Shoreline protection works

Penny Coles
The Local

Although there are signs the lake level is decreasing, Dock Area residents are not complacent. It started dropping and then went back up last week, says retired mining engineer Ron Simkus, and has hardly returned to where it was prior to July 17, he says. There are constant fluctuations, and the fear of a strong wind still exists.

Terry Boulton's family has owned waterfront property since the 1880s. A retired high school English teacher, his interest in family history and of the waterfront that has led to about a decade of researching any printed material he could find, some of it going back as far as the 1790s. What he has learned is that although Lake Ontario reached its highest recorded level this summer, the first significant rise documented, at least that he could find, was in 1796, with an increase of five feet noted in Kingston.

"They say the water level is the highest it's ever been now, and I believe that. But it's been ferocious in the past. At least now something's being done about it."

He found documents from 1886 predicting four to 10 feet of land on the Niagara River would be washed away every year, and reporting the military reserve property owned by Parks Canada lost eight feet of waterfront in 1919.

Also in May 1919, the water was reported to be 15 feet

Continued on page 12

If Tim Bala (centre) had been teaching paddle boarding at Queen's Royal Park decades ago, there would have been a beach. It's too late for sand, but shoreline protection is at least saving the trees and the park. (Penny Coles)
Town moving quickly on replacing single-use plastics

Penny Coles
The Local

As a tenant of a municipal building, Erin Lockard knows her landlord would like her to look at alternatives to single-use plastics.

She's already at it. The owner of Sweets and Swirls Cafe at the community centre knows the Town is committed to reducing and eventually eliminating single-use plastics in municipal facilities, and that consultation with residents and businesses will follow.

As a business owner renting a municipal facility, she fits both categories and is more than willing to comply. She doesn't need to be pushed. “We had already been looking at ways to reduce our plastic footprint. It's the right thing to do,” she says. She uses wooden instead of plastic stir sticks. Her takeout coffee cups are paper, but sometimes the availability is an issue. She has found cutlery in a plant-based plastic. “It looks like plastic but it's compostable,” she says. Options have been put on the table, but she's come across some stumbling blocks, “sometimes because of the pricing, sometimes the availability.”

She uses wood rather than plastic stir sticks. Her takeout coffee cups are paper, but sometimes the availability is an issue. She has found cutlery in a plant-based plastic. “It looks like plastic but it’s compostable,” she says. Options have been put on the table, but she’s come across some stumbling blocks, “sometimes because of the pricing, sometimes the availability.”

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Erinn Lockard of Sweets and Swirls Cafe and her daughter Sophie Cadeau show the paper coffee cup, and its plastic lid they would like to eliminate. Better yet, they encourage customers to bring their reusable mugs. They are also replacing the plastic cups for cold beverages with paper. (Penny Coles)

Arsenault has talked to a few local business owners, including Phil Leboudec at Valu-mart. He learned by charging just five cents for plastic grocery bags, “he went from using 20,000 to 3,500, a reduction of 82 per cent almost overnight. That's how powerful such a small thing can be. I'd like to encourage other businesses to do the same — not just the grocery stores, but clothing stores, anybody who uses plastic bags. It's so easy to do. There are alternatives, such as reusable bags, which can change the usage of plastic drastically.”

The provincial and federal governments are looking at legislation to eliminate single-use plastics, and will likely come up with something more comprehensive, says Arsenault, “but we’re making a start. We’re already thinking of alternatives, and making things happen. People are becoming really involved in the movement, and it’s good to see them talking and changing their behaviour. It’s a positive step. Nothing happens overnight, but a lot has happened in a very short time.”

The Grove opened on Niagara Stone Road, with a steady stream of customers looking for fresh cherries and baked goods. It’s owned by Charlie and Steve Wharton, who have Charlie’s sister Samantha Clowes (left) helping, and her father Phil Clowes baking up a storm in the kitchen. His specialty is sticky toffee pudding. As for butter tarts — drop by and let the Whartons tell you their story. They know the previous owners, the Pohorly family, have left big shoes for them to fill, but they say they are committed to the community and excited to be part of it. (Penny Coles)
Andrea Bartal was introduced to Special Olympics as a teenager and more than 25 years later, the organization is still an important part of her life. At the time, she was just getting used to life in a high school student, having left behind some difficult years in elementary school where she remembers being teased and feeling like an outcast.

“Public school was not a good experience,” she says. “I had suffered health problems since birth, both physical and developmental, and was diagnosed at a young age with neurofibromatosis, which caused hearing impair- ment, and another rare syndrome that resulted in weak- ness on her right side and poor balance. She was a sickly child, says her mother, Helen Mc- Callum, and had several sur- geries to improve her hearing. But through determination and hard work, she says her story of success in life. And she has experienced with Special Olympics from the age of 14 — she has worked hard to overcome her difficulties.

She says she was fortune- able to have teachers in high school who were accustomed to working with children with disabilities. “They could see what I could do, and I started making more friends. I heard about Special Olympics from a friend in a high school, and joined in Durham, where we lived.”

When she was young- er, Andrea was interested in baseball and cross-country skiing, but she came to love and excel in bowling, both five and 10-pin. She began to both play and compete in those sports. Special Olympics, a grass-roots organization that is now in- ternational in its support for children and adults with in- tellectual disabilities through year-round opportunities and accessibility to sports. It encourages participants by giving them a level playing field regardless of their skill, that allows them to gain self-con- fidence and self-esteem, as Bartal says it has done for her. The organization works on a provincial, national and in- ternational level, but it begins with community chapters created to help local people with intellectual disabilities.

Nancy Bailey, a real es- tate broker, is working to establish a chapter in Niagara-on-the-Lake. She has recently set up a Mary Street office as a bro- ker and advisor with Engel & Volkers, an international company which has been supporting Special Olympics as it’s cause since 2015. She said she decided as soon as she got her office up and running, she wanted to introduce Special Olympics to NOTL, which is in the South Central district of the Ontario chapter.

She learned there is a role for the organization to help local, and hopes to move forward, probably picking one sport initially and then hopefully to grow. She has discovered the St. Catharines chapter has a waiting list for those who want to play baseball, and with good facilities here in town, that may be a start.

It could also mean en- suing local athletes have the equipment and uniforms they need, the training to help them progress in their sport, and the funds to travel to competi- tions, she says, while develop- ing coaches and volunteers to support the athletes.

Andrea Bartal says she would be committed to involve, to help others find the support and encouragement they found through Special Olympics.”

“I’ve stuck with it for 26 years,” says Bartal. “I’ve had a lot of opportunities, compet- ing at different levels. I’ve been chosen to bowl with master bowlers. I’ve been to nationals to compete, and won a silver medal.”

She had hoped that would take her to the international level of competition, but she had won at five-pin bowling, and only 10-pin was included that year.

Her participation in sports, she says, has allowed her a “more well-rounded life.” It has given her a pur- pose. It still drives her to work hard and improve — she plays twice a week — and has given her a social environment in which to thrive.

For some participants, says McCallum, “it’s the only thing that gets them out into the world, especially if they don’t have family around to support them.”

Bartal says she would like to volunteer to help others, and McCallum is open to talking to parents about the organi- zation and the help it can pro- vide. Some parents may not be comfortable talking about their children’s disabilities, and benefit from meeting others in similar situations.

“I’ve always been open and upfront about Andrea,” she says. “She has some learning disabilities, and we’ve never tried to hide that. Andrea nev- er had a reason to feel badly about herself, and Special Olympics gave her many rea- sons to feel good about herself. I’m open to talking to parents about how it can help them.”

She recalls how much it meant to her to meet parents who were experiencing similar issues, and says she would encourage Special Olympics for the benefits to parents and their children. She suggests going online to find what sports are available in Niagara through the organization, and getting involved. “It’s inclusive of everyone, with a level playing field.”

Andrea Bartal has medals and trophies from her involve- ment with Special Olympics, an organization that has sup- ported her in her love of sports. (Penny Coles)

Penny Coles
The Local

Maria Mavridis believes strongly in the power of Special Olympics and those associated with it. “That sport will open hearts and minds towards people with intellectual disabilities, and create inclusive commu- nities all across Ontario.”

That vision is now being extended to the community of NOTL, thanks to the ef- forts of a local real estate agent and her connections in the community, she says. Nancy Bailey, of Engel & Volkers, is a proud champion of Special Olympics. In early April, Bailey met with the South Central district developer of Special Olympics Ontario, Primitive Bailey, and realized there is a need for expansion into the NOTL community, as it has been largely un- touched.

Special Olympics has existing communities in Welland, St. Catharines, Port Colborne and Niagara Falls. "Special Olympics gives those with intellectual and physical disabilities an op- portunity to enrich their lives through sport. Through bowling, ball hockey, track and field, basketball and golf, athletes are encouraged to be brave in their attempt," Mavridis said.

“Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt” is the official Special Olympics oath. Tim Bala, of Paddle Niagara, is excited at the opportunity to create a NOTL chapter, that has taught stand-up paddle boarding to a few students in Florida with dis- abilities, and would love the chance to do it in his home town, he said.

Through Mavridis, An- chor Niagara, to organize fundraisers, and is teaming with Slaney Mulholland on an event at the Jackson-Triggs amphitheatre. Club 27: A Rock Concert Experience, will feature singers and musicians cele- brating the works of legends Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison and Kurt Cobain, all who passed away at age 27. Doors open at 6 p.m., with food and drink as well as a pop-up-shop, under the Jackson-Triggs hospitality tent. The concert starts at 7 p.m., with 100 per cent of all proceeds raised to benefit Special Olympics, Niagara.

Tickets include a glass of Jackson-Triggs wine. For tickets visit: www.RazoWine.com

To volunteer and get in- volved in the Special Olym- pics NOTL email candise.walker@evrealestate.com or maria@anchorniagara.com.

Club 27 fundraiser to support local Special Olympics branch

Penny Coles
The Local

Maria Mavridis of Corks Winebar and Eatery has her own compa- ny, Anchor Niagara, to organize fundraisers, and is teaming with Stacey Mulholland on an event at the Jackson-Triggs amphitheatre for Special Olympics. (Photo supplied)
Lord Mayor Betty Disero does not endorse a report supporting the elimination of regional government and the creation of a four-tier model for Niagara.

The document, by a group called Four Cities Niagara, suggests Niagara Falls, Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake become one city — it would be the largest of four and is being backed by Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati. The other three would be St. Catharines, Welland, which would include Port Colborne and Thorold, and West Niagara, made up of Wainfleet, Pelham, Lincoln, West Lincoln and Grimsby.

The report says NOTL and Fort Erie should be amalgamated with Niagara Falls because of their shared location along the “river corridor,” their connectivity to the U.S., their common economic development focused on tourism, and a “rich, shared history.”

St. Catharines is not on-board with the plan either, with Disero saying she expects Mayor Walter Sendzik could possibly — and she stresses possibly — support one large city as a way to take control of land with growth potential and eliminate its debt.

NOTL doesn’t need that kind of help, she says. “We’re doing okay. We have room for growth, and we don’t have a lot of debt.”

Large urban centres have more services to provide than smaller municipalities, she says, and that means greater debt.

The Region helps with those costs through the collection of taxes from all municipalities, “but I don’t know that I want to be amalgamated, and to become responsible for more of that debt.”

Disero says she is asked often what she thinks about amalgamation, and she has the same message for each time — the same one she gave two consultants working on amalgamation for the Province.

“NOTL is so unique in terms of historical significance to the development of the country, we would prefer to look at keeping the lower tier as is,” she says.

She suggested there could be a reduction in the number of councillors across the 12 municipalities, with “a modified second-tier.”

She is a strong supporter of “a disentanglement exercise” to look for efficiencies, to deliver services better and more economically, such as with a sewer and water board, but to keep planning at a local level.

It’s important for NOTL to have more planning controls in place now,” Disero says. She’s made that obvious during council meetings, with discussions about the urgency of having the new draft Official Plan completed. She also wants local planning issues now being reviewed to be completed and bylaws in place so that interim control bylaws can be lifted. One of her greatest fears is having amalgamation forced on the municipality before the OP is approved and reviewed completely, and losing control of planning policies.

“They don’t have to be perfect, but they have to be done, to have controls in place no matter what happens with amalgamation.”

She expects one more meeting of mayors to discuss amalgamation, and regional councillors also want to meet to see “where everyone is headed.” But it is such a large region, with 12 distinct municipalities all having their own agenda, it’s “difficult to reach a meeting of minds.”

She has spoken to Diodati about his four-city model and how it could work for NOTL, not because it’s a choice she endorses but because if there is amalgamation, “we might not have a choice, and I want to be prepared.”

Disero says Mayor Wayne Redelke of Fort Erie has asked the Province for his town to have a special designation, with its own legislation that recognizes its significant heritage, and that could be the solution for NOTL as well.

The Province appointed former deputy minister Michael Fenn and former Waterloo Region chair Ken Seiling to investigate amalgamation, and originally a July report was expected. Residents had until May to provide comments.

Disero says the timeline now for a decision is expected to be after the October federal election.

The single-tier, four-city document, which has been sent to the Province, gives no background information about who is behind it.

Volunteers needed for Snowbird event

The Snowbirds are coming to Niagara-on-the-Lake, and event organizers are looking for volunteers to help out.

The Niagara Historical Society and Museum is bringing the group to town on Sept. 11, as a fundraiser, with a goal of raising $20,000 for renovations and expansion.

Tickets can be purchased online for VLP section or for general admission, but there is a third alternative, says Cheryl Morris, who has volunteered to do the marketing and communications for the event.

You can join the team of volunteers putting on the much-awaited Canadian Forces Snowbirds Aerobatics show and help organizers with the important work of putting on a great event that will draw 3,000 people, and have a close-up view of the performance.

But organizers are also looking for help Sept. 9, 10 and 11.

On Sept. 9, about 40 volunteers are needed to work various shifts, depending on their assignment, to help with parking, selling souvenirs and general duties associated with hosting an event that draws a crowd of that size, says Morris.

To volunteer, you should be able to stand outdoors for a few hours, and be patient and helpful with visitors, she says.

They are also looking for four volunteers to help set up parking Sept. 9 and 10, and another four people Sept. 12 to get the airport back to normal.

For those planning to buy tickets, they can be purchased through the event’s website, at notlsnowbirds.ca.

VLP tickets are $90 ($35 for guests aged 2 to 18). VLP access will include food stations from Niagara Catering/Pig Out; two free drinks supplied by either Konradwinn Estate Winery or The Exchange Brewery; cash bar for further drinks; a chance to meet the Snowbirds, talk with them and get photos; and an optimum viewing site.

“It’s a great place to see the show, from inside the hangar,” says Morris. There are 400 tickets available for this option.

General access tickets are $10 per person. Entry is free for those 12 and under. This area will feature food trucks from PigOut, John- nych Roccot’s, Hometown Ice Cream and Train Coffee.

The Niagara Region Water Wagon will be there too, so bring your own reusable water bottles.

Morris suggests people bring their own chair or blan- ket for seating. It’s an optimal viewing point, and there is also an opportunity to meet the Snowbird pilots through the security fence, she says.

Parking is free for all guests.

Gates open at 2 p.m., prov- iding access to an aircraft display with military and vintage planes and to food stalls. The Geronimo skydiving team will begin performing at 3 p.m.

If you’re interested in volunteering, please contact notlsnowbirds@gmail.com.

For more information about the show visit notlsnowbirds.ca.

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The Snowbirds are coming to NOTL Sept. 11. Organizers of the event are looking for volunteers. (Photo supplied)

Lord Mayor Betty Disero (Penny Coles)
Joe Pillitteri, a faithful fundraiser for the Terry Fox Foundation, and Joan King, organizer of the annual run, are hoping for another successful event Sept. 15. The event, which was first held in Simcoe Park in 1980, will this year commemorate the 35th anniversary of the run. Next year, 2020, will be the 40th anniversary of the Marathon of Hope. (Penny Coles)

Team Pillsy ups its goal for Terry Fox Run

Penny Coles
The Local

Joe Pillitteri is best-known for his one-liners and for his ability to make things as funny as he can be, even when asking for money, he’s all business when it comes to the Terry Fox Foundation.

He and Joan King, organizer of the local Terry Fox Run, typically use this time of year to discuss their plans for the upcoming fundraising event.

King, took on that role more than a decade ago, and has built up a number of activities to add to a successful run total from a relatively small community. Pillitteri, with a huge heart and a passion for the cause, is considered part of that.

As an added bonus, says King, she looks forward to working with him as Team Pillsy puts the fun in fundraising, she says.

He uses his skills as a stand-up comic to benefit the community in many ways, but his devotion to the Terry Fox Foundation tops his list.

On a day last week on Queen Street, where he and King met to discuss this year’s run, he stopped visitors to town to explain the importance of Canada’s national hero, telling them about the Marathon of Hope.

He becomes emotional when he says Fox ran 3,339 miles on one leg, a marathon a day, from St. John’s, N.L., but had to stop in Thunder Bay. He had discovered his cancer had returned and died a short time later. It’s a story everyone should know, Canadian or not, he says.

“...team Pillsy did last year, there will be the second annual car wash, bake sale and touch-a-truck event at the Cornerstone Church building on Niagara Stone Road Aug 17. The women of the congregation are planning to make about 250 peach pies to support the fundraiser.

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It’s time to change our habits

Baby steps, but in the right direction. Municipal councils can’t save the world, but they can do a lot for their own small corner of this universe. And the universe needs all the help it can get. It needs a huge reversal of our habits, and an overhaul of the accept-ance that the convenience of a throw-away society is more important than the planet.

Last May Coun. Norm Arsenault provided some statis-tics of the harm caused by sin-gle-use plastics, not just locally, but around the world. The numbers were shock-ing, but shouldn’t have been surprising given our society’s dependence on items such as plastic water bottles, a relatively new and hopefully short-lived invention, and the myriad oth-er things we think we need to make our lives easier, when we absolutely don’t. He convinced council to embark on a plan to change our habits and our at-titudes. Town staff are making changes, and we will feel the trickle-down effect.

Other municipalities are dealing with similar bans — eliminating single-use plastics, straws, garbage bags and other items, choosing compostable, recyclable and reusable instead.

The provincial and federal governments are considering legislation to speed the prog-ress. It’s likely to be a similar roll-out to banning smoking in public places, with govern-ments layering their legislation at different levels. Some of that should be directed at manufac-turers and packagers, but we all need to be persuaded to accept the responsibility of being part of the many solutions to a wide range of problems.

Plastics are cheap and easy to use. We have relied on them for decades. But past genera-tions survived without them, as well. They are a scourge on the planet. And alternatives will, with time, become just as affordable and convenient.

Governments will legislate. Businesses will be forced to co-operate. And we will all learn to do our part.

Beginning right here and now, in our own little amazing corner of the universe. Our time has come.

Karen Skeoch

Garden of the week

This week’s Garden of the Week winner is 298 Four Mile Creek Road, St. Davids, owned by Karen Felesko, an artist and metal sculptor. Her pieces can be seen in publi-c spaces around Niagara. Felesko’s garden “reflects her passion and her control of materials by deploying a monochromatic scheme complimenting her work along with a beautiful use of hardscape,” say the judges. 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 phenome-nal front gardens and winners will receive a lawn sign rec-ognizing the home owners. Nomination forms are available on Join the Conversation.

The NotlLocal 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.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Local

The trusted voice of our community

P.O. Box 430, 1596 Four Mile Creek Road, Virgil, L0S 1T0

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Local finds

History of an estate

Donald Combe Special to The Local


After the failure of a family business, Dickson left Scotland in 1784 to join his cousin Robert Hamilton hoping for success in Canada. He sold merchandise to the military and traded with the settlers. His enterprises became sufficiently prosperous that in 1790, the 21-year-old Dickson built the first brick house in the peninsula. He became an attorney and magistrate and member of the Pro-vincial Legislature. He lost a considerable amount in the destruction of the town in 1813; however, Dickson’s new house, Woodlawn, remains on John Street, though known as Randwood. Dickson spent years developing his lands in Dum-fries Township and did not return to Niagara till 1836. St. Mark’s has many me-morials to Dickson’s generosity, chiefly the magnificent window above the altar.

*The inscription runs around the edge of the memorial stone and is almost impossible to decipher.

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Pairing nature, music intensifies outdoor experience

Owen Bjorgan
Special to The Local

We can acknowledge that food and wine are a textbook pairing, the features of each enhancing the the other. Sounds like a healthy relationship to me.

Recently I tapped into the pairing of nature and wine while hiking, helping people see the connection between the Niagara Escarpment and the wine that they are tasting from that area. Another match made in heaven. I also encourage you to think about a different type of pairing — the relationship between nature and music.

Being outdoors stimulates our senses. When we suddenly step out of our daily routine and into a natural setting, the floodgates open for new thoughts and sensations to come our way. That’s because our eyes and ears are re-calibrating, telling the brain to chill out and focus on what’s in front of us.

I feel this is where a lot of my own musical ideas stem from, so perhaps it’s not a coincidence that lots of music pairs really well with the outdoors. I remember the year of my life I will always refer to as “Radiohead and Rainforest,” where I discovered both at the same time — my favourite band and my favourite ecosystem.

What that band and the rainforest taught me was the undeniable bond between nature and music. Until then I didn’t know a band could sound so darn good. I also never experienced an environment that could be so beautifully complex. The vibes and powerful originality of Radiohead’s music was about to drill into my brain at the same time I was visiting a tropical rainforest.

A tropical rainforest, the most species-rich type of environment on land, is a playground for exploring. When I first visited the Amazon in Ecuador, the music and ecological madness hit with a one-two punch that forever changed me. If music and nature were nutritious, I had the healthiest meal I’ve ever had on that trip to Ecuador. On a rattling bus full of Canadian students, we were driving from Quito down deeper into the Amazon. As we descended lower from the mountain highlands, the rainforest started to present itself around every corner in dramatic ways. Waterfalls cascading over the roads, jungle clinging to the cliff faces, and land slides everywhere. With my headphones on, Radiohead was pouring their calculated and potent musical feelings into my ears. My jaw was simultaneously dropping at the preciousness outside the bus window — the overbearing feeling of this crazy deep rainforest.

That trip opened my mind to the fact that there are certain types of music that can enhance our time in nature, and vice versa. I enjoy hiking with headphones nearly as much as I do without them. I just can’t get enough of that pairing.

The music I create for my Hidden Corners nature documentaries seems to be a reflection of that time and place when the film was created. The type of environment I spend days and nights filming sets the mood for the film, as well as the mood within me I try to convey.

We all know a certain song or album that instantly reminds us of someone. The song or album that instantly sets the mood for the film, as well as the mood within me I try to convey.

When the protests first showed up, I watched from a distance with bemusement. “Are you kidding me?” was the thought that rang inside my head.

What has happened to our society when any cockamamie notion can be classified as “freedom of speech”? As a strong supporter of the concept of freedom of speech, it raises the ire when it is used in vile ways. One need only to reference the hate mongers who deny horrific historical events such as the Holocaust having taken place, while hiding behind the veil of “freedom of speech” — to understand how, when misappropriated, the defence of “freedom of speech” is a convenient weapon of small minority groups to continue their destructive propaganda.

What is happening in NOTL with the horse and carriage issue is not “freedom of speech.” These protesters have singled out a specific business in town and continue to disrupt that operation with absolutely no concern for consequence. And what happens to them? Are they charged with trespassing or mischief for laying an inappropriate wreath on our cenotaph? Or accosting visitors on our streets? Disrupting traffic which also impacts other businesses? And what happened to the businesses’ right to operate? I am sure this is particularly annoying to the business.

No, none of that happens. We become a majority held hostage by a minority. Kind of the tail wagging the dog — or am I now wondering into speciesism with the tail abusing the dog?

I think it is time the protesters are held accountable for their actions. I cannot imagine there is not some thing the town can do to rid our streets of this nonsense. Are restaurants that serve meat next on the list of protests? What about the living vines that produce our wine? Or, the current “beyond meat” fall? Do we now need to ask the plants for permission to harvest? I am sure they did not agree to be clipped and pruned, while tied to metal strands, not allowed to grow free.

And what of the pet stores? The dairy farmers? The poultry farmers? Or, for that matter any kind of farming operation on which we depend for sustenance. My head throbs thinking about the endless list on this slippery slope.

Protesting is not a right — it is a privilege and as such, it has rules and consequences. I believe it is time to see some of the latter. It is time to take back our town and return to sanity.

R. Jorgensen
NOTL

Editor’s note: For more information about the protest and to see a video documenting the protest, please visit https://notllocal.com/2019/07/11/protesters-lay-wreath-at-cenotaph-sunday-then-take-day-off-from-protesting/

Adam Stirr, leader of the protesters, says his group maintains the police protocol and does not disrupt the horse and carriage business.
O’Connor finds Green Party a perfect fit

For more than a decade, Sandra O’Connor has been an advocate for Niagara-on-the-Lake on environmental issues, and has now set her sights on the upcoming federal election, representing the Green Party.

The vision and platform of the party inspire her, not just on environmental issues, but because the party goals will also strengthen the economy, she says.

When she began researching the party platform, she says she was surprised to learn how well its principles align with her values. She was impressed by its platform on economic issues as well as environmental policies, and believes they work well together if approached correctly.

“In addition to the environment and the economy, the party looks at social issues, democracy and governing issues. They have positions on all major issues.” She has researched the party thoroughly, and was amazed and impressed by what she discovered.

“I think they have the most common-sense approach to address growing our economy, while turning it into a green economy.”

The Green Party would stop subsidies of big corporations, and use the money to improve the economy for everyone, she says. She thinks the time is right for the Green Party. “If we don’t do something serious about climate change, it will be too late. For the sake of our children, we have to do something now.”

The Green Party is growing on the provincial and federal level, and in Europe, she says.

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O’Connor says her strong environmental and scientific background make her well-suited to be a Green Party candidate. After growing up in Niagara, with grandparents who were local farmers, she graduated from Brock University, where she specialized in geography and urban planning.

She has worked for conservation authorities, the Natural Resources Canada, University of Victoria, the Canadian Institute of Geomatics and had her own consulting company, retiring from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council before moving back to Niagara.

For more than a decade, she has advocated for protection of agricultural lands and the Greenbelt, and volunteered with the Preservation of Agricultural Lands Society, the Smarter Niagara Steering Committee and its Affordable Housing Sub-committee, and for the NOTL Conservancy, promoting the urban tree bylaw.

O’Connor has a daughter and son-in-law who live in Montreal.

Support horse-drawn carriages Saturday

Anyone who would like to show their support can contact her to arrange a free carriage ride Saturday, July 27, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

There are three time blocks — 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., 12 to 2 p.m., and 2 to 5 p.m.

Text 905-468-8379 or email office@sentinealcarriages.ca, and you will be contacted with a tour time and a link to more information.
Jazz Festival in NOTL this weekend

Local Staff

The 6th annual TD Niagara Jazz Festival comes to Niagara-on-the-Lake this weekend, with its annual Jazz in the Park and other events in town.

The jazz begins Friday night, July 26, with a co-production of Music Niagara and the festival. Jazz in the Vineyard will be held at Pondview Estates Winery, featuring the Joe Trio, beginning at 7 p.m.

Saturday, Jazz in the Park features musical artists in Simcoe Park. The free event runs from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

“We are fortunate to be able to bring Jazz in the Park once again to the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake,” says festival executive director Juliet Dunn. “This is definitely a festival highlight for us, and being able to offer free events in the community is part of our mandate. Not everyone would have the opportunity to hear world-class pianists play on world-class pianos such as the Steinway grand pianos we bring in for the event. It is a treat to share this musical talent with the community.”

Saturday evening wraps up with the popular Soul Jazz in the Vineyard, with Cinnamon Jones and friends, beginning at 8 p.m. at the Hare Wine Co. on Niagara Stone Road.

On Sunday, at 11:30 a.m., a Dixieland Jazz Lunch in the Vines offers an elegant meal at Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery, featuring the Hamilton Dixieland All-Stars. The weekend “winds up in a big way,” says Dunn, with Sunset Dinner Jazz at Ravine, presenting Talent and Soul, 100 Years of Nat King Cole. The event, which begins at 5 p.m., features award-winning jazz vocalist Ori Dagan with his tribute to the iconic American jazz pianist and vocalist.

This season’s Jazz Festival opened last weekend with the Niagara’s Summer Mardi Gras at the Henley Grandstand, and was a huge hit, says Dunn.

“The weather was so hot and muggy that it actually felt like New Orleans. People really got into the spirit of it all and masks, beads and feathers were flying. It was a magical event and we hope to keep it going for many years to come.”

The TD Niagara Jazz Festival is made possible in part by the TD Bank Group, the Province, the Government of Canada, the Niagara Region, the City of St. Catharines, and the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, says Dunn.

For more information or tickets visit niagarajazzfestival.com.

Last weekend’s Mardi Gras, the opening event of The Niagara Jazz Festival, began with a parade. (Mark Zelinski)
Claudia Gadinger and Ben Janzen, 18, have in common. Another is that both are running their own businesses this summer, with the support of the Government of Ontario Summer Company Program. Through this program, successful student applicants are presented with $1,500 at the start of the season to get their businesses off the ground. During the summer, they have to meet certain checkpoints, and attend sessions with local mentors from the business community. If all goes as planned, each student is awarded another $1,500 at the end of the summer.

Janzen and Gadinger both rave about the value of those mentorship sessions. Gadinger says the mentors are amazing. “They are giving me lots of leads, and they gave me the idea to run a special, which has really taken off. They are such a huge support system.” Gadinger, a Ridley College grad, is doing her part to eradicate the use of plastic bags at the Niagara-on-the-Lake and Niagara Falls Farmers’ markets this summer. She says she “always wondered why we keep putting our fruits and vegetables in plastic bags, because the plastic touches our fruit, and then we eat it.” Inspired by a recent trip to Germany, where shoppers were using smaller reusable bags for their produce, she decided to bring the idea to Niagara. She used the original $1,500 from the program mostly on her inventory of cotton draw-string bags, which she purchases from a supplier out of London, Ont. She also purchased some personalized stamps and ink, to mark each bag with her business name, Viridi. It means “green” in Latin.

At first, she was hoping to sell her bags at grocery stores. However, a conversation with Adriann Knight, a business information officer with the St. Catharines Enterprise Centre, who administers the program, gave her the idea to approach the two markets. She alternates her Saturdays between the two. In Niagara-on-the-Lake, her booth costs her about $25 per visit, while the fee in Niagara Falls has been waived this summer by funding from the city’s Green Initiative, into which her business idea perfectly fits.

Meeting her at the market, it’s hard not to be drawn in by her youthful enthusiasm. While making a sale to a couple, who purchased the special (four bags for $15), she happily offers cleaning advice and converses with them about the benefits of her product to the environment. Janzen is also enthusiastic and passionate about his business, Bright Idea Films. The 15-year-old St. David’s Public School grad had worked on a couple of films with his Eden High classmate, Sara Simionescu, also of Niagara-on-the-Lake. One of their films, on the topic of domestic violence, won top prize in the Niagara Regional Police Film Festival last year.

Janzen says he has been making videos since he was about 10 years old. A visit by Adriann Knight to his Grade 10 Introduction to Business class at Eden inspired him to apply for the program this summer. Upon receiving the start-up funds, he quickly invested most of the cash into new audio equipment, having realized that his current set-up left room for improvement on that aspect of his production. He also spent some of the money on creating a new website and for social media ads. Going into the program, he had no idea how to price his services. He says the mentors with whom he has worked were valuable in providing direction on this matter. “They gave me confidence in our pricing and exactly what the prices should be,” says Janzen. “Every step of the way, the mentors have been there to help us all succeed. Without them, I wouldn’t know how to do this.”

Janzen’s goal this summer is to have eight to 10 contracts for video productions, amounting to about $1,600 in sales. He and Simionescu are currently working on three productions. One is for Mag-gie’s Pet Boutique in Beamsville. He also has a contract to shoot video at a retirement party, and to edit together footage from another client’s collection of home videos.

His daily routine involves posting on social media, following up with current and potential clients, and improving the Bright Idea Films website. As the projects come in, more of his time will be spent shooting and editing videos.

Previously, Janzen had a part time job at Avondale Dairy Bar. Today, he says “working for myself, and being able to do something I love doing, and something I am passionate about, has been the most rewarding thing.” And even on a hot, humid summer day, it beats scooping ice cream.

Though he is only entering Grade 11, Janzen knows he is interested in studying business in the future, and would like to continue expanding his company through bigger contracts and better equipment.

He will be taking two more business classes in Grade 11 at Eden this year: accounting and entrepreneurship. And Gadinger will be attending university in Ottawa, majoring in business. Applications for the 2020 Summer Company Program will open in January, and close in May. For more information, visit ontario.ca/summercompany.
Art at the Pumphouse long weekend

Mike Balsom  
Special to The Local

The Niagara Pumphouse Art Centre is gearing up for their 14th Annual Art at the Pumphouse Show and Sale, scheduled for the August long weekend.

Event coordinator Sandra Stokes says this year’s event promises to be bigger and better than ever, with 63 professional artists showing and selling paintings, photographs, sculptures, jewelry, pottery and more, Aug. 3 and 4.

In conjunction with the show, which takes place on the Ricardo Street grounds of the Pumphouse, there will be a celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Pumphouse Gallery, featuring the Walker Industries Art Competition Awards Ceremony.

In June, jurors chose the top two finalists out of the 25 entries to the competition. At the awards ceremony, to be held Sunday, Aug. 3 at 3 p.m., the first and second winners will be announced, as well as the People’s Choice Award winner, for which visitors to the event can vote.

The Local met up with two artists who are returning to the event this year, both showing and selling their creations.

Julia Kane works out of her studio in St. Davids, primarily in acrylics, watercolours, and fused glass. She moved there from Thorhill three years ago, and says the Pumphouse was one of the main reasons she decided that it would be “okay to move to the Niagara area.” The classes, workshops and camaraderie she found at the facility have been a big boost to this lifelong creative artist.

This will be her third year at Art at the Pumphouse.

Kane will have about 20 pieces at the show. “The Meeting Place” is a striking 6-foot-long painting of a gathering of seagulls. She points out its dimensions make it perfect for hanging behind a queen size bed.

She also will be showing “View From the Vineyard,” which uses the viewing station at Konzelmann Vineyards as her vantage point. She says both this and “The Meeting Place” are works that have definitely been influenced by her move to Niagara.

More indicative of her work prior to her move here, “The Energy of Joy” is a bit more abstract. She says this one is from her heart. No brushes were used in creating this painting. It was completed using rollers, and done “with emotion more than anything, and I love the way it turned out. It really speaks to me.”

Returning for the second year is Cathy Peters, an artist based in Port Colborne. She enjoys the show as a chance to meet other artists, whom she finds to be knowledgeable and approachable.

She says her work, much of it in mixed media and collage, “is very intuitive, very soul-to-hand.” Her process usually begins with something like Japanese rice paper. She then adds some photos, and some paint, and shall see where it goes from there. Two pieces for the show seem to be done this way. “They’re Playing Our Song” superimposes an image of a couple ballroom dancing, with the music notes from an unidentified song weaving through the scene, all tied together with a textured choice of colours that sets the mood of the piece.

When asked what tune the notes represent, Peters says, “I can’t tell you that. It might influence how you feel about the painting. Perhaps someone who purchases the item at the show will sit down and plunk it out on the piano.

Appropriate for the show, “Old Town Icons” uses a similar effect of paint mixed with images of the Conestoga, the Queen’s Royal Park gazebo, the front door to the Pumphouse, and other recognizable Niagara-on-the-Lake landmarks. Peters says this one was created with the upcoming weekend in mind. A third piece on display is called “Dramatic Seas.” It’s an acrylic painting, depicting a sailboat taking on some challenging conditions. Peters suggests her location in Port Colborne, near the shores of Lake Erie, was what inspired this work.

Peters promises to have these three and about 20 more on display at the show.

Stokes says in addition to the art, the Waterfront Bistro and Bar will be back for the weekend, as well as a barbeque, while musical entertainment, as always, will be part of the package. Admission to the event is free.

The Art at the Pumphouse Show and Sale runs Aug. 3 and 4, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. both days.

Julia Kane works primarily in acrylics, watercolours, and fused glass, and will have 20 pieces exhibited at the Pumphouse art show. (Mike Balsom)

Kinsmen clean up

NOTL Kinsmen were out early Saturday morning picking up garbage along both sides of Niagara Stone Road, from Anderson Lane to the Virgil Business Park. The volunteers, who have adopted that stretch of road for cleaning, go out three times a year and typically pick up 20 to 30 bags of garbage on what is likely the busiest stretch of road in NOTL. Kinsmen Ed Marcynuk, Rod Konik, Bob Forbes, Burt Ward and Walde Heydar were across from the farmers’ market doing their part. (Penny Coles)
above its “normal level.”

In 1929, water extended inland to Lockhart Street, Millville Street was flooded, and a breakwall at Queen’s Royal Park was destroyed.

Riverfront properties were endangered by high water in 1943; in 1946 it was said that more than 300 years of waterfront had been lost in the previous 100 years; the following year, the town initiated a study to protect the waterfront, and record highs continued to be recorded in 1973, 1993 and 2017, until this season, when the rise in the water level was the highest yet.

There were also reports, going back to the early 1960s, of low water levels causing navigational problems for ships and water shortages for the town.

Boulton discovered several reports of government studies leading to plans and commitments to shoreline protection, including one in 1954 to protect the waterfront along the golf course. It was reported in a local paper that the cost would be $22,500 and upper levels of government were onside, but the work was never carried out.

Approval for a camp of buildings along the federal Lakeshore Road project for tuberculosis patients was lauded in 1932 — along with plans for a breakwall to prevent further erosion of the property. The camp was built, the breakwall plan abandoned, and eventually, the huts slid into the water. Farmers with property along the lakeshore were reported to have lost 300 trees in a season.

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Boulton has a collection of photos showing the extent of what has been lost, and also that although shoreline protection is expensive, it works.

Some of his photos and newspaper clippings refer to the decades of sand-sucking dredgers taking away “thousands of tons of sand daily,” at least back to the 1920s.

There are photos showing as many as nine dredgers out at one time. They were even considered somewhat of an attraction for people to witness, with anyone who had not seen them being urged to make a trip to observe the operation.

Soon though there were reports saying too much sand was being removed, too close to shore, taking not only beach but portions of roadways and railway tracks, and threatening summer cottages on the beach.

Where the sand is dredged, it’s quickly filled in by water. Boulton says he’s watched it occur from his property as recently as the 1970s. Boulton says he’s watched it occur from his property as recently as the 1970s. It continued along the shoreline until the early 1960s. The sand, if it had been left in place, would have protected the shoreline, he says.

He has photos of sand along Boulton’s Beach, in front of the property once owned by his great-grandmother and where he has now built his retirement home. As a kid, he could play softball on the wide beach, where fishermen would also stretch out their nets.

Now the water comes right up to the houses, and the only flooding protection left along the waterfront is what has been provided by the Town, and breakwalls built by homeowners to protect private property.

Where shoreline work has been carried out, such as the boulders Parks Canada has placed along sections of the golf course, the evidence is clear that trees and the embankments are protected from soil erosion.

But close by, where there are no stores to stop soil from being washed away, roots are exposed, trees are damaged and destined to slide into the water.

There is further work planned by the Town along the Dock Area shoreline, with boulders waiting to be placed along the lake. A provincial permit allows the work to be carried out in a small window of time, between July 1 and September, to prevent fish spawning. Brett Ruck, environmental supervisor for the Town, says he is waiting for the lake level to go down so he can see what he is doing.

Simkins, a Dock Area resident who tracks the lake level, says during the week ending July 19, there was “a disappointing” drop of only 3/8 inches.

“Regardless of all the excitement about blue skies and scorching hot weather, the net balance of flows in and out of Lake Ontario can be tipped by every rainfall that makes its way into the Lake Ontario basin,” he says.

The flooding danger is not over, he warns. “We’re still losing momentum and the lake level is lagging all predictions of receding back to normal levels in a timely fashion.”

Even as it falls, there can be large fluctuations, easily seen from the waterfront, where markers above water can be seen one minute and have disappeared minutes later.

Ruck agrees there will be fluctuations, but told council recently he doesn’t see any reason to panic. The water level is no longer increasing, and it’s wave action that homes need protection from. “The shoreline is protected now,” he told council.

Earlier reports were that it could take until November for the lake to return to normal, as waterfront residents such as Simkins and Boulton fear, leaving plenty of time for strong winds and summer storms before it gets there.

If a “serious storm” erupts in the coming months, Ruck told council he believes residents are protected. “We’ll be able to manage it,” he says. He reminded councillors of 2017, adding he believes, “if it happens again, we’ll survive it.”

Sand dredging led to erosion

Continued from page 1
This week the magic happened.

We were invited to a tiny flitter, a momentary reflection catching my eye in a lit-tle pond tucked deep among the trees. A second tiny flash hovered over the path and I followed it down to the forest. The sight that awaited — a low cloud of fireflies hovering and drifting through the ferns and Solomon’s seals. It was a fantasy in slow motion. I had never witnessed a firefly show as breathtaking as the scene before me.

We walked to the hushed valley, filled with awe and wonder. I had a flashback to a special memory years earlier. It was the beginning of a small village of Grantley Bailey, in the rolling hills of St. Ann, Jamaica. We had just attended my cousin’s wedding in the large outdoor church. I was well acquainted with our good friend Winston’s Green Hill church. Sunday evening we hosted the informal services with folks wearing ball caps, running shoes and comfortable clothes, the better to “raise the praise” in an evening of enthusiastic singing. I watched proudly as Winston helped lead the music on the guitar he had brought back from Canada.

After a rousing evening of lively songs, we walked back to the little country church on foot for the long walk back. I had forgotten just how velvety the sky could be, the star filled galaxy overhead. One lone streetlight lit a short stretch of the single lane road so I relied on the others in our little group to help me navigate.

The road wound around the mountain, overlooking a valley on one side and flanked by a steep drop on the other.

Rounding the first bend we saw a tiny glimmer of the incredible sight of pence wallets — large fireflies — punctuating the darkened landscape before. They drift ed lazily over the valley, leaving soft light trails like comets flaming out into the atmosphere to die. I watched and watched, mesmerized by this unexpected display of fleeting and beauty.

Winston’s neighbour Mavis began to sing as she led the way. Her voice was bold and confident, strong against the mountain face.

These women who walked tall and proud were fearless. It may not have been by choice, but came from having to live without their husbands or partners for the last few months of the year. They had to raise their families and tend their farms, forced to rely on their neighbours and church families during times of struggle, critical illnesses, and hurri cane. There would be nothing left but a concrete pad where a home used to be. The song Mavis sang was an earthy gospel tune called Rest in the Eye of the Storm, but she infused new life into it. The words permeated my heart and continued to provide strength and courage in years to come, as I wrestled with “storms” in my own life.

The walk home that night was transformational in so many ways, illuminated not only by fireflies but the resili ent spirit of these people. An idea came to me as I lay sleepless that night. It was a small spark no bigger than a firefly, but it caught my attention and ignited my life.

How could we honour our Jamaican neighbours back home? What could a small village of Niagara commu nity look like?

As a musician, one idea seemed like a simple place to start. A concert at the mayor and the locals to come and enjoy an evening of music together.

Planning started as soon as we returned from our trip. The band Newworldson readily agreed to participate, as did then-Lord Mayor Gary Burroughs.

Later that spring, in May, 2007, the Caribbean Work ers Outreach Project (with which I volunteered) hosted the first welcome concert at Bethany Church.

The evening was a success, bubbling over with neighbourly enthusiasm and song. The numbers continued to grow each year as it became an annual event.

In 2009, Newworldson recorded a CD with the world-renowned Toronto Mass Choir. One of their most requested songs was the Caribbean Medley they had learned from our Jamaican neighbours on the farms.

Sitting in on their recording session in Toronto, I was blown away by the powerful vocals and the sheer joy the choir exuded when performing. I dared to dream they would some day grace the stage at a Workers Welcome concert.

The cost of bringing them to the concert in Ni gagara was formidable to an organization with no budget for an event like this. How would we possibly raise the money? By late November, the decision had to be made. We decided to go ahead and book the choir.

Early one morning I was driving my husband to work. I was listening to the radio on CBC and heard a “pray to God, I need a sign.” I turned on my husband off, turned on the radio and CBC’s Sounds of the Season came on. To my astonish ment, the powerful voices of Toronto Mass Choir were ringing out from the car speakers. There was no turn back.

On May 2, 2010, buses unloaded and the auditorium filled to capacity at Orchard Park Church as we scrambled to find chairs for over 625 farm workers and locals, to hear the Toronto Mass Choir. Burroughs offered a heartfelt welcome, and together everyone celebrated a powerful night of joy-infused black gospel, funk and reggae.

One elderly gentleman came up to me at the door halfway through the concert, frowning. “How come farm workers get in for free?”

“Because they won’t come if they have to pay,” I replied. He broke into a big smile and plunked down a $50 bill on the table, saying “it’s worth twice that. Thanks for all your work.”

It was my first time meeting Jim Meyers, and he continued to be a great encourager in the years to come.

The 2010 concert took place just a few months after the devastating earthquake in Haiti. Thanks to the un expected donations of many farm workers, we were able to present Lenore More with a cheque for more than $1,000 just a few weeks later to support International Children’s Bureau’s rebuilding of Great Children’s Hospital in Port au Prince. Most of the Jamaican men had just arrived for the season, but they dug deep to help ICC.

Partnering with the Toronto Mass Choir in 2010 was the beginning of a new direction for the Niagara Workers Welcome concerts.

The 2016 concert was a highlight, as we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Seasonal Agricultural Work er Program, with a capacity crowd at Southside Church in St. Catharines. About 600 farm workers and 200 locals attended this milestone event with the Toronto Mass Choir once again raising the roof with their joyous sound.

In 2017 the event evolved into the Peach Pickers Pic nic, to include the Mexican farm workers who wished to participate. It was held at the Market/The Village on the Sunday of the Peach Festival. More than 475 meals were served to our Mexican and Jamaican neighbours, and increased to 500 in 2018.

Working to create a more welcoming community has been a challenging road for the past 12 years. The logistics of finding transportation for workers and fundraising for the annual event can be overwhelming.

The challenge is on again this year, as we ramp up the preparations for the 2019 Peach Pickers Picnic on Aug. 11.

We are encouraged that community support and gratitude has been growing exponentially and are excited about plans unfolding for the coming year.

The Niagara Workers Welcome is a grassroots ef fort that belongs to our community and started with a little spark of light, a glimmer of an idea back in 2007.

We press on for many reasons. It’s about expressing gratitude. It’s about the joy of our treasured friendships.

The growing appreciation of our Jamaican and Mexi can neighbours in the NOTL community has been a clear indication that “together, we are a caring community” — the motto that best represents the Niagara Workers Wel come group.

All organizing is done on a volunteer basis. The budget for the event is $8,000 with about $6,000 designated to showing appreciation by providing free meals to the farm workers. We have about $4,000 to go in the next two weeks to meet that goal.

In past years most of it was raised by people paying it forward to cover the costs of a meal for a farm worker. We also welcome and recognize sponsorships of larger amounts — gold at $1000, silver for donations of $500 and bronze at $250. For more information, contact niagaraworkerswel come@gmail.com. Donations can be sent by e-transfer to the above address or dropped off at 2230 Four Mile Creek Rd. See you at the Peach Pickers Picnic, 5:30 to 9 pm., Sunday, Aug. 11.

See an online version of a workers wel come, visit https://vimeo.com/254895196.

Preparations underway for Peach Pickers Picnic

Jane Andres
Special to The Local

Michael Johnson with the Leap farm jinny at last year’s Peach Pickers Picnic. (Jane Andres)
The storyline is preoccupied by any business, that although centrally derelict building. One dent and designed to decor, the equipment in the ambiance, the aspects of the restaurant. A stage is included to Bricks & Barley

Missing from the photo is owner Michael Frendo. Whitney and enjoy a spa treatment with Pamper yourself with a nontoxic products such as RICA, Zoya and Schwarzkopf and is constantly keeping in all aspects of colour and cutting, razor cutting, experience in scissor techniques and creative talent. Nadia specializes in hair colour, her passion is evident through her craft. Cristina discourages clients to the best service they are having. Her bubbly personality and sports fans to come support of local sports and craft beer. Before opening its Grand Opening Party

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Audiences expect an artist to talk about music in ways that relate, everybody’s in on it. I talk about music in ways that everybody can relate to, telling stories, bringing people in and hopefully they’ll laugh a little.”

Tell me about the show. “It is about 50 per cent talk and 50 per cent music. Audiences expect an artist to chat give personal insights, tell a new story… the days of the ivory tower artist corning onstage and just singing are over — unless you’re Pavarotti.”

“Caroline (Leonardelli)

Donald Combe Special to The Local

If you like comic books you will love the newest Spiderman film. Tom Holland is an attractive, believable teenager who has extraordinary powers and of course uses them in the unending struggle against evil. The storyline is predictable, while the special effects are mind-boggling.

It was a fun evening of pure escapism and fantasy, but now back to the comfort of ordinairiness. Donald Combe is a retired English teacher who loves to go to movies. His Facebook reviews have become popular with his friends and followers, and he has graciously agreed to share his opinions through “short and sweet” exclusives for The Local.

Nancy Smith
Special to The Local

Julie Nesrallah is a brilliant mezzo-soprano, broadcaster, actress, and a successful entrepreneur. And she is also one of the most accessible and unpretentious opera stars you are ever likely to meet. Her mission is to attract more audiences to classical music concerts by delivering not only great performances but also making those performances fun and relevant. Nesrallah’s path to playing on some of the greatest stages in the world was unusual.

How a first generation Lebanese kid from Ottawa become a celebrated opera star?

“I had a fantastic public school music program and I’m still friends with that teacher today. I always felt like a regular kid and this equipped me to talk about all this music in a very humane way. One of the most interesting aspects of classical music is not only the genius behind it but also the utter humanness of the people who created it.”

How do you break down barriers to attract new audiences?

“I connect people with the music. I’ve always tried to bring the audience into the experience by literally taking their imaginations to the place where the music is… once you illuminate a little bit of what’s going on, people relate, everybody’s in on it. I talk about music in ways that everybody can relate to, telling stories, bringing people in and hopefully they’ll laugh a little.”

Have you partnered often with Caroline Leonardelli?

“Ve’ve worked together for more than 10 years. She is a joy to play with, the rockstar of the harp. She takes all of the pieces that have been written for piano and rewrites them for the harp which is hard. She is a tremendous partner and friend.”

Nesrallah has sung for leading opera companies, symphonies, festivals and ensembles around the world and is a recipient of the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medal. She sang God Save the Queen for Will and Kate, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, on Parliament Hill, and was the sole vocalist in An Evening For Peace for Queen Noor of Jordan.

Caroline Leonardelli is a Juno nominated concert harpist known for her passionate and bold musical interpretations. She is a principal harpist with the Ottawa Symphony Orchestra and Gatineau Symphony Orchestra.

Don’t miss Wine and Music, Italian Songs, on Aug. 3 at 11 a.m. at the Mount Carmel Monastery Chapel in Niagara Falls.

Concerts this week: July 30: Andrew Wan, violin, and Charles Richard-Hamelin, piano, both international superstars from Quebec.

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The Man Goes to the Movies

Donald Combe Special to The Local

Caroline Leonardelli and Julie Nesrallah at Wine and Music. (Photos submitted)
Métis at the fort

A traditional Métis encampment was held at the gates of Fort George this weekend, to teach the public about Métis traditions and see how fur trappers once lived, as presented by the Niagara Region Métis Council. Brian Kon (chairman of the Métis Nation of Ontario), Glen Lipinski, and Derek Pont get the fire started to start cooking some food. Derek Pont plays the mouth harp for Margaret Burr while she knits. (Fred Mercnik)
Alan Doyle visits Red Roof, and may be back

Penny Coles  
The Local

Karen Post makes great butter tarts. She is also a strong supporter of mental health programs.

Putting those two together, she has made and sold hundreds of butter tarts to raise money to support mental health and addiction programs.

It's not all she's done. Alan Doyle, best-known as lead singer for Great Big Sea, has been touring with his own band for the last five years. From Petty Harbour, N.L., and a Member of the Order of Canada, he is one of the leaders of A Dollar a Day, a charitable group which supports proven mental health and addiction programs across Canada.

Last year, Post presented a cheque to Doyle at his Jackson-Triggs Amphitheatre concert. Her fundraiser was the sale of bath bombs, and the cheque was for $1,260.

An events coordinator with Red Roof Retreat, Post invited Doyle to tour the facility, which provides day programs and respite care for those with special needs. However, her schedule did not allow it.

So instead, she and Steffanie Bjorgan arranged to have Garrett, Steffanie’s son, at the cheque presentation at the amphitheatre.

"Along with Steff, we were able to tell him a bit about Red Roof Retreat, and he was very interested in the work we did."

In December, she raised $1,028 for the organization through the sale of stained glass Christmas ornaments, and this June, she made 1,300 butter tarts, pastry and filling — 100 baker’s dozens — and raised $2,000, for a total of $4,288.

She also sent Doyle an invitation to visit Red Roof while he was in NOTL this summer for his Jackson-Triggs amphitheatre concert, and she and Bjorgan had Garrett with them for the cheque presentation, this time during a tour of the facility with Doyle.

"We received confirmation a week before he arrived," said Post. "He was extremely interested in Red Roof Retreat, and very enthusiastic to have a tour of the property."

Doyle has said he would like to do a fundraising concert at the Ranch next summer, but the date is not confirmed, and there are no details to release, said Bjorgan.

was quite humbling for all of us that he took time out to come see what Red Roof Retreat is all about."

He was on a tight schedule, she said, yet he still managed to take the time to chat with everyone, to be "completely present in the moment, and not at all rushed."

This was his second meeting with Garrett, "and when Garrett hears his voice, he smiles. That's a pretty special imprint to leave," said Post.

Her fundraising efforts, she said, are her way of paying tribute to a special friend who died by suicide a few years ago.

"Meeting Alan is like catching up with an old friend," said Post. "He is very laid back. He is one of the most gracious and generous human beings out there. It leaves," she said.

He is interested in Red Roof Retreat, and not at all rushed. ""We received confirmation a week before he arrived," said Post. "He was extremely interested in Red Roof Retreat, and very enthusiastic to have a tour of the property."

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Ladykillers ‘hilariously silly’

Penny Colles
The Local

The Ladykillers, a stage adaptation of a classic British film, made its North American premiere on stage at the Shaw Festival Theatre this season.

It is directed by artistic director Tim Carroll, who on the suggestion of Jackie Maxwell in her final season of the Shaw, had a look at the script and decided he wanted it onstage this season.

In the playbill director’s notes, Carroll says Maxwell handed him the script, calling the play “hilarious silly.” He read it and agreed.

“It had all the evil charm of the film, but went at twice the speed, and added no end of great lines and opportunities for daft physical comedy. If only one could get the rights...” And through a touch of serendipity — he had just completed working on another play with the same producers — he obtained the rights to Graham Linehan’s stage adaptation, and hence The Ladykillers is making audiences laugh at the Festival Theatre.

It’s very British, and while not quite Monty Python-esque — the film was produced in the 1950s, and the play reflects the tone of that era — it’s enduring, silly in the best possible way. It’s also replete with moments of frenzied action from a motley crew of bumbling thieves.

Each is an eccentric character as important to the overall success of the production as the plot, which begins with Professor Marcus (Damien Atkins) arranging to rent a room in the house of Mrs. Wilberforce (Chick Reid). To explain the arrival of his gang, he comes up with the incongruous explanation for the aging widow that they are a string quartet. They arrive with their musical instruments, and retire to their room to plan the heist — the house is convenient next door to the railway station, the scene of the impending crime.

There follows all manner of hijinks while they plot their robbery — the best might be the unlikely playing of a classical record to convince their sweet but scatterbrained landlady they are talented musicians.

They achieve such success that they ask them to play for a small group of her friends, not realizing the men don’t know how to hold the instruments, never mind play them.

The Ladykillers features Martin Happer, Andrew Lawrie, Steven Sutcliffe and Ric Reid as members of the gang, Kristopher Bowman representing the local police force, and Fiona Byrne and Claire Jullien as Mrs. Wilberforce’s friends; but it’s Chick Reid, playing the gullible senior citizen, and Atkins as the leader of the gang, who really steal the show.

Judith Bowden designed what appears at this point of the Shaw season to be one of the most clever and detailed sets, a small quaint two-storey Victorian house that separates the gang from their landlady, to a certain extent, and providing humour each time they run into each other. The set rotates, moving the plot to the train station, and creating empathy for the inept but somewhat likeable criminals whose fate is sealed there.

The Ladykillers is onstage at the Shaw Festival Theatre until Oct. 12. For more information or tickets visit shawfest.com.
Across:
1. Maker whose cars go up
2. Place
3. Business
4. Person between 12 and 20
5. Very soon
6. Ripped
7. Jagged mountain range
8. Recline
9. Drop in value
10. Very soon
11. Song of praise
12. Ancient artifacts
13. E.g. Oolong, Darjeeling
14. Look like
15. Tempest, Oscar
16. Spring
17. Online attacks
18. Father
19. Not manual (Abbr.)
20. Spring
21. Song of praise
22. Ancient artifacts
23. Ancient artifacts
24. Ancient artifacts
25. Added clause
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Down:
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2. Ancient artifacts
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How to create beautiful bog gardens

Laura Grant
Special to The Local

From the time I was a young child, I was fascinated by the wetlands and the variety of creatures and plants inhabiting them.

Now as an avid gardener, I still find a bog one of my favourite areas of the entire garden. A relatively small area can hold a huge number of native plants that provide interest from early spring to late fall. The first to bloom are pitcher plants (Sarracenia purpurea) followed by bog rosemary (Andromeda polifolia) and Labrador tea (Rhododendron groenlandicum).

Early summer brings blooms on cranberries, different sedges and orchids, cotton grass and the fascinating insect-eating sundews. Finally in the fall, cranberries are full of red berries around the cranberry called Hamilton. There is a dwarf variety of cranberry, used by florists but peat fibre peat is preferred, the kind used by florists but peat moss will work as well. These “floating” bog is left in the pond unproctected during the winter months frozen in the ice. The frogs love to snuggle in the cool moss during the heat of the day. My garden pond is an area in full sun excavated to about 18 inches and lined with pond liner. It is also filled with 50 per cent sand and 50 per cent peat. Long fibre peat is preferred, the kind used by florists but peat moss will work as well. These “floating” bog is left in the pond unproctected during the winter months frozen in the ice. The frogs love to snuggle in the cool moss during the heat of the day. My garden pond is an area in full sun excavated to about 18 inches and lined with pond liner. It is also filled with 50 per cent sand and peat. To avoid stagnant water at the bottom of the bog I created the following system: a one-gallon empty pot placed up side down at the bottom of the bog serves as water chamber. Punch a hole in the middle of the bottom of the pot and insert plastic tubing into the pot. Make sure the tubing is long enough to reach outside of the finished bog. From time to time run some fresh water through this tube. It is fascinating how many different mosses appear and flourish in full sun. Here I grow the same type of plants, but have to protect the entire area with a net to prevent the birds and racoons from digging it out. Bogs can also be in any sized container placed high on a pedestal where the racoons cannot reach them. This way you can admire your little treasures without getting down on your knees. You will have to add some rain water to the container during dry spells.

Bog plants and seeds are commercially available and should never be taken from the wild. Many plants can be started from seeds sprinkled on peat and sand. The seeds are available from specialty sources such as the Ontario Rock Garden Society, North American Native Plant Society, Alpine Garden Society, Jelitto Seeds and others. A few garden enthusiasts are now growing and selling native orchids from seeds. Laura Grant is the retired executive director of the American Rhododendron Society, and founder of The Ontario Water Garden Society. She studied horticulture at the University of Guelph and became a Master Gardener in the 80s. She belongs to a number of national and international horticultural organizations, and collects rare fruits and plants, pushing the limits of hardiness to make them grow in Niagara.

Laura Grant explains how to plant a floating bog garden in a large pond or a smaller one in an elevated container. (Laura Grant)
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