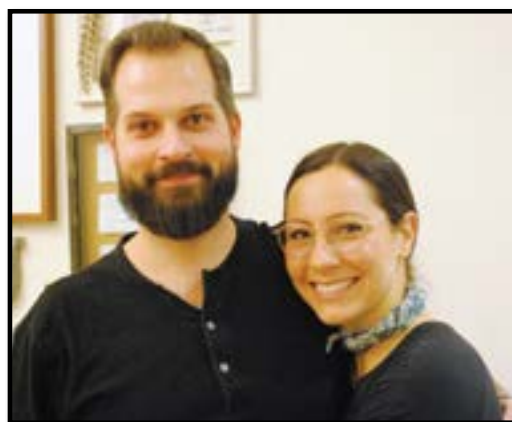


# The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL



Young local couple choose NOTL over world

page 14

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notllocal.com FEBRUARY 21, 2019 Volume 1 • Issue 6

## Uphill battle on Family Day



Sharon Burns, Hannah Burns, Catherine Dubois, and Rob Burns with his grizzly, snowy fake beard were out on Family Day tobogganing by the Fort George hill. The locals say they love taking their sleds to the hill when it snows. (Fred Mercnik)

## Farm worker calls Niagara home year-round

By Lauren O'Malley  
The Local

"I know what I'm doing, I'm confident in it, well confident. Some people around here think I grow the best grapes."

Linford "Dougie" Hall is a serene and self-assured man. He first came to Niagara-on-the-Lake from Linstead, Jamaica on June 5, 1978, on the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, and has been working in vineyards ever since. He

went back to Jamaica off-season until 2005, when he decided to stay in Canada. "My work is here," he says.

Hall just celebrated his 65th birthday ("I feel pretty good"), and continues to enjoy the hard work and great reward of vineyard management at Coyote's Run Estate Winery.

"I know all about the grapes," says the compact and elegant man, removing his well-worn baseball cap. "I learned it all in the field." Hall started at Stonechurch Vineyards (now

Small Talk Vineyards), and was patiently trained by then-owner Lambert Hunse. "He taught me everything I know," the sincere man says with gratitude and respect.

Hall moved from Stonechurch to Coyote's Run in 2012 — the same year he became a Canadian citizen. "It was hard to leave there and come here. Hank [Hunse, owner of Small Talk] came two years ago and asked me to come back. He said there's a job for me there anytime." The opportuni-

ty at Coyote's Run was worth it though, and has paid off. "I was hired as a tractor driver and experienced vineyard person, and was promoted to vineyard manager."

The field-schooled viticulturist is proud of his clean vineyards, and his clean record.

"People come from Niagara College to see what we're doing," he says. "How come your vineyards are so clean? What are you doing here?"



Linford "Dougie" Hall is the vineyard manager at Coyote's Run winery, and knows every vine as if it were family. (Lauren O'Malley)

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

# Lizt Alfonso DANCE CUBA

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# Council crafting response to governance review

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

Lord Mayor Betty Disero has asked councillors to help her and Town staff prepare a position on governance for the provincial government.

The Province is looking at 82 Ontario municipalities, including the upper tier of Niagara and its 12 lower-tier governments, for cost-saving opportunities and ways to deliver services more efficiently.

There are several possible outcomes of a municipal review, Disero said, including amalgamation of municipalities uninterested in giving up their identity and being absorbed by a larger entity. But in her experience

as a politician in Toronto through the 1990s round of amalgamation, it didn't produce the expected cost savings.

That's not to say there aren't ways to operate more efficiently, Disero said, and Niagara should embrace the opportunity to look at efficiencies, but she wishes it weren't under the threat of amalgamation.

"I'm not trying to fear-monger, but my experience with amalgamation is that everything went to the highest cost for the lowest level of services."

Put a group of unions together to combine service delivery, "and nobody says we'll take the lower amount," she said, "so the service level deter-

iorates because you have to look at other ways of saving."

Coun. Stuart McCormack, living and working in Ottawa at the time of its amalgamation, said he experienced the same outcome — increased costs for more full-time councillors, and reduced levels of service delivery.

Disero says she isn't interested in battling with the Province, and is happy to be part of a review that could lead to more efficient, better services.

But cutting out a local council or even reducing the number of councillors in NOTL, who make \$13,000 a year, isn't going to offer significant savings, she said

"If that's the intent, as a symbolic gesture, so be it, but the real savings is in looking at service delivery throughout the region," she said.

There are services the Region provides "really well," said Disero, and some which are best left to the 12 municipalities, while there are others that to her fall into a grey area.

"I'd list services in three columns," she said.

On one side would be services local municipalities do a good job of delivering, such as looking after roads, planning, and building permits.

On the other side she'd put housing, health, social services and emergency services, which the Region does well.

In the middle are water and waste water, policing, and garbage collection, expensive items about which she is undecided — possibly the local municipalities could do a better job. "I think we should start having that discussion," Disero said.

She and Town CAO Holly Dowd met recently with two men sent by the Province to talk to representatives from the 82 municipalities, with a goal of making recommendations by summer.

During a half-hour meeting with Michael Fenn and Ken Seiling, Disero said the men listened without sharing any information about what might be in the cards for Niagara.

"They didn't say much at all. They're tasked with conducting this review and putting recommendations before cabinet. They're just listening at the moment, without preconceived notions."

The outcome of the



Lord Mayor Betty Disero (Penny Coles)

## Zalepa looking on bright side of provincial report

**By Penny Coles**  
The Local

What would a good governance model look like for Niagara-on-the-Lake?

One that leaves the all-important planning decisions in the hands of locals, said NOTL's regional councillor.

The upper-tier discussion about preparing a position for the provincial governance review hasn't begun, but there will be definitely be a conversation, said Gary Zalepa.

And he believes it should be a collaborative effort with the 12 Niagara municipalities. "I think it's important we work together on what we take to the Province."

Niagara is "pretty unique" in Ontario, with different communities requiring different approaches to governance, he said. That needs to be reflected on any decision presented by Niagara.

He thinks local people make better decisions about their municipalities, especially when it comes to planning decisions, "but that doesn't mean it has to be the exact same model as we have now. It could be a Niagara hybrid solution," said Zalepa.

"We could take advantage of the many things we do better together, and still have some things we do better locally."

The key point in preparing a response to the provincial governance review is "what we're doing now that we can do better," he said.

If it's all about cost-sav-

ings, "that's a suspect reason for doing this," he added — cost savings have not been the result following past amalgamations.

"That would be a futile exercise. I'm hoping the reason is improving government, and how people interact with government."

He agrees with Lord Mayor Betty Disero that there would not be significant cost-savings by reducing the number of part-time politicians. "That's a false truth," he said.

In addition, "part-time local politicians are really connected to their communities, and are much more responsive and better at making decisions. I'm not in favour of one amalgamated municipality. I don't think that makes any sense."

He points to the district school boards and the Local Health Integration Network, saying they don't do a good job of representing the small municipalities well.

"The failure of the school board in Niagara-on-the-Lake is proof that bigger is not better."

Referencing the strong local agricultural industry, Zalepa said, "NOTL has the most concentrated tender fruit land in the province, and the number of small farms makes us different than the rest of Ontario."

NOTL also has natural heritage and unique built heritage as major driving forces in town, he said. "I can't imagine NOTL not being one of the 12 municipalities. If I was running Ontario, why would

I do that?"

But an opportunity to look at a regional planning process could have a positive impact on NOTL, one of the most heavily regulated areas in the province, with several layers of regulatory bodies — including the upper-tier Region, the Niagara Escarpment Commission, the Greenbelt Plan and other provincial policies.

"This is an opportunity to do something that would benefit the Niagara region, but still allow municipalities to make their own decisions, with a planning department resourced and staffed to be shared, but with decisions to be made locally. It would bring costs down for growth and development. It could help with affordable housing. There are strong reasons to do something like that, and that might be what the Province has in mind," said Zalepa.

In the long run there could be a solution that would be good for NOTL and for Niagara, he said.

"Twenty years from now, it could be something we would look back on and see as better for all of us."



Gary Zalepa, NOTL's regional councillor

review "could be anything," she said — four large municipalities, 12 local municipalities and one service board, one big city, or any other combination.

She said she is glad council is willing to start a discussion locally, to put their thoughts together "for our little corner of the world, and to provide some suggestions for streamlining. We have a couple of months to do this, so we have to start the ball rolling. The sooner we get started talking about it the better."

Councillors were asked to submit questions for relevant information or suggestions to Dowd by the end of last week.

With the number of visitors NOTL gets each year it needs to keep its unique identity, not have amalgamation turn it into another suburb, Dis-

ero said. She is also concerned about NOTL, with its relatively low \$1-million debt, having to take on responsibility for the higher debts of other municipalities, such as Pelham, with its \$30-million liability.

"But it's really difficult to comment on anything until we find out what we're dealing with," she said.

If municipalities had been given a provincial plan and asked to come up with a business case of their own to accomplish it, rather than having the threat of amalgamation hanging over them, "we would have been able to work without fear."

Along with Niagara, the Province is reviewing Halton, York, Durham, Waterloo, Peel, Muskoka District, Oxford County, the County of Simcoe and their lower-tier municipalities.

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# Official plan approval expected by April

## Dock Area residents have concerns about lack of protection for their neighbourhood

By Penny Coles  
The Local

After years in the making and a newly-elected council determined to see its timely completion, the final approval of the Town's official plan is within reach, but Dock Area residents, fiercely protective of their neighbourhood, are not happy with what they've seen in it.

It includes a secondary plan for the Dock Area, which stretches from the Melville Street town-owned dock to King Street and the beach at Queen's Royal Park, but residents were dismayed to learn last week that some of what they thought would be protected in the plan is not.

Two open houses were held at the community centre last Wednesday, and a public meeting will be held Monday, leading to the adoption of the new official plan, which has been under development since 2015.

It replaces a document approved in 1994, and when passed by council, anticipated by the end of April, it will be sent to the Region for its approval.

The purpose of it, said consultant Rick Hunter at last week's open house, is to "reflect local

priorities, needs and aspirations."

It has to be consistent with provincial planning policies, he said, and some of the delay has been due to the 2017 reviews of the provincial Growth Plan, Greenbelt Plan and Niagara Escarpment Plan, all of which impact the local official plan.

There have been several drafts presented in recent years — one in 2015, three in 2016 and the latest in December 2018, which incorporates comments made about earlier drafts, said Hunter.

It will still be an "interim situation," Hunter said, while the Region completes its growth management review now underway.

The two meetings drew about 100 residents, who were given a brief presentation outlining the process to date, with consultants and planning staff on hand to answer questions.

One of the areas of concern mentioned by residents at both meetings was the town's Dock Area which, planning director Craig Larmour explained, has three documents outlining potential development of the neighbourhood.

The official plan had an amendment approved in 2014

to incorporate the Dock Area secondary plan, but council also approved a master plan in 2015, called the Dock Area Public Realm Landscape Design Concept. Residents remember the more recent process, and pointed out discrepancies in the plans.

The secondary plans, which include those for St. Davids, Queenston and Glendale, as well as the Dock Area, form part of the official plan and are binding.

The Dock Area master plan is not part of the official plan — which is all very confusing, almost dizzying, given that in some cases they appear to be contradictory, says Dock Area resident Paul Shepherd.

He was concerned to learn at the meeting that issues he thought were settled about the future of his neighbourhood are not, or if they are, not in the way most residents would want them to be.

"A lot of what shows up in the secondary plan isn't what we agreed on in the latest discussion," said Shepherd.

For example, he was surprised to learn the secondary plan calls for the paving of a path along the waterfront, which residents had asked to

be left in a natural state.

It shows more development, and larger houses, when many residents thought they would be protected from large homes that overpower their smaller neighbours, he said.

"There are a lot of other bits and pieces, such as changes to road patterns. It seems the official plan is not protecting the Dock Area in the way

we expected it would."

He was disappointed to learn, after following up with the planning director, that the master plan, which best reflects what most residents want for their neighbourhood, is not a binding document, he said.

While he was also told the secondary plan would be reviewed, "I'm concerned we're relying on a review that will

come after, of a document that now includes some items we're not happy with now."

The statutory public meeting under the Planning Act will be held Feb. 25, during the committee-of-the-whole meeting which begins at 6 p.m. in the Town Hall.

Public comments must be received by the Town by March 15.



Dock Area resident Paul Shepherd indicates his concerns for his neighbourhood to Lord Mayor Betty Disero at a recent meeting to discuss the draft official plan. (Penny Coles)

## Strategic plan will go ahead, with a slight delay

### Councillors unable to agree on consultant to help them through the process

By Penny Coles  
The Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake councillors will develop a strategic plan to guide Town decisions through the next four years and longer, but it will be a little behind schedule, while councillors sort out who they want to help guide them through the process.

The strategic plan is commonly one of the first tasks undertaken at the beginning of a council term. It sets out priorities against which council decisions are measured, and the process is customarily done with the aid of a consultant who specializes in collaboration on such a plan.

At the committee-of-the-whole meeting early in February, councillors debated a staff recommendation that outlined quotes from consulting companies ranging from \$23,000 to \$52,500. Staff recommended consultant Bill Winegard of Municipal Strategic Planning Associates be retained, at a cost of \$26,000, but Coun. Wendy Cheropita suggested a more thorough look at other companies.

Cheropita, who has experience in leading strategic plans, said face-to-face meetings with those who had provided quotes would be helpful. Another municipality had recommended a different company based on a positive experience, she said. Although some councillors

wanted to go with the staff choice, the majority voted to ask all three who had quoted for the work to come to council and make a presentation about their services. The three were scheduled to appear before council last week. But in the interim, Disero said she thought about the process council had approved and felt it wasn't appropriate to have one consultant come up after another to sell their services in a public forum. "I don't think you do business that way," she said.

The first one will come up and say 'I can offer you this,' and the next one comes up and makes a better offer, and the third one will top that, she said, and that didn't sit right with her.

Before Monday's meeting, she contacted each councillor and explained her concern, with the exception of Gary Burroughs, whom she couldn't reach before the meeting.

She didn't want to drag the consultants to town to make presentations that weren't going to happen, so she cancelled them, with the agreement of all but Burroughs, who questioned her decision.

Council voted and defeated the staff recommendation to hire Winegard, and also defeated a motion by Cheropita to hire another consultant.

"So no strategic plan," said an obviously frustrated Disero, leading to some comments on social media that council had chosen not to proceed with an

important tool that would help guide them in making future decisions. That is not the case, said Disero.

"There will definitely be a strategic plan, and it will be done right. We don't want a one-day session, without taking the time to talk to staff and the public, and to make good decisions."

Council just hasn't agreed on the consultant who will lead the process, she said. "There were questions on both sides."

Cheropita gave council notice she would make a motion regarding the strategic plan, and although the process has been slightly delayed, it is likely to begin in March, said Disero.

In the meantime, the lord mayor is working on a work plan for 2019, "so everyone knows who is doing what and when it's supposed to be done," she said.

For example, the official plan is targeted to be presented April 29 for final approval, although depending on public comments, it could be delayed. A discussion for long- and short-term housing rentals is also going to be scheduled in her work plan, she said, so members of the community will know about it ahead of time.

Disero will give councillors a chance to approve or amend it, hopefully at the next committee-of-the-whole meeting.

"I think it's important to tell the public what we're doing in 2019, and then be accountable to them," she said.

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# NOTL airport hoping to attract even more traffic

## Number of scheduled flights and private planes both increasing

By Penny Coles  
The Local

Thanks to expansions at the Niagara District Airport, Niagara-on-the-Lake is becoming a destination for the rich and famous, at least at its gateway.

Use of the Niagara District Airport has grown significantly in recent years, but plans are to increase traffic, build more hangars, and further improve the treatment of VIPs who fly their private jets into NOTL.

Residents would be surprised at the number of very high-profile visitors to the area who arrive in their private planes at the local airport, says Coun. Gary Burroughs, newly appointed to the airport commission. It manages the facility on behalf of NOTL, Niagara Falls and St. Catharines, and is made up of nine members responsible for strategic direction, oper-

ating policies, developing and overseeing a budget and appointing the airport manager.

The regularly-scheduled FlyGTA flights between the Niagara airport and Billy Bishop in Toronto have increased, and once its third year of service is completed and passenger targets are met, said Burroughs, the airport becomes eligible for “big dollars” in federal funding to cover capital projects for improvements. The airport has a capital budget of \$326,000 for 2019, funded by the three municipalities, and a proposed operating budget of almost \$775,000.

FlyGTA expects to expand its schedule, which is mostly aimed at business commuters. Its fleet of eight planes fly Niagara-to-Toronto four times most weekdays, with two flights each way scheduled for weekends.

“The demand has increased significantly,”

said Burroughs. “This is totally a success story.”

The airline advertises a flight of 12 minutes, “with a stunning view.”

“More and more people are trying it. You can get to Toronto in the morning, attend a meeting and come home at noon. It’s very comfortable, and a really great experience.”

There is a 24-hour, phone-ahead customs clearing service available for International flights landing, said Burroughs, and there are “a large number of private jets coming in. Names aren’t recorded, but you’d be surprised by who is flying into NOTL,” he said. “I’m told Mick Jagger has landed here, and there are a lot of big players, business owners and industry leader who come for meetings. Some don’t even leave the airport — they have their meetings here and then fly off. It’s quite a change for the airport.”



FlyGTA offers four flights weekdays from Niagara District Airport to Billy Bishop Airport in Toronto, and two on the weekends. (Fred Mercnik)

It’s that private plane traffic driving the need for VIP airside service improvements, he said.

It was \$11 million in federal funding that allowed for recent improvements leading to regularly scheduled flights, he said, but that was only the beginning.

“We’re hoping the new Regional council won’t be so hung up on partisanship, and will support the continued expansion of

the airport. We can’t be a successful region without a successful regional airport. It’s a real resource for Niagara.”

The airport is a “long way from 737s” flying in, said Burroughs — its plans for expansions include more hangar space for people who are moving to Niagara and need space for their planes. “We need dozens more — as soon as we can build them, we can rent them

out,” said Burroughs.

As Pearson in Toronto reaches its flight capacity, a group of 10 airports is working to prepare for a time when they could take over some of the traffic.

“Our part of it is small, but there is a future for growth. Projections for the future are terrific, and we’re doing what needs to be done in the right time frame,” said Burroughs.



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## Construction on Mewburn Bridge to begin soon

### Completion should ease traffic congestion through St. Davids

By Penny Coles  
The NOTL Local

A much-discussed route to ease traffic in and out of Niagara-on-the-Lake is a step closer to becoming a reality.

A decade ago, Concession 6 was well-travelled as a route to and from Niagara Falls. It connects with Mewburn Road south of Warner Road, by way of an old, narrow and crumbling bridge owned by CN, closed since 2009 for safety reasons.

Since then, traffic through the St. Davids intersection at York Road and Four Mile Creek Road has increased significantly, residents say. The pressure at that four-way stop intersection is expected to ease once the

bridge is rebuilt.

Ron Tripp, interim Regional CAO, at council recently to provide an update on the NOTL sewage treatment plant, was asked about progress on the Mewburn Bridge.

“What’s actually happening,” questioned Lord Mayor Betty Disero.

The project “has been tendered and awarded by the city of Niagara Falls,” Tripp said, explaining Niagara Falls will be managing construction. “It’s moving forward.”

Both Concession 6 and Mewburn are local roads, he said, and Niagara Falls has plans to upgrade their portion as far as Mountain Road once the bridge construction is complete.

The long delay in replacing the bridge was

first to determine who was going to pay for it — CN was willing only to replace the narrow bridge that was there, while both NOTL and Niagara Falls said it needed to be wider for today’s traffic.

The financing has been in place for the bridge replacement since 2017, and design was completed last year, with a scheduled construction start expected last December. It is now projected to begin this winter.

NOTL has committed \$250,000 toward the \$5 million bridge reconstruction, while CN has now agreed to contribute \$1.5 million. The remainder of the project will be shared by the Region and the City of Niagara Falls.





High school kids can be dropped off at the community centre cafe, where they can do homework, stay warm and even have a bite to eat while they wait to be picked up. (Lauren O'Malley)

## Late bus for kids into after-school activities

By Lauren O'Malley  
The Local

Maybe you don't know about "late buses" because you don't have a kid in high school; or because your kid in high school didn't choose to share that little piece of information with you. Because maybe they prefer to have you pick them up at school after band/football practice.

Late buses are available to deliver high school students back into Niagara-on-the-Lake from public high schools in St. Catharines and Niagara Falls. The service is organized — as is all public school bus transit — by Niagara Student Transportation Services.

Heather Kyle, operations manager at NSTS, explains that buses are scheduled to wait at the schools for whichever group has scheduled them. "It's a skeletal service meant to help kids who stay for extracurricular programs," she says. It's not the easiest service to plan, in that there

might be several groups at a school needing the later retrieval, and some buses answer to several schools.

That's just the collection part. Then there's the drop-off.

Obviously it's not feasible, having waited for several groups at several schools, for the buses to drop students off on their doorsteps. So the service attempts to find centralized points, convenient spots for several kids to either wait for parents to collect them, or make their way home safely on their own.

One such spot was the strip mall at the corner of Thorold Stone Road and Four Mile Creek Road. Kathryn Hoskiw's teenaged son would be dropped off at the mall on cold winter evenings after rowing practice, but she might not be able to collect him for over an hour. "It wasn't a safe or realistic walking distance to home," says the working single parent.

They say genius is connecting things that seem obvious

but have never been linked. Like asking if the late bus could stop at the community centre. In this case, Hoskiw is the genius. "I thought the most logical place is where there's a library, a cafe, and a gym, open until 8 or 9 p.m.," she says. "It just made sense. It's a safe spot with resources where they could do homework, work out, and so on."

Kyle says, "We set and change the routes based on requests—we don't always say yes. But if there is not an existing stop nearby [to the student's home] we take a look at the route to see what's close." In the case of the community centre, it made sense for a few students, so Hoskiw's request was approved.

"If more parents knew about it maybe more kids could participate in extracurricular activities," says Hoskiw optimistically.

School administration staff should be able to provide information on any late buses at your child's high school.

## A 'good man and great teacher'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

I always come out with clean berries, no fungus, no bugs — just clean berries. Everyone says it." He cites some important names in the industry: "Thomas Laszlo, [former winemaker at Stonechurch] walks in the vineyard, says he has never seen anything like this, not even bugs or fungus on the leaves. Even Ron [Giesbrecht, faculty and co-ordinator of Niagara College's wine programs] says it's super-clean, pristine clean," he says with great satisfaction.

The father of four (aged 19 to 31) says, "I think I'm a nice guy — I don't break rules. I got my driver's licence in 1979 — not one ticket since." He recounts with pride, "I was pulled over by a cop a few years ago. He told me I was speeding, and I knew I wasn't, because I never speed. He took my driver's licence and scanned it and said, 'This guy is so clean.' He let me go."

One of Hall's sons is a chemical engineer, currently working at the winery until he lands a more permanent job. One of his daughters is an ultrasound technician. His offspring seem to have inherited Hall's clear, logical mind.

Even Hall's fingernails are clean: He met and wooed his second wife, Mary, at her nail salon, where he would go regularly to get manicures. They've been married for five years now. Hall feels short and well-maintained nails are a crucial aspect of vineyard management, where any fungus, insect or residue could be tracked from one vine to another. He flashes his strong and immaculate hands, fingers that can sense the life and health of a plant through simple touch.

Part of keeping healthy vines is maintenance and dedication, Hall believes. He is often found on the property as early as 4:30 a.m., and on weekends. "I scout the vineyards every weekend, do all the tractor driving myself," he says. "I keep chemicals to a minimum, and check the berries. I follow

labels and weather."

In the weather department, this year has been a doozy. Hall has been monitoring the vines to determine whether or not they have survived the brutal cold snaps, as well as the ice and warm spells.

He explains the process: "I went to each block and collected 10 canes with 12 buds on each at random from across the block," he says. "I put all the canes in water and left them for four or five days, until I could see the buds swelling up — then I cut them open to see which ones were dead, and which ones were alive. This way I can tell right away how many canes are alive or dead in any vineyard."

It looks like the brutal winter hasn't done as much damage as it might have: most of the varietals at Coyote's Run are at an 85 per cent or higher success rate. Hall has a plan to mitigate any losses. "If there are dead buds on a vine I will leave more when pruning, to compensate. I might have to leave a longer cane, but I can still compensate," he says confidently.

While in the summer and harvest seasons Hall runs a staff of 10 to 18 people, he has plenty to do throughout the winter too. "I'm busy here all year around — I'm responsible for all of the machinery, servicing the tractor and ATVs. All the machines I use I maintain myself, winterize them, put them away," he says.

The fifth of 11 children, Hall makes time to visit his friends and family in Jamaica regularly. "I have lots of sisters and brothers there. I miss it sometimes — especially now, in February," he laughs, looking out over the property seized in ice. "At one point I thought maybe I'd retire to Jamaica, but now more and more it's no."

While he has siblings in Jamaica, Hall's family is here in Niagara. He has chosen family here as well, in Coyote's Run's winemaker, Taylor Hulley, and his partner Laurel Minnes who took him to Silks Country Kitchen in Virgil for his birthday. "That's like family."

"I like to hang out with

Taylor, he's such a nice guy," says a gracious and grateful Hall. "Taylor and I make a happy working crew. It's beautiful working with Taylor — he's so easy to get along with."

The two men clearly have a surfeit of respect for one another: Hulley has much good to say about Hall. "Dougie is a good man and a great teacher. I'm constantly learning from him. He has a way of understanding things from the inside out. Whether he's fixing engines or growing grapes he just seems to inhabit whatever he sets his mind on. It's that empathetic thought process that I most admire about him," says the winemaker. "I think that's also what drives his fierce loyalty and sense of duty to the people in his life. He knows what it's like to go through tough times and when he sees someone in need he's always there to help."

When asked, Hall says his experience with racism as a person of colour in Niagara has been blessedly limited, "And if there's ever one person who is rude, the majority of people are so nice, they just blanket over anyone who isn't."

This good man's sensible creed: "I try to work within the rules, be a law-abiding citizen, and I am honest — it's a great way to be in life. The only way to be."

## Seeking fur-ever homes



Derek Styles is holding on to Harley, and Chanel Kruger has a cuddle with Holly, at Pet Valu this weekend. They are fostering these beautiful felines for NOTL Cats, a local rescue organization. Harley and Holly were found on Hunter Road, living under a porch, when Holly gave birth to kittens. The cats were at the Virgil pet store during an adopt-a-thon, which it holds regularly throughout the year. Styles and Kruger hope the pair will be adopted together. They plan to have two kittens at the store for adoption this week, Thursday to Saturday. NOTL Cats needs more volunteers to foster kittens until forever homes can be found. For more information email notlcats@cogeco.ca or chanel.kruger08@hotmail.com. (Fred Mercnik)

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# EDITORIAL

## Maybe Province should look at de-amalgamation

A quick look at research on past amalgamations of Ontario municipalities shows little good has come of it.

“Study after study has found that the benefits of municipal amalgamation have failed to materialize,” says a report by the Fraser Institute, the great Canadian think-tank that offers non-partisan information and analysis.

Its report states, as evidenced by those who have lived through it in Ontario, costs generally increase due to harmonization of costs and wages. This reflects the experience of Lord Mayor Betty Disero who went through it as a Toronto politician — nobody ever agrees to the cheapest wage, she said.

The Fraser Institute study also backs up her assertion of a reduced service delivery, when the point of amalgamation has always been to increase the quality of services we receive — or so we’re told.

“Municipal mergers reduce competition between municipalities, which weakens incentives for efficiency and responsiveness to local needs,” the research discovered.

“With so many negative aspects, it’s no surprise that

local restructuring proposals have often been met with stiff resistance from local residents.”

Yup, that’s pretty much the local reaction to potential restructuring proposals which could severely damage Niagara-on-the-Lake’s identity as a small community that is an amazing place to live, work and visit.

In fact, given the research showing higher costs and lower service levels as a result of amalga-

the fly — and it seems to be carrying out a large-scale review in a bit of a rush.

Input from municipalities, if it is to be heeded at all, will take time to gather and assimilate into a comprehensive report with recommendations calling for extensive change and potentially undesirable consequences, yet we’re told it will happen this summer.

The fear, of course, is that although we all hope this is an exercise to actually save money and im-

prove services, it may be already decided it will continue the work begun by Mike Harris, by amalgamating the eight regions that

were saved in his campaign to eliminate levels of government.

And if such is the case there is not much any municipality can do about it.

All any of us can do is support our politicians in whatever review they undertake. We can hope they make a convincing case — not necessarily for the status quo, because that’s the least likely scenario — but for some improvements that actually make sense locally.

And trust (oh how terribly naive that sounds) that the provincial government will listen.



mation, and the resistance to the idea of merging to create a larger, likely less efficient entity, perhaps Niagara should be used as a model for de-amalgamation. The Fraser Institute report says is often suggested by municipalities such as Toronto.

There are two significant problems with the current provincial government’s approach to this review that is taking its show on the road to 82 municipalities: it’s carefully holding its cards close and not sharing the rules of the game — possibly because rules are being made up on

## LOCAL FINDS



Three sets of these concrete sentinels border the Epp farm property at Concession 2 and Line 1. (Lauren O’Malley)

### Mysterious gateway by Lauren O’Malley

There are three pairs of white columns bordering the farm at the corner of Concession 2 and Line 1. They are grand, if slightly decayed, and hint at a more noble era. Many of us have passed them by regularly over decades or longer, and some of us might have wondered at their significance.

The property is currently part of the Epp family farm. Scott Epp provides some insight into the land and the columns. “The property was owned by the Canadian Cannery Company. That’s who we bought it from. They were a big fruit canning company,” says the third-generation farmer. “As for the pillars, I believe they were fancy boundary markers.”

*We’d love to have our readers send in their own “local finds,” either with an explanation provided, or with a mystery for us to try to solve. Send them to [lauren@notllocal.com](mailto:lauren@notllocal.com).*

## LETTERS

### Thanks to touching tribute, Egon Epp will not be soon forgotten

I was touched to read the account in your paper of the sad passing of Mr. Egon Epp.

Lauren O’Malley gave us a compassionate, heart-warming story of a man. A good man; loved yet, though now lost. We learned of his skill as a woodworker, and the quiet generosity that flowed from that. We were told of his love for family and of how shared gardening was there entwined. We heard of the wide outpouring of concern and affection during the search, which speaks to how highly Mr. Epp was valued in the community.

Your reporter took time to describe in detail the search and outcome, not the least in a clinical way, but wonderfully. The progress of the search unfolded through the stories and reminiscences of the countless friends and neighbours of Egon that Lauren encountered on that day. Would we not all wish for a eulogy such as she has written for this ‘perfect little gentleman’.

I went back to the paper today, to read the story again. Strangely, it was not at all as I had remembered it. My memory had kept no details of the search; but it held every single thing that Lauren had told us about the man.

I never met Mr. Epp myself, but I now feel a kinship with him; perhaps because I share with him old age and interests, and because of an odd thing that happened to me on that sad day. I was walking home from the post office, down Victoria

Street, when a grey SUV stopped suddenly and a young woman jumped out. “Are you Egon Epp?” she called. Puzzled, (and my hearing not being what it should be), I asked her to repeat what she had asked. She came over to me and repeated her question. “No”, I answered, “I am not familiar with that name” “Oh”, she said, “we are looking for a man who is missing, and he is wearing a brown cap and a brown jacket, as you are, so I thought you might be him.” Before I let her go, I thanked her, as on behalf of all of us, for her concern and effort, hoping he would be found.

That day, I did not know Egon Epp. Now I do, and I will not soon forget him. Thank you, Lauren.

Andrew Henwood

## The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL

The trusted voice of our community

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## Youth need to begin taking responsibility for environment



**By Bethany Polti**  
Youth Member of The Local  
Community Advisory Board

We are the generation that has knowledge at our fingertips. A simple search and click and we can find out whatever we want. Information on our phones, our laptops, our desktops, is so easy to obtain. Technology allows us to become more informed and with that information, we can react and we can act. Knowledge is power.

Greta Thunberg is a 16-year-old from Sweden who is taking action. She went on strike from school to protest climate change, to draw more attention to what governments are and are not doing.

The teen has gathered a huge youth following, is making waves, and has met with and spoken to government officials and the United Nations. Thunberg has motivated other youth around the world to stand up and speak out about climate change. Her focus is to hold governments and businesses accountable.

Do I agree with “striking”

and skipping out of school? No. But I do believe in actions speaking louder than words and that action is necessary. I do think her movement is vital to making the adults listen.

So what type of action can we, the youth, take?

Firstly, we must be accurately informed, we need to review the facts and see both sides of the argument. Once we have a firm grasp of the matter we then must think of solutions.

What is the purpose of calling for change if you do not productively offer up solutions? And those solutions should be viable and realistic.

Here is a very brief summation of what I have found in the research:

According to NASA Science, there have been seven cycles of climate change over the last 650,000 years.

Most of these climate changes can be attributed to minuscule variations in earth’s orbit that would change the amount of solar energy our planet would receive. The planet has gone through warming and cooling trends.

Where some scientists say it could just be warming, there is a growing number who are certain that warming is due to human activity. Most of this warming has occurred over the last 35 years and it

continues to get warmer.

Evidence of climate warming has been documented in nine areas: global temperature rise, shrinking ice sheets, warming oceans, glacial retreat, less snow coverage, sea levels rising, declining Arctic sea ice, ocean acidification, and extreme weather.

After the past couple of weeks in NOTL where we have experienced snow, ice, rain, high winds and seven days of school disruption, extreme weather seems to be living up to its reputation. NOTL’s 16-year-old Sophia Galbraith says, “I think climate change is a real issue and one of the first steps to putting an end to it is admitting it’s a real problem and not living in denial. We need to own up to our actions and the impact we have on our Earth.”

Our responsibility to our planet, our home, is a pressing issue. While we like to push the problem off on big business and pass the blame, individuals need to take action. For as laws and regulatory bodies should be taking care of the big contributors, we as individuals make up seven billion people contributing to the good and the bad. But what can we do?

Everyone has to play their part and we, the youth, should be carrying the change. Since

Kindergarten we have been taught the 3 R’s — reduce, reuse, recycle — and we must be successful at doing this. We have been on eco-teams, green teams, environmental cleanup days and more. These must continue and our groups need to be larger. All of us should be involved. We should then be the role models for the younger kids. Buy less, use less, want less.

I have read about garbage pickup issues in NOTL. I challenge us all to not need weekly garbage pickup, for the environmental benefit. We have been voted the prettiest town in Canada. Can you imagine if we became the most environmentally advanced town in Canada?

Local teen Grace Hannah agrees. “The world we are creating through pollution is not a world we should want to live in or leave for future generations. We need to change our attitude on climate change. It’s not just our generation that needs to understand and work towards protecting our Earth — everyone has to work together to make a difference.”

A quick search and I found out we have five electric car charging stations here in NOTL. I am not old enough to drive yet; however, this is something else for youth to consider. We will be looking



This photo was taken during the February ice storm in NOTL. Extreme weather patterns, such as ice storms like the one we saw, are an indicator of climate change. (Bethany Polti)

at purchasing vehicles. City kids have options for public transport, we country kids have a public transportation option but we know realistically most of us will need a car eventually.

Hybrid and electric vehicles should be our first option. Price is a deterrent. Perhaps the government could think about having a first-time car buyer incentive option to encourage youth to look to green vehicles and make them more economically attainable for us. It seems economics often collide with environmental responsibility. The end will be our generation paying for the

environmental mess: basically, pay now or pay more later.

Youth need to show they want the change, that they are concerned, and lead by example.

Holding up signs demanding government action and passing the blame is short-term. Long term we need each individuals consciously acting. Change begins at home. We need to do both to show we are serious, and as my grandma always says, “We mean business.”

Youth can make differences and at this point, we really need to for our future.

## LETTERS

### Time to rethink approach to annual grants

It is unfortunate that NOTL council did not set a target that kept planned increases to our 2019 municipal taxes at or below the cost of living index. That, plus setting realistic priorities for ongoing and future spending, should have been at the heart of its budget deliberations this year.

I recognize that finalizing a budget and determining spending priorities is challenging work. However, it makes no sense to me that council has opted to close the NOTL com-

munity centre on statutory holidays in 2019, including Family Day, while providing funding to Niagara College, the Niagara District Airport, and the NOTL Chamber of Commerce, among other organizations.

Niagara College, according to media reports, had a \$13-million surplus in 2017-18 and receives substantial provincial funding. Surely it did not need a \$20,000 grant from NOTL.

The chamber exists to represent and benefit its

members, which fund the organization through their membership dues. While it may make sense for NOTL to contract with the chamber to list and sell tickets for local events, there is an argument to be made that providing annual funding to the chamber to promote tourism does not.

Many residents believe that NOTL attracts more than enough tourists already, which has resulted in traffic and pedestrian congestion, parking and noise issues, and local events being inundated

with out-of-towners, making NOTL a less attractive place to live and work. Tourists may be good for the chamber’s members, but they’re not necessarily good for town.

As for the airport. I can see council providing one-time financial support for capital projects, but providing annual funding toward the airport’s operating costs does not make sense over the long term unless there is a realistic expectation – backed by a strong business plan – that the airport can become a

viable enterprise that will generate economic or other benefits to local residents and businesses.

The bottom line is that grants from council to third parties should not be annual line items in the municipal budget. They should only be considered in years when the Town can provide them without reducing the level of services it provides to residents, or raising property or business taxes, and only in exceptional circumstances.

**Terry Davis**

### Reader suggests auction to help

As a local resident who attends the market and the Wednesday evening food truck events, can I suggest an auction to raise funds to cover the repair of the tent.

I would be happy to donate one of my latest oil paintings for an auction to repair the tent.

They are framed, 9”x10” oil paintings with a value of \$600.

**Ron Boaks**

If anyone is interested in helping out, Sharon Brinsmead-Taylor, The market co-ordinator, can be reached at notl.market@gmail.com.

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# Author tells of missing, dead Indigenous teens

Vivid attention to detail brings stories to life

By Lauren O'Malley  
The Local

To list Tanya Talaga's achievements in journalism and activism would take much longer than to explain this person's drive to force people to pay attention to difficult truths.

Debbie Krause is our public library's program and outreach coordinator, and as such the coordinator of the library's Wine & Words series. Of Talaga's presentation on Wednesday night at the Hare Wine Co. on Niagara Stone Road, she says, "She had the audience, and she really told a story." The event was sold out: 100 rapt attendees were silently riveted to the dynamic, intelligent and compelling speaker and her very difficult — and necessary — stories.

To the library's credit, Talaga spoke about other writers telling her she should snag this great Wine & Words gig, where authors get to present in wineries, stay overnight in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and be treated with respect and generosity.

Talaga is an Indigenous person, a journalist, a mother, an activist, and a relentless fighter. She tells of her experience as a political reporter for the Toronto Star, learning how to "yell at the Premier for a living" in media scrums — and of how useful that skill became to her as her career swung toward a focus on the stories of the abuse and neglect of people of her culture and heritage.

In 2011 Talaga used that heritage to back a pitch to her editor: It was the time of the federal election between Stephen Harper and Jack Layton, and the basis of her story idea was, "Why is it First Nations people don't vote in elections?" Her editor supported the pitch — "What an exotic idea" — and Talaga was off to Thunder Bay for research.

She found herself sitting opposite Grand Chief Stan Beardy. "I always start with some big overarching questions to make people comfortable," she says. "I asked him why he thought Indigenous people didn't vote in elections."

Beardy's response was incongruous: "Why aren't you doing a story on Jordan Wabasse, who has been missing for 70 days?"

Talaga recounts this went on for several minutes: She would ask Beardy about voting practises, and he would reply with details about the Indigenous high school student's disappearance. "After 15 minutes I told myself I'd better get a grip. I was sitting with the Grand Chief and he was trying to tell me something," she says. "I needed to listen."

Beardy told her Wabasse was the seventh student to die or go missing in the community. "I felt a lot of things: Shame that I didn't even know the story. Anger: Why was no one researching the story; where was the national inquiry, the national media, the police?"

Beardy took her on a drive in his truck, playing gospel music. "I asked 'What's up with the music?' Stan said, 'When I hear songs about God I feel closer to my son Daniel.'" Beardy proceeded to tell her about his teenaged son who had been beaten "within an inch of his life," and subsequently died. The family had moved from traditional territory to Thunder Bay so Daniel could attend high school.

This is a common theme in Talaga's stories, and in Indigenous life. There are no high schools on reserves or traditional lands. Youth as young as 13 years old are forced to leave their home, parents, family, culture, and language to go to a bigger city. They will typically board with

strangers, be given brochures about how to use traffic lights to cross major intersections, and attend a specifically designated high school.

In Thunder Bay that institution is Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School. Six of the seven dead or missing students attended there. Beardy delivered Talaga to the school and presented her to the principal, saying, "This is Tanya, she's Anish. Tell her everything."

"Six hours later I had found the story that would change the course of my career," says Talaga, who called her editor and reported the change of plans. "They ran it on the front page," she says, celebrating the support she had from her editor and newspaper.

"I wrote little stories, and big stories. But I knew I had a bigger story to tell, bigger than news articles." Talaga knew she had a book on her hands, but — as a full-time-employed single parent of two — had to wait until her kids were a little more independent.

**"I wrote little stories, and big stories. But I knew I had a bigger story to tell, bigger than news articles."**

*Tanya Talaga*

Three years later she followed up with Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler, who directed her to start her book with the story of Chanie Wenjack — an Indigenous boy who died of exposure trying to escape a residential school. Talaga tracked down Wenjack's sister Pearl.

The journalist was one of the first people to give Chanie Wenjack a voice. She describes Pearl and her



At the recent Wine & Words event organized by the NOTL Public Library author Tanya Talaga gives a riveting and tragic account of seven Indigenous students. (Lauren O'Malley)

brother's last time together, detailing a chilling scene between the two siblings that contained a premonition of Chanie's brief future.

Talaga describes scenes and people with a storyteller's vivid attention to detail, bringing everything to life.

hard to hear; it would have been even harder to have to have researched each one in such depth.

Local Kim Manley Ort was in the audience at the winery; she had purchased tickets because she had been following Talaga's CBC Massey Lectures titled All Our Relations: Finding the Path Forward. The series explored the issues surrounding Indigenous youth suicide in Canada and internationally. Ort came away from the night with several thoughts. "Education and awareness [around Indigenous issues] are key and have been lacking in our schools and society," she says. "Assimilation and removal of children from families devastate families and culture," she continues. "There has to be some way to educate these kids while leaving their families intact. First Nations people and especially the kids have not been treated as equals in this country. This is an important issue for me in the upcoming election."

Ort says when Talaga was asked what people could do, "she said to tell others about

it and to call out racism when you see it. I can do that."

Local Terry Mactaggart says she was curious to attend the event for a number of reasons, including the fact her daughter has a master's degree in Native Canadian women writers. "It's so frustrating because we've been looking at this issue for so long and nothing has been done," she says, regarding removing Indigenous youth from their environment for education — which began with the Indian Act in 1867 and continues to this day.

Mactaggart says, "We are refugees in Canada; the Natives belong here."

Talaga is asked during a Q&A session whether she has hope, and she says she does. She also says it's important we all call people around us on their subtle — or not-so — forms of racism. "Educate the people in your circle."

For their part library staff plan to continue their Moccasin Talk series regarding Indigenous issues, and also feature a permanent FMNI First Nations, Métis, and Inuit collection throughout their stacks.

## Tales by Moonlight



Caroline Rigby joined about 45 people at the NOTL Public Library Saturday for the opportunity to make some noise with djembes (a type of West African hand drum) at an event held to celebrate Black History Month. GTA-based drummer Babarinde (Baba) Williams (right) led the event. (Lauren O'Malley)



# Young man from NOTL flying for WestJet

By Mike Balsom  
Special to The Local

He's heard the comments. He's seen the looks.

First, it was the flight attendant. Her eyes gave it away. "You're 21?" she asked, incredulously. Then there was the passenger on the WestJet Encore flight. As he was disembarking, he stopped, looked, and asked, "Are you sure you're old enough to fly this thing?"

"This thing" is a Bombardier Q-400 Turboprop. It boasts a 93-foot wingspan and cruises at a top speed of 667 kph at a maximum altitude of 25,000 feet. Bombardier bills it as the "fastest and most advanced turboprop aircraft" around. As First Officer, 21-year-old Tyler Hill of Virgil is one of two pilots responsible for the safety of the 78 passengers on board. And yes, he is indeed old enough to fly "this thing."

Hill moved to Calgary last March to begin his career as a commercial pilot with WestJet, following a six-month vetting process with the carrier. He began talks with them in October, 2017, but was short on some flight hours. Once he earned those hours, fly-

ing out of the Niagara District Airport, Hill was able to write his exams for his Airline Transport Pilot Licence. Then it was on to an interview with a WestJet pilot, a technical exam, and finally, a job offer in February, 2018. Of course, the process also included a six-week ground school, orienting himself with company policies and learning the ropes on the Q-400 via a flight simulator.

Since then, he's been based in Calgary, flying mostly short-haul flights (under three hours) to Grand Prairie, Vancouver, Nanaimo and other West Coast and Prairie destinations. He's also flown many times into Toronto, out to Moncton, and to WestJet Encore destinations in Boston, Nashville, Myrtle Beach and Portland. The pilots get to bid on their schedules, and Hill tries to ensure that his 60 to 70 hours each month include a chance to have some downtime back home in Virgil with his parents, Rob and Tracy.

The Hills moved to Virgil from England when Tyler was about seven years old. From as far back as he can remember, he has wanted to be a pilot. "Whenever we went on vacation, the most exciting thing

for me was being on the plane. I even loved the airports."

He remembers drawing airplanes in Grade 7, and when, as a Grade 10 student at Eden High School, his class was asked to complete a project on their passions, Tyler, of course, completed his on flying. By then, he had begun flying at Niagara District Airport, and as part of the project, he first took his mother for a short flight. Then, his Grade 10 English teacher, Heather Lailey, was invited to soar with her student above Niagara.

Hill credits the St. Catharines Flying Club and its staff for his early success in the field. "I have seen other flight schools, even ones at colleges and universities, and this one is the best. I got to know all of the instructors. With their experience, and their knowledge, they are the best in Canada by far."

With the airport so close to home, Hill was able to get a job at the desk for the flying club, paying off his lessons by working there. He had earned his private pilot licence by the time he had graduated from Eden, and decided that to continue to progress, the best option for him was to stay right here



Tyler Hill learned to fly at the local airport, and at a young age is already piloting passenger planes. (Photo supplied)

in Niagara. He enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts program with a major in geography at Brock University, and is currently just one elective credit short of his degree. In the meantime, he became a flight instructor with the St. Catharines Flying Club, earning the money he needed to continue to work toward his next licence.

Moving to Calgary for the WestJet Encore job was a big step for a young man at 20 years old. Rob and Tracy were sad to see him move so far away. But

their excitement to watch their young son realize his dream of becoming a commercial pilot took precedence.

Working alongside a captain in the two-person crew, Hill continues to learn from each flight. In the cockpit, he sees his role as pretty straightforward: "To get the passengers and crew from A to B safely and efficiently."

Hill knows he is very fortunate to be with a company such as WestJet at only 21 years old. "They are a great company. The

planes, their level of care, their focus on safety, it's fantastic." He would like to progress up the WestJet hierarchy, moving on from the Q-400 to its fleet of Boeing jets. Eventually, he sees himself working for an international carrier overseas, specializing in transatlantic flights.

He encourages young people to consider a career as a pilot. "There's never been a better time to be a pilot, with so many opportunities out there." Clearly, for Tyler Hill, the sky's the limit.



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

**15396 NIAGARA RIVER PARKWAY \$1,079,000**



Lovely Colonial style 4 bed, 3 bath home filled with natural light on the prestigious Niagara River Parkway with beautiful views of the River. A well-designed floorplan includes main level master suite with vaulted ceilings. The spacious open concept kitchen with Corian countertops and large island overlooks the family room that features floor to ceiling windows. The gardens include plenty of mature trees to provide privacy and a double car detached garage with ample storage. The home is a pleasure to show and worth a visit. **MLS 30701950. Philip Bowron & Sarah Gleddie.**

**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 Service 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.**

**204 LINE 7 ROAD \$1,875,000**



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

**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 & 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.**

**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 theatres. **MLS 30705901. Thomas Elltoft & Kim Elltoft.**

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# Robert Jupiter, a hero in our own back yard

By Jane Andres  
Special to The Local

For many years my daily dog walking expeditions involved sloshing through the Four Mile Creek with a pair of rubber boots and visiting the old Servos family cemetery overlooking the lush valley of the Four Mile watershed.

Over the past 20 years we've had the pleasure of Servos descendants staying at our bed and breakfast, sharing stories of their ancestors who lived out their lives on Palatine Hill.

It was through a guest that I first heard the name Robert Jupiter, one of the first men to be freed from slavery in Niagara, and who was buried in the little cemetery. The fact that he would be interred beside a family of prominent white settlers was intriguing. It was the beginning of an illuminating journey as I sought to learn more about one of the hidden heroes in our back yard.

June 1778, on the picturesque Servos estate set in the gentle hills of New York, Thomas Servos, his wife,

daughter-in-law and three-year-old granddaughter Maggie had just finished supper. Rumours were rampant throughout the Mohawk Valley that General Washington had dispatched troops to uproot and arrest those who had pledged allegiance to the King.

The 1,500 acre Servos property was an established and prosperous estate, with a number of mills and orchards lining the fertile banks of the Charlotte River. Thomas and his sons knew it would be just a matter of time before they became a prime target of the

patriot raids.

The estate required a substantial work force of enslaved men and women to tend to its large operation. Those in bondage knew they were not exempt from the hardships of the raids and would be part of the chattel to be confiscated and sold.

Their worst fears were realized when later that night the rumble of horses was heard on the drive. A small contingent of cavalry and three commanders burst into the house. Protests by Thomas were met with the crack of gunfire and he fell mortally wounded as the women and domestic servants watched in horror. The house was plundered and the troops fled, carrying off the silver and valuables.

Two of the Servos sons had witnessed the arrival of the raiding party from the safety of the forest and alerted the nearest neighbours. They arrived back too late.

Following the tragedy of his father's murder, Daniel offered a choice to Robert Jupiter, an enslaved man on the estate, not yet 20 years old. He could enlist with Butler's Rangers and receive his freedom after the war was over or he could remain behind and spend the rest of his life in servitude.

Both options posed the very real promise of a perilous ending. The chance of surviving life in the military was slim. If he was injured there would be no support system in place and he would be left to fend on his own or worse, in a patriot prison. Either way there was the risk of being captured and sold.

Jupiter made the decision to take his chances with Butler's Rangers, clinging to the hope he would one day be a free man.

He was immediately directed to enlist under Richard Pierpoint's command. Pierpoint had himself been captured in Senegal at the age of 16 and transported on a slave ship to America in 1760.

Jupiter would have found in Richard Pierpoint a kindred spirit, both driven to the point of sacrificing their lives in hope of finding freedom.

There were only a few dozen African Americans from the Mohawk Valley under Pierpoint's command. A few were free but most had received the same promise as Jupiter.

Pierpoint's new recruits marched by foot to Fort Niagara, still in British hands. Jupiter's new life was temporarily occupied with drills and combat training, before heading out on expeditions stretching from New York to Detroit.

The lack of military support from Britain meant the Rangers had to develop strategic partnerships. The combined forces of the First Nations warriors and Butler's Rangers were greatly feared

for their ability to ambush the rebel troops and settlements before disappearing into the heavily forested surroundings.

By 1781, Jupiter found himself among 5,000 loyalist refugees seeking safety in the shelter of Fort Niagara. The conditions were no better for members of Butler's Rangers and the First Nations people who had supported the British during the eight years of war.

Lack of shelter continued to plague the refugees for the next few years, with many living in tents year round on both sides of the Niagara River.

cans across the river. Rumours began to circulate throughout the community as enslaved family members and friends began to disappear.

The violent act involving young Chloe Cooley, forced into a boat and taken across the river to be sold, was the catalyst for Simcoe to stand firm in his decision to pass the anti-slavery legislation.

The compromises for the proposed legislation were many. Members of the House of Assembly continued to oppose emancipation.

**Jupiter made the decision to take his chances with Butler's Rangers, clinging to the hope he would one day be a free man.**

Acquiring land to settle was a priority for the British in order to alleviate the overcrowded misery at the fort. A treaty was signed between the Iroquois and the British crown for a four-mile wide strip of land bounded by the Niagara River, from Lake Ontario to Lake Erie. Daniel Servos was granted 400 acres of choice land along the Four Mile Creek and a saw mill already under construction. A substantial labour force consisting of both freed and enslaved black men, military, and loyalists was required in order to have the second mill completed and in production by 1783. Palatine Hill quickly became the commercial hub of Newark.

Slavery was commonplace in Niagara. Records indicate that a few loyalists owned as many as 50 slaves, most of them stolen as "war booty" during the Revolution. It is estimated that of the 4,000 Black people who lived in Upper and Lower Canada in 1784, almost half were enslaved.

It is not clear whether Jupiter was a free man at this point but he continued to work closely with Daniel, again handling much of the responsibility of building the mill and clearing the land.

When newly appointed Lieut. Gov. John Graves Simcoe arrived in 1791, he was disturbed by the cruelty and acts of enslavement he witnessed in the settlement.

By late 1792 news began circulating that he intended to propose legislation to abolish slavery. Merchants and farmers who owned slaves protested, predicting financial ruin. Disagreements due to the complexity of new economic and social structures created divisions within the community.

Slave owners panicked over the impending loss of property and began secretly selling their slaves to Ameri-

Influential leaders refused to free their slaves. They continued to will the slaves and their slave's children to their heirs.

The legislation did not free slaves or immediately abolish the sale or purchase of those in bondage. Advertisements in Niagara newspapers posted by owners who sought to track down and capture fugitive slaves within the province were still common. Slaves were still bought and sold.

What changed was that it was now illegal for anyone coming into Upper Canada from the U.S. to import their slaves or enslave others after arrival. Any child born to a mother who was enslaved would have their birth officially recorded but would not be freed until the age of 25. Some owners freed their slaves only to rehire them as indentured servants, carrying debts they could never pay off during their lifetime. The act now placed a limit of nine years on indentured service.

The time of transition was a complex and emotional one, as those who were freed continued to live alongside friends and neighbours who remained in bondage until their death.

Some of the black Loyalists who had fought under Butler's Rangers as free men petitioned for land grants, hoping to establish a black community which they were denied. A few however lived as full citizens who paid taxes and had the right to vote.

After years of deprivation and combat, Jupiter was eager to settle down and establish his future. He was treated as a member of the Servos family, who built a comfortable house for him next to the mill. His responsibilities at Palatine Hill played an important part in establishing it as a strategic commercial hub.

Palatine Hill quickly be-

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 11**



The original help house on the Servos property later became the Kirby cottage where William Kirby and his wife Eliza (Daniel Servos' granddaughter) lived briefly before moving to Front Street. The house was still occupied by the Himes family until the early 1940s. (Photo submitted)

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# Life was not easy for Jupiter, even as a free man

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

came known for social activity as well as providing the latest news from York or England.

In 1803 Daniel Servos died at age 55. Grieving with the family, Jupiter joined the large funeral procession down the dirt path, to where they laid Daniel to rest.

Jupiter was in his early 40s when he married Mary Ann Arrishaw at St. Mark's Church on Sept. 4, 1804 with Reverend Robert Addison officiating. Shortly after, they moved to Chippawa. Over the next eight years Mary Ann gave birth to four children. Their peaceful life was short-lived when rumours of political unrest began to circulate.

In the summer of 1812 Britain declared war with the U.S. The stakes were high for the black community, enslaved or free. The main concern was if Upper Canada fell into U.S. control those who had been emancipated would lose their hard-won freedom and fall under the slavery laws still in effect.

Pierpoint, now in his 60s, petitioned the government to allow him to raise a company of Black troops to help protect the Niagara frontier. The local military eventually accepted his offer but only if

they had a white commander, Captain R. Runchey.

The Jupiters moved back to Newark. With four young children Mary Ann would need the support of a familiar community while Robert was stationed nearby at Fort George.

Runchey's Coloured Corps fought in several battles. Their first major engagement was at Queenston Heights on Oct. 13, 1812, where they were among the first reinforcements to arrive and help take the Heights from the Americans.

In May 1813 a fleet of U.S. ships drifted in onto the shore at the Two Mile Creek. The Coloured Corps were among the troops which rallied in vain as more than 6,000 troops overwhelmed them.

Captured troops were imprisoned in Fort Niagara until the following winter. Some of the black soldiers that were captured were transported south, enslaved for the rest of their lives.

On Dec. 13 the Americans were given orders to evacuate. Upon their retreat they defied instructions and torched the entire town, giving the remaining inhabitants just a few hours notice. The house on Palatine Hill was one of the few structures that remained intact.

The house and barn were soon overflowing with refugees seeking shelter. A major snowstorm had blanketed the area with three feet of snow just days before. Women pulled their children and elderly on tea trays, dresser drawers and scraps of wood, struggling through the deep drifts along the lakeshore. It is difficult to imagine how Robert Jupiter's wife could save their four children from

ent MacFarland Park. Low-ering the boats down into the swift current of the Niagara River they drifted in silence, guiding their boats to shore below Fort Niagara.

Storming the fort, they caught the Americans by surprise and within hours had captured the site.

Much hardship followed the war-weary who returned to the remains of the town. The process of rebuilding

**He was well-known as a man of exceptional character and was deeply respected by the community, regardless of their race.**

the bitter cold. Her young daughter was already suffering seizures, there was little hope for her survival.

The British revenge galvanized within days. John Dease Servos (Daniel's son) commanded the troops, Jupiter among them, as they disembarked from their ships in the Four Mile Harbour.

The troops pushed their bateaux down the frozen Four Mile Creek to East West Line. From there it was a direct route to the deep cut in the river banks at the pres-

took years, with the town relying on aid from the British government to survive. The Coloured Corps and enslaved alike worked together to construct Fort Mississauga with bricks salvaged from the destroyed buildings.

The government offered grants of 200 acres of prime farmland in Niagara to the British soldiers, while members of the Coloured Corps were offered 100 acres of land in Garafraxa and Oro Townships north

of Toronto. They would not receive title to the land unless they cleared ten acres and had a house of adequate size completed on it, cleared adjacent roads and paid the fees. The land consisted mainly of swamp and rocky soil.

Some tried and gave up, moving to Penetanguishene and Owen Sound searching for employment in the lumber and fur trade. Some didn't survive.

Jupiter, Mary Ann and the children made the trek north and attempted to start over.

Despite their best efforts, within a few years the extreme hardship took its toll on him now in his early 50s. He contracted a respiratory ailment from which he was unable to recover. He was never able to realize his dream of having a home of his own or see his children flourish.

He had requested that he be buried on Palatine Hill to be close to the family and community he so dearly loved.

The Servos family acknowledged his wish and he was buried underneath a centuries-old maple which presided over his grave until recent years. He was well-known as a man of exceptional character

and was deeply respected by the community, regardless of race.

Mary Ann moved back to Newark with her children. She was unable to sell the land they had worked so hard on because she did not hold the title.

To add to her hardship her son James drowned shortly after her return.

In 1827 Humphrey Waters' wife, Catherine Servos Waters, petitioned on Mary Ann behalf for compensation of property lost in the war. She was destitute and unable to support her children, one of whom suffered from epilepsy. She received a small amount to cover the loss of their horse, some harnesses and livestock. Many of the black families did not receive any of the compensation owed them.

Jupiter's story is worthy of our remembering, a hero in our own back yard.

*Jane Andres has used information provided by the Niagara Historical Museum, and the book Slavery and Freedom by Nancy Butler and Michael Power. The owner of a B&B, she has also had Jupiter's descendants visit with her over the last 20 years, talking about their research, and providing her with copies of their documents.*

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# Sharing seed stash encourages community

## Time to start poring over catalogues to plan for spring



**By Lauren O'Malley**  
The Local

You can spot a gardener in February: They're the ones with hope in their eyes.

While most people are weighed down by ice and grey skies, able to see only the cruelty of the year's second month, the blessed growers are eyeing their garden journals, their seed catalogues, their flats and pots and plant markers.

If you've been buying hardy seedlings and plants every spring and growing your own food, maybe it's time to take it to the next level: starting from seed.

There is a passion in this escalation that can get a little fervent — in a good way. So many choices, so much knowledge, such a steep learning curve. And all inherently doable.

Starting from seed also allows you to create community by sharing your stash. Each seed packet usually contains between 50 and 200 seeds, and it's pretty safe to say you're not going to use those up in the one or two seasons seeds are thought to remain viable. So have a seed-sharing party, or just check in with fellow gardeners to do a "need 'em, got 'em" swap. This adds to the economical factor of the process, too.

Another advantage of the packet-to-table food is knowing what's gone into it at every step of the way. In an era of pollinator scarcity, there's peace in

knowing your plants contain no neonicotinoids, common in store-bought plants and fatal to flying things.

Rose Bartel — aka the Midas of the green world — of local farm Bartel Organics has some guidance. Roddy Heading, local botanist extraordinaire, also weighs in.

As a general rule of (green) thumb, ask six growers a question and you'll get six different answers, so it's not surprising that Bartel and Heading have differing ideas on how to start seeds. It's also relevant that Bartel is growing for the masses, while Heading is guiding you toward something more like a kitchen garden.

### Choosing seeds

Either way, starting from seed gives you a dizzying amount of choice, particularly if you crack a catalogue or two, or visit some inspiring websites. While you might find four or five varieties of lettuce at the market or grocery store, you can easily access literally dozens of varieties with heirloom seeds.

Both growers recommend avoiding GMO seeds; some gardeners — amateur and professional — are keen to keep things as natural as possible. Organic seeds are available through any number of sources, and you can also check with the Council for Responsible Genetics if you're concerned and unsure about a seed provider. Bartel recommends William Dam Seeds; other favourites are Seed Savers Exchange, Heirloom Seeds and Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Com-

pany, with some very unusual heirloom varieties available from all three. (A quick glance taunts with pink celery, Atomic grape tomato, pawpaw fruit, and ancient watermelon.)

Bartel recommends you start with your favourites, and only a few of them. "It's simple: just do what you want, and add new crops slowly," she says. Heading recommends selecting vegetable varieties that are known to do well in Niagara.

### Starting seeds

"Hot weather plants like tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants have to be started six weeks before planting outside at the end of May," says Heading. Some varieties will take longer, some shorter, and some will be directly sown into the garden. Reading seed packets helps to determine the time to maturity.

Seed packets and helpful websites will also provide information about the spacing and depth of seed planting. A general rule is the seed should be as deep in the soil as it is large: i.e. don't put a little pinhead lettuce seed an inch underground, and don't float a big zucchini seed a quarter of an inch under the surface.

When planting seeds, it is very (very) difficult not to get carried away. Remember the size and yield of the adult plants you're starting: Do you really need 12 tomato plants and five summer squash vines for your family of four? Try to be discriminating — which can be challenging, with all of the aforementioned varieties.

"Don't go off the deep end," advises Bartel, "because you'll sacrifice quality."

In Bartel's books, seeds are started in potting soil or specific seed-starting soil, in flats small or large, with clear plastic lids. An alternative is to experiment with the clamshell bins from your grocery greens like baby spinach. If you use the latter, it's recommended to create drainage and air holes in the bottom and top of the container. Clear plastic wrap can also be used to create a greenhouse environment over a flat of seeds.

Heading has a different perspective, equally viable: "For vegetable plants, start with large eight-inch pots filled with light sterile soil. Forget compost indoors, it's full of insects, weed seeds and fungi," says Heading.

Put a few seeds in each pot and let them all grow, then edit down to the best single specimen. We start in a large pot rather than keep transplanting from small to medium to large pots, because each transplant shocks the root system and you lose more than a week of growth," he says. "Place the pot in a foil pie plate and water from the bottom."

In either case, remember germination doesn't require light, only heat and moisture. "But not overly, that's the dumb part," says Bartel. Perfecting the balance is part of the learning curve. "Don't let the temperature get too high or the seeds will percolate," she says. But peppers — both hot and sweet — need extra warmth to be inspired to send out their shoots and roots. (Just like some of us on cold winter days.) "Peppers are the pickiest — they need the most heat from the bottom," says Bartel, who grows a vast variety of sweet and spicy specimens.

Seed flats can be placed on heating mats, suggests Bartel, and grow-lights are an option for those with less-than-ideal window exposures. Heading recommends the pots be kept off the ground, to keep them warmer.

The emerging seedlings, however, do require light, and plenty of it, which is why it's recommended to start your seeds in mid-March, when there is more natural light available. "If you start too early," says Bartel, "you get leggy plants which means they're weaker, and more prone to breakage and disease."

"Go slow, and take notes," are Bartel's main recommendations. "Just starting a veggie garden from seed is a steep learning curve," she says. "Keep writing everything down in a garden journal: the dates, details, how you started the seeds, when they germinated, everything." That way, she says, you can learn from your successes and failures and lean more toward the former in years to come.

Some seeds are direct-sown into the soil, and some tolerant and hardy ones can be plant-



Rose Bartel and Edie prepare a seed order for spring. (Lauren O'Malley)

ed in the late spring. Radishes; many greens including the Chinese (bok choy, tatsoi) and Italian varieties (rapini); and some onions, for example.

### Post-germination

The work/fun doesn't end when your seeds have germinated, whether you're potting them up or letting them duke it out in a larger pot. It's likely later in March by now, and the sunlight is stronger and lasts longer. Tender seedlings can overheat and even burn quite easily — "It happens in a flash, the overheating," says Bartel — so monitor your little pals closely.

The lids you were using for germination need to come off some if not all of the time so as not to create a slow-cooking scenario. You might find you need to move some seedlings closer to or further from windows with direct light.

Of course all of this is much more easily monitored with grow-lights, and if that's your style, it can make the process easier.

Bartel pots-up seedlings, sometimes (as with tomatoes) more than once throughout their growth. This means moving the plants to larger and larger pots before they go into the ground, so their roots can grow and the plants can become more robust.

Tomato seedlings can be transplanted a few times, each time burying the stem until the first or second node of leaves, which makes both roots and stems stronger.

When seedlings are at least eight inches tall or at their fourth or fifth leaf, and there is minimal risk of frost outside, it's time to harden them off. This means exposing the little "hothouse flowers" to the great big, bad world of direct sunlight, wind, rain, and the occasional chill. (It's a bit like putting your tween on public transit alone.) This takes gobs of patience, and ideally something with wheels.

NOTL resident Amika Versteegen grows from seed, and sells the seedlings she doesn't plant in her family's large veggie plot. To harden the plants she grows all over her house, she keeps them in the garage on rolling skids. She

brings them out for a little bit longer every day, and then rolls them back to shelter and safety.

Heading's reminder of the ground being cooler is good for this stage too: Keep your hardening seedlings up on balconies or benches.

### Transplanting

While already over-extended patience might be difficult to find, the May long weekend is generally a good starting point for transplanting most of your vegetables.

"An overcast day is better than a sunny day. This will prevent wilting," says Heading. "You can bury a vegetable plant deeper into the soil than the level of the flower pot since the stem will send out roots if buried."

Space your plants according to the seed packet instructions, as difficult as that may seem. While your little plantlets may look lost and lonely spread so far apart, you must imagine them full-grown and fighting each other for light and nourishment.

Water each plant more thoroughly than you think you should. The roots need to be entirely soaked, and any air pockets created in the planting need to be filled with soil and water so roots don't poke around and find only air.

Heading recommends mulching and supplementing with aged wood chips to keep weeds down, maintain moisture, and to continually amend and improve the soil. He suggests sourcing some of last year's chips from downed ash trees, stating that while wood from ash trees cannot be taken outside the region, it is safe to use within it. Heading says, "A contract tree remover with a chipper will either dump them for free on your driveway or for a few bucks."

Growing from seed is as rewarding as it can be challenging. Bartel advises finding a mentor or two, and even suggests the local farmers market feature a pair or master gardeners on-site every week for advice and information. The library is a great resource as well, as is the friendly wave to your neighbour with a thriving veggie patch.



Trays of seedlings are doing their thing in the Bartel Organics greenhouse. (Lauren O'Malley)

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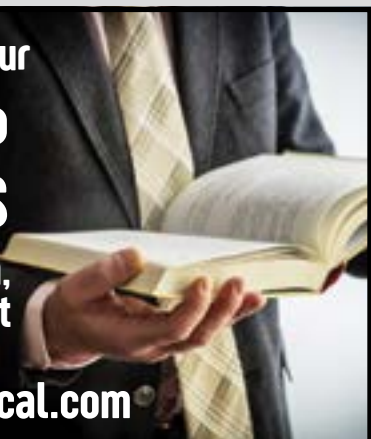
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# Program helps seniors remain at home safely

By Lauren O'Malley  
The Local

In an era of troubled health care, and in a town where the demographic bulge is in the 60-plus set, McMaster University's Health Tapestry program is a beacon of hope and support.

The program partners trained volunteers with residents 70 years of age or older, to determine any health care needs that may not be being met by their current resources.

The volunteers are provided, certified, and trained by the Red Cross. A pair of them visits a senior at home, bringing with them an iPad loaded with an in-depth questionnaire.

The home visit allows volunteers to survey the living situation in a way a family physician couldn't, and also gives them the luxury of time for questions and answers, to create a thorough assessment of the patient's health.

As Dr. David Price — one of the originators of the program — explains it, "I always hear from clinicians that volunteers bring back information they didn't know. If they come into our office for a diabetes check-up, they don't tend to say, 'By the way doc, I've had a couple of falls recently.'" He continues, "We can't ask every single question," in the short period of time of an office visit.

"The volunteers have sat in their living room with them and had tea and asked questions," he says. "We're always surprised by the depth of information. They're able to identify early health issues that are beginning to arise, and we can assign resources to patients before they need intervention, which is what makes such a big difference."

The physician recounts a personal experience with

the program: "A couple in their mid-seventies have been my patients for 19 years. Seventeen years ago I delivered their grandchild," he says. "I thought I knew that family really well, but I was surprised by the information that came back with volunteers about that couple. They were more frail than I had realized, they had more potential health issues. This enabled me to be more proactive than reactive."

help people live a better quality of life at home."

A successful run has been completed in Hamilton, with 380 patients seeing reduced hospital visits and stays, and declined emergency and urgent care visits. Six sites are now being tested across Ontario, there is an agreement to work in Nova Scotia, and there's interest in Quebec and out west. Niagara-on-the-Lake was a prime candidate for the program,

community support and long-term health care at home. We don't want people stuck in the hospital," she says. "We need to put enough supports in place to keep people at home. Many patients need someone two to three times per day to make sure they're eating properly, taking meds, getting ready for bed — that's where we need the money for health care. This is a very helpful program, because a lot of people don't know how to access supports."

Debbi and David Frisby live in Virgil, and have completed their round of interviews with the Tapestry program.

Debbi was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease in 2011, and subsequently had a bad fall at home, two days before Christmas, in 2016. These two health issues left the retired nurse diminished, and put her husband, David, to work as a full-time caregiver. "Life can throw you a curve ball," says David wryly.

David — also retired from the medical industry — learned many of his skills in this new field during Debbi's extended stay in the hospital. The fall, it turns out, had been serious enough to break her spine (this was tragically discovered after a misdiagnosis and prolonged agonizing pain). Both of the Frisbys are extremely grateful to their family physician Dr. Tim Bastedo of the Niagara North Family Health Team, for everything he has done for them — including encouraging them to sign up for the program. "I can't praise him enough," says David, tears springing to his eyes.

Through the program Debbi was seen at the Swallowing Clinic in St. Catharines, to ensure the Parkinson's was not interfering with her nourishment and hydra-

**“ We need to put enough supports in place to keep people at home. ”**

Marilyn Robson

The impassioned doctor continues, "The goal is the longest possible quality of life at home. We asked, 'As a family doctor, could we improve our patients' health care journey?' We realized we can improve quality of life if we interview them early. And you start to realize cost savings, decreased hospital visits — a virtuous circle."

Julie Datta, the program manager, explains the information from the volunteers goes to a team of medical workers, including a dietician, mental health nurse, outreach nurse, occupational therapist, and the patient's physician. "We huddle the team to look at the report," with the end goal always being to keep people out of both emergency and extended care. With a group of experts accessing such in-depth information, "we can think outside of the box," she says. "Stories get told, and the application gets synthesized into a story for their family health team, to

says Price, due to the lack of a local hospital, as well as the history of a strong volunteering community.

Marilyn Robson is one of the 13 volunteers based in NOTL. With her background in nursing and management of long-term care facilities, retirement complexes and home care agencies, she was a rather ideal candidate for the position. She says the group is quite diverse, with a nice representation from different demographic groups: young and old, retired and working.

Robson describes the questions, designed by a team at McMaster, as "very non-invasive," and says it takes a little more than an hour to complete the assessment. She enjoys working with the program — in fact, "I love it. I love it."

Her only issue is concern over the future of health care. "My frustration is that if we can't convince the government — we have to convince them to put money into com-

tion. And an occupational therapist was sent to their house to show Debbi some things she could do differently to avoid further falls.

The Frisbys had already arranged for a personal support worker and a March of Dimes volunteer to help Debbi with bathing and dressing. "I'm not in a hospital or a home," Debbi says with some relief. "We take everything in our stride," says David.

Patients of the Niagara

North Family Health Team can self-refer to the Health Tapestry program via the clinic, or can be referred by their physician or a family member. You must be 70 years of age or older to participate. More info is available through the Niagara North Family Health Team, or at <http://healthtapestry.ca/>.

As Dr. Price says about the only program of its type in the world, "I don't think anybody who hears about it thinks it's a dumb idea."

## LOCAL HAPPENINGS

**LIONS CLUB**  
**FAMILY FISH FRY**  
**Friday, March 1st ~ 4:30 - 7pm**  
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Price includes: Coleslaw, bread, french fries, baked potato, coffee/tea. *Leave the cooking to us!* Alcohol Available.

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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.

## FAMILY FRIENDLY ART STUDIO

**February 24 @ 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm**

Drop in to the Family Friendly Art Studio at the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre to make your own artwork. An opportunity for the family to explore art and get creative. Families are encouraged to see the exhibition in the gallery and then get their hands messy working on their own artwork in the studio.

## FAMOUS AND INFAMOUS

**February 25 @ 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm**

On the third Monday of the month the Niagara Historical Museum offers a free community day and the popular Famous & Infamous biography series open to all. On Feb. 25 the discussion will be about the Shah of Iran, Pt 2

## FIRST ONTARIO PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE

**Wednesday, February 27**

Lizt Alfonso DANCE CUBA. Downtown St. Catharines. [www.FirstOntarioPAC.ca](http://www.FirstOntarioPAC.ca)

## SHAW FESTIVAL ANNUAL MEETING

**March 1 @ 2:30 pm**

Reports will be delivered by the Chair, Treasurer, Executive Director and Artistic Director for fiscal year 2018.



David and Debbi Frisby are happy to be able to live comfortably in their own home thanks to several health resources, including Health Tapestry. (Lauren O'Malley)



# Two young chefs choose NOTL over the world

By Lauren O'Malley  
The Local

Someone forgot to send Tania Ganassini and John Vetere the memo about Niagara-on-the-Lake being a town for retirees looking for a peaceful life.

The two young chefs visited our quiet little community on a whim. "We had never really thought of NOTL as a place to live," says Vetere, a considerate, gentle hipster. "When we visited it just happened to smell like concord grapes. We just knew right away — it just felt right." He continues, "We spotted gaps in the market for things that could come here. And we felt a real actual sense of community, not the false community of the city. There was so much pride — it was cool to see."

Vetere's wife, a petite and pretty brunette with a warm smile and a sharp mind, says, "Everyone is rooting for each other to succeed; the sense is that we need to do this collectively for the growth of the

and proximity to each other," says Ganassini. Of her own decision to move here, she says, "We were done with the grind; this just felt fresh, a nice place to be."

Both cuisiniers had very successful, even enviable careers in the Toronto culinary scene. Vetere had a reputation for successful restaurant openings, and was a much lauded and sought-after entity. Ganassini had stints in the city's darlings like Cafe Boulud in the Four Seasons Hotel, and Canoe Restaurant.

"I was so anti-vegetarian when I was in the kitchen at Canoe. When an order for a vegan substitution would come up, I would swear and yell, 'Why don't they just go to a vegan restaurant?'" It is difficult to imagine this radiantly peaceful now-vegan person cursing. "It was a stressful environment, and the kitchen wasn't set up to handle vegan options in a simple, easily managed way. It wasn't built in, we were swamped and stressed —

chef at Brushfire Smoke BBQ, the food arm of Oast House Brewers. "At the end of the day we're a barbecue restaurant," says the accomplished 30-year-old. "But our goal is always to make everything as tasty as possible — and our vegetarian options are as good as or better than our traditional options."

Again, the impression could be that a barbecue restaurant as part of a micro-brewery would cater to carnivores, but in fact, Vetere says, "There's absolutely tons of demand for vegan foods at Oast. Huge traction. It's unique, and there is such appreciation — so many vegetarians and vegans saying 'thank you for making us feel heard and appreciated.' It's really cool to see."

While Vetere "comes home so happy" from his job at Oast, it wasn't an easy start for the pair in Niagara.

"We jumped in blind," says Ganassini. "We moved here with no job, no friends nearby, nothing. We had never had a problem finding work in our field, and didn't expect to have trouble getting jobs." But they did struggle at first.

"Our timing was off, we couldn't find work right away," says Vetere. "In Toronto it's too daunting to be an entrepreneur — it wasn't even an option for us. But here it was a possibility. The Norton Underground came out of our dire situation."

The Norton Underground was a virtual restaurant, a series of secret dinners in novel locations — like the Niagara Pump House Arts Centre, for example (which, incidentally, has no kitchen). "We had no jobs, our first home



John Vetere and Tania Ganassini feel a sense of community in NOTL. (Lauren O'Malley)

**“ We were done with the grind; this just felt fresh, a nice place to be. ”**

Tania Ganassini

region as a whole, not the individual."

They led the subsequent trend in their family, and bought a house in The Village in 2014. Ganassini's parents would buy a property a few houses down two years later, and her three siblings have also chosen to live in the Niagara region. "They all moved here for a better quality of life, proximity to nature, a slower pace, real estate opportunities,

"I can't even."

Years later, the 31-year-old has made her veganism the core of her private and business lives.

"It really does open up compassion in all of your life. It improves your listening skills. I'm endlessly amazed by how much it cracks you open," she says, wide-eyed.

The perception might be that Vetere is on the other end of the spectrum, as the executive

mortgage, and we had a concept brewing. We wanted a speakeasy vibe, wanted people to feel like that," says Ganassini, her eyes sparkling, her hands flying around excitedly. "We didn't have any connections, our Toronto experiences didn't really translate. We used social media to drum up followers. For two years we had events all over Niagara." The pair was nominated for Niagara's Young Entrepreneur of the Year award in 2015 thanks to the success of the dinner parties that saw people "arrive as strangers, and leave as friends," according to Ganassini.

Proving the truth of her statement that "My hobby outside of cooking is cooking," the hardworking Ganassini was soon running the kitchen at Southbrook Vineyards, and Vetere found himself as the chef de cuisine at Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery. The Underground became more and more of an undertaking, and soon had to be let go.

Ganassini looked for a change of scenery, and found it in working retail at Oast. Here she met Amanda Ali, who soon became a co-conspirator in a new side-hustle: Staff Meal Niagara.

Ali has a background in biology, international development, international nutrition management, has worked in Kenya and held nutrition workshops in third world countries — and she grew up in Niagara. The two bonded over food and fun. "We used to

communicate via text using food puns, almost exclusively," says Ganassini. Vegan wordplay has become a signature of Staff Meal: the women recently hosted vegan cheese-making workshops with titles like "The Grateful Ched Part III: Ferment To Be," and "In Queso Emergency."

The theoretical vegan food delivery business found an unexpected niche: Working folks without access to healthy vegan lunches. The women originally targeted those they knew best: people in the food service industry. "We would see people in the industry destroying their bodies," says the passionate food advocate. "There was no access to healthy fast foods — that felt like a no-brainer gap in the market, a pain point that needed to be met. In fact, the pain point was more important than the business: we needed to start changing this paradigm in the industries of service, health care, educators. They weren't being nourished."

In a meant-to-be moment, a series of coincidences led to Staff Meal Niagara winning a bursary, and subsequently launching. "It's so easy to sit on an idea," says Ganassini, "but this win forced us to move forward. It didn't make sense on paper so we used a 'fail fast' approach," meaning they took risks, and threw themselves into it completely. They soon found another sector that needed nourishment: women

entrepreneurs.

The business grew and grew — they even made appearances at the Farmers Market in the Village on Saturday mornings. The problem was their kitchen: they didn't have one. "We would schlep everything to our food prep space, and build a kitchen, make the food, tear the kitchen back down again, and take it home." For obvious reasons, this arrangement ceased to be reasonable, and Staff Meal is on hiatus while the pair looks for a viable prep kitchen.

In the meantime the workshops will continue. "You wonder if you have an impact, and workshops show you that directly. It's a lot of work, but I love it so much: a direct connection with people," says Ganassini with great enthusiasm. "The break has given us a chance to take a beat and re-evaluate. How contradictory to be in the wellness industry and not take care of ourselves."

Ganassini and Vetere are taking good care of themselves. Vetere walks to and from work, often heading in with the rising sun. The pair enjoys exercising together at the community centre gym, and Ganassini is a big fan of local FoxDen Yoga. While she exercises and cares for her health, Ganassini is also nurturing an expanded concept. "I have visions of a wellness centre, a community hub, maybe a place where farmers could drop off their seconds," for use in healthy vegan foods.

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# SCHOOLS



## ROYAL OAK COMMUNITY SCHOOL



### Kindergarten Open House

Royal Oak Community School welcomes families to explore its Early Years Program with a school and class visit.

It's an opportunity to talk to the teachers and students about what they are doing and to see why the school's small class sizes are so beneficial to student growth and development.

It's also a chance to showcase what makes Royal Oak Community School so incredible and special, said learning strategy specialist Christine McIsaac.

The independent school uses the Ministry Curriculum Documents as a starting point, allowing for students to grow and challenge themselves as they are ready.

The Kindergarten open house is Feb. 26, from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Families can have their children do a mini trial in the class by calling or emailing the school at [royaloakcommunityschool@gmail.com](mailto:royaloakcommunityschool@gmail.com).



Students at ROCS have their physical education classes at the community centre. (Photos supplied)

Students have story time and the opportunity to find books to read at the NOTL Public Library.



ROCS students learn about time with home-made instruments.



Upper Years buddies help Early Years students at ROCS.



Nathan Turner, principal for a day, called for a dress-down day and lunch at The Angel Inn.

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# LOCAL SPORTS

## Winter and summer, bowling is a great social activity

By Penny Coles  
The Local

There are carpet bowlers in town, and there are lawn bowlers — and then there are those who are happy to bowl in all seasons.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Carpet Bowling Club has about 50 members, 30 of whom can be counted on to show up most Monday and Thursday afternoons. The carpets get pulled out onto the smooth, perfectly even floor of the community centre auditorium, and the seniors get some exercise and enjoy a social time.

Paul McHoull is one of the winter bowlers who looks forward to spring, and the beginning of the season for the NOTL Lawn Bowling Club.

Carpet bowling, he said, began in 1998 in the gymnasium of the former high school. Then it got moved to the old Platoff Street community centre, where the floor was “interesting,” said McHoull — not only was it old and uneven, but it had drains located at various spots that the bowls would hit and “make a funny little hop over them.”

It was a challenge to play, and members feel fortunate now to be in the community centre, although McHoull said they were disappointed the Town made the decision to close the building for Family Day, cancelling their outing.

They still have to unroll and roll up the carpets each session, but “I’m not complaining,” said McHoull. “This is a huge improvement,” he said of the new facility.

He would like to be able to offer beginners more training and practise time, but that’s not possible when the carpets are only available for the duration of afternoon games.

Members pay \$50 for the season, but drop-ins can pay \$5 an afternoon. There are teas held monthly, birthdays are celebrated and there’s a pot-luck at the end of the season, he said.

“Some members prefer it to outside and don’t lawn bowl. They don’t have to worry about the weather, or getting too much sun.”

The two games have some differences — chiefly that the lawn bowling lane, at 90 feet, is twice the length of the carpet, which has a block in the middle so players can’t just hurl the bowl straight down. “You have to go around it — you can’t just heave it,” says McHoull.

While it’s more of a social game, with teams drawn randomly each afternoon, some members are more competitive than others, he said.

Some people come out and use the carpet bowling matches as a learning period before joining the lawn bowling club, but those who want to join the outdoor club this season will be able to get in some practice time outside of the games.

Typically, McHoull says, beginners can come out three times to give the sport a try before paying.

Carpet bowlers still have a few sessions left this season before heading outside. Registration for lawn bowling is in April, and opening day is in May, says McHoull.



Elly Warren bowls on the carpet in the winter and moves outdoors to lawn bowling in May. (Fred Mercnik)

## Winning streak for the Wolves



The novice Wolves of the NOTL Minor Hockey League were on a roll Saturday when they played the Dunnville Mudcats at the Centennial Arena, defeating them 2-1 for their third win in a row. (Fred Mercnik)





Heading into provincial semi-finals

The NOTL Atom Rep Wolves of the NOTL Minor Hockey League, sponsored by Buckner's Source for Sports, have advanced to the semi-finals of the Ontario Minor Hockey Association playdowns after a 3-0 series sweep of the Thorold Blackhawks. The Wolves' first game against the Grimsby Kings was to be played Tuesday at the Centennial Arena. They are awaiting the winner of a series between St. Marys and Erin-Hillsburgh. The schedule for the semi-finals will be posted on [www.notlhockey.com](http://www.notlhockey.com). The Wolves would love a strong show of support from the community as they make their push for a provincial title. Playing on the atom team are (front left) Eddy Szewczyk, Devin Hunter, Mitchell Olsen, Levi Bayne, Ben Parker, and (back) Gavin Tomczuk, Andrew Bayne, Sheldon Walker, Ethan Abraham, Marco Angelini, Mason Neal, Riley Smith, Liam Fenwick, and Nolan Grealy. The coaching staff are Trevor Parker, Steve Walker, Kevin Bayne, Rob Read and Alex Read.

Family skate



Esther, 6, mom Trisha Weaver, Mary, 3, Naomi, 5, grandpa Dave Dick and Claudia, 8, make use of the ice for some family time at the Centennial Arena Friday. Weaver says she skates with her girls once a week, and her dad takes a break from work to spend some time with his granddaughters and help out on the ice. (Penny Coles)

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PUZZLE ANSWERS

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

**Across:** 1 Was, 4 Frail, 9 Scarf, 14 H M O, 15 On ice, 16 Tuner, 17 Emu, 18 Ramos, 19 Atone, 20 Range, 22 Enshrined, 24 Endowed, 26 Tare, 27 Brow, 28 This, 29 C is, 32 Emi-pass, 44 Snob, 45 Pulp, 46 Rattled, 49 Riverside, 53 Usages, 54 Odors, 55 Savior, 57 N Y C, 58 Ollie, 59 Elude, 60 P A, 61 Feels, 62 Deeds, 63 A T F.

**Down:** 1 Where, 2 Arman, 3 Sound bites, 4 Foreword, 5 R N A, 6 Aimed, 7 Icon, 8 Less than, 9 Stars, 10 Cute, 11 Anon, 12 Rene, 13 Fred, 21 Gorges, 23 Hair, 25 Ewe, 28 Tours, 29 Casablanca, 30 iPod, 31 Sara, 32 Egan, 33 Mayo, 35 Pivots, 37 Despised, 38 Ventures, 40 Gals, 41 N S A, 43 Purses, 45 Peril, 46 Revue, 47 Egypt, 48 Decal, 49 Roof, 50 Idle, 51 Vole, 52 Dale, 56 Odd.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

1	2	3		4	5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12	13
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61						62						63		

- ACROSS**
- 1 Limerick's second word, usually
  - 4 Delicate
  - 9 Eat greedily
  - 14 Medical insurer
  - 15 Delayed
  - 16 Radio receiver
  - 17 Australian running bird
  - 18 Univision news anchor Jorge ---
  - 19 Make amends
  - 20 Open grassland
  - 22 Preserved
  - 24 Funded
  - 26 Biblical weed
  - 27 Hilltop
  - 28 Not that
  - 29 --- for Charlie
  - 32 Expatriate
  - 34 Rowboat lever
  - 35 The Pope
  - 36 Confined
  - 37 Demand
  - 38 Face protection
  - 39 Affirmative votes
  - 40 Obtain
  - 41 Battle Born State
  - 42 Short numbers
  - 43 Elapse
  - 44 High-hat
  - 45 Cheap sensational magazine
  - 46 Perturbed
  - 49 N Y C's --- Park
  - 53 Lexicographer's interest
  - 54 Whiffs
  - 55 Enjoy to the full
  - 57 U S capital once and briefly
  - 58 Pal of Kukla and Fran
  - 59 Dodge
  - 60 Accountant's letters
  - 61 Senses
  - 62 Works
  - 63 Agency which initiated the Waco siege
- DOWN**
- 1 Location question
  - 2 Capital of Jordan
  - 3 Speech snippets
  - 4 Book opener
  - 5 Genetic component of some viruses
  - 6 Pointed
  - 7 Religious painting
  - 8 <
  - 9 Brenda and Ringo
  - 10 Adorable child
  - 11 Author unknown
  - 12 Mathematician --- Descartes
  - 13 Adele's dancing brother
  - 21 Pigs out
  - 23 Locks or strands
  - 25 Ram's dam
  - 28 Tip sellers
  - 29 Largest Moroccan city
  - 30 Portable player
  - 31 "Two Mules for Sister ---": Eastwood/MacLaine film
  - 32 Pulitzer winner Jennifer ---
  - 33 Salad sauce
  - 35 Fulcrums
  - 37 Loathed
  - 38 Enterprises
  - 40 Young ladies
  - 41 Intelligence agency
  - 43 Prize monies
  - 45 Hazard
  - 46 Nightclub show
  - 47 Pyramid place
  - 48 Kickless coffee
  - 49 Upper limit
  - 50 Indolent
  - 51 Short-tailed rodent
  - 52 Valley
  - 56 Weird

SUDOKU PUZZLE

5								
			6	8			3	
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7								
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		1		5			7	
						8		



## Regular season ends with Nationals in 5th place

The NOTL Nationals lost at home 7-4 to the Niagara Whalers from Port Colborne Friday, their last regular game of the season. They had some players sitting out, knowing the result would not affect the team's 5th place standing. The Nationals had a 3-2 lead going into the third and ran out of gas with a short bench. Coach Spencer De Wolfe said he was proud of the team effort during the first two periods. "It's hard to play a full 60 minutes with a short bench and mistakes were made because of guys being tired," he said of the third period. The Nationals will play away against the Kingsville Kings Friday for their series opener. De Wolfe says it looks like Sunday will be at home, but he's waiting for confirmation — check the team's website or Facebook page for more information. *(Fred Mercnik)*



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# Family weekend in NOTL



Heather Ricardo holds up daughter Farra, preventing her from falling. Eventually Farra starts to stand up by herself. *(Fred Mercnik)*



Patricia Harb (centre) holds hands with Kristan and Lauren while they enjoy skating at the outdoor rink at Fort George. *(Fred Mercnik)*



The Burns family decide to go tobogganing on the hill at Fort George and have a blast. The heavy snowfall Monday morning and a relatively mild day made it perfect for outdoor family activities. *(Fred Mercnik)*



Baba Williams packs up his minivan with 80 djembes after a Black History Month event at the NOTL Public Library. *(Photo by Lauren O'Malley)*



At the Oscar Peterson International Jazz Festival “Music with No Borders” concert Sunday, produced by Bravo Niagara! Festival of the Arts at Stratus Vineyards, the audience was treated to a performance by NEA Jazz Master Kenny Barron (piano), Kirk MacDonald (tenor sax), Reg Schwager (guitar), Neil Swainson (bass) and Lewis Nash (drums). *(Alex Heidbuechel)*