Two councillors resign from CAO selection committee

Penny Coles  The Local

Two councillors have resigned from the CAO selection committee, but with most of their discussions having taken place in closed session, their reasons aren’t entirely clear.

The surprise is that Couns. Clare Cameron and Gary Burroughs have both been passionate and outspoken about the importance of hiring the very best candidate for the job, and the need to strictly adhere to the proper process.

Both have referenced several times in earlier discussions the embusman report released late in 2019 about the hiring of the former regional chief administrator, which they denounced as an “inside job” tainted with improper disclosure of information to the successful candidate. They both endorsed then, and have referenced since, the recommendations that stemmed from the investigation, intended to improve hiring practices in the future.

Cameron read a statement to council at Monday’s meeting about her resignation, part of which said, referring to the provincial watchdog’s report, “This document clearly describes the missteps that occurred in hiring a CAO at Niagara Region in recent years, and I have considered its contents and recommendations very seriously since publication. The belief that this report has unique importance for all elected officials across Niagara led to my moving adoption of its recommendations for the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake in December last year. I feel very strongly that even the slightest spectre of personal, political or other third-party influence creeping into any aspect of the CAO hiring process could undermine the quality of final recruitment, and significantly erode the public’s trust in this organization.”

She went on to say she would be more comfortable participating in the CAO recruitment as a member of council, and hoped that council deliberations could take place, whenever possible, during an open, therefore public, meeting, rather than in closed session.

“When council is asked to provide advice or recommendations to the selection committee, I hope to receive written minutes of the committee’s meetings in order to inform and aid effective decision-making,” she said.

Cameron’s statement was made just before council went into a closed session Monday. Burroughs had asked for a discussion of the makeup of the selection committee in public, which was intended to occur during the closed session, and a vote was taken about whether it should be public or not. Couns. Wendy Chernita, John Wiens, Burroughs, Cameron, and Lord Mayor Lord Mayor

Continued on page 3

Canopy Growth reaches out to seniors during COVID

Penny Coles  The Local

Canopy Growth, one of Canada’s largest medical and recreational cannabis producers, has given eight Niagara long-term care homes iPads to help alleviate isolation for residents during the pandemic.

Sitting in her office in B.C., Hilary Black admits she doesn’t know much about the Niagara Region, but as chief advocacy officer for Canopy Growth, she feels strongly that seniors, as the most vulnerable segment of the population during COVID, need the most support.

“My grandmother is 104, and she lives at home, with full-time support. I have the privilege of talking to her whenever I want to.”

But in long-term care homes, many residents are forced to talk to their loved ones while a staff member stands by, holding a phone to their ear, she says.

So when Canopy decided to do something to help seniors, she supported iPads on “wheelie stands,” pre-loaded with communication apps, so that even if help is required to initiate a FaceTime phone call, seniors don’t need a staff member, covered with all their personal protective equipment, standing beside them.

Black also knows an awful lot about breaking down barriers for patients who can benefit from cannabis, and again, she refers to her grandmother, who takes what she calls her “marijuana vitamins” daily to help her relax, feel good and sleep.

Continued on page 4

On the waterfront

The heavy construction at Ball’s Beach is done, with the Town now beginning the restoration of the path and grass in the park area. Hannah is especially proud of her sand mermaid tail, created by the shoreline protection project has added a new element the kids were making the most of it. (Photos supplied)
Live Shaw revues a go, Christmas Carol cancelled

Penny Coles
The Local

Although Queen Street has been teeming with cars and visitors most weekends this summer, local businesses are reporting a shift in demographics to day-trippers who might stop for an ice cream or a patio meal, but aren’t in town to shop.

Shaw Festival patrons traditionally have stayed in town longer, spending more while they’re here, and the festival is now giving those patrons a reason to visit, even during a pandemic.

Small musical revues are taking place in private backyards, at wineries, in the Shaw Festival garden and other locations around town, and those who attend are loving the live performances.

But many were also looking for a return to the indoor stage soon, including CEO Tim Jennings.

Those hopes were dashed with the news this week that A Christmas Carol is not to be, at least not this year.

Jennings said last week he wasn’t giving up altogether on staging the holiday classic, although chances weren’t looking good.

“We’re really hopeful we can move forward,” but with cases of COVID rising, he said, “we’re concerned. We’re working against a tidal wave.”

He expected a decision this week, and the announcement of the cancellation came as no surprise Tuesday. “We held off making this decision for as long as we possibly could because we had set our hearts on getting back into one of our theatres this year. But it was not to be: the situation clearly calls for caution. We need to keep everyone safe,” said artistic director Tim Carroll in the media release. “But our optimism remains unquenchable: we will do what we can, when we can, and we will be ready to leap into action the moment we get the nod. We are about to announce our plans for next season, which I hope and believe will be our best yet, not only because of the quality of the work we can offer, but because the people making that work, and witnessing that work, will do so with such passionate, renewed commitment to the life-affirming value of live theatre.”

Audiences for the musical revues are small, and so far, have been limited to those with Shaw Festival membership, but there could be some public availability in the coming weeks, says Jennings, “complicated and weird,” and very different compared to the current endeavour has been “complicated and weird,” and very different compared to what the Shaw had been hoping to offer, which was on-stage performances, although to a limited capacity.

The performances, however, are a start. “It’s great to be going outside, and trying this out with small audiences,” he says, and while not the norm for Shaw, “they are beautifully staged concerts, lovely revues of great composers.”

As to fulfilling the goal of driving economic recovery, Jennings says, “I think it’s working. People are going out to dinner, shopping, lounging on patios. We’re trying to get people to come here and stay longer.”

The concerts have been scheduled to finish before dinner to encourage patrons to come and spend the day in town, and go out to eat, he says, and to reassure them that NOTL is a safe place to visit.

“Businesses of Niagara are really focused on public safety, and have been unbelievably resilient with patios, popups and offering more options,” says Jennings. “We want people to stay, shop and make use of all our amenities.”

The town is hurting, he added, “and we need to help.”

This is the Shaw’s way of “pivoting to a different, safe-gathering world,” and its desire to do more than offering only online programs. “The act of getting together and sharing art is a basic need.”

Pedal Pushers ride for palliative care

Lord Mayor Betty Disero was at the former hospital site Saturday, where the NOTL Community Palliative Care Service office is located, to start the Healing Cycle ride for the Pedal Pushers team. Bonnie Baginulo, executive director of the service says it was an amazing day, with more than $16,000 raised from donations so far for palliative care.

Their goal was $10,000. “We are so elated to have been able to raise this much money given COVID. Some of last year’s corporate sponsors weren’t able to help us this year, due to their own business losses, completely understandable and somewhat expected. However, we were very fortunate to gain more community support this year from personal donors,” says Baginulo. (Penny Coles)

The concerts have been free, and were put together quickly, once the Shaw received its $400,000 federal grant for live, outdoor performances. “Soft openings” have taken place in recent weeks, says Jennings, featuring eight performers involved in three musical revues, including ensemble members Kyle Blair, Andrew Broderick, James Daly, Kristi Frank, Élodie Gillett, Alexis Gordon, Olivia Sinclair-Brisbane, and Jonathan Tan, with associate music director Ryan deSouza.

The revues are funded by the grant, which paid for capital costs, and by the federal wage subsidy, says Jennings. Each venue is setting its own safe pandemic protocol, according to space, and provincial guidelines.

“Our outdoor performances help to connect us with our patrons,” Jennings says, adding orchestrating the current endeavour has been “complicated and weird,” and very different compared to what the Shaw had been hoping to offer, which was on-stage performances, although to a limited capacity.

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“The act of getting together and sharing art is a basic need.”

We need your help!

Please email as often as possible requesting protection for working horses.

Email:
SecurityFromTrespass.OMAFRA@ontario.ca
Continued from page 1

Betty Disero voted in favour of the committee membership discussion taking place in public.

Disero said the selection committee meetings had been going along well, until they reached an issue where there was disagreement between members who were split in their opinions. Even after a closed session with council, Disero said, it couldn’t be resolved, and the two resigned.

Disero alluded to a concern over whether staff involved in the work of the selection committee had signed the required document agreeing not to disclose any information about the selection discussions, and said that document had been signed. “I’m not sure why there was still a feeling that the ombudsman’s concerns had not been followed. ‘That’s remained a contention’ she added.

Burroughs did not speak about his reasons for resigning Monday night, but he told The Local that for him, it’s an issue going along well, until they didn’t want to speak for Cameron, he believes she feels the same.

Since last January, when Cameron passed the motion that the Town would follow the recommendations of the ombudsman, which included signed privacy documents, and proceed with caution during the search to replace former CAO Holly Dowd, he has also stressed the importance of “not just talking about doing it, but making sure we are doing it.”

Although Disero has said the process is being followed, “I haven’t seen it,” he says. He signed off on the privacy document himself, but he wanted to see a list of everybody who has access to the search information and evidence they too have signed off.

“The process is so important,” he says, referencing the regional “inside job,” when he was on regional council, and was unaware of what was going on behind the scenes.

“As long as we follow the process, we’re good.”

“I wish them all the best,” he says of the current selection committee members. “This is where it’s going to get difficult.”

Earlier in September, selection committee members were provided a list of candidates by the consultant working with them, and members were expected to provide a shortened list for interviews. Disero said then she expected a CAO would be chosen by the end of the year.

Left on the committee are Lord Mayor Betty Disero and Coun. Erwin Wiens. After Wiens was given an opportunity to also resign, which he declined, three more councilors, Sandra O’Connor, Allan Bisback and Wendy Cheropita were appointed at Monday’s council meeting.

Coun. Clare Cameron’s statement in full:

This statement confirms that I have resigned from the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s CAO Selection Committee, effective September 21, 2020.

The Chief Administrative Officer’s role is incredibly important to our community and the selection of someone for this role is a critical decision that I sincerely looked forward to participating in as an elected official.

The hiring of a CAO requires the utmost care under any circumstances, particularly in the public sector, and now even more so given the November 29, 2019 Ontario Ombudsman’s Report “Inside Job.” This document clearly describes the missteps that occurred in hiring a CAO at Niagara Region in recent years, and I have considered its contents and recommendations very seriously since publication. The belief that this report has unique importance for all elected officials across Niagara is confirmed by my moving adoption of its recommendations for the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake in December last year.

I feel very strongly that even the slightest spectre of personal, political or other third-party influence creeping into any aspect of the CAO hiring process could undermine the quality of final recruitment and significantly erode the public’s trust in this organization.

Given these convictions, I am most comfortable at this time to participate in next steps for CAO recruitment as a member of Council, rather than as a member of the CAO Selection Committee. I also look forward to seeing the Selection Committee’s work, and any related Council deliberations, occur in open session whenever possible, unless it is absolutely necessary to deliberate in camera under the Municipal Act. Before Council is asked to provide advice or recommendations to the Selection Committee, I hope to receive written minutes of the Committee’s meetings in order to inform and aid effective decision-making.

Further, given this Council commitment to support- ing diversity in all its forms, I wish to encourage the CAO Selection Committee to utilize a blind evaluation of applicants that would remove names from future candidate lists until the start of interview views, and therefore help to ensure the utmost fairness of evaluation at this stage on the basis of merit and experience over any other factor.

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake deserves only the utmost quality of open, genuine, innovative and collaborative leadership at all levels, and that includes finding the very best possible candidate to be our next CAO. I trust that the work of the CAO Selection Committee will continue in that spirit.
**Penny Coles**

**The Local**

As applications for the federal tourism grant come in slowly, businesses impacted by COVID are being encouraged to seek their share of the $500,000. Coun. Allan Bisback, one of the Town’s Discretionary Grant Committee members who will review and evaluate the applications, says he expects, as the Oct. 15 deadline approaches, applications will begin to come in quickly.

The objective, he says, is to help small and medium businesses that have spent money on COVID measures, such as plexiglass, signage, door modification, and personal protective equipment, retroactive to June 1.

Town staff have developed the application form for the Tourism Recovery Grant, created in collaboration with FedDev Ontario, and delivered in partnership with the NOTL Chamber of Commerce, winery operators, and the Niagara Region. Before COVID hit, local businesses were on track for a record year, says chamber president Eduardo Laforgia, also a member of the evaluation committee.

Once the crisis hit, it had a devastating effect on local businesses, and not just on Queen Street. Businesses in town that are part of the “tourism value chain,” although not necessarily considered part of the tourism industry, can qualify, if they have spent money to meet pandemic guidelines, he says.

“If your business is affected by tourism, or changes related to tourism, you need to apply. The eligibility is very open, very flexible. If you have any doubt, apply, and we’ll talk to you.”

Eligible businesses will be granted a minimum of $4,000, up to a maximum of $20,000. The grant is for a total of $500,000 to be distributed.

Grant eligibility also includes arts and culture, not-for-profit organizations.

Bisback wonders if the $4,000 threshold is too high for some of the smaller businesses, who may have had COVID-related expenses less than that, and are hesitant to apply. Laforgia says he thinks most businesses will have spent considerably more than that, but if the committee discovers it’s too high a benchmark, it can be lowered.

He believes most business owners are planning to apply, but they are “very, very busy,” and will get their applications in closer to the deadline.

The grant, announced last month, is expected to support about 50 businesses and maintain about 100 jobs.

In addition to Bisback, Coun. Norm Arsenault, and Laforgia, the evaluation committee includes Paul Harber, chief proprietor of Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery; Madison Vine, marketing manager at Pellet Estates Winery; and Linda Sicoli, economic development officer for the Niagara Region.

For more information about eligibility guidelines and the application process, visit notl.com/fed-dev-grant.

To begin your application, visit notl.com/fed-dev-apply.

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**Town responds to rising COVID numbers with closings**

**Penny Coles**

**The Local**

With the Premier finally admitting Monday the recent uptick in COVID cases for the week ending Nov. 1 while watching the “second wave” of the Town is responding with some measures of its own.

Doug Ford not only conceded the province is in a second wave, “it will be worse than the first wave we encountered earlier this year,” he said.

Following Monday’s announcement, the Town sent out a release saying it is “adapting operations and tightening safety precautions to safeguard the community, while continuing to provide full service to residents.”

One of the steps the Town is taking is the can-cellation of public skating at both arenas, although it remains open for organize-d, staffed activities. Public skating, which is not monitored, will be paused until Nov. 30. In addition to the number of cases, Lord Mayor Betty Disero said in her update to council Monday, the Town is taking is the can-cellation of public skating at both arenas, although it remains open for organize-d, staffed activities. Public skating, which is not monitored, will be paused until Nov. 30.

In Niagara, there were 700 new cases Monday in Ontario, and 554 new cases reported Tuesday.

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“I’m particularly excited about this study,” she says. “Residents of long-term care facilities are one of the last groups we have to break down barriers to cannabis for.”

It can be administered in a capsule, the same as other medications, she explains, and the study will help de-termine dosage for-eigns, as well as possible side effects. “We will see what the data tells us at the end of the research project.”

When COVID hit, caus-

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**Seniors using iPads for communication**

Throughout Black’s ca-

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**Sensors using iPads for communication**

Would she love to see more access to communi-

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Niagara-on-the-Lake residents will know the new regional garbage collection policies have taken effect when they see the trucks — everything about them will be shiny and new.

The Miller Waste Systems logo is on the doors. Gone is the Re-Think Your Waste campaign, replaced by Box It. Bin It. Sort It. The region’s new slogan, on the sides of the trucks, has been designed to encourage a better rate of waste diversion.

The trucks themselves, about 65 of them, are diesel, at a cost of $250,000 to $300,000 each. They have begun to arrive at the Miller site on Townline Road in NOTL, ready to roll Oct. 19, says Miller district manager Rob Harris, and were unveiled last Wednesday.

“We’re very excited. We have new trucks arriving every day,” he says.

They’ll all be available when the new contract kicks in, at the same time bags and cans of garbage collection will be limited to every other week, although recyclable and compostable material will continue to be picked up weekly.

In NOTL, the pickup days and routes will be the same.

“We’ve tried to keep it as user-friendly as we could. It’s a new contract and a new vision,” Harris says, with a company that has a long history of waste management and a reputation for good service.

“We pride ourselves on customer service. We’ll make sure garbage gets picked up on the right day, with boxes and bins put back nice and neat, and with lots of smiles on our faces.”

The contract called for all new trucks, with two different models, one configured to collect garbage and compostables, the other for blue and grey box collection.

About 100 staff will work out of the Townline Road garage and office, some of them local, newly hired and trained, some who worked for Emterra, which has the current contract, and some long-time Miller employees, says Harris.

“About 30 per cent of them will be new. We also have some transfers from other divisions, who are local and wanted to be closer to home,” he says.

Lord Mayor Betty Diserо welcomed Miller Waste Systems to NOTL, talking about its 50 years of experience, and its name for being one of the top 50 companies in Canada.

“We’ll be well-served by Miller,” she says, adding Blair McArthur, CEO, and his wife Brenda are community-minded people who always give back, improving any community they live and work in.”

Regional chair Jim Bradley also spoke of the company’s reputation, well-known across the province, and said the accolades are well-deserved.

Bradley says he is counting on residents to make changes that will help meet the Region’s 65 per cent diversion target, up from the current rate of about 50 per cent, a goal which he said is “ambitious but achievable.”

Denis Goulet, president of Miller Waste Systems, says the company is excited to serve the Niagara Region, and is “prepared to make significant investment in Niagara, in terms of property, collection assets and waste-processing capacity.”

A sister company, Escarpment Renewables, has acquired an organics processing plant in Grimsby to become a state-of-the-art facility, producing high-grade natural fertilizer for agricultural use, Goulet says.

Miller is one of two companies to share waste management across Niagara, along with CFL Environmental, which will be based in St. Catharines. The two will divide municipalities between them, with Miller covering St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Welland, Fort Erie, and Port Colborne, along with NOTL.

More information on changes to Niagara’s waste collection program is online at NiagaraRegion.ca/waste.

Lord Mayor Betty Diserо assured NOTL residents they will be well-served by Miller Waste Systems. (Penny Coles)
One of the Jordanian moments in time ever to occur during a Ni- agara-on-the-Lake council meet- ing is the tribute video, put togeth- er by town staff to Dennis Dick, a long-time councillor and friend to so many in the community. Den- nis died of cancer on Aug. 11; there was laughter, there were tears, and as a moment of the family of Dennis, a beautiful, mov- ing tribute from his friends, col- leagues, and many who were both. They spoke of his love for his family, his love of people, his desire to help, and his passion for making NOTL better, not only through his 23 years sitting at the council table, but in the community, in his volunteer work. There is no doubt that Dennis loved this town, or that the residents were his exten- ded family.

When those who spoke about Dennis for the tribute were asked what they would miss about him, there was talk of his exuberance, his optimism, his sense of humour, his boisterous laugh, his smiles, and, as many people agreed, his big, boisterous voice. Or, as former councillor Jim Collard, his long- time friend said, “everything.”

Many spoke of Dennis as someone you would always know was in the room. As council, he was never one to speak for the sake of speaking. He would sit back in his chair, a contemplative look on his face, but when he stood up to voice his opinion, he would sud- denly take up a lot of space in the room. Yes, it was because his voice was loud — he had no inside voice, said Collard — but even more so, others said, because his voice was strong. He spoke with confidence, with wisdom, with belief in what he was saying. And in doing so, although others didn’t always agree with him, he earned their respect.

The video is on the Town’s YouTube and Facebook channels. Make sure you have Kleenex.

Letters! We want letters!

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

Letters!

Some letters are


to

Counsellor

debacle

Town staff put together tribute

to friend, colleague Dennis Dick

Auchterlonie on Astrology

Special to The Local

Enola Holmes (2020) is about a 16-year-old who finds herself facing the world alone, but having been edu- cated by a wise mother, and defying the societal norms for women in the Victori- an era, she becomes an in- dependent woman, a fine detective, and manages a little romance. She aston- ishes brothers Sherlock and Mycroft, and me, who love Enola’s focused actions and the film.

View from the couch

Martha Stewart, the “Queen of Embroidery” is a great inspiration. However, modern female designers seem to have abandoned this art form. The “I Love Lucy” show inspired me to do some embroidery on a t-shirt. This process is not as easy as it seems. However, it is a great way to bring back a lost art.

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Hike shows fall colours just a three-hour drive away

Cathy Simpson
Special to The Local

We’re very happy to be in time for library month, and Ontario Public Library Week, Oct. 18 through 24. We’re not going to be able to celebrate the way we usually do, but have some virtual celebrations planned. Watch the library’s website for details. We need your help to support and cherish every- one’s rights, but need to have take that short drive, be a little adventurous, and feel it for yourself. The people up there are so relaxed and lovely. It’s like stepping back in time.

The guys and I found our- selves in silence after a series of good laughs as we looked out over Old Baldy. The fall col- ours are impossibly painted across both sides of the valley.

To make the most of it with nature, and cheers to my buddy and his wife-to-be!

Fall colours not yet seen in Niagara have arrived in Beaver Valley, a short distance north. (Owen Bjorgan)

Library opens for browsing slowly and cautiously

Members of Knit-a-Bit met every Friday at the library for years before COVID, and have just recently returned, after meeting via Zoom in recent months.

We've seen these barriers to access during amplified the COVID-19 pandemic, and are doing our best to ensure those with slow or no internet access, or those with no computer and Wi-Fi access, still have access to information and learning. We’re now open for com- puter and Wi-Fi access, with technology tutoring by ap- pointment, and we are loaning Wi-Fi hotspots. As well, we’ve recently added coding toys, LaunchPads and Wond- erbooks to the collection. LaunchPads are tablets pre-loaded with learning ap- plications for children, teens and adults, with internet access required. Wonderbooks are print books with a ready-to- play audiobook kids can read along with, and then switch to learning mode for literacy practise. We have several diff- erent loaning toys that also don’t require an internet con- nection.

We believe these resources will level the learning play- field, and we encourage you to borrow and explore them. The library is now open for browsing. Tuesdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Thurs- days from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., and Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Computers, tech tutoring sessions, and study spaces are available by appointment on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and can be booked online by visiting the library’s website, notplibrarylibrary.org or call 905-668-2023.

We’re really missing seeing everyone, and look forward to welcoming you back. The library looks a little different due to health and safety mea- sures, but we still have the same mission: enriching the community by providing ac- cess to the world’s ideas and information. See you at the library.

We need your help to ensure the safety and secu- rity of horse and carriages on the streets. As Canadians, we re- spect and cherish every- one’s rights, but need to retain control; Our rights have been lost and balance needs to be restored. All working animals in public need protection. We ask that you take a few moments to send your comments and support (daily if possible) to SecurityFromTrespass@OMA-
FRANNTaylor.com or call 905-668-2023.
Stop shaking, “she says.

Toing for some news, I couldn’t

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paw on Niagara Lakeshore Road last week, snatched up a kitten from the road, she had no idea whether the wee orange ball of fur was alive or dead.

A talented amateur photo-

her plan had been to spend some time with her camera and then head home, but when she realized she had driven over a kitten, as had the vehi-

le behind her, she turned around as soon as she could to pick him up. As she

limately send him to someone

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t an amputation on a kit-

ight. The kitty was in shock, and she was told he might have severe neurological damage — they just didn’t know at that point. They

s said they would put him on pain medication, and since it was late afternoon, they asked about sending him to the emergency medical clinic overnight.

en got complicat-

d,” says White.

t told them I couldn’t take

take financial responsibili-

ty. I’m newly retired, and I

knew the bill would be sig-

ificant. But I had already

formed an emotional at-

achment.

said, ‘that can’t be my

call. You have to make the
decision.’

With the cost of over-

night care about $600, the clinic decided they would keep him, and in the morn-

he was doing much better.

.MiddleCenter

fghter.” White did some research and found a red-head-

fighter named Micky, and that became the name of the little ginger kitten, whom the veterinarian said was seven weeks old, and weighed just two pounds. “They told me he be still wasn’t out of the woods, but he was more active, and they felt he needed surgery, a leg amputation. His left front leg was paralyzed, and the vet wasn’t comfortable do-

ng an amputation on a kit-

so young, so they want-

to send him to someone

more experienced.”

White told them she’d start a GoFundMe page, and committed to what she could raise on that, she said. “The fund is doing well, but White says she has no idea what the final bill will be, and has decided to keep the fund going, to also cover vaccinations, neutering, and pet insurance for anything else that pops up in the fu-

ture. She is also hoping, with all the coverage on social

media, to find a permanent home for Micky — she has a sweet, she’s not making a
decision about giving him up just yet.

NOTL Cat Rescue will likely help with the adop-
tion process, if that’s what she decides, but doesn’t have the funds to pay for Micky’s medical needs — no rescue organization has that kind of money, she says.

The area of Townline Road and Lakeshore, where she picked up the kitten, is known for stray cats and kittens, White says. “There is probably a col-

ury there, maybe several. There has to be a way to get them spayed. But there ar-

n’t a lot of financial breaks for rescue organizations.”

Erika Buchkowsky, a volunteer with NOTL Cat Rescue, says the story of Micky is all too familiar. There is another little kitten, Murphy, at the rescue shel-

ner now, who continues to have health issues. He was found by town staff at the Concession 6 roundabout, “in really bad shape, and he’s going to become expen-

sive too. He’s another needy

Continued on page 9
Continued from page 8

kitten.” Shelter volunteers have already trapped about 20 cats and kittens in the area where Micky was found, to be spayed or neutered, she says, and he is likely one they missed — his orange and white colouring is similar to those they picked up.

“lt’s a problem area, but just one of many,” says Buchkowsky. Most of them have been vet-checked and adopted, but the shelter still has six adults that are slowly being socialized, hopefully to go to good homes.

“People think of feral cats or being mean and nasty,” she says. “They aren’t at all. They’re just not used to humans or human contacts. They’re not nasty, they’re really frightened.”

The local cat rescue organization has trapped 74 cats and kittens in the last year to be spayed or neutered, most of whom have been adopted, although the few that can’t be socialized are returned to where they’re found. They have 14 cats in the shelter at the moment.

A male and female cat can produce a lot of kittens in a year. Buchkowsky says, and those kittens go on to reproduce, so when you have an area of feral cats, the numbers can grow exponentially. There aren’t a lot of vets offering discounts, spay and neuter rescue, such as the one in NOTL, she volunteers for, haven’t been able to do a lot of fundraising during COVID.

“Some of the volunteers like myself have been paying for food, litter, and other supplies, and the vet bills, out of our own pockets,” she says.

“Cat rescues can be mentally and financially draining.”

To learn about or donate to NOTL Cat Rescue, check out the organization’s Facebook page.

In recent months, White has used her photography skills to help raise money for the shelter. She has been offering mini-sessions for families or their pets, and offering a package of five edited photographs, which have been well-received. She charges $100, with the full amount going to the shelter, and has so far been able to donate $800. White is willing to continue her personal fundraiser for the shelter for the month of October, and can be reached through Messenger on Facebook.

Meanwhile, she says, after a bad week, Micky is doing well. He’s “a real sweet-heart,” eating, which will help him stronger for the difficult surgery he’s facing, active, vocal, and happy playing with toys in White’s guest room.

But he has a long recovery ahead of him, and a lot of challenges, says White.

Janice White is finding Micky to be a sweet-natured kitten, and is pleased with the progress he is making leading up to surgery. To donate to Micky’s GoFundMe page, visit https://www.gofundme.com/lhelp-poor-kitty-hit-by-car.
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The intersection of colour, mood and emotion are of great interest to homeowners – especially when it comes to their bedrooms. Consider using greens and blues to create feelings of relaxation, purples to lift your spirit, dark tones to give off that dramatic air, and/or warm grays to conjure equal feelings of comfort and sophistication. If there was ever a time to create spaces of warmth and comfort, it’s now. Visit the colour experts at Creek Road Paints, Benjamin Moore in Virgil for your next project, and let us help you find the hues that are right for you and your space.

Make time for music

Yamaha’s MusicCast feature brings your music throughout the house wirelessly.

Submitted by Thomas IV

Escape the chill of autumn with the classic, warm sound of vinyl records! Reaching for your favourite album, setting it on the turntable, dropping the needle as you settle in with a glass of wine – it sure sounds good. Whether you are getting back to the pursuit after shelving your albums, or are new to it, our customers really enjoy the experience.

Today’s turntables offer more than ever before. Some even feature a USB port so you can create a digital copy of your vinyl record, and others have a wireless or Bluetooth option for easy connectivity. Thomas TV carries several brands and a range of models that meet any budget. One example is Pro-Ject Audio. Pro-Ject is seen as a world leader in the manufacturing of quality hi-fi turntables, earning nearly every award in the audio industry. Their popular Debut Carbon is a customer favourite, available in high gloss colours, classic black or walnut finish, several magnetic cartridge options and a carbon fibre tonearm that decreases unwanted resonance. Ask our knowledgeable staff what they recommend for you and shop our selection of vinyl records and turntable accessories on display in our showroom.

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Nursery school little ones prove adaptable, resilient

Penny Coles
The Local

Although the Niagara Nursery School and Child Care Centre had hoped to be in its new, expanded home by the end of the year, like everything else, plans have had to be flexible during a pandemic.

In the meantime, the nursery school is fortunate to be able to take advantage of the beautiful green space surrounding its facility, says executive director Candice Penny.

Behind the community centre, youngsters can spread out and make the most of the outdoors, having fun looking for bugs, playing ball, ring-around-the-rosie, and other games with their friends.

“We’re outside the majority of the time, about six hours a day. We have such great outdoor space, and we’re making the most of it. We’re very fortunate with what is available to us.”

Even when the cold weather arrives, she says, “as long as everybody is dressed for it, and it’s not too harsh, we’ll be outside as much as possible.”

Inside, the school space and routine has changed, but kids “have shown how adaptive and resilient they are,” says Penny. “Our day is different, and we have a very different-looking classroom. But we still have the same great, loving, warm and caring atmosphere.”

Cleaning was always an important part of their day, she says, “but it’s on another level now,” with extra staff to help, so they don’t have to worry about cleaning and being with the kids at the same time.

The large area carpets have been removed, as have the soft furnishings, pillows and “cozy things,” she says. “The use of toys is monitored, and children must wash their hands between use. The toys played with in the morning are put away for deep-cleaning, and a new set is brought out for the afternoon.”

Instead of nap-time settings being brought from home, they are provided at school, bagged up and labelled with the child’s name, and washed after each nap with soap, water and disinfectant, says Penny.

Most snacks are eaten outside, where kids can spread out, but at meal-time inside, children sit at the ends of tables, to give them more space.

“We are trying for physical distancing, but with our age group, it’s difficult,” she says. “At more high-risk times such as naps they’re spread out. Outdoors, during play time, it’s okay for them to interact.”

Parents have to go online to answer health-related questions daily, and temperatures are checked as children arrive.

Before-and-after school child care is offered in separate rooms, she says, and again, kids spend as much time as possible outside.

The nursery school has 18 children registered now, but will be up to its full complement of 24 by the end of the year.

The waiting list, she says, is 122, and growing. Most parents are on the list for about two years, ahead of when they’ll need it. “We advise them to get on the list early. About 40 of those on the wait list are ones we can’t provide space for now.”

The relocation and expansion of space is anticipated in late 2022.

“Construction has been delayed by COVID, and we have no updates right now.”

Those using the community centre have seen the future site beside the library marked off with yellow tape for some time — construction was expected to start in the spring.

The majority of the funding is expected to come from the Province, with a contribution from the Town and Region. The nursery school also plans a fundraising campaign, but again, because of COVID, it too has been delayed.

“We have to take it day by day, and be positive,” says Penny. “Right now, we’re just happy everybody is coping so well.”

During the closure last spring, until the end of August, there were regular Zoom sessions for parents and children, to keep the kids “engaged and connected,” she says. Birthdays were celebrated online, children were encouraged to share information about their pets, and hear the familiar nursery school songs and stories.

“It was a bit of an adjustment for some of the kids, but a lot of them loved it. I don’t know what we’d do without technology!”

Staff and board meetings have also been held virtually, and are likely to continue that way through the winter, she adds. “If there is one benefit to this, it’s been to a work/life balance. Technology has been such a useful tool,” says Penny.

“But personal connections are also important, for all ages,” she says. “It’s wonderful to be back together, safely!”

As the two-year term of board members wraps up, Penny says, “we have been so grateful for all the hard work and support our current board has provided our school over the last two years, especially with regards to COVID-19 and our expansion plans.”

The board of directors is an integral part of the school, she says. “We are very grateful to have directors that are so dedicated, and have a true passion for our community.”

In saying thank you to the board for all that they have done during their term, Penny says, “we look forward to seeing what new community members may be interested in coming aboard and for the next two years.” Anyone interested, she adds, is encouraged to reach out via email at niagaranursery@gmail.com.

School-age friends Luca Moreno (clockwise, from bottom right), Gavin Carpenter, Hudson Ward and Aeryn Garth have their after-school snack out by the climbing trees. (Photo supplied)
We are proud of our VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Thank you to the Volunteer Firefighters of Niagara-on-the-Lake

from Lord Mayor Betty Disero and Members of Council
Message from the Fire Chief: Committed to the community, and each other...

Early in 2020, the evolving COVID-19 response began to impact each and every one of us. The uncertainty that surrounded the constantly evolving response was felt by many, and your volunteer firefighters were no different. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their unwavering commitment to their community, even amid such uncertainty, and for being a strong and consistent foundation our community can always lean on in times of need.

During the height of the ongoing response to COVID-19, 15 newly recruited volunteer firefighters graduated from their 300-hour recruit training program, without fanfare, and began responding to emergencies throughout our community. Their fortitude as they commenced their new roles is admirable, given the circumstances.

I would like to thank The NOTL Local for ensuring our local volunteer firefighters are recognized for their significant contribution to the community, and additionally, their interest in covering Fire Prevention Week 2020. This year’s Fire Prevention Week campaign, “Serve Up Fire Safety in the Kitchen!” works to educate everyone about the simple but important actions they can take to keep themselves, and those around them, safe in the kitchen. Cooking is the leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries in Canada.

As we approach Thanksgiving, I ask you to make a commitment to ensuring the safety of your family. Ensure that you have working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in your home. It might just save a life.

Nick Ruller
Fire Chief & CEMC
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Firefighter

Jeremy Froese
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Milan Vujovich
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Thank you to all of our courageous Volunteer Firefighters for your dedication to our community!

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Lucas Devries
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Bill Maartense
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Thank you Volunteer Firefighters!
Volunteers do not necessarily have the time, they just have the heart.

Thank you!

Sean Ferguson
Lieutenant

Scott Maxwell
Lieutenant

Tyler Bessey
Firefighter

Graham Bettes
Firefighter

James Chandler
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Alistair Harlond
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Firefighter

Brenda Lowes
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Lorenzo Mazzuca
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Ken Petrunick
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Lyle Renaud
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Andrew Stuart
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The NOTL local
October 1, 2020

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Safe Home NOTL – Smoke Alarm Program

While our day-to-day lives have changed for the time being, the threat of fire within our homes has not. With more people now working from home and generally spending more time in their homes, the annual average number of house fires have begun to increase. Fire chiefs across the province attribute this increase to preventable cooking or smoking related issues. With house fires on the rise, it is more important than ever to ensure you have working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.

In case you missed our article in The Local a few weeks ago, don’t forget that smoke and carbon monoxide alarms expire. Most alarms expire 10 years from the date of manufacture. Always check with your device instruction manual to confirm your alarm’s expiry date.

A reminder to serve up fire safety in the kitchen

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire & Emergency Services is teaming up with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) — the official sponsor of Fire Prevention Week for more than 90 years — to promote this year’s Fire Prevention Week campaign, “Serve Up Fire Safety in the Kitchen!” The campaign works to educate everyone about simple but important actions they can take to keep themselves and those around them safe.

Cooking is the leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries in Canada. The majority of reported home fires started in the kitchen. Most home fires start with the ignition of food or other cooking materials. “We know cooking fires can be prevented,” said Loraine Carli, vice-president of outreach and advocacy at NFPA. “Staying in the kitchen while cooking, using a timer, and avoiding distractions such as electronics or TV are steps everyone can take to keep families safe in their homes.”

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire & Emergency Services encourages all residents to embrace the 2020 Fire Prevention Week theme.

“The most important step you should take before making a meal is to Serve Up Fire Safety in the Kitchen,” said Brad Dishaw, Fire Prevention Officer. “A cooking fire can grow quickly. I have seen many homes damaged and people injured by fires that could easily have been prevented.”

“It’s easy to get distracted while cooking, especially with multiple people in the home while food is cooking. And use a timer to remind you that you’re cooking.”

You have to leave, even for a short time, turn off the stove.

Never leave cooking food unattended. Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, grilling or broiling food. If you have to leave, even for a short time, turn off the stove.

If you are simmering, boiling, roasting, or boiling food, check it regularly. Remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that you’re cooking. You have to leave, even for a short time, turn off the stove.

To find out more about fire safety programs and activities in Niagara-on-the-Lake, please contact the Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire & Emergency Services at firedepartment@notl.com. For more general information about Fire Prevention Week and cooking fire prevention, visit www.fpw.org.
Fundraiser for painful illness held in St. Davids

Brenda Sharp
Special to The Local

"Imagine waking up one day to what feels like someone stabbing you repeatedly in the face, each strike more intense than the last — in your forehead, your jaw, your eye, your lips, your mouth.

Then the shocks start coming, what feels like volts of electricity coursing through one side of your face. And when the storm ceases, you're left with a dull, aching pain that persists until the next attack, leaving you vulnerable to any trigger — a simple breeze, a light touch, a bite of food, a kiss from a loved one . . .

That's how life is described on a website that is raising funds for anyone suffering from Trigeminal Neuralgia (TN), a nerve disorder doctors classify as one of the worst pains known to mankind. Others simply call it "the suicide disease." Trigeminal Neuralgia strikes without warning. There are few truly effective treatments, and it is currently incurable.

Amy Tomasulo is a TN patient. Her husband, Pat Tomasulo, is a sports anchor and reporter on the WGN Morning News in Chicago. He is also a stand-up comedian. He and Amy are the geniuses behind Laugh Your Face Off (LYFO), an annual comedy night fundraiser to benefit the Facial Pain Research Foundation (FPRF).

The FPRF is the only foundation dedicated to raising money to fund research for a cure for TN, and they are getting close. Each year in the past, LYFO was held as a live show in Chicago. Due to the pandemic this year, the 6th Annual LYFO went virtual. A live link was shared around the world, so others could learn about the disease and donate to the volunteer research foundation.

As the volunteer fundraising coordinator for the FPRF, I decided to host, along with my husband Bryan Sharp, an outdoor watch party at our home at Creekside Senior Estates. We borrowed an eight foot by eight foot outdoor projection screen, prayed for good weather, secured donations for a silent auction and penny auction, and held a 50/50 draw. And what a success it was! From my community alone, we raised $2,020. I am humbled by the generosity of my friends and neighbours here at Creekside Senior Estates.

At the end of the virtual show, Pat Tomasulo shared that during the live airing of LYFO, more than $300,000 in donations had been sent in. And the donations continued to arrive at the FPRF the following day.

What started out as a last-minute decision to keep the event going, despite the pandemic, ended up being our most successful fundraiser to date. We are so grateful for everyone's support. Anyone with a desire to learn more about TN, and how they can help keep our research for a cure going, is encouraged to visit www.facingfacialpain.org.

St. Davids resident Brenda Sharp, a sufferer of TN, is the support group leader for the Niagara Region and a volunteer fundraising coordinator for FPRF.
Young musicians learn performance skills online

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

This summer’s Mu-
sic Niagara Performance Academy was forced to long association with both the Shaw Festival and CBC Radio, has been the director of the Performance Academy for seven years. The academy brings together a faculty of world-class musicians to offer a unique summer experience for specially gifted young performers. Each August, students learn from masters of violin, piano and cello. The 2020 faculty included pianists Dr. Victoria Korchnyskaya-Kogan and Michael Berkovsky, academy alumni violinists Bora Kim, Emma Meirenken and Jasmine Lin, and cellist Matthew Christakos. Of course, Music Niagara artistic director Ats Banks is also involved in the sessions. Worthy says noth-
ing will come to pass if the students are not involved as well.

Worthy says that the students (who participated) identified with them, and could see where they could go. They were mentoring them, and teaching them, and showing them the path, she adds.

The daily sessions were about seven hours long, and included instruction specific to their instruments, as well as the performance sessions. This year, 13 musically-gifted students aged 10 to 18, took part in the academy, seven of whom were able to have the opportunity to participate from their own homes in Mexico. The Mexican students were all from the Conser-
mate arts skills, you can see how it gets done. “The students (who participated) identified with them, and could see where they could go. They were mentoring them, and teaching them, and showing them the path,” she adds.

The daily sessions were about seven hours long, and included instruction specific to their instruments, as well as the performance sessions. This year, 13 musically-gifted students aged 10 to 18, took part in the academy, seven of whom were able to have the opportunity to participate from their own homes in Mexico. The Mexican students were all from the Conservatory of Music and Arts of Celaya in Mexico, with whom Music Niagara has developed a partnership.

Worthy says nothing seemed to have been lost in the Zoom format, which included a few chances for Music Niagara Festival supporters and fans to sit in and observe. “Atis has always been very keen on having his audience be able to see behind the scenes,” explains Worthy. “That’s been a part of his man-
date for years. Even when we were live (in-person), he would always invite supporters to certain workshops. It’s all part of peeling back the covers behind the music, so you can see how it gets done.” Worthy says she is amazed at how much she learned this year through the Zoom sessions. “Watching these younger instructors pass on their knowledge to the students, and then informing things to Atis that even he didn’t know, the teacher was learning from the student, that was really important. And I think (Atis) was really respectful of that as well.”

Using the online format, it was also quite easy to schedule full sessions to be recorded for future use. In fact, three of the perfor-
manence and presentation skills. “When they present their music,” Worthy continues, “they have the same physical exposure and with the vocal skills, they can also speak and be understood. When you study the per-
performance academy sessions can be viewed in their entirety via the website and YouTube channel.

One other opportunity has arisen due to the on-
line version of the academy this summer. According to Music Niagara Festival general manager Karen Lade, the sessions went so well, they are looking into ways to be able to extend the academy to offer instructions throughout the year.

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

This summer’s Mu-
sic Niagara Performance Academy was forced to long association with both the Shaw Festival and CBC Radio, has been the director of the Performance Academy for seven years. The academy brings together a faculty of world-class musicians to offer a unique summer experience for specially gifted young performers. Each August, students learn from masters of violin, piano and cello. The 2020 faculty included pianists Dr. Victoria Korchnyskaya-Kogan and Michael Berkovsky, academy alumni violinists Bora Kim, Emma Meirenken and Jasmine Lin, and cellist Matthew Christakos. Of course, Music Niagara artistic director Ats Banks is also involved in the sessions. Worthy says noth-
ing will come to pass if the students are not involved as well.

Worthy says that the students (who participated) identified with them, and could see where they could go. They were mentoring them, and teaching them, and showing them the path,” she adds.

The daily sessions were about seven hours long, and included instruction specific to their instruments, as well as the performance sessions. This year, 13 musically-gifted students aged 10 to 18, took part in the academy, seven of whom were able to have the opportunity to participate from their own homes in Mexico. The Mexican students were all from the Conservatory of Music and Arts of Celaya in Mexico, with whom Music Niagara has developed a partnership.

Worthy says nothing seemed to have been lost in the Zoom format, which included a few chances for Music Niagara Festival supporters and fans to sit in and observe. “Atis has always been very keen on having his audience be able to see behind the scenes,” explains Worthy. “That’s been a part of his man-
date for years. Even when we were live (in-person), he would always invite supporters to certain workshops. It’s all part of peeling back the covers behind the music, so you can see how it gets done.” Worthy says she is amazed at how much she learned this year through the Zoom sessions. “Watching these younger instructors pass on their knowledge to the students, and then informing things to Atis that even he didn’t know, the teacher was learning from the student, that was really important. And I think (Atis) was really respectful of that as well.”

Using the online format, it was also quite easy to schedule full sessions to be recorded for future use. In fact, three of the perfor-
manence academy sessions can be viewed in their entirety via the website and YouTube channel.

One other opportunity has arisen due to the on-
line version of the academy this summer. According to Music Niagara Festival general manager Karen Lade, the sessions went so well, they are looking into ways to be able to extend the academy to offer instructions throughout the year.
Sudoku solution from September 24, 2020

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

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The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL
The trusted voice of our community.
Jane Andres
Special to The Local

In February, 2012, Jodie Godwin, her 12-year-old daughter Leah and I had the opportunity to visit Ja-
maica.

The purpose of the trip was to meet the families of the men who worked on farms in our neighbour-
hood back home. It had been a whirlwind tour, and after 10 days we arrived in the parish of St. Mary.

Slightly disoriented after a dizzying day of trav-
eling on winding coun-
try roads, we climbed the rocky driveway to the church manse.

Stepping into the front hall, I was greeted by a glo-
rious sight — the angelic
chair and beams of light — a stack of peach masters
impressed with the very
familiar Epp Farm logo. It
was both a comfort and a
curiosity to be welcomed
by this unexpected, but fa-
miliar product so very far
from home.

Rev. Alice Blair ex-
plained that Abe Epp had
used the boxes to ship
books to her church to
distribute to the primary
school across the road.

Dave Hunter, Abe Epp, Betty Knight and Kent Gray have books ready to ship to schools in
Jamaica. (Photos by Jane Andres)

Epp began hitting men
from Jamaica to work on his
modest peach farm in the
mid-1960s. Starting with
four men, his work force
grew as each year his op-
erations expanded, to eventu-
ally become one of the larg-
est peach farms in Canada.

Some of the friendships
forged with crew members
in the early days continued
throughout the years.

One of those men was
Uton Bell, who Mr. Epp had
first visited in Bell’s home
town of Ginger Ridge back
in 1969.

In 2009, Epp asked for
Bell’s help in arranging a
tour for friends and rela-
tives who had stopped over in
Jamaica while on a cruise.

Traveling in a 10-passen-
ger van on those treacher-
ous mountain roads was
not for the faint of heart.

When the van reached Gar-
den Hill School, high up in
Juan Del Bolas district, the
group was invited in for a
tour.

Niagara residents Mar-
gie Enns, a supply teacher,
and Marg Heinrichs, a li-
brarian with the Lincoln
County board of Educa-
tion, struck up a conversa-
tion with principal, Marva
Rhule, asking what the ru-
ral school’s most pressing
need was.

“Books!” was the em-
phatic response.

Upon returning home, Enns and Heinrichs en-
thusiastically began scour-
 ing yard sales, and book
sales at the local libraries. Epp offered to take care of
the shipping costs, and the
project took off.

This past March, I was
in Jamaica and had the
opportunity to meet with
Marva Rhule and her hus-
bond Elkanah, both for-
mer principals at Garden
Hill School when the book
project was launched.

They bubbled over with
enthusiasm as they recalled
the joy of receiving the first
shipment. Students and
their parents would come
in an hour before school started to get some reading
time in before classes. For
the first time, they could
also select books to borrow
and take home. Interest in
improving their own literacy
grew quickly among the
parents, and reading to-
gether as a family became a
cherished activity in many
of the homes.

Within the first year, the
students at Garden Hill
achieved the national liter-
acy level, an accom-
plishment they credit to
the books stimulating their
passion for reading.

The project became an
annual event. Every Au-
gust, after the books were
collected, Epp and his em-
ployees prepared them at
his farm for shipping.

Eight years ago, a
member of the Niaga-
ra-on-the-Lake library
board, Dave Hunter, who
is currently vice-chair, ex-
panded the project to col-
lect books from seven Ni-
agara Region libraries.

“It wasn’t until I watched
the interview (with Marva
and Elkanah Rhule) that all
of a sudden the project re-
ally came alive. I mean we
have not only raised litera-
acy levels, we have actually
helped young people to-
ward careers that take them
beyond their rural villages,”
says Hunter.

Betty Knight, anoth-
er member of the NOTL
Public Library board, has
also joined. She has years
of experience in education
projects in developing na-
tions, and is also respon-
sible for sorting the books
and choosing the ones best
suited for different levels.

This year, books will be
shipped to two schools: Gar-
den Hill, and, for the first
time, the Pringle Home For
Children in St. Mary. They are excited to
be partnering with Rachel
Pellett, the assistant direc-
tor at Pringle Home, who
is also passionate about lit-
eracy. Pellett worked with
MCC ( Menomonite Central
Committee ) in Niagara in
2013 and 2014 as a com-
munity engagement intern,
creating connections be-
tween local churches and the
Caribbean workers.

Last Monday, we gath-
ered at the Epp farm to
wrap and sign off on the books
loaded for transport.

As Garfield Martin care-
fully maneuvered the pallet
on the tow motor into the
shipping van, Epp came
over to me, waving a suitable
stack of letters. They were
all hand-written by chil-
dren who appreciated the
books he had sent over the
years. On one occasion, he
was even invited to a gradu-
ation ceremony at one of the
schools, an invitation he
gratefully accepted.

“These letters are trea-
ures,” he says, his face light-
ning up as he recalled the
faces of the children in the
photographs, forever
impressed in his memory.

This year marks 10 years
of support for the book
project, and Epp is retiring
after many of his years of en-
thusiastic service.

Thank you Mr. Epp for
your dedication to this
worthwhile project, bring-
ing hope and a passion
for literacy to these rural
schools.

The group hopes that participation by more li-
braries in Niagara will
build on this success and
increase the support for ru-
rnal schools and libraries in
Jamaica.

For more information,
or if you would like to be
involved, please contact
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