Paths diverge for future of Negro Burial Ground

Penny Coles The Local

There is good news regarding the progress of work proposed for the Negro Burial Ground.

There is also some discord amongst those attempting to right a wrong of many years.

Research on the history of the cemetery proposed by an archaeological firm has been approved by the town, the firm has been hired and a fundraising committee has the money to pay for it, so that work will go ahead.

However, what happens after that remains uncertain.

When James Russell came to town from Toronto with ground-penetrating radar to ascertain how many graves and headstones were buried in the cemetery, his hope was to eventually put names to those who were laid beneath the surface.

He had a vision that would lead to headstones being uncovered and restored, and ARA, the Kitchener archaeological company the town agreed to hire, had established a course of action with a report that called first for research, at a cost of about $5,000. That was the next step he was anticipating, and then depending on the results of the research, there was the possibility of two more stages that could include hand excavation of each headstone, and a possible third stage to address conservation of the headstones.

Once Russell, through the use of ground-penetrating radar, had determined where stones and graves lay beneath the ground, and was able to mark out the locations, local George Webber stepped in, offering to help with fundraising and to be the face of the project in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

A fundraising steering committee was struck, and they began working with the town which, as the owner of the cemetery property, must approve any work done at the site.

Initialy, he said, “we were thinking of digging up the headstones and dusting them off, leaving them the way they are or having them professionally restored to be appropriate for the site. But that would cost a whole lot of money.”

All three stages of the ARA proposal were estimated at about $64,000, and it seemed fundraising would have to pay for it, although Russell feels strongly it’s the town’s responsibility.

There came the fork in the road, with Russell and Webber heading off in different directions. Continued on page 15

FREE HOME EVALUATION
CALL OR TEXT GREG DIRECT
905.329.3484
GREG SYKES

WHEN YOU CALL GREG, YOU GET GREG!
Add-ons increase capital budget by almost $600,000
Broken diving board to be replaced after two years of being off-limits

Zahraa Hmood Special to The Local

A few adjustments have been made to Niagara-on-the-Lake’s planned capital budget for this year, which includes an additional $596,000 to be spent on projects at the Old Town fire station, Andrews Street and Riverbend Park.

The 2023 budget is set for a final review and approval on Thursday, March 23, and so far, the town has made plans to spend over $10 million on work for roads, improving streetscapes and other capital expenses.

The budget review committee had its second meeting to discuss the capital budget on Feb. 22, during which it reviewed changes made to the budget during its first meeting on Feb. 16. This budget totalled $9.58 million with a plan to take on $2.19 million in debt for three large projects.

Council voted in favour of including three projects which were initially to be removed from the final capital budget: installing a system which removes diesel exhaust at Fire Station 1 in Old Town, at $250,000, creating permeable paving for the parking lot at Riverbend Park, at $211,100, and installing a sidewalk on Andrews Street, at $135,000.

The town will spend an extra $211,100 on parking, leaving a deficit of a little more than $40,000 in the parking reserve. According to Freeborn, the city is applying for a grant that may include funding for this project, which should help offset the deficit.

As for the capital reserve, there will be a surplus of about $190,000, as the two new projects will cost $385,000, however, the municipality is also receiving $135,000 from the federal government through its Canada Community-Building Fund (formerly the Gas Tax Fund).

The diesel exhaust removal system is for the health of firefighters exposed to the carcinogenic fuel exhaust. The permeable paving is so the parking lot absorbs rather than collects water, which runs off into the sewer system, carrying environmentally-damaging pollutants. The sidewalk installation, from Cherry Street to Line 2 Road, is to improve traffic and pedestrian safety.

During the Feb. 22 meeting, Mayor Gary Zalepa asked what the town’s policy is on handling capital reserves, and Freeborn said that general policy, not practice, is to leave $100,000 per year in reserve. “We do normally try to keep a balance in the capital reserve in case things come up in the year or to fund any capital variances at the end of the year,” Freeborn said.

As for what “surprises” could come up over the year requiring the town to dip into those buckets of funding, Freeborn said in an average year, they could end up spending anywhere between $20 to $100,000. Alongside variances for projects that go over their costs, this could also include emergency situations, such as flooding or heavy rain causing culvert failure. If a reserve can’t pay for variances or fix emergency situations, Freeborn said the town can dip into its working funds reserve, or review its capital program for the year and re-evaluate what projects it has on its agenda, which is “rare,” he said. “It hasn’t happened.”

The Feb. 22 meeting also included a discussion brought forward by Coun. Adriana Vizzardi to fix the damaged diving board at the Veteran Memorial Park swimming pool, which has been out of service for years.

Parks and recreation manager Kevin Turcotte said the cost of replacing it would be about $15,000. “If we do come under budget, we can come back on it,” he said. The committee passed a motion to devote $15,000 to replacing the diving board for this summer.

The budget review committee will meet two more times in March before the budget comes before council for approval. Wednesday, March 1 and Thursday, March 9, during which the committee will discuss the 2023 operating budget.

Fatality on Glendale in NOTL Monday

Local Staff
A driver in his 90s is dead after a collision in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The collision took place Monday afternoon on Glen- dale Avenue at Homer Road. Niagara Regional Police say a 91-year-old man was driving a 2015 Mini Cooper that could be east on Glenendale Avenue at 2:50 p.m. when a collision occurred with a 19-year-old man in a 2019 Chevrolet Blazer that was travelling west on Glenendale Avenue.

Witnesses provided life-saving measures to the driver of the Mini Cooper, who was unresponsive after the collision. He was transported to a local hospital, where he was pronounced deceased.

The driver of the Chevro- let Blazer sustained no physical injuries.

Niagara Regional Police Service, Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire Department and Niagara Emergency Medical Service paramedics responded to the scene.

The circumstances related to the cause of the collision remain under investigation.

Witnesses and motorists who were in the area with an operational dash-camera are encouraged to review their footage and contact the lead detective at 905-688-4111, option 3, badge 1049.170 with any relevant information.

Second Tawny Ridge petition

Zahraa Hmood Special to The Local

Another petition has come forward from residents of St. Davids who have more than a few worries about the 86 unit development being proposed.

Local resident Glenn Ksiazekiewicz is filing a petition to the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake on Tuesday, March 7. It states the Tawny Ridge Estates development being proposed by Riverview Homes Niagara at Tanbark and Warner roads, if built, would be “very detrimental” to the fabric of the community and place too much pressure on the area, including traffic.

The petition, like one filed mid-February and signed by 99 residents of Courtland Valley Estates, asks town officials to consider the concerns of residents and assess the potentially negative impacts of the high-density rezoning request from the developer.

“Development of Tawny Ridge Estates . . . would be welcomed by residents,” the petition reads. “However, the construction of high-density three-storey stacked town houses and/or a four-storey apartment building are not consistent with the neighbourhood and a potential hazard for St. Davids School students, dog walkers and others that live and walk in that neighbourhood,” Ksiazekiewicz writes.

The petition argues traffic studies should be done to determine the affect of a high-density residential area with 121 additional cars. Points to look at should include: speeding on Tanbark and Four Mile Creek roads, Tanbark being a steep, downhill road, congestion at specific times and in specific areas, like 8:30 a.m., 5 p.m., when students go to and leave school and intersections like Tanbark and York roads and Warner and Four Mile Creek roads.

The community is lacking sidewalks and crosswalks, the petition argues: there is no community centre, few outdoor recreational surfaces for children, and repairs to the St. Davids pool have been on hold due to unavailable funds.

“It is unknown whether the existing public school could accommodate the high density increase in students,” he writes.

Tawny Ridge Estates proposal con- cerns the question of high-density housing is, the petition shares concerns that the proposed high-density housing could negatively affect the resale value of surrounding properties.

“This financial impact must be a consideration by council in their decision-making process,” Ksiazekiewicz writes. The Tawny Ridge Estates proposal, coming from a push from the region to increase housing options in Niagara. Affordable housing is commendable, Ksiazekiewicz writes, in appropriate places. “Tawny Ridge is a square peg trying to fit into a round hole.”

A public meeting on the development will be on Tues- day, March 7, at 6 p.m. Res- dents are encouraged to attend at clerks@notl.com before 12 p.m. on Monday, March 6.
Councillors see the tourism strategy's five phases and the work they include. (ScreenSHOT)
Mike Balsom
The Local

If 15-year-old Eden High School student Avery Kasper has any qualms about playing the iconic title character in Yellow Door Theatre Project’s production of You’re A Good Man, Charlie Brown, he’s not showing it.

After all, following his first appearance in a YDTP production last year as another iconic character, playing Jesus in Godspell, it’s probably a piece of cake.

Yellow Door kicks off March Break with four presentations of the well-known musical based on Charles Schulz’s beloved Peanuts comic strips, March 11 and 12 at both 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. each day. It features a cast of 12 at both 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.

The musical explores life through Charlie Brown’s eyes, as he and his friends play baseball, send valentines, sing songs and share friendships. Fans of the comic strip will recognize some well-known situations, such as Lucy operating her psychiatric booth, Schroeder playing the piano, Linus spouting wisdom while clutching his blanket and Snoopy fantasizing while sitting atop his doghouse.

“Kasper sees a lot of facets to his character that many might not realize,” Hillstrom explains. “I really had to delve into the way Andorlie is stag- ing it, sitting right beside the per- formers. There’s an intimate nature to the show we work a lot with even the most highly- loved TV specials. But I didn’t really know the comics.”

Dubois says Hillstrom en- couraged the young teen cast to look more to the comics in preparation for the upcoming show than to the musical or even the much-loved TV shows. “The way Andorlie is stag- ing it, it’s a lot like the comics,” adds Dubois. “When we do the show we work a lot with our front-facing one way, another way, so it looks kind of like how it was drawn. It’s cool to take it directly from the comic strip and into our show.”

She’s having a lot of fun playing Lucy, the acerbic dark-haired foil to Charlie Brown’s potential happiness. “She has some strange traits,” she laughs. “Like just punching people all the time. Her anger is definitely there. It’s cool to take it directly from the comic strip and into our show.”

“Her anger is definitely there. She’s having a lot of fun playing Lucy, the acerbic dark-haired foil to Charlie Brown’s potential happiness.”

“Avery Kasper as Charlie Brown, with (back) Alex Bergshoeff as Snoopy, Liam Marriott as Schroeder, Diego Ray as Linus: and (front) Maya Sternin as Sally, Catherine Dubois as Lucy, and Leah Hyatt as Sally — she and Sternin share the role. (Photos by Mike Balsom)
TOWN PREVIEWS

We invite our neighbours, the residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Virgil, St Davids and Queenston to see a performance of:

PRINCE CASPIAN

Tickets available by phone 905-468-2172 or in person at the Festival Theatre Box Office.

PERFORMANCE DATES:
- April 13, 2pm
- April 20, 2pm
- May 6, 8pm

The magical world of Narnia teeters on the brink of war. Only Prince Caspian and four children can restore peace.

ATTENTION CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

The Shaw Festival is now accepting applications from Niagara-on-the-Lake charitable and/or not-for-profit organizations for a share of the funds raised from the Town Previews. Please send us an outline of the project and budget, along with your request for a specific amount of money. Send your application to: Janet Hanna, Administration, Shaw Festival, Box 774 Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON LOS 1J0. Application deadline: May 31, 2023.
The doctors are gone, and an almost-empty building sits on a beautiful property in a prime location in the Old Town. It’s time for council to move ahead and make a decision on what to do with the former hospital building on Wellington Street. It may need some updating, but the grand old building needs a purpose.

A group of residents with a grand plan to match the building’s offerings that purpose — to serve the community as a hub for arts, culture and education.

A presentation to the town about the former hospital building, expected at a last week’s meeting, was put off until this Tuesday. Since council meetings are now held mostly on Tuesday evenings — after decades of the traditional Monday nights — just as The Local is going to press, it will be delivered with your mail Wednesday morning, we can’t report on the presentation in this week’s paper. That story will be online later. In the meantime, we can say what we hope took place.

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

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View from the couch

Donald Combe Special to The Local

Sharper (Apple TV, 2023) is a film experience where none of the characters is who he seems to be, so there are endless dramatic character revelations. The writing, direction and acting are all superb; however, what I learned as I watched was both alarming and somewhat depressing.

Donald Combe is a retired English teacher who loves to go to the movies. Until he resumes going to theatres, he has graciously agreed to share his opinions, through ‘short and sweet’ exclusives, of Netflix series and movies for The Local.

Where’s Ben?

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Where’s Ben?

Eden student Ben Foster continues to discover new locations in NOTL, wondering how
I was disappointed in the lat-
est proposal for the Parliament of
enslaved people as the practice
was disagreeable to enslave anyone.

In 1852, Mary sold the home to
Niagara Seminary for Young
remitted to substantiate whether Maria
s乱 by Mary and John.

Win and a year later the couple moved
into the first home that he had
built in Niagara, 363 Simcoe Street (lot 210). A year later, he
had another home built at 392 Mississauga Street (lot 227), and in
1823 John had constructed the home at 240 Centre Street (lot 202).
The Breakenridges were living in this home by 1825. In 1828, John
Breakenridge died. To counteract the loss in income,
he had built in Niagara — 363


Continued from page 6

when your home and you will find things for
relying on others who have nothing left
had been successfully followed

The family was very involved
in the home history file for
240 Centre Street, there is also a
document detailing information
about the homes (men-
tioned above) that were built by John Breakenridge. In this
package of information, who is the
author, who mentions that Andrew Bradt, Arent's son, did enslaved people,
but was unable to determine if he
was inherited from his father.

Records found on The Ni-
augs Settlements website indicate that Bradt had settled on 200
acres of land in the Niagara Townships (lots 72-73) in 1784.

Robert received lot 227 in 1796 and
in the same year he died, leaving it vacant. The property
appears to have remained in his family until it was sold to John
Breakenridge in 1817.

Since lots 227 and 202 butt
onto each other, the rumour of
the burial of enslaved people
could have started with either
e. Sadly, without any primary
historical information including
death or burial records, the
NOTL Museum cannot deter-
certify the validity of these ru-

with regards to proof of the
name of John Breakenridge, the
family was enlisting 18
people, Natasha Henry, Assis-
tant Professor of African Cana-
dian History at York University
and President of the Ontario
Black History Society, was un-
able to determine if Hitchcock
was enslaved people. Further re-
geography, analysis of archival
records and in the same year he
drew the same conclusion as the
museum has been unable to

When John was just four
old, the 1793 Act to Lim-
its Slavery in Upper Canada
was passed. This act gradually
abolished the practice in the
province but did not imme-
diately free those who were
enslaved. The sale of enslaved
people would still occur in the
province until the practice was
abolished in the entire British
Commonwealth in 1834. There
have been questions raised if
John could have afforded or
had enslaved people at the
240 Centre Street property.

Legally John could have
enslaved people as the practice of
buying/selling was still le-
gal when he acquired the 240
Centre Street property. Recent
statements have been made that
Breakenridge could not have
afforded to enslave anyone.

This is not necessarily correct
for several reasons. Since en-
slaved people were considered
personal property, they were often
hired out by their owners.

One of the statutes in the Act
To Limit Slavery was that any re-
cently freed enslaved person (es-
er than the law or manumitted)
would receive from security of
their former enslaver. Security
could have been in the form of
individuals being held in trust
by a local church or town war-

Firstly, we know for a fact
that John Breakenridge com-
misioned 240 Centre Street to
be built in 1823. Francis Phelps
indication that this brick home
was built by Hitchcock in 1796
and that many of the window-
panes, the original kichen and
much of the original hardware
remained from his ownership.
In fact, John Break-
enridge’s affiliation with this
property in this article is but
one short sentence. Addition-
ally, at the time of Hitchcock’s
ownership, brick homes were
not common. During the town’s
formative years, there were only
a few brick homes within the
present municipal boundaries
of Niagara-on-the-Lake, sever-
also made or the pre-date the War of 1812. During this period, many
of the homes in Niagara were
descrbed as hovels, shacks, ruins
and skeletons (Cap-

However, this article must be
taken with a grain of salt as

Those still in Ukraine need:
• Non-prescription drugs
• Non-perishable food items
• Non-perishable food items
• Thermal clothing, socks,
• Sleeping bags, gym mats
• Energy bars, etc.
• Non-perishable food items

Victoria Biluk Katz immi-
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Russia annexed the Crimea. She is
now the president of AMD FOR
HOPE (amdforhope.com), an or-

April 4, 2023

NOTL Museum research ‘can’t determine validity of rumours’

Not a day goes by when we don’t
think about our community and
people in Ukraine who are
suffering. The NOTL Museum
is taking a closer look at the
property at 240 Centre Street.

A 1966 St. Catharines Stan-
dard article of which Francis Phelps
found in the museum’s digi-
tal house files and in the Joy
Ormuth research notes on the
property; there is an 1826
Gleaner Newspaper advertise-
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The family was involved
in the church and its construc-
tion, and the family would
have likely had some
way in having them buried
in the graveyard. Burying en-
slaved people on consecrated
ground was not uncommon
in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Evi-
dence of this is found at St.
Church McNab.

In the town during this time,
there is no building shown on
lot 202. However, as previously
mentioned, the lack of a war
claim following the War of
1812 may be the reason proof of
it being a vacant lot.

With regards to proof of the
name of John Breakenridge, the
family was enlisting 18
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In the town for 200 years.

New buildings have always
been built in Niagara — 363

Any issue held by the NOTL
Gleaner Newspaper advertise-
ments that Arent/Aaron Bradt,
who received the Crown Grant
for lot 227 (329 Mississauga Street)
hired six enslaved people
on this property. However, I
have been able to locate brack records of having
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first home to the lake

that on this one-acre lot was an
individual, they would travel
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Mike Balsam
The Local

The research is irrefutable. Lifelong learning is important for our well-being and can help stave off dementia and other diseases.

In an article called Lifelong Learning: Why Do We Need It? in the journal Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, doctors Maryam Lali and Peyman Salami write, “continuous building of skills and knowledge throughout the life of an individual enhances social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development, helps people to take an active part in civic life, lead a more sustainable lifestyle, and improves their health and wellbeing.”

To that end, a number of lectures, workshops and seminars with a focus on learning for all ages returns next Monday, March 6 to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library. The first 11 sessions will feature Bonnie Bagulio from NOTL Communi- ty Palliative Care Service. It’s part of the Learn and Live Series that got its start in 2021 via recommendations from the town’s Community Wellness Committee’s report to council that year.

Live and Learn kicked off in October 2021, with Dr. Ron Clavier speaking on the emo-
tional wellness of learning. Clavier was followed by McMaster University professor Larry Chambers on reducing the risk of dementia, and then geriatrician Dr. Sam Thrall speaking about healthy aging. In spring 2022, topics included partnering with local not-for-profit organizations called 880 Cities and the Avanti Singers leading a session on music and Live and Learn kicked off in October 2021, with Dr. Ron Clavier speaking on the emotional wellness of learning. Clavier was followed by McMaster University professor Larry Chambers on reducing the risk of dementia, and then geriatrician Dr. Sam Thrall speaking about healthy aging. In spring 2022, topics included partnering with local not-for-profit organizations called 880 Cities and the Avanti Singers leading a session on music and

For this year’s program, co-organizers Cindy Grant and Terry MacTaggart gathered feedback from those who attended previous events.

“Terry and I sat and brainstormed,” says Grant. “At one point last year, we asked attendees what kinds of sessions they would like. We had that information, and we had a couple of other people join us for some meetings to get more input. Then we started approaching potential guests for this year.”

Grant buzzes with excitement about this year’s lineup.

“We didn’t want it to be just about one topic, she says. “Wellness can really be anything. And Terry always emphasizes that this needs to be a program that reaches all ages, not just the seniors in town.”

Indeed, this year’s ses-
sions, which run up to July 17, are widely varied in na-
ture. Grant is really looking forward to a few that should storm the library’s community engage-
ment coordinator, tells The Local. “Because of what she brings to the table, the Live and Learn program. So I passed it on to Cindy and Ter-
ry to run it under the Library and Live umbrella.”

The June 5 session is called Unpacking Indigenous Baggage: Upgrading Your Singing Voice. For the first session on March 5, NOTL CPCS executive director Bonnie Bagulio hopes to dispel some myths about what palliative care is and isn’t, and also draw some attention to some of the lesser-known services the organ-
ization offers.

Palliative Care begins at the onset of a life-limiting illness,” says Bagulio. “It follows through for a year after the loss. What’s nice about the program is that it is focused on in-home care and bereavement as well. We also have a caregiv-
er program that we are just starting,” she adds. “We want everyone to know that we are here for you, our caregivers, and our clients.”

Pre-registration is re-
quired for the Learn and Live series. Visit the library’s web-
site at notllocal.com and follow the links on the events calendar.
The chaum between them is so deep that Russell, who originally proposed the town hire ARA, didn’t know that had occurred and the work was going ahead, until he heard about it from The Local. The town, with Kevin Turcotte, parks and recreation supervisor, apparently taking the lead, notified Webber and the fundraising committee members, who have decided that once the first research phase of the archaeological work is completed, they have a different plan for the property.

Now, with the research that committee members have done, “we know the huge probability of who is buried there,” says Webber. They have been working with the museum, he says, “and our sense is the 18 names we have are the people who are likely buried there.”

His plan includes having those names engraved on a memorial of some lasting material — possibly marble, concrete or steel — for all to see, he says.

Webber envisions the cemetery as a place with pathways and benches, where visitors will learn about the burial ground from the plaque that relays its history, and will be able to sit for a time of quiet reflection. He says he believes that plan, to be a better use of any money raised than the expensive work of excavating headstones and preserving them.

He and Russell had the discussion about going their separate ways last October, he says. “He doesn’t want to work with the committee. He wants to do his thing, and I’ll do mine.”

Webber says his concept for the cemetery, which has the support of the committee, “is, I think, an even better approach.”

The committee, the town, and the Burial Association of Ontario, which oversees cemeteries, will be working together, he added, and he is confident of their support.

Russell knows he can be confrontational, and isn’t bothered by that. He has definite ideas of what he believes should be done, and isn’t backing down from his beliefs.

If ARA recommends the second and third stages it outlines in its report, Russell wants those carried out, although he doesn’t know who will pay for it. He feels strongly the town, as owner of the cemetery, should foot the bill.

He has also spent months trying to get the owner of the property at 240 Centre Street, which borders Mississauga Street, to use ground-penetrating radar on that property. There are two homes that were originally owned by the same family bookending the property, and there have been rumours for years that the family had enslaved servants, and that some of them might have been buried there.

But he has met with resistance every step of the way. Although there have been several phases of an archaeological study and dig on that property, he explains none of the work that has been done eliminates the possibility of graves.

Research undertaken by Shawna Butts of the NOTL Museum indicates that is a possibility, but the rumours are just that — there is no evidence to prove they’re true.

Russell says there are tools that can confirm whether there are bodies buried on that property, and ground-penetrating radar is one of them. He has triied, unsuccessfully so far, to use legal means to force further investigation, and he says he isn’t one to give up.

Although he has been told there is no intention to develop the property, he is afraid that at some point it might be done, with no attempt to do further archaeological studies “in the right places” to be certain there are no graves. “I don’t know what else to do. I don’t understand why this is so hard,” he says, referring to the use of ground-penetrating radar. “It’s frustrating as heck.”

And the future of the Negro Burial Ground is even more frustrating for Russell, given the likelihood that unearthing headstones will not happen.

However, he says he has “plan B. In April, I’ll be back, with a petition that I’ll ask the residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake to sign, urging the town to pay for the completion of the comprehensive archaeological restoration of the Negro Burial Ground.”

He says he has no problem “with making a lot of noise, and being a pain,” and he plans to continue to do just that. “It’s been 147 years, and town councils have not done anything. The time for talking long past. Town council needs a push, until the people buried in the Negro Burial Ground have been given back the identity that has been taken from them.”

George Webber, the chair of the fundraising committee, would like to see benches in the Negro Burial Ground, with a wall that has the names of those buried there. (Supplied)

James Russell and his wife Marilyn were in NOTL in September, putting down new flags to mark the graves as detected through ground-penetrating radar. He hasn’t given up on the idea of having headstones unearthed and restored. (Mike Balsom)
Police marine unit trains from dock at Navy Hall

Niagara-on-the-Lake Local photographer David Gilchrist, himself a diver, was out with his camera recently and came across a group of divers from the Niagara Regional Police marine unit participating in a training exercise off the dock at Navy Hall.

The Local reached out to Sgt. Jon Pilkington of the NRP for details on the dive, which was part of the unit’s regular weekly training routine.

“We train at various locations around the region where we are able to get exposure to different diving conditions for any of our policing functions we are required to perform,” Pilkington told The Local.

“That was a day for us to get exposure to zero visibility,” he went on, “some light current, and varied degree of conditions and obstacles on the bottom. And on that day we were using a scuba system.”

The river near Navy Hall has some unique features that lend themselves to such training dives. Pilkington points out that about 25 to 30 feet from shore there is an eddy. The current closer to the dock is very cold, moving in a southern direction, but further out it changes to flow north in the direction of Lake Ontario.

“It can pose some potential challenges to an inexperienced diver,” Pilkington says. But as he explains, there is not much likelihood anyone on this month’s training session at Navy Hall will that day. And, of course, the weather is a major factor. Pilkington says each diver has his or her own comfort level under very cold conditions.

“Depending on the system we’re using for a dive,” Pilkington adds, “it all depends on the depth they are going to. The deeper they’re going, the more air they will consume. So if they’re on scuba, they are limited to the amount of air in their cylinder, compared to surface-supply, which provides air from the surface to the diver.”

As sergeant of the marine unit, Pilkington oversees a team of seven constables who are certified to dive. They operate out of the NRP’s support services division based in St. Catharines, but respond to situations across the region. Because of that reach, they also train across the region.

“We do various locations along the Niagara River,” he said. “Miller’s Creek in Fort Erie, some shore-based locations along the river, and places like Sherloton and the Welland Recreational Waterway. And off the shore, we jump in off the boat to get some different exposure to open water conditions. Anywhere we can get to that has water, we train there.”

The length of each training session depends on the number of divers who are fit to dive that day. And, of course, the weather is a major factor. Pilkington says each diver has his or her own comfort level under very cold conditions.

“Depending on the system we’re using for a dive,” Pilkington adds, “it all depends on the depth they are going to. The deeper they’re going, the more air they will consume. So if they’re on scuba, they are limited to the amount of air in their cylinder, compared to surface-supply, which provides air from the surface to the diver.”

The unit operates five patrol vessels, including two 9.4-metre Zodias as their primary patrol vessels, capable of heading into open water on Lakes Erie and Ontario.

They also have a smaller, 22-foot secondary patrol vessel based in the upper Niagara River, and two personal watercraft, or Sea-Doos.

Those are for beach patrols and close shoreline searches,” says Pilkington, a 24-year veteran of the NRP and a 17-year veteran of the marine unit.

“And we do have two additional smaller, tiller-style vessels that we can use for shoreline searches and to access areas like Lake Gibson and Lake Moodie.”

From about May through October, the marine unit is out on patrol vessels in Lakes Erie and Ontario and on the Niagara River. They work with both the Canadian and U.S. Coast Guards, as well as the Grimsby auxiliary marine rescue unit and the Port Colborne marine auxiliary rescue unit to respond to search and rescue missions.

Pilkington began diving recreationally in 1994, and it didn’t take long for him to realize that he could combine his hobby with his profession. His options, besides policing, included diving commercially. He, of course, chose the former.

“In our area,” he says, “we are fortunate that there are so many varied things going on between the marine patrols and the dives, and supporting our front-line officers. Most days, it doesn’t even feel like going to work.”

Mike Balsom
The Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro will be presenting our plans for the next 5 years of investments & operations and want to know what you think about it. NOTL Hydro is community owned and profits go back to the community.

If you would like to submit comments, please visit our website. A link to the Open House will be on our home page. Presentation materials will be made available on March 8 by noon.

www.notlhydro.com

March 8, 2023
4:00-5:00PM
8 Henegan Road Virgil, ON
A group of 20 women attended the first Women in Business meeting. (Photos supplied)

Women gather to share ideas, support each other

Penny Coles
The Local

Judging by the success of her first Women in Business event, Helle Brodie feels she’s hit on something women in Niagara-on-the-Lake both need and want.

She is planning her second event this Thursday, March 2 at The Old Winery, and the group is already growing.

She was pleased to have “20 fabulous women” attend the first gathering, representing a range of ages and businesses, including construction, decorating, real estate, mortgages and insurance, therapy and coaching, and food services.

“The energy in the room was incredible,” she says, “and the consensus is this is much needed in the NOTL area.”

A Facebook group has been created for the group, she says, and in a very short time had grown to 95 members.

Her plan is for women to get to know each other, share ideas and support each other. It’s not intended as a network for promotion or sales, she stresses, although several of the women who attended the first meeting have told her it almost immediately helped build clientele, through word of mouth.

“The whole idea is to focus on positivity, and to be a very inclusive group,” Brodie says she’s been an entrepreneur for 35 years, and is now a business and mindset coach — her second business. She likes to think she and some of the more experienced women in business have some wisdom and experience to share with those in the younger age group who are just starting out.

It’s also a way to meet new people with similar interests, she adds.

Brodie says she moved to NOTL about six months ago, and aside from her retired neighbours, “wonderful people,” she didn’t know anyone in town, and saw this as an opportunity to gather women together to meet other like-minded women in the community. And that seems to be what those in attendance enjoyed the most — the majority came on their own, didn’t know the others, and loved connecting with other women.

“Twenty women in one room with a glass of wine, it’s bound to be fun,” laughs Brodie. “What’s not to like?”

And now, she adds, “I feel like I have 20 new friends.”

The second Evening for Women in Business will be held at the Old Winery on Thursday, March 2, from 7 to 9 p.m. Going forward, Brodie plans for one woman to make a brief presentation about her business — this month it’s about music therapy.

“It sounds fascinating, and I want to know more about it. I’m a curious person, and I like to hear what everyone is doing.”

Tickets for the March 2 event at The Old Winery on Niagara Stone Road are being sold to cover the costs of the event. Tickets can be purchased online at app.promotix.com/events/details/March-Evening-for-Women-in-Business-tickets.
Standing up with MMP Gates against Bill 23

St Saviour’s organist retires — this time for good

March 1, 2023

Mike Balsom
The Local

It’s not the first time the Farley Shaver has headed into retirement. In fact, she promises it will take a lot.

After 54 years on a church organ bench, 44 of them in Niagaraezze, the retired St Saviour’s organist is about to step down after a successful career spanning decades. The decision came after a conversation with her husband, John, who felt it was time for her to start thinking about new adventures.

Farley’s commitment to her craft began in her early years, playing for her friends and family. Her passion for music led her to pursue a career as an organist, and she has been providing musical accompaniment for church services and events ever since.

She credits her late husband, John, with being a constant support throughout her career. He encouraged her to pursue her passion and provided the support needed to make her dreams a reality.

Farley says that she is looking forward to a new chapter in her life, with more time to spend with her family and friends. She also plans to pursue some new hobbies and interests, such as travel and writing.

While she will miss the routine of playing for services every week, Farley says that she is excited to see what the future holds. She is grateful for the opportunity to have had such a fulfilling career and is looking forward to a new chapter.

In closing, Farley Shaver with her family gathered around her at her last service at St Saviour’s before retiring. Her husband is Dave, Irene, John, Patricia, Julia, Matt, Anneliese, Nadia, Dawson, and in front, Farley with Isasiah. (Photos by Mike Balsom)
Sandra Ozkur
Special to The Local

Getting the itch to get growing? Now is the time to start native plants and wildflowers from seed, while your gardens are fast asleep. Introducing native plants to your garden is the best way to support biodiversity and provide food for bees, pollinating insects, birds and butterflies.

Winter sowing is an easy and inexpensive way to start plants from seed. Native seeds need freezing and thawing in order to sprout, and winter sowing provides these exact conditions.

Winter sowing is a method that mimics the cycle of flow- ers and plants in nature. Native plants generally self-seed in the fall and reproduce naturally in the wild. Unfortunately, with loss of natural habitat, native plant varieties are finding it more difficult to survive, so humans can lend a hand by planting pollina- tor-friendly gardens. It is fun and easy, and perfect for beginners.

Native plants are in sync with the natural cycles of the seasons. In autumn, seeds fall from the plants to the ground and are covered by falling leaves, which protect them from wind and birds, and when the snow falls, it provides insulation from extreme temperatures. Through- out the winter, the seeds remain dormant but the natural freezing and thawing breaks open the hard outer shell so the seed can sprout in spring. As the snow melts and the sun gradually warms the soil, the seeds begin to sprout when the time is right.

With winter sowing, we are imitating nature in a controlled environment by making miniature greenhouses. This gives the seeds a better chance of survival.

Frieda Krugel, a local Niagara-on-the-Lake expert on winter sowing, recommends saving plastic containers that would previously be tossed into the recycling bin. Large plastic milk bottles or two-litre pop bottles work well, but her favourite containers are four-litre water jugs. They are the perfect height and width for seedlings to grow, and the carrying handle makes them easy to move.

“The idea is to create mini greenhouses with these con- tainers where the seeds can germinate, set roots, and grow big enough to be transplanted directly into your garden. By setting the containers outside, you are giving the plants a head start, and nature does all the work,” says Krugel.

“Winter sowing is an easy way to start plants from seeds without expensive equipment such as grow lights, heating mats or special containers. This meth- od is much simpler, the seeds are put into moist soil, covered with a transparent lid, then placed outside under the sun. When conditions are right, the seeds will sprout and begin to grow. You don’t have to be an experi- enced gardener to get this right,” she explains.

To begin, you will need a selection of untreated na- tive seeds, suitable containers, potting soil, a spray bottle for watering, plastic forks for labeling, packing tape to seal containers, and a drill or pointy metal BBQ skewer for making drainage holes in the containers.

Begin by collecting suitable plastic containers; if you don’t have enough, check your neigh- bourhood recycling bins. These containers should hold at least six inches wide and 10 to 12 inches high to accommodate the plant stalk and leaves as it grows. Cut the bottom of these containers from the bottom almost all the way around but leave a small por- tion intact to serve as a hinge. Next, take your electric screw driver or pointy barbecue skew- er (heated over a candle) and make four to six holes around the sides of the container so the frame keeps them from tipping over and the soil beneath acts as insulation.

Keep eye on your containers but don’t interfere with the pro- cess. As it gets closer to spring, but don’t interfere with the process.

Prepare a bag of potting soil from seed. Put the seeds in a bucket or tub by moistening the soil is thoroughly moist- ened, breaking up any large clumps as you go. Once the soil is thoroughly moist- ened, distribute it amongst your prepared containers placing at least four inches of soil in the bottom of each container. Next, place your seeds into the pot at a depth twice the diameter of the seed. Follow the instructions on the seed package for best results. Sprinkle a little dry soil on top and pat down evenly, then give a final spray to wet the top layer. Finally, write the plant name on the handle of a plastic fork then stick it into the soil. Once the planting is complete, close the lid and seal it with two layers of packing tape to prevent it from blowing open or being dis- turbed by curious animals.

Once the containers are complete, take the lid off and throw it away, this opening will act as a ventilation hole and let in just enough snow or rain to keep the soil moist. Place the containers outside on the ground in a sunny area protect- ed from the wind. Find a suit- able place alongside the house foundation or in your garden. Placing them into a raised gar- den bed works great because the frame keeps them from tipping over and the soil beneath acts as insulation.

“February through mid-March is a good time to do win- ter sowing,” says Chris DiRaddo from Saunders Farm Nursery in Welland. “It has a selection of na- tive seed packages on his website. You can see a variety of native flowers will create genetic di- versity which improves the spe- cies and creates more resilient plants. Growing native plants that are adapted to our local environment saves on water, fertilizer and yard maintenance.

Once your pollinator plants are established, you will see more flowers, bees, birds and butter- flies because you are providing the right food and habitat,” Di- Raddo explains.

So, get busy and have some fun with winter sowing. Your ef- forts to grow native plants will re- sult in a garden full of splendour and you will feel good knowing that you are providing homes for our tiny pollinator friends. Check out YouTube videos and online articles for more detailed instructions for winter sowing at youtu.be/zRt0o1L_.

Tip of the week: Many local garden clubs host Seedy Satur- days, where you can buy or ex- change native and heirloom seeds.

“Seeding a variety of native flowers will create genetic di- versity, which improves the spe- cies and creates more resilient plants. Growing native plants that are adapted to our local environment saves on water, fertilizer and yard maintenance.”
Church offers Safe Haven for teens to hang out

A St. Davids church has opened its doors as a Safe Haven for teens, offering a gathering place twice a month on Friday evenings, for kids aged 13 to 17.

Maya Gazzard is one of the teens who has taken part in the youth group, organized by St. Davids-Queenston United Church on York Road, and had encouraged her friends to join her.

Maya, 16, a Grade 11 student at A.N. Myer Secondary School in Niagara Falls, is the Sunday school teacher at the church, and says it is her “pride and privilege to teach the kids and have fun with them.”

When the decision was made to go ahead with the church youth group, she got involved in getting it started by spreading the word through posters and social media, and she plans on being a regular participant.

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“Maya Gazzard is one of the teens who has taken part in the youth group, organized by St. Davids-Queenston United Church on York Road, and had encouraged her friends to join her.”

Christian education leader, Rev. YongSeok Baek, was keen to help, and grown a youth group in his sphere, when approached by Maya, when approached by Rev Baek, was keen to help with a teen-focused project.

Maya, Rev Baek and the church’s Christian education committee, led by Nancy Lang, met and decided that a teen group would be a great offering — the community was growing, more families were moving in, and most teens were limited to hanging out at the Public Cen- tres, says Lyndsay.

The Safe Haven teen group was created and is a drop-in space for teens 13 to 17. It runs twice a month on Friday evenings, and offers a space for teens to hang out and chat and to use the board games, ping pong, air hockey and Foosball, gaming systems and musical instruments — and to do whatever they enjoy.

“Any parent of a teen in the NOTL area will tell you that there is a lack of activities and safe spaces to gather at no expense for young people, and the church is hopeful that it can fill its mandate to serve and support all generations of our community,” says Lyndsay.

Lang, who has attended each session so far with a core group of volunteers, says, as a grandmother of four, three of whom are teenagers, she has watched young people struggle through the pandemic, missing out on opportunities to socialize with their friends. When the idea of a youth group came up, “I saw it as giving them a place to land.”

The Friday evenings started with a small group, which has grown, as those who came have returned and brought friends. Even if it remains a small group, the church will continue to operate, happy to provide the space for whoever wants to attend.

Lang stresses that this initiative is not just for church families, and it’s not a faith-based group. “The church is just providing the space,” she says. “The doors are open to any kids who want to come.”

And while there are lots of activities provided, “we do not organize anything. We make equipment available to kids and they decide what they want to do.”

From what she’s witnessed, she adds, it’s working. The kids seem to have fun, there is lots of laughter, lots of music — and so far, they seem to want to return for more.

Safe Haven is at 1453 York Rd., St. Davids, from 6 to 9 p.m.
Lakeit-Hall organized the event at Caroline Cellars “to get like-minded individuals together, women and men,” she said. 

The global theme for this year’s International Women’s Day is equity.

Lakeit-Hall is part of a “great diverse group of women who are all part of the Niagara community. We’re better together. If we come together and learn from each other and celebrate together we can have a better impact on the community and give back more.”

Tickets can be purchased until March 6 via email at info@shconsultinggroup.ca.

Proceeds from a 50/50 draw will go toward The Shoebox Project, which are boxes “filled with items for women (journals, toothbrushes, hygiene products, socks) and delivered to women’s shelters and women in need,” said Lakeit-Hall. “We are really passionate about helping and supporting women in the community.”

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Another event in honour of International Women’s Day is being held at Ironwood Cider House on March 10 from 6 to 9 pm. The event, called Women For Women, will include live music from Riley Michaels. A small shop market with several vendors will be located in the loft.

“Local businesses, such as 124 Queen, Oast House, Blackburn and Ruffino have donated to the silent auction,” said Robyn Brown, Marketing and Events Manager for Ironwood. “Proceeds from the silent auction will go to Gillion’s Place St. Catharines in support of survivors of gender-based violence.” Visit ironwoodcider.ca for tickets.

Caroline Cellars will celebrate International Women’s Day with an event, as it did pre-pandemic. Pictured here are retail manager Jaclyn Lakeit, mom Frieda Lakeit, and event host Stephanie Lakeit-Hall. (Megan Muir)
You may have heard that pharmacists can now write prescriptions for common conditions like allergies, pink eye and heartburn. This sounds quick and convenient, but what does it mean? Can you just show up at the pharmacy counter with a problem? Here are the answers to these and some other top questions:

What is a minor illness?
A minor illness is a health condition that can be managed with minimal treatment or self-care strategies. It’s usually a short-term problem that doesn’t raise any red flags for a more serious condition or require a blood test or lab work to diagnose.

Which minor illnesses can I see a pharmacist for?
Your local pharmacist can now assess and treat 13 common ailments: allergies, oral thrush, pink eye, eczema and skin rashes, painful periods, heartburn, hemorrhoids, cold sores, bug bites and hives, tick bites, sprains and strains, urinary tract infections (UTIs) and impetigo.

Do I need to book an appointment?
No, you can simply walk in and speak with a highly trained pharmacist without having to call ahead.

Is there a fee?
Assessing and prescribing medication for minor illnesses is covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan, so all you need to do is show your valid OHIP card. You may still pay the normal dispensing fee if they fill a prescription.

What happens during the pharmacist visit?
Your pharmacist will ask questions to assess your condition and decide on the best course of action. This could be a prescription or a recommendation for an over-the-counter medication. If the pharmacist feels your illness is serious or requires a follow up, they will refer you to a doctor.

Learn more about this new service at rexall.ca/prescribing.
The anticipation of a new adventure to me, is almost as exciting as the journey itself. On October 18, 2023, I will be leading a 16 day tour to one of my bucket list destinations… Morocco! Already, I have completely embraced thoughts of jumping headfirst into this exotic and captivating country. Experiencing it with Craig Travel means that the program was created with seniors in mind and that I will be joined by new and old friends alike. I am seeing myself there, exploring the mysterious walled Imperial cities of Rabat, Meknes, Fez and Marrakech, with their unique Moorish and Islamic architecture, the clean lines and archways of the medieval buildings and the stunning patterns and colours of intricately placed tiles. Visiting royal palaces, beautiful gardens, fascinating museums and beautiful landscapes will be an exciting part of it all. Imagine wandering through the medinas, the old town section of the cities, navigating the narrow streets, marvelling at the plethora of goods in the souks (markets), listening to the lively banter of the vendors and savouring the exotic scent of colourful spices, piled high in huge bins. How exciting to roam the stalls bursting with textiles, colourful clothing, ceramics, leather items, carpets and slippers.

An overnight tenting in the vast Sahara will be a highlight and treasured memory. A camel ride is an opportunity I, for one, will not miss! Tents come complete with private washrooms, so we’re not exactly roughing it! To walk barefoot on the warm sand surrounded by miles of desert silence is indescribable. To enjoy delicious cuisine served by attentive Berbers in traditional garb, followed by the sweet sounds of Moroccan music, while sitting under a blanket of twinkling stars, will be magical! Next morning, we will want to get up early to experience the desert sunrise! We will cross over the rugged Middle Atlas Mountains into the heart of Berber country where we will visit a Berber village and learn their customs. We’ll make our way to the magnificent Todra Gorge with its limestone cliffs and visit fertile valleys and tea plantations. A special highlight will be a visit to the Amal Centre founded in 2012 to support local women with disadvantaged backgrounds. In Casablanca, we’ll explore the stunning Hassan II Mosque, the largest functioning mosque in Africa and the seventh largest in the world. Our farewell dinner will be at the recreated Rick’s Café, made famous by Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman in the movie classic Casablanca. What a wonderful end to this magical adventure!

**Article by Donna Rombough**

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3 steps to take if your online data has been breached

(1) Cybercrime is an unfortunate reality in our always-connected world, and criminals continue to find ever more sophisticated ways to access our data. This can hurt not only your personal finances, but also your credit score, identity, and even your reputation. If you're feeling concerned, you're not alone.

According to a recent poll, almost half of Canadians are worried about being a victim of cybercrime in the coming year. Older Canadians (55+), in particular, are much more likely than younger generations to be concerned about having email or social accounts hacked, or being scammed online. "As our Internet usage grows, so does cybercrime—and the methods continue to evolve," says Adam Evans, chief information security officer with RBC.

It's important that Canadians proactively protect themselves and know what steps to take in the event personal data is breached in order to recover. If your personal data is compromised online, there are several steps you can take right away:

1. Change all passwords immediately. Regardless of where the breach occurred, it's important to update all your passwords right away, especially if you've used the same one across several accounts. A reputable password manager can help by saving your passwords to a vault and suggesting new ones for each site—that way you'll only need to remember one.

2. Double down on safety. If you haven't already, enable multi-factor authentication. This provides a second layer of security that helps prove you are who you say you are, like sending you a text with a numeric code you use to complete your login. This can reduce the chances of thieves accessing more than one account following a breach.

3. Lock your cards and contact experts. If your financial information has been compromised, chances are that your bank or credit card company is already aware. However, it's a good idea to lock your debit or credit cards and call your financial institutions. Also, advise family and friends to keep an eye out for unusual messages that could be attempts to access your personal information.

Education and vigilance are essential to guard against cyber criminals. You can become more cyber-aware with resources like The Vault, a downloadable guide to cyber safety, available at rbc.com/cyber.

How to spot reliable health information

(1) Sometimes it seems like everyone thinks they're an expert on health, and many people are quick to offer opinions on health information. How can you be certain you're finding the best information from reputable sources?

The importance of self-care

(1) When hearing the words "self-care," some people may think it means indulging yourself, such as getting a massage or buying yourself a treat. In some ways it can include these types of things, but it is also much more. Whatever your form of self-care, there is real value in taking care of yourself in simple, regular ways. For you, it might be your daily walk through the neighborhood, a good chat with a friend or a session with a therapist.

Taking care of your physical and mental health can help you handle difficult experiences, help you feel more confident in yourself and your abilities and improve your ability to regain some control after you've been through a tough time.

Of course, many things can affect mental well-being, and they aren't all within our control. But, having things to look forward to and putting aside time to prioritize yourself are important parts of everyone's well-being. As many of us learn the hard way, you can't do your best for anyone else if you're not showing up for yourself. If even the small things seem challenging or you're finding that emotions like sadness, worry, loneliness or anger are long-lasting or interfering with your daily routines, it may be time to reach out for help. This is another important act of self-care itself.

There are many free and credible mental health resources available online, including self-guided therapy, one-on-one counseling with qualified health professionals and moderated peer-to-peer support. You can find more information about these resources at canada.ca/mental-health.

The key first step is to recognize that not everything you hear is true, especially if the information is associated with the sale of a product or service.

2. Access official sources. While you might be inundated every day with information from friends, family, social media, websites and more, you can very easily establish a few key reliable sources for news. You can't go wrong with trusted official government websites. Health Canada is the leading source for reliable healthcare information that all Canadian citizens can access for free.

Healthcare non-profit organizations can also offer a wealth of information supported by doctors, experts in the field and individuals with lived experience. The Kidney Foundation of Canada, for example, has many resources about kidney disease, such as their website, webinars and social media feeds.

3. Consult your healthcare provider. If you feel like there's a lot of conflicting information online or you have specific health concerns that aren't being taken into account, bring those questions to your primary care physician. Especially if you feel like you may need to make any changes related to your health, seeing your doctor should be a critical step in any decision-making process.

Following these three key steps will help you find accurate, fact-based healthcare information. Before trying any new diet fads, making changes to your drug and health products, or anything else, remember to be skeptical, check your trusted sources and, if needed, consult your family doctor.
7 common scams targeting seniors

(1) Scams targeting older adults are on the rise, but being informed and knowing how to spot the signs can reduce your risk of falling prey to one. Here are seven common scams to watch out for according to Royal Bank of Canada:

1. Romance scams
Initiated on dating or social media sites, scammers build relationships over time before asking for large sums of money. The perpetrator says they can’t video chat for technical reasons, but it’s because a video call would reveal that they aren’t who they say they are.

2. Sweepstakes scams
Scammers claim you won a lottery or other prize, but you must pay taxes or fees to claim the prize. It’s often a contest or lottery the victim never even entered.

3. Grandparent scams
Impersonating a relative, the fraudster phones in a panic saying they’re in trouble and need money to be sent immediately. The phone is then handed to their “attorney” or “representative” before you can clearly recognize the voice. Often the fraudster will say “Don’t tell my parents” and “You’re the only one who can help.”

4. Computer software or virus scams
A pop-up ad or email says your computer has been hacked and demands payment from you. Once you engage, they use extreme pressure tactics to push for more funds or gift cards.

5. Government agency scams
The scammer impersonates someone from the Canada Revenue Agency or another government agency, demanding payment or a transfer of funds so you can avoid a penalty or jail time.

6. Gift card scam
If someone posing as a legitimate source or business asks you to pay for something by putting money on a gift card, it’s a scam. They say it’s urgent, may tell you to purchase several different gift cards, and then ask you to share the gift card number and pin. Once you do, your money is gone.

7. Undercover investigation scam
Criminals pose as legitimate sources like law enforcement or your bank and trick you into providing money to help with a criminal investigation. There are many variations, but the scammer often claims they are investigating an employee at a bank branch and they need the victim to withdraw a large sum of money to be used as evidence. It may happen over multiple days. The victim is told not to tell anyone they’re involved and that the money will be returned. Remember, a business, government agency or your bank will never ask you to participate in an undercover operation to prevent fraud. To help avoid becoming a victim of one of these scams, remember to think twice, ask questions and take your time if something doesn’t feel right. Find more information on how to protect yourself at rbc.com/privacysecurity.
Chef recognized for program to feed those in need

Mike Balsom
The Local

The lights go on in Niagara College’s Benchmark kitchen shortly before 9 a.m. Volunteer students in various stages of their programs at the Daniel J. Patterson Campus’ School of Culinary Arts don their whites and get to work. The menu today is an Asian-glazed barbecue pork loin, steamed balsamic rice and a mix of frozen vegetables. The food will be portioned and packaged into two-pound boxes, each filled to the brim with gourmet food.

Later in the day, representatives from local non-profits in Niagara, such as Gillian’s Place, Start Me Up Niagara, the Boys and Girls Club Youth Centre, CFT and Village of Hope Niagara will pull up in vans to collect 50 boxes each to serve to clients about 4:30 p.m. It’s a program called Feed the Community, initiated and led by chef professor Olaf Mertens, and it’s earned the St. Davids resident recognition from the provincial government.

On Feb. 4, Jill Dunlop, Minister of Colleges and Universities, presented Mertens with an Everyday Heroes Award for the project — an initiative, on addressing food insecurity, promoting health and wellness in the community, and diverting otherwise discarded food from compost heaps.

Mertens tells The Local his idea for the initiative got its roots from a trip to Newfoundland he and School of Culinary Arts dean Craig Youdale took a few years ago.

“I had an epiphany there,” he says. They cooked for a week, and the response from everyone they cooked for was one of gratitude, thanking them for the food, for travelling to be there, and then coming back to express their gratitude again.

“I wanted to cook just to cook,” he adds. “Not for monetary reasons, not even to teach, just to capture my enjoyment in it.”

Mertens grew up in his family’s Mississauga German deli. From as early as he can remember, he wanted to be a chef. After high school, he apprenticed in Berlin, Germany, and was named that city’s appren- tice of the year in 1989. He returned to Canada and spent eight years as the chef at Rogers Hotel in Mississauga, before heading back to Germany to earn his Master Chef designation. With that in his pocket, he signed on as a corporate chef back in Canada, then became the executive chef, co-founder and owner of HIP (Hospita- lity Inspired People) Restaurants, with three Mississauga locations — On the Curve Hot Stone and Wine Bar, Ten Restau- rant and Wine Bar, and West 50 Pouhource and Grill.

In 2010, after a decade in that role, he joined the Niagara College faculty. The journey to the east coast with Youdale took place shortly after that.

Living in Burlington at the time, he discovered a group of volunteers who were cooking for 600 people every Friday, distributing food to those in need in that area. Mertens signed on to help them out for a five-week stint.

He then brought the idea to Youdale and began a similar program at Niag- ara College in 2021. From its beginning that year to December 2022, about 10,500 meals were prepared by Mertens, alongside culinary staff and students, and donated to local shelter and food banks. Already this year, 1,000 individual meals have been donated to about 20 organizations.

Mertens says it’s a bit of an holistic approach, as food is being saved from the compost bin. As well, surplus products brought in for special events, such as 100 portions of chicken from the Feb. 4 Caps, Corks and Forks event, are often frozen for future Feed the Community distribution.

And Mertens adds that cooking for those in need brings him, the faculty, and the students, all volunteers, back to their roots — feeding people because they simply have to eat.

“It’s clear this project brings much joy to Mer- tens, who is just as happy to turn over the reins to his student volunteers and take a back seat to peel onions and carrots for the meals. Today’s menu was designed by graduating students, who consulted with Mertens on the calculations for the suppliers order that had to be placed a week ahead of time.

“It’s another style of learning,” he says. “I see it more as mentoring and coaching, rather than acting as a culinary instruc- tor.”

Youdale says the ini- tiative begun by Mertens brings focus to the power that food and the skill of preparing it can have on the community.

“Sure, it’s a job for them, an opportunity, part of a career,” he says of the students. “But food is really part of who we are as a society. For those that have insecurity when it comes to food, it becomes a difficult thing to deal with. When you have the ability and a skill set to help those out, to do good, we really want them to understand the power that they have.”

Krista Lee Boyd, a sec- ond semester student from Welland, says she volun- teers because “I love cook- ing, I have the time, and I feel blessed in my life. I love that I can come in and help make meals for people going through tough times.”

Boyd believes in voluntarism and expects she as she graduates from the program she will find some way to continue giving back in a similar fashion.

And she appreciates the example being set by Mer- tens and the other faculty members who also help out.

“His a lot of fun to work with,” Boyd says of her jovial leader. “He’s a really good teacher as well. He lets you figure things out with trial and error. I think you learn better that way. He’s great at getting everyone involved. Every- body loves him.”

Mertens hopes to keep Feed the Community going — through the summer months. The college fi- nanced the program for its first two sessions, and a local family donated $10,000 for the third session. The donation covered the costs of the protein and the packaging, he says, “as well as some dry goods that we needed. And the family knew that their donation contributed to about 2,500 to 3,000 meals. They were able to see ex- actly where it was going.”

Mertens’ Everyday Heroes Award was one of two Awards of ExCELlence presented by Dun- lop to Niagara College this month. The other went to its new Accessibility Hub. Launched in spring 2022, it helps educators and non-educators alike to build accessibility-first habits into all aspects of their work.

Mertens is clearly un- comfortable with the at- tention drawn to him for kickstarting Feed the Community, preferring to deflect it back to the stu- dents who donate their time to the program.

On receiving the award from the minister, he says he felt “humbled and grateful. Obviously it’s meaningful that it got recognized, but really I’m hoping it creates a ripple effect, that we can use it as a moment to scream from the rooftops about how fortunate we are.”

“Feed the Community is a fantastic way to continue giving back in a similar fashion.”

Chef Olaf Mertens with student Krista-Lee Boyd. (Mike Balsom)
Niagara Rangers lose a heart-breaker to Pelham

Mike Balsom
The Local

A slow start, some foul trouble, a number of questionable non-calls and a few key missed shots resulted in the Niagara Rangers dropping a 41-39 decision to the Pelham Panthers in Under-19 girls basketball Thursday.

"It was a frustrating game for many reasons," coach Shawn Pylypiw told The Local after the game in Pelham, "but our team didn’t seem to have their hearts in Pelham, "but our team didn’t seem to have their hearts in it. The effort wasn’t there and they were lacking that spark."

It did take a while for the Rangers to get going in the first quarter. Their first three possessions ended with two missed shots and a turnover under the Rangers basket. The only saving grace was that the Panthers were also missing the hoop at the Rangers end of the court.

Pelham was first on the board, though, going up 2-0 on foul shots. But a mid-quarter surge gave the Rangers the lead on two layups by Arii Froese and a basket by Melia Kotsanis, who followed up that with a successful bonus foul shot to put Niagara up 7-4.

The Panthers roared back, though, with six unanswered points to end the first ahead 10-7. Pelham continued their scoring run to open the second quarter, taking a 14-7 lead. Then, Rangers point guard McKyra Pylypiw went on a run of her own, draining two baskets there going one-for-two on the foul line to close the gap to two.

A foul on Kyla Pylypiw gave the Rangers a chance to tie the game. She stepped to the charity stripe and coolly hit both shots. The Rangers forced another turnover, and Pylypiw narrowed the margin to a single point with 1:09 left.

A shot by Pelham’s Jada Upshaw, who ended the night with 11 points, made it 41-38 for the home team. When the Rangers got the ball back, Pylypiw was fouled driving to the basket. She scored on one of her two free throws to make it 41-39.

After Pelham was stopped on their next drive, Niagara’s Amy Venneri had a chance to tie it but missed the net. The Rangers forced another turnover, and their coach called a timeout with 0.9 seconds remaining, enough time for a quick inbounds play and a shot. Kyla Pylypiw made an inbound play to Venneri, who was challenged by the Panthers, and she never actually gained possession of the ball.

"That final play of the game summarized our night," coach Pylypiw said. "We set up a play under their basket for a catch and shoot. The five players who went out had no sense of urgency to get set up and be ready. When the referee handed the ball to us, our players were not even set."

Saturday was how the whole game was, lacking that effort and the heart which we normally have," Venneri added that he saw

"When the referee handed the ball to us, our players were not even set."

"That final play of the game summarized our night," coach Pylypiw said. "Even if we won it would have been a disappointing game for us," he insisted. "We need to have a gut check moment to find that spark as we are now in mid-season and need to start getting things rolling. We need to look at what we can control and what we are responsible for. I know this team has greatness from each player, but potential is a waste unless you play up to it." The U19 Rangers travel to Bramford’s North Park Colle- gate School this weekend for their second tournament of the season. They play the Toronto Lords Friday night, then Illusu- ed Sacrament and the Stratford Revolution on Saturday.

Steve Bogatek, competing in the 70 to 75 age group at the weekend’s Canadian Masters Indoor Championships at York University in Toronto, came home with three gold medals. He won the 50-metre hurdles, 60-metre hurdles and the triple jump. He also won silver in the long jump. Bogatek plans to compete in U.S. Championships in North Carolina in July, and has hopes for next year’s World Championships in Sweden.

Golden weekend for local senior

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Ranger Morgan Lambert dribbles to the corner. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

Ranger Amy Froese in a crowd under the Pelham basket.
The Predators’ Sunday loss takes team to third game

Mike Balsom
The Local

If he were to write a book about his team’s 2022-2023 Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League season, Niagara Predators head coach Kevin Taylor might title it A Tale of Two Teams.

That familiar refrain came out again following his team’s 4-2 loss to the rival Ravens in St. George Sunday afternoon, squandering their opportunity to sweep the best-of-three round series in the Busted Cup playoffs.

“I go through every week wondering exactly who is going to show up, what team we will be,” Taylor told The Local. “We had no sense of urgency out there Sunday. St. George played with desperation. They wanted it more than we did.”

The other Predators team had showed up in Virgil Friday night, though they were a bit slow to start on their way to a 5-2 victory over St. George in game one of the series.

Defenceman Guy Manco got the Preds on the scoreboard 3:19 into the second. Reese Biscia led a three-on-two rush into the St. George zone, bringing the puck into the centre area and dropping it off for a trailing Manco, who one-timed it past Ravens goalie Matt Czyzewski for the goal.

Just 33 seconds later, fellow defenceman Ethan Boyd put the Preds up 2-0 by knocking in his own rebound past a sprawling Czyzewski.

Later that period, after Czyzewski made an incredible stop on a breakaway by Niagara’s Taylor Gearing, St. George’s Harry Pollard-Dall finally solved Preds goalie Zane Clausen for a goal with just under seven minutes left to seal the 5-2 victory.

“Sim was called for hooking and was sent to the penalty box. On the ensuing power play, Cameron Savoie got the puck to Czyzewski left, passed it across the ice to Anthony Tropea, who set up Declan Fogarty for a one-timer to the open side of the net. The Preds added their three-goal lead 1:37 into the third when Savoie got the puck off a faceoff in the Ravens’ end and blasted it past a screened Czyzewski. But St. George’s Harry Pollard-Dall finally solved Preds goalie Zane Clausen a minute later with a screened shot of his own to put the Ravens on the board.

Ten minutes later, Raven Malcolm Campbell closed the gap to 4-2 with a backhand that Clausen couldn’t get to. But Gearing added another insurance goal with just under seven minutes left to seal the 5-2 victory.

Taylor was frustrated with the fact that his team clawed back to within a goal in the third but quickly coughed up another two-stone to the Ravens right after that.

“We let up for a shift,” he said, “and they got a pretty weak goal. And we don’t have that guy who can put the team on his back and win the game for us. It seems everyone is trying to say that they’re that person, and they have to start thinking more about playing as a team.”

That was a best-of-three series, meaning Tuesday’s game in Virgil was the deciding one. It was do or die for both the Predators and the Ravens.

“We have to get a better start,” Taylor said of the rubber match.

“If we want to be better prepared and go from there. There are a couple of guys for whom this could be their last game ever. If you don’t want it to be, you have to leave it all out there on the ice. There’s no tomorrow. If we lose, we have to want it better than they do.”

With a 5 p.m. press time Tuesday, The Local can’t report on the game in Wednesday’s paper, but look online at notllocal.com to see whether the Predators move on or hang up their skates for the season.

Predators’ Sunday loss takes team to third game

LocalHAPPENINGS

FISH FRY
Every Thursday 4 - 7 p.m.
EAT IN OR TAKE OUT
CASH ONLY
1 piece $11 2 piece $15
with fries and coleslaw

Ravens goalie Owen Neomytka makes a save while Ethan Boyd clears the crease in Friday’s home game win. (Mike Balsom)

Fishing

LocalSPORTS

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Saturday, March 4
5 TO 8 PM
featuring Tom Davies
Free Admission - Beef on a Bun $6 - All Welcome!

To advertise your Wors Service, please contact:
julia@notllocal.com

Cornerstone Worship Service
Sunday, March 5th
9:45 a.m.
Kids Ministry Sign In (Nursery - Grade 2)
10:00 a.m.
Worship Gathering Online & In-Person
Message: Kevin Rayne
The Gospel of Reconciliation
(Colossians 1:21-23)
BAPTISM SERVICE
To schedule your baptism, please call Julia at 905-546-3233.

St. Davids and District Lions Club
Friday Fish Fry
March 3rd
4:30 to 7:00 pm
1 pc Dinner - $13.00
2 pc Dinner - $17.00

EAT IN or TAKE OUT
cash only

Haddock or Chips
or Baked Potato, Coleslaw,
Tater Tots, or Bread

Baptism Service

Mike Balsom
The Local
WILLIAMS, ELLEN ELIZABETH (HENRY)—beloved mother, grandmother, and retired teacher, passed away peacefully on February 21, 2023 at Hospice Niagara, in St. Catharines, Ontario after a courageous battle with pancreatic cancer. Born on January 17, 1945, Ellen dedicated her life to her family, her teaching career, and being an active member of her community.

Ellen was a devoted wife to Brian, mother to Lesley (David) Jesseau and Scott (Kyrna) Williams, and was incredibly proud of her three grandsons, Ben & Nathan Jesseau, and Ausher Williams. Throughout her life, she was an active walker, who enjoyed the outdoors and the beauty of nature. After Brian’s passing in 2014, Ellen relied on the loving support of her Niagara-on-the-Lake community and friends including her beloved poker group, community organizations such as Newark Neighbours and her travelling companions with whom she travelled to South America, Mexico, Spain, and Morocco.

Ellen will be deeply missed by her family, friends, and all those who knew her. Her kindness, generosity, and unwavering spirit will forever be remembered and celebrated. The family wishes to thank the incredible staff at Hospice Niagara for their work to support Ellen and them through her final days.

Per Ellen’s wishes cremation has taken place, arrangements entrusted to Morgan Funeral Home. A memorial service to celebrate the life of Ellen to take place at a later date. As an expression of sympathy, those who wish may make a memorial donation to Hospice Niagara or to Pancreatic Cancer Canada. Memories, photos, and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com.
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