

# The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL



Cheer up a neighbour or friend with flowers from drive-through

page 8

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## A moment of cheer

Evan Dolinsk, 12, decided to do something on Saturday to bring cheer to people discouraged by the news of COVID-19. His parents took him to the Niagara River Parkway, dressed as T Rex, so he could wave at passing vehicles. Almost every car beeped at him. Evan will be in The Shaw Festival production of Gypsy, which has been postponed due to the virus. We hope this cheers you up too. (Fred Mercnik)

## NOTL friends unlikely to be home soon

Penny Coles  
The Local

On Monday, Canada's foreign affairs minister had successfully arranged for three repatriation planes to arrive in Peru this week, but it won't be enough to get local residents Scott Robinson and Chelsea Widdicombe home.

Both 23 years old, the lifelong friends are stuck in Peru due to a country-wide quarantine that has closed the borders. Amid the world-wide spread of the COVID-19 virus, they sit and wait, with no idea when they might be able to return to Canada.

The problem for Robinson and Widdicombe is that the planes are to arrive, and depart from, Lima. They, however, are holed up under a country-wide quarantine in an Airbnb in the city of Cusco, a 20-plus hour bus ride away.

Peru's minister of defence announced last week that by

midnight Sunday morning, March 22, Peru would no longer support any repatriation efforts by foreign governments. With 263 cases of COVID-19 reported in the country as of March 20, the Peruvian government said it must do more to contain the spread of the virus. As of Monday, that number had risen to 395.

Positive news came Sunday afternoon. That's when Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne announced via Twitter that he had received a guarantee from Peruvian authorities that they would allow humanitarian evacuation flights of Canadian citizens to depart Peru. And on Monday, Champagne gave details for the three flights leaving this week.

Those flights, though, are only to accommodate those travellers already in the Lima region.

At press time, it seemed

Continued on page 3

## State of emergency declared in NOTL

Penny Coles  
The Local

Lord Mayor Betty Disero has declared a state of emergency to protect the town from the COVID-19 virus.

As head of council, it is her decision to make, but she has made it in consultation with the emergency control group, which includes Fire Chief Nick Ruller and the interim CAO, and also with the support of town councillors, she says.

She began considering a state of emergency last week,

and was discussing it with councillors on Friday, each one of them fully supporting the move, she says.

The scales were tipped toward taking the extra precaution by the large number of returning travellers to town. The arrival of the seasonal farm workers was also a factor. "It's great that they are able to come, I'm glad they're coming," she says, but there will be a lot more people in a town with 50 per cent of its population over the age of 50.

The declaration is the next

step toward slowing the potential spread of the virus for the protection of residents, businesses and staff, she says.

It has been a concern with many in town that not everyone returning from travel has been self-isolating. Grocery store and Avondale staff have reported asking shoppers they know to have been out of the country to go home.

There are people in town who do not appreciate the severity of the situation, and who are disregarding the advice of public officials, says Disero.

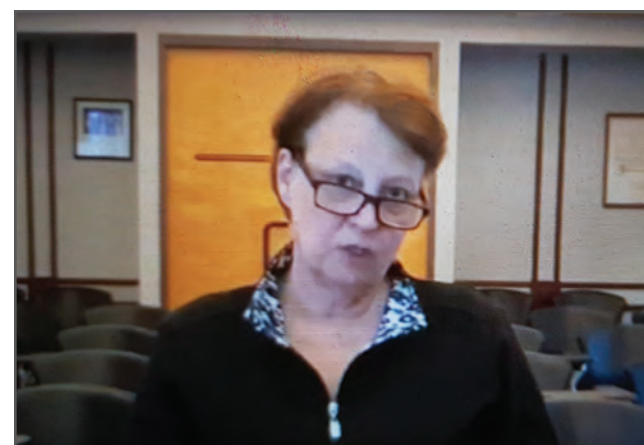
By making a "quick stop at the grocery store, they may unintentionally endanger others," including the public and grocery store employees.

"Please think of your community and cooperate," she adds, especially considering the demographics of NOTL's mature community.

"We will continue to do our part to protect you. We ask that you join us in doing your part as well."

Grocery stores, the conve-

Continued on page 3



Lord Mayor Betty Disero stood before a camera in an empty council chamber Monday to declare a state of emergency in NOTL. (Screenshot)

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# Thwaites farm preparing for seasonal workers

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

The Thwaites family of fruit and vegetable growers was still waiting Tuesday morning to hear when their seasonal farm workers, so essential to their operation, will arrive.

There was no date set yet for when the workers are coming, says Nelson Thwaites. “We are still waiting with figures crossed.”

Growers have been told once the paperwork is in place, the planes could start arriving quickly, and they should be prepared.

When the federal government announced early last week that due to the COVID-19 virus, the border was being closed to all but Canadians, with lim-

ited exceptions, seasonal farm workers were not included in those exceptions. However, by Friday, the government agreed the workers are essential to the country’s food supply, and growers were relieved to hear they would be allowed into the country.

By Tuesday morning, there was still no word about when they would arrive, although there was some expectation they would be here this week.

Nelson Thwaites and his brothers Graham and Corbin are the fourth generation to operate the family farm, with their father John still involved and ready with advice. Nelson hopes they will be here soon. Trees need pruning now, not weeks from now.

“CanAg (the travel service that arranges flights for the seasonal workers to Canada), has buses and flights at both ends ready to go,” he says.

About 28,000 workers were expected to arrive in Ontario alone, many last week, the majority over the next two weeks. Thwaites says he thinks the ‘powers that be’ were confusing various programs for temporary workers.

At first it seemed the confusion was over Mexican workers who might be allowed to come through the U.S., but not those flying in from the Caribbean. Then it seemed they were all in the same predicament.

He is refraining from calling provincial growers’ associations who are working to persuade the government to lift the re-

striction, he says. “We’re trying not to barrage them all with phone calls. We know everyone is pulling in the same direction.”

The Thwaites’ 500-acre farm, mostly in Niagara-on-the-Lake and head-quartered on Firelane 11, includes peaches, nectarines, grapes and pears. Recently the farm was enlarged to include an operation in Norfolk County, adding asparagus to their products.

Thwaites had been expecting 42 farm workers to fly in last Thursday evening, and in previous years, they would be spending their first day getting food, phones and going to the bank. Then, by Saturday, they’d have been out in the fields, doing the work they are not only trained for, but physically accustomed



Nelson Thwaites prunes his peach trees as he waits for seasonal workers to arrive. (Photo supplied)

## ‘We all need to pull together,’ says grower

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

In a town that has worked hard to make farm workers feel welcome, there is some concern over the reaction from some businesses to those who are full-time residents, and some who are Canadian citizens.

“We have some farm workers who live here year round, and have become Canadian citizens,” says Erwin Wiens, a grower and town councillor.

“We’re hearing they’re being told by businesses, ‘you’re not supposed to be here.’”

That also applies to some workers who have been here since January.

In both situations, says Wiens, they should be treated like everyone else, regardless of their ethnicity, but in some cases, that’s not happening.

It’s a delicate situation, with everyone expected to follow the same rules, but some who are doing what they are supposed to be doing are being treated differently.

A provincial agricultural association is already sensing there are problems, and is anticipating it could get worse when more seasonal workers arrive.

Last week the federal government announced seasonal

agricultural workers would be exempt from travel restrictions put in place to stem the spread of COVID-19. It was expected they would be allowed to travel this week, but at press time Tuesday morning, growers had not heard when to expect their arrival.

Wiens says he doesn’t expect a lot of notice — they will hear that the planes are coming, and the workers will be on their way.

“We better be prepared for when they get here,” he says.

Also by Tuesday, there were no protocols in place for when they arrive. Wiens and other growers are prepared for a 14-day isolation period, but they expect that to mean the workers can be out in the fields and vineyards, although not able to leave the farms.

It will be up to the farmers to ensure their workers have adequate food and other supplies when they arrive, he says.

“It’s great the government recognized our food supply is important, now let’s do the best we can. It’s the same with the snowbirds. We have to work together to make sure everyone gets what they need.”

Information sent to growers from the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association Monday asked those who have

workers already on their farms, or anticipate their arrival, to be “sensitive to how the public views foreign workers in the community during this time,” and urges them to be vigilant in protecting the health of the public and seasonal workers.

“It is imperative that we take measures to ensure all risks to the Canadian public are limited, and all growers take actions to mitigate any negative public perception about the arrival of workers.”

Wiens says for those whose isolation period is over, it means not travelling in groups, or at all if not essential — the same that is expected of everyone.

“Let’s act as a unit, and everybody do their part. At this point, everybody should be self-isolating as best they can.”

He encourages the use of online shopping, and also sending one person, not several, to do the shopping when necessary.

He is also concerned about growers making provisions for isolating workers who become ill. He has just eight men expected, and has a house that provides each with a separate room. He’s purchased a trailer as a precaution, in case anyone needs to be isolated from the others, and if he doesn’t need the trailer, someone else might,

he says. Each grower should have a contingency plan in place in case one of their workers becomes ill.

The OFVA is asking growers to provide computer access for their workers so they can shop online, to arrange for delivery of any necessary medication, to work with banks to provide online banking, and, if they have finished the self-isolation period, to discourage them from going to town and explain the two-metre distance between themselves and anyone else, in stores and any public places.

In an email sent by FARMS last week, an agricultural organization providing resources for farmers, CanAG Travel Services says it is prepared to accommodate air travel. The travel service has been “in constant communication with airlines and source countries.”

Jamaica has contacted workers to be on standby travel notice, as well as making sure they want to come to Canada at this time.

Mexico has indicated it will need four days, since workers in some cases need two or more days to travel to the Mexico City Airport.

to doing.

He knows when they get here, the 14-day isolation they will have to undergo means they can’t leave the farm to go to town, but as he understands the rules, they’ll be able to work in the orchards. Pruning peach trees is what is awaiting them when they arrive.

But as of this Tuesday, the growers still had not received protocols on how the isolation is to be handled.

Last week, he began hiring locals who are interested in working, and every morning, he and Graham were spending time training small groups of those who arrive, before heading out to the orchard to prune.

It’s not a great solution, he says. It’s work that requires training, and is physically extremely demanding, especially for those not accustomed to it. Not all last the day, and others don’t come back the next day. “Pruning hardwood is hard work,” he says.

“To put into perspective, it takes about 100,000 man-hours to grow and harvest the farm’s produce,” says Thwaites.

He has spoken to other NOTL growers whose workers arrived before the travel ban, and they feel bad about what their neighbours are experiencing, he says.

Thwaites was discouraged about the lack of information being broadcast to the public about how vital the seasonal employees are to the country’s food chain.

The U.S., which supplies Canada before our local crops

are ready, are in the same situation, he says — the U.S. borders were also closed to temporary farmworkers. And American growers don’t plan for shipping crops to Canada once ours are ready for harvest.

Although the Thwaites are doing their best to keep up with the work at hand now, there is no way they would have been able to keep up. If seasonal workers had not been allowed into the country, he expected he would have to “spray off the trees and wait for next year.”

That means killing the buds to protect the orchards, with no crop to harvest this year. The farm would survive without a crop for 2020, and they would hope for a good year next year.

But that’s a plan he is not expecting to have to put into place.

While he waits, Thwaites has sourced food and supplies for the 42 men he hopes to see soon, and once he hears they’re on their way, he will make sure their supplies are ready for them when they arrive, he says. All their houses are stocked already with toilet paper, he adds.

Most of the workers come with phones, and can use the Wi-Fi that is available for them, and those who have bank accounts will be paid by direct deposit. That will carry them through the 14-day isolation period.

“We’re concerned about the virus, the same as anyone else is,” he says.

But he feels confident when the workers get here and stay on the farm, everyone will be safe, and there will be a crop to harvest this year.

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# Some Canadians returning, but locals can't get to Lima

Continued from page 1

to leave the pair, along with as many as 2,000 other Canadians, indefinitely stranded in the South American country.

To make things even more uncertain for Widdicombe and Robinson, in a Saturday morning address, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau admitted that it would not be possible to rescue all stranded travellers.

Reached Monday evening, Chelsea's father Doug was resigned to the realization that his daughter would not be on her way home this week. He had been holding out faint hope that she and Scott could be on one of those three flights, but he admitted the long trip from Cusco would make it nearly impossible.

This trip was supposed to be a different kind of adventure for the two 23-year-olds.

Robinson left Feb. 29 on what was to be a 10-month trek around the world, starting in the South American country. Various friends were to join him along the way for shorter stretches, beginning with Widdicombe, who arrived in Peru on March 12.

Their first few days were spent taking in the beauty of the country. Cusco sits inland, in the middle of the Andes mountains. Once the capital of the Inca empire, its proximity to Inca ruins makes it a common travel destination for travellers like Robinson and Widdicombe.

On March 16, the pair had made their way to Aguas Calientes, known as the gateway to Machu Picchu. They had tickets for the 5:20 a.m. bus to the UNESCO World Heritage Site. While waiting to board, an official from the Ministry of Cul-

ture stepped out to inform the crowd that the Inca ruins, and indeed, the entire town, had been closed.

Not yet aware the Peruvian government had declared a state of emergency, closing its borders, they packed up their things and made their way to the train station. They hoped to move up their late-afternoon tickets for the start of their three-hour trip back to Cusco.

Their arrival at that train station was met by a massive crowd, who all had the same idea. "I think every traveller, and every worker and resident of the town, was trying to get out through the one train station, and it was quite a scene," says Robinson.

After four hours of panic at the station, including witnessing a vicious fight between a pack of stray dogs, they finally boarded a train and were enroute back to Cusco. Once there, they rushed to the airport and tried desperately to book a flight to Lima, in an effort to board a plane out of the country before the midnight deadline.

Unsuccessful, they checked into an Airbnb and got to work trying to arrange another flight home, with the help of their parents. Currently, they hold tickets from Cusco to Lima for April 1, but have no guarantee that the Cusco airport will even be open by then. If they make it to Lima, they still have to find a flight to Canada.

Widdicombe and Robinson, along with their respective parents, have been in contact with Niagara Falls MP Tony Baldinelli and MPP Wayne Gates, who have both assured the pair that they are actively working on the situation.

As the pair's stay in Peru

becomes indefinitely extended, their costs continue to rise. The Airbnb in which they are staying is costing them \$80 a night. Doug says they're happy to pay the unexpected cost, but he's also happy that the prime minister announced a \$5,000 loan for travellers to help offset the cost of airlines and accommodations. Though he says they won't apply for the loan, he's sure many of the stranded Canadians may need it.

As the virus continues to spread and cause increased concern in Peru, Chelsea and Scott become more confined to their accommodations. With both a quarantine and curfew in place, they can only leave for medical reasons or to get food. And they have to be able to prove to the police who are patrolling the city that their reason to leave is valid.

Their two-bedroom rental also has a kitchenette and a small living area, so it's not as cramped as it would be had they been stuck in a hostel. But after 6 p.m., Chelsea says, it gets pretty cold in the mountains, and there is no heat in the building.

With a number of other travellers also in their complex, many of whom are Canadian, they had been finding ways to keep their spirits up. "Before we were doing yoga and stuff, but now we're pretty much confined to our living quarters, because if people go out for groceries, we don't know if they've come into contact, so we're trying to be even more safe."

Doug and Nancy, along with Scott's parents, Anne and Ross, all worry that with their kids basically confined to their accommodations, they won't have access to food and water in the mountain city. And of

course, there's the virus itself.

Scott's father, Ross Robinson, remains optimistic that the two will find their way home soon.

But to Chelsea, unable to leave her accommodations, "it's getting more and more hopeless, it seems. The government didn't act quickly enough, and we're stuck here for at least another week."

And with no guarantee that their flight to Lima on April 1 will take them any closer to getting home, or even if that flight is allowed to leave Cusco, the uncertainty continues.



Scott Robinson and Chelsea Widdicombe were enjoying being tourists in Peru until all travel came to a halt, and on Monday, said they would be unable to get to Lima in time to get one of the repatriation flights home. (Photo supplied)



## Family out to deliver good cheer

Brian Dolinski, Evan Dolinski, and Tracy Borlase took a stroll on the Niagara River Parkway Saturday, enjoying the support from vehicles passing by. (Fred Mercnik)

## 'Let's work through this together'

Continued from page 1

nience stores which also sell food, pharmacies, gas stations, and banks can stay open as can many other businesses. For a complete list go to <https://www.ontario.ca/page/list-essential-workplaces>.

"Today's declaration is another example of the timely and decisive action that is required to flatten the curve and lessen the impact of COVID-19 in our community," says Fire Chief Nick Ruller in a news release from the Town. "Each one of us is responsible for the health and wellbeing of one another during this pandemic. When people are self-isolating, this crisis is contained. I applaud Lord Mayor Disero and Town Council for their commitment and leadership, as we continue to take every necessary step to effectively reduce potential for spread of this virus throughout Niagara-on-the-Lake."

Disero says she and council will do everything they can to help residents through this health emergency.

"Please remain calm and do

your part by practising social distancing, and staying home as much as possible," says Disero. "If you have just returned to Niagara-on-the-Lake, go straight home and do not leave your house for 14 days. I know the people of Niagara-on-the-Lake are incredibly kind and helpful, and I have no doubt that we will work together to get through this trying time. Call a friend or a member of council to help pick up whatever essential supplies you need."

The state of emergency declaration overrides an earlier by-law that gave Disero the ability to make decisions on behalf of council, along with Randall.

She had also already released a message on Saturday asking residents to obey self-isolating and hygiene rules, stressing the importance of following the recommendations of public health experts to help slow the spread of COVID-19.

While all Town meetings have been cancelled in the coming weeks, including the meeting of the committee-of-the-whole scheduled for this past Monday, and council on March 30, the Province has now passed legislation allowing phone-in meetings, and a virtual meeting to discuss council business and COVID-19 is expected to be held March 30.



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## Town Update Regarding COVID-19

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, under the direction of Lord Mayor Betty Disero and the Emergency Control Group, continues to respond in a well-informed and thought-out manner to address the rapidly changing COVID-19 situation.

The safety, health, and well-being of our residents, businesses, and staff remain our top priority. Please continue to comply with preventative measures, such as social distancing, as laid out by the Federal and Provincial Governments and Public Health officials.

Anyone returning to Canada from winter travel must self isolate for 14 days. Cooperation is imperative.

If you are showing symptoms of COVID-19, please do not overload hospitals and health facilities. Call the Novel Coronavirus Info-Line first at 1-888-505-6074. Nurses are available to take your call between 9:00 AM and 8:30 PM Monday to Friday and between 9:00 AM and 4:15 PM Saturday and Sunday and they will direct you appropriately.

Please go to **[www.notl.com/COVID-19](http://www.notl.com/COVID-19)** for regularly updated information and resources pertaining to COVID-19, including a comprehensive list of answers to frequently asked questions. Town staff will continue to assist and serve citizens online and over the phone at 905-468-3266. Phones are answered between the hours of 8:30 AM and 4:30 PM Monday to Friday, and online service requests remain available at **[www.notl.com](http://www.notl.com)**.

Notices are also posted on the Town's post offices to accommodate those who don't operate online.

For updates and resources from the Federal Government, please visit:

**[www.canada.ca/coronavirus](http://www.canada.ca/coronavirus)**



# Ariel Carr's surgery rushed due to COVID-19

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

Ariel Carr, the 12-year-old Crossroads student now at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, is expected to have her second surgery Wednesday.

Her doctor has moved it up from July, in an effort to get her ready to go home, away from the danger of COVID-19.

Her mother, Denise Carr, says one half of the wing of the hospital is now empty, and has been thoroughly cleaned, ready for use if they need it for patients with the virus.

Ariel's surgeon has cancelled all his other operations, but he can't send Ariel home as she is, and with her reduced lung capacity, he's concerned about the risk of keeping her in the hospital.

Ariel, at 43 pounds and 47 inches tall when she entered the hospital early in February, has severe scoliosis. The top of her spine, shaped almost like a candy cane, was curving into her

neck. Her first surgery was to bolt a traction halo to her skull, and she has gradually had weights added to it to help straighten her spine. She's been fed Ensure, another similar kind of chocolate drink several times a day, and lots of chocolate milk, to help put on some weight so they could add weight to the halo. She is up to 26 pounds on the halo and she herself weighs 55 pounds, quite an accomplishment for a girl who doesn't like the high-calorie drinks they've been giving her. She also has a feeding tube, so she's getting calories at night.

She was actually facing two surgeries on Wednesday, and possibly three, says Denise. First they were going to remove the halo. Then the major surgery would go through her back, to insert rods into her spine to further straighten it.

As Ariel experiences growth spurts in the future, those rods will have to be replaced, says Denise.

The unknown at press time was whether they

would also go in through her front, to remove a rib, says Denise, who promised to let The Local know as soon as she did. Ariel's last growth spurt has caused her ribs to grow into her hip on her left side, and to crush one of her lungs, reducing her lung capacity, and making the threat of COVID-19 a terrifying prospect. The weights have helped straighten out the ribs as well, "but they don't know if it's enough," says Denise.

She'd been told the surgery to Ariel's spine would be nine and a half hours, and if they had to remove a rib, it would be a lot longer.

As frightening as the looming surgery was for Ariel and her parents, Denise says, along with the concern it was being rushed, the other option was to remove the halo and send Ariel home, but that would mean starting all over when the virus is no longer an issue and the hospital is back to normal.

Meanwhile, Ariel was spending her days watching TV, flat on her back, with

about half an hour a day in a wheelchair, in a play room — one patient at a time, because of the risk of COVID-19.

Both Denise and Ace, Ariel's dad, can't say enough about the fantastic care she's received at the hospital, but they are both anxious to have her home.

They have been warned Ariel will have muscle pain in the early days after surgery, and they know it won't be easy, "but I'd rather have her home than here," said Denise. She has stayed with her at the hospital from the beginning, with a few breaks when she's spelled by Ace or one of Ariel's siblings, so she's never alone.

Ariel has been tough through all of this, they both say, enduring the pain of the halo and weights, but they can't wait for the day when she is pain-free and doesn't have to be tough any longer.

The family has set up a GoFundMe page to offset the costs of travel, parking and food. To help, visit <https://ca.gofundme.com/f/ariels-scoliosis-battle>.



Ariel Carr has her wheelchair decorated for Easter, although it's looking like she will be home by then. (Denise Carr)



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# Grocery stores take extra precautions

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

As the news around us changes from one minute to the next, our grocery stores are continuing to do all they can to meet the needs of the community, while protecting the health of customers and staff.

The measures they are taking are also changing, so what was the case yesterday may not be today, and may be different yet again tomorrow.

Monday morning our federal government was telling us extreme measures could be coming, but we weren't there yet. However by Monday afternoon, Premier Doug Ford closed down all but essential services, effective Tuesday at midnight. Grocery stores and pharmacies are considered essential, but Ford said more information would be released about what else would be allowed to remain open.

Phil Leboudec, of Phil's valu-mart, says his main concern now is keeping staff safe. Some members of the public were not getting the message about staying home after travelling, or if they have symptoms, and that is a problem. If one staff member contracts COVID-19, the store will close, and that will affect the whole community, says Leboudec.

He has taken extra steps to keep staff and customers safe. On Saturday, under directions from Loblaw's head office, he began restricting the number of customers in the store at one time to 30, allowing for physical distancing. Those who were waiting for their turn to shop were asked to line up outside, adhering to the two-metre distance required between them.

He also took the unusual measure of having community volunteers stopping people at the door, asking them if they had recently returned from travelling, or if they had any symptoms, such as a fever, cough or sore throat.

Local resident Cory Abt has volunteered to help — he also did some shelf-stocking for Leboudec — and was the first to take his place outside the door.

Many shoppers had already heard a limited number of people were being allowed in, and most were very understanding about what was on Saturday a 15-minute wait.

The few who weren't, he says, were dealt with by others in line.

There were four people who said they had recently returned from travelling and were unaware they weren't supposed to be out grocery shopping, says Abt, but they didn't argue when told they

should go home — they just asked how they were supposed to get their groceries. When he told them they could order online at PC Express and pick them up outside, they went home to place an order, or to ask family members to help out.

"Everybody was complying. It was pretty easy," says Abt. "If the staff at the grocery store don't feel comfortable, they will stop coming to work, and the store will shut down."

Leboudec says Loblaw's has been great about making proactive decisions and coming up with new initiatives to keep everyone safe — all the individual stores have to do is follow the corporate lead.

He says plastic shields are being installed at each check-out in every Loblaw's store, protecting staff and customers, and although on Saturday he didn't know when, he expected it to happen soon.

He worries about his staff, and he worries about his family, but he also feels a responsibility to keep the store open for the community. He says he hasn't a lot of patience for people who are complaining, but for the most part, "the support is far greater than the few complaints we are getting."

Shelves are being refilled, with limits on some items, and as for those who are shopping for groceries, "we can't know if they're being honest, but hopefully they are."

He has been encouraging online ordering, but it's difficult to keep up when customers are placing \$600 orders, instead of ordering just what they need, he says. That has resulted in a delay in filling orders.

"The online ordering system was only designed to complement shopping," he says. "It wasn't intended for the way it's being used, both with the number of orders or the size of the orders."

Tony Hendriks of Hendriks valu-mart is also taking precautions for his staff and customers.

He has instituted a policy of 10 people at a time in the store, since his is considerably smaller than others. He hasn't had an issue with people having to line up to get in, and as long as he keeps to 10 to 15 people at most, there is a comfortable distance between shoppers.

In response to the concerns of his cashiers, he's asking for customers to pay by debit or credit. If a customer wants to pay with cash, he or one of the cashiers, wearing gloves, will take it, but he says most are okay with using their cards.

He is relying on his customers' good judgement to stay home and isolate as

needed, and although he has heard that hasn't always happened, "those cases are rare," he says.

The number of customers, and the amount they are buying, has changed from last week — it's returning to what he would normally expect for this time of year.

Shelves are being stocked every two days, and with the exception of a few items not available from suppliers, he's well-stocked.

"We're a small store, and we're not usually busy now. That makes it a little easier for us."



Shoppers lined up outside Phil's valu-mart Monday, waiting for their turn to shop. (Penny Coles)



## UPPER CANADA ANIMAL HOSPITAL

Your family pet ~ Our family passion

### Dear Pet Parents,

I'd like to start by saying I hope everyone is doing well, and is doing their best to keep themselves informed with reputable sources about COVID-19.

We have had numerous meetings to discuss temporary policies during this unprecedented crisis. I do not have all of the answers, but what I can tell you for sure, is that we have an incredibly strong team and we are committed to maintaining care for your pet. We are following the lead of the Government of Canada's recommendations, as well as the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association. Keeping this in mind, we must maintain a balance between safety and the essential work we do. It is for this reason we have elected to reschedule all routine appointments for the next two weeks. This includes annual exams and vaccines, routine surgeries, nail trims, and other appointments that can be rescheduled without harm. All physical exams due to sickness will be kept in the schedule, as well as puppy/kitten vaccines in which our patients would be left at risk otherwise. We have made phone calls and sent emails to inform those who have been affected, but if you are unsure, please feel free to give us a call.

We remain open for patients that are sick, painful and in need of care. If you are concerned about the health of your pet, please call the clinic to book an appointment. We can discuss over the phone any protocol regarding entering the clinic. We are dedicated to providing excellent health care for your pets. Our orthopedic services also remain open for time sensitive and painful pets.

While we understand these new protocols and guidelines may cause financial distress to small businesses, and pose an inconvenience in our daily lives, it is essential that we do our part to protect our clients, our team and our community. Our collective safety must come before the needs of a business.

We have made changes to the way we are running things on a daily basis, and the changes are as follows:

**If you need to pick up food for your pet, please call the clinic ahead of time. At that time, we will be able to put it aside for you, and we will then require payment over the phone by Visa and MasterCard. When you arrive to pick up your food, please call us from your car and one of our team members will bring it out to our parking area. The same applies for refills of medication, although please be aware that all prescriptions must be approved by a doctor, and therefore will not be available immediately.**

**If you have travelled in the last 14 days or have a cough, we ask you to send a friend on your behalf. Again, they will be required to stay in the car and call us when they have arrived.**

With these policies set in place, I am confident that Upper Canada Animal Hospital will continue to be a safe and welcoming space for both our clients and our patients. Move forward with kindness and compassion, my thoughts are with all of you. I thank you for your support in this time as we do our part to keep our community safe.

Warm Regards,  
Dr. Jim Turpel

**Dr. Jim Turpel**  
**Dr. Angela Granacki**  
**Dr. Erin Kanerva**



323 Mary St., Niagara.on.the.Lake

905.468.4100

www.ucah.ca | ucah@ymail.com





# EDITORIAL

## Difficult decisions for desperate times

As of press time Tuesday, there were seven confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Niagara. That's not a lot, and at this point the regional health was saying there was still no evidence of community transmission. All around us people are doing their best to keep it that way.

First off, we need to say thank you, again, at every chance we get, to all who are still working, who are helping to get us through this difficult time.

Although the Province has shut down all non-essential workers, there is a very broad definition of those considered essential, so there are still a lot of people working. Some of you are business owners, some are minimum wage earners. Most of you are in contact with the public. We hope you stay safe and healthy, and thank you for taking risks on our account. Without you we would be without food, medication, health care if needed, and many other services.

We have our local hardware store still open, and liquor, beer and wine for when we decide to relax. Our convenience stores are open for food and other needs. Our financial institutions remain open. We wouldn't have those services without staff willing to come to work, and we are grateful so many businesses are doing everything they can to avoid laying off staff.

And we continue to be impressed with how creative businesses are being, adjusting to the new way to market themselves and keep their businesses going, while trying to keep everyone safe.

But we will have none of

that if employees are diagnosed with COVID-19, thus one of the reasons for the state of emergency in NOTL as declared by Lord Mayor Betty Disero. You'd think it has been stated enough, but apparently not all are taking it seriously enough: Stay home if you have travelled, or if you have symptoms that indicate COVID-19. Get someone else to go to the grocery store and liquor store for you, or have it delivered. We all need to do everything we can to keep not only ourselves, but each other, safe.

At The Local we are trying to keep up with the changes in our little corner of the world. We understand you all need your local news, and although an online edition might be enough for some people, it isn't for everybody.

We have seniors and others in this town who rely on their paper for their news, and as their connection to the community.

We have businesses who have supported us, and whom we want to continue to support. They rely on us to help get their message to the community, and we want to continue to do that for them.

And of course we are all anxious about Town decisions. We want to know, as our world changes around us, how it's changed. And yes, we can and will do that online, but not everyone will see it. As long as we are able, we will have a print edition. It will be smaller, as you can see this week, and we have other options, such as reducing the numbers we print, but we won't do that unless absolutely necessary. If you don't receive The Local in your mail next week or the week after, you will know we had no choice.

Our decisions, like so many of yours, are day by day.

We have great stories of what those around us are doing, which we don't have room for in this paper, and which will be online. They are the stories we love to hear, and will enrich your lives — at least we hope they will. If you are reading online and know someone who isn't, but might be interested in what you are reading, maybe you could print it out and slip it under their door, with a cheery note to go along with it.

We can all make similar small gestures, and more essential ones as well. We know many of you are picking up groceries and other essentials for those who aren't able to go out, and as long as we stick to physical distancing and don't go out unless necessary ourselves, we're helping if we shop for others while we're out.

And lastly, because again, we can't say thank you enough, we want to salute our town council and staff.

They continue to look after your welfare. They make difficult decisions, and in some cases, unpopular decisions.

As of press time Tuesday — and we keep saying that, because by the time you read this, it may have changed — no other municipality, or the Region of Niagara, has declared a state of emergency. There will be some in town who won't be happy that NOTL has. But it is being done to keep each one of you safe, in a town with a large vulnerable population.

Better to be safe than sorry. Maybe it's a cliché. But in this situation, a fitting one.

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

## Challenging times for tourism



**Eduardo Lafforgue**  
Special to The Local

"The day we will always remember from here on, is the day the world stopped travelling."

I read this recently on a specialized media site. These are challenging times for the global tourism industry and we are not the exception. Since I started as president of Tourism NOTL, I have been talking of how essential the tourism value chain is for our town.

Now that the world has stopped travelling, and we can "enjoy" the deafening silence of no tourism, we will realize how crucial tourism is to our economy and quality of life.

We should be soon preparing for the recovery, because nothing lasts forever, and together we will come out of this stronger.

There is a lot more to come from your Chamber of Commerce and Tourism NOTL team. The value of our industry will be even more apparent in

the recovery phase.

I have also read "travel is the most progressive expression of human curiosity." I have no doubt that Niagara-on-the-Lake's tourism industry will recover and we will bounce back once again, as one of the best destinations in Ontario and Canada.

As a membership-based organization, we are not immune to the hurt everyone in tourism is going through.

Our hearts and thoughts go out to the people who have been affected by the coronavirus, and we appreciate and thank the health-care workers and communities that are on the front line, working to contain the COVID-19 virus.

We acknowledge our members' challenges for their businesses and employees. We also acknowledge our visitors' stress that comes with the uncertainty of cancelling or rebooking existing travel plans.

It's a difficult and stressful time for all of us.

At the chamber, we have implemented measures to ensure our operations and staff remain available to provide service to visitors and members, while respecting the hygiene and social distancing practices requested

by the circumstances.

Technology helps, and allows our team to work remotely, as the situation dictates. During this time, to get in touch with the chamber, or Tourism NOTL, please email [tourism@niagaraonthelake.com](mailto:tourism@niagaraonthelake.com) or call 1-905-468-1923.

While we all work together to contain this virus, the Chamber of Commerce and Tourism NOTL will continue to support its members with information, direction, support and flexibility. We will continue to post any updates on our newsletter and website as they become available. If you want to subscribe to the newsletter (free, with no obligation), please send an email to [membership@niagaraonthelake.com](mailto:membership@niagaraonthelake.com).

Thanks to all of you who have answered the surveys of the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario. The precious frontline information is crucial to advocate in the right direction. Please stay tuned for further surveys in the coming weeks.

Let's all make sure that we are ready for the comeback.

Stay healthy.

**Eduardo R. Lafforgue**  
and the team of the  
**NOTL Chamber of Commerce**  
and **Tourism NOTL**

## LETTERS

### Thank you, Van Noort Florists

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society sends our heartfelt thank you and deep gratitude to Sharon and staff at Van Noort Florists for their support and work in ensuring that our annual Flowers for Seniors event was able to be carried out last week.

The NOTL Horticultural Society has been delivering small arrangements of spring flowers to resi-

dents in each of the three nursing homes for over 20 years. However, when social/physical distancing due to COVID-19 became a reality, our members were concerned that we may not be able to fulfill our commitment this year. Sharon and her staff immediately stepped in and offered to create the arrangements and assist us in their delivery. All necessary COVID-19 precautions were taken, and

the flowers were delivered to the front doors of the homes where the staff gratefully accepted them on the residents' behalf.

A million thank yous to Van Noort Florists. Their staff truly demonstrate the community values that make NOTL such a wonderful town to live in.

**Board of Directors**  
**Niagara-on-the-Lake**  
**Horticultural Society**

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.

### The Niagara-on-the-Lake

# LOCAL

The trusted voice of our community

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

**Editor:**  
**Penny Coles**  
[penny@notllocal.com](mailto:penny@notllocal.com)  
905-246-5878

**Publisher:**  
**The Niagara-on-the-Lake Local**

**Graphic Designer:**  
**Rosie Gowell**  
[composing@notllocal.com](mailto:composing@notllocal.com)

**Advertising Sales:**  
**Karen Skeoch**  
[karen@notllocal.com](mailto:karen@notllocal.com) • 905-641-5335

**Julia Coles**  
[julia@notllocal.com](mailto:julia@notllocal.com) • 905-934-1040

**Helen Arsenault**  
**Local Business Directory,**  
**Local Happenings, Classified Sales**  
[classified@notllocal.com](mailto:classified@notllocal.com)

[notllocal.com](http://notllocal.com) [facebook.com/notllocal](https://www.facebook.com/notllocal) [instagram.com/thenotllocal](https://www.instagram.com/thenotllocal) [@thenotllocal](https://twitter.com/thenotllocal)

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ANONYMOUS**  
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**KIDS HELP PHONE**  
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[kidshelpphone.ca](http://kidshelpphone.ca)

**ALCOHOLICS  
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St. Mark's Parish Hall  
41 Byron St., NOTL  
or find a meeting  
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# Local teacher offers tips for keeping kids on track

**Julia Cain Murray**  
Special to The Local

My name is Julia Cain Murray. I am the Head of Royal Oak School, a teacher and a mom of three.

Being any one of these on any given day makes me a very lucky person — these are three of the best jobs in the world. I'd be remiss however, to say these roles aren't without challenge, and particularly now. Over the last few days, I have been thinking of you — parents and grandparents, foster parents, aunts, and uncles, as this is an unprecedented time to be a caregiver and a human.

We found out yesterday that schools will not resume on April 6 as we had previously hoped, and now our thoughts turn to the important questions: how can we best engage, nurture, challenge, and keep, our kids "on track." Though I have lived in the world of education for 14 years, having worked with universities, ministries and private, public, and community schools alike, I have been stumped at times

these last few days about how best to meet my kids' needs. Our mental health as a collective community, as families, parents and children, is the most important thing always, but at a time like this especially so, as anxieties are at an all-time high and uncertainties abound.

I wanted to share where my mind has settled with regards to helping our kids learn at home, in case it can be of help to other families out there.

Get out of pyjamas. If your child stays on track with school week routines, getting a good night's sleep with a regular bedtime, waking up and getting dressed, having breakfast and really preparing for a full day, they will be more productive.

Hardest first. Children tend to be most energetic and attentive in the morning. Whatever subject area is most challenging for your child is best at the beginning of the day.

Involve your kids in the planning. The night before, I sit down with my kids and a schedule with five blocks in

it, and ask them to pick one outdoor activity they want to do, one "life skill" activity they want to do (helping out around the house, baking, cooking, raking leaves, walking the dog), and then choose when they tackle language and science (math always comes first for us though). Children buy-in to having some control and choice over their day, and this sets a great expectation for participation as well as mutual respect.

When at all possible, make learning a game. Games are one of my favourite teaching tools in the classroom, because they help children practice skills over and over to mastery, without them even realizing it. Putting a worksheet in front of a child and asking them to solve equation after equation will have you both pulling your hair out in no time, but a game of BINGO where you are finding five math answers in a row for B-I-N-G-O, and creating the equations - that's fun.

Take breaks often, and think about a screen-free

day. As soon as you see things are going south (and they will), take a break. Grab a snack, head outside to go around the block, do something else for a short time, and then get back to it when you are both fresh. Consider a day with the job of breathing fresh air, helping a neighbour, learning a new skill, or whatever feels right.

Happy children are the most important thing. When our kids are home, they are usually in relaxation mode, and having more time with you, their incredible caregiver, is a treat. Staying on track is important, but not more important than a positive connection and looking forward to each day.

Lastly, at Royal Oak, we have entered into the world of virtual learning, and are doing our best to help parents follow some of the tips above as we arm them with daily schedules, online learning resources, and games and tasks that promote learning and progression of our curriculum. If you find yourself in need of some vetted resources, sample schedules, those math games for mastery (and fun!), please head over to our Royal Oak website on the 'programs' page and feel free to use what we have put together for our own students. Each day, we will add as we go, and as we learn this challenging new terrain too.

Being here for one another is what will get us through this very difficult time for our community, and we are so grateful to be a part of it.



Royal Oak Community School students, like Leila Ridesic, are working at home, as all students are being asked to during the coming weeks. (Photos supplied)



Wes Ridesic is being taught by Royal Oak teachers, virtually, face-to-face.

## Newark could use food donations



**Newark Neighbours**  
Special to The Local

Newark Neighbours has been able to serve our food clients this past week, and we have received several requests from our caring community on how they can help us.

At this time our stock is running low and can use your help with the following food donations: peanut butter, strawberry jam, small cans of fruit, canned stew, canned kidney beans, canned chili, canned chunky chicken soup, small boxes of salted soup

crackers, cereal, flavoured instant oatmeal packets, cleaning wipes, and toilet paper.

If you are healthy and able to drop off non-perishable food donations at 310 John Street, we will meet you at the back door on Tuesdays and Thursdays, between 10 a.m. and 12 p.m. We will need to disinfect all cans/packages before we can stock our shelves. Please do not leave your food donations unattended.

As well, a kind reminder to please hold all your collectible/clothing donations at home — we are unable to process your treasures at this time, but will gladly accept them once we get back to normal operations.

As for monetary donations, options are: kindly

mail us a cheque to: Newark Neighbours, 454 Mississauga Street, Suite 150, P.O. Box 1090, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON L0S 1J0; or alternatively, you can donate on-line via Newark Neighbours' website @ [www.newarkneighbours.ca](http://www.newarkneighbours.ca). We are using the services from Canada Helps, which is a secure website in which you will receive a tax receipt for 100 per cent of the value of your donation.

The Food Room hours have been adjusted slightly — we will be open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Please call 905-468-3519 and leave a message indicating what day you will be visiting.

Thank you for your continued support.



### GREEN TIP from the Crossroads Coyote Eco Club

During this spring break of great uncertainty and social isolation ... why not embark on local, quiet adventures? By day, celebrate nature walking along Niagara Shores. There's a beautiful path through the woods and down to the beach. By night, try candlelight (perhaps with music, bath, or family board games). Both will prove calming during this stressful time.

**Eliana McManus, Fiona Bell, and Ella Edgecombe,**  
of Crossroads Coyote Eco Club



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**NOTL businesses: call Karen at 905.641.5335 or email [karen@notllocal.com](mailto:karen@notllocal.com)**

**outside NOTL: call Julia at 905.934.1040 or email [julia@notllocal.com](mailto:julia@notllocal.com)**



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# Cut flower industry devastated by virus

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

Niagara-on-the-Lake is rich with family businesses growing flowers under glass. But what was a thriving local industry a short time ago is threatened by COVID-19, as flowers come into bloom, ready to be cut and sold, but nobody to buy them. Orders of cut flowers have largely been cancelled, says Tim Moes of Virgil Greenhouses, as they approach what

should be their peak season. Pim Boekestyn and his brother Tom started growing freesias all year round almost three decades ago, and Virgil Greenhouses has become the largest producer of cut freesias in North America. Tom has since retired, and Pim has brought his son Peter and his son-in-law Tim Moes onboard. Their cooler is now full of thousands of cut freesias and ranunculus, ready to go to market. They cut about 7,000 a

week, ready if orders do come in, but they have no hope of selling the numbers they are growing. With four acres under glass, at least one greenhouse is full of flowers that will not be harvested — there is no point cutting what you can't sell, says Moes. Last week, The Watering Can in St. Catharines came through in a huge way for them, lowering prices, as did the greenhouse, to sell 2,500 freesias in 24 hours. But with the shut-down of essential ser-

vices, Moes says, as of Tuesday there was some confusion over whether florists were allowed to stay open — live produce can be grown and sold, but they were waiting for clarification about whether flowers were included. Some florists have shut down already, others are gearing up to take orders online and deliver them to porches. Moes says they've been dropping boxes of cut flowers at lower income housing and long-term care homes, just

leaving them outside, and other greenhouses are doing the same. They are also selling flowers from a roadside stand set up outside their Hunter Road greenhouses, and after posting a photo on Instagram last week, Moes says he's been "blown away" by the response. "We didn't expect we'd get this kind of support." They've organized it as a drive-through flower shop, with no need for drivers to get out of their car, and they are in

the process of setting up payment online so there will be no money exchanged. They will continue to sell from the stand unless they learn they are not permitted to do so. They were expecting seasonal workers to arrive last week, but that didn't happen, and at this point, it's just as well, Moes says. They don't have work for them to do, and without a crystal ball, no way to know what will happen in the coming weeks. "At this point, it's not looking good."



Naomi Vanderkuit and Clare Wiens, Pim Boekestyn's granddaughters, were helping to fill buckets of cut flowers at Virgil Greenhouses on Hunter Road. The roadside stand has been busy with an outpouring of support from the community, as the cancellations for orders has left thousands of stems to sell. The stand has been set up as a drive-through, to keep everyone safe, and will continue unless the owners find they are not permitted, under the essential-service only mandate, to sell their crop. (Jane Andres)



## Sunshine through the clouds

Jim van der Zalm, who runs European Planters with his sons Trevor and Jimmy, has lost all his Easter hydrangea orders due to the COVID-19 virus. Dr. Jim Turpel of Upper Canada Animal hospital has purchased 1000 hydrangea plants from the nursery, to be delivered to nursing homes in NOTL and clients — an example of a generous local business helping out during this difficult time. (Photo supplied)



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### Creek Road Paints

1573 Four Mile Creek Road, Virgil





# Donna Scott a woman of great presence

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake has lost one of its most beloved and respected residents, mourned by a large circle of friends and admirers.

Donna Scott, recognized with the Order of Canada for her entrepreneurial spirit and business acumen, died March 13, following a stroke.

Scott, along with her husband Hugh Farrell, the love of her life for more than 40 years, had another love – the town they called home for the last three decades.

At that stage of her life, retired from a long and distinguished career, notably as founder and publisher of Flare, Canada's first fashion magazine, she turned her attention to what she could do for her community.

Scott had great friends here, including Bluma Appel. Both from Toronto, both philanthropists, Appel had moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake and convinced her friend she should join her.

Scott soon became a force in the community in the best way possible, using her many business and people skills to further important causes, including as co-chair of the NOTL team that raised \$2.8 million for the new St. Catharines hospital site. That won her the 2014 Chamber of Commerce Spirit of Niagara Award for Community Leadership, but she was the recipient of many awards, both in her career and for her community involvement.

In retirement from business, she served for a time as chair of the Canada Council for the Arts, and was a board member of several organizations related to arts and education.

However, although she was much admired because of her many significant career and public accomplishments, Scott's ultimate gift, the one that will likely most be remembered, was her extraordinary, unforgettable presence.

Whether you were part of her closest circle of friends, or had a brief conversation with her, there was no denying her charisma, her formidable sense of who she was, and her indomitable spirit.

Debi Pratt, one of her closest friends, quotes Scott's obituary the was published in several newspapers, in Niagara and Toronto, and is echoed by all who knew her: When Donna walked into a room everyone knew she was there. She had such a presence about her."

Once Scott became part of the Niagara-on-the-Lake community, recalls Pratt, "she said, 'what can I do for this town I'm so privileged to live in?'"

And then she dug in and set to work. The arts were



Donna Scott loved Willowbank, where this photo was taken with Lord Mayor Betty Disero, the town and its history, parties and her friends. (Photo supplied)

always important to her, as was history. Deciding that some of the important local organizations could benefit from be promoted together, she founded the Historical Site Alliance, to support the Niagara Historical Museum, McFarland House, Willowbank, RiverBrink Art Museum, the Niagara Pump House Arts Centre, and the Laura Secord Homestead. That was a concept that was mentioned several times during a recent envisioning session for the museum, but Scott, with her vision and business sense, actually took a step in that direction. She had a brochure produced with the intention of helping each organization. "That was her way of leading people to the history of Niagara-on-the-Lake, which was so important to her," says Pratt. "She didn't understand why they weren't working together. She asked me about the work I did to tie the wineries together, to market and promote them together, and it made sense to her to do the same for these organizations."

She also spearheaded the purchase and refurbishment of the bells of St. Mark's Church.

In recent years, she also wanted to help the Friends of Laura Secord, by speaking at public appearances about the Canadian hero, but that wasn't to be, says Pratt, although she was telling people at recent small gatherings of friends that they have to support Laura Secord and spread the message about her importance.

She often seemed ahead of her time, was the "first woman" in many of her accomplishments, she loved tackling challenges, and, says Pratt, "to her, it didn't matter if you are

a man or woman, or who you were. She just wanted to know you were capable."

She also loved her parties, and Pratt found herself organizing Scott's last large gatherings, including one she wanted on her beautiful deck. She was living with Alzheimer's — had been for some time — and would often repeat herself. She was still as strong-minded as ever, accustomed to being in control.

table had to be moved to the doors, so Scott could visualize drinks being served from there to the deck, and then it had to be moved back into place.

"We joked about it being the first party ever with a drive-through bar," says Pratt.

And with her friends making "suggestions" about how things could be done, such as the food being served, and a guest list of about 50

Hughie, but when she got up to speak, it was about Hughie but also about her. It was Donna the hostess we knew from before. It felt like a bit of a farewell of the Donna we had known.

The party fell on a nice summer day, Ellie Forbes from Simpson's Pharmacy was the bartender, Robin Howe, with help from Louise Howe, the caterer, "all people who were part of her comfort zone," and it was a great occasion, with lots of photos put into an album for Scott to pick up and reminisce.

That was last summer, and by the fall, says Pratt, "we could see changes." Friends began visiting her at home rather than taking her out, afraid of her falling.

"She still needed her community, and friends rallied around. I started taking her egg salad sandwiches, which she loved, and I learned two things. One, take something to eat, and two, she loved to look at pictures and reminisce about the people and events of her past. You just had to pick up an album — there

was always one near her chair — and she'd be happy. Visitors started bringing pictures for the album.

Pratt organized two more gatherings of Scott's friends — she had planned to continue them for as long as she could, because Scott took so much pleasure in having people around her, and that feeling was reciprocated.

"Donna cared about her friends, and they knew that. You can't forget when someone cares about you, and that is going to be reciprocated. Her friends knew she cared about them, and it was our time to say Donna needed us. It was a reciprocal caring."

Pratt says she and Scott "talked and laughed for the last three years of her life. We talked about fashion, funny things, silly things, and we would laugh. When she got a little down, we could always find a topic that would bring her up."

It was a "sad day" when her friends and her community lost her, says Pratt, "but Donna lived a great life. She brought out the best in people."

“What can I do for this town I’m so privileged to live in?”

Donna Scott

Pratt tells a story about Scott wanting a large dining room table pulled up to the glass sliding doors, to act as a bar. People would gather outside, but be handed their drinks from the inside bar.

Pratt said many times in the lead-up to the party, the

people, Scott was able to have a large group of her friends around her. And with gentle prodding from Pratt, used the occasion to give one last toast to her beloved "Hughie," who died in March, 2017.

"She got a little teary, as she always did when she spoke of

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# Local driver racing on NASCAR virtual track

**Mike Balsom**  
Special to The Local

It was a busy day of racing for Niagara-on-the-Lake native Stewart Friesen this past Sunday. He began by competing against the likes of Kyle and Kurt Busch, Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Bubba Wallace in the Dixie Vodka 150 at Homestead-Miami Speedway. He ended it with another race, on dirt, at Williams Grove Speedway in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.

From Miami, to Pennsylvania, with two races, all in one day, made possible by the world of iRacing.

When NASCAR and the entire stock car world shut down its races on Friday, March 13, Friesen was at Atlanta Motor Speedway with his team, preparing for his next race in the NASCAR Gander Outdoor Truck Series that weekend.

There were no fans in attendance, as NASCAR had previously made the decision to run races that weekend without spectators. With the COVID-19 crisis changing rapidly, however, the drivers were informed that day the race would not be run.

Friesen says “between the top three series, there were probably a couple of thousand people there, with competitors, crew members and stuff like that. It was in everybody’s best



Stewart Friesen practises racing on a simulator in his basement, with his young son helping. (Photo supplied)

interest, with everything that was going on.”

Friesen and his team headed back to his home near Albany, New York, to use some of the down time to get back to the shop. “There’s work to be done,” says Friesen, “in the shop, on the truck team. It kind of buys us some time to get some stuff done. We kind of

rushed over two months in the winter, and we have a couple of trucks to build still.”

But the 36-year-old, who grew up with racing with the family business, couldn’t stay away from the track for long.

He was elated to learn the following week’s NASCAR event would run on the virtual track at Homestead-Miami

Speedway. And for an added bonus, he was able to compete from the comfort of his own home.

In the offseason, most NASCAR and stock car drivers spend time on simulators getting ready for competition. Restrictions on how much time they can spend in their actual cars, on tracks, are part of the reason for this.

With Friesen’s Halmar team moving from Chevrolet to Toyota this year, that simulator time on the Toyota rig was crucial for him to learn how to handle his new truck.

Back in Albany, he has had his own racing simulator in his basement for about five years.

“I never really got on it much before this weekend,” he says. “If I got on there, it was more of a game, you know, and my wife would be yelling at me to get off it, but today was a bit more serious so she gave me a couple of hours.”

He began preparing for Saturday’s first “serious” race on Friday night, running practice races with Kurt Busch and Dale Earnhardt Jr., as well as some of the world’s top iRacers.

## Puzzle answers

Sudoku solution  
from March 19, 2020

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

Speedway. And for an added bonus, he was able to compete from the comfort of his own home.

All those guys are good at iRacing for a reason, they’re on there doing it, getting different races, and knowing different parts of the simulation.”

The morning race, billed as the opening event in the eNASCAR Pro Invitational iRacing Series, didn’t go so well for Friesen. Driving a virtual Toyota Camry sporting his customary number 52, he had to earn his way in via the 20-lap last chance race for Xfinity and Truck Series drivers. He got tangled up with Myatt Snider, crashed, and did not qualify.

The race was won by NASCAR Sprint Cup Series driver Denny Hamlin, who edged Earnhardt Jr. for the title. There was no purse for the winner, but Hamlin donated \$6,400 to assist Miami-area residents affected by the COVID-19 virus. Another \$20,000 was donated to the NASCAR Foundation by sponsor Dixie Vodka, iRacing and Fox Sports, who carried the race live on its FS-1 platform in the U.S.

“It’s pretty cool, with live sports shut down, what NASCAR did today, as far as getting this on Fox, and having a really great race. It was exciting. It’s not the real thing, you know, but it’s live sports,” says Friesen.

The afternoon virtual dirt race at Williams Grove was

billed as the Short Track Super Series Quarantine 500. Friesen fared a little better in that one, but there were glitches with the platform on which it ran, making it difficult for some of the drivers, Friesen included, to communicate and compete. He didn’t finish his heat in that one, either.

“It was a good start with the Facebook Live platform, but it’s going to take a bit more to get it right the way NASCAR did, with the broadcast. It was kind of tough for me to follow along to that, but I will learn from it.”

Friesen admits to be more competitive in the iRacing world, he has some work to do.

“The iRacing platform has been around for about 20 years. More and more people are getting into it, buying the hardware that goes into it,” says Friesen. “It’s a real racing seat. There’s some that simulate movement. You use about 50 per cent of the same motion as you do driving the racing car.”

Of course, Friesen hopes the current layoff won’t last much longer, but as things go on, he realizes iRacing may be in the cards for much of this year’s racing season.

“It shows how fragile everything really is, and this is (a good) lesson for everybody to appreciate what we have and what we can do,” says Friesen. “It’s scary. Hopefully we’ll be out of this deal sooner rather than later, but we’re kind of led to believe it’s going to be later.”

## SUDOKU PUZZLE

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

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## OBITUARY



**NEWMAN, MARGARET ALICE**—Margaret passed away peacefully on Friday, March 20, 2020 at the St Catharines General Hospital as a result of ovarian cancer. She was aged 77 and was predeceased by her parents, Milton Roberts and Marion Deans Roberts of Guelph, Ontario. Margaret is survived by her husband of 47 years, William Douglas Newman of Niagara-on-the-Lake, and their two sons, Donald Roberts Newman (Andrea) of Oakville, Ontario and Andrew Douglas Newman (Dominika) of Melbourne, Australia. She is also survived by her sister-in-law

Nancy Newman (Ralph Eriksen) of Aurora, Ontario. Margaret also has four beloved granddaughters; Stella and Grace Newman-King of Melbourne, Australia and Emily and Taylor Newman of Oakville, Ontario.

Margaret will be remembered as a woman of great optimism, kindness, generosity, manners, resilience and love. She was a dedicated wife, mother and grandmother. She was a congregant of Grace United Church in Niagara-on-the-Lake and an active member of her community.

She enjoyed the Shaw Festival and travelled widely. She was a retired teacher librarian and shared her love of books and learning with her own boys, her students and her friends throughout the many book clubs that she enjoyed.

According to Margaret's wishes, there will be no funeral service. Cremation has taken place and there will be a family memorial service at a future date. Memories and condolences may be shared at [www.morganfuneral.com](http://www.morganfuneral.com)



## OBITUARY



**COLE, DAVID JAMES**—With heavy hearts we announce the passing of David on Friday, March 20, 2020 in his 72nd year after a long battle with leukemia. Cherished husband of Andrea (nee Piper) for 37 years. Loving father of Robert (Jen), Teresa and Adam (Scott). Survived by the light of his life and motivation to fight, his granddaughter, Cherrie. Predeceased by his parents Ernest Matthew and Teresa Mary Cole. Cared for like a son and brother by his extended family and friends; his late aunt & uncle, Margaret Kathleen and her husband John Herman, and their children; Karen (late Bill), Diane (Frank), Thomas (Linda), James (Brenda), Teresa

(Graham) and the late John (Ina) De Line, cousin the late Gordon Robert and his late wife Blanche Emeline Jane Cole and family; and friends and guardians the late Shirley O'Connor and her family. Great friends for many years with neighbours Joe and Connie Venneri. Like a second father of family friend Ashleigh Kandas. David was a retired supervisor from the St. David's Canning Factory after over 40 years of dedicated service. David enjoyed working on his family tree and was able to connect with many family members from across the continent. He will be forever remembered for the joy he brought to so many every day.

David's family will be forever grateful for the loving support of his "Sunshine Team" of hospital visitors, and the compassionate care of the doctors and nurses of the NHS - Walker Family Cancer Centre - St. Catharines Oncology Unit and home care nurses.

In honouring David's wishes cremation has taken place. A Celebration of Life will be held at a later date. Memorial donations to the NHS-Walker Family Cancer Centre or Niagara Falls Humane Society would be appreciated. Arrangements entrusted to Considerate Cremation & Burial Services, 52 Scott Street West, St. Catharines (between Ontario Street & South Service Road), 289-362-1144. Online condolences may be made at [CCBSCares.ca](http://CCBSCares.ca)



**MARTENS, MIRIAM (NEE PENNER), MAY 2, 1935 – MARCH 19, 2020**—It is with great sorrow that we announce the passing of Miriam into the presence of her Lord & Savior at the age of 84 in Abbotsford, BC. Born in Laird, Saskatchewan to Peter & Frieda Penner, raised in Virgil, ON then residing in Abbotsford, BC. Miriam leaves behind her children Arlene & Dennis Martin, Dan & Trudy Willms, Bill & Hilda Berg, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, along with numerous relatives and friends. Also, her brother Harry & Marlene Penner. Miriam was predeceased by her husband of 36 years Abe Martens, both her parents, and her brother Eldon. A memorial service will be held in Abbotsford, BC at a later date. A special thank you to Ron Willms for his caring support, as well as the care given by staff at Tabor Home in Abbotsford, BC.



**HANCOCK, PAUL FREDERICK**—Passed away in the early morning on Wednesday March 18th, 2020 in his 72nd year after a 22-month long fight with cancer. Loving husband of 48 years to Valerie (nee Manisole), and devoted father to Ainslie. He will be dearly missed by his extended family, his friends – all of which were considered family, and those who worked with him on the numerous boards & committees he participated in.

Paul had the largest heart, a story for every situation, and always made sure your glass was full. His passion for wine, food, and travel was

always apparent, all of which you got to experience when you joined him and family at his beloved home in Florida.

Since moving to Niagara-on-the-Lake, Paul was an active part of his community donating his time and passion towards the Voices of Freedom Park, The Shaw Guild, and the RiverBrink Art Museum.

An active member at both St. George's and Cherry Hill golf clubs, Paul could always be found out on the course, or at the 19th hole sharing stories with those who would listen. For those that played with him, his swing was unforgettable, typically followed by the proclamation "That'll play".

Thank you to the staff at the St. Catharines hospital and the Walker Family Cancer Centre for their care and concern during Paul's final days.

A celebration of Paul will be held at a later date once the sun is shining and we can all gather together to remember him and his extraordinary life in a way that he would want it to be celebrated.



## DONNA MAE SCOTT OC SEPTEMBER 23, 1928 – MARCH 14, 2020



Born in Toronto to Rex and Olive Scott, Donna died following a stroke suffered on Friday, March 13. She had been drifting into the Alzheimer's world and died suddenly, without pain, without awareness. A good death.

Predeceased by her darling husband Hugh Farrell, the love of her life (March 15, 2017), her parents (her mother was a church

organist and choir leader in Saskatoon; her father a pharmacist turned Rexall executive), and son Shane Farrell, she is survived by sons Roderick, Steven and Greg Farrell, grandchildren, cousins and friends from coast to coast.

Raised in Saskatoon and educated at Queen's University, her career began in Toronto at the T. Eaton Company. Then she became a rising star in the publishing world at Maclean Hunter, moving swiftly through the ranks to positions such as Personnel Director; Manager of the Health Centre; General Manager, Financial Post Conference Division. In 1979, she became Founder and Publisher of Flare, Canada's first national monthly fashion magazine (her brainchild and one of her proudest accomplishments). Later she was the first woman promoted to the senior echelons and became a Vice President and a member of the Maclean Hunter Management Committee, responsible for the corporation's worldwide operations. After 30 years with that company, in 1994, she was appointed by The Right Honourable Jean Chretien as Chair, The Canada Council for the Arts. Following a four-year term, she was invited to be Executive Director, Arts Council of Ontario.

A true pioneer in the business world, she was just about the first woman in everything she turned to. She was what her Order of Canada citation called "a successful entrepreneur and an astute businesswoman." She served both her country and her communities through leadership on various governance boards including Queen's and Brock universities, Salvation Army, Personnel Association of Canada, Magazines Canada, International Canadian Women in Communications, a variety of fashion industry and arts boards.

In retirement after 40 years in Toronto, Donna and Hugh sold their Rosedale home and moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake to a happy and fulfilling lifestyle. She continued her community leadership by co-chairing the local fundraising committee for the new St. Catharines hospital, founding the Historic Sites Alliance, serving as vice president of the Niagara Historical Society and as a Willowbank board member, and spearheading the campaign to raise money to refurbish the bells of St. Mark's Church (and purchase six more).

In addition to her significant accomplishments, Donna mentored many women and men, inspired others, and was a champion of her friends' talents and accomplishments. She also believed that Canada needed more heroes and even recently wished she could give speeches across Canada championing the heroism of Laura Secord.

Donna had Flare! ... plus a commanding personality and the gift of a presence. When she entered the room, one would know that she had arrived. Never hesitant to point out one's grammatical faux pas or violation of etiquette rules, she also made sure her family and friends knew that following the proper dress code for every occasion was mandatory.

The family wishes to express its deep gratitude to Dr. Karen Berti, Cherry and Hernan Aperoch, Nadja Lepere, Debi Pratt and Hamish Rider for their extraordinary compassion and care for Donna during her illness, and Florence Campbell for her loyalty and endless efforts on Donna's behalf in the last challenging years.

For those wishing to honour Donna's memory, donations to the Salvation Army, St. Mark's Anglican Church or the Friends of Laura Secord would be appreciated. A funeral service will be held after public health officials declare that the pandemic is over. Arrangements entrusted to MORGAN FUNERAL HOME, 415 Regent St. Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at [www.morganfuneral.com](http://www.morganfuneral.com)





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