

The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL



Coffee groups
abound in
NOTL

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Monster Bash a sell-out

Saturday's annual Monster Bash at Willowbank, organized by Perry and Shari Hartwick, raised about \$7,500 to help local kids participate in sports. Hannah DiFruscio (top, left), Kyle Lamb, Andrea Letourneau, Danny Lamb, Diane Lamb, Janice Ashcroft, Greg Lamb (bottom left), Kirsten Cerminara and Ken Lamb get into the spirit of Halloween at the popular event. (Dan Migas)

Moving forward with amalgamation threat behind us

Still an opportunity to
review service delivery

Penny Coles
The Local

Lord Mayor Betty Disero couldn't have been happier last Friday morning to learn the threat of amalgamation is over.

She's delighted with the news, but not surprised.

From her discussions

during this summer's Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference, she said she was hearing from her contacts "what they'd been hearing," that the provincial government had lost its appetite for forcing amalgamation on municipalities.

"Of course anything you hear is speculative, but I was

hopeful."

While she thought Premier Doug Ford might be looking for ways to reduce the number of municipal councillors, "I didn't see him doing something drastic as far as service delivery. I thought he might put a panel together, and a process in place for a disentanglement exercise."

She points out the Province, from its earliest discussions, never talked about amalgamation, it was always about a regional review. That got interpreted as

amalgamation, she says.

There might still be some benefit to such a disentanglement exercise in Niagara, Disero said, to look at who does what. The mayors have met to talk about that, "but there is always a fear people will lose their jobs." With the provincial threat receding, she says, "this will give people some job security."

It also gives Niagara an opportunity to review its service delivery, "to ensure we are not duplicating services," says Disero.

"It makes no sense to me

that we're both providing some of the same services. We've got the Region and the Town doing snow removal, for example. Why don't we have one level doing the whole thing?"

In the letter she sent out Friday, Disero said maintaining high service levels has always been a priority for the Town. "I am confident that with the support of the provincial government, and in partnership with the Niagara Region, council and staff will continue to work with other

local area municipalities to streamline services to not only maintain service levels, but to enhance them."

She said she is "pleased that Niagara-on-the-Lake residents will continue to have a strong voice in this community and be well represented by our locally elected officials."

With the threat of amalgamation behind us, she said, "I'm excited to move forward with our Strategic Plan initiatives and look

Continued on page 2

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PER PERSON

Town upholds extension of cannabis control bylaw

Public meeting held as part of bylaw review

Penny Coles
The Local

After an open house for public input on cannabis production within the municipality, council, with no discussion, approved an extension to the interim control bylaw last week.

Two appeals have been lodged against the interim control, one from medical marijuana producer Tweed Farms, and one from representatives of an Airport Road property, where there is a plan for outdoor growth of the product.

The reason for the extension was to conduct further review of the research the

Town has conducted, and to hold a public meeting to allow input from all stakeholders to ensure best practices are used to control the cultivation of cannabis.

The bylaw under discussion deals with air quality control, and imposes setbacks of 1,500 metres to sensitive land uses, including residential neighbourhoods.

Mark Stewart, a resident of St. Davids and a lawyer who said he was speaking on behalf of many concerned residents, said he, his wife and four adult children live within 1,500 metres of Canopy Growth's Concession 5 operation, known as Tweed Farms.

He spoke of "bringing truth to the narrative," focusing on the need for a strong bylaw to address odour emissions from cannabis cultivation.

In addition to losing more valuable tender fruit and grape farmland to cannabis production, he said, "the skunk stench will devastate the health and wellbeing of our local communities." It will also damage the area as a destination for tourism, he added, reduce property values and "change the fabric of farming communities."

He cited federal Regulation 85, reminding council that although the law states odour from cannabis production must be prevented from escaping, with strict compliance, there are licensed producers not complying with that regulation. Instead, there is talk about

mitigating, deodorizing and masking odours, which is not what the law calls for, he said.

He asked council to ensure its bylaw enshrines the prevention of the escape of odours, pollen and dust from a building where cannabis is produced, packaged, labelled and stored. He also recommended the reference to sensitive land use be tightened and defined, with the 1,500-setback measured from property or lot lines, to avoid any argument about where a building or amenity is located on the property.

Stewart assured council they would have the backing of residents if a tough bylaw is challenged, possibly including crowd-funding to assist with legal costs in the event of a challenge from cannabis producers.

Nicholas Dell, represent-

ing the owners of the Airport Road property, repeated some of the information he presented to council this summer, saying outdoor production has less of an impact on neighbours than growing cannabis in greenhouses.

Tweed Farms' appeal says there is no "bonafide review" underway, which is a condition of an interim control bylaw, and that the bylaw is not based on legitimate land use reasons.

Tweed also states the extension to the control bylaw seeks to regulate cannabis, which is outside the jurisdiction of a municipality and wholly within the jurisdiction of the federal government. It says no municipality is allowed to pass a bylaw restricting normal farm practices, and growing cannabis, it says, is normal farming practice.

The second appeal, from the company that hopes to grow cannabis outdoors on an Airport Road property, says council "overstepped its jurisdiction" in getting into an examination of cannabis-related land uses. Growing cannabis, it says, is no different than growing tender fruits or soybeans, on agriculturally designated property.

The Town's response is that the interim control bylaw is consistent with provincial policy, and conforms with all relevant provincial plans and all applicable official plans. That was all that was said at last week's meeting before the approval of extension of the bylaw.

Following the meeting last week, staff will use the input to formulate a report for council on a bylaw controlling cannabis production.

Momentum of service review should be maintained

Continued from page 1

forward to working with staff and council to further our culture of customer service excellence."

Regional councillor, Gary Zalepa said he is pleased and excited the

threat of amalgamation of Niagara municipalities has been removed.

He, like other residents who hoped to preserve the identity of their community, feared that could be "wiped out" with amalgamation, he said.

"This is an interesting time. It's a good opportunity to have a really good look at ways to improve governance. We've got a good feeling now of what people are open to considering and what the public really wants."

He said if he were to consider forming a regional government today, it would be different from what exists. "This is an opportunity to take what's best about regional government and make it better," he said, continuing the momentum that was created during discussions held as part of the provincial review.

"There is an opportunity to design a different business model."

Locally-elected people tend to make the best decisions for their municipality, he said. "We can create a governance model that works that way. Inefficiencies have evolved over the years, and I think we can make adjustments and do things better."

Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, said in his announcement Friday that during his government's review of eight regional governments, more than 8,500 submissions were received,

and the two special advisors, Michael Fenn and Ken Seiling, attended nine sessions to hear from individuals and organizations on how to improve their local governments.

He said the provincial government would not be forcing amalgamation of municipalities or imposing cuts on municipal councils.

Throughout the review, the government heard that local communities should decide what is best for them in terms of government, decision-making, and service delivery, said a provincial news release.

"After careful consideration of the feedback we heard through the course of the review, our government stands firm in its commitment to partnering with municipalities without pursuing a top-down approach. We will provide municipalities with the resources to support local decision-making," a news release said.

Clark said his government is committed to "helping and empowering municipalities to become more efficient and effective, so they can make every dollar count."

The announcement said the Province is providing up to \$143 million to municipalities, intended to lower costs and improve services for locals in the long term.

Clark said the investment is to support "municipal transformation efforts," to make sure they are delivering efficient, effective and modern services "that meet the unique needs of their residents."

Through the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund, Niagara-on-the-Lake will receive \$349,800 in 2020.

In 2019, NOTL received \$411,500 from the OMPF.

Clark also announced an additional \$125 million in new funding to help municipalities review the way they deliver services.

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Cold Storage owner carries out noise reduction recommendations

Penny Coles
The Local

A walk through the cold storage facility in St. Davids is like strolling through storerooms of Niagara-on-the-Lake businesses.

There are bushels of fresh fruit, tubs of frozen cherry concentrate, bins of vegetables, cages of champagne produced by a local winery aging for two to three years until it is ready for consumption, cases of wine, beer, cider and even the popular organic Kombucha, waiting to be shipped.



Fresh fruit is kept cool, but not frozen, until ready for use.



Tubs of tart cherry concentrate sit in a freezer room.

There are empty bottles and cans standing by until they are needed, cardboard boxes ready to be used for shipping, even packages of toilet paper and Christmas decorations at the ready — more than 300 businesses have products stored in the St. Davids facility.

Businesses in NOTL, and indeed throughout the region, requiring storage space for just about anything they don't have room for on their own premises, depend on St. Davids Cold Storage to warehouse their products.

St. Mark's Church uses it to store cherry pies for its annual cherry festival — at no charge — as does NOTL Minor Hockey for its frozen burgers used for fundraising barbecues, and St. Davids Lions for their storage needs.

The original 33,000 square-foot facility, shut down by the former CanGro fruit processing plant, was taken over by three local owners in 2008 to provide storage for the food and beverage industry. The first customer was Paul Bosc of Chateau des Charmes, who had cases of wine to store. Ravine Vineyards Estate Winery is a good customer, as are many local wineries, along with Niagara College.

The facility has seen two additions, one in 2012 and more recently in 2018, and as you drive along Four Mile Creek Road through St. Davids, it's obvious there is yet another addition underway. When completed it will bring the entire facility up to 70,000 square feet, says Alfred Dyck, now the sole owner.

When the canning factory closed down, 300 jobs were lost, his lawyer Sarah Premi told council last week. The storage facility has replaced those with 120 new jobs, and will add more when the cur-

However, his most recent addition got him into a spot of trouble with some neighbours, and he has spent several months working with the Town to find a solution.

At issue is a condenser unit on the side of the newest freezer, which faces the Cannery Park subdivision. When it was first installed, Dyck admits it was noisy. It was what he expected. He had panels purchased to lessen the noise, but a neighbour complained to the Town before he had a chance to install them, he says.

That brought work to a halt for several months while town staff looked into the complaint, experts were brought in and recommendations made on how he should proceed, and during that time, he agrees with the neighbours, the condenser was loud.

Dyck hadn't included the condenser on the site plan he submitted to the Town planning department, and town staff didn't catch that it had been omitted, so an amended site plan has been before council recently for approval. But councillors are struggling, some in favour of a businessman who is trying to correct an error in the site plan omission, and others who want to ensure neighbours' rights to be free from the intrusion of noise and vibration, aren't being jeopardized. Two Cannery Park residents have made deputations to council about the noise and vibration, describing a situation that prevents them from enjoying their backyards and causes difficulty sleeping. One neighbour showed photos of the windows on the back of his house, covered with slabs of styrofoam to reduce the noise inside. When he was asked at council last week if it is still noisy after the work that's been done, he says, "it's a little better, but we still hear it and feel it."

Dyck has now carried out the work recommended by noise abatement experts and town staff, and has a little bit of "tweaking" planned to further reduce the noise, he told council last week.

Experts have tested decibel levels, saying the condenser, which is surrounded by wooden panels lined with a metal, wool-filled noise-absorbing wall, is within one decibel of provincial guidelines.

Dyck's plan to add a blanket of foam on the walls around the condenser will further reduce the noise, he says, bringing it below accepted levels.

Councillors also heard one neighbour's child's bed vibrates from the condenser. Dyck says the firm he hired to look at noise abatement, which has been subject to peer review by the Town, says the vibration measured on the concrete pad the condenser sits on is within acceptable levels, but the Cannery Park



The compressor neighbours are complaining about has been surrounded by wooden panels and a sound-absorbing wall. (Photos by Penny Coles)

resident maintains it can be felt in an upstairs bedroom.

At last week's council meeting, Dyck's lawyer told councillors he has done everything required of him. "There is science to support the staff's position" that the site plan amendment be approved, says Premi.

She told councillors Dyck didn't know he needed a site plan that showed the position of the condenser, and since finding out, has worked with staff to comply.

He has spent \$75,000 on that work, she says, explaining the complaints were of noise levels before the work was completed.

She suggested the solution would be for councillors to defer approval of the site plan amendment until the

next council meeting, Nov. 11, by which time Dyck will have completed the tweaking he spoke of — the foam blanket — and should have the experts' numbers to show he has accomplished all that was asked of him.

Several councillors have been out to hear the hum of the condenser for themselves.

Coun. Clare Cameron told council she had trouble hearing the unit over the sound of the birds chirping in the trees, and didn't find it any louder than her neighbours' air conditioners.

Coun. Erwin Wiens reminded council, and Cannery Park residents, of an undertaking the developer was supposed to include in purchase agreements for each unit, warning of "noise, odour

and dust from nearby agricultural operations and agricultural-related traffic, industrial operations and industrial/commercial traffic."

Dyck says he doesn't know whether the clause was actually included in sale agreements — that would have been up to the developer of the property.

As the tour ends, a local farmer arrives asking if he can store some bins of butternut squash. He's grown more than he can sell at the moment, and he doesn't have room to store it. The alternative is to throw it out. Dyck agrees to look after them for him.

About the condenser, he says, "I've tried to solve the problem, to do everything I have to do to be a good neighbour. Now all I can do is wait."

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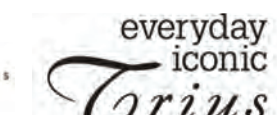
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Town to consider parking buses on hospital property



Interim CAO Sheldon Randall and Lord Mayor Betty Disero discuss the option of using the hospital property for bus parking. (Penny Coles)

Penny Coles The Local

With Parks Canada having increased parking fees for buses at Fort George, town staff has been asked to look at alternatives, and the hospital site could be one of them.

After 18 years of allowing the Town the use of the parking lot at no cost, Parks Canada notified the Town last spring that it would start charging 50 per cent of the gross revenues from the fees paid by tour operators for bus parking, but negotiations got the cost reduced to 25 per cent.

The Town, during its budget discussions, had already decided to raise the price of parking for tour buses by \$25.

The Chamber of Commerce operates a visitor centre at the site, with washrooms, and the Town runs a shuttle bus from the fort to the the parking lot behind the Court House.

Councillors heard last week from interim CAO Sheldon Randall that while most visitors take the bus to town, when they realize how short the distance is, they often walk back. When the use of a Fort George parking lot was first discussed more than 20 years ago, the goal was to draw tour buses to the historic site, in the hope that some visitors would also tour the fort. However, councillors heard that hasn't worked out — most of the buses don't stay in town long enough.

With budget discussions approaching, council discussed whether it might be time for town staff to look at cheaper alternatives for parking.

With the cost of operating and maintaining the lot, along with the commission

paid to Parks Canada, "it will be a challenge for us to make any money from it and pay our bills," said Randall.

Since the contract with Parks Canada was only for a year, it will expire within months, and the Town may have no alternative but to sign if it doesn't look at other options, councillors fear.

Randall said there have been several reports on parking alternatives prepared in the past, but no options that were satisfactory were found.

However, with the hospital now closed — it is still used for doctors' offices and the Royal Oak Community School — that is one possible location that has never been considered.

"I'm only aware of one location that we haven't studied for parking coach buses and that would be the recently acquired property of the former hospital site on Wellington," said Randall.

If council wants to explore other options, "that's the only new site that's come up within the heritage district or a location that makes sense for getting buses in and out of town safely and with the least impact," he said.

"I don't think we should be exploring other locations, we've done that. The only new location is Wellington Street."

The Fort George parking lot "evolved over years," he said, with huge debates and a lot of effort going into it through a partnership with Parks Canada.

The Town looked at "all kinds of options back then," he added. "The only viable option would be the hospital property."

sense, he said, especially if it means the shuttle is no longer necessary.

"I think there is some urgency to get this done," said Coun. Norm Arsenault, with the Parks Canada lease expiring at the end of 2019.

Coun. Burroughs said because of the increase in parking for tour operators, buses are parking on side streets for free.

Staff and councillors should sit down with Parks Canada to discuss future terms, he said.

"It's not going to be a good solution for us to suddenly pull out."

"We haven't had a lot of reports of buses going rogue on side streets," said Randall.

There are always a few bus drivers who do that, he added, but he doesn't have data to show if there is an increase and if it's related to the hike in the parking fee.

Coun. Allan Bisback, who made the motion to look at alternatives, said the reason was very simple: the lease expires in two months on a parking regime the Town depends on, he said.

"We know Parks Canada very well," said Randall. "I have no concern about them saying you're not going to park buses in here in 2020."

He said it might be time to look at the feasibility of using the hospital site, "but if we're not going to eliminate the shuttles, we should stay where we are."

The discussion ended with direction to staff for a "high level information report" on previous studies and a look on the possibility of using the hospital parking lot for bus parking, based on the premise that the goal is for a site that would have the least impact on the rest of town.

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New veterinary hospital opening in Virgil

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Drs. June and Ron Mergl, Niagara residents with a home in Niagara-on-the-Lake, are excited to open the doors to Virgil Animal Hospital next Wednesday, Nov. 6.

Practising veterinary medicine for over 34 years each in the Niagara Region, and winning the 2019 Reader's Choice Award for best veterinary services, the Mergls have a passion for pets that also extends to pets' owners. "A team family approach, with compassion for owners and pets, is crucial to achieving the right diagnosis and appropriate treatment," says Ron.

"After all," says June, "I know our own pets are members of our family, so we treat our clients' pets as if they are family as well."

Both doctors have a strong philosophy of giving to the community, and volunteer with numerous local organizations and charities. Rotarians in Niagara for the past 26 years, they spent their own money to travel to Third World countries to vaccinate children against polio. June has also been a member of Zonta for 32 years, a service

club that raises awareness and funds for women's issues, and both doctors support the local animal shelters, such as NOTL CATS Rescue and Niagara Falls Humane Society. Additionally, Ron was recognized by the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association with the Award of Merit for outstanding veterinary service to both the local and global community.

Virgil Animal Hospital joined the NOTL Chamber of Commerce and the Virgil Business Association last spring, and Ron volunteered immediately at the Virgil Stampede. "What fun to assist at an event that I attended as a young boy, and where my wife and I brought our three sons while growing up in NOTL. It was a great way to reconnect with so many wonderful people of this community and raise funds for a good cause."

Dr. Lindsay Davis, a Niagara native, is also part of the team at Virgil Animal Hospital. A 2010 Ontario Veterinary College graduate, she has worked at the Mergls' practice in Niagara Falls for several years, volunteered five

years with the Lincoln County Humane Society as the veterinarian for exotic animals, and provided veterinary services to homeless animals at the shelter clinic. For her dedication to helping animals, she won the 2018 Ontario-wide SPCA Welfare Award. "I believe all animals deserve exceptional, high quality medical care regardless of size or species," says Dr. Davis. In addition to treating dogs and cats, she provides specialized care to rabbits and guinea pigs and has rescued many bunnies, including King Henry, a huge Flemish Giant bunny.

Dr. Davis completed additional training in dental surgery and is passionate about this important component of companion animal wellness. As well, she is certified in Fear-Free Handling, and makes it an essential part of every appointment so pets have a positive experience at the veterinary hospital.

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EDITORIAL

Recognizing, celebrating strong local women

This week, Lord Mayor Betty Disero sent out a message reminding us October is National Women's History Month.

It is a time for Canadians to celebrate the achievements and contributions of women and girls across the country and throughout our history, she said.

It is a time to recognize women who have made a lasting impact "as pioneers in their field."

"Whether as business leaders, politicians, researchers, artists, or activists, these women of impact have helped shape Canada into a thriving, diverse, and prosperous country through their achievements and desire to make a difference."

As they have in this community, a community of firsts in so many ways.

"When I started to make a list, I was reminded of how blessed we are to have so many strong, determined, and accomplished women in Niagara-on-the-Lake," she said.

At this time, on this day, the list should start with Lord Mayor Betty Disero.

She is the first female Lord Mayor of NOTL. She is a strong leader, and there is no doubt she is having a lasting impact on this town.

In her message, Disero reaches a long way back to women who shaped not only this community, but our country — Chloe Cooley, Laura Secord, Jan-

et Carnochan and Harriet Tubman among them.

The challenge with listing names is you can never include everybody who deserves to be on it. I think we could also include Elizabeth Simcoe. She was a brave woman by all accounts, and her detailed diary and illustrations taught us much of what we know about life in early Upper Canada.

The Lord Mayor mentions Margherita Howe, who was named to the Order of Canada for her environmental activism. In my mind, I always remember her as she sat side by side at council meetings with Laura Dodson, fighting for heritage preservation, for which Laura was named to the Order of Canada. She too should be remembered for her leadership. They were not always treated with respect by some (male) members of council, but they persevered. They were tough and stubborn and they didn't give up.

Austin Kirkby was one of our most stalwart politicians, called an alderman in her day, but she wasn't the first female on council. Nellie Keeler and Blanche Quinn were also aldermen, beginning in the 80s and into the early 90s. They both were characters in their day — still are, likely, although I haven't seen Blanche in a while. I chatted with Nellie recently and she is still a force to be reckoned with. And both

are as passionate about this community as anyone could be. If there were earlier aldermen who were women, that was before my time — there could have been, but it was definitely a man's world.

Peggy Anderson, Gracia Janes, Debi Pratt, Judy McLaughlin, Steffanie Bjorgen, Sandra O'Connor, Andrea Kaiser, Clare Cameron, Wendy Cheropita are mentioned by Disero. I would add Maria Bau-Coote to my list, Janice Thomson for her determination to consciously do what is right and true, Julia Buxton Cox as a volunteer, activist and social media administrator trying to bring kindness to a medium that often isn't, and Maria Mavridis, not just because of her strength in business, but because of the role she plays in fundraising for different causes — a difficult task, and one without personal gain, done from the heart.

We know there are so, so very many others we are missing. The Lord Mayor suggests if you know a woman deserving recognition and thanks, add her in the comments section on Facebook or share a post on Social Media with the hashtag #MakeAnImpact-NOTL.

I would also suggest writing a letter to The Local, at penny@notllocal.com, for us to share.

Penny Coles
The Local

LOCAL FINDS



This beautifully elaborate and costly marble memorial is witness to a husband's love and loss. There is no further record of this little family, however this monument speaks volumes. Perhaps Charles' grief was so great that he left Niagara for a place where he could begin anew. Most early marble and limestone monuments are now unreadable as they have been badly damaged by acid rain and the passage of time, but this 146-year-old stone looks almost new.

Tale of love and loss

by Donald Combe

Special to The Local

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Bingo! Pink Pearl benefits



Brad Baker from BBBlooms hosts the Purse Bingo fundraising event for the Pink Pearl Foundation, founded by Elise Gasbarrino to help young women battling cancer. The event was organized by Maria Mavridis of Anchor Niagara, and held at White Oaks Conference Resort and Spa. The goal for the evening was \$5,000, and more than \$6,500 was raised, said Mavridis, who is holding up a Burberry purse valued at \$1,600. (Penny Coles)

The NOTL Local acknowledges the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, many of whom continue to live and work here today. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and is within the land protected by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum agreement. Today this gathering place is home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and acknowledging reminds us that our great standard of living is directly related to the resources and friendship of Indigenous peoples.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake

LOCAL

The trusted voice of our community

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

Editor:
Penny Coles
penny@notllocal.com
905-246-5878

Publisher:
The Niagara-on-the-Lake Local

Graphic Designer:
Rosie Gowsell
composing@notllocal.com

Advertising Sales:
Karen Skeoch
karen@notllocal.com • 905-641-5335

Julia Coles
julia@notllocal.com • 905-934-1040

Helen Arsenault
Local Business Directory,
Local Happenings, Classified Sales
classified@notllocal.com

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Wetland talk brings back childhood memories



Owen Bjorgan
Special to The Local

Last Wednesday, I was grateful to be the guest speaker at the Niagara-on-the-Lake community centre.

The event, hosted by Friends of One Mile Creek, requested that I talk on wetlands, particularly, the state of wetlands across the Niagara Region and the health of such ecosystems in our hometown.

Driving home after the presentation, I was reflecting on what got me there that evening. Feeling so fortunate to have just spoken in my local area about something I'm so passionate about, I dug into the mental archives and pieced together some entertaining memories.

Turning into an outdoors enthusiast by passion and profession happened because I was apparently already trying it on for size from as early as I can remember. Sometimes in really quirky and outrageous ways.

Most boys in Grade 5 had pictures and keychains of Britney Spears and some beach babes in

their room or backpack. I had a poster of Steve Irwin, and a bland picture of a northern pike (my favourite freshwater fish to catch).

My first childhood books that I didn't have read to me were nature field guides. Battered by dirty hands and abandonment in a couple rainstorms, my Collins Gem pocket guides are still alive and legible to this day, in case you want to read about snakes, spiders, and fungi of the world.

One time my field guide antics got me into some trouble in Grade 5 French class. I was supposed to be focusing on the verb "aller," but instead, I was writing down a meticulous list of cloud formation types.

Cumulonimbus, the one that brings heavy thunderstorms.

And although mammatus clouds are named after a Latin term for breasts, the only thing inappropriate about the list I was making was that it was during class. The teacher confiscated it in front of everyone, and then pinned my list of clouds to the board where I was allowed to retrieve it a day later.

Imagine your uncle and your dad installing satellite TV for the first time in the early 2000s. Suddenly, this plethora of channels becomes available to your viewing, and better yet, you can even search for your ideal program.

Once the cords were connected, my uncle asked me, "Owen, what do you want to watch?" I remember replying "something about mushrooms or fungi." I wonder if he remembers that, and if he's laughing, that's okay because I am too. He searched endlessly, and for some strange reason, couldn't find a show about such a thing running that afternoon.

I remember being at a cottage with my family somewhere in northern Ontario, and I had lugged along some typical rainy day activities like most 10-year-olds.

I had this enormous three-ring binder containing pages of colourful images and tight-knit paragraphs describing animals from all over the world. I could have played gameboy or board games, but I was more determined to memorize the scientific (Latin) names of rare primates from Madagascar.

At a Halloween party this weekend, someone had reminded me of how I once did a talent show piece at St. Davids with reptiles. I remember having a corn snake, two ball pythons, a bearded dragon, and a couple of other scaly guests to educate the crowd about.

My Grade 2 classroom down in Queenston had a chalkboard, and it still might. It might also

still have the feces stain from my pet corn snake, which I brought to class for show-and-tell once upon a time.

The snake awkwardly propped its tail up against the chalkboard while I was presenting at the front of the class, when an unusual projectile poop shot out onto the board. I remember it was impossible to wash off, and to this day, I don't know if it ever was. Rest in peace, Corny.

Sitting in the van with my parents heading to Fort Erie and Wainfleet for hockey games during my youth, seeds were being planted that I didn't know would later sprout. I kept a na-

ture journal of all the observations I could make on the drive to the rink. Deer? Four tallies. Red tailed hawks? Five tallies. Why are there so many more wetlands out here than back near my house? Why do I hear more frogs out this way in the spring? I would later learn that these early inquiries from the van-side window would be met with answers in my later studies and personal leisure.

I also held a birthday party when I was just a tiny one at the base of "Big Tree" on the Niagara Escarpment. I requested that my parents would lead my friends and I to this massive eastern cot-

tonwood tree, where we could eat snacks and enjoy the outdoor playground.

To come full circle, it looks like my days of keeping salamanders in my pencil case and making maps of the forest came to fruition. It's exciting to find space and time to talk to the community about things that unify us all, such as the wellbeing of our natural environment.

Reminiscing about these stories has me thinking that, like any profession, how you spend your time and curiosities outside of work and school is where the real learning can begin, and where you can really grow as a person.



Here's a pleasant view along the Twenty Mile Creek, a place that captured Owen Bjorgan's imagination as a kid visiting his grandmother, and is now a professional "playground" for him. (Owen Bjorgan)



Auchterlonie on Astrology

Bill Auchterlonie
Special to The Local

Welcome to Auchterlonie on Astrology for the last day of October and the start of November. This is the week of the First Quarter Moon in Aquarius, on Monday, Nov. 4.

If you follow my podcasts on Facebook or my website, this is the second week where we look at some fun facts of astrology, such as the meaning of The Ides of March or the names of the days of the week and how they are derived from the names of the planets.

But first, the week ahead.

Thursday, Oct. 31 is always Halloween. And this one starts off positively with the Moon in Sagittarius meeting Jupiter in the morning, bringing positive feelings and good fortune together. Then at 11:41 a.m., Mercury turns retrograde, mean-

ing it appears to begin moving backwards in the sky, suggesting a period where thinking and communications may not be what you're used to. Mercury turns direct on Thursday, Nov. 21, so this period of malfunctioning cell phones and so on is only with us for three weeks this time. When Mercury is retrograde it is a good time to set aside extra time to do some soul searching. Make notes! The great John Candy would have been 69 today and The Lord of the Rings director, Peter Jackson, turns 58.

Friday, Nov. 1 sees the Moon in Capricorn, while Venus moves from Scorpio into Sagittarius. So sexy Scorpio gives way to knowing Sagittarius, with a lot of serious support from feelings that are focused on security and getting things done. It was Nov. 1, 1960 the Montreal Canadiens' great goalie, Jacques

Plante, first wore a mask in an NHL game. One puck to the face too many and a new bit of hockey gear was born. Actress Jenny McCarthy is 47 today.

Saturday, Nov. 2 is a super serious Saturday, as the Moon in Capricorn makes contact with two of the most serious objects in the sky — Saturn and Pluto. It's a good idea to be totally honest with yourself and to be clear about your motives. This is especially true about matters involving vocation and security. The first commercial radio station began broadcasting on Nov. 2, 1920 and the first thing broadcast was the result of the American presidential election. The first crew of the International Space Station arrived up there 19 years ago today.

Sunday, Nov. 3 sees the Moon move from Capricorn into Aquarius in the early morning on a day when both the Sun

and Venus make very positive connections, bringing rewards of a karmic nature and healing through a new or renewed relationship. The income tax was introduced in the U.S. on Nov. 3, 1913. It took until 1917 to get it going in Canada.

Monday, Nov. 4 is the day of the first quarter Moon in Aquarius, as the Moon makes a Square aspect to the Sun at 6:22 in the morning. First Quarter Moons are more energetic because the Moon is gaining in strength on its way to full moon status. This quarter moon is tangled up with some other stressful goings-on suggesting, a need to resolve a challenge from a group of people who may feel or be indebted. Matthew McConaughey celebrates the big 5-0 today. It was Nov. 4, 1916 that the legendary newsman, Walter Cronkite, was born.

Tuesday, Nov. 5 sees the

Moon move from Aquarius into Pisces in the early evening. Both Venus and Mars are active today with Venus in Sagittarius in a stressful connection with Uranus in Taurus. Interestingly, Venus is in Sagittarius but rules Taurus, so this may prove to be a creative moment, when a surprise leaves a smile on your face. Later, Mars in Libra gets a challenge from Pluto in Capricorn. Be careful about lower back issues. In the depths of the worldwide depression in 1935, Parker Brothers sold its first edition of the board game Monopoly. The game was based on a 1903 invention called The Landlord's Game, invented by Lizzie Magie as an educational tool.

Wednesday, Nov. 6, the Moon continues her journey through Pisces as Venus in Sagittarius makes a connection with Pluto in Capricorn, which may prove to be stressful finan-

cially, or in some other way, rewarding. Canadian teacher James Naismith, the man who invented basketball, was born Nov. 6, 1861. And Abraham Lincoln became the 16th president of the U.S. on this date in 1860.

We will see the full Moon in Taurus on Tuesday, Nov. 12, and retrograde Mercury makes some noise as well.

Please check out my podcast either on the Facebook page, Auchterlonie on Astrology, or at <https://www.lookingupwithbill.com/>.

This week it's all about the names of the days of the week and how they connect to the planets. And on the website you will find an offer to have your birth chart done with a look at your year ahead to boot.

Until next time, remember we are all stardust. We are golden. So shine on!

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Every day is Remembrance Day, says local veteran

Penny Coles
The Local

Veteran Doug Garrett will be part of the Remembrance Day parade on Queen Street, which he has been for almost 65 years, but he will not be laying wreaths, which he has always done as the Sergeant-at-Arms of the Royal Canadian Legion.

His knees don't work well enough for that much walking, he says, but at 92, he has done his years of service long enough to hand that role over with pride.

“We still remember them, all of them, especially those who paid the supreme sacrifice.”

Doug Garrett

As Sergeant-at-Arms, his duty is to maintain order during meetings and be responsible for the colours and flags.

Garrett says he isn't the oldest veteran belonging to Branch 124. He can think of at least three as old or older — Blanche Quinn, David Mansfield and Del Sartor. But he's not sure whether they will be

at the ceremony Nov. 11.

He believes he's the oldest active member, he says, and he is still distributing poppies in the days leading up to the ceremony.

The moment the veteran steps up to the Cenotaph with his poppy box, he is besieged by visitors to town who want a photo taken with him, and who stuff bills in the box in exchange for a poppy, thanking him for his service. His age and his demeanour seem to draw respect, and he becomes a little tearful in appreciation.

he just had his driver's licence renewed for another two years. “I plan my day around it.”

His adult children are scattered across Niagara, but not far away, and he has nine grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren, so he feels well-cared for, he says.

The membership of the local legion branch has been growing in recent years, he says, but it's hard to get volunteers to help out at the events and fundraisers — it always seems to be the older members doing the work, and they are getting older.

“I'm not sure what's going to happen when we're not around,” he says, “and you know that's going to happen.”

Although he can't do his usual job of laying wreaths, he will, however, raise the flag and lower it at the Remembrance Day ceremony, and he will stand with pride and think not only about those who didn't come home, those who did, injured, but also increasingly about the local veterans who have died in recent years, and are missed, he says.

“We still remember them, all of them, especially those who paid the supreme sacrifice. The least we can do is remember them one day a year. To me, and to a lot of the Legion members, every day is Remembrance Day.”



Doug Garrett won't be laying wreaths at the Cenotaph this Remembrance Day, but he will be lowering and raising the flag. At 92, he also takes his shifts distributing poppies. (Photos by Penny Coles)



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Lord Mayor Betty Disero, Royal Canadian Legion members Doug Garrett, Stan Harrington, Al Howse and legion president Paul Iranian raise the poppy flag in honour of Remembrance Day.

Newark Neighbours says thanks for generosity

Christmas drive and registration begin

**Suzanne Vaillant
Special to The Local**

Our sincere thanks go out to this wonderful and generous community we live in. Our volunteers filled 25 Thanksgiving dinner baskets for our clients. We would like to send out our thanks to St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Walker's Country Market, Kent Heritage Farms, George Webber and Audrey Pellett, Budapest Bakeshop, Meridian Credit Union, Barb and Ed McCarthy, Julia Buxton-Cox, EKO Couture, Vineridge Academy students and all the anonymous donors who dropped off cash donations, turkeys, treats and food for our dinner baskets. It is always heartwarming to see our community come together to share with others in need.

We are now planning for Christmas. Sign up for food clients begins on November 1 and registration ends

December 10. If you are not a Newark Neighbours client but require assistance, please bring in your 2018 Notice of Assessment, proof of address and a utility bill with your name and address when you come in to register.

Our Thrift Store is no longer open on Sunday. We have returned to our regular hours of Monday to Friday 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Our Thrift Shop is located at 310 John Street (behind Riverbend Inn). For more information please visit our website at www.newark-neighbours.ca.

We appreciate and value the generosity of our community for your donations which allows us to continue our mission of "Serving our Community with Compassion, Care and Concern". Making this mission a reality would not be possible without all of our volunteers whose time and efforts we greatly appreciate.



Vineridge Academy students collect food for Newark Neighbours' food bank. (Photo supplied)



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Three hydro boxes included in beautification project

Penny Coles
The Local

Three hydro boxes in the Old Town have been decorated in the spirit of community beautification, following a contest that asked for artists' submissions.

The project is a partnership between the Town's Communities in Bloom Committee, Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro and the Niagara Pump-

house Arts Centre, which is presenting an exhibition of artwork submissions to be displayed from Dec. 12 to Jan. 7.

There will be an opening reception and awards celebration party for the community-building event on Thursday, Dec. 12, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Pumphouse, with wine and nibbles. The public is welcome.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero made a point of driv-



Elaine Bryck's design is on the hydro box at Front Street near Victoria Street. (Photos by Penny Coles)



Jennifer Penner's designs decorate the large hydro box on the corner of King and Ricardo Streets.

ing around to check out the boxes on the weekend.

"I've seen them and I love them. They give us an opportunity to showcase our visual artists," says Disero.

"We just have to see if they weather well. It would not look good if they fall apart over the winter."

Winning artists are Elaine Bryck, Lindsey Kemp and Jennifer Penner.

Prize money of \$500 will be awarded for each of the three winning submissions on the evening

of the reception.

The competition was open to artists who live, work or operate in the Niagara Region.

The winning submissions have been transferred onto vinyl wraps to beautify the boxes at King and Ricardo Streets, Memorial Park off King Street, and Front Street near Victoria Street.

This has been a pilot project, with the hope of expanding it in the future.

The idea of Hydro Box beautification, which has been successful in many other communities, came

from Tim Curtis, president of NOTL Hydro, the Town, in an effort to promote the local partnerships.

says a press release from nerships.



Lindsey Kemp has the pleasure of seeing her design on the hydro box at Memorial Park, near the tennis courts.



making our mark

NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

CREATING THE NEW NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

BE INFORMED and **PROVIDE INPUT** to ensure that future growth benefits our communities and improves quality of life.

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The region is forecasted to grow to 610,000 people and 265,000 jobs by the year 2041. To guide growth over the next 20 years, Niagara Region is creating a new Niagara Official Plan.

The Official Plan will set out objectives and policies to shape Niagara's physical development, while protecting what's valuable. It will cover topics like:

- Housing
- Climate Change
- Transportation
- Natural Environment
- Culture and Archaeology
- Urban Design

- Land Needs
- Employment Lands
- Urban Structure
- Aggregate Resources
- District and Secondary Plans
- Water and Wastewater

YOU'RE INVITED

Drop by the upcoming Public Information Centre in your area to learn more about the background initiatives that will inform the new Niagara Official Plan. Talk to staff working on the project, and provide your input on how Niagara should grow.

If you require any accommodations for a disability in order to attend and participate in meetings or events, contact the Niagara Region's Accessibility Coordinator at 905-685-4225 ext. 3252 or accessibility@niagararegion.ca.

PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTRE

Thursday, Nov. 7 | 4:30 to 7 p.m.

Gale Centre Arena, Memorial Community Room
5152 Thorold Stone Rd., Niagara Falls

Visit niagararegion.ca/official-plan to see the other three public information centres happening in Thorold, Fort Erie and Grimsby, Nov. 6-14.

Information will be collected in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. With the exception of personal information, all comments will become part of the public record.

STAY INFORMED

Sign up for email updates on the project at niagararegion.ca/official-plan.

To provide input or ask questions, email makingourmark@niagararegion.ca.

Contact **David Heyworth**, Official Plan Policy Consultant at 905-980-6000 ext. 3476

niagararegion.ca/official-plan
makingourmark@niagararegion.ca



Skateboard park may require some redesign

Penny Coles
The Local

The Town has run into a snag with the new skateboard park planned to be completed next spring.

The first phase of a project to be constructed in the coral area of the Virgil Sports Park was expected to cost \$300,000, according to an estimate from the Canadian Ramp Company (CRC), which had come up with a design and a cost to build it.

The plan was to have it finished by next year's Virgil Stampede, says Kevin Turcotte, the Town's parks and recreation manager, so an event could be planned around an opening of the new feature.

The Town had agreed to a capital expenditure of \$150,000 — that money has been set aside in the budget — and the Virgil Business Association has also pledged \$150,000.

But when CRC went looking for quotes from a subcontractor, the price of construction had doubled, and the Town is now looking at \$450,000 to build the design

that has been chosen.

If council agrees to the extra cost during next year's budget deliberations, it's a go, but probably won't be completed in the original timeline, says Turcotte.

If the extra funding isn't available, it will be back to the drawing board for a design that stays within the original \$300,000 budget, he says.

He attended the last VBA meeting to let members know the skateboard park likely won't be completed by next year's stampede, which is the long weekend in May.

The sports park, already home to the Town's two arenas and several ball diamonds, has also had new soccer fields added, a splash pad, new playground equipment, an adult fitness circuit and most recently, pickleball courts.

The Virgil Business Association has helped fund most of the components of the sports park with donations raised from the annual stampede event.

A pump track for cyclists has also been considered as a second phase of the skateboard park.

Harvest Breakfast



St. Davids Lions Club Harvest Breakfast volunteers Tori Ellah and Glenda Hall were very busy serving food at the busy event. (Fred Mercnik)



Pat Hicks and Lord Mayor Betty Disero were greeted by MPP Wayne Gates at the St. Davids Lions Club Harvest Breakfast. (Penny Coles)



The St. Davids Lions Club hall was busy Sunday morning with people enjoying a great breakfast cooked by Lions. (Penny Coles)



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Morning coffee club members an amiable bunch



Bob Cheriton (left), John Strecker, Robin Fraser, Gerry Brand, Jack Bulmer, Wayne Pickard, Mearl Obee and Mike Carleton meet at the community centre Wednesday mornings. Other regulars not in the photo are Terry Choules, Phil Brunt, Mark McCauley and Roger Schmid.

Penny Coles The Local

You have to be up and out early to see them — men and their coffee clubs.

It's worth it, though. You won't find a more genial group of guys than those who gather in the wee morning hours at local coffee shops to share news, gossip, opinions and above all, good humour — there is always some good-natured ribbing going on, and lots of laughter.

I learned about this sub-culture of Niagara-on-the-Lake when I began delivering *The Local* Wednesday mornings. The bulk of the papers go straight from the printer to the post offices, to be put in mail boxes at each of the four stations, or sent off with rural drivers.

But between those stops are drop-offs to local businesses, including the coffee shops, which turned out to be one of the best jobs of producing and delivering a community newspaper. It provides a great opportunity to meet some of the early-bird locals who begin their day with coffee and camaraderie.

They are always friendly and sociable, with warm, welcoming smiles, joking with comments such as “don't give him a paper, he can't read,” or “he only wants to see the centrefold,” but they also share some of the happy and sad news of people in the community — their love of the town and its residents evident as they speak.

For some reason, all but one of the groups are

men-only. Many are retired, although some of the earlier groups have men who stop in for coffee before heading off to work. And the time they leave for work, some of them self-employed, apparently depends on the topics of conversation and how lively they can become.

One group that almost didn't make the cut for a photo was of three men at a table of mostly women at Silks Country Kitchen — they didn't fit the category of men who do coffee, but they are the group with the longest history. They've been meeting there weekly since 1992.

The group that gets the vote for the most determined, resolute bunch of coffee drinkers is the one that meets at the Avondale in St. Davids at 6 a.m. daily.

Since some arrive before manager Crystal Simons, one of the guys usually heads for the coffee machine to get it started as soon as she unlocks the door.

Then, as the tiny store quickly becomes crowded, they grab their cups of Donut Diner coffee and head outside to drink it, daily, 12 months a year. Some stand, some use the Muskoka chairs out front, some make it a tail-gate party, and one regular brings his own chair.

The originals of the group, brothers Ron and Ross Bateman, go back as far as meeting at Surgeoner's Gas Station, now the site of the Avondale at the corner of Four Mile Creek Road and York Road.

After the gas station closed, the group shifted to a coffee shop/convenience store across the street, and

when it too shut down, they moved to The Bench, another short-lived coffee shop located just behind the Avondale.

What do they talk about? “We solve all the problems of St. Davids,” one says, then another chimes in, “there are no problems in St. Davids. We solve the problems of the world.”

For an American politician, President Donald Trump gets a lot of coverage at several of the morning coffee shop discussions, including in St. Davids, and none of it good — or at least not that anyone's admitting.

They also talk about local politics, but most of the discussion is light-hearted.

“We have a lot of fun,” says regular Joe Typer, who is often still around when a smaller group meets a little later.

“It's a great way to start the day.”

With nowhere else to go, and a good cup of hot coffee readily available, the men are willing to brave the weather for their community gossip, sometimes for more than an hour, and they are only half-joking when they say they wish the Avondale owner would put up a canvas overhang that covers a little larger area to protect them from the elements, maybe provide a heater and a few chairs. There is nothing else close by for the St. Davids residents, and they likely wouldn't want to move too far away anyway — the manager has become part of the group, although she doesn't join them outside for coffee.

She does meet with them for barbecues, an annual

Christmas breakfast at the Husky Truck Stop on York Road, and other social occasions they arrange.

“They've become family,” she says. With a real estate licence that keeps her busy, she is asked why she continues to take the early shift at the Avondale.

“How can I leave my family?” she replies.

At McDonald's in Virgil, there seems to be a group of men filling one corner of the restaurant from about 7 a.m. on, through to late afternoon.

The early group is mostly farmers, although not all — Ray Hunter, a town employee, stops in before heading off to work.

The two early groups, at 7 and then 8 a.m., are always welcoming, and will reach for a copy of *The Local* — some for the news and others as anxious to do the crossword and sudoku. They'll ask what's new, and sometimes offer some news or commentary themselves — again, lots of jokes and light-hearted ribbing.

Some say they began their early morning coffee when the restaurant opened. They agree they talk about “everything and nothing,” calling the theme of their discussions “town buzz.”

“We cover topics like vineyards and orchards, traffic and roads,” and sometimes share the odd stock tip, one man says.

“If someone has a problem, somebody else here will be able to solve it,” says another.

The next group arrives at 8 a.m., again with some farmers, “who like to talk about the millions they

make,” says Tony Sapielak, who only began hanging out for coffee two years ago, when he retired from a helicopter plant in Fort Erie.

He's definitely the joker of the group, and is chosen as spokesperson, although he has a hard time being serious.

When asked why so many men like to start their day meeting over coffee, he says, “so they can talk about women.” He also says they like to tell jokes — clean jokes — but then goes on to tell one that can't be printed in the paper.

Although voices get raised — sometimes everyone talks at once and nobody is listening, as they share their strong opinions, he says — it is never in anger.

“We can't solve the world's problems, although we try. We'd like to.”

Down the road in the Old Town, a group of men have been meeting at the Tim Hortons on Mary Street since it opened — they estimate maybe 10 years — some of them going back as far as the Sugar Plum Cafe that occupied the same corner before the coffee chain came to town.

Some are old-timers, others are “newbies,” but they all enjoy the conversation.

Ken Rive, a Niagara-on-the-Lake native, retired as a member of town staff in 2012. He recalls coming in to pick up a coffee before heading into work, and he would often get called over with a question about something going on in town, he says. He has become a regular now of the

group of 12 to 15 men, not all of whom show up.

They begin to arrive by about 8:30 a.m., and are gone by 10 a.m., again, mostly retired, but a few who head off to work.

They too say “Trump's name comes up quite a bit,” they talk about travel, health and local politics, sometimes financial issues, and often, “when is the new sewage treatment plant going to open, and how much is it really going to cost us?”

“There is a lot of teasing and ribbing going on,” says Rive. “You have to have a bit of a thick skin. And you have to be able to laugh at yourself.”

There have been a few arguments over the years, but not recently — mostly they know what topics to stay away from to avoid discussions getting heated.

They also talked about amalgamation, not knowing as they were mentioning the fear that the announcement was being made that it wasn't going to happen.

They talk about some regulars who have passed away — Bob Jantz, Art Wiens, and others. “All of them brought a lot to the table. We miss the guys like that,” says Rive.

Down the street at the community centre, Gerry Brand's coffee club has been meeting Wednesday mornings for just two years.

Some of the regulars are neighbours, he says, some play golf together, and some are volunteers on the Christmas Parade planning committee.

There are 12 core mem-

Continued on page 15

Local politics, Trump, popular topics of conversation

Continued from page 14

bers who meet at 9:30 a.m., but not all come out every week.

They talk about all levels of local government, and no surprise — “Trump comes up a lot.”

Sports are a popular choice of conversation, especially hockey. “Some are Leafs fans, some are Habs,” says Brand, and some follow basketball and are Raptors supporters.

The discussions, as the Irish would say, are ‘good crack,’ a term for news, gossip or fun, explains Mearl Obee.

“We’re all on the same wavelength,” says Brand. “There are no heated arguments. We’re all basically liberal, although that’s not what brought us together. We’re really a diverse group.”

He and John Streckler have known each other since their adult daughters were in elementary school

in Markham, and both men ended up in NOTL.

Another, Roger Schmid, eats out a lot and is the unofficial restaurant critic, says Brand. Some are golfers and play together. And they all agree, the community centre is a great place to meet over coffee. “Erinn (Lockard, owner of the Sweets & Swirls Cafe) has made this place what it is,” says Brand.

He goes on to explain his group is responsible for the “egg thingy” on the menu — Lockard named the breakfast sandwich after them, because that’s what one of them called it.

“She’s made this a very special place,” says Brand.

At another table, same time slot, same location, a group of mostly-retired firefighters meet. Vic Martens, retired from the Old Town station, says they go back at least 10 years, and began meeting at the Mary Street Tim Hortons. However, the large round table they

liked to use, was removed when the coffee shop went “upscale,” he says, and they moved down the road.

They also talk about all levels of government, some hunting and fishing, “and all the world’s problems get solved in an hour and a half. We often say we can never understand why the world is so complicated, when we can figure it out over coffee.”

At Silks Country Kitchen in Virgil, there are groups that come in other days, but Wednesday mornings a group of men and women have been meeting at 9 a.m. for the last 27 years.

It started with Lloyd LeGrow and his wife Ruth, and another couple, both of whom have passed away. There are two other couples who have joined the LeGrows, and some women who have lost their husbands who continue their Wednesday morning ritual, and it’s immediately evident there is a lot of joking going on and

they’re having fun.

The men sit together at one end of the table, the women at the other.

Is the conversation different because it’s mixed? Yes, says Hattie Bolsby, the spokesperson for the group.

“The men talk about the things that men talk about, the women talk about the things women talk about,” she says.

That means while there is sports talk at one end, antique cars, or maybe travel, the other end might be a discussion about cooking, TV shows or what’s on at the Shaw Festival.

The LeGrows and the Bolsbys have known each other since the 1960s, when they lived in Port Credit, she explains.

Hattie, a former teacher, wanted to retire to Niaga-

ra-on-the-Lake so she could work at the Shaw Festival, which she did, as an usher, along with three other women who are now also members of the group. They tend to talk about the Shaw, and although none of them work any longer, they like to compare notes on the plays they’ve seen.

They’ve been coming for so long the waitresses over the years have all known what they order, says Bolsby.

The most excitement was a Wednesday morning this summer, with the unexpected appearance of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who was in Niagara to make some funding announcements leading up to the election.

One of the Silks regulars, Elaine Pol, recalled her husband, who has passed away,

had been in the RCMP and a bodyguard for Pierre Trudeau and his family, when Justin was just a boy.

“We had no idea he was coming to Silks,” Bolsby says. “It was pretty exciting.”

That was a morning none of them will forget, she adds.

Not all of the Silks group still live in NOTL, although they did at one time, and still come to town weekly to meet their friends.

There are lots of laughs, they have fun together and look forward to Wednesday mornings, Bolsby says. “We wouldn’t miss it.”

If there are groups we’ve missed, please email penny@notllocal.com with the time and place. We’ll feature your groups in the coming weeks.



Jack Hernder (clockwise from left), David Sim, Ron Andres, Harold Mulder, Kai Wiens, Doug Hernder, Ray Hunter and Robert Remigio are part of the first shift at McDonald’s, meeting at 7 a.m.



Gary Weatherson (clockwise from left), Lloyd LeGrow, Corrie Vriens, Ruth LeGrow, Hattie Bolsby, Wanda Weatherson, Elaine Pole, Nancy Wilkes and Clair Bolsby meet at Silks. The weekly meetings began in 1992, although some of the names and faces have changed since then.



Meeting at McDonald’s at 8 a.m. are Orlin Epp (clockwise from left), Aran Kopp, Lockie Watson, Gino D’Elia, Tony Sapielak, Dave Willms, Hank Berg and Gerry Whittaker.



Dennis Harder, Bill Getz, Bob Paget, Bob Greaves, Tom Haines, Herbie Watson, Sonny Wiebe, Jake Redikop and Vic Martens are retired firefighters, with the exception of Greaves, who is a friend. Missing from the photo are regulars Bob Dick, Glenn Hunter and Ziggy Neuhof. The late Mike Vriens was part of the group right up to the end — when he was too sick to drive, one of the others would take him.



Henry VanAtte, Doug Wood, Jurgen Morsch, Vic Andres, Paul Thies, Ken Rive and Bill Neudorf are some of the men who meet at Tim Hortons on Mary Street.



Ed Dyck, Ron Bateman, Ned Jackson, Jeff Giessler, Al Steip, Vic Tee, John Fedorkow, with store manager Crystal Simons, Joe Typer, Walter Fast, Dave Hunter and Ross Bateman gather every morning at 6 a.m. outside the Avondale, often arriving before Simons gets there to unlock the door.

Learn about 2019 Nobel Prize in Physics

Dr. Bill Brown Special to The Local

In 1900, the universe was viewed as a steady, unchanging affair — most stars fixed relative to one another and observers on Earth, allowing sailors to reliably navigate the open seas and oceans — there was one galaxy, the Milky Way, and Newton's laws of motion and notions about gravity ruled the roost.

Much was to change in our understanding of the cosmos and the natural world in the 20th century. It turns out the universe

was larger than anyone imagined in 1900. There are trillions of galaxies, most speeding away from one another, pushed by a mysterious force called dark energy, which comprises 69 per cent of the universe. Of the rest, a further 26 per cent turned out to be made of equally mysterious dark matter, and less than five per cent is comprised of what we can see — stars, other interstellar bodies, stardust and gaseous clouds of mostly hydrogen.

Given that the universe was expanding, there must have been a time when it was

very much smaller. Enter the Big Bang moment, when in fractions of a second, the universe began, briefly expanding faster than the speed of light (the 'inflationary' period of the universe), full of all manner of elementary particles, which together with the four primary forces, the strong force, the weak force, the electromagnetic force and gravity, all emerged from something incredibly tiny, dense and mysterious. Sounds complicated and it was. Initially a hypothesis, the evidence for the Big Bang is now strong, and even if the precise na-

ture of dark energy and matter have yet to be resolved, their effect in expanding the universe, in the case of dark energy, and shaping the development of galaxies, in the case of dark matter, are very real.

For his work in providing a sound, more precise mathematical and observational basis for our understanding of the early universe and later dark energy, Professor James Peebles was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics for 2019, of which he shared half the prize with Professors Michel Mayor and Didier Queloz. The lat-

ter two scientists in 1995 provided the first solid evidence for the existence of a planet outside our solar system, a finding, which propelled astronomy forward and sparked public interest into searching for other exoplanets, especially those, which might harbour life.

The 2019 Nobel Prize in Physics is the first in a series of talks on successive Tuesdays over a six-week period, each designed to cover each of the six Nobel prizes, beginning next Tuesday, Nov. 5 and continuing with chemistry, medicine, economics, literature and the

Peace Prize.

The talks will be held at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library at 2 p.m. The talks on the physics and chemistry prizes will be by William F. Brown, the prize in medicine/physiology, by Dr. Susan Hall, the economics and peace prizes, by David Elkins and the literature prize by Valmai Elkins. The last is double-duty, because two prizes were awarded this year in literature.

Plan on coming. It's a great way to keep up with developments in each of the subjects for which a Nobel Prize was awarded this year.

Harvest Party attracts families



Antonella, Adrian, and their son Alesandro Farina dress up as Dorothy, the Scarecrow and the Lion of The Wizard of Oz held at the Harvest Party at the community centre Saturday. (Photos by Fred Mercnik)



Taleah Bucci and Faith Papadopoulos make some slime at the Harvest Party, held at the community centre Saturday.

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Two Virgil businesses complement each other

**Mike Balsom
Special to The Local**

Booze and Vinyl.

It's the name of a book for sale at local businesses SRC Vinyl and Limited Distillery. And it's fitting, as the two businesses are housed in the same Henegan Road location.

Danny Keyes and his partner (in both business and life), Jennifer Miles, have been selling vinyl records out of the store for three years.

When they bought the building, they were intent on opening a distillery there, and began to produce some small batches of whiskey. However, they quickly hit a number of roadblocks on the journey to combining their two passions under one roof.

The major obstacle, says Keyes, was the fire code. Apparently, the flammability of spirits forces a distillery operation into the highest-risk category.

"We had to stop producing, and do a lot of renovations, as the Ontario Fire Code and Building Code puts a distillery in the same high-hazard category as a propane facility."

So, engineers were consulted, and changes were made. Sixteen months later, Limited Distillery was giv-

ing the go-ahead to produce spirits on the premises.

On Oct. 18, they were finally able to hold the distillery's grand opening, and it was a smashing success, with more than 250 visitors over the weekend event.

When you arrive at Limited/SRC, it's the vinyl that jumps out at you first. Neatly filed in homemade wooden shelving, records from many different artists, old and new, are on display throughout the store.

In the center section, 375 ml flasks of six different spirits are stacked, along with accessories for serving liquor, and for spinning vinyl.

Next to the final alphabetical section of albums, sits a rough-hewn wooden table, where Keyes serves up samples of those spirits, including a pumpkin-spiced rum, a mint "elixir", and a jalapeno "moonshine."

He explains the latter two products take on a green tinge from mint leaves and jalapeno peppers, which are added after the distilling process.

Keyes admits it's a unique concept, selling vinyl and spirits out of the same warehouse-like location. But that uniqueness works for the couple, and it's already begun to attract a crowd who enjoys browsing the crates

while sipping some whiskey.

Visitors often take a tour of the clean, open distillery operation out back. Keyes guides the curious to the two unsealed cyprus vats, where the mash noisily ferments.

"This is what makes us unique," says Keyes. "We ferment in these tanks with no temperature control, they're open-ferment tanks, with no control of wild yeast. You get a lot more complex flavours when you make it this way."

The mash ferments for about four to five days before it's ready to be transferred to the still. This particular still, made of stainless steel and copper, was originally used somewhere down in the Ozark Mountains, which adds a bit of authenticity to the whole experience.

After the distilling process, some of the whiskey is bottled in its clear form, and sold as Limited's Moonshine, at either 45 per cent or 50 per cent alcohol.

Alternatively, it is transferred to barrels for aging, where it picks up the amber colour more familiar with mass-produced whiskeys.

Mass producing is not something Keyes and Miles have in their sights. In fact, the name they chose for the business outlines the philosophy behind their produc-



Limited Distillery whiskey, made in a building in the Virgil Business Park, shares space with a vinyl collection. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

tion.

Though they do plan to begin trying to sell their spirits to bars and restaurants, and would like to eventually claim some space on LCBO shelves, Keyes is adamant they want to keep their production in limited quantities of about 700 bottles.

"Our most popular product right now is the jalapeno moonshine. That's the first thing we plan on rolling out to bars and restaurants. We have a skid of about 750 bot-

tles waiting for labels right now."

That jalapeno moonshine, by the way, has a unique, spicy bite to it. It certainly is a product that will stand out in a crowded whiskey landscape. And the three tourists from Quebec who were in the store the day The Local visited, obviously enjoyed it.

Keyes says most weekends they are already accommodating about 20 tour groups per day. He points to two women from Van-

couver who stopped in at the grand opening as part of their Ontario distillery tour that weekend, as proof that the word is starting to spread.

Though it's somewhat off the beaten path, situated as it is in an industrial park, Keyes is confident that tourists and locals alike will add Limited to their wine/beer/spirits itinerary.

And if they pick up some vinyl to go along with the booze, the party can only get better.



Danny Keyes shows off his still, imported from the Ozark Mountains.

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LOCAL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT: BRICKS AND BARLEY

By the beginning, the business plan was clear: to create a place where people could enjoy a craft beer and a wood-fired pizza. Bricks and Barley, a new business in the heart of the community, is now open. The owners, Chris and Sarah, have spent months planning and building this dream. They have a vision of a place where people can relax and enjoy a good meal and a cold beer. The menu is simple but delicious, featuring wood-fired pizzas, craft beers, and local ingredients. The atmosphere is warm and inviting, with a focus on community and quality. Bricks and Barley is a place where everyone can enjoy a good time.

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Annual Monster Bash raises money for KidSport Niagara



Hamish Shaw and Fiona Halliday at Willowbank Saturday.



Scott McGregor and Dorothy Booth dress up for the Monster Bash.



Tom and JoAnne Powers attended the fundraiser for KidSport in style.



Saturday's annual Monster Bash at Willowbank, organized by Perry and Shari Hartwick, raises money for KidSport Niagara, which helps families across the region pay for sports registration or equipment when parents can't afford it without assistance. The Hartwicks always keep their costumes a secret until the night of the event, this year wowing the sold-out crowd with their Sonny (Shari) and Cher (Perry) impersonations. About \$7,500 was raised to help local kids participate in sports.

The costumes are eclectic, and it's obvious there is no effort spared to look great at the annual Monster Bash. (Photos by Shari Hartwick)

Thank you to our generous sponsors for supporting the 2019 KidSport Niagara Monster Bash!

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Workshop teaches use of natural dyes for yarn

Kim Wade
Special to The Local

Radiant Colours: Natural Dye Workshop at Laura Secord Homestead.

Queenston's gorgeous fall colours were an inspiration for the members of the Niagara Handweavers and Spinners Guild as they hosted Radiant Colours: Natural Dye Workshop at the Laura Secord Homestead Saturday morning.

The natural hues of the leaves on the surrounding trees were duplicated on the wool and yarn dyed by the participants in this workshop. Teachers from the guild instructed participants in historic methods of dying wool and yarn with natural dyes made from local plants, including black walnut, black walnut husks, marigolds, black currants and onion skins. Other natural dyes such as indigo and cochineal beetles were also used to add to the variety of colours.

First, participants prepared the colour fixatives, or mordant. For this workshop, alum was used as the fixative to help colour set the yarn. Other possible natural fixatives are salt, vinegar, and cream of tartar, the teachers explained.

The dye solution was prepared from the plant material or powders available, which were added to water and brought to a boil in a stainless steel pot on a single burner. Next, the plant material was strained out. Wool or yarn was added to the pot and simmered until it reached the desired colour, then rinsed with cold water. There was ample experimentation with colours and hues. Colours ranged from deep brown to lighter tan, lighter salmon pink and rich yellow.

Long time member of the guild, Gerda Avz, reminisces about when they held

these dyeing workshops at Balls Falls in Vineland. She explained that each member of the group would bring an ingredient for the communal soup pot. After a day of dyeing their yarn and socializing, each person would go home with a mason jar of the "Stone Soup," she said, Stone Soup being the name of a European folk story about how a town came together to make soup for a hungry soldier. The moral of the story emphasizes the value of sharing, she explained, highlighted for the guild by sharing their knowledge, skills and materials with one another.

Having been a member since 1976, Avz said the fun part now is seeing the guild moving into their third generation of weavers. Her children know how to weave and spin and even her grandchildren are learning, she said. In addition to her children and grandchildren, Avz also shared this knowledge by teaching the craft at Niagara District Secondary School when it was open and briefly at E.L. Crossley High School in Fenwick.

Formed in 1948 with 14 members, the guild now has 60 members and is growing. According to vice-president Bettianne Buck, their members come from all over the Niagara Region, from Fort Erie to Jordan and many of the towns in between. Buck is new to weaving but is enthusiastic about the craft and the guild.

"It is a great hobby," she says, and "lovely to learn about these things" such as weaving, spinning and natural dyeing. Weaving and spinning "is not a dying art, it seems like more people are interested all the time, she adds.

The guild has partnered with the Welland Museum with an exhibit by the guild, Woven in Time. To



Hilda Ellard and Dianne Brown demonstrate the art of dying yarn at the Laura Secord Homestead Saturday. (Photos by Kim Wade)

Avz and Buck, the main attraction of the exhibit is the quilt that was made by assembling squares of weaving produced by individual members. Each square represents the country of origin of that member. The Niagara Handweavers and Spinners Guild members gather in their studio in the lower galleries at the museum on Thursday mornings to practise their craft. The public is invited to visit the museum for weaving and spinning demonstrations on these days.

For information on the exhibit and the museum, visit the Welland Museum at 140 King St., Welland, or call 905-732-2215. For more information about the guild and upcoming events, visit nhws.ca.



The women at the Laura Secord Homestead are hard at work, following instruction on how to make radiant-coloured yard.



Gerda Avz shows off the brightly coloured yarn dyed at Saturday's workshop.

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REAL ESTATE WILLS BUSINESS

Bassist Bakithi Kumalo at library for Under African Skies



Bakithi Kumalo, Paul Simon's drummer, will be at the library as part of a Voices of Freedom outreach program. (Photos supplied)

Mike Balsom Special to The Local

Bakithi Kumalo, bass player in Paul Simon's band, was responsible for the bass solo in the song You Can Call Me Al, the first single from Paul Simon's Graceland album.

Released in 1986, Graceland remains today one of the most ground-breaking, important pop albums of all time.

The album topped the charts in eight different countries, including Canada (it peaked at number three on the Billboard U.S. chart), and earned Simon Grammy Awards for Album of the Year (1987) and Record of the Year (1988).

More importantly, though, Simon's landmark

album introduced listeners across the globe to what is known as world music.

Simon involved a number of African musicians and singers in the recording of the album. For many in the western world, Graceland was their first exposure to Joseph Shabalala, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, The Gaza Sisters, Ray Phiri and Youssou N'Dour. Graceland was one of three or four key albums that helped to popularize African music outside of that continent.

Simon's insistence, however, on recording much of the album in Johannesburg, South Africa, at the height of apartheid, was deemed controversial by many. By 1986, myriad artists had banded together to boycott

the country due to apartheid's sanctioned racial segregation, and political and economic discrimination against nonwhites.

Twenty-five years after the recording of that album, the documentary film Under African Skies was released, in conjunction with a 25th anniversary edition of Graceland.

The film documents the circumstances surrounding the landmark collection of songs, under the shadow of an uneasy political and cultural climate.

Niagara residents will have the chance to meet Bakithi Kumalo for a special screening of the film on Nov. 7 at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library. It's part of the Voices of Freedom Festival, which

is, in turn, part of the annual Bravo Niagara! Festival of the Arts.

Co-founder of the festival, Alexis Spieldenner, says "the Voices of Freedom Festival was founded to raise awareness of the Niagara Region's significant Black history, but it has grown to become an important platform for many different underrepresented histories and peoples. The festival gives voice to music that was borne out of oppression and highlights the ongoing journey to freedom."

Under African Skies, with Kumalo introducing the film, fits right into that description.

Kumalo has been the bassist in Simon's touring band since those Graceland days. It was during Simon's

2018 Farewell Tour that Spieldenner and her mother, Bravo co-founder Christine Mori met with him, and expressed their interest in inviting him to be a part of this year's Voices of Freedom Festival.

In this, the fourth year for Voices of Freedom, having an artist of Kumalo's stature as part of the festival's outreach program is a huge boost.

At the library, Kumalo will be sharing his own story about growing up under apartheid, and commenting on the film's depiction of the reunion of many of the original musicians 25 years after the recording.

Spieldenner describes the film as a reflection on Graceland, and says Kumalo will talk about his "discovery" by Paul Simon and the overall impact of the music on people around the world.

The film does not skirt around the issues inherent to the times. Simon suffered backlash from many, who accused him of breaking the United Nations cultural boycott of South Africa, designed to put pressure on the regime to end apartheid.

In addition to his appearance at the film screening, Kumalo will be meeting and playing with students of Laura Secord Secondary School's music department that afternoon as part of the Voices of Freedom outreach program. This session is open to the public, as well.

As Spieldenner says,

Bravo Niagara! "strives to produce extraordinary concert experiences, as well as to connect communities through the power of music, and to inspire a life-long appreciation of music."

Kumalo will be playing bass with the Larnell Lewis Band on Friday, Nov. 8, as they open for Monty Alexander and his Harlem-Kingston Express.

The Laura Secord students will also perform with Lewis' band that evening. That show takes place at the First Ontario Performing Arts Centre in St. Catharines.

Also happening in NOTL on Saturday, Nov. 9 is the Artists and Activists Roundtable at the Niagara Historical Museum on Castlereagh Street.

Participants in the roundtable include Kumalo, producer and artist manager Céline Peterson, and Stanford Thompson, founder and executive director of the El Sistema-inspired organization Play On, Philly!, which has brought social transformation to several million disadvantaged children around the world through music.

The focus of the roundtable will be exploring the role of artists in society and the historic and present-day intersection of music and social change.

Seats are still available for the film screening, the roundtable and the Friday evening concert.

Visit bravoniagara.org to reserve tickets.



Jazz icon Monty Alexander will perform with his Harlem-Kingston Express as part of the Voices of Freedom Festival.

Paint a Paddle raises money for ALS

Kim Wade
Special to The Local

On Sunday evening, Jackson-Triggs Niagara Estate Winery hosted a unique event for a very special cause.

Paint a Paddle is an initiative started by Dr. Peter Fritz, a Fonthill periodontist, and his team, as a way to raise money for ALS Canada. People attending the event were encouraged to buy an unfinished wooden canoe paddle for \$45 and “paint it, burn it, sculpt it, etch it, carve it.”

Each paddle is to be completed and returned to Fritz by March 4, so he and his staff can prepare them for a live auction at the main event on May 2, at Megalomaniac Winery in Vineland. All the proceeds will go to the Niagara Chapter of ALS Canada. In addition, the artist whose paddle raises the most money at the auction receives the grand prize of a Kevlar canoe. Fritz and his team have 350 paddles in total to sell over the fundraising period and hope to reach their \$100,000 goal after all the paddles are auctioned off in May.

Fritz was introduced to ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig’s disease, when John Hamm, the husband of one of his team members, Cathy Hamm, was diagnosed with ALS in 2014. John Hamm succumbed to the disease in June of this year. Fritz saw the toll this degenerative disease took on John, Cathy and their family, and wanted to find a way to support the family and support ALS research. As he said, “It is one thing to be pas-

sionate about a cause, but it is different to be committed to a cause.”

His inspiration for the Paint a Paddle event came when he was on a canoe trip in Algonquin Provincial Park and saw that Algonquin Outfitters was having a paddle art contest to raise funds for local charities. Fritz thought it was a “beautiful and creative” way to raise funds for this cause. He approached Algonquin Outfitters about using their idea to raise funds for ALS Canada. He said there was no hesitation to let him use the premise. He was inspired to be able to “create something beautiful and wonderful from this terrible situation,” and although he was committed to helping, he felt he “couldn’t do it alone.”

Fritz has not had to do it alone. Many people donated their time and their resources to ensure the success of this evening. David Watt, chef at the Garrison House was there to help. Watt said that he wanted to get involved after hearing John Hamm’s story. He volunteered his time as did Erik Peacock, chef at Wellington Court and Bench Brewing Company, for food and beverages which were provided by Oast House, Jackson-Triggs, Wellington Court, The Garrison House, Backhouse and Tide & Vine Oyster House. Peacock said he was proud of all the restaurants and businesses that came together to support this cause.

Artist Anne More got involved with this fundraiser through her daughter-in-law,



Artist Anne More meticulously paints a paddle as a demonstration, and also to be auctioned off at the ALS fundraiser at Jackson-Triggs. (Photos by Kim Wade)

Roxanne More, who works for Fritz. More took part in the event by providing a live painting demonstration, painting a paddle with acrylics over the course of the evening. The finished paddle was auctioned off by local comedian Joe Pillitteri during the live auction later that evening. More will also be further supporting the cause by using the paddles as a canvas in one of her painting workshops at her studio in Burlington.

In addition, local artist, Sandra Iafrate, is offering

Paint a Paddle Workshop at her Gate Street Studio in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

John Howard, owner of Megalomaniac Winery, attended the event and said he was impressed with Fritz and his team for their commitment to this fundraising campaign. He was moved by the story of the Hamm family and inspired by John Hamm’s work as a firefighter and his struggle with ALS. He is delighted to lend his support to this cause by hosting the main event at his winery, he said,

when he will also be donating some special vintages for the auction.

Fritz said that he has found this experience “outrageously powerful,” and is pleased that the “event has gathered amazing traction.”

Cathy Hamm said she was “blown away by the support” the event has received. She thought the evening was wonderful, and affirms that “although the event doesn’t change my outcome, it is a way to pay it forward to help oth-

ers through the funds generated.”

For those who were unable to attend the event but would like to still participate in this worthy cause, paddles are \$45 and are available for purchase at Dr. Peter Fritz Periodontal Wellness & Implant Surgery, 165 Highway 20 West, Fonthill; Megalomaniac Winery, 3930 Cherry Ave., Vineland; and Gates Street Studio, 358 Gate St., NOTL.

Ticket sales for the live paddle auction in May will go on sale in January.



Comedian Joe Pillitteri auctions off the paddle painted during the event by artist Anne More.



Raymond Barnes, who has been coming to NOTL for 33 years, and Donovan Carey check out the items for sale Ferd Klassen has in his truck, with his grandson Nate Klassen who visits local farms with him. (Jane Andres)

Long-time farmworker's legacy lingers on

Jane Andres
Special to The Local

It's a balmy evening in earlier this fall and I'm walking with my dog towards a brilliantly hued sunset on Wall Road.

In the distance I can see the headlights of a little silver pickup truck pulling into the driveway of a farm bunkhouse. A young boy hops into the back, sorting out items as the men gather round.

Ferd Klassen and his 10-year-old grandson, Nate, are a familiar sight at many of the farms and bunkhouses in Niagara-on-the-Lake. For the past 11 years, Ferd has been showing up every week in the summer and fall months, selling tools and farm supplies to the men. He is also generous with his support, offering an attentive ear, asking about their families back home and sharing news from one farm to another.

His close-knit friendship with the men is a unique story that began years ago.

It started in July, 2007 when I was called to the St. Catharines General Hospital by a nurse concerned about the welfare of a patient who was to be sent back to Jamaica. Upon arrival I recognized Roger as one of the men employed by Epp Farms. Two months earlier he had received a certificate of recognition at a welcome concert for 27 years of work-

ing and contributing to our community.

That night, however, his face was gaunt. He was despairing, afraid he would die if he was sent home. He told me he first began to experience excruciating pain in his side in early April. He visited the doctor multiple times only to be sent back with Tylenol. Finally, in late May he crumpled under the peach trees and his coworkers called the ambulance.

Frightened and alone in the hospital, Roger spent eight weeks in a blur of pain and anxiety.

He was informed he had multiple myeloma and the resulting kidney failure required dialysis three times a week.

Phone calls were made to physicians in Jamaica who confirmed that there was a six-month wait for dialysis. The news was overwhelming, knowing he would suffer a slow death within two weeks of his return.

We were given a slim thread of hope when the doctors informed the Jamaican Liaison Service that they reversed their decision to support his return home.

Accessing medical care, however, was just the beginning of the process, as there were new legal and practical matters that needed to be addressed. The complexity of these challenges was daunting but then amazing things began to happen.

Within a week someone

approached me in the lobby after church. Muggs Klassen offered to have Roger come and stay in her home as long as was needed. She was a nurse in the oncology unit and was familiar with the care required for someone dealing with the aftermath of cancer treatment. It seemed too good to be true!

Tim Wichert, a local immigration lawyer, offered his services pro bono, ensuring Roger could remain legally to receive the necessary treatment.

Neighbours showed up, offering a place for him to stay or transportation to appointments.

When he was discharged in August he moved in with our family and neighbours for a few weeks until Ferd and Muggs Klassen had his room ready.

His strength slowly began to return as he responded to treatment and the dedicated care of the Klassen family.

He was eager to reciprocate and became actively involved with Southridge Community Church, which the Klassens attended. It was a joyous occasion when the community once again made it possible for Troy and Asheda, two of his adult children, to come to Canada to celebrate his baptism and Christmas together. Jason and Mark, his older sons, also worked at Epp Farms. Although Roger had only been expected to have about six months to

live after treatment he continued to thrive, included in weddings, holidays and other Klassen family milestones.

His interviews on television and in the media touched the lives of many, as he shared his story.

Dr. Janice Giesbrecht, the head of oncology, offered Roger a large piece of her rural property, which was transformed into a lush garden the following year. The bounty he produced was shared generously at the hospital with the many staff members who appreciated his sense of humour and down-home Jamaican wisdom.

My father, Rube Friesen, picked him up from dialysis every Friday and they would spend the afternoon together, enjoying each other's company, puttering around our garden or helping local seniors. Neighbours and Southridge members continued to show up to assist with appointments or include him in their family activities.

He and Ferd regularly visited coworkers on the farm, where he had been employed for 27 years. Ferd worked for a farm equipment supply business. Together they began selling Stihl weedwackers, chainsaws and supplies to men on the surrounding farms. They were eager to purchase quality equipment to take home to Jamaica.

For three years Roger led an active, fulfilling life,

until his health began to decline in September, 2010. When it was clear that he had little time left, his son Troy arranged a flight home to Jamaica, where he passed away peacefully in his hometown days later. His resting place is on the scenic hilltop where he had hoped to build his retirement home some day.

Nine years have passed since Roger left us, but his legacy lives on in the lives of the people who were part of his beloved community.

In 2012, Southridge Church began an outreach to the Caribbean workers at their Vineland location. The program includes monthly special events, bi-weekly clinics, barbecues and cricket games from April to October. Best of all, the men on the farms are made to feel part of the family, and included in regular church life. Southridge also partners with other churches to ensure that men as far as Grimsby can take part in the activities.

There are so many simple ways we can invite life-affirming values into our work and day to day routine:

By conversations around our dinner tables.

By grandparents passing their values onto the next generations in their everyday attitudes and actions.

By being a living example of caring for those who have traditionally been marginalized.

By showing up. And

continuing to show up.

We didn't always recognize our own transformation in the journey with Roger, as it was often incremental, in the intentional choices we made daily.

A friend once remarked, "showing up is often enough, and that in itself brings all kinds of healing I didn't even know I needed."

The sun has set and the last of the orders are filled. Nate perches on the edge of the bed of the pickup next to his grandpa, little knees up to his chin. The pride he feels for his grandpa is very evident, as he listens bright-eyed and attentive to the light-hearted conversations with the men.

"We go to Jamaica three times a week," he declares proudly to me. "My grandpa is teaching me how to fill orders so when he gets too old I can take over for him."

"He really wants to go to the real Jamaica, so we hope to make it happen someday," adds Ferd as he gives his grandson a squeeze around the shoulders. Ferd and his wife Muggs have made a number of trips there with friends and family, and know their way around.

"Ja mon, we'll be looking for you Nate. Soon come," says one of the workers.

There is laughter as they gather around, silhouettes illuminated by the headlights, sharing in the warmth of the little gathering.

LOCAL SPORTS

Rangers program develops kids' love of basketball

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

The next generation of Niagara-on-the-Lake basketball players have been hitting the court at Crossroads Public School for two weeks now.

The NOTL Rangers Developmental League is in full swing Saturday mornings, with two age groups currently participating in instruction and games.

Coach Emily Bonisteel, a first year student at Brock University, is heading up the program. She played with the Rangers organization last year, and has coached with No Limits Performance and the City of St. Catharines. The kinesiology student brings a youthful enthusiasm to the court each weekend, and the kids really respond to her coaching style.

On the day The Local visited the gym, a dozen players were on the court for the Grade 1-2 age group. With a focus on skills, and making the game fun for the children, Bonisteel leads them through a game of 3-Up. Split into two teams, each tries to drain 3 more baskets than their opponents, rushing to ensure the others don't catch up and close the gap.

With the basket set at eight feet, two feet lower than regulation, the task is not as daunting as it could be. Kids such as six-year-old Matthew Bogusat, in his first year in the league, are already developing the skills to repeatedly put the ball through the hoop.

Following the game, Bonisteel continues to focus on skills, leading the boys and girls through dribbling drills, moving the ball forward, backward, and across their feet as well. The kids are surprisingly good at it.

The Grade 3-5 group that takes the floor next is a bit bigger in number. The focus for them is also on skills, but with some instruction on game situations and a chance to apply what they learn in friendly competition each week.

For this group, the baskets are raised to their regulation 10 feet, and it's not a problem for



Kids in the Grade 1-2 group learn to shoot into a lowered basket. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

kids such as Addison Driedger. The nine-year old absolutely loves the game, and it shows in her face as she practises taking lay-up after lay-up, at one point hitting 12 in a row.

Addison's father, Jake, who played basketball at Niagara District Secondary School, says his daughter is taller than most kids in her class. He adds that she can constantly be found in the driveway, shooting from various spots he has marked out for her. She loves to shoot, and she seems to gain confidence with each and every shot sunk.

Though she played on the Crossroads team last year, Jake says she didn't really understand the game, and didn't have a lot of confidence in her skill set on the court. This is Addison's first year in the Rangers developmental league, and it's already paying dividends.

When this age group took to the court, Bonisteel led them through a warm-up, where they dribbled to pylons, stopping to perform exercises (lunges, jumping jacks, toe touches, etc.) at each pylon. It is immediately evident that the skill level is much higher, as one would expect, for the older kids.

Bonisteel has ample patience for the large, sometimes loud groups of kids she works with. She loves them, and it shows. "They are amazing kids," she says. "They love to work hard, they have really good skills, are always attentive, and excited to be here. It makes me excited to be here as well."

"It's a great program," she adds. "There's a lot of support in the community. The sponsors come back year after year, because they know it's a great program, with good, hard-working

coaches who want to help out and make it best for the kids."

The Saturday morning program is designed to build skills and game knowledge incrementally, in the hope of developing an overall love of basketball. A second goal is to help feed into the Rangers travel program, which has had as many as five teams competing against other programs in recent years.

The Local will be running a feature on this year's travel teams, and will catch up with the first "graduates" of the Rangers program, in a future story.



Emily Bonisteel works with the Grade 3-5 kids, whose improved skill level is noticeable.

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November 8 @ 7:00 p.m. - 9 p.m.

Join the Friends of Fort George for a special fundraiser dinner; fashioned after the popular Sublime Beefsteak Society of England. Enjoy a steak dinner, live music, an auction and great entertainment. All proceeds from the evening will help to support student employment opportunities at Fort George and Brock's Monument. Tickets must be purchased in advance as seating is limited. Call the Friends of Fort George at 905-468-6621 or email: admin@friendsoffortgeorge.ca for more information.

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November 11 @ 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

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Message by:
Kevin Bayne on Acts 8:4-25

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CROSSWORD PUZZLE

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14					15						16			
17					18						19			
20					21		22				23		24	
			25		26				27		28			
29	30	31					32	33						
34						35				36		37	38	39
40					41				42		43			
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51	52	53					54	55						
56				57		58				59		60	61	62
63			64		65				66		67			
68					69						70			
71					72						73			

Across:

1 Arabian ruler

5 Following

10 Some providers of wood for furniture

14 Prepare

15 Larry --- in "The Iceman Cometh"

16 Largest island in the Marianas

17 Stage accessory

18 Fire prodder

19 A single time

20 Abandon

22 Overhaul

24 Aeronautics group.

25 --- Lama

27 Round Table leader

29 Baseball official

32 Lowest of the low

34 Eye defects

36 Notes

40 Heel

41 Sheltered spots

43 Short written reminder

44 Ethiopian capital --- Ababa

46 "The --- Dancers" (Jean Thesman)

48 About the eye

50 Did, once

51 "--- and her Sisters" (Woody Allen movie)

54 Intriguing group

Down:

1 Smartphone programs

2 Brandy made from pressed fruit

3 Matinee idol --- Novello (d. 1951)

4 Disavowal

5 Egyptian cobra

6 Roman flower goddess

7 Consider

8 Garden west of Nod

9 Go over again

10 Self-esteem

11 Middle meal

12 Former Portuguese territory in China

13 Slander

21 Comedian Roseanne ---

23 Warrant

26 Bony

28 Deceptive decorative paintwork

29 Where the Wizard of Westwood coached

30 One of three in "The Mikado"

31 Formerly known as shell-shock

33 Inquires

35 Escherichia ---, potentially dangerous bacterium

37 Dweeb

38 Give off

39 Alone

42 Counterfoil

45 Irritating email

47 Straight --- arrow

49 Melted

51 Underworld

52 No longer a minor

53 Type of metal or gas

55 Debate

58 Country singer and actress --- Kramer

60 Japanese heavyweight contest

61 Subdivisions of eons

62 Male heirs

64 Plant juice

66 Not her

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LAST WEEK'S SUDOKU ANSWERS

Answer from
October 24, 2019

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

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Across: 1 Amiri, 5 After, 10 Elms, 14 Pave, 15 Slade, 16 Guam, 17 Pop, 18 Poker, 19 Once, 20 Scrub, 22 Renew, 24 C A A, 25 Data, 27 Arthur, 29 Umpire, 32 Nadir, 34 Cataracts, 36 Tones, 40 List, 41 Nooks, 43 Memo, 44 Addis, 46 Last April, 48 Optic, 50 Used to, 51 Hannah, 54 Cabal, 56 Ado, 57 Major, 59 Noses, 63 Dubs, 65 Waugh, 67 Euro, 68 Ella, 69 Ennu, 70 Innu, 71 Step, 72 Dates, 73 Loss.

Down: 1 Apps, 2 Marc, 3 Ivor, 4 Repudiation, 5 Asp, 6 Flora, 7 Take into account, 8 Eden, 9 Reread, 10 Ego, 11 Lunch, 12 Macau, 13 Smeat, 21 Bar, 23 With, 26 Lean, 28 Trompe l'oeil, 29 U C L A, 30 Maid, 31 PT S D, 33 Asks, 35 Coll, 37 Nerd, 38 Enit, 39 Solo, 42 Stub, 45 Spain, 47 As an, 49 Thawed, 51 Hades, 52 Adult, 53 Noble, 55 Argue, 58 Jena, 60 Sumo, 61 Eras, 62 Sons, 64 Sep, 66 His.

SUDOKU PUZZLE

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

Wolves lose to Port Colborne



The NOTL atom Wolves' Lucas Friesen moves the puck up the ice in a game played against Port Colborne Sailors Saturday. The local team lost 3-2 after scoring two quick goals in the last period. (Fred Mercnik)

Hale off to provincials next week



NOTL Skating Club member Ashleen Hale has qualified to compete in the 2020 Skate Ontario Sectional Championships in Flamborough this Nov 7 to 10. This event is also a qualifying event to Skate Canada's national event, the 2020 Skate Canada Challenge, to be held in Edmonton, AB Nov. 27 to Dec 1. (Photo supplied)

CanSkate youngsters Halloween-ready



The young CanSkate division of the NOTL Skating Club was on the ice in Virgil Saturday, with skaters enjoying their lesson while in Halloween costume. (Fred Mercnik)

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