

The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL



Community
mourns
'gentle giant'
page 9

The trusted voice of our community.

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Ryan Crawford, David Watt, Tim Atherton and Leigh Atherton celebrate the community and make a little noise on Queen Street. (Fred Mercnik)



Queen Street gathering celebrates one community

Penny Coles
The Local

Consider it a rally, a flash mob protest, a celebration, or all three — the crowd gathered on Queen Street Monday night planned to make a little noise and have fun.

Stacey Mulholland, one of the organizers, called it a “joyous occasion,” a time to celebrate a community coming together as #onenotl, which includes music, carriages, wineries, restaurants, and all that is best about the town.

It was also meant as a “soft message” to town councillors that Niagara-on-the-Lake needs to be a vibrant community for all ages, and the proposed noise bylaw expect-

ed to come before council wouldn't support that.

Originally discussed as a protest, the conversation quickly turned to the need for something positive, says Mulholland.

“There has been so much negativity, so much divisiveness in town, we decided to turn it into a celebration,” she says, referring to a discussion amongst a core group of people who speak regularly about their tourism-related businesses.

The timing was right to share some positivity, with restaurants now open, people coming back to town, and the pandemic seemingly under control.

“We have a lot to be

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Proposed noise bylaw dropped in response to negative attention

Penny Coles
The Local

Thanks to local comic Joe Pillitteri, Niagara-on-the-Lake has attracted the attention of national media for its draft noise bylaw that bans hooting and singing after 9 p.m.

He has also drawn attention to the “ridiculous” 55-decibel level of noise as the limit proposed in the bylaw, which is below the sound of normal conversation.

The attention he attracted has convinced town councillors, who weren't expected to discuss the proposed changes until their Aug. 24 meeting, to drop any thought of adopting the changes, and concentrate on enforcement instead.

The recommendations in the proposed bylaw included limiting the noise level at 50 decibels between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m., and 55 decibels between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m.

The media attention has

made NOTL a “laughing-stock,” said Coun. Wendy Cheropita, agreeing that the proposed changes should be dropped.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero suggested staff should not pursue the draft bylaw, and instead, councillors should hold a workshop to talk about the existing bylaw and deal with the challenges of enforcing it. Her motion was approved unanimously.

One of the most popular postings on social media

in recent days was a satirical article from The Beaverton, a national publication, with a headline that shouted “Police in Niagara-on-the-Lake investigate drive-by hooting.”

But Pillitteri, who has been using humour to highlight the issue in several media interviews, including CTV, Global TV, and a local radio station, says the draft bylaw was not a laughing matter — it would have had serious repercussions during a time when local businesses

are already suffering.

While revising the Town's noise bylaw has been an ongoing council discussion, and on the radar of stakeholders such as the wineries, breweries and restaurants, “I don't think anyone thought it would get to this stage,” he says. “It's been a good wake-up call — if you don't get involved, decisions will be made for you that will impact our businesses and our quality of life.”

“We enjoy family gather-

ings,” he adds. “When my dad tells his stories, he's talking at 75 decibels. I want to be able to hear his stories.”

This bylaw, if approved, would have impacted everyone, businesses and residents. “It's important we don't turn a blind eye to that,” he said.

Pillitteri was at Chateau des Charmes Winery last Friday afternoon, where he was partnering with the Canadian classical Quartetto

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Brent Carver, Tony award-winner and friend

Janice Thomson
Special to The Local

There has been a great deal of international press this past week, lauding Brent Carver’s outstanding achievements on the stage and screen over almost 50 years. His professional colleagues and those who followed his career are very familiar with his special, unique talents and abilities to interpret and deliver remarkable performances.

But there is another side to Brent Carver, a side that is equally remarkable. Like each of us, Brent was a complex individual, with traits that I will always treasure. He was kind, inquisitive, loving and generous to his family, friends and those he encountered in the community. I had the good fortune to count him as a dear friend, he was one in a million.

Niagara-on-the-Lake residents became familiar with seeing Brent walking through town, appearing to be talking to himself, and learning that he was in fact speaking lines for an upcoming part. Music poured from his home as he played the piano and

sang the songs he loved. Dog walkers on the Common met Brent regularly and know how much he loved the animals and the relaxed nature of the setting. Tea at the Willow, a beer at the Angel, lots of time in the Library, impromptu songs at Christmas, house parties and whenever the mood struck him, Brent was a part of the fabric of NOTL, and his presence will be missed.

Brent lived in NOTL for the past 25 years, and had a history of deep friendships prior to that, so we are not the only community mourning his loss. Our thoughts are with all who knew and loved Brent.

Thank you to Brent’s family for sharing him with us.

Here is the announcement of Brent’s passing sent by his siblings, Vicki, Frankie, Randy and Shawn:

Our family is sharing news of Brent Carver’s passing on Aug. 4 at home in Cranbrook, BC, his birthplace and favourite place on Earth.

Blessed with many talents and a natural love of theatre, Brent was always known as a first-class per-

former, unique in the presentation of his craft, delighting audiences through film, TV, stage and concert performances.

An impressive record, dating back to 1972, of awards, solo shows, collaborations with musicians, Broadway and West End shows and memorable performances at theatres across Canada and the United States culminated in a Governor General’s Performing Arts Award For Lifetime Artistic Achievement in 2014 – a proud moment for our entire family.

But Brent, in his humble fashion, will be remembered as the kind, gentle and gifted man he was, with the deepest love as a true friend and family member.

His love of performing was matched only by his zest for life and lifetime devotion to family, friends and treasured pets.

Thank you to the performing arts community for embracing our Brent and helping him fulfill his dreams with joy in his heart. Brent will be missed.

**All our love
The Carver Family**



While actor Brent Carver was well-known as an award-winning performer, he was also a kind and loving friend. (Photo supplied)

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Niagara-on-the-Lake COMMUNITY Palliative Care

Noise message heard by council

Continued from page 1

grateful for,” says Mulholland.

“We wanted to take a moment and celebrate everything we do as a community. We have collectively said we can’t live in negativity, we have to move forward and stay positive as leaders of the community.”

While the celebration was taking place on Queen Street, town councillors were beginning their virtual Monday planning meeting, one that had Lord Mayor Betty Disero denouncing the much-maligned bylaw that has received widespread attention in traditional and social media, all of it negative.

Some of the group of about 45 locals gathered at the cenotaph arrived at their destination in a horse-drawn carriage, as a reminder the carriage rides are also an important component of what makes NOTL special, says Mulholland.

Ryan Crawford of Ruffino’s on Mary Street talked briefly to the group about the need to come together as a community, and to support the whole community. Garrison House owner David Watt offered a reminder that the noise bylaw would be detrimental to the community. A little music was played, and the gathering ended with the crowd singing O Canada, says Mulholland.

“It was super fun,” she says, and with cellphones measuring noise decibels, over the limits that were being proposed in the now-defunct bylaw. The group was thrilled to learn their message was heard, and council had decided not to pursue the proposed bylaw, she added.

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Councillors agree lack of enforcement is the problem

Continued from page 1

Gelato for Music Niagara's Music and Laughter series. The performance was being filmed by Niagara College for the festival's At Home virtual concerts.

As he spoke to The Local from the York Road winery, the sound of musicians could be heard playing in the background.

It's easy to download an app that measures sound levels, he says, and at the edge of the tent under which the musicians were playing, it was 68 decibels. "The music couldn't be any more beautiful, flowing out through the vineyard of Chateau des Charmes on a summer afternoon. But without an exemption from the Town, this would be in violation of the proposed bylaw," says Pillitteri.

He compares the situation in town to the movie *Footloose*, an American musical drama that chronicles a battle in a small town between politicians who want to ban dancing, and locals who are fighting the prohibition.

"You watch it and think, who would do that in real life? I can't think of a better comparison than what this bylaw would do to NOTL, the way it's proposed."

Entering "the political process" is new for the owner of Lakeview Equipment, who does stand-up comic locally, primarily to help raise funds for causes he supports.

"Ultimately, and I guess a little selfishly, I had to get involved. I knew it would impact funding for things that are important," he says.

Some of the businesses that would have been the most affected are also the most philanthropic, raising money for charitable organizations, including The Terry Fox Foundation, the NOTL Community Foundation, the Canadian Cancer Society, NOTL Minor Sports, Red Roof Retreat, Kidsport Niagara, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Niagara Rotary Club, and various other community initiatives, he says.

"How much money can we raise if we can't have these events?"

Pillitteri has been a regular at the Jackson-Triggs Amphitheatre, performing to raise money for The Terry Fox Foundation, but that would have come to an end under the proposed bylaw, without a special permit.

The same would hold true for other popular events, such as the Virgil Stampede. The Virgil Business Association, organizers of the event, has given more than \$1.2 million to the community through its annual fundraiser.

"If you're yelling happy birthday to your grandmother in your backyard after 9 p.m., you've broken the pro-

posed bylaw and could draw a \$350 fine," says Pillitteri.

It would have restricted how residents celebrate special occasions with family and friends, and would limit recreational and cultural arts activities, eliminate outdoor concerts and live music on patios, and diminish the quality of community events, he says.

An online petition Pillitteri set up had drawn almost 9,000 signatures by Monday night's discussion at council's planning meeting, and the number was continuing to climb toward his goal of 10,000.

The petition has been signed by Steven Page of Barenaked Ladies, who noted "as a musician, audience member and wine lover, outdoor concerts in NOTL, specifically at Jackson-Triggs have been an important part of my life." Killing performances such as these "would be a huge and destructive blow to both the arts and wine communities in Canada," Page says.

Also voicing his concern and signing the petition was singer Alan Doyle, who has performed at the Jackson-Triggs Amphitheatre. "Let's save this most amazing music venue," he says. "The music industry is facing a crisis like never before. We need all the help and venues we can get."

Pillitteri was hoping his online petition would convince councillors that the changes to the bylaw were a bad idea, and it worked.

Referencing the petition and the resulting attention from the public, Disero said the proposed changes to the bylaw were making a lot of people angry. "We need to stop, take a pause and start again, but with this particular draft bylaw, no matter what you do now to try and fix it, people will continue to be angry with it."

The recent proposed revisions came about as a result of a September, 2019, council directive to town staff to review noise policies and gather input from the public to see where improvements could be made to the current bylaw. It had been approved in 2012, but not without lengthy debate amongst councillors and the public at that time. Ongoing concerns have been from residents living close to venues that hold permitted special events, and

from neighbours of short-term rentals, where loud parties can be an issue.

At the request of council, town staff reviewed noise as it relates to special events and outdoor locations, and how it could be better controlled. They were also tasked with investigating the possibility of including a decibel level, which is missing in the current bylaw, leading to the recommendation of limits of 50 and 55 decibels.

At a virtual open house in July, winery representatives made it clear that noise bylaw amendments under consideration could be the death of special events so desperately needed for the continued success of their industry.

About 25 people signed up to speak to the suggested revisions, of the shortcomings of the revisions, including residents, Tim Jennings, CEO of the Shaw Festival, and Andrea Kaiser, chair of The Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake, who was instrumental as a councillor in getting the original bylaw approved.

She and others speaking last month pointed out some inconsistencies in the timelines, such as the cut-off for playing musical instruments at 10 p.m., with amplified music allowed until 11 p.m.

Also yelling, shouting, hooting, whistling and singing are permitted only until 9 p.m.

Another concern Kaiser and others mentioned was the suggested ban on amplified music at 55 decibels, which would "effectively prevent amplified music on winery properties for permitted on-site special events."

Del Rollo, representing Arterra Wines Canada, which includes Jackson-Triggs Estate Winery and Inniskillin Winery, spoke of "robust tourism strategies" that include events on patios featuring local chefs and musicians, and the "ultimate experience" of live music under the stars in the Jackson-Triggs Amphitheatre, while sipping wine with vineyards as a backdrop.

"The challenge is, like with most things in life, we can't make everyone happy. We understand this and we try to make revisions each year to solve these problems."

The revised draft bylaw "would put an end to our amphitheater, and would put an



A group of business people and community members make their way to the cenotaph in a horse-drawn carriage to celebrate NOTL as one community. (Fred Mercnik)

end to outdoor events in general," he said.

Municipal lawyer Tom Richardson spoke of inconsistent and conflicting amendments, which would make it impossible for the public to understand noise limitations, and suggested the Town may wish to create "a committee of concerned citizens reflecting the various communities in town you're hearing from tonight."

Tim Jennings, executive director and CEO of the Shaw Festival, said the draft noise bylaw is especially problematic for those in the arts and cultural professions, with a reduced time allowed for music, and singing added to noises such as shouting and hooting. He also spoke to the issue of noise being limited to 55 decibels in the proposed legislation.

"The difficulty with deci-

bel readings, and we do a lot of them in my world, is a normal household air conditioner at 100 feet is louder than a 60 decibel reading. I'm speaking at about 60 decibels. At 70 decibels, we're not yet at the noise of a TV in the living room."

The 11 p.m. cut-off "is working extremely well," Jennings said.

"The enforcement of the bylaw is the real issue."

Residents spoke of the need for better enforcement and higher penalties. There are no bylaw officers available in the evening, when noise is a problem. Police say they have more important issues to attend, and while fines similar to a speeding ticket can be handed out to anyone contravening the existing bylaw, Rolf Wiens, the town's bylaw official, admitted, "I don't know if they have ever been issued."

Several councillors spoke of the good information that came out of the open house, which shouldn't be lost just because the draft bylaw is abandoned. Coun. Clare Cameron elicited a guarantee from interim CAO Sheldon Randall that the comments from the open house will be preserved in a report for council, ready for the time when the current bylaw is discussed.

Another point they made, agreeing with several of the comments from the public, including Pillitteri, is the need for better enforcement of the existing bylaw.

"We had meetings, we listened, and right from the start everyone complained of lack of enforcement," said Coun. Erwin Wiens, adding if enforcement isn't part of future discussions, the problem will never be solved.

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Media tycoon a democracy and freedom fighter

Jimmy Lai is also a kind, loving, humble family man, says his niece

Penny Coles
The Local

When Jimmy Lai, out on bail following a political arrest earlier this year, was asked in a rare CBC interview recently if he was worried he might one day “be spirited away in the middle of the night to prison in mainland China,” he said yes, but “what can I do? Just keep quiet?”

That was about a week ago, and the owner of Apple Daily, a media outlet openly critical of the Chinese Communist Party, hasn’t kept quiet. Instead he has continued his criticism and protests, and was arrested Tuesday morning. The media tycoon, with close family and business ties to Niagara-on-the-Lake, was taken from his home in Hong Kong, this time, according to international media, with Ian, his 39-year-old son. News agencies are reporting the arrest was over suspected collusion with foreign forces, under China’s new, restrictive national security law, which bans slogans and protests, and can mean life in prison for anyone suspected of subversion or collusion.

He had been arrested earlier this year, along with other prominent business people, on illegal assembly charges, for organizing and participating in protests last year.

A billionaire, he can be seen in photographs marching through the streets of Hong Kong in protest last summer,

during a downpour, a plastic bag over his clothes keeping him dry.

He speaks out, as he does in the CBC interview, knowing the danger, because of the strengths of his beliefs.

While there are many in NOTL who know of his business interests in town, they may not know much about the man and his family, who have been coming for regular visits, or his decades-old quest for democracy.

Lai is the owner of Vintage Hotels, which includes the Pillar and Post, the first hotel to be taken over and run by his twin sister, Si Wai Lai.

She caused quite a stir when she arrived in NOTL in the 1990s, also buying, on behalf of her brother, Queen’s Landing, the Prince of Wales from the Wiens family, the Oban Inn from Gary Burroughs, and properties on Queen Street, where she built the Shaw Cafe. The chain of Vintage Hotels has grown since then to include other properties in Niagara and across the province, but Si Wai’s interest in recent years has been the Oban, while the Vintage leadership has taken over management of the other properties.

Although there was some criticism from locals about her makeovers of familiar landmarks in the 90s, Lai had all the hotels updated and brought up to her high standards, says John Wiens.

The town had already gone through one major change in the

70s, with the Shaw Festival drawing tourists who filled NOTL hotels and restaurants, he says, but Lai’s investments catapulted it into a second stage of development, one that was positive for the town, bringing increasing waves of tourists, as well as retirees drawn to live here.

Everything she touched had to be perfect, with no expense spared on fulfilling her vision, says Wiens, which was always to do the best she could for Niagara-on-the-Lake, the town she loves and continues to call home.

Her purchase of the Prince of Wales was not the easiest of times for him. He and his father were not at first interested in selling, but when she made an offer “too good to refuse,” his father and another family partner decided it was time to sell. He didn’t, and was disappointed that running the hotel was not to be in his future. However, in hindsight, he says, he realizes the family wouldn’t have had the money to do what the Laies were able to do.

“She wanted to make it into a very special, first-class destination, and she did,” he says.

Working with the Town, she also invested in Simcoe Park, which benefited from the updating, and made large donations to NOTL’s first entry into the Communities in Bloom competition, which led to the town being named the prettiest of its size in Canada, recalls Wiens.

“When I look back, I can see that a lot of good came from that time.”

In the early days, she loved to talk about her plans, she was vibrant and enthusiastic about the future, and also open about her past and the struggles she and her brother had faced. Although she now chooses a much quieter, private life, she remains positive about her business interests in NOTL.

Her daughter, Erica Lepp, says her uncle Jimmy, her



Jimmy Lai becomes emotional when asked whether he is sad that his sister in NOTL must be worried about him. (Screenshot from CBC National)

aunt and six children, now between the ages of 19 and 42, have travelled often to Niagara-on-the-Lake, which they love visiting. He doesn’t come as much as he used to, when her grandmother also lived in NOTL, but he still visits, and one of his adult children spent last year here, working at the Oban.

“He’s a great guy,” Lepp says, and although she’s hesitant to discuss his politics, she says he’s always had the same passion for democracy and freedom.

When she speaks to her uncle, as she does regularly, they don’t speak of politics, they speak of family, her cousins and their children, and she tells him she loves him.

“He’s a kind man, a calm person, and he’s always been passionate about what he believes. What has happened is not surprising,” she says.

She spoke to her cousin in Hong Kong this week, but says conversations with family are, out of necessity, guarded. She told them she was thinking about them and offered to do anything she could to help. She has no idea how long he will be detained or if he will be allowed out on bail under the new security law, she says.

She calls this a “cumulative moment” in his life, but nothing new for him. “He has always been so dedicated, not just in politics, but in all his beliefs,” she says.

“I remember him saying to me, when I was a young girl, ‘what good is having money if you don’t have freedom.’”

She says he loves NOTL, and although the creative vision of upgrading the hotels was her mother’s, he always supported it financially.

Si Wai is an outgoing, active person, still involved in the running of the Oban and going out on her three-wheeled bicycle twice daily. “My mother loves this town, and always has.”

The cloak of privacy she wrapped around her and her family goes back to the early days in NOTL, when they were confronted by racism, and publicly criticized for Si Wai’s involvement in town.

“People were mean,” says Lepp. “We were just kids, my sister and I, but people would say really racist things to us. I remember standing in line in the grocery store and having someone tell us to go back to where we came from. We were young, and although I can’t forget what happened, I still love this town, and the many great people I’ve met here.”

To protect them, her mother sent her girls, Erica and Celia, to school in Niagara Falls and then St. Catharines. She wouldn’t let the comments bother her, but she was determined to shield her children. Her mother is a strong person, and having confronted so much worse in her life, she is not easily intimidated, says Lepp.

After high school, Celia went on to study in Europe, and came back to NOTL, taking over the running of the Oban Inn and becoming a beloved member of the community, until her death from cancer in 2014, leaving family and friends devastated by their loss.

Lepp says her uncle, like her mother, is strong, and the criticism they faced has not had an effect on either of them.

“They’re similar in that way, not easily swayed by what’s going on around them. When you’ve grown up in communist China, when you have the beliefs they have, you are not going to be intimidated.”

She calls her uncle a “humble man,” wealthy, yes, and likes nice things, but not flashy. He’s also a loving family man, and devoted to God, she says.

He is generous, faithful, and has always been an incredible

uncle, she adds, offering guidance and support to her and her sister Celia.

“We have always held him, my aunt and cousins close to our hearts, and have endless gratitude for everything he has done for us.”

Lepp mentions her uncle being chosen one of Time Magazine’s top 100 influential people, and the comment written about him. “Though he went from a child labourer in a garment factory to owning his own clothing line and media company, he rejected complacency and the status quo when he chose to criticize a powerful government and support a primarily student-led democracy movement in his beloved Hong Kong. His courage in the face of the firebombing of his home, as well as his subsequent arrest for his role in challenging the ruling order, resonates around the world as an inspiration for those seeking self-determination. It was this kind of bravery that inspired me to mention the Hong Kong protests in my Oscar acceptance speech, and that reminds all of us to always strive to speak truth to power,” was the quote from Common, a hip-hop artist and Academy Award winner asked by Time Magazine to comment on Lai’s inclusion in the prestigious list.

Lai knew he was risking his freedom by continuing his criticism, he told journalist Adrienne Arseneault in his interview for the CBC National. He said he couldn’t be scared, because if he was, he wouldn’t be able to do or say anything, and would be letting the country’s rulers do whatever they want. His chief worry is for the young, he said, and he hopes Canada and other countries will offer asylum to young activists, and also use their combined leverage for change. He said he had asked his staff not to put themselves at risk, and has told his family “to go if they need to.”

When asked by Arseneault at the end of the interview if he was concerned for his sister in Canada, who must be worried about him, he becomes emotional, and says, “well, it must go on.”

When Lepp is asked if she is worried about him, she says her faith allows her to believe in God’s plan for her uncle, and he believes the same. “He too says this is all part of God’s plan. And when you have that belief, you don’t worry.”



Jimmy Lai can be seen taking part in a protest. (Screenshot from CBC National)

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Chamber presents tourism strategy to council

Penny Coles
The Local

Three presentations to councillors Monday night from the tourism sector sent a clear message: local businesses need a strategy to get through the next stage of the pandemic recovery period, and they need to work with council and all community sectors to achieve success.

Eduardo Lafforgue, president and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce, was up first at the virtual council meeting, which included Janet Jones of the Bed and Breakfast Association and Andrea Kaiser, marketing director of Reif Estate Winery and chair of Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Jones is chair of one of two new committees of the chamber, the NOTL Tourism Advisory Working Group (TAWG) and Kaiser was representing the chamber's marketing committee.

"Our wish is to have a productive and positive means to communicate with town council, so we hope this is a start," said Lafforgue to begin his presentation, one he had intended to make in March, but which was put off because of COVID.

He explained the two entities

he represents, the NOTL Chamber of Commerce, the community's leading business advocate, and Tourism NOTL, a destination marketing organization and subsidiary of the chamber, which is committed to the promotion, responsible growth and sustainability of tourism in NOTL.

"The Chamber and Tourism NOTL are not the official opposition, nor a dependency or agency of the Town," he said.

Since the start of the pandemic, the chamber has cancelled all events and sponsorships, revenue is down 78 per cent, and memberships were not invoiced for four months, "as many of our members can't afford it," he said.

Despite the office closure and reduction in staff during the pandemic, the chamber has been busy with a recovery plan and guide that follows provincial guidelines, and has ensured information and resources are available free to all, members or not. "We are communicating to over 1,200 businesses in town three times per week with updates and have not required them to be a member," he said.

The chamber is developing a tourism strategy, one that Lafforgue hopes the Town will support, that includes objectives such

as preserving a brand; creating a demand for all seasons; balancing day trips and overnight stays; increasing visitor spending; improving and assuring quality throughout what he calls the "tourism value chain," which includes all NOTL businesses and organizations; building pride and demanding benefits for the community; business development and investment attraction; and contributing to economic, social and environmental sustainability.

Coun. Gary Burroughs said he was glad to see the objectives outlined, but added "it's hard to know what post-COVID looks like. I'm a little surprised we're developing a strategy before we know what the world is going to look like."

The objectives were discussed before the pandemic, Lafforgue explained, but it's important to prepare for the future, remaining "extremely flexible," while letting both council and the community at large know what the chamber is planning.

When asked by Coun. Clare Cameron about the combined tourism-related experience of the Tourism NOTL committee members, Lafforgue said he is in his 33rd year, but adding up all the people in the various groups, he guessed at about "a century and a

half," a ballpark estimate Jones later said she thought was low.

Cameron also asked how residents of NOTL benefit from the operation of Tourism NOTL. "We have a lean budget and lean resources," said Lafforgue, while providing events locals enjoy, such as the Peach Celebration, Shades of Summer and other dinners and events organized by the chamber — events unfortunately cancelled this year, but he hopes will be back for 2021. Cameron also asked if, in 2020, NOTL is facing overtourism. Numbers are "extremely bad," he said, with only two hotels open although more are opening this weekend, the border is closed, buses aren't coming, and the Shaw Festival is also closed.

"We see a change in demographics, with younger people coming," he said, but the numbers are "far, far away" from those of the past. While success looks like 30 per cent at the moment, "if we can get to 40 per cent, we'll feel blessed," he said.

He also explained the importance of collaboration with the Town and all stakeholders during the process to be successful, "from the beginning. If it's not there at the beginning, you can't add it later."

Addressing marketing NOTL as a destination, Kaiser told councillors the town is on the road to recovery, but "the path is slow."

Tourism NOTL is launching a marketing campaign "that speaks to the insecurities that Canadians are feeling in travelling in these uncertain times," she said, with a three-month campaign which was launched Aug. 1, and allows for any

necessary adjustments to messaging during September and October.

The goals are to increase day trips for wine and culinary experiences, shopping and theatre (when it's available), and increase overnight stays, she said.

Coun. Wendy Cheropita asked Kaiser what NOTL was like "before we had the value of tourism," and having had the benefit of seeing the town evolve, Kaiser said, "I feel we've come full circle talking about a tourism strategy similar to a conversation years ago." What is exciting to her, she said, is the opportunity for young people to live, stay and work in the community.

She shops the main street regularly, and loves going downtown. Seeing local merchants and visiting her favourite bakery "to me is what NOTL is."

During pandemic it was sad to see the street empty, and it made her think "this is what it used to be like. We have to be careful what we wish for." She also cautioned the use of the word "overtourism," which can mean different things to different people, and instead encouraged thinking about sustainable tourism, which includes the three pillars of environment, community and economy, which have to be in balance, and need to be addressed during tourism strategy discussions.

Although demographics are changing and the town is seeing younger visitors, she says she doesn't believe that's long-term, that young people are more comfortable travelling now, and are enjoying experiences. They provide

an opportunity for marketing, but the older, Shaw Festival patrons, who also spend more while they're in town, will return, she believes.

Jones explained she was representing the new NOTL Tourism Advisory Working Group, an independent group falling under the umbrella of the Chamber that represents all segments of tourism and all segments of the community affected by tourism. Members of the group have the expertise to find solutions to the challenges NOTL is facing, she said.

Jones is running her B&B at less than 20 per cent than last year, and "if I'm lucky I will hit 30 per cent at the end of the year."

Although "we don't have a clue what will happen in the next two or three months," the strategies and planning need to take place now for short-term recovery, she said.

"One of things that has been deeply disturbing to me, is the sense of discourse I feel in our community. There's a seemingly fair amount conflict between interest groups, everyone is out to win, and there are unacceptable references to racism and prejudice," references that suggest there are only "certain kinds of visitors" needed in NOTL, and are "deeply disturbing."

Success for all segments of the community won't come from fighting each other, she said, suggesting a professional, independent facilitator would help "keep our opinions on the table in a civilized, collaborative way," so that at the end of it "everybody buys into it and we all win. We have to commit to bringing everybody to the table."

Discussions could halt Virgil skateboard park

Penny Coles
The Local

Coun. Clare Cameron says she loves the sound of kids having fun, she would like to see them able to make noise freely on the new skateboard park under construction in the Virgil Sports Park.

She thinks the skatepark will be a wonderful addition for the town, and in her mind, the heated discussion that followed a concern she introduced "is not, from my perspective, about whether or not we should have a skateboard park. The issue is location."

It's construction is well underway, and halting it is a suggestion she is not taking lightly, but as she explained to councillors Monday, if it's in the wrong location, stopping it now is better than continuing, and ending up too late with a "boondoggle" that will impact neighbours.

She has two concerns, she says, the impact on nearby homes, and the proximity to the pavilion, where families sometimes sit to enjoy a picnic, or may rent for a family gathering, and the nearby baseball diamond.

She has heard from residents who are concerned about the noise, she says, "and kids should have the freedom to have fun."

But also of concern to her is the process of deciding the details of the park, and the location.

The previous council approved \$150,000 in its 2018 budget, which was also included in this year's budget, and the Virgil Business Association has donated \$150,000 toward the \$300,000 cost of the park.

But she doesn't recall, and can find no record of, this council ever discussing or approving the

location of a "significant community facility," one she believes has changed since earlier discussions.

There have been public discussions on Join the Conversation, on the Town's website, open houses and "informal" reports about the park, but to her knowledge, never a formal report, discussion or a vote at council, the proper forum for making such decisions.

Other communities have gone through extensive processes of information-gathering to ensure skatepark locations are safe, she says, and the impact on nearby residents.

"I'm trying to ensure all residents are heard." She is making a motion to get that discussion underway at the Aug. 24 council meeting, and she understands it may not be well-received. The point was made that there were opportunities for residents and councillors who have a problem with the location to state their concerns at an appropriate time for discussion.

Interim CAO Sheldon Randall says he wouldn't recommend "putting the brakes" on the project, as Cameron is suggesting, and that there would be damages to the Town if they do, but it's council's decision if they wish to do so.

"To be honest, I'm shocked if councillors weren't aware of what's going on," although other councillors are aware, Randall says.

To councillors who say "you didn't know, it's ridiculous," says Coun. Erwin Wiens.

Couns. John Wiens, Gary Burroughs and Wendy Cheropita all supported Cameron's request to put the project on hold for further discussion.

Phil Leboudec is a member of the VBA, but not speaking for the

VBA, when he states his opposition to reopening the discussion, which began almost 10 years ago when the Town wanted the existing skateboard park moved to expand the operation yard.

He clarifies the skateboard park is a Town project that the VBA is helping to fund — it's not a VBA project. The location chosen in the sports park is about as far away from any homes as it could be and still be in the park, he says, in the corral where the mud run and demolition derby, Virgil Stampede events, were held. That was the chosen location from the earliest days, although there have been other sites discussed and discarded, he says, because they were even closer to homes on the perimeter of the park.

"You live in the park, and you complain about noise from kids in the park?," he questions. "There are no lights proposed for the area, there is no provision for keeping it open after dusk."

As someone who has worked hard at stampede fundraising events for years, Leboudec said he was blindsided by the discussion at council Monday, taken completely caught off-guard. "It doesn't make sense, people complaining about kids doing sports in a sports park."

Cameron was told Monday that by the time the Aug. 24 discussion occurs, the skateboard park could be finished, but she says her motion will include considering halting the project.

Decisions of such importance should not be made based on public input through Join the Conversation, she says. "If we're going to spend \$300,000, of Town and VBA funds, let's get it right. It's expensive, and it's important to the community."

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In an effort to protect against the spread of COVID-19, Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Administrative Buildings remain closed to the public until further notice.



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Niagara-on-the-Lake
EST. 1781

EDITORIAL

Let's get serious about bylaw enforcement

The Town received a lot of attention this week from traditional national media, social media and even a well-known satirical media publication, for the much-ridiculed noise bylaw being proposed.

Kudos to Joe Pillitteri and all those who got onboard, ensuring the bylaw would never again see the light of day. Humour is contagious, and who could resist the hooting and hollering jokes, words that were actually written into this bylaw, the same one that limited outdoor speech to almost a whisper.

Positivity is also contagious, so thank you to those who gathered on Queen Street with your #onenotl message. Great reminder of all that should be important to us, all we should be grateful for, especially now.

But really, credit where credit is due, the 25 people who spoke out about the bylaw at an open virtual meeting also should be recognized. There was no humour in their comments, although they must have thought that they would even be talking about the recommendations ludicrous. The inconsistencies alone as pointed out by those who spoke should have been enough to sink the bylaw as proposed, but there was so much else wrong

with it. The decibel level was ridiculous, and would have meant events that residents enjoy and help businesses survive, and even backyard family celebrations, would be in contravention of the bylaw.

But here's a little more information worth remembering for those who jump to judgement about elected officials.

First, the bylaw was drafted by staff, and when our local standup comic snagged media attention for it, town councillors had not yet addressed it. There was zero likelihood, after the July open house comments, that they would be supporting it. The recent publicity might have hastened politicians pulling the plug on it, but it was headed down the drain anyway.

The other tidbit worth noting, is that while Couns. Clare Cameron and Erwin Wiens were asked early in the term of this council to meet with business community members and the public, to hear concerns and comments about the existing noise bylaw, they did not write the new one. They reported what they heard, which they both said had more to do with lack of enforcement than a need for tougher restrictions. Cameron said Monday she had

no idea where the 55-decibel level in the proposed bylaw came from — it certainly wasn't mentioned in their notes to staff. So let's not blame council, or any individual councillor, for this debacle.

Another little note. Going back to the original, existing bylaw, which has no decibel level limits in it, two issues have been mentioned repeatedly. The first is that the Town doesn't have enough bylaw officers, they don't work evenings, when infractions usually occur, and the police have better things to do. So enforcement is the real issue, and the Town is going to have to find a way to fund more bylaw officers, or schedule evening or on-call shifts.

The second, mentioned as recently as Monday's meeting, was that neither the police or bylaw officers have the equipment needed to measure decibels. Yet for the last week, residents have been going around town measuring noise levels on their phones. That's how we know just about everything we here is more than 55 decibels.

Hopefully this absurd conversation is behind us, and if this Town is going to have bylaws, to control noise or anything else, let's see it get serious about enforcement.

COVID risk requires responsible decisions

An interesting observation came from a reader last week regarding a photo of some people having fun at a local winery. They were standing shoulder-to-shoulder, and of course, while enjoying some wine and nibbles, were not wearing masks.

And yet, we know the number of COVID cases are on the rise in Niagara-on-the-Lake. At press time Tuesday, we were up to 39, most from close contact, some community contact.

The reader pointed out publishing the photo is mod-

elling dangerous behaviour, assuming these were friends, not relatives or roommates.

We are pretty careful about encouraging people being photographed to follow the guidelines. They are likely doing so, until a camera is pointed at them and they forget.

However, when it comes to drinking on the patio, it's an important reminder that COVID is still out there, and we need to remain vigilant, because others are not. The photo tells us that if we go out to restaurants or

patios, there is going to be some level of risk, however small, and not everyone views that the same way.

Also, the reader asks, "who is (not) enforcing the rules?"

Business operators are not law enforcers, and we know the local bylaw officers aren't checking out patios.

That means the responsibility to look after ourselves falls on us. Probably where it should.

Penny Coles
The Local



Auchterlonie on Astrology

Bill Auchterlonie
Special to The Local

Again, a teaser for this week, with the full version on Facebook at The NOTL Local and at notllocal.com.

Tuesday, Aug. 18: It's the busiest day of the week with the Sun, Mercury and Venus contributing to a day of go go go. Go. And it's the day of the new Moon to boot. Make a wish list. Make a plan to make it

happen. Puerto Rican baseball player, Roberto Clemente, was born Aug. 18, 1934. He died in a plane crash in 1972 while delivering food and gifts to Puerto Ricans following a storm. Also Robert Redford turns 84 today.



View from the couch

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

In *The Farewell*, a Chinese family discovers that their beloved grandmother is terminally ill. She has not been told of her impending death, so in order that the family can gather from far and wide to celebrate and to say goodbye to the beloved

matriarch a wedding is planned for for one of the grandsons. Intriguing behaviour follows and we see what makes the family function and if lying to grandmother was a good course of action. Each member of the family plans for life without Grandmother. The film ends.

Spoiler alert: Grandmother does not die. What happens to

the family dynamic? We can only surmise. Excellent film, on Prime.

Donald Combe is a retired English teacher who loves to go to movies. During the pandemic, restricted to Netflix, he has graciously agreed to share his opinions of what he is watching with "short and sweet" exclusive reviews for The Local.

Brock Talks



Parks Canada interpreter Scott Finlay, as Major General Sir Isaac Brock, offers Brock Talks, Saturdays and Sundays at 12 p.m. at the Queenston Heights monument. (Fred Mercnik)

The Niagara-on-the-Lake

LOCAL

The trusted voice of our community

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The opinions expressed in submitted commentary, and letters to the editor, are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of The NOTL Local.

COMMENT

Niagara's Dr. Hirji recommends continued vigilance

Dr. Mustafa Hirji
Special to The Local

For five months, Niagara has lived with COVID-19. Fortunately, thanks to all of us working together, we have slowed the spread of infection, protecting lives and enabling a safe reopening of most of our economy. As we head into the next chapter of this pandemic, I want to share how all of us can help to keep our communities safe.

There are three ingredients to an infection spreading through our community: the pathogen (e.g. virus) must be introduced; there must be close interaction amongst us so that the pathogen can move from

person to person; and we must lack immunity.

Our response to this pandemic has addressed each of these in turn. From January until late-March, we focused on preventing the COVID-19 virus from taking hold in Canada. Federal monitoring of international arrivals, and local Public Health efforts to find infected travelers kept COVID-19 at bay. This bought us time to prepare.

By mid-March, with COVID-19 now spreading in Canada, Public Health shifted to finding and isolating infected persons, and tracing contacts. By isolating cases and contacts, we stopped interactions with others, thereby halting the

spread of infection. Provinces instituted emergency measures preventing large gatherings and closing businesses to further stop interactions.

Ultimately, we hope to shift to managing COVID-19 by that third element: addressing immunity. Unparalleled global efforts are underway to develop vaccines that can provide us that immunity.

While we await a vaccine, all the ingredients that allow COVID-19 to spread are still here: the infection is in our communities; with businesses reopening, we are now interacting more than we have for several months; and almost none of us have immunity.

Recently, we have begun to see larger pockets of infection where people have had close interaction. This includes an increase of COVID-19 cases in Niagara-on-the-Lake tied to the close interactions in households and social events. Fortunately, this transmission has thus far been contained, resulting in little additional risk to the public at large. However, it illustrates the potential for a new wave of infection to arise if we let our guard down.

Therefore, we must redouble efforts to keep two metres distance from each other. We should keep washing or sanitizing our hands often. We're now required to wear a face cov-

ering when indoors, but we should wear it outdoors too if within two metres of people. And we should stay home and get tested if we have any symptoms of illness. Keeping this up after five months is understandably hard. But practising these measures will avoid the kinds of interactions that risk infection spreading to our friends, neighbours, and loved ones.

As we enter this chapter of the pandemic, Niagara has the distinct advantage of well-defined communities like Niagara-on-the-Lake that have been resilient

enough to endure the disruption of losing physical interaction, and strong enough to pull together to support each other. It is therefore no surprise that we have managed COVID-19 better than other parts of the province, like the GTA. I believe this will be our greatest strength as we head into the coming months: remaining united as a community to practice measures that protect each other, and to exercise compassion in supporting each other.

Dr. M. Mustafa Hirji is the acting medical officer of health for Niagara Region.



Dr. Mustafa Hirji, Niagara Region acting medical officer of health (Photo supplied)

Library to launch Code Club for kids



Kasia Dupuis
Children's Librarian
NOTL Public Library

Pursue Knowledge is the motto of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library, and this August, the library will help children do just that, with a new program focused on coding.

Code Club is a programming initiative to teach children about coding and to help support the recent addition of coding to the Ontario Curriculum. It is being launched this month to support recent curriculum adaptations and help children develop an early understanding of coding, technology and computer science. These programs will also help children who are already familiar with coding advance their programming abilities and understanding.

I will be part of the The NOTL Library Code Club Team, with Christine Reganti, IT/makery assistant,

both of us bringing different strengths to the coding table as we work together to develop resources, adapt tools and facilitate the learning of this new, exciting and important language for kids of all ages. We have been working on three new programming initiatives — Code Club, Storytime with Cubetto and Hello World! — and will focus on the foundations of coding from ages three to 18.

"What is coding?" is the number one question the NOTL Code Club team has been receiving in the last few months. Essentially, coding is the language of computers, the way people program and design computers to run, think and complete tasks, but at its core, coding is all about creative problem-solving, communication and the expression of ideas. As our use of technology and electronics steadily increases, it is important for our youngest generations to become familiar with coding so they will be able to effectively use it in their futures.

Code Club is the first program to be released in

this new initiative. Through the exploration of micro:bits, coding robots, Scratch and block code activities, "code kids" will explore the many applications coding has in our daily lives and create connections to apply it to their futures. The majority of programming is focused for children ages eight to 14. To join Code Club, please fill out a form on the NOTL Library website which will then grant you access to a virtual classroom designed to support the earliest introductions to coding and programming language. Once your child has joined the club, they will have access to physical coding "toys and tools," such as Ozobots, Botley, micro:bits and more, that they have the opportunity to borrow from the library to explore at home.

To help the earliest development of creativity and problem-solving skills that are so crucial to learning and understanding coding, the library is also developing additional coding-based programs geared for the ages three to five and six to 10 age ranges.

Coming in October will

be Storytime with Cubetto, a special no-screen storytime focused on the use of coding language, sequencing and communicating with a small robot named Cubetto. In this program, participants will help Cubetto journey through a story mat and learn to give clear, concise directions in language required in coding. Under current circumstances, Storytime with Cubetto will be offered as a virtual program through Zoom, but the library is anticipating running this program onsite once it is safe to do so. Also launching in October will be the Hello, World! series of workshops for kids ages five to 10. Coding concepts and ideas will be explored through stories, activities, and of course applied through simple and fun coding games and projects, all facilitated by library staff through virtual programming, and eventually once the library reopens.

Additional details, updates and registration can be found at notlpubliclibrary.org. Questions can be sent to me or to Reganti at notl-codeclub@gmail.com.



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Horwath, Gates visit NOTL businesses to talk about recovery

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

Ontario NDP leader Andrea Horwath visited a number of Niagara-on-the-Lake businesses Wednesday to discuss the official opposition party's Save Main Street survival plan.

Accompanied by Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Gates and his St. Catharines counterpart, Jennie Stevens, Horwath began her journey at One Earth on Victoria Street and wrapped up with a tour of the Shaw Festival Theatre. Along the way, hosts Lord Mayor Betty Disero and NOTL Chamber of Commerce CEO Eduardo Lafforgue took Horwath to visit the Budapest Bakery, Irish Design and Sun-

set Grill.

Horwath took time to speak with each business owner about the struggles they have been facing under COVID-19, saying this was a key to her party's proposal to support small businesses in the province.

"It's one thing to develop policy, but it's more important to get the sense from people on the ground how that policy can actually help," said Horwath. "We developed our policy in consultation with the business community in the first place. We're getting a lot of positive responses from people today, but we need the provincial government to step up to the plate."

Horwath went on to criticize Premier Doug Ford for

touring to "talk about a couple of businesses that he's funded directly for conversion to PPE or other COVID-related enterprises, while ignoring the growing crisis on Main Street."

The NDP Save Main Street plan would include a 75 per cent direct commercial rent subsidy of up to \$10,000 a month for three months, for businesses that continue to struggle during the pandemic. It also calls for a utility payment freeze, a fund to help businesses equip employees with computers so they can continue to work at home, a designated emergency fund for small businesses, and a fund to aid businesses in preparing for safe reopening with provisions for

PPE and changes to physical spaces due to safety concerns. The cost of the Save Main Street plan is estimated to range from \$850 million to \$1.15 billion.

"These are not repayable loans," added Horwath, "but full grants, because we're all in this together and if Main Street isn't saved, it's not only about the business owners, it's about the entire community."

Anett Kane, owner of Budapest Bakery, was pleased to welcome the NDP leader. "I'm so glad she came to see our shop, and our town," she said, "because in person I think she can see how we struggle with everything, especially with COVID."

As a relatively new business, open for only 16 months, Kane says it has been particularly difficult for her and her four employees to weather the pandemic storm, though the influx of tourists over the past couple of weeks has been promising.

Amanda Terry, owner of the Queen Regent Bed & Breakfast, also joined the tour at the invitation of One Earth owner Terri-Lynn Woodhouse. Since reopening in mid-July, she has strived to get her business back to being profitable, but knows that her revenue will at least be cut in half this year. She says current programs have not done enough to help businesses like hers.

"My payroll was just under what they wanted the level to be," she explains, when asked about the federal Canada Emergency Benefit Account (CEBA) loan available to small businesses. The regulations have since been modified, and she has reapplied. She is waiting for the application to be processed, but laments having to go "months and months without a loan that would help me get through the winter."

Horwath summed up what she heard from business owners and others during her first 90 minutes in town. "The concerns are what the future holds, and how long before that future starts to take hold," she explained. "People are worried about hanging on for an unknown amount of time, and about the supports they need to be able to stay afloat during that time period, so when we get back to some kind of nor-



MPP Wayne Gates, Shaw Festival production director Don Finlayson, and Shaw CEO Tim Jennings gather around NDP leader Andrea Horwath, on stage, as they talk about the pandemic forcing the festival, a lead economic generator for the region, to shut down.

mal, they are still able to run their businesses."

She was happy, though, to see the town busy on a mid-week afternoon. "For me that's a positive sign, and I think what it says is that as long as people continue their social distancing, their wearing of masks, they have a level of comfort seeing other people doing what needs to be done, and that's a key to continue to tamp down the virus. I'm grateful and proud of Ontarians."

The entourage was later met on stage at Shaw by executive director Tim Jennings and production director Don Finlayson. Horwath began the visit by commending Jennings on the recent National Post coverage of the theatre company's shrewd decision to take out pandemic insurance three years ago, a move that has allowed most of Shaw's 500-plus employees to continue working. She was then invited to try out a new prototype seat designed to allow theatre-goers to stay physically isolated from each other while enjoying a performance.

From there, it was on to the costume department, where head of wardrobe Jason Bendig described how Shaw staff was mobilized to make gowns and masks for front-line healthcare workers.

Horwath was suitably impressed. "To see the ingenuity, the talent, the community spirit, the drive to not only internally as an organization help their staff through this, but then those folks put their talents to work, making the masks, the gowns, and supporting each other and the broader community. It's the best of human nature and it's great to see on display here at the Shaw."

Earlier that same day, Horwath visited St. Catharines, where she held a roundtable discussion with long-term care workers who described being run off their feet, understaffed and overworked. Said personal support worker Lisa Frame of Radiant Care Pleasant Manor in NOTL, "with personal support workers spread thin, seniors in long-term care can wait days and days for help with basic hygiene like bathing and shaving. The Ontario government needs to assist with increasing staff levels and wages in long-term care and also provide support for recruitment of new staff and incentives to keep staff."

"It's been really disappointing," said Horwath in NOTL, "that the government has not been responding at all to what we've been providing in terms of recommendations and advice (on a number of issues)."



NDP MPP Wayne Gates and NDP leader Andrea Horwath get down to brass tacks about what local businesses need, and aren't receiving, in the way of financial aids. One of their stops was to talk to Paul Dickson, a Queen Street business owner for more than 30 years. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

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Andrea Horwath talks to Anett Kane, owner of Budapest Bakery, a new business badly hit by the pandemic.

‘Gentle giant’ will be missed by many

Penny Coles
The Local

John Skubel, the “gentle giant with a huge heart,” will be most remembered by the public for his many years of presiding over the Christmas tree sales for the Niagara Lions Club.

To those who knew him best, he will be remembered as a good, loving, man who would do anything for his friends and family.

At the age of 67, John died suddenly Saturday, Aug. 8, leaving his wife Victoria, his 14-year-old son Luke, a large extended family, and a circle of dear friends to mourn a pillar of the community.

A life-long resident of Niagara-on-the-Lake, he began working at Niagara Fruit and Vegetable on Four Mile Creek Road when he was 14 years old, and after it was sold, moved to Niagara Orchards & Vineyard on Niagara Stone Road, which he loved, although he was only there for a short time.

During his career, John became well-known to the agricultural community, and took his responsibilities toward his customers, the local farmers, very seriously, says his wife Victoria.

He loved to hunt, was active in sports earlier in life, and most enjoyed sitting on the porch of their Concession 6 home with a morning cup of coffee in the good weather, or relaxing around a bonfire with family and friends in the evening, she says.

And he was the go-to guy when anyone needed help with just about anything, she adds.

If his death was a shock to the community, it was as much so to his family.

Victoria says John had been battling cellulitis, a common but bacterial skin infection, for years, several times ending up in the Niagara Falls hospital, but he would be given antibiotics and recover.

Several of the symptoms, including a fever

and chills, are similar to COVID-19, so although he was sure he was suffering a flare-up of the recurring infection, he had driven himself to an assessment centre, and they were all relieved when he received a negative response, says Victoria.

Then, last Wednesday, he became sick enough to be taken to the hospital, where he was tested again for COVID, again with a negative result.

“It was his big toe,” says Victoria. He believed a sliver was causing the infection, she says. “It was that simple, a routine thing.”

That was what she was told by his family doctor, who had seen him through these infections many times.

But in the hospital, he had been laid flat in his bed, leaving his body unable to drain the build-up of fluids, she says, and died of congestive heart failure.

During the few days he was there, she was unable to see him, and only spoke to

him twice, once in a conversation with Luke as well, and then a second time when he called to say he wasn’t happy in the hospital.

“He asked me to come and get him and take him home,” she says.

The next phone call was from the hospital Saturday morning. Victoria says she had been out for a walk with their dog, returned home, sat down with a cup of coffee, realized she had missed the call, and dialled the hospital, expecting good news. She thought they were going to tell her to come and pick him up. She and Luke had bought a 55-inch TV for John, so he could watch the Stanley Cup playoffs, and they were excited for him to get home to watch the game that evening.

Instead, when she identified herself, “they said, ‘he’s not with us. He’s gone.’ I said, ‘Gone where?’ I had no idea he was that ill. He wasn’t that ill. It was such a shock, I still sometimes feel like it’s not real. Sometimes



Niagara Lions Club member John Skubel received many awards during his decades with the club. This one was for his dedication to the club and his community. (Photo supplied)

I just wait for him to call, or to show up late for dinner.”

They had been together 22 years, she says, having brought two families together when they married.

Her grandparents had arrived from Poland in the early 1900s, she relates. Her grandfather worked for the

Continued on page 11

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Young violinist recorded at Pondview to be presented virtually

**Mike Balsom
Special to The Local**

While most fans of Music Niagara will eagerly anticipate the return of 20-year-old violin virtuoso Emma Meinrenken to its At Home series Sept. 13, a dozen supporters had the chance to welcome her in person.

Meinrenken kicked off the 2020 online concert series, a celebration of 250 years of Beethoven, on July 26 with a concert from her Toronto home. This past Monday she returned to NOTL to record a program at Pondview Estates Winery. Accompanied by Atis Bankas and Jonathan Tortolano of Music Niagara, along with Tanya Charles-Iveniuk, Theresa Rudolph, and Theodore Chan from the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, she performed Romance No. 1 and No. 2 by Beethoven and Schubert's Rondo. Sponsors of the 2020 series were in attendance to enjoy the music on a beautiful, sunny afternoon.

Of the program, Meinrenken said, "they're very special pieces to me. I learned them quite a few years ago and they always reappear in my life at very different points. Right now it's really special for me to play something so beautiful at a time when it's so stressful."

She was referring, of course, to COVID-19, which

has forced her studies at the Dorothy Richard Starling Foundation Annual Fellow at the prestigious Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia to move to an online format since March 13.

"I came home for March Break and I haven't been able to get back," she laments. "I still have all my clothes there, all my music there, I have an apartment there. It's a little bit sad, but I'd much rather be in Canada." Her upcoming fall semester will also be conducted remotely.

An alumnus of the Music Niagara Performance Academy, Emma has won top awards at numerous competitions, including first place at the Stradivarius International Violin Competition, the Jury Prize at the Jascha Heifetz International Violin Competition, the silver medal at the Stulberg International String Competition, and grand prizes at both the 2012 Canadian Music Competition and the 2013 FCMS National Competition. She was also a semi-finalist at the last Fritz Kreisler International Violin Competition.

Emma debuted with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra at the age of 10, and has since performed with many other orchestras, including the Utah Symphony Orchestra, and the Orchestre Métropolitain de Montréal.

Meinrenken played the selections, which were all composed in the early 1800s, on a 331-year old violin on loan from the Canada Council. Known as the Buamgartner Stradivarius, the instrument was most recently owned by Robert Masters, the concertmaster of the Bath Festival Orchestra in England during Yehudi Menuhin's tenure as conductor. Its value is estimated at \$6 million.

"It's a great honour," says Meinrenken about the Stradivarius. "It's really exciting to get to know it, so to speak. With older instruments, they always seem to have their own personalities. I always have a lot of fun getting to know them. Sometimes they fight against me for a little while, but it's like taming a lion, or even a house cat. They usually calm down eventually and let you in."

Knowing the value of and story behind the Stradivarius doesn't phase the young musician. "When you start to think of the history, the price, the prestige," she says "it messes with your mind sometimes. I've always played on very good instruments, and I've always found it's almost better to pick it up and not be too worried about it all the time. The more worried you are about dropping it or losing it the more



Emma Meinrenken performs under the winery tent, with Music Niagara founder and artistic director Atis Bankas to her left. (Mike Balsom)

anxiety surrounds it, and you end up actually doing those things. Whereas if you treat it like a friend, you won't forget your friend."

Meinrenken played that "friend" beautifully and confidently at Pondview. It's a delight to experience such a young violinist mastering her craft, while accompanied by accomplished professional musicians in a beautiful setting.

Bankas, Music Niagara founder and artistic director, says, "It's always a joy having Emma back. We've had many, many evenings of pleasure listening to

Emma as she was growing up."

Bankas is impressed with Meinrenken's maturity and growth as a musician. "Of course, she's well-equipped already technically, but her musical maturity is definitely coming to fruition and is very noticeable. It's a pleasure for me as a teacher to have my students perform, and I'm happy to support her as an ensemble member."

The second half of Monday's concert featured members of the Toronto Symphony performing the rarely heard Beethoven's Septet Op. 20. The entire program was recorded by

Niagara College's broadcasting team, and will debut on the Music Niagara website on Sept. 13.

This Sunday at 4 p.m., Lord Mayor Betty Disero joins in the celebration of Beethoven's 250th birthday with a show titled *Ludwig in Vienna*. Recorded live at Queen's Landing, Bankas (violin) and Victoria Kogan (piano) will perform Beethoven's three definitive sonatas with members of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

Music Niagara's At Home series continues each Sunday until Oct. 4. Visit musicniagara.org for details.

Gravelly James records 'live, off the floor' *From Steve's Shed*

**Mike Balsom
Special to The Local**

His stage name, Gravelly James, says a lot about what to expect when listening to his new album, *From Steve's Shed*.

But according to singer-songwriter Chris Madronich, that's more of a happy accident than anything else.

Released on July 31, the collection of 10 stripped-down songs could pass for a modern version of an old Alan Lomax Folkways field recording. His nom de guerre conjures the image of an aging blues singer discovered by a wandering professor with an ancient tape recorder. It's pronounced 'Grave-Lee', not 'Gravel-Lee', though on many of the songs his voice does have a lived-in, gravelly quality.

Hit the play button, and that voice, accompanied by his spare but emotional guitar-playing and his foot-stomping, might lead one to believe a long-lost blues musician from the cotton fields of the deep south has finally been discovered.

But no. Chris Madronich is a 27-year-old who grew up in Port Colborne. He holds a communications degree with a minor in music from the University of Ottawa, and spent many years playing trumpet in jazz combos while teaching himself to play guitar. Along the way, he also played in rock bands and began to write songs. This collection showcases

es the fruits of his recent labour.

The choice of the stage name comes from the combination of his mother's maiden and his father's first names. The fact that he and his family did live near Gravelly Bay in the south Niagara town has caused a bit of confusion for some. But now that he's decided to be known by that moniker, he feels the persona is both influencing and solidifying his choice of musical direction.

Speaking of names, nine of the 10 songs were actually recorded in Steve's shed. That's Steve Goldberger's Shed Studio, in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Well-known Niagara Rhythm Section and Old Wino bandleader Goldberger produced the album, and lends his talents on stand-up bass, an instrument he's only recently taken up, on some of the tracks.

Goldberger met Madronich a few years ago in Toronto. The younger musician was enrolled in a songwriting workshop, while Goldberger was the bass player for the house band for the Thursday night student showcase at Hugh' Room. They connected over music, discovered they were both from Niagara, and kept in touch.

Fast-forward to 2020. "When he approached me about possibly doing some recording," says Goldberger, "I really had no idea what he sounded like, but from the first song, he blew me away. He's really got it together."

Madronich was insistent

that the record be "live, off the floor," with him just playing and singing. Goldberger was skeptical at first, but a four-hour session this past Valentine's Day resulted in the bones of what can be heard on the 10 songs. Most of them are from first takes and indeed, live off the floor.

Madronich reciprocates the admiration for Goldberger's process. "It was awesome," he enthuses. "He really got the vibe of it. He mic'd my foot to pick up the stomping. He had a direct line for my guitar, another mic over my guitar, a vocal mic, and one more to get the surrounding sound. We laid it all down in one day."

After stepping back, though, Madronich realized a couple of songs needed back-up vocals. He and Goldberger returned to the shed to record the harmonies and some spoons for the first track, a bluesy love song called *103*. He also begged Goldberger to play stand-up bass for another song, *Atlantis on my Lips*. That led to Goldberger adding bass on a few other tracks. Ji Sharp Yehia of local band Road Waves is the only other musician on the album, with a guitar solo that wraps up *Shoot 'em Down*.

Thematically, that song is the outlier of the collection, the only time Gravelly James dips his foot into political waters, taking on the Republican party and the National Rifle Association. "I almost left it off," says Madronich. "I wrote it the day

after the 2017 Vegas shootings, and it really was from an emotional, angry place. But I consulted with friends in the music business about what tunes I should put on the album, and right off the bat they said it has to be on it."

Another outlier might be the final song, *Beers with Joe Lapinski*. Originally titled *Rooster in the Barn*, it's the only song not recorded in NOTL. The new title refers to the fact that Madronich laid this one down at St. Catharines musician Joe Lapinski's WOW Recording Studio during a night of sharing beers and tunes in another informal mutual admiration society. But it anchors the collection with a rootsy, frantic pace and fits in well sonically with the other tracks.

Goldberger is flattered that Madronich decided to name-check his studio in the album's title. For Gravelly James, it was a no-brainer. "Calling it *From Steve's Shed*, it really sounds simple, it's something that you can remember, and it fits the

ambience of the album." As far as influences, Madronich admits that Robert Johnson is on the list, as well as Bruce Springsteen from his Nebraska period. When he plays with a full band, Gravelly James often fleshes out his set list with covers of Cat Stevens, Bob Dylan and Eric Clapton. But he's most enthusiastic about obscure Canadian singer-songwriter Roy Forbes, who, as BIM, had a hit with his



Chris Madronich, aka Gravelly James, has high praise for Steve Goldberger's skills in the recording studio. (Photo supplied)

song *Can't Catch Me* in 1975.

"I have a cassette tape in my truck of BIM performing live," he explains. "His reaction to an audience, he does a lot of open-tuning stuff, his guitar playing is story-telling, his craft is something else. It's super stripped-down and it's a big influence on my album."

Conveniently, his Gravelly James solo persona is perfect for these COVID times, when finding a gig for a full rock band is next to impossible.

And Madronich is a bit of an old soul, who still loves the tactile experience of holding a CD, cassette or vinyl record in his hands. Though *From Steve's Shed* is currently available only through the requisite streaming and download services (Spotify, Bandcamp, Apple Music, etc.) he is hoping to do some form of physical release in the near future, accompanied, of course, by a foot-stomping, blues-wailing live solo performance.

Ravine patio a safe, welcoming experience

Kim Wade
Special to The Local

Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery patio opened during Phase 2 of the Province's re-opening program, delayed to ensure the safest protocols were in place to ensure a comfort level for staff and customers, says owner Paul Harber.

Guests are welcomed under a large tent, and even once the Province entered Stage 3, the restaurant remained closed.

The tent was used last summer as a temporary set-up while the winery's new event facility was being built. They were not planning to use the tent again and had even planned to dismantle the patio-stoned flooring in the spring. Due to the pandemic and the imposed restrictions, Harber said they had to "change gears quickly" to adapt to the changing circumstances. The patio stones were left intact. The tent went back up. The newly-built facility became the retail store to accommodate physical distancing and a flow of traffic. Tastings are being offered by reservation on the terrace outside the new event/retail building near the pizza oven area.

In light of the restrictions, the events, mainly weddings, planned this summer at the new facility have been cancelled and the normal traffic to the winery is down. Harber said the winery parking lot is empty of the usual New York and Ohio licence plates. They are seeing more people from the Toronto area, though, and he is pleased to see so many locals coming out.

He said that many locals are within walking distance of the winery and can stroll over with their dogs to the patio for dinner. "It is nice to have a bit of normalcy and have a safe setting to enjoy it in."

Harber explained that at this point their business is

down more than 50 per cent in revenue, but they were able to welcome back around 50 per cent of their regular crew, mainly full-time staff, including retail employees, cooks and servers, and the full management team.

Harber is taking the safety issue very seriously. He explains they are safeguarding the staff and the public by following all the provincial guidelines, plus they are taking it a step further by adding their own precautions. For example, the menus are set on the tables and covered with plexiglass to ensure it's visible, without the need to be handled. The tables are placed more than two metres apart, and a barrel is placed at the end of each table to act as a serving table, to minimize contact between the guests and the staff. The washroom trailer provided for guest convenience is cleaned and sanitized often, as are the washroom facilities inside the building. Staff is required to wear masks at all times and employees and guests are screened upon entering the winery.

Harber says he is comfortable with staying in Stage 2. "We don't want to go inside."

He maintained that they will take it "one day at a time" and keep a close watch on the situation. Factors such as the weather and the numbers of cases of COVID-19 will determine their future plans for the fall. They are prepared, if needed, to go back to doing just takeaway, online and retail pickup orders if necessary. They are constantly reassessing the situation, watching numbers and listening to reports. He lamented that it is "exhausting, but these are the times we are in."

Like many other restaurants and patios, Ravine is offering a truncated menu. Harber says the kitchen is

focusing on a quality and flavour-focused menu, with daily features to give their chefs a challenge and allow them to use their creativity. They are "having some fun with the daily specials" which usually feature the fresh produce from their onsite organic vegetable garden. For example, Saturday's daily special was a creamy polenta and sautéed wild mushrooms, with chillies drizzled, and a black garlic jus, beautifully adorned with flower petals. Other offerings on the menu may sound like simple fare but they all have that Ravine flair, incorporating specific items from their garden, the relaunched Lowrey Bros. line of preserves and sauces, and even honey from their apiary. The St. David's Sundae features vanilla ice cream smothered with Lowrey Bros. peaches, and topped with their own honey oat crumble.

Harber said he is "glad to see how receptive everyone has been in the offerings." He refers to the positive Open Table reviews the patio has received, adding it is "nice to see our efforts are being noticed," as they try to provide "the safest possible experience during COVID times."

Guests will be delighted to discover the drink menu. With so many choices, it is sometimes good to leave the choosing to the experts, including Jayne Stewart, who has been working at Ravine for more than eight years. Her family and the Lowrey/Harber family have been friends for generations. In fact, it was at her great-grandparents' picnic where Harber's great-grandparents met and eventually started the Ravine legacy. Stewart is a wealth of information about the history of the farm and the winery itself. She highlighted the NV Charmat Rosé, which was produced



Server Jayne Stewart makes guests feel safe and welcome under the Ravine tent, and shares history of the winery and the Lowrey and Harber families.

during the pandemic. This rosé has become very popular and is almost sold out. In addition, there is also the NV Ravine Charmat, a pro-secco-style sparkling wine, nice on a hot summer day. If sparkling wine is not your style, Stewart suggests trying one of the Lowrey Bros. ciders in

either the apple or pear flavours, from the relaunched Lowrey Bros. brand, and offering a light, refreshing summer drink.

In addition to food and drinks on the patio, Ravine has provided entertainment, with live music to add to the experience.

Summer patio hours are Sunday, Wednesday and Thursday from 11:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Reservations are required and can be made through the Open Table platform at Ravinevineyard.com or by calling 905-262-8463.



Ravine's menu changes, but often included are pizzas, such as this Margherita version. (Photos by Kim Wade)

Firetruck attracts attention



A Niagara Nursery School youngster got the first look at the town's new fire truck when it arrived in town and firefighters tested it at the community centre, weeks before it was introduced into service Monday. The new 2019 truck has a 101-foot elevating platform, a 2,250 gallon-per-minute pump and a 300-gallon water tank. It took more than 500 days to build the new truck, which has been outfitted with features to help firefighters when responding to the changing needs of the community, including more than 200 feet of portable ground ladders, and an aerial platform at the end of the ladder that allows firefighters to perform rescues directly into the platform rather than having to remove a potential victim down a ladder to the ground, explains Fire Chief Nick Ruller. Typically, a truck such as this will remain in service for 20 years, he says. (Photo supplied)

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S.T.E.A.M. STORYTIME! SCIENCE – TECHNOLOGY – ENGINEERING – ART – MATH

August 19 @ 11 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Join us for virtual Story Time with a Twist! Kasia will be live-streaming S.T.E.A.M. Storytime – a weekly NOTL Public library favourite from our Facebook page. Can't make it? No problem! We will be uploading the video to our YouTube channel so you can watch at your leisure. Join Kasia each week for a S.T.E.A.M. based storytime. All Are Welcome! Hosted by Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library <https://notlpubliclibrary.org>.

VIRTUAL – JANE AUSTEN TEA PARTY

August 23 @ 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

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RiverBrink engaging public with online book discussions

Kim Wade
Special to The Local

“The idea for RiverBrink Reads is to develop a reading group with titles that relate in some way to art,” says Debra Antoncic, director and curator at the RiverBrink Art Museum. “Unlike a book club, attendees change from session to session, depending on interest and availability.” This month’s selection was Jane Urquhart’s work, *The Underpainter*. Recipient of the Governor General’s award in 1997, this bestselling novel was the subject of the virtual discussion. The synopsis on RiverBrink Events page describes the novel telling the “story of an American painter in his later years, who is haunted by memories of the past and by those whose lives most deeply touched his own. Spanning decades, the story moves from upstate New York to the shores of two Great Lakes, from France in World War I to New York City in the ‘20s and ‘30s.” The lively discussion centred on the novel itself and the history and culture of the time the novel was set.

The online discussion took place via the Zoom meeting platform last Thursday. With only three participants, attendance was down from last month, when six people joined in to talk about *Akin* by Emma Donoghue, the 2019 novel that rolls travel, history and photography into a story about an octogenarian and his young great-nephew as they travel together to Nice. The idea for RiverBrink Reads was already in the planning stages before the necessity of moving toward a virtual world was apparent. Antoncic believes this initiative fit in “very well” with the other online programming that they had been developing since early April. She stated that this is just one of the projects that they have developed during the pandemic. “We have made good use of Zoom to reach and engage our members through Coffee with the Curator sessions and recorded mini-lectures on selected art works in the collection.” These lectures are posted on the art museum’s YouTube channel. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC57VsBddeePSYxPNj2UU6tw>.

Antoncic laments that the opening of RiverBrink will not be going forward as planned but the museum will open by appointment. In addition, the art museum has several other projects in the works. The Coffee with the Curator sessions featured several of the artists with work in the exhibition, *Illuminations and Colour with a U-Too*. She also points out the museum hosted an artist talk with Dr. Eric Feng Fan, joining from Beijing via the Zoom platform. As the Niagara Region moves through Stage 3 of the Province’s Reopening Ontario plan, Antoncic anticipates more programs and courses, either online or in person. They are planning courses for the LearnMore Series which are six-week courses in art history, geared toward adult learners. Upcoming artist workshops are also being held outdoors and social distanced. This month students can sign up for workshops to explore Mandela drawing with Lenore Walker on Aug. 22, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., or go on a photo-walk with Niagara wedding photographer Josh Bellingham, as participants explore the

outdoor scenery of the park at Queenston Heights for the perfect shot. Along with these workshops, outdoor Hatha yoga sessions with instructor Sonya de Lazzer on Thursdays at 9 a.m. will run until Aug. 27. These yoga sessions may be extended into September, depending on the weather and demand. As for the next RiverBrink Reads series, Antoncic states that they are planning to discuss the new biography of Andy Warhol, by Blake Gopnik. “This book has been described as the definitive biography of one of the most influential artists of his age. Art critic and author Blake Gopnik digs deep into the contradictions and radical genius that led Andy Warhol to revolutionize our cultural world.” The date has tentatively been set as Sept. 3 but may be changed due to availability of the book and interest. Antoncic says that she has chosen the books so far in this series but she welcomes suggestions from the community. Further details and updates are on their website: <http://www.riverbrink.org/education.html>.

Weekend of golf sees championships decided

Harry Huizer
Special to The Local

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Club Championships were held this weekend, with some outstanding golf and some humbling golf. Champions were crowned as about 100 spectators watched the exciting finishes beside the 18th green, cheering us on as we finished our rounds. The applause for my chip-in 2 made me almost

forget my previous eight poor holes . . . almost. Yolanda Henry, with a terrific final score of 80, won the Ladies Club Championship going away. Ginny Green also had a super final round to claim the Senior Ladies crown. The Men’s Club Championship wasn’t decided until the last short putt was made by James Grigjanis-Meusel, who won by one stroke over last year’s champion, Joe Doria. Joe put the pressure on

James by scoring a birdie 2 on the final hole. The final two-day scores were 149 and 150 for these two outstanding golfers. Lurking close behind was the Senior Men’s champion, Jim McMacken, with a score of 153. There were many other winners as listed below and each performed very well under the pressure and heat. Each would have an exciting story to tell. Many of us who came up short also have stories of

heartbreaking bad bounces, and missed putts. Our excuses have no end. A big thanks to Billy Simkin and Ricky Watson for spending long hours organizing this successful championship. Some of us will soon be rereading Ben Hogan’s Golf Instructional book where it wisely says: “Golf is man’s most humbling diversion. It may be for that reason alone, the greatest game he has ever devised.”

LOCAL WORSHIP



Sunday, August 16th

Speaker: **Jeff Martens**

Message: **Psalm 139: Search My Heart**

Please be advised that with the current state of COVID-19, your safety is of utmost importance to us. We will now be live streaming our service at 9:30 a.m. on Sundays. There will be no in-person church service.

www.ccchurch.ca

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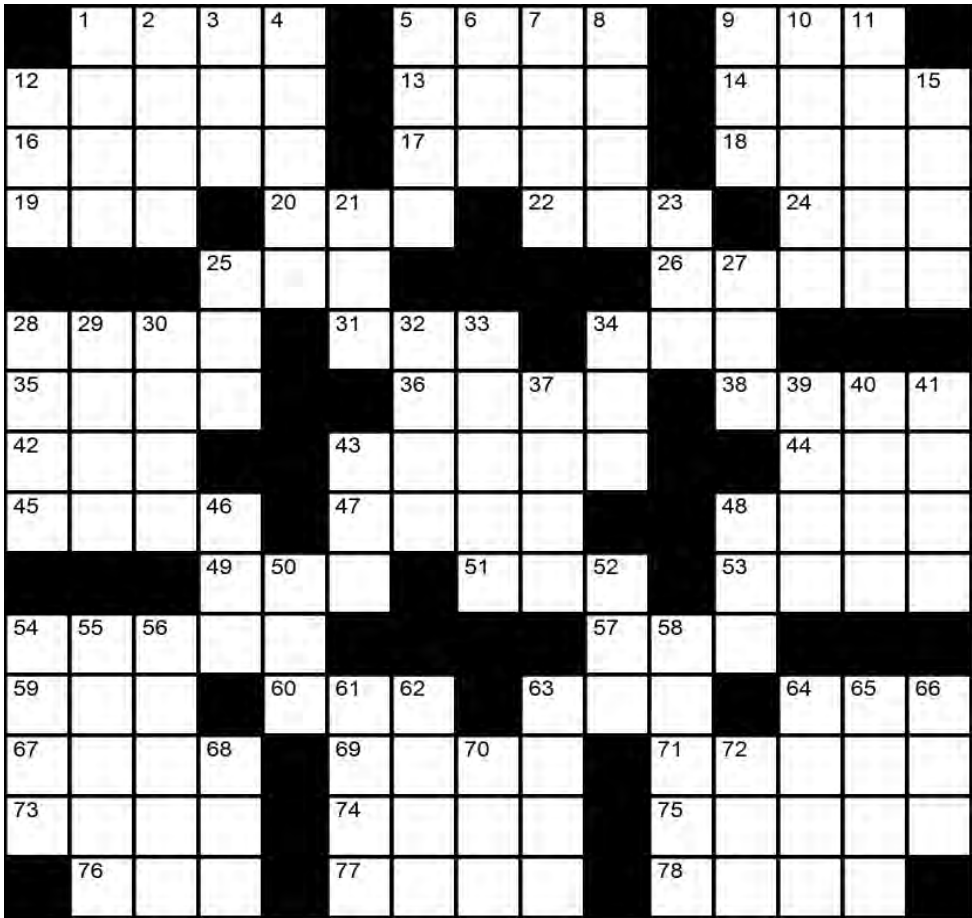
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- Across:**
1 #
5 Conversation
9 P C to web link company
12 Persian Gulf port
13 Gypsy people
14 Immediately, in hospital
16 Edgar --- Poe
17 Upon
18 Insect destructive of clothes
19 Negative
20 One coming out
22 Big beer can
24 --- Grande
25 Solar system center
26 Casing
28 Electrical connector
31 Passed away (Abbr.)
34 Old card game
35 "Would it be ---?" (Presley: "Can't help falling in love")
36 Father's sibling
38 Physicians
42 So far
43 Sour-smelling
44 Sticky stuff
45 Junction
47 Not us
48 Killer whale
49 Rotational speed measure
51 Bashful
53 Top
54 Harsh treatment
- Down:**
1 Kind of hoop
2 Competently
3 Cape Town carrier
4 One of the Indian majority
5 Quarrelsome grouch
6 Very fashionable
7 Hog-wild
8 Recording medium
9 Belief system
10 Bad weather
11 Paved outdoor area
12 Karate degree
15 Hammer god
21 Aim
23 Federal fiscal watchdog
- 57 Applicable
59 Entertainment
60 Bench with a back
63 Letters on Royal Navy ships
64 E.g. a street kiss
67 Horse controller
69 Spanish fashion designer --- Rabanne
71 Long
73 Aware of
74 Overnight stops
75 Law
76 Fight against underwater threats
77 Penny
78 U R L starter
- 25 One of a hundred in D C
27 Eye cell
28 Methods
29 Statement of understanding
30 The Beatles' lovely meter maid
32 Apiece
33 Antidotes
34 Classic Ford model
37 Type of rechargeable cell
39 Man-eating giant
40 Stimulating South American shrub
41 Sit in a tub
43 Bank machine
46 E.g. Robinson, Doubtfire
48 Plump
50 Vigor
52 Thanksgiving dish
54 Spherical hairdo
55 --- Vista, Disney brand
56 Military groups
58 Outguess
61 Heroic
62 Diminish slowly
63 Vast multitude
64 Gasp
65 Bead
66 Newswoman --- Curry
68 The present time
70 Cable/satellite network
72 Dine

OBITUARY



SKUBEL, JOHN (SKUBIE) — August 8, 2020 - It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of John Frank Skubel in his 67th year. Loving husband of Victoria and proud father of Luke. Predeceased by his parents Natly and John. Survived by siblings Helen (Tom), Dennis (Pat), Jane, Richard (Ann). Brother-in-law to Christine (Robert), Helen (Mark), Joe (MaryJane), Fran (Peter), Elizabeth (Steve), Robert (Doris), Donna (Bryan) and many loved nieces, nephews, great-nieces and nephews and a great-great-niece.

John enjoyed his work at Niagara Orchards & Vineyard Corp., where he was always available to advise and help all farmers in the Niagara region. John was a lifetime member of the Niagara Lions Club, and enjoyed the annual Christmas Tree Fundraiser. He loved his annual trip up north hunting with the boys. He was an avid hockey player, and played All Ontario Lacrosse.

There will be a celebration of John's life held at the family home on Wednesday August 12, where a tree planting service will commence at 10 a.m. Please bring a lawn chair and a mask.

Those who wish, may make a memorial donation to the NOTL Minor Hockey Association and NOTL Minor Lacrosse. Cremation has taken place.

Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com.



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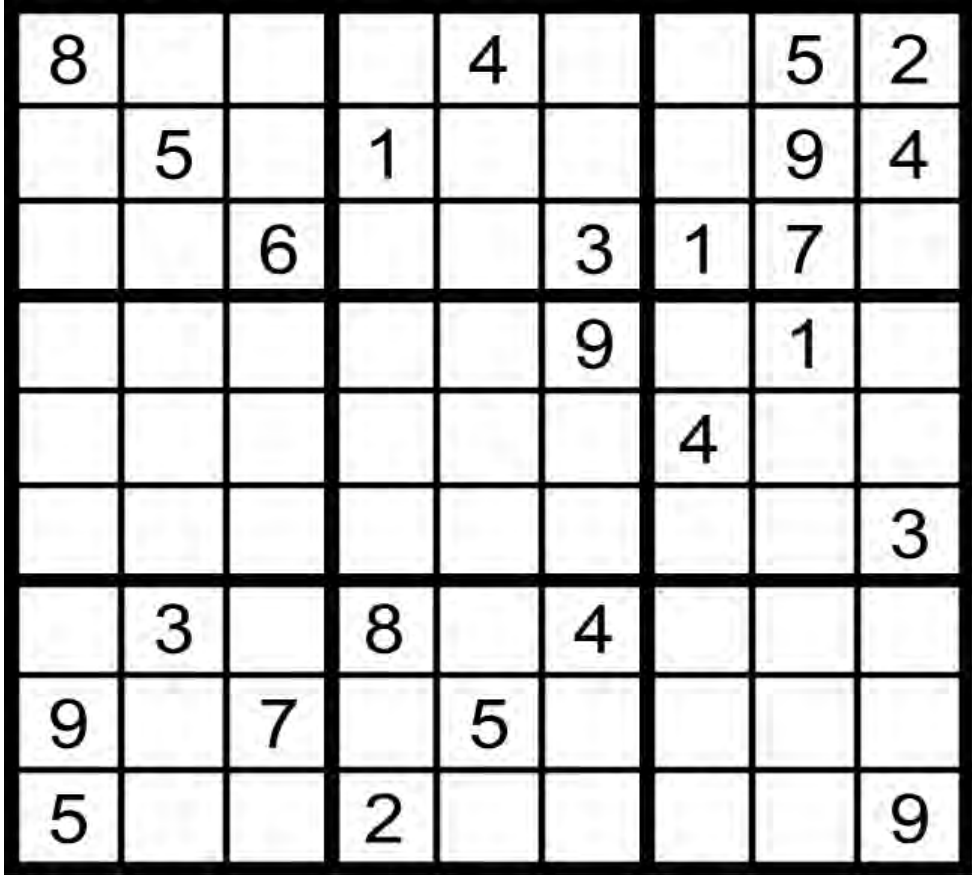
PUZZLE ANSWERS

**Sudoku solution from
August 3, 2020**

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 Hash, 5 Chat, 9 I S P, 12 Dubai, 13 Roma, 14 Stat, 16 Allan, 17 Atop, 18 North, 19 Nay, 20 Deb, 22 Keg, 24 Rio, 25 Sun, 26 Armor, 28 Wire, 31 Dec, 34 Loo, 35 A sin, 36 Aunt, 38 Docs, 42 Yet, 43 Achild, 44 Goo, 45 Seam, 47 Them, 48 Orca, 49 R p m, 51 Shy, 53 Peak, 54 Abuse, 57 Apt, 59 Fun, 60 Few, 63 H M S, 64 P D A, 67 Rein, 69 Paco, 71 Yearn, 73 Onto, 74 Inns, 75 Canon, 76 A-S W, 77 Cent, 78 H t t p.

Down:
1 Hula, 2 Abby, 3 S A A, 4 Hindu, 5 Crab, 6 Hot, 7 Amok, 8 Tape, 9 Ism, 10 Storm, 11 Paito, 12 Dan, 15 Thor, 21 End, 23 G A O, 25 Sen, 27 Rod, 28 Ways, 29 I see, 30 Rita, 32 Each, 33 Cures, 34 LTD, 37 N-I-M-H, 39 Ogr, 40 Coca, 41 Soak, 43 A T M, 46 Mrs, 48 Opt, 50 Pep, 52 Yam, 54 Afro, 55 Buena, 56 Units, 58 Psych, 61 Epic, 62 Ware, 63 Host, 64 Pant, 65 Drop, 66 Ann, 68 Now, 70 C N N, 72 Eat.



**PLEASE RECYCLE
THIS NEWSPAPER**
The Niagara-on-the-Lake
LOCAL
The trusted voice of our community.

As more businesses and services reopen, we must all continue our efforts to protect each other.



Continue to practice physical distancing, stay two metres apart even in gatherings.



Wear a face covering where physical distancing is a challenge or where required.



Continue to wash hands frequently.



Get tested if you are worried you may have COVID-19, or have been exposed to the virus.

Inside or out, stay safe. Save lives.

Run for Pink Pearl, to help young women with cancer

Penny Coles
The Local

Maria Mavridis continues to fulfill a promise she made to her mother to support organizations offering support to those going through cancer treatment, although the pandemic that has cancelled most fundraising events is making it a challenge.

The event coming up, a walk or run in support of Pink Pearl, is especially meaningful for her, as she will have her eight-year-old daughter Hope by her side.

Pink Pearl is an organization founded by cancer survivor Elise Gasbarrino, who was diagnosed with ovarian cancer at the age of 21.

While Gasbarrino was receiving treatment at Juravinski Cancer Centre in Hamilton, she found there were few women her age to talk to about her situation, and decided to organize some programs for the younger age group, including wellness retreats, social events and family support.

Pink Pearl, which gives 100 per cent of the money it raises to fighting cancer, has become a thriving charitable organization focused on bringing together young women affected by cancer through a network of peer support and innovative programs.

Mavridis, who has organized several fundraisers for the organization, says before her mother Vera died of breast cancer at the age of 45, she asked her middle daughter Maria to continue on with the work she had started. Vera had lived with the cancer diagnosis and its progression for 13 years, and during that time, she volunteered for several organizations that raised money to fight cancer, promoted awareness of the disease or offered support to those who were going through cancer treatment.

Maria has had the BRCA blood test that uses DNA analysis to determine an increased risk of breast cancer. She has taken that as a lesson to make the most of her life every day, she says, including helping her community, accomplishing something positive, and setting a good example for Hope to follow.

Maria, a busy mom and business woman who helps her father Bob with their family-run restaurants in Niagara-on-the-Lake, will continue to honour her mother's request by participating in a run being held this month for Pink Pearl. She has organized other successful fundraisers in the past, but at this time during the pandemic, supporters are taking part in individual runs.

She was eight years old when her mother was diagnosed with



Melaina Gasbarrino is preparing for her Pink Pearl walk or run. (Photo supplied)

the disease she would go on to battle for 13 years.

When she and Hope go on daily walks through their Virgil neighbourhood, they chat, and she loves sharing her memories of her mother with Hope.

"It helps keep those memories alive," says Maria. "She's at an age that when I tell her how close I was to my mother, she'll realize how much she can open up to me."

Although she expects the five-kilometre walk for Pink Pearl to be more like "we're on a mission" than a leisurely neighbourhood stroll, she expects her chatty daughter will be asking her questions that will give her an opportunity to share stories of her mother, and what they are walking for.

Together5k is Pink Pearl Canada's 2020 summer event to raise funds and awareness. It's a virtual 'fun run' designed to bring participants together from a distance in support of young women facing cancer.

"Typically, each year our supporters host their own fundraising initiatives, but we've found a fun and engaging way to pivot our efforts given the current COVID-19 situation," says Melaina Gasbarrino, who has helped organize the run and will also be participating.

The programs and communications manager for Pink Pearl, Melaina is Elise's

sister, and a certified yoga teacher and reiki practitioner based in NOTL. She says the five or 10-kilometre run, which takes place from Aug. 12 to 19, is designed for participants to map out their routes to walk or run each day for five minutes, or complete their race in a day. Runners just need to finish their walk or run by August 19 at 12 p.m.

Pink Pearl is "committed to raising funds to continue our programming in a safe and virtual capacity," she says. "Our annual Niagara-on-the-Lake overnight wellness retreat hosts 40 young women facing any type of cancer, and provides our program participants with the opportunity to come together in a safe and supportive space to share, learn and build friendships. In lieu of an in-person retreat, this year we will be hosting a virtual retreat to ensure our vulnerable community is supported in a safe environment."

To register and to start your fundraising page to support young women facing cancer, visit bit.ly/together5k.

Help Hope raise money for Pink Pearl by donating at: https://racerooster.com/events/2020/32571/together-5k/pledge/participant/9597829?fbclid=IwAR2Y99Jj8iFN5xXmNRHxH-qvzVCuebAmGB419iVW6yPIypVFz_IobCzH4zA



Hope takes walks with her mother, Maria Mavridis, daily, and will also walk with her to raise money for Pink Pearl. (Photo supplied)