Carriages moved to Byron Street

Tears well up in the corners of Fred Sentineal’s eyes when he considers the outpouring of support his business, Sentineal Carriages, has received online, via telephone and on the street in recent weeks. It happens during a discussion on Saturday, the first day at the new weekend location for his horses and carriages on Byron Street, at the corner of King, just in front of the St. Mark’s Church Rectory.

Sentineal says he was not presented with any options other than the move, which Lord Mayor Betty Disero says is only for the weekends. "We had a call Wednesday, “ explains Sentineal. “We were told council had made the decision to move the carriage stands, and it was confirmed yesterday (Friday) morning that we were starting here today.”

The move is in response to the chaos of the previous Sunday. That’s when animal rights protesters marched from Simcoe Park to meet with about 100 carriage supporters, stopping traffic at the corner of King and Queen Streets and disrupting local businesses for hours. It was the biggest clash between the two sides in a stand-off that has been ongoing for over three years.

"What I saw on the 23rd was such an escalation of anger between the protesters and the counter-protesters,” says Disero. “Council spent two evenings (Monday and Tuesday) discussing this with legal counsel and came up with a plan to deescalate what was going on, to try to assist the store owners with what’s been happening, and to try and deal with any and all legalities or harshness that was coming from anywhere.”

Disero confirms that council supported the direction to move the carriages just on Saturdays and Sundays, until the situation between the two sides deescalates. The discussion was held in-camera, with legal counsel present, and she assures that at no time did she or any member of council consult with the protesters on the decision. Disero adds that there are further steps to the plan as it moves forward, though details are not being made public at this time.

“There is a plan in place,” she informs The Local. “I talked to Laura and Fred Sentineal yesterday, and the other Sentineal company (owned by Fred’s brother Jeff, Queens Royal Carriages) also operates out of the same location). They’re all in agreement with the plan. We’re trying to work with them (Laura and Fred) to at least understand why the move was made.”

Disero says neither company pays a fee to the Town to operate on their usual corner, nor will they be re...

Continued on page 11
Shaw preparing for next week’s musical revues

Penny Coles
The Local

Last week was a good news-bad news time for the Shaw Festival, but as always, CEO Tim Jennings is moving forward on a positive note.

With news of a $400,000 grant from the federal government for outdoor performances announced last Tuesday, the festival has kicked into high gear to make that a reality, with live musical revues expected to begin next week.

They could run into November, Jennings said, and be staged in the beautiful gardens of the festival theatre, with tables and umbrellas to enjoy other activities, such as visiting wineries, taking bike tours, eating at local restaurants and staying overnight. “It will make a great staycation,” he adds.

Since the reason for the federal grant and the goal of the Shaw at this point is to bring visitors to Niagara-on-the-Lake, the performances will be kept close to home. “This is primarily intended to drive economic recovery to the town, since it is so clearly impacted by the reduction of tourism locally,” says Jennings.

Although the Shaw had been working out possible scenarios for outdoor performances for months, they received very little notice of the funding, learning about it the night before last week’s public announcement, which wasn’t what they expected to hear.

Jennings says he’s still hopeful there will be more funding opportunities. Although the grant was welcome news, they were hoping for more — it isn’t enough to finance the performances.

“Will spend more than we’re getting,” he says, but glad to do it as an engine of economic recovery for the town and also “to make some good art. We’re very excited about that, and we’re hoping to become a model for other places, especially in rural communities, that can follow,” with government or community funding support.

Rehearsals started Monday. “We’re jumping in on both feet, moving as fast as we can” to get performances underway, although there may be changes as they go along.

They intend to start small, with audiences of 50 people, and expect tickets to be snapped up quickly. “Tell people to watch social media for ticket announcements,” he says, adding he hopes to expand performances for crowds of 100 people as they move forward, as permitted by the Province.

“With the lack of tourists this summer, they’re finding it extra important to support businesses, to give back to their communities, and have been unable to help the festival, are finding other ways to contribute. In addition to being welcoming ambassadors for the town, they initiated a project called LOT ONTL, ordering items from local businesses to fill boxes of curated delicacies and home products, as part of the Shaw Guild’s program to support Queen Street merchants, says guild communications chair Cheryl Morris.

The 52 boxes, at $50 each, were assembled and delivered by a team of guild volunteers, led by Emily Lukasik, a Shaw Company actor. “Emily had the idea, and both Tim (artistic director Tim Carroll, and Tim Jennings, CEO for the Shaw Festival) were totally on board. They suggested she get in touch with Laurie Harley (Shaw Guild president) and that’s how it started. And we were available to help,” Lukasik said.

Lukasik had heard of a similar program being done in a Toronto neighbourhood earlier this year, and thought it would be great for the Shaw and the Guild to run the program in support of Queen Street merchants.

The team of Harley, Brenda Weafer, Gail Kendall, Morris and Lukasik spent several hours one day scouting out and shopping for items in the boxes.

Team members found it difficult to make the final choices with so many great shops to choose from, said Morris.

They will gather soon to discuss the possibility of putting together a holiday-themed package later in the year, and perhaps extend the offer to local residents who are not Guild members, she added.

Guild members are also hoping to get back to volunteering for the Shaw. With funding for outdoor performances announced last week, there could be a role for volunteers, or the Shaw may want to use their employees. “We don’t know what they have planned. We’d like to get back to the Shaw, but it will depend on so many other factors. Everything is up in the air.”
Standing out from the crowd, decked in their new bright blue T-shirts, Shaw Guild members mingled with visitors along the streets of the Old Town this past weekend in their new role as volunteer ambassadors.

Saturday marked the first day of the pilot program, which tasks volunteers with greeting tourists and others. The ambassadors are to welcome people, reinforce the guidelines about physical distancing and wearing masks, and answer any questions that might arise.

Shaw Guild communications chair Cheryl Morris says there are currently 29 members who have offered their time to the cause. With the coronavirus pandemic putting an end to summer performances at the Shaw Festival, the dedicated volunteers were elated to finally get back into the community to contribute in this new way.

Council representatives Gary Burroughs and Wendy Cheropita were happy to don their own blue shirts as they met with the first group Saturday before heading to the Market Room. If anything seemed to scare off the protesters, there was no disruption this weekend either as Morris says, “it’s difficult to hold a physically distanced conversation on such a busy thoroughfare.”

With beaming smiles that rivaled their new T-shirts for brightness, the two women approached a group gathered around a picnic table on Regent Street. They introduced themselves as volunteer ambassadors, welcomed the visitors to town, and asked if they felt uncomfortable, we don’t make eye contact, don’t engage in conversation, and if you feel uncomfortable, we ask that they text Laurie (Harley, Shaw Guild president) and Cheryl, as they’re in the Market Room. If anything seems to happen, they would call the police, and not our by-law officers.

Cheropita explains, “we ask them to say ‘I hope you have a nice day,’ and walk away.”

With their shoes. “If they encounter anyone who is confrontational,” Morris explains, “we ask them to say ‘I hope you have a nice day,’ and walk away.”

Some people chatted for a few minutes with the tourists, chatting as if they were old friends.

Cheropita had a chance to meet with a number of the volunteers when it was time for a shift change mid-afternoon. Having just come back from a visit to Sentinel Carriages on Byron Street, it was suggested the ambassadors could direct curious visitors to the new weekend location of the carriages as an answer to one of those FAQs.

On that topic, though there was no disruption this weekend from the protesters, there is a protocol in place for the ambassadors if any conflict arises. “If they encounter anyone who is confrontational,” Cheropita explains, “‘we ask them to say ‘I hope you have a nice day,’ and walk away.”

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Council agrees to get started on tourism strategy

The Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake will begin developing a tourism strategy, with a nod from council to hire a consultant to help with the process.

Staff don’t have the tourism expertise, councillors heard last week, and an outside professional is needed for the tourism effort. The Local at-large councillor, Betty Disero, said describing it as the “much-discredited” tourism tax rebate in disguise, and avoided using the phrase. This included both a commercial tax, and avoid-and-escape tide water, the waterfront, heritage, the natural environment and residents’ ideas for sustainable tourism, she said, listing some of the many different groups formed the local tourism industry and we don’t have the funds to fund it,” said Wines.

Coun. Sandra O’Connor said she emphasized with all residents and businesses suffering from the impact of the pandemic, and supports the heritage tax rebate, but she didn’t support such a large expenditure mid-way through the 2020 budget. Burrows said he was trying to help those on Queen Street who, with the highest assessment, are paying high property taxes, with no tourist to help offset the costs. “It’s becoming a dreadful situation,” he said. “If this doesn’t pass, somebody better figure a way to help those businesses before we have an empty main street.”

Burrows had the support of Coun. Claire Cameron and Wendy Chesnutt, but his motion to help heritage businesses was defeated.

Penny Coles

The Local

An attempt by Coun. Gary Burrows to staff look at a tax rebate for heritage district tourism businesses on Queen Street failed last week.

In the motion asking for the rebate, Burrows referred to it as a commercial tax, and avoided describing it as the much-discredited heritage tourism tax rebate, which council has agreed to consider for next year’s budget.

However, it became dear in his explanation of his request that it is in fact “the heritage tax rebate by another name,” which he wanted to approve for this year.

“It is sort of the same thing, strictly to do with property tax in 2020, at 40 per cent, funded from the parking increase,” Burrows said, hoping to have the Region and education tax rate match it, as allowed by the provincial heritage tax program. “The payback is enormous for tourists,” said Burrows.

“Believe it is the heritage tax rebate in disguise,” said Coun. Allan Bicek, who reminded councillors there is already approval for a working committee, with support from staff, to assess the heritage tax rebate.

Several councillors took issue with a tax rebate to help only businesses in the heritage district. Some councillors such as Sonko, a small family business and Virgil “sion,” said Coun. Erwin Wiens, are also suffering and would not qualify, while big corporations such as Bell and Bank of Montreal would.

Also of concern was how it would be funded.

“We have to stop using parking revenues. We can’t get any more money out of parking and we don’t have the funds to fund it,” said Wines. Coun. Sandra O’Connor said she emphasizes with all residents and businesses suffering from the impact of the pandemic, and supports the heritage tax rebate, but she didn’t support such a large expenditure mid-way through the 2020 budget. Burrows said he was trying to help those on Queen Street who, with the highest assessment, are paying high property taxes, with no tourist to help offset the costs. “It’s becoming a dreadful situation,” he said. “If this doesn’t pass, somebody better figure a way to help those businesses before we have an empty main street.”

Burrows had the support of Coun. Claire Cameron and Wendy Chesnutt, but his motion to help heritage businesses was defeated.

No 2020 tax rebate for heritage businesses

Penny Coles

The Local

The Niagara Falls chamber of commerce was not invited to attend an announcement of a $900,000 grant to help tourism and possibly fund a consultant for the Niagara Falls’s tourism strategy.

Local MP Tony Baldinelli was glad to see federal tax dollars directed toward helping tourism-related businesses in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Shaw Festival, but annoyed he wasn’t invited into the announcement.

As the elected representative for the Niagara Falls riding, Baldinelli said he would have liked to take part in the discussion of $900,000 worth of grants coming this way, and be invited to participate in the announcement.

“I would have expected to be invited to take part in that like in my riding,” he said. He’s been advocating for asistance for the tourism industry, for the agricultural industry, for offshore farm workers and seasonal workers in the tourism industry, and in the early days of the pandemic, worked to help local citizens, stranded overseas, get home, he says.

He would like to have had the opportunity to ask about the details of the grant for NOTL businesses, and to be part of the recovery plan, he says. Instead, he learned about the grant for NOTL businesses when constituents emailed or called him to ask why Niagara Falls hadn’t included in the announcement.

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“arise to being there,” he said. Lord Mayor Betty Disero says there were invitations sent out by FedDev Ontario. She was asked about including council members and town staff, but that was all.

She said she had no idea Baldinelli wasn’t invited, and when she spoke to him after the announcement, she thanked him for his ongoing support. “We invi- ted no one, it wasn’t our round but I passed on a number to call in on that,” she says. Deroing.

Going forward, she says, when her office is asked, she will tell whomever is issuing invitations to such events not to expect the regional chair, regional coun- cil’s MP and MPP “no matter who is putting it on.”

Baldinelli wasn’t invited to attend an SEVISON 900,000 grant announcement

Penny Coles

The Local

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Add value to your home and ease to your lifestyle.
This small community we love, the town that has named the prettiest, the friendliest, the town with the beautiful heritage district, the most historic firsts, the Shaw Festival and all the great wineries, restaurants, and everything else that makes us so proud, has been dealing with some weighty issues recently.

We’re not alone in having to face up to the very serious problem of systemic racism, or learning how to live through a pandemic. We share those with the rest of the world and can only do what we can do in our little corner of the world.

In our little corner of the world, however, we also have our own problems. We’ve been making the nightly news for hosting and holding or (not), and more recently, for the ongoing battle between the protesters, who don’t like the protesters.

Because, let’s be honest, if it wasn’t just protesters, it wouldn’t make the news. It takes two sides to fight. One side walks away, as we teach our kids to, and there is no fight. The protesters aren’t going anywhere.

It’s a fight that can’t be won. It will drive visitors away, from town, from the horse-drawn carriage rides, and from the other downtown businesses who are already suffering more than enough. The loss will be ours.

And just when you might think the Town has made a decision that could actually work, that might take the fight down a few notches and away from the main intersection in town, you see the battle escalating on social media. Everyone has an opinion about what should or shouldn’t happen.

The topic in town this week seems to be not so much what is happening to the carriages, but what is happening on social media as a result of what is happening to the carriages.

The fire there has ratcheted up a few notches. Each comment adds a touch of anger, more petulance. And it’s pervasive. Those who refuse to become part of it are nevertheless affected by it.

One person said to me this week, “social media is destroying this town.”

He’s right, I thought, and then I repeated it to my colleague, Karen Skeen. It’s not social media, she said. We talk about social media as if it’s another Hal (remember Hal, from 2001. A Space Odyssey? Hal was a computer with artificial intelligence, before that was a thing. It was 1968, and Hal had control over his humans. The difference is he was trying to save them.)

Social media isn’t Hal. It isn’t something that controls us, and it isn’t saving us. It’s us. We are the ones acting, escalating anger. Those who saw Fred Sanford in the video that has been going around, screaming at the protesters to go home, can understand what happened. He was angry, frustrated, and caught up in the moment. Who among us wouldn’t be?

He was there, so he fought back.

But people who comment on social media are getting caught up in the same way. It’s not healthy for them, and it’s embarrassing and really, really disturbing to see our local olds, good people by and large, dividing our community, fingling insults at our friends and neighbours, bullying, showing hate for those who have a different opinion. The destruction is not from social media, it’s from inside this community. It’s not just the protesters, it’s every issue, every decision of the Town. A great project like the skate park is a good example. That was a small problem with what turned out to be an easy solution, but you’d never know it from the hateful online comments.

And those who are trying to be part of the solutions, those who have to make sometimes difficult decisions which they know are not going to please everyone, are on the receiving end of the worst of it.

An interesting conversation with two different people associated with the police provided a different way to look at their role in the protest. The police are constantly called on to mediate, to help each other. We hear them and share them and rejoice in the good. When times are tough, we support each other — like the Shaw Guild and their members, out on the street welcoming tourists with a smile, making a project out of buying from local retailers, doing what we can now that they can’t get back to helping the Shaw.

What is dividing our town isn’t, we can put an end to a willing, but what is driving the division. We can allow people to share their views, we can provide a response, or help us deal with others who may be doing a better job.

After all, we share one common and very important trait. We love this community. We want to be the best it can be. We have the ability to make it so.

Penny Coles
The Local

Auchterlonie on Astrology

Best sports park

The Niagara-on-the-Lake

The trusted voice of our community

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We have power to help de-escalate division in town
New boardwalk to make shoreline more accessible

Mike Balsom Special to The Local

For the past year, Niagara-on-the-Lake residents and visitors alike have been enjoying a beautiful new shoreline walk along Lake Ontario, just north of the NOTL Golf Club links. This summer the serenity of the path has been disrupted somewhat with the presence of construction crews working on the final phase of the Parks Canada project.

Crews from Cameron Building Group out of St. Catharines are busy installing a new boardwalk along the northwest side of Fort Mississauga. The boardwalk will soon link the new waterfront walkway with the path through the golf club to the fort.

When completed this fall, locals and tourists will be able to stroll safely from town, through the golf course pathway, around Fort Mississauga, then along the shoreline of Lake Ontario. They will emerge just behind the fourth green of the golf course, meaning more people will be walking the golf course path, which currently requires them to cross in front of the second tee.

Golf club owner and operator John Wiens says he has been kept informed and been part of the decision-making throughout the entire process.

“We work well together,” confirms Wiens. “We had a lot of communication, especially in the timing. We had to close the back tee on #8 a couple of times. There was some noise and dust last year during the walkway construction, but our members were great, and it wasn’t a big deal!”

The latest work is part of the final phase of construction designed to protect Fort Mississauga National Historic Site. The shoreline walkway itself, with 600 metres of breakwall, is part of that protection, as it has been installed to combat erosion and stabilize the shore.

On Monday, trees and brush along the earthworks to the fort were being cleared. Still to come as part of the project is the planting of more than 400 Carolinian trees and shrubs along the trail. The design for this re-vegetation plan was prepared in consultation with Wiens and the NOTL Golf Club, who leases its land from Parks Canada.

According to a Parks Canada press release, the earthworks and breakwall surrounding the fort itself are overgrown with mostly non-native and invasive tree and shrub species. These can damage the breakwall and earthworks archeology with their root systems. Parks Canada will remove about 100 trees and shrubs, and replace them with locally sourced, native Ontario grasses, selected for their minimal maintenance and water requirements. They have assured that no species at risk trees will be removed, and tree removal will continue in September, well outside of the active bird nesting season.

The project has at its roots a 2012 strategic assessment of Parks Canada’s asset portfolio, Sarah Simpson, public relations officer for the Southwestern Ontario field unit, says that assessment considered visitor safety, ensuring high-quality visitor experiences, preserving the ecological integrity of parks and marine conservation areas, and maintenance of historic sites.

Wiens says the walkway and the clear view of the lake now enhance the walkabout experience for golfers. He doesn’t anticipate needing to make changes to the #2 tee, despite the prospect of increased visitors. “We might have to put up a low chain to stop people from wandering off the path, and maybe a couple more stop signs, if anything. But I think it’s really going to be a beautiful thing for the community and our citizens.”

The total budget for the project, including the 2019 repairs and restoration to the fort building itself, is $4.9 million, through federal infrastructure funding.
Restaurant development needs trees, green space

Penny Coles  The Local

As the proposal for a Swiss Chalet and Harvey’s restaurant in Virgil moves through the site plan process, councillors are wresting with how best to make development on Niagara Stone Road look more like a village than a series of strip malls.

One of the answers involves trees and green space.

A lengthy discussion at Tuesday’s continuation of last week’s council meeting focused on a 2015 report that provided guidelines for Virgil development – guidelines Lord Mayor Betty Disero wants enforced for the restaurants, which are proposed on the property by the Grape Escape wine tour company.

Councillors agreed, and spoke about the best way to make that happen.

Disero mentioned several retailers along Niagara Stone Road who have used trees and green space to soften their look, but also expressed some disappointment of others that did not.

“The development on the property of the former Walls Furniture store, she said, was originally intended to have a boulevard with trees and greenspace, but they were tied to a site plan that included a second-storey residential component. When the plan to include apartments was dropped, so was the requirement for trees and landscaping.

She said she was upset the developers didn’t follow through on the landscaping, notwithstanding they didn’t need to.

“We’re trying so hard to make Virgil more walkable and more pedestrian-friendly,” she said. “It’s just very frustrated we’re trying so hard, and some property owners just don’t care.”

“Everything the lord mayor said and then some,” added Coun. Norm Arsenault. “This is the first thing people see when they come into Niagara-on-the-Lake.”

Coun. Wendy Cheropita suggested a harsher “shaming” should be considered if the proponents of the development on the property of the former Walls Furniture store, who she said, were not charged.

But in the winter months there will be no business here to be had, if it becomes a permanent thing. I guess that’s what we’re afraid of.

To Sentinel, it feels like the protesters. At War for Animals Niagara (AWFAN) has scored a victory.

“There’s no doubt they’ve made gains,” he says, especially in the minds of voters.

And here we are, still being vilified for trying to exercise our rights that these guys have taken advantage of.”

Sentinel says he will look into working with the Prince of Wales and the Town to place signs at the usual location to direct people over to Byron Street on weekends.

Disero confirmed that there is nothing stopping the new Shaw Guild ambassadors, who began walking the streets Saturday to welcome tourists, will be able to direct people to the new carriage stands.

Fire Master Plan Survey

The Corporation of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is embarking on a review of the Town’s Fire and Emergency Services, to determine areas of improvement and to help forecast the Department’s immediate and long-term delivery needs and goals. This review will assist in ensuring the Town’s citizens are receiving the most modern and efficient service delivery possible.

The Master Plan for the Town’s Fire and Emergency Services will address current and anticipated community fire risks and needs over the next five, ten and twenty years. The objective of the Master Plan will be to examine, review and research all areas of the Department including operations, prevention and education efforts, apparatus and equipment, and human resources.

We need your help!

Members of the public are invited to complete the Fire Master Plan Survey on the Town’s Join the Conversation Platform. Survey deadline is September 30, 2020.
Skate park almost ready to be kid-tested

Penny Coles
The Local

Construction of the Virgil skate park continues, with some residents’ concerns to be addressed after completion, if necessary.

A motion from Coun. Clare Cameron was discussed at last Tuesday’s continuation of the August council meeting that residents would be consulted following competition, and if necessary, additional landscaping and buffering could be added.

Cameron said she felt she had “dropped the ball” and missed some critical pieces of information about the facility, such as how much it would cost and where it would be located. Part of her motion was to include more information in the process of council making decisions about capital investments.

Kevin Turcotte, acting director of operations, told council there is a “small budget” for landscaping when the build is completed, and if more buffering is required, it could be included in the 2021 budget.

$150,000 to the $450,000 project.

He liked the idea of cameras on the facility, he says, for safety and security reasons, although cameras are not part of the Virgil project.

“I was encouraged to see kids of all ages using it, and I look forward to seeing the Virgil project finished and kids using it. We’re all looking forward to the official opening.”

The skate park is about two weeks away from being ready for use, with the landscaping still to be completed and a sealant to be applied to the finished concrete pad for protection. There is no date set for the opening.

Wall says the VBA is still expecting a pump track, which provides rollers and banked turns for bikes, as a second phase of the facility.

Turcotte agreed it is still being considered, “but will be a few years in the future.”

Hans Pauls, of the town’s parks and recreation department, stops by to check on the work of the skate park. The cement sidewalk was being installed Monday, grass needs to be laid around the sides of the structure, and a sealant added before it’s ready for local kids. It might be a couple of weeks to completion, he says. (Penny Coles)
The rehabilitation of the Upper Canada Heritage Trail is set to continue, aided by a donation from the Palatine Hills Estate Winery. The funding is in place to continue, and the work is ready to proceed, as soon as town staff has time.

Part of the first phase, between John and Charlotte Streets, is done, with residents making the most of it. The project is being funded completely through donations collected by a Town committee formed to see the trail preserved and rehabilitated from John Street to York Road, following the historic Eric and Ontario Railroad. The rehabilitated portion of the trail has been widened to the Town’s three-metre standard, allowing for vehicle access for maintenance, says Tony Chisholm. That has been necessary once already, when a large tree fell into it. The widening will continue, with a fine crushed stone surface to make it more accessible.

The work on the trail is a legacy project going back to local 1960s celebrations, and since then, Chisholm has heard a few complaints about the lack of nature trails remaining in town, some concern that the new surface may attract more traffic from visitors, and that the recently-completed work makes it look like “a highway.”

However, he says he has heard from many more residents who are grateful for its increased accessibility.

One of those is Coon Al law Buck, who walks the trail from John to Paddfield several times a week, and also cycles it regularly to East and West Line, where he says it becomes “unusable and rough for leisure biking.”

Bubback Bikes on Park Court near the start of the trail at John Street, and volunteered to be part of the Heritage Trail Committee when he became a councilor, wanting to contribute to its rehabilitation.

Before the rehabilitation began, “it was difficult to bike on this section,” let alone walk on it without being careful of the uneven surface. After a rain it was unusable and muddy. The Town has cleaned up the dead trees, and installed a great all-purpose surface. The area has lots of birds, deer, the odd coyote, and many skunks, and natural growth is returning.

Viewing the trail from his back deck, the councillor estimates about a 40 per cent increase in use in the past few months, mostly people walking and biking are enjoying the new surface, but also because “folks want to exercise outside during the current environment,” he suggests.

“And to think all this work was completed through volunteers on a committee, and generous donations. I donated to this phase myself, will do so for future phases, and encourage residents to do the same.”

He’s looking forward to the rehabilitation of the other sections that are in poor condition, he adds.

He’s not alone in his praise. Jane Catcher, also a regular user of the trail, says she used to cycle it occasionally before the recent work was completed, but enjoys the new and improved version more. “I love the trail and find it very comfortable to ride,” she says. The foundation is nice and firm and makes for a good ride without even needing to change gears, Catcher adds. “On my weekly ride to the Brockton, I love to come into NOTL and take the Heritage Trail as my reward after a long ride. I feel like I am taking in some history, while enjoying a pleasant ride underneath the canopy of the trees and enjoying the various backyard gardens I can see from the trail — my little piece of heaven,” says Catcher.

It’s time to meet other people, both cyclists and walkers, and feel the upgraded size and width is perfect, because I never feel crowded as I pass by, saying good morning as I go. I look forward to the continuation of the trail and renovations and will continue to be a trail blazer who uses this little piece of heaven right in our own backyard, reminding us of the history that once was such an important part of the town.”

Resident David Bell is one who enjoys the trail as a pedestrian, experiencing it with his granddaughter and walking the family dog, picking raspberries in the summer and taking long falls walks with the family. “It is a wonderful trail, and the improvements between Paddfield and John are very welcome. I look forward to a better path to East-West in the near future, and ultimately to York Road,” he says.

Ron and Ian Ashenhurst also live on Park Court, backing onto the trail, “we have front row seats to observe the traffic on the trail since it has been upgraded.”

They say the use of the trail has probably doubled, with “loads of pedestrians, dog walkers and cyclists.” We also see someone using a walker, and someone in a wheelchair, which would have been inaccessible previously. We also see people on horseback, a couple of ATV’s (not good), and even some deer using the trail. It is a huge improvement over the rutted, weed-infested trail that was there before.”

The Little brothers say they look forward to what lies ahead, and would like to see tree-planting, ornamental shrubs, and an89

There will be plantings add- to the otherwise-finished portion, says Chisholm. Charles Neufeld and Pala- tine teamed up months ago with the heritage trail committee on a fundraiser that dedicated 25 per cent of all wine purchased for trail rehabilitation. Despite lower sales during the pandemic, they raised $550 to the project, says Neufeld, who likes to bike and walk the trail himself. “I love the trail, and I’d love for the rest of it to be fixed up,” he says.

One of Palatine’s philosophies is “take it outside,” says Neufeld, explaining that wine can be enjoyed in the backyard, but outdoor sales are limited to accompanying dinner inside the dining room table.

“That makes this project a good fit for us, where outdoor activity is encouraged.”

The work that has been completed so far has cost about $38,000, and with $12,000 collected in donations, there is enough to finish the first four phases, but the committee will be looking for donations to finish looking at the trail to York Road.

Donations can be sent to The Heritage Trail Committee, c/o of the Town of Niaga- ra-on-the-Lake, PO Box 100, Virgil, ON, L0S 1T1.

Donations of $25 and more will receive a charitable tax receipt.

For more information visit heritagetrail.ca. For information about Palatine Hills Estate Winery, visit palatinestate winery.com.

Community donations are funding trail rehabilitation
Continued from page 1

and back to the family and move forward with their lives. Little Keegan is maternal possessions behind them, concentrate on family and move forward with their lives. Little Keegan is also okay, but she has been ridden with anxiety, never feeling settled.

From the time we moved back in, it never seemed like my house,” she says. “Tucker, had been the same, following her around, worrying about her and seeming to feel the same anxiety. It seemed like he fed off it.”

Until the day about three weeks ago when she, the three boys and Tucker moved out of that house and back to the family farm, into the house that had been her grandparents, having sold the Annmarie Drive house. Rachel grew up right across the street from the farm, and spent a good bit of her childhood there with her grandparents. After moving back, she says she immediately felt like a different person. “I feel like I’ve come home.”

And for the first time since the fire, she says, “Tucker was wagging his tail. He was a different dog. He was happy, and we had a fabulous week. He was flying around outside, loving it.

And then, just 10 days after moving in, when they were doing some work outside and Tucker was with them, he seemed a little slower than usual, Rachel says, and went to his bed to lie down. She saw him there a while later, sleeping peacefully with his paws crossed and looking so sweet, she went to take a photo, and then realized he was too still.

Although she’s heart-broken he’s gone, she says, “he’s at peace in heaven.” She’s sure he felt he had done his job, getting the family away from the house and to a safe place. “He was telling us he knew we were settled.”

Tucker, a shepherd-trotter mix, was six years old when he woke Rachel up the night of the fire with uncharacteristic barking and whining, pawing at her bed and making her realize something was wrong.

He was just eight when he died, and had shown no signs of any problems with his health, she says. With the Annmarie Drive house now a good home for the next family who lives there, and Rachel feeling “amazing” now she’s back on the farm, she says, “I feel in some ways this was meant to be. The fire changed me, taught me lessons I’ve never before learned. This community picked me up and carried me through it. I’ll never leave Niagara-on-the-Lake. This is my home.”

Lions burger night continues to Thanksgiving
But with one less picnic table

Penny Coles
The Local

The St. Davids Lions have found their August burger nights successful both in raising funds and community engagement, and will carry on with them into October.

They will do so with one less picnic table, however. Lion Harold Thiessen says the event has been a great success, with people picking up dinner and staying to enjoy it on the grounds, and they have “cobbled together” enough picnic tables to accommodate those who stay to eat. Last week, volunteers cleaned up and Pittman says the Li- ons are looking forward to the day when they can put those back on their agenda.

In the meantime, they have had great volunteer support, says Pittman, including the Leos, and have instituted as many safe protocols as possible. “It appears to be working,” he says. “Anyone who has stopped by to watch us can see we are all wearing masks, and the hand wash station has helped to keep us all safer.”

The first burger night, with long line-ups, was “part of our learning curve,” says Pittman, and since then the waits have been minimal.

About the missing picnic table, he says, “I can only hope that maybe that person who took it will feel a conscience and see the good we have created here, and perhaps return what doesn’t belong to us.”

Memory of Tucker will live on, as a hero

Although she’s heart-broken he’s gone, she says, “he’s at peace in heaven,” and for the first time since the fire, she says, “Tucker was wagging his tail. He was a different dog. He was happy, and we had a fabulous week. He was flying around outside, loving it.

And then, just 10 days after moving in, when they were doing some work outside and Tucker was with them, he seemed a little slower than usual, Rachel says, and went to his bed to lie down. She saw him there a while later, sleeping peacefully with his paws crossed and looking so sweet, she went to take a photo, and then realized he was too still.

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He was just eight when he died, and had shown no signs of any problems with his health, she says. With the Annmarie Drive house now a good home for the next family who lives there, and Rachel feeling “amazing” now she’s back on the farm, she says, “I feel in some ways this was meant to be. The fire changed me, taught me lessons I’ve never before learned. This community picked me up and carried me through it. I’ll never leave Niagara-on-the-Lake. This is my home.”

The techniques she has learned are helping her deal with PTSD, but being back on the farm is also a tonic. “I feel like a changed person. I haven’t felt this kind of peace in a long time. I wasn’t myself at the house.

Long before the fire taught her kids that all that matters is family, and that was a reinforce- ment that “you don’t need a lot in life.” Things don’t matter, memories do, and those they have taken with them, she says. “You just have to live every day your best life, for the moment and with gratitude.”

And the memory of Tucker will live on, as a hero, recognized with in- duction into the Purina Animal Hall of Fame. An American researcher into pet behaviour, working with Purina, said Tucker did everything he could do the night of the fire to use his “great communication skills” until he was successful- in alerting his family to danger. “It shows the strong bond to his family,” she said, adding that dogs such as Tucker “put the love of their families before their own self-preservation, out of loyalty and love for their family members.”

A

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Penny Coles
The Local

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Thiessen has asked The Local to pass the message along for residents to see if one has been up some- where unexpectedly.

Ed Pittman, the committee head for the Friday Lions burger night, says the response from the community has been won- derful.

“Every week has been a great turnout, and the funds being raised will benefit the community. We have done five bar- becues so far and plan on continuing until Thanksgiving in October, provid- ing the weather holds out for us. That too has been truly fantastic so far.”

The burger night has re- placed the Lions fish fries, however they have also always been a great event, and Pittman says the Li- ons are looking forward to the day when they can put those back on their agenda.

In the meantime, they have had great volunteer support, says Pittman, includ- ing the Leos, and have instituted as many safe protocols as possible. “It appears to be working,” he says. “Anyone who has stopped by to watch us can see we are all wearing masks, and the hand wash station has helped to keep us all safer.”

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Tucker loved life on the farm, but didn’t have a lot of time to enjoy it. (Rachel Spiewak)
The Material and Mystical to appear at Pumphouse

Artist Marilyn Cochrane has been moving in the realm of The Material and the Mystical as she prepares for her solo gallery showing at the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre.

“It is almost a two-year process for me to complete my complex artwork for a solo exhibition, and this will mark the second solo show that I have had at the Pumphouse since moving to NOTL five years ago from Toronto.”

The opening reception for her exhibit will begin at 1 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 5. There will be a naming presentation for The Joyner Gallery at 1:45 p.m., with Lorraine and Geoff Joyner present and recognized for their $25,000 contribution to the Pumphouse. The newly renovated gallery space, which features monthly exhibitions, is being named after the couple for their steadfast support of arts, history and culture in the community.

“A plaque in their honour is now on display at the Pumphouse.”

That will be followed by a short presentation by Cochrane at 2 p.m. and again at 3 p.m. In an effort to adhere to physical distancing restrictions and public gathering guidelines, the Pumphouse will also have a second reception on Sunday, Sept. 6 that will follow the same schedule as Saturday, to ensure visitors can attend without overcrowding.

“I am excited to present my new paintings and sculptures in my solo art show at the Pumphouse Arts Centre opening this weekend,” says Cochrane.

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“I am excited to present my new paintings and sculptures in my solo art show at the Pumphouse Arts Centre opening this weekend,” says Cochrane.

“I will be there to greet everyone from 1 to 4 p.m. on both Saturday and Sunday, to answer any questions about the artwork, and to invite everyone to enjoy a glass of wine!”

Educated at the Ontario College of Art in Toronto, McGill University in Montreal and the American College of Fine Art in Paris, France, Cochrane has had an extensive career as an artist that has included many solo and group exhibitions, mainly in and around Toronto, but as far away as Halifax, Montreal, Winnipeg and Banff. She has also been the recipient of many awards for her work. Most recently, she received the Carl Schaeffer Award of Excellence at the 2017 CSPWC International Watercolour Show in Toronto.

“The title that I have chosen for this show is ‘The Material and The Mystical,’ which represents the two realities that I feel envelop us at all times,” says Cochrane. “We are most aware of the material world, using our physical senses easily every day to interpret it, yet there is also another more subtle realm of unseen energies that we can intuit by using our inner senses. I aim to depict in my paintings the play between these two worlds, and to evoke the beauty that I see and feel in both.”

Cochrane describes nature as her muse, and her muse lives in the Niagara Region. “Nature is my starting point to represent ‘The Material,’ and I focus on the power of soaring trees, ripening grapes and exquisite blooms to bring it to life on canvas,” says Cochrane.

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Nature, Cochrane’s muse, ‘lives in the Niagara Region’

Continued from page 12

Nature, Cochrane’s muse, ‘lives in the Niagara Region.’ Each photograph is ‘painted in a meditative way with layer upon layer of glowing transparent colour, creating highly realistic images. The next step is then working around and into this realism with energetic, highly textural, abstract and free brushwork. This represents to me ‘The Mystical’, the mysterious and the unseen energies around us. I turn to the power of colour to draw the onlooker into the image, and into a dream of another reality where the marvels of our imagination coexist with the world in which we live.’

In this exhibition, Cochrane has also added sculpture to compliment the paintings. ‘My new sculptures are titled Echo Cairns, and they are a continuation of my Echoes Series that I have been exploring for many years. This is a new interpretation where I am stacking millions of years old minerals along with sculpted elements into a fascinating composite of sparkling crystals. Into each of these little sculptures I then place a miniature painted landscape that echoes the colours and feeling of its sculpted form. I aim to beckon the viewer into a condensed world of beauty expressed by the glittering crystals and dreamlike landscapes.’

With nature as her muse and taking inspiration from the Niagara Region, Cochrane has a goal for this exhibition. ‘I hope with my artwork to create a richness to enthrall the viewer, and to allow a space of beauty and contemplation.’

The exhibit will run from Sept. 1 to Sept. 30. Contact the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre for more information at niagarapumphouse.ca or 905-468-5455.

For more information on Marilyn Cochrane, consult the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre website or the artist’s website at www.marilyncochrane.com.
Senior ladies win annual Solheim/Ryder Cup match

Harry Huizer
Special to The Local

Harry Huizer, the captain of the team, has written an account of this annual match, much of it good-natured and tongue in cheek as he acknowledges his found loss to the women.

Friday, Aug. 28 was an almost perfect day, in the eyes of the men, for the annual Solheim/Ryder Cup match at the NOTL Golf Club won this year by the ladies.

The match had 16 senior ladies competing against 16 senior men for the coveted Pris Cup. There were eight matches of two ladies against two men, with a total of 48 points up for grabs. The men were the defending champions.

Both captains Martha Cruikshank and Harry Huizer had their teams ready to play in their colourful outfits.

The formats were front nine-alternate shot and back nine-best ball. Handicaps were considered, but the men's captain was supremely confident of a lopsided victory despite having to fend off the lake. Then something happened that is still difficult to understand.

The better team had won all nine holes and brought a cheer from the men, for the annual Solheim/Ryder Cup match was won 5-1 by the pair of Alan Robb and Don Cruikshank, which gave the ladies double digit points and brought a cheer from the men's team, and especially the captain.

Yes, it was almost a perfect day except for the score, in the eyes of the men.

The better team had won and it wasn't the Senior Ryder Cup men's team.

It was a humbling time for the men's team but they handled defeat with remarkable class. We celebrated with the ladies, and you could see the joy in everyone's faces during the lunch and trophy presentation.

It in fact, was a perfect day, despite the resounding win by the ladies.

A lot of thanks has to go to Billy Simiand and his staff for their help in making the event run so smoothly.

Lunch was served for the first time ever on the first tee. What a treat that was. Thanks especially to Jill Worn and the clubhouse staff for setting up and providing a wonderful lunch.

This event is really characterized by golf talent, sportsmanship, friendship and good fun. Each team was encouraging the other team throughout the matches even though it was a competition.

Each side wanted to win, but in the end, we were all winners by just playing in this event. OK, there was one big winner.

So that is the story of a huge victory by the ladies, but next year plans are already in the making for a comeback win by the men, or so this year's captain hopes.

Yes, it was a perfect day!

Captains of the annual tournament were Harry Huizer of the men's team, and Martha Cruikshank representing the winning team.
CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU

Across:
1 Grouches
6 Female supporters
10 Flat-topped hill
15 Arizona city on the Colorado
16 In addition
17 Latin American dance
18 Side
19 --- Christian Andersen
20 Sharp flavor
22 Note hastily
24 34th Pr
25 Moonshot program
28 Sound of a lion
29 Louse egg
30 Washed out
31 Watch --- step!
33 Not odd
35 Free
36 Settlement
37 Nudge repeatedly
38 Kevlar garments
39 Pirate’ s plunder
40 Mischievous
41 Solitary
42 Levelheaded
43 Hoppy brew
44 Conforms
45 Blockhead
47 Pirate’ s plunder
49 Mischievous
50 Solitary
51 “L” operator
52 Unpleasant to look at
54 Conjugated
56 Afiko, e.g.
57 Augit
58 Political top-dog (Abbr)
59 Brief swim
61 It’s worth ---
62 Note hastily
63 Settling
64 Old food label letters
65 Carpet cleaner (Abbr.)
66 Moor

Down:
1 Coverts rotary motion into linear motion
2 Appliance and electronics maker
3 Bill-dispenser
4 Hollow gas globule
5 Mar
6 Unit of computer memory
7 Regret
8 Key with three sharps
9 Pacific country
10 Speed measure
11 School of -- -- --
12 Clicked
13 Valuable possession
21 Pict maker
23 Choice morsels
25 Interest charge
26 Two identical things
27 Shoppe adjective
28 Manage
30 In de in
32 Jo on de
34 Old kind of computer monitor
36 Fighter ace
37 Lower
39 "Rosemary’ s Baby" actress -- Farr
40 Provides input for an amp.
41 Observe
42 Levelheaded
44 Fry
46 Central bank
47 Studio
48 Waning
49 All too
50 Lister
51 Map
52 Ugly
54 Evoked
56 Hun
57 Nil
58 Pres
59 A dip
60 Ronaldo
61 A try
62 Border
63 Serve
67 Rind
68 Noir
69 Tidal
70 Toga
71 Tome
72 Stack.

PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from August 27, 2020

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

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The trusted voice of our community.
Toronto Symphony at Pondconcert with members of the Toronto home. Back in July with a selection for more than a decade, with the non-profit organization Niagra. The 21-year-old violinist, who has been affiliated with Music Niagara’s At Home Series on Labour Day. For Meinrenken, it’s been a busy summer with Music Niagara. The 21-year-old violinist, who has been affiliated with the non-profit organization Niagra, has been a very rewarding and beautiful setting for the event. Marlene Masales, says the music impacts a community. I want to do some important work is seeing how music impacts a community. I want to do some important work is seeing how music impacts a community.

Mike Balsom Special to The Local

It’s back to school time for the four members of the Kiri Quartet. Before they resume their studies at Juilliard and the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, though, Emma Meinrenken, Matthew Christakos, Jasmine Mengjia Lin and Lynn Sue-A-Quan will make their debut as an ensemble for Music Niagara’s At Home Series on Labour Day. For Meinrenken, it’s been a busy summer with Music Niagara. The 21-year-old violinist, who has been affiliated with the non-profit organization Niagra, has been a very rewarding and beautiful setting for the event. Marlene Masales, says the music impacts a community. I want to do some important work is seeing how music impacts a community. I want to do some important work is seeing how music impacts a community.

“One of those sponsors, Marlene Masales, says the beautiful setting for the event was a bonus. “I just look forward to the music itself. This year there is such a need to keep these things (Music Niagara performances) thriving, successful and growing, to be there when we all can resume coming together to enjoy it more in person more often.”

The sheer joy of performing is evident on the faces of each accomplished young musician, as the Kiri Quartet takes on Mozart’s String Quartet No. 9 in C Major - Dissonance, as well as Brahms’ String Quartet No. 1 in C Minor, Op. 51. The concert was recorded by the Niagara College broadcasting department under the marquee at Chateau des Charmes Winery before a small group of sponsors, who were also visibly pleased to be able to experience live music. One of those sponsors, Marlene Masales, says the beautiful setting for the event was a bonus. “I just look forward to the music itself. This year there is such a need to keep these things (Music Niagara performances) thriving, successful and growing, to be there when we all can resume coming together to enjoy it more in person more often.”

After this weekend, the young virtuosos will be studying music under their mentors, who are in Philadelphia and New York City. Only Quan will be physically returning to school, to study under Hsin-Yun Huang, who is actually a faculty member at both Juilliard and Curtis. “The rest of us have to stay here,” says Meinrenken. “So it is a little sad, but I have to think about health and family, and through this (pandemic) experience I have realized that I can find very valuable musical experiences at home, and I don’t need to travel to another country.”

Visit musicniagara.org Monday, Sept. 7 at 4 p.m. to see the Kiri Quartet perform compositions from Mozart and Brahms.