Climate change rally attracts energetic crowd

Penny Coles  
The Local

The message was clear. Something needs to be done, and done now.

About 60 people gathered on the Court House steps Friday, and on the sidewalk of Queen Street, joining in one of many rallies which occurred across Canada Friday.

The Global Climate Protest, which saw millions of people turn out in countries around the world, was in part inspired by teen Greta Thunberg, who protested climate change in Sweden about a year ago. She encouraged youth to organize school strikes, as part of a movement called Fridays for Future.

When local senior Cynthia Rand heard about a rally planned in St. Catharines, she says, it didn’t seem right to drive her car to a protest for climate change, so she quickly organized one to be held in NOTL.

When she arrived, she was astonished by the turnout waiting for her.

“I thought I’d be here, sitting on the Court House steps by myself, with one little sign,” she said.

“I was absolutely amazed.” She underestimated the power of group emails and social media.

Her husband, along with several of her friends and acquaintances, sent out emails, while others, including Julia Buxton Cox, administrator of NOTL Today, a popular Facebook page, notified followers of the protest.

Many arrived on foot or bicycle, with signs optimistically proclaiming “you can make a difference,” urging change to protect animals, trees and humans, and the Amazon rainforest, one saying “Make love, not CO2.”

The thrill for many was the arrival of students from Royal Oak Community School, gathered on the steps of the Court House Friday. (Penny Coles)
Residents turn out to talk about healthy community

Penny Coles
The Local

Members of the Town’s Wellness Committee, determined to find out what “wellness” means to the residents of Niagra-on-the-Lake, held two public forums last Thursday to do just that.

The results of a survey online and the input from 54 residents who attended the public forums, will inform recommendations the committee will make to council in November, with work expected to begin in the new year, said chair Cindy Grant.

What she hoped to hear at the forum, she said in her introduction, “is no complaints. What we want to hear is ‘this could be improved, and here is an idea of how it could be improved’.”

Lord Mayor Betty Disero, also a member of the new Town committee, MC’d the event, telling those gathered about the official plan, a strategic plan, healthy community: a good health of the importance of three event, telling those gathered about the new year, said chair Cindy Grant.

With a committee member at each table, residents were asked to address each of eight different categories within its framework: healthy community, community vitality, which includes transportation; culture and leisure; democratic engagement, environment; education; time use; and living standards, which touch on Y ork Road.

Different amounts of time were spent on each category, depending on the need for improvements — for example, culture and leisure is an area where the committee feels NOTL already does well.

Table of residents came up with different suggestions, and that information was noted to be combined into a summary that would be sent to those who participated, to give them an opportunity to see what has been said and add anything new they feel had been missed.

At one table in the after noon session were Jurbala, Old Town residents M.J. McGraw and Margaret Walker, and Jim Fisher and Yuk sel Oren, both of whom live on York Road.

Talking about the need for better transportation and connectivity in the community, it was suggested that although they are costly, more bike lanes or bike paths are needed to encourage safe cycling. “There are so many bikes on the road now. It’s become very dangerous for some people to be on certain roads,” said Fisher, who lives on one of the most dangerous roads for cyclists, with no shoulders to ride on.

M.J. McGraw and Margaret Walker talk about issues affecting quality of life in NOTL, including life-long learning and affordable housing for seniors, while Community Wellness Committee member Paul Jurbala takes notes. (Penny Coles)

Fisher, who lives nearer to Queenston, said residents in his neighbourhood tend to use more services in Ni agara Falls, a more convenient drive.

In a discussion about recreational facilities, many mentioned Niaga ra-on-the-Lake does a great job with its pools, arenas, and parks.

“There are people who would really like an indoor pool,” said Walker. It would be a wonderful thing to have in town, she said, “but in my opinion, it would be at the bottom of the list. It would be expensive to build and maintain.”

Others agreed there are indoor pools not far away in Niagara Falls and St. Catharines.

The full suit will be produced, except for black boots. Delaney says he has one Santa lined up, and would be happy to find two or three who can rotate.

“Would I really like is someone who is the grand father-type, who loves the Christmas season, and is touched by the Christmas spirit. Someone who identifies with the character.”

For more information contact him at donavandelaney@gmail.com.
Diverse ideas and common themes discussed

Continued from page 2

One of the discussions was about education, “but think broader than schools,” said Jurbala to his group. “Think about lifelong learning and the broader aspects of education.”

McGraw mentioned the former high school used to offer evening courses that were well-attended.

“I’d like to find a way to bring them back. It wouldn’t have to be in a school — they can be held anywhere. The college or university could organize them off-campus. They could be in a church basement.”

If Niagara College or Brock University were invited to offer classes in town, they would do an assessment to see what the community wants, she said. “We can’t rely on Town staff to do the inviting. We have to get a group of like-minded people together to organize it.”

In a discussion about the environment, Fisher and Oren, both on the north side of York Road with vineyards behind them, objected to the constant noise from bird bangers, calling them “explosive devices.” For about three months of the year, the propane-powered bird bangers go off from a half-hour before sunrise until a half hour after sunset, said Fisher, suggesting the Town should be looking at alternatives, including netting. The two men also said there should be some research done on the use of pesticides and how they affect the health of residents living near orchards and vineyards. “No one is talking about the air quality in NOTL from spraying,” said Fisher.

When the conversation moved to affordable housing, Walker said it’s badly needed for seniors who live in the Old Town and want to stay there. “I would love to see a seniors development that’s affordable,” said Walker. “A lot of Old Town residents don’t want to move to Virgil.”

McGraw suggested a workshop dedicated solely to the topic of affordable housing. “We need to be looking 10 to 15 years into the future.”

Grant, who walked around the room listening to the conversations at both sessions, said she heard a variety of diverse ideas, as well as some overlapping suggestions.

Noise problems were a common thread, she said, and more than one group spoke of health concerns from agricultural spraying. “That’s an issue for the Town to decide on how to proceed,” she said.

There was talk of the need for better communication and awareness — for instance, many residents talking about transportation didn’t know there is a town bus that connects with Glendale, and then to other municipalities.

Also the 211 community information service, a great resource which provides the answers to all kinds of questions, is unknown to many, she said.

One of the recommendations the committee is likely to make to the Town is for something similar to the blue pages in phone books, that would detail the many local services and organizations and contact information. While some of that is available in the Community Awareness booklet published by the Town, it’s not nearly as detailed as it could be, Grant said.

Affordable housing and assisted living needs were also themes that were thoroughly discussed, she said.

While Grant would have liked better attendance, she said, “we were very pleased with the results. The energy in the room was good, the noise level was high, and the people who were there were truly engaged.”
Message from protesters: act now

School. School director Jui-
lius Cain Murray had heard
about it Thursday evening,
and Friday morning students
worked quickly to make signs
before walking from their
Wellington Avenue school
rooms to the Court House.

“It was lovely to have the
kids there, and the Shaw ac-
tors,” said Rand.

“It’s not a joyful occasion,
especially for the kids. I’d
imagine they’re full of fore-
boding. I can remember Tom,
my middle child, worrying
about nuclear energy at the
age of 10. Kids worry about
these things.”

Student Maya Gazzard
asked for the opportunity to
speak. “This planet is in need
of change. We need to act
now, or never,” she said, car-
ringing a sign that proclaimed,
“Time for action is now”

Rand said it’s understand-
able individuals feel what they
do doesn’t really matter, and
worry about other things that
are important, “but not as im-
portant as this.”

What is needed to slow
global warming, she said, “is
big government action, and
big corporations and boards
of directors to get involved.
They have the power.”

But in the meantime, the
small decisions and actions of
individuals are also import-
ant, she says.

Rand said she began seri-
ously thinking about global
warming about 10 years ago.
“It’s been a little cloud for me,
there in the background, for
quite a while. Now it’s a big
cloud!”

“We have to think local,
and we have to all do our
part in saving the planet,” said
Lord Mayor Betty Disero,
also speaking to the school
children about needing to do
something to protect their fu-
ture.

Buxton Cox said she was
thrilled with the turnout,
especially having the kids
from Royal Oak join the pro-
test. “The group of Shaw ac-
tors was a bonus — we didn’t
even know they were going to
be there,” she added.

She and her husband
Dave wrote a rally cry the
evening before, which boost-
ed the energy level and helped
motivate the crowd to get into
the spirit of the protest:

“I don’t know but I’ve
been told, a healthy planet is
better than gold.
Here’s what I know the
science told, we have to fix it
before we get old.
Here’s what I know the
science told, the great big ice-
bergs need to be cold.
Here’s what I know the
science told, we need to act
and we need to be bold.
Here’s what I know the
science told, heat is rising and
we need it to hold.
Here’s what I know the
science told, Act NOW so our
kids can grow old!”

Rand said she hopes the
enthusiasm and energy gen-
erated on Queen Street Friday
morning can continue, with
the students who were there,
and also with the parents of
the students. With a federal
election approaching, votes
can influence governments to
take the big steps, she added.
She’s voting Green.
**St. Davids swimming pool design revised**

Changes made in response to residents’ comments

Penny Coles

The Local

A revised design for the new St. Davids Pool is now posted online, for residents to have a look at and make comments to the Town.

At a meeting in July at the St. Davids Lions hall about 50 people turned out to have their first glimpse of what a new swimming pool could look like, and were asked to speak up about what they liked and didn’t like.

They have done so, and the architect, pool designer and parks and recreation manager Kevin Turcotte, after hearing and reading their comments, showed a revised set of plans to residents last week.

The St. Davids Lions built the original pool, and turned it over to the Town when they could no longer afford to operate and maintain it. That was more than 50 years ago, but they also signed a 99-year lease and have 45 years left to go on it.

The Lions are concerned about preserving the green space of the park, the mature trees on the property, and retaining a layout for the pool that allows for the annual carnival to continue.

The revised design shows the pool still sitting back on the property, with the front of it facing York Road. The new change rooms and office space are shown behind the pool, with washrooms accessible from outside the pool complex for those using the rest of the park and tennis courts, says Turcotte.

That was a request from several residents, and it makes sense, allowing the washrooms to be used outside of the pool, with washrooms facing Y ork Road, Turcotte says.

The first design was for a pool with four lanes, but residents have said they’d like to see six, so the revised renderings show six lanes. The “beach entrance” with a gradual slope into the pool for youngsters in the shallow area, has been enlarged, says Turcotte. The “blue sail” area to provide some shade is still included in the design.

The rounded bench area in the original design has been eliminated because of safety concerns about the difficulty of guarding the area, but there is still a bench for those who want to sit in the water and chat, says Turcotte.

The change-room building is still shown as a family-friendly universal change room, which was well-supported by many of the residents, he says. Playground equipment will be on the south side of the pool.

The budget has been pegged at $3 million to $3.5 million, says Turcotte.

Lord Mayor Betty Duero and some of the councillors have seen the design, which will likely be shown to council as they discuss next year’s budget, along with a detailed cost analysis. The Town is also expected to apply for a provincial grant this fall, and will be forming a fundraising committee to augment funding from the Town and Province, if the grant application is successful.

Residents are encouraged to check out the revised design and site plan and to express their opinions on the town’s website at jointheconservationstlouis.com/st-davids-park-and-pool.

**Firefighters called to Line 1**

Local Staff

When Niagara-on-the-Lake firefighters were dispatched to Line 1 last Thursday, they thought they were going to a structure fire that had been reported by a neighbour.

Niagara Regional Police went to the address for the same reason, says Fire Chief Nick Ruller.

But firefighters couldn’t access the burn from Line 1 — it was in a field they accessed from Concession 4, he said.

“It wasn’t a structure fire, and it wasn’t a permitted outdoor agricultural burn, it was someone burning debris,” he said.

It was the site of an open-air burn pile, commonly used by a nursery operator on his property, but in this case, because it was debris being burned, it was not permitted, Ruller said.

“They had called for permission to burn, but it was outside the guidelines for a permitted burn. It was clear it was debris,” Ruller said although the police had dismantled a marijuana grow-op in near-by greenhouses the week before, “I don’t think there is any connection (between the fire and the grow-op).”

Uniform officers were also called to the area of Line 1 Road and Concession 4 last Thursday for a structure fire, says NRP media relations officer Stephanie Sabourin.

“When officers arrived, they activated the Guns, Gangs and Growers Unit for further investigation due to the presence of cannabis plants,” she says.

No charges have been laid.

**All-candidates meeting at St. Davids Lions Hall**

Local Staff

The St. Davids Ratepayers’ Association is hosting an all-candidates meeting Tuesday, Oct. 8, at 6 p.m. at the St. Davids Lions Club on York Road.

Depending on the number of participants, the event should end no later than 8 p.m. Candidates will be asked to make a short, prepared statement, to be followed by questions generated by the association’s executive.

A brief recess will be followed by questions from the public.
This is the time to say thanks to volunteer firefighters

Fire Prevention Week in Ontario began Sunday with a theme this year of “Not Every Hero Wears a Cape. Plan and Practice Your Escape.”

The message is aimed at educating members of the public about the small but important actions they can take to keep themselves and those around them safe, by making a home escape plan and practicing it.

It’s a good message we can all take to heart.

But to us, the real heroes are our volunteer firefighters, who also don’t wear capes, but live and work in this community, volunteering their time and occasionally risking their lives to help keep their friends and neighbours all safe.

It’s a difficult, risky job they do. It’s 24/7, 365 days of the year. They take them away from their work and family time, not only to answer fire calls but for the weekly training sessions and special drills they do throughout the year, such as practising how to extract someone from their vehicle when we see flashing green lights, possibly on their way to the hospital, or through a window or door.

These volunteer firefighters are usually the first at the scene of a motor vehicle collision, sometimes coming to the aid of seriously injured victims. In this small community, it’s unusual for a firefighter to come across a friend, neighbour or even loved one who has been injured, or worse.

They also are often the first responders to a medical emergency, and again, it may be to come to the aid of someone they know well, someone they love.

These men and women are the true heroes of this community. And we can help make their jobs easier and safer by making that suggested escape plan. By making sure we have working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. By driving carefully, driving sober, and obeying speed limits. By pulling over when we see flashing green lights, which mean a volunteer firefighter is on the way to an emergency.

And we can take this opportunity to say thank you to their families, they couldn’t do it without the support of their families.

In this small community, it’s indeed to have such a caring, passionate and dedicated group of firefighters, volunteers who are committed to constantly improving and practicing their skills so that when the fire station alarm sounds, they are ready to put their lives on the line for the sake of the community.

Penny Coles
The Local

Sad tale of spirit not at peace

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

This much-visited stone in St. Mark’s Cemetery memorializes Sarah Ann Tracy, a little girl whose ghost haunts Fort George. According to some who have seen her in blockhouse two, she walks about in a white gown and follows visitors to the Fort. She does not appear malicious, but her spirit is surely not at rest. Shortly after Sarah Ann’s death, the family moved to Kingston, and apparently became prosperous as the family plot and monument in Cataraqui Cemetery is prominent. Sarah Ann must have been a special child to have warranted such an elegant and costly monument.

A Man Goes to the Movies

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

Anyone who “husballs” to improve himself/herself is a “go-getter” and is admired; however, a hustler generally refers to a prostitute and the meaning becomes negative.

This film examines the lives of four hustlers who hustle to improve their lives. Under all the bravura, they are fragile women who have been hurt and hardened by life, and see nothing especialy wrong in duping the types of men who have hurt many as they climbed the ladder of success. The women are intelligent and smart and they succeed big time. The conclusion of the story brings retribution, but the audience must decide if it is just.

Good film not just because there is much glitz, glamour and a look at a world unknown to most, but above all, the audience is left with lots to think about.

Donald Combe is a talented English teacher who loves to go to movies. His Facebook reviews have become popular with his friends and followers, and he has graciously agreed to share his opinions through “short and sweet” exclusives for The Local.
Another way to look at Maria Rye and Our Western Home

First of all, thank you very much for recognizing the 150th anniversary of the first small group of British Home Children to arrive in Canada at Niagara-on-the-Lake, brought by Maria Rye the first week of November 1869. BHC descendants, advo-
cates and authors such as myself have been working on this for years, decades, to bring this to the attention of the general public. We were thrilled last year when Parliament proclaimed Sept. 29 as National British Home Child Day, which is happening every year now.

It must be pointed out, however, that Maria Rye would not today be someone parents would be comfortable entrusting their children to. Keep in mind that most of the BHC were orphans, had both their parents dead or had parents incapable of supporting them. This was decades before the welfare system and Social Security payments of today were in place. But in the 1970s, the BHC stories in Laying the Children's Ghosts to Rest: Canada's BHC descendants, advo-
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Maria Rye was born in 1846. Her name is not on any 19th-century list of notable people. Maria was the daughter of a French baker who passed through New York City and went on to Canada. She was a young woman who had no knowledge of the world outside her family. She was well educated, however, that Maria Rye would not today be someone parents would be comfortable entrusting their children to. Keep in mind that most of the BHC were orphans, had both their parents dead or had parents incapable of supporting them. This was decades before the welfare system and Social Security payments of today were in place. But in the 1970s, the BHC stories in Laying the Children's Ghosts to Rest: Canada's BHC descendants, advo-
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Local girl featured in latest Munsch story

Penny Coles
The Local

Like so many youngsters, Georgia Grebenc loves Robert Munsch stories, and has her favourites. Her new favourite is about a little girl named Georgia, who looks just like her.

The local four-year-old has become a character in Munsch’s latest book, Sounds Like Christmas, which was released Tuesday.

Georgia’s mother, Jennifer, says her daughter looks at the pictures in the book and knows the little girl is her, but really doesn’t understand the significance of being the main character in a book by one of the most famous Canadian children’s authors.

“She’s beyond excited to be featured in this new book and cannot wait to share it with all her new friends at St. Michael School,” says Jennifer.

“She’s happy to see herself in the book, but she doesn’t understand that book will be read by millions of other kids.”

The other main character in the book is three-year-old Lincoln Grebenc, Georgia’s cousin, who lives in Ottawa.

The story of how two cousins who live hundreds of miles apart came to be in a Robert Munsch story is an interesting one, although not that unusual to those who know how the writer chooses his characters.

Munsch came to Canada in 1975 to work at the preschool at the University of Guelph. He has lived there ever since. During that time, he would turn up at libraries and schools and tell stories to kids, developing a reputation as a great storyteller. He would make up his stories in front of the children and refine them through repeated tellings, and eventually begin writing them down.

Jennifer Grebenc’s mother, Sharon Bruder, met him while she too was working at the university, and when he started publishing his stories, she began helping him out with administrative duties.

More than 30 years ago she went to work for him full-time as his administrative assistant. Now, she says, she looks after everything from book-keeping to fan mail for him.

“It’s been an interesting and fulfilling time,” says Bruder.

“He’s been great to work for. I don’t know too many people who love their job the way I love my job. I keep telling him as long as I can keep coming to work, I’ll be there.”

She has suffered some health issues recently, but Munsch has also had his share of health problems, and she couldn’t ask for a more understanding employer, she says.

Bruder says she started asking him when he was going to use her kids in one of his books years ago, when her kids were young.

That never happened, but she’s as excited and proud as could be to have her two beautiful grandchildren featured in one of his stories.

To suit the stories, he’s had to make them a little older — Georgia is a seven-year-old in Sounds like Christmas — but the resemblance in the drawing to the little girl from NOTL is unmistakable.

His stories don’t have recurring characters. He bases each character in each new book on the children to whom he first told the story.

Bruder says when Munsch began telling his stories to groups of kids, he would pick out a child

Continued on page 9

Georgia Grebenc, from NOTL, is pretty excited to have a little girl who looks like her, and has the same name, in a book by Robert Munsch. Her grandparents and cousin are also part of the story. (Photo supplied)

A KIRK, A KILT & A STRAWBERRY:
225 YEARS OF ST. ANDREW’S COMMUNITY HISTORY IN NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE

Written & Directed by Barbara Worby Featuring: Aaron Berger, Edouard Cenov Jr. & Laurel Minnes

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October 3, 2019

Penny Coles
The Local

Georgia Grebenc, from NOTL, is pretty excited to have a little girl who looks like her, and has the same name, in a book by Robert Munsch. Her grandparents and cousin are also part of the story. (Photo supplied)
About 100 more books to go

Continued from page 8

in the audience to talk to, and get their name. When he get around to writing the story, he would use that name for his main character, and dedicate the book to them.

When the book is published, he tries to find that child — often an adult now — to let them know they are in one of his books. She has helped him track down kids from as far away as Alberta.

He has 65 books published, and about 100 stories he's still working on, says Bruder. "Due to his health, he no longer goes out and tells stories, but he worked on the ones he made up over the years."

His other new book, Bear for Breakfast, is a story inspired by a boy named Donovan, a first-grader in La Loche, Saskatchewan, a Chippewan community in northern Saskatchewan. When Munsch visited in 1990 and asked what the kids liked to eat, Donovan said that he liked to eat bear. The exceptions with the naming of characters, says Bruder, are the four books he wrote and named after his own four kids, and this Christmas book, with Georgia and Lincoln.

Jennifer and her sister Stephanie grow up on Munsch books, and have met him many times over the years. He became like family, Jennifer says — her mother would look after his kids while he was away.

So of course she began reading his books to Georgia, who would have said until recently that her favourite is Mud Puddle.

Bruder finds an interesting twist to the dedication of the book, which is "For Georgia Grace Grebenc, Ontario; Lincoln Joseph Grebenc, Ontario; and Sharon Bruder, Guelp, Ontario." What might confuse readers, says Bruder, is that Georgia now has a little girl and boy so they can be in it, says Jennifer.

"He's just going to have to write another book about a little girl and boy so they can be in it," says Jennifer.

Sounds of Christmas is dedicated to Georgia Grebenc, her cousin Lincoln and her grandmother. (Photo supplied)
Local author wins literary marathon

Penney Colles
The Local

There’s a reason it’s called a marathon.

Sharon Frayne spent 72 hours this summer feverishly writing more than 40,000 words in a competition that offered her a chance at being taken on by a literary agent and an inside track to a Canadian publishing house.

She knew it would require strength, both physical and mental, and a great deal of preparation, but she felt her time had come to take a stab at it.

And she was right. A published author and a member of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Writers Circle, Frayne came first in the category of fiction for young adults in the Muskokaliterary marathon in Huntsville this July.

The competition was founded 18 years ago to support the Muskoka Literacy Council, and now also funds the area YMCA literacy programs, a cause which is enticing to writers.

The prize is also a strong attraction — a win helps shortcut the traditional path to having a book published.

“It’s so difficult to even have your book looked at by a publishing company,” says Frayne.

The setting of her novel, A Chain of Broken Hearts, moves from Huntsville to Niagara-on-the-Lake and back to the Muskoka town, two communities that have much in common.

While Huntsville is situated in cottage country, it has also won awards for being friendly and welcoming, is a high-ranked tourist destination and a Communities in Bloom winner.

But for Frayne, the common denominator that made her want to incorporate both as the background for her story is her love of both areas, and the role they have played in her life.

She grew up in Niagara, but from her earliest years summended with her family in Muskoka.

Although she left for a career in education — she taught high school visual arts and English, and then became a principal at a Halton high school — when she retired, she came back to Niagara to rejoin her family, she said.

When Frayne was a baby, her parents bought a place just outside Bala, in Muskoka, which became her second home. “My heart has always been very close to that area,” she said.

She and her husband, Bill Frayne, now divide their time between NOTL and a cottage south of Rosseau, on Dysont Lake. “These are two of the most beautiful places in the world. How can you beat them as a setting for a novel?” says Frayne.

Living on the edge of Rye Park also is an important influencing factor in her novel.

Her last book, Caught between the Walls, is a collection of short stories, mostly fiction but based on local historical events and characters. One of the stories is about Maria Rye and Our Western Home, the orphanage for young girls that was operated from a building of the former courthouse, where Rye Street Heritage Park is now.

Sept. 28 is now recognized as National British Home Child Day, and this year the 150th anniversary was commemorated. But although the story of British children coming to Canada is very well publicized, the history of the building where it all began is not generally known to the public, says Frayne.

“It is also the setting for the famous story of Solomon Moseby, who played such a significant role in early local and national history — it was from that same building that he escaped in 1837, as a Kentucky slave owner was attempting to reclaim him, accusing him of being a horse thief.

Rye purchased the former courthouse building in 1866, and turned it into a facility for girls who were brought from England, either because they were orphans or their parents were unable to look after them. Some of the girls were adopted, but most were trained to work as household servants or clerks in stores.

Almost 4,000 girls were relocated through the home, says Frayne, and some girls’ lives were dramatically improved, others suffered abuse.

Before writing that earlier short story, Frayne did a great deal of research on the subject of Maria Rye and the children she brought to Canada, which helped her to flesh out the tale she told in the novel she wrote during the marathon.

Without giving too much away, she describes a present-day school field trip for a group of Huntsville Grade 8 students, who travel to NOTL.

But because of a situation that befalls one of the girls, she ends up living in the past, in the group home that was established by Rye in 1869.

Life for the main character becomes very different from anything she has experienced up to that point, until she is able to return to Huntsville in the present, says Frayne.

It is her background in education that made her choose to write both Caught between the Walls and A Chain of Broken Hearts as historical fiction for young adults, she says.

She wanted the books to teach students something about Canadian history that isn’t well-covered in the school curriculum, while at the same time giving young people something they could relate to.

“I wanted to show the kids of today what life was like for girls who were sold as indentured servants. When I wrote it, I was trying to picture what it would have been like for those young girls, compared to today?”

It was also an opportunity to show young adults that life for immigrants to Canada is nothing new, “that immigrants have been coming to Canada for 150 years,” Frayne said.

Continued on page 11

Sharon Frayne, photographed in Muskoka, hopes to have her book published. (Heather Douglas)
Canada for a long time, and conditions have been hard for them for a long time. People have come here from different situations, but everyone has come from somewhere.”

A Chair of Pomegranate is aimed at students in Grades 7, 8 and 9, but could lead to separate about the same group of students as they go on to high school, to appeal to older kids and adults, says Frayne.

Some of those answers were namesake’s characteristics. The donors to describe their Muskoka literacy projects. For donations, promising members of the Writers’ Circle, she asked her fellow and the characters.

For the words she would write, concentrated on preparing for the competition. She also drew on what she remembered about some of the kids she taught, and knew well. “That made it really fun to write, and I think it helped to bring a richness to it, that I could picture these kids, as well as the quality details of the people in NOTL wanted me to write about.”

In the six months leading up to the writing marathon, she says she put other aspects of her life on hold while she prepared for the competition.

In addition to the research she had already done for the historic context, she developed a plot – the most important part of the story – and the characters.

Since fundraising is an essential part of entering the contest, she asked her fellow members of the Writers’ Circle for donations, promising she would use their names in her book in return for $100 for Muskoka literacy projects. She also asked each of the donors to describe their namesake’s characteristics. Some of those answers were surprising, such as the suggestion from one woman that she wanted her character to be pregnant. Although Frayne’s first reaction was this was going to be a challenge in a story about young girls on a school field trip, “it gave me a real impetus to think about the plot.” Since some of the girls who came to Niagara in the 1800s were raped, the pregnancy became an important feature of the story.

“Your years of working in schools helped a lot. I’ve been on 12 Grade 8 field trips, and travelled with a high school band. I do know how kids can act on these trips. Things don’t always go smoothly — something always happens.” She also drew on what she remembered about some of the kids she taught, and knew well. “That made it really fun to write, and I think it helped to bring a richness to it, that I could picture these kids, as well as the quality details of the people in NOTL wanted me to write about.”

She had set up a cot in a hallway of the building, and the one page of notes each of the 40 writers were allowed to take with them into the writing room at the Active Living Centre in Huntsville — in the building that was the site of the G8 Summit in 2010. Frayne felt confident she was as prepared as she could be. Her notes contained enough details about the plot, characters and dates to keep her on track, she says. “I think that’s probably one of the reasons I was successful. I had the story in my head — I just had to get it out. Some people can sit down and write from scratch, but that’s not the way I work.”

She had contemplated entering the competition in past years, but never felt her writing was quite at the level she wanted it to be. After retirement, with more time to give to her craft, she worked very hard on her writing. “It didn’t come as easily as I thought it would. I took all kinds of courses, entered a lot of writing competitions, and in the last six months, I started to do well. I felt I had hit my stride.”

So, with confidence, she prepared for the competition. “Life is short. If you have some burning goal, you have to grab it by the horns and go with it, and I’m glad I did.”

She also knew she would have to be strong to combat the grueling task of getting her words down quickly in an intense, sleep-deprived environment.

Despite being the oldest of the writers who surrounded her for 72 hours, she felt she handled the physical and mental strain well.

She had taped a cot in a hallway of the building, and while some fell asleep at their computers, she remained awake. “I couldn’t get this novel published, “ said Frayne.

She had set up a cot in a hallway of the building, and while some fell asleep at their computers, when she awoke, she would pass out, she took short naps on the cot — catching about two to three hours of “very broken sleep” each of the two nights. She took short breaks to get food she could eat while she worked, and outside of her two naps, she says, “when I really felt I was on the verge of collapse, I went outside and jumped in the Muskoka River to wake up.”

Emotionally, it was tough, she says. She broke down a few times on the last day — the subject matter of the story was difficult, and she was exhausted. It took her several days to recuperate. But she has no regrets. She is confident she told a good story, and the comments from the judges reinforced that.

“I hope you go forward and get this novel published,” said one judge. Her story was described as “powerful,” with “real sympathetic characters,” and a style that is “clean and crisp.”

She won the competition against some very accomplished, published writers, and now she has six weeks to polish what she wrote. She is promised at least that a literary agent will put it before a Canadian publisher, although there is no guarantee it will be accepted for printing. If it isn’t, she won’t give up. It’s a novel she hopes and expects will resonate with young people who are feeling alone, and going through difficult times. “Many children at that age have a lot of the same anger and concern as the main character. Like her, young people have a lot of mixed emotions, all kinds of issues to face, and are trying to fit in. I wanted young people to identify with what she is going through. I wanted her to have this incredible experience, and come out of it stronger at the other end,” says Frayne.

“It’s a novel I’d want my granddaughter to read.”

Frayne has six weeks to polish book

Continued from page 10

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Sharon Frayne

On Saturday evening, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake joined more than 100 landmarks and venues throughout Canada and the UK in Beacons of Light, a tribute to mark the 150th anniversary of the first arrival of British Home Children to Canada. Writer Sharon Frayne, was in Rye Park to see the plaque commemorating Maria Rye and Our Western Home lit up. She met Mary Arnett of St. Catharines, whose mother was a British Home Child, brought to Canada in 1912 to a settlement home in Peterborough. (Bill French)
Rotary fashion show to help eradicate polio

Penny Coles
The Local

Polio is close to being eradicated, thanks to the efforts of the Rotary International campaign, but there are still a small number of cases each year in difficult-to-reach areas, and some money is needed for more vaccinations before being able to declare polio has disappeared for good.

The Rotary Club of Niagara-on-the-Lake is organizing a Fall Fashion Show to support the End Polio Now campaign.

Rotary has been working to eradicate polio for more than 30 years, and has made incredible progress in the fight to rid the world of it forever. As a founding partner of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, Rotary has helped to reduce polio cases by more than 99.9 per cent.

"Rotary International is absolutely committed to seeing it through," says Lynne LeGallais, one of the fashion show organizers. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation matches Rotary proceeds for polio eradication with $2 for each $1 raised, she says.

Pamela Wilson, a local Rotary member who contracted polio as a young girl, will speak at the fashion show. She explains that there are two countries that have had polio cases in the last three years: Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Afghanistan had 13 cases in 2016, 14 in 2017 and 21 last year. "Both have high mountain ranges, with nomadic people crossing borders," explains Wilson. "There are vaccinations being carried out, but some children are being missed."

There are refrigerated trucks and volunteers from those countries going into the mountains to vaccinate, as well as a laboratory truck to help track down where the polio virus is in the water and eliminate it, she says.

Wilson was five years old when she contracted polio in 1953. That year, families from Toronto were taking their children to Lake Simcoe, to escape the polio outbreak. For Wilson, it was too late — she spent three months in the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, alone and afraid, separated from her parents.

There were no visitors allowed.

She remembers vividly having the very high fever that accompanies the disease, which attacks muscles, and the long rehabilitation in Thistletown, an area of Toronto, where she stayed for almost a year surrounded by other children also recovering from polio.

The vaccine came to Canada the following year, she says.

"Polio is preventable," says Wilson. "We just have to make sure even in this country that children are vaccinated."

To declare those countries polio-free, there have to be three years with no reported cases. In Pakistan, there were four cases in 2016, none in 2017, and none in 2018.

"We have to hope there are none this year," says Wilson. "There is no runway — models will be wearing their way through the tables, so we can feel the fabric and see the designs up close. It makes it very approachable."

Lord Mayor Betty Disero, an active Rotary member, will be the Master of Ceremonies. Rotary member Jeannie Manning and Scandinavian exchange student Frida Neilsen will be among those modelling Bella Grace fashions.

"We are thrilled Frida will be able to take part in the show," says LeGallais.

Tickets are $80, and are available at Bella Grace Boutique, 118 Queen St.

The rotary Club is partnering with Joy Kassai-Molon of Queen Street’s Bella Grace Boutique, which is arranging the fashion show, and Steven Treadwell, who is providing a three-course lunch at the Gate House.

The lunch includes sparkling, white and red wine, and tea and coffee.

The fashion show features the Joseph Ribkoff fall and winter collection, with hats provided by Beau Chapeau, says LeGallais.

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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
Each and every day, Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire & Emergency Services volunteer firefighters provide exceptional service to the residents and visitors of our beautiful town. Whether it is responding to calls at any hour of the day, participating in training, inspecting and maintaining equipment, or delivering public education programs, our volunteers continuously demonstrate their professionalism and commitment to our community.

I would like to thank The NOTL Local for ensuring that our local volunteer firefighters are recognized for their significant contribution to the community, and their interest in covering Fire Prevention Week 2019. This year’s Fire Prevention Week theme is “Not Every Hero Wears a Cape. Plan and Practice Your Escape!” When the smoke alarms sound, everyone must know where to go – that is why it is so important for everyone to have working smoke alarms and to develop and practice a home fire escape plan. In the event of a fire, you may only have seconds to escape your home. Practice your home fire escape plan and make sure everyone can get out safely.

In August of this year, our organization suffered an incredible loss of a 34-year member, Captain Michael Vriens. Captain Vriens’ line-of-duty-death was a result of an illness that was directly related to his service as a volunteer firefighter in our community. Sadly, Mike’s illness highlights the risks faced by our firefighters on any given day.

As Thanksgiving approaches, and we gather with family and friends, I would like to express my gratitude for the incredible work that our volunteer firefighters do every day. They are moms and dads, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters. They are committed to their community, and to each other.

Nick Ruller
Fire Chief & CEMC

Message from the Fire Chief: We salute our Volunteer Firefighters

Honouring our
VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Message from the Fire Chief: We salute our Volunteer Firefighters

Stopping for flashing green lights a courtesy

Penny Coles
The Local

There are still residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake who aren’t sure what flashing green lights mean when they see them in a private vehicle, says Fire Chief Nick Ruller.

You don’t legally have to pull over, as you do for fire trucks, ambulances and police, but if it’s safe to pull over, it’s considered an aid to our local volunteer firefighters who are in their personal vehicle on their way to an emergency situation. Provincial legislation allows firefighters to display a flashing green light when responding to emergencies.

Adoption of its use is strictly voluntary by Ontario municipalities. According to the legislation, the purpose of flashing green lights is to help other drivers recognize a firefighter en-route to an emergency and yield the right-of-way.

YIELD TO FLASHING GREEN LIGHT
FIREFIGHTER
EMERGENCY RESPONSE
The Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire Department lost one of their most committed volunteers this year, a firefighter who made a huge impact in the department, and is still mourned by those who knew him.

Michael Vriens was a long-time resident and strong supporter of Niagara-on-the-Lake, both as an employee of the Town roads department for 35 years, and a dedicated volunteer firefighter for almost that long, reaching the rank of captain with Station 1, the Old Town department.

He died July 27 at Hospice Niagara, a loss felt across a seven-year season with battle with cancer.

The impact Vriens had on the department and the community is "not defined by one single act," says Fire Chief Nick Ruller, who spoke at the funeral service that was held in the Old Town firehall, "rather 34 years of service, meaningful interactions, leaving an incredible void in our lives."

Ruller first met Vriens more than 20 years ago, on a winter day on Concession 6.

"He stopped for us in the Town truck to help pull our car out that was caught during a winter storm," said Ruller.

Stopping to help someone was never unusual for Vriens, his brother John — who was always ready to help someone in need.

When Ruller joined the Old Town fire station just out of high school, where Vriens was one of the captains, Ruller got to know him better.

"Mike's ability to influence and connect with firefighters and officers is what made him one of the most esteemed officers in the department," he said.

When Vriens’ illness prevented him from answering fire calls, he continued to attend association meetings, his night training, Christmas parties for the kids, and fundraising events, said Ruller, who often saw Vriens’ bicycle at the entrance to the Anderson Lane station, where he would leave it before heading over to the community centre to work out at the fitness studio. Vriens wasn’t about to let his illness get the better of him, he said. “He demonstrated incredible courage as he fought for years, setting an example of what true bravery is.”

John Vriens remembers his youngest brother as someone who loved his hometown, the family lived first on Gate Street and then Butler. Mike went to St. Vincent de Paul, St. Michael and then Niagara District Secondary School, and took other courses on his own time to improve his skills, including programs on road management and firefighting.

"He never wanted to leave town. He loved it right to the end," said John.

Six and a half years ago, Mike developed glioblastoma multiforme, a cancer that affects the brain, and the same kind that took the life of Gord Downie of the Tragically Hip, said John. A retired firefighter from the City of St. Catharines who developed an interest in firefighting as a career when he volunteered in the NOTL department.

It’s also one of the cancers listed by the provincial WSIB, an occupational disease for firefighters, although, John said, safety procedures have been greatly enhanced in recent decades.

After Mike became too sick to work or drive, he asked John to take him for drives round town. “He just wanted to see how the town was changing,” John said.

Mike’s brother-in-law, Dieter Unruh, recalled that Mike would ask to turn around once they reached the floral clock on the Niagara River Parkway.

"He used to ride his bike everywhere, but the reality is that he was recognized for his leadership, and he deserved it."

He is greatly missed by his family, daughter Riah and partner Ryan, brother Gary and his wife Nancy, sister Connette and her husband Dieter, brother John and his wife Susan, Carol and her son Kevin. Ashley, Brandon, Nicole, Marilyn, Karla, Jonathan, Cassandra, Kyle, Noah, Weston, and Hannah remember Uncle Mike fondly. His large extended family misses him dearly.

The partnership between Muscular Dystrophy Canada and firefighters support the MD association each year.

It takes about 20 to 25 volunteers to man the boots, some who are there for the entire day, others who put in as much time as they can. "It's the middle of summer, and there's a lot going on, so we can use all the help we can get."

For more than 65 years, firefighters across the country have participated in Fill the Boot, a fundraising campaign in support of Muscular Dystrophy Canada.

This year, Niagara-on-the-Lake firefighters raised almost $10,000 for their Fill the Boot campaign, which is held the same day as the Peach Celebration on Queen Street.

Local firefighters presented a cheque for $9,936 recently, in support of the programs and services of the MD association.

The partnership between firefighters in support MD Canada and firefighters support the MD association each year.

"Money raised goes towards programs and research that support our mission to enhance the lives of those affected by a neuromuscular disorder, including families in the Niagara Region," says Fisher.

Volunteer firefighters of Station 1 in the Old Town began supporting the Fill the Boot campaign in 1971, says local volunteer Vic Martin.

They've been on Queen Street the same Saturday in August ever since, and have raised $280,100 to date.

When the Peach Celebration began closing off Queen Street on the same day as the local boot drive, firefighters weren’t sure what to expect, but it turned out to be an advantage for the fundraiser, says Martin, with more people, both local and visitors, on the street that day.

Each end of the street has volunteer firefighters out filling their boots, and while the fundraiser began with just Station 1 volunteers, it’s now expanding to include all stations, says Martin.

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Members of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire Department want to sit down for a chat with their neighbours.

They are inviting residents to join them at McDonald’s, Monday, Oct. 7, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., "for coffee and conversation. No agendas or speeches, just a chance to ask questions, voice concerns and get to know the firefighters in your neighbourhood," says a release from the fire department.

Those who meet with firefighters on Niagara Stone Road Monday morning can enjoy a free small coffee.

"Why? We realized this was the turnaround point for town vehicles, because this is where NOTL ends. There was just no need to go any farther.Both Mike’s brother and brother-in-law spoke of him as a friendly, outgoing guy who would love to talk to people, often about the history of the town.

"He used to ride his bike around town," said John, "and we would joke that he never got anywhere. He was always stop- ping to talk to so many people."

"Mike was the guy who was always willing to help. He was a part of many projects and events," said Unruh. "He was quiet, had a great sense of humour, and a special smirk that was always there when he thought something was really funny."

Mike Vriens was one of the captains, Ruller first met Vriens more than 20 years ago, on a winter day on Concession 6.

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Mike’s brother-in-law, Dieter Unruh, recalled that Mike would ask to turn around once they reached the floral clock on the Niagara River Parkway.

"He loved the service, the people he worked with. He loved the camaraderie of the fire department. He loved sharing his skills and knowledge with others."

And he was courageous to the end, said John.

"People knew him wouldn’t be surprised by that. He was brave fighting fires, and he was brave fighting the disease.”

"He is one of the most beloved and respected public servants that we have ever had," said Ruller. "His service spoke for itself. He didn’t do a lot, but the reality is that he was recognized for his leadership, and he deserved it."

He is greatly missed by his family, daughter Riah and partner Ryan, brother Gary and his wife Nancy, sister
DISTRICT 1 - OLD TOWN

(Names not in order) Mike Mitchell - Captain, Jason Edgecombe - Lieutenant, Firefighters: Steve Baxter, Jeremy Froese, Dan Gordon, Mike Hassim, Ray Hunter, Todd Loney, Vic Martens, Jim Maw, Mark Polgrabia, Natasha Theobald, Adam Ward, Jason Williams (All district photos by Fred Mercnik)
Thank you to all of our courageous Volunteer Firefighters for your dedication to our community!

DISTRICT 2 - ST. DAVIDS

Darren Trostenko - District Chief, Dave Rigby - Assistant District Chief, Dave Ignatczyk - Captain, Derek Rooney - Lieutenant, Firefighters: Colin Hunter, Rick Ignatczyk, Stan Lament, Steve Lebrasseur, Rick Legros, Rob MacLeod, Keith Morley, Mark Newman, Greg Pillitteri, Steve Roy, Maddie Skubel, Eric Trostenko, Milan Vujovich (Names not in order)

To all our firefighters

THANK YOU

Thank you to our Volunteer Firefighters for keeping us safe!

Colaneri Wines
348 Concession 6 Rd, Niagara-on-the-Lake
905-682-2100 | colaneriwines.com

Ravine Vineyard
1366 York Rd., St. Davids
905.262.8463
ravinevineyard.com

RZO Wines
33 Queen St. | 905.888.8822 | www.rzo.ca

St. David's Cold Storage
365 Four Mile Creek Road, St. Davids
905-262-6600 | stdavidscoldstorage.com

Creek Road Paints
1573 Four Mile Creek Rd, Virgil
905.468.2412

St. David's Gold Storage
365 Four Mile Creek Road, St. Davids
905-262-6600 | stdavidscoldstorage.com

Thank you to all of our courageous Volunteer Firefighters for your dedication to our community!
DISTRICT 3 - VIRGIL

Rick Gray - District Chief, Jim Neufeld - Assistant District Chief, Rob Read - Captain, Darryl Janzen - Lieutenant, Jim Reschke - Lieutenant, Firefighters: Rob Anderson, Henry Boese, Aaron Cherney, Brad Disher, Jason Disher, Rod Falk, Dean Filipetti, Hendrik Heikoop, Rob Konkle, Jason Meleskie, Derek Merza, Richard Moore, Jason Plut, Jason Reynolds, Vito Trapani, Carson Tucker, Matt van der Zalm, Jeremy Werner (Names not in order)

Thank you to our amazing Volunteer Firefighters from the VIRGIL BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

Virgil Animal Hospital
1630 Niagara Stone Rd., Virgil, Ontario
Thank you to our wonderful Volunteer Firefighters!
Thank you to our volunteers!

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P.O. Box 430, 1596 Four Mile Creek Road, Virgil, L0S 1T0

We all know how fortunate we are to have such dedicated and skilled volunteers looking after our community!

Thank you!

Thank you for keeping our community safe!

Thank you to all our Volunteer Firefighters!

1501 Niagara Stone Rd, Virgil
905-468-7241 | silkscountrykitchen.com

Thank you to all our Volunteer Firefighters!

Dave Jones - Assistant District Chief, George Vandermeer - Captain, Firefighters: Braeden Bilinsky, Jared Bilinsky, Crispin Bottomley, Peter Cox, Lucas Devries, Frank Digweed, Colin Dodd, Josh Fast, Tanner Ferguson, Rob Glass, Ken Hernder, Bill Maartense, Deralyn MacKenzie, Tom Mussari, Louie Prue, Dylan Skubel (Names not in order)
Thank you to our
amazing Volunteer
Firefighters!

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wonderful Volunteers!
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Debi Pratt given lifetime achievement award

Contribution to wine industry recognized by Women in Niagara

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake's Debi Pratt will be honoured at the Women in Business Awards for her 40-plus years of achievement in the wine industry.

The woman who, along side Donald Ziraldo and Karl Kaiser, was a pioneer in the development of the Niagara, Ontario, Canadian wine industries, is the recipient of the 2019 Lifetime Achievement Award.

The awards recognize women for their accomplishments in business, leadership and contributions to the Niagara community. The organizer and host of the event is the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce (GNCC), through its Women in Niagara (WIN) Council.

When she answered the call from Mishka Balsom, president of the GNCC, Pratt says she was stunned and deeply humbled. Aware of the achievements of the most recent women to receive the award, Betty-Lou Soulier and Margie Spence, Pratt says it is a true honour to be mentioned in their company.

Now retired from her role in marketing and public relations with Inniskillin Wines, then Vincor and Constellation Brands, Debi reflects on how far the nascent local industry, as the one she spearheaded, has come.

As Inniskillin found its place in the area, Pratt was in the trenches, helping them to understand that the Niagara could provide excellent, world class wines.

In 1974, Debi Pratt was an elementary school teacher at the old Brockview School, located at Line 3 and Concession 1, where the Croatia Hall currently sits. She taught in the area for 11 years there.

When that school closed, Pratt followed the staff and students to Laura Secord Memorial School in Queenston, where she taught for another five years.

After this, she met, and began dating, Donald Ziraldo, just as he and Kaiser were beginning to explore the possibilities of growing vinifera grapes in Niagara.

"I would sit and listen to them talk about the wine industry," she says, and "I found it fascinating, and refreshing. I knew nothing about it, but I quickly became eager to learn more."

As a teacher, her summers off allowed her to begin helping out in the nursery. As the winery grew, she began to take on a bigger role.

"What I learned is that Donald and I worked so well in business that we forgot about the dating part," Against her father's wishes, Pratt decided to leave the teaching profession and instead work for Inniskillin full time. It was a leap of blind faith, inspired by the outsized personalities of the two men, whom she calls "polar opposites."

Ziraldo was the agronomist, master in viticulture, while Kaiser was the technical one, a knowledgeable winemaker, who could talk about anything and everything. Pratt found her niche in sales and marketing, but credits her 16 years in the classroom as the key to her success in business.

"I found that I had a million transferrable skills. What I learned as a teacher is very applicable to business. Marketing people need to understand that they need to educate the consumer. You’re not selling them a bottle of wine and telling them how it’s going to change their life. You need to help them understand why they might like it, or why they might not like it."

The core challenge in those days was fighting against the stigma that Canada couldn’t produce wines to compete against those produced in Europe. Pratt said much of her time was spent teaching people exactly why we could grow good grapes here.

She remembers those early days, at events where she would hear people disparage Canadian wines. She borrowed a line from the Ford Motor Company, as she would approach people and say "excuse me, but have you tried a Canadian wine lately?" It wasn’t an aggressive approach, but one that drew upon her teaching experience, as she would gently coax naysayers into trying wines that they otherwise would have ignored.

As Inniskillin found more and more success, other wineries began to sprout up in the area. Pratt was instrumental in bringing them together to work toward a common cause. The "Group of Seven Wineries" in Niagara-on-the-Lake was formed, providing Niagara as a bonafide wine-making region, with Debi spearheading the efforts.

"You can promote your own winery," she says, “but you guys have to work as an ambassador for the wine industry as a whole.”

Whether it was icewine, the VQA designation, or simply increasing Niagara’s profile across the country and beyond, Pratt says working together as an industry was, and continues to be, a key element for success.

Pratt, Ziraldo and Kaiser formed other partnerships along the way. Today, it’s second nature for winemakers to work with chefs, sommeliers and front-line staff in restaurants and hotels, in an effort to improve the entire dining experience. But that wasn’t always the case, and Pratt says it was an important factor in the expansion of the industry.

Nicole Regehr, spokesperson for the Women in Business Awards, says she was surprised Pratt had not already received their Lifetime Achievement Award.

"Debi was a really obvious choice," says Regehr. "Previous winners were all pioneers in their fields, and Debi Pratt really fits that mould. It was a unanimous decision for our committee this year."

The Women in Niagara Community Fund Committee, an arm of the Niagara Community Foundation, selected winners this year for the 2019 Lifetime Achievement Awards.

"That’s a role Pratt has embraced since her retirement in 2014. She decided to retire, she says, because for so long she really never had any time for herself. But even today, she is very eager to continue giving of her time to help others move forward and ‘grab the baton.’"

"I’ve taken on more of an advisory role," says Pratt. "I’m still there to assist anyone who is one who needs me. I enjoy speaking to Brock and Niagara students, and it’s fascinating to meet with newcomers to the industry, many who come in with little business experience. But I don’t change them for my advice. I’m not doing it to make money."

Pratt is heartened by the progress women in the wine industry, particularly in the Niagara wine industry, since her pioneering days. She points to the successes of Lydia Tomek, Sue-Ann Staff, Heidi Fielding and Meg McGrath, all heavily involved in all aspects of Niagara wineries.

"I’m inspired by the women who have stepped up in hospitality, tourism and winemaking to help fill in the parity gap," she says. "They are helping to bring strength, knowledge and experience to the industry."

Along with her advisory efforts, Pratt is a member of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Fund Committee, an arm of the Niagara Community Foundation. In that role, she works to bring donations to the community, putting funds into local organizations such as Red Roof Re-treat and Bravo Niagara.

As she prepares to deliver her acceptance speech, Pratt wants to ensure she does her homework. She sees the opportunity to address the attendees at the luncheon as a huge responsibility.

"I want to be clear with my messaging that the lessons I learned can help those coming up. I am being given a platform to share the tools and strategies that worked for me. I want to provide strong advice for those women who are coming up and in the midst of creating new businesses. People like Shannon Passero are great examples. Women who do their homework, and go above and beyond to give back to their community. I want to be sure to recognize others who are doing it right in today’s business world, which is a much different one than the one I came up in.”

Forever a teacher, whether in the classroom, in the wine industry, or as a mentor to other business people, it’s clear Pratt looks forward to educating those in the audience at the Women in Business Awards, as she accepts the honour that seems made for her.

The Women in Business Awards will be held Friday, Nov. 8, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the Niagara Falls Marriott on the Falls. Tickets are available through eventbrite.ca.
Veteran Jack Hunter remembered in museum exhibit

Randy Klaassen Special to The Local

The late Jack Hunter, a Second World War veteran, is featured in an exhibit at The Niagara Military Museum. "C" Force – The Hong Kong Story, which opened Saturday, is an initiative of Eugene Labisk, the museum’s director of research and archives. It is intended as a means of featuring the volunteers of the Niagara Peninsula who served in Hong Kong. Hunter, a lifelong resident of Virgil, served as quartermaster on board the HMCS Prince Robert, which entered Hong Kong’s Victoria Harbour in August, 1945, prior to the Japanese surrender. After hostilities ceased, the Prince Robert assisted with returning Canadian prisoners of war from the conflict back to Canada.

The full page is made up of a HALF PAGE AD and HALF PAGE ARTICLE

Article word count: 450-500
Ad size: 10.25"w x 7"h

The exhibit is not about glorifying the war, but remembering the sacrifices of the past...

Lt.-Col. Bernard Nehring

"The exhibit is not about glorifying the war, but remembering the sacrifices of the past that have allowed us the freedoms we enjoy today," said Lt.-Col. Bernard Nehring, past commanding officer of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, at the opening of the exhibit. He expressed appreciation to Labisk for the seven years of research, culminating in remembering Canada’s military role in Hong Kong. While researching Niagara’s involvement in Hong Kong, Nehring was excited to loan memorabilia and photos for the exhibit. "Dad always told people, Nobody would be interested in what I did during the war. He would be surprised to see the interest today and the recognition his role had in returning Canadian soldiers home after the war," she told those gathered for the opening.

Items of Hunter’s on display include his sailor’s hat, with locations and dates of where the Prince Robert sailed, and photos — some issued by the Royal Canadian Navy, and others from his personal collection.

The exhibit will be on display until April 2020, at the Niagara Military Museum on Victoria Avenue in Niagara Falls. Following that, the exhibit will be on tour to various locations.

Hunter died peacefully at his home in July 2017, and was laid to rest at Niagara-on-the-Lake’s Lakeshore Cemetery.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL

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InfoHealth session to talk about family health teams

Dr. Bill Brown
Special to The Local

Twenty years ago, family health care was in crisis.

Too few medical students were entering family practice to sustain primary care in Canada. The result in Ontario was that the chairs of five university departments of family health met with the Province in 2002 to reimage family practice.

The goal was to coax more medical students into primary care by changing the way family physicians are funded and care for their patients. Up to that time, most health care was delivered by solo fee-for-service physicians working out of their own office with little or no support staff, except for a receptionist and a nurse. The work was lonely, exhausting and by comparison with other specialists, poorly paid.

The new model offered to sweeten the pill for poorly paid family physicians was to provide a broad range of services tailored to the needs of patients and help the family physician or a nurse practitioner. And out-of-hours coverage has morphed into walk-in care or urgent-care clinics, sometimes scattered all over the community or by default the nearest ER.

These and changes to the way physicians and the FHT are funded, were the subject of the first instalment on the FHT InfoHealth session, which was well and fairly presented in June by four McMaster medical students – Hannah Kearney, Michelle Murdock, George Hu and Yaxie Bhatia, and their mentor, Dr. Jorn Lukings.

In addition to the prettiest towns in Canada, Niagara-on-the-Lake is commonly referred to as the most haunted, says Amanda Gamble of the Friends of Fort George.

The most prevalent tales of paranormal activity surround Fort George National Historic Site, says Gamble, the executive director of the Friends. “There have been hundreds of reports of paranormal sightings at Fort George, ranging from the benevolent spirit of a little girl named Sarah Ann to a more ominous presence simply known as ‘The Watcher.’ ”

This October, when some believe “supernatural forces are most powerful and the barrier between this world and the next is at its weakest,” Fort George will be holding its special Halloween Tours.

The two-hour walking tour includes stories too frightening to be told on the summer tours, and opens a building, the Officers’ Quarters, usually off limits to the Ghost Tour. Halloween tour dates are Oct. 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20, 25, 26, 27, 30, and 31. Tickets are $25 per person and must be purchased in advance. Call the Friends of Fort George Gift Shop at 905-468-6621 to order.

For more information, call the gift shop or email giftshop@friendsoffortgeorge.ca.

Proceeds from the Fort George Ghost tours help to support student summer employment opportunities at Fort George and Brock’s Monument.

Paranormal activity surrounds Fort George National Historic Site, and some believe is most powerful in October.

(Photo supplied)
Fay and Fluffy's Storytime delights youngsters

Kim Wade
Special to The Local

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library celebrated Culture Days with fun and flair Saturday, featuring Fay and Fluffy's Storytime.

Fay and Fluffy Soulfile are drag performers who combine their performance art with their experience as child educators. In a video interview for Today's Parent, Fay explained that “bringing drag performers together with little kids is a kind of perfect relationship. It's kind of like drag performers are clowns, right? They play things up, they are over the top. They are like a cartoon come to life.”

Fay is right. As soon as the duo entered the library, the children were enchanted. Fay's bright orange clogswell curls and sequined rainbow floor-length gowns, accessorized with satin lilac evening gloves, were a delight to the eyes, while Fluffy’s voluptuous lavender wig, tied-dyed bat wing blouse and sequined-rainbow floor-length gown, accessorized with orange corkscrew curls and sequined rainbow floor-length gown, enhanced the whimsical mood.

As Fay and Fluffy introduced themselves, they emphasized how lucky we are in Niagara-on-the-Lake to have such a beautiful library and community centre complex. They also pointed out that libraries are wonderful, safe spaces where ideas and creativity are encouraged and everyone is welcome.

This introduction led into their first book, All Are Welcome, by Alexandra Penfold, which is about diversity and inclusivity. This New York Times bestseller is about a school where all children are welcome and diversity is accepted and celebrated.

The next book was Excerpt When They Don't, by Laura Gehl. The story begins by outlining all the activities boys and girls like, but stresses how anyone can participate and enjoy all of these activities, regardless of their gender. The overarching message is to decide for yourself what you love to do. This story also stresses individuality. When it’s over, Fay reiterates the message by adding, “be exactly who you are,” and “decide what you love to do.”

These positive messages are the heart of Fay and Fluffy's Storytime. The children reacted positively to the stories, many spontaneously sharing their own ideas and experiences.

After a couple of stories, there was an opportunity for more audience participation. Kids got a chance to sing about how happy they were by clapping their hands and stomping their feet.

Fay and Fluffy introduced a newly published book, What Riley Wore, by Elana K. Arnold, which follows a child named Riley who matches each outfit to an occasion and not to the expectations of others. Another song and another book follow the story of Riley, The Family Book, by Todd Parr. In 2003, this explores all the different types of families in our neighbourhoods. Finally, parents and children were treated to the beautiful tenor of Fay, during the reading/singing of I Am Invited to a Party, by Mo Willems, from the much-loved Elephant and Piggie series. They all had a chance to “party, party, party,” before they danced around to “Shake Our Sillies Out.” It was then time to take a few photos and say goodbye to Fay and Fluffy.

Fay and Fluffy's Storytime was as entertaining for the adults as it was for the children. The rapport between the two performers is obvious as they easily bounce quips and jokes back and forth. Fluffy explains that, “we are dear friends and our genuine love of reading and working with children shines through. It truly is a magical experience.”

Both have considerable reading of experience educating children. Fay has been an educator for more than 22 years and currently is a Kinder-garten teacher with the Toronto District School Board, and Fluffy is a cultural performer as well as having many years of experience as a child care provider.

Fluffy explained that when Fay saw a news segment about Drag Queen Story Time in 2015, she was inspired to do the same. She wanted to continue combining her work as a performer and educator and Storytime is that. She contacted Glad Day Bookshop and together they did our first event with the two of us and a few local authors.

That event took place at the Yorkville Public Library in June, 2016. Since then they have been sharing stories with children and their families in the Toronto area, including appearances at the Royal Ontario Museum, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Harbourfront Centre, and the Toronto Film Festival. They also have taken their show on the road by making appearances at public libraries in surrounding areas such as Caledon, Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Their motto, Reading is FUN-damental, highlights how Fay and Fluffy focus on making reading fun through books, songs and lots of laughs. Fay hopes that what “the kids get out of storytime is an opportunity to see that things that are different aren't scary and that things that are different are amazing.”

One goal of Culture Days is to “eliminate barriers to access and participation, and stimulate understanding, appreciation and exploration of arts and culture – so that every person in the country has a deeper connection with themselves, their communities, and Canada.” Fay and Fluffy hope to deepen this connection of diversity and culture through their Storytime events. As Fluffy explains, “creating inclusive spaces is at the heart of what we aspire to do. We received a comment fairly early on from a parent who said ‘there aren't a lot of places where we can take our gender non-conforming child, and our autistic child, and they are not only accepted, but celebrated.’”

Fay believes that “what is so incredible about the reading is that you get families from all sorts of backgrounds and experiences and gender identities and everything. To see that diversity in people needs to be celebrated. And the more we are exposed to that, the more comfortable we are with each other.”

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library supports this idea and promoted the event by stating that, “We especially want to support families with LGBTQ2S parent(s) and gender variant children, and read culturally diverse books, by providing a supportive and inclusive environment focused on fun. Everyone is welcome.”

“In the three years that we've been doing Storytimes we have noticed an impact far beyond what we could have imagined. While we started out believing it was about literacy and diversity, it has turned out to be so much more. We have experienced so many moments with people coming up to us after Storytime and thanking us for the way they have felt. It has happened with someone who was adopted, with a single parent, and with same sex parents,” says Fluffy.

Storytime was part of the Culture Days weekend celebration, a national event held annually at the end of September. This year's theme was creativity, the arts and well-being. Events were held all across the country with each province highlighting their own cultural events.

According to Fluffy, “we have brought Queer and Ally families together, where they have forged new friendships. We've made incredible connections wherever we go.”

It was easy to tell that Fay and Fluffy forged new friendships at the library Saturday.
The Eco Club at St. Davids school has begun their second annual Ontario Schools Battery Recycling Challenge.

Last year, we were a top recycling school in Canada, and won money toward purchasing learning materials for our students.

This year we would like to collect even more! If you have button cell, nine-volt, six-volt or regular alkaline batteries, please drop them off at the office, so they can be added to our school’s recycling program. Before coming, please tape both sides of all button cell batteries, and tape the positive and negative terminals on nine and six-volt batteries, before dropping them off at the school.

We are unfortunately unable to accept lithium or rechargeable batteries at this time, but encourage you to find your nearest recycling center, in order to keep batteries out of our landfills (markethedrop.ca).

Thank you in advance for any support from the community in our initiative to make our planet a cleaner place for our children.
Thunderhawks Jr. Bs to take year sabbatical

Andy Boldt
Assistant Coach
Special to The Local

Due to a lack of community support, transitioning players and inflexible scheduling, the Niagara Thunderhawks Jr. B Lacrosse team will be taking a sabbatical for the 2020 season. Past and present support hasn’t seemed to get the support of our community. The Thunderhawks were one of the lowest fan-supported teams in the whole 24-team league, especially compared to centres with a similar population.

Contrary to these difficulties, NOTL has been able to produce a number of elite lacrosse players over the past 50 years. A number of them have reached Ontario and Canadian Lacrosse Hall of Fame stature, won national championships, played professionally and represented Canada on the world stage. August, 2019, saw Chris Weiser and Zach Belter win the Minto Cup with the Oakville Northmen after the Thunderhawks were eliminated in the first round of playoffs. They and a few other players will probably be leaving the Thunderhawks to play at the Jr. A level next season.

September saw alumni John Wagner, drafted by the New York Riptide of the National Lacrosse League, John and Belter play for NOTL Minor Thunderhawks and upon graduation headed to Marquette University, played for the U19 Team Canada team and played for Brooklin in the Major Series of Lacrosse. September also saw current player Michael Wilson, attending Canisius College and playing defence for the Goldens Griffins, invited to the U19 Team Canada tryouts. This is a huge honour to be one of 64 players from all across Canada to be considered for the team. Wilson also grew up playing in the minor ranks for NOTL and moved to Jr. B the last two seasons to hone his skills and add to his natural abilities.

Due to the Thunderhawks’ geographical location, the team is only able to take players coming up from NOTL Minor Lacrosse and College players from the U.S. Although skilled, a large proportion of the U.S. players have difficulty transitioning from field lacrosse to the box lacrosse game, reducing the number coming to play. Also, the past three seasons saw the number of junior players willing to play Jr. B drastically decline. The 2020 season sees less than a handful of minor players moving into the Jr. B ranks.

After requests by staff to the league to modify the schedule to meet the changing environment of players at college and university were denied, the opportunity to have a viable team was eliminated. Players in U.S. colleges aren’t available to play until the middle of May. This, however, at minimum, is six games into the season. This isn’t new for the Thunderhawks, but due to a low number of upcoming players capable of playing at the Jr. B level, the team could be out of the playoff race by mid season. Not the ideal situation the team staff were willing to take on. For this reason, the team is taking a one-year sabbatical to bolster their position for the 2021 season.

There is a plan. The NOTL Minor intermediate team has always been a development team for the Jr. Bs. The 2020 season will not be the exception. With the help of last season’s intermediate coaches, Jr. B managerial staff and one of their coaches, the Intermediate staff will attempt to put together a team which will be able to resurrect the Jr. Bs for the 2021 season.

The Thunderhawks would like to invite all players wanting to play Jr. B in 2021 to sign up for the 2020 intermediate through the NOTL Minor League website at https://niagaralacrosse.com/after the new year.

John Wagner #57, has returned in part to his early experience with the Thunderhawks, (Photo supplied)

To our 2019 sponsors of the Thunderhawks, we thank you for years of continued support. We invite you, and any new sponsors, to continue that support of the Thunderhawks future by sponsoring the intermediate team. Contact Dave Mines through the Jr. B website, https://thunderhawksjrb.ca, for more information.

To our community and the alumni, for any future team to be successful, requires volunteers. We implore you to remember your years of playing for the Thunderhawks and recognize it requires a lot of hands doing lots of jobs in order to get a team to run. If 2021 is going to be a success, it will be determined by the number of behind-the-scenes supporters we can arrange. Go to https://thunderhawksjrb.ca/register-an-alumni/ to add your support.

Local Business

Harvest time

It’s harvest time, and the van der Laar fruit stand on the Niagara River Parkway had lots of beautiful fresh local fruit for sale this weekend. (Fred Mercnik)