Rainbow crosswalk in time for Pride month

The town has installed its first rainbow crosswalk, just in time for Pride Month.

It’s been in the works for two years, and was done quietly Monday evening, with no fanfare, to be in time for Pride recognition.

A news release from the town Tuesday says in addition to the crosswalk at the intersection of Niagara Stone Road and Anderson Lane, the town “is proudly flying the Progressive Pride Flag at town hall.”

It was raised Monday, with members of Pride Niagara in attendance.

The crosswalk is the same Progressive Pride design as used by the Niagara Region on St. Davids Road, “to promote the continuity of rainbow crosswalks throughout Niagara,” the news release says.

“The design consists of the traditional rainbow flag with the addition (at the far end in the photo) of black, brown, light blue, pink and white stripes. The light blue, pink and white represent trans and non-binary individuals, and the black and brown represent marginalized people of colour. The painting of this crosswalk serves as a visible reminder that all are welcome in Niagara-on-the-Lake.”

Since a rainbow crosswalk discussion was first raised by the town’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, residents have not been entirely onboard.

A public survey or referendum was suggested by some, and although the town did conduct a survey it was not to determine whether residents agreed with a rainbow crosswalk.

Continued on page 2

Young farmworker dies in his sleep, cause unknown

Penny Coles
The Local

A farmworker from Jamaica spending his first season away from home to work in Niagara-on-the-Lake has died while sleeping in his bunkhouse on Read Road.

He leaves behind family that includes a six-month-old baby at home in St. Catherine Parish.

Local friends who heard of his death and visited the men in the bunkhouse say a bunkmate woke up Friday morning, and on trying to waken the man, discovered he had passed away during the night.

Along with Pastor Albert Dawkins, some friends took food to the men, including their evening meal, and said they found his coworkers traumatized, grieving for the loss of a friend, a man who, like them, had made sacrifices to come to work here, wanting to make a better life for his family back home.

“They were in shock, speechless,” said one local who visited the Read Road bunkhouse Friday afternoon. Some were also scared, she said, fearing that it could happen to any one of them.

Pastor Dawkins said he wasn’t able to obtain any more information about what had happened, although he was still trying Monday morning. He said he’d like to be able to reach out to the man’s family.

“It’s frustrating that I can’t offer support to them. I don’t even know if the family knows.”

The pastor of the Niagara Region Church of God and Prophecy in Niagara Falls says he visits the farmworkers when he can and reaches out to them when they’re in need.

“I always make myself available,” he said. “The men I spoke to were really very shaken up and asked me to pray with them. They were still in a state of shock when I spoke to them on Saturday, still not knowing or understanding what happened.”

A friend of the farmworkers who had talked with some of the men over the weekend said they had spoken of appreciation for Dave Enns, owner of F.G. Enns Farms, who was the first to come to his farmworkers’ bunkhouse Friday morning.

“They were thankful for the way he had taken over and handled the situation,” he said. “They said they were very grateful for the leadership and support he had provided.”

Enns spoke to The Local Monday morning about how difficult this has been for all of them on the farm, and still is.

“We’re pretty overwhelmed,” he said. They were all taking the time to talk to each other about the man who had recently died.

Continued on page 2

Happy Pride Month: NOTL makes it just in time with the installation Monday evening of a rainbow crosswalk across Anderson Lane at Mississauga Street. (Mike Balsom) The town also raised a Pride flag at the town hall. (Supplied)
Continued from page 1

walk, but rather where it should be installed.

The same was asked for the location of five rainbow benches. There is now one in the Virgil Sports Park, with the others to be installed at Mary and King Street, in Niagara on the Green, in the Greenway and at the Queenston Cenotaph — one in each of the five communities.

Although the town did receive a grant to help pay for the crosswalk and benches, there was going to be a need to find other sources of funding.

The Rotary Club of NOTL stepped up, offering a $1,500 donation to the crosswalk project, and will be sending funds this week, says Rotarian Bill French. "We were waiting on its completion before we sent the money."

In the news release, CAO Marnie Cluckie called the crosswalk "a visible way of celebrating, supporting and creating awareness of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community in Niagara-on-the-Lake."

NOTL "is a community welcoming and accepting of all," the news release says, calling on members of the community to "show their NOTLPride by printing and hanging NOTL Pride posters throughout town and encouraging social media users to post pictures of pride colours."

A small ribbon-cutting ceremony will be held to honour and celebrate this initiative sometime during Pride Month in June, with a date to be confirmed, Cluckie said in an email to The Local.

This is the first rainbow crosswalk in Niagara-on-the-Lake — Niagara College beat the town to it with installations at both their campuses in 2019.

NOTL Pride posters can be found at nol.com/sites/default/files/2023-05/NOTLPride%20Poster.pdf.

Farmworker was happy the night before he died

Continued from page 1

what had happened, he added — that was really the only way to help each other. "That's the best we can do, for our workers and ourselves."

The Jamaican liaison has been out to the farm, he explained, and "has gone above and beyond" in trying to help.

The men were offered the opportunity to talk to grief counsellors, but "not too many are taking them up on it."

Enns said he has had no details from the police, other than that they found no visible signs to determine what had caused the man's sudden death, and that an autopsy would be done. "I have nothing else I can add to that."

The Niagara Regional Police response from Const. Barry Ravenek was that Friday morning at 6:20 a.m. officers went to an address on Read Road near Scott Street, in St. Catharines, regarding a medical assistance call that became a sudden death investigation.

The incident remains under investigation by detectives assigned to the Criminal Investigative Branch and the Ontario Coroners, regarding a medical assistance call that became a sudden death investigation.

The incident remains under investigation by detectives assigned to the Criminal Investigative Branch and the Ontario Coroners' Office, Ravenek said in an email, and the police will not be disclosing the man's identity out of respect for the family. "This isn't the first rainbows crosswalk in Niagara-on-the-Lake — Niagara College beat the town to it with installations at both their campuses in 2019."

NOTL Pride posters can be found at nol.com/sites/default/files/2023-05/NOTLPride%20Poster.pdf.

Town representatives and members of Pride Niagara gathered at the town hall Monday to raise the Pride flag. (Supplied)
Gateway beautification project finally underway

Penny Coles
The Local

The spring tulips are gone at the end of Mississauga Street, and the fencing for the gateway beautification project has arrived. For the first time in decades there will be no plantings to greet residents or visitors as they arrive at the end of Mississauga and head to Queen Street, or toward the neighbourhood of Chautauqua. Instead, there will be construction.

The contractor mobilized Monday morning, securing the site with construction fencing and preparing for the base of the drystone wall that will be chosen as part of the design. Once that is done, the dry stone wall, along with the Niagara-on-the-Lake lettering and town crest, will be installed, says communications manager Lauren Krutbosch. Additional steps will include irrigation and electrical installations, followed by planting as the last step, she says.

"The stones that have been removed are being reused on site or at another location in town," says Krutbosch, "and the previous trees have been spaded out and planted at the Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery."

The project is anticipated to be completed by the end of this summer, she says. For those wondering about the stop sign in the middle of the road, it is part of a separate project that will be addressed later this year, says Krutbosch.

The makeovers plans for the gateway to the main street, agreed to by council in January 2022 after much discussion, public input and revised designs, include a 22-metre long, 2.7 metre tall drystone wall and entrance sign. The project is being funded through a donation from resident Gerald Kowalchuk’s Family Foundation. He first presented his idea of a revamp of the entrance to town in 2019, and said he would like to be involved in the process.

The work is now in the hands of contractor Three Seas Landscape Group, after issues arose last year with another company initially slated to handle the project. Construction was intended to start last September and be completed by this spring, but was delayed while the town put out new tenders requests.

The project is budgeted at about $265,000.

Focus needed on heritage, arts, culture and agriculture

Penny Coles
The Local

Residents who checked out the list of public information centres to talk about the town’s strategic plan might have found the locations interesting.

The pavilion beside the splash pad in the Virgil Sports Park Monday, where an information centre was set up in the pavilion by the splash pad. She stopped by, she said, “because it gave me an opportunity to zero in on what was important to me. I’m hoping that a lot of people come, so after we can’t say we didn’t know about that. Did you show up? Did you take what you were offered, to go and take a look at this, and to talk to these people who are right here? If you didn’t go, you can’t complain.”

She said she was happy to see the town travelling to different areas in the community. “You can get more personal here because you have all these people here to ask questions directly. I think it’s great. Kudos to council.”

Regier said she’s aware of the options for public input, including the ability to speak at council, and has done that through many councils. “For them to come out to us like this is a big bonus. Hopefully they will pay attention to what we really need when they put the plan together, what we are concerned about. For me it’s agriculture, big time, transportation, affordability and housing. I really hope that those sitting behind a desk in Toronto do not underestimate that we are a lovely town, and they don’t have to exploit every green space here.”

Steele said Monday she was happy with the turnout to the information centres, and that people spent time going through the material presented. “The quality of discussion with each person has been very insightful.”

The information being presented summarized the vision or mission options that council has put forth for the next four years, including what the future looks like and what the town’s purpose is in the community, explained Steele. The information centres were looking for input on priorities. In addition to more attention to heritage, she said, she’s hearing “we need arts and culture to come to the surface more, and the environment. Those are the three that are really standing out so far. They are all in there (the strategic plan), but we need to make sure that they are surfacing to the top and made a priority.”

With files from Mike Balsom.

This is the final design that was approved by the town, and construction has begun in preparation for the drystone wall. (Supplied)

Fencing has gone up so work on the gateway project at the end of Mississauga Street can begin. (David Gilchrist)

Planning director Kirsten McCauley, longtime NOTL resident Ingrid Regier, and Councillor Wendy Chernoplia chat at a public information centre set up in the Virgil Sports Park. (Mike Balsom)
Teens dig in and help out at Red Roof Retreat

Sharon Burns
The Local

For teacher Heather Davis, “being a leader is giving back to the community.”

Last Friday, Davis led by example when she brought her class of 17 business leadership high school students to Red Roof Retreat for a day of volunteerism.

“Red Roof Retreat has been a part of my family’s life since Steffanie (Bjorgan, founder of Red Roof Retreat) taught my kids in Kindergarten, and I thought this charity would be a great choice for my students to see what a visionary leader can do to make a seemingly impossible dream come true,” said Davis.

“Steffanie inspires others to want to be the best person they can and give back to the world in any way possible.”

Many students attending Westlane Secondary School in Niagara Falls are new to Canada, said Davis. “They are coming from, for example, China, Colombia, and Afghanistan.”

“This experience was a great way to introduce them to life in rural Niagara,” said Davis. “They also had the opportunity to meet and work with special needs clients. Working with special needs students at school has given this class the ability to develop empathy and work on communication, while developing an understanding of what special needs individuals have to offer.”

Bjorgan is “happy to give youth from the city, or new to the country, a chance to experience farm life and exposure to peers with special needs,” she said.

Besides being impressed by how large and peaceful the area is, student Hannah Tan said she learned that “this organization allows parents to take a break from their responsibilities by leaving their children at this retreat. The staff members ensure that people with special needs will be given a great time in the organization, as they take care of them and provide them with fun programs they can enjoy during their stay.”

The animals at Red Roof captivated the students’ attention. Masa Pavone’s favourite part of the trip was “being able to meet all of the farm animals, including Murray the Donkey, Wilbur the Pig, the miniature horses and, especially, the newly-born kittens. “I really enjoyed playing with them, getting to know their adorable personalities, and cuddling them at the end of the work day,” said Pavone.

Devon Pham came to realize that “farm work requires lots of maintenance. The barn needs to be taken care of, the hay needs to be removed, and the lawn needs to be taken care of.”

Tan and her friend were assigned to clean the cat barn. “We both loved our task as we played with the kittens and the bunnies while cleaning the place,” she said. “We did not even consider our task as a ‘job’ as we considered it a relaxing and healing time with the animals.”

Davis strongly believes that volunteering should be a lifelong habit and not just 40 hours that students complete to graduate. “I have volunteered at Red Roof in a variety of ways over the last 20 years,” she said. “It is filling such an important gap in the system for special needs families. It was so rewarding to see my students get stuck into doing whatever we asked them to do, while demonstrating teamwork, motivation and communication skills.”

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“A vision is very important. Even though Jackson (Hernandez Garcia, a fellow student) and I were organizing a lot of the time, it was still fun to be there.”

Pham enjoyed spending time with Wilbur. “He was a fun and extroverted pig, and I hope to meet him again.”

Sam Phillips also thought that “it was truly the best school trip I have ever been on. It was such a beautiful place, with amazing people and animals. I love the purpose of this place, they have made it such a peaceful and relaxing place for people to come. I learned what they do and all the different things they offer. My favourite part, by far, was hanging out with the animals, they are all so calm and gentle.”

Tan says if asked “if I want to visit Red Roof for one more time, I will not hesitate to give a big thumbs up to my answer, and help Steffanie and her staff once again!”

Kaylee Layden’s favourite part about the day was “everything!” she said. “I think this was the best field trip I’ve had during high school. I learned that giving back to the community is very important. Even though Jackson (Hernandez Garcia, a fellow student) and I were organizing a lot of the time, it was still fun to be there.”

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Outdoors @ The Shaw returns this month. Enjoy theatrical and musical gems in our new Spiegeltent venue and on our grounds.

Mother, Daughter
SPIEGELTENT | JUNE 3 - OCTOBER 7
WRITTEN BY SELMA DIMITRIJEVIC
This celebrated one-act play explores the changing relationships between children and their parents. Tickets $35 / $20 under 30

The Game of Love and Chance
SPIEGELTENT | JUNE 28 - OCTOBER 8
A ROMANTIC COMEDY BY PIERRE DE MARIVAUX
Marivaux’s classic romantic comedy shows how unbreakable love really is. To match its spirit, there will be a different cast every show! Tickets $35 / $20

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MUSIC BY RICHARD RODGERS
LYRICS BY OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN II
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ORCHESTRATION BY MICHAEL GIBSON AND JONATHAN TUNICK
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A musical revue showcasing the timeless music of Richard Rodgers and the lyrics of Oscar Hammerstein II. Tickets $35 / $30 under 30

A Short History of Niagara
HUMENIUK STAGE | JULY 20 - AUGUST 13
CREATED BY ALEXANDRA MONTAGNESE AND MIKE PETERSEN
From the Maid of the Mist to Laura Secord to the founding of the Shaw Festival, this is pure storytelling. Our rich history, brought to life by postpets. Tickets $10 / $6 youth

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Big, uplifting vocals that will take your breath away! A euphoric musical experience performed by the glorious voices of our Ensemble. Tickets $20

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Glamping weekend around Hamilton a good experience

Owen Bjorgan Special to The Local

It's the largest city in Canada and the third largest in Ontario, with its urban lands divided up between the city centre and its urban lands divided up between the city centre.

There are also broad but useless fences, railings, overburden of fences, railings, spaces without the artificial common sense in their ancient days. Hamilton is the northern-most area of the Canadian Forest Reserve, so its sheltered microclimate in the 'north' at the end of the lake harbours some of Canada's last stands of nationally rare trees and birds, such as the scarlet tanager and the hawks. Furthermore, there is a trail for literally any ability. Many of the trail routes are nicely paved and wide, making them wheelchair and stroller accessible. Flying rustic highways, these trail routes don't necessarily have hills.

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Commercial enterprises being lo-
ning of the proposed hotel com-
ment and shows that there are
actual some reasonably developers in our area who
understand just how im-
portant the look of a project is
and, how it fits into the local,
long-establish, neighbourhood
that they are directly affecting.
What a reasonable, civilized and thoughtful way to present a new project, and then react to
the local input in a reasonable
way. It's really surprising how
this is being handled by all in-
volved, pros and cons, from
either sides thoughtfully han-
dled.
And now for something completely different: two pro-
tects, with no thought for what they look like, how they direct-
ly affect the immediate neighbours
and close surrounding area which are virtually all single-
and two-storey homes, some older and historic. These
are quiet, close knit neighbour-
hoods with a long-established, pleasant feel.
First, the Parliament Oak
School site proposal is so inap-
propriate and offensive to that
neighbourhood. Is this how a
local developer shows concern
and thoughtfulness for our
unique town? Just the act of propos-
ing that particular project with that look on that site
seems to be almost an act
of vandalism to that area.
This type of approach from
any developer really seems to
show their actual attitude to the immediate neigh-
bourhood. Also the complex on Mary
Street (a four-storey apartment
is proposed) across from Wil-
low Cakes and Pastries, is just
more of the same.
Developers take note: If we
had more developers with the reasonable and thoughtful ap-
proach shown by the Melville
condo groups, far more would be
accomplished. Responsible input and proposals from both
sides really seem to get results.
This seems to be an unknown
process to some of our larger
development groups.
Christopher Allen
NOTL

We are writing to present
our concerns regarding the
submission to the Urban De-
sign Committee on April 26
for a proposed apartment building
at 227 Mary Street.
Our concern is specific to the
scale and height of the pro-
posed building. The proposed
four-storey building is located
mid-block, and is situated in the
middle of and will closely back
the rear of three existing one-
and two-storey homes. These homes
are identified in the Official Plan,
and each homeowner has a right
to enjoy the privacy, sunlight and
noise levels as provided
by the zoning bylaws.
The proposed development
will destroy virtually all visual
privacy in their rear yards and
through their windows into their
homes. Moreover, we can
anticipate a significant increase
in noise levels.
We have attached a copy
of the architect's section through
the properties to which we have
added the height and lines from
the proposed third and fourth floors, clearly showing
this direct line of sight inva-
sion of the neighbours' back
yards. The drawing clearly also
shows the proposed building's
fourth floor is significantly
higher than the current zoning
building maximum permitted
height (dashed line).
It should be without ques-
tion that the 13 neighbours
have the right to expect new
adjacent developments to re-
spect the existing zoning and
honour their expectation of
continued privacy in their back
yards and into their homes.
This proposed building
would set a dangerous pre-
cident for the town, whereby
potentially no one house or
households will be safe from
similar proposals, all in the
name of increased density and
developers' profits.
This proposal disregards the
towns existing unique built
character and quality of life.
There can be no question that
it would change the town and its
residents immense harm.

David Parker, Architect,
Gordon Stratford, Architect,
David Anthony, P.Eng.,
John Gartner, Retired Planner
NOTL

I thought your readers
might be interested in the at-
tached illustration showing the
difference in height and mass-
ing of the proposed hotel com-
pared with the Prince of Wales.
If the numerous negative
comments made about com-
mercial enterprises being loc-
ated in a residential area (in-
cluding the delivery, trucks and
related support services), the
700 food and beverage seats
(almost 5.5 times the number of
hotel rooms), and the egre-
gious lack of parking itself suf-
ficient to demonstrate the in-
appropriateness of this project,
then perhaps this illustration
will drive home the point.
This illustration was pre-
pared by Chapman Murray
Associates Architects and is
shown to scale.
A project like the one pro-
posed for Parliament Oak
is likely to create pressure to ex-
tend commercial activity anoth-
er two blocks along King Street.
That's not what is contemplated
in the Official Plan and is, in fact,
contrary to even the broadest in-
terpretation of a compatible use
for this site based on that plan.
If council wants to make
King Street a commercial corri-
dor it should be honest about it
and not allow it to happen pro-
ject.
To be clear, I am not sug-
gest that the commercialization of King Street (or any other
residential street in NOTL) until
that council should either follow
its Official Plan or commence
a broader process to change it
after appropriate public consult-
ation and after consid-
eration to the implications for
the wider Old Town Area. Good
planning does not happen site
by site or block by block.
Lyle Hall
NOTL

Time to approve community hub at old hospital site

David Israelson
Special to The Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake town council has an unusually
strong opportunity to do some
long-lasting public good by supporting
the idea of a Creative, Cre-
tive, Cultural & Community
Hub that a group of non-profit
organizations hope to establish at
the town's old hospital site.
The hub would be a wel-
come addition and would be
good for the long-term growth and
well-being of the com-
unity. The organizations involved
in it already include Indigenous-run Flently Cana-
da, Music Niagara, the Yellow
Door Theatre Project, Royal
Oak Community School and
the Shaw Festival.
With a roster like this, it's
hard to see why the town could
not move quickly to facilitate
the needs of these community
groups and make sure the hub
happens. Some activities that
would take place in the build-
ing, like Royal Oak School,
are already running others have
well-thought-out plans for using
the site to expand their already
successful programs and work.
The track records of these
arts, entertainment and edu-
cational organizations should
speak for themselves as coun-
cil looks at whether to extend
a multi-year allow.
Allowing them to live together
in the community hub would
make their work even bet-
ter, allowing them to share
promotional and creative
ideas and enabling Niagara-
on-the-Lake residents to
one-stop shopping for their
own creative work and needs.
Self-Financing Plan
The hub plan would be
self-financing. Its proponents
want to lease the property from
the town and pay all operat-
ing and capital costs, so there
would be no burden on tax-
payers. The hub coalition has
already obtained $2 million in
donation commitments and
once the hub is leased to this
organization, it could manage
the sub-leases of its members,
meaning no administrative
work for the town.
It's true that there have been
proposals for other use for the
hub site. Some have dreamed
of bringing back medical facil-
ties there, for example — but
the doctors and labs have been
going elsewhere for years.
Others suggest that the town
could realy a tidy sum by selling
the property to developers, but
is zoned for use as a community
facility, and in fact is the last prop-
erty of this type and size that can
fit the needs of small and mid-
sized community organizations.
In any case, Niagara-
on-the-Lake has enough con-
troversy already with devel-
ment proposals that some residents like but others detest!
Bringing the hub to the heart of
Old Town would have the oppo-
site effect — a place for everyone.
Time to Approve is Now
Council is now waiting for
staff to report on the lease offer
now, especially a long-
term lease. It would be good for
council, good for the town and
most of all, good for the mem-
bers of our community.
David Israelson is a writer and
non-practicing lawyer who
lives in Niagara-on-the-Lake.
Crossroads students learn to give back to their community

Penny Coles
The Local

Linnea Bartel, a Grade 8 student in the Three Cs Club — Crossroads Car- ing Coyotes — had a busy Friday afternoon help- ing with the Crossroads School’s Rankin Cancer Run. She was outside on the tarmac behind the school as one of the music DJs, having helped make up a playlist that was sure to get kids dancing.

Linnea, along with a large group of energetic and enthusiastic students, was helping out with the many activities organized for stu- dents to enjoy in addition to the run, or walk, or however they wanted to partic- ipate.

As a member of the Three Cs Club, Linnea’s role with most school events is to help provide music — which she says she loves — as well as being part of the set-up and cleaning crew. “I help out at a lot of school events, fun ones, like this,” she says.

Linnea can’t help but understand the importance of this particular fundraiser though — like most fami- lies, hers has been touched by cancer. Her mother’s two grandparents died of can- cer, and she says one of her friends lost her mother to cancer. She knows the Rankin run helps fund research to prevent cancer, and devel- op programs that benefit cancer patients. “This is a fun thing to do, but it’s also something we do for the community,” she says. The club is organized by teacher Michele Zoccoli for Grade 7 and 8 students. Linnea’s mother, Becky Bartel, is a Kindergarten teacher at Crossroads, and was out helping the young- er children. She says the students are very fortunate to have Michele Zoccoli, “who has so much energy and enthusiasm to organize an event like this that really brings us together, and the community together.”

Zoccoli says she believes strongly in the importance of involving the older stu- dents with school events, giving them the opportu- nity to learn about being part of their community, helping out with caring and kindness, and “taking visible leadership roles that younger students will see as something they want to do as they get older.”

The students want to help others. “This club gives them an outlet to do that. You just need to ask them to do something and they do it. And the younger students watch them, and want to be part of it.”

At the other end of the grade spectrum, Becky Bartel is also teaching her young students about car- ing and kindness, and recently a little about cancer, so she could explain the Rankin Cancer Run to them. “We start with those conversations at their level of understanding. We don’t want to scare them, but we want them to understand why we’re doing this, and also teach them that even at their age, they can help people in a way that’s important in our commu- nity. What we want most is to promote caring and kindness, right here in our school, in our community and even beyond.”

Becky speaks of a trip she took to Africa, as part of a mission to help out in a school. “When I got back I talked about the children I met, and how we can help others who need our help. The kids remember the things I’ve told them about the children in Africa, and they still talk about ways to help them. They can take that with them out into the community, that they can help others,” she says.

It also helps the young students recognize that not all children are as fortunate as they are. “They learn not to take it for granted, and to share with others who are less fortunate. That is really important.”

While the teachers jokingly described Fri- day’s playground scene for the fundraising event as “chaos,” they stress the af- ternoon is meant to be a fun one, with the kids en- couraged to take part in the many activities avail- able — sidewalk chalk drawing, face-painting, music and dancing, beach balls, a bubble machine, a parachute, a cheering squad and of course the run itself, with students given the opportunity to partici- pate by moving around the track in whatever way they feel comfortable.

The Rankin family donates everything required to stage the run, includ- ing T-shirts, so every dol- lar raised goes to fighting cancer.

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Pies baked, boxed and delivered to relief sale

Penne Coles  The Local

The smells of pies baking filled two church buildings last week, as a group of women used the kitchens of both Cornerstone Community Church campuses, on Hunter Road and Niagara Stone Road.

The pies were put together in assembly-line style in the larger Hunter Road kitchen, but some were transported to the Virgil location to be baked and boxed, making the process a little faster, explained Dorothy Soo-Wiens, one of the organizers of the baking.

The women baked a total of 223 pies. More than 80 were sold in the community, the remainder loaded up and delivered to Soo-Wiens Friday afternoon to the New Hamburg Fairgrounds for the annual Mennonite Relief Sale, which is held over the weekend.

“People line up at 5:30 p.m. Friday just to get the pies as they get delivered,” she says.

Asked about where the recipes for the dough and fillings come from, Soo-Wiens says most of the “tried and true recipes” the women use are passed down from a cookbook called The Mennonite Treasury of Recipes. “I’m sure every Mennonite family has this recipe book. I got this for a wedding shower from Dorthea Enns (of Enns Battery Tires) 32 years ago.”

The recipes have been passed on from the ladies in the church, who baked pies decades ago, and who are now in their 80s and 90s, she says.

“Kathy Dyck and I have fine-tuned the dough and filling recipes but they are the originals from when this first started. Erna Falk recruited me to take over from her years ago.”

The fillings included peach-rhubarb, blackberry-blackberry-peach, peach, and a few grape pies, which everyone loves, says Soo-Wiens.

The pies from Cornerstone raised about $2,500 for the relief sale, she says.

Soo-Wiens heard from the organizer of the pie sale in New Hamburg that this year only five churches participated in baking pies as compared to pre-COVID, when there were seven. “This year there were about 1,200 pies that were contributed through the five churches — two Markham Mennonite churches, two churches in Kitchener and our Cornerstone Community Church,” she says.

In all, $333,000 was raised on Friday and Saturday for the Mennonite Central Committee, $15,450 coming from the Cornerstone Community Church, “she says.

The recipes have been fine-tuned over the years, says Soo-Wiens.

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In all, $333,000 was raised on Friday and Saturday for the Mennonite Central Committee, $15,450 coming from the pie sale. The New Hamburg Relief Sale, best known for its handmade quilts, raises money for relief from hunger, poverty and natural disaster and for development and peace-building activities with proceeds forwarded to the Mennonite Central Committee, a not-for-profit relief, service and development and peace agency of the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches in North America.
A Grove of oaks for Christopher Newton

Odette Yazbeck
Special to The Local

The ground-breaking tree initiative, the Chautauqua Oaks Project, helps celebrate the memory of Christopher Newton, former Artistic Director of the Shaw Festival.

The Chautauqua neighbourhood has a distinct landscape, made impressive by its 100 plus year old oak trees. The Chautauqua Oaks Project was developed to ensure the unique beauty of the Great Chautauqua Tree Canopy be preserved. After extensive study two courses of action were taken: the creation of a list of the recommended trees to plant in Chautauqua and a plan to repopulate the diminishing tree canopy.

For the latter the project partnered with the Niagara College School of Horticulture to harvest the acorns of Chautauqua’s heritage oaks. The acorns were then germinated and grown in the campus greenhouse. The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake joined the partnership to plant these new Chautauqua oaks, as they were called, back into the neighborhood. This partnership has proven very productive. To date over 60 Chautauqua oaks have been planted along Chautauqua streetscapes, ready to assume their role as the future Great Chautauqua Tree Canopy.

One such grove was planted on April 23 with a community connection important to Frankish as well as the rest of Canada.

“With the passing of Christopher Newton last December, Canada lost one of its legendary artists’ collaborator and friend Leise Frankish writes. “As an artist, mentor and friend his impact on many lives reached far beyond just those years in time. As a living memorial of his lasting legacy, 23 trees have been planted on the lands surrounding the Shaw Festival. For the latter the project was granted by the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, to create significant landscape gestures with community enriching connections.”

Mike Balsom
The Local

There wasn’t a lot of fresh produce available during Saturday’s kickoff of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Farmers’ Market. But that didn’t stop people from turning up in droves.

The massive stalks of rhubarb being offered by Bartel Organics was about the only produce seen on Saturday. Elsewhere, there was coconut curry butternut squash soup, fresh breakfast scones, local honey, homemade jams and preserves and uniquely designed birdhouses up for grabs.

“We have 14 vendors here today,” said Sharon Brinsmead, market coordinator. “This year we will max out at 25, which is two more than we had last year.”

Relative newcomer Colette Leiter is back with her Savviti booth, offering imported artisanal designs from Africa. She is one of the vendors who chooses to attend just one day a month.

“I’ve had the business since 1997,” Leiter told The Local. “I moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake last year. It’s my second year at the market and it went really well last year. It’s such a great networking place. I met so many people which really helped to expand my business and connections.”

“We have a lot of part-time vendors this year,” added Brinsmead. “Of course, we have a lot of core vendors returning who will be here every week, and a few new vendors joining us this year.”

“One of those new vendors is author Kathryn Recourt and her husband Don, who makes custom birdhouses. Kathryn was at the market last year as part of the NOTL Writers’ Circle and enjoyed it so much that the couple decided to run their own booth this summer.”

“I usually spend two or three hours on each one,” explained Don about his brightly coloured creations. “I take a lot of special requests and do custom builds for people. And I do a lot of corporate gifts, too.”

Brinsmead recognized many returning faithful customers right from the 9 a.m. opening time. Compared to last May’s opening day, when the weather was perfect for a market outing.

“Everybody is just happy to get outside and see people they haven’t seen since COVID came,” Brinsmead said, acknowledging the social aspect of the market. “It’s a community. During COVID we thrived, but we lost the community aspect. So we’re really glad to have our seating area back. People can grab a coffee and go and have a chat with their neighbours.”

And the vendors are happy to be back as part of the community — they’ve created a market family, helping each other erect their tents and carry their goods to their tables, Brinsmead added.

Some of the parents of the new Chautauqua oaks.

The Farmers’ market opens to local vendors

Lori Bisback, Ezra Allard and Xavier Allard from Cheese Secrets serving customers at the opening of the Farmers’ Market @ The Village.

Mike Balsom
The Local

Farmers’ Market mainstay Kim McGuire is back with her award-winning jams.

The Farmers’ Market @ The Village runs Saturdays until Oct. 7, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at 111 Garrison Village Dr.

Farmers’ market regular Lori Bisback offers her award-winning cheeses.
Notice of Completion
Municipal Class Environmental Assessment
Queenston-St. Davids Wastewater Servicing Strategy
Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

The Study
Niagara Region has completed a Municipal Class Environmental Assessment to explore wastewater servicing alternatives for the Queenston Wastewater Treatment Plant service area and to select and develop a preferred servicing solution. The study examined two servicing options:

- Upgrade the existing Queenston Wastewater Treatment Plant
- Decommission the existing wastewater treatment plant and redirect flows through a new sewage pumping station and forcemain to either of the sewage pumping stations in St. Davids

Study Recommendations
In accordance with Ontario’s Environmental Assessment Act, Niagara Region has planned this project under a Schedule “B” of the Municipal Engineers Association Class Environmental Assessment Process. A Public Information Centre was held on Oct. 5, 2022, to share information about the study and encourage interested members of the public, local business communities, and agencies to submit questions or concerns.

The study recommends upgrading the existing plant at the current location following an extensive evaluation process that included public engagement with local residents and businesses, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and Niagara Region. This solution requires no capacity increases, no new facilities or new land. The preferred solution will include:

- Rehabilitation of the existing facility to maintain the plant’s average rated flow capacity of 0.5 megalitres per day while continuing to meet effluent quality requirements; and
- Upgrades to meet Niagara’s State of Good Repair requirements including upgrades to the treatment, electrical, control and site security systems, and repair of the existing access road

For More Information
A Project File Report, documenting the planning process undertaken and key elements of the preferred design, is available for public review on Niagara Region’s website: niagararegion.ca/projects/queenston-st-davids.

The Project File Report will be made available for public review for 30 calendar days from June 5 to July 5, 2023 at the following locations during normal business hours:

Clerks Department
Niagara Region
1615 Sir Isaac Brock Way, PO Box 1042
Thorold, ON L2V 4T7
905 980-6000 ext. 3222
Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215
Monday – Friday: 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Requests should be sent by email or in writing to:

Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks
777 Bay St, 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3
minister.mecp@ontario.ca

Personal information collected or submitted in writing at public meetings will be collected, used and disclosed by members of Regional Council and Regional staff in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. The written submissions including names, contact information and reports of the public meeting will be made available. Questions should be referred to the Privacy Office at 905-880-6000, ext. 3779 or FOI@niagararegion.ca.

If you require any accommodations for a disability in order to attend and participate in meetings or events, please let us know in advance so that arrangements can be made in a timely manner. Please contact the Accessibility Advisory Coordinator at 905-880-8000 ext. 3292 or accessibility@niagararegion.ca.

This notice was first issued on May 31, 2023.
St. Davids Spring Market returns Saturday

Penny Coles  The Local

The St. Davids Lioness Lion Club Spring Market will return this year, with more vendors than ever spread out in the York Road park. Lioness Diane Pewer, one of the organizers of the market, says last year it was warm and crowded inside the clubhouse, so the decision was made to take all the fun outdoors and make use of the spacious St. Davids Lions Park and its two covered pavilions, with lots of room for more than 50 vendors, as well as food and beverage trucks.

Most of the vendors who come have their own tents, she says, and those who don’t will be located under the pavilions. County Boys Mobile Food Service will be there with breakfast, lunch and refreshments, as will Simple Simon, with breads, bagels and desserts. Pierogi Me will also be there, as well as Al-fie’s Lemonade. Vendors will include “many different types of artisans,” she says, along with Ozzie to the Rescue, a foster-based organization run by volunteers who look for families to take on hand-capped and abused dogs. Also at the market will be Necklaces for Hope, colourful necklaces, bracelets and earrings that are handmade and sold to raise money for Wellspring Niagara. And of course the St. Davids Lions will be selling raffle tickets for the 18-foot trailer that will be the grand prize at the July carnival, again donated by Niagara Trailers, with a second prize of $1,000.

This year’s Spring Market proceeds are going to the Niagara Children’s Centre in St. Catharines, which offers programs for those aged four to 21 with physical or mental disabilities, says Pewer.

“We’ve helped out a lot of organizations over the years,” she says, “but this time the whole committee decided they were onside with helping the children’s centre.”

There will be a 50/50 draw, and draws for donated prizes, she says. The event is at the St. Davids Lions Park on York Road this Saturday, June 3, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. “It’s a great day, so I’m hoping . . .” says Pewer. There is lots of room for parking, which is free, as is admission to the event.

Penny Coles  The Local

Selling recycled town tulip bulbs to raise money has become a spring tradition in Niagara-on-the-Lake, this time involving the St. Davids Leos, says Brad Anderson, leader of the local youth branch of the Lions. Residents and visitors have long admired the tulips on Queen Street, and several years ago, The Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society began organizing a sale of the bulbs once they were dug up by town staff, which they do every spring before planting again. When the horticultural society didn’t want to do it anymore, explains Betty Disero, the town was preparing for a Communities in Bloom Competition, and the Rotary Club of NOTL offered to take it on, both as an example of the town recycling and to help beautify local gardens. During the Rotary years, funds from the sale went to the town’s tree fund. But last summer, Disero was asked if the Leos could take it on, and she committed to letting them take it over as a fundraiser. As the tulips were dug up, the bulbs were delivered to the St. Davids Lions Hall, where volunteers helped sort and wash them the first day, including Disero and Coun. Adriana Vizzari, who did some sorting and demonstrated how to clean them.

More than 1,200 bulbs have been boxed and are being stored in a cool, dark place, says Anderson, ready for the Leos to sell at the St. Davids Lioness Lion Club Spring Market this Saturday, June 3, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Leos also held a dog wash recently, taking over the dog wash stations at Pet Valu in Virgil for a day. “It was an overwhelming success,” says Anderson. “People trusted the Leos with their pets, and the Leos did a great job and had a lot of fun, and staff at Pet Valu bent over backwards to help them.” “The staff and dog owners were really pleased by how well the Leos did,” he added.

Leos also organized the annual Walk for Dog Guides, and although only four people showed up for the walk, along with Leos and their families, “the online donations exceeded our expectations,” said Anderson. The Leos have been raising money to help train dog guides, and also to donate to the building of a new, state-of-the-art Lions Foundation facility for dog guide training in Oakville.

The tulip sale, however, is for another one of the Leos’ causes — a McMas- ter Children’s Hospital oncology clinic for teens. St. Davids and other district Lions Clubs have contributed to the building of the clinic, and the Leos also decided they want to help out by supporting the clinic so that teens dealing with cancer and cancer treatments could have their own space. 

Leos selling town tulips at Spring Market

Leos Dylan Kroeker, Sophia Szweczyk, Valeria Yaremchak, Hardi Patel and Xander Anderson had a great day at Pet Valu raising money to help train dog guides. (Photos supplied)

The Leos tulip team has been helping prepare for the town tulip sale, with more than 1,200 bulbs ready to go for $5 a dozen.

The St. Davids Lioness Lion Club members gathered recently. The club has become a branch of the St. Davids Lions Club, due to a decision by Lions International in 2021. Women can become Lions Club members or Lioness Lion Club members and hold their own events while paying Lions membership fees, but Lioness Clubs can no longer exist separately. (Supplied)
Many of us love to spend time in the great outdoors. Sometimes unsteady balance, arthritic joints, a lung condition or other health or mobility differences are what’s making outdoor adventures uncomfortable. But there are still plenty of ways to enjoy an escape into nature.

Get the dirt
Try to research the lay of the land at any campsite, trail or protected park to see what you’re working with. Look online or contact the destination. Ask about the size and location of bathroom facilities. Find out if the terrain can make outdoor activities more accessible. Depending on your needs, devices could range from walking poles or supportive shoes, to beach and off-road wheelchairs, or tents with wheelchair storage.

Use support
There are plenty of tools that can make outdoor activities more accessible. Depending on your needs, devices could range from walking poles or supportive shoes, to beach and off-road wheelchairs, or tents with wheelchair storage. You might be able to reserve, rent or borrow some of these items.

Get glamping
Short for glamorous camping, glamping is the ongoing trend of making camping more comfortable and luxurious. It doesn’t have to be fancy or expensive; it just takes out some of the more complicated or uncomfortable parts of the experience.

A raised sleeping platform or cot is a glamping go-to because it offers a more comfortable night’s rest than the hard ground. A bed off the ground also makes it easier to get up in the morning, independently or with assistance.

By proclaiming the month of June as Seniors Month, the Province of Ontario formally recognizes and celebrates the work seniors have done and are doing in our communities.

Celebrate Seniors Golden Years Guide

Enjoy nature at any age or ability

Celebrate Seniors Month
Join us Saturday, June 24th for our Classic Car Show 11-2pm

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When your time comes, are you prepared? Will you burden your family with planning your funeral after you’re gone? Or will you pre-plan your funeral and have it done your way? You can help answer your pre-need and at-need funeral questions.

Call us to pre-arrange exactly what you want—traditional or contemporary.

Morgan Funeral Home has been part of the Niagara-on-the-Lake community since 1959. Founded on the principle established by funeral directors Gordon & Betty Morgan “of serving families just as we would want to be served.” The team at Morgan Funeral Home continues to be available to help you or your family answer your pre-need and at-need funeral arrangements.

Get moving outside

(NC) June is Cataract Awareness Month, and it’s a great time to learn about the eye condition. Cataracts affect more than 3.5 million Canadians every year, making it one of the most common aging eye conditions. But it’s one of many people may not understand very well.

“Developing cataracts as we get older is like greying hair—it’s inevitable for most people, and it can happen early on or can develop slowly over many years,” says Canadian ophthalmologist Dr. Kathy Cao. “It’s so important to be proactive about eye health, especially if you notice changes in your vision.”

What are cataracts?

Cataracts occur when the lens in the eye becomes cloudy as natural proteins build up over time, leading to clouded vision, light sensitivity and fading colours. If left untreated, cataracts can cause significant vision loss and blindness. At the early stages, cataracts only need to be observed—so annual eye appointments are important. When symptoms become more intrusive, it’s time to discuss cataract surgery.

Early symptoms of cataracts may include:

- seeing halos or fog around lights
- seeing double or “floaters”
- light sensitivity
- needing brighter lights
- needing more time walking each day
- difficulties with near vision
- noticing your glasses are no longer fitting
- problems turning pages in a book
- cloudy vision
- sensitivity to light
- problems seeing at night
- cloudy lenses
- problems reading
- problems doing everyday activities

How to prepare

Cataract surgery involves taking out the natural lens in the eye and then replacing it with an artificial lens. When it comes to lenses, one size does not fit all. Patients may not realize there are different types of lenses for their surgery, but in fact, there are many options to meet specific vision goals.

Your surgeon needs to understand what you as a patient want, the kinds of activities you engage in and your expectations. For example, do you rely on near vision as a bookworm or distant vision as a cyclist? Most people don’t realize how much of our everyday activity is done at an arm’s length, like working at a computer or putting on makeup. These are important things to think about when choosing a lens,” says Dr. Cao.

If you’re considering cataract surgery, you should have an informed conversation with your surgeon about your vision goals to select the cataract lens replacement that’s right for you.

Find more information at seethewholepicture.ca.
Avid hikers need look no further for your next adventure. The magnificent Alpine vistas of the Bavarian and Austrian Alps, a region that boasts some of the world’s most spectacular mountain ranges, offers both exhilarating hiking and incomparable scenery. Along with hiking, a European journey would not be complete without taking in some measure of the historic and delightful sites that we’ve chosen for our group members.

Our fall journey begins in stunning Salzburg. Here, a delightful walking tour introduces us to Mozart’s birthplace, the Salzburg Cathedral, the Fortress of Hohensalzburg and the charming Old Town. In the Berchtesgaden area, we walk through a pristine forest and explore the “Eagle’s Nest” for views of the Bavarian Mountains and Salzburg Alps. At Mt. Watzmann, enjoy some free time to explore the walking trails in the National Park. In Munich, a city tour introduces us to world-famous sites including Hofbrauhaus, Marienplatz, Nymphenburg Palace and more. At Unterammergau, our hike takes us through a nature reserve where we have magnificent views over the Ammer Valley. Stop for a delicious lunch at a mountain lodge before walking back to our hotel.

Visit one of King Ludwig II’s majestic castles at Neuschwanstein. Discover a natural monument as you walk through a canyon, Breitachklamm, the deepest gorge in Central Europe. All of these are only a sampling of the adventures planned for this exciting journey. Join us September 22 to October 5, the most comfortable time of year following the heat of summer in Europe. Mention promo code ALPINEVISTAS when you reserve your space and save $200 per person. If you love the thrill of hiking and experiencing some of Europe’s most spectacular sightseeing, Alpine Beauty’s wonderful balance of both, may be just the ticket! Call Craig Travel at 1-800-387-8890 or email journeys@craigtravel.com. Visit craigtravel.com/NOTL for more tour details.

Written by Robert Craig, President of Craig Travel.

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The magnificent Alpine vistas of the Bavarian and Austrian Alps, a region that boasts some of the world’s most spectacular mountain ranges, offers both exhilarating hiking and incomparable scenery. Explore and discover the historic sites, storybook castles, majestic palaces, charming towns and activities in the great outdoors on this delightful fall journey.

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1092 Mount Pleasant Rd, Toronto, ON M4P 2M6
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www.craigtravel.com/NOTL

*Mention promo code ALPINEVISTAS at time of booking to receive $200 per person savings. Prices are in Canadian dollars. All excursions are on your own. Conditions apply, contact Craig Travel for details.
Are you acting out your dreams while sleeping?

(NG) We all know how important sleep is to our mental and physical health. But how you sleep can be an early indicator for later health issues. If someone has noticed that you act out your dreams, especially yelling, punching, kicking or getting out of bed, you may be living with rapid-eye movement sleep behaviour disorder, also known as RBD.

During normal REM, the time when we dream, the brain prevents movement. But for those with RBD, brain pathways are disrupted and people are able to act out their dreams. People with the condition often have very active dreams in which they’re playing sports, running or even being chased or attacked. Sleep problems, including this one, are common in people diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease. Although not everyone with RBD develops Parkinson’s, studies suggest a strong link between having the condition and a future diagnosis of Parkinson’s or related conditions. RBD can occur years before more well-known symptoms, such as tremors, stiffness or slowness. Other possible early signs of Parkinson’s include constipation, depression and smell loss.

“My symptoms were varied: a shuffling, arm tremors, loss of coordination and difficulties speaking, sleeping and focusing,” says Larry Gifford, a Canadian journalist diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease at age 46. Symptoms began appearing three or four years before, but I never linked them. Through those undiagnosed years, doctors tell me I lost approximately eighty percent of my dopamine-producing brain cells. If you have symptoms, including acting out your dreams, talk to your doctor. Other sleep problems may mimic RBD, so it’s important for a sleep specialist to confirm the diagnosis. Once diagnosed, a movement disorder specialist (a neurologist with expertise in Parkinson’s disease and other movement disorders) can help provide care and offer an individualized treatment plan.

You also may want to consider joining a research study. In Canada, the Michael J. Fox Foundation’s landmark brain health study, the Parkinson’s Progression Markers Initiative (PPMI), follows people with and without Parkinson’s over time to learn more about how brain disease starts and changes. It’s exploring the connection between RBD and brain disease to understand who gets Parkinson’s, who doesn’t and why. Find more information about the study or learn how to get involved at michaeljfox.org/ppmi.

Tips for picking the best (and freshest) produce

(NG) A diet that is rich in high-quality, fresh vegetables and fruits can be great for your overall health, but finding the tastiest, ripest and best produce isn’t always easy. From apples to zucchini and everything in between, here are four tips on how to pick the best fruits and vegetables.

Shop locally

Certain types of fresh produce begin to lose their nutrients just 24 hours after they’re picked, but local food does not have to travel as far as food imported from other regions or countries. Shopping locally is also great for the environment as it helps reduce your carbon footprint. Choosing local food also supports nearby farmers and other producers, which benefits the local economy.

Opt for organic

Some studies suggest that some organic produce may contain more vitamins, minerals and micronutrients than conventionally grown fruits and vegetables. Consuming organic produce may also reduce the chemicals you’re putting into your body because it contains fewer pesticides. Most natural health food stores like Nature’s Emporium carry organic produce exclusively, so it’s easier to avoid pesticides on your produce.

Pick produce with vibrant colour

Choose fruits and vegetables that are vibrant and show consistent colour. For the freshest options, avoid fruits and vegetables that are dull, pale or show signs of discoloration. Brown or black spots on produce could mean it’s starting to go off.

Pick produce that feels firm

High quality, fresh produce is firm to the touch. When shopping for fruits and vegetables, be sure to give them a little squeeze to test their firmness. If produce is soft or feels mushy, it could be a sign that it’s well past its prime. Find more tips at naturesemporium.com.
Sneezing, an itchy throat and scratchy, watery eyes are hallmarks of pollen season. Although they typically haunt allergy sufferers in spring and fall, some people face symptoms all year, even in summer. For those longer-term allergy sufferers, improving the quality of indoor air at home might help.

Here are some easy steps to cleaner, fresher air at home:

**Prevent mould growth**
Mould spores in the air can cause an allergic reaction or a rise in allergy symptoms. Mould grows in moist environments, like bathrooms. To prevent its growth, check occasionally for leaks around your tub or shower. Ensure your bathroom exhaust fan is working and consider opening a window during a shower. Allow the shower and its door or curtain to fully dry when you’re done to prevent moisture build-up. And, when cleaning mouldy surfaces, wear a mask to prevent breathing in the airborne spores and run an air purifier at the same time.

**Avoid VOCs**
Many home cleaning products contain volatile organic compounds, known as VOCs, which are chemicals that can affect air quality. They can also off-gas from pressed wood cabinets, panelling and flooring. To reduce exposure to these compounds, avoid storing cleaning products in your living area and keep only the minimum amount you need. When using them, open a window or turn on a fan. An air purifier can also help increase ventilation without opening windows. The same advice applies if you are installing new flooring or painting a room.

**Reduce pet allergens**
Dog and cat hair and pet dander in the air can affect your indoor air quality. Pets coming into the house can also track in pesticides and outdoor allergens. To reduce these allergens in your home, vacuum area rugs and carpets regularly and consider having your fur babies sleep in a different room from you. Consider a high-quality air purifier in every room where pets spend significant time. Find more information about air purifiers for different rooms at honeywellpluggedin.ca.

### Celebrating Seniors Month

Join us Saturday, June 24th for our Classic Car Show 11-2pm

Live in a vibrant, fun & social community with peace of mind with a built in support system.

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Buzz on Pollinators: 15 trees planted on heritage trail

Sandra Ozkur Special to The Local

If you walk along the Upper Canada Heritage Trail, you will have noticed a lot of activity as of late with the installation of trees and hay along the trail. Protect our Pollinators association was formed in November 2022 with the vision of bringing awareness to the decline of pollinating insects such as native bees, butterflies, moths, hummingbirds and butterflies. This small group of volunteers have been creating pollinator awareness every since through these regular articles.

The group’s secondary objective was to create a pollinator corridor through town. Now that vision has begun to manifest with the creation of large pollinator habitats along the Heritage Trail.

Last Friday, fifteen pollinator-friendly trees were planted along the first section of the trail from John to Paffard Street. These flowering trees, once established, will provide pollen and nectar for a large variety of pollinating insects, as well as habitat for caterpillars to develop into moths and butterflies. These trees have been specifically chosen for the needs of native bees and pollinators. Next, other scrubs and native flowers will be planted in the pollinator beds that are being prepared along the pathway, and together they will create a complete ecosystem.

You will see strips of hay have been laid out in several areas to prepare the beds for the native plants that will soon be installed there. The hay has been placed in a thick mat to smother the invasive plants beneath. When it rains the hay will pack down and provide compost and will hold the moisture in the soil for the plants to grow.

Please bear with us during this process as we know it is unsightly at this point, it takes time to prepare the beds before they will be suitable for planting. The volunteers from the pollinator planting group will be monitoring and watering these new trees and plants with the help of the town.

We would like to thank the many people that have participated in this process which includes the planning and executing of this project, the landscaping, and the coordination with the town and the Heritage Trail committee. Most importantly, we would like to thank the Goettler Family Foundation for their generous donation that made this all possible.

This is an ongoing project so be sure to walk the trail regularly to see it begin to grow.

Penny Coles
The Local

Ron Simkus, a retired mining engineer who has taken it upon himself to monitor water levels in the Dock Area and consult with the town on soil erosion and other issues, is delighted to see a rain garden in The Parkette — Ron Simkus hopes the town will stop calling it Balls Beach Park — is flourishing, thanks to neighbours who have watered it, and the area around it is green solutions and novel engineering combined with green solutions and novel landscape architecture.

Even 20 years ago, a 2004 staff report by Clive Buist, then director of parks and recreation, described the passive parkette that exists today, possibly with benches, but no lighting, no picnic tables or washrooms.

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Organizers offer reminder of upcoming Cherry Festival

Mark your calendars for St. Mark’s Cherry Festival, held on the grounds of the church. It’s an annual favourite for parishioners, local residents and visitors, and this year will be held on July 8. Pie-makers are busy at the church hall preparing for the festival. Last year Judy MacLachlan and Gil Bryan sold fresh cherries, another annual favourite. (Supplied)
Unpacking Indigenous baggage — at the library

Sharon Burns

A program at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Library will unpack some of the baggage Indigenous people carry, and allow participants to update their own “carry-on” items in a “better understanding of how we can help,” said Terry Mactaggart, co-founder of the Lear & Live series.

Shawanoo-Kechego, a long-time and active community member currently working at the Niagara Regional Native Centre’s Indigenous Community Justice Program, was the key speaker June 5. Monday night’s event is titled Unpacking Indigenous Baggage — Upgrading Your Carry-on.

Shawanoo-Kechego is Anishinaabe, Ojibway from Kettle and Stony Point, Turtle Clan. An intergenerational survivor, she has used her strengths to graduate from Brock University in 2013 with degrees in history and sociology. Throughout her tenure at the native-owned centre she has helped numerous roles and continues to be an advocate for her community.

“While there is much work to do in the community, there is a wealth of history and resources to be shared with others. We will look at where we are today, discuss some of the headline history and some of the lesser-known pieces of history, said Shawanoow-Kechego. “In unity, we can bring light to the truth and start the path to reconciliation.”

“Cindy and I decided to strike out on our own and formed Learn & Live, which is unique to this area,” the title Learn & Live is a twist of the phrase live and learn. They chose their catchy title in the hope that participants will carry on learning well after the presentations.

“We will be in partnership with the library, which provides the venue and helps with registration, a variety of programming throughout the summer and into fall. In partnership with the library, we have developed a series of topics. MacTaggart, in reference to the library.

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“Hopefully we can pass forward into better understanding of Indigenous concerns and issues,” said MacTaggart.

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While not many artifacts remain of a “better understanding of what we carry” and the “mega baggage” that comes with us, said MacTaggart.

“If we were to come away from the presentations just having learned a little bit more about our history, that’s a win for us,” said MacTaggart.

“The Local was on its way out the door, John Mul- ligan whispered in his shaggy blue hair, tipped his brass slide on his finger, and played a roaring, metallic version of John Prine’s “Guitar and Me.”

In all, a total of seven differ- ent acts tried their hand at the open mic session for an enjoyable evening of music by some talented local musicians.

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Four Paul Harris recipients celebrated by Rotary

Local Staff

Paul Harris Awards were handed out to four people by the Rotary Club of Niagara-on-the-Lake Tuesday as it celebrated another year of outstanding achievements in the community and beyond.

The annual Paul Harris Awards Gala was held at the community centre, and featured performances by young musicians from the Yellow Door Theatre Project.

“Their talented individual and ensemble performances set the tone for the amazing inspirational stories and speeches that followed as the awards were presented,” said Rotarian Bill French.

The Paul Harris Award, named after the founder of Rotary International, is Rotary’s highest honour. Honourees Lauren and Vaughn Goettler were recognized for their generous and diverse philanthropy, Rotarian Cindy Grant for her outstanding leadership and contribution to several NOTL community organizations, and Rotarian Jodye Porter for her service to numerous local, national and international organizations, said French.

Added club president Greg Fedoryn, “it was a great celebration of our success this year, and it was wonderful to recognize the outstanding contributions of Lauren and Vaughn, Cindy, and Jodye. They inspire us to continue doing good work around the world as people of action.”

Rotary is a global network of 1.4 million neighbours, friends and leaders who volunteer their time and resources to solve issues and address community needs, French explained, with Rotarians volunteering about 47 million hours each year and awarding $33 million to global service initiatives.

On a local level, the Rotary Club of NOTL had the most successful fundraising year in the club’s history thanks to members’ passion and hard work, said French.

Pairing of arts and wine: a sensory experience

Maria Klassen
Special to The Local

Tucked away in two rooms, on the second floor of a European-style chateau, is an incredible art exhibit. Visit Chateau des Charmes Winery in St. Davids, and climb the stairs to the Paul Bosc Lounge and the St. Davids Bench Room. There you will find the diverse and distinctive styles of local artists belonging to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Arts Collective, which also includes several curators and galleries.

The many and varied mediums are astounding. Examples found in this exhibit include: acrylic, oil, soft pastels, mixed media collages, metallic paper prints and high definition prints, prints on metal and canvas, fused glass, charcoal on canvas and an archival photograph.

The subjects for the individual pieces are just as diverse. Mountains and forests, an assortment of flowers and trees, varying water scenes, examples from the animal kingdom, and people and places can be found.

The winery’s director of hospitality, Martin Lindqvist says, “The winery has always been interested in supporting the arts, with exhibits year-round from out-of-town artists.”

When the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre and members of the NOTL Collective approached the winery to display the work of local artists, Chateau des Charmes jumped at the chance to join forces in a partnership representing and supporting local artists.

Paul-Andre Bosc, president and CEO of Chateau des Charmes, comes from a family of winegrowers in France. His father Paul came to Canada with his young family in the 1960s, planted Canadian’s first commercial vineyard, and founded the winery in 1978. The first building went up in 1994. There is a long tradition of showcasing wine and art in Europe, and Paul-André wants to continue this tradition.

Through this partnership, we want to contribute to Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre’s efforts to strengthening the visual arts in the community,” says Bosc. He invites guests to enjoy his estate winery, sipping a glass of wine, savouring the scenery, and enjoying the works of professional local artists.

The public is invited to the opening reception on Thursday, June 1, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., for an opportunity to meet some of the members of the collective and enjoy a complimentary sparkling wine while viewing stunning pieces. The show is open to the public at no charge and continues through Oct. 26.

Artwork can be purchased by contacting the artists directly.

Come by and enjoy a sensory experience for both the eyes and the taste buds — a pairing of the arts.
Niagara votes against privatized healthcare services

Mike Balsom
The Local

The results are in from voting booths set up across Niagara by volunteers with the Niagara Health Coalition.

Almost 120 volunteers ran more than 30 voting stations across Niagara last week, giving visitors a chance to express their opinion about the province’s government’s passing of Bill 60, The Your Health Act 2023, which received royal assent on May 18.

The Niagara Health Coalition, along with the Niagara group led by activist and retired teacher Sue Hotte, are concerned that the new law will lead to the proliferation of private health clinics across the province, putting a further strain on public health systems.

Voting booths similar to those in Niagara were happening this weekend across Ontario.

The Niagara ballot contained two questions:

1. Do you want our public hospital services to be privatized to for-profit hospitals and clinics?

2. Do you want all of the existing sites and services of the Niagara hospitals to be maintained, protected and improved without any further cuts or closures?

Ontarians also had a chance to complete a ballot online, though only the first question was included there.

Overwhelmingly, participants voted against privatized healthcare and for the continuation of current service levels at all existing public health facilities in the region.

In a Tuesday morning press release, the Niagara Coalition revealed the results of the polls across the region. On question one, 17,125 people voted no and 404 voted yes. On question number two, the votes were 10,042 for yes to maintaining our hospitals and 197 for no.

“We’re happy with the turnout,” Hotte said Tuesday afternoon. “We only had four weeks to get the word out, and Niagara is a big area. For me, the turnout is really good. In one town I think more people turned out for this than for the last election.”

In Niagara-on-the-Lake, a Queen Street voting booth set up by the Niagara Health Coalition Friday attracted visitors, many from across the region, throughout the day.

The NOTL booth was set up just after 9 a.m. on the east side of the Court House by Pamela Wilson and Peggy Hooke. Unfortunately, they had chosen the spot usually occupied by the Niagara-on-the-Lake Ambassadors and were asked to move at around noon.

NOTL residents Barb Cowie and Jennifer Roberts took over on the other side of the Court House after that, and told The Local that there had been a steady stream of about 30 voters in their first 90 minutes.

“A lot of people who have stepped up aren’t from Ontario,” said Cowie. “But those who have been telling us they were happy we’re here as they hadn’t voted online yet.”

Gerda Ryckaert of St. Catharines was one of the voters who stopped by the booth Friday afternoon.

“My mother and father died of cancer,” said Ryckaert. “I know how important it is for our families and friends to have services and friendly, helpful people in our hospitals. I am sure everybody there is so stressed and pressured right now. This bill makes me worry that we may end up having to pay for services. Healthcare should be free for everyone.”

especially for the vulnerable populations that I am working for. Privileged people will jump to the cue, they’ll push their advantage and leave out the same people who are always left out.”

“It’s just going to take nurses and doctors from the hospitals, she lamented. “It’s going to drain these services out of our public hospitals. And it’s important to keep local services open. We are an aging population here, we need access to public services.”

Co-workers Rachel Laflamme of Stoney Creek and Summer Thop of London, Ontario were visiting NOTL on a day off.

“I work in healthcare and procurement,” said Laflamme. “The government needs to support our local hospitals and our people. Pulling staff away from an already short-staffed facility to work in private facilities will just create further issues with capacity and patient nurse ratios. That’s a safe issue.”

Laflamme fears Ontario’s health system under Bill 60 will become similar to what happens in the United States.

“What we have is so much better than there,” she added. “We need to be pressing our money into our institutions rather than taking it out. This runs the risk of increased healthcare costs as certain agencies and vendors will get more business and they will raise their prices. In a public health system, we answer to the taxpayers.”

Thorp role in healthcare is to create working relationships between the community and the institutions.

“With this misguided expectation that private health care will be the panacea for everything,” she said. “But there isn’t any contingency planning.

There was a little bit of a kerfuffle when volunteer ambassadors arrived at the Court House to find their spot taken, but they helped move the voting booth set up to ask about privatized healthcare to the other side of the steps. (Photos by Mike Balsom)
Spring celebration at native centre a huge success

Mike Balsom
The Local

The Niagara Regional Al Native Centre’s recent Kenkwite’ne celebration of spring brought together the community in an all-ages sharing of traditional Indigenous teachings, practices and activities.

“It was an attempt to get in touch with everyone’s inner baby child,” says Veronica Orozco, coordinator of the regional centre’s Community Action Program for Children, “to really hone in on that little spirit that sits within all of us. We wanted to have fun and engage in the outdoors and connect to nature.”

To that end, Orozco (Abitinoonji, Ojibway) and others at the centre organized a full day of activities that participants rotated through, including learning to create a friction fire, an archery station, hearing the creation story from an Indigenous elder, gardening, arts and crafts, and a group hand drill session.

The day began at dawn with a sunrise ceremony, led by Roger Jacklin, who tended the sacred fire throughout the day.

“We brought in some Indigenous knowledge keepers to share traditional teachings,” says Orozco. “We asked them to speak to this aspect of Kenkwite’ne, which is spring. We had one of our grandmothers, who is Cree, share her story.”

The gardening station included a chance for the kids to get their hands dirty in the soil, while the painting station focused on decorating aprons and rocks along the Kenkwite’ne theme.

“We also had a friction fire hand drill station,” says Orozco, “which was kind of a tug’o’war style to get the fire started. It brought all the ages together to collaborate to get it going.”

A big hit for the day was the archery station, run by Kirstyn Smith, the Niagara-on-the-Lake proprietor of Red Tail Adventures, formerly Sigma Archery.

“Our archery station was a real highlight of the event,” says Smith. “Someone else dropped out, and she stumbled upon my company. I was so excited to get involved.”

Smith’s archery fascination began a few years ago with her exposure to the Disney animated film Brave. She has even learned how to shoot arrows from horseback as the character Merida does in the 2012 film.

There was no horseback riding during the Kenkwite’ne event, but Smith did set up four homemade targets and led participants through the proper way to release their arrows. Many of the kids tried to circle back to the archery station for another go at the skill.

“My main expression was my company,” Smith says. “I want people to re-wild themselves, to get back to their roots. All of this, archery, gardening, making fire, it all comes down to what we did before society took a different direction. Learning self-sustainability and getting comfortable in the outdoors is really important.”

That focus makes Smith a great partner for Orozco, who was the driver behind the entire day’s event.

“These land-based activities are so important to the survival of our culture,” she says. “We are an urban Indigenous community centre, but unlike others we are gifted with the amount of land we have here. We can do so many outdoor activities here. We have to take advantage of that here.”

With the Native Centre’s summer camp coming up soon, Orozco is hoping that Smith can be a big part of it. And Jacklin hopes to see her back at the Native Centre as well.

“Things are going to grow from this event,” the Ojibway elder tells The Local. “It is such a fulfilling partnership. It will grow greatly, naturally.”

The spring celebration was Smith’s first attempt to bring archery to an event, rather than have participants come to her friend’s farm in St. Catharines where she usually offers her instruction.

“I hand-created my own targets to bring out here today,” she says. “We did a site visit first, mapping out where we would set up, with safety at the top of mind right from the start. And Roger was an ace with the arrow, by the way.”

Jacklin in turn said he was impressed with Smith’s open and honest character, as well as her willingness to share her knowledge with all of the participants.

As Orozco is planning to make Kenkwite’ne an annual event, she hopes Smith can return for future archery sessions. And, as the young sharpshooter is planning to offer other back-to-the-wild activities through Red Tail soon, there may be other opportunities for collaboration.

“The issue these days is all about disconnection,” Orozco laments. “Kenkwite’ne was all about reconnecting our relationship with that spirit. We have to reconnect our people with healthy activities that are full of balance physically, spiritually and emotionally.”

Soccer open for the season

Beautiful sunny weather greeted almost 300 boys and girls aged four to 14 for the opening day of the NOTL Soccer season Saturday. For most coaches it was their first chance to meet their team, and it was the first time for many players to begin forming their new soccer friendships for the summer. More than 340 kids have registered for soccer this summer, including house league and interlock divisions, and travel teams who start their competitive season in June. There is still space for registrations for the Timbits division (turning four or five this year) and for the annual summer camp. Visit notlsoccer.ca for information.
Lacrosse tournament renamed to honour beloved executive

Mike Balsom

A group of former Junior B lacrosse teammates, as well as current and former club executives, gathered along with the family of Mike Jones at the Virgil arenas last weekend to honour the late lacrosse booster.

The Thunderhawks also memorialized the beloved longtime executive of the club by renaming last weekend’s 46th annual minor lacrosse tournament in his name. Jones, who grew up in Queenston and played Junior B lacrosse with the Niagara Kinsmen Warriors, precursors to the Thunderhawks, lost a 16-month battle with glioblastoma, an aggressive form of brain cancer, in January.

“This weekend has brought back so many memories,” said Jones’ wife, Anne Andres-Jones. “And my grandson was playing in the tournament for the very first time, with our son Eryn coaching him. Mike would have been so proud. The support of family and friends this weekend has been amazing.”

Andres-Jones became a bit teary-eyed while considering that the Thunderhawks Tournament will be known as the Mike Jones Memorial going forward.

“It’s a really fitting tribute to the work Mike put in, mostly behind the scenes,” she acknowledged.

“He did all the jobs no one else really wanted to do, but that was Mike. It was really important to him that the Junior B team be a community team, so that kids would have a chance to play.”

In December, 2021, the Thunderhawks organization announced the cancellation of its Junior B program. The closure of the border to the U.S. during COVID made it impossible for members of the Tuscarora Indian Reserve, located across the Queenston-Lewiston bridge in New York state, to play in NOTL.

“His work was behind the scenes,” Dave told The Local. “People didn’t know what he did. His dedication was amazing. I think this is very fitting. And all the people that came, it was like a high school reunion.”

Three years younger than Mike, Dave remembered having a chance to play a few Junior B games with his big brother.

“He was a goalie,” laughed Dave, “and I tried my hardest to score on him in practice every time. We grew up along the Parkway in Queenston where there were so many boys. Mike constantly gave me inspiration to try to beat him, and I still have the scars to prove it.”

Family and friends packed the lobby at the Centennial Arena, where a display case borrowed from the Ontario Lacrosse Hall of Fame was on display. Featuring a jersey once worn by Jojie En gemann, whose parents Joe and Rose were instrumental in the start of the program, it also includes a tribute to Jones. Mike had previously been honoured with the Spirit of Lacrosse print for his 40 years of service to the Ontario Lacrosse Association.

Former club executive member Ken Slingerland, who first met Mike at the 1969 provincial championship but that team isn’t running for 2023. “He was really troubled by that,” said Dave of the cancellation of the junior B program. “He persevered, and contacted Family Crisis...”

Current Thunderhawks president Chris Williams and vice-president Jay Thorimbert then presented Anne and the family with a plaque and flowers.

“Thorimbert’s Under-11 team was one of three Thunderhawks squads playing in last weekend’s 22-team tournament. His squad came from behind to knock off the Centre Wellington Riverhawks 8-7 in Sunday’s semi-final game and went on to a thrilling 7-5 win over the Kitchener Kioidakis to capture the tournament title in their age group.

“It’s huge for us to win this first Mike Jones tournament,” said Thorimbert, who plays for the New York Ripdiles of the National Lacrosse League. “He was there when I started playing Junior B. These kids don’t really know the story, but to win the first one ever at home is amazing.”

“Tournament convenor Lisa Alfaro told The Local that registration numbers for some of the youngest age groups was much larger than previous seasons.

“The idea of bringing back the Junior B team has come up a couple of times in board meetings,” she said. “Considering the turnout we had last weekend, it seems like the of the year.”

“I was enthused to find out how many of the youngest kids are playing in the organization,” Slingerland said. “They told me they had 35 paperweights playing. I think our Junior B will come back in time. There’s a tradition here since 1969, and it was one of the strongest franchises in the province. I’m sure it will be back some day.”

The support of family and friends this weekend has been amazing.”

Mike Balsom

The Local

Mike Jones’ family were pleased to see him honoured. Attending the celebration were Karen Jones, Dave Jones, Bryn Jones, Mike’s wife Anne Andres-Jones, his son Ryan Jones, granddaughters Mia and Macy Jones, daughter-in-law Amy, and Mike’s mother-in-law Lois Andres. Friends and former teammates came out to honour Mike Jones, including his brother Dave Jones, Dave Mines, Al Janzen, Bryn Jones (Dave’s son), Rob Wilson, John Floris, Ed McIroy, Ken Slingerland, Peter Buis, Jay Thorimbert and Steve Leavitt. (Photos by Mike Balsom)
The NOTL kids are a nice mix of offense and defense,” Quinn told The Local. “We have leaders, have bench players. Some are Grade 12 kids who have been playing juvenile and intermediate lacrosse (outside of school). They provide structure for our younger kids. Remember, we lost two years to COVID. Because of that, the younger guys like Williams and Price have been known and grown up with. “I learned a lot, even though I rode the bench last year,” said Kaleb Dietsch, who debuted with Governor Simcoe in the 2022 Under-17 field lacrosse nationals for Team Ontario, 2022 Under-17 field lacrosse nationals for Team Ontario, opened the second period with a shot that beat the Bulldogs goalie on the left side of the net. After giving up a goal to the Cyclone, Holy Cross went on another run. Goals by Liam Dietsch, Kaleb Dietsch and Ostromecki gave the Raiders a 9-1 margin at half time.

Joe Young, the only Raid- er not from NOTL to score in the game, made it 10-1 early in the third. Forty seconds later Ostromecki fought off three de-fenders to pop his third goal into the Crosley net, and Williams completed his hat trick with five minutes left in the period. With a 12-1 cushion to be gin the fourth period, Quinn rested his starters. The Cyclone capitalized on a less-experi enced lineup by scoring three times in three minutes, before the Raiders tightened up on de-fense to shut them down. Price scored his second of the game with just under five minutes left to give Holy Cross a 1-3-4 victory and a chance to average last year’s OSSA final loss against the Redcoats, who beat St. Winston Churchill 13-5 in the other semi-final. In front of a crowd of all players coming back next year, taking unnecessary penalties and being forced into costly turnovers which led to the Redcoats tak ing a 4-3 lead into the half.

Liam Dietsch closed the gap 2-30 into the third period, but Simcoe netted three more to go up 9-4 by the end of the third. They added a 10th goal before conceding markers by Price and Young late in the game. But time ran out on the Raiders, their provincials dream dashed with the 10-4 loss.

Addressing the team after the loss, Quinn admitted the outcome wasn’t what he had hoped for, but thanked his players for a phenomenal sea- son, and for putting a scare into the highly-ranked Redcoats for the second straight year.

“The second half got away from us,” Quinn told The Local. “I would say we outplayed them in the first quarter, but we took too many penalties that cost us in the second quar- ter. We found ourselves on the defensive end way too much, and when we got on offense we rushed it. Simcoe is a very good team, with a deep bench, and they were a lot more composed than us.”

Quinn expressed disappointment that he wouldn’t be able bring the team, with six Grade 12 students who poten- tially will not be returning next spring, to the Ontario champi- onships.

“And they had a shorten- ed high school career,” he said of his seniors. “Both of those years ended on Simcoe’s field, too. We do have some really great players coming back next year, half of our defence was Grade 10s, so we have a lot to build on for next year.”

Though 16-year-old Kaleb Dietsch could be back next year, he may be attending school in Ottawa, if he makes the roster of the Ontario Hock- ey League’s 6’7”, who draft him in the third round in April.

“We left it all out there today,” he said following the game. “It’s disappointing. We worked really hard the last three months. I’m definite- ly going to miss these times, and I’ll miss playing with my brother. Lots of great mem- ories, lots of good times with everyone.”

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Pickleball tournament putting NOTL on the map

Mike Balsom
The Local

The culmination of a vision that John Hindle and his fellow early members of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Pickleball Club had six years ago begins next Friday at the Virgil Sports Complex.

That’s when the Niagara-on-the-Lake Pickleball Classic kicks off with a demonstration by pickleball professionals and a celebration of the fledgling sport. The tournament continues with men’s and women’s doubles matches Saturday, and mixed doubles matches Sunday.

“It’s been in germination since we first started developing a vibrant club,” says Hindle. “Most of Niagara’s municipalities don’t have a pickleball club. They have community centres where people drop in to play. We thought that was a poor way to represent a sport. We wanted our club to be a community that would support each other in their development in the game.”

Hindle says the club started with six members, then quickly grew to 16. Sixteen became 28, and 28 became 75. The growth was so phenomenal that Dan Makesenuk, who manages the NOTL Community Centre, encouraged them to start a club.

“We got such great support from Dan and from Kevin Turcotte (manager of parks and recreation),” Hindle says. “And the entire arena staff has been amazing in the lead-up to this event.”

As members of the NOTL club started to get better at the game, many of them began entering tournaments.

Tournaments were springing up all over the province, remembers Hindle. “We looked like the Bermuda Triangle down here with nothing happening. So a bunch of us spread out entering other tournaments, watched the way they were running them, and it’s finally time for us to host our own.”

Hindle promises the Classic will be bigger and better than any event any of his members have played in so far.

“It will be massive,” he says. “We have over 100 volunteers, plus 16 of us on the steering committee. We capped the entries at 300 players, from ages 17 to 80. The spots were filled in less than six weeks. They’re coming from California, Florida and everywhere in between.”

One of the things that sets it apart is the pro night on Friday. “It’s what makes this tournament special,” he says. “We wanted to bring the excitement for learning pickleball. We’ve invited eight top pro players to play in exhibition matches that night, two women’s doubles, two men’s doubles and a mixed match. The pros will get a lot of time to highlight their skill.”

The club is charging a $10 fee that night, hoping to pack the seats in the Meridian Credit Union Arena. He promises a 50/50 draw and door prizes.

As well, Niagara College physiotherapy students will be on hand to help some of the players work out the kinks between matches.

Speaking of working out the kinks, two weeks ago 80 club members participated in a trial tournament to test out the software and the flow of play.

“We learned a bunch and made some mid-course corrections,” says the retired educator. “It gave us a chance to see what needed to change. We expect it to go on without a hitch.”

As if he won’t be busy enough, Hindle and his wife Alison will be welcoming friends from Tillsonburg, who will park their RV at the Hindle home. He expects many visitors will make a weekend out of the event.

“We’ve heard a strong indication that most people want to come down Friday night, they want to come to the pro exhibition,” he says. “They’ll do some late-night touring, and come to the dance Saturday. Most people will be here at least Friday and Saturday night. It’s going to be a big boost to the town.”

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