

The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL



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the oval for
local speed
skater

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The trusted voice of our community.

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Michele Bosc: quiet warrior

By Lauren O'Malley
The NOTL Local

Michèle Bosc, of Chateau Des Charmes Winery, died Jan. 10, 2019, at the age of 52.

The loss of the wine industry titan will be felt throughout the field, throughout Niagara-on-the-Lake, at Chateau Des Charmes where she was a vice-president — and most acutely at home, where she is dearly and deeply missed by her 11-year-old son Alex, and her husband, Paul Bosc, Jr.

Michèle was diagnosed with bowel cancer late last spring; an immediate and successful surgery removed the tumour, which hadn't spread. But biopsies of 15 lymph nodes returned one positive result, so a six-month course of chemotherapy was prescribed.

"Her health got worse and worse," says the bereft Paul, Michèle's husband and part-

ner. "The medication makes you feel worse, and has a cumulative effect. It felt like she was running a marathon, but struggling. She got to the finish line, and it was an enormous relief. Now we just had to hunker down for the recovery — but over the next several weeks she only got worse."

"We knew she was in a battle; she just didn't expect to lose. None of us did."

Through the last months of her life, Michèle managed to marshal the energy to attend the staff Christmas party at the family's winery, and she "pulled off a perfect Christmas" at home, says Paul. She also fulfilled a dream by publishing her first romance novel on Dec. 11. But on Jan. 9, her bowel perforated and leaked toxins into a vulnerable and compromised system. "It was like a forest fire," says Paul, still deeply shaken.

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Paul and Michèle Bosc were in France in April, 2015 for the wedding of winemaker Amélie Boury to Chris Robinson. Michèle loved great food and wine, so naturally she loved France, Paul said. This particular trip was very special for a number of reasons but mostly because it was Alex's first time in Europe. (Paul Bosc/supplied photo)

Reliving good times on the farm

By Jane Andres
Special to The Local

It had all the feel of a long-anticipated reunion, adults hugging and laughing as the children watched with shy smiles, waiting to be introduced. Indeed it was a special kind of extended family reunion, one that began in the 1970s for employer and his then-employee from a distant island. Gordon Neufeld was looking forward to reconnecting with his old friend Gilbert MacDonald at the home of Gord Jr. and his wife Sandra on East and West Line.

Neufeld Sr. fell in love with farming at an early age as he worked alongside his grandfather in the family's tender fruit farm on Concession 6. His grandfather would bring in a family from Germany in the summer, to live in the upstairs of his house and work on the farm.

After he married, Neufeld Sr. and his wife Erma pursued their own dream of owning a farm. Back then a family could earn a simple but sufficient living on a 10 to 15 acre farm — under certain conditions. To be successful they had to have good soil, be willing to work hard and have depend-

able labour, especially during harvest season. The Neufelds had good soil and were willing to work hard; however, along with most farmers in Niagara in the 1960s, they suffered from a chronic shortage of dependable labour.

Neufeld Sr. remembers going to St. Catharines every morning to get help, but the workers he found were not reliable, he said.

"When the peaches were ready to harvest, I couldn't afford not to be picking just because some guys were suffering from a hangover the night before."

As a result of the shortage

of reliable labour, which they had little hope of resolving, he and his wife decided to sell the farm and move to Strathroy to grow beans, barley, wheat and corn. It was an entirely different type of operation, and one that was less dependent on hired help.

Despite their initial success, the instability of the prices in the market were a cause for concern, he said. It was also a challenge moving to a tight-knit community where other farmers were less supportive and referred to them as "foreigners," said Neufeld Sr.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11



Gord Neufeld Jr., Gilbert MacDonald and Gord Neufeld Jr. talk over old times, including a visit to Jamaica. (Jane Andres)



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Community grieves ‘the perfect little gentleman’

By Lauren O’Malley
The NOTL Local

Egon Epp, a local man known for so much more than his daily walks and his fine woodworking skills, was reported missing on the morning of Feb. 4, when he didn’t return home promptly from his routine walk to the post office. Tragically, Epp was found without signs of life several hours later near Navy Hall.

As sad as his death may be, the strength of his ties to our community were made evident in the hours leading up to the grim discovery.

Neighbours rallied and searched with determination and vigour. One Niagara Regional Police officer noted neither she nor her superior had ever seen “so many people just drop everything to help.”

One neighbour recounts speaking to more than people throughout the day, at least half of whom he says were already aware of the search, and many of whom knew Epp, if not personally, at least by sight. “They suggested I look for him on

Paffard Street, because that was part of his regular route. They also suggested I try Tim’s [Hortons], because he was a regular there.”

Searchers visited Newark Neighbours in tears, looking for the slight 89-year-old, because he was well-known to the John Street charity. Epp was a passionate woodworker, and would create small toys and other gifts to offer those who relied on the resource at Christmas time.

Says Bonnie Turner, long-time NN volunteer, “He was a wonderful man. I always thought it was too bad he wouldn’t be able to see the looks on the faces of the children who received the beautiful toys he made.”

“My daughter was a beneficiary of a wooden rocking horse as a two-year-old,” says one neighbour who had spent the day walking through fields and woods looking for her dear friend.

NRP officers were out in full force, beginning their search by car at around 10:45 a.m. in and around Epp’s Char-

lotte Street neighbourhood. They later brought out foot patrols on and around Queen Street. When the much-beloved man had yet to be found by early afternoon, the police began a backyard search, using a grid format and dozens of officers along with K9 patrols, trying to cast a tight net so as not to miss him.

Vic Martens, who owns Epp’s original house in the neighbourhood, refers to him as the King of Charlotte Street. “Egon was one of the last of the old guard,” he says sadly.

Martens recounts that a neighbour came by and informed him about Epp having gone missing. “I immediately looked around my property — I thought maybe he had wandered in to my yard to reminisce, looking for familiarity. I was hoping for that,” he says. “I was hoping for a happy ending.”

Sadly, that wasn’t to be. NOTL fire chief Rob Grimwood says the department was called to Navy Hall for a water rescue — which is likely what stirred rumours of a fire

on the historic site.

Epp, a polite and friendly German man, husband and father of three, will be remembered for his kindness and generosity, his woodworking skills, and his immaculate

garden. Cosmo Condina, the Epps’ neighbour of 30 years, says Epp and his wife were always together. “They loved working in their garden, and feeding the birds. They had a perfect routine, and they

were the ideal neighbours. We lived next to each other for 30 years without a single conflict.”

“He was the perfect little gentleman,” says Martens. “He will be missed.”

Budget okayed with 4.48 per cent tax hike

By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

The Town budget has passed its first round of approval, with an increase to the tax levy below target.

At the beginning of the discussion Monday evening, the rise over last year’s budget was at about 5.1 per cent, above the 4.5 per cent cap council had requested.

But with a few tweaks agreed to by councillors, they approved a 4.48 per cent tax hike over last year.

With a tax increase of 4.4 per cent, the increase for a house assessed at \$485,000 is \$44, a \$750,000 assessment would see a hike of \$68 and a \$1-million home would have taxes raised by \$90.

To help achieve that

level, there was good news from the library: a provincial grant that was in doubt came through, with an additional \$10,000, reducing the town budget by that amount.

The Niagara Historical Society had asked for an additional \$51,000, and treasurer Kyle Freeborn offered some alternatives for funding that. Councillors agreed to pay for it out of the parking reserve rather than the tax base, further lowering the tax increase.

Councillors also agreed to defer the Byron Street parking meters and remove that capital investment from the 2019 budget, with the intention of taking a holistic look at parking in the heritage district for next year.

The increases requested

from the NOTL Chamber of Commerce, the Niagara District Airport and Niagara College were approved.

Coun. Clare Cameron asked for and received approval for lowering the rent of the former hospital building for Royal Oak Community School to about \$6,000, bringing it to the level of last year and offering some relief for the registered charity.

Coun. Allan Bisback thanked town staff for their efforts, “working day and night” to put the budget together. “I think you learned a lot. We learned a lot too,” he said.

He also thanked treasurer Kyle Freeborn for “excellent work.”

Council will ratify the budget Monday.



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Saturday 16

Bill Charlap presents: George Gershwin
The Blues and the American Soul
Free event

Singin’ and Swingin’: A Jazz Summit
Joe Lovano, Jeremy Pelt, Niki Harris, Renee Rosnes, Russell Malone, Peter Washington and Lewis Nash

Sunday 17

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Sewage treatment plant completion 'a nightmare'

By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

Given favourable weather conditions and successful testing results, the new Niagara-on-the-Lake wastewater treatment plant could be accepting town sewage by late March or early April.

It was originally scheduled to open in the summer of 2016, "and it's been a nightmare" getting it to this point, Ron Tripp, interim CAO of Niagara Region told NOTL councillors Monday.

Tripp and regional engineer Joe Tonellato were at council with an update on the plant — an update Coun. Gary Burroughs called "disappointing," although he thanked them for the information they presented.

The equipment is all in place and operational, but there is a 14-day test putting water through it "in the next few weeks,"

and assuming that's successful, another 14-day testing period introducing sewage to the plant. Again, assuming that is successful, a 30-day commissioning period will begin, leading to the time estimate of late March.

There are still some "deficiencies" to be worked out, including insulation and siding on the digester Tonellato told councillors.

Tripp said he didn't want to go into the reasons for the lengthy delay in completing the project, which has been under one general contractor — the process is leading down a path to legal action, he said.

The next step is decommissioning the lagoons, he said, which will be filled up, according to the environmental assessment completed in December.

That option was not what the Harmony Group has been working toward

for more than a decade, but it is the solution Parks Canada has agreed to, said Tripp.

In addition to filling in the lagoons, creating a riverine wetland which will allow for natural flooding, the decommissioning project will establish the "original meander" of Two Mile Creek, with the design expected to be completed this year and construction to begin in 2020 "pending approvals."

Burroughs said following the meeting he was "more than disappointed" to know the wetlands won't be retained. Up until recently, he thought that was the preferred option, he said.

The project has come in close to budget, at about \$50 million, and will deliver enhanced and expanded wastewater treatment services for the Old Town and Virgil, covering an area of about 6,000 people.



Interim regional CAO Ron Tripp and regional engineer Joe Tonellato were at council Monday to provide an update on the waste water treatment plant on Lakeshore Road. (Penny Coles)

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T'Oast of the town



Locals Jared Goertz, Taylor Hulley, and Laurel Minnes warm up a Friday night, at Oast House Brewers. (Lauren O'Malley)

Court ruling sought

By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

Solmar and Two Sisters Resort have asked that the Town's intention to designate four properties be quashed through the court system.

"In a nutshell," the application says, the town has illegally attempted the designation "and the Town's actions must be undone."

The Town has failed to comply with the On-

tario Heritage Act, the application says, and the intention to designate does not conform to the Town's Official Plan.

SORE, the neighbourhood group opposing development of the hotel proposed for two of the John Street properties slated for designation, called the move "audacious," since developer Benny Marotta had said he had intended to move forward with designation himself on those two properties.

A third John Street property and one on Charlotte Street are included in the designation.

"My understanding is that we followed everything our solicitor advised us to do," said Lord Mayor Betty Disero. "This is yet another move by Solmar and Two Sisters that has to be dealt with."

The application is expected to be heard at the Superior Court of Justice on Church Street in St. Catharines Feb. 14, beginning at 10 a.m.

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Fire station review deferred

By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

A detailed review of the Queenston fire station has been put off until 2020.

After preparing an extensive report on the viability of the station and its history of structural problems for councillors, Fire Chief Rob Grimwood suggested some alternatives for dealing with the information in the report.

He said the next step would be a more comprehensive analysis of the station, which would include

details such as the number of calls, response times, and projected growth for the area.

While “clear direction” on the future of the St. Davids and Queenston stations is needed, given recommendations over the last 40 years that the two could be combined, Grimwood offered some alternatives for the timing of the analysis.

One option, he said, would be to wait and see what the province decides to do about lower-tier municipalities, which could include

redrawing boundaries.

If that happens, he said, the number of stations required and where they should be located would also change.

“There is no immediacy” for making a decision, he added. The structural problems with the Queenston building “while extensive, are historic,” and there are no planned repairs at the moment, he told councillors.

Councillors voted to have a 10-year master plan on fire stations prepared for May, 2020.

Town, region disagree on services for new contract

By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

Despite Niagara-on-the-Lake’s dismal record of composting organic material, councillors don’t agree with some of the changes the Niagara Region is proposing to encourage a better rate of diversion.

While councillors agreed with the Region’s proposal to eliminate scrap metal pickup, some had problems with moving to clear bags and every-other-week residential collection. Recycling and green bins would continue to be picked up weekly.

“I’m not sure I would want my garbage in a clear bag,” said Lord Mayor Betty Disero, although she endorsed every-other-week pickup to encourage better use of the green bins for organics.

Coun. Claire Cameron objected to both requiring clear bags and the reduction to the number of pickups.

“Waste collection is a public service,” she said, “and residents have high expectations that basic services will be provided.”

Cameron said she fears “we’re starting down a path where the public will probably pay the same amount of taxes and receive half the amount of service.”

The region is looking ahead to a new contract for garbage collection in 2021, and is trying to get municipalities on-side with some changes that will affect the request for proposals, with a goal of diverting more recycling and organics from weekly garbage.

Cameron said she would rather see “positive reinforcement and communication” employed to change behaviour, rather than efforts to force that change.

She also objected to the lack of privacy afforded to residents if clear bags are mandated.

Coun. Allan Bisback agreed, saying the information recently received from the region was that the public does not support clear bags and that option wouldn’t be pursued.

Brad Whitelaw, regional program manager, said clear bags present motivation for residents to divert their organics. The saving isn’t in the collection contract, it’s on the environmental side, he said, by making residents accountable for what’s in that bag.

Curbside audits show the average garbage bag in Niagara contains 50 per cent organics and 14 per cent recycling, he said, and fewer than

50 per cent of residents use their green bin.

In the municipality of Waterloo, moving to every-other-week garbage pickup created a 200 per cent diversion increase, Whitelaw said.

“With regards to every other week, if we don’t make a policy change, we will be where we are right now.”

Councillors voted four-four to eliminate scrap metal pickup, and to say no to clear bags and every-other-week collection, with recycling weekly.

Coun. Gary Burroughs, committee chair, broke the tie in favour of the motion, which will be ratified next week, but the region’s decision, expected later this year, will be based on the input from other municipalities.

LOCAL HAPPENINGS



FAMILY FISH FRY

Friday, February 1st ~ 4:30 - 7 pm
(take out available) • 1-Pc \$8, 2-Pc \$12

Price includes: Coleslaw, bread, french fries, baked potato, coffee/tea. *Leave the cooking to us!* Alcohol Available.

Fish Fry

Lions Club Hall, 1462 York Road, St. Davids
www.stdavidslions.ca @ stdavidslions on Facebook
Next Family Fish Fry ~ Friday February 15th

AA MEETING

every
Wednesday evening,
at 8:00 pm to
9:00 pm
at
St. Mark's Parish Hall
41 Byron St,
Niagara-on-the-Lake

Lasagna DINNER

at ST. ANDREW'S
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Kickoff Event to celebrate the 225th anniversary of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church hosted by St. Andrew's Choir in the Kirk Hall.

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LOCAL HAPPENINGS

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NIAGARA PUMPHOUSE INSTRUCTORS' EXHIBITION

January 12 @ 11:00 am - March 31 @ 4:00 pm

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

SHAW FILM SERIES: CAN YOU EVER FORGIVE ME?

February 9 @ 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm. Doors open at 1:30 at the Shaw Festival Theatre.

COUNCIL MEETING

February 11 @ 6:00 pm - 10:00 pm
At the Virgil Town Hall, or watch on Live Stream.

INFOHEALTH

February 12 @ 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm
In the Rotary Room at the NOTL Public Library.

SHAW FILM SERIES: A STAR IS BORN

February 16 @ 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Earn extra cash by selling your unwanted items in our CLASSIFIEDS. Contact classified@notllocal.com Deadline: Mondays at noon.



Super Bowl event helps kids



Matt Dietsch, Moe and Steffanie Bjorgan, Ward Simpson, Karen Post and Paul Dietsch enjoyed Super Bowl Sunday at the Sandtrap, a fundraising event for Red Roof Retreat, which operates day programs and respite care for children and young adults with disabilities. (Photo submitted)

Nothing ‘nefarious’ about NPCA budget

Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

Gary Zalepa, chair of the Region’s budget committee and also a member of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, says the problem with the budget presented by the agency to the Region is one of detail, and will soon be corrected.

As part of budget deliberations last week, Regional council refused to approve funding for the NPCA. The budget as presented was approved by

the last term of the board, under former Fort Erie regional councillor Sandy Annunziata, before the current board was appointed, said Zalepa. That is standard practice for several agencies, and in itself is not a problem, he added.

Interim CAO David Barrick, a former Port Colborne regional councillor, could not account for about \$2.5 million of the \$8.87 million operating budget — money that was likely spent on items such as staff, expenses and other governance costs, said Zalepa.

He has seen the NPCA operating budget, and said he doesn’t believe there was anything “nefarious” at work. He expects the missing information to be presented to the region next week.

Although the region funds the NPCA, along with Hamilton and Haldemand County, it doesn’t have to approve the budget of the provincially-mandated agency, Zalepa said, and can’t refuse the funding.

Withholding funding won’t impact the day-to-day

operations of the NPCA, he added, as long as it doesn’t continue for too long.



Gary Zalepa

LCBO could promote local wines

Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

Andrew Niven understands how much Niagara-on-the-Lake residents are looking forward to the opening of the new LCBO in Virgil.

But not all wineries may be as excited about it, he said.

As chair of the Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake and marketing director at Konzelmann Estate Winery, Niven has some concerns about the

effect the LCBO, expected to open in March, may have on winery sales, and diverting tourists and locals from visiting wineries.

He would like to see a partnership between the local retail outlet and wineries, to encourage the promotion of local wines.

He hopes the presence of the LCBO and its convenience for shoppers won’t take people away from “enjoying the full winery experience, and

understanding what we’re all about,” he said, but if people are going to buy wine at the Virgil outlet, “I hope they’re encouraged to buy local wine.”

He’s seen it work at the LCBO in the Beaches area of Toronto, he said, and it could work here to the benefit of the wineries, he added.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said supporting the wine industry is an important goal of the municipality, and as an advocate of the industry, she

too is concerned about the potential impact of the LCBO on local wineries.

She agreed that a meeting between store management and winery representatives could be beneficial for both.

“Maybe the LCBO could have a sign that says ‘Welcome to Wine Country,’ she said, “or signs inside encouraging the purchase of local wines.”

“Maybe they could have maps of wineries for visitors. It would be great to get the LCBO to promote our wines.”

Disero said she would do whatever she could to encourage a partnership between the new LCBO and wineries.



The LCBO could help promote local wines and wineries, says Lord Mayor Betty Disero.

Happy trails



Local Todd Hunter celebrated the unseasonably warm weather Monday morning with a 40-km bike ride through Queenston to the Falls, through St. Davids, and back to NOTL. “This weather is freaky, but it’s better than last week,” says the avid cyclist. (Lauren O’Malley)

Caught one



Richard Kolodziejczyk catches a two-pound trout in the Old Town beside the jet boat dock. The local fisherman was delighted to catch and release the fish. Niagara has become a popular spot for catching salmon and brown trout. (Fred Mercnik)

THE FRIENDS OF FORT GEORGE PRESENT

WHISKY TASTING

AT NAVY HALL FEBRUARY 22, AT 7:30 PM

The Friends of Fort George in partnership with Forty Creek Distillery is hosting the second annual whisky tasting event. The evening will feature award winning Forty Creek whisky samples paired with a selection of exquisite hors d’oeuvres.

\$45.00/PERSON

FOR TICKETS CONTACT THE FRIENDS OF FORT GEORGE:
905-468-6621 / admin@friendsoffortgeorge.ca

A TOUR of OLD FORT NIAGARA

FRIDAY MARCH 29, 2019 - 10:00 AM - 3:30 PM

This special VIP curators’ tour gives you access to buildings and artifacts rarely seen by the public including a tour of the famous lighthouse.

A special 18th Century lunch, prepared by the Old Fort Niagara staff, will be provided.

\$75.00/PERSON

Bus departs from the Fort George parking lot and you must have a valid passport.

EDITORIAL

Let’s search for the good in each of us

The recent announcement of a long-time local gone missing galvanized a community, and threw strangers together with a united cause: we must find our beloved neighbour. People dropped everything, donned rubber boots, talked to strangers, plotted maps and charts, approached police officers, explored each other’s back yards, and bonded.

When the sad announcement was made that the body of the lost man had been found, neighbours connected on corners, telling their search stories, telling their Egon stories, lean-

ing gently on one another for support.

What would it look like if we could connect and collaborate in times of joy, in times of simplicity, in times of hum neutrality? How could we all more figuratively “drop everything” to collaborate and offer support, working toward the common good of our community?

Imagine if we could all hold open minds, trust in a greater truth than our own bias. If we could have rational, calm, supportive conversations about trees, taxes, development. If we could listen to conflicting ideas

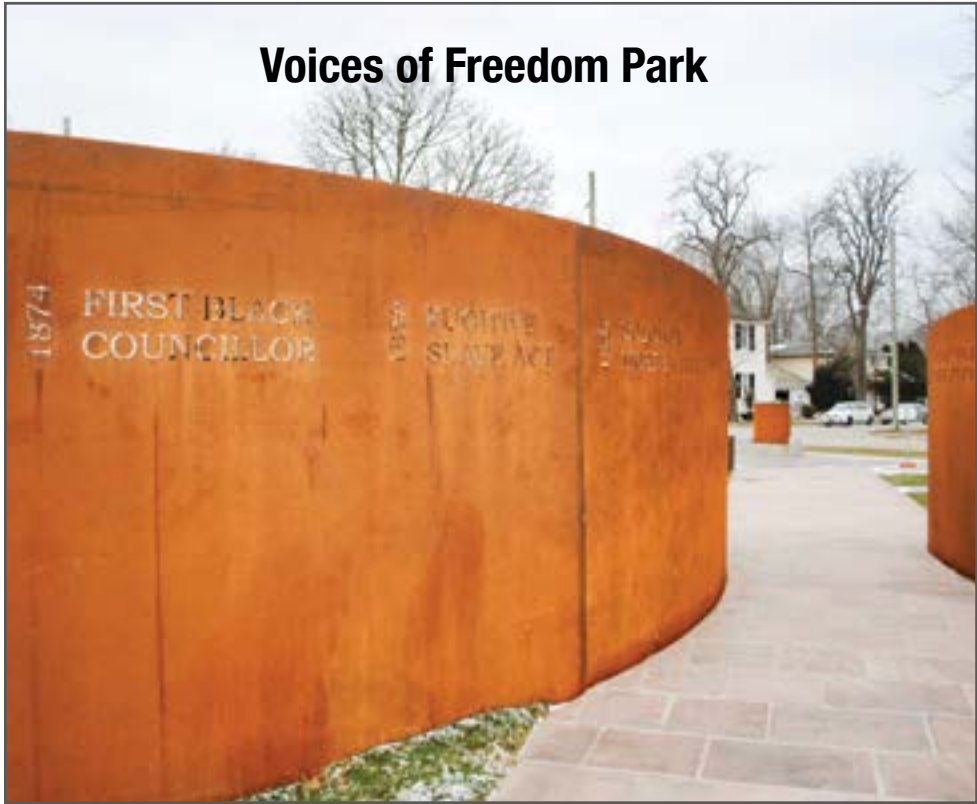
and find a positive solution that doesn’t leave half the community feel like they’ve lost a battle. If we could approach strangers as though they were friends, because we share the common goal of making our community the best it can be for everyone, not just for ourselves.

This would be dropping everything indeed: Our agendas, our prejudices, our own preferences. Let’s do that, and put on those boots.

Let’s search for and save the strength, and beauty, and community in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

- Lauren O’Malley

Voices of Freedom Park



The Voices of Freedom Park on Regent Street was conceived as a way to tell the story of an important time in our history, which includes the voices of the Black people who were among our earliest settlers. The park is intended to celebrate and honour our Black history as is the month of February. Both are meant to educate us with the long-forgotten stories of people who were not given a voice, and to right the wrongs of long ago. This month is a good time to visit the park, learn from it, and take to heart the significance of Black history in our past and our future.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL

The trusted voice of our community

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LOCAL FINDS



Treaty Tree by Lauren O’Malley

From the plaque at the base of the Treaty Tree: “This 400-year-old White Oak is the official boundary marker in the first land deed in Upper Canada (now Ontario) signed in 1781 between the Chippewa and Mississauga Chiefs and the English Crown. The deed was for a 4-mile wide strip of land bounded by the Niagara River, between Lakes Ontario and Erie. ... This deed also marked the official birth of Niagara-on-the-Lake, which held it’s 200th anniversary in 1981.”

“The white oak tree and its significance were discovered in 2012 during an investigation of the history of the war of 1812-1814 by Dave Lee and Abe Epp, Niagara-on-the-Lake residents. The assessment of the tree was done with the assistance of Andrew Hordyk, a certified arborist.”

The tree has been designated a “heritage tree” through the Trees Ontario Heritage Tree Program, a qualification that falls under the same heritage act that designates neighbourhoods and homes.

Think of this beautiful, historical tree as a perpetual candle to celebrate the birth of our town.

Buddy Andres, a former Parks Canada employee, had some information to add to the “monolith” discussed in last week’s Local Finds. The sign was installed during his tenure at Parks Canada, saying Butlers Barracks National Historic Site. It was not used as a parking sign to his knowledge, he said.



Youth council organizes book club at library



By Bethany Poltl
LMYAC

"Books are a uniquely portable magic" -Stephen King

I discovered this to be true at a young age. I love books, for this reason: books can take you anywhere and teach you anything. I love reading books, looking at books, and collecting books.

Since I was little my mom and I have always frequented the local library. I loved my first trip, seeing all the books, listening to a story being told and then getting to pick out a few books to take home. This started my love of books and helped me realize there are different books for different occasions and every mood. I also grew to understand the importance of reading, of creativity and imagination.

Fast forward to the teenage years. I read an article posted by the NOTL Library on Facebook regarding book clubs. I think to myself we should try to start a teen book club. The positive response from the library and the NOTL Teen Literacy Alliance was born.

We started meeting in September. Our first meeting was a book tasting and Emma Burkholder, a library

staff member, had a selection of amazing and diverse novels for us to vote on and choose to read. October: Carpe Diem; November: Vincent and Theo; December: My True Love Gave To Me; January: The Book Thief; February: Meet Cute; March: Here We Are; April: Inside Out And Back Again; May: The Secret Life Of Bees; June: I'll Give You The Sun; July: The Sun Is Also A Star.

For January we discussed The Book Thief by Markus Zusak and we watched the movie. If you haven't read or seen it yet I do not want to spoil it for you, however, I highly recommend you keep a tissue box close by. Our meeting corresponded with International Holocaust Remembrance Day. This day commemorates the devastation of the holocaust and The Book Thief is a story that paints a glimpse into the years of the Second World War. Through books we can learn about our histories and grow from them and The Book Thief is another well-written reminder of the tragedies of the past.

For February we have chosen a light-hearted anthology of romantic stories and tales for Valentines Day, Meet Cute.

So why should teens join our Teen Literacy Alliance?

You get to share your love for books and reading with others.

You make new friends and find support in our group.

Research shows teens who pick up a book and read, for fun, are more likely to succeed in life, especially social life.

Teens can share reading experiences and talk about what matters to them in a safe, secure place, building emotional and mental coping strategies to help them in real-life situations.

Teens who read frequently read more fluidly, and can get their school work done faster and at a higher standard.

Teens who identify with the LGBTQ+ community have found reading novels where characters are identified as LGBTQ+ helps them navigate their feelings, and they feel more accepted by peers who have read and discussed the same novel.

I could go on with statistics and research discoveries but I think the point is clear — reading is good for the mind, body, and soul.

Teens are busy people, we have heaps of extra-curricular activities and living in NOTL we need the support of our families to get us anywhere. In the spring, summer, and fall you can bike to the library if you live near the path, however, in the winter or in questionable weather, we need parents to drive us. I have had a few interested teens talk to me about wanting to come to the book club, but they have no one to drive them.

I would hope that parents, grandparents or perhaps older siblings would see the value in encouraging the teens in their lives to read and support them in driving them to our once-a-month meetings.

Reading opens doors and brings so many other opportunities as well. Last year I was acquainted with the NOTL Writers Club, run by Hermine Steinberg. I entered their Youth Rising Spirits Writing Competition and my non-fiction piece entitled "My Personal Journey into Leadership" was recognized and published in their 2018 Anthology, which you can find at our NOTL Library. This group of enthusiastic and especially talented authors supports each other and they support our NOTL Youth in their creative writing endeavors. If you are an aspiring writer or novelist you really should consider joining our Teen Literacy Alliance and we will announce when the next Youth Rising Spirits Writing Competition is open.

Our next meeting is Sunday, Feb. 24 at 1:30pm-2:30pm. Feel free to contact me: lmyacnotl@gmail.com, follow us on Instagram at lmyacnotl or contact Emma at the NOTL library to for more information. Until then consider: J.K.Rowling "I do believe something very magical can happen when you read a good book."



The teen book club members read and discussed The Book Thief.



We want your photos!

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



Letters! We want letters!

We have an opinion page put aside just for residents — we know you have opinions and we would love to share them. If you have a letter to the editor you'd like to see published, please send it to penny@notllocal.com. Please try to keep it to about 350 words. Sorry, but we won't publish anonymous letters. The deadline is Monday at noon.



Darcy Davidson, Sarah Baker and Bethany Poltl discussed The Book Thief with Emma Burkholder, a library staff member who organized the meeting, books and snacks for the teens.

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Success came in many forms for Michele

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

“She went into septic shock. She didn’t have a chance.”

Despite the cancer diagnosis and treatment, “we never talked about ‘what if,’” says Paul. The assumption had always been that Michèle would succeed at this in the same way she had at everything else she put her powerful mind to. “It felt like a car accident: Here today, gone later today.”

Paul, a philosophical and logical man, breaks Michèle’s life neatly into three parts. “She spent one third of her life on the east coast, in Moncton, St. John’s and Halifax.” Michèle was born in Moncton; raised — with her treasured younger brother Danny — in St. John’s by her entrepreneurial single mother, Caroline; and educated at Dalhousie University in Halifax.

Having survived a near-fatal bout of cancer at age five, young Michèle spent a lot of time in hospitals and within the medical field, and decided she wanted to be a doctor. After achieving her B. Sc. in biology, however, she’d seen enough of the industry from the inside to know she’d prefer the periphery. She decided to become a pharmaceutical

sales representative.

The second third of her life was her coming of age, according to Paul — finding her independence. He describes her first job: “Good news: You’re one of the first female pharmaceutical sales reps in Canada. Bad news, you’ll be based in Winnipeg.” This meant Michèle took small planes to remote Manitoba cities like The Pas and Thompson, where she would have mere minutes to convince time-strapped male doctors to purchase her wares.

Her success in the field was such that she was promoted to the major hospitals in Toronto’s downtown, the peak market. “They don’t hand that area to just anybody,” says Paul with continued reverence for his late wife.

The last third of her life involved her becoming Michèle Bosc — or even just “Michèle,” as she was known, her impact so great only one name was necessary. “There was only one Michèle. She definitely earned that recognition,” says Paul.

Michèle and Paul were introduced in 2001 through a university friend of Paul’s, who set them up on a blind date — although the set-up took longer than anticipated due to inconvenient timing. When they finally did meet for dinner, “it went very well,” says Paul, understatedly. He was used to being “an ambassador of the wine industry,” and having to answer hundreds of questions about his work. But in this case, the conversation flowed easily both ways. “I saw even on the first date she was very bright,” says Paul, his eyes shining with the memory. “And opinionated. There weren’t too many things she didn’t have an opinion on.”

Michèle beat Paul to the punch in asking for a second date, which saw them attending a jazz festival in the Beaches area of Toronto, where Michèle lived at the time. Two months later they were on their way to France. “That was out of character for me,” says Paul with a chuckle. “Normally two months into a relation-

ship I would suggest we spend a whole day together — not travel to Europe.”

The rest is local history: In 2003 the successful urban woman made the shift to a rural life, and shed her pharmaceutical career to embrace her new husband’s wine industry.

“She was a quick study,” says Paul, with his characteristic admiration. “She had already taken sommelier courses for better understanding and appreciation of wine before we even met,” so it was relatively easy for her to dive in. Having married into the family, Michèle “had to overcome labels,” says the scion of the family business. “But people saw quickly she’s very smart. And she hit the ground running, with her pharmaceutical background. She had a skill set a small company couldn’t afford in an industry with many parallels with wine.”

After a matter of just a few years, Michèle’s title was vice-president of marketing and administration; she ultimately had six people reporting to her. She was a recognized leader in social media, and spoke at conferences and events all over North America on the topic. An early adopter, she paved the way for many others, using her own name (@MBosc) as the handle for the winery, and initiating “Twastings” and other digital meet-ups for industry and non-industry folk alike.

“As I look around,” says Paul, “I see her in everything: That was her initiative, and so was that and that,” he says nodding towards posters, bottles and more around the winery. She was responsible for everything from brand management to staff training, as well as all aspects of the guest experience. In a merging of skills that proves Michèle’s creativity and logic were equally strong, she was also head of the business’ IT department. When it became undeniable she would need to be replaced, Paul says he spent hours writing her job description, and then ultimately took it to the existing team and asked them

to step up where they could. “She is irreplaceable,” he says.

In the “When you need to get something done, ask a busy person to do it” vein, Michèle had the ability to add hours to her packed days. The proof of that is the romance novel she published on Dec. 11, 2018. “She went from being a consumer of wine to being a leader in the wine industry. She did the same with romance literature,” says Paul with fierce pride. “Not just ‘I consume this,’ but ‘I can produce this.’” Show Me How to Love was to be the first of a “duet” of books. The book’s dedication page reads: “To abuse survivors, men and women, and their children who through sheer resilience demonstrate immeasurable courage by living their own lives. Fifty cents from the sale of this book, and Show Me How to Live Part 2, will be donated to Gillian’s Place. As one of Ontario’s first shelters for abused women and children, Gillian’s Place has been providing safe refuge and non-residential programs that enable women and their children to break the cycle of violence for over 40 years.”

Paul says, “She hadn’t even sold a single copy, and she was already planning a charitable component.”

Michèle wrote under the nom de plume Hélène Soper — her grandmother’s maiden name. “Hélène died 10 years ago at the age of 98. Michèle suffered terribly when she passed,” says Paul. “And she only outlived her grandmother by a decade,” he says, shaking his head sadly.

Her dedicated husband plans to maintain the book’s website, and to continue marketing the oeuvre — perhaps even going as far as hiring a ghostwriter to pen the second in the series.

Those who knew Michèle will not be surprised by her passion for hard rock. “She loved the band Avenged Sevenfold,” says Paul. “If you look at the music on her phone it is different from that of most 52-year-old white women.” She was known for her passion for live concerts, which she attended regularly, and even initiated at the winery.

Live music was a shared family passion, with Michèle, Paul and Alex attending concerts such as the beloved Avenged Sevenfold, Roger Waters, Kings of Leon and more. Michèle often splurged on backstage passes and relished the full experience.

“There are remarkable things that happen,” says Paul in awe. “She died at 9:20 a.m. A couple of hours later I sent an email to my closest friends, maybe 18 or 20 people. I asked them not to respond, not to call, that I wouldn’t be able to engage. Later that day, my best man and friend of over 40 years showed up at our door, from North Carolina. He moved in for two weeks and did everything for us.” Within



Michèle, in her natural habitat: she designed her kitchen and loved preparing and serving great food. (Paul Bosc/supplied photo)



Three years ago during the Big Brothers Big Sisters Ride for Kids Sake at Chateau Des Charmes, Michèle, Alex and Paul were with actor Kim Coates of ‘Sons of Anarchy’ fame. (Paul Bosc/supplied photo)

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24 hours friends had arrived from all over North America to provide their support.

A Catholic mass was held at a local funeral home. “Father Paul — an excellent representative of God — said maybe the healing can start today,” says Paul. “Alex insisted on speaking at the service, maybe seven or eight pages,” he says of his 11-year-old son. “His voice cracked a couple of times but he made it through. That was when the healing started.”

“I don’t want people seeing her as a tragic figure,” says Paul pensively. “I think sometimes we get too hung up on chronology. The medical profession is keeping people alive longer. A century ago the re-

action would have been different, but now it’s perceived as a life cut short. But if you look at her life trajectory, where she started, what she made it through — the defeats, and the victories — hers was a short life by contemporary standards, but it was a full life. She did a lot of good things, she was completely unselfish. There are plenty of people who live longer, but don’t achieve as much. It’s less about the quantity, and more about the quality.”

“Her life was impactful: on my family, the business, the industry, and the community.” There will be a private celebration of life in the spring, by invitation only — with live music, of course.

Romance of Wine and Chocolates



The Days of Wine and Chocolate takes place over four weekends in February at 26 local wineries, which offer VQA wine and chocolate pairings — from classically sweet flavour combinations to unexpected surprises. A winery visit could be a romantic celebration for two or a girls' getaway. Left, Stephanie, Jeannine, Kelly and Kerri from Connecticut and New York enjoy a dark chocolate espresso bar paired with a 2015 Merlot from Marynissen. Right, Tyler Lee pours some Cabernet for Christina Rotella at Reif Estate Winery, where she was served mini chocolate chicken tacos with River Road Cabernet. (Fred Mercnik)



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373 VICTORIA STREET \$749,000



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631 KING STREET \$2,400/+ UTILITIES



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

105 DELATER STREET \$699,000



VACANT LOT. Fabulous lot in waterfront area within walking distance of the main street, the marina and the Niagara River. Site plan is approved. This exciting opportunity lets you enjoy working with your own builder to add your ideas to the floor plans / layout, custom finishings and landscape. Your dream home is waiting. **MLS 30636589. Patricia Atherton and Caroline Polgrabia.**

2 BLACKBIRD STREET \$899,000



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

225 WILLIAM STREET \$1,595,000



This beautifully proportioned reproduction is located just a few blocks from the main street of Niagara-on-the-lake. It is a classic. The spectacular new open concept kitchen boasts a sub-zero refrigerator, a Miele dishwasher and a 6 burner Viking dual fuel range. A fabulous space to entertain friends and family. There are new walnut floors and crown molding throughout the main floor. Excellent value in an excellent location. **MLS 30667163. Patricia Atherton or Caroline Polgrabia.**

11 MURRAY STREET \$839,000



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

8 LUCIA COURT \$939,900



Outstanding custom-built bungalow located in a quiet and sought-after neighbourhood. This versatile home features brand new hardwood flooring on the main floor, an impressive cathedral ceiling, 2 gas fireplaces, central vac and custom detailing throughout with over 3,200 square feet of finished living space. The spacious open concept floor plan offers an effortless flow perfect for entertaining and includes convenient main floor master suite. This is a superior home located in an exclusive community close to walking trails, wineries and only blocks from main street shops, restaurants and theaters **MLS 30705901. Thomas Elltoft & Kim Elltoft.**

48 WEATHERSTONE COURT \$779,000



Weatherstone Court is a small unique group of town homes surrounding a central green space and bounded by the old stone wall of a large estate. This bright and airy freehold town home with approx. 2300 sq. ft. of finished space features an open foyer with lofty ceilings and elegant stairway leading up to two large bedrooms with ensuites. The kitchen is upgraded with light cabinetry, granite counters and sunny dinette area. A formal dining room, living room with gas f/p, laundry and upgraded powder room complete the main floor and the lower level is fully finished. **MLS 30700507. Thomas Elltoft & Viviane Elltoft.**

84 FLYNN STREET \$699,000



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

5 CHRISTOPHER \$1,175,000



Custom-built bungalow on a secluded cul-de-sac in the Old Town. The large, pie-shaped lot abuts a gentle stream and mature trees, running the width of the back garden. This 2,000 sq. ft. home offers a floor plan designed for retirement main floor living. Your large master suite is secluded in one wing of the home, offering a walk out to the large private deck. A bright, spacious kitchen is the hub of the home with a walkout, casual eating, and a Butlers Servise to complement your formal entertaining. The second main floor bedroom offers ensuite privilege with a large extra bedroom available on the lower level. An extra-large family room features a third wood burning fireplace, expansive built-in cabinets, wet bar and walkout to a private garden patio. **MLS 30701002. Marilyn Francis.**

341 LAKESHORE ROAD \$999,999



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Working relationship created extended family

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"When we heard that an offshore labour program started and our help situation was resolved, we decided to move back to Niagara. I said to my wife, 'we're going to be okay now because we've got good help coming in.'"

With two small children in tow, Sherry and Gord Jr., they moved to a small nursery purchased from the Ziraldo family on the Niagara River Parkway.

With that came an opportunity to hire a young man named Gilbert MacDonald who had worked two previous seasons at Tregunno's farm and Ziraldo's nursery. MacDonald and a friend and coworker came to Canada from Jamaica as part of the Seasonal Agricultural Work Program (SAWP), designed to ease the chronic labour shortage on the tender fruit farms in Niagara. In 1968, 253 men from Jamaica embarked on a pilot program which was soon eagerly embraced by the entire agricultural community, and which has grown to bring 2,000 to 3,000 farm workers to Niagara today.

"We really felt like part of the family. They would include us in everything."

—Gilbert MacDonald

MacDonald remembers when Neufeld Sr. picked them up at the airport after their first flight.

"We were so hungry, and Gord asked us if we had eaten on the plane and we said no. So he asked if we like pizza and we said no, even though we'd never had it before. He took us to Boston Pizza on the way home and it was so good, I was hooked!" laughed MacDonald.

Neufeld Sr. was thrilled to have men who were eager to learn, he said. Transforming the nursery to a tender fruit farm was now a possibility with two men to assist him with the planting. He and Emma could also make plans to expand the farm, and within a few short years had a staff of six Jamaican men working from spring to fall.

They became a close-knit team, with Erma often inviting the crew over for dinner at the end of a long work day.

"We were the first ones to have air conditioners," MacDonald said. "One day he asked us if it was hot in our bunkhouse, and when we said yes he went right out and bought two air conditioners. The guys on the other farms were jealous 'cause they treated us so good."

"I treated them like I would want to be treated. If a stove broke down I'd get them a new one," said Neufeld Sr. "No junk on my farm."

Neufeld Jr. agreed. "I remember polishing up the tractor. My dad insisted on taking good care of his equipment."

"I remember too, every morning he would be up early, sharpening all the pruners and shears for us, they had to be sharp and ready to go," said MacDonald.

"I was also one of the first guys on the farms to get a Canadian driver's licence because of Gord, practising out there in an orchard buggy."

After he got his licence, he could drive the other men around to do their shopping, he said. "It was the best farm to work for. I enjoyed working with him."

The men enjoyed going to church with the family every Sunday in Neufeld Sr.'s van. When MacDonald first arrived in Niagara they attended Virgil Mennonite Brethren Church, and he continued to join them when they made Glengate Alliance in Stamford their church home. The Neufelds always included the men when they went to gospel concerts and special events as far away as Toronto.

"We really felt like part of the family. They would include us in everything. And that Erma, she was a good cook. We really enjoyed trying new stuff," said MacDonald.

"When I got married the whole family flew to Jamaica for our wedding. The kids and everybody, it was great," he added.

"And I had goat soup," recalled Neufeld Jr. The three erupt in laughter. "I just about died. My eyes actually popped out of my head. It wasn't just hot hot, it was burning hot. Never tasted anything like that in my life. It was a good experience though."

"My neighbours really had respect for me then, and thought wow, this guy must be really important for his boss to come all the way here," said MacDonald.

"And I was shocked to see his home," said Neufeld Sr. "It looked like a house that a government official would live in. I said, 'how did you get this kind of a house, and he said, 'I save my money, I don't drink or party, and this is what I have for it.'"

MacDonald said he was proud to show the Neufelds around Mt. Olivet and the surrounding area where he grew up in St. Ann, Jamaica. As a child he would walk the six miles to Brownstown to school every day. He walked back to church with his family on Sundays, when they spent the better part of the day in church. Some Sundays they would spend the afternoon swimming in the brilliant waters of Discovery Bay. Life was simple. They made their

own toys. They enjoyed the security of extended family and a close-knit community living on the compound of a former plantation. With eight aunts keeping a close eye on him there was little opportunity to make trouble, recalls MacDonald.

Trust and a deeply-rooted respect flowed both ways on the Neufeld farm and the two kids were always eager to have MacDonald babysit when their parents went out for the evening.

"Gilbert was easygoing, always laughing. We got to stay up so late," remembered Neufeld Jr.

Neufeld Jr. recalls the men working in the fields, and "it could be the hottest day and everyone's complaining about how hot and sticky and humid it was, yet you guys would be out in the orchard singing. I guess it would help take their mind off things." Although he was still a pre-teen he enjoyed working alongside MacDonald and the other men, he said.

When Neufeld Jr. was in his teens, his father developed a plan to put in a go-cart track not far from the NOTL dump site. It soon became a very popular activity, attracting racers from south of the border who came up to race the locals. It was a family affair, even Neufeld Sr. taking part, pedal to the metal and pushing the go-carts to their limits on the dirt track. His Jamaican employees were always along for the ride, cheering their boss on from the sidelines.

Neufeld Sr. is proud of a one-hour DVD he produced himself.

When his grandchildren Jarvis, 11 and Teagen, nine, watched it, the video brought to life the farm operations from when the first blossoms unfurled to the picking of the last baby gold. It was the kids' first time seeing their dad hard at work as a teen, wheeling the tractor and operating farm equipment like an old pro.

Young Gordon carefully maneuvered a forklift, moving the huge bins of canning peaches onto the docks for transport to the cannery in St. David's.

"The canning factory provided our bread and butter," said Neufeld Sr. "We negotiated the price and the orders in spring so we could be sure of our budget for the year. We didn't have to fuss with packing, just loaded up the bins and delivered them to the cannery. Those baby golds were beautiful peaches."

The video showed the family operation as it continued to grow. A bakery was added, specializing in Erma's and grandpa's home baked goodies. The camera followed the groups doing farm tours, featuring long tables of men in cowboy hats coming up from Texas to enjoy the Canadian-style barbecue and twirl their sweethearts in square dances.



Gord Neufeld Sr., Gilbert MacDonald and Gord Neufeld Jr. laugh about an incident they recall during the Neufeld's visit to Jamaica. (Photo supplied)

After 12 years working for the Neufelds, MacDonald was invited to work year round for Inniskillin Estate Winery, an offer he accepted after the immigration details were sorted. After being separated from his family eight months every year, it was an offer too good to refuse.

He already felt at home in Niagara, having made so many friends in the community over the years. His involvement at Orchard Park Church continued to grow as he was now able to take on more responsibilities year round. Although it has recently been taken over by Cornerstone Community Church he has welcomed the changes and the many new

friends he is making.

He continues to stay closely connected to his Jamaican friends on the farms and has been involved with driving farm workers to the CWOP (Caribbean Workers Outreach Project) church services for the better part of 20 years.

After a short retirement he was invited to return as a supervisor at Arterra Wines from March to October.

"No more working in the winter for me," he said. He enjoys spending more time with his family and keeping in touch with his grandchildren, of whom he is so very proud.

There is much more for the men to talk about, including the many challenges local farms are presently faced

with. They agree to get together for that discussion another time but for now there is much to think about and to be grateful for.

Neufeld Jr. had his arm around Teagen's shoulders.

"My daughter takes after her grandpa, she's hoping to be a farmer some day. She already loves driving the lawn tractor and cutting the grass."

Teagen also helps her mom care for their laying hens and loves cupping the warm eggs as they gather them on a cold winter day.

Her grandfather was passionate about farming but the special friendships he cultivated with his Jamaican employees will create a legacy he will long be remembered for.



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Market tent needs repairing before spring

By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

You can't get much more local than the Market at the Village, which plans to open in May for its 12th season.

The registered not-for-profit twice-weekly gatherings, Saturday mornings featuring fresh Niagara produce and Wednesday's supper market, have become lively and popular meeting places for local families, and this coming season will be no exception, hopes co-ordinator Sharon Brinsmead-Taylor.

However, she's run into a problem that has to be solved in the coming weeks, with the time to put up the main tent not far away.

Last year, she said, the original tent they had depended on was replaced — it had lasted 10 years — and with 2,500 to 3,000 people at most of the supper markets, she decided on a significantly larger one that allows for more events under cover. At 40 feet by 80 feet, it is also taller, and because of the extra height, has sustained wind damage, including bending the bracing.

Before it can be erected this season, it

needs repairing, with extra bracing added, she said. At an estimate of more than \$13,000, "this was a major blow to our budget."

When the farmers market opened in 2007, it was conceived by developer John Hawley as a community event for those who lived in Garrison Village and The Village — a gathering place for residents who could walk there and buy local produce. It's grown to attract about 500 people most Saturdays, and has become an event for the wider community, with prepared foods, breakfast, handmade soaps and bath products, fresh bread and baked goods, jams, jellies, pickles and preserves, and some artisans, all local to the region, as well as live music.

The SupperMarket, which opened in 2014 with a few food vendors, has grown to more than 20 food trucks and local vendors offering a wide variety of choices, with local beer and wine available. It attracts some visitors, but it's still mostly locals who share the picnic tables and consider it a meeting place for friends and neighbours, she said.

"It's all directed at locals, to serve them here so they don't have to go elsewhere. It's walkable for a lot of people and for everyone to enjoy. Many residents come out on a weekly basis, including families who gravitate to the children's activity area, where the kids can play safely while the parents relax and enjoy some free time and socialize with other families."

With free admission and parking, the kids' zone and live entertainment, it operates at a

break-even point most seasons — any money made from the supper market, from vendors and drink tokens, helps support low fees for Saturday's vendors, said Brinsmead-Taylor.

"We have to pay for parking attendants, security, maintaining the field and port-o-potties, and it all adds up."

Because of extreme heat and iffy Wednesday weather, attendance was down last season and it ended in a deficit.

Brinsmead-Taylor is

hoping for some corporate sponsorship, donations, or someone in the community who will be able to help out with the tent repairs, or know someone who can.

There will be a donor plaque by the tent to recognize supporters "as part of the market family," she said.

She's also considering a GoFundMe online request for donations, to ensure the market goes ahead as planned.


"We don't have a heck of a lot of time to get it

repaired," she said.

She's had questions from the community, given the news of a commercial square planned for the Village in the field where the markets now take place, about whether the weekly events will continue. It will be business as usual this season, hopefully with a stronger tent, and in the future, when construction begins for the Village Square, there are sites being considered as a permanent location for the market, she said.





The large tent acquired last year for the Wednesday SupperMarket sustained extensive wind damage, and must be repaired before this season begins, at an estimated cost of more than \$13,000 for the not-for-profit events. (Photo submitted)




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Zoey Bai and Treasha Ray
Grade 6 at St. Michael Catholic School

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Literacy Day at St. Michael

Michael Haramina and Alex Amodeo
Grade 6 students at St. Michael Catholic School

Michael: The books I enjoy the most are Harry Potter because they are full of action, and they are just like black holes, once you start reading them you can't stop. I read because it helps calm me and if something is bothering me, it helps me take my mind off it.

Alex: The book series I like to read is Diary of a

Wimpy Kid. I enjoy reading these books because they help me come up with good puns. These books are jam-packed with funny and comical jokes. I read because it helps me learn new words. Also, it takes my mind off things. If I am very stressed out or if something is bugging me I will read.

We both agree reading is very beneficial to everyone around the world. Here are some of the benefits: stress reduction, mental stimulation, and better writing skills.



Staff and students at St. Michael Catholic School celebrated Literacy Day by dressing up as characters in their favourite books. (Photos by Lauren O'Malley)



What does literacy mean to St. Michael students

By Zoe Anger and Tannin Driedger-Bradshaw
Grade 7 at St. Michael Catholic School

St. Michael Literacy day was a blast. All of the students from Kindergarten to Grade 8 dressed up as their favourite book characters to celebrate reading. Even our teachers and cleaning staff dressed up. The costumes ranged from princesses to witches and wizards. Overall we had an amazing day learning about literacy.

To us literacy means that it gives us an opportunity to think outside the box and be creative. Without literacy we would not know how to complete everyday challenges. Every time we read a book we learn something new. Whether the book is fiction or fantasy every page has new lesson.

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From the heart



Jaclyn Willms and Jena Slingerland of Niagara Fitness & Rehabilitation are collecting donations for Heart and Stroke Month at their Mary Street fitness centre. (Penny Coles)

Tips for staying healthy

Here are some simple steps to get going for a great year.

Move more: The recommendation is for 30 or more minutes per day of activity on most days. If you're already doing this, great. Doing more will lead to even better health. Try taking a walk on your lunch break; park further from your destination; use the stairs instead of the elevator; be active with family and friends.

Avoid sitting or standing for long periods: If you sit most of the time either at home or work, set a timer to remind yourself to get up every 20 minutes and take a two-minute walk. Try walking meetings instead of sitting in the office.

Don't smoke: Smoking is a risk factor for cancer, heart disease, stroke and lung disease, among others. If you smoke, quitting is the best thing you can do. Also minimize your exposure to second-hand smoke.

Be social: People who have active social lives tend to be healthier and happier. Having a support system helps to relieve stress and make you smile and laugh. It also helps to have that support when things go wrong.

Make time for yourself: Taking 20-30 minutes each day for yourself is a good way to clear your thoughts, feel refreshed and concentrate more effectively. Use this time to do something for yourself like read a book or go for a walk.

Eat breakfast: Eating breakfast can help increase your energy throughout the day, leading to more activity. However, it's also important what you eat. One with fibre and protein is ideal.

Eat protein with each meal: Most of us do not get enough protein in our diets. It helps us feel full, fuels our metabolism and may help in weight maintenance. Simple protein sources include eggs, nuts, lean meats, yogurt (Greek yogurt especially) and peanut butter.

Sing and listen to music: You don't need to get on stage in front of a crowd, and it doesn't matter how good you are (no one needs to know). Singing has benefits that make us feel good about ourselves and can help with our health. Even listening to music can make us feel better.

— Tips from Dr. Scott Lear, leading researcher in the prevention and management of heart disease



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Bricks & Barley attracts locals



Christie Devos, John Eymann, Kelly Lafleur, Marco Spione, Chef Jeremy (Clark) Gilligan and Michael Frendo (above) are developing a devoted following at the recently-opened Bricks & Barley, which has quickly become popular with locals (below). Co-owner Spione says he has been surprised, shocked and overwhelmed by the support for the restaurant — and is also extremely grateful. *(Photo supplied)*



Rotary helps students

By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

There are children in need in Niagara-on-the-Lake, students who don't have access to all the enriching opportunities school life may offer to others.

Those children are the reason behind The Education Foundation of Niagara, says Laura Byers, the executive director of the arms-length charity that supports local students in financial need.

The agency provides basic necessities such as nutritious food, warm winter clothing, boots and shoes, and enables students to take part in field trips and extra-curricular activities.

It also helps make post-secondary education accessible through bursaries, says Byers.

The foundation's recently-launched Leadership Giving Program is investing in helping needy kids, she says, and will have a long-lasting impact on the lives of students who will be the next generation of leaders and community members.

The Rotary Club of NOTL places much importance on supporting charities that help the most vulnerable, says Paul Lalonde, chair of the club's community service committee.

"That's why we are so

proud to be supporting the Education Foundation of Niagara in helping them provide much-needed services to students with basic essentials many of us take for granted," says Lalonde.

"They provide such a vital service to young students and are in the perfect position to identify and meet the greatest needs locally. We know our \$2,000 donation will be put to great use."

Since 2007, the foundation has been investing in students and programs at the District School Board of Niagara.

Led by a volunteer board of directors, the foundation exists through

the generosity of individual donors and organizations — it receives no government funding.

It helps ensure health and success for all children, while teaching them people care about their welfare, says Byers, who has heard many success stories about students who have been helped by the agency.

For more information on the Leadership Giving Program, other foundation programs or to make a donation, visit www.efniniagara.ca or contact Laura Byers at 905-641-2929 ext. 37711 or by email at laura.byers@dsbn.org.



Laura Byers accepts a cheque from Paul Lalonde of the Rotary Club of NOTL. *(Lauren O'Malley)*

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LOCAL SPORTS

Local wrestler earns silver



Zubin Gatta (right), a 13-year-old Grade 8 student from Crossroads Public School, competed in the Ontario Cadet Wrestling Championship (high school division) held at the Powerade Centre in Brampton with more than 400 wrestlers from across Ontario this weekend. He has been wrestling with the Brock Junior Badgers Wrestling Club since the age of six. Zubin wrestled in a heavier weigh class and one age group higher and brought home a silver medal with a 7-4 decision. He has been rigorously training twice a day to prepare for this competition, which will prepare him for the Canada East Championships in May this year, with wrestlers arriving from as far as Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and PEI. (Photo submitted)



Sadie Wilson, Carley Breakspeare, Teagan Neufeld, Mia Wilson, Maya Hubbard, Lucianna Beccario, Abby Duc, Reagan Rossi, Brook Harlon and Nicole Falk are taking part in the Saturday afternoon all-girls hockey program at the Centennial Arena. (Photo submitted)

Female players like their on-ice girl time

By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

Girls are welcome and encouraged to join co-ed teams in the Niagara-on-the-Lake Minor Hockey League, but this year a new program designed just for female players is also enjoying a successful season and proving its worth.

Every Saturday at 12:10 p.m. girls from the novice, atom and peewee divisions take to the ice in the Centennial arena to develop their skills and play some hockey.

The goal, says organizer and coach Brian Beccario, is to promote the game for local girls, give them some extra ice time of their own, and allow them “to own the dressing room” once a week.

“When we started in the program in November we had nine skaters,” he said. “We now have 15. Our hope is to continue the program next year as well.”

There was a time, a few years back, when NOTL minor hockey tried to offer all-girl teams, but the numbers couldn’t sustain them, and now NOTL girls have to choose between co-ed teams locally, or travelling to St. Catharines or Niagara Falls to

play, which means the local league is losing them, said Beccario.

He approached minor hockey and asked if he could give this weekly program a try, and it has become an add-on for girls between the ages of nine and 13 who are already on a local team. It is also an option for those who are from Niagara-on-the-Lake but play elsewhere, or those who have chosen to learn the sport through this all-girls program, in some cases because they’re a little intimidated by joining a co-ed team, he said.

Those who are weaker players or just learning become stronger by having good female role models on the ice with them, he said.

They’ve also had three sessions with Kathi Plug, who provides power-skating lessons in St. Catharines for kids aged four and up, including adults. Her on-ice presence offers the girls an opportunity to learn from a strong female skater, former hockey player and another role model, said Beccario.

His daughter Luci, an 11-year-old Crossroads student, loves both playing for her co-ed team and the on-ice

girl-time.

It would be difficult for her to choose which she likes better, she said — for now she’s happy she doesn’t have to make that choice. She also appreciates the skills she’s learning, including moving faster — she feels the power skating classes have made her a better hockey player.

She’s also made a new “best friend” from St. Davids, which is another benefit of the program — it’s great for the community when kids from different schools have a change to develop friendships, he said. “I think any ice time is a good thing,” said Beccario. “Opening it up to more skaters can only be good for everybody.”

Although there is a core group of girls who show up regularly, there can be anywhere from eight to all 15 on the ice, with some off to play hockey with their teams Saturday afternoon, said Beccario. He is hoping this year’s success will ensure it continues next fall.

He welcomes girls who want to give the program a try over the next four weeks, and asks them to call for more information at 905-321-2032.

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Wolves shut out Port Colborne



The NOTL atom Wolves played Port Colborne Friday at the Meridian Credit Union Arena Friday, winning 5-0. (Fred Mercnik)

Soccer registration at arenas this weekend

By Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Soccer Club is gearing up for another summer of the beautiful game. In-person registration takes place this weekend at the arenas in Virgil from 10 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Officials from the club will be there to answer any questions.

The NOTL Soccer Club offers programs for boys and girls born in 2015 and earlier. The club's ever-popular Timbits program is designed to encourage children to be active and to learn to enjoy the game. "The focus, especially in the early ages, is on fun and skill development. The competitive aspect of the game comes in at the older ages, when kids have learned the skills from our volunteer

coaches," says club president Ted VanderKaay. The volunteer aspect of the club, especially when it comes to the coaching, is key to its success, he adds.

According to VanderKaay, one of the mandates of the club is to give kids opportunities to play the game in their own community. "We have probably the best soccer fields in the region, as the Town staff does a great job maintaining the facilities. It would be a shame to have these kids playing elsewhere and bringing their energy to another community."

There are opportunities as well for more competitive soccer, in the form of travel, or "rep" teams at various age groups. In fact, for the first time in many years, there will be a team wearing the Rangers colours in the men's

PSL league.

VanderKaay also wants to remind young people that there are opportunities for them to build their leadership skills and earn a bit of money over the summer as referees. The club is currently encouraging boys and girls 12 years old and up to consider taking a referee clinic with the goal of officiating games this summer.

VanderKaay assures everyone that you don't have to show up for the in-person registration this weekend. It's just as easy to register and pay online at www.notlsoccer.org if that's what you prefer. And he encourages parents to register as coaches if they are at all interested. The house league season will kick off in late May for most age groups, with the Timbits division beginning in June.

Nationals win in overtime



The NOTL Nationals lost their Friday night home game 8-5 against the Niagara Whalers from Port Colborne, but travelled to Tottenham for a 5-4 win in overtime Saturday. Bailey Pritchard was credited with the winning power play goal, as well as three others in the two weekend games. Jake Anderson earned two goals in the winning effort Saturday. The Nationals have four games left to wrap up the regular season: Feb. 8, 10 and 15 at home, and Feb. 9 in Tottenham. The team, currently in fifth place in its division of the Jr. A Greater Metro Hockey League, will play Kingsville in the first round of the playoffs. (Fred Mercnik)



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22 Reactor safety overseer: Abbr.
23 Crimson
25 Shuns
29 Kvetch
30 Hot air
31 Street guide
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34 Spark generator
35 Scotch companion
36 Perfectly
37 Take pictures
38 Egyptian solar deity
39 Legs it
40 Throw
41 Corrosive chemicals
42 Since
- 43 Canter
44 Surrealist Jean ---
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50 Rider Haggard romance
51 Clash
52 Narrow road
53 The Queen City
57 Otherwise
58 Oil well firefighter Red ---
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60 Morose
61 Specifically
62 Fencing stake
63 Storm centers
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5 Get up
6 Rubbed off
7 Spot
8 Destructive computer key
9 Stiffener
10 Shell which can be blown
11 How some stocks are traded (Abbr.)
- 12 The --- small hours
13 S L C church
19 One way to preserve food
24 Scurried
25 Poet whose work led to "Cats"
26 Passionately
27 Walked knee-deep through water
28 Crosses
30 Fillip
32 Bag supporter
33 Knotty
34 Total confusion
35 Blasphemy
37 Filter out
41 Ambition
43 Collarless short-sleeved top
44 Devil dog
46 Computer information exchange code
47 Deadly
48 Follow
49 Appears
51 Programming language
53 Twin-hulled vessel (Abbr.)
54 Statement of agreement at the altar
55 Rural negative
56 Small drinkson show

SUDOKU PUZZLE

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PUZZLE ANSWERS

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Down: 1 Raged, 2 As one, 3 Misdemeanor, 4 Pass-ports, 5 Awaken, 6 Wiped, 7 Espy, 8 Del, 9 Starch, 10 Conch, 11 O T C, 12 Wee, 13 L-D S, 19 In salt, 24 Ran, 25 Eliot, 26 Emotionally, 27 Waded, 28 Spans, 30 Boost, 32 Strap, 33 Tough, 34 Chaos, 35 Sacrilege, 37 Screen, 41 Aim, 43 T-shirt, 44 Marine, 46 A S C I I, 47 Fatal, 48 Ensur, 49 Seems, 51 Java, 53 Cat, 54 I do, 55 Naw, 56 Nip.

NOTL native on his way to winter games

By Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

Nineteen-year-old speed skater Max Brant of Niagara-on-the-Lake feels confident heading into his first Canada Winter Games next week in Red Deer, Alta.

The second-year University of Calgary biological sciences student is in his second full season at the National Team Training Centre at the Olympic Oval. With the retirement of a number of national team members following the 2018 Winter Olympics, Brant was able to move up to the Stage 3 men's program to train under coach Arno Hoogveld.

That move has made a world of difference in Brant's progression. In January, he set personal records in the 500, 1,000, 1,500 and 5,000 metre races, three of those coming at the Canada Cup qualifier on his home ice. He credits the coaches, the staff and the facility itself for helping him get to the next level. Brant feels if he sticks to his training regimen he will exceed those personal records in Red Deer.

This is Brant's first year as a single-sport athlete. While attending Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School he took up rowing, following in mom Wendy's footsteps (she rowed at Denis Morris). He continued juggling that sport with his speed skating, com-

peting for three years in high school as well as last year at the University of Calgary. Last March, he captured the U23 Lightweight men's Provincial indoor title.

"There are a lot of similarities between the two sports. To do well in both you need to combine good timing with excellent technique," says Brant. Rowing, however, relies on cardio endurance, while speed skating, he says, requires more muscular endurance. There is no doubt in Brant's mind, however, that rowing helped him stay in tip top shape for his development as a speed skater.

His promotion to the Stage 3 men's program this year forced him to make the not-too-difficult decision to step out of the boat and spend more time on the oval. "At this level I wouldn't have had the time to commit to my training regimen and balance my workload at university while also rowing." And with his January results, the decision seems to be paying dividends.

Having begun playing house league hockey in NiOTL at five years old, Brant has been on the ice now for most of his life. He enjoyed hockey, but when, at the suggestion of his grandparents, he tried speed skating when he was nine, he quickly fell in love with the speed, freedom and the individualistic nature of the sport. "In

speed skating, you race yourself," he says. Three years later, as he began competing provincially, he gave up hockey altogether.

Just two years after giving up hockey, he moved on from the Niagara Speed Skating Club to begin training in Cambridge. "It's a bigger club, and it gave me the opportunity to work with more competitive skaters. I felt the Cambridge Speed Skating Club would allow me to develop more as a competitive athlete."

And his development as a competitive athlete continues. Last summer he returned to NOTL for July and August. But Brant knows this summer Calgary will be his home, as he is committed to training year round, with the goal of improving his time in all of his events, especially the 500 metres. When he does get back to town, as he did this Christmas, he takes the chance to skate with the Niagara club, where the kids he used to coach look up to him.

Looking beyond these Canada Winter Games, Brant is hoping for a berth on the national team within three or four years. Then, hopefully, it's on to a World Cup and eventually, the 2026 Olympics. When that goal is achieved, it's a given that those Niagara Speed Skating Club skaters will be cheering him on.



Max Brant has stepped up his training, and is getting good results. (Photo submitted)



Bringing home gold

NOTL Skating Club member Lauren Shedden was the only local participant to enter the Abela WinterSkate competition held recently in Windsor. The 11-year-old earned a Gold assessment in her STAR 3 event, which introduces skaters to performing required elements in an individual program as judges assess those elements to a standard. At the conclusion of the event, each skater is presented with a report card and a ribbon for their overall assessment. (Photo submitted)

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Pillitteri dreaming of day he drives Olympia through Virgil

By Penny Coles
The NOTL Local

Joe Pillitteri is living every boy's dream, or certainly his — the owner of Lakeview Vineyard Equipment is making a career of operating heavy machinery, showing off grape harvesters and other farming equipment to those who might be in the market to purchase what he sells.

But he has one dream yet unfulfilled, he said — he has his heart set on driving an ice resurfacer, and he thinks it might be within reach.

He's cautious not to use the word 'Zamboni,' which is not a generic term for those machines that clean the ice between hockey periods or figure skating classes. It's a trade name that draws a hand-rap if used in error to describe another brand, such as the Olympia the Town has ordered to replace one of its aging machines used to clean the Virgil ice rinks.

Pillitteri has won the right to put his Lakeview sign on the new piece of machinery he is sponsoring, and is convinced the Town is going to let him take it to Tim Hortons so he can order coffee at the drive-through, he jokes — after all, he's paying \$25,000 to have his

company name on it for the next 10 years, at \$2,500 a year.

A huge hockey fan and supporter of minor hockey in town, he's been picturing himself on the Olympia since he applied to sponsor the new ice cleaner, which is expected to be delivered to the arena in March and put into use when the ice opens again in September.

"I've been around equipment my whole life, and around hockey my whole life, but this is one piece of equipment I've never driven and I'm dying to do it. I have all sorts of plans for it," he jokes. "I want to fulfill some childhood dreams."

But in true Pillsy fashion, he says, “rumour has it” by the time the machine hits the ice, it might not look much like other cleaners — he included some preliminary drawings in the sponsorship application that show it in a wrap, looking more like a grape harvester than anything customarily seen on a rink.

"I'm really excited about it," he says.

"If we look at our customer base, we have baby boomers, grandparents who are at the arena watching their kids play hockey or figure skating, and moms and dads there sometimes four or five times a week. But it's not just about advertis-

ing — we want them to know youth sports are important to us and keeping kids healthy and fit is important. If we can do something to help that in any way we can, we want to do that.”

Pillitteri and Jesse Willms, his business partner since 2014, sponsor two hockey teams, and Lakeview has donated more than \$150,000 to local causes, including minor hockey, lacrosse, and Kidsport Niagara, which supports kids who need financial help to participate in organized sports.

Pillitteri says that to him, the name he will always associate with the ice resurfer at the arena is Simpson's Pharmacy, and he's always looked up to Ward Simpson as the ultimate example of a man and business owner who gives back to his community.

“He’s been such a good example for business owners to follow, including me, and Sean is a chip off the old block.”

Simpson's didn't apply for the sponsorship this time, choosing instead to open up the opportunity for others such as Lakeview, which was one of three applications.

"I had heard Joe wanted the sponsorship," said Sean Simpson, "and was hopeful that he would get it if we didn't participate."



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