Peaceful rally calls out for change

**Penny Coles**
**The Local**

With a backdrop of images that tell the story of Black history in this town, a crowd of more than 400 people attending an anti-racism rally Friday heard the message loud and clear: systemic racism exists, and ugliness lurks in what we might believe to be a haven from the pandemic of racism in NOTL, in town, not in this town, ‘they one of them thinks, ‘not in my ground to swallow me. “

The remarks and experiences ‘leave scars on my heart, scars that don’t heal,’ she said. Bredow says she’s tired of hearing about it, she said “We have to live it, every day, every single day.”

The remarks were directed at her, not speaking out when racial remarks were directed at her, and not thinking twice, she should grow her hair and straighten it, to pass as white. She’s been introduced by a friend as a housekeeper, and called the n-word as a joke.

Shes experienced racism in a job in NOTL, although she said her current employer has been great. She’s been told, among other things, she should grow her hair and straighten it, to pass for white. She’s been introduced by a friend as a housekeeper, and called the n-word as a joke.

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The remarks and experiences ‘leave scars on my heart, scars that don’t heal,’ she said. Bredow says she’s tired of hearing people say they’re shocked by her revelations about racism, that they had “no idea, this can’t be real. Our pain”, she said, “is so far off our radar that it shocks you.”

Bredow asked every white person in the crowd to raise their hand if they would be happy to be treated as Black people are treated in society. Then she asked again, and not one person raised a hand. That says plainly they understand what is happening to Black people, she said. “Why are you so willing to keep the right to go out, safely? They have the same rights as all of us. The only difference is they live in tight spaces.”

There has been one outbreak in Niagara, and other regions of Ontario.

The recent outbreak at Pioneer Flower Farms in St. Catharines is community-related, believed to have been started by a truck driver from the U.S., although the cause has not been officially determined, says Wiens. In addition to migrant workers, other employees and management have also tested positive.

“I came from the outside. The workers didn’t come here with it,” he says. “It’s sad what is going on at Pioneer, and in Norfolk County. And two deaths — that’s tragic.” Although Dr. Mustafa Hirji, Niagara’s acting medical officer of health, is recommending personal protective equipment for both farmers and workers, other employees and management have also tested positive.

More than 400 people attended a rally at Voices of Freedom Park Friday, many of them taking a knee for several minutes in solidarity against racism. (Penny Coles)

Local farmers working to keep workers safe

**Penny Coles**
**The Local**

Niagara-on-the-Lake migrant workers remain free of COVID-19, and Coun. Erwin Wiens is doing all he can to ensure that situation continues.

Wiens is a farmer with a small group of seasonal workers, and from the beginning of the pandemic and shutdown of international travel, when farmers were concerned workers might not be admitted to Canada, he has become an advocate for both farmers and workers, and a liaison with the municipality.

“She’s not going to do that anymore, she said. She’s been told, among other things, she should grow her hair and straighten it, to pass for white. She’s been introduced by a friend as a housekeeper, and called the n-word as a joke.

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Chamber chair says help for businesses needed now

Penny Coles
The Local

That was Monday morn-
ing, and by Monday after-
noon, Premier Doug Ford was
announcing a ban on com-
mercial evictions, from June 3
until the end of August, for
small businesses that qualify for the rent as-
sistance program, with rev-
ues that have decreased at least 70 per cent due to the
pandemic.

The chamber has added new seats on its board for the
merchants on Queen Street and the Bed & Breakfast As-
sociation, said MacIntyre.

"We have also added a mar-
keting advisory committee
and operational advisory
committee, so every voice
is heard and every sector is
covered when we start on a

Town council, senior staff
speak out against racism

This is a message released by
the Town, and signed by council
members and senior staff.

The recent death of George
Floyd at the hands of members of
the Minneapolis Police Depart-
ment is denigrating a deeply root-
ed anger and unrest that is com-
pletely unacceptable, " says Dr.
Ford.

"We're a quick drive" from
Niagara-on-the-Lake commu-
ity to unite in understanding.
We consider ourselves a kind
and welcoming Town, but we
are not immune to racism and
discrimination. We must take
time to listen to and understand
the experiences of those who
have been impacted by racism.

To our racialized communi-
ty, we grieve with you, we sym-
pathize with you, and we stand
with you. We recognize that we
may not fully comprehend the
turning point you feel, but we align
with you in your fight against
systemic racism and oppression.

As people in positions of
authority, we recognize that it
is more important than ever
to use our platforms to elevate
those without the same privi-
leges and to call out racism as
it happens. Perhaps more im-
portantly, we must step away
from our privilege and listen,
exercise silence to make space
for the voices of Black, people
and people of colour.

This is a practice we aim to
continue every day. Listening
earnestly to the stories of people
who have experienced unimag-
nable hatred. It is only when
we step back and listen that we
can learn and grow our capacity
for love and compassion. Please
join us in helping to create an
environment upon which we
can all exist in peace, as equals.

Niagara not included in
Friday's stage two reopenings

Penny Coles
The Local

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Continued on page 12
Following the rally, a march continued out of the park and down Queen Street.

The park was packed with people, most wearing masks.

Over 300 townpeople, white and black, came together and encircled the courthouse for three days,” Andres said. “Two black men, one of them a school teacher, were killed by police guards.”

They were trying to prevent Mosby from being taken away. “They were taking a stand against a system that was perfectly legal.”

While the historic events she related paved the way for change, she said, two years ago, when the park opened, “another historical marker took place when a farm worker was invited to have a seat at the celebration. He is the second generation in his family to be working on the same farm in NOTL, a total of almost 50 years invested there.”

At the opening, he read the words that explained the park: "Voices of Freedom gives expression to the silenced and forgotten stories of people of African descent, enslaved, freed, and free, whose sacrifices, labour, skills, and talents contributed to the development of Niagara-on-the-Lake. But "Voices of Freedom" isn’t just about looking back. It is a tragic injustice that, amidst the celebrated historical importance of Niagara-on-the-Lake, the Town’s significant and nation-shifting black history has not been given a proper hearing. "Voices of Freedom is intent on righting this wrong. Individually and collectively, all of Canada will benefit from listening to the black voices of Canada’s past, present, and future. Such a hearing is essential for our nation to move towards a fair, just, and free society."

The words he read at the opening, from the brochure explaining the intent of the park, “were full of promise,” said Andres, but “recent incidents that have happened in town, in the grocery store and on some of our farms are just part of an ongoing pattern that has been carefully concealed, or not spoken of for fear of retribution. This too, is a significant part of our history; a story we need to take ownership of.”

Said Andres, “It is time to pull back the veil. We can choose the hard work of building trust and respect. We can choose to create safe spaces with the intention of open, honest dialogue to build a community that is welcome to all. We can learn to listen. Or history can record that we chose to look the other way.”

Yvonne Bredow of Queenston detailed personal and work experiences of racism in NOTL.

Bredow spoke again to wrap up the rally, thanking "two black men, one of them "from the bottom of my heart for coming out”.

She said we all need to do something, to speak out if someone is saying something racist. "If you don’t say something, you are a silent racist," she said.

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Wineries putting measures in place to open safely

Penny Coles  The Local

Some local wineries opened their tasting bars this weekend, but will likely be closing them with Monday's news from the Province.

Other wineries were preparing to welcome guests back to their tasting rooms this weekend, with new protocols and best practices in place.

While wineries had been deemed an essential service during the pandemic, and many have remained open for shopping and curbside pick-up, tasting bars were closed to ensure the safety of the community, guests and their front-line team members.

Andrea Kaiser, director of marketing for Reif Estate Winery, says the intentions regarding the closure of tasting bars was never “super clear, but it made sense for us to close for the health and well-being of everyone.”

Now, as restrictions are beginning to loosen on a provincial level, Kaiser says wineries thought they would “get the nod” from the Province this week, as long as they have approval from local health departments.

Kaiser, who is also chair of the Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake organization, which includes 24 wineries, has been in contact with the Niagara Region Public Health about safely reopening, and has been working with other wineries.

They have a best practices guide to help them, and have been discussing how wineries might best prepare for the “new normal.”

They have been helping each other locally, and also getting advice from other wine regions that are already open, such as B.C., Oregon and California, says Kaiser, and although they will be following best practices, each winery is adapting them to suit their premises, including specific tactics and opening dates once the Province permits, says Kaiser.

Reif, which is looking very cheerful and elegant, has created an attractive division between the shopping and tasting areas. They are also using plastic screens to separate guests from staff.

If migrant workers to reduce the risk of COVID-19, Winns says he’s not sure how it would work, or how they would get it — even masks remain in short supply.

In order for PPE to be helpful in the St. Catharines area, all employees would have had to be wearing it, he says.

In Niagara, Winns says the local government and cheering farmers are following all the regulations set out for them when seasonal workers were permitted to enter Canada, which set out protocols regarding health checks, self-isolation, physical distancing, wages, accommodation, and the supplies needed to keep workers safe.

“Unfortunately, yes, I believe they are. I’m not going physically to the farms, I’m calling and asking them. And I believe that is what is happening,” says Winns.

A report by a group representing migrant workers, “painting a picture of farmer/farm failures to sufficiently protect their workers against COVID-19 based on complaints received about housing and working conditions, and other issues.”

The report, titled “Unjustified Warnings: COVID-19 and Migrant Workers,” was released Monday.

The complaints detailed by the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change organization were gathered from workers who had access to phones, and were representing large groups of workers.

The report says they are requesting permanent resident status for the workers, and that other workers have in fighting against unsafe work practices.

In addition to safety issues such as lack of protective equipment, lack of chemicals needed to properly clean their houses, inability to physical distance due to crowded bunkhouses, and problems of isolating and getting food during quarantine periods, there were also complaints about increased workloads and workers being cheated out of their wages.

Issues that have existed for years, the report says, have been even more problematic during the pandemic, leading to sickness, loss of pay and other problems.

He strongly resents the “damning accusations” by the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, he says.

“This is the issue. Everyone knows I will fight for everything I think is right. But there is nobody to go after this.”

Everything in the report is anonymous, says Winns. There are no names of migrant workers, addresses, just a lot of serious allegations with no way to follow up on them. If the group wants action, it should go to the various labor offices, the police, or the Ministry of Health, he says.

The workers themselves have the same rights as everybody else, and if they are being mistrusted, “we as a community are a society, will look after them. But we need to know who they are. These anonymous complaints are very disturbing. How can you help me if I don’t know who you are?”

If the workers’ alliance doesn’t want to share that information, then it has to make complaints on behalf of the workers.

“Releasing it to the media isn’t getting it done. I don’t have the information I need to fight for them.”

It is frustrating, says Winns, to have that information out there, “and I can’t do anything with it.”

During his update to councillors Monday, Winns says the outbreak of COVID-19 is not a migrant workers issue, it’s an agricultural issue, similar to any business that is working in confined spaces.

He told councillors the seasonal employees have the same rights as anyone living and working in Canada, including being eligible for employment insurance, the Canada Pension Plan, and health benefits.

Every worker is being contacted on a daily basis to make sure they are safe and healthy, and there is a protocol in place for isolation and medical attention, he says.

“If there are some bad actors, there is no place for that in the industry, full stop.”

If anyone is aware of issues, he said they should come forward, “so we can keep everyone safe, which is important for the workers, the food chain and employers.”

Kyle Freeborn, director of operations, agreed council could have a workshop and make decisions, such as the rebate amount, which could be from 10 to 40 per cent, and which properties would be eligible.

Lord Mayor Betty Das- sler, along with Councillors Wendy Cherrupata and Cory Burroughs, suggested pulling the last report to move it along, and voted against the motion to hire another consultant for implementation of the program in 2021.

Some councillors suggested they might best prepare for the Province to adopt the program, and potentially the Province would also offer tax rebates.

Some councillors suggested revisiting the report and the options set out in it, make some decisions and move the program forward.

Continued on page 11

No heritage tax rebate for merchants until 2021

Penny Coles  The Local

After many discussions and reports back dating back almost 20 years, town councillors, as the planning committee Monday, have approved hiring a consultant to help design a heritage tax rebate program to be implemented in 2021.

The audit committee decided in August not to include the program in this year’s budget, but a request from a group of merchants in the heritage district to begin to look into it has been discussed, and the audit committee, and then to councillors, for discussion.

The merchants are looking to improve immediate tax relief to help them during the closure and recovery period of the pandemic, concerned they may not survive without it.

Most tenants on Queen Street have triple net leases, councillors learned in past meetings, which include property taxes, rent and all other costs.

If the municipality adopts the program, the Province may potentially the Province would also offer tax rebates.

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Continued from page 1

Public Notice

Road Rehabilitation - Regional Road 61 (Portage Road) in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

TEMPORARY ROAD CLOSURE

Motorists and the general public are hereby advised that Regional Road 61 (Portage Road) from RR 102 (Stanley Avenue) to Niagara Parkway in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake will be temporarily closed to through traffic from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., weather permitting.

The road closure is necessary to pave the road surface on Regional Road 61 (Portage Road) from RR 102 (Stanley Avenue) to Niagara Parkway.

The detour route for the closure is as follows:

• Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake RR 61 (Portage Road, West of RR 102 Stanley Avenue) / RR 100 (Four Mile Creek) / RR 81 (York Road) / Niagara Parkway

Businesses and residents will have access during the closure but may be directed to take an alternate route to get to their destination.

Emergency services will also have access if required.

Any inquiries concerning this project may be directed to Niagara Region Dispatch at 905-984-3690 or Melissa Tomascik, C. Tech., Project Manager Transportation Engineering, at 905-980-6000 extension 3189.

Your co-operation and patience during this period of inconvenience will be appreciated.

Bruce Zvania
Commissioner of Public Works (Interim)
Niagara Region

For more details check out our Brand Guidelines.

niagararegion.ca
@niagararegion

Wiens calls for those who know ‘bad actors’ to come forward

Continued from page 1

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Coun. Erwin Wiens, also a farmer with seasonal workers, says they were onerous, if he knew where to look for it. (Photo supplied)
Dr. Kevin Clark and Dr. Rebecca Zabek-Clark are pleased to announce that our office has now reopened to help you and your family with your dental needs. It has certainly been an interesting time since the COVID-19 pandemic began in the world. Our community has been through a lot over the past several months, and all of us are looking forward to resuming our normal habits and routines.

From a personal level, we have enjoyed spending the last few months with our three children. It is not very often that one gets an extended period of time within a career to spend with their family. We have been homeschooling our children, spending quite a lot of time outside in our backyard gardening, and doing activities with the kids.

At the same time, we have continuously been keeping up-to-date with dental webinars and researching how to alter our office to make it a safe and healthy environment for both you and your families, as well as our dental team and their families. All Ontario dental offices were given practice guidelines upon reopening. Our office can now resume providing all levels of dental care.

Although infection control has always been our top priority at Niagara-on-the-Lake Dental, you will notice some changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

At Niagara-on-the-Lake Dental, we are following the recommendations from the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario, which is set forth by the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Center of Disease Control. We have made several changes to the office to adapt to our current situation, as well as additional improvements beyond the practice guidelines set forth. For example, medical-grade air purification systems have been installed in every operatory within the office. These units continually purify the air and kill airborne allergens and viruses (including the coronavirus). This is just one example of how we have your health and safety as a top priority at our office.

There are many other changes in the office you will notice when you come in for your appointment, such as your dentists and hygienists using fitted N95 masks. We will also be pre-screening clients prior to entering the office, as well as daily screening of our staff to keep your health and safety our top priority.

Please visit our website niagaradental.ca for more specific updates, and to have an appreciation of how your dental visits have everyone's safety in mind. We are very pleased with all of the changes, and feel very comfortable within our office environment. We will also be extending our hours to accommodate your dental needs.

We look forward to seeing you again and are happy to answer any questions you may have about the steps we have taken to keep you, and every patient, safe in our practice. We value your trust and loyalty and look forward to welcoming back our patients, friends and neighbours.

Niagara-on-the-Lake Dental is located at 369 Mary Street.
We can listen, we can learn, and we must change.

As I write this, at home from my office on the couch, I listened to the funeral of George Floyd while I wept. His brother says, George might be dead, “but he’s going to change the world.”

And I try not to cry, that a man has to die, for us to do what we should have been doing all along. These last days and weeks have been an eyeopener, to say the least. An education, a wake-up call, a reality check, for those willing to accept the truth of what has been put in front of us.

We cannot, must not, ignore it. It’s time to listen, to hear, and to respond. We have been faced with proof of systemic racism, and not just in the U.S. It’s here, in our country, and in our town. And it’s long past time to do something about it.

We’re asked to speak out about racism. To be silent is to condone, we’re told. But to speak out about racism requires us to confront, about what it means to be an ally. To those who know how hard it is to imagine, try to imagine.

One of the many news stories that may help us understand systemic racism on our side of the border. We recently saw photos of a First Nations chief, his face swollen, bruised and beaten, who is alleging an RCMP officer assaulted him during an arrest that he says began over expired vehicle registration tags on his truck.

Have you of ever you been pulled over for not having an up-to-date sticker on your license plate? Were you asked why, would you expect to see any hands, and she was right. We can’t literally walk a mile in her shoes, but we can try to imagine.

That brings us to another situation we need to face, and that’s the change that migrant workers are being subjected to all kinds of inequity.

We know some live in crowded conditions. We’re hearing they live with fear, and worse.

We have a duty to do something about it. We have a duty to change if and where it is needed. Our seasonal workers are essential to our food supply, but much more than that, they are men and women we welcome to our community, and we have a duty to protect them from harm.

To those who know how to help, please tell us. This is a community of good people who will fight for the right of others, if they know what to do.

There is so much good being done already, but if it’s not enough, what is? What’s the next step? Tell us, and we will take it.

We are angered and saddened by the senseless murder and violence suffered by members of the Black and Indigenous communities, not only in the United States, but throughout the world.

And I try not to cry, that a man has to die, for us to do what we should have been doing all along.

We acknowledge that racism exists in our country, in our province, and in our town. Yvonne Bredow’s column about her experiences, local news coverage of discrimination, and the Peaceful Anti-Racism Rally last week have brought to light the issues of racism and discrimination in Niagara-on-the-Lake. They’ve started a conversation that is overdue in our town.

We strive towards a community that is equitable, diverse, and inclusive. In light of this, the Inclusivity Committee and the Community Wellness Committee will work to address the issues of racism and discrimination in our society and be an ally in the fight against systemic oppression.

We acknowledge that now more than ever is a time for allies to listen and to educate ourselves. We encourage you to speak up about experiences, concerns, questions, or suggestions, if you are comfortable doing so. You are always welcome to do so via email at inclusivitycommittee@notl.com. Any information shared will be held in confidence at the request of the individual(s) sharing it. We urge everyone to learn more about what role you can play in addressing racism and what it means to be an ally. There is always more to know, and we all have a part to play.

As a community, we must change the world. To change the world.

Views from the couch

Donald Combe Special to The Local

For six seasons and 80 episodes I have happily indulging in my favourite TV show, Schitt’s Creek. Now it is back on Netflix and I am doing it all over again! In spite of wild and absurd plot lines, and over-drawn people, it is believable because we have all known, or at least wanted to have known, each and every one of these loveable characters who are so real, and uniquely Canadian. Schitt’s Creek is a Canadian wonder.

Donald Combe is a retired English teacher who loves to go to the movies. But with movies unavailable for now, he has agreed to share his opinions on what he is watching on TV, with “short and sweet” exclusives reviews for The Local.
Youth council to promote mental health

Bethany Pottl
The Local Community Advisory Board

We all recognize that caring for our mental health and wellness is extremely necessary. Our recent world-wide situation, COVID-19, has brought on new challenges for many, due to physical distance, isolation, disruption of routine, and cancellation of activities. On a whole different level is the fear and deep sadness, as loved ones or people you know fall ill, and death is a reality as an outcome.

It must be stressed that people need to seek help from professionals to guide and care for them, should they need it during this trying time.

The NOTL Lord Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council has held its annual Grade 8 Health and Wellness Conference the last two years at the community centre. The purpose of our conference is to provide Grade 8 students with strategies for moving into Grade 9, and to support their mental health and wellness. This year has been completely different for these Grade 8s.

Due to safety and distancing regulations, we could not attend the conference in person, so the LMAYC discussed the possibility of offering information online.

In the next couple of weeks, the LMAYC will have two short, two to four minute public service announcements regarding wellness for youth, to be shared through email and social media.

The first PSA, Mental Health Matters, was created by the LMAYC. It offers a few common-sense tips for youth and introduces the information that the next PSAs will be coming. They are being created by Melissa Dunlop, RN, with Niagara North Health; Hillary Flemming from Niagara Region Public Health; and Dr. Ron Clavert, neuroscientist. Each PSA video will address key wellness issues for youth and we feel all can learn from these informative sessions.

These PSA videos can be found on the Town of NOTL site, the LMAYC Instagram and Facebook accounts, and will be shared directly to the elementary schools in NOTL.

Follow the LMAYC Instagram @notllocal to view the mental health and wellness videos and for more updates and information for NOTL youth.

Bethany Pottl is the chair of the Lord Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council.

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Owen Bjorgan
Special to The Local

I often seek a change of scenery, and earlier this week, I found myself biking around through Virgil Conservation Area just to blow off some steam after a long day at the computer.

There are certainly more biodiverse and ecologically healthy conservation areas in Niagara other than Virgil, but that said, the ribbon of green meandering through an increasingly urban area is a designated important fish habitat, and a substantial wildlife corridor for deer, owls, and beavers along Four Mile Creek.

I’ve done it on foot, cause, and bike. I have a recommendation on how to get the most out of this surprising local gem, no matter how you choose to access it. I just wouldn’t recommend swimming, unless you like mad and ear infections.

During my visit this week, I reminded myself of the classic art of stopping, sitting, and observing. At a murky and still pond next to the bank, I noticed the holes in this chunk of mud and ear infections.

During my visit this week, I reminded myself of the classic art of stopping, sitting, and observing. At a murky and still pond next to the bank, I noticed the holes in this chunk of mud and ear infections.

A red-bellied woodpecker swoops into a dead tree limb overarching the creek. It allowed me to take some quick shots while running to the tree tops. You are heard, seen, and your vibrations are felt coming away. Nature’s not a happy talk — reptiles, amphibians, and small mammals feel our footsteps in the soil before we even get there.

Sometimes, birds will sound the alarm first from their lofty perches. Deer, coyotes, turkeys, and rabbits know these alarm calls in the blueprint, and they take the cue. They’ll go hide in the thorns, poison ivy, and tick-infested glades that we dare not venture into. It’s easy for them. As long as they have habitat and protected spaces, like here in Virgil.

On my own farm, I have taken a few hikes through ‘Tickville’ — the really overgrown, grassy parts of the back acres. I have been blown away to find flattened vegetation mats, like crop circles, where deer have been resting. Some of these spots seem routed used, close to a farm trail where horses and vehicles go by every day.

When I was hiking the Bruce Trail in 2014, I was alone for 99 per cent of it. This is where I discovered the power in stopping, pausing, and observing my surroundings, for several minutes. It was incredible to see what would literally crawl out of the trees, ground, or drop in from the sky once I froze. Frogs and birds think you’re gone for a minute, and they start to sing their songs. Snakes start to move across the dry leaves of the forest floor. Raccoons pop their heads out of tree cavities to look around again.

This is what happens out here 24/7, when humans aren’t stepping into the ecosystems space. I’ve done this in the wilderness woods of northern Ontario, the Amazon, and right here in Virgil. It gives the same results every time; you can see who truly lives there and who you’re sharing space with.

Depending where you are in the world, it can be a slippery slope into a terrifying experience if you imagine how many eyeballs are on you at once. I have chosen to see it as mysterious and comforting to know I’m surrounded by so many incredible beings. I’ve observed how many bears and jaguars have seen me, though.

If we slow down and observe, there is plenty of beauty hiding all around us at any moment. This also may unintentionally serve as a meditative experience, as we often forget to take time to just sit and relax with ourselves for a bit.

I’ll be doing more of the same in Niagara as the hot weather and happily scheduled school days continue.

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NOTL local
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NOTL local
December 11, 2020
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Bill Auchterlonie
Special to The Local

This is one day of Looking Up with Bill. The full week is on NOTL The Local Facebook page and on the podcast at www.lookingupwithbill.com.

Saturday, June 13: The Third Quarter Moon, with the Sun in Gemini and the Moon in Pisces, happens at 2:23 a.m. It pits an articulate and energetic you against your most sensitive side. A lot of this happens behind the scenes, so you may be the only one to know what’s really going on. Don’t keep secrets from yourself.

On June 13, 1922, Charles Osborne began to hiccups. He continued to do so for 68 years. In the beginning, Osborne’s hiccups occurred at a rate of around 40 times per minute on average. Throughout his life, this gradually slowed to about 20 hiccups per minute until they finally stopped, mysteriously, about one year before his death in 1991. It is estimated that he hiccuped over 430 million times in his lifetime! Eventually, he learned to suppress most of the noise of a typical hiccups to breathing methodically which, was a technique taught him to doctors at the Mayo Clinic. As Joni said, “Keep on shining!”
Gift of Song thanks grocery store owner

Penny Coles
The Local

Phil Leboudec has been hearing words of thanks for him and staff at his Virgil valu-mart, and as much as it is “100 per cent appreciated,” he says, “we’re doing our job, doing what we always do.”

His most recent message, though, came from a completely unexpected source.

It began with “Hi there, Phil, my name’s James, and I’m an actor with the Shaw Festival company, coming to you today with the gift of song.”

Actor James Daly explained, in a video sent to Leboudec, that the Gift of Song is a project started at the Shaw, encouraging those in the company to nominate people in the community “who deserve a special shout-out to receive a song. You’ve been nominated. I hope you enjoy this song. It’s especially for you because we know how hard you’ve been working at valu-mart, bringing groceries out to cars, and keeping people fed, safe and healthy. This is for you, so do all you do. I hope you enjoy your gift of song.”

Leboudec said it was “pretty cool” to hear about his gift.

“And it had a beautiful message that came with it,” he added.

He has no idea who nominated him, although he did receive it from a mom whose child he had coached in soccer, asking for his contact information.

It always feels good to be appreciated, he said, especially when those who are disappled about something are more likely to be vocal. But during the pandemic, the messages of thanks are more frequent.

The positive messages, from the Shaw Festival and from passersby, “make it easier. It’s new, and very welcome,” he said. “It boosts your commitment to keep going.”

When the pandemic began, he said, and many businesses were shut down, the hardest part for him was ensuring his staff felt safe, and putting all the measures in place to be safe, for staff and customers. “We were scrambling to do what we needed, but we didn’t have a playbook. We didn’t know what we needed.”

Now, months later, with more businesses opening, others are going through that process, with new fears, feeling the anxiety he has been through. He has 400 to 500 people walking through his doors each day, each with different opinions and perspectives about all the safety measures in place, he said, and “a small number of people with complaints,” who voice their opinions. “You brush those off and move on with your day,” he said.

Dealing with the pandemic and its impact on his business has become easier “in the sense that we know what we’re doing. Our routines are stabilized and we know what we have to do. But people need to understand, this is as loose as it gets. It’s not loosening up any time soon. There may be more openings, but this is the new normal, and will be for a few months at least.”

Leboudec said he’s grateful to have that period of figuring out what needs to be done behind him, and for now, “the playbook is set, and everyone knows the rules. But we can’t fall into a level of complacency. We have to keep our guards up. We can’t get too comfortable and forget why we’re doing the things we were doing in the first place.”

He said he feels fortunate to be living in a place where 99 per cent of the people get it, respect it, and are willing to work together to take the measures to protect ourselves. We have an educated community. People here get it.

“At the end of the day, it took the community to get through it. It was a collaboration, it was everybody helping each other, shopping for each other, calling each other on a regular basis to make sure people had what they needed to get through this. I’m not sure other communities have worked as well together. We’re very fortunate.”

The Shaw, he adds, which is cancelling performances, and facing its own difficulties, “takes the time to thank others. It’s not just the song that was the gift, or even the message, but that they are finding ways to help others, when they’re struggling themselves. It’s extremely selfish, when you’re struggling, to think of others. And there is a whole community of people doing that. The list of heroes has to be expanded. Everyone who has reached out a hand to help someone else to get through this is a hero.”

To hear Daly’s gift, visit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cOiSsGXEdMU&feature=youtu.be&app=desktopMU&feature=youtube.

Men move Virgil coffee group outdoors

Edward Wawaszkiewicz, Hank Berg, Tony (who didn’t want his last name used), Gord McIntyre and Orllind Epp are regulars at McDonald’s, who have moved their coffee group outdoors after the fast food outlet closed its seating area. They are happy to see the warm weather, and say they will talk about anything but the pandemic. (Photo supplied)
Newark Neighbours volunteers happily accepted more than $5,000 from the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club Monday, grateful for the support.

The money was raised through an auction which allowed club members to bid for the season’s opening tee time, with the funds raised to go to the local food bank.

Although the club received several generous bids, one golfer, who couldn’t be there to play on opening day, offered $5,000. The member, who chose to remain anonymous, wanted to give the tee time to others who fell into the category of club legends and ambassadors.

When two long-standing senior members were unable to play that day, the club gave the tee time to the men’s Ryder Cup captain, Harry Huizer, and ladies Solheim Cup captain Martha Cruikshank.

Newark Neighbours volunteers Pat Fryer, Laura Gibson and Susan Sparrow-Mace accept a generous donation for the food bank and thrift shop from NOTL Golf Club pro Billy Simkin. (Penny Coles)
Canada Day celebrations to be a family affair

Friends of Fort George providing packages to make backyard celebrations fun

Penny Coles
The Local

This time last year, Cath-erine O’Donnell of Willow Cakes and Pastries would have had all the ingredi-ents for the huge traditional Canada Day cake ordered, and she’d be in her kitchen at home making the figures to go on it.

This year, she’s in the bakery, serving customers at the counter as they come in to pick up the breads and desserts for which Willow is known and loved.

She confirmed about a month ago that Canada Day celebrations, including the walk down Queen Street, along with activities in Simcoe Park and at Fort George, ending in fireworks, are all cancelled, she said.

“It doesn’t feel right not to be working on the cake, but this is what our world is now, and we have to accept it,” she says.

Instead, O’Donnell will be making Canada Day cup-pcakes, which will be sold by the Friends of Fort George, in packages designed to help families celebrate together, safely, at home.

She had a design ready to go in January, she said, one that is “whimsical and fun,” and a team excited to begin work on, but it will have to wait until next year.

She also had a generous donor who offered to pay for the ingredients, so she would only provide the la-bour, which was a huge re-lief to her from a business standpoint. The donor has graciously offered to fund the cake next year.

This is normally a very chaotic time for O’Don-nell, as she adds many extra hours to complete the tradi-tional cake while still run-ning the bakery.

But it’s also a time she loves, thinking of the gift she’s giving to the commu-nity that has been so support-ive of Willow over the years. She also looks forward to the walk down Queen Street, with her family, greeting all the locals and visitors who line up to see the cake.

“People thank us for our time, and that’s nice. We feel the love that day,” she says.

“Canada Day is such a great time for the community to come together. It’s sad that we don’t get to experi-ence it this year.”

When the cake has been cut and handed out to the crowds in Simcoe Park, “I go home, exhausted. I never last to see the fireworks, but it’s a great feeling of satisfaction.”

Now, she says, she’s ready to embrace what Fort George has planned to do what’s best for the commu-nity and help everyone enjoy a safe Canada Day.

The packages will in-clude six cupcakes, flags, pins, Canada Day tattoos, glow sticks, Parks Canada swag, balloons and more.

These packages can be or-dered online through our gift shop at https://friendsofortgeorge.square.site or by calling the gift store at 905-468-6621. The cost is $35 per package with free delivery in NOTL, and $40 per package with delivery outside of NOTL.

All proceeds will support the Friends of Fort George and Willow Cakes and Pas-tries.

There are a limited num-ber of packages available with a deadline of June 25 for orders.

The Friends will also be creating #CanadaDayNOTL, and hope community mem-bers will use it to share imag-es of how they are celebrat-ing Canada Day this year.

Canada Day festivities from previous years will be on Friends of Fort George social media chan-nels (Facebook, Twitter and In-stagram), with some spe-cial content to be shared on Canada Day, so the commu-nity can all celebrate togeth-er, says Amanda Gamble, executive director of the Friends of Fort George.

“We hope that the commu-nity will join us as we celebrate the 104th anni-versary of Confederation” says Gamble, “and we can’t wait to celebrate the 104th anniversary with everyone in 2021.”

Fort George gates open

Local Staff

The gates of Fort George are open for visi-tors to wander around, but buildings are closed. Parks Canada is work-ing to ensure that mea-sures are in place to safely protect the health of em-ployees and visitors. The grounds and green spaces inside Fort George will be open for public use from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and parking lots, including me-tered parking will be open.

Visitor facilities, wash-rooms, and heritage build-ings remain closed and all programming, special events, and interpretive activities remain suspend-ed. As a result, there is no admission fee at this time.

Staff at Fort George will be present on site and performing tasks such as grounds maintenance and garbage removal.

Visitors are encour-aged to plan ahead and check with the Parks Canada website for more information.

Fort George to offer virtual camp

Local Staff

The Friends of Fort George and Parks Canada are partnering to provide a fun and interactive Virtual Summer Camp for kids.

It’s for youth ages five to 10, and will give them about an hour a day to learn about local history.

Each week will start with a short presentation through Zoom, when Fort George staff will provide a brief talk on the theme of the week. Each day will focus on a different topic on that theme, and will include online interactive learning, coupled with crafts, games and activi-ties for youth to try, with the help of their family.

The program begins the week of July 6, and the cost is $50 per child, with a special rate for all three weeks of $125.

Those themes will be repeated over three weeks in August, beginning Aug. 3.

Packages will be avail-able for pickup from the Fort George Gift Shop on Friday, Saturday or Sun-day prior to the start of the camp, with free delivery in NOTL.

Reserve a spot today, purchasing a camp kit through the online giftshop at https://friendsofortgeorge.ca/square/site, or by calling 905-468-6621.

Catherine O’Donnell at Willow Cakes and Pastries will make cupcakes for the Friends of Fort George instead of the traditional huge Canada Day cake. (Penny Coles)
Student receives prestigious scholarship

Penny Coles
The Local

The email to Katja Murray informing her she had been named a recipient of a 2020 Schulich Leader Scholarship arrived on April 21. She opened it, and immediately began screaming.

“Everyone in the house said, ‘are you okay?’” she remembers. “It was really great, and I don’t think we stopped talking about it for at least 24 hours.

The York Road resident was shocked to learn that she would be one of 100 students across Canada to receive one of the most coveted undergraduateships, a 2020 graduate of Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School, the award guarantees Murray up to $100,000 for her education in engineering at Western University in London, Ontario.

Murray at first didn’t think she would qualify for it. She knew she was applying at Western, where her parents, Angela and Mike, met as undergraduates. Both parents have instilled the value and importance of education in their four children (Gabe, Katja, Matthew and Ella). Angela runs her own dental practice, St. Davids Dental, while Mike holds a PhD in Chemistry.

During a visit to the Holy Cross student services office, she was completing an application for the Western National Scholarship, when a guidance counsellor took her aside and encouraged her to apply for the Schulich.

“I was sure it was a long shot,” she says, “but I thought I’ll just apply, what’s the worst thing that can happen, I don’t get it? I know a lot of kids, me included, who think they wouldn’t qualify for these bigger scholarships, but I’m really glad I applied.”

Murray will be attending Western in September for a double bachelors degree in engineering and business, with the business component completed through Western’s prestigious Ivey School. She plans to major in biomedical engineering when the time comes to choose a specific direction.

“I think there is a lot of opportunity there for expansion and growth,” she explains. “There’s a lot of cool stuff biomedical engineers can do. The ability to synthesize something in a lab instead of having organ donations so people aren’t stuck on a donor list for years. Anything that could help, that would be great.”

The stringent program will take five years, and she has already been offered a research position at Western for summer, 2021.

Holy Cross Principal Andrew Boon isn’t at all surprised Katja has earned the scholarship. He had just finished meeting with her this past Monday as she came to the school to record her salutatorian speech for the class of 2020’s drive-by graduation ceremony coming up June 23.

“She is an amazing student,” Boon says. “She approaches everything with such a positive attitude. Even today, when she arrived, she was smiling and so eager to do her speech.”

He adds that through her involvement in many activities at Holy Cross (hockey, swimming, lacrosse, choir, chess club, mathletes, reach for the top), she has shown leadership and a willingness to help others be their best.

According to Niagara Catholic District School Board policy, the graduates with the top five averages throughout their four years of high school are finalists for valedictorian. Murray was one of those top five, and finished second in voting amongst her peers. The second place finish earned her the honour of being the first student to address her class with her salutatorian speech at graduation.

Boon is quick to add, too, that she is also the graduate with the highest Grade 12 average this year, at almost 99 per cent.

And that average wasn’t earned taking a lot of easy electives. Her Grade 12 include physics, chemistry, and biology, as well as all three maths (data management, calculus and advanced functions).

“I really enjoy math,” emphasizes Murray. “I think it’s a little bit misunderstood, but I think it’s really beautiful, because you always know if you’re right, or if you’re wrong. It makes things simple.”

What September looks like for Murray at Western isn’t all that certain yet. Correspondence with the university has promised that about 25 to 30 per cent of her time will be spent in class, with the rest spent learning online. Physical distancing rules will be in effect, students will be expected to wear masks in classes, and residences will be restricted to single occupancy. Whatever shape it takes, she’s excited to get started.

“Thi is such an incredible opportunity, and I really want to make them proud, and show them that I deserve this. The goal is to make Western proud.”

And Boon is certain that will be the case. “She has such a bright future ahead of her, and she’s going to change the world. Kind of selfishly, I hope that when she’s done, she comes back to our community to apply what she’s learned.”

Katja Murray, outside Holy Cross with principal Andrew Boon, has received an award that guarantees $100,000 toward her university education. (Photo supplied)

Hoping to open soon

Continued from page 4

area of the retail store and the tasting bar, which is set up with Plexiglass dividers for staff, two chairs to a tasting pod, and the pods spaced out along the tasting bar.

Kaiser says the winery has been trying for member wineries, with reduced revenues and layoffs, “the support across the country to buy local has been inspiring to all of us,” says Kaiser. “Most of our members were able to pivot from a focus on in-store wine sales to online sales, as well as curbside pickup, to soften the blow.”

Reif is encouraging online reservations for tastings, and will take walk-ins as space is available.

Andre Kaiser and John White, wine consultant, are ready to welcome the public to the tasting bar at Reif Estate Winery. (Penny Coles)
Glendale plan goes forward

Penny Coles
The Local

A draft report of the Glendale District plan, which sets out a complete planned community for the Glendale area, was accepted by the Town’s planning community to be moved forward to regional council.

After two years of studies of a 700-hectare area, including extensive public consultations, a draft report of the plan was presented Monday, the third time it’s been discussed in the past.

The vision shows a variety of residential and mixed use development, commercial, institutional, hospitality and employment areas, a main street with mixed uses, and environmental designations. Although councillors were told the numbers will be refined, the current estimate for the development is that it will attract an estimated population of about 15,000 people, and about 7,500 jobs.

One area of concern amongst councillors that has been discussed in the past is the height of the buildings. Because of that concern, no heights were assigned in the draft report, councillors heard, with those details to be determined at a future date, with the development of a secondary plan for the area.

Councillors were assured by regional presenters that while a certain density of the area will be required to support the amenities residents want, such as a food store, it can be spread out over a large area. There won’t be a lot of very tall buildings, such as would be found in Toronto — there might be a couple of 12-storey buildings.

Council voted to accept the plan and refer it to staff for a report.

Recovery ‘one step at a time’

Continued from page 2

longer-term recovery plan. Although discussions have started, it is one step at a time, safely, and “with a feel of what the market tells us.”

Although hotels were always considered essential, most, including Vintage Hotels, Niagara’s Finest Inns and White Oaks Resort and Spa, shut down out of concern for safety of staff and patrons. The Pillar and Post and Prince of Wales are starting to take room reservations, he says, with a “very low” occupancy, while practising new guidelines.

In the meantime, they are not actively marketing or promoting the hotels with a “massive campaign,” and are planning to slowly build on reopening as it’s safe.

The good news, says MacIntyre, is the way the community is working together.

“In these tough times, I do feel that we find hope in each other, and that we are very united. Much like after 911 and SARS, this community rose to the occasion to take care of each other and our guests, and we will do the same again. NOTL, the chamber and all the leaders in tourism are incredibly respected in all associations, at every level of government, and we are all working together for fast and real solutions.”

Most important to all businesses is being safe, assuring each other to get the economy moving, “and in true NOTL fashion, welcomes our visitors back with the safest and highest level of hospitality in Canada.”

NOTL, he says, has one of the most united, empathetic and caring group of leaders working together, “and if anybody can do it, we can.”

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In the meantime, they are not actively marketing or promoting the hotels with a “massive campaign,” and are planning to slowly build on reopening as it’s safe.

The good news, says Machin, is the way the community is working together. “In these tough times, I do feel that we find hope in each other, and that we are very united. Much like after 9/11 and SARS, this community rose to the occasion to take care of each other and our guests, and we will do the same again. NOTL, the chamber and all the leaders in tourism are incredibly respected in all associations, at every level of government, and we are all working together for fast and real solutions.”

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Penny Coles
The Local

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Local owners close Niagara Falls dinner theatre

Mike Balsam Special to The Local

The so-called “closing statement” on the Oh Canada Eh? website is truly that, as the Niagara Falls dinner theatre will not be re-opening once pandemic restrictions have been lifted.

Co-owner Jim Cooper says he is proud of the 26-year run of the theatre company, especially in light of the number of nay-sayers he and original partner Ross Robinson faced when they decided to begin the venture.

“We were first opened, you wouldn’t believe the number of people who said ‘good luck, you’ll be lucky if you last six months,’” he re-

members.

Until the business was shut down in March, Cooper says things were moving along quite well, approaching its 27th season. “We had planned to do a long, successful run of the production, All Night Long - Hit of the 80s, then the doors were closed due to the pandemic. At the time, they anticipated reopening in time for another successful summer tourism season.

But as the pandemic continued, and the refund requests kept coming in, the financial situation became more and more difficult.

Cast members tried to help the company by creating a GoFundMe campaign. Artistic director Lee Siegel created a two-hour online production with musical contributions from several cast members and musicians. It was performed on May 12, and funds were raised, but not enough to save the company. They are currently in the process of refunding the money to their supporters.

With no certainty of a reopening timeline or if the dinner theatre business model would continue to be feasible under new public health requirements, the owners came to the difficult decision to close. Eight full-time employees and about 40 cast members and musicians are left looking for other work.

Cooper admits that the long, successful run of the business was partially a factor in deciding to end things. “I guess if this had happened in our fifth year, then we’d be out there seeing if we could get more financial support,” he reflects. But I’m just about 80 years old, and I don’t have the fight in me to continue to struggle.”

Since 1994, the dinner theatre has served and entertained almost a million visitors, and performed 4,910 Oh Canada Eh? shows, featuring the likes of the singing Mountie, the Hockey Player, Anne of Green Gables, and Klondike Kity. A number of other successful musical productions, many written by Siegel, were added over the years. This Canada Day would have been the 5,000th performance of Oh Canada Eh? and there were big plans to celebrate this major milestone.

Cooper holds out hope that someone will pick up the Oh Canada Eh? torch and run with it. He points out that Robinson and general manager Erik Hitchcock bought the building that has housed Oh Canada Eh? about two years ago. The log cabin on Lundy’s Lane is currently for sale, but Cooper says it’s perfectly set up to house a new theatre company.

“Certainly there’s an opportunity there for someone, perhaps a couple of our performers, and maybe my business partner, who’s a little younger than me, and our artistic director. There’s a possibility for them to revive all this. And they will do well, because they are extremely talented people.”
Local Royal Oak student given virtual grad ceremony

Penny Coles
The Local

The ‘beautiful Maya’ Gazzard and her mother Lyndsay were treated to a virtual graduation ceremony last week, as Maya leaves her days at Royal Oak Community School behind her, and looks forward to entering Laura Secord Secondary School in the fall.

Maya and Lyndsay had about 30 family members and friends from around the world, including Ireland, Bermuda and across Canada, with them on Zoom to celebrate Maya’s Grade 8 graduation, organized by Royal Oak’s head of school, Julie Cain.

Royal Oak is a small, not-for-profit private school, with small class sizes. Maya moved there from Crossroads in Grade 4, where she was suffering from anxiety made worse by bullying.

Cain began the graduation ceremony with a quote she said was perfect for the times, and perfect for Maya.

“We are not all in the same boat, but we are all in the same storm,” the quote said.

The boats have been harboured, added Cain. “We could never have anticipated four months ago that we’d be planning a virtual graduation.”

Maya and Lyndsay have been navigating some particularly turbulent waters recently, said Cain, telling Maya she and others at school have seen her grace, humility and beauty through all of this.

Tony Gazzard, Lyndsay’s husband and Maya’s father, passed away in February, and Maya is going through a year of “difficult firsts,” missing her father and dealing with his loss, especially on occasions such as her graduation, says Lyndsay.

Having a supportive team at school, who also were quickly able to help arrange for counselling for Maya when she moved to ROCS, was helpful for her and Tony, who were unsure what they could do to help their daughter, she says.

Crossroads did what it could, but working with the public school board was slow, and when Maya was finally offered counselling, the counsellors kept changing, said Lyndsay.

“This school has worked miracles for her, helping to build up her confidence and self-esteem,” she said. “We were very appreciative of all they have done for her.”

The school has always encouraged the buddy system, older students pairing up with younger kids to help them, which Maya loved, says Lyndsay.

The move to online classes has also been a smooth transition, she said, with teachers touching base with students daily, trying to provide a normal, although virtual, school environment as much as possible.

“Teachers have been virtually there for her,” says Lyndsay. “They’re keeping in daily communication with their students. Royal Oak has also welcomed students from the public school system into their online classes, she says.

Her time at ROCS gave Maya the confidence to audition for the performing arts program at Laura Secord, and she is really looking forward to starting high school. When they went to check it out, she loved what she saw and heard at the open house, including other students telling her how great the school is.

“She suits it perfectly, with the artistic side as well as the academic.”

In talking about Maya at her graduation, Cain made it clear she will succeed at whatever she puts her mind to.

She told Maya she met her as a little girl, “mature beyond your years,” with an emotional maturity not often seen in adults. “You understand difficulties make us stronger and better,” she said, describing Maya as a “really kind, caring, sensitive, empathic girl who is not afraid to be herself, and who really appreciates and expects the same of others.”

A slideshow of photos during the virtual ceremony, a beautiful song by Maya herself, and a gift that included a “silly” graduation hat and a grad certificate was handed to her by her mom, along with a necklace with an oak acorn.

Maya came to Royal Oak as a sapling, and grew to be a “mighty tree,” said Cain.

“There is going to be a big hole where your sparkle and shine was,” she told Maya, asking her to come back and do her high school volunteer hours at the school.

Lyndsay says she and Maya don’t have many family members nearby, but several family and friends were able to attend the Zoom graduation ceremony.

A crazy hat and glasses were part of the graduation box Maya received for her virtual ceremony.

Maya Gazzard had her graduation certificate handed to her by her mom at her virtual ceremony. (Photos supplied)
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PUZZLE ANSWERS

Across:
1 Lame, 5 Sadr, 9 Edith, 14 Oral, 15 IAEA, 16 Audio, 17 Film, 18 The big bang, 20 To come, 22 Dire, 23 Story, 24 Earlier, 29 Net loss, 33 Linda, 34 Wet, 36 Hurt, 37 System, 38 Anew, 40 Trade, 42 Tomb, 43 Innate, 45 Real, 47 Tao, 48 Vitro, 49 British, 51 Essence, 53 A-line, 56 Sort, 58 A minor, 59 Amphibious, 64 Gala, 65 Nasal, 66 Noah, 67 Hits, 68 Crags, 69 Glee, 70 Tree.

Down:
1 Lofts, 2 A riot, 3 Malcontents, 4 Elmore, 5 Site, 6 Aah, 7 Deed, 8 Rabies, 9 Eagerly, 10 Dub, 11 Ida, 12 Tin, 13 Hog, 19 IRA, 21 Myth, 25 List, 26 Into thin air, 27 Edema, 28 Rambo, 30 Lute, 31 Orr, 32 Starr, 34 Waive, 35 Ennis, 37 Seat, 39 Ware, 41 Dei, 44 Tonsils, 46 Liam, 49 Bering, 50 Slight, 52 Cob, 54 Nolte, 55 Erase, 57 Tool, 58 Ashe, 59 ANC, 60 Mar, 61 PSA, 62 Hag, 63 UAE.

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