Recognizing Ukrainian independence

The Ukrainian flag was raised at the town hall Wednesday, six months after Russia invaded the country. At the flag-raising are Lord Mayor Betty Disero, Shirley Madsen, founder of Sunflowers For Ukraine, her granddaughter Savannah Nedeljkovic and husband Finn Madsen, to commemorate Ukrainian Independence Day and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress’s continuous support of the Ukrainian community. For more information see page 7. (Photos supplied)

Three inductees in town’s Sports Hall of Fame

Trevor Falk, Yvonne Haines, Launcelot Cressy Servos honoured

Mike Balsom
The Local

A fastball and hockey star and coach, a long-time figure skating volunteer and a golfer with ties to the history of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club are the three newest members of the town’s Sports Wall of Fame.

At the first in-person ceremony since 2019 at Virgin’s Meridian Credit Union Arena, plaques honouring Trevor Falk, Yvonne Haines and Launcelot Cressy Servos were unveiled to a crowd of just under 100 family members, friends, government officials and teammates.

Servos, who was born in 1879 in Buffalo, New York and moved with his parents to NOTL, was the first of the new inductees celebrated Friday night. He was nominated by the NOTL Museum. Launcelot’s second cousin, Daniel Servos, explained that the honouree started his fascination with and long career in golf as a young caddy at the NOTL Golf Club. Soon, Launcelot was entering long drive competitions in the U.S., such as the one in 1897 where he placed second with a drive of 186 yards, less than half of what would win a similar modern day competition.

Servos won a major international tournament in Niagara before turning pro and becoming one of the founding members of the U.S. Professional Golfers Association (PGA). He played in the 1900 U.S. Open, designed the state of Florida’s first golf course, had his name on a set of McGregor brand irons and wrote some of the first popular golf instruction books. "He travelled throughout North America and visited many golf courses," Daniel told the crowd, "but Niagara-on-the-Lake was always home, and he maintained a residence here on Gate Street. Though it doesn’t appear he was a member of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club, he continued to be associated with it, and he donated the Servos Trophy, which is still played for today in the men’s tournament." Daniel also connected Launcelot directly to another member of the NOTL Sports Wall of Fame, perennial men’s club champion Al Derbyshire, who died in 2018. "He used to watch Launcelot and carried his clubs on the Niagara-on-the-Lake golf course," Daniel said. "It’s nice to see that tie-in.”

Launcelot died in Toronto in 1969 and is buried at the St. Mark’s Anglican Church cemetery.

Next up came Yvonne Haines, named to the Wall of Fame in the builder category for her three decades of volunteer support of the NOTL Figure Skating Club. Current director of skating programs and ice coach Judy Boyle-Krzeczkowski introduced Haines as a “true role model” who continues to contribute to the club with “passion, commitment and enthusiasm.” She is continuously picking up new ideas, “Boyle-Krzech- zkowski said of the club’s current co-president and treasurer, “with her invaluable resources

St. Davids is growing, needs more attention

Penny Coles
The Local

Adriana Cater (Vizzari) is a St. Davids resident hoping to win a seat on council to look after the needs of St. Davids residents.

“We need a voice to deal with issues as they arise, and also to be proactive on specific issues,” she says.

St. Davids has grown very rapidly, and doesn’t get the attention it deserves, she says. As an example, she points to all the new development in and around the village, and says “what’s the traffic management plan? Everything feels so reactive here.”

That includes attention to the pool, parks and schools. Without proper representation, St. Davids’s residents end up feeling “slighted and under-prioritized,” she says.

“That may have been fine a decade ago but our population and demographic has changed so drastically!”

The community has legitimate needs that deserve attention, “and someone who is willing to bring issues forward, advocate and put in the work.

Since sewers were installed in 2003, the community has grown from about 230 homes to more than 1,600 homes. What worked in St. Davids 20 years ago isn’t working now, she says.

Although Cater Vizzari has never served as a politician, she feels she has a good understanding of what it means to be a municipal politician.

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Clean-up of Cole Drain spill could top $1 million
No word yet on whether insurance will cover it

BY LITTLE RICKY

An update from Kevin Turcotte to council Monday night was vague about the contents of a large spill that occurred Aug. 17, and that the town continues to clean up.

The acting operations director had some new information on the situation to share, but couldn’t answer all councillors’ questions.

The continuing removal of the contents in the Cole Drain will likely climb to more than $1 million, with the cost described by Coun. Erwin Wiens as likely the most expensive project the town will undertake this year.

As of Aug. 22, just five days into the spill, the cost of the consultant who is advising the town, and vacuuming some of the 480,000 litres of what was determined to be organic material, work that was going 24 hours a day, had already reached more than $600,000.

While Turcotte wouldn’t “hazard a guess” at how much more money will be spent or how the clean-up and remediation is complete, Wiens had no problem extrapolating further costs to reach more than $1 million. “If we have to cover this, where are we going to get the money?”

Treasurer Kyle Freeborn told councillors if insurance doesn’t cover it and costs can’t be recovered from the source of the spill, the town will have to turn to its reserves.

Wiens’ frustration at the lack of answers was evident, as he tried to ascertain why it was taking the town so long to identify the contents and source of the spill.

“Occasionally we would get some delay” in getting the lab results because of the type of testing required, Turcotte assured councillors the organic material in the drain is not hazardous, but couldn’t specify exactly what it is, other than organic material, which he described as good news.

Although initially councillors understood him to mean a more detailed analysis would be forthcoming, when questioned about the timeframe, he clarified that the town has the lab results but won’t release more detailed information, because it wouldn’t be understood.

CAO Marnie Chickie likened the situation to receiving blood work results, but not understanding what they mean — only a doctor would be able to interpret them.

She went on to say it is important for the town “to be open and transparent,” and will bring back results “in a way we can interpret clearly.” She said the public will also be advised when the source of the spill is discovered.

Tuesday morning, residents living in the area of the spill received a letter inviting them to a virtual information session Thursday, Sept. 1 at 5 p.m., saying questions can be asked in advance by email or during the virtual meeting

She said the printer in the town hall is on a neighbour to the drain told The Local Tuesday morning that although liquid is being pumped regularly from the drain, there is no visible improvement, and if anything the water is getting darker. It is also beginning to smell.

Turcotte assured councillors the town’s insurance company had sent a representative to the site of the spill, where a total of four berms have now been built to stop the flow of material through the drain.

He explained the town council had put the town’s ministry documentation — not an order for clean-up, but a “written directive” that will fulfill the insurance company’s requirements to cover the cost of the spill.

He explained the insurance company has not committed to covering the cost, and will wait to determine the cause, since whichever is responsible for it should be liable for costs.

Turcotte said although a source has not been identified, a leachate leak from the Line 5 landfill site has been eliminated.

“We have our test results, and we have our action plan to clean up the spill,” he said.

Coun. Gary Burroughs asked that the possibility of a leachate leak continue to be considered, and also questioned who is looking at the content and source of the contaminant.

“I have a problem with hundreds of thousands of litres in ditches and we don’t know what it is.”

Turcotte explained the consultant hired to oversee the clean-up operation is also looking for the source.

Six large fluid containment tanks that hold 80,000 litres each were lined up along Concession 5 between Line 6 and Line 7 early in the clean-up, and once filled, were emptied into tanker trucks to be taken off.

By Friday, four more tanks were set up to hold the material until it could be pumped into trucks and removed to a location approved by the ministry of the environment, though Turcotte didn’t say where.

Although there were loads from councillors and the CAO for the quick action of staff when they learned of the spill, there was some questions about the lack of communication to residents, who were calling the town, councillors and the press, witnessing the massive clean-up operation that by Monday had been going on for 13 days, and desperate for answers about the substance in the drain.

Communication could be improved in the future, Chickie agreed, by having a letter template available to fill in the blanks and explain the situation to concerned residents.

But in the meantime town staff were answering questions as best they could.

“People are scared, and worried about it,” she said, “and it’s important to alliviate those concerns.”

But it’s also important to give out correction information, Chickie added, and be sure staff have “definitive answers.”

A neighbour of the Cole drain took these photos Tuesday, Aug. 30. The spill council discussed Monday was discovered last Wednesday, Aug. 17, and residents are concerned they still don’t know the cause, or what it is — the town is only saying it’s organic material. The drain should be dry, but the neighbour who took these photos says if anything the black water is getting darker and has started to smell. The town has the area pumped “a few times a day, but no improvement,” the neighbour says.

There is concern amongst nearby residents now that it is becoming a breeding ground for mosquitoes and a danger for West Nile virus.

Nellie Keeler may know more about the Cole Drain and its history than anyone in town — she has lived on the same property for 47 years, and remembers when it became an agricultural drain named after the farmer who requested it. Like some of her neighbours, Keeler has been making phone calls to the town, Lord Mayor Betty Disero, and to The Local, trying to get some answers.

Keeler, the first woman to sit on town council — she served six terms as what was then called an alderman — explains that agricultural drains began in Niagara-on-the-Lake when a farmer wanted one on his land to drain surface water. If the town agreed to the drain, it was named after the farmer who initiated the project.

Keeler lives at Line 6 and Concession 6, and the drain, which should be dry, crosses her property.

Like others, Keeler said she couldn’t fathom what might have caused the black water running through the drain, and was frustrated that the town couldn’t find the source. The size of the spill alone should have made it easy to find where it entered the drain — she didn’t believe anything of that magnitude would come through the ground or travel underground.

“I know this drain inside and out,” she told The Local, and as hard as she tries to picture a scenario of what has happened to it, she can’t.

She questioned whether anyone of those tasked with working on the spill had walked the length of the drain from where it starts on York Road north to Four Mile Creek, but Chickie said yes, they had.

Keeler is also concerned about a large pond further north along the drain from the first berm that was installed, at the edge of her property, and whether it is connected to the spill.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero visited Keeler and saw the pond, but was assured by Turcotte Monday it has been there for some time, and is not created by or related to the spill.

He suggested a fallen tree could have blocked water flow and created the pond.
Town to ask region to put roundabout on hold - again

Penny Coles
The Local

A St. Davids resident was at council Monday to ask that the region be convinced to put the recommended roundabout on hold.

John Gartner told councillors Monday that after a meeting of St. Davids Ratepayers Association members with regional staff — a meeting residents had been trying to arrange for two years — it quickly became evident the region was only interested in talking about design details of a roundabout for the intersection of Four Mile Creek Road and York Road, and not looking at alternatives.

Gartner, with a background of senior planning positions for regions and municipalities, told councillors two factors should have been considered: moving traffic through the intersection; and the impact on the community and its values.

"I have no issue with roundabouts, I actually love roundabouts," he said, having travelled in many different parts of the world where they are well-used, "but in locations that are appropriate."

A roundabout in St. Davids, he added, "is not appropriate."

He suggested the region is basing its choice on data from 20 years ago. The community has grown and its traffic needs have changed since then, as have its traffic needs.

He told councillors he would like to see the region consider a traffic bypass, instead of a roundabout, and that in the meantime he would like the region to do nothing — his ask of council was to find a way to convince the region "to put it on the back burner."

"I think well rather have nothing there than the wrong something," he said, asking for more time to come up with what is right for the intersection, and not at the expense of pedestrians, who would have to use the roundabout to cross the intersection.

Gartner has recently lost his sight, and that in the meantime he would hate for someone like himself, or a child, to be hit by a vehicle while trying to cross the busy street.

He told councillors statistics show roundabouts are safer for vehicles, "but not for pedestrians."

The location of St. Davids School was not taken into account during the environmental study of the area, although children use that intersection to get to school, he said.

Any slow-down in traffic at the intersection now is a matter of seconds, he said, "a minor inconvenience, not a major problem."

Coun. Erwin Wiens agreed there is no need for a roundabout, and said he doesn’t even see the seconds drivers have to wait at the intersection as an inconvenience. He travels through it regularly, "and the most I’ve had to wait is 35 seconds. If you’re complaining about waiting 35 seconds you need to leave."

Councillors agreed to ask the region, for the second time, to put the roundabout on hold while other options to divert traffic are considered.

The roundabout would have to be included in the regional budget for it to go forward, said Lord Mayor Betty Disero, telling councillors she thinks there would be support from other regional councillors and mayors to putting a stop to the roundabout through the budget process.

No solutions for pickleball players or courts

Staff will continue to investigate for next year

Penny Coles
The Local

Council had a brief discussion Monday evening on the future use of the Virgil outdoor pickleball courts, until the two-year court order that has shut them down due to a noise bylaw infraction is satisfied.

Acting operations director Kevin Turcotte spoke of a staff report that looked at alternative uses for the courts, and recommended ball hockey, street soccer and lacrosse as the best options.

The report also recommends further investigation be coupled with a public consultation to solicit feedback and understand the desires and concerns of the community.

If the outdoor court is to be used for any sport, due diligence will be required, said CAO Marnie Cluckie, to ensure there will be no noise bylaw infractions, and that any option chosen would be a “compatible use.”

Sound attenuation measures, such as a sound barrier, would be expensive and not necessarily effective, and enclosing the courts would be even more expensive, said Turcotte.

With the Centennial Arena, which was converted to pickleball courts during the summer, now back to being used for ice activities, the club is being offered more time at the community centre, but Turcotte said he hasn’t found another location to replace the Virgil Sports Park pickleball courts when outdoor play resumes next year.

The NOTL Museum is going to expand last year’s poppy project, which created a curtain of poppies at the museum’s front door, with a plan to cascade poppies along both sides of the Courthouse entrance. There will also be poppies on lampposts along King Street and wreaths on selected Queen Street store fronts. The poppies will go up Nov. 1, and on museum grounds, a poppy garden will include veterans’ names. Sarah Kaufman was at council Monday to describe the project, telling councillors Barbara Worthy has planned it, and along with 40 volunteers will see it completed. (Rendering supplied)
A series of public engagement sessions to be held over the next month will ask for ideas and information on how changes to delivery of healthcare in Niagara may address some of the current challenges, and improve the services that are provided.

The Niagara Ontario Health Team - Team Equipe Santé Ontario, formed about two years ago, “is made up of a planning table of about 45 organizations, of which the Niagara North Family Health is one,” says Mary Keith, executive director of the health team that includes several Niagara-on-the-Lake physicians and many patients. “We are an integral part of the hospital board at one time, Burroughs, who was on the property, says Coun. Gary Houck, a fairness adviser was handled without interfering need for the process to be decided.

The meetings in the coming weeks, from Sept. 13 to 22, will be offered in two sessions in Welland, in French and English; in St. Catharines, Lincoln, Beamsville and Niagara Falls, and two virtually, one in French and one in English.

“We are paying close attention to the Indigenous and Francophone communities,” she says, in an effort to better understand their very specific needs and how to serve them better. With 45 organizations around the table, and a conscious decision that each one, from the largest to the smallest, will carry the same weight in the decision-making process, the outcome will be determined by consensus, she says.

“There will be no moving forward until everyone is confident with the decisions made. We’re all working together for better healthcare, and it’s important that everyone at the table has had their say.” Input is also very important, she says, from patients, family members, and caregivers. Everyone in Niagara is impacted by healthcare, and getting it right for the future “is a monumental task.”

When Ontario Health Teams were formed two years ago, she says, “I think there was an elevated expectation that was not necessarily realistic. It was not as concrete as we would have expected it to be.”

So while the process isn’t going to be completed quickly, it will be thorough. It will take time, and small steps to move forward, she explains. “We can’t move any faster. We understand everyone has to be involved in the decision-making process, including the public. We recognize the system hasn’t been perfect, and there is a lot of work to do,” she says, stressing the best way to get it right is for “everyone to get involved, to contribute to making it better.”

Although the process isn’t set in stone, she envisions eventually having focus groups with “pools of people” who want to be involved in certain areas, such as family members or caregivers of people with dementia offering their experiences and their ideas of how to improve care for those who suffer from dementia.

“Your information would feed into the changes we hope to make to improve the system.”

What those focus groups would be, she says, “we are waiting to be told. We want the patients, their families and caregivers, districting them. They have stories to tell, and often those stories point us in certain directions.”

For more information about times and locations visit https://noht-eson.ca/events/

*The Notl Local*
When she was growing up in Thorold, her father, Tony Vizzari, served two terms on municipal council. “I grew up understanding the commitment the job requires,” she says. “Maybe I’m new to municipal politics but I grew up with it being talked about all the time at home. We had landlines in those days, and my father got a lot of calls at home. He spent a lot of time on community advocacy. And I also see the need to represent St. Davids.”

Her parents now live in St. Davids as well, where she and her husband are raising four children, aged five, seven, eight and 10, all of them at St. Davids Public School. Rather than looking behind, she says she is looking to be a voice for the future. As chair of the St. Davids pool committee, she hopes to help the town attract federal and provincial grants to fund a new pool. She also wants to ensure the town’s plan for parks and recreation covers all of Niagara-on-the-Lake, including what is needed in St. Davids.

“I want to advocate for the pool, but also for other sports and recreation opportunities. We don’t have a soccer field or a full basketball court, but we have a growing number of families with children,” she says. She remembers sitting at a meeting for the Tanbark park, behind the St. Davids Fire Station.

“There wasn’t the growth in the village then, but that changed. I want to move forward with representation on council for the future. And people have to vote to make that happen.”

While she agrees with residents who don’t want to see a roundabout in the village centre, a regional project, she would also like to see a Transportation Master Plan that deals with St. Davids as well as the rest of the municipality, “to look at the big picture, but also to look at St. Davids. Shell also like to be part of a conversation asking the school board about a high school in town. “Things are changing and I want to be part of that change. My goals are for the future of the area.”

Cater-Vizzari says she is all over town with her kids. “We spend time at the arena, on the soccer field, we know every park in town, the sailing club, we’re everywhere.” The St. Davids pool just had its summer’s end party, “and it was so much fun. It was awesome. It’s a testament to how much people care about this community.”

While Cater-Vizzari is aware of the talk about a ward system in town, and there are distinct communities in NOTL, she says the first step is to get people out to vote. “My job right now is to get elected to represent St. Davids, and work to a brighter future.”
Councillors made a wise decision when they decided not to proceed with the process to determine the future of the former hospital building on Wellington Street.

It may not be in great condition — although it seems that not long ago a lot of money, raised from donations made by residents to the hospital foundation, was put into repairs and updates — but it’s an important property, too important to get wrong.

The building dates back to 1951, and was closed in 2018. But years before that, around 1994, there were efforts by the provincial government of the day to close it. A group of residents stepped up, joined an organization called SOS - Save our Sick, led by the late Gerry Wool, and rallied to keep it open.

Departments had already been shut down, the maternity ward long gone, the emergency department gone, until it was a shell of a building with 22 beds for patients who required continuing care. Some were there to get well enough to go home, some were receiving palliative care, and those who had loved ones in the hospital were grateful to have them close by. Many will have stories to tell — a hospital holds memories of both happy times and not-so-happy, as family members were born and died in the local community hospital.

All of this of course has nothing to do with the uncertain future the building and property are facing now. But its history does explain that in addition to its significant location in the heart of the Old Town, or a site steeped with history, it has meaning to many long-time residents as more than just a place of doctors’ offices. It is where their children were born, taken in when they had a broken arm, where aging parents were cared for and where they died, surrounded by family, and felt to be in good care. There are residents in town who still have deep connections to that building.

What happens to its future matters to different people for different reasons. It seems clear it should remain an institutional use. Of the nine proposals for its future received during a recent request for ideas from the public, one, seeking a community hub for arts, culture and education, similar to what was once discussed for Parliament Oak, would allow it to remain institutional, and for a purpose that would benefit many segments of society.

Similarly, anything to do with healthcare, possibly some level of assisted living, would also be serving the community, and would retain its institutional zoning.

Accommodations for visitors, either in a hotel or motel, or parking, might be important to the tourism industry and benefit residents as well by getting parking off downtown streets, but it would seem a shame to use such a prestigious property that way, when there are other possibilities for preserving it for community use.

The previous council did well to have the foresight to purchase it, and at $3.5 million, it seems in today’s prices a bargain. They did it not knowing what the future would hold for the site, but wanting to retain control over it. That didn’t happen with Parliament Oak, and look where that has taken us.

Holding off to be sure whatever decision made is the right decision, however long that takes, is showing respect for the town, for residents and for the building itself.

Penny Coles
The Local
The Ontario Provincial Council of the Congress of Ukrainians of Canada had a campaign recently to raise the Ukrainian flag throughout the province of Ontario to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Ukraine's independence.

On Aug. 24, cities such as Hamilton, Sudbury, Kingston, Barrie, Oshawa, Durham Region, Ottawa, Toronto, Windsor and the Niagara Region held a flag-raising ceremony to show support for Ukraine on Canada-Ukraine Independence Day.

Toonotos CN Tower was lit up in yellow and blue on the Aug. 23, and Niagara Falls was illuminated in blue and yellow. Other cities such as London encouraged their communities to buy and hang Ukrainian flags near their homes and on their cars.

There were many individuals and groups that have and will be doing their own fundraising. Irene McEvoy organized a wonder-doner fundraiser for Musica Niagara in May in Freedom and Peace for Ukraine. Joseph’s Estate Winery held a fundraiser in March. The Virgil Business Association presented me with a cheque from the Virgil Stampede that was passed on to the Niagara UCC to assist in the settlement of Ukrainians arriving in Niagara.

Adrienne Briggs from the Niagara History Museum organized a Fund-raise for Ukraine on Aug. 18 in partnership with the Niagara UCC and the Hotelier National Awareness Tour.

I’d like to personal-ly thank Ironwood Cider House, Regal Florist, NEOG Lavender, Forrest Lane Design, BBQ & Fireplace Centre and Wine maker Katherine Reid who were some that donated to this fundraiser.

To date I have handed out more than 2,500 sunflower seed packets and bulk seeds to our local community to hold their own fundraisers or plant individually. Sunflowers for Ukraine.ca would like to thank Stokin’ Seeds, Gaia Organics, West Coast Seeds, William Dam Seeds and McKenzie who generously donated. Several individuals such as NEOG Lavender, Lakeshore Cem etery and the NOTL Community Garden all planted sunflowers to show support for Ukraine.

I wrote a letter to the editor thanking NOTL Horticultural Society members who toured my garden and dropped off donations for the Help Boutique located in St. Catharines. I also put out a call to the community asking for donations for Ukrainians who have and will be settling in the Niagara Region.

3. I wrote an article for the Niagara Standard thanking the lady I spoke with who kindly took the time to get my story right.

There are many businesses in the Niagara region that are short staffed. “Looking for help” signs are everywhere! Approxim ately 300+ families have arrived in the Niagara Region.

One young man was disappointed he was too late in registering to Niagara College. Currently he and his mother are working in a hotel. The majority of these families are in Ni gaara Falls, St. Catharines and Welland, however, other towns like Vineland, Beamsville and NOTL also are home to some. Any one looking to hire? Maybe someone can arrange transportation and pick up locations… just throwing this out.

Many of these people are mothers and children with their husbands or brothers still fighting in Ukraine; they have come here with very little. Some have found family or friends here that will take them in, which is great. Those who don’t, don’t really have any body. Unfortunately, some have ended up in homeless shelters.

Irene Newton is reaching out to property man agers who would be willing to work with them and arrange low-rent housing for six months or so, until they can get on their feet.

Bonnie Bagnulo says thanks for all the boxes of documents to be shredded, and all the help received for the annual event. (Photo supplied)
In the lead-up to the annual Terry Fox Run, Joe Pillitteri, best-known for his comedy routines, is again donating his time for something he is very serious about — raising money for the Terry Fox Foundation.

Joan King, local organizer of the Niagara-on-the-Lake run, is always looking for ways to add to the total collected from a small municipality, and she knows she can count on Pillitteri to help.

Since he first became active in the annual event, and continuing however he could during the pandemic, he and his Team Pillity have raised more than $500,000.

"I'm always amazed, but not surprised, by how supportive this community has always been, and continues to be. Everyone has been touched by cancer, and this is such a generous community."

On Sept. 16, the local businessman, owner of Lakeview Vineyard Equipment, will once again put his talent to work fundraising for the Terry Fox Foundation, this time at the community centre.

This year, as he talks about his reasons for being so passionate about the cause, he is speaking to The Local from Pennsylvania, where he travels often on business, on the road to sell grape harvesters.

Terry Fox has been an inspiration to Pillitteri for many years, the story of the young man's determination and courage having helped the local comic and businessman through some difficult times. He talked openly about his struggles, when he thought he was losing what was then a new business, and he happened to pick up a book about the Marathon of Hope, and read what Fox had accomplished at a young age, before having to stop his fundraising run across the country when his cancer returned. He died not too long after that, at the age of 22.

It was about 15 years ago that Pillitteri discovered that Terry Fox really spoke to him, and still does, "on so many levels," giving him a new outlook on life. He then that continues to motivate him today.

Last September, Pillitteri was in the U.S. doing a demonstration of a grape harvester, as he is typically busy doing at this time of year, on rows of grapes planted on a hill.

"I've every faced, he pushed on. He was a brave man."

Pillitteri was wearing a seatbelt that day the harvester rolled over, and was fine, but the experience reinforced his commitment to the Terry Fox Foundation.

The annual comedy night, he says, is his opportunity not only to raise money but to continue spreading the message of Terry Fox, to his kids and others, that whatever they are facing, somebody is struggling with something much more difficult.

"That's also his motivation to continue as much as he can to the foundation, and if his message inspires others to do the same, his efforts have accomplished something very satisfying."

Although in the past two years Pillitteri has held his annual fundraising comedy night at Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery, following pandemic restrictions, he’s moving into the community centre this year to take advantage of the large space and round tables, a setting that allows a big enough crowd that he can do one high-energy performance along with host emcees Clifford Meyers, rather than the past years where he’s squared two shows in on the same night.

Ravine is sponsoring the wine, Garrison House the food, he says, and with sponsorship also from Seaway Farms and Lakeview, "every dollar raised will go to the cause."

As Pillitteri travels through Canada and the U.S. on business, he keeps a little notepad to carry with him, writing down anything that thinks might find its way into his comedy routine.

His sister Eileen Pillitteri-Smith and her friend Carol O’Ferran look after the logistics of the show for him, and he runs his jokes by "little sister" Caroline Martiniello, to see if they pass the first test. He has also got into the custom of "holding a warm-up show at his friend's home, Dave and Rita Mines, with about 50 to 70 people. It's at their event that he tries out his new material and decides by the reaction of the crowd what makes the final cut and what doesn't."

His show promises lots of great new material, a charcuterie board at every table, wine, beer from local brewers, and a raffle, with all proceeds going to the Terry Fox Foundation.

Although there are some tickets left, a Joe Pillitteri comedy night in NOTL is always a sell-out, so don't delay in visiting seawayfarms.ca for tickets, $80 per person, $60 for a table of eight. Doors open at 7 p.m., show starts at 8 p.m.

Pillitteri often shares a Terry Fox quote, one that seems to have special meaning for him at different times in his life.

"This year's quote, he says, is "I want to try the impossible to show that it can be done.""

"This speaks to him, he says, because 'as a community, as a country and as a planet, there's been so much for everyone to process over the past three years. But good things can still happen."

Pillitteri preparing for upcoming comedy show

Photo supplied

This was the grape harvester after rolling down an embankment last September, with Joe Pillitteri inside it — fortunately wearing a seat belt and uninjured, but left thinking about life in a different way.
The Local

Mike Balsom

Grape Growers party celebrates 75th anniversary

More than 300 Niagara grape farmers, their families and supporters gathered at Fruithaven Farms in St. Davids last week to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Grape Growers of Ontario.

The Line 8 property just happens to be owned by the current and longest-serving Grape King ever, John Fedorkow, and his family. Named to the ceremonial position in 2019, Fedorkow has continued to hold on to the title with the cancellation of the Niagara Grape and Wine Festival the past two years.

With the celebration situated next to a pond in the middle of his vineyards set up to start in less than an hour, Fedorkow could be seen driving a tractor, delivering shade umbrellas to vendors set up along the path. No resting on his cushy throne for this hard-working king.

“They kept asking me to hold onto the position,” Fedorkow told The Local. “We had the Ice Wine Gala, and then every other event got cancelled. This year, because it’s the 75th anniversary, they asked me if I wanted to host the party at my place. I’m still the Grape King, so I said okay.”

Fedorkow was happy to hold the role and to make an effort to advocate on his peers’ behalf.

“The responsibilities include pushing the industry, making sure it does well in promoting Ontario and Niagara wines,” Fedorkow explained. “As a king, I represent all the growers in the province of Ontario. This is a great industry. It’s my job to remind people that we grow some great grapes and make some fantastic wine.”

Though he says the industry in the province still has a long way to grow, especially when compared to its European counterparts which have survived hundreds of years, Fedorkow says the future looks bright.

At the Sept. 24 Grape and Wine Festival Parade, Fedorkow will finally get to ride on the Grape King’s float with his successor. He may be joined, as well, by some of the other former Grape Kings who attended last week’s party.
Master gardeners help community in many ways

Penny Coles
The Local

Master gardeners — certified horticultural experts — volunteer at many events in Niagara, sharing their knowledge and imparting advice on sustainable gardening, and when they do, be assured they know what they are talking about.

Sitting in Betty Knight’s beautiful, sustainable back garden on York Road, with Carol Tuck-Riggs, both members of Master Gardeners of Niagara, they explain the rigorous requirements that must be completed before earning that title. In addition to an educational component — the University of Guelph and Dalhousie University have certification programs — a master gardener is considered to be in training for two years while working and fulfilling a number of volunteers hours.

Even after completing those requirements and receiving certification as a master gardener, Knight explains, continuing education to keep updating on garden issues is necessary, as is volunteering 30 hours a year in your community.

There are many opportunities to complete those conditions, says Tuck-Riggs, including working at the Niagara Parks School of Horticulture greenhouses; volunteering for the Shaw Garden Tour to answer gardening questions of those who attend, helping out at the Start-Me-Up Niagara Community Garden, providing horticultural therapy sessions at Hospice Niagara and looking after the hospice gardens; leading advice clinics at St. Catharines Public Library and at some of the garden centres in the region, including Country Basket in Niagara Falls and Rice Road Greenhouses in Welland; and even offering a help over a phone line and email address for people who have gardening questions.

“We love doing this. It’s our passion. Sometimes I have to do research to answer the questions, and I learn so much doing it,” says Tuck-Riggs, as the master gardeners take turns handling the requests for advice.

“We’re in an environmental crisis,” says Tuck-Riggs, who is also hoping for more native varieties. “They’re all non-genetically-modified seeds,” says Tuck-Riggs, who is also hoping for more native varieties.

“That’s the main goal of the master gardeners,” says Knight. “We’re in an environmental crisis,” with each member trying to do in their own little corner what they can do reintroduce native plants.

Knight speaks of keystonespecies such as oak, cherry, willow, maple and pine — species native to a Niagara Carolinian forest, which are not the same as Carolinian forests in other areas. She also encourages “redefining what beautiful means,” such as her grass-free lawn, and thinking in terms of planting native species that will attract native insects and support native ecology, such as monarch butterflies, which are now an endangered species.

As an example, she says, “how many people look at mallweed and pull it out?” If the word “weed” is in the name of a plant, it’s probably a native species. “We need to learn to look at things differently.”

She promotes three initiatives as a master gardener — supporting shoreline ecology, replanting and reintroducing native plants, and redefining what is beautiful.

Tuck-Riggs talks of the importance of trees as part of the cycle of filtering and absorbing water, putting moisture in the soil, and acting as windbreakers, “and yet we’re cutting down trees, not just here but around the entire world. And wind is a world-wide system. When we cut down trees we change the wind paths”

They speak of invasive species we’re still planting, such as lily of the valley, periwinkle, and English ivy, not native species, and ones that crowd out other plants. “They are not offering anything for our native pollinators to eat,” says Knight. “English ivy is growing on the escarpment, creating monocultures, where nothing else can grow.”

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There is so much to learn about the way we garden, and another one of the many ways local master gardeners are sharing their knowledge is with the NOTL Community in Bloom committee. They are celebrating The Year of the Garden by creating weekly videos with videographer Rene Bertschi, writing the scripts, and in some cases providing the voice-overs to go with his filming — visit the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s Facebook page to view them. Learn about the town’s beautiful hanging baskets, the Chelsea chop, fertilizing plants, jump worms, and more.

Coming up soon is their annual plant sale, a major fundraiser put on hold for two years during the pandemic. It will be held at Vineland Research Centre, 4890 Victoria North, Lincoln, Saturday, Sept. 10, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Master Gardener of Niagara members are asked to pot up plants from their garden, a minimum of 10 each, says Knight, although she, like many of the master gardeners, will have more than that — she looks at it as doing a favour to her garden while also contributing to the fundraiser.

Members will also be on-hand to answer questions of the public, and plants, priced reasonably, are checked to make sure they are healthy.

Funds generated through the plant sale and speaking engagements support two scholarships for students attending the Niagara Parks School of Horticulture, horticultural therapy sessions, and requests from organizations for funding relating to horticultural projects.

Community garden growing

Tim Mosman shows off veggie plots from the garden of Julian Trachsel. They have garden plots next to each other in Newark Park’s community garden on Niven Road, helping each other out and watering when one is away. Trachsel, organizer of the community garden, says it is expanding next year, and he is taking names of anyone who might be interested. For more information or to reserve a spot email him at mtrachsel@cogeco.ca (Julian Trachsel)
Violinist Rosemary Siemens to play in NOTL

Concert to raise money for school in Honduras

Mike Balsam
The Local

The Niagara United Mennonite Church welcomes four-time Gospel Music Award-winning violinist and vocalist Rosemary Siemens from Manitoba for a free concert Thursday, Sept. 8.

Duerksen, executive director of Winnipeg-based Christian charity Generation Rising, is partnering with the ‘Redbrick Church’ for the concert, a fundraiser to support the White Dove Mennonite School in Honduras.

Siemens, who grew up in Paraguay, is no stranger to the Niagara area. His children were born at the St. Catharines hospital while he and his wife were living in Vineland and Balfour, as a youth pastor in that town.

Generation Rising, he says, has previously had fundraising concerts in the region, having brought well-known Canadian Christian singer Steve Bell to St. Catharines in the past. They have also hosted the Recycled Orchestra of Cateura, composed of children from Asunción, Paraguay who play musical instruments made from scrap materials collected from their local landfill, for shows at churches in the region.

“We are always trying to find churches that want to connect with us,” he says on the phone from his Winnipeg home. “We knew of this church because some of our donors go there. And we were told people in Niagara-on-the-Lake love concerts.”

Since 2008 Generation Rising has been connecting with local people in countries where education is not always a guaranteed fact of life. Usually, those connections are with existing schools looking to grow by building new classrooms. They work on a co-investment model through which parents who want their children to attend school also put something in.

“We want the parents to think of education as important,” he explains. “It’s always meant-tested, though. The parents put in a very small amount, and we subsidize the rest through sponsorships. Families here will sponsor a child to go to school for about $600 a year.”

The cost covers materials, some meals, and medical check-ups that are important in those countries.

The organization is currently working with four schools in Paraguay, three in Nicaragua and three in Honduras.

In that last country, two hurricanes (Eta and Iota) ripped through in the span of only two weeks in 2020. The White Dove Mennonite School is situated in Chamelecón, a poor neighbourhood in San Pedro Sula, which has often been called the most dangerous place to live in América, with gangs wars affecting almost every family.

Generation Rising had helped erect an additional building, and the school was doing well before the hurricanes came. White Dove flooded with two metres of water twice. The organization came in to help with the clean-up, and also assisted with the restoration of the town.

With the help of Duerksen’s organization, the school has been rebuilt and is thriving, but they now need more room to continue their high school program, where they hope to offer vocational training.

As for Siemens’ involvement, she has played concerts for Generation Rising in the past. Free concerts, with the option for free-will offerings from attendees, is a major source of fundraising for the organization.

“We always look for artists who match the kind of music that we, and people that connect with us, enjoy,” says Duerksen. “Niagara United Mennonite has given us the use of the church for free, but we pay for the artists. The free-will donations help us raise funds for our programs.”

Siemens is a fascinating artist who grew up on a century-old family farm in Plum Coulee, Manitoba and currently lives in Vancouver.

Much of her repertoire might be mistakenly referred to as fiddle music, but she plays it all on a 300-year-old violin that was once played in King Louis XIV’s orchestra.

She calls her violin Spar-ie, which fits in with one of Siemens’ obsessions — bling. She loves to wear sparkly, rhinestone-studded dresses and even had a hit with a tune called Barelfoot ‘n Bling from her 2016 album called Plum Coulee, My Home, with her band, The Sweet Sound Revival.

That’s Rosemary’s other obsession — gospel music. On that same album is another song entitled Bring Back the Hymns, and that’s exactly what she has been doing with her weekly live Sunday Hymn Serenades via YouTube.

The series has had more than 100 million views across social media as Siemens features a new Christian hymn every Sunday. She recently received a thank you letter from Queen Elizabeth II for her sax and violin version of God Save The Queen. Alongside her husband, Eli Bennett, and was recently awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal for her contributions to the arts in Manitoba.

“She’s a very good musician. It’s amazing to watch her play the violin,” Duerksen says. “She has deep faith, too. She is really, really passionate to recapture all the hymns she can. I think it comes from her small-town, Manitoba roots.”

“It’s very interesting to see someone who is classically trained play this music,” continues Duerksen. “She moves from gospel country to classical to hymns. It’s a mix of everything. She’ll be very engaging, and I think she’ll bring her (pre-school) son up to sing a few songs.”

The Rosemary Siemens concert is scheduled for 7 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 8. It is a free show and no pre-registration is needed to attend. The Niagara United Mennonite Church is located at 1775 Niagara Stone Road in NOTL.

Photo supplied.

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Why are routine eye exams
important?

EVENING HOURS AVAILABLE
Shaw showcases aspiring young actors

Mike Balsom
The Local

Travis Seetoo, actor and acting instructor, feels fortunate to have had a chance to work with five young aspiring actors who participated in a recent two-week program for teens.

Those who took part in the Shaw Festival Niagara Region High School Monologue Derby ranged in age from 13- to 17-year-olds, all with a keen interest in theatre, Seetoo says. "They’re so wonderfully enthusiastic, and prepared and hard-working."

Shaw first offered the monologue derby in August, 2021 as a chance for high school students whose opportunities to participate in theatre were curtailed due to the pandemic to learn and perform. Though many schools have been able to mount live performances since last summer, Seetoo and senior manager of education Suzanne Merriam saw great value in the program’s continuation. "We view ourselves as part of this community and we want to support young people in theatre," says the 33-year-old Seetoo. "They got to meet lots of company members, tour the building, have lunch with actors in the green room. I know from my own experience that it can’t be overstated how getting to meet experienced actors is such a thrill!"

Students participated in workshops by Shaw actors Kierra Sangster (movement), Julie Lumsden (voice and accents) and Kristopher Bowman (improvisation). As well, actor and associate artistic director Kimberly Rampersad led a session that encompassed auditioning, how to get into theatre school and what Shaw is looking for in young actors.

"You would pay a lot of money for a session like that anywhere but here," Seetoo says. "It was extremely beneficial for them. We can’t thank Kimberly enough for being so giving of her time."

They also had a chance to attend five different Shaw plays in a way that most theatre-goers don’t get to experience. Seetoo led pre- and post-show talks, often with some of the performers from those plays, where the participants were able to dig more deeply into the meaning of the texts.

"We were pretty amazed at how these plays, which are usually for older audiences, really resonated with this younger group," Seetoo marvelled. "All of these students are over-achievers. We had some of the best conversations about these plays that I’ve ever had, with insightful things I never would have thought of."

At Friday afternoon’s culminating derby performances, the five participants all said their favourite of the Shaw plays they saw was Everybody. That, coincidentally, is the one play of the five that is currently starring Seetoo himself.

After some entertaining warm-up improv exercises performed in front of mostly family members at the Court House Theatre, the first performer Friday was Teodora Vekovic of Niagara Falls, delivering a monologue from Thornton Wilder’s The Matchmaker.

"I chose it because Cornelius talks about recently discovering his love for women," Vekovic told The Local. "I find that, emotionally, it’s very much the same way I feel about theatre. Until recently, I hadn’t realized how much I love theatre. Through this program I’ve come to love it more, and feel enthralled about it, the same way my character feels about women."

Vekovic was followed by Hannah Evans, who is starting Grade 10 at Laura Secord Secondary School next week. The Grade 12 student at St. Michael Catholic High School, who is planning on studying acting at university next September, took the stage with the presence and poise of a professional. Her movements, her facial expressions and her voice combined to nail the wonder and fascination expressed by the play’s character, Cornelius.

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Hannah Evans, starting Grade 10 at Laura Secord Secondary School next week, hopes to one day act with the Shaw Festival.

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Monologue Derby will be back next season

Continued from page 12

program. “I want to work at the Shaw one day when I’m older. I love that I can get all of these experiences. It’s truly fantastic.”

Evans bravely chose to tackle a monologue from Swedish playwright August Strindberg’s The Stronger, a one-act play in which Madame X speaks to a silent Mademoiselle Y.

“We all got these pamphlets with all types of monologues to choose from,” Evans, who delivered Strindberg’s challenging lines with great confidence, said. “This one just really stuck out to me. It’s a really emotional piece, the longest of them all. Something about it just resonated with me.”

Grade 12 Eden High School student Tayler Denbak took on the persona of Joan of Arc from George Bernard Shaw’s St. Joan for her performance. This was Denbak’s second year in the monologue derby and her self-assured delivery spoke to her experience with the program.

“I’ll be able to use the skills here, like puppetry and improv,” Denbak said backstage. “I’ll be able to pull those skills from my toolbox. It gives me confidence to have more conversations with people, too.”

Carly Greavette and Jaya Holland were the two youngest participants this summer, both just recently having graduated from Wheatley School in St. Catharines. The pair have been close since Grade 6 and were excited to be spending two weeks at Shaw together before moving on to high school.

“We as a group have gotten very close,” Holland said. “There’s only five of us. I feel like this has really brought us all together.”

Greavette added, “what’s stuck out the most for me has been how close we’ve all gotten with our instructors and our classmates. We’re not wanting to say goodbye.”

The sheer joy on Greavette’s face while delivering her monologue from Shaw’s The Devil’s Disciple was clearly evident. She told The Local that the passage stood out for her as a different and unique piece from what she would usually do, especially with the final line, “long live the Devil.”

“That’s so fun to do on stage,” Greavette said. “We worked on it every day and I just fell in love with it.”

Holland also presented a monologue from Shaw’s oeuvre, this one from the playwright’s 1933 comedy Village Wooing, about a man and woman meeting on a cruise.

Following the final monologue, the five young participants gathered on stage to surprise acting instructor Travis Seetoo with a song and dance to thank him for his hard work over the past two weeks.

“We are continuing this, we’ll be doing it again next year,” Seetoo said. “It’s extremely valuable for young people to come and work on some of these difficult texts, Shaw, Wilde, Thornton Wilder. Our expertise at the Shaw is those kinds of plays with beautiful and complex language. We want to impart that to young actors.”

The five Monologue Derby participants, Tayler Denbak, Teodora Vekovic, Hannah Evans, Carly Greavette, and Jaya Holland surprise acting instructor Travis Seetoo with a song and dance to thank him for his hard work. (Photos by Mike Balsom)
Fedorkow to hand over crown at celebrity luncheon

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years, Fedorkow is clearly proud of how far Ontario has come, especially over the last 15 years. And he stands up for the farmers.

“A good bottle of wine starts with good grapes,” he said. “It depends on the year, of course. We’re given what we’re given by Mother Nature and we work around it and do the best we can.”

Like other local growers, he’s concerned with this year’s crop. “It started last fall,” lamented Fedorkow. “Industry-wide we’re guessing we’re looking at almost a half crop. Some farmers are really hurting more than others. They can be down to 25 per cent of a crop or less. There’s still time, though. All we need is sunshine and not a lot of rain in September and October.”

The conversation turns to farmers as stewards of the land, and then to the very important VQA designation available for 100 per cent Ontario wines.

“That’s what you have to look for in the store,” he insisted. “If you buy VQA, you’re helping us 100 per cent. There’s blending at some wineries, of course, but that’s not all Ontario. All this ‘Buy local’ that people have been pushing for the last few years. It’s simple. Buy VQA. I don’t care which kind. Wine is a personal choice. But as long as it’s VQA I’m happy.”

It’s not just the Grape King who pushes that VQA designation. Grape Growers of Ontario CEO Debbie Zimmerman usually finds a way to slip that abbreviation (it stands for Vintners Quality Alliance) into most conversations. She is a strong advocate for Ontario growers and wineries in her role with the organization.

“It was formed in 1947,” says Zimmerman. “The growers had been concerned that they couldn’t get the prices up for selling grapes. They went to the Minister of Agriculture at the time, and he told them to get organized.”

Formed that year as the Ontario Grape Growers’ Marketing Board, its mandate was to serve the needs and represent the interests of grape growers in their dealings with processors. For the first time, growers had the ability to set a uniform, minimum price for grapes. They also gained a voice in the grape and wine processing industry.

At that time, the grapes being grown were labrusca varieties, native to this region of North America. They were ideal for juice, preserves, and dessert and low-alcohol wines. Their lower sugar levels and higher acids, though, were not suited for the lighter, dry table wines that most wine lovers seek today.

The big turning point for the industry came between 1989 and 1991, when growers removed most of those vines and replaced them with Vitis vinifera vines, the traditional European varieties.

Those efforts were supported by the federal and provincial Grape Adjustment Program designed to remove grape varieties deemed surplus to industry needs, and to help farmers replace them with varieties suited for the higher quality table wines that consumers were demanding. Concurrent to that program, labrusca grapes were banned from all table wines made in Ontario.

The organization’s name was changed to the Grape Growers of Ontario in 2002 to better reflect its membership. It took a few years but eventually vinifera sales began to outpace the sales of hybrid grapes. In 2012, there were 2,198 and 1,991 tons of grapes sold for processing, containing more than 64,000 of wine grapes. Vinifera varieties, virtually unheard of in this area 65 years ago, now account for 67 per cent of the total amount of grapes sold to wineries during regular harvest.

As well, according to their website, there are 17,380 acres of vineyards in Ontario today, almost the same as 65 years ago. But the kind of grapes grown is dramatically different than it was, and the industry has evolved and achieved its status as an internationally acclaimed grape and wine region.

And in the past 65 years, the farm gate value of grape sales has risen from $2.3 million to more than $88.6 million.

Meanwhile, the host of last week’s parties continues to be grateful to his fellow growers for nominating him for Grape King back in 2019, guessing that they must have been impressed with his vineyard practices and his innovation.

But alas, all good things must come to an end. Fedorkow will finally turn over his ceremonial chalice when the 2022 Grape King is announced at the Grape Growers of Ontario’s Celebrity Luncheon on Wednesday, Sept. 14 at Club Roma in St. Catharines. Ticket are available at grapegrowersofontario.com or by calling 905-688-0990.

Former Olympic swimmer Mark Tewksbury is this year’s celebrity guest.

“Yeah, I’ll miss it,” Fedorkow said of giving up his crown. “But it’s time to pass the torch on to somebody else.”
Miles will open the Bravo season Oct. 23. (Photos supplied)

The legendary Count Basie Orchestra will play Partridge Hall Dec. 18. Work in Niagara in spring, 2024, before taking it on tour.

Spieldenner says the gift will allow them to complete the ballet at the scale they had envisioned, including the incorporation of original artwork to complement the choreography and music.

“We’re honored to be the recipient of this transformative gift, which will help make our vision for Kimiko Pearl a reality,” she says. “As a fourth-generation Japanese Canadian, the history of internment is deeply personal to me and my family. I’m grateful that Kimiko Pearl will play a role in sharing this important part of our collective history with all Canadians.”

More details on the premiere and future touring will be announced at a later date.

For more information, please visit www.kimikospelPearl.com and follow @kimikosPearl.
The U13/14 soccer team played all their games against Thorold, undefeated for the season. Playing on the NOTL team were (bottom left) Nathan Lambert, Zoren Ozdemir, Spencer Collins, Dean Velsink, Austin Moolman, Jacob Froese, Julia Rezza, Danielle Smith; (top left) coach Rob VanEgmond, Ron Slootsky, Joshua Sasso, Lucas Visca, Adam VanEgmond, Mark Abboud, Ben Raso, Grace Chemey, Avery Webster and coach Tommy Visca. Missing from the photo are coach Phill Lambert, assistant coach Elon Moolman, Roc Mastromatteo, Ashton Visca, Sienna Lalonde and Halo Lunn-Ure. (Photo supplied)
Erie Otters, Ice Dogs will be a battle on ice

Mike Balsom
The Local

Next Friday night’s pre-season game in Virgil between the Erie Otters and the Niagara Ice Dogs is a battle between two teams looking for a turnaround after a disappointing 2021-2022 season.

Erie completed that campaign with a record of 27-37-2-2, good for ninth place in the Ontario Hockey League’s Western Conference, only a single point from challenging the Sarnia Sting for the eighth and final playoff spot.

Over in the East, the Ice Dogs finished the season in the basement of the conference, at 22-42-3-1.

More importantly, the year ended in turmoil after a controversial series of misogynist texts between Ice Dogs minority owner Joey Burke and head coach and minority owner Billy Burke were made public. Both were suspended indefinitely by the OHL and the team was fined $150,000. In May, majority owners Bill and Denise Burke announced the sale of the team to Brantford businessperson Darren DeDobbelaer.

The Ice Dogs are looking for a clean start under DeDobbelaer, who will fill the general manager’s role with the team. He’ll be assisted by Wes Consorti, who has held various management and coaching positions with the Brantford 99ers of the Ontario Junior Hockey League (OJHL), an organization also owned by DeDobbelaer.

Head coach Dan Fitzgerald will step behind the bench, with his assistants Brandon Shaw, Andrew Fritsch and Damon Racicot.

Last week the Dogs named Landon Cato their captain this year. Defenceman Dakota Betts wore the ‘C’ in 2021-2022 but at 21 years old he is ineligible to return for another year in the OHL.

For the Otters, 20-year-old defenceman Cameron Morton will once again be an assistant captain. He’s looking forward to the upcoming game at the Meridian Credit Union Arena, where the Otters will actually be the home team.

“I’m excited,” he tells The Local from his family home in Kingston, Ontario. “It’s nice to go to a smaller community and give them a taste of OHL hockey.”

Looking back on last year at this time, Morton remembers a locker room filled with relief and excitement to finally get back on the ice after losing an entire OHL season to the pandemic. The Otters had a large number of new players joining the team, and the returnees hadn’t played together for over a year. It made for an unusual and unsure start.

Morton missed only three of the Otters 68 games last year, amassing 3 goals, 18 assists and 21 points.

Softball wrap-up

Niagara-on-the-Lake Minor Softball teams wrapped up a great season on the Virgil diamonds over two days, last Wednesday and Thursday. Coaches, volunteers and most of all the players all did a great job and had fun, and are looking forward to next season. (Photos by Mike Balsom)
**OBITUARY**

**MOLSON, GERDA ANNE**  
DECEMBER 27, 1939 – AUGUST 26, 2022  

With courage and determination through her journey with cancer, Gerda died peacefully at the Greater Niagara General Hospital on August 26, 2022.


Gerda served as the Chief Librarian of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Library for 35 years and as a President of the Ontario Library Association. It was during her tenure as Chief Librarian that she and her Library Board made the courageous and controversial decision to locate the library from the Court House in the old town to its current home. This is Gerda’s legacy to the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Gerda was respected and loved by many. She will be greatly missed by her family and many friends who will remember her for her generosity and kindness of spirit.

Thank you to all her friends for their love and kindness during her illness. A special thanks to Allison Kane for her unwavering support and encouragement.

Arrangements entrusted to Morgan Funeral Home. Cremation has taken place and a private celebration of life will be held by the family at a later date.

Flowers gratefully declined. If you wish, please consider a memorial donation to the Walker Family Cancer Centre, St. Catharines. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com

**OBITUARY**

**ULRIKE “ULI” RESCHKE (NÉE KONZELMANN)** — Born September 8th, 1966 in Stuttgart, Germany. It is with deep sadness we announce the passing of our Uli, a beloved mother, wife, sister, and daughter, on August 25th, 2022.

After a courageous battle with cancer, Uli is now with her Heavenly Father and reunited with her niece (Carolina), brother (Matthias), and father (Herbert).

Uli was a loving, gentle, kind-spirited soul who will be deeply missed by her devoted, loving husband James and her incredible children Mikaela, Lauren (Bowen), and Ty (Julia) of whom she was so proud.

She was a dedicated daughter to Herbert (predeceased) and Gudrun Konzelmann and a caring sister to Claudia Konzelmann (Dietmar) and Matthias Konzelmann (predeceased). She was a wonderful daughter-in-law, aunt, and loyal friend to so many. She took great pride in her work as a dental hygienist; she loved her valued colleagues and patients (Dr. Brian Kim).

Uli will always be remembered for her gentle, peaceful nature, quick-witted remarks, and above all else, her faith. Uli had so many favourite verses that encouraged her and gave her strength. Romans 8:6 says: “For love is long and peace is life and peace.”

The family would like to extend their appreciation to the Palliative Care Outreach Team - PCOT (Ari, Paul, Pam, and Helen) who provided exceptional care to Uli.

In keeping with Uli’s wishes, cremation has already taken place. There will be a visitation at the Tallman Funeral Home in Vineland on Tuesday, August 30th from 4 pm to 8 pm. The family would ask that in lieu of flowers, anyone wishing to, would donate in Uli’s name to Hospice Niagara.

A private celebration of Uli’s life will take place at a later date. Online condolences at tallmanfuneralhomes.ca.

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**PUZZLE ANSWERS**

Sudoku solution from August 24, 2022:

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Across:

1. 11/2 fl. oz.  
2. Accumulate  
3. Comic Chippendale  
4. Dash  
5. — Hole, who co-founded an eponymous online “List”  
6. — Jennings, first Oscar winner  
7. “But... was ambitious, I slew him!” (Shakespeare, “Julius Caesar”)  
8. Doubtful attitude  
9. Pops the question  
10. Fight sites  
11. Brazilian saint  
12. “— cool!”  
13. Chinese gooseberry  
14. Coat Miner’s Daughter  
15. Castiglioni  
16. Pauauds  
17. “Peace on earth, good will —”  
18. “Air America” lead —  
20. “— my — days, when I was in green judgment” —  
21. (Shakespeare, “Antony and Cleopatra”)  
22. Australian national gemstone  
23. “Holy cow!”  
24. Of high grade  

Down:

1. Former lady of France — Bruni  
2. Altars  
3. Democratic right  
4. Sawbones, briefly  
5. Salon goo  
6. Sucker  
7. Three miles  
8. A turbul-ooman, or sabotage form of transportation  
9. Unlettered  
11. "— the torpedoed" (David Farragut)  
12. “Divine Comedy” writer — Algieri  
13. Decree  
14. Death tree  
15. Dirty political tactic  
16. Dorothy’s doggy  
17. Former Ugandan dictator —  
18. Passport endorsement  
19. Eighth moonwalker  
20. Posses  
21. Stoner paired with Harold  
22. “— four — far country —” (Housman)  
23. Gondoliers’ —  
24. “Flo”  
25. “Four”  
26. “Four”  
27. “— four”  
28. “Four”  
29. “Four”  
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PUZZLE ANSWERS
**SPORTS**

**‘Bring your families to read about our heroes’**

**Continued from page 1**

and knowledge from region-
al meetings, Western Ontario AGMs and the many Skate Canada annual conventions she has attended across Canada.”

Boyle-Krzeczkowski went on to laud Haines for her hard
work during the pandemic to ensure the club was following
provincial mandates while continuing to offer fun skating programs for local kids.

The soft-spoken Haines began her speech by congratu-
ating her daughter Emma
Haines then said she learned to skate from her father, a Queen-
en Volunteer Firefighter who helped create an outdoor rink
at the old Laura Second Memoro-
nal School, which she attend-
ed. Her passions for both figure
skating and volunteering were
developed in those early days.

When her daughter Emma
began figure skating in the early
1990s, Haines noticed a poster calling for volunteers to help
with a carnival. She signed up
and, as often happens with first-
time volunteers who show enthu-
siasm, Haines was asked to take
consideration a position on the
class board. She was named
secretary at her first meeting.

Soon, Haines was leading the charge to move the club forward.

“Get connected and secure double our ice hours,” remem-
ered Haines. “We offered our
Can-Skate, our Pre-Can pro-
gram, and for the older skaters we offered three different levels.

We went from three days of ice, to five and a few years later to
seven days for both recreation-
and competitive skaters. And our
reputation began to grow.

“I am grateful that I can still give my time,” Haines con-
tinued. “And that I can pass on
my passion to anyone that will
listen. It brings me joy to see
former skaters bring their child
down to their home club to
learn to skate. And I’m es-
pecially thrilled to see my own
granddaughters skate at the ju-
nior and pre-junior levels, and
my grandson, who will enter
the Pre-Can class.”

Chair of the Sports Wall of Fame committee, Ward Simp-
son, said Trevor Falk’s nomi-
nation form was seven pages
long, encompassing his accom-
plishments in hockey, fastball
and track and field as well as
his continued contributions to
NOTL sports organizations as
a coach and volunteer.

Simpson, MP Tony Bald-
ridge, MPP Wayne Gates, and
NOTL councillor Erwin Weins, all hockey goalies,
expressed relief that none of
them had ever had to face Falk
on the ice. Then Rich Andres
delivered the speech to en-
shrine his long-time friend.

“Looking at Trevor you will
see not only a highly successful
athlete in multiple sports, but
someone who has always com-
peted in a manner that earns
the respect of his teammates,” said
Andres. “Former teammates and
coaches describe him as a
contributor, winner, sportsman, ambassador; and humble. These
are all characteristics that every
coach looks for in an athlete.”

Bill Falk joins his son Trevor Falk to help unveil his plaque for the
Sports Wall of Fame. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

Falk was a frequent winner of many track and field events
during his high school days in
town. He played with the St.
Catharines Junior B Falcons of
the Golden Horseshoe Hock-
ye League, scoring 52 goals in
one season, and followed that
up with three stellar seasons
with the Brock University Bad-
gers. He has also been a fastball
standout with the Niagara Snap-
pers, winning MVP awards and
helping them capture numerous
championships. Falk coaches
with the NOTL Wolves Hockey
Club and also serves as the direc-
tor of hockey development.

“His God-given ability is
paralleled with a strong char-
acter, work ethic and sports
manship,” Andres said. “What
greater compliment can you
give a player than that coach-
ship and playing all want him
on their team and dread playing
against him.”

Falk, who was joined by his
father Bill to unveil his plaque,
explained to much laughter
from the gathering that he
joined sports because he was
trying to get away from the
dores on the farm.

“You never run out of work
on the farm,” he said. “Who
wouldn’t want to play sports?
It grew on me more and more,
playing sports. The older I got
and the higher the level of com-
petition, the more I wanted to
give back.”

He shooked up when talking of
his teammates, former
coaches and friends who nom-
inated him for the honour, and
thanked his parents, sisters and
his wife Stephanie for their
support through the years.

“I never thought I’d be joining the people on this wall,” Falk added,
genuinely surprised at his selection. “I’ve always looked at them as
local heroes as I walked past them to go coach the kids.”

Falk, Haines and Servos bring the total members on the
Wall of Fame to 27. Lord Mayor Betty Disero outlined the town’s
30 decision to create the wall following the death of year
Stan Ignacyczuk, a former
toronto mayor and successful
crunch player, coach and manager. Ig-
ancyczuk’s family donated money
for the cause, and since then the
committee continues to take re-
ponsibility for the selection of
members and raising funds for the
plaque.

Disero urged NOTL resi-
dents to ensure their children
recognize the important role their
athletic role models play
town.

“West is even as im-
portant as our museum,”
Disero said, “in telling the
story and culture of our com-
unity. I ask you to bring your
families here to read
about our heroes in Niagara-
on-the-Lake.”

The evening began by rec-
ognizing the success of the
undefeated NOTL Thunder-
hawks Under-22 lacrosse team,
who won the Ontario Lacrosse
Festival provincial championship
the first week of August.
Assistant coach and trainer
Dan Willms lameted the ef-
fact the pandemic has had on
the town’s lacrosse program,
forcing the club to cancel its Ju-
nior B.

But the club bounced back,
said, when head coach Andy
Boldt gathered the group of
young men who would form this
year’s U22 squad. The staff set four
goals, with the final one to capture
the provincial trophy. They ex-
ced all expectations, winning
every game they played this year.

They set their sights on the
trophy, with the final one to capture
the provincial trophy. They ex-
ced all expectations, winning
every game they played this year.

The Lord Mayor Betty Disero congratulates Yvonne Haines, induct-
ected by the other two inductees.

“The notllocal.com

**Women in Business Networking and Referral Group Niagara-on-the-Lake**

Our first lunch meeting will be at Bricks & Barley on Friday, September 23rd at 12 noon.
Let us know the type of business you have and your contact numbers if you will be joining us for our 1st lunch meeting!

If you are interested please register with: angela.zammit@gmail.com

Looking forward to New Beginnings! New Businesses Opportunities!

**FREE HOME EVALUATION**

WALK-INS WELCOME (CALL OR TEXT)

289-214-4394

496 Mississauga Street (Corner of John and Mississauga Street)

**BRINGING TORONTO BUYERS TO GET TOP DOLLAR FOR YOUR HOME**

What are we all about?

• Creating business alliances
• Referrals and leads for new business
• Brainstorming to help each other with new ideas
• It’s about GIVING and getting
• Expand your customer base
• Meet wonderful local women and create great business relationships
• A positive forward thinking group to support each other

Our first lunch meeting will be at Bricks & Barley on Friday, September 23rd at 12 noon.
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Angela Zambito

Looking forward to New Beginnings! New Businesses Opportunities!
Erie Otters raising money for minor hockey

Continued from page 17

assists and 99 penalty minutes.

"Last year was a big stepping stone, not only in my work ethic but also in my skills and my game as well," he says. "My coaches and I worked on that kind of stuff. Coming into this year I feel really confident in my game."

Finishing just a point out of the playoff picture has left a sour taste in Morton’s mouth.

"We came together really good as a group at the end," he says. "This year, coming into camp, we’re very close. I think a big part of our game last year was how hard we worked. This year we’re going to have that skill and those extra details, put together with some hard work, I think we’re going to have a really good season."

As one of the older players, he relished the opportunity to provide some leadership to the team, and says he’s already been sharing that responsibility with other experienced Otters during training camp.

Fellow 20-year-old Noah Sedore was marked as a player to watch last year as the Otters season began. The 5’9” left winger from Bobcaygeon played all 68 games for Erie, netting 17 goals and 29 assists on the season. The former Lakefield College School student was selected by the Otters in the eighth round as the 144th overall pick, in the 2018 OHL entry draft. He’ll backstop the Otters, amassing a record of 24-25-2-1. His 24 wins led all rookies and was the seventh highest amongst all goaltenders in the OHL. He’ll be back between the pipes for the Otter this season.

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The 18-year-old also earned Midwest Division Academic Player of the Month honours from the OHL in November, and was named one of the goalkeepers for Canada’s National Men’s Under-18 Team at the 2022 IIHF U18 World Championship.

Tickets for the Friday, Sept. 9 game are only $10 and are available in advance from Phil’s Independent Grocer on Niagara Stone Road. Proceeds from the game will benefit the NOTL Wolves Minor Hockey Club.