

The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL



Local student
receives
prestigious
scholarship
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The trusted voice of our community.

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More than 400 people attended a rally at Voices of Freedom Park Friday, many of them taking a knee for several minutes in solidarity with anti-racism protests. (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.

He says his biggest worry now is misinformation about workers' rights.

"They are here on work visas, and they have the same rights as you and I," he says. "We're doing the best we can to keep our workers safe. They want to go out, and they have 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.

"It 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

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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 this prettiest of towns.

The powerful messages from the speakers at the rally let the crowd know that if any one of them thinks, 'not in my town, not in this town,' they

couldn't be more mistaken.

They shared their experiences of racism in NOTL, in their working and personal lives, from employers and from friends.

To ignore that it exists is to be implicit, that the opposite of racist is anti-racist.

Yvonne Bredow spoke about years of her own silence, not speaking out when racial remarks were directed at her, because she didn't want to hurt anyone's feelings. "I just wanted the ground to swallow me up." She's not going to do that any

more, 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.

She's experienced racism in a job in NOTL, although she said her current employer has been great.

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 and accepting for this to hap-

pen to others?" she asked.

Everyone's talking about racism now, and some may be tired of hearing about it, she said "We have to live it, every single day."

"When I look in the mirror, I see me. When I look at you, I see you."

A good human being, said Bredow, "would think twice before they speak once."

Another woman spoke at the rally, first taking time to honour Wilma Morrison, who she described as a treasure, and a tireless protector of Black

history, and would have been watching over the rally, she said.

The long-time resident of NOTL was introduced by her first name at the rally, and shared her experiences with racism in town. She ended by asking those attending the event to google how to be an ally, and begin their work to affect change.

Her speech was powerful, and well-received, but days after the rally, having read hateful

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Chamber chair says help for businesses needed now

Penny Coles
The Local

The message from businesses on Queen Street couldn't be more clear: they need help, and they need it now.

Paul MacIntyre, Vintage Hotels' vice-president of operations and chair of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce, says many businesses "are accumulating and facing insurmountable debt levels while being closed. They need direct aid over debt deferral to survive even after they open."

The chamber and local retail and restaurant operators are communicating daily, he says, and the desperation they are hearing about is similar to what is happening in towns across Canada.

In Niagara, he says, "we need to consider the development of a tax credit, from the Province and Federal governments." The Heritage Tax Rebate program is hopefully being considered by the Town, to support local businesses during the high-cost phases of reopening and operating, he says.

As the Province moves to its second stage of reopening, restaurant patios are being permitted to open in some regions, but not yet in Toronto and some other areas,

including Niagara, but that is expected to change in the coming weeks. Although it's a complex problem, restaurants need assistance to balance physical distancing and capacity issues, he says.

In areas moving into the next phase this week, restaurants, bars and food trucks are able to open patios and in parking lots, or adjacent premises, subject to municipal approval. The Province is allowing alcohol sales in outdoor eating spaces without an application fee to the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, which was a local concern.

NOTL restaurants have been working on plans for slow, safe reopenings, says MacIntyre, without knowing the guidelines under which they can open.

MacIntyre is also working with Lord Mayor Betty Disero, Shaw Festival executive director Tim Jennings, Del Rollo, a wine industry leader, and Richard Wall, president of the Virgil Business Association, to help the Town's emergency control group through the recovery period. The message is the same for all: they need assistance now. And the Town is looking at ways to provide that, as are the provincial and federal governments. He says he's proud of the re-

sponse, of the quick action to get help out quickly. In their haste to do that, mistakes are made, but they react quickly to fix them.

MacIntyre says they are also looking for new federal financial aid and grants to assist with openings, as operators require the personal protective equipment and infrastructure to comply with new health and safety protocols, but with little cash flow.

As openings are allowed, he says, "the Town and the merchants need to find the best method to open safe, with social distancing in confined busy spaces like Queen Street."

They are also hoping for enhanced support of the emergency rent assistance. Again, it's a complex situation which won't work for all landlords or tenants, but with most businesses and restaurants on Queen Street operating at reduced capacity, they will require continued support for commercial rent. "They need protection from evictions while accessing emergency rent assistance," says MacIntyre. "This is what we hear on our community chats and directly from many retailers. It is very similar to what is needed on all main streets across Canada."

That was Monday morning, and by Monday afternoon, Premier Doug Ford was announcing a ban on commercial evictions, from June 3 until the end of August, for small businesses that qualify for the rent assistance program, with revenues that have dropped 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 Association, says MacIntyre. "We have also added a marketing advisory committee and operational advisory committee, so every voice is heard and every sector is covered when we start on a



Paul MacIntyre, outside the Prince of Wales Hotel, is working with Queen Street businesses toward safe openings. (Photo supplied)

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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 Department is reigniting a deeply rooted anger and unrest that is completely justified. We see this in the many protests rising up across the United States and Canada. This is provoking an important discussion that must not be overshadowed by violence.

We are taking this opportunity to condemn racism. If we are to find a place of peace and equality, there is no room for such hatred, not even in a subtle way.

We are calling upon the

Niagara-on-the-Lake community 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 community, we grieve with you, we sympathize with you, and we stand with you. We recognize that we may not fully comprehend the turmoil 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 privileges and to call out racism as it happens. Perhaps more importantly, 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 unimaginable 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

Wayne Gates is angry the local public health department was not consulted before Premier Doug Ford announced stage two of the reopening of Ontario's economy, which does not include Niagara.

"Doug Ford is making political decisions without consulting experts and without understanding the situation on the ground here in Niagara. This is completely unacceptable," says Gates.

Ford said Monday the decision of which regions would open was made in consultation with local health officials.

Dr. Mustafa Hirji, acting medical officer of health for Niagara, said in a radio interview Monday afternoon that public health was not consulted, and that he was disappointed to hear Niagara was not included in the next stage of recovery, which allows restaurant patios, wineries and other businesses to move toward reopening, beginning Friday.

Hirji said it could be due to the surge in cases from the Pi-

oneer Flower Farm outbreak, and the proximity of Niagara to the border.

A statement from the region's public health department Tuesday said "Niagara Region Public Health was not consulted on the decisions by the Province announced yesterday around moving to stage two. However, the Province has had discussions with us around how that decision was made, and there are ongoing conversations on the potential for Niagara to move to stage two in the near future."

Lord Mayor Betty Disero says the Premier has said all along his decisions are based on advice from the province's medical officers, with health as his priority.

"We follow the rules of the Province," she says, "and we'll do what we're asked to do."

"We're a quick drive" from the GTA, which is also not included in phase two, "and we could have seen a large influx of people."

Having more businesses open is good for the economy, but the provincial medical offi-

cers are looking at the impact on health, says Disero.

In the meantime, there is some indication the next stage for the rest of Ontario could be as early as June 19, and the Town is working out a system to allow restaurant patios to open in public spaces, allowing room for physical distancing. The discussion Monday was that in order for that to happen quickly, special occasion permits, already covered by a Town bylaw, can be issued. That would also cover the ability to serve alcohol in those spaces.

Beginning Friday, the Province is increasing the limit on social gatherings from five to 10 people, for all regions, and is allowing places of worship to open with attendance limited to no more than 30 per cent of the building capacity. Some of the openings in other parts of the province include barber shops, hair salons, shopping malls, tour guide services, wineries, breweries, outdoor splash pads, wading pools, and swimming pools, all with measures and guidelines to open safely.

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Silence condones racism, crowd told

Continued from page 1

comments about it on social media, and fearing repercussions, she asked The Local not to quote her or use her name.

Attending the rally was Nadia McDonald, a former resident of NOTL, now living in Niagara Falls. She was there with a friend, and also her 10-year-old niece. After the rally she told The Local she was concerned about taking her young niece to the event, but the peaceful nature of the town made her trust it would be safe. It was a good, positive experience, she said, but “a first step. I’m not sure what comes next for change.”

Her father came to NOTL as a migrant worker, and he and her mother still work in town, she said.

The stories she heard from the speakers were, on one hand, shocking, that the racism they have experienced in town is so “blatant,” possibly because it’s an older community of people who grew up in a time when such comments might have seemed more acceptable. “But we can’t make excuses,” she said. They are not acceptable, “and need to be stopped.”

She said it’s important for all to hear the stories that were shared Friday. “If you don’t experience racism yourself, you can’t relate to it,” she said. “In this community, if people say ‘this is what I have experienced, this is what people have called me,’ you have to accept it.”

Her niece, Eden Noble, carrying a sign saying, “Don’t I Matter?” drew a response from one of the speakers, who said emphatically, “yes, you do

matter.”

McDonald says Eden, young and shy, was uncomfortable being singled out, but it provided a good opportunity for discussion after the rally.

Eden realized the importance of the event, and after discussing it with her aunt and her mom, she had a better understanding of what it meant. Having someone so young with that message at the rally, McDonald said, seemed to have struck a nerve, with those who were faced with the fact that people can be victimized from an early age. “It created an emotional response,” she said, and once Eden talked it through with her family, she was happy to send a picture from the rally to her school.

A third speaker, Jane Andres, shared some of her experiences working with the community’s migrant workers, possibly most telling of which was that a worker planning on speaking at the rally bowed out at the last moment, for fear of losing his job.

Andres spoke of the history of NOTL, which led to the Emancipation Act passed in Niagara in 1793. She told the stories represented in the Voices of Freedom Park, of a young black woman, Chloe Cooley, who was sold, thrown in a rowboat, and taken across the Niagara River to a life of slavery. She also spoke of Solomon Moseby, imprisoned while waiting to be repatriated to his owner in Kentucky. “The local officials had arrested him, following the letter of the law. What was taking place was perfectly legal,” she reminded the crowd in the park designed to help tell his story, and others.

“Over 300 townspeople, 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 Moseby 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 at the same farm in NOTL, a total of almost 50 years invested here.”

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 people “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.

Being silent is condoning it, she added. “You don’t have to be rude, just be you.”

Organizers offered an extensive list of anti-racism resources, including books to read, films to watch, and social media groups to follow:

bit.ly/ANTIRACISM
RESOURCES



Rebecca Saylor, Nadia McDonald and Eden Noble came from Niagara Falls to attend the rally.



The park was packed with people, most wearing masks. (Photos by Penny Coles)



Following the rally, a march continued out of the park and down Queen Street.

Niagara Lake -on-the-Lake EST. 1781

Join the Conversation!

Following amendments to Provincial Emergency Orders, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has cautiously transitioned into its recovery phase in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As such, the Join the Conversation platform has been repurposed to provide information, resources, and engagement opportunities specific to Niagara-on-the-Lake residents, business owners, and visitors during this recovery process.

This site provides information regarding the Town's response to Provincial recovery measures, recovery support for local businesses, details about the gradual reopening of Parks and Recreation facilities, financial relief, a spotlight on community heroes, and a photo contest.

Visit jointheconversationnotl.org for more information and to engage in the Town's recovery measures.

For immediate alerts, follow the Town on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.



#StaySafeNOTL

notl.com/covid-19

jointheconversationnotl.org

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 pickup, 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

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No heritage tax rebate for merchants until 2021

Penny Coles
The Local

After many discussions and reports dating back almost 20 years, town councillors, sitting 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 last fall not to include the program in this year's budget, but a request from a group of merchants in the heritage district brought it back to the audit committee, and then to councillors, for discussion.

The merchants are looking for 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 and potentially the Region would also offer tax rebates.

Some councillors suggested council could resurrect the last report and the options set out in it, make some decisions and move the program forward.

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 Disero, along with Councillors Wendy Cheropita and Gary 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. They were outnumbered by councillors who approved having a consultant assist town staff with designing a program for next year.

PUBLIC NOTICE

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

TEMPORARY ROAD CLOSURE Friday, June 12, 2020 to Thursday, June 18, 2020

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 Zvaniga
Commissioner of Public Works (Interim)
Niagara Region

Wiens calls for those who know 'bad actors' to come forward

Continued from page 1

for migrant workers to reduce the risk of COVID-19, Wiens says he's not sure how it would help, or where they would get it — even masks remain in short supply.

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

In Niagara, Wiens says he is confident 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-isolating, physical distancing, wages, accommodation, and the supplies needed to keep bunkhouses clean.

"Unequivocally, 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 Wiens.

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

The report, titled *Unheeded 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 to give them the rights 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, and for two men, death.

The report calls for immediate action to address discrimination and exploitation in Canada's programs for seasonal workers.

Wiens says every seasonal worker is given a package when they arrive in Canada that provides information in their own language, and numbers for them to call to report 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."

Everything in the report is anonymous, says Wiens. There are no farms, no names or 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 liaison 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 mistreated, "we as a community, as a society, will look after them. But we need to know

who they are. These anonymous complaints are very disheartening. How can I help you 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 answers. Give me the information I need to fight for them."

It's frustrating, says Wiens, to have that information out there, "and I can't do anything with it."

During his update to councillors Monday, Wiens says the outbreak of COVID-19 is not a migrant workers issue, it's an agricultural issue, similar to any business where people are 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're 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 asked that they come forward, "so we can keep everybody safe, which is important for the workers, the food chain and employers."



Coun. Erwin Wiens, also a farmer with seasonal workers, says he would do anything to stop unfair treatment of workers, if he knew where to look for it. (Photo supplied)

LOCAL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT: Niagara-on-the-Lake Dental

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

Niagara-on-the-Lake Dental is now open

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 with in 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.



Niagara-on-the-Lake Dental is located at 369 Mary Street.



Dr. Kevin Clark and Dr. Rebecca Zabek-Clark

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.

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EDITORIAL

We can listen, we can learn, and we must change

As I write this, at home from my office on the couch, I listen to the funeral of George Floyd while I work.

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 first, we must be educated to understand what it is.

From Robin DiAngelo, author of *White Fragility*, a book on the recommended reading list handed out at Friday’s rally: “White people who see themselves as liberal can be the hardest, the most defensive, the most resistant, the most arrogant in their certitude that it is not them. I’m not sure we can fully stop it, but we can seek to do less harm through education and practice, and end mistake-making. The key is that you learn and grow from your

mistakes.”

We all have an opportunity, and a responsibility, to learn, and to grow. To have the difficult conversations with those who need to hear them.

We were asked by Yvonne Bredow at the rally Friday to raise our hands if we would like to live as a Black person in this society. She asked a second time. She didn’t 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.

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 any of you ever been pulled over for not having an up-to-date sticker on your licence plate? Were you asked to get out of your car? If you asked why, would you expect to be beaten and arrested? Being pulled over by police for a minor infraction is mildly annoying for most of us. We hope for a warning, and are angry if we’re handed a ticket.

But for others, it’s terrifying, because they understand what can happen to them. What does happen.

That’s something we can change. Must change.

Thank you to Yvonne and the other speakers at Friday’s rally, and to the organizers who quickly planned and held a gathering that could, that should change the future of our town, and of all of us, but most of all, for those in our midst who live every day with discrimination and racism. We will move through our community now with awareness, and an obligation to ensure racial equality for all around us.

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

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

We have a duty to discover the truth, and to push for 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 rights 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.

Penny Coles
The Local

LETTERS

Racism exists in our town

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.

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.

Together, we can ensure that everyone feels welcome, heard, and valued in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Inclusivity Committee:
Councillor John Wiens
Virginia Head
Jamie Knight (Chair)
Bex McKnight
Richard Mell
Niki Walker (Vice-Chair)
George Webber

Community Wellness Committee:
Lord Mayor Betty Disero (Vice-Chair)
Alan Brockway
Carol Clarke
Natalie Cooper
Cindy Grant (Chair)
Paul Jurbala
Terry Mactaggart
Catherine Novick
Sean Simpson



Views from the couch

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

For six seasons and 80 episodes I was 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” exclusive reviews for The Local.



The cast of Schitt’s Creek.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL

The trusted voice of our community

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Youth council to promote mental health



Bethany Poltl
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 distancing, 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 Mental 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 LMYAC discussed the possibility of offering information online.

In the next couple of weeks, the LMYAC will have a few 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 LMYAC. 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 Clavier, 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 LMYAC instagram and facebook accounts, and will be shared directly to the elementary schools in NOTL.

Follow the LMYAC instagram @lmyacnotl to view the mental health and wellness videos and for more updates and information for NOTL youth.

Bethany Poltl is the chair of the Lord Mayor's Youth Advisory Council

Take a minute to relax and enjoy nature



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, canoe, 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 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 stagnant spot along the creek, I hopped off my bike and just sat on the boulder by the water for a while. While traffic whizzed by on Niagara Stone Road, the creek and forest came to life before my eyes. At first, the scene would appear bland, and that nobody was home. After a couple of minutes, fish started resurfacing and rippling the smooth surface. They become the most audibly and visually noticeable

entity of the woods on a still day.

Then, a hummingbird zips in from out of nowhere, hovering in space and time before a blossom on a tree. I know hummingbirds dart around in town here, but it was nice to see one at home in a local conservation area.

A few minutes later, the ants have found their way up my legs, but these ones aren't biters. I also find a couple of well-fed frogs positioned perfectly still on the bank next to me, laughing in stillness as I flick and pick the ants off.

A red-bellied woodpecker swoops in onto a dead tree limb overarched the creek. It allowed my biology brain to pause and note the holes in this chunk of wood, and the logs which have fallen and criss-crossed all over this bend in the stream. Great habitat complexity means great opportunities for residency.

Although a small area, it still provides enough of these key features to make it appreciable for local people and wildlife alike. I've thoroughly enjoyed seeing these creatures, plus snapping turtles, rainbow trout, black-crowned night herons, and coyotes of Four Mile Creek over the years.

Depending on my mood, I also like to rip through the trails as fast as I can on my mountain bike. Stepping it down, even just walking, you won't be rewarded with the natural experiences the place can truly offer.

Sometimes, nature, and life in general, beckons us to stop, sit, and observe.

When our big biped bodies come walking and talking through the forest, the animals are already taking effortless

cover before you even enter the treeline. You have an invisible sphere around you, and it's bigger than you think.

Before you step into the woods, have fun imagining every animal out there slipping into a crack, hole, deeper in the mud, or running to the tree-tops. You are heard, seen, and your vibrations are felt coming from far away. No, that's not hippy 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, foxes, and rabbits know these alarm calls in the blueprint, and they take the clue. 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 'Tick-ville' — 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 routinely 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 ecosystem's space. I've done this in the wilderness woods of northern Ontario, the Amazon, and right here in Virgil. It gives the same

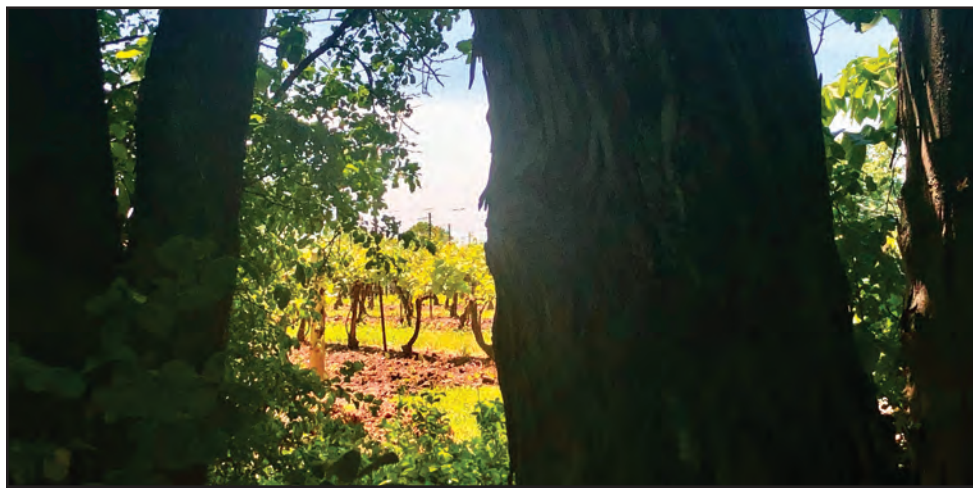
results every time; you can see who truly lives there and who you're sharing space with.

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 much life. I've also wondered 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 strangely scheduled days continue.



Beautiful vineyards back onto Four Mile Creek Conservation Area, where an exceptional shagbark hickory tree grows and provides habitat for the animals mentioned in this article. (Owen Bjorgan)



Bill Auchterlonie
Special to The Local

Looking Up With Bill

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 sensi-

tive 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 hiccup. 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 hiccupped over 430 million times in his lifetime! Eventually, he learned to suppress most of the noise of a typical hiccup by breathing methodically between hiccups, which was a technique taught to him by doctors at the Mayo Clinic.

As Joni said: "Keep on shining."

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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 of thanks, 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. Thank you for 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 get a text 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 displeased 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



Shaw ensemble member James Daly, on his porch with a bamboo screen and twinkly lights as a backdrop, offers a Gift of Song to say thank you to Phil Leboudec of Phil’s valu-mart. (screenshot)

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.”

He points to the Shaw

Festival as an example of living in “a community of selfless people. I see tons and tons of that in the store, people offering to help others.”

At the beginning of the pandemic, he said, he had 65 employees, and lost 18 of them. “That’s significant,” as his business increased 40 per cent.

He hired people and trained them, but at first, when he looks back now, he describes that time as chaotic, crazy and hectic.

“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 selfless, 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. The whole definition of heroes needs 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=youtu.be>.

Men move Virgil coffee group outdoors



Edward Wawszkiewicz, Hank Berg, Tony (who didn’t want his last name used), Gord McIntyre and Orland 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)



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Newark receives \$5,000 to support clients, food bank

Penny Coles
The Local

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 president Laura Gibson says the donation,

which included an additional \$420 from other members, will help keep the food bank pantry full.

Newark is receiving more requests for assistance than usual during the pandemic, she says. Board members have been looking for other ways to

help regular clients of the food bank, and are considering using some of the funds to deliver meals from local restaurants as a way to help not only their clients but local businesses. "It would be a nice treat for families," says Gibson.

The donation was an un-

expected gift from the golf club, and Newark would like to pass it on with a gift to their clients.

This is a time when community groups, including charitable organizations, are finding ways to help each other, Gibson says.

The charity also needs a larger food bank area, and the money will help fund that as well.

Newark Neighbours has been safely providing food for clients throughout the pandemic, who have been appreciative of the assistance,

she says. The thrift store has been closed, and although volunteers are anxious to get back to work, "hopefully soon," the space is very small, and protocols will have to be put in place for distancing, says volunteer Pat Fryer.



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)

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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, Catherine O'Donnell of Willow Cakes and Pastries would have had all the ingredients 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.

It was confirmed about a month ago that Canada Day celebrations, including the cake 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 cupcakes, 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 labour, which was a huge relief 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'Donnell, as she adds many extra hours to complete the traditional cake while still running the bakery.

But it's also a time she loves, thinking of the gift she's giving to the community that has been so supportive 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 experience 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 community and help everyone enjoy a safe Canada Day.

The packages will include six cupcakes, flags, pins, Canada Day tattoos,

glow sticks, Parks Canada swag, balloons and more. These packages can be ordered online through our gift shop at <https://friendsoffortgeorge.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 Pastries.

There are a limited number of packages available with a deadline of June 25 for orders.

The Friends have also created #CanadaDayNOTL, and hope community members will use it to share images of how they are celebrating Canada Day this year.

Canada Day festivities from previous years will be on Friends of Fort George social media channels (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram), with some special content to be shared on Canada Day, so the community can all celebrate together, says Amanda Gamble, executive director of the Friends of Fort George.

"We hope that the community will join us as we celebrate the 103rd anniversary of Confederation" says Gamble, "and we can't wait to celebrate the 104th anniversary with everyone in 2021."



Canada Day cupcakes will be available for family celebrations. (Photo supplied)



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)

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 activities 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.

From July 6 to 10, the theme is Life in Upper Canada; July 13 to 17, Forts of the War of 1812; and July 20 to 24, Famous People of the War of 1812.

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

Packages will be available for pickup from the Fort George Gift Shop on Friday, Saturday or Sunday prior to the start of the camp, with free delivery in NOTL.

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

Fort George gates open

Local Staff

The gates of Fort George are open for visitors to wander around, but buildings are closed.

Parks Canada is working to ensure that measures are in place to safely protect the health of employees 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 all parking lots, including metered parking will be open.

Visitor facilities, washrooms, and heritage buildings remain closed and all programming, special events, and interpretive activities remain suspended.

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 encouraged to plan ahead and check with the Parks Canada website for more information.



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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 undergraduate STEM scholarships. 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 quite 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 credits include physics, chemistry and biology, as well as all three maths (data management, calculus and advanced functions).

"I really enjoy math," enthuses 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 is to 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.

"This 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

made a special effort to look inviting as they welcome visitors back, which she is hoping will be by June 19.

The last two months have 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.



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

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Glendale plan goes forward Recovery ‘one step at a time’

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 described to councillors.

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.

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, assisting each other to get the economy moving, “and in true NOTL fashion, welcome 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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Recovery 'one step at a time'

Continued from page 2

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Local owners close Niagara Falls dinner theatre

Mike Balsom
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.

“When we first opened, you wouldn’t believe the number of people who said ‘good luck, you’ll be lucky if you last six months,’” he remembers.

Until the business was shut down in March, Cooper says things were moving along quite well, approaching its 27th season. “We had no complaints,” he says. “Advance bookings were a little slower this year, naturally, but we were pretty healthy.”

But once the state of emergency was declared, he says Canadiana Productions, Inc., the organization currently owned by Cooper and Anne Robinson, both from Niagara-on-the-Lake, had to take a long, hard look at the

feasibility of continuing.

“Our type of operation, where you have eight people sitting at a picnic table watching a show, it’s not a shock that it would suffer,” he says. “You have to ask how long can you last, is it worthwhile trying? You put 250 people in a room, they’re fairly close together. If you spread it out, you probably have about half, you will have an unprofitable operation.”

Anne Robinson adds, via the website, “nothing could have prepared us for this crisis, and we are heartbroken that we couldn’t keep Canadiana Productions going.”

She tells The Local that she is very proud of the company’s contribution to culture, theatre and tourism for 26 years, but declined to talk directly about the closure, as it’s “too difficult right now.”

Cooper asserts that over the years, Oh Canada Eh? has been “a great platform for wonderful new talent, and fresh thinking about how to operate a theatre, and how you can actually combine a great meal with it, and do it well.”

On March 14, an enthusiastic crowd enjoyed a final performance of the original production, *All Night Long - Hitz 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 Kitty. 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.

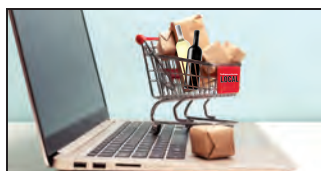
Cooper holds out hope that someone will pick up the Oh Canada Eh? torch and run with it. He points out that Robinson and general manager Erik Hitchcock bought the building that has housed Oh Canada Eh? about two years ago. The log cabin on Lundy’s Lane is currently for sale, but Cooper says it’s perfectly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

“Certainly there’s an opportunity there for someone, perhaps a couple of



Ross Robinson was one of the original owners of Oh Canada Eh?, which has been closed by current owners Anne Robinson and Jim Cooper. The photo was taken in happier times, when they celebrated the dinner theatre’s 25th anniversary last year. (Photo supplied)

our performers, and maybe my business partner, who’s much 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.”



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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, Julia 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 weren’t sure what they could do 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 look-

ing 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, sensi-

tive, 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.



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



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.

LOCAL HAPPENINGS

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Sunday, June 14 @ 4 p.m.
Great Lake Swimmers’ Tony Dekker

Thursday, June 18 @ 7 p.m.
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A crazy hat and glasses were part of the graduation box Maya received for her virtual ceremony.

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- 53 Flared dress type

56 Class

58 Mendelssohn's "Scottish Symphony" key

59 Living on land and in water

64 Blowout

65 Of the nose

66 O T shipwright

67 Chart-toppers

68 Tors

69 Hilarity

70 Every family has one
- 21 Legend

25 Itemize

26 A way to disappear

27 Watery swelling

28 Sly fighter?

30 Pear-shaped stringed instrument

31 Ice hockey player Bobby ---

32 Beatle married to Bach

34 Forego

35 Bill Cosby's late son

37 Candidate's aim

39 Merchandise

41 Agnus ---

44 Lymphatic tissues often removed after infection

46 "Taken" star --- Neeson

49 Strait west of Wales, AK

50 Slender

52 Stocky horse

54 "Lorenzo's Oil" actor Nick ---

55 Rub out

57 Implement

58 Arthur --- stadium, Queens, N Y C

59 Military nurses' group (Abbr.)

60 Besmirch

61 Pro bono TV ad

62 Crone

63 The Emirates
- Down:**

1 Attics

2 Hilarious

3 Troublemakers, often

4 "Get Shorty" author --- Leonard

5 Place

6 Expression of relief

7 Property document

8 Hydrophobia

9 Enthusiastically

10 Name

11 Former name of Psiloritis, Cretan mountain

12 Can plating

13 Harley, often

19 Retirement arrangement

Spanish-Language COVID-19 Support for Ontario Farms

It is important for all farm staff, including Spanish speaking farm workers, to review and understand their workplace COVID 19 safety plan to ensure everyone does their part in protecting their safety, and that of all farm staff and surrounding communities.

We recognize that some Ontario farms find it challenging to communicate with Spanish-speaking workers. We are a group of Spanish speakers with experience presenting information to Spanish speaking farm workers. We can help your farm with Spanish communication using phone/ video chat programs.

Let's work together to ensure everyone keeps safe!



Contact us for more information and to schedule your support:

Intake Coordinator: Tel. 519-761-1074 or Email: intake.coordinator.ontario@gmail.com

Note: Our communication support staff are not COVID 19 or public health experts. They will communicate information approved by farmers, and provided by the appropriate Public Health and Ministry sources. Our support staff are either Certified Pesticides Safety Trainers by OPEP, or certified interpreters, and therefore do have experience presenting health and safety information to Spanish-speaking temporary foreign agricultural workers in a professional and effective manner.

IN MEMORIAM

IN LOVING
memory

May the peace that comes from the memories of a love shared, comfort you.

Remember them with a Loving Tribute.

Contact: classified@notllocal.com or call 905-641-5335

PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from June 4, 2020

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

Across: 1 Lame, 5 Sad, 9 Edith, 14 Oral, 15 I A E A, 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 Hunt, 37 System, 38 Anew, 40 Trade, 42 Tomb, 43 Innate, 45 Real, 47 Tao, 48 Vito, 49 British, 51 Essence, 53 A-line, 56 Sort, 58 A minor, 59 Amphibious, 64 Gala, 65 Nasal, 66 Noah, 67 Hits, 68 Crag, 69 Glee, 70 Tree.

Down: 1 Lofts, 2 A hot, 3 Malcontents, 4 Elmore, 5 Site, 6 Ash, 7 Deed, 8 Rabies, 9 Eagerly, 10 Dub, 11 Ida, 12 Tin, 13 Hog, 19 I R A, 21 Myth, 25 List, 26 Into thin air, 27 Edema, 28 Rambo, 30 Lute, 31 On, 32 Star, 34 Wave, 35 Enns, 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 A N C, 60 Mar, 61 P S A, 62 Hag, 63 U A E.

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



PLEASE RECYCLE
THIS NEWSPAPER

The Niagara-on-the-Lake
LOCAL
The trusted voice of our community.



We're Making a Difference to Keep Each Other Safe from COVID-19

As businesses begin to reopen, we all need to continue our efforts to protect each other.



Practice physical distancing.
Stay two metres away from others



Wear a face covering when
physical distancing is a challenge



Wash hands thoroughly and often

Inside or out, stay safe. Save lives.