



**Maple Leaf
 Mitch Marner
 married in
 NOTL**

page 9



A swear word was spray-painted on the crosswalk (not legible in the photo) and tire burnouts used to deface it. (Mike Balsom)

Rainbow crosswalk defaced, security camera spray-painted

**Penny Coles
 The Local**

Once again, the Niagara-on-the-Lake rainbow crosswalk at Anderson Lane has been vandalized.

It's the third time it has been defaced since it was installed in time for Pride Month in June, only this time, in addition to tire marks, there is profanity painted in large letters as well.

Town staff are investigating, says CAO Marnie Cluckie,

as are police, who were notified Sunday evening after staff were alerted to the incident by a resident.

A formal police report was filed Monday morning.

"I was deeply disappointed and saddened to learn about the recent act of vandalism on the town's rainbow crosswalk," says Cluckie.

The first time the crosswalk was vandalized with circular ATV tire marks was less than a week after its installation, after two years of discussion, across

the road used to access the NOTL Public Library and the community centre.

The second time was before the town had time to clean it, and included the use of tar.

A short time later a 15-year-old boy from St. Catharines was identified as the suspect. He wasn't charged criminally, but rather introduced to the "extrajudicial measures program" because of his age, police said.

"The rainbow crosswalk

is an important symbol of diversity, inclusivity and acceptance in our community," says Cluckie.

"This act of vandalism attempts to diminish the spirit of unity the crosswalk represents. It is disheartening to witness such acts in our community, but I hope we will join together as a community once again and not allow such incidents to discourage us."

The appropriate measures

Carnival contest a doggy delight

**Sharon Burns
 The Local**

It was raining cats and dogs at St. Davids Lions Carnival's first annual dog show this past Saturday. Well, dogs anyway, as cats would have been a distraction to the coiffed, costumed and incredibly cute dogs of all sizes waiting to be judged.

"Oh, I think we have a fantastic turnout for the weather today," said Kelly, a St. Davids Lion and dog show organizer. "We planned on having it outside and at the last minute we put it under the tent. I am fantastically surprised at how many people are here."

The event started with a special award named after Kelly's dog, a whoodle (a wheaten terrier and poodle mix) who had just recently passed away.

"The Beatrice" was awarded to a three-legged dog, named Hattie, for her gentle, loving, kind and sweet nature. "At three months old, Hattie fell down a flight of stairs and shattered her leg," said Kelly. "Her owners at the time left her to suffer for a week, and she was eventually surrendered to the SPCA."

Mary Jane and Donny McGibbon, regulars at the club, spotted Hattie and "it was love at first sight," said Kelly.

"Hattie is pretty much the Lions' mascot. She shares breakfast with The Breakfast Club every morning and is a regular around the club," said Kelly to the packed crowd under the tent at the York Road carnival. "She runs around the grounds here at the club like a race car."

Continued on page 13



Joey, sporting a jaunty red bow tie, is deaf. (Sharon Burns)

Continued on page 5



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Town needs more youth programming, councillors suggest

Kris Dube
The Local
Local Journalism Initiative
Reporter

Niagara-on-the-Lake town council has determined there is no need to focus on creating more programming for the local elderly population than what already exists.

While discussing the town's newest strategic plan during last week's council meeting, Coun. Sandra O'Connor made a motion to amend a recommendation to adopt the strategy, covering 2022 to 2027, to include additional programs for seniors, which was defeated in favour of more programming for youth.

Coun. Nick Ruller said while appreciating the intent to keep seniors in mind, he believes it's younger Niagara-on-the-Lake residents who need more attention.

He pointed to what is available at the local community centre.

"There is a clear absence of any children's programming," said Ruller, adding that criticism from the public about a lack of things to do in town when it comes to activities offered by the municipality has already been received.

"We have heard over and over again from families in this community that there's no programming for children," he

said, adding the town's social media accounts are often a venue for sharing displeasure of what's scheduled.

He said the town's day camps are not what needs to be addressed, but offerings for an hour or a two at a time for young families, at places such as the community centre, need to be expanded.

"We are saturated with programs for other age groups, and there's a clear gap," said Ruller.

After the meeting, Ruller told The Local he recognizes the public library, also located at the community centre, offers programs for younger residents, but said scheduling of events should coincide with one another, such as programs for adults and children running simultaneously.

He said the municipality has "gone down a path where there's a total lack of integration with different age groups."

There is "some stuff" at the library, but "a lot of it is for very young children," he said. "We need some variety for youth."

On the library's schedule for July, there are events scheduled Monday to Friday, such as Super Mario Club one day a week, for children aged four to six, as well as Pokemon Club, and other events for that age group. There are also activities for kids aged seven to 12, such as Summer Science.

Ruller is a father of four

children aged between 10 and 13 years old.

He'd like to see more for the preteen kids at the community centre, something he hopes will result from the town recently creating a new full-time recreation co-ordinator position.

He pointed to the July schedule at the community centre, saying that kids aren't interested in zumba, yoga and euchre.

There are 29 programs listed for July 2023 at the community centre, and it appears Robo Think Niagara is the only one that could apply to younger people.

Others include lawn bowling, line dancing, tai chi, bridge, as well as table tennis and badminton for seniors.

"If we aren't specifically ensuring that we're meeting the needs of young families, they will leave," said Ruller, who grew up in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and moved back with his young family about 10 years ago.

Minimal recreational opportunities for youth offered by the town has been a "sticking point" since then.

"For the last 10 years, there has not been significant programming," he said.

Addressing O'Connor's concerns that more for seniors needs to be added to the strategic plan's community pillars, CAO Marnie Cluckie suggested something could be included



Couns. Sandra O'Connor, Nick Ruller, Maria Mavridis and Adriana Vizzari discuss the need for programming for seniors versus youth. (Screenshot)

for the older population in the advocacy and government relations portion of the municipality's framework, under a housing and healthcare section.

Coun. Maria Mavridis didn't agree with adding language related to healthcare and housing — it's "redundant," and doesn't apply to the amendment O'Connor had put up for consideration, she said.

She also agreed that town programs are mostly aimed at older people, saying they are "very geared to 50-plus."

In its report, staff says the strategic plan is a "roadmap for success to ensure decisions made today set the course for the desired future of our community."

It has two 'lenses,' a diversity, equity and inclusion lens, and an environmental stewardship lens.

There are three community pillars and a foundation pillar, which "supports the community pillars," reads the report approved by council Tuesday.

Staff recommended the term of this 2022 to 2026 plan be extended to 2027 to "provide adequate time for the next term of council to devel-

op their strategic plan process and permit staff to continue working on multi-year initiatives throughout elections and council onboarding."

Coun. Adriana Vazzari, a member of the library board and mother of four children ages six to 11, said she also believes more needs to be offered when it comes to recreational activities.

"I'm absolutely in agreement that we need more programming for children and youth, and families — and that there is a gap," she told The Local.

The library has a lot of "excellent" programs, but they mostly have to do with arts and crafts, and literary skills like reading and writing.

"I do feel there's a gap in other activities," she said.

She is pleased the town has hired a new recreation program co-ordinator and commends the local government for working to address a need.

"I am very confident this is going in the right direction," she said.

Rome D'Angelo, director of operations with the town, said improvements will be made

through the recent hiring of a new recreational program co-ordinator.

"This addition to our team will enable us to expand and enhance engagement and programming opportunities for families, youth and children in Niagara-on-the-Lake," said D'Angelo.

"With this new position, we now have the chance to grow our programming and offer exciting programming opportunities, events and activities for young families, youth and children," he added.

These new opportunities will support the town's popular summer and winter camps, aquatics programming and various seasonal initiatives.

"Our aim is to ensure that great programming is available to all residents, regardless of age, at our community centre," he said.

The town plans to conduct public outreach to gather feedback on desirable programming enhancements specific to young families, children and youth.

However, for now, if residents have specific program ideas or initiatives they would like to see considered, they are invited to send them to programs@notl.com, said D'Angelo.

The town issued a news release Monday, saying council has approved the strategic plan with goals and priorities that will shape the future of Niagara-on-the-Lake, and that it continues to be in effect until 2027.

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Residents speak out at King Street apartment open house

Carrie Gleason
The Local

At a virtual public open house held last week to find out more about a rezoning application that would allow for an apartment building on the northwest side of King Street, neighbours said they feel they have been deceived by the planning process and by the developer, Josh Bice of Butler's Garden Developments.

Just one of several concerns residents listed is that planners at NPG Planning Solutions have not given enough consideration to the effect that the development will have on area homes.

The amendment application seeks to have the space rezoned from low density residential to allow multiple units, with three site specific provisions: a reduced minimum lot frontage from the required 25 metres to 19.6 metres (due to the irregular shape of the lot); no dedicated children's play area from the required 46 square metres, citing the proximity to Rye Park; and an ornamental iron fence to separate the property from the abutting vineyard rather than the required board-on-board fence.

Early site plan drawings and architectural renderings for the development show a long lane leading from King Street that opens onto an asphalt parking space for 18 vehicles, behind which would sit a three-storey, balconied apartment building. Although landscaping is shown

around the sides and rear of the building, a landscape plan with details of what exactly that would entail is not required until later in the process, residents were told. According to the planners at NPG, at the time of the open house it was not yet known whether the two-bedroom units of the building will be rented out or purchased as condos.

Because of the irregular shape of the lot, the bulk of the apartment building would not be visible from King Street, planners said, instead sitting on vacant land behind 727 and 733 King Street, at 7.5 metres from properties on Meritage Lane and five metres from the rear of properties on Cottage Street.

Patrick Gedge lives at 11 Meritage Lane, adjacent to the rear of the proposed apartment building. After questioning the planners on issues such as privacy from apartment balconies and windows overlooking his and other abutting homes, noise, and light trespass, Gedge said he was "surprised" to hear senior planner Jesse Auspitz from NPG Planning Solutions say planners "didn't think that this would have any significant impact on these adjacent lands (Meritage and Cottage Streets)."

Many of the issues raised by residents, Auspitz explained, are details that will be refined at a future site plan stage of the project, based on recommendations received from the town. In terms of privacy concerns, he said, the setback from

Meritage Lane "is standard for residential zoning." Noise, he believes, will not have a significant impact on Cottage and Meritage residents because it is "residential use abutting residential use," while lighting, also to be included in more detail at a future stage, "is anticipated will be directed more towards the front of the building as opposed to the rear."

Residents who spoke at last week's open house took issue with the density of a multi-unit apartment building, saying it would have a negative impact on the neighbourhood. They pointed to an increase in traffic as well as insufficient parking and room for waste disposal and emergency vehicles to manoeuvre on the property.

James Dickson, who lives on King Street, told the planners the development is "an unfortunate case of trying to put too many people in a building, and you're going to get a lot of pushback for it."

This is not the first time developers have sought to construct a multi-residence building on the site. In 2018, there was an application for a four-unit condominium building, which was later withdrawn. Then, in October 2022, approval was given by the town to sever the large, underused rear yards from 727 and 733 King Street and consolidate them with the vacant lot between them to create a single lot. According to a town report from that time, this would "create

an opportunity for future infill development," with staff noting that "one single-detached dwelling would continue to be permitted on the consolidated vacant lot." However, in December of that year, at a pre-consultation meeting between the town and planners, a three-storey, 18-unit residential building with underground parking was proposed.

Recalling the town's approval in October 2022 to create the single lot, Jason Quesnelle, who lives on King Street, asked, "Why were they (the developers) not honest about their intentions, as approvals were made under false pretences?"

Aaron Butler, senior planner and partner at NPG, explained that a single dwelling was the intention at that time. "There was no false pretence," he said. "An application was approved and proceeded under that basis and then they (the property owners) made a different application to propose this development."

But according to area resident David Rodgers, "it appears to be quite a deceptive process." Neighbours were told by the developer that he would not do anything that would have a negative effect on the neighbourhood, Rodgers said. "But when I speak to these same neighbours recently, they absolutely believe this is a large negative effect on the environment."

In addition to the need for the planners to give more consideration to the impact



An architectural rendering of the proposed apartment building. (Supplied)

the development will have on neighbouring homes, residents also requested a more detailed shadow study, a landscaping plan, a traffic study and a visual impact review. "There is not sufficient information here to have a fruitful open house because there isn't enough information in the drawings. It seems at first that the zoning change is pretty simple, but it's loaded with all sorts of side effects or conditions to it that will have a significant impact on the neighbourhood," said resident Gordon.

"Even if these detailed drawings are not required as part of the process, as a good neighbour they should be provided because people attending tonight are being asked to form an opinion about the project with insufficient information," he continued.

When asked how many objections the town has received about the development so far, town senior planner Aimee Alderman said that they "have a received a number, and that

they continue to come."

The Local has since learned that prior to the open house, a list of 33 questions and concerns from 40 neighbourhood residents about the rezoning and the proposed development, some of which were raised at Tuesday's open house, had been sent to the town.

Residents wanting to provide formal written comments regarding the application can do so by emailing Aimee Alderman at aimee.alderman@notl.com and copying the town clerk at clerks@notl.com.

A public meeting about the application will be held at a committee of the whole planning meeting on Sept. 12 in the council chamber. Any residents wishing to speak at the meeting about this application can register by email at clerks@notl.com or by phoning 905-468-3266 by noon on Sept. 11.

The completed application can be viewed on the town website at notl.com/business-development/public-planning-notice.



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Library pop-ups introduce kids to communities

Sharon Burns
The Local

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library and the Tiny Museum from the NOTL Museum have been on the move together all summer to offer children an opportunity to explore from various locations in town.

On Monday, they set up at the St. Davids Lions Park. "Today is our pop-up library and we are in St. Davids," said Debbie Krause, community engagement coordinator for the library. "We are hitting all of the different villages. We've been at Glendale, specifically at the outlet mall, we've been at Centennial Sports Park, and we've been at Niven Road's Community Gardens."

The pop-up library is free and families can just drop in. Crafts, button-making and story time are only a few of the activities provided. "Children who are registered for the summer reading club are invited to come and talk to us about what they've read, and they can make their weekly buttons and get their weekly stamp here," added Krause.

Children can also sign out library books, even if they do not have a library card. Sarah Bowers, technical service coordinator at the library, was on hand to register people new to the library system.

Tess Roberts-Ramos is

a children's library service associate at the library, and she is in charge of children's programming. She was busy helping young children with stamping and colouring activities.

Stacey Sanderson, from NOTL, showed up at the St. Davids pop-up with her children Liam, Callum and Fiona. "The kids really enjoy this activity, and love to be with their friends," she said. "And we always pick up a new book"

The library has partnered with the Tiny Museum to bring awareness to the different villages as well. Karlene Ouellette is the Tiny Museum co-ordinator and she makes sure that village is reflected in the exhibit.

"Today we have an exhibit on St. Davids itself, including a blanket worn by an officer in the War of 1812," said Ouellette. "They used it to hide some ammunition from the Americans."

Also on display was a sampler, from around 1800, supplied by St. Davids resident Ann Woodruff. "The sampler is interesting because it gives us an example of early education in women, which we don't really know a whole lot about because it didn't happen very often," said Ouellette.

According to the museum website, "Young girls were expected to grow up,

get married, have children and care for their family home. These expectations meant that girls often received a very different education than boys. Girls were often taught only arithmetic or reading, if their parents could afford to pay for their schooling, along with other skills that were considered to be 'female accomplishments.' This included manners, sewing, painting, music and comportment."

"Samplers are therefore the most tangible evidence of female education during the early years of Niagara history. To prepare a young girl for the responsibility of sewing for her future family, girls completed at least two samplers. The first, called a marking sampler, was com-

pleted when a girl was around five or six (sometimes older) and served two purposes: to teach basic embroidery and numbers and the alphabet."

Ouellette tries to change aspects of the display for every community they visit. "For the Strawberry Festival, I had a little component for St. Andrew's Church. When we did the Cherry Festival, I had a little component for St. Mark's Church."

NOTL councillor Adriana Vizzari brought four children to the outdoor pop-up event, advocating for a community facility in St. Davids. "There is a need for an indoor community facility," she said. Town events, library pop-ups and presentations are just some of the uses the facility could house, suggested Vizzari.

The weather co-operated for this pop-up, however, with no rain and little humidity.

This year's final library pop-up will be held Aug. 14 at Chautauqua Park. The library offers children's pro-

gramming until Aug. 18, and while most programs are full, "there's always some cancellation opportunities," said Krause, who suggested interested families visit notlpubliclibrary.org.



Liam, Callum and Fiona with Kasia Dupuis, a library services associate.



Sarah Bowers, Tess Roberts-Ramos and Debbie Krause from the NOTL Public Library have books for kids to borrow at the St. Davids pop-up. (Photos by Sharon Burns)



Karlene Ouellette, the Tiny Museum co-ordinator, joins the library pop-up to offer glimpses of history to the kids who attend.

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Police say they have no description of suspect or vehicle

Continued from page 1

will be taken “to promptly clean the crosswalk, ensuring that it can continue to stand as a powerful symbol of unity and acceptance for all,” Cluckie added.

Town staff discovered the act of vandalism when a resident contacted them Sunday evening, she said. “Upon review of the security footage yesterday, it appears that the vandalism occurred shortly after 3 a.m. on Sunday.”

Unfortunately, she added,

“it seems that the vandals may have first painted over the security camera.”

Tuesday afternoon, police sent out a news release about the incident, calling it “a belated mischief complaint.”

Police say the suspect climbed the nearby utility pole and used black spray paint to cover the lens of a surveillance camera, and then defaced the crosswalk by spray-painting a profane word and doing a “burnout” that left traction marks.

“There is no suspect or

vehicle description currently available,” police say, and detectives are appealing to nearby businesses and residents to review their surveillance footage and report any suspicious behaviour.

Police are also asking volunteer firefighters who responded to the Anderson Lane fire station for an unrelated call “to recall and report any persons or vehicles that may have seemed out of place.”

Coun. Maria Mavridis, who was alerted to the vandalism on Sunday, speaks of the emails she’s received as a councillor, from people who are angered by the crosswalk. They often mention taxpayers’ dollars being spent on it.

“It cost each taxpayer 86 cents,” Mavridis said. “I’m going to round it up to \$1, and tell anyone who wants their money back to come and get it. I’ll give them a loonie.”

She’s surprised by the issues residents get angry about, including a sidewalk on Andres Street, where she lives, that has been installed for safety reasons, and paid for by development charges, not by taxpayers. Some don’t like the sidewalk, others are angry about the side of the street where it’s been installed.

“Every time we try to do something, someone’s going to be angry. There are 19,000 people living here. We can’t

make everybody happy.”

The rainbow crosswalk, she says, “represents a small community within our community. Why is that a bad thing? It isn’t. People need to look inside themselves.”

The profanity written on the crosswalk, with a four-letter word followed by U, “is not saying that just to that small community, it’s saying it to the entire community.”

It’s especially difficult to hear comments and receive emails in opposition to the crosswalk from people she has liked and respected, she adds. “That makes it even harder,

when you know it’s coming from people in this community. Let’s just be accepting and move on.”

Mavridis speaks of other communities that are dealing with issues such as the opioid crisis and homelessness, problems of which NOTL sees very little.

“How lucky are we to live in this town, not dealing with drug issues or getting people off the street.”

When the biggest problem is a colourful sidewalk, “we need to remember how lucky we are.”

And although Mavridis

said she realizes her words won’t change anybody’s mind, she adds, “it’s not their mind that needs changing. It’s their heart.”

Police are asking anyone with information to call 905-688-4111, option 3, extension 1007730.

Members of the public who wish to provide information anonymously are encouraged to contact Crime Stoppers of Niagara online or by calling 1-800-222-TIPS (8477).

Crime Stoppers offers cash rewards to persons who contact the program with information that leads to an arrest.



Police say someone climbed the utility pole to spray paint a camera that was installed in June to prevent further damage to the crosswalk. (Supplied)



The Anderson Lane Pride crosswalk was damaged both with tire marks and spray paint this time. (Mike Balsom)



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EDITORIAL

Frustration mounting for those fighting to protect their neighbourhoods

There is never a shortage of unpopular building proposals for Niagara-on-the-Lake residents to oppose, but these days, there seems to be an unusually high number of what locals consider inappropriate developments on the books.

Along with them come all the open houses asking, and receiving, public input, and the planning meetings that are required for each proposal.

Currently drawing the ire of the public is the Parliament Oak proposal — that's been around for a while, taking over after one developer, hoping to build homes and an apartment, gave up and sold the property to another developer, who now wants to turn that block into a hotel and conference centre. The town's heritage committee will be discussing it this week.

The most recent prob-

lem proposal is just up the street, at the dead end of King Street, where a three-storey apartment building is being planned behind a beautiful residential neighbourhood, and of course neighbours are not happy with it.

Also in the Old Town is the Mary Street proposal, with neighbours of that area very vocal about not liking the idea of an apartment building towering over their one- and two-storey homes.

In St. Davids, nearby residents have stopped trying to fight a development and are instead asking for some pretty basic concessions. They aren't having any luck either.

And in the John and Charlotte Street area, there's the subdivision that nobody likes, and Randwood Estates, which has gone quiet the last little while.

Councillors who have to make difficult decisions are in a no-win situation. If they agree to what town planners will likely recommend, based on provincial legislation, they will have to face the anger of residents. If they oppose development, it costs money to deal with the appeals that are sure to come, and they then are in the bad books of taxpayers who oppose the expense. Especially if they lose.

There seems one simple reason why the town is facing so many of these battles, other than the obvious appeal of developers who won't have a hard time selling whatever they build in Niagara-on-the-Lake. The blame can be laid at the feet of Premier Doug Ford, and his legislation to allow more and more development, leaving little or no room for local

councils to make good decisions for their municipalities.

Yes, we need more housing, and more affordable housing, but municipalities should be where the decisions are made about where that housing will go, and it doesn't seem to be working out that way.

So residents are forced to become outspoken lobbyists, advocating for protection of their neighbourhoods, and not always finding much success.

We hear all the time from residents and politicians in town that they aren't against development, just inappropriate development.

It could be construed by outsiders as NIMBYism, but to those who live in those neighbourhoods, it's a matter of preserving them, and they have the right to fight for that.

Niagara-on-the-Lake is unusual in the lengths it goes to and the opportunity it offers for public input. Years ago, the town began holding what were called pre-information meetings, giving residents a chance to talk about developments in the early stages, rather than wait until the legislated planning meetings that are held when the town has already dealt with applications and staff is making recommendations to council.

Those meetings seem to have morphed into what is now called an open house, with developers explaining their proposals and residents having their say. Developers then have the opportunity to take those comments to heart and offer changes, but it seems to rarely be the case, likely because they feel reas-

sured provincial guidelines will allow them to do what they want.

If this seems like a rant, it is. It's very discouraging to hear good people having to battle for what they see as their right to enjoy their homes, when they have little chance of winning anything other than the smallest of concessions.

Is there a solution? A planner said recently those in her profession often feel they're hitting their heads against the wall trying to fight for what they believe to be right, with provincial legislation stopping them at every turn.

That's exactly how residents living nearby these proposed developments must feel as well.

Penny Coles
The Local

Snakes: love 'em or hate 'em, it's unlikely they're dangerous



Owen Bjorgan
Special to The Local

I was a teenager standing knee deep on a quiet shoreline of the Niagara River near the Queenston section of the mighty Niagara Gorge. As I fished and cast my line out into the current, the water carried what appeared to be a floating stick towards my legs.

But the physical protrusion sticking out of the water was not a piece of wood, and was instead a live northern water snake. As you read this, do you feel instant joy or instant horror? We'll talk about those emotions more in a moment.

It drifted harmlessly towards my legs, and I believe when it realized I was a living thing, it quickly dove under and swam right by my legs, bonking itself off of me before continuing to float downstream. Its beautifully-banded body swam with grace, a minute speck of life in a river whose

falls can fill one million bath tubs per minute.

I have rescued these robust yet harmless serpents from resort pools. I've watch them eat frogs, small fish and even a smaller water snake once. I've seen some so thick they could be mistaken for eels, and some so puny that a plastic straw would be considered stronger. They love quarries, creeks, rivers, the cottage shoreline and big lakes with enough natural habitat available. Simply put and aptly named, they are found near water.

Odds are you have seen the northern water snake at some point in your lifetime. Odds are massively lower that you have seen Ontario's second species of water snake, the Lake Erie water snake. That is unless you have ventured to Pelee Island or Middle Island, the only locations in Canada where this genetically distinct species is located.

While I was guiding a recent canoe tour in Wainfleet, I witnessed the classic binary responses of people as we paddled closer to four northern water snakes basking together

on a floating log. One guest was delighted to see the reptiles getting their necessary ultraviolet rays, and wanted me to steer her closer. Snakes, like other ectothermic (cold-blooded) organisms, don't bask in the sun because it feels nice or to catch a tan — this behaviour ensures they can regulate their body temperature, digestive and circulatory systems.

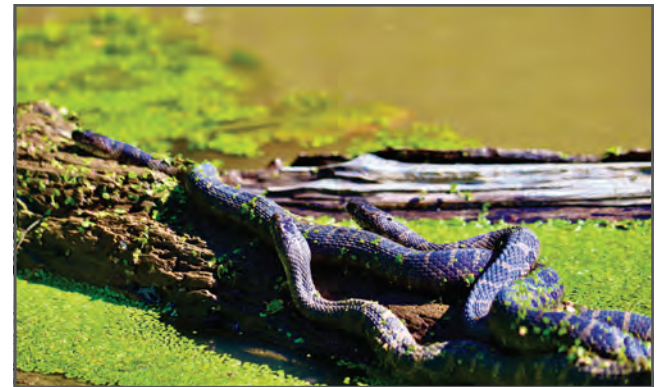
Another guest was open with me about being uncomfortable getting close to snakes, and desired to point the nose of the canoe in the opposite direction. I respect this feeling, and I have spent many years pondering this dichotomous and com-

plex emotional relationship between people and snakes — my favourite animals.

I don't judge a single soul for being uncomfortable around

snakes. Let's first consider how snakes have been portrayed in history and pop culture.

Continued on page 7



Three northern water snakes bask on a log during a guided canoe tour in Wainfleet. (Owen Bjorgan)

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View from the couch

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

The Cleaner series (Brit Box, BBC 2021) is dark comedy centering on a professional crime-scene cleaner who daily contends with blood and gore. He must work with friends and

acquaintances of the deceased to try and restore order and cleanliness. Cameo roles are given by Helena Bonham Carter, Zoe Wanamaker and other notables. These widely diverse tales of the aftermath of murder and mayhem are intriguingly interesting.

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

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

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Where's Ben?

Eden student Ben Foster continues to discover new locations in NOTL, wondering how familiar others may be with them. If you know where this photo was taken, email penny@notllocal.com. Last week, Ben was at Simcoe Park, listening to a jazz festival concert in the bandshell.

COMMENT

Local LETTERS

Don't miss out on 'unabashed fun' of Shaw production

Last weekend my lovely bride and I attended a magical Shaw Festival production, *The Game of Love and Chance*.

The basic plot of an old fashioned mistaken-identity play serves as a wonderful vehicle for zany improvisation from a cast of eight talented mummies.

It's a different production every time for audience and actors alike, because the first thing that happens each showing is that the ac-

tors roles are all allotted via audience dice tosses.

And then ... let Shaw Festival meet Second City!

Now, the entire cast were terrific, but I must take this opportunity to single out my longtime favourite, the legendary Deborah Hay.

She brings an enthusiasm and shameless vaudevillery to the proceedings that reminded this viewer of a young Carol Burnett.

Don't miss it! Especially because it takes place in the brand new Spiegel tent. It's a new Shaw venue, a beautiful luxurious carnival tent imported from Belgium, and it is worth seeing in itself.

In this bleak era of war, plague, famine, fire, flood and unaffordable housing, rare indeed is such unabashed fun and joy!

Will Wilson
NOTL

Local LETTERS

Coming to a neighbourhood near you?

The proposed three-storey condominium building to be constructed on the backyards, severed from numbers 727 and 733 King Street, came as a gut punch to neighbours who were promised a compatible build with respect to surrounding homes.

The builder, Josh Bice of Butler's Gardens Development touts "honesty" and "integrity" on the Bice website. However, Mr. Bice applied to the Town for an Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw Amendment, fully aware of the existing Zoning R1. After promising single detached homes to multiple neighbours, he has cho-

sen to build a totally inappropriate multi-unit condominium building for wealthy investors. One might ask what happened to honesty and integrity.

Residents in this three-storey building will look down on all the surrounding homes, patios and gardens. Neighbours' privacy will be destroyed. The building will cause light and noise pollution. It is 16 feet from the neighbour to the east and 20 feet from the northern neighbour who will face 12 balconies and 27 windows. It has 17 two-bedroom units and 18 parking spaces, one of which is handicapped parking. This

assumes that the residents will have no social life.

The building will set a precedent in Niagara-on-the-Lake for residentially-zoned neighbourhoods to be arbitrarily changed to allow multi-storey buildings anywhere in Old Town.

If the council approves Mr. Bice's application, beware ... this could happen near you.

Please encourage council to deny the Bice application. If council approves it, you too could have a building such as this in your neighbourhood.

M. Tamowski
NOTL

Damage of Hurricane Fiona obvious on PEI

David Gilchrist
The Local

After our two wonderful days on Cape Breton, and leaving Nova Scotia, we crossed back into New Brunswick and headed towards Confederation Bridge. As I studied the map, however, I realized that there was a ferry running over to Prince Edward Island which was much closer than the bridge. Looking into it online, we realized we could, if we hurried, be able to catch the next ferry just in time.

In less than an hour we arrived at the ferry terminal at Caribou. We hadn't been able to make a reservation, but it wasn't a problem as there was still room. We were also quite

pleased to find out that the ferry was free! "What?", we exclaimed.

"Oh, we'll get you on the way back on either the ferry or bridge," the ticket agent replied. We were directed to a lane to line up and I could see the MV Confederation making its way to the dock. Before too long, we were driving onto the ferry among RV's, cars and large transport trucks. It was a very pleasant trip across and was about 70 minutes in duration.

Our first sighting of the island province was a lighthouse sitting on the distinctively reddish coloured soil that P.E.I. is known for. As we drove off at the Woods Island terminal we set our sights on reaching the Cavendish Beach section of

Prince Edward Island National Park on the far side of the island where we had reservations.

The drive northwest took us past the outskirts of Charlottetown and through the countryside leading to the Cavendish Beach area. The views across the planted fields of potatoes were, to me, amazing. I just love the sight of the iron oxide coloured soil throughout the island province. As we approached the Cavendish area, we started to notice some of the results of Hurricane Fiona, which hit P.E.I. very hard last September. Inland, stands of trees at an unusual angle were quite noticeable at first. When we arrived at the campground, the results were very noticeable, both in the campground itself and along

the shoreline. One word would describe what we saw: 'Devastation'!

The news last fall described Hurricane Fiona as one of the "strongest storms in Canadian history". On P.E.I., thousands of trees were knocked down and the storm-driven waves eroded hundreds of kilometres along the coast. After setting up at our site, we walked to the beach and the effect that the hurricane had had was very noticeable. Swaths of trees just up from the beach were destroyed. I think the salt spray also contributed greatly to the tree destruction. The rocks along the shoreline seemed to have been pushed much closer to the small cliffs remaining at this beach and it left me wondering if bank swallows

would be able to nest there. The high dunes along this stretch of coast, off in the distance in both directions, remained intact, which was pleasant to see. As the recovery continues it will take decades of work and one is left to wonder about the impact of future storms.

An early morning sunrise was a wonderful sight before an enjoyable drive along the Gulf Shore Parkway past Orby Head and Cape Turner to North Rustico Harbour. Later that day, we enjoyed a drive to the city of Summerside where we walked on a lovely boardwalk along the shore and visited Spinnakers' Landing next to the Summerside Coast Guard Station. Continuing our drive from there to Cap-Egmont we enjoyed the

sights along Route 11, which included the 'Bottle House' and a huge church at Mont Carmel. With weather beginning to look threatening we returned to Summerside to have a late lunch at a wonderful take-away restaurant called Hoss's Fish and Chips. The menu board listing was large but we settled on fried clams and fish and chips, both of which were delicious. A heavy downpour made it necessary for us to eat in the car. We felt sorry for the pavers who were getting drenched as they repaired sections of the parking lot.

Returning to our campsite we had one last walk along the beach before settling down for the night. It was off to New Brunswick and another national park the next day.

We need our water snakes

Continued from page 6

The snake is seen as an entity of evil and deceit with the story of Adam and Eve. The terrifying mythical wrath of Medusa shows us a female who has snakes for hair. In modern entertainment, pivotal and jarring movie scenes include people falling into snake pits in faraway jungles, and let's not forget *Snakes On a Plane*. Even my childhood favourite, *The Jungle Book*, involves a snake who can't be trusted as it beguiles an innocent and lost child named Mowgli.

In all practicality and fairness, we must consider that well over half of the world's population lives within striking distance of potentially deadly snake species. The pun is intended, but also exaggerated. People simply wouldn't live in Australia, Florida, India or Thailand if dangerous snakes were that frequent a problem. However, these cultures also practise a no-nonsense approach to living with venomous species by using day-to-day precautions, no different than

us camping in bear country.

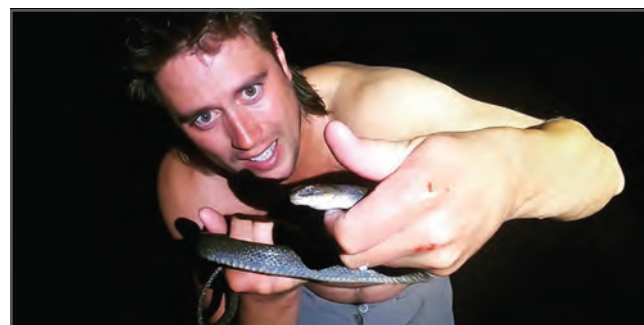
Maybe it is the lack of limbs and the false impression that snakes are slimy that also gets on our human nerves. We have to imagine that early bipeds were wary of slithering creatures near their bare feet and dwellings, so it is also likely that many modern humans carry a DNA package which associates snakes with a perceived threat. Once again, I totally understand peoples' uneasiness with snakes, and this is where education about our local species comes into play.

Back to our local water snake species, something we have no reason to worry about

in Niagara. They are completely harmless. They will only bite if picked up, akin to a child's pinch.

Our local water snakes eat just about whatever they can fit into their mouths and swallow whole. They also get eaten by coyotes, eagles, owls, larger fish, raccoons and foxes, thus playing an appreciably important role in the balance of the ecosystem's food web. Healthy food webs are directly linked to the quality of our water and soil, and therefore the quality of life in human society.

Like them, love them, or leave them — we need our water snakes.



Owen Bjorgan holding up the nationally rare Lake Erie water snake, spotted using a headlamp along a remote beach while filming his *Hidden Corners: Lake Erie* documentary.



Cavendish Beach shows the effects of Hurricane Fiona. (Photos by David Gilchrist)



A view of the countryside between Cavendish and Summerside.

Town to discuss more bylaw enforcement for next year

Kris Dube
The Local
Local Journalism
Initiative Reporter

Niagara-on-the-Lake plans to investigate the need for additional bylaw staff when 2024 budget talks take place.

This is a result of a motion from Coun. Maria Mavridis at last week's council meeting, directing staff to prepare a

business case to be presented ahead of next year's municipal spending plan coming to council.

"I'd like to ensure that for next season, we're prepared," she told fellow councillors and staff.

Her motion says the need for responsive bylaw enforcement during evenings and weekends "has become increasingly evident due to the number of issues that

arise outside regular business hours, and prompt responses to these issues are important to address concerns of community members."

An increase in residents' concerns has put "additional strain" on the existing bylaw division, she added.

The town currently employs four bylaw officers, plus four seasonal parking enforcement officers, as well as one dedicated officer for

short-term rentals.

"This may not be sufficient" to meet the short-term rental demands or other growing enforcement needs of the community," her motion reads.

Coun. Wendy Cheropita said issues were widespread, but added there have been fewer infractions lately.

"I don't see the justification in bringing in more staff when our numbers are going

down," she said.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor said she's hopeful the town can come up with "innovative approaches" when presenting ideas on how to create a greater bylaw presence, and that she doesn't believe creating full-time positions is the way to go.

Having officers available on a "standby" basis is one option she suggested, as well as working with Niagara College and its police foundations and

law and security programs to fill a void.

"I'm sure staff could be innovative in the way they approach this," she said.

Referring to the position that "metrics are down," Mavridis, who brought forward the motion, said this is likely "because we don't have enough bylaw officers to compare" numbers to the number of concerns that are out there.

Please say no to cemetery monument, says Black history expert

Kris Dube
The Local
Local Journalism
Initiative Reporter

A well-known researcher of Black history in the region is urging Niagara-on-the-Lake town council to refuse the offer of a proposed monument at the Negro Burial Ground.

During last week's council meeting, Rochelle Bush, a trustee and historian at Salem Chapel British Methodist Episcopal Church, a national historic site related to the Underground Railroad and Harriet Tubman, told councillors and staff that the 'Memorializing the People of the Fugitive Slave Ads: Barbados and Niagara' is "historically inaccurate."

The ideas behind this memorial "re-imagine the history and the facts by falsely connecting the history of enslaved people of African descent who resided in Barbados to the history of enslaved people" who resided in Niagara-on-the-Lake, under the guise of the African diaspora, said Bush in her presentation.

Descendants of West Africans were forced into slavery and dispersed throughout the Americas, she continued.

"Their lived experi-

ences were very different," Bush told council.

The majority of early Black residents in Niagara-on-the-Lake were from the U.S., and many were brought as slaves from the United States by White Loyalists.

Others were Black Loyalists who were once enslaved in the U.S., said Bush.

"A memorial that rewrites the narrative by connecting the history of enslaved people in Barbados to the history of enslaved people in Niagara-on-the-Lake" is incorrect, and also reduces the importance of the town's own early Black history, involving residents such as Herbert Holmes and Jacob Green, she said.

The town's early Black history is the "only Black history that should be included in a memorial."

Niagara-on-the-Lake "does not appear to take centre stage in the memorial sculpture," she added.

If a partnered memorial with another country such as Barbados is permitted at the cemetery, then "all the other African diaspora countries should be recognized with a memorial as well," said Bush, who also told council that the group behind the project asked for her to contribute research, but she



Although a new plaque refers to the cemetery as the Niagara Baptist Church Burial Ground, the Bereavement Authority of Ontario says the name can't be officially changed until it changes it. (Mike Balsom)

denied the request.

Lissa Paul, a Brock University professor who is part of the team proposing the monument, said in a statement that the Niagara-on-the-Lake project involving African-Canadian sculptor Quentin VerCetty has "no links at all to the history of enslavement in Barbados."

The connection was on

the "way archival research can result in bringing the lived experience of people to public consciousness and to act as a corrective to historical wrongs," said Paul, also providing further explanation about how the idea came to be.

"The NOTL project itself came out of work I did in Barbados on a British Library Endangered

Program Archives grant to digitize two Barbadian newspapers from the 18th and early 19th centuries," said Paul.

Those papers served as the core of two projects: a massive crowdsourcing project on "agents of enslavement" and on a series of daily podcasts, wrote Paul.

"The concept for the project also came out of a discussion with Alissandra Cummins, who is the director of the Barbados Historical Society, and has a long affiliation with the UNESCO Memory of the World project," she added.

Paul said she and her team were made aware "that the legacy of the archival work in Barbados may have caused confusion," resulting in the group changing a description of the project on its website.

"Our project originated with work done in Barbados on the recovery of people memorialized in the fugitive slave ads, then evolved in Niagara as a way of remembering and honouring the people of

African descent who lived, worked, worshipped, educated their children, contributed — and died — in the region in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries," it reads now.

Council voted to refer Bush's decision to the town's heritage committee and staff for further consideration.

In June, stage 1 of an archaeological assessment of the Negro Burial Ground was completed.

This assessment, commissioned by the town and funded through Friends of the Forgotten, a town fundraising committee, is the first step in mandatory due diligence required by the Bereavement Authority of Ontario in advance of potential improvements to the property, said a news release.

The study, conducted by Archaeological Research Associates, includes information about the geography and history of the area, the archaeological potential of the site, and strategies to proceed to stage 2.

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Maple Leafs star Mitch Marner ties the knot in NOTL

Mike Balsom
The Local

It seems the Toronto Maple Leafs like to get married in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Following in the footsteps of team captain John Tavares, who married Aryne Fuller in 2018 at Peller Estates Winery, 26-year-old right winger and alternate captain Mitch Marner and his longtime girlfriend Stephanie LaChance tied the knot Saturday at the exact same venue.

Reports say a number of current and former members of the Toronto Maple Leafs were in attendance, including Tyler Bozak, Connor Brown, Connor Carrick, Kyle Clifford, Jake Gardiner, Justin Holl, Nazem Kadri, Matt Martin, Auston Matthews, Jake Muzzin, Morgan Rielly and James van Riemsdyk.

As well, NHL sure-fire hall-of-famers Joe Thornton and his wife Tabea Pfendsack, as well as Patrick Marleau and his wife Christina, were at the wedding.

The Local's attempts to attain more information about the nuptials from Peller Estates were fruitless. A reporter was told that employees there were asked to sign non-disclosure agreements prior to the event. A request to speak to someone in Peller's management returned a "no comment" reply.

There are reports that the



Bride and groom Stephanie LaChance and Mitch Marner. (Instagram photos)



Teammate Auston Matthews looks on as Mitch Marner and Stephanie LaChance share their first dance as a married couple.

rehearsal dinner was held next door at Two Sisters Winery. The ceremony was conducted at Riverbend, while the celebration of the wedding took place at Peller Estates.

A number of guests shared photos of the wedding on Instagram, many of them taken with the vineyards of Niagara-on-the-Lake as the backdrop.



Tabea Pfendsack, Joe Thornton, Patrick Marleau and Christina Alvermaz Marleau at the wedding.



Tyler Bozak, Jake Gardiner, Matt Martin and James van Riemsdyk at NHLer Mitch Marner's wedding in NOTL.



APPRAISAL DAY AT THE RIVERBRINK ART MUSEUM

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Ukrainian family looking for a home in NOTL

Penny Coles
The Local

Luda Babin, her husband Vasili, and their children, Daniel and Valeria, are looking for a place to live.

The Ukrainian family fled from their homeland a little more than a year ago, leaving in their car early one morning at the urging of their parents to get the kids to safety. They ended up in one of those long lines of traffic seen on the news early in the attacks from Russia, as they headed to the border.

It was early enough in the war that Vasili was able to go with his family — at that time men were not yet prohibited from leaving.

They brought with them just four small suitcases, not telling their kids where they were going — not that they could have imagined where they would end up.

“When we left we didn’t know where we were going. Nobody knew. We were hoping it would be over in a month or two and we would go home. We got to Romania, and we thought we would get settled there and wait a little bit. But then it didn’t stop, and we realized we weren’t going home.”

Those were Luda’s words in May 2022. Today, she

couldn’t be happier about having settled in the village of St. Davids, with the help of friends, and the life they have made here.

Vasili, a car mechanic by trade, works at Covelli’s on Four Mile Creek Road, and looks for other jobs he can do after work.

Luda has a good job in Niagara Falls, and another at the event centre at Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery. Their two children, 10 and eight, are happy at St. Michael Catholic School, where there are several other children from Ukraine.

Canada has been good to them, Luda says.

The house on York Road that was offered to them rent-free, through a friend of a friend, was never meant to be long-term. Luda says she’s just grateful they were able to stay as long as they could. “This was a gift, being in this house for so long. We weren’t expecting to still be here.”

It’s an older home on a large piece of property slated for development, and it’s now time for it to come down.

When the family arrived, Luda felt from the beginning that they were on the right path, that they would work hard and make their life here. It feels safe, stable, and a good place to raise their

children and ensure they have a future, she says. She and Vasili “want to be helpful here.”

They have one car, and someone who looks after their children before and after school. And they love the area.

“We are thankful for all the good people who helped us to stay here. We hope to stay close by.”

But now, there is doubt about whether that will be possible, whether this is their future after all.

They are able to pay rent, she says, but they need to look after their family as well. The most they could manage would be about \$2,000 a month, “and I’m afraid we’re not going to find anything like that here. Prices are so high, especially for newcomers. And if we have to drive far for work, the gas prices are high.”

She says they can’t live here if they don’t have money to survive, and returning to Ukraine might be the only option, but isn’t their first choice.

“We just hope there will be some place for us to live.”

Her daughter, she says, cries when she thinks about having to go to another school. Both kids have become very involved in the community, playing tennis in



Luda, Vasili, Daniel and Valeria Babin celebrated their first Christmas in Canada at their home in St. Davids, which they have to leave. (Photos supplied)

St. Davids, and making good friends, including those who also have a Ukrainian background.

“We know of two families who have gone back to Ukraine. One family has three children, one has five.

And by the time they pay their rent they can’t afford to live here. We’re trying our best to stay, working hard. We hope we are able to live here. The war isn’t about to end,” says Luda.

She makes the point that

they are not considered refugees. They get no government assistance, and they don’t want that — they want to work and support their family in Canada.

“We just hope Canada wants us to stay.”

SAVE THE DATE

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The Babin family on the path along the lake by Queen’s Royal Park, “our happy place,” says Luda.

Pumphouse offers healing arts program for kids

Sharon Burns
The Local

Masha Yertushenko, a tall, articulate 12-year-old girl, moved here from “near Kyiv,” Ukraine, in the spring of 2022. She is enrolled in the Healing Arts for Kids program at the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre, designed for youth who have experienced challenges in their lives.

Yertushenko misses her “family, home town, and all

the activities” she used to take part in, she said. “Ukraine is my family.” Having access to art classes provided by Pumphouse art teacher Freddie Ratkovsky, might make her a little less homesick.

“Art, in general, not only provides healing, but offers numerous benefits, including building confidence and sense of self, improving communication skills, as well as exploring new ideas and thinking creatively,” said Aimee Medina,

marketing and communications manager at the Pumphouse.

“These benefits can be applied in all aspects of their lives as they grow — helping to shape these young people into tomorrow’s leaders.”

“Children are exposed to all art activities, including painting, pottery and textile art. Anything art-related,” said Medina. “They get to use quality art supplies and they get to

see exhibits in our galleries, and it’s also substantiated with art history and theory.”

More than 20 different children access the program weekly, which is sponsored by the Rotary Club of Niagara-on-the-Lake and the Niagara Community Foundation. There is no charge to families for this in-studio summer art program.

Nine year-old Myra Yermeni, from Odesa, is another of several children from Ukraine who takes part in the healing program. She proudly describes her painting of things that make her happy: a stick-figure candy man, flowers, the moon and stars.

Ratkovsky’s budding artists work on a variety of media, including sculpture, drawing, painting and printmaking. Currently her group of artists are working on a mural project for the food bank space in Newark Neighbours’ new site in Virgil. Ratkovsky called it “positive art engagement for the community.”

Healing Arts for Kids is specifically for children who currently live in the Niagara region and are between the ages of four and 12 years old.

The program runs weekly from early July until the end



Pumphouse student Myra Yermeni, Aimee Medina from the Pumphouse, art teacher Freddie Ratkovsky and student Masha Yertushenko from the Healing Arts program. (Sharon Burns)



RiverBrink Museum has been running a summer camp: with Jasper, organizer Asta McCann, Myra, Nicholas, Cassandra, Arielle and below, Vitalina and Mariia. A fundraiser helped pay for three Ukrainian girls, Myra, Vitalina and Mariia, to attend the camp in July. (Supplied)

of summer. Nominations can be submitted by organizations such as schools and Big Brothers Big Sisters. Forms may be accessed at office@niagara-pumphouse.ca. Students can come for one session, or for repeated sessions.

“We do see some children return to the program because they have enjoyed it,” said Medina.

Parents or guardians can register children for upcoming sessions at Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre. Spaces are available for Art Camp, suitable for ages nine through 12, which runs from Aug. 14 to 18 and Aug. 21 to 25. The Pumphouse will have a tent at the Peach Festival on Saturday, Aug. 12.

After-school pottery classes begin in September.



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Carnival suffered from rain storms, but had its sunny moments

Penny Coles
The Local

Last year's "exceptional" attendance at the St. Davids Lions Carnival would have been hard to beat in any situation, but the uncertain weather of this summer made it impossible.

There were some great times at the annual event, but forecasts of rain kept people at home and sudden downpours sent them home, says Lion Ken Lamb, organizer of music for what was a five-day event, extended to Sunday as a celebration of the carnival's 60th anniversary.

"The weather just did not cooperate. And when you do an outdoor event, you live or die by the weather. It's frustrating, because a lot of work goes into it, and in the end, it all hinges on the weather."

Or, as club president Susan Snider, known for always looking at the bright side, said, "in everyone's life a little rain must fall," and it did fall at the carnival.

Opening night, Wednesday, was affected by the rain, and both Saturday afternoon, typically the busiest day of the carnival, and Sunday late afternoon

and evening, with a special Country at the Carnival music event, rain drove people away.

"Last year we had a stellar year, with the pandemic behind us," says Snider. But this year, many annual events found it hard to top 2022, and at the carnival, she explains, in addition to the rain, the rides are on a smaller scale, and they just don't get the crowds they used to.

"But we are very fortunate. We can't complain about a bit of rain. And although the weather affects us, it never dampens the Lion spirit."

Snider says there was one couple attending who remarked they have not missed a year yet — she's disappointed she didn't get their name, and would love for them to get in touch with one of the Lions, so she can thank them.

The first-time ever dog show drew a great turn-out, and when the rain came Saturday afternoon, it was moved under the bingo tent.

And the great food never lets people down — if nothing else, says Snider, "they will come to eat at the carnival. And the bands

were fantastic. Ken (Lamb) is amazing. He's such a great entertainment entrepreneur, and his heart is in a great place."

With entertainment offered Sunday afternoon and evening, the Lions food booths were planned to be open, but the ride company was expected to pack up and leave.

However, "they felt so bad because of the weather, they stayed and offered rides for \$3. And people took advantage of it, even though it was only through social media that anybody knew about it," says Snider.

The Lions Park is a great venue, she adds, "and we need to use it more, to provide more for the community. In the future, I think you'll see more going on at the St. Davids Lion Park."

Lamb thanks the generous businesses that help support the carnival, ensuring "we don't lose money."

But it was not the financial success the club hoped for, "and we might do a few more events to build that back up to where we would like to be."

And "hey," he adds, "there's always next year."



Six members of the Simons family volunteering: Heather Simons, Alan Simons, Nancy Simons, Wayne Simons, Michelle Burrows and Carole Mullen. (Mike Balsom)



St. Davids Lions Club member Allen Snider, now past international director, with Jessica Epp, Susan Snider, and MPP Wayne Gates handing out a 60th anniversary certificate. (Supplied)



Jasper and Talia Graves enjoying a ride on a rocket. (Mike Balsom)



Nello, Dean and Landon Pagnotta trying their luck at the fish pond. (Mike Balsom)



Caiden Cox takes a shot while Ben Harpur of the New York Rangers looks on. Although a good crowd came out to meet Harpur for photos and autographs, Wednesday evening rain shortened the event. (Mike Balsom)



Cousins Cara Paterson and Luca Crievellier compete for prizes. (Mike Balsom)



Lion Mike Davey calling bingo. (Mike Balsom)

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Two Lion Club members from Sedgfield, South Africa, were visiting friends in Niagara Falls, heard about the carnival, and presented a traditional banner from their club. "Lions from around the world . . . pretty cool," says St. Davids club president Susan Snider. (Supplied)

First-time dog show at carnival a great success

Continued from page 1

Judges Wayne Gates, MPP, Susan Snider, Lions club president, and Martin Forster, past president, made notes and conferred continually during the hour-long show.

They chose Bib, an American Coated Terrier, as best in show. Bib is owned by Linda and Mel Hughes from Niagara-on-the-Lake.

John Bertram from St. Catharines entered his Australian Cattle Dog, Joey, in the most handsome category. Born deaf, Joey sported a jaunty red bow tie.

Waiting for contestants to make it to the stage, Kelly played music which corresponded to the category. Of course, Puppy Love played before the 'youngest' category.

Queenston Road residents Kaliana and her mother, Anysa Neal, showed Remington, a young red fox Labrador retriever puppy who fell asleep in his owner's arms during judging.

Top three dogs in each category won prizes, some of which were donated by Virgil's Pet Valu. Minor Brothers sponsored a water station. The \$10 donation entry fee for each entry will be donated to Lions of Canada Foundation for dog guides.



Kevin and Scout (Photos by Sharon Burns)



Sean shows off Rocky.



Dog show judges Susan Snider and Martin Forster, St. Davids Lions, and MPP Wayne Gates.



Anysa with Remington



Alison with Poncho, a Dogo Argentino.



Mary Jane and Donny McGibbon with Hattie, who won the Beatrice Best of Show award. (Supplied)



Each of the three French bulldog puppies snuggled together were entered in different categories, and all are available for adoption.

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Celebrate Seniors Golden Years Guide

What is RSV? Why older Canadians need to know about it



(NC) Of all the things you can get sick with, respiratory syncytial virus – known as RSV – might not be top of mind. But it’s an important one to be aware of, especially for older adults.

The common, highly contagious virus is sometimes perceived as a bug that children pick up in daycare or other group settings and typically presents itself similar to a cold or flu. However, RSV can make anyone sick, and older adults are among those at increased risk for serious infection. In fact, most deaths attributed to RSV occur in adults 65 and older.

Underlying conditions common in adults such as diabetes and lung or heart disease, can increase the risk of serious effects from RSV, but even those without chronic conditions are more vulnerable to infections and health complications than younger people. This is because of the natural decline in how well our immune system functions as we age.

The immune system – like our vision and metabolism – typically peaks in young adulthood and then starts a slow and steady decline, which leaves older adults more susceptible to infections and health complications. While preventative options for RSV are in development, there’s currently no vaccine or specific treatment available in Canada for adults. Further, immunity gained from previous exposure to RSV is short-lived, making it possible to catch the virus again and again.

Without vaccines or treatment, practicing general infection control measures to avoid it can help. Washing your hands frequently, not touching your face, covering your coughs and sneezes in public, regularly disinfecting surfaces you touch often and avoiding time spent close to anyone who is ill are all things you can do to help reduce your risk.

Over 50? Then you’re at risk of catching the shingles virus

(NC) We all experience pain from time to time, whether it’s from a stubbed toe or a mild burn on the hand. Typically, such pain goes away fairly quickly. However, when confronted with certain health conditions, escaping pain can be difficult.

While it might be tempting to brush aside the idea that you could develop chronic pain, you might not know that one-in-three people are at risk in their lifetime for a condition that can cause ongoing pain for weeks or even years.

Shingles is an infection that occurs when the virus that causes chickenpox reactivates in your body, and it’s most likely to happen in those of us over age 50 and those of us who are immuno-

compromised by a health condition or treatment. This is because you’re more vulnerable to it when your immune system gets weaker.

The first symptom is usually pain, tingling or burning that occurs on one side of the body, followed by a rash and

blisters. The pain can be severe enough to interfere with work and other everyday activities.

While most cases of shingles last about two to four weeks, some people can experience chronic pain long after the rash has healed.

While there is no cure

for shingles, getting the shingles vaccine, which is recommended for adults over the age of 50 by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, can greatly reduce your risk of developing this disease and suffering from the pain related to it.



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Celebrate Seniors Golden Years Guide

3 lesser-known wonders of walking

(NC) Most of us know that walking improves heart health, boosts immunity and can help with weight loss. But, did you know there are additional reasons to embrace walking?

Here are three lesser-known benefits to inspire your next stroll.

It helps promote muscle recovery

As a low-strain activity, one benefit of walking is the release of muscle tension, muscle stabilization and increased blood flow, which can reduce the chance of soreness after an intense workout. Whether you include high-intensity workouts in your weekly schedule or not, walking is a step in the right direction to overall physical health.

It keeps you regular

The colon responds to physical activity, which is why it's important to keep your body moving throughout the day. Walking will help with moving



along your digestive system. However, if you do experience occasional constipation despite finding

the time for a daily walk, consider a gentle laxative like Senokot that provides relief in six to 12 hours.

It relieves joint pain

Have knee and hip pain? It may seem counterintu-

itive to move the parts of your body that experience discomfort, but walking can help strengthen

leg muscles around your joints, therefore protecting them and easing any pain.

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Celebrate Seniors Golden Years Guide

3 helpful tips to boost your immune system as you age

(NC) As we age, our immune system weakens, which is why older people are more susceptible to getting sick and often take longer to recover from illness than they did before. So, the older we get, the more important it is to give your immune system the support it needs.

Here are three ways you can do that.

Eat well

The food you eat is the fuel your body needs to function. Consuming a variety of foods, including plenty of fruits and vegetables, to get all the nutrients you need while minimizing the amount of processed foods you eat will help you stay healthy.

Smoking and drinking alcohol both negatively affect your immune sys-

tem, so you should avoid or minimize consumption of both if you're looking to boost your immunity.

Remember adult vaccines

Throughout one's life, vaccination including adult vaccinations provides effective protection against disease. While many of us are familiar with childhood vaccinations, they don't provide lifelong immuni-

ty against every disease. As well, some vaccines are prescribed only for adults.

Adults require helper, or booster shots to maintain immunity for some conditions. And, if you didn't get all your shots as a child, you could still be at risk of infection from vaccine-preventable diseases.

For example, if you are among the 90 per cent of Canadian adults over

50 years old who've had chickenpox – you should consider a vaccine to help prevent shingles. It's a painful disease caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox.

Exercise regularly

Regular exercise improves your cardiovascular health, lowers blood pressure and helps protect against a variety of viruses

and diseases.

A balanced diet and regular exercise will also help you maintain a healthy body weight, which in turn helps boost your immune system.

While exercise is important, allowing your body to rest is equally valuable. Sleep is the tool your body uses to recharge its batteries, including your immune system.

5 reasons to eat more strawberries



(NC) We all know we should eat more fruits and veggies. But did you know strawberries are one of the healthiest fresh fruits? Here are five reasons why eating this popular berry is a smart choice.

1. Immunity support:

Just one cup of strawberries has 95 per cent of vitamin C for the day, which supports the immune system.

2. Nutritional power:

Strawberries are also packed with other beneficial nutrients including potassium and fibre.

3. Digestive support:

A serving of eight strawberries provides three grams of both soluble and insoluble fibre.

4. Natural sweetness:

Sweet-tasting and low in calories, strawberries offer a treat for your tastebuds without excessive sugar.

5. Versatility:

Strawberries can work for any snack or mealtime from a mid-morning energy boost to a healthy evening snack or a delicious accessory to a sweet or savoury recipe.

Canadians can enjoy the delicious taste and health benefits of fresh strawberries year-round from strawberries grown in California. Find more nutritional information at californiastrawberries.com.

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Celebrate Seniors Golden Years Guide

Colombia Truly Shines as a Gem of South America!

Colombia is a small but very geographically diverse country that offers wonderful opportunities to experience all the very best of South America and the Caribbean. From the tropical beaches along the Caribbean coast to the picturesque, mountainous coffee region, to one of the country's greatest natural wonders and beyond, Colombia has become a safe and much sought-after winter destination. It is a melting pot of cultures and ethnicities showcased in its friendly people, colonial heritage, diverse landscapes, fine cuisine and unique experiences.

Each of the country's regions boasts its own rhythm, a different vibe, and wonderful surprises. Craig Travel has created a leisurely-paced journey, February 19 - March 3, where guests will enjoy three nights in each centre visited, allowing for less packing and more time to savour the sights, sounds and colour of this magical country. Comfortable, well-located boutique hotels and inns and meals in unique, highly rated restaurants ensure a more intimate and experience-filled program.

This journey is an immersion into the authentic joie de vivre - the exuberant enjoyment of life, Colombian style. In Bogota, the Plaza de Bolivar highlights the architectural beauty of the City Hall, the Congress of Colombia and the venerable Primada Cathedral. The Gold Museum has one of the world's finest collections of pre-historic gold and the Botero Museum houses the works of Colombia's most renowned artist, Fernando Botero. In the nearby villages, find examples of the country's rich colonial past and Spanish influences such as historic cobble-stoned squares, towering cathedrals and magnificent haciendas.

Just a short flight from the capital we find the city of Armenia and the lush greenery of the coffee region; home to a wide variety of flora and fauna as well as the morning brew for which it gets its name. Visit a botanical garden, an oasis of natural beauty and home to a butterfly farm. Travel by jeep through Cocora Valley, a region dotted with hundreds of giant wax palm trees, Colombia's national tree.



Guatapé Pixabay

Venturing deep into the heart of Manizales, you will discover Finca Romelia, an enchanting sanctuary teeming with biodiversity and captivating natural wonders. Here, you'll be mesmerized by 6,000 orchid plants, 160 bird species and a fascinating variety of carnivorous plants. In Medellín, often referred to as "city of eternal spring" because of its year round pleasant weather, a cable car ride takes you high above the city for spectacular panoramic views of the city. No trip to Colombia would be complete without a visit to the sunny Caribbean coast and historic Cartagena, with its massive fortresses and exquisite colonial buildings. The vibrant colours of architecturally beautiful buildings, overflowing flower boxes, tiny courtyards that peak from city streets, music emanating sweet sounds from charming cafes...this is the welcoming charm of Cartagena. A visit to the Convent of Santa Cruz de la Popa offers stunning views of the sweeping cityscape and is a must-see.

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Christmas in NOTL comes early with visits from Santas

Mike Balsom
The Local

Santas, Mrs. Santas, elves, pixies and Saint Nicks from Denmark, North Carolina and all points across Canada strolled down Niagara-

on-the-Lake's Queen Street shopping district last week, scoping out some ideas to bring back to the workshop for the elves that didn't make the trip from the North Pole.

They were in the region for the World Santa

Claus Congress, the first time the annual gathering of professional Christmas cheer-bringers has ever been hosted in Canada.

"It used to be held in Copenhagen, Denmark," said Peter Boxall Jr., aka Santa

Claus, who lives in Burlington, Ont., when he's not supervising the elves or guiding his reindeer around the world. "The sponsor there pulled out after COVID. So my sister and I took the opportunity to bring the con-

gress here to celebrate our dad's 90th birthday. There are 22 of us here this week."

The Boxalls are known in Burlington as the Santa family, as Peter Sr. has also been donning the red and white suit for decades. Besides the two Santas, the family also includes an elf and two Mrs. Clauses.

The World Santa Claus Congress takes place each year during the week of July 24. Participants are expected to come to all activities, such as shopping in NOTL on a day when temperatures reached 29 degrees Celsius, in full Santa regalia. Most years one of the participants is crowned the World's Best Santa, though that didn't happen at the 2023 event.

Boxall Jr. told The Local that the Santas spent last Monday morning on Clifton Hill in Niagara Falls, where they posed in front of the

Skywheel, and took an afternoon tour of the Niagara Parks Power Station.

Tuesday was spent bringing Christmas cheer to the animals at Safari Niagara.

It took hours for the group to make much progress as they moved down Queen Street. Fittingly, they were especially popular outside the Christmas Store.

"We've been stopped on the street here just about every five minutes," laughed Boxall Jr., as passersby squeezed in to take their own photos of the jolly tourists.

Following the Queen Street stroll, the group of Clauses was off to Avondale on Stewart Road to enjoy some ice cream, then it was back to Niagara Falls for their wrap-up gala.

After washing the sticky ice cream out of their beards, of course.



The World Santa Claus Congress paid a visit to Niagara-on-the-Lake last week, a trip organized by Peter Boxall Jr. (centre, green vest). (Mike Balsom)

Enjoy traditional Scottish fun at Celtic gathering

Penny Coles
The Local

Trish Spagnol jokes about being married to an Italian, but her maiden name is MacIntyre, and she and her husband Dave both enjoy Scottish traditions — they are people who know how to have fun, she says.

As a member of the St. Andrews Society, Spagnol is helping to organize its upcoming Ceilidh (pronounced kaley), a Scottish event for "Celtics or Celtic wannabes," she says, for those even just a little curious about haggis, and for anyone who enjoys a good time.

She says for years Dave

would look at a haggis and refuse to try it, but once he did, he was surprised to find how much he liked it, and now keeps asking when they're going to have it again.

Trish isn't promising there will be one at the upcoming event, "but there might just be a surprise treat," she jokes.

"You don't have to be Scottish" to attend the event, or to join the St. Andrews Society, she says. In fact, the reason for hosting the Ceilidh is to encourage others to learn about the Scottish culture, their food, music and dances, and how much fun they have when they get together. "Everyone has

a wee bit of Scottish in them," she adds.

The club has been around for a while, with an older, declining membership, and she would love to see more young people come out — she is sure they will enjoy the dancing and music.

It will be held at the McFarland Park Pavilion, on the Niagara River Parkway.

There will be Scottish dancers performing, from the Audrey Watkins School of Highland Dance, and they will also be teaching some of the dance steps, says Trish — everyone will have a chance to try them out.

Tom Keeler and Celtic Cross, a Ceilidh band, will

provide the music.

There will also be lawn games, and a catered meal.

The Ceilidh is Sunday, Aug. 20, from 4 to 9 p.m.

Tickets are \$30, \$10

for kids, and are available online at ceilidhnotl2023.eventbrite.ca.



Scottish dancers will be entertaining at the McFarland Park Pavilion, as they did at the last Ceilidh held there. They will even teach a few basic steps. (Supplied)

LemonAiders celebrate



Young LemonAiders help FACS Niagara CEO Anna Bozza and Mountainview Building Group President Mark Basciano reveal the results of this year's Mountainview LemonAID Day fundraiser for FACS. (Supplied)

Filmmaker Peter Sacco racking up music video awards

Mike Balsom
The Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake filmmaker, author and psychology professor Peter Sacco's latest music video is turning heads at film festivals around the world.

Pure Heart, a video for a new song by Canadian music legend Ray Lyell, has won 15 Best Music Video awards and been selected for 20 different film festivals. It will show this September at the Toronto Independent Film and the Toronto International Nollywood Film Festivals, both linked to the larger Toronto International Film Festival.

The part-time McMaster University faculty member got into making films at the urging of a friend who worked in the industry as a production manager and ADR (automated dialogue replacement) supervisor on well-known films such as *Pretty Woman*, *Braveheart* and *Pleasantville*.

"His name was Joe Mayer," Sacco tells The Local. "He had read some of my books and he suggested I try to get someone to pick up the options on making some of them into films. I didn't know how to do any of it, so I just sort of figured it all out myself."

Sacco threw himself into learning what equipment he needed and then taught himself how to use it.

"I didn't go to school for this, I've never even taken a course," he says.

He teamed up with Cogeco's director of programming Jack Custers to produce a popular program called *Paranormal Profilers* that ran on the cable station from 2012 to 2015, and began producing his own films the following year.

Since then, Sacco estimates he's completed almost 30 films, including short and feature length documentaries as well as music videos, many for Gordon Deppe, lead singer and songwriter for Hamilton-based band Spoons.

"Gordon has been a friend of mine for a long, long time," says Sacco. "About five years ago, he approached me and asked me to do a video. I had him on *Paranormal Profilers* as an investigator. He wanted to do a video on that theme for one of his new songs."

The video for the song, called *The First & Last Time*, features Deppe and his longtime musical partner Sandy Horne wandering through Willowbank in Queenston on the hunt for paranormal activity.

More videos for the new wave band followed,



Filmmaker Peter Sacco and Ray Lyell on set by the Niagara River near Queenston. (Supplied)

including an ingenious one for their song *New Day New World*, which he stitched together using submissions collected from people around the world during one of the pandemic lockdowns.

In the meantime, he shot a series of short videos under the theme of *Historical Niagara*. These have featured many NOTL locations, including Fort George, the Laura Secord Heritage Trail, Fort Mississauga and the Court House on Queen Street.

The new music video was also shot locally with the help of co-director Peter Dychtiar.

"Part of it was shot along the Niagara River, not too far from the old railroad bridge," he explains. "We shot the rest of it in my backyard on York Road."

The local footage is weaved together with stock video imagery provided under contract by Pexels and Pond5.

Lyell, who became a pastor about 15 years ago, tells The Local his inspiration for the song came from The Beatitudes, the summary of Jesus' teachings found in the Gospel of Matthew.

"I didn't grow up in the church," says the musician, whose first hit was the single *Another Man's Gun* back in 1989. "A lot of the songs that led me along my own divine path weren't Christian songs. *I Want to Know What Love Is*, by Foreigner, the chorus from the Doobie Brothers' *Long Train Running*. Their messages just hit me between the eyes. There's a lot of lessons there."

As the video for *Pure Heart* begins, the words *A Redemption Story* are fea-

tured on screen. Sacco's interpretation of Lyell's lyrics takes on many of the issues plaguing society today, including the fentanyl crisis, human trafficking and hate crimes.

"The message is anti-hate, anti-racism, the whole gambit of it," Sacco explains. "There's so much human trafficking going on in the world. I know it first-hand because I have volunteered with Child-Find Ontario, and I've consulted for police services at all levels. I've seen it with my own eyes."

Lyell, who lives in Dunville, says he left the visual element for the video pretty much up to Sacco.

"I respect the way Peter went with this," says Lyell. "Sure, if I did the video it might have been completely different, not necessarily any better or worse. It's always great to get someone else's take on it. It's really cool to see Peter's thoughts take form, it's really outside of the box in a way I never would have thought of."

It's an emotional video, and that has led some to reach out to Sacco to thank him for making it.

"A lot of women, especially, have reached out to me," he says. "They tell me the video made them cry. The wife of an old friend I haven't spoken to in many years told me how moved and crushed she was by the video."

Sacco, a member of the Ontario Association of Counselors, Consultants, Psychometrists, and Psychotherapists, as well as the Canadian Mental Health Association, has submitted *Pure Heart* to film festivals in Hollywood, Turkey, Melbourne, Vancouver, the U.K. and Ukraine.

"I basically run on zero budget," adds Sacco. "I pay out of my own pocket to enter these film festivals. About nine of them have waived the fee because they really love the video and want to screen it at their festivals."

Since 2016, Sacco estimates his relentless sub-

missions to film festivals has resulted in more than 200 selections and awards for his work.

Up next for him is another collaboration with Lyell and Dychtiar.

"We're going to shoot it in Kitchener," he says. "There's a covered bridge there that goes over this

creek. It's neat to see the Mennonite women there singing on Sundays in their traditional attire. We'll shoot there and see where that takes us."

To see *Pure Heart*, visit youtu.be/5xYVPR1olcc, or visit Sacco's YouTube page at youtube.com/@historicalniagaratvshow5036.

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Literacy, numeracy skills taught to Stratus workers

Sharon Burns
The Local

Farmworkers get up as early as 5 a.m. and start work shortly after a cup of coffee. This summer in particular, the heat, humidity and rain have made many work days quite challenging. But none of this stops six Stratus Vineyards farmworkers from spending their free time on Tuesday evenings improving their literacy and numeracy skills.

Kevin McDonald, from Saint Ann Parish, Jamaica, said the program, offered through Niagara Regional Literacy Council, “refreshes my mind, because,” he adds with a large smile, “I’ve been out of school for quite a while.”

Andrel Lawson, who has been flying here from Westmoreland, Jamaica, for the past nine years, heard about the literacy program and joined as soon as he could. Newcomer Delan Samuels, from Saint Mary, Jamaica, decided to join to “try to improve myself more in reading, as well as much more that is offered to me.”

Samuels is referring to not only literacy, but also numeracy skills that are sharpened during each 90 minute session by tutor Suzanne, a former teacher, who has chosen not to have her last name used for this article. This is Suzanne’s second year tutoring, and she is invested in helping out.

“It’s the teacher in me, the desire to share that knowledge with others,” said Suzanne. “Also the sadness that I feel when I see people who haven’t done so well at school or haven’t had the opportunity, or struggled for whatever reason.”

“I realize that life as an adult becomes a lot more difficult when they don’t have good basic literacy and numeracy skills,” said Suzanne. “And it’s not a hard thing to gain. So it’s giving the guys confidence because some, they’re not young anymore



Kevin McDonald, Delan Samuels, Oral Walters, Andrel Lawson and Linton Beale are some of the men from Stratus Vineyards taking the literacy classes offered by the Niagara Region Literacy Council. (Sharon Burns)

and so someone can tend to perhaps feel, ‘well, it’s a bit late. I’ve missed the boat,’ but that’s not true.”

“I’ve been interested in literacy for a long time because of my teaching background and just wanted to have some involvement with helping other people in the areas of literacy. I did some research online and I searched for adult literacy and this organization came up, Niagara Regional Literacy Council.”

Christine Restivo has been the executive director of the literacy council since 1991. “NRLC is a community-based not-for-profit charitable organization dedicated to increasing literacy through upgrading basic educational skills,” said Restivo. They are funded through the Ministry of Labor, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, United Way, and OLG Bingo.

Restivo and two other employees assess learners, train tutors and pair the two according to best fit and geography. The literacy council provides learners and tutors with all the resources that are needed, but that doesn’t stop tutors like Suzanne from building lessons around the learners’ goals, such as sending an email and opening a points card account.

Suzanne explained that the resources are helpful for someone who is new at tutoring. “It wasn’t like you had to plan your own activities, yet you were free to supplement. There was a lot of room for playing games or adding other things, but you certainly had enough to start with. You didn’t go in cold.”

Originally, the literacy council received a call from a Jamaican farmworker from Stratus who was interested in improving his literacy and numeracy skills. Restivo said the council does not have any other farmworkers or wineries involved with the program, but they are willing to provide services if they have enough volunteer tutors.

“Tutors are trained via a 12-hour workshop which teaches them sensitivity, the use of all of our materials, and the best way to teach an adult. People interested in becoming a tutor should have time flexibility, and a sensitivity to teaching adults who have, because of circumstance or other, low literacy and numeracy skills,” explained Restivo.

Tutors and learners meet in public places. The literary council offices are available for tutoring sessions, and others have found libraries and

community centres convenient to their home locations. The Stratus farmworkers meet in one of three meeting spaces in the winery on Niagara Stone Road.

Linton Beale, from Manchester, Jamaica, has “been here 12 years now, and I have been in the program from the beginning. I’m interested to learn. It helps me a lot, you know?”

Oral Walters, hailing from Clarendon, Jamaica, has been here for 19 years, and he said that the program helps him with reading and pronunciation.

Sabado Townsend, also originally from Clarendon, moved to St. Catharines several years ago to raise his children. He, like the others, has been involved in the tutoring program since its inception at Stratus.

Suzanne said she has noticed a progression of learning from the beginning of last year (her first year tutoring) to the end of this year. “It was a short period of time because of working around harvest and different things like that. I still saw a real, definite progression. They all improved, and just even in confidence too, and in being willing to read out loud, or willing to have a go at certain questions.”

“I could see some real pride

there,” said Suzanne. “It was actually quite a humble sort of pride, but I could see week by week as they scored higher and higher on mental math quizzes, that they really felt proud of themselves. They could see their own improvements.”

There is another reason Suzanne, a newcomer herself to Niagara-on-the-Lake, volunteers her time. “There’s a part of me that wants to reach out to people who haven’t grown up here, haven’t been born here, and just be friends with them to help create a community.”

Liam Reeves, vineyard manager at Stratus Vineyards, said that the literacy program for farmworkers from Jamaica started about 10 years ago. Farmworkers can choose to abstain from the literacy program, however, they are paid for their time spent learning.

“It’s an opportunity for the guys to learn, and then, if it helps them be able to do their work here a little bit better too, that’s awesome. So we kind of see it as a win-win, you know,” said Reeves.

“At the end of the day,” he added, “there’s a lot of talk about how a lot of offshore workers get treated. But we are very conscious about making sure that these guys are comfortable while they’re here and are treated properly. Learning is an opportunity for them.”

“They don’t have an easy job. They work long hours. They work long weeks and they generally are more upset when I give them an extra day off versus an extra day at work. Because they’re getting paid, they feel like they’re able to actually go and learn,” Reeves said.

Hannah Burns, a Grade 11 student at Eden High School, has also been volunteering as a tutor’s assistant. “Personally, I helped with the smaller tasks, such as putting up papers and writing things for them to see, handing out papers and generally keeping things organized,”

she said.

Besides achieving community service hours as part of her graduation requirements, Burns enjoyed her time tutoring the farmworkers. “I think it’s fun. Teaching is something that’s in my back pocket for a career and it was fun to experience what it would be like,” she said.

The literacy council, which services all of the Niagara Region, is also proud to announce its new Skills for Success program, which offers employment related digital and computer instruction, such as job search, study skills, staying safe online, apprenticeship and trades information, and more.

“We will be working with underrepresented groups to help them obtain new or better employment opportunities,” said Restivo.

With some openings to fill due to retirement, the council is looking for a few board members. Some requirements include meeting 10 times a year, and a general understanding of how charities work. Board members also take the 12-hour tutor workshop so they understand the materials used by the literacy council, however, it is not expected that they become tutors themselves.

“We also teach pre-GED (General Education Development test, signifying a high school equivalency) for people wanting to take their GED exams,” added Restivo.

Those interested in either accessing the tutor program, in being a volunteer tutor or a board member can call 905-684-3500 ext 550.

“We’re desperate for tutors in all areas of the Niagara Region,” Restivo said.

Reporter Sharon Burns is one of three generations helping farmworkers with literacy. A retired principal, she helps teach the farmworkers at Stratus Winery. Christine Restivo is her mother, and Hannah is her daughter.

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Junior B Athletics fight to sudden death finish

Mike Balsom
The Local

As captain of the St. Catharines Junior B Athletics lacrosse team, Jaden Patterson couldn't be more proud of the way his team played this season.

After finishing third in the 12-team Ontario Junior B Lacrosse League's Western Conference regular season, the A's headed to the playoffs, where they dispensed with the Hamilton Bengals in five games before sweeping the Elora Mohawks in three straight.

In the conference final, they faced the first-place Six Nations Rebels, and took them to five games before being ousted in a thrilling double-overtime loss at the Iroquois Lacrosse Arena. Four of the five games in the series were decided by one goal, three of them in overtime.

"As a unit, I think we played really well," says the Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School graduate. "The end result leaves a sour taste in my mouth because we got so close to achieving our goal. But I'm definitely proud of all of us. We did really well in the playoffs, and I think no one expected us to do that well against Six Nations."

The Rebels had the A's on the ropes in the best-of-five series after winning the first two games 13-12 and 9-8, both overtime victories. But the Athletics refused to give up, taking game three 7-6 on the road, then hammering the Rebels 13-3 back home at Canada Games Park. It was the only decisive victory for either team in the series.

In the final game last Friday, a slow start put the A's be-

hind 5-2 at the end of the second. Twenty minutes later, they headed into the third period down 9-3.

Fellow Niagara-on-the-Lake native Liam Dietsch, a defenceman on the Athletics, says coach Alex Tamas didn't let the team hang their heads after 40 minutes of play.

"He just said 'believe,' Dietsch tells The Local. "It's really hard to bear down when you're down like that, hard to get motivated, to focus on the game. But I think we were all on the same page. For some of the guys it could have been their last game. We all just realized we needed to bear down, go at it and get to work."

Dietsch credits the defence for shutting down Six Nations the entire third period, denying the outside shots from the Rebels and transitioning the ball consistently well. And he says the offence took it from there with quick, effective pressure in the offensive zone.

NOTL's Jack Parker started the comeback with a powerplay goal five minutes in. Colton Armitage and Trent Mooradian added two each, while Avery Steinbach-Parker added a single. It was Mooradian's third goal of the game with only 33 seconds left that forced the extra period.

The A's struck first in the 10-minute overtime, with Dietsch and Armitage assisting on Drew Kenney's goal at the two-minute mark. But Winter Rivera tied it up again for the Rebels. The period ended in a 10-10 deadlock, forcing a second, sudden-death frame. It was Rivera who clinched the

series by slipping one past A's goalie Mike Napoli.

"I think we kind of got away from our system," Patterson says of the first two periods in the final game. "Offensively we weren't getting into the middle, getting those great chances we got in game four. We got back to it in the third period. It was emotional."

Patterson led all Athletics in playoff scoring, with seven goals and 38 assists. Parker had 14 goals and 18 assists over the 13 games.

"As a second-year player, I guess my confidence went up a lot this year," Parker says. "And I went on a bit of a hot streak, too. I think, having played with so many of these same players last year, we had great offensive chemistry this year as well."

The 17-year-old is planning to go back to A.N. Myer Secondary School for his 12-B year, where he'll play hockey and lacrosse for the Marauders.

"As a lacrosse player, my dream is to go somewhere in the U.S. to play for a school there," he says. "I'll try out for the Junior A team next year. I got called up to a few games last year, and that was a great experience. If I don't make that team, I'll be back on the Junior B team, I hope."

Patterson and Dietsch also expect to vie for spots on the Athletics Junior A team.

Dietsch, who begins studying kinesiology at the University of Guelph next month, will try to earn a spot on that school's varsity field lacrosse team, as well.

"If I don't crack the Junior A line-up," Dietsch says of his

plans next summer, "I know I've always got the Junior B team. And we're going to have a great team for the next three or four years. I'll be happy wherever I go."

If Dietsch makes the Guelph line-up, he may come up against his A's teammate Patterson, who will return to Brock University where he plays for the Badgers, the team that won silver at the 2022 Canadian University Field Lacrosse Association's Bagat-away Cup.

"My goal for next year is to play Junior A," says Patterson. "Ultimately, I want to get drafted into the National Lacrosse League. That's been my goal ever since I began playing. I'm just going to keep trying to work hard for that."

Dietsch says Patterson's leadership was a difference-maker on this year's Junior B team.

"Jaden was awesome," says the 18-year-old. "He was a great leader. He was a real vocal one in the room, and all business when it came to game time. He was someone you could always go and talk to, ask questions of. He scored goals and made big plays all season long."

Patterson deflects some of that praise back toward his teammates.

"This team just clicked at the right time," Patterson says. "We got some great all-around play from everyone. The young guys like Jack Parker grew so much and played so well. I just offered advice where I could. Everyone embraced their roles. As a group we all came close together, and that led to our success."



Liam Dietsch is one of the NOTL players who helped lead his team throughout a good season. He is seen here during their second round series against Elora. (Photos by Mike Balsom)



Jaden Patterson, another member of the Junior B Athletics lacrosse team.



Jack Parker takes an Elora defender into the boards.

Predators getting players lined up for new season

Mike Balsom
The Local

The Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League's Niagara Predators are gearing up for their third season playing out of Virgil's Meridian Credit Union Arena this fall.

The team is holding a series of open skates for interested players Aug. 15, 16 and 17 from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the new Canada Games Park located next to Brock University. Cost to participate in the sessions is \$20.

"We've actually been skating all summer at the Gale Centre," says team president and owner Robert Turnbull. "This gives us a chance to look at some players we maybe haven't seen on the ice yet."

The Preds went 20-18-4 and finished in fourth place in the league's South Division last season. They beat the St. George Ravens two games to one in the first playoff round before being swept in three

straight in a tough series against the North York Renegades.

Returning players Timur Mirzaizants, Reese Bisci, Logan Baillie and goaltenders Warren Krogman and Zane Clausen, among others, have re-signed with the team. In addition, 2023 draft picks Nicholas Nicoletti, Aiden Jones and goaltender Mike Mankowski have also committed to playing in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

"It looks like we will have a really good team this year," says Turnbull. "Our two Russians, Georgi Kholmovsky and Gorgii Kodzaev, their visas and work permits came through. Both players were on the roster last year but their paperwork never came through."

Turnbull, who owned both the Predators and the Ravens the past two seasons, sold the St. George team in the off-season. That frees him up to take on a more active role this year as general manager, with

Andrew Ferlatte assuming the role of vice-president of hockey operations.

"I'll be doing all the contracts," Turnbull explains, "while Andrew will be strictly handling all of the players."

Following the open skate sessions, the Preds will hold their annual prospect camp

from Aug. 21 to 24, 6:30 to 8 p.m., also at Canada Games Park. Again, the cost is \$20 to participate.

"The prospect camp gives us a chance to look at players who want to try out for the team," he explains. "Our returning and signed players will be there as well."



Reese Bisci, shown making a move on a Flyers defender, will return this season.

The Predators' main camp, by invitation only, is scheduled for the following week, Aug. 28 through 31.

The league's schedule begins earlier this year. The league has traditionally had a mid-October start, but Turnbull expects the season to begin the third week of

September.

"We're happy to be back," Turnbull says of the return to the Meridian Credit Union Arena for their Friday night home games. "The staff there has always been good to us."

The league's 2023-2024 schedule is expected to be released late next week.



Preds' Zane Clausen will play with the team again this season. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

Local SPORTS

NOTL's Ben Simmonds reflects on world ultimate championships

Mike Balsom
The Local

For Niagara-on-the-Lake's Ben Simmonds, wearing the red Team Canada jersey at the 2023 World Under-24 Ultimate Championship (WU24) in Nottingham was a dream come true.

"It was the coolest thing I have ever been a part of," says the enthusiastic 22-year-old on the line from Ottawa. "The opening ceremonies were unreal. Seeing all the teams lined up, carrying their flags, decked out in their country's swag, getting called one-by-one by country, it was such a memorable experience."

Simmonds was part of Canada's mixed U-24 ultimate frisbee team, a combination

of women and men representing their country on the world stage last month. Canada finished fourth in the tournament, running off a streak of seven victories in pool play before losing to Singapore 14-11 and finally to Japan 13-11 in the bronze medal game.

Team USA defeated Singapore 15-5 to win the gold.

"We aren't upset with our final results," says Simmonds. "In all honesty, I think many expected us to do a lot worse than we did. It's unfortunate that we didn't finish with the bronze. But our team fought really hard and we played some of the most intense games I've ever been a part of. We may not have won a medal, but we're proud of the way we played."

Ultimate frisbee, referred

to frequently as just 'ultimate,' combines elements of basketball and football, played with a disc rather than a ball. It involves seven players on each team competing on a 100-yard field.

The team that starts on defence will toss the disc to their opponents, whose objective is to work the disc down the field by throwing it. Unlike football, once the disc is caught, the player cannot run with it. The other six players on the team do run, though, in an attempt to get open to catch the disc when it is thrown again.

A point is scored when the disc is caught in the opposing team's end zone. At the WU24, games were played until one team earned 15 points, unless the soft cap for the time limit was reached.

As well, there are no officials on the field. Rather, the players on both teams communicate with each other to determine the kinds of decisions that a referee or umpire might make in other sports.

"The toughest game we played was the one against Singapore," says Simmonds of the team they lost to after beating Chinese Taipei, Sweden, Finland, New Zealand, Great Britain, and Switzerland twice. "There were some difficult moments that come when you play world rules with teams that speak different languages, elements of the game that aren't part of the play that made it hard for us."

He adds that before tournament play began, Canada was hoping to play a friendly match against Singapore. Those plans were scuttled after a couple of Singapore players suffered injuries in a friendly against the USA.

"It's unfortunate," Simmonds says, "because I think it would have been beneficial for us to have played that game."

A highlight for Simmonds, who notched seven assists and four goals over nine games, was Canada's 15-3 victory over Finland.

"We were able to scout them out beforehand," Simmonds explains. "We realized that our male-matching players might have more of a struggle running the show than our female-matching players against them. We used a different strategy in that game, playing our whole line-up throughout."

One team they didn't get a chance to go up against was the eventual gold medal winner.

"I think if we had played the USA we would have seen a very different game," he says. "I would have loved to have seen how we matched up against them. They pretty much destroyed every team they played. But our styles of play are very similar and I think we would have given them a much closer game than anyone else did."

Another highlight for Simmonds came off the field. He flew to the U.K. a week ahead of the tournament with his



Ben Simmonds (Photos supplied)



Ben Simmonds in the game against Great Britain.



Ben Simmonds with some of the other Canadian team players.

mother, Toby. It was a chance to do some sightseeing and connect with family members.

"It was my first time in England," he tells The Local. "We did a few touristy things, but most of it was spent meeting all of my family over there. It was really awesome."

Back in Ottawa, where he graduated from Carleton University, Simmonds is sharing an apartment with his younger brother Nick while working at a summer camp for Elevate Ultimate, teaching the game to younger kids. He lives and breathes ultimate, playing for his professional team, the Ottawa Phoenix, who compete in the open (mens) division in the Canadian Ultimate Club Series.

The Phoenix placed second at the Ontario Championships in Brampton on July 16, just over a week after Simmonds returned from the U.K. On Aug. 17, he'll be heading off to the Canadian national championships in Surrey, British Columbia, where the Phoenix is ranked third out of 16 teams.

Simmonds holds out hope that he'll have a chance to re-

turn to world ultimate competition in the future, though it probably won't be in U-24 mixed play.

"I have the tab open on my computer right now with my player application to try out for the 2024 senior team to play at the worlds," he says. "It's a tough team to make, but I'm excited to put myself out there for it. That would be my next goal, my next opportunity."

After having taught physical education at an Ottawa-area private school last year, Simmonds' other goal is to be accepted into teacher's college. Working the summer camp is a way for him to build his resume, give back to the sport that he was introduced to in Grade 9 at A.N. Myer Secondary School, and to keep in shape for his next ultimate challenge.

"Stepping onto the field wearing the Canada jersey, it was pretty unreal," he says. "I'm happy, and proud of what I have done in this sport. I feel pretty confident at my ability to stay at this level, and I hope to one day wear that jersey once again."



Simmonds in the ultimate competition against Switzerland.

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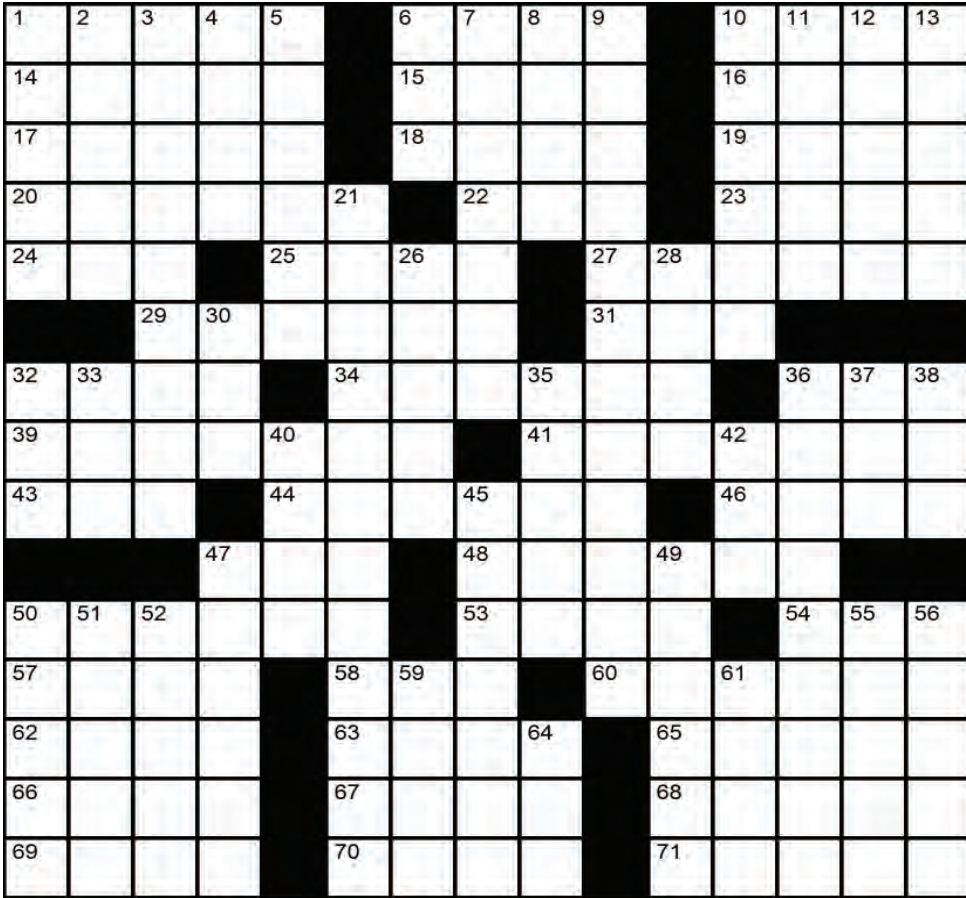
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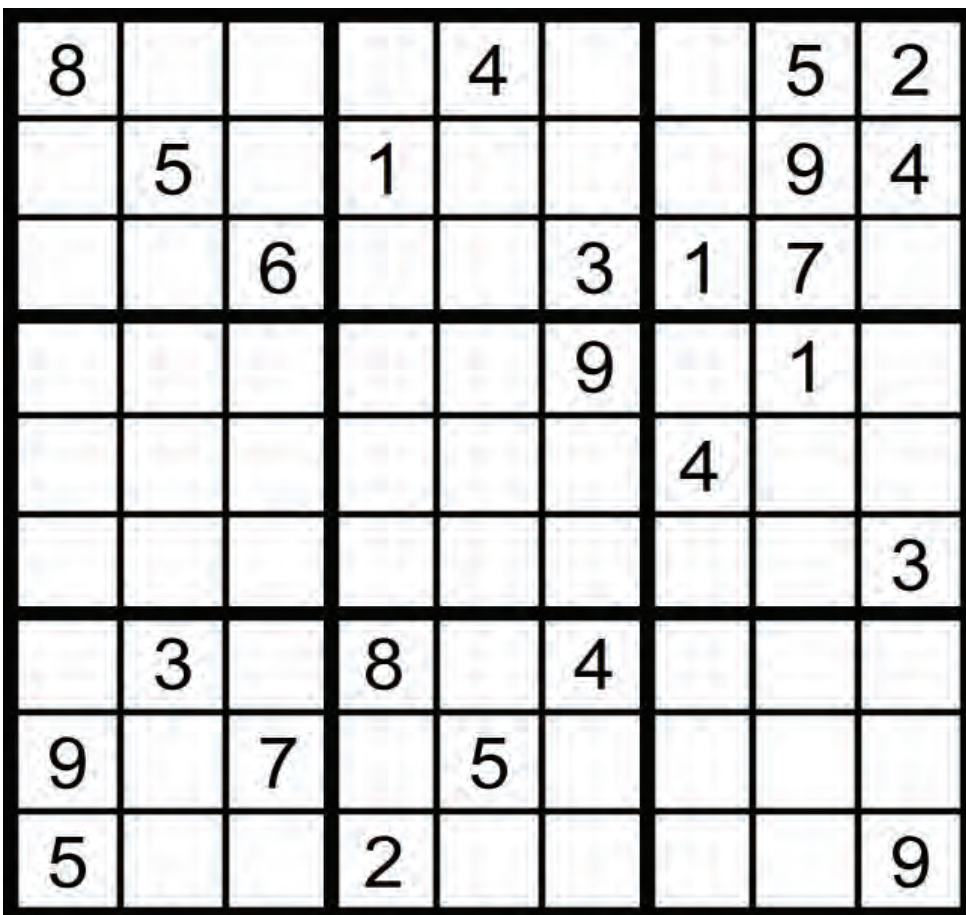


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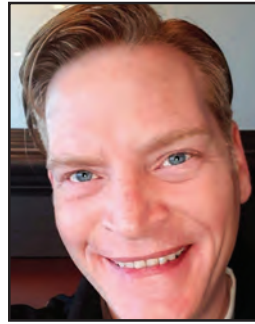


- Across:**
- 1 With a forward motion
 - 6 Guitarist --- Clapton
 - 10 And others in Rome
 - 14 "BohÉro" composer Maurice ---
 - 15 Lead vocalist of U2
 - 16 Sleepless in Seattle director --- Ephron
 - 17 Overweight
 - 18 Embryonic flowers
 - 19 --- Lane, Clark's love
 - 20 Shell lobster
 - 22 Exercise venue
 - 23 --- the ground floor
 - 24 Adeptness
 - 25 A lot
 - 27 Think constantly
 - 29 Badger
 - 31 Beloved
 - 32 Anti-ageist org.
 - 34 Pulpit delivery
 - 36 Cushion
 - 39 Comparatively costly
 - 41 Getting on
 - 43 Chop
 - 44 Base
 - 46 Part
 - 47 Web address
 - 48 Cleared
 - 50 E.g. Courvoisier
 - 53 Pricey
 - 54 World's largest economy
 - 57 Stock-market debuts
 - 58 Monotonous routine
 - 60 Daytona racing supervisory grp.
 - 62 Established ceremony
 - 63 Workplace regulation agency
 - 65 Imperial sites?
 - 66 Sweet
 - 67 It starts every Sunday
 - 68 Fifty after
 - 69 ---, a plan, a canal, Panama
 - 70 Fictional Ozzie dame
 - 71 Author/astronomer Carl ---
- Down:**
- 1 Bouquet
 - 2 Toil
 - 3 Brought down
 - 4 Secluded retreat
 - 5 Glows
 - 6 Abate
 - 7 Harsher
 - 8 --- 500, car race
 - 9 Of worldwide scope
 - 10 Sign up
 - 11 Common odds ending
 - 12 Operatic solos
 - 13 Endures
 - 21 "A Beautiful Mind" actor
 - 26 Record keeper
 - 28 Deform
 - 30 Emulator
 - 32 Fire residue
 - 33 Consumed
 - 35 Donnybrook
 - 36 Bringing forth
 - 37 Everyone
 - 38 Stain
 - 40 One paid to jump out of perfectly serviceable aircraft
 - 42 Before, poetically
 - 45 Soon afterwards
 - 47 Invisible
 - 49 Areas of land
 - 50 About
 - 51 Anything that stupefies
 - 52 Have to
 - 55 Generous annual visitor
 - 56 Fire-raising
 - 59 Pre-loved
 - 61 Mets' old stadium
 - 64 Alias



OBITUARY

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Wherever we were to each other, that we are still. Speak to me in the easy way always used.

Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes we enjoyed together.

In loving memory of Donavin Delaney, October 30, 1974–July 23, 2023.

Your talents, your joys and passions will always be ours.

Cherished by Bill Cochrane, the love of our life.

William and Margaret Cochrane, who embrace your presence in their lives, Micaela Ocean Kills Enemy, your Sunshine and her partner Andrew. Leslie and David Arsenault and our nephew Christopher, nieces, Hayleigh and Elizabeth.

Greatly Missed by Your son Steven Greenwood and the Delaney Family.

Forever in My Heart and Soul.

A Celebration of Your Life will be held in October with details to follow.

IN MEMORIAM

NOV 17, 1951 - AUG 4, 2020



In loving memory of Brent Christopher Carver. Three years have already passed without you, rivers of tears of sorrow and joy have been shed and, above all, memories of wonderful times together are shared and treasured every day.

Love always, family and friends.

NOTICES

**To place an Obituary or
In Memoriam in our Classifieds,
please contact Julia at:
julia@notllocal.com or
905.934.1040
Deadline is Tuesdays at 1 p.m.**

PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from July 26, 2023

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

Across: 1 Along, 6 Eric, 10 Et al, 14 Ravel, 15 Bono, 16 Nora, 17 Obese, 18 Buds, 19 Lois, 20 Mortar, 22 Gym, 23 In at, 24 Art, 25 Much, 27 Obsess, 29 Hassle, 31 Pet, 32 A A R P, 34 Sermom, 36 Pad, 39 Steeper, 41 Elderly, 43 Hew, 44 Alkali, 46 Role, 47 U R L, 48 Nettle, 50 Cognac, 53 Dear, 54 U S A, 57 P Os, 58 Rut, 60 N A S C A R, 62 Fite, 63 O S H A, 65 Chins, 66 Cute, 67 Week, 68 Ten to, 69 A man, 70 Edna, 71 Sagan.

Down: 1 Aroma, 2 Labor, 3 Overthrow, 4 Nest, 5 Cleams, 6 Ebb, 7 Rougher, 8 Indy, 9 Cosmopolitan, 10 Enlist, 11 To one, 12 Arlas, 13 Lasts, 21 Russell Crowe, 26 Clerk, 28 Bend, 30 Ape, 32 Ash, 33 Ate, 35 Melee, 36 Producing, 37 All, 38 Dye, 40 Para, 42 Ere, 45 And then, 47 Unseen, 49 Tracts, 50 Circa, 51 Opium, 52 Gotta, 55 Santa, 56 Arson, 59 Used, 61 Shea, 64 Ak a.



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