.

She also points to the lack of statistics that show cases of COVID spread through grooming — there are none, she says.

“Where are the facts?” Meanwhile, she lives with the uncertainty and confusion of many small businesses, hers closed because of an interpretation of a provincial order that changes from one municipality to another, and nobody to reach out to for a

definitive answer.

Disero understands Chorney’s frustration.

She helps care for her mother’s dog, and with groomers closed, she is one of the many clients left bathing the dog herself.

“I wish they were allowed open for curbside service,” she says.

After Monday’s promise from the town CAO to seek clarification from the province about regulations concerning dog grooming, Chorney said Tuesday morning she’s hoping to hear some good news soon.

Although The Local goes to press Tuesday afternoon, we’ll keep readers updated on notllocal.com and our NOTL Local facebook page.

Police can fine for non-compliance of provincial orders

Penny Coles
The Local

The Niagara Regional Police will not be stopping drivers and pedestrians to ensure they are complying with stay-at-home restrictions, but they can issue tickets to people who are not following the rules.

The province’s most recent order limits people to leaving home only for essential purposes, such as going grocery shopping or to a pharmacy, for a medical appointment, a place of work that is an essential service or getting exercise outside.

It also limits outdoor gatherings to groups of five.

“We’re not conducting routine traffic stops to check for compliance of stay-at-home orders,” says NRP spokesman Const. Phil Gavin, although traffic stops will continue to be made for reasons that fall under the Highway Traffic Act and for criminal investigations, and will be done in a safe manner, with physical distancing and masks.

While typically enforcement of the provincial COVID-related orders is considered the responsibility of bylaw officers, there are situations where police might step in and issue a fine, says Gavin.

The police continue their partnership with municipal

bylaw departments, whose responsibility it is to handle stay-at-home orders, and who typically take complaints up to 4:30 p.m., when municipal offices close.

Complaints after that time that come into the NRP will be triaged, he says, and police may get involved, especially if it’s a safety issue.

“Our goal, our hope is always to have voluntary compliance. We’re not going to go out and charge people or use a heavy-handed approach.”

Since the beginning of COVID restrictions last spring, the NRP has only handed out 60 violations to lockdown orders, he says.

“Education and voluntary compliance is what we want,” although there may be situations that require something more.

There have been occasions when police responded to complaints about too many people in a house, or a party going on, inside or out. They have the authority to ask people to leave, break up gatherings, and tickets have been issued, he says.

“We’re always looking for that balance between education and enforcement, although by now there are not many people who don’t know the regulations.”

Bylaw officers or police can issue \$750 tickets for offences that fail to comply with a provincial order.

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EDITORIAL

In light of disappointing news, vigilance even more important

Last week news of the vaccine arrival in Niagara to protect against COVID-19 was giving us hope.

Now the supply and distribution fiasco we are hearing from the province is just giving us one more reason to worry.

Despite reassurances and promises from our Prime Minister and Premier, the shortage of vaccine heading our way seems a major setback in our fight against this deadly virus, which has so many of us locked in our homes, trying to do what is right for our ourselves, our loved ones, and our neighbours across the province.

Despite the very high number of cases in the region, and the number of seniors who are sick and dying in our hard-hit long-term care homes, Niagara hasn't seemed a priority to the province. Our numbers put us right up there with the other four hotspots in the province, but it has not seemed like we're on the provincial radar as a priority.

Long-term care homes should of course be the priority across the province, but it seems other areas received vaccines for a wider group before Niagara and some other regions received our first doses, and we still don't have enough for all retirement home staff and residents, never mind our doctors and nurses.

Niagara is ready to move quickly with a good plan in place, which was evident during the roll-out last week and the success in vaccinating all long-term care home residents in just two weeks.

Now Niagara Health has to pause its efforts, while it waits for more vaccines.

Despite being questioned on CBC, there were no answers forthcoming from the Premier or provincial health officials about why Moderna doses originally slated for Niagara have been reallocated, or where to, just that the vaccine is going where it is most needed.

As discouraging as the news is, it really doesn't change much for the rest of us.

We must remain committed to staying home except when it's essential, as determined by the province, to go out, wash our hands, wear a mask and keep our distance. And if we can do all of that without being angry or complaining, focusing on being kind and compassionate to others, so much the better.

On another note, the heart-breaking news this week is the number of seniors who are sick and dying here in Niagara-on-the-Lake, which saddens us to hear happening in our own community, but also across the province. These are not just beds in long-term care homes or numbers of cases, they are our loved ones, our parents and grandparents, our friends and neighbours, and right now we can't help them, other than by staying home ourselves.

It might be tempting to jump to judgement about private care homes, but let's all remember, it's happening in not-for-profits and regional homes as well, most often introduced by a staff member who unwittingly contacted the virus in the community. Possibly our own community.

Let's remember health-care and long-term care staff across this region and province are working themselves to exhaustion, trying to keep those who are not infected safe, and caring for those who are sick. Let's keep all of them in our thoughts and prayers, and do our part. Stay home.

Penny Coles
The Local

View from the couch

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

The Children Act (Netflix 2017) is a powerful drama about justice: about compassion; about a minor child of a Jehovah's Witness couple who requires a blood transfusion that he might live; and about a High Court judge whose life is in crisis. It is about being human. Emma Thompson is the judge.

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

Where are the vaccines for Niagara seniors?



Wayne Gates, MPP
Niagara Falls riding
Special to The Local

Anyone following COVID-19 knows that this virus, which has wreaked so much havoc on our community, is particularly vicious for those in the senior age bracket. In fact, so many of the precautions we're taking in our schools and for those under the age of 40 are undertaken for the sole purpose of stopping the transmission from the youth in our society to our parents and grandparents. Part of what makes COVID so deadly is the fact it transmits asymptomatically. That means kids who get the virus in a school setting may not even feel sick before seeing their grandparents and transmitting it to them, with deadly effect. Given this, we see no valid argument against vaccinating areas with high concentrations of seniors as a priority.

This is why the news that shipments of the life-saving Moderna vaccine were diverted away from Niagara is perplexing at best, and downright deadly at worst. Niagara has the third highest concentration of seniors in the entire nation. Here in Niagara-on-the-Lake, one in four of our residents is above the age of 65, and less than one in six is below the age of 14. Looking at these numbers immediately tells you that if the virus spirals out of control here in town, it could have frightening consequences.

As this article goes to press, we are working with our health authorities to stop outbreaks in two separate care homes in town. The virus is here, and we need to take every measure possible to halt it in its tracks. Some of those measures are incumbent on us, like washing our hands, wearing our masks and adhering strictly to the provincial guidelines. However, some of these measures lie squarely with our leadership.

Premier Doug Ford had 10 months to prepare for this vaccine rollout. As the opposition, we dutifully fulfilled our role and raised this issue as many times as we could, offering solutions we thought were feasible. We recognize Public Health Ontario may have made the decision to divert vaccines to areas with more urgent need, but there should have been no shortage in the first place. With 10 months to prepare for this vaccine rollout, the province should have had a strategy in place with vaccines ready to be filled into the system and on the ground without a minute to waste.

Stories of shutting down vaccinations to observe holidays only increased the anger many of us felt with the delay. This problem has now only compounded as we find out that delays at the manufacturing plant making the Pfizer vaccine will create delays in shipments, meaning some will have to wait longer to receive the second dose of the scheduled vaccines. Though doctors tell us this does not affect their immunity, it adds to the frustration Niagara and so many other communities are feeling across the province. The fact that none of these under-served ridings are of one party tells us that this is not a coordinated effort, but generally a failure to have a plan ready for when the vaccine came.

Some may chalk up my rage over these slowdowns and delays to just partisan mudslinging. To those critics I would point out two separate letters sent by doctors and healthcare providers to Premier Ford last week. The doctors, who are exhausted and working unbelievable hours to protect us, still took the time to pen a letter to the Premier saying these delays were unacceptable. They were saying Niagara needs its fair share of vaccines. We're not advocating that our front-line heroes shouldn't get it first, or that emergency spots shouldn't be helped – but we're saying we need a plan.

The seniors in Niagara-on-the-Lake need to know when they will receive the vaccine. The people of Ontario may be willing to even accept that some delays are out of the Premier's hands, but right now they don't even have properly projected timelines, so when the delays happen it just adds more worry.

We've worked extremely hard as a community to protect our most vulnerable against this virus. As a region that depends on tourism, we've taken a harder economic hit than many other regions, and despite this we've still worked hard to keep our community safe. We need the vaccine to put an end to this, and it's unconscionable that we are not getting our fair share, despite our sacrifices. This slow rollout has been an unacceptable failure. It's time to recall the Legislature and get this fixed now.

Our seniors shouldn't have to wait one more day.

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MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS ACCESS (Toll Free) 1-866-550-5205	ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS Meetings every Wednesday evening 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. St. Mark's Parish Hall 41 Byron St., NOTL or find a meeting 905-682-2140	CRIME STOPPERS 1-800-222-8477 (TIPS) niagaratips.com Text 274637 (CRIMES), keyword: Niagara, then your tip
GAMBLER'S ANONYMOUS 905-351-1616		

The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL

The trusted voice of our community

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Commitment, teamwork, community, fire department's core values



Jay Plato
Special to The Local

At the heart of every successful organization, you should find a well-written, thought-out and comprehensive strategic plan.

Any organization can become successful and fill the needs of its client base, however how that organization grows, and what determines how successful it will be, all relates to its strategic plan. Consider the strategic plan as a rudder on a ship. Without it, the ship still floats, but where is it going? How will it get there?

One of the main focuses of any organization's leadership team should be to set priorities, allocate resources, and create a culture that enables everyone to work toward common goals and objectives. This concept, when applied correctly, can be how any organization, including fire departments, achieves success. For any management team to begin steering the ship in the right direction, a proper base to support the strategic plan must first be in place. This base is comprised of a proper organizational mission statement, vision statement and core values.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire & Emergency Services (NOTLFES) recently adopted a new mission statement, vision statement and a set of three core values to help guide the department in a positive direction for years to come. This task was not completed in a bubble, but rather by gathering input from all members of the department. If an organization is to create an environment where all members are truly working toward common goals and objectives, they must be a part of the process. Vision and mission statements are often confused and used interchangeably, however each serves a different purpose. It should be clear they are meeting their defined intent. A mission statement articulates the organization's purpose, while a vision statement defines the overarching aspirations of what it hopes to achieve or to become.

The newly revised mission statement for NOTLFES is "To protect lives and property through prevention, education and response." This statement is short, sweet, and tells the citizens of this community exactly what we do.

Our newly revised vision statement is "To be high-performing, progressive, and visionary in the provision of emergency services within our community." We describe exactly what we want to achieve

as an organization. Why not strive to be the best, all the time?

Following the creation of these new statements, we set forth to determine what our new core values will be. Core values should be the fundamental beliefs and guiding principles for all those involved in the organization. These values can assist in dictating the behaviours of members, while also defining the differences between right and wrong. Ultimately, a solid set of core values can assist an organization to determine if it is on the right path to fulfilling its strategic plan. This task again was completed by polling, and gathering input from all members of the department. There is pride in knowing that the foundation for the NOTLFES was crafted by everyone involved.

Some of you may have noticed that we are pushing our core values a lot. They are becoming a part of our daily lives, and we present them proudly. They are on all of our social media posts. They are now on most of our documents. They are even being placed directly onto our apparatus. The new core values for the NOTLFES are Commitment, Teamwork, and Community. These new values are important to us. With commitment, we feel responsible for the goals, mission, and vision of the department and are dedicated to

upholding and achieving them. We are committed to our organization and each other. Through teamwork, we are highly skilled in building trust, solidarity and collaboration. We value our trust and respect for each other and are loyal to our fellow firefighters and community. Lastly, with a focus on community, we share common attitudes, interests and goals. The needs of our community are at the forefront of all

that we do.

The department hopes that with new foundations in place, helped cast by all members, we have set up a bright and positive future ensuring that the department is successful, ever-improving and always meeting the needs of the residents we serve.

Jay Plato
Deputy Fire Chief
Community Risk
Reduction

The NOTLFES is writing a regular column with The Local related to all things fire. Expect to see articles related to fire safety, training, fire department initiatives or developments within the department. The NOTLFES recognizes one of the best ways to ensure we reach every member of the community is through using all media platforms available. Thank you for reading, and looking forward to the articles that we produce.

LETTERS

Shame nature areas can't be more accessible

I would like to thank Owen Bjorgan for his wonderfully eloquent and descriptive special report to your newspaper on his trek through the Two Mile Creek watershed. It is a shame that not everyone is as agile to work their way around the waterways of our community.

As Mr. Bjorgan shows, there is much to see and enjoy. It is a further shame that our municipal leaders and the Niag-

ara Peninsula Conservation Authority do not do more to make these areas accommodating and accessible for everyone. It would add another attraction for tourists and residents alike and reduce flooding if we were able to walk through these areas. If you drive down Niagara Stone Road and look at Four Mile Creek on both sides of the bridge at that point, you will see the rising threat of flooding po-

tential from the decimation of the area.

Travel further down to the area of the community centre and you will again see the threat potential of flooding. I have attached a picture to better show the problem. Can you envision a series of pathways and bike paths that would make these waterways accessible for all?

Derek Insley
Virgil



The view of Four Mile Creek from Niagara Stone Road shows the potential for flooding. (Derek Insley)



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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Message is clear: please don't try to help

Continued from page 1

boat's existence, and in order to keep John safe through the winter, they are all inside with him having it tied up at the dock for the winter.

John's shoreline helper tells the story that he has gleaned from John over weeks of talking to him, in person, but mostly on his cell, email or through texting. John also has a tablet, all of his devices charged by a battery powered from a small solar panel.

He first went out to check on the boat and its inhabitant on Dec. 23, when it had been anchored in the river for about four weeks. He learned that John, who has an apartment in London, Ont., bought a Gram-pion 26, without a motor, from the St. Catharines Marina earlier this year, and that it's his third such boat since 2018 — the other two were both run aground on the bottom of Lake Erie, in a shallow area in the same location near Long Point, where they remain.

As John's local shoreline supporter says, "he's a horrible sailor, very inexperienced."

He spent about four weeks at the Dalhousie Yacht Club, where some people who came across him referred to John as a savant. He quickly wore out his welcome, though, and after continuing efforts to get him to move on that involved the Niagara Regional Police, the Department of Transportation and the RCMP, he finally left.

His plan was to sail to Pickering, to anchor by the nuclear generating station where the water wouldn't freeze, but he didn't get as far as Niagara-on-the-Lake without hitting the shore and damaging his boat. The day he had chosen to leave Port Dalhousie wasn't a favourable day for sailing, so he decided to take refuge anchored in the Niagara River, where he stayed until late last week.

Our local humanitarian, who had been in touch regularly with John in recent weeks, had let him know that he had received permission for John to tie up at Navy Hall Dock, and he had made plans to go out and help him navigate to the dock on Saturday, a day with a good forecast for sailing. But John decided to take things into his own hands and set sail Thursday, a day with no wind, to get to the dock himself.

Instead, he ended up being carried out into the lake about three to four miles, and eventually anchored at the green marker at the bar where the lake meets the river, the most turbulent place to be, says our local, who contacted the U.S. Coast Guard Friday. He couldn't reach John himself — he discovered John had been using his autohelm, an auto-pilot device, to sail Thursday, using all the juice in his battery, so he couldn't charge his cell phone or tablet. The coast guard took a few hours to get to John and told him he was

too close to the U.S. side, and instructed him to either head back up the river or out toward Ryerson Park, which is the direction he chose, where he remained overnight.

Saturday, the local took out a small boat and found John off the shore of Ryerson Park, helping him sail to the Navy Hall dock, coaching him all the way.

"When we got to the dock, he was so happy. He said it was the first time he'd sailed from point A to point B without incident."

Our local humanitarian called CFB Trenton to let them know John was safely tied up, and he was assured he would not be hassled by the Canadian Coast Guard or the Niagara Regional Police. When he passed that message on to John, impressing on him the importance of staying where he is, he said, "we'll see."

Weather-wise, "if it's an odd year, there can be a lot of ice come down the river, but that hasn't happened since 2014. So far that doesn't look like it's going to happen," said the local, noting lower water levels above Lake Ontario.

The biggest threat will be if John feels bothered by authority, or by anybody approaching his boat, he says.

His wife, who hasn't gained John's trust, says, "you might think he needs help, but he doesn't. He doesn't want the kind of help we might think he needs."

If a passerby sees him on deck and shouts out "ahoy," he



On Saturday, the U.S. Coast Guard watched over the sailboat until a local good samaritan arrived to help guide it safely to Navy Hall Dock. (Chris Allen)

might like a bit of a conversation, but he doesn't want small talk or offers of help in the traditional way. He might ask for information, or for people to contact others on his behalf, but not the kind of assistance most people can or want to provide, as the folks at Port Dalhousie soon discovered.

He has expressed an interest in talking to a Catholic priest, if there is anyone who could wander down to help in that way — he is a religious man who "identifies with John the Baptist."

John recently ordered about \$300 of food from Niagara Wholesalers, which his local friends went to pick up, and they say it should be enough to last him through the winter. They delivered cases of water, cases of industrial-size bottles of mustard, large jars of ranch dressing,

and dozens of frozen, cooked meatballs. Also hot dogs, which John calls cold dogs, since nothing he eats is hot, and multiple boxes of mashed potatoes, which he mixes with water, as well as some sliced ham. He also likes oats and lentils. He has a particular order of eating his supplies, going through the meatballs before the hot dogs, for example, which will last longer.

"He asked for no alcohol or drugs, and he is totally non-violent. Within five minutes of talking to him you know he's safe," says his shoreside supporter.

"You want to take him home and give him something hot," his wife, says. "But you know that's absolutely the last thing he wants. He wouldn't accept it."

Along with the food delivery, his supporters have dropped off warm clothes, and

a survival suit in case something happens to the boat and he ends up in the freezing water — there are few avenues for help at this time of year, and those who can put a boat in the water for a rescue, such as the U.S. Coast Guard and the Niagara Regional Police, would not be able to get there in a hurry.

The couple debated talking to The Local, worried for John's safety if people hear about him and decide they want to help, possibly driving him out into the river, which would put John's life in danger, along with anyone who might try to go out to help him.

They decided to instead take the opportunity to explain a little of what they've learned about him, and hope that readers will respect his wish for solitude, and help keep him safe over the winter.

Hot topic, cold winter, with hiking during lockdown



Owen Bjorgan
Special to the Local

It's one thing to mandate the removal of social and physical contact. We've been doing it for nearly a year now. It's another to inhibit access to nature on top of that. Or, at least, have many of us question how to best go about it during a global health crisis.

While the former strategy makes sense during a pandemic that is all around us, I've been surprised at how complicated going for a walk in nature has apparently become. Not for me, per se, but I hear the chatter online and in daily life.

I'm here to remind you that it's safe, it's healthy, and it's not that complicated.

Part of my job, let alone passion, is contemplating how humans are (or aren't) inspired by the natural world. I am curious about the multiple viewpoints and stakeholders that people bring to the table. How do the old, the young, the urban, and the rural perceive our natural surroundings? What barriers

exist to getting people outside, and how can we appropriately make nature more accessible without damaging its integrity?

Lately, I find myself wading through bizarre new waters when it comes to figuring out the vibe out there for hiking.

The hot topic in the cold winter seems to be how people should go about hiking during lockdown measures. I didn't foresee the day that hiking could become a divisive or opinionated subject. It's like arguing about yoga, or being mad at a playful puppy. It just doesn't make sense, and it makes me sad that it has become something people have to second guess.

The ripple effect was so predictable. When the new province-wide lockdown began (and was then strengthened into a state of emergency with a stay-at-home order), I was just waiting for the opinions on hiking to bust out of the gate.

Some comments recommend just putting hiking to the curb altogether until this is over. There is a respectable number of people who are discouraging others travelling a far distance to get outside, with a simmering sense of "please, keep your germs in your town." Others jump in, stating they

believe nature is a human right, and it is legal to access the trails for fresh air and essential exercise. I even once read, "I could just tell they were from Toronto, just the way they were," as this person complained about a hiking parking lot and the way some young ethnic men were

dressed.

Again, this is on a nature community page.

This a sad state of affairs that I hope doesn't last forever. If I could draw parallels to the conversation tone and certain ecosystems, a few visuals formulate.

Some of the conversations I observe online are like walking through a bog. When you experience such an environment, it's slow-going and often unpleasant. Sometimes, you find yourself making a lot of effort only to get ahead just a little. This reminds me of the people

who are sharing their beliefs on the freedom to hike where they'd like, and then, the effect occurs again when the opposite opinion is offered. One side of the coin believes you shouldn't leave your own municipality to

Continued on page 9



Owen Bjorgan says he doesn't enjoying seeing "the split in attitudes about hiking and getting outside," but this tree near Two Mile Creek was fascinating. (Owen Bjorgan)

Anger and divisiveness now found on trails

Continued from page 8

hit the trails. It's a puzzling phenomenon, and often ends in a dead end, like bush-whacking through a thick swamp.

Other conversations are like accidentally stepping on a wasp nest. You're just walking along peacefully, and perhaps just trying to be a part of the conversation in the woods. Although you never asked for it, suddenly, they're coming at you with stings from all directions. In the past, not even an ounce of anger or divisiveness existed on these hiking, camping, and outdoor community pages.

However, it is in our human nature to be thought provoking and curious when we're faced with new situations. It sounds like many of us would benefit from a soothing walk on one of NOTL's many hiking trails.

Don't feed into the hype, and stop overthinking it. Your skin needs vitamin D, your muscles need a variety of movements, and your lungs and brain thrive on fresh air. We are human beings. We need

exercise and mental fusion with wildlife and trees in order to stay mentally and physically healthy.

Physical distancing is easiest when outside and on the trails. Don't walk in groups of more than five, or whatever number the province has assigned at the time, so you can relax without worrying about conflict. Standing off to the side of the trail for other passing hikers is not only common practice, but a safety measure to maintain distance from others in the great outdoors. It's an opportunity to see smiles, spark some small talk in public, or, to have the whole forest to yourself when you need it most.

Speaking of distance, perhaps look at your options that are within what your vehicle could safely do with gas. If you're out-of-town hiking day trip is going to require multiple stops in multiple regions on the way, then maybe it can wait.

Thankfully, as I cite in the majority of my NOTL Local articles, that is an easy thing to do here in Niagara. We are

blessed with a full spectrum of easy to challenging trails, spots enjoyed by many, and nooks viewed by few. The Bruce Trail, the Niagara Parkway Recreational Trail, Paradise Grove,

Two Mile Creek Conservation Area, and Four Mile Creek Conservation Area are just some starters.

It's essential for humans to get outside, look up to the

treetops, and remember their place in nature as it changes all around us.

Besides, if we're not getting outside and exposing our immune systems to the soil,

bacteria, pollen and fresh air, I fear we're essentially bubble-wrapping ourselves for a much worse disaster down the road. But that's a whole other discussion.

Museum opens lecture series with history of 'abominable offence'

Local Staff

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum's 2021 Virtual Lecture Series kicks off next Wednesday with staff member Amanda Balyk's presentation that promises to be provocative and illuminating.

An Atrocious and Abominable Offence shines a light on 19th century attitudes towards the deliberate termination of a pregnancy, a controversial subject for thousands of years, "with laws that have banned it, approved it, ban-

ished those who practised it, and even condemned others to death," says the museum's Barbara Worthy.

"It has been used as a political weapon, as much as it has been approved as a health measure."

Balyk will use five distinct abortion trials from mid 19th century Victorian England to illustrate "the dizzying attitudes, language, and control practised by the anti-abortionists and medical professionals of the day," says Worthy.

"The trials were diligently recorded in The Lancet,

one of the world's oldest and best-known medical journals, giving a public and highly respected voice to the 'doctors' dilemma.'"

Abortion was against the law, "and the medical professional of the mid-19th century felt their newly acquired professional status was seriously challenged by charlatans and quacks who were always ready to profit from the misfortunes of women."

Balyk is a recent graduate from Brock University, with her MA in history. Her areas of interest are nineteenth-century British crime

and gender, and she brings a unique retrospect on the lesser-known aspects of mid-Victorian medical history.

She is also a high school teacher with the District School Board of Niagara, and currently works as the Tiny Museum coordinator with the museum.

An Atrocious and Abominable Offence is scheduled for: Wednesday, Jan. 28 at 11 a.m.

Please register at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum website: www.nhsm.ca/Events



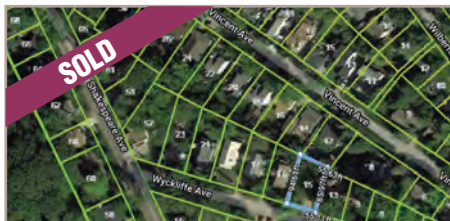
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Jordon Williams 'aggressively' pursuing PC nomination

Penny Coles
The Local

It's no secret that Jordon Williams wants to represent the provincial Progressive Conservative party in the next election, and he's ready to ramp up his public profile in the hope of winning the nomination.

While the election is not expected until June, 2022, the Niagara-on-the-Lake man says the riding association is beginning to discuss possible candidates in the next few weeks.

In September, although Premier Doug Ford said he had no plans to call an ear-

ly election, 72 Progressive Conservatives MPPs were acclaimed in their ridings.

Williams says he believes it's especially important to have a candidate ready in the Niagara Falls riding, "where we're going up against a formidable MPP. Getting in is going to definitely be a Herculean task. Getting people lined up for a campaign makes good sense."

Williams ran as a NOTL candidate in the 2018 municipal election, and says he learned "some good lessons from losing, including how much work is involved in running," which has led to him starting early.

"I really learned what it takes to be successful, which is to really get yourself out there in a positive way."

He's in the process of launching a new business, a travel and lifestyle magazine, first with content on social media platforms, with blog postings to follow, and a quarterly magazine beginning in May. He wants to highlight communities like NOTL "that we can say are safe destinations for the LGBTQ community to visit."

But if he wins the nomination, he is prepared to take the time to run a good campaign.

In addition to promoting

diversity, he says he's running "to advocate for health and well-being of mind and body."

In addition to fighting "for those that don't have a voice or the support that I grew up with," he wants to push hard on dealing with human trafficking, an issue recognized on the streets of Niagara Falls; he would like to improve trade skills training by putting more money in colleges for trades; and he hopes to work with developers on building houses that younger people can afford to buy.

Williams describes himself as socially progressive,

fiscally conservative. "I grew up in the days of Brian Mulroney, Kim Campbell, and Terry St. Amand locally. Some would say I'm a red Tory."

There are times when he has questioned whether he should stay in the PC party, he says, "but honestly, there is nowhere else I would go. That's the beautiful thing about our party. We accept that it's not one way or the highway, or just one way of thinking. It's up to us to change people's minds inside the party and out, and that's one of the reasons I'm running. I want to create a broad coalition of people who don't

think they generally belong in the PC party, but can look at me and see themselves having a voice."

In addition to being a member of the LGBTQ community, Williams says he also identifies with the disabled community, having had health issues as a child that continue to this day.

He also represents the hospitality and tourism industry, rather than being "a doctor or a lawyer or an entrepreneur. Many people can see a little bit of themselves in me. We need the Bay Street businessmen, the doctors

Continued on page 11



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Party is making progress, 'but not there yet'

Continued from page 10

and lawyers, but the House of Commons should also reflect the majority of the population in every aspect. I really feel passionately that we need a candidate who lives and breathes hospitality and tourism, someone who has worked 12 hours on his feet, who understands the fragility of our industry, but can also speak to industry leaders."

Williams adds, "we're in the 21st century. I think we need a modern conservative way of thinking, in a modern conservative candidate."

He says it's time for the

PCs to have a candidate "more reflective of the community. I've faced physical challenges, social challenges and economic challenges. The party needs someone to really speak to others with similar challenges in Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie."

He sees the time as right for change.

"I'm encouraged on our side of the aisle. We've made progress, but we're definitely not there yet."

He has started his campaign at jordonwilliams.ca to bring in memberships, and believes if people look at his website, "I'm sure they'll see

someone like themselves, or they'll see their grandson, or they'll see a neighbour, and sign up."

He's expecting a nomination fight, mentioning a well-known politician in the region who has expressed interest in running.

He expects a late winter or early spring decision on the nomination.

Williams serves on the federal PC board for MP Tony Baldinelli, and says he's been "very aggressive" about making it known to the provincial association that he's interested, "because I think the times call for it. I'm waiting for them to call me."



Jordon Williams, at a friend's horse farm in NOTL, says the time is right for a 'modern conservative' to represent the Niagara Falls riding. (Photo supplied)

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Scuba diving a life-long hobby for retired teacher



Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

Usually on New Year's Day Niagara-on-the-Lake resident David Gilchrist gathers with a group of up to 14 other scuba divers to kick off the year with a dive at the Welland Scuba Park.

Unfortunately, the current lockdown put an end to any plans he had to venture into the old canal.

The retired elementary school teacher was introduced to scuba diving as a student while attending the former Southmount Secondary School in Hamilton. He fell in love with the underwater endeavour, and it has continued to be part of his life for 50 years.

Gilchrist came to the Niagara area to study biology at Brock University. "I had an interest in marine biology," he explains. "There was a scuba club at Brock, and I became involved in that. Belonging to the club was important to me. We organized dives in different locations."

The next important chapter in his life was influenced by his love of the sport. He met his future wife Claudia when she took the scuba course he was teaching for the Brock club. The two settled in the region, purchasing a home in Niagara-on-the-Lake in the late 1970s.

"Diving became a family affair for a few years," says Gilchrist. "Both of our sons (Chris and Andrew) learned to dive when they were growing up. Tobermory was a big draw for us back in the day for shipwreck diving, and we'd go down to Florida on occasion, too."

These days Gilchrist

is the lone member of his family continuing to don the equipment in diving spots around the world. The Mediterranean Sea, the South and Central Pacifics, Hawaii, the Arctic, and the Red Sea - he's been everywhere. While most might marvel at the above-ground sights in these locations, Gilchrist has explored the underwater flora and fauna and snapped photos that prove it.

His Facebook profile is chock full of examples of his beautiful underwater photography. "I've always got a camera in my hands when I'm underwater," he says. "You can get a housing for pretty much any camera. You just pop it into the housing, and all the controls are available."

Besides the obvious aesthetic value of his below-surface photographs, his involvement in the hobby over the years has aided in documenting some pretty important finds.

"My buddy (Queenston native Jim Lockard) and I were invited to go along with a Brock University professor who was investigating a lake in the high Arctic," Gilchrist explains. "We were flown into Resolute Bay (about 3,600 km north of Niagara) and met with people who were running a Canadian Fisheries camp. The underwater life there was much more varied than I expected."

Upon returning to Niagara, Gilchrist successfully applied for a grant through the Arctic Awareness Program from Energies, Mines and Resources Canada. In August, 1989, Gilchrist, Lockard and two others returned to Resolute Bay for some "serious underwater photography." The collection of photographs resulted in an exhibit called *Beneath Arctic Waters*, that was shown in Ottawa and at the Un-



Top photo: Dave Gilchrist investigates a reef at Roatan Marine Park in Honduras, one of his favourite locations for diving. (Photos by Jim Lockard)

derwater Canada Show in Toronto. Gilchrist then hit the library circuit to introduce underwater Arctic

life to many, and had his work published in a few magazine articles as well.

Closer to home, Gilchrist's hobby has led him to get involved in the Ontario Marine Heritage Committee, consisting mostly of professional navigational archaeologists.

"We primarily look at shipwrecks," he says, "but we also look at other sites. The one (Lockard) and I have worked on for a number of years is the old wharf complex that is underwater at Navy Hall."

That wharf originally served the Royal Navy and, later, the Provincial Marine. Working with provincial marine archaeologists and a Parks Canada team, Gilchrist and Lockard have explored the old wharf, cataloguing the scattered timbers that were once associated with the structure. They also found what seems to be the remains of

an old shipwreck there.

"Underneath some stone, we discovered some timbers laid out in a definite pattern of a flat-bottomed bateaux," Gilchrist says. "We think that during the battle of Fort George that vessel may have caught fire, or been set on fire, and sank in place there."

As well, Gilchrist was involved in a prehistoric shoreline study in the Georgian Bay near Tobermory for more than 10 years. He describes it as "a submerged forest area, with an underwater waterfall. That was done by submarine with the navy. We excavated a small cave that at one time would have been above water. They theorized that it may have been used by prehistoric people. We found evidence of corn pollen."

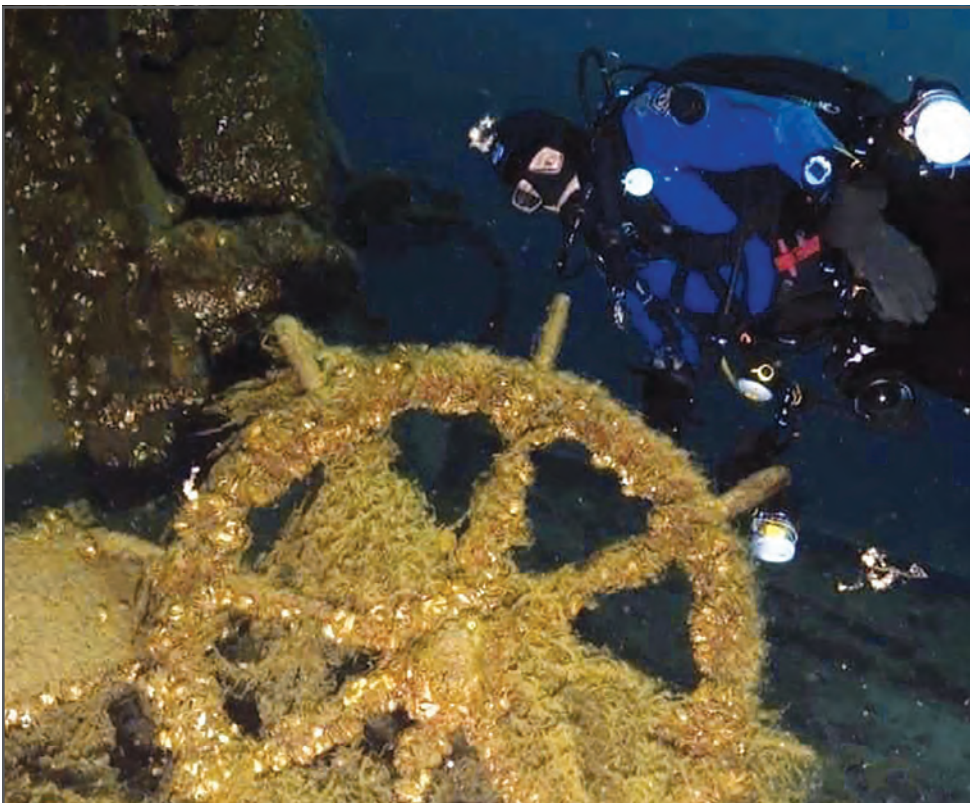
His favourite spot to dive, however, is off Hon-

duras, at Roatan Marine Park, where the colours seem brighter and fuller. He and Lockard put that destination on their itinerary almost every year.

At 67 years old, Gilchrist admits he has slowed down a little bit, and doesn't enjoy diving in cold water much anymore. COVID-19 continues to put a damper on his activities, too. During the pandemic, though, he has turned his attention to above-ground photography pursuits, snapping beautiful photographs of birds, foxes and other animals in nature.

Come April, though, Gilchrist is hoping conditions are such that he can get back underwater to continue pursuing that interest he has had in marine biology his entire life.

To find out more about his work, visit thediveteam.ca.



Dave Gilchrist often dives off Echo Island at Fathom Five National Marine Park in Tobermory.

NOTL woman lived through time of changes in town

Penny Coles
The Local

Joan Elliott was a Niagara-on-the-Lake woman who grew up on a family farm, but bridged the gap between life in the country and in the Old Town, with friends from both worlds.

She died Thursday, Jan. 14 at the age of 91 at Niagara Long Term Care Residence, formerly known as Chateau Gardens and Chartwell.

Her daughter, Jennifer Elliott, says her mother had been suffering from dementia for more than two years, “totally unaware” in recent months of COVID-19 and all that was going on around her, “and for that I’m thankful.”

Visiting had been a matter of sitting quietly holding her mother’s hand, but more recently, due to the pandemic, even that became difficult, with visitors having to be gloved, gowned and masked, says Jennifer.

Now in Florida, she says she was worried when she started to get emails from the administration at the home about the COVID outbreak, but her mother was in a private room, off by itself, and since Joan wasn’t mobile it was easy to keep her isolated. She did not have COVID, but started to fail quickly. “I’m glad it wasn’t COVID-related. I’m grateful for that, otherwise it would have been a much more difficult time for her.”

Her mother was born and raised in the historic brick farmhouse at Concession 2 near East and West Line, which many NOTLers would recognize as the former farm of John and Austin Kirkby, says Jennifer.

Joan was born a Cooper, a family that had been in Niagara since the 1700s, starting with crown land.

She had an older brother, Digby, and an older sister, Catherine, but one of the strong determining factors in her life was the death of Digby in the Second World War. Her brother would have inherited the farm, but instead it went to Kirkby, a cousin.

Digby’s loss “defined her as it did many of that generation,” says Jennifer.

Joan married John Elliott, a boy she had met at school, bringing two families with long histories in town together, although, Jennifer says, “the Elliotts don’t go as far back as the Coopers, but they both go back a long way.”

Although a rural girl, Joan’s father chose for her to go to schools in town, first in the elementary school that is now a bed and breakfast across from the NOTL Museum, and then to Niagara High School on Castlereagh Street, in a building that is now part of the museum itself.

Her mother would get a ride to school with Digby on



Joan Cooper as a young girl growing up in town. (Photos supplied)

his horse. “If he was in a good mood, he’d give his little sister a ride.”

On other days, they’d walk or ride their bikes, and some days her brother would carry her on his shoulders. “In winter, he’d put her on his shoulders to get them to school quicker, and she’d tell us she used her mittens to keep his ears warm. But he was 10 years older and she’d have to get off his shoulders when they got close to school so his friends wouldn’t see them.”

The Cooper farm had mixed crops, including Concord grapes, peaches and pears, and vegetables, as well as pigs and chicken, says Jennifer. She remembers her mother talking about having to cut asparagus in the morning before breakfast, and getting ready for school.

“There was a lot to do on the farm, and she talked about that, but didn’t complain about it. A lot of her friends were doing the same thing, so it wasn’t an unusual situation.”

Jennifer’s father John worked for CIBC, at first on Queen Street in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and in those days, she said, the bank moved their employees around a lot,

and expected them to take their family and become part of the community where they worked. The Elliotts moved to Niagara Falls, St. Catharines, and Vineland, with the farthest branch in London. John could have driven from their NOTL home to most of his job locations, but that wasn’t allowed.

Eventually, when he was close to retirement during the 1970s, he was brought back to the Queen Street branch. “The bank thought it was kind of a neat PR story, that he would end his career as a manager in the branch where he started.”

But NOTL “had never been out of our lives. Most, if not all weekends were spent in NOTL, with our families. It was always our home base, with both sets of grandparents, aunts and uncles and cousins on both sides of the family here in town.”

Joan dealt really well with the many moves, which were more upsetting for Jennifer and her brothers, she recalls, who were never thrilled to leave their friends and schools. Her mother, she says, “was quite the steady Eddy of the family, always concentrating on making us comfort-



Joan with Colin Telfer and her daughter Jennifer Elliott at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club.

able in our new homes. If she wasn’t happy, she wouldn’t have let it show.”

When they moved back to family and friends in NOTL, it was easier for both her parents to get involved in the community. They played golf at the NOTL Golf Course, and volunteered in the community, Joan chairing the fundraising committee for the big restoration of the Court House, John on the hospital board.

It was a time when tourism was taking hold, The Shaw Festival had opened, and the town was changing quickly. Joan and John lived on Regent Street, just off Queen Street, says Jennifer, “and they found it hard sometimes with swarms of people, and cars parked in front of their driveway. But they were good at accepting the changes, and saw the good and the bad as the town moved forward.”

Jennifer at that time was living in Montreal, but moved back to town, and says she got to know her parents better than she had in the earlier years. “We had great times together, and really enjoyed our NOTL life together. They were great years.”

St. Andrew’s Presbyter-

ian Church was always a big part of her parents’ life from the Elliott side of the family, although, Jennifer says, it was one of her great grandfathers — she’s not sure how many ‘greats’ he goes back — on the Cooper side, James Cooper, who designed the front of St. Andrew’s in 1831.

Looking back, Jennifer remembers her mother as “loving, creative, and very intelligent. She was a really smart lady.”

In her 40s, Joan, who had usually had a part-time job, typically at a nursery school, decided to go to Brock University, and received a bachelor of arts in early childhood education.

She worked for the region at various day care centres, and eventually got into administration, pioneering the region’s private day care program.

“By then I was in high school, and she was a full-time working mom. She was a great, loving mom who did all the typical things moms did, but she was atypical in the other things she enjoyed doing.”

In her 60s, Joan wrote two books, one called *The Quilt*, which Jennifer describes as “a patchwork of family his-

tory, covering the Elliott and Cooper sides, from the childhoods of my grandparents to modern times, and about growing up in town.” In the introduction, she says she wrote it for her children and grandchildren so that they might learn about their ancestors and the events that shaped them, and writes that “in the years to come, new information can be added to this history, providing new colour, pattern and dimension to the quilt.” The museum keeps a copy of *The Quilt* for reference.

The other is a compilation of her brother’s letters home when he was in the air force, and her thoughts and recollections of those days, says Jennifer.

“I like to bring them away with me and reread the stories, but I didn’t this year. I wish I had them with me now,” she says.

Jennifer is in Florida, where she and her husband Colin Telfer, are spending the winter, “hunkering down.”

She and the rest of the family have decided that with COVID regulations, they will try to plan a celebration of life when they can all be together in the summer.

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LOCAL SPORTS

Buffalo Bills make run toward first Super Bowl berth

Former NOTLer will be watching his Bills team this weekend



Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

As the Buffalo Bills make their run toward their first Super Bowl berth in 25 years, one former Niagara-on-the-Lake resident watches with great excitement from his home near Bradenton, Florida, despite having already been there and done that.

With 1,101 career points, retired kicker Steve Christie is still the all-time leading scorer in Bills history. He's been following the team's amazing run and is excited about the possibility of this squad finally winning one for the Queen City.

This Sunday, Buffalo takes on the Kansas City Chiefs for the American Football Conference Championship, while Tom Brady and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers travel to Green Bay to meet the Packers for the National Football Conference title. The two winners will square off in the big game on Feb. 7.

"There's some pret-

ty good match-ups next week," Christie says. "Considering the Bills have to go to Arrowhead (home stadium of the Kansas City Chiefs), that's tough. If (Patrick) Mahomes goes through everything he has to do (the KC quarterback suffered a concussion in last week's win over Cleveland), he'll be able to play, but what makes it tough for the Bills is they have to make a game plan for any M.O., defensively."

Christie's 54-yard field goal in Super Bowl XXVIII in Atlanta, Georgia in January, 1994, is still the record for the longest successful kick in a Super Bowl. The shoe he wore that day sits in the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio. But the Bills lost that game to the Dallas Cowboys, 30-13, capping off a four-year run of Super Bowl losses that stands today as a frustrating example of futility.

The end result on the scoreboard in that game wasn't quite as bad as Christie's first Super Bowl appearance the previous year, when the Bills lost to those same Cowboys 52-17. That one was played at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena.

"The first one was nerve-wracking," Christie reminisces. "We trained at

USC, and coming from a small university (William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia) I couldn't believe the facilities. But there's so much hype, all the events, it's a circus, a gong show. It's hard at first to separate yourself and focus on the fact that there's one game at the end of all this nonsense, and that's what it's all about."

got me ready to play, getting rid of the circus," he says. Christie connected on a 21-yard field goal and was 2-for-2 on point-after conversions in that game, at which Michael Jackson entertained the 98,000 in the stadium and the millions watching worldwide.

"When you're in the locker room, it seems like the half-time show is two

Though he overcame his jitters, Christie says his first Super Bowl was disappointing. "Other than (Bills receiver) Don Beebe running down (Dallas defensive tackle) Leon Lett (just before he crossed the goal line on a fumble recovery), and (Bills' special teams legend) Steve Tasker blocking a punt, that game was awful. It was so bad, after the game the press only wanted to talk to Marv (head coach Marv Levy). The rest of us came out of the locker room, and the buses weren't there. I turned to everyone and said 'that's what happens when you get your butts kicked at the Super Bowl. We're walking.'"

The buses did eventually show up, but it added insult to injury.

Christie's career began with Tampa Bay in 1990, but his years in Buffalo are the ones that are most memorable. He kicked for the Bills until 2000, becoming one of the National Football League's best at the position. In 2001, he moved on to the

San Diego Chargers, along with Buffalo quarterback Doug Flutie and other Bills, where he played for two years. He closed out his NFL career after the 2004 season with the New York Giants, wrapping up 15 years with a field goal percentage of 77 per cent, and an extra-point accuracy rate of 98 per cent. The Oakville native came out of retirement in 2007 to play one game for the Toronto Argonauts of the CFL, then retired once again.

Christie and his wife Kelly no longer own the 1880s-era house they used to have on Prideaux Street in the Old Town. About six years ago he was diagnosed with rectal cancer. Facing treatments to reduce the tumour, they decided to sell their property here and move to the U.S. full-time with their daughter Clare. Following treatments at hospitals in Buffalo and Cleveland, Christie's cancer is in remission, and he's feeling healthy and energized by his former team's

Continued on page 16

You just want to get back onto the field. It's a tough game to play in because it doesn't flow like a normal Sunday game, with all the ads.

Steve Christie

Christie says for both games he boarded the first bus with the training staff just to get away from all the commotion at the hotel. "That's the thing that

hours long," he laughs. "You just want to get back onto the field. It's a tough game to play in because it doesn't flow like a normal Sunday game, with all the ads."



Auchterlonie on Astrology

Bill Auchterlonie
Special to The Local

The full week of Auchterlonie on Astrology can be found on the Facebook page for The NOTL Local, and on the website <https://www.auchterlonieonastrology.com>.

Thursday, Jan. 21: Today, Mars is conjunct Uranus at 6 degrees Taurus. This is a very important transit, because it is the first Mars-Uranus conjunction in Taurus since 1942, so this is a completely new Martian energy very few of us have ever witnessed or will recall. With Mars conjunct Uranus in Tau-

rus, you'll probably get to see the angry and explosive side of Taurus. Think of a bull fighting a matador. The muleta with the red cloth hanging is Mars. Mars and Uranus are further triggered by a square to Jupiter, and a conjunction with the Moon. This is not an energy to be messed with. Mars' anger can turn into rage and Uranus can easily blow things out of proportion. The desire to act from your deepest values is so powerful, that you will go beyond common sense or what's socially acceptable. Mars will give you the drive, and Ura-

nus will inspire you, and as a result you can achieve things you otherwise never thought were possible. It was Jan. 21, 1978, that the Bee Gees' Saturday Night Fever album reached number 1. It would stay there for 24 weeks!

Saturday, Jan. 23: Today, the Sun is conjunct Saturn at 4 degrees Aquarius. We have one Sun-Saturn conjunction each year, and that's our yearly opportunity to birth a new Saturn project. Saturn is the planet of hard work, determination, commitment, and mastery. What type of project would you like to attract this type

of energy? No great thing has ever been built without Saturn. So, if you want to build something great, you want to tap into Saturn's energy today. Today is the 70th birthday of Chesley 'Sully' Sullenberger. After landing a plane full of passengers on the Hudson River in Manhattan, due to birds clogging the engines, he was fired for not following protocol. He later won a court case, and Clint Eastwood made a film about it with Tom Hanks in the starring role.

Next week it's the full Moon in Leo.

Until then, shine on!

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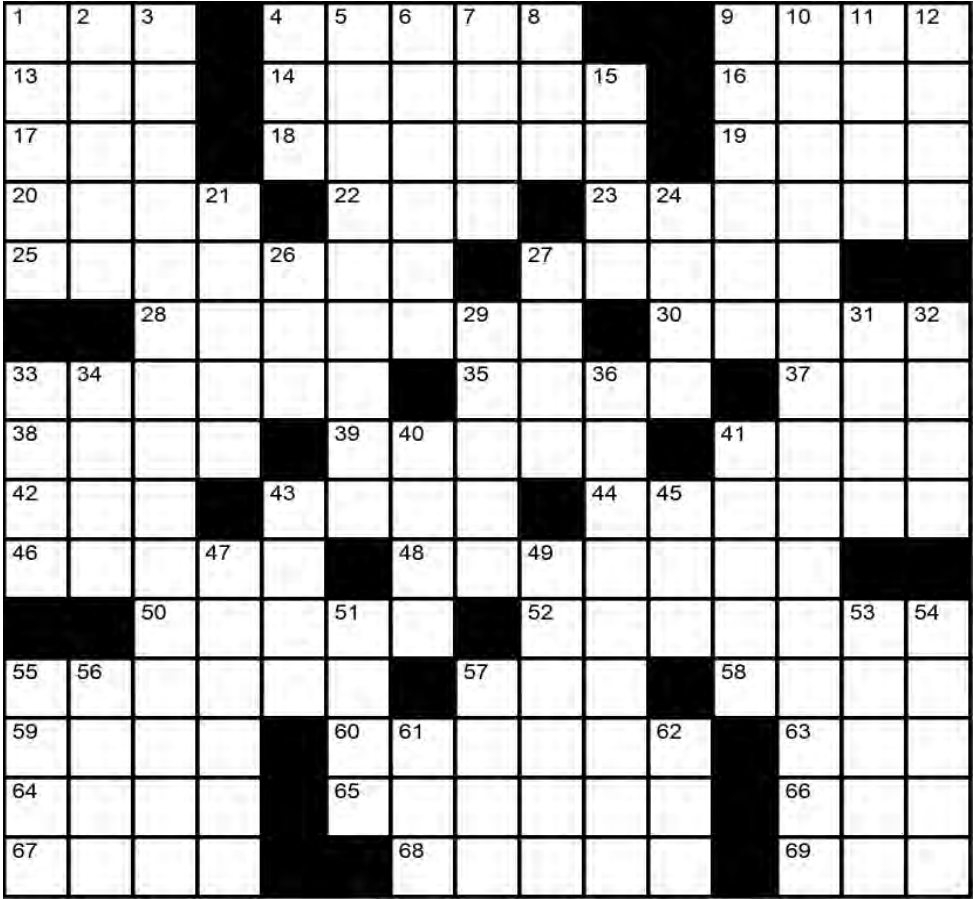
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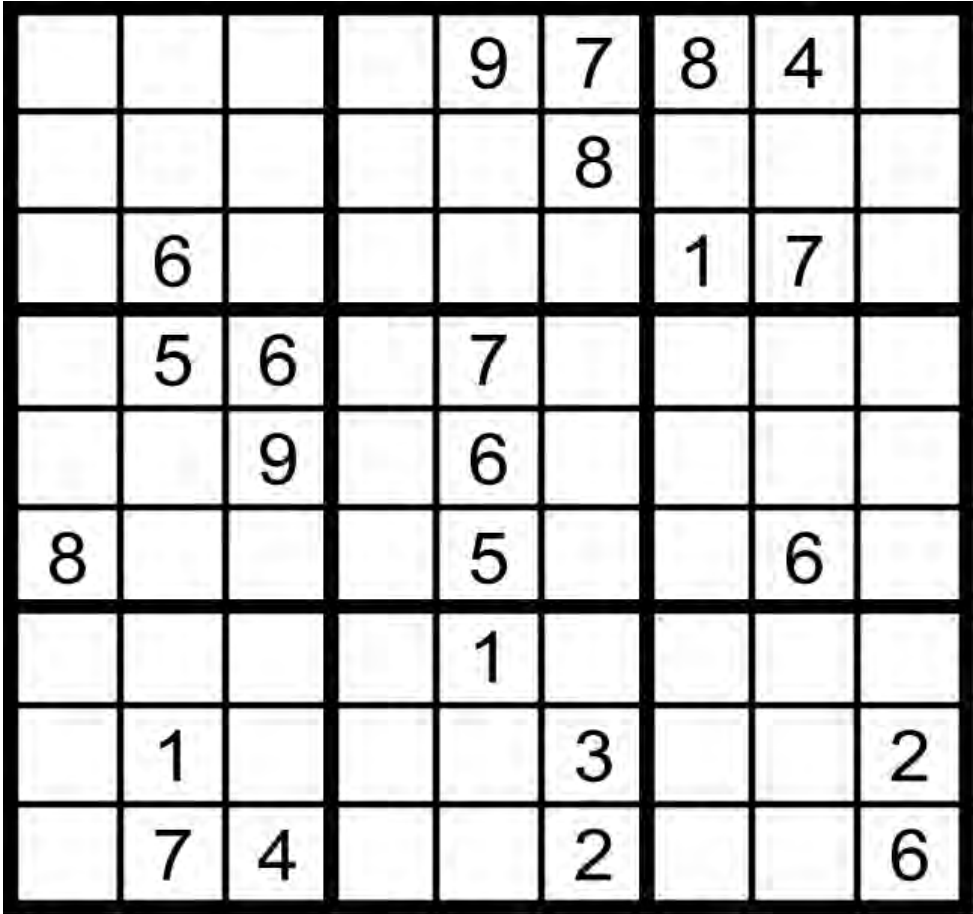
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- Across:**
- 50 Toque wearers
 - 52 To do with plants
 - 55 A machine's productive hours
 - 57 Honoric title in India
 - 58 --- of the above
 - 59 Happy feline rumble
 - 60 Letters, these days
 - 63 Of a thing
 - 64 Surrounded by
 - 65 I'm sorry --- you waiting
 - 66 "The sloeblack, slow, black, crowblack, fishingboat-bobbing ---" (Dylan Thomas)
 - 67 Egg holders
 - 68 Peter Pan's pal
 - 69 Blunder
- Down:**
- 11 Card dispenser
 - 12 Golfing short shot
 - 15 Gray wolf
 - 21 18-wheelers
 - 24 Sleeping
 - 26 Stir-fryer
 - 27 Pack
 - 29 Election list
 - 31 That show's going to be --- 9 pm
 - 32 Silently indicates assent
 - 33 State emblem on Old Glory
 - 34 Expression of amazement
 - 36 Pristine
 - 40 Chums
 - 41 Holy book of Islam
 - 43 Agenda topic
 - 45 Make lace
 - 47 Musical intervals
 - 49 "1984" antagonist
 - 51 Bases
 - 53 Bury
 - 54 Hotelier --- Ritz
 - 55 Poisonous Javanese tree
 - 56 Catamountain
 - 57 Japanese rice wine
 - 61 Cut
 - 62 Intelligence officer



OBITUARY



ELLIOTT, JOAN—With Sadness & in Loving Memory: Joan Elliott (born Joan Florence Marie Cooper) passed away peacefully in the early morning of Thursday, January 14, 2021 at the Chateau Gardens Nursing Home in Niagara-on-the-Lake, at 91 years of age. Married for more than 60 years to John W. Elliott, who she lost in March 2011, she is survived by her children Digby, David & Jennifer, 11 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren. A country girl at heart, she died a short distance from the farm at the corner of Concession #2 & the East/West Line where she was born & raised. As wife & mother, following John's various job transfers within the bank, from 1950-1970, she moved the family on six separate occasions throughout Ontario, managing to instill a sense of love and stability in each new home. While raising her family, Joan was also a pioneer in early childhood education working as a teacher, administrator & eventually a regional supervisor. In retirement, she was happiest in her garden. For those who were lucky enough to know her, she will be remembered for her beauty, determination, intelligence & lively wit. A memorial service will be held at a time when we can gather without the COVID-19 restrictions. The family wishes to extend their sincere gratitude to the nurses & staff at Chateau Gardens. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com



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Only candidates to be interviewed will be contacted.
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PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from January 14, 2021

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

Across: 1 Gig, 4 Grimy, 9 Tbsp, 13 Are, 14 Denial, 16 Oahu, 17 Min, 18 Panchito, 19 Scott, 20 Uses, 22 Die, 23 Basket, 25 Threw in, 27 Ono, 38 Toes, 39 Spawm, 41 Quad, 42 A O L, 43 Is noise, 11 Shoe, 12 Putt, 15 Lobo, 21 Semis, 24 Abed, 26 Wok, 27 Slow, 29 Slate, 31 On at, 32 Nods, 33 Star, 34 Oooh, 36 Unspooled, 40 Pals, 41 Curran, 43 Item, 45 Tat, 47 Thrills, 49 O'Brien, 51 Feet, 53 Inter, 54 Cesar, 55 Uppas, 56 Puma, 57 Sake, 61 Mow, 62 Spy.

Down: 1 Gamut, 2 Irish, 3 General Electric, 4 G D P, 5 Readiness, 6 Inning, 7 Mice, 8 Yah, 9 Toss in, 10 Background noise, 11 Shoe, 12 Putt, 15 Lobo, 21 Semis, 24 Abed, 26 Wok, 27 Slow, 29 Slate, 31 On at, 32 Nods, 33 Star, 34 Oooh, 36 Unspooled, 40 Pals, 41 Curran, 43 Item, 45 Tat, 47 Thrills, 49 O'Brien, 51 Feet, 53 Inter, 54 Cesar, 55 Uppas, 56 Puma, 57 Sake, 61 Mow, 62 Spy.




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Steve Christie now coaches high school kickers in Florida, where he lives with his wife Kelly. (Photo supplied)

Christie reminisces about his career

Continued from page 14

recent success.

He met current Bills coach Sean McDermott at a home game last year (Christie attended five games in 2019), and was impressed with the fellow William and Mary alumnus. "He's a great guy, very personable and focused. He reminds me of Marv. He's not really a yeller, a shouter. He's the kind of coach that I'd like to play for."

"Josh Allen (the current Bills quarterback) has a great arm, and you have to have a great arm to play in Buffalo," he continues. "It's phenomenal how they built that team on the shoulders of Josh Allen, and they've drafted very well. He could be better than (Bills legend) Jim Kelly. He can run, and he's a big guy, he's going to get better and better."

Christie also thinks rookie kicker Tyler Bass will eventually break his

own team record for longest field goal, a 59-yarder in the 1993 regular season. Bass hit a 54-yarder in the Bills' first playoff game against Indianapolis, and was good on a 58-yard attempt at Arizona in a regular season loss.

"He had a tremendous season, and he's got a great leg," Christie raves. "If he's hitting 60-plus yarders during pre-game, there's no doubt McDermott will put him back out there during the game to pick up three points. There's no doubt he'll get it."

During last week's divisional round win over the Baltimore Ravens, Bass and Ravens kicker Justin Tucker each missed two field goals in the windy Buffalo conditions. That doesn't surprise Christie or the Buffalo kicker he replaced, Scott Norwood, with whom he was texting while watching the game. Norwood's wide-right kick at the end of Super Bowl XXV is to this day the

most significant field goal attempt in Buffalo history, as it cemented the first of four straight losses in the big game.

"That was the darkest side of kicking," Christie tells The Local. "The way he dealt with that, though, I learned a lot from him. I watched that game at home in Oakville, but that was in Tampa on my home field. There were a number of plays in the game where it shouldn't have come down to Scott, where we could have done better to set him up for a closer kick."

These days, he uses the lessons he learned from his predecessor while coaching young high school kickers in Florida. He and Kelly also sell real estate in the Bradenton area. And of course, he can't wait to watch this weekend's game, and to hopefully cheer on his favourite team in Super Bowl XLV, which will be played in nearby Tampa Bay, the city where his NFL journey began.