Provincial report influences Town discussion of CAO search

Penny Coles
The Local

With the recent release of an ombudsman report on the hiring of the former regional chief administrator, Niagara-on-the-Lake town councillors are proceeding with caution during the upcoming search to replace CAO Holly Dowd, who retired in August.

The provincial watchdog tasked with investigating the hiring of the regional CAO in 2016 has determined it was an “inside job,” tainted with improper disclosure of information to the successful candidate, Carmen D’Angelo. The ombudsman offered 16 recommendations to improve hiring practices in the future, all of which were accepted by regional council.

At Monday’s committee of the whole meeting in NOTL, councillors agreed to spend $25,000 to hire Legacy Partners Executive Search Firm for the recruitment of a CAO. Some councillors expressed disappointment with the process of getting to that point — rather than sending out a public request for tenders, staff reached out to other municipalities who have recently recruited a CAO. They then asked four recommended firms to submit proposals. Three replied, and council members were given the opportunity to review the submissions independently of costs. To ensure confidentiality, the documents were not sent electronically and were not permitted to leave the building. Legacy had the highest score for its proposal, as well as the lowest price, said the staff report under discussion Monday.

“Never have I seen something so botched,” said Coun. Clare Cameron, referring to the timing.

“What went on up there is what every municipality should be safeguarding against,” said Coun. Steve Evans.

The ombudsman report — which was released on Dec. 2 — ties the CAO situation to various allegations of harassment and wrongdoing made by former employees against former regional CEO Pat Gilmour, who retired in August 2016.

Local Lions Clubs’ Christmas tree sales are underway, all in the name of giving back to the community.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Lions Club has a new home for their Christmas trees this year, but it’s working out better than could have been imagined, say organizers Terry Flynn.

Their inventory of 320 Christmas trees was unloaded in the parking lot of Cornerstone Community Church at the corner of Field Road and Niagara Stone Road last week — the church calls it their town campus, with their church services held on Hunter Road at their Orchard campus. By Monday, they were down to half that amount, says Flynn, who is predicting they could be sold out by Dec. 10, which would be unusually early.

The tallest and most expensive trees are all gone, he says.

The club has used the parking lot of Niagara Fruit and Vegetables on Four Mile Creek Road since it first started selling trees, says Flynn. They took over from the Virgil Lions Club, which folded, who retired in August.

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“We’ve been blessed with the Ontario ombudsman report in the last week about the extremely unsuccessful hiring at the region,” said Coun. Clare Cameron, referring to the timing.

“What went on up there is what every municipality should be safeguarding against,” said Coun. Steve Evans.

Continued on page 5

Holiday Inn: not to be missed

The view is absolutely breathtaking!

WINTER SEASON LINE UP!

Tapa Tuesdays
Name that Tune Thursdays
Family Style Roast Dinner Sunday 4-8
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Community radio station looking like a go

Penny Coles  The Local

David Auger believes there is a need for a community radio station to serve Niagara-on-the-Lake. And he has Duff Roman, retired from an award-winning career in radio, onside.

The two men met with a small group of interested people at the community centre last week, the second held to discuss how to move the project forward.

The advantage of radio is that it allows for news to be broadcast as it happens, seven days a week, Auger said, speaking of other areas where community radio stations have been successful, such as Haliburton.

“If any town in the country can support a radio station, Niagara-on-the-Lake can. It has the greatest concentration of newly and completely retired people, who are extremely talented, great communicators, and even more important, have something to say. It’s the perfect breeding ground for a radio station.”

A small survey he took of 100 people through Facebook gave results “positive enough to make the point that there is an opportunity here,” he said.

Roman explained initial efforts would be geared toward an online station, allowing them to put together a group of talented people who are accustomed to social media and want to get involved in offering music and local news. The eventual goal would be an FM station, he said.

Auger suggested to begin, they would need a fundraising committee with a target of $100,000, to cover renting space, buying equipment — they could look for used, suggested Roman — and one full paid staff member as station manager.

“We need a fundraising group, a membership group and a technical group.”

All the programming would be run by volunteers, with an annual budget also of about $100,000, and on-air advertising to support it.

Auger said the best scenario would be to find a few people who would initially put some “real money” behind the project, which would help the fund-raising committee when members go to the public for support.

He said it would be important to have Town support behind the station, which would be “positive, open and inclusive.”

Lord Mayor Betty Disero was at the meeting to offer her help, suggesting Auger go to council to explain his plans. But Town support would have to be in the form of a verbal endorsement, not financial, she explained.

“I’m thrilled, really interested in having this in NOTL,” Disero said. NOTL Chamber of Commerce president Edgardo Lafforgue cautioned there are several organizations in town trying to raise money for worthwhile projects, cultural and otherwise, and while he finds the idea of a radio station a good one, he’s afraid businesses are asked so often for money they’re already stretched.

But Auger believes there are enough people with the interest and the creativity to move this project forward.

“If all the stars align, I’m hoping we can have something online by Canada Day,” he said.

Duff Roman and David Auger lead a discussion about establishing a community radio station in NOTL, first online, and then, hopefully, on an FM station. (Penny Coles)
Trees of Hope program collecting gifts for children

Penny Coles
The Local

At Vintage Hotels in Niagara-on-the-Lake, the holiday season is a time for sharing.

This month, Trees of Hope toy drives are being held at Queen’s Landing, the Pillar and Post and the Prince of Wales.

Trees at all three locations will be filled with names of children in the community who otherwise may not receive a gift on Christmas morning. Vintage Hotels is encouraging the public to visit their neighbouring property to collect an ornament and purchase an unwrapped gift for one of the names displayed on the tree.

The tree in the lounge at Queen’s Landing has stars with the names and ages of women and children at Gillian’s Place, the local shelter offering hope and safety through a range of services to women who have fled from violent and abusive situations.

Lily Ksan, general manager at Queen’s Landing, says many of the staff members will take one of the stars and shop with their families.

There have been many holiday seasons where her children would shop with her, says Ksan. She would choose children close in age to hers, and they would enjoy shopping, feeling confident they knew what other boys and girls their age would want for Christmas.

While staff and regulars at the lounge take a star every year, Ksan says there are many annual visitors to the hotel who know about the Tree of Hope and make the donation of a toy a tradition of their visit.

She gives credit to Ric Singh, who has been working with Vintage Hotels since the 1980s, and who first organized the Tree of Hope when he was at the Pillar and Post, wanting to be sure kids less fortunate were well-looked after at Christmas.

He will likely take several truck-loads of toys to Gillian’s Place, he says, and if there are still stars left on the tree without gifts to go with them, Vintage Hotels will provide the funds to purchase them. But most years, he says, there are more than enough gifts for everyone.

Canadian leading child and youth mentoring charity, Big Brothers Big Sisters will benefit from the strong efforts put forth by the team at Prince of Wales, and Inn on the Twenty.

Big Brothers Big Sisters facilitates life-changing relationships that inspire and empower children and youth to reach their full potential, both as individuals and citizens.

The Pillar and Post is working with Project SHARE this year to sponsor families living in poverty in the Niagara Falls community. Project SHARE’s mission is to address the short-term need for food and create long-term solutions for food security, mobilizing resources in our community, and adapting services to respond to changes around us.

The Tree of Hope at the Prince of Wales Hotel is located in the main lobby, in the Pillar and Post in the Cannery Restaurant, and at Queen’s Landing, in the Bacchus Lounge.

Each Tree of Hope at Vintage Hotels is decorated with stars, with the names of children in need, and what they might like for Christmas.

Winter wonderland

Queenston photographer Fred Mercnik captured the beauty of winter in his village Monday, with a villager out for a walk to enjoy it.
December 5, 2019

Penny Coles
The Local

It might be considered Christmas fluff, but it’s beautifully presented, visually stunning, emotionally uplifting, unforgettable fluff.

The Shaw Festival production of Irving Berlin’s Holiday Inn will have you grinning from ear to ear, tapping your feet, humming along to holiday classics, and possibly even dancing in your seat.

“Holiday Inn is a respite,” says director Kate Hennig in her program notes. “It is that, and more. Yes, it’s a break from holiday stress, an opportunity for a night out, and a few care-free hours. It’s also a simple little story set in a time that takes us far away from where we are — to a place where there may be a touch of disappointment, but a lot of love, old-fashioned fun, and some of the much sought-after joy experienced when celebrating holidays.

There isn’t much of a plot — it takes a back seat to the music, directed by Paul Sorrell, and choreography by Allison Plamondon, either one of which would make it a must-see. All of the much sought-after joy experienced when celebrating holidays.

As such, Christmas is actually only a small part of the show, but featuring one of the holiday’s biggest musical success: White Christmas, immortalized in song on stage at the Shaw Festival Theatre, the town’s notables are buying a farm that he’s done with life on the road, and has bought a farm in Connecticut. He expects her to come with him, but instead she decides to go off with Ted on a six-week tour.

Jim quickly learns farming isn’t as easy, or as profitable, as he expected, but he is offered help in the form of farmhand Louise (Jenny L. Wright, who immediately endears herself to the audience), and Linda Mason (Kristi Frank), whose family lost the farm to foreclosure.

To save history repeating itself, when Jim realizes he can’t pay the mortgage, he is persuaded by Linda to turn the farmhouse into a concert hall, performing holiday shows that of course feature the best of Berlin, who wrote at least one song to celebrate each of them.

As a highlight, it is close to being a show-stopping scene with the ensemble of Holiday Inn, immersive and featuring one of the most stunning, awe-inspiring costumes by Judith Bowden, in a production that has one scene after another of jaw-dropping, period song-and-dance costumes.

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As each holiday is recognized in song on stage at the Shaw Festival Theatre, the festival itself moves closer to celebrating four seasons. During January and February, the theatre is open for the popular annual film series, and rehearsals beginning for the 2020 season, which opens in April.

That’s good news for Niagara-on-the-Lake residents, and great news for the town, as the Shaw creates even more events for locals to attend and more reasons for visitors to visit.

For more information or to order tickets visit shawfest.com.
Lions trees going quickly for both clubs

The St. Davids Lions tree lot is open 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., seven days a week, and has Balsam at $55, six to eight-foot Fraser for $65 and 10-foot and over at $100. All proceeds from both clubs go back to the community.

St. Davids Leos helped unload trees at the St. Davids Lions Hall. The club ordered about 600 trees, and had its best day ever for sales Saturday. (Photo supplied)

Niagara Lions, a NOTL minor hockey midget team, helped unload Christmas trees for the club last week. The club donated $1,000 for its sponsorship, and will also make a donation to a fundraiser in memory of Michael Labonte, a former team member who died of cancer in October, said NOTL Lion Terry Flynn. (Photo supplied)

The NOTL Lions tree lot is open 12 to 8 p.m. on weekdays, and weekends 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

St. Davids Lions received 600 trees, almost twice as many as they’ve ordered in previous years. They were fortunate to have the St. Davids Leos on hand to help unload.

“It was hard work, but they did a really good job,” said Lion Susan Snider. “We were happy to have them there to help out.”

Continued from page 1

Willowbank open house Dec. 12

Penny Coles
The Local

The Willowbank School of Restoration Arts will be decorated for the season for its Holiday Open House next Thursday, Dec. 12.

Caitlin Wooll, education coordinator at Willowbank, says the event is short — from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., and will include a brief update on “what we’ve been doing and where we’re going.”

It will also be the launch of a much-needed new website for the school.

Following the presentation, Wooll says, “we hope people will mingle and chat,” and there will be light refreshments.

There is also an ongoing sale of student-made items, such as slate cheese platters, place markers and coasters, wooden cheese knives, cards with Wooll’s illustrations, and beeswax polish, to help pay for Willowbank students from the class of 2021 to the Association of Preservation Technology design competition, held in Miami.

Each year, the students’ participation is completely voluntary, self-organized and self-funded. This is the third year Willowbank students have competed, and placed third overall with their bridge design. The bridge they built is a wood replica of a brick masonry arch in the basement of McFarland House, says Wooll.

They are continuing to raise money to offset costs for their trip, says Wooll.

The hand-crafted items will be on display and for sale the evening of the open house. RSVP to willowbank@willowbank.ca or 905-262-1239.

Willowbank students Meghan Lenz, Graham Forster, Chris Riou, Anty-Demian Savov, and missing from the photo, Lisa Christie, came third in an international design competition. (Photo supplied)
It’s beginning to look, and feel, a lot like Christmas in every corner of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Queen Street is looking its best. The giant Christmas tree outside the Town Hall in Virgil will be lit up Thursday, Dec. 5 at 5:30 p.m. If you’re reading this in time to get to the event, there will be the Ukusters playing, and Dan Williams, Lord Mayor Betty Dierou’s husband, is donating refreshments.

There are dear family decorations in five locations — one in each of the five neighbourhoods — which make one in each of the five neighbourhoods.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Christmas Candelight Stroll — for a great selfie, #deernotl.

Consider giving to Grandmothers campaign

The Christmas season is once again upon us. This is the time of year when we all gratefully reflect on the past year and look forward to the New Year with new opportunities and happy times with friends, family and the wider Niagara-on-the-Lake community.

So many people in town are members of one or more groups, ranging from bridge, Mahjong, euchre, book clubs, lunch or dinner groups, walking groups, yoga, zumba and so many more. If you belong to a group in town, and, in the spirit of the season, think of organizing a donation on your group’s behalf, please consider the Stephen Lewis Foundation’s Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign.

The Nyanyans of Niagara (Shwali for grandmother) is one of over 240 grandmother and grandparent groups that raise money and awareness for the African grandmothers in 15 sub-Saharan African countries, who are raising their orphaned grandchildren due to the HIV-AIDS pandemic.

Tuesday, Dec. 3 was Giving Tuesday. Tuesday has passed but it serves as a reminder to donate to one of your favourite charities, any time of the year. Please consider the Stephen Lewis Foundation’s Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign.

The Canadian and African grandmothers will be very grateful for your donation. Remember that “happiness doesn’t result from generosity with those less fortunate, in this very caring community of ours, and across the region.”

We’re proud to have Ted Mouradian writing for The Local, this week suggesting the caring of Christmas should be extended 365 days a year. This is a town where for many, it is.

Enjoy all NOTL has to offer this holiday season, and let’s try Ted’s advice, to ‘be Christmas’ all year long.

- Betty Dierou

The trusted voice of our community

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Local

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

Editor: Penny Coles penny@notllocal.com
905-248-6871
Publisher: The Niagara-on-the-Lake Local
Graphic Designer: Rosie Gowrell composings@notllocal.com
notllocal.com • facebook.com/notllocal • instagram.com/notllocal • thenotllocal.com

Advertising Sales: Karen Skeoch karen@notllocal.com • 905-641-5335
Julia Coles julia@notllocal.com • 905-934-1049
Helen Arsenault Local Business Directory, Local Happenings, Classified Sales classified@notllocal.com

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Imagine the creatures wintering in the forest

Owen Bjornog Special to The Local

Do you ever step outside of your house at this time of year, and think, how on earth are animals surviving the winter? How does the most extreme weather conditions affect them? Watching Netflix as the snow smothered by blankets while embracing the luxuries of being inside is not our fate. We crawl into a cave for winter, we burrows into the ground or hibernate, just like the first pioneers, and the modern aboriginals, the temperature and weather ahead. We eat more carbs and fatty foods, not just because it’s nearing holiday season, but because our societal and cultural DNA connects with healing Chiron, as Mercury in Sagittarius connects with 905-934-1040 julia@notllocal.com. We eat more meat, and drink heavier beverages, not just because it’s nearing holiday season, but because our societal and cultural DNA connects with healing Chiron, as Mercury in Sagittarius connects with healing Chiron in Pisces, indicating the potential for sweetness in relationships. (At least one relationship.)

thaw, the frog’s body is gently pushed to the surface of the forest floor, and the ice begins to melt away. It then hoping its way down the vertical pools in the forest to mate. Only a couple of days, a year you might be lucky to see this post-winter phenomenon. In call sounds exactly like a quacking duck. Unsuspecting ears in a spring forest might have you thinking there is a pond full of ducks ahead, but it is instead filled with hundreds of frogs trying to mount one another. What makes this supercharged sex affair more bizarre when it occurs, is that some of these frogs were literally frozen less than 24 hours ago.

Sadly, I have never seen or heard a wood frog in NOTL. With the vast majority of our swampy woodlands gone, wood frogs are now head-quacking in the forests of southern Niagara. We all fantasize about leaving the country when winter grips us. Florida, Mexico, Costa Rica... those are dreamy locations where a lot of our birds go for the season. But whether or not a trip to somewhere warm is in the cards, until spring, let’s embrace the beauty and challenges of winter. Some of us will just freeze-over like the wood frogs until spring, and that’s okay too.

Auchterlonie on Astrology

Bill Auchterlonie Special to The Local

This week, I look at the second week of December and everything up to the Full Moon on Thursday, Dec. 12.

December 5, Thursday. Dec. 5: The Moon moves from sensitive Pisces into fearful Aries this afternoon. In the morning there is a harmony of the Moon in Pisces, and Mercury in Scorpio, which creates a mysterious calm that is good for quiet, thoughtful insights. In the evening, the Moon continues in her transit of relationship. (Or at least one relationship.)

And a reminder to visit my website, www.LookingUpWithBill.com. It has an all new podcast, featuring the astrology of Christmas and the real fidays of Jesus. As I said, We are starstruck. We are golden. So shine on!
Try having Christmas in your heart all year long

Ted Mouradian Special to The Local

Well it is that time of year again in Niagara-on-the-Lake, when we all either love it or hate it. I am not talking about Christmas. I know I should be politically correct, so Happy Holidays that include Christ- mas, Hanukkah, Diwali, Eid and any other reason for people to celebrate.

But for the purposes of this article, I am going to con-}

Peter's Live Niagara

Lord Mayor Betty Osiero and Dave Artaya raise a flag at the Town Hall in recognition of International Day of Person- sons with Disabilities. Antaya is the NOTL member of the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee working to raise awareness and promote action plans to improve accessibility for all businesses and organizations in the Niagara region. The We are Accessible campaign is offering evaluations and recognition for the implementation of accessi- ble conditions. (Photo submitted)

Focus on accessibility

Rocky Balboa

PETs Alive Niagara

Many friends and neigh- bour- houres have been asking me for an update on Diane Peirce. She is back to the “new normal” as she refers to her health status. In fact her MELD score (which deter- mines her place on the wait list for donors) is now slightly low- er, meaning she is even further away from a deceased donation.

The physicians keep advis- ing us that Diane will have to be much sicker, perhaps near death, to be a candidate for a deceased donation. As you can imagine, this option has no ap- peal to any of us in the family. Hence, we are all focused on a living donation. The Univer- sity Health Network created the world’s first comprehen- sive Centre for Living Organ Donation in 2018. They have been incredibly helpful to us and give us great hope. You might find this video of inter- est: https://www.uhn.ca/Trans- plant/Living_Donor_Program/ Centre_for_Living_Organ_Donation?utm_source=Liv- ingOrganDonation.ca&utm_ medium=Referral_campaign-pa- gina-redirects.

There is also definitely change in the wind for de- ceased organ donation. Nova Scotia has already moved to “presumed consent,” Alberta may be passing similar legisla- tion and I believe Ontario has a proposed bill in place. We hope all of Canada will fol- low. Please visit the organ dona- tion website: 1-4512874.

In the meantime, you can help others by consenting to a signed declaration while you are alive. When you die, the organ harvesting team will be called to perform the ‘organ harvest’. As you can see, this is a very private and important issue. Thank you again for your com- passion. What an amazing community!

Mike Peirce

(Not better known as Diane’s husband)

December 5, 2019

Find them on
defv.com

ted@the2percentfac- tor.com.

Ted Mouradian is President of the 2% Factor Inc. and cre- ator of the Law of Cooperative Action. He is an author and professional speaker and can be reached at ted@the2percentfac- tor.com.

Ted Mouradian

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Amnesty invites public to letter-writing event

When members of the local Amnesty International group gather next Tuesday to write letters, they are hoping to add to the pressure to free a Canadian imprisoned in China.

JL Groux, of the local Amnesty group says there are about one million Muslim Uighurs in China’s western province of Xinjiang. Haseyin Celil, a former activist, is a Canadian citizen from Ontario who has been a prisoner of conscience in a Chinese prison for 13 years, he says.

“Amnesty Canada members know that when we come together we can achieve change. And the more people that come along to these kinds of events, the more our movement will grow,” says Groux.

There are other cases Amnesty International Niagara Group 137 will highlight, and sign letters to help put pressure on foreign governments to release prisoners of conscience.

Write for Rights in Niagara takes place Tuesday, Dec. 10 from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Meridian Credit Union Arena.
Local family fosters puppy-in-training to be dog guide

Penny Coles
The Local

Pacey is going to have an exceptionally good Christmas. The yellow Labrador’s time with the Fieguth family in Niagara-on-the-Lake is about to end, and Pacey, the four-legged baby of two-legged Emily, will return to the Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides training school after Christmas, to finish his training before graduating as a full-fledged dog guide.

Emily, who is not looking forward to his departure, says she’ll be making it an extra-special Christmas for him, with a few more doggie cookies.

“He has absolutely become an important part of our family. He’s in our Christmas photo,” she says.

Emily, her husband Harry and their two boys, Logan, 16, and Brayden, 18, had never had a family dog before deciding to join the Lions Foundation Foster Puppy Program.

“We’ve been dog babies for years,” says Emily. “My parents and my brother have had dogs, but for some reason we didn’t. We just enjoyed looking after other people’s dogs. Having Pacey has been a wonderful experience for all of us. He’s the sweetest thing on earth. It’s been an opportunity for us as a family to have a dog and see what that’s like, and it’s been amazing.”

Brayden, her older son, and Pacey have become very close since the dog joined their family in January, and when Brayden went off to the University of Guelph this year, he wanted to take Pacey with him. “I told him he wasn’t taking my puppy,” says Emily. “But he’s a smart dog, and has responded well. Part of the training is for the Fieghuths to take him places. They’ve had him out at several restaurants, the mall, and even the Shaw Festival Theatre.

“He needs to have that experience of going out, and learning the rules of how to behave appropriately in different situations,” says Emily. The foster puppy program is aimed at teaching dogs the basic skills that they will need to know before entering the official dog guide program. They are expected to become familiar with social settings such as malls and office spaces, and to prepare them for common settings that they might encounter once they partner with their future handler.

“We take him everywhere, and he’s been very lucky. We’ve never been asked to leave,” says Emily.

Although dog guides cannot be refused admittance when they’re working, the rules are different for dogs in training.

Emily carries a card with her when they go out that explains Pacey is in training, and he will be treated the same as a dog on a leash – for instance, they are often placed at a restaurant table against a wall so he has somewhere to lie down without being in the way. But if he barks, or acts inappropriately, he can be asked to leave.

Fortunately, that’s never happened, she says.

He aced his recent 10-month assessment at the Pen Centre, with a trainer to test him as he walked among the crowd, used the escalator, and passed by food without being distracted.

He also went on his first vacation from the family, when he leaves the Fieghuths, he’ll go to the Oakville school for further training any dog is a big responsibility, but this is 24/7, and comes with extra responsibility. At first it was overwhelming. There are rules we all have to follow— don’t do this, make sure you do that — and being consistent is important. We all had to be sure to do the same thing, and it took a little bit for everybody to learn what was okay and what wasn’t, what do you do when he jumps or nips at you?

But he’s a smart dog, and has responded well. Part of the training is for the Fieghuths to take him places. They’ve had him out at several restaurants, the mall, and even the Shaw Festival Theatre.

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“We take him everywhere, and he’s been very lucky. We’ve never been asked to leave,” says Emily.

Although dog guides cannot be refused admittance when they’re working, the rules are different for dogs in training.

Emily carries a card with her when they go out that explains Pacey is in training, and he will be treated the same as a dog on a leash – for instance, they are often placed at a restaurant table against a wall so he has somewhere to lie down without being in the way. But if he barks, or acts inappropriately, he can be asked to leave.

Fortunately, that’s never happened, she says.

He aced his recent 10-month assessment at the Pen Centre, with a trainer to test him as he walked among the crowd, used the escalator, and passed by food without being distracted.

Emily Fieguth often takes Pacey to her workplace, the Niagara United Mennoite Church. (Penny Coles)
Pat Darte and Jane Neaves are collecting toys to distribute on the McMaster Children’s Hospital cancer ward at Christmas. (Photo supplied)
Are you looking for a fun, exciting, and safe place to enjoy winter activities with family and friends? You’re in luck! Parks Canada is kicking off the holiday season on Saturday, December 14th with its annual, weekend-long Garrison Christmas event and the Vintage-Parks Canada 2020 Rink Launch Party. It’s a family holiday event not to be missed!

There’s always something fun to do at Fort George National Historic Site and the Vintage-Parks Canada Skating Rink. Interested in our special events? Check some of these out:

**VINTAGE-PARKS CANADA 2020 RINK LAUNCH PARTY**
Saturday, December 14
6 p.m. – 9 p.m.
It’s time to lace up your skates and celebrate the launch of the Vintage-Parks Canada Skating Rink! Enjoy the sounds of Niagara band the Madhatters as you and your family glide around the outdoor rink in historic style. With hot beverages and holiday greenery, it’s the perfect kick-off to the Holiday season!

**FORT GEORGE GARRISON CHRISTMAS**
Saturday, December 14 & Sunday, December 15
Noon – 4 p.m.
Come experience Christmas traditions from the early 19th century, including crafts, activities and games for the whole family! See Fort George decorated in traditional holiday greenery while enjoying hot beverages, historic treats, and musket demonstrations. Join Parks Canada and the Friends of Fort George for some jolly Christmas fun! Regular admission rates apply. Admission is free for youth 17 and under.

**NEW YEAR’S DAY LEVEE**
January 1, 3 p.m. - 4 p.m.
Fort George National Historic Site
Start the new year off with a bang! Join the Friends of Fort George and Parks Canada for our annual levee celebrations, with cannon firing, toasts, and music by the 41st Regiment Fife and Drum Corps. Call 905-468-6621 or email admin@friendsoffortgeorge.ca

**REGENCY SKATE**
Saturday, January 4
1 p.m. – 5 p.m.
On Saturday, January 4 from 1 p.m. - 5 p.m., visitors can come dressed to impress and join us for a civilized gathering on the eve of war during a time of elegance and artistry in the early 1800s.

Enjoy special activities inside Fort George and on the rink. Wear your Regency best for a chance to win prizes! Your Regency best could include dresses, breeches or pantaloons, collared shirts, shoes, tockcoats, waist coats, cravats, gloves, bonnets, Regency hats, and simple hair styles.

For more information, please visit www.parkscanada.ca/fortgeorge, call 905-468-6614 or email pc.niagaraont.pc@canada.ca

**VINTAGE-PARKS CANADA SKATING RINK**
Saturday, December 15 - March 22
Family and Evening Skating: Skate rentals, music, dedicated rink staff and programming
Friday: 5 p.m. – 9 p.m.
Saturday: 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., 2 p.m. – 5 p.m., 6 p.m. – 9 p.m.
Sunday: 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., 2 p.m. – 5 p.m.
Open Skate:
Monday to Thursday: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Friday: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
*Operating season and hours are subject to weather conditions.

Holiday Hours of Operation: For hours of operation between Monday, December 23 to January 5, please visit parkscanada.ca/fortgeorge, Facebook.com/FortGeorgeHNS or Twitter: @FortGeorgeHNS

**FORT GEORGE NHS OPEN ON WEEKENDS ALL WINTER!**
December 1 - March 31 | Noon - 4 p.m. on weekends
Regular admission rates apply. Youth 17 and under are free!
Enjoy quality one-on-one time with knowledgeable team members as you explore period buildings, or take in a musket demonstration.

For more information, please visit our website: parkscanada.gc.ca/fortgeorge
Sympli

Hello Winter!

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THE NOTL LOCAL
December 5, 2019
notllocal.com

A truly local experience

Submitted by Bibelot Design Studio

One of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s best-kept secrets lies a short distance out on Lake-shore Road.

Bibelot Design Studio, located at 853 Lakeshore Road, is a small creative space run by husband and wife team, Christine McGrath and Reid Maltby. Their simple, modern line of home decor is hand-crafted right down to the textiles which are block-printed, screen-printed, or dyed in-house on 100 per cent linen. The use of linen is especially meaningful since both Christine’s grandmothers were weavers in the linen mills of Belfast.

The hand-printed textiles are combined with wood veneer and glass to create mirrors, frames, wall art, table art and holiday ornaments.

They also have a line of soft furnishings, pillows and table linens. With a great variety of hand-blended colours and designs to choose from, custom inquiries are always welcome.

Everything in the studio, which shares a parking lot with Lakeshore Antiques, is handcrafted with great attention to detail. There are many one-of-a-kind items and a broad range of prices. Bibelot Design Studio also carries a small selection of Canadian artists’ work, including local textile collage artist Leisa Daly.

Make an afternoon of your visit. Our neighbours include the beautiful Konzelmann Estate Winery, the newly rebranded (and super cozy) Palatine Hills Estate Winery, and Barb and Ron at Lakeside Pottery. How’s that for a local experience?

Bibelot Design Studio
853 Lakeshore Road, NOTL
905.321.6516

Bibelot Design Studio, 853 Lakeshore Road, NOTL

The King St. Gallery is kicking off its Tiny Treasures Show, as it does every year, to coincide with the annual Candlelight Stroll. A Cappella Niagara will be performing in front of the gallery, so enjoy the music and stroll in for a look around. We’ll be open until after the stroll Friday night.

As the name suggests, the show focuses on smaller sizes of original art works. This year we celebrate the addition of four artists to our gallery and are excited to show some of their tiny treasures. Smaller paintings are often chosen as gifts to remind loved ones of a special visit to Niagara, and often collected year after year.

Gift wrapping available

King St. Gallery
153 King St., NOTL, 905.321.6516

Of course, we have larger-sized art as well, heirlooms to be passed down through the generations. And when in doubt, a gift certificate for Mom and Dad, to purchase new art or sculpture for their new condo, is always a great idea.

King St. Gallery – Tiny Treasures Show

Submitted by King St. Gallery

A Book of Master Artist Quotes would make great stocking stuffers — and a good read — for anyone with a love of art, and we have wire art pieces that are fun and affordable.

Of course, we have larger-sized art as well, heirlooms to be passed down through the generations. And when in doubt, a gift certificate for Mom and Dad, to purchase new art or sculpture for their new condo, is always a great idea.
Dreaming of a Wine Christmas

Submitted by Konzelmann Estate Winery

It’s that time of year, when we deck the halls and make merry. The days are filled with festive gatherings and holiday shopping – and we hope a big glass of delicious wine. Time spent with friends and family is at the top of the list for seasonal plans, but finding the perfect gifts is probably a close second.

Whether you are looking to gift your clients, show your employees they are valued, or share and create memories with your loved ones, our wide range of gifting solutions has got you covered. When it comes to gift giving it’s all about individual character, so we curate each offering to fit your unique style and budget. From baskets for the foodie, entertainer or sweet tooth in your life to custom labels featuring your company’s logo or a family photo, the possibilities are endless.

If you are looking for the perfect way to spend time with your friends or family, we also offer memorable experiences at the winery. From cheese and reserve wines in our estate cellar, to learning how to pair your favourite junk food with wine, we have experiences suited to everyone on your list.

Visit us at 1096 Lakeshore Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake for a wonderful selection of gift ideas.

Put a little bit of Ireland under your tree

Submitted by Irish Design

What better way to celebrate the holidays than cozying up with the ones you love, Guinness in hand, showing off your new traditional sweater from Ireland? If you’re thinking of purchasing a beautiful Aran knit jumper or perhaps a winter coat, now is the time to do so as here at Irish Design our 33rd annual anniversary sale is in full swing! From super soft merino wool cardigans and pullovers, to wool cashmere coats, tweed jackets and rain gear, there’s something to find here for everyone on your Christmas list!

Pick up some stocking stuffers like our organic beeswax Jo Browne perfume, Kerry Woollen Mills soap, sheep’s wool socks, to wool cashmere coats, tweed jackets and rain gear, there’s something to find here for everyone on your Christmas list!

Visit us at 75 Queen Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake.
All Wrapped Up

Deck the halls with Just Christmas All that glitters is Canadian

Submitted by

Just Christmas

It’s been over 30 years and we are still Canada’s oldest year-round Christmas Emporium. You can choose from over 5000 different Christmas items that are ever changing year after year. We strive to make all your holiday dreams come true!

Over the years we have developed the most enormous selection of ornaments, that we will personalize for free while you wait.

This includes sports and leisure activities, licensed characters, baby’s 1st Christmas and family ornaments right down to your treasured pet. As always, we feature our most popular glass name-balls. Hand painted by one of our talented artists while you wait. Our assortment always represents the best quality at the best prices. We like to think that your purchases will become family heirlooms for years to come.

Remember if Christmas is special to you, then come and visit Just Christmas.

Visit us at 34 Queen Street in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Submitted by

VandenDool Jewellers

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–Brian and Mark VandenDool

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the notl local
Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

What the future holds for the RiverBrink Art Museum in Queenston should be more certain in a few months.

The first step toward that future coming to light took place last Friday, as the museum hosted an open house to kick off feasibility study on its growth.

Curator Debra Antoncic was pleased with the turn-out, as almost 30 community members showed up to meet the representatives from Lord Cultural Resources. The evening was set up in a round-table of sorts. Visitors were invited to sit with three principals from the consulting company, including president Gail Lord, who has a weekend home in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Lord’s station on the round table focused on the collections of the museum. RiverBrink is known for Housing The Samuel E. Weir Collection of more than 1,400 important and valuable Canadian, European and American art pieces. It was clear in many attended wanting to know what steps need to be taken to protect the curatorial excellence and integrity of the museum’s exhibits.

Former RiverBrink director Richard Baker said, “this has always been a very high quality gallery that exhibits art of a very high standard and historical interest. It’s very important to maintain that rather elevated and sophisticated atmosphere that it has achieved over the years it’s been here.”

Longtime volunteer Fred Farnham has seen a few changes to the museum over the years. He worries that future expansion could move RiverBrink further away from Samuel Weir’s original vision, which was built as the lawyer’s summer home.

Farnham has been volunteering since before 1996, when RiverBrink’s east-side porch was converted into what is now known as the “long gallery.” Marina Ramirez, Lord’s senior consultant of facility planning, met with visitors in that room to learn what they liked about the museum’s architecture, and to hear their suggestions for changes.

Susan Dods told Ramirez she feels RiverBrink needs more space to display and care for the Weir collection on a permanent basis. Currently, the “long gallery” is being used to house “Compound Vision,” a temporary exhibition of the works of Toronto artist Charmaine Lurch. Meanwhile, much of the Weir Collection remains in storage.

Baker feels strongly that changes need to be made to the front entrance to the museum. “The appearance of the front of the building needs to be improved, so people don’t drive by and say it’s just another house. It’s just not a commercial front door. It’s absolutely unremarkable.”

“You could just change the materials, you could make it look a little bigger, you could make it an antechamber, you could use glass, put a modest sign upstairs that says ‘this is the RiverBrink Art Museum,’ something modest, but powerful and inviting.”

Baker was one of many visitors who lamented the fact that RiverBrink is a bit of a “hidden gem.” Many in attendance expressed to Ted Silberberg, Lord’s senior principal, market and financial planning, that for the museum to survive, it’s important that attendance improves.

Attendance this year was up. Silberberg believes, because free admission had been sponsored from February through August. That led to 3,900 visitors for 2019, 1,300 more than the previous year, when there was an attendance charge.

Silberberg’s role in the feasibility study focuses on the financial viability of RiverBrink. He was heartened by the number of people who showed up to express their interest in its future.

“There is substantial room for growth in all attendance and revenue areas,” says Silberberg, “being in Niagara-on-the-Lake, having access to substantial markets both for Niagara-on-the-Lake and Niagara Falls, having a strong passing traffic, traffic here for the wineries, a demographic whom I assume would have a strong interest in art as well — those are all opportunities.”

He went on to say, “the objective of our study is to build on the opportunities, look to mitigate the challenges, and help to increase attendance, earned income, and the conditions for more private and government support.”

A number of different ideas arose to capitalize on those opportunities. One participant posited the idea of adding more history to the museum entry into town to the former host of the museum. That process should already be underway for most any changes, upgrades or expansions to RiverBrink.

“We’re conscious that there are a number of expansions going on, there are a lot of big projects that organizations are raising money for now, so we’re just really trying to start out and find out if this is something we can even dream of doing.”

One thing is certain, though. Like the Niagara Historical Museum, RiverBrink will have to install an elevator to meet the standards of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act by 2025.

Antonicc welcomes input from those who were unable to attend the open house. Questions or concerns about RiverBrink can be sent to her via email at dantonacc@riverbrink.org.

The next step for Lord, Silberberg and Ramirez will be to meet with the local school boards, chambers of commerce, and other organizations to gather input on the museum’s role in the community. That process should take up the next few weeks and months, said Silberberg.

According to Antonicc, there is no timeline or budget yet for any changes, upgrades or expansions to RiverBrink.

“We’re conscious that there are a number of expansions going on, there are a lot of big projects that organizations are raising money for now, so we’re just really trying to start out and find out if this is something we can even dream of doing.”

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Learn about Nobel Prize-winning literature

Penny Coles
The Local

Valmai Elkins is a published writer who loves literature.

While teaching childbirth education at McGill University, she pioneered the hospital Birthing Room and introduced the concept and design across North America.

Elkins and her book, Rights of the Pregnant Parent, are credited with changing hospital birth. It became an international bestseller, followed by The Birth Report. She was also a pioneer in encouraging fathers to be present at their babies’ births.

Next Tuesday, Elkins will present the Nobel Series talk, held at the NOTL Public Library, on the prize for literature.

Alfred Nobel, engineer, chemist, inventor and philanthropist, was also a lover of fine writing, says Elkins. He himself produced a handful of poems and a satirical novel. His Nobel Prize in Literature, presented on Dec. 10, the anniversary of his death, is awarded for “Outstanding work in an idealistic direction that adds the greatest benefit to humankind.”

Since 1901, she says, there have been 101 men who have won the prize and 15 women, including, in 2013, Canadian, Alice Munro.

The 2018 Award was postponed because of allegations of sexual abuse and financial misconduct against the husband of a member of the Swedish Academy. It was deemed prudent to allow the scandal to settle before an award was made, says Elkins. “However another wave of scandal would engulf this year’s double prize if each winner has triggered public outrage because of their interpretations of historical events.”

Polish writer Olga Tokarczuk, 57, winner of the 2018 award, also received the prestigious Man Booker International Award for her audacious novel Flights, a plunge into contemporary travel through a restless world where the international airport replaces the town square, says Elkins. The narrator maintains that, “a thing in motion will always do better than a thing at rest, for change will always be a nobler thing than permanence.” This journey through time and space, with side trips to the anatomy of the human body and soul, the nature of borders and the return of Chopin’s heart post-humously to his native Warsaw, is both disorienting and captivating.

Tokarczuk’s 2014 novel, The Books of Jacob, however, received such vitriol for its interpretation of the 18th-century Polish history that her publisher protected her with security guards, says Elkins. This year’s winner, Austrian playwright, novelist, and screenwriter Peter Handke, 78, has 30 works of fiction, drama, screenplay and critical theory with a string of awards.

At 34, his play, Offending the Audience, established him as a brilliant linguist and provocateur. His screenplay, for the Wim Wenders film, Wings of Desire, about trench-coated angelic beings who gather in the Berlin Library during the Cold War to send rays of hope to troubled humans, won acclaim. But his novel, Across the River: Justice for Serbs, produced an outcry accusing him of denying crimes against Muslims in the Bosnian War, says Elkins.

Though his publisher issued a 24-page defence and even his most ardent critics concede his linguistic brilliance, his work and that of Tokarczuk raise disturbing questions about the political nature of post-modern literature.

Elkins will talk about these two Nobel prize-winners at the NOTL Public Library Tuesday, Dec. 10 at 2 p.m.

InfoHealth to focus on caring for the frail

Penny Coles
The Local

Who will support Niagara residents when they’re too frail to live at home?

What are their housing options, and where will they find the help they need?

And how can they help themselves to remain “brain healthy” so they can remain at home?

Those are some of the issues Dr. Larry Chambers, research director of McMaster’s Niagara Regional Campus of School of Medicine, will discuss at Wednesday’s InfoHealth session at the NOTL Public Library, to raise public awareness of options for people who are frail. “It’s probably now about 700. And it’s a problem,” he says.

He will talk about “closing the gap” in both physical fitness and brain health, which can be improved up to a point, and then, as we age, begins to decline.

Although the decline can’t be prevented, it can be slowed, he says.

There are four ways to gauge good brain health: the ability to drive a car safely, or playing chess. “Keep the brain going,” he says.

He also talks of the importance of keeping the brain active while we age — by learning new skills, such as playing a musical instrument, starting a new business, or playing chess. “Keep the brain going,” he says.

The demographics in NOTL are changing, he adds. From 2011 to 2016, the number of people over the age of 85 increased from 500 to 700.

“It’s probably now about 900 people. And it’s a problem,” he says. “The provincial government and the public think of housing for the frail as “only one place” — long-term care homes. We need a multiplicity of options for people who are frail.”

In addition to more housing options, more staff needed to look after the frail, he says. “There needs to be a call to action, to think about the fitness gap, housing options and finding ways throughout the community to support the frail,” says Chambers.

To raise public awareness and stimulate actions, Chambers, with Hanna Levy and Eva Liu of the Niagara Regional Campus of the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine, McMaster University, will present the next InfoHealth session on supporting the frail, Wednesday, Dec. 11 at the NOTL Public Library.

The DeGroote School of Medicine has 85 medical students, 261 junior-graduate trainees and a 400-physician faculty, based at Brock University. It has partnerships with family physicians, long-term care homes and hospitals across Niagara, as well as the Niagara Region public health department, to support medical students.

Dr. Larry Chambers will present some of his research findings on caring for the frail, at the NOTL Public Library, Wednesday, Dec. 11 at 2 p.m. (Photo supplied)
Patrick and Barbara McGilly played Mr. and Mrs. Claus at Ravine Vineyard’s Christmas Market Sunday. (Fred Mercnik)
Wild goose chase ends in success

Penny Coles
The Local

A goose named Chicken led a group of Glendale residents on a merry chase Tuesday.

The chase began when Robin Fisher sent out the call for residents, and organized a rescue operation to capture a Canada goose that suffers from angel wing, says Steve Hardaker, one of the neighbours who offered to help.

The syndrome prevents the bird from flying, he says, and Fisher intended to catch it and transport it to the Open Sky Raptor Foundation in Grimsby, where it will live out the rest of its life.

The reason his saviours dubbed him Chicken? “He initially fled from us, playing the wing feathers pointing against the body, is Wikipedia’s description of Chicken’s deformity.

It is caused by a high-calorie diet, often, when they live near humans, and fed a steady diet of bread.

The rescue group first saw it by the storm water treatment pond at the corner of Taylors Road and Glendale Avenue, but by the time they captured it, they were behind.

Steve Hardaker, one of the neighbours who offered to help.

Robin Fisher sent out the call for residents, and organized a rescue operation to capture a Canada goose that suffers from angel wing, says Hardaker. “Fitting name.”

Angel wing is a syndrome that affects primarily aquatic birds, such as geese and ducks, in which the last joint of the wing is twisted, with the wing feathers pointing out laterally, instead of lying against the body, is Wikipedia’s description of Chicken’s deformity.

It is caused by a high-calorie diet, often, when they live near humans, and fed a steady diet of bread.

Alison Flus, Tammy McCarthy, Robin Fisher, Logan McCarthy and Steve Hardaker were led on a wild goose chase by Chicken, who can’t fly. He has been taken to a bird sanctuary, where he will live to the rest of his life in safety. (Photo supplied)

Decorated for the Holidays

Diane Turner and Tonde Wirth of the Garden Club of Niagara are decorating McFarland House for two weekends of a Christmas celebration, using mostly natural items scavenged from local gardens. McFarland House will be open Friday and Saturday on the Rotary House Tour, and Sunday 10 to 4. It will be open to the public all three days. Next weekend, Dec. 14 and 15, it will be open 10 to 4 as well, but without Rotary House Tour guests, and will allow for a more leisurely visit. Cookies and hot beverages, including hot chocolate and cider, will be served both weekends. (Penny Coles)
CRUX, Sandy—Died peacefully at her home in Virgil, Ontario on Thursday, November 28, 2019. She was survived by her husband of 49 years, Jim, her brother David Reynolds (Colleen) of Calgary, her sister Marsha Reynolds also of Calgary and her children Andy Girard (Donna) of St. Catharines and Carole Wiens (Chuck) of Virgil. She is also survived by her grandchildren, Julia Dick (Jeff), Matthew Wiens (Alex) and Stephanie Wills (Jesse) and her beloved great-grandchildren Corson, Landen, Georgia, Hunter and Charlie.

A private memorial service for immediate family and friends was held at the Tallman Funeral Home in Vineland on Monday, December 2, 2019.

Online condolences at www.tallmanfuneralhomes.ca
Former Rangers make Niagara College team

Mike Balsom Special to The Local

They once were Rangers, now they are Knights. NOTL Rangers basketball alumni Beth DeBoer and Mackenzie Schroeder have been making a mark as first-year members of the Niagara College Knights women's basketball team.

The two were teammates and co-captains last year at Eden High School, and played together on the Rangers under-19 women's team. Both were recruited by former Niagara head coach Michael Beccaria, just before current coach Chris Rao was brought in to take the helm.

Welland native Rao left his role as assistant coach with the Cape Breton University Caps men's team to accept the Knights position. He also has extensive experience with Nova Scotia under-14, under-15, and under-17 boys provincial programs.

Both DeBoer and Schroeder impressed Rao from the start, when he gathered the women for some workouts in mid-August before the start of the school year.

“They play really hard, it is the first thing,” says Rao. “They both defend well, and under-17 boys provincial programs. Both DeBoer and Schroeder impressed Rao from the start, when he gathered the women for some workouts in mid-August before the start of the school year.

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