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.

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,”

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.”

Thank you to all the essential service providers for supporting our community.

905-468-3205 • notlrealty.com
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 Derozo 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. It is intended to control the spread over the next several weeks in order to determine how well Niagara will fare in the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a very serious 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 underlining the critical nature of the situation with everyone in the region. We know most of you are following the guidance of your public health ex- perts, 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 mayor 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 differ- ence by slowing the spread of the virus. We are all helping to pro- tect the health of your friends, families and neighbours.”

Those who are following the public health message, prac- tising 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 all of us safe, and we all need to step up and do our part to help keep them healthy.”

Ignoring the order to stay home and practice physical dis- tancing 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 Zuccheri.

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

That includes NOTL hav- ing the discretion “to make the de- termination of when it was best to declare a state of emergency based on certain conditions,” Zuccheri said, such as the high senior pop- ulation, and the number of re- turning tourists, “a situation that seemed to hold greater importance for NOTL than other munici- palities.”

It allows local municipalities to make local decisions, and a regional response to be made now on the advice of the region- al 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 go out ahead with the message to be more conscious about social and physical distancing,” says Zapega.

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

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 announce- ment 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 all of us safe. We will forever be in your debt.”

Residents, non-profit groups and social service clubs “are working hard in this pandemic to help those in need during difficult times.”

“We recognize these efforts and encourage those who are helping their neighbours in self-isolation due to age, or being at higher risk to keep in touch with them,” 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 the time. If you have family members or neighbours, close all non-essential businesses.”

Stay home as much as possible and only leave the house once a week if required for NOTL’s local food banks.”

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How best to care for elderly parent a difficult decision

Penny Coles

Trudy Walde’ celebrated her 100th birthday in February surrounded by family and friends 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 LTC facilities across the country, with an increasing number of seniors falling prey to the virus, some experts advising seniors falling prey to the virus, some experts advising

Trudy’s daughter Lou- ise Walde, and Louise’s hus- band 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 ad- vised “to rescue your parents when you can,” Louise said. The couple have talked it over at length, but with a small mul- tiple house, a bathroom might 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 appropri- ately 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’s easy to 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 further away, were in agree- ment that it was best for Trudy to live in the facility, she is now, Louise adds.

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

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

Remember to thank our front line workers and hands often.

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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 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.”

“Tests positive 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 Val’s Market as the “best case scenario.”

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

The employee who had worked at the grocery store on March 26, but that shift was in the back of the store, 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 says he is 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, including 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.

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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.

For the March 23 declaration of a state of emergency, Leboudec said 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, draw home the message, “stayathomewithou.”

The best way to stop the spread of this virus, he added, “is to stay home.”

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

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Grocery store given all-clear after employee tests positive

Thanks, Ruller kids!

Kevin Bayne shared his son Ben’s #stayathome poster. (Photo supplied)

Maxim, 10, Anastasia and Sofia, eight, and Sammy, seven, coloured their #stayathomewithou poster. (Photo supplied)

Thanks, Ben!

Enotl Town poster, sent to The Local by proud dad, NOTL Fire Chief Nick Ruller. (Photo supplied)

Thanks, Ruller kids!

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

#stayhomeNOnl

Your homes from your home.

Penny Coles
The Local

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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 #stayhome- end 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 together. We’ve been put into our lives. The kids are playing at all. As terrible as this pandemic is, I really feel our distance,” she says. “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 K. But if that was 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, 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 numbers and letters with his snacks instead, she says. “We’ll be happy when we don’t need to do this anymore,” 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 Virgil Stampede, a May long weekend tradition, has been cancelled. (File photo)
Penny Coles
The Local

Mexican migrant workers testing positive for COVID-19

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 of how many workers have tested positive, with numbers ranging from 13 to 63. According to the reports, the workers were brought in from Mexico to work on the farm, and were tested on arrival.

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

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

Town Enforcing Contraventions of Emergency Orders Relating to COVID-19

Three (3) noteworthy Emergency Orders, enforceable by Niagara-on-the-Lake’s 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’s 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 905-468-4111.

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.
At this point during the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us have settled into a routine, for some 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 tough, 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 businesses and supporting industries, 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 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. Rebeca Zabel-Clark and Dr. Kevin Clark from Niagara-on-the-Lake Dental recently donated 500 surgical masks to the NOTL Fire Department. From Eileen Pilitter-Smith at Sawwy Mariah, a story some will have seen on social media, but we keep reminding ourselves there are many where they who are not privy to all the information online, so we’ll share the details. With offshore workers requiring supplies, Pilitter-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 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 they think 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, 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
On behalf of our community, thank you to our front-line healthcare workers, businesses and so, many others coming together in this tough time, if you can safely, please continue to support our local small businesses and local papers!
Online learning a challenge, but the only option for now

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 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 impending e-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 hang to the spring air, and your lungs to the spring air, and your hearts to those who need you. For many years now, I have used our District School Board of Niagara online platform, Desire 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 internet and equipment to participate in online learning effectively.

Continued from page 7

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

Check updates

Thank you

Home Delivery, parking lot pick up, online shopping ... we are here for you

Order Online and Pick-up In-store or
FREE Local Wine Delivery To NOTL, Virgil, Queenston & St. Davids. Minimum 2 bottles. Order and Pay Online. Check our website for full details about both of these options, as well as our current store hours. The Farmhouse Café is currently closed due to COVID-19.

Caroline Cellars Winery

1010 Line 2, NOTL 905.468.3314 | www.CarolineCellars.com

Creek Road Paints

1573 Four Mile Creek Road, Virgil

Creek Road Paints is still mixing things up!
We ask you to try our CURBSIDE SERVICE or FREE Home Delivery

We will be offering curbside pick-up between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m., and FREE Home Delivery from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Orders can be called or texted to 905-329-2077 or emailed to creekroadpaints@cogeco.net.

Creek Road Paints

Welcome to our online store where you can order paint, primer and supplies just by clicking your mouse. Check out our full selection of products including wall paint, primer, paint rollers, brushes and more from the comfort of your home. We offer free shipping on orders over $100.00. If your order is less than $100.00, a $15.00 shipping fee will be added to your order. Your order will be shipped to your delivery address using Canada Post. Orders over $100.00 will be shipped free of charge. Please note that orders cannot be shipped to PO Boxes.

1573 Four Mile Creek Road, Virgil

Harvest Barn

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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 programming to the same day, the Shaw announced Monday.

The Festival will continue to monitor the situation for additional 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, neighbours in Niagara and the theatre community. On behalf of all of us at The Shaw, I want to say thank you. You believe our spirit 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 is working remotely to contact ticket holders, offering refunds or exchanges.

Penney 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 do “every step possible” to flatten the curve of the spread of COVID-19, and is asking businesses to do the same.

“We are announcing the closure of many more sectors of the economy, and I can tell you this was no easy task,” the premier said.

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.

“We’ve also been disinfecting all our stores constantly,” she says. “We have installed plexiglass at check-outs, have limited 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.

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

Penner’s offering parking lot sales

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, their last day open, which they expect to be a busy one.

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Town buses stop rolling Thursday

Local staff

The Town is putting its public transit system on hold.

The Town’s emergency control group, which includes Lord Mayor Betty Dufton, 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.

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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 905-468-5266.

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.com/content/service-request.

Visit www.canada.ca/coronavirus for the most up to date information from the federal government.
April 9, 2020

**OBITUARIES**

JOYCE GERTRUDE RICHES (NEE BAILEY), NOVEMBER 4, 1928 TO APRIL 4, 2020—Joyce was born in St. Catharines to Sidney and Elisie Bailey on November 4, 1928. She was predeceased by her husband James Riches, her brothers Roy Bailey and Eric Bailey, and her sister daughter Virginia White. She is survived by her daughter Lee-Anne Penner, son Lee Penner, step-children Deklos (Les) Welsgan, James (Julie) Riches, and Gail (Russ) Ganske; her grandchildren Christine (Adam) Prest, Emily (Paul) Harris; and many great-grandchildren. Family was very important to Joyce 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 travel, cooking, and visits to animal sanctuaries, and then, when she was more housebound, through feeding the birds and squirrels on her patio, and watching nature documentaries.

Joyce was a woman of faith. Her church community — Cornerstone Community Church — consisted of a group of people with whom she felt connected, providing 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.
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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 Daldaw 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.

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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 bout 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 trip.

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

Says Patricia Murenbeeld, NOTL Rotary youth committee chair, “as far as Rotary International was concerned, ‘in-person church service.’

“The reality of the situation for both girls is, had they stayed put, they would have been bored with their host families for at least the month of March. They make their own decisions at the end 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 exchanges. 18 outbound, and 18 inbound. Of that total, 13 are still here in North America, three 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 check 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.

“But 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.

Penney 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 about 50 people typically for an in-person church service.

It’s been a tradition for many years for the chapel to celebrate Easter with the current state of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

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