

Thumbs-up to a good cleaning of neighbourhood open spaces in Niagara-on-the-Green. (Penny Coles)

Glendale volunteers pick up lots of garbage, some ticks

Penny Coles
The Local

A group of about 20 enthusiastic volunteers did a quick but thorough cleanup of the open spaces in the Niagara-on-the-Green area Saturday, agreeing it was a perfect day for the annual task.

“We’re a small but mighty group,” said resident Steve Hardaker to the crew gathered at the neighbourhood park. “I’m confident we’ll get this done.”

The idea of the cleanup was planted about six years

ago when Lianne Gagnon, who was then the Niagara College director of student services, was a member of the former Glendale task force along with Hardaker.

The task force was established by the town to address issues such as noise, parking and garbage, problems that seemed to arise when the area attracted a large number of Niagara College students.

Since the task force involved the college, Gagnon worked with students and encouraged them to be good neighbours, including being

part of the cleanup.

Hardaker began working with Gagnon, who has since retired, and the cleanup has become a regular spring event.

Gagnon was at the meeting point in the park first, and decided to begin picking up garbage while she waited for the others. The first item she found was — no surprise — a plastic water bottle.

Once volunteers started to arrive at what has become a community event, Hardaker handed out plastic bags and gloves to those who gathered, then assigned the

open areas to be cleaned, including the large green spaces around what neighbours call the wet and dry ponds, the park and parkettes. Although the residential streets were not part of the cleanup, Hardaker asked volunteers to pick up any street garbage on their way to their areas.

Linda Hardaker and Ellie Davidson, with Kaleb and Delilah Davidson, headed to a dry pond, surrounded by brush, to pick up garbage.

“What a good neighbourhood we live in,” Ellie

Continued on page 12

Neighbours plant rain garden to aid parkette drainage

Penny Coles
The Local

A rain garden, approved by the town years ago, was finally planted in the Dock Area Monday by volunteers.

Also called a rain harvester, the garden is situated at a low point at the end of Ball Street, in the eastern end of the Dock Area parkette. It is considered the last component of the stormwater drainage initiative that has been ongoing in that neighbourhood since the flooding of 2017 and 2019.

It is intended to take the runoff from rain, and whatever washes over the groyne in the lake, explained Ron Simkus, who helped organize volunteers to do the planting.

The rain harvester is not only an aesthetic en-

hancement to the parkette, he said, but also acts as a natural filter for stormwater drainage to help reduce contaminants reaching Lake Ontario, and to filter out silts during heavy rain.

While the town prepared the bed ahead of time and provided the plants, Dock Area residents were told it could only be planted if they volunteered to help not only with the planting, but also the maintenance of the garden.

It was funded with \$10,000 from a Niagara Community Foundation grant, which “is only available to communities that establish cooperative engagement from residents who will volunteer their own time to support the rain harvester in their immediate community.”

Continued on page 2




Volunteers plant a rain garden in the Balls Beach Parkette, as part of a larger stormwater management plan for the Dock Area. (Ron Simkus)


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Rain garden plants are all native pollinators

Continued from page 1

The small group of neighbours who came carrying their trowels and gloves, made quick work of the planting. Parks and recreation manager Kevin Turcotte, on hand to supervise the work, said he anticipated it would take about one and a half to two hours, but the planting was finished and the garden given a good soaking in about 40 minutes.

Ongoing support usually involves just annual mulching and weeding, and shouldn't be an "onerous obligation," with the mulch keeping down the weeds, however, it will be monitored and adjusted as necessary, Turcotte explained.

In the coming days there will be further clearing of the area around the garden, which is now just dirt, Turcotte said, with eventual hydroseeding — the spraying of grass seed mixed with fertilizer — when the cleanup is completed.

The work is scheduled to be finished by June 8, with Simkus having high praise for the involvement of CAO Marnie Cluckie and Rome D'Angelo, the

town's new director of operations, for their support.

Rain gardens are popular in Toronto, used as a landscape feature to collect stormwater that runs off grass, roofs and driveways. According to the Toronto Conservation Authority, they are planted in a shallow depression with loose, deep soil that absorbs and naturally filters the runoff, preventing it from entering the storm drain system and, eventually, city waterways.

The conservation authority tells homeowners that by planting a rain garden, they can help maintain the natural water cycle while protecting local rivers, lakes, fish and drinking water sources, and it encourages the use of pollinator plants.

The plants used in the Dock Area garden were chosen from a list provided by the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, said Dave Voogt, town grounds specialist, and are all native and considered pollinators. The varieties planted include some ornamental grasses, bush honeysuckle, blue flag iris, sneezeweed, turtleweed, and black-eyed Susans.

While Simkus and neighbours were happy



After about 40 minutes, the long-awaited rain garden was planted and watered. (Penny Coles)

to see the rain garden installed, it has been a long time coming.

Simkus referred to a 2004 report signed by former parks and recreation director Clive Buist and then-CAO Lew Holloway, which proposed a design

for the area that included landscaping and shoreline protection "to eliminate any further erosion." But nothing was done until after the high water levels and flooding of 2017 and 2019. The town has been trying to manage soil erosion and flooding since then, as the budget allowed, and a rain harvester was considered part of the plan.

The town put emergency measures into place at the time to alleviate damage, including pumps and sand bags to stop flooding into the storm system. Water from the sailing club

waterfront flooded across Melville Street, recalls Simkus, and into the low area of the parkette, where the rain garden has now been installed.

The erosion plan was implemented in the intervening years, creating the groyne that is there now.

Since the flooding, Simkus has kept tabs on water levels, sending out a blast email to about 100 residents.

On Monday, he said Lake Ontario had reached his high water mark by the culvert, at the record-setting elevation of 2019, the highest since then. Fortu-

nately the water has crested, and the elevation is expected to continue falling, but will still be 11 inches above average by the second week of June.

Simkus said he believes there is still work to be done to prevent another situation of water cresting over the sailing club property, flooding across Melville Street and again reaching the parkette, but he doesn't expect that to be undertaken by the town any time soon.

"The idea for the parkette was designed 19 years ago, in 2004," said Simkus. "It hasn't changed substantially since then."

That took 10 years to be approved, he said, and even longer to be implemented, with the rain garden nearly completing the picture — all that's needed now is the grass, and it will again become a parkette residents can enjoy.



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Local palliative care service has new digs, new programs

Penny Coles
The Local

The local palliative care service has new offices, new programs to offer those suffering a serious illness and their families, and new bereavement support for those who have lost a loved one.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Palliative Care Service now has four offices in the Niagara Medical Centre on Niagara Stone Road, beside Simpson's Pharmasave, sharing space with doctors of the Niagara North Family Health Team.

Executive director Bonnie Bagnulo says since their services were relocated recently from the former hospital building, she has been delighted with the amount of space they have, made available when some of the family health team moved to the new Village Medical Centre.

She also loves the central location — about as perfect as it can be, conveniently bringing them closer to a growing number of Virgil, St. Davids and Glendale clients. It alleviates parking issues, and provides a welcoming environment for those looking for information about services.

Although there were doctors' offices nearby when the former hospital was their home, she says, "clients were less likely to wander down the hall to find us. Anyone who sits in the waiting room here will see our offices," which are conveniently sectioned off from doctors, and next to the waiting room and check-in desk. "That helps with raising awareness for us."

It also helps with the growth in programming, as does the proximity to the doctors themselves, who are the chief source of patient referrals.

"We held a lunch and learn with the whole team," she said, which was very well received.

"Doctors, nurse practitioners, nurses and reception staff found there were so many services we provide that they were unaware of. It's a huge boost of awareness, and for referrals."

The offices provide space for administrative staff, a volunteer coordinator and a bereavement coordinator, who is coming on board thanks to a federal grant, and will be able to "ramp up bereavement services," says Bagnulo.

The palliative care service also now has a contract psychosocial consultant, she adds.

"He brings the next level of professionalism to our support services, helping those in bereavement. For our team to provide that



Bonnie Bagnulo, executive director of NOTL Community Palliative Care Service, shows off her new office. (Supplied)

support to our clients who require that level of service is really important for us — there is no normal grief process. It is so individual for everyone."

People who need more end-of-life, existential discussions, with questions such as "what was I here for" and other conversations before death, can benefit from those extra layers of support, she says.

However, for the first time since the service was formed in 1986, she adds, "we're paying rent."

A small portion of that is paid through ministry funding — while they receive some grant money, about 70 per cent of the costs of the services they provide is funded through donations, fundraisers and memorial gifts.

Their new space also provides storage for the equipment they lend out, says Bagnulo, praising Sean Simpson for being so accommodating. "They've been given space in the basement, and they can use the pharmacy conveyor belt to take equipment up to the back door and back down again when it's returned. "It makes life so much easier for us," she says.

They offer wheelchairs, walkers, canes, shower seats, transfer benches, cushions and comfort items — almost everything anyone during an illness might need, other than lifts and recliners. "Also room monitors for caregivers so they can get a good night's sleep are very helpful," Bagnulo adds.

"The mission from the time I started is to reach people," she says. "Many people have struggled — we want to put some of those fires out and help them navigate what is an uncomfortable journey to be on alone."

The palliative care ser-

vice has some events coming up, including the really well-received butterfly release from last year that will be held June 17, with butterflies reserved by May 20.

Bagnulo says they will try to accommodate people who reach out by May 31, the absolute deadline, but she can't guarantee butterflies will still be available.

This event is intended as a tribute to all loved ones, says Bagnulo, from partners to pets, who passed in 2022. There will be a memorial scroll that will be read out by Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa with the names of those who died in 2022, but not the names of those from earlier years, she says — they learned their lesson last year, when the reading just took too long for those waiting to release the butterflies, and for the butterflies themselves.

This is the second year for the event, the butterflies will again be painted ladies from Alberta, and are \$25 each.

There will be room for displays again inside the community centre, and time for people to chat with each other, says Bagnulo, but once everyone moves outside, the release will be quick, with fewer speeches, for the sake of the butterflies.

"It's an open venue, not a formal service. And we learned a lot from last year."

Bagnulo says she is also pleased to be able to offer the Shred-it event on Aug. 19.

It will once again be held in the parking lot of Simpson's Pharmasave, she says, advising those who have personal papers stored to save the date for the event, which supports palliative care programs.

And there are new programs, she says, including a Recharge Caregivers Group,

offering a safe space for caregivers to express their experiences and struggles with others on a similar journey. It includes mindfulness practices, relaxation techniques, and provides resources for burnout and caregiver fatigue.

"The group is open to anyone who cares for another. We understand the patient needs all the support

they can receive while walking through a progressive life-limiting illness. However, their crew, the people taking care and responsibility for their loved one, can oftentimes find themselves overwhelmed, facing caregiver burnout, and under great duress. We decided to offer a Recharge once a week," says Bagnulo.

This group meets at the

community centre with a different facilitator every week, she says. "Sometimes it's instructional; such as aromatherapy, reflexology, or creating a vision board, and sometimes a registered professional therapist who facilitates the group offers discussions about self-care and coping strategies."

There are also bereavement walking groups, she says, and art groups, including one for children experiencing bereavement. Trained volunteers will facilitate creative work, with art a medium to "reframe the narrative of illness and death."

In addition there are art pet loss workshops, with local artists to help create a unique and personalized project that memorializes a beloved family pet.

Anyone looking for more information can call 905-468 4433, visit notlpc.com or email notlpc@bellnet.ca.

Or, says Bagnulo, knock on the door of her office in the Niagara Medical Clinic, a home she describes as finally feeling permanent, "at least for now — you never know what the future might bring. But this feels like the best move palliative care has ever made."

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Media, family reach out to help free Jimmy Lai

Penny Coles
The Local

International news outlets are reporting that more than 100 journalists and editors have signed an open letter calling for the immediate release of Jimmy Lai, who at the age of 75 is still detained in a Hong Kong prison.

They are asking for charges against him and other journalists to be dropped.

Lai, the founder of Apple Daily, a Hong Kong media outlet openly critical of the Chinese Communist Party, was out on bail for a short time after being arrested in August 2020 on national security charges. His bail was evoked and he has been imprisoned since December of that year.

The media tycoon is also the owner of Vintage Hotels. He took over the Pillar and Post in 1974, and then the Prince of Wales Hotel, which was sold to Lai by the Wiens family.

Later came the Queen's Landing Inn, and then the Oban Inn, which is still run by his twin sister Si Wai Lai, who came to town to take over the running of the Pillar and Post.

A pro-democracy activist who had taken to the streets in protest, Lai was imprisoned on charges of allegedly violating the lease terms for office space for the Next Digital, the media company he founded, and under what was then a new national security law, of suspicion of colluding with foreign forces and endangering national security.

Lai had recently resigned as chairman and executive director of Next Digital, which runs his Apple Daily newspaper, "to spend more time dealing with these personal affairs," the Associated Press



Jimmy Lai was interviewed by CBC in 2020. He has been in jail since the December of that year. (Screenshot)

reported then.

The Guardian and other international news outlets say the signatories to the letter, organized by Reporters Without Borders, said: "We, as publishers and editors of news media organizations from around the world, are united in support of Apple Daily founder and publisher Jimmy Lai, and his fight for media pluralism and press freedom in Hong Kong."

"Jimmy Lai has stood for these values his entire life ... In a tremendous act of courage, he chose to stay in Hong Kong and continued to publish as long as he could, despite the severe crackdown taking place around him."

Bob Jackson, CEO of Vintage Hotels, said Lai "is always in our hearts and prayers. And I'm always happy to see others speak out on behalf of press freedom, in his case specifical-

ly, and of course we're extremely supportive of the cause."

Jackson has met Lai several times over the years, and says "the best way to describe him, and I don't think this would be surprising, would be that he is a very inspirational man. He's also very principled, and I've always enjoyed the opportunity to spend time with him."

As owner of Vintage Hotels, Lai's imprisonment does not affect the operation of the business at all, said Jackson.

"We're independent, and we have a board of directors. We've been able to function normally regardless of what's been happening with Mr. Lai."

Jackson adds that he appreciates "the International community shining a light on the situation. We can only hope they will continue to shine a light

on this."

NOTL resident Erica Lepp is Lai's niece, and daughter of Si Wai Lai. She said her cousin Sebastian, one of Jimmy Lai's four children, was in Niagara-on-the-Lake recently.

Her uncle has visited his family in Niagara-on-the-Lake many times in the past, and she has described him as a kind man, a calm person, and passionate about his beliefs, although she has been cautious of talking about his activities.

But she is outspoken of her support for the current attempts to have him freed, as is Sebastian, who she says "has been going around the world talking to all the press outlets. He's been to Washington D.C., London and New York City, trying to get the message out."

It's difficult to know how he's being treated in

prison — family members get few chances to visit — "but he's 75, he's diabetic, and he's in prison. It's hard to know how he's doing, but we're always worried about him," she says.

She encourages people to watch a documentary on YouTube by the Acton Institute called *The Hong Konger: Jimmy Lai's Extraordinary Struggle for Freedom*, which in the three weeks it has been online has received more than two million views — it can be seen at [youtube.com/watch?v=bRkuv-fO-V7k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRkuv-fO-V7k).

"It is literally his history. It explains his story in the best way, and is supported by my uncle's people and by the family. We've been doing a lot of sharing."

Lepp says his freedom could be in the hands of the U.K. Lai is a British citizen — that's his only citizenship, she adds.

The Guardian said Lai's supporters have criticized the U.K. government for not doing enough to advocate for Lai's release, and that Sebastian said publicly recently that the U.K. government was "incredibly weak" for failing to call for the release of his father.

Lepp says the family is really hoping the British government will step up and come to his aid.

Lai was chosen one of Time Magazine's top 100 influential people in 2015.

In December 2020, he was given a Freedom of Press Award by Reporters Without Borders for his role in founding Apple Daily.

Earlier this year, a group of leading U.S. lawmakers nominated Lai and five other Hong Kong democracy advocates for the Nobel Peace Prize. Nobel Prize winners are announced in October.



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Parliament Oak proposal takes ‘wrecking ball’ to Official Plan

Carrie Gleason
The Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake residents who spoke out against Official Plan and zoning bylaw amendments for 325 King Street at a public open house on Tuesday, say the proposed land use does not benefit the neighbourhood or the community and, in the words of Marilyn Bartlett of Centre Street, “takes a wrecking ball to the Official Plan.”

The former Parliament Oak School property, which is owned by Two Sisters Resorts, is currently designated for open space and community facilities, and zoned for institutional use. The developer has submitted a proposed amendment for commercial use of the property, which would see a 19-metre-tall, 129-room hotel with underground parking, a restaurant and patio, a spa, banquet/conference facilities and retail shops built there.

Having a hotel in the middle of a residential area is not unusual in NOTL, Two Sisters representatives said, pointing to others in town, including the Prince of Wales Hotel and the Oban Inn, and with a design not intended to mimic nearby houses, but to be suitable to the area, recognizing and integrating with the location of the downtown area and placed sensitively in the neighbourhood.

While the property will be walled, councillors were told, there will be an entrance to the grounds that

will make it accessible to the public.

Bartlett, who also called the amendments “an assault on the quiet character and privacy of the surrounding neighbourhood,” would like to see the town reject the application as incomplete and inappropriate, a sentiment echoed by more than a dozen residents, some of whom cited the need for a traffic study and a planning impact analysis. Regent Street resident Alan Gordon quoted the Official Plan in his objection, which prevents “the intrusion of commercial uses into residential areas.”

Many residents at the open house objected to the height of the proposed hotel, saying that although the planners have called it a four-storey building, in reality its height would be closer to that of a six-storey building. While the planners have suggested that the “generous setbacks” of the building from the street would “mitigate” its height, NOTL resident Connie Tintinalli stated that “the height is the height.”

Lyle Hall, a former hotel operator and current president of the Niagara Foundation, said that hotels are “incompatible with residential land uses,” and that the proposed hotel goes far beyond space to accommodate overnight guests by allowing seating for 700 people in its combined restaurant and banquet facilities — five times the seating needed for hotel guests. This, Hall explained, means that the

proposed underground parking will be insufficient for the number of patrons.

He requested the town ask the property developers to demonstrate a business need for another new hotel in NOTL, given that three hotels have already been approved, which together will provide 190 additional rooms. By refusing the amendment applications, he says, “council (could) use this high-profile opportunity

to signal its intention to enforce the Official Plan across NOTL.”

In addition to parking, residents expressed concern about the safety of children on streets surrounding the property, given that there would be an increase in traffic once it was built, and many streets in the neighbourhood do not have sidewalks.

When asked by council what they would prefer to see happen on the site,

residents overwhelmingly agreed it should remain zoned institutional, with suggestions for its use including a community centre, a medical facility, or a child care centre.

Nancy Bongard, who has lived in NOTL for 42 years and uses a walker, said that “Someday, I will obviously need an assisted living facility when I move from my home, just as many other seniors who have settled in Niagara-

on-the-Lake. We desperately need an assisted living facility, much more so than another hotel. The applicant has said he wants to improve our town. I suggest he now has the opportunity to do so, to step up and fulfill this enormous need in our town... This property has been zoned institutional, and to build anything other than an institution for the benefit of Niagara-on-the-Lake would simply be wrong.”

ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD NOTICE TO CUSTOMERS OF NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE HYDRO INC.

Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro Inc. has applied to raise its electricity distribution rates and other charges.

Learn more. Have your say.

Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro Inc. has applied to the Ontario Energy Board to raise its electricity distribution rates effective January 1, 2024. If the application is approved as filed, a typical residential customer and a typical general service customer of Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro Inc. would see the following increase:

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Other customers, including businesses, may also be affected.

Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro has also applied for approval to increase a number of its Specific Service Charges. It is important to review the application carefully to determine whether you may be affected by these changes.

THE ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD WILL HOLD A PUBLIC HEARING

The Ontario Energy Board (OEB) will hold a public hearing to consider Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro’s application. During this hearing, which could be an oral or written hearing, we will question Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro on its case for a rate increase. We will also hear questions and arguments from individuals that have registered to participate (called intervenors) in the OEB’s hearing. At the end of this hearing, the OEB will decide what, if any, rate increase will be allowed.

Distributors such as Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro typically apply for a full review of their rates every five years. Any rate changes for the years in between are made by applying an OEB-approved formula which is tied to inflation and other factors intended to promote efficiency. You may not get notice of future rate changes made by applying the formula.

The OEB is an independent and impartial public agency. We make decisions that serve the public interest. Our goal is to promote a financially viable and efficient energy sector that provides you with reliable energy services at a reasonable cost.

BE INFORMED AND HAVE YOUR SAY

You have the right to information regarding this application and to be involved in the process.

- You can review Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro’s application on the OEB’s website now
- You can file a letter with your comments, which will be considered during the hearing
- You can become an intervenor. As an intervenor, you can ask questions about Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro’s application and make arguments on whether the OEB should approve Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro’s request. Apply by **May 29, 2023** or the hearing will go ahead without you and you will not receive any further notice of the proceeding
- At the end of the process, you can review the OEB’s decision and its reasons on our website

LEARN MORE

These proposed charges relate to Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro’s distribution services. They make up part of the Delivery line - one of the line items on your bill. Our file number for this case is **EB-2023-0041**. To learn more about this hearing, find instructions on how to file a letter with your comments or become an intervenor, or to access any document related to this case, please select the file number **EB-2023-0041** from the list on the OEB website: www.oeb.ca/notice. You can also phone our Public Information Centre at 1-877-632-2727 with any questions.

ORAL VS. WRITTEN HEARINGS

There are two types of OEB hearings – oral and written. Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro has applied for a written hearing. The OEB will determine at a later date whether to proceed by way of a written or oral hearing. If you think an oral hearing is needed, you can write to the OEB to explain why by **May 29, 2023**

PRIVACY

If you write a letter of comment, your name and the content of your letter will be put on the public record and the OEB website. However, your personal telephone number, home address and email address will be removed. If you are a business, all your information will remain public. If you apply to become an intervenor, all information will be public.

This rate hearing will be held under section 78 of the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998, S.O. 1998, c.15, Schedule B.



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EDITORIAL

Don't miss the Virgil Stampede this weekend

It's not Volunteer Week — at least not anywhere else but Niagara-on-the-Lake.

This has been a week that really shows the goodness of volunteers in the community — of course, every week does that.

Glendale residents came out, as they do every year, to clean up garbage around their neighbourhood.

Dock Area people planted a rain garden — one that was expected to be part of the town's stormwater management plan over the years, but was paid for by a charitable organization, to be planted and maintained by neighbours.

Then there's the NOTL Horticultural Society, also trying to honour their many

activities. They could use a few more volunteers.

The NOTL Community Palliative Care service never has enough volunteers — it's not an easy task to walk the journey with those suffering from serious illness or facing death, or with the family members who love them, yet its volunteers manage to do that and more, increasing their programs to offer more to those who need them.

Those are just a few of the organizations in town, mentioned this week in The Local — next week there will be others organizing events and fundraisers to help make this great community even better.

And let's not forget the Virgil Business Association, the

small group of people behind the huge undertaking that is the Virgil Stampede.

This is not your typical group of business owners who meet to network — the VBA was created to give back to the community, and that continues to be its goal. It has returned more than \$1.2 million to the community over the years with its annual fundraiser, which draws people from across the region. It's a great family event, not to be missed.

For those new to town, yes it's called a stampede, but no, unfortunately there are no horses, although there are pony rides for kids.

Some history: beginning in 1965, and at least until the mid-1990s, Virgil attracted an open

horse show and barrel racing, with competitors coming from around the province.

The event soon became two days, then three, and expanded to include carnival rides, games and all kinds of activities for all ages. As other horse shows around the province drew our competitors away, the VBA found other ways to draw families to the Virgil Sports Park.

In its early days, it was the Virgil Businessman's Association, eventually becoming the Virgil Business Association, a group like all others that is struggling to find volunteers to put on its annual event. It has always relied on the families of members to help out, and if you belong to the VBA, it's pret-

ty difficult to go away the May long weekend.

Pretty well any child or family living in NOTL has benefited from something the VBA has helped fund — the sports park, the library, community centre, both arenas, the swimming pools, sports groups, the Christmas Parade, Red Roof Retreat, and more.

With all the hard work that goes into the event, weather is the biggest variable, although there is a saying that Mary Snider won't let it rain on stampede days, and most years, it hasn't.

If you have kids who love the rides, don't forget Phil's Independent sells bracelets until Friday at 9 p.m.

Coming out to a really fun

family event is just another way for all of us to support this great community.

And please, since The Local is a proud member of the VBA — Karen Skeoch and I have been volunteers for 30 years — organizing the nickel sale for many of those years, please stop by the Mary Snider Room to spend some of your stampede money there, with a chance to win some great prizes. And wrap up your long weekend with what is truly a spectacular fireworks display Monday at dusk.

For more info about hours and parking, visit virgilstampede.ca.

Penny Coles
The Local

Fire, one of our closest and oldest friends



Owen Bjorgan
Special to The Local

I've been working with students from the school board in our Survival Skills program, where students Grades 4 to 12 are put into educational mock scenarios to learn about some tricks of the woods. Then we exercise the new-found survival knowledge with a local context.

I'll often frame the day by telling the students to put on their imaginary hats, and ask them to wonder what

would happen if the bus forgot to pick them up from their school trip. You have to survive one night alone in our woods with just flint and steel. What would you do? In this example situation, going down the escarpment to hitchhike or get some McDonald's is out of bounds.

Once we complete building a storm shelter composed of natural materials, we move on to the necessity of fire. We discuss how fire was controlled by bipedal beings somewhere between 200,000 to 500,000 years ago. It would take a little longer after that, perhaps 40,000 to 130,000 years ago during the age of the Neanderthal, to intentionally create the fire from scratch. Since

those ancient milestones, fire has been used for a plethora of social and industrial reasons beyond count.

From a survival standpoint, the students and I will discuss the importance of heat, lighting, cooking food, boiling water, fending off predators, and creating rescue smoke signals. We then challenge the students to use flint and steel, one of the more primitive fire starting methods which may date back nearly as far as Neanderthal times. The literature is up for debate as to when exactly which species of upright ape was the first to strike rocks together to create sparks.

Sometimes I get gifted with a chuckle as I watch young students finally catch the supplied lint and toilet paper on fire. Some shriek, get a little freaked out, or even celebrate and cheer passionately. When I see this, I rewind time to ages before, when a bunch of hairy, ape-like animals would have had similar reactions. Joyous as this is, fire was a tool of power and shaping the landscape in historical times.

For example, fire was used by Indigenous Australians up

to 65,000 years ago to hunt, as it funnelled terrestrial animals into the kill zone and forced four-legged meals into (or out of) ground burrows. There are also ancient practices of landscaping where land was cleared to create pathways and more open spaces devoid of vegetation.

Nowadays, right here in Niagara-on-the-Lake, we occasionally use fires to purposely burn off invasive species and plant new ones in areas along the Niagara Parkway. All the while, a nearby neighbour sits by a flame in the backyard to socialize with friends over a cold one.

My case in point is that fire has a rich history as the closest non-living thing to a living thing we know. It breathes, as it requires oxygen. It needs



Friends have always enjoyed a good fire, and will continue to. (Owen Bjorgan)

to consume fuel for energy. It grows, and to quote one of my firefighting pals, "it wants to grow." It leaves waste, and it even seemingly reproduces itself and spreads. However, it is not made of cells that divide and function like other true

living things. But it's pretty close, so no wonder we have always had a substantial relationship with the ubiquitous flame. Hopefully, the students (who all survived) will never look at a backyard fire the same way again.

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View from the couch

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

Queen Charlotte (Netflix, 2023) is a prequel series to Bridgerton, and an historically-inspired drama focusing on

Charlotte, wife-to-be of the soon-to-be-crowned King George III. It is sensual, sexual, beyond lavish, and more or less historically accurate. Obviously it is highly popular.

Donald Combe is a retired

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

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

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Where's Ben?

Eden student Ben Foster continues to discover new locations in NOTL, wondering how familiar others may be with them. If you know where this photo was taken, email penny@notllocal.com. This week we received several correct answers. The first response was from Ted Wiens. Ben was behind the fourth green at the NOTL Golf Course. Or as was seen behind him, by the cairn marking the Battlefield of Fort George.

COMMENT

Local LETTERS Development in NOTL is not a Monopoly game

My name is Jim Reynolds and I live at 120 Delatre St. in the Dock Area. I moved to NOTL 42 years ago when I married Pat Hartman, who was a teacher at Parliament Oak School.

Back then the school was the heart of the community. Its yard rang with the voices of children at play. Classes were filled with busy students engaged in learning, in sports, in musical productions and community events. Pat's choirs sang on special occasions throughout the town. Little did anyone suspect that this vital and bustling place faced an ignominious future. As townspeople grew older, as retirees moved permanently to their favourite weekend getaway and as housing prices rose astronomically, fewer and fewer young families could afford to live in the Old Town. First St. Vincent de Paul School on Victoria Street closed and eventually the school board shuttered Parliament Oak, despite community attempts to keep it alive.

The town had been granted the property on King Street for the express purpose of building a new school. The old one at Platoff and Davy was simply too small for all the baby boomers coming along. And when the local school boards were amalgamated under Lincoln County and then the District School Board of Niagara,

the school property became an asset of the school board by administrative fiat.

When the time came to close the school, however, there was never any question: they would sell this valuable property to the highest bidder rather than returning it to its rightful owner, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The town attempted to buy back the land which had been taken away, and submitted a competitive bid, but there was not the slightest chance that it would be successful. A board trustee, a former colleague of mine, told me straight to my face that they would never sell the property to the town because "they would put a school in there." The DSBN wanted no competition for students for their new school in Virgil.

No one has said whether the successful bidder from Montreal knew precisely how much he had to offer in order to obtain the property. But when his unacceptable residential plans fell through, he sold the land to Benny Marotta for a fine profit and we now face the prospect of our town being eviscerated by a huge commercial edifice at its centre.

The cuckoo lays its egg in another bird's nest with the intention that the unwary host will raise the intruder to the detriment of its own nestlings. This misfit crowds out the smaller

birds and bullies its way to the front of the nest, demanding food and space and dominance. Property developers often buy land zoned for benign or passive purposes and then lay their cuckoo's egg, expecting the neighbours to acquiesce, perhaps even to be grateful for the intrusion. They treat zoning as a temporary inconvenience to be changed to suit their business model and their bottom line. Their selfish approach looks inward at their own business interests, not outward to the effect they are having on those who share the same streets, the same air and the same sky.

Parliament Oak School was taken away from the town by bureaucrats and trustees from Fort Erie, Welland, St. Catharines and Grimsby who had no stake in the future of this community. They sold it to developers who knew what the zoning constraints were but whose sole interest was to maximize the return on their investment.

But we must remember that property ownership and control of its use are not inextricably linked: a person may own a property but the elected representatives of the town control what can be done with it. I own my own house but I may not tear it down and build a car wash. The zoning forbids it. This applicant wishes to change the institutional zoning of the school property to com-

mercial so that he may build his hotel.

But why not a gas station, a strip mall, a go-kart track or a casino? Why not ask for a change to agricultural zoning for a cannabis grow-op? Why not a change to industrial for a brewery, a cement plant or a foundry? The answer is obvious. While all of these uses are physically possible and may even create jobs, they are completely inappropriate in this location. They would destroy the property values and the peaceful lives of all who live close by and would do irreparable harm to this historic town.

The arbitrary change to the zoning requested here would sound the death knell for our community as a place for permanent residents and be the starting gun for others who await the necessary precedent for their own greedy schemes.

Zoning bylaws, when prop-

erly enforced, provide predictability, harmony and stability within a municipality. Land use planning and permission are the most important powers a municipal government has. To cave in to pressure from developers with deep pockets and armies of lawyers and to arbitrarily change established zoning would be to abandon the ship and allow it to drift onto the rocks. There is no possible justification for building a large and intrusive business in the middle of this quiet residential area. This kind of flagrant aberration is the very thing that zoning bylaws are meant to prevent. That we must go through the motions of examining this proposal at all is a massive waste of time and resources. We must ask ourselves a simple question. When does a demand from a developer become too preposterous to merit consideration? I would suggest that we have reached that point

with this proposal.

We are not involved in a game of Monopoly here, where the player with the most money and the most property automatically wins. The town is under no obligation to ensure that any applicant's gamble pay off so that he can make a handsome return on his investment. Property speculation is precisely that — speculation — and the risk lies with the purchaser of the land. The town should ask this applicant to return to the drawing board and come back with a proposal which suits this precious and unique location and which provides something the residents of this community really need. Perhaps a high-quality, properly-scaled retirement residence built to include parts of the existing school building would be a good place to start.

Jim Reynolds
NOTL

Local LETTERS

Don't endanger kids in school yards

My children attend the local schools in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Their school yards are a place they frequent throughout the day and as we know, young children get low to the ground.

Dog owners seem to also like to treat the Crossroads school yard like an off-leash dog park outside of school hours and do not always follow the poop and scoop rules.

With strep bacteria still circulating, this is concerning, as dog excrement is known to carry a lot of antibiotic-resistant bacteria including streptococcus. It is no wonder that our kids are constantly picking up bugs.

It is one thing for the old saying that a little dirt is good for you but not to track into school classrooms. Seeing as Crossroads is on town property, dog excrement is a

health hazard, and a school yard is not equivalent to an off-leash dog park, I think it is safe to say that dogs should not be allowed on school property for the health of the school.

Here is a pubmed article with the evidence to support this: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3564131/

Lauren Bubnic
NOTL

Honouring a special needs family member



At a recent fundraising pasta dinner for Red Roof Retreat, the Enns family donated \$5,000. The gift was in honour of Dorothea Enn's cousin in Germany, Klaus-Dieter Janzen, who has special needs. Red Roof Retreat, represented by Moe Bjorgan (right) says thank you to Dorothea, Julieanne, and Rudy Enns. (Supplied)

Greenbelt legislation shows lack of respect for local planning



Wayne Gates
MPP, Niagara Falls Riding

Let me firmly say this — the Greenbelt is an integral part of our ecological conservation in Ontario.

Niagara-on-the-Lake is a vibrant, sociable and naturally beautiful community which values environmental protection and exercising great care when considering how we develop. We all understand that development is

important, but responsibility and consideration for the natural characteristics of a beautiful community like this one is absolutely key.

Frankly, I am worried. A few days ago, Doug Ford called the Greenbelt a "scam" that was drawn up at random. This comes five years after he made a commitment he would not allow developers to build on it. We know now those statements may not have been completely true. This government has recently made strong-handed policy decisions which will upturn years of municipal planning in Mississauga to double the

size of a waterfront project against the will of city council and the mayor.

This behaviour demonstrates a pattern — a lack of respect for the environment and disregard for local authority. Governing like that could have serious negative consequences for a community like NOTL. Abundant natural beauty, a strong sense of community, and an emphasis on developing responsibly with great consideration for preserving cultural heritage — this does not fall in line with the Ford government's rapid urban-sprawl development approach. It

couldn't be clearer; his development ambitions are a threat to the Greenbelt and what we cherish in NOTL.

I believe that local planning decisions should be made by the community, the Lord Mayor and council. Residents understand the importance of preserving both our Greenbelt and heritage. Legislation like Bill 23 not only further erodes local decision-making, but devalues the uniqueness of community. Building a community means more than developing plots of land. It means coming together to use our spaces wisely, protect environmentally

significant lands, create the housing we need and build a place we all are proud to call home.

Niagara-on-the-Lake has many hectares of prime farming and greenspace land. Outside developers and this government may look at that land as an opportunity to make profits, but I don't think that's right. Unfortunately, I believe this may just be the beginning when it comes to strong-handed planning policy from this government.

I can promise that I am on your side, and I will continue to fight every day to protect Niagara-on-the-Lake and the

health of our environment. This government looks at the environment as something they may take or leave, depending on what is politically expedient for the given moment. Niagara-on-the-Lake needs consistency, environmental protection, and respect; something terribly lacking from this government.

But we can't be complacent when it comes to defending the Greenbelt and our beautiful town — we must stand up to ensure local voices are leading the charge on both development and ecological protection.

Mark Klassen, more than just a caretaker, is retiring

Mike Balsom
The Local

Come September, for the first time in 50 years Mark Klassen's schedule will not revolve around the school calendar.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake-born Klassen is retiring at the end of June from his position as head caretaker at Crossroads Public School after a 36-year career with the District School Board of Niagara and its predecessor, the Lincoln County Board of Education.

"I'm going to have to get used to a year beginning in January, instead of September," he laughs, speaking to The Local in his office at Crossroads.

The graduate of St. Davids Public and Niagara District Secondary Schools decided to take a year after finishing high school to figure out what he wanted to do. It was 1987. While other friends took jobs in factories or made their way to post-secondary education, Klassen took a summer position with the Lincoln County Board.

"Funny, the first place they sent me, the very first day, was to Niagara District," he laughs, a photo of the NDSS gym on the wall above his left shoulder. "The day after I graduated I was cleaning out my friends' lockers. Jim McIntyre's locker was particularly disgusting."

The board soon shifted Klassen to the grounds crew,



Mark Klassen relaxes in his office. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

where he stayed for seven years.

"I loved it," he says. "They turned me into a lead hand almost immediately. I got to pick where I wanted to be. Of course, I chose Niagara-on-the-Lake and north St. Catharines. I had District, St. Davids School, Laura Secord Elementary and Parliament Oak. I knew the teachers. It was my jam."

As a teenager, Klassen worked every summer for Froese Farms, where he developed his love of working outdoors. So the groundwork came naturally to him.

Then, Mike Harris' Conservatives came to power, and cut-backs hit school boards across the province. As one of the youngest guys on the grounds crew, Klassen was informed he was going to be moved indoors.

"I was told I had to go into caretaking," he remembers. "It devastated me. My wife Erica and I had just had our son (Mark Junior, whom he affectionately refers to as Marky), and things were going so well otherwise. But I was bitter about the change."

After spending a year at Gainsborough Public School on Highway 20 in St. Ann's, he was invited to an auction-style meeting that he said he almost decided to skip. There, support staff members were called one-by-one into a room to claim available positions from a list on a board.

"I walked into the room," Klassen says, "and there was Niagara District. So I took it, begrudgingly. I wasn't sure that I wanted to go back into my old high school. But it turned



Outside Crossroads, which was a shiny new building when Mark Klassen began working there.

out to be the greatest thing that happened to me. Twelve years of loving each and every day I went to work."

From the moment he walked into the building he remembered what his teachers and coaches did for him as a student there. He felt the community spirit of the small school, and wanted to contribute. Seeing that there was no one available to coach the senior boys basketball team, he volunteered to take the reins.

Rarely do caretakers take on such roles. In this reporter's almost 30 years teaching in four different high schools in four different school boards, only two caretakers offered to coach teams. Klassen was definitely an outlier.

"Ken Riediger coached the girls; I coached the boys,"

he says. "One year we went to OFSAA (the provincial championships) and there was a coaches' meeting. Everyone was introducing themselves, and someone asked me what I taught. When I told them I was a head caretaker, they all killed themselves laughing. They thought I was joking, until Ken told them I was serious."

He and Riediger, who became his best friend, also coached the NDSS golf team together. In 1997, Brad Neudorf was part of the team that won OFSAA twice when the tournament shifted from spring to fall that same year.

"He spearheaded these trips we took to Myrtle Beach," Neudorf remembers. "It was such a great experience, especially for those of us who went on to play for U.S. colleges. I

think Mark was just as excited as us to be down there."

Neudorf remembers starting most days with his friends in the cafeteria next to Klassen's office on the lower floor, a hot chocolate or chocolate milk in hand.

"We'd go sit down in his office and watch the sports highlights on TSN," Neudorf laughs. "I'm sure we spent way more time in there throughout the day than we should have. He was always looking out for the kids' best interests. To us, he was never Mr. Klassen, he was always Mark. He was a true Trojan."

Klassen spearheaded a fundraising campaign to replace the gym floor, much to the chagrin of officials at the DSBN. And when it was clear the town's only high school was on the chopping block, he had to bite his tongue as an employee of the school board, fighting hard to keep it open from behind the scenes.

That same year, Klassen received a Premier's Award for Support Staff. He claims he won the award because of the efforts he made to raise funds for a former student, Christi Rougoor, who had been injured in a Florida motorcycle accident.

"I remember one day she came into the school so excited because Brock University had just bought some of her artwork," Klassen says, tearing up

Continued on page 14

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Hort society cancels garden tour for this year

It will return, better than ever

Penny Coles
The Local

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society Garden Tour is on hold for this year, with volunteers already planning to ensure it returns better than ever in 2024.

Originally scheduled for July 8, the event was cancelled “after careful consideration” by the horticultural society board, members and the garden tour committee, says Cindy Grant, president of the organiza-

tion.

Last year, she says, “we had 25 beautiful gardens, and a really successful garden tour. But when it was done, we all needed a break. We decided to take some time to rest and regroup.”

However, in the new year, with no gardens chosen for the tour and nobody volunteering to coordinate it, the board and members agreed to cancel it for this season.

It’s been a successful event for more than 30 years, Grant says, showcas-

ing NOTL gardens and the talent of local gardeners.

There is now a new garden tour committee in place which, along with board members, is already planning, and committed to organizing a great event for July 2024, says Grant.

“The good news is we have two fabulous people who will co-chair the committee, and they will ensure we have a knock-out, great tour next year.”

In the meantime, horticultural society members are putting their energy

into other projects, such as the recent successful plant sale held outside the Virgil arenas.

“We don’t have the final tally, but there were lots of people there, spending lots of money — I think we did really well.”

Next up is a pollinator garden at the Newark Park Community Garden. Grant says horticultural society members have been partnering with Julian Trachsel, whose efforts resulted in 32 plots for locals to plant last season.

He has been working with the town to create another section of garden

plots for this spring, says Grant, with the pollinator garden as part of it.

A group of horticultural society members is also focusing on the William Nassau Park, says Grant.

“We’ve adopted the park

and we have a team going there every week to really spruce it up.”

Members “are still active and busy,” she says, and early this summer will begin hunting down gardens for next year’s tour.



Horticultural society members held a successful plant sale last week at the Virgil arenas. They are focusing on other projects for now and plan to bring back the garden tour in 2024. (Photos supplied)



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‘Weed warriors’ prepare for Heritage Trail pollinator garden

Sandra Ozkur
Special to The Local

Great news — work has begun for the preparation of the pollinator gardens that will be installed this month.

A group of volunteer ‘weed warriors’ came out on Thursday to begin removing brush, vines and invasive plants to make way for the installation of pollinator plants along the first section of the Heritage Trail, which is in the One Mile Creek watershed. You will notice a lot of little flags along the path that are needed to get this work done, so please do not move or remove any of these flags.

The volunteer group, called Protect Our Pollinators, has put an enormous amount of time and effort into making this project happen. Our volunteer group came together in November 2022 to promote pollinator awareness in the community. We rely on these species to pollinate the majority of our flowers and food crops, making them key to the survival of humans. Because there is a mass decline in bee, moth, bat and butterfly populations, we wanted to do something to help these creatures.



Robin Garrett, a volunteer from the neighbourhood, removes brush from the trail.



Klara Young-Chin works to ready the trail in preparation for pollinator plants. (Photos by Sandra Ozkur)

Since the inception of this group, we have managed to produce 10 articles under the title *The Buzz on Pollinators*, informing locals about the key aspects of creating pollinator habitats. The town has approved our group to install pollinator plants along the Heritage Trail with the generous donation from the Goettler Family Foundation. Because of their contribution, you will soon see many new pollinator plants growing

along the trail.

This year’s installations will take place along the first section of the Heritage Trail, starting at John Street and ending at Paffard. The entrance to the trail will have a keystone tree dedicated to the Goettler family and two Eastern Redbud trees to welcome you. Just past the fence, we plan to create an instructional pollinator garden where you can learn to create one of your own. Along the path you will see several groves of native shrubs and wild flowers as well as a large installation of pollinator-friendly trees. These pollinator patches are intended to create an entire ecosystem to serve native

species with everything they need to complete their life cycle.

Our group engaged the consulting services of Niagara Beeway to guide us through the bed preparation, plant selection and species integration for long-term habitat restoration. Niagara Beeway has over 30 years’ experience in habitat restoration for bees, pollinators and other endangered species such as birds, turtles, raptors and native plants. Our goal is to attract species such as native bees, swallowtail butterflies, monarchs, hummingbirds and many other interdependent creatures looking for food and habitat.

The work has just begun with the clearing of underbrush, weeds and vines — it’s only the first step and will be an ongoing struggle. There are many invasive plants overtaking the trail either naturally or from having been planted by well-meaning people not aware of the damage these plants are causing.

We hope to educate everyone about the harm of planting invasive species such as English ivy, gout weed, Japanese barberry, and lily of the valley, forget-me-not and lesser celandine. It is almost impossible to get rid of these plants once they have taken hold.

The use of pesticide is

not a viable option. That’s why we are trying an environmentally-friendly technique called smothering to kill these plants. Instead of spraying them, bales of straw will be rolled out over the area where we intend to create pollinator patches. These bales will be left in the rain and the sun until the plants underneath have been suffocated. This matted straw may look unpleasant but please be patient with the unsightliness, as it is a work in progress!

Once the straw begins to pack down and create a mat, some of the larger shrubs such as spicebush, staghorn sumac, eastern red bud and service berry bushes will be planted. The success of the beds will be monitored, and hopefully by mid-June we will be able to add the more delicate flowering plants.

Our vision is to see the path filled with flowers and butterflies, but native pollinator plants take time to get established. It will be a long-term process and may take several years before our vision is complete. In the meantime, we will keep you regularly updated about the progress. Please keep an eye open on your walks along the trail as our project evolves.

If you would like to volunteer to help with our upcoming projects, please contact Klara at wklaramyc@gmail.com.

Tip of the week: Be patient with us, great things take time to manifest.



There is much work to be done by volunteers before it’s time to plant.

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Shaw's *Prince Caspian* is a treat for all ages

Mike Balsom
The Local

The buzz of excitement before a recent matinee performance of *Prince Caspian* at Shaw Festival's Royal George Theatre differed greatly from the usual reserved pre-show din.

That could certainly be attributed to the makeup of the audience, at least 40 per cent of whom were under the age of 18, and more than half of that group under the age of 12. Many of them, along with their parents, had pinned to their shirts handmade paper leaves, signifying that they had just participated in a pre-show workshop. They were ready to provide sounds as part of an army of trees during the performance.

"It's really integral to the storytelling," says director Molly Atkinson. "It's fabulous to see all the different kinds of people getting into it. I can see the children, especially, getting so excited as they wait for their cues. It really engages them for the whole performance."

Prince Caspian was the second of seven published novels in C.S. Lewis' beloved *The Chronicles of Narnia*, though chronologically it is the fourth in the saga that was published in the early 1950s.

It continues a run of Shaw presentations of the author's work — previously, Shaw presented *The Magician's Nephew* (2018) and *The Horse and His Boy* (2019). *Prince Caspian* was actually slated to run during the COVID-cancelled 2020 season.

Despite the presence of so many young people in the audience, Atkinson insists the Shaw production is a universal story that is accessible to children, adults and everyone in between. And it takes on big themes, most importantly the damage that humans have done to the world.

"What's really neat about this particular show is that it was adapted for the stage by Damien Atkins," says Atkinson. "And, because the book is so huge, he really narrowed down exactly the story that he wanted to tell from the book. It's really about Lucy, the youngest child, and her connection to Narnia, and the natural world as a whole."

That means that avid Lewis readers may notice many plot points and situations from the book missing from the stage adaptation. But playwright Atkins has put together a cohesive script that any Lewis acolyte, as well as neophytes to the story, can thoroughly enjoy.

Another adjustment that Narnia fans are asked to make with the Shaw production is the presence of four adult actors in the central roles of the Pevensie children.

It's not at all a difficult adjustment. Kyle Blair (Peter), Andrew Lawrie (Edmund), Marla McLean (Susan) and Kiana Woo (Lucy) fill the roles admirably, embodying the children without actually pretending to be children themselves.

"As the director, I didn't feel the need for them to pretend to be kids," Atkinson explains. "There's so many wonderful complex emotions, thoughts and feelings about all these huge life lessons in this play. It would have been too much of a caricature to do that."

Woo in particular does an excellent job of capturing Lucy's wide-eyed bewilderment and excitement as the children return to a world that just a year earlier they had ruled as kings and queens, only to discover that more than 1,000 years has passed in Narnia. Michael Man personifies the title role of the prince, and Lawrie, as the always-hungry Edmund, is a delightful comic relief.

Atkinson and her creative team have made every effort to make *Prince Caspian* as spectacular as possible.

"I wanted to make it as beautiful, as epic, as huge as we could," says Atkinson. "When I read the books, it was so epic in my mind, so big. I saw everything so clearly. I really wanted to make Narnia real. The colours needed to be vivid."

Atkinson rightfully gives production designer Cory Sincennes much credit for making her vision of Narnia come alive. The sets, including a majestic, giant tree as a constant background, are spectacular. And with actors Fiona Byrne, Patty Jamieson, Qasim Khan, Jade Repeta and Sanjay Talwar all playing multiple characters, Sincennes' costume designs are integral in following along with the story.

During the second act, jaws dropped in the audience in reaction to the emergence of the lion Aslan onto the stage. Controlled by Khan, Aslan is a massive walking, talking puppet that awes the audience as much as he does Lucy. The detail in the giant lion's head is truly impressive.

As well, Jareth Li helps to bring much of the magic alive with his spectacular lighting. Early in the play the children are transported from a UK train station with a trick of the light that is mind-blowing. And the shadows cast upon the stage by the moon in act two look alarmingly realistic.

"I would say it's a bit of a dream team working together," raves Atkinson. "The script says the music has to be epic. Our sound designer Alessandro Juliani came up with music that just moves the show incredibly. It's really beautiful."

The fight sequences during act two are particularly enjoyable. At times brutal, at others balletic,



Kiana Woo as Lucy and Qasim Khan as Aslan, a giant puppet who wows audiences. (Photos by David Cooper)

actors explode on and off the stage, some portraying multiple characters between off-stage costume changes. Axes, daggers and swords clank and clang. At one point the centaur Glenstorm, played by the multi-talented Khan, raises his rear hooves to knock away an evil foe, much to the delight of the audience.

"John Stead, who did all the fight work, is probably the best fight director out there," Atkinson says. "He was incredible to work with. My job as a director is to come up with my

thoughts and ideas and to get the best people and let them do their jobs to make it all happen."

And from the audience's perspective, it was clear at the matinee that each of the actors on stage was having a really great time playing these characters and telling the story.

As well, the many families in attendance for the matinee seemed to be having a great time. Most likely a large number of the parents in the audience had read the Narnia books themselves, and perhaps

spent many evenings reading the stories to the children who were there with them.

And those audience members with the leaves pinned to their shirts? They enthusiastically provided their assigned sounds as beech, silver birch and great oak trees on cue. One gentleman sitting next to this reporter was especially energetic in his role.

Prince Caspian continues at the Royal George Theatre until Oct. 6. For tickets, dates and times, visit shawfest.com.



Andrew Lawrie as Edmund, Marla McLean as Susan, Kyle Blair as Peter and Kiana Woo as Lucy in *Prince Caspian*, at the Shaw Festival.



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Volunteers feel good about cleanup, but not about ticks

Continued from page 1

said, “with everyone taking care of it.” Delilah was earning her high school volunteer hours, and although Kaleb had to be convinced to join the cleanup, “once they’re out in the fresh air and nature they enjoy it,” said Ellie. Plus, she added, it’s a “teaching moment,” an opportunity for kids to learn about giving back to their community.

Some said they felt there was less garbage than other years, but three volunteers quickly filled their first garbage bags around the stormwater management pond that runs parallel to

Glendale Avenue, and had no trouble filling a second in less than an hour.

Garbage gets caught in the brush around the pond, said Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa as he made his way around it with volunteers Margaret McMahon and Christine Ballone. Some of the rubbish they were picking up had blown away from overloaded recycling boxes on “windy Wednesdays,” the neighbourhood garbage day.

Hardaker estimates over all it was about the same number of bags filled as last year.

Although all kinds of garbage was retrieved, from large pieces of cardboard, sheets of metal, and even a

large red polka-dotted children’s ball, the items most often picked up were plastic water bottles, volunteers agreed.

With the lord mayor in attendance, residents’ talk both before and after the cleanup turned to some of the issues that still plague them in their neighbourhood.

Parking has been an ongoing problem for many years, with the town trying to find solutions. But it has failed to be resolved, with tickets being handed out to residents who don’t have enough room in their driveways.

Speeding on residential streets is also still an issue,

said Gagnon, with others quickly agreeing.

The task force has been disbanded, but those are problems that still need to be addressed, Gagnon said, suggesting there is still a need for the town committee.

She has called the police about speeding — she reported an incident on Friday night, she said, but even though she has licence numbers, she didn’t receive a response from police.

“People speed through these streets at 80 kilometres an hour. I worry about kids and cyclists, as well as pets,” she says.

Future development in Glendale is moving forward, and that might be the time to

reinstate the task force, said Hardaker.

Zalepa listened to the concerns of neighbours, which include an increasing number of drivers not stopping at red lights and stop signs.

“Those are problems we have consistently elsewhere,” he said. “There is a lack of compliance with rules, and I believe we need some harsher penalties.”

Road engineers are looking into the problem to see what can be done about speeding, he added, saying there is a pilot project in Niagara that uses “something like bollards, only nicer,” that he thinks are a better idea than traditional speed

bumps. He asked residents to keep him up to date.

“Drop us an email when there are issues in the neighbourhood,” he said. “Keep us informed.”

While volunteers were wrapping up the event, feeling they had accomplished something worthwhile, they were also discovering the problem with ticks had been a side-effect of their work. Several picked or brushed them off before heading home.

Hardaker agrees “the ticks were bad,” with five volunteers reporting having found them on their bodies. “I hope the town cuts the grass in the common areas soon.”



Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa hands out town pins to Niagara-on-the-Green volunteers heading out for a Saturday morning cleanup of open spaces. (Photos by Penny Coles)



Lianne Gagnon begins a cleanup of the Niagara-on-the-Green park, finding the first water bottle of the day, but far from the last.



YongSeok Baek, with his daughters Soul and Dana and dog Coco, are ready to set off for the cleanup of one of the dry pond areas.



Linda Hardaker picks up garbage around one of the dry ponds intended for runoff stormwater.



Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa and volunteer Margaret McMahon wait for more bags before making their way around the stormwater management pond.



Kaleb Davidson cleans up his Glendale neighbourhood with his mother, Ellie, who got right into the bushes.

Yellow Door preparing for Performing Arts Centre shows

Mike Balsom
The Local

The next few months will be busy ones for Niagara-on-the-Lake's Yellow Door Theatre Project.

Auditions for the non-profit youth theatre company's fall production of *Newsies*, the 1992 Disney film that became a Tony Award-winning Broadway musical, will take place at their Line 2 location in Virgil on Sunday, June 4.

Newsies was inspired by the real-life newsboys strike of 1899 in New York City. It's the rousing tale of Jack Kelly, a charismatic newsboy and leader of a band of teenaged newsies. When the titans of publishing raise distribution prices at the newsboys' expense, Jack

rallies newsies from across the city to strike against the unfair conditions and fight for what's right.

"I saw *Newsies* when it was on Broadway, and it kind of stuck with me," says YDTP founder and artistic producer Andorlie Hillstrom. "For a lot of people it was something that motivated them to try musical theatre. I'm actually surprised at how many young people actually know the songs."

As Yellow Door has recently presented new, original works for their fall program, presenting an existing production is a bit of a departure for them.

"We love doing that," Hillstrom says of the original productions. "But this year we thought it would be nice to do

something that is more familiar, more well-known. It will also give us all a bit of a break from the immense work that goes into writing, rehearsing and performing an original production."

Yellow Door is looking for 28 talented musical theatre performers between the ages of 10 and 18 to fill the roles in the play, that will be performed from Dec. 6 to 9 at Robertson Hall in the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre in St. Catharines.

And for two weeks this summer, the PAC is where Hillstrom, her staff, and her young students will be found, as the company's summer program, which will culminate in two performances of *Mary Poppins Jr.*, is moving into that

facility for the first time.

"It's a new partnership with them," explains Hillstrom. "For years, they have wanted to have their own summer program for youth there. They brought it up in a meeting with us several months ago. We suggested that we move our summer program there."

With the transition into the PAC, Yellow Door will have access to the professional sound and lighting as well as the technicians who operate it. And they will have the opportunity to rehearse on site and use the larger stages.

"This has really elevated our summer program," she adds enthusiastically. "In the past we've presented our final summer performances all at our own facility. That works

well enough. But being at the PAC means we can really give it that little bump to move it to the next level."

Hillstrom credits the administration at the PAC for getting behind the partnership 100 per cent. And she adds that there has already been a significant amount of interest in the program, leaving only a few spots remaining.

The summer program offers two full weeks of music, dance and stage training for young performers between the ages of eight and 18, from Monday to Friday, July 3 to July 15. It will culminate in two performances of *Mary Poppins Jr.*, a family friendly adaptation of the movie and Broadway musical featuring such well-known songs as *Spoonful of Sugar*,

Chim-Chim-Cheree, and *Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious*.

"The summer program isn't one that children have to audition for, either," Hillstrom adds. "Anyone can participate, they just have to have an interest. It allows us to meet that many more young people in the region. And because there are two shows, we'll be double-casting. Two completely different casts, both performing in the large theatre there."

The performances will take place on July 15 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Visit yellowdoortheatre.org for more information about auditions for *Newsies*, to register for the summer program or to purchase tickets for the summer performances.

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8-Ball is Canada's Top Dog, Westminster winner

Mike Balsom
The Local

Around the house she's known affectionately as 8-Ball. But when things get serious at dog shows around North America, she's known as Shines Call the Winning Shot with Tzo Wen N Xin Jin.

The almost-six-year-old (8-Ball's birthday is May 27) is the most decorated, award-winning Chinese Shar-Pei in Canada, says Rhonda Holloway, who moved to Virgil with 8-Ball, her husband John Kolodziej, and eight other Chinese Shar-Peis last year. The couple breeds them via their kennel, Periwrinkles Chinese Shar-Peis.

"She was the top Shar-Pei in Canada for 2018 through 2021, and 2023 as well," says Holloway.

And the awards keep coming for 8-Ball. Just last week, she was named Best of Opposite Sex, the top female after the male Shar-Pei Good Fortune Good And Ready was named Best of Breed at the world-famous Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show.



Hailey Carusi with 8-Ball at the recent Westminster Kennel Club Show. (Supplied)

Holloway raised Shar-Peis back in the late 1980s and 1990s, but gave it up for a number of years. She got back into it again in 2016.

"I absolutely love this breed," she says. "Back when I started they weren't recognized by the Canadian Kennel Club, but that changed in 1990. I never showed them back then, but since we start-

ed up again I've been showing them almost every weekend for the last six years."

All nine of Holloway's Shar-Peis are show dogs, but none as successful as 8-Ball, a name given to the dog by her breeder.

She explains that judges look for dogs to match the standard for the breed. For the Shar-Pei, that includes a

square-like body, a top half that rises, a tail that is upset over the back, an up-tilted rear end, moderate rear angulation, shoulders that are set back, smaller ears that don't perk up and a muzzle that is equidistant from the forehead to the stop.

The wrinkly fur that is natural to the breed must also be maintained. And Holloway



Rhonda Holloway and 8-Ball in the Virgil Sports Park. (Mike Balsom)

adds that when a Shar-Pei sits, those wrinkles are supposed to fall. 8-Ball, she adds, was super-wrinkl as a puppy, and has clearly maintained quite a bit of those wrinkles.

"Her movement is absolutely perfect," Holloway adds. "She flows like no other Shar-Pei I have ever seen. When she moves around the ring she is just amazing. And she loves it. I don't have any dogs that love it like she does."

Though Holloway travels with her dogs to shows such as Westminster, 8-Ball usually competes alongside professional handlers, including Hailey Carusi who was in the ring with her last week. Between shows, 8-Ball attends handling classes, and Holloway makes every effort to socialize her.

"Most Shar-Peis are known to be a little bit more aloof," she adds. "She is very friendly and outgoing. That is a little different than most in the breed."

During a short meeting at

the Virgil Sports Park, 8-Ball is full of personality and energy. When Holloway releases her, she runs to this reporter and accepts the affection on offer. Well-behaved, when Holloway calls her back 8-Ball enthusiastically returns to her side.

There's no sign during her time at the park that 8-Ball is aware of her lofty status amongst the Shar-Peis of the world, and that's just fine for Holloway, who will be showing her at the American Nationals near Chicago in September.

"She's won the top-25 there twice," she says. "You have to be invited, and she's been invited five times in her six years."

And 8-Ball isn't the only winning Shar-Pei in the household. She's been setting the standard for others in the Periwrinkles stable.

Juice has won multiple awards in the U.S. and Canada, while Cello has also captured titles in both countries, her first coming when she was just seven months old.

Birthday meet and greet planned

Continued from page 8

as he speaks. "She told me her life was perfect. Then, 24 hours later she was paralyzed from the chest down."

Klassen shifted a scheduled alumni golf tournament from an NDSS fundraiser to instead help Rougoor and her family. Christi passed away at only 29 years old in 2016.

A highlight of his years at District was a chance to perform in the musical *Grease* in the role made famous by

Frankie Avalon in the movie version. He was asked to sing *Beauty School Dropout* in front of a live audience.

"Ken Reidiger did it as well," says drama and dance teacher Kim Wylde, now teaching at Welland's Centennial Secondary School. Klassen performed a couple of times in that run, she said. "He owned it. He was a superstar. And his two nieces were in the show, too. It was like a family affair."

Wylde remembers a caretaker who knew all the kids' names, was involved in every-

thing, and would offer advice to kids.

"He was Niagara District," Wylde says. "As soon as I got there he took me under his wing. He became a great friend, and you knew he cared for and loved the school, and wanted the best for the kids and the staff."

Tears fill the corners of Klassen's eyes remembering the musical, as it brought him closer to his son Mark, who works in human resources for Hamilton Health Sciences and lives on the lower floor of the family home with his husband Taylor. Mark wasn't into sports like his father, but instead loved singing, acting and dancing.

"Marky is my biggest hero," says Klassen. "I was so nervous going on stage. Kim had to push me out there and I had this out-of-body experience. I never would have done that without my kid. I wanted to show him that I could do it, too, even though I was totally terrified."

After NDSS closed, Klassen spent a year at Virgil Public School until the opening of Crossroads in 2011. He had a shiny new school to keep operating and to keep clean, and a shiny new office from which to run everything.

He didn't take on a coaching role, but did start an after-school golf program that introduced many Coyotes to the sport. It culminated in a tournament every year.

Over the past 12 years he's met the children and even a couple of grandchildren of some of the kids he knew back at NDSS.

Current Crossroads principal Kate Fish says Klassen's

importance to the school can't be overstated.

"He has a lengthy history of making people's lives in Niagara happier and cleaner," says Fish. "When we were online, he was here every day. I didn't have the understanding of the level of pride that he takes in his job until I started taking photographs of things in the school and posting them on social media. People constantly remarked about how shiny and clean everything was."

Fish knows that pride runs deeper in Klassen than just his sense of commitment to his job.

"It's much more than bricks and mortar for him," she says. "He has a deep sense of pride for the building as a facility for the kids and the families of this community. It's a community hub to him. I will miss him so much as a human, as a professional and as a friend."

A meet and greet celebration for Mark's retirement is being held at the Sandtrap Pub & Grill on Friday, June 16 from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. His wife Erica is hoping that all who plan to attend can send an email to kathryn.eden-smith@dsbn.org.

Klassen plans to play lots of golf this summer, then perhaps look for work at one of the local wineries as a tour guide. He celebrates his 55th birthday just a few days before his final day on the job, so he knows he's not ready to just put his feet up and relax.

"It's time for me to reset," he says. "Time for the next chapter. I want to do something in Niagara-on-the-Lake, where I can meet people, tell them I grew up here, and tell them everything that's great about my town. I would love that."



A caricature created by NDSS art teacher Karen Black.

Please help the legion help a friend

Local Staff

The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124 is issuing an invitation to a day-long fundraiser to aid one of their own.

The fundraiser is this Saturday, May 20, in support of Sue Pauls, an employee of the legion for a number of years. Her father, James Walshaw, was a veteran.

Pauls "was a long-time resident of this area, and a bartender at different establishments in town, including our branch," says president Al Howse.

"She had a devastating stroke in November, which left her blind and partially paralyzed. She is currently in Garden City Manor long-term care."

Money raised will go toward her personal care, and appropriate clothes, says Howse.

The event will be held on

the front lawn of the branch at 410 King Street. It will feature music by the Pubdaddy Blues Band, featuring Roger Picken, known by many in the community, playing from 4 to 8 p.m. There will also be food and raffle draws.

Everyone is welcome, says Howse. "Start the Victoria Day Weekend off with us and help out a friend."

The Niagara-on-the-Lake legion branch is continuously working to achieve its mission of Service to Veterans, says Howse, as well as their families, to promote remembrance, and to serve the community.

"We recently donated \$1 of each fish and chips ordered on May 4 to the Hospital Activity Book for Children in honour of the King's coronation," Howse says.

For any additional information please contact the branch office at 905-468-2353.

LocalSPORTS

Local hockey player paraded for Junior B win

Mike Balsom
The Local

Glendale resident Owen Holmes received a send-off fit for a champion in the form of a parade from the town of Leamington, Ontario, on Saturday.

He was joined, of course, by his teammates on the Leamington Flyers. That made perfect sense, since just a week earlier the Flyers had brought home the Greater Ontario Junior B Hockey League's Sutherland Cup.

"It was a blast," Holmes says of the team's recognition from the municipality. "The people here love this team. The turnout was amazing. The people of Leamington are all class."

After cruising through the first two rounds of the playoffs, taking down both the Sarnia Legionnaires and the LaSalle Vipers in four games straight, the Flyers beat the St. Mary's Lincolns in five games to qualify for the Sutherland Cup round robin against the Hamilton Kilty B's and the Stratford Warriors.

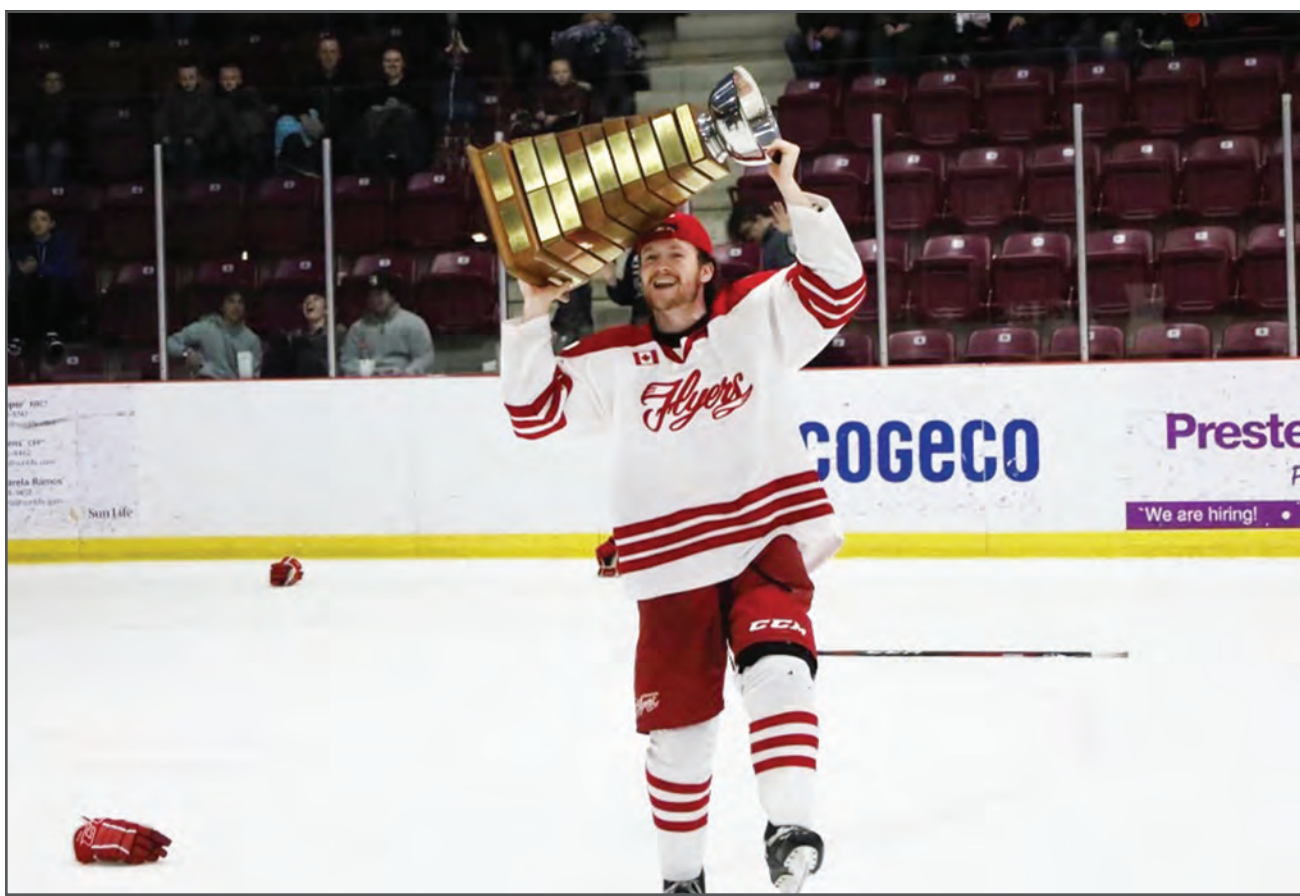
"We were dialed in those first two rounds," Holmes says. "We're a pretty special group. We were all playing for each other. There was no selfishness. Going into the round robin, really, all we wanted to do was get to the finals. We did put ourselves into a pickle, a win-or-go-home situation against Hamilton, but we scored five goals in the last 10 minutes to win 5-2."

Leamington went 2-2 in that round, losing a game against both teams. That was good enough, though, for them to earn the opportunity to take on the 3-1 Warriors for the title.

The Flyers won the first two games of the best-of-seven series, both by 4-1 scores, before Stratford dropped them 6-2 in the third. Leamington went up three games to one in game four, but the Warriors won two in a row to force a game seven back in Stratford.

"We shut them out 4-0 in their barn," says Holmes of the final game, in which his linemates scored all four goals. "There was so much confidence on this team. When we want to play, there's no stopping us."

Holmes was a big contributor to the Flyers' playoff run, contributing 14 goals and six assists over the 24-game stretch while playing left wing alongside the team's two leading scorers, Connor and Ryan



Owen Holmes skates with the Sutherland Cup, representing a win for the Greater Ontario Junior B Hockey League. (Photos supplied)

McPherson.

That's exactly what general manager Justin Solcz was hoping for when he acquired Holmes from the Ontario Junior A Hockey League's Brantford 99ers in December, with roughly half of the regular season remaining on the team's schedule.

"We were looking for a left winger to play with the

twins," says Solcz. "I got a tip on him, and Brantford wasn't going to make the playoffs. I felt that he would be the perfect guy to play with the McPhersons because he responds so quickly. He's super skilled and he gets to the front of the net. Darren (DeDobelaer, who also owns the Niagara Ice Dogs) let me talk to him."

Solcz says he also reached out to the Ontario Hockey League's Flint Firebirds, who selected Holmes in the 11th round of the 2018 draft and for whom Owen's older brother Hunter played for three-plus seasons.

"They helped us out, and we gave Owen our pitch," Solcz says. "We told him that coming here to win a

championship playing with those two would be best for his development, especially for his last season. He really delivered."

Solcz adds that the McPhersons, who are on the NHL's central scouting list (Connor at number 128, Ryan at 211, a rare feat for Junior B players), would not have had the success they did without Holmes' presence on their line.

A humble Holmes, who also had 11 goals and 10 assists in 20 regular season games, reciprocates Solcz' comment, saying the McPhersons were largely responsible for his success on the ice.

"They're two of the best hockey players I'll ever play with in my life," says Holmes. "We had great chemistry. I think I complemented them well. I just came in and helped them develop their game. I think I helped them hone their defensive game a bit, if anything."

"Owen definitely kicked it up another gear come the playoffs," adds Solcz. "He's an older guy (Holmes turned 21 in April) who has been around. He really wanted to win, and he became a leader in the room. And he spent a ton of time at the rink, taking all the extra skates he could."

The A.N. Myer Secondary School graduate readily takes that compliment, labelling himself both a locker room guy and a playoff guy.

"Once I settled in after Christmas," he says, "I slowly got more comfortable in my role in the room. We only had four

20-year-old players on the team. They kind of wanted me there to help the young guys along in stressful situations, like the playoffs. I have never seen a more calm room than ours heading into game seven."

Holmes admits he remains a little disappointed that he wasn't able to follow his older brother to Flint after that 2018 draft.

"I worked really hard to be on that team," he remembers. "You get two years to earn your spot, and I really focused on that second year. I was 16 when I went into that camp, and really confident. But they couldn't find a spot for me. That's just the way it worked out."

Instead, Holmes played two Junior B seasons with the Niagara Falls Canucks and followed that with one with the Thorold Blackhawks. He made the jump to the provincial junior league's Georgetown Raiders for the 2021-2022 season. Midway through this season, though, the Raiders moved him to Brantford, where he amassed 13 points in 17 games.

Meanwhile, he has taken some courses in kinesiology both from Brock University and the online Athabasca University, with the goal of one day becoming a physiotherapist. He is still eligible to play for National Collegiate Athletic Association teams in the U.S., and with his junior success, would certainly be welcome to play for a Canadian university team, as Hunter is in Windsor.

Owen is back home in Niagara-on-the-Lake this week, ready to get his summer business started up again. He sells and delivers peppers from St. Davids Hydroponics and asparagus from Thwaites Farms to local businesses, making sales calls and filling orders as a middleman. And he'll spend a bit of time on the golf course and working out, getting prepared for wherever his next destination might be.

As he says goodbye to junior hockey, he says he's grateful he got to do it with a championship win for Leamington, in front of his parents Chuck and Maryellen and a handful of friends.

"You go to a Leamington hockey game on a Thursday night and they have almost 2,000 people there," Holmes marvels. "They treat us like superstars. There's so much history with this team. I am so happy I got to end my junior years here."



Owen Holmes gets a hug on the ice from his mother, Maryellen.

Local men's hockey league celebrating 50 years

Mike Balsom
The Local

When the Lincoln Hockey League, which was run out of the Thorold Arena, folded in 1973, 29-year-old Niagara-on-the-Lake residents Ted Wiens and his friend Bud Andres were left without a place to play their favourite sport.

"We didn't have a local league to play in," Ted tells The Local. "There were so many graduates from the town's minor hockey program like us that we thought it would be neat to give them some place to play. There was ice time available (at Virgil's Centennial Arena, the only one in town at the time), so we put our heads together to come up with something."

So Wiens and Andres, along with Ted's 27-year old brother Art, decided to start a league of their own.

Fifty years later, the Niagara Hockey League, affectionately abbreviated as the NHL, complete with its own three-foot-tall version of a championship Stanley Cup, celebrates a big milestone. Current league administrators are planning a big party, a reunion of sorts, at the Niagara-on-the-Lake community centre on June 24.

Back in that first year, Andres took on the role of treasurer for the fledgling organization. They enlisted four interested players to serve as captains, then put out the call for others to register. The new league held a draft to assemble four teams, and the rest is history.

"It's always remained a four-team league," says Wiens. "It's basically the product of Niagara-on-the-Lake minor hockey graduates. There have always been a few players from out of town, but even those usually have had some connection to Niagara-on-the-Lake. It's always been a local league for local players."

The Wiens brothers and Andres continued to play in and run the organization through the years, until they felt it was time to graduate to something specifically for old-timers. True to form, they were the ones behind the start of NOTL's Hot Tub League, for players 50 and older.

They never envisioned the original men's league would still be running 50 years later.

"We had always hoped it would continue," says Ted. "We knew we wouldn't be there forever. We turned it over to a group of interest-



Doug McClure and Jay Haulbrook are planning a June 24 celebration at the NOTL Community Centre. (Photos supplied)

ed people who wanted to keep it going. I know a lot of the guys who are playing in it. It's great to see that it's still running, and it continues to be in good hands."

The 50th anniversary party is being organized by the league's current administrators, including Doug McClure and Jay Haulbrook, the current president.

"It's one of the longest running men's hockey leagues in Canada," says the 53-year-old McClure. "Usually the players are all in their mid-20s to mid-30s, with a few exceptions, like me. I've been playing for 33 years."

"My father (Manfred) 'Muff' played in the league, and I've been playing for at least 12 years now," adds Haulbrook.

"It's great to see generation after generation play in the league," says McClure. "Some fathers even played with their sons. Carl and Ben Glauser played on the same team, and so did Moe and Owen Bjorgan. Those two actually joined the league the same year."

He adds that it's a pretty competitive league, even though it is strictly non-contact.

"There's a lot of what we call rubbing out," laughs McClure, who works for Olde Towne Building Company. "You're not allowed to do that anymore, but it happens. It doesn't get rough, though, because we all have jobs we have to go to in the morning."

Following the original plan, four captains are

chosen at the end of each season and a draft is held to assign the 56 players to one of four teams. The games are held on Tuesday evenings from 8 p.m. until 9:30 p.m. for 26 weeks.

McClure and Haulbrook have been busy getting the word out about the June 24 event. With 50 years of play, they expect a large number of current and former players to attend.

"It's open to anyone who wants to attend," says McClure. "We hope to see a lot of alumni there."

Wiens, a retired elementary school principal, is planning to be at the party.

"I'm looking forward to it," he says. "I hope some people who may have left town make a special effort to come back. The one thing I've found from growing up in a small town is that you develop lifelong friendships. Even if someone moves out of town, those friendships remain. Local events like this draw them back home to touch base with their friends from years back."

Tickets for the celebration, which runs 7 p.m. to midnight, are \$25. There will be food, a disc jockey, door prizes and a raffle table.

Joe Pillitteri will be the party's emcee, and proceeds from the event will be going to the NOTL Wolves Minor Hockey Club and Red Roof Retreat.

Contact Doug McClure at 289-241-6186.



Trevor Falk hoists the Niagara Hockey League championship trophy.

Under-19 Rangers capture provincial bronze medal

Mike Balsom
The Local

Though his Under-19 Rangers girls basketball team came home from Kingston after winning provincial bronze last weekend, coach Shawn Pylypiw laments a late game collapse that kept them from competing for a different coloured medal.

After knocking off the Toronto Lords and the Grimsby Grizzlies, the Rangers fought hard in game three of pool play against the Huntsville Hurricanes for three quarters. But the Hurricanes pulled away in the fourth en route to a 67-36 victory at the Queen's University gymnasium.

"We hung in with them for most of the game," Pylypiw tells The Local about the Saturday afternoon game. "We were only down by five when we entered the fourth quarter, but then the wheels fell off. They were a really well-coached, skilled team, and we kind of imploded at the end."

The Rangers kicked off the Ontario Basketball Association (OBA) Division Four tournament Friday night with a hard fought 55-40 win over the Toronto Lords Friday night. Ava Froese led

the way with 17 points, while Kyla Pylypiw added eight for the winning squad.

"Kyla was fighting through a bad cold," says Pylypiw of his daughter. "Ava was a force on both ends of the court, too. She dominated the glass with her rebounding and shot-blocking the entire game. And her leadership both on the court and from on the bench was a big factor."

Pylypiw also credits the defensive efforts and play-making skills of Mikayla Wallace and Tiana Hicks as crucial to the strong start in their weekend quest to better the team's second-place finish in 2022 as an Under-17 team. Melia Kotsanis also contributed with her vocal presence on the floor.

The strong start continued Saturday morning against Grimsby, a familiar opponent from just a few kilometres away on the QEW. The back and forth game saw many lead changes, but the Rangers came out on top 53-45.

Again, Froese led the way with 16 points, while Amy Venneri stepped up with some defensive hustle, making some key stops and adding 10 points of her own.



The Rangers team photo, with their medals: (back) Shawn Pylypiw (coach), Karlyn Coveney, Kyla Pylypiw, Ava Froese, Morgan Lambert, Amy Venneri, Emilia Ciocca; (front) Sydney Chavez, Jailah Gabbidon, Mikayla Wallace, Tiana Hicks, and Melia Kotsanis. Absent from the photo: Julia Diemer, Mikhaila Marshall.

"Our girls battled through some poor execution and some bad calls that went the other way," says Pylypiw. "But they found their stride when they needed to, and began to pull away in the fourth quarter. It was like they found the next gear. Melia was a force again, she really stepped up her game and shut down Grimsby on defence."

After Saturday afternoon's disappointing game three loss to Huntsville, who finished pool play 3-0 and went on to win OBA gold against Brantford, the Rangers had to regroup for the bronze medal game scheduled for Sunday at noon against Ancaster.

It was another back and forth contest that saw Ancaster take a seven point lead in the fourth quarter. But Wallace drained back-to-back three point shots to keep the Rangers in the mix.

That gave the rest of the team added confidence on the way to capturing the bronze with a thrilling 44-42 win.

"We made some adjustments in the fourth quarter," Pylypiw explains. "We transitioned from a zone to a man defence and that helped a lot. In the last six minutes they all dug deep and worked really hard on both ends. And they ignored the taunting from Ancaster to focus on their own game."

The Rangers went up by four points with just over a minute remaining in the game. Ancaster then shifted to a full court press and closed the gap to two, but the Rangers answered quickly with two points of their own. After another bucket by Ancaster, Niagara regained the ball with 17 seconds remaining.

"I just told them to hold

the ball and play keepaway," Pylypiw says. "They did a great job of that, they didn't look to score, they just killed the clock to close it out for the win."

Froese once again led the way with 14 points and continued her dominance under the boards. Wallace added 13 points and Kotsanis chipped in with six. Pylypiw adds that Kotsanis forced a number of turnovers in the defensive zone and was instrumental in moving the ball up the court in the transition to offence, and Venneri added some strong play on defence.

"I'm so proud of the way these girls played," Pylypiw says. "It was such a good feeling to win bronze, actually a better feeling than last year, because you have to win to get bronze, whereas to get the silver, you have to lose your last game. It may be a lesser

medal, but it feels better to be victorious in that game."

That feeling is especially important for at least three of the Rangers who played their final game with the club Sunday. Wallace, Venneri and Emilia Ciocca have all aged out of the Rangers system and will be ineligible to play next year. Point guard Wallace has earned a spot on the Niagara College Knights women's basketball team for 2023-2024.

"I have a close connection with Mikayla," Pylypiw says. "I've been coaching her for a while now. It's hard to see her go but I'm happy she'll be playing at the next level. I look forward to going to watch her play whenever I can."

Pylypiw is counting on a strong core of players to be back next year for another run at OBA gold at the U19 age group. Key Rangers such as Kyla and Froese will return, while Morgan Lambert, Karlyn Coveney and Mikhaila Marshall will earn more floor time. And he's counting on Hicks, Kotsanis and Jailah Gabbidon to fill in for the loss of Wallace at the all-important point guard position.

"We were lucky to have four higher-end point guards that we could turn to," he says. "They were very interchangeable, we could give Mikayla a rest any time and not give up ground. That was a definite asset to our team."

All the same, Pylypiw admits there will be some holes to fill, and is hoping to pick up a few players before things get going next December. And he is also hoping the team can move out of Port Weller Public School and back into the Crossroads School gym for their practices next year.



The Rangers knock off the Grimsby Grizzlies on their way to earning a bronze medal. (Photos supplied)



Tiana Hicks drives past an Ancaster player for a layup while Melia Kotsanis looks on.



Ranger Amy Venneri takes a shot while Tiana Hicks gets ready for a rebound.



Mikayla Wallace drives in for a layup.

LocalSPORTS

‘Owooooo! Wolves live here!’ — and NOTL couldn’t be more proud

Carrie Gleason
The Local

It was a different vibe in council chambers at Tuesday’s committee of the whole meeting as the Niagara-on-the-Lake Wolves Under-11 rep team players gave their

trademark wolf howl followed by a rousing team cheer.

The young hockey players, sporting green jerseys and OMHA championship medals draped round their necks, were honoured with standing applause from town councillors in a room filled with proud parents and grandparents, and presented certificates to mark their silver-medal win at the provincial championships in April.

Their success came hot on the heels of another win just weeks before at

the Niagara District Hockey League championships, where they defeated the Thorold Blackhawks in a triple overtime shoot-out to take first place.

“We’re thrilled to have them with us,” said Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, congratulating the players, coaches and the volunteers who made the season a success.

The team also won the championship in their division at the Harvest Classic Tournament here in town, with Zalepa showing off the trophies for big wins.

He praised the team for their incredible season, saying “Niagara-on-the-Lake is really proud to have Ontario finalists, U11 team here in town . . . Thank you so much, keep up the hard work, and we’re looking forward to next year.”



The Under-11 rep team Wolves file into the council chamber, being recognized for their silver medal at the OMHA championships. (Photos by Mike Balsom)



Niagara-on-the-Lake residents, parents and grandparents, applaud the Wolves as they enter the council chamber.



Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa and councillors pose for pictures with the young hockey players.



Trophies from two wins and the silver medal finish in the OMHA championships are displayed at council.

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Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa remembers his days playing for NOTL Minor Hockey, and hands out certificates to this year's Under-11 rep team members.

Local

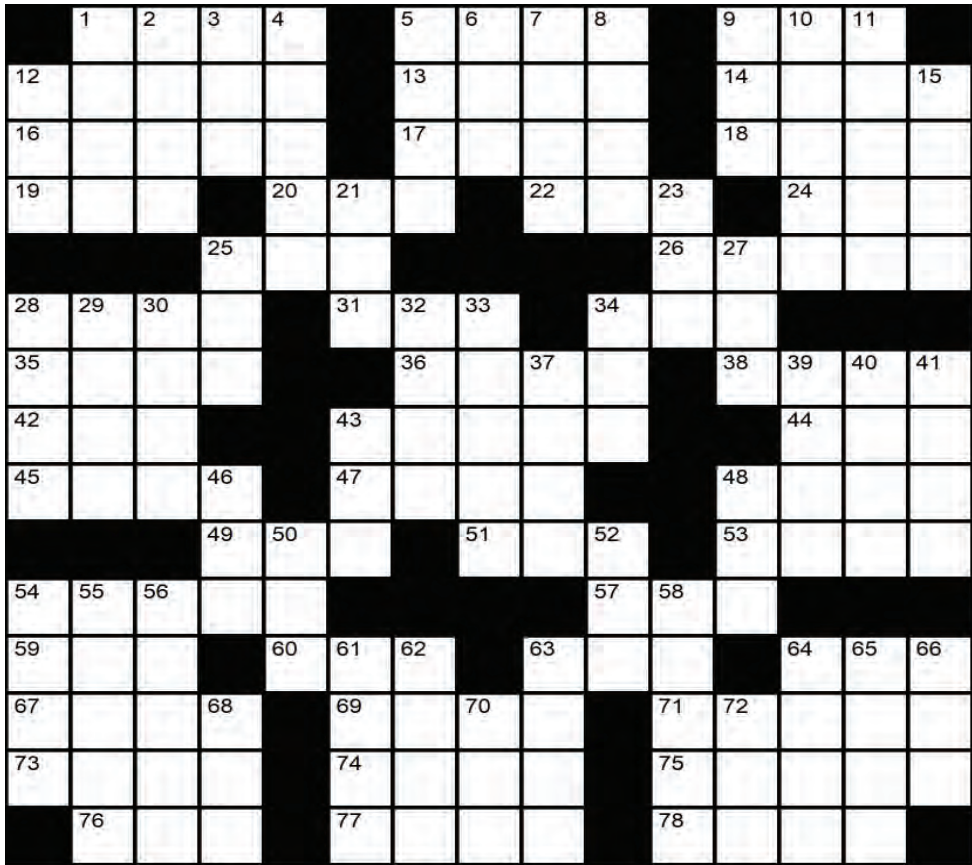
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- Across:
- 1 Not strapped

5 Mining passage

9 Welding flash

12 Disgraced comic

13 U2 lead vocalist

14 Major health scare of 2002-03

16 Chip dip

17 1 for H, or 2 for He

18 "Yo!"

19 Anger

20 Teeny amount

22 Hearst kidnap org.

24 Observe

25 Dough dispenser

26 Fingerboard bars

28 Hobbie

31 Not-for-profit TV spot

34 Angel dust

35 In which two dozen merles were found

36 Run at low speed

38 Kernel

42 CD- ---

43 Type of bottle with one surface

44 Owing

45 Afloat on the ocean

47 Touchdown forecasts

48 Big brute

49 Whey-faced

51 Type of joint

53 TV host --- Seacrest

54 49-er

57 "--- Love You" (Beatles hit)

59 100 square meters
- 60 Sir ---, Arthurian knight

63 Now let me think ...

64 Small snub-nosed dog

67 Smurf in red

69 Kvetch

71 --- ear and out ...

73 Visit

74 Doctor imprisoned on the Dry Tortugas

75 Stay still, at sea

76 Catastrophic occurrence

77 Approximately

78 Patron saint of sailors
- Down:
- 1 Laugh loudly

2 The Apple --- (Tasmanian nickname)

3 Parent company of Simon & Schuster

4 Big hotel name

5 --- hair day

6 --- Lemon, female barnstormer and navigator

7 Getaway places

8 Utensil

9 Bat wood

10 Hike

11 Undercroft

12 Forensic TV franchise

15 "Simon --- "

21 Signal booster

23 Home of one Super Bowl team, briefly

25 Emulate

27 Turntable speed measure
- 28 Yuri Zhivago's love

29 NASDAQ debuts

30 Silent actor

32 It's not quite as fine as clay

33 "A weasel hath not such --- of spleen ..." (Shakespeare, "Henry IV" Pt. I)

34 Author

37 Brightest Simpson

39 Nervously irritable

40 Ambience

41 Typical Hunger Games devotee

43 Range of knowledge

46 Wonderment

48 "Either you do it --- will!"

50 Presumably unicorns missed it

52 Air-pollution measure

54 Hikers' helpers

55 In a snit

56 Land between China and India

58 "... ---, though your heart is aching ..."

61 Magazine contents

62 It's --- move

63 Reverse

64 "The United States themselves are essentially the greatest ---" (Walt Whitman)

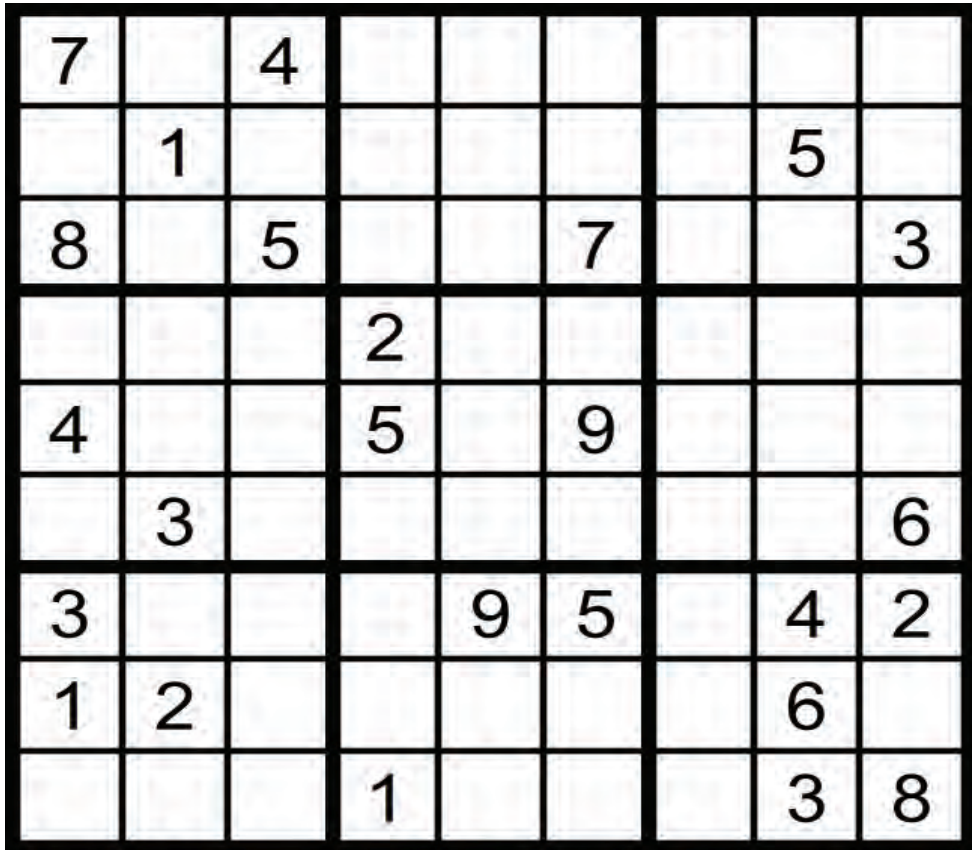
65 "... and --- dust shalt thou return." (Genesis)

66 Bygone GM brand

68 Bridge agreement

70 Lifeblood of TV and the web

72 "--- sine numine" (Colorado's motto)



OBITUARY



WIKSTON, BRIAN GEORGE — It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Brian George Wikston, in his 76th year, surrounded by his loving family on Wednesday May 10, 2023. Brian is survived by his beloved wife of 55 years, Linda Wikston, son Bradley (Melanie) Wikston, and daughter Stephanie (Trevor) Falk. Proud grandfather of Abbileigh, Shaeleigh, Liam, Brandon, Nicole and Rachel. Brian will also be dearly missed by his many relatives and friends.

After retiring, Brian loved spending many nights playing euchre with his family, attending his grandchildren's sporting events, travelling, and soaking up the sun.

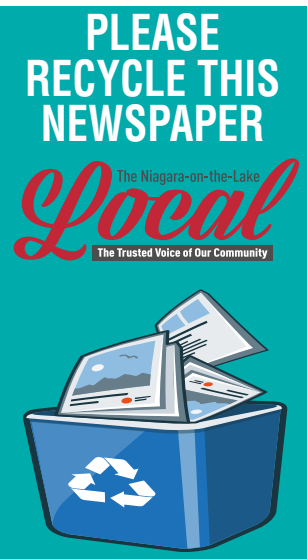
Please join us as we celebrate Brian's life at 1:00 pm on Saturday May 27, 2023 at 1039 Lakeshore Rd., Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. In lieu of flowers, a donation to the Canadian Liver Foundation at www.liver.ca would be greatly appreciated by the family.

Online Guest Book: www.georgedartefuneralhome.com



ERMANSO, GEORGE — Passed away peacefully at home with his loving family by his side on Tuesday May 9, 2023, at the age of 74. Beloved husband of Florence for 49 years. Loving father of Craig Ermanson (Leslie Panucci) and Lisa (Eric) Cook. Caring grandfather of Parker Cook. Dear brother of Dee Adams, Ivar (Laura) Ermanson and John (Louise) Ermanson. He will be fondly remembered by many nieces, nephews and friends. George worked for Niagara Fruit and Vegetable for over 50 years. In his spare time, he enjoyed gardening,

spending time up north with family and spending time with his grandson Parker. George loved to be social with his neighbors and friends. He also was a long-time Legion Member in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Cremation has taken place. Arrangements entrusted to MORGAN FUNERAL HOME, 415 Regent Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake. George's family invites friends and family to join them for a celebration of his life at Legion Branch 124, 410 King Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake, on Sunday June 4, 2023 from 2 to 5pm. In lieu of flowers, those who wish to make a memorial donation to the Royal Canadian Legion Poppy Fund. Memories, photos, and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com



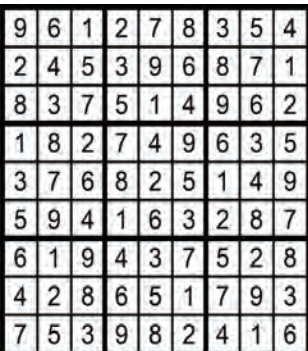
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PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from
May 10, 2023



Across: 1 Rich, 5 Adit, 9 Arc, 12 Cosby, 13 Bono, 14 S A R S, 16 Salsa, 17 At No, 18 Hiya, 19 Ie, 20 Tad, 22 S L A, 24 Spy, 25 A T M, 26 Frets, 28 Limp, 31 P S A, 34 PCP, 35 A pie, 36 Idle, 38 Meat, 42 R-O M, 43 Klein, 44 Due, 45 Asea, 47 E T As, 48 Ogre, 49 Wan, 51 Lap, 53 Ryan, 54 Miner, 57 PS I, 59 Are, 60 Kay, 63 Umm, 64 Pug, 67 Papa, 69 Moan, 71 In one, 73 Stay, 74 Mudd, 75 Lie to, 76 E L E, 77 Or so, 78 Elmo.

Down: 1 Roar, 2 Isle, 3 C B S, 4 Hyatt, 5 A bad, 6 Dot, 7 Inns, 8 Tool, 9 Ash, 10 Raise, 11 Cnpt, 12 C S I, 15 Says, 21 Amp, 23 A F C, 25 Ape, 27 R P m, 28 Lara, 29 I P Os, 30 Mime, 32 Silt, 33 A deal, 34 Pen, 37 Lisa, 39 Edgy, 40 Aura, 41 Teen, 43 Ken, 46 Awe, 48 Or I, 50 Ark, 52 P P m, 54 Maps, 55 Irate, 56 Nepal, 58 Smile, 61 Ammo, 62 Your, 63 Undo, 64 Poem, 65 Unto, 66 Geo, 68 Aye, 70 Ads, 72 Nil.

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