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 when 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

Penny Coles
The Local

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

NOTL friends unlikely to be home soon

Penny Coles
The Local

On Monday, Canadian 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 worldwide 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 defense announced last week that 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 travelers already in the Lima region. At press time, it seemed

Continued on page 3

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 Meronik)
Thwaites farm preparing for seasonal workers

Penny Coles  The Local

In a town that has worked hard to avoid a repeat of COVID-19, the theme this year is 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 live here year round, and they are prepared."

Growers have been told once the paperwork is in place, the planes could start arriving quickly. "We expect a lot of notice — they will take measures to ensure all public and seasonal workers."

"It means killing the buds on their way, he will make sure they are ready for harvest."

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 trees is what is assuring 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 har- vesting local workers who are interested in working, and every morning, he and Graham were spending time training small groups of those who arrive, head- ing out to the orchard to prune. "It is a great solution, he says. "It’s work that requires training, and it is physically ex- tremely demanding, especially for those not accustomed to it."

"Pruning hardwood is hard work", he says. "They have had time training small groups of those who arrive, head- ing out to the orchard to prune."

He has spoken to other NOTL growers whose workers have 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 is a plan he is not ex- pecting to have to put into place. While he waits, Thwaites has sourced food supplies and found that the 42 men he hopes to see arrive before the travel ban, and once he hears they’re on their way, he will make sure their supplies are ready for them when they arrive, as they all "are their houses are already stocked 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 everyone else,” 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 har- vest this year.
Ariel Carr’s surgery rushed due to COVID-19

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, her mother says, has been giving her 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 more 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 hip, 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.

Sheil 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)
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 whole building is out of order 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 been away and 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.

The 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 other staff.

"The day before, they 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 checkout 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 complainers 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 been 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 and 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 advising 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 judgment, or if uncertain, 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.”

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 at that time, we will be able to have your order ready for you. We will then require payment by Visa or MasterCard.

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

- We have made changes to the way we are running things on a daily basis, and the changes are as follows: "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)
Difficult decisions for desperate times

As of press time Tuesday, there were seven confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Niagra. That’s not a lot, and at this point the regional health was saying there’s enough evi- dence of community trans- mission. 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 help- ing to get us through this dif- ficult time.

Although the Province has shut down all non essen- tial workers, there is a very broad definition of those considered essential, so there are still a lot of people work- ing. Some of you are business owners, some are minimum wage earners. Most of you are in contact with the pub- lic. 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 hard- ware store still open, and li- quor, beer and wine for when we decide to relax. Our con- venience stores are open for food and necessities. 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, adjust- ing 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 diag- nosed with COVID-19, thus one of the reasons for state of emergency in NOTL as de- clared by Mayor Betty Doides. You think it hasn’t been stated enough, but apparently not all are taking it seriously enough. Stay home if you haven’t travelled, or if you have symp- toms 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 our- selves, 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 at their connection to the community. We have business who have supported us, and whom we want to continue to sup- port. They rely on us to help get their message to the com- munity, and we want to continu- e to do that for them.

And of course we are all anxious about Town decisions. We want to know, as do everyone, what changes around us, how it’s changed. And yes, we can and do want it all to be reported and that every- one 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 dec- rousing the numbers we print, but we don’t want that unless absolutely necessary. If you don’t receive The Local in your mail next week or the week af- ter, 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 do- ing, 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 continue to share as long as we can. It is at least we hope they will. If you are read- ing online and know someone who isn’t, but maybe is inter- ested 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 es- sential 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 our- selves, we’re helping if we shop for others while we’re out.

And lastly, because again, we want to say thank you enough, we want to salute our town council and staff. They continue to look after your welfare. They make dif- ficult decisions, and in some cases, unpopular decisions.

As of press time Tuesday — and we keep saying that, be- cause not everyone has the chance to read this. It may have changed — no other municipality, or the Re- gion of Niagara, has declared a state of emergency. There will be some in town who won’t be happy that NOTL has. It is that being done to keep each one of you safe, in a town with a large population. Better to be safer than sorry. Maybe it’s aliche. But in this situation, a fitting one.

Penny Coles
The Local

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

Thank you, Van Noort Florists

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society sends our heartfelt thank you and deep grat- itude 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 Horticultur- al Society has been deliv- ering small arrangements of spring flowers to resi- dents in each of the three nursing homes for over 20 years. However, when an- physical/social/distance due to COVID-19 became a reality, our members were concerned that we may not be able to fulfill our com- mitment 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 they were gratefully accepted on the resi- dents’ behalf.

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

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

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DISTRESS CENTRE
For depression, distress and crisis.
24 hour help line: 905-668-3711

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AND ADDICTIONS
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416-586-5437
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kidshelplne.ca

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
Meetings and events
519-884-7721

ASSAULED WOMEN’S
HELPLINE
Mobile text to: #SAREA (7273)
1-866-863-0511
(Toll Free)

CRIME STOPPERS
1-800-222-8477
(TIPS)
niagaracrimestoppers.com

Text 274637 (CRIMES),
keyword: Niagara, then your tip
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 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 work, routines, and 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 and know when they have mastered them. I use 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 and ready.

Lastly, at Royal Oak, we have entered into the world of virtual learning, and 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.
Cut flower industry devasted by virus

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 Tim 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 services, 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'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)

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)

Sunshine through the clouds

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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, and 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 Apel, both philanthropists, Apel. Both from Toronto, Scott, along with her husband Hugh Farrell, the love of her life for more than 40 years, and another love — the town they called home for the last three decades.

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Scott had great friends here, including Bluma Apel. Both from Toronto, Apel 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 promote its causes, including as co-chair of the NOTL team that raised $2.8 million for the new St. Catharine’s hospital.

She also won the 2014 Chamber of Commerce Spirit of Niagara Award for Community Leadership, but 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 achievements, 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 that 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, she 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 always important to her, as was history. Deciding that some of the important local organizations could benefit from her promotion, she founded the Historical Site Alliance, to support the Niagara Historical Museum, McFarland House, Willowbank, RiverRed Art Museum, the Niagara Pumphouse 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 wins to her beloved “Hughie,” who was a great woman, a great spirit, and a guest list of about 50 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.

Pratt said many times in the lead-up to the party, the 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 people who were part of her comfort zone, 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.”

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**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 he handed their drinks from the inside bar.

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Sunday, March 29th

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**THE NOTL LOCAL**

March 26, 2020
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 Drive 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 interest, with everything that was going on.”

Friesen and his team head 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 dirt to learn the following week’s NASCAR event would run on the virtual track at Homestead-Miami Speedway. 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.

“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 Drive 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,” said Friesen.

The afternoon virtual diet 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.

“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 layout 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’ve kind of led to believe it’s going to be later.”
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. David was the beloved husband of Andrea (nee Piper) for 37 years. Loving father of Robert (Jen), Theresa 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 (Dee) DeLine, cousin the late Gordon Robert and his late wife Blanche Emlenie 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 Vennett. 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. Memories can be shared at www.morganfuneral.com. Arrangements entrusted to MORGAN FUNERAL HOME, 415 Regent St. Niagara-on-the-Lake.

MARTENS, MIRIAM (NEE PENNER), MAY 2, 1935 – MARCH 19, 2020—It’s 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 Vegi, ON then residing in Abbotsford, BC. Miriam leaves behind her children Arelene & 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 46 years to Valarie (nee Manic), and devoted father to Anlle. 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 RiverlinkArt 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’s 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 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 was 92 years old. Donna was 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, Maclean Hunter, 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 Taylor Newman 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. Donna also has four beloved grandchildren, Sharae Stephen and Grace Newman-King of Melbourne, Australia and Emily and Taylor Newman of Oakville, Ontario.

NATIONAL 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 predeceased by her parents, Milton Roberts and theHon. 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 grandchildrens, Sharae Stephen 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
Brandie Sinclair is the owner/operator of ONESource moving Solutions. She is a certified Relocation Transition Specialist (CERTS), member of the National Association of Senior Move Managers (NASMM) and a Certified Staging Professional (CSP). Active memberships and accreditations with these organizations ensures that through regular training, Brandie and her team are continually able to assist older adults, their families and caregivers through every step of the often difficult and stressful move process. All employees have had the Police Vulnerable Sector Check (PVSC) and appropriate insurance.

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