



**Paul Wheeler:
music legend
mourned**

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And they're off!

The youngest group of kids races to find treasures at Saturday's NOTL Kinsmen Easter egg hunt. Although it looked like it could be a cold, miserable day, the sun came out just as the egg hunt was about to begin, with what might have been the best crowd yet of parents and children enjoying the return of the popular event. For more photos, please see page 13. (Penny Coles)

St. Davids village postmaster retires after 30 years

**Penny Coles
The Local**

After 30 years with Canada Post, Barb Pearson, postmaster at the St. Davids branch, has retired.

She worked her last day Thursday, with a brief ceremony to mark the occasion, as village residents stopped by to pick up their mail and congratulate her.

Pearson, a St. Davids resident, had just recently returned from a six-week vacation in Texas with her husband Frank. They've already done quite a bit of travelling, pulling a trailer, and hope for lots more of those trips in the future, especially to warm places during cold Canadian winters, she says.

Pearson recalls her first job with Canada Post was as a casual, part-time worker in Queenston.

She then went to Niagara Falls, and after that Ridgeway, a village in Fort Erie, where she served as postmaster.

She spent the last 10 years of her career in St. Davids, where she was happy to work with residents she has known for years, and not too far from home.

She and Frank brought up their family, Frank Jr., Scott and Rachel, on Tanbark Road, but in 2006, as that area of St. Davids became more built up, the couple moved to Line 7.

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Outdoor pickleball shut down due to racket dispute

Town provides space in Centennial Arena

**Penny Coles
The Local**

Niagara-on-the-Lake Pickleball Club members are not happy that their Virgil courts are not able to open as expected.

Instead, the town has set aside some indoor space in the Centennial Arena for them.

"Many of the club's mem-

bers are deeply upset with the town's decision to close the outdoor courts, and offer us indoor space in the Centennial Arena," says John Hindle, president of the club.

"Mostly, our members fear that the cement floors and their older knees and hips will not go well together. Of course falling onto cement is a natural fear for our older members," he said in an email

to The Local.

"Although we will continue to offer sessions at the community centre, pickleball was meant to be played outdoors, like tennis or golf, and only because of our nasty winters do we choose to move indoors. The complete loss of this outdoor season will directly impact the emotional health of many of our 250 members who are already ex-

periencing a weakened spirit due to COVID."

Information shared in an email to club members, some of it from the town, said six temporary courts have been constructed in the arena, and will be available daily to members and the public Monday to Friday, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., except for specific dates between April 29 and July 25. Those days include the three days of the Virgil

Stampede, and some lacrosse tournaments.

The temporary relocation of the pickleball courts is in response to "identified noise concerns associated with the use of the outdoor pickleball courts," and will remain there until the issue can be resolved by provincial court, the email to members says, adding that the town "is hopeful" the issue will be dealt with quickly.

Two days were scheduled for the court case, one this week and one in June. The

pickleball club, also charged with a noise bylaw infraction, will be responding.

The town put up a sign on the outdoor pickleball court earlier this week, directing club members and members of the public to the courts inside the arena.

In the meantime, members can also continue to play at the community centre, following its normal schedule.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero

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Pearson hopes to travel, spend time with her bees



Barb Pearson's son Scott, her brother Arnie Lepp, Barb, her husband Frank and daughter Rachel celebrated Barb's retirement from Canada Post after a 30-year career. (Photos by Penny Coles)



During a small retirement celebration Thursday, Connie Flagg showed Barb Pearson some congratulation videos. Flagg also spoke of Pearson's exemplary career, using her love of bees, as shown by the posters held up by Barb's daughter Rachel Pearson.

Continued from page 1

Rachel is now raising her sons in the village, and has worked for Canada Post for the last four years. She's taken on her mom's job, holding down the fort until a new postmaster is selected, she says.

Connie Flagg, a local operations superintendent for Canada Post, was at the St. Davids Post Office Wednesday to congratulate Pearson on her retirement.

"She is by far the best team leader I've ever worked for," says Flagg, who was first hired by Pearson at the Ridgeway post office, almost two decades ago.

"I've done many retirement speeches in my career at Canada Post, and I usually don't struggle to find words of congratulations and warm wishes, but this retirement speech was a little different. For you Barb, I feel an extra special responsibility to truly communicate how grateful I am, for not only your years of service, but also for you personally in my own work life and career."

Flagg was working in Port Colborne and "hoping against hope that I could somehow transfer to Ridgeway," she says. "My husband moved before we could, and he visited the office and spoke to Barb about me, and Barb graciously said that she was willing to give me a chance. My first actual hired position was in the Ridgeway office and Barb was my postmaster," says Flagg.

A few years ago Barb, who had for a long time been interested in raising bees, was given a bee hive by her kids. Raising bees and collecting honey have become a hobby for her, "a labour of love," she says, that she will now have more time to devote to, with Frank, who helps her.

To those coming to say goodbye to her at the post office Thursday, she handed a small jar of home-made honey, with a label that says, "It's

been sweet!"

Flagg, aided by Rachel with posters, used Barb's bee-keeping hobby in her retirement speech, which she called "What You Need to Bee a Successful Postmaster."

First, she said, you need to "Bee interested in your team members, which Barb always was."

"I have lovely memories of your team Christmas parties at the fire hall and in your home," she told Barb — Frank is a retired volunteer firefighter.

"You took the time to make your team members feel special and appreciated," she told Barb, who dropped off baskets of fruit at Flagg's door for her sons "when they were in their hungry teenager years."

She listed other kindnesses Barb showed for her fellow employees, "which may have seemed like small gestures at the time but they certainly had a positive effect on her team."

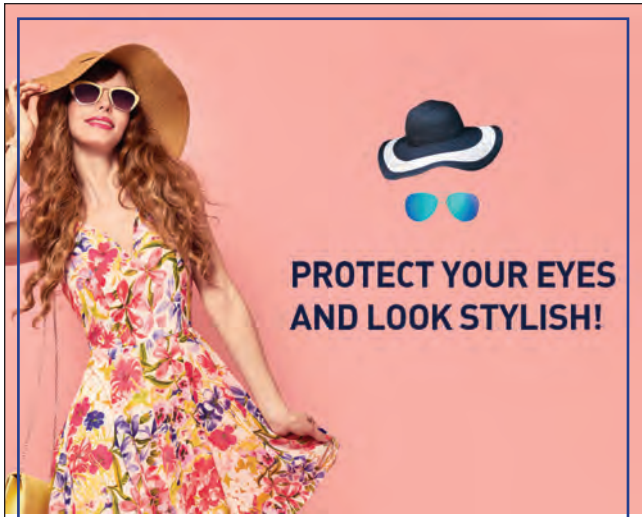
Barb also learned how to do everything within an office, and showed a confidence and ability to transfer the knowledge to others. She showed an engaging presence with customers, solving problems and maintaining a rapport with them "that is legend. If I had a dollar for every time that you were mentioned by name in the monthly customer surveys, I would be a rich person," says Flagg.

Barb also shared her sense of humour, at times self-deprecating, and at other times with a "wicked and witty take on things."

When she visited St. Davids, Flagg says, Barb always made her feel better, "a gift that I and many others will miss the most."

As Barb enjoyed her last few hours at the St. Davids post office, she said it was a gift to end her career working there, "re-connecting with my community. I loved my time here."

But, she laughs, she expects to love her retirement even more.



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Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society

You've been planning great things for your garden during our many lockdowns (between binges of Netflix movies and the Food Channel). So now is your chance to swing into action and get started on making your perfect garden for 2022. **It has been three years since the NOTL Hort Society has been able to have a garden sale, and 2022 has been declared 'the Garden of the Year', so plan to join us on Saturday, May 14 (rain or shine).**

We will have annuals, ferns, tomatoes and herbs from local growers. The perennials will be from our members' own gardens, and there are always some specialty items. Bring your favourite pruner or shovel to be sharpened at the same time. We hope to see you there.

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Hummel, town back in court next week

Penny Coles
The Local

An appeal of a decision that was made a year ago by a provincial Superior Court justice will be heard in Toronto next Wednesday.

After hearing a lawsuit against the town by developer Rainer Hummel, Justice James Ramsay released his decision in April, 2021, saying there was no wrongdoing or bad faith when the current council passed two interim control bylaws in 2018, within days of taking office.

In his lawsuit against the town for damages and costs, Hummel said an interim control bylaw to temporarily put a hold on development was passed illegally and in bad faith, alleging it was not permitted under the planning act, and that there was no review of planning policies undertaken — a necessary component of the hold on

development. His lawsuit also alleged that two interim control bylaws could not cover the same time period — council also passed one preventing cannabis operations as a land use.

The timing of the by-law approvals, at a special council meeting two days after council members were sworn in following the 2018 election, meant it was discussed improperly and did not follow the proper process, Hummel alleged.

At a special council meeting called for Dec. 5, 2018, council resolved to commission a study of land use planning policies, Justice Ramsay explained in his decision.

Then council enacted the interim control bylaw, which prohibited subdivision or condominium approval and zoning changes in the Old Town. Council later extended it, to continue protection against development until the Official Plan was approved

and would take over the protection offered through the interim control bylaw, Ramsey said, finding no wrongdoing with the process.

Council's freeze on cannabis-related land use, Ramsay said was for a different purpose, and did not contravene planning legislation.

In the appeal to be held in provincial court before three judges next week, there will be no witnesses, and no new evidence heard, explains Justin Safayeni, a Toronto lawyer with Stockwoods LLP, representing Hummel Properties.

What is new is the addition of the Ontario Home Builders' Association and the Niagara Home Builders' Association at the hearing, two organizations which asked to join the appeal on two questions of importance to the residential construction industry.

Those issues are whether two interim control by-

laws can be consecutively applied to the same lands, despite the three-year cooling-off period set out in the planning act, and the scope of municipal powers regarding interim control bylaws, also as legislated under the planning act.

Appeal Court Judge J.A. Rouleau said the two organizations collectively represent more than 4,000 member companies which have built homes in over 500 communities across Ontario, with mandates to represent the position of home builders, developers, professional renovators, trade contractors.

In a March decision, Rouleau allowed them to join the appeal. The associations, the judge said, "regularly consult with the provincial government and with local governments, and appear before the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal to advance the interest of their members."

In asking to join the

appeal, the associations argued the decision on the interim bylaws "will have an impact well beyond the interest of the parties to the litigation." They submit that "the decision could have significant consequences to the industry and those who work in it."

Rouleau agreed the two issues the associations are addressing "transcend the interest of the parties," and "can make a useful contribution to the appeal."

The judge did not agree with the town's opposition to the inclusion of the two associations, which was based on the assertion that "there is significant overlap" between the submissions the home builders associations want to make with that of Hummel Properties.

The judge also disagreed that allowing them to participate would result in significant additional time being spent on the appeal.

The decision that will result from next week's appeal

hearing will represent at least two of the three judges who will hear the case.

In going forward with the appeal, Safayeni said, "I think it is fair to say that the appellant (Hummel) is deeply concerned about the consequences of the decision made by the Court below—both in terms of the broad powers it grants to municipalities to use the extraordinary power of interim control bylaws, and in terms of the standard it sets for acceptable municipal conduct when considering and passing interim control bylaws."

The appeal of the lower court decision, he added, "provides an important chance to reconsider these issues. We are looking forward to that opportunity."

In terms of the outcome, "the Court of Appeal could agree with the appellant [Hummel Properties] on all, some or none of the issues the appellant raises on the appeal," he said.

Wind storm takes down large tree



Old Town resident Peter Donato said his family 'cycling crew' out on Good Friday just missed a large tree falling across Front Street in the wind storm. Town staff were quick to respond and clean it up, he said. Checking out the tree were Ivy Ann Donato, 6, Jacob Bigue, 7, and Veronica Bigue, 11.



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Music community mourning loss of legend

Mike Balsom
The Local

Chances are if you've seen a local band playing live in a Niagara watering hole any time during the last 45 years, you've either seen Paul Wheeler in action, or at least one musician on stage who has worked with the one-time Niagara-on-the-Lake resident.

Six degrees of separation? More like one degree anywhere in the region, maybe two degrees if you expand the focus to Hamilton, three in Toronto. The fourth-generation musician, who lost a short battle with pancreatic cancer on April 11, had been a mentor to practically everyone who had ever stepped on a Southern Ontario stage.

The entire Niagara music community is mourning the loss of one of the nicest, most generous and gregarious performers to ever make a dent on the local scene. The 60-year-old Wheeler had the knack for making everyone he met feel like part of his extended family, as if he would go to bat for them in any situation, which he often did.

Wheeler was a drummer, singer and bassist for various rock bands through the years, many of them also featuring his younger brother Jon, an expert guitarist who passed away in 2014. Their father, Paul Senior, was also a musician and a member of numerous groups during his lifetime, including the Lincoln and Welland Regiment Band and the Ronn Metcalfe Orchestra.

Paul's uncle Kenny Wheeler was an internationally renowned trumpet and flugel-horn player, and a composer/arranger with 28 albums released under his own name. The St. Catharines Collegiate graduate collaborated with many of the biggest names in jazz, including Dave Holland, John Abercrombie and Bill Frissel, and contributed to Joni Mitchell's 2002 album *Travelogue*.

His mother Nora was an opera singer, and Paul had traced the family's musical history on both sides back four generations, to their roots in Ireland. The family moved around a lot in Paul's earlier years. This scribe first met the Wheeler boys while they were living on Chestnut Street in Merriton. Numerous afternoons and evenings were spent in the family's basement watching Paul and Jon jam with various local musicians.

Inevitably, Paul Senior, Nora, or older sisters Kathy or Deborah would find their way downstairs to join the proceedings. There was a deep appreciation from the entire family of the boys' musical endeavours, no matter the volume, and all visitors were welcomed with open arms.

Paul was a consummate storyteller who loved to regale friends and family members with stories of his life in music, and the many characters he came into contact with over the years. His raucous tales of his travels could fill a very enter-

taining book.

He was also a natural comedian, with a fascination for clowns. Uncle Paulie, as many referred to him, could often be found running around with his rubber chicken and his fart-gun, interrupting serious conversations with inappropriate sound effects.

In 1991, Paul moved to Regent Street in NOTL with Nora and his sister Kathy. He outfitted the basement there with a 16-track soundboard and opened Castle Studios, the name perhaps a nod to the famed 1960s-era St. Catharines club which was owned by bandleader Metcalfe, with whom his father had played. James Cadeau, who with his wife Erinn Lockhard, runs the NOTL community centre's Sweets & Swirls Cafe, remembers visiting his cousin Paul at the studio. Cadeau, a musician himself, was inspired at an early age by Paul's and Jon's seemingly natural musical ability.

"I remember he always had cartoons on when he was working in the studio," Cadeau laughs. "I think he got some inspiration from the music behind those Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd episodes."



Paul Wheeler, larger than life onstage, was a huge presence on the local music scene. (Photos from Facebook, with permission from Lisa Klassen-Chaing.)

As teenagers and Niagara District Secondary School students, Andrew Grimo and Zach Lepp also spent time at Castle Studios. Grimo, now a Hamilton-based computer consultant, met Paul while taking drum lessons at Ostanek's Music Store (now Long and McQuade).

"Paul was a fantastic guy, all around," Grimo tells The Local. "He made music look easy to do. He and his brother both had a knack for it. They lived and breathed it. They were charismatic, but they had this rough-around-the-edges way that made them fit into the bar scene."

At the studio, Grimo took every opportunity to learn the recording process from Wheeler. "They had a very basic recording setup that worked well for what they were doing," he says. "They were good at making use of any tools they had access to. Back in those days just getting something recorded to a cassette was sort of normal."

Grimo later earned a diploma in recording engineering from Fanshawe College and worked at Metalworks studio in Mississauga before moving into software.

Zach Lepp was one of almost 250 people in attendance at Paul's funeral Monday.

Wheeler's Regent Street residence became a second home for a 16-year-old Lepp after being introduced to Paul by their mutual friend, the now-deceased Bob Strang.

"He was a great musician, a really great guy," Lepp says of Wheeler. "He was older than us, about 31, so we looked up to him. I was a drummer, and if they didn't have a session in, they would let us get behind the board and record stuff."

While Wheeler is being remembered following his death as a mentor to so many musicians, Lepp, who currently plays in local 90s cover band Big Shiny Tunes, says the relationship between him and Paul went deeper than that.

"I look at Paul and Jon as so much more than mentors," he says. "I lost my parents by 15 and I was kind of lost. I always felt welcome there by Paul and his entire extended family. I would sit with Nora and Kathy and just watch TV. I would go to Paul for life advice and he always gave me his undivided attention. The whole Wheeler clan makes you feel like you're part of their family."

Lisa Klassen-Chaing was

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Lisa Klassen-Chaing, a country music singer, met Paul through music and they eventually became a couple.

Top Chef stars coming to NOTL for special dinner

Penny Coles
The Local

When Top Chef Canada stars Erica and Josh Karbelnik visit Niagara-on-the-Lake, it is usually to reconnect with long-time friends David Watt and Leigh Atherton, owners of The Garrison House.

They love the town, the wineries and the markets, and are returning next month to see their friends. Their next visit, however, has a special purpose. They will return to The Garrison House to prepare a special dinner, one that had been arranged and cancelled during the pandemic, and is rescheduled for May. The Karbelniks will join Watt and sous-chef Braeden Mann in the restaurant kitchen, each of the four chefs preparing a course for a sold-out event.

Watt says when they learned COVID restrictions would be lifted and decided they could go ahead with the dinner next month, he first reached out to those who had booked for the event originally scheduled for October 2021, and now has a waiting list.

Erica was the winner of the 2021 season of Top Chef Canada, taking home \$100,000 and a new Lexus RX Hybrid Electric SUV. She and Josh were the first married couple to compete on the popular TV show, with Josh coming in fourth, winning \$5,000.

The season was planned and filmed during a pandemic, and by being in the top four, Josh was able to be Erica's sous-chef during the final competition.

The exposure of winning Top Chef, with Josh by her side, "has definitely opened some doors for us," she says, including a successful catering business they created when restaurants were shuttered during the pandemic.

Both winners of separate Chopped Chef shows, they had talked about applying for Top Chef, but wouldn't have been able to take time

out from their jobs if it hadn't been for the pandemic. With neither of them good at sitting still, Erica says, they decided the time was right for the 2021 season, applied, and were accepted together.

"We decided it was as good a time as any, and said, 'let's do it.'"

Winning Top Chef "was definitely bitter-sweet," says Erica.

"We've always been each other's biggest support system, always there for each other, and always competitive in the kitchen. The kitchen is the kitchen, and our relationship is our relationship."

She expected him to make it through to the end. When he was eliminated in fourth place she asked him if he was okay, and he said he was fine, she says. Since all the participants had been kept in a bubble during filming, and as one of the final four he would be her sous-chef, he told her, "let's kick butt," recalls Erica.

Without that exposure and success, they also might not have pivoted to a flourishing, private in-home catering business that allows them to work together as a couple, which they enjoy, while caring for their five-month-old baby girl, says Erica.

The pandemic "pushed us in a direction that has worked for us. We needed that nudge, and made the best of the situation."

Josh had been working up to the eight-month mark in her pregnancy, and made the decision then to stay at home with her and their baby, and build up their own business.

They had at one time wanted to open a restaurant together, and have considered returning to Niagara, but with their current catering business thriving, that would be a difficult decision to make.

"We've talked a lot about moving there, but a few things in our lives have changed, including having a baby and doing well with our business here. Who knows what the future will hold?"

Their journey that brought them to this point began a long time ago, when they became friends in high school in Thornhill. They didn't date, but when Erica moved out of the country with her parents at the age of 16, the communications between them changed. Being apart, she says, "made Josh realize he had a 'thing' for me." Erica was able to convince her parents to let her return to Canada, where she lived with her grandmother, to find out where their relationship would go.

"I got on a plane at 16, and we're still together 15 years later," she says.

Their love of cooking convinced them to attend the Niagara College culinary program together, likely one of the best decisions they've ever made, she says. "Niagara College is a very one-on-one experience. You know your professor, you work with local venders and go to markets, you learn about wine and beer and work with very seasoned producers."

Watt got to know Josh during those years, when the Niagara College student worked at Zest, Watt's restaurant in Fonthill at that time. He found Josh to be a dedicated, hard-working young man with a strong work ethic, and passionate about cooking — one of the most motivated people he's ever met in the kitchen.

"I really admired him, and we became friends," he says of Josh. "I've kept tabs on him, and he's done well." Erica, he adds, "is a tour de force. I admire them both."

It's good to see her doing so well in an industry that has traditionally been male-dominated, although that is changing, he says.

Josh came to think of his employer as a mentor, the best he could have had, and Erica got to know Watt as Josh's boss, although they became friends and peers in later years.

They graduated in 2011, and were married five years ago, after a time spent work-

ing in Vancouver. They returned to Toronto to be married, each taking executive chef positions in separate restaurants.

After their graduation from Niagara College, Josh was working in a kitchen when he had a devastating injury while cleaning an ice cream machine.

It's a machine that has a guard on it that has to be removed to properly clean it, explains Watt, who has another friend, Brian Morin, a chef who lost the tops of the same two fingers that Josh did, cleaning the same machine. "Josh didn't think he would be able to continue doing what he really wanted to do," says Watt, who connected him with Morin "to show him what can be done."

Watt says he was proud of Josh before the accident, but was even more proud to see how he fought back.

"You work with your hands all the time, gripping a knife, mixing ingredients, everything you do, you do with your hands." Josh proved his strength, and has demonstrated "if you really want to do something, you can do it."

Josh says after the accident, "I thought about not working in a kitchen again, for about a week. Then I realized I couldn't see myself doing anything else."

Learning how to use his hands differently was a struggle at first, but he has adapted to the point where it's become second nature now. "My knife skills are the same as before, if not better," he says.

He credits Watt as his mentor for letting him learn his skills in his early years at Zest.

"A lot of chefs have an ego, and don't let you develop your creativity. He would send me to the market, let me choose some ingredients, and create a special. That's very rare. At a lot of restaurants you're expected to do the job the chef tells you to do, and nothing more."

During the pandemic, Watt has taken on his own



David Watt is working on a cookbook with recipes from local chefs, a project started during the pandemic to keep him busy. (Mike McColl)



Josh and Erica Karbelnik (Photo supplied)

project, one that to some extent involves the Karbelniks, and gave them a chance to work together again.

While it's not yet completed, Watt is working on a cookbook that includes recipes from local chefs, most paired with local wine or beer. "I started it in the middle of COVID, on the days the restaurant was closed. I needed something to do," he says.

Chefs were asked to share recipes that could be completed by at-home chefs.

And being chefs, most of whom are "very philanthropic," he says, they have shared about 40 recipes, which he is in the process of testing.

One of his own contributions is his mother's

100-year-old Christmas cake, a recipe that came from his grandfather, and is a tradition in their family.

Erica and Josh have chosen to share a bourbon and peach pavlova because of their love of Niagara peaches, she says.

It isn't intended as a coffee-table book, but rather one with "recipes that will connect home-chefs with their loved ones," says Watt. His friend and professional photographer Mike McColl, skilled at food photos, is providing the pictures for the cookbook.

Proceeds once it is printed and available to purchase will go to local mental health initiatives.



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EDITORIAL

Thanks to all those working in public places, and keeping us safe

If you look at Niagara Region statistics, it would seem that COVID numbers are coming down. That is great news.

But does anyone believe it?

With the lack of testing, and scientists telling us new cases in Ontario could be more than 100,000 a day, it's difficult to know what to believe. The province and local health units have turned to wastewater testing for a better idea of how many cases are out there, and that testing seemed to show a peak early in April, and then a bit of a plateau. We were warned, however, that after the holiday weekend, we could expect that to change. In the last two

years, every holiday we've had was followed by a spike in cases.

Anecdotal evidence seems to indicate we're surrounded by people with COVID, more so than at any other time in the last two years. At least that's how it feels in conversations with friends and acquaintances. It may not be scientific, but it may also be a better indication of what's really happening in society than the reported cases.

There are outbreaks in health care facilities and long-term care, anyone with kids at school has a pretty good idea of what is going on there — it's not a pretty picture — and we also hear of many employers desper-

ate for staff, from the local coffee shops to manufacturing jobs, because so many are out sick, quarantining because a family member is sick, or staying home to look after sick kids.

Some school boards are trying to bring back mask mandates in their schools, and healthcare officials in Ontario are pleading with the province to extend its high-risk setting mask mandate, which is supposed to come to an end next week.

Has anyone noticed the number of employees in essential services such as grocery stores and pharmacies, in coffee shops and restaurants, still wearing masks? From a very infor-

mal survey, it seems some employers are asking their employees to wear masks, to protect themselves from getting sick as well as customers. And some are just choosing to wear them.

It's the same with customers — you see a mix of masked and maskless, and it seems nobody is really paying attention. But some of us are. To those of you who continue to wear masks to safeguard others, thank you.

It is such a contradiction that the province and our regional public health departments are choosing not to mandate mask-wearing, but advising us to wear them all the same. We know what that means — those who have been good about

following rules all along will do what they're asked, and those who have no use for government mandates will laugh at the request.

It is time again — actually it's time every single day — to say thank you to all those who are going to work at public-facing jobs, many of them exhausted, to look after our various wants and needs. It's not just health care workers any more, although they are still our heroes. It's every single person, doctors and nurses of course, teachers, grocery store and pharmacy employees, even parcel delivery people — all those who keep services open and our lives running smoothly, while risking their health,

and the health of their family members, every time they go to work.

If wearing a mask isn't your thing, if you don't think you need one because you're young, you're not at risk, maybe because you've already had COVID and aren't worried about getting it again, maybe, just maybe you could think about helping to keep other people safe, and their families healthy, if for no other reason than they are helping us by doing their jobs.

You're tired of hearing it, we're tired of saying it. But the truth is, we're not there yet. Close, but not close enough.

Penny Coles
The Local

Why did the green frog cross the road?

To get to the other side



Owen Bjorgan
Special to The Local

Now that I've reused and recycled the world's simplest joke, I want to take your eyes from this newspaper to the road.

Without doubt, your

eyes should always be on the road while driving, for your safety and those around you. If we think outside of the human box for a moment, who else might you be trying to protect? It takes little effort, and a bit of a conscientious tweak.

I want to focus our attention on our local reptile and amphibian species. The Niagara Peninsula is blessed with some seri-

ous species richness in the cold-blooded world. This species count can also be referred to as alpha diversity. All in all, there are likely still a whopping 20 species present in the municipality of NOTL alone. The number is considerably higher if we count the whole of Niagara Region, as most of NOTL's natural features have been and continue to be removed.

April and May are

hands-down the ultimate migration window for our scaly and amphibious friends. Are they migrating to simply enjoy the sun rays somewhere else? Not quite — they are in an evolutionary trance, hellbent

on finding the ideal breeding habitat, reproductive mate, and a safe spot to lay their eggs.

There is a remarkable and consistent order of appearances to count on every year. In late March and

early April, blue- and yellow-spotted salamanders will walk over patches of ice and roadside snirt (a fabricated word where snow and dirt have amassed to-

Continued on page 7



A green frog sits unassumingly on a rural roadside in the spring of 2021. This photo shows the whitish, triangular body form that your vehicle headlights can pick up on. (Owen Bjorgan)

View from the couch

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

About Time (Prime 2013) is a charming fantasy that centres on a young man whose ability to travel in time allows him to al-

ter events with the hope he can create a better life. The characters are loveable, the locations beautiful, there is an important lesson to be learned and viewers will be quickly engaged.

Donald Combe is a re-

tired 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

The Trusted Voice of Our Community

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Local LETTERS

Why isn't public health instituting mask mandate?

Re: Hirji disappointed in lack of mask mandate (NOTL Local, April 13).

I, too, was disappointed that the government has once again failed us, waiting for numbers to skyrocket before taking any action. Doctors seem to agree that masking is one very simple, effective way

to curb the spread of the virus.

Why then, I ask myself, does Dr. Hirji feel disappointed, believing masking would be effective, and yet fails to act?

Of course, it would be more effective if the mask mandate were province-wide but if each re-

gional medical officer of health had the courage to institute a mask mandate for their region, we might have more protection for Ontarians making our way through this pandemic.

Donna Lynne Fraser
Queenston

Local LETTERS

Only experts are migrant workers themselves

When it comes to problems with temporary foreign worker programs, the only experts are the migrant workers themselves. This is also true when it comes to discussing and implementing solutions.

On housing solutions: Migrant farmworkers continue to demand enforceable national housing standards from the federal government, rather than relying on the patchwork system of regional health departments. This has been a key demand for over five years, and local farmworkers made this demand public in 2019 after the Pioneer Flower Farms fire. The demand for national standards is also

supported by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture.

On overall solutions: Migrant farm workers, both seasonal and those on longer contracts, are united with other migrant workers across the country, including migrant care workers and international students, as well as with refugees and undocumented workers to call on Trudeau's government for full and permanent resident status for all as the only solution.

Eighty per cent of Canadians support permanent resident status for migrants (Nanos Research, 2021).

Not all migrants want to live in Canada, but all want

to live with freedom and dignity. That includes the ability to speak up for their rights, and access health-care without threats of being deported or blacklisted from the program. Not all migrants want to live in Canada, but all want to be together with their families and hug their children after a long day's work.

Permanent status for all means freedom, dignity, and family unity. Migrants have the solutions, and as citizens it's our responsibility to amplify them and push the federal government for implementation.

Kit Andres
Migrant Workers
Alliance for Change

It only takes a little effort

Continued from page 6

gether on the roadsides at the end of winter). Joining them as some of the first road-crossing warriors are wood frogs, followed by little spring peeper tree frogs and western and chorus frogs.

Come the back half of April, the aforementioned species are nearly done their pilgrimage. A new suite of animals continues the tradition though, which is evidence of how these separate species have fallen into their own non-competitive time slot to take advantage of spring breeding conditions. We're talking about leopard frogs, green frogs, and American toads. American toads just started calling about a week ago.

Late April into May, all of these amphibians are just about wrapping up their annual breeding tradition. Grey tree frogs and green frogs will be the last roadsters in the amphibian category, and with the arrival of early May's longer days and more intense ultraviolet rays, we see turtles and snakes.

Unlike their amphibian pals, turtles and snakes have dry skin, so they don't need to wait for rain to make the dangerous trek across the bitumen. In fact, they will move when the sun is out, or when the road is hot. They will soon

be seen crossing during dazzling May days, or, at night when the temperature drops but the roads are warmed up for basking behaviour. Painted turtles and snapping turtles are likely the only species you'll ever see in NOTL, and as for snakes, most will be eastern garter or Dekay's brown snakes.

Perhaps you're asking: how can I be a good ecological samaritan while driving this spring?

When it is rainy and warm, look out for those amphibians. They will appear as little "pimples" on the road. These slight bumps on the road usually have a triangular stance or shape when we see them from their sides, and at night, they reflect a light glowing white off of your vehicle's headlights due to their moist bodies.

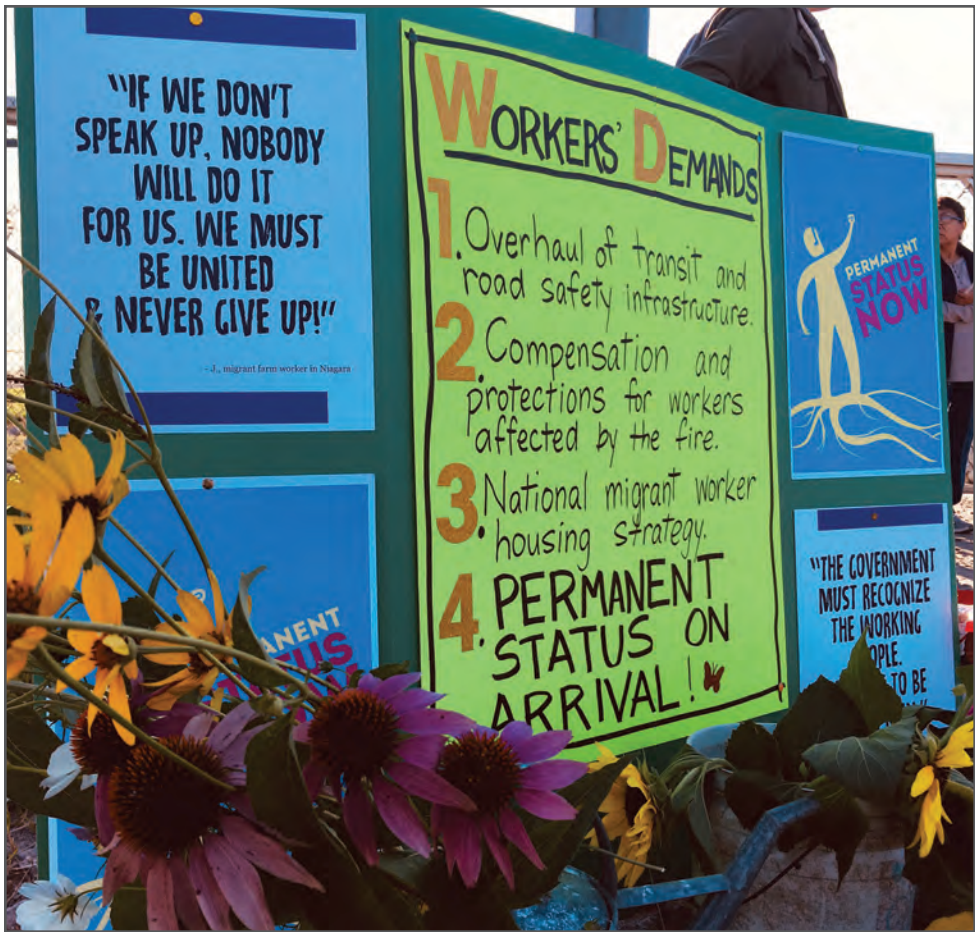
On the sunnier and slightly drier latter half of spring, reptiles are a little easier to spot due to their size and shape, yet hundreds are victims of road mortality every year in NOTL and elsewhere in Ontario. Look for their opaque, black silhouettes from afar before they disappear under your vehicle.

At this time of year, there thankfully isn't a lot of leaf litter blowing around on the roads, which gives us a chance to do the right thing and slow down a notch, and observe.


Am I asking you to swerve violently out of the way and drive hunched over your steering wheel for the next few weeks? Absolutely not. However, just maybe after reading this article, you can add a new gear to your vehicle while driving — the careful observation gear.

If we all took this little bit of effort, it would statistically save countless organisms every year from death, and it would make NOTL a little bit more safe and successful for all living things.

Regarding last week's article on the best biking areas in NOTL: A reader who is a member of the Bruce Trail Conservancy has contacted me to point out that mountain biking, or biking of any kind, is not permitted on the Bruce Trail, as it is strictly designed to be a footpath for hikers. The reader also wanted to emphasize that much of the Bruce Trail runs through private property sections where we must practise these rules in order to respect the land owners who have generously allowed such trail access. The Bruce Trail Conservancy is composed of many volunteers who passionately and diligently maintain the quality of the Bruce Trail, to be enjoyed by all hikers while preserving the surrounding ecosystems.



This photo shows migrant workers' calls to action, during the August 2019 vigil for Zenaida, a Mexican woman who was killed by a pick-up truck in a hit-and-run near the corner of Concession 7 and Line 6. (Kit Andres)



Letters! We want letters!

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





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Cleanup scheduled for Niagara-on-the-Green

Penny Coles
The Local

A cleanup through the Niagara-on-the-Green neighbourhood is planned for this Saturday, with help from residents, Niagara College students and student services, Lord Mayor Betty Disero and some town councillors.

Niagara-on-the-Lake Rotary Club members have also offered to help

The cleanup was intended to be an annual event, organized by Lianne Gagnon, Niagara College

director of student services, and resident Steve Hardaker, and was held a few times pre-pandemic but cancelled for the last two years.

“Neighbours were worried about picking up garbage, so we decided not to do it out of respect for them,” says Gagnon.

As a member of the Glendale Task Force representing Niagara College, which dealt in part with issues related to college students renting housing in the neighbourhood, Gagnon said originally

the cleanup was an opportunity for the college “to demonstrate we’re good community members. We did it at the Welland campus as well,” she said.

The town’s task force was looking at residents’ concerns in the area, such as parking problems, noise from students renting houses, and issues with long-term rentals and absentee landlords. But the task force hasn’t met for some time, says Gagnon, and she hasn’t been able to determine if it has been disbanded, has just cho-

sen not to meet during the pandemic, or if the problems have for the most part been resolved — she’s hoping that’s the case.

“We have a neighbourhood Facebook page, and we’ve heard nothing about the task force or about student issues for a long time. As far as I’m concerned, we’re just building a good community here,” said Gagnon, who is also a Niagara-on-the-Green resident.

Hardaker, who also sits on the task force, said, “it last met in March 2020,

just before the COVID-19 pandemic shut all committees down. Shortly afterwards, Coun. Stuart McCormack, who was the chair, resigned his council seat. That left the committee with two vacancies, the other being a resident rep. The town has not acted in filling those two positions. My understanding is that the town is rationalizing all the committees of council.”

Being able to again hold the cleanup is a positive step for the neighbourhood, Gagnon said.

“We’re just really excited to have students and community members get together to get this done.”

Most of the garbage to be picked up has been blown out of recycling boxes by the wind, not from residents or students littering and polluting,

she added, suggesting the trend toward putting recycling materials out in clear plastic bags is a good one.

The town is donating garbage bags and gloves for Saturday’s cleanup, and is looking after the garbage pickup, she said.

After the two-year pause, Gagnon says she feels really good about “the momentum we’ve got going,” and is looking forward to seeing who comes out to help.

“The cleanup is a day after Earth Day, and it seems a really opportune time to be good stewards of the land, by cleaning up our own backyard.”

The Niagara-on-the-Green cleanup is this Saturday, April 23, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., to be rescheduled in the case of bad weather, said Gagnon.

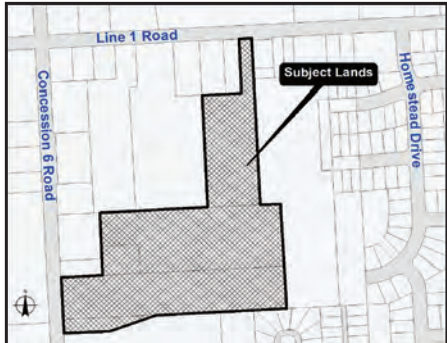


NOTICE OF INTENTION TO PASS AMENDING ZONING BY-LAW TO REMOVE HOLDING (H) SYMBOL

What: Notice of Intention to Pass an Amending Zoning By-law to Remove Holding (H) Symbol (under Section 36 of the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990 as amended).

Regarding: File No: ZBA-03-2022
Line 1 Road & Concession 6 Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake
Konik Estates (Phase 1) Draft Plan of Subdivision

What is this?



The Zoning By-law amendment application proposes to remove the Holding (H) symbol that applies to the subject lands through site specific Zoning By-law 4316DU-20.

The Holding (H) symbol requires environmental matters for the residential use of the land to be addressed to the satisfaction of the Niagara Region. Upon removal of the Holding (H) symbol, the subject lands may be developed for a draft approved residential plan of subdivision.

The Council for the Town of Niagara-on-the Lake may pass the proposed Zoning By-law Amendment to remove the Holding (H) symbol from the subject lands no earlier than the **April 25, 2022** Council meeting. However, Council may consider the proposed Zoning By-law Amendment at a later meeting.

Under Section 36(3) of the *Planning Act*, only the applicant has appeal rights with respect to the removal of a Holding (H) symbol. There are no third-party rights to appeal the proposed Zoning By-law Amendment.

As permitted under Provincial legislation and the Town’s Procedural By-law, Council and Committee meetings are being conducted with electronic participation since in-person meetings are cancelled at this time due to COVID-19.

If you wish to participate and make an oral presentation or ask questions at the Electronic Council meeting, you must register in advance with Ralph Walton, Town Clerk (ralph.walton@notl.com or 905-468-3266 ext. 228). On the date of the meeting, you will receive an email with instructions to connect to the meeting on your computer, tablet or telephone.

If you wish to view the Council meeting for information purposes, registration is not required. The meeting will be available for viewing at the following link: <https://livestream.com/notl>

For more information:

Please contact Scott Turnbull, Development Coordinator, at **905-468-3266 ext. 322** or via email at scott.turnbull@notl.com if you require additional information.

A copy of the application and supporting documents for the proposal may be obtained on the Town’s web-site, www.notl.org/content/public-notice-under-planning-act or at the Community and Development Services Department within Town Hall (1593 Four Mile Creek Road, Virgil, ON).

Dated at the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, April 20, 2022
Ralph Walton - Town Clerk



Lianne Gagnon, one of the organizers of this Saturday’s cleanup in Niagara-on-the-Green, is looking forward to seeing the community working together on something positive for their neighbourhood. (Penny Coles)

Open mic Sundays back at legion hall

Mike Balsom
The Local

After a pandemic-forced two-year break, Open Mic Sundays are back at Niagara-on-the-Lake's Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124 this weekend.

Organizer Randy Busbridge is excited to once again welcome people for what became a very popular event over the six months it ran from October, 2019 to March, 2020.

"Right from the get-go, it was great," Busbridge says. "I think we had 30 people the first time. Word got out and it got a little bit

bigger. The last time we ran it we had about 45 to 50 people. They were all buying drinks, and the legion made some money."

The retired Toronto computer consultant conceived of the idea to host the Open Mic sessions after speaking to a friend who ran a similar event in Uxbridge. Told how it populated that area's Branch 170 on a traditionally slow day, Busbridge convinced the local executive to give it a shot.

Known by his nickname, Buzz Hummer, Randy hosts the sessions and plays a few songs him-

self. He supplies his public address system and microphones, while participants bring their own guitars, ukuleles, harmonicas or mandolins and sign up for a slot that usually runs about 15 minutes, or three songs long.

In the past, the repertoire has included traditional Irish folk songs, singer-songwriter fare and some acoustic classic rock. One person stepped up to recite his poetry, while local resident Holmes Hooke did a spoken word performance complete with his homemade jingle stick.

Some, such as Peller Es-

tates employee Sal Fasullo, will take a crack at introducing the crowd to their own compositions, though the afternoon usually consists of cover versions of well-known songs. Renditions of numbers by Janis Joplin, Joan Osborne, Bob Dylan, The Tragically Hip and Johnny Cash populated the last session before COVID shut everything down.

Busbridge, a veteran of a number of different Open Mic sessions across Niagara, says there's something unique about Sundays at the NOTL legion hall.

"Typically the audience at an Open Mic is 100 per

cent participants," he tells The Local. "They show up, maybe buy one drink, do their number then leave. What was really cool about ours is that people would stay for the whole show. About half the audience were participants, the other half were there to just listen. And of course there were some legion members as well."

Some seasoned veterans of the music industry performed on at least one of the local Sundays. Steve Goldberger of the Old Winos and the Niagara Rhythm Section, and former Mashmakan and Lisa

Hartt Band member Rayburn Blake, both NOTL residents, backed up a few of the participants at that last pre-pandemic session.

"It was drawing that calibre of musician, and I hope they come back," Busbridge laughs. "There were two or three others coming from further afield, too. It's not all just industry professionals, but overall the quality of music was really, really good."

The success of any Open Mic session relies on those unseasoned singers and musicians feeling

Continued on page 12



Randy Busbridge and Scott Harris, who plays in the Celtic Band Barley Brae, with a local performer. (Photos by Lorraine Busbridge)



Julie Van Horne, Steve Goldberger and Rayburn Blake have been regulars at the legion sessions, and played at the last one before the COVID shutdown.



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Bingo a fun night for a good cause

Penny Coles
The Local

The Irish Harp is planning another of its popular events to raise money for Red Roof Retreat.

With COVID restrictions lifted and restaurants operating at capacity, Jovie Joki, owner of The Irish

Harp Pub, is continuing to organize fundraisers for Red Roof and the children, young adults and families it supports. It's a cause the local pub has supported from its earliest days.

Joki is now back to offering Bingo nights, with the help of Ward Simpson, who offers his expertise as

a bingo caller developed during about four decades of manning the Virgil Stampede bingo tent.

As the chair of the board of RRR, Simpson helps out wherever he can, whether it's selling 50-50 draw tickets at the restaurant or enjoying a pint of Guinness from behind the bingo machine, to raise funds for the respite and recreational programs for those with special needs and their families, in the Niagara region.

Steffanie Bjorgan, executive director of Red Roof Retreat, says there is usually a full house on bingo night. "We always have fun," she says, attending with friends and Red Roof supporters, "but there is a mix of people in the crowd."

Bingo enthusiasts come from around the region, and many of them don't know about the work of Red Roof. The evening helps to spread awareness, and even draw supporters and volunteers, says Bjorgan.

"You start watching the tables, and you see how much fun everyone is having. Ward is having a good time, calling out numbers and making his dry little jokes, and it's a good time for everybody."

Simpson also uses some

of the time between games to talk about Red Roof, she says, "and of course he becomes emotional, and you can hear his voice cracking. He can't talk about Red Roof without his voice cracking."

In addition to matching a fundraising portion of past 50-50 draws to increase donations for Red Roof, Joki also contributes to the total raised at bingo nights.

The association with the organization goes back to Trevor Smyth, she says,

who opened the pub, and became close friends with Simpson, sharing a love of all things Irish. Smyth passed away in 2013, and Joki has continued the restaurant's support for the local charity.

It takes a special talent to call bingo, especially with a crowd of seasoned veteran players.

Joki says it's Simpson's charm that makes him the perfect person to operate the bingo machine.

He has fun with it, and enjoys back-and-forth

chatter with the players.

People will shout out, asking him to slow down, others yell for him to speed up — typically those with the most cards want him to call faster, he says.

Prizes range from \$50 a game to the \$500 top prize for the final game of the evening, usually with the restaurant fully booked — reservations are required — raising about \$1,000 for Red Roof, with The Irish Harp topping it up.

The next bingo evening at The Irish Harp is May 11.



Ward Simpson is ready to start calling a bingo game at The Irish Harp, raising money for Red Roof Retreat. (Penny Coles)



At The Irish Harp for a bingo night are, from left, Sandy Beatty, Moe Bjorgan, Kelly and Heather Davis, Shari Hartwick and Steffanie Bjorgan.



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VIRTUAL INFORMATION SESSION - COYOTES

A Virtual Information Session is being held about coyotes in Niagara-on-the-Lake on **Wednesday, April 27, at 6:00 p.m.**

This will be held online via Livestream and recorded for those unable to attend. Registration is not required. Watch the Virtual Information Session at livestream.com/notl.

A presentation will be provided by Coyote Watch Canada, and a panel of community partners will be in attendance to assist with answering questions following the presentation.

Questions can be submitted in advance or during the session via the following methods:

- **Email:** communications@notl.com
- **Social Media:** Facebook (@Town.of.NOTL), Twitter (@Town_of_NOTL), Instagram (@niagara.on.the.lake)
- **Phone (Call or Text):** 905-380-0056

For more information, please visit notl.com/coyotes.

Walk rural portion of Heritage Trail on Earth Day

Penny Coles
The Local

In 2017, when the restoration of what was then called the Upper Canada Heritage Trail was first discussed as a 150th legacy project, Stefanie Bjorgan was quick to get involved.

At that time volunteer Tony Chisholm, now vice-chair of the project, led a group hike along the trail to view it and discuss efforts to rehabilitate it and enhance public awareness of the beauty of the trail.

Although Bjorgan stepped away from the town committee for a time, she has followed its progress, and has rejoined, anxious to see it completed.

Five years later, much work has been done, both on rehabilitation and the public awareness component, and Chisholm is ready to kick off the next phase of trail restoration, with an Earth Day celebration to mark the occasion.

The Heritage Trail restoration continues along the old railway bed from East and West Line, heading south and ending at York Road near the villages of Queenston and St. Davids, says Chisholm. Phase two is the sec-

tion along Concession 1 from East and West Line to Line 3. The trail's accessibility and prominence has been compromised by years of disrepair, overgrowth of foliage and erosion. The town is committed to the restoration project to support trail improvements, enhancements, and infrastructure repair.

The committee plans to bring the Heritage Trail back to a state that will support eco-tourism, walking, cycling, and community engagement, says Chisholm. "The plan is to reconnect the trail as a side trail to the Bruce Trail, at the same time connecting three different communities in Niagara-on-the-Lake." With the first phase successfully completed to East and West Line, the Heritage Trail committee is beginning to fundraise for the next section south.

The cost of creating a proper trail through this section of phase two is about \$160,000 or \$100 per metre. The committee is hoping for donations of \$100 (or more) to cover the cost of restoring one metre (or more) of this trail during phase two.

Bjorgan has offered to host a free barbecue luncheon and information ses-

sion at her Concession 1 home, with the Heritage Trail on the other side of the road. It's a very different trail than the portion of it that begins in the Old Town, she says.

"I'm hoping the barbecue will get people here to see the other part of the trail, in a rural area instead of the Old Town."

There are some concerns about what is needed to restore it, and residents can come for the barbecue, take a walk along a bit of the trail, have a look at it and ask questions, she says.

"Earth Day is a great time to connect with people, after two years of a pandemic and little opportunity for fundraising," she adds. "Coming out for a simple barbecue may renew interest in the trail, and get people to see it beyond the Old Town, enjoy nature and avoid negativity on a beautiful day."

There is no charge for the lunch, but donations are welcome, and hopefully it will be a good day to get outside, with no rain or snow, she says.

The barbecue and information station are at 404 Concession 1, where it ends at Line 9. The time is 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.



Axl is excited to hand parks and recreation manager Kevin Turcotte a cheque for \$100 to help with the restoration of the Heritage Trail. (Photo supplied)

NOTL Hort Society returns with plant sale

Penny Coles
The Local

You've been planning great things for your garden during our many lockdowns (between binges of Netflix movies and the Food Channel), says Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society member Cindy Grant.

"So now is your chance to swing into action and get

started on making your perfect garden for 2022."

It has been three years since the NOTL Hort Society has been able to have a garden sale, and 2022 has been declared the Year of the Garden, says Grant, so plan to join members on Saturday, May 14 (rain or shine) for what used to be an annual plant sale.

There will be annuals,

ferns, tomatoes and herbs from local growers. The perennials will be from members' own gardens, and there are always some specialty items.

And bring your favourite pruner or shovel to be sharpened at the same time.

The sale is cash only, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Meridian Credit Union Arena, 1565 Four Mile Creek Road, in Virgil.



NOTL Hort Society returns with plant sale. (Photo supplied)

Wheeler leaves music legacy

Continued from page 4

another visitor to that Niagara-on-the-Lake studio. The country singer met Wheeler when she visited Castle Studios to record her version of Patsy Cline's *Crazy*.

Wheeler closed Castle Studios in 1996 and moved back to St. Catharines. Meanwhile, Klassen-Chaing's marriage to her first husband broke up, and in 2006 she placed second in a contest called St. Catharines Idol. That prompted her to search out Wheeler again for another musical collaboration.

"I looked him up and found him," she says. "I said 'do you remember me?,' and I started going to jams. Soon we were together, and here we are 14 years later."

Cadeau says Klassen-Chaing was almost a female version of his cousin.

"She's a little more regimented, a little more serious than Paul," Cadeau says, "but they shared a heart. Their hearts are in the same place."

The couple lived near downtown Niagara Falls. True to Paul's love of family, his older sister Kathy, who has lived with Paul off and on for more than 30 years, was the third member of the household, along with various cats.

In 2013, Wheeler had a health scare, when an infection in his tooth turned septic and he ended up in a coma for a few days. He recovered from

that incident, only to lose his brother and musical soulmate Jon about a year later.

The career musician continued to gig as many nights a week as possible before the pandemic shut down live entertainment. He supplemented his income in recent years driving for 5-0 Taxi.

His most recent projects included a Rolling Stones cover band called Painted Black, a tribute to AC/DC's early Bon Scott era called Squeeler, and the classic rock group The Rockets, featuring fellow veterans of the Southern Ontario circuit. The Rockets played the NOTL Legion and Clare's Harley Davidson Thursday Bike Nights frequently before the pandemic hit.

As well, during the pandemic, he helped Niagara Falls woman Christie Hails get her

Niagara Falls performance and recording studio, The Upper Space, up and running.

Wheeler leaves behind his wife Lisa, his step-daughters Melodie and Erica and grandson Odin, as well as his mother Nora and sisters Kathy and Deborah.

But beyond that, he leaves a life-long influence on the music scene in Niagara and beyond.

A celebration of Paul's life will be held on Sunday, May 1 from 3 until 9 p.m. at the Niagara Falls Hose Brigade on Dunn Street. Organized by Wheeler's long-time friend and bandmate Rick McLean, the event will fittingly feature live music performances and a chance for musicians to jam in Wheeler's honour.

You can bet that many stories and songs will be shared that day.



Paul and his brother Jon were musical mentors to many in Niagara. (Photo from Facebook, with permission from Lisa Klassen-Chaing.)

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Lisiecki recital for Bravo Niagara! part of four-month tour

Mike Balsom
The Local

Four-plus months, 12 countries and more than 30 cities. That's what's on the agenda for 27-year-old classical pianist Jan Lisiecki between now and September.

Mark down a Bravo Niagara! Festival performance on April 26 as an early part of that itinerary.

Lisiecki's Tuesday solo piano recital at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre in downtown St. Catharines follows his three-night engagement at Toronto's Roy Thomson Hall, where he will be accompanied by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

Just three days later, he'll leave for Switzerland for the first leg of his tour. He'll stop in Germany, France, Italy and Spain before heading to Seoul, South Korea for a single show, then it's back to Germany before winding up in Brazil for three straight nights at the beautiful Sala São Paulo Concert Hall.

After a brief respite, Lisiecki returns to North America on July 7 for three performances of Beethoven's Piano Concertos at Boulder's Colorado Music Festival. Another rest, then it's back to Europe for the second leg of his tour, taking in Germany, Monaco, Italy, Poland and Switzerland once again.

Though it looks like an exhausting schedule for the faint of heart, the one-time child prodigy is eagerly looking forward to the experience.

"It is very busy, and there is a lot going on," he says on the phone from his Calgary home. "It's wonderful to be back into a full schedule where we don't only have certain countries presenting concerts, as we've had during the pandemic. And we can actually play in Canada now, which is very important."

Lisiecki has been wow-ing audiences everywhere since his first concert recital at nine years old. At only 13 he performed at New York City's prestigious Carnegie Hall, and was invited to the 2008 Chopin Festival in Warsaw, Poland to perform with Sinfonia Varsovia and Howard Shelley.

A year later he was featured on CBC's *The National* in a segment entitled *The Reluctant Prodigy*, during which Pinchas Zukerman, music director of the National Arts Centre Orchestra, insisted that talent of Jan's magnitude happens only two or three generations apart. Lisiecki signed a recording contract with Deutsche Grammo-

phon the following year, at just 15 years old.

That 2008 Chopin Festival performance seems to have left a lasting impression on Lisiecki. Four of the 10 albums in his discography feature the Polish composer's works exclusively. And his most recent release is a Juno-nominated collection of all 21 of Chopin's Nocturnes. His local appearance will be a solo performance of those pieces.

"It's an easy association," Lisiecki says of his relationship to Chopin. "Because of my own Polish roots I feel an affinity to Chopin. My appreciation of his music comes from a place as a musician, but more specifically as a pianist. He was able to write in a way that used the capabilities of the instrument to its fullest extent."

Like Lisiecki, Chopin was also a child prodigy, having begun to compose some of his earlier works before his 20th birthday. He moved to France, where he formed a friendship with Franz Liszt and captured the attention and admiration of contemporaries such as Robert Schumann.

Chopin was known for writing all of his compositions on and for the piano. His Nocturnes, written throughout the composer's lifetime, are often described as intimate and personal pieces of music. Because of that, they can be challenging to play to a concert hall audience.

"It's music that should be played from the heart and the soul," Lisiecki tells *The Local*. "But at the same time, you have to share those emotions, those private thoughts, with a large audience. It's very easy to close yourself off in a bubble. But you have to have an interaction with an audience. If they can't associate themselves with the music then it doesn't bring an understanding."

At 27 already a veteran of the classical circuit, Lisiecki points to his Canada Day 2011 Parliament Hill performance to an audience of over 100,000 as the true highlight of his career. That's mainly due to one special audience member.

"Meeting the Queen (Elizabeth II) was a great privilege," he recalls. "It's something I will remember for the rest of my life. It's more important than any of the other things I have ever done in my life. And I got to represent classical music to the whole country, too."

Lisiecki has supported a number of charities over the years, including Polish

Humanitarian Action and both the Make-A-Wish and David Foster Foundations. But the nearest to his heart is UNICEF, for whom he became an ambassador to Canada in 2012.

"I have seen their work in action in different places," he says. "It's something that is easy to get behind universally. It is so basic and essential that children should have access to the basic necessities of life, including education, things we take for granted in Canada. Children are the future."

A recent New York Times article referred to Lisiecki as "Piano's Doo-gie Howser." He laughs at the comparison to the TV program about a child doctor that went off the air two years before the first-generation Canadian was born.

"I think we as humans strive to put labels on things," says Lisiecki. "Words often fail us, where music doesn't. I've been playing concerts for well over a decade. Certainly when I was a pre-teen the label of child prodigy was accurately applied. I tried to stay away from it, but at times I had to explain it. I understand why it takes place."

As CBC's Joe Schlessinger stated in *The Reluctant Prodigy*, unlike most others who show such talent at a young age, neither of Lisiecki's Polish-born parents, Anita and Zbigniew, play an instrument or even sing. They will be accompanying him as part of his support team during his four-plus month sojourn.

"Because they aren't musical, I have been able to learn exactly who I want to be, what I want to do and how I want to do it. It doesn't come from a legacy, or preconceived notions. They were incredibly supportive, but they never pushed me to continue in music. They made sure I knew that I could have done anything else in life."

Pushed to expand on that last comment, Lisiecki recalls moments when he may have considered becoming a doctor, a pilot or a lawyer. But in 2022 he can't imagine doing anything other than playing music. And audiences around the world, including right here in Niagara next week, are the luckier for that decision.

Tickets for Jan Lisiecki's April 26 performance at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre's Robertson Hall are available at the Bravo Niagara! Festival website, bravoniagara.org.



Jan Lisiecki, now 27, signed a recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon at just 15 years old. (Christoph Kostlin)

Open Mic regulars help out

Continued from page 9

comfortable stepping in front of an audience to perform. Busbridge has seen a few aspiring performers a bit hesitant to take the spotlight. Having welcoming professionals on hand for encouragement and accompaniment can be a bonus.

"We don't have a house band per se," he says, "but Rayburn and Steve did jam along with some people that they knew. It's a very informal, flexible thing. I remember one time where someone wasn't sure if they wanted to commit themselves, then borrowed my guitar to get up to play and sing. I remember one lady telling me she wasn't really confident on the guitar, so I went up and backed her."

Busbridge calls himself a life-long guitar player who always wished he was a better singer. When he moved to Niagara about 10 years ago he joined a band called the Remnants. They played the local bar circuit until 2017, with a set list consisting of classic rock from the likes of The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin.

When the band members went their separate ways, Busbridge began to look for opportunities to play solo, and local Open Mic sessions became an important part of that transition. He will play a few songs at each session, sometimes throwing in one of his self-penned originals to gauge audience reaction.

It's clear he relishes the opportunity the Open Mic sessions give him to help out the local legion while also giving fellow musicians a chance to perform to receptive music lovers.

"The audience is very, very appreciative, very attentive," Busbridge concludes. "They're there to have fun and listen to music. It's a fun afternoon."

The first Open Mic session at the Royal Canadian Legion hall on King Street is this Sunday, April 24 from 2 to 5 p.m. Future sessions will continue on the last Sunday of every month, as long as they are successful. If you go with the intention of performing this Sunday, make sure you sign up on the sheet for your time slot.



Pre-pandemic, local resident Holmes Hooke offered a spoken word performance along with his home-made jingle stick. (Lorraine Busbridge)

Bunny trail, egg hunt an egg-cellent success



The Bunny Trail morning began cold and damp, but by the time the Kinsmen Easter Egg Hunt was about to start, the sun was shining on a perfect morning for the event. It was evident everyone was happy to be out — the parking lot at the community centre was overflowing by 9:30 a.m., and line-ups were beginning to form for the games. The bake table was packed with goodies, little ones were braving the egg race and enjoying the touch-a-tractor, and once the awaited egg hunt began, kids raced to find the chocolate treats. (Photos by Penny Coles)



Niagara Nursery School executive director Candice Penny introduced Eggs, the bunny mascot, to the Bunny Trail crowd. Eggs was named through a contest that was won by three-year-old Giacomo Kauzlaric (right), with his cousin Noah Filice. Giacomo won a gift basket from Simpson's Pharmacy for the winning name.





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Neighbourhood egg hunt



After a two-year absence, Tammy McCarthy and NOTL Station 5 (Glendale) firefighters were happy to offer the annual Niagara-on-the-Green neighbourhood egg hunt. Held in the Young Street park, Sparky was on-hand to entertain kids, and volunteer firefighters to talk about fire safety. Glendale district chief Cameron Degrow spoke of recent house fire tragedies, and explained that there is so much in a house today that burns very quickly, it is essential to have working smoke alarms to help get people out of a burning house quickly. McCarthy, Sparky, Degrow and Scott Maxwell, Station 5 lieutenant (right), were ready with prizes for those who find special eggs. And Sparky tries to get a smile from one-year-old Mahaz Jadgal (above) as kids wait for the egg hunt to start. (Photos by Penny Coles)

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Bunny Trail colouring contest winners



Candice Penny, executive director of the Niagara Nursery School, was on hand to present the young winners of the Bunny Trail's colouring contest with their prizes last week, along with the newly-named Eggs the Bunny. The NNS board chose Eggs from the submissions received, and presented a Simpson's Pharmacy gift basket to Gia-como Kauzlaric, three years old, for the winning choice. The colouring contest was sponsored by Niagara Nursery School, Phil's Independent, and Maple Leaf Fudge. At the Queen Street fudge store, Penny presented the prize for the five and under age group to Avery MaGee, with mom Carly MaGee. At Phil's Independent, Penny and store owner Phil Leboudec presented the prize for six to 10 year olds to Daisha Necakov-Waller. (Karen Skeoch)

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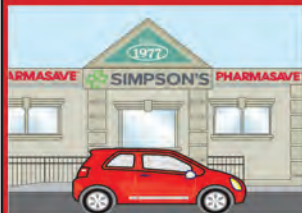
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Royal Oak students create Ukrainian Easter eggs

Penny Coles
The Local

Christyna Prokipchuk loves the tradition of Ukrainian Easter eggs. Called a pysanka, a decorated Ukrainian egg is created with writing in beeswax, rather than painting, Prokipchuk explained to students of Royal Oak Community School Wednesday, as they gathered to learn the tradition and create a Ukrainian Easter egg themselves, using

a pencil, hot wax and dye, while learning the history of the tradition. Although she was born in Canada, her father was born in Ukraine, as were her grandparents on both sides. Prokipchuk provided templates for the traditional designs, or symbols, which the students first drew on a raw egg, then used a wooden stylus and a wax puck to outline the designs with wax, heated over a candle flame. With teachers and par-

ent volunteers to help, the students followed the steps as shown, producing eggs that were soaked in dye, then heated in an oven to melt the wax. Prokipchuk explained that although the tradition began in the pre-Christian era, the symbolism has evolved throughout the centuries, and continues to be relevant to this day, each symbol considered a word in a story. She gestured to the students gathered at long tables

in Addison Hall at St. Mark's Church, describing their afternoon as "an authentic experience," similar to friends and family members gathered around a table creating eggs as they chat and exchange stories, around the world, and here in Niagara. And as history has evolved and the eggs continue to be made, she says, "they have a bigger, more universal meaning," especially today. "They represent things like community, protection,

and solidarity, evolving, aging, and always relevant," never more so than today, with the evident strength of Ukrainian people, and the global community that is supporting them. Flowers are a common symbol, she said, as are oak leaves — two she chose for the students — a rose, a symbol of beauty, on one side of the egg, and the oak leaf on the other, with an acorn a sign of rebirth and strength, especially appropriate for the

Royal Oak students. Grade 3 student Riley said after the eggs were completed he loved learning more about the art of Ukrainian Easter eggs and their culture, and celebrating the tradition, "even though there are difficult things happening in Ukraine right now." Ruby, a student in Grade 7, said she was "happy to be able to do something joyful to support people experiencing something so sad in Ukraine."



Grade 5/6 students, Marlo Higgins, Saxon Reese and Sophie Kamatovic work on their eggs. (Penny Coles)



Ukrainian parent and workshop organizer, Christyna Prokipchuk, with Grade 8 student Nathan Turner. (Penny Coles)



Henry Kedziora and Robert Murray showing off a finished pysanka by Henry. (Julia Murray)



Grade 1/2 teacher and resource teacher Lauren Dennis and Kelly Satran, with Grade 1/2 students, Henry Kedziora, Michael Kamatovic, and Robert Murray. (Penny Coles)



A completed Royal Oak egg, by Lev Prokipchuk, with acorns symbolizing strength and power — very fitting for Royal Oak and the resilience and strength of Ukrainian people. (Julia Murray)

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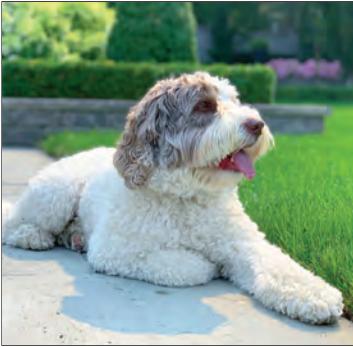
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Actual Kid-Friendly News

Kids

GAZETTE



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BUDDIES!

April 2022 Volume 2 • Issue 7

FIND THE SMILEY FACE HIDDEN ON THIS PAGE!

Contest Alert!

Using any art form, use your imagination to depict what summer in Niagara-on-the-Lake means to you. It can be anything from a poem about swimming in the lake at Queens Royal Park to a draw-

ing that shows you playing at the Virgil splash pad. The winner will be announced June 1 in the Gazette and will receive a gift certificate to the Old Town treat shop of their choosing. If you are new

to town and have not spent a summer here yet, depict what you are looking forward to most about spending summer here in NOTL! Send submissions to joyousnotlkids@gmail.com. Good luck!

Local News

If you went for a walk in one of the parks in NOTL last Saturday, April 16, you probably saw groups of people searching high and low (and under trees and rocks) for something. Saturday was the annual golden Easter egg hunt put on by Reynolds Regier Homes-

Royal LePage Niagara. Every year around Easter the dynamic realtor duo hides a golden egg at one of the NOTL parks, and the finder of this egg is the lucky recipient of \$500! This year Stacy Turner and her family found the golden egg at the Pumphouse in the late afternoon.



Mountainview LemonAID Day in support of FACS

Children helping Children go to camp.

On June 12, 2022 watch for a lemonade stand in your neighborhood and buy a cup to support the kids!



The Origin of Olympus

Short Story By:
Saxon Reese

Ok, so you've heard of the Greek gods, right? Zeus, Poseidon, Hades, Hera, Hestia, Demeter, and so on and so forth. But have you heard their origin? It all started a long time ago where time wasn't a thing and words weren't spoken and only chaos ruled, until the earth was born with mountains, oceans, and the sky, known as Uranus (yr-ah-nuhs), along with the moon, the stars, and the sun. Uranus and the Earth came together and had their children, the titans. But only then Uranus was afraid his children would overthrow him and take his throne. Then Uranus locked all his children in the depths of the earth. But his son Cronus, the lord of time, overthrew him and took his throne. He married his sister Rhea and gave

birth to two gods, Hades and Poseidon, and three goddesses, Hera, Hestia, and Demeter. But Cronus inherited the fear of being overthrown and instead of imprisoning his children, he ate them. But what Cronus didn't know was that Rhea was expecting a child and had secretly given birth to Zeus in Crete. Then instead of giving Zeus to Cronus Rhea gave him a rock

wrapped in swaddling clothes. When Zeus grew up he found his father and gave him a mixture of wine and mustard, which caused Cronus to throw up his children fully grown. When Zeus reunited with his older siblings they started and ended the clash of the titan war. Then Zeus became king of the gods, Poseidon king of the sea, and Hades king of the underworld.



Charity

Be on the lookout for the Mountain View lemonade stands popping up to support Family and Children Services - Niagara. ☺

SUBMISSION INFO

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

Interview with Katherine

- Q. What do you want to be when you grow up?**
A. I would like to own a car dealership. I've always been into cars. I've become friends with a bunch of "car guys" and that helped pique my interest. I also really like talking to people and selling things, it's something I'm really good at. I worked at Carelotta's during the summer and while I was handing out coupons this guy told me I could sell a piece of chewed-up gum to someone.
- Q. What do you do to help others?**
A. Anything I can do, I will. For Christmas every year my family donates to one of the less fortunate families in our area. We spend a few days shopping and bagging everything up, then we donate it all so kids can have toys for Christmas.
- Q. What is a fun family tradition you have at home?**
A. Every Mother's Day my aunt and my cousin come to town and go with my mom and I to Prince of Wales for their afternoon tea. Sometimes my older sister will come. It's so fun.

- Q. What's that certain something that makes you special?**
A. Definitely my singing. I've been singing since Grade 7 or 8. I started because I had a really bad lisp. I was in speech therapy for 10 years and nothing was helping. I was even being bullied for it. So, my mom did some research and found that singing sometimes helps, and she found a singing coach (Lisa) for me. After a while Lisa thought I was doing well enough to compete. My first competition was awful. I sang *Castle on a Cloud* from *Les Miserables* and the entire time I looked directly up at the ceiling. I've done quite a few competitions since then and I still get really nervous. One competition I sang the same line over about 10 times and, I don't know how, but I still won! I have provincials coming up, and am really excited about competing at that level.
- Q. How would you change the world if you could?**
A. If I could make the world better, I'd give people more opportunities, people who might not have the oppor-

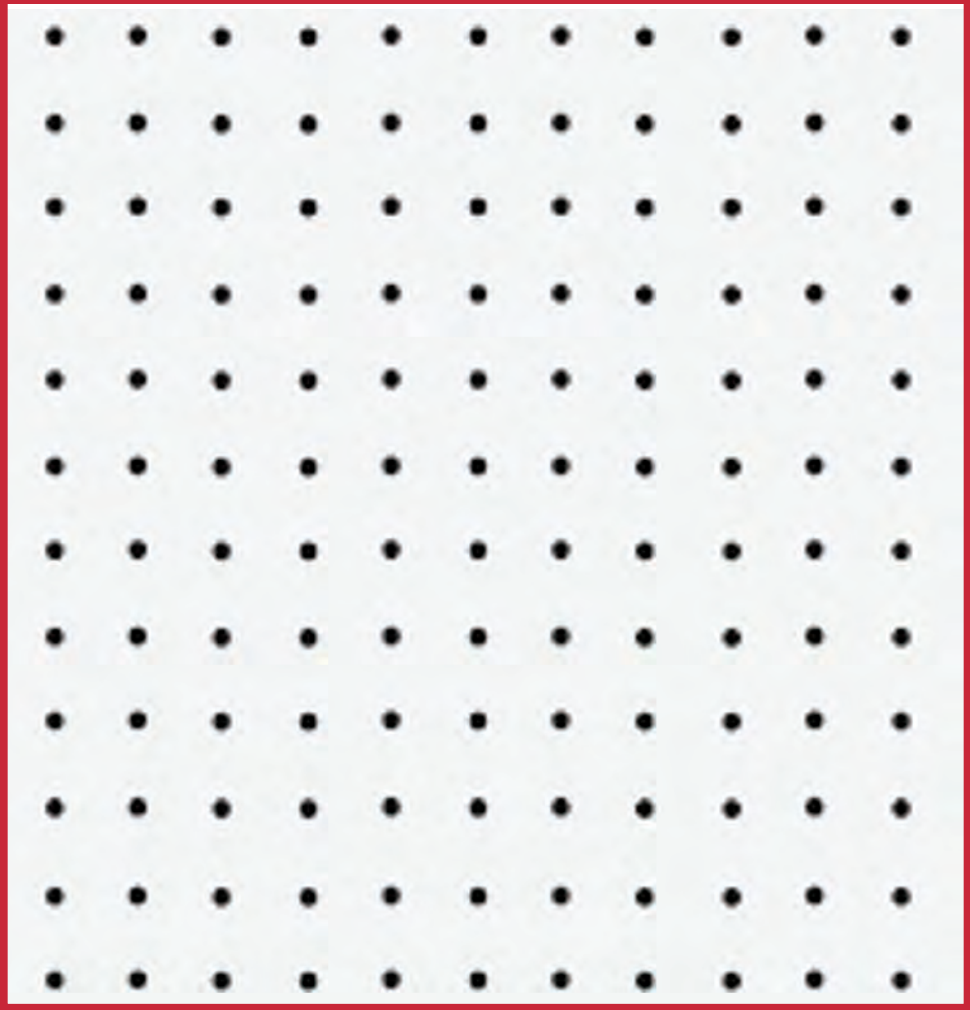
tunities that others do. I have a few friends who are struggling right now, especially with COVID hitting. I am given so many opportunities, and I really wish I could share that with them.

Q. What is your ideal day in Niagara-on-the-Lake?
A. A quick breakfast at Tims - lots of coffee! Depending on the time of year, I like to go to the lake for sunrise with my friends. Then we'd walk around all day and go swimming. We'd go to Stagecoach for lunch for some cheese fries. More walking around and maybe dinner at Sandtrap and we'd finish the day with a campfire.



Katherine Simpson, 17 senior at Holy Cross

Crossword: DOTS & BOXES



1. Each turn, draw a line horizontally or vertically between two dots.
2. The player that draws the 4th wall of a box wins it, earning you a point. When you close a box you must move again.
3. Lines are drawn until all squares are claimed. The player with the most claimed squares wins!

LocalSPORTS

Predators introduce next season's head coach

Mike Balsom
The Local

When the Niagara Predators begin their 2022-2023 Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League season they will have a new head coach on the bench.

Team owner Robert Turnbull, who at 72 years old filled the additional roles of head coach and general manager for a large portion of the schedule last year, has hired former Durham Roadrunners and Oshawa Riverkings head coach Kevin Taylor to take the helm.

"He's someone that I know I can trust implicitly," says Turnbull. "He's coaching for all the right reasons."

Taylor recalls that when Predators coach Andrew Whalen resigned from the team in late October, 2021, he spoke to Turnbull about potentially taking over the reins

for the remainder of the Predators maiden season at Niagara-on-the-Lake's Meridian Credit Union Arena.

"I've talked to Rob for years," Taylor says on the phone from the parking lot of the Bowmanville Home Depot. "He asked me if I was interested last year, and I wanted to take the job. But I run a business out of my house in Oshawa, and it was such a short notice. It wasn't the right time."

Turnbull subsequently stepped into the role and guided Niagara to a third place Southern Division finish. They swept Plattsville in the first round of the Russell Cup playoffs before losing three games to one to the North York Renegades in the semi-finals.

Following the close of the Predators GMHL season, Turnbull turned once again to Taylor, who had been acting

as defence coach for the GMHL's Northumberland Stars. With enough time to prepare for the job between now and late summer, the Pickering native jumped at the opportunity.

"We have the same mentality in terms of what the program is about," Taylor says of Turnbull. "I have always tried to run a program, not just a hockey team. You have to ensure that there's more to the team than just hockey. Rob and I both stress school and life. We want to shape these players into productive people in society."

Taylor knows too well through friends and acquaintances how hard life can be for hockey players facing life after the game. He talks of former teammates turning to drugs and alcohol to cope with the dashing of their athletic dreams.

When his own hockey ca-

reer was waning, Taylor finally returned to school at Trent University as a 30-year-old. He earned a degree in history with a minor in sociology, and at 35 years old he earned his social worker's certificate.

In 2019, Taylor and his fiancé Darlene Dobbs opened Tristan's Place, a psychotherapy and counselling service in Durham Region. It's named for Dobbs' daughter's boyfriend, Tristan Connelly, who took his life while waiting for mental health support.

"We opened this agency to make sure there will never be a waitlist for people in need," explains Taylor. "We also run 'Supportive Steps' out of our house. It's an adult day program where we support anyone, adults or children, by taking them out in the community and building friendships with each other."



Predators new head coach, Kevin Taylor, calls himself "a player's coach." (Photo supplied)

Continued on page 20

LocalHAPPENINGS

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Town, club hope to have issue resolved soon

Continued from page 1

could only say that a discussion about the pickleball courts took place behind closed doors during a March 21 committee of the whole meeting.

The agenda for that evening indicated an in-camera meeting would be held "subject to solicitor-client privilege, including communications necessary for that purpose, specifically regarding a noise by-law prosecution."

The sport of pickleball dates back to 1965 and its beginnings in Washington state, and from its modest roots, the sport's popularity has surged. Although it appeals to seniors, the pandemic has prompted even more people to pick up a paddle, attracting kids and families.

Club members have had scheduled times over the last two years, with other time slots open to the public.

Club play was suspended on the Virgil courts in 2020, due to COVID-19, but the gate code was available to

the public so they could play, following pandemic safety guidelines.

When the club was first formed in NOTL, members were using the badminton courts at the community centre. In 2018, given the sport's growing popularity, the town was asked to convert the tennis courts at the Virgil sports park to pickleball courts.

The courts were rebuilt and opened in the spring of 2019, and club membership grew from 60 to 270 that year, said Hindle.

In 2020, the club spent \$5,000 on windscreens to help with Niagara winds that affect the light ball during play.

The club also asked the town to install the gate locks that could be controlled by a code to protect and manage the courts, which were being damaged by bicycles and skate boards.

The club has since also paid for a shade shelter. All of that was able to occur due to a partnership between the club and the town, forged in 2020 on a trial basis, setting out the responsibilities of both, including how costs and maintenance will be shared.

Hindle told The Local in 2020 that the club has asked those playing to be respectful of noise that might bother those whose homes border the park, just steps away from the courts.

In 2021, when the courts reopened for the season, the hours of play were reduced to 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. They had been starting an hour earlier

and ending an hour later, but times were changed out of respect for nearby residents, who found activity from the courts could be noisy.

There was some discussion at a council meeting in May 2021 about reducing the hours even further, closing down at 9 p.m., but councillors had little appetite for taking another hour of play away from club members and the public without consultation.

"We should be encouraging people to get outside," said Coun. Allan Bisback at the time. "We don't know what this recovery is going to be like," he added, speaking to reopening during the pan-

demic, and noting the courts have lights for evening use.

The town's noise bylaw goes into effect at 11 p.m., and closing an hour earlier gives players time to pack up their stuff and chat amongst themselves, heading home before the noise curfew begins, Disero said at that meeting.

But in other areas where there have been noise issues, including Vancouver, it is the sound of the pickleball paddle hitting the plastic ball that is annoying to nearby neighbours.

The email to members said club "board members will continue to defend the club from this serious charge in provincial court."



Owen Danes and Cole McMann were out last May enjoying the pickleball courts in Virgil. The courts were to open this week, but that has been delayed due to a noise problem that must be resolved. (Mike Balsom)

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Note to readers: A photo of Matt Miller in last week's Local, supplied to us, was, taken by Kevin MacLean of The Lake Report, and used in error. The Local apologizes for the error and any inconvenience it may have caused.

Local

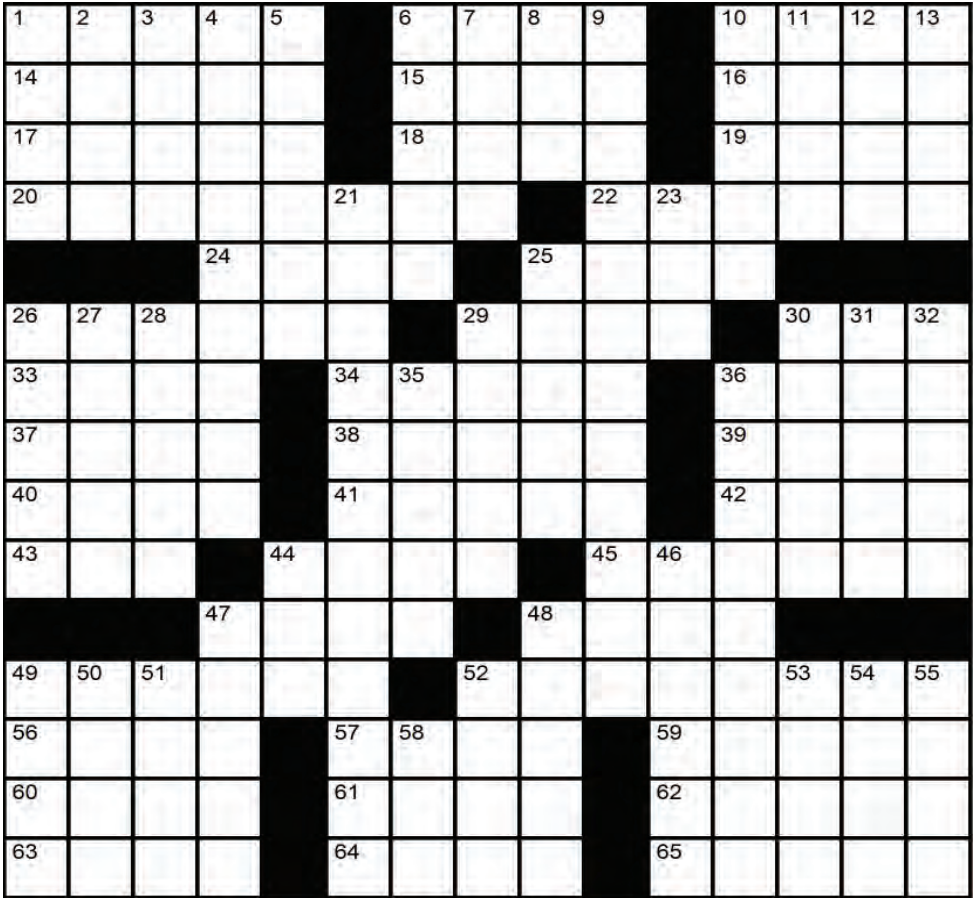
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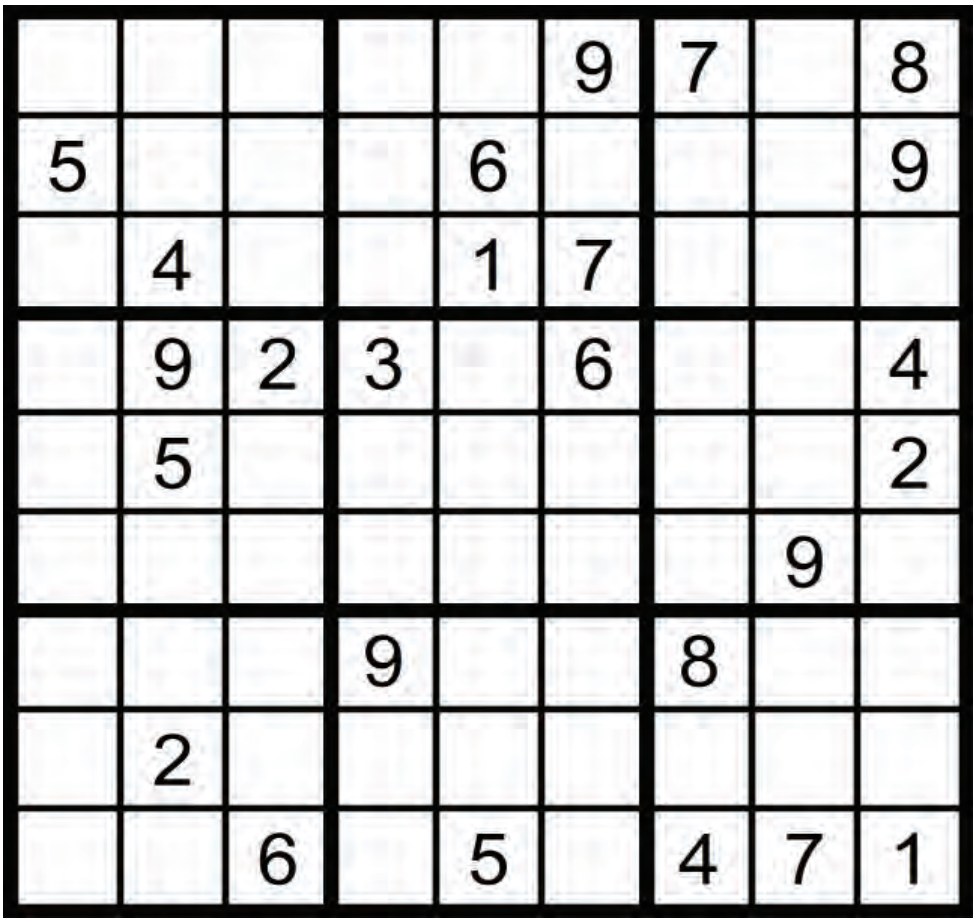


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7 Two-fold
8 Excavate
9 One of a hundred in D C
10 In case you --- noticed ...
11 Panache
12 Bad-mannered
- 13 --- Bradley, five-star general
21 Broke
23 Sibyl's power
25 Act of kindness
26 Big banger
27 Jerry Lee ---
28 Collector's list
29 State of high honor
30 Skipper of the Argo
31 Out of favor
32 British W W II general
35 Had eight days according to the Beatles
36 Residents of Abuja, for example
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47 Reach by air
48 Chap
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53 Scent
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PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from
April 13, 2022

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	9	2	8	7	6

Across: 1 Share, 6 Adds, 10 Hero, 14 Cocoa, 15 Suit, 16 Alum, 17 Altos, 18 Saga, 19 Dada, 20 Mystical, 22 Tenner, 24 Clay, 25 Fest, 26 Always, 29 Gasp, 30 Jim, 33 Beau, 34 Halve, 36 Nano, 37 Owms, 38 Swoon, 39 I S B N, 40 Mite, 41 Terra, 42 Goat, 43 B Ss, 44 Prey, 45 Trendy, 47 Flak, 48 Four, 49 Wallop, 52 Versions, 56 EBay, 57 Peal, 59 Sadie, 60 Blot, 61 Evil, 62 In one, 63 Beso, 64 Dana, 65 As red.

Down: 1 Scam, 2 Holy, 3 Acts, 4 Root cause, 5 Easily, 6 Assay, 7 Dual, 8 Dig, 9 State senator, 10 Hadn't, 11 Elan, 12 Rude, 13 Omar, 21 Cash-strapped, 23 E S P, 25 Favor, 26 A-bomb, 27 Lewis, 28 Wants, 29 Glory, 30 Jason, 31 In bad, 32 Monty, 35 A week, 36 Nighenans, 44 P L O, 46 Russla, 47 Fly to, 48 Fella, 49 Webb, 50 Able, 51 Laos, 52 Vain, 53 Odor, 54 Nine, 55 Seed, 58 EVA.

LocalSPORTS

Taylor excited about head coach job with Preds

Continued from page 18

Tristan's Place has become important to Taylor and Dobbs, making them reluctant to move to Niagara permanently at this time. Taylor says he will spend the next few months looking for an apartment in Niagara to better facilitate the amount of time he will need to dedicate to working with the young Predators players.

Now 44 years old, Taylor's own hockey playing career began during his minor hockey days with the Toronto Red Wings AAA organization. He began his junior career with the Junior C Uxbridge Bruins of the Provincial Junior Hockey League before leaving for a short stint out west.

He returned to Ontario when the Port Hope Buzzards of the Metro Junior A Hockey League called him. He played for them for three years, encompassing that league's merger with the Ontario Junior Hockey League, before being traded to the Cobourg Cougars.

In 2000-2001, Taylor played five games with the Fort Worth (Texas) Brahmas of the Western Professional Hockey League, then left

hockey until 2005, when he signed with the Frankford Huskies of the Eastern Ontario Senior Hockey League.

Along the way Taylor and his father had bought an Oshawa bar, which they ran for 10 years. Ironically, Taylor says today that his return to university at 30 years old resulted in his favourite stretch of playing hockey.

"At that time the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT) Ridgebacks hockey team had just started," Taylor says. "Trent shared a campus with them, so I was allowed to try out for their team. I ended up playing with a bunch of 20-year-olds, and I had the time of my life."

When he and his father closed the bar, he began working at a Buffalo Wild Wings franchise, where his opportunity to transition to coaching presented itself.

"A hockey team came in one day, and the coach and owner was Kahlil Thomas (father of current NHL player and former Niagara Ice Dog Akil Thomas)," Taylor recalls. "They were a new (GMHL) team, the Oshawa Riverkings, and their trainer was an old lacrosse contact. I offered to help them out and Kahlil took

me in."

That was in 2015. Taylor stayed with the team through 2019, becoming the head coach in 2017. When Thomas left to coach in the U.S., his wife Akilah took over the day-to-day operation of the Riverkings, enlisting Taylor to help.

The Riverkings morphed into the Durham Roadrunners, and Taylor stayed on as head coach for two more years, but wasn't enjoying the minutiae of helping to run the team, as it was taking away from the time he needed to coach effectively.

So he stepped away following the 2020-2021 season in favour of coaching the blue liners for Northumberland last year.

Taylor calls himself a player's coach, one who is likely to be found playing video games with his current and former players. Outside of Tristan's Place and his on-ice duties, he helps train young hockey players on specialized treadmills at a skills training facility in Bowmanville.

He says Turnbull has told him he won't have to worry about that minutiae as he did in Durham. He just wants Taylor to coach.



Kevin Taylor on the bench with the Riverkings. He loves coaching, but not dealing with the details of running a team, he says. (Photo supplied)

"One thing with Rob is that when he says something, he delivers," Taylor explains. "There's nothing hidden with him."

And he's looking forward to working with second-year assistant coach Connor Shipton.

"I spoke to Connor last week," says Taylor. "We're both excited to work with each other. Rob has said a lot of good things about him, and Connor wants to learn. I'm not looking to work with a puck-pusher. He'll run the

defence. I relish the role to get Connor to the next level, and I look forward to learning from him as well."

After a season during which both a coach and general manager departed the Predators, forcing Turnbull to do triple-duty, Taylor assures The Local that he's in for the long haul.

"I'm a person of my word," the father of three promises. "No matter what, I'm sticking it out. I have wanted to be a head coach again for a while.

I'm really excited about this."

Predators Notes

Though Connor Shipton is staying on with the Predators as associate coach, trainer and assistant general manager, Samantha Marson has moved on to the North York Renegades as their trainer.

The Temiscaming Titans of the GMHL's Northern Division swept the Durham Roadrunners in four straight games this month to win the 2022 Russell Cup.

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