

The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL



Mexican
workers
may arrive
next week

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Spreading the message

Klaudia Bator, six, and siblings Zuza, eight and Felix, four, each take a house to colour on the Town's #stayhomeNOTL poster. The message from the Town hasn't changed. (Photo supplied)

Message from Town continues: stay home

Penny Coles
The Local

With a number of cases of COVID-19 in Niagara-on-the-Lake, the Town's message becomes increasingly dire: stay home.

Although The Local is hearing from residents who are confused over conflicting messages

about walking and biking, there is no conflict about the message from the Town. NOTL has different demographics than other municipalities, a large number of returning travellers and snowbirds, said Lord Mayor Betty Disero. To curb the potential threat of COVID-19, NOTL residents are being

told to stay home.

Disero knows there are NOTL residents who have tested positive. She doesn't know how many, but said "it's probably about five," although others have told The Local, that the number is closer to 15.

Disero is not looking for names, but that she doesn't know the exact number, or

the areas where they live, is a source of frustration to her.

"We just don't know. We've been fighting with the Region to get the numbers in each municipality, but we're not getting that. Other regions are doing that."

If she had more information, she said, it

would help to know how to move forward.

"I believe the public has the right to know. I want to know the number of people, and what caused the local transmission. It could be travellers, or it could be community spread. That information could determine how we deal with it, what measures we put

into place."

The Region cites protecting the privacy of individuals as the reason for not releasing more information, says Disero.

"That doesn't make sense. It's important information for us to have."

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Region declares state of emergency

Penny Coles
The Local

The Region of Niagara has declared a state of emergency that includes all 12 municipalities.

The announcement was made Friday morning, almost two weeks after Lord Mayor Betty Disero declared the town a state of emergency, Monday, March 23. The Province was declared a state of emergency on March 11.

The Region and other municipalities made the declaration “in anticipation of a surge of COVID-19 activity in Niagara in the coming weeks,” the announcement says.

As of Tuesday, the Niagara Region website was reporting 149 cases of COVID-19, up from seven cases reported March 24.

All levels of government have warned another large jump is expected in the coming weeks, though the numbers could be reduced if the public strictly adheres to imposed limitations such as reducing the number of people gathering, staying home as much as possible and keeping a physical distance while out.

The regional announcement came just hours before the Province announced its projections of expected numbers in future weeks and months, even looking ahead as far as two years, when we could be experiencing second and third waves of the disease. The Province announced an expected 1,600 deaths by the end of April if further interventions are not taken, while more stringent restrictions could help reduce that number to 200 by the end of the month.

With the Niagara Region declaration comes options available to protect the health and safety of Niagara residents, Friday’s regional announcement says.

The mayors and regional chair offered a joint statement in the announcement: “The timing of this declaration is imperative as our actions over the next several weeks will determine how well Niagara will fare

in the COVID-19 pandemic. This situation represents a real and pressing risk to the health of our community, and we all need to work together to slow the spread of the virus.”

“By declaring this emergency together, we are underscoring the critical nature of the situation with everyone in the region. We know most of you are following the guidance of our public health experts, and we offer our sincere thanks. We recognize how hard this time is for everyone, and the sacrifices you are making to practise physical distancing, and even complete isolation in some cases.”

The Region and the mayors also reinforced the message, “as a united Niagara,” to ask everyone who is currently following the directives to keep it up.

“You are making a real difference by slowing the spread of the virus and you are helping to protect the health of your friends, families and neighbours.”

Those who are following the health care message, practising isolation and physical distancing, are also helping to protect healthcare workers, hospital staff and first responders, the announcement says.

“These are the people who are working around the clock to keep us all safe, and we all need to step up and do our part to help keep them healthy.”

Ignoring the order to stay home and practise physical distancing is not negotiable, says the regional announcement. “We are at a tipping point in this pandemic, and everyone needs to get on board – we are all in this together and we need everyone to do their part.”

The question about whether the Region should have declared a state of emergency sooner is “a fair discussion,” says NOTL Regional Coun. Gary Zalepa.

The model of regional and municipal levels of government allows municipalities to make certain decisions that benefit those municipalities, he says.

That includes NOTL having the ability to make the determination of when it was best to declare a state of emergency

based on certain conditions, such as the high senior population, and the number of returning travellers, “a situation that seemed to hold greater peril for NOTL than other municipalities.”

It allows local municipalities to make local decisions, and a regional response to be made now, on the advice of the regional public health department, to get ahead of what is expected in coming weeks, he says.

“With the warmer weather approaching, and the Easter holiday coming up,” the regional decision “allows us to get out ahead with the message to be more conscious about social distancing and social isolation,” says Zalepa.

While not all directives about outdoor use of all public places, such as parks and trails, match across municipalities, and the message can be confusing, the message those who are not in quarantine due to having travelled or having COVID-19 symptoms should take away, is to make decisions based on whether you can adhere to physical distancing guidelines and keep safe, says Zalepa.

It’s important to get outside for physical exercises, he says, “but if you’re going to go for a walk, stay close to home and choose locations where you can keep your distance.”

The regional announcement offered “heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the healthcare workers, hospital staff and first responders in our community. You are doing incredible work and putting your health on the line to keep us all safe. We will forever be in your debt.”

Residents, non-profit groups and service clubs were also thanked for helping those in need during difficult times. “We recognize these efforts and encourage those who are helping their neighbours in self-isolation due to age, health or being at a higher risk to keep it up,” the announcement said.

“We ask you to check in on each other with a phone call, email or video chat. Offer to help friends, family and loved ones with groceries if you have to make the trip. If you have

family members or neighbours over the age of 70, do what you can to make sure they don’t have to leave the house. And finally, if you have the means, consider making financial donations to your local food banks.”

Directives for Niagara (as of April 3):

Residents are reminded that the following mandatory directives are now in place:

- Stop all gatherings of more than five people (this includes private gatherings of extended family)
- Avoid all outdoor recreational amenities, including parks, playgrounds, beaches and sports fields

- Close all non-essential businesses
- Stay home as much as possible and only leave the house once a week if required
- Self-isolate for 14 days if you have symptoms or have returned to Canada from being outside the country
- Practice physical distancing and wash hands frequently

Enforcing the Emergency Management and Civil Protections Act

Municipalities across Ontario have the power to issue fines to enforce these public health and emergency directives. Failing to comply with an

emergency order carries a fine of \$750 per offence, and up to \$1,000 for obstructing those attempting to carry out their duties under the Act.

Concerns around enforcement should be directed to local municipal bylaw offices. After-hours calls may also be directed to the Niagara Regional Police Service’s non-emergency line at 905-688-4111. Do not call 911.

More information on Niagara’s response to the COVID-19 situation can be found at niagara-region.ca/covid19, or by calling Public Health’s COVID-19 InfoLine at 905-688-8248 (press 7, then press 2).

How best to care for elderly parent a difficult decision

Penny Coles
The Local

Trudy Waldie celebrated her 100th birthday at Upper Canada Lodge earlier this year. Now the centenarian is living through the COVID-19 pandemic at the regional long-term care facility.

As daily news stories reveal the danger that lurks in some facilities across the country, with an increasing number of seniors falling prey to the virus and some experts advising getting loved ones out of such homes, Trudy’s daughter Louise Waldie, and Louise’s husband Andrew Porteus, are still struggling with the decision of how best to protect her.

One headline that unsettled them was an opinion piece in a national newspaper that advised to “rescue your parents while you can,” says Louise. The couple have talked it over at length, but with a small multilevel house, a bathroom that’s not wheelchair accessible, and Trudy unable to walk, bringing her to live with them through the pandemic didn’t seem a good solution.

“We could theoretically do it if she does get sick, but one concern is if she falls, how would I look after her? The house is not set up appropriately for that, and the risk of her falling would be far greater here than at Upper Canada.”

It was a hard decision to make, Louise says “and it might be the right choice, or it might be wrong. It would be a viable option to have her at home, but not ideal. I really don’t know the answer. There are so many factors, including whether the nursing staff get sick, whether she gets sick, whether we get sick, and how long this will go on for.”

Her siblings, who are all further away, were in agreement that it was best for Trudy to stay where she is for now, Louise adds.

“If I gave her the decision she might jump at it coming here. But she has to live with the decision we’re making for



Trudy Waldie celebrated her 100th birthday in February surrounded by friends and family at Upper Canada Lodge. With her were family members Keith (top), Louise, John, and Betty. (File photo by Fred Mercnik)

her, and there is no way to see into the future to know if it’s the right one.”

They have confidence in Upper Canada, and after weighing all the factors that influenced their decision, made the choice to leave Trudy in the long-term care home, where she has been happy and well-cared for, and can stay in her routine.

Louise talks to her daily, and is also in touch with the staff, who have been very good about keeping in touch with families.

So far there have been no cases at the lodge, it continues to be very well staffed, she says, “and I’ve had good answers to all my questions.”

There are no visitors allowed in the facility, but within, residents are allowed to visit each other, and Trudy has made friends and enjoys chatting with other residents.

She also, fortunately, likes talking on the phone.

“We’re a phone family,” says Louise, who is one of five siblings. “With five of us calling, she gets multiple phone calls a day, and all five of us could talk on the phone for an hour,

easily.”

Trudy can also call them if she wants to talk, adds Louise.

Some families use Skype, and the staff offered to set that up for Trudy, “but she doesn’t see very well, and it might just be confusing for her. Anything new might be a challenge.”

Trudy is fine with meals, able to look after herself, and has a TV in her room, tuned to CBC, “which she watches day in and day out. She is a devoted Trump-hater, so she followed all of the impeachment process, and we discussed it every day.”

Now, with the news turned to the pandemic and how it’s affecting the world around us, she watches that, so she understands the need for isolation, and she is stoic about it. Louise and her siblings talk about it, and try to keep the conversation positive, she says.

And Trudy, although a little bored without the usual activity at the lodge, “always says everyone at the home does a good job of looking after her.”

And when she chats with Louise, “she still likes to talk about her birthday, and what a great party she had.”



During these unprecedented times, we all need to do our part and come together as a community. Please stay home whenever possible and when out, practice safe social distancing and wash your hands often.

Remember to thank our front line workers and if possible, support our local not-for-profit organizations.

WE WILL GET THROUGH THIS TOGETHER!



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And if you're sick, 'stay in the house'

Continued from page 1

Disero addressed council Monday in another of its virtual, phone-in meetings, explaining the reason for the March 23 declaration of a state of emergency in NOTL was to protect from the potential of spread. "My hope was to create a bubble around our little town, but the virus is here now. We must be ever so mindful, because the results of the actions you take today will not be seen for a number of days, and we do not want them to be devastating."

The Niagara Region, as of noon Tuesday, was reporting 162 identified cases of people infected with the virus.

But even without details of how many in NOTL, the evidence of its spread to town drives home the importance of her message.

"We're heading into a long weekend, a holiday weekend. Don't have a party on your driveway. It's not protecting each other, even if you are standing apart from each other. Don't do it."

In her address at Monday's meeting, she explained the spread of the virus is "by droplets and the aerosol that comes out of people's mouths when they breathe, when they speak, when they sing or when they yell. The louder they are the further their vocal cords push out that spray."

The virus can also

be spread by touch, she said. "If you touch a glass I give you and put it to your mouth or touch your eyes, you can contract COVID-19. So even if you were keeping two metres apart, picnicking or drinking from a bottle poured by someone else, or taking a glass held by someone else, can make you susceptible."

As well, people are still walking through the park to get some exercise, keeping their distance, she said, "but what we are finding is members of the community are climbing over fences, parking illegally or driving around the barricades to play in some of the fenced-off areas. For example, because fishermen were over-running Riverbeach Park,

we had to close it off, so now people can't even walk through it. I ask once again for those who find it necessary to totally disregard the efforts of the community to stop community spread, please comply."

Disero has been in the habit of walking with her mother daily while she walks her dog, but she's not doing that anymore, she

told The Local. Instead, she talks to her mother on the phone daily.

But, she adds, "if you must walk or bike, do it from home. If you feel well, walk from home and keep your distance from other people. You are allowed to walk, but keep your car at home. Bike from home. As long as you keep your distance, you're okay," she said.

The best way to stop the spread of this virus, she added, "is to stay home."

And again, if you have returned home from travel recently, or are feeling sick, "do not leave the house."

For a list of volunteers offering community assistance, including food delivery, visit <https://notl.org/content/community-assistance>.

Grocery store given all-clear after employee tests positive

Penny Coles
The Local

If there had to be a case of COVID-19 in a grocery store, Phil Leboudec describes the situation at his Virgil valu-mart as the "best case scenario."

The staff person who tested positive has fully recovered, after experiencing only very mild symptoms, says Leboudec.

The employee had worked at the grocery store on March 26, but that shift was outside of store hours, and with no contact with other staff or the public. The last date the employee would have had any contact with anyone in the store was March 23, he says.

The staff member took a self-assessment test online, and being an essential worker, was referred for testing, Leboudec believes.

He learned of the positive test Sunday evening. A team of professional cleaners, organized by Loblaws, was sent in overnight, the store was sanitized "from top to bottom," and Leboudec was given a "full sign-off from all authorities as necessary" to

open the store Monday.

"I didn't make the decision that it was okay to open," he emphasizes. It was made after an investigation by health officials that determined there was no risk to staff or the public.

"If I thought for one minute that this posed a threat to staff, or to anyone else, we wouldn't be open."

There are no staff members with any symptoms, he added. "We have no issues here."

The employee who tested positive is not being identified for reasons of privacy, Leboudec says, but had no history of travel. "I'm guessing it was from someone who travelled who came into the store."

Despite the strong messages from all levels of government about self-isolation for the large number of returning travellers, including snowbirds coming back from wintering in the U.S., Leboudec and other retailers have been concerned that not all are heeding that message.

Loblaws has instituted several measures to ensure the safety of staff and the public at all stores, includ-

ing plexiglass at check-out counters, limits to the number of customers in the store, and signs directing customers as they move through the store to allow for physical distancing.

The public is also being encouraged to shop online, and there are volunteers in the community who are willing to deliver. Residents are also asked to send only one person in a family to shop, and to limit visits to the grocery store.

For a list of volunteers offering community assistance, including food delivery, visit <https://notl.org/content/community-assistance>.

From the moment Leboudec heard of the positive test until the all-clear was given to open, a protocol kicked in that came from Loblaws and public health, he says.

Before opening, he spoke to his staff to ensure they were comfortable with returning to work. "If they're not worried, our customers shouldn't be worried," says Leboudec.

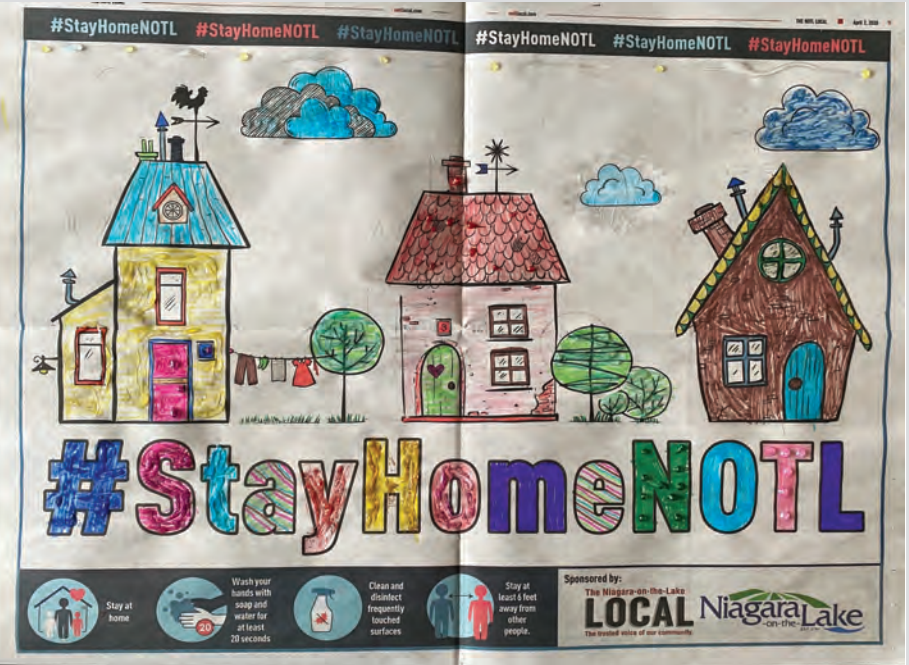
But this does, he says, drive home the message, #stayhomenotl.

Thanks, Ben!



Kevin Bayne shared his son Ben's #stayhomenotl poster. (Photo supplied)

Thanks, Ruller kids!



Maxim, 10, Anastasia and Sofia, eight, and Sammy, seven, coloured their #stayhomenotl Town poster, sent to The Local by proud dad, NOTL Fire Chief Nick Ruller. (Photo supplied)

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Family of five coping well with isolation

Penny Coles
The Local

Three kids had three houses to colour.

The Bator siblings enjoyed their colouring activity together, says their mom, Magdalena Bator, as they have most activities so far while they adhere to the #stayhomenotl restrictions, protecting themselves from exposure to COVID-19. But it might not have gone so well if there hadn't been one house for each — the kids are getting along for now, "although the novelty of this may come to an end," she says.

"I really can't complain at all. As terrible as this pandemic is, it's really quieted our lives. The kids are playing well together, they're bonding together. We've been put into this new bubble, but they understand why it's happening. I'm really proud of them."

Bator, a real estate agent, works for Royal LePage in town, which has closed its office.

Realtors are still considered an essential service, says Bator, but it is not business as usual. "We have been told to no longer host open houses and to limit showings to situations where it is absolutely necessary. The safety of our clients is always our top priority, and though it is possible to conduct business via virtual showings and online documentation, we have seen a substantial drop in activity in the market."

However, she adds, "there are still transactions occur-

ring and safety measures must be in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In the meantime, I have my days filled with different demands from my children."

Bator's husband Andrew is also working from home, she says, so there are times when the kids need to be quiet or play outside, but they are still having fun playing together in the safety of their backyard. They also go on bike rides on the trails that are still open. "You get the occasional look that says 'what are you doing,' but we're keeping our distance." And the kids, aged eight, six and four, get to burn off some energy, she adds.

"This is a small community, and everywhere we go we see somebody from school, but we keep our distance. We feel guilty being out. It's a very strange feeling, wondering, did we put ourselves in any precarious positions," says Bator. "You know you didn't, but you want to be sure you haven't done anything to risk getting sick."

And the first thing they do when they get home, she says, "is wash our hands."

All three kids are Crossroads Public School students, and Bator only returned to work in September, when her youngest started Junior Kindergarten, so life at home with them is not that different for her.

The kids are asking a few questions, and she gives them some details, "but we're all staying calm. When parents get anxious, they feed off that. But kids are very resilient,



Klaudia, Zuza and Felix Bator show off the poster they coloured to remind residents to #stayhomenotl. The poster is now proudly displayed in their front window. (Photo supplied)

if they have a support team that's calm and resilient."

They are each hearing almost daily from their teachers online — the Grade 1 teacher even called.

"That brought a tear to my eye," she says. "I know she (Klaudia) won't be going back to school, and won't be finishing Grade 1 with her teacher. With the Town facilities closed until June 30, I don't think schools will open

before then. That's not going to happen," she says.

"I've prepared a place in the house for the kids to do their schoolwork, at least the two girls."

The kids are actually looking forward to have daily activities, which are similar to what they would be doing at school, she says, and especially excited to have their dad home to do school work with them.

The youngest is doing his numbers and letters with his sisters, and having fun doing that. And when they're in the backyard, using their imagination, "they're having fun playing with mud and sticks. They are using their brains in a different way."

Without all the processed snacks Bator would normally buy for school lunch boxes, the kids are also eating better, with fruits and vegetables for

snacks instead, she says.

There are no social pressures, no extracurricular pressures, "and we're making the most of it. I really feel very fortunate. This hasn't affected my family very much at all. Not like other families where they are losing their jobs, or have lost their child care," says Bator.

"I'm praying for those families, and hoping this will end soon."

54th annual Virgil Stampede cancelled



The popular Virgil Stampede, a May long weekend tradition, has been cancelled. (File photo)

Penny Coles
The Local

Organizers of the Virgil Stampede, gearing up for another celebration of the May long weekend, learned Friday the three-day event would have to be cancelled.

Members of the Virgil Business Association had been discussing that eventuality, knowing it was a possibility, and had set May 1 as the date for a final decision.

But the closure of all Town facilities announced Friday, extended until June 30, means the 54th annual family event, which began

with a neighbourhood fireworks display for locals, will not go ahead.

Last year, the stampede proceeds were to help pay for a new skateboard park in the Virgil Sports Park, and the \$150,000 donation promised by the VBA will still go ahead, said Marcia Penner, secretary of the organization.

"We don't spend money we don't have," says Penner, "so in that sense, nothing changes."

This year's stampede proceeds were set to go to the Crossroads Public School accessible playground, and the \$35,000 donation already committed to that project will also go ahead, she says.

The Town sent a letter to the VBA before the closure announcement was made public, says Penner, and although it wasn't unexpected, "it's still very heartbreaking. We know the kids really look forward to it. We all look forward to it."

The closure of Town facilities to June 30, and possibly longer, "really hits home the enormity of this," she

says. "This is not a short-term problem. I hope people will start listening, and stay home. Let's not make this go on any longer than it has to."

This is the first time in its 54 years it has had to be cancelled, says Penner. "There have been events cancelled because of the weather, but never the whole stampede."

Last year, with the heavy rains leading up to the long weekend causing muddy conditions, there was a discussion about whether it could go ahead. The popular demolition derby had to be cancelled, but with a reconfiguration of the layout of events, with midway rides being moved to paved areas, the stampede was able to open all three days.

In the decades since the first stampede, when proceeds went to help fund the Centennial Arena at the sports park, the VBA has raised more than \$1.2 million to put back into the community.

"We'll be happy when we can get back to helping the community," says Penner.



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Mexican workers coming, but facing travel delays

Penny Coles
The Local

While seasonal workers have been arriving from the Caribbean beginning their quarantine period, growers

whose offshore help comes from Mexico are still waiting, expecting it to be at least another week before they begin to arrive.

Grape grower Matthias Oppenlaender, also chair

of the Grape Growers of Ontario, says the Mexican government is mostly shut down, and has been slower in releasing the permits that allow their workers to leave for Canada. He believes it's

also taking time to arrange the paperwork that will allow the planes to fly into Mexico to pick them up.

Since the government announced they would be permitted to come to Canada, FARMS, a resource organization for farmers, has been working out the logistics, but it's been slow going, he said.

"They are coming, it's just taking a little longer than expected."

He is expecting about 12 workers, only half what he would normally have in the vineyards at this time of year, but he is spacing out their arrival. He has three bunkhouses, and with fewer

workers, that will give them more room and make it easier for them during their 14-day quarantine, he says.

Some of them have been coming since 2004, and are trained both in the work and the use of equipment. It's important to have that core group, he says.

But he is also training some local workers — he always does, he says, to do some hand work — but this year will hire more than usual, "as long as they will come out. They have anxiety as well."

The offshore workers don't require training, "and the work has to be done

right, and done at the right time."

It's easy to keep a physical distance once they're working in the vineyards, he added.

He is prepared to do the shopping and ensure his workers have all the supplies they need when they arrive, and once they're done their isolation, they will have to either order online for delivery, or send one person to shop for the group. They won't be going into town together, as they have other years.

"We will make sure we all stay safe and healthy," he says.

'Time to give back,' says grape grower

Penny Coles
The Local

Local grape growers benefit from their community, and it's time to give back to that community, says the chair of the Grape Growers of Ontario.

The organization made "an easy decision" to support those affected by COVID-19, through a generous donation to fund the purchase of a \$66,000 ventilator for the Niagara Health system, says Matthias Oppenlaender, a local grape grower, and chair of the provincial association.

"This is where we live and work and raise our families, and this pandemic has affected all of us in some way," says Oppenlaender.

Last week, he decided the Grape Growers of Ontario "needed to do something to

help. We live in this community, and we rely on the community to support us, to buy our product. We say buying local matters, so giving back also matters."

There was no hesitation when he mentioned to members that now is the time to help the community, he says.

"There was no discussion. They very quickly agreed. It made me very proud to be the chair of the Grape Growers," says Oppenlaender.

"This was an opportunity, actually a responsibility to help out during these difficult times."

The donation has been made out of the Grape Growers' general fund to the Niagara Health Foundation, which is fundraising through an online community campaign to help purchase equipment

to support Niagara hospitals, medical teams and patients.

The Grape Growers of Ontario is also encouraging industry partners, businesses and suppliers to "step up and invest in needed resources for Ontario communities to tackle COVID-19," says Oppenlaender.

"The amount doesn't matter. What matters is being there for the community. It doesn't have to be a ventilator. Any donation will help purchase personal protective equipment, masks, whatever is needed. Locals giving back matters now."

To learn more or donate, please visit, www.SupportNHF.com.

Funds raised will directly help patients at Niagara Health who have been diagnosed with the virus.

B.C. migrant workers test positive for COVID-19

Penny Coles
The Local

Reports from Kelowna, B.C., indicate a group of Mexican seasonal workers are in self-isolation after being tested for COVID-19.

The workers all work for a family-owned nursery, and live in on-site housing.

B.C. health officials have described accommodations as very good, with enough space for each worker to safely self-isolate.

There are varying reports

about 14 or 19 workers out of a group of 63 who have tested positive. There has been no indication of how they contracted the virus.

Advocates for seasonal agricultural workers are asking for increased inspections of housing, but there is no indication that insufficient housing was behind the spread.

There are 60,000 workers who come to Canada each year, and the federal government has announced a stringent protocol for protecting the health of workers, with added responsibility for farmers.

FARMS, a national resource organization for farmers, says farmers are responsible for regularly monitoring the health of workers, and are also expected to provide information on COVID-19 in a language the workers understand.

Farmers must also ensure all seasonal workers have the tools to practise good hygiene, and must be able to isolate arriving workers in accommodations that are separate from those not self-isolating, including finding alternate accommodations, such as a hotel, if necessary.



Matthias Oppenlaender works in his vineyard, hoping his skilled Mexican workforce will arrive next week. (Photo supplied)



Town Enforcing Contraventions of Emergency Orders Relating to COVID-19

By ministerial designation under the *Provincial Offences Act*, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake's By-Law Enforcement Officers have been authorized to enforce *Emergency Management and Civil Protections Act* Orders. This action positions the Town to ensure that the Orders set out by the Provincial government are adhered to. Fines range from \$750 to \$1,000.

Three (3) noteworthy Emergency Orders, enforceable by Niagara-on-the-Lake's Municipal By-law Enforcement Officers, include:

- Closure of Public Places & Establishments
- Prohibiting Events & Gatherings of More than Five (5) People
- Prohibiting Unfair Pricing on Necessary Goods

Community members looking to report a business or individual(s) operating in contravention of Emergency Orders, are asked to contact Niagara-on-the-Lake By-law Enforcement by email (covidcomplaints@notl.com), phone (905-468-3266), or online complaint form at notl.com.

DO NOT call 911 to report these concerns. After hours complaints or urgent issues can be reported by calling the Niagara Regional Police Services non-emergency line at 905-688-4111.

To review all Town updates related to COVID-19, read answers to frequently asked questions, and see up-to-date information on the status of Town services, please visit www.notl.com/COVID-19, or call 905-468-3266. Town Staff will continue to assist and serve citizens online and over the phone between the hours of 8:30 AM and 4:30 PM Monday to Friday.

Work out, stay healthy



Karolyne Surowka of Klean teaches yoga and personal training in her home studio, and is using Instagram at the moment to offer free live workouts. She limits the equipment she uses so everyone can join in — such as wine bottles doubling for dumbbells. Surowka has also teamed up with Paddle Niagara's Tim Bala to do Movement Monday videos to help people work out at home and to boost morale. Their recent video can be viewed at <https://share.icloud.com/photos/0ncb35ALhSDvWzBwNlWpJPJzg>. (Photo supplied)

EDITORIAL

With love, caring and compassion, we'll endure

At this point during the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us have settled into a routine, for some much more difficult than others.

Most of us are willingly consenting to the isolation imposed on us. We've been told repeatedly the best way to end this, sooner rather than later, is to do what we're told, to hunker down and protect each other. We are warned that the coming weeks could be grim, and the actual numbers will be telling.

There have been more shut-downs, more layoffs, more people affected financially, and we expect it to get worse before it gets better. In a town where the main industries are hospitality and tourism, the economic recovery is not going to be easy. When this is over, the return to business as usual will be gradual.

But there is much to feel good about. Residents are helping residents and supporting businesses, many are offering free, online, virtual services to help keep us healthy and engaged, and businesses are helping out wherever they can. The community is showing its love and compassion for each other.

There are many great stories, one of the best from the NOTL Public Library, where we learned Tuesday, staff have taken home 3D printers to make face shields for health care workers. Also, library staff are reaching out by phone to those they know to be isolated, just to check up on them.

We keep hearing about mask shortages: Dr. Re-

becca Zabek-Clark and Dr. Kevin Clark from Niagara-on-the-Lake Dental recently donated 500 surgical masks to the NOTL Fire Department.

From Eileen Pillitteri-Smith at Seaway Market, a story some will have seen on social media, but we keep reminding ourselves there are many in the community who are not privy to all the information online, so we'll share the details. With off-shore workers requiring supplies, Pillitteri-Smith couldn't find all she needed online. She shared her concern with a friend, who shared it with Paul Harber of Ravine Vineyard, its restaurant shut down. That same afternoon he showed up with the items, and, when asked for an invoice, he refused payment — he just wanted to help out, he said.

John and Anna Petrie of Niagara Trailers are lending trailers to frontline healthcare workers in isolation, so they can be separate but near their families. How amazing is that!

So many volunteers and groups are standing ready to help out when needed, including with food delivery. There is a list on the Town website at <https://notl.org/content/community-assistance>. If you cannot access it and you need help, call 905-468-3266.

Our hearts break for all who are struggling, but none more so than our vulnerable seniors who don't all have access to the information they need online.

We've asked before, and

we ask again, if you know someone who fits that category, please give them a call, or slip any information you think they might need, such as a print-out of the Town's list of volunteers offering community assistance, under their door or in their mailbox. They, like most of us, may be glued to CBC or CNN news, but they're not necessarily hearing what they need to know about their little corner of the world.

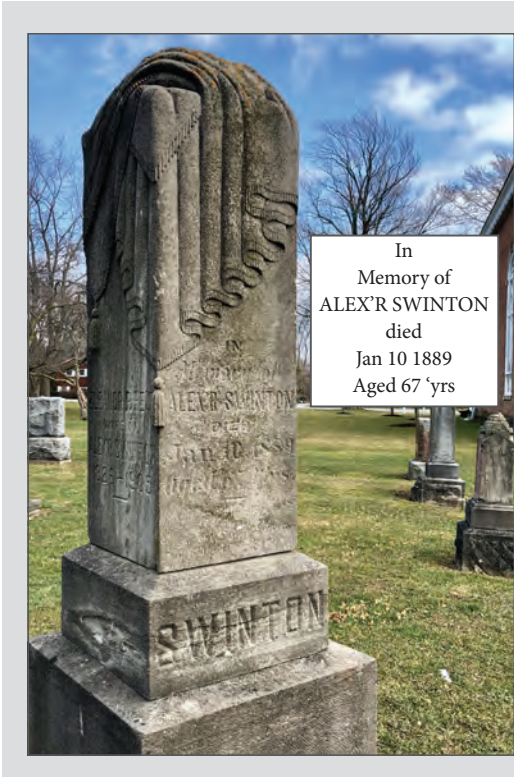
We're doing our best to get that information out in The Local, although like many businesses still operating, we're working with limited resources. Many of our advertisers who have shown amazing support are closed. That means a 12-page paper this week, and less news than we would usually print.

This is a difficult time for so many, but please, reach out if you need help. We'll get through this together, and when we do, it will be because we will still have what is most important: family, friends, colleagues, and a compassionate, caring community.

You don't have to be a royalist to love the message the Queen shared on Sunday, comparing what we are going through to the wartime years, which were longer, harder, and only a few can remember. There is still more to endure, she said, but there are better days ahead.

She ended with what could be a rallying cry for all of us: we'll meet again.

Penny Coles
The Local



LOCAL FINDS

Decorative monument in St. Andrew's cemetery

by Donald Combe
Special to The Local

This shroud-topped pillar in St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Cemetery memorializes Alexander Swinton, whom Janet Carnochan lavishly praised for his decorative designs for a ball in the Town Hall. She suggested that his taste in such matters could hardly be surpassed. I wonder if he designed his own monument.

Newark helping clients with Easter dinner

Laura Gibson
Special to The Local

Amid this difficult, but necessary disruption to our daily lives, supporting our food clients is our first priority.

With the help of our food managers and a few volunteers, we continue to serve our food clients each Tuesday and Thursday morning from 9:30 a.m. until noon. This week we are going to be able to also provide our food clients with their Easter food hamper. We extend our sincere thanks to our regular suppliers who donate their time and products to fill these hampers to ensure our families enjoy a special Easter dinner.

We are definitely seeing the best in each other and in our caring community. The shelves in our food room were slowly depleting, however our amazing community is responding to our request for help by dropping off food donations and sending us monetary donations.

A big thank you to all those who have donated food, and those who have sent us a financial donation to help purchase groceries for our food bank. We are truly grateful of your support.

Our thrift shop remains closed until further notice, however we are safely accepting non-perishable food donations at our 310 John Street location each Tuesday and Thursday morning between 10 a.m. and noon. Financial donations can also be made by mailing a cheque to Newark Neighbours, 454 Mississauga St., Suite 150, P.O. Box 1090, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, L0S 1J0, or through a

secure system on our website at newarkneighbours.ca.

To each of you, we wish good health and safe keeping, and we thank you again for your continued support.



Volunteers Susan Sparrow-Mace and Francyne Chenier stock food shelves at Newark Neighbours. (Photo supplied)

The NOTL Local acknowledges the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, many of whom continue to live and work here today. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and is within the land protected by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum agreement. Today this gathering place is home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and acknowledging reminds us that our great standard of living is directly related to the resources and friendship of Indigenous peoples.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake

LOCAL

The trusted voice of our community

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Nature gets a breather from nature-lovers



Owen Bjorgan
Special to The Local

The news world hits us quickly on a regular day, but now the updates come just as quickly.

They also hit our very personal lives from angles we least expected. I have been trying to keep up with the current updates, and the closures of Niagara's green and natural spaces have given me a lot to chew on this week, as I believe they have shone a light on how we mentally prioritize nature.

First, the schools, pubs, and shops closed, so parents and social groups flocked to the outdoors. Did parents hitting the trails have an epiphany as to how fun, cheap, and healthy this is for a family and kids? Do people as a whole have about a million other hobbies and occupations that may have smothered the idea of going outdoors in Niagara? Probably so!

For a very brief moment, people were reminded such

areas are available for their enjoyment and well-being. A moment outdoors to breathe in fresh air, play with boldness, and get away from screen time for a bit.

"School's out, forever," as the song goes. And now, "Nature's out, forever?"

Well, that depends who you ask. It is unknown how long the closures of the Bruce Trail, the Niagara Parks Commission, and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority's main outdoor properties will remain in place.

When the closures hit, social media showcased how some blatantly disobeyed the signs, which may bring a powerful glimpse into our deeper relationship with nature regarding its ownership, and how we perceive that as individuals. Some feel saddened and restricted by the loss of their ultimate pastime. Some see it as a last escape, when all other options are off the table, or perhaps a place to get out of home for an afternoon.

Nature is the only thing that humans didn't create, but can suddenly be owned and therefore controlled. That's where

my mind is at! I will personally miss the natural hotspots that deliver, every time I visit them. Does that mean I would break the law to go hiking in my personal favourite area in Niagara? No way. These closures also go to show you the monumental influence of the organizations which oversee the affected areas, as these properties serve to protect biodiversity while spring continues to take off full throttle, minus the busy voices, boots, and roads.

Watching the fishing rods line up and the conservation area parking lots reach capacity two weeks ago was likely a phenomenon composed of three categories.

First, your outdoors enthusiasts who fish, hike, or bike on any day of the season. They are already there. Then, you've got people who have always loved such activities, and suddenly found themselves with the time to indulge. Sadly, this newfound free time likely came with a financial cost at home.

I believe where it really got tricky is when category three, those who normally haven't ventured outdoors, showed up in waves and likely stressed the

ecosystems, and added a sudden volume of people in close contact – even outside.

Objectively speaking, the closed areas are Niagara's most biodiverse and enjoyable nature spaces. One of the best ways to customize your own trail now is to walk in town close to wooded neighbourhoods and low traffic. We may have to make do with that, but it certainly doesn't compare to the wondrous waterfalls and cathedrals of trees tucked away into Short Hills Provincial Park, the Niagara Gorge, or Wainfleet Bog.

There are peer-reviewed studies which show that humans exposed to areas of higher biodiversity and of greater ecosystem health, experience greater physical and mental changes than in a park or an inner-city creek. These changes are to do with reported mood, reduced blood pressure, and molecular parameters within the body. We literally feel more alive in relatively "wilder" spaces.

From someone whose skin has seen a lot of mud and sun and snow, I understand that biologically healthier ecosystems also feel healthier to people.



Owen Bjorgan gives a thumbs-up in Short Hills Provincial Park before it was closed. He says he "remains hopeful that nature gets the breather it deserves while we sort out the best way to deal with COVID-19."

Little woodlots crammed into urban areas or exposed to outside stressors emulate the vibe of a traumatized person. Or perhaps, they are unoriginal and boring. Sure enough, nine times out of 10, a quick peek into these ecosystems reveals that my gut feeling was correct. They are often overrun with invasive species, litter, and present very little wildlife or plant diversity. They don't compete with our conservation areas and other hiking trails that are officially closed.

I know it is my best place

for recharging and healing. Not just in the tree-hugging, spiritual image, but as a human. What is deemed as an essential under the title of a pharmacy, or exercise, can be found on the shelves and in the gymnasiums of the woods.

The natural areas were shut down due to COVID-19, not because it hides on the bark or the moss of the escarpment, but people had momentarily overcrowded our trails and parking lot systems, and a high

Continued on page 8

Library offering check-in calls to those not online



Debbie Krause
NOTL Public Library

My last column was a mere three months ago, and yet the world has changed dramatically since then.

I'm sure not many of us could have imagined the life we are living today. I wish this was simply a strange, unsettling disruption to our normal lives, but the reality is we are all rightfully worried and scared for our own health and the health of our loved ones. I am fortunate to be able to continue to work every day. My home office is the dining room table, overlooking vineyards across the street. We are truly lucky to live in such a beautiful town, as it makes iso-

lation a little easier to bear.

I, along with my colleagues, have been busy bringing the library and its resources to you through our website and social media pages. However, as proud as I am of our staff for putting together what I consider to be very innovative and creative programming in such difficult circumstances, no virtual book club, video chat gathering, livestream tutorial or online discussion can replace the value of face-to-face connection.

We have not forgotten that many of our regulars have little or no access to these online activities. We are painfully aware there are many in our community we cannot reach. I have compiled a list, with the help of staff, of some of our most vulnerable members. I and a team of volunteers will be calling them to check in and chat on a regular basis. This list is definitely not exhaustive, and

therefore I ask that if you, or someone you know, is feeling especially isolated, or is in need of assistance, please call the library at 1-289-401-3216, or email us at notllibrary@gmail.com. Due to reduced staffing levels, telephone and live chat will be answered Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

What you can expect to find online: Over the last couple of weeks, the library staff has been working hard to create a new normal, finding ways to reach the community with online resources and innovative programs. In addition to all of the e-resources available through our website 24/7, we have created a weekly schedule of online events and activities to help you pass the time and stay connected to the community. Let me give you a quick run-down of what we've got planned.

Every Sunday we are host-

ing "Brunch with Miles" on Facebook. Miles Suhaimi, sous-chef at Queen's Landing, demonstrates how to make delicious and unique dishes using common ingredients from your pantry. You can catch his demo at 10:30 a.m., or find it on the library's YouTube channel at your convenience. So far, we've learned how to make Eggs Benedict and Trinidadian Doubles. Yum!

On Mondays, join us as we Livestream Create with Kasia, an all-ages, step-by-step art demonstration. No need for special supplies, projects are easily adaptable to what you have on hand. We'd love to see your creations, so be sure to share them with us.

For children and families, the library is offering Mine-craft club, STEAM Challenges and Storytime, online chess tournaments and Trivia Time. Tinker Thinker has moved

from the Rotary room to your living room, and Family Fun Fridays promise to be a blast. Days and times and any special instructions can be found on the library's Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/notllibrary/>.

For those who do not have children to entertain, the library has created online programming just for you. Library IT staff will be available on Tuesdays at 3 p.m. to help with your technology needs. Ask anything, from how to video chat with your family to where to find more e-resources. This extra IT support will hopefully make it possible for more people to easily access all the virtual activities the library has planned, such as Tuesday Trivia, adult online chess tournaments, Shelf Isolation – an informal online book chat, and Fitness Fridays. To connect with some of our local experts, please participate in

Ask me Anything Facebook forum Wednesdays. This week we welcome chef Miles to answer all of your cooking questions. On April 15 at 2 p.m., local history/genealogy expert, David Hemmings will be joining us. Be prepared to ask him anything about researching family history, DNA testing, tips for using ancestry.com. He will be happy to answer.

Additional AMAs will be announced over the next few weeks. If you would like to participate in your own AMA and receive questions from the community, please contact me at dkrause@notlpl.org.

A fully updated schedule of events will be posted on the library's Facebook page at the beginning of each week. Please follow us. We'd love to hear from you at <https://www.facebook.com/notllibrary/>.

Stay home, stay well and we will see you again soon.

On behalf of our community, thank you to our front-line healthcare workers, businesses and so, so many others for coming together in this tough time.



If you can safely, please continue to support our local small businesses and local papers!

Wayne Gates

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Online learning a challenge, but the only option for now



Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

These are unprecedented times. I know you've heard that phrase and seen it in print dozens, if not hundreds of times over the past four weeks, and you are most likely sick of hearing it.

I can confirm, though, that in my 28-year career as a secondary school teacher, I've never experienced a school year such as this one.

When the Ministry of Education announced on March 12 that Ontario's publicly funded

schools would remain closed for two weeks following March Break, students everywhere were smiling.

There weren't too many teachers happy about the news, though.

In a school year filled with labour strife, there had already been too many days missed with rotating strikes. Adding another 10 days off would force us to scramble even harder to deliver important curricula.

And when Education Minister Stephen Lecce announced that the closure would extend to at least May 4, students started seriously fretting about losing their year or, in the case of high school, their semester.

With social distancing in effect, the Class of 2020 graduates

shared their anxiety over their social media accounts.

"What will this mean to my university or college acceptances?"

"I can't believe I can't see my friends in the last few months of high school."

"What about prom?"

If you have school-aged children, some time during those two weeks off you may have heard your child say "I miss school." I know I have.

So, it was a relief in many ways when Lecce announced a continuation of learning with online lessons to begin April 6.

Oh, the irony!

At the secondary school level, one of the biggest sticking points in contract negotiations between the Province and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF) has been mandatory e-learning. Now, one of the major bones of contention was necessarily becoming the solution in COVID-19 times.

E-learning has been available, at least at the high school level, for many years. It can be a viable solution for those students who feel anxiety stepping into a crowded classroom. As well, in some smaller schools, it can make it possible for students to enrol in classes not offered at their site.

For many years now, I have used our District School Board of Niagara online platform, De-

sire 2 Learn (D2L), to post every lesson I deliver in class. It is an important tool to support what I teach in person during the school day.

But it takes a disciplined student to get through an e-learning course successfully. Many who thrive in a traditional classroom stumble online. And, believe it or not, there are many students in Niagara without access to reliable equipment and internet to participate in online learning effectively.

Nothing can truly take the place of face-to-face learning. Online courses take the human element out of the equation, and for me, that has always been the most important element in any class I have taught.

Here we are now, with schools closed, and some form of online learning being the

only option for continuing to teach students.

Teachers in the DSBN spent the week before April 6 contacting students and parents, with two goals in mind: to ensure they knew about the online plan, and to gauge their need for technology.

At Laura Secord Secondary School, where I teach, that resulted in a list of more than 90 students, or about 15 per cent of our student body, with some form of technology shortcoming at home. It pretty much proved the OSSTF's point about equity related to mandatory e-learning courses.

But kudos to the school boards across the province, who stepped up, rallying together to collect and distribute chromebooks, laptops and other equipment to students who needed it.

And to the teachers as well, who made every effort to contact their students to get them all on board for the continuation of learning.

Beginning this past Monday, teachers of all grades began stepping out of their comfort zones, learning new techniques and placing lessons online for students to access.

Will it be successful? It remains to be seen, but it's the only option right now.

It's a new frontier for both educators and students. No one can predict when a return to school will actually happen. But for the time being, teachers, school boards and the government are all working together to accomplish what each has been claiming to want all along - to do what's best for students.

Check updates

Continued from page 7

risk for spread was possible.

I see a larger picture at play, one of irony. Across the Niagara Region, over the decade, natural ecosystems of all quantities and qualities have been targeted for their removal. Some of these land battles are ongoing. In a moment of sunshine, the open trails and deep green pockets reminded us that we really appreciate them and need them as well. Even the very last few, as we're

learning.

If you're itching to hike or walk locally, make sure you check in on the updated laws as to which trails and their associated parking lots are closed. Days are strange, but they will become stranger when you become the first person to get fined for a solo nature walk. If you do walk, stay close to home, and keep your distance from others.

Meanwhile, open up your lungs to the spring air, and your hearts to those who need you.





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Shaw 'needs help soon to remain solvent'

Local staff

The Shaw Festival is extending the cancellation of all performances and public events until June 30.

This decision is in response to the Town's declaration of a state of emergency, and cancellation of all events, meetings and programmings to the same day, the Shaw announced Monday.

The Festival will continue to monitor the situation for addi-

tional cancellations, the release said.

"The Shaw Festival is committed to paying the almost 400 company members who are currently on the payroll, through to April 19, and will continue to evaluate payroll on a week-by-week basis," the release said.

The Festival will not be recalling company members currently scheduled to start after April 12, until the company

is able to return to the stage, impacting about 48 company members.

"These increased measures and the loss of so much of the season are deeply upsetting. We are dedicated to supporting all of our company members as best we can. We continue to work closely with government agencies around the various new programs being put in place and also with our bank, funding agencies and other

business partners to do what we can to remain solvent," said Tim Jennings, Shaw executive director and CEO. "That said, we have stretched our resources nearly to the breaking point, and need this outside help to come very soon if we are to maintain that solvency."

In these difficult times, Jennings said, "we have been humbled and honoured by the tremendous support we've received from our patrons, neigh-

bours in Niagara and the theatre community. On behalf of all of us at The Shaw, I want to say thank you. You bolster our spirits every day and we look forward to the time when we can gather together in our theatres again."

The box office is closed by provincial order, but a small team of box office representatives are working remotely to contact ticket holders, offering them refunds or exchanges.



Tim Jennings paints a grim picture as he announces the Shaw Festival will remain closed at least until June 30.

Penner's offering parking lot sales Town buses stop rolling Thursday

Penny Coles The Local

With Friday's provincial announcement of further workplace closures, Penner's Building Centre is closing its retail store at the end of the day Saturday.

It plans to stay open for curbside pickup and delivery to customers, beginning Monday, which is still permitted, says Marcia Penner of the family business.

In his announcement Friday, Premier Doug Ford said his government was prepared to take "every step possible" to flatten the curve of the spread of COVID-19, and is asking businesses to do the same.

"We're announcing the closure of many more sectors of the economy, and I can tell you

this was no easy task."

The new closures are effective 11:59 p.m. Saturday, April 4, for a period of two weeks. Of those ordered to close, some, such as hardware stores, and those who sell vehicle, animal, office, computer and safety supplies, will be allowed to continue curbside pickups and deliveries.

The local Home Hardware store had already been taking measures to make the retail area safer for customers, says Penner. They have installed plexiglass at check-outs, have been limiting the number of customers in the store at one time, and have taped the floor to indicate physical distancing of customers.

"We've also been disinfecting the store constantly," she says.

They have also hired a security company to ensure the



Penner Building Centre is shuttered, but can continue offering parking lot sales and deliveries. (Penny Coles)

limit to in-store customers was followed, and plan to implement that Saturday, their last day open, which they expect to be a busy one.

Call 905-468-3242 to order

and arrange a pick-up time.

For further information about what is considered an essential business, visit <https://www.ontario.ca/page/list-essential-workplaces>.

Local staff

The Town is putting its public transit system on hold.

The Town's emergency control group, which includes Lord Mayor Betty Disero, CAO Sheldon Randall and Fire Chief Nick Ruller, made the decision out of concern for the health and safety of maintaining operations, and also because of the recent decline in ridership.

Buses will stop rolling Thursday, April 9.

As the Town's state of emergency continues, this suspension of service is another way to protect Niagara-on-the-Lake from the spread of COVID-19, a Town announcement said Monday.

Residents requiring assistance with grocery delivery and shopping support are encouraged to visit the Town's website to take advantage of the community assistance program.

All Town updates on COVID-19, including how to access volunteer support, are available at notl.com/COVID-19, or call 905-468-3266.

Phones are being answered between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, and online service requests remain available at notl.org/content/service-request.

Visit www.canada.ca/coronavirus for the most up to date information from the federal government.



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OBITUARIES



JOYCE GERTRUDE RICHES (NEE BAILEY). NOVEMBER 4, 1928 TO APRIL 4, 2020.—Joyce was born in St. Catharines to Sidney and Elsie Bailey on November 4, 1928. She was predeceased by her husband James Riches, her brothers Roy Bailey and Eric Bailey, and her step-daughter Virginia White. She is survived by her daughter Lee-Anne Penner, son Les Penner; step-children Deloris (Les) Welgan, James (Julie) Riches, and Gail (Russ) Ganske; her grandchildren Christine (Adam) Prest, Emily (Paul) Harris; and many great-grandchildren. Family was very important to our mother, and she will be deeply missed by us all.

Our mother loved life, and she fought to hold on until the very end. Joyce was a strong woman who overcame many difficult challenges in her life. She had a great curiosity and a deep love of the natural world, which helped her through these challenges. She explored this love through travels, camping trips, picnics with friends, hikes in the forest, visits to animal sanctuaries, and then, when she was more housebound, through feeding the birds and squirrels on her patio, and watching nature documentaries.

She was an avid gardener with a brilliant green thumb. Joyce cultivated indoor plants to the extent that her house resembled a tropical greenhouse. She would head outside as soon as the spring weather permitted and spent hours upon hours planting, cultivating, pruning, and nurturing. Her flower beds glowed and her vegetable garden yielded beautiful produce that she would store up for the cold months ahead.

Joyce was a woman of faith. Her church community – Cornerstone Community Church – consisted of a group of people with whom she could connect, provide support when she was able, and then receive support when she could no longer lend a hand. A few examples of the ways her faith was put into practice were volunteering with Meals on Wheels, feeding residents at Heritage Place (Pleasant Manor), and baking for MCC fundraisers.

One of Joyce's favourite hymns was "How Great Thou Art". When you listen to these words in the future, please have our mother in your hearts. *When through the woods and forest glades I wander. And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees. When I look down, from lofty mountain grandeur. And see the brook, and feel the gentle breeze. Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee. How great Thou art, how great Thou art. Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee. How great Thou art, how great Thou art!*

There are so many people whom we want to thank from the bottom of our hearts. These are just a few of the many people, other than her dear friends, who supported and loved and cared for our mother in her final years:

- The fabulous PSWs and all other staff at Radiant Care Pleasant Manor who provided the best physical, spiritual and emotional care any family could ask for.
- The members of Cornerstone Community Church, who were always there for her.
- Dr. Dillon and Dr. Smith at Niagara North Family Health Team, Virgil site.
- Dr. Levesque, Oncologist at the Walker Family Cancer Centre, to whom we are forever grateful.
- The helpful and friendly drivers at the Canadian Cancer Society Wheels of Hope program and the Niagara Specialized Transit.
- The amazing, kind and patient staff at Simpson's Pharmacy.
- Lorraine Tonkens at the N-O-T-L Community Palliative Care Services, who began as a volunteer, and became a dear friend and lifeline to Joyce.

There will be no funeral service at this time. Please send donations to Radiant Care Foundation to support their truly wonderful work.

SPUREK, JEFFREY ANDREW — It is with great sadness that we announce the sudden passing of Jeff (Spureky) on April 5th, 2020 at Niagara Falls General Hospital at the age of 57.

Jeff was a kind and generous soul, he worked and lived in Niagara-on-the-Lake his entire life. He loved the outdoors, helping people and had a genuine kind heart. He worked many years, in the boat industry which he loved. For the last 15 years, Jeff worked for Dawland Farms and considered Donnie, Judy, Mark and the entire staff his friends and family, he will miss you all. Beloved fiancé of Joanne Mattei. Dear brother of Joanne Spurek-Nemeth (Steven), Brad Spurek (Elaine), Lisa Neudorf (Kevin). Jeff was predeceased by Brenda and James Driedger and parents Henry and Jane Spurek. He will be fondly remembered by Margaret Nicholson, Rick and Janis Corvino, Ralph Corvino, Eric, (Edwina) Amanda, (Alec) Mike (Kara), Jeff (Karlie), Ashley, Jayson (Brooke), Corey, David (Jordan), Jonathan (Jess). Cremation has taken place. A service to celebrate the life of Jeff will be held at a later date. Arrangements entrusted to Morgan Funeral Home, Niagara-on-the-Lake. Those who wish, may make a memorial donation to the Canadian Cancer Society. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com.



PUZZLE ANSWERS

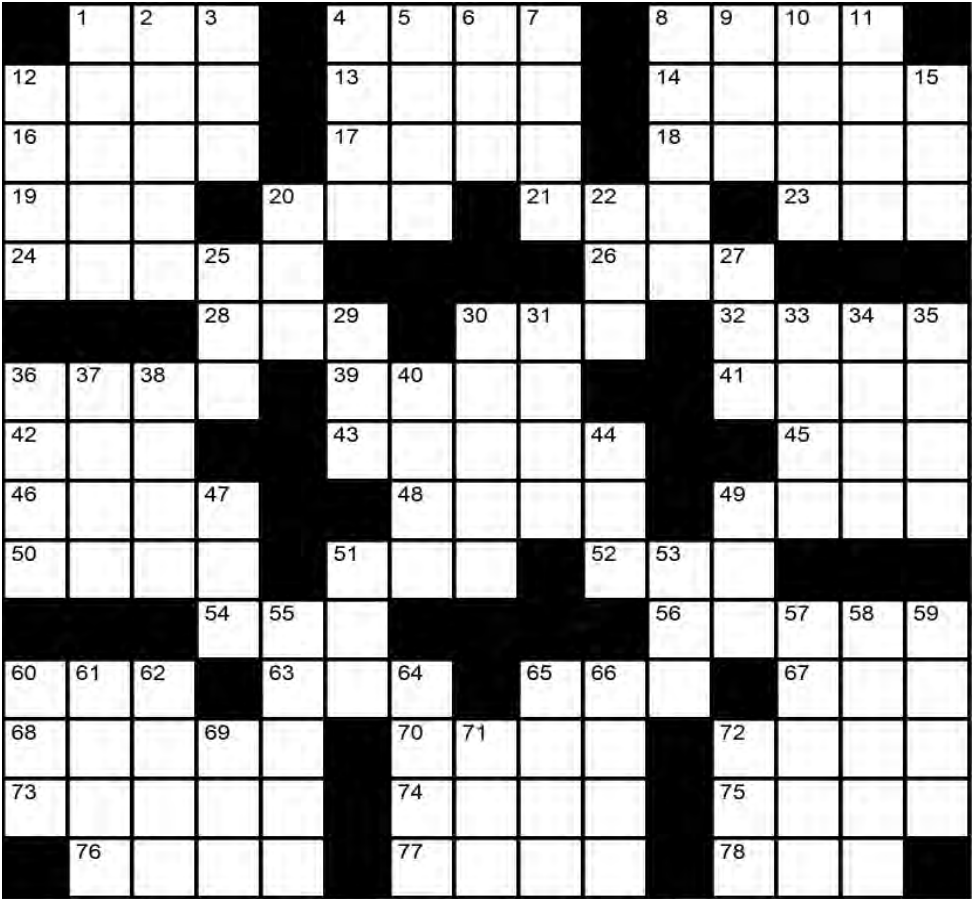
Sudoku solution from April 2, 2020

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	9	6	3	2	1

Across: 1 Cld, 4 Gash, 8 V I Ps, 12 Vase, 13 Edie, 14 Ideal, 16 Iran, 17 Rica, 18 Salve, 19 AAA, 20 Pen, 21 P D T, 23 Tex, 24 Lt Col, 26 Dab, 28 Wyo, 30 Sgt, 32 Itch, 36 Flan, 39 Fete, 41 Zero, 42 Oil, 43 Feral, 45 Rub, 46 Atom, 48 Lure, 49 Undo, 50 Meih, 51 M S T, 52 O A S, 54 Zoo, 56 Ibsen, 60 C D C, 63 Cos, 65 Ell, 67 P L O, 68 Orare, 70 Liza, 72 Hoes, 73 Tanya, 74 A cry, 75 Urge, 76 Been, 77 Peas, 78 Hey.

Down: 1 Carat, 2 Isaac, 3 Den, 4 Gere, 5 Ad in, 6 Sic, 7 Heap, 8 Vista, 9 Ida, 10 Pelt, 11 Save, 12 Vial, 15 Lex, 20 Pfy, 22 DDT, 25 Own, 27 Biz, 29 Off, 30 Shurt, 31 Gear, 33 Tern, 34 Crud, 35 Hobo, 36 Foam, 37 Lite, 38 A lot, 40 Eel, 44 Leo, 47 MHz, 49 U S B, 51 Moo, 53 All, 55 Ocean, 57 Spore, 58 Elegy, 59 Nose, 60 Cot, 61 Drab, 62 Cane, 64 Slap, 65 Ezra, 66 Lays, 69 Rye, 71 Ice, 72 Huh.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



- Across:**
- Spanish hero El ---
 - Deep cut
 - Big cheeses
 - Flower jar
 - Falco, Nurse Jackie
 - Paragon
 - Formerly Persia
 - Rich, in Spain
 - Soothing ointment
 - Small cell
 - Author
 - Oregon summer clock setting
 - Lone Star State (Abbr.)
 - One over a major
 - Small amount
 - Neighbor of Neb.
 - Noncom
 - Irritate
 - Open pastry dessert
 - Carnival
 - Nothing
 - Lubricate
 - Untamed
 - Chafe
 - Speck
 - Enticement
 - Software menu option
 - Crystal ---
 - Tucson time
 - West Atlantic international grp.
- Down:**
- Diamond weight unit
 - Writer --- Asimov
 - Room for relaxing
 - Buddhist actor Richard ---
 - Tennis server's edge
 - Attack command
 - Abundance
 - Grand view
 - Actress/director/producer --- Lupino
 - Bombard
 - Preserve
 - Pharmacist's container
 - Latin law
 - Menagerie
 - "A Doll's House" dramatist
 - Atlanta-based health grp.
 - Lettuce variety
 - Building extension at a right angle
 - Gaza Strip grp.
 - Pray in Latin
 - Minnelli with a zee
 - Weeders' tools
 - Country music's --- Tucker
 - "--- in the Dark" (Streep movie)
 - Appetite
 - "--- there, done that"
 - Podded vegetables
 - "--- Porter" (Johnny Cash song)
 - Provide
 - Banned insecticide
 - Possess
 - Show --- (entertainment industry)
 - Rancid
 - Support column
 - Apparatus
 - Slender fork-tailed gull
 - Gunk
 - Drifter
 - Floating bubbles
 - Low calorie variety
 - Loads
 - Long slippery fish
 - Fifth sign of the zodiac
 - Freq. unit
 - Type of computer connection
 - Low
 - Suffer
 - Huge amount
 - Pollen grain
 - Lament
 - Small winning margin
 - Military bed
 - Dingy
 - Malacca
 - Strike with an open hand
 - Writer --- Pound
 - Sung poems
 - Whiskey variety
 - Diamonds
 - Bewildered response

Rotary exchange program cut short by COVID-19

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

When Leah Klassen of Niagara-on-the-Lake left for the Netherlands on a Rotary exchange, she knew she was in for an adventure. She had no idea, of course, that her adventure would be cut short by a worldwide pandemic.

Klassen left home last Aug. 10, landing in the province of Noord-Brabant, where she would connect with the Rotary Club of Helmond-Regio. She settled in with her first host family, and began attending high school classes (Klassen graduated last June from Laura Secord Secondary School).

She quickly made new friends, and on weekends enjoyed trips sponsored by the Rotary Club to Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Aachen, Germany.

The avid equestrian was

even fortunate enough to be placed with a second host family who owned horses. The family kindly brought in a new horse named Daantje, and Leah was able to train and bond with her new equine friend.

After overcoming a brief battle with homesickness in October, she began to enjoy herself thoroughly, while having opportunities to meet other exchange students from around the world at Rotary gatherings and events.

Then, while home from school suffering from a cold in late February, a fellow student there was reported to have a case of the novel coronavirus. Klassen herself, luckily, showed no symptoms of COVID-19.

"I was very grateful that I was not at school during that period," she says. "My house mom and I made the decision to keep me home from

school, so I had not been out much for the past couple of weeks there."

The virus started spreading across the Netherlands, with her province being hit hardest. A quarantine was enforced in Helmond, and Rotary Club members from NOTL, who were planning to visit, were forced to cancel their trips.

Klassen was in frequent contact with her parents back in NOTL, as well as with the Rotary Club, and at first the decision was made to stay put. Flying home seemed to carry with it too many risks.

Says Patricia Murenbeeld, NOTL Rotary's youth committee chair, "as far as Rotary International was concerned, we were abiding by public policy and the World Health Organization, which all stipulated that it was safer to stay where you are than to travel."

But things began to change. Klassen, who had been in contact with other exchange students scattered across Europe, began to look at the availability of flights back to Canada. When Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stepped to the microphone in front of Rideau Hall on March 16, telling Canadians it was time to come home, her decision had been made.

She arrived in Toronto two days later, cutting her exchange stay short by more than three months. She's happy she's home, but the feeling is bittersweet, as her departure was so abrupt, she had little time to say goodbye.

It was a similar experience for Frida Nielsen, the 19-year-old student from Sweden sponsored by Rotary Niagara.

On March 13, when the Ministry of Education an-

nounced that schools would be closed for two weeks following March Break, Nielsen had already heard that other exchange students had begun to return home.

As the situation became more dire around the world that weekend, she began to worry she might miss her chance to get back to her family.

"It changed so quickly, that Monday, it was like they were closing the country," says Nielsen. "Then, that Wednesday, Sweden also said they were going to close their borders. So that's when I started freaking out, because what if I got sick in Canada, or someone in my family got sick in Sweden, we wouldn't be able to go see each other."

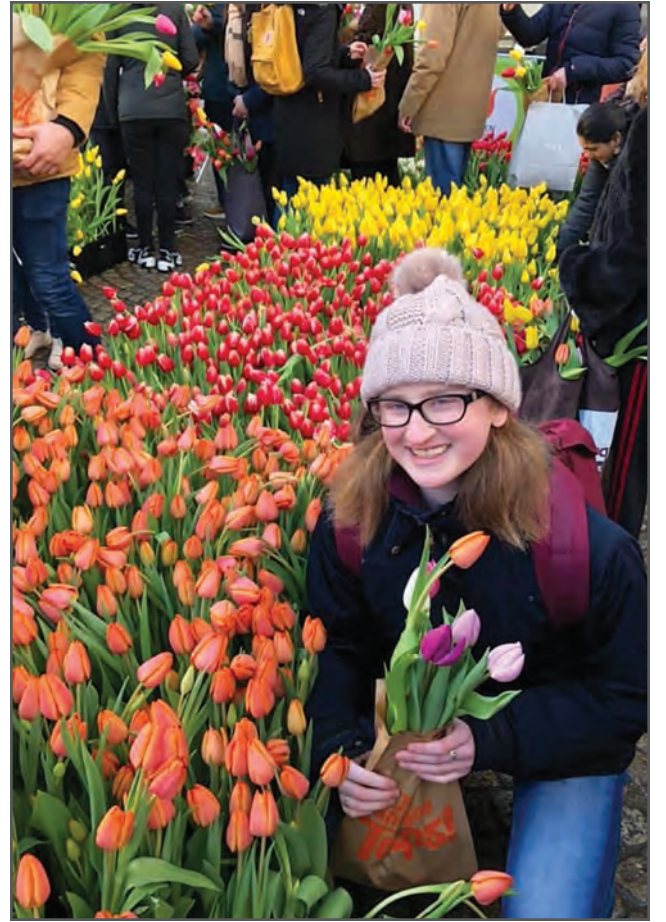
Nielsen flew back to Sweden March 21, and celebrated her 19th birthday with her family at their home in Hofors.

"I was really happy being home, but the sadness started kicking in a few days later," remembers Nielsen. "I am missing my Canadian friends, my host families, my Rotary Club, and I was looking forward to our Rotary New York trip (which was cancelled)."

The reality of the situation for both girls is, had they stayed put, they would be holed up with their host families for at least the month of April. It wouldn't have been the usual enriching Rotary Youth Exchange experience for either girl.

Murenbeeld is the Rotary District 7090 vice-chair for their Northern Europe Youth Exchange program. The district includes Rotary Clubs in Niagara, Hamilton/Brantford and Western New York.

This year there were 36 students involved in exchange-



Leah Klassen was grateful to get home after COVID-19 began to affect travel arrangements. (Photo supplied)

es: 18 outbound, and 18 inbound. Of that total, 13 are still here in North America, while three from local Rotary Clubs are still abroad.

Looking ahead, the COVID-19 pandemic is already affecting next year's exchanges. Murenbeeld says both Australia and Denmark have pulled out of the program, forcing one NOTL girl to postpone her exchange for a year. She's expecting more countries to make their final decisions at the end of April.

With schools currently closed, all four of next year's local outbound students may have to postpone their plans.

"When I get a student assigned to me, I need to go to the school's guidance

department and get a form stamped, then I march over to the school board to submit it to their international department," says Murenbeeld. "With schools closed, I can't get the documentation that is needed."

Other Rotary youth programs have fallen by the wayside this year, as well. Both the four-day Adventures in Citizenship Ottawa trip and the Slapshot leadership weekend were cancelled.

But Murenbeeld remains optimistic that these programs will be back next spring, although the uncertain length of time attached to today's current reality may put the exchange program on hold for 2020-2021.

Wayside chapel will remain quiet this Sunday

Penny Coles
The Local

The little white chapel that has been holding Easter morning services for more than 40 years will be quiet this Sunday.

The Living Water Wayside Chapel on the Niagara River Parkway usually attracts a good crowd for its annual dawn gathering, the only organized service held at the tiny church.

It's the first time a service has been cancelled, says Rick Meloen, one of the organizers and participants — they've

endured through all kinds of weather, with a crowd of about 50 people typically gathering outside to celebrate daybreak on Easter morning. But not through a pandemic.

While Easter service gatherings are cancelled across the country to prevent the spread of COVID-19, some are offering a virtual service, but Meloen says they don't have the technical experts to put that together, especially at such short notice.

It's disappointing to have to cancel the service, he says, but "we can only look forward to better times next year."



About 50 people gathered at the Living Water Wayside Chapel for last year's Easter service, although it was a dreary, rainy morning. There will be no service this Sunday. (File photo)

LOCAL WORSHIP

CORNERSTONE
COMMUNITY CHURCH

Sunday, April 12th

Please be advised that with the current state of COVID-19, your safety is of utmost importance to us. We will now be live streaming our service at 10:00 am on Sundays. There will be no in-person church service.

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