



Cass celebrating 100th birthday soon

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notllocal.com APRIL 12, 2023 Volume 5 • Issue 15



James Russell attaches the padlock to the chain that held him for more than 30 hours in a camp chair at the Negro Burial Ground. (Mike Balsom)

Police investigating 'envelope of cash'

Penny Coles
The Local

Coun. Gary Burroughs has released a statement about an incident he refers to as “now well-known,” an issue he understands has been a topic of conversation amongst the public, some of it based on fact and some relying on rumours.

The incident, he says in his statement, occurred more than a month ago involving him and developer Benny Marotta, “which I reported to the town and is now subject to an investigation by Niagara Regional Police. I have been instructed not to comment further while the incident is under investigation. At this time, however, I am compelled to clarify a few salient facts pertaining to this issue.”

Burroughs told The Local he has had people questioning why his story has not been told in this paper. The answer is that having been advised early on not to talk to the press, he had

asked that anything he said be off the record — not a legal term, but one that is widely respected for ethical reasons.

The details Marotta shared with The Local in response to the events of March 4 — as Burroughs says in his statement, “not March 11, as has been previously reported,” are very similar to the details Burroughs shared.

On that Saturday, Marotta asked Burroughs to meet him at Two Sisters Winery, and the councillor agreed.

“It might seem crazy, but I hoped I could convince him to do something good for the town,” Burroughs says. They didn’t talk about business, but rather about their families, he says — they are both close to celebrating their 50th anniversary, they both have two daughters and grandchildren, and they are both accustomed to criticism in their chosen work, but protective of their

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Hunger strike ends, but James Russell is not giving up

Mike Balsom
The Local

Though he originally planned to remain chained in place until at least Saturday, James Russell ended his sit-in hunger strike just before 6 p.m. Tuesday evening.

On Monday at noon, the 76-year-old Toronto film producer attached himself with a 10-pound chain and a padlock to the historic plaque at the Negro Burial Ground on Mississagua Street and vowed to stay there until Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa promises on cam-

era that the town will unearth, clean and restore the headstones buried on the site.

But a family emergency forced him to rethink his strategy for convincing the town to foot the bill for the estimated \$59,000 cost of the work, a figure arrived at after he enlisted Kitchener-based Archaeological Research Associates (ARA) to work up a quote.

When he made the decision to leave Tuesday, he at first planned to wait until the evening’s council meeting was over to see if the subject of the restoration of the old cemetery

was discussed.

“But I really need to get home,” he told The Local 25 hours after he first arrived on site. “I had originally planned to hang in here until the bitter end, but this sort of takes precedence. The good news is, though, that if the town does not move forward with the motion tonight, I will be back.”

Russell unfastened his padlock from his wrist and the signpost, folded up his chair and walked over to his car that was awaiting him in the parking lot next to the Subway store. But first he made sure

to devour a sub, his first solid food since last Saturday.

“I’m energized by the amount of support I got today and yesterday,” he told The Local. “The people of this town have also wondered for years and years what the Negro Burial Ground is. People told me they were happy that this project could go forward, and that finally the town is going to be held accountable.”

Russell has been on a quest for over a year now to have the buried headstones, all likely marking the graves of Black parishioners of the old Baptist

Church that used to sit on the now town-owned lot, lifted and restored.

Though he first became familiar with the historic site in the mid-1980s while working as a photojournalist, it was in November 2021 that Russell first petitioned the town to allow him to conduct a ground penetrating radar survey of the old cemetery.

Six months later, he hired Brampton-based Global GPR at his own expense to conduct the work. Their survey revealed 28 graves and 19 buried headstones on the historic site.

Russell believes there may actually be more than that.

“All I want,” he said Monday, “is the town to do the right thing, to restore the names of the Black Canadian settlers who are buried here in unmarked graves. And I want them to restore the dignity to these folks.”

Russell spent Monday evening sitting in a camp chair. He was joined at around 6 p.m. his first night by NOTL councillor Maria Mavridis. The first-term representative quickly took out

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Indigenous female role models inspire young women

Mike Balsom
The Local

Five Indigenous female athletes, all successful leaders in their chosen sports, are gathering together to inspire others this Saturday, April 15, at a fundraiser in Niagara Falls.

It's the third annual Blockers & Attackers: Indigenous Women in Sports Leadership conference hosted by the Niagara Chapter of Native Women (NCNW) at the Stamford Centre Volunteer Firemen's Association.

Wendy Sturgeon, executive director of the women's group, says the event brings together a group of Indigenous women who share their unparalleled successes, insights and wisdom in the elite sporting world. They promote a vision of equity, healthy wellbeing and cultural integrity by sharing information about their special skills and unique talents with the larger community and the world.

Jessica Ghosen is one of five athletes on the panel at this weekend's fundraiser. Ghosen is a yoga instructor and roller derby athlete who plays for the Buffalo Lake Effect Furies and Team Indigenous Rising.

"Team Indigenous Rising is based out of Turtle Island," says the Cayuga known in roller derby circles as Blackrock Bruiser. "It's a borderless team composed of all Indigenous skaters, who come from across Canada and the U.S. We have skaters from California,



Jessica Ghosen

Mexico and British Columbia."

Ghosen was always an active child growing up, and was looking for community and a physical contact sport after high school. That led her to roller derby. It quickly became her passion, and she loves to share that passion with others.

"It's still a hobby for all of us," explains Ghosen. "A lot of people don't know that we don't get paid for this. We just love to play the sport at a high, competitive level. This sport has allowed me to grow as a person both mentally and physically."

Her participation in Blockers and Attackers for the second straight year is a way to lift other women up, to help empower them in mind, body and spirit. And connecting with other Indigenous women on Saturday's event, she says, is an amazing experience.

"When we get around our Indigenous family," she says, "there's

a presence that's felt that's really powerful and motivating. I really looked forward to hearing about the stories the women shared last year, and I enjoyed learning that there are other Indigenous women out there in sports paving the way, accomplishing amazing things."

Ghosen, the secretary on the current board of directors, says she grew up around the chapter. Her mother, Valerie, has also been a member of the board for many years.

"We have a number of women who have grown up in the chapter and have done amazing things," Sturgeon explains. "Not just in sports, but at universities as professors, or private companies as partners in law firms, for example. We have a rich history of helping Indigenous women in particular to achieve great things in their lives."

The organization supports Indigenous women across On-



Kalley Armstrong

tario and New York state from their Garrison Road, Fort Erie, headquarters through a number of different programs.

"The work we do is trauma-informed," explains Sturgeon. "We work with many families involved with child welfare, families involved with the justice system. We do a lot of work in education. Our Indigenous Women's Health Program promotes health and wellness. We have our Breaking Free from Family Violence Program, which promotes healthy relationships and safety."

She goes on to speak of the importance of Indigenous people, not just women, to be able to look to positive role models.

"The stereotypes have been passed on for hundreds of years," says Sturgeon. "Generationally amongst families we have young people growing up hearing discrediting, racist comments amongst their own family and friends. It's so important for us to

portray positive role models in all walks of life."

Sturgeon says Blockers and Attackers is a unique, one-of-a-kind event. The first edition was held virtually during the pandemic, and last year's second presentation was sparsely attended because of COVID restrictions. She's hoping to see the interest grow with this Saturday's third event.

Besides Ghosen, this year's keynote speaker is Claudia Jimerson (Cayuga), lacrosse champion and director of talent acquisition and development at Seneca Resorts & Casinos. Emcee Waneek Horn-Miller (Mohawk) was a member of the Canadian women's water polo team that won a gold medal at the 1999 Pan American Games in Winnipeg. She also became the first Mohawk woman from Canada to ever compete in the Olympic games.

Rounding out the lineup are guest speakers Amy Wilson-Hands (Anishinaabekwe), a

Team Canada volleyball coach and member of the Team Ontario Mission Staff for the Niagara 2022 Canada Summer Games, and Kalley Armstrong (Anishinaabekwe), granddaughter of Toronto Maple Leafs legend George Armstrong. The former captain of Harvard's women's hockey team is currently a third-year PhD student at Western University researching hockey from Indigenous youth perspectives, and the complexities surrounding gender in Indigenous hockey.

"These are just some of the amazing women coming," Sturgeon says. "The stories they bring with them are incredible. We have to recognize that there are so many Indigenous leaders in pivotal places right now in society."

Sturgeon likens the event to Truth and Reconciliation through sport.

"It's about changing the behaviour that we've had to deal with generation after generation, whether it's the peewee hockey team, or the baseball team, no Indigenous kid should have to hear inappropriate slurs while they are on the field. It's learned behaviour, and we know that we can unlearn it no matter how old the person is."

Blockers & Attackers: Indigenous Women in Sports Leadership is scheduled for this Saturday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Stamford Centre Volunteer Firemen's Club. For information and tickets to the event, visit ncnw.ca/blockers-attackers.

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Burroughs, Marotta have both spoken to police

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families.

The “incident” Burroughs referred to is Marotta passing him an envelope, and telling him to read it later, which he did.

Burroughs says when he got home and he and his wife Sarah looked at what was in the envelope, they were shocked to find \$10,000 in cash, and from then on began the attempt to return it.

Both Burroughs and Marotta agree that Marotta did not ask for any favours.

On Sunday, Burroughs says he went to church as he usually does, and as he says in his statement, “I reported the incident to a senior official within my church, while town offices were closed.”

On Monday, March 6, Burroughs says, “I reported the incident to the town’s CAO and delivered the envelope to town offices.”

Burroughs has also kept a chronology for himself, which he says details having tried to give the money back to Marotta.

Marotta says at the restaurant Burroughs had told him about his past businesses, and that he worked for his church. Marotta says he told Burroughs he was giving him a campaign donation, and not knowing the rules about the donation limits, he said if it was too much to give the rest to the church. He told Burroughs not to open the envelope because the restaurant was busy, he said.

Burroughs told The Local that Marotta had slipped the envelope in his pocket, and said not to read what was in it until later — “or he may have said not to open it, but I think he said read it.”

If Marotta had said what was in the envelope was intended as a campaign donation, “I would never have taken it. I would have said my campaign is over. I’d already sent some money back to a donor because I didn’t need it.”

If he’d known there was money in the envelope, he added, “I would have left the room.”

Burroughs said it wasn’t until the next day when he tried to return the money that Marotta said it was for his campaign, and when Burroughs told him it was too late, and that he didn’t need it, Marotta said to give it to the church, which Burroughs declined.

Marotta told The Local he had never asked Burroughs for anything. “I don’t ask for favours, he added, “I do favours for other people.”

He confirmed that Burroughs told him the next day, “I cannot take this money.”

Marotta says he later called Burroughs to offer to go to the church with him to donate the money, but Burroughs didn’t answer or return his call.

Burroughs says when he met with CAO Marnie Cluckie that Monday, March 6, she put the envelope with the money in a safe, gave Burroughs the name and contact information of the integrity commissioner, and talked about giving the money back through lawyers.

Over the next few days, Burroughs says he spoke briefly with the Integrity Commissioner, as well as Cluckie, and his lawyer, who agreed to return the money on his behalf.

Also, “out of concern for the unlawful implications of what occurred, I personally reported the incident to the NRP while I continued to wait for a response from the town,” he says in his statement.

“I am participating in the investigation with the NRP and I have given a statement to police.”

He told The Local being interviewed at the police station “was just like what you see on TV.”

While he was being questioned by one police officer, two others were watching

through a window, and he assumed the conversation was being videoed.

He says it was a nerve-racking situation, but the police officer reassured him the questioning was intended to gain information to help them better understand what had occurred.

Marotta confirmed he has also spoken to the NRP, but said he hadn’t heard from the Integrity Commissioner.

On March 22 the town issued a statement saying that on March 20, council was informed of a matter involving “a third party’s interaction with a member of council that warranted investigation.”

Neither the third party nor the member of council were named.

Council directed the CAO to bring the matter to the attention of the Integrity Commissioner and to notify police, and both steps were taken immediately, the statement said.

“The work of the Integrity Commissioner and the police are important investigative processes that need to be carried out in a professional and confidential manner,” it continued.

“The Town will respect the investigative processes, assisting and supporting any reviews and investigations to the best of its ability.”

“Throughout more than two decades in politics, at no time have I ever sought or solicited money or any other benefits from anyone, including Mr. Marotta,” Burroughs says in his statement, written April 5 and given to The Local April 6.

One issue that is important to him at the moment is whether he needs to declare a conflict of interest during discussions or votes on matters that come be-



Gary Burroughs, with daughters Josie and Alex and his wife Sarah, at the community centre as he learned he had won another term at the council table. The recent incident has been hard on his family, he says. (File photo)

fore the town pertaining to Marotta, and his companies Solmar and Two Sisters Resorts.

In his statement, Burroughs says, “In my view, I do not have a conflict of interest. Nothing has occurred that prevents me from assessing the merits of any application in a fair and unbiased way. That said, I have asked the Integrity Commissioner Ted McDermott to review and offer an opinion on the matter.”

Burroughs adds that he agrees with those who say “this incident ought to remind us all of the need for compete transparency and vigilance regarding dealings between elected officials, town staff and those who seek town approval for

their business dealings.”

Finally, he adds, “I have held elected office in this town and this region for more than 25 years and I can say — thankfully — nothing like this has ever happened to me before. The entire incident has created significant stress for me, my wife Sarah, my family and my friends. We look forward to the completion of the ongoing investigations. In the meantime, I am getting on with the business of council and serving my constituents to the best of my ability.”

Const. Phil Gavin confirmed the NRP were contacted “regarding concerns over a financial contribution that occurred in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.”

Detectives are continuing to investigate, he said, but he was not able to provide any further details “as it is an on-going investigation where charges have not been laid. There is no timeline on the length of the investigation.”

Cluckie said council directed her to bring the matter to the attention of the Integrity Commissioner and to notify police, and both steps were taken immediately. Under the municipal act, she added, “the Integrity Commissioner would not investigate the matter while an investigation is ongoing with the police.”

Questions to the Integrity Commissioner were not answered by press time.



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Russell ‘won’t give up until town agrees’

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her phone and contacted some of her council cohorts to enlist a majority of them in backing her plan to support Russell’s quest for the town to fund the restoration.

“I promise I will try to get this on the agenda for tomorrow’s council meeting,” she told Russell Monday. Russell said Tuesday afternoon before he left that he felt a glimmer of hope with Mavridis’ efforts but he wasn’t holding his breath.

Also Monday evening, local resident Yvonne Bredow arrived with her own camp chair and some blankets, including extra ones for Russell, and accompanied him on his overnight stay.

Bredow, who has previously been vocal about the racism she has experienced while living in town, felt it was important for her to support Russell’s cause.

“He is from Toronto,” Bredow marvelled, “and has come by here so many times over the years and decided to do something about this. Nobody in town will do anything about this, because they are scared of the repercussions. For James to have such passion for this, it says so much about him.”

Bredow and Russell spent the evening at the historic site. It was 6 C at 3 a.m., with the howl of coyotes off in the distance. Their plaintive wails, luckily, were out of earshot from the two protesters around the corner.

“All we saw was about four skunks,” Russell laughed. “And more than the temperature, it was the constant north wind that was challenging.”

On Monday, the town issued a press release attributed to CAO Marnie Cluckie. In the document Cluckie said the town is committed to honouring those buried at the cemetery and preserving heritage in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

“Council has committed to a partnership with the community group known as the Friends of the Forgotten (FOTF) to restore and preserve this burial ground long

term. Staff is working with the FOTF concerning next steps and is currently conducting a stage one Archaeological Assessment through funding raised by the FOTF community group. Once completed, the results will be shared with Town Council, and next steps will be determined.”

The press release went on to explain that all work on the site must be conducted in accordance with the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries’ current guidelines as well as the Funeral, Burials and Cremation Services Act.

Friends of the Forgotten has a different vision for the site than Russell’s. Spokesperson George Webber said Monday that the group doesn’t see the need for costly excavation of the cemetery. Instead, they would like to have some kind of memorial erected to commemorate those who are buried there. And unlike Russell, the group is willing to raise funds from supportive citizens to back their vision as an alternative to forcing the town to pay for their vision.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa visited Russell late Monday afternoon, and Russell said what he heard from the mayor was that the town had recently struggled to approve a budget, with many projects underfunded or deferred, and there is no money currently in town coffers for the cemetery.

“It’s sad,” said Bredow Tuesday morning about the town’s response. “They’re just giving a lot of lip service to this, hoping this will all go away. Just like racism issues in Niagara-on-the-Lake, sweep it under the rug and it’s gone. Nobody wants to deal with the issues that are here. They’ll find money for other things, but not for this site that needs to be looked into, needs to be repaired.”

Throughout Tuesday morning a steady stream of people walked by, many averting their eyes from Russell, as The Local noticed during two visits. Some well-wishers did stop to show support, including How-

ard Bogusat, who walked the burial ground with Russell last May, and former Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124 president Stan Harrington.

Around noon, activist and authentic racism educator Shari Darlene from Niagara Falls heard about Russell’s protest and decided to pay a visit.

“I took a drive down here and brought him some chicken broth,” said Darlene. “I didn’t even know about this place at all. I drove right past it on my way into the town, in fact I drove past it a few times. I stopped and asked people if they knew where the Negro Burial Ground was and no one knew.”

Darlene stood near the historic plaque and looked toward the numerous flags planted by Russell a year ago to mark the spots where graves were found by the radar.

“Those are bodies there,” she said incredulously. “There’s only two stones above ground, and they both mark the graves of white men. These are our ancestors buried here. This is not okay to me. This goes back to hundreds of years ago when there was no regard for the Black body and Black pain.”

“For way too long they have neglected to do the right thing,” she told The Local. “There was no regard for these lives and that is not okay anymore. It’s time for white people to step up and do the right thing. If it was your ancestors you would want the right thing done.”

Of the town’s response to Russell, Darlene said, “they really just want him to go away. They think they have the sign up, that’s enough, go away. We’re not asking for a lot. This is wrong on every level, and Niagara-on-the-Lake should be ashamed of itself.”

As he walked back to his car, Russell said he would be listening to Tuesday’s council meeting during his drive back to Toronto.

Mavridis did bring up the issue during the new business section of the Tuesday night agenda near the end of the council meeting, asking Cluckie to give the public a clear up-

date on the burial ground in light of Russell’s protest.

Cluckie summarized what the town’s involvement in the situation has been since March 2022, and insisted that they’ve been following all the processes in the proper fashion, mentioning the BAO and the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, among other organizations.

“Through the latter part of 2022, staff was working with the BAO and Mr. Russell as well as the Friends of the Forgotten, who didn’t have their name yet and had joined on with Mr. Russell to work on this initiative. We initiated the stage one archeological survey, and through the generosity of this community we had enough funds for that, so we hired ARA through the town.”

“We received council’s

endorsement to support the work of the Friends of the Forgotten in principle on March 21,” Cluckie continued, “and to continue to support their fundraising efforts. And we delegated along with other local municipalities about this issue at AMO (Association of Municipalities of Ontario) We have a lot of priorities, and we wanted to find other sources to fund this.”

She didn’t touch on any specifics about Russell’s belief that it should be the town funding the archeological research. When asked when the stage one assessment will be ready, Cluckie said it would be by the end of this month.

“We are absolutely dedicated to this,” Cluckie concluded. “We just need to follow the appropriate process and honour it in the way that we should.”

Russell may have indeed returned to Toronto, but in light

of what happened at council tonight, he holds open the likelihood of another trip to town with his chain and locks before the end of the month.

“But I will not come back to the Negro Burial Ground,” he says. “I know where the Shaw Festival is, I know where the main street is, where the town hall is, and where the mayor lives. I’m leaning toward Queen Street, where there are lots of tourists and lots of residents. Maybe the old Court House steps.”

And chances are when he does return, he won’t be alone.

“The young people I spoke to, who had no idea of the struggle I’ve been going through for the last year and a half,” he said, “all offered to put their heads together to come up with something if this town fails to do the right thing this time. We’ll be back, and in a big way.”



Coun. Maria Mavridis talks with James Russell, promising to try to get support from councillors to approve paying for the work he wants done to restore headstones buried at the Negro Burial Ground. (Photos by Mike Balsom)



Local Yvonne Bredow stayed at the cemetery with James Russell through the night.



James Russell, packing up Tuesday evening.

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Councillor concerned about impact of budget decision



Sandra O'Connor, once a Green Party candidate, is concerned about the impact of not hiring a climate change coordinator, a position that was originally in this year's operating budget. (Supplied)

Penny Coles
The Local

Sandra O'Connor feels strongly that climate change is one of the most important challenges we face as a society, and at all levels of government.

She sat on the town's environmental committee last year, which came up with a thorough and ambitious climate adaptation plan that was approved last spring, and includes six goals and 27 actions.

O'Connor was glad to see the position of a climate change coordinator in this year's budget to help implement that plan. However, along with a fleet mechanic, that position was dropped, and her efforts to have it included were unsuccessful.

A United Nations report released in March leaves no doubt about the dire situation caused by climate change, and outlines the urgency of taking more ambitious action. It says that "if we act now, we can still secure a liveable sustainable future for all."

The report says "more frequent and intense extreme weather events" have caused increasingly dangerous impacts on nature and people in every corner of the world, and climate-driven food and water insecurity is expected to increase.

Governments working together with public fund-

ing is key, the report says, and changes are more likely to succeed where everyone works together to prioritize risk reduction.

O'Connor was one of three councillors who recently voted against the operating budget because of the 8.39 per cent increase over last year for the average taxpayer, most of it due to new hirings.

But even with that increase, she says, there is nothing in it to support the town's climate plan. Although councillors approved 11 other new full-time positions, they voted to defer the hiring of a climate change coordinator until next year, saving \$54,140.

"The budget reflects the priorities of council, and the environment, in my opinion, is a very important priority," O'Connor said when she voted against it.

She told The Local she isn't sure why others don't share her sense of urgency — she hesitates to call it complacency. "I can only say I don't feel it's being given the appropriate priority."

O'Connor recently found a CBC survey that showed "nearly 80 per cent of Canadians between the ages of 16 to 25 find their concern over climate change impacts their overall mental health," she tells The Local. "And what are we doing about that?"

She also discovered that teachers in Alberta are developing programs for students in Grades 4 and 5 to deal with "climate change anxiety."

With no dedicated Niagara-on-the-Lake staff person to deal with climate change, including legislative requirements, the implementation of meeting those requirements or carrying out the recommended actions in the climate adaptation plan "will be much, much slower," she says.

Town staff were surveyed as part of the research for the

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTRE

What: Character Study for Randwood Estate and John Street East
When: Thursday, April 27, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.
Where: Electronically via the directions below

The Town is undertaking a Character Study for the Randwood Estate and John Street East area (the "Study"). The purpose of the Study is to define the character of the area and identify appropriate policies, regulations, and design criteria to guide future development.

The objectives of the Study are:

1. Establish a planning framework that protects existing cultural and natural heritage features, as well as agricultural lands;
2. Establish land use and cultural heritage policies and other design guidance for potential development within the study area; and,
3. Define and recommend any additional implementation mechanism(s) or tools to address the area character.

The subject area includes the land bound by the Heritage Trail, Charlotte Street, John Street East and in proximity to the urban area boundary in Old Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, as shown in the map below.



Phase 1 of the Study, including background review, area assessment and preliminary principles, is now nearing completion by the Town's consultants.

The purpose of this Public Information Centre is to present this information and receive feedback from the public. This input will help to inform the next steps of the Study, including the development of Official Plan policies and zoning regulations.

Dialogue is encouraged:

You are invited to attend the Public Information Centre to gather information and provide input regarding this matter.

If you wish to participate, you must register in advance with Shannon Mista, Community and Development Services, at shannon.mista@notl.com or 905-468-3266 ext. 315. Please register as soon as possible but prior to 12 noon on Thursday, April 27, 2023. You will receive an email on the date of the meeting with instructions to connect on your computer, tablet or telephone.

If you wish to view the meeting for information purposes, registration is not required. The meeting will be livestreamed and available for viewing at the following link: <https://www.notl.com/council-government/mayor-council/meetings-agendas-minutes>

The meeting will also be recorded and posted following the session.

Written comments are also encouraged and can be submitted via the contact above, at 1593 Four Mile Creek Road, P.O. Box 100, Virgil, ON L0S 1T0 or via email. Unless indicated otherwise, all submissions, including personal information, will become part of the public record.

For more information:

Information on the Study may be obtained on the Town's website at <https://www.notl.com/node/3011> or at the Community and Development Services Department within Town Hall.

The Town also invites you to get in touch at any time if you have any questions or comments about the Study. Please contact Kirsten McCauley, Director of Community and Development Services, by phone at 905-468-3266 ext. 243 or by email at Kirsten.McCauley@notl.com.

EDITORIAL

Really not so difficult at all to do what is right

It seems as if a bit of a cemetery skirmish is going on in town. It's unfortunate, and unnecessary.

There are divided opinions about how inactive cemeteries, specifically the Negro Burial Ground, which has been the focus of attention in Niagara-on-the-Lake for some time, should be treated, and who is responsible for the expense of doing what is right.

While there are thousands of inactive cemeteries across Canada, and many municipalities struggling to deal with them, there is no doubt that the little cemetery that brought this to our attention is very special.

It's extremely old, at the site of what was once a baptist

church that was established in 1830.

And buried beneath are a number of people who have no stones to mark their final resting place or to tell us who they were.

They are mostly Black settlers, some of whom may have been enslaved, escaping to our country hoping to find freedom and safety, others possibly their descendants. Their stories, their role in this country's history, make this site significant.

And we have James Russell, who came to town, saw an abandoned cemetery, albeit with very neatly cut grass, in a very public place with no recognition of those buried

beneath, becoming so determined to right a wrong that at the age of 76 he was willing to risk his own health with a hunger strike, hoping to force the town, owner of the property, to spend about \$60,000 to unearth the gravestones and hopefully give those early Black settlers back their names.

As Russell says, those buried in the cemetery came to our country under darkness, and under the threat of death. He intends for them to be given back not only their identity, but their dignity.

And then we have a committee of locals who hope to fundraise for this cemetery and others that are inactive, working with the town, "com-

mitted to honouring those buried at the cemetery and preserving heritage in Niagara-on-the-Lake," but with a different goal. It would simply be too costly to dig up those headstones, and all the others buried in inactive, neglected cemeteries where the only care they get is having the grass cut.

Let's go out on a limb here, and say the situation that is before us is a very special project in this moment of time, giving us the opportunity to honour those who have earned their place in the history of this corner of our country. Their very lives were steeped in battle. Let's see if we can do better for them in death.

This is not the time to butt

heads over \$60,000.

Those of us who know where our ancestors are buried, who can visit their graves, help care for them, are indeed among the fortunate. Those whose final resting place was the Negro Burial Ground many, many years ago, have no one to speak for them, to care for all that is left to show they lived and died; nobody but those who want now to at least give them the dignity of a headstone that names them, that recognizes their lives contributed to this community's history.

As much as the town and its committee is trying to work collaboratively, they are not working toward the same goal

as James Russell.

A solution seems possible, but not very probable, given that it seems the town is determined to stick to its plans and the process it has laid out.

Is it too late to look at a different option?

We offer this: consider doing what needs to be done to restore this cemetery and its headstones to the best they can be.

In the meantime the committee can continue with the suggested process, fundraising with the knowledge there will never be a shortage of cemeteries to restore, or enough money to do the job properly.

Penny Coles
The Local

Student encourages businesses to say yes to co-ops

Ben Foster
Special to The Local

I have not written anything for a while, since leaving my co-op placement with The Local. I really enjoyed the experience and learned a lot about putting a newspaper together. I hope readers are still enjoying the "Where's Ben?" photo each week?

I wanted to take some time to say how thankful I was for the co-op experience.

Without this opportunity I would not have been able to complete the co-op education course. All young people who want this work experience rely totally on the support and help of businesses and places of work. Big thanks to Penny Coles, editor of The Local.

I really struggled to get a placement in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Often people did not even call back or reply to my emails. I tried large employers in the area but was

declined, because they were busy, or it wasn't the right time or perhaps they saw me as extra work in an already busy day. I get that when a young, inexperienced person wants to come to a place of work, it could end up being more work for the workplace, but we try our best to be helpful to you.

I hope that if you get a call or email request, you can answer, and more that you can give that young person a

chance. We want to do this, we want to be a good addition to your workplace and help get your work done while also learning. We will all be looking for jobs when we finish our education, and employers will be looking for employees with experience.

While doing our co-op courses we learn about resumes, how to find a job and what to do in an interview. If asked, I think most young people would say they hope

the program gives us some insight into working life, what to expect, how to work with others and independently, take direction, communicate and undertake work that is required well.

Co-op gives us experience, hopefully in places we might not usually get in other part-time jobs while at school. It's a good step between school and work.

I want to give a big shout-out to all the employers and

businesses in NOTL who do offer young people the chance of a work placement, and see us as a welcome contribution to their workplace. Taking on young people in this way you get a chance to have an impact on the next generation of workers, and hopefully have an enjoyable experience with us — one that helps your business.

If asked to take on a co-op student, I hope you will consider saying yes.

Where's Ben?



Eden student Ben Foster continues to discover new locations in NOTL, wondering how familiar others may be with them. If you know where this photo was taken, email penny@notllocal.com. Last week, Lidija Biro identified Ben as being on the Butler farmstead near Two Mile Creek. Elizabeth Oliver-Malone added a little more information — he's probably standing on what was the living room, she said.

Local LETTERS

Don't spend money on under-used pool

I read with disbelief the articles in The Local regarding the St. Davids pool. As noted in the article, the pool has been under-used for a number of years and I suspect the same is true of the pool in Old Town. Both facilities are limited by weather to approximately three months a year. Finally, the Kiwanis in-

door pool in St Catharines, a fantastic facility, is less than a 30-minute drive from NOTL; for any parent from Toronto or a similar-sized city a drive of less than 30 minutes to get your child to swimming lessons was seen as a blessing.

Given the current environment of massive federal and provincial deficits there will be

a reckoning which will include tax increases and program reductions. I recommend this council work on a budget that is less than inflation and ensure that existing facilities such as pools, arenas, parks, etc. are fully used, rather than thinking about how to spend more money.

John McCallum
NOTL



View from the couch

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

Everything Everywhere All at Once (Prime 2022) may have won the Academy Award for Best Picture in

2022, but if this is the best, then heaven preserve me from the rest. Please avoid this movie.

Donald Combe is a retired English teacher who loves to go to the movies.

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

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

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COMMENT

Local LETTERS

Local woman appreciates help

Thank you to the patient staff and kind patrons at the Service Ontario site in Virgil.

Last Tuesday, after a long (at least 45 minutes) wait in line, I learned that the new licence plates I needed would have to be installed in the parking lot, so that the old, damaged plates could be turned in immediately.

Lacking tools, I was looking at returning another day, to another long wait.

The very patient and kind woman at the desk suggested a few options, at which point a young man in line behind me offered the use of the screwdriver in his truck. Everyone waiting was incredibly patient while the job was done, and

another person in line was so impressed by the young man that she insisted on giving him \$5 for coffee.

Total strangers engaging in simple acts of kindness is what makes NOTL such a wonderful place to live. Thank you all.

**Sandra Lawrence
NOTL**

Why is the region determined to build a roundabout?

A number of articles have appeared in local newspapers concerning the establishment of a roundabout in St. Davids.

Based on these articles it would appear that the region is intent on establishing a roundabout in the small town of St. Davids, which would require considerable road work, traffic delays, and expropriating land, all of which I would think would be a significant cost.

The region appears to want to do this at a time when everyone's residential taxes are increasing, along with the cost of housing, food, and just plain living. I think that most residents who elected the regional representatives would feel that fiscal restraint would be the policy of the day. Reduce our tax burden, not increase it.

The thought processes in play are very perplexing and raise a number of questions as follows:

1) The region has indicated that it wants to interact with the residents of St. Davids to address their concerns. Regional Coun. Andrea Kaiser has approached the St. Davids Ratepayers Association in this regard. Notably, the St. Davids Ratepayers Association doesn't represent all of the constituents of St. Davids but it would be fair to say that they do reflect all of the residents of St. Davids when they state that there

is massive resistance to the creation of a roundabout. It appears from the newspaper articles that the St. Davids Ratepayers Association is being put into a position where it is being forced to work with the region's autocratic objective to build a roundabout.

2) One would have thought that a traffic study was done that would overwhelmingly justify the significant amount of money that would be needed to build a roundabout versus leaving the intersection a four way stop, versus stop lights? A cost benefit analysis? Articles do not mention any traffic studies.

3) It was stated in a local newspaper that the region's plan for 2023 is starting a draft design on a roundabout for the St. Davis intersection at York and Four Mile Creek Roads, in the village's commercial centre, a recommendation put forth by a regional environmental assessment report in 2021. This reference raises an additional plethora of questions:

a) What commercial district is there in St. Davids — it's hardly a commercial district. It's a village.

b) Why and how does an environmental assessment make recommendations about traffic flows and the need to facilitate the construction of a roundabout?

And why is the region relying on an environmental assessment as justification for road construction?

c) Is the region relying on an environmental assessment to justify the cost of a draft design of a roundabout?

d) Wouldn't the money be better spent with a roundabout in Virgil where Four Mile Creek and Regional Road 55 meet, where significant traffic flows occur, and where traffic lights actually slow traffic down significantly at that intersection?

4) Wouldn't the roundabout increase the speed at which cars travel in that particular area, create greater safety issues for students of St. Davids Public School, walkers, bicyclists, and create significant difficulties for residents egressing from Avondale, the dental office, the Firehall Restaurant, the post office, the Lion's Club Hall, the St. Davids Golf Course, Warner Road, Tanbark, Four Mile Creek, etc.?

5) How does this roundabout benefit the residents of St. Davids, improve the quaintness/charm of St. Davids, and increase safety for vehicles and pedestrians?

6) Is anyone listening to the objections of St. Davids residents?

**Gienek Ksiazkiewicz
St. Davids**

Taking a walk on day of reflection

Wednesday, April 12, 1980, was the beginning of the Marathon of Hope.

Forty-three years ago on a cold day in St. John's, Newfoundland, Terry Fox dipped his artificial leg in the Atlantic Ocean to begin his run across Canada, his goal to raise money for innovative cancer research. His best friend Doug Alward drove the van while Terry ran, a marathon a day, the beginning of a legacy that inspired a whole nation.

When April 12 approaches its like a day of reflection for me. I do the 5-km route in NOTL and reflect on what Terry started. The more you learn about Terry, the person, and his unique ability to inspire others, the more passionate you become about honouring his memory at a local run.

Like many Canadians, I have lost too many friends and family members to cancer. Terry became a symbol of hope, courage and selflessness. His legacy continues to blossom as he inspired generations of Canadians from all walks of

life in deeply personal ways.

We celebrate through Terry Fox runs held every September. This year it will be held on Sunday, Sept. 17, at Simcoe Park.

This year's shirt design was inspired by an excerpt from the book written by Douglas Coupland, where he mentions that Terry received more hand-written letters than anyone in Canadian history.

Ryan Reynolds has partnered with the Terry Fox Foundation and given input on the 2023 shirt design, promoting this year's theme, #DearTerry.

The shirts will be selling for \$25 (short-sleeved), \$35 (long-sleeved) and \$40 (performance tee).

You can message me at joankemp10@yahoo.ca, or text or phone me at 905-262-5898.

We are encouraging people to share how Terry inspires you, why you continue to support his legacy, or share a story about meeting or seeing Terry running.

On April 12, Canadians can register to join and fundraise for the 43rd Terry Fox run in support of cancer research. Visit terryfox.org and register as an individual, a team, or support Team Pillsy, with a goal set of raising \$200,000.

When Terry's coach showed him an article about an amputee running the Boston marathon, Terry felt he could do something audacious. He was competitive and he liked a challenge, and would go all out. After witnessing the suffering of the children in the cancer ward he would run across Canada bringing awareness and collecting money for much-needed cancer research.

"In the end it took cancer to realize being self-centred is not the way to live. The answer is to help others."

I am looking forward to the community coming together to honour Terry's legacy on Sept. 17, 2023.

With gratitude,

**Joan King
Queenston**

Town council supports Friends of the Forgotten

Friends of the Forgotten would like to thank town council for their unanimous vote on March 21 to support our group's work in principle. Our mission is to respectfully restore the final resting place of Niagara Baptist Church parishioners buried at the Mississagua Street site known as the Negro Burial Ground. Many of these people were part of Niagara-on-the-Lake's historic Black community, which included enslaved people, freedom seekers from the United States, Black Loyalists, free people, and their descendants. We believe the site should properly honour the parishioners' place in the town's heritage and reflect the importance of Black history in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Our group formed last fall with the goal of bringing the same level of attention, care, and respect to this burial ground as is given to other important historic sites in town.

Since then, we have learned a great deal not only about the site and the parishioners buried there, but also the processes and regulations surrounding burial sites in Ontario.

The Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO) is the governing body for all burial sites and cemeteries in the province, and any actions taken on these sacred grounds must be with their approval and following their regulations. As the owner of the property, the town of NOTL is responsible for maintaining the burial site.


Before any plans can be finalized to transform the site into a worthy memorial, a Phase 1 archeological study must be completed. Our group raised the \$5,000 required to conduct the study, which the town commissioned. Once the results are received, plans for the site and next steps will be determined in conjunction with the BAO and the town. Town staff will report back to

council with future recommendations at this time.

One of our group's founding tenets is a desire to work collaboratively with the town, residents, and other stakeholders to make the Negro Burial Ground a point of pride for NOTL. Friends of the Forgotten is excited to be the only officially endorsed group working to fundraise for the burial site. The town is accepting donations for the site on our behalf and issuing tax receipts, as well. To donate, please visit notl.com.

For more information on our group, our efforts, and how to contribute, please see the Friends of the Forgotten website: negroburialgroundnotl.org.

Friends of the Forgotten
George Webber, Niki Walker, René Berschi, Cheryl Morris, Audrey Pellett, Sarah Kaufman, Lissa Paul, Betty Knight, Jamie Knight, Juliet Dunn, Barbara Worthy, and Kiera Sangster



Letters! We want letters!

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



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Bunny trail, egg hunt ‘a phenomenal day’

Penny Coles
The Local

Organizers of Saturday’s Bunny Trail and Kinsmen Easter Egg Hunt agreed — it couldn’t have been better day. “It was phenomenal,” says Candice Penny, executive director of the Niagara Nursery School and Child Care Cen-

tre. “We couldn’t have asked for better weather, or a better turnout. We’re all so pleased that everyone had a great time.” Although organizing the Bunny Trail is a lot of work, it’s been somewhat simplified, says Penny, and refocused on child-driven activities. And while it’s an import-

ant fundraiser, “having the community come together is what’s really important.” Seeing the little ones having fun is the best part, and sometimes seeing those who have graduated and are in high school, “surpassing my height,” is also gratifying, she says. The nursery school, which has been helping families and

their little ones for 51 years, is having trouble pinning down the first Bunny Trail, but they’re guessing this was the 30th year for it. “We’re still trying to figure that out,” she says. They began as a partnership at the Kinsmen Scout Hall — the Kinsmen held their first egg hunt 47 years

ago, but moved to the Anderson Lane location for the event so they could continue to partner with the nursery school. “We’re so grateful for that relationship,” says Penny. And although everyone loves their new, expanded space at the nursery school — now able to accommodate 69

little ones — “we still have a waiting list for more than 230 children in town, and sadly, it’s the same across the region.” There just aren’t a lot of options for families looking for day care spaces, she says. “We wish we could take all of them. As soon as we have a space we try to fill it. We just don’t have enough spaces.”



Jasper and Violet Serniak climb aboard heavy equipment. (Photos by Penny Coles)



Nursery school director Candice Penny



MPP Wayne Gates



Candice Fortier works the bake sale, selling treats to Abigail Felice and Jacke Morris.



Eggs the Bunny celebrates a day at the Bunny Trail.



Melanie Hamilton-Pack with her daughter Maya at the egg hunt.



Cameron Legal, 3, takes part in the egg and spoon race.



Owen and Lily Redunsky, and Graylynn Wasiliw hunt for eggs.



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Pillitteri upping his goal for Terry Fox run

Penny Coles
The Local

When Terry Fox began his Marathon of Hope on April 12, 1980, with a plan to run across Canada to raise money for cancer research, we could never have imagined that 43 years later we would still be talking about it, and raising money for cancer research in his name, says Joan King, organizer of the Niagara-on-the-Lake run.

It was a cold, rainy and windy day in St. John's, Newfoundland when Fox dipped his foot in the Atlantic Ocean to begin his marathon a day. He would cover 5,300 kilometres over 143 days before cancer returned, putting an end to his goal on Sept. 1, 1980. Fox died on June 28, 1981, but his Marathon of Hope has continued.

Joe Pillitteri also has a goal — for Team Pillsy to reach or top \$500,000 raised for cancer research since 2012, when he started participating in the annual run.

“I want to hit half a million dollars,” says Pillitteri. “We’re at \$481,000. Last year we raised \$105,000. This year my goal is \$200,000. To do that we’ll need more people joining our team, more people helping out with fundraisers. It’s going to take a real community effort, with a lot of people coming on board.”

Pillitteri typically does a comedy show close to the run

date, and tickets for it always sell out early.

This year he’s looking for a venue that will hold 1,000 people, feeling confident that will sell out as well. “I’m looking to bring more people together than we ever have before.”

He is also hoping more people will join Team Pillsy, and come up with their own fundraising ideas. “Pie sales, car washes, whatever you want to do. We just would love for everybody to be part of this.”

Niagara-on-the-Lake has in recent years been among the top 10 Canadian municipalities with run contributions, amongst the biggest cities in the country, “but that’s all because of Joe. We wouldn’t be doing that without him,” says King. “Last year we contributed about \$160,000. Of that, \$105,000 was from Joe.”

Wednesday, April 12 is the first day to sign up for this year’s run, and King encourages anyone who might be planning to participate to join Team Pillsy and help Pillitteri reach his goal.

As anybody who knows him will agree, even a brief meeting with NOTL’s celebrity comedian is guaranteed to include lots of laughter. Yet he takes his annual efforts to raise money very seriously, always trying to come up with something to top his previous year’s donation. One of his motivators is about family.

“We’ve seen over the years how close the Fox family is,” he says, after having lost their son and brother early, and very publicly. He has heard from Terry’s older brother, Fred Fox, who has congratulated him on the success of his runs, and has said he would like to attend the NOTL community run at some point.

The Fox family made sure Terry knew before he passed away that there would be an annual run in his name, and his goal to raise money for cancer research would live on.

“It’s moments like that that I think of my relationship with my sisters,” says Pillitteri. “That message is what makes this very personal for me. If it was one of my sisters, I’d feel the same way. I’d be honoured and proud to continue for them.”

Pillitteri has talked before about a time when he was going through a difficult period, when he picked up a book about Terry Fox, read about his accomplishments, and was inspired to make some changes in his own life.

He told The Local he has faced some recent challenges, but thinking about Terry Fox “gives me instant perspective, knowing what he was going through.”

He also thinks of his friend Keith Simmonds, who died last September in a tragic cycling accident while raising money for a cause that was dear to him.

“Keith was very much a ‘go big or go home’ kind of guy, and he has been on my mind a lot. Thinking about

him makes me ask myself, can I do more?”
The answer is he’s going to try.

To help him reach his goal, sign up for his team online, or reach out to him with a fundraising idea on social media.



This year’s Terry Fox Run shirt celebrates the countless messages Terry received from the millions of people he continues to inspire. Joe Pillitteri and Joan King show off the short- and long-sleeved versions which will soon be available for purchase. (Photos by Penny Coles)



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Lavender farm moves across the street

Neob now has a store downtown

Sharon Burns
The Local

Queen Street in the heritage district is far more aromatic these days. Nestled between Beau Chapeau and Just Christmas, neob Lavender Boutique has opened its doors for the first time downtown. “We’ve officially moved,” said the excited proprietor and lavender farmer, Melissa Achal.

Melissa, with husband Robert Achal, own neob, short for Niagara Essential Oils and Blends. Besides the move to Queen Street, they are also in the process of moving the lavender farm from its former location on Regional Road 55, near the airport, to a new location on the other side of the road at the corner of Concession 7.

Their former location was leased, and was only two acres, explained Robert. When the opportunity came up to move and expand to 12 acres, they jumped at it. “After 13 years of growing lavender at that location, it was time to make the investment and make the move to grow into a world-class lavender farm.”

“We are a lavender and a flower farm,” emphasizes Melissa. “Before, we had only 4,000 lavender plants, now we are actually planting 20,000 lavender plants in the spring, plus two acres of fresh flowers. We are going to be growing zinnias, strawflowers and snapdragons. They will create the most beautiful bouquets of flowers. We are very excited about this part of the expansion.”

“We have been so fortunate that nothing was planted on that property for 30 years,” said Robert. Melissa added, “it’s the perfect growing medium: rocky, sandy, and free-draining soil. That’s what lavender loves.”

Melissa, a Beamsville District Secondary School graduate, and Robert, who grew up in Oakville, started in the flower business right out of high school.

“The story started 13 years ago,” said Melissa, when the pair identified a market. “At that time, drug-stores didn’t carry fresh-cut flowers,” explained Robert. “We thought it would be great if we could get flowers

into these stores.” Melissa and Robert had flowers pre-arranged in South America, shipped in a refrigerated shipping system and delivered to over 200 locations across Canada.

“It worked out very well,” said Robert. “That’s how the industry started.”

“Then we thought we could grow our own fresh-cut flowers. We started growing all sorts of things,” said Melissa. “But we filled the greenhouse with lavender and nothing else, and we said ‘all right, let’s do lavender now.’”

“All that lavender that was in the greenhouse, that we were propagating for flowers, ended up going in the fields,” said Robert. “Next we learned about extraction and products. It was a huge learning curve. We replanted that field so many times before we got it correct,” he laughed.

“We started reading up on it and experimenting with the different products we could make. I started throwing lavender experience parties, which are like Tupperware parties but



Robert and Melissa Achal are now welcoming visitors to neob Lavender Boutique on Queen Street. (Photos by Sharon Burns)

with lavender products. It just kept expanding more and more,” said Melissa.

“We do all sorts of home care, bath and body products. We make over 150 different products,” added Melissa. “We have amazing customers that help direct us into the products we should make,” such as the “Glorious Niagara Lavender that a local resident named

for us,” she said.

The Achals are starting the farm at the new location with new plants, “because we are using our Niagara hybrids this time,” said Robert. “One is a beautiful hybrid that Melissa designed. We call it Massuet Niagara Lavender after her maiden name. These are true Niagara-bred lavender plants that

grow fantastic.”

Currently the Achals have 1,000 baby lavender plants under a tarp until frost is no longer a threat.

Lemongrass and rose geranium are the two other scents the Achals extract from their plants. The extraction will take place at the field but all the process-

Continued on page 11

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Farm size increases significantly at new location

Continued from page 10

ing is done off-site. "We do all the growing, bottling and labelling here," said Melissa.

Though the Achals are still working through the details with the town and region, a plan to build a fresh-flower stand is in the works.

"The produce stand will be opened up this season. We are working on a site plan with the town, and administration has been absolutely fantastic. We are working with them on future plans for a new retail

location and a barn. So that will take a little bit of time as we work through the process," said Robert.

"We are hoping to have picture opportunities and fresh-cut flowers," added Robert. "We hope to have all that ready for this season. We are going ahead putting in the flowers and we are planting our lavender. It will take a couple of years for lavender to come to full flower."

"There is a certain point when the essential oil production starts to drop and then you have a rotation that starts to occur. For the average home user a lavender

ender plant lasts about five years," he said.

Currently on the property is "a lonely garage that is not attached to a house. We would like to know more about the story behind it," said Robert.

When asked about competition, Robert explained that "there were some really beautiful lavender farms here in Ontario that have closed or are relocating, but we are probably the largest in southern Ontario."

The Achals also own neob stores in Bracebridge, Elora, and Stratford.

Their annual neob Lav-

ender Festival celebrated the end of the harvest season for lavender essential

oils, and was last hosted in 2018. However, said Melissa, "the festival is not in our

thoughts at the moment."

But, Robert added, "Anything is possible."



The lavender farm is also on the move, to the other side of Regional Road 55 at the corner of Concession 7.

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'Cass' is about to turn 100, still walks every day

Sharon Burns
The Local

Kazys Svirplys, known to friends and family simply as Cass, had a bounce in his step as he headed out the door for his daily walk. He was practically sprinting, while making jokes and laughing as he walked to collect the mail from the box around the corner from his Virgil home.

Cass will turn 100 years old April 28.

"So far I feel good. I walk every day for about half an hour, then come to the corner here to pick up my mail," he said.

"The rest of the day, I just watch TV, read the news, and learn what's going on in the world. I get the newspaper on Saturdays and Sundays, and the TV program is listed there, and that's how I figure out what I want to watch."

Cass, born in Lithuania in 1923, lives with his daughter and son-in-law, Judie and Wolf Dorak, in a one-bedroom home in a quiet subdivision in Virgil. His journey here has not always been easy.

"I was around 20 years old," Cass said, "and Lithuania was occupied by communist Russia. I said to myself, 'if I stay, the Russians are going to hand me a rifle and tell me to go and fight in Berlin.'"

Lithuania remained independent until the Second World War, when it was occupied by the Soviet Union. Following a brief occupation by Nazi Germany after the Nazis waged war on the Soviet Union, Lithuania was again absorbed into the Soviet Union for nearly 50 years.

"The communists were here before the Germans started the war and I saw their system and their rules," he said. Cass determined that he needed to leave home. "When the war finished, I was in Germany and they were saying 'go home,' but if I went home, I would end up in Siberia, because I was a traitor, you see. I was supposed to stay there and fight the Germans."

Siberia was used by the Russian empire as a place of exile, sending people to work in agricultural camps in the region.

In Germany, Cass stayed in a displaced persons camp, a temporary facility for refugees or internally displaced persons, for four years post-war.

"In Germany, at the very end there was a shortage of food. They gave you only so much, then said, 'we are finished, everyone must go home.' But I know if I went home the train would pass Lithuania and go straight to Siberia."

"I stayed in Germany for four years before they opened immigration. First they opened immigration to England and I said 'too close — get the hell out altogether.' Then they opened to Australia and I said, 'too hot, I don't like the heat.'"

Cass eventually immigrated to Canada in 1948 where he had two choices. "Either work in the bush or for the Canadian Pacific Rail. I applied to CPR. and I came to Halifax on an American boat."

From Halifax, Cass was transported to Saskatchewan and worked for CPR for six months, including another six months in the bush cutting trees for lumber. He didn't speak a word of English, but made friends with a group of Lithuanians.

"Our home was on the side of the line. Two boxcars — one for the water and the kitchen and the other one was the bunk beds. It was not bad, but in the summertime, the mosquitoes were bad."

"We worked to pay for our trip because we didn't have anything. My pants, a shirt, a jacket and that's it."

While in Saskatchewan, Cass heard that "the KGB, the secret police for the communist country, were telling emigrants to 'go home! We are going to give you land over there, and money, everything you need.'"

"Well, they got homesick and said 'we are going home and we will write a letter to you.' They went back home and we never heard anything. They went straight to Siberia."

"For years, I couldn't write home while I was in Canada because that was a ticket for my family to Siberia. They didn't know where I was. I could not tell them where I was. After Stalin died, I wrote that I am still alive. For 13 years they didn't know if I was living or dead."

Cass never returned to Lithuania. His mother and father died, but he had a good relationship with his sister, Julia, until she died a few years ago. Julia visited him in Canada in 1991 and again in 1996.

After a year in Saskatchewan, Cass moved to Toronto and worked preparing meals for flights in the Cara Operations department at the Toronto Airport.

Cass married Rita in 1950 and they had three children, but Rita passed away in the late 1950s and Cass lost his children to the Children's Aid Society.

"The Children's Aid Society wouldn't let him keep children because men didn't keep a family in those days," explained his daughter. "They said it was best to be adopted. There were three of us and we were separated."

Eventually Dorak "put an ad in a Lithuanian newspaper and a friend of his read it and informed him that I was looking for him. We reunited about 38 years ago," said Dorak, who has since reunited with one brother, who recently passed away, and another brother who lives in Alberta.

"We are all connected now," said Dorak. "Cass has six grandsons and seven great-grandchildren."

Judie, who works from home, and Wolf, retired, raised their family in Brampton and moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake in 1996. A year later, Cass moved in, enjoying long drives along the Niagara Parkway.

Despite his tumultuous past, Cass still feels strong. "Oh, I feel younger. Especially going through the wars and all that stuff," he said.

He suggests that a possible reason for his longevity is that he quit smoking. "One day, I said I am going to stop smoking. And I haven't had one cigarette since."

Dorak added, "he doesn't smoke, and rarely drinks. He has a full breakfast, lunch, and sometimes doubles up at dinner," she laughed. "Judie is a good cook," added Cass. "Any dish that she makes is a good one. She never hears me complaining about it."

Cass has no regrets in life, mostly because he chose Canada to be his home. "For me, everything is good. You live in a good country and you have got to be happy that you are here. Germany at that time wasn't a friend to 'ausslanders.' We were considered second-class citizens."

Cass credits optimism for his good health. "It's no good to be a pessimist. Some people say, 'this is not good, that is not good.' For me, everything is good."

"I read about politics," he said. But he doesn't let that bother him. "I say the politics in the world goes one way and my mind goes another. Instead, I think about what is going on around the house or what I am going to have for the next meal," he joked.

"My eyes are still good but I cannot read for too long. When I was younger I could read for eight hours without stopping, but now I read for an hour or so and my eyes become blurred."

Cass told The Local he did not feel qualified to give advice to younger generations. "I cannot say anything and I cannot advise anyone, because I like certain things, and someone else likes other things, and we are all individuals, with different ways of thinking. He might say, 'you're an old guy, you know nothing about it.'"



Cass walks through his Virgil neighbourhood about half an hour a day, and then gets his mail. He's a quick walker — others younger than him could have trouble keeping up with him. (Photos by Sharon Burns)



Kazys Svirplys, known as Cass, at home in Virgil with his daughter Judie Dorak.

Technology, however, has shifted so much in the last 50 years. Cass has a cell phone, which he rarely uses. In fact, his friends have to call Dorak to ask him to turn his cell phone on. He was amazed by video calls with his sister.

Cass, who had insisted his 99th birthday be held

at Wayne Gretzky Winery, will be celebrating his 100th birthday with family and friends at The Pillar and Post. Mindaugas, his grandnephew from Lithuania, will be here for the festivities, allowing Cass opportunity to speak in his native language. He will be busy, said Dorak, with family and friends for a

week-long birthday celebration. "Busy drinking vino!" Cass quipped.

Cass, who still wonders how he got to this age, is enjoying his quiet life. Sometimes, "I walk down the middle of the street because the sidewalks are snowed in. If a car comes, they see me and they detour around me."

Lailey Winery wins gold at international competition

Sandra Ozkur
The Local

Every spring I head out to wine country to taste the new releases and find out what programs the wineries will be offering for the high season.

April is the best time to avoid crowds and really get the full attention of staff, so on my list this week was Lailey Winery. I heard that it had changed ownership just over a year ago and I wanted to check it out. I was impressed to find out that they had just been awarded one of the most coveted gold medals in the world of wine for their 2019 Stonebridge Chardonnay Reserve East. That is quite an accomplishment for such a young winery.

I have worked in the wine industry for many years and fondly remember Lailey wines, but the style changed drastically since the family sold it in 2017. I was pleasantly surprised to see that the new owner, Faik Turkmen, had quickly upgraded the winery by rebranding to bring back some of the traditional varieties that Lailey was known for. Planted in 1970, the Lailey brand of wines are sourced from the original estate vineyard that surrounds the winery, some of the oldest vines in Niagara. Turkmen kept the name and redesigned the label to resemble the original Lailey label with a rose on it. The label is immediately recognizable to those of us who have been living in Niagara for a long time. Turkmen also added a whole line of reserve wines under a new label called Stonebridge.

The Lailey brand offers

Rose, a Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Vidal Orange wine and one of my favourites — Zweigelt. Once I finished tasting through the Lailey wines, I eagerly moved on to the Stonebridge Reserve wines.

The grapes for the Stonebridge wines were sourced from Turkmen's personal vineyard in the Four Mile Creek sub appellation. Prior to purchasing Lailey, Turkmen was growing grapes in his Stonebridge vineyard, hoping to one day open a winery. When Lailey came up for sale, he saw the advantage of purchasing an existing winery where he could incorporate his own brand rather than starting from scratch, and he is so glad that he did. "I get along so well with the Lailey family because we have the same vision for the future of the winery," Turkmen said.

Stonebridge label is Turkmen's most cherished wine because he has tended to those grapes since they were planted. "I walk my vineyard every single day. They are my family and I know the vines very personally. I want to produce grapes that will make the best wine possible, so I don't skimp on anything."

The vineyard is planted with French vinifera varieties, such as Chardonnay, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. "We use sustainable methods to produce the best quality fruit and restrict production, which results in higher quality grapes. We never rush to pick the grapes, we let them hang until they are perfectly ripe. When ready to pick, they are field sorted, hand-picked, and then inspected



Lailey's Stonebridge Chardonnay Reserve East earns a coveted gold medal at a prestigious competition. (Sandra Ozkur)

bunch by bunch to make sure no imperfect fruit gets into the batch," he explained.

"The 2019 vintage was superb. My winemakers and I were especially impressed with the 2019 Stonebridge Chardonnay from the east vineyard, so we decided to

enter it into the Chardonnay du Monde International wine competition."

This prestigious event is held in France every year in March and recognizes the best Chardonnay wines throughout the world. This competition is highly com-

petitive — 200 judges compared 537 wine samples from 32 countries.

"We were ecstatic when we got word last week that Stonebridge 2019 Chardonnay Reserve East had been awarded the gold medal in the 2023 competition," Turk-

men said.

With all that in mind, I could hardly wait to taste a sample. Turkmen cracked open a fresh bottle of the Stonebridge Chardonnay Reserve East for me to taste. The wine is beautiful golden in colour with a hint of buttered toast on the nose. The oak was subtle, but just enough to give nice body to the wine. As the wine opened up, gorgeous aromas of Anjou pear, a touch of apple and French vanilla emanated from the glass. It was exceptionally smooth on the palate with complex ripe fruit and smooth balanced acidity, ending in a long luscious finish — just superb!

When I asked about his secret to the success of this wine, Turkmen replied, "Our very experienced winemaker, Ann Sperling, takes a low intervention approach, using gentle pressing and natural wild yeast fermentation. Each clone is fermented separately in French oak barrels. After 24 months in the barrel, she tastes and then blends from individual barrels to create the best Chardonnay possible. It's a combination of good grape growing and skilled winemaking that produces quality results," he said proudly. "I really want to live up to the reputation that the Lailey family established as one of Niagara's iconic wineries. I would like to build on that reputation for future generations to enjoy."

This award-winning, limited-edition Chardonnay is only available at the winery, but it won't last long once news of the gold medal gets out.

Lailey Winery is located on the Niagara River Parkway just across the road from the McFarland House.

Lifepointe Bible Church offering community garden plots

Sharon Burns
The Local

The Niagara Community Garden Network website can add one more to its list: Lifepointe Bible Church at 736 York Road.

"One thing that has come to our attention is the rising costs of food," said Greg Alderton, pastor at Lifepointe. "Things you paid \$7 or \$8 for are now over \$10 dollars." Alderton cited the price of romaine lettuce as an example of food prices that have increased over the past few years.

"One of the ways we could help out the community is to open up a community garden and let people come here and grow their own vegetables."

"We will have 15 gardens ready to go this year," said Alderton. "Ten will be raised garden beds, and five will be at counter height for seniors, for people who

have back problems, or for people who enjoy gardening, but don't want to get down on their knees and bend over."

The ground-level plots will measure 12 feet by three feet and the raised beds will be four feet wide by eight feet long.

"The church family will also have our own garden and we will donate all of our vegetables to Newark Neighbours. They gave us a list of things they would like, such as a lot of lettuce," and other green vegetables. "Anything we harvest goes directly to Newark Neighbours."

Church members will start to prepare the gardens on the last Saturday in April. "On Saturday, May 13, we will invite all the gardeners out to show them where everything is. If they want to plant that weekend, they are welcome to do so. It's their space," said Alderton.

The church is charging

would-be gardeners \$50 to cover start-up costs such as lumber and soil. "We are supplying the garden, fresh soil, water throughout the season and garden tools." For now, the church plans to use rain barrels to collect water, but they have plans

to mount a large water tank on a repurposed shipping container on the property.

The church backs onto a conservation area and is bordered by Six Mile Creek. Wild turkeys, rabbits and deer may be frequent visitors to a garden,

but Alderton suggested that "individuals are more than welcome to put up chicken wire around gardens. After we get our first year under our belt we might put up a fence around the gardens."

While the location is close to residents of St. Da-

vids and the Glendale area, "anyone from Niagara-on-the-Lake is more than welcome to sign up for a garden."

Register for a plot on Lifepointe.ca, or call the church office at 905-688-2525.



The church will have 15 garden plots ready to rent this season. (Sharon Burns)

Corridor of colour to be on display at 124 on Queen

Mike Balsom
The Local

Teaming up for a new art exhibit is clearly a ton of fun for both Alana Hurov, director of marketing at 124 on Queen Hotel & Spa, and Niagara-on-the-Lake artist Tanya Peterson, who curated the collection.

Speaking to The Local in the hotel's Q Lounge last weekend, the pair frequently laugh while sharing stories of their young children, and talk enthusiastically of how great it has been to work together on the bright, colourful exhibit of works by Peterson, her husband Jordan Morrison, and fellow NOTL artist Ron Clavier.

Their collaboration will be in the spotlight for a special opening event in the Q Lounge on Wednesday, April 19 from 7 until 10 p.m.

Sixteen canvases line the sides of the corridor leading from the hotel's Queen Street entrance toward the lounge and bar, ending just before the door to the guest rooms.

"We look at this hallway as our corridor of fun," Hurov says. "We used this opportunity to turn it into this magical place."

Visitors are struck by the bright hues as they walk through, stopping to admire the stunning golden sunsets in Morrison's photography, the waves crashing ashore and a solitary rowboat in Peterson's paintings, and the abstract water images of



There will be a special exhibit opening event with the artists, including Tanya Peterson, in the Q Lounge on Wednesday, April 19 from 7 until 10 p.m. (Mike Balsom)

Clavier's works. Though the styles of each artist are very different, each piece was chosen to reflect the title of the gallery's debut exhibit, Lake Life.

Hurov explains that once the hotel's design team had settled on the first exhibit to feature the work of the three artists, she reached out to Peterson.

"The goal was to collaborate with local artists from the Niagara-on-the-Lake Art Collective," Hurov says. "When I got in touch with Tanya I quickly decided that she would be the best person to curate the exhibit and to be our artist-in-residence

at the hotel. She'll help us with design and curate different art pieces for the hotel, too."

Peterson, the daughter of well-known NOTL artist Trisha Romance, likens curation to art mapping.

"Pieces talk to each other," she says. "And when you have landscapes, you have to be conscious of the levels. I had some sleepless nights thinking about what was going to go where. Hanging itself is an art form, and it took us all day. It was a lot of fun."

Peterson situated the pieces to give an early introduction to each of the three

artists, while ensuring that each canvas flowed fluidly into the next, leading visitors through a stroll down the corridor that becomes more than just a walk.

Hurov adds that beginning with the opening night, the white bulbs in the gallery will be replaced with colourful lighting, and a series of animations of Clavier's paintings will be projected on the wall. Those, and other elements, are designed to create a fully immersive experience.

"All senses will be impacted," says Hurov. "You'll hear the sounds of the ocean and you'll also smell

the ocean breeze. It all fits in with the theme of the entire hotel. I don't think the town has ever seen anything like this. We're hoping to make it a true celebration of art in this community."

"We've had many art shows," adds Peterson, referring to the gallery that she runs with Morrison on Niagara Stone Road, "but we've never done this, where all your senses are being hit."

In her role as artist-in-residence, Peterson envisions curating new exhibits every three months or so, basically changing with the seasons. She mentions as fu-

ture possibilities a collection of portraits and an exhibit of work by young, emerging artists. Other potential ideas include holding classes or inviting local artists to actually paint right in the gallery.

Hurov points to the courtyard, which later this summer will feature a 20,000 square foot Zen garden. Peterson sees the possibility of holding art activities outside once that space is completed, and inviting local sculptors to display their work there as an extension of the hallway gallery.

With their Niagara Image Gallery situated on the way into town for many visitors, Peterson and Morrison are accustomed to providing advice on where to go in NOTL. Likewise, Hurov feels it's part of 124 on Queen's responsibility to promote local artists and help build up the arts community in NOTL.

"Tanya will use her great talent and connection with our amazing community to see which pieces make the most sense for the next exhibit," says Hurov.

"Together, it will be good to see what fits," Peterson adds. "We want to make the gallery a real extension of the hotel."

Tickets for the April 19 opening of Lake Life at 124 on Queen Hotel & Spa are \$40 and include a beverage and items from the hotel's menu. For tickets, email orders@treadwellcuisine.com.

Yellowjackets to make first Niagara appearance

Mike Balsom
The Local

Jazz fusion legends Yellowjackets have released more than 25 albums over their 43-year career, but there's one thing keyboardist Russell Ferrante says the group has never done.

"I can't remember when it was," the soft-spoken Ferrante says over the phone from his home in the L.A. suburb of La Pina, "when we did a series of concerts northeast of Toronto. But we don't often get up to Canada, even. I don't believe we've ever played Niagara."

Indeed, a deep dive into the influential combo's concert history reveals no evidence of them ever having stopped in the region. And there's no sign of them having performed even in nearby Buffalo in at least the last 15 years. So their April 29 Bravo Niagara! Festival performance at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre is quite a big deal.

Even more so when one considers that Yellowjack-

ets don't tour as often these days.

"The only time we take extended times away from home is when we go overseas," says the 71-year-old. "Two or three times a year we go to Europe, for about three weeks. Two of the guys still teach at USC (University of Southern California) so they can't be away for long periods. And we all have families."

The St. Catharines show comes after a weekend engagement in Baltimore, one show in Wichita, Kansas, and then a stop in Rockport, Massachusetts, where Ferrante will have an opportunity to visit his daughter and five-year-old granddaughter.

Ferrante, who retired from the music faculty at USC just last year, relishes every opportunity to reunite with current Yellowjackets members Bob Mintzer (saxophone), Dane Alderson (electric and acoustic bass) and Will Kennedy (drums).

"We love what we do," he says, enthusiastically. "Whenever we play it

feels fresh, and we're excited to be together. We're compatible musically and personally. There's great chemistry. We try not to play the same set every night, to keep everyone on their toes. It's exhilarating, still as much fun as it's ever been."

Ferrante is the last remaining original member in the current Yellowjackets lineup. The band formed after coming together to record virtuoso guitarist Robben Ford's 1979 solo album *The Inside Story*. Ford left during the sessions for their second album, and they briefly became a trio.

Through the years Ferrante has seen some of the best players of their generation come and go from the band, usually moving on to solo careers or session work. Mintzer replaced Marc Russo in 1990, after playing a session for their *Greenhouse* album. Kennedy replaced Ricky Lawson in 1987, left for ten years, then came back again in 2010. Alderson is the newbie, coming

up on his eighth year in the quartet.

From time to time, says Ferrante, numbers from

the band's early work will still slip into their setlist. *Imperial Strut* from the debut album is a go-to choice,

and *Claire's Song* from their second release, *Mirage a Trois*, is another.

"We play some of the



Bravo Niagara! presents the legendary Yellowjackets April 29 at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre. (Supplied)

Classic radio drama returns to Ravine Vineyard

Mike Balsom
The Local

Nick and Nora Charles and their canine companion Asta are returning to St. Davids Monday, April 17.

Popularized by the 1934 Dashiell Hammett novel *The Thin Man*, the film of the same name that followed it, and especially the ensuing radio series that began in 1936, the characters will be back at Ravine Vineyard for Radio Noir, an evening of murder, mystery and mayhem.

"I started doing Radio Noir as a concept back in 2012," producer Barbara Worthy tells The Local. "It actually started long before that, when I was working with (the late director, playwright and actor) Neil Munro at the Shaw Festival. He always used that concept for readings. I borrowed the concept when he came to work with me at the CBC, and I've carried it on since then as a bit of an homage to him."

Worthy has produced Radio Noir performances through the years with Lyn-desfarne Theatre at Brock University and the Queen Street Theatre, where they did a musical version of *It's A Wonderful Life*. Performances were later held at Trius Winery for a couple of years

before moving to the barrel room at Ravine, where they performed a version of Orson Welles' *War of the Worlds*.

Monday's *Return of the Thin Man* is Worthy's first Radio Noir production at Ravine's new event centre.

"We love doing these '30s, '40s and '50s recreations from the golden age of radio," Worthy tells The Local. "We try to mix comedy and drama, make it a little over the top, to have people fall into the immediacy and the intimacy of it. People gathered around their radio sets for these dramas and were transported by the mystery and the romance."

Each one of the Radio Noir performances has gathered together a group of theatre veterans, both actors and technicians, who hold as much love for theatre of the mind as they do for theatre of the kind they are usually involved in at Shaw. Next week's performance is no exception.

"They love doing it," Worthy says of her colleagues from the Shaw Festival. "We have these amazing actors, such a great collection of people in town that we have been able to draw upon. We're very lucky to have this rich, enormous resource of incredibly talented people here."

"I love the medium of ra-

dio," says Shaw veteran Gabrielle Jones. "It's so much fun to have people get caught up in the story simply by hearing the words. There are sometimes a few visuals, but it's pretty much just ourselves out there. From an audience perspective, it's so much more active to use your imagination."

A bonus for Jones next week is the chance to get to work with her husband, fellow Shaw actor Peter Millard, to portray the Nick and Nora characters. They'll be joined by Patty Jamieson and Neil Barclay, both also with vast experience at Shaw. Allan Teichman handles sound effects as the production's Foley artist, and also doubles as the dog

Asta, while Ryan deSouza, Shaw's associate music director, takes on musical duties.

"There are only four of us," Jones laughs about the cast, "but we play 29 roles between us. That means a lot of switching around. There's a character from the Bronx, there's an Italian, there's an Irish cop. There's a dancer at a nightclub as well as a very strict high society woman. All kinds of delicious cameos that get sprinkled in with the main roles."

Worthy has adapted a script based on the 1936 murder mystery comedy film and radio play *After the Thin Man*, a sequel to the original movie, 1934's *The Thin Man*, both of

which starred William Powell and Myrna Loy in the title characters.

"There's a recognition factor to the characters and the title," Jones says. "It's based on those films and the radio scripts from that time, which were hugely popular. There's a lovely dollop of suspense and a lot of wit. It's really well-paced. And the icing on the cake is that people get to see somebody doing sound effects as well."

And the two acts, each about 35 minutes long, are interrupted at appropriate times by the actors voicing the very same soap advertisements that radio listeners at the time would have heard.

"I think people are craving nostalgia these days," Worthy says. "Maybe after these last three years especially, we are all ready for it again. And our audience loves the genre, and they love seeing familiar faces performing for them."

Worthy says Monday's script ticks all the boxes of Radio Noir.

"Mystery, murder, mayhem," she lists, "There's lots of humour, romantic playfulness, chaos, and a femme fatale. It's wonderful."

Tickets for the show are \$99 and include a 1940s-inspired dinner. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Tickets can be reserved at ravinevineyard.com/Events/Winery-Events.



Ryan deSouza at the piano. (Photos supplied)



Foley artist/sound engineer Allan Teichman.



Gabrielle Jones



Peter Millard



Barbara Worthy



Neil Barclay

Songs sure to sound great on Partridge Hall stage

Continued from page 14

older material," he adds. "We do like to mix it up, but we have a new recording, and right now we're playing several tunes from that one."

That new album, 2022's *Parallel Motion*, was nominated for a 2023 Grammy Award, their eighteenth nomination. Yellowjackets previously won a Grammy in 1987 for Best R&B Instrumental Performance for the funky *And You Know That* from their album *Shades*, and again two years later for Best Jazz Fusion Performance for their album *Politics*.

Parallel Motion sees all

four band members exercise their compositions skills. Ferrante wrote three of the record's nine mostly-instrumental tracks, which stand out as some of the most melancholic, introspective numbers on the collection.

"Each of us has a different composition style," Ferrante says. "Once someone brings a tune to the band, Bob Mintzer is fond of saying it becomes band property. Everyone has input and helps shape the song. Even though one person may have written it, there are contributions from each person."

Ferrante's hymn-like *If You Believe* features Jean Baylor on vocals. The

former member of R&B duo Zhane and wife of one-time Yellowjackets drummer Marcus Baylor delivers a soulful, breathy performance, trading off melodies with Mintzer's saxophone.

And his composition entitled *Il Mio Amico* translates from Italian to 'my friend'. Ferrante explains that in this case that friend is actually a new musical instrument he recently acquired.

"It is dedicated to my new Fazioli, a beautiful acoustic piano," Ferrante raves of his Italian-made grand. "You can play anything on this instrument, it's so inspiring. I was working on a little bit of a

different harmony on it, and that inspired the tune."

Ferrante's Fazioli was actually moved into Capitol Studio to record the album. Located in L.A.'s landmark Capitol Building, it's the studio made famous as the place where Frank Sinatra, Nat King Cole and the Beach Boys recorded some of their biggest hits.

"Interestingly enough, the room we worked in didn't really have a great acoustic piano," states Ferrante. "I had just acquired the Fazioli, so I thought why not take it for a spin at Capitol. Two big brawny guys showed up at my house, loaded it on a truck, and we had it in the studio

for a few days."

The usual modus operandi for Yellowjackets is to play together as a band when they record, though Ferrante admits there is often some pre-production work where ideas and demo tracks are sent to one another. But they always try to capture the feeling of their live performances within the studio walls.

"For *Parallel Motion* we got together for maybe three days of rehearsal," he adds. "When the day came for us to head to the studio we were all ready to record."

The nine tracks are the sound of a band who clearly enjoys playing together,

evolving together and growing together. It's markedly different from their work in the '80s or the '90s, less jazz fusion than straight-ahead electro-acoustic jazz, with few of the Latin, swing and funk elements that have found their way into the Yellowjackets oeuvre over the years.

And the songs will sound great on the Partridge Hall stage, even though Ferrante will be sitting behind the PAC's Steinway and not his beloved new Fazioli. He probably won't mind at all.

Tickets for the 7:30 p.m. performance at the First-Ontario Performing Arts Centre can be purchased at bravoniagara.org.

Actual Kid-Friendly News

Kids

GAZETTE



JOYOUS
NOTL

NOTL CENTRIC POSITIVITY



RIDDLE

Submitted by:
Olivia Rapone

What pasta is
the most calm?

Answer:
SPA-gnelli

Local News

To celebrate spring, Joyous NOTL is holding a photo contest for KIDS (up to age 18)! While you are out and about around town, take a photo of any sign of warmer weather and submit the photo to joyous-notlkids@gmail.com. No camera? No problem! If you don't have a camera, draw a picture of something you see around town that tells you spring is on the way! Ideas for these submissions include buzzing bees, daffodils blossoming, trees budding and birds nesting. The winner will receive a \$20 giftcard to Cows! We want you to have plenty of time to get out and enjoy nature while looking for these signs so we are giving this contest an entire month. The winner will be announced around April 20th (or later depending on the weather). Here are a few of our submissions so far.



Artist's Corner

Submitted by:
Akira R., 7



WORD SEARCH: PLAYGROUND

WWKHGMUYWGWUUP
LCPSTHYDNAPFYIC
LJJLUQAJHMOPTPAW
FGHITNWP AELGLWF
HAWDVXOCPSAPOYO
UMXEOPQYVYUGLKQ
OZCHHKVIFPGVCAQ
HXOFFXOTRZHGIJY
FKBBRZGXIQTEVLN
JUMPXRKVEMEHNLS
CYMCDGFDNTRFPIS
LMZELCKADJJ DVEW
DFYCKIBYSOWIYCI
EUOVVPMLKUOZZEN
FNKMCJFBPWGGXJG

LAUGHTER
SWING
JUMP
FRIENDS
CLIMB
GAMES
SLIDE
HAPPY
PLAY
FUN

Interview with Akira

- Q. What is your ideal day in Niagara-on-the-Lake?**

A. I like to go to my school every day, evenings to Firemen's Park or Queen's Royal Park makes my perfect day.

Q. In your free time, what do you like to do?

A. In my free time I like to do drawing, painting or playing slime.

Q. What do you want to be when you grow up?

A. I want to be an artist, musician and scientist.

Q. What is your favourite food?

A. I like pizza, burgers, french fries and all fruits.

Q. If you could be an animal for a day, what would you be and why?

A. Of course a white-tailed deer. Because I can lift my tail when there is danger and let all people know about some-
- thing that is going to happen.

Q. What kind of music do you like to listen to?

A. Calm music.

Q. What is something you like to do outside of school?

A. I like to go hiking and camping and to trampoline parks.

Q. Outside the classroom, what type of learning do you enjoy most?

A. I like hands-on experiments, live work sheets, and watching learning videos on YouTube.

Q. If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would it be?

A. Ussuri Bay with its colourful glass beach in Russia.

Q. What are three awesome things about yourself?

A. Kindness, artistic and
- smart.

Q. What is a big world problem that you would like to change?

A. I want to stop people from killing so many animals and pollution.

Q. What is your biggest dream or goal in life?

A. I want to form a team to save animals called STAR RANGERS and rescue all animals. I'm already on my mission. Currently I have a team of nine.



Akira R., 7

5 Fun Facts About Easter

By Taleah Bucci, 12

1. Easter was originally recognized as a holiday when Christians remember how Jesus Christ, known to some as the Son of God, died on the cross, resurrected from the dead, and ascended into Heaven. It is one of the most important Christian holidays.

2. The Easter Bunny was introduced to North America by German settlers in Pennsylvania in the 1700s, who brought with them traditions involving the 'Osterhase,' or 'Easter Hare,' delivering eggs to good children.

3. Easter's date changes every year. It's always on a Sunday after the 'Paschal Full Moon' (the Hebrew
- 'Passover Full Moon').

4. The Easter baskets we fill with eggs today were originally designed to symbolize a bird's nest.

5. Egg decorating originated in Ukraine. Ukrainians would make 'pysanky' by dripping hot beeswax onto eggs in intricate patterns before dipping them in dye.

Family-Friendly monthly project courtesy of The Niagara Pumphouse

Use your cellphone camera to scan the code to get started!

FAMILY-FRIENDLY ONLINE ART STUDIO

Use your flashlights to reveal a drawing!

pumphouseart.online/flashlight

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SUBMISSION INFO

The hope for this page is to get kids involved and interacting with the community in a positive way. We welcome submissions for all categories from kids of any age. Please keep the reviews positive and all submitted content appropriate for kids of all ages. Please send all submissions to joyousnotlkids@gmail.com and in the subject line please put the category for which you are submitting. Thank you.

CHARITY

We are looking for charities in which kids can participate. If you would like your organization to be highlighted here, please send your information to joyousnotlkids@gmail.com.

Local SPORTS

Under-11 Wolves come home with OMHA silver

Mike Balsom
The Local

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Wolves Under-11 hockey team staked their claim last week in Barrie as one of the top two Tier One teams in the province. The silver medallists drove home to NOTL with an Ontario Minor Hockey Association (OMHA) Finalists banner that will soon be proudly hung at their home arena in Virgil.

"I'm so proud of these kids," raves head coach Joe Pagnotta. "They were so resilient and fought hard all year. They were disappointed they didn't win gold, but I told them to seize the moment, that these opportunities don't come around often. It's going to be great to hang that banner in the arena."

The eight teams who qualified for the tournament began their quest for the title on Good Friday. It actually turned out to be a great Friday for the Wolves, who won both of their games that day.

The morning began with a 3-0 win over the Mount Brydges Cougars on the strength of goals by Luke Simpson, James Froese and Ben Bayne and strong goaltending from Mason Nichols, who was named player of the game for his shut-out performance. Nichols was between the pipes for all five games the Wolves played over the three-day weekend.

Game two in pool play came later Friday afternoon, when the Wolves faced the Midland Centennials. Earlier this season NOTL and Midland exchanged wins in each other's tournaments, so Friday's OMHA match was a bit of a tie-breaker for bragging rights.

The two teams skated through a scoreless first period before Midland broke the

deadlock with the game's first goal 1:27 into the second. But Simpson responded eight minutes later off his own rebound to tie it up.

The "second and third period team," as often described to The Local by Pagnotta this year, lived up to that billing, exploding for three goals in the third from Froese, Eli Perng and August Felice for a 4-1 victory.

"They were convincing wins, but both games were actually much closer than the scores show," Pagnotta says. "All the teams that made it to the OMHAs are really good teams. Anybody could have won any of the games."

The Wolves finished the day with a 2-0 record and a guaranteed spot in the semi-finals Sunday. All that was left before that was to face the similarly 2-0 Saugeen Shores Storm Saturday to see who would lay claim to first place in their four-team pool.

Pagnotta says the players and their families gathered Friday night for a team dinner at a Barrie restaurant, and Saturday morning some of them visited Innisfil Beach for a shoreline stroll.

The Wolves faced off against the Storm at 2:30 p.m. that day and came out on the losing end of a 6-0 decision. Neither team scored during the first period, but Saugeen Shores tallied three each in the second and third to claim top spot in their pool.

Perhaps the Wolves were overconfident after the big day Friday, maybe it was too much downtime between games for the nine- and 10-year-olds, or it could have been the knowledge that they had already made it to the semi-finals, so they may not have felt the urgency to win.

"They had a couple of really

good skaters," Pagnotta says of the Storm. "But we didn't play very well. We didn't show a lot of fight later on during that game, and we came up short. It was our weakest game of the tournament."

Making lemonade out of lemons, Pagnotta and fellow coaches Glen Davis, Derek Nichols and Sean Simpson turned the loss into a coachable moment.

"We talked to the kids about how important it is to follow the game plan," Pagnotta explains. "Going into the semis we were hoping we could use this to get them to buy into what we were telling them to do. And they did."

For Sunday's semi-final game they drew the Tillsonburg Tornados, who finished first in their own pool. The Wolves came out on top that morning with a thrilling 2-1 double overtime victory to punch their ticket into the championship game.

It was another scoreless first period for both teams, and the fourth straight for NOTL. But Ben Bayne managed to get the Wolves on the board in the final minute of the second period.

The Wolves celebrated their second goal of the game early in the third period, but the referees waved it off, claiming the whistle had been blown before the puck had crossed the goal line.

Then, with under seven minutes left to play, one of the Wolves tried to win the puck in the NOTL zone, but it caromed off the end boards and came out right in front of Nichols. The Storm knocked it in to tie the game.

It was Simpson, the same player whose shootout goal sealed the Niagara District Hockey League championship



The NOTL Wolves Under-11 team's silver medal is a huge accomplishment, says coach Joe Pagnotta. (Supplied)

for the team just over a week prior, who was again the hero, netting the winning goal with 6:47 left in the second overtime period.

"Mason made some great saves," Pagnotta says. "The kids bought into everything we asked of them and they played as a team, not as individuals, which they did late in game three. They were so deserving of the semi-final win regardless of how it happened."

Earlier Sunday morning the Strathroy Junior Rockets had beaten Saugeen Shores 6-2 in the other semi-final, meaning NOTL would face the Rockets at 1 p.m.

The Rockets went up 1-0 late in the first period, then scored two more in the first five minutes of the second before

James Froese got NOTL on the scoreboard with 7:24 remaining. But Strathroy added two more just seven seconds apart to take a 5-1 lead. NOTL closed the gap a bit with a power play goal with 1:39 remaining in the second.

The Wolves shut down the potent Rockets' offence for much of the third, but couldn't score another goal, and gave up a final one to Strathroy, losing the game 6-2 but capturing the silver medal.

"We made some costly errors and got down a couple of goals," Pagnotta recalls. "We kept grinding, and most of the kids kept fighting until the end, though some were playing in panic mode. But right up to our last shift they went out and took some final attempts on the

Strathroy goalie."

Pagnotta, a board member with the NOTL Minor Hockey Association, reiterates his opinion that the team has nothing to be disappointed about after capturing the silver medal.

"It's a huge accomplishment," he states. "I've been involved with the club for at least six or seven years, and I don't remember any team winning a medal at the OMHAs in that time. Most kids in this province will never have an opportunity to even make it to the OMHAs, let alone compete for a gold medal."

Pagnotta continues, "these guys are going to have a banner raised in the arena and be able to stare up at it for the rest of their lives. They should be so proud of themselves."

Niagara Kings Hockey Club celebrates 40 years

Al Janzen
Niagara Kings

Back in 1983, a group of 20 year olds, led by Bruno Skubel, decided to put a competitive hockey club together with players that had graduated through the Niagara-on-the-Lake Minor Hockey system.

The Niagara Kings were formed! The Kings played a majority of their competitive hockey in the Sportmans League for nearly 20 years. Led by coach Don Read, the Kings won a number of tournaments, including two provincial championships in 1989 and 1991.

The team moved on to playing pickup hockey on Thursday nights and Sunday mornings. In 2018, Dan Neudorf and Al Janzen formed a new version of the Kings that began playing

Thursday afternoons. This new format was simple. Play a little hockey, tell a few lies in the dressing room, and

socialize at one of Niagara's fine restaurants after each game. Thanks to Silks Country Kitchen, Sandtrap Pub

and Grill, Butlers Sports Bar and The Grist for putting up with us on Thursdays!

Two teams were formed,

Team White jersey and Team Black jersey. After a gruelling campaign this past year it looks like Team

White took the Kings Cup, winning the last game of the year — but it all depends on who you talk to!



Players pictured in photo (top left) Al Janzen, Bruno Skubel, Fred Teichgraf, Larry Downes, Scott Read, Ted Skubel, Ron Baerg, Dylan Skubel, Ken Hunter, Andy Vanderhoeven, Pete Buis, Rob Neufeld, John Federkow, Mike Wagner, and (bottom left) Don Holenski, Helmut Friesen, Dan Neudorf, Duane Singer, Erwin Wiens, Tim Dyck, Ivan D'Agostino, and Clay Johnson. Missing from photo are Pete Vanderhoeven, Dave Mines, Ted Riccardelli, Joe Pillitteri, Ian Paul and Jerry Skubel. (Supplied)

Town will lack ‘climate change expertise’

Continued from page 5

plan, and “overall there was an enthusiastic level of support for the draft visions and goals.”

But senior staff, when asked if they can meet the responsibilities of what is proposed “said it would be a challenge,” says O’Connor.

“No one person is available to do the work. We really need to have the focus of one person on staff to champion the plan, and that has the expertise to champion it. And

when we go to upper levels of government to advocate for various things for climate change mitigation, they’re always asking what we are doing about it. If we don’t have someone with the expertise needed they won’t take us seriously, because we’re not taking it seriously.”

One of the three most important actions in the climate change adaption plan is that it needs to be mainstreamed into corporate policies, O’Connor says, “but there won’t be one person to get that done, and no one will have the

environmental expertise.”

What happens to this report?

O’Connor says it’s left up to council to question the impact of climate change, “and the only one who is doing that is me.”

The climate change adaption plan approved last year calls for next steps: to execute the plan and align budget items, for short-term action times to be included in the budget, and for detailed planning for mid- to long-term actions to be forecasted.

Staff, particularly the

CAO, are trying to incorporate the plan and think about the environment to the best of their ability, as the need arises, O’Connor says, “but they’re also doing it on several other fronts. And so without a champion inside to push it, it’s not going to be as effective. That’s not to say the staff are not aware of it or aren’t pushing it, it’s just going to take a little longer.”

The position of the climate change coordinator was originally in the middle of the priority list of hirings on the budget, placed there by staff,

she says, “but council took it out and said not this year.”

The report is not just about climate change in general, it also spells out how it will directly impact NOTL. It shows that the annual average temperature has already increased since the 1980s and will continue to increase, along with an increase of the frequency of freeze-thaw cycles.

The number of hot days, above 30 C, is predicted to increase, while the number of cold days, below -15 C, is expected to decrease.

For the Niagara region, cli-

mate scientists are projecting an increase in average annual temperature of 3 to 4 C by the 2050s, an increase of frost-free days, a significant decrease in rainfall and an increase in extreme weather events.

“This town is likely to be affected by a range of climate change impacts, including basement flooding, damaging storms, power outages, heat stress and damage to infrastructure,” the climate change adaptation plan says. “These impacts will reach all aspects of the town, including residents, business owners, tourists, agriculture and wildlife.”

A recent regional survey on climate change showed that the 104 NOTL residents who responded are taking climate change seriously and are concerned.

“There are many people in NOTL who are concerned,” says O’Connor. “I think they are aware of the plan and they think we are implementing it. They haven’t been paying enough attention to the budget to realize that it isn’t happening.”

Meanwhile, the environment advisory committee from last term has been reinstated for now, “until we go through a thorough review and see how it’s going to be reconstituted,” she says.

O’Connor has looked to other Niagara municipalities to see if they have climate change coordinators, and discovered many of them do, although the titles vary. “It’s fair to say most municipalities do. It’s a common role most municipalities have, full time.”

Existing NOTL staff will do their best, she says, “but they just won’t have a lot of time.”

O’Connor says she’s “not very confident” the six goals and 27 actions of the climate change adaptation plan approved by council will be accomplished, but she believes as issues come up for discussion, such as during a review of the official plan, the impact on the environment will have to be included. “How thorough it will be done without that person with expertise, I do not know.”

Queen Street blossoming



A few warmer, sunny days, and it’s time to get planting. Chris Allen fills planters at the Shaw Cafe with colourful pansies for passersby to enjoy, while Phyllis Gleeson from BBBlooms Floral Studio has been busy adding a touch of spring outside of 124 on Queen Hotel and Spa. (Sharon Burns)

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(Nursery - Grade 8)

10:00 a.m.

Worship Gathering
Online & In-Person

Message:
Kevin Bayne
Jesus Meets Mary in her
Grief (John 20:11-18)

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64						65					66			

- Across:
- 1 Wander

5 White or Blue African river

9 Ahura ---, Zoroastrian Supreme Being

14 "... Marching --- war ..." (Sabine Baring-Gould)

15 Downright dastardly

16 Sherlock seeks them

17 Supercelebrity

18 Immeasurably long periods

19 Heavenly supporter

20 Causes house moves in California?

23 "... Venus sets --- Mercury can rise" (Pope)

24 Some

25 For each

26 Piece on earth?

28 Timber management

33 Lay

34 Wedding attendant

35 Weeding implement

36 Ironclad Mrs. Rice encrypted some FBI database entries

40 GWB, to GHWB

41 Quaintly ancient

42 Flag

43 Really?

46 "In your dreams!"
- 47 It never gets off the ground in Australia

48 Home to Jaguars but not Panthers

49 A decade

52 Sub rosa

58 Found in rings and bulbs

59 "Battle Hymn of the Republic" author

60 Pennsylvania resident famous in February

61 Fatty acid, for example

62 And the rest

63 Kansas movie barker

64 Corporate bigwigs

65 Century note

66 Double-click, perhaps
- Down:
- 1 Elevate

2 Half of "The Odd Couple"

3 Pet Antonio fusses about sometime

4 Nat King Cole's "--- Lisa"

5 "Well You ---" (Thelonious Monk)

6 Trade in the elephant variety is illegal

7 Short note

8 "Lohengrin" heroine

9 Big name in antivirus software

10 Tables with frontals
- 11 Bantu language

12 Distribute cards

13 Helper, for short

21 Model --- Campbell

22 Bender

27 "Solaris" author Stanislaw ---

28 Golfer who won three British Opens and three Masters

29 Giant people-eater

30 Place to find a bargain

31 Staffs

32 Triumphant cry

33 28 Down is one of them

34 Friends

36 "--- : Miami" (CBS hit)

37 Still in dreamland

38 Superior herring?

39 "Halt! --- fire!"

44 Valiant

45 They're made in reparation

46 Far away from home

48 Up in arms

50 Cream of the crop

51 It can run while you walk

52 Flat-fish

53 Multi-user computer operating system

54 About to go off?

55 "--- Call Me MISTER Tibbs!"

56 Jot

57 "He's --- no good"

6		4		8			7	
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NOTICES

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PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from
April 5, 2023

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

Across:

1 Roam, 5 Nile, 9 Mazda, 14 As to, 15 Evil,

16 Clues, 17 Icon, 18 Eons, 19 Atlas, 20 San Andreas Fault,

23 Ere, 24 Any, 25 Per, 26 Plot, 28 Forestry, 33 Poem,

34 Page, 35 Hoe, 36 Criminal records, 40 Son, 41 Olde, 42

Its, 43 Is that so, 46 As if, 47 Emu, 48 A F C, 49 Ten,

52 Surreptitiously, 58 Onion, 59 Howe, 60 Phil, 61 Lipid,

62 Et al, 63 Toto, 64 Execs, 65 Yard, 66 Open.

Down:

1 Raise, 2 Oscar, 3 At one point, 4 Mona, 5 Needn't,

6 Ivory, 7 Line, 8 Elsa, 9 McAfee, 10 Alters, 11 Zulu, 12 Deal,

13 Asst, 21 Naomi, 22 Spree, 27 Lem, 28 Faldo, 29 Ogre,

30 Thrift shop, 31 Rods, 32 Yes, 33 Pros, 34 Pals, 36 C S I,

37 Not up, 38 Cisco, 39 O I, 44 Heroic, 45 Amends,

46 Afield, 48 At war, 50 Elite, 51 Nylon, 52 Sole, 53 UNIX,

54 Pipe, 55 They, 56 Iota, 57 Up to.

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56 GARRISON VILLAGE DR, NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE

STUNNING! \$1,949,000



2 PARK COURT, NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE

\$989,450 END UNIT/UPGRADES!



31 WINDSOR CIRCLE, NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE

\$1,375,000 DOUBLE LOT IN PRIME LOCATION



390 SIMCOE ST, NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE

ADDITIONAL SERVICES WE OFFER – WE WORK HARD FOR OUR CLIENTS

- ★ clean/declutter & sort items to be donated or sold
 - ★ help to organize packing to prepare for your move
 - ★ free staging – both virtual & in-house
 - ★ renovation connections and advice
 - ★ help with estate sale/working with lawyers & family
 - ★ in-house mortgage & lawyer referrals
 - ★ free consult to improve your home for sale
 - ★ professional photography, video & drone
 - ★ up to 480 million views of your home
- ★ 5-star reviews
 - ★ largest independent brokerage in Canada
 - ★ huge agent network throughout southern Ontario
 - ★ active long list of buyers
 - ★ office with parking in high visibility area of town and roughly 4 million+ possible buyers driving by annually
 - ★ high quality brochures
 - ★ luxury presentation of your home
 - ★ personalized daily contact to meet all your needs

MCGILLIVRAY™

Trusted

Angelika Zammit is proud to have been recognized as the exclusive McGillivray Trusted Agent in the Niagara-on-the-Lake market.



Angelika & ASSOCIATES

LUXURY REAL ESTATE

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www.angelikazammit.com
496 Mississauga Street
Local Office: Niagara-on-the-Lake



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