Hotel proposed for Parliament Oak site

The Farmworker Hub is expanding, offering a place for men and women working on local farms to hang out and have some social time together. A large space that was “in limbo” upstairs at Cornerstone Community Church, where the hub offers clothing, household items, toiletries and food on the main floor, has been offered to the hub to help fulfill its vision. Cornerstone’s Pastor Jeff Martens, who looks after operations and outreach, says there hadn’t been a clear vision of what that space would be used for once the church moved to its Hunter Road location. The church had been supporting the hub in small ways, basically treating it as a tenant, and operating a little bit at arms length, says Martens. But as they got to know Julia Baxter-Cox, organizer of the hub, and understood her plans for its future, “we wanted to develop more of a partnership between the church and the hub. We wanted to help it expand, and dedicate that section to a longer-term vision.”

Martens says they felt privileged having that building and their new, larger church on Hunter Road, and wanted to partner with community organizations to use the Cornerstone space. That developed into a relationship with the NOLT, Youth Collective that uses the former sanctuary for a drop-in centre and programming for young people. The Farmworker Hub and Quest Community Health Centre, which operates a clinic for agricultural workers. “We wanted to use the space God has given us to bless the community, and work with good partners in many ways,” he says. “That made good sense to us.”

In 2018, the District School Board of Niagara sold the 1.6 hectare King Street property to developer Liberty Sites Ltd., who explains they considered it to be too big and believing it to be too big and too large a density, were advocating that any development of the site should respect the streetscape and low-density residential neighbourhood surrounding it. Paul Lowes, of SGL Planning and Design, who also represents developer Benny Marotta, Two Sisters Resort and Solmar for the proposed subdivision on John Street East, says the applications for Official Plan and zoning by-law amendments for the hotel have been submitted to the town, along with all the studies required and an “early design.” The town will review those applications and make good sense to us.”

Continued on page 3
Tawny Ridge could destroy neighbourhood, residents say

Zahraa Hmood
Special to The Local

Opposition to plans for growth in St. Davids persists this winter, as residents shared more than a few questions and concerns at an open house about a large-scale residential project being proposed in their neighbourhood.

Local construction company Riverview Homes Niagara wants to build a new subdivision called Tawny Ridge Estates in the west end of the village, adding 86 new homes to a block of land at Tanbark Road and Warner Road.

At an open house Wednesday, Feb. 8, planners from Upper Canada Consultants shared details of the proposal, which includes a collection of single-detached homes, townhouses and a four-storey apartment building facing Warner Road.

The details did not go over well with some of the subdivision’s would-be neighbours.

“There’s no precedent for an apartment building to be put in this area,” said local resident Gienek Ksiazkiewicz. “It just doesn’t fit within St. Davids’ historical value, and the ambiance.”

Rohe said the goal of the project and others like it in the area is to rezone the land from residential 1 to residential 2 and to permit an apartment building, plus other exceptions for building heights, yard setbacks and more.

“Tawny Ridge could destroy the neighbourhood. ” Courtland Valley Estates resident Bruno Libberte said he and many other residents are concerned about the development, and called the rezoning requests “excessive.”

He also voiced concerns that increasing the neighbourhood’s population will lead to traffic issues on local roads.

For phase one, the zoning bylaw amendment requested is to rezone the land from residential multiple 1 Zone to residential multiple 1 Zone, with site-specific provisions. For phase two, the majority of the land for which is zoned for residential development, the request is to rezone to a residential multiple 1 Zone.

A Facebook group for the development was set up in June 2021, and registration is currently open for hopeful future residents of the estates at tawnyridgeestates.ca. The website lists the types of units that will be available as detached bungalows, two storeys, freehold bungalows and bungalow townhomes.

Ksiazkiewicz was one of about 10 residents who questioned the planners during the open house. Afterward, he said he would liken the conversation to a “beauty contest” in which the developers, on behalf of the developer, were attempting to convince residents of the project’s advantages, “smoothing over any objections.”

“There’s a place for apartment buildings, but I don’t think it’s here,” he said. “It would destroy the neighbourhood.”

Senior planner Craig Rohe said the goal of the Official Plan — and providing options for older residents looking to downsize their living spaces.

There’s been a lot of thought given to the most appropriate way to lay out this site,” Rohe said.

“The province’s directive right now is that we’re in a housing crisis right now and we need to provide more housing options for developers: according to Premier Doug Ford’s government, this is part of its goal of increasing housing options in the province.

“Opposition to plans for growth in St. Davids persists this winter, as residents shared more than a few questions and concerns at an open house about a large-scale residential project being proposed in their neighbourhood.

“The province’s directive right now is that we’re in a housing crisis right now and we need to provide more housing options for developers,” Rohe said.

A public meeting on the Tawny Ridge Estates development is being held Tuesday, March 7, scheduled for 6 p.m. or soon thereafter.
Extra space helps to fulfill vision of church, hub

Continued from page 1

during the pandemic, she appreciated items to farms workers, delivering much-needed items for farmworkers.

Her goal even then was to use her time and skills for the betterment of the community.

From her first introduction to working with farmworkers, delivering much-appreciated items to farms during the pandemic, she felt the need to do more, she says. Today, the hub consumes her. She is passionate about helping her friends from the agricultural community, not only by providing them with necessities so they can save money to send home, but also to continue to promote their acceptance as part of this community.

Once she learned of the need, she couldn’t walk away. Quoting Maya Angelou, she explains, “Once you know better, you do better.”

And she encourages others to do better.

“It’s easy to see what’s needed. And it’s important to me to stand up and say this is what’s needed. I see it, I’m going to do it, and I want you to follow.” When you touch people’s hearts, there is no end to what you can do. When you share your heart and your vulnerability, something happens. And this community has been behind me and helped me all the way.

Years ago, when Cornerstone moved out of what they now call the Town Campuses in Virgil to Hunter Road, “instead of selling it, they decided that it would be dedicated for the community,” says Buxton-Cox, and Martens and Cornerstone have been with her every step of the way since she first envisioned the hub “Cornerstone has made this happen.”

And “what a blessing” for the hub to have a location in the centre of Virgil, close to banking, groceries and the bike repair shop for the farmworkers.

“It’s unheard of for a church to keep a building,” she adds. “It was all meant to happen. Whether it’s by God’s plan, or the stars aligned, everything has happened for a purpose. The whole concept of being a Christian is to love others, and this is a way to love our neighbours.”

Today, there were 1,600 workers who visited the hub in 2021, and more than 3,000 visitors last season, she says, representing 77 farms.

“My goal is to reach all workers, from all farms.”

Buxton-Cox says she has never been involved in something “this big, where we are able to impact somebody’s life, including my own. Knowing these seasonal agricultural workers has completely changed my life.”

And she quickly adds that the hub couldn’t be the success it is without the support of a very generous community. “We have a unique population of retirees and young people, affluent people, who make this work. I can’t imagine this taking off in any other community. I’m just a conduit for making it happen.”

For more information about the hub, to get involved or donate, visit the hubnotl.ca.

Free family skate Monday

Local Staff

Bring your family, and bring your skates. The Fine Estates Team of Revel Realty has booked the Centennial Arena and is hosting the first annual Community Free Skate Fest on Monday, Feb. 20 (Family Day).

Skate for free from 1 to 3 p.m. at the arena in the Centennial Sports Park on Four Mile Creek Road, and enjoy some snacks and drinks provided by the Revel team.

We’re hoping to have a great turn out filled with local families and friends and we can’t wait to see everyone there,” says Gracie Wilson, of the Fine Estates Team.
Residents already opposing commercial zoning

**Continued from page 1**

tions to determine if they are complete.

Once the town deems the application complete, it will be made public.

“The building will have a ‘slightly bigger’ lot coverage, at 25 per cent, than the school building, which covers 18 or 19 per cent of the property, says Lyle Hall, a member of the town council. ‘But the landscaped area will be greater, with less paved surface. And the historic oak tree, which has been reported to be 300 years old, will be saved.

The building design, he adds, will ‘fit quite nicely in Niagara-on-the-Lake.’

Residents in the neighbourhhood of the property have received a letter from LURA, a public relations firm, dated Feb. 6, explaining they ‘specialize in speaking with neighbours about a variety of policy and planning or construction projects. We are not engineers or planners ourselves nor are we responsible for the result of any project we are involved with. Rather, we work to foster positive dialogue between interested parties.’

Two Sisters Resorts, the letter says, ‘has identified that an early dialogue will be beneficial to ensuring the circulation of accurate information and the fostering of a respectful and open dialogue. We recognize there may be great interest in this site from residents. As the application process advances, this dialogue will also be helpful in clarifying concerns and inquiries from the community back through to the project proponent/applicants.’

Neighbour Alan Gordon says POST, a group of NOTL residents and neighbours interested in action by the first development proposal for the historic Parliament Oak school site, is still very much in existence.

‘Our Special Town was formed to protest what was considered inappropriate development in a low-density residential neighbourhood. Gordon says since the first proposal was appealed for lack of a town decision on zoning and Official Plan amendments, POST members have been waiting for a hearing.

Liberty had also filed an application to the town for a permit to demolish the school, an application that was not completed, but that can be moved forward by Two Sisters, which bought the property in October for $8 million.

‘Things went very quiet during the hiatus, and nothing much was happening,’ says Gordon.

He and others opposed to the residential Parliament Oak development have been following closely the proposal for a four-storey, 60-foot apartment building on Mary Street, at the corner of Mississauga Street. It too is inappropriate for its location in a residential neighbourhood, because of its height and size, and that developer is also looking for Official Plan and zoning amendments, Gordon says.

That application ‘got our attention. We’ve been communicating with our list from POST. Most four- to five-storey buildings are 40 feet. This has very high ceilings, and mechanicals on the top. It’s the equivalent height of a six-storey building.’

Added to that is the issue of density, with 40 units proposed, “about 10 times or more what the OP allows,” says Gordon.

‘Frankly to me it seems quite absurd. ’ The Mary Street proposal is “way out of line” with the Official Plan, which is specific about residential zoning and development and what is appropriate for an existing neighbourhood, he says.

Meanwhile, having heard that the Parliament Oak property had been sold, we were on notice, just waiting for the other shoe to drop,” he says. It has, and what he has learned about the proposal for what he calls a ‘quasi-resort’ is also inappropriate for the low-density established residential area, he says.

‘An enormous amount of effort went into the Official Plan,’ which was recently updated, he says. ‘Our position is very clear. A commercial use for the property is completely inappropriate and inconsistent with the OP, as is the density, height and scale of the building.’

Gordon says he and his group are not opposed to development, and he points to the new hotel on Queen Street as something he feels maintains a sense of scale and density with the surrounding neighbourhood.

‘But the Parliament Oak and Mary Street developments, in residential areas, defy common sense.’

‘Commercial use for the property is not consistent with the OP, as is the density, height and scale of the building.’

Gordon says the building be “what tone the new council is going to set” with this proposal, and the one for Mary Street.

If the town wants to give up community facility space for commercial zoning right in the middle of a residential block, ‘we’ll never see another community facility space. Let’s not fall into the development trap of whether it should be 129 rooms. It shouldn’t be a hotel at all. Ideally, it should remain a community facility, or at worst, residential,’ that fits in with the surrounding neighbourhood, says Hall.

Unfortunately, he continues, the owner of the property “has more money and more staying power than probably the town or the residents do.”

‘I’m not at all surprised,’ he adds, to see the property owner propose commercial zoning for a hotel — the discussion will be whether council will defend what residents want them to do.

This proposal, which apparently would begin to pull the commercial concentration away from Queen Street, Hall says, will ‘be a real challenge for council.’
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WRITTEN AND ADAPTED BY RAVI JAIN AND MIRIAM FERNANDES
A WHY NOT THEATRE PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH BARBICAN, LONDON COMMISSIONED AND PRESENTED BY THE SHAW FESTIVAL
The issue that may define this term of council

We can’t rewrite history (although there are certainly those who try) but we can learn from it.

Looking back now, it seems so simple — if the town had just purchased Parliament Oak School when the District School Board of Niagara declared it surplus, we would not be where we are today.

And a group of residents hoping to establish a community hub would not have planned to talk to council Tuesday night to ask for the hospital building — they would likely have spent the intervening years with an established hub in the former Parliament Oak building, and the town would not be gearing up for yet another battle over the future of that property.

Negotiations went on for years, first with the town trying to convince the board not to close the only school left in the Old Town, and then trying to buy it from the board, making a total of three offers, all three turned down.

Most of the discussions between the town and the school board took place in closed sessions, but once negotiations came to a halt, both sides issued public statements. Pat Darte, the mayor at the time, said the town was doing everything it could to work with the board, and the board said it was open to working with the town. But it still didn’t happen.

Gary Zalepa was a councillor during that term, and Gary Burroughs was the regional chair — they would understand the frustration of not being able to see those negotiations end successfully. They must think of that these days — how could they not?

It seemed there were two stumbling blocks. Although the site was zoned for institutional use, the board apparently wanted to test the open market to see what the property would be worth to a developer.

The other snag was the board’s conditions — the town would not be allowed to flip it, nor could it become a private school.

The board was understandable concerned about losing Old Town students, and the dollars that went with them, to a school that might be established by a community group who wanted to provide families with an alternative to the long bus ride to Virgil. That, of course, is exactly what happened — Royal Oak Community School, set up first in the Market Room of the Court House, quickly outgrew that space, and continues to grow in the old hospital building — the only property zoned for community use left in the Old Town.

When the group heard the Parliament Oak property had been sold again, there were efforts made to again see it turned into a building the community could use, but that, not surprisingly, didn’t fly.

However, the good news is a community hub and not-for-profit school is still possible. The town has so far held on to the former hospital building, and has for some time tried to determine a future, hopefully permanent, use for it.

And a group of residents, many of them part of the group that first floated the idea of a community hub in Parliament Oak, has a solution for the hospital building that would allow it to continue as a community facility and serve residents, by offering a world-class centre for “creative, cultural, and community organizations to work and share resources, to the benefit of Niagara and beyond.”

Their vision is described as a self-funded collaborative between Royal Oak Community School, and other non-profit organizations such as Music Niagara, the Shaw Festival and Yellow Door, and their ask of the town was to allow additional community organizations to become tenants.

The Local goes to press Tuesday night, and with the switch of town council meetings to Tuesday, we can’t report the response to the request of the group to use that space as a “creative, cultural and community hub” but we hope it was positive — look for a story online today.

And that’s the lesson we hope has been learned — what is being proposed would be a great addition to the community, a permanent solution to the future of the building, and a chance for the do-over after the failure to secure the school when the town had that opportunity.

The issue, however, is whether council of Parliament Oak site that is still to be determined. The owner of the property might turn out to be the only resident of NOTL who thinks a hotel is a good idea, but this is whether council has the will, or the staying power, to stop it.

Gary Zalepa was the candidate in every election campaign in NOTL, for at least the last three decades, has said they supported development, but opposed inappropriate development. Just as every candidate has said they support preserving heritage, you don’t get elected in NOTL without making those promises.

But promises are easy to make and were likely well-intentioned at the time they were made, but are oh so much harder to keep. To fur ther complicate matters, the recent election also brought out discussions about the high cost of legal bills, and taxpayers don’t like to hear how much they are paying in legal fees to developers. This council has some added pressure to deal with that appears to be a non-win situation.

It will cost money to uphold the town’s Official Plan and zoning bylaws against developers with deep pockets and patience. Development issues and the legal fees that come with them aren’t necessarily resolved within a term of council.

The good men and women now sitting on council will want to do what’s right for the town, and for the taxpayers. They will want to keep their promises to fight inappropriate development. They won’t want to rack up huge legal bills to accomplish their goals. They are in a tough position, just months into a new term, with an issue that could easily become one that defines this council.

Engage in battle and stay the course, hoping for a win? Or save the cost of fighting. Which will it be?

Penny Coles
The Local

Where’s Ben?

Donald Combe
Special To The Local

Eden student Ben Foster continues to discover new locations in NOTL, wondering how familiar others may be with them. If you know where this photo was taken, email penny@notllocal.com.

Donna Small
Local News

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Local
The Trusted Voice of Your Community

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Where’s Ben?

Donald Combe is a retired English teacher who loves to go to the movies. Until he resumes English teaching, he has generously agreed to share his opinions, through “short and sweet” exclusives, of Netflix series and movies for The Local.

VIEW FROM THE COUCH

Engage in battle and stay the course, hoping for a win? Or save the cost of fighting. Which will it be?

Penny Coles
The Local

Where’s Ben?
Newark (now Niagara-on-the-Lake) was the first capital of Upper Canada. Sessions of Parliament were held in the Free Mason’s Lodge on King Street. In the extreme heat one summer, the members of parliament moved their desks and chairs outside to conduct their business under a canopy of oak trees.

It was on this site (donated by the town to the school board) that Parliament Oak School was built and opened in 1948. In 1966 it was sold for one dollar with a restaurant, bar and event spaces in the middle of the esplanade, originally designated a residential area of Old Town.

The height, noise, traffic and density of this proposed development is totally inappropriate. Introducing a commercial use into the middle of an established residential area will betray all the residents of this town and contravene the Official Plan, which stipulates one of the goals and objectives for commercial areas is “to prevent the intrusion of commercial uses into residential areas.”

The Official Plan designates the property for open space and community facilities, with the main uses being “active and passive neighborhood parks, elementary schools, health care facilities, churches, daycare centres, cemeteries, museums, historic sites, and similar community services.”

How much further into the intended use of this important site can this proposal for a commercial hotel be? Community facilities and institutional zoning designations permit uses that serve the residents and future residents of this town. If this site is lost to commercial development, there is only one other property remaining for potential community facilities and institutional uses.

If the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake wants to remain a real town with residents, families and maybe even a school, we need to prioritize the needs of the people that live here rather than the ones who merely visit and those who only want to reap riches through development as they overwhelm the town’s unique character. If an institutional use is no longer viable, the Official Plan provides that for the only purpose for which the property may be rezoned is Low Density Residential Use, one that is compatible with the surrounding Established Residential neighbourhood.

Connie Tintinalli

**Hotel proposal ‘totally inappropriate’**

In reply to the letter to the editor (The Local, Feb. 8) under the topic of No apolo-ogy owed to nurses, consider the following, taken from the Ontario Nurses’ Association’s website:

“Ford’s plan to expand private clinics in Ontario will cost patients dearly, risk lives and significantly worsen staffing shortages, health-care unions say.

“The unions – CUPE/ OCHU, Ontario Nurses’ As- sociation, OPSEU/SEFPO, SEIU Healthcare, and Unifor – say that this move will fur- ther starve our public health-care system of funding and divert front-line staff to en- sure profits for private shareholders and diminish access to publicly-delivered healthcare. Patients will wait even longer for treatment and should not be misled into believing they will not pay out of pocket.

“They say that since com- ing to office, this government has implemented policies to demoralize healthcare workers, worsen the staffing shortage and cause burnout through heavy workloads.

“Ford’s plan to expand private clinics in Ontario will cost patients dearly, risk lives and significantly worsen staffing shortages, health-care unions say.”

**Never have nurses or their unions advocated for privatization**

The opinions expressed in submitted commentary, and letters to the editor, are the writer’s own and not attributable to the editor (The Local, Feb. 8)

**LETTERS**

**Hotel proposal ‘totally inappropriate’**

Owen Bjorgan Special to The Local

During a recent deep cleaning of my basement, I had a realization about boxes and boxes of belongings that haven’t been touched in years. The inevitable situation took over immediately, as I found myself walking into my basement, I had to

**An easy way to get kids interested in nature**

Terrays, I also mapped their water quality. Of course I wasn’t using scientific instruments as sensing phosphorus or nitrogen levels, I had a walkie talkie to keep in touch with my parents.

“...a free and healthy method of exploring the outdoors and enjoying about ensuring they became familiar with biology it was, and still is...”

**Willow needs help**

NOL CATS has been caring for Willow for about an month. She’s a sweet, affectionate kitten who captures the heart of every-one who meets her. Willow was recently diagnosed with clinical Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP), a viral disease which is almost always fatal. NOL CATS enrolled her in an FIP drug trial and she started her treatments five days ago. Her prognosis is already looking good, but help is needed to cover the $3,000 cost for Willow’s medications, veterinary appointments and food. Contributions to her treatments can be made at gofundme.com/willow...
**Sharon Burns**

Special to The Local

“All you need is love,” said Shayla Vermolen, which is fitting for the 196 dozen heart-shaped cookies her mother Jody Finn-Vermolen has recently made to “give back” to Red Roof Retreat.

Kerry Finn, Jody’s sister and Shayla’s aunt, is a client of Red Roof Retreat, which has provided recreational programming for Kerry for six years. In addition to programs for special needs children and young adults, Red Roof also provides day camps and respite care at two locations, The Ranch on Concession 6, an 11-acre hobby farm with an accessible walking trail and playground, and Kevan’s House on Concession 2, which provides adult respite weekends and emergency residential care.

Kerry “loves going to The Ranch and going on outings and crafts and singing songs. Everything that Red Roof offers brings fulfillment to her life,” said Jody.

Jody describes Kerry as “the light of our life. She is happy all the time. She is a social butterfly. She thrives from being around people and being able to do things and have friends.”

According to Shayla, Kerry “has been super fortunate to spend time with the lovely people at Red Roof Retreat who provide her with so many fun activities and experiences. Our family is very lucky to have been able to connect with them.”

On Tuesday morning, Valentine’s Day, Kerry met everyone at the door of the retreat’s Hunter Road location, inside Cornerstone Community Church, with laughter, hugs and a big cheque to donate to the place that brings her so much happiness.

Wearing red and pink, clients and staff of Red Roof Retreat were planning on celebrating Valentine’s day with a party. “We have a whole bunch of activities set up today,” said special needs worker Kennedy Anderson. “We are going to decorate some cookies, and a whole bunch of colouring. And if the weather’s nice we will get outside.”

“All you need is love, Red Roof Retreat’s slogan, indeed.

Sharon Burns

Special to The Local

**Cookies a heartfelt way to help Red Roof Retreat**

Cookies a heartfelt way to help Red Roof Retreat. (Supplied)

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**RiverBrink presents documentary on resilience of women**

Surrounded by evocative artwork such as haunting and sinister faces smooched with white, pink and blue makeup, and life-size skirt sculptures, director Roselyn Kelada-Sedra answered audience member questions after the screening of her award-winning documentary *Women of Resilience*.

At RiverBrink Art Museum in Queenston, Kelada-Sedra was surrounded by the art of four other Niagara-based artists from the SWFT (Supporting Women, Femme and Trans) Artist Group. Themes such as gender identity and queerness, trauma and family cycles of transformation and human connection are apparent in the sculptures, video art and wall hangings throughout several rooms of the museum.

Kelada-Sedra’s 45-minute film features three women in the Niagara region who have experienced trauma. The science of resilience is reflected in the film. “Trust,” said Kelada-Sedra, “is based on the understanding that no matter what comes, this relationship is solid. And one’s ‘circle of security’ is people that you can call when you’re angry or sad, people who have earned your trust. People who have proved over time that they are in it with you.”

Kelada-Sedra chose to make this documentary because she admires women of resilience and “always wondered how they get like that.” Her godmother and mother appear in the film.

“I care the most about women who have been through things and found a way to make their hearts bigger and their boots bigger and keep on walking,” she said.

“We have a misunderstanding about forgiveness, that it’s once. And you have to do it right away and it has to be 100 per cent done for real or it’s not real. And that’s not real. Forgiveness is every day, and that’s exhausting. It’s really hard, but if you can’t in one moment, you can try again in the next. If you cannot forgive her,” said Kelada-Sedra, “you can focus on healing yourself and try again later.”

Women of Resilience has won many accolades by esteemed film competitions around the world such as the Toronto International Women Film Festival and Cannes World Film Festival.

The artwork of Rajshree Jena, Mori McCrae, Luce Latour-Mooney and Rea Kelty represent a diverse range of perspectives and mediums, including drawing, painting, the traditional Indian folk-art form of Madhubani and sculpture.

A workshop on Indian Folk Art in a Mindful State with Rajshree Jena is scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 25.

The SWFT exhibit is still on display and is donate-what-you-can. For more information, please visit riverbrink.org.

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**RiverBrink presents documentary on resilience of women**

Film director Roselyn Kelada-Sedra was at RiverBrink Art Museum to screen and discuss her 45-minute documentary on the resilience of women. (Supplied)

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**At the Red Roof Retreat space in Cornerstone Community Church on Hunter Road were (back) program coordinator Christa Rawsthorne, cookie maker Jody Finn-Vermolen, Red Roof Retreat staff member Kennedy Anderson, student volunteer Lauren Manlow, and (front) Red Roof Retreat clients Kerry Finn and Kaitlin. (Sharon Burns)**

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**Sharon Burns**

Special to The Local

February 15, 2023

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**Cookies a heartfelt way to help Red Roof Retreat**

Cookies a heartfelt way to help Red Roof Retreat. (Supplied)
To celebrate the opening of their new Q Lounge, 124 on Queen Hotel and Spa is kicking off a new speaker series with an appearance by Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa. It was originally planned for Thursday, but has been rescheduled to March 15.

Director of marketing Alana Hurov feels the new lounge is the perfect spot in Niagara-on-the-Lake for the leaders of the community to come together on a regular basis to network and discuss important matters.

The lounge is a bright, open space with modern decor overlooking a spacious courtyard with a centrepiece fountain. It has the capacity to host between 50 and 70 people when all of the convertible walls are opened up. As well, Hurov says the floor-to-ceiling windows can also be opened to increase the capacity during warmer months.

"It's a real lounge atmosphere," says hotel general manager Eric Quesnel. "With this event, everything is going to be open. We have different types of tables throughout the room, and it's a place where it is easy to move from table to table.

"We want it to be a place for the locals to go to, to feel welcome," Hurov tells The Local, "to dress up, to have cocktails and great meals. We want people to enjoy spending time here, to feel that they have a place to gather in the Old Town." Hurov, who moved to Virgil with her family during the pandemic, says Zalepa is a perfect headliner to kick off what she plans will be a monthly event.

"He's a new Lord Mayor," Hurov says. "Being a local myself, it's important to hear what his plans are for the community. It makes sense to have him as our first speaker, to bring our community together.

When asked about future guests for the speaker series, Hurov is holding her cards close to her chest for the time being. But her extensive background in television and multimedia production, including stints with Rogers Sports and Media, HuffPost Studios, Shaw Communications, and CBC, Global and City Television, gives a hint as to some of the possibilities.

"We're in talks with some CEOs and leaders in our community and the region," says Hurov. "And maybe some other celebrities that I may be able to bring in from my previous life. I've reached out to my old friend George Stroumboulopoulos (Hurov produced his CBC talkshow) to see if he can come."

Hurov adds she's open to suggestions for future guests and holds out the possibility the series could become membership-based.

"My goal," she says, "is to make Niagara-on-the-Lake have higher-profile people do events. We've brought different event producers to the hotel to showcase the space, to see the luxury of our venue and its suitability for those types of events. We shouldn't have to go to Toronto or Hamilton for them when they can be right here in our backyard."

Hurov adds that proceeds from each date will go toward local charities. For the first session, the NOTL Youth Collective will be the beneficiary.

Guests will enjoy a four-course meal from Treadwell Cuisine and will be escorted on a tour of the hotel and spa area, as well. The event will take place March 15 from 7 to 10 p.m., and costs $175 plus tax and gratuities per person.

To book, send an email to orders@treadwellcuisine.com.

"It's really exciting to see what we can do with the space," says Hurov. "It's beautiful, modern and luxurious. Our own local people are the hosts, and they've put so much love into this place that I feel so strongly about helping them make this successful, to make it a beautiful spot for people in our community to enjoy."
New director chosen for Niagara Regional Native Centre

At the Feb. 8 special membership meeting a new board was elected and appointed for the Niagara Regional Native Centre. Newly appointed director Sean Vanderklis is hoping the change brings stability to a beloved organization.

The previous board was left with only four members in late 2022 after the centre’s executive director at the time, Karl Docksta-der, was escorted off the Airport Road property by board president Lacey Lewis and treasurer Wan-da Griffin. Three fellow members resigned from the board following that incident, leaving the organization with an insufficient number of directors to operate and qualify for provincial funding.

Vanderklis, a journalist and co-host with Docksta-der of the radio program One Dish One Mic, tells The Local that the remaining directors resigned on Feb. 8.

"Once they resigned, six new members were elected by our membership," he says. "And once they were in place, I was appointed to the board.

We currently have seven of nine vacancies filled, with two more remaining to be filled. They will probably be appointed at our next meeting."

Vanderklis feels that the native centre community was very clear and concise that they were under the leadership of the wrong leaders in the old regime. "They needed to go, unfortunately," he says. "At the beginning of the meeting it appeared they weren't going to, though. They seemed to be fighting tooth and nail to hold onto power. But our community broke into song, our women's hand drum singers sang for a good 15 to 20 minutes, I imagine as a form of healing, of making sure that we were all collectively together."

The new board is to be led by president Roxanne Buck, who has served in that position a number of times over the centre's existence. Her mother was one of the founding members of the native centre.

Brian Mac Aulay will serve as vice president. "He's part of our Silver Fox group, our older clientele," says Vanderklis. "He's been coming to our programs forever, and he brings a lot of historical knowledge, community knowledge that a younger member like me doesn't have."

Doug Paget is the new treasurer, and Elaina Jones is the new secretary. Activist Fallon Farinacci and Audrey Clark will join Vanderklis as directors.

"Out of our executive, three or four have past board experience specific to the Niagara Regional Native Centre," Vanderklis adds.

The dispute that arose following Dockstader's resignation did not identify the issue. "The dispute and the removal from his position left some rifts in the community that Vanderklis hopes can be healed with the new board."

"Our community is very small, very tight-knit," he points out. "The people that we were taking issue with are people that I grew up with. (Newly-re-signed board member) Bobbi Jones Japp is a childhood friend. I've hung out with Wanda Griffin outside of meetings. These are relationships we've been developing and fostering for years."

The fourth member who resigned at last Wednesday's meeting is Wendy Wilson.

As a community member, Vanderklis is hoping that another open meeting can be held in the near future for all members to voice their concerns.

"Ultimately the goal of this organization is to improve the quality of life for our people," he insists, "not just right now but for future generations. The legacy needs to continue. Despite any differences some of us may have had, it's incumbent upon us to have these tough discussions."

And, he says, he hopes to see those board members who resigned last Wednesday back at the centre.

"Wanda and I might have differences, but she has been one of the most community-focused board members we've ever had," he says. "Some staff members here consider Wanda to be their family. There are members of our community that feel bad about what happened to Wanda and Bobbi."

The issue, says Vanderklis, is that the old board wasn't following the proper process when it came to governance.

"I imagine that once some time passes, and some healing has happened, they will want to become more involved than they want to be right now," he adds.

The newly elected board meetings the last Tuesday of every month, which would mark Feb. 27 for their next one.

Before that, though, the new board hopes to meet with the provincial funders, with whom they are now in good standing with seven of the nine board positions filled.

"Our community is passionate," Vanderklis says. "Sometimes we have these disagreements that affect governance. Indigenous people historically use a consensus-building model as a method to navigate some of the bigger decisions, not the first-past-the-post model. I hope that we can look at having bylaws in place in the future that better represent our traditional governance structures."

Free Admission in February for residents of the Niagara Region

Town drops appeal of tree-cutting allegations

The town has decided to withdraw the appeal regarding the provincial offences violations under the Ontario Heritage Act at Bandwood Estate, on the three John Street E. properties and one in Charlotte Street.

The original charges arose from allegations that heritage features were damaged because of trees that were cut on the properties.

In October 2022, the courts decided that the case would no longer continue, the towns press release, sent out Tuesday, said.

Every individual has a right to be tried within a reasonable time frame, and the courts have provided guidelines concerning those timelines. Those accused need to be tried within 18 months for provincial court trials, unless there are exceptional circumstances, the news release says.

"In this circumstance, the accused was not able to have the trial within these prescribed timelines. Several factors contributed to the time delay, including the lack of judicial resources. On this basis, the town believes financial resources are better used in the interests of the public, and the appeal will not proceed."

When making its decision, the news release continues, "the town was also mindful of the high legal costs associated with an appeal on this matter," without any assurance of success.

The public may be assured that the town continues to value the conservation of heritage resources and will make the most of opportunities through Heritage Act and Planning Act applications.

After a closed session Friday, council voted on the matter of a provincial offence involving Solmar, but did not identify the issue.
Music Niagara celebrating its 25th season

Mike Balsom
The Local

When the first season of what was then called the Niagara International Chamber Music Festival was wrapping up 25 years ago, founder Atis Bankas was urged by his audiences to do it again the next year.

He heard the same thing the next year, and again the next year.

“I thought by then they would have known I wasn’t going anywhere,” he laughs.

Getting set to launch what is now Music Niagara Festival’s 25th year this summer, Bankas says it’s the perfect combination of the scenery, the history, the wineries and the Shaw Festival that have made it possible to reach this significant milestone.

“It was evident right from the start that this was a great place for classical music,” Music Niagara’s artistic director tells The Local. “It’s been a true labour of love.”

“Our audiences have grown with us over the years,” he adds, “and I feel we’ve expanded the boundaries of what is considered good music. We’ve presented jazz, Celtic, world music, choral music, a diverse lineup right from the start.”

With the season announcement just around the corner, Bankas is using the week of Valentine’s Day to announce a fundraising goal of $25,000 to appropriately mark Music Niagara’s milestone this year. He’s personally donating $12,500 of his own and looking to raise a matching amount and more by July 1, to ensure that this summer’s schedule of events is the best ever.

“It will be a terrific shot in the arm,” Bankas says, “to raise $25,000 this year. It will go a long way toward keeping the festival going.”

He holds out hope that Music Niagara can continue another 25 years, and looks forward to presenting an orchestral series some time in the future.

Bankas is promising a lineup of 15-plus concerts this summer, as well as a new Wine and Music series that will celebrate emerging musicians, something that has always been a part of the festival.

“Our academy has always been the backbone,” the violist tells The Local from the Ottawa airport, on his way to play New York City’s Carnegie Hall with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. “I actually started the school before I started the festival. I’m happy to have developed so many musicians over the years.”

The Wine and Music Series aims to support young, diverse and emerging musicians that Music Niagara has worked with in the past. As well, it will highlight a new generation of performers, including some from Ensemble Olfota, the Odin Quartet, the Toronto All-Star Big Band and students from The Royal Conservatory, where Bankas teaches. Concerts will take place at Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery, Chateau des Charmes and Ironwood Cider House.

Bankas missed presenting young musicians in masterclass settings during the pandemic, and is hoping to return to that now that concerts are back in full swing for 2023.

“Our young musicians have always been well-received by our audience,” he says. “Our masterclasses would be full with audiences watching teachers working with students. We hope to get back to those kinds of shows.”

Final arrangements are being made on booking the musicians and the venues for 2023, and should be complete in the next few weeks. A full lineup for the festival will be announced then.

Photos from Atis Bankas taken over the last 25 years: (clockwise, top left) Atis Bankas at St. Mark’s Church with Ukrainian musicians, including world-renowned violinist Oleh Krysa, his late wife, pianist Tatiana Tchekina, and young pianist Marianna Humetska; practicing at Henry of Pelham, in preparation for a gala performance; young students at Music Niagara’s Performance Academy at Niagara College — the violist was Bankas’ student Marya Krechkovsky who is playing with Pittsburgh Symphony now; and Bankas with his previous administrative assistant Kaylee Davidson. (Supplied)
Avery collects 50 boxes of food for Newark Neighbours

Mike Balsom
The Local

Last Wednesday, a day after his 10th birthday, Virgil’s Avery London filled the shelves of the Newark Neighbours food bank with donations from around the world.

Avery and his parents Mike and Krista loaded up the family van with an estimated $3,000 in food and household items, $750 in cash, $250 in Amazon gift cards and another $25 in M&M Food Market gift cards to drop off at Newark’s John Street location.

The collection was the result of Avery’s desire to donate to the food bank this year rather than receive gifts for his milestone birthday. Krista put out the call for donations last month via her TikTok account, thekristalondon, which has almost 600,000 followers.

Immediately, boxes from Amazon filled with items from Avery’s wishlist under the banner Frank’s Birthday Fundraiser (Frank is Krista’s nickname for her son), began to arrive at their door.

“Fifteen boxes was the kitchen table,” Krista tells The Local, “and covered all of our counters. People were sending diapers, and we had an insane amount of baby wipes. We were able to get it all in the van, but there was nowhere for me to sit, so I had to follow in my car.”

Many of the donations of products and cash came from Krista’s TikTok followers from around the world. In lieu of making an Amazon order, some opted to send e-transfers or simply make a payment to her PayPal account, which converted foreign currency into Canadian dollars.

“When we brought it all in, the bags and the boxes filled one entire row, and part of the food bank shelf area itself,” she adds. “There was no floor space left.”

“I don’t think we’ve ever had a donation of this size from one family,” says Newark Neighbours board chair Cindy Grant. “And I was shocked by how much. Krista told me it was 50 boxes, but I had no concept about how much that would be.”

“All we had to do was say it on the internet,” said an enthusiastic Avery, a Crossroads Public School student, “and snap, there was food at the door.”

Grant agrees that the nature of the donation sheds light on the potential of social media to be used to do some good in the world, and in the Niagara-on-the-Lake community.

“The concept of putting something on TikTok and having that kind of response, says Grant, “makes me realize Newark Neighbours has to get better with our own social media. I had a brief chat with Krista about it, and I hope to sit down with her to see if she can help us promote our upcoming move.”

The Local is currently in the process of finalizing the design for the interior of their new space in the old Lincoln Interiors building on Niagara Stone Road. Once that is done, they move on to the construction stage. Grant expects the move from John Street will take place either in late spring or early summer.

Although the shelves at John Street are now filled with Avery’s donation, by the time of the move those goods and much more will most likely have been distributed to families in need.

And despite the fact that Avery didn’t ask for any birthday gifts, Grant presented Avery with two Lego sets and an item that one of the food bank volunteers brought back for him following a trip to Ireland.

“We specifically wanted to thank him,” Grant says. “We knew it was his birthday, and we wanted to give him a gift as a show of appreciation for what he did. That was very important to us. He was so excited to be here Wednesday.”

“This is a real shot in the arm to see this amount of food come in at one time,” Grant continues. “It gives us hope, and it keeps us going. He is learning at a young age what it means to give, and hopefully Avery continues to have that spirit of generosity as he grows older and becomes an adult.”
Queens and Cider at Ironwood Friday

Pride Niagara and Ironwood Cider House are partnering to present Queens and Ciders at Ironwood’s Lakeshore Road site this Friday, Feb. 17.

Pride Niagara Ambassador Macy Manolo, Queen Mother of the Niagara Region Rhonda Richards and Empress Claudia Silva will be entertaining audience members. Hospitality manager Devon Ryback made sure to note that they have secured a DJ for after the performance.

Surrounded by art from local artists in Ironwood’s large second-storey loft, Robyn Brown, marketing and events manager for Ironwood said that “Ironwood’s connection with the District Tapas Bar in St. Catharines has shown us that we can offer the same level of entertainment.” The District has a pop-up restaurant at Ironwood.

“The performers are with Pride Niagara, a pride advocacy centre in Niagara,” said Brown. “We incorporate diversity into our events and we want everyone to know we are an inclusive, welcoming space.”

As for potential negativity, Brown said, “we have seen a couple comments on Facebook but this isn’t a deterrent for us.”

For more information please visit ironwoodcider.ca.

Macy Manolo, Rhonda Richards and Empress Claudia Silva will be performing at Ironwood Friday. (Supplied)
Seedy Sunday has something for gardeners at every level

**Penny Coles**
**The Local**

Whether you’re an experienced gardener, or more of a greenhorn wanting to learn, you’ll find what you’re looking for at the Master Gardeners of Niagara Seedy Sunday even.

And whether you know it or not, others may be looking for just the seeds you have to swap.

Bev Campeau, chair of Seedy Sunday, says there will be a large crowd of gardeners and volunteers available to help both those looking for seeds for their gardens, and others bringing seeds who may need some help labeling.

It’s typically more experienced gardeners who swap their seeds, since beginners don’t necessarily know how to collect seeds, says Campeau. However, “it’s about 50/50” for the people buying seeds and selling them.

A seed sale has become an addition to the swap, for those who are new gardeners.

There will be more than 2,000 seed packages for sale, at just 25 cents a package, adds Campeau.

Seeds will be sorted to ensure gardeners buy the right kind, including 200 different varieties of vegetables and 20 different kinds of native plant seeds good for pollinator gardens, such as milkweed and wildflowers, and even seeds for trees.

As Campeau explains, “your garden doesn’t have to be perfect to swap. We don’t care how the better the more the better, and if you add a couple this year, and a couple more next year, you’ll be providing your part of the environment.”

There will also be work shops and talks from experts, and opportunities to meet garden-related vendors selling items such as bee houses and organic pesticides, and to buy seeds from seed companies.

Talks throughout the day include Designing for Biodiversity; Benefits of Native Plants; Urban Homesteading; and “Tina’s A Painted Corn 16 Years In The Making.”

And, says Campeau, bringing the kids — there will be fun learning activities for them, and the kind of care the plant will need.

“An all beginning gardener would need to know is on the package, and we’ll fill in the information on seeds that are brought in,” says Campeau.

“We don’t want to discourage people from bringing in seeds. This event started with the idea of sharing seeds, and having a variety available. A seed sale has become an addition to the swap, for those who are new gardeners.”

If you bring your seeds in and put them into a black garbage bag and set it in the sun for a couple of weeks to kill the plants before re- plant, the seeds will remain dormant in the soil. You can later plant them in the garden and watch them grow.

There will also be work shops and talks from experts, and opportunities to meet garden-related vendors selling items such as bee houses and organic pesticides, and to buy seeds from seed companies.

Seeds will be displayed in colour-marked pots so gardeners will know what they’re purchasing.

**Sandra Ozkur**
**Special to The Local**

Invasive plants are non-native plants that have been introduced to North America either deliberately or by accident. They can grow out of control, causing environmental, societal and agricultural damage.

These non-native plants are invasive, so familiarize yourself with the most threatening ones in Ontario to avoid purchasing or sharing these plants with friends.

Betty Knight, a Master Gardener in Niagara-on-the-Lake, says, “The best way to eliminate invasive species is to never plant them in the first place. Invasive species can be transformed, reproducing rapidly, growing quickly, changing the biome of the soil and crowding out other plants. They are hard to remove once established.”

You may be surprised to learn that some of your favourite plants are indeed invasive. I have a lot of English ivy growing in my yard. It first, I liked it because it was green wall ground cover and didn’t require much care. However, it always came a thorny problem when it grew up the side of my house, onto my cedar, and across my wolf spider’s den, eventually choking out all the original flowers. It has been impossible to remove from my yard and it has gotten all over the property, I wish I had stopped it years ago.

When invasive species are confined to your yard, they may not seem like a problem. They can spread across the native plants, and then into your flower garden, and then into your vegetable garden, and then into your flower garden. It becomes a problem very quickly.

The use of herbicides is never recommended unless you have a landscape out of control, or are entangled with poison ivy.

Begin your attack by digging out the entire plant roots and rhizomes. Use a garden fork to loosen up the unrooted roots and rhizomes, and rake any remaining plant material into the garbage.

You may be surprised to learn that some of your favourite plants are indeed invasive species. English ivy is an invasive plant that can take over a garden and is hard to get rid of, (Sandra Ozkur)

**Buzz on Pollinators: Identifying, removing invasive plants**

“English ivy is an invasive plant that can take over a garden and is hard to get rid of,” says Campeau.

“If your tomatoes had a black spot on them, we can help you. If they’ve been damaged by an insect, we can help you identify what kind of insect,” says Campeau.

Refreshments and light snacks will be available for purchase throughout the day.

And, says Campeau, “the kids — there will be fun learning activities for them, such as planting a seed ‘to take it home, learn how to nurture it and see what happens. It will help kids learn what gardening is all about, sliced from aces as an orange. Maybe it will encourage them to grow some potted tomatoes or lettuce themselves.”

Seedy Sunday is on February 26, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., at St. Giles Church, 205 Linwell Rd., St. Catharines.

Admission is free and parking is available. Food donations for the local food bank will be collected.

For more information on seed classification, seed collection, native seeds and seed germination or on the event itself, visit the Master Gardeners of Niagara website: mgni-agara.com/seedy-sunday.
Interview with Hannah Allison

Q. What do you like about your “Hair-raising Experience” artwork?
A. I like all of the crazy lines in it and the detail on the shirt.

Q. What would be your perfect day in Niagara-on-the-Lake?
A. I think I would wake up and go to Sunset Grill. I would get chocolate chip pancakes. Then, I’d play with my dog for a bit. Then, I’d play on my iPad. I’d get Wendy’s for lunch and have a playdate with a friend. Then, I’d play on my iPad a bit more. Maybe I’d go to Silks for dinner? I included “waking up” in my answer because otherwise this wouldn’t work. Lol.

Q. What do you want to be when you grow up?
A. I think I would like to be a zoologist or an interior decorator. I love animals and I love designing things. Personally, I think I have great taste in style.

Q. What is your favourite food?
A. Panookies. Basically, it’s a big cookie cooked in a pan with ice cream and toppings. I had it at Boston Pizza.

Q. What is your favourite restaurant in Niagara-on-the-Lake?
A. Wendys by the highway. I just love Wendy’s!

Q. What is a big problem in the world that you’d like to change?
A. Probably war because so many innocent people die or get hurt. We have someone in my class that had to leave everything behind because of war. It’s very sad.

Q. What are 3 awesome things about yourself?
A. My creativity, my imagination, and I think I have pretty good reading abilities.

Q. What can we add to Niagara-on-the-Lake to make it better for kids?
A. An indoor pool that’s close to Virgil would be amazing! It would be good if it was close and open all year long.

Q. What is a unique talent you have?
A. I’m pretty good with animals. I know how to train dogs on how to give a paw.

Q. What do you like about Grade 4?
A. It’s not too hard and it’s not too easy. Also, I like that I get to be upstairs now and learn French and stuff.

Q. How do you feel about having another Hannah in your class?
A. I find it fun because if someone says “Hannah”, I can always say “yeah”... even if it’s not for me!
Women score with access to outdoor hockey rink

**Skating news includes bake sale, gold medal winner**

Three NOTL Skating Club members competed at the recent Hamilton Winter Chill competition. Danish athlete Daniela Medfor placed 6th in her STAR 4 U13 event; Jamie Doucet placed 4th in her STAR 4 O13 event; and Hailey Mitchell won the gold medal in her STAR 4 U10 event.

The NOTL Skating Club held a very successful bake sale fundraiser at the Meridian Credit Union Arena Saturday, organized by club volunteer Lollita Hale. More than 30 families donated baked goods and the table was overflowing with a great variety of items. Proceeds of the sale are going directly toward keeping the cost of skating programs down, says Darlene Dortono, who thanks all the volunteers who assisted with the sale. Behind the table are Yvonne Haines (club co-chair), Maria Orsini, Katharine Vanderkaay, Ophelia Xie, Ashleen Hale and Lollita Hale.

**Women score with access to outdoor hockey rink**

Sharon Burns Special to The Local

One good thing to come out of COVID for a group of Niagara-on-the-Lake friends has been the formation of a weekly outdoor women’s hockey game.

Several women now play in this regular Wednesday night game, including rink-owner Erin Rowaan, who had played for a co-ed team in the Virgil arena with the GHL, a co-ed, non-contact hockey league for adults with little or no hockey experience.

But in December of 2020, hockey, due to the pandemic, was cancelled.

“We always had a little rink on our front lawn,” said Rowaan. “Then we decided to put the boards up and it was amazing timing because we had to renovate the barn and decided to put the refrigeration in.” The rink, complete with lights, viewing platform with a fireplace, scoreboard and of course, Zamboni, “is an amazing timing because we had to renovate the barn and decided to put the refrigeration in.” The rink, complete with lights, viewing platform with a fireplace, scoreboard and of course, Zamboni, “is an amazing outdoor space to play hockey on,” she said.

“It’s nice that anyone from a beginner to someone with experience can play,” said Stephanie Willms, who may be the most experienced player on the ice. “I grew up playing hockey since hockey school, and I was playing in a women’s league in St. Catharines. After COVID I decided to try this and I enjoy it more.”

Karen Wiens said she had never played hockey as a kid, and two years ago joined the GHL to give it a try, “then COVID happened.”

Audrey Epp Neuhoef is also new to the game. “Last year I was at my son’s hockey school and another mom friend asked if I wanted to join an outdoor ladies hockey league. It seemed like a lot of fun. Baseball season was over. And if they can tolerate someone with no skills who doesn’t know how to play, then I was down.”

The Rowaan family — mom and dad Erin and Brian, and sons Hayden, 12, Charlie, 10, and Wesley, seven — have all been enjoying this front lawn rink since 2020. “All three boys are involved in hockey, and Brian has a weekly hockey night with his friends.”

Erin always wanted to play hockey growing up, “but there wasn’t a lot of opportunity like there is now for girls to play. I grew up learning how to skate on our ponds,” she said. Like many of her friends, the year she signed up for organized hockey, the season was cut short and she thought, “you know what? We have a rink. All my kids get to play, so why shouldn’t I play too?”

The Honey Fields Ladies Outdoor Rink Hockey was formed, named for the family business of bee-keeping and pollination across Niagara and Ontario.

Other players include Wendy Esteen, who, with Erin, played hockey for Eden High School. Laura Dick started playing as an adult. “This is a relatively new sport for me and I love it,” said Dick. “It’s an authentic hockey experience. This is what we do in Canada. It’s unique. We have a long enough winter to get a long enough season to play.”

However, Wiens noted, “it’s totally unmotivating when it’s dark and cold. But you know you’re going to love it once you’re out there, and it’s a break from home life and kids, and you can put all your stress away.”

For Epp Neuhoef, the team’s music playlist curator, the outdoor rink “is the only reason I would stay inside an arena. The lights, the stars, the music, are the best of winter.”

Willms admits it is fairly rare to find outdoor women’s hockey and this is “more of a social night out.” Epp Neuhoef appreciates that “everyone is so supportive. I just started last year and people are cheering me on. Everyone is so pumped up.”

One day Erin may expand the friends-only pick up league into something more, but for now, the ice is getting plenty of use. Before the Honey Fields took to the ice on Wednesday, dad Brian was spending some one-on-one time with Wesley, developing his hockey skills. Wesley implies that he plays a lot of hockey here, “not every day, but.” His favorite part of outdoor hockey is that he “can just walk out the front door and I’m on my rink.” He also enjoys the time on the ice with his dad, and now, his hockey mom Erin.

Playing outdoors is a bonus for a group of women who love to play hockey together.

Karen Wright has moved her tennis lessons for kids from the community centre to St. Davids, and has expanded the Thursday lessons to Sunday as well. This Sunday, with the help of Shirley Madsen, she invited some of the children who are recent arrivals from Ukraine to a class, at no charge, providing them with tennis racquets and balls. The kids all had a great time, Wright says. Her mission in life is to give back to others through tennis, and this helps her fulfill her goal. (Shirley Madsen)
The Predators finally beat Roadrunners

Mike Balsom
The Local

The Niagara Predators finally got their top-three teams monkey off their backs Monday when they defeated the third place Durham Roadrunners 4-3 at the Delpark Homes Centre in Oshawa.

Goalie Jared Dohlan put the Predators in the lead just over two minutes into the second period, with assists from Ethan Boyd and Nolan Wyers. A minute later, the Preds blew leads three times and allowed the Flyers to tie the game with 15 seconds remaining. As a result, they had a man advantage for two minutes of the overtime period but failed to capitalize on the opportunity.

"We got outworked," said head coach Kevin Taylor after the game Friday. "Guys who were supposed to step up their game tonight didn't step up. They weren't playing like they wanted to.

In Friday's loss to the Streetsville 51-30 Sunday, but three of the four Streetsville goals were on power plays, leaving Clausen almost unprotected on some of the Flyers' attempts.

The Predators dominated in the first period Sunday, but seemed to tire out as the game progressed. Perhaps it was the fact that they were in the middle of their busiest seven-game stretch of the season, with five games on their schedule, including four in a row from Friday to Monday, and practices last Wednesday and Thursday.

"It's a lot of hockey," said a frustrated Taylor, "we're on the ice 12 times in 12 days.

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NOTL wrestlers bring home provincial hardware

Mike Balsom
The Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake teen Charlotte Bowslaugh, Ezekiel Ivri, and Jorja Lepp all came home from the Ontario Winter Games last weekend with provincial medals around their necks.

Bowslaugh, a Grade 10 student at Eden High School, won gold in the girls 60 kg division, while visual artist and best friend Lepp took home bronze in the same category. Ivri, in Grade 10 at A.N. Myer Secondary School, also captured bronze in the boys 51 kg category.

Larry Grieve, one of their coaches with the Brock Junior Wrestling Club, wasn’t surprised to see Bowslaugh come home from the Ontario Winter Games last week with provincial medals around her neck.

“This is strong,” Grieve told The Local at the club’s Monday night workout at Thorold Secondary School, “one of the strongest kids here physically. She’s new to the sport, but she’s done jiu jitsu and kickboxing before. And she comes from a wrestling background. Her father wrestled, and her aunt was a wrestler and national judo champion.”

“Pembroke was so much fun,” Bowslaugh said. “It was a great experience. We got to experience the team duals, and the individual matches. I wrestled five times during the weekend. I really wanted to win. I felt more confident in this tournament than I ever have.”

On her way to her gold medal, Bowslaugh was defeated in both the team and individual matches on the weekend. She usually wrestles at 65 kg, so she was one of the lighter competitors at the Winter Games. She is also quite tall, which is often a hindrance rather than an advantage on the mat.

“My stance is usually a lot higher than other people, so I have to really work on getting lower,” agreed Bowslaugh. “I usually end up standing a lot because I’m uncomfortable down low. My height is good for lifting shorter people off the ground, though, because I can lift them a lot higher.”

“A lot of the best kids and next door neighbours in rural NOTL competed in the same weight class last weekend. It was a tough tournament,” Gawrie said of the past weekend. “I was dominating my first (individual) match, I was up-6. But I was going for a pin, and my arm slipped out near the end of the match, and I got re-rolled near the end and it cost me the match.”

He made up for that mistake in his bronze medal match later that day. “I wanted to finish it quickly,” explained Ivri. “I got a quick takedown and I finished the match with a pin in the first round.”

Like Bowslaugh and Lepp, this is Ivri’s first year competing on the mat for his high school. In his school season so far, he has won his weight class in all but one of the five tournaments he participated in.

“We really encourage kids to do both,” Grieve explained. “The kids who are wrestling both, eventually. "

Ivri wrestled, eventually. “It was a tough tournament. I tried a couple of the other 30 high-school wrestlers, as well as some of the other 30 high-school aged Junior Badgers, through preparations to compete at the Southern Ontario Secondary Schools Association (SOSA) championships taking place Thursday, Feb. 23 at Grimsby’s Blessed Trinity Catholic Secondary School. The Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations (OFSAA) follows that two weeks later.

“It’s training hard for that,” Ivri says about next Thursday. “I’m going to remember the mistakes I made at the Winter Games, and try to learn from them and not repeat them at SOSA. I also have a winning mindset coming into the matches.”

Grieve says Ivri’s 10 years of experience are an asset for a wrestler of his age, especially when he comes up against less seasoned competitors.

“He’s very quick, very flexible,” Grieve said Monday. “Most kids in his age group don’t have as much experience. He’s very coachable, he’s like a sponge.”

Following March Break, Ivri will be flying out to Britain with seven others from Junior Badgers to compete at the Canadian Nationals.

And, on a smaller set of mats, by the way, another set of Brock coaches were working some of the six- to 12-year olds through some exercises as well. One of them was Zacharakh, Ezekiel’s nine-year-old brother, surely on his way toward following in his older brother’s footsteps.

Charlotte Bowslaugh wrestles her friend, Jorja Lepp.

Jorja Lepp (left) wrestles an opponent at her Monday practice. (Photos by Mike Balsom)
OBITUARY


Shirley was a dedicated member of Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124 where she spent many hours volunteering specifically baking, with the Ladies’ Auxiliary. Cremation has taken place, interment at a future date at Pleasantview Memorial Gardens.

PETER JANZEN
1954-2023

Surrounded by the love of his family, Peter passed away on February 10, 2023 at NHS Niagara Falls, in his 69th year. He will be deeply missed by his loving wife, Wendy (nee Wiens), beloved daughter J (Rainier) Jabs, and cherished granddaughter Ansley.

He will be sadly missed by his sister Anna (Rick Andres) and their children; brothers and sisters-in-law Eleanor (nee Wiens), beloved daughter Jennifer (Rainer) Jabs, Henry (Shirley) Wiens and many nieces and nephews. Also mourning his passing is his half-sister Senda (Will) Kuskova and their family in Germany. Predeceased by his parents, Dietrich and Katharina (Paetkau) Janzen. Half-sister Senda, in-laws Jake and Katie Wiens, and dearest friend John Goertzen.

Visitation will be held at Niagara United Mennonite Church on Thursday, February 16th, from 2:00-4:00pm and 6:00-8:00pm. Funeral service will be held at Niagara United Mennonite Church on Friday, February 17th, at 10:30am, with reception to follow.

Click Online condolences at tallmanfuneralhomes.ca

Tallman Funeral Homes has been entrusted with the arrangements.

Memorial donations may be made to the Mennonite Central Committee.

In Memoriam in our Classifieds, Deadline is Tuesdays at 1 p.m.

To place an Obituary or In Memoriam in our Classifieds, please contact Julia at: julia@notllocal.com or 905.934.1040

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