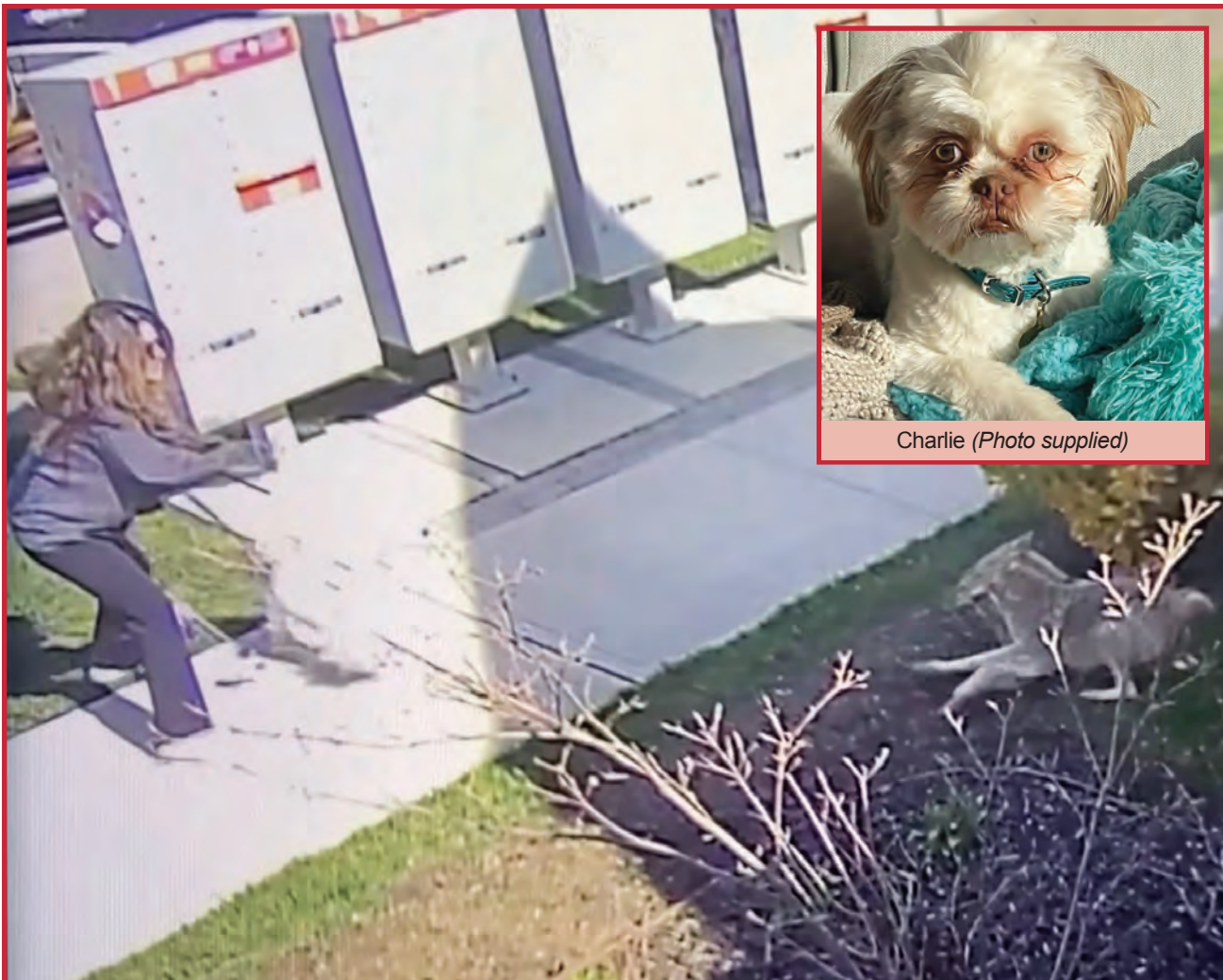




Clare Cameron's surprise announcement
page 4

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Charlie (Photo supplied)

Isabella, who asked not to have her last name published, was walking her dog Sunday morning when she realized she was being chased by a coyote, and did everything she could to scare him off. The video was recorded by her aunt. The audio reflects how terrifying the situation was. (Screenshot of video)

Pickleball players give arena a chance

Penny Coles
The Local

Pickleball players are using the indoor court at the Centennial Arena, and are happy for the opportunity to play.

It's not a perfect solution, but it's an option for those who were anxious for the outdoor pickleball season to start.

Several players were testing the new courts, and while the demarcations on the arena floor are great, they said the surface is hard on the body, and they all agreed they'd rather be outside.

The outdoor courts in the Virgil Sports Park have been closed due to a noise bylaw infraction that went to court to be settled last week. They are expected to stay closed until the court issues a decision on the matter, expected mid-June.

The court hearing was the result of one neighbour to the sports park saying the

town and the pickleball club broke the town's noise bylaw, which outlaws sounds that could "disturb the quiet, peace, rest, enjoyment, comfort or convenience of the inhabitants of the town."

Members understand that all are trying to find solutions to get players back outside, said one of the club members in the arena Saturday, and agree that recreational facilities in NOTL should include pickleball courts, for what was described as "the most sought-after sport in town."

The issue dealt with at court last Wednesday is whether the courts should be relocated, says John Hindle, president of the NOTL Pickleball Club.

There was an attempt at mediation, with compromises offered, but not accepted, he said — the complainant is only interested in seeing the club moved away from its

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Brazen coyote chases woman, dog

Penny Coles
The Local

A video showing a terrified woman and her dog being chased by a coyote has been widely viewed on social media, highlighting what is shown to be a dangerous situation Old Town residents are calling on the town to fix.

The video posted by Filomena Pisano, is of her 30-year-old daughter Isabella, who was walking Charlie, a Bison Frise puppy, on John Street near Gate Street when

she heard a horn honking behind her.

Even before she turned around, it occurred to her that the honking might be to warn her of a coyote, and when she turned, she saw one following her and gaining ground.

As it got closer, she began screaming and waving her arm, whipping part of the dog leash at it. "I tried to run quickly," she said. "I probably shouldn't have done that."

But when the coyote got close she tried to lunge at it to scare it, using her other

hand to keep Charlie behind her. But she wasn't stopping the coyote, so she turned and snatched Charlie up in her arms just as the animal leapt at the puppy, trying to grab him, and at the same time, the person in the truck who was honking jumped out and successfully chased the coyote down the street.

"I had a bullhorn and a whistle with me, but I was in so much shock I didn't think to use either of them," she said.

"He arrived just at the

right time, and scared the coyote away, just as I was picking up the dog," she said.

Charlie's saviour was local Tim Bala, and Isabella is sure if he hadn't taken off after the coyote, "Charlie would have been killed."

Her experience Sunday morning was traumatic, and has left her in shock, she told The Local Sunday afternoon.

Isabella knows the family of the young boy who lives down the street from her, she says, who was also chased by a coyote while walking their

small dog, and she is convinced the coyote knows of the presence of the dogs in the area and is hunting them. "It was preying on me and my dog. The animal knows there are dogs in the area, and he's just waiting for a small dog so he can go for it."

She says she won't be walking in that area any more, and on the same day saw another girl waking a small dog, who said she had come from Garrison Village where she lives, to walk her dog in what she thought was a safe place.

Bala says when he saw the coyote, coming around the corner from Anne Street, where townhouses built in recent years have displaced coyotes, it was sauntering.

When Bala saw a woman walking her dog, further along the street, he began honking, at first to scare the coyote away, and pulled into a driveway hoping to get it to change directions.

Instead, it just went around the back of his truck, and Bala

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Town approves coyote management plan

Penny Coles
The Local

As many residents have seen the video of a coyote attack on social media, the town discussed and approved a coyote management plan Monday night.

CAO Marnie Cluckie explained the document, called a canid management plan to include foxes, should they be an issue in town, is intended to be dynamic and modified “as we move along and as we have more best management practices,” such as documenting sightings of foxes and coyotes.

It also includes an escalation process that will become a document for staff to implement as necessary,

and, Cluckie explained, it proposes “strengthening the language in the animal care and control bylaws to better discourage wildlife feeding.”

It includes some of the challenges with euthanizing coyotes, in response to relocating or euthanizing the animals.

It explains “you really want to tackle this from a behavioural perspective,” said Cluckie.

That method has seen success in other communities, she said.

Coun. Gary Burroughs suggested staff should contact a coyote bounty hunter, who understands the situation in NOTL, and might be a good resource.

The management plan

starts with education, said Lord Mayor Betty Disero, asking “where does this process end? How far do we take it?”

Cluckie explained observation of coyote behaviour begins with sightings, moves to encounter, to unattended pet attacks, livestock loss and intended pet attacks, to an incident, an unprovoked attack on a human and then a provoked human attack, “and of course we would take serious measures,” she said.

The response to behaviour, after education and hazing, goes on to aversion conditioning, through extreme behaviour that could lead to euthanasia, Cluckie said.

Coun. Clare Cameron

noted that all councillors have been getting messages about some sightings in the community, and “there is still something sitting very uncomfortably with me, an aspect of this that feels like we are just waiting for someone to be attacked, and all of this logic kicks in, unfortunately after an incident has happened.”

Cameron said that like in a lot of situations, “all the great advice from experts doesn’t instantly make people feel okay, or feel safer.” The town still has a job of selling to do to convince people the plan is enough to deal with the current situation, she added.

“People need to feel confident where that threshold would be. Are we waiting for

a small child to be attacked? Are we waiting for a pet to go missing? Are we waiting for people to be injured physically before a coyote might be injured?”

It feels like the safety of a coyote is being considered above the safety of a human, she said.

Cluckie said she can understand that might be the perception the public has, but “we’re not. We’re just recognizing what has been effective in the past and what has been ineffective, based on best practices.”

She said there has been only one reported fatality of a human by a coyote since the 1800s.

Coyotes see small dogs as

prey, so taking measures in that regard is really important, “but rarely is a person attacked.”

Coun. Wendy Cheropita lives in a neighbourhood where coyotes have been a problem. She said she sees people walking every day “with baseball bats and other things they can hit the coyotes, with so people are going to start to get more aggressive.”

At the town’s virtual meeting Wednesday to discuss the coyote issues, “it’s important we should address the emotions,” she said, and make residents realize “we’re putting humans first.” Despite the town having discussed coyotes for months, she said, “it’s really getting worse.”

‘Brazen’ coyote needs to be removed

Continued from page 1

said, “his ears and tail were tucked down. He looked like he was stalking prey.”

He pulled out and kept honking, speeding through the neighbourhood in an effort at that point to warn Isabella. When he realized the coyote was about to grab the dog, he jumped out and started running after it to scare it off.

By then, he says, the noise of Isabella screaming and his

honking had brought several neighbours outside to see what was happening, and he thinks the commotion was enough to convince the coyote to turn and run.

“She can really scream,” he said. “She was loud, and it was blood-curdling, all while she was trying to hold on to her dog.”

He agrees with Isabella’s assessment of the timing — if he hadn’t driven by when he did, Charlie would likely have been

captured by the coyote. “I feel like I got there just in time.”

Bala was in the area to pick up his own dog, Otis, from his parents, who had been caring for Otis while Tim was away. He lives on Niven Road, just on the edge of Garrison Village, with a field beside him, and has heard all the stories about coyotes in the neighbourhood, although he hasn’t had any problems with them. He says he used to see a lot of rabbits in the area, but not



Tim Bala comes to the rescue of Isabella and her puppy Charlie, scaring off the coyote and likely saving Charlie’s life. (Screenshot of video)

this year. He believes the cycle of rabbit population, and the shortage this year, is contributing to the aggressive behaviour of the coyotes.

“To them, a small dog looks the same as a rabbit, and that’s their dinner,” he said.

The neighbourhood, he said, “is such a beautiful, perfect place to walk, but now people are afraid to. I don’t know what can be done, but now, with that footage, maybe the situation will be taken more seriously.”

Bala said he is an animal-lover, usually stopping to take pictures of any wildlife he sees, and he understands coy-

otes are appearing in urban areas because development has taken away their habitat.

“We’re displacing them, by building on their domain.”

But at the same time, they are becoming more brazen, “I think because they’re hungry.”

And in this situation, from what he saw, this particular coyote is a danger, and needs to be removed. “I think the humane society should do their part.”

Pisano says she is proud of her daughter for the bravery she showed, protecting her dog, and very grateful to Bala for coming to their rescue.

“He’s a Superman,” she said.

There is a virtual meeting today, Wednesday at 6 p.m., with Coyote Watch Canada, the Lincoln County Humane Society, Niagara Regional Police Services, and the Ministry of Natural Resources participating. No registration is required — it can be viewed online: livestream.com/notl

The town’s website says in an emergency situation with a coyote, such as a coyote cornering humans or showing signs of potential rabies, call 9-1-1 immediately. Police are authorized to handle these situations and frequently engage the Humane Society when they attend the call.

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Housing advocate asks for legal basement apartments

Also accessory dwellings for long-term rentals

Penny Coles
The Local

Scott Robinson, a Niagara-on-the-Lake resident working in development and housing advocacy, is hoping the town will take some positive steps toward remedying the housing affordability crisis in town, and the lack of rental housing.

At Monday night's council meeting, he presented councillors with a "small, uncontroversial solution" that the town could adopt and which could have a significant impact on housing, without changing existing streetscapes.

Robinson was asking for legislation to allow secondary suites and accessory dwelling units as additions to existing properties, allowing for basement apartments, apartments above garages or detached rental units in a backyard.

Most commonly, he said, "these units are used for an ageing parent, for that transitional time between living independently and needing full assisted care. Or they're used for a young adult transitioning from living with their parents to independence."

The third most common use is as long-term rental units, he said, and NOTL currently has three times fewer rental units than the Canadian average. "This would help us address that inequity."

It's also an excellent compromise "for those people who are anti-development, anti-change or want to preserve neighbourhood character."

NOTL has the most expensive housing market in Niagara, and is one of the most expensive towns in Ontario, he said, with the average home sale price during the past months more than \$1.2 million. "That's crazy. That's over three times higher than what the average Canadian household can afford."

The rental market is also bleak, he added, and those units that do exist are increasingly expensive.

"Think about what that does to our demographic diversity," he told councillors.

In a presentation to the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Committee, which is supporting his request to council, Robinson said allowing secondary suites and accessory dwelling units "adds gentle density to existing and desirable streets. If just one per cent of homeowners in NOTL chose to add a second unit, it would add 800 new rental units to town, with no change to the built environment."

It would also allow for additional units to use existing town services, without the need for more infrastructure in pipes or paved roads, he added. "This is an environmental sustainability and climate change solution."

He spoke to the diversity committee members on this premise: "that you cannot accomplish your goals to have a diversity of age, race, socioeconomic status and lifestyle, if you do not first have a diversity of housing types. It is logical, for different types of people, you need to have different types of housing. You need both large and small homes, urban and rural homes, for sale and for rent, expensive and affordable. If you have only a few types of homes available, you will only have a few types of people living here."

To have a diverse population, "you need to first have a diversity of housing, and Niagara-on-the-Lake does not."

According to a recent regional economic report, "7,000 of the 11,000 jobs in town are filled by people who don't live in town," he told councillors.

"That didn't surprise me, and it doesn't sound like it would surprise Minerva," he said, referring to Chamber of Commerce president Minerva Ward's delegation to council just before Robinson's, which included discussion of the lack of affordable housing and scheduled public transportation contributing to a labour shortage in the hospitality industry.

"I've known my whole life that most of the servers at the restaurants don't live in town," Robinson said. "The workers at the wineries and the people at Vintage Inns, they can't live in town. My friends, the people I went to Parliament Oak with — while a lot of them now



Scott Robinson points to a new subdivision in St. Davids as an example of a neighbourhood that could accommodate secondary suites, with plenty of room in wide driveways for parking. (Penny Coles)

work in town, they can't afford to live in town."

And elderly neighbours that have lived in town for decades are being forced to move to the surrounding cities, because there are no options for them, he said.

Robinson stressed according to the town's Official Plan, secondary use units cannot be used for vacation or short-term rentals — they'd have to be for long-term rentals, six months or more.

Many progressive municipalities in Ontario are approving these unit types by-right, "meaning that if an application comes forward, and it meets the predetermined criteria in the zoning bylaw, it is approved by-right," he added.

Other municipalities in Niagara are well ahead of NOTL, and can be a great role-model, he said.

"In 2015, the Liberal provincial government mandated the use of secondary suites. Niagara-on-the-Lake is just way behind on that. In 2019, the Conservative provincial government mandated both secondary suites and accessory dwelling units, so Niagara-on-the-Lake is way behind on that too. The NDP also agree — it's included in their election program."

The new regional Official Plan says all municipalities must allow for secondary suites and accessory dwelling units, he added. "This is going to happen, it has to happen, and we want it to happen. Let's make it happen."

Niagara-on-the-Lake could

choose to drag its feet, put up a bunch of barriers, and continue to be exclusive, he added, but the status quo is not working. "Over the past 20 years, looking at census data, the town has continued to become more old, white and rich. To reverse the trends, we need to take action. You could lead with your values, and be inclusive."

Robinson asked for four motions from council: to amend the 2017 and proposed 2019 Official Plan to allow for secondary suites and accessory dwelling units as a permitted secondary use on all detached, semi-detached and townhouse dwellings; to create an inclusive zoning bylaw that permits these units, and sets out pre-determined requirements. If an application meets these requirements, it would be approved by-right; and that the town encourage the construction of these units by eliminating all financial and administrative barriers; and the town actively and enthusiastically encourage the construction of these units, with funding allocated to create a webpage to inform residents, and an annual advertising campaign.

The fifth, catchy step, he said, could be to celebrate. "We will have done a great thing. We will have become more inclusive, we will have allowed for growth without urban sprawl," and will be able to welcome people to live in town.

There are massive barriers that need to be addressed now, he said, including expensive site-specific amendments in the few neighbourhoods of town where secondary suites are permitted.

Zoning by-right would eliminate that, and would add "gentle density" with no new infrastructure required. "You're actually making town infrastructure more efficient."

Regarding parking, he said, answering a question from Coun. Gary Burroughs, he wouldn't suggest what the zoning requirements should be, but secondary suites would work on more than 95 per cent of properties in town, where there would be room for one more car.

"There would be some that wouldn't qualify, and wouldn't get it," said Burroughs.

"That makes sense to me," replied Robinson, adding the zoning wouldn't apply to all areas, only to those that meet the requirements as set out by the town.

He said it would be his dream that it would be a secondary use across NOTL, in all five communities and all rural properties, meeting housing needs for everyone. But details would have to be set out in the zoning bylaw, he explained.

"There are properties in NOTL where it wouldn't work," he said, specifically speaking to accessory units in backyards, such as in The Village, but there would be other areas of town where they would work.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero asked Robinson to clarify that the province and region are saying all municipalities should allow secondary suites or additional residential units, and he confirmed they are authorizing secondary suites or additional units by-right.

"I'm not asking for more than that, which is why I thought this would be an easy yes," Robinson said.

The official plan needs to be updated, to allow for what the province and region are mandating.

NOTL could choose to really drag its feet and to put up as many barriers as possible, to happen in as few areas as possible, but he said he is asking for the opposite, to use it as a tool to make NOTL as inclusive as possible and to allow for demographic changes that are desirable.

Coun. Wendy Cheropita spoke of discussions she has had with several residents living in rentals, some young and in hospitality, and some with the Shaw, who were having to leave their rental units because the owners wanted to turn them into short-term rentals, where they could make more money.

Robinson's request, Cheropita said, "is answering to me a number of things that are really critical," including keeping young people from leaving town. "I personally love this idea and endorse it 100 per cent."

"I would love to approve this in principle," she continued, and would ask to send it to staff to work out the details.

Coun. John Wiens suggested that as staff consider the details, they could include a stipulation that the secondary suite or additional unit couldn't be converted to a short-term rental for a specific time limit.

Councillors voted unanimously to send Robinson's suggested motions to staff to study.



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Chamber president talks to town about tourism

Penny Coles
The Local

After eight weeks as president of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce, Minerva Ward introduced herself to council Monday night, and spoke about what she has been working on since taking the job.

But first, she gave a brief introduction of herself, having a varied background in tourism in the Caribbean, from there to Vancouver, B.C, then to the Northwest Territories and in the Arctic, before coming to NOTL.

She began by focusing on stakeholder engagement, she

told councillors.

"I think it is critical for me to listen to the needs of our industry, businesses, and to listen and learn and to speak to people," chiefly listening, she stressed. "So I've been doing quite a bit of that."

She has also been meeting and listening to key contacts and stakeholders, she added, and has been learning about the region and the town, and focusing on raising the visibility and relevance of the chamber by providing timely and useful information to members, the business community and the wider residential community.

She has also been advocating on behalf of Chamber

members on areas of concern, such as, at the local level, short-term rental issues. At the provincial level she is dealing with the consistency of the rollout of the municipal accommodation tax, and, at the federal level, the issues of removing border restrictions, and changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, as a tool to ease the current labour shortage in the hospitality industry.

"I believe in being a sober and reasoned voice for the tourism industry, and of course responding to business needs," such as the recent job fair to deal with labour shortages in the tourism industry and the community,

but also across the country, across North America, and across other industries.

She spoke of working with industry partners such as the town, Parks Canada, and Niagara Parks Commission, on preparations for the upcoming tourism season.

"I think when we partner together, we can achieve so much more than when we operate on our own," she said, citing the Ambassadors program of providing information to tourists on Queen Street as "one great example of the talent, spirit of volunteerism, and cooperation that came out of the Shaw Guild. It was started by the town, and then handed over to the chamber."

Over the short to medium term, the key priority areas of focus for the chamber are working with the town of the rollout of the municipal accommodation tax, which has its first meeting of the governance committee set; and working, also with the town, on the development of a tourism strategy.

That would include addressing some of the conflicts between tourism and residents, she said. "NOTL is a living, breathing organism, with tourism and residents and businesses occupying the same space."

Developing a tourism strategy will provide the opportunity for stakeholder engagement, to articulate issues and iron them out. It also has to address the "carrying capacity of a destination," and not just in terms of numbers, but the "psychological carrying capacity as well," discussing the right approach for a sustainable model of tourism through the tourism strategy.

Stakeholder engagement "should be a huge part of the development of our strategy," Ward said.

"I think we get more done when we work together, forming alliances and partnerships.

I think we all want what's best for the town, our businesses and our residents, and



NOTL Chamber of Commerce president Minerva Ward introduced herself to council at a virtual meeting Monday, and spoke about some of her priorities. (Penny Coles)

Deputy lord mayor not seeking second term

Penny Coles
The Local

As Monday's council meeting wrapped up, Coun. Clare Cameron, who is also the deputy lord mayor, said she had a personal announcement to make.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said after she had spoken, "I was worried when you told me it was a personal announcement, what it might be, and my fears were realized."

With Monday, May 2, the first day to file to run for municipal council in the October election, Cameron was letting the public know — likely a very surprised public, for those who follow council — she is not seeking a second term.

"It has been an absolute honour and privilege to represent the residents of NOTL" as your councillor and deputy lord mayor," she said.

"I will leave this role with a very deep sense of gratitude to thousands of people who put their trust in me to speak up for them, for their busi-

nesses and properties, their families, their fears and hopes for the future of NOTL."

She will finish the term feeling most proud "of my

contributions to the draft official plan for NOTL, supporting the community

Continued on page 14



It was decided early in her term that Deputy Lord Mayor Clare Cameron showed she knows how to have fun, as she stomped grapes in the friendly competition at Montebello Park in 2019. (Crispin Bottomley)



I know the current state of this Real Estate market can take a tremendous amount of energy, and can be a highly emotional process. If you have any questions about our current market, or simply want to discuss your options, please feel free to reach out – I would be happy to chat.



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Local BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT: NPNG Fitness

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NPNG Fitness offers personal training, wide range of equipment

Local businessman Dave Dick was a top rower in his university days, and 50 years later is rediscovering the benefits of a good rowing workout to mind and body.

The owner of Niagara Motors was a member of the 1972-73 Brock University men's lightweight and varsity heavy eight teams winning the provincial championship in both categories which had never been done before, or since. Dick says "The team was magic, everything just clicked."

Although over the years he has kept fit by running outdoors most days, the Brock sports wall of fame has returned to rowing, hoping to compete in the World Rowing Indoor Championships in 2023, which will be held in Mississauga in February.

To qualify for his age group — he will turn 70 next year — he has turned to Scott Paines, personal trainer at NPNG Fitness, a family-owned business on Niagara Stone Road in Virgil.

NPNG has recently acquired the best rowing machine you can buy, says Dick.

He has become an admirer of Paines as a personal trainer, and a fan of his workouts, especially

on the RowERG, which is the one favoured by elite athletes.

"You get so much benefit from workouts — your I.Q. improves, your cognitive functions improve, your posture improves, you walk better, you feel better, your arthritis pains are better. If people knew how much they'd improve coming here, with Scott as a personal trainer, they'd be lined up out the door. We naturally lose bone and muscle mass as we age. Working with Scott slows down that process."

Dick says he's as excited about getting back in shape at a competitive level as he is about the possibility of qualifying. "Everyone wants to have that drive, to know you can still do it, and stand up against others."

He ends each workout on the rowing machine, where he will spend anywhere from 10 to 60 minutes. It's almost like being on the water, it feels that good. And it brings back memories. It makes me want to be competitive again."

Paines rented his gym space in 2019, and after taking longer than expected to complete renovations in the large space, held a soft opening early in 2020. He was continuing to add more equipment and finish-

ing touches in preparation for an official opening in March, "which was going to happen one day before the lockdown," he says, when provincial restrictions to COVID-19 included the closure of fitness centres.

It's been an open/closes struggle since then, but Paines is building support and membership in the community.

Dave Dick can't say enough about the help he and others are receiving from the personal trainer, and the wide range of quality equipment the gym offers.

Paines says he is a Niagara-on-the-Lake native, "born and bred," who attended Parliament Oak School and then went to Sir Winston Churchill rather than Niagara District Secondary School, as it fought a losing battle to stay open.

He loved being involved in local sports, including travel soccer, and football in high school.

When he visited Nova Scotia after high school and decided to stay, he took a job on a fishing boat. That's demanding, physical work, he says, but he missed the competition and camaraderie of participating in sports, and joined a local gym.



Pat Warren, on a treadmill, will be 77 this July. He works out at NPNG every other day, and is feeling great, he says. Scott keeps an eye on him while also watching over Dave Dick.

Upon returning home to Niagara, he became a personal trainer, and worked for some of the larger fitness centre chains, learning a lot that has helped him in building his own business, including the value of a base personal assessment for clients. He also learned some of what he wanted to avoid — he chooses to focus on individual clients' needs, rather than gouging them by pushing personal training services or long-term membership fees.

He promotes fitness work-

outs as a way to prevent injuries for those who work in physical jobs — or for that matter to help people who sit all day at a desk job. He's keen to help those who come in with a sore back or any other physical complaint, determined to show them they don't have to live with pain. "I can help you go to work pain-free," he says.

He also holds some group workouts for friends who come in and want to work out together, typically a younger crowd who push each other, and have

fun while they're at it, he says.

Some members come for the body assessment and personal training, others just come to work out on their own, but he is always willing to offer advice or guidance to anyone who wants it. He also posts a daily workout for anyone who chooses to follow it.

"In here, you can make your body better," he says. "From the age of 35, our bodies go down hill. We can help to slow that down. Just come in and let us show you how."

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EDITORIAL

Election mode straight ahead — let the games begin

Clare Cameron was impressive from the first time she stood up to speak at an all-candidates meeting in the fall of 2018.

She had the credentials, had experience from the other side of the table working in municipal services, was so articulate, and had already shown her interest in municipal issues by serving on several town committees as a resident.

At what was likely her first meeting during the election campaign, candidates were asked, since Niagara-on-the-Lake would be hiring a new CAO, what qualities they would look for. Her

answer was so spot-on, so intelligent, that the person who followed her — it might have been Dennis Dick — stood up when it was his turn to answer, and said something like, 'I'd hire her.'

When Cameron announced Monday night she would not run in the next election, it seemed to come out of nowhere. In the typical discussions that begin about this time of year about who will throw their hat in the ring, and for which position, what we hear are mostly rumours, with the exception of a few who have been open about their plans. Never did we hear any talk that Cam-

eron might not be seeking a second term — it would have been more expected to hear she was going to run for mayor, and if not this term, definitely in the future. She has represented this town well, always in a thoughtful, inclusive approach, leading quietly, and it's disappointing to hear her influence will be missing from the next council.

At the Glendale cleanup Saturday, with quite a few councillors taking part and Lord Mayor Betty Disero there to do her part, there was some joking about the only councillors not there must not be running. Maybe it wasn't a joke.

Cameron gave no explanation for her decision in the announcement she made Monday, so people will be trying to read between the lines for a hint. But she was as careful and thoughtful in choosing her words as she always is, and if the reason is there, it's subtle.

It's no secret there is tension on this council, that not all get along. That's not unique, nor are the voting blocks that emerge. If that has deterred Cameron from sitting on council for another four years, it's a shame, because she certainly seems tough enough to handle it.

She is, however, as she

said, leaving a place open for another newcomer, and by announcing her intentions early, she's giving people time to think about it.

Last municipal election, we had the largest number of candidates in memory, and more newcomers elected than we've seen in decades. It made for an interesting campaign, and an unusual four years.

In the coming weeks, with nominations open Monday, we'll hear more from those who are running for election, from those who have decided not to, and from the newcomers, or former politicians, who are ready to serve the next

four years.

While we already know Cameron's decision for next term, we can only hope the time will come that's right for her, when she might consider giving it another go. There is no doubt she would be welcomed back.

Cameron rightly said Monday night politics is not a game. It's a huge responsibility and should only be undertaken for the right reasons.

However the time leading up to an election is certainly a competition.

So let the games begin.

Penny Coles
The Local

The untouchable banks of the Niagara River



Owen Bjorgan
Special to The Local

The Niagara River is a 12,000 year old feature, where a world-class volume of water flows, falls, cuts, and flows again as it travels between Lake Erie to Lake Ontario.

I felt inclined to take the time this week to paint a picture of one of Niagara-on-the-Lake's most discrete but irreplaceable ecosystems. Actually, I am surprised I haven't written

about this in the past.

The geographical nature of the land upstream of Niagara Falls is significantly different than the features we see down below in NOTL. Upstream and closer to Lake Erie, the river is broad, shallow, and nearly level with the surrounding dry land.

At Niagara Falls, once the 3,160 tons per second of water plummets over 50 metres into the cauldron below, it moves with serious momentum through the Niagara Gorge. Given that the gorge naturally diminishes at the edge of the Niagara Escarpment near Queenston, this is where the river slows down again into its most ancient stretch through NOTL.

The cliffs on NOTL's side of the river are the oldest carved formations on the river's banks to date. That means the river bank at Navy Hall is actually a more ancient drop-off than the towering rock faces of the Niagara Gorge.

Globally speaking, with an example right under our noses here in NOTL, there exists a theme of rugged areas that have been spared development due to their inaccessibility. These riverside slopes fall into that exclusive category.

For the vast majority of land along the Niagara River in NOTL, it is a human-developed landscape of private properties and dwellings.

Such areas once hosted bloody battles over the times, from Indigenous territory feuds thousands of years ago, to the War of 1812 featuring names such as Sir Isaac Brock and Laura Secord.

However, even with such a busy landscape, the steep and wooded banks of the great river have stood the

test of time relatively uninterrupted. This often overlooked (literally from above, and figuratively on paper) drop-off into the river below serves as an invaluable habitat corridor for wildlife.

Much of this ribbon of green is simply too sheer and jungly for anyone to properly explore it for leisure or scien-

tific purposes. A lot of this forested slope also technically belongs to the various private properties that flank the Niagara River, which further occludes its importance and accessibility.

Personally speaking, the areas I have attempted

Continued on page 7



View from the couch

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

Why Didn't They Ask Evans? (Britbox, 2022) is a mini series of an Agatha Christie story with script written and directed by

the talented Hugh Laurie. The critics were not kind; however, I was charmed by this murder mystery set in springtime in the British countryside.

Donald Combe is a retired English teacher who

loves to go to movies. Until he resumes going to theatres, he has graciously agreed to share his opinions, through "short and sweet" exclusives, of Netflix series and movies for The Local.

History revisited



Tony Chisholm invited some of the key people who worked together on the Town's bicentennial celebrations in 2012 and 2013 for a 10-year reunion lunch at the NOTL Golf Club, and sat down to get caught up with (clockwise from left front) Richard Merritt, Richard Coyne, Rick Meloen, Chisholm, Dave Eke, Kenneth Gansel, Erika Alexander and Jim Alexander. (Photo supplied)

The Niagara-on-the-Lake
Local
The Trusted Voice of Our Community

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COMMENT

River a habitat corridor for mammals to migrate in peace

Continued from page 6

to penetrate and explore have revealed a multitude of unique microhabitats.

Fresh water seeps out the base of the cliff into the wide and mighty turquoise waterway. Hidden little waterfalls cascade their way down to the shore, and perhaps only flow in the spring time.

Hundreds of old growth trees dot the wall of greenery, subtly advertising their hollow chasms, fit for bird and mammal nesting sites. This is all too important, as the Niagara River water course was declared a Globally Import-

ant Bird Area in 1996, the first designation of its kind in all of North America.

This is also a relic habitat corridor where large mammals and other terrestrial creatures can migrate in peace while avoiding human conflict up above.

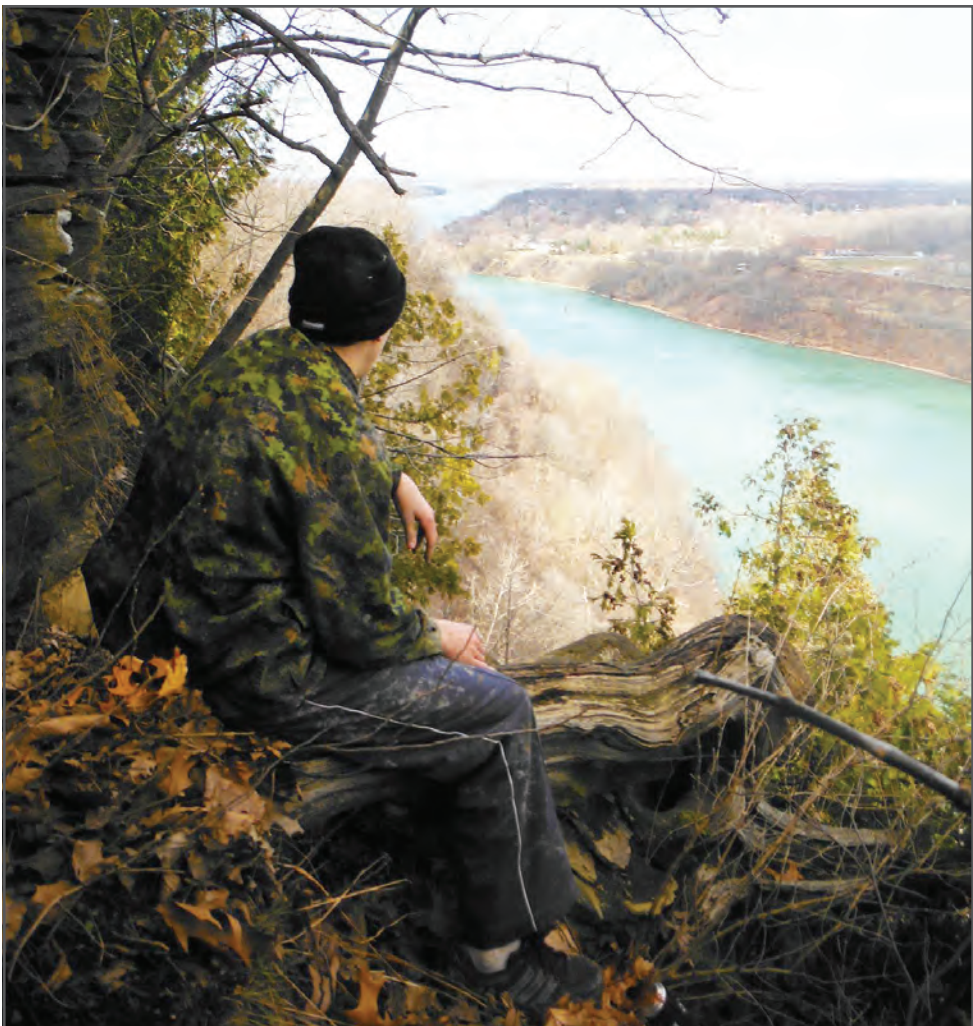
Considering how little we see of this cryptic habitat feature, we can't negate how large it actually is.

If the bank of the river in NOTL is on average 20 metres (0.02 km) high, and therefore wide, and the Niagara River from Queenston to downtown NOTL is about 11 km long, we can calculate

that this habitat feature takes up about 0.22 km squared, or nearly 55 acres of natural land within NOTL's municipal borders.

We have all driven by this natural heritage feature, or maybe we got a quick glimpse of in locations like Browns Point along the Niagara Parkway or on top of the bluffs near Navy Hall.

At the end of the day, the ultimate way to appreciate the fragile, but bold contiguity of this cliffside ecosystem is from the water, where you can see this environment for what it is worth.



Isaac Bjorgan, Owen's brother, looks downstream of the Niagara River and its associated habitats that remain on the banks. (Owen Bjorgan)

Local LETTERS

How about empathy for those bothered by noise?

I have a problem with the article on pickleball (The Local, April 20) at the sports park in Virgil. It clearly evokes empathy for the pickleball club and players, but I have always believed that the media is obligated to present a story in a balanced manner, particularly when there is more than one side involved. Why was no attempt made to obtain the position of those who live next to the courts?

We have no issue with the park beyond the pickleball courts, which are less than 50 feet from our outdoor space.

In the morning for several hours, there are as many as 40 people in the court area, 24 playing on six courts and a dozen or more waiting to play. It is beyond intrusive, rendering a relaxing morning coffee on our balcony, or enjoying some fresh air with the windows open impossible.

This should never have been located so close to people's homes, without input from those living there.

I have no wish to stop people from enjoying this game. It seems to be a great

pastime and likely provides a healthy form of enjoyment and exercise, but should not do so at the expense of the comfort of neighbours in their homes. How about a little empathy for them?

Richard Gallant
NOTL

(In response, our letter writer is correct — we have failed to find anyone willing to speak about their issues with the noise, understandably fearing the repercussions, especially on social media.)

Could trees be an effective sound barrier?

Re: Pickleball moving indoors (The Local, April 20)

Although I do not play pickleball, I totally support the members who get outdoors and play this game.

From the article it does sound as though the members have put money and effort into making the area better for the players. I do not know if this only relates to the Virgil court, however, any outdoor activity should be encouraged.

Being outdoors is so much more important, as long as the noise is not past the 11 p.m. deadline. Plus, I believe the Virgil Park was there long before the houses. And I believe the residents living along the park boundary have the immense benefit of opening up their back gates and walking the park, enjoying the outdoors and walking their dogs in the park.

Simple solution that

does not cost the town any money: A solid row of evergreen trees along the residents back boundary would dull any noises, would it not?

I trust the town will quickly reconsider and open up the courts for these outdoor enthusiasts. Not to mention the stupidity of this going to provincial court!

Susan Pohorly
NOTL

Oh no . . . only in NOTL

A Canadian flag going up at Queen's Royal Park? I love it, but . . .

Oh no, it only represents Canadians, what about all peoples of different nations who will want to have their flags go up next?

Oh no, are we the taxpayers paying for this?

Oh no, this wasn't in the town plan - let's take six years and make up a new town plan.

Oh no, we demand that it be two, not three stories high.

Oh no, SODOFF (Save our Domain Only From Flags) is suing the town; next week they're suing the

flag developer.

Oh no, such a modern flag that has only been around for 57 years just doesn't fit this charming town's historical character.

Oh no, in a recent poll of local residents, 3 were for and 5 against, therefore, the majority of 17,000 taxpayers are against it.

Oh no, local experts (you know, the couple who lives next to that family's cousin's friend), say it will increase traffic uncontrollably and change the character of the neighbourhood.

Oh no, a flag means there will be more car accidents at this corner because

one day I saw a car speed by a flag.

Oh no, visitors to the flag will be classified as short-term guests and be taxed. And who will control their wild, noisy parties?

Oh no, the sound of the flag flapping is like cannons going off, torture bursting ear drums and affecting mental health — the long-term effects of this noise have never been studied.

Oh no, when I moved here nobody said there was going to be a flag in the Queen's Royal Park.

Alex MacGregor
NOTL

Letters! We want letters!

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



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Hospitals struggling with bed, staff shortages

Penny Coles
The Local

With a possible spike in COVID cases still possible as a result of last week's long weekend, Dr. Mustafa Hirji, Niagara's acting chief medical officer of health, is concerned about the pressure on hospitals.

The number of infections at this stage is heading upwards, and could plateau, or continue to rise, he said.

"We may be hitting the peak, but the data doesn't show that. Hospitals are seeing an upward trend province-wide."

The provincial science table is indicating hospitalizations could exceed the numbers during the omicron wave, he said.

With Niagara hospitals at about 107 per cent capacity, up from 102 per cent two weeks ago, Hirji said, "I don't know how much more our hospitals will be able to weather that storm."

In the last seven days, one to two people were

hospitalized per day with COVID, and the number of acute care beds that are occupied is rising, he said during his Monday media update.

The problem is two-fold, with Niagara hospitals also dealing with staff shortages, and had more than 300 staff off last week either because they themselves were sick, or were at home isolating because a family member is infected with COVID.

They're struggling with beds and workers, said Hirji, and the way to solve that problem "is by controlling this pandemic."

"It's not time to return to life as it was in 2019," he said, with people still being hospitalized, still dying, and increased chronic illness due to long COVID.

Hirji said he supports Dr. Kieran Moore's Section 22 directive to extend mask mandates in high-risk settings until June 11, including on public transit and in long-term care and health care settings.

"It's a really positive

move," he said. "Absolutely the right decision has been made."

He continues to hope mask mandates will return in schools and work places, and while he could enact a Section 22 to that effect in Niagara, he says he is still looking to the province for consistent mask rulings.

"I also think this is not the last wave, and we really should have a province-wide mask mandate."



Dr. Mustafa Hirji is concerned about hospitals weathering the storm of COVID admissions. (Photo supplied)

Niagara postponing surgeries due to shortages

Penny Coles
The Local

Niagara Health is ramping down its surgical program to 70 per cent, due to growing pressures from patient volumes and staff and physician illness.

This measure will allow Niagara Health to use these beds to care for COVID-19 positive patients and other patients with urgent needs, a media release says, and adjusts operations to ensure Niagara hospitals can provide

emergency, critical and acute care to patients using available resources.

This news comes as Niagara's chief medical officer of health Dr. Mustafa Hirji warns of local hospitals struggling with staff and bed shortages due to COVID hospitalizations.

"We will use the same decision-making framework that we have used in previous waves to assess each case, understanding that emergency, urgent and oncology patient surgeries will take priority,"

says Linda Boich, one of the hospital system's executive vice-presidents, and executive lead for integrated care.

"Surgeons and the scheduling office will reach out directly to patients who are impacted by surgical postponements to rebook the procedures at the earliest opportunity. We recognize the challenges this places on patients and families and apologize for the inconvenience and stress this may cause," says Boich.

Niagara Health has been working to catch up on the surgical backlog created during earlier COVID waves, says a Monday news release. "It is very unfortunate that we must ramp down surgeries again, knowing how important it is for patients to receive safe, quality surgical care on a timely basis. However, the ramp down is a necessary measure given the urgent need to address the current and anticipated pressures from this sixth wave."

"This is part of a stepped approach to respond to capacity and staffing pressures and ensure we are prepared for heightened activity in the coming weeks," the release says.

"We are not yet seeing peak activity related to this wave in the hospital," says Dr. Johan Viljoen, chief of staff. "Hospitals across our region and beyond are facing similar pressures, which have led to the postponement of non-emergency procedures and temporary closures of emergency departments and urgent care centres. Our leaders are continuously evaluating our resources and recommending further actions as required. It is important that we support our team members who are impacted by COVID-19, either by illness or their extraordinary efforts to support operations."

Given the heightened pressures on emergency departments, Niagara Health is asking patients to consider their healthcare options before visiting the hospital for non-emergency concerns. In non-emergency situations, patients are encouraged to reach out to their primary care provider first, or make an appointment with Virtual Urgent Care at www.UrgentCareOntario.ca.

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Volunteers needed for shoreline cleanup

Penny Coles
The Local

Tim Bala has been unofficially cleaning up Niagara-on-the-Lake beaches for years, asking friends to help him out, and hauling the garbage away in his truck.

Over the years his cleanups became a little more organized, and he'd get about 15 to 20 people out to help, he says.

But when he learned about a Toronto group called A Greener Future, which stages annual waterfront cleanups from Niagara-on-the-Lake to Kingston, he began partnering with them, taking on the NOTL portion from North Shores Park to Navy Hall.

"We get a great turn-out, with about 50 people, and we can get boats out on the water, for an all-encompassing shoreline cleanup," he said. "We're super-excited to be doing it with them again this year."

The last one was in 2019 — he didn't want to be asking people to pick up garbage during COVID. But this year he's ready to go.

Paddleboarding offers a different perspective of Lake Ontario and the Niagara River, including a view of the beach from the water, says Bala, and that's where he will be Sunday. "I usually get the fun stuff, out by the club house to Fort Mississauga."

Every summer he teaches his Paddle Niagara students about not littering, and respecting the beaches, and explains to them "this is not people doing it for the sake of doing it."

Sometimes bins have overflowed, or animals have ripped bags apart. "Garbage

just happens," he says.

The cleanup will be held Sunday, May 1, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. beginning at Queen's Royal Park.

A Greener Future is also holding a nurdle hunt, which Bala explains: It is a hunt for the small pieces of raw plastic also known as nurdles.

"A shipping container full of nurdles went overboard on Lake Superior, I believe, and now nurdles can be found throughout all of the great lakes."

Participants will be provided all supplies and equipment.

The non-profit A Green-

er Future organization says it will complete 100 litter cleanups this year, typically engaging hundreds of volunteers across Ontario, and raising awareness about plastic pollution while educating communities on the impact of litter in Lake Ontario.

Registration is required as

space is limited. High school community service hours can be earned at this event.

Visit <https://www.agreenerfuture.ca/upcoming-events/2022/3/8/lyl-queens-royal-park-to-register>.

There will also be an opportunity to register onsite, says Bala.



Tim Bala looks forward to another spring shoreline cleanup, after a two years' absence. (File photo)



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Library planning to celebrate Year of the Garden



Cathy Simpson
Chief Librarian & CEO
NOTL Public Library

As the weather warms up, gardening season begins. We hope you had an opportunity to use our seed library in your garden planning this year. It recently closed for the planting season with just more than 700 packets of seeds

checked out by 185 people. The collection includes only native and heirloom varieties of vegetables, berries, herbs and flowers and when the growing season ends, we encourage borrowers to return seeds collected from their harvest. The Communities in Bloom (CIB) volunteers are starting to work on the community vegetable garden behind the library. It doubled in size last year. Vicky Downes and her dedicated volunteers did a tremendous job last season, and shared the garden's bounty with the communi-

ty at Newark Neighbours, the Migrant Worker Hub and the library.

The green space behind the library has evolved over the years, and just keeps getting better. When I started in 2012, the garden was enclosed by a fence, the pergola was rotted and the irrigation system defunct. With a grant from Farm Credit Canada and generous donations of time and money from residents, businesses and service groups, the garden was transformed in 2014.

Continued on page 13



CIB Chair Vicky Downes, CIB Volunteers Linda Murray and Shirley Levers, during construction in 2022. (Photos submitted)



Library garden 2014



Library garden 2013

Balzac's adopts eco-friendly ground surface

Mike Balsom
The Local

For over a year now, visitors to Balzac's Coffee Roasters on King Street have been marveling at the new patio and driveway off the back door of the old streetcar depot building.

The eco-friendly surface was installed in collaboration between the property owner and Balzac's, an Ancaster-based chain of 17 destination cafes. As general manager Steve Janzen says, the pandemic is part of what prompted the decision.

"I've been trying to get a larger patio in there for years," Janzen says on the line from his Ancaster office. "It took COVID to prove that we needed more seating. But we didn't want to just put more tables in the driveway."

It was clear the unique circumstance of the location would not allow a traditional asphalt or concrete installation. The driveway space is much lower than that of the surrounding properties. A simple paved surface would not allow water to sufficiently flow off the driveway.

"We needed to find a solution that was permeable, to allow water to go through it," Janzen explains. "The property owner did some research and he found Ecoraster. It's perfect on every level."

The Ecoraster grids are made out of recycled plastic bags. Based on German engineering, their Bloxx and E40 systems installed at Balzac's are made in Canada and distributed by a company out of Listowel, Ont. Their website claims the blocks and grids are industrial-grade, capable of carrying loads of 800 tonnes per square metre. The environmental benefits are obvious.

"It's completely permeable," says Janzen. "You don't need to put as much salt on it. It prevents waste water from running off into storm sewers. Once we became aware of it we knew we had to do it."

After a first winter with the Ecoraster driveway, Janzen says compared to previous years, there was no pooling during melting periods and less ice on the surface. The Balzac's staff had no trouble shovelling the snow, and the landscaping company was able to use a plow without damaging the driveway.

Those curious about the patio and driveway often ask staff for information. Behind the register, they keep a stack of business cards from Smithville-based MC2 Contracting, who installed the Ecoraster system.

MC2's Brandon McCully says the company is busy installing the eco-friendly product every single day, mostly

across Southern Ontario, but periodically venturing further afield to locations such as Peterborough, where they are working on a 7,000 square-foot parking lot this week.

"With climate change, people are trying to ease up on storm systems," McCully says. "This gives people a better opportunity to do their part. People choose it for the lower environmental impact. Our customers are looking for an eco-friendly product, and the drainage part of it is popular."

McCully says he started using the product for base pads for hot tubs and spas, but soon his clients were asking about larger applications. The company does both residential and commercial applications.

As far as cost, Ecoraster fits somewhere in between asphalt at the low end and concrete at the higher end. Though McCully explains that prices fluctuate depending on the excavation needs of the site, it is roughly about \$15 per square foot.

Janzen says the excavation at Balzac's King Street location didn't pose any difficult challenges. The grids are set about four inches deep to hold them in place.

McCully's company installed the Bloxx system for the approximately 440 square-foot patio at Balzac's. These are square recycled plastic grids

that each house four square flat bricks making for a smooth, level surface on which to place tables and chairs for the cafe's customers.

The E40 grid system used for the driveway consists of smaller irregular-shaped spaces, each filled with gravel and levelled. The driveway is used by the upstairs tenant and for deliveries to the cafe.

Both look great aesthetically and seem just as solid as the alternatives. Ecoraster's website adds that very little maintenance is necessary.

Janzen insists that the eco-friendly installation is in line with an overall green focus that the company has taken.

Their cafes were the first such business to earn LEAF (Leaders in Environmentally Accountable Food Service) certification in Canada. Their coffee beans are roasted at their head office using the eco-friendly Loring Smart Roaster. It reduces energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions by 80 per cent, compared to conventional roasters.

In addition, guests are offered a 25 cent discount off their drink if they bring their own reusable cups. Biodegradable straws and cutlery are offered, and though their double-wall takeout cups can't go into the green bin, they are compostable in commercial facilities and break down faster



Customers enjoying their coffee on the eco-friendly surface of Balzac's outdoor patio. (Mike Balsom)



A close-up of the two different ground surfaces, for tables, chairs and for walking on. (Mike Balsom)

than polyethylene alternatives. Appliances used are Energy Star rated as well.

"We were named Canada's Greenest Cafe in 2020," adds Janzen. "We consider the environment in everything we do,

and we have since the company started in 1993. We always know with the environment we can do more. We're not a net-zero company yet, but we strive for continuous improvement."

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Volunteer gardeners needed

Continued from page 10

In 2017, the labyrinth was added, and in 2021, the community vegetable garden doubled in size.

With the retirement of gardener John Vandenberg and the addition of the Niagara Nursery School next door, we decided to simplify garden plantings with

a focus on native species and sustainability. A grant to hire a student gardener last year allowed us to clean up the garden and develop ways to simplify it.

2022 is the Year of the Garden, and the library and CIB Committee are planning fun and engaging ways to celebrate. Stay tuned for more de-

tails. This year, we're also looking to recruit volunteers to maintain our garden through the Town of NOTL's Adopt-a-Park program. If you would like to help us, please contact me at 905-468-2023 ext. 203 or csimpson@notlpl.org. Thank you for your support, and happy gardening!



Labyrinth 2017 (Photo submitted)

Rescue dogs enjoying life in NOTL



Anna Stemmler on Rye Street, and her husband Brian, have three rescue dogs from Spain. The breed is Galgo, a Spanish Greyhound, that is used in that country by farmers to hunt rabbits. Anna says they are often kept until the end of their usefulness to the farmers, which is until they are about three years old. Many of them are killed, while some of them are rescued. From left to right are Abeana, Norabelle and Marquessa, ranging in age from 5 to 12.5 years old. (Mike Balsom)

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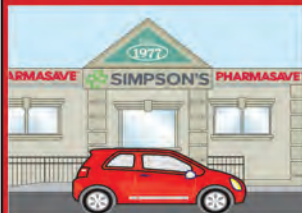
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'Public office such an important service'

Continued from page 4

centre expansion for the Niagara Nursery School from its very beginning, advocating for our local history and heritage," she said and pushing for a "positive, refreshed leadership culture" in the town's administration, and seeing the launch very soon of a completely new website to showcase and serve "this amazing community."

She admitted to some disappointments along the way, "some of them incredibly bitter and frustrating. But such is life. Nobody runs for council because it's going to be easy. In this chamber we are each one of nine voices that are all intended to equally matter. And I appreciate that we've been a council who did not always agree and mostly worked very well together."

A lot can happen in four years, she continued — NOTL's population has grown to more than 19,000 people, and the Niagara Nursery School's wait list continues to grow.

"That means NOTL is a living, breathing and real community. And that should be a fact to embrace and to work with, rather than to fear. Change is hard, inevitable and healthy."

Her decision not to run again "will hopefully make space for someone new to contribute their time and energy to the quality of life in NOTL. Politics is not a game. It's a calling, and politics shouldn't be assumed as a career. Politics is about being in the service of people, all people, and the decisions made in this chamber need to be focused on what is good for the total community, not for any one person, a carefully counted voting block, or a very vocal and privileged few."

Anyone who is deter-

mined enough has what it takes to do this work, she said, "and no one was perpetually written in the stars to run this place forever."

So to anyone who has ever read an article about municipal council or a capital project passed wondered, 'why on earth is that being done,' "or wanted to be a decision-maker in this community or even had the slightest inclination they could probably do great things from this chamber, you're probably right, and now is your opportunity. So run. There is no perfect time to hold public office, yet it is such an important service. It requires commitment, not eternity. Run, build your team and bring your new ideas. Run. Share your visions for what NOTL can be and stick to those visions. Find your voice and use it. The town needs people like you."

With Cameron and Disero on the dais of the council chamber, two women, deputy lord mayor and lord mayor side by side but two metres apart, Disero turned to Cameron to offer her response.

"I can remember four years ago sitting in meetings that were very, very loud, anxious meetings, and you held your calm."

And you guided people through issues that would otherwise have lacked a lot of leadership," Disero said.

"I just saw you, Clare, as a star to this town, and wholeheartedly supported and endorsed your candidacy. I knew that you would be good. And yes, we've had some agreements and disagreements along the way, and sometimes even the claws came out a little bit. But I still respect and admire your perfect orator skills, and your commitment and your thoughts that go into how to make this town a better place. I know you re-

ally wanted to push creating a Niagara-on-the-Lake for all people and all ages, and I think with your assistance we are on our way there. So thank you for that."

As others also thanked her, Coun. Wendy Cheropita said she was sad to hear Cameron's news. "I feared that you might come to this conclusion, but I will say it has been an absolute pleasure to work with you. You are inspirational. You challenge in the right way. You have made an incredible contribution to this town, and I know every time, when you come to this meeting, you come prepared, and you come with much articulation of some really important issues. I am grateful to have the opportunity to work with you," said Cheropita.

"I liked you from the minute I met you," she added, "before the election, and I consider you a colleague and friend, I hope that will continue. It has been an absolute pleasure, and I am so sorry it's not going to be a continuation."



Coun. Clare Cameron collaborated on an avocado mayonnaise with Chef Tony de Luca, showing her good humour by agreeing to work in the kitchen with the chef for the sake of an interesting story. (File photo)



Veteran Chris Bjorgan was followed by Clare and Mackenzie Cameron, on the way into the water for their Penguin Dip in 2019. (Penny Coles)

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Sisters star in Laura Secord's *Mamma Mia!* production

Bittersweet for all involved in musical

Mike Balsom
The Local

You might say Hannah Jamal is getting a bit of a promotion, from older sister to mother, in the upcoming Laura Secord Secondary School production of the musical *Mamma Mia!*.

She plays Donna, the former singer, now a taverna owner on the fictional Greek island of Kalokairi. Donna is preparing to host the wedding of her daughter, Sophie, played by none other than Hannah's younger sister, Ayla Jamal.

"It's awesome," Hannah enthuses about playing her younger sister's mother. "We have such great mother-daughter chemistry on stage because we can draw from personal experiences from living in the same household. And it helps that I am the older sister. I've always had a bit of a maternal reaction to her in many ways. We are able to channel those experiences."

"Hannah and I are best friends," Ayla adds. "We've been performing together since I was 10 years old. Working with her is always an awesome time. We're super close, and getting to work with her again after COVID has brought us even closer."

Though neither of the St. Davids Public School graduates think they look that much alike, they certainly sell the mother-daughter similarities better than Meryl Streep and Amanda Seyfried did in the popular 2008 film version of the jukebox musical, based on the songs of the chart-topping Swedish pop group ABBA.

"In real life, most people say they would never guess we were sisters," Hannah laughs. "They don't see it in our looks. But as soon as people hear us talk and see us interact, they know there is definitely something there."

Both Hannah and Ayla have been involved in theatre since their pre-teen years. Hannah's first production was at the Toronto Fringe Festival at 11 years old. She then auditioned at Niagara-on-the-Lake's Yellow Door Theatre Project (YDTP), where she was cast for their production of *Peter Pan*. She also worked with a group called the Chippawa Players.

Ayla, inspired by her older sibling, followed to YDTP.

"In third grade I was a swimmer, and I cycled through hobbies a lot," says the 16-year-old Grade 10 honours student at Laura Secord. "When Hannah

started at Yellow Door, I wanted to do it as well. The next year I auditioned and I really fell in love with it."

Between the two of them, they've acted and sang in 10 YDTP productions, and both appeared in the recent film *Red Letter Day*, which was shot last summer and had its premiere at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre's Film House last month.

Both girls credit YDTP founder and artistic director Andorlie Hillstrom for their growth in theatre. Hillstrom has worked with the Jamal sisters in private lessons, and has also directed much of their work on stage over the years.

"They are both incredibly talented, very, very strong vocalists," Hillstrom tells The Local. "They are intelligent, bright and quick, and poised and mature beyond their years. It's been extraordinary to watch them grow into such wonderful young women."

Hillstrom recognizes the importance of the upcoming two-weekend run of *Mamma Mia!* both in general and for her two students. The pandemic has meant that it's been more than two years since they have done any live theatre.

Director and Laura Secord drama department program leader Tracy Thorpe gets tears in her eyes thinking about the May 5 opening night. The play was originally scheduled to open in March 2020. On March 12 that year, just over a week from opening night, the cast and crew had gathered in the school's James H. Smith Theatre for its first dress rehearsal when Thorpe had to break the news to students that their March Break would be extended two weeks, which included three performances of the musical.

The two weeks stretched into three months, and when students returned in September, 2020 for the new school year, Thorpe had received commitment from the entire cast, including many who had by then graduated and moved on to post-secondary studies, to return in May, 2021 for rescheduled dates. By then, another wave of COVID-19 put an end to those plans.

Fast forward to this past September. With thousands of dollars sunk into the set for *Mamma Mia!*, and those grads now in their second year of college or university, the show had to go on, but with a new cast.

"It's bittersweet," Thor-



Hannah Jamal (left) plays the mother of her younger sister Ayla in Laura Secord's *Mamma Mia!* (Photos by Mike Balsom)



pe says. "It's exciting to get it done, and I love this cast. But I miss the kids who didn't get to do it. You feel a bit bad that we're doing it and they're not here. Many of them have moved on, though some wanted to come back. But then I got word that I couldn't bring outsiders in to rehearse with my students."

The pandemic also forced Thorpe to pare down the cast from its original number to 25 members. The ensemble is much smaller, and she moved some of the background singers off stage to add their vocals sight-unseen.

Now 18 years old, Hannah was in Grade 10 two years ago and had won a role in the ensemble. She remembers that 2020 dress rehearsal well.

"It was extremely heart-breaking," she recalls. "It felt very gloomy, and kind of apocalyptic. We were all confused, we didn't really know what was going on. We were about a week away,

and all that build-up had amounted to nothing."

Last September's audition won the Grade 12 honours student a much bigger role, of course, but like Thorpe, she wishes she could have worked with the original cast.

With a little more than a week now before opening night, cast, crew, and the many student and staff volunteers might be a little shell shocked from the circumstances that have forced the two-year delay for *Mamma Mia!*. But they are taking it in stride and hoping that everything goes off without a hitch.

Ayla says the cast, including fellow YDTP regulars Sydney Bungard, Catherine Dubois and Emily Fulton, is really hitting its stride and gelling together.

"We've gotten to a place where we are comfortable with one another," Ayla says. "We understand our characters. Just seeing how everyone has grown with their characters, and are comfort-



able with our characters, I love that part of it."

"There are so many talented people involved in this process," Hannah adds, referring to the students on stage painting rocks for a beach scene. "I don't think it's totally sunk in that it's actually happening. I think back to when I was in Grade 8 and I came to see *The Addams Family*. It made me

want to go here, and I wanted to be on this stage singing a solo. And now I'm here, and I'm truly grateful that it's happening."

Laura Secord Secondary School presents *Mamma Mia!* May 5 through 8 and 12 through 13. Tickets are \$15 for adults, \$12 for students and seniors. Visit laurasecord.org for information.

International Jazz Day celebrated with French music

Live performance also a fundraiser for Ukraine

Mike Balsom
The Local

Since 2011, April 30 has been known as International Jazz Day, declared as such by UNESCO in honour of the role the art form has played in uniting people across the world.

The TD Niagara Jazz Festival will celebrate the day with a performance by Le Trio Parisien at Stratus Vineyards this Saturday. The evening does double duty as a fundraiser for the festival, with 10 per cent of the proceeds going to the Canada-Ukraine Foundation.

"It's pretty great that there's a day worldwide to celebrate jazz," says festival co-creator and executive director Juliet Dunn. "It's so important to recognize the art form. That's what we do all year long, too."

After marking the day in 2020 and 2021 with on-line performances, Dunn is thrilled to be back at Stratus for a live program. And she's equally thrilled to dig into her formative years as a singer with an evening of music inspired by France.

"It really is my favourite of all the bands we have," says Dunn on the line from her north St. Catharines home. "I lived in France from the age of 18 to 30. I really connect with all of the French tunes. I prefer singing in French, and my mom always loved my singing in French."

Dunn lost her mother suddenly earlier this year, just a few short months after having to also say goodbye to her sister, Kim. Clearly, her choice to

act the chanteuse Saturday is partially a tribute to her mom.

Dunn will be joined by her husband and TD Niagara Jazz Festival co-creator and artistic consultant Peter Shea on piano. Shea will take turns with fellow pianist Doug Mundy, while St. Catharines native Jeff Luciani will play drums. Adrian Juras will be on bass, and, stretching the definition of a trio format, Tom Szczesniak plays the very important accordion.

"That's the highlight of a French band," Dunn says. "It won't sound like a French band without an accordion. He has quite the resume, too."

Besides the accordion, the Toronto-based Szczesniak is a composer, arranger, conductor, pianist and electric bassist. He has performed with scores of renowned musicians, including Gordon Lightfoot, Anne Murray, Little Richard, K.D. Lang, Smokey Robinson and Bobby McFerrin. In addition, he has composed music for over 100 feature films and countless animated television programs.

Dunn promises an evening of music made famous by Edith Piaf, Josephine Baker, Charles Aznavour and others.

"We'll do some tunes originally written in English, but I'll sing them in French," explains Dunn. "We'll do *Autumn Leaves*, which was originally written in French by Jacques Prévert, and a jazz number called *Nature Boy*, in French."

Dunn adds that most of the songs will switch between

the two languages, with about four or five that will be exclusively in French.

"For those, I will explain them before I sing them," she adds. "Most of the show I will speak in both French and English. It's lots of fun."

She's also relishing the opportunity to dress up for the evening. She'll be pulling out her French outfit and donning a wig to play the part.

Stratus Vineyards is the perfect location, as well. Winemaker J.L. Groux is a native of France's Loire Valley, and he and his wife often show up when Le Trio Parisien is playing anywhere in the region. As well, Dunn reminds The Local she actually worked at the Niagara Stone Road winery when it first opened.

The fundraising part of the evening includes a 50/50 draw and a silent auction.

"We always like to give some of our proceeds back," Dunn says. "In the past, we've given to the United Way, Red Roof Retreat, the migrant workers and other charities. This year we decided to contribute to a cause that is needed so much right now."

Normally, International Jazz Day is used also as a platform for the Jazz Festival to announce its summer lineup. They're not quite ready to reveal the full details this weekend, though Dunn says July 20 to 24 are the dates, and they have lined up Henry of Pelham and The Hare Wine Company as locations.

Besides this Saturday's event, the festival's popular Twilight Jazz and Blooz Series continues with six more events through to July 4 at Spirit in Niagara Distillery on Lakeshore Road. The next performance in that series is



Juliet Dunn has made a tradition of performing with Le Trio Parisien, shown here at Manhattan's (top) and at a Brock Soiree (above). (Photos supplied)

by blues pianist Julian Faith on Monday, May 2.

Tickets for the April 30 International Jazz Day celebration are \$79 plus HST,

and include a complementary glass of Stratus wine and amuse-gueules, which Dunn explains are finger foods.

Vaccination policies are

in effect for the indoor event. Dust off that beret and dig out your gitanes, but remember to smoke them outside if you bring them.

Open Mic returns



It was a welcome return for Open Mic at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124 Sunday, when a fun group of amateur and professional musicians, newcomers and regulars, shared their talents with an appreciative audience. The plan at the moment, says organizer Randy Busbridge, is to host Open Mic sessions the last Sunday of every month. Randy Busbridge entertains with regulars Steve Goldberger and Dianne Ticknor, as does Keith Williams at the first session since 2020. (Photos by Lorraine Busbridge)

Celine curates performance recognizing Oscar

Pianist Robi Botos with Peterson's 'sidemen'

Mike Balsom
The Local

For Céline Peterson, growing up with a famous father was normal. After all, she didn't really know any other way.

"My normal had some of the things that most would classify as that," she tells The Local, "going to school and hanging out with friends. But it just also happened to include this unique job that one of my parents had that took me across the world for the first 16 years of my life."

That parent, of course, was more than just famous. Oscar Peterson was a world-renowned legend on the piano. The unique job to which Céline refers included releasing some 200 albums, playing thousands of concerts around the world, collaborating with some of the biggest names in jazz, composing music and winning seven Grammy Awards. And of course, being one of the most well-known Canadians ever.

At the behest of Bravo Niagara! Festival's co-founders Chris Mori and Alexis Spielfelder, Céline Peterson has curated an upcoming performance featuring some of her father's favourite sidemen and his last major piano protege before he passed away at age 82 in 2007.

On April 30, drummer Jeff Hamilton, guitarist Ulf Wakenius, and bassist Dave Young join forces with Juno Award-winning pianist and Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Robi Botos to celebrate International Jazz Day at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre in St. Catharines. They'll be

playing music from Peterson's canon.

"It's an absolute dream," Céline says of the lineup. "Just as Chris and Alexis and I were talking about what to do for International Jazz Day, I found out Ulf was going to be in town. He really loved playing the music he played with Dad. He was Dad's last guitar player, during a really special, emotional time in Dad's career."

Bringing Botos in to take the piano chair was an obvious and inspired choice. Botos has been affiliated with Bravo Niagara! for a number of years, and performed most recently in a festival concert in late 2021. Botos opened for Peterson at the 2005 Montreux Jazz Festival, and became a student of the master until his death.

"Robi has worked with all of these guys before," Peterson adds. "Ulf, Dave and Jeff have so much respect for Robi. He and Dad had a really special bond for the time they got to spend together. Robi, like me, does not take his responsibility lightly."

It might be a daunting task for Botos to take on the music of his mentor, but as Peterson explains, Botos plays Peterson's music the way he wants to play it. He doesn't try to copy Oscar, but instead plays to feed the others in the group. The St. Catharines concert will not be a copycat show, even though the music comes from the Peterson repertoire.

Céline says her father was really a typical dad at heart while she was growing up. He wanted to go to the school concerts, the science fairs and other events, but his fame made those outings difficult for him.

"He really loved being a father, and he loved doing fun things with me," she says. "We would have our daddy-daughter days, we'd go out for dinners together, he'd take me on day trips. He was very happy to be a home-body when he wasn't working."

Peterson says she never truly realized Oscar's importance in the world of jazz music, or exactly how beloved he was, until she was 16 years old.

"The moment of realization came when he died," she recalls. "Most other people experience that privately, and take control over their own grieving process. We didn't have that. His death was leaked to a media outlet before we could even inform the people close to us whom we didn't want to read about it in the news."

The home phone was ringing off the hook, media outlets calling to confirm his death. Police cruisers guarded the family's Toronto driveway for a week to watch over the house. It was a surreal invasion of the family's privacy.

"Sharing that loss, without a choice, and everything that followed," she stresses, "that's where a lot of my realization came in. Even today, I'm not always thinking with the Peterson hat on, I'm thinking as a daughter, and I have to readjust and look at it through that lens."

Asked about meeting some of the many stars who were part of Oscar's orbit, Céline lists two as her most memorable.

"I was truly starstruck when Dustin Hoffman came to a concert at the Hollywood Bowl," Peterson laughs. "I was still very young. He came backstage, and I got so excited. My mom wanted to know why her nine-year-old knew who Dustin Hoffman was. It was because of the movie *Hook*."

The other happened shortly before her father passed away. Stevie Wonder was playing a concert in Toronto. Though Oscar was not up to attending the show, Céline went and dropped off an invitation to the musician to visit the Peterson home.

"The next day his tour bus pulled up, taking up about the length of three houses on our street," remembers Peterson. "He was actually nervous to meet Dad, someone he had admired his entire life. That was really special to see. I mean I was meeting Stevie Wonder, but Stevie Wonder was meeting Oscar Peterson."

Through her business, Céline Peterson Productions, she has worked with the likes of Jackie Richardson, Molly Johnson, Oliver Jones and Paul Marinaro. Her bio states quite plainly, however, that she herself is not a piano player.

"There was pressure for me to play the piano," Peterson says of her younger days, "but none of it came from my family. It came instead from people on the outside. Dad never wanted any of his kids to do something they didn't want to do. He certainly didn't want any of us to feel we had to carry on his legacy. And he had a rule about never teaching family."

Though she doesn't do it at the piano, Céline has worked diligently to keep her father's legacy alive through her work with jazz musicians and in organizing concerts like the one on April 30.

"The people who love his music carry it forward," explains Peterson. "I actually had an email today from a young boy in sixth grade who is doing a project on him. That stuff brings me so much joy, because it's proof of how strong his legacy really is."

"I do feel a responsibility to ensure that anything I do, whether related to him or not," she continues, "I do with the excellence that he brought to his life and career. And I take great pride in any project that is related to my dad. It's not something I take lightly at all. I want the things that I do that are Dad-related to be special."

Peterson has certainly done that with the curation of the performance to take place in the FirstOntario PAC's Recital Hall. Botos, Hamilton, Wakenius and Young are at the top of their games as musicians. And Wakenius will be performing a special guitar duet with 2021 Juno Award winner Jocelyn Gould.

Concertgoers couldn't

ask for a more special night than to have this quartet celebrate the music of the man that none other than Duke Ellington referred to

as the Maharaja of the keyboard.

For tickets and information visit bravoniagara.org.



Ulf Wakenius on guitar will help celebrate the music of Oscar Peterson. (Photos supplied)



Drummer Jeff Hamilton will be playing Peterson's music on International Jazz Day.



Celine Peterson is curating the music for Saturday's performance. (Tracey Nolan Studio)



Robi Botos will play Peterson's music in his own style.

Tennis club excited about summer games

Mike Balsom
The Local

Last weekend's beautiful weather prompted a number of Niagara-on-the-Lake Tennis Club members to dig out their racquets and head to the six courts located at Memorial Park on King Street.

It was the first busy weekend of what should be a banner year for the club, chosen to be one of two sites to host tennis events for this August's 2022 Canada Summer Games.

Club president Hugh Dow is excited that the best young tennis players from across the country will be descending upon NOTL for competition from Aug. 6 to 13.

"It's a great opportunity for the club members to come and see some really good tennis," Dow tells The Local. "There have been some names in the past, such as (current pro) Eugenie Bouchard (2009), who have played in these games. There will be some up-and-comers and it's quite likely we'll see a few of them on the ATP (Association of Tennis Professionals) or WTA (Women's Tennis Association) tours in the future, and at the Olympics."

With the support of the town and the Canada Summer Games committee, the club is already involved in preparation for the tournament, which is now less than 100 days away.

Last week a group of club members gathered

to hang wind screens on the north east side fence. Dow says just beyond that barrier a set of temporary bleachers with seating for as many as 450 spectators will be placed for the August competition.

In a couple of weeks, the original four courts will be undergoing a resurfacing that will see the regulation area painted blue, matching the two new courts which opened last summer where the beach volleyball net once stood. That will reduce the capacity for tennis by two thirds for about a week, but it will be worth it.

Once the resurfacing has been completed, new scoreboards will be installed for use during the Games.

As well, before Aug. 6, new light standards will be erected for the newer courts, making all six available for night play. The town has agreed to cover the cost of the lights, while the resurfacing is taking place on the Canada Summer Games dime.

Finally, the pavilion will be refreshed with a new coat of paint some time before then, and new picnic tables have already arrived on site.

The entire park will be transformed during the Games.

"The pavilion area will be cordoned off," says Dow, pointing back behind the courts. "There will be hospitality tents, media tents, tents for each of the provinces and territories. The pool will be closed during

the period as they will be using the showers and change rooms. And the parking lot will be closed as well."

Past president Rosemary Goodwin is involved in the scheduling and administration of the actual tennis matches, while current vice president Marilyn Francis is heading up the venue committee, ensuring it meets the standards for the Summer Games. Dow says at least 40 club members have signed up for various volunteer roles for the Games.

"It's the biggest year we've ever had," exclaims Dow. "There's never been an event like this at the club. And it's spread all over the Niagara area."

Brock University is acting as the centre for Niagara's 2022 Canada Summer Games. Almost every one of Niagara's 12 municipalities is hosting at least one of the sports. Tennis matches will also be held at the Welland Tennis Club, while the Niagara-on-the-Lake Sailing club will be the sole host of both the sailing and para-sailing competitions.

"The tennis event will be the most visible here in the town," Dow says. "Town council has been very supportive, and the parks and recreation people are actively involved in making sure everything is up to scratch. It's a really big deal."

Perhaps due to the excitement of the big year, Dow says membership at the club is up for 2022. He says there are as many as 40 new members registered, bringing the total number close to 350.

Late Friday afternoon, about 30 members showed up for the first of three weekend clinics led by club professional Shawna Macfarlane. Two more clinics, free for members with their \$150 registration fee, take place this Thursday and Saturday.

There will be a Coffee and Mingle session this Saturday morning, while the first club social is scheduled for Sunday, May 29.

According to Dow, working with the Summer Games people has been an

interesting experience for all involved.

"There are so many moving parts to this, both volunteer and staff," says Dow. "It's huge. Just trying to figure out what the responsibilities are for each

group is quite challenging."

"Everything is going to look really, really good," he concludes. "The tennis club has really benefitted from having this event, on top of the prestige and the importance of hosting it."



Cosmo Condina and David Rodgers enjoy some chilly Friday morning tennis. (Photos by Mike Balsom)



Tennis club president Hugh Dow in front of the summer games banner.



Shawna Macfarlane gives lessons to club members.

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TONY BALDINELLI
MP FOR NIAGARA FALLS

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LocalWORSHIP

**CORNERSTONE
COMMUNITY CHURCH**

Sunday, May 1st

10:00 a.m.
Worship Gathering
Online & In-Person

Message:
Kevin Bayne
The Fall of Babylon
Revelation 14

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CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12	13
14					15					16				
17					18					19				
20					21					22				
23					24				25					
		26	27	28			29	30						
31	32					33						34	35	36
37						38				39	40			
41					42	43				44				
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47	48	49					50	51				52	53	54
55						56				57				
58						59				60				
61						62				63				
64						65				66				

- Across:**

1 Pitcher's error

5 Hall amphibian?

9 Enhancement

14 Country singer/songwriter Jake ---

15 S American flightless bird

16 Light gray-brown

17 How to start a pudding race?

18 Bring in

19 Garden tool

20 Slant

21 Marx or Warners, e.g.

22 Adjusted

23 Longing

24 Place for experiments

25 Series of church intercessions

26 Prom partner

29 Sarcastic praise

31 Reluctant

33 Ugly encounter

34 Oil well equipment

37 Arc

38 Apollo 11 lander

39 New in Tijuana

41 Arid

42 Stand-in

44 Wept
- 45 Thin pancake

46 The Volunteer State (Abbr.)

47 Wooden hammer

50 Batter's stat.

52 A long way

55 Castaway locations

56 Bathtub residue

57 Where to find Pikes Peak (Abbr.)

58 Trim

59 Rent

60 Saturnalia

61 "Peace on earth, good will ---"

62 A k a C C C P

63 College sporting org.

64 Commence

65 Court dividers

66 Unload for cash
- Down:**

1 Dictatorial

2 Up

3 Fabled

4 Recognize

5 Junior's voice

6 Vivien Leigh's G W T W role

7 Strenuous activity

8 Aykroyd and Quayle

9 Teetotalism

10 Second-in-command

11 Actress --- Rigg

12 Poet --- Nash

13 Wanting

25 Wolf Man --- Chaney

27 Off-roader

28 Now

30 --- Martin, cognac

31 Flat panel TV type

32 Belonging to us

33 Pigswill

34 Strengthen

35 "--- Got No Strings..." (Pinnocchio)

36 Deity

40 Gravetop vase

43 On a pension (Abbr.)

45 Brainy

46 Stopwatches, e.g.

47 Light fogs

48 --- in the arm

49 South American ruminant

51 Pop

53 Kind of pond bloom

54 Kingly

56 Ostracize

57 Drawbacks

IN MEMORIAM

MARIA LETIZIA BRAVETTI MIELE
1932 MAY 10 – 2017 APRIL 28

My beloved, sweet, tender-hearted mother. I wish you were here for me to hold you and love you.

I miss you everyday Mom, as well as Dad. You didn't have to experience all the suffering you did.

Regardless, heaven sees and knows everything you have endured.

Our Father in heaven will vindicate your sufferings.

Love, Romeo Miele

Your favorite son.

P.S. Mom, you just wanted Dad and us to love you. I really did love you so much and will forever, see you in the resurrection.

SUDOKU SOLUTION

Sudoku solution from
April 20, 2022

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

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PUZZLE ANSWERS

Across: 1 Balk, 5 Toad, 9 Add-on, 14 Owen, 15 Rhea, 16 Beige, 17 Sago, 18 Earn, 19 Spade, 20 Skew, 21 Bros, 22 Tuned, 23 Yen, 24 Lab, 25 Litany, 26 Date, 29 Irony, 31 Loath, 33 Scene, 34 Rig, 37 Curve, 38 L E M, 39 Nuevo, 41 Dry, 42 Proxy, 44 Cried, 45 Crepe, 46 Tenn, 47 Mallet, 50 R B I, 52 Far, 55 Isles, 56 Scum, 57 Colo, 58 Shave, 59 Hire, 60 Orgy, 61 To men, 62 U S S R, 63 N C A A, 64 Start, 65 Nets, 66 Sell.

Down: 1 Bossy, 2 Awake, 3 Legendary, 4 Know, 5 Treble, 6 O'Hara, 7 Aerobic exercise, 8 Darn, 9 Abstinence, 10 Deputy, 11 Diana, 12 Ogden, 13 Needy, 25 Lon, 27 A-T V, 28 The present, 30 Remy, 31 L C D, 32 Our, 33 Stop, 34 Reinforce, 35 I've, 36 God, 40 Urn, 43 Ret, 45 Clever, 46 Timers, 48 A shot, 49 Llama, 51 Burst, 53 Algal, 54 Royal, 56 Shun, 57 Cons.

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



Outdoor courts likely closed until mid-June

Continued from page 1

current location.

It's difficult to know if there are many other neighbours who feel the same way.

"Almost without exception, what we hear is people support the club and the benefits it offers, but people are also trying to be sensitive to a unique situation," Hindle said.

Of the many comments on social media over the last week, most said they believe people should be able to play pickleball in a public park, and from the tone of the comments, those who might find the sound annoying would not likely want to speak up.

Hindle said he has seen similar cases in the media from other areas in the country, and in one case, the courts were moved to a different location in the same park, however in that case it was people playing on adapted tennis courts, unlike Virgil, where the town went to great expense to convert tennis courts to pickleball in 2019, in response to the growth of the sport.

Building a sound barrier to the necessary height would be impractical, and would spoil the view for other residents, Hindle said.

"The club was willing to negotiate on a variant of fronts, including reducing the hours."

But in addition to the repetitive noise of the racket hitting the ball, more so than tennis, the complainant said pickleball players "are more boisterous and noisy."

Hindle says the day the complaint was made, the pickleball club was not operating, due to COVID, but the courts were open, with the code for the lock on the gate on the town's website available to the public, so others could use the courts, he said. The argument was made that the club was therefore responsible, although the code, Hindle said, "was widely available."

There was some discussion at the provincial court over whether noise level standards could be applied to public parks, and this week there was a discussion at council over a motion to amend the town's noise bylaw related to "sporting or recreational activities."

Although a discussion about a noise bylaw infraction was held in a closed session, council dealt with a request to amend the bylaw as it referred to sound on town-owned properties arising from sporting or recreational activities, as approved by the



Lorraine Laliberte, Ray Sampson, Merlene Mendez and Susan Sampson tried out the indoor pickleball courts at the Centennial Arena Saturday. (Penny Coles)

director of operations or delegate for the town.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor objected to it, interpreting it as "blanket approval on sound in any of our parks, without considering the impact," and said the town would not be doing its due diligence to the placement of new and noisier activities close to residents.

She said she thought any change to the noise bylaw should wait until the town receives the verdict "on the legal action that everybody knows is going on here. I think it's premature."

Coun. Claire Cameron agreed, saying she thinks it's hypocritical of the town to pass the motion "writing ourselves out of any potential noise bylaw provisions," while in other areas restricting noise. "That just doesn't seem fair."

The motion, she said, "makes it seem like it's a resident's problem if they are bothered by noise, whereas really it's our problem."

She asked how the town would be anticipating the potential impacts of noise on residents who may have signed up for a certain living situation, that could change "quite drastically because of the fitness trend. I think also it's important that this is not just about pickleball. We've had another repetitive noise issue, not that went to prosecution, but there have been complaints about the skatepark too, which is a wonderful facility, and yet has impacted some residents is some way."

She too felt the timing is off, with the legal action before the courts.

Council first voted on a motion to defer the amendment to the noise bylaw, which failed on a tie vote, and then voted on the amendment, which also failed on a tie.

NOTL Tennis Club president Hugh Dow, weighing in on the noise issue in recreational spaces, said he is sympathetic to the situation at the pickleball courts. Though the same area once housed tennis courts, "those were public courts and were not linked to the tennis club," he said. Dow added he is not aware of any previous noise complaints levelled at tennis players there.

"It's too bad, because it's certainly another venue for people to participate in outdoor activities," he told The Local. "I really don't know a lot about the complaint. It is a distinctive noise, though, that can be a factor, there's no question about it."

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