The first annual After Party on Ice, held at the Fort George skating rink and sponsored by Vintage Hotels, raised money for Red Roof Retreat, which provides day programs and respite care for youth and young adults with disabilities. (Fred Mercnik)

Red Roof Retreat is committed to expanding to support mental health.

“My board is all over it,” says Steffanie Bjorgan, the respite centre’s executive director. “Mental wellness for youth is a cornerstone, but this is about more than youth. We didn’t want to build a relationship with people and then at 24 we tell them you gotta go — that’s not great for mental health.”

Two basement rooms at RRR’s Concession 6 property have been renovated and custom-built to suit a variety of activities for the new Growing Wellness program — paid for in part by a generous donation from the Mavridis family, owners of Corks and Orzo restaurants. One room is private and cozy, set up for one-on-one or small-group counselling and therapy. The goal is to find a few different counselors with unique skill sets to serve the community, who will rent the space for a day or two a week, for example.

“We’re meeting with people and looking for a good fit,” says Bjorgan.

The main room is bright and neutral, ready to hold a long table and a dozen chairs for a vision board workshop, or a dozen yoga mats, or cushions or easels — anything required to offer workshops, classes and activities that might help contribute to good mental health.

“The goal for year one is one event or activity per month,” says Bjorgan. The series will launch on Feb. 4.

By Lauren O’Malley
The NOTL Local

Karen Post, co-ordinator of the Growing Wellness program at Red Roof Retreat, prepares her own vision board in the facility’s new space devoted to its mental wellness programs. (Lauren O’Malley)
Fire station problems date back 40 years

By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

Rob Copeland, a 30-year volunteer Queenston fire-fighter and resident of the village, is concerned about the future of his station.

“It’s nothing new to him — it’s been an ongoing discussion for more than 40 years,” he said, and has surfaced recently. He’s just not sure why.

Information about the oldest station in Niagara-on-the-Lake was requested by council at this time.

A report by Fire Chief Rob Grimwood on the subject of the viability of the station will be presented to council Monday.

He looked as far back as 1971 at its history and included everything he could find relating to the station since then, he said.

“He presents it “without analysis,” and should council want that level of detail or recommendations for the future, another staff report would be required,” he said.

He said his sense in dealing with the request from council was that it was not tied to the budget — it came about because he had mentioned during orientation meetings for new councilors that three of the five fire stations are relatively new and in good condition.

He suggested the Town will need to look at a long-term plan for St. Davids and Queenston stations, which are both “getting up there in age.”

Looking back, he said, whenever the discussion came up, there was a question of whether each community requires its own fire station or whether they could be well-represented with one.

“Isn’t a new issue. It’s just getting a handle on what to do in the future.”

Last week, Grimwood talked to the volunteers of the Queenston station to fill them in on what he’d found.

“What he couldn’t tell them was where the discussion might be leading, said Copeland, who wanted to know the reason for the report and its timing.

The request by Coun. Stuart McCormack for the information was made at the same meeting as budget deliberations, and Copeland fears a discussion may ensue once Grimwood’s report is presented over the cost of maintaining the building.

McCormack said that was not the reason behind his request.

He learned at the orientation meeting that there were some issues with the station and was asking for information. If his request has been seen as tied to the budget, “it may have been taken out of context,” he said.

“It may have come up within the course of budget discussions, but it was not necessary related to budget discussions.”

Several of the reports done over a period of more than 40 years, beginning in 1971, indicate there has been an ongoing consideration of closing Queenston and St. Davids stations and build a new one on York Road, or cover the two districts out of the St. Davids station.

Instead of making a decision, councils deferred his request.

Copeland, who has retired from his role as assistant district chief in Queenston operations, he said, “has been an ongoing discussion for more than 40 years, beginning in 1971, indicate there has been an ongoing consideration of whether each community requires its own fire station — he was on council for some of the discussions.”

This time, he said, it seems the report was to look at the viability of the building, “but I think it’s about more than just the building.”

Of the information in Grimwood’s report, he said, “a lot of questions could be asked. But my question is why start this now? Where is it coming from?”

As Grimwood’s report indicated, the building is bad shape, agrees Copeland.

“It’s had structural problems since it was built, he adds, but the contractor went out of business before those issues could be addressed.

“It’s the oldest station in use now, and it’s past its sell-by date. It was built to last 40 to 50 years, and it’s getting expensive to maintain, but it can be maintained.”

Copeland was on the 10-year master plan steering committee charged with looking at the future of fire stations from about 1994 to 2006, he recalls.

Decisions kept getting put off from one term of council to the next — one committee report described it as an “emotional issue.”

He recalls another push in 2002 to build a new station on York Road and amalgamate Queenston and St. Davids stations. The steering committee had recommended from the previous term of council and by then the neighbourhod of Glendale was growing.

Instead of making changes to the St. Davids and Queenston operations, he recalls successfully advocating for a standalone station for the new subdivision before his last term of council ended in 2006.

The most recent engineering inspection of the Queenston building’s structural problems was undertaken in September 2018, by a company that had first provided information on the state of the station in 2003, and again in 2010 and 2012. Some of the issues identified in those reports have been fixed, and some haven’t.

Copeland questions whether there is also a concern about the viability of the station because of recruitment numbers.

He says the recruitment program became an issue when the province introduced more stringent guidelines about training, which prompted a decision about sending new volunteers to firefighter school or stepping up the department program.

Grimwood has managed to bring the NOTL Fire Department “into the 21st century,” Copeland said, with “very high standards set for its training program and well-equipped facilities,” but there hasn’t been a push to attract new volunteers.

Copeland is hoping council will receive the information from past reports and take a long-term look at the future of all stations.

He agrees it should be part of another 10-year master plan, rather than a quick decision based on cost savings.

With a plan for the future, the Town could start building a contingency fund for repairs or reconstruction for both stations — the state of the Queenston building today is due to the failure to do that in past budgets, he said.

Eliminating a station now, Copeland said, would put more stress on the others, and increase response time.

In recent years the call volume has been down, “but at any time we could get a big call. It doesn’t happen often, but it happens. We have to be equipped for it, which we are in Queenston.”

The Queenston fire station began experiencing problems as soon as it was completed. (Fred Mercnik.)
Town councilors are struggling with budget

By Penny Coles

The NOTL Local

Town councillors are making difficult choices on budget at a reasonable tax rate, with several discussions during workshops and council meetings about keeping the tax rate low to look for cost savings and increased revenue sources.

Councilors have reported an increase of no more than 4.5 percent, and along with Town Mayor Betty Disero she is working to get to the point that she’s looking for a decision. In past weeks, she has hoped for a definite answer by Thursday. In any case, she expects a budget will be presented that will be ready for committee approval.

Town treasurer Kyle Freeborn said the current draft is as low as possible, but isn’t increase over last year. The hike for a typical residential assessment of $483,000 would amount to about $20 per assessment (or 4.08 percent). We are confident that council will make steps toward budget approval.

At council’s target of 4.5 percent the change is approximately $92. The budgeting, said Disero, because it inherited a problem that has been growing over a number of years, making it a challenge to come up with a sustainable budget. “It’s not a one-year fix.”

This council will work toward building a capital reserve that has been depleted in the past, and then one that she’ll look further down the road to future terms of councils, and hoping to not have to deal with the same issue.

Staff salaries are also out of line, manager users, and maintenance in some areas has not been kept up. We can’t blame the last term of council. It’s happened over a number of years,” said Disero.

Most members of this term of council “although brilliant, haven’t worked in the public sector, and needed to get a handle on how it works, which includes paying for services that are not self-sustaining, such as libraries and museums.”

“The private sector doesn’t do that.” A 2.7 percent increase to keep up with the consumer price index is not expected in this year’s user fees, but there were other asks of the Town that exceeded.

“We try to do what we need. To keep the community is paid for by the taxpayers,” she said. “That’s the challenge.”

But councillors have been “dedicated and hard-working, and took the time we needed to get to do, without laying off staff or cutting services,” said Disero.

Along with Town staff, she said, “It was a collective, team effort.”

Over the next year, council will continue to look at the $9.5 million that it can do better for next year. Feb. 11 will be the beginning of the process for next year. We won’t discuss the budget until the April council.

At last council meeting in January, representatives from several not-for-profit organizations spoke about the level of Town funding they require, which suggests their case has increased at least stabilized funding for services they provide, to see through them to an end. A follow-up on those requests is expected next week.

Julia Klassen and Norm Arsenault were the two councillors looking at the discretionary grants and making recommendations to council.

They were working with a giant budget of $10,000, and the requests submitted totaled more than $200,000, said Arsenault, so difficult decisions need to be made.

Of 17 organizations that asked for a portion of the discretionary grants, all were approved to receive some funding, but not at the level the requests.

Royal Oak Community School was one such organization. The school had asked for $26,000 for initiatives that would be extend to all local children, including a day camp during teachers’ professional development days, and events that would bring students from all NOTL schools together. Instead, a $5,000 grant was approved.

Council also approved a motion by Disero to look at other ways to offer the school financial support, including lowering the school rent for use of the former hospital building, town-owned rooft, on Government Street.

Greg Mendulin, vice-president of external relations of the College, said that research numbers that show the growth of the institute, with 11,000 full-time students, 11,000 part-time students, 1,300 teachers, five degree programs and more than 100 accredited courses. He spoke of the long history of global engagement, with 1,300 international students in Niagara and several world-wide programs adding to the success of the college.

The success at hands on learning important skills is paramount, he said, and provides value to the local business support for small and medium businesses in NOTL.

The college’s response to the town is that local business support what differentiates it from other institutes, he added.

The College has 130 programs, with the NOTL site, celebrating its 20th anniversary, offering a teaching winery, greenhouse, distillery, and the first cannabis program in Canada, which he said has garnered international attention.

NC and its staff and students add $80 million in revenue to the Niagara regional economy, but is dedicated to discuss our advertising opportunities that can benefit your business.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake

NC is thrilled to announce the appointment of JUlia COules

to our Media Sales team servicing all areas outside Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Julia is Niagara-born, raised and educated. She is a Brock University graduate with an Honours Bachelor of Arts degree. With more than 30 years experience in the newspaper industry in Niagara, she has achieved national awards for design and was the Sun Media Niagara Business Woman of the Year.

Julia has participated in many charitable events over the years through the Niagara Association of Realtors, the Kiwanis Club and the Alzheimer Society of Niagara. She received an Ontario Volunteer Recognition Award in 2017.

“I am excited to be working with such an experienced, professional and dedicated team of newspaper people whose respect and reputation in NOTL know no equal,” she says. “The aim is not to be the biggest, merely the best.”

Works for me!

Julia brings with her extensive knowledge and professional experience and sales across the Niagara Region. We encourage businesses outside Niagara-on-the-Lake to contact her at julia@notllocal.com to discuss our advertising opportunities that can benefit your business.
Red Roof planning workshops
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The first vision board workshop will be led by Michelle Madden, a social worker and clinical therapist.

“This time of year people are looking forward, wondering what their year will look like,” Karen Post, co-ordinator of the Growing Well-being Initiative, says. “This is a way to open it up and get people thinking, a simple activity, magazines, markers – anything you connect with.”

On Feb. 20, adults will have the opportunity to create their own vision boards. Each workshop costs only $5 to participate. A youth introduction to yoga class with Meredith Locke on Feb. 23 and a youth introduction to music therapy class led by Aksana Kovaleva-Moussi on March 25 will also cost only $5.

“A lot of people are doing their time and efforts,” says Post, which is how they can keep costs low for now. Class sizes are maximum 12 people, and the youth age limits are 15 to 24 years.

Bjorgan also plans to run larger-format programs in the spring and fall. “I’m talking to healers, therapists, practitioners to build something,” she says. She expects to send out a needs assessment to the community “sooner rather than later,” to find out what people want to see.

Part of the idea of the initiative is to bring people together in a safe space to allow them to share and process their thoughts.

Post sums it up simply: “Everybody just talk. It sounds so simple but, if everyone took a dark moment and shared it, we could help each other find ways to help manage what we’re going through.”

For more information or to book a spot in upcoming classes or workshops, email karen@redrootreat.com.

LOCAL HAPPENINGS

FISH FRY AT THE LEGION: Public welcome, take out available. Every Thursday 4:30 to 7:30 Royal Canadian Legion 410 King St., Niagara-on-the-Lake

FAMILY FISH FRY
February 1st – 4:30 – 7:30 pm (Take out available) $5 + S/P/C/F Alcohol Available.
Next Family Fish Fry – February 15th

To advertise your event in LOCAL HAPPENINGS contact karen@notllocal.com
Visit us online at: www.notllocal.com

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.

COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE MEETING
February 4 @ 8:00 am - 5:00 pm
Expect a comprehensive report on 2019 Town budget at the Town Hall.

SHAW FILM SERIES: CAN YOU EVER FORGIVE ME?
February 9 @ 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Walk-in clinic opens

Lindsey Parr, nurse practitioner, is seeing patients in the basement at the former hospital on Wellington Street. (Photo submitted)

The walk-in clinic is an office distinct from the local family health team and the doctors who share space at the former hospital, says Parr, but they work in collaboration when needed. If she feels she would like a doctor’s advice, she has only to walk down the corridor to get it.

“If I want to consult with a doctor, I can. We’ve separate entities who can work together. Our funding comes from different sources, but we work as a team.”

She will see as many people as possible in a day’s work, she says, without appointments.

“However my hours are subject to capacity and if volumes are high I may not be able to accommodate everyone.”

To clarify when it’s appropriate to seek care from a nurse practitioner, Parr explains: “I would say the medical concerns I can assist patients with would include those of less urgency, that have potential for complications or are causing mild distress, and in which the patient would benefit from intervention or medical advice.”

That would include minor injuries, including lacerations — she can provide sutures and wound assessment — minor infections such as urinary tract, throat, sinus or ear problems, which are the symptoms of the majority of people she sees, or minor abdominal pains and rashes.

She is also able to assist patients with ‘episodic primary care issues,” according to the hospital. We’re very pleased to the service open and running.”

To access the walk-in clinic, Parr says, use the back door of the hospital that is reached from the parking lot. Go downstairs — it’s actually the basement but labelled as the ground floor — and there will be a sign pointing down the hall.

Lindsey Parr, nurse practitioner, is seeing patients in the basement at the former hospital on Wellington Street. (Photo submitted)

The NOTL Local
By Penny Coles

The Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre presents its Pumphouse Instructors’ Exhibition, running until March 31, featuring the artwork of instructors, practitioners to build something,” she says. She expects to send out a needs assessment to the community “sooner rather than later,” to find out what people want to see.

Part of the idea of the initiative is to bring people together in a safe space to allow them to share and process their thoughts.

Post sums it up simply: “Everybody just talk. It sounds so simple but, if everyone took a dark moment and shared it, we could help each other find ways to help manage what we’re going through.”

For more information or to book a spot in upcoming classes or workshops, email karen@redrootreat.com.

Lindsey Parr is back, her shingle hanging to declare the walk-in clinic in the Old Town is open for business.

Parr is the nurse practitioner who staffed the office in the basement of the former hospital on Wellington Street for a few short months in 2017. She took the job in July of that year and when she began her maternity leave six months later, the office closed.

It opened earlier this month, Parr running it single-handedly, without so much as a receptionist to record patients’ information as they arrive.

It’s a simple take-a-number, take-a-seat in the corridor situation, and when Parr ushers the patient next in line into her office, she takes the necessary details and registers them through the St. Catharines office of Niagara Health, her employer.

Parr is there to attend patients who either don’t have a family doctor, or who need attention and can’t get in to see a doctor, she says.

She is a registered nurse who has both a master’s degree in nursing, a new requirement for the job of nurse practitioner, and a supplementary education certificate.

With those additional credentials, she is authorized to diagnose, order and interpret diagnostic tests, as well as prescribe medication and other treatment.

Parr became a registered nurse already knowing she wanted to take the extra steps needed to become a nurse practitioner, she says. “I was interested in expanding my knowledge and scope of practice, and enjoy having the ability to practice autonomously.”

She will see as many people as possible in a day’s work, she says, without appointments.

“However my hours are subject to capacity and if volumes are high I may not be able to accommodate everyone.”

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To access the walk-in clinic, Parr says, use the back door of the hospital that is reached from the parking lot. Go downstairs — it’s actually the basement but labelled as the ground floor — and there will be a sign pointing down the hall.

The hours of the clinic, at 176 Wellington Street, are Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to noon, and 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Chamber asks for continued financial support

By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

Janice Thomson, president of the Niagra-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce, is hoping town councillors, in the midst of deliberating a 2019 budget, will agree to maintain an annual payment for service negotiated two years ago.

Thomson outlined the agreement to the Town in 2017 to have an annual payment become a line item on the budget that recognizes the many services the chamber provides to attract tourists, and the Town’s role in contributing to the cost of services.

Thomson said until 2017, the Town contributed $70,000 toward the chamber’s costs of promoting tourism and attracting visitors to town.

It costs the chamber a little more than $460,000 a year to maintain its services that welcome tourists seven days a week, she said. Until 2017, the Town paid a fee for service of $37,000.

Two years ago, Thomson said, “we renegotiated that base number.”

The Town now pays an additional $33,000 toward the chamber budget for listing and selling tickets for local events, highway signage and media tours, and another $48,000 for the icewine festival, peach celebration and candlelight stroll.

These events, she added, help “promote the town, and define what NOTL is,” for residents and tourists.

That amounts to the $118,000 line on the single budget line, she says. Factoring in the $38,000 rent paid by the chamber to the Town for space in the Court House, that means the Town invests about $70,000 in the work of the chamber.

A portion of the chamber’s revenue comes from its 400 members, including representatives from wineries, restaurants, accommodation, arts and culture, and professional services offered by accountants, insurance companies, real estate brokers and others from across the community, she said. Until 2017, the Town said. Until 2017, the Town.

It also comes from participation in group marketing efforts and working with other funding partners such as the Tourism Partnership of Niagara.

“Chamber strongly believes this investment, our partnership and our operating relationship, generate a very positive return on investment that the Town is realizing annually, as well as supporting our members. It is certainly very much appreciated, and we believe together we’re investing wisely in success for the town of NOTL.”

Joe Perrie, Larry Pretto, Tonie Mori and Nadia Pretto at the White on Ice dinner.
(Karen Skeoch)

Increased bus parking fees could have ripple effect

By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

In an effort to increase revenue from tourism to offset tax increases to the 2019 budget, Niagara-on-the-Lake councillors have decided to raise the price for tour bus parking.

Janice Thomson, president of the NOTL Chamber of Commerce, spoke to councillors recently, hoping they would reconsider what seemed like a hasty decision to increase tour bus parking to $70 a day from $25, without any input from the local business sector or any conversation with the coach operators.

Thomson said there were almost 8,000 tour buses in the heritage district in 2018, carrying 267,774 visitors to town.

The increase in parking fees could have the unintended consequence of tour buses bypassing not only the heritage district but wineries, restaurants and farm markets, where they often stop on the way to the Old Town, she said.

Coun. Clare Cameron suggested reducing the increase even further, to the consumer price index increase of 2.7 per cent, given the lack of consultation with tour operators, with support from Coun. John Wiens and Coun. Erwin Wiens, but the majority of council were in favour of the $50 increase.

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Joe Perrie, Larry Pretto, Tonie Mori and Nadia Pretto at the White on Ice dinner.
(Karen Skeoch)
Budgeting for now and future a difficult task

Niagara-on-the-Lake council members and staff are struggling to produce a reasonable yet sustainable budget. They have been faced with deciding the fate of requests for funding increases from several organizations, while knowing most taxpayers are only interested in the bottom line, the one that affects their wallets. Many have been bound by the daunting task of making up for years of dwindling capital reserves, wanting to look to the future but again without over-burdening residents.

Then we have the many organizations in town which provide great services, but rely on municipal funding to support them.

For example, most communities have a chamber of commerce to promote small local businesses, and to play the role of advocate for them in municipal decisions. Niagara-on-the-Lake is fortunate to have a strong chamber to host events, promote and handle tickets for events organized by others, to work seven days a week to attract tourists and welcome them when they arrive, and lobby local representatives for support for the business community.

This town is different from most other municipalities in that its economy depends on a healthy tourism industry. While town staff and council members battle to balance a budget, every taxpayer, whether they take advantage of chamber events, or whether they see any personal gain from the effort that goes into its promotion and management, will benefit on their tax bill.

Parking alone pays the town revenue of $1.6 million, and every cent of that is money that would otherwise be spread out over the tax bill, or lead to a reduction of the services residents have come to expect living in NOTL.

The same can be said about the town's museum and the many events and services it provides. We might not all make regular visits to the local museum. But local history is one reason tourists visit NOTL, pay for parking, stay in local accommodations, eat in restaurants and shop in stores that might employ us or our teenagers. Can you imagine living in a world without art or history? It can be a point in your life.

The same could be said about the Shaw Festival — if you're local and don't go to the plays performed by some of the most talented and creative people in Canada, you may be missing out. But those who have never stepped foot inside a Shaw theatre have gained some financial advantage from watching a world-class theatre as a neighbour, one that attracts visitors from the tourism industry and for the economy, it's good for every taxpayer, every family who lives in NOTL, every child who has played minor league sports on a team sponsored by a local business, every service organization, church or school that has had a fundraiser and asked businesses to donate.

Residents of this small town are fortunate to have a great library with a wide range of services, a beautiful community centre, two arenas and hopefully this summer still two pools — so much for which to be thankful.

Yes, funded by property taxes, and the toll of all who live and work here. But also by the tourism industry which adds to municipal coffers, and by doing so, helps to make this community a great place to live and work.

Let’s talk about it

When we say “How are you,” what are we really asking? Could it be one way of saying, “How is your mental health right now?”

One measure of success of the Bell Let’s Talk initiative would be for all of us to feel at ease asking, and answering, questions about our psychological and emotional well-being readily and candidly.

Are you “fine”? “Good?” Or maybe you’re anxious about having to attend a social event where you won’t know everyone and feel people might judge you.

Maybe you’ve been feeling “sad” since the sun shifted and we headed into these cold and isolating winter months.

If someone asked, could you tell them you feel lonely, and wish you had more time — or more confidence — for friends?

Could you be open about how everyone’s perfect life on social media makes you feel less, like you don’t belong, like you’re the only one who doesn’t travel the world with their perfect family and eat photogenic meals for breakfast, lunch and Netflix?

The Let’s Talk campaign aims to diminish and ultimately eradicate the stigma around mental illness. Which is actually a funny way to state it, because why is anxiety an illness when in fact it’s more prevalent than its opposite, which is… what, exactly?

Not only on Bell Let’s Talk Day, but really, every day, try being honest with yourself and those around you.

Maybe you’ll connect and have a real conversation, may be even dispel some darkness by shedding light on the issues we’ve been trained to hide.

For more information visit https://letstalk.bell.ca/en/bell-lets-talk-day.

The Niagra-on-the-Lake

The trusted voice of our community

LOCAL FINDS

What is this monolith? by Lauren O’Malley

There is an approximately 10-foot-tall wood-clad monolith in the parking lot on John St. near Butler’s Barracks and the Commons. A rather mysterious thing, it hasn’t had smart brass lettering, or local event posters, or really any kind of message on it in the past 15 years.

Interest piqued.

According to Fran Di Cesare of Parks Canada, “The structure was used as a parking sign for Butler’s Barracks NHS in the 1970s and more recently as a notice board, where we post information from time to time. However, earlier this year, we identified this structure as being superfluous and have marked it for removal by March 31.”

So if you want to pay your respects to this local artifact, you might want to give it a sign. Or if you’d like to see it stay up as another form of community bulletin board….

The NOTL Local has an office, with an address, a desk, and just about everything it needs to produce a weekly newspaper for Niagara-on-the-Lake readers. For those looking to find us, we’re at 437 Mississauga St., in the Caldwell Financial Centre beside Tim Hortons. We’re grateful to Jim Caldwell and Lorraine Craig for offering us office space while we look for a more permanent home. For now, it works for us!
RiverBrink open year round for exhibits and lectures

By Debra Antonic
RiverBrink curator

Niagara-on-the-Lake residents enjoy a rich and vibrant arts scene, of which RiverBrink Art Museum is an important part.

One of the many cultural facilities in the area, the fine art museum in Queenston is a resource for local artists and art lovers, and a destination for visitors and tourists. Through exhibitions, lectures, artist workshops and other events, RiverBrink provides access to a collection of art works by professional artists, here in the local community. In addition to the art collection, established by Samuel E. Weir and augmented by new acquisitions since Weir’s death in 1981, RiverBrink has a library of books on art and history, a small decorative arts collection, and other treasures.

Open year round since 2013, the art museum has a reduced schedule in the winter months, but continues to host programming events along with current exhibitions. We are now entering the final weeks before the closing of the exhibition Mary Prittie of Port Colborne: Paintings, on March 2.

A prolific and talented artist, Prittie’s landscapes of Niagara, ships on the Welland Canal, local farms and street scenes, and the former amusement park at Crystal Beach, are impressive and not to be missed.

In addition, we are in the process of installing new collection-based exhibitions: Menagerie and Centre and Periphery: the Group of Seven and preparing for the exhibition The Power of Niagara, generously sponsored by OPG Niagara, which opens April 18. This exhibition includes loans from the OPG facility in Queenston along with a contemporary video work Ice Forms, American Falls, Niagara (2016) by artists Jennifer Buchwal and Nicholas de Pencier.

This exhibition schedule, of contemporary art works integrated with our permanent collection and loans from other institutions and individuals, is a significant shift from the exclusive display of the Weir Collection when the art museum opened in 1983. One of many changes at RiverBrink in recent years, the introduction of contemporary art helps ensure we engage new audiences with current ideas and trends in the art world.

While this curatorial work is ongoing, we also host educational programming and workshops. The popular LearnMore courses continue through the winter months, with a new series beginning Feb. 6. This latest series, Beyond The Myth: Seeing Leonardo da Vinci in 2019, delivered by artist historian Penny-Lynn Cookson, is now at capacity, but we do have a wait list and, who knows, we may convince Penny-Lynn to offer it again.

For art practitioners we have a workshop scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 23 with artist Robin Niset.

Our programming is supported by the town of NOTL through a discretionary grant, which helps subsidize the cost of workshops and courses. Other upcoming events include a Queenston Circle eating, a visit to Rodman Hall on Feb. 26. Please see our website www.riverbrink.org for more information on this and other levels of membership, our current exhibitions, and upcoming programming. You can also call 905-262-4510 or stop in at 116 Queenston St., Queenston.
Library a hub of activities to serve community

By Penny Coles

The NOTL Local

It’s been a long time since libraries were mere repositories for books to be borrowed, with a few students being shushed for whispering and giggling while there to study.

“The value and goal of today’s public library is to help the community library “an informed and involved citizenry, creating engaged teens and adults, a level playing field for literacy, lifelong learning, and access to technology,” Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library board chair Madeline Lefebvre told town councillors recently. It also strives to ensure “an inclusive, culturally diverse society with a strong sense of community and well-being,” she said.

The duties of the library board, she added, as legislated by the province, include providing a comprehensive and efficient service that reflects the unique needs of the NOTL community.

Credited with having the first circulating library in Upper Canada, founded in 1800, Niagara-on-the-Lake opened its current public library on Anderson Lane in 2000 — a modern building designed with those goals in mind.

Since then membership has grown to just shy of 5,000, says Debbie Krause, the community engagement co-ordinator. With about 12 regularly-scheduled events listed each week on its calendar, and more scattered throughout the month, Krause helps guide the progress that continues to evolve to meet the needs of the community.

In the decades since the library added videos to borrow and a small bank of computers for members without them at home, it has transformed into a building meeting place, a hub for events and programs related to literacy and education in a much broader sense — and that’s only what takes place within the Anderson Lane brick and mortar.

There are also several outreach programs that take library services out into the community to further achieve its goal, says Krause.

The NOTL library has been the envy of other municipalities since it was built, but after about six months’ closure in 2017 for an extensive renovation, a bold move for those in charge of a relatively new building to re-opened with a design even more suited to the programs already being offered, and which allows for many others that had only been imagined.

“It’s made a world of difference,” said Krause of the current design. “It’s become even more of a multi-use space.”

One of the biggest changes made during the renovation was to the shelving, which is more accessible, varied and shorter, opening up the look and feel of the library — patrons can now stand at the front and look across the stacks, through the windows to the outdoor space behind the building. The shelves can be easily moved to create a cozy and cocooned rotunda for gatherings, as it was last week for a reading from favourite author Ian Hamilton’s new book to a full house, or to accommodate a larger crowd for an event such as Tales by Moonlight, an interactive story-telling dance and drum circle to celebrate Black History Month, to be held Saturday, Feb. 16. These activities can be scheduled during library hours, without interrupting members who have wandered in for other purposes.

There is a quiet space, where people can read or study — it is used by students of all ages, said Krause, as well as by those who work from home but want a change of scenery. With its big windows and recent renovation, the building has transformed into a dynamic hub for events in a relaxed environment.

The glassed-in computer room is usually busy, the children’s corner floor is often covered with kids spreading out while they read, and the comfy chairs tucked away in nooks and crannies, especially those pulled up beside the fireplace, are taken by folks reading magazines or the local newspaper.

There are programs for babies and toddlers, which combine playfultime with activities that encourage readiness, and there is the new Makery space, where people “think, build and solve,” which is used for several programs. One encourages parents to gather early in the evening to have fun with their kids — a time of day when youngsters are often drawn to the TV.

New this month is a book club for teens Grade 7 and up, encouraging reading, discussion and debate. It’s organized by the library Advisory Council — books and snacks provided.

Last year, there were 1,600 participants taking part in a total of 201 children’s programs at the library. And there’s room for all of them. “We looked at the needs of the community, and provided the space to satisfy those needs,” said Krause.

Aesthetically, she adds, “it’s a beautiful space, with a really great atmosphere in a physical environment that works for the community. We did very well with the space we had before the renovations but everything is easier, more comfortable now.”

It’s also a great place for staff to work, she adds.

The InfoHealth series is one of the most popular programs for adults, said Krause, held in the Rotary Room, which was also moved and enlarged.

Also popular is the Moc-casin Talk series, with Indigenous speakers addressing issues of Truth and Reconciliation, including the history of land agreements.

There is a Nobel Prize section, a movie theatre, yoga, workshops on DNA and genealogy, book clubs for adults, technology classes, e-books to borrow, and book lending made easier with the help of volunteers who visit those who are home-bound, not only delivering their favourite books but sometimes staying to read to them.

Wine and Words is a great example of another outreach program, said Krause — authors are invited to local wineries and offer readings and discussions in a relaxing atmosphere over a glass of wine, and locals are introduced to a winery they might not otherwise have visited.

Another outreach project is travelling with, making high-speed internet available to migrant farm workers to help them connect to their families at home.

Then there are the lockers in the St. Davids fire station on Warner Road, and in the Virgil arena — books can be ordered online, and picked up and returned at those locations.

Last fall, said Krause, is the book-stocked “vending machine” at the Centennial Arena. A library card can be scanned, the door will pop open and the items selected will be checked out when the door is closed. Books can also be returned through the same process, said Krause.

Library CAO Cathy Simpson was at the January council meeting with Lefebvre to explain the budget request which will be decided by councillors at Monday’s committee meeting, and ratified at the Feb. 11 council meeting.

The library, she said, “is a great community building and one of the last free public spaces. Everyone’s welcome; it’s open to all.”

To support its many programs and all it offers the community, the library is asking for an increase of a little more than six per cent over last year’s budget, said Simpson, which represents an extra $42,000, bringing municipal funding up to $728,759.

There is some revenue from fundraising, and small grants from the provincial and federal government — although provincial legislation controls libraries in Ontario, 97 per cent of the library’s funding comes from the municipality, she said.

The provincial contribution to libraries was significantly reduced in the ‘90s, and leading up to last year’s provincial election there was lobbying to increase it, said Simpson, but with the change in government, “we’re not hopeful.”

A group of women take part in the yoga program at the NOTL Public Library. (Photo submitted)

Janice Thomson and Marie Warman wait for Ian Hamilton to sign a copy of his book at a recent book launch.

Tom, Julia, and Finley Hewitt build with Lego together at a recent Tinker Thinker Thursday program. (Photo submitted)

Jasper Hewitt and Ladon Munger design their video game with Bloxels on Tinker Thinker Thursday at the library. (Photo submitted)
Kinsmen help local girls attend summer camp

By Lauren O’Malley
The NOTL Local

Six Niagara-on-the-Lake girls are LEAP-ing for joy these days, as they see their dreams of going to a leadership camp this summer get closer and closer to becoming a reality.

Bob Forbes, president of the NOTL Kinsmen Club, says the association likes to donate to groups in need. When the local Girl Guides leaders asked for some support to help girls attend the camp, Forbes said they met and agreed it was a worthwhile cause. “We look for local groups of young people, groups that may not have access to a lot of money,” Forbes says. They tend to lean toward athletic pursuits, sponsoring things like the Crossroads basketball team, and the Niagara Thunder lacrosse team.

The Kinsmen also donate their half to all the levels of Girl Guides, from Sparks to Pathfinders. “It’s free. We take care of that,” says Forbes. LEAP 2019 is a girls leadership camp at Doe Lake Camp, near Huntsville. It’s a week-long “large-scale event,” according to Guides patrol leader Megan Gilchrist — attracting between 2,600 and 2,500 young ladies from all over Ontario and Nunavut.

The camp features traditional activities such as archery, canoeing and rock-climbing, plus STEM activities, such as robotics. “There will also be a service component,” says Gilchrist. “The girls will have a choice between several activities such as helping out at an animal shelter, or making kits for residents of a women’s shelter or for people experiencing homelessness.”

The Guides will continue raising funds for the campers by selling cookies, and making and selling tea light holders. Each camper’s fee is $900 for the week, so they’re eager for you to keep buying the Chocolate Mint cookies until the end of February. In March they will bring out the traditional chocolate and vanilla sandwich cookies.

Gilchrist points out that you can donate even if you don’t want cookies, and the boxes you pay for will be given to Newark Neighbours.

She also says most units of Sparks, Brownies, Girl Guides and Pathfinders are still accepting new recruits, and there’s a new program in place called Girls First, which is “an exceptional program because the im-petuses are coming from kids, they’re skills-based, and they’re really fun.”

Madison, 10, is “really excited” to go to LEAP 2019, and not at all nervous to go to overnight camp, because she’s been before. “Brooke, nine, is equally excited and confident. Also attending will be Sophie, Josie, Amara and Hannah.”

Kinsmen Brian Liske (treasurer), Tricia Froese (past president), and Bob Forbes (president) present a cheque for $600 to campers Brooke, Sophie and Madison. (Lauren O’Malley)
Family nightmare ends well

By Lauren O’Malley

January 31, 2019

Weber Hospital, “the nearest medical facility. By this point the baby had a blood and brain infection. “She would take that as an indicator. They will just look up a very specific treatment could be initiated. “They got her on the big gun antibiotic which fought her specific type of meningitis,” says Whitney. They kept the baby’s fluids up and kept her comfortable. “I decided to see how things would play out for the next couple of days,” when an MRI could be done to see if various parts of Melody’s brain had survived the infection. “On day five we had a clear MRI and her brain was back to its normal size,” says Whitney. “A top neurologist came in and put all these cords all over her, cables everywhere — she looked like a little alien baby. They were monitoring seizure activity; there was none.”

“Everything was just feeling more hopeful. We will not feel out of the woods though — she was still spiking fevers. “A cause for the infection has not been determined yet. “An infectious disease team asked us about everything we had touched, eaten, done. We told them everything to the last detail. Their determination was just ‘bad luck.’”

Whitney’s keenly aware of her good luck, however. After five days in the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit, they were moved into the general ward. “They saw it’s kind of like going from being Kate on the Titanic to being Jack — from a highly modern space with a private nurse to a general ward. It was a bit of a shellshock,” she says. They were in a room with three other families, and were following the sad stories playing out before them. “Their issues were permanent,” she says. “We thought, ‘This sucks for now, but she’s getting better. She’s a fragile little baby, but oh my God, we’ve got it good.’”

At one point Whitney was able to wheel Melody down a hallway with her IV unit in tow. She passed a mother who said, “Oh, are you in for cancer treatment too?” Whitney says her heart broke for the woman and her family. “It’s heartbreakingly beautiful, but beautiful,” she says. Throughout the 12 days in hospital, Whitney was surrounded by her care team around her. “You think of a medical situation as being cold and clinical, but they were very caring and very pathetic,” she says. “A lot of things that could have been so — they made it so.”

“I told her we need to tell all the time to me about all of the kind things people were doing for us. Our customers were bringing everything, anonymous donors, people leaving money to pay for hospital parking, blankets, letters, meals, prayers, everyone wanting so badly to help, all these amazing things people would do; it was so beautiful to see our community come together,” she says.

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Horses, dogs, and a pig: they board them all

By Lauren O’Malley
The NOTL Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake is the kind of charming small town where anything can happen. Including bumping into two young women on horseback on the Commons, which you might have done if you were out and about of a Saturday morning.

Emily Mayes and Kasia Polakiewicz-Morrice love dogs as well as horses and welcome them all.

Justin Morrice and Kasia Polakiewicz-Morrice fell for Copper the minute she heard his tragic tale. He and another horse had been found by the Hamilton Humane Society after spending three days in a trailer without food or water, in the heat of summer, in the city’s downtown. Her husband Justin Morrice bought the traumatized 11-year-old horse from Whispering Hearts Horse Rescue for Polakiewicz-Morrice’s birthday almost two years ago, and she has been rehabilitating him since. “He had never been ridden before — had never even been brushed,” she recalls. “He trusts me now.”

Copper was not their first rescue — Polakiewicz-Morrice has been at this for a decade. “The young couple manage a boarding business and farm on Concession 6. They have four horses of their own (including Copper and Minipuff, a miniature pony), “and we’re adapting to suit all animals for boarding,” says Morrice.

Their most common clients are horses and dogs; they also board cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, and even sheep. “A man was moving his farm from Manitoba, and needed a place to keep his three horses and a dozen sheep for two weeks,” says Polakiewicz-Morrice.

They have boarded a pet pig too, “A big one. We kept him in the barn,” she remembers with a smile. “We haven’t gotten an elephant yet,” quips Morrice. The pair were married in 2016 on the 16-acre property, which belongs to Polakiewicz-Morrice’s parents. Her father is an accomplished carpenter who has built and customized any number of projects on the farm, with help from Morrice. The latter works in greenhouses, and has helped establish striking perennial beds which act as backdrops for photo sessions in the summer.

Polakiewicz-Morrice is an amateur photographer, and creates albums for her clients of their pets’ vacations. She also offers seasonally-themed backdrops and photo shoots for pet owners.

Five acres of the land at Evergreen Trail Stables are native forest “with trails galore,” she says — and locals are welcome to come and enjoy them. The site is also becoming a popular location for weddings.

Polakiewicz-Morrice’s father has made a habit of planting approximately 100 new trees on his land every year, including fruit orchards and evergreens, to a total or more than 1,000 new additions. Since establishing the stables, manure is used as a convenient fertilizer.

“We have our own little paradise here,” says Polakiewicz-Morrice, looking over the pastures at the pond featuring turtles and fish in season, and the Weeping Willow tree that sweeps over it. “We enjoy every day.”

The Genuine. The Original.
Making themselves at home in NOTL

By Lauren O’Malley

The NOTL Local

“It seems like we only have wine glasses,” says Cheryl Blake, looking for a water glass. “Welcome to Niagara-on-the-Lake,” says her husband Roman Mamalyga, laughing.

Blake and Mamalyga recently been welcomed to town from Oakville. As transplants, they are already reaching deeply into their roots.

“We do everything local,” says Mamalyga. “I love to go to Valu-mart every day for my groceries. I walk to Willow every morning and when she sees me she puts two coffee cups on the counter.”

“If you want to create value and help people you have to put root down into the community,” Mamalyga says passionately. “We do everything here, absolutely everything. That’s the only way to do it.”

Blake has had a long-term relationship with NOTL, having visited often in her youth with her philanthropic father, Philip Robert Blake, who was a patron of the Shaw Festival.

“I’ve been coming here since I was this high,” she says, holding her hand three feet off the ground. “That’s how I got my love for the theatre, Vintage Inns, and retail therapy.”

Five years ago when she suggested we should go to Niagara-on-the-Lake, says Mamalyga, “I had no idea what she was talking about.” He was an urban Torontonian whose knowledge of Southern Ontario stretched only as far west as Oakville, “where all the rich people live.”

They started visiting NOTL once or twice a year, on their anniversary, and for Christmas. Over the 2017 Christmas holidays, they booked several days at the Pillar and Post, and enjoyed the snowiest celebration.

“You know how it goes in life where things just start happening,” asks Blake. “We had booked a special private walking tour with Dick Coyne,” she recalls. “He said, ‘If you ever consider moving Niagara-on-the-Lake, there are some areas I would suggest you look at.’”

“For all the years we’ve been coming to NOTL we had never been past the golf course,” says Mamalyga, who was inspired by Coyne’s suggestion to go for a drive in the Chautauqua and surrounding neighborhoods. They spotted a ‘for lease’ sign for a house on Nassau Street, and impulsively decided to act on it. They called the realtor listed on the sign. “Laurie [Sobil] said she had just walked in the door from a trip to England — we caught her just in time. She said, ‘You guys are so lucky!’ He shakes his head and says, ‘Yeah, we are.'”

The couple saw the house and promptly decided to become locals. “Laurie asked if I wanted to see the upstairs and I said I didn’t need to — we’ll take it,” says Blake.

They moved here in March, 2018, and integrated fully. “I joined the golf club. John and Laurie Sobil have become good friends,” says Mamalyga. “Mike Berliss has introduced us to many people, and given us a list of local wines to try every week.”

Through Berliss Mamalyga has also joined the international group Les Marmitons: amateur chefs who meet up once a month to learn high-end cooking techniques from professionals.

“All of a sudden he’s a cook,” laughs Blake — and goes on to describe the dinner parties for which they’re becoming known. She describes Mamalyga’s Ukrainian spin on entertaining, which they do often. “Most of our friends are here now,” says Mamalyga, amazed at the difference one year can make.

Blake — or “Miss Blake,” as Mamalyga fondly calls her — is a history buff, and refers to locations in town by their proximity to historical sites. Charlotte Street is “by the old railroad,” and their newly-purchased home in St. Andrew’s Glen is “near Butters Burial Ground.” When her adult son visits from Toronto they like to follow the old train paths around town and imagine the way things were. “I read about a group looking to preserve the trails — that would be something I would love to be involved in,” she says.

The outgoing Mamalyga has joined the local Rotary club, and was excited to be among the volunteers at their holiday house tour. “There’s a lot of positive in the NOTL Rotary,” she says. “The people, meeting them for the first time — you’re part of the family. All successful people just giving back.” Blake — who says she’s taking a bit of a back seat for now — has joined Friends of Rotary, and sustains her long-term relationship with the Shaw by volunteering for the festival.

Mamalyga had never been to the theatre before attending A Christmas Carol in 2017. Now the couple attends at least one play a month, and has joined the Friends of the Shaw.

“It’s all magical,” says Mamalyga, “but the timing was right.” He’s referring to the fact the couple was able to uproot their relatively new life together and integrate into a whole new community because their children are grown and have lives of their own — Mamalyga has three children and one grandchild, Blake the one son. They were also able to change their business focus, Mamalyga moving away from his career in the flooring industry and Blake from hers in insurance and administration. They have launched a shared business in the financial field.

“We’re really putting down roots,” says Mamalyga.

“That’s it, we’re here.”

By Lauren O’Malley

Roman Mamalyga and Cheryl Blake with Gizmo. (Lauren O’Malley)
STEAM Challenges in Kindergarten

By Lindsay Parravicino
St. Davids Public School

The Kindergarten students at St. Davids Public School love taking on challenges that are placed around the room each week.

We call these STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math) challenges. These are fun and engaging activities that help children learn more about math and science, and give them opportunities to investigate and problem-solve throughout their days at school. Many of these challenges require students to work together in order to solve the problem, and to persevere through many trial and error attempts in order to solve the problem.

When I asked a group of students to explain what a STEAM challenge is, Joshua replied, “It’s a challenge where you can play with someone else to solve a problem. I love them.” Harrison added, “A STEAM challenge is something that is hard for you, and you have to try and solve it. They teach us math and science.”

Joshua went on to say, “Today we made balloon rockets using string, straws and balloons. We had to see whose would go the furthest!” The ones that had a lot of air went really far, but the small balloons barely moved,” added Matthew.

Students then learned about force, and that the more air the balloon has, the more force is omitted once the air is released. That is why the big balloons travelled so far down the string, they discovered.

I then asked students to tell me about some of their favourite STEAM challenges from our year together. Wyatt told me, “I liked when we had to try and build a fence for the pumpkins. We had to use clay and popsicle sticks and make a bridge that could hold up a pumpkin. It was really hard and we had to keep adding more sticks because the pumpkin was so heavy.” This was a favourite activity for many of our students, and there was great conversation about making a solid and sturdy base that would support the weight of the pumpkin.

Harrison had a different favourite activity, that we completed during our pirate inquiry. “I liked using robots. We made a maze and pressed buttons to make them go through the maze. Throughout this inquiry, students learned about mapping and coding. We used Google Earth to help us make a map of our school playground and students made treasure maps that included a compass and legend. Our friends loved having the opportunity to use BeeBots to learn about coding. They used large wooden blocks to build mazes, and then had to program the BeeBots to travel throughout the maze. This involved a lot of counting and spatial awareness.”

There is at least one STEAM challenge available for students to investigate each week in our classroom. These are always very popular activities, and we love to see how excited the children are to engage in these learning opportunities. Great work, St. Davids Kindergarten friends. Lindsay Parravicino and Cara Bodnar are the teachers of the St. Davids Kindergarten class.
Think boating, and plan for safety

By Randy Klaassen
Special to The Local

The Toronto Boat Show gets a lot of people thinking about summer, and some of those people are Search and Rescue (SAR) volunteers.

Gerry and Fran Doran of Niagara-on-the-Lake have served as SAR volunteers for the past six years with the Civil Air Search and Rescue Association (CASARA) Niagara District Airport. They recently spent two days at the Toronto Boat Show.

“Thinking of the upcoming season on the water we were there to remind boaters that now is the right time to plan for safety,” said Gerry. “Planning to be safe before going out on the water is the best way to ensure that everyone gets home again.”

As a spotter aboard CASARA aircraft, Fran knows first-hand what it is like to search for a missing person floating on Lake Ontario or Lake Erie. “Flying 1,000 feet above the water, and scanning a mile beyond the side of the aircraft, it can be really difficult to spot an object as small as a person in the water, especially if there are waves. And then, whenever the aircraft makes a turn, the light on the water changes, which can hide objects.”

The main attraction of the SAR display was a 424 Squadron CH-146 Griffon helicopter, which flies SAR operations across Ontario, and has the capability to hoist stranded people out of the water.

“There are unique weather patterns created by the two Great Lakes, Erie and Ontario,” said SAR pilot Captain Erin Pratt. “The forecast can indicate calm, clear weather, which is great for boating, and people can go out on the water. But the weather changes, she said and boaters often fail to wear a lifejacket, she said, and fall off the back of a boat. “Seems like a silly thing, but the best way people can assure a successful rescue is to wear a lifejacket. When things do go wrong, people need to know they are going to be in the water for a long time. Wearing a lifejacket makes it easier than having to swim for four hours or more.”

“We hear from people who say they take a lifejacket in the boat, but don’t like to wear it,” said Fran.

“Another frequent comment heard is they plan to rely on their cellphone when they get into trouble, but often cell phones don’t work out on the lakes, and they certainly don’t work in water. Boaters have a much better chance of survival if they have and use the proper equipment.”

Pratt added, “Having flown too many searches for missing boaters, the number one thing I can tell people is to wear a lifejacket whenever you are on the water.”

To learn more about volunteering with CASARA see the website https://ontario.casara.ca.

Ken Gansel appointed chair of police services board

By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Ken Gansel says as the new chair of the Niagara Regional Police Services Board, he is looking forward to a productive year, but there are challenges ahead.

Gansel replaces Niagara Falls Regional Coun. Bob Gale, who remains a board member.

To earn the appointment, Gansel said, he expressed interest in the position, and won it with four of seven votes.

Gansel is a former police officer with the Ottawa force and a retired citizen employee of the NRP. He was first elected to the police board in 2012, and has served three years as vice-chair.

He began his career as a police officer in the ‘70s in Ottawa, he said.

He then worked for the province, in the office of the Chief Justice of Ontario and for the Ministry of the Attorney General, in IT security.

He also worked for the Niagara Regional Police, again in computer security.

The job of chair of the services board “is a good way to end my career,” he said, putting his experience to good use in retirement while still being able to travel with his wife Karen.

“I’ve always been a believer in work and life balance. This job allows me to try to limit work and spend time with family.”

The first is the 2019 budget of $147 million, a 6.5 per cent increase over last year. That was approved by the service board last Thursday, and will go to regional council this week.

The other is “getting a shovel in the ground and construction underway” for the new police building in St. Catharines, on a piece of property on Welland Avenue, a brownfield that cost the Region about $3 million to purchase in 2014 and clean up.

That and the unanticipated high tariffs on steel has put them over budget before beginning construction, he said.

The budget for the building is about $17 million, said Gansel.

Another “critical piece of work” to be developed is the 2019 to 2021 Strategic Plan, which will include priorities identified by the NRP members and the community.

As board chair, Gansel said, he will be his job to ensure the board asks the right questions, and with the facts before them “consider all options and viewpoints of service management and of individual board members,” and that the board “engage in the discussions and debates necessary to tackle those challenges effectively.”

Gansel is an active member of the community and currently serves the Town as the chair of the Committee of Adjustments and is a member of the Community Safety Committee.
Learn local history through song

By Lauren O’Malley
The NOTL Local

Do you think you could have learned the alphabet song without the alphabet song?

Music has been proven to help people of all ages learn. Now you can perfect your local history knowledge with the Great Canadian Historical Songbook.

Local Barbara Worthy, a Shaw alum and seasoned broadcast producer, has written and produced a series of songs telling the stories of, among others, Chloe Coolie, who is believed to be the instigator of the Indian Act and residential schools. Worthy says she would write lyrics about a historical figure — Samuel Zim- merman, for example, who built the second Welland Canal, and brought railways to Niagara — “March 12, 1857, heading from Toronto to up to heaven.” She would sing them, “badly, into her smartphone, suggesting a melody. And then she would send the recording to Berger with the annotation, “Think Great Big Sea.”

“Aaron would always come back with something amazing,” says Worthy. “We have become a songwriting team.”

When Worthy wanted to create a song commemorating Nikola Tesla, she wrote the lyrics and hand them over to Niagara producer Joe Lapinski with the direction, “Think [70s progressive rock band] Yes.” “Joe came back with something phenomenal, with all this electrical feeling about Tesla. He turned Tesla on.”

Also in on the collaborative effort are singer and songwriter Laurel Minnes; singer and producer Juliet Dunn; and performer Adrienne Smoke, a Six Nations Mohawk.

In writing a song about the Indian Act and residential schools, Worthy wrote the lyrics and then ran them by several Indigenous people and authorities on the culture, to be sure not to offend. “The lyrics include, ‘Square, square, you’re out the door,’ shouted by white people.”

Worthy has done extensive work with Indigenous peoples, and says she is very sensitive to the delicate issues involved.

Minnes has become an “unofficial music director,” says Worthy. “Laurel makes everything 10 times better. She has such a sense of harmonies and rhythms.”

“I love working with these groups,” says Minnes. “Babs has such a passion for history, and this is such a neat idea. The musician and bandleader goes on to say the collaborators “definitely have a good working relationship, knowing our roles, where everyone’s strengths are best utilized. And Aaron is hilarious.”

The Songbook is performed live, with Worthy side-stage as narrator. The show has been staged at the Niagara Falls Museum, and — in an innovative twist — during the break between The Niagara Rhythm Section’s sets last Saturday night at the Old Winery restaurant. “I asked Steve (Goldberger, the band’s leader) if we could do it, and he said yes right away,” says Worthy.

Upcoming shows include Feb. 19 at the NOTL public library, and Feb. 23 at Mahlcy Cafe in St. Catharines. “I would love to add an orchestra and perform at heritage events all over the country,” says Worthy about this celebration of Canadian history through music.

“We are definitely open for business,” says Berger. “We’re really pleased to have six gigs right away, and were certainly hoping a little history with your music will appeal to people.”

Worthy also feels there’s room for more songs: “Every time you turn around here there’s another story to be told,” says the history buff who loves to share her passion for the people and ideas that shaped Niagara.

In the meantime, the group plans to record a series of podcasts, six episodes at five minutes each — one per song. The concept is to give some historical context to the song, discuss the creation of the piece, and then add the song itself. “I’ve never done podcasts, but I listen to a lot of them,” says Worthy, who is excited about this next iteration of the project. “It will be a learning process for all of us.”

You can follow the Great Canadian Historical Songbook on Facebook, and watch for more upcoming performances.

Crossroads preparing for home show

Preparations for the Niagara-on-the-Lake Home Garden and Craft Show, a fundraiser for Crossroads Public School, are underway. In its 11th year, the home show continues to be an amazing one-day event, showcasing local businesses, says organizer Amy Rapone.

The show will be held at Crossroads Public School, on Niagara Stone Road. Exhibitors and vendors include home economy, landscape/gardening, home renovation, home-based businesses, crafters “and so much more,” said Rapone.

The Home Show is planned to be a great day for the whole family, she added. In addition to the nearly 85 vendors, there will also be a barbecue, a kids’ zone with a bouncy house and games sponsored by Niagara Inflatables, raffle prizes, grand, first and second prizes, and swag bags for the first 50 attendees.

Home Show proceeds will benefit the community by supporting the students of Crossroads Public School, helping with equipment updates, academic and music programs, said Rapone.

Home Show sponsor or vendor or add to swag bags, or for more information, contact notlhomeandgardenshow@gmail.com.

The home show will be held Saturday, March 2 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Parks commission job fair Saturday

The Niagara Parks Commission, one of the region’s largest employers with more than 1,700 full-time and seasonal employees, will host its annual job fair Saturday at the Niagara Parks’ Legends on the Niagara Golf Complex.

The annual job fair allows the parks commission to showcase the seasonal job opportunities that exist within the organization each year, while providing individuals with an opportunity to connect directly with various departmental hiring managers. Representatives from the human resources department will also be on-hand to answer questions.

More than 350 positions will be available in 2019 in the following departments: culinary, retail, attractions, parks, golf, heritage and transportation. Niagara Parks also welcomes all those who qualify to consider a student co-op or an apprentice co-op placement.

Applicants should come prepared for an on-site interview and are encouraged to bring their resume. Each applicant will also be required to create an online profile to submit their formal application, prior to the job fair, at niagaraparks.com/employment.

Date: Saturday, February 2, 2019
Time: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Location: Legends on the Niagara Clubhouse (entrance off Willoughby Rd.), 9561 Niagara Parkway, Niagara Falls.

Free shuttles: For those using public transit, free shuttles will run every 30 minutes from the corner of Portage Rd. and Mackerel St., beginning at 9:30 a.m., with the last shuttle departing Legends on the Niagara at 1:30 p.m.

Contact: For more information and to apply online, please visit niagaraparks.com/employment.
Friends thank friends

Tony Chisholm, president of the Friends of Fort George, presents Angela Redekopp of Greaves Jam with a plaque of thanks to acknowledge generous funding to support Canada Day events over the past few years. “Greaves Jams has been proud to contribute to the Friends of Fort George and their volunteer efforts on Canada Day,” said Redekopp. Fort George events help make Canada Day meaningful for locals and tourists, and contribute to the special atmosphere of the town, she added.

LOCAL WORSHIP

Grace United Church
Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario
222 Victoria Street 905-468-4044

Sunday Service
@ 10:30 a.m.
Check us out at...
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Earn extra cash by selling your unwanted items in our CLASSIFIEDS contact classified@notllocal.com

Deadline:
Mondays at noon.

Teaching kids to play and love tennis

By Lauren O’Malley
The NOTL Local

“It’s that moment when a kid who couldn’t even catch a ball hits one over the net,” says Trish Spagnol, a volunteer with Tennis 4 Kids.

Karen Wright is leading the group tennis lessons at the community centre. “We use the pickle ball nets which are lower, and better for the kids,” she says. Children between the ages of five and 10 learn co-ordination skills, and how to catch and throw a ball; they learn the basic of a ground stroke, and ultimately how to rally with forehand and backhand strokes.

“They also learn competition, skill development, co-ordination, and good social things,” says Wright.

A recently retired elementary school teacher, Wright was with the District School Board of Niagara for 30 years. “I missed being with kids,” she says. “I need to be with kids.”

Then the 58-year-old Niagara Falls native moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake, and heard that Rosery Goodwin was offering free tennis lessons at the public courts in Rye Park. She decided to give them a whirl. “I hadn’t played tennis since a couple of times in my teens,” she says—and this time around she found herself smitten with the sport.

So much so that she now plays as many as a dozen games in a week, and is working toward certification as an instructor.

“Tennis is something you can play your entire life,” says the recent convert.

Tennis 4 Kids meets weekly in the gym at the community centre, the third session has just started and will run for seven or eight weeks, depending on the availability of the space.

“Tennis is a tough thing. You’ve got racquets flying—it’s pretty crazy,” says Wright, referring to the levels of both co-ordination and patience required. The hour-long lessons are divided into two age categories (five to seven, and eight to 10), and grouped in basic skill levels. Volunteers at a ratio of one to four help the kids toss cottony balls and catch them, control foam balls with their hands and racquets, and work up to actual rallies over the net.

The pace is quick and the children are focused and excited.

Goodwin, Wright’s former instructor, is also an important factor in Tennis 4 Kids, volunteering her time as a teacher, and also supplying all the racquets and balls and any other equipment necessary — other than the nets, which are supplied by the community centre.

“Dan has been just wonderful,” says Wright of the centre’s helpful co-ordinator.

The program has been so well received in the community that Wright is working to take it into the schools through the DSBN. A pilot project at St. Davids Public School went well, and is leading to sessions in the gyms of other local schools.

“People think this is a seniors’ community, but look at all these kids,” says Wright. “There must be a thousand of them in Niagara-on-the-Lake.” And Wright would have every last one of them wielding a racquet.

A session with Tennis 4 Kids is $50 per child. Students who learned to rally in the last session will be spending time at Vineland Tennis Academy playing in the tennis bubble and receiving two hours of free instruction from professional coaches. Wright describes children with eyes wide with delight at the idea.

To maintain its growing success, the group needs a few more volunteers — “people who have some knowledge of tennis, and a comfort level with kids,” says Wright. She provides a lesson plan for each session.

High school students can use this toward their community hours. More information regarding volunteering or participating as a student can be obtained by emailing Wright at kidstennisniagaraaragmail.com.
Local lacrosse player recognized by U.S. university

By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

Bryan Neufeld's choice of lacrosse over hockey as a teen in Niagara-on-the-Lake turned out to be a wise decision.

Neufeld, inducted into New York state's Siena College Athletic Hall of Fame Saturday, was described at the ceremony as 'the offensive catalyst for the winningest class in program history,' leading the Saints to a 48-21 overall record.

He helped guide the Saints to several championships and tournament appearances during his four years playing lacrosse, and was named the 2011-12 Male Athlete of the Year.

Neufeld studied finance while at university, where he was recruited to play lacrosse after a successful stint in NOTL with the Thunderhawks.

A graduate of Virgil Public School and Niagara District Secondary School, he returned to Niagara to marry Catherine Rougoor, who he met at high school.

Neufeld played minor hockey and lacrosse growing up in NOTL and triple A in Niagara Falls. But when he realized he had gone as far as he could on the ice, he chose to focus on lacrosse, and played for the Jr. B Thunderhawks.

That helped him as he moved on to the U.S. university, he said.

The sport he chose was one he came to love.

"I liked the fast-paced nature of the game, the contact, and the high-scoring."

He still does, coaching both field and box minor lacrosse in NOTL, where his family and friends are, where he comes to play pick-up hockey, and where he hopes to relocate as soon as he and his wife can find an affordable house.

"That's our goal. We're always looking for a way to get back."

And it's where his heart is.

"I still try to give back to the community, and to the game. NOTL Lacrosse did a lot for me, and I want to be involved in the minor league as much as I can."

His drive to succeed in sports, he says, carried over to his career, and in his life choices.

The sport also taught him "values you can't learn in a classroom — meeting others, dealing with other kids, learning what success feels like and what failure feels like."

He believes every child should have the opportunity to play sports, he added.

"You learn things you don't learn anywhere else."

Neufeld was the recipient of many athletic awards and named to several N.Y. all-star teams.

He was a North-South Senior All-Star Game participant, he was the 2009 Rookie of the Year and is the only four-time First Team All-Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) selection in program history.

Named to the MAAC's 35th Anniversary Spring Sports First Team, which covers three states, he is the conference's all-time leading scorer and ranks second on Siena's charts with 240 career points.

Neufeld led All Division I players nationally from the Class of 2012 with 156 career goals, which also stands as the second most in Siena history. He ranked in the top 10 nationally in scoring during both his junior and senior seasons, and led all Division I freshmen in goals scored (38) while ranking third in scoring (51) during his rookie campaign in 2009.

National wins home game

The NOTL Nationals Jr. A hockey team played the North York Rangers at home Friday, winning 5-4 to move up to 5th place in their division of the Greater Metro Hockey League. Joey Fratantonio made 46 saves and Bailey Pritchard collected two goals and an assist, while Colt Jaime scored a goal and two assists. Next home game is Friday Feb. 1 at the Meridian Credit Union Arena. Game time is 7 p.m. against Nationals rivals, the Niagara Whalers. The game is sponsored by Brick & Barley.

(Fred Mercnik)
CROSSWORD PUZZLE

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85 Golden
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103 Author
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6 Recline
7 Filmmaker Woody ---
8 Jagged mountain range
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11 Long narrow jacket with a high collar
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PUZZLE ANSWERS

FURNITURE

Rental space for a Counselor/Therapist focusing on spiritual, emotional and/or mental health well-being. Rates vary from $20 - $25/hour. Variable rates and times can be discussed. If interested, call Karen at 289-868-9800.

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LOCAL CLASSIFIEDS
Stewart Friesen is looking forward to winning a race with his No. 52 Chevy Silverado in the upcoming season.

Come off the heels of his debut NASCAR Camping World Truck Series season, Niagara-on-the-Lake native Stewart Friesen is excited about the road and track ahead.

His busy 2018 (23 NASCAR Truck races, 51 DIRTcar Modified races) will be in the rearview mirror starting Feb. 12. That's when the 2019 DIRTcar season kicks off at Volusia Speedway in Barberville, Fla., followed by the NextEra Energy 250, the first entry in the NASCAR Gander Outdoors Truck Series, at Daytona Speedway just 3 days later.

Speaking from his home just outside of Albany, NY, where he lives with his wife Jessica and three-year old son Parker, Friesen reflected on 2018 and his goals for the upcoming year. He says his performance in the Truck Series last year was mixed. Though he didn't win a race, his nine top-five finishes and a chance to compete in the Chase for the Championship (he finished seventh out of eight) were definitely positive signs.

The learning curve was steep for Friesen in moving from Dirt racing to the NASCAR Truck Series. He initially started out more aggressively, and soon found he had to adjust to the longer races in the Truck Series. He was forced to become more patient as a driver, he said, and to learn how to run the race based on what his No. 52 Chevy Silverado gave him.

Friesen is confident that with one season under his belt, and a great team with Halmar-Friesen Racing, he can attain his goal of winning at least one Truck Series event and placing higher than seventh in the Chase for the Championship this year.

Friesen grew up in the pits at local speedways Ransomville, which his parents owned, and Merrittville. He doesn’t get back to NOTL often, so is looking forward to competing once again at his old haunts when the Super DIRTcar Series returns there this August. Though he definitely has ambitions to progress to the NASCAR ladder, Friesen says Dirt racing is his first love, his “bread and butter,” and he can’t see himself ever fully turning his back on the sport.

Still nurtures a great relationship with the local racing community, he says. Though he builds his cars with his team near his home in New York state, he still uses many parts from local manufacturer Bicknell Racing Products.

Stewart Friesen is looking forward to winning a race with his No. 52 Chevy Silverado in the upcoming season. (Photo submitted)
If you haven’t been to Swag Hair Company located in Virgil, you are missing out!

The atmosphere in Swag is unique, unlike other salons and spas — from its modern design, layout and the products offered, right down to the music played. Not only does the salon offer the latest in hair trends for men and women, but it also provides a full-service spa. The team at Swag Hair Company are passionate, knowledgeable and believe in responsible beauty.

“We strive to give our clients 100 per cent of our craft each and every time they visit. The products we use in the salon and spa are as natural as possible to ensure the integrity of the hair, nails and skin.”

Swag Hair Company has been in business since October 2016 and is growing rapidly. “We are thankful for the amazing support from our clientele and community and we would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to our highly skilled and artistic team.”

Meet Cristina, Stylist/Colourist and Owner. She has 15 years experience in scissor cutting, razor cutting, colouring and beautifying in the hair industry. With training in RICA, Toni & Guy, Vidal Sassoon, Cezanne and many more under her belt, she is meticulous in her craft. Cristina discovered RICA, a line from Italy with a motto that fits in with her vision for the salon. Cristina is passionate about hair and it can be seen through her excitement, creativity, knowledge and professionalism.

“We’ve got you covered, let our team pamper you from head to toe!” says Cristina.

Meet Whitney, Esthetician/Skin Specialist/Lash and Brow Stylist. Whitney has more than 13 years of experience in aesthetics and four years in lashing services. Her bubbly personality has her going above and beyond for her clients no matter what service they are having. Whitney’s professionalism is evident through continuously researching her industry and taking courses to service clients to the best of her ability. She has a very holistic approach, believing in natural, nontoxic products such as RICA, Zoya and Wild Craft Skin Care. Pamper yourself with a spa treatment with Whitney and enjoy a relaxing experience.

Meet Nadia, Colour Specialist. Nadia has 26 years experience in the hair industry, focusing her expertise in all colour services. With training in Aveda, Goldwell and RICA hair colour, her passion for her profession is shown through her techniques and creative talent. Nadia specializes in all aspects of colour and is constantly keeping up to date with ongoing education so she can provide her clients with the newest and latest in hair colour and hair trends.

Meet Jenn, Stylist/Colourist/Bridal Specialist. The newest member of the Swag team, Jenn brings with her almost 10 years of experience in the hair industry. She has trained with some of the most prestigious names, such as L’Oreal, Redken, and Schwarzkopf and is certified in hair extensions. With her attention to detail in all aspects of hair, Jenn’s passion for bridal up-dos and special event styling showcases her talent.

Meet Whitney, Jenn and Nadia at Swag Hair Company located in Virgil, 504 Line 2 Rd, Virgil | 289 868 8600 | swaghaircompany@gmail.com

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