

The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL



New method
of teaching
kids to read
page 10

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Virgil couple Eleanor and Jim Dick ride along the Niagara River Recreation Trail, bordered by beautiful cherry blossoms. (Fred Mercnik)



Shaw still hoping for summer performances

If not, a longer fall season may be an alternative

Penny Coles
The Local

Tim Jennings, executive director of the Shaw Festival, remains optimistic and focused on what can be salvaged of this theatre season. He is also doing his darnedest to look after his theatre people.

Jennings has several good reasons for his optimism — despite an earlier fear of insol-

vency, and notices to contract staff that they could be terminated with two weeks' notice, the future is looking a little brighter these days.

One recent positive step, Jennings says, is the federal wage subsidy program that has allowed him to temporarily lay off contract staff, and bring them back as employees doing education outreach and digital engagement.

"They won't be on stage,

but they'll be able to be paid by the wage subsidy," he says. "This is good for all of us."

Some of the actors have been rehearsing through Zoom, which has been helpful in preparing for the start of the season, "but we've come to the end of what is reasonable to do on Zoom. This will give them temporary jobs to do, which I expect they'll take."

The work will include calling donors and theatre

patrons, thanking them for their support, he says, as well as providing online theatre activities and games, and having an online presence in other ways.

"It's a really good opportunity to create a digital conversation about what we do, and how theatres are used for the public good," he says.

With so much shut down, people are realizing the importance of gathering and

sharing stories and experiences, Jennings says, and the Shaw can seize this time to provide those opportunities.

It's obvious, from the number of people violating provincial orders, "that people need to be around people for their mental health. I get it." But people have to work hard at obeying those orders to help make this go away faster, he adds.

And the faster this ends, the sooner the Shaw can get back to doing what it does best — providing live theatre.

With non-essential services still mostly closed, and the Town shut down until June 30, Jennings says he is still hopeful for a season that could begin July 1.

That depends on getting people "back into the building, into rehearsals," in time to be ready to open. If that doesn't happen, there are alternatives under discussion.

In the meantime, "we're finding new ways to work," and when this is over, and

Continued on page 3

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Local feels ‘shamed’ for being out on road

Penny Coles
The Local

Maureen Dodd lives on Concession 2, a long stretch of rural road where vehicles often speed.

With not much of a shoulder to walk on, she is in the habit of jumping in her van and driving to the Commons with her nine-year-old Great Dane, Miles, for a long walk.

While she heeds the stay-at-home message from the Town, and would love to be able to go out her front door and go for a walk, it's simply not a safe place for either of them.

"I live in a rural area. There are no safe roads to walk, with a child or a dog, especially with the extensive speeding I've seen on rural roads and on the parkway recently."

Last week, Tuesday, April 28, she and Miles were in the van on Line 3, almost at the Niagara River Parkway as they headed to the Commons, when a car turning left from the parkway lost control, and hit her side of the vehicle so hard she spun around and ended up facing the other direction.

The car that hit her travelled quite a distance, into a ditch, leaving a trail of debris behind.

Her van has been written off, but it saved her life, she believes.

The collision left her badly shaken, physically and emotionally, although uninjured — she feels it's a miracle she's still alive. And she's angry, because "it was completely senseless. It shouldn't have happened."

And it could have been worse, if there had been pedestrians on the side of the road when it occurred, she says, or children riding their bikes.

She was further dismayed to see an online video by Fire Chief Nick Ruller, showing the scene of the collision, which was used to remind NOTLers, to stay home as requested, except for essential travel. She feels that it was aimed at her, suggesting she shouldn't have been on the road. She points to the charges laid against the other driver — not proven — as the cause, rather than the fact that she was driving to the Commons to walk her dog. The other driver is also local, although she felt the chief's message implied he was from outside the community.

Ruller introduces the intent of the video by saying he is responding to residents' concern over the messaging of the signs and communications from the Town regarding non-essential travel into the community. "We don't want to discourage anybody

from essential travel," visiting essential businesses, or providing care to those in need, he says.

Ruller's point was that because of the severity of the collision, there were four police officers on the scene, two paramedics, four bystanders who stopped to see if they could help, eight firefighters and two fire chiefs. There are risks and unintended consequences when people take to the roads, he says, which is why the Town is trying to discourage non-essential travel — to keep residents safe, to stop the spread, and to limit unnecessary interactions for first responders.

He referenced the Line 3 collision between a resident and "someone out for a drive within the community" in the video, and did not intend to imply that Dodd shouldn't have been on the road, he told The Local.

He didn't identify her in the video, he says, and if she was going out to take her dog to a place where it's safe for her to walk, "there's nothing wrong with what she was doing."

The message in the video was not about that one incident or those specifically involved in the collision, but to say to those who question why it's wrong to just go out for a drive, "stuff like this can

happen, and it involves a lot of resources. There were about a dozen people who were affected by it."

Dodd says although she feels targeted by the video for being out on the road, "I'm completely grateful to all responders. They were professional, compassionate, and they did a very thorough investigation."

Officers from the Niagara Parks Police Service responded to the call, charging the driver of the other vehicle, also from NOTL, with careless driving, and other offences related to insurance and lack of documentation. They are just charges at this point, not proven, say parks police, and the investigation is ongoing.



Maureen Dodd's van is a write-off after a serious collision on Line 3. (Photo supplied)

Kids' virtual activities online at the library

Penny Coles
The Local

Kasia Dupuis is a teacher and an artist. She's not accustomed to being on-camera.

But with the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library closed, Dupuis, who looks after children's programming, has gone virtual.

Using a tripod and her phone, she records and uploads online programs, including Create with Kasia, showing kids how to paint along with her step-by-step instructions, and STEAM Story Time, when she reads a story to youngsters and shows them some simple science.

Story Time is Wednesdays at 11 a.m., and when offered at the library is intended for kids aged three to five, but online, "anyone can access it."

The art-based program is offered Mondays at 4 p.m., and is designed for all ages — she's even finding adults enjoy it, she says.

The number of kids who watch each session has been anywhere from a dozen to about 40, she says, depending on the day and what is on offer, but each past video is available on YouTube to watch afterward. Dupuis says they've had about 800 viewers — Story Time, for example, can be watched by kids who enjoy it over and over again.

"People are watching them, and we're getting really good feedback."

She says recording the videos is fun, and "also terrifying. I'm not used to being on-camera."

It is, however, something she's always wanted to try, especially with an art-based program, and now that she's given it a try, she finds it exciting.

And, as a bonus, she's still employed — some library staff have been laid off.

"This is helping me think about programming in general, not only for online and vir-

tual," she says. "It shows there are different ways of providing programs for people who can't come to the library."

And it's interesting to be able to connect with a wider audience, from home, she adds.

Also online is the Virtual Minecraft Club on Tuesdays at 1 p.m. and Fridays at 3 p.m., and Family Fun Fridays, at noon, offering instructional videos to follow along with

some simple and fun activities. Online learning is about the future, she says, but it's also here now. "When this is over, and we're back to the new normal, whatever that looks like, virtual programming will continue to have its place."

For a schedule and more information about online library programs, visit <https://www.facebook.com/notllocal/>.



Miles, Callum, Alice and Lucy Vanderwielen show off what they made while watching Create with Kasia. The siblings have followed three of the sessions, and have had fun with each of them. (Photo supplied)



Kasia Dupuis presents a virtual STEAM Story Time. (Photo supplied)

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Planning underway for library reopening

Penny Coles
The Local

Cathy Simpson is working four days a week, from home, and is busier than ever.

The chief librarian and CEO of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library says she's surprised at how much work there is to do, and how quickly the days fly by.

At the moment, the main focus of her attention is looking at how the library can safely re-open when the Town, and Province, permit.

The library closed March 13, and since early April, student pages and three frontline staff members have been laid off.

Two library full-time staff members were temporarily laid off last week: Debbie Krause, the community engagement coordinator, and Sarah Bowers, the local history and cataloguing technician — both of whom have duties that cover more than their titles suggest.

The remaining full-time staff have had their hours and pay reduced to four days a week, "including me," says Simpson.

"There is still lots to

do," she adds. "There is so much planning going into re-opening," which she is hopeful could occur July 2, although in a limited way.

The library, which has been rebranded as a "community hub" in the last decade, has offered so much more than book-lending, says Simpson, and has continued during its closure to provide a number of online services, such as ebooks, audiobooks, digital magazines, language learning programs and ancestry.com, as well as activities for kids and adults. For example, says Simpson, there are chess tournaments for both.

The weekly schedule on Facebook shows a variety of programming. One popular event is Ask Me Anything, Wednesdays from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Each week it features a different guest host who showcases their talent, taking questions and answering them in a real-time chat. This week, May 6, is local musician Steve Goldberger, with Barbara Worthy, actress, writer and historian, next week.

Simpson says the library is looking for volunteers who have a talent they'd like to share and stories to tell. She encourages anyone

interested to contact her at csimpson@notlpl.org.

Another popular online event is Tuesday Trivia. To access the game, which starts at 7:30 p.m., people need to enter crowd.live on their phone, tablet or laptop — no app needed. They will then be prompted to enter a code, which is posted on the library's Facebook page and website every week.

There is also a kids' trivia game Mondays at 2 p.m., which works in the same way.

For a schedule and more information about ongoing online library programs, for adults and kids, visit <https://www.facebook.com/notllibrary/>.

As popular as the online programs are, Simpson is anxious to have the doors open at the library. Once she has a date, staff will be going in ahead of time to prepare, and after opening, hours will be limited at first.

Furniture will be removed, to discourage people from sitting, and shelves may be moved to make physical distancing easier.

Simpson says she is also considering specific times for the vulnerable populations.

Another change may be a curbside service for book

returns, to ensure books are quarantined before they go back on the shelves.

To share ideas, she has attended regular meetings on Zoom with other library heads from around the region, discussing their plans for re-opening.

"It's nice to see their faces — you don't feel so isolated," she says.

They're paying attention to what is happening internationally and in the U.S., and will be watching what libraries in other provinces do as they open.

"We'll have to get creative, and there are some things we won't be able to do for a while."

However, the library has always managed to remain relevant, did its best to continue through the pandemic, and will be again in the future, she says.

One of the services offered during the closure, primarily by volunteers, is a phone check-in service with members. The volunteers have learned there are many seniors, and some who aren't, who are not online, either through lack of knowledge, or lack of technology.

The calls, Simpson says, have been very much appreciated by the recipients. "A



Library CEO Cathy Simpson is working on a gradual reopening of the library. (Photo supplied)

lot of them are saying they are finding this very difficult. There's a certain demographic that is feeling very isolated. That's something we want to address when we re-open."

Summer students will be coming back to the library, and may stay longer into the fall, and it may be an opportunity to encourage people to get online, with technical

tutoring, and if necessary, loaning out the technology that's needed, says Simpson.

"We could also load up tablets and other devices with content that people could take home with them."

Being online is becoming a necessity, she adds. "We hope we can help with that. We need to serve everyone, all ages and all demographics."

Federal programs, insurance help festival as it moves forward

Continued from page 1

back to some kind of normal, he says, they'll be looking at how they did things online and what they can do differently to provide more, while continuing to offer live theatre.

Some of what is being done online now by others, including presenting videos of performances, is too much like TV, "and there is no need for more of that. We'll be looking at new ways of working to make us better, such as outdoor performances, smaller venues, bigger venues," and other changes with productions that will be discussed. Artistic director Tim Carroll is coming up with ideas such as outdoor pageant wagons — moveable stages — or productions that have actors moving from one stage to another, small gatherings in multiple places, shorter performances, "literally hun-

dreds of ideas" that might work to change things up and enable them to stay flexible in the future.

It's really an extension of the vision Carroll has presented over the last four years, says Jennings, which includes developing relations and human connections, and sharing a live narrative, "enabling us to breathe the same air."

There's never been an easier time to talk about it, to understand the value of community-based theatre, and how it can serve the public through art, he says.

Another aid to moving forward is the Shaw's forward-thinking insurance policy that covers disasters such as the pandemic. When Jennings was "new to the gig" at the Shaw, late in 2016, he and CFO Roy Reeves were looking through insurance documents, and Jennings, who has seen his share of disasters in

his career, decided the Shaw was under-insured in that aspect. The chief concern was that a communicable disease could spread and affect a number of cast members, and cause the cancellation of three or four shows.

As it turned out, "we were prescient with our decision, and very fortunate," he says.

How much financial aid the insurance provides will depend on how the season plays out, he explains — it is intended to bring them up to their "normal net" based on recent seasons. Although they won't have that information until the end of the year, they've been offered an advance to tide them over.

He is also anticipating the details of the \$500 million promised by the federal government to arts, culture and sports organizations will be available this week — possibly released Wednesday — and

that the money should begin flowing quickly, as it has with other relief benefits.

"It's not going to stretch to a huge amount to any one organization, but I'm hoping it will consider the larger employers with the most actors. Or it may not. We hope to hear soon."

If, despite Jennings' optimism, the Shaw is not able to stage performances this summer, there is another option under discussion. After last year's successful holiday season, he says, they are hoping to move forward with holiday shows this fall, and could begin them earlier for a longer run. "That would help the town get back on its feet, restart the economy, and help get people coming back to town."

Clearly, as Jennings states, there is still a huge appetite for live theatre, and for the Shaw Festival, and the town, its return can't come soon enough.



Tim Jennings, executive director of the Shaw Festival, is hoping for a summer season, and in the meantime is doing everything he can to look after staff. (David Cooper)



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No hanging baskets on town streets this year

Penny Coles
The Local

After a discussion about the long-standing tradition of beautiful hanging baskets on Queen Street, and more recently the other four communities, the basket program has been cancelled for this year.

Every February, about \$10,000 worth of small plants are ordered from local growers and in early May, are planted in baskets in the Town greenhouses and grown on until they fill the baskets.

The baskets, in the early

days a project of the NOTL Horticultural Society as a gift to the town, have always been much admired by visitors.

But not this year.

“After careful deliberation with the Emergency Control Group, and in consultation with council, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has decided to cancel its 2020 hanging basket program,” said an announcement last week.

“While this may be understandably disappointing for some, the COVID-19 pandemic is forcing the Town to make difficult deci-

sions with respect to staff and budgeting. Cancellation of the hanging basket program will save the Town \$51,000.”

Staff create and install about 230 baskets each year.

While on display, the baskets require regular maintenance, which is performed by contract staff. Due to the impact of COVID-19, the Town has had to lay off a number of contract staff and postponed the rehiring of summer contract staff, the announcement said.

“The reality is that this program is simply not feasible at this time,” says interim CAO Sheldon Randall.

“We understand and share in residents’ disappointment, and we are looking forward to the hanging baskets returning to Niagara-on-the-Lake in 2021.”

To review all Town updates related to COVID-19, read answers to frequently asked questions, and see up-to-date information on the status of Town services, visit notl.com/COVID-19, or call 905-468-3266.

Town staff will continue to assist and serve citizens online and over the phone between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday.



There will be no hanging baskets in town this season. (Photo supplied)



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Ignoring parking ban results in fines and towing

Penny Coles
The Local

Last week, after weekend crowds proved that escalated measures to deter out-of-town visitors were ignored, the Town banned all on-street parking within a designated area of Old Town.

This weekend, bylaw officers were issuing tickets, and vehicles were towed.

More than 10,000 vehicles entered the Old Town this weekend, from Mississauga Street and Queen's Parade, the Town reported Tuesday. Bylaw officers issued 113 parking tickets,

and 19 vehicles were towed, with the \$200 charge to retrieve it. The tow truck operators are paid by the vehicle owner. "The Town did not pay to have trucks stationed throughout Old Town," as one social media post reported.

In response to a question about how drivers were able to retrieve their vehicles, the Town said, "if a vehicle is not where the owner left it, the owner can call the police and the police will advise where it was taken. Uber is operating and available to assist people in getting to their vehicles."

Eight emergency order charges were laid for groups larger than five, and complaints of public urination and defecation continue, although no fines were laid because bylaw officers were unable to catch those reported.

Residents who have parking permits will not be permitted to use them during the parking ban, and those purchased before May 1, with a 2020 expiry date, will be extended by the period of time the ban remains in effect.

There are some accommodations being made, said

the announcement. "Vulnerable residents dependent on the care of family and/or support workers remain a high priority for town council and staff. If a ticket is issued to a person providing an essential service, please contact the Town at covidcomplaints@notl.com immediately."

Residents holding a Dedicated Parking Permit will be permitted to park within the banned area, and 15-minute parking zones will be established to accommodate patrons of essential businesses remaining open in Old Town.

The road signs previously situated at main, high-traffic entrances have been relocated "to strategically target out-of-town visitors," with messaging adjusted to say: "State of Emergency," "No Facilities Available," "Parking Enforced," and "Essential Business Only."

The parking ban will remain in effect until further notice, Thursday's announcement says. "It is important to remember the significant risk the spread of COVID-19 poses for Niagara-on-the-Lake. With more than 50 percent of our

population over the age of 50, one of the demographics identified as most vulnerable, this human health emergency could be disastrous for our community," the parking ban announcement says.

"The health and safety of residents, and the public, is the highest priority, and town council and staff are doing all they can to protect against community spread. This health crisis is new territory for everyone, and situations are changing rapidly. As such, adjustments will continue to be made as circumstances evolve."



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EDITORIAL

How did we get here, and where are we going?

There are some cliches that, while drastically overused, are applicable when looking at this year of the pandemic, and the way it has been handled.

They become cliches for a reason, so often repeated they sound trite. But at some point, they were considered relevant. And as trite as they may seem, they are relevant today.

“Hindsight is 20/20,” or as has been said, 2020, as this will be a year to look back on.

How about “unprecedented?” How many times have we heard this from politicians and medical experts from across the country? Or “nothing’s off the table.” “Err on the side of caution.”

Yet, as often as we have heard that we are living through a time like no other, that all possible options to help guide us through it safely are being considered, and that decisions are being made to keep us as safe as possible, we sit in judgement of the decision-makers.

Many are angry with the politicians who make those decisions. Going by the plethora of strongly-worded insults on local social media, they are extremely angry, likely because people are getting increasingly anxious and impatient for it to be over.

There are two sides, or more, to every story. In this town, at this time, one side represents those who think the many restrictions, including the recent parking ban and signage to keep visitors out of town, go too far.

And on the other, are the decision-makers, and all those who support their decisions and willingness to err on the side of caution.

One side fears the restrictions are unnecessarily harsh and compromising our economy to the point of no return. The other is concerned about saving lives.

Although there are many who are quick to offer their opinions now, they are just that. Opinions. Only in hindsight will we be able to assess the actions taken. We will be looking back on this year, maybe the next couple of years, evaluating what was done, what should have been done or could have been done, and was it enough or too much.

For now, as we all struggle to get through this time, it’s still best to work together. And together, follow the guidelines and help to bring this to a conclusion sooner and with a better outcome. To all who are doing that, thank you.

Can we be optimistic, and trust that decisions, which in time may prove to be too much, or maybe not enough, are being made for the benefit of us all? That those who are planning cautious reopenings will do so sensibly? That businesses will open and visitors will return?

And can we choose to wait it out with kindness, rather than anger?

As The Local’s Karen Skeoch noted, after a much-needed grocery store outing, the store employees were all wearing T-shirts asking people to be kind.

“How did we get to the point where we need T-shirts to ask us to be kind?” she wonders.

Good question. Can’t we just be kind?

Penny Coles
The Local



Auchterlonie on Astrology

Bill Auchterlonie
Special to The Local

While the pandemic shrinks the number of pages of The Local, Auchterlonie on Astrology will also downsize to one paragraph.

Thursday, May 7: Just a few minutes after the sun rises this morning, we will be under the influence of the full Moon in Scorpio – one of the most powerful full Moons of the year.

Basically it pits what we do not know about ourselves against our deepest, most passionate emotions. It also plays with our head, and drains us of our usual energy. My advice? Be charming and be sincere. Don’t be like Saint Joan of Arc, who on May 7, 1429, led the French army to oust the British for the rule of the City of Orleans. If you have not seen G.B. Shaw’s play at the Shaw Festival (called *Saint Joan*), check it out the next time it is offered.

The full Auchterlonie on Astrology column will be in this week’s printed edition.



Mental Health is the Greatest Wealth

Ben Bradford Andrew (top), and Samantha Cashmore, Grade 8 students at St. Michael Catholic School, created posters for Mental Health Awareness week. Each of their posters has five suggestions for remaining positive during the pandemic, and is being displayed in the community. Mental Health is the Greatest Wealth is this year’s theme for the campaign. (Photos supplied)



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. The deadline is Monday at noon.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL

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keyword: Niagara,
then your tip

COMMENT

Chamber preparing to welcome back visitors



Eduardo Lafforgue
Special to The Local

Last week was a strange one of in-betweens — between our once-normal life and our alternative COVID-19 one, between our town shut down in a bubble and others on the brink of some form of reopening.

As we face the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 outbreak, our efforts naturally turn to creating a clean and safe environment for our guests to enjoy and the well-being of all of us.

Now that we are “enjoying” the deafening silence of no visitors, we realize how crucial tourism is to our economy and quality of life.

There’s no question that this pandemic is the biggest challenge the tourism industry and Niagara-on-the-Lake as a destination have faced in the past 40 years. But, despite the chilling emptiness of our streets and zero per cent occupancy rates in our hotels, bed and breakfasts and short-term rentals, not to

mention employee lay-offs and closed shops, it’s time to think about the future and show respect and care for those who have been our source of revenue for so many years: our visitors.

So, what will the Niagara-on-the-Lake brand bring to the post-coronavirus tourism world? Tradition, culture, elegance, heritage, nature, beauty and that “savoir faire” that has been, during the last 70 years, our signature to welcome guests and visitors. We should not allow COVID-19, and the excessive use of restrictions, destroy Niagara-on-the-Lake as one of the most recognized and cherished tourism destinations in Canada. There is a light at the end of the tunnel. Hotels, B&Bs and short-term rentals are talking about ways they’re readying their properties and timing for openings.

The cultural stakeholders are looking at ways of sharing resources so they can open their sector to recovery, as well as new initiatives for different venues. Restaurants, retailers and wineries, who have not stopped doing curbside delivery, are innovating and redesigning their shops and spaces to the new social distancing rules. Niagara-on-the-Lake is

looking to the future.

Sometimes it’s hard to think about tomorrow, when today’s reality appears less than promising. We are all wondering about the future; when will all this be over? I suggest visualizing what we want the future to look like. Taking into consideration the realities of today, let’s imagine the innovations that can make that vision come to life, and put them into action. I am convinced our destination, Niagara-on-the-Lake will be more vibrant than ever.

The hospitality and travel industries, the theatres, museums, festivals, restaurants, shops and wineries will bounce back and they will flourish. Their offers may look different than they did last year, or even three months ago, but surely we will return.

The Chamber of Commerce and Tourism NOTL are here to provide you information and resources to consider as we visualize and create an even more welcoming industry, where guests feel safe and taken care of.

Eduardo Lafforgue is the president and CEO of the NOTL Chamber of Commerce and Tourism NOTL.

LETTERS

Signs for visitors offensive to reader

Dear Lord Mayor:

I have listened to your appeals to the public to stay away from NOTL, and driven by the new signs. (I believe the public sign between Niagara Falls and NOTL on St. Paul Street may in fact be on Niagara Falls property and not on NOTL property. Perhaps this should be checked out by the works department).

We are all, every one of us, struggling to keep safe and to do the right thing during this pandemic.

As I listened to your message, wondering about tourists in the town — where they are coming from, are they asymptomatic, are they likely to cause the spread of the virus as they shop at the bakery, grocery stores, ice cream shop (what is essen-

tial about an ice cream shop, anyway), etc., I have to wonder if that is not the case for everyone living in every single municipality.

This question can also be asked of NOTL people as they indeed shop in grocery stores, bakeries, banks, bulk food stores, big box stores, etc. in the municipalities outside their own area of NOTL — say perhaps St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Beamsville, or Grimsby. They might also park their cars and walk along sidewalks and paths in those other municipalities. I think it is fairly safe to say that any resident in NOTL would be hard pressed to find all their needs could be met within the boundaries of the town.

I believe the signs warn-

ing people away from the Old Town are very offensive. “Please stay home,” “local traffic only,” are signs used to indicate that only people within those streets should be on them. Your merchants who are delivering curbside pickup provide a service to people who live outside the town. In fact, I dare say that they, none of them, in good times or in bad, would survive without the support from neighbouring towns and villages.

The message seems pretty clear to me, as a resident of the village of Queenston for some 47 years, the Old Town wants your money but please do not cause us any inconvenience or concerns.

Donna Lynne Fraser
Village of Queenston

Niki Claus
NOTL

LETTERS

Feeling blessed to live in NOTL

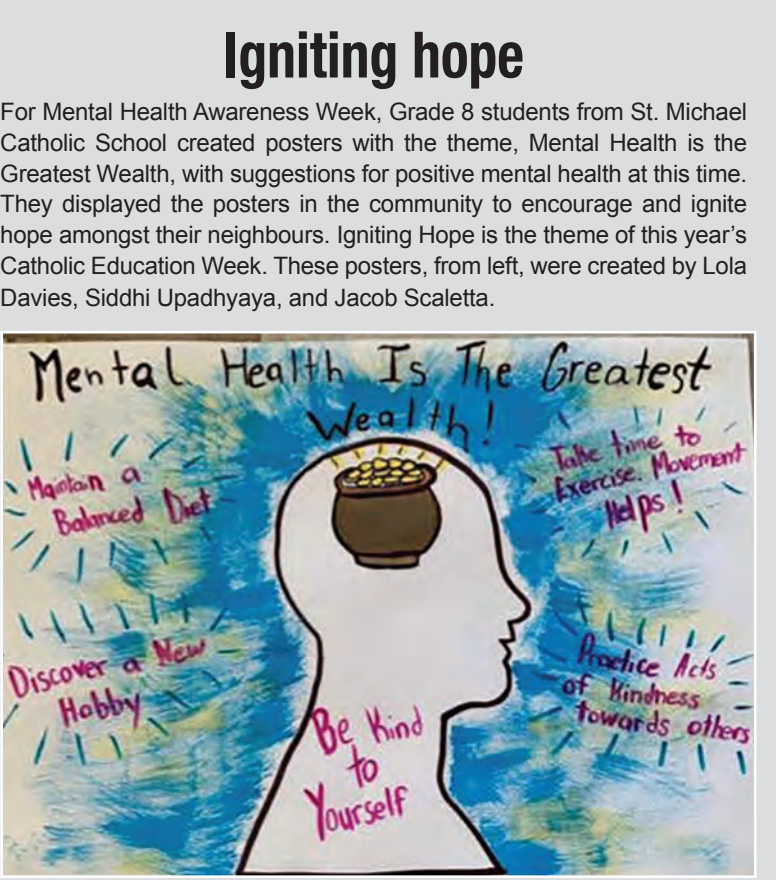
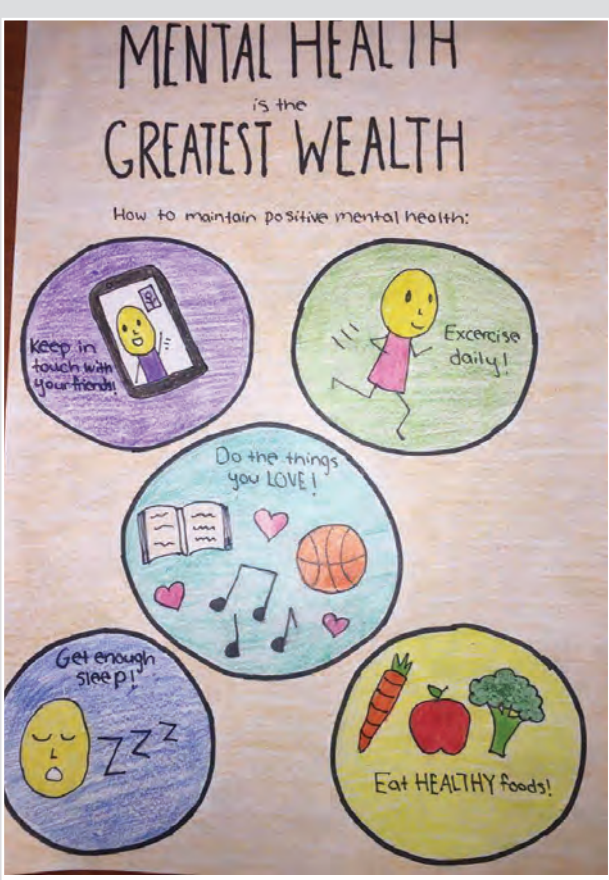
Thank you, Penny, for choosing to share our story.

We have been overwhelmed with the unexpected generosity and thoughtfulness

from our neighbours, and people who we haven’t even met!

We are reminded of how blessed we are to live in such an amazing communi-

ty. Friends and strangers alike, thank you from the bottom of our hearts.



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Crossroads students learn about planting from local expert

Penny Coles
The Local

Byron Dodd wasn't going to let a global pandemic and school closures interfere with his commitment to about 50 students at Crossroads Public School.

Three years ago, when his oldest son Logan was in Grade 1, he decided he would like to teach students a little bit about farming, and figured he could do a better job if he went to school, rather than have the kids come to him, at Dodd's Greenhouses on Concession 2.

He took some pansy seeds with him, and taught the kids how to plant them in tiny little plugs, then, when they were ready, transfer them to four-inch pots. Each student was able to choose four plugs and two four-inch pots, to plant two to a pot.

He taught them "the very basics" about the root system, soil, and planting, he says.

He had seeds that would produce several different colours, and although it was too early to see the flowers, "the kids got so excited. It was the best part of it for me, watching them all trying to choose which they wanted to plant."

Once each child had their two pots planted, he took them back to the greenhouse to grow them on, and nor-

mally, he would take them back to school to give the kids in May, before Mother's Day, and they'd have something they could give their moms, with pride in having planted them.

This year was different, of course. The pansies were planted before March break, and as it turned out, due to the COVID-19 virus, the students haven't been back to school.

Instead, Dodd and his wife Sue arranged for each of the student families to come to pick up the kids' plants. Each pot was labelled with the students' names, and the Dodds had one family drive into the parking area at a time, allowing the students to pick up their pots safely.

There are two and a half Grade 1 classes, totaling about 50 students, says Crossroads teacher Anjie Inglis. Dodd taught each one of them and helped with their planting. All three teachers were at the greenhouse Saturday to watch their students pick up their plants, and although everyone was cautious about physical distancing, and spacing out the arrival of the students, it was an emotional reunion.

"We appreciate the Dodd family so much," says Inglis. "They have come into our Grade 1 classes for the past



Byron and Sue Dodd, with their daughter Maryna, in Grade 1 at Crossroads Public School, welcomed her classmates to Dodd's Greenhouses parking lot Saturday. The students picked up pansies they planted at school before it closed. (Penny Coles)

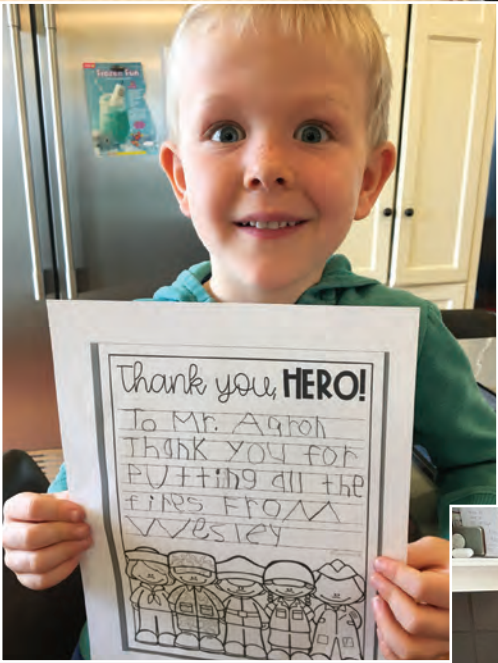
few years and have taught our students all about planting pansies. Mr. Dodd explained to our students how to plant and care for the flowers. Our students love getting their hands dirty by planting their very own flowers."

This year, she says, "the flowers were planted on the very last day before March Break. Even though we haven't been back since, I hope that by picking up their flowers today, our students will see that life continues to go on, and that it will return to normal again. We miss them so much."

St. Davids students have fun learning



St. Davids Public School students Charlotte, Leo and Sofie Mannella (top), Wesley (left), Brady Parravicino (bottom left), and Ella Parravicino show off the school work they've had fun with at home. (Photos supplied)



Town Enacts Parking Ban to Further Protect Against Community Spread

Effective May 1, 2020, all on-street parking within a designated area of Old Town is prohibited at all times. This prohibition will remain in effect during the Town's State of Emergency or until further notice.

All 1-Hour Resident Parking Permits will be void during the parking ban. The expiry dates for 2020 1-Hour Parking Permits purchased prior to May 1, 2020, will be extended by the period of time equal to the parking ban.

Despite this parking ban, the following accommodations have been made:

1. While parking restrictions are being strictly enforced throughout the designated area, vulnerable resident's dependent on the care of family and/or support workers remain a high priority for Town Council and Staff. If a ticket is issued to a person providing an essential service, please contact the Town at covidcomplaints@notl.com immediately.
2. Residents holding a Dedicated Parking Permit are permitted to park within the banned area.
3. 15-minute parking zones have been established to accommodate patrons of essential businesses remaining open in Old Town

It is important to remember the significant risk the spread of COVID-19 poses for Niagara-on-the-Lake. With more than 50 percent of our population over the age of 50, one of the demographics identified as most vulnerable, this human health emergency could be disastrous for our community.

The health and safety of residents, and the public, is the highest priority, and Town Council and Staff are doing all they can to protect against community spread. This health crisis is new territory for everyone, and situations are changing rapidly. As such, adjustments will continue to be made as circumstances evolve.

In addition to increased enforcement efforts within the Old Town, Enforcement Officers will continue to ensure that Emergency Orders are adhered to throughout Niagara-on-the-Lake. Those wishing to report a violation or issue a complaint are encouraged to email covidcomplaints@notl.com.

For more information, please visit notl.com/COVID-19, or call 905-468-3266. For immediate alerts, follow the Town on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Klassen family making the best of time together

Penny Coles
The Local

If you want to know what other families are doing to have fun during the pandemic, ask Erica Klassen.

She and her husband Mark Klassen, their son Mark Jr., and son-in-law Taylor Klassen, live in their Virgil home, where they keep busy, active, and feel very fortunate to be having fun together.

Erica says Taylor is the one with the creative mind, and comes up with great ideas to

keep them busy.

Last week, it was a scavenger hunt with 20 clues, the details planned by Taylor, says Erica. Rather than looking for objects, they had questions that were more of a personal nature, related to family history, and they had to find the answers.

They paired up, took selfies as they hunted, and raced to the finish, Erica and Mark winning by a slim margin.

"This was the most fun ever. It took us about two hours to find everything," says Erica.

The two couples kept cross-

ing paths as they searched, but the most fun was watching the selfies they took as they hunted, which "the boys," as Erica calls the two adults who married last fall, turned into a slideshow for them all to watch on TV.

She says she looks forward to doing it again, with extended family, once they're able to get together.

She's had several people reach out to her, saying how much fun they seemed to be having, and asking about the questions for the hunt. While she's happy to explain, she says, the clues are Taylor's creation, and devised for the Klassen family.

They often have game nights, sometimes the four of them, sometimes virtual games with other family, Mark and Erica in the Henry Street garage Mark has turned into his man cave, Mark Jr. and Taylor downstairs in the space they rent. Other evenings the four of them just hang out in the garage together.

Erica says she's grateful they're able to be at home together — she loves having them close by, and finds just having them in the kitchen over coffee in the morning is time she treasures with them. "I keep think-



Mark Jr., Erica, Mark and Taylor Klassen head off on one of their daily five-kilometre walks through their Virgil neighbourhood. (Photo supplied)

ing it's amazing they want to spend time with us parents, but they do. They want to be with us. We're so grateful. Mark and I keep it fun, the boys keep it fun, and we all keep active. It's just such a pleasure to be with them."

Erica also needs her "girl time," and gets that virtually, when five female family members get together to have a glass of wine on Skype. "We vent, and we chat. It's a ton of fun. We share some happy times and some sad times, and lots of laughs. They help keep me sane."

Taylor is an essential worker, as a clerk at the Joseph Brant

Hospital in Burlington, and apart from him going to work, the four of them are "keeping it real, and close to home," isolating and doing what they can to stay safe, and positive.

The four of them — they call themselves the Klassen clan — are also taking walks together, with their two dogs, but still staying close to home, following a five-kilometre route through the neighbourhood.

"We do the same route every day, and see the same people. We've never seen people so friendly. Everyone's smiling, they're waving and saying hel-

lo. People are looking for interaction with others."

There are sad days, says Erica, getting emotional when she remembers the Easter dinner she cooked just for the four of them, trying to keep the holiday "as normal as possible," but missing extended family.

But overall, "it's been a positive time" for the Klassen family, she says. The lesson from this time, she adds, is "family means so much. Certainly there are bad days, when it feels like this is never going to end, but we love being together. We love each other."



Taylor (front), Erica, Mark and Mark Jr. clown around in their Henry Street garage. Mark's man-cave has been turned into a family hang-out as they get through the pandemic together. (Photo supplied)

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MLS 30794953 • Marilyn Francis



339 MARY STREET
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MLS 30804125 • Thomas Elltoft and Kim Elltoft



1409 CONCESSION 2 ROAD
\$1,380,000
MLS 30804384 • Thomas Elltoft and Kim Elltoft



92 ANGELA CRESCENT
\$799,000
MLS 30793849 • Randy Armstrong



11 WINDSOR CIRCLE
\$699,000
MLS 30761386 • Christopher Bowron and Nicole Vanderperk



9 WEATHERSTONE COURT
\$3,379,000
MLS 30789130 • Patricia Atherton



40 PLATOFF STREET
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MLS 30804777 • Thomas Elltoft and Kim Elltoft



558 LANSDOWNE AVENUE
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MLS 30804183 • Christopher Bowron and Nicole Vanderperk



16 NORTON STREET
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MLS 30791351 • Thomas Elltoft and Kim Elltoft



9315 WARNER ROAD, NIAGARA FALLS
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MLS 30758804 • Viviane Elltoft, Thomas Elltoft and Kim Elltoft

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Local creates new method to teach kids to read

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

A life-long struggle with reading difficulties has prompted Niagara-on-the-Lake's Jeff Harrington to create a website to help others learn to read.

And he's hoping Wuzzals.com will soon become the standard for teaching reading to young children.

Harrington grew up in London, Ontario, where he excelled in mathematics but struggled severely, right from the start, in reading.

Time spent in summer school, special education and remedial classes, even failing a grade and being forced to repeat, didn't improve his reading skills. Harrington's challenges with reading continued to dog him in high school, right through to his university education. He pushed through, though, earning a degree in history at Brock University.

About five years ago, he decided to visit his alma mater, and have himself analyzed. What he discovered surprised him.

"They told me I have zero phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is the ability to sound out words," he explains. "So I learned every word by sight."

Around that same time, his son was in Grade 6 at St. Michael Catholic Elementary School, and noticed that one of his classmates was reading a book that was far below what would have been expected for a student in that grade.

"It was like a flashback," he says. "When you're that far behind, you become self-conscious, and you don't practise as much. These kids age out of materials, and become extremely discouraged."

Harrington started researching the outcomes of children who struggle with reading. What he found was astonishing.

"If you don't learn to read by the end of Grade 2, over 50 per cent of boys end up in jail," Harrington claims (according to the website dosomething.org, two-thirds of students who

cannot read proficiently by the end of fourth grade will end up in jail or on welfare). "But at the other end of the spectrum, there are people (with reading problems), you watch Dragon's Den and Shark Tank, and you'll see there is a disproportionate number of people who reach a high level of success."

He was interested in the dichotomy of the two ends of the spectrum, and this prompted him to start researching reading programs that are widely in use.

His research broke learning to read into two approaches. The first focused on phonics. The other approach, learning by sight, was closer to the way Harrington and many other struggling readers actually learn.

What began simply as something he wanted to learn more about, became a bigger project. He found that most people who have trouble reading are better off learning by sight. He dug deeper, looking at all the phonic rules.

"The rules only work 61.7 per cent of the time," he claims. "There are 114 different ways to spell words, there are 44 sounds, and we wonder why we have dyslexia and other learning disorders with English. There's less occurrence of reading difficulties in other languages."

He came up with the idea of isolating the phonic rules that have the fewest exceptions, and focusing on them first. Harrington decided on a system of levels.

He began by looking at short, one- to three-letter words that children can learn by sight, and grouping them in tens. The first level, called level 10 on Wuzzals.com, introduces ten decodable words (words that sound the way they are spelled), so they are easy to sound out. Many of the words on this level are what Harrington refers to as CVC words (Consonant, Vowel, Consonant).

He mobilized a team of 14, including program-

mers, illustrators, editors and writers, and began putting together the website based on these levels.

A visit to Wuzzals.com today shows an easy-to-use system of reading progressions, beginning with those simple CVC words. Each level builds on the skills learned in previous ones, and includes a quick explanation and list of words for parents and teachers.

Children will find colourful, engaging stories featuring characters such as Pip and Sam, and Finn the Vegetarian Shark, with a number of online books available at each level. There is also an option to click on an audio button, which will have a professional voice actor read the book for the student.

By the time a reader gets to level 100, he or she has learned 100 sight words, which Wuzzals.com claims is over 50 per cent of the everyday language. It makes perfect sense, and Harrington is hoping others pick up on its simplicity.

Before the COVID-19 outbreak, he met with researchers at universities, expecting to get pushback from PhD candidates. He was amazed that they accepted his ideas. He was also in the process of meeting with the local school boards in an effort to start a pilot project to test the website. The closure of schools after March 13 put that on hold.

But he continues with his team to push on with the website.

Recently they have been working on a fully functioning system through which a teacher can create a classroom on Wuzzals.com, assign levels based on a student's current reading ability, and track progress for a group of students based on their various different strengths. He hopes to have up to level 300 (corresponding to 300 sight words, which would correspond roughly to a Grade 2 level reader) ready to go by the beginning of September, with 100 books available at each level.

Harrington, whose

boundless energy can be quite contagious, likens the whole website to "flash cards on steroids." He wants to make learning to read fun. He says the website builds success for readers, as "the fewer words you have to learn at once, the more success you'll have." And he insists it's not just for struggling readers like he was, but for all children learning to read. He hopes that eventually it becomes the new standard for education, and that parents use the site to support their children's learning as well.

Harrington invites anyone who is interested to give it a try. Visit Wuzzals.com, create an account, and start reading with your child. It's free, and they're already learning online, so why not give it a spin?



Jeff Harrington displays Wuzzals.com, a learning program he created to teach kids to read. (Photo supplied)

Reese brothers helping others during school closures

Penny Coles
The Local

Mariah Reese couldn't be more proud of her three sons during this time of self-isolation.

Their homeschooling leaves them plenty of time to fill, and inspired by the movie, *The Christmas Project*, "the boys have always wanted to drop gifts off at peoples' homes, 'just because,'" she says.

"We figured now was the perfect time for such a thing." Vineridge student Sebastian Reese, and Royal Oak Community School students Saxon and Skielor Reese, have delivered 40 to 50 "cheer baskets" to neighbours, friends, and even strangers, their mom says. "We have taken a lot of suggestions from other people about people they know who could use a smile right about now."

They also try to find their own ways to help strangers, she added.

"My middle child, Saxon, has a special family recipe for banana bread and another one for cookies. He has been hard at work in the kitchen making loaf after loaf — we even bought him a special mini loaf pan — and cookie sheet after cookie sheet to add to the baskets."

They have run out of baked goods a few times, and have bought cookies and tarts to give out instead, she says.

"My youngest, Skielor, has been making cards that say 'we hope you :) today.' We try to personalize the bags where possible, with wine and chocolate or toys and games for kids, and all three have been dropping the bags at doors and trying to run away without being seen," says Mariah.

"Saxon was running away from a house and his shoe fell

off on a gravel driveway and he said, 'it hurt so bad, but felt so good.' I asked him what that meant and he said, 'the rocks hurt my feet, but it felt so good to make people happy,'" she says.

"The boys have had such a good time with this, and I am so proud of how much time and love the boys have put into others' happiness during such a hard time for so many people."



Sebastian, Skielor and Saxon Reese pick up litter along the Niagara Parkway Recreation Trail on Earth Day. (Photo supplied)



Skielor Reese drops off a gift bag and scampers away before being seen. (Photo supplied)

LOCAL WORSHIP

CORNERSTONE
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Sunday, May 10th

Please be advised that with the current state of COVID-19, your safety is of utmost importance to us. We will now be live streaming our service at 10:00 am on Sundays. There will be no in-person church service.

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IN MEMORIAM



John Stephen Fryer

May 20, 1946-May 3, 2019

Forever Loved! Forever Missed!

Wife Pat

Children Lisa Fryer Kolos & Andriy Kolos;

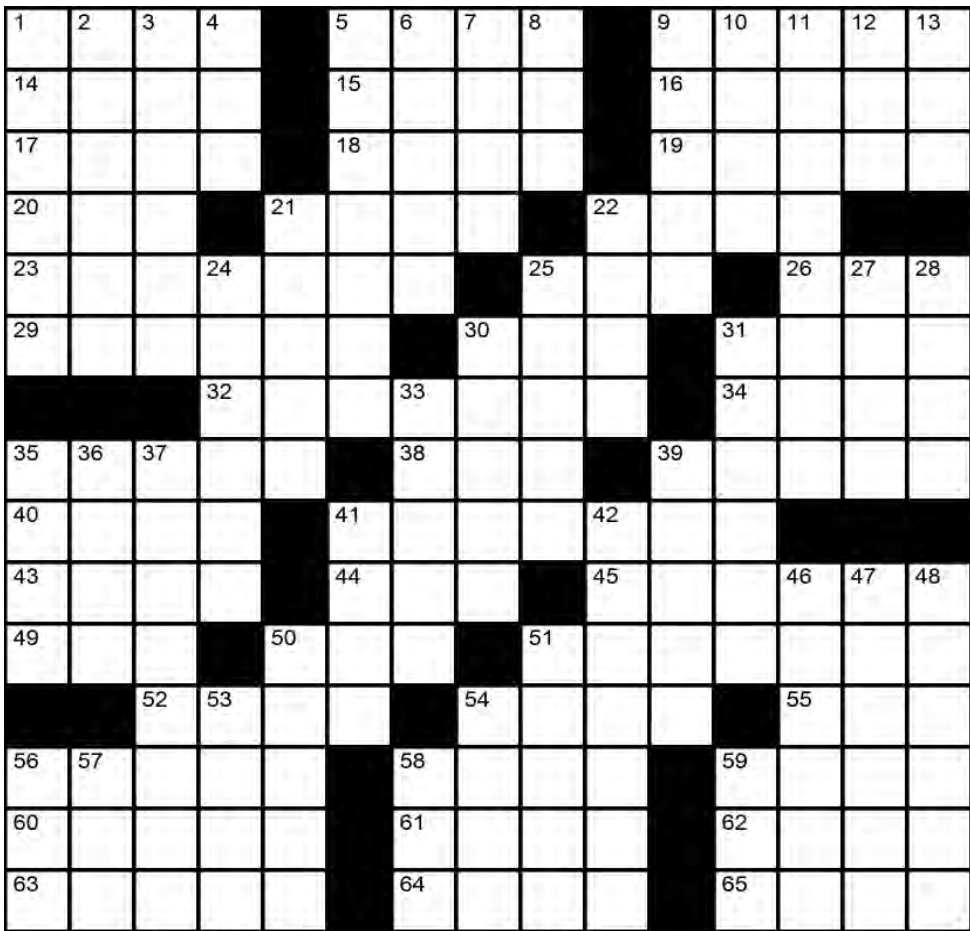
Stephen & Kaite Fryer

Grandchildren Ella & Henry Fryer

Furbabies Tallin and DARTH

Until we meet again!

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



Across:

- 1 Urban air pollution problem
- 5 That's in Paris
- 9 Prim
- 14 Formerly French Sudan
- 15 E.g. Rice, Harvard (Abbr.)
- 16 Snake vulnerable to the mongoose
- 17 Not dissimilar
- 18 Salespeople
- 19 Syrian dynasty
- 20 Padre (Abbr.)
- 21 Prepares for war
- 22 Roughly speaking
- 23 Traditional voting day
- 25 West Atlantic international grp.
- 26 Flat panel TV type
- 29 Ankle injury
- 30 Parking area
- 31 Doozie
- 32 Undersides
- 34 2,000 lbs
- 35 Foundation
- 38 Tear
- 39 Shorthand inventor John Robert ---
- 40 --- calling!
- 41 Maturity
- 43 Stiff sentence
- 44 Missions (Abbr.)

Down:

- 1 Mental ability
- 2 Bury the hatchet
- 3 Director/producer --- Stone
- 4 Kind of rummy
- 5 Small seedless raisin
- 6 Foe
- 7 Drinks slowly
- 8 Corner consoles?
- 9 Operation mementos
- 10 Decide with a coin
- 11 Pure

- 12 Plan sponsored by Sen. William Roth
- 13 Family guy
- 21 Spanish farewell
- 22 Stable food
- 24 Californian pine
- 25 Vavavoom
- 27 Block
- 28 Ordure
- 30 Lower abdomen
- 31 Pantry
- 33 Ensnarers
- 35 Hairless
- 36 Keen
- 37 Computer code
- 39 Attendees
- 41 Low sounds?
- 42 Out with a potential partner
- 46 Neglect
- 47 Pressurize
- 48 Comet finder --- Halley
- 50 Bargain
- 51 German philosopher
- 53 Cosmopolitan (Abbr.)
- 54 Second-largest Hawaiian island
- 56 Nordic airline
- 57 By what means?
- 58 National economic indicator
- 59 Actor --- Carrey

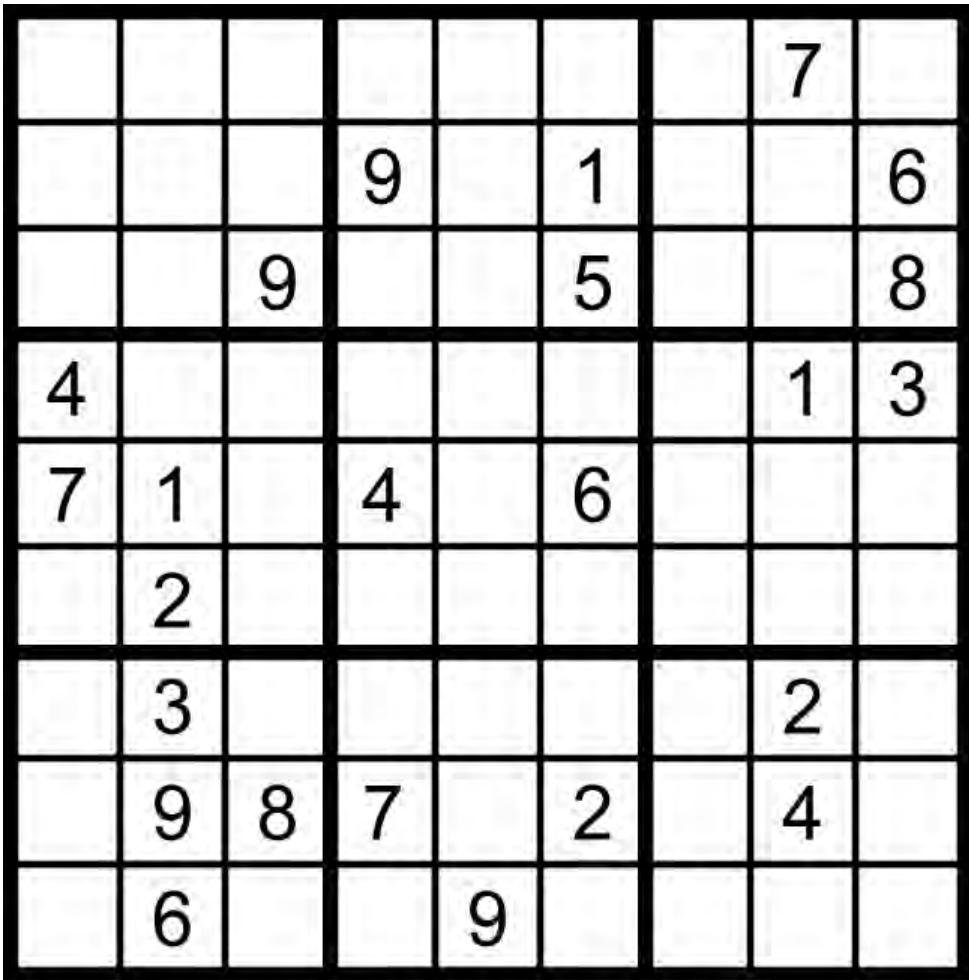


May the peace that comes
from the memories of a love
shared, comfort you.

*Remember them with
a Loving Tribute.*

Contact: classified@notllocal.com or call 905-641-5335

SUDOKU PUZZLE



PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from April 30, 2020

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

Across: 1 Smog, 5 Crest, 9 Staid, 14 Mail, 15 Univ, 16 Cobra, 17 Akin, 18 Reps, 19 Assad, 21 Arms, 22 Or so, 32 Tuesday, 25 O A S, 26 L C D, 29 Sprain, 30 Lot, 31 Lulu, 32 Bottoms, 34 A ton, 35 Basis, 38 Rip, 39 Gregg, 40 Avon, 41 Manhood, 43 Life, 44 Ops, 45 Needle, 49 DDT, 50 S O S, 51 Harmed, 52 Wits, 54 Meds, 55 S A M, 56 Shane, 58 Gage, 59 Juno, 60 Aorta, 61 Duet, 62 Is on, 63 Swell, 64 Pile, 65 Mend.

Down: 1 Smarts, 2 Make up, 3 Oliver, 4 Gin, 5 Current, 6 Enemy, 7 Sips, 8 TVs, 9 Scarfs, 10 Toss, 11 Absolute, 12 I R A, 13 Dad, 21 Adios, 22 Oats, 24 Sabine, 25 Oomph, 27 Clog, 28 Dung, 30 Loins, 31 Larder, 33 Traps, 35 Bald, 36 Avid, 37 Software, 39 Geers, 41 Moos, 42 On a date, 46 Disuse, 47 Lean on, 48 Edmond, 50 Steal, 51 Hegel, 53 Int'l, 54 Maui, 56 S A S, 57 How, 58 G D P, 59 Jim.



Our customers are always on good ground with us

Mulch

- Shredded Pine
- Classic Cedar
- Enhanced Black
- Hemlock CPM
- Enhanced Brown
- Decorative Hardwood
- Four Seasons Pine Mulch

Decorative Stone

- Gold Stone
- 1/2" Beauti-Drive
- Silica Pebbles
- 1" Terra Stone
- River Rock

Gravel

- 1/2" Clear
- 3/4" Clear
- Traffic Binder
- Masonry Sand
- Concrete Sand
- Screening

Soil

- Top Dressing
- Topsoil
- Triple Mix

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