

The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL



Coyotes and residents can get along
page 4

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Ben Burland brought The Ben Show to Queen Street and the Original Icewine Festival Sunday, entertaining visitors and posing for photos. It was crisp and snowy — the perfect recipe for another successful event organized by the NOTL Chamber of Commerce. (Fred Mercnik)

Strong women lauded during global event

By Lauren O'Malley
The NOTL Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake wove 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



Lord Mayor Betty Disero (left) joins the Women's March Global Event Saturday. (Lauren O'Malley)



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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 barely 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 spills on our streets.

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



Rob Read (in truck) and Sheldon Randall discuss plans for clearing the snow on Saturday night. (Lauren O'Malley)

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 it 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 sidewalk 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."



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Shaun Donnelly, her mother Jackie Donnelly, and Tara Rosling are among the leaders of the pack leaving Simcoe Park and beginning the march. (Lauren O'Malley)

Women march for rights

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

No battle in the cry, really: The march made its way quite peacefully up King Street, those gathered ranging 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 a quote from famed American Supreme Court Justice and feminist Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Another sign read, "Respect my existence or expect resistance."

The march continued along Johnson Street to Regent, with chants of "Tell me what a feminist looks like. This is what a feminist looks like." Thair led the way with her near-comical bullhorn matched in size by her passion. They looped onto Regent Street, generating more puzzled looks from security at the other end of the Village, and then along Prideaux Street where they were greeted warmly and dramatically by Maya Nority, a drag queen who later performed in the bandshell.

As the small but dedicated crowd encircled the stage, Thair thanked everyone for their participation and began her introductions. The first speaker was Mel Thivierge, an employee at the Shaw Festival. Thivierge is a transgender person who spoke with humour and courage about the complexity of choosing which public washroom to use. (Thivierge prefers the pronoun "they.") Although they were born female, they identify as male. They told of a time when a woman tried to block their way from entering a women's washroom, and how they had to explain the situation to her patiently and respectfully. They said they're not so sure they would find a similar understanding in a men's washroom, and yet they do feel they are male.

"That's what it's like going to the bathroom sometimes when you have gender dysphoria, or identify as transgender. It's really freakin' stressful," they said. "And the thing that most people tell me is 'I don't care if you're in there,' but you still worry, you worry someone is going to

get upset and say something."

They went on to explain gender dysphoria as feeling emotionally and physically the opposite of one's gender, and directed the audience to "The Genderbread Person," an online resource and teaching tool they said is updated frequently. updated frequently.

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

Following Thivierge's moving presentation was Elizabeth Zimmerman, executive director of the YWCA Niagara Region, who discussed economic security for women, relaying 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 Disero also participated in the march, and spoke next in the blowing snow inside the bandshell.

"Chloe Coolie's screams through the night caused our government to come forward with the first legislation towards the abolition of slavery, not just here," she said, "but in all of British North America." Disero went on to say how wonderful it is this started here in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and suggested we "use her strength and determination to open up and take away the barriers that we face today."

The lord mayor also referred to Laura Secord's strength and determination, and honoured some more contemporary heroines. "Some more modern pioneers who have come and worked very hard. Margherita Howe, Gracia Janes, Austin Kirkby helped develop the town the way it is today. And if they didn't work so hard, our farming community wouldn't be as strong as it is today. We would have high-rises along our waterfront, and our town would not be as quaint, welcoming

and wonderful as it is today," she said. She also mentioned local recipients of Orders of Canada, Donna Scott and Bluma Appel, in addition to Howe, "who have done so much to promote equality."

Disero went on to say she had good news and bad news. "The good news is that NOTL has a female lord mayor, and a female deputy lord mayor and CAO." The bad news, she said, is that other positions are still dominated by men — although she pointed out with pride that NOTL has harmonized equal pay for equal work. More bad news: "At regional council one of the mayors gets up and says, 'I think what the province wants is to expedite the process and get a guy who knows what he's doing to come in, because it used to be handled by secretaries, which took days.' I looked across the room and could see almost every councillor cringe," said Disero.

"This is not what our leaders should be saying. So I took him aside and explained it, and he's not quite there yet. The good news is that I refuse to give up. I will continue to correct him whenever he is wrong." This is what a feminist looks like.

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

Actor Natasha Mumba then read a moving piece thanking her parents for their dedication to their ancestry as well as their courage to help her immigrate from Zambia to Canada and have a career in the arts here.

To close the event, Maya Nority — "a gay man in my day-to-day life and a woman on the weekends" — sang Andra Day's inspirational song Rise Up:

And I'll rise up
I'll rise like the day
I'll rise up
I'll rise unafraid
I'll rise up
And I'll do it a thousand times again.

Thair and the local chapter of Women's March Global are planning future uprisings. To find out more or to join the lively and motivated group, visit womensmarch-global.org.

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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)

Coyotes, residents can live side-by-side peacefully

By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

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 now are descendants of those animals, she says, which, for her research purposes, she named the Creek Park Pack.

When she learned then that coyotes in the area were being shot, pups taken from their den, and residents lobbying the Town to undertake a relocation program, she stepped in to help quiet the maelstrom.

She recalls going to see the late Bob Howse, the Town clerk at the time, whom she looks back on today as a trail-blazer. She asked if she could speak to councillors about educating the public, which she did, and with his support the controversy died down as residents became more understanding and less fearful.

The level of peaceful existence with nature has come a long way since then, but the Town could have furthered the process by keeping 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, educating the public and encouraging an acceptance of living in harmony with wildlife.

A specialist in coyote behaviour, she believes education 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 compassion 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."

Although neighbourhoods are changing and the animals may be displaced, the biggest single factor in their increased presence is likely to be residents who are feeding them.

"If you put food out, a coyote will go to it. That's what they're conditioned to do."

If there have been multiple sightings, it's time for residents to "wildlife-proof" their properties, she says.

She encourages homeowners to keep their decks sealed to discourage wildlife. She remembers having to

relocate a mother and pups from under a NOTL deck — if you have an open deck, make sure there are no dens before sealing them.

Be a responsible pet owner, she adds — keep dogs on a leash and cats inside. And above all, don't leave food out.

While it is mating time, that shouldn't increase their presence — they tend to mate for life, and their monogamy means they're not likely to cruise urban streets looking for a partner. They are more visible in winter, she said, stressing it's common for residents who see them in their neighbourhood to begin leaving out food — they may enjoy watching them, want to show them off to their grandchildren or just take photographs. But neighbours begin to think they are seeing several coyotes, when it's likely it's the same one looking for the easy meal its become accustomed to finding.

If coyotes aren't rewarded by food, they aren't likely to return to the area, she says. It's no different than birds returning to a bird feeder or squirrels hanging out below one, she explains, but she cautions against assuming it means they are becoming less fearful of humans and more aggressive — they have simply become conditioned to look for food they've come to expect.

If people are feeding them, she suggests "being considerate to your neighbours, their pets and other wildlife. Don't feed them."

When the presence of coyotes became a concern for Niagara Falls residents, the City passed a bylaw banning feeding them, with a fine of \$5,000 for anyone convicted of contravening the legislation. Other municipalities have accomplished the same goal by enforcing property standards bylaws, she says.

If the Town steps in and does its part to educate residents it could prevent coyotes from being seen as a threat.

"I've never met one 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 source of information, as is Coyote Watch Canada. She encourages using its website to report sightings of coyotes in urban areas, and if the reported behaviour seems outside the norm, it will be investigated, she says.

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

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

"The coywolf isn't a thing. It's a nickname," she says. "We have one species of coyotes in Ontario."

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

It's part of the canid family, which includes wolves and foxes. Sightings of particularly large, healthy-looking coyotes further promote the idea of a new hybrid, but the average coyote seen in Ontario is about 35 to 38 pounds, says Sampson. While she's received reports of much larger examples and gone to investigate, they turn out to be exaggerated. She has weighed one female at 55 pounds, but that is an anomaly, she says.

Some coyote specialists feel the eastern coyote's name 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 frustrated 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 increases, but it's no different than the coyotes that have been seen in Ontario for the last 100 years."



This photo of a coyote with a full winter coat was taken last week as it strolled along Anne Street to cross Mississauga Street, said Anthony Read, who snapped it. The coyote had been eating from a discarded MacDonalds container thrown out of a passing truck, he said. There have been several sightings, possibly of the same coyote, in the area.

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The Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre presents its Pumphouse Instructors' Exhibition, running until March 31, featuring the artwork of some of its talented instructors. 27 Ricardo Street, Open Tuesday to Sunday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m

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Drop-in active play program for little ones, aged three months to four years at the NOTL Public Library, Anderson Lane.

STEAM

January 23 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm
Story time with a twist, exploring science, technology, engineering, art, and math through simple, engaging activities for ages 18 months to three years. At the NOTL Public Library on Anderson Lane.

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January 26 @ 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm
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SHAW FILM SERIES: COLETTE

February 2 @ 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm
Don't miss Barara Tranter's Historical Gossip series short on the war years of veteran Norm Howe, to be shown before the feature film.

Community to help determine future of church

By Lauren O'Malley
The NOTL Local

There's another change coming to Virgil, and you can have a say in 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 outright. "It was a generous and visionary move on their part to throw the keys on the table and give us their church," he says of the Orchard Park congregation.

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

Then last year the offer came from the dramatically 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 — having paid off OPBC's mortgage.

"We want to be a church that does good in the greater community," says Bayne regarding the future of Cornerstone's land. "The developer from across the street [the new Tim Hortons, LCBO et al] has already reached out several times and offered to buy the property, but we're thinking of something a little more strategic than a strip mall."

The team at CCC has decided to open a conversation with the people of Niagara-on-the-Lake. "We want to

engage the community and have an assessment: 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 historical value, having been built in 1941 as the Cornerstone Mennonite Brethren Church. Minor renovations 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 October.

"We've come full circle," she says. "We started in Cornerstone 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 isolation."

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 mental 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 the town."

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 official sit-downs with the lord mayor," says Bayne. "We would like to have a good sense of the direction of the property before the beginning of the summer."

Phil Leboudec, owner of nearby Phil's valu-mart, has a suggestion. "It might be a better spot for the new medical centre. Potentially a better location all around, with the lights going in there already," he points out. "Nice and close for the citizens at Pleasant Manor, which is expanding."

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 development, with everything in walking distance." He sees it as an ideal spot for those who are beginning the transition into supported living.

Elltoft also recalls an arts-focused youth group from his own teens: "We had the old Beehive with Roddy 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.



Jeff Martens, outreach pastor and Kevin Bayne, lead pastor of Cornerstone Community Church. (Lauren O'Malley)

Holocaust survivor to tell his story

Contributed by
Charlotte Lettkeman

Jack Veffler, author of *Through the Eyes of The Child: Survival of the Holocaust* is a frequent speaker at Holocaust memorial events.

Born in Holland in 1940, Veffler and his older brother Maurice are child survivors of the Holocaust.

Veffler frames 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 individuals, Dutch and Aliens: 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. My story is about the suffering, 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 Veffler's family, including his father and mother, perished at the Auschwitz concentration camp.

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

The event is being sponsored by the Baha'i Community of NOTL.

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EDITORIAL

Expecting a great 2019

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're over our resolution to make resolutions, back to doing all we promised not to do, but still hoping for a good year, even a great one. There is every reason 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 Region 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 more talk about planning controls, interim bylaws, to develop or not to develop, and although not everyone finds the language of municipal planning riveting stuff, those decisions have an impact on our daily lives, whether we live or work in the Old Town, Virgil, Queenston or other neighbourhoods, or

farm in the rural area.

Decisions about the medical centre, where our doctors will be while it's under construction, how traffic problems will be solved, whether kids will have a pool to swim in this summer (they will, we're assured) — resolutions of all these issues will shape the future of the town and its residents.

But that's only one part of the equation: We are also offered wonderful opportunities to enjoy the best of NOTL — tobogganing with our families; attending the great Shaw Film Series matinees; planning a night out at a local restaurant; joining in one of the many programs on offer at the public library or community centre; or this weekend, taking a walk through a beautiful Icewine Village.

NOTL is an incredible place to live, work, raise a family or retire. And this year, with hope and faith in our hearts, we look forward to watching all the awesome people of this amazing community, every one of us, working together to make it even better.

Penny Coles, Editor

Letters to the Editor

Tourism needs to be managed

Concerns expressed by the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce regarding a parking fee increase for tour buses using the lot at Fort George fail to consider three key issues: the economic benefits bus visitors generate in the town versus those provided by longer-term visitors, and the impact of rampant tourism on residents as well as town infrastructure.

On Jan. 13, CBC Radio One's Sunday Edition program on "overtourism," which looked at the issue mostly in relation to tourist hotspots in Europe. Some of the comments made during the program could also apply to NOTL and Old Town in particular: "As a growing glob-

al middle class gains increasing access to low-cost travel, residents in tourism hotspots say they are overrun. Housing costs are skyrocketing, driving out residents. Infrastructure is overburdened. The environment is suffering and so is local culture."

It has been reported that certain areas in Barcelona, like the famous La Rambla pedestrian boulevard, are clogged with tourists, and become a place for residents to avoid. Businesses that formerly served locals are being driven out due to high rent and replaced by tourist-oriented services like bicycle-rental shops and tapas bars. Short-term, apartment-rental agencies like Airbnb are driving up housing costs, meaning many locals can't afford to live in the city any longer.

Of course Old Town is not Barcelona. Nonetheless, perhaps there is a real need to manage tourism 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 much 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. An increase in the cost of bus permits is likely a good start.

Sandra Davis

LOCAL FINDS



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 begin 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 embossment. 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 grandfather John Elliott who built the wall at Randwood. The Nelles' private home referred to, now the 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.

If you have anything to add to these stories, or any local artifacts, spots, or puzzlers you'd like us to explore, please contact me at lauren@notllocal.com. I'd love to hear from you.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake

LOCAL

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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 disadvantaged 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 living in the moment and not to take life for granted.

This is when my passion for humanitarianism ignited. 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, however I wanted to do something momentous, to reach children globally, to do something that hasn't been done before in Niagara.

In the winter of Grade 10 I did some research in ways I can advocate for the world's

most vulnerable children, and that's where I stumbled upon UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund), the organization my family donated to when I was younger. Without hesitation I decided to ask about advocating, acting, and fundraising for UNICEF, and through a series 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 together to advocate for a topic that many are so passionate about. The day finally came where I was in the meeting with my principal discussing 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, 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, the idea to create the first UNICEF Niagara Club was born. This time I knew the initiative would not fail because I would take a whole new approach. As my desired path to the UNICEF club was foiled, I started speaking 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 Canada 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 vulnerable children. We reach children worldwide by advocating, acting, and fundraising. Through this initiative we host fundraisers, campaigns, attend schools to talk about who we are and how to help adolescents worldwide, attend summits, and much more.

At the moment we are in the process of planning our first fundraising event

which is at the St. Catharines Farmers Market where we will be accepting donations. We have many exciting campaigns planned, including advocating for the earthquake and tsunami crisis in Sulawesi, Indonesia, and the Rohingya crisis following the aftermath of the cyclone period.

We plan to advocate for these campaigns by visiting schools and discussing these pressing issues, as well as being active through social media.

In terms of fundraisers we plan to an art auction using artwork from youth, as well as a neon-dance bringing youth together.

If you are a youth in Grades 9 to 12 and want to become a member of the UNICEF Niagara Club email unicefniagaracub@gmail.com.

Letters to the Editor

If you're out at night, make sure we can see you

For over 21 years, off and on, I have lived in the old town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

However, it seems to me that there are many more people wandering around in the dark on their after dinner walks, with and without their pet dogs. Most times the dogs are visible with their illuminated collars or coats but the owners aren't.

Some areas do not have good street lighting or sidewalks, so can you please ask all human walkers to make sure they wear something that can be seen by road users. I'm not suggesting that they wear collars but carrying a flashlight would be ideal.

I assume that the same applies to the dark early mornings but I must confess to not being up and about before the sun rises, well not outside anyway.

I hope you have great success with The Local.

A.J. Read

One solution to organics problem

I read with great interest your report on various aspects of the garbage issue here in Niagara-on-the-Lake. I found it timely, because I had been planning to write our new Lord Mayor with my thoughts on this matter. Better though, that I write you, who have all aspects of this already in mind.

Our family (of two) creates very little garbage, and because we ourselves compost all our own vegetable waste, only a very small proportion of what we put out is organic. But I still feel badly when I include the chicken bones in my black bag. Why not use the green bin? Well, you see, this bin is the main issue.

The green bins are huge, ungainly, hard to clean, smelly and actually, even

with the lid firmly closed, ours also used to let in the water when it rained. When all our organic waste would fit into one, at most two small single-use plastic bags, this enormous bin is completely inappropriate. And what with the blue bin, the grey bin and our garbage can already, I didn't have any more room to put it away inside our shed. It had to stay out; an ugly eyesore. So I gave it away.

There's a simple solution. We need a 'Small Green Bin' option, something about half the size of the grey and blue bins, raccoon-proof, with a lid that seals properly, small enough to clean easily. That would be more than big enough for us, even at Christmastime with a turkey, and I think it might appeal to a large proportion of residents.

I promise I would use that. Never another chicken in the wrong pot!

Andrew Henwood



Some of the amazing youth members involved in the UNICEF Niagara Club gathered last week, including vice-president Shreeya Patel; advocacy committee officer Kyle Cofell; Alexcia Cofell, founder and president; vice-president Katie Miller; and communications committee director Dawoud Najmudin. Victoria Palumbi, Madeline Ocampo, Gaia Cattani, Emma Martin, Pavan Kairon, Madison Maclean, Kaixin Jiang, Mia Cordasco, Maxie Pasetto, Jordynn Bateman, Bianca D'amore, and Heer Mehta are also club members but are missing from the photo. (Photo submitted)



We want your photos!

We'd love to feature local photos, so if you have one you think our readers might enjoy, please email it to penny@notllocal.com. Deadline is Monday at noon. Thanks!

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Mecho and Therapy Dogs perform miracles

By Lauren O'Malley
The NOTL Local

"We're 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, a 119-pound Bernese Mountain dog. (The name, pronounced "Meeko," 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 Bernese 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 Neighbour). "Mecho has more letters after her 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 idea of Mecho becoming a therapy dog, and joined the St. John Ambulance therapy pet program. Mecho excelled, and Thwaites 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.

TPOC Niagara 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." 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.

They're also the only therapy pets 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 Alzheimers 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 nine 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" — and can connect well with patients with dementia. They do end-of-life visits for people who are dying, and with their loved ones, and therapy visits for people who have endured great losses.

The work is rewarding, and difficult at the same time. "The dogs absorb the energy of the people they help," says Thwaites with concern. Their handlers are exposed to many emotionally difficult situations as well, so visits are typically limited to one a day, between one and two hours.

Thwaites underwent her own emotionally trying time last year, when Mecho suffered through two separate life-threatening illnesses. But she pulled through, and the pair can continue their good work. Thwaites feels the experience has made Mecho even more sympathetic to people who are ill or in pain.

Therapy dogs are trained to ignore any food or other edibles — pills on a bedside table in a hospital, for instance. They learn to nudge the arm of someone feeling stress or sadness, and to put their heads in the laps of seated people. The pets have to be unflappable in hospital



Laurie Thwaites and her pet therapy dog Mecho. (Lauren O'Malley)

scenarios like dialysis and chemotherapy treatments, where there are "machines beeping all over the place, and wires and tubes everywhere," says Thwaites. And where there are also people in need of some unconditional love and a snuggle.

What are the beneficial effects of visiting with a therapy dog? "It really depends on what you're looking at," says Thwaites. "For a child who has been bullied, the dog is someone who will listen. For a child who can't read, or doesn't speak English well, they're a non-judgemental partner. In the paediatric ward, kids are scared. They're in cribs or beds, and when a dog puts its head on the side of their beds, kids just relax." She tells of non-verbal people

spontaneously speaking to the animals.

"Each of these dogs has worked miracles," 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 all volunteer, and members 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 tpoc.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 vulnerable sector checks.

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

Firefighters recognized for service



Scott Pearson and his father Frank Pearson were both recognized at council last week, Scott for 16 years as a volunteer with the St. Davids station and Frank for 32 years with the same station. (Photo submitted)



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Zalepa chair of \$950 million regional budget discussions

By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

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

It's a big job for a first-time councillor, and he said he hesitated to accept, chiefly because as chair, his role in the discussions changes. He will play less



Gary Zalepa has been appointed chair of the regional budget committee.

of a part in hashing out details of the \$950-million budget, but will have a greater responsibility in how information 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 may have 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 re-

gion through 2019, said Zalepa.

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

A 10-year capital budget has been approved by the committee, but must still pass muster by regional council when all final 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 \$274 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 re-

gional and municipal routes.

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

The cost of decommissioning the NOTL sewage lagoons, estimated at \$12 million, is included in the capital budget — 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 \$27 million, will be financed by debt, he said.

Of the overall \$950 million cost of running 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.

Winter view of wildlife



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)



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21 RED HAVEN DRIVE \$975,000



Beautiful bungalow home with approx. 3000 sq. feet of finished living space. Fully finished walk-out basement with 10-foot ceilings. Main floor has 12-foot ceilings and great open concept layout including gourmet kitchen, great room, formal dining room and luxury master suite. **MLS 30703410. Kevin Stokes.**

10 LUCIA COURT \$749,000



Perfect retirement property located on a quiet cul-de-sac in a great area of town. Features main floor master bedroom with ensuite; wood floors; lovely open concept kitchen; gas fireplace and 2 doors that lead out to the deck, patio space and private rear yard. The upper level has 2 bedrooms with Jack & Jill ensuite. Finished lower level has a large recreational room; bedroom and a three-piece bath. This lovely home is within walking distance of downtown shops, restaurants, wineries and theatres. **MLS 30684870. Victoria Bolduc and Sarah Gleddie.**

30 OAK DRIVE \$689,000



Set in the desirable Chautauqua area is this pleasing 1450 sq. ft. raised bungalow. Main level features 3 bedrooms, 3-piece bathroom, open living/dining area with hardwood flooring. Lovely 3 season enclosed sunroom and deck which overlooks a treed and private backyard. Full lower level consists of a family room, 4th bedroom, 3-piece bathroom, potential hobby room and walk up. Steps away from the phenomenal sunsets overlooking Lake Ontario. **MLS 30670987. Chris Bowron, Audrey Wright & Nicole Vanderperk.**

5 ALBION WAY \$1,098,000



Welcome to the Royal Albion Place. This newly released townhouse by Gatta Homes is located only a few minutes from the heart of Niagara on the Lake. 1+1 bedroom inner unit bungalow townhouse includes an open concept design, large windows, high ceilings, elegant custom kitchen with quartz countertops, hardwood floors throughout. Finished basement is comprised of a bright bedroom, ensuite and family room. **MLS 30700063. Christopher Bowron, Audrey Wright & Nicole Vanderperk.**

204 LINE 7 ROAD \$1,875,000



This luxurious 4700 sq. ft. 5-bedroom 4-bathroom residence is dedicated to comfortable yet sophisticated living showcasing timeless details and finest craftsmanship. It is situated on almost an acre overlooking vineyards and surrounded by lush grounds which include your own 7 hole putting green; salt water pool; fabulously equipped cabana; outdoor kitchen; several sitting areas and an outdoor fireplace. **MLS 30632818. Chris Bowron, Audrey Wright, Nicole Vanderperk.**

9 HARVEST DRIVE \$838,000



Beautiful former model home built in 2018. Fantastic floor plan with 2 Bedrooms, Den and Laundry room on main floor with finished Family room and Bedroom with Ensuite on lower level. Luxurious high-end finishes throughout the home with attention to detail. Stunning kitchen with quartz counters and open concept to Dining Room and Great Room. The Great Room features a beautiful floor to ceiling fireplace flanked with custom built in cabinetry. The Master bedroom boasts a spa like ensuite bathroom and spacious walk in closet. **MLS 30696858. Linda Williams.**

2 BLACKBIRD STREET \$2,500 + UTILITIES



Classic brick semi-detached home in convenient location offering numerous amenities within walking distance including community centre, library, wineries/breweries and only minutes from downtown Niagara on the Lake's shops, theatres and restaurants. Property is also available for sale. **MLS 30704008. Thomas Eltoft and Kim Eltoft.**

CONCESSION 1/LINE 6 LOT \$579,000



Rural Niagara on the Lake corner lot surrounded by orchards and close to wineries, bike paths and the Niagara River Parkway. Just under one acre centrally located with easy access to Niagara Falls, QEW and US border. **MLS 30678863. Thomas Eltoft and Kim Eltoft.**

84 FLYNN STREET \$699,000



A charming salt box design 3 bedroom/3-bathroom home situated in a quiet corner of the old town within easy walking distance of the main street, the commons and walking trails along the River. Reminiscent of an earlier era with separate barn style garage, pine trim, parquet wood floors, brick wood burning fireplace, and country kitchen this freshly painted house is light and bright to suit owners starting out, retiring or looking for a unique weekend getaway. **MLS 30675597. Viviane Eltoft & Thomas Eltoft.**

11 MURRAY STREET \$839,000



Located in The Village, this pristine bungalow provides over 3200 sq ft of finished living space with exceptional quality and taste. Entertaining is made easy with open concept main floor living, an upper loft providing ample space for guests, a fully finished lower level and private rear courtyard. With hardwood floors, character moulding and high-end fixtures, this gleaming home can't fail to impress. Restaurants, wineries, shops, town library and community centre are all within easy walking distance. **MLS 30687159. Thomas Eltoft & Kim Eltoft.**

631 KING STREET \$2,400 + UTILITIES



All brick bungalow situated on a large lot in the heart of Niagara on the Lake. This well planned home offers main floor living including 2 bedrooms, updated 4 piece bathroom, spacious principal rooms, open kitchen and 4 season sun room. Lower level is recently finished offering additional bedroom, large rec room with gas fireplace, laundry room, 3 piece bathroom and storage. Sliding doors to entertainment size deck and convenient walkout to double car garage and interlocked double drive. **MLS 30703155. Victoria Bolduc & Sarah Gleddie.**

1341 NIAGARA STONE RD \$1,650 + UTILITIES



Welcome to 1341 Niagara Stone Road, offered to lease. Fabulous completely renovated first floor three-bedroom home in the heart of Virgil directly across from Crossroads Public School. New floors, kitchen, bathroom, electrical windows and finishes. Roughly 1,000 square feet, large deep backyard overlooks orchards and vineyards. Laundry accessible in basement. Please submit rental application with offer to lease. First and last month's rent deposit, 5 minutes to downtown Niagara on the Lake, local transit on Niagara Stone available. In the heart of wine country! Make an appointment to take a look. **MLS 30692680. Philip Bowron.**

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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 celebrations 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.

Mischievous Coffee serves from a vintage 1966 Airstream trailer. (Photo submitted)

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)



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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 50th 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 1956. Carey has been the emcee since 2007, taking over from Bob Barker, who immortalized the phrase, “Come on down!”

Weir, the most recent arrival in NOTL, met the others about 20 years ago—Rumsey has known Arthur all her life, and they met Wagner in high school.

Although they have often had girls’ getaways over the years, this was their first big trip. The point of travelling so far was to see Arthur, but

Weir decided since they were going to California, it would be a lark to go to the taping — they had all been fans of the show as teenagers.

It turned out to be a simple process to get tickets online for an afternoon taping, and off they went, hoping of course to be called but certainly not expecting it.

“It was a long day before the show even started,” said Rumsey. They stood in line for about four and a half hours, trying to be cheerful and excited, knowing cameras were on the crowd.

“We met so many people waiting in line, from Vancouver to Toronto and even a couple of ladies who planned a road trip from Alaska. I thought for sure one of them would get picked.”

Before the show started a staff member came out to interview every person in line, she said. He spoke to each one for about 20 seconds to a minute — that was how much time they had to shine and tell their story, 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 seated 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 Rumsey.

“We didn’t stop screaming or clapping throughout the whole show,” said Wagner.

To start the game, four contestants are each asked to guess a price for a prize that is displayed, and 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



Katherine Weir, Sue Rumsey, Tina Goetz Arthur and Sheri Wagner wait to watch the taping of The Price is Right. (Photos submitted)

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, and 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 “genuinely 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.”



Drew Carey and Tina Goetz Arthur wait for the spin of the wheel.

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One philosopher's path from journalism to gelato

By Lauren O'Malley
The NOTL Local

Zuhair “Kash” Kashmeri has died, and left a hole in the heart of our community much larger than his slight frame.

Many locals would know Kash as “Carlotta’s husband,” or “the gelato guy,” a warm and chatty man-about-Queen-Street. They might not know him as an award-winning, groundbreaking journalist, author, deeply spiritual man, and champion of rights the world over.

Born and raised in Bombay (now Mumbai), India, young Zuhair was taught to be curious, to question things. His father was one of the top Bollywood screenwriters — but “still made time for his family,” says Kash’s brother Sarwar — and his mother was a social worker, championing the rights of women and minorities. “There were lots of protestors at the apartment when we were growing up,” says Sarwar with a grin.

Kash’s inquisitiveness and thirst for justice naturally led him to journalism. He received degrees in India and England, and returned to write for the Indian Express. According to Sarwar, in 1971 Kash’s employer said, “You’re so good you need a bigger stage,” which propelled the

journalist to Toronto, Ont.

The bigger stage he chose was the Globe and Mail. In his 15 years with the national newspaper, Kash built a reputation for covering delicate and complex topics, such as the Middle East, and Sikh culture. In fact, he was so well known for his sensitivity to the former that Yasser Arafat granted him an interview. Kash was in the first journalist in North America to be given time with the then-leader of Palestine.

The dogged journalist also broke the scandal around a famous Air India bombing; “He saved the image of Sikhs throughout the world,” says Sarwar, telling the story of a Toronto cab driver who recognized his family name and praised his brother’s work. “Zuhair was known for old-fashioned journalism,” says his proud older brother. “Get the story, get more than the story.” He recounts tales of exploding buildings and race riots. “He was a storyteller; he wanted to put every story in perspective, to provide the truth and the facts.”

Kash had many other career successes, including as an instrumental editor and journalist with the then-start-up Now Magazine, which has become a weekly alternative news powerhouse. He wrote two non-fiction books, made

a documentary about his father, consulted for National Bank Financial, and the list goes on.

He also married and had two children, to whom he was devoted.

But what he could be most famous for is his love for Carlotta — and hers for him.

“Death is gracious for the dead, not for the living,” says the grief-stricken widow. Normally known for her Italian effervescence — spumante personified — Carlotta is flattened. “When people ask me how I feel, I want to tell them I feel shitty. I don’t care if people get shocked or offended,” she says in her rich Italianate English.

In 2001, Kash had a quadruple bypass. “I think he was living a good life,” says Sarwar, “Indulgent.” He also blames the stress of journalism. After the successful surgery, the indulgences shifted: “He changed his food, he changed his life. He travelled the world looking for Carlotta,” says his brother with a twinkle in his eye. In fact at this point he didn’t know Carlotta existed.

Kash travelled to Costa Rica on vacation in 2004. Carlotta happened to be managing the resort where he stayed. “I decided to study Spanish literature in Costa Rica — I’ve always loved the Spanish language,” says the

diminutive Italian. “I was offered a job for six months, and stayed for five years. They’re still waiting for me in Florence,” she says with a chuckle. “I said I’d be back in six months.”

Kash was smitten from the start, and returned to the same resort in Costa Rica every two months for a year. Did Carlotta know he would be the love of her life? “Absolutely not.” But she didn’t have much of a chance when it came to the man who won over Arafat and survived death threats and heart surgery. Kash won her heart too. Completely.

Carlotta moved to Toronto in 2005. The couple had two weddings in 2007. “Nothing was normal with Kash,” says Carlotta, shaking her head.

Both ceremonies were held in the tiny town of Reading, Vermont — population 300. Sarwar and his wife Debbie had a farm there which was a favourite place of the couple’s.

Kash had decided he wanted the officiant of their wedding to be a world authority on Islam and Christianity. “Unfortunately,” says Sarwar, “he was not ordained as a minister in Vermont and therefore the marriage had to be performed by a justice of the peace.”

The justice of the peace in Reading also happened to own a garden centre, and that’s where the ceremony was held. “We were in this big arboretum, we popped the cork,” remembers Carlotta. “He was drunk, to tell he truth. Such a character,” she says, describing their first officiant.

The second service was held in the same small church where Kash’s brother was married. Three hundred of their closest friends and family attended. “Oh, the wedding,” says Carlotta. “It was a multi-cultural service with Hindu, English, Italian and Spanish spoken. Each of our friends and family were reading their speeches in their language,” she recalls with a sigh of joy.

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,” says Carlotta, logically. They bought the Burns House on King Street, and dubbed it La Toscana di Carlotta. “He loved this crazy old house,” says the business’ namesake.

“We started the B&B in the spring, my mother helped. We were a good team of three,” Carlotta says. “Kash was a wonderful host. He was my personal encyclopedia.”

In the first of several harsh blows, Carlotta’s mother died three years ago.

Most B&B owners will tell you that running a successful guest house is plenty of work, but Kash didn’t stop there. “It’s a funny story,” says Carlotta. “We were travelling in Italy



Zuhair “Kash” Kashmeri was always ready for good food and good conversation. (Supplied)

and always having lunch in gelaterias. One night we were having dinner with my brothers 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 Florence’s Uffizi gallery, hatched the basic business plan for Il Gelato di Carlotta.

“Zuhair was always a big fan of slow food and as organic as possible,” says Carlotta. “It took months to find the products and ingredients we wanted. He also wanted to promote Niagara products,” she recalls. “We started with the amazing marketing that Zuhair did.”

They opened their first gelateria on Queen Street five years ago. The growing empire has spread to four locations, with a fifth in Florence: a modern, high-end gelato food truck.

In his “spare” time, Kash remained thoroughly engaged. He working on ways to encourage kids to read over the summer; wrote poetry; walked their beloved dog Maia through the parks and streets of town every day, often stopping to chat with other locals. He meditated daily, and participated in silent Vipassana retreats regularly, for 10 days at a time — which, for such a garrulous man, was quite an accomplishment. He played tennis regularly, and had a very active and satisfying social life.

“On Tuesday night, the 20th, we had friends here,” says Carlotta. “We had a toast to Kash’s excellent health.” He had recently been to the doctor for his annual physical, and everyone was very happy with the results.

On Wednesday, Dec. 21, Carlotta went to open the Queen Street gelateria. She says, “I said, ‘Okay Kashi, I’m going now,’ and he said, ‘Okay, I’m coming with the dog but first I have to put away a load of wood.’” Having not heard from her husband, Carlotta called him at 3:27 p.m. There

was no answer.

“At 4:20 I came home,” says Carlotta in a soft, sad voice. “Maia was there and the kitchen was cold. I saw the door was open, and I was ready to say ‘Oh Kash, you left the door open.’ I walked out into the garden, the wood was all put away — he was on his knees with his head on the wood.”

“I grabbed him, I called him, he was so cold,” she says.

Carlotta called 911, and was coached through what to do until the paramedics arrived, but there was no hope. “The coroner said it was probably instant,” says the bereaved wife. “It is what he would have wanted.”

The day after Kash died, Carlotta went into his desk and found a poem he had been transcribing in calligraphy for his brother. Originally a sermon by Henry Scott-Holland, it begins, “Death is nothing at all,” and concludes with, “All is well. Nothing is hurt; nothing is lost. One brief moment and all will be as it was before. How we shall laugh at the trouble of parting when we meet again.”

Zuhair “Kash” Kashmeri leaves his wife Carlotta Cattani; his children Shamil and Shireen and their mother, his ex-wife Hera Kashmeri, as well as his brother Sarwar, and four grandchildren.

Carlotta says some of his ashes will be spread on the beach in Mumbai where he played as a boy. Some will be in Toronto with his children. And some will be buried in a cemetery in Florence. “He wants to be next to my mum,” says Carlotta. “He interviewed the nun who runs the cemetery because she protects Roma, hires them to clean,” she continues. “How is it possible in Italy we are so racist against Roma?”

“What Zuhair did was instead of being scared, he was wanting to know how we’re different. He wanted to let them keep their own culture,” she says, of the man who respected all people’s rights to their own truth and justice.

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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 with a bit of time on their hands — Mark Gaudet and Terry Weiner decided they would repair 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 the 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 men, with an increasing number of women, spend long hours on local farms, but in what little spare time they have, they need to buy groceries and do errands. The highlights of their lives here are going to church and congregating with workers on other farms when they can. Bicycles in safe working order are a lifeline 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 volunteers who came on board — 270 bikes were refurbished, and another 168 repaired. The two men had started out paying for supplies out of their own pockets, but gradually donations from the community helped to make their organization self-sustaining, Gaudet says.

A grant from the Niagara Community Foundation allowed them to set up four workstations, where volunteers could tinker side-by-side in the shop they had set up in the basement of the former Virgil School, thanks to building owner Lloyd Redekopp.

Last season, the number of refurbished bikes to sell rose to 470, and they repaired 327 for farm workers.

Before Christmas, after one group of workers

had returned home, leaving their bikes on racks outside their accommodation, Gaudet and Weiner arranged to pick them up and take them back to their shop to repair.

When the workers return this spring, they will find their bikes completely overhauled, covered in plastic to protect them from the elements and waiting to be ridden around town, said Gaudet.

While the goal of the men was from the start to provide low-cost, safe bicycles and free bike repairs to seasonal farm workers — more than 2,000 come to NOTL each year — the spin-offs that have resulted from their simple starting point have been far-reaching.

"It started off as one thing," said Gaudet of their original plan, "but it became something very different."

Gaudet and Weiner have spoken to groups interested in setting up similar programs in other Ontario farming communities, providing them with everything they could possibly need to know about creating their own sustainable operations. Although they have not yet come to fruition, Gaudet says he and Weiner remain open to helping out in any way they can.

They have provided logistical support, training and supplies to Bike Me Up, a not-for-profit in St. Catharines, that is providing affordable transportation to semi-homeless, vulnerable people, says Gaudet.

They have also assisted recent immigrants from St. Catharines who travelled to Virgil to see them, and provided bikes for a church-sponsored Syrian refugee family in NOTL.

Shaw actors in their first year with the festival and finding transportation around town a problem, as well as NOTL adults and kids struggling with keeping up have also been on the receiving end of safe bikes in good repair.

"We were approached and could not say no," says Gaudet, about branching out to help the larger community.

Their efforts are reaping rewards even further afield: some workers will take their bikes with them when the season is finished, maybe because the bike is especially nice and will provide transportation back home, or as a gift for a family member, he says. And when they return to NOTL, they will be looking for another bike.

Ideally, Gaudet and Weiner like to have refurbished bicycles waiting for the workers when they return to their eight-month

home. There are 150 bikes ready to go when the 2019 season begins, but that's not enough, says Gaudet.

"Last year we had over 200 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 those 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 safety of the bike riders — the unreliability of front and rear bicycle lights. Although all bikes leaving the shop would have both installed and working as part of a routine 50-point safety check, Gaudet says they realized once the battery-operated lights were done, the workers would not be likely to replace them.

With money from a local donor, they have placed an order for 100 USB rechargeable 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, "of the person who it belonged 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 story that comes 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 the one part of the program he's not talked much about, he said — the 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 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.



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. (Photos submitted)

Some he has 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, out-

reach 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 done more than provide bikes — they've taken

guys to medical appointments when they've been hurt on the job or to church or the dollar store so they don't have to make that long trek by bike.

"It's good for the workers, and God knows they need it," said Gaudet.

Sometimes a bike is just a bike, he says, but in NOTL, it can be so much more.

If you have a bike you're not using, contact Weiner at 905-321-8638 or Gaudet at 289-783-1684.



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.

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SCHOOLS

ROYAL OAK COMMUNITY SCHOOL

This is the first of a regular feature in The Local to highlight our elementary schools and students. Royal Oak Community School graciously agreed to be first, and next week we will feature the St. Davids Public School Kindergarten class.

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 embodied their school's values of kindness, respect, and community.

ROCS 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 also facilitated and participated in their own Terry Fox Run to raise awareness and funds for the Terry Fox Foundation; ran a very successful "Trick or Eat" walk to collect non-perishable foods for Newark Neighbours; and most recently adopted a Community Cares family for Christmas.

ROCS 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 instil 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 pro-

grams, 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 8 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 "Growing 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.

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Holden Powell and Grayson Tataryn interview Ms. Dritsacos, head of school.



Royal Oak students clown for the camera at an Ice Dogs Game in St. Catharines.

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 all of 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, biking, hiking, 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 paediatrician, 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 the people I love getting sick or hurt.

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

7. Who is your best friend?
My childhood friend Demi I would consider my best friend, however, I have many who I hold near and dear my heart.

8. If you could go anywhere in world where would you go and why?
Everywhere and to learn all different cultures.

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 week-

end, 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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REAL ESTATE WILLS BUSINESS

Local snaps of winter weekend



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 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)



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)



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)

LOCAL WORSHIP

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karen@notllocal.com

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. 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).

Success for skaters



Members of the NOTL Skating Club recently participated in a STAR Series Skate Ontario competition in Orono, and came home with good results. 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.

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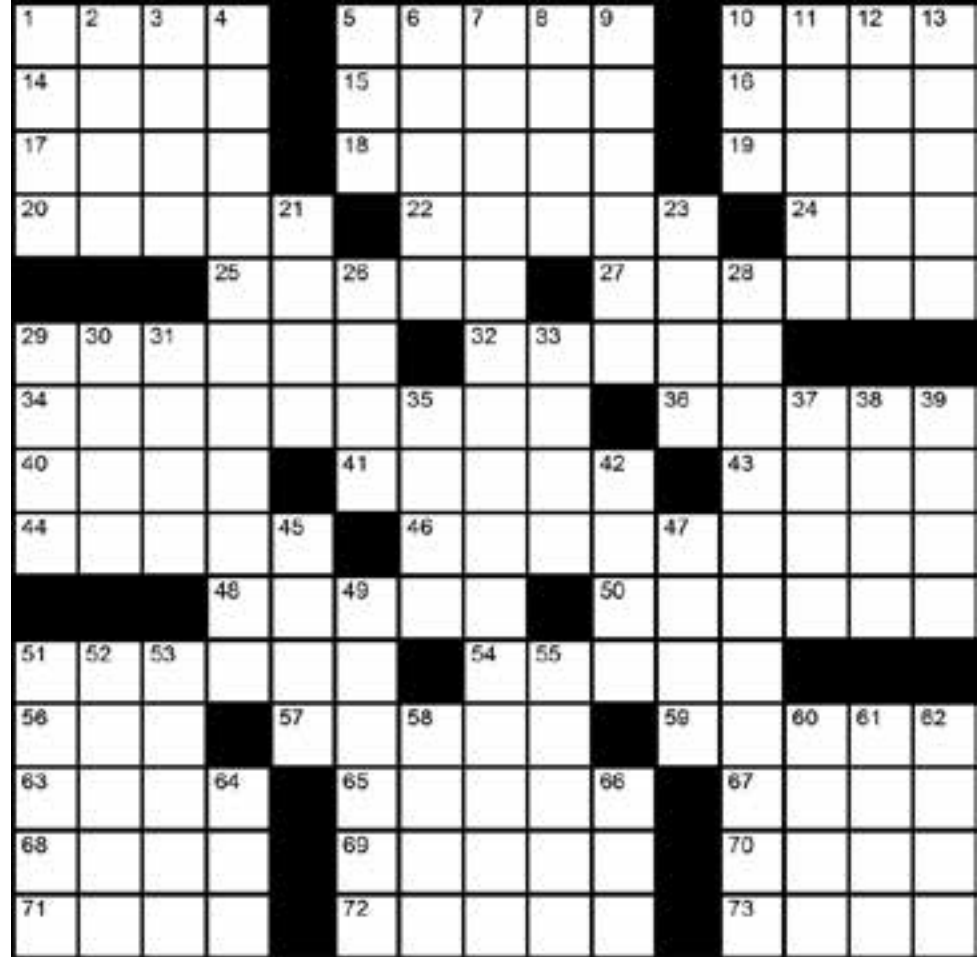
OBITUARY

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 ccbscares.ca



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CROSSWORD PUZZLE



- 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

32 Lowest of the low

34 Eye defects

36 Notes

40 Heel

41 Sheltered spots

43 Short written reminder

44 Ethiopian capital --- Ababa

46 "The --- Dancers" (Jean Thesman)

48 About the eye

50 Did, once

51 "--- and her Sisters" (Woody Allen movie)

54 Intriguing group

56 --- Annie ("Oklahoma!")
- 57 Battalion XO, often

59 Moves cautiously forward

63 Names

65 Author Evelyn ---

67 It replaced the French franc

68 Noted scat singer --- Fitzgerald

69 Boredom

70 Former Mrs David Bowie

71 Move

72 Palm tree fruit

73 Sports defeat
- 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
- 21 Comedian Roseanne ---

23 Warrant

26 Bony

28 Deceptive decorative paintwork

29 Where the Wizard of Westwood coached

30 One of three in "The Mikado"

31 Formerly known as shell-shock

33 Inquires

35 Escherichia ---, potentially dangerous bacterium

37 Dweeb

38 Give off

39 Alone

42 Counterfoil

45 Irritating email

47 Straight --- arrow

49 Melted

51 Underworld

52 No longer a minor

53 Type of metal or gas

55 Debate

58 Country singer and actress --- Kramer

60 Japanese heavyweight contest

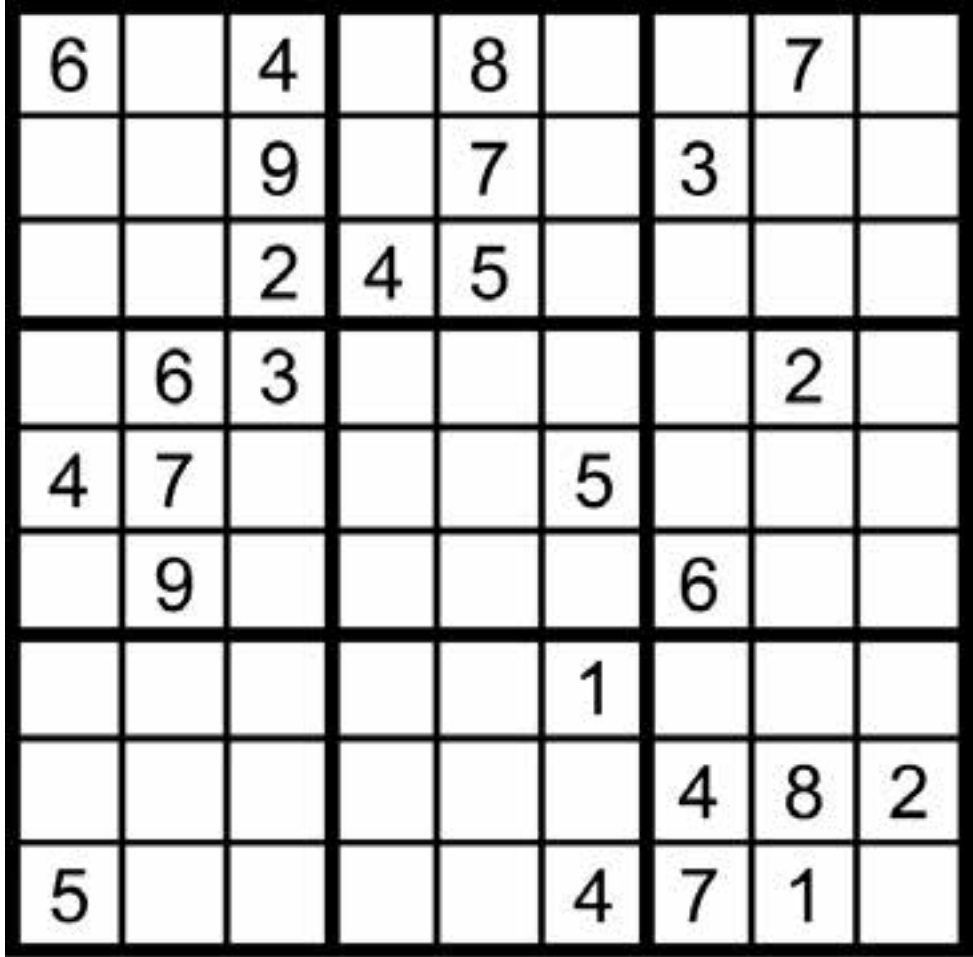
61 Subdivisions of eons

62 Male heirs

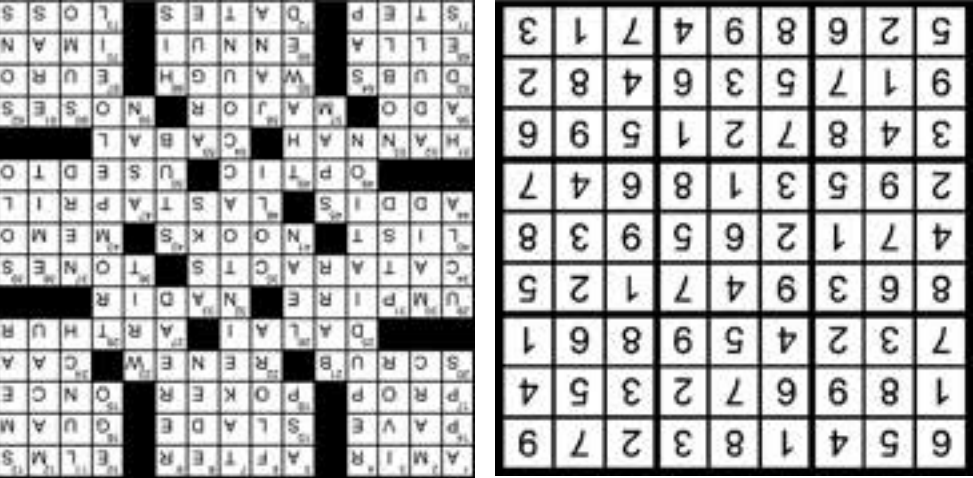
64 Plant juice

66 Not hers

SUDOKU PUZZLE



PUZZLE ANSWERS



Across:
1 Amir, 5 After, 10 Elms, 14 Pave, 15 Slade, 17 Prop, 18 Poker, 19 Once, 20 Scrub, 22 Renew, 24 C A A, 25 Dalai, 27 Arthur, 29 Umpire, 32 Nadir, 34 Cataracts, 36 Tones, 40 List, 41 Nooks, 43 Memo, 44 Addis, 46 Last April, 48 Optic, 50 Used to, 51 Hannah, 54 Cabal, 56 Ado, 57 Major, 59 Noses, 63 Dubs, 65 Waugh, 67 Euro, 68 Ella, 69 Ennu, 70 Iman, 71 Step, 72 Dates, 73 Loss.

Down:
1 Apps, 2 Marc, 3 Ivor, 4 Repudiation, 5 Asp, 6 Flora, 7 Take into account, 8 Eden, 9 Reread, 10 Ego, 11 Lunch, 12 Macau, 13 Smeat, 21 Barr, 23 Wit, 26 Lean, 28 Trompe l'oeil, 29 U C L A, 30 Maid, 31 P T S D, 33 Asks, 35 Coll, 37 Nerd, 38 Emit, 39 Solo, 42 Stub, 45 Spam, 47 As an, 49 Thawed, 51 Hades, 52 Adult, 53 Noble, 55 Argue, 58 Jana, 60 Sumo, 61 Eras, 62 Sons, 64 Sap, 66 His.

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 Mussat, 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."



The NOTL Nationals won Friday 9-4 against Port Colborne, but lost in overtime 3-1 to the Northumberland Stars, leaving them in fifth position. They play this Friday at the Meridian Credit Union Arena. (Fred Mercnik)

Midgets battle to close finish



Two NOTL Minor Hockey League midget teams battled to a 4-3 finish at the Meridian Credit Union Arena Saturday evening. (Fred Mercnik)



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THE Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL YOUR COMMUNITY NEWS



LOCAL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT: BRICKS AND BARLEY



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 derelict 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 re-birth 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.



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