Lucky boys!
The Trapasso brothers, St. Michael students Isaac and William, enjoy their Regent Street backyard rink. Last weekend’s cold spell was the perfect weather for a rink, allowing them to get outside and on the ice, thanks to the hard work of their dad, Dominic Trapasso. (Mike Balsom)

Niagara Long Term Care COVID cases continue

Penny Coles
The Local

The outbreak at Niagara Long Term Care on Wellington Street in Niagara-on-the-Lake is ongoing, with a number of both staff and resident cases resolved.

“We currently have 56 active resident cases, with 22 resolved, and no new deaths to report. We have 14 active staff cases with 23 resolved,” says executive director Chris Poos.

“We have been very pleased to introduce the Pan Bio Rapid testing here at Niagara. This testing produces results in 15 minutes, which gives us real-time information to assist us in managing this outbreak, such as cohorting residents.”

Some residents are two to a room, and have been moved to protect others during the outbreak, Poos said earlier.

“We will be welcoming EMS into the home on Monday, Feb. 1 to assist in additional infection prevention and control education. Public Health has also been into the home and is pleased with our IPAC (infection prevention and control) practices.”

The home is waiting for a date of the second

Continued on page 3

Gaio family winners!

Walter Gaio, a local fruit farmer, celebrates a $10,000 win on the Canadian version of Family Feud, aired Monday. They were making a second appearance Tuesday for a chance at another $10,000, and possibly a third try. The Local went to press Tuesday before the airing of the game, and of course Walter wasn’t talking about the outcome, but many readers will know the results by now. Congratulations to Walter and his family. He says the whole experience was a once-in-a-lifetime blast. They might spend some of their winnings on a family trip, he says, when travel is permitted, possibly to Britain to see his daughter. With him waiting to see if they won are Danielle Gaio, her brother Ryan, his wife Sarah and Walter’s wife Katherine. (Screenshot)
Town to allow patios to remain for next season

Penny Coles The Local

Staff have recommend-ed allowing the two re-maining patios on Queen Street to stay where they are, ready to open in the spring. Other patios, such as the Firehall Flame, at King and Queen, which is on the boulevard, and others on private property, are also permitted to remain, as new expenses, he was looking at this year as a time for austerity, without any of the wish lists that have been entertained in previ-ous years.

During early budget discussions of the 2021 budget, the audit committee was first look-ing at an increase over last year of about 7.68 per cent, $978,824. They were asked to reduce that to $934,882, or $43,940. The final recommended budget for council approval al-ready Wednesday is just a little more than two per cent in-creased by 30 per cent or $978,824. They were asked to reduce that to about three per cent, and the final recommended budget for council approv-alwednesday is just a little more than two per cent in-creased by 30 per cent or $978,824. They were asked to reduce that to about three per cent, and the final recommended budget for council approv-alwednesday is just a little more than two per cent.

He remains concerned with the uncertainty of what will bring as a result of the pandemic, he added-normalcy has ever existed, and also that the town’s snow-clearing equipment, he says, was to reduce those grants to not-for-profit heritage organizations, and the audit committee’s recommen-dation this year was to reduce those grants by 35 per cent, $978,824. They were asked to reduce that to about three per cent, and the final recommended budget for council approv-alwednesday is just a little more than two per cent.

The town’s premiums in-creased by 30 per cent or $118,650. The town’s premiums in-creased by 30 per cent or $118,650. The insurance is seeing a large in-crease over 2020, he says, and also that the town’s snow-clearing equipment, he says, was to reduce those grants to not-for-profit heritage organizations, and the audit committee’s recommen-dation this year was to reduce those grants by 35 per cent, $978,824. They were asked to reduce that to about three per cent, and the final recommended budget for council approv-alwednesday is just a little more than two per cent.

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Vaccine hopefully arriving soon, says Dr. Hirji

Dr. Mustafa Hirji

The Local

Vaccinations in long-term care homes residents in Niagara were completed last Thursday, and those in high-risk retirement homes will be in the coming days. That will put a pause to vaccinations until more vaccine arrive.

Dr. Hirji, Niagara Region’s acting chief medical officer of health, says there is sufficient vaccine for Niagara for the high-risk retirement homes, and he expects to have enough ar-

\[\text{...second doses by then. “Next week and a half and we’ll get vaccine in the...} \]

\[\text{...through the town’s fire...} \]

\[\text{...the town’s dedicated...} \]

\[\text{...about what is permitted. Counselors may be receiving calls...} \]

\[\text{...of staff have stopped at this...} \]

\[\text{...than waste it. “We try to trace where...} \]

\[\text{...week and a half and we’ll be...} \]

\[\text{...to stop giving second doses by then.”} \]

\[\text{...number of new cases...} \]

\[\text{...stable, while about 2,000 workers...} \]

\[\text{...are still really high, and we...} \]

\[\text{...and bunks that are two...} \]

\[\text{...be isolated to their rooms, and...} \]

\[\text{...receive the vaccine. “We look...} \]

\[\text{...expertise to the services, and dog...} \]

\[\text{...with owners confused about...} \]

\[\text{...a week and a half and...} \]

\[\text{...to the town’s fire chief...} \]

\[\text{...as having five staff mem...} \]

\[\text{...and wellness grooming...} \]

\[\text{...from the province. Then...} \]

\[\text{...are still really high, and we...} \]

\[\text{...have bunks that are two...} \]

\[\text{...be isolated to their rooms, and...} \]

\[\text{...be to stop giving second doses by then.”} \]

\[\text{...groomers have taken as...} \]

\[\text{...a provincial shut-down and...} \]

\[\text{...human-like people infected, about...} \]

\[\text{...and fewer people per house.} \]

\[\text{...and treatment protocols, and...} \]

\[\text{...week she promised to approach the prov...} \]

\[\text{...to home is helping to bring...} \]

\[\text{...the status of COVID-19 cases, says...} \]

\[\text{...but cases are still really high, and...} \]

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\[\text{...as having five staff mem...} \]

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\[\text{...from the province. Then...} \]

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We're working to ensure small businesses can keep employing people and serving their communities now and when COVID-19 is behind us.

Visit ontario.ca/COVIDSupport to apply

We're not local.com

Penny Coles
The Local

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A list of potential businesses to visit was drawn up by staff at Niagara Public Health, to cover all 12 municipalities, says Dr. Mustafa Hirji, the department's acting chief medical officer of health for Niagara region.

He wasn’t sure how many in Niagara-on-the-Lake were visited, but it was focusing on the larger stores, such as Costco and the Walmart stores, across the region.

In Niagara, says Godfrey, more than 125 businesses were visited. About 22 tickets and five orders were issued.

The most common violations were regarding adequate screening, capacity limits, and lack of safety plans.

Also handed out were formal warnings, for a total of 68 contraventions, he says.

He was unable to say how many of the Niagara businesses were in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Across the province, 107 inspectors visited businesses in Ottawa, Windsor, and Durham, in addition to Niagara.

A total of 640 businesses were visited, more than 80 tickets issued, more than 100 orders issued, and again, in Niagara, the most common violations were regarding adequate screening, capacity limits, and lack of safety plans.

Phil Leboudec stands in front of his sign advertising mandatory face coverings in July. A more recent protocol calls for no exemptions, although those with medical conditions can wear face shields instead of masks. (File photo)


Publishers to help publishers

Pennies for Canada

The Local

The public has a misconception that stores allowed to remain open during the pandemic are making huge profits, but in his case, sales were up last year but not sales, “he says.

It starts with a good staff, “he says. He brings in designated staff to fill up to 60 orders a day, calling them from other duties as necessary. Online orders require 30 to 40 minutes of staff time to fill. “It’s adding more labour costs, but not sales,” he says.

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Realtors® connect Oakville to Niagara-on-the-Lake

Nancy Bailey and Ann-Marie Shirley were introduced when Ann-Marie visited her parents, the Ellisons, long-time residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Ann-Marie moved to NOTL soon after, and the two struck up an immediate friendship that evolved into a great business partnership. Together as The Bailey-Shirley Team, they represent Engel & Völkers, Oakville real estate in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Nancy worked successfully in the luxury hotel industry for over 25 years, including managing the Queen’s Landing Inn, before finding her true calling in real estate. “My father was involved in real estate, my mother worked in the advertising industry for 30 years, specialized in marrying advertisers with TV shows, such as HGTV’s Income Property. Now she marries families with the right home. “It gives me immense joy to see the happiness on a client’s face when we find their perfect home,” explains Ann-Marie. Scott Russell, Broker of Record for Engel & Völkers, Oakville, is thrilled to have Nancy and Ann-Marie as part of the Oakville team. “Having expertise in the Niagara Region provides our GTA clients with professional knowledge in a market where there is a serious buying interest.”

Nancy and Ann-Marie are known for their listings with the Oakville advisors and discuss the GTA and Niagara markets regularly. “Find they are in the unique position of living and working in Niagara-on-the-Lake, with the insight and support of its feeder markets.”

Engel & Völkers Real Estate was founded over 40 years ago in Europe, and established a North American arm in 2013. An innovative company, they provide exceptional real estate service and have a proud tradition of crafting a home-buying experience tailored to each client. Capitalizing on their global efficiencies, they have unparalleled marketing tools that are made available to every advisor. What keeps the team’s clients coming back? Their link to Oakville is seen as a prime asset, extending the clientele for their sellers beyond the Niagara borders. In addition, they’re described as professional, honest, intuitive and empathetic; they understand that it is not just a transaction. “We’ve experienced the process of buying and selling a home during a life transition, and believe being of service to people is the most important aspect of our job,” says Nancy. “Supporting our community is as vital as supporting our clients.” Ann-Marie states. “We always thank our clients for their trust in us with tasty NOTL treats from the local shops. This year we partnered with Konzelmann Estate Winery for our holiday gift-giving, and delivered personalized bottles of their Cabernet Merlot.” The bonus for Konzelmann? The Oakville office joined in and purchased some for their clients.

Nancy and Ann-Marie have a core value of social responsibility. They support the Special Olympics globally with Engel & Völkers. Locally Nancy has been a sponsor of many community events, and raised over $50,000 for the community centre. Ann-Marie sponsors meals for the residents of Ronald McDonald House Charities South Central Ontario when she closes a transaction. For the future, they want to continue to build their business in Niagara-on-the-Lake and surrounding area while helping to develop the Engel & Völkers brand. With their expertise, caring and enthusiasm, they are sure to succeed!

Nancy and Ann-Marie partnered with Konzelmann Estate Winery for their holiday gifting, and delivered personalized bottles of their Cabernet Merlot.

A blend of luxury and timeless elegance await you in this 3+1 Bedroom Bungaloft located on a quiet cul-de-sac. Open concept living with cathedral ceilings overlooks the outdoor kitchen and private terrace. One of the property’s highlights is hidden in the finished lower level, a large wine cellar and tasting room.

For your private viewing call Nancy Bailey 905-371-4234.

Nancy Bailey · Engel & Völkers Oakville, Brokerage
Broker · Private Office Advisor
226 Lakeshore Road East · Oakville · Ontario · L6J 1H8
905-371-4234
nancy.bailey@evrealestate.com

Ann-Marie Shirley · Engel & Völkers Oakville, Brokerage
Realtor®
226 Lakeshore Road East · Oakville · Ontario · L6J 1H8
289-969-6222
ann-marie.shirley@evrealestate.com

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The Niagara-on-the-Lake

The trusted voice of our community

P.O. Box 430, 1596 Four Mile Creek Road, Virgil, L0S 1T0

Editor: Penny Coles
P.O. Box 246, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON L0S 1T0

Advertising: Karen Skeoch
905-688-3711
W: http://notllocal.com
E: 905-684-5335

Columnists:
Gary Zalepa
NOTL Regional Councilor Special to The Local

The Niagara-on-the-Lake

NOTL Regional Councilor Special to The Local

Gary Zalepa

There are three components of the region’s budget.

One is the levy operating, which comes from property tax payments, the second is the rate setting, which is comprised of water and wastewater charges, and the third is the capital budget, which covers repair and replacement.

In June 2020, regional council provided guidance for a budget deficit of $2 million over a two per cent target set over 2020 levels. This included a total program of services, costing roughly $1 million, covering the public health department, emergency services, social services, senior services, long-term care, children’s services, affordable housing and homelessness, our conservation authority, regional police, water, wastewater, waste management, roads, transit, economic development and planning, services, capital repairs and maintenance, council administration.

For a full explanation, visit https://www.niagararegion.ca/government/budget.

Over the course of five to six months, there was an extensive public engagement process, with council workshops and committee meetings. A thorough review comes from the province, other fees, reserves and use of debt.

The typical NOTL home, assessed at $459,3 million is levy funded through property tax, with range of $60 to 80 million.

Budget drivers for 2021:

• COVID-19 costs for 2021 estimated at $37.9 million, funded through the province, to include a pandemic response team in Niagara.

• Emergency Medical Services (EMS) transformation for improved patient care, while mitigating increased costs for ambulances.

• A targeted increase towards capital infrastructure of $2 million to address the risk in the capital funding gap (identified in prior budgets).

• Contribution towards West Lincoln Memorial Hospital new and expanded, an investment of $12.6 million ($3 million per year).

• Usage of 4.3 million in reserves to mitigate operating pressures on taxpayers.

Of the approximately $1 million in the budget, $469.3 million is levy funded, through property tax, with a range of $60 to 80 million.

This means that the region’s rate cap, comprised of water and waste water budgets, was set at 2 per cent above 2020, and the waste management budget was 4.5 per cent above average.

In 2020, council requested a comprehensive plan, to fund that repair and maintenance of important infrastructure.

Politicians who promise zero tax increases, absent of a provincial plan, should have knowledge of the above facts, should not receive your popular support.

West Niagara residents will be more space for residents to build ever-larger hubs, try and get through this.

The region’s overall goal is to build ever-larger hubs, try and get through this. The region’s overall goal is to build ever-larger hubs, try and get through this.

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As Owen Bjorgan has indeed the area of Lakeshore Road, namely the watershed of the Insley for his letter to the editor. One item about the reconstruction of two Mile Creek, commencing from the area of Lakeshore Road. As Owen Bjorgan has indeed shown us through his weekly nature columns, there is much to appreciate in these natural areas. I pass by this area on a daily basis, and have noticed a tremendous amount of fallen trees, brush and debris build up within the actual creek and the associated floodplain. Due to all this build-up of debris, I was not very successful on my trek! I am convinced that even fish, normally found in this watershed, would find it extremely difficult, if not impossible to navigate.

I immediately connected with my contact at the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, who responded with some very favourable news regarding the Two Mile Creek. The conservation authority actually has some plans to do some remedial clean-up in that area this spring. Hopefully this will happen, and as Dekis Leney indicated in his letter, make these areas more accommodating and accessible for everyone.

Buddy Andres NOTL

I would like to thank Derek Inlay for his letter to the editor (Shame nature can’t be more accessible, Jan. 21, The Local) regarding our natural areas, namely the watershed of the Two Mile and Four Mile Creeks. What a coincidence that his letter appeared at this time. On Sunday, Jan. 17, I attempted to hike the valley of the Two Mile Creek, commencing from the area of Lakeshore Road. As Owen Bjorgan has indeed shown us through his weekly nature column, there is much to appreciate in these natural areas. I pass by this area on a daily basis, and have noticed a tremendous amount of fallen trees, brush and debris build up within the actual creek and the associated floodplain.

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Buddy Andres NOTL

Leaders need to protect tree heritage

I walk the trail out to Fort Mississauga frequently; both before the Fort re-construction and after. I love the view of Fort Niagara across the river and the peacefulness of the golf course, with its expanse of green grass and manicured trees. Kudos to Parks Canada and the friends of Fort George for preserving this historic building. One item about the reconstruction, however, is misleading. It has been publicized that only non-native and invasive plants were removed from the site. In fact, the site contained a mix of native and non-native trees and shrubs, and the entire site was clear cut by Parks Canada. There was no selective culling of invasive species. While Fort Mississauga has historic significance and deserves to be preserved, it is not a particularly attractive building, with its piecemeal construction, and is not open to the public. The landscape left after the clear-cutting is stark, and will require decades for trees to reestablish themselves. In retrospect, wouldn’t it have been better to leave some of the larger, more mature trees for shade in the summer, and to add visual interest to what is now a barren landscape? Between development, disease, and age we are losing a tremendous amount of the tree canopy that enhances the historic look of NOTL, gives it its character and protects our environment. All levels of government need to be leaders in protecting our tree heritage from unnecessary removal. Clear cutting is never a good thing.

Stewart Hall NOTL

We as a community are lucky to have the stunning Niagara River, the lake, and the Carillon Forest. We, in fact, have a responsibility to not only reduce the toxins we are casually draining into them; but restore tree cover, habitat, and native plants, insects, birds, and other wildlife. It’s been a joy to read Owen Bjorgan’s columns, teaching and inspiring us to care more about and better understand the natural world around us. This week, he stepped outside his role as naturalist, and wrote as a humanist an artful worded column on how we need to share our trails and natural spots with visitors. Thank you for opening hearts and minds to each other, as well as nature.

Ellen Qualie NOTL

The weeks and months of the pandemic continue to keep us close to our homes in isolation or hibernation for the cold winter season. With the feeling of walls closing in, diminishing space, claustrophobia and boredom, luckily we can still venture outside and walk with our dog along all the trails and parks that are nearby.

Nothing can mirror happiness than an unleashed dog carrying a new found stick running free in nature’s playground.

With one exception. Yesterday on our walk we came upon a tree adorned with colourful decorations and single adornments on other neighbouring trees. How beautiful the heart or hearts of the someone(s) who choose this particular tree that might otherwise have gone unnoticed along this trail to spread joy and delight to all who would by happenchance walk by. Thank you to whoever you are for your kindness in bringing extra joy and delight, similar to our dog finding a new stick, on our walk along nature’s trail.

Wendy Lowe NOTL

The opinions expressed in submitted commentary, and letters to the editor, are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of The NOTL Local.
Are people inspired by local area biodiversity?

Owen Bjorgan
Special to The Local

I hike with family, friends, clients, or students almost every day of my life. Not so much the students these days, given the circumstances of current school closures. However, sharing the outdoors with so many people over the years has given me the opportunity to observe how others react to nature. More specifically, I’ve noticed how people look and feel more invigorated in some ecosystems more than others.

My biology brain is always whirling when I’m outdoors, and I find it’s due to my understanding of the environment. This is not to be confused with fascination, which is a sensation that can be achieved without any knowledge of the scenery at hand. Even when I’m hiking around with a Kindergarten class behind me, my mind is always observing and analyzing all the biodiversity around me at a hundred miles an hour.

“Can I identify this tree in the middle of winter?” I don’t think I’ve ever seen that nest before. Why are there fungi on this tree, but none on the same species next to it? Could I find salamanders here in the spring?”

Being taken aback by the beauty and captivation of the outdoors isn’t just for biologists, though. What’s even more awesome to me is to watch students of all ages, including my friends and family, pause, raise their eyebrows, and how he hadn’t seen anything like it in the area. He told me how he had noticed the stature and characteristics of the trees in this section of woods, and how he hadn’t seen anything like it in the area. He was animated and happy to share how much he knew exactly what they’re looking at.

“Can I identify this tree in the middle of winter?” I don’t think I’ve ever seen that nest before. Why are there fungi on this tree, but none on the same species next to it? Could I find salamanders here in the spring?”

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One of my favourite places that provides an unexpected visual treat is in the heart of the Wainfleet Bog. I call one section of trail ‘the tunnel’, where an old peat mining track has been preserved as an open, squishy trail for adventurous hikers.

On one stretch, gorgeous European birch trees line the trail symmetrical- ly on either side for about 300 metres. With the trail running directly east-west, the morning or evening sun shines boldly down the tunnel of invasive, but beautiful trees.

On my tours, and on a recent hike with my parents and my girlfriend to the bog, this is the spot where people stop and pause. Cameras come out. Some polite and laughable “can you get out of my photo?” moments unfold. People are enamoured by the bog’s eerie but beautiful landscape.

It also happens to be one of the most biodiverse sites in all of Canada. Even if you only see birds and footprints in the winter, like we did, all you need to do is look at all of the ferns, club mosses, lichens, and rare bog plants which essentially carpet the landscape with their funky colours. It speaks to the uniqueness this place beholds come spring and summer.

Something dawned on me as I stood out there last week. It’s Niagara’s quietest place, at the quietest time of year, and the quietest year we’ve experienced in decades. We passed not a soul in the bog or its tiny parking lot, as we hiked through bricky, black mud, which was semi frozen.

In the midsection of the Niagara Gorge, there is a trail where I’ve heard the term ‘Narnia’ come up a few times before. Before ascending among the enormous, shed-sized boulders, you are greeted with a postcard image of green mossy rocks, ferns gently draping over the path, and an inviting stone staircase. People like to ask for their photo here, or wait for hikers to pass that point just to grab an image of the fairy-like landscape in its glory. Funny, once again, how this little pocket in the gorge stops so many people in their tracks.

It’s connected to biodiversity, again. Due to the variety of surfaces and jumbled boulders down in the gorge, species of plants which can only thrive in shaded, protected sites can make themselves at home. The effect is a collection of mosses, ferns, bryophytes, and other ancient plant groups growing on just about every surface. It makes people stop and look, even if they don’t know exactly what they’re looking at.

When I venture into old swampy forests, near gnarly cliffs and into quiet patches of old woods with people, sometimes someone will say “you’d think you could see a dinosaur here.”

I’d say this familiar, but classic comment speaks more to our deepest primal instincts more than it does to movies like Jurassic Park. We weren’t alive when the dinosaurs were. So, why does a certain environment, often old-growth and biodiverse, seem to make us feel like we may see one of these extinct creatures? It’s something to think about.

I believe areas of high biodiversity are strongly correlated with being aesthetically beautiful. The pleasing parts of nature, such as huge trees, the different types, the immense boulders, and a pretty variety of colourful plants can sometimes speak to species richness, by means of our very own interpretation of the environment.
Moment of silence at council honours Michael Howe

Penny Coles
The Local

Councillors sent their condolences to the family of Michael Howe “for the community’s great loss” at Monday’s meeting, and held a minute of silence for the man who is being mourned by the community.

Howe, born in 1946, died from cancer in hospice care Dec. 29. It was Coun. Allan Bisback who called for the tribute, telling councilors Howe was raised in Niagara-on-the-Lake by his father Norm Howe, a founding member of The Niagara-on-the-Lake Foundation, and mother Margherita Howe, a founding member of the NOTL Conservancy.

“Howe cared deeply about this community, our town of NOTL, and fought to preserve its heritage, mainly through the work of the NOTL Foundation, and as president he led its efforts with dignity and hard work,” said Bisback.

“Recent works of the foundation have included the restoration of the slave cottage known as the William and Susanah Steward house on Butler Street, contributions to the restoration of St Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, and the restoration of St. Mark’s Anglican Church, an annual scholarship at Willowbank, the retention of the lawn bowling lands as public land, now the Voices of Freedom Park, and ongoing efforts to restore the historic Wilderness property on King Street.”

“Many knew Michael for his acerbic wit, wry sense of humour and gusto for life. The quiet side of Michael demonstrated thoughtful and helpful advocacy within the community and amongst its leaders. He will be remembered as a friend of many and a lover of the town,” says Bisback.

Marsha and Michael Howe on their last trip to Italy in 2019, when Marsha first realized Michael had health problems. (Photo supplied)
Local family mourns loss of son, brother

His father ‘on a mission’ to prevent other families from suffering a similar loss

Penny Coles
The Local

Tom King will remember his son Kenzie as the social boy with the infectious, quick smile.

Blakely, Kenzie’s sister, will remember him as her best friend, and the funniest person she has ever known.

At the age of 24, Mackenzie Austin Drew King of Niagara-on-the-Lake died in a car collision last Friday morning on his way to work in Welland.

Tom has two stories to tell about the son he and Blakely called Kenzie, and the boy his friends called Matt. One is the tragedy of losing his beloved son in a tragic accident. The other is the darkness of the events that led up to it.

Mackenzie had been working for QBM in Welland, as a conveyor belt splicing technician, for about two and a half years. It was a good job, well-paying, one that sent Mackenzie all around the world, sometimes on ships, to repair belt splicing.

He loved to travel, and often went away with other family members, says Blakely.

Tom would get up and make his son’s breakfast, see him off to work, and when Mackenzie finished his work day, most often he’d disappear in the basement.

In recent years, he’d been a loner, cut off from his school friends, although he had a girlfriend.

“When you’re on drugs, you don’t need friends,” explains Tom.

“Drugs are your friend,” Tom says his son’s problem started years ago, when Tom had knee replacement surgery. He came home with oxycodone for pain, but he was allergic to it, and didn’t take it.

Mackenzie discovered the pills, shared them with his friends, and he was hooked.

It was about six years ago that he shared his problem with his dad, and entered a rehab program. But he relapsed. It was easy, with a drug dealer not too far away, always ready to sell him drugs.

The boy who had attended St. Michael Catholic Elementary School, Niagara District Secondary School until it closed and then Governor Simcoe Secondary School, the boy who was a great athlete, playing travel hockey and soccer, and grew into a handsome, young man, couldn’t be helped.

Blakely remembers her brother as a surprise, one with beautiful blue eyes, brown hair and porcelain skin—her parents had been told throughout her mom’s pregnancy that they were going to have a girl.

His favourite movie growing up was Z Ty Story, she says. He would watch it over and over again and everywhere he went, he had to bring along his yellow “blanky,” she recalls.

“Before our eyes,” she says, “Kenzie became this

He truly did have a big heart, and had so much love to give.

Blakely King

years. It was a good job, hard, she says.

Aches” from laughing so hard.

“Before our eyes,” she says, “Kenzie became this

Club, and “built these beautiful large wooden boats as a child,” says Blakely.

Because of his love of boats, and travel, his job was a perfect fit for him, she adds.

He also had “the biggest spot soft for animals,” and in every picture she has of him, he’s holding or cuddling one of the family pets.

“He loved our dogs immensely, and he left behind not only us, but his dog named Chevy.”

He loved Tom’s wine, a Costco steak, and a concert at the Jackson-Triggs Amphitheatre with his sister and father, and more recently, with his girlfriend Emily, says Blakely.

“He truly did have a big heart, and had so much love to give.”

But now, says Tom, with the loss of his son, he has made a promise to himself and to Kenzie.

“On a mission, I want to rid the town of this drug dealer.”

He knows his name. He has been to his house to ask him to stop.

He has provided the names to the police, he says, but to his knowledge, nothing has been done. He can only imagine it isn’t a police priority.

He says the dealer admitted to selling his son drugs the night before his death, and Tom knew the drug contributed to the collision. Mackenzie fell asleep at the wheel at 8 a.m. on his way to work in Welland, Tom says. He went off the road and into a hydro pole. He was thrown from the Jeep, and died instantly. “He never knew what happened. He didn’t even hit the brakes.”

He was taking Xanax, a drug sold for anxiety, but when mixed and smoked, produces “a very quick high,” says Tom.

He says he knows of other young adults in NOTL who have suffered from overdoses.

“If I can stop another family from going through this, my mission will be worth it.”

In addition to Tom and Blakely, Mackenzie is survived by his mother Louise (Paul), and his half-brother Colton in New Brunswick.

He will be missed by many aunts, uncles, and cousins and especially his favourite uncle Peter and long-time friend Emily who loved him dearly.

A celebration of Mackenzie’s life will be held at a later time, when this pandemic is over.
Firefighters lauded for professionalism, thoughtfulness

Eduardo LaForgue, president of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce, attending Monday night’s virtual council meeting to talk about Queen Street patios, took the opportunity to thank the NOTL fire department for their professionalism the night his house was razed by fire.

Although LaForgue has a very public job, he’s a private person, and hasn’t spoken publicly about the fire. At the council meeting to talk about Queen Street patios, he wanted to tell the community how much he admired the quick work of Fire Chief Nick Ruller, Deputy Fire Chief Jay Plato, and all the firefighters on Anne Street early that morning. The fire of Jan. 8 started just before 6 a.m., under the hood of a pick-up truck parked in his neighbour’s driveway.

It quickly spread to his neighbour’s roof and his adjoining townhouse, destroying the living room, and his upstairs bedroom. The glare from the fire woke him up and led him to look out the window, he says, where he saw flames coming from the truck, in a driveway very close to his house. That gave him time to wake up his wife, grab coats and a few possessions, and get out of the house through another exit.

His home fire alarm went off just as they were leaving. “It was a miracle that I saw the fire. If I had not been sleeping in that bedroom I wouldn’t have seen it. It gave us an extra five minutes, but five minutes is a lot in that situation.”

He heard an explosion, and saw the flames reach his roof. By the time the fire was extinguished, his home, the one most badly damaged of the two, he says, had collapsed. What is left of it will be torn down.

By the end of that day, he had been offered three choices of homes to rent, and chose one provided by Jason Clemets of Niagara Property Rentals, just two blocks away, where he and his wife can stay — with their large dog — for four months.

“In 1985, I lived through the earthquake in Mexico City. Buildings were collapsing all around us. But I can say this was much more scary than that,” he says.

“We’re all collateral damage of the truck that caught fire in the middle of the night,” he adds. “It’s been a stressful two weeks,” sorting through the emotional ramifications of the fire, as well as the paperwork and insurance to deal with.

“Some people you never expect to show up have offered help in a very spontaneous way,” he says.

“Our large dog — for four months. We’re all collateral damage of the truck that caught fire in the middle of the night,” he adds. “It’s been a stressful two weeks,” sorting through the emotional ramifications of the fire, as well as the paperwork and insurance to deal with.

“Some people you never expect to show up have offered help in a very spontaneous way,” he says. “We’ve had some wonderful people calling us. I am very thankful for all the people who have offered help.”

His wife, Anick Fernandez, is an artist and print-maker, planning a showing of her prints at the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre in May. Her workshop was in the basement of the house, and thankfully her work was undamaged, says LaForgue, as is an old print of LaForgue, as is an old print.

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Music Niagara celebrating Mozart's birthday this year

Mike Balsom Special to The Local

For the second straight year Music Niagara Festival is celebrating the anniversary of one of classical music’s greatest composers.

Following on the heels of the 2020 recognition of the 250th anniversary of the birth of Ludwig van Beethoven, the current season will acknowledge the accomplishments of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who was born January 27, 1756 in Salzburg, Austria.

“It's a fortunate convergence of dates,” according to founder and artistic director Atis Bankas. “They were born 15 years apart, he points out, going on to explain that Beethoven was heavily influenced by Mozart. “There wouldn’t be Beethoven if it wasn’t for Haydn and Mozart, or Bach for that matter. It’s an evolution. No other composers before them made the soil so fruitful, though the road was paved by others and their different attempts.”

The fact that Beethoven was born in December, while Mozart’s birthday is in January, means the non-profit organization can move seamlessly from celebrating one composer to the other.

“With Beethoven, it was the end of the year, so it was a whole celebration before the birthday,” says Bankas. “As soon as the calendar year turned, we began to celebrate Mozart at 265.”

On Wednesday, Jan. 27, Music Niagara Festival premiered a short program via their website and YouTube channel as an introduction to the theme for this year’s online At Home Series. Originally planned as a much larger event to be recorded at Mount Carmel in Niagara Falls, gears were shifted at the last minute.

“It was supposed to take place (Jan. 14) as a full concert, but because of the state of emergency protocols we couldn’t do it,” laments Bankas. “We managed to record just the day before (the state of emergency) was announced, without doing anything illegal, and we’ll do the show at the monastery once it is lifted.”

The recording features Bankas and Tanya Charles-Iveniuk on violin, with Caitlin Boyle (viola), Elina Kelebeev (piano) and Jonathan Tortolano (cello). “The program runs through the first movements of Mozart’s piano concerto no. 23 and his piano quartet in G minor. As well, Mozart’s Adagio is performed as a stand-alone piece.”

Bankas describes the group of musicians as a combination of “old friends and new friends, musically speaking. Tanya Charles used to be my student at the Glenn Gould School, so we go back a long time. She’s a wonderful person and a very, very fine musician. Caitlin Boyle was a member of the Cecilia String Quartet, and came to play for Music Niagara about five years ago. She has a lot of experience.”

“The older member of the group is Jonathan,” he continues. “a long-time collaborator, and our pianist (Kelebeev) has a great feel for Mozart, a high calibre of professionalism and musicianship.”

Digging deeper into the importance of the composer, Bankas talks of him in almost superhuman terms. “Mozart’s genius supersedes human capabilities,” he raves. “It would take many more years to copy the music of Mozart than it took him to write it. He made no errors and no revisions, one of the very few in history, he just put it right on paper and it was perfect. That doesn't happen in a thousand years.”

To Bankas, the music of both Beethoven and Mozart mines the very core of human nature, touching people now in the same way it did in the composer’s own times.

“The emotions of people, it doesn’t matter where they come from, don’t change, really,” he states. “Technology changes, fashions change, but we react the same way (today) because the human emotions are the same. When you compare Beethoven and Mozart, they are touching us in different ways, but they touch our emotions.”

Looking ahead to the rest of 2021, Bankas expects that most of the Music Niagara Festival program will continue to be performed online. “It’s hard to predict,” says Bankas. “I would love to have live concerts with some kind of capacity. However, we know the numbers, and we experienced the first wave, and we know the vaccinations will take place later rather than sooner. It’s very safe to assume that it won’t happen until fall or winter.”

Music Niagara will take the lessons learned through almost 10 months of running the 2020 festival through a pandemic. “We’re not starting from scratch,” Bankas reminds The Local. “We are proud that we succeeded to continue our activities, with the help of the board and our benefactors and great donors. We had a great feeling of support in the community, and that is evident from the incredible number of people who were tuning in. That gives us all kinds of ideas to think about a future of incorporating that experience even when live concerts return.”

Bankas promises that the 2021 program, like last year’s, will be full of events that combine Mozart’s compositions with other forms of art. “The spoken word, and theatre, is definitely something that is very popular here,” he says of Niagara-on-the-Lake. “It reaches people and gives a greater understanding of the composer, the work, his life, etcetera. We fully intend to continue to combine spoken word and music to expose the history and process of the composer’s mind.”

The full Music Niagara Festival 2021 At Home Series will be released soon via their website. While waiting, the preview of Mozart’s 265th anniversary celebration is available at musicniagara.org or through the Music Niagara YouTube channel.
Early on, firefighters attack the roof of the Lafforgue home on Anne Street. The fire spread quickly, and what is left of the house will be torn down.

Safety is first priority

Continued from page 11

around the world.

“Our children tease us about travelling very light, with an enormous printing press, and a very large dog,” he says.

Fortunately, their 45-kilo family pet was welcome at their rental home. The press, which weighs about 350 kilos, and will require a specialist to take it apart and move it, he says.

Their family heirlooms, and antiques they’ve collected around the world, did not fare well in the fire, he says.

“All those things that have been with you, in so many countries, are suddenly gone. It feels like losing some part of you. But really they are just material things, and we’re safe, our neighbours are safe. That’s what is important.”

In addition to the professionalism of the firefighters, one of them — he doesn’t know who — Lafforgue is extremely grateful for his thoughtful- ness.

On a table in their living room, which was destroyed, were some family photos in silver frames.

One of the firefighters, understanding their significance, grabbed the photos and carried them outside.

A neighbour took them from the firefighter to dry them, and has them still.

“That touched us a lot that a firefighter would take the time to rescue something that was so important to us. We found that gesture fantastic, and we’re very grateful. When I called my children later that day, including my son in Belize, and asked them what they would have wanted saved, all three said those photos.”

Lafforgue says he hasn’t had the courage to visit his neighbour yet to see what condition the photos are in, but whatever he discovers, he’ll be grateful to have them rescued from the fire.

He finds it interesting now, looking back, that last year’s Spirit of Niaga- ra Chamber of Commerce Award was given to the NOTL Fire and Emergen- cies Services, recognizing the value of their support and comfort to the community. “I didn’t know I would need those guys one day, some of them the same firefighters that were there that night at the award ceremony.”

Support for those who served

Continued from page 2

to supplement the budget. Due to concerns over parking revenue performance in 2021, this transfer is being rolled back entirely, and results in a net increase of $85,000 to the operating levy. One large legal matter remains outstanding for 2021 with several planning appeals expected to continue. Other large legal matters are expected to be resolved in following budget years beyond 2021.”

“There will be lots of disappointed organizations,” he says, “but most of the grants are to support and sponsor events that are not likely to happen this year.”

Of presentations made to the audit committee in December, most were approved at the 2020 level, with the exception of the Chamber of Commerce and the Niagara District Airport. Due to the cancel- lation of the peach and ice wine festivals, the Cham- ber’s request for funding was reduced from $118,000 to $72,000. The difference of funds of $46,000 from the parking program has been used to support the operating budget. The Ni- agara District Airport was approved for a nominal in- crease of $667.

The largest capital ex- penses recommended for 2021 are for the fire department, and the typical large ticket items such as road recon- struction, and water, waste water and storm water in- frastructure projects. Some of those projects have been put off in previous years as an attempt to keep tax increases low, says Bishack, and have caught up with the municip- ality.

Two of the costly items in this year’s capital bud- get include $900,000 for new breathing apparatus for the fire department, almost half of which will be debentures, and a pump replacement at a cost of $820,000, to be fully de- bented.

Bishack says he was concerned to learn, espe- cially during COVID, that some firefighters have to share breathing apparatus — the number of recruits has grown in recent years, but equipment has not been purchased to keep up.

“All budget decisions are about priorities,” he says. “I believe our fire de- partment is important. As long as it’s affordable, and makes sense, I would fund whatever is needed.”

Another item is for a project that is now un- derway, the Mississauga Street culvert, at a total cost of $550,000, which has been on the books for a few years, and is also ful- lly debentured.

“This is another project that has been kicked down the road a few times,” said Bishack.

The problem with proj- ects like this one that are deferred, he adds, is that the more often they are kicked down the road, the more expensive they’re likely to become.

“The balance of the capital program remains within available funding,” the report says.

Council approved projects in 2020 that were placed on hold and de- referred to 2021, for a total of $1,313,344, the audit committee recommenda- tion report says. Another $11.5 million in proj- ects has been deferred to 2022 or beyond, including $11.2 million originally scheduled for 2021, and $311,000 approved in pri- or years’ budgets.

About $215,000 in capital projects has been can- celled, $87,000 originally scheduled for 2021 and $128,000 related to proj- ects approved in previous years’ budgets.

Bishack says he was amazed to see the town “squeezed through” its first year of the pandemic with a small surplus, lauding town staff for that accomplishment. That has been passed on to the tax- payers, with a percentage of it going toward the tax levy.

He cautions, though, that when they see their tax bill, it will include the regional portion, a small increase that goes to the St. Catharines Hospital site of the Niagara Health system.

He adds, too, that the costs of implementing recommendations of the Deloitte service review carried out in 2020, put on the “back-burner” while the town waited for the hiring of a CAO, are not included in the bud- get, but may be considered later this year.

Councillors at Wednes- day’s meeting can approve the audit committee recom- mendations, or send them back for another look at potential savings.

Once approved, the 2021 budget will be post- ed on the town’s website, along with a brief explan- atory video.
If last year was one of extraordinary challenges for Jane Andres, as she tried to welcome farm workers and ease some of the pandemic-related problems they faced, this year will be different again, but hopefully easier.

Knowing what was ahead gave her and the small group of volunteers who help her a chance to be organized and prepared for welcoming offshore workers to town.

With the exception of a few flower growers who have had some farm workers arrive in January, most won’t reach Niagara-on-the-Lake until mid to late February, she says. Last year, when farm workers were delayed because of federal permit problems due to COVID-19, she already had the welcome kits she has been handing out for the last three years filled, with the bags and items being stored in a section of her bedroom and breakfast room that is closed off from the family area.

Although B&Bs were allowed to open this summer, Andres says she didn’t have many guests, so she invited some regular guests from Toronto to “I didn’t charge them,” she says. “I knew they’d be looking for a chance to get away for a few days, many from kids or parents they’re living with,” she says.

They also support Niagara farmers by buying local fruit, one of her goals, and many donated to her farm worker programs, including bringing items for the welcome kits.

She has also invited farmers from other areas of the province to stay at her B&B when they come later in the season to pick up workers who have completed their contracts in Niagara, and are ready to move on to other farms further north. It gives her an opportunity to talk about the support for local workers, hoping it will spread to other communities.

Because of storage issues with welcome kits, instead of asking for donated items, she is requesting donations of money through e-transfers to niagaraworkerwelcomes@gmail.com, using welcome as the password, or make donations online at workerwelcomes.ca.

Most of the items are already ordered in bulk, but she could use donations to help pay for them. She is not registered as a not-for-profit yet, so she can’t issue tax receipts, but she keeps a scrupulous accounting of how the money is spent.

“We have people in the community who have been helping us source items to find the best possible deal. Penner Lumber has been a great help, advising us when we can order 500 pairs of work gloves on sale,” says Andres.

“‘This is a community driven, neighbour-to-neighbour project funded by residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake. It’s a long-term success has inspired communities across Ontario to adopt this practice to welcome their neighbours that work on the farms, greenhouses and vineyards.’

She began her purchasing for this year’s kits with $1,000 donated by the 2020 Candlelight Stroll. Each costs about $25 to fill, and for the last three years, about 500 were delivered, she says. This year her goal is 550.

As the bags are filled, she is reaching out to farmers to arrange a safe drop-off at their homes before their offshore workers arrive. That way the kits will be in the bunk houses when they arrive, and there will be no contact issues while they’re isolating.

“We hope to deliver the kits directly to the employers of Caribbean workers prior to the arrivals from mid-February and on, as arranged. Rev. Antonio Illas and the Anglican diocese have a program that reaches out to the Spanish-speaking population. It’s not identical to our welcome kits but we share a lot of resources, ideas and encourage each other in how we can best meet the needs during these challenging times.”

Andres says she doesn’t have all the employers contact information, and would appreciate them contacting her at niagara-workerwelcomes@gmail.com, to let her know when a delivery would suit them best.

The welcome kits are especially important to the workers this year, who will arrive late at night, straight from the Toronto airport with no stops. They will appreciate the gloves and warm socks waiting for them, toiletries, toilet paper and snacks.

Heavy work socks have been purchased for $2 a pair from Socks for Change, a Niagara charity organization. Sam Baio, the organizer, also provides, in return, several hundred balaclavas, and neck and ear warmers, Andres says.

Newark Neighbours is usually open at this time of year for workers to pick up warm clothes and household items, such as blend- ers and microwaves, but is only currently open for locals who need help from the food bank.

In the future, Andres says, she’d really like to see a permanent Vigil location to collect donations for the workers, but closer to where they typically shop in town. The very positive news, she says, is that she feels change is in the air, not only with discussions about changes to federal regulations, but with what is happening in the community.

“People are becoming engaged, and are thinking about the farmworkers as part of the community. Most of the men are really happy to be here, and happy with where they live. We have some really awesome employers, and a community that wants to help.”

She says as the next generation of farmers takes over, they have a better understanding of their workers. She also enjoys seeing the young people moving to town from GTA, who are accustomed to a diverse community, and love the different cultures they encounter here.

“I see farmers pushing for change, and I’m so encouraged. The young generation is definitely making an impact. There is more diversity in the community, and more respect for other cultures. Social media is helping us to learn about what’s going on in our community, and people are recognizing the richness and rewards of embracing those relationships.”

More people are also thinking about buying local produce, and that helps the farmers, the workers and the communities, she says.

“It’s a win-win situation.”
Women’s march important reminder of necessary change

Kim Wade
Special to The Local

Last year, the sound of boots crunching on the snow filled the air as 30 souls marched through the streets of Niagara-on-the-Lake. It was an unseasonably cold day as they marched with one single goal in mind.

They were not Red Coats or Americans. They were not even from the distant past, even though 2019 saw the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, according to today's standards. These "soldiers" were partici-

pants in the first Women's March Global in the NOTL Chapter. In January 2019, they took to the streets with the goal of bringing Women's Rights to the forefront of Global awareness.

The event commemorated the first Women's March that took place in 2017, when millions of women, from seven con-
tinents, mobilized. They came together united by shared struggles to pro-
mote the single vision of collective liberation. At Women's March Global, they believe that "women's rights are human rights and human rights are women's rights." The ultimate goal is to create a global com-

munity where race, gen-
der, ability, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious or societal norms do not inhibit liberation. Women, whether they are Black, Indigenous, poor, immigrant, disabled, lesbian or trans and regard-

less of their religious or non-religious background, should be free to "care for and nurture their families, however they are formed, in safe and healthy envi-

ronments free from structural impediments." The organization prioritizes coalitions with grass roots organizations. Their goal is to "amplify and support their work.

Grass roots chapters like the one in NOTL are the backbone to the movement. Participants from the 2019 march still remember that day. Shaw performed as his drag per-
session, Maya Norty. "The march was extremely cold and I was in drag, so I was extra cold. It was inspiring to see so many people still out for the cause despite the harsh conditions," he reminisced.

"I think one of the biggest barriers to social progress is complacency. In this pandemic, particularly in mostly white towns like NOTL, complacency is rampant. I think that the march has a way of sparking that complacency, and re-

minds the people of NOTL that though the world may be skewed in their favour the systems in place now are widely cruel and unjust to anyone who does not satisfy the terms of the capitalist white cis-hetero patriarchy."

He stressed the con-

tinuing importance for the march in this pandemic era by stating, "I think that the injustices that existed in the world pre-pandemic didn’t go away, gender in-

equality included.

"In fact, many of the world's problems have been exacerbated by the pandemic, especially when you consider its dispropor-
tionate impact on people of colour and economi-

cally oppressed communities. That being said, I think we have to get creative with our advocacy now, so I'm glad the organizers are doing their best to work around the circumstanc-

es."

Norty’s senti-

ment about the effects of the COVID-19 pandem-
ic on women is shared by Lord Mayor Betty Disero, who also participated in the 2019 Women's March in NOTL and shared the stage with Norty.

As Disero said, "I think women, although they were hardest hit by COVID-19, I believe that being from the 2019 march still

them to help us through the econom-
ic crisis once the health issue gets under control," she continued. "I really believe there are a lot of women entrepreneurs out there that will take up the cause to help bring back the economy."

Amy Jewel, Shaw per-
former and co-organizer of the 2019 NOTL chap-
ter, would like to re-

member what the march means and the importance of adding your voice to the whole. "There is pow-
er in numbers. The voice and power of the many has the potential to yield more powerful results."

Women, Black Lives Mat-
ter, violence against the LGBTQ+ community, eth-
ic cleansing: these are all instances where a group of people have been pushed down and marginalized, treated as ‘less than’ be-
cause of their gender, skin colour, sexual orienta-
tion, ethnicity or religion."

She continues, "women's march groups all over the world are rising up to say ‘no more’, which, when wielded effectively, can ef-

fect more change than the voices of a few."

Even though the re-
cent pandemic restrictions have impacted the annual march for this year, there is still a way to add your voice to the global choir and make up for the lack of boots in the street. The global organization has put up an online survey that opened on Thursday Jan. 21.

This survey asks a series of questions that partici-
pants answer to give their opinions on which gender issues are most important to them, and what they feel should be priorities for all governments.

Participants can sign up online at womensmarch-
global.org, and follow the prompts for #WECOUNT to add their voice to the international voice of all women, non-binary and transgender people, with a goal of ensuring "all voices are counted as we face the post-pandemic global re-
set," globally and at home.
Robi Botos Bravo Niagara! Festival artist in residence

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

When jazz pianist and composer Robi Botos agreed to take on the role of 2021 Bravo Niagara! Festival artist in residence, it seems he may have taken the “in residence” part of the title literally.

Botos, along with his wife and three children, recently moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake, realizing their family dream to get away from the downtown Toronto core. To Botos, the timing was perfect.

“There’s a time where you are doing things in the middle of the city, when you’re talking about entertainment. I think it’s important to be in a certain place at a certain time,” Botos explains. “But just like all my favorite artists, who did their time in New York, or L.A., Montreal or Vancouver, after awhile, when your kids are about to grow up, it’s not as critical for me to be right in the middle of a city.”

Besides the expense of living in Toronto, the current situation for artists may have made it even more timely for Botos and his family to make the move. “I just feel like there was a little bit of an escape in being in a very busy place, in the middle of a second wave, living in a high density area,” he says. “And things have changed. Most of the work is remote right now anyway.”

Alexis Spieldenner, executive director and co-founder of Bravo Niagara!, has rolled out the welcome mat for the Botos family. “We’re very excited to have Robi to the community, and officially announce that he will be Bravo Niagara! 2021 artist in residence,” she says. “He was one of the first artists we presented for our inaugural 2014 festival at Stratford, with Molly Johnson. We always love having Robi back at Bravo Niagara!”

The renowned musician and his family moved from their native Hungary to Canada more than 20 years ago. It took about six years for them to wade through the red tape to gain landed immigrant status. During that time, he quickly made a name for himself on the Toronto jazz scene, playing with the likes of Dave Young and Terry Clark, both of whom had played with pianist Oscar Peterson, one of Botos’ idols.

In 2004, with his status in Canada finally achieved, he was able to enter the Montreux Jazz Festival’s solo piano competition, placing first. Part of his prize was an invitation to return to Montreux the following year to open for Peterson.

“He came early, and listened to me, and complimented me,” marvels Botos. “Later I got asked to come to his house. They were looking for a piano teacher for his daughter Celine. My first time coming to the house, it was like a comedy, I took about 15 to 20 minutes to knock or ring. I didn’t know what to do.”

When he finally mustered up the courage to make his presence at the door known, Botos was greeted with a warm welcome. “I became friends with the family,” he remembers. “It was just magic, he was beautiful and very supportive. He gave me some beautiful advice, and he was very interested and respectful. He made me feel like I was on the right track. It was a beautiful experience.”

Peterson’s influence informs much of Botos’ work, as does his experience growing up in Hungary in a musical family. “My dad and my brothers listened to a lot of jazz,” he says. “I played a lot of drums and percussion, keyboards. Without going to any formal school for music I was able to play and make up my own melodies, so I started right out with improvising, and always felt comfortable about it.”

In fact, Botos was a drummer first, and his feel for percussion is a crucial element in his piano technique. “It puts you in your place,” Botos points out. “It’s very important for anyone who touches any instrument that their rhythm evolves and they can get better with timing on their instrument. You can play any notes you want to, but without it, it’s not going to have the same kind of power.” These lessons in rhythm and improvisation are part of what he brings to his position as a member of the Humber College Faculty of Music. Another major influence for Botos is his Romanian heritage. His 2018 album Old Soul features a moving song called Bucharest, and he composed the score for Aaron Yeger’s film, A People Uncounted, which focuses on the rich culture and history of the Roma people, commonly referred to as gypsies in Europe. Last year, Bravo Niagara! produced Robi Botos: Romanian Experience (available to watch at bravoniagara.org/amplified) as part of its Voices of Freedom Festival. Sounds of Hope program.

The 40-minute video is a heartfelt lament for a people who have been marginalized, ostracized and subjected to genocide.

“When you live in a country (Canada) where people don’t really care, aren’t necessarily against your background and your heritage,” confirns Botos, “you can open up and be more creative, and push that side of things. I feel that I owe my ancestors that because they went through the hardest times, including the Holocaust and a lot of persecution. I want to embrace that story and tell it to the world.”

As they settle into their new community, Botos and his family feel incredibly fortunate to be amongst the newest residents of NOTL. “I’ve been coming down here for a while, and I never really thought this would be the place I would be,” he says. “Thankfully, I have nice friends here in Niagara-on-the-Lake. This place stole my heart. It’s not just like another small town. It’s a magical place, and I’m excited to be here.”

As 2021 progresses, he’ll be working alongside Alexis Spieldenner and Chris Moir of Bravo Niagara! Festival, making plans for what will be not just an exciting year of music, but also his official welcome, a homecoming of sorts, to his new community.
Welcome to Auchterlonie on Astrology with Special to The Local. Bill Auchterlonie will resume going to theatres, he has graciously agreed to share his opinions, through his podcast, through www.auchterlonieonastrology.ca.

Monday, Feb. 1: Two big aspects today first: the Sun is in square Mars at 6:33 a.m. Then Venus moves from Capricorn to Aquarius at 9:05 a.m. Fortunately, Mars is in Taurus so overwhelming may be the worst of it. Venus brings a new forward-looking edge to relationships. And today would be the 73rd birthday of the Superfan, Rick James of Buffalo.

Tuesday, Feb. 2: It’s Groundhog Day. With the Sun in Aquarius in harmony with the Moon in Libra, the rodent should see his shadow. He’d been a successful Mississippi riverboat captain when the American Civil War broke out, and he was unemployed. So, he became a writer. And this Samuel Clemens became Mark Twain on Feb. 2, 1863.

Wednesday, Feb. 3: Challenges here, there and in other places too. Fear is the worst. So do not fear. Deal honestly and win. Sadly, today is the day the music died, when a plane carrying Buddy Holly, J.P. Richard and The Big Bopper crashed in Iowa. It was Feb. 3, 1959. That’s AonA for this week.

Until next Thursday, as Joni Mitchell said “We are stardust. So shine on.”

Great to get outside

Mike Balcomb couldn’t help but stop and enjoy the sight of two young brothers, enjoying their outdoor exercise this past weekend, the coldest days of the year. William and Isaac Trapasso are fortunate to have a dad, Dominic, willing to put in the work to give them a big skating rink in their Regiment Street backyard.

Notice of Completion and Submission of Design and Construction Report

Design-Build for OEW/Glendale Avenue Interchange Reconstruction Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Regional Municipality of Niagara DB 2019-2119

THE PROJECT
Brennan Paving and Construction and their design consultant Morris Hershfield have been selected by the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) to undertake the design and construction of the Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW)/Glendale Avenue Interchange Reconstruction Project (hereinafter referred to as the “Project”). The project includes the replacement of the Glendale Avenue bridge over the QEW and reconstruction of the QEW/Glendale Avenue interchange to a Diverging Diamond Interchange (DDI). Additionally, the project will reconstruct the Glendale Avenue/York Road intersection to a single lane roundabout, and construct a new airport road ramp and connection road from Glendale Avenue to York Road/Airport Road intersection on behalf of Niagara Region. A new commuter corridor will also be constructed at the northwet quadrant of the new interchange.

The Diverging Diamond interchange will allow for traffic performance improvement by reducing the number of vehicle conflict points and allowing unrestricted access to the QEW.

THE PROCESS
The MTO project has followed the approved planning process for a Group B project in accordance with the Class Environmental Assessment for Provincial Transportation Facilities (2008) with an opportunity for public engagement. A Design and Construction Report (DCR) has been prepared to provide background information about the project, present the proposed design, describe construction staging, associated impacts and proposed mitigation, and provide an overview of the public consultation process that has occurred to date.

The 30-day public review will start on January 28th, 2021 and end on February 20th 2021.

The DCR can be downloaded from the project website at http://www.glendale-interchange.ca/

Upon completion of the DCR review, the project will be considered to have met the requirements of the Class EA and will proceed to construction.

The projects within Niagara Region (roundabout at Glendale Avenue/York Road intersection and a new Airport Road connection from Glendale Avenue) were assembled in accordance with the approved planning process for Schedule C projects under the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (MCEA). This project will fulfill the planning phases of the Environmental Assessment process including draft design and construction.

The construction phase is anticipated to start in April 2021 and is anticipated to be completed in summer 2023.

COMMENTS
Interested persons are encouraged to review the DCR and provide comments by February 26, 2021. The Project Team will respond to all comments generated during the 30-day public review. Outstanding concerns are to be directed to the proponent for a response. Unless the outstanding concerns are resolved, the proponent will be directed to provide comments in a timely manner to address Proponent’s unanswered questions. The matters should be addressed in writing to the following:

Director, Environmental Assessment Branch
Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks
155 Niagara Avenue West, 6th Floor
Toronto, ON M5V 1S7
e-mail: EAdEID@environment.gov.on.ca

Information will be collected in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. With the exception of personal information, all comments will be made public.

If you have any accessibility requirements in order to participate in this project, please contact the Project Team members listed above.
LOCAL WORSHIP

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

Please be advised that with the current state of COVID-19, your safety is of utmost importance to us. We will now be live streaming our services at 10:00 a.m. on Sundays.

www.ccchurch.ca

CROSSWORD

Across:
1 Pilots
5 Police heavy brigade
6 Unexpected turn of events
14 Long song for one in an opera
15 Cains Pittsburgh river
16 Totalled
17 Of the present month (Abbr.)
18 Traditional knowledge
19 Cosmetics mogul Elizabeth --
20 Monk’s title
21 Job-discrimination watchdog (Abbr.)
22 Plumping
23 Moonshine maker
25 Idile
27 Journey's end forecast
28 Swedish aircraft maker
30 Astonish
32 Take or gifted
34 Heath
38 Radiation absorber
39 “I shall not find myself so ---” (Antony, in “Julius Caesar”) ---
41 One up on a deuce
42 Catholic
44 Accuse
46 Wide river mouth
47 Flying toy
48 Batter essential
51 Fashion reminiscent of the past
53 What happens in --- stays in ---
56 Shot stops
58 Decree
60 Web site ID
61 The first Mrs. Trump
62 Singer --- Simone
63 Split
64 Well mannered
65 International trade org.
66 Strip
67 Breaks
68 Raised
69 B.J. Levin, Gershwin and others
70 Been
71 Fingers
72 Motion picture device
73 Actor "Shane" star Alan ---
74 Toff
75 Of the people
76 Word
77 Effective
78 Radio station
79 The only AmericanEnglish

Down:
1 British Prime Minister
40 When the Constitution was signed
23 Fab Four
51 Personal assets
24 Excited
26 Leave out
29 Fish Fingers
33 Top-fermented beer
35 Moderately dry
36 Unorthodox
43 Fallen
45 Exalted
46 Leave out
47 DeGraw
50 Yellow tropical fruit with pink pulp
52 Token amount
54 Center of an amphitheater
55 Snow vehicles
57 Saucy girl
59 "Shane" star Alan ---
62 Toff
63 G-men
65 Slogan
69 Slogan
71 Slogan
72 Slogan
73 Slogan
74 Slogan
75 Slogan
76 Slogan
77 Slogan
78 Slogan
79 Slogan

PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from January 21, 2021

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

Thank you for your support of the Niagara-Palace Performing Arts Centre and our artists. We hope you will enjoy our events and continue to support us. We look forward to seeing you again soon. Many thanks.
KING, MACKENZIE AUSTIN DREW—May 16, 1995-January 22, 2021
Sadness, sorrow, and enough tears to fill a river that now flows out of control.
A smile so infectious with humor that filled a room is now silent and dark.
Mackenzie died suddenly from a car accident on January 22 while on his way to work.
Survived by his father Tom and sister Blakely in Niagara-on-the-Lake, his mother Louise (Paul), and his half-brother Colin in New Brunswick.
Mackenzie was a working pragmatist who believed there is nothing more practical than a good theory. Her commitment to theory and practice influenced everyone and with our family and our friends. We think of you often and we will remember you in our hearts, thoughts and as we pray. We often cry when thinking how long it will be until we can see and be with you once again.
But then we remember we have to be brave. We have to be until we can see and be with you once again, memories of you and continue to be brave.
Love and miss you always and forever,
Jennifer, George, Logan, Cole and Lauryn

URE, DONNA LEE —Donna Lee Ure passed in peace on January 11th, 2021 at Upper Canada Lodge.
Donna was born in Stettler, AB on June 5th, 1944, the second youngest of four children. From a young age, it was obvious that she was as clever as she was compassionate and charmed most with her spunky smile. After graduating high school, Donna attended Nursing school at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, where she met her lifelong friends while living with seven of them in a house. We still refer to them as the ‘nurses.’ Making lifelong friends was just one of her many talents. Following graduation she and the love of her life bought their dream home on the Shores of Sylvan Lake, Alberta. Donna and her husband Doug were teaching at Red Deer College before both travelled to San Francisco to continue their education. This pattern of working followed her into her professional life. Donna was a hard-working pragmatist who believed there is nothing more practical than a good theory. Her commitment to theory and practice influenced everyone and everything she did. Soon the desire to see the world took over and they left Alberta, and began their lifelong journey together to work, to travel, and to educate. In the summer of 1986, Doug and Donna travelled with her two young children to Niagara-on-the-Lake, where they have lived ever since.
Both worked at the Niagara Institute where they developed an international reputation in the field of leadership development. There, Donna rose to the position of Director of Programs before leaving to work as a consultant full time alongside her husband, and building Ure & Associates together. Doug and Donna celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in 2019, having married on a sunny day during the summer of love in ’69. She is survived by Douglas, her two adoring children Ian and Lindsay, their spouses, and her grandson Halo.
We have lost a wife, a mother, a best friend, a sister. A foxhole buddy. We feel immense gratitude for every day we got to spend with her, every lesson, every smile, every shot in the arm. Every hug. Every conversation. We loved her and we will cherish our memories of her above all else. We have received an outpouring of condolences; one that the young spunky girl from Alberta would be proud of. She would have shown us the smile and nodded her agreement that it had been a life worth living most definitely. Thank you to everyone who will continue to remember the woman she was!

ROBERT WINSTON IRVINE
JANUARY 31, 2020
Bob, Dad, Papa,
It’s been a year since you left us suddenly, not allowing us to say goodbye, You left a hole that can’t be filled because you were always our special guy.
We think of you often and smell your scent in each and every passing day, the dimes we have found and the cardinals that were sent we knew it was you that couldn’t stay.
This year has been a distraction here on Earth, we’re not sure how happy you would have been, But knowing you were placed safely in heaven was one answered prayer from God that was seen.
The constant ache that we have felt, that is in our hearts has not seemed to dull with each passing day, But we know you will continue to visit us often and we will remember you in our hearts, thoughts and as we pray.
We often cry when thinking how long it will be until we can see and be with you once again.
But then we remember we have to be patient and vital and live our journey out with our family and our friends.
Until then we will share all our stories with you as we come to tend to your grave, and we’ll think of happy stories and memories of you and continue to be brave.
Love and miss you always and forever,
Joyce
Jeff and Shannon
Jennifer, George, Logan, Cole and Lauryn
Janice, Julian, Bronwyn and Thomas

THE PERFECT TENANT
Seeks a bungalow, townhome or condo in NOTL or vicinity for long-term lease.
Responsible, mature, professional woman, works from home, recently widowed, wishes to escape the chaos of the city.
No pets, no kids, non-smoking, loves peace and privacy, gardening, home upkeep, arts and culture. Late spring or early summer. Exceptional references.
Contact: ollyclaire@yahoo.com

Seasonal Farm Workers
needed from approximately June 20, 2021 to mid-September.
No education or experience needed. Working in an agricultural environment in all weather conditions. Must be available 7 days a week. Heavy lifting and ladder climbing will be required. Duties also include manual weed pulling, hoeing, thinning, fruit picking and packing. Must also adhere to food safety and COVID safety policies and procedures. Min wage ($14.39 per hour) and own transportation is a must.
Email resume to sirleskes@hotmail.com
Only candidates to be interviewed will be contacted.
Dan Serluca Farms | 1038 Concession 2 Rd., NOTL
Healthy sleep patterns decrease heart risks

Larry Chambers
Eva Liu and Hanna Levy
Special to The Local

A recent survey of 5,525 Canadians, as published in the Journal of Sleep Research 2020, reported sleep difficulties increased from 36 per cent before the COVID outbreak to 53 per cent during the outbreak. This is problematic because adults over the age of 45 who were disbe- lieved with sleep quality have higher odds of multiple long-term conditions (including heart disease, stroke, diabetes, dementia, lung disease) as reported in the Canadian Longitudi- nal Study on Aging of over 30,000 participants. As well, among 408,802 UK Biobank study partici- pants aged 37 to 73, with a healthy sleep pattern, had a 42 per cent reduction in the risk of heart failure compared to participants with an unhealthy sleep pattern. Humans spend about 30 per cent of their life sleeping. Our sleep is com- posed of several sleep cy- cles throughout the night. One sleep cycle takes ap- proximately 90 minutes and each cycle is com- prised of the following five stages:

Stage 1: 4 to 5 per cent - Light sleep, slowed muscle activ- ity, and occasional muscle twitching.

Stage 2: 45 to 55 per cent - De- creased breathing rate and heart rate.

Stage 3: 4 to 6 per cent - Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep begins - brain gets rid of dead particulate organic material that accumulated throughout the day.

Stage 4: 12 to 15 per cent - Very deep sleep characterized by rhythmic breathing, limited muscle activity, and delta waves.

Stage 5: 20 to 25 per cent - REM sleep where brainwaves speed up, dreaming oc- curs, muscles relax, heart rate increases, breathing becomes rapid and shallow.

Sleep is regulated by certain neurochemicals in the brain responsible for producing different aspects of alertness and sleep. Our internal clock, also known as our circadian rhythm, determines when we feel the desire to sleep, as well as our susceptibility to sleep disorders. The circadian rhythm is the 24-hour sleep-wake cycle that gov- erns many physiological processes including pro- duction of sleep hormones, gene expression and body temperature.

The two types of prob- lems with sleep are insomnia and sleep-disordered breathing. Insomnia, where peo- ple have difficulty falling or staying asleep, is related to another existing health problem more than 90 per cent of the time. Some common causes of insom- nia are depression, arthritis, chronic pain, chronic obstructive lung disease, stressful life events, grief, and medications. This is especially relevant during COVID times, when there is additional financial, psychological, and social stress. Insomnia in older adults is associated with falls, poor quality of life, deterioration in balance and ambulation, slower reaction or reflex time and slower wound healing.

Sleep-disordered breathing increases with age. It is connected with snoring and feeling tired even after a full night’s sleep, caused by fragmented and/or disturbed sleep cycles. Sleep-disordered breathing is often under-diagnosed and under-treated, which can be dangerous because it increases risks of multiple long-term conditions. Insomnia, heart disease, stroke, sedative drugs, al- cohol, smoking and being overweight increase the risk of sleep-disordered breathing.

Am I on the right track with my sleep? The following check- list can be used in check- ing that you are advancing your efforts to have good-quality sleep (note that children may require more sleep than what is listed below):

1. I am getting between seven and nine hours of sleep each night.
2. I do not wake up during the night more than once.
3. I am able to go to sleep most nights.
4. I do not sleep during the day.
5. What are some routines that can help you with your sleep?

- Get up at the same time each morning (even on weekends), regardless of when you go to sleep.
- Develop relaxing pre- sleep rituals, such as reading, and avoiding screen time before bed.
- Avoid caffeine and alco- hol within six hours of bedtime.
- Do not smoke at bed- time.
- Exercise regularly – vig- orous exercise such as jogging should be done in the morning, and more mild exercise, like walking, should be done two to three hours be- fore bedtime.

What sources of sup- port are there for people who want to have good quality sleep?

Friends and family

Loved ones can help assess and set up your bedroom to be conducive to sleep. Try to eliminate computers or televisions in the bedroom, block as much lighting and sound as possible, or consider using a fan or white noise machine to disguise background noises.

In the community

Seek out peers in the community who also struggle with sleep quality. You can empathize with and support each other. The most helpful peer will likely be someone your age (or generation), gender, disease status, socioeco- nomic status, religion, eth- nicity, place of residence, culture or ethnicity.

In the health service

If these self-help strat- egies are not sufficient- ly addressing your sleep concerns, talk to your doctor. Use of a continu- ous positive airway pressure (CPAP) device may be prescribed if you have sleep-disordered breath- ing. A physician can help rule out any sleep disor- ders and identify lifestyle factors or medication that might be getting in the way of quality sleep.

Larry W. Chambers has authored 175 articles and books concerning disease prevention (e.g. dementia), quality improvement in long-term care homes and innovative approaches for continuing professional de- velopment. He is research director of the Niagara Re- gional Campus, School of Medicine, McMaster Uni- versity. Eva Liu and Hanna Levy are medical students at the Niagara Regional Campus of the McMaster University School of Medi- cine. They are interested in improving community well-being of frail older adults in NOTL by narrowing the fitness (physical and brain) gap, diversifying housing options for older adults and increasing economic activity within the community that also increases ability of our minds to interact with people and ideas.