Volunteers hope to tell story of historic railway repair pit

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

A group of volunteers is hoping to receive approval from the town to acknowledge and commemorate Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum’s railroad history in the Dock Area.

Beginning in 1864 with the arrival of the first steam engine, the dock area of Niagara-on-the-Lake became an important factor in moving people and goods between Toronto and Buffalo. Coal was often unloaded in NOTL while peaches and other tender fruit were loaded at the docks to be taken to steamers for the trip across the lake. Trains were also used during the two World Wars to transport troops.

At the May 10 committee of the whole meeting, River Beach Drive resident Ron Simkus made a presentation to councillors focusing on the site of the old engine house, which, until it was torn down in 1926, sat about 200 feet south of the railroad turntable. As the steam-engine trains would arrive, they would be unloaded, then the engine would enter the turntable, where railway workers would use levers to turn the track around. The engine would either get set for a return journey, or head to the nearby engine house for repairs.

Today, at the site of the turntable, located fittingly on Turntable Way, locals and tourists alike can stroll the beautiful garden, plotted around the original circular stone layout and maintained by local residents Pat Hartman and Jim Reynolds.

Just a short stroll south, those same visitors might also come upon another series of stones. These are laid out in a rectangular shape, arranged eight feet wide by 34 feet long. According to Simkus, this is the base of the old engine house.

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Locals can help create future museum exhibits

Museum staff looking for stories, videos, photos of pandemic

Penney Coles
The Local

As we live through this pandemic, we’re making history.

And one day, curators of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum will want to be able to tell our stories of what our lives looked like during this period of our history.

To do that, current staff are asking for our help.

They want journals, photos, audio or video recordings — anything that can be used to help tell the story of life during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, says assistant curator Shawna Butts.

Living through history at this particular time might not seem so great, and we might think we don’t want to remember it, we just want life to return to normal, says Butts.

But we all have important stories to tell. To be ready for the day when visitors will want to know what this was like, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum has already started collecting, both physical and digital items. Staff, when they’ve been out and about, have been taking their own photos as reminders of how things changed, but they have a long way to go to be able to stage exhibits.

“We want the everyday stories,” says Butts. “And we want to make sure people save their mementos, their videos, or share an oral history over Zoom to keep for the future. We hear people say, ‘you don’t want my story?’ We do. We want to know what people are doing. If they’re making masks, we want a collection of unusual masks. If they’re making sourdough, we want the recipes. We want to know the personal stories of how people are coping. If grandparents are staying at home and can’t see their grandchildren, what are they doing instead? We want to be able to tell as much of an inclusive story as possible.”

We know the pandemic is affecting children of all ages, high school and university students whose lives are very different, says Butts.

“We want to know how different it is to be young at this time.”

We also know the pandemic is taking a mental, and physical and emotional toll on people, she says, “and we want to know how they’re getting through this, day by day.”

No story is insignificant, and no two stories will be the same, says Butts, who is hoping people will be inspired to take some time

Continued on page 5
Vaccination eligibility will outpace vaccine supply
Pharmacies, family physicians to start receiving more doses

Penny Coles
The Local

The good news is the province opened vaccina-
tions to those 18 and over on Tuesday, to include the young-er ages where infec-
tion spread is most com-
mon.

Vaccinations for the 12 to 17-year-olds won’t be far be-
hind, with vaccination ap-
pointments to open to that age group at the end of the month, and dedicated clinics expected in June.

The not-so-good news is that while this makes first doses available to consider-
ably more people, the region will not be able to accom-
odate them all, restrained by the lack of vaccine.

“Be patient,” is the mes-
sage from Dr. Mustafa Hirji, the acting medical of-
icer of health for Niagara.

The province is receiving more vac-
cine, and is not re-
serving large amounts for hot spots, so more will come this way, says Hirji, but not enough.

Appointments are ba-
ically already booked for pri-
ority groups until the end of the month, although there will be some availab-
ility for those in the younger age groups, he says, but not nearly enough “in the near future.”

“The province is rapidly opening up access to vac-
cines. Starting Tuesday (May 18), all adults will be able to book appointments.”

The 50 per cent of vac-
cines that has in past weeks been redirected to hot spots will instead be distributed to public health units across the province, and primary care doctors and pharmacies will also be receiving doses of Pfizer and Moderna “in the near future,” Hirji says. “We will see an upward trend of vaccinations.”

Dr. Penny Coles
The Local

Although the trends are not as much of a worry, but “that’s worrying,”

Hirji predicts a lock-
down extension of another two weeks after June 2 will be necessary, if we want to open safely and stay open for the rest of the year.

Premier Doug Ford, he says, “is hedging his bets” about a further extension.

Pharmacist Sean Simp-
son said Tuesday he has re-
eived 100 doses of Moderna at the Simpson’s Apothecary on King Street, and is ex-
pecting 150 doses of Pfizer at the Niagara Stone Road pharmacy this week. He will be working his way through his waiting list this week, offering appoint-
ments, he says.

But age groups opening up adds 160,000 more peo-
ple to the list of those eligible in the next couple of weeks, competing for about 20,000 doses of vaccine, he says.

“The vaccine supplies are not coming at the same pace as eligibility is opening up. I think we need to be pre-
pared that that might be the eventuality.”

More clinics and more appointments will open up, he says, suggesting those eli-
ible should keep checking the provincial booking web-
site for availability, but it may not be the end of June before all those eligible for their first dose will be able to get it.

While those who are front-line health care work-
ners or who work in long-term care or retirement homes may be next for second dos-
es, Hirji warns for most of the population, depending on their risk, sooner may not be better than later.

Waiting the extra time, three to four months for a second dose, may mean bet-
ter protection in the long-
term. There’s a “trade-off” of less protection now, more in the future, Hirji explains.

“For most of us who don’t have acute risk, with a second dose at three to four months, the protection will be better.”

Niagara-on-the-Lake held two successful vaccination clinics at the community cen-
tre last weekend, but there are no more clinics scheduled in town at this point.

For information about who can book and when, and a list of clinic locations through to June 5, visit https://niagara.region.ca/health/covid-19/vaccina-
tion/appointment-booking.

To book a vaccination appointment visit ontar-
io.ca/bookvaccine or call 1-888-943-3980.

Top Niagara health official calling for more time
June 2 reopening is two weeks too soon

Penny Coles
The Local

As daily cases of COVID-19 continue to drop, across the province and in Niagara, safe reopening is getting closer. But maybe not as close as the province is suggesting.

While the provincial stay-
at-home order has been ex-
tended to June 2, Dr. Mustafa Hirji, acting medical officer of health for Niagara, isn’t con-
vinced that’s long enough. He hasn’t changed his message about another two weeks af-
ter that being needed for a sustainable reopening.

Although the trends are going in the right direction, hospitals are still seeing in-
tensive care units full with more COVID cases than the second wave, and much high-
er than last summer. Patients are still being transferred out of GTA hospitals to those fur-
ther afield, he says.

Hirji is predicting a lock-
down extension of another two weeks after June 2 will be necessary, if we want to open safely and stay open for the rest of the year.

Premier Doug Ford, he says, “is hedging his bets” about a further extension.

There is already evidence that people are not staying home as much as they were when the lockdown began. Hirji says, and although cases are coming down, they may not be decreasing as quickly as they could. People are tak-
ing public transit, shopping and gathering in groups, and “this worrying.”

Being outdoors in itself is not as much of a worry, but the number of people “out and about” starting to creeping concern.

The more aggressively we adhere to the lockdown, the more aggressively we’ll be able to reopen, he says.

Meanwhile, the num-
ber of people vaccinated in Niagara is climbing, with almost 45 per cent of adults having received their first dose. Numbers range from 17 per cent for the 18 to 29 age group, and increasing steadily up through the age categories to 98 per cent of those over 80.

Almost 230,000 doses have been administered to date to Niagara residents.

Hirji says he is still hop-
ing to have 75 per cent of people vaccinated in time to allow for a safe summer re-
opening.

Last Update: 2021-05-17 12:00 PM

NIAGARA’S LUXURY LEADER

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45 ROSE GLEN CR., NOTL 5765,000

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NIAGARA’S LUXURY LEADER
the footprint of an engine re- pair building in order to access the bottom of the train from below.

“It was really quite a signifi- cant site,” said Simkus. “In its
day, it was 75 feet long and 40 feet wide, a gigantic structure that housed two bays for loco- motives, one for repair, and one for starting up.”

Working with local author Peter Nields, Off to Brus- sieve Grave: A Railway History of Niagara-on-the-Lake), Sim- kus discovered that the stover themselves are actually the tops of a solid foundational wall, with notches cut out to hold railway ties.

“The repair pit itself in the centre was six feet deep,” he ex- plained. “It probably had steps going down to it. When a loco- motive straddled this structure they could work underneath to perform repairs. It was aban- doned in 1926, and the rails were removed. The facility was basically filled with trash and covered over.”

The vision of Simkus and the other volunteers is to use the remaining, mostly-buried structures to restore the rails on the repair pit using its original configuration. They don’t plan to dig the original pit out, but instead use the 24 recesses cast into the pit walls to hold stan- dard railroad ties cut in 24-inch lengths. Then, each rail would be topped with a tie plate on which the rail would rest. Final- ly, the ties would be spiked into the pit walls to hold them in place.

“When I talked to some of the people from the Her- itage Trail committee, and some of the railway enthusi- asts in town,” explained Sim- kus, “there’s no section of rail that anyone can point to in the town. This particular structure was purpose-built exactly for that, to house two rails in parallel, for a length of 34 feet.”

Simkus went on to explain a five-step process that would be followed to restore the site. It would include careful remov- al of the soil blocks to replace them with a pre-cut railroad tie set into the recess it was intend- ed for. All the moss and soil cuttings would be stored for archaeological review if neces- sary, he says.

Interestingly enough, the recent demolition of a house at 93 River Beach Drive, the Goring Ball home, turned up six railroad ties from the period when the railroad was operational. These have been set aside in hopes of using them for the restoration. As well, Simkus has reached out to PGM Rail Services in Niagara Falls. They specialize in restoring old rail stations, including the Freeman Station on Fairview Street in Burling- ton. The rails, plates and spikes needed for the engine house restoration would be acquired from PGM. The company’s owner, Peter Murdza, grows up town, and he is willing to supply the labour for the installation.

“The rails would be set on the original spot, where they were removed. The facility was basically filled with trash and covered over.”

Simkus stressed during the online meeting that all of this work would be completed at no financial cost to the town. As PGM would be doing the installation, he also claimed that the project would not put any bur- dens on staff time. In addition, Simkus says the whole project could be completed in as little as a single day.

Speaking with Simkus on site Saturday, his enthusiasm for the Dock Area is palpable. He guides his visitor through the two sites, explaining their signif- icance and outlining clearly the plans he and the others are propor- tioning. He drops in some histo- ry along the way (those ties were salvaged from the site of the old fish house at 93 River Beach Drive) and points out that the rocks lining the nearby parking lot were actually removed from the turntable site in 1985 and are slated to one day be returned to their home.

Living right next to the turntable, he’s eager to see the plans for the Dock Area to start coming to fruition.

“In 2013, Simkus tells The Local, “after 10 years of consul- tation with the public, the town agreed on a Dock Area master plan, which included five his- torical sites. They were each supposed to be commemorat- ed by a plaque.”

He acknowledges that of the five that were planned in 2017 and 2019 was most likely respon- sible for pushing back some of those plans. Town resources set aside for the Dock Area were necessarily put into play for sandbags and pumping equip- ment to mitigate the flooding.

But he and the other vol- unteers are ready to get things moving, and they’re willing to foot the bill themselves.

Simkus has commissioned designs for two bronze plaques, one for the turntable and the engine house. He is cur- rently gathering estimates from some foundries for the plaques, and says he has committed to paying for them.

“Because the two of them (turntable and engine house) were so intertwined,” he says, “we decided it was best for us to develop a plaque in recognition of the engine house itself. Both of these have been reviewed with the heritage planner.”

The Dock Area master plan also calls for signs at the restored culvert at Balls Beach, along the waterfront to com- memorate the Teenie H fishing boat, and another on Delater Street at the site of an old house watering trough.

For years Simkus has been well-known to the town for his frequent updates on the water levels at Balls Beach. A retired mining engineer and executive, Simkus has been involved in the restoration of mines all over the world, including in South America, where they were dig- ging near ancient Mayan ruins.

Most recently he was involved in an excavation in Romania that was situated near old Ro- man ruins.

Since moving here in 2010, he has had a unique perspec- tive on the Dock Area, his house situated in a way that he and his wife have taken on the role of sentinels. He keeps an eye on the beach area, and offers his engineering expertise to the town whenever he has a chance. He also sends out regu- lar emails with water level up- dates to more than 100 people.

As for the engine house project, he hasn’t nailed down a timeline yet, with so many factors coming into play, includ- ing when PGM Rail Services might be available to do the in- stallation. But he sees the resto- ration and the installation of the plaques as a timely endeavour.

“After all this COVID nightmare of 2020,” he says, “and now going into 2021, ev- erybody in this community wants something really posi- tive to happen. And this is something that everybody can get involved in and be proud of. That’s why we’re doing it.”

The presentation by Sim- kus was accepted positively by the committee of the whole, and the following day his pro- posal was passed on to the town’s Heritage Committee. He expects to speak to the Heritage Committee on June 8.

Ron Simkus, Dock Area resident, has researched and hopes to bring to light a little-known part of NOTL’s history, a railway repair pit in the Dock Area. (Mike Balsom)
Museum hopes to collect artifacts for the future

Continued from page 1

during this stay-at-home order to put something together for the museum, "now, while it's fresh, while it's still happening. We won't be able to build a collection 100 years from now. For history, and the curators of the future, there are so many wonderful stories out there."

If your business has a sign that becomes irrelevant, don't throw it out, give it to the museum. If you're anti-lockdown and you have a lawn sign, when you're ready to take it down, give it to the museum — it's part of the story. If you attended a protest, either about the lockdown, or perhaps the Black Lives Matter protest that occurred during the pandemic, donate your signs or photos. Butts asks. Community art, posters, photos of fenced-off picnic tables or playgrounds, Zoom meeting screenshots, are all part of the story. "Please don't throw anything away," says Butts.

If you have questions about the museum's collecting, email contact@nhsm.ca or call 905-468-3912.

The Voices of Freedom Park (below) was the site of a large Black Matters Protest, at a time during the pandemic when gatherings were not allowed. Any signs or photos of the protest would be welcomed by the museum.

Museum staff took this photo of the interior of Balzac’s on King Street, as a memento of what it looked like in the pandemic. (Photos supplied)
Good times await, but not for all of us

Small businesses need more government support

Wayne Gates, MP
Niagara Falls riding Special to The Local

It’s no secret that over the last 15 months there isn’t a business in this province that hasn’t been impacted in one way or another by this virus. One of these sectors is tourism, one of the greatest job generators in our community. I’m proud to say that we are learning about inequality in schools reflecting inequality in society, which translates to those students who are the hardest hit by the pandemic are the students who were struggling to begin with, as in many living situations not only by choice, seniors in long-term care, and so many others. The list is endless. While the privileged live out our stay-at-home order and pandemic restrictions in relative ease and comfort, at every step of the way, as the impact of societal inequalities is magnified during the pandemic, we realize we don’t have the resources to properly address these issues, nor, apparently, is there a political will to do what needs to be done.

Yet we look at what is happening in other countries and feel fortunate, our hearts breaking for those so forgeting there are those in need right here at home. We focus on the good news, the millions of doses of vaccine coming our way, that magical solution to all that ails us. It brings with them the promise of a summer with barbecues, sitting around the patio with family members, as long as we stay outside; and a fall that offers getting together, at least in small groups, inside. Awesome news!

Our prime minister is working directly with the EU and the UK to ensure that a spring and two-dose fall, both of which will be safer and more normal than anything we’ve experienced in the last year or so.

But at the same time, let’s hope we don’t entirely forget about all we’ve learned, and maybe spare some time for working toward solutions for those who were left behind. With a vaccinated future doesn’t offer quite so much promise.

No more heads in the sand. Canada is a great place to live, for most of us, but is still rife with inequality. We will look like in September, beginning about what schools to in-class learning and talks of kids going back online learning made it so much harder for them.

Small businesses need more government support

I encourage once Ontario is safe and the pandemic is over to help support the local community through staycations, and engage with these tourist operators.

I welcome and remain positive about this new grant. However, there are still concerns, and I hope the government is willing to work with us so this grant rolls out smoothly and helps small businesses in the tourism sector that desperately need it. Niagara citizens can also play their role in helping these businesses, and I encourage once Ontario is safe and the pandemic is over to help support the local community through staycations, and engage with these tourist operators.

Niagara is world-renowned for our tourism, and we are the fortunate. Please support your community, reduce travel time, and enjoy the wonders of our great region offers.
Weekly column creates space for important environmental discussions

Owen Bjorgan Special to The Local

Wow, I never thought such a milestone would come at any point in my life!

You are currently reading the 106th nature article which typically gets published weekly for The NOTL Local.

The first thought that comes to mind at my desk this morning is how grateful I am for a paper with features that preserve a consistent environmental column. That’s rare, and I don’t believe any other paper in the whole of Niagara Region offers such a feature. The significance lies in the fact that we create space for conversations about anything, about everything, for something as important as our attitude toward nature.

This column will explore what this topic means to me personally and how much importance I give it to put food on our plates. Some obvious conclusions can be drawn.

For example, if I take the time to explore the woods with my own toes by writing about something to eat, I believe I will come to understand that biodiversity is an essential property of our natural world.

The pandemic era has shown us all how much we depend on nature, and how our relationship with our natural environment can affect our mental and physical well-being.

I will use this column to discuss the importance of conservation and how it benefits us all.

In one aisle, you have local wildlife and hidden natural features to educate about. A straight up Bill Nye kind of lesson about salamanders or nationally rare trees. In the next aisle, there could be some interesting environmental news that I believe requires further comment or investigation, such as when the provincial government snuck in seriously concerning conservation changes under the guise of a COVID recovery bill.

Another aisle over, I can shop for ideas that have come from my own personal experiences and adventures, whether they took place here in Niagara as a weekend warrior, or perhaps reflecting on trekking through the Amazon, and how a place that far away actually has similarities to here in Niagara. Sometimes, there is an aisle I visit where I can pull something more philosophical off the shelves, such as an article that challenges you to think about nature as a whole.

Other times, I have no clue what I’m going to write about, will just sit at the desk, up whatever I’m sipping, and start writing. Providing it’s about nature and can have some relevance to our town, the writing seems to come like the rush of the Niagara River itself.

The pandemic era has given me, and all of us, lots to chew on. Many of my articles were a reflection of modern events that pertained to, again, our relationship with nature. Arguably, that conversation has been pushed to the forefront more than at any other time in our lives. Every trail system in Niagara is now packed in seasons and types of weather that would normally keep most people home. The accessibility and regulation of nature is changing.

The phenomenon of Niagara and the Greater Toronto Area discovering their own green backyard has been fascinating, beautiful, and painful to watch all at once.

That’s how I get my ideas. I like to imagine myself pulling back from the earth, as an omnipotent outsider, or a different species entirely, who simply watches, observes, and reports.

I try my best to make you, the reader, think about nature in new and exploratory ways. I try to challenge decision-makers and politicians, who I know and respect, to do their right thing when it comes to protecting our fragile biodiversity.

I don’t enjoy being a thorn in the side, but sometimes, I politely have to. I also hope to have parents reading this who will say, “You know what? We should take the kids outside more often.”

Speaking strictly for myself, my greatest challenge, which I love, is to inspire both sides of the coin, and to find new avenues to get to a greater variety of people.

The comments from the public are inspiring me. I write for you, the reader, in a town I care about very much. You inspire my work when I get feedback by mail, email, or even on the streets or in the local grocery store.

Thank you for your readership, and to all in this town who also want to see our natural world in a healthy light. Here’s to 100 more articles!

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Thank you for your readership, and to all in this town who also want to see our natural world in a healthy light. Here’s to 100 more articles!

Thank you, Owen, from The Local, for sharing your knowledge and your thoughts, and for opening our eyes, and hopefully those of future generations, to the beauty around us and the importance of looking after it.
Town close to asking for interest in hospital property

Penny Coles
The Local

It’s been about five years since the town purchased the former hospital property for $3.6 million, and it continues to get closer to deciding what to do with it. A steering committee, including three members of council, is now at the point where a request for expressions of interest is almost ready to go out to the public, looking for ideas and proposals for the future of the property, says Coun. Allan Bisback, a member of the steering committee.

Coun. Gary Burroughs is chair of the committee, and Lord Mayor Betty Disero is also a member. Town staff have finalized the hiring of a fairness monitor, said Bisback, a move approved by council in March. The committee agreed the scale and sensitivity of the project called for a fairness monitor to oversee the process, said Bisback.

He is already getting calls and comments from people asking about the property, some anxious to share their ideas, and he is telling them he’s not able to talk about the project. Although it’s early in the process, he’s not taking any chances of any perception of impropriety.

“We agreed to go out to the market, with the request for expressions of interest, and to ensure the process is handled in a proper manner,” said Bisback.

The document requesting expressions of interest is likely to be finalized by the end of this month or early June, and after that, will hit the market, he said.

Bisback says the committee recently received a letter from the Friends of Fort George, which has also been made public, asking that the heritage significance of the former hospital site, which borders Parks Canada property, be respected.

When discussing the request for expressions of interest, the committee decided to make it as open-ended and accepting as possible, without placing any limitations on proposals, in an effort to receive a broad range of responses.

“We don’t want to limit people from submitting interesting and creative ideas,” he says. “We want to keep it open.”

Speaking for himself, he says, he has no preconceived ideas, nor has he heard anything from the public to indicate there are already discussions about the future of the property.

The purpose of the fairness monitor is to ensure that doesn’t happen, he says.

At the same time, council, which will ultimately make a decision about the property, is committed to the significance of heritage, and the Friends of Fort George have a valid concern.

“I appreciate their letter, but I’m not aware of anybody or any conversations that indicate any plans for the property,” he says. He says when he receives calls from various people about the property he says he can’t talk about it — it has to be a fair process, and once the request hits the streets, “nobody can have conversation or interaction with anybody.”

But the process has a long way to go, with opportunities for the public to weigh in at some point, especially if what is recommended requires a change of zoning from its current institutional use.

Given the pandemic and the downturn in the economy, he adds, “we may not get any interest.”

Assuming they do, they will need to create a process for evaluating the proposals, but that is a long way off.

“I don’t think anybody should be concerned yet. It’s very preliminary.”

Amanda Gamble, executive director of the Friends of Fort George, said the letter was intended as a reminder of the history of the sensitive property, bordering Parks Canada land. The Friends of Fort George are concerned about preserving the planes and sight lines from the fort, she says, and felt it was important to make the letter public as a way to remind those who might have an interesting proposal for the significant heritage property.

“I don’t think people know the important history of the property, or its heritage value,” she said. “We just want to be sure the community is aware of its significance.”

Whatever is developed on that property, she adds, “we want to be sure it fits with its heritage, and with its location at the entrance to town, with Fort George beside it and the Shaw Festival Theatre across the street.”
The Newark Neighbours Porch Pickup Food Drive, thanks to terrific support from NOTL Rotary partners, and the 19 Rotary volunteers picking up donations from 135 addresses throughout NOTL, including rural areas. There were about 20 drop-offs of donations Saturday and Sunday, with a very large supply of all the items on Newark’s wish list. “We are confident that we will have sufficient supply to last us through the summer and into the fall,” says food bank manager Cindy Grant.

Newark Neighbours volunteers Donna Bruce (back, left), Maria Townley and Cindy Grant sort food as it’s dropped off by NOTL Rotary Club members. (David Gilchrist)
It was a busy weekend on Queen Street, with lots of people walking, more cars and motorcycle groups, and as always, folks looking for ice cream and gelato. Town CAO Mamie Cluckie reported a significant increase in vehicles coming into town over the past two weekends. Vehicles and mobile devices show an increase of people from the GTA, with a decrease from Hamilton and the Niagara Region. Queen’s Royal Park was also busy with people enjoying the good weather. Bylaw officers were kept busy with parking tickets, and also issued 10 provincial fines related to social gatherings. (Photos by David Gilchrist)
Keeping focused on mental health issues

Youth need to be addressed at federal level of government

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

The pandemic has shone a light on the subject of mental health and one Niagara-on-the-Lake resident wonders if the issue is not forgotten whenever the next federal election is called.

Max Roberts Ramos, a third-year political science student at Brock University, recently wrapped up a stint working with Future Majority, a non-partisan, non-profit organization that advocates for youth issues at the national level.

Politically focused since his high school days at Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School, Roberts Ramos was invited by Future Majority to apply to their team following an application and interview process. He was tasked with the role of volunteer captain and co-director for the organization’s efforts in the Niagara Centre riding.

“Before the first year they had expanded into the riding,” says Roberts Ramos, “so they really had no footprint here at all. We (he and another co-director) were in charge of building a team, and we got seven volunteers working specifically in the riding now. Then we started reaching out to local businesses and other partners in the riding through our Instagram account.”

The Niagara Centre riding encompasses Port Colborne, Welland, Thorold, and southwestern N. Catharines. It’s a riding that Future Majority has identified as potentially holding the balance of power and will be pushing a specific plan to improve mental health care in Canada. "Come election time, young voters will be looking for a specific plan to improve mental health care accessibility, and will be pushing for each party to commit to a royal commission or study to understand the root causes of mental health issues, especially in marginalized communities. Besides mental health, Future Majority is also pushing for changes to university and college tuition to make post-second- ary education more affordable. The environment, specifically climate change, is front and centre, as is racial and social justice.

For the next federal election, Niagara Centre is one of 25 priority ridings identified by Future Majority. The organization’s website points out that with Millennials and Gen Zs now counting for 40 per cent of eligible voters, young Canadians can potentially hold the balance of power.

In line with Future Majority’s focus, a big key is to get young Canadians to hit the polls. Roberts Ramos recognizes that at election time that can be an issue. “I think there are some barriers when it comes to voting,” he admits. “A lot of students are away from home, living in different ridings. Young people in general move addresses a lot, too. That can lead to lower voting rates.”

In the 2019 federal election, Future Majority successfully motivated 26,000 students to vote across 15 competitive ridings. They claim that they were able to mobilize more students to the polls than the vote margin of the two leading parties running in four of those ridings. As well, they worked hard to get their message out through the press on their key tenets.

Though Roberts Ramos worked on Andrea Kaiser’s 2019 campaign in Niagara Falls, he is adamant that in his role this month with Future Majority there was no political bias.

“We made a real commitment to keep partisan politics out of it,” says Roberts Ramos. "In meeting with the organization, and in all their training sessions, it’s very clear that you are supposed to avoid partisan politics in all your meetings and even in discussions with the team. I’m sure (my team) has a variety of political beliefs, but I couldn’t even tell you what they believe are.”

Despite the popular image of a disengaged youth mesmerized by cell phones, Roberts Ramos sees a large number of his peers willing to speak up and be heard. "I do think there is a significant number of people in the younger generations who are politically engaged," he tells The Local. "This organization is providing a great way for young people to be more engaged in politics. I know for at least two of our volunteers, it was their first time being involved in a political organization. They really enjoyed it, and will hopefully stay engaged moving forward.”

Soon, Roberts Ramos will begin a co-op semester working with Statistics Canada, while balancing that with his part-time job at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Library. When his studies are completed next year, he will be deciding between pursuing a master’s degree at Carleton University, or applying for jobs in electoral politics, hopefully working for an MP locally.

And now that his role with Future Majority has come to an end, he will most likely begin volunteering for Andrea Kaiser’s campaign once again. The 20-year old will be seen knocking on doors, urging not just young Canadians but voters of all ages to hit the polls come election time.

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"PROUDLY SUPPORTING LOCAL NEWS"
Traffic improvements in Chautauqua welcomed by residents

Penny Coles
The Local

The Friends of Ryerson Village have been waiting to hear council’s approach to solving their problems since last fall. They heard the proposed solutions Monday night, and these solutions are more than content with the recommendations.

Staff appropriately proposed short-term and long-term solutions to “the rapidly growing issues of systemic and ongoing parking problems in our area,” said John Scott, who spoke to councillors Monday night. He was representing the organization of 204 Niagara-on-the-Lake households, and was there to support the staff recommendations.

He had one request, however, which was to make immediate adjustments to the recommendation to allow for parking for visitors and residents on only one side of all the narrow roads in the Chautauqua neighbourhood.

Scott recommended the establishment of a temporary parking area in the Glendale subdivision. “This would allow for an increased penalty of $150 for various bylaw offences in that neighbourhood. The recommendation includes hiring a full-time parking enforcement officer for the duration of the pilot period, and having staff report back in the fall, with an overall evaluation addressing measured results, parking fines issued for various offences and revenue generated, and with recommendations as to whether the enhanced enforcement should be continued in 2022.

Scott, along with other officers at the presentation, council agreed with the staff recommendations and approved adding temporary parking signs on one side of the street only, as part of the pilot project. At operating manager Hardaker’s request, they also approved banning parking on either side of the streets they approach in intersections to allow for clear sight lines.

Other requests, such as limiting the hours of the parking area, and additional signage related to permitted uses and facilities, are already in progress with temporary signs. Permanent signage to be installed once community feedback can be evaluated, the staff report said.

Restructuring traffic flow within the Chautauqua area and the Mississagua Street at the Queen Street intersection, including signage, reducing the speed limit, and a no-stopping tow-away zone, are still being considered.

“We were very pleased with council’s adoption of the staff’s recommendations, together with our request for an immediate adjustment to allow parking for both residents and visitors, and for the12-hour parking restriction,” Scott said.

Penny Coles
The Local

Although he didn’t get his wish, Niagara-on-the-Green resident Steve Hardaker says he has learned just how complicated parking solutions can be.

Which is not a surprise, given the decades residents have been asking council for solutions for parking issues in the Glendale subdivision.

His specific request for a moratorium on enforcing the 12-hour parking restriction during the pandemic was denied on a tie vote Monday night. Councilors for giving him the chance to speak, and for coming up with an alternative solution.

Some streets in Glendale, especially those where there are townhouses, with narrow driveways and small garages, present parking challenges, he told councilors.

“As new phases were added, there were more townhouses and less single family residences. All the streets in the neighbourhood have a sidewalk on one side, which limits parking space in driveways,” he said.

With Niagara College nearby, much of the ongoing problem has been caused by rentals to students, but as well, many of the homes in the neighborhood have more than two vehicles, which causes parking issues regardless of whether their garage is available.

Although town bylaws are traditionally enforced on a complaint basis, in Niagara-on-the-Green council, not the case, he said, telling councillors that NOTL, by agreement with Niagara College to enforce parking in their paid parking lots, is now required to enforce their routines at the college, they proactively patrol and enforce the bylaw in NOTL.

“Leaves residents with the impression that the university is being unfairly targeted, compared to other neighborhoods like Garrison village, Chautauqua and Cannery Park.”

The 12-hour limit restriction has become more problematic during the COVID-19 pandemic, Scott said, when many people are working from home, and staying at home as ordered.

“During the pre-pandemic time, many residents left the neighbourhood during the day for work. However, many are now working from home and have done so for the past year, so there is no longer an exodus of vehicles at the start of the workday. Add to this the stay-at-home order, councillors said, people and vehicles remain in the same spot for hours, even days.”

Scott expressed no choice but to park at least one vehicle on the street, and some are becoming frustrated with the possibilities of acquiring multiple tickets, he said.

Hardaker’s solution to pause enforcement of the 12-hour parking restriction during the pandemic “would be for other residents to request that the compassion and kindness towards residents who are already struggling, financially and emotionally, through these unprecedented times.”

However, councillors pointed out that the 12-hour restriction applies to the municipal area, not just Glendale, and questioned whether they could request a pause of the restriction “has become more noticeable slower.”

Councillors said, “is inclusive, and payable with traffic noticeably slower. We are confident that the approved short-term remedies will be extremely beneficial and augur well for longer-term solutions to be considered in the months to come.”

Also on Monday, Scott clarified concerns raised by some councillors regarding the 12-hour parking restrictions, which several Chautauqua residents recently started using.

The signs were de- limited by a small group of young people who grew up in NOTL, live in Chautauqua, Scott said. The signs were paid for by a number of community contributions, he told councillors.

The group developed the signs because of the significant concerns area residents have repeatedly raised regarding excessive speed, traffic volume and noise pollution created by the snap-up of vehicles in open-park pipes.

The signs are individual- owned, and placed by members households. However, each participant has been asked to put them out only on high-traffic days,” said Scott.

The signs first appeared on Mother’s Day weekend because the group believed it would be the start to higher summer traffic volumes. “We guarantee that the only thought of our members was to address the critical concerns of safety in the community. We also assure our staff that there was no intention to coordinate the timing with your consideration of the staff report. We are not professional lobbyists – just concerned citi- zens trying to do the right thing for our community.”

He said the signs have been helpful, with traffic noticeably slower.

“We are certainly open to alternative, practical sug- gestions anyone may have to address excessive speed at least until town staff can develop a permanent solution.”

Scott thanked staff for extensive work that was thorough and professional, and applauded “the deliber- ate process undertaken.”

Members “are fully sup- portive of the three phased (short, medium and long term) approach to address several of the more difficult issues,” he added.

The staff report, Scott said, “is inclusive, and anything but the right balance for everyone living in or visiting our beautiful town. It truly is a report that de- serves the respect of this community.”

Mike Grecco, Shauna Dickson and Ricky Watson distributed traffic safety lawn signs in Chautauqua, which have helped to slow traffic over the last two busy weekends. (Photo supplied)
Last year local Teresa Costello, a familiar sight at the Farmers’ Market at The Village, was happy to find Rose and Ken Bartel with some vegetable plants. The popular vendors will be there May 29, opening day, but all will be wearing masks. (File photo)

Saturday farmers’ market getting set to open

Penny Coles
The Local

When the Market @ The Village opens for its 15th season, it will be as business as close to normal as can be expected, during a pandemic.

Sharon Brinsmead-Taylor says the May 29 opening will be very similar to last year, with guidelines from Niagara Public Health, but also with some lessons learned from last season.

She explains for customers, it will look more like picking up from where they left off when the market closed for the season, although restricted at this point to 17 growers who have signed up to sell food or plants, which the province has deemed essential.

That’s up from the 10 vendors who opened the season last year. “Word got out about how successful the market was,” says Brinsmead-Taylor, “so we have some new people this season. And they will all be local, from the Niagara region, with most from Niagara-on-the-Lake. Shoppers will be buying local produce, and supporting local farmers.”

One big difference is the ability to have Ken and Rose Bartel back from the beginning of the season with their beautiful flowers — this time last year, their booth, one of the anchors at the market from its earliest days, was limited to vegetable plants.

Artisan vendors can’t be included yet — they’re expected to return when current restrictions are lifted.

Having been through this before, Brinsmead-Taylor is ready for a good year at the market. Many of the vendors told her last season was their best ever, with the market offering a welcome, safe and easy outdoor shopping experience for those anxious for something to do that seemed normal.

Rather than limiting the capacity of one shopper per vendor, the region is allowing flexibility, giving staff the responsibility of ensuring people are able to physical distance. That should eliminate the lineup of people waiting to get into the market, as experienced by some last year, although it’s likely there will always be a lineup at 8 a.m. for the early birds waiting for the market to open.

“We’ll be watching the flow, making sure it doesn’t get congested,” says Brinsmead-Taylor. “It’s a big, open space. We just have to watch people can keep a good distance.”

Another difference is that masks must be worn, by market staff, vendors and customers, whereas at this time last year, they were optional outdoors, although almost everyone was wearing one. “I started working with public health months ago. This year, they’re asking us to ensure everyone is masked. But it won’t be an issue. People have become so accustomed to wearing a mask that most of us don’t think twice, it seems so normal.”

Each vendor will be on the pavement, in their own tents, placed at least six feet apart. Most of the farmers’ markets around the region have the same coordinator as last year, and they’re all accustomed to working together with public health staff they have gotten to know, so the process has been a little smoother.

“It’s been a real collaboration, figuring out how best to follow protocols. The onus has been put on the market coordinators to ensure things are done properly, and we know public health will be around to do inspections, although they’re overwhelmed with everything else they have on their plate.”

Everyone has the same goal, she says — to keep people safe and healthy, and market coordinators “have done a really good job of that. It’s important to me to make our vendors, staff and customers feel safe.”

The market will be open the same hours as other years, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturdays until Thanksgiving.

For the Wednesday Supermarket, “we’re not even contemplating that.”

There is so much work to do for it to open, without knowing when that could be, the decision was made not to plan for it.

“We’re dealing with so much unknown at this time,” she says.

There is always a “slight” possibility that it could open for a few weeks at the end of the season, says Brinsmead-Taylor, for the locals who love it. She’s warning us not to count on it, but adds, “if it works out it would be a bonus.”

B&B owners given 33 per cent reduction in licensing fees

Penny Coles
The Local

It’s not exactly what they asked for, but short-term rental operators are happy to get some relief on the fees and reductions they pay to the town.

John Foreman, president of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Bed and Breakfast Association, was at council Monday to ask for consideration of a 50 per cent one-time reduction in licensing fees as they face “a second consecutive historically bad year. It is likely that the entire first half of the year will be lost, and the prospects for the rest of the year depend on the rate at which restrictions are lifted and the tourism industry recovers,” Foreman said.

In March, council was asked for a number of considerations to help short-term rental owners through what was expected to be a difficult year, and granted their requests, except for a 50 per cent reduction in 2021 fees.

Since then, some have already decided to forego this season for safety reasons, Foreman said, and “some others have closed forever. A higher than average number of STRs are up for sale. By our informal count, the number of B&Bs in NOTL is down by at least 15 per cent over the last 12 months.”

A fee reduction alone "won’t turn a bad year into a good one," he said, "but it will definitely help.”

After asking Kyle Freeborn, town director of corporate services, if there was sufficient money left in a provincial pandemic recovery grant to cover a reduction in fees, Coun. Norm Arseneault made a motion to reduce fees by 33 per cent, which was approved.

Foreman said after the meeting while he would rather have seen the 50 per cent reduction approved, 33 per cent “is a meaningful amount.”

In addition to his appreciation of the savings, he said, he’s grateful to see the town and short-term rental operators working together in a more positive manner, having a better understanding of issues from both sides and moving forward on finding solutions both can agree on.

Robert Bradley

Painting in Niagara-on-the-Lake for more than 40 years. Robert Bradley
T: 905.380.0298 E: paintersnotl@gmail.com
Village volunteers to offer two little libraries

Penny Coles
The Local

Ardeth Staz has received the permission she was seeking to have two little libraries installed in The Village.

Little libraries, she explained to councillors Monday night, are “little boxes, or houses,” that contain a collection of books for sharing. The collection changes over time as residents visit the library and take a book, or add a book. There is an official Little Free Libraries Association, which says they will be successful if located in high traffic areas, “so we think our mailboxes are the perfect location.”

The history of Little Free Libraries began in 2009, when the late Todd Bol of Hudson, Wisconsin, mounted a wooden structure, designed to look like a one-room schoolhouse, on a post on his lawn and filled it with books. It was a tribute to his late mother, who had been a teacher and a book-lover. Since then, the idea has spread and developed into a non-profit organization that includes maps of where to find such free libraries.

With the number of residents in The Village, the expected growth in the area, and the public library not too far away, Staz said they didn’t want or need to become part of the official association, which might attract more visitors to their little libraries.

They have ensured a high-traffic location by asking for them to be placed by the mail boxes, but needed permission from the town, owner of the pergolas.

“Everyone goes to get their mail, so they can get a book at the same time,” Staz told councillors Monday evening. “I imagine it will be even more active when the medical centre is built, the Life Lab is here and the new rental apartments are completed.”

Instead of putting other posts up, Staz said, “it makes a lot of sense to use the posts that are already part of the pergolas in the mail box area.”

The libraries were built by two Village residents, and with an approved budget by the Village Community Association, and donations of materials, as well as checking with Canada Post, the local delivery person and with developer John Hawley, town approval was the last piece of the puzzle.

The appearance of the libraries and the colour they are painted even adhere to the Village Architectural Codes, Staz said.

She has also been in touch with the public library to make sure the little libraries are not seen as competing with them.

“Our goals are the same, promoting literacy,” she added.

The library staff have provided flyers to display with the little libraries that describe public library services, there will be COVID protocol reminders, and hand sanitizer will be provided.

Although books are not of concern as a COVID transmission route, a recent VCA newsletter explaining the libraries suggests book borrowers “may want to let a book sit for a few days before you start reading it. Don’t visit the library if you are feeling sick.”

People will still visit the public library on Anderson Lane, and they will still buy books, said Staz, “however, during this time of COVID when people are tending to stay close to home, and not visiting book stores or the public library, the VCA little libraries can provide a safe alternative for acquiring books very close to home, without being in contact with anyone.”

The VCA will be responsible for maintaining them, and everyone who uses them will be asked to help keep them well-organized and well-taken care of.

The libraries will be installed in the mailbox areas on McDonnell Street and Perez Street, both of which are areas visited by all residents and accessible to others who visit the neighbourhood, she said.

The little libraries, Staz added, “will enhance our sense of community.”
Pamela "Penny" Coles  
Local Editor  

As violence against women continues to increase during the COVID-19 pandemic, Niagara women's shelters are telling the public they haven't gone anywhere and are still available to help, whether with emergen- 
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grame they provide.

Cristina, 33, says she is committed to ad-
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anxiety for many, and some-

"Women at home may not be able to find a place to make 
text, "she urges anyone who is 

An increasing number of 

The products we use in 
domestic violence.

Kaiser reaching out with  

Andrea Kaiser and her 
team of volunteers have a jam-
packed long weekend planned to 
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Facebook: Gillian's Place 

www.gilliansplace.com 

Proof of purchase required. 

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Local Staff

Andrea Kaiser and her 
team of volunteers have a jam-
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Kaiser's team also has a day 

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Audrey Pellett has found her niche in helping those who live in the remote areas of northern Canada.

It began with a small collection of fur coats originally destined to become plush teddy bears, that instead were eventually mailed to remote Canadian communities to keep people warm, says Pellett.

It has turned into much more than that.

Pellett says there was a time in her life, 25 to 30 years ago, when she collected fur coats to turn into teddy bears. But she had five coats left over from that project, instead, as she moved house to house, moving them with her.

When she learned recently about Clothing for our Northern Friends, a Facebook group that matches items to be donated with people in need of those items, she knew what to do with the coats.

She also discovered there are many people with fur coats they don't wear, but don't want to throw out. "Everyone who donates a fur says, 'I look at it in the closet, and don't know what to do with it,'" she says. She provided the solution for them.

The first coat she posted on the group page drew 140 responses from people who wanted it. She estimates that since then she has sent between 60 to 80 fur coats north, packed in boxes that are sold by Canada Post, including the cost of shipping.

She can get a fur coat into a box from Canada Post for $34, usually with room left over. "It's a great deal from Canada Post," she says. Although so far they have been real fur, faux is also acceptable — it's not as suitable for the coldest weather, but is still warm enough to be useful.

The box can weigh up to five kilograms, so she might ask the recipient what items they might need to bring it up to that weight, and also typically packs some chocolate as well, because after all, "who doesn't like chocolate?"

Some she sends are worn as coats, and others are repurposed into warm mittens, hats, or coats for children. "It's very hard to sew with fur," she says. "The talent some have to do that is really amazing. Sometimes the recipient will send a photo of a child or grandchild wearing what they've made."

Most of the coats she has sent went to Nunavut, a few to the North West Territories, and some to northern Ontario and Quebec. These are places where there are few stores, certainly no second-hand stores, and the prices of what is available for sale in those remote communities "would blow you away. Imagine if you have three kids to clothe, and incomes are not anywhere near the level of the south."

When Pellett saw a request from a woman "desperate for a wedding dress," although it was outside of her norm, she decided she would try to help, and put the word out to some of her friends in Niagara. She got a good response, took photos and got all the particulars of the dress, and was able to let the woman in search of the dress choose which one she wanted.

"The woman who gave it to me got married in 1985, and still had it in that souvenir box you get from the cleaners. She was thrilled that it was going up north to someone who could use it. And the recipient was so happy, overcome with gratitude."

When the recipient was hesitant about the price of shipping, Pellett reached out to some "earth angels" in Niagara-on-the-Lake, who offered to foot the cost.

Because she received photos from several women who had dresses to give away, she says her role has morphed to include wedding dresses. She has also sent mittens suits and children's clothing. If a friend has something to give away, she will help out by posting on the site and making the connections for them. She is limiting her involvement to that, because she knows if she doesn't, it could easily become all-consuming, filling her home with items to send north.

"Niagara-on-the-Lake local Louise Waldie is an administrator of the Clothing for our Northern Friends, and Pellett is one of about 7,500 members of the group that matches items available from donors across southern Canada to those who need them in northern communities."

"Louise is a force," says Pellett. "It warms my heart to picture in my mind the tundra above the treeline, the difference in culture from the south, and the difficulty residents have in purchasing what they need."

"It seems more real, now that I've seen the environment. The land is very different from anywhere else in Canada. There is so much we take for granted that people in these communities don't have access to. The number of stores is very minimal, and everything is very costly. Used clothing here is easy to come by, but it isn't there. This gave me the context to move my focus there."

She says it's made clear that when people post that they have items to give away, the recipient is not determined by "first come, first served." Rather donors are encouraged to look at the responses and make their own call about who needs it the most.

She emphasizes clothing must be either new or gently used, so that money isn't spent on shipping items which are not usable.

If there is any damage or visible wear, the condition of the items must be listed as such.

For locals who are downsizing, small household items may also be posted, she says.
Fond memories of growing up in Niagara

Jim Marino Special to The Local

I have had thoughts for quite some time of putting finger to keyboard about my old Niagara, for anyone who might have a slight interest in reading them. I finally did so.

I grew older, with many cherished memories of what seems so long ago, it was nothing to make the attempt. Niagara-on-the-Lake is a town that I hold in high regard as a sacred treasure, and we all want the very best for that special town. I would like to share a few comments and memories for you to ponder, if you will.

Born in the old Queen Street Cottage Hospital, I grew up throughout town, delivering groceries to customers of my family’s store, which they operated at 15 Queen Street. My parents had big hearts, allowing children that lived in poverty until they were able to pay. I recall one occasion when a customer’s youngest son wanted to charge an item while innocently commenting to my mother, that they couldn’t pay the bill that week because they spent all of their grocery money at Loblaws. No problem. Big-hearted Mom added the new charges to the existing bill.

Growing up in the Old Town with best buddies like Bruce Sherlock, Paul Albrechtsen, Ross Walsh, Wally Green and the Bates and Dietrichs boys was a real privilege. We were more like brothers than just friends, playing together from dawn to dusk well into the evening. We spent hours on the lake. Sometimes in the late afternoon I would build a huge bonfire from the old lumber that was cut to cast their nets in the clear blue waters of Lake Ontario, and again in early mornings, to retrieve catch of fresh white-fish and perch, destined for sales at Bishop’s Fish Market. One memorable catch was a gigantic sturgeon that was displayed at Bishop’s, and attracted hundreds of gawkers from all across the Niagara Peninsula.

Some of the best boats of the day were built in town at Shepherd’s Boat Works, Hinterhoeller and C & C Yachts, where gainful employment was provided for many local residents. Town council indicated the opening of a new chapter for Niagara-on-the-Lake. In opening any new chapter, stories and featured “characters” of the old chapter must always be remembered. For instance, long-time business characters like the Reids, Carnochans, Chambers, Dyers, Dalys, Howes, Marinos, Stewarts and McClellands who operated grocery and meat stores in the Old Town, Characters like Mulhollands Dry Goods, Albrechtsen Niagara Home Bakery, Billy Zooger’s to 1 Dollar Store, Mona Billings Shoe Store, Kyle’s Town and Country Clothing, McKinnon Plumbing, Greaves Hardware Jams, Harrison’s Lumber, Magader’s Family Store, Caris, Trustran and Steele barbers, Caras, Fields, Bates and Coynie’s Pharmacies, Conolly’s china gift shop and soon. Libbrock’s gift shop, Caughills, Richardson’s and Haines’ Coal Companies, Club 19, Parkview and Thisbe Shoppe.

Jim Marino is now executive director of the Niagara Foundation for Catholic Education, a registered charitable foundation that raises funds to support students in need, and scholarship funding for students attending Niagara Catholic District School Board schools. (Photo supplied)

Pie’za Pizzeria offering free signature pizzas Sunday

Special to The Local

Maurizio and Laryssa Cesta, owners and operators of Pie’za Pizzeria, will be giving away free (takeout) Margherita pizzas all day on Sunday, May 23, to celebrate their five-year anniversary at 188 Victoria Street in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Pie’za Pizzeria opened its doors Victoria Day long weekend in 2016, and since then has been officially recognized and certified by the Vera Napolieta Asociacion (AVNF) in Naples, Italy. With only one of their certifications in Canada, the owners say they strive to deliver a high-quality pizza out of their 5,000-pound wood burning oven imported from Naples.

Laryssa volunteers weekly at St. John the Compassion Mission in downtown Toronto, where she was born and raised. This is a charity near and dear to her heart, and an effort to support those in need, donations will be accepted to support their favourite cause.

To commemorate the five-year anniversary of Pie’za Pizzeria, Laryssa and Maurizio want to say thank you to all their loyal supporters by serving their signature pizza, the Queen Margherita, free of charge, while encouraging safe curbside takeout pratices, they have put in place over the past year. Guests are welcome to come any time after 12 p.m., until they run out of dough. They will also have their full bar open for guests to purchase takeout wine, beer or soft drinks.

Owners say the team at Pie’za Pizzeria is excited to celebrate this milestone, and they hope to put a smile on their customers’ faces during these difficult times.

The owners ask that you follow the COVID-19 safety guidelines wearing a mask and keeping two metres apart. Washroom facilities are closed but public restrooms in NOTL are open.

Gerry Wool, Walter Theo- bald, Jake Froese, Dave Dick, Leno Mori, John Robert Dick, Harry Dawson, Mike Dietsch, Harold Clement, Bill Hunter and my older Nick, to name just a few. Blazing the way for a culture ingredient came the founder of the Shore Festi- val Theatre, Brian Doherty, who, with the assistance of Calvin Rand, developed an international theatre attract- tion that many will say put NOTL on the map as the place to visit and live.

In carving out any further milestones, it is worthy to recognize and appreciate not only the notables of the town’s very early years, but also the day to day “ordi- nary” solid citizens of more recent years, whose names will probably never make it into the history books.

I have threatened to someday write a book about memorable Niagara experiences, but the most difficult part will be jotting down the first sentence. Perhaps this is a beginning.
Auchterlonie on Astrology

Bill Auchterlonie
Special to The Local

The full week of Auchterlonie on Astrology can be found on the Facebook page for The NOTL Local, and on the website www.auchterlonieastrology.ca.

Welcome to Auchterlonie on Astrology, a look at the week of May 20 through May 26, including the first day of Gemini, and a lunar eclipse on Wednesday, May 26.

On my podcast you can also find out how to obtain your own personal birth chart including a forecast for the year ahead. The podcast is at www.auchterlonieastrology.ca.

Now, the week ahead:

Thursday, May 20: Happy birthday to all Gemini out there. Today, the Sun enters Gemini and the Gemini season officially starts. With Mercury, Venus and the north node already in Gemini, you may feel that the Gemini season has started a long time ago. But it is really when the Sun is in the sign that we get the full experience. Gemini is a very curious, witty, expressive, verbal and intellectual energy. Gemini is the jack of all trades of the zodiac, without having the know-it-all Jupiter/Sag attitude. Because Gemini energy is intrinsically curious, we will actually get to pay attention to what is going on, and approach things with a beginner’s mind. And this is when we usually finally find solutions to old problems that felt impossible to solve in the past. It was on May 20, 1932 that Amelia Earhart took off all alone in her single engine plane from Newfoundland. Seventeen hours later she landed in a field in Ireland, becoming the first woman to fly across the Atlantic. Five years later, she disappeared somewhere over the Pacific Ocean.

Friday, May 21: The day starts with a conflict between heart and mind. Thinking gets you one answer. But that doesn’t feel right. Hold on, because by this evening you will feel the right way. Especially the right way for you! On May 21, 1927, Charles Lindbergh flew solo on that same crossing. Saturday, May 22: Yesterday we saw a conflict between heart and minds. Today there is a potential disagreement between a memory and current ideas, or difficulties with a project requiring imagination. Resolving this impasse today will save a situation from stalling completely. Norak Dysonic celebrates birthday #34 today. He is ranked #1 in men’s tennis. One of the greatest of all time.

Sunday, May 23: When the lowest visible planet station retrogrades, the world doesn’t turn upside down as it does when Mercury or Mars go retrograde... but Saturn’s retrograde stations rarely go unnoticed, even if for different reasons. If some things in your life went on by inertia, or they were kind of sluggish, now they will stop working altogether. Imagine you have an old car that takes ages to start. You expect any moment to crash, and unsurprisingly, one day the car does crash. It’s not that you haven’t seen it coming. But the fact that it has stopped working will finally push you to do something about it. Now the problem becomes obvious, it becomes tangible, it becomes a reality. You can’t just get away with it anymore. When Saturn goes retrograde, you will finally stop, so you can reassess an area of your life that is not working as well as it could be. Saturn retrograde is an opportunity to rethink and re-engineer that sector of your life. By the time Saturn goes direct, you will find a new solution, a new operating model, that will improve your life in the long run. Saturn is retro in the Pacific Ocean.

Monday, May 24: The unoffical start to summer in Canada is today – Victoria Day. In many parts of the country, today is a holiday. Astrologically it may prove to be a test of true or dare. Saturn makes for a serious Monday, whether or not it is a holiday for you. Be honest with yourself and you will be easier. Queen Victoria was born May 24, 1819 and ruled for 63 years and seven months, until her death in 1901.

Tuesday, May 25: The focus today is on Mars. That means on all things Martian. Like work, or physical labour. We recommend we talk more about it later, as our own needs, not your own. We are in a generous mood and giving seems to be the way today. It was May 25, 1977 that the first Star Wars film was released. Directed by George Lucas, it starred Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill, and Carrie Fisher.

Wednesday, May 26: One of the highlights of the month is the full Moon and total lunar eclipse in Sagittari- us. The eclipse is at 5 degrees of Sagittarius and it is a south node eclipse, so it is a culmination of what we’ve been building and creating since the nodes have shifted into Gemini and Sagittarius.

On the east coast of North America, it will be visible starting at 4:45 a.m. and lasts about two hours. As with all full Moons, emotions are highly energized, this time in a 4g, starian way. We feel like we know it all. (And likely, we do.) Happy anniversary to Brian and Mike Mulroney, married May 26, 1973.

And that’s Aeon for this week. On May 29, Mercury goes retrograde and on May 31, the Sun makes a connec- tion it makes only once a year. Next week is very important. Until then, as Joni Mitchell said, shine on.
**CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU**

Across:
1  Limerick’s second word, usually
4  Delicate
9  Eat greedily
14  Medical insurer
15  Delayed
16  Radio receiver
17  Australian running bird
18  Univision news anchor Jorge ---
19  Make amends
20  Open grassland
22  Reserved
24  Funded
26  Biblical weed
27  Hilltop
28  Not that
29  --- for Charlie
32  Expatriate
34  Rowboat lever
35  The Pope
36  Confined
37  Demand
38  Face protection
39  Affirmative votes
40  Obtain
41  Battle Born State
42  Author unknown
43  High hat
45  Cheap sensational magazine
46  Perturbed
49  N Y C’s --- Park
50  Indolent
51  Short-tailed rodent
52  V alley
53  Usage
54  Whiffs
55  Enjoy to the full
56  Weird
57  Upper limit
58  Elude
59  Pal of Kukla and Fran
60  Accountant’s letters
61  Senses
62  Works
63  Agency which initiated the Waco siege

Down:
1  Location question
2  Capital of Jordan
3  Speech snippets
4  Book opener
5  Genetic component of some viruses
6  Pointed
7  Religious painting
8  <
9  Brenda and Ringo
10  Adorable child
11  Author unknown
12  Mathematician --- Descartes
13  Adèle’s dancing brother
21  Pigs out
23  Locks or strands
25  Ram’s dam
28  Tip-sellers
29  Largest Moroccan city
30  Portable player
31  “Two Mulies for Sister ---”; Eastwood/MacLaine
33  Salad sauce
35  Fulcrums
36  Tipped
37  Loathed
38  Enterprises
40  Young ladies
41  Intelligence agency
42  Nightclub show
43  Prize monies
44  Pyramid place
45  Hazard
46  Geography
47  Kickless coffee
48  Upper limit
49  Riverside
50  Idle
51  Short-tailed rodent
52  Valley
53  N Y C
54  Odors
55  Savor
56  W eird
57  N S A
58  Ollie
59  Elude
60  C P A
61  Feels

PUZZLE ANSWERS

**Help Wanted**

Cleaning Lady needed to clean local 2 storey home, once every two weeks. Call for details. References appreciated 905-684-7671

**House Sitting**

HOUSE SITTING
(While you are away)
Location Niagara-on-the-Lake.
Oct 15th 2021 to April 15th 2022
Inclusive. No Pets.
Contact John email hammerjd1867@gmail.com

**ANTIGUES**

IT’S TIME!
Offering complimentary appraisals, advice and selling tips on your treasures.

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GUIDE DOGS BELONG EVERYWHERE. IT’S THE LAW.
Become a guide dog champion at guidelineschampions.ca

**Sudoku solution from May 12, 2021**

![Sudoku puzzle solution](image)
Ontario’s COVID-19 vaccine plan is helping to stop the spread and save lives. Thousands of people across the province are getting vaccinated every day.

As vaccinations continue, we need to stay the course to protect those we love. Wear a mask. Wash your hands. Keep your distance.

Find out when, where and how to get vaccinated at ontario.ca/covidvaccineplan or call 1-888-999-6488 for assistance in more than 300 languages.

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Watch for upcoming classes that include popular local artist

Continued from page 18

people are doing by walking around and looking at their work. You can tell right away if you need to talk more on composition, or the elements. Virtually, you don’t have that option. You have to remember to pause, and have them show you their work individually, to see what is going on. It changes how you teach.”

This virtual classroom setting has provided Haftar with the opportunity to improve her computer skills as she has been fine-tuning her virtual teaching skills.

“We were used to a different time. Now we have to be flexible in our thinking, and to improve computer skills. It takes time to get comfortable with new things.”

The Pumphouse is wonderful because they host the online workshops, she says, so she doesn’t have to worry about that part of the process.

Although this workshop has sold out, the Pumphouse has registration open for other virtual and in-person programs, including their art summer camps for children and youth.

Aimee Medina, marketing coordinator at the Pumphouse, says more classes are being added monthly, taught by Haftar and other talented instructors. Keep checking the niagarapumphouse.ca website for updates on upcoming programs — and Haftar is really in demand.

Virtual camps for kids will be held live via Zoom on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Students can expect a fun and engaging online learning experience, supported by group discussions and off-line activities. There will be a morning session that will air from 9 to 10 a.m., and are suitable for children ages six to eight. The afternoon sessions will be held from 1 to 2 p.m. and geared towards youth ages nine to 12. The full-day, in-studio camp will be held Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Art projects will include drawing, painting, sculpture and more, using quality art supplies (included in fee) and tools in the studio.

The Pumphouse also supports disadvantaged children and youth in the Niagara Region by providing the summer camps free of charge, thanks to Healing Arts For Kids and the generous support of the Rotary Club of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

For more information, visit niagarapumphouse.ca. Or more information on Patricia Haftar and her work: www.patriciahaftar.com