Strong women lauded during global event

By Lauren O’Malley
The NOTL Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake wore itself more deeply into the planet’s tapestry this weekend with the first local Women’s March Global event, joining the Women’s Wave.

All over the world people met and marched and discussed progressive topics such as gender and racial equality, pay parity, and issues minorities of all kinds face. NOTL was no different.

About 30 brave and committed souls met at the bandshell in Simcoe Park. Shaw actor Jacqueline Thair handed out a single page of chants to anyone who wanted to fill their lungs with bitterly cold air and let it out warmed up with a powerful phrase or two. As one of the event’s organizers, Thair then led the march through the park and across Queen Street — where security guards at the Icewine Village looked on with curiosity as she put an enormous black bullhorn to her mouth and led the battlecry, “What do we want?” “Full equality,” the parade replied. “When do we want it?” “Now.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3
Snow fall turns roads into puzzle for plows

By Lauren O’Malley

The NOTL Local

“It all works like a smooth jigsaw puzzle,” says Sheldon Randall.

The Town’s director of operations is describing the complex and rather heroic job of plowing the roads of Niagara-on-the-Lake after (or during) a snow event — like the one we had last Saturday.

As usual, five trucks spread out into the town when the depth of the snow reaches over three inches, and doesn’t look like it’s going to stop for a while. And as usual, there are two people in each truck: the main operator, and the “wing man,” who operates the second blade on the plow.

Rather outside the norm on this blustery night is Lord Mayor Betty Disero sitting in a the wing man seat. “She just jumped over the wing and got right in,” says Darryl Janzen, who has been working for the town for three years, and who forfeited his spot to Disero for about half an hour.

“Betty truly has an interest in what our staff does,” says Randall. “She mentioned wanting to come out on a snowplow quite a while ago, and we decided tonight’s the night.” He explains the offer has been made available to any member of council over the years, and as far as he knows, Disero is the first to give it a whirl. “Betty’s a champ,” he says.

While residents waiting for their street to be plowed — or perhaps worse, watching their driveway get blocked in with a fresh seam of snow — may not see the elegance of the operation, viewed from above it’s quite an elaborate and yet logical ballet.

Each truck heads to a zone and gets to work, often doing several passes on a street due to width, corners, and cleanup. Gate Street, for example, takes three passes on one end of the street, but can hardly squeeze in two at the other, narrower end.

“There’s a lot going on at any time [inside the truck]. Rob had to adjust all the controls to make it all work,” says Janzen, explaining Rob Read, the driver in the plow with the lord mayor, had to merge the wing man’s controls into his own so he could get the job done alone.

The driver steers the truck, and also manages the distribution of the sand and salt mixture (85 per cent sand, 15 per cent salt) that goes through the spreader under the carriage. The wing man manages the hydraulics of the second blade, which ideally carves along the curb, and telescopes in and out gracefully around parked cars and other obstacles.

The trick is to accurately determine where the curb is under several inches of snow, without hitting it — which could chip the blade or the curb. And that’s not the only challenge: they also need to manage drivers who aren’t exactly sure what to do when they see a plow. The easy answer to that one: “Just get right out of the way,” says Read.

The heavy equipment operator has been driving snowplows for the Town for 10 years, and says, “It’s pretty task-saturated at times.” But he also says he enjoys it, sitting high up in the warm cab with his wing man and his country music playing, cleaning up the mess Mother Nature spells on our streets.

Read describes the practice of looping: “I start out and every turn I do in town is turning right.

I turn right a thousand times a night,” he says. “I always have to plan to loop to clear corners.”

Imagine lining up a few wooden blocks to create something like city streets, and then dumping sugar all around them. Then imagine taking a scooped blade that’s somewhere around two-thirds of the width of the distance between the blocks — the “streets” — and pushing the sugar around. Can you picture the sweeps and the rounded triangles left in between? That, among other complex logistics, explains why you might see a plow go along that next street over with the blade in the air, while your car is still stuck in the driveway.

All that looping can make a person, well, loopy. “It’s hypnotic, you do have to watch for that,” says Gary Sidlar, roads supervisor.

“With snow falling and blowing, you add in visibility issues, even whiteout conditions, and it’s really quite dangerous.” Sidlar says this weekend’s storm also featured strong and shifting winds. “Some of that snow we may have moved twice, or even three times,” due to drifts.

Snow clearing often happens at night, “And when it does come, it seems to always come on weekends,” says Randall, grateful to the staff who remain on call during snow events. “For prolonged events we will plow twice, for example at 7 p.m., and again at 4 a.m. We’re lucky people will free themselves up to do this.”

All road staff also go to snow operations courses for safety updates every year. They call it “snow school,” and Janzen says “it’s a good refresher.”

The Town shares the responsibility for clearing the roads with the Region, which manages all roads connecting municipality to municipality, such as Niagara Stone Road, Four Mile Creek Road, and Lakeshore Road. And to add to the party, the Niagara Parks Commission clears the Niagara River Parkway from Navy Hall to Fort Erie.

Randall says he takes five trucks, with two people in each, eight hours to clear the snow in NOTL.

“Our routes are designed for efficiencies,” says Read. “The main roads are high priority, secondary roads are next, and then those in subdivisions and so forth.” When the roads are clear the side-walk plows come out.

“I would never have known how complicated it was if I hadn’t gotten into that truck,” says Disero. “Rob kept saying, ‘So right now my wing man would be…’ I wanted to help, but I didn’t know how.”

The lord mayor says she likes to know what goes in to people’s jobs. She also believes it helps staff morale to have someone from council learn about their work. With her new-found respect for the diligent and difficult work of the snow removal system in NOTL, Disero urges, “When you see the plows, wave and thank them for doing their job.”

Sidlar wants the last word, though. “Tell people to put some value on their life, and just slow down. Drive safely.”
No battle in the cry, real- 
ly. The march made its way 
quite peacefully up King 
Street, those gathered rang 
ing in age from 10 years to 
fully senior, and a variety in 
between. A young woman 
held a handmade placard 
that read, “Take your feet off 
our necks.” RBG, “ referencing 
that, “The Genderbread Per- 
son,” an online resource and 
teaching tool they said is 
updated frequently and 
readed.

They also spoke about 
asking the doctor about 
gender reassignment surgery. 
Apparently the doctor was 
perplexed when he learned 
that Thivierge would still be 
staying with their male part- 
ner of almost 20 years, be- 
cause, “Why would you want 
me to turn into a man, if not to 
date women?” Laughter and 
gawks from the audience.

Following Thivierge’s 
moving presentation was 
Elizabeth Zimmerman, exec- 
cutive director of the YWCA 
Niagara Region, who dis- 
cussed economic security for 
women, relating stories from 
her experience with women 
and single mothers who are 
forced to resort to shelters 
and food banks. Zimmerman 
said when women win, “everyone 
wins.”

Lord Mayor Betty Dis- 
ero also participated in the 
march, and spoke next in 
the blowing snow inside the 
bandsaw.

“Chloe Cooke’s screams 
through the night caused our 
government to come forward 
with the first legislation to- 
ward the abolition of slavery, 
not just here,” she said, “but in 
all of British North America.” 
Disero went on to say how 
“feminist looks like. This is what a femi- 
nist looks like."

A musical performance 
followed with siblings Ange 
Nethersole and drag queen 
persona Maya Nority, “the 
fancy backup singer.”

“some more modern pio- 
cerers who have come and 
helped to open up and take away the 
barriers that we face today. “The 
good news is that I refuse 
to give up. I will continue to 
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By Penny Coles

Lesley Sampson, founder and executive director of Coyote Watch Canada, believes feeding is usually behind an increase in sightings of coyotes in urban areas. (Photo submitted)

A Niagara expert in coyotes was surprised to learn about concern for the presence of the animals in the Old Town.

About 20 years ago, Lesley Sampson, then studying coyotes in the William Street area of Niagara-on-the-Lake, made a presentation to Town council to calm the fears of residents in the area.

Hearing there are still reports of coyotes in the same neighbourhood surprised her, but she’s grateful the sightings have not reached the level of concern they did then, she says.

She spent about six years studying a family of coyotes in the area back in the 90s, even staying in a tent at night to investigate their behaviour. It’s “entirely possible” that the coyotes people are now seeing are descendants of those animals, she says, which, for her research purposes, she named the Creek Park Pack.

When she learned that coyotes in the area were being shot, pups taken from their den, and residents lob- sing the Town to undertake a relocation program, she stepped in to help quiet the mass hysteria.

She recalls going to see the late Bob Howse, the Town clerk at the time, whom she had gone back on today as a trail blazer. She asked if she could speak to councillors about educating the public, which she did, with his support.

The controversy died down as residents became more un- derstanding and less fearful.

Sampson said the level of peaceful co- existence with nature has come a long way since then, but the Town could have fur- thered the process by keep- ing the education program alive, she said.

“The Town didn’t do what it should have done, which was continue to educate the public. History doesn’t need to repeat itself.”

Sampson, founder and executive director of Coyote Watch Canada, speaks to municipalities and residents across the country, dispelling myths about coyotes, educat- ing the public and encourag- ing an acceptance of living in harmony with wildlife.

A specialist in coyote behaviour, she believes edu- cation is key, and says it’s time for the Town to once again begin engaging the public.

“If you’d asked me in the 1990s where I hoped the work I was doing would lead to, I had my dreams. Many of them have come to fruition through the wonderful com- passion and collaboration in communities. NOTL can still become a flagship model for a community that has an engaging education program, empowering the co-existence of residents and coyotes and giving residents strategies to encourage and celebrate co-existence.”

To encourage neighbour- hoods to stop feeding the animals, which are becoming less fearful and are coming conditioned to look for food, residents are being educated about the consequences of feeding coyotes.

“The fear level then in- creases, but it’s no different than the coyotes that have been seen in Ontario for the last 100 years.”

The Coyote Watch Canada website is a good resource for anyone in Ontario who is concerned about coyotes. She encourages people to report sightings of coyotes in urban areas, and if the reported behaviour seems out- side the norm, it will be inves- tigated, she says.

One of Sampson’s pet peeves is the use of the term “coywolf,” as if it’s a new species of animal that has made its way to Niagara.

Although the nickname has been coined in recent years, the animal in the wild is nothing new—that’s one of the myths she works hard to dispel. Its DNA has been known for 100 years, when the western coyote made its way east to Ontario, and mated with the eastern coyote (Canis latrans) wolf, producing what became the eastern coyote, she says.

The coywolf isn’t a new, “spooky” nickname, she says. “We have one species of coyotes in Ontario.”

The coyotes seen in Niagara, Sampson says, are eastern coyotes, and yes, their DNA will show some Algonquin wolf, but there is nothing new about it.

It’s part of the cain fami- ly, which includes wolves and foxes. Sightings of particularly large, healthy-looking coyotes further promote the idea of a new hybrid, but she says the large size coyote seen in Ontario is about 35 to 38 pounds, says Sampson. While she’d received reports of much larger exam- ples and gone to investigate, they turn out to be exagger- ated. She has weighed one fe- male at 35 pounds, but that is an anomaly, she says.

Some coyote specialists say the name coywolf should be officially changed to coywolf, believing it would offer the animal some level of protection.

“I’m not opposed to that,” she says, but she does get frus- trated and impatient about the belief that some wolf DNA in the animal makes it more fearful, often described with words such as “bold and brazen.”

“The fear level then in- creases, but it’s no different than the coyotes that have been seen in Ontario for the last 100 years.”

She encourages home- owners to keep their decks sealed to discourage wildlife.

“Don’t leave food out, if you keep the decks open they are more likely to be residents who are feeding them.”

If the Town steps in and makes a protest, it could convince coyotes from being seen as a threat.

“The very last thing any resident who, when I explained, didn’t come to understand and accept the concept of food conditioning. Educating the public is paramount.”

The Ministry of Natural Resources website is a good place to report sightings of coyotes in Ontario, and to report coyote activity to the Town.

This photo of a coyote with a full winter coat was taken last week after it roamed along Anne Street to cross Mississau- ga Street, said Anthony Read, who snapped it. The coyote had eaten a meal of food from a discarded MacDo- nalds container thrown out of a passing truck, he said. There have been several sightings, possibly of the same coyote, in the area.
Community to help determine future of church

By Lauren O’Malley
The NOTL Local

There’s another change coming to Virgil, and you can bet we’ll say it.

The congregation of Cornerstone Community Church has moved to the former Orchard Park Bible Church on Hunter Road, the two churches having amalgamated.

As CCC’s lead pastor Kevin Bayne explains, his church now owns both properties. “It was a generous and visionary move on their part to throw the keys on the table and give us their church,” says the Ord- Church Park congregation.

Back in the fall of 2017, CCC had a capital campaign to redo its property on Niagra Stone Road at Field Rd. “We needed to expand our facilities,” says Bayne, who became lead pastor in 2010. “The congregation had grown the building, and we wanted to make it youth-focu sed — we were looking at a youth centre.” The successful campaign raised $2.6 million. Architects were brought in.

Then last year the offer came off the dramatical ly depleted Orchard Park, and CCC was left with a nice problem to have: more money than it needed in the moment, and two properties from which to choose — paid off OPBC’s mortgage. “We want to be a church that does good in the great- er community,” says Bayne regarding the future of Cor- nerside’s land. “We develop across the street [the new Tim Hortons, LCBO et al] has already reached out several times and offered to buy the prop- erty, but we’re thinking of something a little more stra tegic than a strip mall.”

The team at CCC has de cided to open a conversation with the people of Niagra-on-the-Lake. “We want to engage the community and have an assessment,” says Bayne. “What does the community want to see as an asset,” says Bayne. “We’re open to a variety of models. I think we have the capacity to manage many things ourselves, or we could manage a strategic sale. We’re holding on to it fairly loosely; it doesn’t have to be owned or made by us.”

The church building has no significant histori cal value, having been built in 1941 as the Corner stone Mennonite Brethren Church. Minor renova tions have been made to the property since, but nothing significant has been done. The property is 2.3 acres, a significant plot of land, and is zoned mixed residential and village commercial. “It’s not a deal-breaker to start from scratch,” says Bayne, “but if a great community need could be met by the existing building that would be good.”

One community need being met by the existing property is a medical clinic for migrant farmworkers. Kylee Hunter, community health worker with Quest Community Health Centre, says there will be 12 clinics held from April through Oc tober. “We’ve come full circle,” she says. “We started in Cor nerstone from 2011 to 2013. Then we were at the Virgil site of the Niagara North Health Team. Last year we ran clinics out of the community health centre in St Catharines, and now we’re back at Cornerstone.”

Hunter has nothing but praise for Cornerstone: “It’s been so lovely joining forces to provide the best clinical care for our workers, and dealing with their social iso lation.”

On the theme of social isolation, Bayne refers to youth in NOTL. “With no public high school in town, kids are missing out.” One of the ideas floated internally is a youth community centre — Bayne, a father of four boys, is fond of this option. A men- tal wellness centre focused on youth is another option that has been discussed. “Affordable housing is a regional issue,” says Bayne, suggesting this as another potential use for the land. “We’re specifically trying to leverage the centrality of this location to Virgil.”

The hope is to have some kind of forward movement on the site by this spring. “We will be creating surveys for community members, we’ll be holding open forums, and will have offi cial sit-downs with the lord mayor,” says Bayne. “We would like to have a good sense of where the direction of the property before the begin ning of the summer.”

Phil Leboudec, owner of nearby Phil’s value mart, has a suggestion. “It might be a better spot for the new medical centre. Potentially a better location all around.”

Tom Elltoft has a strong sense of what’s lacking in the real estate market. “The greatest need in town is for people who aren’t quite ready for Pleasant Manor but can’t afford a townhouse,” says the local realtor. “This is an ideal location for that kind of de velopment, with everything in walking distance.” He sees it as an ideal spot for those who are beginning the tran sition into supported living.

Elltoft also recalls an arts-focused youth group from his own teens: “We had the old Beehive with Rod dy Heading, he remembers fondly. ‘A teen centre would be a great idea; I just don’t know what you’d have to do to draw them there’.”

Community consultation will begin shortly. “This is the front end of the endeavour,” says Bayne.

Holocaust survivor
to tell his story

Contributed by Charlotte Lettkemann

Jack Veffer, author of Through the Eyes of The Child: Survival of the Holocaust is a frequent speak er at Holocaust memorial events.

Born in Holland in 1940, Veffer and his older brother Maurice are child survivors of the Holocaust. Jack describes the cruelty of the tragic and senseless genocide of six million Jews in his book. “They were city folk and farmers, orthodox, agnostic and atheist, healthy and sick, old and young, families and individ uals, Dutch and Alie men, women and children.”

Asked why he offers to tell his story so often, he states, “I feel compelled to bear witness so long as I can, because in history we usually wind up knowing the story of the perpetrators, yet we hardly ever find out the story of the victims. I still vividly recall the harrowing, the deprivation and the overwhelming sense of grief. My destiny, my very being, my nightmares were shaped by the events of the Holocaust. It is but one story of some six million people. We must do all in our power to never let this happen again and we can never forget it.”

Most of Veffer’s family, including his father and mother, perished at the Auschwitz concentration camp.

Veffer will be speaking in the Mori Room at the Niagara-on-the-Lake comm unity centre on Tuesday, Jan. 29 at 7:30 p.m.

The event is being spon sored by the Baha’i Com munity of NOTL.
January is the month of new beginnings, of hope for the future. It’s a time to curl up in a cuddly blanket, a hot cup of coffee, or maybe a glass of wine beside us, reflect on the year gone by, and imagine the year to come.

By now, we’ve moved past our resolution to make changes, back to doing all we promised not to do, but still hoping for a good year, even a great one. There are many reasons to expect 2019 in Niagara-on-the-Lake to be a great year.

Having had a municipal election in the fall, we’re starting out with a fresh council, and are already seeing huge change in the political scene — not just in town but across the region. All those new faces, the energy, the enthusiasm, the desire to tackle all the many issues at once and move forward with speed and determination — it can be heady stuff.

Typically, government moves at a snail’s pace, and in some cases that’s for the best, since what is most important is getting it right.

But we’ve seen swift, positive change at the local level, regional council and at the board of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority. The decisions that evolve from substantive changes in governance and direction will impact all of us, whether it’s the decision doing a better job of public transit and helping those who rely on it get where they need to go, the NPCA working harder and smarter at its mandate to preserve our watersheds, or municipal council doing the best possible balancing act with taxpayers’ dollars while delivering much-needed services and looking after the many agencies and organizations which are so important to the town.

In another few weeks the Town and Regional budgets should be in place to allow projects to move forward, to set agencies on their chosen paths for 2019, and to make taxpayers aware of the impact on their wallets.

There will be talk more about planning controls, inter-bay laws, to develop or not to develop, and although not one’s Sunday Edition program - but there was unanimously on one point: “The way tourism is managed here. CBC’s program discussed tour buses and cruise ships and their role in depositing large groups of tourists in towns for short stopovers, and some panelists questioned the value of this type of tourism to the host towns. There were varied opinions on the panel — but there was unanimity on one point: “The way tourism is managed in many of the world needs to change, fast.”

The Chamber of Commerce’s mandate is to promote business, including tourism. The job of managing tourism must fall to the Town of NOTL.

Who is ‘Darling’? by Lauren O’Malley

As a compulsive reader, I note the word “Darling” on fire hydrants in my neighbourhood, and its sweetness triggers my curiosity. So I began reading hydrants in other neighbourhoods (which isn’t weird), and am introduced to “McAvity.” I begin to develop a tale of wealthy family estates naming different districts of Niagara-on-the-Lake after themselves, and having those defined by the hydrants on their streets.

A call to Jay Plato of NOTL Fire & Safety swiftly disabuses me of my somewhat romantic idea — I had imagined our heroic firefighters loading onto their trucks and speeding off to “Darling District A3.”

“To be honest those names aren’t really something I’ve ever questioned,” says the firefighter when I ask about the Darling embellishment. When I mention McAvity, it all becomes clear: “I believe those are the names of the manufacturers,” he says, pragmatically. Darrin Wills, lead hand of environmental services at the Town, confirms Plato’s assumption. “It just comes down to branding,” he says. “You’ll see other names too, like Centurion and Brigadoon.”

What are the names on the fire hydrants in your neighbourhood? Do you already know them because you are also a compulsive reader, or will you be checking them out now out of curiosity? In last week’s Local Finds, we neglected to mention that Hope Bradley was born Hope Elliott and it was her father Jim Elliott and her grandmother John Elliott who built the wall at Randwood. The Nelles’ private home referred to, now the Riverbend Inn, only became Bradley’s private home referred to, now the Riverbend Inn, only became Riverbend Inn, only became a hotel in the last 20 years. Before that it was the Afruktah home and museum, and had been used for other purposes, including a school, before that.

Letters to the Editor

Tourism needs to be managed

Concerns expressed by the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce regarding a parking increase for tour buses using the lot at Fort George fail to consider three key issues: the economic benefits bus visitors provide to tourist hotspots in Europe, and are already seeing huge change in the political scene — it can be heady stuff.

Typically government moves at a snail’s pace, and in some cases that’s for the best, since what is most important is getting it right.

But we’ve seen swift, positive change at the local level, regional council and at the board of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority. The decisions that evolve from substantive changes in governance and direction will impact all of us, whether it’s the decision doing a better job of public transit and helping those who rely on it get where they need to go, the NPCA working harder and smarter at its mandate to preserve our watersheds, or municipal council doing the best possible balancing act with taxpayers’ dollars while delivering much-needed services and looking after the many agencies and organizations which are so important to the town.

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Local youth providing aid to vulnerable children

By Alexcia Cofell

Lord Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council.

I grew up knowing that families donated to UNICEF, that at Halloween children came around with little envelopes, and that it is a organization that helps disadvan-
taged children worldwide.

Being lucky enough to have lived around the world in six different countries — because of the nature of my dad’s job — I have seen childhood poverty firsthand and what it looks like when children don’t have rights.

Countries that I have lived in include Sri Lanka, Qatar, Trinidad, Vietnam, Tunisia and Canada, and having that opportunity has changed my outlook on life, allowed me to assess the fact that happiness isn’t measured by material things, and given me exposure to so many different beautiful cultures.

Living on three different continents really teaches you to appreciate what you have, the importance of liv-
ing in the moment and not to take life for granted.

This is when my passion for humanitarianism ignit-
ed. I knew that I wanted to help children in need, I just didn’t know where to start. I knew that volunteering at a youth shelter, and donating money to children’s rights organizations would help vulnerable children, howev-
er I wanted to do something momentous, to reach chil-
dren globally, to do some-
things that haven’t been done before in Niagara.

In the winter of Grade 10 I did some research in ways I can advocate for the worlds most vulnerable children, and that’s where I stumbled upon UNICEF (United Na-
tions International Children’s Emergency Fund), the orga-
nization my family donat-
ed to when I was younger.

Without hesitation I decid-
ed to ask about advocating, acting, and fundraising for UNICEF, and through a se-
ties of emails we decided that approaching my principal about initiating a UNICEF club at my high school would be the way to go.

I was ecstatic and excited about getting youth togeth-
er to advocate for a topic that many are so passionate about. The day finally came where I was in the meeting with my principal discuss-
ning forming a UNICEF high school club, but my euphoria diminished as my principal’s response to starting the club was a disappointing no and that I should just continue with Halloween donations, otherwise known was trick-
or-treat for UNICEF. This was beyond disappointing. I was distraught that starting a club in my high school wasn’t an option, and so I left the idea alone for a few months.

In the beginning of Grade 11 I decided to revisit my hope of becoming part of the UNICEF Canada family. Through a series of emails we decided that approaching my principal about starting a UNICEF Niagara Club was born. This time I knew the initiative would not fail be-
cause I would take a whole new approach. As my desired path to the UNICEF club was foiled, I started speak-
ing to a contact at UNICEF Canada in Toronto as an independent. At this point my mom also got involved and solidified my abilities to take on this momentous task, confirming to UNICEF Can-
da that she would support my efforts.

Through numerous back and forth emails, documents, and phone calls a youth-led group from grades 9-12 that advocates, fundraises, and acts for UNICEF Canada was established.

The UNICEF Niagara club is a group I now coordinate with a team of passionate youth who aid the world’s most vul-
nerable children. We reach children worldwide by advo-
cating, acting, and fundraising.

Through this initiative we host fundraising events, conferences, andatic events.

Local youth providing aid to vulnerable children

By Alexcia Cofell

Lord Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council.

I grew up knowing that families donated to UNICEF, that at Halloween children came around with little envelopes, and that it is a organization that helps disadvan-
taged children worldwide.

Being lucky enough to have lived around the world in six different countries — because of the nature of my dad’s job — I have seen childhood poverty firsthand and what it looks like when children don’t have rights.

Countries that I have lived in include Sri Lanka, Qatar, Trinidad, Vietnam, Tunisia and Canada, and having that opportunity has changed my outlook on life, allowed me to assess the fact that happiness isn’t measured by material things, and given me exposure to so many different beautiful cultures.

Living on three different continents really teaches you to appreciate what you have, the importance of liv-
ing in the moment and not to take life for granted.

This is when my passion for humanitarianism ignit-
ed. I knew that I wanted to help children in need, I just didn’t know where to start. I knew that volunteering at a youth shelter, and donating money to children’s rights organizations would help vulnerable children, howev-
er I wanted to do something momentous, to reach chil-
dren globally, to do some-
things that haven’t been done before in Niagara.

In the winter of Grade 10 I did some research in ways I can advocate for the worlds most vulnerable children, and that’s where I stumbled upon UNICEF (United Na-
tions International Children’s Emergency Fund), the orga-
nization my family donat-
ed to when I was younger.

Without hesitation I decid-
ed to ask about advocating, acting, and fundraising for UNICEF, and through a se-
ties of emails we decided that approaching my principal about initiating a UNICEF club at my high school would be the way to go.

I was ecstatic and excited about getting youth togeth-
er to advocate for a topic that many are so passionate about. The day finally came where I was in the meeting with my principal discuss-
ning forming a UNICEF high school club, but my euphoria diminished as my principal’s response to starting the club was a disappointing no and that I should just continue with Halloween donations, otherwise known was trick-
or-treat for UNICEF. This was beyond disappointing. I was distraught that starting a club in my high school wasn’t an option, and so I left the idea alone for a few months.

In the beginning of Grade 11 I decided to revisit my hope of becoming part of the UNICEF Canada family. Through a series of emails we decided that approaching my principal about starting a UNICEF Niagara Club was born. This time I knew the initiative would not fail be-
cause I would take a whole new approach. As my desired path to the UNICEF club was foiled, I started speak-
ing to a contact at UNICEF Canada in Toronto as an independent. At this point my mom also got involved and solidified my abilities to take on this momentous task, confirming to UNICEF Can-
da that she would support my efforts.

Through numerous back and forth emails, documents, and phone calls a youth-led group from grades 9-12 that advocates, fundraises, and acts for UNICEF Canada was established.

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nerable children. We reach children worldwide by advo-
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Mecho and Therapy Dogs perform miracles

By Lauren O’Malley

The NOTL Local

“Very, very small, but we’re mighty,” says Lori Thwaites describing the Niagara chapter of Therapeutic Paws of Canada. She’s clearly not referring to her own therapy dog, Mecho. The 140-pound Bussines Mountain dog. (The name, pronounced “Mecho,” means “teddy bear” in Bulgarian.)

Thwaites recently became the team leader of the chapter, which is something she never would have anticipated seven years ago, she says in her comfortable living room in her Virgil home.

It’s been seven years since Thwaites and her husband visited a Bussines Mountain dog breeder, hoping to choose their family pet. The breeder said, “You don’t choose a dog, the dog chooses you.” Ten-week-old “Miss White” as she was then called, promptly crawled into Thwaites’ lap and fell asleep.

That’s where it all begins.

“We took Mecho to Sit Down and Stay dog training school,” she says. “They’re local, very good trainers. They said we had a good dog on our hands.” Thwaites and Mecho achieved various levels of certification, including CGN (Canine Good Neighbor). “Mecho has more letters after his name than I can count,” she says. Thwaites volunteered with the trainers, and wound up becoming very engaged in the canine community.

She decided to explore the role of pets in therapy, and joined the St. John Ambulance therapy pet program. “Mecho was so advanced, and Mecho excelled, and Mecho discovered her own passion for this kind of volunteering. With two children entering adulthood, she had time and vitality on her hands, and was able to devote herself to the activity. “I used to put all of my energy into my kids — now I put it into dogs.”

When the St. John Ambulance program folded early last year, Thwaites and others continued to visit the nursing homes and schools where they had developed relationships. She also promptly appealed to “Therapeutic Paws of Canada” to open a Niagara branch. The process is thorough, the criteria stringent. The group was approved. Thwaites subsequently became team leader in October.

In Niagara, therapy dogs are so thoroughly trained and trusted, they are the only ones allowed in Niagara Health hospitals, which they “attend daily.” “We have to arrive half an hour before our scheduled shift, because everybody stops us — nurses, doctors, security guards, patients — everyone wants to pet the dogs,” says Thwaites.

“We visit all the floors including mental health departments and paediatrics,” she says. “Only dogs with an IWC (Interaction With Children) certification are allowed in the paediatrics department.”

“It’s really tough stuff,” says Thwaites. “If that dog isn’t bomb-proof, it doesn’t go through.” And if it does go through, it also goes to schools and reading programs. “The Story of Mecho” is a small booklet Thwaites has created to work with children who are learning to read. It features simple phrases and amusing photos of the dog in costumes, enjoying the seasons, and doing her work. Reading to or with a dog tends to make learning easier, if only because the children are more relaxed.

Today the only therapy dogs allowed on the campuses of Brock University and Ridley College, where they typically visit before and during exams, for stress relief for the students.

The group was invited to Ridley to provide emotional support for students when one of their peers died by suicide, and returns on the anniversary of the event to continue to provide comfort.

“Thwaites and members of her group will be at Brock for the upcoming Walk for Memories, an Alzheimer’s Society event on Jan. 27, and for a Bell Let’s Talk mental health event on Jan. 29. Bell Let’s Talk Day, on Jan. 31, is an initiative aimed at eradicating the stigmas surrounding mental illness, and supporting mental health across Canada. TPOC Niagara will be in a dedicated space on the campus with many dogs and their handlers.

Typically we’ll be visited by 700 to 1,200 people in the two hours we’re there,” says Thwaites. “The kids come in and talk to the dogs. Sometimes they cry, people lie on the floor — one medical student fell asleep for 20 minutes she was so relaxed.”

The therapy dogs visit seniors who may have had to say goodbye to a beloved pet to move into an assisted-living facility — “We provide a much-needed furry cuddle,” she says. “We get letters and cards all the time from grateful people. We’re so passionate about what we do; we really know we’re doing good.”

Thwaites says this is a full-time job for her — and it costs her money, rather than paying her. “The work is rewarding, and difficult at the same time. The dogs absorb the energy of the people they help,” says Thwaites. Their handlers are exposed to many emotionally difficult situations as well, so they must purchase their own uniform and accessories, including a “uniform” bandana and jacket for the dog.

If you feel your group, institution or event would benefit from visits with therapy dogs, or if you’d like to donate to TPOC Niagara Region, contact Thwaites at tdlorit@gmail.com. To find out more about joining the group, visit tpos.ca.

Thwaites stresses, “We do not train, we evaluate. To join you have an initial interview, then paperwork, a police check, an evaluation, monitored visits, more paperwork, then, if you are approved, you can join. We have to see you in the community, in classrooms, in a kidney dialysis room. We turn down a lot of dogs because our standards are so high,” she says with pride. There are currently 20 dogs on their roster (two in Niagara-on-the-Lake), with another two pending police and validator and sector checks.

“It’s a really gratifying job. To know I made a difference in their lives is really, really cool,” says Thwaites.

Laurie Thwaites and her pet therapy dog Mecho. (Lauren O’Malley)
Zalepa chair of $950 million regional budget discussions

By Penny Coles

Gary Zalepa, Niagara-on-the-Lake’s regional councillor, has been appointed chair of the regional budget committee.

It’s a big job for a first-time councillor, and he said he hesitated to accept, chiefly because his role in the discussions changes. He will play less of a part in hashing out details of the $950-million budget, but will have a greater responsibility in how it is organized and presented to regional council and the public, he says.

“I decided to accept it. I’m really pleased and honoured to have the opportunity to be involved at this level.”

With a large percentage of first-time councillors, they are all getting to know each other, and Zalepa says although his seat at the region is new, his past experience on Town council and other boards will stand him in good stead, and he has influenced his appointment as chair.

The committee has gathered six times in about two weeks, at meetings and workshops, and each time, steps are made toward finalizing the budget that will guide the region through 2019, said Zalepa.

Each meeting breaks the budget into smaller, manageable pieces — one meeting focused on only water and wastewater costs — that make it easier to move toward the final decisions, he said.

A 10-year capital budget that was approved by the committee, but must still pass muster by regional council when all financial reports are expected to be presented for approval Feb. 28.

While the Region has identified a cap of two per cent as an acceptable increase over last year, the $724-million capital budget, which includes the cost of some high-ticket items, is making that a challenge, said Zalepa.

It includes almost $14 million for public transit to replace aging buses and improve the integration of regional and municipal routes.

Water and wastewater increases to improve infrastructure and meet provincial guidelines are also making that two percent look less likely, he said.

The cost of decommissioning the NOTL sewage lagoons, estimated at $12 million, is included in the capital budget, so the new wastewater treatment plant, Zalepa said, is going through testing procedures, and if all is well, could be open by March.

Some of the cost of the capital budget, about $21 million, will be financed by debt, he said.

Of the overall $950 million cost of managing the region, about $400 million of that is for the public health department, which is financed by the Province, said Zalepa.

The remainder is the amount that must be raised by the Region.

Kevin and Sally Jackson had their cameras ready when they caught a deer nibbling on bird seed they had put out, and also enjoying the ivy and cedar trees in their backyard this weekend. They live on Two Mile Creek in the Old Town, eight blocks from Queen Street, and have a yard abundant with wildlife. (Photo submitted)

Winter view of wildlife

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MLS 30687159. Thomas Elltoft & Kim Elltoft.

Constructed on a 5.1 acre lot with a driveway leading to an interlocking stone driveway entrance, this 4400 sq. ft. brick bungalow is designed to fit comfortably yet exemplarily being streamlined today's lifestyle.

Beautifully set in 1.2 acres of land, this 4250 square foot residence was designed by architect and built by builder, Mike McNaughton. Each detail of the home was thoughtfully planned with a focus on quality and timeless style.

The 4 bedroom, 3 bathroom home has a fully finished lower level, 2 car garage, stone clad entry, stone and brick exterior, with both a front and rear yard.

The master bedroom on the second floor has a large ensuite and walk-in closet. The basement includes a fully finished recreation room, a bedroom, bathroom and a fully finished backyard. The home is located on a quiet cul-de-sac of a popular Niagara-on-the-Lake community.

MLS 30696858. Linda Williams.

Located on a quiet street in the desirable Chautauqua area is this pleasing 1450 sq. ft. raised bungalow. Main level features 3 bedrooms, 3-piece bathroom, open living/dining room and Great Room. The Great Room features a beautiful floor to ceiling fireplace and 2 doors that lead out to the deck, patio space and ground level patio. The lower level has 1 bedroom with ensuite and a rec room and family room.

MLS 30701011. Victoria Bowron and Kevin Glanville.

This bungalow is perfectly positioned for a busy family needing space. This 5 bedroom, 4 bathroom home has been completely renovated on the main floor. Featuring a fully finished lower level, walkout, indoor pool, sauna, hot tub, gym and workshop. This unique home is located a short distance from Niagara-on-the-Lake. The home is a short drive to both QEW and US border.

MLS 30701232. Lisa Shaw, Audrey Wright & Nicole Vanderperk.

MLS 30690904. Thomas Elltoft & Kim Elltoft.

MLS 30701372. Thomas Elltoft & Kim Elltoft.

This 4 bedroom, 4 bathroom home has been completely renovated on the main floor. The main floor has been expanded with an extensive interior design, including a new kitchen, new flooring and a completely renovated bathroom. The basement has been completely finished and includes a family room, a large bathroom, two bedrooms and a laundry room.

MLS 30701375. Victoria Bowron & Kevin Glanville.

MLS 30701414. Victoria Bowron & Kevin Glanville.

This classic brick semi-detached home in carmichael harbour offers numerous amenities within walking distance including community centre, library, restaurant, tennis club, and only minutes from downtown Niagara-on-the-Lake's lovely beaches and restaurants. Perfectly located on a quiet street.

MLS 30701429. Lisa Shaw, Audrey Wright & Nicole Vanderperk.

This 5 bedroom, 4 bathroom home has been completely renovated on the main floor. The main floor has been expanded with an extensive interior design, including a new kitchen, new flooring and a completely renovated bathroom. The basement has been completely finished and includes a family room, a large bathroom, two bedrooms and a laundry room.

MLS 30701431. Lisa Shaw, Audrey Wright & Nicole Vanderperk.

This 5 bedroom, 4 bathroom home has been completely renovated on the main floor. The main floor has been expanded with an extensive interior design, including a new kitchen, new flooring and a completely renovated bathroom. The basement has been completely finished and includes a family room, a large bathroom, two bedrooms and a laundry room.

MLS 30701433. Lisa Shaw, Audrey Wright & Nicole Vanderperk.

This 5 bedroom, 4 bathroom home has been completely renovated on the main floor. The main floor has been expanded with an extensive interior design, including a new kitchen, new flooring and a completely renovated bathroom. The basement has been completely finished and includes a family room, a large bathroom, two bedrooms and a laundry room.
After Party on Ice

By Lauren O’Malley
The NOTL Local

It’s not over ‘til it’s over. When the icewine festivities wind up for the day Saturday, the fun continues later that night at the first annual After Party On Ice.

A Vintage Inns initiative, this inaugural event moves the celebra-tions away from the Icewine Village and onto the ice at the Fort George skating rink. The $5 entry fee goes to Red Roof Retreat, a well-known and well-loved local charity that is “near and dear to our hearts,” says Peggy Jo Wills, hotel and restaurant manager at the Shaw Club Hotel and Zees Grill. “We do many events throughout the year with the charity and wanted to include them in the first after party.”

“The idea was to offer a nighttime activity after the second week of the icewine festival, one that offers more than just icewine,” says Wills. The event promises beer, wine, and a fun coffee cart, says Wills, describing Mischievous Streamers, a coffee and bar service run out of a vintage 1966 Airstream trailer. Local brews from Oast House and Silver-smith will be poured, as will wines from 13th Street and Ravine wineries.

Zees is supplying food, says Wills, and while it’s not a full dinner service, there will be traditional and vegetarian chilis, as well as desserts.

There will be live music from Niagara acoustic duo Matt & Frank to add to the party atmosphere, as well as a DJ.

The party starts on Jan. 26 at 8 p.m., and runs to 10:30 p.m. Tickets can be purchased on location, as well as at Red Roof Retreat, the Shaw Club Hotel, and the Best Western Colonel Butler Inn. For more information call 905-468-5715.

“Everyone is welcome, and we 100 per cent want the local community to come out,” says Wills with enthusiasm.

Snow day for all

Local Patrick McManus on a salvaged snow racer sled outside Fort George joins in the fun of a snow day. (Lauren O’Malley)
Four long-time friends have thrill of a lifetime

By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

A chance for four local women to watch the taping of The Price is Right in California ended with the thrill of a lifetime — a trip to the stage for one of them.

Three Niagara-on-the-Lake residents, Sue Rumsey, Kathy Weir and Sheri Wagner, had planned a trip to see their long-time friend Tina Goetz Arthur, who moved to California about two years ago with her husband and son.

The women were sad Arthur left Niagara, but excited to visit her “in beautiful California,” said Rumsey.

The trip, she said, was a birthday celebration for her, “and what a great way to end my 50th year, celebrating with good friends and Drew Carey,” the host of the popular TV show that first aired in Canada to get hot on the air in 1974.

“We set with a minute — that was how much time they had to shine and tell their story, and desk and computer. She couldn’t see the computer where they were sitting, they couldn’t see the desk and computer. She set with a TV, computer desk and computer. She couldn’t see the computer where they were sitting, they couldn’t see the computer and desk, said Rumsey.

They tried to increase their chances of being chosen by wearing T-shirts they had made up for the occasion saying, “We left the cold in Canada to get hot on The Price Is Right.”

Also in an effort to get attention the shirts were decorated with a cartoon drawing of Carey and a Canadian flag.

The women were seat-ed in the third row, “and we thought that was the highlight just to be sitting there, knowing we would be on TV,” said Rumsey.

When the show started, the noise was intense, with everyone “pumped up.”

Arthur was the third contestant called to “come on down,” leaving her friends in shock, said Wagner.

“arthur won her chance to get on stage to bid on bigger and better prizes. Her prize door opened and there was a living room set with a TV, computer desk and computer. She had to pick the first number of the worth of the prize, choosing from a four, a six or an eight, which struck the women as an odd coincidence, since those are the start of NOTL telephone numbers.

They were shouting at Arthur to choose the six, putting the value of the prize in the $6,000 range, but from where they were sitting, they couldn’t see the computer and desk, said Rumsey.

Arthur said she was nervous on stage, but excited, and in shock when she was called up. She did manage a shout-out to Niagara-on-the-Lake, and although she didn’t get to go home with the prize, she lost at the spin of the wheel, which provides another opportunity to play and win, “it’s okay because the experience was amazing.”

Everyone on stage was very kind to her, including the host, and seemed “generously sad” for her when she lost, she said.

“I was disappointed I lost,” she said, “but it was such a thrill to make it on stage and be on The Price is Right.”

Katherine Weir, Sue Rumsey, Tina Goetz Arthur and Sheri Wagner wait to watch the taping of The Price is Right. (Photo submitted)
stage, "which propelled the
According to Sarwar, in 1971
England, and returned to
received degrees in India and
protestors at the apartment
the rights of women and mi-
a social worker, championing
Sarwar — and his mother was
but "still made time for his
Bollywood screenwriters —
be curious, to question things.
young Zuhair was taught to
bay (now Mumbai), India,

The bigger stage he chose
the resort where
Carlotta happened to be
in perspective, to provide the
riots. "He was a storyteller;
exploding buildings and race
work. "Zuhair was known for
recognized his family name
of a Toronto cab driver who
also broke the scandal around
Palestine.

In 2001, Kash had a qua-
small church where Kash
sobered the success, the
indulgences shifted: "He

didn't know Carlotta existed.

They opened their first
gelatina on Queen Street
five years ago when this
empire has spread to four
locations, with a fifth in Florence:
a modern, high-end gelato
gourmet. In his "spare" time, Kash
remained thoroughly en-
chanted with his love for Car-
Carlotta went into his desk
he would have wanted. "
The bereaved wife. "It is what
was probably instant, " says
Kash was always a big
fan of slow food and as organ-

They started the B&B in
fighting, my help.
were a good team of
closed church and family
were reading their speeches in
her language, they recalls a

In 2008 the pair made the
move to Niagara-on-the-Lake
to run a bed and breakfast.
We thought the prettiest
town in Canada would be
the best location for a B&B," said
Catalina, logical choice. They
bought the Burns House on
King Street, and dubbed it
La Toscana di Carlotta. "He
loved to be with crazy old
people," says the business
namesake.

We started the B&B in

and always having lunch in
gelaterias. One night we
were having dinner with my broth-
er and one of them said, "Let's
open a gelateria. "Kash said,
"I'm in," she says. "Always the
best things come from dinner
together." The next morning
the three of them met and,
over a cafe breakfast in Flor-
ence's Uffizi gallery, hatched
the basic business plan for Il
Gelato di Carlotta.

Zuhair "Kash" Kashmiri was always ready for good food
and good conversation. (Supplied)
Sometimes bikes are more than just bikes

By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

It seemed like a pretty simple plan hatched by a couple of retired friends who have a bit of time on their hands — Mark Gaudet and Terry Weiner decided they would refurbish a few bicycles for the hard-working men and women who come to Niagara-on-the-Lake for the farming season.

The migrant workers come to town each year under auspices of a federal program which began more than 50 years ago to meet the labour needs of local growers.

The seasonal workers, mostly Jamaican and Mexican, who come in increasing numbers, spend many hours on long local farms, but in what little spare time they have they need to stock up on groceries and do errands. The highlights of their lives here are going to church and connecting with workers on other farms when they can. Bicycles in safe working order are a lifeline for them, for the workers who depend on them for transportation, but more often their bikes are old and in poor shape, and the farm workers don’t have the tools or parts to repair them, says Gaudet.

In 2016, their first year working together on Bicycles for Farmworkers, the men rebuilt 40 bikes which they then donated to farm workers through a raffle at a local health fair, or sold at a nominal cost. Weiner, retired from a career as an aerospace engineering consultant, and with some experience restoring old cars, knew how to fix a bike. Gaudet, who had worked in management for a company that sold paper, had to learn from his friend, he says.

Their second year, they repaired many more bikes donated from a generous community, with the help of a handful of families who had come on board — 270 bikes were refurbished, and another 108 repaired. The two men had started out paying for supplies out of their own pockets, but gradually donations from the community helped them make their organization self-sustaining, Gaudet says.

A grant from the Niagara Community Foundation allowed them to set up four work stations, where some workers will take their bikes when they return home. There are 150 bikes ready to go when the 2019 farming season begins, but that’s not enough, says Gaudet.

“Last year we had over 1000 bikes when the workers started arriving in mid-March. The great inventory levels allowed us to get ahead of things and spend more time repairing more workers’ bikes during the spring and summer.”

Having these bikes ready allowed the volunteers to repair three times more bikes for workers than the previous year, he says. One very positive development for this year’s program is a solution to a problem that has plagued them in the past, causing concern for the simple starting riders — the unreliability of front and rear bicycle lights. Although all bikes are now equipped with both installed and working as part of a routine 50-point safety check, Gaudet says they realized once the batteries were charged, the workers would be likely to replace them.

With money from a local donor, they have placed chargeable lights, which they will sell at half the cost, absorbing the difference well worth it to know men and women will be riding bikes that are well-lit as they travel the rural roads.

The greatest rewards and unexpected benefits for the volunteers have been the relationships that have developed not only with the grateful recipients of bikes, but also many of the people who have donated them.

“Every bike has a story,” he says, “with the person who donated it belonging to and where they are now.”

It could have been ridden by a young adult who has grown up and moved far from home, a family member who is no longer fit enough to ride it or a loved one who has died — the stories that come with each one can be steeped in sentiment.

One woman who donated her father’s bike, a really nice old bike,” says Gaudet, became very emotional talking about him, and said “please, just take care of it.”

He put it to one side and made sure it went to someone who would look after it. That’s one part of the program he’s not talked about much, but those connections that have been built, with the locals who donate the bikes, the farmers and the farm workers.

He believes the labourers are “under-appreciated” in the community and they help to support through their work so they can support their families they have left behind for a good chunk of the year, year after year.

Some have spoken to are the third generation in their family to take on seasonal work in NOTL. Gaudet says. He’s also seeing couples who have left their children so they can offer their families financial security. They are part of the community when they’re here, but not always seen or treated as such, he says.

For decades they were almost invisible and largely ignored, but in recent years other organizations, outreach programs and caring individuals have been working hard to change that.

He encourages residents passing a farm worker on the street to make eye contact, smile and say hello, simple gestures to remove that cloak of invisibility.

They have a Spanish-speaking volunteer who helps them communicate with the workers who don’t speak English, and they have made more than 2000 prioritize rides — the unreliability of front and rear bicycle lights. Although all bikes are now equipped with both installed and working as part of a routine 50-point safety check, Gaudet says they realized once the batteries were charged, the workers would be likely to replace them.

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Sometimes bikes are more than just bikes

Mark Gaudet, Terry Weiner and Ken Eden have a few bikes to repair, but not enough to be ready for farm workers when they begin to arrive. (Photo submitted)

This is the sight seasonal farm workers, anxious for transportation, will see at the former Virgil school, but volunteers are hoping for many more bicycles to repair.
Spreading cheer

By Leila Ridesic
Grade 4, ROCS

Ever since the Trick-or-Eat walk, the students of Royal Oak were looking for more ways to help people in our community. Before Christmas, the students of Royal Oak decided to support a family that may not have all the privileges of some others. All the students received a slip of paper that explained what they could provide for the family.

Most of the students’ families gave some items in the hopes that these extra special gifts will make their holidays memorable. Some of the items donated were: LEGO friends, bath and body products, Play doh, grocery gift cards, and Pen Centre gift cards.

When asked how they felt about the giving project, one student said, “I think it was very kind.” Another student was happy Royal Oak could help a family. “I am very glad we could help someone have a good Christmas!”

We hope to help our community again soon.

Students at Royal Oak Community School enjoy an outing at the Fort George outdoor rink. (Photos submitted)

ROCS fundraising for a home

By Christine McIssac, ROCS staff, and parent Niki Walker

Students from Royal Oak Community School recently enjoyed a sing-along at Chartwell Long Term Care Facility—and in the process, they helped expand the school’s values of kindness, respect, and community.

ROYC’s teachers and administrators were especially proud of the event, since it was entirely student-initiated. ROCS students were very excited to share their songs and piano playing with the seniors, hoping their music would bring smiles to their neighbours. They have already asked when they can go back to play cards and chess with their new friends.

As part of the ROCS philosophy of using the community as a classroom, students are always finding ways to connect with their neighbours. Since the beginning of the year, ROCS students have facilitated and participated in their own Terry Fox Run to raise awareness and funds for the Terry Fox Foundation; ran a successful “Trick or Eat” walk to collect non-perishable foods for Newark Neighbours; and most recently adopted a Community Cares family for Christmas.

ROYC is celebrating its fourth academic school year, and as an independent school and a charitable organization, understands the value of giving as the school has often been the benefactor of amazing acts of kindness. In turn, ROCS strives to instill in its students the importance of community and giving back.

As the school grows a little each year, ROCS also wants to grow its connections in the community through giving and through opening its doors to all community children for after-school programs, camps, and fun events. Look for upcoming Movie Nights, January Passport Club, Homework Club, and opportunities for tutoring.

In four years, the little school that started in one room of the Court House has grown to a thriving Junior Kindergarten to Grade 4 school with 33 students and eight faculty members. ROCS continues to strive for “excellence within reach” by creating affordable options for learning and growing.

The school is excited to announce the launch of its “Giving Campaign” with the goal of raising $1.5 million in the next two years for a future location and for student bursaries.

Families and community partners who want to know more about ROCS are always welcome to tour the school and experience its unique approach to learning for themselves.

Students interview Ms. Dritsacos

By Holden Powell (Gr. 4) and Grayson Tataryn (Gr. 4)

Students at Royal Oak Community School are interested in finding out more about their teachers. They brainstormed and wrote questions that they thought would be of interest to other students and families.

They were most interested in finding out about teachers’ lives outside of school. Students then made appointments to interview teachers, wrote down the answers, and then wrote the interview to share with ROCS families.

1. What are your hobbies? My hobbies include cooking, baking, hiking, biking, camping, decorating, and all things Christmas.

2. If you weren’t a teacher, what would you like to do? If I wasn’t a teacher I would like to be a doctor — a pediatrician, or a surgeon.

3. Do you have any pets? If so what kind and what are their names? I do have pets, a dog named Mimi and another puppy.

4. If you could teach any grade, which would you choose and why? I like all grades for different reasons.

5. What is your greatest fear? My greatest fear is having many who I hold near and dear my heart.

6. Who is your hero and why? I have many heroes for different reasons.

7. Who is your best friend? My childhood friend Demi

8. If you could go anywhere in the world where would you go and why? I would consider my best friend.

8. If you could go anywhere in the world where would you go and why? I have many heroes for different reasons.


10. If you could be anyone, who would you be and why? I have many heroes for different reasons.

11. What is your greatest fear? My greatest fear is having many who I hold near and dear my heart.

12. Who is your hero and why? I have many heroes for different reasons.


14. If you could go anywhere in the world where would you go and why? I have many heroes for different reasons.
Icewine Village open again this weekend

Staff
The NOTL Local

A winter wonderland it was, and although temperatures plummeted for the weekend and the snow kept on falling, the entertainment, icewine sampling and culinary treats under tents on streets lined with glistening ice sculptures made the perfect first weekend for the Original Icewine Festival.

The street will remain closed for the Icewine Village for the second weekend, Saturday, Jan. 26, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, Jan. 27 from noon to 5 p.m.

The prelude to the second weekend will be the 5th annual White on Ice Dinner Friday, Jan. 25, with an outdoor reception before moving into the ballroom in the Court House.

VQA wines will be served with cuisine from the Signature Kitchen Chefs, accompanied by live music and dancing. The evening concludes with fireworks and an icewine toast under the stars.

NOTL residents Devon Duc and Jami Godin (above) enjoy the Original Icewine Festival Sunday, with the cold and snow making the event even better, they said. (Left) Ryley Taggart and Randi Delorme serve ice wine, while (right) tasty treats are served. The Strolling Jazz Cats (below) did their best to keep warm while entertaining the crowds.

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Local snaps of winter weekend

Local Joy Janzen was spotted at dusk “joy”ing the winter snow storm that so many others were at home avoiding on Saturday. “You’ll find me out here on my skis as soon as there are two inches of snow on the ground,” she says with exhilaration. (Lauren O’Malley)

The Regier family and friends beat the storm and release some late-night sleepover energy with a walk across the Commons to the Icewine Village on Queen Street Saturday afternoon. Back: Stephane Regier. Middle left: Nicholas Haramina, Simon Regier, Oliver Regier, Jacob Dulas, Joshua Dulas and front left: Charlotte Regier (with snowball Billie) and Marla Serluca (with snowball Billie-Lou). (Lauren O’Malley)

Local Joy Janzen was spotted at dusk en”joy”ing the winter snow storm that so many others were at home avoiding on Saturday. “You’ll find me out here on my skis as soon as there are two inches of snow on the ground,” she says with exhilaration. (Lauren O’Malley)

The hill behind Fort George was the place to be for kids and adults alike. It was crisp but the snow was perfect for tobogganing. (Lauren O’Malley)

Locals bundled up and braved the bitter cold to enjoy our best tobogganing hill — at Fort George — on Sunday. Among them, Nicole, Dan and Max Plomish, with their dog Abby. (Lauren O’Malley)

Shirley Rednall, Christina Walker, and Carol Walker sell raffle tickets every Saturday afternoon through the winter at the Shaw Film Series. “I’ve been doing this for 13 years, and no one has ever taken my picture,” says Carol. (Lauren O’Malley)

Sunday, January 27th
Message: Kevin Bayne, Pastor Technology & Anxiety Kids Programming Grade 8 & under Sunday Worship at 10am at 434 Hunter Rd. Offices at 1570 Niagara Stone Rd.
www.ccchurch.ca

To advertise your WORSHIP SERVICES in this section, please contact karen@notllocal.com

LOCAL WORSHIP

Sunday Service @ 10:30 a.m.
Check us out at... www.graceunitedchurch.com
Success for skaters

Members of the NOTL Skating Club recently participated in a STAR Series Skate Ontario competition in Orono. Ashley Backshall earned an 8th place in the STAR 10 Women’s division, Kyra Marotta was 2nd in Pre-novice Women, Marin McLaughlin 9th in Pre-novice Women, Rachael Hunter was 5th in STAR 8 Women, Eva De Luca 5th in Under-14 Juvenile Women, Ashleen Hale 7th in Pre-Novice Women, Tatum Lyric Bidal in Juvenile Women (U14) was 8th and STAR 9 Women 9th. Soraya Felice was 5th in STAR 5 Women (U13), and Mira Strickland was 12th in STAR 7 Women. Missing from the photo, Audrey Morrison was 6th in Novice Women and Melena Orsini was 14th in STAR 5 Women (U13).

For the love of skating

Members of the NOTL Skating club recently competed in the Super Series of Skate Ontario at the Charles Dover Memorial Arena in Grimsby. Maya Dueck (left) earned a STAR 3 silver, Katharine VanderKaay a 2nd in the STAR 4 (under-13), and Addisyn Wiens and Lauren Shedden both earned silver in STAR 3. Bronte Ibbotson, missing from the photo, earned a STAR 4 6th place in the over-13 category.
TRANQUIL, newly renovated hall is available to rent for weddings, birthdays, meetings, and as a commercial venue. Contact the Branch office weekdays 10 am to 4 pm or leave a request with our staff. 410 King Street, St. Catharines 905-468-2353.

BLAKEMORE, Thomas James A graveside service was held at 10:00 am on Tuesday, January 22, 2019 at Victoria Lawn Cemetery, 480 Queenston Street, St. Catharines. Arrangements entrusted to Considerate Cremation & Burial Services, 52 Scott Street West, St. Catharines (between Ontario Street & South Service Road), 289-362-1144. Online condolences may be made at cbcscares.ca.

ACROSS:
1 Arabian ruler
5 Following
10 Some providers of wood for furniture
14 Prepare
15 Larry — in “The Ice-Man Cometh”
16 Largest island in the Marianas
17 Stage accessory
18 Fire prodder
19 A single time
20 Abandon
22 Overhaul
24 Aeronautics group.
25 --- Lama
27 Round Table leader
29 Baseball official
31 Least of the low
34 Eye defects
35 Notes
36 Heel
41 Sheltered spots
43 Short written reminder
44 Ethiopian capital --- Ababa
46 "The --- Dancers" (Jean Thesman)
47 About the eye
50 Did, once
51 --- and her Sisters" (Woody Allen movie)
54 Intriguing group
56 --- Annie ("Oklahoma")

DOWN:
1 Smartphone programs
2 Brandy made from pressed fruit
3 Matinee idol --- Novel- lo (d. 1951)
4 Disavowal
5 Egyptian cobra
6 Roman flower goddess
7 Consider
8 Garden west of Nod
9 Go over again
10 Self-esteem
11 Middle meal
12 Former Portuguese territory in China
13 Slander
14 Comedian Roseanne
15 Warrant
16 Deceptive decorative paintwork
17 Where the Wizard of Westwood coached
18 One of three in "The Mikado"
19 Formerly known as shell-shock
20 Inquires
21 Escherichia ---, potentially dangerous bacterium
22 Dweeb
23 Give off
24 Counterfoil
25 Irritating email
26 Strong --- arrow
27 Melted
28 Underworld
29 No longer a minor
30 Type of metal or gas
31 Debate
32 Country singer and actress --- Kramer
33 Japanese heavyweight
34 Former Mrs David --- Fitzgerald
35 Tranquil, newly renovated space available for aesthetician, lash artists, PMT, other quiet office space in Virgil. PLS email: niki.intouchdayspa@gmail.com or text 905-880-1574. No phone calls please. Counsellor/Therapist focusing on spiritual, emotional and/or mental health well-being. Rates vary from $20 - $25/hour. Variable rates and times can be discussed. If interested, call Karen at 289-688-9800.

SUDOKU PUZZLE

PUZZLE ANSWERS

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SUDOKU PUZZLE

PUZZLE ANSWERS
Nationals move up to 5th place

Staff
The NOTL Local

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Nationals managed to grab three out of four possible points this weekend, placing them fifth in the conference. They’re just a few points back from fourth place, which would earn them home ice advantage with the GMHL playoffs looming, said Jake MacNeil, general manager. Friday night saw the Nationals take on highway rivals, the Niagara Whalers, in Port Colborne. The Nationals received superb goaltending from Iskander Shamsiev and an offensive attack from Bailey Pritchard, Antoine Michaud, Caleb Musatt, Dallas Loiselle and newly acquired Colt Jaime, managing to skate to a 9-4 victory.

Sunday evening saw the Nationals, playing at home, fall behind early 3-1 to the Northumberland Stars. A late push saw them drop a 6-5 overtime decision. The Nationals were still able to salvage a point despite not putting in their best effort. The Nationals will regroup for the next game, Friday Jan. 25 when the North York Renegades come to town. The NOTL team will welcome back forward Trevor Lord, who will make his return along with some late deadline acquisitions who will make their Nationals debut, said MacNeil. “Be sure to come out and catch some fast and exciting hockey this Friday.”
In the beginning, they were neighbours, two families living a couple of blocks apart in a new neighbourhood in the small town of Virgil.

The Eymanns and Spiones have long histories in the region and large extended families. Both families have strong family bonds and over time, the families developed strong bonds with each other.

They have shared values including a passion for their community and a passion for good food and drink.

In time, the circle grew and came to include another cousin and family.

As time passed, all shared a growing passion and drive to open a unique, quality restaurant in their own backyard, the town of Virgil.

They focused on a long unused and somewhat dilapidated building. One that, although centrally located, had been unoccupied by any business for decades and was being overrun with trees and other vegetation (growing inside!). This was to become the site of both a new restaurant and the rebirth of a historic Virgil building.

Their shared strong family focus drove them to aspire to open a restaurant in which their guests would feel warm and welcomed, as though they too were a part of the family.

The kitchen would be open and visible to create the sense of being welcomed into their home.

The families also share a desire to provide the best in all aspects of the restaurant. The attention to detail in the ambiance, the decor, the equipment and the menu is evident and designed to showcase their passion for the restaurant.

Bricks & Barley sources local ingredients directly from local farms.

A stage is included to showcase local live entertainment. The beverage menu is highlighted by the best in local wine and craft beer.

Before opening its doors Bricks & Barley became a sponsor and supporter of local sports teams. The desire to provide the perfect meeting spot for sports teams and sports fans to come unwind, bond and share a delicious quality meal is a focal point of the restaurant.

Bricks and Barley, a new establishment built to revive a site and born from a love and passion for food, family and friends.

They welcome you to their family, their kitchen, their hearts and hope to be a part of your family as you grow together!

Executive Chef Jeremy (Clark) Gilligan, Owner John Eymann, Owner Marco Spione, and General Manager Christie Devos. Missing from the photo is owner Michael Frendo.

Grand Opening Party
Friday, January 25th - 11 AM
Live Entertainment with Vinyl Flux at 9:30 pm

1573 Four Mile Creek Rd., NOTL
905-468-8808 | BRICKSANDBARLEY.CA