Region expects to close Upper Canada Lodge in 2020

Pleasant Manor’s new facility should be finished in time for NOTL residents

Penny Coles  
The Local

As details were rolled out last week for the expansion of two regional long-term care homes, so too was the process and timeline for the closure of Upper Canada Lodge. It’s been public knowledge for some time that the Region did not intend to renovate its only long-term care residence in Niagara-on-the-Lake, but little information has been available about a timeline for closure. With just 80 beds in the lodge, which sits on property owned by Parks Canada, a redevelopment to bring it up to provincial standards isn’t feasible, said Henri Koning, director of senior services, before last Thursday’s regional committee of the whole meeting to discuss long-term care.

Although no approvals were expected, plans were laid out Thursday that will allow designs to move forward for a new and expanded Gilmore Lodge in Fort Erie. It is expected to accommodate 160 seniors instead of 80 the current facility has space for now. The Region has purchased a former mall property on Garrison Road, and will build a three-storey residence, with room for a mix of housing on a portion of the site that could be sold to a developer or leased.

Linhaven in St. Catharines will have a new six-storey building, on property where it is now situated but in a different location, expanding its number of beds to 261 from 248. A portion of that property is expected to be sold to developers for a mix of residential units, said Koning.

While less than half the residents at Upper Canada Lodge are from NOTL, almost 100 per cent of those at Gilmore Lodge are from Fort Erie, with a waiting list of residents who would like to be there. On paper, Fort Erie is getting the beds NOTL is losing, but that space is not expected to accommodate NOTL residents — it will be required for Fort Erie seniors.

The Region is able to make that decision knowing Pleasant Manor in Virgil, Regional District of Niagara, is under Region’s control, and that the Region will control the new Pleasant Manor facility in Virgil as an expansion of the existing facility.

Continued on page 3
Protesters lay wreath at Cenotaph, then take day off
Counter-protesters out in numbers Sunday

Penny Coles
The Local

Sunday’s Occupy NOTL, a threat by the protesters against horse-drawn carriages, fizzled after an early start, when members of the group placed a wreath on the Queen Street cenotaph, only to have it quickly removed by town staff.

AWFAN (At War for Animals Niagara) warned they would be ramping up their protests in Niagara-on-the-Lake in “strategic locations,” over the Canada Day long weekend, with a number of protesters out on the street. They ended their day Saturday, June 29, by projecting videos on the Cenotaph, angering carriage supporters and local residents over the disrespect to war veterans and desecration of the memorial.

The group had warned media and counter-protesters their Operation Anvil would include a day they referred to as Occupy NOTL, set for last Sunday, which would include “large-scale action against specissimism,” which they defined as “non-human persons as property.” But Locals for Carriages increased their presence in response, asking supporters to show up in numbers.

After the protesters held a brief ceremony at the Cenotaph and laying a wreath on the second Sunday in June, without permission from the Royal Canadian Legion, they disappeared for the day.

Adam Stirr, the leader of AWFAN, said he hadn’t intended any disrespect to veterans, choosing the Regiment Street side of the Cenotaph for the video projection.

The following night he projected the images on the side of a private building, angering the owner, who had given permission for the protesters to be on his property and who said he did not support their cause.

Stirr said Sunday’s ceremony and laying of the wreath, which he made available in a video on YouTube, was “in response to concerns regarding the projection upon the Clock Tower.” He said he didn’t ask the Royal Canadian Legion for permission because “our grievances were from the people of NOTL.” The wreath, he said, “was simply a public showing of respect to make things right with the citizens of NOTL.”

When Lord Mayor Betty Disero heard about the wreath early Sunday, she quickly had town staff remove it. She said it could only be laid with permission from the Legion.

“If they had permission from the legion we will bring it back. But nothing goes on the Cenotaph unless it goes through the legion.”

Disero also said she hopes to have Insp. Jim McCaffery of the Niagara Regional Police revisit the protocol agreement from last summer.

She planned to update council on the protests Monday, but time ran out and the council meeting will be continued Wednesday.

Stirr charges members of Locals for Carriages have chosen to stop observing the agreement reached in August 2018 during meetings with the Niagara Regional Police and the Town to maintain peace.

Laura Sentinel of Sentinel Carriages says AWFAN members have ways to make it look like Locals are breaching the protocol.

For instance, she said, one of the protesters follow- ing closely behind her, trying to get her attention, then began filming as soon as she turned around to face him, making it look like she was getting too close to him.

She says she’s not sure what use an agreement is if it’s not going to be enforced by police, who don’t lay charges.

She commends Disero for trying to help.

“I know she genuinely wants to help, for our sake and for the sake of the town. We’ve had some meetings, and she’s hoping there are some things that can be done. I know she if she had a magic wand she could wave, they’d be gone.”

The problem is much bigger than what is happening in NOTL, said Sentinel — the protesters want to shut down farmers who have animals, and retail and restaurants which carry animal and dairy products. The solution will have to come from top down — levels of government, the police and the courts, she said.

Disero was on Queen Street Sunday, as were police, who spoke to both sides, reminding them of the agreement, which includes not impeding people from access to the sidewalk.

The job of the police, she said, is to ensure protests remain peaceful. “I believe the police are doing their job. They’re doing their best.”

Disero said the NRP was planning to lay charges for projecting videos on the Cenotaph over the Canada Day weekend, but after they talked to the crown attorney, “no charges were laid.”

Disero said she has researched other cities’ regulations, trying to find a solution to help control the protests, including Toronto, but has found nothing helpful to NOTL.

“The Charter of Rights and Freedoms say they have every right to be on the sidewalk for a peaceful protest.”

Whatever the solution, it can’t come too soon. Sentinel relates the story of how the family’s involvement in the horse and carriage trade began.

Her late mother-in-law Jackie loved horses from the time she was a young girl, hanging out at Jack Green’s stable on King Street during the 1940s, and working there in exchange for being allowed to ride. Later, Jackie married Fred Sentinel Sr., and locals will remember seeing her riding around town in a horse-drawn cart.

Laura said her husband Fred, one of three Sentinel brothers, inherited his mother’s love of horses, and had been giving carriage rides for weddings and as a teenager just for fun. One day the Sentineals were contacted by the Pillar Foundation, which wanted to provide carriage rides for weddings.

The Sentineals bought a horse and carriage, and obtained licences, and Fred and Laura became part of a new era.

On Canada Day one year in the 80s, they had a horse and carriage on Queen Street for training purposes, when some visitors to town asked for a ride. That began the second phase of their business, Laura said.

“We built it up from there. Two of our children are now actively engaged in the business, and we haven’t got any grandchildren yet, but hopefully one day we will see it grow and be as good as this. This business is part of the history of the town and we want to keep it that way.”

The protesters present themselves “as somehow morally superior, but they don’t understand horses,” she said.

Research on working horses pulling carriages shows it keeps them physically and mentally healthy, she said, and her veterinarian agrees.

The protesters are using feelings and ideology to try to persuade people of their views, “based on opinion, not fact.”

Not every horse wants to pull a carriage, and when that happens, she said, they work out what would be best for the animal, “never, ever” taking any horse to slaughter.

And while they are not a rescue organization, they have bought horses headed for slaughter. “We’ve given them a good life, a job and lots of love.”

“When this is all over,” said Laura, referring to the protests, “we’re going to be having a party.”

Carriage supporters Janis Peters, Travis Cherney, Austin Gould and Margie Andrews were downtown Sunday, trying to spread a positive message. (Fred Mercnik)
Regional seniors programs to continue after lodge closes

Continued from page 1

owned by Radiant Care, has provincial approval for a facility that will accommodate 160 people. This new build has an anticipated opening date of 2022, which is expected to align with the completion of the two Regional facilities and the closure of Upper Canada Lodge.

The new homes will be designed as campus-style developments, now considered to be not only more economical and efficient to operate but also able to provide better care for seniors in a community hub setting.

“We are excited about what we will be able to offer seniors as a place to live, sooner rather than later,” said Koning. The three existing buildings, Upper Canada Lodge, the current Guilmore Lodge and Linhaven, are expected to operate until the new facilities are completed and ready to be occupied, she said.

The budget for the two regional redevelopments has been pegged at $175 million. With $15 million approved by the Region and $66 million to come from the Province, the remainder is expected — although not approved — to be included in future regional budgets, said Koning.

The Region will continue to provide resources in NOTL for seniors and will offer adult day programs, at a location yet to be determined, once Upper Canada Lodge closes, she said.

The fee structure of the two long-term care homes remaining in NOTL, Chariwell Niagara (the former Chateau Gardens) and Pleaswell Niagara (the former Linhaven), and the two Regional facilities involved to the table for talks “in a neutral location” to work for everybody involved.

Placement of clients on a waiting list for all not-for-profit long-term care homes in Niagara, whether they are owned by the Region or privately, is handled by Home and Community Care, and is determined by need, not ability to pay or other affiliations, said Koning. Efforts being made to accommodate a client’s preference for location when possible, including looking at first, second and third choices.

Long before Upper Canada Lodge closes, she said, “Home and Community Care will begin working with residents and families and looking at where they would prefer to be located.”

NRP to revisit protest protocol

Penny Coles
The Local

Phil Gavin, the media relations officer for the Niagara Regional Police, says there will likely be a meeting between the groups involved in the horse and carriage protests to review a year-old protocol agreement.

Last summer, Insp. Jim McCaffery met with then-Leader Mayor Pat Darte, Laura Sentinel, protesters of horse-drawn carriages and counter-protestors who support the local carriage business, to work out a protocol that would keep demonstrations on Old Town streets peaceful and safe for all.

Gavin explained such an agreement is a set of guidelines arrived at with input from both sides and intended to work for everybody involved. Insp. James McCaffery, reached an agreement between groups on issues such as not blocking the sidewalk, giving protesters a set location, asking them to keep an agreed-upon distance from carriages, and both sides keeping a set distance from each other.

In a protest such as the one in NOTL, said Gavin, people on both sides are passionate about their beliefs and “not everybody gets what they want.” The goal is to balance the needs of both sides and “try to find a middle ground.”

Protesters have a charter right to be there, he said, and the job of the police is to try to keep the peace. He says there are efforts being made to bring all parties involved to the table for talks “in a neutral location” to review the protocol set a year ago.

“It’s a good-faith document, not legally binding,” he said. “The difficulty in keeping to those guidelines is often because of the number of people who get involved in the protests, who may not abide by the protocol in day-to-day situations, he said.

As for the police pressing charges in the incident involving projecting photos on the Cenotaph, he explained, “they reviewed the evidence with the Crown, and also had a look at interar.”

They came to the conclusion that the intent was to educate the public, not to cause any damage or mischief to the war memorial.

Laughing to help others

MPP Wayne Gates, Pat Darke, Nancy Bailey, Debi Pratt, Paul Chapman, Janice Thomson, Lois Chapman, Mike Berls and (crouching) Ellen Berls, attended the Joe Piltitri Comedy Night at the community centre, which raised money for the Niagara Community Foundation’s Vince and Margaret Piltitri and Family fund. The interest on the capital will be split three ways between the Terry Fox Foundation, Red Roof Retreat and Kiisport Niagara. (Penny Coles)

Garden of the week

This week’s Garden of the Week winner is 14541 Niagara River Parkway in Queenston, owned by William and Bonita Leslie. The beautifully maintained garden has a well-planned balance of colour, shapes, and textures, the judges said. “Their effective arrangement of plants and colours leads the eyes of viewers across the entire garden, from the arbor through a hedge of Annabelle hydrangeas at the side of the house to the two hydrangeas standards that frame their front entrance, and across the driveway to another bed of perennials, shrubs and rocks. They have chosen colour combinations that work well together and contribute to the flow throughout the garden.” The Town, the Communities in Bloom Committee and the Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticulture Society are running the Garden of the Week program over the summer months. Residents are encouraged to submit nominations of phenomenal front gardens and winners will receive a lawn sign recognizing the home owners. Nomination forms are available on Join the Conversation. (Photo supplied)
Councillors hear strong opposition to winery rezoning

Penny Coles

With a running application before councillors for a small winery on a large Queenston Road property, they have been given lots of information to mull over before their Wednesday meeting, when a decision is expected.

Several presentations were made at Monday’s committee of the whole meeting by business owners and residents, cautioning councillors about what they consider a precedent-setting issue. Queenston Mile Vineyard, now operating as a farm winery, is looking for rezoning to an estate winery. In addition to producing and selling wine, the rezoning would allow food to be served. The winery owners are also asking for an agriculturally良的 use as a secondary one on the 50-acre site.

A committee decision was expected Monday, but public presentations on the winery application and other issues took more than four hours, and the remainder of the meeting was rescheduled, to be concluded Wednesday, beginning at 5 p.m.

Maria Mavridis, whose family owns a restaurant on Queen Street, told councillors as the number of wineries serving food has grown, downtown restaurants have seen a decline in business. “Queen Street businesses payastronomical property taxes and rents,” she said, and employs year-round staff although business is a seven-month season, while wineries such as Queenston Mile have the advantages of free parking for their customers and tour buses, controlled wine costs, and much lower agricultural taxes.

“We are for fair air advantage,” she said. Wineries looking to open restaurants, run events and offer venue space should pay commercial taxes, she said. “We are asking council to take their time in reviewing every aspect, prior to making any decisions that may result in becoming a detriment to our downtown business,” said Mavridis.”Whatever decision is made with regards to the Queenston Mile application, it will set precedent to all future applications to town planners and this council,” Maria Hassebroek is a Queenston Street resident who, like other owners of the vineyard, has complained about noise from customers and bus traffic problems. “Staff says it will not impact us. I can tell you it does,” she said, citing issues with noise from customers and bus traffic problems.

Mavridis touched on concerns mentioned by others saying the winery “is not playing by the rules.” She maintained the family farm winery is selling a 2016 vintage of wine it is not allowed to sell, and also referred to the expensive commercial kitchen equipment in the building that she believes indicates weddings and other events will be held, creating more noise and traffic for neighbours close by. “No amount of buffering would be sufficient, she said. “This is not the proper location for an estate winery.”

Lawyer Tom Richardson, representing several clients opposed to the rezoning, changed the wording used to creating “to a restaurant where a restaurant is not permitted.” He referred to the kitchen equipment and large washroom facilities as evidence the intent from the beginning has been for a restaurant.

He also said crushing, fermenting or bottling has taken place on the property, as required of a farm winery, which can only sell wine made on site or grapes grown on the property. “The proposal is not an agricultural use, til the smuggling in of an urban use in an agricultural area,” he said, suggesting councillors be inclined to approve the zoning, they should request a deferral until they have a site plan before them.

Paul Harber of Ravine Vineyard Estates Winery, cautioned councillors against rezoning, saying if they do, “any-one can buy a barn and put anything in it, including roads of uses that aren’t agricultural.”

He said because the winery opened just seven months ago, it hasn’t been through a full harvest, and there is no way to access the full impact on neighbours. “This might be a precedent-setting case of upsetting the neighbours.”

Ravin winemaker Martin Warner also warned against allowing an estate winery in the small building, saying there is no room for the production that is expected to process 39 acres of grapes, while also having a hospitality area and kitchen. Former NOTL town planner, Stephen Bedford suggested the winery building should have been located in the centre of the property. He said a small portion of grapes may be processed onsite, “the application is for a restaurant and washrooms for 250 people. Applications like this give me pause, with respect to the future direction of the town.”

Rezoning the property could potentially make it cheaper to buy a winery and open a restaurant, and could drive up the price of agricultural property, he said.

But when lawyer Steven O’Mara had his chance to speak on behalf of Queenston Mile, he praised the staff recommending zoning approval, and refined the arguments against it, which he said were not about planning issues. The application conforms to all relevant agency and town planning policies, he said. Richardson’s comments about the construction of the kitchen are “inaccurate and extremely unfair,” he said. “The kitchen was not hooked up — it was "optimis-tically purchased" for the day when it could be used. That’s what was going on about processing on site, he said, “there is crushing, fermenting and bottling occurring. It’s a fact.”

The sale of a 2016 vintage was permitted when the farm winery opened, he said — that is typically allowed because it anticipated wine made on the property won’t be ready.

The issue of restaurants paying higher taxes, and neighbours’ concerns, are also not planning issues, he said.

As for traffic, the owners have already agreed to a drive way off Concession 6, as neighbours have requested.

Alison Zarka, general manager of Queenston Mile, also addressed some of the points made by those opposed to the rezoning.

She said the business plan for the winery is to produce 2,000 bottles to sell at Queenston Mile, not to process all 39 acres of grapes onsite. “The kitchen equipment, she said, was put in for a future, so it would be “shoe-horned” in, and is not for a restaurant, but to serve food with tasting and in events.

She said she has been trans parent from the beginning about plans for the winery, and told the planning department she would apply for a farm winery first and then would be back for rezoning for estate use. “We’ve never been shy about saying we want to do events. Show me a winery that doesn’t have events, good food, and I’ll show you a winery that doesn’t have cars in the parking lot.”

Rezoning the property would “do some home work” about outdoor crops. “We spoke of the ‘drifting sand of procedure’ from the federal government regarding the growth of marijuana, with “municipalities often left in the dark.”

Dell said an outdoor crop should be considered “a boon on it’s way to the community,” one that would keep good agricultural land in production and that meets provincial and regional planning policies. He described what he called a more “gentle” operation, than green-house grown cannabis, with no light, no noise, limited security required and minimal odour mitigation when necessary.

Although he described his client’s plans as an outdoor operation, the crop would be grown in a hoop house — a temporary structure for the growing period — and planted directly into the soil. The area would be fenced, and buffered by landscaping to prevent it being “an eyesore” to neighbours.

He said the operation being planned would “not threaten” neighbours’ enjoyment of their properties.

Dell said the council approved a year’s extension of the interim control bylaw which prohibits new or expanded cannabis operations pending a land-use policy review.

A bylaw to control can nabs facilities in NOTL is expected next year, with public consultations expected in September.
Your Hearing Health Matters: A Call to Action

The crunch of snow beneath your feet, the punchline of a joke, the whispers of wind through the trees, the sermon at church, the tune of a familiar song, the laughter of a child. As you read these words on the page, you can hear them, and that is how powerful hearing is. To quote William Shakespeare, “the world has music for those who listen.”

When the words on the newspaper become blurry or the colours of the world dull, we seek the assistance of the Eye Doctor for an eye exam. When we no longer hear our loved ones, or the tune of that song does not sound quite right, who do we seek for assistance?

Our hearing gets neglected. We have regular eye, dental exams, and physical exams, but rarely does hearing become part of our health routine. Society is putting an increased effort on wellness with a strong focus on active aging. After all, we are all living longer lives. Why not strive for the best quality of life by utilizing the supports around us?

The journey of aging is not always a particularly kind one. Nonetheless, it is a journey we are all buckled in on. Along this journey, we all find ourselves at different points with frequent reminders that things do not work or are not as they use to be. Alas, we do have a choice we can control, and that is how we are going to adapt to these changes we face to optimize our quality of life for as long as possible.

Hearing affects many facets of our lives—one of the biggest being our ability to communicate with each other and the world around us. It is an integral part of the evolution of our society. It is how we share ideas and exchange information—how we build and maintain relationships, how we stay connected to the things and people we enjoy. If we are unable to hear properly, communication gets disrupted, our relationships strain, and we start to disengage from the things and people we enjoy. Thus, quality of life, the life we wish to optimize, suffers.

So what is the call to action you may ask? Well, if you have not already clued in, or the frequency of advertisements has not given you the gentle nudge, the call to action is, get your hearing tested. Be proactive and make it a part of your health routine.

Come visit Hearing-Life for a free hearing test at our new office in Virgil, Niagara-on-the-Lake, and have an honest conversation about hearing health with us. Who am I? Just your new, friendly-neighbourhood Audiologist. My name is Vanessa Vani, born and raised in St. Catharines, resident of Niagara-on-the-Lake, and I’m excited to be an advocate of hearing health with the goal to help residents lead active lives that reflect this beautiful community we live in.

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Retirees Among Those To Benefit From New Hearing Aid

Just recently, a brand new hearing aid was released to the public and it’s transforming the hearing experience for its users. The enhanced speech understanding in noise, solves the age old feedback problem, and provides convenient connectivity to modern media devices. This all means easier interaction with the world you love and less work for your brain.

Most hearing aids deal with background noise using directional microphones that limit what the hearing aids process to what is directly in front of you—like putting blinders on your ears. No more! These new hearing aids process sound so exceptionally fast, they can handle sound from all directions and help prioritize speech—greatly improving your ability to hear and comprehend conversations.

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Connecting to your modern lifestyle is easier with these breakthrough hearing aids. Make handsfree calls from your smartphone, or stream audio from your phone, stereo, TV, or other Bluetooth® enabled devices.

All this technology is housed so discreetly and comfortably; you may even forget you’re wearing it. Plus, these remarkable hearing aids can be enjoyed using traditional batteries, or with no-fuss daily charging thanks to the addition of a rechargeable lithium-ion battery option.

Yes, the future of hearing is here and it sounds better than ever. If you think you may have hearing loss, ask your Hearing Professional about this new hearing aid and what it can do for you. A hearing test takes less than 60 minutes, you don’t need a doctor’s referral, and there’s no cost or obligation whatsoever.

Call now to try these hearing aids for yourself!
Attention to protests increases tension levels

A peaceful, legal protest focusing on an issue doesn’t get a lot of attention. But add a group of passionate counter-protesters in a small community, supported by the majority of residents, and the interest level can be off the charts.

Radical protesters are defined as those with extreme opinions. Animal rights are not extreme. But the group targeting Niagara-on-the-Lake, although focused on saving horses pulling carriages, is not only targeting a popular business and damaging the local tourism industry; it is extreme in that it refers to horses and all animals as non-human people with the same rights as humans, and wants to eliminate the use of animals not only in working roles but as pets, assistance guides to those with disabilities, and in any kind of food product. While there are people who support the cause, there are many more who object to having a group of what radicals trying to eliminate the ability of others to make such choices.

Protesters need attention to spread their message, and it’s not unusual for them to stage dramatic activities to gain that attention. In the small town of NOTL, with strong counter-protesters, it seems both sides taking up positions on busy street corners would be dramatic enough, but in recent days activities have ramped up, and as one side acts to increase attention, the other side is compelled to respond.

The media have a role in this. However, sometimes it can be a struggle to decide where that responsibility lies, especially knowing that publicity fuels the passion on both sides.

One responsibility is that if we are going to report on a protest, we should include both sides of the story, regardless of our personal opinions.

But the other issue hard to ignore is that publicity fuels the passion of both sides, and no matter how responsibly mainstream media try to handle such reports, protesters and counter-protesters can have a field day on social media, going way beyond merely articulating their respective opinions, and escalating tension to such a degree that it seems inevitable it will eventually spill over onto the streets.

It’s tempting to think if the media refused to bite when the protesters threaten to increase their drama, if we pulled back in the attention given the protests, they might at least scale back their activities. But that doesn’t address social media, over which there is no control.

So far nobody has come up with a solution to put a stop to the protests, which are legal and guaranteed by our human rights charter as long as they remain peaceful, and though the police have been reasonably successful to date at keeping them peaceful, there is still a lot of summer ahead of us.

The goal of the protesters in NOTL is to put an end to horse-drawn carriages. They pointed in a recent press release to the success of horse-drawn calèche being banned in Old Montreal, which will take effect at the end of 2019.

It didn’t take a lot of research to see that while there were animal rights activists pushing for the ban, there were also concerns other than ideology — horses had been injured in traffic incidents on busy streets, and there were several reports, one media outlet saying several hundred — of mistreatment of the horses.

That is far from the case in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Penny Coles
The Local

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The NOTL Local acknowledges the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, many of whom continue to live and work here today. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and is within the land protected by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum agreement. Today this gathering place is home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and acknowledging reminds us that our great standard of living is directly related to the resources and friendship of Indigenous peoples.

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The Niagara-on-the-Lake

The trusted voice of our community

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Local Finds

SUSPICIONS EXPLAINED
Donald Combe
Special to The Local

In memory of Rev. Thomas Creen
Jan. 6th 1864,
Aged 64 Years

Thomas Creen was born in Ireland, educated in Scotland, arrived in Niagara as a Presbyterian minister, became a teacher, was “persuaded” by Archdeacon Strachan to become Anglican, became assistant to Robert Addison at St. Mark’s and in 1829 became the second rector of St. Mark’s. All went well in the expansion community of St. Mark’s until 1848 when there were some suspicions about the amount of sacramental wine being consumed, the misuse of church funds and inappropriate correspondence to a married lady of the parish. We now understand that this respected man was suffering dementia or Alzheimer’s.

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Listen to the voices

A good crowd of committee representatives, dignitaries and the public celebrated the launch of the Voices of Freedom Black History Walking Tour app, sponsored by the Niagara Historical Society Museum, at the Voices of Freedom Park Tuesday morning. It can be used to learn about local Black history by walking to different locations noted on the app, or sitting at home or in the park. For more information visit https://www.vofpark.org/about-voices-of-freedom. (David Gilchrist)
Lots of activities for kids this summer

Debbie Krause
Special to The Local

We’ve waited a long time, but summer is finally here with all of its sunshine and humidity. July is not yet half over and we’ve already enjoyed two festivals, strawberry and cherry, we’ve honoured Canada Day, and here at the library we continue to celebrate summer every day. The party began with a bang on June 22 at our Annual Summer Kickoff where approximately 250 people joined us in the back garden for food, cotton candy, bouncy castle, Reptile Kingdom and numerous activities and crafts. The day was perfect — sunny and warm — as was the mood. Thank you to all who came out and enjoyed the fun and to all those who volunteered their time to make it a success. Since then the summer programming has been gaining momentum. Programs have been full of excited children learning to code, participating in the maker movement and ‘craftersroom’, listening to stories, reading to Jasper our favourite golden retriever, and conducting science experiments. Something new this year, the library is going on the road. Once a week, on Thursday afternoons, children’s librarian Kasia Dupuis will meet kids and their families at a different location around the town. Last Thursday 11 children came out to Chautauqua Park for a story time and interactive activities like the collaborative cotton ball paintings that will be displayed in the library at the end of summer. This Thursday, July 11, Kasia will be at Niagara-on-the-Green Park, and after that she will be at Memorial Park, Willowbank, Centennial Park, St. Davids Lion’s Park, and finally at Garrison Village Park. For full details, please visit the library’s website. Although much of the summer programming is geared to children, the most significant event of this season is exclusively for adults. On Aug. 18 at 6 p.m., the library is hosting its Annual Garden Party Fundraiser. This evening is definitely a highlight of the year. We are fortunate to welcome the executive chefs from the Vintage Hotels who always delight us with amazingly deli-cious food, local wineries generously donate the wine to be enjoyed, and The Blythes will provide the live music. This year we will also be holding a silent auction. The affair takes place in the library’s beautiful community garden and gazebo, a very appropriate venue considering proceeds go directly to the maintenance of this stunning community space and continuous library programming. Please consider supporting us by attending this unique and special evening. Tickets are limited and only available through the library’s website and Eventbrite.

I hope to see you soon.

Kasia Dupuis is taking children’s programming on the road to local parks, providing fun things for kids to do. (Photo supplied)

Jet boat buses drive residents indoors

The buses for jet boat tours are two old, diesel-spewing vehicles that collect customers from the Floral Clock on the Niagara River Parkway and transport them down to Durnfries Street in Queenston and from there, around a hairpin turn on Niagara Parks Commission land to the jet boat operation at what was the Queenston Sand Dock on the river, and is now used by the jet boat company. Because of the noise, which is significant, and the diesel fumes these buses emit (have they been tested?) residents are unable to sit outside on their front porches and back decks. Last year one woman counted 76 bus passes in a single day. There is a bus going past her house approximately every three minutes. These are not quiet buses. They are old and the fumes are awful. Her family is unable to sit on their deck.

Other residents have to remove themselves from their front porches when the buses start at 10:30 a.m. because people have trouble having a conversation due to the noise.

Last Sunday, to mark Canada Day, St. Saviour’s Church on Princess Street, approximately 200 feet from the bus route, had a barbeque outside the church hall and those attending were treated to noisy bus passes and one particularly heavy emission of diesel that made everyone exclaim. Diesel on our potato salad. How appetizing.

The jet boat company has been running these buses for years, but this must not be allowed to continue as it significantly affects the quality of life of everyone on the bus route. It is a health hazard, a continual source of frustration and a denial of residents’ enjoyment of their own properties.

Vicki Lowenberger
Queenston

Not all workers are invisible

May I offer a gentle admonition to everyone who read this article: Migrant workers have names, like the rest of us. (The Local, June 20).

Edgar Allan Poe has been quoted as saying, “Believe nothing that you see.” This is also true of the things we read. When we amplify the negative experiences we also neglect all the positive and amazing ways that local folks have shown kindness, friendliness and generosity to our workers.

Nancy King
Caribbean Workers Outreach Program volunteer

Letters! We want letters!

We have an opinion page put aside just for residents — we know you have opinions and we would love to share them. 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. The deadline is Monday at noon.
Nature can have its dark side

Owen Bjorgan Special to The Local

I would be curious to know how many hours I’ve logged under the canopies of trees, in rubber boots, or carrying a backpack. I’m 26 years old, and I know the hour count is insanely high. And it continues to grow, like the trees themselves.

If my life were a pie graph, the majority of the pie would show me using my spare time outside in nature. I can’t help but be atypical in terms of what aspects of nature I like to present to others, because after my many hours spent outside, I have felt and seen some unusual displays of force from the forest.

A handful of them have been very uncomfortable, and not in ways you’re likely imagining. I’m not talking about cold, rain or relentless mosquitoes — I’m talking about those times when I’ve been hiking, and I suddenly feel overwhelmed by the darkness of the place.

Right here in Niagara-on-the-Lake, we offer ghost tours and celebrate our haunted history. One pub in town has a notoriously haunted downstairs washroom. And what about Fort George and its famously recounted paranormal stories?

I have been subject to some pretty weird and unnerving spots out on the trails, away from the buildings and sometimes civilization altogether. Some spots are right here in NOTL. I won’t tell you where I believe they are, as that is up to your own interpretation and experience. I’m not trying to rile your thoughts and discourage your potential visit to our beautiful forests.

Rather, I’m inviting us to think about our human connection with nature, and how we can pick up on things that are unique human experiences. For example, I have felt patches of woods and hills where the vibe was decidedly creepy. But there was nobody around, sometimes for miles.

When you think about it, it is an exclusive human feeling to interpret something as creepy. We share the ability to be scared, startled, and defensive, like our animal counterparts, but a dog doesn’t see an ominous human silhouette as creepy; it just sees something.

These moments hit me hard when I hiked 890 kilometres on Ontario’s Bruce Trail in 2014. Over the course of 37 days, I was blindsided by certain moods of the environment I walked into. The majority of those moments were joyous, but a few were contemplative and uneasy. I couldn’t put a finger on why certain stretches of trail made me feel I wasn’t the only one in the woods, when I knew I certainly was (believe me; the black flies and flooding was so atrocious at times, I once saw nobody for four days straight. Fun side question: what is the longest stretch you’ve ever gone without seeing another person in your life?)

I now propose the question — can nature be haunted?

I think you know my answer. When in these zones, I wonder — were lives lost, or heavily influenced, in this area of forest? In areas around NOTL, that is certainly true for both Indigenous and colonial lives lost on our soil.

I also wonder, do the very aesthetics of nature speak to people in ways other animals don’t perceive, to an extent where we find certain ecosystems scary? I just think it is amazing how we don’t need old buildings, intense history, or scary basements to make our skin crawl a little.

When this happens in nature, I think it is a healthy and humbling feeling. Our woods and trails in NOTL are generally safe of dangerous animals and mischief — take it from someone who has hiked all over Ontario, and the world. We have it lucky.

The purpose of this article is to present the idea that the depths of our wild places can carry a certain energy, as do people, as do towns. They have a vibe, and there is no denying the feeling.

You know when someone enters a room, and you just go, “this could get interesting?” I live for that in the great outdoors, because it is a sensation our ancestors must have experienced all the time, when we were closer to nature.
Shaw gives back to community

The Shaw Festival Theatre handed out cheques to local organizations Tuesday, an annual Shaw event. The money was raised through ticket sales to specific performances. Receiving money for their organizations were (back row, left): Bonnie Bagnulo, NOTL Community Palliative Care; Susan Weaver, Canadian Cancer Society; Rhys Beak, Royal Canadian Legion; with Tim Carroll, Artistic Director, Shaw Festival and Tim Jennings, Executive Director, Shaw Festival; and Jayme Campbell, NOTL Soccer Club; (front row) Andorlie Hillstrom, Yellow Door Theatre Project; Kasia Dupuis, NOTL Public Library; Jane Andres, Niagara Workers Welcome; Kristin Mechelse, Upper Canada Lodge; and Lise Andreana, Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre. (David Gilchrist)
Local woman’s ‘polite’ activism pays off

Penny Coles
The Local

If you pick up your mail at the Queen Street post office, drop in Saturday and say ‘Hi’ to Anthony.

He’s the new person behind the counter, hired when the decision was made to extend the post office hours to include Saturdays, after a battle fought... little it very politely — and won by Old Town resident Julia Buxton Cox.

She isn’t looking for thanks. She suggests residents who are happy about the improved service to say thank you to the post office staff.

It’s been two years since the local woman began challenging the federal agency with arguments based on logic, which seemed in slim supply at times, and the reasoning that expanding the hours of operation would not only provide better service for residents and visitors, but would also increase revenue.

When she learned she had been successful — with the help of many others, she adds — “I had a little happy dance around the kitchen.”

And it’s not just the post office — it’s good for businesses along Queen Street where tourists can buy postcards and then mail them.

Coun. Allan Bisback

This is from the woman who had never been an activist, but couldn’t resist trying to change something that made no sense to her, and that had a negative impact on a lot of people.

When Buxton Cox moved to town, she had no choice but to sign up for a post office box where she would receive her mail. She was fine with that until she, along with all

Niagara-on-the-Lake residents using a post office box, was notified in a letter dated July, 2017, that staff would “return to sender” any mail without a box number on it.

Residents were told they must notify anyone sending them mail of their box number. That’s pretty difficult when you can’t anticipate who will be sending you mail, said Buxton Cox.

She went to the press, and to Betty Disero, then a town councillor, for help.

The administrator of NOTL, the popular Facebook page to share news with locals, Buxton Cox learned in her research that Canada Revenue and banks wouldn’t send certain mail with a box number on it, for security reasons, but post office officials weren’t swayed by the information.

She personally discovered the impact of the policy when she had a credit card compromise and cancelled it. She had her bank a replacement would be sent in the mail. When she offered her post office box number, she was advised it could only be mailed to a civic address.

“This from the woman who had never been an activist, but couldn’t resist trying to change something that made no sense to her, and that had a negative impact on a lot of people.”

The person on the other end of the phone suggested it could be sent to the local branch of her bank, where she could pick it up — until the employee realized the bank also had a post office box. The solution, said Buxton Cox, was for the credit card to be sent through an inter-branch courier to her bank, where she could pick it up, just a few steps away from post office box.

She also learned the return to sender policy without a box number wasn’t new. Staff for years been putting mail in the correct boxes as a convenience to their customers. Staff turnover on困难 difficulties St. Davids Street had resulted in a directive from above to enforce the policy.

Buxton Cox started an online petition asking for mail to continue being delivered, box number or not, and also created a website to draw attention to the issue.

The researched community mail boxes such as are available in other areas of town, but was told that wasn’t a viable option. She also offered to have volunteers go through whatever security procedures necessary to help sort mail and add box numbers where necessary, but that offer was also rejected.

During her many conversations with residents, she discovered St. Davids and Virgil post offices had Saturday openings, and decided to add to her request for Queen Street.

Wanting to help, Disero drew up a resolution in May, 2018, supported by council, that was sent to Canada Post head office, saying that given the number of people who shop online and would like to be able to pick up their parcels, but couldn’t get to the post office weekdays before 5 p.m., and also due to the number of tourists who would buy stamps to send postcards home, council supported Saturday openings.

When Buxton Cox had no response by last February, she chose a different route, and sent an online chat request to the customer service department, then asking for Saturday hours.

“We have 2,000 P.O. box here, and it’s a tourist destination. It wouldn’t only be for residents, it’s good opportunity for revenue from tourists. The post offices in Virgil and St. Davids are open — it just doesn’t make sense that Queen Street isn’t. If you arrive at the post office at 5:01 Friday afternoon you find you have a parcel to pick up, you’re out of luck until Monday.”

More recently, she contacted Coun. Allan Bisback, who retired from a career with Canada Post, hoping he might be able to “ruffle some feathers.”

Bisback’s position when he retired was general manager of retail operations across Canada, and he contacted the person who took over his job in Ottawa.

He pointed out that NOTL is a tourist town, and there would be increased revenue from opening Saturdays. Bisback said the decision would have been made with input from local staff.

“I made a couple of phone calls and sent some emails, but I’m not sure I can take the credit for this. I think it was Julia and the man at Canada Post talking to the lead hand at the post office, and discussions both at the head office level and locally. It would not have been a decision made in Ottawa.”

He has heard since that opening Saturday was a good move.

“I’m told they’re doing very well. And it’s not just the post office — it’s good for businesses along Queen Street where tourists can buy postcards and then mail them.”

As for mail being returned without box numbers, he said, the policy hasn’t changed. That information is part of the mailing address and is required for mail to be sorted properly.

In the “old days,” staff would know who mail belonged to, but with the turnover of staff and the number of new people moving to town, it’s not that easy. However post office staff are doing their best to accommodate residents, Bisback said, in a desire to provide good service.

Buxton Cox has been told the initial disruption of mail being returned did result in fewer pieces of mail arriving at the post office without box numbers — it’s only about 10 per cent of what it used to be.

Buxton Cox has been open on Facebook about her ongoing medical issues, which slowed her down temporarily but will not stop her activism for NOTL residents. She says she will share her story when she has more conclusive information, but expressed how much she appreciates all the well-wishers wanting to help.

She has received offers to provide rides, weed her garden, she’s had food delivered, a Canada Day planter dropped off — and even an offer to clean her bathroom.

“It’s been overwhelming. Some of the people who reached out I’d never even met — I just knew them through Facebook.”

Buxton Cox says the extent of the outpouring of support was a surprise, and yet one more reason to love living in a small town.

In response to one gentle- man, a long-time NOTL resident, who commented on the time it took post office staff to direct mail even without box numbers as a return “to the good old days,” Buxton Cox responded, “these are the good new days.”

Julia Buxton Cox battled with the post office and won, resulting in extended hours and better service for customers. (Penny Coles)
Raising money for Pink Pearl Foundation

Penny Coles
The Local

A fundraiser for the Pink Pearl Foundation, which gives 100 per cent of the money it raises to helping young women fighting cancer, was held at Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery Friday.

It raised $10,500, said organizer Maria Mavridis, mainly thanks to the generous items auctioned off by Ravine’s Paul Harber.

He became emotional when addressing the crowd of 150 people gathered for food, wine, musical entertainment and a beautiful evening overlooking the St. Davids vineyards.

“We’re the people we are because of the people who raised us,” he said, “and too many of them have lost their lives to cancer.”

He has lost several family members, as Mavridis has, and her mother was also a big influence in his life, he said — the two have been friends since high school.

He likes the work of Pink Pearl, which tries to make life better for those who are fighting cancer, he says, to make them feel better while they deal with the disease.

One of the tables of happy guests supporting the Pink Pearl Foundation.

Maria Mavridis stands by nervously as Paul Harber auctions off the main prize, a dinner for 30 people on Canada Day, plus wine and some other goodies. When the bid was up to $5,200, Pat Darte stepped in and suggested Ravine provide two dinners, and by agreeing, Harber was able to raise more than $10,000 through the auction. The first dinner went to Jessica Gale, the second to Bob Mavridis, his a dinner for 20 people, both next Canada Day.

Pat Darte, Mark Goldrup and Paul Harber in the vineyards of Ravine Friday night at a fundraiser for the Pink Pearl Foundation. Thursday evening, Harber bid on and won a guitar signed by Great Big Sea’s Alan Doyle, who had performed at Jack Triggs. Friday, Harber presented the guitar to Goldrup, a Virgil resident who is general manager of the Toronto Marriott Eaton Centre Hotel. Goldrup opened the doors of the hotel to 1,500 people panicking as reports of gun fire and stabbings reached them during the celebration held for the winning Raptors basketball team in June.

Pink shirts Scott Epp, Dan Plomish, Paul Harber (there is pink in his plaid) and Julian Lustig pose with Maria Mavridis at Eat, Drink Pink, an event to raise money for the Pink Pearl Foundation. All went to Niagara District Secondary School together except for Lustig, who married a friend from District, said Mavridis, and drove up from North Carolina to attend the event. Harber says he looks forward to doing the same next year, in Ravine’s new social and corporate conference centre. (Photos by Penny Coles)
Sunshine cherry on top for St. Mark’s

Billy Swan and Eiveta Sobol colour some pictures at St. Mark’s Church. (Photos by Fred Mercnik)

Linda Brooks, one of the many volunteers at the St. Mark’s Cherry Festival Saturday, dishes up cherry pie.

Judy MacLachlan holds a plate of cherries, the last available for the day. She said the St. Mark’s Cherry Festival broke a record this year, selling out cherries and cherry pies in less than an hour.

Sue Baxter pours cherry juice with help from her granddaughter, Whitnie Baxter.

Congratulations Mike & Elle married July 11, 2019

Advertise in our LOCAL CELEBRATIONS
Contact: anna@notllocal.com
Pricing starts at $20. Deadline is Monday at 3 p.m.

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT

MARRIAGE

Billy Swan and Eiveta Sobol colour some pictures at St. Mark’s Church. (Photos by Fred Mercnik)
Joanna Paul of the Niagara College commercial bee-keeping program displays a busy bee hive during the Horticultural Society garden tour at NOTL Historical Society Museum Saturday. She will be holding classes for kids aged 10 to 14, to introduce youth to the role of bees and beekeepers. Call 905 736 2487 for more information. (Fred Mercnik)

Home-owner Trish Anthony shared her beautiful Andrew Logan House gardens on Ricardo Street with interested visitors Saturday during the annual NOTL Horticultural Society garden tour, which featured eight Old Town homes. This garden featured ponds, waterfalls and lots of colourful perennials. (Fred Mercnik)

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Exciting things happening at Fort George this summer!

July 13-14
The Battle of Fort George Re-enactment
Come see re-enactors dressed on Fort George to relive this historic battle with muskets, cannons, and music!

August 17-18
20th Annual Fife and Drum Muster and Soldiers’ Field Day
Enjoy a spectacular showcase of music and firepower demonstrations from the early 19th century!

August 24-25
Echoes of Niagara’s Past
Watch the fort come alive as interpreters, animators, and veterans deploy uniforms, weapons, and vehicles from the wars of our past.
25th anniversary to be celebrated at Rotary Rocks

Penny Coles
The Local

Rotary rocks. Those two words symbolize everything about the Rotary Club of Niagara-on-the-Lake as it celebrates its 25th anniversary.

Jolanta Kudlats, in charge of fundraising for the club and one of the organizers of Rotary Rocks, the main event recognizing the club’s milestone, says the name was chosen because it will take place at Queen’s Royal Park, the location of the club’s gift to the town also to acknowledge its anniversary. Working with the Town’s parks department and contributing not only funding but some labour as well, the club built a limestone seating area on the beach to give locals and visitors a place to enjoy a beautiful view and tranquility as they rest on the rocks, with the gazebo behind them and Fort Niagara across the mouth of the river.

“It’s one of the most significant and picturesque locations in NOTL,” says Jolanta. The name is also appropriate, she adds, because, “well, after all, Rotary rocks. That says a lot about the club.”

It rocks because of all the good it does every year, locally and internationally, with a list of causes it supports by the hard work done, and continues to do, by its members.

All the money raised — more than $100,000 last year — is given to various causes, she says.

Over the last 25 years, says Howard, the club has donated more than $750,000 locally, and probably $1 million internationally. Looking back over the years, they mention Hospice Niagara, to which Rotary has donated $150,000; Niagara Health, $100,000; RedRoof, $86,000; Community Care, $30,000; and Meals on Wheels, $280,000.

A project in Kenya to build water systems received $85,000, the Gift of Life program $50,000, Doctors without Borders, $15,000, and the Shelter Box program $50,000.

The club has also sponsored student exchange programs with clubs in other countries, fostering international understanding, and supports Rotary’s global program to eradicate polio.

In celebration of its 25th, this spring Rotary Paul Harris Awards were given in recognition of outstanding contribution to the community to three Rotarians and two community members, handed out at a gala black tie event at the Royal Cambridge Room.

But with limited seating, the club wanted to do something where they could include the public, so an outdoor picnic dinner will be held July 30 at the Queen’s Royal Park. Tables will be set up for guests to bring their own picnic dinner, live entertainment will be provided by local band By Design, Strewn wine will be available at $15 a bottle, and Big Head wine for $20, and Oast beer at $5 a glass — all alcohol to be ordered ahead of time, by July 23 — and Firemaster Productions will wrap up the evening with what is expected to be a spectacular fireworks display at dusk.

To be environmentally friendly, Rotary is asking for food to be in non-disposable containers. Battery-operated candles and tea lights “will look awesome on your table,” no real candles or lanterns allowed as per fire regulations, and no outdoor cooking.

“As always during an outdoor event, be prepared for Mother Nature’s surprises. Umbrellas, sunscreen and mosquito repellent may be needed,” the Rotary website advises.

Tickets, at $150 for a table of six, are available at 905-468-2297 or email hkudlats@gmail.com.

Pedalling for a good cause

Mario Sagarski (centre) of Pedal Pub Niagara presents a cheque for $2,000 to Shari Hartwick of KidSport Niagara and Steffanie Bjorgan of Red Roof Retreat. The money was raised through a Pedal Pub fundraiser that offered NOTL residents rides for $20, with all proceeds donated. Pedal Pub owner Tony Visca matched $1,000 raised so each organization received that amount. Hartwick and Bjorgan said they rode the Pedal Pub with some of their staff, and had a ton of fun, enjoying the music, and a stop at the Wednesday SupperMarket, which they requested. (Penny Coles)
Keke Boutique planning outdoor shop for summer

Submitted by
Keke Boutique

Keke Boutique is a women’s boutique located inside Penner Building Centre, in the loft area above the paint department.

This stylish boutique is a quaint shop with lots of selection and style. There are many brand names in store for all styles and price ranges, such as Dex, Gentle Fawn, Cost Me Bamboo, Smash & Tess, Priv, Piperwest, Quay and more. They have a great selection of jewelry, clothing, accessories, and giftware.

Owners Marcia Penner and Kelsey Penner-Overbeeke say opening a boutique has been something this mother-daughter duo have wanted to do for some time. Both have a strong passion for clothing and fashion, and are excited to share that with their customers. The boutique is named after Kelsey – Keke is a nickname given to her by her brother as a young child, when he was unable to say her full name. The nickname stuck, and she has been Keke ever since.

Keke Boutique strives to make their customers’ shopping experience nothing less than amazing, with one-on-one shopping, and lots of knowledge of materials and products. They promise to make sure you are getting exactly what you are looking for!

All new spring and summer fashions are making their way into the store. This year, the trends are bright yellow, mauve, and navy, as well as beautiful florals. We are so excited for this year’s fashions to arrive.

During the summer, Keke Boutique will be having an outdoor shop every Saturday (weather depending). Come stop by and shop your favorite styles on sale.

Marcia Penner and Kelsey Penner-Overbeeke

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Full range of treatments, safety and professionalism tops

Submitted by
In Touch Day Spa

The charming, historic town of Niagara on-the-Lake is home to In Touch Day Spa. Owned and operated by Niki Claus, a certified aesthetician and born professional, it offers a full range of treatments, from the newest advanced skin care treatments, hand and foot care, eyelash services, and botox and fillers.

Niki’s education through Sheridan College, combined with her 28 years of experience, has elevated her passion and dedication for the beauty industry, earning her the credibility and loyalty of her clients.

With a spotless, relaxing and calming studio, Niki insists on the highest standards of safety, professionalism and products. Her goal, with her team of professionals, is to continue to provide exceptional services for her clients and ensure their spa experience is as comfortable and enjoyable as possible.

Niki happily welcomes new clientele to experience her services, and you can find her spa and services, as well as promotions through social media, such as Facebook and Instagram.

Niki Claus
Chooi to play rare Stradivarius at Music Niagara

Nancy Smith
Special to The Local

Timothy Chooi, a 25-year-old violinist from Victoria, B.C., has just accomplished what no Canadian musician has done before him: he won second prize at the internationally prestigious Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels.

This is an extraordinary accomplishment, given the competition was founded in 1937 and is the oldest, most established and difficult competition in the world. Winning one of the top prizes is an extraordinary achievement for any violinist, anywhere.

Playing in front of the most discerning crowds and judges at the competition, Chooi delivered an impassioned and intimate performance that was described by the media as “breathtaking” with “completely deserved standing ovations.”

I was able to speak to Timothy soon after he returned from Brussels. He was excited about winning not only the Queen Elisabeth Award, but also the 2018 Joseph Joachim violin competition in Hanover, Germany. These are the two most prestigious competitions in the world, and he won both of them within one year.

I asked Timothy what it meant to him to win the awards.

“Audience reaction is important. It is different than sports, but you want to feel appreciated. You communicate, tell a story. It is rewarding to get an emotional response. The profile and respect lets me perform at the highest levels, with interesting conductors and orchestras. It opens opportunities in Europe, North America, even Asia, helping build my career.”

Do you feel a difference when you’re playing the rare 1717 Stradivarius loaned to you by the Canada Council Instrument Bank?

“It was the most life-changing moment for me as a violinist. To have it with me, along for the journey, has helped me be successful in the events. The violin and I have a similar approach for sound; there is a reciprocal reaction. I play the violin the way it wants to be played.”

What attracted you to the violin as a child?

“My brother is five years older and was already playing the violin and that’s why I started. I was not a prodigy growing up. So many people could play difficult pieces that I couldn’t handle. One thing that set me apart was that I never gave up, and with the help of my parents I gained consistency. Through slow but meaningful work I created a stronger base, didn’t take my talent for granted. My priority was work, I never gave up when it came to school life and violin. I’m still a slow learner.”

Tell me about the July 27 Music Niagara concert with you on violin and Benjamin Smith on piano.

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Tell me about the July 27 Music Niagara concert with you on violin and Benjamin Smith on piano.

“I’m focused on the audience experience and chose simple classic pieces. Keep it simple because for audiences, less is more. Winning the awards raises hype but I’m as prepared as I can be, as sincere as I can be.”

Timothy’s concert at St. Mark’s Church in Niagara-on-the-Lake is a great opportunity to hear an extraordinary talent play a rare and beautiful violin. He is already a YouTube sensation, attracting more than 500,000 views, and now you have a chance to see him in person.

Upcoming concerts you won’t want to miss include:

- Last Night of The Proms, the most famous annual concert of the year featuring classics and British patriotic pieces played by the Niagara Proms Orchestra.
- Elmer Iseler Singers, back by popular demand they’re set to shake the rafters at the Niagara Menno-nite Church through the power of twenty exquisite voices united in song.

For more information go to: musicniagara.org.

Irina Filippova-Williams will perform Vienna to Broadway, the July 15 Oast Cabaret concert. (Photo supplied)
Local group celebrates 50 years of camping

Randy Klaassen Special to The Local

A group of Niagara-on-the-Lake friends and family members with a shared history celebrated 50 years of camping together on the July long weekend.

During the 1960s there was a succession of family migrations of Mennonites from Uruguay to NOTL. These people had left Germany in the late 1940s, after the Second World War, seeking refuge from violence, and hoping for opportunities in education and meaningful employment. Many of these families joined Mennonites of other backgrounds at the Niagara United Mennonite Church (NUMC).

After immigrating to Niagara, Joachim Regier initiated a discussion with friends about the desire to have a getaway experience in the ‘flavour’ of the Uruguayan culture they had acquired. Gunnar Doerwald recently recalled that conversation of 50 years ago during the first ‘Uruguayan campout’ weekend at the Elora Gorge Park. In the early 1970s, the group’s annual campout moved to Pinehurst Lake, between Cambridge and Paris.

The first year the Pinehurst group camped in small trees and little shade, whereas currently the tree canopy is more than 20 metres high. The site serves as a shelter to fuel grills for the Uruguayan-style barbeque, known in Spanish as an ‘asadero’. While a core group of about 50 camp three nights, the highlight of the weekend is always the barbeque on Saturday evening, when the group size swells to about 100 adults, plus many children.

The event begins in the morning, with specially-cut beef ribs being set out on a table. The assigned grillers (asaderos), keep basting the ribs in a specially-made Uruguayan marinade (salmuera). Early afternoon the asaderos light the fire to prepare charcoal for grilling. By mid-afternoon the thick-cut ribs are laid out on a three-metre length grill, to begin their slow roasting. Leaning over the grill and using hands to check the temperature of the coals, the asaderos maintain a constant watch, and apply more hot coals from the fire. The ribs are given a constant baste of salmuera, and are occasionally turned to cook evenly.

When the ribs are nearing perfection, salads are prepared, along with vegetables and buns to complete the dinner menu. Before the meal is served, a brief business meeting is conducted to report the year’s attendance, and volunteers are requested to organize the following year’s event. This year, in addition to the business agenda, NUMC Pastor Renate Klaassen offered recognition of the 50th anniversary, and shared a memory of those from the group who have passed away, including Joachim Regier who first initiated the event. Participants were invited to take a yellow ribbon, upon which to write the name of a loved one who had died. The ribbons were then tied to a tree, symbolizing their memory.

After the rib feast, campers gather around a campfire in a large circle. In years past, Kurt Wiens and Siegfried Regier recently passed away) lead the group in singing German folk songs. The singing lasts long into the early morning hours.

Sunday morning the campers gather for their morning matey, before a church service is held. (Randy Klaassen)

Sunday morning the group gathers early again around the campfire, to drink the traditional Uruguayan tea, Yerba Mate (pronounced match). There is a brief break for breakfast, before gathering again for a worship service. This year Pastor Renate shared a message reflecting on the harrowing escape from what was then East Germany, to the West, from the perspective of children, who are now the grandparents at the campsite.

The message acknowledged God’s protection and provision. And while the group focuses on their Uruguayan experience, there is much discussion of thankfulness to the blessing of being Canadian.

Sunday, July 14

Art & Fashion Lecture Series at the Museum

July 18 @ 7:30 – 9:30 p.m.
Tickets are $10 for the general public or free for Niagara Historical Society Members. Please reserve at contact@nhsm.ca as seating is limited.
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**CROSSWORD PUZZLE**

Across:
1. Distant
2. Apex
3. Jobs
4. "ER" actress --- Tierney
5. "--- Believer", Monkees
6. Gene Pitney was only 28
7. Lightweight tropical hats
8. Lighter of matches
9. --- Todd, barber
10. --- want is a room somewhere...
11. Lightbulb in your closet
12.--- doble (dance)
13. Fair Lady"
14. Get on the horn!
15. --- Believer, Monkees
16. Natter
17. Front (part of a building)
18. --- local.com
19. Tenor --- Bocelli
20. Snow runner
21. --- Jong
22. Buoyant
23. Wyo. neighbor
24. Welcome
25. Room
26. Old Testament song
27. --- want is a room somewhere...
28. One of the Three Bears
29. --- local.com
30. --- want is a room somewhere...
31. --- doble (dance)
32. --- doble (dance)
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Down:
1. Pennsylvania Memories
2. Sri ---, formerly Ceylon
3. Ahead of the field
4. Mineral source
5. Litter of pigs
6. Bracket
7. Stimulus
8. Security detachment
9. Anna Paquin won an Oscar for this film, aged 11
10. Spanish winds
11. The pen
12. Recall
13. Remain
14. Rotating engine part
15. Welcome
16. Old Testament song
17. Silver
18. Hookman
19. Find
20. --- doble (dance)
21. One of the Three Bears
22. --- Amity", in which Morgan Freeman played God
23. Nicks's successor, Homily
24. Ghost
25. Pith...的政治家
26. Rev up
27. --- Todd, barber
28. Chest pain
29. --- Todd, barber
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**SUDOKU PUZZLE**

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**PUZZLE ANSWERS**

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Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

“It’s not yoga, Mike, it’s broga.” Those are the words of Keith Simmonds, host of weekly broga sessions above his garage in Queenston. Once a week, a rotating cast of about 15 men, mostly business leaders in the Niagara-on-the-Lake community, begin their day not with a power breakfast, but instead with an hour of stretches and flexibility exercises led by one of five certified instructors.

It’s a gathering that has taken place at least once a week for about three years, started by Simmonds and his wife, Toby, a certified yoga instructor herself.

According to the Collins English Dictionary, broga can be defined as “a marked exercise regime for men that combines fitness exercises with traditional yoga postures.” There are variations on the name — yoga and yoguy are a couple of them — but basically what it amounts to is yoga for guys. In St. Catharines, Yoga by Sarah runs an eight-week course, but the group in Queenston varies from the name — yoga and yoguy are a couple of them — but basically what it amounts to is yoga for guys. In St. Catharines, Yoga by Sarah runs an eight-week course, but the group in Queenston is a more informal affair.

If anything, yoga in its purest form is as much about the meditation as it is about the fitness. And with that in mind, the setting for this broga group is ideal. The room is large, 450 square feet with pitched ceilings on either side, and a sliding glass door that looks directly out onto the lake. And in terms of in-cense hangs below the peak, and it’s just hot and humid enough on this day to set the mood perfectly.

The eight in attendance (thankfully none clad in lycra) arrive just after 8 a.m., and get busy setting down their mats and doing some preliminary stretching. As you can imagine, in a group of eight men who all know each other fairly well, there is some friendly banter and gentle ribbing that takes place at this time.

Tobias Willis, director, Eastern Estates and Government Relations at Arterra Wines Canada, talks a bit about the Alan Doyle concert the previous night at Jackson Triggs, while humorous stories of mutual acquaintances and some absent members of the group are shared.

Then, today’s instructor, Maria Cerenzia, the lone female in the room, takes control. She quickly sets the tone with her calm, relaxed vocal delivery. She leads the men through some general light stretches, guiding their breathing in an effort to bring mind and body together for the session.

Sean Simpson, owner of Simpson’s Pharmacy, credits the meditation and mindfulness involved in these sessions to helping him with his state of mind. “It does translate to our interactions, whether it’s with the people I work with, or customers. There’s a sense of calm, and it clears our minds, and helps us to be better at whatever we are doing.”

Simmonds agrees with Simpson. “Feedback from the guys is, if we don’t do a class, I’m going to be hurting, and it’s first the meditation side of things. You clear your head, and you’re more relaxed. It definitely helps with any other sport you do.” The “other sport” for most of today’s participants is cycling. Cerenzia has clearly tailored today’s workout to the flexibility needed for spending hours on a bicycle. A certified yoga instructor for 12 years, she’s been working with this group for roughly 12 months. She says there’s not a huge difference between what she would do with a women’s or mixed class and this broga group.

“In general, most men aren’t as flexible as women, but I teach the same, because I feel the challenge is good, and with challenge you progress more quickly. They do just as much as the women do, maybe at different levels, but they are doing the same exercises.”

When it comes to flexibility, the different levels in this class are obvious. Steve Deboer, owner of Zoom Leisure and a long-time avid and competitive cyclist, is at the higher end of the flexibility spectrum. As Cerenzia leads the group through a series of hip-opening exercises, Deboer is able to twist his body into shapes more commonly seen in a bag of pretzels.

The names of those on the lower end of the flexibility spectrum will be left out of this article for their own protection. Suffice to say, there was a lot of groaning coming from certain individuals as the stretches became more complicated. And a few times, the silence was broken by some friendly “chirping” at those who may have been having some difficulty with the positions.

These are the moments, most likely, where broga differs from your common, everyday yoga class. Cerenzia says, “We get a lot more groaning and moaning in bro-yoga for sure. Men just seem like when they are in group together, they do get a little competitive, and I think that’s where it comes from.”

Despite the struggles for some, and the talks of a “fractured ego,” none of the participants shy away from at least attempting every move, even the most complicated ones.

Before the session comes to a close, Cerenzia walks through the room, stopping at each “bro” placing her hands on their foreheads and imparting positive energy to each participant to take with them for the rest of the day.

When the hour is up, it’s clear there is a general sense of well-being, and of accomplishment, from each of the participants. And there is certainly a sense of camaraderie at having completed this workout together.

A post-session gathering in the Simmonds kitchen is a chance for the guys to further bond and, today, to celebrate the birthday of one of their own, Gord Statham, who, Deboer tells me, is a “beast on a bike.”

After a quick espresso and some healthy muffins in celebration, they are all on their way to their daily jobs, relaxed yet energized, and ready to handle all that comes their way.