Labour shortage threatens food supply, says grower

Penny Coles
The Local

As of Tuesday morning, word in the farming community was that the 28,000 seasonal farmworkers expected to arrive in Ontario in the next couple of weeks will not be allowed into the country. The announcement came from FARMS (Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Services) which has been keeping tabs on federal announcements, and emailed Ontario growers Monday evening, saying that no seasonal workers (no non-nationals at all) will arrive in Canada after March 18.

There were workers expecting to fly out of their home countries Tuesday, with a cut-off time for arrivals at midnight, says grower and Coun. Erwin Wiens. "This is a catastrophe. It's a disaster," says Wiens. "This is our food chain we're talking about. It's not just a matter of getting together and helping each other out. We need labour, and there is no labour."

The email said FARMS "is devastated by this news," and "is working with other industry partners to do everything possible to try and change the minds of those behind this decision."

Although flights were being allowed from some areas, including the Caribbean, the borders are closed to those who are not Canadian nationals.

COVID-19 virus closing down local businesses

Penny Coles
The Local

In a matter of days, the world has changed for many locals who found themselves in the process of shutting down their businesses Tuesday.

Premier Doug Ford's morning announcement affected restaurants and wineries in town, which were doing their best to continue operations, stepping up cleaning practices and in some cases limiting the number of visitors at one time.

Just days before, on a sunny Sunday afternoon at the start of March break, Queen Street was busy with families visiting, and Corks Restaurant was experiencing a typical lunch hour.

One couple enjoying their meal had travelled from Whitby for a three-day break, staying at the Pillar and Post. They planned to visit some wineries and maybe the lavender farm while they were here, and were no more concerned about COVID-19 virus than if they had stayed home.

By Tuesday, there were three cases in Niagara, all travel-related, the number of cases across the province was escalating and businesses were being shut down to "help flatten the curve," slowing the spread of the virus so that fewer people need to seek treatment at any given time.

On Sunday, Maria Mavridas and her father Bob Mavridis were optimistic. At that point there was no discussion of closing.

"I'm hoping it will be over sooner than we think," says Maria. "We've had 9/11, we've had SARS. There's always planned to visit some wineries and maybe the lavender farm while they were here, and were no more concerned about COVID-19 virus than if they had stayed home.

By Tuesday, there were three cases in Niagara, all travel-related, the number of cases across the province was escalating and businesses were being shut down to "help flatten the curve," slowing the spread of the virus so that fewer people need to seek treatment at any given time.

On Sunday, Maria Mavridas and her father Bob Mavridis were optimistic. At that point there was no discussion of closing.

"I'm hoping it will be over sooner than we think," says Maria. "We've had 9/11, we've had SARS. There's always
**Shaw Festival postpones play openings until May**

**Penny Coles**

The Shaw Festival is canceling all performances and public events for the month of April. It is also shutting down all “on-site non-essential business operations”, including rehearsals, and its box office, with the plan of resuming those operations on April 6. Following “a very difficult few days,” talks on Monday, which included colleagues at other theatres and community partners, led to the difficult decision, says executive director Peter Hall. Dropping the first 33 performances from the season will have economic consequences for the festival, but the community. “For every $1 we don’t make,” Jennings says, the region loses $7 to $10. Jennings likened the difficult decision to “juggling a hand grenade”, one that comes on the heels of an announcement of a successful 2019, with a 13 per cent increase in operating revenue, and a surplus of more than $5 million.

Actors who would be in rehearsal now and the support staff who won’t be working will be paid until April 6, he said. Jennings said the Shaw will “continue to monitor the situation” and see if there are additional cancellations and closures are required, based on the recommendations of the public health units of the region, province and country.” The next decision will likely be made early in April.

“Your health and safety, and that of our communities, our actors and our staff is our top priority. We feel that cancelling performances and drastically reducing business operations is the only responsible decision at this time,” says Monday’s press release from the Shaw. Jennings says at this point he is not considering extending the regular season, with the holiday plays the Shaw is planning leaving little room for extra performances. The three plays that have been affected are Charley’s Aunt, a Gypsy and Prince Caspian.

Ticket-holders to the affected performances will have the choice of rescheduling, getting a refund, or consider the ticket cost a donation, says Jennings, adding “we really hope they’ll come.” Ticket-holders will be contacted by staff once the box office re-opens. For further information, email feedback@shawfest.com. “We have an incredible team here who have been cooking up some wonderful treats. Of course it is frustrating to have to put that on hold, but if our aim is to create a more human, more connect- ed theatre, then our first priority is to have everyone safe,” says artistic director Tim Carroll in the press release. “I know our amazing audiences will understand and support us, and we send everyone our love and good wishes. Please stay safe and well, and we will get through this together.” For more information visit shawfest.com.

---

**Bikes for Farmworkers taking a break**

**Penny Coles**

Mark Gaudet of Bikes for Farmworkers says the volunteer-driven organization is shutting down for now. It’s the time of year that would normally be busy, with volunteers repairing bikes for seasonal farmworkers who would be arriving in the coming weeks.

“With their ability to come to Canada up in the air, social distancing recommended by the public health department, and the need to keep volunteers safe, the decision was made Monday to put their work on hold, Gaudet said.

The organization, which shares space in the former Virgil school with Gateway Community Church, had just announced a community partnership with the church. The partnership is intended to confirm both organizations’ commitment to serving the local migrant farmworker community, and ensuring a sustainable outreach program.

During the winter, Gaudet says volunteers picked up and repaired bikes from five of the larger farms, leaving them ready and safe to ride when farmworkers return. The plan is for Bikes for Farmworkers to resume operations April 7, when its work shop will re-open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Thursday, April 9, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., “if all goes well,” says Gaudet. “Like the rest of the world, we’ll be re-evaluating.”

People who have bikes to donate can call Gaudet 289-783-1684 or Terry Weaver at 905-321-8638 and they will arrange a pickup at a future date.

---

**Don’t panic: grocery stores restocking**

**Penny Coles**

On Monday morning, the two valu-mart in the town was packed full of shoppers, and the shelves were completely bare. Both stores were expecting trucks to arrive with the items needed to restock the bare spots Monday, and by Mon- day evening, those shopping would have noticed a difference — the trucks had arrived.

But please, says Phil Lebouche of Phil’s valu-mart in Virgil, don’t buy more than you need.

At the parking lot and store looked like it was the Friday before a long weekend Monday morning, cars waiting for parking spots, shoppers in line long-ups, with all cash registers open, grocery baskets filled to the brim and more.

Lebouche was bagging groceries and taking them out to customers’ cars, but his mes- sage was that there is nothing to do but buy more than you need. Stockpiling is unnecessary. “We haven’t missed a delivery, and we won’t miss a delivery.”

“Our health and safety, and that of our commu- nities, our actors and our staff is our top priority. We feel that cancelling performances and drastically reducing business operations is the only responsible decision at this time,” says Monday’s press release from the Shaw. Jennings says at this point he is not considering extending the regular season, with the holiday plays the Shaw is planning leaving little room for extra performances. The three plays that have been affected are Charley’s Aunt, a Gypsy and Prince Cas- pian.

Ticket-holders to the af- fected performances will have the choice of rescheduling, getting a refund, or consider the ticket cost a donation, says Jennings, adding “we really hope they’ll come.” Ticket-holders will be contacted by staff once the box office re-opens. For further information, email feedback@shawfest.com. “We have an incredible team here who have been cooking up some wonderful treats. Of course it is frustrating to have to put that on hold, but if our aim is to create a more human, more connect- ed theatre, then our first priority is to have everyone safe,” says artistic director Tim Carroll in the press release. “I know our amazing audiences will understand and support us, and we send everyone our love and good wishes. Please stay safe and well, and we will get through this together.” For more information visit shawfest.com.

---

**Town announces more public building closures**

**Penny Coles**

Lord Mayor Betty Dier- ero is meeting daily to dis- cuss changing measures in response to the COVID-19 virus. The most recent news Tuesday morning was adding public washrooms and the Court House closures to the public to the list of public buildings that have been shut down since last Friday.

Monday morning, keep- ing in line with measures be- ing taken by the Province, all Town administration build- ings were closed to the pub- lic. All public and committee meetings have been cancelled. The town council meeting scheduled for March 30 re- mained scheduled, but is sub- ject to further notice. Notices will be circulated once new dates have been con- firmed, says Dierero.

Last Friday, the Town an- nounced the closing of Town facilities, such as the commu- nity centre, library and arenas. That included the Niagara Nursery School and March break library programs, until at least April 6. “These decisions are necessary based on the de- mands of our popula- tion, and the risk of a human health emergency as a result of COVID-19. This closure will assist in protecting the health and well-being of our residents and staff”, said Friday’s release. Despite these closures, Town staff will remain avail- able to assist and serve citizens online and over the phone, Dierero said.

Meetings will continue with the Town’s Emergency Control group, as well discus- sions with Niagara Region Public Health, “and while the risk of contracting the virus is still low, the Town is focused on efforts to protect the pub- lic, staff and their families from potential exposure to COVID-19.”

Other moves to main- tain core services were an- nounced Tuesday afternoon, and information is available on the Town’s website at https://notl.civiciweb.net/ documen/16277.

“Communication right now is really important. We’re sending out information as we have it, as soon as we have it.”

Faced with some criti- cism from people about over- reaction, Dierero says, “I’d rath- er do too much than too little. I’d rather not be prepared, trying to play catch-up, and then be sorry to be on the side of caution.”

The Town’s Emergency Control Group (ECG) in- cludes Lord Mayor Dierero, senior staff, and members of the Town’s Fire and Emergen- cy Services Department. Their role is to develop and coordi- nate responses and preventa- tive actions to any emergency. In the event of an emergency, they work to ensure the conti- nuity of Town operations and protect the public and Town employees.

Additional information will be forthcoming in the hours and days to come.

For all messages com- ing from the Town, monitor the Town’s social media pag- es and visit www.notl.com/ COVID-19.

To accommodate those residents who don’t operate online, important messaging from the Town will be dis- played at all local post offices. Town phones will continue to be answered between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday (905- 468-3266), and online service requests will remain available at www.notl.com.
Stay home and we’ll deliver, urges Simpson’s Pharmacy

Penny Coles
The Local

At this point in the COVID-19 pandemic, what Sean Simpson would really like to see is delivery-only service from his pharmacy. He is doing everything he can to protect all Simpson’s Pharmacy staff and customers, with particular concern for seniors, the most vulnerable of Niagara-on-the-Lake. To protect seniors who feel the need to come to the pharmacy he has posted a request on-line for customers to leave the first couple of hours for seniors to shop, and although he can’t enforce it, he sees it as helpful to those most vulnerable. “I’m asking people to honour that, although I’m not enforcing it,” he says. “And I’m promoting social distancing. In an ideal world, you wouldn’t have to come out at all. Give us a call, let us know what you need, we will deliver.”

Simpson’s delivery is free, and he would like people to take advantage of it. He can even arrange for “parking lot pickup,” he says. He has increased cleaning and disinfecting, but fewer people in the store is better for everyone, he says. He is also urging anyone with symptoms such as fever, cough, or trouble breathing, or anyone who has come in contact with someone who has those symptoms, to call in an order for free delivery.

He has double reason for concern, he says — as much as he wants to protect the community, he wants to keep his staff healthy, so they can continue looking after the community.

“I’m just trying to keep everyone safe, including ourselves, so we can continue providing the services people need.”

For anyone self-isolating, the items ordered can be dropped off on the door-step, with electronic forms of payment.

And for those who may be struggling with too much alone time, in the face of fear of the virus, Simpson says, “the seriousness of what’s in front of us is really taking its toll. We need to keep social distancing, but there are ways to overcome it. Pick up the phone, talk to people you haven’t talked to in a while. Get to know each other in a way you haven’t had time to — use the time to connect. And if you’re at all spiritual, pick up the phone and pray together.”

For up-to-date information visit simpsonspharma.ca or fb https://www.facebook.com/SimpsonsPharmacy/.

Ashley Jackson, manager of a Niagara Falls Starbucks, and Ryan Dawson, manager of the Virgil Starbucks, said Monday they’d been instructed by their head office to leave the coffee shop open for “grab and go,” but tables are closed. They are still serving at the drive-thru. Starbucks, said Monday they’d been instructed by their head office to leave the coffee shop open for “grab and go,” but tables are closed. They are still serving at the drive-thru.

Natasha Serota and Aaron Levy were enjoying a short break, visiting NOTL from Whitby this week. They had no idea when they sat down to lunch at Corks that restaurants and wineries would begin closing the next day. (Penny Coles)

Sean Simpson says practise social distancing — stay home and Simpson’s will deliver what you need. (Penny Coles)

‘Can’t stop mother nature’

Continued from page 1

“I’m scared,” says Wiens, who has a relatively small farm, and up until Monday, was hoping and expecting his group of Jamaican workers would arrive next week and “hit the ground running,” as seasonal farm workers do, he says. “It’s not like they sit around waiting to work.”

He had delayed having his seven workers come one week, and that has made the difference — they could have been here already.

He certainly not the only one in this position, with many farmers requiring much more help than him. “Everyone is really worried. Across the province and across the country, 28,000 workers in Ontario, these workers come to help farmers with work that needs to get done now, not a few weeks from now. It’s not like you can just start whenever they get here. You can’t stop mother nature. There is a very short window to get done what needs to be done, for both tender fruit and grapes,” says Wiens. “You can’t make that up.”

And while the closures originally discussed were expected until April, now there is talk about extensions until May or June. He says he is hoping the Minister of Agriculture will be talking to the prime minister, and that the situation which has been evolving very quickly, can change.

As they arrive in Niagara-on-the-Lake, they would be pruning and tying in vineyards, and pruning and thinning in tender fruit orchards — jobs that can’t wait. Some seasonal workers are already in town, working on some of the larger farms, but the “vast majority would be arriving in the next couple of weeks,” says Wiens.

And if they are allowed to come, he says, “what happens when they get here? Are they quarantined? Are they allowed to get out to work in the fields?”

His main concern, though, is getting them here — all else would be worked out when and if they arrive.

Those who are in limbo at home waiting to hear about flights, says Andries, are concerned about what awaits them when and if they get here. But they are also worried about not being able to work on Canadian farms and earn the money they would be sending home.

Meanwhile, she was looking at ways to help those who were expected to arrive this week, including how to get them the food they need.

Some of the farmers were arranging food delivery, but she was considering asking restaurants, which are now closed or closing, if they have any food they can’t use.

“Maybe they would even consider spending some time in their kitchens to prepare meals for the workers who are their first week here,” she says.

If the farmworkers are unable to get to stores to buy phones, it would also be helpful if the NOTL Public Library would lend some of its Wi-fi so they could communicate with family until they are able to get phones, she says.

Aid for staff a major concern

Continued from page 1

something, and we’re still here. But no question this is a wake-up call for all of us.”

The concerns of some of the local restaurants, similar to residents, was toilet paper.

“Our supplier had lots, so we’ve got boxes, and we’re sharing with Backhouse, who has a different supplier who doesn’t have it.”

Firstly, rather than worrying about toilet paper, she was trying to figure out how to help their employees, who were going to work for two more days to help with the shutdown, their future uncertain after that.

“It’s what my father is worried about. We’ve got rent and mortgage payments to worry about, but he’s really concerned about the employees,” she said, as she drove to the Queen Street restaurant to begin the process of closing.

Whatever food they have left over, she planned to divvy up amongst the employees.

Her real frustration, she says, was with directives such as closing, and assurances there would be help for businesses and employees. But “there has been no information, no clear avenue for accessing that help announced, no phone number or department to reach out to.”

As late as Monday night, Paul and Matt Dietsch were preparing for one of their biggest, most successful annual events, St. Patrick’s Day.

Tuesday morning, they were shutting down the restaurant, talking to their staff, and planning to step up takout, which has always been part of their business model.

They will provide takeout hours from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., and from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., says Paul, and for now, will offer their full menu, since they already have the supplies in — but like everything else these days, that could change.

Like Marrvidis, he’s also trying to find information about how to get help for his employees.

On Queen Street Tuesday lunchtime, the streets were empty.

“There is nobody out there,” says Marrvidis. “Nobody!”
Wineries closed to tastings, public events

Kim Wade Special to The Local

We all know how much difference a day makes — we’ve learned that very quickly.

“We are open for business” at Trius Estate Winery, staff said Sunday afternoon.

By Monday there were rumours of closing, and by Tuesday morning, tasting bars and restaurants within wineries were being shut down, under the direction of Premier Doug Ford, in an effort to “flatten the curve” of COVID-19.

In response to virus concerns, Sunday staff behind the tasting bars were donning black latex gloves and smiles. There was a faint scent of disinfectant in the air mixed with a springtime freshness, thought to be the new reality in the face of the current pandemic. Lates gloves, disinfectants, hand sanitizers and skin rubbed raw from diligent hand-washing while singing numerous choruses of “Happy Birthday” to ourselves.

To be sure, local wineries were taking the advice of Health Canada very seriously, while balancing the desires and expectations of their customers.

But that wasn’t to be enough.

Retail winery stores are staying open — at least they were on Tuesday — but tasting bars and all public events have been shut down.

Next door at Wayne Gretzky Estate Winery and Distillery, the message was the same. The roaring fire in the hearth that warmed guests as they attended tours and tastings was one of the last days they would be allowed to continue, at least until April 6.

Hinterbrook Winery had already addressed the situation by taking a proactive approach to ensure the safety of their customers.

They had decided last weekend to suspend all in-store wine tasting and tours booked between March 16 to April 5, but remain open for online and phone orders.

There is no doubt that COVID-19 is taking a toll on wineries but it seems locals are remaining loyal to the cause, as Jane Langdon, owner of Strewn Winery, points out. She noted on Sunday that there had been a drop in the numbers of people coming to the winery in the last couple of weeks, but they were seeing more of their club members and locals.

She said they have had some visits from locals visiting their retail shop to pick up a few of their favourites that they would usually get from the LCBO.

Langdon said that they do not usually see a large number of people in the winery anyway. Since they are a small business and not a volume winery they don’t get that many people, so they weren’t worrying about large gatherings. She takes pride in this model, she says, believing that with “fewer people, they have a longer, more personalized experience.”

Langdon knew they were working on a day-to-day basis, monitoring the situation and adjusting accordingly, and that too changed Tuesday, with all events and tastings cancelled. They will keep their retail shop open, as long as they are able, and they are stepping up the number of wines available for order online.

“We’re not sure what the next round of announcements will bring,” she said, “but we want to do the right thing for everybody.”

OLY Tasting Bar and Restaurant, within the winery, has also closed.

Karen and Bill Colvin are greeted warmly by Jane Langton at Strewn Winery Sunday. Although tastings and public events are cancelled, they can still shop at the retail wine store — at least for now. (Kim Wade)

Langdon says that she is “cautiously optimistic” this is a short term issue. As an incentive for customers that are unable to get to the retail store, or just choose to stay home, she is offering free shipping in Ontario, and a discount on shipping for club members outside of the province.

Langdon says she is very thankful for support from the locals, and from Strewn club members, such as Bill and Karen Colvin. The Colvins first discovered Strewn on a bike tour in 1999, and have been Barrel Members ever since. Currently living in Guelph, they have a son, daughter-in-law and two granddaughters living in Virgil. Since they were in the area, they decided to pop into the winery for a visit, where they were immediately greeted like family.

“We want to see our American friends, our customers and club members,” says Langdon. “They support us so well, they appreciate the quality of our wines. We have a lovely town. We have heritage, culture, and wineries, but this town depends on tourism. We are blessed and we will get through this. I’m not sure what it will take but we will do whatever it takes.”

For news of other winery closures, check online or on Facebook.

With files from Penny Coles.

Niagara Region Woodland By-law Review Notice of Cancellation of Public Information Centres

Due to the temporary closure of public facilities, the following Public Information Centres for the Woodland By-law Review have been cancelled:

- **Tuesday, March 24** at Wellandport Community Centre, 5024 Canborough Rd., West Lincoln
- **Wednesday, March 25** at Niagara Region headquarters (cafeteria), 1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way, Thorold
- **Monday, March 30** at Gale Centre, 5152 Thorold Stone Rd., Niagara Falls
- **Tuesday, March 31** at Vale Health and Wellness Centre, 550 Elizabeth St., Port Colborne

For additional information visit niagararegion.ca and search Woodland By-law Review or contact woodlandreview@niagararegion.ca.
Niagara Holiday Rentals is a locally-owned and operated property management company in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Started more than 15 years ago, it manages vacation homes and cottages located in Old Town.

“We live in Old Town and are only minutes away from all the homes to ensure a great guest experience, and also to ensure that all homes are closely watched and maintained,” says Jason Clements, who owns Niagara Holiday Rentals along with his wife, Elsie Mae Clements.

Providing home rentals meets a unique need by offering a place for family and friends to meet, and experience the area, says Clements. It’s an affordable option and provides the opportunity to bring the whole family, including children, not always allowed at bed and breakfasts, and also the family pet.

“Many of our guests are coming for a reunion of family and friends, sometimes from locations around the world,” adds Clements. Guests also like facilities to cook their own meals, managing expenses so that they stay in town longer, and meeting any unique dietary needs.

Jason and Elsie Mae were first tourists themselves, visiting NOTL for the first time more than 20 years ago. They instantly fell in love with the town and it was their destination of choice for weekend getaways, and the occasional extended stay, renting a vacation home themselves before moving here permanently five years ago.

Jason is proud of his family ties to the town, dating back to the late 1700s. Reverend Robert Addison, founder of St. Mark’s Anglican Church, is a distant relative. His nephews settled in Oxford County, where Jason’s family tree includes the Addison name.

“We enjoy helping visitors plan their stay by suggesting local, not-to-be-missed experiences,” explains Elsie Mae. “Niagara-on-the-Lake is a town of experiences. It’s the wineries, the heritage and the history, the surroundings, Shaw Festival, Queen Street...other small towns don’t have these. Without the tourists coming here, Niagara-on-the-Lake wouldn’t have all these attractions. We’re glad to be a part of this, and helping to support the town.”

Having a short-term rental managed by a local, professional property manager such as Niagara Holiday Rentals ensures homes are maintained, contributing to the beauty and character that makes NOTL a great community, and guests are respectful to the homes and neighbours.

Niagara Holiday Rentals is registered with the Travel Industry Council of Ontario (TICO) as a licensed travel agency. To facilitate short-term accommodation rentals in Ontario, a business must be registered with TICO. This assures guests and homeowners of professional standards to which Niagara Holiday Rentals must adhere.

Each year, Niagara Holiday Rentals hosts visitors from all over the world, giving them a place to reconnect with family and friends and create memories that will last a lifetime. While they are here, they also support the local economy from shops, restaurants, festivals, and wineries, to fruit stands, bakeries, and grocery stores – they love living like the locals!

Jason and Elsie Mae are really proud that Niagara Holiday Rentals is a local business, and they are happy to support many of the other local businesses in the community, including HVAC companies, electricians, landscapers, and local cleaning contractors.

You can learn more about Niagara Holiday Rentals, the homes that they manage and their property management services, at www.niagaraholidayrentals.com.
During dark times, let’s look for the light

The world is changing as these words are written, and will have changed again by the time they are read.

Working to get The Local to press on WRIC News running in the background and regular ping as emails arrive, signalling more changes, more closures, information overload about the COVID-19 virus and how we should react to it, is dizzying. As The Local travels across the country, the messages can be slightly different, although the goal is always the same — to ensure, for all, just heart one Canadian premier say “we need to stay at home,” followed in the next sentence by, “as a community, we need to take care of our neighbours.” He didn’t explain how to do both.

Our provincial health ministers are talking about the number of virus victims in each of their jurisdictions — they are on their telephones — and about “simple ask” such as hand-washing, self-isolating for those who have been out of the country, limits to public gatherings and closures, along with so many other reminders and updates, such as take our jewelry off when hand-washing in one breath, in the next, the Rolling Stones are cancelling their tour.

But you can find that news, those statistics, anywhere. Where more important to us is what is happening here, in our community, a bit of news to brighten our day.

Our provincial health ministers are talking about the number of virus victims in each of their jurisdictions — they are on their telephones — and about “simple ask” such as hand-washing, self-isolating for those who have been out of the country, limits to public gatherings and closures, along with so many other reminders and updates, such as take our jewelry off when hand-washing in one breath, in the next, the Rolling Stones are cancelling their tour.

But you can find that news, those statistics, anywhere. More important to us is what is happening here, in our community, a bit of news to brighten our day.

We were excited to hear, for a change, of an event that has not been cancelled, something that we could leave on the doorstep.

In the early days of the Flow- ers for Seniors event, volunteers who made the bouquets were able to hand them directly to the seniors, who were always so grateful to receive a colourful, cheerful reminder of spring. Then, as policies changed to protect the health of the long-term care residents, volun- teers would leave them at the front desks, to be distributed by staff. This year, they are leaving them outside the entrances of Heritage Place, Upper Canada Lodge and Chartwell, but never mind, they will still be grateful- ly received, likely even more so with the shortage of visitors to these facilities.

What a great example of community — a local business helping the horticultural society to hold on to the tradition of cheering up seniors. Amongst all the gloomy news, the repeated phrases about “unprecedented times,” it was so reassuring, so heartening to hear this bit of brightness in our community is continuing. Although the experts we are on the news are giving out all the advice we feel we could possi- bly need, one little bit they’re not telling us — this is just a suggestion from someone who thrives on news — is don’t over- dose on it. Turn it off, get up and go for a walk — not sure if that is still allowed, but if you walk there where there isn’t a lot of people and you can keep your distance from anyone you might encounter, it may not be too risky. A little bit of sunshine and physical ac- tivity might lift the feeling of iso- lation that leads to depression.

Otherwise, follow the ex- ample of the spring flower event and reach out to others who are also in need of some more meaningful human contact and conversation. We might not be able to bring them colour- ful bouquets — although we could leave one on their door- step — but a phone call, a few encouraging words, could have the same effect of bringing some light and cheer into what could otherwise be a dark day.

For more local news, we will try to keep our readers up to date. It’s difficult when changes are occurring so quickly, but we are committed to bringing you all you need to know. We are a good source of news about what’s closed tomorrow that wasn’t closed today. But if that’s not your expertise, if you have trouble finding what you need to know, call me at 905-346-5878, or email me at penny@notllocal.com. If you don’t know the answer I’ll try to direct you to where you can get the help you need.

Possibly one of the most important contacts is the re- gional public health depart- ment, online at https://www.niagaraonthechair.ca/news/article.aspx?news=1038&title= Niagara confirms third case of COVID-19. Or call the health department at 905- 688-8248 ext. 7476.

Penny Coles
The Local

The Niagara-on-the-Lake

The trusted voice of our community

P.O. Box 430, 1596 Four Mile Creek Road, Virgil, L0S 1T0

Editor:
Penny Coles
penny@notllocal.com
905-248-5871

Publisher:
The Niagara-on-the-Lake Local

Graphic Designer:
Rosie Gowwell
composing@notllocal.com
notllocal.com • facebook.com/notllocal • Instagram@thenotllocal • @thenotllocal

Advertising Sales:
Karen Sketch
karen@notllocal.com • 905-641-5335

Julia Coles
julia@notllocal.com • 905-934-1040

Helena Arsenault
Local Business Directory, Local Happenings, Classified Sales
classified@notllocal.com

Distress Centre
For depression, distress and crisis.
24 hour help line: 905-688-3711

Mental Health and Addictions Access
(Toll Free) 1-866-550-5205

Gambler’s Anonymous
905-351-1616

Kids Help Phone
Service for youth 1-866-363-6333

Alcoholics Anonymous
Meetings every Wednesday evening.
8 p.m. to 9 p.m.
41 Byron St., NOTL

905-682-2140

Assaulted Women’s Helpline
Mobile calls to:
#SAFE (#7233) 1-866-863-0511
(Toll Free)

Crime Stoppers
1-800-222-8477
(TIPS)

 Niagara Falls teenager found guilty of first-degree murder

By Donald Combe
Special to The Local

Samuel Zimmerman, considered the founder of the city of Niagara Falls, made a fortune in construction and speculation. He was killed when the tracks, which he had built for the Great Western Railway, failed, and the train plunged into the Desjardins Canal at Hamilton. Zimmerman and 58 others were killed.

He was interred in a vault on his estate overlooking the Falls, but was removed in 1888 to St. Davids, to lie beside his first wife Margaret Woodruff.

The NOTL Local acknowledges the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, many of whom continue to live and work here today. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and is within the land protected by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum agreement. Today this gathering place is home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and acknowledging reminds us that our great standard of living is directly related to the resources and friendship of Indigenous peoples.
Building NOTL community vitality through connectedness

According to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Wellness Committee’s January report, community vitality involves both connectedness and education through lifelong learning.

Although connectedness is something that NOTL does well, the committee’s report also recommends the following:

• Promotion of the NOTL Safety Committee’s Know Your Neighbour initiative;
• Continued expansion of the Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council membership and development of ideas for inclusivity for young people to foster better integration with the overall community;
• Development and implementation of additional inter-generational events within the community;
• Investigation of public garden allotments for residents who do not own property (i.e. renters, and seniors living in shared, supportive housing);
• Encouragement of town staff to continue encouraging the volunteer potential of residents and developing volunteer programs which tap the extensive experience of older residents, and the potential contributions of younger residents. For example, reinstating and expanding the volunteer-based leaf and snow buddy programs.

Brain and genetics research reveals that social activity avoids isolation and depression. ‘Use it or lose it’ is a good principle when it comes to the brain, mind and body.

It is often said there are two aspects to the mind: emotive, concerned with feeling; and cognitive, concerned with remembering, decision-making and logical thinking. Social interactions require use of numerous neural networks in your brain, as they often require both the emotive and cognitive aspects of the mind. Conversations and activities with friends and family help keep the brain healthy. Visual, hearing, or mobility problems can impede socialization and lead people at higher risk of losing these neural networks. This makes it even more important for people in this high-risk category to mitigate those risk factors through the use of visual, hearing, or mobility aids, and to put emphasis on exercising the brain in addition to the body.

Two recent studies show the importance of social connectedness for brain fitness. The first looked at the significance of social engagement and its connection to brain shrinkage. A study in Shanghai, China compared groups who either did Tai Chi, walking on their own, had social interaction or no interaction. Study participants had MRI assessments of their brain size at the beginning and end of the study. Compared to a reduction in the group that received no intervention, significant increases in brain size were seen in the Tai Chi and social intervention groups. The Tai Chi group also improved on neuropsychological tests. No differences were observed between the walking on their own group and the intervention group. This study shows that although brain shrinkage is part of the normal aging process, the memory centre in the brain maintains its size when engaged in social activities.

The second study examined brain shrinkage in adults over 65 enrolled in the Experience Corps, a U.S. program that brings retired people into schools to serve as mentors to young children, compared with those who were not. Volunteers worked with teachers to help children learn to read in underfunded school libraries. The program helped participants maintain a regular routine that is socially and physically engaging. The Experience Corps participants work in teams with young people and engage in problem-solving, providing complexity and novelty that often disappear once people retire. Typically, annual rates of brain shrinkage in adults over age 65 range from 0.8 percent to two percent. In this study, other participants who worked with teachers saw an increase of 0.7 to 1.6 percent in brain size over the course of two years. The Shanghai and Experience Corps studies are intervention studies that recently showed the importance of social engagement on brain health. Social contact is perhaps even more important for those living with dementia. Research has shown that among people with dementia, the rate of cognitive decline is lower among people with more frequent social contacts.

If NOTL follows through with the recommendations of its Community Wellness Committee, it is more likely that residents will experience the following benefits:

• The act of interacting with others calls upon multiple networks in your brain and may help slow the rate of shrinkage of your brain;
• Social contact and stimulation for people with dementia may help slow their rate of cognitive decline.

A clear plan is needed to optimize physical health and ensure good vision and hearing, to allow older adults the best opportunity to stay intellectually engaged and reduce isolation and depression.

Larry W. Chambers has authored 175 articles and books concerning disease prevention (e.g. dementia), and innovative approaches for continuing professional development. He is research director of the Niagara Regional Campus, School of Pharmacy at the University of Waterloo. Eva Liu and Hanna Levy are medical students at the Niagara Regional Campus of the McMaster University School of Medicine. They are interested in improving community wellness of frail older adults in NOTL through promotion of the fitness (physical and brain) gap, diversifying housing options for older adults, and increasing economic activity within the community that also increases ability to interact with people and ideas.

Newark Neighbours to offer limited hours for food bank

Suzanne Vaillant Special to The Local

To all our valued customers and food bank clients: The health and safety and comfort of our volunteers, customers and food bank clients is our number one priority.

The growing concerns regarding the COVID -19 pandemic is an important matter, and one that Newark Neighbours is taking seriously.

At this time, we feel it necessary to suspend shopping and drop-offs until April 6. We will re-evaluate at that time. These drop-off bins will be locked until further notice. Please do not leave donations on the ground as they will only go into the garbage, which is a cost to Newark Neighbours.

Our priority is our food bank. We hope to be able to have no disruption in service for our clients. We are working on a plan to safely accept food donations and to be able to ensure our clients do not go hungry during this pandemic.

Food Room Clients: The food room will be open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Please call 905-486-3519 and leave a message.

We appreciate and value the generosity of our community and the support which allows us to continue our mission of “Serving our Community with Compassion”.

Making this mission a reality would not be possible without all of our volunteers whose time and effort we greatly appreciate.

With the arena closed and the minor hockey season coming to an early end, dad Wil Varent and his son Liam, with friends Lucas and Andrew Ceglie, hang out at the Virgil sports park Sunday, enjoying a cool but sunny day. (Penny Coles)
Taking advantage of outdoors

Penny Coles
The Local

Locals Karen and Guy Hamilton, walking Bowie and Sonia, were enjoying the sunshine and window shopping on Queen Street.

“We were in need of some fresh air, and so were they,” she says, gesturing to the two pets who help keep them active.

They had been grocery shopping for “a few bits we need” before the store was too busy, and they were consciously avoiding crowded areas.

“We’re getting outside and enjoying the town without being in close contact with people,” says Karen.

“We’re retired, we’re both in good health, and we can decide when we want to spend time in town. We’re watching the news to see what happens, but it will still be there when we get home,” says Karen, about the updates on the COVID-19 virus, which in the last couple of days has been emphasizing social distancing.

“You have to turn it off sometimes, but we’re learning new information all the time, such as how it’s transmitted. It’s important information. We’re trying to educate ourselves. And we want to be sure we’re being vigilant. We listen for awhile, and then we turn it off and discuss what we’ve heard,”

They had tickets for a concert in St. Catharines — now cancelled, but they wouldn’t have attended if it had gone ahead.

They might have ventured out to a restaurant, but they’re cautious while they’re out, says Karen, pulling gloves out of her pocket.

“They were expecting the arrival of their son, who was going to work from their home, and their granddaughter. They are looking forward to the visit, but not sure what they will be doing to entertain the younger while her father works — they are hoping for good weather.

As they walked away with their dogs, Karen said, while social distancing may be good for our physical health, it can pose a danger to mental health, especially for those who live alone.

“If you’re someone who likes being around people, social distancing is sad.”

Logan and Spencer Hutchison, five-year-old twins, love the Virgil Sports Park. Their mother Stephanie Hutchison, who left their three-year-old twin brothers at home with their father, says they come often to use up some energy, and will likely be back again in the coming weeks, with few other activities to occupy them. “It’s going to be a long three weeks,” jokes the mother of four boys.

“We were in need of some fresh air, and we will still be there when we get home,” says Karen, about the updates on the COVID-19 virus, which in the last couple of days has been emphasizing social distancing.

“You have to turn it off sometimes, but we’re learning new information all the time, such as how it’s transmitted. It’s important information. We’re trying to educate ourselves. And we want to be sure we’re being vigilant. We listen for awhile, and then we turn it off and discuss what we’ve heard.”

They had tickets for a concert in St. Catharines — now cancelled, but they wouldn’t have attended if it had gone ahead.

They might have ventured out to a restaurant, but they’re cautious while they’re out, says Karen, pulling gloves out of her pocket.

“They were expecting the arrival of their son, who was going to work from their home, and their granddaughter. They are looking forward to the visit, but not sure what they will be doing to entertain the younger while her father works — they are hoping for good weather.

As they walked away with their dogs, Karen said, while social distancing may be good for our physical health, it can pose a danger to mental health, especially for those who live alone.

“If you’re someone who likes being around people, social distancing is sad.”

Guy and Karen Hamilton take advantage of the sunshine and enjoy a walk with their dogs along Queen Street. (Penny Coles)

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice of Statement of Opinion of Non-Conformity with the Regional Official Plan under Subsection 17(40.2) of The Planning Act

with respect to the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Council adopted new Official Plan

On Oct. 22, 2019, Niagara-on-the-Lake Town Council adopted its new Official Plan (the “Plan”). On Jan. 30, 2020 the record pursuant to subsection 17(31) of the Planning Act was received by the Niagara Region as the approval authority to make a decision on the Plan.

Under subsection 17(40) of the Planning Act, if the approval authority fails to give notice of a decision in respect of all or part of a plan within 120 days after the day the plan is received by the approval authority, any person or public body may appeal to the Tribunal all of any part of the plan. An exception to this provision applies if the approval authority states that the plan or any part of it does not, in the approval authority’s opinion, conform to the upper-tier municipality’s official plan.

The purpose of this Notice is to inform you that Niagara Region, is of the opinion that the Plan does not conform to the Niagara’s Regional Official Plan (2014 consolidation). Regional staff have identified multiple areas where conformity with the Regional Official Plan has not been achieved. These include, but are not limited to:

- the identification of and permitted uses within the Natural Heritage System
- the identification of and permitted uses within agricultural lands
- growth management
- proposed employment land conversions and permitted uses within the employment areas

The identified matters above is not an exhaustive list of non-conformity, but reflect a sample of matters that need to be resolved prior to the approval authority making a decision on the Plan. Pursuant to subsection 17(40.4) of the Planning Act, the 120-day period does not begin to run until Niagara Region confirms that the non-conformity with the Niagara’s Regional Official Plan is resolved. As such no appeals under subsection 17(40) of the Planning Act may be filed at this time.

Date of Notice: March 12, 2020
Municipality: Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake
Subject Lands: All Lands within the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake
Town’s new Official Plan needs more work

Penny Coles
The Local

The Town’s new Official Plan, sent to the Region for approval in January, has been sent back to local planning staff for more work to be done before the Region can consider it for approval.

Councillor knew when it was approved the OP at a special council meeting in October that it did not conform to all regional and provincial policies, and understands it will now take time, and more public meetings, to bring the new plan into conformity with those policies, says Lord Mayor Betty Disero.

In the meantime, the Town’s 1994 plan remains in effect, and with the amended legislation that allows for compatible development with surrounding neighbourhoods as outlined in the new OP “there is no need to rush,” she says. One of the main discrepancies between the new OP and provincial policies concerns the way ditches are treated, of great concern to the agricultural community which relies on them for irrigation.

During discussions leading up to the approval of the OP Disero says, the agriculture committee expressed concern about the provincial policy that treats ditches as part of the “natural heritage system.”

The agricultural community was concerned about the impact on specialty crops, with provincial policy limiting what can be done when drains and ditches used for irrigation overlap with protected natural areas.

Councillors were warned by the consultants there might be problems finalising the plan, with ongoing changes at both the provincial and regional levels resulting in planning policies that conflict with the Town, especially on the issue of natural heritage features. Council approved the new OP knowing it wouldn’t meet regional and provincial policies in that area, hoping, for the benefit of the agricultural community, to open a discussion that might allow for some exceptions for NOTL’s unique situation.

She says she hopes in the coming months the discussions of the OP with the Region will include irrigation ditches and changes to the mapping of natural heritage, but that the Town’s man-made ditches are not recognized as distinct from natural heritage features, the Province will at least be aware of the unique situation in NOTL.

In addition to the natural heritage system, other areas identified in the Town’s OP that don’t conform to regional and provincial policies include (but are not limited to, the report says) permitted uses within agricultural lands, growth management, and proposed employment land conversions to allow for residential development.

The Town’s new OP has some issues with land use for vineyards that have to be addressed, and it doesn’t deal with conversion from commercial to residential development, which is not a common occurrence, says Disero.

Referring to growth management, she explained members regarding future housing units were omitted, since regional and provincial growth policies were unknown when the Town’s OP was under consideration. The Region was expected to fill in the numbers once they were available, Disero says, but likely decided not to when it realised there were other issues that meant sending the plan back to the Town for further consideration.

A Regional report regarding the non-conformity of the Town’s OP to regional and provincial policies, presented to its planning and development committee last Wednesday was of ‘no useful discussion.’

The report said the Region has met with Town staff and councillors about bringing the plan into conformity, so that the regional council can consider it for approval.

Developer Rainer Hummel says a delay of the plan regional approval doesn’t impact developers, with the possible exception of the conversions from employment lands to residential land use.

His question is why this town council was in a hurry to have the new OP completed and approved, with the time and cost of town staff and consultants changes, with councillors knowing it was a document that could not be adopted by the Region.

In addition to the agricultural issues, the Town knew a revised provincial policy statement would be announced by a newly-elected provincial government, and taxpayers’ money could have been saved if it had waited for that news, says Hummel.

“They didn’t know what the policy would say, and they couldn’t just guess at it,” he says.

Although the Region listed four main areas of non-conformity, he believes there are many more issues, “an entire host of things” that will have to be revised, likely requiring hiring a consultant again, in order for the regional council to be approved by the Region.

The whole process to rush for approval was unnecessary, he says, “and unfair to the taxpayers.”

There have been many changes to provincial policies for more than a year, right up until the new provincial government proposed changes in 2019, the report says. Regional and Town council staff met on several occasions to discuss conformity matters between the Town draft OP before it was approved by council.

Regional staff also noted in the report that the Region is currently preparing a new regional Official Plan — it was discussed at length at Wednesday’s meeting.

Niagara Region has 120 days to review the Town’s new Official Plan for conformity and consistency and for regional council to either approve, modify and approve, or refuse it. But a “temporary pause” is permitted when the plan does not conform to the upper-tier municipality’s Official Plan, and once the Town’s OP conforms with regional policy and is again presented to the Region for approval, the 120-day countdown to reset.

Disero says public meetings will be required, but she doesn’t see any need for consultants or any extra cost — the Town has the original consultants’ report, which for the most part will conform to Regional policies. The exception would be the numbers for growth, which need to be added.

Although she was concerned about the provincial threat of amalgamation at the time of the OP approval, it wasn’t rushed, she says. “We had the consultants’ report, and we had made the changes we wanted, so we approved it.”
FREE DELIVERY
Serving Niagara Since 1977

SIMPSON’S

We are committed to the health & wellbeing of our community and will be here for you throughout the current COVID-19 situation.

Please assist us in limiting our community’s exposure by

PHONING US RATHER THAN COMING IN PERSON.

WE WILL DELIVER TO YOU FREE!

We will do everything we can to support you all.

Pharmacy: 905.468.2121
Apothecary: 905.468.8400

Follow our Facebook Page for Updates
www.simpsonspharmacy.ca
Chamber of Commerce presents Spirit of Niagara

The Chamber of Commerce Chair’s Award was given to NOTL Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services, recognizing the value of their support and comfort to the community. The Spirit of Niagara awards were handed out at the Ravine Vineyard conference centre March 10. (Photos by Penny Coles)

Alex Harber celebrates with his brother Paul Harber of Ravine Vineyard, who won the Peter Ling Entrepreneur of the Year Award, for initiative and innovation in a business venture or project. The award is in memory of longtime chamber board member Peter Ling, for his generosity to the chamber and the community. The Spirit of Niagara ceremony was held at Ravine in its new conference centre.

The Chambers of Commerce Chair’s Award was given to NOTL Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services, recognizing the value of their support and comfort to the community. The Spirit of Niagara awards were handed out at the Ravine Vineyard conference centre March 10. (Photos by Penny Coles)

The Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre received the Community Leadership Award. Gail Kerr accepted the award on behalf of Lise Andreana, and the Pumphouse, presented by Coun. Wendy Cheropita.

The Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre received the Community Leadership Award. Gail Kerr accepted the award on behalf of Lise Andreana, and the Pumphouse, presented by Coun. Wendy Cheropita.

The Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre received the Community Leadership Award. Gail Kerr accepted the award on behalf of Lise Andreana, and the Pumphouse, presented by Coun. Wendy Cheropita.

The Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre received the Community Leadership Award. Gail Kerr accepted the award on behalf of Lise Andreana, and the Pumphouse, presented by Coun. Wendy Cheropita.

Tim Jennings, executive director of the Shaw Festival, presented the Christopher Newton Award of Extraordinary Vision in Business to the Wayne Gretzky Estate Winery, accepted by winemaker Scott McGregor. Newton is a former artistic director of the Shaw.

Leigh Atherton and David Watt of the Garrison House won the Celia Liu Award for Excellence in Hospitality, for their outstanding commitment to delivering excellence, with a positive, unitifying influence on the community. Liu, a friend to many in the business community, passed away in 2014, leaving memories of an amazing human being, fully dedicated to sharing the joy she experienced in daily life.
Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

According to NOTL Local columnist Owen Bjorgan, the 2020 Spirit of Niagara Awards snuck up on him last month. “This was news to me, just a week ago,” he said, accepting the very first Dan Patterson Youth Leadership Award last month. “I’d been on the fly. I’ve been out in the woods, working. I wear rubber boots seven days a week.”

In juggling the many things he does, Bjorgan indeed pulls on those wellies and every day. His love of, and commitment to, the environment, is what earned him the award. “They’re still learning something special,” he enthuses. “I’ve been on the fly. I’ve been doing what I do.”

In addition to hosting a number of nature documentaries, where his love and respect for the outdoors takes centre stage, he is also a regular contributor to the DSBN, the indefatigable Bjorgan also runs his own business. Recently rebranded as Owen’s Filming and Adventures, Bjorgan spends much of his “off-time” guiding clients through the local wilderness. His tours bring people up close to wildlife in the Niagara Gorge, Short Hills Provincial Park, Decew Falls, the Wainfleet Bog, and other significant local nature spots. He’s been known to jump into the water to pick up a turtle, or to rifle through leaves to find a rare salamander, so his guests can get a closer look.

He has also shot and hosted a number of natural documentaries, where his love and respect for the outdoors takes centre stage. His series of Hidden Corners programs, available on his website (owenhikingsandadventures.com) and his YouTube channel, follow him through his favourite spots in Niagara, as well as his adventures in Ecuador, Australia and Florida.

It was during his trip to Australia, when he was able to meet the family of another one of his heroes, the late Steve Irwin, known as the Crocodile Hunter. Bjorgan admires Irwin, who died in 2006 doing what he loved — he was pierced in the chest by a stingray while filming. “He was in your face, he was passionate, he was enthusiastic, his heart really beat for conservation. I learned a lot from him, his fire, his ability to never quit.” He adds that it was a surreal honour to meet Irwin’s family.

Bjorgan has also brought his own passion to the stage in a Ted Talk, delivered at his alma mater, the University of Guelph. And, of course, there’s his regular column here in The NOTL Local, another avenue he uses to inspire a love and concern for nature.

That concern for nature is a big part of what drives him. “I believe we are at a crucial point in time when it comes to the environment,” he warns. “The Niagara Region has lost 90 per cent of its wetland coverage. I would like to see more action toward not just conservation but also preservation in Niagara, in order to curb our ecosystems being whitened down to levels of functioning that would make them incomparable to their original state.”

Reflecting on receiving the Youth Leadership Award, Bjorgan remains humbled and honoured. As he says, “I feel deeply connected to Niagara-on-the-Lake, and it is “no ordinary town to be connected to. There are a lot of big, big hearts and influential people in this town, and they were in that room last night, and in the group photo with me, and I felt like I was part of a bigger, accomplished team.”

And he was further humbled when one of those influential people, Debi Pratt, spoke highly of him as a big part of NOTL’s bright future when she took to the stage to accept their Citizen of the Year Award. She said it was high time the chamber brought back a youth award, and that the choice of Bjorgan was “unbelievably well-deserved.”

Looking toward the future, he sees himself bringing his tours to ecosystems outside of Niagara. “I want to tour people globally, to ecosystems of greater significance,” he says, “and be an international outdoors tour guide. I would like to take people up to northern Ontario, and to teach navigation and outdoor skills in bear country and wilderness settings. These are skills I have that I can’t really apply in Niagara.”

He also talks about taking his nature documentaries to another level. His goal is for them to become educational tools that will further inspire others.

With these visions, Bjorgan is closer to becoming a peer of his heroes, Suzuki and Irwin. It’s clear that Ni- agara, though plenty bountiful in natural settings, may not be able to hold Owen Bjorgan much longer.
Debi Pratt named citizen of the year

Penny Coles
The Local

Debi Pratt is known for her decades of leading public relations and marketing for Inniskillin Wines, but also for being one of the strongest supporters and promoters of the Niagara wine industry as a whole, as it grew and flourished to become the industry it is today.

She has been recognized twice with lifetime achievement awards, and last week was named citizen of the year at the Chamber of Commerce Spirit of Niagara award ceremony in recognition of her widespread volunteer involvement in many community projects.

Called the Lord Mayor’s Award of Excellence, it was presented to her by Lord Mayor Betty Disero, who has worked with her on several projects and considers her a friend, and someone she will go to for advice.

Past award-winners have been recognized for a range of worthwhile pursuits, assisting in community projects, raising funds for charitable causes, or generally making life better for residents, said Disero.

“She has been recognized for their contributions to heritage preservation, for years of volunteer work, or for their service to the public,” Pratt has been involved in all of those, she said.

Throughout the years, she has been tapped on the shoulder for worthwhile pursuits, community projects, fundraising and generally making life better for our residents. She has never refused and always willing to lend a helping hand.

“As a resident of our dear town,” Disero said, Pratt “has never stepped away from helping out where there are issues to be addressed. She was part of the Town committees dealing with the ongoing issue of parking and this year was a leader in creating our authentic natural Christmas decor.

And on a personal note, said the lord mayor, “she is someone I go to for advice and as a sounding board, when I need guidance. I appreciate her steady, logical thinking, her cool head and her inclusive manner.”

Speaking after the award ceremony, Disero said it was not surprising that Pratt spoke of the accomplishments of others who were also recipients, including Owen Bjorgman for his youth leadership award.

“Debi is the most selfless person I have ever known,” Disero said.

“She is always giving, never asking for anything in return. She just wants to do good, for the betterment of her community.”

Pratt told the gathering she had been an elementary school teacher at the old Line 13 Brockview School, and then at Laura Secord Memorial School in Queenston. She has taught many local kids, now adults, and asked those in the room to stand up, congratulating them too on how well they have done.

Her teaching career has continued, although along a different path. “I went from teaching students how to read, to teaching people how to drink.”

But although she joked about the educational component of the wine industry, she has continued to talk to students at Brock University and Niagara College, and has mentored many along the way.

She also spoke of her days on the Chamber committee that administered the awards in its early days, leading to the spirit awards now given out annually.

“We recognized those who gave their hearts and souls to their community, and their expertise, to keep the town “vibrant, sustainable and proud.”

Giving back to the community, she said, “is so simple. Pay attention, and when you see someone in your neighbourhood who needs help, when you see something in your neighbourhood that needs help, you step up. The people who are here tonight have done that,” she said.

“I’m so proud to be a citizen of Niagara-on-the-Lake, along with citizen of the year.”

Debi Pratt receives the Lord Mayor’s Award of Excellence from Lord Mayor Betty Disero at Ra-vine Vineyard’s conference centre last week. (Photos by Penny Coles)

Family-owned Niagara Trailers top business

Penny Coles
The Local

Founded in 1972, Niagara Trailers is a local business that has made a significant impact, not only on the RV industry, but on the surrounding community.

At last week’s Spirit of Niagara award ceremony at the Ravine Vineyards conference centre, the family-owned and run business in St. Davids was named Company of the Year.

The story of how it got its start traces back to a coincidental conversation at the former Fudge Stand at the corner of York and Queenston Roads, explained Andrew Niven, who presented the award to John and Anna Petrie.

It was John’s father, Doug, “the company patriarch,” who approached, said Niven, at which time the operation was handed to John, “whose business acumen and extraordinary vision has brought it to be one of the most successful RV trailer businesses in the province,” and winning it many industry awards.

The Petries are equally committed to the community, he said, “donating both time and dollars to local causes, and organizations like the St. Davids Lions, Red Roof Retreat and Meals on Wheels.”

“It’s their quiet, unassuming approach that really makes them unique,” he added, and worthy of the title of Company of the Year.

“It’s been a great journey,” said John, accepting the award with his wife Anna.

“We absolutely love the RV lifestyle, and we enjoy the community of St. Davids.”

Receiving the award, he added, “is a great way to start off the spring, our busy time.”

Thanking the Chamber, he said, “I look forward to the next 48 years in St. Davids.”

Following the ceremony, Anna joked about her reaction to the thought of another 48 years, suggesting it might be for family members, if they take it on — there are several working in different areas of the business, she said, “although I want them to do what makes them happy.”

The best part of the business, she said, is the people they’ve met.

“We’ve had many repeat customers, still coming in and talking about Doug and Anna.”

She said she and John were both surprised, and humbled, to receive the award, and when they got home, “I told him how proud I was of him, and how proud his dad would be. We miss him so much. He would be so proud.”

Anna and John Petrie of Niagara Trailers won the Company of the Year Award at the Spirit of Niagara ceremony, presented by the Chamber of Commerce.
Custom solutions give optimum sound in your home

Submitted by Thomas TV

Making good sound even better, is what we love to do. When a customer comes into our store looking for a hi-fi system that suits their space and listening style, we take the time to demonstrate the variety of options there are to consider. Our goal is to bring them their optimum listening experience.

Having audio distributed to several rooms in the home is popular, and brings a range of questions from homeowners such as, Can I add in-wall or in-ceiling speakers to my house if it is finished? Where would I put the equipment? Should I consider wireless audio? We specialize in retrofitting existing homes with audio and video, adding music to any room or outdoor space you wish, and installing the equipment out of sight. Wireless audio is an option, but it isn’t the best solution for every application, however there are several quality options that we recommend.

For over 55 years, Thomas TV has focused on offering quality brands and service to the Niagara Region. We have seen technology evolve, and we’re always excited to bring what’s new to our customers. Our knowledgable staff and trained installers are focused on customer satisfaction, after all, home entertainment should be fun! We welcome you to visit our showroom, located at 130 Thorold Rd. in Welland, or call for an in-home consultation.

Spring forward at Creek Road Paints

Spring is in the air! Unfortu-nately, we know it’s not the only thing in the air, as many of us have received government direc-tives to either work from home or to quarantine ourselves to pre-vent and contain the spreading of COVID-19. Maybe this would be a great time to get a jump on that spring painting project you were holding off on? Or freshen up that bathroom with one of our Zero VOC Paints?

Spring forward into Daylight Savings Time with the expert team at Creek Road Paints. Ben-jamin Moore® who have the es-sential solutions to paints, prod-ucts and home decor that will save you time, daylight and cost! Renew the hues that are right for you and are also trend-ing. Consider Benjamin Moore®’s Colour of the Year, First Light 2102-70, which is the “backdrop for a bright new de-cade.” First Light features a fresh palette. A revitalized spirit. A harmonious hues of the Co-lour Trends 2020 palette, which deliver “modern paint colour painting that combine optimism with understatement, a traveled way to lighten up.”

These colours are not only palette-able for Spring, but will breathe life and renewed energy into your space. Whether you are starting a painting project in your basement, garage, bathroom, kitchen, living room or bedrooms, trust our expert staff to provide you with the appropriate line of pre-mium paint, primer, stain, and all the products that will help you achieve your project goals.

Thinking of beginning an exterior job? Just because the sun has started to come out, doesn’t mean the brushes are ready to come outdoors yet. We have seen some sunnier days, and the tem-perature seems to be warming up, but the focus during this sea-sonal shift should still be interior projects – at least until Mother Nature declares it safe to venture outdoors. Until then, as a gen-eral rule of thumb, the Exterior Paint Meteorologists call for a minimum of 10 degrees Celcius, with the exception of Aura Exterior, which makes it possible to drop down to 4 degrees, and if you’re staining, you can go down to 2 degrees Celcius with our Ready Seal – goof proof Staining sys-tem. Visit us in store for Moore tips, essential solutions and plans on how to spring forward in preparation of exterior projects.

At this difficult time we find ourselves in, the stuff of Creek Road Paints, Benjamin Moore cannot reiterate the importance of the safety and well-being of everyone. We would like to ac-knowledge and thank those cli-ents that have travelled and have postponed painting projects in order to follow the necessary precautions of COVID-19, and have also taken into consider-ation their painters, contractors, and the whole community.

Although businesses, or-ganizations, and institutions may close their doors, it is our intention to remain open until further notice. Please consider the most vulnerable: the elderly, those with autoimmune, respira-tory and other health issues. Cardinal Rule: Wash your hands like you wash your paint brushes! And remember... There’s Always Something Moore at Creek Road Paints, Benjamin Moore Store.

Visit our Home Theatre Room for the optimum surround sound experience.

Submitted by Creek Road Paints
Hardwood maintenance tips

Submitted by Imperial Hardwood Flooring

In order to keep your new wood floors looking great, always follow these tips:

• Wipe up all spills immediately.
• Only use vacuum cleaners that have a setting for hard-surface. Turn off the beater bars/brushes on the vacuum cleaner when present.
• Do not wet-mop a wood floor. Standing water will result in cracks, splits, warping, degradation of the finish, and leave a discoloring residue. Use approved cleaners made specifically for hardwood floors. We recommend the BONA line of cleaners.
• NEVER use Murphy’s Oil Soap on your hardwood floor.
• Do not use steam cleaners on wood floors. Water in a vapor form will penetrate the wood fibers and cause irreversible damage to the wood flooring and the finish.
• Use breathable throw rugs both inside and outside the doorways to prevent grit, salt, chemicals, sand, moisture and other debris from being tracked onto the wood floors.
• For wood flooring installed in the kitchen, place a breathable area rug in front of the kitchen sink and stove.
• Rugs should be shaken out, cleaned, and thoroughly dried when they get wet.
• Check with the finish manufacturer for when rugs can be placed on the newly finished floor. In general, they should not be placed on a newly finished floor for a minimum of seven days after the final coat of finish has been applied.
• Take special precautions with non-skid pads that are frequently placed under area rugs. Some of these pads may imprint their pattern onto the finish and/or the wood floor. (Natural fibers may not transfer as much as some synthetic pads.)
• Be aware that area rugs cover the wood floor, protecting it from UV/sun exposure, which results in color differences in the wood floor.
• Put fabric-faced glides under the legs of furniture to prevent scuffing and scratching. Periodically check these floor protectors for embedded soil and replace as necessary.
• Avoid walking on your floor with cleats, sports shoes, and high heels. A 125-pound woman in high heels has an impact of 2,000 pounds per square inch. An exposed heel can exert up to 8,000 pounds per square inch. This kind of impact will dent any floor surface.
• Keep pet claws trimmed and in good repair.
• When moving heavy furniture, do not slide it on wood flooring. It is best to pick up the furniture completely to avoid scratching the floors.
• When moving appliances (refrigerators, stoves, etc.), use safety glides. On newly finished floors, wait a minimum of three days before replacing appliances.
• Use an appropriate humidifier throughout the winter/dry months and/or a dehumidifier in the summer/humid months to keep wood movement and shrinkage to a minimum. It’s important to maintain a consistent environment throughout the year to minimize floor movement.
• When the floor loses its luster, it’s time for a recoat.

Need New Floors?
Let us help you brighten up your home this year!

From hardwood, laminate or cork flooring, you’ll be sure to find something to suit your style and budget. We will provide you with the best quality customer service from start to finish.

What about those large and heavy pieces of furniture? No worries! We will move them out of the way and put them back when we are done... FREE of charge!
We are excited to continue to promote our membership card, especially as it is an ideal gift for a senior. It is perfect for those who may be hard to buy for and it gives them the flexibility of patronizing various local businesses over the course of an entire year. Our card simply says, “I’m Local,” and if you present it to participating businesses, it entitles the cardholder to discounts and special offers — so important for anyone on a fixed income. We have a convenient wallet-sized card waiting for readers who want to sign up, at a cost of $39.95 (plus HST). The charge for the cards helps cover the cost of the program for us, and will also help to support your community newspaper. Our membership bonus includes two free classified ads per year — a $40 value (private party only). There is no charge for businesses to come onboard — their cost is the discounts and special offers for you, our readers. Additionally, we have a website that explains how to join, and also allows you to sign up online, using PayPal or a credit card. As a Local member, you have so many great choices! From dining to fitness/healthcare to home décor to automotive and more! Businesses may change their offers monthly, or they may stay the same. That’s up to them. Be sure to check back often to see new businesses on board and existing participants vary their offers month to month. The more variety, the better. So there you have it — our local membership plan. It’s a cliché, we know, but we feel it’s a win-win situation, for locals who want to support their neighbourhood businesses and businesses who want to welcome locals.

Contact Karen at 905 641 5335 or email karen@notllocal.com
Online at notllocal.com/membership or visit our office at 1596 Four Mile Creek Rd., Virgil

We personally plan, coordinate and organize every detail associated with making a stress-free transition from one home to another.

ONESource offers a wide variety of services to make your move easier:
- Decluttering
- Organizing
- Downsizing
- Packing/Unpacking
- Setup of new home
- Clear out
- Auctions

Get your LOCAL MEMBERSHIP CARD now!
notllocal.com/membership

$39.95 per year
plus HST ($45.14)
With the current self-isolation in place throughout the province and the country, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Soccer Club has been forced to postpone its annual live registration.

When the town shut down all public facilities, the planned March 28 registration at the arena in Virgil was affected. The Ontario Soccer Association (OSA), of which the club is a member, also suspended all sanctioned activities last Wednesday.

Club president Ted VanderKaay says this is a perfect time for parents and players to register for this summer’s season via the clubs new website, at notlsoccer.ca. At press time, the board of directors of the club were optimistic that the May 23 opening festival will go on as planned.

VanderKaay points out that the new website was necessary due to some changes put in place by the clubs original software provider. “They were cancelling their initial program and wanted us to migrate to their new platform. That forced our hand to look for other options, and we felt that a more local provider, Power Up Sports Management Systems of Toronto, provided a superior product with a more local flavour.”

Other clubs in the Niagara area, including the St. Catharines Jets, Niagara Falls United and the Welland Soccer Club are also using the new platform. Because of the move to the new software provider, VanderKaay says that all previous registrants will need to create a new account on notlsoccer.ca.

It may take a little longer to register, but VanderKaay says one of the benefits of having the new software is that we are upgrading all our systems information to be accurate. With the old platform, it had been around for about 10 years, there was a lot of inaccurate and incomplete information, including contact information for parents. By migrating to the new platform, we will be able to update our database, to more current, accurate levels.”

The new website will also direct parents and coaches to up-to-date information on the clubs concussion protocol. VanderKaay says the club is compliant with Rowan’s Law, passed by the Ontario government in Bill 193 in 2018.

Upon registration, visitors to the site will be directed to a number of online resources related to concussion awareness, including those posted by the Province.

Last year, the NOTL Soccer Club had 405 players registered, in ages 4 to 17, with a couple of adult teams added into the fold.

For 2020, the adult teams have moved on, and this year the club is offering a house league, beginning with the Timbits program for ages four and five, and ending with their interlock program, for up to age 17. In that program, teams from NOTL compete against those from other Niagara municipalities in a sort of extended house league program.

There will also be travel programs, with U8, U9 and U11 boys/co-ed teams competing in the Niagara Soccer League.

With Timbits registration set at $100, and house league at $160, VanderKaay feels soccer is still one of the most affordable activities in town. “It’s a great outdoor activity,” he says, “and our soccer facilities, in Virgil and Memorial Park, are second to none.”

The club is also holding a soccer camp the week of Aug. 10. Instructor John DiPasquale returns that week to offer a fun-filled program of games, activities and instruction to improve soccer skills. Again, at only $85, it is an affordable way for kids aged six to 14 to spend half a day. Registration for the camp is also available on the website.

VanderKaay encourages parents to visit notlsoccer.ca to register. And, once the warmer weather sets in, even if people are confined to their homes, it’s never too early to get out to the backyard to start kicking the ball around.
Across:
1. Fables
2. 4 G
8. Striébreaker
12. Sistas
15. Egg layers
18. Father of a leprechaun
20. Superstar
22. Study
23. Senses of self-importance
24. Enter stealthily
25. Grey matter
26. Smiley
27. Heartland
29. American football team
31. Montgomery's daughter
32. Aegis
33. Of an
34. Lies on
35. Stand up to
36. Tong
37. Aha
38. E.S.T.
39. Tonnage
41. Now
42. A.D.
43. Lies on
44. Lies on
45. Etched
46. Man
47. Oft
48. Sent
49. Deli
50. Expos
51. Brain
52. Cape
53. Flux
54. Provo
55. Essex
56. F.D.I.C.
57. Leno
58. Carlo
59. Hers
60. Hers
61. Depp
62. Singles
63. Egos
64. Into
65. Mind
66. Dive
67. Coos
68. T.N.N.
69. Sox.

Down:
1. User
2. Shiva
8. Canadians
9. Arcs
10. Arcs
11. Beat
12. Naps
13. A
43. Of an
44. Lies on
46. Man
47. Oft
48. Sent
49. Deli
50. Expos
51. Brain
52. Cape
53. Flux
54. Provo
55. Essex
56. F.D.I.C.
57. Leno
58. Carlo
59. Hers
60. Hers
61. Depp
62. Singles
63. Egos
64. Into
65. Mind
66. Dive
67. Coos
68. T.N.N.
69. Sox.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

IN LOVING MEMORY

May the peace that comes from the memories of a love shared, comfort you. Remember them with a Loving Tribute.

Contact: classified@notllocal.com or call 905-641-5335

SUDOKU PUZZLE

Puzzle answers from March 12, 2020

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

SUDOKU SOLUTION

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

PUZZLE ANSWERS

Across:
1. Fables
2. 4 G
8. Striébreaker
12. Sistas
15. Egg layers
18. Father of a leprechaun
20. Superstar
22. Study
23. Senses of self-importance
24. Enter stealthily
25. Grey matter
26. Smiley
27. Heartland
29. American football team
31. Montgomery's daughter
32. Aegis
33. Of an
34. Lies on
35. Stand up to
36. Tong
37. Aha
38. E.S.T.
39. Tonnage
41. Now
42. A.D.
43. Lies on
44. Lies on
45. Etched
46. Man
47. Oft
48. Sent
49. Deli
50. Expos
51. Brain
52. Cape
53. Flux
54. Provo
55. Essex
56. F.D.I.C.
57. Leno
58. Carlo
59. Hers
60. Hers
61. Depp
62. Singles
63. Egos
64. Into
65. Mind
66. Dive
67. Coos
68. T.N.N.
69. Sox.

Down:
1. User
2. Shiva
8. Canadians
9. Arcs
10. Arcs
11. Beat
12. Naps
13. A
43. Of an
44. Lies on
46. Man
47. Oft
48. Sent
49. Deli
50. Expos
51. Brain
52. Cape
53. Flux
54. Provo
55. Essex
56. F.D.I.C.
57. Leno
58. Carlo
59. Hers
60. Hers
61. Depp
62. Singles
63. Egos
64. Into
65. Mind
66. Dive
67. Coos
68. T.N.N.
69. Sox.
Auchterlonie on Astrology

Bill Auchterlonie Special to The Local

This week on Auchterlonie on Astrology I’ll look at the new Moon in Aries on Tuesday, March 24, the earliest spring equinox in 124 years on Thursday, March 22, and also the week of Sunday, March 22 through Saturday, March 28. The website is https://www.lookingupwithbill.com/podcasts.html.

Now, the week ahead:

Thursday, March 19: At 11:49 p.m. we witness something we haven’t seen in 124 years, the spring equinox. To explain this in detail would take too much time and space. If you are interested, just google “This Year’s Equinox Is March 19, The Earliest In 124 Years.” It will explain how our clever calendar adjusts for the difference between the true time it takes to go around the Sun and the time we measure on our calendars, including over centuries. It’s a serious Thursday with a surprise that makes for a more secure future. On this day in 1885, Louis Riel returned to Canada from the U.S. and proclaimed a provisional government for Saskatchewan.

Friday, March 20: After 5 a.m., the Moon is ‘void of course’ meaning the Moon has no contact with any other object in the solar system for most of the day. This usually makes for a ‘do nothing’ kind of day. But Mars and Jupiter make a powerful connection later this morning, bringing good fortune to medical appointments, health matters and work activities. One of the world’s funniest people, Carl Reiner, turns 98 today. From the Dick van Dyke Show, to directing Steve Martin’s films, to working with Mel Brooks and Jerry Seinfeld, Carl is a funny man.

Saturday, March 21: The Moon moves into Pisces just after midnight and Saturn moves from her home sign of Capricorn into Aquarius at the very end of the day. There is a lot of karmic energy in the air today, so reap and sow with your best foot forward. Better get 58 candles for Rosie O’Donnell, because that’s how old she is today.

Sunday, March 22: This is one of the busiest Sundays ever. The Moon in Pisces gives imagination and Venus and Mercury are on board to help heal old wounds and find exciting new ideas. Captain Kirk was born on March 22, 1931, in Montreal. Back then they called him William Shatner. Hey, we still do! And while he has played many varied roles over his nearly 90 years, he still seems Captain Kirk to many.

Monday, March 23: The Moon moves into ‘leap before you look’ Aries in the early evening, and Mars hooks up with Pluto early in the morning in the constellation of Capricorn. There is energy and willpower to accomplish just about anything.

Tuesday, March 24: The New Moon always holds the promise of new beginnings. Today it occurs at 5:28 a.m., and even though the New Moon sees both the Sun and Moon in Aries, most of the energy is ‘off stage’ or shrouded in some way. This means that if the energy does break through to this side of the plane, it will be powerful and very dynamic. Yet it will be honest too. The first anti-slavery newspaper, the Provincial Freeman, was published on March 24, 1854, in Windsor, Ontario. It was edited by Samuel Ringgold Ward and Mary Ann Shadd Cary, the first black woman publisher in North America.

Wednesday, March 25: Good times. Testy times. Good, thanks to benevolent Jupiter. Testy, courteously stubborn Pluto. Try to be honest and know that a fight with Pluto is never a good idea. Put it aside until the heat has cooled.

And it was March 25, 1867, that the Parliament in London, England abolished the slave trade throughout the British Empire with a fine of 120 pounds per slave to be paid by ship captains.

Next week, Auchterlonie with Astrology looks at the week of Thursdays through Wednesday, April 1. (No fooling!)

As Joni Mitchell says: “We are stardust. We are Golden. So Shine On!”

Encouraging species at risk

Last Thursday Parks Canada hosted an open house and field visit for the community to learn about nature conservation initiatives at Parks Canada sites, including Paradise Grove, identifying 12 species at risk. It will focus on six species encouraging new growth. Christina Lawrence shows the eastern flowering dogwood to the nature enthusiasts on the tour. Invasive species need to be removed so sunlight and more room can encourage new growth. (Fred Mercnik)