Vic Tee recognized for looking after student safety

Wednesday is Ontario Crossing Guard Day

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

The car pulls up and parks on the small strip of asphalt next to the original wing of St. Davids Elementary School around 8:30 a.m. Seventy-three-year-old Vic Tee gets out and puts on his cap, with the words “I’m Nice” printed on the front.

Next, he dons his bright orange and yellow safety vest, and grabs his hand-held stop sign. He heads to the sidewalk in front of the crosswalk for his first of three shifts ensuring his young charges make it across the road safely.

As children approach the crosswalk, he greets all of them with a friendly smile that, though covered by a mask these days, is evident in his eyes. He greets most of the youngsters by name. They wait for his instruction, and for him to take his place in front of the idling cars, before they eagerly shuffle across the street.

For the past eight years, the retired truck driver has been part of the fabric of life at the small community school. “I do it because I enjoy it,” he says. “It gives me something to do, gets me out of the house.”

And he loves working with the students. “I’ve seen them grow up. They’re great kids. They watch out for everything, you know. They have always been a great bunch. I’ve lived in St. Davids for over 40 years, and I know their parents, and

Continued on page 3
Summer could look good if we limit social interaction now

Penny Coles
The Local

The bad news is cases of COVID-19 and variants of concern are on the rise, in Ontario and the Golden Horse- shoe area.

The good news, says Dr. Mustafa Hirji, is what we could expect this summer: movie theatres and the Shaw reopening, although likely with restrictions, an increase in indoor dining, and more freedom to enjoy social interactions with friends and family.

During Monday’s weekly press briefing, the acting chief medical officer of health said, “I’m pessimistic about the next couple of months, and our ability to get through these two months without trigger- ing a third wave.”

But if we can get through the next two months without that happening, “I’m very op- timistic for what this summer could look like,” he added.

“It’s all a question of what we do now that affects what happens over the next couple of months.”

He spoke of getting to the point this summer “where we’re actually able to really re- lax and recalibrate.”

But to get there, he contin- ues to ask Niagara residents to do their part by staying at home except for essential rea- sons, wearing masks and lim- iting social interactions to our own households, for another two months.

After that, the increased number of vaccinations and the warm weather will be on our side, he says.

While other medical health officials are calling cur- rent COVID numbers a third wave of infections, Hirji talks of moving toward one, and the possibility of avoiding it.

There is no absolute number that says we’re in or nearing a third wave — judgment of where we are at “is in the eye of the beholder” — all that mat- ter is where the numbers take us, he says.

“We will only know after the fact if we end up in a third wave, or ‘we’re able to curb it to a small ripple.’”

Although previously the largest number of cases were through outbreaks, the cas- es in Niagara is seeing now are mostly from community spread, within households or through co-workers, extended family and friends, Hirji says.

With the rising trend of variant cases, he admitted to being surprised by the gov- ernment’s rush to open up restaurants to 50 per cent of their capacity, although he said the restriction of tables to one household, as has been the case in Niagara since the re- gion moved into red, will help limit the spread of infections.

Any further lockdown, he suggested, would have to in- clude the Golden Horse- shoe area, with the second-highest number of cases in Ontario.

In addition to our social behaviour, vaccinations will help us contain the spread, he says.

Almost all — 99 per cent of the 80-plus age group have either had their first vac- cine or are booked to get it, says Hirji.

Beginning Monday, resi- dents ages 75 to 79 were able to book their appointments, and those vaccinations could be completed in mid-April.

Encouraging Niagara resi- dents to take the opportunity for vaccination when offered, Hirji says the four vaccines approved in Canada will pre- vent 100 per cent of hospital- izations and deaths, so take the first one offered. “The first vaccine you can get is the best vaccine you can get.”

To date, Niagara has most- ly received the Pfizer vaccine, along with a small quantity of Moderna, but he said Astra- Zeneca, which has received"

Lord Mayor defends chief medical officer

Penny Coles
The Local

Lord Mayor Betty Disero says she stands by Dr. Musta- fa Hirji and the medical deci- sions he makes to keep Niag- ara residents safe.

Disero was concerned about the criticism he re- ceived during his update to regional politicians Friday, a small number of whom said

they found his messaging too negative, and questioned his credibility.

During the meeting, he referenced other countries, including the U.K., Nether- lands, Italy and Brazil, their handling of the pandemic and their outcomes.

The Netherlands vacci- nation program is going at a similar pace to Canada, is just a little ahead, he said, and that country is “now in its fourth wave, and putting pressure on its hospitals.”

He also warned about the possibility that if the number of cases increases, more peo- ple in the 60 and 70-year old age group could become sick and die.

He told regional politi- cians people should be en- couraged to stay at home and minimize interactions for the next eight weeks, which will take us to the point where more people are vaccinated and the weather is warmer — otherwise, we face the like- lihood there will be a third lockdown.

West Lincoln Mayor Dave Blyshma suggested public

health, with its negativity, is losing its credibility with the public.

He told Hirji “there seems to be a disconnect to large- scale realities,” citing the overall death rate in Canada as not including a pandemic, and that there is no advantage to vaccinations.

Hirji addressed his con- cerns by explaining there haven’t been a huge number of deaths because of the mea- sures that have been taken. He also spoke to the eco-

Niagara pharmacies hope to be included soon

Penny Coles
The Local

Sean Simpson hopes to be one of the pharmacies to offer a COVID vaccination, and he hopes to see that happening soon.

He could be vaccinating as many as 200 people a day, if needed, but he’s expecting the number to be more in the 50 to 100 range, he says. When that will begin to happen is unclear.

Simpson estimates most pharmacies will be able to handle about 40 plus vaccina- tions a day.

He was taken by surprise when Premier Doug Ford announced Friday he would be expanding the number of pharmacies to offer the vac- cine, with no further informa- tion about where or when. Meanwhile, he’s getting “a ton of calls” from residents with questions about vaccina- tions.

He was disappointed by the lack of transparency, and the lack of any advance warn- ing to pharmacy owners, who will need to be prepared when they learn vaccine is on its way.

Simpson, representing the Pharmacies Association of Niagara on the regional vacci- nation task force, is anxious to get started administering vac- cinations, and many NOTL residents will be happy to see that happen.

All three pharmacies in NOTL, along with others in the region, are hoping to be in- cluded on the provincial list of those to deliver vaccinations.

If we have the opportuni- ty, we’ll be ready,” says Simp- son.

He expects they will re- ceive the AstraZeneca, which seems headed to pharmacies, and is a little easier to handle as far as refrigeration.

Pharmacies will receive

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Pharmacies will receive

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Glitches being worked out

Continued from page 1

their grandparents.”

Thursday, March 24 is School Crossing Guard Appreciation Day in Ontario, a chance to recognize unsung heroes such as Vic, who assist young residents with their active and safe travel to and from school.

To recognize Vic, a number of students who cross with him worked on thank you cards in class to present to him on his special day. They also presented him with some special treats from Tim Hortons.

Principal Tracy Leermens says Vic “is warm and caring to the students he crosses. He never misses a day, and is out there through all kinds of weather. We are so very fortunate to have such a dedicated crossing guard. He’s one of the best!”

Vic seems almost embarrassed, but there is a day dedicated to crossing guards.

“I guess it should be appreciated,” he finally agrees. “Being here three times a day, it kind of ties you down a bit, but I appreciate just being able to be out here in the fresh air, playing around with the kids, getting to talk to their mothers and fathers as they are bringing them in. It’s fun.”

Vic notices one girl approaching his post. He calls her Gigi, and glances at his Apple watch. “She’s a little earlier than usual,” he tells The Local. It comes with the job, knowing when certain students are likely to arrive, and feeling his radar go off when a routine is broken.

On an average day, especially when the weather is as nice as it is today, Vic’s Apple watch clocks around 10,000 steps. “I do a lot of walking. At lunch time I’m not very busy, so I walk from here down towards the other end of the school and come back. Once the kids have crossed, there’s not a lot for me to do, so I walk almost most 40 minutes.”

Working the crosswalk is just one way Vic gives back to his community. He has been a member of the St. Davids Lions Club and speaks highly of the programs they support with their fundraising efforts, many of which benefit the kids who visit his crosswalk daily. He would also become a volunteer firefighter, but he says he prefers to wear his hair longer and often grows a beard.

Vic grew up in the Old Town of NOTL, where he kept active in his younger days playing tennis, soccer, and track. He attended Parliament Oak and Niagara District Secondary School back then, but his wife Sandy attended St. Davids. He’s pretty sure his father did as well.

Vic and Sandy’s two boys, now in their 40s, were also Dragons. The Tees now have six grandchildren, and last September, they became great-grandparents, when twins were born to their eldest granddaughter.

Providing support to students arriving at school is a bit of a family business. Sandy drives a school bus, leaving just a little earlier than Vic every day to start her regular route.

Obviously, contributing to the community and helping out kids is important to both Vic and Sandy, but he’s not sure how much longer they will continue in their support roles. They own a trailer they keep in the Purry Sound area, where they spend much of their summer weeks. During colder days, when instead of getting all those steps in he whiles away time in his car, he admits it’s not as much fun as it is in the spring. And they want to spend more time with their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, too.

But for now, he’s out there five days a week, three times a day, stopping cars and waving back, about every third driver who smiles and waves back, showing their appreciation for what he does each and every day.

The error must have been in the booking system. She could see that several other people had also booked for incorrect dates, but she couldn’t say how many.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero was made aware of the error, as was the region’s public health staff, but it was up to the province to fix it.

Disero was told the province would be contacting those residents to rebook, but in a video released Thursday, she suggested residents rebook, rather than wait.

The glitch of dates not matching locations had appeared, and been corrected in other places, the lord mayor was told, but not in NOTL, at least not that anyone reported until Wednesday evening.

Peter was able to rebook their appointments, and he and Edith headed to the MacLachlan Centre in Niagara Falls last Friday for their vaccinations — although not until Peter visited his barber for the first time in six weeks, he said, where they were very pleased with how smooth the process was.

The number of phone calls that go back and forth to correct their situation, Peter said, “provided enough material for a one act play.”

The Local was told by the region that any answers about a resolution to that problem, such as when and how it was resolved and how many residents were impacted, would have to come from the province. When contacted last Thursday, The Local was told an answer would be forthcoming ASAP, first that day, and again on Monday morning, but at press time Tuesday, despite those assurances, no information had been provided.

Another error appears to affect those who may have tried to book appointments for the 75 and over age group through the booking system Monday morning.

Rene Bertschi contacted The Local to say he had tried to make a vaccination date at the NOTL clinic site Monday morning, when registration opened to his age group, but couldn’t. After phoning the booking system number, he was told they were all booked.

He was frustrated to learn that after waiting almost an hour on the phone, there weren’t enough appointments available in a town with such a high seniors population. Instead, he offered to pay for the vaccination himself.

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Park rules and regulations explained in bylaw

**Construction to begin on Village apartments**

**Local Staff**

Following aground-breaking ceremony Mon-day, construction was ex-pected to begin Tuesday on 20 new one and two-bed-room apartment units in three separate buildings in The Village.

“We are very excited to be bringing new rent- al housing to The Village. Providing a diversity of housing options has al- ways been integral to our original vision and master plan, and rental housing is a key part of that,” said John Hawley, president of Traditio-nal Neighbour-hood Developments Inc. (TND), in a press release issued Monday. “They’re going to be beautiful build- ings, with architectural connections to heritage properties in Niagra-on-the-Lake.”

When we started de-signing these apartments, we drew inspiration from the Willowbank Estate in Queenston, with its beau-tiful curved staircases and prominent entrance,” said Adam Hawley, vice-president of TND.

Parking will be accessed through the use of a private rear lane, and there will be ample bike storage.

An agreement is in place with Village Bike Rental, always looking for rental units for staff, to rent one building with seven units, beginning Nov. 1, 2022.

Those interested in learning more about The Village Apartments can join the mailing list at www.TheVillageNiagara.com/Apartments.

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**Park rules and regulations explained in bylaw**

**Penny Coles**

**The Local**

With warm weather in the forecast, council has approved a bylaw to impose some limits to activities in local parks, as a result of issues experienced with the arrival of a large num-ber of visitors once the warm weather arrived last year.

The bylaw sets hours for parks to be open, and restric-tions about barbecues, tents, al-cohol, and organized activities, among other concerns.

Coun. Sandra O’Connor asked last week for a deferral to allow for some public input, which was missing in the draft-ing of the bylaw, but as Lord Mayor Betty Disero pointed out, while public feedback is important, the bylaw doesn’t include anything “extreme” and this summer can be considered a trial period before deciding whether changes are required.

Director of operations Shel-don Randall explained the by-law is not unusual, having been arranged in a square grid on a white background. When scanned using a smartphone camera, the QR code will redi-rect the user to a webpage, ac-cording to revisions to the bylaw that might be made in the future.

The report to councillors estimates 31 new signs will be required at a cost of $150 each, for a total of $4,650.

There is a provision in the bylaw for special occasion permits, with a processing fee, which, with council approv-al would be required for large events in Queen’s Royal Park and Simcoe Park. They would be needed for events with ex-pected attendance of 250 people or more; road closures ex-ceeding 12 hours; and alcohol or food trucks on the property. Barbecues and bonfires are outlawed without a special permit.

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The park bylaw bans ri-otous, boisterous, violent, threatening, indecent or illegal activity; activity that creates a public nuisance, including be-ing intoxicated; littering; spy-ing; urinating; and any other interfering with the use and enjoyment of the park; and the use of regional bylaws; activity that may cause injury or damage; carrying or discharging a fire-arm, air gun, slingshot or other permit-requiring item; releasing balloons, pa-per lanterns, glitter or confetti; operating motorized models of aircraft, watercraft or ve-hicles, or using a skateboard, non-motorized scooter, or rollerslides other than in des-gnated areas; and practic-ing golf; throwing any object that might hurt someone or com-ing onto or putting up a structure such as a tent or booth without a permit.

Shade shelters for children will be allowed. Anyone contravening the bylaw can be asked to stop the activity or personal property asked to leave the park, or fined.

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**The Hawleys have chosen to honour architectural connections to NOTL heritage with the design of three apartment buildings to be constructed in The Village.**

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The Niagara Region is known for many things - quality wine, innovative culinary experiences and a quick retreat from the city. Each of these experiences that give Niagara its exceptional flair are nestled underneath a canopy of trees and natural wonders. The preservation of this magnificent urban forest is at the heart of what professional tree care company Safe Tree stands for. In their overarching approach to tree maintenance and plant health care, Safe Tree actively performs their services with both tree and property owner in mind.

Safe Tree specializes in low-impact tree removal in addition to providing disease and pest control, trimming and pruning, stump removal, cabling and bracing and even planting and plant health care services. Ivan Fredette, Team Leader and Certified Utility Arborist at Safe Tree, knows that his team assesses each tree with longevity in mind, ensuring that plant health care is at the forefront of each diagnosis. "Plant health-care helps to deal with any stressors, issues or pests that trees may have. At Safe Tree, we want to get the trees back to where they were and help preserve the wonderful heritage that they may hold." As Team Leader, Fredette strives to educate Safe Tree clients on how professional tree maintenance benefits not only the value of their property now, but for generations to come. "We strategically assess each tree and landscape we encounter to ensure that they are treated with a full scaled approach. It is easy to start from scratch, but to preserve these ancient trees that contribute to our canopy is truly amazing."

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The educated and trained arborists at Safe Tree take a comprehensive approach to assessing all factors of tree maintenance, ensuring that their customers' minds are put at ease. From types of soil that surround a tree to what species may be impacted by their removal, customers trust that Safe Tree considers all environmental elements. Performing with a sense of stewardship to the Niagara canopy, the Safe Tree team leans into their strong moral compass and ensures that their clients are professionally educated about their trees. One of our team players at Safe Tree, Plant Healthcare Specialist Kaitlyn Simpson, believes in creating a stronger, greener urban forest for our community. "In Southern Ontario, urban forests are not only crucial for wildlife, but also us as humans. At Safe Tree, we are actively doing everything we can every day to protect and maintain the urban forest, and that is important to me both personally and professionally." Tree maintenance benefits not only the value of their property now, but for generations to come.

As municipalities expand and the economy continues to grow, Safe Tree strives to maintain the beautiful green heritage of Niagara. Safe Tree is further fueling their meaningful approach to tree maintenance through Simpson who is passionate about her new journey. "To me, Safe Tree hits every beneficial factor for the urban forest. From maintenance to plant health-care to removal, we strategically look at the entire tree life cycle to ensure we are helping make the urban forest bigger and better and the future, much greener."
Vaccinations important for all adults, not just seniors

It’s great news to hear from locals who are rolling up their sleeves and getting vaccinated. And even better when we hear the number of people across the region who have either been vaccinated or have their appointments, and will be sooned. The faster that number climbs, the sooner we can dig ourselves out of this pandemic. While we’re not the experts, we listen to what the experts say, and they say it’s important to be vaccinated. They tell us all four of the vaccines approved in Canada are safe, and highly effective at preventing COVID-19, and even more serious illness and death. That’s the kind of news we like to hear.

And as important, if you’re vaccinated, all the experts tell us we’re helping to protect our loved ones, and others we may come into contact with. Those who have received their first shot realize it doesn’t give them unlimited freedom. They still have to be careful about all Movietools, until they and others around them have both doses. That’s why the experts will tell us it’s safe to resume our social activity, and that won’t happen until most, if not all, of the adult population is vaccinated.

That’s a little concerning, because so far, we’ve only heard from seniors, health care workers and others at high risk, who have been vaccinated. They couldn’t wait. But we have no idea what percentage of the uptake will see, how much enthusiasm will be, when appointments begin to trickle down for the younger adults, who don’t want to see themselves as vulnerable. Yet as we see cases numbers climbing here and around the world, we hear


talk about those in their 30s and 40s getting sick, ending up in ICU beds, even dying. That horrible to contemplate, but points out the need for all age groups to be vaccinated when their opportunity knocks.

We’re being told we’ve got about two more months to live as if we’re in a lockdown, although to be clear, we aren’t. We’re actually seeing a little lessening on restrictions, allowing more people indoors and on outdoor patios.

Every day, with every clinic and every arm vaccinated, it seems we’re inching closer, but of course, we’re not there yet.

While we can enjoy our local restaurants, we still need to be on guard about our social interactions. That’s what stands between us and another lockdown, we’re told.

And in the meantime, we treat the experts who are encouraging us to be vaccinated with the utmost respect, we may be able to move around much more freely by the time the summer comes, going to the theatre, the Shaw Festival, some of the many outdoor events we’ve missed over the course of a year, and enjoying time with friends and family.

All we want whatever age and stage of life, have been missing out on something important to us, and we are so very close to enjoying those things again soon.

When it’s the turn of younger adults to make a decision, with the high-risk seniors, the front-line workers, teachers and paramedics, all those who put themselves at risk for us, have been vaccinated, hopefully they won’t hesitate. For themselves, and for everyone else around them.

And so we can get back to enjoying all we love most about summer. The good weather is coming. We can call.

Penny Cokes
The Local

Turkey vultures returning

Swooping above the skies of town and surrounding region, many of us have recently ad- mired the large raptors, turkey vultures (Cathartes aura), that have been returning on their spring migration. With a possible wingspan of close to two metres, they are easy to spot in the sky, especially on a windy day.

Their flight pattern often seems quite whirrallic, drifting and drifting with the wind and the upwellings of warmer air. The ends of their wings resemble ‘fingers’ which makes it eas- ier for us to identify them from the ground. We see them in the flight and in summer’s large as they migrate. No screams for them spending the winter in the south and crossing the border with the warm- er weather during a pandemic. When a large number of them are spotted in the skies, this is known as ‘settling,’ and can occur during their spring and fall migrations. They are less likely to be seen in the morning — they tend to fly until the afternoon when there are stronger air cur- rents and thermals carry them further and faster.

When they fly south, they will travel past the areas in the U.S. where turkey vultures live year round, instead continuing until they get to places such as Venezuela and Argentina.

Despite the fact that the creatures have a face that best be described as one that only a mother could love, vultures are quite fascinating. They resemble, from a distance, a wild turkey, but have no feather- ers on their heads. As they have no voice box like other birds, they can only emit a grunting sound or a hoot. The red-faced turkey vulture is the most com- mon species seen in the area, but the black vulture (Coragyps atratus) is being spotted a lot more recently. Two weeks ago a number of the black vultures were spotted in the Queenston area.

I had only known of this species of birds since spotting them occasionally in the skies above Highway 6 and 10 while driving to Tobermory, Ontario, but, despite remaining on their flight paths, never knowing much about them. I can remember driving down the Ni- agaraw Parkway a few years ago, and becoming aware of these large creatures sitting on a post in a vineyard. I slowed down, and then realized there were quite a few, just sitting around. I had never actually seen them


don’t hesitate. For themselves, we may be able to move around much

Continued on page 7
It is my understanding that the town is currently debating the issue of whether or not to open our pools this summer, and further, whether or not lessons should be offered. I am writing this letter in support of the opening of both the town pools with swim lessons running.

We are now a year into the pandemic. The citizens of Niagara-on-the-Lake have shown great strength, and have risen together as a community.

As summer approaches, we need to encourage our lord mayor and town council to open both pools and offer lessons for our youth.

The Lifesaving Society of Canada feels strongly that facilities where the age of 80 with the allotment of vaccines made available to us. Recognizing the unique concentration of a senior population in Niagara, we are asking for you to immediately act and provide additional specific vaccine relief for Niagara and include our local pharmacies in the provincial pilot program immediately. We have asked our pharmacies in Niagara and it is not only clear that they have capacity but that they are eager to start putting vaccines in the arms of their elderly residents due to the high demand. For example, Templons Pharmacy, an incredible local community partner, has told us they have the capacity to immediately help in the fight against this virus - already they have a waitlist that exceeds 3,500 seniors waiting for government approval. They are not alone among the local pharmacies willing to play a role in defeating this virus. We implore you to let these local heroes do what they do best and helpsave lives.

According to the science table, the majority of intensive care admissions in Ontario are within the age group of 60 to 70 years old. It is urgent to ensure we have a vaccination rollout strategy that includes retailing pharmacies in Niagara in order to keep pace with other younger populations across the province. You must act now and include Niagara pharmacies being brought on board with the provincial pharmacy pilot and expedited delivery channels in our region.

We will work with you to whatever degree you need to make this request a reality. Our offices look forward to discussing this matter further with you.

Sincerely,

MPP Jennie Stevens
St. Catharines

This letter is in regard to your recent story (The Local, March 3) about a Niagara-on-the-Lake couple who, despite federal and provincial requests not to travel outside of Canada during the current pandemic, did so at risk to both themselves and Canadians they might infect on their return.

In short, two NOTL citizens journeyed to Florida for the winter despite Florida being a dangerous hot spot for COVID-19. In your story, they speak about how they broke the rules and are safely enconced on their motor yacht at a Florida marina. In fact, we were even informed that they had been vaccinated down there as Canadians llamp along up here. I guess the rest of us are suckers for staying home, following the safety protocols, giving up seeing our families, and general turning ourselves into winter hermits in the hope we can defeat the COVID-19 virus through responsible behaviour.

Consider, available statistics tell us there have been more than two million COVID-19 cases in Florida, more than 37,000 deaths in the state and 175 deaths every day. And even now there are active right-wing campaigns to discourage their own people from taking the vaccine creating even more danger for our NOTL Buccaneers.

Our NOTL citizens have been lucky as far as we know, however, not so for everyone who breaks the rules. Third-party acquaintances (the Mailmans) from Nova Scotia, who claim the winter is hard on their bodies, did something similar. Unfortunately, they didn't time their health insurance needs properly and both contracted COVID-19. While we still know the long term health results, we do know they are facing monstrous medical bills over $300k. US that will likely destroy them financially. Let Nova Scotia not become a bad example.

I suppose I object strongly to two things: the tone adopted by our Florida boat dwellers, and the fact that The Local printed such a story. Surely, through lauding their success by giving them a voice in the community, you are encouraging others to also flaunt the rules. This can only result in more COVID cases, more deaths and a further delay in getting back to any semblance of normalcy.

Responsible journalism means being able to resist a "tabloid draw" such as the aforementioned story and instead simply report the news.

Robert Moorhead
NOTL

Photograph a challenge

Continued from page 6

Then, two years ago, a large number of them appeared behind a neigh- bours' house across the street. I counted about 35 of them roosting in several trees on their property. Upon investiga- tion, we found a dead raccoon in the yard that the vultures were turning to devour. Turkey vultures have an amaz- ing sense of smell. As they drift closer to the ground, they use this sense to detect the presence of carrion. As such, they act as nature's clean-up crew, and are very important for this reason. Last summer, while visiting the Lake Erie shorelinem at Morgan's Point, I saw several vultures clinging to dead fish washed up on a driftwood ashore, ending up on the rocky shoreline. Without such animals performing the task of clearing up, rotting fish and carrion cases would be a source of bac- teria and disease.

This year, when I started spotting them in the air and seeing some photos posted on Facebook, from other photogra- phers, I once again decided to head down the Niagara Parkway toward Queenston. At first, I was keeping an eye on the fence posts along the way, but no luck.

As I headed up the escarpment at Queenston and round- ed the bend, I spotted several sitting in a tree across the road- way. I managed to quickly pull into the laneaway on the right, where the steps leading up to Brooks Monument are located. I parked and slowly climbed out of my vehicle. I eased my camera strap over my head and around my neck before care- fully crossing the road. I didn't want to scare them off. They ap- peared to be quite uninterested in my presence.

The sun, however, was be- hind them, making it difficult to get photos that were simply not silhouettes. I did manage a few though. It was on this oc- casion that I first noticed the vultures of the four spread its wings and hold them out for an extended period. This is known as the ‘horaltic’ pose. When doing this, the vulture is either drying its wings if they are wet, or regu- lating its body temperature, try- ing to cool down or warm up, or they may simply be posing. I did manage a few though. It was on this oc- casion that I first noticed the vultures of the four spread its wings and hold them out for an extended period. This is known as the ‘horaltic’ pose. When doing this, the vulture is either drying its wings if they are wet, or regu- lating its body temperature, try- ing to cool down or warm up, or they may simply be posing.

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Horse lost to equine virus, local stable in quarantine

Penny Coles/The Local

A highly infectious disease has taken the life of a thoroughbred being groomed as a show horse for the coming season, and quarantined a local horse farm.

Pippin, an almost 14-year-old retired race horse who had been boarded by his family at Benchview Equestrian Centre for about eight years, became ill, was tested and found positive for EHV-1, a highly contagious and deadly equine virus, says Benchview's Jasmine Darte. If caught the disease in a herd of horses, some surmise, but Pippin's health declined rapidly over a 24-hour period and could not be saved.

That was Sunday, March 14, and if it had been passed to any of their 28 horses, they would be expected to have shown symptoms within five to nine days, so it seems Pippin had an isolated case — none of the other horses were showing any signs of the disease this week.

"It looks like we're good so far," she says, with the vet telling them they can breathe a little easier while they ride out the quarantine. However, the equestrian centre and its horses remain in isolation for a total of 21 days, during which time they have a very extensive and expensive sanitization and sterilization program in place.

Aside from staff, the centre is closed to anyone else, she says.

Designated staff monitor the horses around the clock, taking their temperatures and watching for any signs of illness. "We watch their movement, if something's off. Sometimes they may have bludder issues, or may be leaning up against the fence," she says.

The vet also checks in with them several times a day, she says. "He's very confident with communicating that he's regularly, and he would be here in half an hour to administer medication if necessary.

The protocols are eerily similar to what people are going through with COVID, and can be a scary realization for the staff, says Darte. "We can't have clients here taking lessons."

It's very common, with a large number of horses becoming infected before they reach the age of two, says Darte, although many never show any symptoms. The disease can remain dormant, and come out at times of high stress, similar to chicken pox and shingles in humans.

For a male such as Pippin, the spring mating system is enough to cause stress levels to increase, with female horses nearby, she says. "It's very common, with a large number of horses becoming infected before they reach the age of two, says Darte, although many never show any symptoms. The disease can remain dormant, and come out at times of high stress, similar to chicken pox and shingles in humans.

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Pippin enjoyed visits from his family's dog Marty. (Justine Drodger)

Continued from page 2

Region lobbying province

Continued from page 2

$13 from the province for each vaccination, but it's not a money-maker, with the time involved and the cost of supplies, including personal protective equipment and syringes, he says.

He expects pharmacies will also have to set up their own online booking system, to link to the provincial site.

"Pharmacies are a very safe space for vaccinations," he says. "We're looking forward to being onboard as soon as we can, but the timing is up to the province."

He says in the meantime he would encourage people to get vaccinated as soon as possible, "no matter where."

Regional chair Jim Bradbury, who had hired Hirji as the medical expert, says Disero, and having people vaccinated, "but we're not there yet."

"He is the medical expert," and "what he tells us is what I say to the public. I don't want to give anyone other than the medical advice from the experts."

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"He is the medical expert," and "what he tells us is what I say to the public. I don't want to give anyone other than the medical advice from the experts."

He is "obviously disappointed" Niagara has not been included in the regions now receiving vaccines for pharmacies, he adds, but hopes that will change soon.

"I'm hoping we don't see a repeat, that it takes another month," he said, referring to the delay in receiving vaccines from the province earlier this year.

"We're one of 13 hotspots in the province. I hope in the next round of pharmacies and primary health care clinics, we'll be included."
Penny Coles
The Local

Last year, St. Davids families protested the town’s decision not to open the pool. They are hoping not to have to do that again.

St. Davids parent Adriana Vizzari said it is customary, about mid-June, to open the St. Davids pool as the province cleared the way for pool openings. The decision to leave the St. Davids pool closed was made by the town’s emergency control group, based on cost.

“Last season, once the province cleared the way for pool openings, the town announced it would be operating the Memorial Park pool and the Virgil splash pad,” said Vizzari, where children can meet their friends and learn to swim. She’s hoping they can do so again this summer.

“If it weren’t for costs relating to the pandemic, I would open it and deal with mechanical problems, if there are any,” Turcotte said last season. But the Old Town pool is newer and more reliable than the St. Davids facility, which is expected to be replaced.

The original timeline for a new pool, which depended on receiving a major grant from the provincial and federal governments, would have seen the old one open for 2020, with work beginning on the new, $5 million pool when it closed last fall. However, that grant didn’t come through, and any future timeline depends on a successful result for new grant applications, Turcotte says, but his plan, when that happens, is to time construction without losing a season.

A fundraising committee has been struck, but has no target, until they know they have secured a grant and how much it’s for. Their discussions to date have been about going after grants, as well as naming opportunities from a large sponsor, such as Bell Canada.

The decision to leave the St. Davids Pool closed was made by the town’s emergency control group, based on cost.

“As far as swimming lessons, a decision will be made when he knows more about the restrictions imposed by the province, he says. “My plan is to open the pool, and see what colour we’re in, and what programs we’re able to offer.”

Last season, once the province cleared the way for pool openings, the town announced it would be operating the Memorial Park pool and the Virgil splash pad.

However, he cautioned councillors that although it has always been properly winterized, it’s an old pool which has been closed for two winters, and there could be mechanical problems.

“I just wanted them to be aware there could be problems. If something does come up, we’ll address it, based on the cost of repairs,” he says, hoping that isn’t the case, but he won’t know until he tries, he says.

“If there is an issue, what happens next depends on how expensive it would be to repair. The decision would be one for council to make at that point, he says.

“We’d have to give council a business case to consider. Ultimately it would be up to council to decide and approve the expense. It’s not something that’s in the budget.”

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“My plan is to open the pool, and see what colour we’re in, and what programs we’re able to offer.”

The plan, he says, is to try to open the St. Davids pool as is customary, about mid-June, around two weeks before it would open to the public.

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“If it weren’t for costs relating to the pandemic, I would open it and deal with mechanical problems, if there are any,” Turcotte said last season. But the Old Town pool is newer and more reliable than the St. Davids facility, which is expected to be replaced.

The original timeline for a new pool, which depended on receiving a major grant from the provincial and federal governments, would have seen the old one open for 2020, with work beginning on the new, $5 million pool when it closed last fall. However, that grant didn’t come through, and any future timeline depends on a successful result for new grant applications, Turcotte says, but his plan, when that happens, is to time construction without losing a season.

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The town has $100,000 put aside in its capital budget, which shows council’s support of a new pool, Turcotte says, and donations so far have contributed about $48,000.

The pool is a huge part of the St. Davids community, says Vizzari, where children can meet their friends and learn to swim. She’s hoping they can do so again this summer.
Grace United gets reserved parking for $1

**Penny Coles**

**The Local**

It may only have been a handshake, but a deal is a deal.

And the deal with Grace United Church on Victoria Street over parking spaces, even if only verbal, should be respected, said Mayor Betty Disero.

In response to a request from Grace United Church members for a reserved space for the minister and three parking spaces in front of the church to be enforced as belonging to the church, councillors have agreed to help ease their parking difficulties.

But the majority of council did not agree with the staff report that the church pay for those parking spaces.

The church had installed four signs, one reserving a parking spot for the minister, the other three reserved for one-hour parking for church members, based on what church representatives thought was an agreement with the town forty years ago. Councillors told them in December they couldn’t use those signs until council had a staff report and a vote to support the use of those signs, which have remained covered since.

But because town staff could find no documented evidence that, as the church had suggested, the town had agreed to those parking spaces for the church decades ago, the staff report recommended the church would have to pay for the parking spots.

In past times, it was not uncommon for municipal agreements to be confirmed with a handshake, said Disero.

“I really believe when you give your word, you give your word,” said Disero, adding she believed the town and church had come to the agreement of parking spaces in the 1960s.

“I believe in my heart of hearts that an agreement was made with the church, in good faith, and we should honour that agreement.”

On Monday, she suggested an amendment to the motions councillors approved, which was to lease the four spaces to the church for $1, with third-party responsibility for insurance, permitting and enforcement, and council approved.

Councillor Sandra O’Connor agreed with Disero about the cost, referring at the planning committee meeting, reminding councillors that Mary Snider, a member of the church in the 1960s “who has a room named after her in the Virgil arena,” remembered that parking spaces were reserved for the church.

Just because written documents couldn’t be located, doesn’t mean an agreement didn’t exist, said O’Connor.

It was suggested construction trucks and others who use the spaces could be ticketed, but continue to park there all day, so town staff proposed the parking be allowed for one hour only.

It encourage parking turnover, allowing some parking for businesses in the area and give church members there during the week-on-church business an opportunity to use the space.

“I’m disappointed to hear the importance of parking turnover,” said Coun. Clare Cameron.

“Churches are a major part of what remains to help stitch the fabric of a community, together and connect people,” encouraging a sense of community.

“I’m extremely supportive of this. Churches are facing enough challenges as it is,” adding the parking spaces are “a simple ask.”

The approval of the signs provides a solution to problems that go back to the building of the church in a location that has no property for parking.

When church trustee David Gilchrist asked council for some help with the situation in December, going over some of the history of parking issues, he was told a report would be prepared for council, who would make a decision on the spaces.

“The church members had decided to install the signs reserving parking spaces based on what they thought was a decision made years ago, although they didn’t feel they needed to put the signs up until recently,” said Disero.

Instead, the town asked that the signs be bagged until council could deal with the issue.

For new people coming to town, staff at local businesses, the hotel, store and condominium construction workers, and even the immediate residents of nearby apartments, the unusual for municipal agreements

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Penny Coles  
The Local

St. Patrick’s Day at Irish De- 
sign was just not the same this 
year.

Anne Marie Regehr was not 
there to play her Irish music, as 
she has for the last 30 years, first 
on her fiddle, then on an Irish 
harp, which she learned to play 
at the age of 60.

She was certainly not the 
same for her family on their 
mother’s favourite day. They are 
missing their mother, and her 
love of music, of Ireland and of 
all things Irish, says her daugh-
ter Diane Haliski.

Anne Marie, who was ded- 
crating much of her time look- 
ing after her ailing husband, 
died suddenly at the age of 83 
after suffering a stroke.

Born April 23, 1937 in the 
Cottage Hospital, she died 
March 8, “peacefully, with grace, 
and surrounded by family.”

Anne Marie is well known for 
playing her music at festi-
vails, concerts, weddings and 
funerals around the region. 
She also played for seniors in 
long-term care residences, and 
would intersperse her tunes 
with amusing anecdotes of 
family history or Irish tales, says 
Diane, calling herself the Winer-
ning woman.

Generous with her time, and 
loving to share her pas-
sion for music, she would play 
anywhere she was asked. If she 
charged for her time, it was 
a small amount, but anything 
she made she would save for her 
next trip to Ireland, says Haliski.

From the time she was a 
child, Anne Marie longed to 
visit Ireland, which she did at 
least 24 times, all but two of 
them on her own.

“I knew she loved to travel 
and had been to Ireland sever-
al times, but I was shocked to 
learn that she had been that 
many times,” says Diane.

The last time was two years 
ago, when she was continuing 
to explore family history. She 
loved to visit cemeteries and 
cemeti-
tories, looking for information 
about her ancestors.

“She felt more at home in 
Ireland than anywhere,” says 
Diane.

Her first visit was with 
friends, but she decided she 
would see more on her own if 
she went alone — full of energy 
and enthusiasm, she would pack 
as much as she could into every 
moment of every day when she 
was away, living “like a gypsy” 
and enjoying her solitude.

She also made one trip that 
included Diane and a large 
group of Irish dancers, who 
she accompanied to a dance compe-
tition.

Her husband Dan, her child-
hood sweetheart of 63 years, 
stayed at home, and was always 
very supportive of his wife and 
hers dreams, says Diane.

Going through her mother’s 
musical history, Diane found 
many fiddle players on the pi-
ace Anne Marie had played, the many people 
she had connected with and 
performed with, as she trav-
elled to many locations around 
Europe and Great Britain, pur-
chasing her love of music.

One tidbit Diane came 
across was an item about a con-
test Anne Marie had entered in 
a job in Ireland, a traditional 
dancing contest — an old 
dance is danced on the top,
on top of a rooster, explains Diane.

Her mother not only step-
danced on the court, but played 
her fiddle while she danced, 
“which gave the Canadian lady 
the win,” she says.

Growing up in St. Davids, 
Anne Marie was encouraged to 
play the piano as a child. When 
she turned 10, she took up the 
fiddle. She had accompanied 
many fiddle players on the pi-
ano, says Diane, and wanted 
to learn the instrument herself.

She proudly played the hand-
made black walnut violin her 
husband gave her for Christ-
mas one year.

Diane remembers a home 
filed with music, including 
her as a child and recently with 
grandchildren. “We were so lucky to 
always have music in our lives,” 
she said. And in addition to the 
many performances on her own, 
Anne Marie was also musical 
director for St. Davids Presbyte-
rian Church, and a member of 
the Niagara Old Time Fiddlers 
Association and various other 
groups over the years.

She also remembers great 
summers in Muskoka, where 
her mother had worked at a 
lodge as a young woman. She 
had great memories of that 
time, and took her family back 
there every summer for many 
years, creating great memories 
for them as well, says Diane.

Two of the highlights of 
her mother’s life were opening 
for American musicians Willie 
Nelson, at one of the Niagara 
Falls casinos — Diane isn’t sure 
whether that was in the U.S. or 
Canadian side — and taking 
the stage to play with the Chief-
tain, a traditional Irish band 
formed in Dublin, when they 
performed in Hamilton.

Anne Marie was also an 
amateur historian, and loved to 
traverse through old cemeteries. 
“Shall drive far just to visit a 
deadly soul, on the off-chance 
they may have a story to share 
about some distant relative,” 
says Diane. “That was exciting 
for her.”

Many of these stories were 
used in the compilation of her 
Family History Book. When it 
was being published, she was 
adviced to make 100 copies, 
says Diane, and was surprised 
to have it sell out at the Niagra-
ra-on-the-Lake Museum.

It included her father and 
grandfather, Nixon and Ed, who 
published the Niagara Advance, 
the newspaper of Brant town, 
and her brother, Jnr., reached 
it’s 100th anniversary before it was shut down.

Ed, her grandfather, came 
to town in 1919 specifically to 
start the newspaper, and his 
son Nixon, Anne Marie’s father, 
took it over and ran it until he 
paid it in the early 1930s. While 
Anne Marie was born after her 
father sold it, she loved to hear 
the stories her father would tell of 
those years — he was a 
great story-teller — and she was 
proud of that connection.

When she died, she was 
working on another family his-
tory, this one telling the stories of 
the men in her family, going 
back generations, who had 
served in the military.

Anne Marie had wanted to 
give it to Dan for his son, a 
captain in the Canadian Armed Forces. 
Diane says she hasn’t been able 
to find it yet, but she will keep 
looking — there is so much to 
go through as a result of her 
mother’s very busy life and 
many interests.

Diane says she walked with 
her mother regularly, and had a 
hard time keeping up with her — 
she was very active, dancing 
and playing her music right up 
until her stroke. “She seemed so 
young,” says Diane. “She really 
surprised us.”

Her mother was always 
upbeat, always positive, “and 
always really supportive of any-
thing we wanted to do. She let 
us find our own ways, and was 
always so helpful. She would 
help anyone with anything.”

She also loved to be out in 
the community, and going out 
for dinner with Dan, especial-
ly the NOTL Golf Club. They 
were out for dinner just before 
she stroke, says Diane. “I’m glad 
they had that one last time be-
fore she die.”

A small graveside Celtic 
service, with some local music-
ian friends, including Doug 
Miller on flute and Debbie 
Whitehouse singing some of 
Anne Marie’s favourite Irish 
music, was held at St. Andrew’s 
Presbyterian Church.

Anne Marie is survived by 
herself husband Daniel, children 
Heather Williams (Mark), Di-
anne Haliski (Mark Holmes) 
and Teresa, four grandchildren, 
three great-grandchildren and 
her siblings Kathleen Sharpe 
and Terry Brennan.

She is preceded by her 
son Desmond, parents Nixon 
and Elsie Brennan (Dawson), and 
brothers Michael, Harry and 
Dennis.
Popular author to do virtual session at library

Penny Coles
The Local

Ian Hamilton, the popular author of the best-selling Ava Lee novels and the more recent Uncle series, will be offering a virtual reading and discussion at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Library.

It was planned for January, says program coordinator Debbie Krause, but had to be cancelled due to the lockdown, with a new date arranged for the Burlington author as soon as the library was able to open again.

While there are no in-person Wine and Words events, she suggests fans of his books can still have a glass of wine and listen to Hamilton from the comfort of their homes.

Although it’s a virtual session, Hamilton specifically wanted to hold it at the library. He’s very comfortable with organizing online meetings from home, and has his “techie” wife nearby if there are any problems, he says, but he hopes to come to Niagara-on-the-Lake. He has friends in town and hopes to be able to fit in a visit of some sort.

He’s also looking forward to getting out and about, he says, after a year with a full lineup of events cancelled.

His reading will be from Fortune, the newest in what was supposed to be an Uncle Chow trilogy — he knows there will be at least one more spin-off from the Ava Lee books, of which there are now 14.

Ava Lee is a young Chinese-Canadian forensic accountant who specializes in collecting massive debts that aren’t likely to be recovered through traditional methods, and Uncle is her Hong Kong partner, helping her deal with the organized corruption that seems to inevitably factor into her work.

Hamilton, now 74, has had an extremely varied and unconventional career himself. He’s been a journalist, a civil servant with several different departments of the federal government, and a businessman running seafood companies.

He’s worked in more than 30 countries, and has travelled to China at least 50 times since he first visited the country in 1989.

In 2009, while still working, he underwent major surgery. When he recovered, he decided to change his life and spend his remaining time doing exactly what he wanted to do.

So he began taking himself downtown in his Burlington home every morning, cup of coffee in hand, to write about the exploits of his favourite hero, drawing on his familiarity with Chinese culture, history, people and food as the backdrop, as well as the many strong women in his family who have surrounded him all his life.

Since then, he’s become a prolific and popular author, and will be making his fourth appearance at the NOTL library, where he is always well received, says Krause.

His most recent novel is a stand-alone story that not surprisingly has been kicking around in his head for several years, based on his own father’s life.

His father, says Hamilton, was six years old when his mother took him and his sister to a Glasgow movie theatre, and left him there.

“He was raised by his father and was treated abysmally,” says Hamilton. “He was bright as hell and evidently a good student, but was forced to leave school when he was 14, and was apprenticed as a bricklayer. The book is dedicated to him, and it basically sums up his life.”

Hamilton’s mother didn’t know the story of her husband being abandoned and having a sister — he had told her he was an only child. After revealing the story about his childhood one night over dinner, years into their marriage, they decided to travel to England to meet his sister. There they discovered his mother had been pregnant when she left him, and he had another sister, as well as a half-sister.

They were able to meet all three women, but only one of those meetings went well, says Hamilton.

In Bonnie Jack, he was Jack Anderson who was abandoned by his mother in a Glasgow movie theatre. Now living in the U.S. and facing his impending retirement, Jack and his wife Anne travel to Scotland to track down his long-lost sister, where he becomes entangled in local affairs and confronts uncomforatable truths about family.

But true to form, it’s Jack’s wife whose strength becomes evident at the end of the book, leaving the possibility open that she could feature in future novels.

Hamilton says he might consider doing a reading of this yet-to-be-released novel, although that wasn’t originally his plan.

His appearance at the library is a free event presented over Zoom. Attendance is limited, and registration is required.

Zoom log-in information will be emailed to all participants at least 24 hours before each event.

Bestselling author of the Ava Lee series

Ian Hamilton will read from his newest release in the Uncle trilogy, but may also do a reading from Bonnie Jack, his latest, a stand-alone novel.

Stay home to stop the spread of COVID-19.
Learn more at ontario.ca/covid-19

Paid for by the Government of Ontario

Social gatherings can have deadly consequences.

Telehealth services and some in-person care are resuming in Ontario on April 1.

The reasons for resuming telehealth and in-person visits are complex, experts say, but most say they prioritize the needs of COVID-19 patients, seniors and those with chronic conditions.

Health-care providers are being asked to carefully consider the unique needs of individual patients before deciding which services should be offered in person.

Both in-person and virtual visits are being resumed, and some services are changing to ensure patients can continue to get the care they need.

This article has been updated.

Ian Hamilton, a prolific and popular author, will make his fourth appearance for a reading at the NOTL library, this time virtually. (Photos supplied)
Royal Oak School started a Local Lunch program this year to provide healthy, hot lunches to our students and staff, but also to support our local restaurants that have had a difficult year. Evi Hassan enjoys an Olde Angel Inn lunch in the Early Years room. (Photos supplied)

Silas Agate enjoys his freshly rolled sushi made in Passport Club. Though finding opportunities for extracurricular involvement has been difficult this year, Royal Oak is committed to continuing their clubs by cohorting students with their own teachers in afterschool activities and continuing these important social and enriched learning opportunities for their students.

Max Yerich has a healthy salad bowl from Freshii as part of the Local Lunch program.

Saxon Reese, Aspen Ziraldo, Silas Agate and Kamila Domaradzki ham it up for the camera.
It’s amazing to get an opportunity. Jessica said in a press release. “It’s the pinnacle of motorsports in North America. As a race fan myself, it has always been something I’ve dreamed about doing.”

The process to transform the all-concrete track at Bristol into a red clay surface for this weekend began about three months ago. Over 2,000 loads of dirt, 25,000 cubic yards full, were hauled in to construct the multi-layered surface. Global Satellite Positioning (GPS) equipment on the bulldozers and graders were used to place the Bluff City clay onto the right spots on the track.

In the video call with reporters last week, Jessica said Parker is trying to wrap his head around the idea of both his parents competing in the same NASCAR race, while his wife will be strapped into his familiar number 52. It marks the first time the HFR team has fielded two trucks in the same race. The Friesens become the first husband and wife to compete as teammates in the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series event in Bristol, Tennessee.

The couple have raced as teammates in a number of dirt car events, but this weekend’s Pinty’s Truck Race on Dirt will be Jessica’s debut behind the wheel of a truck in competition. Jessica will be driving the number 62 Toyota Tundra, while her husband will compete as teammate in the number 52. It marks the first time married duo to drive the same NASCAR event, while the first husband and wife to race. The Friesens become the second married duo to drive in the same NASCAR race, since Elton Sawyer and Patty Misoe in the early 1990s.

“I’ve been racing sprint cars and modifieds on dirt for my entire racing career,” Jessica said in a press release. “It’s amazing to get an opportunity to compete at this level. I’m looking forward to the experience of driving a truck for the first time.”

Like her husband, Jessica grew up in racing, starting with go-karts at age seven, and working her way up to the bigger vehicles. In recent years her focus has turned to her family, especially the couple’s young son, Parker, who will turn six this year. She also runs a screen-printing business. One Zee Teez, out of their home base in New York state.

But this year she’s been more active on the Northeast Dirt Modified circuit, where they often compete together. Last weekend in Port Royal, Pennsylvania, Stewart and Jessica finished third and fourth in a 40-lap Short Track Super Series event won by St. Catharines native Mat Williamson. The couple both began the race in the front row after finishing their heat in first and second.

In a video call with reporters last week, Jessica said Parker is trying to wrap his head around the idea of both his parents competing in the trucks. To Parker, Dad races the truck, while Mom races the modifieds. “It’s a story Jessica says will be great to tell their grandkids someday. Stewart has been giving Jessica some pointers for her first time in the truck, and she admits his experience on the circuit is valuable. On the line from the shop today, where both trucks were being prepared, Stewart says Jessica will take a few days to learn the transmission in preparation for Saturday’s race.

“Last weekend in Georgetown, a friend of ours brought his pro-stock and she ran it for a bunch of laps,” he adds. “There’s a lot of similarities between the truck and the pro-stock. She got the feel of a full-sized vehicle, sitting on the left hand side. She looked really good, got really comfortable, and turned a lot of good laps.”

Stewart Friesen, his wife Jessica and Parker (centre) in the winning circle of the Sunshine Swing contest in Florida in February, 2020. (Photo supplied)

She gets it, she knows how the race is played out.” On Sunday, March 28, the big weekend continues for Stewart. He will be driving the number 77 Spire Motorsports car, sponsored by Halmar International, in his first NASCAR Cup Series event. Also being held at Bristol Motor Speedway, the Food City Dirt Race is 133 miles long, requiring 250 laps to complete.

Having grown up with the family involved in Niagara’s dirt track circuit, Stewart will be at home at this weekend. He has over 330 career wins in dirt modified racing behind him, and his first victory in the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series came on the clay at Eldora in 2019.

He knows his experience and success on the surface is what attracted Spire to give him this weekends opportunity. Though he does say it feels kind of surreal to be driving in his first Cup Series event, the 37-year-old credits the hard work of his sponsors and his crew members for helping him get to this point.

“It’s a dream come true to compete in the Cup Series,” he said in a press release. “It’s the pinnacle of motorsports in North America. As a race fan myself, it has always been something I’ve dreamed about doing.”

Friesens racing each other in NASCAR Truck series


declared. "Facing each other on the same track will be purpose-made for the surface. That means he will have to get used to the track smooths out over the 250 laps."

He’s looking forward to working with Spire crew chief Kevin Bellicourt, and has felt truly welcomed by the entire team. He usually HALMAR-Friesen crew chief, Tripp Bruce, will be part of that team Sunday, lending his support and guidance on race day. Stewart is hoping he can apply the lessons he learned racing the truck on the Eldora dirt track to compete at a high level at Bristol.

The two drivers will get limited practice laps on Friday. On Saturday and Sunday, when both Stewart and Jessica are busy with those practice laps and with the Pinty’s Truck Race, Stewart’s parents Jamie and Yvonne will be there with Parker to watch how it all unfolds.

Qualifying heats for the truck race will take place Saturday between 4:30 p.m. and 5:15 p.m., with the Pinty’s Truck Race on Dirt scheduled for 8 p.m.

The Cup Series qualifiers run from 6 p.m. to 6:45 p.m. Saturday, while the Food City Dirt Race will start at 3:30 p.m. Sunday. Fans of both Friesens can follow the action Saturday on TSN, and Sunday on Fox.
CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU

Across:
1. Spanish hero El ---
4. Deep cut
8. Big cheeses
12. Flower jar
13. --- Falco, Nurse Jackie
14. Paragon
16. Flower jar
17. Rich, in Spain
18. Soothing ointment
19. Small cell
20. Author
21. Oregon summer clock setting
23. Lonesome State (Abbr.)
24. One over a major
26. Small amount
30. Noncom
32. Irritate
36. Open pastry dessert
39. Carnival
41. Nothing
42. Lubricate
43. Untamed
45. Chafe
46. Speck
48. Enticement
49. Software menu option
50. Crystal ---
51. Tucson time
52. West Atlantic international grp.
53. --- Tena, done that
54. West Atlantic international grp.
56. “A Doll’s House” dramatist
57.钻石重量单位
58. --- Porter” (Johnny Cash song)
59. --- Tena, done that
60. --- Porter” (Johnny Cash song)
61. Eagle
62. Malacca
64. Strike with an open hand
65. --- Stripe (Streap movie)
66. Sung poems
67. Diamond
68. --- Tena, done that
69. Whiskey variety
70. --- there, done that
71. --- Tena, done that
72. --- Tena, done that
73. --- Tena, done that
74. "--- in the Dark" (Streap movie)

Down:
1. Carat
2. Isaac
3. Den
4. Gere
5. Ad in
6. Sic
7. Heap
8. Vista
9. Ida
10. Pelt
11. Save
12. Vial
15. Lex
20. Ply
22. Banned insecticide
25. Possess
27. --- there, done that
28. Rancid
30. Support column
31. Support column
33. Slender fork-tailed gull
34. Gunk
35. Drifter
36. Floating bubbles
37. Love calcite variety
38. Loads
40. Long slippery fish
41. Zero
42. Oil
43. Feral
44. Fourth sign of the zodiac
45. Rub
46. Atom
47. Frequent
49. Under
50. Meth
51. M S T
52. O A S
54. Zoo
56. Ibsen
60. C D C
63. Cos
65. Ell
67. P L O
68. Orare
70. Liza
72. Huh.
73. --- there, done that
74. --- there, done that
75. Urge
76. Been
77. Peas
78. Hey.

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PLEASE RECYCLE THIS NEWSPAPER
Minor soccer moving ahead with plans for this season

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

With summer on the horizon, Niagara-on-the-Lake Soccer Club president Ted VanderKaay is optimistic that young people will be on the pitch beginning the last weekend of May.

Registration via the online portal opened last week. VanderKaay is encouraging parents to begin signing up their children for divisions from Timbits (U4/5 - born in 2016 or 2017) up to U17 - born in 2004.

According to the 77-page Ontario Soccer Association (OSA) Return to Play guide, minor soccer games can be played as long as the local public health unit is in either the red zone, yellow or green zone of the province’s colour-coded system. In the grey and Niagara’s current red zone status, games are prohibited, though limited outdoor training is allowed.

“We kind of hope and expect that we get to the orange zone sooner rather than later,” VanderKaay says it was the uncertainty of the early stages of the pandemic that forced the decision.

“The town, the region, the government, no one knew what to expect. There were park closures (by the town) because no one knew what to expect with that. The bright side this year is that there is more knowledge in terms of outdoor activities. I had a meeting with public health last week, and the town and the week before. Both are pretty optimistic and encouraging for getting youth activities going outdoors.”

He continues, “there’s more public guidance in terms of social distancing, sanitation, those types of things. The fact of the matter is, after a year of this, all the governing bodies have a better knowledge base to make decisions on and guidance for the players and spectators outdoors this year.”

Most of the kids who play in town participate in house league programs every year, but the club does run a few local travel, or rep teams. As of press time, the particulars that apply due to COVID-19. VanderKaay says it was the uncertainty of the early stages of the pandemic that forced the decision.

“We hope to run four travel teams this year,” VanderKaay explains. “But right now I know nothing about how the NSL (Niagara Soccer League) is going to organize the leagues and what we can expect. We’re still waiting for direction from them.”

There is no doubt that, with all that children have had to deal with for the past year, a return to some physical activity would be a big boost to their mental health. A University of Michigan department of psychology study has shown that for children and adolescents, moderate-to-vigorous physical activity and exercise are associated with elevations in self-esteem, improved concentration, reductions in depression, and improvements in sleep. And the World Health Organization suggests that for children, regular physical activity helps support healthy growth and development.

“The town and the region are really behind us, trying to get kids outdoors,” an enthusiastic VanderKaay says. “It’s good for their mental health, it’s good for their physical and social well-being, and with the guidance from them, and Ontario Soccer, we can forge forward with confidence saying we can do this.”

The not-for-profit club is still actively recruiting local businesses for sponsorship of teams for the upcoming season, though club officials recognize that many business owners are feeling a financial pinch from the pandemic. In spite of that, registration fees for 2021 are holding at the same price as they were back in 2019.

VanderKaay adds that all registrations are being done online this year, to avoid any in-person contact. As well, a move to a new platform provided by Power-Up Sports means that families who had previously been in the clubs system may have to create a new account.

To register your child for soccer this summer visit notl.soccera.ca.

NOTL Soccer Club president Ted VanderKaay is hoping there will be games on the soccer field by May. (Photo supplied)