Large crowd applause draws ire of deputy lord mayor

Demolition permits denied for proposed subdivision site

Mike Balsom
The Local

The vote effectively put a halt on any plans Benny Marotta’s Solmar and Two Sisters Resorts have for demolition or relocation of any of the structures on the properties at 200 John Street East and 588 Charlotte Street. That includes the Calvin Rand summer house, the main stables and barn and the carriage house, some of which Denise Horne, the town’s heritage planner, recommended that council approve for demolition with conditions.

By 4:30 p.m., at least 60 people had already gathered inside the Anderson Lane community centre, hoping to secure a good seat for the 5 p.m. start time. When auditorium doors opened at 4:40 p.m., it was clear town staff seriously underestimated the expected attendance. The portable wall had been pulled almost fully closed to divide the auditorium in half, and fewer than 100 chairs had been set up.

As residents continued to roll in, staff opened the portable wall and distributed more chairs. By the time the meeting began, it was standing room only for the 5 p.m. session. When auditorium doors opened at 4:40 p.m., it was clear town staff seriously underestimated the expected attendance. The portable wall had been pulled almost fully closed to divide the auditorium in half, and fewer than 100 chairs had been set up.

As residents continued to roll in, staff opened the portable wall and distributed more than 200 more chairs, but still it was standing room only by the time the meeting began.

To the surprise of those in attendance, Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa opened the proceedings by declaring a non-pecuniary conflict of interest as defined by the town’s code of conduct. "It’s due to the proximity of my primary residences to the subject properties," he told council. "So, in an abundance of caution, after consultation with the town’s integrity commissioner and my own independent legal counsel, I am declaring this conflict of interest."

Before walking out of the meeting, Zalepa handed the chair to Deputy Lord Mayor Erwin Wiens.

Wiens’ first order of business was to remind those attending that according to the town’s bylaws, as chair, he had the right to expel or exclude anyone who displayed improper conduct.

"This is a large room with a lot of people," said Wiens. "This isn’t a sporting event, where somebody can cheer for the side they want to win or lose. The chamber is supposed to be a solemn place where order and democracy takes place. If the meeting gets out of hand, we will take a break and move out to an anteroom until our bylaw officers bring the room back to order."

Wiens would end up making good on his warning later during the four-hour session.

Horne was first to speak, outlining the estate’s historical significance as well as the importance of the Dunnington House that is to be demolished.

The meeting was concluded.
Coun. Gary Burroughs told The Local he is focusing on the work he was elected to do.

A statement emailed to The Local on April 20 from St. Catharines lawyer Sullivan Mahoney said that “builder and philanthropist Benny Marotta has been cleared by Niagara police of any wrongdoing after he gave a local councillor a donation to cover campaign expenses from the October municipal election.” On March 4, the statement continues, “Marotta made the contribution to Councillor Gary Burroughs, instructing him to use the amount allowed for municipal campaigns to clear up any outstanding election debts, then donate whatever was left over to his church. Burroughs accepted the contribution but changed his mind later and returned it to the Town’s CAO.”

Burroughs told The Local he did not know what was in the envelope when it was given to him. If Marotta had said then it was a campaign donation, “I would never have taken it. I would have said my campaign is over. I’d already sent some money back to a donor because I didn’t need it,” Burroughs said it wasn’t until the next day when he tried to return the money that Marotta said it was for his campaign, and when Burroughs told him it was too late, and that he didn’t need it, Marotta said to give it to the church, which Burroughs declined.

The councillor says at no time was any favour asked of him. Marotta said the same to The Local, that he had not asked for any favours. Marotta’s statement says he hopes Burroughs is also cleared “after council asked the town’s Integrity Commissioner to review the councillor’s conduct in the matter.”

Marotta went on to explain some of the controversy over his proposed developments. He “raised concern over a small group of residents opposed to growth in NOTL who have tried to divide the community,” his statement from the law office says.

“No and my family are committed to helping Niagara-on-the-Lake become a vibrant, growing community that not only preserves its character and heritage but enhances it for future generations,” he added. “This is a jewel in Ontario and we only want it to shine even brighter. Sadly, some people don’t like others who have a vision.”

With two ongoing and controversial issues regarding Marotta development proposals before councillors and the public, Burroughs said in his recent statement that he doesn’t believe he has a conflict of interest resulting from the matter between him and Marotta, and he will continue to take part in discussions and votes.

“The NRP investigation is now complete,” he told The Local Tuesday. “At this time, I will continue to focus on the important work at council and doing the job I was elected to do.”

No word on when or if Integrity Commissioner inquiry to start
Crowd applauds denial of demolition permits

Continued from page 1

cated at 176 and 200 John Street East, both parts of the estate. These are rare and unique designed landscapes by pioneering landscape architects Howard and Lorrie Dunnington-Grubb,” said Horne. “They were known to design landscapes as a series of outdoor rooms and nooks, each distinct with its own character.”

Horne added that the Rand Estate represents a cultural landscape with a high level of integrity, a measure of how well a property’s heritage attributes continue to be preserved over time. Horne recommended preservation of the landscape and most of the built heritage on site to match the area’s approach. At the same time, Horne recommended that council approve demolition of the summer house and the main residence, including the stable and barn, as a last resort due to the substantial alterations of the buildings over time, which have diminished their relationship to their earliest state.

Of the 28 items in the Solmar application, Horne’s heritage report recommended that council approve 22 items. Those rejections included a number of applications for the removal of trees and shrubs as well as for the removal of the boundary wall and brick pilars at the 200 John Street East entrance and a proposal to construct a roadway through what is known as the pan-handle into the planned 171-home subdivision.

There were eight items in the application that Horne’s report recommended for approval under some conditions, including the demolition of the summer house and the main residence, the stable, and barn.

Premi, a lawyer from St. Catharines’ firm Sullivan Mahoney representing Solmar, was next to the podium.

Referring to the citizen organization Save Our Rand Estate (SORE), Premi claimed that despite the animosity between the two groups since 2018, there actually is a lot of common ground.

It was clear from her presentation, as well as from her colleague David Reilly’s, that one of the major differences between Solmar and SORE is Solmar’s insistence on adapting the existing pan-handle as the entrance into the subdivision. To complete the work would require removing a number of trees and destroying much of the Dunnington-Grubb pool garden, Reilly explained. Those proposals would be commemorated, though didn’t fully explain how.

He also pointed out the development of the site as a series of outdoor rooms and nooks, each distinct with its own character.

Landscape architect Brien Marotta then spoke with more detail on the pool gardens, before turning the mic back to Lyons to wrap up the SORE presentation.

“They’re asking for permits today, but you will find out later what the mitigation looks like and which trees will be saved,” said Lyons. “The only way those two things can be seen together is if you deny the heritage permits sought by the company. Your decision will then be appealed to the OLT (Ontario Land Tribunal) and joined with the planning act applications. They will have all the expert testimonies.”

She suggested that if council adopted Horne’s recommendations item by item, Marotta would appeal the town’s refusal to his heritage application. And she warned that if they accepted Horne’s recommendations in full, Solmar would “probably demolish the Rand house, the barn and stable complex and the pool garden tomorrow.”

That again drew more applause from the spectators, again prompting an admonishment from Wiens to the crowd.

Wiens and other councilors had questions about the added cost that would be involved for the heritage applications to be heard at next year’s OLT hearings. Lyons insisted that the costs would be minimal.

The meeting moved on to the public delegation portion, with former NOTL resident Alan Wink as the first speaker, focusing on the property’s uniqueness in the country. After a short break, he was followed by Nancy Macri, who didn’t have a presentation, but used her podium time to question Wiens about the heavy handiness of his decisions.

Macri’s challenge to the deputy lord mayor once again drew applause, and Wiens again admonished the crowd, pointing to one person in particular and asking town staff to remove him. NOTL Fire Chief Jay Pluto and a colleague then walked down the aisle to speak with the resident while council took another short break. When they returned, a good portion of the crowd had left, but the gentleman who had been asked to leave was still there. His name was Ted Baker of Ricardo Street, Lyle Hall representing the Niagara Foundation, conservation activist Gracia Jane, via video conferencing, all spoke out against the Solmar application.

Coun. Sandra O’Connor put forth a motion that council consider all 25 points of part one and all five points of part two of Solmar’s heritage permit applications as two separate votes.

On the first vote, refus- ing each part of the application related to 588 Charlotte Street, including demolition of some of the buildings, Coun. Tim Balasadi, Gary Burroughs, Maria Mavridis and O’Connor overruled Wiens, Wendy Chergopita and Nick Ruller 4-3 (Coun. Adriana Vizzari was absent from the meeting).

The second motion to deny the removal and widening of the boundary wall opening and the pillars at 580 Charlotte Street and to remove healthy trees along the boundary wall was passed unanimously. Both decisions were met with applause from the crowd.

Following adjournment, Lyons expressed a satisfaction about the outcome to The Local.

“This matter was going to go to OLT anyway,” said Lyons. “Without some kind of access, they can’t really develop a site. They would have appealed that anyway.”

Although a large crowd arrived early for the meeting, there were still people left standing at the special council meeting, which was held in the community centre to accommodate a crowd.

Couns. Sandra O’Connor, Nick Ruller and Maria Mavridis, the town’s director of community and development services Kirsten McCauley, Lord Mayor Gary Zalewa be- fore he left the meeting, Victoria Steele acting as town clerk, and Couns. Wendy Chergopita, Gary Burroughs, Erwin Wiens and Tim Balasadi.

(Photos by Mike Ihahom)
At Q Lounge, 124 on Queen last week Tanya Peterson, her husband Jordan Morrison, and fellow NOTL artist Ron Clavier opened an exhibit of sixteen canvases lining the sides of the corridor leading from the hotel’s Queen Street entrance toward the lounge and bar.

Alana Hurov, director of marketing at 124 on Queen Hotel & Spa, told the small group of guests at the opening that from the moment she saw that corridor, she envisioned it filled with beautiful art, and she was delighted to have the three local artists involved in the exhibit. Peterson’s paintings, Morrison’s photography and abstract water images of Clavier’s works greet visitors to the hotel and lounge, with the exhibit curated by Peterson.

During their introduction at the opening, Clavier spoke of Niagara-on-the-Lake as a theatrical and musical centre, as well as the wine-making and culinary culture, and said he would like to see the town also become a visual arts centre, with town support.

Art exhibit open at Q Lounge

Walk your dog for a good cause

Heritage Trail committee members are planning a Paws on the Trail four-kilometre dog walk on Saturday, May 20, to collect donations for trail restoration. Last year’s successful event (pictured above) was a Fun Run/Walk and Dog Walk, but this year the event is all about dogs, and includes dog-themed activities, such as dog massages, a dog kissing booth, dog photographer and dog communicator. Check-in is at Memorial Park at 9 a.m. The cost is $45 for up to two dogs. May 20 is also Dog Rescue Day, and there will be a dog rescue organization onsite. Registration is limited. For more information or to register visit heritagetrail.ca/get-involved.php.

Artists Jordan Morrison, Ron Clavier and Tanya Peterson at the opening of an art exhibit at the Q Lounge at 124 on Queen. (Penny Coles)

Tanya Peterson curated the corridor of art at the Queen Street hotel. (Mike Balsom)
Jeleel Stewart was crushed by a forklift in just like a Jamaican! to smack those tiles down us in a game of dominoes at Mori Nurseries. He joined with all who knew him.

Of undivided attention, love communicating, laughing and singing and incredible hos-fer while travelling across home.

In November, he invit- his home-style cooking. the end of the week he’ d cook who struggled to keep up. At providing a helping hand with others who struggled to keep up. At the end, he knew how to cook big pots of soup to share with coworkers who appreciated his home-style cooking.

Returning home to Ja- maica in November, he invit- ed my friend Jordie Godwin and I to visit his family at home.

The following February, he took us up on his of- fer when he returned, his left hand was crushed by a forklift in a workplace accident. He underwent a three hour sur- gery while the surgeon at- tempted to reattach severed nerves and tendons. It was a painful time, mentally as well as physical- ly. Having only arrived a few weeks prior, he had no mon- ey, no place to stay, or to send home to his fam- ily. He was unable to prepare meals with one hand. The isolation, boredom and anx- iety of being alone for nine to 10 hours a day was unbear- able before smart phones and he could not afford phone cards to communicate with his family back home.

Members of the commu- nity helped him with meals. We raised funds to pack a barrel of food to ship to his family in Jamaica to help them get through the winter. After three months, Stew- art returned home, where he continued physiotherapy and was partially compensat- ed by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) for two years.

Despite the intense phys- iotherapy, he was unable to regain the use of his hand and fingers. The injury left him with permanent damage and chronic pain.

In 2010 he received a let- ter from WSIB. They stated that because he could conceivably find work at a gas bar in Ni- agara because he still had one working hand — this despite the fact that he lives in Jama- ca and would not be able to pass a medical exam for work approval with one functioning hand. The controversial policy that guided their deci- sions is known as “deeming.” In WSIB’s deeming process, they can reduce or eliminate benefits based on the idea that workers could be re- ceiving wages from a job that they do not have.

Astounded at the WSIB decision, Godwin and I re- assured him that we would get him through until the is- sues were resolved, thinking it would be two to three weeks at the most. Instead it became a 16- year nightmare.

The relentless pain and inability to care for his fam- ily led to severe depression in the following years. Ten years ago he left us a phone message that he was ready to end his life. His wife Susan lived in constant fear, wor- ried about the future of the family and losing the love of her husband.

They had to make impos- sible choices between send- ing the children to school or feeding the family. Despite our financial support, the three oldest children, Kesar, Cheryanne and Jamie, were unable to finish high school due to the costs of tuition, supplies and transportation.

He developed diabetes a few years ago. Unable to afford proper nutrition, his health began a precipitous decline.

Trying to navigate the WSIB system has proved to be impossible for all in- volved.

It was a whole other level of ongoing trauma for Stewart and his family who must live with the conse- quences of unfair Canadian policies. Communication is extremely difficult. Trying to feed a family and pay rent takes priority over cell phone data, and even then the ser- vice can be unreliable.

Who is responsible for this mess?

Jane Andres

The Local

I heard his booming voice before I saw him. It was in 2007 at a Sunday night church service for Car- ribbean farmworkers. His deep voice caught my atten- tion among the congregation’s enthusiastic singing, and I saw him, arms raised to the heavens, eyes closed.

I recognized him as 33-year-old Jeleel Stewart, with his thick accent and a warm, friendly, ver- bally skillful conversation a few weeks prior. He had been looking over a map of Jamaica in the bummy kitchen with me, telling me about his family and his church back home. It was his first time work- ing in Canada, digging up and potting trees and shrubs and preparing them for ship- ping up to Toronto.

Leno Mori, Stewart’s em- ployer at the time, says in the documentary Migrant Journeys, he has been an excep- tionally good worker for us to have those people work here.

The Jamaica people are tremen- dous workers. They’ll take a shovel and do heavy work, hard work, and they’re terrif- ic. Without them thereby we would have those people work here.

Stewart was brimming with enthusiasm about his job and how he was going to work in Canada. His co- workers spoke very highly of him, calling him a natural worker. They spoke very highly of him, calling him a natural worker.

He had been looking for work in Canada, digging up and potting trees and shrubs and preparing them for shipping up to Toronto. He had been looking for work in Canada, digging up and potting trees and shrubs and preparing them for shipping up to Toronto.

In May, only two months after we met Jeleel, we watched as he left Canada for a few years ago. Unable to attend the event at the Centennial Arena in Virgil at 9:15 a.m., and write to MPP Wayne Gates at wagates.co- np.gov.on.ca. Ask for justice for Jeleel Stewart.

Jeleel Stewart after he was injured and before he returned home to Jamaica. (Jane Andres)
Hidden Corners: Appalachia behind the scenes

Owen Bjorgan Special to The Local

Over 13 months. That is the length of time it has been since I first hit ‘re-record’ in Northern Virginia in the United States, to when I hit ‘publish’ Monday, for a full-length documentary.

Filming the documentary took only a week and a half, but the remainder of those many days have taken the skeletal structure of the documentary to be shaped and molded. During the past year I interviewed and filmed more than 100 people, and recorded entirely by myself, the video footage.

I then edit the colour and sound. Video editing is one of the most difficult and challenging parts of the process, but also the most enjoyable. Editing allows me to control the pacing and tone of the story, and to create a narrative that is engaging and compelling.

During the editing process, I refine the footage, adding music and sound effects to enhance the storytelling. I also make decisions about how to organize the content, ensuring that the final product is cohesive and well-structured.

Making the fifth episode of my documentary was a challenging and rewarding experience. I am committed to delivering high-quality content that resonates with audiences and inspires them to learn more about the world we live in.

I hope that you enjoy watching Hidden Corners: Appalachia, and that it provides you with a glimpse into the lives of the people and places featured in this documentary.

Owen Bjorgan

Donald Combe Special to The Local

In Sam and Kate (Netflix, 2022), with Sissy Spacek and Dustin Hoffman, a mother and her daughter and a father and

somewhere behind the scenes of the video, with no one around.

Continued on page 7
**Local LETTERS**

**Why does town even consider King St. proposal?**

With the proposal to build an enormous hotel on King Street, the Marotta group once again has the residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake up in arms, and it is no surprise.

What we are presented with here is a flagrant violation of the spirit and the laws of good planning. To suggest for a moment that a commercial building of this size and intensity has any place in a residential neighborhood is sheer folly. It makes a mockery of the procedures which need to be followed when a proposal is placed before the town.

It shows no bounds and makes no apologies for its rapacious destruction of green space and historic artifacts or for its predatory demands for rezoning and the countless variances and accommodations which would be required. It takes no notice of the community into which it intends to insert itself.

It is an insult to all who love this town. The time and effort required to go through the process of rejecting this preposterous monstrosity is a complete waste of taxpayers’ money.

What if a developer were to propose converting to industrial and building a rendering plant on or around this property? Would the town still be obliged to carefully review these absurd ideas as if they were for a moment desirable or feasible?

There is no precedent that we are aware of in Niagara-on-the-Lake for property with Institutional zoning, surrounded by residences, to be re-zoned to commercial. The activities and traffic surrounding a hotel with bars, restaurants and event spaces will extinguish the peaceful enjoyment of home and gardens in countless residences for blocks in every direction from “ground zero.”

There is no benefit to the town or its people, only to the owner. Local hotels are already importing offshore workers because there is insufficient staff to run them properly. Where would this one find the workers it would need to serve its guests? “Inn” is a complete misnomer — the word in French denotes a small shop. It has come to mean outrageously expensive and exclusive and defiantly not small.

There is no way to attenuate the destruction that this outrageous enterprise would bring to the precious life of this town. If this takes root here, there is no way to prevent its metastasizing to any other residential area in Niagara-on-the-Lake. It would be an unacceptably vile precedent. To this request there is only one possible response: an unequivocal NO.

*Ron Simkus*

Jim Reynolds and Pat Hartman

**NOTL**

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**Travelling ‘one of healthiest activities’**

I am writing to express my deep concern about the disrespectful and bullying behaviour exhibited by the acting chair, our Deputy Lord Mayor, during the recent committee meeting.

Regardless of one’s position on the matter being discussed, it is never acceptable for those in positions of authority to use their power to intimidate and silence residents.

During the meeting, the acting chair repeatedly warned residents in a belligerent and authoritarian tone to refrain from showing any emotion, even on an important matter. This kind of behaviour is dis-appointing and undermines the democratic process.

Additionally, the acting chair abruptly stood and ordered bylaw to remove a resi-dent who allegedly applauded a fellow resident expressing their views. This type of behavior is unacceptable and shows a lack of respect for the opinions of others.

The acting chair’s con-trolling and accusatory be-haviour towards delegates was also concerning. It is import-ant for those in positions of authority to lead by example and exhibit professionalism, respect, and civility when in-teracting with others, espe-cially when dealing with sen-sitive or controversial issues.

It is my hope that the act-ing chair will undergo meeting management training and sen-sitivity retraining to improve their behaviour and commu-nication skills. We deserve a council that is willing to listen and engage in respectful dia-logue with residents.

*Allan Bisback*

**NOTL**

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**Another look at the approved 2023 budget**

**LETTERS**

A new line item in the regional column? I don’t know where or how, but residents are now going to pay that tran-sit tax as a new levy from the region. Isn’t that a tax increase and are we supposed to get mudd at region for this? Parking revenues are going to stay behind and get buried in the Town’s now expanded operating budget to pay for new employees and their sala ries. That’s not a very transparent process at all.

*Ron Simkus*

This was included in the weekly dock area update from Ron Simkus, and printed in The Local with his permission.

**Local LETTERS**

**Behaviour at special council meeting disturbing**

I just when you think we’ve got it right, it sounds totally off on a different set of spea-kers. Back to the editing studio, again, and again, until I get it right.

Last but not least, at this point I have watched my documentaty about 15 times. It is missing just one element to fi-nally fill in the cracks and make the story flow as smoothly as the beautiful Chattooga River of South Carolina. It requires narration, which I write out by hand and then record into a high-quality microphone. This is where my important and pertinent research of the land-scape comes into play, and can be presented in a logical mes-sage for the final cut.

I like to look at my Hidden Corners creations as a band who puts out albums. Each al-bum has a slightly different feel or vibe to it, yet it will always have hallmark signs of who created it. All episodes share a classic nature documentary theme but with a highly cu-rated blend of professionalism and blatant informality. I strive to create something that adults and kids can both get some-thing out of, like Sharks! There are passionate scenes about protecting biodiversity, spooky moments of adult hu-mour, and pointed monologues about conservation and the scientific importance of those beautiful mountains. In this episode, I recognize the histor-ical weight of this trip, as many people around the globe were not permitted to travel for near-ly two years straight, and I ar-gue that travelling is one of the healthiest activities our species can do for global societal health and awareness of wild areas.

It’s me — unfiltered, un-apologetic, and pruned to inspire — just as the world’s wilderness areas do for us. It is available for free on my YouTube channel, Owen’s Hiking And Adventures. Enjoy!
A Niagara-on-the-Lake author has had his first published book make the shortlist for the Crime Writers of Canada Awards of Excellence in Canadian crime writing.

T. Lawrence Davis, known locally as Terry Davis, has recently published *The Pale Horse*, a mystery that draws on the many years’ experience he had working as a groom at thoroughbred race tracks, running his mother’s thoroughbred horse farm, and as a breeder of thoroughbreds, until he could no longer see that being his future. “I finally realized horse farming was not the long-term career for me,” he says.

He has travelled several educational and career paths since then, eventually retiring to Niagara-on-the-Lake, but he says writing has always been in his blood. He began his first novel more than 50 years ago, although that is not the one that would eventually be published. Despite spending a lot of time on it over the years, “when I finally sat down and finished it, I realized I could do better.”

*The Pale Horse* was started in retirement, and took about two years to write and another year to refine, working with an editor at Friesen Press, a self-publishing company that offers levels of expertise of which Davis took advantage. He also relied on the help of several readers to produce the most polished book possible before releasing it to the public, he says.

While waiting for feedback from those who will read the book, he is “wrenching,” he admits, making the shortlist for the best first crime novel has helped calm those nerves somewhat. “It certainly makes all the effort of writing it worthwhile, from the first draft through to when it was published,” he told The Local.

Davis was also pleased to receive a positive review from Kirkus, an online review journal, which called *The Pale Horse* “a winner... an intense, gripping racetrack drama.”

In addition to his time working with horses in various capacities, Davis obtained a bachelor of science in agriculture at the University of Guelph, but was not accepted to the veterinary medicine program as he had hoped. So instead he went back to work as a groom before returning to school, earning a bachelor of arts degree from McGill University in Montreal with a major in history and political science.

After five years of working in “all aspects of running the farm, from foaling mares and preparing yearlings for the horse sales in Toronto and Saratoga, to making hay and caring for the farm’s 26 horses and small herd of beef cattle,” Davis decided to pursue his true passion — writing — and applied to the journalism program at Sheridan College.

“I decided being a journalist offered more possibilities in terms of a pay cheque than creative writing,” he says.

That was in 1984, and just days after being accepted at Sheridan, he was on the road, driving a panel van packed full of his belongings from Victoria, B.C., where he had been about to enter a creative writing program, to Oakville, in time to start classes at Sheridan.

“It worked out well for me. I still enjoy writing,” he says.

Davis lists the jobs he has tackled in addition to his work with horses: news reporter, editor, photographer, darkroom specialist and layout artist for a weekly newspaper in Alberta; managing editor of magazines and association newsletters; jobs in communications; and manager of strategic communications with Parks Canada.

But the most recent years, which included retirement in Niagara-on-the-Lake to be closer to his daughter and grandchildren, and seeing his novel come to fruition and receive positive affirmation from the Crime Writers of Canada, may be the most rewarding. That, he says, “felt really good, to look at that list and see my name at the top of it.”

Some very successful authors have been on that list, including his favourite, Louise Penny, whose books are set in the beautiful Eastern Townships of Quebec, a place Davis knows well from his horse training days.

The whodunit is set in the beautiful Eastern Townships of Quebec, a place Davis knows well from his horse training days. The plot involves a thoroughbred trainer brutally murdered in his Oakville apartment on the same day that one of the thoroughbreds he was training died at the track. The trainer’s wife becomes the primary suspect.

As the case is being investigated by a detective and her husband, the vet at Woodbine, another murder is discovered similar to the first one, and the couple rush to solve the crime before the killer strikes again.

With *The Pale Horse* published, Davis says his next step will be to promote the novel, starting with a book signing. It will be at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library on May 3, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., which he describes as “sitting by the fireplace,” greeting locals who are interested in his mystery/thriller novel.

Also in his future is a sequel to *The Pale Horse*, he says, although he has been distracted recently by also trying to write down his family memories, and those passed down through other family members. The book will be available for purchase at the library, $20 for a paperback and $30 for a hardcover. It is also available in hardcover and paperback formats through Friesen Press, Amazon, book stores and ebook retailers. Davis says the easiest way to purchase it is to visit his website at tlawrence-davis.ca/bookstore.html.
Franklin Arbuckle, a Canadian illustrator who painted over 100 covers for Maclean’s magazine from the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s. "While he was busy building up this post-war Canadian consciousness," said Basciano, "he was travelling across the country to see the prairies and meeting many people." His art reflects the outside world of landscapes and cityscapes, including an untitled work of Queen Elizabeth’s coronation procession in 1953, on display at RiverBrink.

"Then you have Frances-Anne and she is working from inside the home," said Basciano. "They have two children, they graduated art school and started painting right away, but she is working out of kitchens and bedrooms and looking after the house and the children." She doesn’t ever depict people at all, however, just by dropping a piece of fabric, or moving the position of the chairs, she evokes the idea of presence. You can tell it’s a lived space.

On display are many of Johnston’s favourite artifacts, such as a jug painted with black cherries, a violin, a hippo statue and an armoire. "Johnston painted these into her interior landscapes," said Basciano, "purposefully showing you with her own objects, a self-portrait. Many of the paintings in this collection include these items multiple times.

Another interesting piece in the exhibit is by Johnston’s husband, Arbuckle. He painted a window panel which was once installed on a Canadian Pacific Railway train in a luxury car, which had domes and panoramic views of the landscape. The grey squares show where the windows once were. Here, Arbuckle shows the flowers around Mount Assiniboine. The diagonal lines break the scene into winter, spring/summer, and autumn, offering movement and bringing nature into the abstract.

"It’s a jewel," said Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, former board member at RiverBrink, referring to the museum. He, several board members, locals and out-of-towners were in attendance for the private curated tour by Basciano.

Brett Sherlock, international consultant for Christie’s Canada, is a local and a regular at RiverBrink. "The permanent collection is fantastic. They have all the great Canadian painters and their sculptures. All the Group of Seven is represented." Allan Magnacca, RiverBrink president and acting treasurer, said "we’ve waited several years to have it confirmed that we would be chosen to have this collection on display."

RiverBrink director and curator Debra Antoncic explained, the exhibition was several years in the research and planning before the Ottawa Art Gallery sent out a call for expressions of interest in late 2020. "I submitted a letter of intent indicating our interest in hosting. The grant was approved in 2021 and then we began to plan to host the exhibition, including all the permissions for loans from other galleries and the logistics of shipping."

The application process also included an examination of the building to determine that it had the right conditions, including temperature control, to house a collection of this magnitude.

The exhibit is travelling only to one other site, Sarnia, near the end of the summer. "We are a jewel in the community," said Magnacca. "We are outside of the Old Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and from the outside it looks like a home, and that’s what it was. It was Sam Weir’s home, and he buried out front. People don’t recognize us as a place to come and visit."

Visit RiverBrink for A Family Palette is an enriching experience, and an enjoyable illustration of Canadians. The collection can be viewed at 116 Queenston Street in Queenston, Wednesdays through to Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Bill Auchterlonie: ‘a superhero to the end’

Penny Coles
The Local

Bill Auchterlonie, known to his friends and family as a lovely human being and a wise man with a great sense of humour, died April 5 in the Niagara Falls Hospital after an ongoing struggle with his health.

He was well known for his long-time stint as a local radio host, beginning in 1986, a job that took him to Britain and Europe visiting art galleries, and where he met Heather. He was a man with a radio voice — and it was at CKTB in St. Catharines where he first appeared.

Auchterlonie lived an interesting life that included an eclectic and successful career that took him down several paths. In Niagara, he became well-known for his long-time stint as a local radio host, beginning in 1986, a job that would often come in for a piece of pizza. He would often come in to chat. It was at the time he had a radio show, and Mazza recalls him using his sense of humour to help promote the pizzeria in downtown Virgil, telling his listeners that Mazza was the guy “who delivers”, and about the Cadillac he drove on deliveries — Mazza was known for the old Toyotas he has driven over the years.

He was also interested in politics, working on campaigns behind the scenes and taking a run for municipal council himself in 2014, believing it was time for a new wave of councillors. He was a little ahead of his time, with the majority of councillors elected that term. He was chair of the town’s parking committee before it was disbanded, and was an outspoken critic of the expensive pay-and-display system purchased, with meters that often did not work, a problem that continues today.

Martin Mazza, who did not get elected to council that year, refers to Auchterlonie as a person who is the ultimate in being “best friend material” always listening, asking questions, and giving advice while not sounding as if he is giving advice. “He would never say ‘you should,’” says Mazza. “He would just talk casually and offer tidbits that you didn’t even realize at the time were advice.” Mazza, owner of Italian Pizza and Subs, first met Auchterlonie when he came in for a piece of pizza almost 30 years ago. They quickly became friends, and he would often come in to chat. It was at the time he had a radio show, and Mazza recalls him using his sense of humour to help promote the pizzeria in downtown Virgil, telling his listeners that Mazza was the guy “who delivers” (that was his political slogan), and about the Cadillac he drove on deliveries — Mazza was known for the old Toyotas he has driven over the years.

He had a heart of gold. He did anything for anyone, but he never looked for accolades or even a ‘thank you’, says Mazza. “And when Rita came into my life, when we got engaged for coffee Bill would always invite her and make her feel part of our friendship.”

He was also a smart man, Mazza adds, “very knowledgeable about a lot of things, but also people-smart. He had a real pulse for the community.” When Mazza and Auchterlonie were both running for council in 2014, “he helped me, to the point where he was sacrificing his own campaign. I still feel guilty about that. He plugged me every chance he got, and I think that hurt him.”

Mazza says Auchterlonie was always very appreciative — of his family, his friends, and of life in general — and he was inspirational to others.

“He always made me wish I could be more like him. He was a super human being.”

Auchterlonie, Mazza added, “didn’t wear a cloak or anything, but Heaven has gained a superhero. I miss him already.”

The Local and then The Lake Report, where he offered a look at what was going on in the area.

In recent years, Auchterlonie was likely best-known for his astrology columns. When he had been interested in astrology from an early age, a visit to Stonehenge while he was with the Art Gallery of Ontario piqued that interest, and when combined with his radios show and background, it wasn’t surprising that in recent years he devoted his spare time to an astrological and marketing podcast. He also had a column first in The Local and then The Lake Report, where he enjoyed it — he could always make people laugh.

He saw the funny side of most things.

When Auchterlonie started his astrology column, he told The Local that while his health issues could be considered a bit of bad luck, “I’d say I’ve had good luck, I’ve come out of it.” If his luck didn’t carry on through his last bout of illness, it certainly did through his life, with the love of his family and respect of those who knew him best.

Friends who posted their condolences on Facebook described him as “a lovely human being,” “a beautiful man,” and “a truly remarkable man who had a larger-than-life impact on his family and his community.”

As one family member said, “May you rest in peace in the stars you read.” He leaves behind his siblings, step-children and grandchildren who are heartbroken, says Heather.

A celebration of his life is being planned for June.
Buzz on Pollinators: Attract butterflies to your garden

Sandra Ozkur
Special to The Local

Just imagine your backyard with butterflies lighting up your garden from morning until sundown. By integrating native plants and flowers you will be inviting a host of beautiful butterflies and moths to visit your garden adding splendour to your landscape and hours of entertainment.

Creating a pollinator garden with the right plants and flowers will quickly attract many species of these beneficial insects.

Creating a butterfly garden is much easier than you think — it is as simple as selecting the plants butterflies are most attracted to. Pay attention to the plants you are buying this spring. Many garden centres will label plants that are good for butterflies, bees and pollinators. It is best to choose native plant species which include trees, shrubs and grasses in addition to native perennials. Some of the best flowers are black-eyed Susan, butterfly milkweed, coneflowers, bone-set, wild columbine, Joe Pye weed, cardinal flower, ironweed, or bee balm.

Shrubs and grasses also serve as host plants that provide food at the caterpillar stage. Butterflies enjoy the heat so plant your flowers in warm sunny locations. Canadian Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths and skippers) are adapted to plants which are native to Canada. It is important to have a good variety of blossoms to suit their individual needs. Native plants are often referred to as wild-flowers, and provide the necessary food at just the right time to coincide with the life cycle. Insect Lepidoptera have different needs during each stage of life: the egg stage, the caterpillar stage, the chrysalis/cocoon and then the adult stage, so make sure you have something blooming from spring until fall.

There are three categories of Lepidoptera and it is easy to identify them by the following traits.

- Butterflies — fly during the day, have brightly coloured scaly wings, and rest with their wings closed. Their antennae have a club-shaped end, and they generally pupate in a chrysalis (a protective hard shell). Moths — often have less colourful or hairy wings, are more active in the evening or night, and rest with their wings open. They pupate in soil, leaf litter, or under bark with little or no cocoon (protective shell made of silty threads). Their antennae are generally smooth and slender but may have featherlike branches.

- Skippers — are smaller, may be hairy or smooth, and dart about in the daytime like butterflies do.

To start the reproductive cycle, butterflies lay eggs on a host plant that is suited to the insect’s dietary needs. Once the egg hatches, the caterpillar feeds upon that plant until it is ready to form a cocoon. In this protective shelter, it will grow wings and transform into its adult stage as a mature butterfly or moth. Only adults feed on sugar from nectar, which they find in flowers. Their taste receptors are on the feet, and their tongue (proboscis), is rolled up until it lands on a flower. The strawlike tongue then unrolls and dips deep into the base of the flower to suck up the nectar. While searching for nectar, pollen from flowers sticks to their scaly or hairy bodies, thus pollinating the plants as they fly from one to another.

Some butterflies are plant-specific and are only adapted to certain shapes or varieties of flowers. For example, a monarch butterfly can only feed on a milkweed plant, and the spicebush swallowtail butterfly’s host plant is the spicebush. When arranging your garden, be sure to group similar coloured plants together in clumps to make it easier for the insects to find them. Organize your garden with taller plants at the back and shorter ones at the front for best viewing purposes.

Also place some large stones in your garden that will stay warm. This will provide a safe place for the butterflies to rest and bask in the sun. Be sure to leave some open soil spots so rain or sprinklers will create little puddles for the butterflies to drink from. Avoid being a super tidy gardener, for it is better to leave some fallen leaves and branches around to provide habitat for nesting and overwintering. Hibernating butterflies spend the winter in hollow trees or amongst dead, rolled, folded or webbed leaves or grass.

Once the butterflies arrive in your garden, taking photos and looking them up on the internet is a great way to educate yourself about the different types of butterflies. Their distinctive colours and patterns are a survival mechanism meant for camouflage or to deflect predators. Some butterflies have stripes that simulate veins in a leaf or the stripes on a plant. Inchworms often look like twigs or twisted dead leaves. The wings of moths mimic the pattern of the tree bark they are resting upon. The bright colours on the wings of butterflies are hidden when they are at rest and the wings are closed, but when they open their wings, the bright patterns and colours signal their presence, not always for escape but to create little puddles for them to drink from. That is why you often see patterns that look like eyes on their wings. Even though they have this natural protection, they are still the choice food for birds, so large populations are necessary because only a few survive.

Besides natural predators, butterflies, moths and skippers are increasingly under threat from diminishing habitats, chemicals, pesticides, contaminated water and climate change. Creating a butterfly garden is a win-win situation — you provide refuge for these creatures and in turn you get to enjoy their beauty and pollination services. Beautiful butterflies of Southern Ontario

Large: Canadian tiger swallowtail, black swallowtail, giant swallowtail, monarch, vicerey, admiral
Medium-sized: Cabbage white, orange sulphur, checkerspot, crescent, comma, question mark, buckeye, wood saty, peary-eye, ringlet, wood nymph, painted lady, mourning cloak
Small: skipper, copper, elfin, hairstreak, blue, aruze, brillatia, northern crescent, painted lady

Tip of the week: Create a butterfly garden in an area protected from wind so your butterflies won’t be blown away!

Good time for bird-watching along Niagara shores

David Gilchrist
The Local

This is an interesting time of year for bird-watching.

Most of the ducks that winter in the Lower Niagara River have headed north and the warmer weather brings others through the area as they migrate from southern areas.

The turkey vultures have been a common sight, hovering over the area performing aerial acrobatics. Mer-
Crossroads students share message of friendship

Sharon Burns
The Local

The gymnasium at Crossroads Public School was packed to the gills with parents, family and friends, hooked by Go Fish: A Musical Play for Young Singers. Actors and singers alike entertained the audience for nearly an hour last Thursday evening.

The Local spoke with Holly Neuhof, Grade 3, and her cousins Adrian Poapst, Grade 3, and Annabelle Poapst, Grade 1, about Go Fish, written by John Jacobson and Annabelle Neuhof, Grade 3, and her sister, Annabelle.

Holly, cast in the leading role as Tiger Shark, described the storyline of Go Fish as, “basically, a shark, me, wants to be friends with the fish, but the fish are scared of the shark. Then this great white shark comes and tells everybody that ‘you’re all different and you all can be friends.’ It’s about more than that,” added Adrian, one of the clown fish — the play contains important messages about diversity and inclusion. “I just play with ribbons,” piped up Adrian’s six-year-old sister, Annabelle.

“We had rehearsal every first break since January,” said Holly, who has also acted in other school plays, and performances with Yellow Door Theatre, a performing arts group for youth and teenagers in Virgil. Holly memorized her lines with the help of her family and by looking at the script “a lot,” she said. The play opened with sharks playing the card game Go Fish. Tiger Shark wanted to be friends with other creatures in the sea, but Hammerhead, played by Owen Thorntimbert, told her “some things don’t mix, some things we can’t fix.”

Tiger Shark met an eclectic group of would-be friends: a zebra fish covered with spots because her extreme make-up didn’t come out quite right, an octopus with only seven arms, a starfish without a leading role, a blow fish with allergies who puffs and wheezes before every line, a tuna fish who can’t carry a tune in a bucket, and a clown fish who can’t tell a joke.

“Sharks don’t need friends,” explained Zebra Fish, played by Taylor Jonah. But Tiger Shark wouldn’t give up and sought the advice of “the one who can shed some light in the dark, the one and only, Great White Shark.”

The stage was colourful and the action chaotic, especially when eight crabbly crabs crab-walked across the stage, grumbling and complaining about everything from being bored to being hungry and tired.

There were delightful seahorses square dancing to a caller, played by Alice McGeechin. In the Colours of the Sea Dance, Annabelle and several other characters performed a ribbon dance, emulating the motions and currents of the ocean floor.

It seemed as though every student from Grades 1 to 3 was involved in this production in some way. If they weren’t on stage, they stood on the risers and lent their voices to the musical numbers.

The program listed many staff and students as part of the production team and crew, with tasks such as costumes, props, and the set, as well as student crew and assistants. Artwork of creatures of the sea were posted on the walls around the gym.

It is Great White Shark, played by Harrison Pohorly, who helped Tiger Shark to see that she was already surrounded by friends who are beautiful in their uniqueness. “If we are all alike, how boring it would be. We are all are as different as the fish in the sea,” he said. Go Fish was a rousing performance, thoroughly entertaining, with an important message which Holly explained. “Everyone has something that makes them different,” she said. “We are all different and we can all be friends.”

A group of ‘crabby crabs’ entertained with their crab-walk across the stage. Tuna fish Elliott Chard, zebra fish Taylor Jonah and tiger shark Holly Neuhof learn they can be different and still be friends.
Queenston Women's Chorus marks 20 years

Mike Balsom
The Local

The Queenston Women's Chorus celebrates its 20th anniversary this Saturday, April 29, with a spring choral concert at Trinity United Church in St. Catharines.

The concert will include spirituals, some Beatles tunes, songs from movies such as The Greatest Showman and La La Land, and some well-known numbers from popular Broadway musicals.

As a special treat, the 26-member choir will be joined by two past winners of their music scholarships. Both Alexandre Brillon and Emily Draper will be taking solos during the concert.

Drillon just completed his studies in musical theatre at Sheridan College. This summer he will be travelling to London to study in musical theatre at Garden City Productions. And in high school he was named Most Outstanding Theatre Performer by a group of adjudicators.

“I competed in the festival starting when I was 10,” says the Fenwick resident, now 22 years old. “It’s so exciting to get to sing with them this weekend, to be a part of this performance. I hope they’re excited to see me as well.”

Choir conductor Lisa Cosens Brillon is indeed thrilled to welcome both her son Alex and Emily back for the show. On Saturday, Drapper will be singing Somewhere That’s Green from Little Shop of Horrors.

“Shes so great,” Cosens Brillon says of Drapper, who now works in St. Catharines as a hairstylist. “She sang in the past with Oh Canada Eh and with Garden City Productions, and she competed last month again at our festival.”

“I was performing a lot before COVID” Drapper says. “I did Oh Canada Eh’s Canadian show for its 25th anniversary, and I was in Legally Blonde for Garden City Productions. And in high school at Welland Centennial I was in Bring It On.”

Drapper calls herself a musical theatre geek, one who takes every chance she can get to travel and see shows that she loves. During COVID, when performers were left out of work for months, she decided to take a bit of a U-turn and pursue a more stable career.

“One thing that she always has is a goal. And she always has a plan. And if she doesn’t have a chance to get back on stage, she keeps on, socially distanced,” she says. “Tom had so many emails from members who really missed singing, it gave me support, so I started it up again.”

Singtrig with each other is about community, adds Cosens Brillon. With membership including women of all ages and from all walks of life, it’s a big part of their social activity.

“Singing has been shown to improve a person’s sense of happiness and well-being,” she says. “You sing with your body, with your soul. It really expresses something from your inner being.”

She lost a few members who decided to retire after the pandemic interruption, so the choir is in a bit of a rebuilding phase.

“We had 36 members at our peak,” she says. “It was hard to fit all of them on the stage at once.”

Besides funding the music scholarships, proceeds from the choir’s performances have gone to support organizations such as Newark Neighbours, the Resource Association for Teens (RAFT), Wellspring Niagara and Nova House.

Part of this weekend’s proceeds will go toward funding a commissioned work that the Queenston Women’s Choir will be collaborating on with a similar women’s choir in Uxbridge.

“They’re also celebrating their 20th anniversary,” she says. “This is something we’ve never done before, so it’s really exciting. Commissioning a work is really expensive, too.”

Tickets for the 7 p.m. show are $20 for adults and $15 for students, and will be available at the door.

St. Saviour’s holds Coronation Tea service for Queen

The weekend of May 6 and 7 will be a time of celebration at St. Saviour’s Anglican Church in Queenston for the Coronation of King Charles III, says member Vicka Lowenberger.

On Saturday, May 6, St. Saviour’s is holding a Coronation Tea in the church hall at 1:30 p.m. The tea will include tea sandwiches, scones and clotted cream as well as a variety of coronation sweets.

Tickets are $30 and may be purchased in advance from Lowenberger at 905-262-4145. On Sunday, May 7, in lieu of a regular service, St. Saviour’s will be holding a Coronation Service featuring much of the music and prayers from the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth, says Lowenberger.

There will be hymns from her coronation and an anthem will be performed by the Newark Singers under the direction of organist Michael Tansley.

St. Saviour’s is at the corner of Highland and Princess Streets in Queenston.
Half an hour into a clean-up of the One Mile Creek pollinator garden to mark Earth Day, Nigel Young-Chin began to fill his second green garbage with plastic bags, wrappers, cardboard and other refuse.

Friday was the first day of an annual spring rejuvenation of the site at the corner of King and John Streets in the Old Town. Young-Chin was one of a handful of volunteer members of the Friends of One Mile Creek (FOMC) who came out on the sunny afternoon.

“We usually do this on Earth Day,” said Nigel’s wife, Klara Young-Chin, “but with the rain expected Saturday, we changed it to today at the last minute. Normally we would have had a much bigger group coming out for this.”

“Those who did show up got busy pulling out dead brush from last year to make room for new growth of riparian species this summer. “We have to be careful while we’re doing this to not tread on the young plants that are starting to come up,” Klara told The Local, gingerly stepping into the garden. “And it’s still early, so a lot of bugs are still wintering under the leaves, so we leave most of the leaves on the ground for now.”

In October 2020, with the support of the town, Parks Canada and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, the friends group planted 450 native shrubs and plants in the park area just across King Street from the Pillar and Post Inn. The planting was made possible with a restoration project grant from the conservation authority and a donation from a nearby landowner.

About 50 volunteers participated in that planting, undertaken to replace some of the 214 trees along the creek lost to the emerald ash borer infestation.

One Mile Creek weaves through Old Town neighbourhoods before pooling in Lansdowne Pond at its outlet to Lake Ontario. It’s a relatively small creek that drains a highly urbanized watershed area and flows through mostly private property.

According to the Friends of One Mile Creek website, trees intercept rainfall in their canopy, slowing down runoff and allowing water to infiltrate the root zone,
Native shrubs and plants replaced diseased trees

Continued from page 14

assisting in flood control and biodiversity. The strip of trees and shrubs that grows along the shoreline acts as a buffer between land and water, improves water quality and contributes to wildlife habitat.

As well, the pollinator plants in the area, Klara said, attract beneficial insects.

Pollinator gardens attract bees, butterflies, moths, flies, beetles, bats, and even hummingbirds. These creatures transfer pollen grains from the male anther of a flower to the female stigma, fertilizing the plant and later yielding fruit and seeds. It’s a crucial process in the ecosystem.

And the 100-member-strong friends group has plans to extend the coverage of pollinator plants across John Street.

“We have a major benefactor,” she revealed Friday, “who is helping us fund the project. We are going to plant wildflowers, native trees and native shrubs this summer along the Heritage Trail corridor between John and Paffard Streets. And we hope to continue that on the trail behind The Promenade. It will be a beautiful pollinator corridor.”

The group, which also worked with the conservation authority to create a landowner’s stewardship guide for residents living along the One Mile Creek watershed, has presented its plan to the town’s Heritage Trail committee and is awaiting final approval from council for this next step.

That stewardship guide, available at friendsonemilecreek.org, represents an important aspect of the group’s mission.

“It’s about proper education,” says Klara. “That aspect is important. We’re here to help residents along this path to do the right thing. If they plant the right species that build their roots deep into the soil, that protects the edges of the creek from erosion and ensures a better flow of the water through town.”

And over the 20 year existence of the FOMC they’ve certainly been there to help the wildlife that inhabits the creek where it winds through the area that borders the Butler Barracks.

“The garbage blows down King Street and gets caught in the brush,” Nigel explained, “and we pull plastic out of the creek, which is a spot where ducks will often bring their young.”

Looking around the site, he estimated that this year’s cleanup would yield about two full garbage bags, about the same as in previous years. Then he passed and pointed up to a stand of mature trees bordering the east side of the creek.

“If you look closely you can see a huge nest up there,” he told The Local. “There’s a hawk that nests up there every year. She often looks down on us while we’re doing our work.”

Though the hawk wasn’t peering down on the group last Friday, when she returns, she’ll surely be thankful for their efforts.

Klara Young-Chin, Kathy Goulding and Nigel Young-Chin were the three members of the Friends of One Mile Creek who showed up Friday for the cleanup.

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Customer Appreciation Day
Every 3rd Wednesday of the month, everyone saves...
20% off most products*

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Bring this ad in for 10% off lunch on any Tuesday or Wednesday in April
Tomorrow’s Voices wins Impact Niagara award

Mike Balsom
The Local

Tomorrow’s Voices, a non-profit, barrier-free children’s choir led by executive director and founder Todd Green of St. Davids, was recognized last week by Chair Jim Bradley with a 2023 Niagara Impact Award.

Green and board chair Carly Snider accepted the award at the State of the Region event held at the Niagara Falls Convention Centre. They were chosen as the winner in the non-profit category, one of six categories in which a total of 140 nominations were put forth.

“Tomorrow’s Voices was selected as this year’s recipient for their dedication and commitment to creating a space for children to explore music, build relationships and raise their voices together in song.”

“I was surprised,” said Green, a university professor who teaches at Brock’s Goodman School of Business. “We think that what they said about us really stood out to the committee. They were chosen as this year’s recipient of the Impact Award.”

Tod Green, centre, holding the award, joined by Mendelt Hoekstra, who conducts the choir, standing by the excited youth choir members. (Supplied)

Tomorrow’s Voices began their weekly rehearsal. (Supplied)

The Local, one of those parents, Kay Waboso, described Tomorrow’s Voices as “a warm and open space where equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility is centred. Such a safe, nurturing and engaging space for children and youth.”

Tomorrow’s Voices began as an offshoot of sorts from Green’s research work at Brock. While working on his paper “An Exploration of Socially Responsible Music Consumption,” he met vocalist, songwriter and bass player Murray Foster of Great Big Sea. Foster suggested an idea to offer music training as a team-building activity for corporate entities.

Out of that came Choir Nation, through which Green, Foster, and Momentum Choir director Mendelt Hoekstra brought choir sessions to organizations such as KPMG, Clubb, Indigo and Canada Goose.

Green soon realized that the benefits that adults were getting from singing together would easily translate to children, and Tomorrow’s Voices was born.

More than just giving children a chance to sing, though, Green wanted to bring opportunities to those who might not have access to extra-curricular music activities.

“I contacted Community Care St. Catharines and Thorold, and we connected with Big Brothers Big Sisters, too,” he explained. “Cascaren started referring kids to us, and Brock’s Marilyn I. Walker School agreed to host our rehearsals for free. At first we had four kids signed up, and within a week we had 26.”

That commitment to offering opportunities to less advantaged children continues today. Some of the kids currently involved in Tomorrow’s Voices are in foster care, and others have been diagnosed on the autism spectrum.

Since that 2017 beginning the choir has operated, Green estimates that at least 150 kids aged seven to 18 years old have benefited from Tomorrow’s Voices activities. Besides their weekly gatherings for rehearsals, they’ve also had the opportunity to perform on stage, backing up big names in Canadian music, including Serena Ryder, Chantal Kreviazuk, Dan Mangan, Royal Wood and Scott Helman.

After the awards ceremony, Green took the award to the choir’s weekly rehearsal.

“‘The kids were so excited about it,’ he says. ‘Every single kid wanted a picture with the award, and with me. We had a bunch of group photos, too. Their excitement made winning the award even better. It made me feel like we’re really doing a great thing with this.‘”

Before Tomorrow’s Voices takes a break for the summer they will be rehearsing for a May 13 concert backing the Niagara Youth Orchestra, with some of the ticket proceeds from that event going to the choir. In the past, some of the funds raised have been put toward post-secondary awards and bursaries to the choir’s graduating kids.

And for the fall season the choirs from all four cities are collaborating on a group project.

“The kids are learning We’re Going to Be Friends by the White Stripes,” says Green. “All four cities are learning it, and they will film it. Then we’ll piece together a video of all of them performing. There are some other works in progress, too.”

And they’re sure to be seen singing the national anthem at the Meridian Centre in St. Catharines at the start of a few of the Niagara Ice Dogs games when their new season gets underway.

Green sees the Niagara Impact Award as a testament to the hard work and dedication of the organization’s board of directors, music directors, volunteers and supporters.

“It certainly inspires us to continue our work and make an even greater impact for kids in Niagara, across the province and nationally.”

The woman with the golden voice

Angela Seeger singing Golden Eye. (Photos by Rosie Gowsell)

The Local, one of those parents, Kay Waboso, described Tomorrow’s Voices as “a warm and open space where equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility is centred. Such a safe, nurturing and engaging space for children and youth.”

“The Local, one of those parents, Kay Waboso, described Tomorrow’s Voices as “a warm and open space where equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility is centred. Such a safe, nurturing and engaging space for children and youth.”

Seeger...Angela Seeger. While the name may not be as iconic as the movie character James Bond’s, her voice should be. Seeger performed at a sold-out house on Saturday night at Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery singing the iconic songs of the James Bond films in a show called 60 years of Bond.

The crowd was full of Bond fans, who were not only entertained by Seeger’s chameleonic ability to sound like many different performers, but also by her wit and humour. Close your eyes and you would swear you are in the room with singers like Shirley Bassey, Carley Simon, Adele. But Seeger isn’t just an imitator, she also brings her own take to songs originally performed by Duran Duran, Tom Jones, Paul McCartney and Sam Smith. The audience was invited to wear their most James Bond-like attire and they did not disappoint. The crowd was full of smartly dressed Bond and Bond girls.

Seeger has an uncanny ability to draw her audiences into her performances with her banter and charm until they literally give her the shirt off their back.

Here, Seeger is wearing a gold sequin jacket a woman in the audience gave her to wear while singing Goldfinger.
The Rangers faced an aggressive attack by the IEM Spartans out of Brampton. They lost 62-33, with Pylypiw actually calling the game off when one of his players was hammered roughly to the ground by an opponent. It was a style of play the girls weren't ready for. "They were violent and foul-mouthed," Pylypiw said of the Spartans. "They got into our girls' heads, and took us out of our game. They were even high-fiving each other when our girls went down with injuries. It really shook us up."

The Rangers didn't have much time to lick their wounds, though, as they were scheduled to be back on the court at 6 p.m. Saturday to face the Scarborough Blues. The Blues had defeated Niagara in the gold medal game at the 2022 Ontario Basketball Association finals. "We really bounced back as a team," Pylypiw says. "We had a great all-around game, everyone worked hard, and we even had a chance to apply some new aspects to our system, and it worked well."

The Rangers came out on top 59-36, led by a 21-point performance from Froese, 16 from Wallace, and 10 points from Kyla Pylypiw. On Sunday afternoon the Rangers put their 2-1 record on the line against the Toronto Lords with a chance to qualify for the gold medal game at 4:30 p.m. And they had to do it with only nine of their 13 players.

Another strong start saw Niagara up by 12 early in the game, but Toronto fought back in the second half to close the gap to a single point. The Rangers were able to hold on, even with some of their key players missing, for a close 37-33 victory.

For the champion-ship game the shorthand-ed Rangers had to go up against IEM Brampton again. The Spartans had cruised to an undefeated record, winning by margins of 16, 29 and 46 points. They pressed us all game, even when up by 35 points against us," Pylypiw says, incredulously. "And their parents kept cheering every single basket they made like it was the biggest game of their career!"

Again, the Spartans played a physical style of basketball, knocking the Rangers to the floor often and forcing a couple more players out of the game. Niagara ended up on the wrong side of an 87-35 score, but Pylypiw was proud of his squad for their hard work and the fact that they kept their cool while facing more rough play. Ava Froese was named the team's most valuable player for the tournament.

"Ending up with the trophy for silver was some consolation," Pylypiw says, "but that team was in a differ ent class than everyone in our division. They probably should have been playing in the next division." At press time, Pylypiw was expecting the Rangers to be back in action this Thursday night against the Grimsby Grizzlies.
NOTL’s Kaleb Dietsch drafted by OHL’s Ottawa 67’s

Kaleb Dietsch was both nervous and excited watching the Ontario Hockey League (OHL) priority selection draft Friday night. He was sitting in his family’s Niagara-on-the-Lake living room watching the broadcast when his name popped up in the third round, 46th overall, chosen by the Ottawa 67’s.

“I had no idea who was going to take me, or when,” he tells The Local. “I think 17 of the teams contacted me before the draft, so I wasn’t sure where I would end up.”

His father Paul adds that Kaleb’s OHL interview was actually with Ottawa via Zoom a few months ago. “They’re a top organization,” Paul says. “They shared a ton of information with Kaleb on that call. They share a facility (TD Place at Landsdowne Park) with the CFL team (the Redblacks), with high-end equipment. And they have an academy right on site where he would finish high school and be able to get on the ice every day. It was a really impressive, well-organized presentation.”

The 16-year-old Grade 10 student at Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School knows he still has to fight for a spot on the 67’s, and he knows he still has to work really hard the last couple of years, he has to start working even harder. He has the right frame of mind.

Kaleb got his start in hockey playing in the NOTL Wolves minor system. Two years ago he moved on to the Southern Tier Admirals to compete at the AAA level and to grow his game.

“It was hard leaving behind the guys I had always played with,” Kaleb admits, “but it was the right thing to do to take that step.”

He did have a chance to play at Holy Cross with some of those friends last year, as well as with his older brother Liam, a Grade 12 student who split his time last season with the Niagara North Stars AAA Under-18 team and the Thorold Blackwolves of the Greater Ontario Junior Hockey League.

Kaleb says he is ready for this next step and the hurdles he will have to jump to earn a roster spot. “The game is a lot faster, quicker, and more physical,” says the self-described shut-down defenceman. “Everything’s going to have to move at least a second faster than it did this year.”

Both father and son credit Admirals coach Kevin Rosebrugh for Kaleb’s development as a player the past couple of years. “All of his coaches there have been a huge part of his success,” says Paul. “Kevin’s coaching style is aggressive, there’s not a lot of love out there for him. It’s about preparedness. At this next step, these coaches aren’t going to be holding his hand, and he’s ready for that.”

Rosebrugh’s approach seems to have worked. Six of Kaleb’s Admirals teammates were also drafted, including two ahead of him: goaltender Isaac Gravelle of Fenwick at number 27 by Oshawa, and 15-year-old Ottawa-born defenceman Dryden Allen at number 32 by Flint.

“He’s an all-around solid player,” Rosebrugh says about Kaleb. “He’s a big body who skates really well. He’s got a good, active stick, he’s strong with the puck and makes great decisions. I know Ottawa was really happy he was still available when they got him.”

Rosebrugh compares Kaleb to a young Chris Pronger, and feels that he has a bright future in the game. “He’s gotta go and do his thing,” says Rosebrugh about Kaleb’s chance to make the 67’s this summer. “He has to play his game and be aggressive. He’s long and he moves well for a big kid. The summer will be important for him to get stronger and fill his body out.”

Kaleb is expecting Ottawa head coach Dave Cameron’s style to be much like Rosebrugh’s. The 6’2”, 176-pound draft pick will be working with his personal trainer over the next few months to be ready for camp.

“I’ll be on the ice three or four times a week this summer,” Kaleb adds. “I know I have to work on gaining a bit more weight. I’ll have to eat a lot more and stay away from junk food.”

Paul, who is co-owner of the Sandtrap Pub and Grill with his brother Matt, jokes that Kaleb can still enjoy a lot of the pub’s pizza and wings, but will have to double down on the veggies and maybe add a bit of broccoli to the toppings.

He adds that Matt is one of Kaleb’s biggest supporters. And with his nephew potentially lacing up the skates for Ottawa come fall, Matt may have to help out in at least one important way.

“Between the two of us we work our schedules out weekly,” Paul explains. “Obviously hockey is most-ly on weekends, when it’s usually much busier. But for the second year of the 2023-2024 OHL schedule, to see when they can all visit the Meridian Centre in St. Catharines to cheer on one of their own.”

Kaleb Dietsch is training, hoping to earn a spot with the Ottawa 67’s. (Supplied)
COLES, JACK (JOHN GLEN) — Jack passed away at home on April 22, 2023. Born August 13, 1933 and raised in Welland, Ontario, Jack was the son of the late Delmar Coles and Viola May Doan. Jack was predeceased by his wife, Marnie (2015) and daughter Sandra (2016). Survived by his caring daughter Julia Coles of St Catharines. Also survived by his sister Adele Hopkins of Port Colborne, sisters-in-law Carole Allen (Peter) of Hamilton, Caroline Neate of Stittsville and many nieces and nephews. He was also predeceased by his brothers Bill, Keith, Ken, Ron, Reginald, Karl, Larry and his sister Valerie Smith.

Jack was proud to have served 5 years in the Royal Canadian Navy. During that time, Jack was on an aircraft carrier, the Magnificent, and a destroyer escort, The Prestonian, as a leading seaman - sonar.

Jack was part of the original family-owned business of Coles The Mover and later was the owner/operator of Crown Moving and Storage. A Kiwanian for many years, Jack was also a Past President of the Welland Kiwanis Club and a member of the Royal Canadian Legion, Welland branch. In retirement, he worked for several years at Twenty Valley Golf Course and was affectionately known as “Fairway Johnny”.

Cremation has taken place. Family and friends will be received at H.L. Cudney Funeral Home, 241 West Main Street, Welland on Wednesday, April 26 from 2-4 pm and 6-8 pm.

Online condolences available at www.cudneyfuneralhome.com
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