

The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL



Don't miss
uplifting *We
Are the World*
page 10

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Eileen Pillitteri of Seaway Farms shows off some of the colourful plants and hanging baskets waiting for customers, now that garden centres can open to the public. Seaway is limiting the number of customers inside to allow for physical distancing, and has rearranged some of the displays to make it easier to control the flow of traffic through the store. (Fred Mercnik)

Blanche Quinn was admired, respected by all who knew her

Penny Coles
The Local

About five years ago, author Randy Klaassen wrote a book about the life of Blanche Quinn. After an extensive amount of time interviewing her, he described her as a woman who lived life “at full throttle.”

That was Blanche. She was spirited, strong-minded and opinionated. She said what

she thought. She was genuine, intelligent, quick with a one-liner, always upbeat and ready with a smile.

When talking to others who knew her, there is a theme that quickly becomes evident. She had a difficult life, and many hardships to tackle, mostly by herself. She never hesitated to talk about them, or about the losses of those she loved. She met challenges head-on, with strength,

and most of all, with humour, her way of coping with adversity. The woman who may be remembered most for her wit loved to make others smile.

Klaassen says Blanche, who died May 8 at the age of 97, was 90 years old when she finally gained full independence and moved into an apartment on her own. Prior to that she had always lived with someone else.

She was raised in Toron-

to by her grandmother after the death of her parents, and then, when her grandmother died, lived with a friend and her family. She joined the Royal Canadian Air Force with a friend, and after the war, married Lincoln Quinn, and came to Niagara-on-the-Lake to live with his parents in the family home on Ricardo Street.

Her husband died when

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Kindness and compassion in our community

Mike Peirce
Special to The Local

Some of you may recall the front page article by Penny Coles in the October 17, 2019 issue of The Local entitled “Organ donation needed to save the life of NOTL woman.”

With many thanks to Penny and many others, I am pleased to write that the “NOTL woman,” Diane Peirce (my wife), received the incredible gift of a living liver donation on April 29. A vibrant and selfless young woman, appropriately named Joy, from St. Catharines became Diane’s donor. What Joy has done by giving a large portion of the largest internal organ in her body and put her life on hold during a world-

wide pandemic for someone she had never met may seem like unfathomable kindness to many, me included. To say that Joy, who is married with a young son, is an incredibly special person, is a huge understatement.

Diane’s journey began more than two years ago with the diagnosis of the rare liver disease, primary sclerosing cholangitis (PSC). PSC resulted in end-stage liver disease. She was fortunate enough to be referred to the University Health Network (UHN) liver team in Toronto — the largest living donation program in North America, with a world-renowned team of brilliant medical professionals.

We were given the choice

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Joy met Diane Peirce for the first time a few days after she gave Diane a part of her liver. She says when she first learned about Diane and her family’s search for a living donor, her heart went out to them — she couldn’t imagine how difficult it must have been for them not to be able to donate themselves. She spent the rest of that evening researching living donation, and submitted her application the very next day. “To say that Joy, who is married with a young son, is an incredibly special person, is a huge understatement,” says Diane’s husband Mike. (Photo supplied)

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Town opening washrooms, lifting parking ban

Penny Coles
The Local

With more businesses opening on Queen Street, limited to curbside pickup for now, the Town is lifting its parking ban and opening two public washrooms.

In recent weeks, says Lord Mayor Betty Disero at Monday's virtual committee-of-the-whole meeting, it became obvious the lack of washrooms was trading one public health risk

for another, as tourists continued to visit.

Niagara Public Health is "providing oversight" to ensure proper care is taken, she says.

The facilities on Market Street and Queens Royal Park will be open, cleaned on the hour, with town staff on site limiting the number of people going into the washrooms and ensuring physical distancing.

The parking ban has also been lifted.

time staff operating at 100 per cent capacity, will be bringing in four contract staff to assist bylaw officers. They will patrol parks, and if there are gatherings larger than five, or people who are not physical distancing, they will talk to them and try to move them on, interim CAO Sheldon Randall told councillors. If they are unsuccessful, they will call bylaw officers or the Niagara Regional Police.

The Town is also bringing

back two horticultural staff for planting and watering town gardens in the Old Town, and planters in Queenston, St. Davids and Virgil, starting Monday, says Randall.

When questioned by councillors, Randall agreed the Emergency Control Group, which dropped hanging baskets from the budget this season, could revisit that decision,

given the parking revenue to be generated by lifting the ban.

Three contract staff will be supporting operations at the two washrooms that are opening, Randall says.

Virtual coffee breaks continue

Penny Coles
The Local

When Lord Mayor Betty Disero began holding coffee breaks to engage with residents, she couldn't have imagined those sit-downs with locals would fall victim to a pandemic that cancelled all public events,

even chats over coffee.

She continues to give locals the opportunity to discuss their concerns, although there's no coffee or cookies on offer.

Next Tuesday, May 19, from 6 to 7 p.m., anyone with questions for the Lord Mayor can ask her during a Facebook live format coffee break.

Questions can be sent ahead of time to beth.audet@notl.com, or typed during the virtual chat, and she will answer them.

It's open to anyone with a Facebook account, who likes or at least follows the Town's Facebook page.

Teachers missing students



Royal Oak Community School staff, Julia Cain Murray, Gianna Dritsacos, Kirsten Koyle, Brittany Nyenhuis, Campbell Filer and Mireille Salem, are in touch with their school families virtually, but miss the personal contact. (Photo supplied)

Interchange construction could be noisy 24/7

Penny Coles
The Local

The Region is planning to begin work this June on a diverging diamond interchange on Glendale Avenue, replacing the current highway overpass, and a roundabout at the intersection with York Road.

In order to get the project finished on time, the Region and the Ministry of Transportation have asked the Town for an exemption to its noise control bylaw, "in order to complete the project expeditiously and reduce the impact on the community."

To meet this "aggressive timeline," the Town report says, the Region and Province want an exemption to the prohibition of working from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m., including Sundays, allowing the contractor to schedule multiple crews and making it easier to complete the project on time.

At Monday's virtual committee-of-the-whole meeting, councillors asked for a deferral, until the next council meeting.

There are four hotels in that area, said Coun. Norm Arsenault, and "no doubt" there will be blasting and pile-driving, that could disturb residents as well as

visitors staying in hotels when they should be sleeping. He asked town staff if they could get an idea from the Region or the MTO about what construction would take place at night.

Coun. Gary Burroughs agreed, adding that although the report says the noise exemption wouldn't impact residents, "this is so open-ended it could mean pile-driving 24 hours a day." He asked for time to find out what construction would occur at night, especially with White Oaks Resort and Spa almost right beside where the construction will be taking place.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero offered to add a recommendation to the report saying town staff would ask for more information before it comes before council for approval in two weeks, but instead councillors voted to defer the decision until that council meeting, when they should have the information they're looking for.

The project also includes a new commuter carpool lot and travel information centre at the northwest side of the new interchange, some repaving of the Queen Elizabeth Way lanes, and an extension of the right turning lane

of Glendale Avenue between Taylor Road and Niagara-on-the-Green Boulevard.

Once the diverging diamond, just east of the current overpass, is finished, the old bridge will be removed.

The construction will be divided into five stages, with completion planned in 2023.

Steve Hardaker, member of the Glendale Task Force, says there hasn't been a meeting recently, but he informed residents through a closed neighbourhood Facebook page of the virtual discussion that took place Monday. He hasn't heard any negative comments about the noise bylaw exemption, he says, although in the early days of discussion, there was some concern about the diverging diamond itself.

"There is always fear of the unknown, and this is only the second in Canada to be built. The other one is in Edmonton. There is also some concern about when it's snow-covered, but Edmonton gets a lot more snow than we do."

He has looked at the design and feels it will be safer for pedestrians and cyclists. "I don't think it's safe as it is. I wouldn't want to be cycling over it," he says.

Glendale District Plan goes back to Region

Penny Coles
The Local

After working on a plan for several years, the Friends of Laura Secord have moved closer to recognition of local history and heritage in the Glendale area.

In February, Caroline McCormick, a direct descendant of the Canadian hero and president of the organization promoting her, asked for council's support to recognize Secord as the development of the Glendale area progresses.

The Friends of Laura Secord, of which she is president, then provided written comments to the Region, with sug-

gestions on how to incorporate local history in the Glendale District Plan, which has been in the works for more than two years.

A draft report of the Glendale project, which was to be discussed by the regional planning and economic development committee Wednesday, says "there are several areas that this input can be incorporated through future study and improvements," and suggestions provided by the Friends of Laura Secord have been included in the district plan.

The draft report was going to be presented to the region's planning and economic

development committee, for information purposes, before presenting it to the Town for endorsement in June, and then to the Region for approval.

The plan involves the development of a complete 400-hectare community to proceed over decades, with several residential areas of medium to high density, a community and transit hub at the corner of Glendale Avenue and Taylor Road, a main street leading into the outlet mall with offices, restaurants and other commercial uses at street level and apartments above, and a cluster of employment lands on the north side of the highway.



As the Province looks to re-open the economy and begins to roll out recovery measures, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake will continue to respond in a timely and well-informed manner.

For the most up-to-date information about COVID-19 related changes, please visit the dedicated webpage and follow the Town on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

notl.com/COVID-19



Former town councillor met challenges head-on

Continued from page 1

their kids were young, and she raised four children with the help of her in-laws. She lost her son Jim to suicide, and in one decade, Klaassen wrote, she lost six people who were dear to her.

To support her family, she worked at the Niagara District Airport. In 2017, her career there was documented on film by local Barbara Tranter, who knew Blanche as a friend of her parents when the kids were growing up.

Tranter left Niagara in the 1970s, following a career as a film-maker, and since her return to her hometown in 2011, has been interviewing and making short videos of people of her parents' generation, who had stories to tell about Niagara-on-the-Lake in the years following the Second World War.

When she ran into Blanche at the Legion, Tranter says she quickly realized she was talking to a woman who had stories to tell, and she wanted to record them.

The five-minute video she produced about Blanche was made at the airport, where she had worked from 1960 to 1988, bringing no training to the job other than her war years' experience. She became airport manager, although she didn't have a flying licence, a radio licence, or any training in air traffic control, which eventually became her responsibility. She also used to give weather forecasts to pilots — in Tranter's video, she talks about judging visibility by how well she could see the crane at Port Weller, and wind velocity by how straight the flag was flying.

"She was someone who had led a difficult life, yet she would go on to do really hard things," says Tranter. "She was very resourceful. She had to be."

After her kids were grown and John and Judy gone from the Ricardo Street home, Blanche continued to live there with her son Patrick, his wife Paula and their kids, until eventually it became too small. It also had no parking. When Pat and his family moved to a large house on Irvine Road, she went with them.

"Sometime later she moved to an apartment at Pleasant

Manor, then to full care at Heritage Place," says Klaassen. "I visited her last at the end of February. She seemed tired, yet still had a spark in her spirit — that of quick wit and humour about life."

Klaassen says when he was interviewing her for the book, which he wrote in her words, she often told stories that had him "wide-eyed" with disbelief, about how daring she was with adventures or situations.

"She also shared stories about other people from town, when I had to look her in the eye, and say, 'Blanche, we can't write that.' 'Why not?' she demanded. 'Blanche, I'd get sued if I published that story.' She didn't understand what the fuss was about, but we left those stories alone."

When she talked about her years as a widow raising young children, Klaassen says, Blanche showed "an unfailing spirit to make the best of life. She often plowed her opinionated way through situations, sometimes leaving behind a few casualties, but determined to do her best. Blanche was charming and witty. She could be blunt with her opinions, but if you listened long enough, and didn't let her opinions push you away, she could be a lot of fun."

In the forward of the book, which is called *I Did It My Way: That's Why Nothing Works*, Klaassen noted Blanche's observation about life: "They ought to have an orientation session for this before somebody has to do it." Blanche found there are few orientation sessions for life's challenges and responsibilities that confront each of us. "That's true of many of the obstacles Blanche faced, and 'kind of sums up our experience with the current pandemic,'" he says.

After retiring from the airport, she took up letter writing, to the old Niagara Advance, except for a short sabbatical when she ran for politics and became an alderman, and vowed to give up letters that were critical of local politicians — it wasn't an easy job, she realized. That lasted only as long as her one term — she chose not to run for a second three years, and once off council, took up her letter-writing again, until the Advance closed in 2017.

They were hand-written,

dropped off at the office, and when she came in the door, it was always a treat to chat with Blanche and see what she'd written — astute commentaries, but never mean-spirited. She loved the town, and used humour, with a touch of sarcasm, to make her point. In her obituary, her family wrote: "What she was most known for was her tongue-in-cheek letters to the editor of the local newspaper. These letters made her a beloved town celebrity."

She was on council from 1988 to 1991, when Stan Ignatczyk was lord mayor.

Also on council that term was Nellie Keeler, another strong-minded politician who said what she thought. She says she was disappointed when Blanche decided not to seek a second term — she brought knowledge, common sense and a good understanding of the town to the council table.

"She certainly had opinions," says Keeler, "but she was very fair and reasonable. She was an easy person to work with. Although she had strong opinions, she was willing to listen to others."

Blanche "always had an upbeat personality, even though she had so many struggles in life. She was always cheerful, and very knowledgeable," says Keeler.

"When she talked, it was genuine. She never seemed down. It's wonderful to think about that, now she's gone. I always think of her smiling, making a joke. She was good at it. She would have been a force to deal with in her younger years," says Keeler. "She would have to be tough, with what she went through in life."

Keeler adds, "Blanche loved NOTL, 100 per cent, and her decisions on council were always made with insight. She could see the big picture, and she didn't mind stepping up to the plate if things got tough. I had a lot of admiration for Blanche."

Donald Combe, long-time member of St. Mark's Anglican Church, also had huge admiration for Blanche.

She was a positive force who was never hesitant to speak her mind, he says. "She had a difficult life, but always rose above adversity, no matter how insurmountable. It was refreshing to be in her com-



Blanche Quinn was interviewed and filmed by Barbara Tranter at the Niagara District Airport about three years ago. (Screenshot)

pany, as you knew it would be both informative and fun. I never heard an ill word spoken about Blanche, as she was universally admired."

Blanche was a life-long member and a warden at St. Mark's. "She was high profile, and I just admired her candour and her genuine sense of fun," says Combe.

"Blanche," says Tranter, "was a role model. She thought outside the box. She

was really creative, in terms of problem-solving."

She was probably given the job of flight desk at the airport because of its secretarial nature, at a time when the airport was mainly a man's world.

But that was before the days of discussions about feminism, says Tranter.

"It was a different generation. I would call her an early feminist, undisclosed. And

she was a delight. I've done a lot of interviews, and Blanche was just a pure delight."

She is survived by her children John, Judy, and Patrick, his wife Paula, grandchildren Jordon, Morgan, Kevin, Samantha, Bailey and Hunter, and eight great-grandchildren.

A celebration of life will be held at a later date, with memorial donations asked to be directed to the Lincoln County Humane Society.



Bells of thanks

Rachel Hunter and her friend Matt DeVos are ringing the bells at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. The church was challenged by Grace Presbyterian Church in Calgary to join their #Bells of Thanks, ringing out thanks to all the frontline workers during unsettling times. Every evening at 7 p.m., right across Canada, churches are joining in. The local church is also collecting donations for Newark Neighbours, daily from 10 a.m. to noon, and every week for the past five weeks a carload of groceries, usually including toilet paper, is dropped off at Newark to help meet the needs of those in the community. (Photo supplied)



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EDITORIAL

Pandemic forcing us to look at long-term care reform

We have learned many lessons from this pandemic. Wash our hands. Don't touch our face. Watch for arrows on grocery store floors, and stay two metres away from other shoppers.

However, the most important lesson of all that has been drilled home: do a better job of looking after our vulnerable seniors.

We're discovering, as a society, the system we trusted is broken.

It was in crisis before we'd ever heard of COVID-19, and with the arrival of the pandemic, we've been faced with the reality in facilities that care for our elderly and those with disabilities, those least able to advocate for themselves.

There are some prob-

lems that have jumped out at us. Some facilities were understaffed, even before the outbreak. Those most directly tasked with caring for residents were overworked, underpaid, often moving from one home to another to work more shifts, and when personal protective equipment was required, it wasn't available.

We've moved as a society

to provide care to seniors so they can stay at home, but that means once they are moved to long-term care, a large percentage are suffering from dementia, requiring a high level of assistance for basic, time-consuming care. And funding hasn't kept up with the cost of providing that kind of care.

Yet we know there are for-profit homes, including here in NOTL, that provide quality care for their residents, and have protected them during the pandemic.

Experts are saying the problem is system-wide. One of the obvious failures is the lack of thorough inspections and oversight, and are calling for much more stringent regulations on the ratio of front-line staff to residents. That applies across the board, for all homes, whether for-profit, non-profit or government-run.

Today, our neglect of a national problem is front-and-centre, as the number of deaths among residents of these facilities continues to rise daily, far beyond those in the community. It's easy for government officials to be horrified, to promise reviews and reforms, but we need to be vigilant, to be sure the reviews are transparent, thorough, and don't end up shelved due to cost. The reforms need to ensure our loved ones receive the care they deserve, daily, with or without a pandemic, and with measures in place to protect them from this virus and any other that could come along in the future.

We need to remember the images of soldiers marching into our long-term care homes, and the stories of broken-hearted family members discovering, too late, their loved ones had died alone.

It's up to us to ensure that never happens again.

Penny Coles
The Local

Donor's gift far-reaching

Continued from page 1

to wait until Diane was near death for a deceased donation (there aren't enough deceased donations to meet demand), or pursue living donation. Although Diane was reluctant to ask for help, the choice was obvious. Family members were excluded for various health conditions, age and other matching criteria, so we began to look outside our family for a potential donor. Our daughter Natalie and son-in-law Adrian designed the website donor4diane.com, and the rest of our family members played key roles in spreading the word and helping Diane stay safe during COVID-19.

Nearly 1,500 people visited the website, and 76 people went on to link to the UHN donor portal. These numbers may seem small in these days of millions of followers and "hits," but keep in mind what we were asking someone to do. We only needed one matching donor.

The number of donors who volunteered to be tested has not been disclosed, but we do know that more than two people went through the entire donor evaluation process. Connie, sister to a good friend from western Ontario, was a good match, but her liver anatomy was not a perfect match for Diane. Connie agreed to be a backup donor in the event an ideal donor could not be found soon.

Connie, a nurse, provided knowledgeable inspiration for Diane while the search continued. Thankfully Joy had read Diane's story in this newspaper, and turned out to be a perfect match.

The transplant took 10 hours, in addition to the time it took to remove a large section of Joy's liver. Her liver will regenerate in a matter of weeks — the human body never ceases to amaze. Due to COVID-19, neither of these courageous women could have visitors during their entire hospital stays. They met privately for the first time a few days after the transplant. I understand it was a highly emotional meeting, with a few (very gentle) hugs. The rest of our family look forward to meeting Joy when it is safe. Diane says it perfectly and simply.

"She is lovely" . . . no surprise to anyone! Both women were discharged from the hospital well ahead of schedule, one week after the transplant, and are recovering well at home.

My wife has inspired me through her ordeal. She has been a "rock." The matriarch of our family, she lived in the "now" and never once expressed self-sympathy, even when she learned her mother had passed after a long battle with dementia, only hours after I brought her home from her transplant. The tears she cried for her mom were soon replaced by a smile, as she

watched through the window as our little granddaughter Olive played in the backyard (socially distanced of course). No doubt she had thoughts of the endless circle of life. Diane hopes her story will inspire others to consider living organ donations.

Joy's gift has reached far beyond Diane. She has enhanced the lives of our daughters and their families, her three sisters and their families, my extended family and our friends. But best of all, Olive may now have her beloved, gentle, powerful "Mimi" to help guide her until she is a young woman. It also seems likely that Joy has inspired others to save lives through living donation.

There are too many others to thank for Diane's miracle here — physicians, nurses, patient coordinators, medical professionals, family, friends and well-wishers. We Canadians have a powerful sense of reciprocity. We like to repay kindness bestowed, but how can you possibly repay a gift of life. All we can do is our best to pay it forward.

Editor's note: Diane and Joy need a bit of time to rest and recover before talking about their experience. We understand readers will want to know more about how Diane is doing, and also more about how Joy came to the decision that she could be a donor — we do too! Stay tuned. We'll have that story for you as soon as Diane and Joy feel strong enough to share it.

The NDP, and our MPP Wayne Gates, are blaming for-profits, calling for a "community-based non-profit and public seniors care system that puts money into hiring more PSWs and delivering care, instead of padding the balance sheets of multi-national corporations' higher death rate due to COVID-19 in long-term care homes that are owned by for-profit corporations, compared to non-profit homes and public, municipal homes."

Celebrating nurses, PSWs

This is the week to celebrate nurses.

It couldn't come at a better time, when nurses risk their lives and their families as they go to work each day, their goal to help and protect others, at the cost of their own physical and mental health. We are reminded daily of how much they do to earn our gratitude.

Nurses have always been an integral part of our health care, but never more so than

this year, at this time. Our hearts have been opened to all front-line health care workers, and the difficulties under which they work.

Next week, May 19, is Personal Support Workers Day. An unappreciated, yet essential segment of our health care, PSWs also work to protect our loved ones, at great risk to themselves.

Regardless of how often we say it, we will never be able to

thank our front-line workers enough for the work they do. We can show our gratitude, however, by keeping pressure on our government to ensure they have the equipment and training they need to protect themselves, and for PSWs, pay that reflects the importance of the work they do. And when we have the opportunity, we can thank them in person.

Penny Coles
The Local

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The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL

The trusted voice of our community

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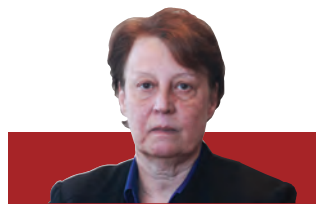
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Changes include lifting parking bans, opening washrooms



**Lord Mayor Betty Disero
Special to The Local**

From the outset of this crisis, my focus has been to protect the health and safety of our community.

When the Province de-

clared a state of emergency on March 17, which still stands, we complied with provincial emergency orders, closing public facilities, including washrooms, and outdoor amenities. Parks were open for walking or cycling through but groups of more than five were not permitted to congregate.

We have tried to assist all Niagara-on-the-Lake businesses, encouraging people to come in and pick up or drop off what they need, buy local, get takeout from

restaurants, pick up at wineries and greenhouses, but during this time, people should not be driving only to hang out or sightsee.

In order to deter sightseers, we used every tool available to us – signage, parking bans, videos, media interviews and advertisements, and public messages – to ask them to please stay home now and come back later. We're a proud and friendly town, and we want to be able to host them in a way that will make us proud and you happy.

While the Heritage District experienced a large amount of traffic on the May 2 to 3 and May 9 to 10 weekends (10,452 and 6336 vehicles respectively), the parking ban was successful, with only a small percentage stopping and parking illegally. If the parking ban had not been put in place, there may have been thousands who stopped.

Unfortunately, the stories of persons using both public and private spaces to relieve themselves are true. Many visitors arrived expecting access to public and/or private facilities. When the lack of availability was realized, some threatened essential business operators and a few made a very disappointing spectacle of themselves.

The Province is starting to roll out recovery measures, and look towards reopening the

economy. In addition to provincial parks reopening, an expanded number of retail businesses have been identified as essential, and are permitted to operate with curbside pickup.

In response, we've lifted our parking ban and we are working with the regional department of health to safely reopen the Queens Royal Park and Market Street restrooms as of Friday, May 15, with strict criteria. We must open our washrooms now to avoid a different public health issue.

Changes continue to come our way, but it is not yet time to let our guard down, or resume business as usual. While we will follow the Province's lead, we continue to ask visitors to please stay home for now, and visit us later.

And to all of our citizens, stay home whenever possible,

walk from home if you can, please keep a distance of six feet (two metres) if you have to go out, and keep washing your hands and refraining from touching your face.

The long weekend is coming, and we will do everything in our power to try to manage the potential crowds, but while physical distancing is recommended by the provincial government and essential in helping to avoid the spread of the virus, there is currently no regulation that enables us to enforce this. Please, let's each and every one of us continue to do our part together.

For the most up-to-date information about how we're responding to all COVID-19 related changes, visit notl.com/COVID-19 or follow the Town on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

LETTERS

Consider risk to Old Town residents

Re: Signs for visitors offensive to reader (The Local, May 7)

Yes, the signs are offensive but these are unprecedented times.

I believe it is a matter of geography, lack of public facilities, and the risk of the coronavirus.

Also, the continual mantra of the Prime Minister and Premier

asking the public to stay home.

Please consider our risk — 10,452 people came through our town last weekend with the offensive signs asking them to stay at home. Still, they came. The messages are not getting through, and not from lack of trying.

With the closing of our public washrooms, visitors

have found an alternative on our lawns and in our gardens.

This is not only unsafe but offensive!

I hope the letter writer will see another side of the situation, and be grateful to live in Queenston.

Elsie Lailey

Ricardo Street, NOTL

Messaging should change

Re: Signs for visitors offensive to reader (The Local, May 7)

I empathize with the letter writer regarding offensive signs.

I live near the Commons and often walk along the pathway to get fresh air and healthy exercise. I was horrified a couple of weeks ago to see the huge sign on the corner of Niagara River Parkway and John Street East stating "Please Stay Away, Local Traffic Only, No Public Washrooms."

Although the Town has

since softened the message, I feel most visitors would find this very offensive, including those who live locally but outside the Old Town.

In a few months, when the pandemic is over, our businesses will be eager to attract these same people that we're now chasing away. Punishing remarks meant to deter rule-breakers in the short-term are unlikely to win their cooperation over time, especially if we're asking people to tattle on

each other through the Town's website to report COVID-19 concerns. People don't appreciate being treated like children by their governments with these negative messages. They need to learn to trust people to do the right thing.

An overly controlling approach can backfire with less and less compliance. As we move towards reopening, these messages must change.

Karen Gansel

NOTL

Isn't there a better way?

I am writing to express my profound concern, dismay, and disappointment at the way our elected town officials are handling this COVID crisis. I understand the need for physical distancing, and I understand that with restaurants and public restrooms closed, we currently lack facilities to accommodate people that would like to spend the day here. But is anyone aware of the lengths to which our Town is going to punish 'outsiders'?

Cars are being towed from the streets, tickets for over \$800 are being issued to people sitting

on benches, more bylaw enforcement officers are patrolling the streets to enforce the new restrictions and are encouraged to issue outrageous fines to anyone breaking the new rules. Is this the kind of town any of us want to live in? What happened to common sense, and most of all, kindness?

A crisis can bring out the best and the worst – why have we opted for the latter? When this is all over, and it will end eventually, how do we want to be remembered?

I am so grateful that the Ni-

agara Parks Commission has left the walking trail and Niagara River Parkway land accessible. In my opinion, it is horrifying that sitting on a bench, or walking through a park has become a punishable offence. Our tax dollars are funding this extreme and disturbing enforcement. If you have similar concerns, please let our town council know. They are our representatives. There has to be a better way.

Joanne Penner

NOTL

LETTERS

Gratitude post from reader

Months ago I asked on Facebook if anyone in our community could assist me with a knitting project.

My mother was halfway through a sweater when she developed Alzheimers, and forgot how to knit. I can do many things, but knitting isn't one of them. I wanted to know if there was enough wool left so I could hire someone to complete her project. Carol McIntosh offered to look at it for me. She asked me to drop it off and told me she would let me know, as she had to really put her mind to the 1960s pattern my mom had started with margin notes and a few sizes highlighted!

A short time later she called me and offered to complete the project. Carol finished the sweater with love. I'm sure it wasn't easy, that it involved a lot of guesswork, and it took more time than she probably thought. She dropped it off to me this week and it was beautiful. But the most beautiful thing was a note she included with the sweater. She thanked me for allowing her to finish my mother's sweater!

You see, Carol has met my mother. In fact she was one of my dear friends who took her out for lunch a year ago today.

My mom and dad lived with us then. It will be my mother's 88th birthday on Saturday. She is currently in week nine of physical isolation in her seniors residence with my dad. I know this sweater will bring her much joy, much like Carol's incredibly talented gift

has brought me. This is a great community. I am blessed to live here and know the people I do. Friendship is a gift. Life is fleeting. Go out into the world and do well. But also, please, go out in the world and do good. Thanks Carol McIntosh.

Betty Knight



Betty Knight has given the completed sweater, beautifully finished by her friend Carol McIntosh, to her mother, which she is wearing in the photo. (Photo supplied)



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NOTL long-term care homes faring well

Penny Coles
The Local

The Town continues to reach out to long-term care home facilities to ensure they have what they need, as they remain free of the coronavirus, and work diligently to stay that way.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero says one of the homes has said it needs gloves. It's not out of gloves, but doesn't have the stockpile that would make staff feel comfortable, so the Town is searching for a source to get them more.

Asking whether they need anything, and how the staff is doing, Disero says, is the limit of their conversation, but so far, they seem to be in good shape.

We know that as of Tuesday Niagara-on-the-Lake's residences have remained free of COVID-19, because the Region announces those with outbreaks. Of the three facilities in town, Niagara Long Term Care is privately owned, with 124 beds; Pleasant Manor is not-for-profit and can accommodate up to 29 individuals; and Upper Canada Lodge, run by the Region, has about 80 residents.

Across Niagara, the story has not been as good, with more than 80 per cent of the deaths from the virus occurring from outbreaks in long-term care and retirement homes.

"Niagara has done well at limiting the number of cases of COVID in the wider community," says Dr. Mustafa Hirji, the acting medical officer of health for Niagara Region.

However, within long-term care homes, there has been a struggle with infectious control practices, he says.

Once COVID-19 takes hold in one of the facilities, "it spreads widely, and once it spreads, staff become infected and are not able to work."

With fewer staff looking after residents, and the virus creating more work for the remaining staff, it becomes "a vicious cycle," says Hirji, and spreads out of control.

As Hirji explains, because retirement homes typically have seniors who don't require as much care as long-term care homes, the staff ratios are lower, and comprised mostly of personal support workers (PSWs), with one nurse.

The average ratio of front-line staff to residents in Ontario homes is one to 10. Recently, with the alarming number of cases and deaths across the province in long-term care and retirement homes, there has been a call for those numbers to be mandated.

Currently, the Ministry of Health dictates one registered nurse on staff at all times, and enough staff to properly meet the needs of residents. It doesn't set out a ratio for front-line health care workers to residents.

"We need to find a staff solution, and a way to bring in more staff to help in those situations (when there is an outbreak)," says Hirji.

"We've learned a lot from the three homes with serious outbreaks."

The worst outbreak in Niagara, at Lundy Manor, a retirement home, has resulted in a \$20-million class-action lawsuit against the home, alleging management failed to protect its residents — charges not proven in court.

The other two Hirji refers to are Seasons Retirement Community and Royal Rose Place in Welland, a long-term care home.

There can be no conclusions drawn about retirement homes, with less staff, and long-term care homes, with a higher ratio — there are some of both that do have outbreaks, "and lots of each that don't," Hirji says.

Before the pandemic, an inspection of a residence would have taken two to two and a half hours, he says, but the inspection process regarding infectious disease control practices has been enhanced, and now takes about four hours for inspectors to watch how things are done, and ensure appropriate processes, according to provincial standards,

are being followed.

By ensuring similar practices are being done in homes that don't have outbreaks, he says, "it seems more likely we can prevent them."

While there might have been some "subtleties" of infectious control practices that were missed early in the pandemic, and other homes might have been doing more, "luck might have been a big factor," he says.

If a staff person or visitor didn't carry the virus into a facility at the beginning, before enhanced infectious control practices were instituted at all homes, the fact that everyone was then using best practices has likely helped to keep it out, he says.

The percentage of deaths to the number of cases in Niagara is high, because of the number of cases in long-term homes, and a small percentage of cases from community contact, Hirji points out.

Up until the end of March, shortage of testing equipment was a problem, says Hirji, but since then, "the number of tests is going well. Since late March, we're testing anyone with symptoms."

Kim Widdicombe is executive director of the Niagara Long Term Care Home, formerly Chartwell. It is considered medium-sized by provincial standards, but is the largest in NOTL at 124 beds.

"We have been diligent in following all public health directives," she says.

"We are thrilled to remain COVID-19 outbreak-free, but we recognize that could change at anytime. No one is immune to this virus, and its seemingly ever-changing symptoms. Our deepest condolences are extended to the families and friends who have lost loved ones during the COVID-19 pandemic."

Widdicombe adds, "the only way to protect our residents against COVID-19 is to keep it out of our home. Once the virus has entered many facilities, big or small, whether it be long-term care, retirement home, factories,

etc., it has taken hold quickly, and often without much warning."

As with all long-term care homes, she says, "we have policies and procedures in place every day that address how we care for our residents, cleaning standards, infection protocols, and even pandemic plans, the latter we hope we don't ever have to use. But we are prepared in any event."

In the case of COVID-19, in addition to existing procedures, Widdicombe says public health mandates they are following include not allowing non-essential visitors; enhanced hand hygiene; active screening twice a day for residents and staff; isolation of residents who display any COVID-19-like symptoms; enhanced cleaning and sanitation; one site employment for staff; and universal masking.

Prior to the Province restricting workers to one home, Widdicombe says, they had a few staff who also worked at other locations, "however, we were very pleased that most chose to stay with us."

The staff to resident ratio is dictated by the Ministry of Long-Term Care, says Widdicombe, "and does not differ from other long-term care operators, unless there is a sickness or other reason staff cannot come to work."

The home has 129 employees, she says, but was unable to say how many of them directly care for residents.

Widdicombe adds, "we are very fortunate here at Niagara Long Term Care to have an awesome team, who are hard working and committed. They are truly passionate about the work they do and the residents they serve."

Peter Criscione, communications consultant with the Region, says from the beginning of March, Upper Canada Lodge, a regional long-term care residence, was no longer using agency staff in the home. By March 14, all visiting by families and friends was suspended, with the exception of end-of-life visiting, first passing active screening,



The DaCosta siblings, students at St. Michael Catholic School, posted these rainbows in their NOTL home's window with messages of love. (Photo supplied)

and wearing personal protective equipment. The home has also had "excellent support" from medical director Dr. Tim Bastedo, and doctors from the Niagara North Family Health NOTL team. Doctors are using telephone consults with residents, facilitated by nurses at the home. "We also were doing everything possible to avoid emergency department transfers by reaching out to the nurse practitioner to provide services instead of sending residents out," he says.

By early April, "we no longer had staff working in multiple locations."

Active screening of residents and staff continues to be done twice a day. All staff are encouraged to call in sick if they are unwell, and symptomatic employees are referred to public health for direction on whether they should be tested and if they should be in self-isolation, he says.

Regional homes are following PPE guidelines to ensure the

protection of residents and staff, "while using our PPE wisely."

Training is ongoing with safety talks, which include respiratory infection refresher training, hand hygiene, PPE donning and doffing, refresher training, point-of-care risk assessment, and say COVID-19 spot check reports.

With adult day programs shut down, "we were able to redeploy activity staff to allow for resident engagement while social distancing. This included connecting residents with their families through FaceTime or by phone."

Criscione says staff have been increased in some departments, including nursing, housekeeping and recreation, ensuring resident needs are met and cleaning practices are increased. If staff are off, "we are not working short," he says.

Staff at Pleasant Manor, the not-for-profit long-term care home in NOTL, did not respond to a request for similar information.



Looking Up With Bill

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 14: Jupiter turns retrograde at 27 degrees of Capricorn this morning, a few minutes after the third quarter Moon in Aquarius. So it's a stubborn day where we feel like we want things to get going and – BAM – we are double-crossed somehow. Jupiter needs to do this to keep the universe in mo-

tion – but also to play a key role in the shrinking of the corona virus pandemic. Jupiter turns direct on Sept. 14. Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg was born on this day in 1984, in White Plains, NY. His net worth is \$75 million. Check out my Podcast at www.lookingupwithbill.com. Editor's note: This week we are changing the name of the column to Looking Up With Bill, to align with his website and podcast. Please visit notllocal.com for his full column, or our NOTL Local Facebook page - thanks to Mark Zuckerberg!




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Farmers' market to open with a different look

Penny Coles
The Local

It's official: the Farmers' Market at the Village will open for its 14th season. It can't be business as usual, but with guidelines from the Region's public health, it will be able to offer a limited number of vendors on its originally planned opening date, Saturday, May 23. Farmers' markets have been deemed essential by the Province, says Sharon Brinsmead-Taylor, coordinator of

the local market, but at this point, it must be restricted to farmers and food products. For example, Rose and Ken Bartel, anchors at the market from its earliest days, will be there with vegetable plants, says Brinsmead-Taylor, but they won't be able to sell their beautiful cut flower arrangements. The popular flower and plant growers and artisan vendors of previous years can't be included, at least not for now. There is always the possibility that could change

throughout the season, she says. "This is how it stands right now. We really don't know. We might be able to have them down the road." She's just excited to be opening, and to have vendors outside, presenting a welcome option for shoppers. She's been reading about the diminished likelihood of the virus spreading outside. "It will be user-friendly shopping, and it just has a different feel to be outside," she says. The large tent won't be up — it would be restricted, because of distancing, to a small number of vendors, and it's expensive to erect. Instead, all vendors will be on the pavement, in "pop-up tents" placed at least six feet apart. This will allow for greater flexibility for vendors, says Brinsmead-Taylor. However, she knows the wind could be a challenge, for these small tents, without being able to stake them into pavement, so she's looking at cost-effective alternatives to weigh them down. For opening day, there will be 10 vendors, with staples

such as graded eggs, honey, cheese, bread, early greens, micro greens, butter, jams, pickles, preserves, and frozen meals and soups. And the produce will be set up behind the vendors, which is also different. The number of residents allowed into the market area at a time has yet to be determined, she says, but it will allow for physical distancing, with a line-up of people at six-foot intervals outside the market area, if necessary. Brinsmead-Taylor says she's been working extensively with the public health department, which has always played a big role in both the farmers' market and the Wednesday SupperMarket. "There have always been rules and standards and there still are. We've worked with them to ensure we're offering a safe solution. They've been wonderfully supportive. They want everyone to be safe as well," she says. "We're doing everything we can for the health and safety of our customers, staff and vendors. That's really import-



Rose Bartel won't be selling flowers, but she will have vegetable plants when the Farmers' Market opens.



Jams, jellies and other food products will be available at the weekly Saturday Farmers' Market at the Village, on Niagara Stone Road and Niven Road. (Photos supplied)

ant to us. The measures we're taking are to protect everyone. And hopefully people will feel comfortable and want to come out and support our vendors." The market will be open the same hours as other years, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., at least to begin with, but if necessary, those hours can be tweaked, says Brinsmead-Taylor. As for the Wednesday SupperMarket, she's hopeful it could be offered at some point this season, although it would likely be a smaller market. "We have some ideas of how it could work — we haven't fully given up on it yet." It would have to follow all the provincial guidelines, and be done with the support of the regional public health and the Town, which would need to provide an event permit, as it has in the past.



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Bravo Niagara! brings musicians together for *We Are the World*

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

COVID-19 has forced many businesses and organizations to adapt and find new ways of doing things. You can count Bravo Niagara! Festival of the Arts among these.

This week, Bravo Niagara! released their first ever music video as a response to the pandemic.

Bringing together past Bravo Niagara! performers along with some on the organization's wish list, and teaming them with children's choirs from Chorus Niagara, Laura Secord Secondary School and Fern Hill School in Oakville, a brand new version of *We Are the World* was premiered via their Facebook page and website Tuesday, May 12.

Bravo Niagara! founder Christine Mori felt this was the perfect time to take on the one song that she's always wanted to be a part of one of their live concerts. It began during talks with bass player Bakithi Kumalo. He performed for their Voices of Freedom Festival last year, and was planning his return to Niagara with his tribute to Paul Simon's *Graceland* album. In this concert, the South African native, who played the iconic bass lines on that landmark record, planned to

gather young musicians and singers to back him up while playing *Graceland* in its entirety, sharing stories about the recording process along the way.

When the pandemic hit, the focus of the talk changed to their shared admiration of *We Are the World*.

"It's a song that I have loved for so many years," Mori says. "When I read the lyrics again, to me it was almost as if Lionel Richie wrote it for COVID-19."

Her next conversation was with Measha Brueggemann, via text. The Canadian singer committed immediately. Then, Mori heard through the grapevine that Richie himself had been considering recording a new version of the 35-year-old song to respond to the pandemic. She decided to push on with her plan, putting a Bravo Niagara! spin on the song.

Through her contacts, she was able to line up musicians and singers such as Emily Bear, Dominic Mancuso, Eric Bazilian, Brooke Blackburn, Jenna Weir, Alana Brigewater and Quincy Bullen. She also brought in the Powerhouse Fellowship Soul Choir, featuring Shawn Cotterell, and the One People Band, which includes guitarist Biodun Kuti who, like Kumalo, has performed in the past with Paul

Simon.

More than 150 singers and musicians appear in the video, each having recorded their parts at home while in self-isolation during the pandemic.

For Laura Secord music teacher Katryna Sacco, it was a natural fit for her students. "We have fostered a partnership with Bravo Niagara! over the years, and all of our involvement with them has given our students the opportunity to collaborate with world-renowned artists," she says. "We were very happy when they asked us to collaborate because, as you know, we can't be together right now making music in person."

About 50 students can be seen and heard in the video. They were given a rough cut of the musical backing track and asked to record their vocals separately. Those tracks were all sent to producer Guillermo Subauste of Toronto, who was tasked with mixing all of the audio tracks together.

Bakithi Kumalo laid down his bass parts for the song in his home studio in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. He is amazed at how quickly and how well the whole project came together. "Everybody just jumped on it, and it's beautiful," says the musician, who is also working on his own new CD during the pandemic. He was still



Bass player Bakithi Kumalo says he's 'honoured' to be part of the Bravo Niagara! video. (Photo supplied)

living in South Africa when the original song was released, and related to the song's message then as he does now. "The singing, the musicians, all the time they took to put the project together, I'm just so proud to be a part of it."

Subauste also took on the job of meshing together the hundreds of video files, and painstakingly synchronizing the video and the audio into a professional-quality product.

The finished video looks and sounds amazing. The combination of the voices and the musicians is powerful, uplifting and joyous. In this age

of Zoom meetings and family gatherings, the multi-split-screen technique will be familiar to many. But to get an idea of how great this video looks and sounds, take the quality of a Zoom call and multiply it by a factor of about 100.

Seeing each of the participants in the comfort of their own homes, each recording their parts separately, adds a new twist to the message of the song. It's about unity, and the phrase that has been repeated so often during self-isolation: we are one, and we are all in this together.

"This project is so time-

ly," Mori says. "This is really what lifted my spirits (during COVID-19). Every time I listened to the tracks of all the children, I was sitting in tears. What makes it so unique is that every single one of those musicians did it with real love and heart, and you can see and feel the deep emotion in it."

To see the *We are the World* video, visit the Bravo Niagara! Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/bravoniagarafestival/>. You can also find a link to the video on YouTube on the website bravoniagara.org.

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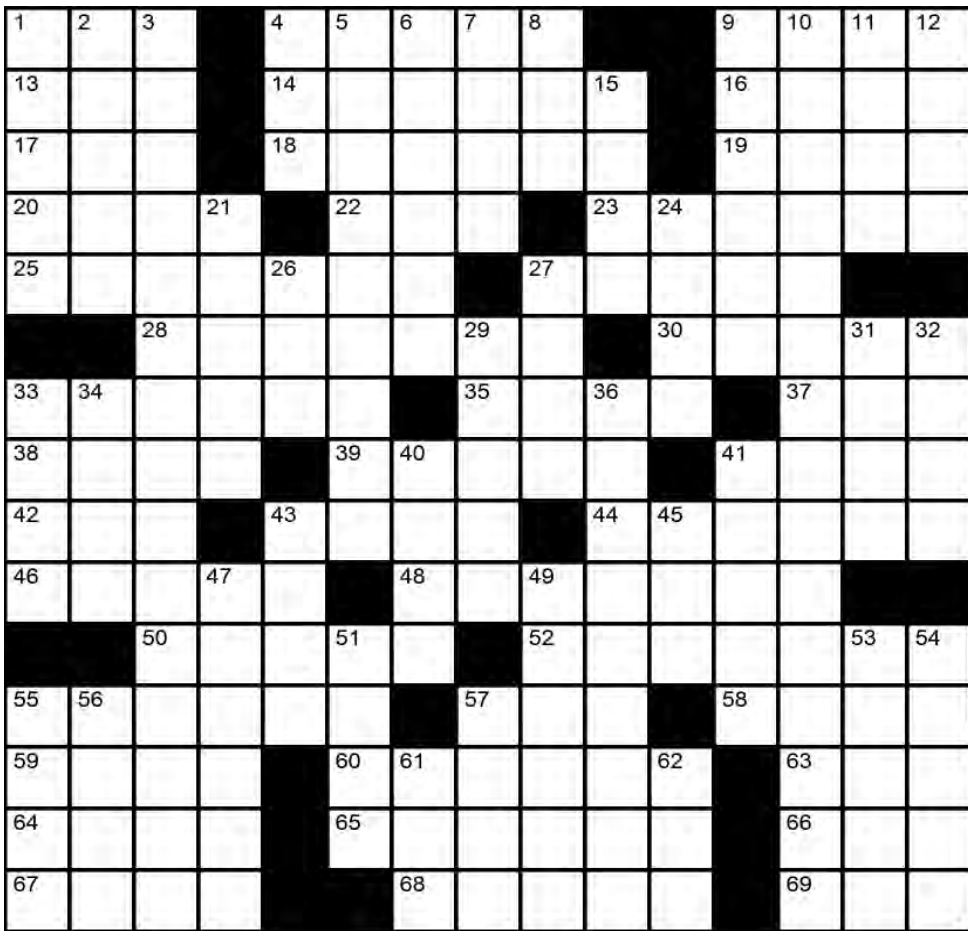
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CROSSWORD PUZZLE



Across:

- 1 Concert appearance
- 4 Dirty
- 9 Cooking meas.
- 13 100 square meters
- 14 Contradiction
- 16 Chief Hawaiian island
- 17 Short for the least
- 18 Tennis great --- Gonzales
- 19 Tax
- 20 Applications
- 22 Tap's partner
- 23 Hoop dunk
- 25 Added for free
- 27 About this size
- 28 Surrounded by
- 30 Subject of spectacular bankruptcy case
- 33 Very similar to
- 35 Flashy
- 37 Tokyo Yoko
- 38 The Pobble had none
- 39 Engender
- 41 One of four
- 42 "You've Got Mail" company
- 43 "The hour --- hand":
St Matthew's Gospel
- 44 Dangerous feats
- 46 G W T W's --- Butler
- 48 Green, blotchy frog type

- 50 Toque wearers

- 52 To do with plants
- 55 A machine's productive hours
- 57 Honorary title in India
- 58 --- of the above
- 59 Happy feline rumble
- 60 Letters, these days
- 63 Of a thing
- 64 Surrounded by
- 65 I'm sorry --- you waiting
- 66 "The sloeblack, slow, black, crowblack, fishingboat-bobbing ---" (Dylan Thomas)
- 67 Egg holders
- 68 Peter Pan's pal
- 69 Blunder

Down:

- 1 Complete range
- 2 Whiskey choice
- 3 Thomas Edison was once a director of it
- 4 National economic indicator
- 5 State of preparedness
- 6 Baseball segment
- 7 Clickers or squeakers
- 8 Expression of derision
- 9 Add as a bonus

- 10 Hi-fi is not supposed to suffer from it
- 11 Card dispenser
- 12 Golfing short shot
- 15 Gray wolf
- 21 18-wheelers
- 24 Sleeping
- 26 Stir-fryer
- 27 Pack
- 29 Election list
- 31 That show's going to be --- 9 pm
- 32 Silently indicates assent
- 33 State emblem on Old Glory
- 34 Expression of amazement
- 36 Pristine
- 40 Chums
- 41 Holy book of Islam
- 43 Agenda topic
- 45 Make lace
- 47 Musical intervals
- 49 "1984" antagonist
- 51 Bases
- 53 Bury
- 54 Hotelier --- Ritz
- 55 Poisonous Javanese tree
- 56 Catamountain
- 57 Japanese rice wine
- 61 Cut
- 62 Intelligence officer

OBITUARY



HAGEN, JERRY—Jerry Hagen of Niagara-on-the-Lake and formerly of Wallaceburg, passed away peacefully at Fiddick's Nursing Home in Petrolia on Monday, May 11, 2020 at the age of 76. Jerry is the son of the late Harry & Helen Margaret (Simpson) Hagen. Loved brother of Pat Hagen (Arlene), Chris Hagen (Bob Leach), Barb Vandergulik (Jamie McDougall) and the late Jim Hagen. Fun and caring uncle to Michelle, Jim, George, Emily, Jessica, Ryan, Sara, Katelyn, Tamika and Allison. Jerry's vibrant journey has come to an end. After attending the University of Windsor Teacher's College, he was hired by the Lincoln County Board of Education, beginning a very successful career. Jerry loved traveling throughout the world, especially if the destination had a beach. He spent many summers in Mykonos, Greece and later at his condo in Naples, Florida. Jerry loved his home in Niagara-on-the-Lake where he had many close friends and was always the life of the party. He was generous and kind, always bearing gifts for his family and friends. Funeral arrangements have been entrusted The Haycock-Cavanagh Funeral Home, 409 Nelson Street in Wallaceburg. Due to the COVID-19 situation, please celebrate Jerry's life by having a glass of wine, watching a good movie, and remembering his wicked, sarcastic sense of humour. We love and miss you Jerry. If desired, remembrances to Parkinson Canada may be left at the funeral home 519-627-3231. Online tributes may be left at www.CavanaghFuneralHome.ca.

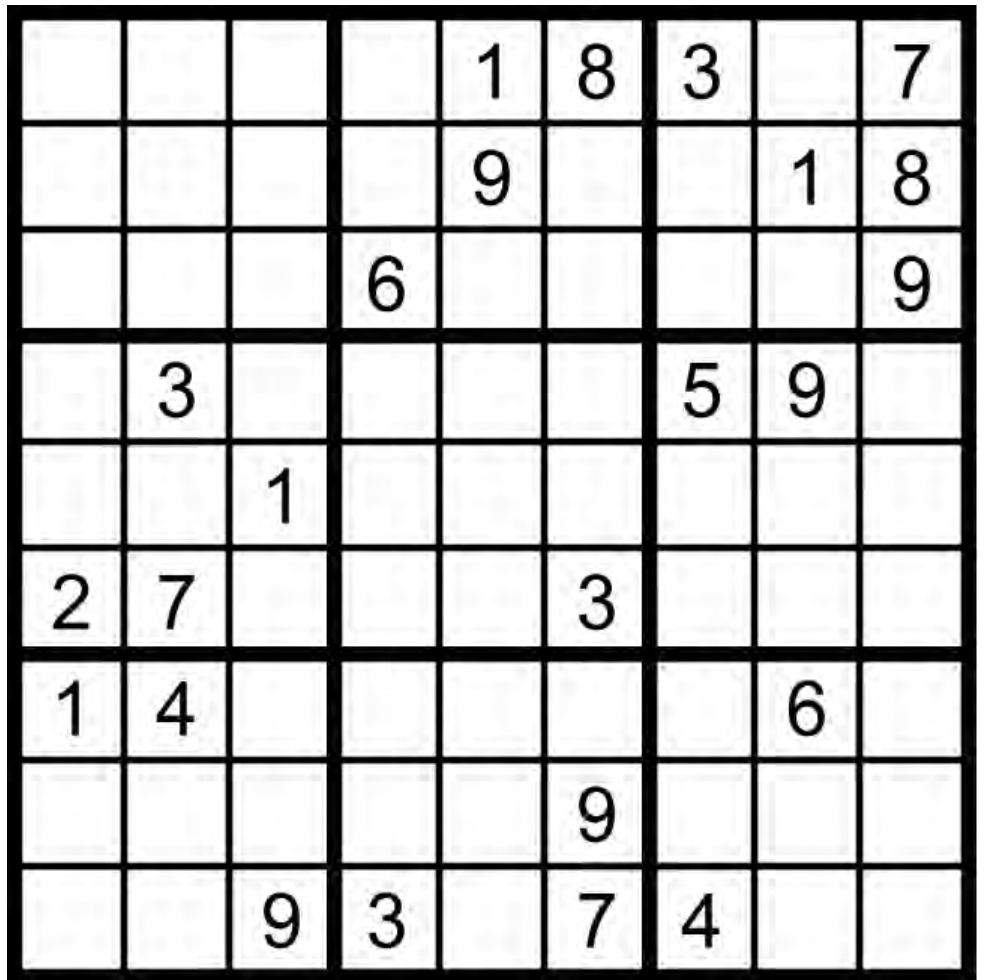
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SUDOKU PUZZLE



PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from May 7, 2020

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

Across: 1 Gity, 4 Gummy, 9 Tbsp, 13 Are, 14 Denial, 16 Oahu, 17 Min, 18 Panchro, 19 Scot, 20 Uses, 22 Die, 23 Basket, 25 Throw in, 27 So big, 28 Amongst, 30 Error, 33 So like, 35 Loud, 37 Ono, 38 Toes, 39 Spawm, 41 Quad, 42 A O L, 43 Is at, 44 Stunts, 46 Rhett, 48 Leopard, 50 Chets, 52 Botanic, 55 Uptime, 57 Sri, 58 None, 59 Purr, 60 E-mails, 63 Its, 64 Amid, 65 To keep, 66 Sea, 67 Sacs, 68 Wendy, 69 Err.
Down: 1 Garnut, 2 Irish, 3 General Electric, 4 G D P, 5 Readiness, 6 Inning, 7 Mice, 8 Yah, 9 Toss in, 10 Background noise, 11 Shoe, 12 Putt, 15 Lobo, 21 Semis, 24 Abed, 26 Wok, 27 Slow, 29 Slate, 31 On at, 32 Nods, 33 Star, 34 Ooh, 36 Unspoiled, 40 Pals, 41 Cur'an, 43 Item, 45 Tat, 47 Thrills, 49 O'Brien, 51 Feet, 53 Inter, 54 Cesar, 55 Upas, 56 Puma, 57 Sake, 61 Mow, 62 Spy.



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