



Learn how
The Big Let Go
can change
your life
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Newark Neighbours gears up for Easter

Newark Neighbours volunteers Cindy Grant, Pat Fryer and Susan Sparrow-Mace are set to dig in to mountains of food and begin packing Easter hampers for clients who require help over the holiday. The hampers will be delivered Thursday. (David Gilchrist)

Supporting local businesses is important, and fun

Penny Coles
The Local

Joe Pillitteri, local businessman, stand-up comic and community supporter, is finding innovative ways to help local restaurants and wineries.

And in doing so, he is encouraging his many social media followers to do the same.

The two industries, both so important to the local economy, and employers of many Niagara area people, are struggling, he says, and need local support.

Pillitteri, known for his comedy routines, couldn't be more serious when he asks for help for these local businesses. Recovery is on its way, he says, but they need cash flow to hang in until then, to ensure they're still in business when it comes.

Wineries missed out on the tourist traffic of spring,

summer and fall last year, he says. Bus traffic, U.S. and overseas tourists just weren't there for them, after investments many had made to accommodate larger groups of people.

Like all businesses, they found ways to supplement what they were losing by marketing to locals, with curbside pickup orders and free deliveries, trying to do whatever they could to bolster their sales. Although it helps, it doesn't make up for what they've lost, he says.

So Pillitteri picked up on #openlocalwine, an initiative of two friends of his, "great wine industry peeps in Michigan who were kind enough to include their Canadian friends in the fun."

This is the second year for the U.S. initiative, the first here in Niagara, thanks to Pillitteri.

It's just one day, Satur-

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More Niagara vaccination clinics being scheduled

Booking glitches have been frustrating

Penny Coles
The Local

As the portal to booking vaccinations opened to the 70-year-old age group Monday, residents in Niagara-on-the-Lake reported difficulties getting appointments.

It seemed hit-and-miss, with some people reporting getting through and booking appointments, and others being told early in the day there was no availability.

Dr. Mustafa Hirji, Niagara's acting chief medical officer of health, estimated about five per cent of seniors trying

to book vaccination appointments had trouble Monday, but the rest were able to get a time and date for their first shot.

He asked people not to call public health, explaining it's the provincial system that is experiencing issues.

Although some municipalities have developed their own online registration systems, Hirji said he didn't think that would help in Niagara — there would still be problems,

but with the region having to shoulder the responsibility to fix them.

Although there were "thousands" of available appointments Monday morning, Hirji said, by 3 p.m. Monday public health sent an email saying all appointments for all Niagara clinics were booked.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said she was hearing "mixed reviews" from those trying to book appointments, with one

local telling her she was able to get an appointment Monday for the same day, and others struggling to find any time slots available.

Although there are no new dates for NOTL clinics at this time, she was hoping there will be in the next few weeks.

There were expected to be 8,500 new appointments for Niagara clinics in the booking system early this week, and more later this week. Pub-

lic Health is planning more clinics for April 11 and 12 in Niagara Falls, at the MacBain Community Centre; April 13 and 14 in Port Colborne; April 15 and 16 in Grimsby; and April 17 and 18 in Welland.

More dates and locations will be added, but probably not until the latter half of April, Hirji said.

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RECOVERY

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Lesson from long-term care homes: vaccinations work

Continued from page 1

He suggested residents keep trying the provincial portal [Ontario.ca/bookvaccine](https://ontario.ca/bookvaccine) for availability, or if they are having trouble finding a location, to call a booking operator at 1-888-999-6488.

By Monday afternoon, residents were finding new dates and availability for those 70 and over at the Seymour-Hannah clinic, from April 5 to 11.

There will be enough appointments for all residents 70 years of age (27,000 more people) and up once Niagara Health and Public Health both get their clinic schedules online, Hirji said.

During Monday's weekly meeting with reporters, he spoke of "night and day" with the number of cases seen earlier this year in long-term care homes, and what happens if there is an infection now.


A couple of months ago, an infection would spread quickly through long-term care and retirement homes, whereas, thanks to vaccinations, that isn't happening now.

"I hope this is a message everybody else in society takes, that these vaccines are really working, and we should all be taking them, so we can make sure we get out of this pandemic," he said.



Byron Dowd, town staff member at the community centre, finishes up Tuesday afternoon in preparation for the 500 people expected to be vaccinated by Public Health staff Wednesday. (Mike Balsom)

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More restrictions will be needed to stop variant spread

Penny Coles
The Local

As cases of COVID-19 and variants continue their upward trajectory, the region's top medical officer says he's not optimistic that current restrictions will be enough to prevent hospitals and intensive care units from being overwhelmed.

Dr. Mustafa Hirji, the region's acting medical officer of health, says any further restrictions should be for the entire Golden Horseshoe. He indicated with the "very sharp upwards trend," especially of variants, which reproduce quickly, that may be necessary for the next couple of months, to buy time for more people to be vaccinated.

"If we stay our course, the sharp increase will continue. The only hope of flattening it is reducing social interaction," he says, adding that "that current government decisions that are being made by the province," are not enough to reverse the trend.

It is social activity which is causing the current spike of infection, he says.

With the numbers of cases caused by community spread, rather than by outbreaks in long-term care homes as they were earlier in the pandemic, there are fewer people in the 80-plus group becoming ill.

When there is a case in long-term care, it tends to just "fizzle," he says, due to the high number of residents who are vaccinated.

While the majority of variant cases are the U.K. strain, Hirji says he's concerned about the P1 variant from Brazil, which seems to transmit the quickest, cause the most serious illnesses, and against which vaccines are the least effective. It has increased 30 per cent in cases across the province in just two days.

There were 132 new COVID-19 cases reported over the weekend in Niagara, and Hamilton was placed in grey-lockdown zone Monday.

We already know people travel from Hamilton to Niagara, says Hirji, and he fears the number of visitors might increase and bring more cases of COVID with them.

As cases increase, so does the number of people in hospital and in intensive care units. Hamilton may begin sending patients to Niagara hospitals, if its system becomes overwhelmed, said Hirji.

Toronto hospitals are already sending patients to hospitals as far away as Kingston, and Toronto's Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre is in the process of setting up a mobile field hospital in its parking lot, a process that began early in March. The tents, which will be able to handle up to 100 patients, are expected to be ready to receive patients in early April.

The sight of the hospital tents across the parking lot reflects the level of fear over what the third wave could bring, says Hirji.

Province providing grants to help small businesses

Penny Coles
The Local

The Ontario government is providing \$100 million to help small tourism businesses, and \$100 million for a new one-time recovery program.

Premier Doug Ford, and Lisa MacLeod, minister of heritage, sport, tourism and culture industries, were in Niagara Monday to announce the funding.

Prior to the pandemic,


tourism generated more than \$36 billion in economic activity, and supported 400,000 jobs in Ontario. As a direct result of the pandemic, the tourism sector has lost more than \$18 billion in revenue alone and more than 200,000 jobs.

The grant will provide one-time payments of \$10,000 to \$20,000 to eligible small businesses, including hotels, motels, travel agencies, amusement and water

parks, hunting and fishing camps, and recreational and vacation camps. Businesses must demonstrate they have experienced a minimum 20 per cent revenue decline, and have less than 100 employees to qualify.

The Ontario Tourism Recovery Program will support established and proven tourism businesses that have been hit hardest by COVID-19

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Wineries, restaurants struggling to reach recovery

Continued from page 1

day, April 10, to commit to drinking local wine, he says. And while many of us are already doing this, he adds, it's a day to not only pick a local wine and enjoy it over dinner, but to also publicize it by posting photos on social media, to encourage others to do the same, showing support for Niagara wineries.

"When you think about local wines and what they mean to our economy, we have to make sure they get

through this. It's so great to see the light at the end of the tunnel, and with the arrival of vaccines, and the reopening of the border not too far off, we can help businesses with their cash flow, so that when we get back to whatever normal is, they'll still be here."

He's doing what he can to help hard-hit local restaurants as well, with his weekly staff lunches.

Every Friday — Thursday this week due to the Easter holiday — the president of Lakeview Vineyard

Equipment buys lunch from local restaurants for about 20 staff members.

They each make their choices from the menu, lunch is ordered, and to encourage others to do the same, Pillitteri makes a video when he picks up the food to post on social media.

Although he's not criticizing the restrictions in place, he says the unpredictability has been hard on restaurants.

"You can open with 10 people, you can open now with 50, no, you can't be open. How do you manage staff, make plans? We feel obligated to do what we can to help."

He's been to many local restaurants in recent weeks, including Bricks & Barley, which opened less than three years ago by three local families, and was so popular it was sometimes hard to get a table there.

"It's an awesome spot," says Pillitteri, a beautifully restored tractor dealership, and now with an enclosed, heated patio — an example of what restaurants have to do, he adds.

He asks his followers to "check out every restaurant close to you, and get takeout tonight. It means a great deal



Rebecca Hagman and Joe Pillitteri are practising for #openlocalwine, coming up April 10, and joined by many others who want to support local wineries during the pandemic. (Photo supplied)

to people who are trying to keep going right now, and the restaurant business could use any boost it can get."

When he and the Lakeview staff sit down to eat, he says, "we have a little chat. We recognize how fortunate

we are to stay open, to be an essential business. We recognize the importance of living in a safe place, and we recognize our friends in the restaurant business. We support them from home, as well, not just at work. We

put great reviews online, and encourage people if they feel like going out, to book a reservation, enjoy one of the restaurants they've been going to for years, or get takeout. Support them any way you can."



Joe Pillitteri says his wife Rebecca Hagman doesn't usually want to appear in the restaurant lunch videos he posts on social media every week, but he captured her in the one he made last week. (Screenshot)

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NOTL is one of friendliest towns in Canada

Local Staff

According to Expedia users, Niagara-on-the-Lake is ranked the third friendliest town in Canada for 2021.

Described as “quaint,” Niagara-on-the-Lake received

the third highest percentage of positive traveller reviews mentioning words such as, “friendly, friendliest, amiable” from January 2019 to December 2020.

While Niagara-on-the-Lake has 17,500 permanent residents, it welcomes millions

of visitors each year. Residents and visitors alike, enjoy the town’s natural beauty, as well as the many historical landmarks and local amenities.

As experienced by many municipalities around the globe, the COVID-19 pandemic greatly impacted

NOTL’s 2020 tourist season, decreasing the number of visitors and putting significant strain on the local economy. “While I cannot predict what provincial regulations will be in place over the spring and summer months, I am confident that town staff will work

diligently to ensure all provincial regulations and public health recommendations are being followed to ensure our business community is supported, our visitors feel welcome and safe, and most importantly, the health of our residents is protected,” CAO

Marnie Cluckie said. “I am hopeful that during this coming tourist season, residents and visitors will be able to safely enjoy the wonderful attractions, heritage and culture, and distinct beauty of Niagara-on-the-Lake,” said Lord Mayor Disero.

Staff working on making town safe for visitors

Local Staff

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is proactively preparing for the anticipated increase in the number of visitors to its downtown core by reopening public washrooms in the Heritage District, assigning town staff to public education and cleaning, and posting safety signage.

Beginning last Saturday, the public washrooms at Queen’s Royal Park and Simcoe Park will be open seven days a week, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Physical distance markers will be established and signage posted, reminding the public to wear a mask, sanitize their hands frequently, maintain a safe distance of two metres, and avoid touching their face.

Staff is helping to support local businesses and those choosing to visit the down-

town core, said CAO Marnie Cluckie.

“With the weather warming, we’re seeing an increase in the number of people coming to town and we want to ensure we’re providing the services they need during their stay.” Staff is also assisting with public education regarding restrictions outlined by the province, and periodically sanitizing high-touch surfaces such as benches and parking machines.

These extra precautionary efforts will be made on Saturdays and Sundays throughout the spring and summer. “The arrival of spring always attracts crowds to our beautiful Town,” says Lord Mayor Betty Disero. “While we love to see visitors experiencing our unique culture and heritage, our stunning parks and gardens, and our wonderful local businesses, we must



Last summer the town organized volunteer ambassadors to welcome visitors to town and pass on pandemic protocols. There are plans for both staff and volunteers to do the same this year, making Queen Street friendly and safe. (File photo)

remember that COVID-19 still poses a significant risk for our community, and safety comes first.”

Public washrooms at Memorial Park and at the In-

formation Centre, located at Fort George, remain closed at this time but will reopen later in the season. The Market Street washroom, being the only public washroom

that does not close during the winter season, remains open daily from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

For more information about how NOTL continues to respond to the ongoing

COVID-19 pandemic, visit notl.com/covid-19.

For the most up-to-date information from the provincial government, visit covid19.ontario.ca.

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Legion reaching out to seniors

Penny Coles
The Local

The Niagara-on-the-Lake branch of the Royal Canadian Legion is expanding its outreach program with a new initiative to help local seniors.

The program will help fulfill the Legion's mission, to serve veterans and their dependents, promote remembrance and act in the service of Canada and its communities, says office manager Elizabeth Richards.

Branch 124 is receiving funding from the New Horizons Seniors Program to establish a Seniors Volunteer Outreach Program within the branch. The goal of the project is to combat social isolation amongst local seniors, fostering

long-lasting relationships between our seniors, the branch and local youth, who may volunteer to teach technology skills to those who want to learn, says Richards.

The program will help those 65 and over in the community, not just members of the branch, she says.

A committee is being formed to discover what kind of help seniors are looking for, and how to deliver it, says Richards.

There are five Legion members on the committee now, and she hopes to have at least five more volunteers from the community.

While this is an initiative that evolved from the concern over social isolation due to the pandemic, it is something that

is intended to continue as the Legion develops supports and partnerships in the community, she says.

The first step is a community assessment survey, available online, to determine what kinds of services are needed. Then they will be able to allocate the budget of \$23,222 they've received, and if necessary, begin fundraising to cover additional costs.

Anyone interested in volunteering for the program or for the committee please sign up at the branch, or call 905-468-2353.

To access the survey online visit at https://www.surveymonkey.com/create/preview/?sm=SU6MFSQYrY1AWGjbtTAUsxXXhPDjvKvvutrOCWKIfA_3D

Museum offers history of tennis

Local Staff

When world class tennis pros come to Canada today, they often head to Toronto or Montreal for the Canadian Open or the National Bank Open.

But in 1886 the tennis world turned its eyes on Niagara-on-the-Lake, says NOTL Museum's Barbara Worthy, "and for the next 40 years the world had a front row seat at the fabulous Queen's Royal Hotel for some of the most prestigious tennis championships of the time.

The International and the Canadian Open would both be hosted there, with many U.S, Canadian, and Wimbledon champions competing for tennis glory.

When the world came, they saw the beautiful six grass courts belonging to the Queen's Royal Hotel, balconies that overlooked Lake Ontario and gave perfect viewing of the courts, and enough space all around for the hundreds of

spectators. Plus there was the golf course, the bowling greens, and rowing boats for hire on the lake. The nearby military camp housed upwards of 10,000 soldiers and their families, all who loved some entertainment. And four steamships and three trains arrived daily. Niagara-on-the-Lake was a social hub, explains Worthy.

Robert J. Lake's virtual lecture on Wednesday, April 7, will turn the clock back on this period of tennis history, and detail the socio-economic influences and intricate sports dynamics that made it all happen, as well as its demise following the aftermath of the First World War.

Robert J. Lake is in the sport science department at Douglas College, B.C., where his research focuses on the socio-historical aspects of tennis. He is a multi-published author, winning the Lord Aberdare Literary Prize from the British Society of Sports History for *A Social History of Tennis in Britain*. Among other positions he holds is president-elect for the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport. He brings a wealth of sports history to his lecture, and the museum is indebted to Rosemary Goodwin, director of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Tennis Club, for facilitating this lecture.

A History of Lawn Tennis in Niagara-on-the-Lake is being held Wednesday, April 7, at 10:30 a.m. Registration is required: www.nhsm.ca/events



Robert Lake will give the last lecture of the museum series, this one on the history of local tennis. (Photo supplied)

'Should help a lot of businesses'

Continued from page 2

pandemic restrictions, and are key employers and tourism generators in all regions of the province.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero was invited to be part of the announcement — the first in-person meeting she has attended since December, she said.

"The grant should help a lot of small businesses," she said, encouraging business owners "to apply and get whatever they can to help get them through this."



Finance Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy, Mayor Sandra Easton, Premier Doug Ford, Coun. Vince Kerrio, Lisa MacLeod, minister of heritage, sport, tourism and culture industries, Lord Mayor Betty Disero, Joel Noden, Niagara Falls Attractions Operator, and (bottom) MPP Sam Oosterhoff, Joe DiCosimo (hotelier), and Mayor Jim Diodati were at Table Rock Monday for the provincial announcement of grants and recovery funding for the tourism industry.

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EDITORIAL

Losing the race between vaccinations and COVID cases

There doesn't seem any doubt the third wave is here, although there is still talk of cur-tailing social activity to avoid it.

Premier Doug Ford said Tuesday he won't lock things down if he has to — sounds like a hint that could be coming, although what lockdown means now seems a little more flexible.

One of the biggest fears is hearing there are more patients in their 40s, 50s, and 60s, becoming seriously ill, some on ventilators.

We're definitely seeing a change in demographics.

The vast majority of COVID-19 deaths until now has tragically been among seniors in care homes, but with most of those in that vulnerable age group vaccinated, the demographics of serious and fatal infections have shifted.

Variants may be behind some of the demographic shift in hospitals, with a faster spread, including among younger people. And they are spreading more quickly in Ontario, as of Tuesday making up 67 per cent of all new infections, with much greater risk of being admitted to hospitals or intensive care units.

That, and the increasing frustration with vaccinations, is what's new with the pandemic. In the race between a growing number of cases, and efforts to deliver more vaccinations, the spike of infections seems to be winning out, and with the number of variants and the news we're hearing about the more serious nature of the disease caused by variants, that's very scary.

Meanwhile, we listen to news of issues with the quantity, and worse, quality of vaccines

we're receiving.

While it was great for those 70 and over to learn they could book an appointment, it was extremely discouraging for those who found there were no appointments available. And the whole issue of problems with AstraZeneca is also unnerving. For those of us who haven't fit into any of the groups to have been vaccinated so far, and we're offered AstraZeneca, what do we do? One more difficult decision to make, at least for some.

We know Niagara is doing its best with its vaccine rollout, and any glitches so far have been due to the provincial booking system. If there is a delay going forward, it could be more glitches, or a result of vaccine shortage, or both. It's frustrating to know pharmacies and some family doctors are ready and

waiting to deliver the shots, but there is not enough vaccine.

However, not all the news is bad. NOTL is holding two clinics this week, Wednesday and Thursday, and by the time they are finished, there should be at least 1,000 more locals vaccinated, with a third clinic and another 500 shots to be delivered at the community centre next Friday, April 9.

Many others have made their way to St. Catharines and Niagara Falls clinics, and some took advantage of vaccinations for the 60-plus crowd at phar-

macies in Toronto. We have a long way to go to get to herd immunity, and safety for all, but every shot takes us one step closer.

The weekend brings Easter, the wind-up of Passover, and the start of Ramadan next week. We are being told not to gather in large groups to celebrate, not even to sit down around the family dinner table with anyone outside our household, but we can get outside, get some exercise and fresh air, and maybe sit around the backyard with family or friends, physically distancing of course. Not ideal, but the

best we can do at this point.

And we can take the advice of Joe Pillitteri: we can pick up a nice dinner from one of our many favourite local restaurants, maybe for some of us with a bottle or two from any one of the great local wineries, and celebrate being fortunate to live surrounded by so much beauty, so many great opportunities, and best of all, so many wonderful people who make it a priority to look out for each other.

Penny Coles
The Local

Local reporter earns bus photo for Cogeco



Mike Balsom, reporter for The Local, earned having his photo on the side of a city bus to promote his Cogeco cable TV show. (Photo supplied)

Penny Coles
The Local

We won't see this in Niagara-on-the-Lake, but when driving through Niagara Falls or St. Catharines, you might notice a familiar face on the side of a bus.

It's The Local's own reporter, Mike Balsom, although it is in his capacity as a Cogeco TV personality that earned him the very large advertisement on the bus.

Mike, also a high school business teacher, is the host of The Source, a half-hour package of interviews with newsmakers and community organizations, with a focus on COVID-19 information as well.

New shows debut Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 5 p.m. on Cogeco cable channel 10, or channel 700 in HD. The show runs Monday to Friday every half hour from 6 a.m. until 8:30 a.m., and from 5 p.m. until 6:30 p.m.

Saturday's schedule is every half hour from 6 a.m. until 9 a.m., at 12 noon, and every half hour from 5 p.m. until 6:30 p.m., and Sundays every half hour from 6 a.m. until 9 a.m., and from 5 p.m. until 7:30 p.m.

That's a lot of choices, and it's worth checking out for those who have Cogeco cable.

Mike is a great interviewer, and with interesting guests.

A music lover, Mike says Hamilton musician Tom Wilson (Blackie & the Rodeo Kings, Junkhouse), was one of his favourite interviews.

He's also a huge sports fan — he writes our sports stories — and he also found former Toronto Maple Leafs captain Rick Vaive a memorable interview.

Maryam Monsef, Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, was also one of his favourites.

"We've also covered the horse and carriage controversy in NOTL, and had many guests on who reside in town," he says.

"We went on the air with this show last March, shooting interviews via Skype from my home, and in September moved into the studio. Since then we have done more than 500 interviews, most of which are archived on the YourTV Niagara YouTube channel.

Of course, also right up there at the top of his list was coverage of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, when he dropped into the NOTL community centre in the summer of 2019.

We're proud to have Mike on our team at The Local!

Auchterlonie on Astrology

Bill Auchterlonie
Special to The Local

The full week of Auchterlonie on Astrology can be found on the Facebook page for The NOTL Local, and on the website www.auchterlonieonastrology.ca.

Sunday, April 4: The Sun is in Aries. The Moon is in Capricorn. They are 90 degrees apart at 2:48 p.m. It's the third quarter Moon, a challenging time when seriousness stands in the way of impulsive behaviour. Be sure to wear a mask and do so with a smile. It was April 4, 1968 that the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was shot dead as he stood

on the balcony of a motel in Memphis, Tennessee. Shaw Festival mounted a stage play about this night and it played to glowing audiences.

Monday, April 5: Heart and mind are friendly today. Good news can do that. An idea that makes life better can do it too. It was April 5, 1987 that Fox TV first aired two new shows: *The Tracey Ullman Show* (featuring the Simpsons); and *Married with Children*.

Wednesday, April 7: The Moon in Aquarius is friendly with Jupiter early on today. A gift from the Cosmos makes for smiling faces, as wrongs get turned right. Then we get lazy,

with not much happening. Even if it seems like there is activity, it likely won't amount to much. So, enjoy the early good news! If she were still here, Lady Day, aka Billie Holiday, would be 106 years old. Born April 7, 1915, she sold a standing-room only capacity audience at Carnegie Hall on March 27, 1948, just 11 days after being released from prison. She was a tormented genius, with even Frank Sinatra modelling his style on her.

That's AonA for now. Next week is the new Moon in Aries on Sunday, April 11.

Until then, shine on!



View from the couch

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

Blackbird (Prime, 2019), a powerful film about living life fully, focuses on a terminally ill mother who arranges to bring her family together

one last time for a celebration of life. Susan Sarandon portrays this mother superbly well. Although somewhat contrived, this beautiful and disturbing film has a significant message.

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.

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

Editor:
Penny Coles
penny@notllocal.com
905-246-5878

Publisher:
The Niagara-on-the-Lake Local

Graphic Designer:
Rosie Gowsell
composing@notllocal.com

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

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

Helen Arsenault
Local Business Directory,
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COMMENT

Wellness committee provides update on vaccinations



Community Health and Wellness Committee

This week's article is the third in a series intended to provide timely and relevant information to Niagara-on-the-Lake residents about the status of vaccinations in NOTL and throughout the Niagara Region.

These updates are also published on the town's website (notl.com/COVID-19). Niagara Region Public Health continues to lead the vaccination planning and distribution process.

Posters providing contact information regarding COVID-19 vaccinations are posted in the local post offices and other frequently visited locations throughout the community.

All NOTL residents should be aware of the following:

- As of Monday, March 29, all residents 70 years of age and

older (born in 1951 or earlier) are able to book their vaccination appointment through the provincial appointment booking system available online at Ontario.ca/bookvaccine or over the phone (1-888-999-6488).

- The three scheduled dates for the vaccine clinics (March 31, April 1 and April 9) at the Community Centre in Niagara-on-the-Lake are fully booked. Additional dates are anticipated shortly. The town and Niagara Region Public Health will be communicating updates as soon as new dates are confirmed. Residents should check the on-line appointment system or call the information line frequently to determine appointment availability.
- Eligible residents are able to book an appointment at any vaccination centre in the Niagara region and can bring an essential caregiver with them to their appointment. However, it's important to note that essential caregivers who are not eligible for vaccination (in the

appropriate age category) may not be able to receive a vaccination.

Transportation to any of the vaccine clinics throughout the region can be arranged through one of two resources:

- The regional On-Demand Transit Program will provide a ride free with proof of appointment. Connections can be made to regional transit at the Outlet Mall if it is necessary to travel to a vaccine clinic in St. Catharines or Niagara Falls. To book a ride with On-Demand Transit, call 289-302-2172 or download the app at NRT OnDemandTransit App.
- Community Support Service Niagara – Transportation is provided by this service to and from any vaccine clinic in the region for a nominal fee of \$10. To request this transportation, call 905-682-3800 x 709.
- Residents 60 years of age and over are eligible to book an appointment at any participating pharmacy in selected areas of the province for the

AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD vaccine. This list of pharmacies is expected to expand in the coming weeks to the Niagara Region and to our local pharmacies. Until it is available in this area, any eligible adult can visit ontario.ca/pharmacycovidvaccine to find a participating pharmacy and can contact the pharmacy to make an appointment.

To answer questions about NOTL's clinic and to help inform the public about how to prepare and what to expect throughout the process, a frequently asked questions page has been published on the town's website (notl.com/faq/vaccineclinic). Residents who do not have access to a computer or are not comfortable navigating websites are invited to call 905-468-4386 ext. 3 to hear a recorded message.

If you are aware of an eligible NOTL resident who may require help in booking their appointment, please reach out to them to offer your assistance. Alternatively, residents can call a representative from the Community Well-

ness Committee at 905-246-3091 for assistance. Volunteers are available to help residents book their vaccination appointment either in-person, using the computers at the library, or by phone.

Some key statistics on the progress of COVID-19 vaccinations in Niagara:

- As of Monday, March 22 nearly 100 per cent of the 80+ age group has either already been vaccinated or has an appointment booked, as reported by Niagara Region Public Health.
- As of March 28, over 63,000 doses of the vaccine (approx. 14 per cent of the regional population) have been administered by the Niagara Region Public Health and the Niagara Health System.
- The percentage of people vaccinated in the Niagara Region is in line with the overall Ontario percentage, which is approximately 13 per cent.

This is reassuring information, showing that we are moving closer to the time of overall protection from COVID-19. But in order to reach an optimal level

of protection in our community, it is vital for everyone to get their vaccination as soon as it is available for your age group.

Please remain calm and patient. It is the intention that every NOTL resident who wishes to receive a COVID-19 vaccination will get one.

What we can do now:

Continue to follow public health measures to help stop the spread of COVID-19:

- Practise frequent hand washing.
- Wear a mask or face covering in indoor spaces and when two metres physical distancing isn't possible.
- Take a self-assessment if you are feeling unwell. <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/>
- Stay up to date. Visit covid19.ontario.ca for the most up-to-date information from the provincial government, niagara-region.ca for information from the Niagara Region, and notl.com/COVID-19 for information regarding impacts to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Library planning a busy week for April break

Kasia Dupuis
NOTL Public Library

April Break will be a busy time at the NOTL Public Library.

While this year's break is a little later than usual and will look a little different than others in the past, it will be no less fun, exciting and engaging for kids in our community, because after all, when school's out, the library is the place to be.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library is offering a mix of programs on art, science, story times, trivia and more, for ages two to 14.

Everyone's favourite Mad Science of Niagara will be offering two workshops, focusing on art and wildlife conservation. On Monday, April 12 at 1:30 p.m. children can "dive in" to learn all about jellyfish – the mysterious and curious creatures of the deep – and then create their very own dancing jellyfish mixed media project, with materials provided in an at-home kit.

Also happening on Friday April, 16, at 1:30 p.m., children

can learn about the wide world of turtles, and create unique turtle sculptures, again with materials provided in an at-home kit. Both of these programs are offered free of charge, and include a virtual meet-up as well as an art kit to be picked up at the library prior to the workshop dates.

On Tuesday, April 13, we are celebrating "Gotta Catch 'Em All" day, and we have a great line-up of Pokemon-inspired programs for young Pokemon enthusiasts. Starting at 11 a.m. for ages seven to 13, you can join Kasia to learn how to paint pop-art-inspired Pikachu and Squirtle paintings using fun printmaking techniques. This program includes a kit with all of the materials needed, and each participant will finish with two paintings of these popular Pokemon. For the three to six age group and the youngest of Pokemon enthusiasts, Rachel, the library's new preschool programmer, will be hosting a fun and interactive virtual Pokemon Party via Zoom, which also includes a kit of materials and activities to be picked up at the library.

Finally, at 6:30 p.m. kids aged seven and up can join us for Pokemon Trivia to test their

knowledge from the comfort of their own home, and have a chance to win a Pokemon Prize Pack.

Wednesday, April 14 features something special for the seven to 14 crowd. Combine art and science together to learn how to make an interactive and dynamic piece of art, inspired by the pandemic-popular game, Among Us. All materials your creative kid will need are provided in a kit to be picked up at the library, and they will join Kasia virtually to create their own Crewmate (or Imposter) spinning in space. Spaces in this unique workshop are limited, and we recommend registering early.

Babies and toddlers are the focus for the morning of Thursday, April 15. Join Rachel to launch a brand new program called Welcome Baby, at 9:30 a.m. on Zoom. This program will provide a welcoming place for new caregivers in our community to come together to bond, share and learn. Shannon Eaves, a speech language pathologist, will join the program as guest speaker to give a speech development presentation, as well as be available to answer parent questions. Registration is required for this event.

The relaunch of our popular program, Tumble Tots, will also be happening that morning at 10:30 a.m. This program, geared for ages two to four, with parent participation, will include story time, songs, rhymes and activities all about bears, and also includes a free kit of manipulatives and materials for tots that will help to foster engagement and interaction during the virtual program.

Thursday afternoon, kids aged six-plus will be able to take part in some virtual Trivia inspired by *The Lego Movie*, at 2 p.m., with a chance to win a Lego prize pack. Thursday is also home to another exciting relaunch: Tinker Thinker, Thursdays is back.

This popular program focuses on exploring, discovering and problem-solving through S.T.E.A.M. concepts and ideas, and will provide kids aged eight to 12 with a fun, hands-on activity to build along with Kasia. Each month, starting this April, children can be registered for a kit that includes two activities that will be explored during a virtual meet-up with Kasia. April 15 will offer an opportunity to explore circuits, and April 29 is for experimenting with light and

colour. Spaces are limited in this program, and we recommend registering early.

Rain or shine, you'll find us in The Wild on Friday morning for the relaunch of this popular outdoor preschool program. Modelled after forest and nature-school ideas, kids aged three to five, with their caregivers, can join Rachel to explore "the wilds" of NOTL as they hike, explore and discover together the changes spring is bringing our way.

Taking time for ourselves to recharge, refocus and relax our bodies and our brains has been immeasurably important during the past year, not only for ourselves but for our children too. On Friday, April 16 at 10:30 a.m.,

kids aged six to 12 can join Kasia for a virtual workshop focusing on mindfulness, creativity and calming the mind through art. Kids will learn fun and simple techniques to use a variety of art materials and found items to make a mixed-media collage piece focusing on the joy and process of creating, rather than the final product. This free program includes a kit with all materials, which can be picked up at the library after registering.

Registration for all of these great programs is available on our website www.notlpubliclibrary.org, and we look forward to learning, creating and connecting with you and your families this upcoming April Break.



On Monday, April 12 children can dive in to learn all about jellyfish, and create their own dancing jellyfish mixed media project, with materials provided in an at-home kit after registration. (Photo supplied)



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Spring adventure at Rondeau Provincial Park



Owen Bjorgan
Special to The Local

Losing daylight, I'm cruising further west on Highway 3's endless straight roads. Departing directly from work, the van camp setup is in its prime for spring exploration in Rondeau Provincial Park.

The eight-kilometre giant protrusion of land into the blue abyss of Lake Erie I'm heading toward is called a sand spit.

My draw to this unusual peninsula, created by over 10,000 years of powerful waves and moving soil, was its appreciably high biodiversity. Ontario's second-oldest pro-

vincial park is home to more nationally rare or threatened species than the remainder of the province.

This is largely because it's located on Canada's south coast, which is essentially Lake Erie's forever changing shoreline. Just like here in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Rondeau Provincial Park is part of the Carolinian Forest zone, where we find the country's highest species richness.

Five-lined skinks (our only lizard in the province), eastern hog-nose snakes, spiny softshell turtles, and Ontario's largest population of breeding prothonotary warblers are just a handful of rare species which call Rondeau Park's habitats a protected home.

One way to set yourself up for a world of surprises is to enter a new location for the first

time at night. Driving through the awkward, open gate into the park, I was greeted by a maze of cottages and deer in headlights. Literally. After rounding the corner on nearly a dozen nonchalant deer, I tried to find a park backroad or two that I had previously scoped out on Google Earth. I just needed a place to park the van and crawl into the back for a sleep, no trouble to anyone or the hoofed night wanderers.

Alas, I accepted that I would be bothered no matter where I parked in the area. Adapting on the fly has been the theme of the past year or so, so I embraced the unusual plot twist of checking into a tiny motel at around 10 p.m.

At the crack of dawn, I chiselled the icy film off of my windshield and headed back to the park. The friendly motel owners tipped me off as to where I could find a resident eagle nest. They told me that on the way to the park, I would have to make a left, a left, a right, a quick right, by a house, and then you see the bush, or something like that. Locals out here refer to tracts of forest as "the bush," and that was the conversational clue that allowed me to spot the giant wooden nest from the road while driving.

I had the pleasure of pulling over on this backroad and filming both the nest and the



This was snapped on the Mavic Mini drone at Rondeau Provincial Park, showing the sand ridge forests with stagnant wetlands tucked in between, created by over 10,000 years of sand deposition.

bald eagle in flight. I thanked the motel owner aloud, and hopped back into the van.

I parked in the closest public spot I could find near the park boundary, and then proceeded to hike in with a day's worth of food, two cameras, and other gear in my backpack.

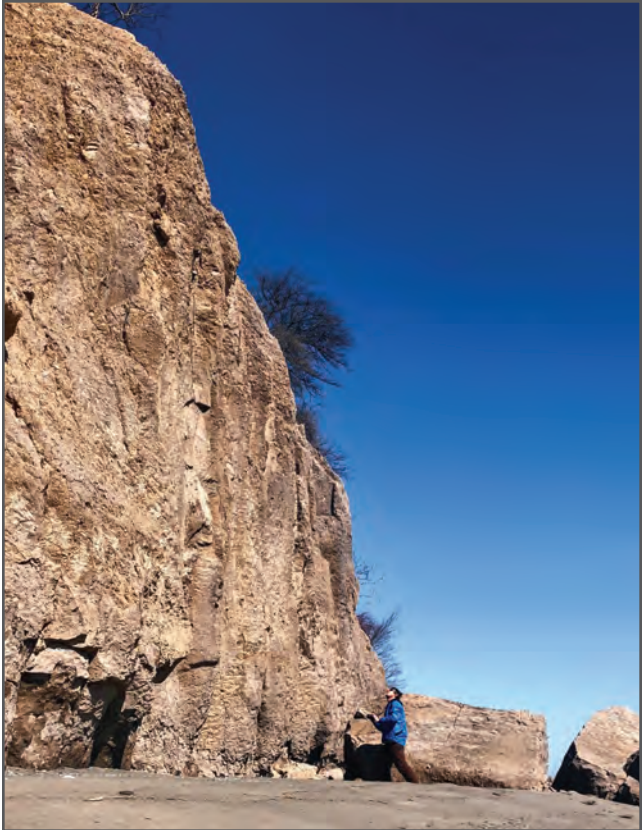
At first, you walk by a series of old, quaint cottages which line the handful of beautiful backroads at the front of the park. Already, the tulip trees and red oaks are appreciably bigger than any tree stand I know in Niagara.

The cottages sit plunked in linear fashion along this peninsula's eastern shore. Here, the beach is idyllic and endlessly sandy. This is one of the few provincial parks which allows a resident cottage establishment within park boundaries. This was evidenced by the modest dwellings and spooky churches tucked into the forests on the park roads. One step in from the other side of the cottages puts you into a world of rolling sand forests with stagnant wetlands sunken in between.

As you can see in the photo I snapped using a drone, the wetland and ridge features of this enormous 32-square kilometre landscape stands as southern Ontario's largest remaining tract of Carolinian Forest. Beach on one side, wetlands and woods in the middle, and a gentle transition into a marsh on the opposite side. It sets the stage for a noteworthy variety of habitats, and therefore species, to coexist.

I love the graduating contrasts of finding these places on a map, seeing them from above, and then exploring them on foot. A satellite image, to a drone flight, to standing in the middle of it all in complete silence by yourself.

Ultimately, these are my favourite moments. That strange reality of how an exciting idea



The ancient, super compressed sand serves as a unique foundation for our Carolinian Forests, and they require care while walking at the base.

has led me to standing in this moment. Off the trails, I continue to stand still.

The sun was rising from the east with a certain confidence. It is the first day of spring. Without interruption, the ultraviolet rays and warm sunlight were being absorbed by the exposed leaf litter and dark logs. With an ear and hand closer to the forest floor, all I hear is a pitter patter, which resembles rain drops. The sound is coming from the ground up, as worms, crickets, and salamanders begin to rummage their energized bodies beneath the leaves. In a couple hours, the forest floor will turn into a giant heat pad. Snakes will emerge out of hibernation and bask on the toasty dry leaves, while birds, such as the nationally rare acadian flycatcher, might snack on the insects attracted to the sunny surface.

The vernal pools line the

impossibly linear trenches between the sand ridge forests. The consistency in this landscape, plus some highly memorable trees — the size of which still astounds me — helped guide me through this eerie and precious environment. I found an eastern red-backed salamander, more than a dozen eastern garter snakes, and listened to sandhill cranes and spring peepers tout their haunting, seasonal calls.

For two days, I floated around in these ancient slough forests, which eventually led to a beach with summer-like sand temperatures. I checked under logs, I sat and observed, and periodically filmed snippets for an ongoing *Hidden Corners* episode.

Sunday afternoon, I cruised back to Niagara with cameras full of memory and a mind full of memories. Their batteries had run out, but mine had certainly recharged.

On an end note, in case this is a thought someone needed to hear, it never ceases to amaze me how mentally and physically refreshing time outdoors can be. Inhaling that beautiful spring air and experiencing the quietly noisy ecosystem had me feeling good to go for the work week ahead.

Right here in NOTL, we have our own tulip trees and free trails to access at anytime as well.



These exposed tree roots are evidence of Lake Erie's constant forces at work along Rondeau Park's shores. (Photos by Owen Bjorgan)



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REAL ESTATE WILLS BUSINESS

Local faith leaders delighted to receive vaccination

**Randy Klaassen
Special to The Local**

When COVID vaccines began to be offered, I shared with others, “I’ll wait my turn, but when it’s offered to me, I’ll be quick to sign up.”

So, when my wife, Renate, and I both received notices last week that as spiritual leaders we were eligible to make an appointment, we both registered.

As an ordained minister, Renate serves as associate pastor for German Worship, with Niagara United Mennonite Church on Niagara Stone Road, which has a significant membership of seniors, whose first language is German.

Until the COVID pandemic, Renate and I went in opposite directions on Sunday mornings, as I serve the St. Catharines United Mennonite Church, on Linwell Road near Vine Street. There, as associate pastor, I serve with a focus on seniors, helping them to finish life well.

We are often called upon to provide spiritual support for those in palliative care, and to officiate at funerals.

The notice we received in-

cluding us to be vaccinated was addressed to “spiritual leaders of Niagara’s Faith Communities,” from Robert Bond, coordinator of spiritual and religious care with Niagara Health. After wading through the information, we were surprised to make an appointment for the next day.

Niagara Health administers the Pfizer vaccine to targeted groups at the Seymour-Hannah Sports and Entertainment Centre in St. Catharines. As instructed, we arrived at the arena 10 minutes prior to our appointment, only to see a mostly-full parking lot, and several long lines of people. With our screening forms and identification in hand, we picked one of the lines to join, and soon a security person confirmed we were in the correct line for our appointment.

As a vaccination site, the St. Catharines arena at that time was currently serving mainly Niagara residents 75 years and over. In the lineup we felt a bit out of place, as “younger” faith leaders. We trusted our appointment confirmation, and waited our turn in the warm

sunshine, while the atmosphere had a touch of festivity.

It wasn’t long until a fellow behind us began voicing his opinion. “This whole thing is totally disorganized!”

Renate and I looked at each other. “Disorganized?” Among the hundreds of people, waiting patiently in their respective lines, with a helpful security person giving direction for people to find the correct line for appointments. What’s disorganized? This fellow commented several times, “Totally disorganized . . . and disgraceful . . .” followed by a few adjectives not fit for print. Justification for his complaint was that he was not receiving his vaccination on time. All I could think of were the times I’ve waited at a doctor’s office, or times standing in line at a theme park. This was nothing.

In succession, each of the lines moved ahead, in bunches, my guess was about 20 people per time slot. When it was our turn, once inside, a person checked our health card, and confirmed our appointment.

We were then directed to a station where a person conducted the screening process, and



Randy and Renate Klaassen were invited to receive their vaccinations. (Randy Klaassen)

entered information into a computer. Next we followed arrows on the floor to the arena, where someone directed each of us to a desk, where health professionals were giving the vaccination.

The person I met introduced himself as a medical doctor. We chatted briefly, as he reviewed my documents and I rolled up my sleeve. Across the rink something visually distracted me, and the next thing I knew the doctor was placing a band-aid on my shoulder. I seriously doubted I had been given the vaccine. I had intended to

watch the needle, yet it was so quick and painless, I felt a bit cheated.

With instructions to take a seat in the waiting area, I thanked the doctor, who placed a sticker with the time of the injection on my shirt. Fifteen minutes to wait, should there be any negative reaction.

After the allotted time, the final step in the process was to be checked out, which included receiving a Ministry of Health receipt documenting various aspects of the vaccination. Before leaving the building my

cellphone buzzed, with an email confirmation of my vaccine.

As of the date of our vaccinations, the Niagara Health website indicated they had administered 40,424 vaccinations, of which 3,036 were a second dose. Considering the thousands more vaccinations to provide, standing in line for a period of time seemed like a minor issue to deal with.

We both felt grateful to receive the vaccine, and know that as a community, we have a long way to go before the COVID virus will no longer be a threat.

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Kids of all ages, especially teens, struggle with pandemic

Penny Coles
The Local

It's no surprise the pandemic is adding an extra burden to children and teens, especially those already suffering with mental health issues.

Pathstone Mental Health provides a wide range of clinical services and programs for children up to the age of 18, and with Niagara in the red zone, is now able to open its walk-in clinics.

The pandemic is having an impact on kids of all ages, says Pathstone director Bill Helmezc, and on their parents. Throughout this difficult time, services have been adjusted to help clients as quickly as possible, and only one of their programs, the brief service,

which is considered a way into Pathstone, has a waiting list at this point.

Many of the families and children looking for help are new clients, and Pathstone is seeing many more than they were pre-pandemic.

Before the pandemic, Pathstone clients tended to be "more grounded" with their struggles, Helmezc explains. Now, because of the extra stress of what they're living through, it can be more difficult to get to the specific issues that are bothering them.

Picture walking down a dark street in an unfamiliar neighbourhood, Helmezc suggests. "You might be anxious and worried and distracted, and having a concise or coherent conversation becomes a little more difficult."

The pandemic makes it more difficult to focus on specific issues, and the pandemic itself also has to be addressed.

While there is no one age group being affected by the pandemic, it affects different age groups differently.

A baby six months or a year old may be impacted by not getting the attention required from his mother, and the mother/child attachment can be negatively impacted. The mother or parents may have to share their time with other children at home, who would normally be at school, or they themselves may be stressed, confused, and dealing with all the life stresses they haven't had before the pandemic.

A 10-year-old at the age

when he's experimenting with groups of friends may not be able to have that opportunity, impacting his development.

Teenagers and young adults are at a stage when social interaction is very important to their development. It's a time when they're formulating their identity, but they're not able to do that because they're not in school, or school has been erratic, and they're not allowed to go out to be with their friends.

Teenagers, having lost the opportunity for in-person social interactions, may now be replacing them with interactions on social media and withdrawing from family.

Helmezc says it's important to continue having

open conversations with teens, and try to do more with them, to spend more time with them.

It's also important to understand why teenagers are reaching out to their friends through social media. Are they just seeking that social interaction, or are they fearful about the pandemic and reaching out to friends to be consoled?

If they are fearful, parents need to have more conversations with them to allay those fears.

If they're spending too much time on social media because they have nothing else to do, then try to find things for them to do

Make time to do things together, such as games nights. Find ways to interact with children, he says.

"It's more and more difficult for parents to do that. They have their own issues, helping kids with homework, doing their own job, or maybe they're stressed financially and looking for jobs."

There may be little time available for those interactions with children, or not as often as they might hope, he says.

"It's always about communication, always about having open conversations. Parents will often say 'there's nothing I can do,' but that's not really true."

Even as children go through adolescence, and peers become more and more important, research shows parents still have influence on their child, says Helmezc.

"Always recognize you can have conversations with your teenager, and listen as well.

Kids, teenagers are still looking to their parents for open conversations, not just talking, but listening too."

"Parents may walk away thinking it's not the conversation you wanted to have, or the results you wanted to have, but keep that conversation going."

How do parents know when it's more than they can cope with, that their kids need outside help?

It goes back to communication, he says.

Adults are more equipped to deal with a pandemic than kids. They

can talk about what they're worried about, ensure the child is not alone, and have some positive conversations about the good things that are happening.

"This is another transition phase of life, this is something no-one has experienced before, but we do have the ability to figure some things out," he says.

The pandemic "is a scary thing, a terrible thing, and people are dying," he says.

But parents can also tell their kids most people won't get sick and won't die.

"You don't know what kids are thinking," and having conversations to find out what they are thinking and answering their questions is important.

Try to help them understand, and get a good sense of what's really going on, with information such as "we know we can get through this, the vaccinations are coming."

For adults struggling with difficult situations, such as financial difficulties or a marriage breaking down, it may seem like there is no solution, it can help to write things down, begin to make a plan.

This is a process that can be used to teach valuable lessons to children, Helmezc says, thinking positively and proactively to improve our current situation.

"We don't want to see pandemic burnout in children," he says.

As we get fed up with wearing masks or following the rules, our children will follow us.

They are going to pick up on us not following the rules, he says, "and they will see that we get to pick and choose what rules we follow."

What parents have always done is taught children about managed risk.

"At some point we make a decision as parents that our child can cross the road without holding our hand, and then at some point cross the road themselves, or go to pool parties even if they're not the best swimmers. Life is full of risks, and we have to help our children to manage

Continued on page 11

Walk-in clinic in NOTL closed permanently

Another NOTL location could be successful

Penny Coles
The Local

A walk-in mental health clinic, offering free, one-on-one counselling sessions for youth, is no longer available in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Which is unfortunate, with Pathstone Mental Health "inundated" during the pandemic, receiving a large increase in crisis and support calls, and requests for other programs for families, and children up to 18 years old.

All Pathstone walk-in clinics were shut down for a time, and have reopened. Pathstone is now offering three services: the crisis call hotline, in-person visits and virtual visits.

The crisis phone line has led to 911 calls, says Kim Rossi, director of philanthropy and public relations, in response to young people talking about suicide, drugs and eating disorders, among other issues.

The clinic in Niagara-on-the-Lake was shut down before the end of the year-long pilot project, and pre-pandemic, because it was consistently

underused, says Rossi. The walk-in clinics in other communities were a huge success, but in NOTL, it may have just been the wrong location. Pathstone staff had looked at a few sites, but Red Roof Retreat on Concession 6 was the one they chose.

The Pathstone model for providing mental health care for kids has shifted to community-focused, one-on-one counselling. They have learned, since opening the first walk-in clinic three years ago in St. Catharines, that in many cases, one or two sessions can provide kids with the coping skills and problem-solving needed to deal with issues such as stress, anxiety and depression.

St. Catharines Branscombe Health Centre now offers clinics five days a week, and satellite locations have opened one day a week in Niagara Falls, Fort Erie, Welland, Grimsby, Port Colborne, Beamsville, and most recently Thorold.

When the NOTL clinic was closed, Rossi says she believed there was "no appetite" for municipal

support, which is required to operate a clinic, in part funded by the municipalities.

Red Roof Retreat provided a newly-renovated space at no charge, but it never received the number of walk-ins the other clinics did, some days not seeing anyone.

Rossi says it could be because it was not easily accessible, with no public transportation at the time, or whether the community wasn't aware of the clinic and all it offered, although she did everything she could to advertise it.

In NOTL, the Town had committed \$10,000, matching the same commitment from the Niagara Community Foundation — the break-even point for a one-day-a-week clinic, with donated space, is \$20,000 a year, she says.

The clinics help eliminate the long wait times for other Pathstone services and programs, says Rossi, but the most significant improvement of the walk-in model is the ability to provide counselling when kids need it. Waiting can cause more complex issues, she says.

Youth up to the age of 18 are welcome, and parents who have concerns about young children can

also receive help. Youth may be feeling sadness, worry or anger, may be bullied, getting into trouble, or feel they may hurt themselves — those are some of the concerns clinicians hear.

Teenagers in other locations usually come in on their own, says Rossi, but with no transportation in NOTL to that location, that wasn't working.

Rossi says she would be interested in trying again at a different location, but she needs buy-in from the town.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero says she understood when Pathstone closed their clinic in NOTL, given how few clients it saw, and was disappointed it didn't meet its potential in town.

She felt Pathstone had another location for the Monday clinic that would fill up the week, and wasn't interested in continuing in NOTL.

She would support trying again, she says, and would be happy to bring it to council, but thinks a good start would be to involve the Lord Mayor's Youth Advisory Council.

If Pathstone is willing to give it another try at a different location, she says, "I can't imagine it not happening."



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Four-week workshop deals with letting go

Penny Coles
The Local

When something difficult happens to us in life, how many times have we been told to “just let it go?”

How often have we wished we could just let it go, knowing it’s not that simple?

Can we learn to let it go?

Darcy Patrick, author, public speaker and wellness writing coach, believes we can, and wants to help by showing us how.

He’s written a book called *The Big Let Go*, and for some time, Debbie Krause, program co-ordinator of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library, has been trying to organize a series of workshops Patrick offers to show us how to let go, move on past trauma, relinquish control, and take charge of our lives.

He also shares his tools to help us get there, he says, including forgiveness, setting boundaries, acceptance, changing perspectives, and having faith in ourselves.

The virtual, interactive workshops can accommodate up to 30 people, and are designed for registration to include all four in the series, spread over four weeks.

“He’s been on our radar for a long time,” says Krause. “He was scheduled to come last spring,

and had to be cancelled. If the pandemic has taught us anything, it’s that mental health is a very, very important part of our well-being, in addition to our physical and economic situations. Mental health needs to be something we talk about. We’re all in COVID fatigue, and that makes us less able to cope with the hard stuff we’re facing.”

Patrick’s workshops may be timely, in that his advice on how to let go of things we can’t control could be more important now than ever, adds Krause.

Patrick had written three books before the arrival of COVID, and also worked as a music instructor. A health problem forced him to give up his work with the public during the pandemic, and helped move forward the schedule for completion of *The Big Let Go*, also giving him time to create a workshop series.

He has other workshops he does for the Canadian military, and the first series on letting go was spread for them over six weeks.

When Krause asked for a four-week series, he says, he took “what was best from each” to work with her schedule.

He believes people crave control, and think being in control is good for them. Losing control builds anxiety, he says, so

learning to let go during a pandemic, when so much is out of our control, is especially timely.

“We can hold on to things for a long time, but then we find ourselves in a stressful situation, and although we might not think we’re struggling, we start to become anxious or depressed. We’re faced with a challenge — the control we thought we had, we’ve lost.”

We might deal with that by going out with friends, and talking to people, but while that coping mechanism might have worked in the past it’s not always possible in a pandemic.

Other issues such as wearing a mask and physical distancing can also be seen as ways we are losing control, says Patrick.

But it’s not just about the pandemic — we all have issues we could let go, he says, such as family disagreements that fester.

Letting go, he says, allows us to accept who we are and find peace within ourselves.

A St. Catharines resident, he also does workshops for the St. Catharines Public Library.

When the pandemic cancelled public appearances, one of the issues he had to let go was his feeling a virtual meeting couldn’t accomplish what in-person workshops could, he says.

He agreed to do some virtual workshops, and

discovered they not only worked well, but are something he may continue to offer post-pandemic.

Register for the first

workshop, Thursday, April 8 from 7 to 9 p.m., and you will be registered for the other three dates as well.

Program registrations

can be done online at <https://notlpubliclibrary.org>.

For more information call 905-468-2023.



Darcy Patrick will offer four virtual sessions, organized through the NOTL Public Library, about *The Big Let Go*. (Photo supplied)

Three services offered

Continued from page 10

those risks.”

That includes following COVID rules and restrictions, he says.

For example, if we decide to drop off a birthday gift for a family member or friend, we may decide to take our mask off if we’re six feet away and only going to be there for a few minutes, and we’re outside, where there is less risk of transmission, he says.

“We’re teaching them to problem-solve and manage those risks in certain situations, still staying within the parameters of what is allowed.”

It’s confusing for all of us, adults and children, when science is different around the world, science is allowing us to do things differently in different countries, but the experts are not talking about certain factors such as margins of error, or density of population, or probability, leaving out information to explain why different areas do things differently, he

says.

Instead, we have to help them understand decisions are being made on the best information that is available to us.

In the long term, we have no way of knowing what impact the pandemic will have on children of all ages, long past the point of vaccinations, he says.

“We can only do our best to be ready to address issues as they come up.”

Pathstone Mental Health’s eight walk-in clinics are open across Niagara for in-person counselling sessions, with appointments required.

Pathstone offers free, immediate, mental health support without a referral or health card needed, for children and youth from birth to age 18.

You can visit Pathstone in any of three ways.

- * The Crisis and Support Line at 1-800-263-4944 connects to a Pathstone counsellor, 24/7, 365 days a year.
- * Walk-in clinics, accessed through video

session, Monday-Friday.

- * Walk-in clinic, in-person sessions: Monday to Friday in St. Catharines; Mondays in Welland and Thorold; Tuesdays in Fort Erie; Wednesdays in Port Colborne and Grimsby; and Thursdays in Niagara Falls and Beamsville.

An appointment is required for in-person or video walk-in clinic services and can be made by calling 1-800-263-4944, with same day or advance appointments available for off-site locations. Pathstone Mental Health is a lead agency and community-based organization whose mission it is to provide innovative and effective treatment for all children in Niagara diagnosed with mental health issues. Thanks to support from our donors and volunteers, we are able to address and meet the needs of children and their families as the primary accredited provider of mental health services for children in Niagara.

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Love and ice wine filmed at Peller Estates

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

Though they were blocked from shooting scenes on Queen Street this week, a Toronto-based crew of about 45 technicians, builders, caterers and actors spent four days filming a new movie at Peller Estates.

Beginning on a warm spring day last Wednesday, the winery was transformed into a wintry Hudson Valley, New York fictional destination named Hollingbrook Vineyard.

A new sign was hung in the main entrance and a carpet of fake snow was laid on the island roundabout to set the scene for *Love and Ice Wine*, a Hallmark Channel movie that began shooting Thursday. Produced by Chesler Perlmutter Productions, the made-for-TV film will premiere in winter, 2022.

Love and Ice Wine stars Nazneen Contractor as Cristina, a food and wine writer, who visits a winery she had panned in the past, owned and operated by a single dad, Michael, played by Brennan Elliot. Both actors will be familiar to fans of Hallmark Channel productions. Director Don McBrearty, a veteran of the Canadian television and film industry (*Murdoch Mysteries*, *Heartland*, *Road to Avonlea*, *Magical Christmas Ornaments*) is at the helm.

Associate producer and location manager Alexander Broughton expressed frustration that plans to shoot along Queen Street this Monday and Tuesday were nixed last week by Niagara-on-the-Lake council.

"All the businesses I talked to (Just Christmas, Hatley Boutique, Cheese Secrets)," claims Broughton, "were super happy to have us. I was extremely disappointed, and frustrated. They (council) told me I didn't give them enough time to address all of the COVID concerns."

Speaking to council last week, Broughton said that despite the lower budget for this particular film, a lot of investment was made into COVID protocols.

"We are the second most heavily regulated industry outside of the healthcare industry. There hasn't been a spread in our industry because we take a lot of precautions," he told council. "The amount of regulations that they (local businesses) go through to open up isn't nearly as much as we go through on a regular basis."

Indeed, on a visit to the set at Peller Estates March 25, The Local was

required to check in with the company's COVID medic. A series of clearance questions were asked and answered, a mask was required, and a face shield was provided for this reporter to wear. The crew was on a break at the time, and it was clear that physical distancing was in effect. As well, major changes to their craft services means all meals were served individually wrapped.

Despite his assurances, Broughton's request to shoot the outdoor scenes on Queen and Market Streets was turned down. CAO Marnie Cluckie said Broughton's application came through in mid-March, and that these types of requests usually take four to six weeks to review.

"We require a fair bit of information, and it takes time for the various groups at the town to review," explained Cluckie. "We want to make sure the business impact is minimized, that garbage collection is addressed, that there's a fire safety plan with access, road closures are addressed, and a number of other things. At the time that he submitted it, there wasn't adequate time for that circulation."

On Tuesday last week, Broughton moved on to Plan B. He quickly reached out to his contacts in Cambridge, and informed The Local he was expecting an answer in 24 hours from that municipality. By Thursday, Cambridge had given him the go-ahead, and the crew moved there this week.

In the meantime, shooting went on as planned last weekend at Peller. In keeping with the theme of the film's title, rows of artificial ice wine grapes were set up next to the vineyard just northwest of the Peller building. Plump, juicy grapes covered in frost hung from vines, over another carpet of fake snow. Though the scene did get rained on during last Wednesday's storm, the set-up certainly looked convincing.

"The main characters will be walking through, and they'll be picking the grapes," said Broughton. "And we have a night scene tonight, as they usually pick the grapes at night because of the frost. The whole scene will be about eight minutes."

Camera operators, sound technicians, script assistants and sets and props people gathered on the white snow blanket. Contractor and Elliot, both wearing masks, approached the vineyards to block the scene, during



Associate producer Alex Broughton of Chesler Perlmutter Productions prepares to film at Peller Estates Winery last week. (Photos by Mike Balsom)



Director Don McBrearty works with Nazneen Contractor as Cristina, and Michael, played by Brennan Elliot, in the vineyards of Peller Estate Winery.



Since the movie involves the stars picking grapes for ice wine, snow is an essential element of the outdoor set.

which Elliot's character is tutoring Contractor's on the tricky, yet rewarding, details of growing grapes for ice wine. It's clear that, keeping with the title once again, love seems to be brewing between the two.

Executive producer Robert Vaughn was on the set with director McBrearty. The veteran of Hallmark productions, as well as movies for Lifetime, Universal Pictures, and Animal Planet, was impressed with the location

Broughton had chosen for the scene.

"It's beautiful, it's (a) huge production value," said Vaughn. "Everybody at Peller Estates has been lovely to deal with. It's completely perfect. It's romantic, it's escapist, it's all of that. It's been a great experience."

On Friday, the production went indoors for a wine tasting scene shot in the cellar room. An outdoor party scene, requiring a number of extras, was also planned for the weekend.

Broughton added that a number of local actors had been enlisted to be in that scene, though he was unable to provide any names.

Despite the frustration of having to move the shoot to Cambridge Monday, Broughton, whose position as a location manager involves scouting sites, negotiating with local officials, and scheduling shooting, looks forward to someday returning to town when the situation calls for it.

"Niagara-on-the-Lake

is such a beautiful town," he says. "The network, Hallmark, really loved the town, and we (Chesler Perlmutter Productions) really love the town. I have a good relationship with a lot of different towns. But I've had Cambridge pull my permits before when we went into lockdown, and I had to go look for another town. It's about building these new relationships with a town and knowing what my limitations are and aren't."

LocalSPORTS

Ice Dog star playing pro hockey in Germany

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

Former Niagara Ice Dogs Alex Friesen is in the thick of his third season playing professional hockey in Germany. The centre has notched six goals and nine assists in 17 games this year for the Fischtown Penguins, who play out of the port city of Bremerhaven.

The 30-year-old has missed more than a dozen games with a groin tear in a season already truncated by the pandemic. The Penguins sit comfortably in second place in the Northern Division of the Deutsche Eishockey Liga (DEL-2), the second tier German professional hockey league. With 10 games left to play, they are almost certainly assured of a spot in the shortened playoffs, which begin after April 18.

The son of Helmut and Lucy Friesen of Virgil has been playing professionally since his five years with the IceDogs came to an end in 2012. Drafted by the Vancouver Canucks in the sixth round in 2010, his second year of eligibility, Friesen spent five years playing in the American Hockey League, three with the Utica Comets. He crossed the Atlantic for a spot with Leksands Idrottsförening in the top-tier Swedish Hockey League in 2017-2018, then moved to Bremerhaven the following season.

Friesen is enjoying the competition level in the league. "At the last Olympics, Germany came in second," he says. "The German talent pool has grown over the last 15 years. Each team can have nine import players. We have players from Canada, the USA, all over Europe."

He continues, "Tim Stützel played in our league. He was drafted third overall last year. He played for (Adler) Mannheim last year, and obviously he's doing pretty well with Ottawa. The league has a lot of good young and older German players, and players from around the world."

Reflecting on his days in the AHL, Friesen admits the goal was always to crack the roster of an NHL team. But he kept his options open in the back of his mind.

"The best way to get a spot in the NHL is to play in the American Hockey League," says Friesen. "But it was always a thought that, later in the career, if things didn't work out that it could be a possibility to play over in Europe."

Friesen did get the call from the Canucks, making his NHL debut at home on February 15, 2016 against the Minnesota Wild. It would be the only game he played in the league.

"That was one of the highlights of my career," he enthuses. "My parents, my girlfriend (now wife, Allie), my aunt, my sister, a bunch of people all came out to watch the game. It was a great experience. Obviously it would have been nice to stick around



Local Alex Friesen is in his third year of a professional German hockey league. (Photos supplied)

and play a little more, but it was awesome."

He remembers fondly his three seasons in Utica, only a few hours away in New York state. In 2014-15 he helped the Comets reach the Calder Cup Final, where they fell in five games to the Manchester Monarchs.

But his days with the IceDogs, whose first year in Niagara coincided with Friesen's first season with them, remain some of his favourite times. He and fellow NOTL native Johnson Andrews were two of the most popular players amongst fans.

"It was definitely a fun five years," Friesen reflects. "Getting drafted by them, having it be my hometown team, was a huge factor. In terms of community outreach, every week we were out at some school appearance or community event."

In 292 regular season OHL games, Friesen notched 91 goals and 244 points. He added another 51 points, including 14 goals, in 61 playoff games. In Game 5 of the 2012 Eastern Conference Final against Ottawa, Friesen was the hometown hero, scoring the game winner in the second period, sending the Niagara IceDogs to their first ever appearance in the OHL Championship Series.

As well, Friesen received the 2008 Ivan Tennant Award, given to the OHL's top academic high school student. He was also named a third team all-star during his final OHL season, after recording 71 points (26 goals and 45 assists) in 62 games.

"I'm still in touch with some of the guys," he says. "Johnson and I have been friends since we were five years old. Guys like (Andrew) Aggozino, (Steven) Shipley, (Mike) Schwindt, we get together at least once a summer for a round of golf."

Last summer, Friesen and Allie were back home helping out

at his grandparents' business, Pillitteri Estates Winery. They were both enlisted by his brother-in-law, Michael Zappitelli, to support him with his BarrelHead Pizza operation. With the pandemic still a factor in Germany, they had an extended time at home, as their return to Europe was delayed until September.

"We had exhibition games and practices in November," Friesen recalls, "but the season didn't start until December. There are 14 teams, in two divisions, North and South. For the first 24 games all we did was play the northern teams, so we didn't have to stay over in hotels. Now we're playing the southern teams, playing one game away, then one game at home."

Life is different for the couple this year with COVID-19 of course. When they arrived in November they were still able to get out to restaurants and enjoy much of what Bremerhaven has to offer. But with cases spiking in December, lockdowns became a reality, as traditions such as the popular Christkindmarkets were cancelled.

Normally the couple takes advantage of short breaks in the hockey season to travel through Europe. That hasn't been possible this past year, but they are still enjoying their time in Germany.

"We live close to other families, guys from the team," he says. "We've been able to socialize within the parameters of what is allowed with our teammates. It's nice, because we have a kind of network around us."

Like in Canada, Friesen says the frustration in Germany of late has been with how slowly the vaccines have been administered across the country. Though not in a complete lockdown as of press time, Friesen says that only grocery stores are currently allowed to open.

He worries about the ability

of the DEL-2 teams to continue beyond this season without fans in the stands.

"I know next year, this league needs to have fans in some capacity to play," Friesen laments. "The hope is that things go smoothly with the vaccine so that come September we can have some fans in the arenas. This year, all contracts were

reworked. For next year some teams are now putting in clauses where, if there's 50 per cent or 25 per cent fans, your salary is going to reflect that."

Assuming the league can weather the pandemic storm, and he can stay healthy, Friesen plans to play a few more years in Germany before considering a career beyond professional

hockey. Options for the future include starting a hockey school back here in Canada, and immersing himself more fully in the family's wine business.

You can be sure if he runs that hockey school out of Virgil's Centennial Sports Park, his popularity from his IceDogs days and his professional experience will make it a popular choice.

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LocalSPORTS

Despite schedule changes, weekend works out for Friesen

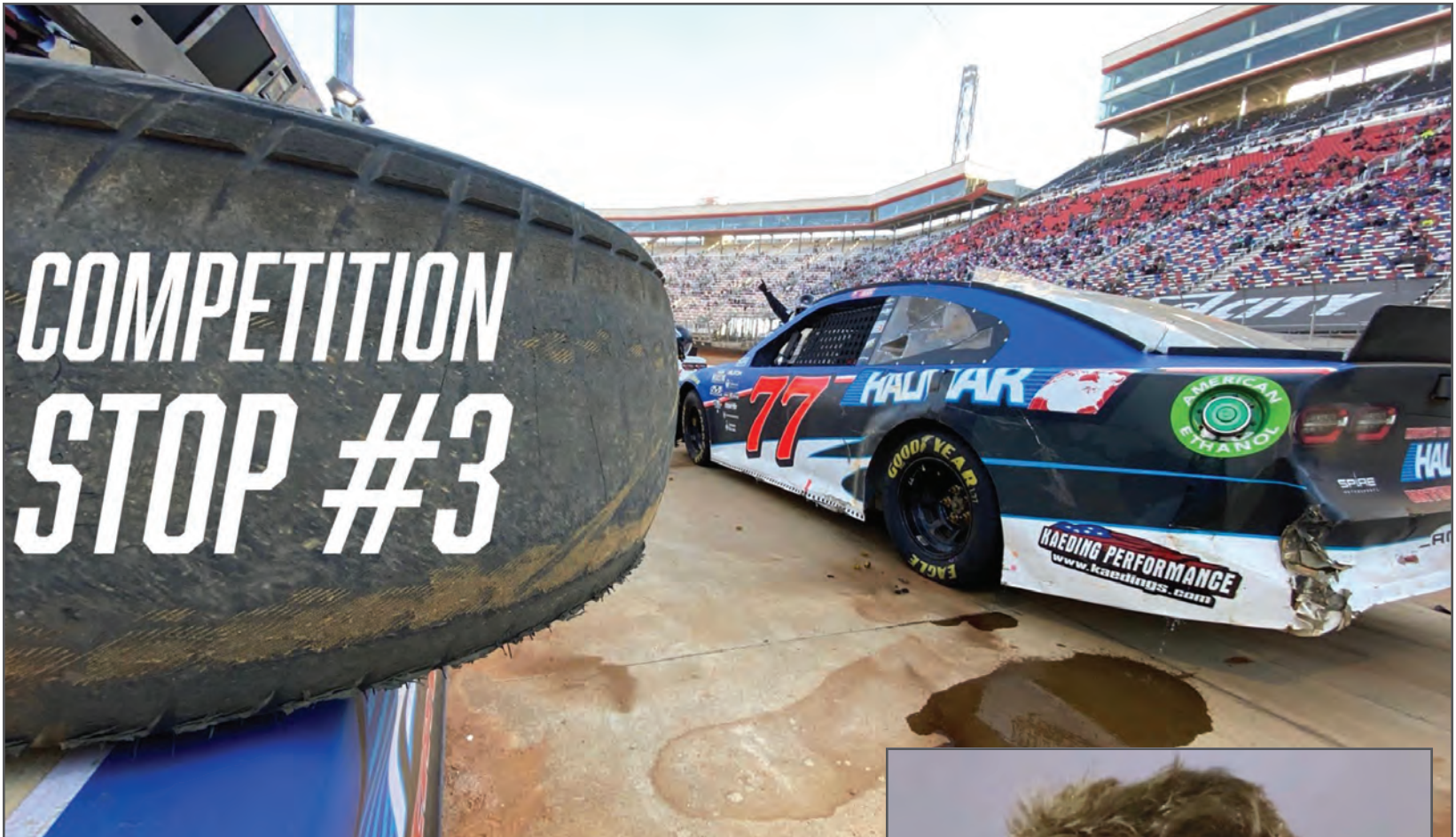
Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

For Niagara-on-the-Lake's Stewart Friesen, a weekend that included an uncharacteristically large amount of downtime ended up in two relative successes and one very big disappointment in Bristol, Tennessee.

Saturday was supposed to see the debut of Jessica Friesen, Stewart's wife, in the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series. Jessica was able to get in some practice laps in her number 62 Toyota Friday, but that would be all the time she would have in the truck on the weekend.

She needed to run a qualifying heat for the chance to end up in the main event, the Pinty's Truck Race on Dirt. But rain and wind wreaked havoc on the track, forcing the cancellation of all qualifiers, after only one muddy lap that left the grilles and windshields of the trucks covered with thick, red mud. Without the qualifier, Jessica was left out of the race, and her number 62 truck was sent home.

NASCAR rejigged the schedule, moving the Pinty's Truck Race to an earlier time slot on Sunday, with Stewart's debut in the NASCAR Cup Series Food City Dirt Race scheduled for 3:30 p.m. that same day. Again, conditions forced NASCAR to



Stop #3 is complete, with both rear tires replaced, and 100 laps to go. (Screenshots)

call off both of those races and push them to Monday.

When conditions were finally conducive for racing Monday at noon, Stewart started off strong in the truck, holding the fourth position after stage 1, and the seventh in stage 2. Martin Truex Jr. won the race, holding on to the top spot for 105 of the 150 laps. Friesen finished 12th.

"With the 52, we kind of missed the balance of it a little bit," he said lat-

er via a Facebook video, with the truck going from a little tight on the track to too loose. "We were really good early in the grip, and then just blew off and we missed it."

The finish earned Friesen enough points to continue his hold on fifth place in the Truck Series standings.

At 4 p.m., Friesen rolled his Halmar Racing Sprite Motorsports Cup car to start in the 32nd position. He entered his first stop with a bit of damage to the sheet metal from contact, but climbed to 25th with 200 laps left.

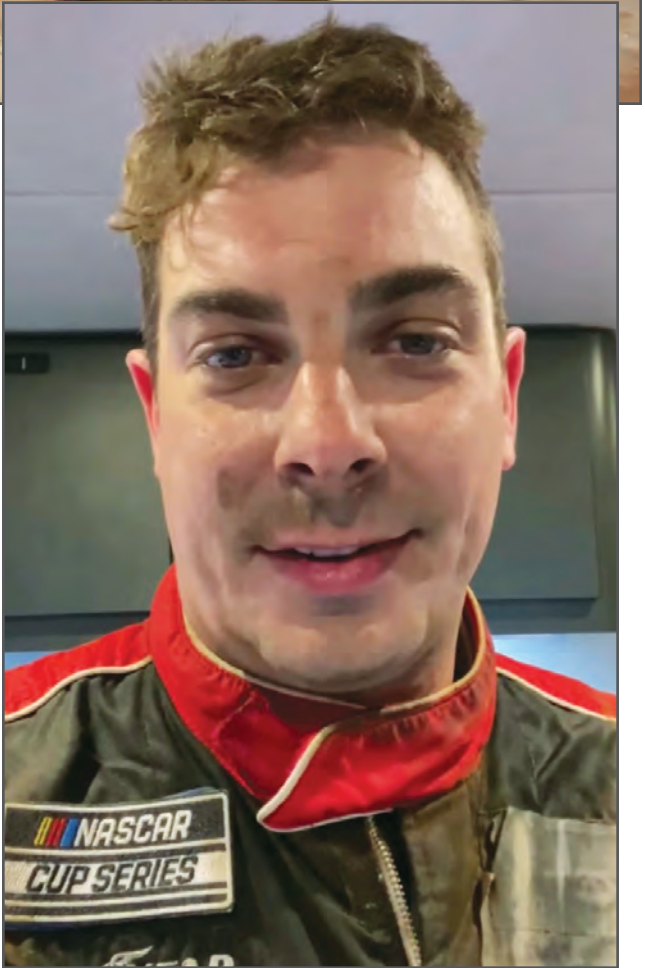
Friesen continued to move up, and for a while had cracked the top 20. But he finished the race placing 23rd. Thirty-year-old Joey Logano of Connecticut took the checkered flag.

"I'm pretty happy, I brought the number 77 Halmark Chevy home with a top-25," he said following

the finish. "It was a long, really tough, challenging racetrack. Daytime conditions were really tough, we were able to make some passes early, get up on the top and get rolling, then jumped the cushion once. We kind of lost visibility with the dust and the sun on the windshield. All in all, we survived."

Good news came Sunday, by the way, for Jessica. That day, Stewart announced on SiriusXM NASCAR Radio's Morning Drive show that his wife would be returning with the number 62 Toyota Tundra to qualify at Knoxville Raceway on July 9. It will be another truck race on dirt, part of Knoxville's Corn Belt Weekend.

And more good news followed the Cup Series race on Monday. Friesen discovered NASCAR had announced during the race that Bristol would hold the same race on the dirt again in 2022.



Stewart Friesen explained his Monday races in a video.

"Hopefully it's at night," he laughed. "Daytime dirt-track racing stinks. But it's just the nature of the beast."

Patting the NASCAR

Cup Series patch on his shoulder, he added, "I'm happy to have this patch on my fire suit. It's pretty darn cool. On to the next one."

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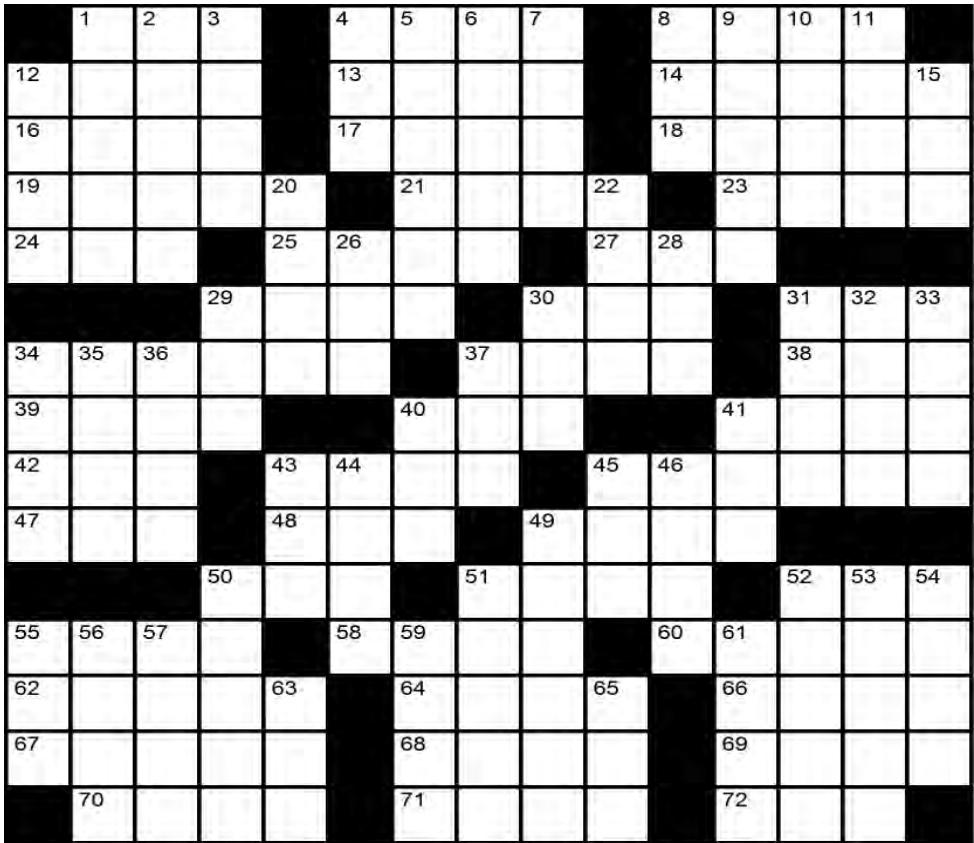
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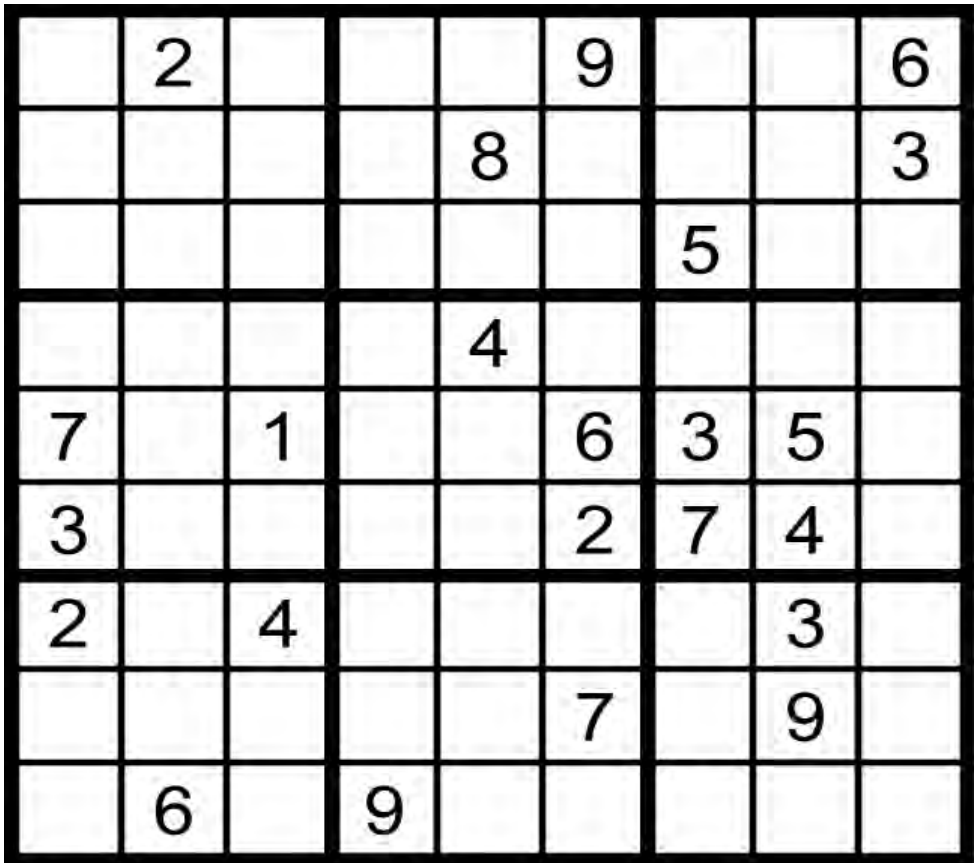


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40 Big Blue
41 This place
42 Sawbuck
43 Chemical pollutants banned in 1975
45 Leftovers
47 Space viewed from below
48 Play on words
49 Computer brains
50 Some foreign Government heads
51 Tree with a partridge at Christmas
52 Adult female pig
55 Interlock
58 --- Silvers or Collins
60 Singer/songwriter --- Mars
62 Thespian
64 Line about which rotation occurs
66 M --- mouse
67 Formerly the Gold Coast
68 Model and actress --- Suvari
69 Liquor measure
70 Adhere to
71 Toboggan
72 A T M ID
Down:
1 E.g. Schwinns
2 Arm of the sea
3 Target
4 Gamble
5 Breathe out
6 Incantation
7 Cleaner
8 Aviation safety grp.
9 Fittingly
10 "Licence to Kill" Bond girl Talisa ---
11 Labor strenuously
12 Campus housing
15 --- Building, now the Comcast Building, N Y C
20 Graceful waterbird
22 Lasting mark
26 Logical operator
28 Viral genetic material
29 Mary Jane
30 Flee
31 Court statement
32 Heavenly instrument
33 Fabric colors
34 Hill dwellers
35 Emblem of Wales
36 Large number
37 2,000 to a ton
40 Arabic "son of"
41 Slugger's stat.
43 Common measure of pollutants
44 Turning point
45 Health club
46 Edge of a street
49 Singer --- Dion
50 Ring
51 Screen dot
52 Osaka fish dish
53 Aromatic bulbous vegetable
54 Habit
55 Journal
56 Reverberation
57 Dagger thrust
59 Overactors
61 Coarse file
63 Flat fish
65 Down



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PUZZLE ANSWERS

**Sudoku solution from
March 24, 2021**

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

Across: 1 Big, 4 Bess, 8 Fast, 12 Dino, 13 Expo, 14 poor, 16 Okla, 17 The A, 18 Attic, 19 Reels, 21 Alps, 23 Lola, 24 M S, T, 25 Wall, 27 Cry, 29 Pane, 30 L A N, 31 Ph D, 34 Almond, 37 Lara, 38 Lay, 39 Neat, 40 I B M, 41 Here, 42 Ten, 43 PC Bs, 45 Scraps, 47 Sky, 48 Pun, 49 C P Us, 50 PMS, 51 Pear, 52 Sow, 55 Mesh, 58 Phil, 60 Bruno, 62 Actor, 64 Axis, 66 As in, 67 Ghana, 68 Mena, 69 Shot, 70 Obey, 71 Sled, 72 P I N.
Down: 1 Bikes, 2 Inlet, 3 Goal, 4 Bet, 5 Exhale, 6 Spell, 7 Soap, 8 F A A, 9 Aptly, 10 Soto, 11 Toll, 12 Dorm, 15 R C A, 20 Swan, 22 Scar, 26 AND, 28 RN A, 29 Pot, 30 Lam, 31 Plea, 32 Harp, 33 Dyes, 34 Ants, 35 Leek, 36 Many, 37 Lbs, 40 lbn, 41 Hrs, 43 P m, 44 Cusp, 45 Spa, 46 Curb, 49 Celine, 50 Phone, 51 Pixel, 52 Sushi, 53 Onion, 54 Wort, 55 Mag, 56 Echo, 57 Stab, 59 Hams, 61 Rasp, 63 Ray, 65 Sad.

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