



Susan Aglukark shares stories of her youth, culture and road to success
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notllocal.com June 22, 2022 Volume 4 • Issue 25



Rev. Leighton Lee, Donald Combe and Canon Robert Wright toast with some bubbly in the courtyard of St. Mark's. (Penny Coles)

Donald Combe honoured for his service to St. Mark's

Penny Coles
The Local

As the bells rang out at St. Mark's Church Sunday evening, to be enjoyed by residents and visitors throughout the town, Donald Combe was being honoured for his 30 years of service to the preservation of the church's history, archives, library and cemetery.

In the words of Bob Wright, who retired from St. Mark's after 17 years as the much-loved rector, "that is an incredible achievement."

While bubbly was served to a large group of Combe's friends in the courtyard, on a perfect evening to mingle outdoors, bell-ringer Bernadette Secco entertained with an extensive playlist she developed to welcome people and to demonstrate the bells' tone and range,

says Sally Mitchell, organizer of the event.

Guests wandered in and out of the church hall to admire what was the talk of the evening — the beautiful decorations on two the dinner tables, by Gary Zanner.

Some of the greenery and flowers were from people's gardens and some flowers were purchased, the black Scottie dog cut-outs on the wall, and the flowered wallpaper cut-outs on the table cloths, all combining to create a feeling of enchantment, but also affection and respect for the man being honoured.

This was the first time in many years the hall was being used for such a large-scale celebration, said Mitchell, and as Zanner added, "it's all about Donald."

At the back of the

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Roots of lacrosse embedded in Indigenous culture

Mike Balsom
The Local

The game of lacrosse has a long history amongst Canada's Indigenous peoples, including in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and a group of lacrosse coaches and players from Fort Erie are working hard to keep that history alive.

Jace Sowden and his partners Cassidy Doxtator and Blue Hill are the principles behind FUSE Lacrosse.

They specialize in building essential skills, fundamentals, conditioning, agility and speed to help lacrosse players reach their goals in the game.

But just as important to the trio is that they build an understanding of the traditional teachings of lacrosse and its roots from the Haudenosaunee perspective as the Creator's game. They do this via special sessions on the history and culture of the Indigenous game.

To explain the importance of lacrosse and its teachings, Sowden says he was just three years old when he began to play the game competitively. But his introduction came even earlier than that. As he explains, Haudenosaunee tradition is such that when a boy is born, a lacrosse stick is given at birth.

"My family has upheld that tradition," Sowden says. "I have two boys myself (three-year-old Cree and

four-month-old Lake), and my brothers gifted them lacrosse sticks either the day before or the day after they were born."

Though most modern day lacrosse sticks are made with a composite material, those traditional sticks were made of wood, often hickory. The spirit of the tree is believed to connect the player to Mother Earth as they play for the Creator.

"Our youth initiative started really organically,"

Sowden tells The Local. "We started offering these sessions in Fort Erie about four years ago, just to revive the interest in lacrosse and encourage people to be active. As we learned more about the game, though, we began to feel that it was our responsibility to do this."

Sowden is Haudenosaunee, with roots in the Cattaraugus-Allegany reservation in upstate New York. He, Doxtator and Hill, all with a Haudenosaunee

background, grew up in the Niagara region, and identify themselves as urban Indigenous people.

"What lacrosse has done for us," Sowden says, "is given us that tradition component. Our families were an intricate part of teaching us the values of the game. Although we all lived off the reservation, it gave us a connection back to our home communities. It really helped

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Lord Mayor Betty Disero was happy to try a pickleball serve the day the courts officially opened in 2019. Now she is hoping the town can find an alternative use for the courts that won't damage the surface and will provide access to the public for some activity until pickleball can resume. (File photo)

Pickleball courts may be used for other sports

Town looking for alternatives while pickleball is banned

Penny Coles
The Local

The discussion of the legalities of the recent pickleball court case, which saw the town and the NOTL pickleball Club convicted of breaking the town's noise bylaw, was held behind closed doors Monday, but councillors have agreed to take some steps as a result of the closure of the Virgil Sports Park courts.

Town parks and recreation director Kevin Turcotte was planning on meeting with members of the pickleball club Tuesday, and said he would talk to them about alternative locations for courts.

The penalty imposed by the justice of the peace after convicting both the

pickleball club and the town, in a decision read in court last Wednesday, was a fine for both of \$1,000, and both were given a probation order for two years, that prevents them from committing a further breach of the noise bylaw.

The justice of the peace limited the extent of the probation order to apply only to pickleball at the Virgil Sports Park.

Last week, town CAO Marnie Cluckie told The Local "the town remains committed to exploring ways to mitigate noise at the pickleball courts. She said legal counsel and town staff would be discussing the next steps with town council. A closed session of council was held Monday, presumably to talk about those steps,

including whether there would be an appeal of the decision.

Asked for clarification about whether the probation order closes down the courts for two years, or whether mitigating noise levels could allow it to re-open, Cluckie explained pickleball itself is not banned. The specific order coming from the court states that the town and pickleball club are placed on a probation order not to commit a further breach of the noise bylaw. "For now, the pickleball court remains closed until further notice while the town discusses its next steps and continues to explore ways to mitigate noise at the pickleball courts."

A bylaw to amend the noise bylaw was before council and approved Monday.

The bylaw at the time of the October 2020 charge by a nearby neighbour of

the court said "no person shall make, cause or permit sound or vibration at any time, which is likely to disturb the quiet, peace, rest, enjoyment, comfort or convenience of the inhabitants of the town." The bylaw is in force from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.

The neighbour said the noise from the paddle hitting the ball was extremely disturbing to her and impacting her quality of life.

The amended noise bylaw allows "any emission of sound or vibration" on town-owned property during those times, from sporting or recreational activities, as approved by the director of operations or delegate of the town, during those same hours.

John Hindle, president of the pickleball club, has said the club was not playing pickleball at the time of the complaint — it had not yet resumed play that was halted due to COVID.

He also told The Local there were several attempts made at compromise, between the town, the club and the resident who was disturbed by the noise, before it went to court.

When the town decided not to open the outdoor courts last spring until the court case was settled, many of the 250 members chose to continue playing at the community centre, paying \$5 each time.

At Monday's council meeting, Lord Mayor Betty Disero asked town staff to look into the availability of other spaces that could be used as pickleball courts, mentioning specifically the Croatian National Centre on Line 3, the Vineridge Academy gymnasium on Niagara Stone Road, and the former Virgil school building.

The town is paying for extra staff to make adapted courts at the Centennial Arena available for pickleball play, but club

members are saying the cement floor is hard on their knees. Also, as Turcotte pointed out, putting the ice in is only a couple of months away.

He asked about the cost of offering alternate space, how much of that would be the responsibility of the town, and how much the responsibility of the club. Disero asked him to talk to club members about an alternative that would suit them best.

Disero also asked that staff look into how the sports park courts can be used by the public in the short term, such as volleyball or badminton. Other ideas were also put forward, but Turcotte reminded council the town has a significant investment in the court and its surface, and only "running shoe sports" should be considered to preserve it. Badminton would be a possibility, he said.

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Torchbearers chosen to spread the games spirit

Penny Coles
The Local

The 2022 Canada Games torchbearers have been selected to help carry the spirit of the games across the country, with 13 of them chosen to carry the torch through Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero says she is thrilled to begin the NOTL portion of the relay from Queenston Heights as it travels through town July 30.

When her executive assistant, Victoria Steele, brought to her attention that applications were open to be part of the torch relay, she says, she agreed right away that she would love to be part of it.

She applied, “just like everybody else in the region,” and was not only accepted, but given the first leg to run, walk or roll.

NOTL torchbearers are to meet in the morning at the Meridian Credit Union Arena to be transported to Queenston Heights for a 10 a.m. start, and a route that will end up back in Virgil.

Disero says she hasn’t done any running in a long while, having stopped when she started to have back problems, but she walks regularly.

Each leg of the relay is one kilometre or less, and she’s confident it won’t be difficult — although she doesn’t know how heavy the torch will be to carry.

She will hand off the torch to George Webber, who takes the second leg, from the end of the Bruce Trail to the corner of the Niagara River Parkway and York Road. He passes the torch to Peter Fenwick, who carries it to the corner of York Road and Sheppard Crescent. The route continues along York Road and up Four Mile Creek Road, carried by Ross Robinson, Jane Martin, Ken and Emily Seibel, Julian Caverley, Carter Simpson, Neveah Ferrara Horne, Tim Taylor, Linda Chang, John Easton and Wade Stayzer, eventually ending back at the arena.

“I’m super excited about doing this. It’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” says Disero.

She’s also pleased to have the two sports events in NOTL, tennis and sailing, as well as one of the 13 For 13 Cultural Festival, a new initiative for the 2022 games. Held on select evenings between Aug. 7 and 20, the festival event will see each of Niagara’s municipalities, as well as Niagara Region, collaborate with one of Canada’s 13 provinces and territories to showcase the unique cultural heritage, entertainment, art, and culinary experiences of each pairing, with no admission charge. NOTL will be paired with B.C. Aug. 10.

All 12 Niagara municipalities are included in the relay. The torch arrived by ship in Port Colborne Friday night, exactly 50 days ahead of the opening date of the games, which run Aug. 6 to 21. In keeping with Canada Games tradition, the torch relay began with a lighting ceremony for the Roly McLenahan Torch in Ottawa at the Centennial Flame on Parliament Hill June 6. It then traveled from Ottawa to Montreal by way of the Trans Canada Trail, and embarked on a CSL ship to Port Colborne.

Over the next seven weekends, the torch will travel to every corner of the region, before completing its last leg in St. Catharines July 31. By the time the torch arrives at the Meridian Centre for the Aug. 6 opening ceremony, it will have traveled through 21 communities in both Ontario and Quebec, covering approximately 1,200 kilometres by foot, bike, horse, and boat.

It will begin its Niagara leg from Albert Street in Thorold Saturday, June 25, arriving in NOTL July 30, and wrapping in St. Catharines the next day.

Disero will be one of about 150 people to carry the torch through Niagara.

Rotary Clubs across Niagara are offering a fundraiser for the games and for their clubs, by selling one-of-a-kind Niagara games T-shirts to friends and family members who want to run with the torchbearers during the relay.

Webber, who takes the

torch down the escarpment from Queenston Heights to the end of the Bruce Trail, says he filled out the application form, wanting to be part of the relay, and was both surprised and delighted to be accepted.

He says he has not been doing a lot of walking recently — the extent of his community involvement indicates why he doesn’t have time — but he and his wife Audrey Pellett have started getting outside and walking three or four kilometres a day so he can be physically fit when his turn comes. “You don’t want to be gasping for breath when you have to hand it to the next person,” he says.

“I get the easy part, and I could always roll down the hill if I have to, but I can’t drop the torch,” he jokes.

Webber is also volunteering with the committee that is planning the 13 For 13 event. He is a member of the town’s inclusivity, equity and diversity committee, has done some inclusivity training for the town, and is using his interest and expertise to look at accessibility issues for 13 For 13 Festival, which in NOTL will take place in Simcoe Park, and will include an arts and artisan display and sale.

His main role is to make sure the event is accessible to all, “so that individuals who may have some sort of disability are not left to struggle. Diversity is more than race and gender,” he says, “it’s about accessibility, about having an inclusive event that allows everyone to participate, without having difficulty moving around.”

That includes reaching out to accessibility experts “to see whether what we’re planning on doing is the right thing to do.”

Webber is a busy community volunteer, also with a position on the board of the NOTL Museum. He first got involved, he says, when he was on the education committee of the Voices of Freedom Park, and that role “led to exposure to the museum,” first with a temporary board position, and next as vice-president. In



George Webber is walking three to four kilometres as often as he can with his dog Penny to be prepared for his leg of the Canada Games torch relay. (Photo supplied)

that role, he is working on a variety of projects, he says, “not the least of which is the expansion the museum,” and also increasing membership, “which has been successful, even through the pandemic.” The museum did an amazing job in continuing programming for community engagement, he added, and in continuing its fundraising efforts.

Another project he is also undertaking, in consultation with James Russell, is to tackle fundraising for the archeological project to

unearth gravestones in the Negro Burial Ground. Russell, who is based in Toronto, is focused on research “to find who these people are, and who their families are. I could be the public face here, working collaboratively with town council and staff, and putting together a strategic plan in terms of how to go about this.”

But as busy as he is, July 30 is a date on his calendar he is really excited about, and he’s going to continue walking every chance he gets to be ready for the big

day. He says he is especially grateful to the Rotary Clubs across the region who are making it possible for not only the successful torchbearer applicants to take part in the relay, but others to run along the route with them. He will have his wife taking part beside him, his family and friends, “and maybe even one or more grandchildren out there with me,” he says, ensuring the spirit of the games and the magical experience of the torch relay is shared. “It’s going to be a family event for us.”

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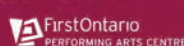
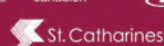


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Town will look at safety of e-scooters this summer

Penny Coles
The Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake councillors have agreed to have a look at e-scooters this summer, to determine their safety.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero suggested at Monday's council meeting that town staff work with Richard Mell, owner of Grape Escape Wine Tours, to look at possible routes where the e-scooters could be tested for safety as part of a pilot project. She was looking for speedy action to be taken on Mell's request last week that was deferred.

Councillors came close to approving a motion last Monday, June 13, put forward by Coun. Norm Arsenault that the issue of e-scooters be referred to staff to review the

pros and cons, especially relating to safety issues. It called on staff to review the provincial requirements for a pilot project and bring back a report to the new council to adequately assess recommendations for a decision in time for the 2023 tourism season.

But without discussion, and before a vote could be taken, Coun. Erwin Wiens said he felt that council has already discussed the issue this term, and it was decided to defer the motion and ask staff to investigate that discussion and make the information available.

Mell told councillors last week Grape Escape has purchased 10 electric kick-scooters for wine tours, and asked them to consider adopting a provincial pilot project to

permit the scooters in Niagara-on-the-Lake. He said he had investigated to see if there was a town bylaw restricting them, and when he discovered there wasn't, he went ahead and made the purchase.

He later learned the provincial program allows municipalities to pass a bylaw approving them, but without that bylaw in place they are not permitted.

Mell described the electric scooters as two wheels with a board between them, with handlebars. They must have a working bell and a light, riders must be 16 years or older, with one rider per unit, standing at all times, and wearing a helmet if under 18. Any accidents must be reported to a police officer, he said.

If a municipality joins the provincial pilot project, it can decide where they can be used, he added, suggesting the town might not want them on sidewalks, or in the busy heritage district.

He also mentioned helmets could be required for everyone on an e-scooter.

The province says, in its explanation of the program on its website, that municipalities wanting to allow e-scooters to operate on their roads "must pass bylaws to permit their use and set out specific requirements based on what is best for their communities"

"You are essentially in con-

trol in NOTL," Mell told councillors, adding that he would love for the town to become part of the provincial pilot project.

This Monday, Coun. Sandra O'Connor said the original motion focused on looking at the pros and cons, not just preferred routes, as Disero has requested.

Coun. Norm Arsenault reminded council there is provincial legislation regulating the pilot project, and those restrictions must be considered.

During this week's discussion, Coun. Wendy Cheropita supported moving ahead with a pilot project in NOTL, and working with Grape Escape "to have some real live research to

determine the pros and cons." And since his winery tours are all staffed, there would people onsite to monitor them, she added.

Council approved moving ahead with plans to have staff work with Mell to test the safety of e-scooters on what would be considered safe routes through town.



Richard Mell has tested an e-scooter and says he believes they are as safe as bicycles. (Photo supplied)

Ship ahoy!



Liam King, who toured the HMCA Oriole at the Navy Hall dock Sunday with his grandfather Rick Meloen, likes all things military, and was impressed with being onboard the ship. The Oriole, the sail training vessel of the Royal Canadian Navy, was expected to leave NOTL and continue its tour of communities along the St. Lawrence Seaway and Great Lakes. (Rick Meloen)



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1 in 3 single parent families struggling

My alarm goes off, and it's 4:30 am. I turn it off as quickly as I can before I wake the kids. I need this time to get organized for the day. My first shift starts at 7:00, and I have to prepare meals for them before I go. There isn't enough in the fridge for me to pack a lunch for work, again. I'll eat a piece of bread now and have a coffee. I'll be fine.

This is a typical morning for me. I am a single mother of three beautiful kids. I work two jobs, full-time as a cashier at the drug-store and part-time at the diner, doing the dinner shift just to cover our basic needs. I know summer has just begun, but I dread the fall when I'll have to buy everything for back to school...And I'm not alone. 1 in 3 single-parent families like mine lives in poverty. – Megan, single mother of three

Megan's story is not unique. Approximately 24,000 households in Niagara are currently struggling to make ends meet. Affording extras like back-to-school supplies is often



out of reach. United Way works to tackle the issues facing low-income families all year round, investing in programs that enhance

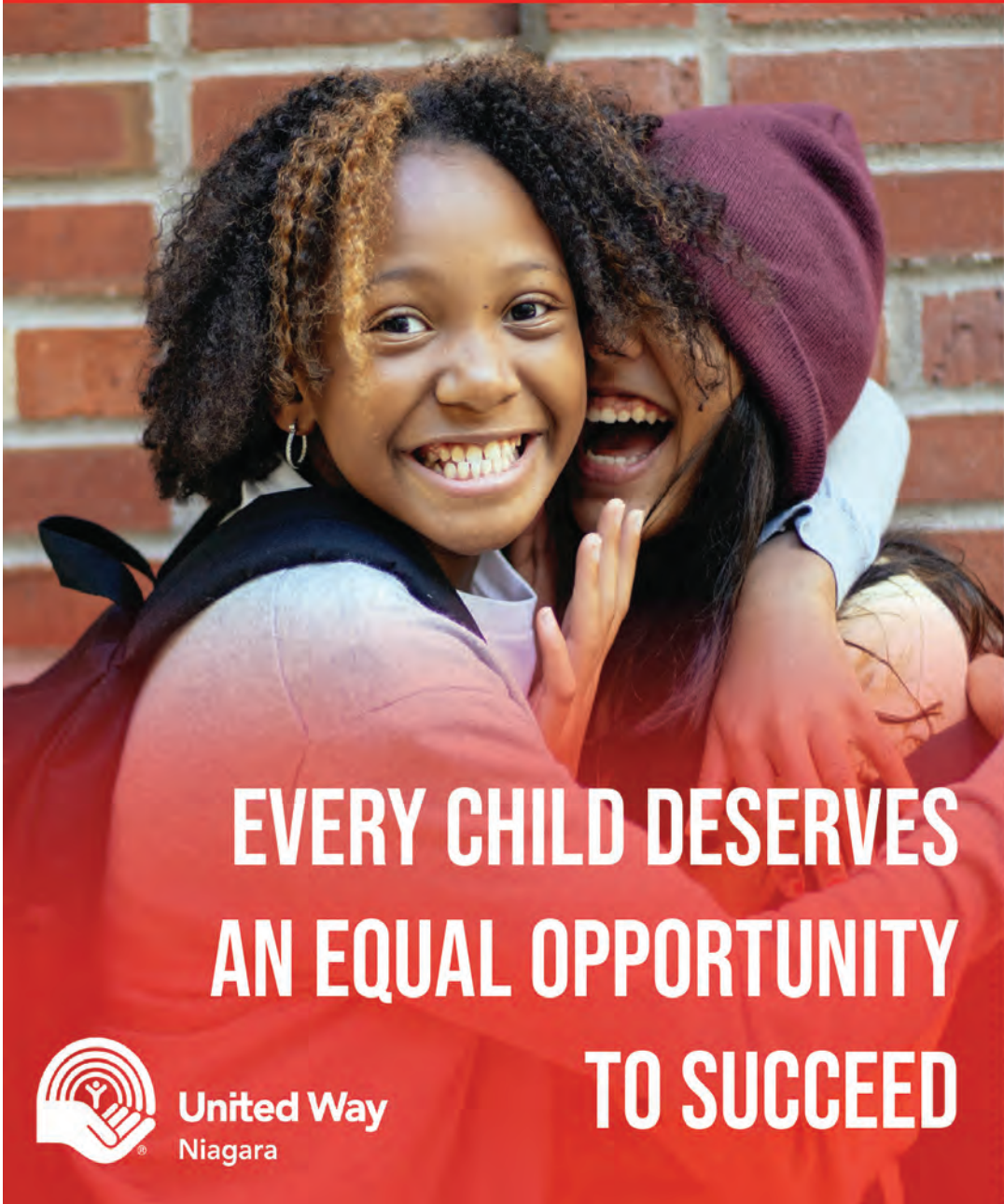
their connection to the community, support their mental and physical well-being and give them the tools to excel in the classroom. We ask for your

support on this mission because we know that **better is possible** for youth in Niagara. One such way that we're helping families like Me-

gan's is through the Backpacks for Kids program. Annually, this initiative provides over 2,000 backpacks fully stocked with school supplies to families

in need across the region. "We are seeing the toll that inflation and cost of living are taking on the average consumer, so just imagine what that means for families living on or below the poverty line," said Frances Hallworth, CEO of United Way Niagara. "Backpacks for Kids is one way that United Way can help ease the financial burden on families while also allowing kids to be all they can be." Imagine a family on the poverty line struggling to pay rent and utility bills and keep food on the table. How can they find the means to send their kids to school with everything they need? If you believe, like us, that every child in Niagara deserves an equal opportunity to succeed, please consider supporting United Way Niagara with a monetary donation towards the Backpacks for Kids program. This year we've set a goal to provide 2,100 backpacks for children and youth in need, and we can get there with your support. **Help us do better.**

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EDITORIAL

A tale of two cemeteries, and efforts to preserve them

It seems that thanks to Donald Combe and historians before him, Niagara-on-the-Lake residents have been hearing the stories of people buried in St. Mark's Church Cemetery for many decades.

We've learned of their accomplishments, their ancestry, their loved ones left behind, information that's been recorded in archives, written about in books — some by Combe himself — and chronicled in newspapers such as The Local and the community newspapers that came long before it.

Residents often wander through the old cemetery, finding it a peaceful place to walk, shaded by beautiful trees, some of them historic themselves, others recently planted. As people meander between the stones, they likely recognize names that

are familiar to them, names of people who made significant contributions to this historic town in their time. Elizabeth Kerr has the distinction of having resided in the cemetery the longest, and it's possible if you asked a local who lies beneath the oldest stone in the cemetery, they would be able to tell you.

We have also heard the stories of headstone restorations in St. Mark's for years, decades even.

In fact, Combe can tell us about what was probably the first, around 1838, when a 1782 memorial stone was discovered in excavated rubble during a construction project, cleaned up and then brought inside and affixed to a wall, where it remains.

It's not like money is ever free-flowing to do maintenance and repairs on beautiful historic churches like St. Mark's,

or their cemeteries, but church parishioners and members of the community have been generous, opening their wallets to ensure the stones and the history they represent are preserved. Years ago, when we had a high school in NOTL, a local history teacher used to take his students to do etchings of the stones, and research the names they discovered.

Just this Sunday, a beautiful dinner was held to honour Combe, rightfully so, for his service to the church over the last 30 years, to its archives, library, and cemetery. It was also a fundraiser, Save our Stones, to raise money for the next round of restorations — the work is not complete, and likely never will be. Combe, and those who helped him, are to be congratulated.

Just down the road and

around a couple of corners from St. Mark's is the Negro Burial Ground on Mississauga Street. It's a heritage site, and the Ontario Heritage Trust has announced it is renaming it the Niagara Baptist Church Burial Ground. A new plaque is expected to be erected any day now.

The church congregation was established in 1829, and it's thought a meeting house and cemetery came soon after. The building is long gone, but the cemetery remains.

There are three stones visible in the cemetery, and thanks to the work of James Russell from Toronto, and a ground-penetrating radar technician, there are believed to be 28 early Black settlers buried, and another 18 stones below the ground. The stones will hopefully be unearthed to help tell the stories of those who

lie beneath, maybe to even learn something of their accomplishments, their lives and their loved ones.

The only stories we hear of this particular cemetery now are ones nobody wants to see published in their local newspaper — about stolen gravestones used long ago on walkways, for fireplace hearths, and even as the floor of a basement in town.

Unfortunately the loss or burial of the gravestones, and the demolished church, have made it difficult to access church records — there are no archives nearby, there is no archive committee, just James Russell hoping to find the information he is looking for buried somewhere in the library of McMaster University, where he believes the church records to be stored. He knows he has his work cut out for him, but he

won't rest until he has done his best to find the names of those who were laid to rest in the Baptist cemetery many years ago, settlers who also contributed to the history of this town, who had families, and whose headstones may reveal at least part of their stories.

George Webber, a Niagara-on-the-Lake resident who learned that Russell wants to see an archeological dig unearth those stones, has come forward to say he would like to help. The town owns the cemetery property and will have the final say about whether that happens, but Webber is committing to raising funds to make sure it does.

Stay tuned for more information, and plan to help give those 28 people a name.

Penny Coles
The Local

The 'animal farms' in NOTL add to biodiversity



Owen Bjorgan
Special to The Local

You might say driving in a straight line for a great length of time could be boring. As I routinely cruise up and down the lines and concessions of rural NOTL, I don't find this the case.

The views and vistas observed out of vehicle windows depict a peaceful, yet quietly hardworking farm landscape. Barns sit timelessly nestled against the vineyards while cat-tails grow in the ditches adjacent to orchard alcoves. Farm-

workers will always smile and wave back, and the tall grasses wave to the sun as they blow about in the wind.

Again, it never gets old. But today, it gave me a new thought.

Which of these land-use types constitute the best habitat for our local wildlife, despite their rooted intention in only serving humans? Let's break down why animals may prefer orchards, vineyards, or cash crops.

Orchards climb to the top of agricultural land uses that can support the most resident or transient wildlife species. We are talking about actual woody trees versus smaller vines, grasses, and other thin crops.

The orchard is not considered a biodiverse landscape due

to its tendency to be planted as a mono-crop. Supposing the entire orchard is apple, cherry, or pear, these small shrubby trees create a miniature canopy effect. This allows animals such as deer, foxes and coyotes to find a place of cool shelter during the day if they are too far from one of our woodlots. The leafy growth and reaching branches also create a visual blockade for birds of prey, so rabbits, snakes, and a multitude of small mammals can travel with a sense of ease without being assassinated from above.

The roots of orchard trees behave similarly to just about any other native tree species. They are longer and more sturdy than the roots of a vine or corn, so this enables the roots



Cherry blossoms as seen from above by drone during the spring; these orchard rows then become one of the more suitable animal habitats compared to other agricultural land uses.

to keep soil and moisture locked into the property for longer. This is not only beneficial for the orchard itself, but it is a welcome coolant for toads and local insect species, which find shelter in the dark, damp soils.

Although deer in the area are capable of jumping over vineyard rows or creatively crossing through the metal wiring and vines, they would certainly find it easier to move underneath the free-flowing and non-linear world of the orchard understory. The many branches create a mathematically impressive labyrinth of space for small birds to perch and nest, too.

With all of the animals living in or passing through the orchard, you can imagine that birds of prey are still waiting for their opportunity on the outskirts of the fruit tree rows. All in all, biodiversity attracts more

biodiversity.

Vineyards are structurally more rigid. They are in rows as well, but they don't give the same coverage, protection, and mobility options as an orchard does. We know our local large mammals will walk down the grape corridors out of ease or in a form of retreat, but there are not the same microhabitats provided by an orchard. Small and large creatures would find themselves more exposed in the relatively open and linear environment.

Also to consider are the pockets of cash crops we have here in NOTL. These farm fields are not in the same propensity as we see in southern Niagara Region, and that is due to the wildly different soil profiles above versus below the Niagara Escarpment.

Our few plots of soybean, corn, wheat, and other cash crops do not contain the

woody and protective features of the vineyard, and especially won't size up to the habitat qualities of an orchard. These crops have evolved and been further designed to be staring at the sunlight and grown in high density. Their little root systems, although numerous, don't hold soil or water in place like their neighbouring riesling vines or plum trees.

With little space above or below the leaf level of these plants, not many animals other than rodents, insects, and various soil microbes call these fields home. However, the fields help put food on the plates in our homes.

As I am sure many readers have noticed as well, NOTL has been undergoing a considerable shift over the past 20 years, with orchards being replaced by vineyards, likely because it's more lucrative for farmers to use their soil for an alcoholic beverage than tender fruit.

In the big picture, I do worry and wonder how this change of land use will further degrade our already harmed biodiversity. I ponder if rural land owners would consider a multitude of other ways they can make their property more habitat-friendly.

I guess I'll end this article by clicking "send" and having some local fruit for lunch while I think further about it.



View from the couch

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

Twenty Twelve (Brit Box, 2011), a series of 13 episodes, chronicles the progress, or lack thereof made by the committee

of experts while preparing for the 2012 London Olympics. Whatever could go wrong, goes wrong. This is brilliant story-telling starring Hugh Bonneville and Olivia Colman.

Donald Combe is a retired

English teacher who loves to go to movies. Until he resumes going to theatres, he has graciously agreed to share his opinions, through "short and sweet" exclusives, of Netflix series and movies for The Local.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake
Local
The Trusted Voice of Our Community

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COMMENT

Local LETTERS

Reader shares letter regarding Rand subdivision

To the Lord Mayor and members of NOTL council: Please accept this letter as a statement of my opposition to the current Solmar proposal for the development of the Rand estate lands.

I have recently returned to Niagara-on-the-Lake after decades of life in various regions throughout southern Ontario.

I grew up in Niagara Falls and like so many, worked in tourism. After spending days listening to visitors express how they loved the falls but found the city disappointing, I looked forward to riding my bike along the parkway to this idyllic town, and I would direct visitors to NOTL. Invariably people would return, thanking me for the introduction to such beauty and the opportunity to learn more about Canadian history.

Years later I would be telling people in the international diplomatic corp to make sure to see NOTL while they were in Ontario. By this time, everyone knew it was the place to visit. It was making the top of Most beautiful towns in North America lists and the place where one could literally walk through Canadian history. I was proud to brag that NOTL had been designated as a Provincial Heritage Conservation site and a National Historic Site of Canada.

It's easy for a Niagara native to be dismissed as romantic and sentimental, or to be accused of NIMBY biases. While I do have resident-oriented concerns, my opposition to the Solmar proposal is based on very pragmatic, far-reaching, long term implications. To make the wrong kind of changes to Old Town is to clear the way for the degradation of this unique region.

It is provenance and beauty that has defined and continues to define NOTL. And it is for this reason that I am putting my opposition to the proposed Solmar subdivision in writing.

My concerns about the Solmar proposal include:

- The overall plan puts profit over context and disregards the established community.
- High density - defies the designation of land for low-density development and sets a dan-

gerous precedent.

- Unattractive row-housing design erodes what NOTL stands for and what residents, investors and international visitors value.

- Lack of likelihood that such housing would retain value – and that reconstruction/redevelopment will take place.

- Evokes a sense that the historic part of town is simply a construct for tourists, not an organic community.

- Disrespect for a nationally designated historic region.

- Poor house design - awkward features, no evocation of existing historical sensibilities, unattractive garage-front row-house plans.

- Poor landscape design - almost no side yards (resulting in no glazing to sides of houses) and no breathing space. Imparts an unfriendly feeling to the neighbourhood.

- Narrow streets with tight turning radius - questionable for emergency vehicles, bicycles, etc.

- Environmental impact on surrounding agricultural land.

- Strain on infrastructure - hydro, sewage, drainage, overhead wiring, education, health-care and other services.

- Damage to existing roads through construction period and beyond – costs to the city.

- Unresolved issue with clear-cutting and gutting of interior of Randwood estate.

- Paucity of open space and landscaping.

- Long term impact on tourism and commerce – visitors will be left with a negative impression.

Having lived in the GTA, I have seen first-hand what poorly-considered, hasty development has done throughout the region – from the strain on infrastructure to fostering a level of disrespect for the built environment.

I am not opposed to development, I simply believe that it can be done far more responsibly, sensitively and creatively.

For these reasons, I am also in support of the SORE proposal that includes:

- All built heritage attributes on the site are saved.
- No significant grade changes

- Number of residential units reduced to 70

- Most of the remaining designed cultural heritage landscape and mature trees are retained.

- Public pedestrian access to view the heritage attributes of Randwood is provided at 200 John St. E. and 588 Charlotte St.

- The Whistle Stop on the Upper Canada Heritage Trail, including the memorial garden that was a central feature of the designed landscape at Randwood, is “preserved and enhanced for public and resident enjoyment.”

- Primary access to the site is provided using a historic access route between 144 and 176 John St.

I would also propose consideration of the following:

- Complete restoration of the Randwood estate - interior, exterior and landscaping

The building could then be opened up again as a museum, think tank, event centre, etc.

- Boulevards instead of narrow streets

- Consideration of access through the Two Sisters property

- A 50-70 unit subdivision with no two houses being exactly alike.

- Consider the work done on Garrison Village Drive - unique, mixed-style homes respectful of historic architecture featuring large front yards and garages located out of visible sight.

- Consider the architectural style of experts such as Robert Stern and the sensibilities of well planned communities such as Seaside.

- Work with Willowbank staff and students to ensure a respect of the historic nature of this part of town.

NOTL is not a subdivision that happens to be on historic land. It is a historic region that has some room for new residents willing to recognize both the restrictions and the benefits of settling here.

The Rand property presents an exciting opportunity to showcase thoughtful, creative development and to welcome new residents to this very special part of Canada. Let's demand a design that reflects it.

Chrys Kaloudis
NOTL

Local LETTERS

Good Samaritans, and some not so good

Yet again, there are good Samaritans, and not! A week after my letter to the editor, driving down Oak Drive in Chautauqua, I came across another turtle in the middle of the road. I pulled out a towel and plastic bin to figure out how to pick him up, a difficult task as I was recovering from an injury with four stitches and a broken bone. This turtle was half the size of the last one I came across.

One resident came out

with a shovel, then another, and were able to get the turtle into the bin. One resident shared a story of a young boy who used to love turtles and lived in the house where the turtle was headed. These good Samaritans took the turtle down to the creek and released him.

Then, there are those who are not good Samaritans!

Yesterday while out gardening I heard a loud pop, then saw a large black pick-up truck drive away. I

went to see what might have caused the pop, and found a small turtle that was about a foot long. This one was splattered across the road. As I picked it up to take it to the side of the road, a truck going in the opposite direction came back, and the man told me they saw the black truck swerve to hit the turtle.

We should all cherish and protect our wildlife.

Shirley Madsen
NOTL

Local LETTERS

Let's show same support for others

Last week, the editorial in The Local strongly supported the town decision to install a crosswalk and five benches to promote inclusivity for Pride folks.

As I have written before, I don't believe any group should be promoted beyond other groups. As a former Prime Minister once stated that government does not belong in the bedrooms of the nation (which I agree

with), I also do not believe that the bedrooms of the nation belong in the streets.

However, now that the decision to promote inclusivity for one group has been made, I believe we now should show that same support for other groups. In particular, Indigenous and Black folks should have a more visible show of inclusivity. These people have a strong historical relation-

ship to this very historical town. To not offer them this same consideration would seem to be disrespectful.

I would urge them to submit similar proposals as has been done for Pride. I would expect that town council and The Local would be supportive of demonstrating inclusivity for them as well.

Doug Johnson
NOTL

Local LETTERS

The Local asked to 'abide by' council decision

A response to the suggestions by council of locations of the crosswalk has been asked and responded to by the public, and no doubt will be revealed shortly.

Obviously from your article, (editorial, June 15) they don't meet your expectations. You appear to now

be suggesting alternative locations. Presumably you completed the survey and yet you continue, via your privileged position as editor of the Local to further sway opinion.

I suggest you abide by the decisions of the possible locations presented in

the survey. Believe it or not I like to think we are still a democracy. The public do not want to see a rainbow heaven in downtown as they like it as it is. It is preferential that the downtown area remain unblemished.

Jean O'Malley
NOTL



Letters! We want letters!

If you have a letter to the editor you'd like to see published, please send it to penny@notllocal.com. Please try to keep it to about 350 words. Sorry, but we won't publish anonymous letters. And please stick to the issue at hand, rather than attacking those involved. The deadline is Monday at noon.

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Celebrations back in the park this Canada Day

The Rotary Club of NOTL will offer its traditional fare

Penny Coles
The Local

Celebrate Canada Day in style, with the traditional Rotary Club of Niagara-on-the-Lake pancake breakfast and barbecue.

Although there were pop-up celebrations the last two years, club members are excited to be back in Simcoe Park, doing what they do best on our national holiday.

Pancakes and sausages — two of each — along with juice and coffee, are served from 8 to 10:30 a.m., with lots of picnic tables scattered throughout the park for seating, says Rotary member Gary Hatton, chairing this year's event.

Then volunteers transition to a barbecue that runs from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., serving 1/3 pound burgers; Great Canadian beef and pea meal burgers, and 1/4 pound hot dogs.

Organizing the event after a two-year absence is a bit of a challenge, Hatton says, not knowing whether the "post-pandemic" feeling in the air will draw a

record-breaking number of people, or whether there will be some hesitancy that results in lower numbers. But based on what's happening at airports and with travellers, and other local events, they're planning for the "break-away crowd" of locals, people across the region and tourists all ready to celebrate NOTL-style.

This year, the folks who brought their Santa Run to NOTL and have been also organizing a Canada Day run in Burlington for 15 years are returning to NOTL July 1. Their five-kilometre run will start at the St. Mark's Church-Byron Street side of the park, and Hatton says he expects friends and family cheering them on may wander over to the Rotary breakfast, as will those who finish their run and want to load up on carbs.

Beginning at 11 a.m. there will be a car show from the Niagara branch of the Antique and Classic Car Club of Canada. For several years the car show was an important part of the Canada Day event, lin-



There's no telling whether the turn-out will be bigger than usual in Simcoe Park for July 1 celebrations, or less than expected, but whatever the size of the crowd Rotary Club volunteers will be ready for it. (File photo)

ing the path from Byron Street down into the park with a collection of beautiful, shiny classics to admire, and Hatton says it's good to have it back again.

Throughout the day, beginning at 11 a.m. and

running until 3 p.m., there will be musical entertainment, with Juliet Dunn, Peter O'Shea, and a small back-up band, along with face-painting and clowns to keep the kids in the crowd happy.

Hatton says it takes about 60 volunteers to put on the Canada Day event, not an easy task after a two-year absence and with a 75-member club — not everyone is available to do the jobs they may have done for

several years, up to 2019.

"We have a few holes still to fill. We're also counting on family members, and the holes are filling up, although not quite as quickly as I'd like."

At 3 p.m., Rotary volunteers begin helping to set up for the cake walk when it arrives in Simcoe Park, although it's not a Rotary event, he says. The cake parade begins at 2:45 p.m., with the 41st Regiment of Foot Fife and Drum


Corps accompanying a giant cake, travelling along Queen Street and concluding in the park. Once it's cut and served, Canada Day celebrations shift to Fort George, which is open from 10 a.m. to tour buildings, visit with costumed interpreters, enjoy a musket demonstration, and more, with free admission. Festivities in the fort ramp up and continue through the evening, ending with a fireworks display.

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Canada Day cake 2022 to reflect the times

Penny Coles
The Local

Catherine O'Donnell typically begins working on the cake of all cakes — the one that ranks its own parade, accompanied by a fife and drum corps — in January.

This year the process has been a little rushed — the decision that there would be Canada Day celebrations in Niagara-on-the-Lake hadn't been made in January.

However, the Willow Cakes and Pastries chef, creator of the gigantic cake that has been a centrepiece of Canada Day celebrations for many years, and paraded along Queen Street to Simcoe Park, didn't have to start from scratch.

When COVID hit in March of 2020, she had a design ready to implement and was already putting together some of the “many little elements” that would be incorporated. Those figures we see on the tops of her cakes are made to be edible, she explains, although they're not actually eaten, so those that were made in 2020 can still be used. She is going with the 2020 design for the cake that was never made, but is adapting it with some “whimsical” touches to reflect “the new world” that has evolved over the last two years, she says.

O'Donnell always keeps her designs a secret, to be a surprise once the cake walk

begins on Canada Day, so she's not saying too much about it. She did tell The Local one of the figures on the top of the cake is almost five feet tall, and can't fit in the bakery — she will have a tent up outside on the eve of Canada Day, placing it on the cake at the last minute.

Although she won't say more about the design, she does talk about how the pandemic changed her world, and so many others in NOTL.

“I'm so grateful the community has stood behind local businesses,” she says. “To still have my doors open, to still be able to make this cake for the community — for that I'm so thankful.”

She never had to close her doors, she said, but there were restrictions that were costly, such as the plexiglass that was added for safety. She closed two days a week to give her staff a break and keep them safe, she's been doing more deliveries, and had to pack products differently. While it's been costly to adapt, “we live in the best town in the world,” she says. “People just kept ordering.”

O'Donnell recently returned from a trip to Saskatchewan, where she was inducted into the Canadian Culinary Federation's honour society, which promotes “culinary excellence, friendship and good will.” It was developed to honour and recognize leadership, professional excellence, lifetime commitment

and significant contributions to the profession, O'Donnell's certificate says.

And amongst the 200 chefs who were at the conference, there was one ongoing “big conversation,” and that was about staffing problems. It's hard to get staff, they agreed, it's hard to keep them, and they are stressed. Although most customers are “beyond great,” O'Donnell says, there are also customers who are rude — themselves possibly stressed as a result of the pandemic — and when they take it out on the young person behind the counter, it doesn't end well, often resulting in tears and meltdowns.

“There are customers who just don't know how to be kind anymore,” she says.

Stressed-out staff want to put in their hours and go home — they don't want to volunteer for helping with the Canada Day Cake, O'Donnell adds.

“Young people have had a really difficult time during the pandemic. It's really stressed them, and it's changed their lives.”

COVID, she says, “has made running a business in town much harder. It's everywhere. But we're lucky to be in business.”

So part of her message as she reflects on this year's cake is about being kinder, more compassionate, and more understanding of others.

O'Donnell was at an



The last time Catherine O'Donnell made a Canada Day cake and paraded it down Queen Street was 2019. She always gets stressed and nervous as the day gets closer, but once she's walking beside the cake to a cheering crowd, she says it all goes away. (File photo)

event at St. Mark's Church to honour Donald Combe last Sunday, a long-time friend of hers. She donated the dessert for the evening, and says how good it felt to be part of something so positive, that was all about community, and saying thank you.

“We all have to step back and ask, how can we be kind, how can we be helpful?”

And, she adds, “we have to say thank you to everyone who has kept our doors open, and 16 staff working. That's a big reason for doing this cake.”

In the past, O'Donnell has tried to find donations

of ingredients from suppliers — it takes a lot of flour and fondant to make an elaborate eight-foot by five-foot cake — and has also sought cash donations to offset the cost. This year, she's decided not to do that.

“How do we go out to other businesses and ask for help? We're all in this together, and I don't feel we can ask for money.”

She's a little concerned about people feeling uncomfortable, being “squished” during the crush at Simcoe Park when people are waiting for their slice of cake — there is always a big crowd gathered

around it — and says there will be people likely wearing masks, even though they're outside.

She is encouraging people to step back, leave some space around them, and think about “respect and kindness, and how can we show it to each other.”

The cake walk down Queen Street begins at 2:45 p.m. July 1, making its way slowing through the crowd at Simcoe Park, led by the 41st Regiment of Foot Fife and Drum Corps accompanying a giant cake, concluding in the park with the slicing, usually beginning around 3:30 p.m.



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Celebrations all day long at Fort George

Canada Day activities end with fire works display

Penny Coles
The Local

When Canada Day celebrations wind down in Simcoe Park, the Friends of Fort George and Parks Canada ramp up festivities that will have been ongoing during the day.

Once the annual cake parade has reached the park, led by the 41st Regiment Fife and Drum Corps, and the cake is sliced and served to the public, free of charge, the focus shifts to the fort.

Fort George National Historic Site is open Canada Day from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., with no admission charge. Throughout the day, visitors can tour the buildings, visit with costumed interpreters, and enjoy a musket demonstration.

There will be cold drinks and treats available from 2 to 4 p.m. inside the fort. Food trucks will be on site starting at 4 p.m. Evening entertainment starts at 6:30 p.m. with the kiddie militia and drill, followed by a presentation by the Fort George Infantry, and Fife and Drum Corps.

Funds raised by the sale of food by the Friends of Fort George will help to support summer student employment



People fill the fort as dusk approaches, waiting for the fireworks that draw the celebration to a close. (Photo supplied)

opportunities at Fort George and Brock's Monument.

On stage will be The Howling Horns, an eight-piece horn band featuring music from blues to dance to classic rock.

At 10 p.m., a spectacular fireworks display will once again close the evening, by the award-winning fireworks company, Garden City Fireworks.

The events are all free for the public, funded by generous donations and support from the Department of Canadian Heritage, The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Parks Canada, local businesses and individual supporters.

For more information on the Canada Day festivities in Niagara-on-the-Lake, visit the Friends of Fort George Canada Day event page at <http://www.friendsoffortgeorge.ca/canada-day/index.html>

Arts collective scavenger hunt back for Canada Day

Fun event an opportunity to learn about local artists

Penny Coles
The Local

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Arts Collective is hosting its second Canada Day scavenger hunt, offering an opportunity for residents and visitors to get to know more about the local visual arts community.

Professional visual artists, and art gallery representatives in NOTL created the collective a year ago, led by Lise Andrea-na, chair of the Niagara Pump-house Arts Centre. She orga-



The Upper Canada Native Art gallery is one of the locations to visit on the Canada Day scavenger hunt. (Photo supplied)

nized the first scavenger hunt in 2021 as a way to introduce their collective network and local art.

Participants in the event are given clues and led to various artworks and locations throughout town.

The entry form with the rules and instructions to play can be downloaded from the collective website, notlartscollective.ca; or picked up from any of its six member galleries, including the Niagara Pump-house Arts Centre. All entry forms with correct answers will be entered into a draw on July

2 for a chance to win amazing prizes.

Another draw will be held at the Pump-house on Canada Day for a chance to win an original artwork by local artist and mem-

ber Sharon Frayne. Now in its second year, Peter Domarchuk is hosting a raffle to help promote visual arts in town.

Entry forms are now available in the Walker Gallery to be filled out in person.

The Niagara Pump-house Arts Centre will be open during Canada Day weekend July 1, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and July 2 and 3, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Correct entries will be entered into a draw for a chance to win one of three gift certificates donated by the Sandtrap Pub & Grill.

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Canada Day 5K, Kids 1K coming to NOTL

Penny Coles
The Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake will be the site of its first Canada Day five-kilometre run this year, brought to town by the same folks who hosted the Santa Run in Simcoe Park last November.

It's the VR Pro Canada Day run's 15th anniversary, and is expected to attract about 300 to 400 runners and walkers who will leave Since Park from the Byron Street entrance.

"We are super excited to be in NOTL and have our inaugural Canada Day race there," says Kelly Arnott, co-founder of VR Pro.

The number of Canada Day runners would typically be higher, but with July 1 falling on a Friday, many regular participants are away at cottages or have other travel plans for the long weekend, she says.

The run will be raising funds for the Niagara Health Foundation, to contribute to the new Niagara Falls hospital build.

She is very grateful for the great support the run is receiving, including from the town.

The first event of the day will be the Kids 1K race, which will start at 8:40 a.m. July 1. Parents and families are encouraged to participate in this event with the kids.

The next event will be

the Canada Day 5K race which will start at 9 a.m. and is open to runners and walkers of all ages and abilities. The route will take participants along the scenic walking trails of NOTL, and through Niagara parks, Arnott says. Everyone who participates in the race will get a crystal finisher medal, a Canada Day celebration T-shirt, and more, the race director promises.

Runners and spectators will be encouraged to attend the Rotary breakfast in the park, she says.

VR Pro hosted an inaugural Santa five-kilometre in NOTL in December,

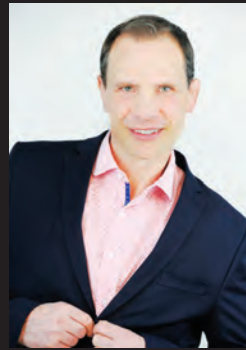
in collaboration with The Irish Harp, with hundreds of runners and walkers dressed in Santa suits.

"Our Niagara-on-the-Lake Santa 5K was such a success that we wanted to put on another race in Niagara-on-the-Lake as soon as we could," said Arnott. "We are excited to be working with the town and local businesses once again to host our Canada Day 5K."

VR Pro Inc. has hosted running events in the GTA and beyond for over 25 years, and has contributed more than \$3 million to local charities, including Joseph Brant Hospital.



The Canada Day run began 15 years ago, and has been held in other areas, coming to NOTL for the first time this year. (Photo supplied)



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One of Niagara-on-the-Lake's greatest natural resources is its artistic community. Looking back in history, there are many societies which missed valuing the enriched cultural environment they were living in. Think about Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh who was only understood and appreciated after he passed. It is important to note that the last van Gogh original visual artwork, "Labourer in a Field" from 1889, went for \$81 million at a New York sale in 2017. In Niagara-on-the-Lake, we are surrounded and living with the world's greatest visual artists, and to experience them and their insights we only have to travel to the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre on Ricardo Street. Display areas and art development programs greet every visitor. To incentivise a visit, anyone who comes to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Pumphouse Arts centre in June can enter a free draw for an exciting and fabulous original artwork by Niagara-on-the-Lake artist and award winning author, Sharon Frayne. So, love yourself deeply and bring joy to your life and have fun participating in a free original art draw sponsored by Peter Domarchuk Niagara-on-the-Lake Royal LePage, Wholehearted Real Estate

Visit niagarapumphouse.ca

Artistry by the Lake Canada Day weekend

Local Staff

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce is once again presenting Artistry by the Lake.

It is a juried show of

more than 80 artists and artisans, taking place in beautiful Queen's Royal Park overlooking the mouth of the Niagara River and Lake Ontario, with no charge for admission.

It offers a marketplace for artists and artisans producing original, high-quality handcrafted works.

Artistry by the Lake runs July 1, 2 and 3, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.



The last time Artistry by the Lake was held in NOTL was 2019, with artists and artisans selling their work, including Aaron Grant with his map of Canada carved of wood.

Council agrees to advocate for nurse practitioner

Penny Coles
The Local

The 6,000 residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake who are without a doctor in town have council on their side.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor's quest to bring a third nurse practitioner to NOTL, one who would care for residents who are not rostered patients of the Niagara North Family Health Team, as well as visitors, has taken a step forward.

At Monday night's

council meeting, O'Connor explained the position would be funded by Niagara Health, operated as a walk-in clinic staffed by a nurse practitioner, who she described as a health care professional somewhere between a registered nurse and a doctor.

"When the nurse practitioner in this position left on maternity leave a few years ago, Niagara Health did not replace her. Upon return from maternity leave she was redeployed to assist with COVID activities

under the provincial emergency act," O'Connor told councillors.

O'Connor, Lord Mayor Betty Disero and a team of other advocates, spearheaded by Bonnie Bagnulo, the executive director of the NOTL Community Palliative Care Service, met with representatives of Niagara Health, "and we are making progress," she said.

"The lines of communication are open and Niagara Health has agreed to further our discussions on how the town of NOTL and

Niagara Health can collaborate on opportunities to build a healthier Niagara."

"The money is still there" to fund the position, they were told by Niagara Health.

"NOTL has the highest percentage of Niagara residents 65 years of age or older, with over 30 per cent in that category," said O'Connor. "No other municipality in the Niagara Region is 30 per cent or greater. Why is this important? Because the older the patient, the more complex the health issues

being considered and the greater the need for health services."

The Niagara North Family Health Team currently has the longest wait list for a doctor that they have ever had, she said.

"I have spoken to medical professionals in NOTL, and they all agree that we need this Niagara Health nurse practitioner."

"The Ontario Medical Association stated that healthcare is an infrastructure and that municipalities have a role to play in ad-

vocating for the healthcare needs of their community," she continued, "and recommends creating an advocacy plan."

Her motion that an advocacy plan for the return of the nurse practitioner position funded by Niagara Health be developed and executed was supported by council, and will start the process. Showing Niagara Health the statistics, showing them what services we have here, and more important, what we don't have here, is the next step."

Pumphouse wants street-facing art on Virgil building

Penny Coles
The Local

The Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre wants to beautify Niagara Stone Road through Virgil to coincide with a regional road reconstruction planned for the summer of 2023.

With a 28-year history of promoting art through many programs and events, Lise Andreana told councillors Mon-

day, the mission of the pumphouse is to engage, enrich and celebrate the diverse and growing population through visual arts. Their goals are to advocate for local artists and increase the quality of cultural tourism in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and to that end, Andreana was proposing a project to help the town "achieve its goals for Virgil beautification."

One of the pumphouse projects is in its fourth year of improving the streetscape through hydro box beautification, implemented in several areas of the Old Town.

Andreana wants to work with Arnie Lepp, owner of Niagara Orchard and Vineyard, and local artist Ron Clavier to have one of Clavier's paintings that represents the agricultural community replicat-

ed on the side of the Niagara Stone Road building. It will improve the streetscape by introducing visual art to public-facing buildings, she said.

Andreana estimated the project will cost \$20,000, and was at council to ask the town to fund it.

The project has been endorsed by grower Kai Wiens, who called it "a rare chance to marry art, culture, tourism, and ag-

riculture in one beautiful package. Let's not lose this moment but embrace this rare moment of partnership for generations to come," he said.

Councillors discussed sending the request to staff to consider in the 2023 budget, but Coun. Erwin Wiens said while he loves the idea, he would like to see a fundraiser to help pay for it, in particular asking the agricultural communi-

ty to contribute.

After a brief discussion, councillors agreed there is no rush to approve it, although Lord Mayor Betty Disero said she would like to see it installed as soon as possible following next year's road reconstruction.

Council approved a motion to endorse the project, ask staff for a report back, and seek donations from the agricultural community to help fund it.



A well-known business in Virgil that serves the agricultural community is willing to have artwork on its building to beautify the streetscape. (Photo supplied)



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Efforts on two fronts planning for community education

Penny Coles
The Local

Efforts to have public school boards recognize the needs of education in rural communities have been moving along in recent years, on two different fronts.

A motion requested by Jim Collard, a former town councillor in NOTL, about potential changes to Ontario's education policies, was approved by council Monday.

In information Lord Mayor Betty Disero presented to councillors during their discussion with Collard when he made his request last week about other local plans, mother and provincial policy director Caroline Polgrabia joked that she was "outed." She has been working behind the scenes for about eight years, since Parliament Oak closed, with a group of local peo-

ple dedicated to offering some form of community education in town.

While Collard's provincial school alliance has reached the point of being ready to ask for municipal support, Polgrabia says she too is ready to go the public, "99 per cent sure" her group will have something tangible for parents and high school students by this September.

Polgrabia grew up in town, attending Parliament Oak and Niagara District Secondary School. She was living in Toronto and working for the province when she decided to come home and raise her children in NOTL, envisioning them following her footsteps through the halls of the two schools she attended.

Instead, her children are now at St. Michael Catholic Elementary School, and while her ultimate goal is to eventually have a public

high school in NOTL, she doesn't expect it to be in time for her kids.

She is starting with small steps, providing space for something similar to a supervised study hall, allowing high school students to gather in their community after school hours.

Collard, a member of the provincial Community Schools Alliance, said the educational policy of the past two decades in Ontario has resulted in the amalgamation of smaller local schools into larger buildings, and often the closure of schools in smaller communities. Instead of attending school within their local community, many students are forced to attend schools in communities further away from home.

That has occurred in NOTL, as Polgrabia and many parents have experienced since the closure of

NDSS, despite concerted efforts of the community to keep it open.

The trend toward bus-ing rural and smaller-community students into other communities can have wide-ranging impacts on the health, well-being, and stability of students, parents, and affected communities. The impacts of these closures may also not be immediately apparent, with potentially longer-term impacts being experienced decades later with negative economic competitiveness and socioeconomic outcomes, a Community Schools Alliance document says.

A recent study by Western University, also referenced by the alliance, showed small rural and northern communities with schools tend to have more private amenities and more public services than those without schools; that closing a school in a single-school community threatens the future existence of those amenities and services, and the quality of life of the families living there; and that closing a school also reduces the ability to attract new growth and economic development to the community.

Unfortunately, Collard said, under the current education governance model, local area municipalities have little influence over school board capital infrastructure decisions.

The alliance says ministry, school boards, and municipalities need to work together to develop policies that address planning for declining enrolments, the accommodation review committee process, a review of funding to rural and small community schools, and improved transparency and accountability in capital infrastructure decision-making.

The alliance is asking for an increase to funding for the rural and north-

ern education fund, which supports students in those schools; and that a moratorium on accommodation reviews remain in place for the schools until a thorough review of the education funding formula is completed.

Collard asked for a motion be passed by councillors to adopt those resolutions, saying "all students should have the opportunity to attend elementary and secondary school in their home community."

The motion includes that there be consultation with school boards and community groups, including the community school alliance regarding pupil accommodation review guideline templates are developed.

Coun. Gary Burroughs moved Collard's motion, and added that staff should meet with the school board to discuss new schools in the community, both high schools and elementary schools.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero assured councillors those discussions are already occurring at some level with residents involved, referring to Polgrabia's plan, although she wasn't prepared to share the details.

Coun. Clare Cameron agreed that meetings between board and town staff should happen periodically, and that the town should try to rebuild its relationship with the board. There is a lot of emotion over past issues, and a lot of sadness that "the younger portion of our population has been treated as invisible," she said.

Although there was some discussion about a school in Glendale down the road, "Glendale is exciting, but it's a huge long-term plan, and we're a broad municipality," said Cameron, cautioning against hanging too much on one place, that is still so

far down the road.

Coun. Wendy Chero-pita suggested "now is the time to look forward. The population is growing, and our strategic plan is looking at attracting families," she said. "Now is the time for action and solutions."

Coun. Erwin Wiens said the town should move forward with a business model identified. "If we don't have a plan in place, they won't listen to us."

There was unanimous support for Burroughs' motion as requested by Collard and the Community Schools Alliance, and further that staff confidante meetings with both Niagara school boards to discuss the possibility of new schools in NOTL.

Polgrabia has a plan, and is trying to build a relationship with the school boards. She said although they are not ready to help her yet, "they didn't say no," leaving the door open for support when the time is right.

She plans an information session for parents and students, and an open house to see how many are interested in the youth campus idea as a start, hopefully this summer.

First, she needs to nail down the location — she feels she has secured the right space in the right place, but has nothing signed yet.

She has people lined up to be mentors to the students, but has to finalize a governance model.

While she is looking at something in her community for local students, the model, she said, should be one that could be applied in all rural communities

This is just a start, she added, hoping to one day be able to offer curriculum programming, immersive, hands-on learning, sports — taking the lead from parents and students to offer what they are looking for.

Going, going, gone



As quickly as tulip bulbs were dug up from town flower beds, they were ready to be sold at the community centre. The sale of the gently-used bulbs, which will produce beautiful tulips next spring, was first implemented by Disero in 2019 to raise money for tree plantings in the community. Coun. Sandra O'Connor was at the community centre to help Friday, as locals snapped up the bulbs. (Dave Gilchrist)

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Gender politics on display in one-act play at Shaw

Mike Balsom
The Local

On the surface, George Bernard Shaw and his contemporary, Bengali poet, playwright, visual artist and composer Rabindranath Tagore, were worlds apart. But a deeper dig into their turn of the century works reveals some stunning similarities.

Kimberly Rampersad is directing and choreographing Tagore's one-act play *Chitra*, to be performed at Shaw's Royal George Theatre until Oct. 8. She first chose the play back in 2017 when she was a Neil Munro Directing Intern at Shaw. The gender politics, as well as the similarities between *Chitra* and Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, drew her to Tagore's work.

"It blew my mind, the idea that Kitty and Vivie argue aspects of feminism," Rampersad says of the two central characters in Shaw's play, written in 1893 and first performed in London in 1902. "A gentleman wrote that. That big theme of the 'new woman,' which runs through many of Shaw's plays, also runs through this play."

Chitra is Tagore's own English translation of his dance drama *Chitrangada*, was written in his native language in 1892 and translated in 1913. The story follows the title character, the warrior princess of Manipur and the only heir of King Chitravahana. Raised as a boy, she embraces the warrior spirit, becoming a particularly skilled archer.

But after a chance encounter with the warrior hero Arjuna, Chitra begs the gods for perfect beauty in an attempt to win his love and affection.

"Something is sparked in her," Rampersad explains. "It's her womanhood, her sexuality, her self-awareness. That awakening takes her on a journey to her new self, where she is able to reconcile all aspects of herself."

In that storyline, Chitra embodies the 'new woman' both literally and figuratively, as she begins to discover her own femininity. In today's era of acceptance of gender fluidity, *Chitra* the play holds a special kind of relevance.

"I hope that with people's awareness they can see that every human being has aspects of femininity and masculinity in them," says Rampersad. "It's not about gender, it's about the human experience. I hope that everyone who has ever had a moment when something within them didn't necessarily jive with how they think the world perceives how they should be, can identify with that."



Adam Sergison (Corps), Andrew Lawrie as Arjuna, Jade Repeta (Corps), Caitlyn MacInnis (Corps), Gabriella Sundar Singh as Chitra and David Andrew Reid (Corps) in *Chitra*, at the Royal George Theatre. (David Cooper)

The Winnipeg native says Gabriella Sundar Singh, in her fifth season at Shaw, is brilliant in the title role.

"Not only is she a great actor," raves Rampersad, "she's also trained in a form of classical Indian dance. She's able to bring all of those worlds together in the portrayal of Chitra. She is so comfortable in her body, she's able to move like the warrior, and also embody the other aspect of herself when she becomes beautiful."

Andrew Lawrie, a veteran of both Shaw and Stratford Festivals, plays the role of Arjuna.

"He does a lot of especially comedic plays, and he's very talented," Rampersad says of Lawrie. "It's wonderful to see him stepping into that leading man role, watching him lean into that. We first worked together on this in 2017, and then last year during COVID we did a reading of *Chitra* in the garden behind the Royal George Theatre. So all three times he's been involved."

Rampersad herself is in her seventh season at Shaw. She is currently knocking everyone's baseball socks off as the sexy temptress and devil's assistant Lola in *Damn Yankees*. Rampersad is also learning the ropes as associate artistic director under Shaw's Tim Carroll.

"I stepped into the position in March, 2020," she explains. "I never imagined I would ever be in artistic leadership when I started my career, but that's how it has unfolded. I am learning about all aspects of a theatre company."

Of working with Carroll, Rampersad says she is fortunate to get a chance to pick his brain in twice-weekly sessions together.

"I hope that I function as his privy council, or his senate. What's great, too, is there's reciprocity. It's not just him asking for my gaze on something, but I can also present plays, ideas and ways of working, and I know that I will be heard."

Rampersad's parents immigrated from Trinidad and Tobago in 1969. She graduated from the University of Manitoba with a degree in political science. She also earned her dance teacher's certificate through the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School, and was on the faculty there for four years. Later, she became a full-time dance clinician with the Winnipeg School Division and helped write the dance curriculum for the Province of Manitoba's Department of Education.

She was at Stratford in 2014 when she came to Shaw to audition for *Sweet Charity*, scheduled to run the following year. She booked that play and also performed in *Pygmalion* that season. Seven years later, she's still here, and has moved full time to Niagara-on-the-Lake, embracing life in town to its fullest.

"My first love is dance," she says. "Dancing led to musical theatre, and that's brought me to the career I have now."

Her dance moves are a major highlight in *Damn Yankees*, while directing and choreographing *Chitra* has given Rampersad further

opportunity to draw on her first love.

Tagore's original one-act play was written in verse, but 44 years later the Nobel Prize winner rewrote it as a dance drama.

"We combine elements

of his original play with his dance drama," explains Rampersad. "For example, Chitra is an archer, and the archery is performed as dance. The plot is driven forward throughout as dance."

Chitra continues at the

Royal George Theatre on Queen Street with about a dozen performances per month until Oct. 8. The one-act play begins at 11:30 a.m. and runs just under an hour. To plan your lunchtime visit, go to shawfest.com.



Andrew Lawrie as Arjuna and Gabriella Sundar Singh as Chitra in *Chitra*. (David Cooper)

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Kristi Frank and Olivia Sinclair-Brisbane in *The Duke and Two Irenes* (Shaw Festival, 2021). Photo by Jason Lupish (Lauren Garbutt Photography).

Pangman, Aglukark headline concerts at St. Mark's

Mike Balsom
The Local

Music Niagara Festival's 24th season continues this Friday with a 4 p.m. performance on the grounds of the beautiful McArthur Estate on John Street East in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The Sweet Hots turn the clock back to the 1930s for a set of old-time jazz and blues Friday, June 24. The trio features vocalist Alex Pangman

with Drew Jurecka on violin and Nathan Hiltz on guitar.

"They're both virtuosic on their instrument," Pangman enthuses about her bandmates. "They're great at what they do and they're also really fond of the music of the 1930s as well. It's a really great partnership."

With her love of what's known as the Great American Songbook, the 45-year-old Pangman has become known as Canada's Sweetheart of

Swing. Since her 1999 debut album *They Say*, produced by the late Jeff Healey, Pangman has released close to 10 albums either under her own name or with her other band, the Alleycats. Each features her take on classics and lesser-known numbers from the era of the 78 rpm record, as well as her own original compositions.

"The melodies are beautiful," she says of the songs of that decade, "they have a lot of

depth to them. Same thing for the lyrics. Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, these are poets set to music that you can dance to. The rhythms, the melodies, the lyrics, I'm drawn to them, they speak to all the human emotions."

Pangman talks of how that music, book-ended by the first and second World Wars, saw people through much adversity during difficult times.

"When COVID hit," she

adds, "it was like this music was perfect to soothe our troubled minds, distract our hearts, and give us some joy when sometimes that was hard to find."

Pangman herself is no stranger to adversity. Born with cystic fibrosis, Pangman has undergone two double lung transplants, one in 2008 and another in 2013, shortly after opening for Willie Nelson at Toronto's Massey Hall. She has since become an advocate for organ transplants, crediting her own donors for saving her life twice.

Due to her ongoing immune system issues, the pandemic meant that she has had to keep away from public performance longer than most. She has stayed busy with The Sweet Hots, though, performing regular monthly online concerts for the past 24 months. The outdoor Music Niagara show will be one of Pangman's first in-person performances in almost two years.

Next week, three-time Juno Award-winning artist Susan Aglukark visits St. Mark's Anglican Church to close out June for a show billed as an Artist Life Stories performance.

Curated and hosted by Cameron Smillie, the Thursday, June 30 Music Niagara Festival event will see Aglu-

kark sharing stories of her upbringing in Nunavut, the abuse she suffered as a young girl, her landmark musical success in the 1990s and her current work with the Arctic Rose Foundation. In between, she'll step to the microphone next to two members of her band to play and sing songs such as *Oh Siem* and *Still Running*.

"In the early years, I left home to leave, not to pursue a public life," Aglukark remembers. "I wasn't even a singer or a songwriter."

Then came 1992's *Arctic Rose* on EMI Records, following her self-released *Dreams For You*.

"When your major label debut album starts to chart, then hits number one, suddenly you are headlining. It was a lot of playing catch-up."

Aglukark says she was in a state of 'ilira', the Inuit word for emotional fear. She was always deferring, waiting for someone to bring her to her next gig. When *Oh Siem* hit in 1995, her career rocketed into yet another stratosphere.

"There couldn't have been a better song to create, to write, even the video," she says. "Everything about that song set the tone for what would be the last 25 years of my career. I am very proud

Continued on page 17



Alex Pangman and the Sweet Hots



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Aglukark's humanitarian award helps her help others

Continued from page 16

of it. Every time I sing it it reminds me of that time. It brought calm to me then, and that's what I needed."

Oh Siem topped the Canadian country and adult contemporary charts that year, and made it to number three on the pop top 40. It was the first top-10 hit in Canada for an Inuk performer and acted as the centrepiece of Aglukark's fourth album, *This Child*, which went triple platinum.

The song's lyrics alternate between English and Inuktitut, and are set to a joyful beat as they protest against racism and prejudice. There's a beauty in Aglukark's message that is underscored by the beauty of the melody. "We are all family," she sings, suggesting that there is room for all cultures and races to understand and love each other.

"Twenty-five years later, so much has changed, but so much has stayed the same," she says of her best-known hit. "When you hear parts of the song, you say 'okay, I get it now, I got it then, and I get it now differently in some ways.' It's a gentle, nudged statement song."

Her life changed in the ensuing years. Five more al-

bums followed between 1999 and 2013, each of them including songs that shed light on the issues facing Canada's Indigenous peoples. In 2005 she was named an Officer in the Order of Canada, and her continued success allowed her to actually do something about those issues.

In 2012, Aglukark started the Arctic Rose Project in an effort to help address hunger, homelessness and the health and wellness of Inuit children and youth. The organization received charitable status in 2016 and became the Arctic Rose Foundation. Its mandate expanded to support Northern Inuit, First Nations and Métis youth, promote emotional and mental wellness, and connect participants with their culture through arts-based programming.

This May, Aglukark was the 2022 recipient of the Humanitarian Award presented by Music Canada at the 51st Annual Juno Awards in Toronto. The award recognizes an outstanding Canadian artist or industry leader whose humanitarian contributions have positively enhanced the social fabric of Canada and beyond. Past winners include Buffy Sainte-Marie, Neil Young, Bryan Adams, Sarah McLachlan, Tom Jackson and Bruce Cockburn.

"It was truly an honour," says Aglukark. "The work we need to do as Indigenous people, especially right now for healing and reconciliation, really has to come from us. When I started working on the Arctic Rose Project, we were drawing from our lives as we were healing them. The work we do is about emotional health, so that they are less afraid to pursue success in their lives."

She says she was at first reluctant to accept the award, but came around after realizing that it was an opportunity to share the award with and to introduce the team that is doing the work. Youth involved with Arctic Rose were invited to the Junos to share in Aglukark's recognition.

The June 30 performance will see Aglukark talking with Smillie about Arctic Rose and many other experiences and occurrences during her 30-year career.

"He touches on the early years of my career," she says, "and he talks about the transition. We'll look at what I've learned as an artist, and even the business side of music. The songwriting, the stories and the culture, too. And we give time to why healing must come before or alongside the reconciliation conversation."

And in between the topics, she'll take the microphone to sing some of her hits, including one or two from her new album *The Crossing*, her 10th, released this past April.

"We'll take questions from the audience, too," adds Aglukark, who has done these Artist Life Stories shows about six times with Smillie. "A lot of

the questions centre on what non-Indigenous people can do to support and acknowledge reconciliation."

"We walk this journey together," she concludes. "We have to change the lens through which we view those generations of Indigenous people. We all have to start on the same page. We don't know

what that page is yet, but we have to correct the narrative. We are all correcting it, and healing from this."

Tickets for both Alex Pangman and the Hot Sweets (June 24, 4 p.m.) and Susan Aglukark's Artist Life Stories performance (June 30, 8 p.m.) are available at musicniagara.org.



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Combe 'an evangelist for the cause' of St. Mark's

Continued from page 1

church were displayed donated items for sale, as well as auction items, to help fund the next stage of cemetery stone restoration.

Wright told those gathered in the church hall over a dinner to celebrate the guest of honour that Combe had asked him to be brief — he said it was intended as a fun time for those in attendance. However Wright listed “a few of Combe’s accomplishments,” including his host of publications; his work with the archives committee, which took on the role of caretakers of the books in the Addison Library; the 100 trees planted on the property; the extensive work that has been done in the church’s historic cemetery; and the restoration of 21 monuments in the cemetery, work “which will continue thanks to your support of this event today.” Called the Save Our Stones Dinner, the event was a fundraiser for cemetery restoration.

Wright also said a few words about what he learned over years of working with Combe.

“The gifts that he brings to the task of this archival service are many, and have resulted in an incredible legacy. Let me hasten to add, however, and Donald would be quick to point this out, much of it happened because he was able to invite others to share in this monumental accomplishment.”

As he looked around at those gathered in the hall, Wright said he could see many people who have assisted Combe in his work. “Donald knows well large tasks demand that we ask others to help. He has always been good at forming partnerships with others in

the community.”

Many years ago, when the church parish was wrestling with the issue of what to do about the Addison Library, Wright recalled, he had invited Richard Landon, director of the Thomas Fisher Library in Toronto, to offer his opinion on how to proceed. “When he and his partner Marie arrived, we gathered in the crypt where the library was stored. It was high drama as Richard unpacked some of the books, examined them and turned to us and said, ‘Do you know what you have here? The oldest private library in Canada west of Quebec. They are in great shape, bring them upstairs and put them on bookshelves.’”

His question, said Wright, “became a kind of a mantra for the archives committee through the years. Donald realized that if you do not know what you have, you might very well lose it. You see, only when we know our inheritance can we truly begin the process of the work of preserving that legacy. Donald has been instrumental in helping us know what treasures we have.”

But there was one further step which Combe decided to take in answer to a second question, said Wright — ‘but how will others know?’

“I think you came up with the answer because you do so know the history of this church,” he said to Combe. “I think you found your answer in the motto of our patron saint, Mark the evangelist: ‘Proclaim the Good News.’ Proclaim, not tell, not inform, not whisper but proclaim, to cry out. As an actor, Donald, you know that it is not simply about reciting the words. You have to convince, with enthusiasm, if you want

people to get excited about the story.”

Like St. Mark, Wright said, “Combe is an evangelist for the cause. Come to think of it, perhaps many who gather here in this

place today do so because your words, your writings, and your example have encouraged us to become fellow evangelists.”

In Wright’s toast to Combe, he said, “Don-

ald, for your many efforts and accomplishments. You have helped us to appreciate and celebrate our goodly heritage, and for that we will always be grateful. Yet I think what I admire

most in you is that you continually look to the future, to the road ahead, reminding us that the way forward at St. Mark’s has always been, ‘with our past before us.’”



Julian Trachsel, Lucy McEwan, Sally Mitchell, Faye House, Elizabeth Jamieson, Jack Hanna, Eileen Hanna, Trudi Watson and Albertine Moxam all helped in the kitchen, and Catherine O'Donnell (right) of Willow Cakes and Pastries donated the dessert. (Photos by Penny Coles)



Sally Mitchell, Gary Zammer and Trudi Watson helped put the event together. Zammer was the designer and creator of the beautiful decorations in the church hall.

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Fresh strawberries the star of the show

Mike Balsom
The Local

The cooler temperatures Saturday didn't seem to keep locals or tourists from enjoying the first St. Andrew's Strawberry Festival since 2019.

Flats of beautiful red strawberries were continuously being delivered to the tent where event chair Julie Hunter and other volunteers were serving visitors. Those running the crepe stand were working quickly to keep up with demand, while more than 100 guests sat down to enjoy the music of the Niagara-

on-the-Lake Ukesters.

A large contingent of volunteers was working the barbecue, while further back on the church grounds thousands of books lined the ever-popular book sale table. Church members were selling strawberry jam and other preserves under another separate marquee as well.

"They're wonderful," Hunter said about the quality of the berries this year. "Tigchelaar Farms in Vineland is where we get them. And on Monday, we hulled berries that were donated from Seaway Farms. We made the jam with them. That was a really nice gesture from

the Pillitteri family."

Though Hunter estimated that the crowds may have been slightly smaller than in previous years, from the look on most attendees' faces, the enjoyment factor may have actually been exponentially higher.

The Strawberry Festival is the unofficial kick-off to the summer festival season in NOTL. The fact that it actually happened this year brought a feeling of relief and celebration to those in attendance after two years of COVID cancellations.

There were a few changes to the festival this year, though, brought about by the events of

the pandemic.

"We didn't sell flowers this year, or yogurt, and we didn't run Granny's Attic," Hunter said. "That's due to space inside the hall. We wanted to keep things spacious for people's comfort and to enhance social distancing."

A silent auction was the only event being held inside the Kirk Hall this year, keeping indoor crowds smaller. The festival also decided not to have an inflatable castle for the kids for similar reasons.

Preparation for the festival took place all week long. Hunter estimated that there were as many as 150 volunteers

involved Saturday, working in shifts to keep things running smoothly from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. Of course, many were members of the St. Andrew's congregation, but Hunter was quick to add that politicians, members of other churches and community members in general all chipped in to help.

"In the town, you see a lot of the same people helping out at all the festivals," Hunter explained. "St. Mark's Cherry Festival is after us in July, the Peach Festival at St. Vincent de Paul is in August. We all support each other. Working together is a real bonus."

Liza Klepacs of Port Dalhousie has been volunteering at the festival for eight years, either at the pie or crepe stands.

"It's nice to see everybody out enjoying the festival again," Klepacs said. "The food is fantastic and the entertainment is great, too. It's a fantastic day out."

She was enjoying some crepes with Jameson Alma, who was visiting from Ottawa. Though his parents live in NOTL and he comes to town often, it was his first time at the festival.

"It's fantastic, and this is such great weather," he told The Local. "And the crepes are great."



The Ukesters, always a crowd-pleaser, drew a good audience during Saturday's Strawberry Festival. (Photos by Mike Balsom)



Brothers Andrew and David Lindgard and Jessica Diab serve strawberry crepes, a favourite at the festival.



Celine from St. Catharines plays in the sand, one of several kids' activities.



Kathy Hunter and Margaret Walker sell the strawberry jam, freshly-made in the days leading up to the festival.



Liza Klepacs and Jameson Alma enjoy strawberry crepes.



Rose from Niagara Falls loved the face painting, and the cemetery stones.

Town Strawberry Social coming up — register today

Local Staff

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is excited to return to an in-person gathering for the Strawberry Social event, with a pick-up option available.

All residents aged 65 years and over are invited to register for this fun afternoon of food and fellowship. Admission is free for all attendees.

The date is Monday, June 27, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Lunch will be served around 11:45 a.m.

As usual, the event will be held in the auditorium of the community centre.

Pick-up lunches will be available at the side entrance of the community

centre from 1 to 2 p.m.

Registration is required for both in-person and pick-up options. In-person seating is limited to a capacity of 150 residents. Please register at www.notl.com/recreation-events/community-initiatives-events by end of day on June 22.

"I am so pleased about the return of an in-person event for our annual Strawberry Social," said Lord Mayor Betty Disero. "After the pandemic and having to alter the Strawberry Social in previous years, it is fantastic to see Town Staff eagerly return to planning this event in honour of Senior's Month. On behalf of town council, thank you to all our passionate and thoughtful senior residents

who make our community one of a kind."

"The Strawberry Social is about bringing our senior citizens together to celebrate and honour them for their valuable contributions to the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. We are proud to be able to show our gratitude in person, once again," said CAO Marnie Cluckie. "Thank you to town staff, PigOut and Seaway Farms for your outstanding collaboration in planning this event. I hope that everyone enjoys the 2022 Strawberry Social."

A special thanks to Seaway Farms "for generously donating strawberries for this beloved occasion," the town press release says.



Kids just wanna have fun



Proud dad Matt Dietsch (left) sent The Local this shot of some of the Coyotes that attended the Special Olympics last week, including his son Dylan. There were 700 athletes at Welland's Centennial High School, and it was a great day for all, says Dietsch.

Butterfly release recognizes COVID losses

Mike Balsom
The Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Palliative Care Service (CPCS) executive director Bonnie Bagnuolo was amazed at the turnout for Saturday's Memorial Butterfly Release.

Almost 300 people gathered at the NOTL Community Centre to honour their loved ones lost during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The community centre was set up inside with tables to allow for a small memorial or picture space for families to share and acknowledge their significant others. As people mulled about there was a feeling of strength in numbers permeating the atmosphere.

After about half an hour, Bagnuolo invited everyone outside to pick up their butterflies, each reserved with a \$25 donation to NOTL CPCS. The painted lady butterflies were in small boxes, many of them already fluttering inside their temporary homes, ready to be released.

Like many visitors to NOTL, the 256 butterflies made a stop at a local winery upon arriving in town. As Bagnuolo explained, the insects were shipped from Alberta two days earlier and spent the evening in the cool temperature of a local winery's cellar.

Once their butterflies were received, participants

were directed to the south end of the parking lot, where chairs had been set up for the ceremony.

"You have all gone through a lot the last couple of years with your losses," Bagnuolo told the crowd after her initial welcome. "Any loss is hard to endure, but especially so with the unfortunate events that COVID brought to us. You weren't allowed to visit in the hospital, and if you were it was only one family member."

Families couldn't come from out of town for funerals, and there were capacity limits on the funeral services, she added, "if you could even have one."

Bagnuolo went on to explain NOTL Palliative Care's role from the onset of a life-limiting illness through to a year after a loss. She outlined the many services and programs offered, then turned the microphone over to clinical social work consultant Sandra Hardy.

"We're all trying to find our way through the grief in these unprecedented and unsettling times," Hardy said. "A celebration like this today is a real honour. These times have provoked many of us to have increased sadness, stress and anxiety. Not only are we experiencing a personal sorrow for those we lost, but also a collective sorrow as well. We gather together as a new community, brought together by a com-

mon event."

"This is a process, kind of like the tides, it comes and it goes," Hardy said of grief. "It's not a quick one, or an easy one, but it is a real one. You don't have to walk the road alone. Embrace this moment. As you choose to move forward, you will fly more freely, like the butterflies that we will release today."

CPCS board chair and social worker at Upper Canada Lodge Patricia Whitwell spoke next.

"I saw first-hand how difficult it was for our residents," said Whitwell. "I saw how people struggled. We really had to adapt. But it certainly didn't replace that one-to-one human contact with people you love. Hopefully now we're through the worst of it and we can move forward. Hopefully you can all get a sense of peace and some sense of closure today and be able to move forward in a more positive way."

Lord Mayor Betty Disero then came to the front and read the names of the 104 loved ones listed in the afternoon's program. Bagnuolo explained after, though, that those weren't the only ones being remembered Saturday.

There were butterflies released by people who had just heard about the event but whose family members' names did not make it into the program, she explained, and also we also "for people who just



Lord Mayor Betty Disero reads the list of names of those remembered with a butterfly release. (Photos by Mike Balsom)



Hiba Khatkhat honours her father with a butterfly.



About 250 butterflies flew away in remembrance of lives lost.

wanted to honour family members."

Hiba Khatkhat of St. Catharines was there as part of her healing journey after the loss of her father last year.

"I didn't have an ongoing relationship with him as an adult," Khatkhat told The Local. "When he passed he was on the other side of the world. By that point I had worked on my own healing and had forgiven him even though we weren't on talking terms. But I couldn't be there to say goodbye, and grieved in my own way."

The anniversary of Kaiser Khatkhat's death was Friday. With the butterfly release wedged in between that and Father's Day, it was perfect timing for what Hiba felt spiritually compelled to do to commemorate him.

She brought photographs of her dad from when she was much younger, helping her to reflect on the good times they had experienced together. Hiba described Kaiser as "the life of the party," and explained that her choice of a colourful outfit Saturday was another way to honour him.

When it was time to

release the butterflies, everyone was invited to step from the parking lot onto the grass. Most edged up close to the waist-high brush where many wildflowers could be seen blossoming.

Upon opening the boxes, some butterflies stubbornly clung to their temporary homes, reluctant to fly away for a few moments. Some fluttered away then dove straight down to the grass to feed on the flowering weeds.

Family members and loved ones were "really looking at that butterfly as the representation of the spirit of that significant person," Bagnuolo said. "When they stood up and walked over to the brush area, it was like they were really releasing something that they were holding in for quite some time."

Khatkhat's painted lady clung to the box for just a few seconds, giving her some time to reflect on the loss of her father. When its wings spread and it flew straight up past her face, her eyes followed it into the blue sky and a huge smile spread on her face. One could feel the sense of release and closure that must have been going through

her heart and her mind.

Ken Decker came all the way from Sudbury to honour his father-in-law, who lived in NOTL and passed away in September. He was with a group of about six family members.

"It's an amazing event," Decker said. "It was really emotional. He was my best friend. It's kind of cool to say goodbye to him this way."

"People were so very grateful," Bagnuolo said following the release. "There was a lot of emotion, and it was a safe place for them to be able to feel. Some of them have been really numb over the past couple of years, not being able to release that sadness and have their bereavement witnessed."

Bagnuolo was adamant that the 2022 Memorial Butterfly Release, a first for the NOTL CPCS, would not be the last.

"The butterfly has always been a symbol, and it was time," she said. "It is such a representation of new life. I knew we needed to do something really, really special. And it's a definite. Absolutely we will be doing this again next year."

Cultural lessons foster friendship, respect

Continued from page 1

to shape our identities.”

The Onondaga and Haudenosaunee Nations believe that one of the gifts the Creator can bestow on any individual is the gift of sport. Traditionally, the Onondaga and the Haudenosaunee called the game Dehoñtjighwaës, roughly translated to mean, “they bump hips.” That’s certainly an apt description for an activity that happens often in a lacrosse game.

It is believed the Haudenosaunee played the game as early as 1100. In its purest form, lacrosse was played by tribal warriors for training, recreation and religious reasons outside on a field, often with no boundaries, and with no official limit on time.

French Jesuit missionaries in the 1630s came across games of lacrosse being played by the tribes in the St. Lawrence Valley. One of them, Jean de Brébeuf, wrote about the game being played by the Huron Indians in 1636 and it was he who first referred to it as lacrosse.

“It’s really rooted in the fabric of the Haudenosaunee people and Iroquois Confederacy,” Sowden says. “The values in the teachings that are involved, including respect, mutual understanding, mindfulness and the strong bond that you get from playing are the values of our people.”

Niagara’s physical proximity to those early days of the game has made the region a hotbed for the modern day version of lacrosse.

“Think of it at the professional level,” says Sowden. “The Premier Lacrosse League (PLL) and the National Lacrosse League (NLL), a lot of the people in those leagues come from Niagara. A huge number from St. Catharines, and there’s some from Welland, Fort Erie, Buffalo and upstate New York.”

Niagara-on-the-Lake is part of that lacrosse hotbed as well.

Andy Boldt, coach of the NOTL Thunderhawks U22 team this year, says in the past, most NOTL lacrosse divisions were composed of about 40 per cent indigenous players coming from Tuscarora Nation in New York.

He mentions players such as Rich and Travis Kilgour who played in NOTL. They went on to play for the St. Catharines Junior A Athletics and with the NLL’s Buffalo Bandits. Both have their numbers retired and are in the hall of fame.

There’s also Ron Henry, who coached in the NLL, the Arena Lacrosse League (ALL) and for the Tuscarora

Senior B team as well as in NOTL, and his brother Don who played for the Bandits in the 1990s. NLL player Jim Bissel came through the NOTL program, as did Randy and Roger Chrysler.

Randy Chrysler is a long-time coach with the now-defunct Niagara Thunderhawks Junior B team. Currently the defensive coach for the NLL’s Buffalo Bandits, Chrysler’s resume includes stints on the bench for the 2014 Iroquois Men’s box lacrosse team, the Six Nations Arrows and the Tonawanda Braves Senior B team.

Chrysler is one of many Indigenous people from New York state who have contributed to lacrosse in NOTL.

“My dad coached there, I coached there, my son coached and played there, and my grandson is now playing there,” he says. “Four generations. It’s like our first home, actually.”

Chrysler remembers playing as a five-year-old on the same Tuscarora team as kids as old as 17. That was because Tuscarora’s minor lacrosse program had begun to fall apart as their box, or arena, got old and became too expensive to repair. As even that team was beginning to fall by the wayside, his father contacted NOTL Lacrosse and signed Randy up to play here.

“He would go get a van, and he’d pick up half the players in Tuscarora, kids from our territory and around the area, and we’d come up to play,” Chrysler laughs. “We got there, and it was just like family. The friendships we made in Niagara-on-the-Lake are lifetime ones.”

Playing alongside non-Indigenous teammates had its advantages, too. Many of those friendships he speaks of were formed over the sport, but also bridged the gap between cultures, creating a true understanding of each other’s lives.

With difficulties at the border since March, 2020, NOTL lacrosse has seen a decline in registration, as well as a decline in the number of American players coming across to play. That, of course, includes many Indigenous players, who have looked elsewhere to pursue their love of the game.

In light of that, Chrysler’s proudest accomplishment to date might be his current role as president and head coach of the newly formed Tuscarora Tomahawks of the First Nations Junior B Lacrosse League.

“It’s the first time in Tuscarora history that we have had a Junior B program,” states Chrysler. “It’s because of the border, and COVID.

Just to see our community back together, and our minor system being re-formed. It’s amazing.”

Like Chrysler, Sowden is also giving back to the game. In his case, it’s through FUSE Lacrosse’s skills sessions and its lessons on the game’s culture and history, three of which were run recently as part of the Niagara Folk Arts Festival.

Those cultural lessons include a focus on the values of tradition, respect, leadership, perseverance and integrity. FUSE uses active discussions to create an environment that encourages conversation and builds understanding of Indigenous history while growing the game of lacrosse.

“We use our Haudenosaunee perspective to give back to our community,”

Sowden says. “One of the biggest things we recognize is what lacrosse did for us as people. It’s so important to help youth to identify themselves and find a purpose.”

And it’s an opportunity for the three men to create a community around the game, and to move toward healing in a time of truth and reconciliation.

“It’s a chance for dialogue,” he says. “It’s an opportunity for discussion in light of the finding of all the unmarked graves. We can share knowledge, not only about the game itself, but also about some of the challenges Indigenous people face. We can have those meaningful discussions while doing something active, and surrounding ourselves with like-minded people.”



Jace Sowden (Photos submitted)



Cassidy Doxtator, Blue Hill and Jace Sowden with a FUSE participant.



Indigenous lacrosse action with Cassidy Doxtator and Jace Sowden and a young lacrosse player.

LocalSPORTS

Friesens suffer two collisions in as many weeks

Mike Balsom
The Local

The past two weeks of racing have brought to the forefront the dangers of driving trucks at NASCAR speeds on

the Camping World Truck circuit for Stewart and Jessica Friesen.

Stewart was running his number 52 Toyota truck in the DoorDash 250 at California's Sonoma Raceway on Sat-

urday, June 11. After starting from the 10th position, Niagara-on-the-Lake native Friesen collided with Wisconsin-born Josh Bilicki with only five laps to go in the third stage. With extensive damage to both trucks,

neither finished the race.

"That's the hardest hit I've seen in awhile," Stewart says. "It was kind of a glancing blow, and I hit a barrier that was really a concrete wall. It kind of hurt, I got some bruises out of it. It still hurts, and running Knoxville the next week, the bruises are kind of where the seat grabs you right around the rib cage."

Friesen's truck connected with the back of Bilicki's vehicle, causing both to spin out of control. It's clear watching the video that Bilicki and his number 30 truck bore the brunt of the crash, which necessitated a red flag and a restart. Both Friesen and Bilicki popped their window nets down to signal to the safety crew that they were okay.

Both drivers were later treated at the racetrack's care centre and released.

A week later, Stewart's wife

Jessica, driving the Halmar Friesen number 62 truck, was involved in her own incident at Knoxville Raceway in Iowa during the Clean Harbor 150.

On lap number 58 In just her third NASCAR Camping World Truck Series start, Jessica spun around in turn three, catching the berm and rolling her truck upside down.

It was a brake problem that led to her losing control on the berm. Her husband didn't even know that Jessica had rolled the car until the following stage break. He found out when he returned to the pit.

"It was a soft roll, and it didn't do much damage to the truck, or to herself," Stewart says from his home in Sprakers, New York. "She was actually able to continue on after the roll. We joked after that there are only two people who have flipped and been able to continue a race. The first was Dale

Earnhardt, and the second was Jess."

As might be expected, both Friesens are used to seeing teammates in such situations. But rarely are those teammates husband and wife, partners in life as well as in racing.

"She's been in accidents before and I have seen them," he admits. "It's very scary, but we get through it the best we can."

Their son Parker was with the Halmar Friesen team in Knoxville but fortunately did not see his mother's car flip. He was watching from home the previous week, though, when his father collided with Bilicki.

"He hasn't seen enough of it to be numb to it like Jessica and I are," Stewart says when asked how six-year-old Parker reacts to collisions. "It's definitely upsetting, and he has had to deal with it. I'm sure he'll continue

Continued on page 28



Jessica Friesen, driving the Halmar Friesen number 62 truck, was involved in a collision at Knoxville Raceway in Iowa during the Clean Harbor 150. (Screenshot)

Thunderhawks' range of ages makes for strong team



#44 Christian Blaylock
Defence



#7 Nolan Price
Offense



#6 Ethan Williams
Offense



#58 Tanyan Davis
Goalie

Andy Boldt
Special to The Local

Wisdom can be defined as having the quality of having experience, knowledge and making good judgement. Although still young in a worldly sense, the U22 Thunderhawks display a number of these characteristics for the sport of lacrosse, and are in a unique position this season.

Most divisions in sport are made up of two age groups, sometimes referred to majors and minors. For U22 this is not the case, rather a team can be made up of players from five age groups, players in their 17th year (16 years old) to players in their 21st year (20 years old).

The U22 Thunderhawks exhibit a variety of ages. Six players are in their 21st year, so their last season (Joe Fragnito, Trent Hunter, Matt VanderLaar, Sam VanderZalm, Aedan O'Gorman and Colby Ostromecki). All provide a foundational leadership piece of the puzzle found in a cham-

pionship team.

Brett Wilson is the lone player in his second-to-last season, while there are four players with two years left (Keaton Boldt, Nathan Wilson, Hunter Ostromecki and Jordan Wiens). Players with three seasons left are Nolan Price, Kris Wilson, Aaron Wilson, Jack Muraca and Christian Blaylock. With offensive and defensive threats, this middle group is the backbone of the Thunderhawks, often called to play in specialty positions on man-short or power-play situations.

Finally, the rookies, players with four possible years left with the Thunderhawks, are Liam Dietsch, Jack Parker, Ethan Williams, Jack Marotta, Noah Ostromecki, Liam Gatt and Tanyan Davis. Three of these rookies are already playing up with the St. Catharines Jr.Bs, looking to be fully rostered players next season.

The 2022 U22 roster has all the characteristics which make a good lacrosse team: speed, strength and game intelligence. This group of Thunderhawks also contains one overlooked characteristic found in championship teams — a great sense of family, which means a group of individually skilled players filling specific roles and sacrificing individual exploits to do what is required to lead the team to a provincial championship for 2022.

Come out and support the U22 Thunderhawks when they play the Hamilton Bengals June 28 at 8 p.m. at the MCU arena, followed by their July 9 Alumni Day double-header versus the other undefeated team in the province, the Milton Mavericks.

Go Thunderhawks!

LocalHAPPENINGS

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July 1st, 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Join the fun and get to know the local visual arts community. Enter for free for a chance to win great prizes! Learn more and download the entry form by visiting our website: notlartscollective.ca

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LocalWORSHIP

Sunday, June 26th

10:00 a.m.
Worship Gathering
Online & In-Person

Message:
Kevin Bayne
The Book of Life
Revelation 20:11-15

www.ccchurch.ca

To advertise your
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in this section, please contact:
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Local

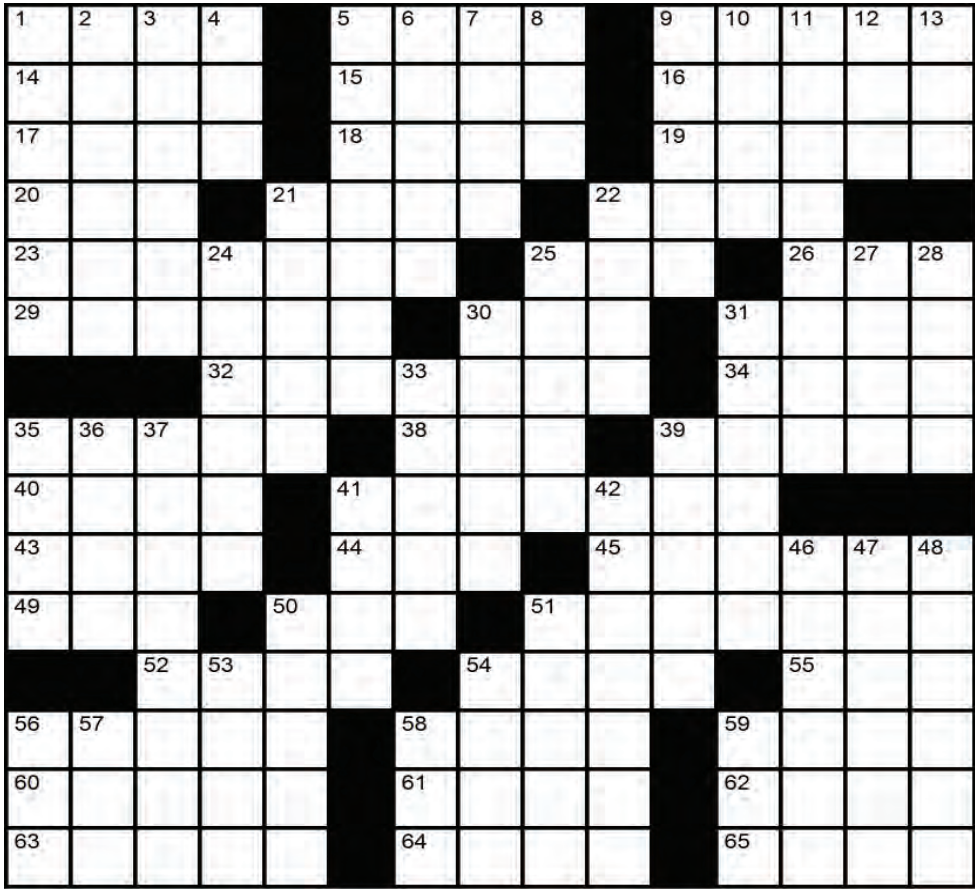
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CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU



- Across:
- 1 Urban air pollution problem

5 That's in Paris

9 Prim

14 Formerly French Sudan

15 E.g. Rice, Harvard (Abbr.)

16 Snake vulnerable to the mongoose

17 Not dissimilar

18 Salespeople

19 Syrian dynasty

20 Padre (Abbr.)

21 Prepares for war

22 Roughly speaking

23 Traditional voting day

25 West Atlantic international grp.

26 Flat panel TV type

29 Ankle injury

30 Parking area

31 Doozie

32 Undersides

34 2,000 lbs

35 Foundation

38 Tear

39 Shorthand inventor John Robert ---

40 --- calling!

41 Maturity

43 Stiff sentence

44 Missions (Abbr.)
- 45 Goad

49 Banned insecticide

50 Distress message

51 Chivvied

52 Comedians

54 Drugs (Abbr.)

55 Threat to fighters

56 Alan Ladd gunfighter role

58 Loopy

59 D-Day beach

60 Main artery

61 Piece for two

62 "Time --- My Side" (The Rolling Stones)

63 Awesome

64 Stack

65 Fix
- Down:
- 1 Mental ability

2 Bury the hatchet

3 Director/producer --- Stone

4 Kind of rummy

5 Small seedless raisin

6 Foe

7 Drinks slowly

8 Corner consoles?

9 Operation mementos

10 Decide with a coin

11 Pure

12 Plan sponsored by Sen.
- William Roth

13 Family guy

21 Spanish farewell

22 Stable food

24 Californian pine

25 Vavavoom

27 Block

28 Ordure

30 Lower abdomen

31 Pantry

33 Ensnares

35 Hairless

36 Keen

37 Computer code

39 Attendees

41 Low sounds?

42 Out with a potential partner

46 Neglect

47 Pressurize

48 Comet finder --- Halley

50 Bargain

51 German philosopher

53 Cosmopolitan (Abbr.)

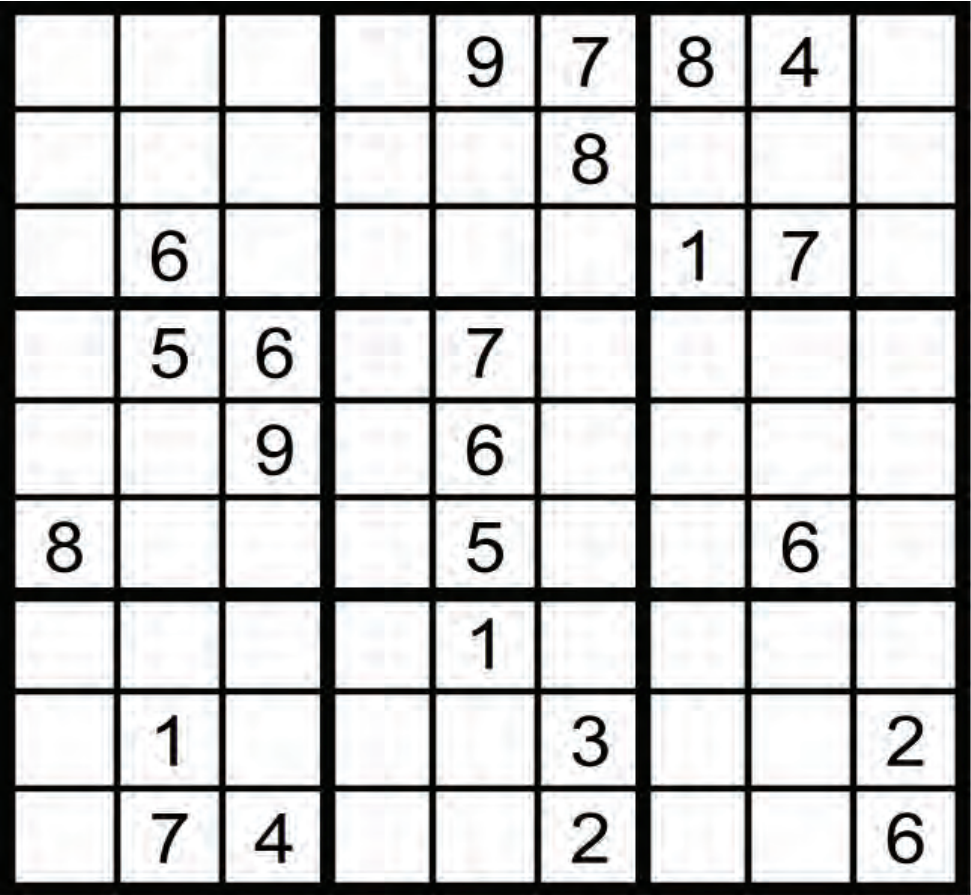
54 Second-largest Hawaiian island

56 Nordic airline

57 By what means?

58 National economic indicator

59 Actor --- Carrey



YARD SALES

YARD SALE

June 25th
9 to 3
20 Friars Crt.,
St. Catharines
A bit of everything -
Vintage & Modern!
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905.934.1040
Deadline is Tuesdays at 1 p.m.

PUZZLE ANSWERS

Across: 1 Smog, 5 C'est, 9 Staid, 14 Mail, 15 Univ, 16 Cobra, 17 Alkin, 18 Reps, 19 Assad, 20 Rev, 21 Arms, 22 Or so, 23 Tuesday, 25 O A S, 26 L C D, 29 Sprain, 30 Lot, 31 Lulu, 32 Bottoms, 34 A ton, 35 Basis, 38 Rip, 39 Gregg, 40 Avon, 41 Marhwood, 43 Life, 44 Ops, 45 Needle, 49 DDT, 50 S O S, 51 Harred, 52 Wits, 54 Meds, 55 S A M, 56 Shane, 58 Gaga, 59 Juno, 60 Aorta, 61 Duet, 62 Is on, 63 Swell, 64 Pile, 65 Mend.
Down: 1 Smarts, 2 Make up, 3 Oliver, 4 Gin, 5 Currant, 6 Enemy, 7 Sips, 8 TVs, 9 Scars, 10 Toss, 11 Absolute, 12 I R A, 13 Dad, 21 Adios, 22 Oats, 24 Sabine, 25 Omph, 27 Clog, 28 Dung, 30 Loins, 31 Larder, 33 Traps, 35 Bald, 36 Avid, 37 Software, 39 Goers, 41 Moos, 42 On a date, 46 Disuse, 47 Lean on, 48 Edmond, 50 Steal, 51 Hegel, 53 Int'l, 54 Maui, 56 S A S, 57 How, 58 G D P, 59 Jim.

LocalSPORTS

‘Can’t deny’ safety is an issue, says driver

Continued from page 26

to work it out in his own way as we race on.”

“It’s an aspect of the sport you can’t deny,” Stewart continues. “Safety equipment has thankfully come a long way even in the past 10 years that I’ve been doing this professionally. We do the best we can to outfit ourselves, and to outfit the cars with the newest stuff to have it in place when situations arise.”

Stewart finished the Knox-

ville race in fifth place, while Jessica’s brake problems resulted in her not finishing.

On Sunday, Stewart ran his number 44 modified in the Short Track Super Series 50 lap race at Devil’s Bowl Speedway in Vermont, finishing tenth.

This Friday, June 24, Stewart will be competing in the Rackley Roofing 200 NA-SCAR Camping World Truck Series Race at Nashville Superspeedway. Jessica, meanwhile, will be racing in the modi-

fieds at Utica-Rome Speedway Friday.

On Saturday, the Friesens will go separate ways once again, with Jess at Fonda Speedway and Stewart running at Middletown, New York’s Orange County Speedway, both for modified races.

“It’s kind of tough,” Stewart admits. “We split the team up, with a couple of the guys going with Jess, a couple going with me. We don’t do it often, but we do it the best we can.”



Stewart Friesen collided with another truck in the DoorDash 250 at California’s Sonoma Raceway on Saturday, June 11, hitting the barrier. Neither finished the race. (Screenshot, Fox News)

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