



Love for  
music  
reunites  
local men  
**page 14**

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Rachael and Martin Werner, with their daughters Dani and Penny, are the owners of the house they were surprised to learn is considered the sexiest in Niagara-on-the-Lake, thanks to a fun contest organized by the NOTL Museum. Their historic, 1818 home won out over 31 other historic houses. For story, please see page 12. (Photo supplied)

## Mother hoping for answers about son's tragic death

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

Colleen Franz has a message for the many, many people who have sent her their condolences over the loss of her son Matthew Wilson: every one of them has helped her get through “the next minute, the next hour, and the next day.”

Losing a child under any circumstance is devastating, but the tragedy of Matthew's death, and the questions still remaining for his family, have left his mother in shock, struggling to be strong, trying to be the kind of person Matt would want her to be, she says.

He was walking along Lakeshore Road near McNab Road last Sunday night, when he was hit by a pickup truck, she thinks around 10:30 p.m. The driver fled the scene. Two men, Colleen thinks on their way to work Monday morning, saw her

son in a ditch around 7 a.m., and stopped to help. One called 911, and the other administered CPR until paramedics arrived.

The two men, she says, “have reached out to me. They tried to save my son.” They want to be anonymous, she added.

Colleen believes Matthew, 40, was on his way home from seeing a girl, someone he may have met recently, but she's not sure.

He told her he was going out, and he was walking, as he often does. And because her son was an adult, living with her and her husband John, Matt's stepfather, she didn't ask him a lot about what he was doing or where he was going. He had lost his job due to COVID, and she had suggested he live with them to make his life a little easier during a difficult time. She was doing her best to

**Continued on page 4**

## NOTL agricultural workers among first to be vaccinated

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

When Phil Tregunno received a phone call asking if he could get a busload of his farmworkers to St. Catharines to be vaccinated, he didn't hesitate.

The invitation, which came “out of the blue,” included the offshore and Canadian employees at Tregunno Fruit Farms on the Niagara River Parkway, as well as his own family mem-

bers, he says, a total of 71 people.

He was given about three days' notice, and at first, he thought he might have trouble getting the workers on-board. They were hesitant, and had questions, he says.

“They responded negatively at first, and fairly vocally negatively.”

It was at the time when AstraZeneca was in the news, he says, and there was a lot of misinformation about vaccinations, which was creating

concern, but fortunately, he'd been given some material for them to read, that seemed to help allay their fears, and when they asked if he would get the vaccination, his answer was a resounding yes.

“I told them I would be first in line,” he says, and explained that health care workers had already received vaccinations. There were also questions about which product they would get, so he was happy for their sakes to see it was going to be Pfizer, al-

though for himself, he would have been okay if it had been AstraZeneca.

He also assured the men they wouldn't lose time or work earnings, which was important to them. “I made sure it wasn't an issue.”

To his surprise, when it was time to go to the clinic, every one of the men had signed their consent forms.

His only concern now is their second dose is four months away — he's hoping that will get moved up. And

when the time comes, whatever is happening on the farm, he'll make sure they all get there. Nothing is more important than health care, he says. “We want to get everybody back there and get it done.”

Many of them have since thanked him, and are very appreciative of having been vaccinated, while many other workers on other farms haven't.

Leading up to vaccination day, the arrival of the men

had been stressful enough. Although they had all received negative COVID-19 test results before they left to come to Canada, there were some positives on arrival of every flight, he says.

Tregunno, chair of the Ontario Tender Fruit Growers, says his workers quarantined in a Niagara Falls hotel — although it's expensive, he didn't feel there was enough room for them to spread out

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# Lord Mayor took health care advice: first vaccine is best vaccine

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

Lord Mayor Betty Disero has received her first vaccination, and she couldn't be happier.

She's been on the waiting list at Simpson's Pharmacy, and when she received a call offering her an appointment, she jumped at it, she says.

"I've been trying to get an appointment at one of the clinics,

and planned to just take whatever came first," she says.

She didn't hesitate for a minute when offered the chance at a dose of AstraZeneca, she says.

While she has heard from a few people — not many, because she's not going out and having occasion to talk to people — that they are hesitant about AstraZeneca, but she says she's following the advice

of health care professionals, that "the first vaccine is the best vaccine. It didn't matter where I went or what kind of vaccine it was, it was just a matter of what came first."

When community clinics were opened up to those aged 60 and over, another 67,000 people in Niagara became eligible, says Disero. "There is no way clinics will be able to do 67,000 people, plus those who

are over 70 and still trying to get vaccinated."

There have to be other outlets to help get through that number, and pharmacies are the other option at the moment, she says, although primary care doctors are also coming onboard this week.

Although as of Tuesday there were no more community clinics scheduled to take place at the Niagara-on-the-Lake community centre, she's hoping to hear soon from Public Health that NOTL will be included in the next schedule announcement, possibly for a few consecutive

days, "rather than a day here and there. I don't want them to give up on the smaller locations."

Simpson's Pharmacy and Simpson's Apothecary vaccinated 325 people during its first week of vaccinations, and are in the process of booking another 300-plus for this week.

Invitations have been sent to all of those 55 and over who signed up on the pharmacy's waiting list prior to March 1, but there are still more than 2,500 names on the list.

Sean Simpson says he has another 300 appointments for this week, and has enough

vaccine to take him through to Thursday, but he's beginning to book for Friday and next week, hoping to get more supply for those appointments.

There are still a significant number of people on the waiting list who are not accepting appointments, and although some may be hesitant to get the shot, he suspects most have received their dose elsewhere.

Those who are 60 and over are now eligible to be vaccinated at community clinics. To book an appointment, visit: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/book-vaccine/>

## Health team doctors ready to start vaccinating

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

Local primary care physicians are now able to offer vaccinations to their patients, with their first clinic at the offices in the former Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital site being held Wednesday.

Dr. Karen Berti says there will be two clinics this week, Wednesday and Thursday, for patients of all 11 doctors in the Niagara North Family Health Team.

While both clinics will be held at the Wellington Street site, they are by appointment only, for patients of both the Virgil and Old Town offices.

The two offices received a total of 330 doses Monday, and staff were going through their lists of patients in the 55 to 59 age group, who are not yet eli-

gible for vaccinations at community clinics, to offer appointments, although a number of them have already been vaccinated elsewhere, says Berti.

On Tuesday morning, they had about 100 appointments booked, and she was expecting about 180 to 200 vaccinations would be administered over the two days.

The holdup, as with the pharmacies, is training staff on the provincial system for documenting the vaccinations, making the start-up a little slow until everyone is comfortable on it.

As well as looking for patients at higher risk in that age group, they are making a list of those who are homebound, and will have staff go out to administer shots next week to those who can't get to Wellington Street, says Berti.

With primary care physicians part of the rollout of phase two vaccinations, the Niagara North Family Health Team was asked to participate, and all of the sites said yes, she says.

Berti and other doctors of the family health team have been "working behind the scenes" all along, she says, helping their patients get vaccination appointments at community clinics.

When the provincial online booking system opened to patients in the 80-year plus group, the doctors were allowed access codes to expedite the process for some of their patients, and could go online to book for those who were having difficulty doing it themselves.

"We were able to get the system going for them," she says.

## Stone Road Pharmacy waiting for vaccine supply to arrive

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

Pharmacist Julie Dyck says "gentle Julie" has a list of people waiting for vacci-

nations, and she is anxious to get started.

She knows her Stone Road pharmacy is included in the expanded list of locations — she heard it on

the radio Monday night, she says.

The problem is, although the media and Niagara Region are including her pharmacy as now available for vaccinations, by Tuesday morning, she still hadn't heard anything official from the province.

She hadn't received any vaccine, or any word of when to expect it, and she hadn't yet been given access to the provincial system that is necessary for documenting vaccinations.

And if you go on the provincial online booking system looking for a vaccination appointment close by, her pharmacy isn't on the list yet — at least it wasn't by Tuesday morning.

"I was hoping the vaccine would be shipped Monday, but it didn't come." Neither had any word of when to expect it, she says. "I've been trying to make some sense of this. I'm ready to go."

Dyck says she's been administering shots for the last 10 years, and will be doing it herself, with appointments every 15 minutes and four offices for people to wait safely, physically distanced.



Julie Dyck's Stone Road Pharmacy is on the list of locations for vaccinations, but on Tuesday, she was still waiting for official notification. (Photo supplied)



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# Pace of vaccinations going well

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

As more pharmacies and primary care doctors begin offering vaccinations in Niagara, the region should be close to reaching the 40 per cent vaccination target by May 6, as set by the province.

That comes as cases of COVID 19 continue to rise in Ontario, exceeding the second wave and continuing to head upwards, with a similar situation in Niagara, says Dr. Mustafa Hirji, acting medical officer of health for the region.

With more than 4,000 new cases daily in Ontario recently, hospitals and intensive care units are becoming overwhelmed, he says, "entering the danger zone" of reaching capacity, while cases can be expected to rise for another couple of weeks before falling as a result of the current shutdown. "It's definitely a bleak time in terms of hospitals," he says.

We're not seeing that yet in Niagara hospitals, rather they are trying to help the GTA by making beds available for patients who have to be moved, he says.

The rising case num-

bers are affecting Niagara in that contact tracing is becoming more "cursor-y," rather than allowing for the thorough investigations Public Health was able to do previously. "We're not able to follow up on a timely basis," causing some "frustration" among the public from a sense Public Health isn't doing its job, although staff are doing their best on the most at-risk situations.

On a more positive note, vaccinations are coming along, with almost 93 per cent of those in the 80 and older age group vaccinated. With the number of cases down in that age group, "the message is that the vaccine really does work."

Hirji said in the next week about 90 per cent of those in the 75 to 79 group will have received vaccinations, with about 75 per cent of those aged 70 to 75 having received a first dose.

About 21 per cent of Niagara residents have now received at least their first dose of vaccination, Hirji said Monday, with more clinics being planned, and more pharmacies and doctors to help speed up that rate. It could be over 25

per cent this week, he said. "We're definitely making good progress getting vaccine out to people."

If Niagara doesn't meet the provincial target of 40 per cent by May 6, at a vaccination rate of about 5 per cent a week, the region would likely be only about a week behind.

In addition to bringing

the age group at community clinics down to 60 and over, and pharmacies vaccinating those 55 and over, Niagara is planning to vaccinate teachers and school staff this week, and is also targeting agricultural workers for vaccinations.

The vaccination clinic schedule for Niagara has been updated up to

May 18, with no more clinics planned in Niagara-on-the-Lake at this time.

Although Hirji says offering clinics for successive days at larger sites is more efficient, there could be second clinics scheduled on some of those days in the smaller areas such as NOTL, where they could

stay for a few days as well.

Unlike other regions, he says, "so far we've had real success in getting all of our clinics fully booked."

To book a vaccination at a community clinic, go to [Ontario.ca/bookvaccine](https://ontario.ca/bookvaccine) or phone 1-888-999-6488. To book at a pharmacy, visit [covid-19.ontario.ca/vaccine-locations](https://covid-19.ontario.ca/vaccine-locations).

## Police asking for help finding missing NOTL woman

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

Police are looking for a 22-year-old woman from Niagara-on-the-Lake who is missing, and are asking for help from the public.

Nikki Guzman was last seen at around 6:40 p.m. last Tuesday, April 6, in the area of Wright and Young Crescents in the Niagara-on-the-Green area of Niagara-on-the-Lake. She was last seen in a silver, four-door sedan.

She is described as being 5 feet 7 inches, with a medium build, and brown

hair and brown eyes.

She was wearing a black jacket, with white fur on the hood and collar, a blue or black tank top, jean shorts or a skirt, and was carrying both a grey backpack and a brown purse or bag.

Police and Nikki's family are concerned for her welfare and are requesting the public's help in locating her.

Anyone with information is asked to contact the Niagara Regional Police at 905-688-4111, dial option 3, extension 1009535.



Police are asking for help to locate Nikki Guzman. (Photo supplied)



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# Matt will be remembered for being kind, caring

Continued from page 1

respect that he was a grown man, free to come and go, she says.

To those who question Matt walking along Lakeshore Road to get home to Virgil, Colleen explains, "Matt was a walker. That wasn't unusual. He's walked as far as Fort Erie. He didn't want to ride a bike at night. He said he didn't feel safe riding at night."

She said he was at home with her until about 8:30 p.m., when he said he was going out. "I said if you want a ride home call me. I'll come and get you."

But it didn't surprise her that he didn't call, or come home — he was an adult, after all. "I didn't know what happened, but that wasn't unusual. It was just a day in Matthew's life."

Colleen says the Niagara Regional Police have been great, right from the moment the first officer came to the door to tell her what had happened to her son. "He was so kind. He seemed to be really struggling. It was hard for him."

But there is still much she doesn't know about what

happened.

While the police have answered some of her questions, there are many they can't.

"I wanted to know everything, I bombarded them with questions. But some they couldn't answer, because things are still under investigation. Now I understand why," she says.

"The NRP have been fabulous. The officers working with us have been in constant contact, keeping us updated."

The police now know who was driving the truck, but as of press time had not charged the driver. Colleen says there is speculation the driver went to the police, but she doesn't know if that is true or not.

"I have to accept that for now, there will be things I don't know."

She is still in shock, she says, "grieving terribly, but I'm sure it will get worse. I can't believe he's not here."

Colleen adds, "I'm not angry. I'm just questioning."

Matt wouldn't drive by an animal on the road without stopping to help — he has stopped to move a turtle, called the humane society when there was a raccoon on the road, his mother says.

If the driver who hit him had stopped, "Matt would be asking if he was okay, 'how can I help, what do you need?'"

"I just want to know the truth about what really happened. That's what I need to know. Why didn't the driver stop?"

She's trying not to be angry, she says. "Matt wouldn't want that."

She has received many texts, messages, phone calls, flowers, cards, and even meals, from family, friends, Matt's friends, and from people she has never met.

One text that meant a lot to her was from Matt's former boss, who told her how hard-working her son was.

"He said Matt was a great person, and a hardworking employee," she says.

Colleen remembers Matt delivering the Niagara Advance newspaper in Virgil as a youngster, and how seriously he took his job. "He was just like a little businessman," she says.

She recalls he delivered papers to the home of Harry Penner, of Penner Home Hardware, who would often stop to chat with Matt. "Mr. Penner knew him as the paper boy, and knew how

hardworking he was. He offered him his first real job, at Penner's."

Matt went to Virgil Public School and then Niagara District Secondary School. He played many sports growing up — including minor hockey, softball, soccer, lacrosse, tennis and golf, says Colleen. Her dad used to take Matt and his older brother Kirk golfing a couple of times a week during the summer, to watch Blue Jays games in Toronto, and to see the Baby Jays when they played in St. Catharines.

Matt started out playing house league hockey, then moved on to travel hockey, also helping Kirk on the ice when he coached a minor hockey team.

"Matt loved all sports, but he loved hockey the most," she says.

His other passion was music.

He took piano lessons when he was young, and Kirk learned to play the guitar, which he then taught his little brother.

"I remember the music nights at District," when her boys would perform, Colleen says. "There was a lot of talent in that school."

She speaks of the many school friends of Matt's who have contacted her, teachers, and at least 200 messages she's received.

One very special message from a girl she has never met, who said during "the turbulent teenage years," Matt really helped her. "She said she is alive today because of him. He sat and talked to her, and gave her the help she needed."

The words she has heard over and over since Matt's death, she says, "are always about how kind he was. Kind and caring. And he really was. He was a kind, wonderful person, caring and giving."

Even though he didn't have a lot of money, he would buy coffee and pizza slices for



Matthew Wilson (Photo supplied)

the homeless people he'd see downtown — that was within his budget, she says — and he would donate money to the Socks program to help the homeless.

"He wasn't perfect, he wasn't a saint, but he was kind. That's why we asked for donations for the Out of the Cold program. He was passionate about helping anybody in need."

She could ask him to do anything to help, and he'd say, "sure, no problem," and he'd always do a good job."

He was very smart, a top student, and always loved to learn. He chose programs on TV to learn more, especially anything about animals and nature, she said.

He studied photography at Brock University and Niagara College, and was a pro-

fessional photographer.

Recently, he'd been learning everything he could about COVID-19, and he was always very interested in politics.

"He took the pandemic very seriously. He always had masks and hand sanitizer in his pockets, and kept his distance. He was very cautious. It was very difficult for him to be out of work."

Colleen wants those who have reached out to her to know how much it means to her and the family.

"I can't believe the kindness of people in Niagara-on-the-Lake. I'm amazed, and feeling very blessed to be surrounded by such wonderful people. I want them to know how much it's helped to know people care. I appreciate it so much. They have helped me get through a minute, an hour, helped me get through a day, by taking time out of their busy lives to talk about Matt."

Matt, she says, didn't hold grudges. "He just wanted everybody to be happy. He would tell me to forgive. My answer would be, not today."

But she is trying not to give in to anger, and to think of forgiveness as something to work toward, to honour what she knows her son would have wanted.

Matt leaves his mother Colleen, his stepfather John Franz, his father Robert Wilson, brother Kirk and Melanie Wilson, niece Hannah and nephew Zachary, and other family members and friends. For information about funeral arrangements, visit <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/niagara-falls-on/matthew-matt-wilson-10142032>.

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# On-demand transit numbers ‘skewed by pandemic’

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

The on-demand transit pilot project has increased ridership, but the overall low number of rides is likely a result of the pandemic.

on the pilot project, in Niagara-on-the-Lake and west Niagara, was discussed briefly at Monday night’s planning committee meeting.

Coun. Norm Arsenault pointed out that there was a 40 per cent increase in the number of calls for the service from

February to March. “On-demand transit seems to be working. It’s good news,” he says.

On-demand rides have totalled 348 over a period of four months, from when the regional pilot project got underway at the end of November, to the end of March.

The rides are all within Niagara-on-the-Lake, with the peak at mid-day.

The average wait time is about 12 minutes.

The overall number of rides across the region is 14,633, although other municipalities began providing the service in September, and offer the service from one municipality to another.

Grimsby residents seem to be using the service the most, with more than twice as many rides taken as any of the other municipalities using the on-demand service.

The Niagara Regional Transit OnDemand pilot project is provided by Via Mobility, an international company, contracted to provide a ride-sharing service in Grimsby, Lincoln, Pelham, Wainfleet and West Lincoln, but they also have a component that provides travel across municipal-

ities, which NOTL has chosen not to include.

Although there was some discussion and an option offered to NOTL to pay for four vehicles to cover St. Davids and Queenston, council decided to revisit the scope of the project as part of the 2021 budget deliberations, says Lord Mayor Betty Disero.

There is money put aside in the budget should the service be expanded, but with so many businesses shut down, and fewer students using it, the expansion will not be considered until after the pandemic.

The project is now “testing the water” to see if the service will work for NOTL, but the reported numbers are being skewed by the pandemic.

“When we are able to move around more freely, council will take a look at the numbers and make a decision” about expand-

ing the service, says Disero.

“We’re hearing people want to be able to get to Queenston and St. Davids, but we did say we’d wait until after the pandemic to look at that.”

She expects maybe in September, if more work places are open and kids are going back to school, people will be moving around more, “and we’ll be able to get a true sense of its use.”

The goal of NRT OnDemand is to provide residents with an efficient system that is also affordable, and although NOTL did not choose the option to include transportation to locations in other municipalities, it does allow residents to connect with regional buses at the outlet mall, with a free transfer.

Niagara College is within the boundary for the service so residents can connect to GO Transit.

# Parks Canada studying making all trails safe

## Leash-free area of Commons also under microscope

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

Local dog walkers sending emails to Parks Canada to tell them how important the Commons off-leash area is to them are hoping for a commitment that the federal agency will honour a hand-shake agreement of about 25 years ago.

But after receiving dozens of such emails, Parks Canada is not promising anything.

The fear of losing the only area where dogs are allowed to run free in Niagara-on-the-Lake is growing, a result of complaints from others who use the path, and an explosion in the popularity of

its use by those out for a stroll, a run or a bike ride.

“The national historic sites in Niagara-on-the-Lake are wonderful places for visitors to discover, learn, and connect with history and nature, and there is a long standing tradition of public use at these shared spaces, particularly in the area known as the Commons,” Parks Canada communications officer Elizabeth LeBlanc said in an email to The Local.

“Parks Canada has unofficially permitted dogs to be off-leash in a section of the Commons at Butler’s Barracks National Historic Site. In recent years the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has seen some

dramatic changes. The local population has grown, the town has become an increasingly popular tourism destination, and there has been a significant increase in how and how often the public are using outdoor spaces,” said LeBlanc.

“Additional visitor demand on local Parks Canada heritage places, especially during the pandemic, has resulted in increased pressures including waste, concerns for species at risk, human-wildlife interactions, and conflict between users.”

The health and safety of visitors and staff is a priority for Parks Canada, she said. “As a result, Parks Canada is currently reviewing the public use of heritage properties and multi-use trails in Niagara-on-the-Lake, including Butler’s Barracks National Historic Site, the Commons, Paradise Grove and Fort George National Historic Site, to explore ways to best ensure the safety and enjoyment of all.”

LeBlanc said more information will be available in the weeks to come, and said Parks Canada will continue to collect comments, complaints and concerns from the public by email, at pc.niagaraont.pc@canada.ca or by phone at 905-468-6614.



Dogs have been permitted on one area of the Commons without leashes, and dog walkers are hoping that will continue. (File photo)



# Auchterlonie on Astrology

**Bill Auchterlonie**  
Special to The Local

*The full week of Auchterlonie on Astrology can be found on the Facebook page for The NOTL Local, and on the website [www.auchterlonieonastrology.ca](http://www.auchterlonieonastrology.ca).*

Friday, April 16: Today the Sun is at 90 degrees from Pluto at 9:26 a.m. This means that our deepest motivation is fighting with you about something you see as paramount to your happiness. Maybe it’s time to re-evaluate what we want. We first knew him as Lou Alcindor. He changed his name to Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. He changed basketball in 20 years of playing for Milwaukee and the L.A. Lakers, scoring over 38,000 points.

Today he turns 74.

Sunday, April 18: Mercury is conjunct Sun at 29 degrees Aries. Mercury-Sun conjunctions (when Mercury is direct) happen in the middle of the Mercury cycle. They are similar to a full Moon, and we can well call them a full Mercury. This is when we manifest what we have started at the beginning of the Mercury cycle on Feb. 8. And happy birthday to one of the MacKenzie Brothers. Rick Moranis celebrates number 68 today. Moranis was also a Ghostbuster, a Spaceball, and lately has been singing songs.

Monday, April 19: The Sun and Mercury both enter Taurus, so we will experience a sudden energetic shift from Aries energy to Taurus energy.

Taurus is all about concrete steps, and concrete results. If in the Aries season we felt inspired and came up with many ideas, now is the time to make things happen. Taurus will give us the practical intelligence and stamina we need to make our ideas a reality. It was April 19, 1927 that Mae West was arrested (in Montreal) on obscenity charges for her play (which she wrote), *She Done Him Wrong*, most famously known for her line, “Why don’t you come up sometime and see me?” Her next two plays also put her in jail, and made her the biggest star in Hollywood and New York.

And that’s AonA for this week. Next time we see Pluto go retrograde. And a lot more. So, until then, shine on.

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## LOCAL REALTOR® LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

### NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE MARKET SNAPSHOT

MARCH 2021

HOME PRICE INDEX is an accurate portrayal of the average sale price.

\*as reported to The Niagara Association of REALTORS®

NOTL	VIRGIL	ST. DAVID'S
32 # OF NEW LISTINGS	10 # OF NEW LISTINGS	11 # OF NEW LISTINGS
22 # OF SOLDS	7 # OF SOLDS	11 # OF SOLDS
10 DAYS ON MARKET	19 DAYS ON MARKET	19 DAYS ON MARKET
\$1,156,100 HOME PRICE INDEX*	\$822,300 HOME PRICE INDEX*	\$1,084,100 HOME PRICE INDEX*
\$600 PRICE PER SQ.FT.	\$335 PRICE PER SQ.FT.	\$606 PRICE PER SQ.FT.

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# EDITORIAL

## Hang tight and the end could be in sight

The pace of vaccinations in Niagara is going well, and our public health department is doing a good job of concentrating doses of vaccines where needed. We were relieved to hear agricultural workers are being vaccinated, a group of people who come here to support their families and our farming community, and who, because of the circumstances of their work and living arrangements, are at great risk. Also good news is that educators and those working in schools will be vaccinated, although that was followed by the announcement that schools will be closed after April break, without even a target for reopening. Both were good decisions,

although one is going to mean hardships for many families. While there has been lots of talk about the importance of mental health for children, school closures also mean extra stress on parents, many of whom have maxed out their stress level, with nowhere to turn for help. What we can do for them, both students and parents, is stay home and reduce our risk of spreading infection, and being part of the solution. We need to get COVID numbers down to a point where schools can open again, parents can get back to work, and none of us have to worry about when the next shutdown will be. We have said this so many

times we wonder if anyone is listening: we also need to support our local businesses. Restaurants, retailers, wineries, anyone who is closed and allowed to offer takeout and curbside pickups. That's just another way to get through this as quickly as possible, to keep some businesses from folding and some of our friends, neighbours and family members employed at some level. Those who attended the weekend protest in St. Catharines against business closures were not doing small businesses any favours. They broke laws, didn't wear masks, weren't the least bit concerned about physical distancing, and if they get sick, they will add to the still-ris-

ing number of COVID cases, hospitalizations and intensive care admissions. Until those numbers are all under control, businesses will remain closed. The best way to help them is to stay home and stay safe. Yet as the restrictions increase, and the vaccine rollout ramps up, so does the anger, which is so evident on social media, and so destructive. Those who are worried about mental health issues could make a commitment to stay off social media, stop arguing, try to be kind, non-judgmental, and support the local shops, restaurants and wineries who need us now more than ever. Reach out to friends and family, check in to see if they

are okay or need anything. Maybe ask if they need help getting a vaccination appointment, or getting to one. There are so many more productive ways to help others than protesting in anger. What do you want to be able to do when this pandemic ends, and how do you want to be remembered? Choosing to be a member of society who helped others get through this would be how most of us will want to look back on this time, and playing by the rules will get us there sooner. Everyone has a right to their opinion, and we don't mind hearing them, but we need desperately to change the subject sometimes, to turn away from anger.

Criticizing politicians and those in charge of decision-making is easy in hindsight, but again, it's not helpful. On a daily basis, we learn something new from science, and from the mistakes that have been made. Lives have been lost, and none of us, especially the families of loved ones who have died, will ever be the same. But one result of this time in our lives that we can carry forward is to focus on what is really important, family and friends. If we still want to have them with us when this is over, we have to hang tight for just a little longer.

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

## We can do better in supporting wine industry



**Wayne Gates, MPP**  
**Niagara Falls riding**  
**Special to The Local**

As an elected official during the COVID crisis and the third Ontario lockdown, my office's primary focus remains on stopping the spread of COVID and protecting our community — efforts which I have written about previously. However, despite the pandemic, the original duties of being an MPP have not changed, and chief among these has been exploring legislation to support our local businesses and protect jobs. I'd like to take a break from my articles on COVID and talk about one of these issues. Anyone following my political career knows there is one pillar that I have always run on – buy local. When we buy local, we put money into the pockets of our neighbours, and those who go on to spend that money locally. When you purchase

a bottle of Ontario wine, that results in nearly \$40 of economic impact for the province's economy, whereas purchasing a foreign bottle of wine produces only a fraction of that in economic benefit to our town. I have always believed our procurement policies should try to emphasize the use of local workers, to make sure that when we build things like the new hospital, that is done with local work. While many of you may be surprised to learn that I do not drink, I still have come to deeply love our local wine industry and the entrepreneurs and dedicated community members it has produced. These local, home-grown business geniuses must be given every advantage our province can offer. Working with these community leaders, I came to realize there was an issue in tax policy that may not garner the most attention, but is vitally important to this industry and the over 18,000 jobs it supports. Right now in our province, local VQA wines pay a 6.1 per cent tax on retail winery sales. International wines don't pay this tax. You

read that right. Despite the fact our local wineries provide jobs in Ontario and generate economic activity, our local industry is facing additional tax burdens that the international market doesn't face. This must change. In September 2020, working with many of our town's best wineries and others across Ontario, we introduced a bill for the second time at the Ontario Legislature to create an exemption of VQA and 100 per cent Ontario wines from the 6.1 per cent basic tax paid on wine sold at winery retail stores. The 6.1 per cent basic tax must be exempted from VQA and 100 per cent Ontario-grown wines, and now more than ever, we need to support Canadian-made products and Niagara-made products in a region that has seen so many job losses from COVID-19. Support to eliminate the basic 6.1 per cent tax has been received from several organizations, including Ontario Craft Wineries and Wine Growers Ontario, as well as the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Exempting this basic tax

has also gained wide support across Niagara, including the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce. I am willing to stand with any person of any party to get this bill passed. As you can imagine, we were all disappointed when this common-sense bill was not included in the province's recent budget. If the Ford government wants to help businesses, they can remove the barriers now that will allow them to grow exponentially as soon as this vaccine process is fixed and we get back to life as usual. Niagara is one of the most prominent tourist destinations across Canada, and our vineyards are globally recognized and deserve to be supported. Tourism pro-

vides thousands of Niagara jobs, and these industries have been critically impacted by COVID restrictions and the Ford government's lockdowns. Wineries and grape farmers have been affected enough in this global pandemic, and the basic tax is unfair. Therefore, this tax must be removed to help these industries with the economic impacts they continue to face. I encourage Niagara citizens, when this lockdown is over and proper precautions can be met, to support our local wineries, or support them safely if you can now. Many industries are being impacted during the global pandemic in Ontario, and across the globe, and will require different and necessary solutions to rebound from this chaos. This basic tax illustrates one example of how the Ontario government can level the playing field and create jobs. The basic 6.1 per cent tax should have been addressed in the March Ontario budget and been exempt. It's a mistake that it was not. Right now the immediate focus is on fixing and accelerating this vaccine rollout, bringing mass testing on site and giving businesses the financial supports they need to stay afloat and avoid debt during this awful lockdown. However, there are steps that also must be taken to prepare our businesses to make up for lost time, and passing Bill 209 is one of those steps.



### View from the couch

**Donald Combe**  
Special to The Local

This fascinating film, *A Dangerous Method* (2011 Gem), directed by David Cronenberg, looks at the way the intense relationship between Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud gave birth to psychoanalysis. As interesting as that is, it is Michael Fassbender's performance as Jung that makes this film perfection.

*Donald Combe is a retired English teacher who loves to go to movies. Until he resumes going to theatres, he has graciously agreed to share his opinions, through "short and sweet" exclusives, of Netflix series and movies for The Local.*



**The Niagara-on-the-Lake Local**  
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## NEED HELP? MAKE THE CALL

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<b>MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS ACCESS</b> (Toll Free) <b>1-866-550-5205</b>	<b>ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS</b> Meetings every Wednesday evening 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. St. Mark's Parish Hall 41 Byron St., NOTL or find a meeting <b>905-682-2140</b>	<b>CRIME STOPPERS</b> <b>1-800-222-8477 (TIPS)</b> niagaratips.com Text 274637 (CRIMES), keyword: Niagara, then your tip
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# COMMENT

## Wellness committee provides latest in vaccination update



### Community Health and Wellness Committee

This week's article is the fourth in a series intended to provide timely and relevant information to Niagara-on-the-Lake residents about the status of vaccinations in NOTL and throughout the Niagara region.

These updates are also published on the town's website ([notl.com/COVID-19](http://notl.com/COVID-19)). Niagara Region Public Health continues to lead the vaccination planning and distribution process.

Posters providing updated information regarding COVID-19 vaccinations are posted in the local post offices and other frequently visited locations throughout the community.

For those of you who have already had your vaccination, or have an appointment to receive one, congratulations! Each jab is one more small step to a return to a safer community. As of Sunday, April 11, the Niagara region website reports that nearly 110,000 vaccine doses have been administered to Niagara region residents, resulting in over 20 per cent of residents in receipt of their first dose. In order to reach an optimal level of protection in our community, it is vital for everyone to get their COVID-19 vaccination as soon as it is available to you.

For those NOTL residents who have not yet received a vaccine or have an appointment, the following information may be helpful to you:

- As of Wednesday, April 7, all residents 60 years of age and older (born in 1961 or earlier) are able to book their vaccination appointment through the provincial appointment

booking system, available online at [Ontario.ca/bookvaccine](http://Ontario.ca/bookvaccine) or over the phone at 1-888-999-6488.

- Residents 55 years of age and older are now able to receive the AstraZeneca vaccine, at selected pharmacy locations in Ontario. In Niagara-on-the-Lake, participating pharmacies are Simpson's Pharmacy and Simpson's Apothecary. A list of participating pharmacies in Ontario with booking information is available here: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/vaccine-locations>. To register at either of the Simpsons Pharmacy locations, visit their website at <https://simpsonsparmacy.ca/pages/covid-19-vaccination>.
- Eligible residents are able to book an appointment at any vaccination centre in the Niagara region and can bring an essential caregiver with them to their appointment. However, it's important to note that essential caregivers who are not eligible for vaccination (in the appropriate age category) may not be able to receive a vaccination.
- A vaccination stand-by list has been added to the Niagara region website at [niagararegion.ca/health/covid-19/vaccination/clinic-schedule](http://niagararegion.ca/health/covid-19/vaccination/clinic-schedule).

To be on the standby list, residents must be 65 years of age or older (born in 1956 or earlier) and able to get to a vaccine clinic within 30 minutes of a phone call. There is an online form for entry of your name, date of birth and phone number. The standby list is not a booking tool, and appointments will only be offered if there are unused doses available at the end of a clinic day.

- Transportation to any of the vaccine clinics throughout the Region can be arranged through one of two resources:
- The regional On-Demand Transit Program, available online at [Ontario.ca/bookvaccine](http://Ontario.ca/bookvaccine) or over the phone at 1-888-999-6488.

Connections can be made to regional transit at the Outlet Mall if it is necessary to travel to a vaccine clinic in St. Catharines or Niagara Falls. To book a ride with On-Demand Transit, call 289-302-2172 or download the NRT OnDemandTransit App.

- Community Support Service Niagara – Transportation is provided by this service to and from any vaccine clinic in the region for a nominal fee of \$10. To request this transportation, call 905-682-3800 x 709.

The three vaccine clinics on March 31, April 1 and April 9 at the NOTL community centre were successfully completed. Additional vaccination clinic dates for NOTL are anticipated shortly. Additional dates throughout the region have been added by Niagara Region Public Health. Residents should check the online appointment system or call the information line frequently to determine appointment availability.

Niagara Region Public Health remains committed to ensuring every resident has an opportunity to receive the vaccine in Niagara. The region and the town realize that many people have had problems with booking an appointment for a vaccine and, at times, the process has been less than ideal. Everyone is doing the best they can in this unprecedented effort. It is the intention that every NOTL resident who wishes to receive a COVID-19 vaccination will get one. Please remain calm and patient — no one will be left behind!

If you are aware of an eligible NOTL resident who may require help in booking their appointment, please reach out to them to offer your assistance. Alternatively, residents can call a representative from the Commu-

nity Wellness Committee at 905-246-3091 for assistance. Volunteers are available to help residents book their vaccination appointment or answer any questions about the booking process.

A frequently asked questions page has been published on the town's website ([notl.com/faq/vaccineclinic](http://notl.com/faq/vaccineclinic)). Residents who do not have access to a computer or are not comfortable navigating websites are invited to call 905-468-4386 ext. 3 to hear a recorded message.

Beginning April 9, frontline educators and others working in schools and childcare centres, who are unable to work from home, were able to book a vaccine appointment. These groups will receive detailed booking instructions from their employer. For further details, please visit [niagararegion.ca/health/covid-19/vaccination/appointment-booking](http://niagararegion.ca/health/covid-19/vaccination/appointment-booking)

What we can do now: Continue to follow public health measures to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

- Stay home - Ontario is currently under a stay-at-home order – travel is only allowed for essential services.
- Practise physical distancing – Maintain two metres from anyone who is not from your household.
- Practise frequent hand-washing.
- Wear a mask or face covering in indoor spaces and when two metres physical distancing isn't possible.
- Take a self-assessment if you are feeling unwell at <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/>
- Stay up to date. Visit [covid19.ontario.ca](http://covid19.ontario.ca) for the most up-to-date information from the provincial government, [niagararegion.ca](http://niagararegion.ca) for information from the Niagara region, and [notl.com/COVID-19](http://notl.com/COVID-19) for information regarding impacts to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

## Local LETTERS

### Where is enforcement?

It is a nice Saturday afternoon and we sit in our house because of the lockdown and watch out the window at traffic, solid, going down the Niagara Parkway to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

What is the purpose of a

lockdown if no one enforces it?

Are we the fools for obeying the lockdown?

At this rate this will never end.

Linda Hargreaves

## Thanks to all who helped at Easter



We wish to send our sincere gratitude to all those who made our recent Easter Food and Gift Hamper program such a success.

Once again, our generous community allowed us to provide 45 hampers to our food clients, who were delighted to have a full Easter dinner and treats.

Special thanks to Harvest Barn Niagara/Konzelmann Estate Winery, Walker's Country Market, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Hendriks valu-mart, and many individuals and families for their food donations. Thank you as well to the volunteers at Bethany Mennonite Church for de-

livering the hampers, and Cornerstone Community Church for providing us a safe space for our volunteers to put the hampers together.

We have been most fortunate to receive a special COVID-19 grant from Food Banks Canada. This funding will greatly help support our food bank program in this challenging year. Recently, we have received donations from Ekocouture, Coastal Culture and Graves and Richard Professional Corporation, and from several individual donors whom we are truly grateful for.

Please check our website for up-to-date information and our food bank hours at [www.newarkneighbours.ca](http://www.newarkneighbours.ca).

Should you know of anyone in need, please contact us at 905-468-3519.

Laura Gibson  
president,  
Newark Neighbours

## 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](mailto: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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PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice of Study Commencement and Public Information Centre #1

2021 Water and Wastewater Master Servicing Plan Update

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

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

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

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

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

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

Access the project website at [niagararegion.ca/projects/www-master-servicing-plan](http://niagararegion.ca/projects/www-master-servicing-plan)

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

**Ilija Stetic**  
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289-668-4536  
[niagamspu@niagararegion.ca](mailto:niagamspu@niagararegion.ca)

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

If you require any accommodations for a disability in order to attend and participate in meetings or events, please let us know in advance so that arrangements can be made in a timely manner. Please contact the **Accessibility Advisory Coordinator** at 905- 980-6000 ext. 3252 or [accessibility@niagararegion.ca](mailto:accessibility@niagararegion.ca).



A rare, healthy adult spotted salamander lies beside a much tinier and more common eastern red-backed salamander. (Owen Bjorgan)

Future of rare salamander looks bleak in Niagara



Owen Bjorgan  
Special to The Local

The bright, yellow spots of this spectacular creature leap off its slimy skin.

As I rolled the log over, a large black salamander riddled with yellow polka dots lays squat. I can count on one hand the number of times I've come across this memorable species of mole salamander, simply named the spotted salamander (*Ambystoma maculatum*).

This was last weekend, out on another trip that found me with my girlfriend in the depths of Backus Woods, near the shore of Lake Erie.

The first time I encountered one of these superb salamanders was when I was barely old enough to remember it. Yet, it was unforgettable. I was maybe six years old. My Dad (Moe) wanted to take me hiking, so he invited his coworker and friend, nicknamed Crow, out for a local Niagara Escarpment adventure. Crow was talked up as an avid salamander enthusiast, and he still lives true to that title today.

The three of us delicately searched the trailsides under waterlogged logs and flat stones. What I remember most vividly was the moment those bright yellow "lights" flashed up from the dark soil. Crow had found one, and as a budding nature enthusiast before I even knew it, I was hooked for a lifetime to see what else is out there. Nothing looks quite like a spotted salamander.

Since then, I have seen just three others at different locations in southern Ontario. These amphibians live and love where old growth forests grow on mounds of land. They like these hills adjacent to stagnant

wetlands in their various valleys. All in all, it's an increasingly hard combo to come by in southern Ontario.

This is exactly the type of habitat scenario you can find out toward Backus Woods and Long Point, which I have made a habit of exploring during the onset of spring conditions.

From this exact time last year, I remember where I discovered a small, pinky-finger sized juvenile of the spotted salamander. It was tiny, but provided a huge sign that big, chubby adults were in the area. That's the one you see pictured with this article, which was found after selectively searching the same area where we found last year's little one. Populations of these creatures tend to remain in a certain geographical area which specifically suits their habitat needs.

Emphasis might be put on the word "needs." Spotted salamanders have relatives of the same family, like the blue-spotted salamander and Jefferson salamander. This robust trio of mole salamanders all share the same requirements of habitat. Humans simply can't recreate the soil composure and habitat features that thousands of years of uninterrupted processes yield.

I found another spotted salamander on this trip, roughly one-third the mass of the one pictured, but even more vividly spotted. The expression of brighter and more vivid colouration is common across younger reptiles and amphibians around the globe.

What strikes me more than the fascinating colours is the power of a story from my childhood. That curiosity has carried forward over the years, and it keeps me looking for those heart-racing finds. It's important to locate and recognize where certain species are for the sake of environmental knowledge and conservation. It's equally important to take a

moment and look at this alien-like creature, which is actually much more earth-like than you. It's a distinguished moment when you share time and space with such a living thing.

I pick up the salamander while my partner holds the log back. I am purposeful to muddy my hands with the surrounding soil, so I can minimize any potential skin damage to the sensitive being, which absorbs both water and nutrients through its skin. The log is placed back without squishing the virtuous vertebrate, and I remark, how can a creature the size of your hand keep propelling you into worlds that are thousands of acres in size?

Even if you don't find the salamander you're looking for, it's a lot like golfing or fishing. You can score really poor at golf, or perhaps catch no fish, but you can still have the happiest day out. The outdoors environment is constantly rewarding curious minds with its plot twists and beautiful seasonal changes. I believe that when I look back to the specific afternoon hike with my Dad and Crow as a kid, it was that moment which led me to the biggest and best salamander find in my life a few days ago.

Did I mention the epic canoeing routes, sandbank cookouts, and hundreds of acres to yourself? Those are just some of the things that came packaged with the hunt for a spotted salamander.

We do have a resident population here in Niagara-on-the-Lake. It is small, and likely genetically isolated from other "spotties." With continued habitat degradation of lands surrounding the Niagara Escarpment, their future as NOTL residents looks bleak at this rate.

With moments of discovery come moments of appreciation for our natural surroundings, and we may find ourselves surprised at where we end up next because of it.



# Workers gave consent, were happy to be vaccinated

Continued from page 1

in their living quarters on the farm. There have also been issues with workers having a positive second test, and if they're quarantining on the farm, that creates more issues with isolation.

Quite a few tender fruit growers are doing the same, he says, although others are choosing to use living quarters on their farms for isolating.

Although they were given tests to administer to themselves after 10 days of their quarantine, as are all travellers arriving at a Canadian airport, Tregunno says he thought it would be better to have a nurse do it instead. "I'm not sure I could do the test myself."

Along with other growers in the same situation, he hired Bayshore HealthCare to provide private nurses to do the testing, he says. "We really need health care workers to help navigate the system."

Instead of using Purolator to deliver the tests to the lab, he drove the tests to Mississauga himself for processing — and then about half of them were then lost, he says. "It's really been a big issue, but in the end it all worked out."

It's been a different start to the season than last year, when the issues were mostly about prevention, when there was confusion about regulations and whether farmworkers would be allowed into the country, and then working out safety protocols regarding cohorts of workers, wearing masks and physical distancing.

But although those were not issues this year, "there was still lots of stress" around testing and vaccinating, says Tregunno.

His was among the first of about 180 farms to be offered appointments at the Seymour-Hannah clinic in St. Catharines, he says — there were other farms who arrived the same day. His understanding is as vaccine

is available, there will be appointments for other growers and their employees, and Public Health, which is committed to getting agricultural workers vaccinated, will reach out with the invitation.

Public Health has been involved and very helpful throughout, he says, arranging phone calls with growers every few weeks, and helping them work out the interpretations of provincial rules and regulations. They are also willing to work with growers "when we bring up things that are a little more workable for us. They're very proactive, they know seasonal workers could be at risk, and they definitely see the agricultural sector as a high priority."

If Tregunno had one piece of advice regarding the vaccination of agricultural workers, it would be for the government, he says. This week, there were plans to begin vaccinations at the airport as they arrived, but the grower doesn't think that's a good idea. Judging by the

first reaction he received to the subject of vaccinations, he thinks many will object. "I don't think they'll get a good uptake there," he says.

He would suggest instead they make sure those arriv-

ing don't have COVID, and then let them finish their isolation before vaccinations are offered.

"They need to have the information to help them make that decision," he says.

And by next year, he wouldn't be surprised if before leaving to come to Canada, agricultural workers need not only a negative COVID test, but proof of vaccination.



Phil Tregunno (centre) of Tregunno Fruit Farms on the Niagara River Parkway was able to take Jeffrey Johnson and Lincoln Hall, and all his farm workers and staff, both offshore and local, as well as his family to a St. Catharines vaccination clinic. (Photo supplied)

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# Vaccinations for teachers, closing schools both good decisions



**Mike Balsom**  
Special to The Local

With the third wave of the pandemic pushing COVID-19 numbers higher than ever before, it's now more important than ever that people get vaccinated to control the spread.

I couldn't be happier to be receiving my Pfizer vaccination this week at the Seymour-Hannah Sports Centre in St. Catharines.

Along with thousands working in education for both Niagara school boards (teachers, custodial staff, early childhood educators, students on educational placement, licensed home childcare and in-home service providers, cafeteria and administrative staff, bus drivers and monitors), I was made eligible for a COVID-19 vaccination during the spring break this week. The news came April 5, first as a rumour via social media, then via an email from the office of District School Board of Niagara Director of Education Warren Hoshizaki.

Niagara became the first region in the province to

move toward vaccinating education workers. Other regions quickly followed suit.

Chair Jim Bradley told me in a telephone conversation this Monday that vaccinations for those working in schools was something he had been pushing for. As a former teacher himself, Bradley has a deep understanding of the climate within a school building. And, as the regional chair, he also understands how important it is to parents, and for children's mental health, that kids remain in school.

"I was in constant conversation with (Niagara's Community Coordination Task Force for COVID-19 Vaccination) chair Dr. David Dec about this," Bradley told me. "It's important to keep schools open to control the spread, and to do that education workers need to be vaccinated."

Then, later that same day, Premier Doug Ford held his press conference announcing that, despite prioritizing for months keeping schools safe and open for in-class instruction, students across the province would not be returning to in-person learning on April 19.

Ford's decision was a serious flip-flop, after months of the Ontario government's re-

solve to keep schools open. In fact, less than 24 hours before the Premier's press conference, Minister of Education Stephen Lecce published a letter to parents reiterating his determination to continue with in-person learning.

"During the provincial emergency brake and the provincial stay-at-home order," said Lecce in Sunday's

Some jurisdictions in the province, including Peel Region, Toronto and Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph, were hit hard enough that their public health departments decided before the break to close schools. Meanwhile, the ministry reported another 217 school-related cases of COVID-19 Monday, including 186 students, 30 staff

buildings.

As of press time, the DSBN was reporting 23 active COVID-19 cases and 32 classrooms closed. The NCDSB had 30 active cases, and 110 resolved cases. All schools in both boards were listed as open.

Digging more deeply into the DSBN numbers, it seems four of Laura Secord's feeder schools (Carleton, Crossroads, Lockview and Prince of Wales) were reporting no current cases, while E.I. McCulley had one and Lincoln Centennial, which had been hit with a number of cases in December, had two.

As a staff member at Laura Secord, this is where it gets a little worrisome. Many of our students, of course, have younger siblings still attending our elementary feeder schools. When the virus affects those younger students, it increases the chance that older siblings living in the same household could unknowingly spread it to our building.

And despite all the safeguards put into place, many education workers have been nervous each and every day when reporting to work. In general, students have a hard time following pandemic protocols. The young brain is still developing, and just

doesn't work the same way as an adult's.

Where for me, the pandemic is top of mind all the time, for many students, those momentary lapses come naturally, and the COVID protocols are often absent-mindedly broken. It gets exhausting being the one constantly reminding them.

Did the Ford government make the correct decision to keep schools closed after this week's break? I believe the answer to that question is most definitely yes.

In light of that decision, was the correct decision made a week earlier to vaccinate those working in education? Again, the answer to that question is a resounding yes.

Once students do return to schools, staff members in all roles will be able to more confidently enter the buildings where hundreds of young people attend each and every day. And perhaps with education workers vaccinated this week, that return to school will come much more quickly than it would have otherwise.

So I know where I will be this Thursday at 9 a.m. Smiling joyously for the first time in my life at offering up my shoulder for the jab of that needle.

**“ It's important to keep schools open to control the spread, and to do that education workers need to be vaccinated. ”**

*Jim Bradley*

letter, "all publicly funded and private elementary and secondary schools will remain open for in-person learning, with strict health and safety measures in place, except in those regions where local public health units have directed schools in their areas to pivot to remote learning."

Ford's announcement may not have been popular with Lecce, but it didn't surprise anyone in education.

and one person who was not identified.

While working at Laura Secord Secondary School, my colleagues and I watched these COVID numbers in schools across the province increase at an alarming rate over the past month or so.

Here in Niagara, both the DSBN and the Niagara Catholic Board (NCDSB) have, for the most part, been able to contain outbreaks in their

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# Local heritage activist recalls 'crossing paths' with Prince Philip

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

Rick Meloen didn't actually meet Prince Philip, who died on Friday at the age of 99, but he did have a "slight encounter" with him, crossing paths in 1973.

The royal couple was in Niagara-on-the-Lake for the official opening of the new Shaw Festival Theatre in June of 1973, a much-celebrated visit, he recalls.

The Pillar and Post restaurant, then owned by John Drope, was hosting a banquet in honour of the Queen and Prince. At 19, Meloen, a Ryerson Polytechnic student in the hospitality program, was

working at the Pillar and Post at the time, and was selected to be one of the waiters at the head table.

"This was an exciting time for the staff, and extensive preparations were undertaken. A menu had to be selected and approved, and all the staff working that day had to have security checks and health exams. I'm pretty sure the RCMP still has my fingerprints on file somewhere."

However this was in 1973, and very unlike what security would be today for visiting dignitaries, he says.

"The day finally arrived and the royal entourage took over the premises."

They had two footmen, or

possibly pages, among other staff, accompanying the royals. "They gave the waiters for the head table quick instructions on manners when dealing with the royals. For instance, we were not to talk to them unless spoken to first. Thankfully this didn't happen, because I probably would have stuttered and said something stupid."

Prince Philip sat beside Lord Mayor Jake Froese, says Meloen.

"In all the hubbub I did manage to overhear some snippets of their conversation. They were discussing peach farming, and the Prince seemed genuinely interested."

Other than that, Meloen remembers the time flying by in

a blur, his mind focused on not doing anything to mess up. The royal couple was ushered out to the unveiling event, and a play at the Shaw.

"It had been an exhausting day, especially for the kitchen staff preparing for the banquet of 200 guests, but a memorable one."

For the Pillar and Post, it meant a boost in business for years to come. Many were interested to visit and dine in the place where the royals had been. I can't confirm it, but I would like to surmise that because of the security checks, many dignitaries were choosing the Pillar for their dinner or lunch events."



Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip while on their 1973 Royal Tour of Canada, including NOTL where the Queen officially opened the Shaw Festival Theatre and visited Fort George. (NOTL Museum)

Continued on page 12



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# Museum contest declares Prest House ‘the sexiest’

**Penny Coles**  
**The Local**

A beautiful historic house on York Road has been deemed the town’s sexiest heritage home by those who voted in a contest organized by the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum.

Rachael and Martin Werner, the current owners of the property, laughed about the designation, saying they had no idea there was to be such a contest or that their home would be included. Rachael says her mother told her about it after seeing it on Facebook. “We didn’t know anything about it until then.”

They watched it work its way through the contest as the photos came up on social media, and their home remained as others were knocked out. “It’s kind of cool” to live in the sexiest house in Niagara, says Rachael. “It makes us smile.”

Martin adds, “it’s not something you would expect from the NOTL Museum, to do a contest on the sexiest house, but it’s been fun.”

And that’s exactly why they decided to do it, says Shawna Butts, assistant curator and educational programmer at the museum.

“I’d seen something similar on social media, early in the pandemic. It was done somewhere in Britain, and I thought it was hilarious. I told the other staff about it and we chuckled about it, and then we decided we would have some fun. And

people did have fun with it,” says Butts. “History and museums can be pigeonholed as stuffy. But we have a young staff, and during the pandemic, we’ve been trying to do some interesting and fun programs online.”

She says they were asked occasionally what would make a building sexy, but the answer, she decided, would be different depending on who you ask.

“There is no definition. We were thinking of the exterior of the house and what it looked like, but we found many people had different associations. They would tell us they’d been in a house, or they may have known people who lived there. They might have had roots there, personal stories to share. For some, it was more about their personal attachment with the building.”

The museum staff originally came up with 60 of their favourite buildings, and narrowed it down to 32. One of their goals was to represent all NOTL communities, to involve more people. “We didn’t want to focus only on the Old Town,” says Butts. “Narrowing it down wasn’t easy.”

Once they had their 32 homes, they used social media sites, including their own Facebook page, to promote the contest and engage the public.

It began with a series of round robins, two buildings going head to head for votes, with one moving on to the next round, ending in quarterfinals, semis and then

the final vote, when the Prest House won out over the stately Grand Victorian Inn on the Niagara River Parkway.

The winning home, on the escarpment side of York Road approaching Queenston, was built around 1818, on 20 acres of land which can be traced to the Secord family. The property was sold to William Davis, the son of a United Empire Loyalist, who built the two-storey stone house. It passed through the hands of several owners before the Prest family moved into it in 1862, and retained ownership until 1964.

It’s been renovated over the years, but never as thoroughly restored as under the hands of Willowbank instructor Bob Watson, who sold it to the Werners in early 2017.

He was passionate about staying true to the historic elements of the building, and did an amazing job, says Rachael.

When they bought it, there was some work to be done to modernize it for them and their young family, updating the kitchen and bathrooms to make them more functional, while still respecting the heritage elements of the home.

Watson had worked meticulously to bring it to “the full level of a restoration of a historic home,” says Martin. “He really went all out to keep it to its origins,” but it needed some practical updates. “The key word is functionality.”

“We did a massive renovation



The Prest House on York Road has been voted the sexiest heritage house in a NOTL Museum contest. The house has been restored, with some modern updates to make it functional for raising a family. (Photos supplied)



in the kitchen,” Rachael says, which had been added to the main house in 1849. It has a beautiful, big open cooking fireplace, with a baking oven beside it, but they added a glass wall with patio doors to open it up to the outside.

But even with some modernization, she says, “everything is still very farmhouse.” The living room has the original fireplace and mantel, the floor is still large pine planks. “We’ve also updated the master bath, but we’re still retaining the historic charm of the house,” with some aspects still looking and feeling like the 1850s, but working for their family. The house has four bedrooms, four bathrooms, a “gorgeous” restored stone basement, heated flooring, and six

fireplaces, she says.

“We’ve also added some beautiful outdoor lighting.”

While what they could do outside with the landscaping depended on the Niagara Escarpment Commission, especially in the back of the house, they applied for and were granted permission to plant vineyards to wrap around both sides of the building.

Rachael points out that both she and Martin come from families of grape growers, as were they before they bought the Prest House. The permit to plant their vineyard on York Road allows them to expand their farm, she says.

“It’s very comforting, and natural in that sense,” she says.

With the soil and climate of

the area, it’s a perfect place for “sparkling” varieties, she says, which, Martin adds, are harvested early, before the birds and other predators of the escarpment behind them can destroy their crop.

They had their first harvest of pinot noir, chardonnay, aligoté and gamay in 2020, three years after the vineyards were planted.

“I have always been in love with this property, always thought I’d love to live here,” says Rachael.

With their love of the land and their young family, “we’ve brought fresh life to the property, and a fresh perspective.”

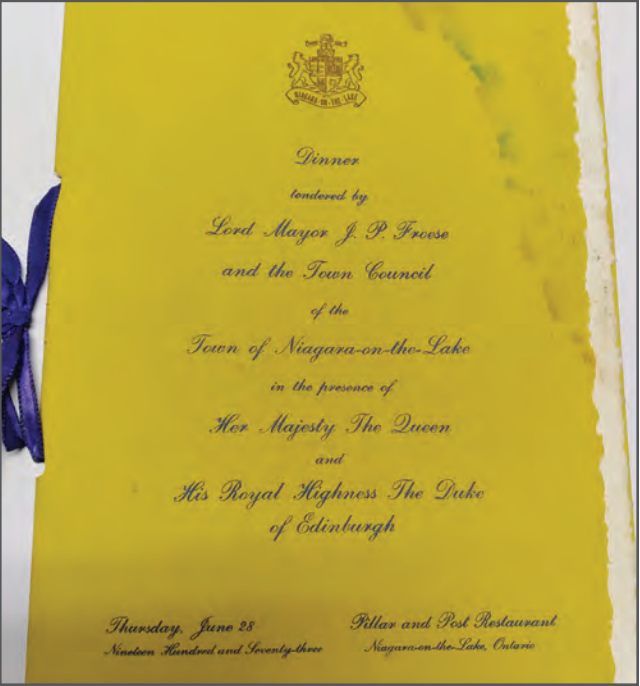
And, in this town of beautiful heritage homes, they can say theirs is the sexiest.

## Memorable day when Royals came to town

Continued from page 11

Although it was the Queen and the Prince who came to town, it is mostly referred to and remembered as the Queen’s visit, says Meloen. “Prince Philip, ever supportive and dignified, remains in the shadow. And I am left with fond memories of the day the royals came to town.”

Although Meloen’s career ended up to be in the town’s roads department, where he retired as superintendent, he has had a life-long interest and volunteer involvement in celebrating the history of the town, possibly encouraged by a brief encounter as a young man with one of the most celebrated couples in the history of Canada.



Rick Meloen has kept souvenirs since the day the Royals visited NOTL. (Photo supplied)

John Willms

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# Friends enjoyed and learned a lot from heritage bingo

## Now it's the kids' turn to experience museum event

**Penny Coles**  
**The Local**

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum, closed again by the current lockdown, is looking for ways to keep people engaged with local history.

With the current April break underway for students, staff have turned their attention to kids.

A heritage bingo contest earlier this year for adults has been revamped to attract the younger set, who can learn about the history of the area while having some fun outdoors, says Shawna Butts, assistant curator and education programmer.

There is a bingo card available online, with each square containing a heritage activity to be completed, such as creating a NOTL heritage rap song, or exploring Fort Mississauga.

Kids are asked to complete two lines or two diagonals, and send photos of themselves taking part in

the activities.

While some parental involvement will be necessary, Butts says she hopes kids will “take ownership” of the game to get the most out of it.

Fran Boot was one of the museum members who had fun with the recent heritage bingo, which began in January and wrapped up in March.

She had been participating in some of the online museum programs, she says, but when this came along, “it was an activity that seemed like a fun way to learn a bit of the history of the town.”

She and two friends, Betty Houghton Knight and Carol McIntosh, first mapped out a plan of how they would approach the challenge.

The three of them love to walk, and do so together regularly.

They typically walk five kilometres together, from the parkette at the bottom of the hill up to Queen-

ston Heights, and up and around Brock's Monument, doing the loop three times. But to play heritage bingo, they used their walking time to complete the activities, plotting what they could do in a five-kilometre walk, through cold, snowy days. “It got us out during the longest, darkest stretch of winter. We couldn't go away, so this was our way of keeping busy in town, physically distancing, getting some exercise and having fun,” she says.

“It was like a scavenger hunt with a bingo card,” and at each activity, they would take photos to show they were there, often with Luna, Knight's “lovely 60-pound bernedoodle.”

Knight and McIntosh are “relatively new” in town, but Boot has lived here since 1979, and she still discovered some places she'd never been to, she says.

They also had some lively discussions. One was after their visit to Vrooman's Battery, an important site

during the Battle of Queenston Heights in the War of 1812. But the women also recognized the Vrooman name in association with the story of Chloe Cooley. “On the one hand the battery was a site of a heroic act, and maybe five kilometres north was the site that Chloe Cooley was shoved on a boat and taken across the river,” says Boot. “In one place we're honouring the family, and in another, we're thinking, what did they do?”

But Boot admitted they didn't really know the connection, and were interested in learning more.

“What a great question,” says Butts, when it was posed to her.

“Yes, Vrooman's battery does have an association to Adam Vrooman, the man who bound Chloe Cooley and sold her across the river. During the War of 1812, the land the battery was on was owned by Adam's son, Solomon Vrooman. The battery, with a 24-pound-

er gun, was used by members of the British Militia to harass the American forces crossing the river during the Battle of Queenston Heights. As the son of Adam Vrooman, Solomon would have grown up in a family that accepted and practised enslavement, although we likely don't know where Solomon personally stood on the matter,” says Butts.

“I can only imagine the discussion that Fran and the other bingo ladies had, especially now, in an era where many are pushing to change community names, landmarks, etc. that have ties to slavery. It's so great to hear that this bingo card not only provided people with a fun way to explore NOTL's heritage, but that it sparked some great historical discussions.”

“We are keeners,” says Boot. “We like activities. It might not be typical for 60-year-old women, but we thought it was interesting.”

She says she would encourage kids to first plot out the activities, so they feel in control of the game, and

maybe, if permitted, might have fun if they could join forces with another family.

But to get the most out of it, “the kids should be the ones to decide how to approach it,” she advises.

If the activities hadn't overlapped, Boot says she and her friends might have done this one as well, just for fun — especially the rap song — and would certainly consider doing it again if it's offered.

The museum may do another bingo later in the spring for adults, but for now, Butts is concentrating on making it fun for kids. It began April 1, and without registration, it's difficult to know how many families have decided to try it, she says.

And although the school break might prove a good time to give it a try, they have until the end of the month to complete their lines.

Once they've accomplished that, with selfies to show it, contact@nhsn.ca for a prize, she says.

For more information, go to the NOTL Museum's Facebook page.



Fran Boot, Carol McIntosh and Betty Houghton Knight took part in the first edition of heritage bingo, which is now available for kids. To complete the activities, they found some Common ground, walked the Heritage Trail, found a curling stone in the Randwood Estate wall, and took a selfie with the Simcoes. (Photos supplied)





# Local guys ready to make music — again

**Mike Balsom**  
Special to The Local

Locals of a certain age may remember a rock and roll band named Aspen Snow. Formed in 1973 shortly after the members graduated from Niagara District Secondary School, they played a few gigs at local church halls, then graduated to the bar circuit, playing at a number of haunts that no longer exist: the American Tavern, the Riverside Hotel and the Anchorage.

Their set list included songs from the Rolling Stones, the Allman Brothers, Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton and the Byrds.

Niagara-on-the-Lake native Robin Howe, now 67 years old, remembers those days fondly. He was one of the guitar players, along with George Enns of Virgil. Also from Virgil, Al Evalds played bass, while drummer Mark Pendergast grew up in Queenston. Doug Snider of NOTL took on lead vocal duties.

"We rehearsed for well over a year before we felt good enough to play in front of an audience," Howe says. "Everybody had jobs so practice time was usually twice a week, on I think Wednesdays and Sundays, in Mark's parents barn. We were actually getting better and more polished by the time we broke up, but it just wasn't worth the effort for the little money and gigs locally that we could get."

Those jobs and eventually marriages started getting in the way, and some of the members left town for post-secondary studies.

Howe, for example, studied biology at the University of Guelph, and then Brock. Later, he moved to Toronto to begin a culinary career at some of the city's top restaurants. In 1982, he came back to Niagara and began his own catering business, which he still operates today.

"We lost touch with each other for about 40 years," explains Howe. "George moved to the States and married a girl there. Then I got a call from Al to go see some concerts at Brock University about 12 years ago. Then one day George showed up. He had come back to Canada and had been living in Niagara Falls. I said to them, 'come to my kitchen and let's just play and sit around, get some pizza and have some beers,' and that's what we did."

The trio connected once again with former drummer Mark Pendergast, and began jamming again in Al's garage, this time at his home in Chipawa.

In the meantime, Wisconsin-born Dave Rusch had moved to St. Davids. The long-time broadcasting executive and his wife were looking to buy an Angie Strauss painting in 2012. In talking to Angie, Dave mentioned that he was a drummer, and was looking to connect with other musicians in the area. She gave him Al Evalds' contact information.

Rusch called up Evalds, went to a jam session, and thus was born the Niagara Trophy Husbands Band, featuring four of the original members of Aspen Snow.

"There's about 12 guys," Rusch says, "who are in and

out of there. Some nights there's six, some nights seven might show up, but they might be different guys. This band has been playing since 2012. We have a few guitar players, some drummers, lots of singers."

From playing together in the early 70s, to playing together around their own early 70s, Howe is having a blast. But like it did 40 years ago, sometimes work gets in the way.

"I'm the odd man out," he says, "because I still run the catering business. All the others are retired, or mostly retired, so they are able to play more of the pub gigs and birthday parties that they've booked. They are usually on weekends, and that's when I am traditionally busy doing weddings. But I make the Tuesday practices as much as I can."

Soon, Rusch was dragging some of the guys to Dean Malton's Groundloop Studio in Ridgeway, and after all those years, those four members of Aspen Snow have finally found themselves on some professional recordings.

Rusch's radio background led him to start a regular podcast called KWW Radio St. Davids. Besides interviews with interesting people from the village, his site also hosts recordings from the Niagara Trophy Husbands Band and other local musicians.

Various members of the 12-strong collective show up on songs such as the Lovin' Spoonful's *Summer in the City* and Michel Pagliaro's *Lovin' You Ain't Easy*. Howe takes lead acoustic and electric guitar duties on the Yardbirds' classic *Heart Full of Soul*, with Rusch on drums and vocals and Evalds on bass. It's a polished, well-played version of a classic song updated with modern technology. There is also a take on the Johnny Rivers classic *Secret Agent Man*, featuring just Howe and Rusch, that has yet to be posted on the site.

The group has had no chance to get together to jam, record or play live over the last 13 months. Like everybody, they are adjusting to the limitations the pandemic



The Original Aspen Snow, 30 years on, with Al Evalds, Mark Pendergast, Robin Howe and George Enns. (Photo supplied)



Al Evalds, David Rusch, George Enns, Ron Walker, Robin Howe and Kieron Moore, in a photo taken in 2012, are local musicians who like to get together and make music. (Photo supplied)

has brought.

With few weddings or other events happening, Howe was able to pivot his catering business to preparing meat pies and casseroles for delivery and pickup. Rusch has continued working with his wife Jane's business Audio Broadcast Canada, selling broadcast technologies, and also hosts a podcast called Home Improvement USA with Steve Leventhal, via

SRN Broadcasting.

Howe and the others are itching for a chance to get back to playing, though.

"When you get older, and I was the youngest member (of Aspen Snow) it's nice to have guys who can just get together," he raves. "We jam, we argue, and we play music. It's a wonderful thing."

"We're always coming up with new songs," Howe continues. "Before COVID we

were doing some newer stuff, and some CCR. I think the last time we got together was last summer, at my place in St. Catharines when the rules were more relaxed. We're chomping at the bit to get together again."

To hear music from the Niagara Trophy Husbands Band, and other segments focusing on St. Davids, visit Rusch's website at [kwradio.com](http://kwradio.com).

## Local HAPPENINGS

### LEGO MOVIE TRIVIA AGES 7 – 13

April 15 @ 2 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Everything is awesome – especially virtual trivia! Join us for virtual trivia all about The Lego Movie and have your chance at winning a lego prize pack! Log onto [crowd.live](https://crowd.live) with the Room Code UX3ZL at 2 p.m.!

### THE BIG LET GO WITH DARCY PATRICK

April 15 @ 7 p.m. - 9 p.m.

Join us in welcoming Darcy Patrick, Author/Public Speaker/Wellness Writing Coach for a free four week course on how to learn that letting go of control is taking control. You will learn the power of: radical acceptance, changing your perspective, forgiveness, setting boundaries, and building faith in yourself. You will learn to apply all of Darcy's tools in your everyday life, turning your growth into a truly personal journey. Register on <https://notlpubliclibrary.org>: <https://zcu.io/Aq94>

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With or without a border, colour graphics optional.  
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## Local WORSHIP

**CORNERSTONE  
COMMUNITY CHURCH**

Sunday, April 18th

10 a.m. Worship Gathering  
(Online Only)

Speaker: Kevin Bayne

Message:

The Hospital: Jesus our Healer

Live stream available  
Sundays at 10:00 am

Please be advised that with the  
current state of COVID-19, your safety  
is of utmost importance to us.

[www.ccchurch.ca](http://www.ccchurch.ca)

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OBITUARY



SHERVILL, PAULINE — My Big Sister

Pauline was the first born in February 1936 to Frank and Phyllis Wright who lived in Catford South London. One year later she was joined by a new baby sister “Gwen”.

The four of them lived together in a 2 bed room flat, facing the threats of Second World War. Going to school and visiting family in the Lewisham South London Area.

In 1949 another member of the family popped up, namely me “Susan”, so that made Pauline and Gwen young teenagers when I arrived, “what a shock for them”. But from what I remember they both made a fuss of me, being the baby of the family.

Pauline loved her clothes and had a great fashion sense. When she left school she went on to doing an apprenticeship in Wig Making, and I hear made some good ones for some well known people. I can remember Pauline also working in a office on a switch board, and one day took me with her to work. I guess I was around 5 years old at the time, “Great fun”.

Pauline started to get an eye for the boys and of course one in particular named Derek Shervill. They started courting and in 1955 they got married. By this time my parents moved from their flat into a small house in Bellingham South London. This is where Pauline and Derek came to live with us sharing the rooms etc. We were together for 2 years, I have happy memories of the time sneaking into their living room once they got home from work to be made a fuss of. They often took me out with them and their friends, visiting the seaside “Brighton” and seeing the lights at “Southend on Sea”, what a little pain I must have been Ha Ha!

So when 1957 arrived, Pauline and Derek decided to take off to Toronto Canada for a new and exciting life it was very sad for me and my family! I loved the time we had together and loved the time they gave me as a little girl of 6/7 years.

Our family were very happy to know they had settled in Canada and started to put down roots, and making a family of their own. First came their daughter Kim followed by their son Drew who later married Jane.

Over the years our family made quite a few visits to see them in Canada, each time going to different houses and places.

As time went on they were both blessed with Grandchildren, 2 girls Natalie (married Cameron), Tatum and a grandson Liam.

They finally settled in a lovely house at Niagara-on-the-Lake, what a beautiful place. Just like something out of Anne of Green Gables. Whilst there Pauline made lots of great friends and social scenes, including the lawn bowling club, Fish and chip Legion dance nights and of course summer events down at the Lake at the bottom of their street. Pauline was so happy sitting in her lovely garden watching and feeding the birds, and making a fuss of their beloved dog Bicky.

Then in November 2019, blessed with a beautiful Great Grandson “Azaryah” who made her story complete. Dear Pauline Greatly Missed, Always in our Hearts.

CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8		9	10	11	12	13
14						15				16				
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63						64				65				

Across:

- 1 Distant
- 6 Apex
- 9 Jobs
- 14 “ER” actress --- Tierney
- 15 “--- Believer”, Monkees hit
- 16 Start playing!
- 17 Tap
- 19 “Fear of Flying” author --- Jong
- 20 Snow runner
- 21 Less common
- 22 Buoyant
- 23 Old-fashioned cab
- 25 Lightweight tropical hats
- 27 Elite group
- 28 Gene Pitney was only 24hrs from here
- 29 Downloadable program
- 32 Small lake
- 34 Natter
- 35 Tenor --- Bocelli
- 37 Sidestepped
- 39 Splendors
- 40 Demeanor
- 41 Total
- 42 Capital of Norway
- 43 Source of formic acid
- 44 Jambalaya ingredient
- 46 Little one
- 47 “Band of Gold” singer Freda ---

- 48 Miscreants
- 51 Economizer
- 54 Succeed
- 56 One of New York’s finest, perhaps
- 57 Nautical fastener
- 58 To
- 60 Carroll’s rabbit-hole explorer
- 61 Wyo. neighbor
- 62 Extended area of land
- 63 Waterproofed as many showers are
- 64 Affirmative vote
- 65 Solemn promises

Down:

- 1 Pennsylvania Mennonites
- 2 Sri ---, formerly Ceylon
- 3 Ahead of the field
- 4 Mineral source
- 5 Litter of pigs
- 6 Bracket
- 7 Stimulus
- 8 Security detachment
- 9 Anna Paquin won an Oscar for this film, aged 11
- 10 Spanish winds
- 11 The pen
- 12 Recoil

- 13 Remain
- 18 Rotating engine part
- 24 Welcome
- 26 Old Testament song
- 28 Sliver
- 29 Nobleman
- 30 Rind
- 31 --- doble (dance)
- 32 One of the Three Bears
- 33 “--- Almighty”, in which Morgan Freeman played God
- 34 Nixon’s successor, informally
- 36 Drivel
- 38 At peace
- 39 Rev up
- 41 --- Todd, barber
- 45 Chest pain
- 46 Am disposed
- 47 Serenity
- 48 Pro
- 49 Gun handle nick
- 50 Notices
- 51 Get outta here!
- 52 “--- want is a room somewhere...” (“My Fair Lady”)
- 53 Bridal wear
- 55 Start of a Hamlet soliloquy
- 59 Geological time composed of periods

PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from  
April 7, 2021

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

Across: 1 Aboof, 6 Tip, 9 Tasks, 14 Maura, 15 I'm a, 16 Hit it, 17 Intercept, 19 Erica, 20 Ski, 21 Rarer, 22 Perky, 23 Hansom, 25 Topics, 27 Few, 28 Tulisa, 29 App, 32 Mere, 34 Gas, 35 Andrea, 37 Avoided, 39 Glories, 40 Manner, 41 Sum, 42 Oslo, 43 Art, 44 Prawn, 46 Tot, 47 Payne, 48 Felons, 51 Saver, 54 Get on, 56 Cop, 57 Cleat, 58 In order to, 60 Alice, 61 Neb, 62 Tract, 63 Tiled, 64 Aye, 65 Oaths.

Down: 1 Armish, 2 Lank, 3 Out in front, 4 Ore, 5 Farrow, 6 Tier, 7 Impetus, 8 Patro, 9 The piano, 10 Aires, 11 Stir, 12 Kick, 13 Stay, 18 Cam, 24 See in, 26 Psalm, 28 Tad, 29 Aristocrat, 30 Peel, 31 Paso, 32 Mama, 33 Evan, 34 Gerry, 36 Drool, 38 Departed, 39 Gun, 41 Sweeney, 45 Angina, 46 Tend to, 47 Peace, 48 For, 49 Notch, 50 Spots, 51 Scat, 52 All I, 53 Veil, 55 To be, 59 Era.

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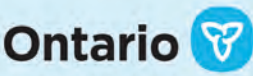
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Sharon Brinsmead-Taylor, with Michael and Sukyi Watson, show off a greenhouse full of produce for local consumers. (Penny Coles)

# Farm boxes with options available from local grower

Penny Coles  
The Local

Front Step Farms is almost ready to begin selling fresh, locally grown vegetables, that typically would not be ready until later in the growing season.

Michael Watson, a sixth generation farmer, and his wife Sukyi are behind Front Step, while Sharon Brinsmead-Taylor, known locally for her role as the coordinator of The Market @ The Village, is quickly becoming the face of it, having taken over the marketing and organization of their Farm Boxes, which are almost ready to go.

Front Step is making use of some space in Line 8 greenhouses to have a list of vegetables that are ready to be enjoyed.

Brinsmead-Taylor, who will also be back at The Market this season, explains Watson has been a friend of hers for many years, and she was intrigued by the concept of boxes of fresh greenhouse-grown produce being available weekly, cutting down on the risk and increases availability from the more traditional practise of selling produce grown outdoors and ready only in-season.

Front Step boxes are handled differently from the typical Community Supported Agriculture programs delivering weekly produce, which are usually pre-paid at the beginning of the season, with a commitment to weekly purchases, the content and quantity depending on availability, as influenced by the weather.

Brinsmead-Taylor says the difference with Farm Boxes are that for an upfront membership of \$25, they can be or-

dered and paid for each week, so if someone is going to be away, or wants more or less produce, that can be reflected in their ordering. It makes it much more flexible for the consumer, who can choose boxes made up for single foodies, she says, for couples, or for families of four, ranging in price from \$28 to \$42, but with the ability to vary that on any given week.

"You can order as frequently or infrequently as you like. If you are going on vacation you don't order a box that week. You're not committed to ordering," she says, although there will be produce available 52 weeks of the year.

"We take the risk away from the consumer, offering flexibility in box size and frequency of purchase."

Those who pay for a membership will receive a weekly newsletter on Fridays, explaining what is going to be in the box, along with some extras, such as recipes, and will be able to order by Sunday, with options for pickup at the Line 8 greenhouses, where the boxes will be packed.

Although they had a small number of people picking up boxes in NOTL, most of their business was done out of the Maple farm.

By planting from seed and growing under glass, they can slow down or speed up the growing process to ensure crops are ready on time.

"By Friday, we can be 100 per cent sure what will be available for the following week. And it allows us to have a much more diverse crop ready," she says.

Watson's family has been farming in Niagara since

the 80s, but he and his wife moved to Maple and have been farming there for a number of years before returning to Niagara. They are still growing garlic and fruit in Maple. The Line 8 greenhouses, between Four Mile Creek Road and Concession 2, are owned by a friend who rents out space, which Watson is doing until his own greenhouses on Line 1 are ready to begin operation.

He is growing under 15,000 square feet of greenhouses on Line 8, and will have another 30,000 square feet ready soon on Line 1, with more to come.

"We'll have 150,000 square feet for growing by 2023," he says.

Although he combines traditional and conventional techniques for growing, organic and pesticide-free, he is always researching new and modern ways to grow better, producing more and better-tasting year-round crops, including an innovative process for garlic he is working on.

"Between the three different farms, we'll have lots of options available," says Brinsmead-Taylor, including several varieties of lettuce, kale, radishes, garlic, peppers, zucchini, onions, spinach, herbs, varieties of tomatoes, including heirloom, no longer typically available, and the hugely popular microgreens.

There will also be jams and jellies — preserves are Sukyi's department — from the Maple farm.

Brinsmead-Taylor says they are in negotiations with local bakeries to add some bread or the baked goods to the boxes.

For more information visit [frontstepfarms.com](https://frontstepfarms.com).