It's volunteer week! This is the week that many organizations in town would be recognizing their volunteers, but with no in-person events allowed, it's difficult to do that. The Local would like to say thank you to all the volunteers who make our town such a great place to live and work. Still able to do their important job are the Newark Neighbours food bank volunteers, Cindy Grant, Pat Hicks, Marilyn Rickard, Genevieve Lawrence, Susan Sparrow-Mace, Frencyne Chenier, and Marion Ollerhead. For more on local volunteers, see pages 10 and 11.

Social behaviour needs to be curtailed, says Hirji

Penny Coles
The Local

The provincial lockdown extension to six weeks might not be long enough, the local acting chief medical officer warns.

Dr. Mustafa Hirji of Niagara Public Health says the climbing number of cases, including a significant number of variants of concern, may not be on enough of a downward trajectory by May 20, when this six-week lockdown is scheduled to end, to allow a safe reopening.

He is also suggesting there may be a decreased amount of vaccine coming to Niagara, if the province begins diverting supplies to hotspots, where it will do the most amount of good at reducing serious illness and deaths, he says.

Ontario cases have passed the peak of the second wave, he said Monday, and most parts of the province are seeing large increases that could last for another couple of weeks, until the current restrictions have had a chance to work, and more people are vaccinated.

About 26 per cent of the region's population has received their first dose of vaccine, while two per cent have received both doses. Hospitals and intensive care units are becoming increasingly overwhelmed, Hirji says, well past where they were during the second wave, and that too is likely to continue, possibly for a few more weeks, which is a strong concern for the health care sector.

Tracking shows that will flatten out by about mid-May, at a number well above what is considered the danger threshold in the province.

Hirji points to the U.K. for some lessons that can be learned going forward. After a one-month lockdown last fall was

Foster family found for two-pound goat

Penny Coles
The Local

Melina Morsch was all set to take care of a two-pound baby goat, a task she has accomplished successfully before.

Morsch, the owner of Fox Den Yoga, is an animal lover, and keeps several adorable Nigerian dwarf or pygmy goats she has incorporated into all kinds of fun activities, including pre-pandemic yoga classes and family movie nights.

She doesn't breed them herself, instead working with three goat breeders, she says, and occasionally, one of the does has more kids than she can feed, rejects one, or just isn't cut out to be a mother and doesn't look after her kids, explains Morsch. The breeders will occasionally call her when there is a baby in distress, she says.

When that happens, she is used to helping out, feeding and caring for the babies to give the breeders time to look after their other animals and babies. This time, when she received a call to take one tiny little female who was being pushed off by her mother, she thought of the many families she knows who might love to help out during a pandemic, when their children are at home, doing online school work and missing all their recreational activities and their friends. “Life has bottomed out for so many young people,” she says.

Nursing an extremely cute, tiny little creature might be uplifting and rewarding for them in so many ways, she decided, and set out to find a foster family with a post on Facebook.

She had no shortage of offers. The response was amazing, and she chose one family of animal lovers, with three young girls. She set them up with all they needed, gave them some pretty simple instructions about bottles and formula, along with a playpen and a carrier, and handed over the four-day-old kid.

Continued on page 4

Continued on page 5

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Pharmacies taking appointments for 40-plus age group

While there are currently no vaccination community clinics scheduled in Niagara-on-the-Lake, local pharmacies and primary care doctors are now able to offer appointments to those 40-years-old and up.

Niagara Stone Road Pharmacy's Dr. Kevin Clark and Dennis say that there’s a waiting list of 40 years old and up. (Penny Coles)

The sooner you are able to become eligible, the sooner you are able to get vaccinated," says Penny Coles, president of Niagara Stone Road Pharmacy. "We have a waiting list of 40 years old and up." (Photo supplied)

The Local

Penny Coles
The Local

After last week’s shut-down of non-essential businesses, town bylaw officers received a complaint about the Virgil Avondale selling T-shirts.

Dr. Kevin Clark and Dr. Rebecca Zabek-Clark Dentists and their registered Dental Hygiene Team

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THE NOTL LOCAL

This has been a tough year on everyone," says Brown, "and we somehow have to figure out some way to work together. Can we take the time to help each other, instead of spending so much time complaining about others?"
**Judge dismisses Hummel lawsuit against town**

Developer seeking $500,000 to offset loss of revenue from building freeze

**Penny Coles**
The Local

A provincial Superior Court judge has found no wrongdoing or bad faith in the current council’s passing of an interim control bylaw within days of taking office.

Developer Rainer Hummel of Hummel Properties was unsuccessful in his attempt to sue the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake for $500,000, plus costs, for a bylaw that put a temporary stop to development. His application to the court said the bylaw was enacted illegally, and in bad faith. His lawsuit alleged the bylaw was not permitted under the planning act, that there was no review of planning policies undertaken — a necessary component of the hold on development — and that the timing of the bylaw approval, at a special council meeting two days after council members were sworn in after the 2018 election, meant it was discussed improperly and did not follow the proper process.

In his decision, Judge James Ramsay says most of the councillors elected in the fall of 2018 were new, and had campaigned against uncontested development of the Old Town, and in favour of updating the Official Plan.

On Nov. 22, 2018, which was after the election but before the official swearing-in of council on Dec. 3, Betty Disero asked staff to draft an interim control bylaw. After the new council was sworn in, its inaugural meeting was adjourned to the next regular meeting of Dec. 17, or to a special meeting at the call of the Lord Mayor, the judge wrote in his decision.

On Dec. 4, Disero, at the request of a majority of councilors, called a special meeting for Dec. 5. “Under the procedural bylaw, that was short notice, but it was permitted for an emergency meeting,” Ramsay’s judgment says.

At the meeting of Dec. 5, council resolved to commission a study of land use planning policies. Then it enacted the interim control bylaw, which prohibited subdivisions or condominium approval and zoning changes in the Old Town. Ramsay said in his judgement.

To the issue of the land use review, necessary to justify an interim control bylaw, Ramsay points to public meetings and consultations that followed, along with the commissioning of a study of some of the City of Markham policies, and a report on them, all of which delayed the adopting of the Official Plan update, which was intended to be completed by April 1, 2019.

The summary of public submissions and the staff review of planning uses was discussed by council at its August Mayor’s meeting, the judge says, and a draft Official Plan was approved. A revision was enacted by council in October, 2019, but would not take effect until appeals were exhausted. During this time the interim control bylaw was freezing Old Town development, but was to expire on Dec. 5, 2019, and was extended until Nov. 11, 2020. The interim control bylaw was repealed before that, in June, 2020, after the Official Plan amendment went into effect.

Ramsay writes that because the bylaw was repealed, Hummel’s assertions that the Dec. 5 meeting of council and the interim control bylaw did not meet the requirements of the planning act are moot, and that the municipality is free from any liability because it did not act in bad faith. However, he went on to address the issues of illegality, finding none, and bad faith, again finding no evidence of that.

The Lord mayor was permitted to call the emergency council meeting, he says, and it was held in public, as required under the planning act. Although mention was made of the director of planning not being aware of any emergency, “that does not matter and ‘interim control is by its nature urgent,’ Ramsay says.

He goes on to explain the planning act allows for a bylaw to freeze development for a year, to protect the public interest in suitable zoning of the area being protected, and refers to the Hummel’s argument as “essentially that the town did not comply with a number of imaginary conditions related to enacting an interim control bylaw,” and that, further, his job is “not to burden the town with conditions that are not required by the statute” that regulates such a bylaw.

Issues in the application against the town include that there were two interim control bylaws at the same time, referring to one freezing cannabis-related land use, which Ramsay says was for a different purpose, and does not contravene legislation; and that the extension was illegal once the Official Plan amendment had been approved, which he also says is not restricted by the planning act.

He lists five different charges by Hummel that the town acted in bad faith — that the bylaw was driven by the lord mayor outside of the proper council process and not completed in public, that council failed to comply with its procedural bylaw regarding the announcement of the Dec. 5 meeting, that the meeting agenda was cryptic and misleading, that the bylaw was not supported by staff, and that the extension of the bylaw as enacted was without any basis and contrary to a staff recommendation.

Ramsay dismisses each of those allegations, and says, “on the whole of the evidence the case for bad faith strikes me as contrived.” He says that council was concerned about the Old Town’s heritage and considered the matter urgent, freezing the status quo, considering studies and public input, amending the Official Plan and then repealing the interim control bylaw. “That is essentially what they were supposed to do.”

Neither Hummel nor Lord Mayor Betty Disero would comment on the decision. Disero said Monday she and others at the town have been asked not to speak publicly until they have met with their lawyers. Hummel said, “pending the appeal, we are not able to comment at this time.”

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**Auchterlonie on Astrology**

**Bill Auchterlonie**

**Special to The Local**

The full week of Auchterlonie on Astrology can be found on the Facebook page for The NOTL on Astrology can be found on the Facebook page for The NOTL.

**April 21, 2021**

Thursday, April 22: Today Venus is conjunct Uranus in Taurus and trine Mars in Cancer. All full Moons are intense by definition (we are dealing with Scorpio). The Full Moon is at 7 degrees Scorpio. The Full Moon is opposite Uranus in Taurus and time Mars in Cancer. All full Moons in Scorpio are intense by definition (we are dealing with Scorpio energy, after all), and this one is no exception. Mars in a water sign will fuel our emotions even more, while Uranus will seek an outlet for them. The landscape architect who designed Central Park in New York City, and who also urged for the creation and preservation of a park at Niagara Falls, was born April 26, 1822. He was Frederick Law Olmsted. And that’s AonA for this week.

Next time it’s the Sun con-junct Uranus on April 30.

So until then, shine on.

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**April 21, 2021**

Thursday, April 22: Today Venus is conjunct Uranus at 10 degrees Taurus at 9:01 p.m. When have you been truly true to your heart lately? We may think we are true to ourselves, that we listen to our feelings. But sometimes it takes a Uranus transit to shake us and for us to realize that we are not true to ourselves, that we need to listen to our feelings.

Tuesday, April 27: Mars is the planet of action, and Cancer is the sign of privacy and security — our comfort zone. Mars in Cancer may seem emotional and fragile, but he’s hard as a rock and he will not hesitate to claw you if he feels threatened. Cancer is a cardinal sign after all. The upcoming six weeks are a good time to draw stronger boundaries and fight for what is important to you. Lester B. Pearson was Canada’s 14th prime minister, serving from 1963 to 1968. He also won the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in resolving the Suez Canal Crisis. He was born April 23, 1897.

Monday, April 26: It’s time for a full Moon at 7 degrees Scorpio. The Full Moon is opposite Uranus in Taurus and time Mars in Cancer. All full Moons in Scorpio are intense by definition (we are dealing with Scorpio energy, after all), and this one is no exception. Mars in a water sign will fuel our emotions even more, while Uranus will seek an outlet for them. The landscape architect who designed Central Park in New York City, and who also urged for the creation and preservation of a park at Niagara Falls, was born April 26, 1822. He was Frederick Law Olmsted. And that’s AonA for this week.

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Kids learn responsibility

Continued from page 1

who they named Fern.
She needs to be bottle fed every four hours, and to be held and cuddled a lot, which the girls are loving.

Emeline, Delphine and Maggie Norman, their dad Brent Norman and mom Jen Feschuk are used to animals around the house. Their two dogs, Freddie and West, have become intrigued with Fern, and the girls are really enjoying their role as a foster family.

“I don’t think I’ve ever taken care of anything other than people, so I’m a bit overwhelmed with offers, and they probably would have said they’re not at all surprised,” says Jen.

The girls are also learning to deal with the frustration of such a tiny creature requiring so much attention, she says, and realizing the responsibility that comes with it.

“They’re really bonding, and they’re learning that taking care of any animal is a big commitment. It’s really a cool experience,” she says.

They take her to the park (they board her), and she’s learning that taking care of any animal is a big commitment. It’s really a cool experience,” she says.

They take her to the park with them, where she melts the hearts of all who see her.

They are also going to learn what it means to give Fern up in about eight weeks time.

“I’ve told them from the beginning it’s meant to be a fostering experience,” says Jen.

“That’s another important lesson in life to learn. Emeline takes her to the park (they board her), and she’s learning to be able to see Fern while she’s there”

While fostering Fern while she and her husband are at home during the pandemic has made it a little more convenient, says Jen, they probably would have offered anyway. “Our friends say they’re not at all surprised we’re doing this.”

Morsch says she was so overwhelmed with offers, and this is going so well with Fern, she may start networking for other local breeders and develop a list of foster families who are interested in helping out.

Delphine cuddles Fern, a two-pound dwarf goat.

Fern and Freddie get to know each other.
More restrictions might be needed, says Hirji

Continued from page 1

brining cases down, the country reopened, and “things took a turn for the better” as the B117 variant took hold. By mid-December, it was back into lockdown, which just ended last week.

The message, he says, is an arbitrary four-week lockdown doesn’t work, and opening when cases are still high, although falling, is a mistake. It led to a “massive resurgence” of new cases in the U.K.

He is predicting it could be late June before cases in Ontario are low enough, and vaccinations high enough, for the province to be able to safely reopen. And for that to happen this lockdown has to work — it needs to actually stop people from social interaction, he says, “and we haven’t seen that reaction with his current lockdown,” suggesting there may need to be increasing measures to get people to stay home.

The positive side is that vaccinations are working, as evidenced in the reduction of cases and serious illness and deaths in the older population of 80-plus residents.

Hirji also encouraged those who are vaccinated to continue following all protocols, including staying home and minimizing social contacts. If they don’t, it would be hard to motivate others who are not vaccinated to follow the rules, he says.

His message is, “we’re all going to do this together.”

From a high of 220 cases reported last Thursday, daily numbers across the region have ranged from 143 on Saturday to 169 Monday.

As of Monday, there were 44 cases in Niagara-on-the-Lake, for a total of 402 since the pandemic began.

The number of variant cases continues to grow in Niagara, with the likelihood that some of them are of the South African or Brazilian variant, although they have not yet been identified, says Hirji.

There have been a total of 1,459 variant cases in Niagara, with 19 confirmed the U.K. B117 mutation, the others unknown.

There is such a high number of variant cases across Ontario, provincial screening to identify the type of variant can’t keep up, says Hirji.

Variants are amounting to about 50 per cent of the cases in Niagara, and 75 per cent in Ontario. The variants are known to be more contagious, causing more serious illness. Niagara Health released a statement Monday afternoon regarding the state of local hospitals with the rising number of infections.

“We are currently treating 71 patients who are positive with COVID-19. Of these 71 patients, 17 are in our intensive care unit. These patient volumes speak to the increase in infections and seriousness of the illness. In comparison, on April 1, we were treating 11 patients with COVID-19, which included three patients in our ICUs,” says the message from Lynn Guerriero, president of Niagara Health, and interim CEO, and Dr. Johan Viljoen, chief of staff.

Postponement of some scheduled surgeries and ambulatory procedures is taking place, although urgent surgeries and cancer surgeries are not currently impacted.

There are ongoing transfers of critical care patients to Niagara from other ICUs in harder-hit areas of the province, the message says. “We increased our critical care capacity last week by three beds, up to 63, and have plans to add additional beds this week. Redeployment of staff is critical to this planning and is ongoing.”

Patients are also being moved from St. Catharines to other sites to make room for COVID patients, with volumes expected to increase, “including those who require critical care. This will further impact our delivery of health services at all of our sites.”

Niagara Health is urging everyone to remain vigilant with all public health measures, and encourage others to do the same, to reduce the transmission of the virus.

Continued from page 1
Ontario in a crisis, hopefully, with relief in sight

Although there have been few details announced, it’s beginning to look like Ontario workers may get the paid sick leave so desperately needed to help them and their families through this pandemic, and to stop the spread of infection through workplaces.

It must come soon, and it must be based on a continuation of wages, so that workers feeling ill can choose to stay home and know it won’t affect their pay cheque.

Speed is essential as hospital and intensive care units set new records daily, and are in danger of being overwhelmed, with many patients who have been infected at their workplace.

On Tuesday, Peel and Toronto public health units, recognizing the importance of preventing more workplace outbreaks, ordered businesses with more than five COVID cases to close. That is a good example to set across the province.

Hopefully, employees of these workplaces will continue to receive their wages.

Until this week, Premier Doug Ford has continued to direct any conversation of paid sick leave to the federal program, which is somehow not enough, and doesn’t come soon enough for those working paycheque to paycheque.

The NDP has tried to push provincially-legislated sick leave for the past year, with no success.

But this is no longer a political issue, a partisan decision. It’s one of life or death, for many workers, for their families, and for those who come in contact with each other.

Members of the Ontario Science Table, members of the provincial Vaccine Distribution Task Force, and many other medical experts have been telling us in very strong terms that adequate sick pay for low-income essential workforces is critical — with redefining what it is truly essential and shutting down everything else, is what is needed now.

The variants of concern, they said, are in the midst of a pandemic to send health care workers and vaccine to Ontario.

Doctors are telling us they are increasingly treating entire families, who contracted COVID-19 because one family member was infected at work.

When it long-term care homes where most outbreaks were occurring and seniors were dying, it took a bit of time, but finally provincial governments across the country acknowledged what needed to be done and followed through.

Thanks to improvements that were made and vaccinations being directed at those facilities, there is now good news on that front.

Lives have been saved.

But now COVID is infecting younger people, many of them low-income, minimum wage essential workers who are looking after the welfare of the privileged, who get to work from home at their well-paying jobs, put themselves at risk for a foray outside to pick up groceries or sustenance at the LCBO.

How much worse does this have to get before even more drastic shutdowns are required, and the recognition of sick pay to prevent workplace outbreaks is addressed?

Mistakes have been made at all levels of government, most likely not from having adequate information on which to base their decisions. That is no longer the case.

The Ford government is being asked to do the right thing for those workers, most at risk.

Wayne Gates, MPP Niagara Falls riding Special to The Local

On Sunday, April 18, the Ford government sent word to the official Opposition that they intended to shutter the provincial legislature this week.

Let me say this as clearly as possible — with record infections, record intensive care unit admissions — now is not the time for the Premier to close the legislature, remove himself from public view and stop the necessary work of governing. We have too many important bills before the House to stop business.

There are too many people counting on supports and government action to stop the work of our elected officials.

Unfortunately, as last Friday’s announcements showed, it is clear that the Premier is not on top of this public health crisis. Medical experts tell us large workplaces are the highest spreaders of COVID-19, yet Ford shuts golf courses and parks down. Nurses tell us they need more supports to get vaccines into arms, yet he gives police powers that they themselves didn’t ask for and refuse to use. We smugly tell our government to shut down our legislative body until at a very minimum he commits to replacing police state tactics with a public health plan to stop COVID-19.

Ford and his government need to provide recognition and correctness to the lacklustre supports supplied to businesses. Better supports for businesses across Ontario are required before more go under and businesses and the Ontario population should not be facing debt let alone bankruptcy from the Ford government, and they intend to reverse this course of action.

We have no intention of supporting these measures until at the very least Ford’s government:

- Gives Ontarians paid sick days by passing Bill 239
- Gives workers paid time off to get a vaccine
- Shuts down non-essential workplaces
- Gives impacted local businesses and workers a new package of financial supports

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View from the couch

Donald Combe

Special to The Local

What Would Sophia Loren Do? is a documentary (Netflix, 2018) that white teeth’s English teacher who is a documentary (Netflix, 2018) that white teeth’s English teacher who

loves to go to movies. Until then, he has graciously agreed to share his opinions, through his columns and on social media.

Donald Combe is a retired English teacher who Donald Combe is a retired English teacher who

Gates urges Ford not to run out of his duties

The Niagara-on-the-Lake

The trusted Voice of our Community

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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. Letters should not exceed about 350 words. Sorry, but we won’t publish anonymous letters. Please stick to the issue at hand, rather than attacking those involved. The deadline is Monday at noon.
Owen Bjorgan Special to The Local

This article is going to carry a bit of a different tone, because it’s necessary. It’s a hard line to walk — maintaining the image of happy nature boy, but also being a messenger on the ground who has the ability to tell you the truth of what’s going on.

But this isn’t about me. It’s about you, our town, and our collective health as a population.

Since the pandemic was announced more than 400 days ago, the human race has watched a series of trends run their respective courses. New patterns have emerged on how our species socializes, what makes us sick, and what makes us tick.

As I’ve touched on previously, the way humans have interacted with our natural spaces has been warped into positive, negative, and perplexing directions in the past year-plus. One subset of our population appears to be getting outside more, and increasing their newfound bond with nature. Another population is waiting for rules to change, or perhaps is comfortable with the indoor lifestyle.

Things move fast. I literally have to jot down the incoming environmental incidences as they populate my mind and our newsfeeds. Niagara-on-the-Lake and the Niagara region have given me a lot to chew on recently. Here are some provocative tidbits from the past couple weeks which I found quite noteworthy.

As our leaders have been promoting how being outdoors is exponentially safer than being indoors, they really made that concept much more inaccessible. Let’s start with beach and water access.

Our neighbours in St. Catharines have recently proposed paid, and even timed parking at Lakeside and Sunset Beach, arguably two of the most popular beaches along Lake Ontario. It appears it will go through. Nothing quite like going to the beach and keeping your eye on the time, in case of a fine.

Families with youth, especially from urban or inner-city neighbourhoods, depend on simple and rightful access to public natural spaces. Once we begin to monetize and categorize nature, we pass a slippery slope of return. I’ll be saying to the youth one day, ‘remember when we used to just go to the beach or the gorge?’

Boat launches are closed now, too. It must be difficult to socially distance in the middle of the Welland River or Lake Ontario. However, film production is allowed to continue as an essential form of work, likely because that industry draws people indoors.

There is no biological science to support these decisions.

I recently had my first personal experience with the Niagara Gorge and Whirlpool parking situation. There are three main parking areas to access this natural wonder, created by nature and time, and as of now, they are all paid parking spaces. Be aware as a local, you could get charged for parking on a gloomy, drizzling Thursday midday, even in the offseason.

The parks and bylaw officer pulled up at the same time I arrived. This is not #InItTogether and need to work together, along with the Niagara Parks Commission and our city. We are all in this together.

Nothing quite like going on a fine.

Owen Bjorgan gets a photo of a closing berrying Four Mile Creek.

Continued on page 8

Gorge parking, creek garbage a concern

During this pandemic, we know it’s not the first time on peoples minds, but it should be addressed.

Every time we go out for a walk, Leslie takes a bag and a pair of tongs and picks up at least a grocery bag full of garbage, and that’s only from our house on Platoff Street to the post office, two blocks. We’ve found everything from Tim Hortons cups to mcn dogs... Why? We don’t understand why people can’t pick up after themselves.

This is supposed to be The Prettiest Town in Canada... I know we’re not putting our best foot forward.

Hannah and Leslie Kerr NOTL

Niagara Health pleads for community support

Si"a Health is experiencing unprecedented pressures and needs our community’s sup- port to help protect capacity for life-saving critical care and other patient services. The situation is serious in Niagara, as it is across the province.

More than 70 leaders from across the region are supporting Niagara Health and its healthcare providers who are working flat out to care for Niagara residents. Niagara Health has written this letter to strongly urge every mem- ber of our community to follow public health guidelines 100 per cent of the time. It will save lives.

To the Niagara community.

Now more than ever we are #InItTogether and need to support one another as we fight through the third wave of this dreadful pandemic.

We’ve vaccinated more than 24% of Niagara residents, beginning with those in the highest risk populations. More than 125,000 doses have been administered in our community, and the number of COVID-19 vaccinations increases each day by the thousands.

At the same time, however, there is reason for concern. Niagara Health is experiencing unprecedented pressures and is asking for your help to protect capacity for life-saving critical care and other patient services. This is also the case for hospitals across the province and beyond.

Let’s remember the 379 people who contracted COVID-19 and died, along with the loved ones who are grieving these ter- rible losses. There are currently 1,405 active cases in our community, a number that’s been growing at a concerning rate over the past number of weeks.

There have been so many challenges thrown our way over the past 14 months. We know people are hurting and we know you are frustrated.

How much more can we need to support one another. Follow public health guidelines — masking, physical distancing, handwashing and keeping contact with members of your household only. Support local businesses — stores, restaurants, wineries, and other merchants.

And be kind.

We are #InItTogether.

Owen Bjorgan

Dr. Johan Viljoen
President and Interim CEO
Niagara Health

Please, locals, slow down on Line 2

For the past year and a half, as my wife and I have walked around the nearby neighbour- hood, we have noticed more and more CAA Slow Down signs popping up on front yards.

So, we are not alone in no- ticing the crazy speeds some locals are driving through pop- ulated areas. It feels like these drivers have no respect for oth- ers. It is especially frightening because there are many more young families moving into our neighbourhood. I imagine if someone were to tear past their house at those speeds, they would be the first to be upset.

It surprises me because these are not strangers to the community. They are local people, coming out of the sub- divisions, down Line 2 to Con- cession 6 at breakneck speeds. We even noticed a parent running a stop sign after dropping his child off at school.

Line 2 is not a highway. Children walk and bike to school along this road and families go for walks along the street. Most of this section has no sidewalks. As a pedestrian, I have been hit twice by vehi- cles while on a crosswalk, so these speeds scare me. If the driver that hit me had been going at the speeds we see in front of our house, I would not be here today. God forbid they hit a child.

Which brings me to a sec- ond point. Why is this section of Line 2 not considered a school zone? The school zone is on Niagara Stone Road, yet 95% of the children at Crossroads Public School enter the school grounds off of Line 2, not Niagara Stone Road. I know that it’s a regional road. Clearly we can speed at 40 kilometres an hour as it is on Niagara Stone Road.

I encourage as many people as possible to contact a town councillor to see what can be done. We have to protect our children.
time as my friend and I did. The two of us were just out to get our essential exercise in the same place we have our whole lives. Please don’t interpret that as being an entitled local; I’m just stating a fact that I know many of the readers can relate to.

The officer, pen in hand, is making her way down to our vehicles. I politely stepped out of the vehicle and asked, “are you going to put a ticket on our dashboards right now if we begin hiking?” She said yes. We wanted to pay with cash, but cash wasn’t allowed. My phone was dead, so I couldn’t download the app required to pay for my hike. So, she suggested that I drive to a nearby corner store to purchase a Vanilla card, and come back to pay with that.

What the heck is a Vanilla card, and why do people need it for hiking? With all respect, she was of course just doing her job. I thought we were in a pandemic where we are encouraged to make less stops, touch less, and avoid indoor spaces with people, no? Imagine if our various authorities put these kind of efforts and staffing into outdoor education, replanting projects, and habitat enhancement.

I told the lady to have a nice day while my friend and I piled back into our vehicles, and drove up the road to find the last free parking spot.

Beaches and other 12,000-year-old natural features are being squeezed out for our citizens. Which leads me to another shocking announcement with no scientific spine — crown land camping is now illegal in Ontario. Regular camping spots are full to the brim, backcountry camping sites have quadrupled in price, and now the final, wild straw has been pulled.

In summary, nature is becoming either straight up illegal, or, on other angles, an increasingly discouraging trip out the door. Meanwhile, places like Virgil Conservation Area have recently been victimized by disturbing amounts of litter and a small but noticeable forest-clearing event (the cleared land is painfully obvious, and reaches right down to the edge of the creek). I stood in the valley, admittedly, my blood boiling.

There is nothing quite like staring across a creek with markedly terrible water quality (according to the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority’s Watershed Report Card), as more natural vegetation gets removed, and a plethora of plastics clings to the banks.

Wrong. I was back just a week later with my girlfriend and a select few others in my “bubble,” and we cleaned that place up by filling big plastic garbage bags. It was that easy, and that productive. I will be hitting up other sites in the near future as well, before vegetation and ticks become too rampant for productive garbage cleanups, many of which are cancelled or postponed due to restrictions with no concrete end date in sight.

Ironically, it’s the very deprivation from nature, and the degradation of it, that makes us sick, sick people. Welcome to spring, the season of transformation. You know what they say, you can often tell a lot about someone by the environment they live in.

Here’s an emergency break I would love to see, where the province goes, “oh my gosh! The very environment that keeps us healthy and economically sound is being dismantled at an alarming rate!” Not enough of us are paying attention these days.

I take a deep breath from the keyboard. Pause. Sigh. Perhaps I could focus more on the positive? There is an enormous danger to turning a blind or ignorant eye to evolving problems. You can only sweep so much under the carpet before you trip over it.

Will NOTL trip, or rise to the occasion?
Drivers and ask where they are. Police the right to pull over. Mind-boggling, he says, reiterating ahead of time. It was even getting the support of the provinces. The justification was given to police, without their families. Infection to co-workers and home when they’re sick, rather than going to work and spreading. Activities, but didn’t add anything. They were a few people screaming. On Saturday, the premier rescinded his order to shut down playgrounds in a tweet, although not other outdoor bans such as tennis and other activities, but didn’t add anything that might have been effective. “I can’t understand, for the life of me, why the government isn’t listening to the doctors. Even doctors can’t understand why they’re not listening to doctors.” He also points to the $22 million the province spends to fund intensive care units, a cost that is climbing every day with the need to increase capacity. There was talk Monday about Premier Doug Ford shutting down the legislature, “when the reality is people are dying,” says Gates, accusing him of running away from his duties. Although Ford has pointed to federal help for those who are sick, and there was some limited support offered in the new federal budget, it’s not enough to encourage people who have COVID symptoms to stay home, says Gates, the federal funding is not immediate, and it’s not seamless. “It doesn’t guarantee a continuation of wages.” He will also continue to push for paid time off for vacation appointments, and more financial support for small and medium-sized businesses struggling through the pandemic. “We’ve got to keep doing what we’re doing,” he says, pressing the government to take the advice of medical experts to heart and act on it. “We’re seeing so many doctors, so many mayors, even backbenchers in the Conservative Party saying we’re not going in the right direction. People are dying, and their deaths could have been prevented. Hopefully over the next few days the pressure will get the government to do the right thing. We have to continue to put pressure on the government to change their course. I’m sure they’re starting to think like the rest of us. Let’s stop the dying. We can do it collectively.”

These magnolia trees are stars.

Mike Balsam couldn’t help but stop to take a photo of these star magnolia trees on Anderson Lane. The blooms don’t last long but they are magnificent when in full bloom.
We are now well into the second year of a pandemic, when the world changed, and since then, so much has changed.

What hasn’t changed is the number of compassionate, energetic and dedicated individuals and members of various arts and cultural organizations, businesses, churches, schools, and service clubs who are the driving force behind so much that is great in our community. During this time, those who volunteer in our long-term care homes and in health care deserve an extra special thank you, for doing an unimaginably difficult job.

This week is National Volunteer Week, and for the second year, it’s been difficult to recognize our wonderful volunteers in the fashion they deserve. Many organizations are accustomed to hosting annual events for their volunteers, but that can’t happen again this year. Volunteers work tirelessly and make a difference every day of the year with their expertise and energy, and they are missing that experience as much as the community is missing them.

Volunteers bring a richness to every facet of this town, and are instrumental in making it such a great place to live, work and visit.

To every person who has volunteered their time over the last year, we say thank you, and to all those who had to put their volunteerism on hold, thanks for your patience, and we look forward to seeing you again.

We have included a few of the organizations and businesses who contribute to the town in a meaningful way, and the people who make them work. To those who were missed, if anybody would like to submit a photo in the coming weeks to honour a group or a particular individual, we’d be glad to publish it.

Thank you to The Niagara Lions Club

This photo, which has all but three of the Niagara Lions Club members in it, was taken at a club meeting on Feb. 19, 2020, a month before the first COVID lockdown. The club was celebrating 100 years of Lionism in Canada. It seems so long ago and yet it was only a little over a year ago, says Dorothy Soo Wiens. Since then members have continued to do what they can in the community, raising funds and giving back to minor sports and many other local causes. The town would not be the same without its service organizations, so thank you Niagara Lions for all you do.

Shaw Guild

Sonia Johnson, Peggy Bell, Louanne Lynch, Jane Catcher, Patty Neame, Mike Fox, Sam Kingdom, David Livett, Margaret Fairman, Marie Marcozzo, Ken O’Malley, Barbara Webber, Linda Murray, Brian Parr, Kathy Callaghan, Paddy Parr, Joe Cassidy, Paul Madeley, and John Hunter are Shaw Guild gardeners, just some of the many volunteers that help the Shaw Festival run smoothly. Guild members also volunteered to be ambassadors for the town on Queen Street last year, and hope to do so again this summer. (All photos supplied)

Leah Atherton and David Watt

Owners of The Garrison House, Leah Atherton and David Watt are often seen helping community members, including offshore workers. This month, upon hearing of a local family from St. Vincent shipping items to help those devastated by the recent volcano eruption, they loaded up their vehicle with essential items to be part of the shipment. They are just two of many individuals in town who see a need, and do what they can to help fill it.

Red Roof Retreat

While Red Roof Retreat programs are closed, volunteers continue to help on the property and with animal care. Moe and Steffanie Bjorgan continue to go in, and volunteer Linda Wiebe deserves a special thanks for going in each week to stay on top of office work. “All of these people who don’t have to help, and still honour their commitment to Red Roof Retreat, certainly makes things easier,” says Steffanie. “I also know, that for each of them, it gives them a sense of purpose and something to look forward to. We are so appreciative.” Special thanks from Red Roof Retreat to Danielle Moss (top left), Gord Harris, Gary LaPierre, Kathy Mann, Marc Bertrand, Kim LaPierre, Linda Wiebe and Karley McKiegan. Missing from the photos is Linda Murlot.

To all NOTL’s dedicated volunteers, we say THANK YOU

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The Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre

Volunteers chair Patti Krype has a message to Pumphouse volunteers: “During this National Volunteer Appreciation Week, the staff and Board of Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre would like to honour all our volunteers, in particular, those who have been able to help during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, we managed to hold some live events including our grand reopening in August, a few artist exhibitions, and open the Christmas season. Our volunteers took on different tasks from normal to ensure we were following COVID-19 protocols. We are certainly hopeful that 2022 will be better than Niagara-on-the-Lake, and for all the good that is done, we need look no farther than Newark Neighbours, the organization that is staffed solely by volunteers and has been helping the needy in town since 1971. The registered, not-for-profit organization currently has 39 volunteers who, pre-pandemic, would have shared the duties of running a food bank for those in need, and a thrift shop, which helps to fund the food bank and pay the bills for their John Street East location. There are eight women who oversee the food bank, sanitizing all donations before placing food on shelves, and providing food bank clients safely, following COVID protocols — with a selection of groceries every two weeks, as well as special holiday meals. While the food bank has been able to stay open during the pandemic, with the eight volunteers sharing shifts over two mornings a week, the thrift store is closed, says Newark Neighbours chair Laura Gibson, and the volunteers who would have spent a day each week at the shop are missing that social time. “Everybody had their day, and they’re not able to do that job for the second year. Everyone is missing their friends and fellow volunteers,” says Gibson. We look forward to having them all return. They’re anxious and willing to step forward and help. They miss the social contact, and the rewarding work they do.”

Gibson says she is especially thankful to the volunteers who have continued to work through the pandemic, including the large number of volunteers who came out to help with the last three holiday hamper programs, ensuring everyone in need received a great meal and some extra food last Thanksgiving, Christmas and over Easter.”

So many of our volunteers came out to help, and this was before vaccinations. We really appreciate all stepping up for us. “For the last 58 years, past and present volunteers — and they’ve been many of them over the years — have been so dedicated to Newark Neighbours.”

The community has also always been very generous and quick to respond when there was a need, she says. “There has been more need than ever during the pandemic, with an increase of about 35 to 40 per cent in the number of clients requiring help from the food bank, says Gibson, many of them families suffering a loss in income because jobs have been lost, or hours cut.”

“We’re still getting food donations, and we’re fine for now, and maybe once we’re out of this lockdown, we’ll have another community food drive. We’re likely to need it by then.”

St. Davids Lions

Rick Will, Hal Barfouk, LEO Jason Christie, Ted Brunows, Janet Guy, Sue Pitman and Glenn Miller were part of the team offering the Friday fish fries, cancelled again during this recent lockdown. In the summer they offered a wildly popular Friday burger night. Both efforts are so the 79 Lions and members and 26 Lioness can continue to give back to their community in a meaningful way. Can’t wait for the next St. Davids Lions Carnival, a great annual event, and thanks to all of you!
Penny Coles
The Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce president Eduard Lafforgue says he is grateful to town councillors for considering the future of patios on Queen Street.

They had a report before them this week to approve the extension of the temporary patios until January 1, 2022, and Lafforgue spoke to them at their Monday virtual meeting, hoping for an extension.

Instead, they agreed to review the program in December, and look at what they want to do for next year.

Lafforgue says he is satisfied that they will consider an extension, rather than having an end date of January, 2022.

Patios are well-liked by residents and visitors, providing a safe and enjoyable experience, he says. They are also important to restaurants, which have struggled throughout the pandemic. They are hoping for recovery to begin this fall, and patios will help them navigate through that recovery, which is expected to last until 2026, according to Tourism Canada reports.

“We will not be able to make up for lost business for a long time,” Lafforgue says.

Coun. Wendy Cheropita was hoping for a guaranteed extension throughout 2022, but couldn’t get her fellow councillors on board. With the stability that would have offered, restaurant owners might consider upgrading and investing more in their patios, she suggested.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero says she supports patios, but doesn’t like the way they stick out into the street, and are surrounded by concrete barriers, which the town requires for safety reasons. She would like to consider the long-term look of Queen Street, and told Lafforgue when it’s time for that discussion, she would seek input from the municipal heritage committee, restaurateurs and other businesses, the chamber, residents and council.

Coun. Allan Bisback asked for the December review to allow town staff to come back with their report of how patios are performing, with the potential of expanding the patio program for 2022, and also allowing for public consultation.

Having council support for patios is important, says Lafforgue, and the review will also give the chamber and restaurateurs an opportunity to have input in a decision for next year.

Patios to be reviewed in December, councillors decide

Blossom time in Niagara

David Gilchrist, on the hunt for blossoms, says it’s getting harder to find them as so many orchards have become vineyards. However, he managed to find and photo these beautiful trees in blossom.

The Firehall Flame patio was popular last summer. It opened briefly this spring before being closed again for the lockdown, but hopefully will be allowed to open again soon. (File photo)
Bravo Niagara! presents ‘dream roster of artists’

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

Juno Award winning Cana-
dian guitarist Jesse Cook kicked off the 2021 Bravo Niagara! Festival of the Arts Amplified Membership series this Friday, April 23. It’s the first in a series of six world class musical even-
tings presented virtually by the local non-profit organization.

For a $100 fee, members will get exclusive access to vir-
tual concerts, meet-and-greets, interviews and more featuring some of the best jazz, classical and even folk/pop artists in the world, from April to July. Cook, who won the 2001 Juno for best instrumental al-
bum for his Free Fall release, is one of the most recognized purveyors of flamenco guitar, though, as he himself admits, his influences are in elements of jazz, music, jazz, pop, Brazilian sam-
ba and more into his music. He burst onto the scene in 1995 with the independently-re-
leased Tempst, which he had recently been revisiting during his Tempst 25 tour before the pandemic hit.

Amplified members will experience Cook’s talent in a pre-recorded concert and will also have the chance to meet the artist live in a post-show event hosted by Mark Wignzero of WQX’s New Classical FM.

Bravo Niagara! co-founder and executive director Alex-

tial jazz pianist Billy Taylor will also have the chance to meet the artist live in a post-

Bravo Niagara!’s one-of-a-kind roster is an effort to recreate some of the years.

Bravo Niagara!’s one-of-a-kind roster is an effort to recreate some of the most important voices in jazz. Eva-

In 2023, the “dream roster of artists” continues, “the mem-

Line-up for the 2021 Arts Amplified Membership series:

April 23 — Jesse Cook
April 30 — International Jazz Day’s Sing About Freedom
May 21 — Emly Bear
May 28 — Chois Brothers
June 11 — Royal Wood
July 9 — Stephanie Tettea

Photographed by

Not local.com

The NOTL

April 21, 2021

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Céline Peterson, the daughter of this newspaper can take advantage of a 10 per cent discount by entering the code NOTLLOCAL.

Laila Biali (Photos supplied)

Bravo Niagara! celebrates In-

Laila Biali (Photos supplied)

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CALLING ALL KIDS AND ADULT COLOURERS:

Please colour this picture, and put it up in a front window to encourage everyone to be kind to each other, as the Town is reminding us to be! And please take a photo of your masterpiece in the window and email it to penny@notllocal.com, and also to #NOTLShinesLight #NOTLSpreadsKindness.
Town explains new provincial restrictions

Playgrounds open, picnic tables off-limits

Local Staff

After receiving some criti-
cisms on social media for lagging
behind other municipalities, the
town’s parks and recreation de-
partment had removed barriers
to playground equipment in lo-
cal parks.

The province had made an
announcement late in the day,
advancing a number of addi-
tional measures coming into
effect including the closure of
all outdoor amenities, including
playgrounds. In response, staff
worked late into the evening to
immediately secure play struc-
tures with caution fencing.

On Saturday, after strong
concerns for health profession-
als and Ontario Science Table
members, Premier Doug Ford
tweeted advising that provincial
regulations would be amended
to allow playgrounds to reopen.

“This Tweet gained traction
and understandably cre-
ated excitement for young
children and families within Ni-
agara-on-the-Lake’s town news
release says.

Town staff, says Lord Mayor
Betty Drews, waited for the of-
ficial notification of an amend-
tment to the regulation, and once
the Ontario website was updated
to reflect the change Monday
morning, staff removed munic-
ipal playgrounds.

According to provincial
regulations, other outdoor ame-
nties will remain closed, in-
ccluding outdoor sports facilities
and multi-use fields such as golf
courses, baseball diamonds, soc-
cer fields, tennis, platform tennis,
table tennis and pickable courts,
basketball courts, BMX, boul-
der skate parks, portions of parks
or recreational areas containing
outdoor fitness equipment, pic-
cia parks and picnic tables.

Parks or recreational areas
are open to walk through and
playgrounds, play and
equipment can be used by
children if both the children
and their parents can maintain
a physical distance of at least
five metres from others, other
than a person who is a member
of the same household.

Closed dog parks and
benches in parks or recreational
areas can be used if all protocols
followed.

“This past weekend demon-
strated just how high tensions
are,” says Drews, adding bylaw
officers were being given extra
time by people who were not fol-
lowing provincial regulations.

“Let’s not allow the stress of
this pandemic change who we
are as a community,” she says.

“No matter what stage we are
at, no matter what the prov-

Local Staff

For one week, Niagara-
on-the-Lake residents are being
asked to be kind.

The town first Shine Light,
Spread Kindness Campaign
began Monday, designed to
promote a culture of kindness
throughout the community.

“Niagara-on-the-Lake has
always been like a little piece
of paradise for me. It is the most
beautiful town, filled with the
friendliest people, and is the
place I am proud to call home,”
says Lord Mayor Betty Drews.

“This kindness campaign pro-
vides a beautiful opportunity to
remember and celebrate who
we are as a community. Even as
we go through this difficult time
let’s continue to shine our light
and spread kindness out
to the world. Everyone de-
sires kindness and respect. ”

“Tamara and I have
decided to commit to
shining light and spreading
courage every day this week,
and by doing so, working to-
together to ignite light and
love in our community. One flame
provides some light to a dark
room but light multiple can-
dles at once and a dark room is
transformed to light,” the news
release says.

“I am marvel at the way
a simple smile or kind word
can brighten my day,” says CAO
Marnie Cluckie. “Kind-
ness is truly powerful and
now, more than ever, kindness re-
ally matters. Many people are
hurting, frustrated, confused,
lonely, anxious, sad, and the
list goes on. While we are all
in this pandemic together, we
are all experiencing the effects
of it differently. It is essential
despite the frustrations we’re
experiencing, that we choose to
be kind to ourselves, and kind
to each other. Extending grace
is one way to shine your light,
join in on this week’s spread of
kindness and reminding ourselves
and one another that we are all
human and we are doing our
absolute best with the challeng-
ing circumstance. May our first
response always be a kind one.”

“To be part of the community
initiative, visit notl.com/kind-
nesscampaign, and follow along
with the town on Facebook,
Twitter and Instagram for news
information and daily sugges-
tions on ways to spread kindness.

Kids can participate too.

A social media challenge is
invited to print the activity sheet,
available on the campaign website,
and share the fun you have partic-
ipated in, and even make it a
family affair.

The town is also asking the
business community, churches,
and other people or organi-
zations with digital signs, bill-
boards, or lawn signs, to display
kindness messages throughout
the week, such as Shine Light,
Spread Kindness, Kind-
ness Matters, Be Kind Always.

Choose Kindness, or Spread
Kindness, as a visual reminder
to our loved ones.

Take a picture of your sign
and email it to kindnessmat-
ters@notl.com or post it to so-
cial media, tagging the town
and using the hashtags #NOT-
LShinesLight #NOTLSpreads-
Kindness.

Local Staff

Queen Street was not busy Sunday afternoon, except for
the gelato and ice cream stores. (Photos by David Gilchrist)

Picnickers enjoyed the tables in Simcoe Park Sunday, but
by Monday evening, the province was prohibiting the use of
picnic tables.

Get your sneakers ready for
the step challenge

Local Staff

With outdoor exercise on
the list of things we can do
during a pandemic, the town
is planning a revival of its popular
step challenge.

Set to launch on June 1,
it will be open to anyone
who lives or works in Nia-
agara-on-the-Lake. Registra-
tion will open for both
individual competitors as well as teams
of four on Tuesday, May 18.

“What better way to promote
positive physical and men-
tal health than to get outside
and walk our community’s
picturesque neighbourhoods,
parks and trails,” says Lord
Mayor Betty Drews. “You can
be sure to see me out walking
and participating in this chal-
lenge, and I invite you to do the
same. Let’s get stepping, Niaga-
ra-on-the-Lake, and be sure to
wave hello to steppers from a
safe distance. Stay healthy, stay
safe.”

The Niagara-on-the-Lake
Step Challenge took a hiatus in
2020 due to the pandemic. Al-
though COVID-19 remains
an ongoing concern, a town
news release says: “We are
confident this year’s competition
can proceed safely, with individ-
uals and teams collecting steps
on their own while maintaining
a safe physical distance from
people outside of their house-
hold.

This year, the town is
looking to surpass the 2019 achieve-
ment of together amassing
more than 14.5 million steps.

Bylaw officers were at Queen’s Royal Park Sunday. CAO
Marnie Cluckie says they had people yelling, sweating
and spitting at them, frustrated over the confusion of
what they were and were not permitted to do in parks.

“The town will continue to
work diligently to implement
and adhere to provincial regula-
tions and requirements as they
become available, and to com-
municate these to the public.”

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Please spend this week choosing kindness

Local Staff

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Kindness.
NOTL Brownies meet online and explore careers

Brenda Ferguson
Special to The Local

The 2nd Niagara-on-the-Lake Brownies have been online since January in virtual weekly meetings. It has been an outlet for us to continue fun activities while learning, exploring and remaining safe during the pandemic. It has been important for us to continue our meetings for the girls in the unit, as well as the guiding leaders.

It hasn’t been without challenges, of course but we have all remained positive about our experience. “I feel like I have learned more in the last few months of online meetings than I have in the last few years, with all the research I have done for the meetings,” said Bobbi Epp, or Sunset Owl as we like to call her. “Meetings on World Thinking Day, Black History Month, World Landmarks and more have taught me so much, and it has been nice to see the girls without their masks on,” Epp said.

“I really liked doing our yoga meeting,” said Maansi Gandhi-Malhotra, while Millie McGrochian said she is always excited for Brownies and that she enjoyed building her robot. We do all miss being together in person. “I liked when we got to go on walks and did our community scavenger hunt for Halloween,” Emilia Epp shared. However we all agreed it’s still fun to get to do crafts together online. “It still feels like an adventure,” said Emily Ferguson. “I love that I get to see my friends and learn about so many things.”

“The best part about Brownies is that no one is left out,” Carmelina Peca expressed. “I feel safe and happy at Brownies.”

We have spent the last few meetings exploring different careers. It’s great for the girls to see that no matter what their dream is, it is always possible. We have many guests planned to join us virtually to talk about their careers and to show the girls that they can be anything and do anything, and that there are many paths that can lead them to their dreams.

We have learned about what it is like to be a doctor in today’s world from Dr. Debbie Flaherty. We also had the privilege to have Penny Coles join us for a meeting to discuss journalism and what it means to be an editor. We are so appreciative of all of our guests past and future. They have all made an impact on the girls and who knows? We may have a future journalist among us!

Emily Ferguson

Emily Epp

Maansi Gandhi-Malhotra
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BUSINESS HAS NOT STOPPED. IT SHIFTED.
Tennis Club seeing boom in members ready to play

Mike Balsom  Special to The Local

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Tennis Club has welcomed a record number of new members for this summer. According to president Hugh Dow, about 50 newcomers are ready to swing their rackets at Memorial Park. But as of last Friday’s announcement from Premier Doug Ford, it’s highly unlikely they will be waiting a few weeks longer to step onto the courts.

“Late (Friday) night the town advised us that all facilities were being closed, including tennis courts, effective immediately,” Dow tells The Local. “We’re hoping that by May 20, unless the provincial order is changed or modified by then, that’s the date we’re looking for.”

With or without a border, colour graphics optional.

Dow, who took on the president’s role last October, isn’t all that surprised by the delay. After many conversations with town CAO Marnie Cluckie, the club was ready to get things going soon, albeit in a modified way.

“We were just sort of ramping up, with nothing formal in place,” explains Dow. “We normally get things going, depending on weather, in early to mid-May.”

Those plans, of course, are now on hold.

With two new courts going in at Memorial Park, this could have been a big year for the club. The courts take the place of the beach volleyball court near the entrance to the park, which was removed last year. They are currently awaiting final surfacing, known as colour coating, and installation of the nets.

“We’re very excited about that,” Dow notes. “It’s been literally a 10-year dream to have these new courts. We’ll make us the largest hard court facility in the entire Niagara Region. Some of the other clubs have clay and hard courts, but we’ll have six hard courts. It will become a pretty important component of the town’s facilities.”

The club has already been through a pandemic season, and has learned how to adjust to the demands of the times.

“We had to put COVID protocols in place,” he says of the 2020 season, “and as various protocols changed and were modified we adapted to them. But throughout the entire season we had things in place such as separate entry and exit gates, social distancing. Many people wore masks on the court until they started to play. The protocols were observed by everyone.”

As someone who has been involved with or observed the club for over 10 years, Dow notes that the social aspect of tennis in NOTL is a huge part of the experience. Much of that was missing in 2020, and will most likely continue to fall by the wayside this summer.

Dow, who joined the club in 2011 after moving here from Toronto, had previously been involved with tennis clubs in the big city. He can’t remember another tennis club that has been so socially motivated.

“We’re a very socially-oriented club,” Dow avers. “The social aspect of it has historically been an important component of how we operate. We have somewhat of an older demographic, which is obviously a factor. The majority of play; probably 85 to 90 per cent, is doubles play. And as a result our social events have been extremely well-attended.”

Traditionally, Monday night matches are for the men’s league, women’s league is on Wednesdays, and mixed doubles matches take place on Fridays. Dow says that this year there are already 75 men who have signed up for Mondays.

“When you’re just sort of ramping up, with nothing formal in place,” explains Dow, “we normally get things going, depending on weather, in early to mid-May.”

The club professional Shawna MacFarlane has already had over 50 people taking lessons with her this year. It’s an indication of the level of interest, and it’s been quite noteworthy, but it all came to a crashing halt (Friday).”

The decision by the province to curtail activities such as tennis and golf has left Dow and the other members of the club’s board baffled. He feels often the people who make decisions such as this one don’t necessarily have a good understanding of exactly what happens in these athletic endeavours.

A visit to the club’s website, though, shows that positive thinking reigns supreme. A list of events begins on May 29 with a club social and a mixed round robin tournament, and even includes the annual Tennis Ball dinner dance on Sept. 17. Dow admits that there may be a bit of a question mark on some of the early season events.

“We made it clear that these dates are really tentative,” he says, “and really depend on our own judgements and obviously what the town and the province have in store for us.”

“We have a really strong board this year,” Dow continues. “It’s a really strong team. We have a lot of things to wrestle with, but I’m really pleased to see how everybody is so involved and really does their part.”

Of the delay, the board is resigned to the fact that there’s not much they can do about it.

“We’re just going to have to accept it.” Dow says. “We’re looking forward instead of looking back, though, and with the new courts hopefully available we’re going to have a good season ahead of us.”

Author talks Jennifer Robson ~ 14+

April 20 @ 7 p.m. – 8 p.m.

Join us in welcoming Jennifer Robson as our next author in our 2021 Author Talk Series! Enjoy an evening with author Jennifer Robson from the comfort of your home as she talks about her book “Our Darkest Night”. Although she’s missed last year. We are in terms of playing to the demands of the times.

The Local Tennis Club is closed until the province and town says it can open for the season. When it does, it will have many new members ready to play, says club president Hugh Dow. (Mike Balsom)
PEARSON, SHEILA ALMA (SAMS)—It is with heartfelt sadness that the family of Sheila Alma Pearson announce her passing on Tuesday, April 13, 2021, at Meadows of Dorchester, Niagara Falls, ON. Sheila was born on April 17, 1930 in Gaspe, Quebec. Beloved wife of the late Frank Sr. (2004). The simplest pleasures in life, spending time with family, brought great joy to our mother. She will be greatly missed by her children, Frank Pearson (Barb), Cathy Pearson, Gary Pearson (Bev), Amy White (late Bill), Diane Robert (Roger) and Donna Rotondi (Ello), grandchildren; Rachel, Frank, Scott (Robin), Ange, Jamie, Jess, Calvin, Carly (Casey), Jaclyn and Evan and eight great grandchildren. Predeceased by sisters; Eileen and Marina and brother Cyril.

Mom lived with dignity and grace throughout her long battle with dementia. The family would like to express our deep appreciation to the Meadows of Dorchester, especially the staff of Primrose Garden for their years of compassionate care.

Private family arrangements in the care of MORGAN FUNERAL HOME, 415 Regent St., Niagara-on-the-Lake. For those who wish, donations can be made to Meadows of Dorchester. In lieu of flowers, Mom would love for you to enjoy time as a family at a picnic or an outing. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com

In Loving Memory
Jessie Thomson

Forever held dear by all fortunate enough to be part of her circle of family and friends.
Six years have already passed since April 21, 2015.
There is a link death cannot sever, Love and remembrance last forever.
Forever missed by John and family, Janice, John (Sue), Jim and the grandchildren, Andrew, Lindsey, Megan, Kaitlyn and James.
COMMUNITY MINDFULNESS

While the COVID-19 outbreak is affecting communities around the world, as a professional real estate advisor, I am continuing to represent clients who want or need to buy or sell a home during this time. While some of our physical real estate shops are not open or are operating with limited staff, I am still working hard and conducting the business of real estate. Though many of the ways we operate are changing, rest assured the global Engel & Völkers infrastructure we have in place provides us the added capabilities of interacting with each other and our clients instantly via chat and video conferencing — along with offering virtual showings and paperless online transaction management. As a company and as individuals, we are being diligent in protecting ourselves, our families, our clients and the communities we serve by following an abundance of caution and taking precautions to slow the spread of the Coronavirus including washing our hands, practicing social distancing and avoiding large crowds, by cleaning and disinfecting objects and surfaces in our homes and shops, and working with our sellers to do the same in the properties I represent. I am eating healthy, exercising, getting plenty of sleep and received my first Vaccine on April 12th. I am also educating myself and those who depend on me of the facts of this pandemic. I fully appreciate that this is not business as usual — or life as usual. With compassion and understanding that everyone is dealing with a new, hopefully short term “normal”, I am remaining positive, present and prepared to do what is necessary to personally navigate what lies ahead while also connecting with my clients, partners and others who may need to hear a calming voice or receive a helping hand. I am here and available to help if you need me.

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