Family business celebrates 75 years in Virgil

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

Niagara Motors celebrated 75 years of sales and service in Niagara-on-the-Lake with a $4,700 donation to Red Roof Retreat.

Saturday’s car show and barbecue raised $2,260 in donations to the charitable organization that provides respite and recreational programs to children, youth and young adults with special needs.

Dave Dick and his family topped the total up with another $2,440. Dick, the dealer principal, said he usually prefers the company’s contributions to local causes to fly under the radar, but the special occasion called for different optics.

“They’re a fantastic organization,” he told The Local. “What they have to deal with, what they’ve done, the car business is easy by comparison when you look at some of the things they have challenges with. There’s so many good things in town. Just look at the volunteers.”

Niagara Motors opened its doors in 1946 at the same location where it stands today. William Lyon McKenzie King was Prime Minister back then, and Newfoundland and Labrador had yet to become a Canadian province.

Virgil, like most of Niagara-on-the-Lake, was largely rural, and the dealership got its start selling and servicing Case tractors. They branched out into Studebaker cars and trucks and also sold Meyer sprayers and farm implements.

“Some of the neighbours that lived in town back then told me this was the first place in town that had any asphalt,” Dick said. “The streets were still dirt. The kids would come around with their roller skates and just have a blast.”

In 1953, Niagara Motors shifted to General Motors products.

Dave’s father, also named Dave, began as a salesman for original owner Frank Willms. He sold fruit during the summer, and Willms convinced him to take a job selling cars during the winter.

In 1961, Willms moved to Niagara Falls and Dave Sr. bought Niagara Motors.

“I grew up here and on the fruit farms, and did everything at the dealership,” Dick reminisces. “Changing oil and tires, and working in accounting. Body shop, detailing and helping to sell cars.”

Dick took a moment to survey the array of classic cars on the lot Saturday, at least one of which, a 1963 Pontiac Acadian driven in by Ellen Enns, was originally sold by Niagara Motors. The majority of the collectors were showing off GM products, and he reflected on the dealership’s connection with the manufacturer.

“We’ve always had a great relationship with them,” Dick said. “We’ve been with General Motors for a long time.”

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River Beach Drive proposed as site for paddle board launch

Penny Coles
The Local

Tim Balasiuk, better known locally as Tim Bala, presented an idea to council Monday that would open up the south end of River Beach Drive for launching paddle sports activities. He has operated his paddle board operation, Paddle Niagara, first from Balls Beach, beginning in 2012, and there from 2015 until the present at Queen’s Royal Park, offering stand-up paddle board lessons to locals and visitors, and camps for local kids.

Moving to River Beach Drive would be a great opportunity for the town to use more of its waterfront, in a spot that can be nice and calm even on windy days. There are rocks, rubble, and pieces of steel sticking out from the river at the site that would need to be cleaned up, but it wouldn’t take a lot to create a safe launch, he says.

He told councillors he would like to create a public/private partnership, that would allow Paddle Niagara to work with the parks and recreation department, offering day camps and lessons for kids. He also envisions some sort of membership for adults that would allow them access to launch equipment that would be provided to them at the beach.

A number of families with kids are moving into the area, and are not aware of the waterways in NOTL, the currents in the lake and river, said Bala, and this would be an opportunity to teach safety, and create a safe place for paddle sports.

He told councillors that

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Town takes next step toward accommodation tax

Penny Coles
The Local

An effort to move to adopt a municipal accommodation tax in Niagara-on-the-Lake met with some resistance Monday, from the business community and from some councillors.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero wanted to open the discussion of the tax, seeing it as a way to pay for infrastructure projects for which the town has no budget and no mon-

The strongest opposition for the tax was over the timing — local businesses are struggling to survive a pan-
demic, and a new tax will not help the tourism industry at this time.

Tim Jennings, CEO of the Shaw Festival, warned council they don’t have the information they need to understand the impact of the tax, and spoke of tourism strategy that was neces-
sary to allow gathering and analysis of information, and input from the industry.

He spoke of the signifi-
cant contribution of the Shaw to the local economy, which could be harmed if visitors decide to reduce their over-
night stays due to the tax.

“We are solidly against implementation of a MAT without benefit of a tourism strategy, and wide consul-
tation, as it could be very detrimental to the speed of recovery efforts of the town’s business sector.”

He said it could seriously impact the Shaw “in detri-
mental ways, since we work on very small margins as a charity between surplus and deficit.”

Eduardo Lafforgue, pres-
ident of the NOTL Chamber of Commerce and NOTL Tourism, also spoke to the timing of suggesting a new tax now, and support-
ed waiting until a tourism strategy could be developed.

“There seems to be an ongoing misunderstanding about what the local tourism industry brings to the town and its contribution to the community, its de-
velopment and the creation of value for its residents,” said Lafforgue. “Indeed, so many of us settled in Niaga-
ra-on-the-Lake to partake of the amenities, services and experiences provided by NOTL tourism providers.”

“The tourism industry and, in particular, accommo-
dations, he said, “are among the hardest-hit businesses in any sector, and all are strug-
gling to recover from the worst crisis most of us re-
member. There could not be a worse time to reignite the discussion about MAT.”

“Nothing has more po-
tential to create division and disagreements within our struggling community,” he added, and several council-
ors agreed it would cause division and harm relationships in town.

Vintage Hotels also op-
poses the tax, councillors were told, because of its negative impact on tourism and the division and dis-
agreement it would create in the struggling hospitality industry.

Although several coun-
cillors agreed this was a bad time to initiate a new tax, the majority voted to support the introduction of the tax, scaled from two per cent to four per cent over three years, and funds generated be put in a re-
serve fund tourism-relat-
ed infrastructure projects, with recommendations from the audit committee in the 2022 budget. They also agreed it be included in the scope of the tourism strate-
gy. Couns. Gary Burroughs, Clare Cameron and Wendy Cheropita voted against the motion.

Council meetings to remain virtual

Penny Coles
The Local

After hearing options for the possible resumption of in-person meetings, Niagara-on-the-Lake councillors de-
cided to continue holding virtual council meetings for a while longer.

Parks and recreation manager Kevin Turcotte out-
lined three options at Mon-
day’s council meeting: to stay virtual council meetings for a while longer.

The town hall is open to the public by appointment only.

Although there was some concern about maki-
ging Paddle Niagara the only business with access to the launch, council agreed to refer the request to staff for a report on a paddle sports launch.

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Hoping for town partnership

with his rescue boat, he has performed 20 rescues this season — none of them Paddle Niagara customers or students.

“Would it also be a great way to show the town is becoming more inclusive with our access to water,” he said, adding that the launch could be designed for those with disabilities.

He said it could seriously harm the hardest-hit businesses in the struggling hospitality industry.
Dealership enjoys great relationship with GM, customers

Continued from page 1

Motors for a long time. They’re a great company and they’ve been really good to us.

“We’ve got such a good cli-
et base,” he added. “Our cus-
tomers are great, and the staff we have here are beyond great.

Dave Dick hopes Niagara Motors will continue as a family busi-
ness for the next 75 years — or longer.

A classic car show on the lot Saturday was part of the 75th
anniversary celebration.

Troy Mliinkovich has been with Niagara Motors for 20
years, having moved over
from his previous position
with John Bear Pontiac in St.
Catharines.

“Virgil is growing,” said
Dick. “Niagara-on-the-Lake
is growing so much. When we came here Virgil had 1,000
people, and there were about
5,000 people in the whole
town. In 10 years, we’ll have
30,000 people. People like to
move down here.”

Dick’s own family con-
tinues to grow. He and his
wife Terri have four kids and
eleven grandchildren. With
one of those kids working full
time at Niagara Motors, and
three of the grandchildren
putting in time there when
school allows, chances are
the family business continues
right where it has been since
1946.

“I’d like to see it in the
family for at least another 75
years,” he said. “For that mat-
ter, why not forever?”

Saturday’s anniversary celebration collected $2,260 for Red Roof
Retreat Saturday, which was boosted to $4,700 by Niagara Mo-
tors. David Dick presented the cheque to Steffanie Bjorgan and
Claire Ellsworth from Red Roof Retreat, with event planners/lead
volunteers Jill Saxton (left) and Sara Epp. (Photo supplied)

A 1963 Pontiac Acadian driven in by Ellen Enns, originally sold
by Niagara Motors, was included in Saturday’s classic car show.

The Local
September 1, 2021

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Those in the younger age groups are still the least vaccinated, although numbers are slowly increasing.

Dr. Mustafa Hirji, Niagara's acting chief medical officer of health, says an increase in the number of people vaccinated across the province could prevent that, and save the hospital system from being overwhelmed again. The alternative, he says, would likely be another lockdown to prevent social interaction and infection spread, although Ontario isn’t at that stage yet.

However, he says he can see allowing non-essential businesses to stay open, and applying a lockdown to only those who are not vaccinated, restricting them from places such as restaurants and malls, and having sort of vaccination credentials for those who are fully vaccinated.

Just that possibility might help motivate the unvaccinated to change their minds, he says.

Other countries, and other provinces in Canada, have seen an uptake in vaccinations once a vaccination passport was instituted, and unvaccinated people realized how their lives were going to be impacted, said Hirji. Those who fall into that category might unfortunately be people such as a single mom struggling to work and raise her children, too busy to find the time to be vaccinated, he added.

However, “on the flip side, another lockdown would mean lots of business owners losing their income, and their employees finding themselves out of work,” he said. “Marginalized people who depend on those business for work will be the ones suffering most from that.”

The province was expected to announce Tuesday that a proof of vaccination system would be implemented, but the announcement was cancelled, reportedly so that discussions on details could be ironed out.

With the majority of people testing positive for COVID unvaccinated, he says, “the best-case scenario is more people choose to get vaccinated, and we don’t have to go down that road again.”

He blames the province’s impatience for moving from Step 2 of the recovery too soon, resulting in more mobility, more social interaction, more shopping and other forms of recreation, leading to the increase. Although cases in Niagara aren’t rising as quickly as some areas of Ontario, Hamilton “has become the epicentre of COVID in the province,” says Hirji, and that will likely have an impact locally.

Niagara reported 27 new COVID cases Tuesday, with 1,366 people in the region currently infected.

Among the new cases in the past two weeks, Hirji says, 69 per cent were unvaccinated people, 18 per cent were vaccinated twice and 13 per cent once.

Per cent of age groups vaccinated

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Those in the younger age groups are still the least vaccinated, although numbers are slowly increasing. (Screen shot)
For 75 years, Niagara Motors has been a driving force serving transportation needs for the Niagara Region. Established in 1946 by Frank Willms, the dealership originally sold Case tractors, Myer's farm sprayers, and Studebaker automobiles selling over 200 vehicles per year. General Motors (GM) quickly took notice and by 1953, Niagara Motors was a GM branded store. Owned by the Dick family for the past 60 years, Niagara Motors has sustained recessions, restructuring and rebranding. The success of Niagara Motors is due to family patriarch David G. Dick, known to most as Dave Sr., who led the dealership for over five decades.

In 1957, Dave Sr. was hard at work on his 5-acre farm, planting and harvesting a variety of tender fruits and vegetables. Instead of taking the winter off, preparing for the next growing season, he searched for a job to provide additional income for his growing family. With no automotive sales experience, Dave Sr. was not an ideal candidate, but Frank appreciated his tenacity and gave him a chance.

Within four years of working at Niagara Motors, Dave Sr. purchased the dealership and began expanding the business with major renovations in 1964, 1977, 2003 and 2014. Niagara Motors has grown from a small car lot, with 15 vehicles, to a retail establishment on three separate sites in Virgil. Today, the dealership is still a branded GM store, offering new and used vehicle sales, a service department, parts store and body shop.

Throughout its history, Niagara Motors has always maintained its small-town, family-oriented approach. This is evident in the three generations of the Dick family who have worked at the dealership, and Dave Sr.'s daily presence at the store until his passing in 2015. As he got older, many will remember Dave Sr. sitting in his office by the front door eager to talk with customers and employees as they walked into the showroom, signalling them with a wave. He often had crates of fresh peaches from his farm stacked in his office, and eagerly shared them with anyone stopping in. While Dave Sr. is no longer with us, his family-oriented approach and the crates of peaches remain a dealership staple.

In honour of 75 years in business, Niagara Motors hosted a celebration event on Saturday, Aug. 28. The celebration included a car show with classic GM vehicles, car wash, barbecue and raffle draw, with prizes donated by local businesses. The celebration served a joint purpose, being utilized as a fundraiser for Red Roof Retreat.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero congratulates Dave Dick Jr. as Niagara Motors celebrates 75 years in business. We were so humbled by the incredible support of our community, and were able to raise $2,260. Niagara Motors pledged to match all funds raised and rounded the donation up to a total of $4,700 for Red Roof Retreat.

Niagara Motors is open Monday to Thursday 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., Fridays 8 a.m to 5 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. We will continue to be Virgil’s automotive sales and service leaders and look forward to serving the community for the next 75 years.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero congratulates Dave Dick Jr. as Niagara Motors celebrates 75 years in business.
Mandated vaccinations, and vaccinations passports, were not long ago just spec- ulation, possibilities, hotly debated. It hardly seemed that in our society, in our day and age, they would be- come a reality.

But most of us have been vaccinated before, and have the scars to prove it.

Most of our kids have been vaccinated, and have their reports, those little yellow cardboard books, to prove it.

Every day brings evi- dence that we may have to go through this again, an- other wave.

And every day brings more anger, stronger op- position, a bigger divide in society.

Those who are actual- ly vehemently, violently opposed to vaccinations, and all the other pandemic safety steps, are the minori- ty, but they are mad, and loud.

The rest of us are either resigned, seeing the inevi- table, or grateful for a way out.

The District School Board of Niagara has fi- nally posted a policy on its website, following the Ministry of Education’s mandate that requires school boards to disclose the vaccination status of all DSBN staff, who will have to provide documentation to confirm they are fully vaccinated.

All staff who are not vaccinated will be re- quired to take regular rapid antigen testing to make sure they test negative for COVID-19. In addition to regular testing, staff who have religious or personal reasons for not getting fully vaccinated will also have to participate in a Ministry of Education training ses- sion.

That’s educators looking after us.

And that’s huge, be- cause it’s the youngest in our society now who are not vaccinated.

At press time, the Cath- olic board’s website had not been updated, but the board’s statement said it will continue to comply with the Ministry of Edu- cation’s guidelines with re- gard to vaccinations for all employees.

The Niagara Region has decided its employees will need to be fully vaccinat- ed against COVID-19, or regularly tested, with some exceptions, and announced a paid time off for those who choose to get vaccinated.

What is bringing us back to normal is the discovery of safe vaccinations, and our choice to do what feels right for us.

We’re like we’re at a crossroads. We can beat this as a society by being vaccinated, or we can see another round of infec- tions, this next more virulent than the others.

Most of us have made our choice, and we can’t force that choice on others.

How frustrating that there is such a logical solu- tion for reducing hospital admis- sions, and for preventing more lockdowns, but we have to sit back and hope that others do what is right.

Because in our soci- ety, we respect choice. Dr. Mustafa Hirji, acting chief medical officer of health, suggested this week that if progress to show and another lockdown of busi- nesses is called for, those unvaccinated should be locked out and businesses allowed to stay open. Let the unvaccinated enjoy their freedom, they’ve earned it. It sounds harsh, but it’s a choice. And with some luck and few more vacci- nations, hopefully unnec- essary.

The Niagara on-the-Lake

The Trusted Voice of Our Community

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Social media is having an influence on nature

Interestingly, nature itself doesn’t know about, let alone understand social media. Unlike humans, it has done just fine without its presence over the past 3.6 billion years, since life has existed on planet Earth. As our species evolved to current day, nature became not only a resource to survive on, but also a recreational outlet. In fact, in many contexts, it is now easier than ever to discover an outdoors area that almost every human can find.

That is largely thanks to social media, and that piece of technology attached to so many at the hop. What was once performed by keen inter- net searches, library books and word of mouth is now put on display right at your fingertips. You don’t necessarily have to go to a website about local hiking trails, or perhaps a Canadian Geographic magazine highlighting the country’s top hikes. All of this information used to be a quite reclusive on a sort of nature or environmental platform. Now, the introduction to a new waterfall, a beautiful forest, or a pond to see wildlife with your kids is on full display with Instagram, Facebook and the like. This means that spots are discovered earlier, easier, and more frequently.

This phenomenon comes packaged with circumstances for you, the frogs, and the birds though. An Instagram image shows just that, an image. This can instill an immediate sense of wonder, but can be misleading. Sounds like how some people use social media, too. What the image doesn’t show you is what the trail conditions are like, the maps, or what protected species and ecosystems may reside there. For the sake of social media and respecting biodiversity, it is always best to do your own research on the area in advance.

Take Decew Falls, for example. I often joke and say it’s the Instagram capital of Niagara Region. People want their photo taken in what is arguably the most beautiful waterfall on the peninsula, housing for first place with the Niagara Gorge for rescue operations, though, not all is as idyllic and easy as it seems. You can’t simply pull up and walk to the base of this waterfall. It is a dangerous and slippery hill, which at times has you literally climbing to the roots, rocks, and occasional rope along the steep walls. With more people using social media, compounded with the change of behaviour during the lockdown era, Decew Falls has seen more visitors than any time before. In the past two years, we’ve seen a breathing display of people, particularly from southern Ontario, discovering conservation areas and parks for their first time. This comes with both positive and negative repercussions. You’ve got more people engaging in healthy activities and fostering a further connection with nature, but it is coupled with more garbage, rescue stories, and the trampling of sensitive environments.

Another case in point is a local trail system up on the Niagara Escarpment here in NOTL. Independent from the Bruce Trail, there is a very network of thin trails that are sometimes hardly distinguishable. They have been taking local walkers and mountain bikers into deeper, quieter parts of the woods for some time now. A theme I’ve seen unfold is these trails widening over the past couple of years. The soil is more compact, and there is evidence of somebody maintaining the trail by means of tools and cutbacks.

Some quiet places in NOTL’s natural spots now have a Google Review, which is a bizarre but fascinating development unto itself. Some of these places won’t receive mention in this article, as I don’t want to over-promote these hideouts for the sake of the species that live there. It’s not a matter of if, but when these places will gain tourism appeal and become busier as a result. It’s like pouring water onto a potato and watching it infiltrate all the cracks and spread about. We are the water, and we are starting to inundate some of the last nature nooks around. I believe social media is an exponential driver of this concept.

As I write this and wrap it up, a notification pops up on my phone from Facebook. It’s someone I don’t even know. They are posting in a fishing group I follow, politely asking, “Hey, does anyone know a good fishing spot for salmon, 1-2 hours drive from Toronto?” Thanks!”

That is how it begins, and how it continues.

As a retired developer, I find myself concerned by the proposed development of the former school site on King Street. While a consulting report previously prepared by Megan Hobson states “the property meets one criteria for designation,” and while the proponent appears to have agreed to keep the two basic-back limestone panels by John B. Shaw, that falls far short from any adaptive reuse of this important asset.

What if the buildings for merly comprising the earlier public school (48 Plantoff Street) were previously demolished? Suppose the NOTL Museum on Castlegarhough had previously been demolished — wouldn’t the town now be poorer?

When my wife and I moved to NOTL in 2014, we were impressed by the foresight of previous town officials who en- sured that such buildings were retained and subsequently re- purposed for the important uses which occupy them today. Has anyone acting for the proponent been encouraged to consider repurposing the likely soon-to-be-demolished yellow brick school? Having worked with design firms like ERA, I value their skills and insight with respect heritage preservations, but I also know that even the best consult- ants are frequently subject to ACC’s Appraisal as Per Client Instruction.

I still enjoy an occasional look (with pride) at buildings which I had the opportunity to help restore and which will, I hope, endure preserving presence on their streetscapes. The buildings which come to mind are the Canada Life head office on University Avenue, and the Rex Hotel on Queen Street in Toronto. If we don’t keep important and loved buildings, our claim to being the Prettiest Town is lame. I would like to strongly encourage council and Lord Mayor Betty Durovic to seriously consider two thoughts. Why can’t the listing school buildings be repurposed as a residential project, having more appropriate density, and why do we need to approve such prece- dence-setting, massive density for this well-loved site? Do we actually want to establish that precedent?

And with the proponent establishing the monthly rent- al rate, although it will add housing to the town, it will potentially be less affordable than local younger folks might anticipate.

In closing, I distinctly recall participating on a cold win- ter day in the SOS (Save our School) human chain, which surrounded the Parliament Oak school site. Remember, “if you don’t know your past, you can’t know your future.”

I suspect that over most of the Niagara-on-the-Lake residents will ultimately feel poorer, if we allow the proposed, prece- dence-setting, dense develop- ment scheme to proceed. I hope to hear in Sep- tember that council does the right thing.

David House
NOTL

Council should proceed cautiously with 135 Queen

Re. Solmar proposal for 135 Queen St.

In September of 2014, I prepared final drawings for a site plan agreement for this property which incorporated an existing heritage building.

A year later, Benny Maretta tore down the heritage building and left hoarding in its place for almost six years.

I understand that council would like to have something other than the hoarding around this property, but the proposal should be carefully scrutinized by the town to ensure that we’re not getting something worse.

Wayne Murray
NOTL

Letters! We want letters!

If you have a letter to the editor you’d like to see published, please send it to penny@notlocal.com. Please try to keep it to about 350 words. Sorry, but we won’t publish anonymous letters. And please stick to the issue at hand, rather than attacking those involved. The deadline is Monday at noon.

THE NOTL LOCAL

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Businesses outside NOTL: Call Julia at 905.934.1040 or email julia@notlocal.com
After each performing their emotional, gut-wrenching or humorous monologues for an audience of approximately 50 strong, eight high school-aged students gathered in a backroom at the Court House Theatre to surprise instructor Travis Seeto with birthday cupcakes. The posed, mature delivery by all of his students were probably the icing on the cupcakes for the Shaw ensemble member’s 32nd birthday Sunday.

Billed as the Shaw Festival Niagara Region High School Monologue Derby, the afternoon performances were the culmination of a two-week opportunity for the students to work with Seeto and other theatre professionals in both group and one-on-one sessions.

The idea for the program came out of a discussion with a local high school teacher, who informed Seeto of the heartbreak that students whose drama and musical theatre productions had been shut down by the pandemic. He sympathized, and used his role as an embedded artist with Shaw to give them a chance to do what they love.

In that role, Seeto has been hired by the festival as a full-time employee, removing some of the uncertainty that usually accompanies a career as a performer.

“Actors at theatres all across the country are contract workers,” he explains, “hired for the season and then they’re done. This gives us full-time work on three to five-year contracts. It gives us security, and we’re not having to spend our time auditioning. It’s ideal for actors who also have interest in other parts of the building.”

Seeto’s interests beyond the stage have always revolved around education. He pitched his idea to work with students to education department members Suzanne Merriam, Megan Gilbert and Warren Bain. They loved the idea and reached out to others at Shaw, including actor Kiera Sangster and Kristopher Bowman, and head of wardrobe Jason Bendig.

They put the call out via social media and connected with local high school drama teachers. Then they set about collecting audition submissions from interested students ranging from Grades 9 to 11. Those chosen were given a truly immersive experience, completely free of charge.

“We did all of our sessions in person, at the amazing facilities at the Shaw,” Seeto explains. “We were in the Festival Theatre, the Studio Theatre, we’ve been in all the rehearsal halls. I was able to give them backstage tours, they met a bunch of actors. We had really good COVID protocols.”

Both weeks were bookended by four-group session, during which the aspiring actors learned about preparation techniques, the use of voice, projection, and interpreting theatrical text.

“There are really, really important things for students to know,” Seeto stresses. “A lot of these students are going to be auditioning for universities or community theatre productions. I’m trying to give them all the tools that they will need to successfully work on a monologue and have a good audition.”

In addition to the group sessions, each student received two individual coaching sessions with either Seeto or another member of the Shaw ensemble. These sessions focused on honing their monologue deliveries in preparation for the Aug. 29 performance date.

Another highlight for the students was getting to see a performance of Julius Caesar at the Royal George Theatre. Of the seven girls and one boy who participated, Seeto says two had no prior on-stage experience.

“They’ve been so impressed with how much they’ve grown,” Seeto says. “Their voices are bigger, they’ve got really, really good command of their text. They’ve told me they don’t want it to end.”

Hope Mercer is heading back to Eden High School next week for Grade 11. She chose to deliver a monologue in Juliet’s voice from Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet.

“I tried to relate the character to me and go from there,” she said Sunday, following her performance. “Once I broke down the monologue and connected the words to what I would say in real life, that helped a lot.”

Mercer hopes to use what she learned the past two weeks in her drama classes at Eden this fall.

The lone boy in the program, 16-year-old Sebastian Mocchio, also attends Eden and, like Mercer, has performed with Niagara-on-the-Lake’s Yellow Door Theatre Company. His father, Eric, a teacher at the same school, is happy his son has had a chance to get back onstage.

“He really enjoyed the group activities,” Eric said. “That was a great way to break the ice, not having to do individual things in front of each other right away. And the individual acting workshops with Travis were an amazing experience for him. He was able to capture more of his character that he was supposed to play.”

“Coming out of the pandemic, without having this kind of outlet,” Eric continued, “this has been a game-changer for them. His demeanour went from pandemic blahs to being this kid full of energy and passion again, because he got to be performing.”

Sebastian’s monologue was from Canadian playwright Anne Chiasson’s Quiet in the Land, about a young Amish man who enlisted during the First World War.

On his return to Canada, having killed a German soldier in the war, he deals with his father and his girlfriend who are devastated by what he has done.

Mocchio delivered the lines with the urgency of a young man desperate to win back the respect of his community.

“The pride of seeing my boy get into a character where I don’t think he’s ever felt that emotion before,” his father said. “It was really cool to see him able to portray something I’ve never seen him able to do. It had me feeling the feels because of it.”

Seventeen-year-old Hannah Baechler chose Anne Sexton’s monologue, written by a 16-year-old Calgary high school student. For Baechler, who will be attending St. Joseph’s College School in Toronto, isolating just one part of a play was something she had never done before.

“It was very different focusing on monologues by themselves,” she said. “They really focus on the details. It’s not something I’m used to, which was really challenging. With just the monologue, you only have so many minutes to let the audience know what the story is all about.”

The enthusiasm of the participants was matched by Seeto, who at 32 could have easily passed himself off as one of the students. For the former National Ballet School student, the three-week program was important for building bridges, “not just for the kids, but for the Shaw as well,” he says, “to connect to the talented people in our own area. We really need to focus on the people in our own backyard. It’s important for us to show them what this is all about. They might want to work here one day, as actors or in other areas. It’s a big cultural centre.”

“I take it very seriously,” Seeto continues, “that I should take the initiative to do projects that are beneficial to the Shaw and our community. And the fact that they are performing at the Court House, where it all started for Shaw, it brings the past and the future together in one place.”

Seeto hopes the Monologue Derby becomes an annual event at Shaw Festival.

The group prepares for their Sunday performance at the Court House. (Photo supplied)
Dr. Marianne Hopkins will be at her Eye Doc clinic on Mary Street Wednesday, as she has been throughout the pandemic, even when her services were deemed non-essential and she had to close her doors.

The optometrist won’t have to close her doors, but she won’t be seeing patients whose eye care is covered by OHIP.

“We’re going forward with the job action,” she said Tuesday morning, unless something happens before the end of the day to make it unnecessary for optometrists across Ontario to withdraw their services until the province agrees to fund OHIP-insured eye care services, at least to the cost of delivering those services.

Optometrists have for years been subsidizing about 50 per cent of the cost of eye tests for children and seniors. Those appointments are covered by OHIP, but are drastically under-funded, says Hopkins.

“The Ontario Association of Optometrists has been trying for decades to change that, and recently has been looking for third party mediation with the Ministry of Health, but at least up to the last minute, that hasn’t happened.

The OAO said in a press release it “remains committed to the principle that any agreement must ensure that, at a minimum, the compensation that an optometrist receives for providing insured services covers the overhead and operating costs of those services. Until the government commits to this principle, the Sept. 1 deadline for service withdrawal remains in place.”

In recent months, a campaign by the OAO saw about 100,000 patients send letters to the ministry, asking the government to fund OHIP-insured eye care.

The Ministry of Health agreed to meet with the OAO on Aug. 5, said the press release, and the OAO proposed a formal negotiation process with a third party mediator that optometrists no longer be forced to subsidize the delivery of eye care to OHIP patients.

This principle of cost recovery was immediately rejected by the Ministry. After one meeting, the Ministry declared an impasse,” the statement said.

Dr. Richard Saat of the OAO said Tuesday there had been no talks for about a week, when the Ministry of Health went public with the discussions that were occurring at the bargaining table.

He didn’t expect anything further that might call off the job action, he said, “given the government hasn’t agreed to solve the problem.”

While optometrists can continue to see patients, they won’t be able to see those who are under 20, over 65, or who have illnesses that affect their eyes, in which case their eye care is covered by OHIP.

There are only about 2,400 optometrists in Ontario, and they don’t get the same attention from the government as other health providers, says Hopkins.

“We’re just a small group, but we’re in this together now.”

In 2020, Hopkins bought the Mary Street practice of Dr. Kim Robertson Woods, who is still a part of the clinic, which has five doctors, and supports 13 families, including those of staff.

“Over the last 30 years, Hopkins says, 75 per cent of the patients they see at her office are funded through OHIP.

“So affecting my business in a huge way. This is a battle for down the road, to have sustainable eye care for the most vulnerable. That’s important to us,” says Hopkins.

“We shouldn’t have to run at a loss for providing a service.”

But the province, and not just the current government, but going back almost three decades, “ignores that. Other medical professionals have the ability to negotiate. We don’t have the ability to table our concerns.”

Early in the pandemic, optometrists were not considered essential, and Hopkins says she sat in her office, making herself available to see patients in emergency situations, although the Mary Street doors were closed.

“At this time of the pandemic, “and it’s definitely not done yet, not back to normal yet.”

In addition to overhead and staffing, the equipment an optometrist relies on is expensive. “We’ve become a very medical practice. Our patients know what kind of care they’re getting, because we do things very thoroughly.”

The amount OHIP pays for eye tests wasn’t sustainable before the pandemic, “and it’s definitely not during the pandemic,” she says. “And it’s not done yet, not back to normal yet.”

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Hopkins says she has had “overwhelming support” from people who have been amazing, and very loyal to the office. For their sake, she hopes this will be settled soon.

“I don’t have any idea when this job action will be over. I’m certainly hopeful it will be sooner rather than later. In the meantime, I’ll be talking to people on the phone, and seeing emergencies when needed. Other than that, we’ll be taking it day by day.”

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Submitted by ReMax Greg Sykes

When preparing to sell your home it’s very important to consider getting more than one realtor to assess your home. I recommend getting 2 or 3 experienced realtors in to assess your home, ask them to share with you their marketing plan and discuss their tactical strategies and options to pricing and presenting your home on the market. It is important to find a LOCAL realtor who you have chemistry with, who you feel understands your goals and objectives and who will be pleasant to work with.

The realtor you choose to work for you will be somebody you have to speak with likely each day or sometimes multiple times a day for what could be several weeks, so choosing a realtor you feel you can get along with is of the utmost importance. It’s also a great idea to make sure that the realtor you choose is going to use professional photos, professional video, local, regional and international marketing strategies, professional staging (I use The Luxury Stager – Lisa McIntee – to stage my listings) etc.

There are many factors to consider who to choose when selling, but the main point here is to get a second and even third opinion as to what the value of your home truly is! Most realtors are willing absolutely FREE of charge.

Over the years I’ve worked with hundreds of different real estate agents all throughout the region and the GTA. Here are four other local standout realtors who I have loved working with and who know our beautiful town of Niagara-on-the-Lake very, very well.

1. Doug Rempel, of Bosley Real Estate
2. Tom Elliott, NOTL Realty
3. Debi Chewerda, of ReMax Niagara Realty
4. Andrew Perrie of Revel Realty

Consider two or three of us when you need an opinion of value of your home. Once you have met with a couple of great realtors, obtained their opinion of value and evaluated who you feel is the best fit to work with, you can then move forward with total confidence and peace of mind knowing that you have done your due diligence in selecting the best realtor for you!

Don’t Call ONLY Me When Selling Your Home!

Thanks for reading and if you have any real estate related questions, call or text me anytime directly at 905-329-3484 and I’d be happy to answer any questions you may have! Greg Sykes TheSykesTeam.com 905.329.3484

Welcome to 1335 Niagara Stone Rd. Located in one of the most desirable communities in our country, directly across the street from Crossroads Public school, with nearly 2700 ft² above grade, a 3 1/2 car garage with heated floors, FIVE bedrooms & an office above grade, 3+1 bathrooms, a massive fenced and unspoiled backyard backing onto nothing (complete with chickens in your yard!), just a few minutes walk to Wayne Gretzky’s winery and a 6-minute drive to the waterfront in Old Town Niagara-on-the-Lake, this home has it ALL. Although the original home was just under 1500 square feet, the current owners added onto the back of the house a massive kitchen and dining room, a new laundry room on the main floor, an office and a beautiful loft above the garage that could either be two bedrooms or a big open recreational area as it’s currently being used! The work was permitted. When the addition was done approximately 10 years ago the sellers also built out the garage and redid the siding. Although the home was extensively renovated there’s still room for you to customize one of the bathrooms and decorate as you please!

This luxury freehold end unit home has THREE balconies with spectacular water views, overlooking the Niagara River and the NOTL sailing club, boasts three finished levels, MAIN FLOOR has a beautiful den with a murphy bed included which makes for a perfect THIRD bedroom if needed, FOUR bathrooms with floor to ceiling Italian marble, double shower heads in main bath, a high end kitchen with upscale appliances and a view of the Toronto skyline and balcony number 3 off the kitchen has a gas bbq line. Top quality hardwood floors, TWO floor to ceiling stone gas fireplaces, updated gas furnace and central air in 2020, natural stone and Cedar exterior, an attached single car garage PLUS a dedicated parking spot directly behind the home, street parking out front and a public parking lot behind lot line. This executive luxury townhome has an elevator rough in, is located within walking distance to the finest hotels, shops, restaurants, theatres, wineries, nature trails, the Niagara River Parkway, a short drive to the US/CANADA Border, Niagara and Buffalo Airports and just 20KM to the world famous Niagara Falls.

This is a RARE opportunity to BUY, to LIVE, to VACATION, and to ANCHOR in the RIVER BEACH area of the best small town in the country. Come and fall in love! Yearly common element fee of just $1,100 covers all your snow removal expenses and gardening! Come and fall in love.

$1,595,000

41 Melville St.

$795,000

1335 Niagara Stone Rd.

CALL OR TEXT GREG DIRECT 905.329.3484
Celebration of Nations, the Niagara region’s highly regarded gathering of Indigenous Arts, Culture and Tradition has announced the full schedule for its hybrid edition of in-person programming at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre as well as virtual offerings from 10 – 12 September 2021.

“Since COVID-19 emerged, it has become even more clear how important community and the arts are to maintaining healthy minds and hearts,” said Artistic Director Michele-Elise Burnett. “Artists are often at the forefront of speaking truth to power while also providing purpose for humans to gather to fulfill our ancient and ingrained need for connection. I am thrilled that we are able to provide this hybrid edition to once again bring community together to learn, share and reflect on the deep wisdom of Indigenous cultures.”

Tickets are on sale now for two in-person concert experiences in Partridge Hall, a first for the FirstOntario PAC since last fall. Kicking it off is Friday’s concert event TREATY: A Reconciliation Revelry, a new creation by Celebration of Nations Artistic Producer Tim Johnson that features an ensemble of renowned and award-winning Indigenous and allied musicians coupled with filmed reflections on reconciliation and the Indigenous experience.

“The program’s stories and messages, conveyed through video, narrative and music are situated in the realm of contemporary issues and events, but that provide audiences with historical context for understanding Indigenous experiences and Indigenous realities today,” said Artistic Producer Tim Johnson. “Brief film segments featuring Indigenous and Canadian leaders in civil society, education, culture and the arts speak to the themes, thereby building a story that seeks to pave the way forward for Truth and Reconciliation.”

Saturday’s concert experience features an evening with prominent Indigenous singer/songwriters Amanda Rhéaume and Logan Staats with an opening from Strong Water Women. Limited tickets are available for both in-person concert experiences.

The 2021 workshop series offers hands-on opportunities to learn from skilled, Indigenous artists and Knowledge Keepers. In partnership with 101 Deweguns Living Hearts Legacy, four sanding workshops will take place over the weekend. Please visit celebrationofnations.ca to view and register for creative workshops ranging from FREE to $15 per participant.

The festival will conclude Sunday with Drums Across Canada, a call-and-answer with four other Canadian communities starting at 4 p.m. on St. Paul Street. Throughout the weekend, safe and free activities have been planned in the backyard of the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, where our Sacred Fire will also burn, offering Indigenous Elders with Sunrise Ceremonies each day, and cared for by faithful Firekeepers Fred Bowering and Brian Kent.

Highlights include a very special, FREE, not-to-be-missed presentation of Cris Derksen’s Orchestral Powwow featuring Crhiste Travellers and members of the Niagara Symphony Orchestra on Saturday 11 September at 4pm. And among still many other programs, Victoria Poet Laureate Janet Marie Rogers returns to curate and perform the Empathic Poetry Café live in the backyard with a group of creative and expressive Indigenous writers at 6pm that evening. Saturday’s program will be hosted by One Dish, One Mic, the popular radio show that explores Indigenous issues from CKTB 610 AM.

Celebration of Nations is an opportunity for local, national, and international visitors to actively participate in an inclusive and engaging community gathering that fosters a greater sense of belonging, support of meaningful reconciliation, and that engenders a lasting legacy of goodwill. The 2020 virtual edition attracted more than 36,000 viewers from across the globe.
Jazz pianist featured in backyard concert

Mike Balsam
Special to The Local

Adren Farrugia is striking while the irons are hot. The jazz pianist appears with drummer Ernesto Cervini and bassist Joe Machar this Friday, Sept. 3 for the TD Niagara Jazz Festival’s In Your Own Backyard Dinner and a Show. The gig at Shady Acres follows a week spent tutoring youth at the Interprovincial Music Camp in McKeil, Ontario. One day back from the camp and on his way to the Stratford Summer Music Festival to play with trumpeter Jens Lindemann, a member of the Order of Canada and professor at UCLA’s Alpert School of Music, Farrugia calls while on the road. “It’s great to be back playing live,” he says. “I think we all have that mentality, performers, club owners, festival organizers, we’re trying to squeeze in as many things as we can because things feel a little tenuous right now.”

Though he says, he’s not booking too far ahead, his September includes gigs at the Rex Club in Toronto, his first time playing Hotel and the Jazz Bistro in Toronto, and the TD Niagara Jazz Festival’s In Your Own Backyard Dinner and a Show. “It’s a big reminder about how meaningful all of this is,” he says. “There’s a special kind of energy when performer and listener are in the same place. It creates this feedback loop that’s so important.”

Like many musicians, during the pandemic Farrugia shifted to online concerts, including one in May, 2020 for the TD Niagara Jazz Festival’s Live Love, Jazz series. “It’s great that we are in a place where technology allowed us to offer these online shows,” he tells The Local, “but there’s nothing that can replace the experience of playing in front of a live audience.”

Farrugia is about as versatile a jazz pianist as it is possible. He’s performed or recorded with the likes of Eric Nies, Larry Carlton, Tom Scott, Bob Brozman, Randy Brecker, Molly Johnson, June卜ett, Kenny Wheeler and Pat LaBarbera.

As band leader he has released four albums, the most recent 2018’s Blue Dharma, a duo recording with American saxophonist Joel Frahm. Featuring five original compositions and two covers, it’s a collection that shows off the melodic, interplay between sax and piano, with the two long-time collaborators both inspiring and challenging each other on each track.

Farrugia and Frahm are both core members of drummer Cervini’s band Turboprop, a sextet that won the 2020 Juno Award for Jazz Album of the Year (Group) for their 2019 release Abundance. They’re known to be an energetic, electrifying and innovative combo in the vein of Art Blakley’s Jazz Messengers.

“They are two of my oldest friends,” Farrugia says of Cervini and Maharaj, who make up his trio this weekend. “And they’re two of the very best in the country. We’ll be featuring one of my own music for this show; and probably some other well-known compositions.”

Farrugia has become a mainstay of sorts with the TD Niagara Jazz Festival, having appeared in the region on many occasions in a variety of configurations. He’s thankful to be invited back to Shady Acres for the upcoming TD Niagara Jazz Festival’s In Your Own Backyard Dinner and a Show. This Friday’s concert takes place literally in the backyard, at Shady Acres, located on Arthur Street in St. Catharines. Tickets for the VIP-exclusive dinner and show are $99 + HST; and are available in limited quantities.

As well, groups of up to six can reserve an entire tent for either $529 or $559. A three-course dinner is being provided by Giganti Events and Catering. The performance will proceed rain or shine. For tickets and information, visit niagarajazzfestival.com.

Peter Taras, Candidate

Authorized by the Financial Agent for Peter Taras Niagara Falls

I am Peter Taras and I am the candidate in the next federal election for the People’s Party of Canada. The PPC is the only federal party that is fighting to:

COVID POLICY
A People’s Party Government will:
• Promote a rational and scientifically based approach to the pandemic that focuses on the persons that are most vulnerable, guarantees the freedom of Canadians to make decisions based on informed consent, and rejects coercion and discrimination.
• Fire the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada, Theresa Tam, and replace her with someone who will work with provincial agencies to implement a rational approach to the pandemic instead of following the recommendations of the World Health Organization.
• Repeal vaccine mandates and regular testing for federal civil servants and workers in federally regulated industries.
• Repeal vaccine passports for travellers.
• Oppose vaccine mandates, vaccine passports, and other authoritarian measures imposed by provincial governments, and support individuals and groups that challenge such measures in court.
• Support emergency provincial measures to protect the most vulnerable, but stop bailing out provinces that impose economically destructive lockdowns.
• Support medical research and development of therapies to treat Covid-19 and other viral diseases.

DEFUND THE CBC
Defund/sell the CBC and cancel government bailouts of media organizations.

ALL JOBS ARE ESSENTIAL
Ensuring that small businesses are treated fairly and huge corporations are not given advantages. During the recent lockdowns large corporations were given preferential treatment over small businesses.

SMALLER GOVERNMENT
Significantly reduce the size of government. As an example, the PPC will end government sponsored multiculturalism in Canada.

IMMIGRATION REFORM
Cap annual immigration at 150,000 new immigrants. Focus immigration on the skills and people that Canada needs to remain competitive. New immigrants should be self-sufficient and not need to access Canada’s welfare system.

STOPPING GLOBALISM
The PPC will remove Canada from the UN treaties that infringe on our sovereignty such as the Paris Agreement. The globalists want people to live in fear, the PPC want people to live in freedom!

PROTECTING FREE SPEECH
We will repeal Bill C-10, which wants to give power to government to censor the internet. The PPC will ensure no similar laws ever be put into place. PPC will also put a stop to the censorship of health professionals. We will also work towards repealing that restrict parental rights.

Get involved! Request a lawn sign, discuss our ideas, volunteer, donate or become a member of the PPC. We can be the change!
Learn more at: www.PeterTaras.ca

Campaign Office: 3335 Nigh Road, Ridgeway
tel: 905.894.2305 | cell: 416.995.0658 | email: ppcparty.niagara.falls@gmail.com
Royal Oak prepares for safe reopening

Penny Coles
The Local

When Royal Oak Community School opens next week for the new school year, it is prepared to do so safely.

Head of school Julia Murray says there has been independent thought and discussions about “how to protect our children, who can’t protect themselves.” All staff and any volunteers who come into the school will be fully vaccinated, she says. “It’s one thing we can control to protect our children.”

They’ve also done upgrades, adding Hepa filters to every classroom, and a UV filter system for the whole building to protect against the spread of infection.

Classes will still be kept to cohorts, from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 4 and Grades 5 to 8, she says, each cohort under 40 students.

There is still room for students in Grades 1 and 2, so the school is offering a 50 per cent discount for new students in those grades, says Murray.

The school will continue to offer synchronous learning, as it did last year, with 50-inch TVs allowing teachers and students in the classroom to engage with students who are learning from home. If any of their students has to quarantine at home, says Murray, it will be an easy transition for them.

The school has more space this year, and in addition to plexiglass between desks and students, they are better able to spread out.

If there is a fourth wave from the Delta variant, she says, “I feel really confident about our small school, and the protections we have in place.”

Carolyn Pedlar
Penny Coles
The Local

THE NOTL LOCAL
September 2, 2021

ROYAL OAK TEACHING STAFF ENGAGE IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Royal Oak teachers engage in professional development around curriculum planning.
Flag raised on childhood cancer awareness

Penny Coles
The Local

Patti and John Bauer don’t miss an opportunity to raise awareness and funding to help find a cure for childhood cancer.

They know too well the pain of watching a much loved child battle cancer, only to lose that child to cancer.

Their goal is to help save children and their families from the heartbreak they have experienced, by helping to fund better treatment protocols, and ultimately find a cure for childhood cancer.

It’s been a decade since their beautiful daughter Miranda, just 16, was diagnosed with stage 4 alveolar rhabdomyosarcoma, an aggressive form of cancer.

The protocol used to treat Miranda was the first break-through in 30 years, her mother Patti told a small crowd gathered at the town hall in Virgil Monday.

For the first time, at the request of Patti, who recently became a staff member at Sick Kids, on September 1, 2021, a flag was raised at the town hall to recognize the town, a flag was raised at the town to recognize childhood cancer.

For the first time, at the request of Patti, who recently became a staff member at the town, a flag was raised at the town hall to recognize September as the month of awareness for childhood cancer.

“We are doing these flag-raisings in five communities to raise awareness for children who are diagnosed with cancer, who are fighting cancer, or who cancer has stolen from this world,” said Patti. “Our Miranda is one of them.”

She was an amazing daughter, says Patti, “a dotting big sister, granddaught-er, and best friend. Her fa-vourite things in the world were her brother, her dog, and butterflies.”

Just as Patti started to speak, a monarch butterfly fluttered around the crowd, a reminder, she says, of Mir-anda, and the message of all that is important to her fam-ily now that she’s gone.

And as she finishes speaking, she explains the beautiful, intricate tattoo on her arm, of Miranda, a but-terfly, and the tears that have been shed since her death.

While Miranda was being treated at Sick Kids in Toronto, she learned that just four per cent of research funds raised goes to chil-dren’s cancer research, and she decided to do something about it.

She hosted a fundrai-er in June 2012, and raised more than $10,000, which was donated to research to cure children’s cancer.

As a patient ambassador, she was in a ‘You got it’ media campaign, and appeared in TV commercials and photos in the downtown subway stations.

Miranda, says her mom, designed T-shirts to use for that year’s Rally for Kids with Cancer in Toronto, “and we still sell them today, along with other fundraising efforts with all the funds raised from selling these items going to a designated and monitored, named research fund at Sick Kids, called Remember Mi-randa’s Fund.”

In 2013, Miranda received the Spirit Award for her efforts, and her flag hangs in Donor Hall at Sick Kids.

“But all of this wasn’t enough for her to beat can-cer. We lost our girl . . . the world lost our girl,” says Patti. “We will not let her efforts die with her.”

“We will still raise funds for research in her memory, and now we also raise flags to raise awareness for the month of September as the month of childhood cancer awareness,” says Patti.

“Flag-raising, to remind people of the need to fund research to cure childhood cancer, and said they hoped it would become an annual event.”

Lord Mayor Betty Disero assured them it would.

“Both this month, and throughout the year, it is important to take time to honour the children currently battling cancer, the families who love them, the survivors of childhood can-cer, and those who lost their lives to childhood cancer,” she said.

“It’s also important to re-member the clinicians and caregivers treating children, and the researchers working to conquer childhood can-cer,” said Disero.

“Our community supports you, and all those who are working so hard to find cures to childhood cancer.”
Food for the Friends of St. Davids celebration was provided by Kent Farms.

Musician David Rusch entertains at the FOSD celebration.

First Little Library coming to St. Davids park

Penny Coles
The Local

St. Davids is about to join more than 100,000 communities around the world with its first Free Little Library, designed to help promote a love of reading.

At a recent event for members, the Friends of St. Davids unveiled the first such library for the village, to be installed soon in Sparky’s Park, on the corner of Tanbark Road and Warner Road, in the shade shelter.

Lili Revas-Kvederys, a member of the FOSD, came up with the idea, and will be the steward of the library for the first year.

Leslie Mann, another member of the group, came on board with the idea and built the first library to look like a historic home in St. Davids.

Revas-Kvederys says she has seen them around the world, and been “mesmerized” by the concept of how they work and what they bring to a community.

A lover of books herself, living in a village with a growing population of young families, she says she thought it would be a great idea to provide the first Free Little Library, and see if there is an interest in using it.

As steward, Revas-Kvederys will be tasked with keeping the two shelves of the little library stocked with appropriate books, to be borrowed by passersby.

The goal is to promote literacy and the love of reading, while building a sense of community, with a “take a book, return a book” policy, that offers an opportunity for neighbours to share their favourites. Revas-Kvederys will keep her eye on what is most popular, with a mix of selections for all adults and children.

There will be no shortage of books to stock its little shelves, she says. Her daughter, a teacher, has already donated about 100 books, and others have also given her books. She will watch the selection, checking it about once a week to make sure it’s kept filled.

Equipped with solar lighting, and close to the St. Davids Firehall, the library is in a safe place, she says, as well as one that will be seen by passersby, and by families using the park.

“It’s a location that will be seen by people when they’re out for a walk, and by children when they’re playing.”

There are more than 42 million books in little libraries around the world, in more than 100 countries, says Revas-Kvederys.

This Free Little Library is registered and official, part of a movement which began in 2009 by a man in Wisconsin, who built a model of a one-room schoolhouse, filled it with books and put it out in his front yard. He did it as a tribute to his mother, a former school teacher who loved reading. When he discovered how popular it was, he kept building them and giving them away, to be stocked with free books.

He eventually formed a not-for profit company that offers library kits with several different designs, a sign, a registration process so the library can be included on a Google map that locates them world-wide, and all the information anyone could need to successfully operate it.

The Friends of St. Davids, says Revas-Kvederys, is a social group, but one that wants to give back to the community.

Because this particular little library will be on town-owned property, she says, she needed permission from the town, and it will be there as a year-long pilot project.

If it’s something the community seems to want and use, “we’ll look at whether we should go forward with more, and we encourage residents, if they feel there’s a need, to put one out at their homes.”

She envisions, now that it seems safe to meet, having reading events and maybe another book club, in partnership with the library, but this is a start, a “baby step” for St. Davids, she says.

“We’re excited about all we can do through the Friends of St. Davids. It’s a way for us to give back to the community.”
On affordable housing: The Green Party is advocating for free tuition for students who finish school in Niagara and candidates list as a priority that we need to create in co-op and non-profit housing. We will create a task force to address the impact of the financialization of housing.

On climate change: The Green Party is committing to bringing forward an immediate action immediately. We will work to protect our local wetlands. We will work with all levels of government to ensure that we maintain our wetlands and a buffer around them and work to protect them. We will do this through the Niagara National Housing Strategy that includes input from all levels of government and Indigenous communities. We need to invest in co-op and non-profit housing. We will create a task force to address the impact of the financialization of housing.

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On climate change:
Unlike the Conservative Party, the Liberals consistently voted to deny the existence of climate change. I am committed to fighting climate change and protecting our environment. A Liberal government will move forward with our strengthened climate change plan that includes a bold and effective price on pollution, ban on single-use plastics, and mandate to ensure all vehicles sold in Canada by 2035 are electric. Our plan exceeds the Paris Climate Accord commitments and our goal of net-zero emissions by 2050. If elected, I will immediately take the following actions:
• Implement a Fossil Fuel Tax Action Plan to protect our Great Lakes and Niagara River from pollution created with climate change.
• Draft regulations that require large oil and gas companies to reduce methane emissions by at least 75 percent by 2030.
• A zero-emission vehicles more affordable continue to expand consumer rebates of up to $5,000 and building 500,000 more charging stations across the country for healthcare. These transfer payments, for healthcare, have ballooned over $43 billion from $20 billion in 2006. Despite the enormous increase in the amount of money going to the provinc- es, our healthcare systems have not improved. Why? One of the criteria for the provinc- es to receive more cash from the feds is longer wait times for patients. This is a terri- ble methodology to reward poorly-performing provin- cial health care systems. We rewards victimhood and per- petuates a dependency on the federal money, and it does- nothing to improve health care for citizens.

The PPC would phase out the transfers payments to the provinces while empowering them to collect the GST por- tion of the HST.

On affordable housing:
Our unsustainable immigra- tion is a major contributor to a lack of affordable housing, as well as the escalating housing prices. The PPC wants to put Canada First when it comes to immigration. We would advocate for the best immigrants rather than the most immigrants. Sustainable immigration grows our econ- omy and brings in people that Canada needs. A PPC government would advocate for first taking care of our citizens and recent im- migrants rather than bringing in immigrants who arrive in order to become a burden on our welfare system, and simultaneously occupy hous- ing that would normally be available to Canadians. The PPC wants to provide new immigrants with opportunities and not handouts.

On climate change:
When Justin Trudeau signed the UN Paris Accord for climate change, he flew a del- egation of hundreds of hu- man rights with him to Paris. The hypocrisy of this is stag- gering. He flew to Paris with hundreds of people, paid by taxpayers, to tell people not to fly around the world. If Trudeau wants to reduce car- bon emissions he should lead by example. A PPC government would respect the choices of Canadians. If an individual believes in cutting Prime Minister Trudeau’s emissions then, they should make personal choices to re- duce their carbon emissions by flying less, driving an elec- tric car or living in a smaller home. A PPC government would withdraw from the UN Paris Accord. We would stop sending billions of dol- lars to help foreign countries to reduce their emissions. A PPC government would pri- oritize practical solutions to make Canada air, water and soil cleaner.
Community offers generous support for helping woman in need

Penny Coles The Local

There is nothing like social media when you want to reach a lot of people in a hurry, especially in Niagara-on-the-Lake, when you want to help someone in need.

Krista London-Vertichino, a relative newcomer to town, discovered how generous this community can be when she turned to Facebook to find help for her four-year-old daughter Crystal.

Crystal, the woman in need, has been cleaning her house since Krista and her family moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake two years ago.

With two young autistic children, and Krista and her husband working from home, “I really needed some help,” Krista says.

In addition to being the hardest-working person she has ever known, Crystal, who arrived to help her out, became her friend, and now Krista wants to help her in return.

“She didn’t ask me for help,” Krista stresses. Crystal just made a small comment about being in some difficulty, and Krista took her aside and told her she could talk to her, “no judgement.”

Crystal had grown up in foster care after her mom had her at the age of 14, says Krista. She managed to finish high school and put herself through college, and now is a single mom with two children of her own, and a support system, says Krista.

“I was a single mom for a time, so I know how hard it is. This woman just works her butt off. She’s a dream, honestly an angel, and when I realized the extent of her situation, my heart broke for her.”

Crystal hasn’t been able to make ends meet for the past few months, despite working seven days a week, at two jobs, says Krista, who, with her husband, did what they could to help. But Krista decided to take to social media to see what else she could do, understanding that this woman needed more than just a short-term donation of food and clothing.

“I’ve been overwhelmed by what people have done, and continue to do a week later. I have no words to express the amount of support we’ve had. I’ve lived in several different cities, and I don’t think this would have happened anywhere else. The number of people who have called with offers of help, who have dropped by my house to drop things off, I didn’t expect this at all. She is very grateful, but this is hard for her. She’s never had family support, just went from foster home to foster home.”

Krista’s hope to get this “amazing single Mama” what she will need to see her and her boys through the winter, and then to get her out of the house and even better, place to live in a better location. In addition to paying $1,600 rent in an undesirable neighbourhood in St. Catharines, as well as utilities, her friend received funding from the Ontario Student Assistance Program, which she is now struggling to pay back.

“Nobody should have to work seven days a week for this Mama, Krista. And she just works so hard. This is someone who has done everything right, but nothing is going her way. Nobody should be in her position, and she certainly doesn’t deserve it. Her boys are two of the sweetest kids I’ve ever met!”

What would help more than anything is cash donations, says Krista. “Just donation of a dollar or two could add up, and help her get her head above water. The focus is getting her donations for Christmas, so she never gets back into this situation, and get her to a place where she can work five days a week and spend weekends with her boys.”

For those who may wish to help by ordering needed items, Amazon list Krista has created, visit https://www.amazon.ca/hz/wishlist/ls/5SJFYTB156qSmRef=s_wd_s_c_1.

“Any items purchased off of Amazon comes directly to our house so we can sort it and get it to this amazing single Mama.”

For anyone who would like to drop off or mail a donation, whether it be a gift card, cash donation or physical item, it can be mailed to or dropped off directly to her home in Virgil says Krista, at 676 Pender St., PO Box 859,Virgil, Ont. L0S 1T0. Contact Krista at krista.london@hotmail.com.

Cogoec, chambers host riding candidates debate

Local Staff

Four out of five Niagara Falls riding candidates for the upcoming federal election will participate in a live debate hosted by Cogeco’s YourTV.

Debates will be held for all four Niagara ridings, with the Niagara Falls candidates invited to the studio Sept. 9.

Mike Balsom, who also reports for the Local, will be Cogeco moderator.

Candidates from the Conservative, Liberal, NDP, and Green parties will be included in the debate.

The questions will come from different sources, says Balsom. “We are reaching out to some of our local non-profit and business organizations, including the chambers of commerce, to collect questions. We will also throw it open to local media outlets. Some questions may be used in all or multiple rides, and others may be specific to one riding only.”

The general public will also be able to provide questions.

Cogeco has several pandemic protocols in place for a safe debate, but will stop short of requiring candidates be vaccinated.

“All staff and volunteers working the production are fully vaccinated,” says Balsom. “At this point we are not requiring candidates to be vaccinated,” although candidates could be asked a question about their vaccinated status.

“We have temporarily installed plexiglass, which will provide a barrier between candidates. As the moderator, I will be facing the candidates from across the floor. We will ask candidates to maintain a safe physical distance at all times, and direct them into the studio separately.”

Masks will be worn on site, and will only be removed once candidates are in place on set and microphone ready.

The Niagara Falls riding has five candidates, but only four, the Conservative, Liberal, NDP and Green Party representatives are being included in the debate.

YourTV follows the guidelines set by the Leaders’ Debates Commission, which sets criteria for inclusion in these debates, and the People’s Party of Canada does not meet that criteria.

Peter Taras, the PPC representative for the Niagara Falls Riding, has been offered the opportunity to send a video to be included in the broadcast.

“We always truly hope that all candidates who are not in the four main parties take advantage of this opportunity to submit their two-minute video,” says Balsom. “In the past, many have made use of this offer.”

The Taras team has said they will be sending in a video, however Cogeco had not received it by Tuesday.

The debates will be broadcast live from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Sept. 9. All debates will be posted on YouTube the day after the live airing. They will also be available to watch directly on Cogeco’s YouTube channel, at YourTV Niagara.

Repeats are Sunday, Sept. 12 at 3:30 p.m.; Monday, Sept. 13 at 9 p.m.; Wednesday, Sept. 15 at 7 p.m., and Sunday, Sept. 18 at 9 p.m.

The Zoom link will be provided closer to the date.To register visit https://southniagaracc.com/event/niagara-falls-candidates-event/?c=sncc.
Bravo Niagara! excited to be back with live concerts

Penny Coles  The Local

Bravo Niagara! Festival of the Arts has announced a return to live venues for their 2021-2022 season, and co-founders Christine Morì and Alexes Spieldenner couldn’t be more elated.

“There is nothing like the feeling and energy of a live music experience,” Morì tells The Local. “We could not be more excited to return to the stage with live in-person concerts this fall and holiday season. Canada is home to incredible talent, and we are thrilled to showcase these Canadian treasures.”

Indeed, the fall lineup is all-Canadian, with Vancouver-born Juno Award winner Laila Biali kicking things off on Oct 16 at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre in downtown St Catharines. Biali is looking forward to her return to Niagara, one of her favourite places, she says over the phone from her temporary Toronto home. She and her husband, drummer Ben Wittman, along with their 11-year-old son Josh, are currently renting while awaiting renovations on their newly acquired home in the Eglington Avenue area.

“It’s awesome,” she says about getting back on stage in front of audiences. “I know there’s a lot of trepidation on the part of the public, the presenters and the artists, and rightfully so. But everyone wants to keep safety front and centre, and it’s been good to see so far that presenters have been doing just that.”

She calls live performance the lifeblood of what she and other artists do.

“It’s wonderful to be able to create the work, in an enclosed space, but even that is driven and motivated by the fact that one day we’re going to be sharing this music with the public in living colour, in a way that is going to give those songs life.”

Many of the songs the jazz pianist and singer and her band will be playing in October first came to life back in 2020, when her latest album, Out of Dust, was released just as the pandemic took root.

“Finished writing the songs at the Barré Centre, which is my happy writing place, in January 2019,” she explains. “Then we went into the studio for five months to record the album. Our release date was supposed to be March 27, but of course, everything got cancelled. So it ended up as an online release.”

Like many other musicians, Biali spent much of the past year and a half performing online, which she said at times could be exhausting, but also came with a certain kind of sweetness due to its imperfections and flaws. She recalls always being nervous that her Wi-Fi would fail at the most inopportune moments. Out of Dust, Biali explains, “encapsulates a season in my life that was a movement from darkness into the light. A lot of the songs represent that transition. In that sense it felt like a really appropriate album to release in the middle of a pandemic.”

Co-produced by Wittman, the collection sees Biali taking a journey toward pop style while maintaining the sophistication of her jazz background. Her voice is clearer and stronger than ever on the 11 tracks, all but one of them original compositions. She calls it an album about hope, and it does indeed have a hopeful sound.

And she raves about Take The Day Off, a song inspired by and co-written with the couple’s son.

“There’s a possibility Josh may actually come and make a little cameo on stage,” she says. “One morning he picked up a mallet and started playing one of Ben’s African tongue drums. That became the seed for a new song. He performed it with us a few times and he’s just been getting his confidence to do it live.”

She promises a mix of songs from Out of Dust as well as her eponymous 2019 Juno Award winning album. She’ll take a dive into the Canadian songbook, and play the Re:Quest-A-Matic game, which has become a staple of her live shows since 2015.

“We’ve had requests for everything from Beyonce to Prince, and a song from the musical Rent,” she laughs. “We come up with personalized arrangements, and put our own jazz spin on it. These always go really well in live performance. It’s something fresh but familiar.”

The Bravo Niagara! season continues Nov 13 with the Sul- tanahs of String in their first ever performance for the festival. It’s a special event, a double CD release show for their upcoming albums Refuge and Sanctuary.

“It’s their seventh and eighth albums,” explains Spieldenner. “They’re pretty remarkable albums. And there will be some special guests, some performing and some virtually.”

Six days later the Robi Botos Trio, featuring Mike Downs and Larrell Lewis, plays the PAC. Though he’s appeared with Bravo Niagara! many times, Nov 19 will be the first headline spot for Botos and his trio.

That concert also features vocalist and composer Joanna Majoko. She recently won the 2021 Emerging Jazz Artist Award presented by the Toronto Arts Foundation, and she has recently released her debut EP, No Boundaries.

December will see two holiday-themed concerts for Bra- vo Niagara!. Pavlo brings his Mediterranean mix of Greek, Latin and Spanish music to Niagara for Home For the Holidays. (Photo supplied)

Sip, Savour & Stroll

The annual Shaw Guild elegant garden party was held Saturday, with happy guests enjoying the beauty of the gardens, and sipping local wines. The Shaw Guild garden tour is coming up on Sept. 11, with eight fabulous, private gardens, and master gardeners on site to answer questions and offer tips. For more information visit https://www.shawguild.ca/ garden-tour

Pavo will bring his Mediterranean mix of Greek, Latin and Span- ish music to Niagara for Home For the Holidays. (Photo supplied)

Indeed, getting back to in-person shows, Spieldenner is thankful for the support they received during some challenging times.

“These past 18 months have demonstrated the power of the arts to unify and uplift,” Spelden- nner says. “We are grateful for our incredible sponsors, partners, and patrons who have stood by our side and enabled us to continue supporting artist- ers, commissioning new works, and producing exclusive digital content through our new Bravo Niagara! Amplified series.”

All five concerts will take place at the PAC’s Partridge Hall. Current Hall plans limit the tickets to 50 per cent capacity. There will be no intermissions for any of the shows, and all venue COVID protocols will be in effect.

Tickets are $50 for each show, though flex packs for multiple concerts offer dis- counts to purchasers. Information is available at bravoniagara.org.
Social club being revitalized following COVID

Penny Coles  
The Local

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Social Club, which has been dormant for a while, is being revitalized.

There are about 250 members, says Penny Milligan, who is working on its resurrection. It seems a good time, she explains, when members can meet safely, and there may be people who have moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake during the pandemic, and have not had an opportunity to get out and meet people.

The club welcomes anyone over 18, she says, “men, women, singles, couples, green, blue, young or old. We’re open to everybody with a connection to Niagara-on-the-Lake.”

In the past, they’ve held an annual Christmas party, and organized trips to hockey or baseball games and other events. They’ve had a regular Finger Food Friday, where members bring their own appetizers and drinks, and will continue these at people’s homes — hosts supply a location, party napkins and wine glasses, for two hours of visiting.

Twice a month there are morning Coffee and Conversation meetings at the community centre’s Sweets & Swirls, from 10 to 11:30 a.m., says Milligan, and new people are always welcome.

“We are a social club whose main aim is to get together and have fun. We want to create and maintain an environment where everyone feels safe doing this.”

While there are events organized for socializing, and the primary focus “is for bringing people together in a safe social environment to have fun,” the club is intended to offer more than that, she says.

In addition to events, the club also offered interest groups, and “lessons and learning,” says Milligan. Some upcoming events being proposed include a “mystery” bus tour, a Queenston Heights picnic, car races at Merrittville Speedway, art gallery visits, and a ghost tour at the recently-opened Niagara Parks Power Station.

Interest groups could include the Finger Food Friday, a lunch bunch club, a travel experience club, music appreciation, a choral group, and a new one, a “magazine salon,” with members sharing magazine articles with others who share similar interests. Lessons and learning, she says, may include a session on improving knowledge of your iPhone, canasta and gardening.

A survey is going out to members to put these ideas forward, and see who is interested, says Milligan. Although some of the events come at a cost, many are free, says Milligan. The cost to join is $25 per person with a $10 renewal fee annually.

For more information, email notsocialclub@gmail.com

Grace United market to offer Mystery Table

Chris McQuestion  
Special to The Local

After a COVID-19 pause in 2020, The Festival Market is returning to Grace United Church this Labour Day weekend.

A new feature this year will be the Mystery Table, featuring loads of new and nearly new items that will be of interest to shoppers of all ages. Items are all reasonably priced, assured organizers.

If you enjoy finding a bargain, this is the place for you to be. The event is Saturday, Sept. 4, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Curious about the Mystery Table? Come out and search for your perfect treasure.

The Festival Market will also have your old favourites — fruits and vegetables, jams and jellies, the popular bake table and a large used book section.

LET YOUR CUSTOMERS KNOW YOU ARE OPEN TO SERVE THEM SAFELY!

RUNNING EVERY WEEK UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE!

To place your ad, call or email Karen at:
905.641.5335  
karen@notllocal.com

Check out the Mystery Table at Grace United’s annual market event. (David Gilchrist)
Youth soccer wraps up its season

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

Youth soccer players aged four to 14 gathered at Virgil Sports Park this weekend for the NOTL Soccer Club’s Year-End Festival.

Though it wasn’t “business as usual,” club president Ted VanderKaay was pleased with how the season developed.

“We had over 340 players,” said VanderKaay, “which isn’t too far off our usual number. We started a bit later than usual, but I think we had a longer and more meaningful soccer season than a lot of other clubs around the region and elsewhere.”

Though medals were distributed to all the Timbits (age 4-5) players, Saturday was primarily a day to celebrate getting back onto the field successfully after a 2020 without soccer. Coaches reported that many kids and their parents thanked them this weekend for providing them a chance to get back to having fun on the pitch this summer.

VanderKaay was quick to add that none of this would have happened without the support of all the sponsors who stayed with the club during some uncertain times, and the many parents and community members who stepped up to coach the kids.

He says the club is hoping that 2022 will see a return to a full season of soccer, starting as it usually does just after the May long weekend.
Senior Ryder Cup returns to men’s team

The Senior Ryder Cup men’s team hung on to win back the Pro’s Cup in a ‘colourful’ way.

For the ninth year in a row the Senior Ryder Cup men’s team have faced the Solheim ladies team in a friendly but competitive golf match.

It was a beautiful day for golf, except for strong winds off the lake which often played havoc with the golfers.

Fourteen ladies played the 14 men in seven matches, with 42 points up for grabs, as there were six points available in each match.

This year the men came up with a tactic which likely made the difference in their slim victory. The tactic was wearing colourful and wild outfits instead of their Ryder Cup team blue shirts. The ladies seemed mesmerized as I and others appeared by the first tee. Their eyes couldn’t believe the clashing of colours that many of us wore. They laughed, but little did they realize the effect it would have on their game. Yes they were mesmerized!

The final result wasn’t decided until the final group came in, and the men won the day by the smallest of margins, 22-20.

Lunch was served on the first tee after the matches, and then came the presenting of the cup to the winning captain. The ladies’ captain, Martha Cruikshank, was gracious in her defeat as she presented the coveted trophy to the men’s captain, Harry Huizer. Tears of joy, clapping and laughter were seen at each table.

Everybody had a great time, as could be seen by the fun and friendly atmosphere at the luncheon and also during the competition.

Many thanks to Jill Wiens and her staff for providing the lunch, and a special thanks also to Ricky Watson, Billy Simkin and their staff for their help.

I can’t wait to see what the ladies will plan next year as they try to regain the cup.

You might say the day was a joyous and colourful victory for the senior men over a talented ladies team.

Harry Huizer
Special to The Local

Playing for the men’s team were Doug McCulloch, Warren Tutton, Drew Porter, Jim McMacken, Stephen Warboys, John Reynolds, Harry Huizer, Darryl Fry, Jim Panetta, Mike Eagen, Ted Carmichael, Don Allen, and missing from the photo, Brodie Townley and Kevin MacLean. (Photos supplied)

The ladies’ team included Marie Ellison, Yolanda Henry, Margot Richardson, Michele Darling, Maria Townley, Lisa Allen, (back) Robin Foster, Louise Robitaille, Sue Gagne, Janice White, Barbara Athiwalla, Judy Mantle, May Chang, Ginny Green, and missing from the photo, Martha Cruikshank. (Photos supplied)

Harry Huizer, captain of the men’s team, proudly lifts the Senior Ryders Cup, with women’s captain Martha Cruikshank and pro Billy Simkin looking on.
Men’s NOTL Tennis Club doubles champions decided

Local Staff

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Tennis Club held its recent annual men’s double tournament over four days, and after missing a year of tournament play due to COVID-19 restrictions, everyone enjoyed the competitive action on the courts, players and spectators. The competition results for the men’s doubles are as follows:

A division champions: Scott Lewis and John Pilling

A division finalists: Paul Plourde and Mark Waler

B division champions: Jim O’Gorman and Bill Devolin

B division finalists: Rob Lamond and Doug Campbell

A consolation champions: Jayden Jeong and Felix Jeong

A consolation finalists: Terry Francis and George Dell

B consolation champions: Les McFarlane and Terry Ratkovsky

B consolation finalists: Cosmo Condino and Alec Papadimitriou

In last week’s edition of The Local, we incorrectly attributed some of the women’s photos. The group shots were taken by Marilyn Francis, the action shots by Cosmo Condino. The Local apologizes for the error and any inconvenience it may have caused.

Cosmo Condina

John Pilling and Scott Lewis, the A division champions (Photos by Deb Robert)

Bill Devolin, Jim O’Gorman, Doug Campbell and Rob Lamond

Mark Waler and Paul Plourde

Ross Robinson

Scott McGregor

Ken McGillivray

Richard Berti, 80-plus years young

Local Staff