Goal of VBA is to attract all ages to sports park

Penny Coles  The Local

As Richard Wall sits at a table under the pavilion by the Virgil splash pad, he can look around him with pride, and understandably, a sense of accomplishment.

The president of the Virgil Business Association likes to think that what he sees is the best sports park per capita in all of Canada. “I don’t think there is a town of 20,000 or under with a better facility,” he says.

If there is one out there, show me where it is,” he says. “The vision of the VBA has always been to create a multi-generational park, and we feel they are accomplishing what they set out to do.

“Many of the community members have worked hard to make this happen, and the results speak for themselves. The park is used by people of all ages and abilities, and it has become a focal point for our community.”

The fundraising committee raised $158,000 in 1967, and Dave received certificates from both levels of government for the biggest centennial project per capita in the country.

“I grew up in that era, and I love to reminisce,” says Wall. “The mentality that got that rink done was the same mentality that has created this whole park.”

The recent skateboard park controversy that started the trip down memory lane for Wall. He has stayed away from anything political, as has the VBA, which developed a strong partnership with the Town as it expanded the facilities in the Virgil Sports Park. But he wants the story told of how the first skateboard park came to be built.

He thinks it was in the mid-90s, when a small group of kids were skateboarding in parking lots of Niagara Stone Road businesses, including the former MB Foods (now Phil’s valu-mart), the original Niagara Credit Union (where the LCBO is now), and his family’s Wall’s of Virgil Furniture Store, on the property where the Niagara Image Gallery and other businesses are now located.

The kids weren’t causing any trouble, just having fun. The VBA saw an opportunity to create a dedicated space for skateboarding, and worked with the Town to develop the park.

“Once it was built, it took off, and it’s been a source of pride for our community ever since. The park is used by people of all ages and abilities, and it has become a focal point for our community.”

Continued on page 10
Former Virgil School vandalized by teens

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

Thanks to a swift response from the Niagara Regional Police, a group of teens have received a warning under the Youth Criminal Justice Act following a break-in and vandalism spree at the old Virgil Public School.

Last Friday morning, local artist Filomena Pisano, who rents a studio space in the building, arrived to find debris scattered on the hallway floor in front of an office space rented by the Great Vision Church. She walked down the hallway to pick up the painting that seemed to have fallen from the wall, when she noticed that a window on the door had been broken.

Pisano sat down and wrote out her feelings in a heartfelt letter to the perpetrators. Rather than expressing anger, the letter conveys her concern for the mental health and desperation that she was sure caused the vandalism to violate the community building. “Perhaps you are upset with how life is right now;” wrote Pisano. “I get it’s tough to be in the world today. But that doesn’t give you a green card to vandalize.”

She went on to write, “I truly wish you can find it in your self to tell someone what you did, and that you can spend some time volunteering, with the community that you upset so much.”

She was thankful her son was with her when she arrived, as it helped her get through the initial shock. Pisano had only recently moved her studio into the old classroom, and the break-in left her feeling shocked and scared.

The Niagara Regional Police officer investigating the scene determined that the previous evening a group of six males, aged 14 to 16, entered the building and caused the damage that has been estimated at about $1,000.

The boys were identified and spoke to the officer in the presence of their parents. In line with the provisions of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the youths were cautioned with extrajudicial measures, which deal outside of court with youth who have broken the law. Their names cannot be released under the act.

Terry Weiner is one of the volunteers who runs Bikes for Farmworkers out of the basement of the old school. He would like to see those responsible held to account for their actions.

It’s disturbing to see that anyone would break into a church and vandalize it randomly, he says. “To see the damage, they took some rods out of a football game and used them to break windows, they ripped sinks off the wall, thank goodness the water had been turned off or the damage would have been even worse.”

It’s disheartening to see that anyone would maliciously damage someone’s property; Weiner continues. “It’s disappointing, I wish that their parents would do more than just put a slap on the hand. I’d like to see them get back in the building repairing the damage. I don’t know what was going through their minds; it shows a true lack of character.”

Michelle Mercier, lead pastor at Gateway Community Church, opted not to comment on the incident for this newspaper. “As well, The Local’s attempts to reach the Great Vision Church were unsuccessful as of press time.”

Building owner Lloyd Redkopp is happy that the perpetrators were caught. “It’s unfortunate, and we have to go up and clean up after their mess. I hope to speak to the parents shortly. The boys have admitted their guilt, and hopefully between them and their parents they can help with the restoration.”

Redkopp says it’s been a number of years since the building has had a break-in. “When the former school is more active it tends to deter any vandalism attempts. ‘We’ve been renting out classrooms to a variety of people and that meet the needs of the community, and what we were allowed to do,” he adds. It just been an extremely quiet summer, with COVID, though, and these kids were looking for things to do. Unfortunately, they got on the wrong side of things to-do.”
Volunteer ambassadors to act as friendly greeters

Penny Coles
The Local

Volunteer ambassadors will be presenting friendly faces and welcoming visitors to town, with a goal of explaining about COVID measures and encouraging compliance. They are to act as greeters, and have been told not to confront or interact with protestors, councillors heard at Monday’s planning meeting.

They’re being asked to remain calm and not engage in conversation or make eye contact in a confrontational situation, or make eye contact in a confrontational situation, or make eye contact in a confrontational situation, or make eye contact in a confrontational situation. They could be helpful with protestors or those who may say they’re not going to wear a mask, said Coun. Wendy Cheropita, who with Coun. Gary Burroughs, has helped organize the volunteer project.

They’ve also been told not to contact staff if they run into problems, but to call Cheropita or Burroughs, “and we’ll go to the appropriate person,” she said.

In July, when it became evident there were problems with physical distancing in restaurants and on patios, Burroughs suggested using volunteers, trained by staff, to be good-will ambassadors. They would be asked to welcome people and explain the rules to do with COVID. They would not be enforcement officers, he emphasized. They could be helpful by “suggesting that we do have rules, not enforcing them,” he said at that July special council meeting.

Interim CAO Sheldon Randall was a little concerned about what the volunteers would be expected to do, but Coun. Wendy Cheropita offered to work with Burroughs on a volunteer ambassador program, seeking “compliance versus conviction,” she said, to strengthen the town’s image of being friendly and welcoming, and putting the safety of visitors and residents first. Shaw Guild members have been looking for new ways to help out in town, and were happy to help, she said.

The two councillors have been working with the guild volunteers to act as welcome to the community. The program is to be launched this Wednesday to Sunday, and then Friday to Sunday thereafter, into the first week of September. They will talk about face masks and shields, physical distancing, and the use of hand sanitizers, which will be available in local businesses.

Lord Mayor Betty Dero opened the meeting saying there had been a spike of 19 new cases, but nothing new recently, however it’s important to follow guidelines to keep it that way, she noted.

Laurie Harley, Shaw Guild president, and communications chair Cheryl Morris have been instrumental in getting the program put together quickly, as have town staff, councillors heard.

“The ambassadors will be wearing T-shirts identifying themselves as such, and also as Shaw Guild members. Volunteers, Burroughs said, will thank people who are visiting the town, and also those already wearing masks. The project “is good for the volunteers, and also good for us.”

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

Catch Me If You Can (2002) is based on the life of Frank Abagnale, a young man who successfully passed himself off as a doctor, and finally an airline pilot, before being unmasked. The film is directed by Steven Spielberg and stars Tom Hanks, and the young Leonardo DiCaprio, who with Coun. Gary Burroughs, has helped organize the volunteer project.

Donald Combe is a retired English teacher who loves to go to movies. During the pandemic, restricted to staying at home, he has grudgingly agreed to share his opinions and were happy to help, she said. The two councillors have been working with the guild volunteers to act as welcome to the community. The program is to be launched this Wednesday to Sunday, and then Friday to Sunday thereafter, into the first week of September. They will talk about face masks and shields, physical distancing, and the use of hand sanitizers, which will be available in local businesses.

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Margot Devlin, Lois Chapman, Kim Mustill, Laurie Harley, Brenda Wafer and Cheryl Morris have been trained as greeters, and received a bottle of Konzelmann wine in appreciation of their offer to help. (Rene Bertschi)
Continued from page 1

any trouble — they were good kids just looking for somewhere to skateboard. "But there was concern that either one of the kids or one of the customers would be hurt," he says.

"In true VBA fashion," some of the members approached the Town to talk about a skateboard park, and it wasn’t long before a site was chosen, and a basic structure, only ever intended to be temporary, was built to keep skateboarders in a safe location, beside the arenas.

"Nobody knew how much it would get used, but it was a facility we thought kids could enjoy, and then, for 10 years or more, there was no more discussion about anything else."

It was the perfect spot for it, says Wall, on the location of the former T-ball diamond, where there was no chance of bothering anyone.

But some time ago, he thinks about 2005, the VBA was approached by the Town about tearing down the original structure and building a new, relocated skateboard park. It seemed the CAO of the day wanted the site of the old skateboard park to expand the Town’s operations centre, although he doesn’t remember that was ever officially discussed, says Wall.

The VBA supported the project, but there were no costs discussed at the time.

There was talk about putting it beside the tennis courts, where the pickleball courts are now, but before anything was decided, the splash pad idea came up, "and the skatepark board renewal project got pushed aside," Wall says.

"The splash pad became a big project, with a long-term plan that included the walking trail and fitness equipment. That took us to about 2016, when the skateboard park came up for discussion again."

At that point, the conversation included potential locations, and the cost of a pump track, with a skatepark as the first stage.

"As always, the VBA wanted "as good a quality project as possible," Wall says.

One of the first sites discussed was at the back of the property where the mini-soccer fields are, but nobody wanted to give them up. The other location was "right in residents' backyards."

The parks and recreation department then asked if the VBA would be okay giving up what is always referred to as "the corral, which had been part of our stampede from the beginning, when we had horses and barrel-racing. At that point, we were using it for the stampede mud run, and then later for the demolition derby. We agreed it made sense for the community to have a facility it could use three seasons a year, rather than us using it for three days a year."

We thought maybe we could look at other opportunities for entertainment, such as amateur events around the skatepark."

It seemed the best location, and the least likely to disturb bordering backyards, he says.

He emphasizes it is municipal property, and the decisions of what has occurred, such as the design, cost and location, were always Town decisions, but with support, including financial aid, from the VBA.

When he was a kid, in addition to the arena, he remembers the park had a few ball diamonds that would be used in the early evening by kids playing minor ball, and when they were finished with their games, the adults would take over for slo-pitch, as they still do, except for the unusual season when the pandemic shut down organized sports.

In the intervening years, the VBA and the Town partnered on the Meridian Credit Union Arena, the picnic pavilion, the concession stand and equipment; and the splash pad, playground, path and exercise equipment, and now, $150,000 toward the skatepark.

All were designed and built by the Town, with large chunks of Town money.

Wall says the intention of the VBA was always to contribute to the multi-generational use of the park, which has grown now to attracting residents of all ages, every day of the week, all times of the day.

It was the purchase of the former Kallau property, once peach orchards where out-of-towners would search for hard-hit home runs, that allowed for the expansion. It extends from the fence between the paved path and the ball diamond, to what is now Loretta Drive, and also includes the soccer fields.

When that property was just an orchard, the VBA had the vision of one day adding it to the sports park, and members approached the Kallau to ask for right of first refusal when they were ready to sell.

When the time came, the VBA spearheaded the sale, approaching the Town to talk about their vision. A significant amount of taxpayers’ money went into the purchase, along with $50,000 from the VBA.

"At the time, I remember saying to the Town, "if you put a subdivision here, it will come back to bite you," says Wall.

And yet, while some might complain about the noise, the park has become a place where a young family can come to the park, with one child playing baseball or soccer, others in the splash pad or on playground equipment, and soon, older kids enjoying the skatepark.

Richard Wall says the VBA didn’t choose the location for the skateboard park, but other options were discussed, and he believes the site chosen seems the best place for it. (Penny Coles)
Don Chapman legacy found in historic buildings

Penny Coles  
The Local

Architect Donald Chapman left a legacy throughout the region with his designs of many landmark buildings, including Niagara-on-the-Lake, where he served on the town’s heritage committee for more than a half century. Chapman died Aug. 8, at the age of 91.

His associate Wayne Murray of Chapman Murray Associates Architecture says for more than a half century, Chapman was a leader in the community, focusing on good building design and the preservation of heritage structures. He also served on the Niagara Falls heritage committee, and was devoted to protecting the historic buildings in Niagara Falls.

When asked to design additions or alterations to existing heritage structures, he was always sensitive to the character, style and period when they were built. His firm was involved in the design of many hotels and restaurants in Niagara Falls, and all of the hotels in NOTL, all regional long-term care facilities, major additions to the Daughters of the Memorial Hospital in Fort Erie and Greater Niagara General Hospital, and designed several medical office buildings in Niagara.

He also designed the NOTL Town Hall, and worked on most of the NOTL hotels, including the Pillar and Post, Queen’s Landing, the Motif Inn, the Harbour House and the Show Club Hotel.

He was proud of the work he did in NOTL, says Murray. He also worked extensively with Calvin Rand on Randwood over a period of many years. Did the current situation at the John Street estate bother him? “Nothing ever really bothered him. He was resilient, and he was a realist.”

Most of the buildings he designed are still used for the same purpose, Murray added, a sign that Don took his work very seriously, and made the addition or renovation, always choosing classic designs that would fit in over time. That was the philosophy of the firms, he says, that buildings were to be timeless, not avant garde or cutting edge, which might seem right for the time, but not over the long term. Instead, he liked contemporary elements and material with a nod to heritage, “and that turned out to be a good philosophy to have. It means designing something that will last.”

It has been about 10 years since Don served on the local heritage committee, says Murray. He always tried to stay apologetic, and focused on buildings and on heritage.

“He was a well-respected man, who made significant impact on heritage issues.”

He lived in NOTL, loved the town, and invested in designing a beautiful home on the river side of the Niagara River Parkway, on an estate that had been divided. “He built a wonderful home, one that looks contemporary but has all kinds of historic references. He did a beautiful job capturing the significant historical shapes of the Old Town.”

Don knew everybody in NOTL, says Murray, “and everybody knew him.”

Murray says Don was so well liked, his clients looked forward to meeting with him. “He was very colourful, and had nicknames for people he would use when talking to them. He was also a colourful dresser, delicately wearing things that were mismatched, big floppy hats, and he had one pair of pants he would always wear that looked like a quilt pattern. He liked to make a fashion statement — he was that kind of guy.”

He also always had an opinion that he liked to share, although never in a way that offended people, says Murray, or to embarrass or criticize.

“He worked quietly to let his opinions be known,” says Pam. “He was a good place to work very wise, and as a person, no bad habits — everything was in moderation.”

As good as Don was at his job, “I think some of our clients kept coming back to us because they liked him so much,” Murray jokes.

“He was a wonderful, colourfull guy, but he didn’t socialize a lot. He enjoyed his own company.”

He also worked on the latest additions to the Regional Niagara government health care building in Thorold. In St. Catharines, the firm designed One St. Paul office and retail complex at the corner of Ontario Street, the Canada Trust building at James and King Streets and many commercial and residential buildings throughout the city.

As well, Don designed many churches, schools, university and college buildings, forkable housing for the YWCA and several women’s shelters throughout the Region.

“The people of the region were fortunate to have had Don Chapman from John B. Parkins’ office in Toronto to Niagara where he has made significant contributions to the built environment,” says Murray.

“Despite his somewhat irrelevant sense of humour, he remained respected professionally by his peers, admired by the hundreds of employees who had worked with him for almost 70 years, and remembered fondly by his many public and private clients who became good friends of this remarkable, colourful and talented man. The firm of Chapman Murray Associates is proud to carry his name forward which will act as a tribute to his legacy and as an inspiration to continually create architecture of the highest quality.”

Chapman is survived by his wife, Isobel, children Kael and Gregory and Sarah, and other family members. A private family service is to take place.

Skate park to be discussed, but no request to halt it

Penny Coles  
The Local

Kevin Turcotte is expecting a discussion about the skate park board park location on Monday’s council meeting, but isn’t sounding like it will call for conference to be halted, as originally seemed the case. The director of operations for the Virgil Business Association was asked and agreed to give up the corral for the Virgil Stumpede, Turcotte said, that site was chosen as the one in the land locked park farthest from neighbouring backyards.

The skate park is about 75 per cent completed, with some concrete still to be poured, and could be finished or close to it by next week, he added. If council wants the process for decision making on capital projects to change, Turcotte said, that would need to be a direction of council.

Cameron’s motion to discuss Monday says “contract procurement and vendor selection” were approved by council, but council was not given an opportunity to consider location or public feedback.

Residents have recently been expressing concerns about the location and its impact on them, the motion says, and after completion of the park, it calls for staff to meet with residents for feedback and share a summary of comments with council. Cameron’s motion asks that council be provided, the 2021 budget include landscape and buffering features to the skate board, and that future projects involving Town facilities where location is an issue be brought to council’s attention, either with a formal report or highlighted in budget submissions.
Reasonable solution offered for skate park

For the last week or so, the new skate park has been a topic of pretty heated discussion. Suddenly a long-awaited project that would add another element to an already pretty great sports park was now, not amplified, and on hold because, it might be in the wrong location. That didn’t sit well with those who were opposed to it, or imagining the lofty task of moving to things great and more concrete, at substantial cost to the taxpayer.

Coun. Clare Cameron has taken a lot of flak in social media, and in chatter around town, for suggesting construction should be halted until council debates whether its location in the Virgil Sports Park is the best place for it. This concerned about the impact to neighbouring properties, and also about the safety of those using the park.

This week, in completing her notice of motion — the topic of discussion for Monday’s meeting — she has removed the word halt and come up with a reasonable solution.

When she first spoke of halting the progress on the skatepark structure, she garnered a lot of attention, all of it negative. It didn’t help that she came after a week of craziness over the proposed noise bylaw, while Faith here were already saying made NOTL a laughstock, and this seemed proof-positive that there is absolutely no fun allowed in this town.

But she had to make a point. It is a major, $450,000 project, one that has implications for a small number of residents nearby, but at least as important, the decision of its location was made without input from council.

It seemed if Coun. Cameron wanted a debate about the skatepark game, it should be about correct- ing the process for future decisions, not stepping at all, and getting to go back to the fact of less of course it could be shown to be dangerous.

She has managed to come up with a solution covering two bases.

If the skatepark does create problems for nearby residents, she is suggesting there are solutions to mitigate those issues of noise and safety. And if staff need to have a line drawn around which decisions they can make and which ones need to be considered at the council table, this is the time to make that distinction.

Her solutions could be debated, amended, or approved Monday; but she has given coun- cillors a reasonable launching point for their discussion.

The Local is a member of the Virgil Business Association. The old Advanced was as well, so we speak to Karen Skeoch and I, have sat in on many meetings over almost three decades. While it is a group of business people that has grown from the original six to about 30 members, with monthly meetings, we can attest to the fact that it has never been the pur- pose of networking or growing businesses, but the mandate for the group to offer fi- nancial support for projects that benefit the community. It started with the skatepark in the very first annex, and contin- ues to support the expansion of the skatepark, with a long list of other projects over the intervening years. It’s safe to say that in the past 30 plus years, there has not been a child grow up in town — not just Virgil, but all of NOTL — who has not benefited in some way from a project supported by the B. And the facilities, thanks to the Town, are always top-notch.

While the skatepark might not be everybody’s first choice of a recreational facility it is intended to appeal to an age group that is enti- ted to the same support as every- one else, from toddlers to seniors, but one that doesn’t receive a lot of positive attention.

Kudos to the Town and the VBA for supporting this project, and there is a lesson to be learned about the need for a formal process in such decisions, thanks to Coun. Cameron for pointing that out.

Pennie Coles
The Local

Long live the joyful noise of NOTL

My husband and I are neophytes to Niagara-on-the-Lake, and in our first year of living here, we had a lot to learn about this wonderful town.

We were awakened by the sound of what we thought were 1) helicopters, circling for hours, looking for something or 2) the filming of a remake of MASH. We laughed when our neighbours told us about the wind ma- chines that reside in the fields, working their magic over the sensitive grapefruits and fruit trees to keep the frost at bay, and pro- tect from the crops from injury. They soon became white sound, rest- ful like the winds through the trees, and the crickets in their nighttime dating scene.

Starting around late one evening, trying to locate the or- igin of the “music to our ears” (I may have been in my PJs), and we were happily surprised to be drawn to the outdoor concerts at a nearby winery estate. Wow, bonus, we could listen and en- joy the music, comfortable on our front porch, close to the wine cabinet.

Our street is a busy street, big and little trucks, maintenance vehicles, lawn care, construction crews, bicycles, dog walkers, jog- gers, kids bouncing basketballs on their way to the park; tennis players carrying their rackets to the same park; kids talking and laughing as they pass by, babies in strollers, some sleeping, some not. All good healthy sounds of life and living.

We visited many times prior to choosing to call NOTL home. We chose to live in (and died and gone to heaven) wine region, a region rich in fruits and vegetables, outdoor markets, who does not love fresh everything, asparagus, straw- berries, peaches and cherries, to name a few; a town withc housing, that walks the halls, streets and parks, and the ubiquitous skunk population we walk wherever they want.

A viable downtown with shops and restaurants, inns and B&Bs, horse-drawn carriages, green spaces, historical gardens and proud homes.

A town steeped in culture, social institutions, arts, theatre, music. A town which draws millions of tourists and travel- lers, the young and the not-so- young any more, farm working shopkeepers, entrepreneurs, and all the worker bees that keep the wheels of commerce turning to share the fruits and labours, the sights and the sounds of NOTL. This is the joyful noise of a town living large. Long live the noise.

Wendy Lowen, NOTL

Rental contracts impact quality of life for some

What appears to have been lost in the current noise bylaw debate is the reason that Niagara-on-the-Lake took on the development of a new noise bylaw in the first place.

During the 2018 municipal election, several residents raised concerns about the noise being generated by guests staying at weekend rental properties. Oth- ers noted the increased volume of noise emanating from outdoor entertainment events, in- cluding the concerts being held at local wineries. A number of candidates, myself included, voiced support for amendments to the current noise bylaw, in- cluding adding a decibel level component to the regulations, and enhancing enforcement.

While the draft noise bylaw developed by town staff is by no means perfect, it could have provided a starting point for further consultation with stakeholders as well as residents. Instead, council has allowed a group with vested interests in the rental industry to usurp the mandate for the group to offer financial support for projects that benefit the community. It started with the skatepark in the very first annex, and continues to support the expansion of the skatepark, with a long list of other projects over the intervening years. It’s safe to say that in the past 30 plus years, there has not been a child grow up in town — not just Virgil, but all of NOTL — who has not benefited in some way from a project supported by the Virgil Business Association. The old Advanced was as well, so we speak to Karen Skeoch and I, have sat in on many meetings over almost three decades. While it is a group of business people that has grown from the original six to about 30 members, with monthly meetings, we can attest to the fact that it has never been the purpose of networking or growing businesses, but the mandate for the group to offer financial support for projects that benefit the community.

The change of this year’s venue, up to the NOTL Commu- nity Centre due to COVID restrictions, was an awesome place to hold the event. A spe- cial thank you to the Town and area residents, once again, for pro-1

Thanks for shredding support

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Palliative Care Service wanted to extend our sincerest gratitude to Doug Martin of Meridian Credit Union for once again donating the funds to cover our Shred-it Trunks and their shredding equipment.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Palliative Care Service all worked on the recent Shred-it event, a major fundraiser for the service. (Photo supplied)

The change of this year’s venue, up to the NOTL Commu-
thoughts on the pervasiveness of sound

Last Friday night I responded to a telephone poll regarding the temporarily closed noise pollution law and ended up frustrated. The poll did not allow for nuanced answers. The questions were worded in a manner that felt truly deliberate. It seemed to me there was no constructive way to respond, nor did the questions adequately capture this situation.

In the poll, questions of auditory volume were repeatedly portrayed as...
Local writer, producer shares NOTL gossip and scandal

Kim Wade
Special to The Local

Everybody loves good gossip and a scandalous sto- ry, whether we like to admit it or not. Scientific research into our psychology has sug- gested that humans love to gossip and gossip has many functions, one of which is to promote cultural learning.

In the 2004 issue (Vol. 8) of the Review of General Psychology, three researchers, Baumsteine, Vols and Zhang, wrote a paper named Gossip at Cultural Learning, proposing that, “In our view, gossip is a potentially powerful and ef- ficient means of transmitting information about the rules, norms, and other guidelines for living in a culture. On the surface, gossip consists of sto- ries and anecdotes about par- ticular other people, perhaps especially ones that reflect negatively on the target. We re- ceently concede that some of the appeal of gossip is simply learning about other people. However, we think that a sec- ond, less obvious function of gossip is to convey infor- mation about social norms and other guidelines for be- haviour.”

Barbara Worthy’s Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum lec- ture, Scandal and Gossip, this past Thursday afternoon defi- nitely gave listeners some en- tertaining stories about other people. Some of the stories were sad and heart-wrench- ing. Others were scandalous and intriguing. However, all of them conveyed “information about the social norms and guidelines for behaving,” the difference being that Worthy’s gossip was about people no longer around to dis- tinguish them.

As Worthy explained, “I think the public always en- joys juicy, somewhat maca- bije tales … and when they’re his- torical, it takes the horror out of it. I wouldn’t want to re- tell stories of that nature, if they are too close to our own times. But in general, stories that incorporate something that is not the norm, or illu- trates some kind of behaviour that would have shocked peo- ple in their times — those stories are fun and revealing. Not just about the people in- volved, but about society at that time.”

Last year, when Worthy gathered these stories, she was able to turn them into an event by walking with a group to each location. At the loca- tion, she would tell the story of what happened there. This year, things are different, and Worthy had to adapt her pre- sentation to the digital world. “The most challenging aspect was getting comfortable using Power Point and operating the slides at the same time as reading my script and keep- ing them all in sync,” she says, “and not getting stressed if something went a little off. But I think everyone is very forgoing in today’s Zoom world.”

As an experienced writer, director, producer and per- former, Worthy showed no stress during the lecture as she presented her gossip in a fun and entertaining way. Worthy was a drama and documentary producer for CBC Radio for two decades, and she enjoyed a 20-year asso- ciation with the Shaw Festi- val, including acting, writing and producing. She teaches at both Brock University and Niagara College, and is a cre- ative producer and content provider for many local arts organizations in the Niagara region. Over the years, she has worked with the museum on specific projects and con- tracts, but joined the museum staff last fall as the visitor and members services Assistant.

In her new role, she put together this lecture that took viewers on an adventure filled with mystery, romance, murder and espionage. She drew the audience in as she recounted the mystery of the tunnel beneath Parliament Oak, and the story of who really burned the Old Angel Inn. She recounted the tragic romance of Isaac Brock and Sophie at Brock’s- manour House, and the tale of romance gone sour between Peter and Mary Servos at Pal- atine Farm. She wove tales of betrayal and murder within the Free Masonry and with the murder of Bartholomew Lindon by his wife and her lover. She ended with the sto- ry of Niagara spy, Catherine Poole who supplied the Brit- ish with information on the American occupiers during the War of 1812.

Even though the lecture was on gossip, that does not mean that the stories are un- substantiated. “Most of the initial research came from hard digging by museum student intern last summer,” Worthy explained. “And other- wise research came from our graveyard tours that we’ve done here for the past eight years!”

She continued, “You have to be kind of historical de- tective. What makes sense? What else could be going on? And you have to check multi- ple sources, of course.”

Some sources also include NOTL locals. “Mostly it’s dig- ging through the archives. And then talking to the locals, and trying to find material that backs it up … like check- ing official documents. And there’s going to be a certain amount of literary licence, but around here you can’t stretch that too far or we’ll hear about it, for sure. The locals are very passionate about their history, and mostly they want you to get it right.”

These tales of gossip may be based in truth with a little pepper thrown in for spice, but they remain a window into the life, and culture of the past. They can still serve as cultural lessons on morals and behaviour. As Baumsteine, Zhang and Vols con- cluded in their study, “Gossip greatly expands the oppor- tunities for cultural learning, because one can benefit from the experiences of others out- side of one’s field of vision and sometimes even outside one’s circle of friends.” After expe- riencting this lecture, we could add, even outside one’s period of time.

Worthy’s lecture is up on the museum’s YouTube chan- nel for viewing. Virtual Scan- dal & Gossip – Tour of Niaga- ra-on-the-Lake.

Worthy added that the museum has been successful in obtaining a couple of grants and she will have the oppor- tunity to write a new musical to complement the upcoming All Along the Waterfront ex- hibit which is planned for a spring 2021 opening.

“My short ‘docu’-musical will be called Rollin’ Down the River, and will incorpo- rate some of that same fun stuff on the Zoom lecture, some darker tales of stories about the river, as well as how it was the lifeblood of the region.”

The next lecture in this series, The Cayuga and her Consorts: Remember- ing beloved Niagara-to- Toronto Steamers, will take place Thurs., Aug. 20 at 4 p.m. and presented by John Hen- ry. Contact Amy Klassen at aklassen@niabh.com or call 905-468-3912 to register.

Niagara EMS names Karen Lutz-Graul, Deputy Chief

Penny Coles
The Local

A Niagara-on-the-Lake native who began her ca- reer as a paramedic in town has been appointed deputy chief of the Niagara EMS.

Karen Lutz-Graul was first hired by the NOTL Hospital in 1991, before Ni- agarag local municipalities amalg- amated their ambulance services to form the region- al EMS.

The regional announce- ment referred to Lutz-Graul as the first female deputy chief, and while she’s proud of that, she says, she’s pro- gressed up the ladder, and worked hard to be the most qualified for the position. “I don’t want the fact that I’m a woman to detract from the fact that I’ve earned this,” she says.

Along the way to her most recent promotion, she was instrumental in transform- ing the way EMS op- erates, developing two pro- grams to reduce the volume of calls, increase efficiency, and provide better care to those who called for emer- gency services.

Lutz-Graul grew up on East and West Line, gradu- ated from Col. John But- ler Elementary School and Niagara District Secondary School, and completed the Niagara College ambulance and emergency care course in 1990. She was hired on as a primary paramedic at the NOTL Hospital, later earning her advanced care diploma.

In 2000, the Niagara Re- gion amalgamated six sepa- rate EMS services, some of which had been run by the Province, and others pri- vately operated or run by the municipalities, includ- ing NOTL. In 2009, Lutz-Graul had the opportunity to become a training supervisor, and since she had always en- joyed teaching, took the job. “I say, sometimes, volume have to be physically fit, and “your body might not be able to do the work for as long as you’d like it to,” so when offered the train- ing position it seemed like a good time to think about how she could continue to serve in a meaningful way, in a profession she loves.

In 2013, Lutz-Graul became the commander of quality assurance, with oversight of training and education of paramedics and dispatch, at which time she learned to do the job of communications, to ensure resources are used strategi- cally to get calls where they need to, and on time.

In 2018, the Region chal- lenged the EMS, which had seen call volumes “escalate dramatically,” to find ways to operate more efficiently. About 25 per cent of the
Karen Lutz-Graul

...they challenged us to fashion a system that would work in a very different way.

Lutz-Graul instrumental in changes to EMS

Continued from page 8

increase could be attributed to the aging populations demographic, but other than that, she says, "we had no idea why people were becoming so reliant on emergency services."

Each year the EMS was asking for more funding, she adds. "It costs taxpayers $1.5 million to operate each ambulance, with all the necessary equipment and staffed around the clock," and while the Region had given the service significant increases over the years to meet the demand, "they challenged us to fashion a system that would work in a very different way."

Kevin Smith, the chief of EMS, had the insight to develop integrated health care, versus finding the care people actually do worse if they take to the hospital emergency rooms. For instance, the patient might just need help getting off the floor, she says, or the fall might be a symptom of something else. The right intervention teams, which include occupational therapists, physical therapists, and nurses who were trained to take over some calls from dispatch, and ask more clinical questions to find out what was needed, which is not always a trip to the emergency room, she says. For instance, the patient could be suffering a minor illness that requires a call to a family doctor.

About 30 per cent of people actually do worse if they're taken to the hospital, versus finding the care they need to help them at home, she says. Nurses can help identify the problems and offer more appropriate treatment to prevent further emergency calls, reducing the strain on both EMS and hospital emergency rooms.

Lutz-Graul was also the lead on the project that developed integrated health teams, another change that involves teaming paramedics with other health professionals, such as mental health nurses who are better able to determine what kind of treatment is appropriate in some cases, or falls intervention teams, which include occupational therapists.

The person who called might just need help getting off the floor, she says, or the fall might be a symptom of something else. The right care could prevent a more serious, life-altering injury, and help seniors stay in their home.

The programs have been successful "because we work with some great partners," she says. "All of our stakeholders help fashion the changes with us as a community, and with the community on board." When Smith asked her about taking on the job of deputy chief, he questioned whether she would be willing to move on, leaving behind her the work about which she is so passionate. She said yes, and one of the reasons she is happy to take this next step is her interest in helping other ambulance services make some of the same changes, and perhaps further down the road, changes in legislation "to make this a reality across the province. We need to showcase to others what can be done."

That being said, "our core business is still life-threatening calls. That hasn't changed."

Before COVID, call volumes were continuing to rise, although not at the same pace they had been, she says. Since COVID, they have decreased substantially — people don't seem to want to call for an ambulance at this time, which has her wondering who they are doing instead.

But the struggle in response time remains an ongoing problem, partly because of delays at the hospital, which the EMS can't control, as paramedics wait with the patients they've transported. Hold-ups are created by those in hospital beds who require an alternate level of care, such as a room in a long-term care home.

The current struggle is about how to help reduce those system-wide delays, says. "My next step is trying to figure out how to help the system, as the population continues to age. We have to develop a system based, similar to a business, on how to meet our customer demand, tailoring the care we provide to what people really need."

Lutz-Graul has spent most of her 50 years living in NOTL. Once both of her parents, Erna and Henry Delesky, passed away, she and her husband Mark decided to move to Burlington, halfway between his job in Toronto and hers at the old Foster Wheeler building on Glendale Ave., now the Niagara Corporate Business Centre, owned by Niagara College.

But of course, she says, "I was born and raised in NOTL, and it will always be my home. It's such a diverse community, with so much to offer. It's always been home and always will be."
The Local - August 20, 2020

‘It just doesn’t get old,’ says paraglider

Continued from page 1

one day in 2012, a customer of his business invited him to come out to a field to watch him paragliding. He was immediately hooked.

Wall signed up for lessons with Zeman, and within two weeks he was flying.

Now in his ninth year of powered paragliding, Wall has earned his ultralight aircraft license, which is a must for anyone aiming to pursue the sport as a hobby. He has hundreds, if not thousands of flights under his belt, and often chooses travel destinations based on where he might like to fly.

Three years ago, he and his wife Carlee built a new house on a rural plot of land that, not coincidentally, was perfect for take-offs.

On a beautiful, nearly cloudless August night like tonight, it’s easy to see why he is so enthusiastic about this type of flying. “Anybody can get involved,” he says. “If you are an adventurist, and have done sports like scuba diving, parachuting, mountain biking, you have a much better chance of succeeding and enjoying the sport. There is definitely a physical aspect to this type of flying.”

Training through Zeman costs $4,500 and involves 35 training hours. He provides the training equipment for his students. Visit poweredparaglidingontario.com for information and training dates.

In these photos taken by Mike Balsom, Stan Wall (clockwise from left) gets set to take off; Graham Speck comes in for a landing in St. Davids; Evgeny Derkach does some repairs on his gas line connection; Speck gathers his wing following his landing, and Speck gliding just above the tree line. In the sunset photo below, Speck is flying, with Stan Wall taking the photo.
The Missing Pages

Tom Allen and Music Niagara tell the story of

Brotherly bonding the best deep in the forest

Mike Balsom

Special to The Local

The story of a little-known Canadian connection to arguably the world's most well-known composer is at the center of Music Niagara's 2020 at Home series presentation this Sunday.

Titled The Missing Pages, the show is the brainchild of CBC Radio host Tom Allen. It brings together music, song, drama, history and informed speculation in a format he has dubbed a chamber musical. Originally scheduled to come to Music Niagara as a live performance, this Sunday's program was pre-recorded at a church in Toronto over three days in June, following physical distancing protocols.

As Allen explained via telephone from Ottawa, Theodore Fiebrich Molt, born near Stuttgart, Germany, was the son of a Lutheran organist. In 1813, he played the deeply fraudulent, unpredictable Schindler, who narrates the play. Cabaret singer, songwriter and pianist Bryce Kulak plays Molt, while Beethoven is portrayed by Stratford and Shaw veteran actor Derek Boyes. Soprano, songwriter and actor Patricia O'Callaghan takes on the role of Susannah Sotto.

"The one thing we do know about Molt's visit," says Allen, "is that when Molt arrived at Beethoven's studios, there had been a very attractive female singer (Sotto) who had been there paying her respects to the great maestro. Beethoven was so smitten with this singer that he pressed Molt into helping him to write love poems that he thought would help win her heart. They worked very hard to come up with these poems, but according to Molt, they were pretty bad."

Of course any chamber musical about Beethoven needs the maestro's music. In The Missing Pages, the music is played by Allen's wife, Lori Gemmell, the principal harpist with the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony.

Molt, by the way, returned to his work in Canada in late 1816, teaching students, publishing educational pieces, and trying to create a national culture of song and music in Lower Canada. Allen has no doubt that Molt played up his meeting with the maestro to his favour, though at the time, musicians were not able to make a great living in the country. His heart was in music, and he later left the camping life behind, taking up a career in the theatrical world, and even ripped pages out of the book in an attempt to figure out what hadn't happened.

For reasons still unknown to this day, Beethoven wrote back, in speculation, there is no doubt that neither a deer nor fellow human should be able to step on an insect, or it would scream out in the night. The insect calls amalgamated into one peaceful unit of sound, which eventually carried me into one of the best sleep's I've had in weeks.

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Printing, copying business continues at home

When Neeti and Vinay Mehrotra, owners of local The UPS Store, decided to close after 16 years, they had no idea what they would do next. They never expected they’d be back in the same business, printing, copying, packaging and shipping from their home.

Neeti said they ended up with some of the smaller pieces of equipment stored in various locations in the house, although most of the supplies had been sold to other UPS outlets. They’d closed about three months into the pandemic, which had created a downturn for the Mehrotas, but it was a significant increase in their rents and common area charges, as well as the need to replace an expensive commercial air conditioner, that sealed their fate.

“This is the kind of business that relies on many small things that add up,” said Neeti. “There was definitely a drop because of COVID, but at least we were open.” However, a good part of the UPS income was from other local businesses, she said, including menu-printing for restaurants, which had closed.

“And then everything was gone all at once, and we just couldn’t keep going,” she said.

But the Mehrotas were well-liked in town, and their business of copying,
Continued from page 12

Neeti can be reached at neetinotl@gmail.com.

Notllocal.com

THE NOTL LOCAL
August 20, 2020

NOTL and Mehrotra missed each other

“I’ve missed that, missed seeing people all the time. When I go out, people keep telling me they miss me. I tell them I can still help them, and they’re so grateful. That’s what’s best about a small town, everyone helping each other.”

Neeti says she hasn’t missed the store but she has missed contact with people. “People would come to talk more than to do business,” she says.

“We’re not crazy busy, but we have enough work to keep us going. It’s good enough for now.”

The customers who are reaching out to her “are ones who we have had a closer relationship with. They email us — they don’t have to come to the door. It’s not like a retail location where people are always dropping in.”

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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.

Friday, Aug 21: The Moon moves from discriminating Virgo into well-balanced Libra early this morning, and sets up a challenging day where if we are able to be open to change, things we have long dreamed about will move several steps closer. While she is best known for her role as Samantha Jones on the smash TV series, Sex and the City, one of her earlier successes was Crossbar, with Brent Carver and Peter Krantz, a made-for-TV film that still stands up. Kim Cattrall turns 64 today.

Join us for a complimentary glass of Sparkling Wine when you have dinner at Restaurant Oban Inn.

Complimentary Sparkling Wine available until August 20th, 2020

Call for Dinner Reservation 1-866-359-6226
Dinner Hours: 5 pm to 9 pm, Closed on Tuesday
OBAN.COM
Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

After losing 29-13 to the McMaster University Marauders in the 2019 Yates Cup (Ontario university football championship), Niagara-on-the-Lake’s Lake Andrews and his Western University Mustangs teammates were looking forward to a big comeback season for 2020.

On June 8, Andrews’ dreams of success this year came crashing down. That day, U Sports, the governing body of Canadian University athletics, cancelled the 2020 football championship, the Vanier Cup, due to the coronavirus pandemic. The Ontario University Athletics Conference (OUA) soon followed suit by shutting down the entire football season.

Heading into his fourth year at Western University, Andrews can barely remember the last time he faced a summer or fall without football on the horizon. He took up the sport as a 10-year-old when his parents, Bob and Mauro, signed him up for the Niagara Regional Minor Football League program. He moved on to play for the Niagara Generals of the Ontario Minor Football League, and then to the Niagara Spears of the Ontario Varsity Football League (OVFL). He put in time as a defensive back, running back, wide receiver and kick returner, and was named an OVL All-Star in 2013 and 2015. As well, he holds a number of records in that league’s bantam and junior divisions.

On the collegiate level, Andrews graduated enrolled at A.N. Myer Secondary School, where he also became an integral member of a growing and successful football program. The Myer Marauders marched to a Junior Metro Bowl championship in his first year, and Andrews was named the team’s defensive MVP the following season. In his two years playing on the senior team, the Marauders took the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations Football championship, and were considered amongst the best high school teams in Canada. Andrews was Myer’s male athlete of the year twice, and also played basketball, and competed at track and field.

Andrews signed to play for Western during his senior year at Myer. He was one of the first two players of the 2017 recruiting class announced by head coach Greg Marshall, who was certain that Andrews would compete for a starting role from the outset. When he arrived for training camp at Western in 2017, however, Andrews had been nursing a high ankle sprain that he had thought had healed. After two weeks on the field it was clear the injury had begun to heal back up. He missed the first month of the season, and when he was healthy enough to return he was red-shirted, so that wasn’t considered one of his five years of eligibility. He was able to practice with the team, but remained ineligible to play in any games. The Mustangs ended up winning the Vanier Cup that season.

With Andrews in the defensive backfield, the Mustangs lost the 2018 Vanier Cup game.

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Secondary School, where he also became an integral member of a growing, and successful football program. The Myer Marauders marched to a Junior Metro Bowl championship in his first year, and Andrews was named the team’s defensive MVP the following season. In his two years playing on the senior team, the Marauders took the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations Football championship, and were considered amongst the best high school teams in Canada. Andrews was Myer’s male athlete of the year twice, and also played basketball, and competed at track and field.

Andrews signed to play for Western during his senior year at Myer. He was one of the first two players of the 2017 recruiting class announced by head coach Greg Marshall, who was certain that Andrews would compete for a starting role from the outset. When he arrived for training camp at Western in 2017, however, Andrews had been nursing a high ankle sprain that he had thought had healed. After two weeks on the field it was clear the injury had begun to heal back up. He missed the first month of the season, and when he was healthy enough to return he was red-shirted, so that wasn’t considered one of his five years of eligibility. He was able to practice with the team, but remained ineligible to play in any games. The Mustangs ended up winning the Vanier Cup that season.

With Andrews in the defensive backfield, the Mustangs lost the 2018 Vanier Cup game.
**OBITUARY**

**IVAN EATON — Oct 9, 1925 - August 12, 2020**

Ivan, a NOTL resident for 22 years, passed peacefully with Evelyn by his side, freed from the bonds of his terrible illnesses.

He led a rich and satisfying life for 94 years, travelling extensively, playing golf, squash, lawn bowling, bridge and tending to his beloved garden. He raised five children: Ellen, Rand (Kim), Brian (Vivian), Cindy (Malcolm) and Vernon, who then blessed him with nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. He will be missed also by his sister-in-law Lauren McIntosh (Gord Bedford).

If riches are counted in friends and family, Ivan was indeed, a rich man. Evelyn is so appreciative of the many friends from NOTL who have sent their condolences. Ivan was so fortunate to labour at work that he genuinely loved. For 20 years, he worked at the YMCA, finishing at the National Council, and then spent 21 years as Executive Director of the Bank of Montreal's community outreach program, EPOC, where he helped guide young adults to promising futures.

Even in retirement, Ivan continued at the same pace, managing “Deaf Futures” for BMO, serving on the Board for the YMCA Retirees and was the President of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Bowling Club, a position and game that he dearly loved.

A Celebration of Life will be held Friday, September 25 for immediate family. Those interested in attending the celebration via Zoom at 1:30 EDT should email Ivanscelebration@gmail.com for details. In lieu of flowers, donations are welcome at YMCA Canada, c/o Don Noble, 5273 Driscoll Dr., Manotick, ON. K4M 1E9.

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**Sudoku solution from August 13, 2020**

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  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9
A 6 7 8 9 1 2 3 4 5
B 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
C 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 1
D 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 1 2
E 4 5 6 7 8 9 1 2 3
F 5 6 7 8 9 1 2 3 4
G 6 7 8 9 1 2 3 4 5
H 7 8 9 1 2 3 4 5 6
I 8 9 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
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**PUZZLE ANSWERS**

Across:
1. Spanish hero El ---
4. Deep cut
8. Big cheeses
12. Flower jar
13. --- Falco, Nurse Jackie
14. Praiseworthy
16. Formerly Russia
17. Rich, in Spain
18. Soothing ointment
19. Small cell
20. Author
21. Oregon summer clock setting
23. Lune Star State (Alta)
24. One over a major
26. Small amount
30. Nuncio
32. Midriff
36. Open pastry dessert
39. Carnival
41. Nothing
42. Lubricate
43. Untamed
45. Chefs
46. Patch
49. Software menu option
50. Crystal
51. Tuscan time
52. West Atlantic international gyps.
54. Managers
56. “A Doll’s House” dramatist
58. Atlanta-based health gyp.
63. Lettuce variety
65. Building extension at a right angle
67. Gaga (shrip grill)
68. Play it Latin
70. Minned with a zee
72. Wooden’s tools
73. Country music’s --- Tucker
74. “--- in the Dark” (slapstick movie)
75. Apocrypha
76. “--- there, done that”
78. Poducts vegetables
79. “--- Porter” (Johnny Cash song)

Down:
1. Cid
4. Gash
8. V I Ps
12. Vase
13. Edie
14. Ideal
16. Iran
17. Rica
18. Itch
36. Flan
39. Fete
41. Zero
42. Oil
43. Feral
45. Rub
46. Atom
48. Lure
49. Pelt
11. Save
12. Vial
15. Lex
20. Ply
22. DDT
25. Own
27. Biz
29. Off
30. Strut
47. MHz
49. U S B
51. Moo
53. Ail
55. Ocean
57. Spore
58. Elegy
59. Nose
60. Salve
19. AAA
20. Pen
21. P D T
23. Tex
24. Lt Col
26. Dab
28. Wyo
30. Sgt
32. Womanized
67. Goya
68. Pop in Latin
70. Minned with a zee
72. Wooden’s tools
73. Country music’s --- Tucker
74. “--- in the Dark” (slapstick movie)
75. Apocrypha
76. “--- there, done that”
78. Poducts vegetables
79. “--- Porter” (Johnny Cash song)

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**IN MEMORIAM**

**Gordon ‘Gord’ Tait**

On August 21st it would have been one year since you had to leave us.

Your gentle smile, your laugh, your hugs and the thoughtful little things you always did are missed so much.

Forever loved, forever in our hearts.

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**FAMILY GARAGE SALE**

Bargains on furnishings, vintage dishes, clothing, art, books, accessories.

115 Johnson St., NOTL Saturday, August 22nd 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

**WANTED TO RENT**

**SHORT TERM FURNISHED**

SENIOR COUPLE, QUIET, NS, NO PETS, SEEKS 2 BED COTTAGE, SUITE, CONDO, OR HOUSE. COMMENCE DATE SEPT 15
DURATION: 4-6+ MONTHS FLEXIBLE.
CONTACT: EMAIL wattj928@gmail.com
PH 604 379 1004 BC PST

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**MOVING SALE**

Friday, August 21 4 p.m. – 8 p.m. & Saturday, August 22 8 a.m. - 2 p.m.

5 LOYALIST COURT
Household items, tools, books, small garden shed, furniture, etc. Please use distancing as mandated.

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**WANTED**

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**PUZZLE ANSWERS**

Across:
1. Cid, 4 Gash, 8 V I Ps, 12 Vase, 13 Edie, 14 Ideal, 16 Iran, 17 Rica, 18 Itch, 36 Flan, 39 Fete, 41 Zero, 42 Oil, 43 Feral, 45 Rub, 46 Atom, 48 Lure, 49 Pelt, 11 Save, 12 Vial, 15 Lex, 20 Ply, 22 DDT, 25 Own, 27 Biz, 29 Off, 30 Strut, 47 MHz, 49 U S B, 51 Moo, 53 Ail, 55 Ocean, 57 Spore, 58 Elegy, 59 Nose, 60 Salve, 19 AAA, 20 Pen, 21 P D T, 23 Tex, 24 Lt Col, 26 Dab, 28 Wyo, 30 Sgt, 32 Womanized

Down:
1. Cid, 4 Gash, 8 V I Ps, 12 Vase, 13 Edie, 14 Ideal, 16 Iran, 17 Rica, 18 Itch, 36 Flan, 39 Fete, 41 Zero, 42 Oil, 43 Feral, 45 Rub, 46 Atom, 48 Lure, 49 Pelt, 11 Save, 12 Vial, 15 Lex, 20 Ply, 22 DDT, 25 Own, 27 Biz, 29 Off, 30 Strut, 47 MHz, 49 U S B, 51 Moo, 53 Ail, 55 Ocean, 57 Spore, 58 Elegy, 59 Nose, 60 Salve, 19 AAA, 20 Pen, 21 P D T, 23 Tex, 24 Lt Col, 26 Dab, 28 Wyo, 30 Sgt, 32 Womanized

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**LOCAL CLASSIFIEDS**

classified@notlocal.com
A popular Paddle Niagara kids’ instructor has been recognized by one of the leading media bodies in Stand-Up Paddleboarding (SUP).

On Thursday, SUPConnect named Welland native Maddi Leblanc their 2020 Woman of the Year. Leblanc edged out the women of all ages who came from around the world to earn the prestigious honour. Just days after finding out, she is still getting used to the accolade.

“I feel like the reality of it hasn’t really set in yet,” says Leblanc. “The amount of messages and support I’m getting from this is truly incredible.”

When I first found out Thursday, I was kind of in shock. It wasn’t really sinking in, I drove home (from NOTL) after work, that’s when it hit me, and I had tears in my eyes.”

Her profile on the SUPConnect website’s awards page, she is described as inspirational, dedicated, selfless, strong, and passionate. Her editors say that she embodies all that they look for in a woman of the year.

To have a conversation with Leblanc is to bask in positivity. Her words are regularly punctuated with genuine laughter, and she speaks with an energy and enthusiasm that is infectious. She brings that energy and enthusiasm to her sport, to her teaching the kids with whom she works, and to her efforts to improve her community.

Leblanc became fascinated with stand-up paddle-boarding on a family vacation at the age of 10. She spotted two men gliding on top of the water on Lake Huron. When they came to shore, she inquired about their boards. They offered to let her try one out, and she immediately fell in love with the sport.

She begged her parents for her own equipment, and finally, about a year and a half later, there was a shiny new board under the Christmas tree. When the following spring came around, she could be found on the Welland River honing her skills.

In the summer of 2014, the next year she became a SUPKids program the next summer she was stoked about the news. Leblanc came by for a one-day paddle, and the next year she became an instructor in Niagara on the Lake.

Her presence working with the kids for three summers has been instrumental in growing the sport in Niagara. “She just has this way of connecting with them,” says Bala. “I really admire it. I think it has to do with her passive, carefree, positive attitude. She doesn’t really let anything faze her. It’s nice to have someone who is able to relate to the kids like Maddi. Kids see her and they just sort of light up.”

Like many who participate in board sports, Leblanc has a keen interest in ecological issues. Last year she completed an undergraduate degree in Environmental Resources and Sustainability at the Brock University. Through the co-op program, she worked for the City of Welland’s water and wastewater department and at the Woodend Outdoor Centre. She is currently pursuing her master’s degree in Brock’s Faculty of Applied Health Sciences. Her thesis topic is right up her alley — a study of stand-up paddleboarding and children.

On the water, she’s been bitten by the competitive SUP bug. Maddi started racing in 2016, and claimed the Ontario SUP Series Last year she completed standon in the overall open female category the following year. At the end of that season she signed on as a team rider with Starboard, one of the world’s leading SUP companies. In 2018, she won the overall elite female category at the Ontario SUP Series, and also captured the overall title and the yellow jersey at the 2019 and 2018 Mammoth Race in Toronto. All of this got her an invitation to represent Canada at the ISA World Championship in China.

Now that the ISA has finally claimed the right to govern SUP internationally, there is a good chance that SUP may eventually find its way to the Olympics, a prospect that excites both Leblanc and Bala.

“I would love to see Maddi train and paddle in the Olympics for Canada,” says Bala. “She has the technique, the drive, the skill to clearly go far as long as she’s given the opportunity. She paddles every day and that’s the only way to get better.”

“Oh gosh, it’s a huge dream,” says Leblanc about the potential to compete in the Olympics. “I think I can be happy with the fact that at least once in my lifetime I was able to represent Team Canada on an international stage. But I feel like I’m not done, and if it were to be an Olympic sport, that would just give me up so much. We’ll obviously have to see in terms of life circumstances when that happens, but as of right now, absolutely.”

These days the Leblanc family needs space for at least five boards in their garage, one for each of the three kids and her parents, Dan and Jackie. Of course, Maddi’s board/spends the least amount of time in that garage.

And she may be taking it with her to new waters in the near future. She is in early talks with a major SUP company for a job in their eco-project department. The company’s headquarters are in Thailand.

The recognition by the top SUP media organization is still sinking in, yet Leblanc remains as down to earth as ever. At such a young age, she has reached the pinnacle of her favourite activity, but it’s clear that she has so much more to give as a paddle and a person.