Dogs in the area, and he’s just waiting for a small dog so he can go for it."

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."

His 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 daunting. 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

Continued on page 20

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**Penny Coles**

The Local

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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 Ilomena Pisano, is of her 30-year-old daughter Isabella, who was walking Charlie, a Bichon 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.

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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 plan, 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 relocation or euthanizing the animals, “you really want to tackle this from a behavioural perspective,” said Cluckie.

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

Coun. Gary Burnough 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 unprompted 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 aver- sion 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 many people 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 coyote challenges for months, she said, “it’s really getting worse.”

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 neighbour- hood, although he hasn’t had any problems with them.

He says he used to see a lot of rabbits in the area, but not this year. He believes the cycle of rabbit population, and the shortage this year, is contributing to the aggressive be- haviour 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 coyotes 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.”

Fisano 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 Min- istry 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 cor- nering humans or showing signs of potential rabies, call 9-1-1 immediately. Police are authorized to handle these situations and frequently en- gage the Humane Society when they attend the call.

‘Brazen’ coyote needs to be removed

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)
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 housing for young people.

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 structures.

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

Most commonly, he said, “these units are used for an aging parent, for that transi- tory 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.”

That most common use is as long-term rental units, he said, and NOTL currently has three times fewer rental units than the Canadian aver- age. “This would help us ad- dress that inequity.”

It’s also an excellent com- promise “for those people who are anti-development, an- ti-change or want to preserve neighbourhood character.”

NOTL has the most expen- sive 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 month more than 91.2 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 increas- ingly expensive.

“Think about what that does to our demographic di- versity,” he told councillors.

In a presentation to the Di- versity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, which is supporting his request to council, Robinson said allowing secondary suites and accessory dwelling units “adds gentle density to exist- ing and desirable streets. If just one per cent of homeowners in NOTL chose to add a secondary unit, it would add 800 new rent- al units to town, with no change to the built environment.”

It would also allow for ad- ditional units to use existing town services, without the need for more infrastructure in pipes or paved roads, he added.

“This is an environmental sus- tainability and climate change solution.”

He spoke to the diversity committee members on this premise: “That you can accom- plish your goals to have a diversity of age, race, socioeco- nomic status and lifestyle, if you do not first have a diversity of housing types. It is logical, for different types of people, you have 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 liv- ing here.”

To have a diverse popula- tion, “you need to first have a diversity of housing, and Niag- ara-on-the-Lake does not.”

According to a recent re- gional 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 Minerwa Ward’s delegation to council just before Robinson’s, which in- cluded discussions of the lack of affordable housing and sched- uled public transportation con- tributing 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 peo- ple I went to Parliament Oak- ond — while a lot of them now work in town, they can’t afford to live in town.”

And elderly neighbours that have lived in town for de- cades are being forced to move to the surrounding cities, be- cause there are no options for them, he said.

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

Many progressive munici- palities in Ontario are approv- ing 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 Ni-agara are well ahead of NOTL, and can be a great role-model, he said.

“In 2015, the Liberal pro- vincial government mandated the use of secondary suites. Niagara-on-the-Lake is just one step behind on that. In 2019, the Conservative provincial government mandated both secondary suites and accessi- bree dwelling units, so Niaga- ra-on-the-Lake is way behind on that too. The NDP also agrees — 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 hap- pen, 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, look- ing 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 val- ues, and be inclusive.”

Robinson asked for four mo- tions 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 require- ments. If an application meets these requirements, it would be approved by right, and the town encourage the construc- tion 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 in- clusive, we will have allowed for growth without urban sprawl, and will be able to welcome people to live in town.”

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

Zoning by-right would elimi- nate that, and would add “gentle density” with no new infrastructure required. “You’re actually making town infra- structure 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 ar- eas, 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 sec- ondary 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 Dero- nero asked Robinson to clarify that the province and region are man- dating.

NOTL could choose to really drag its feet and 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 had with several residents liv- ing in rentals, some young and in hospitality, and some with the Shaw, who were having to leave their rental units be- cause the owners wanted to turn them into short-term rentals, where they could make more money.

Robinson’s request, Cher- opita said, “is answering to me a number of things that are really critical” including keep- ing young people from leaving town. “I personally love this idea and endorse it 100 per cent.”

He would like to approve this in principle, she contin- ued, and would ask to send it to staff to work out the details.

Coun. John Wiens sug- gested 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 unani- mously to send Robinson’s sug- gested motions to staff to study.

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Community 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.

“Is it 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 Hotels, 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 on the rollout of the municipal accommodation tax, which has its first meeting of the governance committee set; the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, as a tool to ease the current labour shortage in the hospitality industry.

Continued on page 14

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 abstinence. I have not sought 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 businesses 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.”

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

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 to 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.

He promotes fitness workouts 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 of what he wanted to avoid — he chose to focus on individual’s needs, rather than gouging them by pushing personal training services or long-term membership fees. He promotes fitness 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.

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The untouchable banks of the Niagara River

Owen Bjorjan
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-Lakes 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 plummet 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 planet, having thousands of years ago, to the War of 1812 featuring names such as Sir Isaac Brock and Laura Secord. However, even such a busy landscape, the steep and wooded banks of the great river have stood the test of time relatively un-touched. This often overlooked feature (literally from above, and figuratively on paper) drop-off into the river below serves as an invaluable habitat corridor for wildlife.

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.

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 Melson, Chisholm, Dave Eke, Kenneth Gansel, Erika Alexander and Jim El- manzer. (Photo supplied)

 нужна либо помощь, либо звонит".

**EDIT R A L**

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 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 Niagra-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 rumors with the exception of a few who have been open about their plans. Never did we hear any talk that Cameron 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. 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, giving people time to think about it.

At municipal election, we had the largest number of candidates in history, and more newcomers elected than we’ve seen in decades. It made for an interesting campaign, and an unusual four years. For the coming weeks, 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 knew Cameron’s decision for next term, we can only hope the time will come that 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 Niagara-on-the-Lake Vocal

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April 27, 2022
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 majestic turbougeous 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 chimneys, fit for bird and mammal nesting sites. This is all too important, as the Niagara River water course was declared a Globally Important 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 Brown 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 hold continuity of this clfscide ecosystem is from the water, where you can see this environment for what it is worth.

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, 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

(Letters! We want letters! — we have failed to find anyone willing to speak about their issues with the noise, understandingly fearing the repercussions, especially on social media.)

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 the 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
Hospitals struggling with bed, staff shortages

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.”

A provincial science table is indicating hospitalizations could exceed the numbers during theomicron 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 the right decision 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.”

Niagara postponing surgeries due to shortages

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-president, 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 Vlijmoen, 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 extraor-dinary 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 Virtu-al Urgent Care at www.UrgentCareOntario.ca.
Volunteers needed for shoreline cleanup

Penny Coles
The Local

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

Over the years his clean-ups 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 water-front 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,” he says.

Participants will be provided all supplies and equipment. The non-profit A Greener 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/queensroyal-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)
Library planning to celebrate Year of the Garden

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 community 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 rotten 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
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 way 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 destinations. 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 paving of the surface would not allow water to sufficiently flow off the driveway.

“We needed to find a solution that was permeable, to allow water to sufficiently flow off the driveway,” Janzen says. “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 that 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 for base pads, parking lots, driveways, hot tubs and spas, but soon he expects demand to go into the green bin, they are offered, and though 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 than polyethylene alternatives.

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

“Ecoraster fits somewhere in between asphalt at the low end and concrete at the higher end,” 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 has 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 metre. The environmental benefits are obvious.

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 than polyethylene alternatives.

“People choose it for the lower environmental impact. 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.”
Heritage Trail event addresses need for donations

Penny Coles
The Local

Fred Sentinel remembers the days when the Upper Canada Heritage Trail, which follows the old railway bed through the rural area to John Street, was used regularly by the local equestrian association. His mother, Jackie Sentinel, was one of the founding members of the Upper Canada Equestrian Association, which, in addition to regular group rides, would undertake a spring cleanup of the trail. He also remembers members of the association planting trees along the trail about 40 years ago, and he too has enjoyed riding it on horseback, he said at an Earth Day event Friday.

As a member of the heritage trail restoration committee, he looks forward to the day all four phases, from John Street to York Road, are open and accessible to anyone who wants to use it.

“I support the trail for everyone, pedestrians, cyclists, horse — everyone who wants to use it.”

His mother and three others who founded the association “formed it to save these trails,” he said, and the work of the committee now is continuing the effort to preserve them.

While many of those who used it see the Old Town portion, the bulk of it runs through agricultural areas, Sentinel said, and although the surroundings are different through the rural setting, it should also be available to anyone who wants to use it.

At a barbecue at the home of Steffanie and Moe Bjorgan, Friday, Town Crier Tom Pekar called a small crowd to attention with his traditional humorous opening, and said, “for reasons unknown, the former railroad right of way has escaped the grasp of developers. This is in large part due to concerned citizens in our past who have thwarted the bulldozer blade.” Residents have enjoyed the benefits of phase 1 of the heritage trail restoration, he said. “Now is the time to begin phase 2 to bring the trail back to support eco-tourism, walking and cycling and community engagement. The plan is to connect to the Bruce Trail which already brings thousands of trekkers to the bounty of tender fruit and wine that Niagara on the Lake has to offer. Give generously for the sake of your grandchildren. By the power invested in me as town crier I declare today Heritage Trail Day.”

The Bjorgans live at the end of Concession 1 as it meets Line 9, and those attending the Earth Day event learned the third phase will end at that point. Walking the trail will mean crossing the street and meeting it as it begins again just past Line 9, but that portion is currently off-limits, owned by the municipality. It is literally posted with No Trespassing signs to keep people from using it, for safety reasons — it has been compromised by erosion and washouts.

But that’s a few years off — for now, the committee is focusing on donations to move ahead with the rehabilitation of phase 2.

Restoration of the first phase, from John Street to East and West Line, has been completed, and the committee is now committed to raising $160,000 — about $100 a metre — to finish it from there to Line 3, said Rick Meloen, committee chair, encouraging donations to a glass jar that by the end of the event had collected more than $2,000.

The final two phases will take it to its finish at York Road, between Queenston and St. Davids, and connect it as a side trail to the Bruce Trail, while also connecting three communities of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Old Town resident Debi Pratt also has memories of the rural portion of the trail, and is looking forward to seeing it restored to its finish. She recalls teaching at the former Brockview School on Line 3, when the railway track was still used occasionally by trains, although there would just be an engine and maybe once or two cars, she said.

By the late 1960s or early 70s, the train wasn’t part of a regular schedule, but when it was approaching, it was loud, and difficult to continue teaching classes that went from Kindergarten to Grade 3. Instead, she taught her kids to put their outdoor clothes on when they heard it coming, and they’d go outside and wave as it passed by: “Everything was a language experience,” she says, and when the tracks were removed, that was another lesson, watching the heavy equipment that did the work.

Restoration of the trail along the railway bed began with the NOTL Canada Sesquicentennial Committee, created in 2017 to support and execute events to commemorate Canada’s 150 years of Confederation, when rehabilitation of the Heritage Trail was chosen as a legacy project.

Anyone contributing more than $99 will have their name on a plaque — the donation can also be in honour of someone else. A cheque can be made out to Heritage Trail, Town of Niagara on the Lake, and mailed to the town at Box 108, Virgil, ON L0S 1T0.

Coun. Allan Biltschak chats about the heritage trail with committee member Fred Sentinel (with Walter) and Diane O’Donoghue at a barbecue and information session at the home of Steffanie and Moe Bjorgan. (Photos by Penny Coles)
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 details. 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!

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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THE NOTL Local

Labyrinth 2017 (Photo submitted)
‘Public office such an important service’

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)

continued from page 4

centre expansion for the Ni-
agara Nursery School from its
very beginning, advocat-
ing for our local history and
heritage,” she said and push-
ing 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
disagreements along the
way, “some of them incred-
ibly 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
ever 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 Nur-
sery 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,
and to work with, rather
should be a fact to embrace
and your perfect orator skills,
But I still respect and admire
and sometimes even the
agreements along the way,
some agreements and dis-

Coun. Wendy Cheropi-
ta 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 incred-

I like you from the
minute I met you,” she add-
ed, “before the election, and
I consider you a colleague
and friend, I hope that will
continue. It has been an ab-
solute pleasure, and I am so
sorry it’s not going to be a
continuation.”

I can remember four
years ago sitting in meetings
that were very, very loud,
angry, meetings, and you
held your calms.
And you guided people
through issues that would
otherwise have lacked a lot
of leadership,” Disero said.

“Just saw you, Clare,
as a star to this town, and
wholeheartedly supported
and endorsed your candi-
dacy. I know that you would
be good. And yes, we’ve had
some agreements and dis-

I consider you a colleague
and friend, I hope that will
continue. It has been an ab-
solute pleasure, and I am so
sorry it’s not going to be a
continuation.”

You have made an incred-

Public office such an important service’

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)
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 tavern 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 of 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 see the mother-daughter similarities better than Merrill Streep and Amanda Seyfried did in the popular 2008 film version of the musical, based on the songs of the chart-topping Swedish pop group ABBA.

“Hannah and I 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 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 one week from opening night, the cast and crew 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 their production of Peter Pan, she wished she could have worked with the original cast.

But 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.

“I’ve been able to channel those experiences. I think it’s really hitting its stride and people are much more comfortable with their characters, and are comfortable with our characters, I love that part of it.”

“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 auditions 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.

“When I was 10, I came to see the movie, and I cried through it,” Ayla says. “I don’t think we understood what was actually happening. I 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 and acting.”

“Last year’s auditions were really a hit for Ayla and her younger sister,” Hillstrom 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, although 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.

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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 Burgand, 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 comfortable 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 and acting. 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 lauraecdord.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 online 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 of music made famous by famous artists.

“It really is my favourite of all the bands we have,” says Dunn on the line from her north St. Catharines home. “I really connect with the songs. I decided most of the show I will sing them in French.”

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. Green 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 spring, though Dunn says July 20 to 24 are the dates, and they have lined up Henry of Pelham and The Rare 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 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 complementa-ry 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.
Celine curates performance recognizing Oscar

Pianist Robi Botos with Peterson’s ‘sidenem’

Mike Balsom
The Local

For Celine 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 people would recognize as ‘normal,’” 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 Celine 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.

As at the behest of Bravo Niagara Festival’s co-founders Chris Mori and Alexis Spelden-ner, Celine Peterson has curated an upcoming performance featuring 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.

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Tennis club excited about summer games

Mike Balsom
The Local

Last weekend’s beautiful weather prompted a num-
ber of club members on the Lake Tennis Club 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 opportuni-
ty for the club members to
come and see some really
good tennis,” Dow tells The
Local. “There were some names in the past, such as (current pro) Eug-
enie 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 As-

sociation) tours in the fu-
ture, and at the Olympics.”

With the support of the
town and the Canada Sum-
mer Games committee, the
club is already involved in
preparation for the tour-
ament, which is now less
than 100 days away.

Last week a group of club members gathered
to hang wind screens on the
court’s east side fence. Dow says just beyond that
barrier is a set of temporary
bleachers with seating for as
many as 450 spectators will be
placed for the August competi-
tion.

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 re-
duce the capacity for tennis
by two thirds for about a
week, but it will be worth it.

Once the resurfacing has been completed, new score-
boards 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 courts
available for night play. The
town has agreed to cover
the cost of the lights, while
the resurfacing is taking
place on the Canada Sum-
mer Games dime.

Finally, the pavilion will be
refreshed with a new
paint job and a new
picnic tables have already arrived
on site.

The entire park will be
transformed during the
Games.

“The pavilion area will be
dressed up,” says Dow,
pointing back behind the
courts. “There will be hos-
pitality tents, media tents,
tents for each of the prov-
inces 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.

Fast president Rose-
mary Goodwin is involved in
the scheduling and ad-
ministration of the actual
tennis matches, while cur-
rent 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 mem-
bers have signed up for var-
ious 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 act-
ing as the centre for Niag-
ara’s 2022 Canada Summer
Games. Almost every one
of Niagara’s 12 municipal-
ties is hosting at least one
of the sports. Tennis match-
es 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 sup-
portive, and the parks and
recreation people are ac-
tively involved in making
sure everything is up to
scratch. It’s a really big deal.”

Perhaps due to the ex-
citement 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 Mac-
farlane. 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 Sat-
urday morning, while the
first club social is sched-
uled 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 re-
 sponsibilities 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 impor-
tance of hosting it.”
May 10 – 2017

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.
Outdoor courts likely closed until mid-June

Continued from page 1

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

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

Hindle says the day the complaint was made, the pickleball court was not operating, due to COVID, but the courts were open, with the code for the lock on the gate to 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 infrac- tion was held in a closed ses- sion, council dealt with a re- quest to amend the bylaw as it referred to sound on town-owned properties arising from sporting or recreational activities, as approved by the director of operations or del- igate for the town.

Councillor 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.”

Councillor Claire Cameron agreed, saying she thinks it’s hypocritical of the town to pass the motion “writing ourselves out of any poten- tial 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 res- ident’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 prosecu- tion, but there have been complaints about the skate- park too, which is a won- derful facility, and yet has impacted some residents in some way.”

She too felt the timing is off, with the legal action be- fore the courts.

Council first voted on a motion to defer the amend- ment 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 pres- ident Hugh Dow, weigh- ing in on the noise issue in recreational spaces, said he is sympathetic to the situa- tion 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 out- door 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.”

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