Sometimes the simplest solutions are the best, as turned out to be the case with a boat rescue last week.

Last Wednesday evening, a couple aboard their sailboat were heading from Toronto to Smuggler's Cove Boat Club, planning to dock for a few days and spend some time in Niagara-on-the-Lake. It was a trip they'd made before, but before they could reach their destination, their engine lost power, and there was no wind to help them complete their journey. It didn't seem like a huge problem at the time, said John, who asked that his last name not be used. “It started off seeming to be an inconvenience we could deal with,” he said.

He and his wife, members of the Aquatic Park Sailing Club in Toronto's outer harbour, in Tommy Thompson Park, are long-time, experienced sailors. It had been a rough trip from Toronto, and they were exhausted, so they decided to anchor, have some dinner, and with a bit of a rest and a clear head, decide what to do. A couple of small boats had stopped by, with some conflicting advice, and weighing what they were told and the conditions at the time, they felt it was a safe decision, he said.

But that quickly changed. In no time a north wind went from zero to 20 miles an hour, and they found themselves being dragged toward shore, and then grounded amidst sand and rocks. “It was quite terrifying,” said John, as the situation became “a real problem, and we were overwhelmed, without the resources to deal with it.”

The good news, as they were pushed closer to shore, was that they felt their position close to shore was safer for them, but the devastating news was that their boat was at a greater risk, with nothing they could do to save it.

A small, manageable problem suddenly seemed insurmountable for the seasoned sailors, who decided to call the Coast Guard.

Both Canadian and American Coast Guards, the Niagara Regional Police and the St. Catharines and Niagara-on-the-Lake fire departments ended up being called to the rescue.

NOTL Fire Chief Nick Penny Coles

Continued on page 3

Continued on page 15

Penny Coles
The Local

St. Davids-Queenston welcomes new minister

Red Roof getting set to start up programs

Penny Coles
The Local

It feels like it's been a long time coming, says Steffanie Bjorgan, but she and the board of Red Roof Retreat are working on reopening safely, expecting to announce an October date soon.

Bjorgan, founder and executive director of Red Roof, says most of the staff have been volunteering during the closure of their facilities due to the pandemic, and are back in the office making sure they are ready to open smoothly when the time is right to do so safely.

It's been hard on staff, but more so on the families of special needs children and adults, especially those who have been unable to attend school, with no day programs or respite to provide relief from the 24-hour care required by their clients.

There has been some financial support even during a time when the traditional fundraisers could not be held, says Bjorgan. But limited capacities and other mandated protocols that will have an impact on program delivery, staffing ratios, as well as all the extra supplies necessary for a safe reopening, will put a strain on their new budget.

The decision has been made to downsize the number of programs and clients to begin with, allowing them to manage the risk better, and hopefully be able to stay open if there is another lockdown.

When programs resume in October, it will be on a limited basis, says Bjorgan, with full reopening depending on many factors that will be evaluated as they go along.

“Our delivery of services will look different, but it’s the best we can do,” Bjorgan says.

Bjorgan says the biggest change is that they will not be reopening their St. Catharines location. Instead, the board is delighted to be partnering with Cornerstone Community Church, which has offered to donate some space at their Hunter Road location, thereby bringing all programs home to NOTL.

“COVID made us feel like we wanted to come home here, didn’t seem like a huge problem at the time, said John, who asked that his last name not be used.

“It started off seeming to be an inconvenience we could deal with,” he said.

He and his wife, members of the Aquatic Park Sailing Club in Toronto’s outer harbour, in Tommy Thompson Park, are long-time, experienced sailors. It had been a rough trip from Toronto, and they were exhausted, so they decided to anchor, have some dinner, and with a bit of a rest and a clear head, decide what to do. A couple of small boats had stopped by, with some conflicting advice, and weighing what they were told and the conditions at the time, they felt it was a safe decision, he said.

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Fire department searches for bad smell on Queen Street

**Penny Coles**
The Local

Fire department crews were in Old Town Saturday investigating a bad odour that was reported from the ambulance dispatch at Wellington Street, to as far as 124 Queen Street, next to Hendriks valu-mart.

“We ended up with 12 to 15 people talking to us and telling us they were smelling an odour,” says Fire Chief Nick Ruller.

Enbridge Gas was called to determine if there was a gas leak, but couldn’t find any evidence of natural gas. sewer gas, “highly toxic and flammable,” was also considered a possibility, says Ruller, but monitoring tests to determine the origin of the odour couldn’t detect any evidence of that either.

Tests were conducted inside buildings in the area first, and then the focus was shifted to underground infrastructure as a possible source, but “we were never able to identify the source,” says Ruller.

“Sheldon (Randall, operations manager) brought in staff, and we worked backwards trying to identify the odour. There was a lot of activity on Queen Street, and they weren’t taking any chances, said Ruller, but they could find no sign of an explosive substance.

More than two hours after arriving on the street, in the middle of a busy long weekend, it was determined there was no risk from a dangerous substance, and Ruller says the fire department and Enbridge left the area.

They were unable to identify the odour, he says, but considered the possibility that someone had disposed of a substance by pouring it into the sewer system.

“It worked out well in the end. I guess we’ll have to wait and see if we have the same situation again. But whatever it was, it wasn’t something that posed a risk to the public.”

Family health team to move temporarily to former hospital

**Penny Coles**
The Local

Members of the Niagara North Family Health Team now in the medical clinic in Virgil have been granted a temporary home in the former hospital building. They will be moving out of the medical centre in January, when their lease will expire, until their new permanent home in The Village is ready for them.

Mary Keith, the director of the family health team, was at a council meeting recently to ask to rent about 1,380 square feet of space in the old hospital building on Wellington Street for a temporary home for team members. Those who will be moving from Virgil include nurses, nurse practitioners, social workers, dietitians, an occupational therapist, a pharmacist, and chiropodist, she says.

The doctors now in the Niagara Stone Road clinic are expected to sign a new lease and remain there — there isn’t room in The Village building for all the health team doctors.

Simpson’s Pharmacy will stay where it is in Virgil, although one of its part-time pharmacists will work with the family health team one day a week, explains Sean Simpson.

Keith says the Virgil lease is set to expire at the end of 2021. Councillors approved a motion for a month-by-month rent agreement basis, giving the team a home until April, when construction of the Village Medical Centre is expected to be finished.

It will also be home to the doctors now in the former hospital, and LifeLabs.

Some councillors voted for the recommendation, saying town staff had done the job they were asked to do, which was to find a safer route.

Coun. Clare Cameron agreed with the recommendation, saying the operation hasn’t had any safety issues, "and they deserve an answer from us," rather than a referral back to staff to look at other locations.

Coun. Erwin Wiesen also supported Town staff, saying they did what they were asked to do, and objected to a deferral to send them back to the business owners and ask them to rework their business model.

Lord Mayor Betty Dero voted against it — she was hoping the Pedal Pub owners could be persuaded to visit local wineries and stay off the main roads. But the business representatives told town staff their business model doesn’t allow for that — the distance to travel is too far.

When the recommendation was defeated, with no alternative offered, Dero said, “therein lies the dilemma. Now it’s a bit of a free-for-all, with no routes approved.”

Defeating the recommendation, explained CAO Marnie Cluckie, means the operators will be forced to leave their Mary Street location, head to King Street to Market Street, using the Court House parking lot for passengers to disembark and visit Forno’s Restaurant and the Exchange Brewery on Queen Street.

New route for Pedal Pub turned down by council

The Pedal Pub operation will travel the same streets as it has a season, including Mississauga and Queen Streets, which some councillors feel present a safety issue. (File photo)

**Penny Coles**
The Local

After struggling with a recommendation from town staff to change the route for the Pedal Pub operation, councillors could not accept it as a safe option.

"The route staff recommended was defeated, with no alternative offered, Disero said, "therein lies the dilemma. Now it’s a bit of a free-for-all, with no routes approved.”

Defeating the recommendation, explained CAO Marnie Cluckie, means the operation can continue on the routes it uses now.
Couple rescued by firefighters, professionals free boat

Continued from page 1

Ruller said he got the call Thursday morning, just after 1 a.m., and with an automatic aid agreement for water rescues, the St. Catharines department arrived as well, towing two Zodiac rescue boats, which could have been launched from the NOTL Sailing Club.

At that point, said Ruller, although there were discussions about how to proceed, the decision was made to focus on getting the couple off the boat, and because of the weather conditions and the shallow water, the coast guard couldn’t help.

Long-time waterfront resident Terry Boulton, who has been sailing since he was a child, was out watching the rescue efforts. He said he and his wife had witnessed a rescue in a similar situation more than 20 years ago, and he mentioned to emergency personnel the easiest and safest way was to walk out, help the couple off the boat and walk them to shore.

Ruller said it helped that he and some of the NOTL volunteer firefighters are also familiar with the water off Queen’s Royal, and some of the challenges it can present.

Ruller had been puddle boarding in that location with his kids just the week before, and was able to pull up some pictures on his phone that helped confirm the depth of the water, he said.

Two of the firefighters walked out, and were able to get the couple into their own inflatable boat, and walk it back to shore, he said.

“Everyone was focused on getting us off,” said John. “We had no idea at that time what would happen to the boat.”

As disturbing as it was leaving their sailboat, not knowing how it would be affected left sitting in a combination of rocks and sand, “the important thing was we were safe, thanks to the good works of the fire department and coast guard and everyone who helped. They all took great care of us,” John told The Local Saturday.

Once he and his wife were off, Ruller says it helped that he and some of the NOTL volunteer firefighters are also familiar with the water off Queen’s Royal, and some of the challenges it can present.

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Once he and his wife were off, Ruller says it helped that he and some of the NOTL volunteer firefighters are also familiar with the water off Queen’s Royal, and some of the challenges it can present.

It wasn’t until Friday that they were able to figure out how to rescue the boat, and that was difficult, “not knowing who to turn to,” he said.

“A bunch of people from the local boat club came out and tried to help,” he said, and although they had the right idea, their boats weren’t strong enough, and C-Tow, a professional marine service that helps boaters across Canada, was able to trailer boats from Barrie to help free their beached Casa Libre, a 16,000-pound Hunter 37.5 fibreglass sailboat. It was after 10 p.m. Friday when the boat was towed to the NOTL Sailing Club.

Matt Phillips, a local Red and Breakfast owner who is also an experienced sailor, spoke with the boat owners, and watched the rescue attempts throughout the day.

C-Tow crews, aboard two tow vessels, didn’t arrive on scene until 7 p.m. Phillips describes these last two summertime boating incidents as a hectic time for boat rescues — another result of the pandemic, as people who have never owned or piloted boats have decided to purchase all manner of watercraft, and find themselves in trouble due to their lack of experience.

Once the crew arrived and assessed the situation, says Phillips, it took a three-hour effort “to kedge the stricken vessel off.”

Phillips described the operation the locals tried earlier in the day first, which was also a kedge effort. With a rope from the top of the mast to one boat, off to the side of the sailboat, it is tipped to one side to try to lift the keel from the sand, as another boat, tied to the bow and a distance out in front, tried to pull it out.

Unfortunately the two boats trying to help were not strong enough and the thrust wasn’t sufficient for the task, says Phillips.

A family on shore and their kids had also waded out in their clothes, wanting to help, as had Tim Bala from Paddle Niagara, and along with the two boats from the sailing club “they were all giving it everything they could. As a lifetime sailor myself,” says Phillips, “I could feel the owners’ pain and wanted them to know that if they needed any shore support, I was there for them. I like to think fellow sailors looked after each other in times of distress. I’ve only ever seen this kind of groundings in pictures or video, but never in person,” he added. “It was indeed a sad sight to see their poor boat, through no fault of its own, now beached.”

When the C-Tow crew were in the water, they followed roughly the same procedure for large boats, and after a number of “methodical, try this and try that,” its crew was successful, with a cheer sounded by a ghost tour crowd from the gazebo on shore celebrating “that Casa Libre was finally ‘tied’, floating freely once again,” says Phillips.

“C-Tow understood the angles and exactly where and how to pull,” says John. “They were professionals, and knew how to do it. And we had so many offers of help from locals, lots of people reaching out. I can thank the community enough.”

He and his wife were offered all kinds of assistance, including a place to stay, but having visited the town before they had a local hotel in mind where they were able to stay, until some friends arrived with equipment John wanted for his boat, and to take them home.

Although it was too soon to know on Saturday, and a detailed inspection would be required, it seemed the hull was intact, he said. He suspected some damage to the keel, and his boat, he said, will likely spend the winter in NOTL at the sailing club, and be repaired there.

Ruller said the fire department gets an average of two calls a year for water rescues, and sometimes will receive calls from people who believe there is an emergency rescue required, such as when people tubing look like they’re in trouble, but when the fire department arrives they discover that’s not the case. The automatic aid agreement with St. Catharines is great for the town, he added, with the larger city department having more training and more expertise with water rescues.

The sailor was rescued by the firefighters, professionals free boat

The sailboat was dragged by the wind and waves onto the sand bar, not far offshore from the gazebo. (Photos by Matt Phillips)

The owner of the boat grounded on the sand bar just off Queen’s Royal Beach helps crew members from C-Tow as they begin to set up for the rescue of his boat at dusk Friday evening.

The owner heads out in his small inflatable to help the C-Tow crew rig his sailboat to free it from the sand.
Airport commission looking for private management

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

Big changes may soon be on the horizon for the Niagara District Airport, and chief executive officer Daniel Pilon is excited about the possibilities.

Last week the Niagara District Airport Commission released a Request for Proposal (RFP) for third-party operators interested in assuming management responsibilities of the facility.

“A feature in the community since 1929, the airport is currently operated by the commission through the municipal governments of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Falls and St. Catharines. It sits on 362 acres of land owned by the town.

“We recognize the importance an airport plays in a community and in an economy,” Pilon tells The Local. “We’re trying to find innovative and different ways to look at our asset. We have some opportunities here to see what some of this interest could look like.”

Pilon expects significant responses from third parties to the RFP despite a 2017 offering that garnered only three bids.

“The scenarios are where some people will see opportunity,” he says. “It’s certainly been a difficult 18 or 19 months, but we will like to think that it will create an environment where there will be significant interest. People have already and will soon be flying again. They’re going to want to travel. When you have 13 million tourists a year, you need to invest in all your different modes of transportation.”

The airport is a key part of the region’s transportation master plan, along with GO Transit and an amalgamated regional transit service to link Niagara’s 12 municipalities. The region is forecasting a regional population of 610,000 by 2041, an increase of 160,000 people, of movement throughout the region becomes even more important.

Pilon expects that the bids will come from companies already in the airport management business elsewhere.

“Operating an airport is different from operating an airline,” he explains. “There’s far more involved from a regulatory perspective, keeping abreast with Transport Canada. It’s not uncommon for airports to be operated privately. The Hamilton airport, for example, is operated by Vantage Airport Group, who also run the Vancover Airport. We’re excited to see what interest is out there.”

The airport’s annual budget runs at just over $1 million, with approximately a third of that designated for capital costs.

“It’s a little on the light side,” Pilon says. “In Niagara, we get a lot of our business for our back, with the support of the municipalities, working with different grants. The capital investment is really the big item. It’s what you want to have from a terminal perspective, what kind of service do you want to create, what do you want to spend to maintain the asphalt of your runways.”

There have been a number of key improvements to the airport over the years. Since 2010, $11.6 million dollars of improvements have been taken place under the Infrastructure Stimulus Fund, including runway rehabilitation, an expanded parking lot, improved lighting, and the new terminal.

Pilon sees a transition in management as key to the future growth of the airport’s suite of offerings. Its location close to the highway and easy access for tourists to both Niagara-on-the-Lake and Niagara Falls make it a potential catalyst to attract future business to the region.

“There’s also corporate travel coming in, folks staying at some of the high-end luxury accommodations in Niagara-on-the-Lake,” he adds. “There’s a significant portion of tourism and business travel.”

With the RFP being released, the future of the Airport Commission and the financial involvement of the three municipalities is somewhat up in the air, depending on the winning submission. The possibility exists that the funding of the airport may come off the books of the three governments.

“We might see different offerings from a whole host of individuals,” says Pilon. “I think, on behalf of the municipalities, that may be the expectation, that they may not have to engage from a financial perspective. It’s a bit of an unknown, but I think that’s what the municipalities are expecting, that they will be removing themselves from their annual financial support.”

Under any new agreement, the Niagara District Airport Commission would continue to exist and would oversee the management of the airport by the company. With a municipal election coming in October, 2022, there may be some changes to that commission and how it operates, but it will continue to guide the facility’s operation.

The CEO is adamant that any successful third party partner would retain and uphold the existing leasing agreements with businesses on-site, including the St. Catharines Flying Club and Fly GTA Airlines.

Currently, there are no plans to extend the length of the runway. At 5,000 feet, corporate jets and general aviation are easily accommodated. Domestic aircraft from Canadian cities in the range of 75 to 100 passengers can be brought in at the current runway length.

“The RFP closes on October 20. Pilon expects evaluation of the submissions and the subsequent negotiation process would result in an executed agreement with a successful operator some time in February, 2022.

“We are expecting a lot of interest,” Pilon says. “We’re hopeful, given the attractive- ness of this asset, that we see some-quality submissions.”

September 8, 2021
notllocal.com

Airport infrastructure has been upgraded in recent years, including at the terminal. (Photo supplied)
First responders are recognized on Sept. 11, to remember their role on that tragic day in 2001. (File photo)

They were called out that morning, on a day like any other, to face a situation no one could ever imagine, and for that reason, they are honoured yearly at the Sept. 11 memorial service. Lord Mayor Betty Disero will speak, as will Lafforgue.

Nearly 3,000 people lost their lives that day, from 90 countries around the world, including 24 Canadians. There were many Americans visiting NOTL that day, and several visited the Chamber of Commerce office, some looking for news, others for places to stay the night.

In past years, there have always been a few who returned to be present at the memorial service at the cenotaph.

“We have some Americans returning now that the border is open,” says Lafforgue, “but I don’t think very many. It’s impossible to say whether they will return for the service.”

The American and Canadian flags will be lowered at 8:45 a.m., and after a moment’s silence, raised again to the playing of O Canada, and the American national anthem.

Lafforgue promised at last year’s quiet, scaled-down service, it would continue this year to recognize the 20th anniversary of the traumatic events of that day, and although masks will be worn and all pandemic protocols followed, it is time to resume this significant event, he says.

Police charge woman with assault

Local Staff

The Niagara Regional Police have charged a woman with assault after an August confrontation between horse and carriage protestors and supporters in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The charge is the result of an investigation into two accusations of assault, one of a 17-year-old girl and one of a 69-year-old woman, on Aug. 14.

The police say there was an altercation between the girl and the woman, but their investigation showed no evidence that the teen was assaulted. However, they say there is evidence showing a 35-year-old woman approached a protester and allegedly swatted a cell phone out of her hand.

The victim did not suffer any physical injuries as a result of the incident, the police report says. On Saturday, Sept. 4, Elizabeth Beattie, 35, of St. Catharines was arrested and charged with assault.

Beattie was released on a Form 10 (used by the police to compel the accused to attend court and abide by specific conditions) and a future court date.

Anyone with information is asked to contact the Niagara Regional Police Service at 905-688-4111, ext.1002200.
Town committee provides context to inclusivity and related issues

Jodie Knight, co-chair Inclusivity Committee

“Inclusivity” is a word that has popped up a fair amount over the past year or two. It has been in the news, on the town’s website, and was the basis of a survey circulated earlier in the year.

Inclusivity Initiative members have stirred some controversy, so it seems high time to give some meaning and context to “Inclusivity” and related terms, especially as they relate to our town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The use of the term “Inclusivity” is becoming increasingly frequent in workplaces, clubs and societies, between groups, volunteer organizations, elected bodies of government, and even entire communities. For instance, in 2020, NOTL and the other municipalities that make up Niagara Region joined the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities. In doing so, the town committed to valuing diversity and respecting all residents; giving residents full access to resources and decision-making processes; promoting equal treatment and opportunity; working to eliminate all forms of discrimination; and responding quickly to sense and other discriminatory incidents. Inclusivity (or inclusion) is often linked with two other equally important terms, “Diversity” and “Equality.”

The acronym DEI, or Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, has become the most common way of representing these three concepts, and it has become a buzzword in many quarters. However, many people see DEI initiatives as a means of building a better, more just, society. These initiatives can only succeed when we stop thinking of DEI issues as isolated or marginalized, and open hearts and minds to the table, however. There remains plenty of room for discussion — and even vigorous debate — when it comes to time concepts into action, but we must be willing to start from a place of respect and openness for any true debate to take place.

In the months ahead, the Inclusivity Committee looks forward to presenting further details about ideas and initiatives that we are debating and forwarding to the attention of town council. We trust that these introductory paragraphs will give readers a better sense of what our Committee does and what key words actually mean. Most importantly, we welcome input from anyone interested in learning more and participating in our activities and discussions. Please visit the town’s website, niagaraonthe-lake.com, and join the Conversation for our committee (https://www.jointheconversation.notl.org/inclusivity) or reach out to us by email: inclusivity Committee@notl.com.
I read with interest your reporting of council’s deliberations over the introduction of a Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) in NOTL. (The Local, Sept 1). While continuing to accept grants from NOTL ratepayers whose taxes have increased significantly over the same time period. So for the Shaw, the ratepayers pay for tourism services and infrastructure and then Shaw accepts more money provided by ratepayer via grants. This is a sweetheart deal. He should have come to council to thank the ratepayers of NOTL.

Eduardo Lafforgue, president of the NOTL Chamber of Commerce, said that the local tourism community creates value for the community, without actually saying what that value is, or attempting to quantify it. Nor did he mention that other Chamber of Commerce entities are funded by local businesses, but here in NOTL ratepayers contribute to its costs. Another sweet deal paid for by NOTL ratepayers.

He also didn’t mention that the Shaw has been in a significant surplus financial position. NOTL tourism is booming. I’ve driven past the Pillar and Post and Queen’s Landing and see full parking lots. It seems that recovery is well under way, here as in Niagara Falls hotels that I un- derstand has a MAT. The law- yer, when it was pointed out that Vintage has just raised its advertised and non-nego- tiable rate to $19.95 plus tax, did not explain why that fee doesn’t hurt their business, but $80 on a $400 a night room rate will.

The hypocrisy of all the delegations was overwhelm- ing. But, hey, Coun. Clare Cameron, Wayz Cherpotia and Gary Burroughs bought it. Sometimes using the same talking points provided by the delegations. Sad Lucky- ly, six other councillors saw through it and approved the next step for MAT.

Let’s hope that in 2022, NOTL ratepayers see some financial relief to the tourism services and infrastructure budget, and we ask tourists to pay their fair share towards maintenance of the services we provide so that these services and our wonderful Town is here for their enjoy- ment for years to come.

Joe Accad
NOTL

Thanks to council for approving accommodation tax

Residents for Sustainable Tourism is pleased that Niagara-on-the-Lake Council has approved the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) to be considered by the Ontario government. The MAT, as intended by Ontario, will go towards tourism infrastructure and marketing. We know that it was a spirited and passion- ate debate by all parties, and we appreciate that it was ful- ly discussed and reviewed. After hearing all sides of the issue, hopefully council and staff will implement the plan in as sensitive a manner as possible based on prevailing COVID conditions in 2022. In the end, it is our goal that the voting taxpayers will see some cost recovery from the industry. At the same time we hope that the MAT helps the tourism industry by funding marketing focused on brand and building the infrastructure the industry needs to keep up with growth.

With regard to focusing tourism marketing on brand, it is our belief that Niagara-on-the-Lake should continue to be branded as the TEMCO industry committee described “a living histori- cal community” that is a joy to live in and visit. NOTL should be an alternative to Toronto and Niagara Falls. We would like our elected representatives to focus on “revitalizing before overtour- ism” and to that end we call for the tourism, town industrv and residents’ groups to be equally represented in the development of the new town tourism strategy. We look forward in building a great town for all to visit and live.

Bruce Ulitman
Residents for Sustainable Tourism
Local man makes Terry Fox Run an annual priority

David Scott tied up his sneakers, showed up early in the morning at Simcoe Park and participated in his first Terry Fox Run in 1993. He hasn’t missed one since. It hasn’t always been in Niagara-on-the-Lake, but wherever he has found himself on the morning of the run, he has walked the 10 kilometres (sometimes five if grandchildren are along), and through his business, Scott Construction, has raised money for the Terry Fox Foundation.

“It’s not a lot of money,” he says, usually around $3,500 to $4,500, from trades and suppliers he has met through his business.

This year, he hasn’t anything planned, but expects he and his wife Linda will walk around Queenston, where they live.

Over the years, he says, they’ve been joined by their kids, Nathan, Dana and Matt, and grandchildren, “whoever could join us.”

One year, he and Linda were on Vancouver Island on the day of the run, and went for a 10-kilometre walk. Last year at this time, they were in Sauble Beach with Dana, son-in-law Andrew Harber, and two grandchildren, Aiden and Emma.

There was no organized run in 2020, but a One Day, Your Way event, so the family did it their way, walking five kilometres for Terry Fox.

Scott recalls that in 1993, two organizers of the run, Rosemary Chew and Paul Kent, created the concept of Dream Teams, encouraging participants to form teams and raise more money for the run. That caught his attention, and was the beginning of what has become an 18-year tradition of him not missing a year.

Scott recalls the year Terry Fox began his run, and received little attention for what he was doing. When he came through Niagara, Scott says, “why didn’t I pay more attention to what was going on, to what he was doing?”

He pays attention now. Cancer is a “very devastating disease,” he says.

“Linda and I have turned 70, and we’ve lost numerous friends to it. It’s just common sense. Cancer should be beaten. It keeps rearing its ugly head, and most people have been touched by it. We should be doing what we can to stop it.”

There are many worthy causes requiring support, and people make their choices as to how they want to donate, but for Scott, it’s been for cancer research. “Sometimes it feels like cancer is all around us. I latched onto it because of Terry Fox, and his involvement. He asked others, if he couldn’t finish, to keep it going. We see the sacrifice he made, running in pain every day.”

That personal association with the annual run, says Scott, is what keeps him going. “I just carry on because it’s a good cause. It helps others, and one day it may help me.”

Coming up to add to NOTL’s fundraising total, says run organizer Joan King, is another music trivia night fundraiser, Niagara’s Name That Tune, Live with Lee, on Friday, Sept. 10 at 7 p.m. It’s online on Zoom, using the Kahoot app. Donations can be e-transferred to TerryFoxNOTL@gmail.com.

“Nobody knows who else is playing,” says King, “so if you’re not great with music trivia, but want to give it a try, this is the way to do it. It’s lots of fun.”
St. Davids-Queenston United Church welcomes new minister

Steve Hardaker
Special to The Local

After a nearly two-and-a-half-year search, on Sunday, Sept. 5, the congregation at St. Davids-Queenston United Church welcomed their new minister, Rev. YongSeok Baek.

In the spring of 2019, long-time minister Rev. Paul James retired and moved to Penticton, B.C. He had served as minister at St. Davids-Queenston for 22 years.

Rev. Baek’s journey of faith that eventually brought him to St. Davids-Queenston is a fascinating story.

Rev. Baek was born in South Korea. He pursued a theological education at Hanshin University and several years later, earned a bachelor of divinity.

In the spring of 2019, a potential new minister was found in October, 2020, but that candidate ended up turning down the position. Not to be deterred, the search committee pressed on.

Baek’s appointment to the St. Davids-Queenston United Church was approved in late April 2021. Thus began an over 3,500-kilometre road-trip to come to Ontario.

He, his wife Yugeun Oh and their two children, Soul and Dana, arrived in Niagara-on-the-Lake in mid-August, and he officially became the minister on Sept. 1. He and his family have settled in the Glendale area.

Baek’s first service was filled with inspiration, positivity, laughter and wonderful music. He loves singing with guitar, backpacking travel, and sports.

St. Davids-Queenston United Church has once again commenced in-person worship services at 10:30 a.m. Sundays, with capacity limits. An online reservation booking form has been created on the church’s website, and all those wishing to attend each week, must first make a reservation in order to avoid over capacity limits.

In addition, the church simultaneously live-streaming their services on their YouTube Channel for those who feel more comfortable worshipping from home.

Steve Hardaker has lived in Glendale for 11 years and is active in many community organizations.

St. Davids-Queenston United Church welcomes Rev. YongSeok Baek (Photo supplied)
Harvest Festival draws good crowd at Grace United

All was revealed on the Mystery Tables at the Festival Market at Grace United Church Saturday.

An eclectic selection of items were displayed for sale, and the weather was most accommodating for the event this year, which had been interrupted by COVID-19 last year.

A large number of community members and visitors to town were able to select from a variety of goodies at the bake table. As usual, a large variety of jams, jellies and sauces were offered as well as fresh fruits and vegetables.

In the church hall, a giant book sale was held with a huge variety of fiction, non-fiction and special collection books available at very reasonable prices. Many people got ready for the winter reading season.

Members of Grace United are most thankful to all who attended. Hopefully, next year all the churches in town can, once again, continue with such events that make living in our town so wonderful.

John Sayers and Judy Thornton look after the busy book sale at Grace United Saturday.
Don't miss Shaw Garden Tour this Saturday

Kim Wade
Special to The Local

“The gardens are going to look magnificent. To be more specific, the burning bushes are in their full glory and colour. The hydrangeas are going to be looking beautiful,” says Jane Catcher, convenor of the Shaw Guild’s Garden Tour Committee, when she is asked about hosting their 15th version of the garden tour.

“People say to me, ‘what is a garden going to look like in the fall?’ because people’s minds are saying, ‘aren’t all the flowers gone?’ Catcher believes a fall garden still has much to offer the eye, and even the nose. “One of the gardens, for instance, has a beautiful feature plant called a Sweet William clematis, which is a fall demit. And when your eye falls upon it, it is jaw-dropping, not only to the eye but to the nose. The fragrance that comes out of it is significant, and it is a must-see.”

The Shaw Guild’s 15th annual Garden Tour will take place this Saturday, Sept. 11, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. It will feature eight gardens in total. Five are within Old Town, two are located on the Niagara River Parkway, and one is in Queenston. Tickets are $25 and are being sold online through the Eventbrite platform at www.shawguild.ca.

As the convenor of this event, one of Catcher’s primary roles was to select the gardens for the tour. She explains the guild has a bank of gardens they choose from each year. They then approach the homeowners to see if they are interested in participating. “You look for gardens that not only have a ‘wow’ factor, but there is historical significance to the home itself and then that translates into the garden. Some of the homes are historical from years past, back to the 1800s. That historical significance obviously translates through to the garden,” she says. “Some of the gardens are designed by key landscape architects. There are some features within these gardens which are really eye-popping. One of the gardens is right on the waterfront. It has three different terraces. As you approach each of the terraces, you are just wowed with all of the details in the design.”

She continues, “There are other homes where the gardens are reflective of Old Town Niagara. It’s not all about prettily, perfectly-placed flowers, but about well-thought-out bushes, perennials and annuals too. Gardens that really eye-catching not only from inside the home but also from outside on the street.”

“This year it will be our 15th annual garden tour and of course it was . . .” She hesitates, “I just left no stone unturned, is what I want to say, toward being able to host this event this year and not have to cancel it for yet another year,” she says with renewed confidence. In her quest to move forward with the tour, she approached the executive of the guild with her committee’s proposal for a full version of the garden tour, as opposed to the traditional late spring event. She said that the support for the proposal was unanimous. With this idea, she then approached the homeowners. There again, the support was unanimous. She says that the homeowners felt more comfortable with a fall garden tour, especially with the uncertainty of COVID restrictions and lockdowns.

The response from the public has also been enthusiastic. “Sales are going fantastic.” Catcher raves. “We have already sold over 600 tickets. My goal was to have 750 tickets sold. We know that we are going to comfortably meet that goal because we know we sell somewhere in the range of 100 tickets on the day of the event. We also find that our sales bump in those three days before the event. People want to see what they’re doing and they keep their eye on the weather. So far, our long-range forecast is saying that it will be a beautiful fall day.”

This year the Shaw Guild is making their largest fundraising event even more spectacular. They have added special features to each garden to enhance the experience. In each garden, there will be a certified master gardener on hand to answer questions about that particular garden. As Catcher explains, “One of the things we do in advance is that we have a meeting at every garden and we identify what the master gardener thinks are of interest. We have beautiful tags made up for all of these plants and then should questions arise, the master gardener can answer any question about the garden that people come up with.”

Also this year, every garden is going to have a ‘special activity’,” says Catcher. “It could be anything, like how to use edible flowers, it could be how to make a fall planter, and we will have two musical performers,” she adds. “These special activities are not added to distract from the gardens, but to enhance the overall experience. “It’s just to add a little bit of unique piece de resistance to the tour’.”

The Shaw Guild is a volunteer organization with approximately 300 volunteers who work to support the Shaw Festival and their productions throughout the year. On the day of the Garden Tour, between 110 to 120 people will be working hard to make the total experience successful for their guests. Catcher explains that this includes organizing everything from signage, to cash boxes, to first aid kits if the need arises. “It’s all the little details,” she says. The last week before the event is filled with uncountable hours of volunteering for her, her committee members, the homeowners and other guild members.

Catcher also wanted to highlight the contribution of the sponsors to make this event successful. “The sponsors are a very big part of this. Our local sponsors, who we go to time after time for all the various fundraisers that are being held in this town. Our local sponsors continue to step up and say, ‘yes, I can support that’ and ‘yes, I’d love to support you.’ They are all community-spirited and they really step up every time. For two Christmases in a row, I am very pleased to say that everything that I purchased was local to Niagara-on-the-Lake, so I encourage people to think, really think local.”

“Never before have they needed our business like they do now,” she continues. “They need to be recognized for the continued support that they show our town, and all the various fundraising events that are being hosted.”

For more information about the Shaw Guild and the 15th Annual Garden Tour contact the Guild at www.shawguild.ca.
Local author writes about NOTL’s role in prohibition

Penny Coles
The Local

It’s a small book, but a lot of work went into the research.

Local waterfront resident Terry Boulton has self-published Smuggling on the Lower Niagara River, 1920 to 1933. He chose the specific area and time frame, he says, because although there has been lots written about prohibition, there is little about the impact of it on this area and local residents during those years. The focus of his book is “how a small Canadian town became embroiled in American prohibition.”

Boulton says he started his research for another book he was writing about his family history as it relates to the fishing industry, he could trace back as far as 1840, who owned waterfront property and were commercial fishermen. Family history is also why he has lived most of his life on the waterfront, and is so comfortable on the water himself. When he started his research in 2009, he was spending four to five hours a day, day after day, reading local newspapers on microfiche at the St. Catharines Public Library, “an arduous task, to say the least,” says Boulton.

And while doing that, he was becoming more and more distracted by stories that would pop up between the social columns and other local news regarding smuggling on the Niagara River, beginning in the 1920s, and decided that would be a topic for another book. When he realized how much the research was overlapping, as were the two stories in his head, he decided it was time to put the family history on hold — it is a larger story and a longer book — and concentrate on finishing his work on smuggling.

“For such a small book, I had to do a heck of a lot of research,” he says. He credits the writings of John Field, the first druggist at The Apothecary on Queen Street, Elizabeth Ascher, who wrote for The Standard in the early 1900s, and Joe Masters, who submitted regular columns to the Niagara Advance, for providing “the backbone of the research,” and says he also had help from many others.

He recently had his first printing of 150 copies sell out, and by the time he picked up the next printing of another 80 copies, 60 were spoken for.

Prohibition in the U.S. at that time was a moral issue, says Boulton, backed by suffragettes, and although many Americans did not agree with it, it impacted every facet of society. While the upper Niagara was heavily involved in smuggling, particularly with the large outlet for alcohol in Buffalo, the lower Niagara was less active because of the current, and also the proximity of the Coast Guard in Youngstown.

Boulton had to rely on anecdotal accounts from local newspaper articles about “rum-running” episodes, some tragic, some humorous, to paint a picture of a colourful time in Niagara-on-the-Lake history that isn’t well-known. Although there had been times in our history when

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River became dangerous for recreational boaters

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governments tried to control alcohol on this side of the border, these efforts were unpopular, so that bootleggers and rum-runners were not typically disparaged — going by the anecdotal evidence he found, locals were pretty tolerant. Smugglers, he says, were usually recruited from the dock area, and commercial fishermen were particularly sought out as participants — they had the necessary skills and knowledge of boats and the river.

He found one newspaper article of the day that said at least 19 local fishing boats were employed in the practice of smuggling part-time, and he came across information that Smuggler’s Cove, now the site of a boat club, a gravel pit near Chautauqua and even Paradise Grove near the rifle range were used as suitable spots for loading boats, while locals either helped out or turned a blind eye.

Farmers, Boulton discovered, were agreeable, for a price, to storing alcohol on their premises until it could be picked up for a trip across the river.

Local historian Jim Smith, who provided some photos for the book, told Boulton a story of his father, Lesley Smith, as a young boy, walking along the bank by the NOTL Golf Club, and seeing a boat, owned by someone well-known in the community, running low in the water, covered by a tarp. His father believed booze was being smuggled, said Smith. “My dad was the last person to see him alive, as he completely disappeared.”

Did locals get rich participating in rum-running? Boulton says at least three businessmen in town were reported to have made their fortune through smuggling, during a time when the risk seemed very little.

However, as American vigilance on the river was stepped up, it became more difficult and dangerous. Evening recreational activity on the waterfront came to an end, because of the fear of locals being shot at by the U.S. Coast Guard. And finally, when the Canadian government prohibited the export of liquor, under an agreement with the U.S., smuggling activity wound down on the Niagara River.

Boulton retells colourful stories the way they were told originally, every quote written as he came across it in his research, and each one documented. It’s a local story of the people, the waterfront, and a different way to look at the history of fishermen in the area, including some with family names we might recognize — some he had permission to use, and others he didn’t name — until the coast guard began coming down hard on those they caught.

In a town rich with history that has been told and retold, mostly from 1812 on, Boulton’s is not a story that’s been told before.

A couple of copies of his book can be found at the NOTL Public Library — chief librarian Cathy Smith has cataloged them under social science as well as history — at the NOTL Museum, and some other outlets around town, including the Scottish Loft on Queen Street, and the Gretzky and Peller wineries. Boulton is selling them for $10. If anyone is interested, call him at 905-468-3765, or email him at 43tboulton@gmail.com.

Looking north, this circa 1920 picture shows the entrance to the Niagara River from Lake Ontario. The proximity of the NOTL basin to the Coast Guard Station at Youngstown, N.Y. is clearly illustrated. (From the collection of Terry Boulton)
Learn about birds in your backyard

David Gilchrist
Special to The Local

Although a lot of my bird photographs have been taken at various locations around town, including along the waterfront and Niagara Shores Park, I enjoy getting some of the more common species right in my own backyard. We are blessed with a mature birch tree in our backyard, and with the presence of some beautiful mature trees on neighbouring properties, have a variety of common bird species present in the area. Cardinals, sparrows, robins, blue jays, and finches are all common backyard visitors in town, and offer year round opportunities for photographers.

Occasionally, however, rarer gems show up. Recently, a pair of red-winged blackbirds and a northern flicker visited. Also, my first sighting of an eastern kingbird took place while I was sitting in the backyard waiting to take monarch butterfly photos as they landed on a flowering plant. I happened to look up at my neighbour’s tree, and noticed an unfamiliar bird sitting perched on a branch. Using the handy Merlin app on my iPhone, I was able to ID it as the eastern kingbird. The same day, but later, our backyard was graced with the lovely male northern flicker.

A pair of cardinals, and what I believe to be one of their offspring, are regular visitors. Last year we had a nest with three eggs, two of which successfully hatched, and were raised in the immediate area of our backyard. It has been interesting to watch this. They are wonderful to observe year round, and at times, they seem to actually pose for the camera.

Blue jays, with their more raucous behaviour, also make their presence known with their loud calls almost demanding attention if the feeder is empty. By the spring, although kind of belligerent, they still show up for a period of time. Often considered to be a nuisance bird, they have a beautiful blue colouration on their head which is quite striking to see.

Who can forget another common backyard bird — the mourning dove. These can often be spotted on a fence or tree branch, issuing their mournful cooing sound. A close-up photograph of these birds reveals some interesting coloration on the body, and a light blue ‘eyeliner’ around their eyes. They emit a noticeable squeak when they begin flight, and often appear ungarnished while flying short distances.

The smaller stars of the backyard birding scene are the finches, the house finches and the American goldfinch. They are lovely, small birds, flitting around the area and our backyards. The males of both of these varieties are especially striking in their coloration. The loss of colour in the male house finches during winter makes it appear these have gone south, but they do, indeed, habituate the backyards year round, just less conspicuously.

Of all the backyard birds, however, it has to be the robin that seems to be the most visible, hopping about the lawn looking for worms. Many of us find their nests in strange places around the outside of our homes, and are treated to their active parenting as the ever-hungry chicks appear with their beaks always open. Special too, with the robins, is the opportunity to witness the chicks attempting to make their first flights with the parents hovering nearby, seemingly coaxing them on.

Last but not least are the varied species of sparrow, often in larger numbers, can hide in bushes and trees, taking flight at the slightest disturbance. Although the house sparrow seems to be the most common, there are some variations of the common house sparrow that show up with interesting coloration or markings.

Over the last year and a half, with staying at home being the norm, I’ve been glad for the simple pleasure of sitting on a comfortable covered deck watching for the birds in the backyard. Coffee in the morning and the occasional libation in the afternoon with my camera in hand, and at the ready, has been an important coping measure during this time. Reflecting on these simple pleasures, and writing about them, has also been a great way to help get through this period.
Continued from page 1

to our community. When we got a call from Cornerstone, telling us what they wanted to do for us, it was perfect timing,” says Bjorgan.

They will be offering day programs, recreation and re- spoke, using Cornerstone, and Red Roof’s Ranch and Keven’s House facilities, to a limited number of clients — they will be reaching out first to those who need it the most, says Bjorgan.

Staff, volunteers and clients 12 and over will be double vac- cinated, and there will be more one-on-one support. With their limited budget, RRR is hoping for more volunteers who will come on board to help out.

Cornerstone’s offer to Red Roof to share some of their program space in the church Monday to Saturday, rent-free, “is a no-lose situation for us, that couldn’t have come at a better time,” says Bjorgan.

Kids who are going back to school will be able to take part in weekend programs and respite care, and young adults who are no longer in school can participate in day pro- grams throughout the week.

And heading into the fall, “all of our fundraisers will re- sume,” starting with a garage sale Sept. 11 at The Ranch, on Concession 6.

Other donations have come in that were a surprise, includ- ing a recent cheque of $1,400 from the sale of NOTL T-shirts by a local Facebook group.

A huge surprise was a donation made by local wom- an Glenda Smith in her will. Bjorgan calls her a “quiet do- nor,” who made small financial gifts over the years. Her fam- ily asked for donations to Red Roof in her memory, and Byor- gan was overwhelmed to learn that when Smith died last De- cember, she left $53,000 to Red Roof, which has helped to fund operations during COVID.

Bjorgan credits Amber Dyck, mom of Megan, a 12-year- old who has been enjoying the services provided by Red Roof since she was eight, as the driving force behind the partnership with Cornerstone Church as part of their reopening.

In addition to being a mom who feels blessed to have the support of Red Roof, Amber has been a member of Cornerstone Church for the last 20 years.

As a parent with a special needs child, she learned during the recent 18 months how isolat- ing a pandemic can be, she says. Megan was a student at Crossroads, but when she could no longer attend school, it was also not safe to have caregivers come to the house, says Amber. Megan has respira- tory problems, a weakened immune system, and was too young to be vaccinated.

Amber became the only person who could deliver all of the services Megan required, around the clock. Even physi- cal therapy had to be delivered by video, with Amber follow- ing instructions offered online.

It was an exhausting full- time job, in a very isolated bub- ble, also putting stress on her husband and two older children, who were left to step in and keep the household running.

“That’s been one of the hard- ships and tragedies of COVID, that schools and programs for special needs children have shut down,” says Amber. “This community of special needs children and parents has been particularly vulnerable.”

Amber is accustomed to advocating for support of Me- gar and other families of spe- cial needs children. She calls Bjorgan a “trailblazer” who set an example of all that can be ac- complished, but even with the financial support that can be accessed from the government, “it’s not just the dollars we need, it’s the safe-support and respite for families that those dollars will pay for.”

Amber recalls the first day she took Megan to a Red Roof program. “It’s not easy for par- ents to leave their special needs children in someone else’s care, she says, but when she picked up Megan, “she said she felt like she’d come home. She found other children she could relate to, and a place where she wasn’t alone, and where she could go at her own pace.”

What Bjorgan has been able to accomplish “is such a blessing,” says Amber, who is taking the step with her church to expand those programs lo- cally, “to provide a special place for special needs children and their families.”

She said the church board looked at what it could do in- ternally to be more accessi- ble and supportive, and then looked externally to see if there were programs in place they could partner with.

“Steffanie jumped out as someone already providing care, someone we could offer strategy support to help meet the needs of the community”

The church has the Sun- day school and nursery space that can be used for Red Roof programs Monday to Saturday, and a base of volunteers who want to be involved, she says. And it is planning an ex- pansion of its space to make it more accessible than it is, she says, fulfilling one of its goals to not only support the church community but to others with special needs.

With Steffanie as an example to follow, Amber says, she feels like she’s taking on a role of facil- itator, helping families through the strategic partnership be- tween Red Roof and the church, and continuing along the path of offering “authentic inclusion.”

“I feel like God has equipped me to help do this,” Amber adds.

“It puts me in a position to continue to be an advocate for Megan, while taking on a broader responsibility to the larger community”

Providing a place where parents feel they can safely leave their vulnerable child in the care of someone else, says Amber, “is providing something more valuable than I can explain.”

Karen Post, Chrissa Kawashome and Shauna Press are packing up at Kna Grafton, eager to move programming back to NOTL. (Photo supplied)
Welcome to the second installment of the grape variety series, this time exploring the virtues of chardonnay and Winery, was eager to extoll the virtues of chardonnay last year.

As for the grape itself, “Chardonnay is a vitis vinifera species of grape originating from Europe, but more that they don’t know it is a true expression of its region.” Pietruniak continues. According to the VQA, “Chardonnay describes a special set of conditions that contribute to the character of a wine.” It refers to the particularities in weather, pattern, soil composition and elevation of a specified area. Each of the four sub-appellations within the regional appellation of NOTL is diverse in these characterstics. Pietruniak, explains that these characteristics affect the character of the grape, as she describes the distinct conditions at Palatine Hills Estate Winery and its location within the Niagara Lakeshore sub-appellation. “Niagara Lakeshore VQA is a sub-appellation that extends three kilometres inland, from Niagara River to the Welland Canal. The soils along Lake Ontario are reddish-brown sandy clay all soils that encourage deep root penetration. Vines hate cold wet feet. So water retention in soils is ideal, and sites that are well-drained, low to moderate fertility. Grape growers want to encourage the vines to send their roots deeper to access water and nutrients. This is what gives wine character. In order to build character, we must struggle a little bit,” she adds with a laugh.

This is where Pietruniak gets a bit more technical as she describes the soil composition of the Palatine Hills vineyards, which requires a small geologist. “Our vineyards have a soil composition of a reddish clay loam soil that has been modified by lacustrine processes. So what are lacustrine processes? This means that soil is made up of lacustrine deposits, the food left behind by early freshwater species that inhabited ancient Lake Ontario, known as Glacial Lake Iroquois, when the shoreline extended up to the escarpment. This type of soil retains heat and will advance opening of the fruit. According to Pietruniak, it also gives their terroir minerality. “Minerality cannot be replicated in the winery. Only the terrior can give this to you.” This is where things get a little more complicated. The term ‘minerality’ is shrouded in a bit of mystery, not because people don’t know what it is but more that they don’t know how to describe it. Within the wine aficionado community, there also seems to be a consensus on whether minerality is a taste, an aroma or even a mouth feel, or maybe all three in combination. However, there does seem to be a consensus that it is a unique characteristic of the finished wine product that is transferred to the grapes from the soil, especially in areas with ancient marine sediment. Another characterisitic to the Niagara Lakeshore sub-appellation is “lake effect.” Pietruniak simplifies this phenomenon. “Throughout the day, Lake Ontario absorbs a lot of heat energy for its own ecological systems. This is precious heat energy from the sun.” Lake Ontario releases this heat at night, she explains, which shortens the difference between day and night temperatures in the vineyard (diurnal range) and prolongs the ripening conditions in the area close to the lakeshore. This effect also helps reduce the risk of ground frost and reflects sun rays which promotes photosynthesis. “At Palatine Hills, we benefit from the lake effect; she states proudly.

As for the grape itself, “chardonnay is nicknamed the winemaker’s grape,” Pietruniak says. “While it is not an aromatic grape variety, it is highly expressive of winemaking techniques.” Pietruniak explains that the differences in aroma and taste depend on whether a chardonnay is unoaked, oaked or aged on the lees.

“First example,” she says, “when chardonnay undergoes malolactic fermentation, it presents a wonderfully creamy or buttery texture. When oaked, it is toasty and nutty. When aged on the lees, it expresses autolysitic notes of biscuit or brocchio. Chardonnay loves to be told to do what the winemaker wants.” To clarify, malolactic fermentation (MLF) is used in wine productions and is often applied to chardonnay when the winemaker seek to soften the acidity in the wine. This second fermentation converts the malic acid in grape must to lactic acid, like in milk, which smooths out the taste and provides a richer mouthfeel to the wine. To be aged on the lees or ‘sur lie’ refers to the wine being aged with the remaining grape solids and the residual yeast from the fermentation process. Palatine Lakeshore Winery boasts three single varietal chardonnays. The first is an unoaked, Pietruniak says the 2018, 2012, Unoaked Chardonnay, is a staff favourite since it is a true expression of what they call the “Niagara Lakeshore minerality of its terrior.” She says their winemakers, John Jr. and Charles Neufeld, “did a wonderful job at leaving this wine unmasked and expressive of where it is from.”

Stephanie Pietruniak, sommelier at Palatine Hills Estate Winery, is eager to extoll the virtues of chardonnay. (Photos by Kim Wade)

The second is the 2016 Neufeld Vineyard Reserve Chardonnay. This wine spends 12 months aging in 100 per cent French oak barrels. She describes it as “a big, full-bod- dled, bubbly, nutty, toasty wine that still expresses its primary fruit aromas and its signature minerality.”

The third chardonnay Palatine offers is their Traditional Method Blanc de Blanc Spar- kling wine called Savage Brut. This is a very unique wine that has spent 10 years on the lees (that very rarely happens). It expresses its autolysitic notes of brocchio palate but most ex- traordinarily its primary fruit aromas of ripe golden apple, lemon, pear and blossom are still present and vibrant. At 10 years, that is so impressive. And again, the minerality just shines throughout. It is Extra- complex and effervescence (which again after 10 years should not be the case). Sorry . . . got car- ried away there,” she says. “But not so sorry as to take it back!” Pietruniak has no need to apologize. Her enthusiasm for her craft is inspiring. Thank you Stephanie for the knowl- edge you have imparted on the king of the white grapes and its unique character, its variety and its connection to the land it is cultivated on.

Stephanie Pietruniak, sommelier at Palatine Hills Estate Winery, was eager to extoll the virtues of chardonnay.
Predators set to begin regular season Oct. 1

The Niagara Predators are hitting the ice this week to get ready to finalize the team for their GMHL season opener on Oct. 1.

General manager Johan Eriksson has announced that the Predators, of the Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League (GMHL), are holding a prospect camp Sept. 10 through 12 from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Meridian Credit Union Arena. He’s hopeful that a number of local hockey players will vie for a spot on the tier II Junior A team.

One player from Niagara Falls is eagerly anticipating his first skate with the Predators at the main team camp, starting Sept. 16.

Dante Massi, a 21-year-old St. Paul Secondary School graduate, has signed as an over-ager and will take on the assistant captain role with the team that has relocated from Toronto.

Massi brings experience from his time with Fort Erie, Thorold and Welland of the Greater Ontario Junior Hockey League (GOJHL), as well as the Niagara Riverhawks of the Provincial Junior Hockey League.

The fourth-year psychology student at Brock University says he wasn’t sure what he was going to do this year hockey-wise until Riverhawks assistant coach Chris Sacco suggested he get in touch with Eriksson.

“Johan gave me a call and we had a really great talk over the phone,” Massi recalls. “Things sounded really promising, sounded like things were going to be really good with this club this year. So we met, talked about the team. We have a lot of imports coming over from Europe who have played high level hockey already.”

Massi admits that his junior career thus far has been a bit of a scramble.

“I didn’t really put up the numbers I wanted to, I think this is a great opportunity to get a little bit of redemption.”

Bouncing around from team to team on the Junior B and C circuits made it difficult for Massi to fully assimilate to styles and systems of play.

“I definitely struggled adjusting to team systems,” he says. “That definitely cost me when I was playing in Thorold. In Fort Erie, they had me playing defence, and I had trouble adjusting to that. The Riverhawks had a spot for me when things didn’t work out in Thorold.”

After 20 games in his second season with the Riverhawks in 2019-2020, Massi was called up to Welland.

“I enjoyed it, it was good to be back playing at that pace. I ended up being bought out by Welland after 10 games as a call-up, and finished the season off with them. The team struggled, but it was a good group of guys. I think this is a great opportunity to get a little bit of redemption.”

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Dante Massi, a 21-year-old St. Paul Secondary School graduate, will take on the assistant captain role with the Predators. (Photo supplied)
Club is still looking for local families to billet players

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and Chris Lukey and the coaching staff were great there.”

In September, 2020, when the GOJHL was planning to return to the ice, Welland owner Lou Savonéa’s request for the team to sit out the season in an attempt to halt the spread of COVID was approved by the league.

That left the players scrambling to find new homes. Massi was loaned out to the Fort Erie Meteors. They had a few exhibition games, and he was looking forward to playing with his old team again, but the pandemic forced the cancellation of the entire season.

Massi has spent a lot of time on the ice this summer, assisting former pro hockey player David Culen with his hockey school, and he feels he is ready to begin the GMHL season. Eriksson points out that Massi was one of his first players signed to play in Niagara this year.

“I really wanted Dante because of his very good character,” Eriksson says. “He’s a good leader, and he can play three zones on the ice equally well. He will help us in both power play and penalty killing as well as lead the way and be one of the more experienced guys.”

With the Predators, Massi will be skating alongside the likes of Emil Eriksson and goaltender Oscar Martine, both from Sweden. Other Predators will be making the trip to Niagara this year from Russia and Switzerland.

Massi believes that playing with and against the many import players in the league is a chance for him to prove he can be competitive at a high level. He’s looking at this year as the first step in a continuing career in hockey.

“If this can lead to an opportunity in Europe, in one of the minor pro leagues, that would be great,” he says. “Or even if I could play some university hockey in Canada, U-Sports, that would be awesome.”

Since the announcement of the team’s move to Niagara-on-the-Lake, there has been some push-back from members of the community who are still stinging from the short-lived presence of the NOTL Nationals. That short-lived presence of the team’s move in September, 2020, went from the Predators to the OHL (Battaglia split between the Erie Otters of the OHL and the St. George Ravens of the GMHL). ”

Eriksson laments. “There are so many ideas about this league,” Eriksson laments. “I deal with this quite a lot. You can go straight from this league to the OHL. Noah Battaglia, our number one goalie three years ago, went from the Preds to the OHL (Battaglia split the 2018-2019 hockey season between the Erie Otters of the OHL and the St. Catharines Falcons of the GOJHL).”

Eriksson points out that the Predators are in a 3-to-1 home/road balance at a high level. He’s looking at

The team will play its first season in Niagara under the Predators name. GM Johan Eriksson says there were almost 50 submissions by the community of suggested names after a previous article published in the Local.

“We have narrowed it down to a couple of names, but it’s too close to the beginning of the season to change it for this year. Our lawyers told us they had to check on the availability of names legally, and ensure we don’t infringe on any copyrights.”

“We’ll play as the Predators for one more season, then switch for 2022-2023. I’m going to talk to the people who sent us the names that we like, and we’ll probably announce the new name maybe some time in January; in conjunction with a skills competition or sponsor night.”

The winning submission will receive the first jersey with the new team’s name and logo, as well as season tickets for the 2022-2023 season.
PARKER, ANTHONY—The incomparable Tony Parker passed away on Saturday, September 4, 2021. Tony had 75 years of adventures, and even after his brain cancer revealed itself in November 2019, he had his best year ever as a realtor, connecting many clients to their dream homes.

Tony (Antonino) was born in Sicily and raised in Canada in his 20s. He worked in sales nearly his whole life, selling everything from Lifesavers candy, to china and glassware, to office equipment. But it was when he turned his considerable talents to real estate that his abilities were truly able to shine. Becoming a realtor in the Old Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake at age 65, Tony earned his place as the top realtor at the local Bosley Real Estate brokerage for the past five years running. In selling homes, he helped build the local community, bringing new and old residents together, and introducing clients to his favourite local businesses. Many of his clients became friends of his, as they discovered how much genuine care he took in everthing he did for them. He would not let any need go unmet, and always encouraged and supported others to succeed.

Tony was a connoisseur: he loved a fine meal, and had a wide palate, especially enjoying Indian and Thai food, stinky cheeses from England and of course, pasta. He could not resist fresh pastries, and he was able to indulge in them on his frequent trips to Europe with his partner Meg. The patisseries of Paris will miss him. He loved art and architecture, with a special passion for art deco buildings and sculptures. Tony was a film buff enjoying everything from art house favourites to documentaries to goofball comedies. He was also an avid reader of books on history, politics, and the social sciences. He delighted in learning about advances in science and technology, as befitted his optimistic nature.

Many described Tony as a consummate gentleman, which was absolutely true. Always impeccably dressed, he loved to go for drives in his new Jaguar, a car he had dreamed of owning for years. But he also had a wonderful silly side and loved to laugh. Tony was a destroyer of crosswords and a sandwich wizard, and he let his creative side flourish in the kitchen with his famous fish soups. Tony could bask in the sun for hours and lived his entire life in denial of winter.

Tony will be dearly missed by his daughter Judith and her partner Angel; his son Steven and grandsons James and Owen; his partner Tony will be dearly missed by his daughter Judith and her partner in the kitchen with his famous fish soups. Tony could not resist fresh pastries, and he was able to indulge in them on his frequent trips to Europe with his partner Meg. The patisseries of Paris will miss him. He loved art and architecture, with a special passion for art deco buildings and sculptures. Tony was a film buff enjoying everything from art house favourites to documentaries to goofball comedies. He was also an avid reader of books on history, politics, and the social sciences. He delighted in learning about advances in science and technology, as befitted his optimistic nature.

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Tony will be dearly missed by his daughter Judith and her partner Angel; his son Steven and grandsons James and Owen; his partner Meg and her son Jeeb; his sisters Anna, Marisa, his brother Frank, and many nieces and nephews. Family & friends are invited to a Celebration of Life in Niagara-on-the-Lake at an upcoming date, to be confirmed. Kindly email Celebrations of Life Toronto info@cfl.ca or call 416-817-8772 to be placed on our contact list. You will receive memorial details for Tony as they are announced. The family ask that any donations be made to Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Palliative Care or United Way Niagara.

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Mike Balsom Special to The Local

When the puck drops for the Niagara Predators to begin their first season playing out of Virgil’s Meridian Credit Union Arena, Michael Frena will be calling the shots. And the passes, the goals, the shots. And the passes, the goals, the shots.

The 2018 Niagara College broadcasting graduate has been named the play-by-play announcer for the 2021-2022 season of the Greater Metro Jr. A Hockey League’s local team. He credits his mother, Tracey, for encouraging him to apply for the position. The games will be live-streamed on the league’s gnhhl.tv website.

Frena, who works full-time at Pfil’s valu-mart in the grocery and dairy department, can’t wait to put his love of sports broadcasting to work up in the booth.

After graduating from Eden High School, Frena applied to three programs at Niagara College. He chose broadcasting - radio, television and film over both acting and game development, largely because it included an internship.

“I saw that TSN was one of the (internship) places,” he says, “and I thought that would be something I would like to do one day. I always watched SportsCentre growing up, and I always thought it would be great to be on TSN or Sportnet talking sports and recapping games.”

He ended up interning at TSN 1050 radio in Toronto from February to April, 2018.

Though he didn’t get a chance to sit behind a microphone there, he was put to work supporting announcers such as Brian Hayes, Jamie McLennan and Jeff O’Neil (known as Hayes, Noodles and the O-dog, hosts of the Overdrive show).

“I worked behind the scenes,” Frena explains, “I would listen to Overdrive, the Morning Show, the Scott MacArthur Show and Michael Landsberg. When they had guests on, I would take their answers in their interviews and clip them into shorter segments so they could be used later.”

He also created PhotoShop templates to promote upcoming guests via Instagram.

He credits his valu-mart employer, Phil Leboaduc, for graciously working around his schedule while he would stay in a Toronto Airbnb for three to four nights at a time during the internship.

While at the college, Frena gained valuable experience doing play-by-play, colour commentary and pre- and post-game interviews for various sporting events. He was able to work a number of Junior B hockey games in Fort Erie, Niagara Falls and St. Catharines as well as a few Niagara College Knights basketball games.

“They do it in the NHL, these guys make it look so easy,” marvels Frena. “When you get into it, it’s challenging. I enjoyed doing all the different things. I’m not sure which one I like best. But I had a blast doing all of them.”

When Frena graduated from Niagara, he applied for a few broadcasting jobs, but found the industry difficult to break into. “A lot of these places are looking for people with experience,” he says, “I didn’t give up, but I put it off for a little bit. Then COVID hit, and I found out that a lot of my friends who did have (broadcasting) jobs got laid off.”

This appointment with the Predators is an opportunity to build his resume with some of that valuable experience needed in a changing industry.

“Any experience is a good experience,” Frena says. “It’s a foot in the door. It will be the first step to an even bigger step down the road. I can say I have this on my resume. I’m a little nervous, but excited for this opportunity.”

Frena himself played hockey for many years in Niagara-on-the-Lake, with his father, Mike, coaching him. Once he entered high school he stopped for a year, then got back on the ice with the St. Catharines CYO program.

During his three-year college program he had little time for hockey, between school work and his job at valu-mart. But after graduating he began playing with the Sunday morning Wallburgers league alongside his friend Ben Glaser. He eagerly anticipates hitting the ice again later this month.

The Buffalo sports fan looks to legendary Sabres announcer Rick Jeanneret for inspiration as a sports broadcaster. Frena was fortunate to be taught by Rick’s son Chris at Niagara College. He also names Gord Miller, Ray Ferraro, Jim Hughson and Craig Simpson as his favourites.

When asked where he sees himself in 10 years, the 24-year-old NOTL native sees a world of opportunity.

“I’d like to be doing something with sports radio, or hockey analytics,” he says. “Another thing I’d like to do is voice acting, you know, doing voice-overs for commercials and TV. That really interests me as well.”

First thing first, though. Right now he’s looking forward to the challenges presented in taking on his new role with the new hockey team in town. That includes, of course, learning how to correctly pronounce some potentially difficult Swedish and Russian names.

“My seeing myself in 10 years, the 24-year-old NOTL native sees a world of opportunity. “I’m going to do my best,” he laughs. “I’ll ask them personally. ‘Hey, how do you pronounce your name, because I don’t want to butcher it. There’s nothing wrong with asking them how to pronounce it. I’m really looking forward to it.’”

Niagara College broadcasting grad Mike Frena will be offering the colour commentary when the Predators take to the ice this season. (Photo supplied)