



**Niagara  
Cats Rescue  
fundraiser  
Saturday  
page 10**

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The Shaw Festival is presenting Tom Rooney as Cyrano and Deborah Hay as Roxane in *Cyrano de Bergerac*, on stage at the Royal George Theatre. For Mike Balsom's theatre review, please see page 8. (Photo by David Cooper)

## Need for food doubles, food bank shelves bare

**Penny Coles  
The Local**

Easter is coming up, and the number of clients depending on Newark Neighbours to feed themselves and their families, not only for the holiday but over the coming months, has doubled, says food bank manager Cindy Grant.

And the shelves are bare.

She has 70 clients in her book requiring help, representing 128 people, 35 of whom are children.

That's more than double what the food bank is accustomed to feeding, she says.

The need had been creeping up during the

pandemic, but now, "with the high price of food, gas and just about everything else, people are struggling. They're really having a hard time. One young couple with a little one, the mom has gone back to school, and the dad has a full-time job, but at minimum wage. People with full-time work, on minimum wage, are living so close to the bone they just can't manage."

There were so many generous donations at Christmas, the mountains of food made it seem like they would never run out, says Grant, "but the food is gone, we

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## Farmers feel criticism levelled at them unfair

**Penny Coles  
The Local**

Last week's march for seasonal farmworkers didn't sit well with some local farmers, who felt they were being unfairly targeted with complaints that imply they mistreat their workers.

The protest was intended to bring attention to racism, discrimination, bullying, and poor conditions for workers, as well as to call for resident status, with the

same rights for them as for all Canadians.

Not all farmers who objected to the implications of the march were willing to be named, but one who is always open with The Local is Erwin Wiens, who has a small group of offshore workers who return every year.

The biggest objection to last week's article was the claim that migrant farmworkers pay into the Canada Pension Plan and Em-

ployment Insurance, but can't collect it.

That is incorrect. When a farmworker who has worked in Canada retires, he can collect an amount based on the amount he or she has paid into it, like all Canadians.

He has one worker who is now 58, and has been coming to Canada to work for 32 years.

"He says he'll keep coming to work here until he doesn't want to, and when

that time comes, he'll get the maximum."

Employment insurance benefits are also available, but not for workers to collect for the four months or so they aren't working, says Wiens. They can collect special benefits under circumstances such as sickness and paternity leave.

Kit Andres, one of the organizers of last week's march, agrees farmworkers can collect CPP and EI.

"Farmworkers who had

or have temporary status (through the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program or Temporary Foreign Workers Program-Agricultural Stream) and meet the conditions to apply, can collect CPP and certain EI special benefits (including sickness benefits) as long as they have a valid work permit (which expires every Dec. 15 for SAWP workers). Seasonal farmworkers are excluded from collecting EI regular benefits when they

are laid off for the season, and farmworkers without status (undocumented workers) are completely excluded from any social supports," says Andres.

"What sometimes ends up happening when a worker is sick or injured is that they are simply deported and replaced before they're able to apply for compensation. That's another reason why farmworkers and other

**Continued on page 4**

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# Community allotment gardens a go

## Newark Park the chosen location

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

Coun. Norm Arsenault was hoping for one of the garden plots Monday night, if the town approved a community allotment garden, as requested by resident Julian Trachsel.

Councillors gave their approval for the project, but it has turned out to be such a popular idea, Arsenault discovered, there are no plots left to be had — they’ve all been reserved.

Town staff have reduced the number of plots Trachsel was hoping to rent out, to just 32, with two larger, raised beds.

If it goes well there could be a second phase next year with an increase in the number of allotments. And Trachsel has already allocated plots, mostly to people who have supported him and donated funds for the project, he told councillors. He expects to have a waiting list, which is not at all unusual for community gardens, he added.

When Trachsel spoke to councillors in August,

he asked for a location on town property, with access to water and a faucet.

He was pleased with the location the town is providing, in Newark Park, with an entrance from Niven Road, but was surprised to hear the recommendation in the staff report that “all costs be the responsibility of the garden group, through the garden coordinator,” who is Trachsel.

That would include \$5,500 for the water and faucet installation. He asked for “a 50-50 split if not 100 per cent” be paid by the town, otherwise, “I’d have no cushion for unexpected operating costs” throughout the season.

He has a list of rules and regulations for a consistent garden appearance, to be monitored by volunteers, Trachsel told councillors, including a three-foot wire mesh border to keep the bunnies out — no other size or design will be accepted.

As for deer, he is keeping his fingers crossed and hoping for the best that they don’t get into the al-

lotments — a chain link fence around the area is too expensive, he said, and he has no other solution.

He has pledged of \$20,200 to cover the start-up costs, he told councillors, and he has looked for grants that might be applicable, but has had no luck so far.

He has several reasons for wanting the project to

proceed, including that it will further public engagement, will encourage people to spend more time outside, staying fit and having fun, and it “converts part of a little-used green space to be more creatively used, and more environmentally friendly.”

He is also hoping it will encourage children to learn about food sources.

The town property that is being provided will allow for 32 10’ by 10’ plots,

plus two 5’x10’ raised beds for those with mobility issues. He had originally hoped for 70 plots, but is now hoping for a sustainable project that can grow.

Although the staff report said there is no funding available for the community allotments, Arsenault made a motion that the town cover the \$5,500 for water and faucets from the capital reserves, which was unanimously approved.

However, Trachsel warned, some of those who contributed to the \$20,200 in pledges have said their donation depends on the garden being ready for this year’s planting season, and although parks and recreation director Kevin Turcotte said he couldn’t guarantee that, he would do his best to make it happen.

For more information, Trachsel can be reached at Newarkparkcommunitygarden@gmail.com



Newark Park, with an entrance from Niven Road, has been chosen for the community garden, (Photo supplied)

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# Masks, vaccination proof still on the table

## Numbers of infections, hospitalizations rising

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

With the number of COVID cases and accompanying hospitalizations starting to creep up again in Niagara, a regional order to bring back a mask mandate and proof-of-vaccination requirements remains on the table if needed.

Dr. Mustafa Hirji, Niagara's acting chief medical officer of health, says he is hoping the region can continue to align with the provincial decision for individuals to make personal decisions about their risk, but he is disappointed the messaging from the province hasn't been stronger in promoting voluntary wearing of masks.

"It's a little frustrating that they have been basically radio silent about COVID over the last couple of weeks," he says.

And he is "absolutely leaving the door open for masking and proof of vaccinations," should COVID cases go sideways.

Outbreaks have been increasing in Niagara since mid-March, even before restrictions were lifted last week. Hirji says he's hoping that information alone will be enough to encourage people to wear masks, and get booster vaccinations, which remain the best tools in stopping the spread of infection.

Most of the outbreaks are in hospital facilities, long-term care and retirement homes and other congregate living situations, he says.

It's difficult to know what's happening in schools, with no record of infections unless parents report them, but it's likely there are a fair number of cases "that I'm afraid we're blind to."

Hirji often compares what is happening in Ontario and across the country to other countries that

are typically ahead of Canada. Countries in Europe, such as France, Austria and Switzerland, are broadly similar to Canada, he said, in the way they have regulated cases, and now show a surge of infections, hospitalizations and intensive care admissions after lifting restrictions. Their cases are close to numbers during the peak of omicron.

Some European countries have chosen to reinstate restrictions, such as a mask mandate, as a result of their upward trajectory.

Hirji fears the same might happen in Ontario, including an increase in deaths, and refers to the already-increasing numbers as a "new wave," saying it could be as bad as the last one.

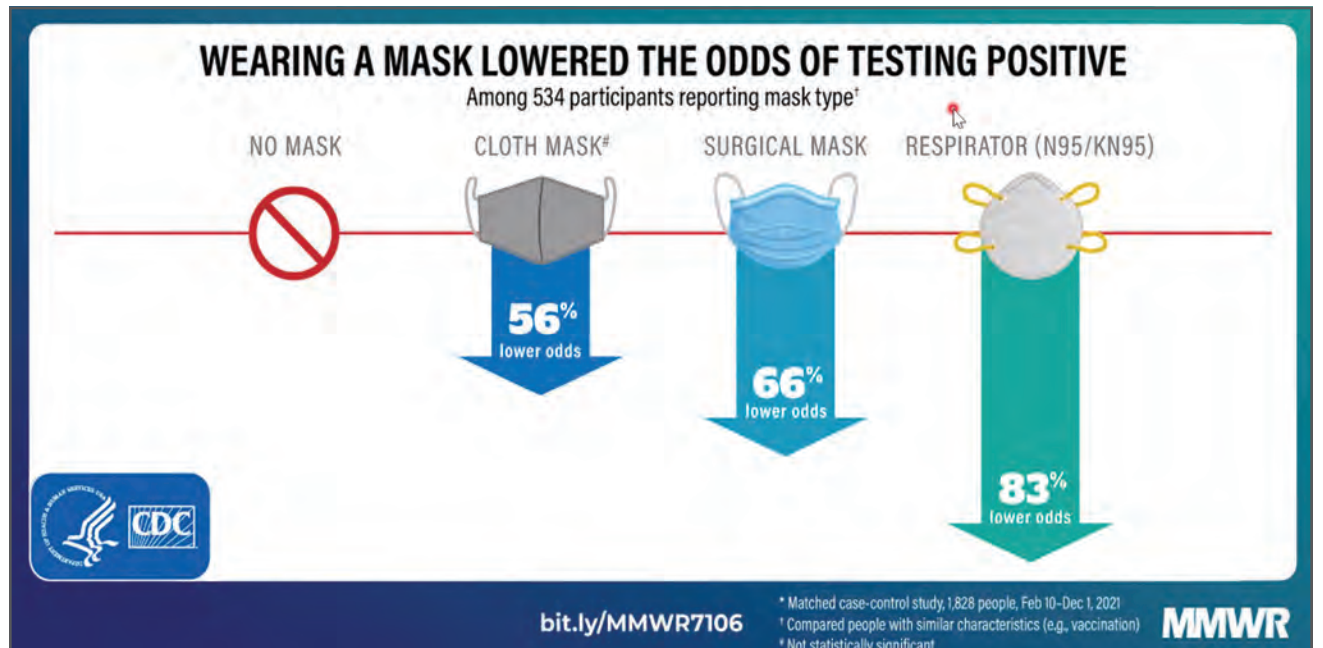
"Just because we have a lot of immunity (through vaccinations) out there doesn't mean we can expect hospitalizations will be okay, but they won't go up as much as they did in the last wave. If there are hospitalizations, a small number of people will die. I do worry suddenly we'll see an increase in deaths as we go through this next wave. We want to prevent this, to prevent human suffering."

And people who come out of the hospital may have long-COVID, he added. "It's important to prevent this."

In Niagara, testing indicates a 14 per cent positivity rate, far higher than during other waves. Outbreaks are up 160 per cent since mid-March, hospitalizations for people with COVID are up 94 per cent in the same time period, and the number of patients primarily being treated with COVID has jumped by 182 per cent.

The data from wastewater testing also shows an upward trend, both in the region and across the province, he says.

Hirji also presented data that indicates an un-



Dr. Mustafa Hirji presented this graph to show the advantages of learning a mask in indoor public settings.

vaccinated person is 37 per cent more likely to become infected with COVID, 490 per cent more likely to be hospitalized, and more than 700 per cent more likely to be admitted to intensive care.

He showed figures that indicate those in the lowest income categories may suf-

fer the most from COVID, including more deaths. They may not have easy access to good health care, and may not seek treatment as quickly. "It's disappointing that those who are the least well-off will feel the greatest impact of COVID," he says.

In addition to stronger messaging about wearing

masks and getting fully vaccinated, Hirji says he'd also like to see the province put out more messaging about how to access medical treatment, and make pathways to treatment easier.

"We also need to build a culture of staying home if you're sick, including pro-

viding pay for sick days." Those without sick pay "are more likely to come to work and spread infections."

The province should already be working on a plan for re-introducing a mask mandate, and proof of vaccinations, if necessary, two initiatives Hirji says have a lot of public support.

## Period Promise



The NOTL Rangers' service project in support of the United Way's Period Promise was a huge success, collecting more than 300 products that will go toward helping those in need in the Niagara area. Period products are a basic necessity and for those living in poverty, access to these products can be challenging, especially during a pandemic. The Rangers decided this was an important issue and a worthy cause to support, and offer their heartfelt thanks to all who donated, with special thanks to Phil's Independent Grocer for a significant donation. Annika Janzen, Samantha Fretz, Tannin Driedger-Bradshaw, and Helen Hguyen helped organize the project, along with Aria Leonard, Emily Leitch, absent from the photo. (Photo supplied)



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# ‘Not all workers want permanent residency’

Continued from page 1

migrant workers are calling for permanent resident status, so they can access full benefits and healthcare when sick or injured, without risk of deportation.”

The issue of workers not wanting to stay on certain farms is more complicated. They can move from farm to farm to go where the work is, if the farmers agree, says Wiens — he has workers who will move to other farms to pick apples. But they are under contract, and if they want to move because they don’t like their living conditions or they feel they’re being treated badly, they need to call the Jamaican or Mexican consulate or liaison officials, numbers they are given.

Some workers are afraid to do that, fearing they will be sent home, he says.

If they ask not to return to a particular farm the next season, their names will be put in a pool, and they may not be offered a contract, Wiens explains.

When workers come to Canada, their contract is with a specific employer.

“Where the problem in the system lies is there are some bad employers. They exist. There are bad

employers everywhere. That’s human nature. And you can’t change it through legislation.”

What legislation can do is determine set working conditions, including living arrangements and hours of work, and make them consistent, he says.

To the comments at the march that farmworkers work long days with no overtime, Wiens says, their rate of pay, this year set at \$15 an hour with housing, and a maximum number of hours they can work, is spelled out in the contract they sign. That is negotiated with and agreed upon by all involved, “enshrined in legislation.” And it’s necessary for the employer, who has work that has to be done at a specific time.

There is no overtime, he agrees, also as spelled out in the contract, but that applies to all workers in the Canadian agricultural sector, not just those who come to the country under seasonal workers programs.

“No Canadian in the agricultural sector is paid overtime or holiday pay. They work many hours in a short period of time and then they’re done. It couldn’t work any other way.”

But overall, the program



Erwin Wiens says the way to improve the lives of farmworkers is to have consistent standards, and enforce them. (Photo supplied)

is a huge benefit to developing nations, to huge lineups of workers who want to come here, and to the farmers, who need them, says Wiens.

The march also called for “urgent and permanent changes to ensure immigration rights instead of partial, time-limited programs.”

Wiens agrees that the process for farmworkers who want permanent res-

idence in Canada should be easier — he has been going through it with one of his Jamaican workers for the last three years. It’s an expensive and costly process, he says, and his employee, nicknamed Obama, “should be a Canadian. His family should be Canadian.”

Wiens is willing to sponsor him, and is doing everything he can to help him.

“I have said that to everyone who will listen,” says Wiens. “We’re now three years into the process, and we want to bring his family over here.”

The process is slow, however, for all who wish to come to Canada, he points out, and in response to the comments made at the march, he adds, “not all

farmworkers want to come here permanently. Most are happy to go home, they are content with their lives there. They are all entitled to apply though.”

The problem with the process is “a shortfall of the Canadian government, for anybody who wants to come to Canada.”

Most who do successfully apply look for work other than in the agricultural industry, some going to school to develop trades, and they do well, Wiens says.

He would love for Obama to stay on the farm forever. “He would have a job here as long as he wants it, but I would never hold him back. The reality is the world would be his oyster.”

As Kit Andres said during the march last week, and Wiens agrees, those who come under the seasonal workers programs “all want to come to Niagara-on-the-Lake.”

“They want to come to this community, and many of them have been coming for decades. There is everything they need here for them, places they can congregate. Even the housing is better here. Most have access to satellite TV and internet, and they have better mobility.”

The NOTL farmers who called The Local shared their concern that they are being blamed for the mistreatment and poor living conditions farmworkers experience in other regions of the province. They speak of well-maintained living quarters inspected by Niagara Region every year, and the fact that many farmers treat their workers like family, going above and beyond anything they are required to do to make them comfortable. One spoke of arranging Sunday morning church services on the farm for them.

They praise the dedication of the health inspectors, who won’t approve a farm that doesn’t meet standards spelled out for them, and surmise maybe the same standards aren’t upheld in other areas.

Before employers can hire foreign farmworkers through the federal program, they must pass that regional inspection. If there are any infractions found, inspectors will return to ensure they’ve been corrected, before forwarding their report to the Service Canada, which administers the program — if living conditions don’t pass inspection, farmers will not be able to participate in the program.



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# EDITORIAL

## Two sides to every story, including last weekend's march

There is absolutely no doubt farmworkers who come to Canada are treated better today than they were when the seasonal workers program began more than 50 years ago. The question is, have we, as a country and a society, come far enough?

Those who advocate for farmworkers believe there is more work to be done.

Most farmers, at least here in Niagara-on-the-Lake, believe they treat their employees exceptionally well, as if they are family, and go far above and beyond what is mandated by government programs. Most of them here in NOTL probably do.

How many don't is unknown, and without having names and specific complaints, it's difficult to know what to do about it. There are avenues to lodge complaints, but workers fear it would end up with them being sent home, never to be accepted into the seasonal program again, and they can't afford that. So if they are ill treated, they must be staying and putting up with it, biting the bullet for the sake of their families at home, and then they do it all over again the next year. Maybe for the rest of their working lives.

Also at issue is the question of rights. As one letter-writer pointed out along with many

phone calls, The Local printed incorrect information last week. Farmworkers who come to Canada have benefits they didn't have decades ago, including CPP when they retire, and some EI special benefits, although not for workers on contract during the time they're unemployed, but that same rule applies to all Canadians. We're told there can be snags in collecting some of those benefits, but those who pay into them are entitled to collect them.

Last week's march was called to protest racism. It was marking the International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and it brought out one side of the story. The farm-

ers' response brought out the other side. Does the truth lie somewhere in the middle, as it usually does? Do most farmers treat their employees well, with the kindness and respect they deserve, and are most workers happy with their employers and their lives in Canada?

When it comes to racism, it that's what is happening, most is not good enough. It's a sensitive subject, because the underlying issue is about much more than two sides of a labour dispute. At its core is the charge that it's coming from a place of discrimination, and if true, there can't be two sides.

Many of us have likely at

some point in our lives been on one or the other side of an employer/employee relationship that didn't go well, but maybe not as many because of race or colour. That's a very different situation, and much harder to fix.

What is very hurtful to many farmers, good men and women in our community, is the feeling they're all being painted with the same broad strokes. That's really unfortunate for those who are really doing their best for their employees, but hear the message, and feel it's aimed at them as well, in their community, in a very public forum. And without specific complaints, how

do we avoid it?

To all the farmers, business owners, volunteers and community members who wholeheartedly reach out their arms in welcome and do their best to offer a good life in Canada for those who not only are essential to our food supply but a part of our community for a large part of the year, thank you.

Last weekend's march gave us all something to think about, to talk about, and maybe to do something about, so that those who took part in it will never feel the need to march again.

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

## Tree-clearing underway for Thundering Waters development



**Owen Bjorgan**  
Special to The Local

It is with a sense of fatigue and frustration that I find myself reporting on the first large-scale cutting of trees and drainage of wetlands at the Thundering Waters Forest, one of Niagara region's most biologically significant remaining ecosystems.

This is not the first time where I've mentioned the invaluable but controversial plot of land located just outside of Marineland, towards the

southern end of Niagara Falls.

Before I discuss the implications of the pictured habitat elimination you see here, I will give the most succinct background event leading up to this pivotal day.

A 484-acre ecosystem caught the attention of a Chinese investment group called GR Can during Kathleen Wynne's time as premier. Through municipalities like Niagara Falls, there was a celebrated economic opportunity to allow a foreign developer create a city within a city, amidst swaths of provincially-protected wetlands and other habitat features.

The geographical layout of such protected features should have drastically reduced or

even outright prohibited the size of this particular development, but initial maps and plans showed a more dominating and destructive layout.

I and many locals, as well as professionals from biology backgrounds, sounded the alarm through regional, city, and other public meetings while the previous board of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority essentially sat on their hands. However, in the meantime, that same board of directors was very pushy and public about the concept of biodiversity offsetting, an idea where species richness removed in one area can be recreated in other areas to offset the loss.

The issue became national

news when the dots connected during a corruption scandal with the region's previous CAO, who was involved with the NPCA, who had political ties with the City of Niagara Falls city council. It led to citizens being sued for speaking out, acts of backdoor lobbying, and two slaps on the wrist for the developer who repeatedly probed the land before they were legally allowed to.

Does this sound like a cynical, unbelievable story? A few quick Google searches will verify everything I just mentioned.

This back-and-forth battle of trying to have the de-

velopment project moved somewhere less environmentally-destructive went on for years. Thundering Waters Forest went from national notoriety to eerily silent during COVID-19, when our society was blindsided and then all-consumed by the events at hand. I feared the silence, and the next thing you know, the shovels were officially in the ground as mid-March, 2022, seven years after it became a talking point.

I learned about the recent logging from the core group of citizens I was once fighting this issue with against developers. I remember seeing the

photos just a day before heading out on my Appalachian road trip over March break. I relate the feeling of receiving the news to losing someone close to me.

My big drive down in the U.S. certainly gave me a lot of time to contemplate the emotional aspect of the loss. Then, there is the cyclic nature of asking myself, 'could I have tried harder? Did we try hard enough? What more would it have taken? Was the strategy right in some areas and misguided in others?'

With every big moment in

Continued on page 7



The clearing of Thundering Waters Forest has been ongoing over the last two weeks. (Photo supplied)

## View from the couch

**Donald Combe**  
Special to The Local

*The Peacock Spring* (Prime, 1996) features two teen-aged sisters who travel to India to live with their widowed father. They

bring unrealized and unreal assumptions, and meet strange expectations from their father and difficult demands from an exotic society. A well-conceived story and a beautiful film.

Donald Combe is a retired

English teacher who loves to go to movies. Until he resumes going to theatres, he has graciously agreed to share his opinions, through "short and sweet" exclusives, of Netflix series and movies for The Local.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake  
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# COMMENT

## Local LETTERS

### Reader takes exception to COVID numbers

I would respectfully like to address Dr. R.G. James' letter (The Local, March 16).

Dr. James had quoted that approximately 38,000 deaths in Canada were from COVID. It's important to note that the 38,000 died with COVID, not from COVID. The other co-morbidities listed on their death certificates were: 38 per cent dementia or Alzheimer's; 33 per cent pneumonia; 15 per cent hypertensive disease; 13 per cent ischemic heart disease; 13 per cent respiratory fail-

ure; 12 per cent diabetes.

And the list goes on.

The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), the national public health agency of the U.S., has acknowledged that 75 per cent of the deaths with COVID had four or more co-morbidities and 94 per cent had two or more co-morbidities.

The doctor also had expressed that "after two years and approximately 38,000 deaths from COVID in Canada versus 900,000 in the U.S., to suggest

that our vastly improved performance over our southern neighbour is not due to our way more successful vaccination policy is so disheartening."

When you look at the number of people testing positive for COVID compared to the deaths with COVID, the U.S. ratio of death is 0.012 and Canada's is 0.011. With the vaccinations not stopping the spread of the virus our survival rate in Canada seems to be very similar to the U.S.

**Shannon Sherwood**

## Local LETTERS

### Temporary workers have same rights as all Canadians, farmer says

Regarding the article on the front page of The Local (March 23, Farmworkers ask for same rights as all Canadians), I must say I was very disappointed with the inaccurate content.

There seems to be a never-ending trail of fake news, and it seems now that The Local with this article has joined the parade.

Firstly, the correct term for these people is temporary foreign worker and not migrant worker. I google searched "can temporary foreign workers collect CPP if they pay CPP benefits" and presto it says that TFWs are able to collect EI sickness benefits. They can also get CPP if they have made enough contributions. A deeper dive shows that TFWs can't collect loss of work benefits, which is not a factor, as they are here on a work visa with an employer-guaranteed minimum of 240 hours of pay/work over six weeks, but they can claim special benefits such as sickness, maternity and parental leave. They are also protected by the Charter of Rights

and Freedoms, the workplace safety and insurance act, the Ontario Human Rights Code and the occupational health and safety act. This information took me under two minutes to find, and definitely changes the narrative of the article.

I was very interested in Gabriel's story of the sacrifices he made, and continues to make, to earn monies for his family back in Mexico. A pertinent piece of missing information is that under the SAWP (seasonal Agricultural Workers Program) no worker can stay and work in Canada beyond eight months a year, and they must leave Canada to return home for Christmas.

This means that Gabriel has left Canada 21 times and leaves me to wonder that if the conditions are so bad for Gabriel, and if he is being bullied and mistreated, and if the pressure to produce is so bad, and if the living conditions (which are annually inspected by the local regional government as part of the qualifications to requests TFWs) are below his

standards, and if leaving his young family is so traumatic, and the work so difficult with his herniated discs, then why has he voluntarily returned to the same employer 20 times (Mexican TFWs have the right to change employers)?

Thank goodness Gabriel was here and that his employer pushed to have him seen at Hamilton General for his open heart surgery, one of the best hospitals for this procedure in the province, and arguably the country.

It's important to note that all TFWs receive a health card and have the same access as every Canadian to our health care system. They also have their own drug plan.

I must say 'shame on Ms. Coles' for not performing her journalistic duties of fact-checking prior to print. It is this kind of fake news that creates mistrust amongst the community. The article should clearly read 'temporary foreign workers have same rights as all Canadians.'

**Kevin Watson**  
NOTL

## Shovels hit the ground mid-March

Continued from page 6

life, there is hopefully a lesson. How can we apply ourselves moving forward when we see the warning signs of such an event?

During the Thundering Waters years of conversation, I had to admit that when a larger force is in play, it can and will do everything in its power to maintain the power. In this case, once the initial deal was signed and nobody was publicly made aware of it, it was going to be hard to walk it back. It had already sunk its roots in, with the brutal irony of the roots it was about to rip up in Canada.

Money has a big mouth, and admittedly, it is a hard mouth to close, even if what it is yelling about is wrong. If you yell back, as I did many times, you will be chomped at by said mouth, or it will turn around and yell to the public how you're just a special-interest tree hugger. It may even bite so hard, that it could sue you for trying to protect a rare parcel of our natural heritage.

There are also victories to consider. We ultimately shrunk the original size of the plan significantly. If we hadn't spoken up, they would have succeeded in levelling and indirectly polluting dozens and dozens of more acres than planned. We did that through passion, education, and successful face-to-face communication as a team of local citizens. In the environmental field, let alone any field, people can accomplish a lot when they work in unison.

From a past and present tense, there are two things I find particularly disturbing about the cutting happening in Thundering Waters Forest.

On a grand scale from the past, there was a particularly voracious and sincere hunger to have this project accomplished. All of the legal and controversial aspects are just points to show how determined the powers-to-be were to push this through at any cost.

Secondly, and at present, I find it disrespectful and scientifically tone-deaf to be doing all of this development in early spring, where the species that

inhabit the forest's seasonal wetlands are emerging from hibernation and gathering to reproduce.

I must also say that I do not own the image accompanying this article. I will not disclose who sent it to me, for the respect of that individual who has worked countless hours and years to advocate for this forest. I currently have paperwork in my office telling me how if I ever took photographs on that property again, I'd have a legal consequence at the door. Meanwhile, the property is no stranger to illegal garbage dumping and hunting as we speak.

As the backhoes and saws continue to pursue their way into what was once the jewel of Niagara's swamp forests, I wonder how to move forward with this event on a personal and professional note, but also, what more can be done currently and in the future as more big-money investments come to town?

Ultimately, politics has a direct impact on our environments, and that has a direct impact on you.

### Kudos to town for fixing potholes

Kudos to the town staff for rectifying so timely the concerns brought to them on Monday, March 21.

By Wednesday, March 23,

the potholes on Concession 6 near St. Michael Catholic School were repaired, and the blockage in the creek near Trius Estate Winery was cleared.

The follow-up call was also much appreciated. Well done!

**Laurene Nickel**  
NOTL

### Shameful a sovereign nation can't be protected

All this money and time the countries of the world have spent to fund the United Nations, since 1945. All the money and time that NATO

countries spent to fund NATO. It seems completely useless if the world can't find a way to protect a sovereign nation from invasion, in this

day and age. What good is any of this?

Shameful.

**Steve Siansky**  
NOTL

### Please sign petition for equal rights


The current and former migrant farmworkers who led Niagara's first Unite Against Racism march to demand full and permanent immigration status for all, would like to thank the community for participating in

last week's event in Virgil. It was a great success and encouraged them to continue speaking up for migrant rights. Migrants urge you as their neighbour to join them in the call for equal rights for all migrants, refugees, and

undocumented people by signing and sharing the petition at statusforall.ca.


United we are stronger!

**Kit Andres**  
**Migrant Workers Alliance**  
**for Change**




## Letters! We want letters!

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



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# Cyrano 'theatrical version of comfort food'

Mike Balsom  
The Local

It's fitting that Shaw Festival's first 2022 presentation in one of its signature theatres is a play that was part of its last pre-pandemic full season.

*Cyrano de Bergerac* has returned to the Royal George Theatre with the same actors in the lead roles, in a play adapted by the same writer and helmed by the same director, with a set that seems as if it never left the stage.

All of that amounts to a very, very good thing.

Tom Rooney is back as the title character. He perfectly embodies Cyrano, a confident, boastful raconteur who uses his eloquent and at times acerbic words as effectively as he does his sharp sword.

But his hubris fails him in his desire to capture the heart of his cousin Roxane, expertly played once again by Deborah Hay. In her company, he can't see beyond the end of his own nose to his endearing qualities, hung up as he is on his prominent proboscis. Its grotesqueness makes it the centre of many jokes, though these are rarely told to the swashbuckler's face.

Enter Jeff Irving, returning as the handsome yet vapid beau-hunk Christian de Neuvillette. His supermodel good looks catch the eye of the swooning Roxane, much to the chagrin of Cyrano. Yet Christian, incompetent orator as he is, cannot string together the words to express his love for her.

That, of course, is where Cyrano jumps in, offering to be Christian's scribe, and even his voice in one of the play's most well-known scenes. It's an easy yet painful task for him. The words flow like water in the river Seine, but each wave pierces the nobleman's heart, knowing as he does that his skilful prose is helping the



Tom Rooney as Cyrano and Jeff Irving as Christian in on stage in the Shaw Festival production of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. (David Cooper)

younger cadet win the hand of his beloved cousin.

It's a tale as familiar as it is enduring. Written in the late 1890s by Edmund Rostad, *Cyrano de Bergerac* is based loosely on the life of a real person and set in the 1640s during the Franco-Spanish War.

Originally written entirely in verse, it was an immediate hit upon its premiere in France in 1897. There have been a number of translations and adaptations through the years, with a half-dozen film and television presentations of the story. And many, many more if you include cartoon retellings (*Cyrano de Bugs*, anyone?) and the 1987 Fred Schepisi romcom *Roxanne*

starring Steve Martin and Daryl Hannah. Shaw first mounted a production of *Cyrano* for their 1982 and 1983 seasons.

As she did in 2019, Kate Hennig has again translated and adapted the story for Shaw's stage. She has done a marvellous job in bringing out both the pathos and the humour in this story of unrequited love.

The Royal George is used to its utmost by director Chris Abraham. Characters enter and exit through the doors behind the back row, continuing their dialogue up and down the aisle. It sets an almost immersive tone, especially during the first scene, which takes place in the theatre of the Hôtel de Bour-

gogne. From the stage actors look out to audience members as if they were sitting alongside those of the performance within the performance.

As with a number of Shaw's recent productions, the cast is diverse, with Michael Man portraying both a pick-pocket and a mistress, Nafeesa Monroe playing Le Bret, and Keira Sangster taking on various roles, including one as a cadet in the French army.

Rooney is an expert Cyrano, capturing his humour and his sarcasm in equal measures. A particular standout is a long string of humorous comparisons he makes of his own nose to various horrors. That takes place during a sword fight with the Viscount Valvert, to whom Roxane is expected to be wed. The audience laughed

uproariously throughout, especially when he dropped the clever name 'Nostrildamus' at one point.

Rooney's portrayal of the lovelorn Cyrano is such that theatre goers can see past the character's outstanding physical trait to both the pain and love within his heart. The audience can feel his desire for Roxane to choose his soul over Christian's beauty, to love him for what he is. And they also feel his fear of stepping out of the shadows to profess his love. Rooney endears himself to the audience, wearing Cyrano's emotion on his face.

Act Two begins on the battlefields of the war and stands out as a tour de force for the production, with the humorous feast a prelude to the brutality of the battle with

the Spaniards. It ends in a convent, where Cyrano visits Roxane regularly to bring her his Gazette, his weekly outline of events in and around Paris.

It's in the convent when Hay's exquisite Roxane and Rooney's ageing Cyrano come together, playing off of each other expertly in the play's moving and poignant final scene.

The tried and true *Cyrano de Bergerac* is a theatrical version of comfort food. It's a welcome return to the Royal George Theatre, as well as a welcome return to normal theatre going, albeit with masks and vaccine passports checked at the door, as per Shaw's current duty of care procedures. It's on now until May 8, with tickets available via shawfest.ca.

**We are thrilled to welcome Ricky Watson to our Niagara-on-the-Lake Realty family!**

Raised in historic Old Town Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ricky knows exactly what the region has to offer. After obtaining a Business and Accounting degree from Southern Wesleyan University in South Carolina, he spent many years as a Golf Professional at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club before embarking on his real estate career.

Ricky's knowledge of and passion for Niagara-on-the-Lake, along with his commitment to supporting clients, problem solving skills and patience ensures that the home buying or selling process is a stress free and comfortable experience.

When not working, he can be found enjoying a walk around town with his partner Shauna and their dog Bogey or out on the golf course. Ricky looks forward to introducing his clients to the wonderful lifestyle that Niagara-on-the-Lake has to offer.



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# Tribute at community centre to thank essential workers

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

Almost 1,400 origami cranes are now on display at the community centre, marking the second-year anniversary of provincial closures due to COVID.

“Little did we know at that time how COVID would affect us all,” said Lise Andreana, chair of the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre, which undertook the project of the 1,000 cranes in January. It is intended to honour and thank the many essential workers who have contributed to our health and safety during the last two years, while putting their own health on the line so that critical services and operations continued.

“This art installation, featuring colourful origami cranes,” said Andreana, “honours those unsung heroes.”

She saw it as a simple project to execute, but one that would make a large, beautiful impact for all to enjoy.

At last Thursday’s opening of the display, she shared the ancient Japanese legend that inspired it, explaining the crane, considered a mystical or holy creature, is rumoured to live

for a thousand years. It promises anyone who folds a thousand origami cranes will be granted a wish by the gods, or bring happiness and good luck. They can be made by one person or by several in a group.

It involved 45 volunteers to make it happen, she said, spending hundreds of hours folding, stringing, and installing the cranes, including many made by Lord Mayor Betty Disero and CAO Marnie Cluckie, who also helped coordinate the installation with town staff. “Marnie and Betty know firsthand how hard it was,” she said, thanking them for their enthusiasm.

Disero told the crowd of about 40 people gathered for the occasion that a lot of people were afraid at the start of the pandemic, and uncertain about what the future would hold.

But there was a group of people that worked and put the community ahead of themselves, frontline workers, healthcare workers and emergency services, who put themselves at risk to keep others safe, and who have earned our gratitude, said Disero, and who deserve the tribute the display rep-

resents, she said.

“All of us, collectively over the last two years, have pulled together and done what we need to do to get through this pandemic,” she said, calling on everyone present to say thank you to any frontline workers, whether a nurse or doctor, an EMS, a pharmacist or a grocery store worker.

“Please tell them thank you, and please be kind when you speak to them. I know in my heart of hearts we do appreciate the work they’ve done for all of us. They really need our support.”

Although the installation is complete, there is work still to be done, and the help of the public is still

required.

“The art installation is scheduled to run through April 7,” said Andreana.

After the show ends, strings of cranes will be donated to essential workers. The public is invited to nominate an essential worker to receive a strand of origami cranes from the exhibit. It doesn’t have to be

an essential worker as designated by the province, she said.

“You can nominate anyone you consider essential, anyone who helped you get through the last two years. We all have someone in our lives who has helped us during the pandemic.”

Send suggestions in an email to [office@niagara.pumphouse.ca](mailto:office@niagara.pumphouse.ca).



There were at least 45 volunteers involved in creating and installing the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre origami crane display at the community centre. On hand for the opening last week were volunteers Patti Knipe, Gail Kerr, Susan Ashukian, Lord Mayor Betty Disero, Pumphouse board chair Lise Andreana, Joanne Morandin and Aimee Medina.



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# Cat rescue fundraiser this Saturday

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

Seven years go, Tanya Rice's sister organized a 50th birthday for her, and because she knows how much Rice loves animals, asked for donations to Niagara Cats Rescue instead of gifts.

Every year since then Rice, who has become one of the organization's committed volunteers, has assisted with annual fundraisers to help to fulfill their mission: to shelter, nurture and socialize abandoned and homeless cats in a loving, home-like environment until they can be adopted to their forever homes.

That first year, she didn't consider herself a fundraiser, but wanted to do something to help. She decided to turn a personal Christmas tradition into an event to raise money for cat rescue.

She and her husband Peter typically held a post-Can-dlelight Stroll open house at their home, and since they were providing refreshments for their friends, they asked for something in return — a donation to the cat rescue organization she supports.

That worked well, but when the pandemic came along and she couldn't do that, she had to find other

ways to raise funds.

One of her ideas she put into practice last year was selling spring flower arrangements.

She usually makes decorative urns "for the people I love," she says, giving them away to friends and family. Her sister encouraged her to start charging for them, which she did, as another way of raising funds for the rescue organization.

Last spring, "my mom and two best friends stepped up to the plate," and with their help, she raised \$2,300.

She explains her motivation for volunteering this way.

"I love living in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and I believe we have to support our organizations. There are so many worthwhile causes that need our support. I just have a strong connection to cat rescues."

She has two cats, and has been feeding a pregnant feral cat. She and her husband decided to keep two beautiful kittens of the litter, "taking volunteering to the next level."

She is also fostering their fifth cat, four of which found homes. Phoebe is up for adoption now.

This non-profit charity group, operated 100 per cent

with volunteers, is hosting their annual spring fundraiser this Saturday, with a raffle and a spring flower sale, to help pay for veterinary care, including emergency visits, and spaying and neutering assistance.

It offers a foster program as well as an adoption program with the local Pet Valu store on Niagara Stone Road, which helps find suitable permanent homes for unwanted or abandoned cats.

Every cat adopted from Niagara Cats Rescue is spayed or neutered, and has a microchip inserted by the vet during that procedure, says Rice.

The organization also provides continued long-term veterinary care, shelter, food and spaying and neutering release programs for feral cat colonies where domestication is not possible. Volunteers trap cats, sometimes feral, and sometimes cats who have been socialized. If they're microchipped they can be returned to their owner.

But often, and even more so during the last two years of the pandemic when parents were working from home and kids were attending school virtually, families have taken a kitten into their

home, and when it didn't work out for them, let it loose outdoors. "Now mom and dad are back to work, and kids are back to school, socialized cats are being abandoned and are showing up at back doors," says Rice.

And when people find these cats, "they don't always know there is a cat rescue organization in their community. We want to educate people, to tell them we have the means to humanely trap these animals, and see if they're microchipped. We have a website and a Facebook page we can use to help find their homes."

These cats can usually be adopted, but foster homes are needed until families can be found for them, says Rice.

Niagara Cats Rescue fundraiser this Saturday, April 2, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., is at 456 Line 2 in NOTL.

There will be eight-inch and 10-inch pots with tulips and daffodils, decorated with pussy willows and decorative grasses, says Rice. They will sell for \$25 each, cash only. There will also be a raffle, with tickets at \$2 or three for \$5, for items such as a Fossil leather handbag, spa products and wine, and 100 per cent of ticket sales going to Niagara Cats Rescue.



Volunteer Tanya Rice, shown with Phoebe, the cat she is fostering, is holding a fundraiser at her home, with potted spring plants for sale. Last year's sale in her driveway earned \$2,300 for the organization. (Photos supplied)



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# Red Roof Retreat director finds role rewarding

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

As Red Roof Retreat gradually reopens, helping special needs kids and their families across the region, board members are meeting regularly to plan for the future of the organization.

With Steffanie Bjorgan at its helm as founder and executive director, Red Roof has a volunteer board eager to steer it through a gradual return to full strength and the many programs it offered pre-pandemic, which included an adult day program, a summer day camp, recreational programs, school trips, day visits, and horseback riding.

Board members have come together from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, each bringing a skill to the board that helps shape the direction and mission of Red Roof, as it continues to develop, even after many years of providing respite and recreational programs to children and young adults.

Brodie Townley has been one of those board members for the last five years. He moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake in 2015, and was looking to get involved in the community, he says, when he met long-time board member Ward Simpson, and one of Red Roof's staunchest supporters, at the golf club. Townley was hooked by his enthusiasm.

"We talked about Red Roof, and I liked the idea of it being a community charity, as opposed to one of the big-name organizations," says Townley. "The fact that it's a real hands-on role, getting involved in events, appealed to me."

Townley, retired from a career with ScotiaBank in the treasury department — the last 12 years spent in the Bahamas — brings financial expertise to the board.

He is quick to admit that when he began volunteering he knew nothing of the needs the children Red Roof serves, or of organizations that provide such assistance.

"I had no family or friends in that situation, no experience in dealing with the challenges these kids and their families face," he says.

"It has been a real eye-opener to me, how big the need is."

Fundraising has so far been a pretty minor part of his role, with most of the fundraising events already well-established, he says, and Red Roof has been fortunate in the support it receives from the community, although there is always a need for funds to successfully operate its programs.

"Steff is a driving force in that department, and always has been. It's hard to say no to her, and she has no problem asking for help. Whatever

she needs, whether it's money, or help with snowplowing or laying gravel at The Ranch (one of the Red Roof properties), she has a way of finding it."

Being on the board, he says, "you see the direction Red Roof is going, you see the face of Red Roof, and the local aspect that is so appreciated by people. I had no idea of the need right across the region, and what Red Roof is able to do."

The programs now available for children and families "wouldn't happen if it weren't for Steffanie," he added.

Going back in history, children with the kinds of challenges some children face might have become wards of the state, their parents unable to care for them. "We've come a long way since then. Parents wanted to keep their kids at home, and mon-

ey became available for parents to spend to help them."

As children become young adults, the need for support continues, and Red Roof has developed programs for them and their families, says Townley.

Sitting on the board, he has seen that while Red Roof is a local charity, its reach has grown, as has its need to have policies in place that reflect its size and growth. And that is a challenge for him, to help work on policy and governance issues, and to have them more formalized than they have been, "formalized in a very positive way, to guide Red Roof into the future, and putting down processes for moving forward."

That's the major skill he has brought to the table, he says, now that COVID is in the rear-view mirror. During the pandemic, "everything

ground to a halt. Now it's time to think about moving forward."

Red Roof has a great group of people on its board, and from his perspective, the work they do is very rewarding.

"The board encourages its members to be involved. It's a very up-front group, and you can see its successes."

The best part, he says, is going to The Ranch when there is a program or a day camp with kids there, "and you see the look on their

faces. They're ecstatic to be there. It gives you such a good feeling to see that."

As a parent of two adult children, he can appreciate how much that means to children and their parents, and also how much the respite means to parents, giving them time to spend with the rest of the family, the brothers and sisters who don't always get the attention parents would like to give them.

"That's why the shutdown has been so difficult.

The kids missed the programs, and the families didn't get a break. Caring for them is 24 hours a day, and that has been a real challenge."

Red Roof is looking for more volunteers to start rebuilding its programs, and for new board members "to bring new blood, different views, and different ideas to the table, to look at all the opportunities to help lead it as it looks forward. And to put their hands up when something needs to be done, whatever it may be."



Brodie Townley is enjoying his work on the Red Roof Retreat board of directors, as it outlines plans and policies for the future. (Photo supplied)



## Great event, great cause

Maria Mavridis of Anchor Niagara, Stacey Mulholland supporting Anchor, and Elise Gasbarrino, founder Pink Pearl Canada, at a recent Pink Pearl fundraiser held at BarBea and Ruffino's, with 100 per cent of proceeds going to Pink Pearl Foundation. The event was sold out within a day, says Mavridis, who was still waiting to hear the fundraising total at press time. (Photo supplied)

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# Unique, fabulous finds on sale this weekend

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

When Liz Hawley was taken suddenly in a tragic collision the summer of 2020, she left behind a family devastated by their loss.

To all who knew her, she was a strong, loving, generous spirit, motivated by faith, and an inspiration to others.

She was also an exceptionally creative and talented designer, with incredible taste, and over the course of decades, amassed an eclectic assortment of all kinds of interesting items, fabulous finds of furniture and accessories, says her husband John.

She had at various stages in her life rented them out for photo shoots or themed weddings, sold them from a warehouse space open to the public, a gift store she had in Garrison Village until John needed the space, and stored them to stage model homes in The Village, as John built them.

She had one warehouse space on Airport Road, then moved to a similar unit on York Road, where her Warehouse Niagara collection remains.

With the lease on that space about to expire, John and family members are sifting and sorting through

what is left, preparing to put it up for sale this weekend.

While a number of items have already been sold, says John, there are all sorts of wonderful things left, from fabulously unusual cards, to beautiful throw pillows, antique doors, staging props, and an amazing five-piece master bedroom set only ever used in the model homes.

She must have decorated at least 20 model homes over the years, he says. He loved them all, once he saw them finished — he was never sure when they were a work in progress. When she would start showing him items she was planning on using for the next home, in his mind, he'd think it was never going to work, and he'd suggest she just copy what she had done in the last one. "She'd say okay, but she never would. And it would always work. She loved doing it, letting her creativity show."

It's been an emotional time going through her collection, some of it going back to a long-ago trip to France, "way back when," he says.

Liz "had this crazy, varied, wonderful way of collecting really unusual, interesting things. She sometimes had plans to use them to make something else, so some might be of interest to people who are looking for some-

thing unique, that might present an opportunity to create something," says John.

"There's lots there that I recognize. I remember where we were when we got it, what we did with it. It feels good to

be going through it, and doing something with it."

Proceeds from the sale will go to a cause that was very important to her, Rising Angels, which helps women who have been abused or

exploited in the sex trade. Its mission is to bring education and awareness to the commercial sexual exploitation of women, and to provide supportive services and safe environments for them.

The sale is being held Saturday and Sunday, April 2 and 3, from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at 360 York Road, unit 19.

Cash or e-transfers will be accepted.



Liz and John Hawley in happier times, at their cottage in Ridgeway. John and family members have been going through a collection of items from her Warehouse Niagara business, putting them up for sale this weekend. (Photo supplied)

## The Warehouse Niagara Contents Sale

April 2–3  
9:30 am – 1:30 pm  
360 York Rd, Unit 19



### The Hawley Family is having a contents sale of Liz Hawley's Warehouse

We would like to invite our NOTL neighbours and friends to our public sale.

**All proceeds from this sale will be donated to Liz's favourite charity RISING ANGELS.**

Cash or e-transfer accepted.

- Industrial Shelving • Furniture (Antique/New) • Staging Items • Antique Hardware
- Doors • Wood • Chairs of all sorts • China • Lamps • Dinnerware • Pillow/Fabric
- Books • Shelving • Signage • Vintage suitcases • Print Art • Mirrors AND MORE!

View more photos at <https://tinyurl.com/yckww2th>

## Celebrating Joseph Pohorly, fundraising for Ukraine



An event to celebrate Joseph Pohorly was held Tuesday at Joseph's Estate Winery, organized by winemaker Katherine Reid. It was also a fundraiser for Ukraine, as a tribute to Pohorly. At the event were Katherine Reid (winemaker), Geoff Crane (Lions District Governor), Shirley Madsen (Sunflowers for Ukraine), Jim Smith (Past Zone Chair Garden City Lions), Cathy Smith (treasurer, Garden City Lions), and Nancy Boerse (Colour Me Happy). (Photo supplied)





# Notice of Open House and Public Meeting

## PROPOSED NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

Niagara Region has prepared a new proposed Niagara Official Plan, and will hold an open house and public meeting, pursuant to subsection 17.5 and 17.6 of the Planning Act R.S.O. 1990, as amended.

### OPEN HOUSE

Thursday, April 7, 2022 at 5:30 p.m.

It will be held virtually.

The purpose of the open house is to present the new proposed Niagara Official Plan and give an opportunity to ask questions.

### PUBLIC MEETING

Thursday, April 28, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.

It will be held virtually as part of a Special Regional Council Meeting.

The purpose of the public meeting is to present the new proposed Niagara Official Plan and give an opportunity for the public to provide input.

## PURPOSE OF THE NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

The proposed Niagara Official Plan will shape the physical, economic and social development of the region over the next 30 years. It sets out objectives and policies that will, among other matters:

- Identify how and where growth will happen
- Help protect Niagara's natural environment and address our changing climate
- Ensure Niagara has an adequate and diverse supply of housing
- Plan for our future infrastructure needs and ensure they're properly funded
- Create the right conditions to attract and retain jobs in Niagara

As the proposed Niagara Official Plan will apply to the entire Niagara Region planning area, a location map has not been provided. Consultation has taken place on background work and draft policy. A final proposed Niagara Official Plan will be available for review and comment at [niagararegion.ca/official-plan](https://niagararegion.ca/official-plan) from the date of this notice.

## HOW TO REGISTER TO ATTEND AND PROVIDE INPUT

Register to attend the April 7 open house at [niagararegion.ca/official-plan](https://niagararegion.ca/official-plan).

To provide input orally at the April 28 public meeting, please pre-register with the Regional Clerk at [clerk@niagararegion.ca](mailto:clerk@niagararegion.ca) before 9 a.m. on Friday, April 22, 2022. For more information, visit [niagararegion.ca/government/council/speakingatcouncil](https://niagararegion.ca/government/council/speakingatcouncil). Due to efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19 and protect all individuals, Council Chamber at Regional Headquarters will not be open to the public to attend meetings until further notice. To view a live-stream meeting proceeding, without the ability to provide oral submissions, please visit [niagararegion.ca/government/council](https://niagararegion.ca/government/council).

To provide written input, please either mail your comments to the Office of the Regional Clerk, Niagara Region, 1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way, Ontario, L2V 4T7 or email [clerk@niagararegion.ca](mailto:clerk@niagararegion.ca) by 9 a.m. on Friday April 22, 2022.

If you are not able to attend, or would like more information, including information on appeal rights, you can provide input or ask questions by emailing [makingourmark@niagararegion.ca](mailto:makingourmark@niagararegion.ca). If you wish to be notified of the decision of the Council of the Regional Municipality of Niagara on the proposed official plan, you must make a written request to the Clerk c/o Regional Clerk, Niagara Region, 1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way, P.O. Box 1042, Thorold, Ontario, L2V 4T7, or email [clerk@niagararegion.ca](mailto:clerk@niagararegion.ca). Such requests must include the name and address to which such notice should be sent.

If you require any accommodations for a disability in order to participate in meetings or events, please let us know in advance so that arrangements can be made in a timely manner. Special accessibility accommodations and materials in alternate formats can be arranged by contacting Niagara Region's **Accessibility Advisory Coordinator** at 905-685-4225 ext. 3252 or [accessibility@niagararegion.ca](mailto:accessibility@niagararegion.ca).

Any personal information is collected under the authority of the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P. 13 and may be used in an appendix of a staff report, published in the meeting agenda, delegation list and/or the minutes of the public meeting and made part of the public record. Niagara Region collects this information for the purposes of making informed decisions on the relevant issues and to notify interested parties of Council's decisions. It may also be used to serve notice of an Ontario Land Tribunal hearing. Information collected, used and disclosed is in accordance the **Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)**. Questions about this collection and disclosure should be directed to the Access & Privacy Office at 905-980-6000 ext 3779 or [FOI@niagararegion.ca](mailto:FOI@niagararegion.ca).

Notice first issued in the newspaper on March 31, 2022



# St. Davids Lions Club honours lord mayor

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

It's not often the public sees Lord Mayor Betty Disero caught off-guard, but the St. Davids Lions certainly managed to surprise her at their Thursday night meeting last week when they presented her with the Melvin Jones Award, the highest form of recognition given by Lions Clubs worldwide, for humanitarian ideas and services. Disero told the mem-

bers gathered for their regular meeting that she'd been invited to the club for dinner, but was unable to stay, having a regional council meeting to attend. However she took the time to drop in and chat with members before dinner. When club president Steve Burrows introduced her as a special guest, and called her to the podium, she still didn't know she was about to be honoured for her support of the St. Davids Lions Club.

"Our community throughout the Niagara Region has always supported our Lions club," said Burrows, "especially in the last two years. With their unwavering support we have been able to enrich the lives of the less fortunate. In appreciation of that we are honoured to have with us tonight a representative of our community who has personally, through helping our club, made the world a better place." Lord Mayor Betty, Bur-

rows said, "has always championed the St. Davids Lions Club at every opportunity. She helps spread our brand in the community." She has sold tickets at the grocery basket game at the carnival, he said — she promised to do so again this year — and with her husband Dan, and with friends, has attended many Lions fundraising activities, including barbecues and fish fries. She has helped by providing service projects for

the Lions to perform, Burrows added, and the Lions wanted to show their appreciation with the Melvin Jones Award for humanitarian services, seldom given to people outside Lions membership. "This means the world to me," said Disero, emotionally wiping away tears. "I couldn't receive it from a better group of people. I'm beyond words to describe how much the St. Davids Lions Club has given back to the community."

The Lions dinner had several members from other clubs attending, in the area for a division convention being held in St. Catharines. Don Noland, a past international director from St. Louis, Missouri, was asked to present the Melvin Jones plaque and pin to Disero. Meanwhile St. Davids Lion Al Snider, an international director, was in Russellville, Arkansas for a Lions convention being held there.



St. Davids president Steve Burrows and Past International Director Don Noland, visiting from Missouri, present Lord Mayor Betty Disero with a Melvin Jones Award at last Thursday's Lions meeting. (Penny Coles)

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# Food needed for Easter and throughout coming months

Continued from page 1

have Easter hampers to fill, and we really need to get stocked up for the coming months.”

The Niagara Lions are holding a food drive April 16, at Hendriks Independent on Queen Street and Phil’s Independent in Virgil, and that will help to stock up after Easter, “but I don’t see any other food drives happening,” says Grant.

“We really need this wonderful community to once again show their generosity,” she said.

“We are pleased to see food coming in, and people are again showing their generosity, but we need a lot more.”

Children will be receiving candy for their Easter baskets, she says, thanks to Hendriks, who has already dropped off two truckloads of food, including a big box of candy that will be enough for all the families with children.

The food bank also welcomes cash donations, which helps them buy what isn’t donated,

says Grant, and to accommodate those with special diets.

Newark generally banks on giving away turkeys and hams — each family gets one or the other, but more prefer turkeys.

Also high on their list of food items they need are the extras that go with a holiday dinner — including turkey stuffing mix, cranberry sauce, cans of pineapple to go with the ham, tins of gravy, and canned juices.

Newark buys potatoes, onions and carrots, and volunteers are thankful for Jim Walker of Walker’s Country Market, who will drop off fresh pies, “literally made that morning,” hot out of the oven, to add to the Easter hampers at the last minute before they’re delivered April 14.

For a list of food that is needed all year long, visit <https://www.newarkneighbours.ca/donate-to-the-food-bank>

The Newark Neighbours Thrift Shop will be closed for the Easter holiday, from Wednesday, April 13 until Tuesday, April 19.



Newark Neighbours food bank volunteer Genevieve Lawrence shows how empty the shelves are, just before Easter. (Photo supplied)

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# Planting seeds of change in Niagara's farmland

Jane Andres  
Special to The Local

This week marks the 10th anniversary of the passing of Isebrand Boese. A refugee from the war in Ukraine, he arrived in Niagara in 1930 with his parents and five siblings. Within a few decades the Boese family had created a legacy that would change the direction of the agricultural industry.

Rereading his obituary recently brought back memories of a delightful afternoon in 2008 spent with Brandy, as he was known by his family and friends.

I was assisting my friend Janet with research of farm

history for her thesis. Fred and Art Andres had invited us to meet with Mr. Boese, then living at Pleasant Manor, who at 95 was a veritable encyclopedia of agricultural knowledge.

Delighted to have company, he seated Fred, Art, Janet, and me at the dining room table laden with a treasure trove of books and photos capturing Niagara's history of farming.

Fred and Art eagerly initiated an animated conversation, each one finishing the other's sentences, a character trait the twins were well-known for, before Art passed away in 2017. There was soon plenty of laughter

and longing, recalling old memories and local family dynamics.

The Boese family fled Ukraine like thousands of other families in the 1920s and '30s. Thirteen-year-old Brandy arrived in Niagara with his parents, five siblings and just a few suitcases in hand. Thanks to MCC (Mennonite Central Committee) and the good credit of Mennonites already established in the community, his parents were able to purchase a 16-acre farm in Beamsville based on only a handshake and a \$1.75 down payment. Within four years they bought a much larger farm on Hunter Road in Ni-

agara-on-the-Lake, severing it into three lots for his older brothers John and Martin, and brother-in-law Frank Andres.

Peaches, cherries, pears, and tomatoes were in high demand in the canning industry, with almost 35 canneries operating in the region at that time.

While most family farms were 10 to 15 acres, the Boese family's growing investments in farmland proved lucrative, and they soon had the cash to expand once again, this time purchasing 75 acres of prime farmland in Port Dalhousie.

As their farming operation expanded, Brandy recognized their equipment

needed upgrading to manage the growing acreage. He became known as an agricultural innovator during those years, developing the idea of the cherry picker. It's now an essential piece of equipment in the orchards, which raises harvesters in a bucket that allows them to work safely, instead of relying on ladders prone to tipping in soft soil.

Up until that time pesticides were hauled around the farm on a stone boat or wagon, a two-man operation. Art and Fred grew up on the family farm on Niven Road. They remembered their father Bill Andres Sr. hosing down the trees with the sprayer nozzle while their

mother pumped furiously by hand on the wagon bed. The Boese farm was one of the first to implement the system of driving a fan-blown sprayer behind a tractor, the forerunner of the present methods.

In 1946, the Boese family built a large canning factory in the north end of Lake Street in St. Catharines. It quickly became one of the largest in Canada, shipping Niagara's premium peaches, tender fruit, and tomatoes across North America, with a staff numbering almost 1,000 at its peak.

Niagara was experiencing a post-war economic boom, with McKinnons (later GM) and manufacturing plants springing up on former farmland.

Competing with the abundance of manufacturing jobs, the Boese family had to find new ways to attract a dependable labour force.

The cannery advertised out west, attracting many young women from Winnipeg and the prairies in search of employment (and husbands). The arrival of eligible women certainly injected new life and romance into the social life of local churches!

As he pointed out familiar faces in the photo albums, Brandy told us about Mennonite friends and relatives entrenched in deep poverty in Paraguay after fleeing Ukraine in the Second World War. Having been a child refugee himself, he had a heart for people who shared that experience.

The Boese family sponsored hundreds of these families to enable them to come to Niagara. Within a year or two these same families were buying homes in north end St. Catharines, thanks to the guarantee of steady employment and Mennonite con-



Isebrand Boese reminisces with Fred Andres. (Jane Andres)

Continued on page 17

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# Beginning of new era in Niagara agriculture

Continued from page 16

nections in the community.

Brandy's story then took us on an unexpected turn as he opened another large book, scanning the pages until his finger alighted on one particular page. It was a book about the Japanese internment in Canada. He told us about hearing firsthand the stories of Japanese descendants who were working for a nursery in Vineland. They had lost their homes, all of their belongings — everything confiscated by the Canadian government in the 1940s, despite the fact that they were Canadian citizens who had lived here for multiple generations.

He invited several of the men to work on his Port Dalhousie farm. With surprising candour, he told us how this decision drew the ire and a racist diatribe of a man then the reeve of St. Catharines, and later the mayor. It was Brandy's first experience witnessing overt racism in Niagara.

Shocked and dismayed over the opposition from the reeve and local politicians, Brandy pressed on with his decision to hire Japanese workers, assisting them to have their families join them in the community.

With a mischievous twinkle in his eye, Brandy recalled how that reeve was asked to present the student achievement awards at the public school in Port Dalhousie. He did not expect to have to present the trophy for highest academic achievement to young Thomas Matsushita, the son of the man whom he had vehemently opposed moving into the community.

He spoke also of another gentleman, Gary Hotta, who

became an indispensable employee on the field and in management, appreciated for his ability to connect with farmers and negotiate sales contracts across the region.

The experience sensitized Boese to those being discriminated against and marginalized in his own community.

It also motivated him to look at other possibilities to creatively solve the looming labour crisis on the farms.

In the mid 1960s, John Smith, owner of Cherry Lane Orchards in Vineland, and Brandy took a trip to Michigan to meet with a few farmers who had hired Jamaican men on an agricultural pilot program. They were impressed with the fact that the men were so quick to develop the skills necessary for high-yield crops, and that they stayed on until the completion of the season.

Returning from their fact-finding mission, they were met with a less-than-enthusiastic response from some of the most influential growers within the industry.

Brandy and Smith insisted that \$1.35/hour was a reasonable wage for skilled labourers. Other employers disagreed, sticking to a \$1/hour wage paid to the workers at the completion of each day. Many farmers relied on men who they picked up at the Farm Labour pool on Grote Street in St. Catharines, or at the downtown farm market.

Boese and Smith persisted, travelling to Ottawa to present their case to the federal government, reminding officials that Jamaica was part of the British Commonwealth and it would be greatly beneficial for both countries. Canada had al-

ready developed a domestic labour program with Jamaican women coming to work in Toronto during the 1960s, which gave them the confidence to push forward with their request.

Despite much scepticism in the agricultural industry, 273 Jamaicans arrived for the first season in 1966. The excitement was mutual on both sides!

Brandy got his 44-member crew settled, providing them with the proper work gear and warm clothing. On the first day of work he greeted them enthusiastically at a group meeting. The supervisor then took over, saying, "OK, let's go boys."

Nobody moved. One of the men stepped forward and calmly stated, "We are not boys."

It was the beginning of a learning curve for Brandy as he began to understand the importance of cultivating a work environment based on respect and dignity.

Brandy was also proud of his latest purchase for the farm, a shiny Bluebird coach bus.

On Sunday mornings he would pick up whoever wanted to come to church. It was well-attended at first, but gradually dropped off as "it wasn't lively like back home."

Sunday afternoons were reserved for outings everyone was eager to join in on. Dressed in their best, the men would load up on the bus and Brandy would take them sightseeing to Toronto, the Royal Botanical Gardens in Hamilton, fall fairs and Niagara Falls. It was a great way to build a team, he said, and it created friendships that were treasured for many years to come.

In the winter Brandy and his wife travelled to Jamaica.



Fred and Art Andres talk about the early days of the local farming community. (Jane Andres)

They rented a car and travelled the country roads, visiting every one of their 44 employees over the next few years.

He sat back in the chair with a smile, lost in his recollections momentarily during our conversation.

"Do you know, they didn't have road signs back then. It was a lot of guesswork to find those places up in the mountains." Sometimes they would lose their way, navigating steep mountain switchbacks in the dark.

It would take a while for his wife to calm down after

some of those expeditions, he recalled. He definitely had the gift of understatement!

Meeting the men and their families in these rural towns made it all worthwhile. On many visits, most of the town would be waiting to greet him, the families of his employees dressed in their finest "going to church" clothes. He especially enjoyed spending time with their children, finally putting faces to all of the family members his employees had told him about back in Niagara.

He began to appreciate

how hard it was for them to leave family behind, and to understand how important it was for their families to know that their husbands and fathers were treated with dignity and respect during their time in Canada.

That memorable afternoon with Brandy, Fred and Art passed far too quickly, but was the beginning of many more conversations to come in the years following.

Today we are able to enjoy the fruits of their investment, thanks to the vision of Niagara's early innovators.

## Thanks for support



The Farmworker Hub would like to thank The Rotary Club of Niagara-on-the-Lake for their generous donation, says hub organizer Julia Buxton-Cox, who accepted the cheque from Rotary member Gary Hatton Sunday. The hub is asking the public to hold off on material donations for two weeks while volunteers catch up on sorting. (Photo supplied)

# HEY KIDS

**JOKES • DRAWINGS  
REVIEWS • STORIES**  
**The Kids Gazette wants  
your submissions!**

The vision for this page is to get kids involved and interacting with the community in a positive way. We welcome submissions for all categories from kids of any age. Please keep the reviews positive and all submitted content appropriate for kids of all ages.

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Please send all submissions to  
**joyousnotlkids@gmail.com**  
and in the subject line please put the category for  
which you are submitting.



# LocalSPORTS

## Predators owner hopes to be back next season

With more practice time, if possible

**Mike Balsom**  
The Local

Niagara Predators owner Robert Turnbull says his team had a fabulous 2021-2022 season playing out of Virgil's Meridian Credit Union Arena.

"The entire staff has been great," he tells The Local. "We like the rink, we like the people, we like the location."

Turnbull says the Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League team he also managed and coached this year is committed to staying in town, after having moved here from Toronto last fall.

Turnbull met with NOTL Parks and Recreation manager Kevin Turcotte and supervisor of recreation Dan Maksenuk Monday afternoon to lay out his wish list for next season. A key element on that list is improved access to ice time.

"Because of the age of our players, we have kids in university and some that work," Turnbull says. "We had 3 p.m. practices most weeks. We need a later practice time in order to get everybody there. For the Europeans and the billeted players it's no problem. But to run a really good program, to make everybody better, you need two or three 90-minute practices per week, with everybody there."

Turnbull insists that minor hockey comes first, and that he's not aiming to take any ice time away from that group. Nor does

he want to bump any long-term groups who rent the ice.

"There was a lot of unused ice time," he says. "And they did a good job of telling me when that came up. But we need a minimum of two 90-minute practices a week where we finish some time around 10 p.m. That way we can have everyone there at least twice a week."

He adds that he would also like to continue to be able to run a couple of those 3 p.m. sessions that would allow the Predators living locally to get some extra ice time during the week as well. He is hoping for a minimum of five hours of practice time weekly, in addition to the regular Friday night home games, which he is committed to maintaining.

Turnbull goes on to talk of the size of the dressing rooms, which he says are suitable for a team of 20, but not necessarily for a team the size of the Predators.

"Once you put the goalies in there, it's a very small room," he explains. "In order to present the type of product that I would like to present, I need more space and better access to washroom facilities. The room that we have, we have to open up the door to the other room to get enough space."

"I can work with what we have," he continues, "providing we have access to both rooms earlier. Our guys show up an hour to 90 minutes before practices and games and can't

get in there until just before our ice time. We need access at least an hour before."

According to Turnbull, the last item on his wish list is an earlier installation of the ice surface in the MCU Arena.

"We're hoping to have the ice in the last two weeks of August, and they believe they can do that," he says. "That would give us an opportunity to hold a good prospect camp and a main camp before the season begins. It will give us about three weeks of really grinding it out."

For now, the Predators have made no requests for any capital improvements, but Turnbull would like to see a workout facility on the premises in the long run, allowing players to work on fitness in the same building where they skate.

"We brought that up before, when we discussed maybe building something," he clarifies, "but I can work with what we have right now provided we have better access to it. I'm hoping to take this team to the next level, and to do that you need access to training, either on site, or next door."

Prior to the move to NOTL, the Predators played out of North York's Canlan Ice Sports, the home arena to the GMHL's Renegades, who bounced Niagara from the playoffs a week ago. That facility features six rinks and eight dressing rooms, and also provided a workout room for players.

"We had at least three practices a week there," Turnbull remembers, "and all the kids skated in the morning. And we had the gym there. But with so many teams playing there, it was a bit of a nightmare, with people running up and down the hallways while a game was going on."

Turnbull considers his meeting with Turcotte and Maksenuk to have gone very well. He expects to hear back



Owner and coach Robert Turnbull

from them within three to four weeks. He's hoping the town can fulfill his requests to make the upcoming 2022-2023 season go more smoothly. The

Local was unable to reach Turcotte's office for comment by press time.

"We've built a good fan base here in Niagara-on-the-Lake,"

Turnbull says. "To hear them cheer for us and rattle and bang things around, it's been great. We want to be back here next year."

## St. Davids Pool may be repaired or replaced

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

St. Davids residents may not be getting a new pool anytime soon, but at least fundraising committee members can now investigate repairing it to ensure it stays open, until money is available to replace it.

At Monday's council meeting, the mandate of the pool fundraising committee was changed to allow members to look at repairing as well as replacing the ageing structure.

A design for a new pool that comes with a \$5 million price tag was approved in 2019, but since then, the town

has gone through rounds of funding applications with no luck, and without a grant from other levels of government, committee members haven't started on raising its portion of the cost. They have received donations of about \$52,000 to date.

On Monday, council reaffirmed its commitment to replacing or repairing the St. Davids pool, and added that the committee could discuss all possibilities to keep the pool open and in proper repair.

Coun. Gary Burroughs, a member of the pool committee, said he's glad council is giving the committee clarity.

"Several of us on the committee thought we could find a solution to the repair issue," he said.

Coun. Allan Bisback said he was initially hesitant about supporting the idea of looking at repairing the existing facility.

"We all expressed our support for a new pool in St. Davids three years ago," he said. But then the pandemic came along, and with it the inability to raise funds.

He said he'd be disappointed if the focus becomes the repair of the pool only, "because I actually think one day, maybe two years, three or four years from today, the money will start flowing from upper levels of government." Unfortunately it is not flowing right now, he added, but cautioned the committee not to lose track of the possibility of a new pool — that there could be two tracks, one to consider repairs, and one to focus on replacement.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero reminded councillors of other municipalities using newer solutions for facilities, such as containers rather than new buildings. "They look amazing," and they're a third of the cost, she said, again urging councillors to check out projects in Welland and St. Catharines that have gone that route.

## LocalHAPPENINGS

**St. Davids and District Lions Club**  
1462 York Rd., St. Davids (NOTL)



**JOIN US**  
**Friday Fish Fry**  
**April 1st**  
**4:30 to 7 p.m.**

**1 piece dinner \$11**  
**2 piece dinner \$15**

Haddock & Chips  
or Baked Potato,  
Coleslaw, Tartar Sauce,  
Bread, Tea/Coffee

**TAKE OUT & EAT IN**

[stdavidslions.ca](http://stdavidslions.ca) @stdavidslions on Facebook



**NOTL ARTS COLLECTIVE**  
**Spring GROUP EXHIBITION**

**April 1 to 24, 2022**  
Opening Reception:  
**April 3, 2-4 p.m.**

**Niagara Pump House Arts Centre**  
247 Ricardo St., NOTL  
[niagarapumphouse.ca/exhibitions](http://niagarapumphouse.ca/exhibitions)

**PLACE YOUR COMING EVENT COMMUNITY SOCIAL HERE**

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or email: [classified@notllocal.com](mailto:classified@notllocal.com)

## LocalWORSHIP

**CORNERSTONE COMMUNITY CHURCH**

**Sunday, April 3rd**

**10:00 a.m.**

**Worship Gathering**  
Online & In-Person

Message:  
**Kevin Bayne**  
Witnesses  
Revelation 10-11

Our services are also streamed online  
Sunday's at 10 AM. Visit our website  
for more information!

[www.ccchurch.ca](http://www.ccchurch.ca)

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CROSSWORD

1	2	3			4	5	6	7			8	9	10	11	
12			13		14					15					
16					17				18		19				
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56	57					58	59					60			
61						62						63			
64							65					66			
67							68						69		

- Across:
- 1 Raises

4 1 G

8 Strikebreaker

12 Siestas

14 Egg layers

15 Father of a leveret

16 Superstar

17 Wanes

19 Old Peruvian native

20 Aligned

21 Open

22 Enormous

23 Abominable snowman

24 Scrutinize

25 Study

27 Mardi ---

29 Evil

30 E.g. A O L

33 Four pecks

36 Secret Chinese society

37 Bingo!

38 Time in Boston

39 Merchant ship's capacity

41 Immediately

42 Dentists' grp.

43 "Death --- Expert Witness" (P D James)

44 Is adjacent to

46 Homo sapiens

47 Frequently, poetically

48 Mailed

49 Specialty food store

51 Contemptuous exclamation

52 Mantle

56 State of constant change

58 Lily Munster actress Yvonne De ---

60 Not his

61 Captain Jack Sparrow actor

62 Online missives

63 Senses of self-importance

64 Wild about

65 Look after

66 Seedy joint

67 Talks lovingly

68 Singles

69 Could be bobby, red or white

Down:

1 One

2 Army chaplain

3 Gush forth

4 Presidential workplace

5 Chucks

6 Outbreak

7 Junkie

8 Destructive Hindu deity

9 Those north of the 49th

10 Curves

11 Police officer's patrol route

13 Snow carriage

18 Wrestling maneuvers

26 Enter stealthily

28 Provide new equipment

29 Long feathery scarf

31 Get lost!

32 Minor chessman

33 Smile

34 Federal farming regulator

35 Confront

36 Channel revived as Heartland

40 --- King Cole

45 Engraved with acid

48 Salty

50 Montreal ---, now the Washington Nationals

51 Gray matter

53 Breastplate of Zeus or Athena

54 Brigham Young University city

55 Antique auto

56 Depositors' protective grp.

57 Longtime "Tonight Show" host Jay

59 Rounds

SUDOKU

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

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PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution  
from  
March 23, 2022

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

Across: 1 Ups, 4 Thou, 8 Scab, 12 Naps, 14 Hens, 15 Hare, 16 Idol, 17 Eases, 19 Inca, 20 True, 21 Over, 22 Vast, 23 Yet, 24 Vet, 25 Read, 27 Gras, 29 Bad, 30 I S P, 33 Bushel, 36 Tong, 37 Aha, 38 E S T, 39 Tonnage, 41 Now, 42 A D A, 43 Of an, 44 Lies on, 46 Man, 47 Off, 48 Sent, 49 Dell, 51 Bah, 52 Cape, 56 Flux, 58 Carlo, 60 Hers, 61 Depp, 62 E-mail, 63 Egos, 64 Into, 65 Mind, 66 Dive, 67 Coos, 68 Ones, 69 Sox.  
Down: 1 Unity, 2 Padre, 3 Spout, 4 The Oval Office, 5 Heaves, 6 Onset, 7 User, 8 Shiva, 9 Canadians, 10 Arcs, 11 Beat, 13 Siegh, 18 Strangleholds, 26 Edge in, 28 Retool, 29 Boa, 31 Shoo, 32 Pawn, 33 Beam, 34 U S D A, 35 Stand up to, 36 T N N, 40 Nat, 45 Etched, 48 Saline, 50 Expos, 51 Brain, 53 Aegis, 54 Provo, 55 Essex, 56 F D I C, 57 Leno, 59 Ammo.



# LocalSPORTS

## NOTL Skating Club holds first showcase in two years

Two skaters returning from provincials will skate their programs



Skater Ophelia Xie with coach Judi Boyle-Krzeczkowski. (Photos supplied)

### Local Staff

Niagara-on-the-Lake Skating Club's Ashleen Hale came home with a bronze medal from the Skate Ontario Provincial Championships, held last weekend in Mississauga.

Hale earned third place in the Gold Women event. She also placed fourth in her STAR 9 event.

Ophelia Xie competed in the provincial championship in the STAR 5-U13 Women event, finishing eighth.

Based on the results of their placement at the championships, both skaters have earned a spot on the Skate Ontario development team. "Throughout the year, this team will have the opportunity to attend development camps, where they will train with Skate Canada technical specialists and elite-level athletes from across the country," says

public relations chair Darlene Dortono.

The NOTL Skating Club is extremely proud of their accomplishments, "considering the last two years of very limited ice time, shutdowns and competition cancellations. Throughout all that, these two kept their sights set on and achieved their goals," says Dortono.

Both girls will be skating their programs this Friday, April 1 at the club's program showcase, coinciding with the annual NOTL STAR Challenge, from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Meridian Arena in Virgil, the first showcase since the pandemic.

This is also a time for pre-junior, junior and intermediate Star figure skaters to practise their routines, in a safe and non-competitive environment. For the first time in two years, eager skaters will have a chance to showcase all they've learned for friends and family.



Ashleen Hale, who won a bronze at the recent provincial championships, is holding Skate Ontario's Vincent van G.O.A.T., who travels the world cheering on all Skate Ontario skaters. He just returned from his recent trip to the Beijing Olympics.



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