**Kids arrive for their first day at school**

*The first day of school is a busy day for everyone,* said Coun. Erwin Wiens, a local grape grower who is also council’s representative on the municipality’s irrigation committee, which oversees decisions related to the system.

It runs from mid-May to mid-September, and exists through the passing of a private member’s bill decades ago that allows the system to pull water from sources such as the Niagara River, Lake Ontario, the Ontario Power Generation Canal, and the Welland Canal, explained Wiens.

At an irrigation committee meeting last week, concern from members was raised while discussing two agenda items, related to clean-up and maintenance issues, and who will pay for them.

There are two ponds in the area of the Virgil Dam at Four Mile Creek and Line 3.

The ponds are owned by Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, and are a source of water for the irrigation system, which is owned by the municipality, but paid for by local growers.

However, the town’s irrigation committee is now struggling with some work that has to be done, related to removing obstructions in Four Mile Creek, that would cost about $45,000 to remedy.

Wiens estimates the value of the system is about $28 million, all of which is an investment made by local growers since the system started operating.

But the cost of repairing culverts and removing obstructions shouldn’t come out of the growers’ pockets, said Wiens, because the damage is not related to irrigation.

Erosion caused by heavy rain and thaws are to blame, not the functions of the system, he said.

“We’re all in agreement that irrigation water is not causing the issue,” he added, also noting the problem at the ponds, which were built in 1968, mostly has to do with soil build-up.

While discussing the ponds at the recent committee meeting, the town’s public works manager Darren MacKenzie told members that changes to the Ontario Conservation Authority Act have resulted in the NPCA no longer having funding to maintain them, other than to take care of grass cutting in the area.

Therefore, two options need to be considered by the committee, said MacKenzie.

The first consideration related to the ponds is that
Region waiting for guidelines from province

**Continued from page 1**

immunizations kept up to date. Get your booster for the updated variant. Get the updated flu shot. Wash your hands regularly, and stay home when you’re sick.

That last piece of advice, though, also has been addressed by society and the workplace, so that all parents have the support they need to make those decisions, whether it’s to stay home because they are sick, or to look after sick children.

“It comes back to a societal situation — not all people get paid if they stay home when they are unwell. We need policies in place so they can make that choice.”

The role of public health departments, he added, “is removing the systemic barriers people face.”

While there has been an uptick in COVID cases, as determined by wastewater studies, there is still some uncertainty about when the next COVID booster will be available, and where. Kasmani says Niagara Region Public Health’s fall vaccination plan will follow provincial guidance.

He told The Local last week, those guidelines are not as yet available, but as soon as they are, Public Health will make that information public.

In an email sent Tuesday, he explained that after talking with the ministry, “it’s likely they’ll follow the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI’s) guidance, that states it’s best to wait until the fall and get an updated strain vaccine if available.”

NACI also says “the focus should be on those at highest risk: people over 65 or with other high risk medical conditions, residents of long-term care or congregate living facilities, essential workers and medical staff, and folks who face systemic barriers or members of equity-deserving communities.”

The federal government buys the vaccine, he says, “and we’ve heard there is an updated strain vaccine coming, but we aren’t sure when it will be available to us. Again, priority will be for those living in long-term care and retirement homes before the general public.”

Public Health will be holding clinics at the Canada One Outlet Mall in Niagara Falls, and at its offices as capacity allows, but the main focus will be on supporting long-term care, retirement homes, congregate care and living settings, as well as those who are homebound.

“We will also be holding clinics where folks, especially students and young people, can catch up on other vaccines they may have missed.”

Public Health will also provide support to pharmacies and primary care offices so they can provide COVID and flu vaccines, “as they will likely be the main providers this year.”

**NPCA wants help from town with funding**

**Continued from page 1**

the committee enters a memorandum of understanding with the conservation authority, opening better access to funding from upper levels of government to make improvements.

The NPCA has “avenues we don’t have available as a town,” MacKenzie told the committee, referring to funding sources from upper levels of government.

MacKenzie said during the meeting that a cleanup of the two ponds has an estimated cost of about $425,000 and that the NPCA could potentially bring in half that amount by applying for funding from those sources. If the committee decided not to form an agreement, the NPCA will decommission the ponds, which is their second option, he said.

The committee voted to move forward with exploring options related to signing a memorandum of understanding with the NPCA, but did not commit to any specific details of an agreement.

Wiens was not in attendance at last week’s committee meeting because he was meeting with federal officials about irrigation issues, he told The Local. Those discussions involved a potential partnership with Niagara Region, and the federal and provincial governments to create a new system like the one in Niagara-on-the-Lake that would serve western portions of the peninsula, said Wiens, who has also been chair of the region’s irrigation committee for the last 10 years.

That project has an estimated cost of $100 million and would also involve about $10 million in improvements for Niagara-on-the-Lake’s irrigation system, he said.

“It is hoped that Niagara-on-the-Lake would be able to increase the volume of water it takes, as well as the number of acres the system serves. The idea of entering into an agreement with the NPCA, he said, is worth exploring.

“I’m always in favour of finding creative ways that we can keep the irrigation system viable. We’ve got to look at all avenues to make it work.”

He told The Local that the irrigation system was also a topic of discussion at last month’s Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference, where he asked the provincial Minister of Infrastructure for support to maintain and expand irrigation in Niagara.

Wiens reiterated that Niagara-on-the-Lake’s system is “wholly funded” by growers, but noted that the town has an irrigation superintendent on its payroll to play a role in its operation.

Wiens, in his second term on council, became part of the municipal committee about five years ago.
The former rifle range on Lakeshore Road is now closed to the public, but that could change, says a federal spokesperson. (Kris Dube)

Until 2000, the balance of the property was used by DND under lease agreement for summer military training, and included two rifle ranges, a pistol range, a rocket range, a grenade range and a tank training and maneuvering area. There is also a small area to the west known as Niagara Shores, administered by Parks Canada, and also now off-limits to the public.

Local Staff

84 charges laid in Port Weller fire

There was no information released about the specific charges laid by St. Catharines Fire Services. The first court appearance is scheduled for the end of September 2023. This appearance will mark the beginning of the court process to address the charges laid following the events at Keefer Road earlier this year.

The former rifle range undercurr one London residence, located at 1699 Lakeshore Rd.

The DND spokesperson said rifle range could be opened to public use eventually, including two pieces of unexploded ordnance, and there could still be some such items on the property.

The DND spokesperson also suggested the property is considered low risk, and it opened to the public, those using it will have to watch out for such devices and call the police if they see anything that looks like ordnance.

In correspondence with The Local, DND spokesperson Andre-Anne Poulin outlined what has taken place at the site to investigate and clear it of unexploded ordnance.

The DND completed environmental and unexploded device investigations on the site, which identified the presence of both environmental contaminants and the potential for unexploded ordnance.

This resulted in clearance and environmental investigations conducted in 2015 and 2016. A total of 2,947 potential ordnance targets were investigated over the course of the remediation process, and at that time, 353 unexploded ordinance items were found before being sent for disposal at the ammunition depot in Dundurn, Saskatchewan.

Two unexploded ordinance pieces were also discovered — a one-inch mortar that was destroyed on site, as well as a 3.5-inch unfielded practice rocket.

Despite these findings in recent years, DND is "committed to ensuring the former rifle range property is made safe for parkland use," said Poulin.

"While it is difficult to completely eliminate all oldinning clearance work and site investigations, DND has "assessed the former rifle range site at low risk for future use by the community," he said.

"However, as with all former military sites, people will need to continue to use good judgement and caution when using the property," added Poulin.

If people see something that looks like it may be ordnance, they are advised not to touch it, "turn around and leave the area the same way you came in," and call local police, he said.

Originally acquired in 1908 by DND, the lands were transferred in 1947 to what is now Parks Canada.

In 1982, 23 hectares were transferred to Niagara Region for use as a sewage lagoon, and an additional 16 hectares was leased to the region for the operation of a wastewater treatment plant located at 1699 Lakeshore Rd.

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"While it is difficult to completely eliminate all old
Two new doctors coming to family health team in Virgil

Dr. Michael Grasic and his wife Christine are counting down the days until they move to Niagara with their now seven-week-old daughter Lucija. (Supplied)

Dr. Anne Wilson, with her two boys, eight and 10. (Supplied)

Penny Coles
The Local

The waitlist for a family doctor in Niagara-on-the-Lake is about to be shortened.

The Niagara North Family Health Team has two new doctors set to call the Niagara Medical Centre in Virgil home, both expected to arrive this fall.

Their starting dates are uncertain, pending the completion of Ministry of Health paperwork.

“We are excited to welcome two long-awaited doctors to our team and hope to continue with our vision of providing health and well-being to our communities one patient at a time,” says health team clinic manager Sheryl Lepp, encouraging NOTL residents without a family doctor to fill out a patient profile sheet and drop it off at the Virgil clinic, available on the health team’s website.

Dr. Anne Wilson, a medical doctor for the last 10 years, will be the first to arrive, with a proposed start date of Oct. 1. Now living in Niagara Falls with her husband and their two sons, Wilson says she is looking forward to being part of the family health team model, which she believes is able to provide more services and better care for patients, she says. “It’s what drew me to this.”

Family health teams, Wilson explains, have extra funding from the province to hire other staff, such as specialists, nurse practitioners, nurses and administrative staff, while physicians working in a clinic or in their own practice have to hire any extra services they might need — she has in the past had to pay a nurse practitioner out of her own salary and overhead.

“What’s extra in a family health team is these services, specialized nurses, administrators, are paid for by the province. I think it’s a great model. Having your own practice can be very limiting.”

Nurse practitioners are also an advantage to have available for patients, and Wilson adds, “really help meet that need.”

They also provide after-hours service, she says — each doctor contributes their time to those clinics, with hours that are regulated by the province.

Last April, Jill Croteau, the region’s physician recruitment specialist, made a presentation to NOTL councillors explaining the shortage. She said the region needed nine more docs, NOTL an additional three — there were 11 at the time, and the town needs a total of 14, based on a formula of one doctor per 1,380 population.

Coun. Sandra O’Connor, who has made local healthcare one of her priorities, says she doesn’t agree that NOTL fits that model.

“We have a population over 34 per cent seniors (65 and over),” she told The Local.

“Doctors recognize that seniors’ issues are more complex and hence require more time, which translates into an increased need for doctors. The exact number? I don’t know.”

However, the hiring of two new doctors she adds, “is still good news.”

With a long waiting list of residents who don’t have a family doctor in NOTL, O’Connor has been advocating for another nurse practitioner, not affiliated with that family health team, but instead able to see residents who don’t have doctors. That nurse practitioner would also be able to see visitors to town.

“I think that we are all very frustrated with the fact that we don’t yet have the nurse practitioner position in place and operating. It is still a go, but making it happen with the Ministry of Health is challenging. We are continuing to push for it,” she says.

Later this fall, Dr. Michael Grasic is expected to arrive. Although he proposed start date is Nov. 1, he says he has to work out a time of notice to his current patients that may mean a date closer to December.

He is a family medicine physician born and raised in Mississauga, although his family at one point moved to Zagreb, Croatia, where he completed his medical school training at the University of Zagreb. He specializes in sports injuries, and says he expects to be able to help patients at the local health team clinic with those kinds of problems.

Following medical school, Grasic moved to New York State where he completed his family medicine residency in Plattsburgh, followed by a primary care sports medicine fellowship in Albany.

He is currently living and working in Toronto, he says, and “it’s a lot of city. We wanted something with more of a community feel.”

He and his wife had thought they were “big city people,” and are living on Yorkshire Avenue near Bloor Street, a very busy part of Toronto, but once they knew they were expecting a baby, they realized what they really wanted was a good place to raise a family.

When he and his wife Christine — a nurse practitioner he met while working in New York — visited NOTL, they fell in love with it, and through a friend of one of the Niagara North Health Team family doctors, learned there was a position available.

He is very excited to be joining the health team and is looking forward to establishing a practice in the area, and to moving to Niagara with his young family — their daughter is just seven weeks old.

They soon learned, however, that there are few places to rent in NOTL that aren’t tourist accommodations, and have found a place in Port Dalhousie, which they have already rented. They come to Niagara most weekends, moving in a bit at a time, visiting NOTL and enjoying getting to know the area, and hoping to eventually buy a house in town to raise their family.

Lepp says any resident of NOTL who is currently without a family doctor should visit Niagaraonther th.ca, click the NOTL tab, and print out a patient profile sheet.

The clinic hours for patients of the family health team, she adds, have been returned to pre-COVID: Monday and Wednesday at the Virgil Clinic (1882 Niagara Stone Road) from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. and Tuesday and Thursday at the NOTL Clinic (101 Garrison Village Road) also from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

The clinic will alternate between the two sites for Saturday clinics, from 8:25 a.m. to 12 p.m., beginning with the Sept. 2 clinic that was held in Virgil.
Businesses seeing U.S. visitors returning

Kris Dube
The Local
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Business owners in Niagara-on-the-Lake’s Old Town are noticing similarities between this tourist season to pre-pandemic times.

And one of those indicators is the number of Americans spending time in the historic neighbourhood.

“We’ve seen far more U.S. customers lately,” said Kevin Neufeld, owner of Beaut-Chapeau, a hat store on Queen Street that has been in operation since 1997.

But it’s not easy to say whether business is back on track entirely for local merchants.

“It’s hard to compare because so many things have changed,” said Neufeld, who owns the store with his wife, Jana.

Inflation has caused everything to become more expensive, and business owners struggle to find a balance between adjusting to rising costs on their end, while keeping prices as reasonable as possible for customers looking for some new headwear, he explained.

“At the end of the day, we all see it everywhere we go,” said Neufeld, adding that Beaut-Chapeau also saw a “window of opportunity” a couple of years ago when a neighbouring unit on Queen Street became vacant.

They bought ‘The Hatter, a hat business with a history on Avonair Road in Toronto that had closed, and moved its operations to their new space, which doubled in size, and allowed more traffic through their doors.

When warm weather started to arrive, Neufeld said some businesses in the Old Town were finding it difficult to keep a full staff.

“When the spring of this year, everyone was experiencing unprecedented staffing shortages,” said Neufeld.

But this appears to not be as much of an issue as it was a few months ago.

“Hes familiar with the ebb and flow of Mother Nature and pointed to a few rainy weekends in the early summer slamming crucial business days,” said Neufeld.

“When you lose a weekend, you lose a weekend in Niagara-on-the-Lake, that’s money you don’t make back,” he said.

Another impact of the pandemic that seems to be part of the past are shipping and procurement problems that businesses had to deal with.

“This was the first summer in a couple of years where we’ve had on-time deliveries,” he told The Local.

He says that commerce seems to be “slowly getting back to normal, but having grown up on a farm, he’s aware of how much weather can make or break a bottom line.

Neufeld also said September and October are “very busy” months on Queen Street, and that the tourist season doesn’t necessarily end after Labour Day.

Kim Hughes-Gauld owns Sunset Grill, also on Queen Street. “She’s been meeting visitors from south of the border the way she used to a few years ago and sees plenty of U.S. license plates on vehicles in the neighbourhood.”

“One of the biggest things is seeing the American tourists back,” she told The Local.

“It’s the first summer where it’s been nice to see it back to normal.”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, restaurants were faced with several obstacles, such as only being allowed to serve takeout for periods of time, or being required to separate customers by plastic glass when it was okay to dine inside.

As those restrictions came to an end, some normalcy returned.

“Fear from the pandemic and all that stuff — it seems to be gone now,” she said.

Hughes-Gauld said staffing shortages were never an issue at her restaurant. Asked about inflation and whether people are spending less when they go to eat — or are maybe doing so less often — she said people are definitely “watching their money more carefully”.

The Local HOME Of The WEEK
32 THE PROMENADE

Traditional brick 1.5 storey home conveniently located in established neighbourhood. This well-planned home features main-floor living with bright principal rooms, 4 piece bath, laundry and an advantageous main-floor bedroom with two additional bedrooms and 5 piece bath on the second level. Features include living room brick gas fireplace, generously sized windows, French doors to back deck, new flooring in main principal rooms and neutral decor. Exterior offers charming front porch, landscaped gardens, mature trees, fenced lot, ample driveway parking and attached single garage. This prime location offers all the best amenities including being close to Wineries and just a short walk from the Niagara on the Lake Community Center & Gym, Public Library and Historic Queen Street.

NOTL Businesses contact: Joy at 416-817-0920
or email: joy@notlocal.com
Businesses outside NOTL contact: Julia at 905-934-1040
or email: julia@notlocal.com
This year, if we purchased a T-shirt for the Terry Fox Run, we could read some of the messages others had written to him during his Marathon of Hope. We can even write our own message and drop it in a box at Simcoe Park the day of the run. Everyone who takes part in a Terry Fox Run has a story. Everyone is running for someone, often ten years after their diagnosis. Survivors run in their red T-shirts, to show cancer can be beaten. The family members of John van der Zalm have a heart-wrenching story, as do all those who loved Mike Viens, two men honoured by the run for their courage in fighting the disease, and for participating in the run themselves when they were being beaten down by cancer, but wanted to raise money to help others. Every one of you reading this has a story, whether you participate in the run, make a donation, or just read the articles in this week’s paper about others who do, and think about why. If Terry doesn’t inspire us, he should, not necessarily to show up at Sun- ceo Park on the day of the run, but to think about challenges in our lives, and that he will likely use during his comedy show — he may be the funniest man in town, but he winds up his annual fund- raiser, he becomes serious as he talks about Terry. He speaks of him as an inspiration, as a motivator, and as a reason to participate in the run, to raise money to make life better for all those who may have to get out of bed in the morning knowing they are waiting to hear about surgery they have been waiting months for in our badly messed-up health system. Or they may be facing another debilitating cancer treatment, or supporting a loved one during whatever they have in front of them. All the while trying to stay positive, because as Pillitteri would say, if Ter- ry could do it when he faced that highway every morning knowing what was ahead, we can do it. And we can, for all those with their stories to tell, so they know we care, that we want to help. “I loved it,” said Ter- ry about his daily mara-thon in the quote Pillit- teri chose for this year. “I enjoyed myself so much, and that was what other people couldn’t realize. They thought I was going through a nightmare run- ning all day long.” “I love this,” explains Pillitteri, “because it shows me that perspective is ev- erything. If you believe in something, if you believe in anything, then working to-wards making it happen can frame whatever suffering it’s taking you to get through it to be a positive thing.” My message to Terry for the T-shirt box: If you choose his road, his kind of positive thinking, we will do a much better job of helping those who need us.

Penny Coles
The Local

As summer ends and kids start getting their school supplies ready, par- ents across the country have their own reasons for singing the back-to-school blues this year. The inflation crisis caused by Prime Minis- ter Justin Trudeau and his Liberal government has affected every area of life — including yearly back-to-school shopping for es- sentials. Stationery, which in- cludes such items as pens and paper, is up 49 per cent. Reading material is up 32 per cent. Food infla- tion is making it more ex- pensive to fill a lunchbox. Staples like bread, crack- ers and milk are all more expensive than they were last year. Across the country, prices are up, and parents are feeling the pressure. Some are cancelling their kids’ extracurriculars to make ends meet. Oth- ers are going into debt to make sure their children have the school supplies they need. Char- ities that help families se- cure school supplies are seeing demand skyrocket and their resources dry up.

After eight years of Justin Trudeau, everything is broken — even back-to-school shopping. Liberal policies have fuelled inflation, increas- ing the cost of the goods we buy and the interest we pay. Life costs more for all Canadians, especially those who can afford it the least. This isn’t the way it’s supposed to be. This was not Canada eight years ago. That’s why common- sense Conservatives and our leader, Pierre Poil- ivre, are fighting to bring home lower prices for Canadians. We will cap costs and stop wasteful government spending to bring down inflation. We will cancel Trudeau’s tax increases so that parents can afford to buy food and give their kids the tools they need to grow and learn.

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

Mission: Impossible – Dead Reckoning Part One

This epic film is impossibly, impossibly daring; im- possible not to love the entire fantasy. It is impossibly, impossibly beautiful. It is impossibly not to be swept up by this series of impos- sible feats of daring. It is impossibly not to be swept up by this series of impos- sible feats of daring. It is impossibly not to love the entire fantasy. It is impossibly, impossibly beautiful. It is impossibly not to be swept up by this series of impos- sible feats of daring. It is impossibly not to be swept up by this series of impos- sible feats of daring.

Dead Reckoning Part One: A man goes to the movies

Donald Combe, who began sharing his reviews pre-pandemic, is a retired English teacher who loves to go to the movies. He switched to reviews of TV movies and when theatres closed during COVID. He made his first trip back this week.

Where’s Ben?

Eden student Ben Foster continues to discover new locations in NOTL, wondering how familiar others may be with them. If you know where this photo was taken, email penny@notllocal.com. Yes, last week Ben was at a traffic circle, but as Debra Jacobs told us, the new roundabout at York Road and Glenelge, which is now open.

Local LETTERS

Federal inflation driving up back-to-school costs

As summer ends and kids start getting their school supplies ready, par- ents across the country have their own reasons for singing the back-to-school blues this year. The inflation crisis caused by Prime Minis- ter Justin Trudeau and his Liberal government has affected every area of life — including yearly back-to-school shopping for es- sentials. Stationery, which in- cludes such items as pens and paper, is up 49 per cent. Reading material is up 32 per cent. Food infla- tion is making it more ex- pensive to fill a lunchbox. Staples like bread, crack- ers and milk are all more expensive than they were last year. Across the country, prices are up, and parents are feeling the pressure. Some are cancelling their kids’ extracurriculars to make ends meet. Oth- ers are going into debt to make sure their children have the school supplies they need. Char- ities that help families se- cure school supplies are seeing demand skyrocket and their resources dry up.

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A democracy is based on laws and rules being applied equally and equally to all people. Without favour.

In a municipality, the rules for land use are found in the Official Plan and its bylaws. When people look at buying a house or land, they inform themselves by verifying the Official Plan and respective bylaw for the property and surrounding neighbourhood. When developers evaluate the purchase of land they do the same thing. The rules of the game must be transparent.

To evaluate the proposal for the three-storey apartment (condominium) building at 727/773 King Street, the process should be straightforward. Does the proposal meet the existing Official Plan and bylaws or not?

If this proposal is to be considered then the criteria should include:

1. Why significant expenditures to the Official Plan and bylaws are so compelling and unique to warrant such a major change (without favour).

2. If developers need to start around the fallen tree, including wildlife and new trees. It seems the use of the DND lands has been kicked around for nearly a decade with no viable solution. If the land is dangerous for humans, then developers must be interested in starting on their own. We seem obsessed with putting vacant land to use. Is there any better use than allowing the land to become an oxygen-generating, carbon-digesting, natural engine near the centre of town, and start addressing low incomes in the community toward reforestation?

3. This proposal fails all three.

One example: The building will be 16 feet and 25 feet respectively from single-detached homes on Meritage Lane. The Official Plan requires the evaluation of impacts of a new building on the general public both at Niagara Shores Park and the Rifle Range. It becomes a matter of liability to Parks Canada, having to insure the property and building a breakwater along the shore (at a cost of millions of dollars) and keep them from eroding.

The second question is why was the $10 million reserve set aside by the Niagara Region for the remeasurement of Niagara Co-operative Housing Society Ltd. to the general public both at Niagara Shores Park and the Rifle Range. It becomes a matter of liability to Parks Canada, having to insure the property and building a breakwater along the shore (at a cost of millions of dollars) and keep them from eroding.

Over the years Parks Canada has stonewalled any attempt to work with them in conjunction with the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, the Niagara Region and the NPCA to make this property accessible to the public (while protecting the wildlife plants and species at risk, wetlands, creeks and the last of the Carolinian forest).

So again, it must be questioned: Why is it Parks Canadas property as “surplus government lands” and will sell it off to a developer to build a marina, possibly a hotel/condominium and accommodate a ferry service from Toronto. Let’s do away with the speculation that there is a right of way roadway from Shakespeare Avenue allowing vehicular traffic to access the DND lands to the Rifle Range. Let’s do away with the speculation that Parks Canada continues to change the plan/strategy for this property and really does not have an Official Plan.

And finally, let’s do away with the speculation that the Battle of Fort George took place where the current monument sits on Queen Street (near the golf course), where it primarily was fought between Two-Mile Creek and One Mile Creek on the DND lands. We have so much to be thankful for concerning the Niagara-on-the-Lake and the surrounding Niagara Region. Wouldn’t it just be the cat’s meow for a different people, there are no rules.
Mike Balsom
The Local

With local air search and rescue volunteers getting set for an open house, The Local was invited on a simulated rescue flight with pilot Paul Eyles, volunteer Randy Klassen, and Klassen’s nephew and 809 Newark Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron member Elias Dau.

Upon arrival at the Niagara District Airport, Klassen, Eyles and fellow pilot Gord Tessier, members of the Civil Air Search and Rescue Association (CASARA) Niagara, were abuzz with excitement about the landing of a Royal Canadian Air Force Hercules C-130J aircraft on the runway. Warrant officer Tyler Ashbee invites the group onto the 75 million pound, including Dau, in the area on an active search for a person in Lake Erie, for a tour.

Following that, the group reconvenes at a small building across from the terminal, where CASARA, or CARES Niagara as it is commonly known, is based. The not-for-profit organization provides volunteer air and ground search and rescue operations throughout Southwestern Ontario and beyond, into Ontario and Quebec as required. The Niagara unit, incorporated in 1977, primarily supports rescue services throughout Niagara and rescue operations, with standards set by Canada’s aviation safety and assists with the country’s search and rescue program.

Local volunteers are trained to a high level of competency for both airborne and ground based search and rescue operations, with standards set by Canada’s military. They are ready and available to respond to calls for help 24 hours a day seven days a week, and play a vital role in Canada’s search and rescue program.

“We have three pilots currently,” Klassen tells The Local. “We get some funding to cover expenses for training. We get a budget for that and have to keep within it. When we get called out on an actual mission, the funding comes through CASARA via the Department of Defence.”

Klassen guides The Local through a large room where training of the almost 60 volunteers takes place regularly. He picks up an iPad and shows an image from an app called Foreflight.

“That’s probably the greatest advancement in aviation safety since the jet engine,” explains Tessier, pointing out the expanding squares on the screen. “That’s our meat and potatoes. They give the coordinates to us in that format and we just go out and find it.”

Other recent advances used by the team include the use of drones (remotely piloted aircraft systems), Go Pro cameras whose high-resolution gestated images are converted into a program called Loc8, and remote satellite communication using the InReach system.

Klassen says CASARA Niagara has been called out six times on searches since the start of the year, a much slower pace than the 16 missions the organization participated in last year.

“Four were conducted by aircraft, two were conducted by drones,” explains Klassen about this year’s action. “We had one in March that was a ‘major’ which lasted several days, and involved crews from across Ontario, and one from Manitoba. It was based out of Thunder Bay, involving a missing aircraft flying food supplies to a northern community.”

Klassen adds that three of the six searches were “humanitarian,” meaning people were involved — one boater and two swimmers, while two were for Emergency Locator Transmitters, or ELTs.

The day’s flight was to be a simulation of a search for one of those ELTs. These are attached to airplanes and broadcast distinctive signals on designated frequencies. Depending on the application, ELTs may be automatically activated by impact or manually activated.

“Air traffic control picks up the signal and relays it to JRCC (Joint Rescue Coordination Centre, in Trenton, Ontario),” Klassen says. “They call us and tell us to go and check it out.”

Klassen explains that a transmitter with a training signal had been placed on a farmer’s field in the Beamsville area earlier that morning. Eyles was to take us up to demonstrate what the volunteers go through on a typical search.

“After everyone is strapped into the cockpit, Eyles goes through a detailed checklist, ensuring all functions on the four-seat Cessna twin engine aircraft are working.

“[For] you can see,” Klassen says, “we can’t really respond to emergencies at the drop of a hat. There’s so much that has to be done to make sure we remain safe while doing an aerial search.”

Klassen hands this role in Canada’s search and rescue to his volunteer’s best friend. “I’ve been at this for many years,” Klassen laughs, “and I still get sick up there from time to time.”

Shortly after lifting off, veteran pilot Eyles guides the plane to 2,000 feet over Port Dalhousie, and points out that he has begun to hear the ELT signal. Klassen draws attention to a dial on the instrument panel,lockpicked at a frequency of 121.775.

“That’s our training signal,” explains Klassen, as Eyles guides the Cessna toward the ELT, careful to maintain the position of the arrow at the centre of the gauge.

Klassen begins looking out the side window in an effort to spot a marker that had been dropped on the field. He clearly has a love for aviation and sees a bit of a connection between search and rescue operations and his former career.

“There’s a lot of teamwork involved in it, too,” he adds. “We are all volunteers, we don’t get reimbursed for what we do. When there’s a callout, we incur some personal expenses, too.”

CASARA Niagara’s open house will include a classroom session on the basics of electronic homing (used to find people in distress) and how to use various radio receivers and equipment. That will be followed by a basic homing exercise in the yard. Ground tours of aircraft used in their work will be conducted — no need to pack a paper bag — and there will be demonstrations on equipment and technology used in search and rescue.

The open house runs Saturday, Sept. 16 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Niagara District Airport in the CASARA Niagara building.

Pilot Paul Eyles going over his preflight safety checklist.
The Chautauqua community is stronger than ever, says Weston Miller, mostly thanks to the influx of young families, who turned out to enjoy the day and all the festivities. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

Lee Chan and Wayne McIsaac manned the barbecue, serving up hot dogs to the participants. Miller gave much credit to residents Derek and Woody Cadman, who took the time to gather the supplies, set up, and run the event. Many who attended stuck around for the entire two-hour period and beyond, talking about neighbourhood news and other topics while joining in on some picnic games.

“I truly believe that the Chautauqua community is more unified and stronger than ever,” stated Miller, “and that is thanks to both the new residents and established families in the neighbourhood.”

Robin Cordozo and Jeff Richardson enjoy corn and the conversation at the annual corn roast.

Ruby Keir and her daughter Ash, visiting from California, chat with Troy Miller.
Local author takes children on a magical journey

Mike Balsom
The Local

Former St. Davids resident Kaley Mills’ upcoming debut children’s book is capturing attention from across the globe.

Bianca the Brave follows Bianca Montoro, a character made famous by author Katie Cross in a series of 60 young adult books, as she fights off flames threatening the forest in Letum Wood, part of Cross’ fantasy world Alkarra.

The two mothers immediately hit it off when Mills travelled to Cross’ Montana home.

“I only knew her by video, so when we met in person it was like she became three-dimensional,” laughs Mills. “That just became so enhanced.”

The Kickstarter success means that Mills and Cross will work together in the future.

“I’m always open to those ideas, because it’s exciting to see Alkarra moving beyond me,” says Cross. “But I was really floored by Kaley’s manuscript. I remember the feeling in my chest. She gets it. She sees Alkarra and Bianca and the vision I have for my company. I saw so much potential for the book and future ones to bring goodness back into the world through escapism and magic.”

The pair decided to launch Bianca the Brave via a Kickstarter campaign, which opened on Aug. 22 with the goal of raising $13,584 (US $10,000). They smashed that goal in 12 hours, and at press time 243 backers had pledged $21,355 (US $15,600).

“Katie has such a big following,” says Mills. “We worked really hard to get the word out about the campaign. We estimated that we would maybe hit 30 per cent on day one. She writes young adult fantasy books, so we had no idea how a kids book would be received. By the end of that day I felt so humbled, speechless and honoured that people would believe in it.”

On Saturday, Mills had a table set up to promote the crowdfunding effort at Penner’s Building Centre.

“The second book is already written,” Mills says. “It’s about Merrick, a little long-haired boy. As we go forward, we want to show a host of minority populations. I’ve seen in my teaching career that little boys don’t like to read. If they can see themselves in a book, then they can be successful in reading.”

Her third Alkarra book will feature Sanna, a little girl who has vision impairment.

“The Bianca the Brave Kickstarter campaign wraps up this Sunday, Sept. 10. Mills promises that once the books are ready for sale, she’ll be back at Penner Home Hardware with the physical copies.

To pre-order a copy of Bianca the Brave, contact Mills at kaleymills@gmail.com.
White Sangria

Ingredients:
• 1 1/4 cups white wine
• 3/4 cup orange juice
• 1/2 cup pineapple juice
• 2 Tbsp OLiV Peach White Balsamic
• Fresh or frozen fruit (peaches, cranberries, strawberries, oranges, etc.)
• 1/4 cup Ginger Ale, Sprite, 7 UP or soda water

Directions: Pour wine, orange juice and pineapple juice into a jug. Add Peach Balsamic. Stir to mix well. Add fruit and mix again. Add ice to 2 large wine glasses. Add some fruit to each glass. Divide sangria between 2 glasses. Top with soda. Add fruit to rim of glass for garnish. Serves 2. ENJOY!

Joe Pillitteri and Joan King model this year’s T-shirts
Joe Pillitteri and Joan King show off this year’s Terry Fox T-shirts, called Dear Terry, representing the many hand-written letters he received during his run. There will be shirts available in Simcoe Park Sept. 17, the day of the run. (Penny Coles)
Terry Fox run to honour firefighter Mike Vriens

NOLT volunteer died of occupational cancer

Penny Coles
The Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake — lost a dedicated, beloved and high-lying volunteer firefighter in 2019 to a type of cancer that is listed on the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board as an occupational disease for fire- fighters. Mike Vriens had been committed to being a firefighter for more than 30 years, reaching the rank of captain with Station 1, the Old Town department.

For almost seven years, he battled glioblastoma multiforme, a cancer that affects the brain.

This year was born and raised in Niagara-on-the-Lake, says his sister Corinne Unruh, who was considered one of the most popular people in town, both as a firefighter and a life-long member of the community.

He was a student at St. Vincent de Paul School in the Old Town, St. Michael in Virgil and then the Hug District Secondary School.

“Love this town, and worked not only to support it but to help others. Once you’re grown up here, it’s so in your blood,” says Vriens was a member of the town staff for 35 years in the roads department, and between his outdoor work, which included planting trees, and as a volunteer firefighter, he knew a lot of people, and a lot of friends, says Unruh.

He also belonged to one of the local morning coffee groups that met at the community centre.

Once he couldn’t drive, “I would get him there, or somebody from the group would pick him up,” she says.

Some of the group were firefighters, and those meetings with friends meant a lot to him, she said.

He continues to be mourned by many who knew him.

Vriens was the last firefighter to work at the 2017, a group of people who had gathered at his gravesite to tell stories and remember him, she says. Some may be friends from work, others fire-fighters or a friend or neighbour, and it’s not always the same people. Some years the group is larger than others, depending on who is able to get to the gravesite, she said.

When she visits the gravesite, she often sees a little memorial, behind it. She was always there to help if someone needed something.

“Have so many friends, knew so many people, and he was always there to help if someone needed something.”

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Proud to support the Niagara-on-the-Lake Terry Fox Run

Niagara on the Lake Realty
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Thank you for supporting the Terry Fox Run

Tony Baldinelli MP
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Proud to support the Terry Fox Foundation
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REGISTRATION BEGINS AT 9 A.M.
RUN BEGINS AT 10 A.M.
• Terry Fox T-shirts will be for sale in the park
• Fruit from Walker’s Farm Market and Quiet Acres

To register
TERRYFOX.ORG
or call Joan King
905-262-5898
Sharon Burns
The Local

NOTL Cats is a 100 per cent volunteer-driven non-profit rescue group of people who help to support spay and neuter, vaccination, microchip and emergency veterinary care for cats and kittens. But they need help to finance all they accomplish.

To do that, they are holding a spring and yard sale Saturday, Sept. 16, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

“Typically, we do not do a fundraiser this late in the summer,” said volunteer Ruby Rice.

“We usually concentrate on spring and December, but due to the overwhelming fact that we are at our maximum capacity between the shelter itself, and our foster homes, we really need another fundraiser!”

NOTL Cats has 29 litters and four adult females in care, and one cat is expected to give birth at any time.

There are four ways to support NOTL Cats adoption, fostering, volunteering and donations, she explains.

Vinyl Pet Valu has committed to partnering with the rescue organization to find forever homes for kittens and cats. Lately, volunteers have been bringing in less to the store on rotating Saturdays and Sundays for a meet and greet with customers.

“Through some of that community initiative we have added some very successful adoptions,” said Rice. In fact, a lovely couple from NOTL just adopted Peter and Penelope last night. It’s really nice, from a foster point of view, to see that the kittens we foster are staying in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Concurrently, “When we were at Pet Valu on Sunday with some of the kittens, this gentleman came in and thought, ‘Oh, he looks really familiar!’” said Rice.

“Well, he adopted one of our fosters last year, and he said, ‘Look, here’s Juno and he’s thriving, and he’s such a good boy.’ This is what makes fostering very rewarding.”

Rice explained that post-COVID still complicates the adoption process, because of cat and kitten abandonment. “We’re always looking for fosterers who don’t want the lifetime commitment of owning a pet, but may just want companionship, or they have the space in their home.”

To be eligible to foster, a volunteer from NOTL Cats completes a quick home inspection to ensure there is adequate space for the cat, and that it is a safe home. “NOTL Cats provides the foster with all the supplies they need, from a litter box and toys, to a cat climber and food. A volunteer will drive to the vet if there’s a medical issue, or if it’s time for it to be spayed, neutered, vaccinated, ets., unless as a foster you’re also willing to do that.”

“We’re just looking for caring, compassionate people who have an open heart and open mind and an open home to foster, and we’re going to have a couple of tables just dedicated to seasonal items,” said Rice.

She asks that early birds wait until 9 a.m. to arrive, as they will be “pleasing the needs of the cats and kittens prior to starting.”

Rice reminds people to spay and neuter their animals, not only to reduce the colony of abandoned cats that pop up late and add to the number of homeless cats, which have become a worldwide pandemic post-COVID but also to reduce the risk of pets contracting feline distemper.

Rice is also an advocate for microchipping cats. “I see all the time on Lost Pets Niagara, the Humane Society Facebook page, that people are missing their animals. Microchipping is so valuable because it helps to reunite the fur babies with their owners.”

Rice advised, “Whether it’s a cat or a dog, spay, neuter, microchip, and take action.”

Cats and kittens available for adoption can be viewed on the NOTL Cats website (notlcats.org) or text nonprofits directly through the Facebook search bar.

On Saturday September 23, 2023, teams are available to pick up your donations any time 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

If you wish to donate food in support of our Food Bank, please call 905-468-7498 for more information.

On the NOTL Rotary website (notlrotary.ca) or Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/notlrotary) you can make your donation to benefit the families in our community.

G pessimistic, “The five-kilometre walk or ride, 25 kilometres or 25 kilometre bike ride, takes place Sept. 23 at 9 a.m., departing from the site of the former Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital at 176 Wellington Street.

Porter will be giving the opening speech and Buholtz will officially start the race. “Let’s get out there, include everyone, reach out, and make our community as caring and open and inclusive a community as we all can, because we are capable of that,” said Porter.

To join a team ride, go to thethenetherlands.ca, click on the option “Hummel Family Pedal Puffer Challenge” and register as a business team or an individual rider.

Donate securely through the same portal. A tax receipt will be provided for every donation at the time of donation.

Alternatively, Buholtz said her team is more than happy to come and pick up a donation cheque. Also, if local businesses would like to participate in this fundraiser, email notlpc@bell-net.ca. All donations must be in by Sept. 15 to be included on the T-shirts.

“No one in this town should be alone when navigating a life-changing illness, at the beginning or near the end,” said Buholtz “Whether they come in and out of our service, or we completely discharge them because they no longer require our service, we are there to support them when needed.”
Ziraldo, Pratt take a walk down memory lane

Inniskillin, VQA history documented

Mike Balsom
The Local

The 47 boxes of documents, photographs, slides, awards, newspaper clippings and more donated by Donald Ziraldo to the Brock University Archives represent the history of the most successful wine industry in Niagara.

Inniskillin Wines co-founder Debi Pratt joined Ziraldo to meet with Archivist David Sharron, who had been preparing a book, doing a television interview, every article he wanted to forget how you got there. Anybody writing a history should feel a sense of pride and amazement.

“Have to make it that much better to get people’s attention. The simplest way to do that was to get the icewine into people’s mouths. ‘Wow’ was usually the reaction that we got.”

NOTE: Digital images of some of the Ziraldo and Inniskillin Archive can be found online at exhibits.library.brocku.ca/s/inniskillin/page/introduction.

Debi Pratt and Donald Ziraldo look over a collection of photographs of celebrity visits to the winery during a recent visit to the Brock University Archives. (Photos by Mike Balsom)
A Chat with Lord Mayor Zalepa

Libraries: Building community and fostering opportunities

Adriana Vizzari
NOTL Public Library board member

Recently, I sat down and interviewed Niagara-on-the-Lake Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa. We discussed the vital role of libraries in our community and how they have shaped young minds and a lifelong passion for reading.

Q: What was the first book you remember reading, and how did it impact you?
Lord Mayor Zalepa: My first serious book was Lord of the Rings when I was in Grade 7 or 8. While I had read other books before that, this epic tale left a lasting impression. The rich characters and intricate plot captivated me.

Q: What are you reading right now? Any recommendations for our readers?
Lord Mayor Zalepa: Currently, I’m on my fifth re-read of Patrick O’Brian’s Master and Commander series, a historical fiction set during the Napoleonic Wars. The novels delve into the lives of British naval officers, particularly Captain Jack Aubrey and his friend, Doctor Stephen Maturin. The series offers a gripping blend of history, adventure and deep character development.

Additionally, I recently finished The Necessary War by Tim Cook, which explores Canada’s involvement in the Great Wars. Another non-fiction work I enjoyed was In the Garden of Beasts, by Erik Larson, a historical account that fascinated me with its depth.

Q: What makes you love or recommend a book?
Lord Mayor Zalepa: The connection I feel with a story and its characters is what drives me to love and recommend a book. When a book leaves a profound impact on me, whether by teaching me something new or eliciting strong emotions.

Q: What is your favourite book of all time, favourite author, or genre?
Lord Mayor Zalepa: Pat-rick O’Brien’s Master and Commander series stands as one of my all-time favourites. The characters and their development, themes of leadership, bravery and strength, create a captivating narrative that keeps me returning to the series time and again.

Q: Do you have a favourite quote from a book? Yes, I have an affinity for quotes from non-fiction works, especially from authors like Winston Churchill.

Q: Did anyone read to you as a child? Your mother read to me as a child, and I credit her for instilling the love of reading in me. We always had books in our house.

Q: Do you belong to a book club? Yes, I belong to a book club.

Q: Did you belong to the library as a child? Yes, I was a member of both the NOTL and St. Catharines libraries as a child and reading played a significant role in my early years.

Q: Do you have a favourite childhood library memory? My favourite childhood library memory centres around my school’s library, where I first encountered a computer lab in Grade 2. This exposure to technology sparked my interest and opened up new opportunities for learning.

Throughout the interview, the lord mayor’s passion for books and libraries shines brightly. He understands the crucial role libraries play in fostering connections, nurturing interests, and providing equal opportunities to all. As we delve into the world of literature through the eyes of Lord Mayor Zalepa, we are reminded of the transformative power of libraries in shaping young minds and inspiring a lifelong love for reading.

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3 tips to get active in your golden years

Over 50? Then you're at risk of catching the shingles virus

(NC) We all experience pain from time to time, whether it's from a stubbed toe or a mild burn on the hand. Typically, such pain goes away fairly quickly. However, when confronted with certain health conditions, escaping pain can be difficult.

Shingles is an infection that occurs when the virus that causes chickenpox reactivates in your body, and it's most likely to happen in those of us who are immune compromised by a health condition or treatment. This is because you're more vulnerable to it when your immune system gets weaker.

The first symptom is usually pain, tingling or burning that occurs on one side of the body, followed by a rash and blisters. The pain can be severe enough to interfere with work and other everyday activities.

While most cases of shingles last about two to four weeks, some people can experience chronic pain long after the rash has healed.

While there is no cure for shingles, getting the shingles vaccine, which is recommended for adults over the age of 50 by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, can greatly reduce your risk of developing this disease and suffering from the pain related to it.

We make moving easy!

Find more information to make an informed decision about getting a dog at inspection.gc.ca/dog-decision.

Celebrate Seniors Golden Years Guide

3 tips to get active in your golden years

(NC) Staying active as you grow older is one of the best ways to ward off age-related ailments such as disease, muscle and joint pain and feelings of isolation, depression or anxiety.

Experts have long known about the connection between activity and longevity, and with 2021 census data revealing one in five Canadians is 65 or older, there are a lot of us who could benefit from putting our best foot forward. Your family, and our healthcare system, will thank you.

Here are some tips to help you stay active:

Take advantage of everyday opportunities

Listen to your body and find ways to incorporate activity into your routine. You can try taking the stairs more often instead of the elevator, carrying your groceries further to your car or looking for group fitness classes in your community. Many municipalities and community centres offer free or discounted classes for seniors.

Go for cardio and strength

Once you’re up for it, head to the gym to take part in at least 2.5 hours of moderate to vigorous aerobic activity each week. Try using a treadmill, stationary bike, swimming or playing sports. Add muscle and bone strengthening activities at least twice a week using appropriate resistance such as light weights or bands.

Get out with a buddy

Every step counts so it’s a sound idea to walk whenever and wherever you can. One of the best ways to stick to a walking routine is to go with someone else. Many people also do best with a dog by their side. Dogs of all shapes and sizes need daily exercise to keep them mentally and physically healthy too, so your very own pooch will get you out pounding the pavement regularly.

If you’re thinking of buying or adopting a dog – especially one from abroad – take the time to properly research where you might get the dog from. Ask questions about the dog’s history and health status, what veterinary care they’ve had and what paperwork and health records are provided. Before bringing a dog into Canada from another country, familiarize yourself with the disease risks of that region and ensure you meet the specific import requirements to bring it into Canada.

There’s no right way to stay active as you age, but there are plenty of ideas out there. For some, a furry friend might just be all the motivation you need.

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Once you’re up for it, head to the gym to take part in at least 2.5 hours of moderate to vigorous aerobic activity each week. Try using a treadmill, stationary bike, swimming or playing sports. Add muscle and bone strengthening activities at least twice a week using appropriate resistance such as light weights or bands.

Get out with a buddy

Every step counts so it’s a sound idea to walk whenever and wherever you can. One of the best ways to stick to a walking routine is to go with someone else. Many people also do best with a dog by their side. Dogs of all shapes and sizes need daily exercise to keep them mentally and physically healthy too, so your very own pooch will get you out pounding the pavement regularly.

If you’re thinking of buying or adopting a dog – especially one from abroad – take the time to properly research where you might get the dog from. Ask questions about the dog’s history and health status, what veterinary care they’ve had and what paperwork and health records are provided. Before bringing a dog into Canada from another country, familiarize yourself with the disease risks of that region and ensure you meet the specific import requirements to bring it into Canada.

There’s no right way to stay active as you age, but there are plenty of ideas out there. For some, a furry friend might just be all the motivation you need.

We all experience pain from time to time, whether it's from a stubbed toe or a mild burn on the hand. Typically, such pain goes away fairly quickly. However, when confronted with certain health conditions, escaping pain can be difficult.

While most cases of shingles last about two to four weeks, some people can experience chronic pain long after the rash has healed.

While there is no cure for shingles, getting the shingles vaccine, which is recommended for adults over the age of 50 by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, can greatly reduce your risk of developing this disease and suffering from the pain related to it.
The proven health benefits of artmaking for seniors are well-documented. From increased cognitive & memory functions to improved moods, creative activities engage both the mind and body and in turn promote the well-being of art creators.

A program developed by the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre introduces and encourages older adults to try their hand in art activities. THRIVE - Introduction to Creativity for Seniors offers no charge admission for participants aged 50 and older to these beginner-level courses.

"I am pleased to announce that through funding in-part from the Government of Canada’s New Horizons for Seniors Program, we are able to introduce seniors to new artistic mediums to spark creativity, learn new skills, create and share memories and form new friendships," says Rima Boles, Art Centre Director. "It is our hope that the sessions encourage older adults to continue with their creative journey after participating in a preparatory course, leading to long-term positive impact from practicing art," she adds.

The THRIVE program introduces older adults to a variety of mediums including drawing, pottery, fused glass, photography, digital arts and collage. More information about the program is found at the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre website, niagarapumphouse.ca/programs.

Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre is also inviting adults 50 and over as program volunteers. "We encourage seniors to lend a hand to instructors during the delivery of classes or workshops," Boles explains. "On the part of the volunteer, the program provides them the opportunity to socialize and meet new people from the community."

Those interested in volunteering are asked to contact Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre front desk at office@niagarapumphouse.ca or 905-468-5455.

Many of us love to spend time in the great outdoors. Sometimes unsteady balance, arthritic joints, a lung condition or other health or mobility differences are what’s making outdoor adventures uncomfortable. But there are still plenty of ways to enjoy an escape into nature.

Get the dirt
Try to research the lay of the land at any campsite, trail or protected park to see what you’re working with. Look online or contact the destination. Ask about the size and location of bathroom facilities. Find out if the terrain is paved or grassy; soft or hard; steep or flat. Are there places to pause for a rest?

Use support
There are plenty of tools that can help you choose a trail or campsite and prepare accordingly.

Get glamping
Short for glamorous camping, glamping is the ongoing trend of making camping more comfortable and luxurious. It doesn’t have to be fancy or expensive; it just takes out some of the more complicated or uncomfortable parts of the experience.

A raised sleeping platform or cot is a glamping go-to because it offers a more comfortable night’s rest than the hard ground. A bed off the ground also makes it easier to get up in the morning, independently or with assistance.

You can find more information and confirm a professional is licensed through the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario at coto.org/ot.
In April 2024, a captivating journey will delve into the realms of South Korea and Taiwan, two of the world’s most influential economies. Crafted to provide firsthand encounters with the present-day essence of these nations, the itinerary unveils the contemporary and thriving infrastructures intertwined with their rich and diverse historical chronicles.

Following the Second World War, both nations had to fight for their existence and many trials and tribulations enveloped and reshaped the Korean peninsula. Korea’s long and very stable dynastic rule was shattered as the country split into the communist North and the democratic South. Following the division, the South succeeded in reshaping itself, becoming one of the strongest economies in the world. But it is far more than bustling cities, for it has retained wonderful relics from its long dynastic history and the land is literally dotted with UNESCO World Heritage Sites. As we explore its length, we will enjoy its unique cuisine, warm hospitality and magnificent scenery.

South Korea’s not-to-be-missed highlights include the Jongmyo Shrine dating back to the 14th century; the spectacular Changdeokgung Palace, an exceptional example of Far Eastern palace architecture and unique design; Seoul’s traditional Bukchon Hanok Village, where hundreds of hanoks (traditional houses) are clustered together, showing visitors a 600-year-old urban environment as they stroll its many alley ways; Busan, with Korea’s second largest population, known for its beautiful beaches, temples, shopping, and seafood. From South Korea, a short flight brings us to the island state of Taiwan, home to the last vestiges of the nationalist government which once ruled all of China. Although still officially in a state of conflict, the island chose a different path using its resources and relatively tiny population to create its own economy. This tiny island (just 90 miles by 250 miles) offers so much. During our full-day city tour of Taipei, we’ll visit Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall, see the changing of the guards and a display of taichi movement. The National Palace Museum is a highlight, hosting a permanent collection of nearly 700,000 pieces of Chinese art and artifacts. We’ll take in the trendy Ximending District and stroll the Raohe Night Market. In Northeastern Taiwan, we explore Yilan, surrounded by both sea and mountains. Here, a visit to the National Center for Traditional Arts introduces the largest exhibition and performance site for traditional arts in Taiwan. Try your hand at indigo dyeing! At Taipei 101, the most iconic building in Taipei, we’ll travel to the 89th floor for a panoramic view of the city.

These are just a few of the highlights of our time in South Korea and Taiwan. If you are looking for something completely different in a travel adventure, this is it. Accommodations have been carefully selected to ensure our creature comforts and we have designed the journey to provide a leisurely pace full of fascinating experiences.

Book early to ensure your space on this wonderful new adventure! Reserve by November 30 and save $200 per person! Contact CRAIG TRAVEL at 1-800-387-8890, visit craig-travel.com, or email journeys@craigtravel.com. We look forward to hearing from you!
This is Anne — Older and Wiser — is a 50-minute play created, compiled and performed by Bannerman and her musician partner, Rusty McCarthy. Photos were taken in The Woodbourne ten in St. Davids, an 1839 historically designated eight-bedroom manor house which has been fully restored. (Lauren Garbutt)
Mike Balsom
The Local

The final Music Niagara concert of 2023 past Tuesday at NOTL’s St. Mary’s Anglican Church encapsulated the themes of celebration and reflection that underlined the non-profit’s 25th year.

Musically, it was a fitting cap to the series of 19 events held in Niagara-on-the-Lake by the lake this year. Tuesday’s program was varied, with young violinists showcasing their talents, music from Ukraine and Lithuania played by skilled musicians from those countries, and a Toronto music collective playing an eclectic mix of blues, reggae, Arabic and other sounds from around the world.

Tying it all together was comedian Mike Bullard, best known for his nine-year run on the CBC talk show on CTV and then Global television. Bullard entertained with his signature audience participation—a joke here and a joke there—back and forth with a selection of some of the 110 guests packing the pews, asking them which instruments they’re interested in. “I made it seem as though I had never seen them before. It was a fun way to get them involved.”

Since it broke out, the war in Ukraine has been a special topic of concern for Music Ni- agara co-founder and artistic director Atis Bankas, whose early life was spent living in Lithuania under Soviet rule. Bankas quickly mobilized last year to arrange two successful fundraisers, one in Toronto and one in Niagara, to sup- port the Ukrainian cause. He continued that focus this sea- son with programming that Lithuania featured and celebrated musi- cians from Ukraine.

Tuesday’s special guest, Lithuanian ambassador to Canada Darius Skusevicius, praised Bankas for being the first to hold such fundraising and awareness events.

“I am fascinated with his ambitions. He not only plays music together in one concer- t,” said Skusevicius, prior to present- ing the artistic director for his continued commitment to bringing quality music to NOTL.

“That was really encour- aging and nice,” Bankas said, tak- ing the praise in stride.

“I’m only already planning for next year, and we’re about 60 per cent of the season booked already! We have some beautiful mu- sic, some beautiful mu- sicians coming next year!”

Tuesday’s show began with young violin virtuosi Gloria Verhovskov, Romanian Nykor- owych and Sora Sato-Mound, billed by Bankas as “Three Ukrainians Violin Musi- cians.”

The young violinists from Ukraine, Austria and Poland

“With music from their country was capped with a big success. We had the Canadian pre- mier of a Polish composition, our Glory to Ukraine concert was a big success. We had the young musicians back. Every- thing was so well received.

When the show was over, Bankas looked back affectionately on the festival’s silver aniver- sary year.

“We had so many beautiful shows,” he told The Local. “We had a great pops series that was successful at the wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake. We had the Canadian pre- mier of a Polish composition, our Glory to Ukraine concert was a big success. We had the young musicians back. Every- thing was so well received. I was very pleased with the way the season went, way better than last season, definitely.

Bankas is working on ar- ranging a lineup for a Remem- brance Day event, something he’s committed to, and possibly a holiday-themed show in December. Though he says with the support of the fes- tival board he is close to finaliz- ing 2024’s slate, he’s not ready to reveal specific details yet.

“We will continue our col- laboration with Shaw Festival, and continue all of the tradi- tions we have started,” he said.

“I am sure we will bring back our Glory to Ukraine concert, because war takes no days off. We really look forward to pre- vious years’ concerts in the first season of the next 25 years in 2024.”

Alts Bankas, Aiste Bruzulaitė and Egidijus Alisauskas performing at St. Mark’s Church.

Goettler Foundation supports Ukrainian film academy

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Music Niagara season concludes with celebration, reflection

Atis Bankas, Aiste Bruzulaitė and Egidijus Alisauskas performing at St. Mark’s Church.
Softball season wraps up with championship games

Mike Balsom
The Local

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Minor Softball Association held four nights of playoff action at two diamonds in Virgil recently. The 11 to 14 Yankees. The Tigers seven to 10 age group. The 11 to 14 Pirates. The NOTL Minor Softball seven to 10 age group Pirates, with coaches pitching. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

The Coaches Pitch (ages seven to 10) and Squirt (ages 11 to 14) divisions concluded Thursday night with some exciting action. The Yankees took the Squirt title with a victory over the Blue Jays, while over at the other diamond, the third-place game went into extra innings before the Reds could claim their bronze medals by beating the Pirates.

Earlier in the evening another team of Pirates claimed the Coaches Pitch championship. Details on the winners of the Learn to Play (ages three to six) and Pee Wee Slo-Pitch (ages 15 to 18) were not available at press time.
Celebration of Life

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