Chamber to hold first State of the Town event

Penny Coles
The Local

Although a “state of the town” address is common in other municipalities, it isn’t a tradition in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Eduardo Lafforgue, president and CEO of the NOTL Chamber of Commerce, wants it to become an annual event, beginning this year.

It is also customary for it to be hosted by the local Chamber of Commerce, and is typically held early in a new year as a way to reflect on the past year and look at goals for the future, he says. When he decided this was the year to establish a new tradition, and asked Lord Mayor Betty Disero if she would participate, she didn’t hesitate, immediately agreeing to do it.

“It’s a role we haven’t played in the past, and should have,” says Lafforgue.

“I hope it will become an annual ‘must-attend’ event with the lord mayor.”

It is often held as a breakfast meeting, and Lafforgue says he would like to do that in the future, but for this year will be a virtual event, open at no charge to anyone interested in listening, although registration is required. It gives Disero an opportunity to talk to the business community and the community at large about the past year, its challenges and opportunities, and what lies ahead, in terms of goals, challenges and opportunities for 2021.

And while 2020 and 2021 are very different than any other year because of the pandemic, for businesses and residents, “this is the main reason we’re doing it. It’s essential,” says Lafforgue.

It was mostly due to the pandemic that the local chamber became a member of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, and several other business and tourism associations, all of which gave access to more resources and shared ideas on how to get through a difficult time for businesses, and can provide a larger forum of advocacy than the chamber could manage on its own.

“We can make a lot of noise, but we are still a small chamber,” he said, although membership has grown in the last year. “I’m delighted to see the support of the community and businesses, at a time when many chambers have lost memberships.”

It is also a time when more businesses can reopen, and Lafforgue says he encourages them to do so. Bed and breakfasts and local hotels are receiving reservations from people ready to get out and enjoy “some level of activity,” and residents will be looking to do that as well, he says, which is welcome news for businesses.

There has been some changeover of businesses, with some closing and new ones moving in, “and likely more to come,” Lafforgue says, and although it’s sad to see closures, there is “an opportunity for new beginnings.”

Continued on page 3
Region racing to roll out vaccinations before variant spike

**Penny Coles**

The Local

Vaccines are coming to Niagara, but will their arrival be in time to prevent a third wave?

Dr. Mustafa Hirji, the region’s acting chief medical officer of health, says Niagara is a race to get vaccine into arms before the spread of variant cases leads to another lockdown.

And again on Monday he warned the only way to control the spread, is “to push the increase as far as possible” while we wait for vaccinations, by being cautious, “staying home, and venturing out only for essential purposes.”

The rate of infection could be much worse if everyone doesn’t do their part, he added.

Moving to the red zone and the reopening that accompanied it encourages people to go out shopping or for recreation, Hirji said, but he doesn’t think the province is likely to move Niagara back to grey-lockdown, although that could change.

By mid-March, variants, which spread quicker than the original virus, could make up 40 per cent of all cases across Ontario.

We have “a few more months” to stave off the increase of cases until more people are vaccinated, avoiding another lockdown, he said.

By Monday, Niagara had gone from six suspected cases of variant cases to 60 in two weeks, four of them confirmed as B.1.1.7, the U.K. variant.

The good news is there are now four approved vaccines on their way, also seemingly effective against variants, and a second dose can be administered four months after the first, rather than the previous target of three to four weeks. That will allow more people who have been vaccinated sooner, said Hirji, and still offer good protection against infection.

A revision in the schedule for second doses follows the provincial decision, based on the recommendations from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, due to limited COVID-19 vaccine supply, and increasing research that the first dose of both Pfizer and Moderna has high effectiveness against symptomatic disease and hospitalization several weeks after the first dose, said an announcement from Niagara Health.

Niagara Health will continue to advocate for the time between doses to be reduced should supply of vaccine increase in the future, the announcement said.

Anyone who is awaiting their second dose from Niagara Health will receive a revised notification about their new appointment.

Despite the good news on the vaccination front, Hirji remains concerned about the “pretty high” number of people harbouring the coronavirus in intensive care units and hospital beds in Niagara, and said it’s important to get that number down in advance of a potential spike in variant cases.

While staff levels will be “stressed” once health care workers move to vaccination clinics, he said, there are sufficient numbers to get the job done, but that’s another reason to control the spread and not further stretch hospital resources.

Niagara is using the provincial portal for vaccination registration, expected to open March 15 for people 80 and older. At that time, appointments can be made by phone as well, Hirji said.

Vaccinations are expected to begin in community clinics about a week later.

In Niagara-on-the-Lake, the clinics are expected to be held one day a week in the community centre, although the day has not been announced.

Although other areas of the region do not appear to have progressed further in their vaccinations, having now moved on to the 80-plus population, Hirji disputes the notion that Niagara is lagging behind.

The region has a higher number of long-term care homes in Niagara, and seniors living in congregate settings who have already been vaccinated, along with the health care workers in those homes.

Niagara, he said, “is actually keeping pace in terms of vaccinations” with other areas in Ontario.

“Niagara is actually a little above the provincial average for vaccinations. Niagara’s done pretty well,” he said, despite getting a late start in receiving vaccine, and working with a larger senior population in a greater number of long-term care homes.

Niagara Health is now vaccinating some of those in the 80 years old and up category, but has approached that rollout a little differently than other areas, by first targeting those currently in the hospital and reaching out by phone to those at home who have recently had hospital stays.

Niagara Health is also continuing to vaccinate health care workers at the Seymour Hannah clinic in St. Catharines, prioritizing long-term care and retirement home staff and physicians, primary care providers, dentists and other specialists, as well as medical first responders (including paramedics, police and firefighters).

While vaccinations in long-term care and at-risk retirement homes, and other care settings behind in receiving vaccine, and working with a larger senior population in a greater number of long-term care homes,

“The good news is there was an extremely difficult year for short-term rentals, as it was for most businesses.”

John Foreman, president of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Bed and Breakfast Association, spoke to councillors Monday about his requests to make the 2021 season a little easier.

The number of bookings in bed and breakfast settings is dramatically down from 2019, due to a combination of forced closures because of COVID, fewer tourists (especially Americans), and also reduced capacity due to the requirement to accommodate social distancing, Foreman said.

Cottage rentals were a little higher, bringing the average up to the 30 per cent range.

“In my case, we operated our three rooms in 2020, “ he said.

Volunteers needed for clinics

**Penny Coles**

The Local

Niagara Region Public Health has a call-out for volunteers to help out at vaccination clinics sites.

People are needed to do everything from setting up the clinics across the region to directing traffic in parking lots.

**Volunteers needed for clinics**

Volunteers can also help with client flow through the clinic, ensure they are wearing masks and that physical distancing is maintained in waiting lines, and directing clients to the next step in the immunization process.

There will also be a recovery period, about 15 minutes for those who have received their vaccinations, says Dr. Mustafa Hirji, the region’s acting medical officer of health, and volunteers will be needed to monitor them throughout that time period.

There is a complete list of volunteer tasks and requirements on the region’s website at https://www.niagararegion.on.ca/living/wellness/volunteer-with-public-health.aspx.

Some short-term rentals are closing for good, putting their property up for sale, and others are closing for the year for safety reasons, he told councillors.

“There will be fewer B&Bs at the end of the pandemic than there were at the start,” he said.

“This is a great loss for NOTL,” he added, explaining they provide part of the town’s character, as well as tourist accommodations.

“One of Foreman’s requests was in relation to a town delay in processing applications for 2021 licences. Normally, he said, licence renewals would have been processed before the expiry of their current licence, but due to a moratorium on licences in the fall, and the lockdown, the town is far behind in processing them. He was asking that short-term rentals be allowed to operate while waiting for that process to catch up.

That was an easy request for town staff, with CAO Marnie Clack explaining they are already doing that, and would do a better job of communicating that to the owners.

He also asked that some short-term rental owners who are considering not opening for 2021 be allowed to put their applications on hold for the year, and be able to reapply the following year without having to start from scratch.

In addition, he was hoping that those who haven’t decided whether to open for 2021 or stay closed for safe reasons be able to renew their licence without interest, and that the due date be extended to June 1, giving them time to make that decision.

In recognition of a difficult year to come, with closures and lower capacity of guests expected, he asked that licence fees be reduced by 33 per cent.

Foreman was also concerned that the short-term rental committee now meeting to discuss changes to the current bylaw doesn’t have enough representation from the short-term rental community.

In addition to a motion by Lord Mayor Betty Disero that Foreman’s presentation be referred to staff, she asked that two additional members of the short-term rental community, at least one of them on the B&B association, be added to the committee, which was approved.

Foreman’s remaining requests are expected to be dealt with in a staff report already in the works, which will be presented to councillors later this month.

Short-term rental owners ask for support through pandemic

**Penny Coles**

The Local

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Dr. Mustafa Hirji (Supplied photo)
Disero happy for opportunity to address the public

Penny Coles
The Local

An explanation in a town information report about the outcome of an appeal to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT), which the town lost, brought up a discussion of the high cost of legal fees, which in this case, did not accomplish what the council had hoped.

The appeal was by Queenston Mile Winery, over the council had hoped. It did not accomplish what the discussion of the high cost of town lost, brought up a discussion of the high cost of

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Laffegoe is optimistic for the future, with indications that destinations such as NOTL are “poised for recovery,” as people turn to day trips, or those that are two to three days in duration, generally within about 200 kilometres of a populated centre.

That benefited businesses last summer, and “we’re working on it for this summer, but only if it’s safe. Safety and cleanliness is the top priority.”

There are several contingency plans for marketing this summer, with different scenarios depending on where we are in the pandemic, and what is considered safe, he says. The chamber will be prepared to activate a marketing plan as soon as they have the information they need to go ahead.

According to Destination Canada, some places could be recovered by the end of 2022, while other locations are looking at 2026.

“We’re doing whatever we can to be in the front row, to be sure we can be successful. But it’s so important to have the mayor and the business community at the same table. Our mandates are different, but working together is very important.”

Disero says she welcomes any opportunity to speak to the public about what we’re doing, and what our vision is for the future. That is so important for the public to know.”

She was a little surprised to get the request, since it’s an event that hasn’t been held before in NOTL, but pleased to do it.

In December, Disero released a two-year update, in print and on a 10-minute video, which included a list of accomplishments similar to what she is being asked to speak about in the State of the Town address. Her plan is to “revise it and talk about the year to come as well.”

It helped her to write it down and see how much has been achieved by the town and council, she says. “We’ve been busy, and we’ve done a lot of good. People don’t always see that.” She has received a positive response from some residents who were also impressed with how much has been accomplished, she says, and welcomes the opportunity to reach more members of the public with her message through the chamber.

There is also time for questions during the upcoming webinar, and Disero says she values getting feedback from the public that will be helpful when changes need to be made. “That’s the way we live. Things are changing all the time.”

The State of the Town webinar will be held Wednesday March 24, at 7 p.m.

Registration is through the NOTL Chamber of Commerce by email, at chamberevents@niagaraonthelake.com, or call 905-468-1950.

Questions can also be submitted by email or by calling the chamber.

Councillors discuss planning appeals and legal costs to town

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Running a hotel, even a small one, is not something Peller Estates Winery was expecting to get into, but when the hotel in question has 17 acres of grape vines bordering the winery’s own vineyards, it was an obvious choice. “It seemed like a natural fit,” says Greg Berti, vice president of business development for Andrew Peller Ltd., which has just purchased the Riverbend Inn and Vineyard for $10 million.

“We weren’t in the inn business a month ago, but we are now,” says Berti. “This is a first for us” although some of Peller’s winery properties in B.C. have houses on them, which are run as Airbnbs. And while, he adds, “we didn’t see this coming, we’re happy to have it.”

There was a time, almost 20 years ago, when purchasing the property nestled between John Street and the Niagara River Parkway was a consideration, but then John and Jill Wiens bought it and built the elegant, Georgian-style, high-ceilinged 21-room inn and restaurant, with a beautiful view overlook ing the 40 acres of vineyards and Peller winery.

It is tempting to think the two properties might have all been one at some point in their past, says Berti, but he hasn’t researched their history going back that far.

While it’s early days yet and there are many decisions still to be made, he says Peller wine-makers are anxious to take over management of the vineyards, and will likely use the grapes to produce wines under the premium Peller label. “It happened so quickly,” says Berti of the purchase. Although the Riverbend property had been for sale, Peller was later coming to the table, and there were other parties interested. But with adjacent vineyards, “it made sense.”

He toured the property early this week, and although the inn has been closed since December 2020 due to the pandemic, he says it is a beautiful building with “the same look and feel” that he remembers from its early days, and of course, the spectacular view.

He expects it will be open and operational this spring, with some investment in up dates to be made before then.

The acquisition of the inn will add to the wine tourism experience, says Berti, and is a “natural extension of wine hospitality.”

The inn’s restaurant has also been closed for more than a year, and Jason Parsons, Peller’s chef, and his team will oversee reopening.

The current owners will be retiring once the transaction is completed. “We are very pleased that our neighbours and friends are acquiring the inn and the vineyards, and excited that our heritage of providing one of the region’s highest quality hospitality experiences will be enhanced under their new ownership,” said Jane Yu, Riverbend’s owner and manager, in a press release issued by Peller.

Andrew Peller Limited now operates Peller Estates, the Riverbend Inn, Trius Winery and Wayne Gretzky Estates in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Thirty Bench Wine Makers in Beamsville and additional wineries in British Columbia.

Continued from page 1

Physical exercise is so important to good health, he says, and it should be available close to home. It’s also essential for good mental health, especially at this time, when people are suffering increased depression due to the pandemic.

He also expressed his dissatisfaction in emails to some of the town’s politicians, and the response he received was a lukewarm, “the only gym member who spoke out. The response to his concern from Lord Mayor Betty Deroo, and councillors Clare Cameron and Wendy Cherpota, indicated they would look into the reasons behind the continued closure. They were impressed by his speedy response, and feel they may have helped to get it reopened.

He’s also grateful the decision was made to end the delay. It’s a vital part of the community, for people of all ages, he says. Tanner will likely use both gyms, the one in St. Catharines fitness centre, even though they had pre-paid for a year’s membership, up until October, at the NOTL centre. He called the decision to keep the community centre closed, despite provincial lifting of that restriction, “oppression and disservice to the NOTL community.

“It’s a small gym, and simple to manage. I’ve never been more happy than when I’m there at the same time, maximum.”

Members grateful reopening delay is over

The town’s Emergency Control Group made the decision to delay the reopening of the community centre for an extra two weeks, based on capacity limits, staff availability, and information regarding vaccination clinics.

Staff also monitored the response and impact of delaying the reopening of the community centre. It also takes some time to ensure every provincial regulation is being interpreted correctly, and that with the resources available, including additional staff, the operational plan can be followed, says Turcotte.

The NOTL Public Library will open for some in-person services the same day, March 15, but there hasn’t been a decision about libraries & Swirls Cafe yet, he says.

More information regarding reopening procedures and booking requirements for reserving use of the fitness areas within the community centre, will be available on the town’s website.

At this time, the Meridian Credit Union and Centennial Arena will remain closed until further notice, with town staff reviewing potential options to reopen in the future.

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Nancy Bailey and Ann-Marie Shirley of Engel & Völkers have many similarities in their approach to business. Honesty, integrity, and loyalty are among them. They also both believe that collaborating diverse expertise is an asset that is greater than the sum of its parts. This is one of the reasons they chose to work together in the real estate market of the Niagara Region.

Nancy and Ann-Marie both bring a unique set of skills to their business. In February 2018, Nancy was inducted into Engel & Völkers Private Office Advisors Network, a globally connected group that works together to assist and advise clients. This unparalleled network provides access to premium real estate in the world’s most sought-after locations which includes Niagara-on-the-Lake. The collaborative team is also privy to real estate tools that put their clients at the forefront of buying and selling activity. The Private Office Designation is reserved for accomplished Engel & Völkers Advisors with a history of successful high-value transactions and market leadership as well as client and colleague recommendations. It is of little surprise Nancy carries this designation. Even less of a surprise is that she shares this knowledge with her team, ensuring that all clients can benefit.

Ann-Marie brings significant advertising and marketing expertise to the team, a must-have in this competitive real estate market. Having had an extraordinarily successful 30-year career in the advertising industry, her knowledge was acquired working with every medium to position her Fortune 500 clients to reach their buyers. “When I joined Engel & Völkers and learned of the many sophisticated marketing tools they offer Advisors, I was ecstatic to have this kind of access at my fingertips,” states Ann-Marie. With her guidance, The Nancy Bailey Team has put these marketing tools into action. Their digital campaigns have gained excellent traction for their clients. They have seen above average engagement with the ads, which has translated into increased home showings and sales to out-of-town buyers. These women do not rest on their laurels, they are always conscious of continuing their education and achieving milestones that allow them to provide exceptional service to their clients. “Achieving my recent goal of getting the Certified International Property Specialist designation” says Nancy, “allows me to connect to an influential International Network and better serve my buyers and sellers in Niagara.” As for Ann-Marie, she immerses herself daily in the numerous courses offered by the expansive Engel & Völkers Academy.

Capitalizing on their similarities and differences, The Nancy Bailey team is positioned to provide meaningful advantages to sellers and buyers of real estate.
Honour those who have died by protecting the living

The Virgil Business Association reached a difficult, but inevitable decision, their Tuesday virtual meeting: the 2021 Virgil Stampede, a May weekend tradition, has been cancelled, but with every expectation that it will return in all its glory in 2022. Even holding some sort of scaled-down event seemed an unlikely prospect, but there was a discussion about looking at possibilities for smaller fundraisers and events later in the year, Virgil business president Richard Wall reported. Members are taking some time to “re-energize,” first, waiting to see where we are in the pandemic and what kinds of events might be possible, he said, and also what major projects they might support for the future. We know whatever the VBA decides to do, it will do well, and whatever it decides to support, it will be a benefit to the community. This is an organization with a small number of members but a huge and very generous heart, having given about $1.5 million to the community over more than 50 years. That’s a feat that required respect and hard work from our community, so thanks to all of you who have contributed, through donations, volunteering, or attending.

While the stampede, which always heralds the start of the season we love, but we know it will return bigger and better than ever.

Penny Coles
The Local

International Women’s Day message from Lord Mayor Betty Disero

Deputy Lord Mayor Clare Cameron, and CAO Marnie Cluckie

Opportunity is a hopeful word. We all want opportunity. Opportunity for a job, a home, a life with help and hope. Throughout history, women have had the additional burden of fighting for the opportunity to be treated as equal rights. For the rights we hold today, we owe a debt of gratitude to many who have made notable strides over more than 100 years, to break through the glass ceiling of equality. On this day, March 8, as we celebrated the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women and girls, we also recognized the work that still needs to be done. Every time we see a woman volunteering to help their community, or in her job, in public office, on stage in front of a microphone, leading a campaign for change, opening a new business, or excelling in their field, we are en- ergized that women are making their mark, getting their recognition, finding their opportunity. We are amazed when we see the enthusiasm of the young women on the Lord Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council. We see these young leaders using their voice, harnessing their power and we want to help in any way we can, so they don’t have to struggle to be considered equal in all re- spect. Their love of people, the planet, and this Town gives us solace that our fu- ture is in good hands. So here is the challenge to women everywhere. While we struggle to find our place and make a difference in our lifetime, let’s bring others with us. Let’s look beside and behind our husbands, our boyfriends, our fathers, our brothers, our sons, or another up. Let’s make sure there are opportunities for all women, including Indig- enous women, Black women, women of colour, trans- gendered women and those women who do not identify as any gender. Wherever we can, let’s be a mentor, a friend, a supporter. Let’s continue the great work of those who came before us, so the next generation does not have to struggle to find our opportunity. Together, we are stronger.

For a video message from Niagara-on-the-Lake Lord Mayor Disero and CAO Cluckie on Interna- tional Women’s Day, visit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZyBhvA5KwRk

Thank you VBA, for all you do
Ontario provincial parks will fill up quickly

The events were fore-shadowed on social me-
dia. Images and jokes were circulating around about Ontario residents waiting at the computer with their finger on the mouse, keen to reserve a summer ad-
venture with just a click. Alas, when the click fac-
es the clock, there’s a lot working against you to get a spot.

In an attempt to book some accommodation for my family this summer in the Killarney Provincial Park, I found myself at the com-
puter screen, site select-
ed, credit card ready. Like most all other sites right now, they must be booked five months in advance due to the incredible volume.

I was like many who sat with a cup of coffee by the screen at 6:59 a.m., in or-
der to click and reserve a spot at 7 a.m. for sometime in July. The clock strikes the hour and one, two, three. As quickly as I clicked, I be-
came one of the many who felt the quiet nothingness to follow, accompanied by a pop-up window saying ‘Site occupied, although all we know it wasn’t just seconds ago.’

The good news is that your trip hasn’t capsized just yet. The COVID days have caused us to adapt and get creative as things change quickly. Faced with a new-found demand for nature in Ontario citizens, we see unforeseen num-
bers of people going online to book. The Ontario Parks system is filling up fast, and in many cases, it’s already full into summer bookings.

On Feb 23, Ontario Parks posted that 58,475 reservations were made in the first few weeks of the year. In 2020 last year, pre-pandemic, it was only 29,504 reservations for the same period, nearly dou-
bring the number.

I believe I see what’s going on. With the uncer-
tainty of lockdowns looming almost a year after the first one, Ontario residents are grasping at their local provincial options as the inviting warm weather ca-
tains the corner. I can’t blame them. People want to get out and breathe fresh air, try new activities, and be with loved ones in less controlled outdoor set-
tings. It’s going to be very competitive, and not just for prime spots, but all available spots.

If you find yourself dis-
couraged, either before or after trying the On-
tario Parks system, there are some other outdoor avenues you can consider which can provide just as valuable an outdoor expe-
rience.

Firstly, check out the many local conservation areas in Ontario. Each re-
gion of the province has such a legislative body, and many of them here in Southern Ontario have a handful of conservation areas which offer fami-
ly-friendly camping. They are usually similar in style to many of the provincial parks, but they are often more quaint. Based on COVID closures, be sure to check to see if the local conserva-
tion authority is offering such camping experiences, as it may differ region to region.

There are also plenty of private campground op-
portunities available out there. Sometimes they operate much like an organized park, but they might be family-owned and provide unique, exquisite camping sites. Furthermore, many of these private camps might be close to nature access points. Some prop-
erties have private hiking trails available to their guests, or they might be adjacent to the Bruce Trail or a popular canoe access point.

While I write this, I rec-
collect some good experi-
ences with rural Airbnbs, where you are sometimes offered the camping option at the back of someone’s 40 acres. These may be prop-
erties where guests have total privacy and can have a fun night of tenting un-
der the stars.

Of course, there is also the exciting adventure of back-country or crown land camping. With design-
ated back-country spots also being booked at an astonishing rate, there is the option to access crown land and camp like an ex-
plorer. Of course, this re-
su res serious preparation, and considerations before attempting, but it may be a new and healthy, challeng-
ing option for adventurers who want to try something new.

There is also an op-
portunity for some of you to reach out to family and friends who might have land, large wild properties. I’ve always been a firm believ-
er that you can achieve the camping feel-good basics right in your own backyard if done right. Having said that, not everybody has a backyard or access to large, natural spaces. So, if you know someone who might own such property (and you haven’t seen them in ages), maybe ask if you and the family or some friends can do a backyard campout in the forest or down by the creek in their backyard.

At this rate, it doesn’t look like our indoor life is going to get much more lively in the near future, so we best be prepared to nav-
igate the new wave of those trying to get outside, plus the benefits and challenges that come with this.

Owen Bjorgan
Special To The Local

The good news is that the exciting adventure of back-country or crown land camping. With designated back-country spots also being booked at an astonishing rate, there is the option to access crown land and camp like an explorer. Of course, this requires serious preparation, and considerations before attempting, but it may be a new and healthy, challenging option for adventurers who want to try something new.

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At this rate, it doesn’t look like our indoor life is going to get much more lively in the near future, so we best be prepared to navigate the new wave of those trying to get outside, plus the benefits and challenges that come with this.
Niagara Region is undertaking a Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (EA) to address and improve conditions for all modes of transportation at the intersection of Regional Road 81 (York Road) and Regional Road 100 (Four Mile Creek Road), St. Davids. The MCEA schedule will be determined when the study team confirms the potential cost and environmental impact.

The first Public Information Centre will be held in an online format. As part of this event, the Study Team will deliver an online presentation followed by a Q&A on March 25, 2021 from 6 - 8 p.m. Information about the Online Public Information Centre #1 will be available on the project webpage starting March 25, 2021, and comments will be welcomed through one of the project managers below, until April 8, 2021: niagararegion.ca/projects/regional-road-100

If you would like to receive future notices via email, or if you have any questions or comments, please contact one of the project managers identified below:

Maged Elmadhoun, M.Eng., P.Eng. Manager, Transportation Planning Niagara Region 905-980-6000, ext. 3583 Maged.Elmadhoun@niagararegion.ca

Phil Weber, M.Eng., P.Eng. Senior Project Manager CIMA+ 905-695-1005, ext. 6732 Phil.Weber@cima.ca

Personal information collected or submitted in writing at public meetings will be collected, used and disclosed by members of Regional Council and Regional staff in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA). The written submissions including names, contact information and reports of the public meeting will be made available. Questions should be referred to the Privacy Office at 905-980-6000, ext. 3779 or FOI@niagararegion.ca.

If you require any accommodations for a disability in order to attend and participate in meetings or events, please let us know in advance so that arrangements can be made in a timely manner. Please contact the Accessibility Advisory Coordinator at 905-980-6000 ext. 3252 or accessibility@niagararegion.ca.

This notice was first issued on March 10, 2021
Newark Neighbours says thanks for meal kits

Newark Neighbours volunteer Susan Sparrow-Mace shows off a couple of the meal kits donated by St. Davids Lions, intended for clients of the food bank. (Photo supplied)

Newark Neighbours was thrilled and incredibly grateful to recently receive a very generous donation from the St. Davids Lions Club. On Wednesday, March 3, the club delivered 30 casserole meal kits for our food bank clients, with a variety of five types of meals. Each kit contains a recipe, canned or boxed ingredients, measured pasta and spices to make a nutritious and satisfying meal for a family of four.

Our food bank clients, and their families, are very appreciative of these meals. This donation will go a long way in helping Newark Neighbours achieve our vision that “no resident in Niagara-on-the-Lake need be hungry.”

Our sincere thank you goes out to all members of the St. Davids Lions Club — you made our day!

Looking forward to next month, the registration for Easter baskets began Tuesday and will close on March 25. We will be distributing them on Thursday, April 1, again from the Cornerstone Church on Niagara Stone Road in Virgil.

Following is a list of food requirements for our 2021 Easter Program:

• Canned green beans
• Canned peas
• Canned pineapple
• Bottled juice - Cranberry or Apple
• Crackers
• Cookies – any kind or flavour
• Chocolates – for Easter baskets

General Food Bank Supplies:
• Rice
• Canned Salmon
• Canned Chili or Spaghetti or Ravioli
• Canned Beef Stew
• Chunky Soups (beef or chicken)
• Cream of Mushroom Soup
• Canned Red Kidney Beans
• Canned Ham, Corned Beef or Spam
• Sidekicks & Mr. Noodle packets
• Cereal (any kind)
• Granola Bars
• Jello – any flavour
• Ketchup / Mustard / Mayonnaise / Green Relish
• Coffee or Tea
• Shampoo & Conditioner / Toothpaste
• Paper Towels / Toilet Paper

We appreciate all donations of food supplies; however, we are currently well stocked on the following items:
Kraft Dinner Macaroni & Cheese, canned tuna, stuffing mix, oatmeal, cranberry sauce, pasta, canned tomatoes and tomato sauce, canned gravy, and peanut butter.

Easter baskets began Tuesday, April 1, and will close on March 25. We will be distributing them on Thursday, April 1, again from the Cornerstone Church on Niagara Stone Road in Virgil.
Shaw to use $1 million for underwriting jobs

Penny Coles
The Local

The importance of receiving almost $1 million from the province can’t be overstated, says Tim Jennings, executive director of the Shaw Festival.

The Ontario government is giving a total of $25 million to the 140 organizations in the arts sector, of which the Shaw is getting $999,993.

With the exception of virtual programming last season and small in-person concerts last summer and fall, the festival season was cancelled, bit by bit, until it became obvious in July there could be no stage productions offered in 2020.

When Gypsy, the largest production of the season held over from last year, was cancelled for 2021 as well, Jennings was left to find ways to keep about 900 people involved in the shows employed.

The funding announcement "was fantastic news," he says.

"This new funding will help underwrite and stabilize the jobs of our artists, artisans and arts workers as we pivot and work through the shifting landscape of this coming year, as we did through all of 2020," Jennings says one way the festival hopes to do that will be with outdoor concerts and events this summer, although there is much to work out before that can happen. They had planned to do that anyway, but may be able to do more, thanks to the funding, which will stabilize operations and underwrite employment, hopefully lessening the impact for the artists and crews who were expected to be involved with Gypsy.

"We have to figure out what we can do to protect them." Jennings says the provincial investment is also important for the "economic success and stability of our communities, as well as our cultural health."

He feels the weight of responsibility of drawing visitors to the region and to the town, for the success of the local tourism industry, and as one of the region's largest employers.

The festival, he says, is "an economic generator that anchors thousands of related tourism jobs for our local wineries, hotels, restaurants and retail shops."

The six other shows of 2021 are scheduled to go ahead, with two more holiday offerings in the fall.

"Charley's Aunt, the first on the calendar, is expected to open in previews May 1. That will, of course, depend on provincial restrictions, based on the progression of the pandemic, but Jennings has a year of experience behind him when it comes to pivoting from one plan to another.

"It was easier last season, when decisions were based on the number of cases and it was easier to predict what would happen, but this year, there is the arrival of vaccinations on one side, bringing great news, and on the other, fear of the variants causing a spike in cases."

"It's a planner, and I get really<span class="i"></span>hard when I have no idea of what next week or the week after that will look like," he says.

"There are all sorts of contingency plans" in the works, but at the moment, they are moving forward and getting people back to work in preparation for their May opening, "under huge safety protocols. In order to open a show in May for 50 people, we need to get started now."

Bunny Trail to return with package pickups

Morgan and Audrey Bowen got creative at the Niagara Nursery School Bunny Trail in 2019, with Crystal the Bunny. Crystal will be helping put packages for pickup together for kids this year.

(Previous photo)

Penny Coles
The Local

The popular Bunny Trail will return this Easter, but like everything else during the pandemic, with a bit of a twist.

"For a safe event, the board of directors and staff of Niagara Nursery School and Child Care Centre, with support from the town, are putting together Bunny Trail take-home packages that will be available for purchase.

"We were so disappointed to have to cancel the annual Bunny Trail fundraiser in 2020, and have been working hard to come up with a way to bring the Bunny Trail back to the community in a COVID-friendly manner," says executive director Candice Penny.

"Crystal Bunny will be hard at work behind the scenes, preparing bunny trail packages for pickup that will include crafts, some sweet treats, and lots of other goodies from our community sponsors."

"The purchase of Bunny Trail packages will support the ongoing expansion of the Niagara Nursery School."

There will be a limited number of packages available.

They can be purchased online between March 10 and March 31 at https://niagarannurseryschool.ca/.

Packages can be picked up between 9:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. on April 3, in front of the new nursery school expansion beside the Niagra-on-the-Lake Public Library at 10 Anderson Lane. Additional pick-up instructions will be provided upon sign-up.

All proceeds from the Bunny Trail packages will help to support the new expansion project. For more information on the Shaw and Bunny Trail packages, visit niagarannurseryschool.ca.

Residents and local busi-
ness owners are invited to sponsor this event by donating sealed sweets or Easter-themed activities including stickers, colouring books, pencils, etc., for inclusion in the packages. Please email niagaranurserydirector02@gmail.com to arrange for donation drop-off. All event sponsors will be acknowledged on a sponsor list included in each package.

Library role growing

"It's part of its mandate and its strategic plan to enhance the social infrastructure of the town," he says. "Social infrastructure is the physical conditions that measure whether or not social capital develops. The library has a variety of activities that go on throughout the year, for all different generations.

The idea is to bring people together so they connect. Its function in town is at least as important as the sewer system, if not more so."

To better understand the idea of social infrastructure, McCormack recommends the Eric Klinenberg book Palaces of Babel as a key focus on the fight against inequality, polarization and the decline of civil life.

McCormack says the workshops and other sessions the library has been delivering online have been widely popular during lockdown. He feels that as we emerge out of the current pandemic, the library will play an even more important role than ever.

It's McCormack's first time working in libraries as we emerge out of the current pandemic, but that will, of course, depend on provincial restrictions, based on the progression of the pandemic.

McCormack was left to find ways to support the artists and crews who were expected to be involved with Gypsy.

"We have to figure out what we can do to protect them." McCormack says the work of drawing visitors to the region and to the town, for the success of the local tourism industry, and as one of the region's largest employers.

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Continued from page 8

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"Libraries are at the heart of the community, and at the centre of the fight against inequality, polarization and the decline of civil life."
Doctor shares wise insights about the end of life

Reflections on death and dying by Dr. Ron Bayne

Dr. Larry W. Chambers
Special to The Local

We all should watch this 12-minute video (https://vimeo.com/511268822) about getting over fear of the unknowns about dying, realizing that death is inevitable and that every one has the right to end their life if it has become unbearable.

Dr. Ron Bayne, a former Niagara-on-the-Lake resident and geriatrician, produced the video just before he died on Feb. 26. He was 98 years old and received MAID – medical assistance in dying.

In the late 1960s, when the new McMaster University medical school was founded to serve the Golden Horseshoe at the west end of Lake Ontario, the first dean, Dr. John Evans, recruited a stellar group of scholars, including Dr. Bayne.

A geriatrician doctor is a medical doctor who specializes in the care of older adults. Dr. Evans understood the need for Canada’s future physicians to be prepared to serve older adults with complex and long-term conditions and disabilities. In Canada in the 1960s there were very few geriatricians. Ron was exceptional because he was also a clinical scholar. Ron was appointed as a professor of medicine in 1970, and retired in 1989.

As a student at McMaster, Ron had a major impact convincing me that I should focus my career on public health and healthcare policies about older adults.

In 2006, Ron received an honorary degree from McMaster for his advocacy and work raising awareness of the need for better care of older adults, and people living with long-term conditions, and his initiation of programs that recognized we cannot separate the health and social aspects of living as frail older adults. When we are frail, we have a spectrum of health events (from acute episodes to more complex, long-term conditions) and we require a spectrum of approaches (from single interventions to long-term health-promotion interventions) where distinctions between health and social aspects of life are largely meaningless.

Ron and his wife Barbara made several donations to McMaster, establishing the Ronald Bayne Gerontology Award for a graduate student conducting aging research; and the Barbara and Ronald Bayne Award to provide support for senior students in the Department of Health, Aging and Society who are engaged in practical learning experience as part of their undergraduate studies.

Dr. Bayne founded the Hamilton-Wentworth Group on Aging, the Gerontology Research Council of Ontario (GRCO) and led the Canadian Association on Gerontology in the ‘80s. His passion for the health and healthcare of older adults drove the infusion of provincial funding into research and training in aging.

Throughout Ron’s leadership, we learned the principle that every citizen should have the right to choose where they live. Instead of refering to out-dated policies that have an institutional mindset, a successful aging-in-place philosophy is required to build infrastructure using an aging-in-place philosophy. In the video, Ron asserts: “Take that responsibility. Let us ensure that the health-care system for long-term care is properly organized and managed and supervised.” It is fantastic that he lived to 98, as a specialist in aging.
Sarah Kaufman is happy to have more time for the public to see Making Her Mark, which features local women who played a part in the history of the town, including Laura Secord, who is important on a national level. (Penny Coles)

As sanitizers and signage, as well as sanitizing high-touch areas and washrooms, the lockdown is a little easier to start getting out again, says Kaufman, celebrating about 25 extraordinary local women, some prominent with names easily recognized, and others who worked quietly behind the scenes, who made their mark on the community. The launch of Making Her Mark: The Women of Niagara-on-the-Lake is the prelude to a book which features short biographies on the women who are included in the exhibit, who have contributed to the community. It includes women such as Molly Brant, whose role in history dates back to the furthest, to Chloe Cooley, Janet Carruthers, and forward to those whose local significance is more recent, including Margaretta Howe, Laura Dodson, Donna Scott and Blanche Quinn.

The book release has been delayed, as more biographies were added, expected to be out sooner, but has been held up to allow biographies of Scott, who died in March, and Quinn, in May, to be included, says Kaufman. Brant, born in 1736, was a respected First Nations Clan Mother, and a diplomat, interpreter and ally to the British during and after the American Revolution. Cooley was an enslaved Black woman who, in 1793, was beaten and bound by her owner and transported across the Niagara River to be sold. Her re-
Niagara local Shane Barton was recently recognized for his 30 years as a search and rescue volunteer. He was presented an Ontario Volunteer Service Award, and a Civil Air Search and Rescue Association (CASARA) Niagara award of a 30-year wing pin.

Across Canada, CASARA volunteers provide humanitarian and air search capabilities in support of the Royal Canadian Air Force. Locally, the organization is based out of the Niagara District Airport.

Barton’s involvement with search and rescue began in 1979 with a ground organization. It was later, at a Hamilton Airshow, he learned of CASARA Niagara.

“My involvement with CASARA has been diversified, to say the least,” says Barton. “I started as a spotter, and progressed with learning aviation communications, navigation and safety.” As a member of CASARA, Barton has flown as a spotter, served with ground searches, and driven for the unit’s mobile command vehicle.

In addition to Barton’s many searches, he has spent thousands of hours training. “It has been a great adventure serving with CASARA Niagara, where I’ve had opportunity to learn more each year, as technology and skills evolve. I’ve really enjoyed serving with other crew members, and engaging members of the public on enjoying outdoor activities safely.”

While CASARA volunteers are aviation focused, they are also called upon to assist with searching for persons missing on lakes, lost hikers, and other situations of people in distress.

CASARA Niagara has headquarters and a training facility at Niagara District Airport, operating two aircraft and a mobile command vehicle. As a charitable organization, the volunteers depend on donations to maintain their operations. Deemed an essential service, and using COVID protocols, CASARA volunteers have been actively training for the upcoming spring season, typically a high search and rescue season when people spend more time outdoors.

Receiving his awards, Barton told his crew members, “It’s an honour to receive this 30-year pin, and I hope there is a 50-year pin, because I plan on serving for a long time to come.” For more information on CASARA Niagara, check the website, http://caresniagara.ca.

Trainer Randy Klaassen gives Shane Barton his 30-year pin. (Photo supplied)
Ultrasound treats hand tremors without surgery

Penny Coles  
The Local

Bill Auchterlonie used to be proud of his artistic hand-writing, a skill that did not come easily to him. Born left-handed, it was a struggle for him in school, but he worked at it, learning to lift his hand so he didn’t drag across the paper, smudging as he wrote. He spent his Grade 3 year learning to write with his right hand, and succeed- ed, but missed the joy he had found in writing, and was permitted to go back to using his left hand, he says. But as an adult, he began to experience some shakiness in both hands, notice- ness enough that colleagues would comment on it, and his signature began to lose its attractiveness, courtesy of the tremor, he says.

Auchterlonie, now re- tired, has had an eclectic ca- reer, including a long-time passion as a local artist, with a voice that would be familiar to listeners. He also has a love of art, and has worked in the cura- torial department of The Art Gallery of Ontario, where his job took him to Britain and Europe visiting art gal- leries, and more recently, was the owner of a Victoria Street gallery of Inuit and Six Nations art.

His hand-writing, which he worked on and develop- ed until it could be consid- ered calligraphy, was one way of realizing his artistic expression.

“It was really more like drawing than writing,” he says.

Until it wasn’t, with the act of writing at all made difficult by the tremors in his hands.

In 2008, Auchterlonie says his physician referred him to a neurologist, who started him on a treatment of medicatin used for treat- ing mild cases of Parkinson’s disease, but it wasn’t very effective, and the tremors in both hands continued.

Last year, he read an ar- ticle in The Globe and Mail about a program at Sunny- brook Hospital, and a team of neurosurgeons who use focused ultrasound to de- stroy lesions in the brain that cause tremors.

The treatment allows doctors to do brain surgery using imaging and sound waves, instead of scalpels and surgical saws, and can be helpful for a range of con- ditions, from hand tremors like Auchterlonie, to treat- ment-resistant depression or brain cancer, including glioblastoma, the cancer that took that the life of Tragical- ly Hip singer Gord Downie.

But the most common use of focused ultrasound in the Sunnybrook project is to destroy the bit of brain tissue that causes hands to shake, for people like Auch- terlonie.

His physician sent his files to the hospital, and after two consultations, last month, he had the two-hour procedure done as an outpatient.

Before having the treat- ment, he spent two and a half hours in a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machine, which produced a detailed “road map” of his brain that the surgeon could follow during the procedure.

Then, during the proce- dure, he describes lying motionless, for another two and a half hours in a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machine, which produced a detailed “road map” of his brain that the surgeon could follow during the procedure. He also says that the ultrasound destroyed the lesion in his brain that was causing the tremor. There was no pain from the ultrasound, just the discom- fort of being unable to move, but a whole lot better than surgery that would have re- quired cutting or drilling into his skull, he says.

“The doctor doing it is a brain surgeon, but there is no surgery involved. Instead there are two very specific technologies going on, being used simultaneously,” he says.

He was discharged from the hospital when the proce- dure was done, but couldn’t drive home. He got a taxi to a hotel, stayed overnight, was checked out the next morning at the hospital be- fore he drove home, he says.

“It’s been a little more than a month, and I still can’t do 100 per cent comfort- able with this hand I was able to have for a few years. But I like it a lot.”

The biggest advantage?

“Well, I can sign my name. And one of the most common problems before was I had the two-hour procedure done, but couldn’t drive home, he says. “Well, I can sign my name. And one of the most common problems before was I had the two-hour procedure done, but couldn’t drive home, he says. I can cook for myself, I can do most of the things I was able to do for a few years.”

Having one hand trem- or-free is a “significant im- provement” in his life, he says. His hand-writing is improving, and he’s looking forward to the next proce- dure to rid his right hand of the tremors, hopefully later this year, but more likely next.

And all because he hap- pened to come across an ar- ticle in The Globe and Mail that opened his mind to the possibility.

Auchterlonie has long been interested in astrology, and now, in his retirement, spends a great deal of time looking at what is going on in the skies, writing a weekly column for The Lo- cal, and using his radio voice to produce a podcast on the subject. He also does birth charts for people who are in- terested, including a forecast for the year ahead. His stud- ies of astrology lead him to question coincidence, which he believes is something that is there being something behind it that is a little more than just what we consider coincidence.

Coincidence is an amazing, subtle and power- ful force in nature, and we’re all part of nature,” he says.

Which leaves him to be- lieve there was a reason he picked up the newspaper ar- ticle when he did, and that, thankfully, led him to where he is today, with one hand tremor-free than a few short months ago, and another that will get there at some point.

Auchterlonie on Astrology

The full week of Auch- terlonie on Astrology can be found on the Facebook page for The NOTL Local, and on the website www.auchterlonieastrology.ca

Saturday, March 13: To- day, we have a new Moon at 23 degrees Pisces, conjunct Venus and Neptune, so this is truly a fairytale new Moon. Sometimes new Moons come as a reality, and when the manifestation power of a new Moon meets Venus and Neptune, anything is possi- ble. Also, Venus is conjunct Neptune at 20 degrees Pisces. Venus conjunct Neptune is one of the most romantic transit in astrology, and it’s just a few more years that we are lucky enough to have it in Nep- tune’s sign, Pisces. No matter how difficult our lives may be at the moment, Venus conjunct Neptune is a gentle reminder that when we truly connect with our hearts, we can find beauty and magic everywhere. Clyde Tom- baugh announced his dis- covery of Pluto on March 13, 1930.

Sunday, March 14: Here is a day where work and career matters give friendly answers that make our moods im- provre. Our health may also take a step up. Today is Albert Einstein’s birthday. He was born on March 14, 1879, and is the most famous of all the great theoretical physicists. His E=mc2 equation shows how matter is energy at a lesser speed. Monday, March 15: To- day, Mercury leaves Aquir- ius and enters Pisces. In Pisces, Mercury is imag-}

Bill Auchterlonie couldn’t sign his name a little more than a month ago. It’s much improved, but not quite up to his artistic standards yet.

Bill Auchterlonie, bald after focused ultrasound removed a brain lesion causing hand tremors, says it was a successful procedure. (Photos supplied)
REDNALL, JOHN N.T. — John passed away peacefully on March 3, 2021 in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. He will be dearly missed by his family and friends. In accordance with John’s wishes a service and remembrance will be family only. In lieu of a donation or flowers in memory of John, please perform an act of unexpected kindness today. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com

PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from March 3, 2021

1 6 9 2 7 5 4 8 3
5 9 6 4 3 2 1 7 8
3 8 2 1 4 4 5 9 7
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BarrelHead chef planning for another great year

Mike Balsom
The Local

A very successful 2020 season running BarrelHead Pizza out of Pillitteri Estates Winery has Michael Zappitelli thinking big for 2021.

With the family-owned winery heavily geared toward exporting ice wine to 39 countries, Zappitelli claims he needed to do a hard-sell to push his in-law back into the hospitality side of the business last year. “I had to fight to start BarrelHead,” he says. “Hospitality wasn’t really a thought. The family had done it before. When I brought it up, I was told it hadn’t worked before; it’s not a great fit. So I had to kind of lay out a business plan, and say let me try this on a minimal budget, and let me show you it will work.”

And work it did. Expecting to sell about 50 pizzas per day, Zappitelli was pleasantly shocked to see demand almost immediately spike to 10 times that figure. He quickly scrambled to acquire more equipment and hire additional staff to satisfy his hungry customers. He even recruited his brother-in-law, former Niagara Ice Dog Alex Friesen, to help out in the kitchen. “He plays professional hockey in Germany,” says Zappitelli, “and he was home a little bit longer because of COVID, and his wife Allie ran our bar operations. He offered to help, so I said sure.”

As word spread about BarrelHead and locals caught on, that demand never let up all the way through the Thanksgiving weekend, even with the pandemic.

After taking a couple of months off to catch his breath and spend time with his almost two-year-old daughter Michaela and his wife Julia, he’s currently donning the second of the two hats he wears at Pillitteri Estates. The third-generation family member is their business development manager, concentrating on online wine sales, assisting with additions to the winery and developing revamped procedures. But as spring approaches, he’s ready to jump full-steam ahead back into BarrelHead.

In mid-April, he will transition fully from the wine side of the business back to hospitality. He’ll be busy setting up the wood-fired ovens and other new equipment. Then he’ll be running the menu through with the kitchen staff, and balancing the flavours of the ice wine cocktails that are also part of the outdoor menu. Visitors to Pillitteri Estates and locals alike will begin to smell the wood smoke from these ovens on Victoria Day weekend.

Last year’s menu featured just four Neapolitan style pizzas: Bianco, Guardiano, Margherita and Calzone, which was the most popular. This year, BarrelHead will be expanding the menu to seven selections and introducing some other items. “I’m revamping the whole menu, none of the old pizzas are coming back,” he promises.

“I’m going very traditional Neapolitan style, with a Capriccio- sa, with ham, artichokes, kalamata olives and mushrooms, but with my own cool, creative culinary spin. We’ll still have the salads from last year, but we’ll add three appetizers and desserts as well, as that was a big ask.”

Zappitelli combines his love for Neapolitan style cooking and his experience working in the local restaurant industry since he was 10 years old to inform the decisions he makes with BarrelHead. Add to that a keen business mind developed through a degree in commerce at Brock University and a post-graduate diploma in sales and marketing from Niagara College, and the methodical approach he takes to business makes sense.

“I’m really fascinated by the subconscious, and how people perceive dollar value,” Zappitelli says. “I’m really super interested in price-pointing. I’m also a big believer in buying paralysis. One of the things I studied is why it’s important to not overwhelm the consumer. I’m a big fan of doing something small, having a good core menu, and doing it very, very well.”

Zappitelli admits that he has dreams of taking the business into a traditional bricks and mortar type of operation, but doesn’t want to expand too quickly. “I don’t want it to be too big, where the quality suffers,” he says. “As a business person I want to scale it as big as I can, but I also don’t want to take away from the quality. We’re doing everything by hand, we’re sourcing everything locally from sustainable farmers, so we can only do so much as they provide us. But maybe in three to five years we can look at an expansion.”

He adds that the ambience of being outside in the cherry orchards, and giving something back to the locals are also both important to him, and the space they have right now allows him to do that.

Before he puts his head down and begins to work on the summer menu, though, Zappitelli has a contest that he’s hoping to win as well. He’s been nominated in the online Favorite Chef contest, which comes with a $50,000 prize and a double-page spread in Bon Appétit magazine. He has topped his category through the first two of seven rounds, with round three wrapping up this week.

“I still don’t know who nominated me, and my vote assures it wasn’t him,” he tells The Local. “I got an email from Favorite Chef, and a couple of days later I heard back from them and they told me I had been hand-selected for the contest.”

Chefs from around the world are in the competition, and Zappitelli is surprised with his early success.

“To be honest, I didn’t think I would do this good,” he says. “I’ve had a crazy amount of support from my friends, relatives, family members. A lot of people I haven’t really talked to for years, from high school at St. Michael, who I haven’t seen in 11 years, who have done the voting thing. It’s humbling.”

Supporters can vote for free, but paid votes, with 25 per cent of the proceeds going to the Feeding America charity, can also be cast.

If he indeed comes out as the Favorite Chef when the contest ends April 8, he would sock away some of the winnings for Michaela’s education, and perhaps take a family trip to Naples, Italy to experience and learn more about Neapolitan-style pizzas. And you can bet that the famous Neapolitans will find their way onto the menu at BarrelHead.

To vote for Michael Zappitelli visit https://favchef.com/2021/michael-zappitelli.

Social gatherings can have deadly consequences.