



Parents,  
kids loved  
March Break  
tourney  
**page 16**



Krista London-Verticchio makes up to three videos a day, turning family chaos into short, funny stories. (Photo supplied)

# Region calls end to State of Emergency

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

The state of emergency declared two years ago in Niagara-on-the-Lake has been lifted.

In recent weeks, discussions at council have indicated that although NOTL made the decision to declare a state of emergency independently, about 10 days before the region followed suit, the town would join with other municipalities to end them as a region.

Chair Jim Bradley announced Monday that they would officially end in all 12 municipalities Tuesday, March 15 at 12:01 a.m., “as they are no longer necessary.”

When NOTL became the first municipality to declare a state of emergency, it was Lord Mayor Betty Disero’s decision, although it was supported by councillors and in

consultation with the emergency control group. It was made in part out of concern over the many returning travellers at that time who were not self-isolating.

Lifting it now does not change much that would be visible to the public, impacting mostly administration procedures, such as deploying staff to other areas without contract negotiations, Disero said.

The town’s emergency control group met Monday, and although it isn’t obligated to continue meeting, it likely will to wrap up some remaining issues, mostly dealing with staff, she added.

NOTL councillors have been talking about resuming in-person meetings since last summer, with Disero making it obvious she would like to see at least a hybrid meeting

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# Mom’s claim to fame funny family videos on TikTok

**Mike Balsom**  
**Special to The Local**

Virgil’s Krista London-Verticchio is finding online fame as the TikTok Mom. Her autismoma account on the social media platform has 260,500 followers and counting.

She uses the account to document life as a mother with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), raising three children, including two

boys both diagnosed with autism.

London-Verticchio turned to the social media app near the start of the pandemic. The long-time Facebook user was becoming frustrated with the negativity, anger and vitriol she was seeing there.

“Everything was turning into COVID talk,” she says, “and it was really difficult to see that all the time. I noticed people posting funny TikTok videos onto

Facebook, though, so I decided to check that out.”

Like many new to TikTok, she was originally inundated with the types of video content her own children were watching. That is, short clips of teens and young adults dancing to upbeat tunes.

“But TikTok has an algorithm, and it quickly learns what you like,” she says. “Every single user has its own ‘for you’ page. When you react to some-

one’s video with a like, a comment or a follow, TikTok makes note of it. Today, I don’t see any kids anymore. I see teachers, police officers, it’s all adults now.”

She began to post short videos to make light of what the effervescent London-Verticchio says is the humorous chaos in her household of five, including 16-year old son Ryan, nine-year-old son Avery, Emma, six, and her hus-

band Mike.

“It ended up turning into talking about the reality of what it’s like, having children with autism here in Ontario,” she says today. “It’s a struggle all over Canada, the lack of resources for autistic people in general, but I focus on the humour of the whole situation. If you’re not laughing at it, you’re crying or upset. I try to keep it as positive as possible.”

Though she creates

many of her short videos in the family’s open concept main floor living room, she often retreats into her car to escape the chaos. In fact, when The Local came calling that’s exactly where she chose for the interview.

Her followers quickly began to snowball last year. It was a bit of a shock for London-Verticchio to see how popular her posts were becoming.

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# Seated TASTINGS

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# Farmworker Hub set for a successful season

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

Organizers of The Farmworker Hub are looking forward to their first full year in a permanent, central location, with early signs leading to a successful season.

And farmworkers arriving in Canada during a harsh, snowy winter were grateful it was there for them when it opened Sunday afternoon

Hub coordinator Julia Buxton-Cox says she couldn't be happier about the response to their new space, on the main floor of Cornerstone Community Church in Virgil.

"It was a really good turnout Sunday," she says, especially considering the bulk of workers has not yet arrived in Niagara.

Some of those who visited the hub are here for their first season, she says, and were especially grateful for the warm winter clothing — the recent arrivals were finding it really cold. "They were mostly looking for warm winter coats, boots, socks, hats and gloves."

One man arrived in shorts, and picked up several pairs of pants — he and many others expressed appreciation for finding the hub operating and offering warm clothing —

all of it free, helping them send more money home for their families.

When the hub opened in a portable in the church parking lot last July, it was intended to be temporary, set up quickly to respond to the lack of services for farmworkers due to the pandemic.

The Cornerstone location was considered perfect, central for the workers, near the old Virgil school where many of them go for new bikes or bike repairs, and close by for shopping, banking and other services when they get to town.

The hub has received funding through a federal grant to Kairos Canada, an ecumenical, faith-based movement for ecological justice and human rights, intended to help temporary foreign workers during the pandemic, with a focus on the agricultural sector.

The funding helped get the hub started, and along with another generous donation, has covered the rent for the church space for a couple of months. Buxton-Cox says she feels pretty secure in their current location, but donations would be welcome to help cover monthly expenses.

She would also be happy to see more volunteers,

although they have a good group now.

"We saw so many happy faces Sunday," says Buxton-Cox, adding there were several farmers who came to pick up supplies for their new arrivals. "They seem to be getting more involved, picking up welcome kits, and asking if we had certain items like work boots."

As is the community, she adds.

"It seems like all of a sudden the community is coming together to help each other. We should be welcoming them. We are a farming community, and if our workers are happy, if they feel part of the community, they will be more likely to want to come back"

But it's about more than that. "We're not just caring for them because they're farmworkers, we're dealing with real issues of racism and poverty. They're not just a sector of our community. They're our friends and neighbours. Why would we not care for them?"

The hub is keeping spring hours of Sunday from 2 to 5 p.m. to ensure the workers aren't riding their bikes in the dark, but in May they will move to Thursday evenings.

Those with items to donate can come by the hub at the Cornerstone Church

on 1570 Niagara Stone Rd., in the back, Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. There is also a box to leave items outside those hours. They are only accepting clean and washed items. Warm clothing for men is on the top of the list of needed items — men's jeans or work pants sizes 32 to 38, socks, coats, hats, gloves and boots.

The hub is overstocked at the moment on clothes for women, says Buxton-Cox.

They also welcome household items, although at the moment no electric appliances.

A full list of what is needed at the hub can be found on their website at [thehubnotl.ca/donate](http://thehubnotl.ca/donate).

"We've done a lot of hard work to get to this point," says Buxton-Cox. "Last year we moved three times in six months, and we're really happy with where we are now. We're looking forward to an amazing season, going right through to the end of fall."

The hub is also supplying information from the region about On-Demand transit, which the workers haven't had before.

"We're promoting it and

hoping it works for them — the women especially like going to the outlet mall," she says.

"We're so far ahead of where we were last year. We're very grateful for that, and looking forward to a really good year."

The Farmworker Hub operates under the umbrella of Niagara Community Partners, in collaboration with the Gateway Community Church, which is registered as a not-for-profit, the Caribbean Workers Outreach Project (CWOP), and Niagara Workers Welcome, headed by Jane Andres.



As farmworkers arrive in NOTL and need warm clothes, they are grateful for the hub offering them what they need — free. (Photos by Julia Buxton-Cox)

## Police looking for video of ATV rollover

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

Early Sunday morning, a St. Catharines teenager was discovered pinned under an all-terrain vehicle in a rollover in Garrison Village.

Niagara Regional Police responded to Garrison Village Drive and Village Road just after midnight on March 13, and found the 16-year-old boy wearing a helmet, but suffering from life-threatening injuries.

Paramedics and Niaga-

ra-on-the-Lake firefighters treated him at the scene and transported him to a local hospital. He was later flown to an out-of-region hospital for further care.

The ATV involved, a yellow Suzuki King Quad 700, was considerably damaged.


Roads in the area were reopened at about 6:30 a.m.

Detectives from the NRPS collision reconstruction unit, assisted by forensic services detectives, are


investigating, and are asking residents or businesses in the area with closed circuit security cameras, doorbell video cameras, or dash cameras to review their footage for the yellow ATV or any footage that may assist in the investigation. Police are interested in recorded activity from 11:30 p.m. March 12 to 12:35 a.m. March 13.

Anyone with information is being asked to contact 905-688-4111, extension 1009265.






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# No plans to expand mask mandate in Niagara

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

The mask mandate will end across the province Monday, leaving residents and business owners free to make their own choices in Niagara-on-the-Lake and across the province.

And although Dr. Mustafa Hirji, the region's acting chief medical officer, has made it clear he believes it's too soon to offer that choice, there is no plan for an order to continue making them mandatory in Niagara.

"We disagree with the province's decision to end mandatory masking, and believe it should have aligned with when the infections from COVID-19 were much lower and the risk to the community was much less," he said in a statement last week.

"We agree with the province that wearing masks is a recommended practice to protect oneself and those around us. We encourage everyone to wear masks past March 21, and support organizations who wish to continue with masking policies to protect their customers

and staff."

With the lifting of the mask mandate taking effect Monday, as students return to school after their March break, Hirji said public health would review the announcement and discuss "how we might act going forward. With respect to a section 22 order, a decision on one would need to be based on local COVID-19 trends closer to March 21 when it might come into effect."

"We are currently not planning such an order," he added, "but will continually reassess the situation as we approach March 21 and beyond."

Dr. Azim Kasmani, the region's associate medical officer of health, told The Local Tuesday "at this time there is no plan" to continue a mask mandate in Niagara. "It wouldn't make sense to adjust the provincial mandate just for Niagara," he said, and he hasn't seen any indication that other jurisdictions are considering it.

However, "there is always the potential for a rebound" of cases, and if, through monitoring results of wastewater

testing, hospitalizations and intensive care admissions, that seems to be the case, that could change, he said.

Although there are school boards across the province which are continuing to require the wearing of masks in school, Kasmani said public health hasn't had any discussions with local school boards, and it would be up to the boards if that was their intention — they wouldn't require regional input.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero is encouraging people to make their own decisions, and to "wear a mask if they feel a risk at all, or if they feel uncomfortable in a public place. The mask mandate is being dropped, but that doesn't mean you can't continue to wear one."

She has heard some businesses might continue to require them, and asks people to be kind to anyone who makes a decision to continue wearing one.

"The pandemic isn't over. As in other municipalities, we're just following the province on this," she said.

When the mask mandate

is removed Monday, people coming to the town hall will no longer be expected to wear a mask, but to just check the passive screening signs on the door.

As the mask restriction is lifted, there is a high rate of immunity across Niagara, with a large number of people vaccinated, Kasmani says, but he continues to encourage those who haven't had a first, second or third dose to get those shots.

Novavax, one of the more traditional vaccinations that is not an mRNA, is now approved and available, he said, and that could encourage people who have avoided vaccinations so far to reconsider.

It is available in the region, and to find out where, call to the COVID-19 Info-Line at 905-688-8248 or 1-888-505-6074, press 7, during the hours of 8:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m.

The other piece of good news, he added, is that there are at least two new medications approved to help those who are infected with COVID, and that could reduce the risk of serious illness and hospitalization. There are many factors to determine

whether they are appropriate for patients with specific medical issues, so the first step, he said, is for anyone with early symptoms to con-

tact their physician to make that determination. If they are candidates, they would be referred to a regional assessment clinic.



Dr. Azim Kasmani, Niagara's associate medical officer of health. (Photo submitted)

## 'This doesn't mean pandemic is over'

Continued from page 1

model sooner rather later. With the state of emergency lifted, council meetings are now required to be held in-person, she said.

There needs to be a bylaw passed to allow for a hybrid model, so that councillors who might feel uncomfortable being in the council chamber could still attend virtually. That discussion will occur at next Monday's planning committee meeting, and all councillors who want to attend must be in the council chamber.

Once passed, the bylaw that allows for a hybrid meeting will also cover those making deputations to attend virtually, Disero said.

Although the lifting of the state of emergency is good news, she added, "it doesn't mean the pandemic is over."

Bradley made the same

point in his announcement.

The regional state of emergency was enacted "to help save lives, protect our hospital system and to underscore the critical nature of the situation. After two years, we are in a significantly different position and appears that it is now the appropriate time to move forward as a community," Bradley said.

"As we continue to observe a decrease in cases, hospitalization and loss of life, standing down from our emergency declaration is another way we are learning how to transition to living with and managing COVID-19."

The chair thanked Niagara residents for doing their part over the last two years to wear masks, following directions to stay home, limiting personal contact and getting vaccinated.

"We also thank all of our front line health care workers

who selflessly made the commitment to serve our community, getting us through exceptionally difficult times. We also owe a debt of gratitude to our essential workers who continued to report to work throughout the pandemic, risking their health to ensure our economy could continue to operate."

Bradley acknowledged the last two years have been exceptionally challenging for everyone, "but the people of Niagara proved time and time again that they are willing to do what is necessary to take care of each other and keep one another safe. Make no mistake: the sacrifices that you made saved lives and kept people out of the hospital."

As provincial rules continue to ease, Bradley said, residents are encouraged to "safely take advantage of all that our communities have to offer. Like most residents, we are relieved to see the progress

we have made over the last few weeks and we are ready to move forward in our lives."

But despite this significant progress, he cautioned that the pandemic is not over, and encouraged residents consider taking steps to protect themselves and reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19, including getting a third vaccine dose, physical distancing when possible, and participating in outdoor activities instead of indoors when that's an option.

"It's important to remember that the pandemic is not completely over," he said. Residents are encouraged to consider taking steps to protect themselves and reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Some of these steps include getting a third vaccine dose, practising physical distancing when possible, and participating in outdoor activities, as opposed to indoor, when that is an option.

## Go-VAXX bringing vaccinations to NOTL

### Local Staff

The GO-VAXX mobile vaccine clinic will be at the Niagara College Niagara-on-the-Lake campus March 17 to administer COVID-19 vaccines to students, employees and members of the public.

On March 20, it will be at the Outlet Collection on Glendale Avenue.

Fully accessible buses will be providing first, second, and booster doses for adults and youth ages 12 and up, as well as the pediatric Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for children aged five to 11.

The converted Metrolinx bus will be at Niagara College March 17 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Daniel J. Patterson Campus in Niagara-on-the-Lake, in parking lot A2.

A map of the campus lots can be found on the NC website. Parking is free for those visiting the GO-VAXX bus.

The GO-VAXX clinic will also be at the Outlet Collection

of Niagara on Glendale Avenue Sunday, March 20, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Book an appointment via the COVID-19 vaccination portal or provincial hotline at 1-833-943-3900. Walk-ins are also accepted.

The GO-VAXX bus operates as a fully functioning vaccine clinic with the necessary supplies and trained staff to provide assistance to people and ensure vaccines are administered safely. All COVID-19 safety precautions will be followed, including the required pre-vaccination screening and post-vaccination monitoring.

Bring a health card if possible, or another form of government-issued photo identification such as a driver's licence, passport, status card, or birth certificate.

Do not visit the GO-VAXX bus with symptoms of COVID-19.

To learn more about the GO-VAXX bus, visit [ontario.ca/page/go-vaxx-bus-schedule](https://ontario.ca/page/go-vaxx-bus-schedule).

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# Airport receives \$1.6 million for safe operations

**Randy Klaassen**  
Special to The Local

Niagara District Airport continues to develop as a regional player in the aviation industry of Southern Ontario.

Last Thursday, federal transport minister Omar Alghabra was at the airport to announce \$1.6 million funding through Transport Canada's airport capital assistance program to purchase much-needed heavy equipment for safe and successful operations for general aviation, and an increased volume of airport business.

Alghabra spoke to a crowd gathered on the tarmac in front of a business jet and a commercial passenger plane. "The pandemic highlighted the important role Canada's local and regional airports play in our country's economy, and in sustaining the social and economic well-being of our communities. In addition to supporting personal travel, local and regional airports are key connectors for business, health care, social services, and emerging resource development sectors," he said. The investments, he added, will improve safer airport operations.

Niagara District Airport CEO Daniel Pilon said the funding will allow the purchase of a new snowblower, sweeper, loader and snowplow. "Some of the current equipment is quite old, and we anticipate the new vehicles to be operational for the next winter season. We hope there will not be delivery delays due to issues of COVID, yet that seems to still be a factor in vehicle acquisitions."

The intention, he added, is to purchase equipment within North America.

The funding is in addition to the \$470,000 in the capital assistance program funding provided to the airport in May 2021 for the purchase of a medium-sized snowblower.

The equipment will help the airport maintain safe operations for aircraft, passengers, crews and airport workers by keeping airside surfaces, such as runways and taxiways, clear of snow and ice.

Robin Garrett, chair of the Niagara District Airport Commission, said development plans for the airport are progressing with an aim to serve an expanding clientele. She credited the 2016 addition of Greater Toronto Airlines, with passenger service between Niagara

and Toronto's Billy Bishop Airport, as a major factor in the growth of the airport. "The vision is to expand with further business opportunities, especially since Niagara's runway is much longer than Billy Bishop's."

Alghabra acknowledged other MPs who were in attendance for the announcement, and credited them for working behind the scenes to make the funding grant possible. MP for Niagara Centre, Vance Badawey and Chris Bittle, MP for St. Catharines each spoke of the importance of aviation services to the region.

Following the announcement Garrett was asked if the airport considered other projects for the funding, such as marketing Niagara as a unique destination for tourists. "The criteria for the grant was specific to make capital investments in safety, so for the commission the focus was clear," she said. "The equipment we've identified is needed for critical safe operations of the airport, as we learned this past winter when 55 centimetres of snow closed the airport for the first time. Our staff did a tremendous job, but we could have done better, and this equipment will allow us to do so well into the future."



After the announcement, St. Catharines MP Chris Bittle, airport commission chair Robin Garrett, airport CEO Daniel Pilon, Niagara Centre MP Vance Badawey, and federal transport minister Omar Alghabra chat at the airport. (Photos by Randy Klaassen)



After a recent snowfall, Gord Tessler, volunteer with the Niagara air search and rescue association, makes sure the area around their plane is cleared out.



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**Website: [notl-ambassadors.ca](http://notl-ambassadors.ca)**



# Proposed boat launch still up in the air

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

Since the early days of this council term, when there was a push to complete the town's updated official plan, residents in the dock area have lived with confusion over the area's secondary plan and the master plan, which showed discrepancies between plans and what they thought had been approved.

Add to that the town's recreational master plan, which also impacts the dock area, and the result is some confusion among councillors that arose during a recent discussion over moving forward with the secondary plan.

There were two main concerns: one that a portion of what is considered the dock area is not included in the secondary plan, and could allow development to move forward on Melville Street, on the King George V property, if there are no protections in place.

The other is a plan put forward by Tim Balasiuk, better-known locally as Tim Bala, presented to council last August. He would like the town to open up a portion of the south end of River Beach Drive for launching paddle sports activities.

The confusion was over how to proceed, when each

plan covers different aspects of the Dock Area.

Since 2015 Bala, the owner of Paddle Niagara, has been offering standup paddle board lessons to locals and visitors at Queen's Royal Park, as well as summer camps for local kids.

Moving to River Beach would be a great opportunity for the town to use more of its waterfront, in a spot that can be nice and calm even on windy days, said Bala, suggesting it's time for a boat launch there.

It would also free up parking spaces on King Street, he said.

"And it would be a great way to show the town is becoming more inclusive with our access to water," he said, adding that the launch could be designed for those with disabilities.

When he made his presentation, council agreed to refer his request to staff for a report on a paddle sports launch, to see how much it would cost.

But when Lord Mayor Betty Disero recently made a motion to shift \$20,000 in the budget from consulting fees for dock area plans, to instead pay for the more immediate need for improved drainage in the area, and councillors agreed, they didn't realize they could effectively be de-

laying the boat launch, which they had endorsed.

Coun. Gary Burroughs brought that to the attention of councillors last week, out of concern for both issues, potential development on the unprotected portion along Melville Street and River Beach Drive, considering the jet boat operation is not returning, and the delay of a new boat launch.

Neither Disero nor other councillors had anticipated those problems, and called on town staff to help.

Last week's meeting ended with assurances a staff report on the boat launch would come to councillors next Monday, for a discussion on how to proceed.

Disero said Tuesday she is concerned about drainage, and the issue of expanding the area covered by the secondary plan, to protect it from development.

She was grateful Burroughs pointed out the problems resulting from her motion, and still hopes to offer residents access to the water through a River Beach Drive boat launch. If the cost is reasonable, she doesn't see why it couldn't happen for this year.

Bala said he still hopes to move to River Beach Drive, and expand his paddle sports to include lessons for kids and adults on paddle boards and

kayaks, and to offer kayak tours on the river.

He was optimistic that with council's support he would be able to do that, and in anticipation, has already spent \$20,000 on kayaks, paddles, and other equipment.

He will also need a location to store his equipment, and envisions a large shipping container that could be made to look like a boat house, totally fitting in with its surroundings, to be used not only for storage but could also offer a small classroom area for kids if it begins to rain during their lessons.

Given the reaction he has heard from the public, he believes he has a lot of support for the boat launch.

But the first step is to have an answer from the town, and he's going to run out of time before council moves forward, even if they accept the costs involved.

"I need to figure out my operations for Paddle Niagara for this year," he says.

What he is expecting is to return to Queen's Royal Beach, for 2022 at least, expand his operation to include the kayaks he has purchased, and offer a range of paddle sports to visitors and locals.

And he'll hope for a boat launch he can use to access the water for the 2023 season.



Tim Bala hopes to move his Paddle Niagara operation, but doesn't expect he will be able to for this season. Instead he is planning an expansion to go ahead at Queen's Royal Beach, where he's been since 2015. (File photo)



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**neighbours**  
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Niagara-on-the-Lake

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- Canned Pineapple
- Stuffing Mix
- Canned Gravy
- Cranberry Sauce
- Snack Crackers - any kind
- Bottled Juice - Cranberry or Apple
- Cookies - any kind or flavour
- Chocolates - for Easter baskets

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• Habitant Soups	• Canned Baked Beans
• Chunky Soups (beef or chicken)	• Jello - any flavour
• Canned Red Kidney Beans	• Jams - any flavour
• Canned Ham, Corned Beef or Spam	• Ketchup/Mustard/Mayonnaise/ Green Relish
• Canned Tomatoes/Tomato Sauce	• Sugar / Flour / Baking Ingredients
• Canned mixed vegetables	• Coffee or Tea
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• Sidekicks & Mr. Noodle packets	
• Soda (Soup) Crackers	



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# EDITORIAL

## We've been given choices, and should make them wisely

Across the country, and in Ontario, mask mandates are being dropped. Some scientists and medical experts fear we're not quite there yet, while most of the population seems to feel ready for it, seeing it as a step forward to a more normal existence.

Our own Dr. Mustafa Hirji isn't convinced it's time — he has always erred on the side of caution, and he's always been right. But the case has been made that COVID-19 is waning, and there is no overwhelming data to show it isn't. So maskless we will go next week. If we're so inclined.

Premier Doug Ford says it's time we make our own

choices, based on our individual risk or comfort level. It sounds reasonable enough. The problem with that though is we have been told from the start of this pandemic that we wear masks to protect others, and so it really isn't about our risk, it's also about our concern for those with whom we come into contact. Still, it is a decision we are now able to make.

The sidebar to that choice is not judging those who make a different decision. We're reminded to be kind, not to react, not to harass or bully. We can do that — it seems like an easy enough request. However our record for kindness is not that great

these days. Anger seems to be the go-to emotion. We'll have to try to control that, and maybe we'll get used to seeing some people masked, some not, and not reacting one way or another. Unless it's with a smile from those who are maskless.

On the bright side, the dropping of restrictions, and of vaccination mandates, should be good for local businesses, and it's time for them to have a reason to see a better future. Spring is in the air — not literally, but it is coming — and it seems there are better days ahead. Events that were cancelled for two years are back on, and there is lots to look forward to.

However, with the drop-

ping of restrictions, and the lifting of the state of emergency across the region, we are also being warned that the pandemic is not over. Far from it.

A philosophy professor from Brock University, Christine Daigle, recently wrote that government decisions could send the wrong message, and give us a false sense of security.

"Most people rely on the message they are getting from the government, and if the government is lifting so-called restrictions, it must be because things are okay," she said.

That appears to be what is happening all around us — the message is making us feel we can let down our guard.

Adam MacNeil, associate professor of immunology at Brock, adds to the message, saying going maskless indoors will increase virus transmission, and there is "lots of virus in circulation relative to previous waves."

This too we know, along with MacNeil's other warnings: the risk for unvaccinated children, immunocompromised individuals and the elderly; the new and more highly transmissible subvariant of omicron (BA.2) emerging in Canada; and increasing understanding of the consequences of infection in Long COVID.

And our politicians who are making decisions also know this.

The fact is, if we decide not to wear masks, or not to be vaccinated, we are not only endangering ourselves, we are also putting others at risk. And so far, that hasn't worked out so well.

But the powers-that-be have made their decisions, we have our individual choices ahead of us, and we can only hope people make them wisely, with thoughts of others, and a reminder of what can't be said too often as we enjoy this return to normalcy — the pandemic isn't over yet. We don't want to have to take another step backwards.

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

### View from the couch

**Donald Combe**  
Special to The Local

Michael Douglas and Alan Arkin star in *The Kominsky Method* (Netflix, 2021), a witty, bright series. The audience is soon intimately involved

in the lives of these two old friends facing the very real problems of ageing and loss, while maintaining a sense of humour. Some of the episodes are so engaging that I have watched them twice.

*Donald Combe is a retired*

*English teacher who loves to go to 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.*

### Surely there is more we can do

There are no words for the scenes we are watching daily, coming at us from Ukraine.

A photo of a pregnant woman we were shown over and over as she was taken from a bombed hospital we now know is dead, as is her baby.

Schools, kindergartens, bombed. Children have died. Families have died.

This is war, close up and personal. And no end in sight.

Members of the House of Commons and Senate listened Tuesday as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy pleaded for help.

He spoke of his people suffering, dying.

He made specific requests. A no-fly zone. For air space to close, to stop the

bombing, the slaughter of his people.

NATO has so far refused, but if Zelenskyy thinks it would help, surely he knows best.

This man is a hero, doing everything within his power to save his people, and certainly risking his life every day he stays to fight.

He has called on Canada to do more. Not to wait. Surely he is telling that to every country he is able to talk to.

Sanctions have not stopped the war, and are not enough, he says. "You need to do more."

We need to do more. We can't in good conscience ignore his pleas for help.

NATO leaders are meet-

ing for an emergency session next week in Brussels, and will be talking about what else they can do.

How many more children will die by then? How many more families?

As we watch the tragedies unfold, the horrible images on TV, we feel there must be something more to be done. We hope there is a plan, that it will work and the war will end soon. But it doesn't look like there is a plan. We have the smartest minds in the world working on this, talking about this. Surely one country, one man can be stopped.

Please, make it end.

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

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### Hairy Woodpecker



Photographer David Gilchrist was at Queen's Royal Park when he heard the hairy woodpecker call, but could not see it. As he walked from tree to tree, it seemed the woodpecker was moving each time. Gilchrist says he was getting a little frustrated at this point, but it eventually found something worth pecking at on one tree. Its head was moving very fast as it pecked, making the photo blurry, so he changed his camera shutter speed to 1/4000 of a second and was able to freeze the head movement and capture it, in this photo, at mid-peck. These woodpeckers are very common to our area and are often confused with the smaller downy woodpecker, he says. The longer beak on the hairy woodpecker is key to its identification.



Local LETTERS

Local LETTERS

Solution to crosswalk debate

After watching the never-ending discussions over a rainbow crossing, I could no longer hold back my comments.

Yes, it is a great idea to show that Niagara-on-the-Lake is LGBTQ friendly but a simple road crossing will not indicate anything but a big money expenditure. This road painting will be at one intersection to be seen by

only those crossing the street wherever that might be and not much to see in the winter. Money better spent would be to have a set of flag poles at the entrance to Old Town with the Canadian flag, the Ontario flag and the Pride flag. Also spend maybe a few hundred dollars on small pride window stickers to offer business owners, hotels, restaurants and B&Bs to place

in their window to show they are LGBTQ friendly. That way everyone coming to the area will see them. Be different Niagara-on-the-Lake and take your own road forward instead of following the lead of others who have painted their roads. And that's the way I see it.

Doug King  
Queenston

Experts don't all agree on mRNA

Re: Religious tract spreads misinformation (NOTL Local, Feb. 16) You quoted a woman saying the mRNA in vaccinations has not affected the DNA — many of the experts we trust have stressed that. “It has acted as an intermediary as a defence against the virus.”

Note the qualifier, “many of the experts we trust” in that statement. It rightly implies that others might, likewise, trust in experts who differ with their chosen subset. Wrongly, however, this clearly objects to any but specific “trusted experts” viewpoints being disseminated.

Granted, the couple quoted in the article lay claim to an above-average experience in some areas of science, making their concerns about various dissenting assertions worthy of likewise above-average attention. However, the matter does not end there, for, as they should be among the first to concede, science is an ever-changing occupation in which today's expertise can become tomorrow's repository of error.

Accordingly, it might just be possible that, in the

intensely congested realm of pandemic-related research, new research participants, new studies and new findings are to be expected, including those liable to expand certain envelopes of trustworthy sources. And, it is likewise possible that the latter's findings might make their way into the hands of sober and keenly interested observers, such as those whose civic-mindedness and awareness of the adversarial editorial stances evident on virtually every mainstream platform in Canada might prompt them to take extraordinary efforts to share their own findings and opinions with their fellow Canadians.

By way of example. I invite their noteworthy skills to review the following, recently published paper, “Intracellular Reverse Transcription of Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 mRNA Vaccine BNT162b2 In Vitro in Human Liver Cell Line” ( <https://www.mdpi.com/1467-3045/44/3/73> ), which reports findings of precisely the kind of DNA-altering alluded to in the “offending” missive. Not

such a wild-eyed prospective concern, now, is it?

Are that study and its findings absolutely definitive? Perhaps not; but they do not have to be. Their very presence in Current Issues in Molecular Biology, an international, scientific, peer-reviewed, open access journal on molecular biology, should suffice in granting it worthy of serious scholarly note, as opposed to some readily-ignored amateur endeavour.

As to whether The Local will accord this new and important development attention equal to others' opinions, that remains to be seen, as will the possible walking back of the blanket assertion regarding the mRNA vaccines' purportedly nonexistent threat to affecting/altering human DNA. For now, however, it is enough to point out that not everyone who challenges the official narrative is a legitimate candidate for automatic dismissal. Indeed, to contend that they are is to give tyranny free reign.

Bruce Dickson  
NOTL

Local LETTERS

Ukraine needs water and food

Surely, the Red Cross, and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees must demand that Russia allow allied bombers to bomb food and water for the besieged people of Marioupol, etc. as

happened in 1945 when the Dutch were starving under Nazi occupation — as part of the terms of capitulation — and in this case as part of the conditions of Russia's participation in world trade etc.

My late brother-in-law (a Royal Air Force pilot) said that it was the best bombing run he ever made.

Elizabeth Oliver-Malone  
NOTL

Letters! We want letters!

If you have a letter to the editor you'd like to see published, please send it to penny@notllocal.com. Please try to keep it to about 350 words. Sorry, but we won't publish anonymous letters. And please stick to the issue at hand, rather than attacking those involved. The deadline is Monday at noon.



Horned Grebes

The NOTL Sailing Club acts, at times, almost like a catchment basin for migratory waterfowl, says photographer Dave Gilchrist. Out of the current of the Niagara River, and protected from days and nights of high winds, it acts as a haven during winter when boats are up on shore. This was where, in the fall, a pied bill grebe was spotted. Recently a different grebe species has been observed in the basin. Photographed through the wire fencing at Nelson Park a pair of horned grebes has been active. These both appear, from their colour, to be non-breeding adults. At times, they venture out into the river to dive for food, but return to the sailing club basin where they are actively swimming and diving. They have very distinctive red eyes!



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# Red Roof reopening slowly, one program at a time

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

After a revolving door of being open and closed during the pandemic, Red Roof Retreat is now optimistic about getting back to doing what they do best — helping their special needs kids and their families.

Executive director Steffanie Bjorgan says she and the other staff members are looking forward to being open in whatever capacity they can be for the moment, and to expanding their services in the coming weeks and months.

Two years ago, in March 2020, Red Roof was looking ahead at a year of celebrations for its 20th anniversary.

Instead, they were shut down. Although they were excited to finally open again last September, before they really got underway they were shut down again in December, and stayed closed until last month.

Pre-pandemic, Red Roof Retreat had three locations, including a relatively new one in St. Catharines that had allowed them to expand their programs. They had 212 families on their register, and almost 30 staff, including five in administrative positions, says Bjorgan.

Currently, they are down to a handful of staff, one location open, and just day programs running in a very limited capacity, still due to COVID re-

strictions, and also because of staff shortages.

The children's respite program which was such a life-saver for parents and children at the Ranch site, accommodating five children each weekend, 48 weekends of the year, is now closed until they can acquire more staff.

Adult respite care at Kevan's House, with four adults per weekend, for 24 weekends, is now also unable to operate due to lack of staff.

The adult day program, which was offered at two sites, with about 17 clients per day, 48 weeks per year, is now down to one site, three clients a day, "until we get more staff," says Bjorgan.

Summer camp is usually open to 20 to 25 campers per week for six weeks. "Last year we had 10 campers due to social distancing," says Bjorgan, who is hoping to get closer to full capacity this season "if all restrictions are lifted and more staff are available."

"Other recreation programs will wait until fall 2022," she added.

When Red Roof first had to close, staff, including Bjorgan, were laid off and on employment insurance. "I keep getting approached by people thinking I'm still getting paid, and that I own the properties," she says, laughing. "I wish . . . I'm on EI like so many of our other staff, who then went on to get other jobs, and I'm not going back while other staff are still off."

Bjorgan founded Red Roof as a not-for-profit organization, with a board to run it, and is an employee the same as other staff members, she says.

As programs reopen, the immediate need is for front-line staff, and the best approach is to hire a few at a time, train them, and then hire a few more. As the number of trained staff increases, Red Roof can bring back more programs and more clients, she says.

"At this time, we have brought back one part-time and one full-time admin position, and two front-line staff. We recently hired two more. This allows us to at least get one site up and running for a limited day program, which in turn allows us to not only serve some clients, but provide a program to train new staff," she says.

"So basically, with each new ready staff, we can expand capacity. As capacity grows, the rest of the admin roles will be reinstated"

Last fall, Red Roof developed a partnership with Cornerstone Community Church, which was interested in doing outreach projects through that partnership. But despite excitement on both sides for moving forward with programs at the church, another lockdown occurred postponing that project.

"We are hoping to get back

into Cornerstone Community Church as soon as they have donated space," says Bjorgan.

That will help make up for the space Red Roof lost by closing their St. Catharines location, necessary for budget reasons during the pandemic.

"Until we have the capacity to bring back the volunteer/special events coordinator, we are looking for community volunteers to help with events such as Bingo with OLG," and to promote events and schedule volunteers. They also need help with outdoor spring projects. If anyone is interested they can email [steffanie@redroofretreat.com](mailto:steffanie@redroofretreat.com).

Without their traditional pasta dinner fundraiser for two years, Red Roof has had to rely on donations, and is also in need of financial support.

"Thank you to everyone who continued to support us, especially through our Gifts from the Heart Campaign and our Red Rovers Monthly Giving Program," says Bjorgan.

Despite the many challenges, Bjorgan as always remains optimistic for the future, grateful to be open, knowing there are great people to train, and moving forward "slow and steady," to a time when Red Roof will be back to what it was pre-pandemic.

For more information about volunteering, donations or legacy giving, visit <https://www.redroofretreat.com/>



Kaitlyn has some help baking treats at a Red Roof program. (Photos supplied)



Naomi shares apples with Mikey the horse at the Red Roof Ranch.



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# Event to celebrate life of Joseph Pohorly

## Proceeds to Ukraine for humanitarian aid

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

When Joseph Pohorly, founder of Joseph's Estate Wines, died Sept. 12, 2020 at the age of 88, it was during the height of COVID, when funeral gatherings were significantly restricted.

Katherine Reid, winemaker and longtime friend of Pohorly's, feels it's time to celebrate his life and his contributions to the wine industry, and is organizing an event to be held at the winery on Tuesday, March 29, from 1 to 4 p.m.

It is also appropriate to recognize his heritage, with ties to the area close to the border with Poland, says Reid, and 100 per cent of the proceeds from the event will go to humanitarian aid for Ukrainians through Lions International in Poland.

Pohorly's parents came to Canada from Poland, she says, and he spoke both Ukrainian and Polish.

Reid says she and Pohorly spoke of their common background, which she learned more about during COVID, when she had time to do some research about her own

heritage and discovered she had relatives living in Ivano-Frankivsk, the city where its airport was hit by a missile early in the Russian attacks on Ukraine.

They both talked about making trips to the area, but neither of them made it. She still hopes to when she retires.

Pohorly became a member of the St. Davids Lions in his later years, and after his death a small ceremony was held at the club hall. His family held a private service.

Reid expects Lions local governor Geoff Crane, from the Merriton Lions Club, and is hoping Canadian international director Al Snider, from St. Davids Lions, will be on hand to say a few words.

The event will offer the calming effect of colouring for the Ukraine, with local owner Nancy Boerse of Colour Me Happy providing the materials to colour a picture supporting Ukraine, while enjoying a glass of wine, both included in the \$25 ticket price.

Sweets & Swirls Cafe will be supplying treats.

Reid has also chosen the

date to ensure it will be held in March, the month to celebrate St. Joseph.

"Needless to say, there are a few of us excited about this. We have not had something to look forward to in a long time."

She is challenging the St. Davids Lions Club to do something similar, on behalf of Pohorly and the Niagara Lions in Niagara-on-the-Lake to do something in memory of longtime member John Skubel, who was Polish, she says, offering to assist in any way she can. Skubel died in August, 2020, at the age of 66. He was a lifetime member of the Niagara Lions Club, and organizer of the annual Christmas tree fundraiser.

She adds she would like to see all Lions clubs find ways to help.

"People want to help Ukrainians, and this is the safest outlet I know, through Lions International, with no administration costs," says Reid. "Lions International is usually the first on the ground to help people. This is another way to celebrate Joe, and to help with humanitarian relief."

There are Lions clubs in Ukraine, she says, "but I don't think it's as safe to send aid there."

Known as an outstand-

ing member of St. Davids Lions, Pohorly had been helping the service club for years, before he finally decided to join in 2014, and even before becoming a member, he worked on various community projects, such as the Centennial

Pavilion at the Lions Park, which he designed and funded.

He also helped the club by applying for grants to fund projects for the Lions, including renovating and expanding the club hall, and was generous with do-

nations himself.

Those who are not able to attend can make a donation at the winery boutique, at 1811 Niagara Stone Road, and will receive a tax receipt, says Reid, or donate at <https://www.lionscanada.ca/our-foundations>



Joseph Pohorly



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# Red Brick Church asks for help with quilts for Ukraine

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

A group of Niagara United Mennonite Church women have been meeting Tuesday mornings for decades —the best guess is 40 or 50 years — to share a tradition that is steeped in history and passed down through generations. They like to socialize and enjoy coffee together, but their main purpose is create quilts to warm those in need, in communities close to home and far away.

This time the help that is needed is far away, and immediate.

Because of the pandemic the women haven't been able to get together as a group for about a year and a half, but they will on Saturday, March 26, at what is known locally as the Red Brick Church, and they would welcome help from the public.

Their goal is to tie quilts to send to Ukraine, through the Mennonite Central Committee.

Their quilts have been distributed all over the world through the MCC, but this time the greatest need is for Ukrainians under attack by Russians, many of them, mostly women and children, driven from their homes to find safety from



Pre-COVID, the NUMC Women in Service were recognized for the years of dedication making comforters. Those present for the photo were Lucy Harder (front), Lani Gade, and Anne Marie Enns; Ingrid Dau (middle row), Hannelore Enss, Klara Knelsen; and Tina Runge (back row), with Hannelore Harder and Anneliese Pankratz. (Photos supplied)

the military, says church administrator Emily Fieguth.

As the number of quilting members declined to a group that now numbers 20 women, they began putting the layers of quilting together, she says, and then tying them, a method which is

much easier and faster than traditional quilting.

A successful quilt-tying event, with help from the public, was held at the church in January, 2020, and everyone had so much fun they wanted to do it again, but it couldn't proceed last year

with COVID regulations.

"No sewing experience is needed, says Fieguth. "We welcome everyone to be part of our community, coming together to support our brothers and sisters in Ukraine."

The task is pretty simple, she says.

"I can't quilt, but I can tie, and if I can do it, anyone can."

Her expertise is organization, and when Fieguth began hearing about the attacks on Ukraine, she used her skills to quickly put together this event.

She is hoping people will drop in at 1775 Niagara Stone Road and help out, even if only for an hour, on Saturday morning, March 26, between 8:30 and noon.

"We were all sitting around thinking we wanted

to do something to help, but didn't know what to do," she says. "This seemed like such a practical thing to do."

Even children aged 10 and up should be able to tie, Fieguth says — and coffee, tea and refreshments will be available. She is also setting up a quilt colouring activity for younger kids.

Every year, the number of comforter requests MCC receives from its partners in more than 45 countries is greater than the number of comforters it can provide. In the fall of 2021, the NUMC Women in Service group sent 78 comforters to MCC that were mostly tied at home while they were unable to gather due to COVID, and this February, they had finished an additional 45 comforters to donate.

"Comforters are an excellent metaphor for the nature of our work around the world at MCC," says Rick Cober Bauman, executive director of MCC Canada. "When our volunteers and supporters come together to create comforters, they will make a difference in the lives of people affected by conflict and disaster."

Last year, he says, more than 45,000 comforters were shipped by MCC to Burkina Faso, Ecuador, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Ukraine, and Zambia as well as throughout Canada and the U.S. The project started in 1929, helping families affected by war and famine in Ukraine.

For more information contact office@redbrickchurch.ca or go to www.redbrickchurch.ca for details.

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Lucy Harder, with Jocelyn Thwaites and her granddaughter Kayla at the January 2020 Great Winter Warm-up tying event, pre-COVID.



# Learn and Live initiative continues at NOTL Library

Program starting off small, with plans to expand

Cindy Grant, chair of the committee, says the program is not organized by the town committee, program that will present a curriculum of themed seminars and discussion groups around a variety of also to keep our minds active,” says Grant. That was the goal of the wellness committee’s rec-audience-participating session format, helping to “move from losing what we had to having what we

## Penny Coles

### The Local

The Learn and Live program initiated last fall is offering two more series at the Niagara-on-the-Lake

Public Library this spring.

The project arose from one of the town's Community Wellness Committee's recommendations to council to create educational programs for all ages.

Cindy Grant, chair of the committee, says the program is not organized by the town committee, but was spawned in an effort to carry out its recommendation.

A small steering committee of local people began meeting in the spring of 2021 to develop this initiative, and created a

program that will present a curriculum of themed seminars and discussion groups around a variety of topics, and delivered over a period of several months.

At the moment, the sessions are being kept small, held in the library's Rotary Room with about 20 people. The speakers are local, gleaned from members of local networks.

As the popularity of the series grows, Grant envisions the day when she can cast farther afield for speakers, and fill a room at the community centre, expecting there to be a cost for the sessions. Subjects she would like to see offered include environment and climate change in Niagara, music, and museums.

The program is intended to offer a variety of interesting topics that would appeal to a large number of people, and that will help keep ageing minds active.

“We had a geriatrician speak in the fall, who talked a lot about preventing frailty as we age. He talked about the need to keep active and physically fit, but

also to keep our minds active," says Grant.

That was the goal of the wellness committee's recommendation for continued learning.

For now, Learn and Live: Enriched Learning for All Ages, is integrated with other library programming, held Monday evenings from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

The next series will be held over two weeks, April 4 and 11, and is presented by Bonnie Bagnulo, executive director of NOTL Community Palliative Care Service, with consultant and therapist Sandra Kesselman-Hardy.

The sessions, called Partnering with Losses, will focus on understanding losses in an interactive,

audience-participating session format, helping to “move from losing what we had to having what we lost,” the program description says.

Beginning Monday, April 25, and continuing May 2 and 9, the topic is Creativity and Applied Imagination, with Barb Babij, who will speak about the person, the process, the product, and the place (environment), the 4Ps of creativity, and learning new perspectives and tools, and how to apply them.

Registration is required  
at [notlpubliclibrary.org](http://notlpubliclibrary.org), or  
call 905-468-2023.

Registration is limited to 20 people, but the sessions will be available on the library's YouTube channel.



Pre-pandemic, Cindy Grant was able to present the Wellness Committee's report to council. The Learn and Live program is an initiative that arose from one of the recommendations in that report. *(File photo)*

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# TikTok helps promote local businesses

Continued from page 12

to combine her online income with what she earns via her home-based busi-

ness My Little Party, selling helium-filled balloons, for income tax purposes.

Besides the money and free products, London-Verticchio is also rewarded

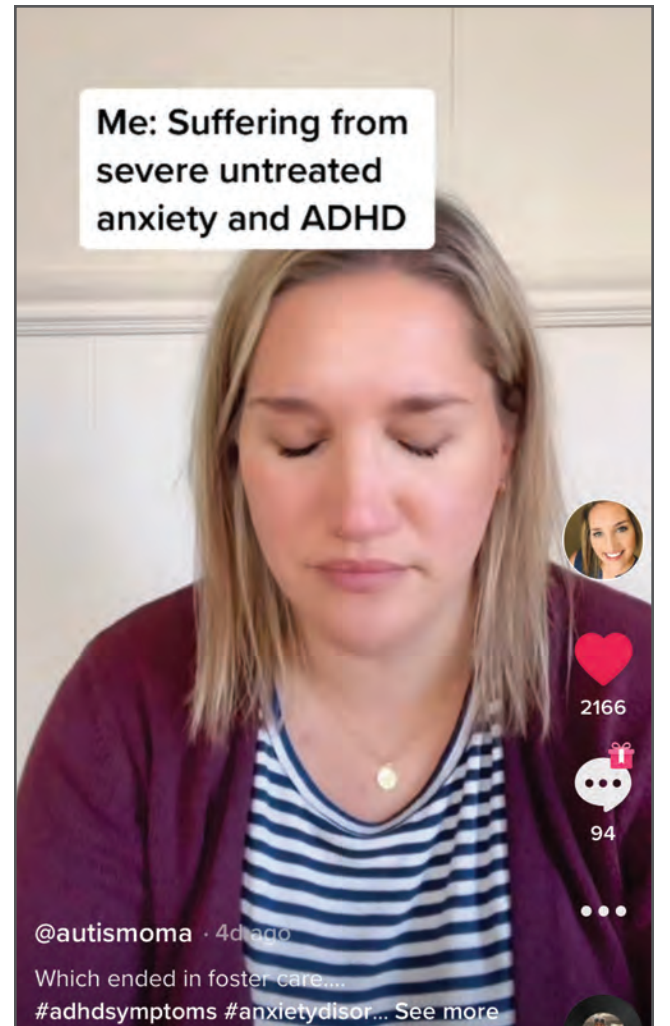
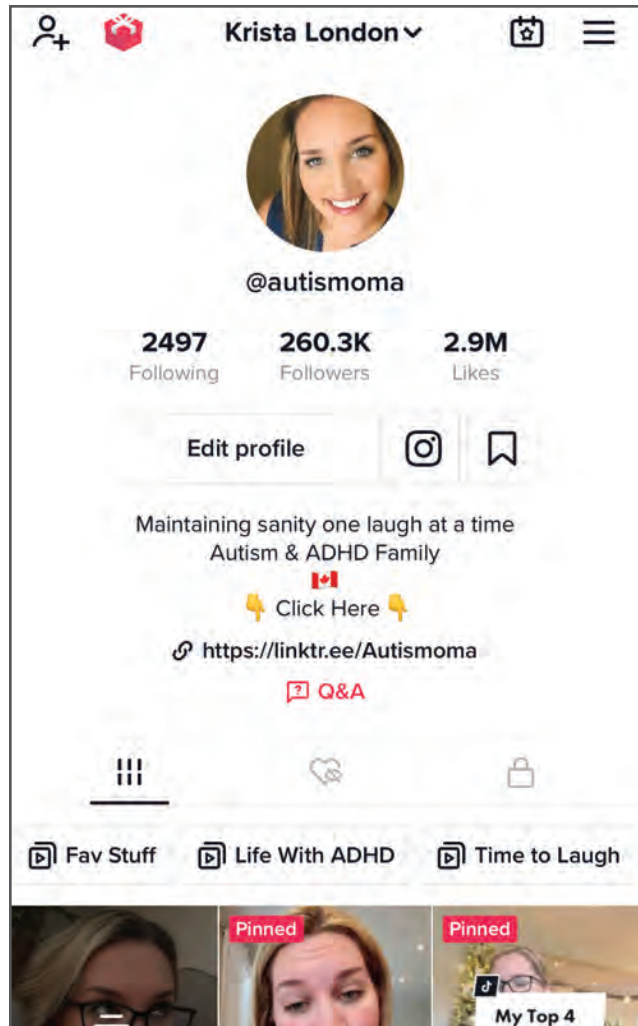
with feedback in the form of messages from her many followers, most of whom thank her for making light of living in a household where ADHD and autism

are present. With a waitlist of over 51,000 families for autism support services in Ontario, many could use her help.

"I really enjoy con-

necting with people, and sharing information about ADHD and autism," she says. "A lot of people misunderstand both. I would love to get to the point

where I'm maybe talking to people in larger groups to support them. I would like to continue educating people and sharing our stories."



Krista London-Verticchio sometimes finds her car a quiet place to make her TikTok videos. She has a huge following of people who enjoy her humour, and is able to make some money from her popular videos. (Photos supplied)

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Actual Kid-Friendly News

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March 2022 Volume 2 • Issue 6

FIND THE SMILEY FACE HIDDEN ON THIS PAGE!

## Local News

Tomorrow is Saint Patrick's day! Be sure to wear green to avoid those pinches! Also, just four short days until spring. Almost time to put away the snowsuits and get out the bathing suits! What are

some fun things you have planned? Email joyousnotlkids@gmail.com and let us know.

## Movie Review

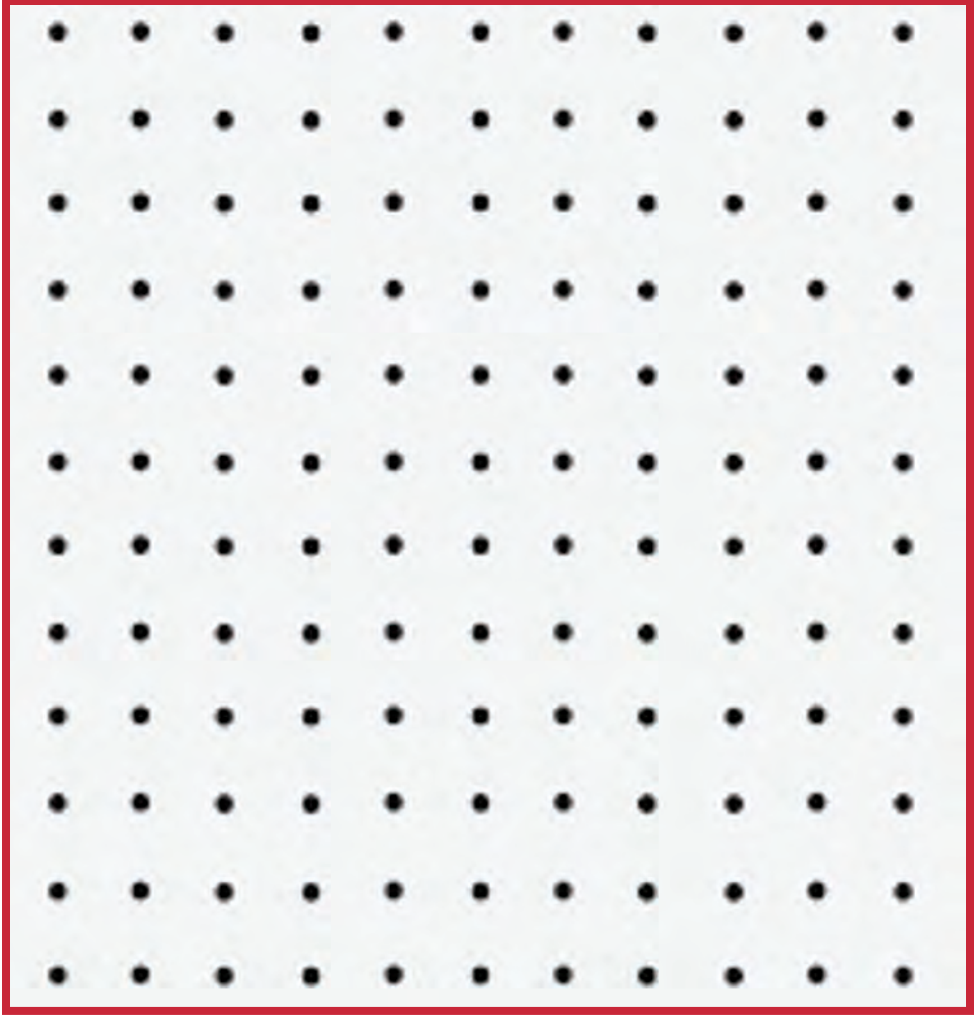
by Taleah Bucci, II

Today I will review the movie *Spirit Untamed* by DreamWorks Animation. It's the story of a girl named Lucky who forms a bond with a wild horse

named Spirit. When Spirit's herd gets captured by a wrangler, Lucky and her friends have to help Spirit rescue them. This movie is very exciting and adventurous. There's also a movie called *Spirit: Stallion of*

*the Cimarron* and a TV series called *Spirit: Riding Free*; both of these are also made by DreamWorks. I recommend *Spirit Untamed* for horse-lovers, and I'm giving it four stars out of five.

## Crossword: DOTS & BOXES



1. Each turn, draw a line horizontally or vertically between two dots.
2. The player that draws the 4th wall of a box wins it, earning you a point. When you close a box you must move again.
3. Lines are drawn until all squares are claimed. The player with the most claimed squares wins!

### BIRTHDAY ANNOUNCEMENT

Sebastian Reese is turning 17 on March 28.

### RIDDLE

Q. What has to be broken before you can use it?

A. An egg.

### CHARITY

We are looking for charities in which kids can participate. If you would like your organization to be highlighted here, please send your information to [joyousnotlkids@gmail.com](mailto:joyousnotlkids@gmail.com).

### SUBMISSION INFO

The hope for this page is to get kids involved and interacting with the community in a positive way. We welcome submissions for all categories from kids of any age. Please keep the reviews positive and all submitted content appropriate for kids of all ages. Please send all submissions to [joyousnotlkids@gmail.com](mailto:joyousnotlkids@gmail.com) and in the subject line please put the category for which you are submitting. Thank you.

## Interview with Gabe

Q. What do you want to be when you grow up?

A. I am not sure. Maybe an engineer. I like to build and make stuff. The last thing I made was a sword made out of wood.

Q. How would you change the world if you could?

A. I would get rid of pollution. All kinds of pollution.

Q. What is your ideal day in NOTL?

A. I'd wake up and see my friend at my door. Then Saxon and I would go to Stagecoach for breakfast. Then we would meet up with a couple more friends and play some sports then go swimming in the lake. We'd end the day by going to hockey.

Q. What is your favourite movie?

A. The new *Ghostbusters*, we saw it in the theater. I liked how it was with kids this time. The kids are smart and nerdy (in a good way).

Q. What is a fun tradition your family has?

A. We make pasta a lot. We also play 'Kris Kringle' with my mom's family, about 20 people, at Christmas. That's where you buy a gender neutral gift for someone, like a box of chocolates or a diffuser, then we put numbers in a hat and whoever has the first number gets the first gift and you can steal a gift. That's how we got our chia pet. We also like to travel together.

Q. What is something special about you?

A. I have been cooking for a few years now. I really enjoy it and I like cooking for people. My favourite thing to make right now is pasta sauce. I gifted it as Christmas gifts this year. I also like to make lasagna for people.

Q. What is your favourite thing about NOTL?

A. Probably how close to the water it is. I like to swim and go tubing on the water.

Q. How did you keep busy during the COVID lockdowns?

A. I would go biking around town and I watched a lot of Tic-Tok. Oh, I also played the drums.



Gabe Santelli, II

## Artist's Corner

Poseidon-themed skateboard design by Saxon R.





# Singer/storyteller Bambrick on stage Monday

**Mike Balsom**  
Special to The Local

Referring to a woman as a 'dame' might not win one a lot of friends in the 2020s, but 100 years ago it was quite common.

The roaring 20s feel of Lakeshore Road's Spirit in Niagara Distillery is what inspired TD Niagara Jazz Festival executive director, co-creator and artistic director Juliet Dunn to use that sobriquet, dubbing a group of shows headlined by female artists the Dames in the Distillery Series.

But as the local jazz chan-

teuse explains, it's not the first time she's dusted off that word for a Jazz Festival show.

"It was a show with Heather Bambrick, June Garber and Barb Manitini," Dunn recalls, "the first year the Wayne Gretzky Distillery opened. I wanted a word that goes well with 'distillery' and I thought of 'dames,' as we had three women that night."

Bambrick is back this Monday, March 21 for the second show in the series, following Betsy Tauro's well-attended kick-off at Spirit in Niagara March 7. The Cheri Maracle Quintet completes the troika of Dames in the

Distillery performances on Monday, May 30.

Dedicated Jazz FM listeners will know Bambrick from her morning radio show on 91.1 FM. The Juno-nominated singer's voice may also be heard on various television and radio commercials as well as on a number of successful animated television programs, including *The Wild Kratts*.

Dunn and her husband, Jazz Festival co-creator and artistic consultant Peter Shea, promise an evening of great music and storytelling from Bambrick, whose shows have been described

as what happens when Ella Fitzgerald meets Carol Burnett at a Newfoundland kitchen party.

"She's from Newfoundland, and she has a great personality," Dunn explains. "She's a lot of fun on-stage. The storytelling in between is great, and she'll do some east coast-style pieces along with jazz standards. She's really good at swinging hard."

Shea has known Bambrick since their days studying jazz in the early 1990s in the University of Toronto's music program, where they often played together. He has backed up Bambrick on

drums for some of her previous TD Niagara Jazz Festival shows.

"We were good friends back in university, and ever since then we've had a kindred connection," adds Shea. "Musically, she's a consummate professional. She's an amazing singer and scats like Ella Fitzgerald. She's hysterically funny, she does impressions. She's very well-rounded."

Shea will be sitting in the audience rather than behind the kit for this one, as Bambrick will be joined by pianist Adrean Farrugia and bassist Ross MacIntyre, both of whom appear on her most recent album, 2019's *Fine State*.

Farrugia is recognized as one of Canada's finest pianists and composers. He has appeared on more than 40 albums and has been nominated for four Juno Awards, winning one. He is on the faculties of both Mohawk and Humber Colleges.

MacIntyre, meanwhile, has shared the stage with the likes of Matt Dusk, Emilie-Claire Barlow, Guido Basso, Elizabeth Shephard, Laila Biali, Jesse Cook and the Shuffle Demons. His work appears on hundreds of recordings, including 11 that have either won or were nominated for Juno Awards.

Monday's program will include a brief opening set by rising star Jacob Chung. The 21-year old Canadian saxophonist and composer has earned multiple awards for his playing during his studies at the University of Toronto. He has also garnered several non-academic accolades including the 2021 Hnatyshyn Foundation Oscar Peterson Grant and the 2019 Prince Edward County Jazz Festival Rising Young Star Award. Shea will accompany Chung on piano.

The Dames in the Distillery shows are a subset of the festival's Twilight Jazz and Blooz Series: NOTL Edition, all taking place on Mondays

at Spirit in Niagara. Food and drinks are available, but not included in the ticket prices.

"What we like to do for these is have theatre-style seating for those who are just coming for the show and drinks, so they can sit like they're in a theatre," Dunn explains. "Those who are going to have dinner can sit on the sides or in the back to enjoy their food. It's like a dinner theatre set-up. It's a great venue — we love it."

The Jazz Festival is also running a concurrent Twilight Jazz and Blooz Series on Sundays in St. Catharines at the Mahtay Cafe. Upcoming shows there include the Jeffrey Arthur Quartet on April 10 and Melissa Lauren's CD Release Party on May 8.

Some may wonder when Dunn and Shea themselves might soon be taking to the stage for a Jazz Festival presentation.

The musical power couple will be bringing their Le Trio Parisien to Stratus Vineyards on Saturday, April 30 to mark International Jazz Day. The fundraising concert will include French hors d'oeuvres and a welcome cocktail with the ticket price, as well as door prizes, a silent auction and a 50/50 draw.

On the fundraising end of things, Dunn is encouraging supporters of the TD Niagara Jazz Festival to consider making a monthly donation to the non-profit through Canada Helps. During the month of March, Canada Helps will chip in an extra one-time donation of \$20 for every new monthly donation of \$20 or more.

Tickets for the Heather Bambrick Trio, Monday March 21 from 6 to 9 p.m., are \$49 plus HST in advance or \$59 the day of the show. Musicians, arts workers and students can buy their tickets for \$23 plus HST. Visit [niagarajazzfestival.com](http://niagarajazzfestival.com) for tickets and information.



Newfoundlander Heather Bambrick has a great voice and on-stage personality, promising an entertaining evening Monday. (Photo supplied)

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## Local coach passing on love of hockey

**Mike Balsom  
Special to The Local**

Niagara-on-the-Lake Wolves U11 house league hockey coach Mike Cwierniewski was busy this weekend coaching his team at the club's annual March Break Tournament. Though his Wolves lost all three games they played, there was a general feeling of positivity amongst the players for having participated in the event.

That positivity fostered by the first-year hockey coach has led to Cwierniewski being named the Ontario Minor Hockey Association's Coach of the Month for February.

Local resident Adriana Miele, whose son Michael is a goaltender on the team, got the ball rolling to nominate the father of two for the recognition.

"I wrote a letter to the OMHA to nominate coach Mike and coach Dan (Plomish)," Miele recalls. "I told another parent and she sent something in too. Two weeks later we got a letter that he was getting the award."

In a season during which Miele says the team has only won a single game, Cwierniewski's encouragement and upbeat attitude at both practices and games has been a key factor in instilling a love of the game amongst his young charges.

"He's fantastic," she raves, "wonderful with the kids all the way around. He's encouraging to

every one of them, encourages their strengths, makes practices fun every time. Even when we lose he only focuses on the positives."

The St. Michael Catholic Elementary and Denis Morris High School grad says the three girls and nine boys on his team were stoked to play in this weekend's tournament.

"Every game these kids go in with the attitude that they're going to win," he says. "But it doesn't matter what the score is. We had the tunes going in the dressing room before each game, they were happy, pumped up and ready to go. Every goal we get ignites them like crazy."

He gives credit to fellow coach Plomish for contributing to their combined effort to approach every game with the aim of ensuring the kids have fun no matter what the score might be.

"Our focus is to stay positive, have fun and to keep that mentality throughout the game," Cwierniewski says. "You can't ask for anything more than that from these kids. We always say 'we don't know this team, maybe we can get a win today,' and that keeps them going."

Cwierniewski says Wolves coaching convenor Joe Pagnotta recruited him to take on a role behind the bench when Mike's 10-year-old daughter Ella decided she wanted to play hockey.

"She was in the CanSkate program, then figure skating," Cwierniewski says. "Then, during the pandemic, she

needed new skates. One of our friends gave her a pair of hockey skates. She played on a pond with a bunch of friends and had a blast, so this year she asked if she could play hockey."

Ella is hooked, and he calls her one of the hardest workers on the team. She's following in her father's footsteps in a way, as Cwierniewski himself played minor hockey in NOTL before moving on to AAA in Niagara Falls. Later, he played for four years with the Junior B Thorold Blackhawks.

He thinks Ella will play hockey for many more years to come, and she's expressed a desire to continue playing in the community where she lives with her father, mother Alison and five-year-old brother Austin.

Mike, by the way, still laces up his own skates weekly. On Tuesdays and Sundays he plays in NOTL, while on Thursdays, his co-workers at Monkey Sports, a Niagara Falls-based sports retailer and outfitter, have a regular time slot for a pick-up game at the Gale Centre.

With so many different skill sets on his U11 team, one of two NOTL house league teams at that age group, he and Plomish put in extra effort to balance the players equally between each line. He's quick to credit each of his dozen players for working their hearts out every single game.

During Monday practices he emphasizes positioning and staying "in your lane" on the ice.

"At the U11 age group the kids are still trying to figure out the game," he says, "and they tend to chase the puck together and bunch up in the same spot on the ice."

Both U11 teams practise at the same time, working through drills together before splitting up into opposite ends of the ice. At the end of each session, they play games such as ball tag, ice soccer, or even a shootout where they can be creative and try whatever move they want.

"It keeps them motivated," he says, "but what they don't realize is that it's helping them with other skills such as balance, stability, stick-handling and shooting."

Having played competitively himself, he's had to shift his way of thinking toward a more developmental mindset with his U11 players.

"It's about where to be on the ice, or how to make a quick line change," he explains. "Keeping your head up, not bunching up. Focusing on the real little things right now that kids at this level have to develop more and more. It's about building their awareness of the fundamentals of the game."

Cwierniewski also credits the parents for buying into the philosophy espoused by him and Plomish. And that has led to steady development for each player as the season has progressed.

"A lot of the kids started quiet, but now they're getting into the game," he enthusiastically



Mike Cwierniewski at Monkey Team Sports in Niagara Falls, where he works. (Mike Balsom)

cally explains. "We got our first win in Fort Erie, I think we had seven or eight goals that game. It really fired them up. You can really see the progression that keeps coming and coming."

He's especially impressed by the improvement shown by Miele's son Michael between the pipes.

"You gotta see him play, he's like (former Buffalo Sabres goalie) Domenic Hasek out there," Cwierniewski raves. "He's diving and kick-saving everything. Just when you think he's been beat he's making a glove save or a kick save. He's grown so much. I think next year he will make a BB or AA team."

Says Adriana, "one game

Michael faced 63 shots on net. After the game coach Mike said 'Michael, think about it, you saved 54 shots today'. He always looks for the positive. After every game he makes them feel that they did their best. They always walk out of the arena with a smile on their faces."

And Cwierniewski himself smiles the entire time he speaks about his team to The Local.

"I just want the kids to enjoy playing the game," he says. "I guess the fact I got this nomination means they are happy. When they're happy, that makes me happy, too. It's fun. I'm 40, and I want to see them still loving the game at 40 like I do."

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# LocalSPORTS

## Preds sweep Plattsville in first round of playoffs

**Mike Balsom**  
Special to The Local

It's on to the semi-finals for the Niagara Predators after sweeping the Plattsville Lakers to take the best-of-three first round series 2-0 in the Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League's Russell Cup playoffs.

Niagara hosted the first game of the series on Wednesday, March 9 at Port Colborne's Vale Health and Wellness Centre. With NOTL Wolves Minor Hockey Club hosting their annual March Break Tournament, there was a dire lack of available

ice time at Virgil's Meridian Credit Union Arena.

The change in home venue didn't hurt their cause as the Predators skated to a 2-1 victory in a fast-paced game that saw only a single penalty called in 60 minutes.

Niagara controlled the play from the outset, peppering Lakers goalie Rahul Bola with 50 shots, including 22 in the second period alone. After a number of chances, defence-man Nathan Fehr set up Reese Bisci with a perfect pass. Bisci skated into the faceoff circle in the Plattsville end and tripped, pushing the puck to Geor-

gy Kholmovsky who slid it past Bola about 15 minutes into the game.

Plattsville's Kyle Struth tied it up early in the second when a weak clearing effort by the Predators resulted in a turnover in front of the net. The tie lasted only five minutes when Dante Massi set up his younger brother Alessandro for what turned out to be the winning goal with eleven seconds left in the second.

The third period saw Plattsville turn the tables on Niagara in the shots on goal category, challenging Predators goalie Morgan Penwell with 14 attempts, but the big goaltender held on for the victory.

Head coach, general manager and team owner Robert Turnbull commended his squad on a full team effort.

"Everybody worked their butts off," Turnbull told The Local. "The third period especially they got to the puck first and they got to their man first. Not so much in the second, when we gave them great opportunities. Morgan was absolutely outstanding. Reese won 80 per cent of his faceoffs, and Dante went into the corners on every shift. And Dawson (Walker) and Logan (Bailie) shut them down on defence."

Despite the lack of penalties, Wednesday's match was a physical game. Fehr in particular threw some hard checks, knocking both Chaseton Sieling and Lucas Bright to the ice on two of his hardest hits.

The physicality continued Friday night in game two at the Plattsville Arena. As well, the return of forward Noah Caperchione seemed to spark the Predators toward their 4-2 victory, clinching the series.

Caperchione, who scored 22 goals in 21 games in the regular sea-



Dante Massi faces a number of Lakers. (Photos by Mike Balsom)



Defenseman Pontus Madsen is chased by Lakers.

son, missed some time after being involved in a car collision earlier this month.

"I got a call from him saying the doctor had just cleared him to play," Turnbull said. "I wasn't sure how well he was going to play, so I had moved him to a different line initially. We got some chances in the first, but then Alessandro suggested he switch

lines with him. We moved him back with Dante and Reese."

After Dante Massi opened the scoring in the second, the line juggling paid off, as Caperchione scored the first of Niagara's three goals just under seven minutes into the third period. Struth cut the lead to 2-1 just 22 seconds later, but a mere 20 seconds after that Pontus Madsen

scored the eventual game winner, an unassisted goal that put the Preds back up by two.

The physical nature of the game came to a head in that period, with a total of nine penalties dished out, five to the Predators. Bright scored on the power play for the Lakers at 10:33, but Caperchione iced the game with his second of the night, an unassisted power play marker into the upper corner behind Bola with a minute and a half remaining.

Heading into the best-of-five semi-final series, the Predators are well-matched against the North York Renegades. The teams met three times in the regular season, with the second place Renegades winning the season series 2-1. Home teams won each game during the season.

Niagara will have to keep Santino Foti off the scoreboard. The forward

Continued on page 20

### Meet the Predators

Name: **Morgan Penwell**  
Jersey number: 30  
Age: 21  
Birthdate: **July 12, 2000**  
Hometown: **Port Carling, Ontario**  
Nickname: **Benner**  
Favourite hockey player: **Marc-André Fleury**  
Favourite 'hype' song: **Narcos by Migos**  
Hockey highlight: **Sweeping St. George in the playoffs 2022**  
Other sports you play: **Golf**  
Favourite "cheat" meal: **Seafood Carbonara**  
Secret talent: **Golf**



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10 Buddy

13 Dry gulch

14 Cab

15 Lawyers' grp.

16 Flower of Rhode Island

17 Rends

18 Affirmative signal

19 Call the whole thing off

20 Very strong winds

21 First lady

22 Stand-up guy

24 "Thanatopsis" poet William --- Bryant

26 Large handbag

29 Noah's boat

30 Dumped in Boston harbor

31 Homeless child

32 Thick slice

34 First light

38 Bart Simpson's driver

39 Cheryl --- of "Suburgatory"

41 Wine valley

42 Terse

44 Aflutter

45 Operation Overlord

46 Half a Latin dance
- 48 Wetland

49 Snitches

50 "Mamma Mia" mamma

53 Fidgety

55 Pursue ardently

56 Ascends

58 Worn out

62 Limb

63 Repast

64 Medical prioritization

65 National boys' gp.

66 Corrosive

67 Confer

68 Male offspring

69 Directed

70 Fall flowers
- Down:
- 1 Grotto

2 Are you out ---? (Poker)

3 Nudge

4 Cops in general

5 Intention of

6 Baloney

7 Postal delivery

8 Anticipate

9 Cold comforts?

10 Control board

11 Aloft
- 12 Burdened

14 Heptathlete's specialty

20 Little lady

23 Pulverize

25 Lots of things to do

26 Pairs

27 Cuss

28 Former Yugoslav dictator

33 Sires

35 Zilch

36 --- the crack of dawn

37 Is profitable

40 Coordinate

43 Rising current of warm air

47 Each

50 Gun-barrel cleaners

51 Trunk

52 One of the old empire builders

54 Fast rabbit relatives

57 Stated

59 Deceased

60 "Prince ---", Borodin opera

61 Tidings

64 Uninformative schedule info.

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PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from  
March 9, 2022

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

Across: 1 Copper, 7 Met, 10 Pal, 13 Arroyo, 14 Taxi, 15 A B A, 16 Violet, 17 Rips, 18 Nod, 19 End it, 20 Gales, 21 Eve, 22 Comic, 24 Cullen, 26 Tote, 29 Ark, 30 Tea, 31 Wait, 32 Slab, 34 Sunup, 38 Otto, 39 Hines, 41 Napa, 42 Short, 44 Edgy, 45 D-Day, 46 Cha, 48 Fen, 49 Rats, 50 Strep, 53 Itchy, 55 Woo, 56 Rises, 58 All in, 62 Arm, 63 Meal, 64 Thage, 65 B S A, 66 Acid, 67 Bestow, 68 Son, 69 Led, 70 Asters.

Down: 1 Cave, 2 Or in, 3 Prod, 4 Police force, 5 Eye to, 6 Rot, 7 Mail, 8 Expect, 9 Tissues, 10 Panel, 11 Above, 12 Laden, 14 Track and field, 20 Giltie, 23 Mash, 25 Laundry list, 26 Twos, 27 Oath, 28 Tito, 33 Begets, 35 Nada, 36 Up at, 37 Pays, 40 Sync, 43 Thermal, 47 Apiece, 50 Swabs, 51 Torsos, 52 Roman, 54 Hares, 57 Said, 59 Late, 60 Igor, 61 News, 64 T B A.





# LocalSPORTS

## Home game Friday

Continued from page 18

was third in the GMHL in both goals, with 53, and points, with 109. As well, goaltender Nicholas Lewicky has confounded the Predators somewhat this year.

“Penwell will start in net,” Turnbull said about his own goaltender, whom he acquired from his other team, the St. George Ravens. “I knew how good he was, but I wasn’t sure how good he would actually be, not having played at all this year. But he practised hard and quickly got

back into game shape. He played very, very well in both (Lakers) games. We’ll have to be at the top of our game to win.”

Of the Renegades, Turnbull says, “they’ve been a very, very good team. We’ve had two great games against them. This series will be very interesting. We have to get to the puck first and take the man to have a chance. I’m looking for competitive games against them.”

After having to move the home games against Plattsville to Port Colborne, Turnbull is happy

the minor hockey club was able to carve out home games for the Predators this Friday night at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday afternoon at 3:30 p.m., if a fourth game is needed. Adult tickets are \$10 for those games.

The Predators open the series in North York Tuesday at 8 p.m. (results were not available at press time) and follow that with a 5 p.m. start time in that same arena Wednesday. If necessary, game five will also be in North York. Those road games will be streamed live at gmhl.tv.



Morgan Penwell (Mike Balsom)

## Turnbull named South Division Executive of the Year

The GMHL announced its 2022 awards on Monday. Alex Andrews of the Predators was named first runner-up for best defensive forward in the South Division, behind Durham’s Kevin Serio. As well, Pontus Madsen was first runner-up for best defenseman, behind Christian Bascio of the Renegades.

Robert Turnbull was second runner-up for coach of the year in the South, and took home honours as team executive of the year for the first time in his GMHL tenure. League commissioner Ken Girard praised the owner of two South Division teams.

“He’s done a great job with both Niagara and St. George,” Girard told The Local. “He handled the move from Toronto to Niagara quite well, and put a good product on the ice. And he’s always helping with pushing the league forward with great ideas. He’s an

asset as a member of the GMHL.”

“I was surprised,” Turnbull said. “I was quite honoured. They called me and gave me a whole list of reasons, which was very nice. I would like to think it has a lot to do with helping other kids in the league as well as our own to get them into an education program while playing hockey. It’s something I’ve done for years, and hope to continue to do for many more.”

Turnbull began this season with one role, as owner of the Predators. But he stepped into the head coach’s position in October when Andrew Whalen left for family reasons, and assumed the general manager’s role when Johan Eriksson resigned from that post. He is also a member of the GMHL’s executive committee.



Robert Turnbull

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