Town shows its pride

Couns. Maria Mavridis and Nick Ruller, April Jeffs representing MP Tony Baldinelli, MPP Wayne Gates, Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, inclusivity committee members Jamie Knight, Richard Mell and Niki Walker, CAO Marnie Cluckie, Coun. Gary Burroughs, Regional Coun. Andrea Kaiser and Coun. Wendy Cheropita cut the ribbon on the new Pride Crosswalk at Anderson Lane Tuesday afternoon. (Supplied)

Butterfly release ‘magical’ moment of relief for bereaved

Penny Coles
The Local

This year’s butterfly release was pure magic, says Bonnie Bagnulo.

It was the second year for the very emotional and moving tribute organized by the The Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Palliative Care Service.

Held at the NOTL community centre again, with a few slight changes, it was every bit as helpful to those going through a grieving process, having lost a loved one, some recently, others in the past — all were welcome.

“It was so well-received this year,” says Bagnulo.

“There were such touching, meaningful, heartfelt moments for all."

There was a brief service outside first, during which the names of the loved ones who passed away in 2022 were read, then, as a group, the indigenous painted lady butterflies were released.

Those who know Juliet Dunn of the Niagara Jazz Festival, a beautiful person with a beautiful voice, will understand she has been through a very difficult time, with the loss of her sister, her mother, and then her beloved partner in life and music, Peter Shea.

As part of the release ceremony, she offered to sing at the butterfly release, says Bagnulo, and chose Somewhere over the Rainbow.

“The song was for Peter,” she says, and although Juliet’s pain was obvious, “we had to bring out Kleenex boxes, it was beautiful. I was shocked that she got through it, but she did. That song — that was what we were there for. We could feel the spirits around us.”

About 125 people attended, and almost 100 butterflies were released. Even the bereavement councillor, there to help others, was able to talk about his own bereavement — he had lost his mother a year ago, on the same day as the butterfly release, says Bagnulo.

Doug Mundy, who often plays with Dunn at Jazz Festival events, was back on-site,” Zylstra told The Local that morning. “He was saying I’m here, I’m seeking asylum. Could you please call the authorities for me? So we did.”

Zylstra says the man, described as tall and lean, Caucasian with blue eyes, appeared cold and a little shaky. He told her he had made the dangerous journey across the border.

When Janet Zylstra, River Brink Art Museum’s administrator, fellow staff members, volunteers and vendors arrived at the Queenston Street facility at 7 a.m. Saturday to set up for their first ever juried art show and sale, they received a big surprise.

“When we got there, a gentleman approached us and said: ‘I’m here, I’m seeking asylum. Could you please call the authorities for me?’ So we did.”

Zylstra says the man, described as tall and lean, Caucasian with blue eyes, appeared cold and a little shaky. He told her he had made the dangerous journey across the border. Continued on page 5
Bill Krahn, Coun. Sandra O’Connor, who said she attended a meeting in St. Davids to listen, Sharon Taylor, Bruno Laliberte and Konstantine Mandropialis are at the corner of Tanbark Road and Hickory Avenue, to talk to town planners about traffic in their neighbourhood. (Penny Coles)

June is a Cataract Awareness Month

Millions of people worldwide over the age of 40 are currently living with cataracts. As the eyes age, the lens inside the eye becomes cloudy. This lens focuses light on the retina at the back of the eyes to produce a sharp image of what we see. When that lens gets cloudy, light cannot pass through it, making the image blurry. Lower the risk of cataracts by eating healthy, avoiding smoking, wearing sunglasses, and getting your yearly eye exams.

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June 21, 2023

I’ll get down on my knees to beg for through-road

Penny Coles
The Local

A small group of St. Davids residents gathered at the corner of Hickory Avenue and Tanbark Road Friday afternoon, hoping to convince town planners a new development could create a serious safety hazard on local streets.

These living in Courtland Valley Estates say they already have a traffic problem, one that’s too late to be corrected, but they fear the current plan for Tawny Ridge Estates, in the west end of the village, will exacerbate the issue.

Meeting with the residents were town planner Mark Lamarino and planning director Rick Wilson. Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa was invited to attend, along with town councillors. Zalepa met with the residents for a short visit, and Coun. Sandra O’Connor, the only councillor who took residents up on their offer, stayed to listen to what they had to say.

Krahm told councillors were advised not to attend, because if five or more showed up, it would be a quarum and considered a meeting. He had hoped for better attendance—despite discussions about the situation, he felt councillors would have a clearer understanding if they could see it for themselves.

The problem, residents say, has an easy solution. They are asking, “pleading,” says resident Bruno Laliberte, for a road they call Street A to be connected to Tanbark Road to provide additional access for Tawny Ridge residents. It would reduce an increase in traffic for those in the nearby Courtland Valley subdivision, who say they feel the traffic flow is already a problem.

“There is going to be an increase in traffic” when Tawny Ridge is built, says resident Bill Krahn, “and this (extending Street A) would make it a lot safer.”

There have been many group emails from Krahn and Courtland Valley residents to town planners and councillors.

In his most recent, sent after the meeting, Krahn again amplified residents’ request: “As we stated, none of us are against the Tawny Ridge development, or any development in St. Davids for that matter. We are just very concerned with the impact the increase of traffic will have on an already-compromised intersection which does not meet today’s safety standards.”

That situation, he decried Friday, is a reduced setback between a driveway at the corner of Tanbark and Hickory Avenue. The intersection was not constructed as originally planned, or according to existing standards, and results in vehicles stopping to turn from Hickory on to Tanbark. Standing at the corner for the meeting, the residents pointed out three cars parked in the driveway on one side of the road, obstructing the view for drivers turning.

“We understand that this situation cannot be resolved and made compliant with zoning bylaws, however I hope we clearly and unequivocally demonstrated that this invasive increase of traffic at the corner of Tanbark and Hickory can be somewhat mitigated by extending Street A of the Tawny Ridge Subdivision through to Tanbark Road.”

Wilson and Lamarino both explained to the residents gathered at the corner that no decision has been made, that staff have made no recommendation to council, and that there are still two possible options: extending Street A, or having a walkway for pedestrians.

Residents’ concerns were heard at a public meeting and an open house, and will be taken into consideration when making a recommendation to council, Wilson and Lamarino both pointed out.

But because of discussions in the past, the residents are afraid staff are leaning toward a pathway, which is against the developers’ request—opening the road would eliminate two housing.

Laliberte referenced a professional traffic design committee that says St. Davids urban design guidelines suggest a maximum block length of 250 metres. The block along Tanbark Road, between Hickory Avenue and Warner Road, is approximately 340 metres in length. In such cases with longer block lengths, he feels the committee, by the nature of its discussions, is recommending a pedestrian walkway instead of Street A.

Laliberte and the other residents say they are not fighting the development. Earlier this year, there was opposition at a public meeting and an open house as to the density of the project, which includes some single homes, an apartment building and town houses. The developer has asked for an Official Plan amendment to increase the density on the site and for other exceptions, including for building heights and yard setbacks.

But the group gathered Friday said they have given up on that and accept the subdivision will go ahead—they just want the planners to understand their concerns over safety issues due to increased traffic through their neighborhood.

“Please, I beg you, I plead with you, I will get down on my knees for you,” Laliberte said to Wilson and Lamarino, referring to the extension of Street A. He acknowledged town staff have asked for residents’ opinions, but “I’m afraid you don’t listen.”

Tawny Ridge was not the only issue discussed, but it was the most contentious.

Wilson and Lamarino both spoke of a professional traffic study which has been completed, and the operations department of the town which will also be consulted, but Laliberte and resident Konstantine Mandropialis told them they didn’t believe the study was conducted as it should have been—the traffic at the corner of Hickory and Tanbark was not counted, they said, and should have been.

Mandropialis too said he was uncomfortable that a pathway was even discussed and said giving on the traffic, which he considered significant, “Street A is what is going to mitigate the situation.”

“You have so much pow-er,” Laliberte told the planners. Whatever you say, council will rely on you. And there is so much at stake here.

The planners listened, and assured residents public comments would be considered, but didn’t give any hint of what their recommendation would be.
Residents speak out over three planning issues

Carrie Gleason  The Local

On Tuesday, June 13, resi-
dents spoke at a committee of the whole planning meet-
ing regarding Official Plan and zoning bylaw amend-
ments for three Niagara-on-the-Lake properties.

240 Nassau Street resident welcomes new neighbours

An application has been received to sever the lot on the corner of Nassau and John-
son streets in Old Town into two separate parcels. Property co-
owners Susan and Cathy Russell wish to retire to the Chautauqua neighbourhood and live side by side in two homes that will have a “new home, old charm” style.

Nassau Street neighbour Mark Wheaton says that he and his wife, Marilyn, are “looking forward to having their block complete” and “having neighbours rather than an empty lot” next door.

At a previous open house about the lot severance, a question was raised about why one of the proposed homes will have its driveway on Johnson Street rather than Nassau, which, as planner Nicholas Goedfried from Better Neighbourhoods explained, is to retain the existing old trees on Nassau Street and avoid having a driveway near a stop sign for safety.

Drawings of both proposed homes showed large front porches, with the corner home also having a pergola on the Johnson Street side.

The application also in-
cludes site-specific amend-
ments of 0.8 per cent in-
crease in lot coverage for the corner dwelling and a decreased interior side yard setback by 3.1 metres for the home on Nassau Street.

Coun. Gary Burroughs questioned whether these allowances were necessary, saying that the “variances are so minor, could the developer not fit them into the existing bylaws?”

61 Melville Street looks good, but is too large

The proposed develop-
ment at 61 Melville Street was also questioned in terms of variance from zoning bylaws. Currently zoned marine commercial, the developer is seeking to rezone this Dock Area property to medium density residential to allow for a 12-centric, three-storey condo building. If built according to the proposed plan, the building would have a 67 per cent lot coverage, with 12.1 per cent used for a paved outdoor parking lot, and 21 per cent for landscaping.

Three longtime Delatre Street residents, Jim Reynolds, Barbara Worthy and Paul Shepherd, although in sup-
port of the rezoning and the general look of the proposed building designed by local architects Wayne Murray and Connie Tintinalli from Chapman Murray Architects, opposed the amendment for a building that would have a 17 per cent increase in lot coverage over the 50 per cent allowed under the bylaws.

They also opposed the one-centre side setbacks of the building from Delatre and Lockhart streets, saying that the building would create a “canyon-like” effect on the side streets.

The zoning bylaw requires a 7.5 metre setback. As De-
latre Street resident Barbara Worthy said, “the current de-
velopment does not ‘breathe,’ with the neighbourhood . . . yet,” in the hopes that the developer and the property owner will take their concerns about the size and setbacks of the building into consider-
ation in a future site plan.

Concerns were also raised about the need for an eight-
spot outdoor parking lot, giv-
en that there will be 16 spaces in an enclosed lot at the rear of the building, more than enough to meet the parking required under the zoning bylaw.

John Kinney and Chrys Kaloudis spoke about the need to preserve the remain-
ing NOTL waterfront so that it can be enjoyed by both resi-
dents and visitors and wheth-
ner the rezoning is appropriate for the Dock neighbourhood at all.

1570 Niagara Stone Road, community programs safe

Also on the table for dis-
cussion was an application for rezoning at 1570 Niagara Stone Road in Virgil, which would allow Cornerstone Community Church to sever and sell the north part of the property.

Cornerstone Pastor Kevin Bayne spoke at the meeting to say that the church would be retaining the current build-
ing, out of which its mid-
week youth program, a health clinic for seasonal agricultur-
al workers, other youth pro-
grams and The Farmworker Hub currently operate. “We think it is an asset to our com-

munity, so we would like to keep on operating it as such,” he assured the committee.

However, since the church now has its services and offic-
es at its Hunter Road location, it no longer needs such a large parking space or the former manse. If the zoning amend-
ment is approved and the lot sold, Bayne said that funds received from its sale would allow the church to continue to fund some of the commu-
nity uses at the site, as well as to help with renovations and expansions planned at the Hunter Road location.

Neighbour Kenneth Enns, who lives at 681 Penner Street and is a member of Corner-
stone Church, asked council members if there could be any assurances given as to a new development on the severed lot, adding that he supports the church’s proposal. Kirsten McCarley, the town director of community and develop-
ment services, responded that any future development on the site would require a plan-
ing application and public meeting.

Comments made by res-
dents at the public meetings will be relayed to the proper-
ty owners and developers by town planning staff for con-
sideration before recommen-
dation reports are prepared for council to make its deci-
sions at future meetings.

All three proposals can be viewed on the town website at notl.com/business-develop-
ment/public-planning-notices. Residents wishing to comment on the proposals can do so via email to clerk@notl.com.
James Russell was hoping 500 people would march from the Negro Burial Ground to the steps of the Court House on Queen Street in an effort to get the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake to take action in uncovering buried headstones. However, this past Sunday, Father’s Day, only a handful of people were in attendance. “You make time for what’s important,” said Russell.

“I can’t believe the turnout for the march on Sunday. “People are familiar with the idea that there might be something below the ground that should be known. People are getting used to the idea of uncovering difficult pasts, learning about it, embracing it and atoning for it. And then making it part of our present.”

“The town has their head in the sand,” added Abbott. “There is nothing wrong with someone on council putting their hand up and saying, ‘You know what? The time has come.’”

“We essentially have no march,” said Russell, as the group dispersed from the burial ground around 2 p.m. without having walked to the Court House. “But the good news is that I am never going to give up.”

This week, Russell plans to contact all 124 MPPs to give an overview of the Negro Burial Ground Project, which he plans to turn into a non-profit called the Canadian Unmarked Graves Project to focus on educating and lobbying cemetery owners about the ethical, legal and historical importance of maintaining their properties in the condition mandated by the Bereavement Authority of Ontario and other provincial and federal legislatures," said Russell in a copy of the letter he shared with The Local. “Our first campaign is to restore the 19 headstones of Black freedom-seekers buried in Niagara-on-the-Lake’s Negro Burial Ground.”

A march that wasn’t, but Russell won’t give up

James Russell and his wife Marilyn at the Negro Burial Ground with their signs.
Man turned over to Canadian Border Services

Sharon Burns
The Local

Tara Rosling was pretty disheartened by the vandalism to a Niagara-on-the-Lake’s Pride crosswalk, which had been defaced twice in early June and has since been cleared up by town staff.

“The best thing to do is take positive action, as opposed to going down a rabbit hole of despair,” said Rosling, town resident and actor at the Shaw Festival Theatre.

So Rosling and her 14-year-old daughter Eliana McManus will be hosting a Pride bake sale fundraiser this Sunday, June 25, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at 23 Shakespeare Avenue.

McManus strongly believes that everyone deserves to be treated equally. “After hearing about the Pride flag crosswalk being defaced in our community, I think it is important to step up and support the 2SLGBTQI+ community,” she said.

No strangers to advocacy work, in the past two years the mother/daughter duo raised funds for both survivors of the war in Ukraine and for survivors of indigenous residential schools.

This year’s recipient is Egale, a charitable organization whose mission is to improve the lives of 2SLGBTQI+ people in Canada, and to enhance the global response to 2SLGBTQI+ issues.

Previous bake sales were largely successful due to the contributions of the community, said Rosling. “So far we’ve received contributions of bread, focaccia, muffins, and squares. Somebody is baking something gluten free.”

The bake sale will also have a kids’ component with Pride tattoos and face painting, and a silent auction. “We’ve had handmade soaps, donated ceramics, blankets and some coffee,” Zylstra said. “It’s hard to see someone displaced because they don’t feel supported by their country or their community,” she said. “I think it would be a pretty death-defying trip to cross the Niagara River. It may look calm out there, but I know it’s not. It’s sad to think that someone feels they have to go to those extremes to find what they feel to be safety or asylum.”

When The Local arrived at RiverBlink Saturday morning at about 10 a.m., the Royal Canadian Mounted Police were still on site. Shortly after that, their SUV pulled out of the parking area, presumably with the asylum seeker in the vehicle.

The Local followed up with both the Niagara Regional Police and the RCMP.

At press time attempts to reach the border agency were unsuccessful.

Community members can contribute by donating something for the sale and auction or by baking. Email Rosling at tararoslings@hotmail.com.

Those who would like to donate, but cannot attend the bake sale, can do so through canadahelps.org/en/pages/tara-elianas-pride-bake-sale-fundraiser/ or by emailing Rosling for the link.

Continued from page 1

the Niagara River on a raft of some sort, though she was not sure where that raft was or at what point he came to shore.

“We got him a seat, a blanket and some coffee,” Zylstra said. “While we were waiting for the authorities to arrive we told him that he had had a lot of struggles in the States, that he didn’t feel supported by their community, or their country, but wondered if he had some kind of mental instability. She teared up often while describing the situation.

“At press time attempts to reach the border agency were unsuccessful.”

An RCMP car leaves RiverBlink Museum after picking up a man who said he was from the U.S. and was seeking asylum in Canada. (Mike Balsom)
Pride for all involved in rainbow crosswalk

Donald Combe Special to The Local

In Here Today (Netflix, 2021) Charlie Burnz, played by Tiffany Haddish. Charlie has dementia and is struggling, and Emma becomes his best friend and soutaine. Some might think it an imperfect film, however, its powerful message of love and trust makes it perfect for me.

That Cluckie is also sup-

ed, where she was pleased

a ribbon-cutting could be held
during Pride month. It truly does seem that the vandal, and what was likely on their minds when they decided it would be a good idea to de-
face the vibrant colours of the crosswalk — in addition to its symbolism, it really is — represent a very small minority in our town population.

We’ve also learned NOTL is not alone; that these incidents of destruction to Pride flags, rainbow crosswalks and other symbols of inclusivity are common, still happening in other commun-
i ties in Niagara and across the province. What seems most distur-
bing of all is nobody seems sur-
prised it happens or by the anger that leads to such destruction.

In NOTL, that is behind us thankfulness — hopefully — and the ribbon has been cut with pride for a town that now open-
face the vibrant colour of the crosswalk — in addition to its symbolism, it really is — represent a very small minority in our town population.

We’ve also learned NOTL is not alone; that these incidents of destruction to Pride flags, rainbow crosswalks and other symbols of inclusivity are common, still happening in other commun-
i ties in Niagara and across the province. What seems most disturbing of all is nobody seems sur-

The Niagara-on-the-Lake

Where’s Ben?

Eden student Ben Foster continues to discover new locations in NOTL, won-
dering how familiar others may be with them. If you know where this photo was taken, email penny@notl-
local.com. Last week, Ben was in Virgil on a rainy day during construction.

Local LETTERS

Hotel would have significant impact on residential neighbourhood

We are writing to express our concerns regarding the new hotel development pro-
posed for the Parliament Oak School property at 325 King St. We understand that devel-

or find a meeting

Penny Coles

Editor:
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Penny Coles

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Town CAO Marnie Cluckie described the Pride crosswalk ribbon-cutting ceremony that took place Tuesday afternoon as quiet and informal, with a smat-
ter- ing of representatives from the town, including Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa and a few coun-
 cilors, a representative from MP Tony Baldinelli’s office, and MP Wayne Gates.

There were a few passersby who stopped, but all in all it was over quickly, with little fuss, the pylons removed and the road reopened in time for nursery school pick-up.

Almost anti-climactic it seems, in relation to the outcry from the audience of about 20 peo-
ple gathered on Anderson Lane and Mississauga Street, and a motion of council in July 2022 that got us to this point where

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June 21, 2023

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ple gathered on Anderson Lane and Mississauga Street, and a motion of council in July 2022 that got us to this point where
**Local LETTERS**

Don’t blame the tree or the road

Lakeshore Road is a scenic, leisurely drive. Yes, approaching from the east, the tree does look like it is in the middle of the road, as do other trees and houses along other curves in the road.

However, the yellow centre line, and two white road-side marker lines are clearly visible. An attentive driver, at 60 km/h, should be able to follow them and remain on the road, especially on a clear, dry roadway. A larger tree, on the same side but closer to the cemetery entrance, claimed the lives of three or four (can’t remember) lads in the 1960s, as did a tree at the entrance to the cemetery, claiming two young ladies (both trees bear the scars).

All three of these were in the west-bound direction. The last two had speed as a contributing factor; this recent one, judging from the displacement of the left front wheel to the interior foot well, suggests, to me, that speed was a factor. A medical emergency may have been a factor in this crash. The road in this area, as in many along its length is a curve, so maybe a “curve ahead” sign would be appropriate, but not the removal of a beautiful tree.

I have sat on a friend’s porch and watched as vehi- cles, very obviously speeding, passed by along Lakeshore Road, as well as passing in a “no passing (solid centre line)” zone. The four-way stop sign at Concession 6 and York Road does make crossing north-south easier. However, the stop sign that had been there was clearly visible with high beams when on the level by Coliniari Winery, and even in daylight, to an attentive driver. I have seen many vehicles, mostly on York Road but also on Concession 6, do a “rolling stop” through the stop sign, even with a vehicle, me, approaching the same intersection.

All the safety features available will not protect the inattentive, self-absorbed, driver. The only reasonable explanations are a medical emergency, or a mechanical breakdown, stop making excuses for inattentive drivers.

Madis Tambre,
Niagara-on-the-Lake

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**War continues, and so does need for help**

This is where I need your help. As parishioners of St. John’s Ukrainian Catholic Church, we are once again stepping up our continued efforts to provide humanitarian aid to Ukraine to those affected by the destruction of the hydro-electric dam in Nova Kakhovka.

St. John’s Ukrainian Catholic Church, located at 91 Lakeshore Rd., St. Catharines, is holding a donation drive on Thursday, June 22 and Friday, June 23 from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. both days.

June 23, at my home at 18 Concession 6 and York Road, do a “rolling stop” through the stop sign, even with a vehicle, me, approaching the same intersection.

All the safety features available will not protect the inattentive, self-absorbed, driver. The only reasonable explanations are a medical emergency, or a mechanical breakdown, stop making excuses for inattentive drivers.

Madis Tambre,
Niagara-on-the-Lake

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The RiverBrink Art Museum held its very first juried art show and sale June 17 and 18 on the beautiful grounds of the site of the former country home of art collector Sam Weir. Programming and curatorial assistant Asta McCann was excited for the museum to take the step into the new adventure. She told The Local that the 20 spots for vendors filled up quickly with local artists and artisans, many of them, like Kathy Thomas and Yim Lei “Molly” Yep, who live right in the village of Queenston. Fellow Queenston resident Tony Dekker entertained the crowd with his Juno and Polaris Prize-nominated band Great Lake Swimmers. Food and refreshments were on hand as well from new NOTL business Plant No. 01.

McConnell is hoping that the art show and sale becomes an annual event and a new must-see weekend for art lovers.

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**Beautiful grounds of museum host to juried show**

Artists on the beautiful grounds of RiverBrink. (Photos by Mike Balsom)
Grocery store chats lead to treasured friendships

Jane Andres
Special to The Local

It was an appreciative congregation who met on Sunday night for the Caribbean Workers Outreach Project church service, with only one more to come this season.

Hosted by Bethany Mennonite Church for decades, it has found a new home at the Hunter Road campus of Cornerstone Church the past few years.

Rev. Dave Pritchard, retired from Grace United Church, used the occasion to express gratitude to three individuals who have shown extraordinary dedication, serving the practical, social and spiritual needs for many years.

Nancy Howse has been extensively involved in many levels of organizing outreach projects for more than two decades. It started when she met farmworkers coming in to MB Foods (now Phil’s Your Independent) where she worked as a cashier. Casual conversations at the store lead to friendships. Her family began inviting them over for meals or taking them on excursions to Niagara Falls or other area attractions.

Getting involved with the outreach project’s Sunday night services connected her to a supportive network that organized popular annual events attended by hundreds — the Caribbean dinner, the dominos tournament and the cricket match. Members also travelled regularly to Jamaica to visit the families of their friends who worked on the farms, as well as their churches and schools.

It’s amazing to see years later how those initial casual conversations in a grocery store have led to so many treasured friendships. Although Howse is retiring from her official position on the committee, the friendships will continue!

Pritchard also extended his thanks to two very dedicated Jamaican members of the outreach project — Brian Burton and Elijah Steele.

Steele is usually known as Prophet, perhaps for his uncanny way of prophesying his winning streak over the past 27 years as coach of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Clippers cricket team. Brian Burton has been working at Langendon Nurseries for a little over a decade, and bubbles over with enthusiasm when talking about his involvement with the Caribbean Workers Outreach Project. His contributions are many — leading in worship at the church services, organizing the dominos tournament held at Niagara Agara United Mennonite Church, and refereeing at the annual cricket match.

Pritchard also spoke of new opportunities to partner with organizations that are supportive of its mission, thereby encouraging the committee to make plans and welcome new volunteers for 2024.

Although three members of the outreach project received special recognition on Father’s Day, there have been many locals who have steadfastly shown up and contributed over the past three decades, providing rides, friendship, after-service snacks, organizing dinners or fundraising.

Percival Sutherland, who arrived for his first time in Niagara just a few weeks ago, was grateful to receive a warm welcome, singing songs from home and make new friends. He was introduced to Uton Bell, who provided some words of encouragement.

Bell one of the first farmworkers on the program who was able to bring his family to Canada, thanks to his employer, Abe Epp, sponsoring him in 1973.

From the newest face in the crowd to men like Bell who have been attending the church service for 35 years, it was a fitting reminder of how vital the presence of the Caribbean Workers Outreach Project is in our community.

This Sunday, June 25, will be a concert and the final night of the spring/summer season. It’s a live, fun night when neighbours on the farms are welcome to share a favourite song. Starting at 7:30 p.m., everyone in the community is welcome to come and enjoy a casual evening of friendship and music, Caribbean style!

Health fair back for farmworkers

Local Staff

After a three-year hiatus due to COVID-19 safety measures, Positive Living Niagara and Niagara Migrant Workers Interest Group are organizing the return of the popular health fair for migrant agricultural workers in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

It takes place this Sunday, June 25, from 2 to 6 p.m. at the NOTL Community Centre on Anderson Lane.

The health information fair provides information tables for 300 migrant farmworkers about community organizations and service providers.

Living and working in a rural area presents a number of challenges including access to health services, says organizer Kit Andres, leading in transportation, and social isolation.

One of the goals of the health fair is to highlight and bridge some of these gaps, while providing a safe social space to connect with friends on the farm and meet new community members.

Health fair attendance in previous years was as high as 500 workers, says Andres.
Kathy Hunter and Nancy Nichols go through a lot of strawberry jam.

MPP Wayne Gates stops to chat (and have a photo taken) with locals Johanna Bevington, Lois Cranston and Debi Pratt. (Joy Sagedolce)

Twins Beatris and Amelia, 7, and Paulina Balan, 6, enjoy strawberry frozen yogurt and crepes, and get a lot of attention in their strawberry outfits. (Penny Coles)

Kathy McHoull, Connie Cristolavo and Kay Turnbull had a popular booth at Saturday’s Strawberry Festival at St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, selling luscious, sweet strawberries.

The Highest Total Volume of Local Sales for the Past Decade

Highest volume in Niagara-on-the-Lake from 01/01/2011 to 09/21/2021. Source MLS.

724 LINE 3 ROAD
$2,498,000
MLS 40411740 • Randall Armstrong

26 BALMORAL DRIVE
$1,650,000
MLS 40425998 • Victoria Bolduc

382 WILLIAM STREET
$1,448,000
MLS 40411333 • Viviane Elliott

230 ANNE STREET LOT
$1,249,000
MLS 40454768 • Patricia Atherton and Caroline Polgrabia

4 LUTHER AVENUE
$729,000
MLS 40375618 • Patricia Atherton and Caroline Polgrabia

229 VICTORIA STREET
$1,589,000
MLS 40424098 • Nicole Vanderperk and Christopher Bowron

32 THE PROMENADE
$1,189,000
MLS 40411099 • Thomas Elliott and Ricky Watson

188 FRONT STREET
$4,498,000
MLS 40358103 • Thomas Elliott and Weston Miller

187 QUEEN STREET
$3,695,000
MLS 40374144 • Nicole Vanderperk and Christopher Bowron

5 JORDAN STREET
$999,000
MLS 40400867 • Nicole Vanderperk

45 STONERIDGE CRESCENT
$1,799,000
MLS 40397301 • Randall Armstrong

8 SETTLERS COURT
$2,395,000
MLS 40483939 • Nicole Vanderperk and Christopher Bowron

Christopher Bowron*** 905-327-6704
Kim Elliott** 905-380-8011
Randall Armstrong** 905-651-2977
Victoria Bolduc* 905-941-3726
Philip Bowron* 905-941-7526
Nicole Vanderperk* 905-941-4366
Viviane Elliott** 905-988-7494
Thomas Elliott** 905-380-8012
Jenae Elliott* 905-988-5773
Cheryl Carmichael* 905-941-0276
Sarah Gladding* 905-986-2456
Linda Williams* 905-401-4240
Caroline Polgrabia* 289-257-6063
Patricia Atherton* 905-333-4983
Weston Miller* 289-213-6898
Ricky Watson* 905-246-3387

***Broker of Record  ** Broker  *Sales Representative
The Local

A business forum hosted by the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce drew an audience of local business owners and tourism operators, who were presented with a wealth of information.

The first-time event was intended as an exploration of the state of the local economy and how it affects Niagara-on-the-Lake businesses, and how to create a better future for businesses with potentially impacting residents.

Town Councillor Cluckie and Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa both spoke, and participated in a “fireside chat” moderated by Paul Machtyne, vice-president of operations at Lais Hotel Properties. The chat also included Chamber of Commerce CEO and president Minerva Ward, who was an opportunity for questions from the audience.

The forum was held at the Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery conference centre, with lunch provided, and although local comic Joe Pillitteri was on hand to emcee the afternoon session, his time to entertain was cut short due to speakers running over time.

Cluckie spoke of the town’s time during the pandemic as one of survival, and went over all that town did to help local businesses get through it, including a ShopNOTL website that included 260 businesses in the first two weeks it was online, and the development of a temporary patio program to help local restaurants.

“We were in a survival state — the whole world was for a time,” she said. “We banded together as a town for our survival.”

After survival came a time of striving to recover, she said. “It’s been less than a year, and things opened completely, and we’re still in that striving stage, shifting over time.”

Cluckie spoke of town initiatives to move forward out of the pandemic, including achieving a sustainable budget, increasing capital programs, addressing provincial legislation such as Bill 23, and economic development initiatives such as a tourism strategy, municipal accommodations tax, and focusing on a strategic plan that will develop “a road map for this town.”

Cluckie also spoke of a business retention and expansion program, designed to “keep existing businesses growing,” she said. The program allowed personal visits with business owners in town to see how they are doing, she explained. “Now we have to act on what we heard, and integrate that information into the tourism strategy.”

She also mentioned the many projects underway, including the Glendale Secondary Plan, and focusing on strategic growth and the development of a complete community. Creating a diverse and inclusive community with accessibility enhancements is also on the list of priorities, with youth and family programming, and a Recreation Master Plan.

And to help “pull it all together” are the strategic plan, the tourism strategy, the transportation master plan, and the Official Plan, all to “get to where we want to be. We have an excellent council, committed to taking you there in the next four years.”

“We choose to thrive,” she added. “That’s where council is taking us.”

Zalepa followed Cluckie, echoing her enthusiasm for the future of the town and all that is being planned to get it there. He spoke about the early people on the land, thousands of years ago, “including on this property,” he said, referring to the Ravine conference centre surrounded by vineyards, “and we’re the stewards of it now.”

“As we look at climate change we can see the challenges of managing it,” he said, using that as an example of a “challenge all levels of government have to look at.”

Zalepa is a strong proponent of working with upper levels of government, and spoke of the importance of developing government relationships and working with them on issues such as irrigation, Bill 23, heritage, the airport as an important tool in economic development, and climate change.

At meetings with other levels of government, he said, “Niagara-on-the-Lake is not hard to sell. People ask where you’re from, and there is immediate recognition — that’s something we sometimes take for granted. Let’s not take that for granted. Let’s leverage it. And let’s not forget how perfect we have it here!”

He admitted that “people’s eyes glass over” when strategic planning is mentioned, but explained it’s important to the community, and important for council to know where it should be going. “It gives us a chance to see what people want,” he said, and reduce that to a list of priorities “that everyone wants.”

Having a strategic plan helps council to stay focused on that list, “and not be distracted by pet projects. We want to be responsive to the majority of the community by getting those things done.”

The development of the tourism strategy, involving stakeholders, means that “at the end of it we’ll have a robust, dear set of items” that will help the town “manage the tourism sector properly,” he said.

Zalepa is in favour of “a shared delivery of services, and local people making local decisions.” But not amalgamation, he quickly adds. “Any time I see amalgamation, it doesn’t work well. And I convey that every chance I get.”

He spoke of economic development and all the possibilities he sees, including in the maritime industry.

“We are all blessed, but I think we really need to push forward to build on what we have here today.”

Ward was next to speak — her morning presentation was about all the chamber does for the town and local businesses, including several events and support for the Ambassador Program, as well as its goals for 2023, which includes a “street level” accessible space.

In the afternoon, she spoke of Niagara-on-the-Lake as “the small town with the power to lead,” specifically in its growing role in the wine industry.

The town faces challenges: an aging population, labour shortages, workforce development challenges, infrastructure and affordable housing needs.

And at the same time “we have a huge competitive advantage,” she said. Its location near the border, scenery, charm, the Shaw Festival and Heritage District, the airport, shopping — “from ‘whimsical boutiques to the outlet mall’ — and not only wineries, but the growing brewery and distillery businesses.

She also referenced the culinary scene, the many festivals and events, the arts, accommodations and capacity for business events. While day visitors are essential, “and every tourist is welcome in town,” she said, the chamber’s focus is on marketing to those who come and stay, for a few days, and building on business events, especially during the shoulder season and on weekdays.

She stressed the gift NOTL has with its wine industry, and the town’s ability to attract people because it. It can be a useful tool to increase tourism, she said, while being sensitive to residents, and a way to grow with less impact on those who live close to the tourism area.

“People in NOTL live in a fish bowl,” she said. “Their actual heritage homes are part of the attraction for visitors. Tourism has to be respectful of that community.”

One of the fireside-chat questions addressed that point — why are there not members of the public on the tourism strategy committee?

The answer, from both Cluckie and Zalepa, is that the committee of stakeholders is for governance, but there have already been three focus groups, and the committee will be looking at many months of data collection from public input.

Residents, Zalepa said, and all stakeholders in the process, “won’t be impeded by not having a role on the committee.”

Another question concerned building tourism without losing “the sense of character of the Old Town,” and that continued building and expanding tourism “will make it less desirable.”

Ward said the town has to act responsibly, understanding that residents live in the midst of tourism. “We have to be very careful how we grow, in keeping with what we already have.”

Growth has to be “a measured response, and it has to be managed carefully, but we also can’t stand still as a destination.”

When asked if there was an “aha moment” when looking at the results of public input for the strategic plan, Zalepa says his came when he realized how closely aligned most of the comments were.

“Everyone is on the same page. Certain things emerged, with similar challenges, such as public transportation and skills gaps. And with everyone on the same page,” he added, “we can really make this happen.”

At the top of the list is reliable transportation to get people to work. “I’m comfortable supporting public transportation, and will continue to do that,” Zalepa said.

Machtyne also addressed the labour shortage, saying while residents have the impression the town is busy, and it is rebounding, it hasn’t reached pre-pandemic levels. Many restaurants are not open full time, some just five days a week, he said, when previously they were open seven days a week, “because we can’t meet the demand” due to lack of staff.

Ward agreed. “We’re better

Continued on page 11
mostly good news for Niagara businesses

Continued from page 10

off than many other desti-
nations but we’re not at pre-
COVID levels yet!

Tim Jennings, CEO of the Shaw Festival, said tickets aren’t
going as fast as they would have pre-pandemic, with people still
hesitating to make travel de-

titions. He asked about part-
nerships that might help the
town, and was told by Zalepa
that Parks Canada and Niagara
Parks Commission “are really
strong partners, and offer lots
of exciting opportunities. “

“We are having those con-

versations all the time, and they
of areas of Ontario,” and is attract-
ing more young people with
families, “in numbers we’ve never seen here before.”

While people have stored-
up income from the pandem-
crises they could be spending
now, he said, “an incline in
interest rates causes a decline
in the retail sector. But interest
rates will change and the retail
sector will improve, and Niag-
ara will catch up with the prov-
ence over time.”

Construction has seen
growth in Niagara, “especial-
ly with all the people moving
here. We need more houses.”

Niagara is also seeing “a
gradual improvement” in con-
struction in institutional and
industrial sectors, he said.

“Companies are running
out of space in the GTA and
Hamilton, and are moving to
Niagara. “

And more good news —
during the pandemic, “Niagara
was growing in exports, sup-
plying other areas of the world,”
with 90 per cent of its exports
in manufacturing products.

Although there is a labour
shortage in retail and hospital-
ity sectors, there are more peo-
ple working in Niagara than
there have been for many years,
with an unemployment rate
that is “outperforming the rest
of the province.”

Niagara is still an older
demographic, and during the
pandemic many people made
the decision to leave the work-
force, while others found bet-
ter jobs. Locally, there are still
1,000 jobs that have not filled,
“mostly across hotels, hospitali-
ty and restaurants.”

The final speaker of the day
was Erin Henderson, founder
and chief sommelier of The Wine
Sisters, a Toronto sommelier ser-

vices and wine events company.

She spoke of a career path
that led her to start her own
business, the time during the
early days of the pandemic
when she didn’t think it would
survive, and some of what she
learned along the way that
helped her survive. She used
every opportunity she could
promote her business, and
spoke of the importance of
respecting every single client,
and being open to learning les-
sons from failures.

Also important, she said, is
“listening to yourself, being
true to yourself” and suggested
avoiding short cuts, “which are
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Shaw’s On the Razzle a hilarious adventure

Mike Balsom The Local

For Shaw’s production of Tom Stoppard’s On the Razzle, now on until Sept. 2 at the Royal George Theatre on Queen Street, it’s all about the timing.

That’s established from the moment the curtain rises. The opening scene is a graceful slapstick dance of avoidance, as characters busily rush to ready Herr Zangler’s upscale Viennese grocery store for the day’s business dealings. It's a marvel to watch as each actor hits his or her mark, punctuated by the ringing of shop bells. Sacks of flour fly across the room to find their rightful place below the counter, narrowly missing the actors.

And as the play progresses, it’s the impeccable comic timing of the actors that makes director Craig Hall’s On the Razzle a hilarious comedy of errors, misplaced identities, malapropisms and sexual innuendo.

Leading the charge is 20-year Shaw veteran Ric Reid in the role of Zangler, the self-centred, over-protective and often befuddled shopkeeper. Reid brings the right amount of bluster to Zangler, a man who loves to prance around in his shop in his military parade uniform.

In Stoppard’s script, Zangler has the propensity to mix his metaphors often, to which it is said to mess with what writers, if they’re really skilled, prised apart so easily, “says Zangler. And not hers.”

On the Razzle is full of such clever plays on words. Zangler also specializes in muddling up common turns of phrase. Staples such as “cock of the walks” become “cake of the week” in his voice, and the laughs come hard as Reid’s Zangler continues to botch the phrase, groping comically for the correct word.

Zangler is also important and perpetually annoyed, if not angry. Besides his niece’s paramour he also lambastes his tailor, his new servant, a washer and his housemaid Gertrud. He also prone to excessive preen.

The sight of Reid transformed into a military uniform two sizes too small elicits much laughter from the Shaw audience.

As Zangler leaves to meet his fiancée, Madame Knorr, owner of a Vienna dress shop, the audience is introduced to her head clerk Weinberl (Mike Nadajewski) and his junior clerk Christoph (Kristi Frank). The casting of the female Frank in a male role, by the way, was common in the early 20th century, when Stoppard’s 1981 play is set.

Frank is great as the clueless but affable Christoph. And the always great Nadajewski is perfect for the role of the sly, sneaky Weinberl. He nails the innu- merous intimations with his glances to the side and the grasy hankie that he wears.

Nadajewski marvelously delivers an eloquent soliloquy about his place among the merchant class, before convincing Christopher to close up shop and go “on the razzle,” for a good time to Vienna while the boss is away.

Of course, according to Murphy’s Law, nothing goes right. The second act sees Weinberl and Christopher continuously finding themselves in compromising positions, as they hit Vienna and somehow wind up at Madame Knorr’s shop and, later, at the same restaurant where Zangler plans to meet his fiancée.

There, they sit with both Madame Knorr (Claire Jalland) and Frau Fischer (Elodie Gillett), who of course think they are each other. Gillett’s Fischer, though, knows of the ruse, and gloriously pair into going deeper into the charade. Some of the best sexual innuendo in the play come through these mistaken identities.

But we have to bear in mind that writers, if they’re really good artists, are absolutely ad- dicted to messing with what they’ve inherited.

In an orderly fashion that makes sense, “anachronism in a production can be jarring,” said Carroll. He gave an example of how disturbing it can be to have sword fights throughout the play only to have, in the fi nal scene, a gun fight.

And by the rules of the game I’m talking about the production.”

Carroll noted, however, that some elements, such as music, “can be incredibly anachronistic. I’ve almost never known any audience to notice when the music is on the wrong track at the right time or an early or too late for the play.”

“We look for a play to show us the organizing principles of life,” he continued, “and we look for productions to have its own organizing principle, something about the organizing principle of the play that maybe we haven’t noticed.”

The final Learn & Live session for the season is presented by J.B. Hopkins, parks supervi sor for the town. He will explain how Niagara-on-the-Lake became The Prettiest Town in Canada. Visit the NOTL web site to register for this Monday, July 17 event.

Shaw artistic director Tim Carroll gives tips on play-watching

Sharon Burns The Local

Tim Carroll, artistic director at the Shaw Festival Theatre, shared suggestions on how to watch a play at the largest Learn & Live event of the season held Monday at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library.

The hour-and-a-half event was not about how to be an audience member. Carroll explained, but about the rules of theatre that we all want to understand. He used examples from ancient Greek tragedies, George Bernard Shaw, Tennessee Williams, William Shakespeare and Tom Stoppard, to name a few.

Carroll contended that we go to the theatre to see the hidden connections between things, and to see the order that’s lurking beneath the chaos.

There is a spectrum of what the audience would say they look for in theatre, suggested Carroll. For most people, the answer is entertainment. A relevant factor, noted Carroll, is that writers, if they’re really good artists, are absolutely addicted to messing with what they’ve inherited.

Another truth about theatre is that writers, if they’re really good artists, are absolutely addicted to messing with what they’ve inherited.

For example, a director can’t impose his or her mark, punctuated by the ringing of shop bells. Sacks of flour fly across the room to find their rightful place below the counter, narrowly missing the actors.

And as the play progresses, it’s the impeccable comic timing of the actors that makes director Craig Hall’s On the Razzle a hilarious comedy of errors, misplaced identities, malapropisms and sexual innuendo.

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The magical process of understanding the rules starts when, for example, a play- writer can compress five years events into two hours.

Next, the audience likes to know that the end is always im- plied from the very beginning of a play. “The denouement, the reveal, must be surprising,” said, “but with hindsight, inev- itable. It’s quite a tricky thing to pull off,” said Carroll. It gives the restoration of order.

As a member of the human race, suggested Carroll, we look for patterns in the world to un- derstand more about ourselves, and how the world works.

The same is said of what an audience member wants to “see Williams, William Shakespeare and Tom Stoppard, to name a few.

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Another truth about theatre is that playwrights always tell the story. “It’s a contract with the audience,” said Carroll. Also, “protagonists who have committed a crime will pay for it, and the point of a play is to demonstrate the hidden patterns in life.”

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Regional program keeps seniors active, mentally and physically

Seniors drop in to the open house to see what the daily three-gion’s Adult Day Program, manager for the Niagara Region’s Adult Day Program, explained their programming is based on the Five Ways to Wellbeing: Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning, and Give.

An open house at the community centre last week was designed so that the curious could walk through several activity stations to get a sense of what to expect in a three-hour session.

“We start with independent activities, then go into the brain game,” said Fedorchuk. “We will do different types of games that help people with cognitive issues and with memory.”

Participants can be seniors over 60 years old, and they can be physically or cognitively challenged, socially isolated, or have early to moderate memory loss. They “come here and are active-ly engaged with us and enjoy their time,” said Fedorchuk. The three-hour session also allows a break for the caregiver.

All the staff have been trained in SAM STEPS, an exercise program designed for seniors to exercise safely, which they do for 45 minutes. A social break follows, giving people the opportunity to engage with each other over a snack.

The bathrooms are equipped with rails and staff are trained to provide assistance.

The last hour of the session, Stay Connected, explores weekly themes in visual, social and ac-
tive ways. Participants can take a tour of China through videos and slideshows, learning about famous people, history, and ex-
pertise in art and music. The hour concludes with an activity, such as painting a branch of a cherry blossom.

Sparshak, program manager for the Niagara Region’s Adult Day Program, explained that community centre last week was designed so that the curious could walk through several activity stations to get a sense of what to expect in a three-hour session.

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pertise in art and music. The hour concludes with an activity, such as painting a branch of a cherry blossom.

“The games are also conversation starters,” said Jackson. Recreationists, such as Tammy McIsaac, are trained to develop and implement appropriate social recreation programming for a diverse group of seniors. They use some of the games as a starting point to get seniors to stay connected and to keep learning.

Willard and Anita Miller, from Virgil, attended the open house. “I think he would find it interesting,” said Anita of Wil-lard. “There is a lot of variety,” she added, with 84-year-old Willard Miller agreeing.

The Adult Day Program runs Tuesday and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., and Monday through Fridays from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Clients must attend at least one session per week. A daily user fee of $16.20 is incurred for each session.

Doughvine treats are ‘showstopping’

Mike Balsom
The Local

As a frequent visitor to Ni-
agara-on-the-Lake from her previous home in the Ottawa Valley, Jessica Millet felt there was something missing.

“I felt that Niagara needed a doughnut intervention,” says Millet. “I thought, let’s make a fun spot with awesome, organ-
ic food, comfortable seating and really good coffee.”

So when the veteran of many years in the restaurant industry moved to NOTL with her husband, Norman, the couple looked for the per-
fekt place to start their new venture.

Doughvine, Millet’s new cafe located on Victoria Street, is a bright, cheerful shop complete with that comfortable seating and really good coffee and espresso, brewed with beans from the Happy Goat Coffee Com-
pany in the Ottawa Valley.

It’s all in line with Mil-
et’s commitment to offering doughnuts, breads, Montreal-
style bagels and beverages made from truly Canadian, organic sources, with a focus on local ingredients when they are in season. She even sources her flour from Tot-
ternham, Ontario’s artisanal K2 Milling.

Visually, her doughnuts are showstoppers. Dough-
vine’s Oreos donut has giant chunks of the namesake cook-
e embedded on top of a dark chocolate drizzle. The Boston cream is topped with large beads of white chocolate. If you’re a fan of The Simpsons you will recognize the Homer, even if you’ve never encoun-
tered that exact doughnut anywhere other than in front of your television.

And they are scrumptious. Doughvine honours-dipped doughnuts are made with real local honey, as evident from the very first bite. Their Coffee Crisp brings the rich flavour of the chocolate bar to a soft, doughy pastry. The birthday cake comes com-
plete with a soft, tasty ball of dough in its centre.

“Lots of my ideas come from nostalgia,” laughs Millet. “I guess I’m reliving my child-
hood a bit through dough-

uhts. And I learn a lot by getting feedback from people. It’s important to listen to your customers’ advice. I always pay attention to what’s going on locally.”

When the annual Straw-
berry Festival is taking place at St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church on Simcoe Street next week, it’s likely that Millet will be whipping up batches of doughnuts filled with locally made strawberry jams.

True to her adventurous nature when it comes to the culinary world, Millet has plans to experiment a bit with different flavours and styles. Doughvine is the kind of place you may want to visit frequently, as the menu may be different from day to day.

Millet does offer vegan options, and she plans to also make gluten-free doughnuts, though she cautions that those would be made in an environment where they may have come into contact with regular flour.

And she will soon offer a traditional Polish paczki stuffed with a spiced plum filling.

The doors to Doughvine opened just before June 1, a sort of soft opening to get things going and to train her staff, who are as enthusiastic as the house. "I think he would find it interesting," said Anita of Wil-
lard. "There is a lot of variety," she added, with 84-year-old Willard Miller agreeing.

The Adult Day Program runs Tuesday and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., and Monday through Fridays from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Clients must attend at least one session per week. A daily user fee of $16.20 is incurred for each session.

The Local is pretty sure those duping hun-
y — Millet and Dough-
vine might soon see lineups of doughnut lovers snaking around the block.

How can you resist?

NOTL Cat’s Rescue volunteers will have Rocky, Rosie, and mom Raveena at Virgil Pet Valu Sunday, June 25, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Rocky and Rosie, born April 5, must be adopted together. Applications for adoption will be available. (Supplied)
Paul Tobey to entertain at Spirit in Niagara Distillery

Mike Balsom
The Local

It was a perfect confluence of events that led to Paul Tobey’s upcoming jazz trio concert at Spirit in Niagara Distillery on Lakeshore Road in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

First, the accomplished jazz pianist and his wife, Nancy, decided to check it out. They immediately fell in love with the atmosphere, and especially the food.

“They come here all the time,” Tobey tells The Local. “At least two or three times a week.”

A big factor in the atmosphere at Spirit in Niagara is based on the nostalgia of the roaring 1920s and the rum-running bootleggers who followed during the Great Depression of the following decade.

“That era also marked the beginning of the jazz age. So it made sense in December 2021, when the distillery became the home of the TD Niagara Jazz Festival’s “Jazz and Blues” series. To accommodate the series, Jazz Festival co-creators Julian Dunn and the late Peter Shea moved a grand piano into the space at Spirit in Niagara.

Fast forward to January 2023. That very same Julian Dunn booked Tobey for a “comeback” Jazz Festival concert at The Hare Wine Co. Tobey’s new profile in the jazz world was rising with his Juno-nominated album Street Culture more than 20 years ago, had suffered a career-ending injury to his forearm, along with tinnitus. He didn’t play the piano at all for many years before the NOTL move. Part of the reason for the move to the area was to slowly ease his way back to the piano bench. He set up his studio and from his new home dug into the space here.

“It should be fairly obvious it’s a real team effort that led to this one,” Tobey says. “I was flattered,” Tobey says. “but I told him that I play piano. I don’t play keyboards. There is a big difference between playing a piano. especially a concert piano, and playing an electronic keyboard. I told him I couldn’t play there because he didn’t have a piano there anymore.” He set up his studio and from his new home dug into the space here.

“I was shocked when he heard about Tobey’s performance at the Niagara Stone Winery, and the next time he saw him at the distillery with Nancy, he asked Tobey when he was going to perform there. I was flattered,” Tobey says. “but I told him that I play piano. I don’t play keyboard. There is a big difference between playing a piano. especially a concert piano, and playing an electronic keyboard. I told him I couldn’t play there because he didn’t have a piano there anymore.”

He should be fairly obvious what Lepp did next. Yap, he bought himself a piano. It’s a shiny, beautiful Samick baby grand piano, acquired by Lepp with the help of a local piano tuner and consultant. As he opens the lid to show it off to the The Local it is clear that Lepp is happy with his purchase. “I was shocked when he told me he bought it,” Tobey laughs. “It’s a really, really good piano. It’s perfect for the space here.”

“We were so lucky to find this beautiful piano,” Lepp says. “I believe it was owned by someone in the Fort Erie area. Since we got it, we’ve had Eddie Pizzo, the piano player from the (St. Catharines restaurant) Blue Mermaid on Thursday nights. I’ve heard Paul play it a few times, too, and it sounds amazing.”

Tobey has assembled a great trio for the July 29 concert, including Shaw Festival bassist Ross McIntyre, who has shared the stage with the likes of Matt Dent, Emile-Claire Barlow, Guido Basso and Laila Biali, among many others. Joining in on drums will be Joel Haynes. The Burlington, Ontario resident has appeared on over 30 recordings as a side piece with artists such as Seamus Blake, Russell Malone, David Braud and Denzel Sinclaire. He also has two albums under his own name to his credit.

Tobey promises a set packed with standards, including well-known jazz numbers “The In Crowd” (Ramsey Lewis), “My Funny Valentine” (Chet Baker) and “My Favorite Things” (John Coltrane).

“They’re all going to be on an album I’m hoping to release later this year,” says Tobey, looking forward to potentially the third step in his comeback process.

He’ll also throw in “A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes,” the tender theme song from the classic Disney version of Cinderella, and a jazzed up version of an original classical piece he wrote to commemorate his walk of the Camino in Spain. The trio will also perform the Oscar Peterson ballad “You Look Good To Me,” among other numbers.

“A journey through the Great American Songbook,” Tobey adds. “Songs you know and love. It will remind us how lucky we are to have an evening filled with good friends, good food and great music.”

And his good friend, Arnie Lepp, is over the moon with excitement to host Tobey for the second step in his comeback.

The Thursday, June 29, show begins at 7 p.m., with the audience welcome to gather for dinner at 6 p.m. Tickets for the concert only are $45, while dinner is a la carte.

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Lepp wins best new business award

Mike Balsom
The Local

The awards keep coming for Arnie Lepp’s Spirit in Niagara Distillery on Lakeshore Road in Niagara-on-the-Lake. The just over two-year-old distillery and restaurant was named Niagara’s Outstanding New Business at the Niagara Business Achievement Awards last Thursday.

It is over third region-wide award for Lepp, following a 2022 Award of Excellence for Architecture at the Niagara Biennial Awards and a 2021 Award of Merit from the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority for the small batch producer’s commitment to using otherwise discarded, damaged fruit to make its spirits.

Add those awards to the dozen or so that have been won for specific products in Spirit in Niagara’s lines of gins, vodkas, bourbons and eaux de vie, and the trophy shelf at the entrance is filling up fast.

“This one is the most rewarding on a personal level,” Lepp tells The Local. “It’s about the outstanding new business in Niagara award. A lot goes into starting a new business. I think all those in the category were worthy of the award. I know we are making some great products here, and we are offering some great food at our restaurant. It is a really a team effort that led to this one.”

Arnie Lepp wins a local business award for best new business in Niagara. (Mike Balsom)
Palliative care service has much to offer

Continued from page 1

Riannon Bagnulo and Agnes Feren with volunteers Melissa Nixon and Jessika Powel. Three generations, Riannon Bagnulo, her mother Bonnie Bagnulo, and Bonnie’s mother Agnes Feren released butterflies for Bonnie’s brother. (Photos supplied)

Juliet Dunn sang for her mother, her sister, and her husband and music partner Peter Shea.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa attended and released a butterfly for a family member lost last year.

The painted lady butterfly is indigenous to our area, says palliative care executive director Bonnie Bagnulo.

Mark and Monica Gaudet release a butterfly for their son.

Doe Trivett and Mary-Beth Blackman release their butterflies.

When we were crying over our losses, sometimes other people get tired of listening to us, but on a day like this, we all have something in common, the need to witness our grief. That release of grief, of bereavement, surrounded by people who understand, for that one moment of the day, can be freeing. It’s a letting go of just that little bit of bereavement, just for that moment.”

This event has become an important one for the palliative care service, but they can help in so many other ways, with programs to offer those suffering a serious illness and their families, and bereavement support for those who have lost a loved one. They have a psychosocial consultant who adds a level of support for those grieving, and they provide equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers, canes, shower seats, transfer benches, cushions and comfort items — almost everything anyone during an illness might need, including room monitors for caregivers.

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

Continued from page 1
Three bell concerts coming up at St. Mark’s

Penny Coles 
The Local

While a St. Mark’s emporium is traditional for the church, it evolves every year as organizers find different ways to stage the annual fundraiser, as it has this year. It continues to be an opportunity to find hidden treasures in action in France during the First World War. They then pro-
vided a full octave range of nine bubs. In 2006, all nine bells were
renewed for tuning and recons-
tituting to carillon standards. At the same time, the aging bell was repaired, reinforced and made for the return of the original nine bells and nine
more. In 2012, a single bell was
added: The Brock, so named to
commemorate the 1812 war hero and the bicentennial cele-
brations.

There are about 2,600 sets of
tower bells in the world, says Taylor, including 48 in Ontario.

“We can’t call it the largest Canadian car-
illon as it is at the Rainbow Bridge
(55 bells and 43 tons) in Niaga-
ra Falls. Fully refurbished in the
1990s, this carillon has not been played since the tragedy of 9/11.
It is still considered a security
risk.”

St. Mark’s Haute Emporium returns with Wine & Wears event

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Record-breaking ride for prostate cancer

Mike Balsom
The Local

It was a record day for the Ride For Dad Niagara Saturday, with $63,000 raised to support awareness of and research into prostate cancer, one of the biggest killers of men in Canada.

Co-chair of the Niagara chapter and national chapter advisor Matt King of Niagara-on-the-Lake says a record 210 motorcycles roared out of the parking lot at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124 on King Street at 9 a.m.

The great turnout was also a fitting send-off for Niagara Health urologist Dr. Ian Brown, who has been involved in the Niagara ride since its beginning 13 years ago. Brown and his wife Tina, both members of the Niagara executive, are retiring from his practice in Niagara to move to British Columbia. Not a motorcycle enthusiast himself, Brown rode in the Batmobile as the pace car for the Niagara ride for the last time Saturday.

The ride was one of 35 such events scheduled between May and September across the country to raise funds for the Prostate Cancer Fight Foundation, a leading investor in cutting-edge prostate cancer research.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, Dorothy Soo-Wiens, Erwin Wiens, organizer Damien Parrent, and co-chair Matt King before Saturday’s Ride For Dad, which began from the Niagara-on-the-Lake Royal Canadian Legion on King Street. (Photos by Mike Balsom)
Foster Festival relaunches Local Heroes charity program

Mike Balsom  The Local

The Foster Festival refers to Shawn Rahbarian, owner of Hypnotic Hair Lounge and the new York Road Barber Shop, as one of the Local Heroes program that allows those who might never get to the theatre to attend a Foster Festival play. (Mike Balsom)

“His plays are renowned for producing playwrights. Foster, one of Canada’s most beloved and most often produced playwrights. The former radio announcer’s plays are renowned for their ability to shine a spotlight on regular life with a combination of comedic and serious moments. His characters are often relatable, everyday people interacting with friends and family members, each discovering something about themselves and in turn, about each other in the process. “He really writes stories that we all can identify with, across the board,” says Williams. “He deals with general issues, whether it’s getting old, or facing death, or looking at relationships. These aren’t exclusive to any social demographic, or even any age demographic.”

Of course, it costs money to produce a play. There’s the rental of the performance space, the cost of promotion, the salaries of the professional performers, the copyright costs of the material and so on. A not-for-profit professional theatre company, the Foster Festival needs to cover these expenses. It all adds up.

The live arts are not necessarily accessible, cost-wise, to a portion of our community,” Williams explains. “Our prices, at $42 including tax, are inexpensive comparatively. Speaking, but still, for a portion of our audience, whether its seniors, or people experiencing economic hardships, $42 can make a significant difference in a weekly budget.”

So the Foster Festival has joined with Bethlehem Housing and Support Services, the Walker Family Cancer Centre, Pelham Cares, Project Share and Community Living St. Catharines to make seats available to their clients for the Foster plays Outlaw (on now until July 2 at the Century Barn at Falls Historic Village), and Jenny’s House of Joy (Aug. 9 to 20 at Ridley College’s Mandeville Theatre).

“We free the tickets available to those agencies for them to distribute to their clientele,” Williams says. “For instance, Bethlehem Housing and Support Services have a direct line to their clients. And with the Walker Family Cancer Centre, we felt with what people are going through there, perhaps they can step out for a couple of hours and forget about things, have a communal experience where laughter is involved.”

Those who have seen Foster’s plays know that it’s difficult to walk out of one without reflecting upon how real one has laughed during the proceedings. For someone who is experiencing hardship on a daily basis, that experience can have a major positive effect.

“And there’s been studies done,” Williams says, “that have found that when an audience gets together for a live theatrical event, their heartbeats synchronize. They’re watching the same story in the same space, the pace of the story seems to allow them to sync up. It’s an interesting symbol about how connections are made. It creates a sense of communal well-being.”

The Local spoke to Greg Lewis, president of Pelham Cares, a food bank and social services agency serving that community. Lewis had already had a chance to distribute tickets to some of the organization’s clients.

“We were excited to have a chance to offer them this opportunity,” Lewis affirmed. “It’s not the usual thing someone might expect when they visit a place like Pelham Cares. But we thought it would be a great way to bring some joy and sunshine into their day.”

The festival’s Local Hero program was actually begun by its artistic director Emily Oriold prior to the pandemic. With the number of people still experiencing food insecurity and other issues that were exacerbated by COVID-19, Oriold felt the time was right to bring the program back.

Rahbarian and Rigas were two of the first sponsors to support the relaunch of the initiative. They each donated $250 that will make four tickets available to one of the partner agencies. Those agencies can then present the tickets to two families of four for them to enjoy one of the Foster Festival’s upcoming performances.

Williams’ goal is to line up 100 Local Heroes, bringing laughter to 400 people who are using the services of the five partner agencies.

Recently, Meridian Credit Union stepped up as the title sponsor for the community-minded program. “If we can meet that target,” Williams adds, “we may be able to facilitate transportation, too. For some of the clients, just getting to the theatre can be an issue. It would be great to be able to grow the program to a reasonable size where we can help shuttle people to the theatre and back.”

For Rahbarian, who recently also opened the York Road Barber Shop, giving to the program was something he couldn’t turn down.

“If I feel like everybody deserves to have a little taste of that joy,” he says of those who may benefit from his donation, “even in their worst of times. Personally, I think if you can help, you should. In the end, the money that I gave doesn’t change anything in my life, but it will change something in someone else’s life.”

In and tough times, adds Williams, it’s important for the clients of those five non-profits to feel that they are a part of their community. “It’s about a sense of belonging,” Williams says. “When people don’t have access to the culture of a community, then they stand outside of it. When you bring them in, that has an impact on their sense of belonging. That’s not a small thing. That can be a really significant moment for them.”
HOODINS, JOHN B.

After a short illness, at NHS-Niagara Falls, on Thursday, June 8/2023, loving husband of Cecile (nee Lopushenski) for 69 years. Devoted father of Dennis (Karen) Lori and Reg (Karen). Proud grandfather of Shanayde (Ro) and great-grandfather of Rhett and Ellis. Survived by brother Donald (late Pat), Joyce (late Harry) Brennan, Bob (Linda). John was predeceased by his siblings Ken (Anne) and Pat (Reg) Drake. He will be missed by his many nieces, nephews and their families.

We were all truly blessed to have him in our lives. A gentle kind soul and a true gentleman. The space that now exists will never be filled but will always be remembered and will always be so deeply missed. His love will remain like an eternal glow and we love him more than words can ever say.

A special thanks to Dad’s support team: Dr. Ahmed, Ern Jarvis, Flo Palmer-Buller and her team, Juleigh Z., Dani Davison, Dr. Rohani and Unit D at Greater Niagara Hospital. In honouring John’s wishes cremation has taken place. Interment will take place in a private family service. Memorial donations to Parkinson Society or Hospice Niagara would be appreciated.

Arrangements entrusted to Considerate Cremation & Burial Services, 26 Nihlan Drive, St. Catharines (between Lake Street & Scott Street), 289-362-1144. Online condolences may be made at CCBSCares.ca.