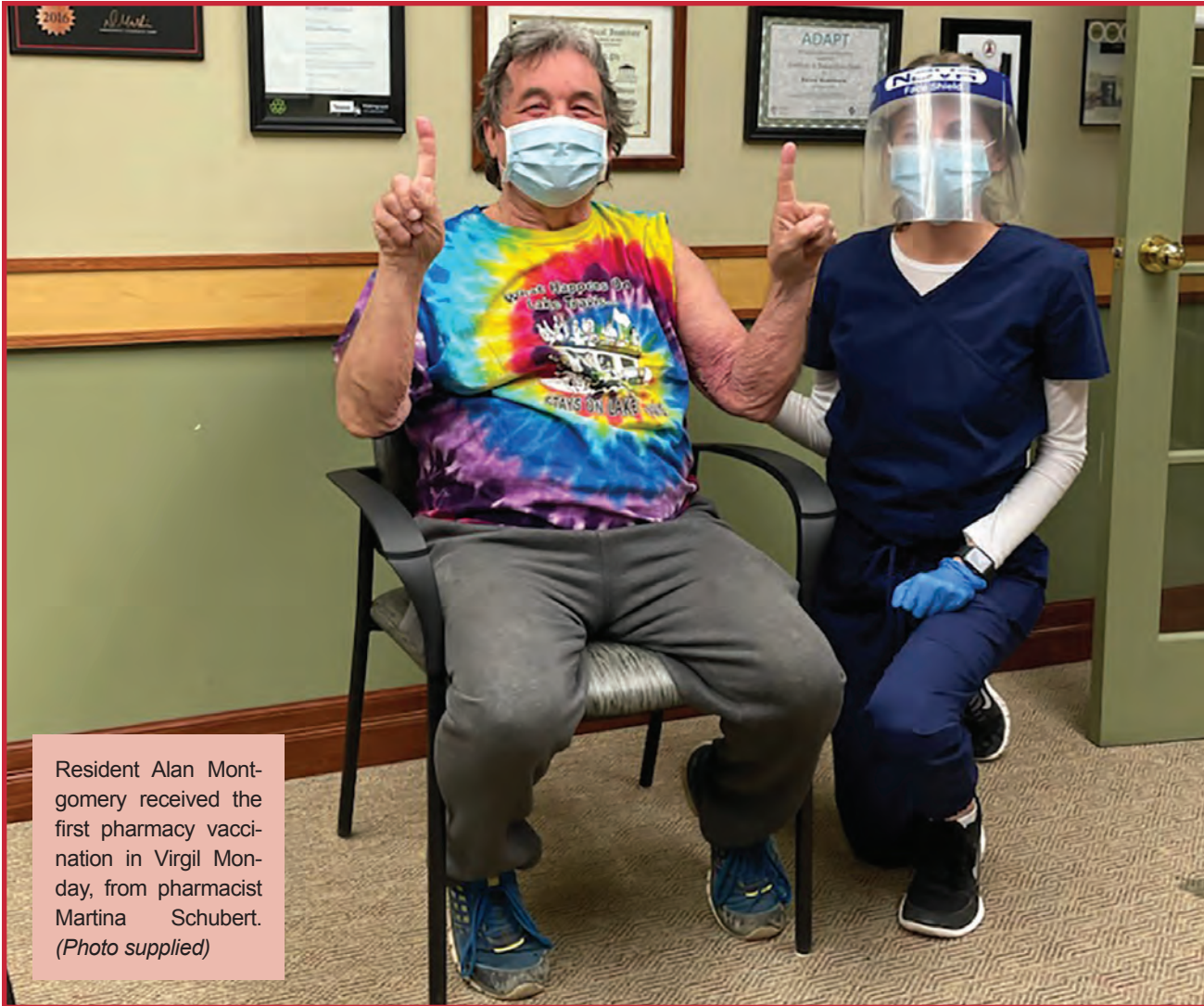




Dog walkers value off-leash area

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notllocal.com APRIL 7, 2021 Volume 3 • Issue 14



Resident Alan Montgomery received the first pharmacy vaccination in Virgil Monday, from pharmacist Martina Schubert. (Photo supplied)

Police find man dead on Lakeshore Rd.

Penny Coles
The Local

On Tuesday, members of the Niagara Regional Police were looking for the driver of a Ford F150 that was travelling eastbound on Lakeshore Road about 7 a.m. Monday morning, and struck a pedestrian by the passenger side of the truck. At about 7:18 a.m. Monday, police were called to the area of Lakeshore Road and McNab Road, to assist paramedics.

When officers arrived on the scene they found

a dead man lying on the side of the road.

Further investigation revealed he had been struck by a vehicle, and Lakeshore, between McNab Road and Stewart Road, was closed for investigation by detectives with the collision reconstruction unit.

Anyone with information is asked to contact detectives at 905-688-4111, ext. 1009137.

At press time Tuesday, police would just say the matter remains under investigation, and no further details were being released.

Vaccinations underway at Simpson's

Penny Coles
The Local

Sean Simpson began vaccinating people over 55 years of age Monday, with 400 doses of AstraZeneca he has received to divide between his Virgil and King Street pharmacies.

Premier Doug Ford said last Thursday a shipment of 583,400 of the 1.5 million doses that arrived in Canada will be shipped to 700 pharmacies, with about 350 new locations added to the 300 that were already offering vaccinations.

Of those, 22 are in Niagara. In Niagara-on-the-Lake, Simpson's PharmaSave on Niagara Stone Road and Simpson's Apothecary on King Street were the only ones included in that list.

The age group for pharmacy vaccinations has been lowered from 60 years of age and over to those 55 and over.

Although the information for making appointments is available on the provincial online booking system, some pharmacists, such as Simpson, have been collecting names on

a waiting list, to be ready to move quickly once they receive vaccines.

Simpson says those who have already added their names to his waiting list don't need to register again. He is going through the names in sequence, beginning with those who registered last February, sorting through those who haven't yet received their vaccination elsewhere and are eligible.

Those who were first to put their names on Simpson's list when it was made available online Feb. 9 can expect to hear soon,

through email.

For every 50 emails he sends, he gets back requests for about 25 appointments, he says.

Eleven people were vaccinated in Virgil Monday, and 10 at the downtown apothecary.

Simpson was aiming for 40 appointments Tuesday, although he wasn't planning on ramping up the King Street location quite so quickly.

With a total of 400 doses, and 3,500 names on his list, those who registered recently might be waiting a while, he said.

By Thursday, he expects to be ordering more vaccine, and hoping it will be delivered.

He was hearing from some people that they were hesitant about AstraZeneca, and preferred to wait for a community clinic where they would receive Pfizer or Moderna, but he also talked to someone who received AstraZeneca at a Public Health clinic.

"The lines seem to be a little blurred now," he says.

He encourages anyone who has an opportunity to be vaccinated at one of the

community clinics, or anywhere else, to take whatever is offered first.

"I wouldn't discourage anyone from looking elsewhere," he says.

"The message we sent out was for those who have an opportunity to get vaccinated anywhere, to take it. The primary goal is to get as many people vaccinated as possible."

Older people will have other options, as more community clinics are scheduled, he says.

People who are eligible

Continued on page 5

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Lockdown could extend another month, says Hirji

Niagara's top medical health officer advocating for stay-at-home order

Penny Coles
The Local

If the province does not call for further restrictions or a stay-at-home order soon — possibly as soon as today — it's likely the current shutdown will not be enough to control the spread of infection, and we'll be looking at two months of it instead of one, says the region's top medical officer.

That was Dr. Mustafa Hirji's prediction Tuesday during his weekly press briefing, but he isn't alone in his thinking.

He, and other medical officers of health across Ontario, wrote to the province last week asking for further restrictions to be enacted.

"I would absolutely agree with the recommendation that we should have gone to a stay-at-home order," he says. The science table shows, even

with that, we could still be in a "pretty dangerous place" with hospitalizations and ICU admissions." We should be doing at least that."

The last two lockdowns "have actually worked," he says, but having retail stores open doesn't make sense.

The medical officers didn't receive an answer from their letter, but if Ford is paying attention, it may come in the form of an announcement

this week.

Projecting to the future, if the lockdown doesn't change the trajectory of COVID, Hirji says the next steps could be looking at curfews, requiring passes to travel certain distances, and the province shutting down travel across public health units.

He could see that helping stop the spread in tourist areas, as people from the GTA and Hamilton travel to Niagara, but it would have to be a provincial initiative.

Hirji, the region's acting chief medical officer of health, says there has been a sharp increase of variant cases in the last two weeks, which was expected, but even the non-variant number is rising across the province. Hospitalizations and admission to intensive care units are also climbing. We're close to a peak similar to the second wave, he says, and will likely surpass it within the week. "I expect the third wave is going to be larger than our second wave," as a result of what he is seeing in Niagara and across the province.

If nothing changes, the Ontario Science Table is showing the number of daily cases could double by the end of April, from the 3,000 we're seeing now to closer to 6,000.

A combination of vaccinations with a stay-at-home order or similar kind of lockdown might see cases peak by mid-April and then start to come down, but they would likely start to rise again as soon as the lockdown is lifted.

"You buy yourself a little bit longer before you lift off the lid from the pressure cooker," he says, but "that's assuming the province would be in a stay-at-home order," which hadn't happened by Tuesday.

"It's quite possible that a month from now we could still see cases higher than where they are right now."

And if that's the case, a month from now the province will have to decide on extending the lockdown, he added.

He also warned that admissions to hospital and ICUs will be later to rise, as a "lagging metric compared to cases. It's quite possible we would still be at that very high level of ICU admissions even a month out," another reason why he suspects the lockdown will be more than a month. "I see ICUs being at



Dr. Mustafa Hirji (File photo)

a really critical level a month from now, and we're going to need to stay in lockdown quite a ways longer before we actually see our cases coming down."

He's also concerned about the P1 variant from Brazil, which has turned B.C. into a hot spot, coming to Ontario.

"This variant is one I'm going to pay attention to, because there is a risk that we could see it."

It's more severe in terms of illness, so would put even greater pressure on hospitals, and is also the most resistant to our vaccinations.

It could mean that his hopes for the summer may be delayed, he says. Just two weeks ago, he was feeling optimistic about the freedoms we might be able to enjoy, even by May or June, when we have a majority of the population vaccinated. Instead, he says, we might not be able to reopen as quickly as he had thought — those freedoms are looking like they may be a little further off.

"I was really hoping that by the mid to later part of the summer we could start to see things looking very similar to what they were last summer, where most things are open."

The P1 variant "could put a damper on that."

The spread of the British B117 is the one that is dominant now in Ontario, and is really at a point where it is overwhelming the ability of

Public Health to do case management and contact tracing, he says. Follow-up has already become much more cursory, which means contact tracing is going to be less effective at keeping a lid on cases, and will be contributing to the increase we're seeing, says Hirji.

And that increase, he says, is coming in the younger age group. There has already been an increase in the number of cases in those younger than 20, because of school outbreaks, he says, adding he believes it's starting at home with family members and spreading to children, who take it to school.

While some areas have taken "drastic action" by closing schools, Hirji agrees with the province that children need to be at school, and that schools should be the last thing to close. Teachers are next up to be vaccinated, likely through Niagara Health, which could dedicate some clinic dates to educators, rather than having them book through the provincial online system, he says.

The next age group, the 20 to 39-year-olds, is also increasing, and is dominating the spread of infection.

They are a driver of the community increase, "because they're working service jobs, and they're working jobs where they aren't able to stay at home."

It's no fault of their own that they are more at risk — it's a matter of their work environment, he says.

The 40 to 59 age group, the parents of the younger people who are getting sick, is also trending up.

The good news is that the number of vaccinations in the older age groups are having an effect, and we're seeing that impact with cases in those age groups considerably lower.

Boots to the ground



Michael Webber, Sue Henry, Julia Buxton-Cox, Debbie and Mike Maggean, Audrey Pellett and George Webber have all been part of an effort to get donated boots and shoes to offshore workers. Thanks to Pellett's contacts at Pepsi Co. and a safety shoe wholesaler, many workers are able to enjoy safe and sturdy footwear in the coming season. Work boots are an expensive item in addition to the workers' many pre-travel expenses and testing, and many wait until they are literally falling apart before they invest in new ones. Organizers Buxton-Cox (Buy Nothing Niagara-on-the-Lake Facebook group), Donna Brown (CWOP and Gateway Church), Jane Andres (Niagara Workers Welcome), and Rev. Antonio Illas (Migrant Farmworkers Project, Anglican diocese) have been working together to distribute the work shoes and boots to those most in need. (Photo supplied)



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V is for vaccine, says local couple

David Gilchrist
Special to The Local

For the last year of the pandemic we have been helping our son, Andrew, and his wife, by acting as caregivers for two of our grandchildren in Hamilton two days a week.

Our daughter-in-law, Jodi, is involved in COVID research at St. Joseph's Hospital. Part of her responsibilities has been testing people who are homeless, or living in group homes. So, despite all precautions, there always has been a concern of disease transmission.

Our lives, like that of so many, have been on hold, and we've been hoping for the relief that getting a vaccine would

mean. The last month has seen us patiently waiting for our age group to be announced.

With the anticipated rollout of vaccine distribution through pharmacies my wife, Claudia, a registered nurse, signed us up online several weeks ago with Simpson's Pharmacy.

Claudia was thrilled to get a phone call on Sunday afternoon from Sean Simpson asking if we would like to have an AstraZeneca vaccine the following day — Monday. Yes!! The pharmacy had received doses and wanted to begin with a slow rollout of the vaccine to streamline the process. We had no hesitation at agreeing.

My wife had done a lot of research regarding the AstraZeneca vaccine, and many of my Scottish relatives had received it, some of whom are quite elderly. So we had no concerns for those 55 years of age and older. We arrived a few minutes early at Simpson's Apothecary on King Street Monday afternoon, and announced we were there for our vaccine. The night before we had completed an online questionnaire, but were given a more detailed one to complete at the pharmacy. Although we had no concerns, I did ask one question. Where is this vaccine from? The U.S. was the answer, from AstraZeneca's North American headquarters

in Wilmington, Delaware. So, thank you President Joe Biden.

Receiving the vaccine itself was no different than receiving a flu shot. It was expertly administered by Amina Sayed, pharmacy manager at Simpson's Apothecary. After waiting for 15 minutes we thanked Amina. All done.

Our second dose is scheduled for early August, but this may change if supply levels increase (fingers crossed). For now, we will continue to exercise caution, wear a mask, wash our hands regularly and maintain other protocols. We would encourage others to accept the first vaccine offered. We want to see an end to this pandemic!



Claudia Gilchrist receives her shot at Simpson's Apothecary on King Street Monday, the first day for Niagara pharmacy vaccination sites. (David Gilchrist)

Gates calls on province to fix glitches, pay for sick days



Wayne Gates, MPP
Niagara Falls riding
Special to The Local

The news of the newest round of lockdowns has exasperated us all. Despite Premier Doug Ford's misplaced hopes that the vaccination process would outpace rising infections, we have returned to an untenable cycle of infection and lockdown. On April 1, we had more residents of Ontario in hospitals on ventilators than at any time before in this pandemic — the vaccine rollout has not arrived quickly enough, and there's immediate steps we must take today to stop the health and economic damage of this third wave.

Last week many of you saw the comments I raised with the Premier regarding my concern for the vaccine rollout in Niagara. Any time my office is told of an issue — and there are many — I must remember that this is a large, unprecedented logistical challenge. We have no choice but to accept that a program this large will have bumps in the road that are not the fault of anyone in the government or the bureaucracy. The issues I raised last week were unforced errors that should've been addressed.

The largest issue was the dozens of residents who received calls from the Ministry of Health mere hours before their appointments, and were told those appointments were cancelled, sometimes rescheduled in a different city. According to the Ford government, this occurred because of a glitch in the system. Normally, this may be understandable, except for the fact that this glitch had been raised with the government 11 days before the system went live. Especially with the 75-plus age group, many of these seniors lacked access to transportation beyond the appointments in

their communities. My office began to receive calls from panicked seniors who were going as far as to try to flag rides with strangers to the new assigned vaccination centres across the region.

While some issues with the system are to be expected, issues flagged a full 11 days in advance cannot go unaddressed. Every senior who struggles with the system to get an appointment, or who is rescheduled or cancelled, is a senior who continues to go without these life-saving vaccines. In some cases these seniors are so frustrated they don't book another appointment. Defeating this virus means breaking lines of transmission, and that means vaccinations. Unforced errors like this cannot be allowed.

Another policy that sits before the legislature that must be immediately voted on is Bill 239, which will provide paid sick days for Ontario workers. The evidence could not be clearer, the shutdown will not work if those most likely to contract COVID-19 are still working. In our province, a huge portion of community transmission are workers in warehouse and manufacturing settings. In the second wave, some 65 per cent of Toronto's workers were deemed essential, over 80 per cent in these settings that were ground zero for community spread. The problem we have is that we cannot expect workers to choose between feeding their families or going to work with symptoms, and they shouldn't have to. Workers must be able to stay home and stay away from others if they are sick. The list of leaders and experts supporting these necessary measures is long, but includes Ontario Medical Association, Alliance for Healthier Communities, Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario, Ontario College of Family Physicians, Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario, Nurse Practitioner Led Clinics Association, and the

Ontario Community Support Association, among dozens of city mayors and councils. Supports can and must be extended to businesses to offset any concern about costing of the programs. Simply put, Ford cannot say we're listening to doctors and then ignore one of their loudest comments — paid sick days will help stop this virus in its tracks.

The other policy that concerns me greatly is the continued resistance to funding lower class sizes. Just looking at the daily numbers in our province, it is clear that school outbreaks are spreading out of control. Students get sick and then go home and get their parents and grandparents sick. Some of those sick will end up in the hospital, and some in the ICUs. We can stop this form of transmission. If we ensure our essential workers, teachers included, are vaccinated, and our classrooms are manageable in size, we can get through the next two or three months, which will be critical until our vaccination process catches up.

I also have two bills before the legislature that are critical to ensure our community can rebuild once we beat this

virus. The first is a travel tax credit for families, a credit that will give residents up to \$1000 of their travel expenses back if they travel in our province.

Forty thousand of our neighbours in Niagara are out of work because of the downturn in tourism, and we cannot ignore their reality and the financial hardship they have gone through. Once it is safe to travel — and only when it is safe — we must supercharge our tourism industry, and get those families back to work. My bill provides residents of

this province with a generous tax credit to travel and explore our great province.


The second bill is a much-needed tax change for our local Niagara wineries. Providing as many jobs in the town as they do, they cannot be held back by taxes that do not apply to international wines. Again, they have taken a massive hit from this pandemic, and a simple tax code fix can help them.

No one should be travelling to our region until this crisis is over, but these bills can

be passed to put the frameworks in place to support these industries as soon as our vaccination program successfully puts an end to COVID as we see it today.

These are all policies before the legislature today. Premier Ford could call a vote and fix all of these issues in an afternoon. As we go into yet another lockdown, I am hoping he will see these are not lofty ideas, but well thought-out policies with community support. Policies which are desperately needed today.

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Transplant recipient concerned about vaccination rollout

Penny Coles
The Local

Laura Phillips has been watching as the age group drops for vaccinations, and wondering when it will be her turn.

The 57-year-old Virgil woman is an organ transplant recipient. Her new kidney gave her life about five years ago, leaving her with a severely immunocompromised system that has a hard time fighting off infections and diseases.

Contracting COVID-19 could be fatal for those who have had organ transplants, she says, yet recipients are not high on the priority list for vaccinations.

She received her new kidney in Hamilton, and her specialist there is willing to provide a letter affirming she is a transplant recipient, which seems to work in other areas, but not Niagara.

"There doesn't seem to be a process for us, other than 'wait for it'."

She is isolating as much as possible, double-masking when outside, unless there is nobody around, and is terrified of what the disease might do to her. Her healthy husband, who is older than her, is likely to get his shot before her, she adds.

Although her age now

qualifies her to go to a pharmacy for the AstraZeneca vaccine, her doctor has told her not to take it.

Two other local transplant recipients spoke to The Local about getting their shots, and urged Phillips to keep trying all possible avenues.

Maria Bau-Coote, about to turn 52, is a familiar name to many after serving two terms as a town councillor, one of them as deputy lord mayor. She is celebrating 21 years as a kidney recipient.

Her career has been spent in health care, including working for the Niagara Health system as a hospital administrator assistant, and executive director for the NOTL Family Health Team, before it amalgamated with the Niagara North team.

She is now executive director of the Good Shepherd Centres hospice, offering palliative care to the marginalized, those with mental health and addiction problems, and the homeless, she says.

"It's a very humbling experience," and a job she loves, but one she had to do from home until, as a health care professional, she was vaccinated.

If it weren't for her job, she'd still be waiting, she says.

"I don't want to be critical of public health," she adds,

lauding the way they have handled the difficult feat of mass vaccinations, "but there has never been a mention of individuals with immunocompromised systems. I think that should be looked at, especially for those who are still working. But there is no thought of those in this situation."

As it is, the vaccination is considered much less effective for those whose immune systems are already compromised, she says.

Although it's been more than 20 years since she received her kidney, her immune system is still compromised, and if anything, there are further complications to be expected as recipients age.

"We should all be seeing it as a priority," she says. "Our systems are not the same. Contracting COVID could lead to death. Anyone with a compromised immune system doesn't have a fighting chance. I'm very lucky that because of where I work. I was able to receive the vaccine."

Her husband isn't at the age where he qualifies, and he has to be very cautious, she says, because she is still vulnerable, even vaccinated.

The province has recognized that by reducing the waiting time for transplant recipients' second doses, to

just the three weeks as determined to be optimum.

But for Phillips, that's not helpful when she hasn't had her first dose.

Another local transplant recipient, Diane Peirce, was able to be vaccinated at the Toronto hospital where she received her living liver organ transplant almost a year ago.

Her coordinator with the transplant team arranged for both her and her husband Mike to be vaccinated last week, she said.

"When I found Niagara was so behind, I contacted them and was told I could book an appointment through the University Health Network."

She encourages Phillips to try every possible avenue to get her vaccination.

"She is so much more at risk than a healthy 70 year old. I don't understand who is making these choices."

Peirce is also aware that the vaccination is much less effective for her, and she remains very cautious. The number of daily cases in Ontario, and the fear of the variants, makes it scary to go anywhere, she says, although she's played golf a few times, enjoying getting some exercise outside.

"After all I've been through, everything I've done to improve my health, I'm not

going to take any chances."

Phillips says none of the other transplant recipients she knows have had any luck getting vaccinated. Hamilton doesn't have any special opportunities for them.

"It's been a rough year. I'm double-masking, keeping my distance, and it's even more stressful in the last month because of the variants and

how easily they can be transmitted."

Her dad, who is 83 and healthy, has been vaccinated, "and he says he would have gladly given it to me."

Phillips says she will watch the news, and wait for the age groups to get to her, while continuing to pursue any possibility she can to be vaccinated.



Diane Peirce, a transplant recipient who has been vaccinated, suggests others with compromised immune systems should advocate for their turn. (Photo supplied)

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Town asking for feedback on park restrictions

Penny Coles
The Local

When the town passed a parks bylaw, restricting or banning many activities, councillors discussed the need for public input. In order to get the bylaw passed for the coming warm weather, councillors agreed, on the advice of director of operations Sheldon Randall, that the summer could be considered a trial period, before deciding whether changes to the bylaw are required. The bylaw was passed in March to regulate the use of municipal parks and green spaces, to establish rules for the shared public use and enjoyment of such spaces, and to aid in the protection of the natural environment, a recent town news release says. “Niagara-on-the-Lake has many wonderful parks and green spaces that res-

idents and visitors enjoy year-round,” says Lord Mayor Disero. “While our parks are intended for the use and enjoyment of the public, it is important that we regulate various activities to ensure our shared spaces are kept safe, clean, and welcoming for everyone.” The bylaw sets hours of operation for each park, and prohibits activities such as barbecuing, lighting, building or stoking campfires or bonfires, setting off fireworks, consuming alcohol, erecting tents, amplifying sound, allowing pets off-leash, using motorized vehicles and parking (except in designated parking areas), damaging property, using a metal detector, feeding wildlife, commercial activities, and more. Some of the previously listed activities are permissible by way of a permit, which can also allow

for large gatherings. Temporary signs are being posted in some parks, with permanent signage going up in all town parks and green spaces prior to the summer season. Members of the “municipal park patrol team” will be rotating throughout parks on weekends to educate and assist with compliance, the town’s news release says. Town bylaw officers will respond to complaints made throughout the week, as required. The public is now being asked to provide feedback on the bylaw throughout the spring and summer. A public survey will be published at the end of the summer to solicit additional feedback, as well as a summary of all comments received. To comment on the bylaw, visit jointheconversationnotl.org/parks-by-law.

Best advice is take first vaccination available

Continued from page 1

to attend a Public Health clinic should take those appointments, which will open up more spots for others at pharmacies. AstraZeneca is not available to those 55 and under, and everyone has to make the best decision for themselves, he says, adding, “the best advice is to get the first vaccine available to you.” He has 10 trained staff able to administer the doses, and says the ability to get shots in arms is not the limiting factor — it’s the time-consuming job of filling out the necessary documentation to report to the province that will be the challenge. Niagara residents 70 or older in 2021 (born in 1951 or earlier) can book an appointment online at Ontario.ca/bookvaccine or by calling 1-888-999-6488. Residents can book an appointment at any clinic across Niagara. For those 55 or older, Ontario.ca/bookvaccine will direct residents to the pharmacies nearest them.

Niagara pharmacies offering vaccinations:

Niagara-On-The-Lake
Simpson’s Apothecary -
223 King Street

Virgil
Simpson’s Pharmacy -
1882 Niagara Stone Road

Niagara Falls
Shoppers Drug Mart -
3701 Portage Road, Unit 1

Costco Pharmacy -
7500 Pin Oak Drive

WalMart Pharmacy -
7481 Oakwood Drive

Shoppers Drug Mart -
5125 Montrose Road

Boggio and MacKinnon
Pharmacy -
6680 Drummond Road

Rexall -
6485 Lundy’s Lane

Welland
Shoppers Drug Mart -
Seaway Mall (H2-800
Niagara Street North)

Shoppers Drug Mart -
595 South Pelham Road

Loblaw Pharmacy -
821 Niagara Street North

Rexall - 399 King Street

St. Catharines
Shoppers Drug Mart -
1-387 Scott Street

WalMart Pharmacy -
420 Vansickle Road

Loblaw Pharmacy -
221 Glendale Ave.

Fort Erie
Rexall -
310-C Garrison Road

Crescent Park Pharmacy -
5-1264 Garrison Road

Grimsby
Shoppers Drug Mart -
43 St. Andrews Ave., Unit 1

Port Colborne
Boggio Pharmacy Ltd -
200 Catharines St.

Ridgeway
Boggio & Edwards
Ridgeway IDA -
307 Ridge Road N

Beamsville
Rexall -
4486 Ontario Street

Smithville
RX Drug Mart -
144 Griffin Street

**Recently added Niagara
Public Health clinics:**
April 11 to 12
Niagara Falls: MacBain
Community Centre

April 13 to 14
Port Colborne:
Vale Health and
Wellness Centre

April 15 to 16
Grimsby:
Niagara West YMCA

April 17 to 18
Welland:
Niagara Centre YMCA

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice of Study Commencement and Public Information Centre #1

2021 Water and Wastewater Master Servicing Plan Update

Niagara is expected to gain 214,000 new residents and 81,000 new jobs by 2051. We need to plan now to make sure we have the water and wastewater infrastructure we need to support this growth, including water/wastewater pipes, pumping stations and water/wastewater treatment plants. The update will be coordinated with other Regional Plans including:

- Development Charges Background Study and By-law
- Transportation Master Plan Refresh
- Regional Official Plan - 2051 Population and Employment Forecasts

In 2016, Niagara Region completed a Water and Wastewater Master Servicing Plan that charted infrastructure needs to the year 2041, while maintaining levels of service. This 2021 update to the plan will incorporate recent knowledge and current priorities to ensure we can accommodate further growth expected by 2051 and beyond, as per the amended *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*.

The study follows the master planning process as established by the Municipal Engineer’s Association Class Environmental Assessment process for Master Plans, which is an approved Ontario Environmental Assessment process. The Master Servicing Plan Update will satisfy phases 1 and 2 of the Class Environmental Assessment process including developing and evaluating alternative servicing strategies for the Region’s systems and facilities. Public and stakeholder input will be sought throughout the process and a Master Servicing Plan Update Report will be prepared and filed for public review.

Public feedback is important. Information about the project will be available on Niagara Region’s website as part of Public Information Center No. 1. You can learn about how this project will contribute to Niagara’s overall growth plan, key servicing issues being considered and how you can have your voice heard.

A recorded video and information regarding this project will be made available for Public Information Centre No. 1 on the project website beginning **Wednesday, April 21, 2021**. This will be followed with a two-week period to submit Public Information Centre No. 1 related comments to the Project Team.

Access the project website at
niagararegion.ca/projects/www-master-servicing-plan

If you have any questions, comments, or wish to be added to the study mailing list, please contact:

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Personal information collected or submitted in writing at public meetings will be collected, used and disclosed by members of Regional Council and Regional staff in accordance with the **Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)**. The written submissions including names, contact information and reports of the public meeting will be made available. Questions should be referred to the Privacy Office at 905-980-6000 ext. 3779 or **FOI@niagararegion.ca**.

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EDITORIAL

It's time to look at who is most at risk

While the province has made some mistakes, and glitches have occurred, the vaccination process is proceeding.

For those who are eligible and have either been vaccinated or have an appointment, there is a feeling of euphoria.

For others, frustration.

Disappointment. Even anger.

Each province has had its list of priorities for vaccinations, and residents of each province have ideas of how they would choose to prioritize, if they were in charge.

One comment heard frequently in Ontario has been that if kids are going to school, teachers should

be vaccinated. It seems the province is finally recognizing that, and will begin offering the choice to educators. That's so logical it's surprising it's taken so long to get there, but at least it's happening.

The issue of those at higher risk, because of illness that has compromised

their immune systems, may be a small category, but also seems obvious. These people are at great risk if they get COVID, and not all can just sit at home in isolation. Let's move them up on the list.

Essential workers, often the grocery store or pharmacy clerk, or at larger work places such as factories, should also be priorities, not only for themselves, but for all those in the community who will be infected as part of a workplace outbreak. It sounds like the province is not only lowering the age group to 65 but also looking at those circumstances, although at press time, we didn't have a lot of details as to when or how that would happen.

We know everyone who wants to be vaccinated will be, and it's looking like

sooner rather than later.

But it seems for it to do the most good, not just to the individual but for the greater good of the community, there are risk factors that are more important than age.

We all want to reduce our chances of becoming seriously ill or dying, that goes without saying. Most of the elderly, most at risk for that, have been vaccinated, a decision that has never been questioned. Now let's have a look at those who have to go to work, who come into contact with a large number of people, and by working in risky situations, are more likely to pass it on in the community. They are there to serve the rest of us, in one way or another — and they have become the people who are being hospitalized

and admitted to ICUs, not because of their bad choices or dangerous social behaviour, but because they depend on their pay cheque to pay their bills and support their family.

Last January, the goal across the country was to get needles into arms as quickly as possible.

It still is, but now, if this is a race against time, as new provincial cases, variants, hospitalizations and admissions to ICUs rise at an increasingly alarming rate, maybe it's time to take a step back and look at how to be smarter as well as faster. Winning a race is always about more than speed, or the turtle would never have beaten the hare.

Penny Coles
The Local



View from the couch

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

Audrey Hepburn had a remarkable life. To her many admirers her career as actress, fashion icon and humanitarian proved she had achieved the ultimate.

This new documentary, *Audrey* (Netflix, 2020), allows a more intimate look, showing us not only the glamorous aspects, but also the many difficulties and sadnesses in the life of this amazing woman. She died at age 64 in 1993.

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.



Audrey Hepburn in a scene from *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.



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

Thursday, April 8: With Moon in Pisces making a friendly connection to Uranus in Taurus, this Thursday can bring a nice financial surprise — or some good news health-wise. Or best of all — both! Today would be the 129th birthday of Hollywood's first superstar. Mary Pickford was born in Toronto on April 8, 1892. I met her when I was a film student at York University five years before she passed. She was soft-spoken, and still radiant and magnetic.

Friday, April 9: A dream holds the insight to a bet-

ter understanding on an old wound, and while that might be painful at first, it quickly changes into something sweet that sets you free. Be on your toes this afternoon, as there is a risk of an accident which hurts, most likely in a lower extremity like a foot or toe.

It was April 9, 1869, that Canada became the huge land mass that we know it to be today. That's because 152 years ago today, the Hudson's Bay Company gave all their lands to the new (two-year-old) government of Canada.

Sunday, April 11: At 10:30 p.m., it's the New Moon at 22 degrees of Aries. Close by are Mercury and Venus, making this a day when new starts are possible, and a clever and generous day shot with new ideas, and boldly-improved relationships. Make

a list of things you want. Today's the day to make big steps toward making them come true. The New Moon is very Aries, featuring five planets in the first sign on the zodiac. The new Moon is sextile Mars in Gemini, sextile Saturn in Aquarius and square Pluto in Capricorn. All the planets involved in this lunation have a "let's do it" vibe. And of course, when we have a new Moon in Aries, we want to do Aries stuff: pioneer, explore, take a stand and get involved in projects that define the truth of who we are. Back in 1936, the Toronto Maple Leafs were in the Stanley Cup finals against the Detroit Red Wings. On April 11, the Red Wings won game three of a best of four, by a score of 3-2.

That's AonA for now. Until next time — shine on.



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.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake
Local
The Trusted Voice of Our Community

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COMMENT

Local LETTERS

Local LETTERS

Council urged to reconsider heavy-handed park restrictions

Dear Editor:
I remember, as the youngest son of an immigrant family, having picnics in Niagara-on-the-Lake parks and along the beautiful Niagara Parkway. My brothers and I would play catch with a baseball or toss around a football or a frisbee. When I became a teenager, I enjoyed the parks with friends and used a hibachi or the park bbq's to whip up some burgers or sausages. As an adult, with a young family, I introduced my children to the beautiful Niagara River landscape and would end the day with an ice cream cone from one of the many stores in NOTL's Old Town. My parents and other family members loved bringing us to this area for picnics and fellowship on weekends. My dad and his friends would play dominoes on a picnic table while Mom and the ladies would present us with delicious prepared side dishes and desserts to be enjoyed with food cooked over the barbecue. I can't tell you how grateful I was to live in a country with such beautiful vistas and encouraged its visitors and guests to take it all in.

Having a barbecue and a few drinks throughout the day was never looked at as being intrusive. I am not condoning drunkenness or rowdy and reckless behaviour. I'm sure that incidents such as these are mitigated by the public complaints to bylaw enforcement and are handled expeditiously. Are complaints of excessive smoke and a backlash against physical activity

overtaxing the bylaw enforcement system already in place? Erecting a small tent or shelter throughout the day to shade young children or older adults from extreme heat or rainfall should not be seen as bylaw infraction.

As a retiree, I've made NOTL my home and have always thought of this area as being inclusive and inviting. I walk throughout NOTL and along its majestic trails on a daily basis and have not experienced any of the incidents that this bylaw seeks to prevent. In the absence of extremely dry conditions, small barbecue fires are not a problem.

I'm sure that our local fire prevention department can tell you that the incidence of out-of-control, unattended barbecue fires doesn't justify such punishing actions.

Thus, my surprise reading that our lord mayor and council had passed a draconian bylaw prohibiting activities that were a staple of enjoying a day out along the Niagara Parkway, in my earlier years. If there was a public outcry against such activities, I'm sure that most locals would have been aware of it.

Has the welcome mat been pulled out from under us? Our lord mayor and council must realize, even in these times, that people need to get out into our great outdoors and enjoy the park spaces that are available to us. Being hassled by bylaws designed to keep visitors and locals from enjoying a day out with their families cannot be what NOTL is all about. Many families do not have

the money to enjoy our stellar restaurant district but can still enjoy a day out in the park with their loved ones and all of the other attractions that this area has to offer.

To be frank, it's not polite to invite visitors and guests to the area only to be told to refrain from enjoying yourself in the parks but make sure that you have enough money to spend in NOTL's Old Town and at many of NOTL's wineries. It smacks of being told to "stay off my lawn," but support the local businesses.

There are bylaw enforcement officers patrolling throughout Niagara's parks that should be able to monitor and fine drunk and rowdy behaviour when it occurs, along with aid from local law enforcement. If more bylaw officers are needed then it's incumbent on council to find creative ways to hire more of them. But to enact offensive bylaws that paint all of the picnicking visitors and guests with the same brush as a few rowdy visitors is not fair and robs us all of the wonderful experience that is NOTL.

I urge council to amend or reconsider the enactment of this bylaw and allow visitors, guests and locals to fully enjoy what this historic and 'inclusive' area has to offer. I wonder if NOTL's third "friendliest place in Canada" ranking will be re-examined after the upcoming tourist season?

Art Thomas
NOTL

Please don't outlaw barbecues in town parks

I want to raise my disappointment over the new bylaw of no barbecues or alcohol in town parks.

Welcome, tourists. However, if you are visiting our town, be aware you cannot enjoy family gatherings in our parks by having a barbecue or a glass of wine or beer, or else you will be charged by our bylaw officers.

This is the most absurd

government-controlled bylaw that anyone could think of.

I have mentioned this to friends and family and all laughed, and couldn't believe such a bylaw would be enacted.

I'm sorry, but this is government overreach at its finest, and surely will tick off not only town residents but tourists who like to visit Niaga-

ra-on-the-Lake with their family and friends, and enjoy a casual barbecue and maybe have a drink.

You need to rethink your priorities, and make this a welcoming town where people can enjoy a barbecue if they wish in our parks.

A disappointed resident of Niagara-on-the-Lake,

Kirby Davis

Sunshine attracts visitors



The weekend saw some busy days on Queen Street, and more visitors are anticipated as the weather warms up. (David Gilchrist)



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Dog walkers fear loss of off-leash privilege

Penny Coles
The Local

Local dog walkers are hoping for some new signage on the Commons, to alleviate some of the problems resulting from the explosion in popularity of the paths for those out for a stroll, a run or a bike ride.

Julie Clark, a professional dog trainer, has been walking Gemma, her German shepherd/border collie cross, daily on the gravel path of the Commons for several years.

She's out there 365 days a year, and like many other locals, takes advantage of what has been an informal agreement with Parks Canada, which owns the property, that allows dogs off-leash in the area around the gravel path. That arrangement is thought to go back 25 years or more.

It's not a leash-free park, says Clark, where dog owners stand around

and chat while their dogs interact and run free. It's an opportunity for people to walk across the Commons, their dogs following along, off-leash. There is a big difference in the way dogs behave in those two situations, she says.

"We don't stand around, letting our dogs interact. When people are talking, they're not paying attention. Their dogs are being ignored."

Recently, with the number of people using the paths on the Commons "skyrocketing," she says, there have been some issues, and some people complaining.

There have been a few occasions of dogs jumping on people, or running into kids, she says, leading to the complaints.

"It's a temporary thing, because of the increasing population on the path. It will go back to normal after the pandemic," Clark

says. "To me, it's a privilege to have this space. I can't think of another town that has this. The locals love it, and the dogs love it. It's so beautiful. I'd be really upset if Parks Canada took it away because of a few bad apples, people who don't understand it's not a dog park."

Dog walkers are afraid the complaints are reaching the ears of Parks Canada staff, and the off-leash privilege might be revoked.

There is one sign at one end of the gravel path that shows a dog in a green circle, indicating dogs are allowed, but doesn't specify off-leash, says Lindsay Gazzard, another dog-walker hoping Parks Canada will continue to allow the practice for the many locals who use it.

There is another paved path across the Commons, and she would like to see the paved trail signed for

pedestrians and cyclists, and the gravel path for dog-walkers.

Clark says that while Gemma is trained and respectful around walkers, joggers, cyclists, kids and anyone else using the path, they are not always respectful of the dogs and dog-walkers. Many of the users of the path, especially on weekends, are from out of town, some of them bringing their dogs and treating the area like a leash-free park, creating issues with both local dog-walkers who want to keep moving, and others without dogs, who she too believes would be better off sticking to the paved path.

In a letter to Parks Canada, she says, "I would like you to consider the locals who are out there 365 days a year in all weather, before you rescind the off-leash privileges. Please consider putting up better signage . . . at both ends of the gravel dog path so that non-dog walkers know to stay off the path and stick to the paved paths. This would make things clearer for all."

A poster beside the sign that says dogs are permitted asks residents to email Parks Canada and tell them why they want the area to remain for off-leash dogs, "or they may shut it down."

"What we need is really good signage at both ends of the trail," Clark says, "a sign with a few rules, so that people with dogs use the gravel path, and everyone else uses the paved path."

Clark received a reply to her letter from Parks Canada, saying "we've received dozens of messages similar to yours in the last week," and her email would be forwarded to the management team at Parks Canada responsible for the site.

A question from The Local to Parks Canada could not be answered by press time.



A Parks Canada sign shows a dog without a leash in a green circle, but the off-leash arrangement is thought to be an informal, "hand-shake" agreement.



Dog owner and professional trainer Julie Clark asks Parks Canada to allow time for busy Commons path to get back to normal. (Photos supplied)



Dog walkers are being asked to tell Parks Canada why the off-leash area is so important to them.

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Chilly day for an outdoor bake sale

Grace United Church on Victoria Street held an outdoor sale of baked goods and jam Saturday, a chilly day but a success nonetheless. Peggy Larder picked up Easter baked goods from Donna Seymour and Esther Giesbrecht at the church. (David Gilchrist)

Jo Zambito to become Niagara Falls fire chief

Penny Coles
The Local

Virgil resident Jo Zambito wasn't one of those kids who grew up wanting to become a firefighter.

His childhood was spent on the family farm on Hunter Road, and farming has always been in his blood, he said, but he thought his passion was in architecture.

However, once he became a volunteer firefighter in Niagara-on-the-Lake, that became his passion, and he began working his way up through the department, knowing he aspired to one day become fire chief.

Last week, when his promotion to Niagara Falls fire chief was announced, his days became a little crazy, he says.

"I've heard from so many people, so many friends. People I went to school with, worked with, people in the fire service past and present. It's been a very humbling experience, and a good kind of crazy.

It's been really nice hearing from people I haven't heard from for many years."

He takes on the title of chief June 30, when the current chief is set to retire.

The Niagara Falls Fire Department has 146 full-time personnel, and a volunteer complement of 104.

When Zambito heard the position would be posted, it took him some time to prepare mentally for the possibility of being chief. Once he decided he was ready, he had to work through the process, with virtual interviews, and it was nerve-racking, he says, "but it was all worth it."

He is also an alternate fire co-ordinator for Niagara Region, an appointment by the Office of Fire Marshal and Emergency Management.

Before becoming a volunteer firefighter for the Virgil station, Zambito worked for the Town of NOTL as a building inspector and municipal enforcement officer.

He remembers the day he went outside to put some gas in one of the town vehicles, and saw Bruce Little, then the NOTL fire chief, looking very smart in his formal dress uniform, filling the tank of his vehicle. Zambito offered to help, not wanting Little to get his uniform dirty. When he was finished, Little suggested he consider becoming a volunteer firefighter.

In those days, it was a simpler process — he showed up at the Virgil fire station on a Monday night, and the training began, leading to attending fire college.

"That was the start of my career," says Zambito, who would run across the street from the town hall to the fire station when a call came in.

He also recalls his involvement in community events as one of the best parts of being a volunteer firefighter. "It's a side of fire service you don't think about when you join, but

it's a huge part of it. And it's something the community really appreciates."

His first full-time job in the NOTL firefighting service was in 2005, with a complement of 110 firefighters, when he moved from his volunteer position as captain to deputy fire chief.

It was 11 years later that he took the job of deputy chief of operations with the Niagara Falls Fire Department, which has some similarities to the NOTL fire department he left behind.

Some of the stations are staffed with volunteers, who on occasion work side-by-side with the professional firefighters in the department, he says. "They work well together, and have a great relationship."

And while it may not have been his dream job as a child, looking back, Zambito, 42, says, "I can't think of a better profession. I love what I do, and I can't imagine doing anything else."

Except, maybe, working

on the family peach farm in his spare time, to ensure that lifestyle and work ethic is passed on to his kids.

"Farming taught me a lot. I want that for my kids. I want them to learn how to work."



Jo Zambito (Photo supplied)



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Rescued dogs almost ready for adoption

Penny Coles
The Local

Marlene Sibbald was one of many Niagara-on-the-Lake residents who saw the photos of a large number of dogs rescued from a Niagara Falls property, and wanted to help.

A dog lover who has organized fundraising dog shows in NOTL, she signed and shared a petition about the situation, made a donation toward caring for the dogs, and reached out to John Greer, executive director of the Niagara SPCA, to learn more about the situation, and what else could be done to help.

She was relieved to hear that while the dogs were being kept under deplorable circumstances, they were in good medical condition, and will soon be ready for adoption.

Greer says after several visits to the property, beginning March 20, 27 dogs, all husky/shepherd mixes, were rescued. Three or four were underweight, he said, but “not malnourished in any way.”

One dog had a cataract over one eye that had been treated by a vet “years ago,” but the rest were all in good shape, and after being gently cleaned up, were dewormed and vaccinated, with the socialization process leading to adoption already underway.

The situation was brought to the attention of the SPCA when a loose dog was spotted on Montrose Road.

On arrival, SPCA staff found almost two dozen dogs in various cages outside.

What Greer found when he arrived was a situation that could not have been seen from the road, or by neighbours, he said.

Going back about 20 years, the property had been the site of a licensed kennel, but that was no longer the case, and the cages and outbuildings were in rough shape, dilapidated, with roofs caving in.

“This was not a puppy mill,” he said. “None of the dogs were being sold.”

Rather, it was a case of a situation that got out of hand, and could have continued for years, becoming much worse, if that one dog had not been running loose on a busy main road.

Greer calls it a case of mental illness, not ill intent. The man who was caring for the dogs had kept them to honour the memory of his mother, who had owned the kennel on the property. His wife had asked him over time to get rid of the dogs, but he couldn’t part with them.

He surrendered them willingly to the SPCA, once he was assured they wouldn’t be euthanized.

“He was actually quite thankful,” says Greer.

“He was compliant. He just wanted the animals to be looked after. He had definitely bonded with them — they all had names. He was not malicious



in his intent at all. He didn’t see anything wrong with what he was doing.”

He helped capture some of the more skittish animals, and it was obvious, says Greer, that there was a bond between him and his dogs. He and his wife were taken to hospital by a crisis team to have their health assessed.

“We’ve taken some criticism for not laying charges,” Greer said, aware of the comments on social media. While the SPCA rescues animals, it’s the responsibility of the five inspectors working for the province under the Provincial Animal Services Welfare Act, assigned to the Niagara Region to investigate and make a decision regarding charges, he explained.

“I was an inspector for 17 years,” said Greer, “so I know what I’m looking for, and I’ve seen much worse. If there were charges laid, it would be because of the living conditions, not the condition of the animals.”

Greer and other SPCA staff returned several times to the large property to rescue dogs that were running loose, setting humane traps for them, and also for some cats on the property.

Animal rights protestors who had arrived at the site when they heard what had been discovered said they had seen several puppies, and bones of many dogs, but Greer said he asked them to walk the property with him, and they could find only one puppy, and the bones of one cat.

After 14 days in quarantine and some time with volunteers for socializing, the dogs will be put up for adoption. Watch the Niagara SPCA Facebook page if

you’re interested in offering one of these dogs, ranging in age up to about four or five years old, a home.

“There’s lots of life left in them, and they can all make good pets once they’re socialized. They’re still stressed, and a little afraid, but they’re not aggressive.”

As for the protestors and their petition calling for justice, Greer said, “we should keep in mind the human component, the need for compassion for humans, now more so than ever. We want to help the animals, but let’s also think about the people. This was a positive outcome.”

While it’s important to report situations of animals in distress, people can go too far, going onto private property, hindering the rescue and creating a dangerous situation for the officers on the scene, he said. During the Montrose Road rescue, they also made exaggerated claims that tied up SPCA officers, police cars and fire trucks.

Following the rescue, Greer said, the SPCA received an outpouring of support, with donations of blankets, food, toys and wipes, which were used to clean the nervous dogs, rather than bathing them.

“The outreach from the community has been overwhelming.”

Sibbald says she’s happy to hear the dogs are in good condition, and hopes people will “step up” when they’re ready for a good home.

Donations for the care of animals at the Niagara SPCA are always welcome, and can be made online at www.niagaraspca.org.

SCHOOLS

NIAGARA NURSERY SCHOOL

Kids have fun preparing for Easter

Local Staff

Niagara Nursery School children were making sure they were ready for Easter with some fun Easter crafts, while staff and volunteers put together take-home packages for local kids to help celebrate the holiday.

The popular annual Bunny Trail was cancelled last year, but returned this

Easter with a twist — packages packed with crafts, some sweet treats, and lots of other goodies from community sponsors — for youngsters, which were picked up in a safe drive-through Saturday.

The purchase of Bunny Trail packages will support the ongoing expansion of the Niagara Nursery School and Child Care Centre.



Mckenna Tissen and Walker Meleskie work together on their bunnies.



Mckenna Tissen paints Easter eggs at Niagara Nursery School. (Photos supplied)



Dawson Paget proudly displays his Easter bunny to take home for the weekend.



Milo Hipwell gets some help painting his Easter egg.



Merritt Hawley concentrates on painting eggs to take home for Easter.



Candice Penny, Nicole Tissen, Amanda Mirabella, Olivia Friesen and Karen Den Besten are ready for people to pick up their Bunny Trail packages.



Amanda Mirabella hands out one of 400 bags of goodies to Patti Moore, with Brady, and Bruce Read.

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REAL ESTATE WILLS BUSINESS

SCHOOLS

ST. MICHAEL CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Grade 6 students meet cast of Detention Adventure

Local Staff

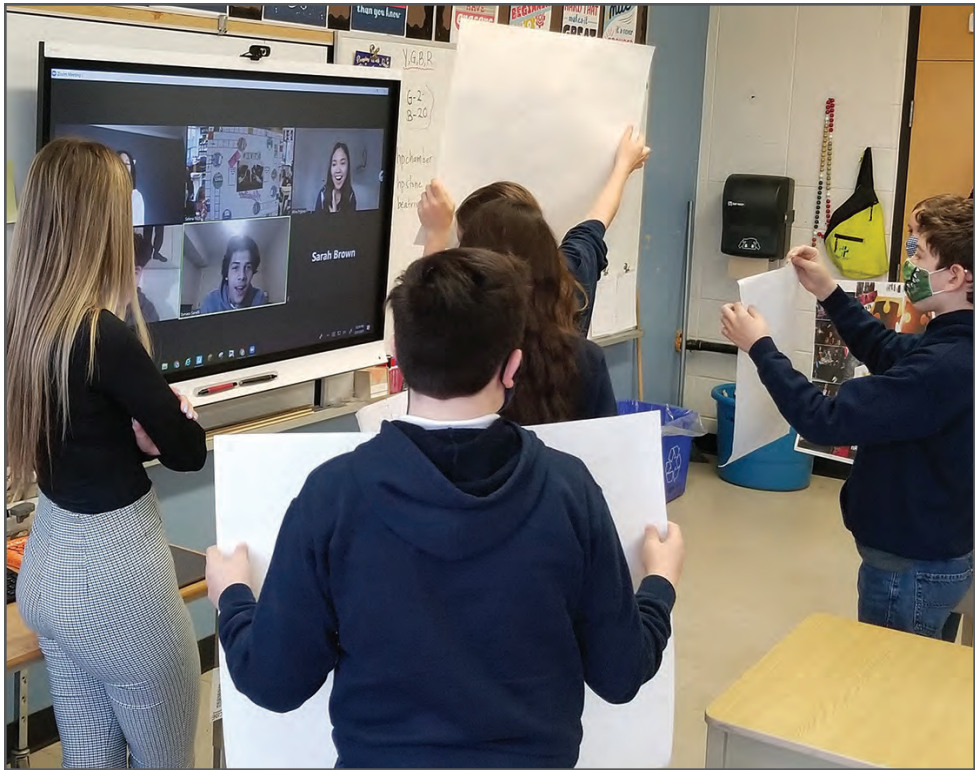
Last week, the Grade 6 Class at St. Michael Catholic School enjoyed an extra-special virtual meet and greet with the cast of the CBC Gem show Detention Adventure.

Students of teachers Kristin Lingerfelt and Selena Ricci's classes were treat-

ed to a Zoom call with the four main actors from the show — Jack Fulton (Hulk), Simone Miller (Raign), Alina Prijono (Joy) and Tomasso Sanelli (Brett).

The 'interview' style session lasted about 30 minutes and, thanks to Miss Ricci's outstanding efforts, students were able to ask questions and engage with the teen actors.

Grade 6 students had watched the show as part of a media literacy unit they recently completed. They were granted the opportunity to share final projects such as collages, novel covers and board games with the four cast members. It was a one-of-a-kind experience for the boys and girls in Grade 6, one they are sure to treasure for a lifetime.



Grade 6 students take part in an interactive Zoom meeting with four of their favourite TV stars. (Photos supplied)



Grade 6 students Christian Tomic and Maya Hubbard, along with Theodora Zhilinsky, Simon Regier, Gavin Contini, Denaesia Osborne and Katherine Vanderkaay from the Grade 7/8 class, learn about catapults in their STREAM challenge.



Superheroes, Matthew Ramirez, Shakeem Lynch and Elliott Epp take part in a student-organized, fun learning event. During Faux March Break, St. Michael student council members planned and delivered a Superhero STREAM (science, technology, religion, engineering, art and mathematics) event, entirely organized and executed by students, who showed great leadership and organizational ability, says principal Janice Barretto Mendonca. She simply explained the goal of the assignment, and the students took it from there.



POG PANDEMIC RAP

Before this everything was really nice
Eating some chicken and a plate of rice
Everything was going smooth and cool
Hanging with my friends at the school

Then when I heard everything was changing
It's like my mind was suffocating
I really was wondering what I would do
And now we have to wait out this terrible flu

Then came online school which was crazy
And all my old memories were getting hazy
I heard this would soon be done with
But I knew that was all just a myth

I hoped there would be a drastic change
But finally it was starting to not be all that strange
I knew that Jesus had a plan
And would grant us with it soon 'cause He's the man

And maybe soon, well I'm just guessing
He might bring us all a great blessing
By making this terrible nightmare over
And man that would be quite the turnover

Alex Amodeo

The Wellerman Poem
Written by: Michael Haramina

There once was a thing called Covid,
and that next day the virus exploded.
It took so many lives,
It even took our high fives.
One day the virus will be gone,
and we can finally move on.
One day we'll all be okay,
we just have to pray.

It happened just a year ago,
when the dreaded virus became our foe.
Our entire world felt this pain,
a pain we could never explain.
One day the virus will be gone,
and we can finally move on.
One day we'll all be okay,
we just have to pray.

Then the virus hit our town,
but we wouldn't let it bring us down.
We all were forced to quarantine,
we couldn't even go to the Croatian cuisine.
Every province had to do its part,
even far away in Stuttgart.
One day the virus will be gone,
and we can finally move on.
One day we'll all be okay,
we just have to pray.

Now, here we are in the present day.
With thousands of people still on sick pay.
One day the virus will be gone,
and we can finally move on.
One day we'll all be okay,
we just have to pray.

The End

The Killer Queen

Foreign, mysterious was the new girl on the block
Never was in plain sight, yet she always got everyone to talk
I didn't give her a thought, I was naive and innocent
I was carefree and just an adolescent!

She pulled some strings and gave me some freedom
In return I admired her stardom
She gave me fun and she was glorious
I praised her because I felt victorious

Times turned dark and down
She was a killer queen and I gave her a crown?
She's created disaster with her antics
People are scared, sad and frantic

Misery filled me, she has one of my own
No love can help him he's all alone
Knowing someone is suffering hits you with the biggest truth
Beware the killer queen; she'll rip out your youth

I've picked up habits since she's become rife
Using extra measures because she won't dictate my life
A little forgetful now and then
Just waiting for life to be normal again

I've familiarized myself with her since we met
I'm accepting life the way it's been set
Despite things still being bad
I've learned, I've grown and I'm grateful for the journey I've had

As St. Michael Catholic School students approached the one-year anniversary of the life-changing pandemic, Grade 8s reflected on its impact through poetry.

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Members of local Ferrari Club planning summer events

Club members welcome questions, attention from curious spectators

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

The members of the brand new Niagara Chapter of the Ferrari Club of America (FCA) are excited to begin planning their own events in the region this summer.

The local chapter is the brainchild of Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Lindsay Gillespie, who moved to town 10 years ago when he retired from a career as a music industry executive.

The Ferrari Club of America, founded in 1962, has more than 11,500 members and is divided into 16 regions and 54 chapters across North America. Gillespie and other members of the new Niagara chapter were all part of the Canada East Region of the club, based out of Toronto and covering an area to the east coast. For five years, Gillespie was the regional director of that chapter.

For Gillespie, basing a chapter out of Niagara was an obvious choice. "The roads are great, the scenery - everybody loves the vineyards," he says. "Everybody loves Niagara-on-the-Lake, you know, the history, the wine and the reputation

for restaurants. It's close enough that people from Toronto can come here for the day, it's a nice place to drive."

In the past, Gillespie and fellow local chapter member Todd Trinder participated in many events in the GTA. But neither of them ever really enjoyed the trip to and from the big city.

"The stop-and-go traffic on the QEW is not an enjoyable drive in any car, never mind a manual transmission Ferrari," Gillespie laments. "To get to those events, you have to leave at least an hour-and-a-half early just to get there, then you do the event, then you have to drive an hour-and-a-half back. And the traffic jams on the weekends are a nightmare."

So Gillespie spoke to Trinder, and about a dozen other local Ferrari owners, and they all agreed it made sense to start a chapter here to organize their own drives and other events.

"We've been officially recognized as a chapter, so we are part of the FCA now," Gillespie explains. "When we do events, we have to sign waivers for liability and that kind of thing. The other thing we

do is we try not to hot-rod around and attract attention. We want to enjoy the cars in a safe, organized fashion and not anger people or show off."

It's hard not to attract attention with a Ferrari, even with the car parked. That kind of attention, though, is welcomed by the owners.

"I just love when I see a kid around my car," Trinder says. "If the father looks okay, and if the kid doesn't look like a mischievous soul, I'll let the kid sit in it. Then I'll pop the engine bay, and the father will ask to take some pictures. I love that."

Trinder also owns a classic Oldsmobile 442 and just took delivery of a 2021 Corvette, while his everyday car is a BMW M3. But the retired partner from a Toronto sales agency says there's nothing like driving his 2004 360 Spider, his first Ferrari.

"There's no equivalent," the Virgil resident raves. "You just can't duplicate a Ferrari. It's the engineering, the design. It's the performance, the character. Each one is hand-built, there's no production line. When you're driving this car you are one with the car. You definitely feel the road."



Many Ferrari owners are happy to lift their hoods and answer questions for those curious about the luxury cars. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

Gillespie, whose rural NOTL garage is full of motorcycles, a dune buggy, a few Porsches and a classic 1970s Fiat Spider, also drives a 2004 360 Spider. He concurs with Trinder.

"A Ferrari has a different kind of soul," he explains. "The Porsche is German, it's very exact and precise. The Ferrari has a little more personality. It has a different feel, a different sound. People react differently to a Ferrari. They look fast even when they're sitting still. In fact, they look faster than they are."

Make no mistake, though, both of their cars can go very, very fast. With

400 horsepower and 280 pound-feet of torque, the 360's 0-60 mph time is rated at 4.6 seconds. But Trinder and Gillespie are both quick to point out that they only stretch the performance aspects of their Ferraris on those occasions when they are able to visit tracks such as Toronto Motorsports Park. Gillespie boasts a top speed of 120 mph on the track.

As for the Niagara Chapter's plans, nothing is set in stone for 2021 as of now.

"We don't have a schedule yet, but we have a lot of ideas," Gillespie informs The Local. "Because of

COVID, it's hard to sit down and plan it, and you can't go anywhere and sit down at the same table. It's still early in the year, too. Normally the cars aren't out until mid-April when it's warm enough and the roads are clean enough."

Once it's time, though, and once the pandemic restrictions allow, Gillespie and the rest of the Niagara Chapter are hoping to turn the tables a bit on the Toronto members, inviting them to brave the congested QEW with their Ferraris to attend official FCA events here. You'll hear that distinctive Ferrari roar when that happens.



Todd Trinder and Lindsay Gillespie look forward to summer and Ferrari Club events.

Bravo Niagara! launching second virtual Amplified Series

Amplified memberships will keep festival going and help support artists

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

Heading into their second season offering an online version of their usual jazz, classical and world music fare, Bravo Niagara! Festival seems to have things figured out.

This month, their Amplified Series, which debuted in 2020, kicks off with a performance from Juno Award-winning flamenco-style guitarist Jesse Cook. It's the first of six shows that form Bravo Niagara's Spring 2021 Amplified Membership Program.

"Last year, we launched Amplified as our response to COVID, and we had over 60,000 views and counting, and it allowed us to connect to new audiences," says co-founder and executive director Alexis Spieldenner. "This spring, we decided to launch a new Amplified membership, which will give our audience an opportunity to experience exclusive content from some of the leading artists of today, and the stars of tomorrow."

Of Jesse Cook, Spieldenner says, "I'm a big fan. Hopefully in the future he is an artist that we can present live in concert to an audience in Niagara. But we thought this would be an opportunity to share his music with our audiences now."

In addition to Cook, Bravo Niagara! will welcome violinist siblings Nikki and Tim-

othy Chooi, cellist Stéphane Tétreault and 19-year-old multi-genre composer, pianist, songwriter and singer Emily Bear.

Bear participated in the Bravo Niagara! Amplified version of *We Are the World*, the first entry in last spring's online series. Her album *Diversity*, recorded when she was 11, was produced by Quincy Jones. In 2016, at 14 years old, she performed in front of a sold-out Bravo Niagara! crowd at Stratus Vineyards. Recently, she's made waves worldwide via her collaboration with fellow young singer-songwriter Abigail Barlow on *Bridgerton - The Musical*, sharing their progress via social media platforms.

"She's just phenomenal," Spieldenner raves. "They're basically musical theatre's new songwriting duo, they've gone viral, they've been featured on every media for the last month now."

Besides the performance by the young virtuoso, Bear will be featured in an interview hosted by actress Brigitte Robinson. In fact, each of the shows features a similar exclusive value-added extra for Amplified members, including meet-and-greet sessions with Cook, Tétreault and the Chooi Brothers.

Without the ability to bring musicians and music-lovers together in a physical venue, to Spieldenner, these extras are a key to build-

ing a collective experience. "We wanted to have more of that connection between artists and audiences. Adding that interactive Zoom after, gives audiences an opportunity to meet and say 'hi' to Jesse Cook or the Chooi Brothers. It's something different from what we did last year."

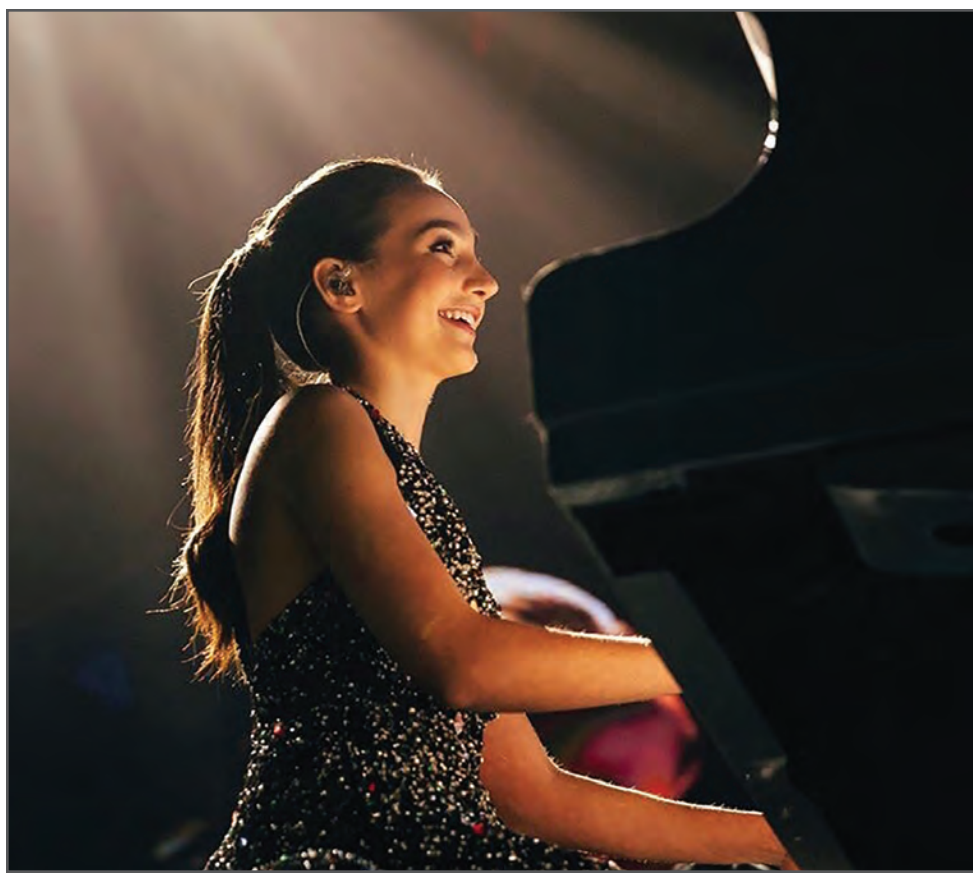
The second April show will celebrate International Jazz Day with a program titled *Sing About Freedom*. Curated by Céline Peterson, it includes Robi Botos Bravo Niagara's 2021 artist in residence, as well as Molly Johnson, Lara Driscoll, Laila Biali, Monty Alexander and others. A conversation between bassist John Clayton and retired Chicago Tribune jazz and classical music critic Howard Reich follows.

The June 11 Amplified performance truly steps away from what one might expect from Bravo Niagara! Toronto-based singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Royal Wood is featured that night, in a show to be recorded at Ravine Vineyard. His repertoire swings more toward the pop and folk genres.

"Like Jesse Cook, he's an artist that we've been wanting to bring for a long time as well," says Spieldenner. "He performed at Massey Hall recently, and released that on record. To be able to hear him in a more intimate performance will be very special."

Also special is the exclusive that follows Royal Wood's performance. A trained sommelier, he will be showcasing that talent as well, with a wine-tasting alongside Ravine's winemaker, Lydia Tomek.

Spieldenner and co-founder and artistic director Christine Mori continue to plan for that elusive day when they may be able to again present their events to an in-person live audience. Meanwhile, this year's membership fees will enable the non-profit organization to continue to present and sup-



Emily Bear, 19-year-old composer, pianist, songwriter and singer, returns for Bravo Niagara's 2021 season. (Photo supplied)



Bravo Niagara's spring 2021 season kicks off with a performance from Juno award-winning flamenco-style guitarist Jesse Cook. (Matt Barnes)

port world-class musicians, as they have since their inception in 2014. That financial support is a key to ensuring audiences can enjoy quality musical experiences this year, and in the future.

"It's been crucial, the support we've received from the donors, the sponsors, and the government funders who have been able to help Bravo Niagara! and other charitable organizations right now,"

Spieldenner says, "because we don't have live audiences. Without that revenue, that support is vital to continue to be able to support the artists."

Members will be provided access to all six virtual shows, and their accompanying online meet-and-greet and interview sessions. Using a new digital platform via the Bravo Niagara! website, each of the six events will be available for members to enjoy for a full

week after their premiere.

Access to Bravo Niagara! Amplified Membership Series events is \$100, but readers of The Local can save 10 per cent using the discount code NOTLLOCAL.

Jesse Cook starts things off on April 23, while the final performance by the Chooi Brothers is scheduled for July 9. Visit bravoniagara.org/amplified-virtual-series for the full schedule and to register.

Local HAPPENINGS



Unfortunately, the Legion's Fish Fry scheduled to restart this Thursday, April 8th is now CANCELLED due to the new Provincial Emergency Shutdown Restrictions.



We apologize for the inconvenience and appreciate your support.

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April 12 @ 9:30 a.m. - 10 a.m.

NOTL Public Library Staff-led virtual 4 week session for infants and caregivers. Encourages a lifetime love of reading, a look at developmental milestones, and offers community connection and support for caregivers. Caregivers please visit: <https://notlpubliclibrary.org> to pre-register for April 15th. Upon registration you will receive an email with information regarding ZOOM Link and a pick-up time for your free welcome kit! Participants need to be able to access Zoom.

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Sunday, April 11th

10 a.m. Worship Gathering (Register at www.ccchurch.ca)

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Message: The Slave Market: Jesus our Redeemer

Live stream available Sundays at 10:00 am

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- Across:**

1 Grouches

6 Female supporters

10 Flat-topped hill

14 Misbehave

15 Arizona city on the Colorado

16 In addition

17 Latin American dance

18 Side

19 --- Christian Andersen

20 Sharp flavor

22 Note hastily

24 34th President

25 Moonshot program

28 Sound of a lion

29 Louse egg

30 Washed out

31 Watch --- step!

33 Not odd

35 Free

36 Settlement

37 Nudge repeatedly

38 Aloof

40 Conductive elements

43 Hoppy brew

44 Conforms

45 Blockhead

47 Pirate's plunder

49 Mischievous

50 Solitary

51 "L" operator
- 52 Unpleasant to look at

54 Conjured up

56 Attila, e.g.

57 Aught

58 Political top dog (Abbr.)

59 Brief swim

61 It's worth ---!

63 Start playing tennis

67 Skin

68 Film genre

69 Flowing and ebbing

70 Roman wear

71 Large and scholarly book

72 Heap
- 21 Prius maker

23 Choice morsels

25 Interest charge

26 Two identical things

27 Shoppe adjective

28 Manage

32 Be in debt

34 Old kind of computer monitor

36 Fighter ace

37 Lower

39 "Rosemary's Baby" actress --- Farrow

40 Provides input for an amp.

41 Observe

42 Levelheaded

44 Cook in hot oil

46 Central bank

47 Artist's workshop

48 Diminishing

49 Extremely

50 Snap

51 Map

53 Enormous

55 Kevlar garments

58 Funeral woodpile

60 Electronic helper just for you

62 Border

64 Old food label letters

65 Carpet cleaner (Abbr.)

66 Moose

OBITUARY

DR. MARGARET ISABEL SWAYZE PH.D.—Margaret passed peacefully following a lengthy illness at Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital March 16, 2021. She was the adored daughter of the late Owen and Agnes Swayze. Margaret was raised on a farm in St. Davids, Ontario, and graduated from Trinity College, University of Toronto in 1970. She obtained her first doctorate at the University of Birmingham Shakespeare Institute, UK, in 1973. She then started her teaching career at St. Mildred's-Lightbourn School in Oakville, where she taught for many years. As a teacher she pursued further studies on a part-time basis, obtaining her doctorate in education from the University of Birmingham in 2000. Margaret was devoted to all her students, whether at St. Mildred's or those whom she tutored privately as recently as the past year. She was particularly focused on the needs of students facing special challenges in achieving the educational system's expectations, for whatever reason. Margaret will be remembered by her students, friends and colleagues for her kindness, generosity, sense of humour, loyalty and caring, as well as her unwavering commitment to education. In accordance with her wishes, cremation has taken place. Margaret was always mindful of the needs of many less fortunate in our community. With that in mind, donations may be made to a charity of your choice, or, in accordance with her wishes, to the two institutions that were the foundation of her life's work, Trinity College, University of Toronto, and the University of Birmingham Shakespeare Institute. A celebration of Margaret's life will be held at 12 pm on Saturday April 17th at Oakview Funeral Home in Oakville. Unfortunately, due to COVID restrictions, capacity at the church is limited, and attendance is by invitation only. The service will be livestreamed. Please visit oakviewfuneral.ca to offer an online condolence and to find the link for the livestream of the service.

NOTICES

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PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from
March 31, 2021

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

Down: 1 Cam, 2 R C A, 3 A T M, 4 Bubble, 5 Spoil, 6 Byte, 7 Rue, 8 A major, 9 Samoa, 10 M p h, 11 Elaine, 12 Sunk in, 13 Asset, 21 Toyota, 23 Treats, 25 A P R, 26 Pair, 27 Olde, 28 Run, 32 Owe, 34 V G A, 36 Top gun, 37 Nether, 39 Mla, 40 Mic, 41 Look, 42 Sane, 44 Fry, 46 Fed, 47 Studio, 48 Warning, 49 All too, 50 Lose it, 51 Chart, 53 Giant, 55 Vests, 58 Pyre, 60 P D A, 62 Film, 64 R D A, 65 Vac, 66 Elk.

Noir, 69 Tidal, 70 Toga, 71 Tome, 72 Stack.

Hun, 57 Nil, 58 Pres, 59 A dip, 61 A try, 63 Serve, 67 Rind, 68 47 Sway, 49 Arch, 50 Lone, 51 C T A, 52 Ugly, 54 Evoked, 56 Town, 37 Nag, 38 Remote, 40 Metals, 43 I P A, 44 Fts, 45 Oaf, Apollo, 28 Roar, 29 Nit, 30 Pale, 31 Your, 33 Even, 35 Rid, 36 Plus, 17 Mambo, 18 Team, 19 Hans, 20 Bite, 22 Jot, 24 Ike, 25 Across: 1 Crabs, 6 Bras, 10 Mesa, 14 Act up, 15 Yuma, 16

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THIS NEWSPAPER

The Niagara-on-the-Lake
LOCAL
The trusted voice of our community.

Nyanyas part of grandmother groups offering virtual concert

Stellar lineup of musicians, dancers, storytellers and drumming artists

Penny Coles
The Local

In support of African grandmothers, 160 grandmothers' groups from across Canada are presenting a virtual concert featuring Together in Concert: In Solidarity with African Grandmothers.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake group of grandmothers is going one step further, offering a Tapestry of African Deserts to enjoy while watching the 90-minute online concert featuring a tapestry of Canadian talent, which includes music, dance, storytelling, and drumming.

The Nyanyas of Niagara is one of 260 grandmothers' and grandmothers' groups that raises money for the Stephen Lewis Foundation's grandmothers campaign.

Since the local group was founded in 2007, the Nyanyas (Swahili for grandmother) have raised more than \$100,000, from two major fundraisers held each year and other smaller events.

The Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign was launched by Lewis's foundation in 2006 in response to the crisis faced by African grandmothers as they struggled to raise millions of children orphaned by AIDS. Since then, a growing number of grandmothers' groups has raised funds to support the life-enhancing programs run by African grandmothers, and the community-based organizations which support them.

Today, African grandmothers continue to raise the next generation while two pandemics intersect, HIV and AIDS and COVID-19.

The need has grown even greater, says Terry Mactaggart, one of the original founders of the Nyanyas, while fundraising opportunities have been limited by the pandemic, making it more difficult to ensure community-based organizations in Africa have the resources to support their programs.

This event celebrates the 15th anniversary of the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign of the Stephen Lewis Foundation.

In an effort to do something significant for the 15th anniversary, says Mactaggart, she joined representatives from across Canada in a virtual meeting to brainstorm ideas.

In addition to talented musicians and storytellers, one of the speakers is an African grandmother, who has visited Niagara-on-the-Lake and attended a Nyanyas fundraiser, and has also trav-

elled across Canada to talk about the work of the Stephen Lewis Foundation and what the campaign means to African grandmothers, and the programs it's funding.

Canadian grandmothers also travel to Africa to see what their counterparts are doing to raise their orphaned grandchildren.

The travel is funded through donations of Aeroplan miles, of great benefit to the campaign, says Mactaggart, as women are able to talk about the positive work that is being done and how effective it is, inspiring groups to carry on the fundraising.

That motivation is especially important during the pandemic, when smaller groups of just a few women are struggling, and some have folded.

With 150 members, the Nyanyas is one of the larger groups, but still has had difficulty fundraising during the pandemic, although typically it has done very well with the events the women have organized. The virtual concert, says Mactaggart, "is a feel-good event," allowing even the smallest of groups to get involved. "This is something we can all get behind."

Representatives of grandmother groups across Canada have been meeting monthly by Zoom, she says. Last October, when they were brainstorming about the 15th anniversary, Mactaggart recalls, "one of the members said, 'why don't we put on a cross-country concert?' The idea quickly took hold, and a couple of weeks later, about 20 people from across the country joined to help plan this. From east to west, members were so amazing. None of us know each other, we just pitched in and found our niches of where we wanted to help. And now we have two weeks to go."

In addition to signing on the performers, someone was needed to look after the technical aspect of producing the virtual show, and Mactaggart put forward Niagara College as a possibility. "Students help the community in so many ways. They need the experience and they have good mentorship through their professors."

She approached Niagara College, and students of the broadcast department became involved. She also arranged for some of the grandmothers who had been part of the planning, and live close enough to Niagara-on-the-Lake for a day trip, to meet at Jackson-Triggs

Estate Winery last week and record introductions of the performers. They met and filmed the segments safely outside, she says.

After many months of meetings, "we were beyond excited" to see the concert coming together, and so close to being a reality, she says. Along the way, they encountered some glitches, "but the committee has been great at finding solutions."

As much as it has involved a lot of time from last fall to get to this point, Mactaggart says it has been great having something to do to help get through the pandemic.

She has also been fortunate to have a good group of friends to walk with daily, always safely, wearing masks and distancing, two of whom are members of the steering committee, and all members of the Nyanyas.

Along their walks, they did a lot of talking, and lots of laughing, she adds, although their usual end to the exercise, time to sit and chat, and enjoy treats and coffee at the community centre, was no longer allowed.

So once the idea of a concert took hold, and the Nyanyas wanted to add an extra fundraising, local element to the event, Erinn Lockard of the Sweets & Swirls Cafe was the obvious place to start.

Mactaggart contacted Lockard about providing a selection of African desserts, and chose not only three unique African treats, but "some really good African teas" to accompany them, to be ordered ahead of time and picked up a few hours before the concert.

A \$15 box for one person will include three desserts, plus two servings of African teas, a creative way to fundraise for the Nyanyas.

A \$20 box for two people will include three desserts paired with two servings of African teas for each person.

"We're happy to partner with Sweets & Swirls. They're such a community-minded couple," says Mactaggart, referring to Lockard and her husband, James Cadeau, who are always eager to help out when they can.

There is no charge for the virtual concert, which will be shown Thursday, April 15 at 7:30 p.m., and available live-streamed for 72 hours for those who register, until Sunday, April 17.

In the countdown to the concert, the Canadian Grandmothers Facebook page is highlighting one performer or group each day, to entice people to tune in not only across Canada but in



Four grandmothers, Maxine Hermolin, Terry Mactaggart, Sya VanGeest and Jo-Anne Page gathered at Jackson-Triggs to say goodbye after recording performers' introductions. (Photos supplied)



Maxine Hermolin and Jo-Anne Page wait overlooking vineyards for their turn to be filmed for the virtual Together in Concert: In Solidarity with African Grandmothers, to bring attention to the Canadian Grandmothers Campaign, helping African grandmothers raise children during two pandemics.



Maxine Hermolin is prompting Sya VanGeest, waiting her turn to be filmed, with Charlie Short, the camera operator/assistant editor of the concert and Tayvis McCullough, the producer/editor, from Niagara College.

other countries where there are grandmothers involved in the campaign, including Australia, the U.K. and the U.S.

After months of planning, Mactaggart herself is excited about the upcoming event. "If you see it April 15, it will be so good. I'm telling all my friends about it."

The concert features Steven Page, Jackie Richardson, National Ballet of Canada, David Myles, Stratford Festival, Sheree Fitch and Stephen Lewis Foundation Speakers.

They will be joined by

acclaimed Canadian talent, including Bridge Brass Quintet, Canada's National Ballet School, the della kit, Feels Like Home, Forte, Gentecorum, Kids of Note & The Notations, Kym Gouchie, Lorraine Klaasen, Sya VanGeest & Nicholas Stoup and stories from Canadian grandmothers who visited Africa.

The virtual event is free, but donations are welcome. Registration is required. For more information, to register or to make a donation, visit www.cdngrandmothers.com.

Orders must be received by noon on Tuesday, April 13 for pickup on Thursday, April 15, between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. at the Sweets & Swirls Cafe in the Anderson Lane community centre. Place orders at sweetsandswirlscfe@gmail.com, including your name and phone number.

Payment can be made by cash or cheque at pickup, or by e-transfer to sweetsandswirlscfe@gmail.com with the password: sascale.

Credit or debit can be used at pickup, or call Lockard at 905-468-1024.