Avid kayaker Carla Rienzo doesn't let the lack of easy access to the water keep her from kayaking almost 365 days a year. The Niagara-on-the-Lake resident took up the sport about 20 years ago. The fitness buff balances her kayaking with road cycling, running and trail hiking in the mornings, followed by hitting the water in the afternoon or early evening. And somewhere along the line she finds time for some weight-lifting.

"I'm an extreme athlete," she tells The Local while waxing her kayak. "I had Olympic aspirations when I was a kid, and the spirit never left me. I just love physical activity, health, fitness, strength and endurance. I love and breathe it, and I love the outdoors."

Rienzo has captured the attention of local residents who have spotted her in her 17-foot sea kayak in all kinds of conditions. In the dead of winter she can be seen paddling on the cold water of Lake Ontario and the Niagara River. She is most definitely not a clear-weather kayaker.

"I've got all the gear and the attitude," she says. "Anything but really strong winds and I'm out there."

For winter paddling she climbs into a Gore-Tex dry-suit with latex gaskets on the neck and wrists to keep her out. It has a waterproof zipper criss-crossing the front of her body, with attached booties to protect her feet. Underneath she dons a down jacket and thick polar fleece pants, and stuffs her feet, covered with three pairs of wool socks, into a pair of men's neoprene boots. She estimates she can swim for about 20 minutes before she would have to get out of the water. She's on her third, or as she says, her last kayak. It's a British sea kayak, a fibre-glass P & H Cetus LV, with a shallow V hull and four evenly distributed hatches for storage of essential items.

"I'm about 120 pounds," the retired dental hygienist says. "It's a boat that fits me well. It just hugs me perfectly. Even though it's a low-volume kayak it has amazing storage. I can get out for two weeks in it and store enough food without starving. It's really sea-worthy."

Mike Balsom
The Local

"Extreme athlete" Carla Rienzo can be seen on the water in all conditions. (David Gilchrist)

How to fix problems for seasonal workers?

Penny Coles
The Local

The concerns of rights and living conditions for seasonal farmworkers is one not easily resolved, although there are several processes in place intended to ensure consistent standards and treatment for all.

Public health units are in charge of housing inspections, and are following a checklist of conditions, with the results reported to Service Canada, says Glen Hudgin, regional supervisor for living inspections.

Federal ministries are charged with other issues, such as labour problems, and there are annual reviews involving officials from all countries involved in the temporary workers program, says Ken Forth, president of the Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Services (FARMS), the non-profit organization that administers the program in Ontario. Those reviews are intended to highlight any problems, and find solutions, he says.

Yet we still hear of concerns over living conditions, and worse — workers badly treated, sometimes sent home if they complain or if they are sick or injured, some too scared to lodge complaints or speak out, with families depending on the income they earn in Canada.

Hudgin is the manager of environmental health for Niagara's public health department. It is his job to supervise inspections of housing for temporary farmworkers, and to report to Service Canada.

If housing doesn't pass any of many items checked during a detailed inspection, Hudgin will have the housing inspected again before the workers move in. Those reviews are intended to highlight any problems, and find solutions, he says.

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Hirji disappointed in lack of mask mandate

As the region’s acting chief medical officer of health was saying he hoped a mask mandate would be reinstated, the province was announcing that wouldn’t happen.

Talking to the press Monday, Dr. Mustafa Hirji called the mandate a “common-sense measure,” with cases of COVID on the rise across Ontario.

“Two weeks ago was the time to respond,” he said.

“A small increase has turned into a much worse increase.”

And it’s “pretty predictable” that it will continue to worsen.

While intensive care admissions and deaths are not yet on the rise, they are expected to follow the increase in hospitalizations.

Hirji said across the province, many communities are seeing more cases than during the peak of the omicron wave, and although Niagara isn’t there yet, it could be in the next two weeks.

Hirji was also hoping to hear the province would be expanding access to COVID antiviral treatments, and increased availability for PCR testing.

Both of those were promised by Moore Monday, along with a strong recommendation for mask-wearing at indoor events, but no mandate.

As outbreaks continue in many schools, Hirji also said he would like masks to be mandated for students and staff. Although no data has been available since the province discontinued a reporting requirement, there is evidence both students and staff are becoming infected with COVID at higher rates than during other waves, and some school boards are experiencing huge staff shortages.

Some school board trustees across the province have asked for the mask mandate to return to schools, but Moore said Monday he is not planning to do that.

He did say if cases continue to rise, there could be a time when he would reconsider.

Hirji said while he could institute a local mask mandate, it would be more effective if the province makes that move. “If we’re a little island, it’s not going to work as well. It really needs to be province-wide.”

Moore also asked people to self-test when they have symptoms, and to get vaccinated, whether for first, second or third doses.

Hirji would also like to see proof of vaccinations updated to include third doses, but the provincial announcement made no mention of bringing back proof-of-vaccination measures.

To prevent further spread of infection, Hirji called for paid sick days, and “a culture of staying home when people are sick.”

He suggested those who are eligible for antiviral medication such as Paxlovid — the province released eligibility information Monday — should check with their primary care physicians as soon as possible to begin the pathway to treatment.

That would lead to a referral to the assessment clinic in Niagara Falls, and an evaluation of whether antiviral treatment is suitable, he said — there are issues about it mixing with other medications, and other medical factors to be considered before it’s prescribed.

It’s especially important for those who are not vaccinated, to reduce the chance of a serious case of COVID and hospitalization, Hirji added, “but the people most in need of treatment are not taking COVID seriously,” and are less likely to consider anti-viral treatment.

The province announced Monday that participating pharmacies should also be dispensing it to those with a prescription this week.

A positive test result is required to be assessed for antiviral treatment, and it must be started within five days of the onset of symptoms, Hirji said.

The new eligibility requirements announced on Monday includes high-risk individuals who are immunocompromised and may be at higher risk of severe side effects after contracting COVID-19.

The following groups are now eligible for PCR testing and assessment for antiviral treatments such as Paxlovid:

* Individuals aged 70 and up
* Individuals aged 60 and up with fewer than three vaccine doses
* Individuals aged 18 and up with fewer than three vaccine doses and at least one risk condition (For example, a chronic illness, heart disease, obesity, diabetes, etc.)
‘Brazen’ coyote situation scaring residents

Penny Coles
The Local

Those who are following social media and the local news reports of coyotes in the Old Town will understand the gravity of the situation to residents.

Many are fearful, and frustrated that more can’t be done to make them feel safe on their own streets.

Others, as is expected online, are quick with their criticism, often directed at newcomers to town who they believe should learn to live with wildlife wandering through their neighbour- hood.

Tina Clement was a relative newcomer to town when she attended a meeting at the community centre in 2019 to hear a presentation from Penny Coles, at the time a Coyote Watch Canada representative.

Clement was worried about her little 15-pound Yorkie, Me- gan, then and still is.

“I’m petrified,” she said. “She’s always been frightened of big dogs — happy dogs, never mean dogs, just ones that want to attack her.”

Megan just turned 10 years old and is starting to have health issues, and Clement has been taking her to other neighbour- hoods to walk safely, but “tiring to haul her around in a car three to a day three a day to walk outside of The Village isn’t an ideal solution.”

Clement has heard the sto- ry of the small dog that was picked up by a coyote while being walked in The Village — the dog was wearing a coat, and when the coyote shook it in its mouth, the dog was shaken right out of its coat and shaken to safety with its owner. It could have been Megan, says Clement.

That dog was lucky; she adds, warning people to be cau- tious of dogs wearing collars who could slip out of if they’re being dragged to get away from a coyote.

Clement reminds dog ow- ners of a tip she learned at the community centre in 2019 which does not use extension leashes. “You can’t really run away from it if you need your dog at your side pronto, plus these leashes have plastic handles that you could easily drop.”

If you use a regular leash, she says, you can wrap the han- dle around your wrist.

She remembers of other tips Sampson suggested that day, in- cluding opening an umbrella or a paper bag, creating noise to scare off a coyote.

Those are difficult if you have your hands full holding on to your dog, she said.

She does carry a can of coins for noise, and wears a whistle around her neck, which she has used.

Other tips she has learned are “never turn your back on a coy- ote and run, walk backwards, and hold your other hand high. Make yourself large. I did that in 2019 when I had my encounter.”

Also, yell as loud as you can, and carry an umbrella or a heavy stick to wave at — she is seeing people in The Vil- lage now with umbrellas while walking their dogs.

Clement joins many others who express concern about the coyotes becoming more brazen, and that not only dogs but a per- son, even a child, could be hurt.

“I’ve heard stories from people who don’t agree with removing coyotes, who feel there are other- solutions, like learning to live with and respect the coyotes.”

She’s been being held hostage at home, she says. 2019, in neighbor- hoods believed they were dealing with only one coyogue, but today, “people I know who have lived in The Village for 20 years can’t believe this is going on.”

The town has stepped up its involvement, councillors heard at Monday’s meeting.

CAO Marine Cluckie acknowl- edged “this is an incredibly stressful situation for fami- lies. It causes a lot of angst, and understandably so. It can be very frightening.”

“We want to solve this problem quickly as we possibly can,” she added.

But she also acknowledged, when questioned by Lord Mayor Betty Disero, whether the work that is being done today could take two seasons to accomplish its goals.

The good news is, she said, “that other communities have also experienced this, and we know by following some of these steps that you can solve the problem by working with the partners that were working with us.”

In addition to issuing more letters and information about coyotes through mail-outs, the town has a coyote sight- ing form on its website to map where the coyotes are.

That information is being given to the Lincoln County Humane Society, which is sending out patrols to look for them, and for food sources that might be attracting them, and if neces- sary, “they are able to intervene,” she said.

Disero explained after the meeting that information about food sources identified by the LCCHS can also be given to town staff to investigate.

The town is posting more signs around the community, and has hand-delivered post- ers and letters in areas where there have been sightings, Cluckie said.

The message “is again ‘they’re looking for food sources, and to keep coyotes out of urban areas, you need to remove those food sources, including garbage, bird feeders, and leav- ing food out for feral cats, or any other animals out- side,’ because all this attracts coyotes.”

She asked Cluckie to explain when someone sees a coyote and runs into the house to fill out a sighting form online, “what happens from that point?”

Cluckie explained the forms “are extremely helpful to us be- cause we map out where were seeing these sightings, and that helps our partners to locate coy- otes. They haven’t located the coyotes’ den yet, but by knowing where they are they can track them.”

Some people are notifying the town through emails, but said, without the mapping element of the forms, it makes it difficult to find them.

The town uses the mapping to help the Lincoln County Hu- mane Society patrol neighbour- hoods, she said.

“In most cases the idea is to prevent the coyotes from com- ing back.”

Capturing and relocating them won’t work — legislation only allows them to be relocat- ed up a kilometre away, “and unfortunately the coyotes find their way back very quickly.”

By instead identifying food sources, they can use “aversion control,” training the animals “to stay out of the areas they are used to.”

“It’s concerning this is not a fast process,” said Disero.

“I’m concerned someone is going to hurt before we are able to train them and teach them not to come into the towns sections.”

The solution, Cluckie re- peated, is removing the food supply. Sights that are too small, she said “tends to happen” but are too scared to go out, she said.

“Some people are notifying the town through emails, but said, without the mapping element of the forms, it makes it difficult to find them.”

The town has posted information on its Facebook page about coyote control methods.

Local staff

The Heritage Trail commit- tee is ready to kick off the next phase of trail restoration work, with an Earth Day celebration to mark the occasion.

On Sunday, April 21, the public is invited to a special information session and a bar- bque luncheon at the home of Stanislaw Jorgian, at 404 Concession 1, where it ends at Line 9.

The time is 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Earth Day, with no charge for lunch.

We ask only for a donation to the trail fund,” says commit- tee vice-chair Tony Chisholm.

The Heritage Trail resto- ration continues along the old railway bed from East and West Line, the Heritage Trail committee is beginning to fundraise for the next sec- tion south. The cost of creat- ing a proper trail through this section of phase two is about $160,000 or $100 per metre.

The committee is hoping for donations of $100 (or more) to cover the cost of restoring one metre (or more) of this trail during phase two, in return for a tax receipt from the town, and a name added to the trail website, at www.heritagetrail.ca.

The committee plans to install a permanent plaque at an entrance when the second phase is completed. Please provide dona- tions over $99 in the donor’s name or in honour of someone else.

Cheques can be made out to Heritage Trail, Town of Ni- agara-on-the-Lake, and can be mailed to the town offices at Box 100, Virgil, On L0S 1T0.

Disero thanked town council for their support of the trail project, and for noise, and wears a whistle in his mouth, and asked if staff can find the owner and talk to them to see if coyotes can be stopped from getting hold of the chickens.

Disero also asked Cluckie to go back again to the Ministry of Natural Resources to have another conversation about relocating the animals. “It just seems that this is going to take too long,” she said, referring to the behavioural training that involves removing food sources.

Disero explained that there has also been an increase in attacks by coyotes “both on small pets as well as on human wildlife. They have seen success, such as Thorold, although it took them two seasons to accomplish the relocation.”

“It sounds like we as humans need to be retrained a little,” said Coun. Clare Cameron. “We’re hard to break habits and change be- haviour.”

Although the sighting forms are useful, in an emergency sit- uation, call 911 and the NRP will respond. Lincoln County Humane Society staff will also come out quickly, she said.

Disero said that those who are concerned about being attacked by a coyote should speak to the police loudly, and run away, the coyote will give up after a time, she said.

Dick Coyne, Cheryl Moulton, Tony Chisholm and Steffanie Bjorgan are planning an Earth Day cele- bration, with a barbecue lunch at Bjorgan’s home, and an information session on the restoration of the Heritage Trail. (Photo supplied)
TTed Brindell is a senior reporter who recently crossed the border into the U.S. with a passport and his proof of vaccination.

That part of his trip was easy. His problems began when he arrived at the Queenston-Lewiston Bridge on his way home to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The 78-year-old, who enjoyed the trip in his 1975 Pontiac Ventura, expected the same problem-free crossing on his return, but he was wrong.

He reached out to the Local to warn travellers of what to expect if they are fully vaccinated, but chosen for random testing.

His first problem, he said, was he was unable to understand the border official who was talking to him through his car window, and he wasn’t all sure of what he was being asked to do.

He suggests instead of saying pardon, which wasn’t helping him, “we should say something along the lines of ‘let me get this straight. This is what you are asking me to do.’”

He drove away with a test kit in his car, after being told, to take the test at home and mail it for processing.

He was also told he would not be able to leave Canada and return again during that period without quarantining for 14 days, making him, he said, “a prisoner who’s a prisoner in my own country.”

He discovered he actually had to send the test by Purolator, and wait up to 14 days for the results, but with no need to quarantine while he waits — that only happens if the test results are positive.

However, a look at the government website indicates he could have been made to quarantine at home for 14 days, could have been fined, and would not be able to leave the country if he doesn’t fill out the information requested on the ArriveCan app.

He has no phone, and no app, he said, although he may ask a friend to assist him out with that.

A very helpful travel agent, who didn’t want to be named, explained the random testing procedure to the Local.

The agency has a policy against talking to the press on COVID issues, because policies change rapidly, and they could be blamed for giving out information that is wrong by the next day — hence not giving out her name or that of the agency.

They advise their own clients throughout their trip of any changes, she said.

She agreed the government website is very difficult to navigate, with little information about random testing, which occurs at airports and land crossings.

Also, regulations for entering other countries can vary widely — her advice is to ensure you understand all the protocols for travelling to your destination and for returning home to Canada before you leave, and check regularly for changes.

As of Monday, the random testing Brindell experienced was still occurring, although the federal government is being lobbied to lift it.

Government regulations require all travellers entering Canada to have the ArriveCAN app, so access to a computer, or a friend or relative to help out, is necessary at some point, she said, adding it would be a challenge for those who are not tech-savvy.

If you are chosen for a random test at a land crossing, it has to be carried out online with an official watching, and then, although the instructions use the term ‘mailing’, it is to be sent by Purolator for testing.

She said she believes Purolator will come to pick it up, and she has heard of a testing response received the same day.

Minerva Ward, president of the NOTL Chamber of Commerce, says chamber members in Ontario remain concerned about the confusion around border restrictions, the requirements, and the process. “While we are thankful that the government of Canada heard the pleas of tourism and tourism-related business, and made changes to Canada’s border restrictions, we are concerned about what this lack of clarity and confusion will mean for our tourism industry for the upcoming tourist season,” she said.

She said she has heard anecdotally that U.S. visitors who may not have smartphones or are not as technologically savvy.

“We have also heard from unvaccinated travellers who have opted to wait it out to visit Canada until border restrictions are fully lifted,” she said. “We have heard from fully vaccinated travellers about the hesitation around still being subject to random PCR testing. Overall, the information and process around border crossing are confusing and still cumbersome.”

Just ask Ted Brindell.

He will agree policies are confusing, and not just for American visitors to Canada. He never dreamed as a Canadian he would have such difficulty trying to get home, he said.
One of the region’s most exciting showrooms of outdoor furniture, smokers and barbecues is now right here in NOTL. Penner Home Hardware in Virgil has created its own 8,000 square feet Outdoor Living Showroom that’s full and ready for you.

“We think we have created a hidden gem here,” says the store’s retail manager Lawrence McLean. “After all, why should NOTL residents have to cross the bridge to shop in St. Catharines?”

If you want to add some new flavour to your cooking routine, it’s time to join the Traegerhood. Traeger grills use all-natural hardwood as fuel. So, no matter what you cook, you’re automatically adding incredible wood-fired taste to anything you grill, smoke, bake, roast, braise, or BBQ.

If you still think of “patio sets” as temporary summer seating arrangements, just look at the outdoor living furniture at Penner’s. With this level of quality and style, you might not want to go back inside until fall. “People should be able to live in the same style and comfort outside as they do in their living rooms,” McLean says. “People can now look at their backyards as extensions of their indoor living spaces, not just add-ons.”

Penner Home Hardware’s Outdoor Living Showroom also has a great selection of outdoor lighting and lanterns, firepits and fireplaces, canopies and umbrellas, bistro sets and basket chairs, and more. “We are excited to see this kind of showroom right in the heart of town,” McLean says. “Just come into our store and follow the signs to our showroom!”

Penner Home Hardware, proudly serving NOTL residents since 1950, is on the corner of Niagara Stone Road and Line 1/Penner Street in Virgil.
Can’t we be concerned for humans and coyotes?

Owen Bjorkan
Special to The Local

Newspaper articles and online social media banter have brought coyotes back to the forefront of conversation in NOTL. What do these incidents tell us about our relationship with these dynamic animals, and what are the potential solutions to consider?

When a problem is evolving in the background, it is often quiet. When the problem polishes its head to the surface in real time, there is no time people want to take note. This applies to both the social and environmental world.

The proliferation of more relaxed coyotes perusing through NOTL’s urban environments was a story waiting to happen, beginning over 10 years ago.

I have touched on this fact before in previous articles for The NOTL Local, but we need to consider how the green ring of forest and meadows surrounding NOTL’s downtown urban boundary has been chopped up and fragmented considerably over the last two terms of council. The protected and relatively isolated green highway for animals was altered so severely in recent years, that coyotes have had to reinvent how they survive in a new world.

On a side note, it is stories like this that explain why I resigned from the town’s environmental advisory committee after one year of service as the vice-chair. To the fault of anybody in particular, I was personally exhausted and frustrated about the politics of having meetings about meetings, and by the next time a meeting rolled around, we had lost another plot of forest or another significant habitat.

The cruel irony is how the goals we spent so much time talking about were having their foundations removed from beneath us. How can we productively combat climate change, poor water quality, biodiversity loss, and make improvements in living harmoniously with local species (such as coyotes) while we all low the teardown of the very ecosystems which help out coexist? That may turn out to be the only solution, but it is not easy. Criticizing or making fun of them on social media is not helpful. It is making the situation worse.

Whatever side of the debate you’re on, these residents have a very real concern, and don’t de-serve to be maligned just because it is so easy to do so on social media. Hopefully people will start being more aware of preventing food sources, and the coyotes will move back to the fields and ravines and find their dinner critters there.

Penny Coles
The Local

Coyote problem may require patience to solve

Editor
April 13, 2022

The Niagara-on-the-Lake

The Niagara-on-the-Lake

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The Trusted Voice of Our Community

Dread

The local.

More Kinder-brand chocolates recalled due to salmonella risk

A quick word of warn- ing as we head into Easter weekend: the Canadian Food Inspection Agency says re- called chocolate should not be eaten.

A resident who saw the recall of her family’s favourite Easter treats asked us to let our readers know about a variety of Kinder Happy Surprises products.

Other countries have reported people have become sick, from eating Ferrero products, but so far no ill-nesses have been reported in Canada from consuming the recalled chocolates, which should either be returned to the store where they were pur- chased, or disposed of safely.
Continued from page 6

runs, immediately and with haste, to the next nearby log or sense of security. Imagine what males would do if all of the logs in the area were removed. Would they then take big routes and be out in the open to find the next suitable place to hunker down.

The same human-animal parallels continue to unfold around the world with elephants in India, black bears up north, cassowaries in Australia, and alligators in Florida's Everglades. I would reckon that such a label, will we ever get to the point of exterminating "problem" coyotes in NOTL? To me, that will be a hard day to hold your chin high as a local. I would reckon that such a moment would put NOTL on the map as a municipality that would rather take the easy and ruthless route, versus finding an adaptive compromise or, perhaps even addressing the root of the issue which I have howled about for over a dozen years.

Is there enough to feel the concern for both locals and coyotes alike? Believe it or not, that is totally valid, even in a world where many of us believe there can only be one side and one solution to something.

Remember, we have two stakeholders involved: ourselves and the coyotes. Can we both get along? Will NOTL allow the coyotes to have a figurative voice in this, or will we take the privileged way out and vilify an intelligent animal that was here thousands of years before us?

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St. Catharines takes lead on affordable housing

In regards to addressing the affordable housing crisis in our region, I want to congratulate the City of St. Catharines for taking the lead on being innovative and ensuring that the sale of City property drives affordable housing.

The City of St. Catharines recently approved the sale of roughly 3.8 acres of land previously occupied by the City’s Community, Recreation and Culture Services administration building. The sale was approved provided it is used in part for affordable and social housing. Specifically, the developer must develop the area with 43 per cent affordable housing, and 14 per cent social housing.

The developer has committed to a partnership with Habitat for Humanity Niagara to ensure that 32 townhouses are sold to Habitat at below market rates. In turn, Habitat will sell the townhouses at the same price as purchased to deserving families who could not otherwise be able to afford a home. Habitat will sell the homes through an equity share program. Profits generated off future sales of the townhouses will be split between the selling family and Habitat, allowing for the organization to reinvest the profits in future affordable housing.

The partnership with Habitat on the 32 townhouses comes alongside requirements that 60 rental units be rented at affordable rates for the next 40 years.

This is an exciting initiative and will make an impact on the affordable housing crisis in Niagara and allow families to achieve greater stability.

Cindi Laford Lopp Chair of the Board of Directors

Trieste is opening soon on Queen Street losing its unique heritage distinction

Thirty years ago Queen Street and the Heritage District of Niagara-on-the-Lake were considered unique, and always to be protected.

There were only eight establishments on Queen’s Picton where people could buy food, including two ice cream shops and the hotel restaurants. Today, there are 36. Store signage in heritage colours and size were controlled by town bylaws. No sandwich boards were allowed on sidewalks.

No merchandise was allowed to hang outside stores. Today, many store signs are inappropriate in design, shape and colour, and products proliferate outdoors.

No chains stores were allowed . . . an unwritten rule supported by merchants and the town council alike. Today they are here and there are more to come. A Dairy Queen is opening soon on Queen Street.

The entire objective back then was to keep Niagara-on-the-Lake different from everywhere else. Almost all other small towns, even if they had interesting or quaint centres, became so consumed by ‘sameness’ that they had become pointless to visit.

The Old Town is heading down a slippery slope with a confused or non-existent mission statement. The Shaw Festival, high quality hotels and wineries attract patrons who support long-term, consistent business development an objective supported strongly in previous years.

However, Queen Street is rapidly becoming a food court for the Outlet Mall, including chain outlets with their varicous appetites for fast-food customers who are shuttled from the 100 buses which daily, in season, at the Fort George parking lot for their one-hour layover, before heading to Niagara Falls.

This dichotomy needs to be on the agenda at the next tourism strategic planning discussion by those now responsible for keeping what’s left of the precious old part of Niagara-on-the-Lake as different as possible from everywhere else.

Hamish Kerr
Retailer on Queen St. 1988-2006

LOOKING TOWARD AN AREA OF CAROLINA FOREST WHICH WAS ONCE A SHIELD FOR WILD POPULATIONS OF ANIMALS, INCLUDING KOYOTES (Owen Bjorgan)
Tomorrow's Voices brings children together

Choir provides opportunities for children who might miss out

Todd Green explains the inspiration for Tomorrow's Voices. (Photos supplied)

Mike Balsom
The Local

St. Davids resident Todd Green knows the benefits of choir singing. After all, the Brock University Goodman School of Business professor has researched them thoroughly.

Green is one of the men behind Tomorrow’s Voices, a non-profit children’s choir that launched out of St. Catharines in 2017. It all started a couple of years earlier with a chance for him to combine his love for music with his business background. While researching his paper, An Exploration of Socially Responsible Music Consumption, he came into contact with vocalist, songwriter and bass player Murray Foster of Great Big Sea. Foster approached Green and the Goodman School with an idea to offer music training as a team-building activity for corporate entities.

"Singing is much easier than having four guitars, three bases and a whole bunch of drums coming into a corporate board room," laughs Green. "And singing is something that people can easily learn to do. When you put enough voices together pretty cool things happen."

His Goodman School students started researching the idea that became Choir Nation. He and Foster (and some other musicians) found their services in demand by organizations such as KPMG, Chubb, Indigo and Canada Goose. He laughs that as he was running to these head offices, the Choir Nation quarter-ters was housed in the base-ment of the St. Davids home he shares with his wife Jennifer and their seven-year-old son Liam.

Along with Foster and Choir Nation co-owner Tor Mendelt Hoekstra, they agreed to host our rehears-als for free. At first we had four kids signed up, and within a week we had 28.

Some of the kids in- volved are in foster care, and others have been diag nosed on the autism spec-trum. One of the children involved had not even been sent to school until he was nine years old.

Stephanie, now 18 years old, joined Tomorrow’s Voices about two years ago, following her sister Emily. The St. Catharines Colle-giate graduate is now study ing Early Childhood Educa-tion in Niagara College and successfully convinced Green to allow her to con-tinue with the choir even though she’s technically too old to participate.

“It gives me a highlight to look forward to every week,” she says. “When I was in high school it was my favourite thing to do each week, going to choir, and meeting other people from other schools. I have always been one of the older ones in the choir and I enjoyed making connections with the younger kids.”

In November, 2017, To morrow’s Voices had their first public performance as a choir of more than 25 kids aged eight to 18 at a show by

Tips for avoiding coyote conflicts

- Feeding coyotes causes aggression towards humans
- Store garbage indoors until collected
- Secure garbage and compost in durable plastic or steel containers with locking lids
- Remove bird feeders and seed spillage that attracts rodents and their predators
- Feed pets indoors and always keep all pet food indoors

Important Note

Provincial Law prohibits the relocation of wildlife beyond a 1 km range. Therefore, coyote(s) relocated 1 km away often return to the area where it feels most comfortable.

It is vital that anyone in an emergency situation with a coyote, such as a coyote cornering a human, call 911 immediately. Police are authorized to handle these situations and frequently engage the Humane Society when they attend the call.

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(Charge will not be used for emergencies)

Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake
905-469-3266 ext 0
info@notl.com
notl.com/coyotes

Nick Jerrom and began working with kids in St. Catharines in 2017. “I contacted Community Care St. Catharines and Thordal, and we connect ed with Big Brothers Big Sisters, too,” he explains. “Caseworkers started referring kids to us, and Brock’s Marilyn 1 Walker School agreed to host our rehears als for free. At first we had four kids signed up, and within a week we had 28.”

Some of the kids involved are in foster care, and others have been diagnosed on the autism spectrum. One of the children involved had not even been sent to school until he was nine years old.

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Virtual music trivia night coming up April 28

“O Canada”

Tickets are still available for the trivia night, at https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/tomorrows-voices-virtual-music-trivia-ft-alan-cross-tickets-274904866857.

Green promises a great night of music trivia covering all genres and all decades of music. And you don’t even have to leave home to enjoy it.
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Wayne Gates
MPP Niagara Falls Proudly representing Niagara-on-the-Lake

Martin Sheppard Fraser UP
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Jeleel Stewart grew up in a rural area in Manchester, Jamaica, attending the local school and enjoying a carefree childhood with a loving extended family. His father was gone for six to eight months of the year, cutting cane on the farm work program in Florida. It was a dangerous job, and one year he was injured.

Jeleel’s mother was informed that her husband did not survive a serious accident at work. The family was cut off from any further information, received no compensation and could not afford a lawyer. At 13, Jeleel was forced to quit school and become the breadwinner for his family.

Years later, in 2007, he applied to join the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program in Canada as a way to support his wife Suza-nna and four children. He arrived in early spring in Niagara-on-the-Lake and plunged into his new job with great enthusiasm, easily making friends with his new coworkers. We met on a Sunday night at the Caribbean Workers Outreach: Project church service at Bethany Mennonite Church, where he jumped up to join the music team for a post-service singalong. We connected with a few more times over music and family dinners before he returned home in November.

Six months later my friend Jodie Godwin and I took him up on an offer to meet his family in St. Catharines, not in Niagara-on-the-Lake. We brought gifts and watched with assurance from WSIB. We gathered donations and with the help of his coworkers, shipped a barrel full of necessities and dry goods to help his family get through the following winter. The sick benefits provided were not enough to feed the family but there was hope that the physiotherapy in Kingston would restore at least partial use of his hand.

In 2010 he received a letter from WSIB informing him that because the damage to his hand was considered permanent by the doctor, he would no longer receive benefits or therapy. In a process known as deeming, WSIB stated that because there was a cashier job available at a gas bar in Niagara-on-the-Lake which he could perform with one hand, he would no longer qualify for assistance.

We were stunned. Surely this was a mistake. We assumed WSIB had made an obvious error as Jeleel lived in Jamaica, not in Niagara where he could apply at the local gas station. We knew there was no chance that the Canadian government would issue a work permit for a cashier job. Jeleel has developed diabetes in recent years because the family cannot afford fresh vegetables and protein necessary for good health.

He is presently in the hospital for the second time in two weeks. His face is hollow, his body a mere shadow of the physically strong man he once was. His diabetes is out of control and he cannot afford the necessary medication. His heart is failing. We hope and pray that help does not come too late.

WSIB recently issued a press release boasting of its surplus of $1.4 billion. Jeleel is one of many seriously injured farm workers whose suffering has allowed others to benefit from rebates and dividends.

On March 20, people gathered worldwide in parks, churches, and streets to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. In the little village of Virgil about 50 people gathered across different faith communities, immigration status, and ages to take part in a walk through the village, affirming the full humanity of our migrant, refugee, and racialized neighbours. We joined them in honour of the Stewart family’s struggle for survival.

Farmworkers are more than migrant workers. That is why we chose to “walk the walk.”
Part-time hockey coach Matt Miller has developed characteristics and skills both playing and coaching hockey at a high level over many years. “Sports are terrific for making you work well with others, recognizing that everyone has something to bring to the table,” says the 33-year-old.

“Leadership qualities for sure, organizational skills, communication and time management is a huge one.”

He adds competitiveness to the list, and his recent experience in coaching competitive levels of hockey stand as proof that he can hang in there when the heat is on.

They are all also skills that also help him in his full-time job as a sales representative with the Miller Group, including managing time with showings for clients and buyers.

Growing up in the Ajax/Pickering area, Miller rose through the junior hockey fires, who was chosen by Cuylle of the Windsor Spitfires, who was chosen by the NHL’s number six over-ager in 2001, and left winger Will Schanbacher (Barrie Colts) was drafted into the OHL.

Miller’s team in his second year coaching the North Stars. Evan only experienced Matt’s expertise for a short period of time.

“We really enjoyed his junior-style practices that were always well executed,” A.J. said. “He spent a lot of time correcting and explaining different things. He was one of the most transparent and honest professional coaches we have ever had, and he took a zero-parent influence policy, which was quite refreshing. I could see him coaching even above Junior B and heading onto an OHL bench like a seasoned vet.”

This year Miller moved on to take an associate coach role with the St. Catharines Junior B Falcons. They are currently in the first round of the playoffs in the Greater Ontario Junior B Hockey League’s (GOJHL) playoffs.

“They’re an excellent organization,” Miller says. “It’s a great culture, they provide a great environment for the players. There’s a certain expectation for the players’ behaviour both on and off the ice. And the number of volunteers involved, it’s second-to-none in the Niagara region.”

Miller, who just got married to Andrea last summer (they met years ago when they both worked at Bistro 61 on Queen Street) and does not have children of his own yet, says his focus in coaching has always been on development.

“That’s with respect to skill development and personal character development,” Miller insists. “And work ethic, too. I would identify myself as a player’s coach who takes an interest in each of my players’ lives, and treats them with respect and care. In return, I expect a good attitude and hard work. Success will come with that.”

When asked who his coaching mentors were, Miller points to Billy Caroll, a former NHL player who won three Stanley Cups with the New York Islanders and one with the Edmonton Oilers in the 1980s. He also mentions Wayne Marchment, his Junior coach back in his Cobourg days.

“He was a vocal, charismatic player in those days, with a smart hockey IQ,” Miller says. “I think both of those guys recognized that I had potential to be a coach back then.”

Outside of his current role with the Falcons, Miller continues to run his self-named hockey school and camps, which in the past have taken him as far away as Minnesota and China. And he has run a number of camps in the Niagara region, especially when he was involved with the North Stars.

Miller continues to coach for all the right reasons. He does it because he loves it. It’s his passion. Though he admits it would be a dream to make hockey his full-time job, he also has a practical side that means he has to make the difficult decision to miss a practice or arrive 10 minutes late from time to time.

“People want to see homes when they are home from work,” he explains, “which is generally evenings and weekends. Well, that’s generally when hockey is. I’ve become a master navigator of my time, I manage my schedule to a ‘T’. I never jeopardize my real estate work with hockey. Real estate takes the front seat, and hockey goes to the back.”

“We won’t back down, we negotiate very hard for our clients,” he says of the Miller team. “We’re not afraid of an agent, or a difficult buyer or seller on the other side. We try to re-present our client’s interests as best we can.”

Even if he does some day find full-time work behind a hockey bench, Miller says he will always be involved in the family business, which he loves just as much as his favourite sport. And after all, as he points out, he loves the competition.
Preparations in full swing for safe Bunny Trail

Penny Coles
The Local

Preparations are in full swing for the popular annual Bunny Trail event, back after a two-year absence. While the new Niagara Nursery School multiple-room space is working out well, says executive director Candice Penny, it won’t be available for the event, which is being planned entirely outdoors, with an eye on safety precautions against COVID. “We’re following best practices for the event,” she says, and that includes outdoors with events planned to allow room for distancing. “Activities are spread out to discourage major gatherings in any one spot as much as possible,” with lots of sanitizing throughout.

Decisions had to be made about the event without knowing whether there would be restrictions mandated, so they prepared for that scenario by keeping it outdoors. Hand sanitizers will be available, “and we’re encouraging people to wear masks,” says Penny.

The event will be held “rain or shine, unless we have really something really extreme,” she says, “so come dressed for the weather.” “We’re definitely excited to be going ahead with this, but also cautious, prepared to do what we need to do.” They’ve tried to keep it simple, with a limited number of activities, mindful both of safety but also providing lots of fun for families, including a bake sale, touch-a-tractor, balloon animals, and an Easter photo booth. NNS is still accepting suggestions of names for their new “bunny friend.” Suggestions can be sent to niagarannurserydirector2@gmail.com by April 14. The winning name will be announced on social media on Friday, April 15.

The Bunny Trail is Saturday, April 16, from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at the Niagara-on-the-Lake community centre. The Kinsmen Egg Hunt starts at 10 a.m. sharp, with age groups for three and under, four to six, and seven to 10, and a special prize for each age group.
The Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum research room has opened, for now every Tuesday by appointment, and all sleuths, detectives, genealogists, and the curious public are once again invited back to explore the secrets of boxes, drawers, and files of historical archives.

The NOTL Museum’s collection database site at www.notlmuseum.ca is the first place to start. After an initial exploration, researchers must book an appointment with the museum. Requests are received, and a detailed inventory of relevant information on a particular subject is drawn up by museum staff. Researchers are then able to determine exactly what archival material they would like to physically examine.

The museum is home to more than 50,000 items, out of which approximately 41,000 fall into the photographic, paper and print categories. And as this museum houses one of the oldest and most significant collections of life in Upper Canada for the past 10,000 years, the job of clue-hunting is not for the faint of heart. Diaries, war claims, oral histories, military and court records, properties, families, names, and early settlement records, all make up the extensive collection, and make researching even the most obscure article a fascinating adventure.

All researchers are asked to phone ahead to make a Tuesday appointment, and to provide initial areas of interest. Research fees are $15 per visit for non-members, and free to members.

For more information check out the NOTL Museum website at www.notlmuseum.ca/research, or send an email to: contact@nhsm.ca.

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Barb Blackwell
NOTL Museum

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Central Community Church opening for Easter service

Mike Balsom
The Local

For lead pastor Bill Markham it’s more than serendipity or coincidence that the new York Road location of Central Community Church will open its doors for the first time for an Easter Sunday service this weekend.

“I believe that there is an order and a reason for everything,” Markham says, standing in the large, spacious foyer. “Not only are we getting to open on Easter Sunday, the highlight of our calendar, but people are able to come without registering and we can actually have a mass celebration. I give credit to God for that. He knew the timing would work out.”

This weekend’s opening is the fulfilment of a dream that began with an idea about 14 years ago, when it became clear that Central’s 900-capacity Scott Street church was beginning to burst at the seams. A fundraising campaign was begun, and ground was broken on the new site in 2019.

Construction delays forced by two years of the pandemic did slow things down for much of 2020, but project manager and congregation member Grant McArthur says the $20 million building is ready to open its doors to the public.

“There’s just a bit of clean-up to do,” McArthur tells The Local. “We have to double-check everything, put up a few banners, move some things around, just some last minute details. We’re ready to go. It’s not a rush to the end, it’s exactly what we planned.”

“We were actually doing a three-week opening,” Markham explains. “The first week is, of course, the celebration of Easter, a regular service that celebrates what Jesus did. Week two we’re going to talk about what this means for our church, and week three on May 1 is for the community, with the mayors coming to cut the ribbon and all the fanfare.”

Over the past few weeks, Markham has welcomed members of Central’s volunteer committee, who number in the hundreds, as well as members of the congregation who contributed to the financial campaign for the new building. Feedback from them has been overwhelmingly positive.

“The first impression, I think, will be amazing for everyone,” predicts Markham. “Many gave sacrificially to this project. For them, it will be just an amazing moment and experience as a family. It’s a testament to the belief of the church family, and I hope it’s something that anything is possible.”

Both Markham and McArthur stress that 680 York Road is not just a church but also a community centre. From the beginning, the vision was to have the building become a central part of the Niagara community, built to host everything from weddings and celebrations to concerts and conferences.

As well, the church space itself, with a capacity of 1,500 on the floor and another 300 in the balcony, features no permanent seating, making it flexible enough to host sports groups during the week. “There’s no space that is single use,” Markham says. “That was a critical piece in the design of this space. And we still have space that we can develop. Yes, we are a church family, but we did everything with the greater community in mind.”

“It’s bright, it’s grand, it’s open,” continues Markham. “The goal was to make you feel welcome when you walk in. It’s a way to say that this is a place for you.”

McArthur says new events coordinator Sarah Petitda has already booked an upcoming concert and a major youth conference. A number of weddings are planned for the smaller room, which will be used for youth ministry on Sundays, and a volleyball group has booked the main church for its teams. The annual Community Crew fundraising gala will be held on the site as well.

Final preparations to open the on-site daycare centre are still being completed. Childcare supervisor Christine Lett says inspections by the region should be happening soon, and the playground equipment has yet to arrive. She expects the daycare, with spaces for 65 children, should be open in a month.

Standing inside the church space it’s difficult not to be impressed. The massive stage may be the largest permanent stage in the region. It’s flanked on either side by large projection screens, 24’ wide by 13.5’ high, and raised LED lighting. The hardwood floor, not yet lined for volleyball or basketball, goes wall-to-wall.

An island with television cameras sits about two-thirds back from the stage, connect ed to the sound and lighting board installed in the balcony. The audio system sounds fantastic, a promising factor for future concert bookings.

Visitors for Sunday service, with sessions at both 9 a.m. and 11 a.m., will enter the foyer, greeted by volunteers identified by their brightly coloured T-shirts. They’ll have a chance to take a photo by the large A PLACE FOR YOU sign.

There are monitors and speakers in the foyer that will show the service, perfect for any overflow or for those who may be overwhelmed by the number of people inside the church. The cafe in the foyer will be open Sunday as well.

Markham and his team are busy preparing for this weekend, with a full run-through with lights and sound happening this Thursday evening.

“‘They have worked really hard.” Markham enthuses about his team. “They are super-positive, super excited. We’re really excited to invite new people who have maybe never been to our community of faith, who may have never been to church before. It is very different than maybe what most people expect.”

The final Sunday service was held at their long-time Scott Street location last weekend. For Good Friday, Markham and his worship team will bid a final adieu along with the congregation there, symbolically closing that chapter before the debut on York Road.

“We were there for 21 years,” Markham says. “My daughter took a picture there with my grandson. That’s where she grew up, where all the major transformative moments of her life took place. This will be his place, the place for the next generation.”

Happy Anniversary!

Sally McGarr is celebrating her 40th... that is 40 years of selling real estate throughout Niagara. She is seen here with the team of realtors, at a McGarr listing located at 228 Queen Street in Old Town. McGarr is proud to assist their clients across the peninsula. Happy Anniversary Sally! (BW Cochrane)
As we celebrate National Wildlife Week it is wonderful to spend some time in our local conservation areas.

A popular area for both townfolk and visitors is the Niagara Shores area along Lakeshore Road. In the last few weeks, after the long winter, the area is showing many signs of coming alive again. The Canada geese are loudly making their presence known in the pond area. A turtle was spotted sunning itself on a log on the far side. A pair of mute swans have returned and appear to be nesting at the far end of the pond. A mallard drake, seemingly lonely at one time, was seen jumping and my favours - the belted kingfishers - were quite active along the shoreline. A Canada goose was seen sunning itself on a log on the far side. A pair of mute swans have returned and appear to be nesting at the far end of the pond. A mallard drake, seemingly lonely at one time, was seen jumping and my favours - the belted kingfishers - were quite active along the shoreline.

It’s great to see people out walking the trails and encouraging to see many of the folks with dogs keeping them leashed in the area, as Parks Canada requests. Given that we have fewer and fewer areas locally for wildlife, it’s important that they aren’t being chased by dogs on the loose.

I’m hoping that vehicle access to this relatively small area will remain restricted, as I fear it will cause many problems, especially for species at risk like the bank swallow that will soon be reappearing.

It’s very important for us to remember that with the ongoing development of so much of our surrounding lands, these dwindling natural areas will face extraordinary pressure. Maintaining their wise use will become very important.

Continued from page 1

Kayaker not happy about paid parking

For years you used to be able to land your boat there and spend the night," she says. "I’m a no-trace camper, I did not harm. In fact, I would clean up other people’s messes. Now Parks Canada has taken over, and they put up ‘no trespassing’ signs all over the island. Now no one has access. My world is getting smaller and smaller.”

Rienzo recently replaced her Honda Fit with a Subaru Forester. She has outfitted the vehicle with a Thule Hullavator system, which allows her to lift her kayak to waist height and let the Hullavator do most of the work to get the vessel on the roof.

The Subaru allows her to easily navigate the road down to Smuggler’s Cove, where she usually launches her boat. Navy Hall is another frequent launch location, but she says access there is not easy, with the dock sitting too high off the water. And a few months ago a pile of boulders were dumped near the dock, making access even more difficult.

With the recent announcement that the town does not have enough money left in the budget to add an accessible dock near Balls Beach, she continues to be frustrated by what she sees as the town’s lack of support for water enthusiasts like herself.

Terry Disero told The Local recently, "there are a few areas along Balls Beach, closer to a parking area on Turntable Way, where a simple launch for kayaks could be made at little cost. Disero said she and Town C.A.O Marnie Cluckie will be monitoring that location for kayakers to see if any improvements need to be made.

Disero added that there will be parking meters connected to Honk Mobile at Turntable Way. That would allow Rienzo and others to pay for extended parking using the app on their phone, and to top up their time remotely, even from the river.

“I refuse to pay to put my boat in the water,” an angry Rienzo says. “It’s absurd. We as a species should not be limited to where we can access water, period. Lakes, rivers, oceans - it shouldn’t matter. We don’t have a shortage of tax dollars, we have a problem with politicians who don’t know how to spend it responsibly. We need politicians who are athletes, someone like me, who wants to access our parks and our waterfronts.”

“We’ve got water here, but we’re landlocked for kayaks,” Rienzo says. “That is a big problem here and it isn’t fair. Niagara-on-the-Lake is not kayak-, canoe- or small motor boat-friendly. And there is not a single beach that is wheelchair- or senior citizen-friendly.”

She plans to add her voice to that of Tim Balski, owner of Paddle Niagara, and others who have been pushing for some kind of easier access for kayakers and paddle boards for a number of years.

As she finishes waxing her vessel, she plans to head out later the same day, hoping to run into that beaver sitting too high off the water.

Rienzo feels the town is missing an opportunity to attract a certain kind of tourist. With an average kayak coming in at around $2,000, and additional money spent on roof racks, life jackets, spray skirts and bilge pumps for the boat, kayakers usually have money to spend at NOTL hotels, bars and restaurants.

There is some hope, though, as Lord Mayor Betty Disero told The Local recently, "there is an area along Balls Beach, closer to a parking area on Turntable Way, where a simple launch for kayaks could be made at little cost. Disero said she and Town C.A.O Marnie Cluckie will be monitoring that location for kayakers to see if any improvements need to be made.

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Mike Balsom
The Local

Though it was perhaps a bit chilly Friday, for Keith Vant there couldn’t have been a better day to open the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club.

Sunshine greeted the first group of golfers to tee off at 8 a.m., and the 29-year-old Niagara Falls native played his first round as the club’s new head professional about an hour or so later. “It was a great opening day,” Vant tells The Local. “We had a total of about 85 golfers come out, and we had no rain. I met a lot of the members Friday.”

Vant takes the reins from long-time head pro Billy Simkin, who departed for a head teaching professional job at Fonthill’s Peninsula Lakes Golf Club. Vant, a native Ricky Watson, who is behind last fall by NOTL ICC, then jumped to Legends, following graduation from Hamilton’s International Country Club. He later became a junior member at Stevensville’s International Country Club (now Niagara National).

He earned his pro card while working part-time at ICC, then jumped to Legends as their assistant pro, a role he held for seven years. Vant sees some similarities between Legends and NOTL, as well as some stark contrasts. “Between the two clubs, the customer service has to be top-notch,” Vant reflects. “At Legends, though, golfers were there vacationing, you didn’t get the repeat clientele that you do at Niagara-on-the-Lake. This club is a lot more social, a lot more tight knit. People are friends here, or looking to meet new friends.”

“It’s a complex job,” he continues. “There’s a lot I’ve had to step into to get going right away, with the number of leagues we have, and the amount of people that are in our leagues. Business ladies and Thursday nights men’s leagues are both over 150 players. I’ve had a lot of requests for lessons as well.”

In the month or so since he’s been at the NOTL club, he’s had a chance to meet many of the members, and he’s been impressed at how welcoming and helpful everyone has been.

His goal is to create some fun games and activities to enhance the social aspect that both he and club proponent John Wiens see as one of the biggest assets of the club.

“It will be easier this year now that COVID rules are lifted,” Vant says. “We can go back to shotgun starts for league play, we can have people back inside the dining room all at the same time afterwards. We’ll be able to do prizes and dinners and get to know each other through that.”

Coming off the course Friday morning Vant couldn’t help but reflect on the scenery. “What beautiful views, just awesome,” Vant marveled. “I noticed how tree-lined the fairways are. It will be even tighter once the leaves are on them come summer. I’ll have to be hitting a straight ball all along. And with the wind coming off the lake, that will add to the challenge but also feel like a blessing during the dog days of summer.”

Assistant pro Cam Zeppa gives credit to the grounds crew, led by superintendent Mike Magwood, for getting the course ready for Friday’s first rounds. “He’s done a great job,” Zeppa says. “I know he has some plans to do a little more in the next few weeks, but the course is drier than we anticipated. They’ve done a lot of tree-trimming and getting the bunkers ready. There’s no real winter-wear on the grass, either.”

Zeppa came to NOTL last spring from Hamilton’s Glendale Golf and Country Club, a Club Link course. He steps into the role left behind last fall by NOTL native Ricky Watson, who is now working in real estate.

Like Vant, Zeppa is eager to see the social aspect of the club return after two summers of play-and-leave being the order of the day. “This year we’re really trying to bring back the pre-COVID club atmosphere,” Zeppa says. “We weren’t able to clean our members’ clubs last year because it was a COVID risk. We are able to bring that service back to our members. And we hope our members will stay after their round, have a drink, some food and socialize.”

Zeppa says he and Vant have been working well together. “We bring in our own friends. We bring in our own customers. What lovely people.”

As the golf season progresses, Vant and Zeppa are hoping to hire another assistant to help them with the high demand for lessons. They are also planning to run four junior camps, one more than usual, during the summer months.

And Vant hopes he can carve some time out periphrasically to hit the links once again with his father, as well as with his mother, Kandy, who took up the game about 15 years ago. “I love golf with my mother now almost as much as I do with my father,” laughs Vant. “She gives my dad a run for his money almost every time we play.”

Reigning NOTL Golf Club men’s champion James Grigjanis-Meusel, and John Sobol, winner of the Goldcup trophy, played the first round of golf for the season at the NOTL Golf Club Friday morning with Joe Doria, the first to sign up. He was also part of a foursome that opened the season last year. “It’s been a long, tough winter,” said Doria Friday. “We were really anxious for the club to open.”

Assistant Cam Zeppa and golf club pro Keith Vant are hoping to develop more social activities at the club, now that pandemic restrictions are lifted. (Photo supplied)

Assistant Cam Zeppa and golf club pro Keith Vant are hoping to develop more social activities at the club, now that pandemic restrictions are lifted. (Photo supplied)
The late Doug Garrett, with emcee and committee chair Ward Simpson beside him, recalled his golfing days during the Sports Wall of Fame induction ceremony in 2019. There hasn’t been one since. (File photo)

Mike Balsom
The Local

Ward Simpson, chair of Niagara-on-the-Lake Sports Wall of Fame committee, is happy the town will be able to honour at least two new members this year on the wall of the Meridian Credit Union Arena.

“We struggled with whether to do it or not during COVID,” says Simpson, himself a Wall of Fame inductee, joined in 2011 for his own contributions to local sports. “The right decision was to not do it because one of the best parts of the whole thing is the evening when we present the awards. With COVID, we couldn’t do that.”

The last ceremony was held at the arena in late August, 2019. That night about 60 family members and friends gathered in the corridor to celebrate the induction of Doug Garrett as an athlete and Dave Wall for his behind-the-scenes efforts as a builder.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Sports Wall of Fame was established to acknowledge those men and women who have made a significant contribution to sports in our community. Since its inception in 2003, 26 others have joined Simpson in the photo gallery at the arena.

“The town is accepting nominations for the Wall of Fame until May 6. After that date, the committee will meet to evaluate all the names put forward.”

“It’s always tough, because we keep all the past nominations and go back through them,” explains Simpson. “When we did it last time, we only had one or two new submissions. Hopefully we will get more new submissions this year to make the decision harder. It’s always good to have new names brought in.”

NOTL manager of parks and recreation Kevin Turcotte says the nominations are actually always open, but the town didn’t promote it during the pandemic. Because of that no nominations were received the past two years.

“Normally the committee selects two people each year,” Turcotte tells The Local, when asked whether or not more members will be welcomed this year to make up for the two years missed. “Our committee won’t meet until after the nominations close, and that’s something that we might discuss then.”

Only twice before were more than two members inducted. Four were welcomed in 2008 (Harry Steels, Bill Dunny, Jer- eny Rempel and Susan Grimstead) and three in 2017 (Bill Dickson, Marv Edwards and Jack Lowery).

In 2016, Alan, Vera and Mark Derbyshire were inducted together as athletes, and Art and Ted Wiens were welcomed as a tandem of builders in 2016.

In 2018, the committee made the rare decision to induct only Bob Hunter in the builder category for his contributions to minor hockey.

“It’s not necessarily always an athlete and a builder,” Turcotte says. “It’s based on the applications we receive, and the committee’s recommendations that get brought forward. It depends on which applications are supported by the majority of the committee.”

To nominate an athlete or a builder, Turcotte asserts there must be support from at least five people in the community on the official form. That lends more weight and support to each particular nomination.

Simpson adds that whether an athlete or a builder, each member of the Wall of Fame must have been a resident of Niagara-on-the-Lake while initiating his or her athletic endeavour.

“It’s fairly strict,” Simpson explains. “We’ve had people who have moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake in their later years who were great athletes, but not really in Niagara. We’re not able to accept those applications because they’re not Niagara natives.”

One of Simpson’s favourite parts of chairing the committee is discovering the contributions of people he didn’t realize had contributed so much to the community.

“We hear about some people who we didn’t really recognize as sports heroes,” Simpson says. “That makes it a lot more interesting. And it makes the decision process challenging, too.”

“There’s a real sense of community, and I think you can see that on the wall,” says Turcotte. “People enjoy telling people that they are from Niagara-on-the-Lake. And people are proud of the efforts of others to build sports facilities and leagues. It’s a celebration of sports in Niagara-on-the-Lake. The wall is indicative of people contributing to the community in whatever way they can.”

Funding for the plaques and frames comes from various organizations and sponsors, including the Niagara-on-the-Lake Kinsmen Club and Rotary Club.

Nomination forms can be found at https://notl.civicweb.net/document/22530.
SUDOKU

Puzzle Answers

April 6, 2022

To place an obituary in our Classifieds, please contact Julia at: julia@notllocal.com or 905.934.1040
Deadline is Tuesdays at 10 a.m.
Queenston village supports Ukraine with flags, funds

Penny Coles
The Local

Queenston Residents Association president Jim Armstrong was hoping to raise a Ukrainian flag on the village flag post, with a little ceremony, outside the library.

When he learned town regulations made that impossible, he quickly found another option.

A drive through the village will show three Ukrainian flags hanging from hydro poles in the village, along with several residents flying flags on their own properties.

The three 3’ by 5’ flags, as well as the flagpoles, were paid for through donations to the QRA, with town staff assisting by installing them, says Armstrong.

“The staff were very enthusiastic, and when we thanked them for their help, they thanked us for what we were doing. The feeling out there is that everyone wants to do as much as they can.”

The QRA has also been raising funds for Ukraine, with a matching campaign, and will be sending $1,500 for Ukrainian relief. It took a bit of time, “but we exceeded what we had anticipated,” said Armstrong.

The flags are symbolic, but the donations are what is really important, with so much needed in the way of humanitarian aid, he added.

Queenston resident Adrian Schoot Uiterkamp said villagers seeing the brutality of Russian attacks felt they wanted to do something to support Ukraine, even those without family connections. “We’re all humans belonging to the world,” he said.

Queenston resident Doug King, Sue Stecyk with Daisy, Marilyn and Jim Armstrong, and Adrian Schoot Uiterkamp celebrate the new Ukrainian flags in the village, with flags and poles paid for through donations by residents. (Penny Coles)