Candlelight Stroll: a night to remember for two youngsters

Sharon Burns
The Local

The Candlelight Stroll illuminates not just our streets, “but also the solidarity and warmth of our town,” said Minerva Ward, president and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce.

Last Friday’s grey, rainy day turned into a dry, mild evening in the Old Town, with flickering candles held by a large crowd of people who came from all over the region.

The event, sponsored by Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce, highlighted two extraordinary young people, Dylan Dietsch and Maya Webster.

Dylan, a 13-year-old student at Crossroads Public School, lives with cerebral palsy. “His journey and achievements highlight the incredible strength and resilience found in the face of challenges,” said Ward.

Maya, a 12-year-old advocate living with juvenile diabetes, “represents the power of voice and action. In her youth, her efforts in advocating for increased government funding for continuous blood glucose monitoring devices is not just commendable, but inspiring,” said Ward.

Gathered at the base of the Court House, Shaw Festival performers, Niagara Star Singers and Queenston Women’s Chorus, Yellow Door Theatre Project members and the Salvation Army Band entertained passersby from mid-afternoon until dignitaries made their way to the stage at 6:30 p.m.

Dylan’s father, Matt Dietsch, was thankful for the community’s support as he spoke on Dylan’s behalf. “It’s just an amazing feeling standing up here seeing all these wonderful faces and seeing all these wonderful kids getting ready to sing their hearts out,” he said.

Maya’s blood sugar was low moments before Maya delivered an impassioned address to the crowd where she promised to “continue to fight to find a cure,” through donations to the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

Continued on page 4

Newark Neighbours helps hungry and homeless in NOTL

Penny Coles
The Local

With rising food and housing costs, Newark Neighbours is just one of most food banks across the country watching requests for their help increase, especially in the weeks leading up to Christmas.

The number of Niagara-on-the-Lake families facing food insecurity is growing, and in the last week or so, more families have been added to the list of those requiring help at Christmas, says food bank chair Cindy Grant.

Last year there were more families than ever before depending on Newark Neighbours for food hampers and toys for their children, and this year, even more again, she says.

And for those who think homelessness couldn’t be a problem in NOTL, says Grant, it is, with people who are “tucked away” living on the rural lines and concessions in outbuildings for shelter, “places where you wouldn’t realize or expect to find people living.”

She shares the story of one man who came in recently looking for warm clothes. He said he was a refugee, although he didn’t share where from, or how he ended up in town. He was willing to pay for the hat, mittens and sweater he needed, although they didn’t take his money, and he said he had enough food — he had just found a job and had some cash — but it had to be food that didn’t need to be heated. “He was living in a

Continued on page 2

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Continued on page 2

Town CAO Marnie Cluckie has announced her resignation.
Town CAO leaving NOTL position in January

Kris Dube
The Local
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Marnie Cluckie is leaving her role as Niagara-on-the-Lake’s chief executive officer, effective Jan. 14.

She called her decision “bittersweet,” and says she is taking a position with another municipality.

A news release from the City of Hamilton confirmed that Cluckie is headed there in the new year as city manager. She has been appointed in the new year as city manager.

In an interview with The Local on Tuesday, Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said it’s been a pleasure working with Cluckie.

“She’s demonstrated a very impressive, professional record,” he said, adding that her guidance with the town’s strategic plan has been vital.

Cluckie joined the town of NOTL in December 2020, just as news of the pandemic was breaking, and steered town staff in its response and recovery to ensure residents continued to receive critical services, while also taking steps to improve communication and service delivery, a news release from the town said.

She was thanked “for her strategic leadership,” and wished well in the future. In an announcement to NOTL town staff Monday, Cluckie said working with them “has been an incredible journey, filled with shared accomplishments, problems solved and challenges overcome,” and added how grateful she was for their “unwavering dedication, professionalism,” as well as their inspirational passion for serving their community and hard work.

Cluckie was on holidays Monday to Wednesday this week and not available for comment.

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Cluckie is not the only staffer to depart from the town recently. Last month, it was announced that interior planner Denise Horne was leaving, but where she was headed was not disclosed.

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It’s his stance that filling Cluckie’s role to the Niagara-on-the-Lake, she was a director on the strategic transformation group and director of operations Sheldon Randall filled in on an interim basis until Cluckie’s first day.

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Wishing you a happy and healthy holiday!

Seasons Greetings from all of us at

Niagara on-the-Lake Realty
1994 Limited Real Estate Brokerage
Continued from page 1

barn with no way of cooking,” says Grant.

This is a critical time of year for those in need, but Grant says she feels the organiza-
tion is well-equipped to help, at least when it comes to food and clothes.

Their storefront thrift shop looks a lot like Christ-
mas, cheerful and inviting, a place to attract and welcome shoppers to help pay the bills and purchase what isn’t do-
ned. But the real work at this time of year is just be-
ginning. Behind the scenes in the food bank area, providing much more space than was available last year.

“We realized the minute

we moved in that our shelves in back would be full,” says Grant.

And fortunately the com-

munity continues to do its

part, once again with incred-
ible generosity, she adds.

Stories they hear from those in need are for the most part “the working poor,” those

with incomes that just can’t

meet today’s costs of food and housing. They include single

parents, families where one

parent has been laid off, and
even two working parents

with low-paying jobs, she says.

Those who are registered
can come in every two weeks,

and unlike most food banks, they can choose what their family needs from what’s on

the stocked shelves, with limits
determined by the number of

family members, says Grant.

Food has been pouring in

from local businesses, organi-
zations and individuals, and

toys are beginning to mount up. Grant estimates about 40 businesses and organizations are collecting food and toys, including wineries, churches and schools.

One of the businesses of-

ferring support in Niagara Mo-
tors, John Dick has recently returned to the car dealership his grandfather founded, and

which his father Dave has taken

over, and John has created a program to help Newark by asking those who drop by

the dealership to bring non-

perishable food or a toy in

return for a ballot for weekly

draws. Inside the showroom,

the back of a pickup truck is

being loaded with bags and

boxes people are bringing in

for Newark, and in return

receiving extra ballots with

weekly draws for gift certifi-
cates for Phil’s Your Indepen-
dent Grocer and Gale’s Gas

Bar. And on Dec. 22, there

will be draws for two big-screen

TVs, explains Dick.

He’s back in the family

business after 15 years with a

job in Toronto as a principal

of business development at

Flipp, a popular app provid-

ing digital grocery flyers in

one place.

Raising his family in

Oakville, he returned to

Niagara Motors as general

manager, “to my roots, as the

third generation” involved in

the business, he says. He also
describes his roll as head of

skunkworks, a term for a de-
partment of a company typ-
ically tasked with producing

innovative research and de-
velopment projects.

Visiting Niagara Motors

Friday, Grant grabbed some

of the toys to take with her to

add to the trucks of food ex-
pected after the Candleight

Stroll last Friday, and toys

and food from NOTL Hydro,

which will be collected at the

Christmas Parade this week,

along with food collected by

Newark Neighbours.

All of which is very much

appreciated, with about 100

families now signed up, in-
cluding 10 new registrations

last week, says Grant.

In past years, Newark has

asked parents to provide their

children’s wishlist for
toys, and volunteers would

put them together with food

hampers to pick up.

This year, with the number of families registered, Newark has a different plan. They have set aside two days, Dec. 12 and 14, for parents to come into the store and “shop” for toys for their children. How many they will be able to pick will be determined by what Newark has and how many children are on their list at that point, says Grant.

The week of Dec. 18 there is a team of volunteers who will begin putting together hampers, she adds.

The thrift store closes at the end of day Saturday, Dec 23 and reopens Jan. 2. The food bank closes Wednesday, Dec. 20 after the hamper distribu-
tion, and reopens Jan. 2.
How does a donation to United Way make an impact?

We are often asked where donations to United Way go. How exactly does your donation make an impact on people and communities in Niagara?

While we are proud of the visible change through our community initiatives like growing and distributing fresh food, providing backpacks to kids in need and supplying agencies with hygiene products, the bulk of United Way’s investments are harder to see.

At the heart of United Way’s approach to building a stronger Niagara is the Community Fund. The Community Fund is the general investment pot which supports the network of agencies and programs in our community that are helping 1 in 4 people.

Stable funding is critical. Our network of partner agencies across Niagara rely on sustainable funding year-over-year, to plan and execute these crucial programs. While one-time grants are helpful in emergency situations - purchasing food and supplies or bridging immediate funding gaps - if agencies don’t know when they will receive support, we cannot expect them to operate regularly. The Community Fund is constant communication with local agencies who are on the ground in our community, we know where funds will make the greatest impact.

Providing long-term support helps more people in stronger, more effective ways - connecting people to affordable housing or life skills for long-term success - can be the difference that breaks deep-rooted cycles of poverty.

What our partners are saying:

“United Way is an important funder for the YWCA Niagara Region as there are many programs that we offer that would not exist without this funding. Having consistent three-year funding ensures that the programs we provide for women and their families are sustainable and reliable for those who access them. It also provides the consistency for long term impact, such as the support we receive for the transitional housing program, it gives women the time to do the work they need to move to a place of stability. United Way also provides supplies such as back-packs, kitchen kits, feminine products and produce, this supplements our work and provides supports to women and their families that we otherwise would not be able to do.

Without United Way funding we would not be able to provide the programs that we do which are essential to the overall supports that we provide to women, girls and families.”

- Elisabeth Zimmermann
Executive Director, YWCA Niagara Region

Learn more at unitedwayniagara.org

“[Stable funding] also provides the consistency for long term impact, such as the support we receive for the transitional housing program. It gives women the time to do the work they need to move to a place of stability.”

Unrestricted gifts are key. Unrestricted gifts allow our dedicated Community Investment volunteers to shift funds and grants to address the areas and issues of highest need. Being in

POVERTY AND FOOD INSECURITY ARE NOT ALWAYS VISIBLE.

“I was always the guy who brought donations to the office food drives, now I find myself making excuses when they come by my desk. I work full time but the cost of everything has gone up so much that my income alone isn’t cutting it anymore. I put off asking for help for a long time, but I had to last month. I was at the point where I had to decide which bills to skip to afford groceries. I made a call and was connected with a number of programs that could help. I just got a box of fresh produce and I can get staple items from the pantry in my neighbourhood. I also met some others who are in the same boat as me so I feel less alone. My son and I now rely on these programs, without them I don’t know where we would be.”

- Chris

DONATE NOW to support the network of programs that more than 175,000 people rely on.

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By mail: United Way Niagara
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St. Catharines, ON L2R 3C4
By phone: 905-688-5050
Monday - Friday
8:30 am - 4:30 pm

IN NIAGARA THIS HOLIDAY SEASON...

75,000 people won’t have enough to eat...

1,500 calls for help are expected due to gender-based violence...

26,000 households are at risk of losing their home, and...

96,000 people will face a mental health challenge in the coming year.

DID YOU KNOW?
5% of food insecure households in Ontario are employed.

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December 6, 2023

LOCAL GIVING. 100% LOCAL IMPACT.
A tour of Niagara municipalities, pre-settlement

Owen Bjorgan
Special to The Local

I once wrote an article for The Local about what nature would have looked like within Niagara-on-the-Lake’s current boundaries prior to European settlement. By studying historic climate records and the wind patterns, soil and vegetation associations with the times, I have decided to expand this conversation to each municipality within the Niagara Region.

In this two-part series of summarizing what Niagara looked like before electricity, roads, and farms, I will attempt to paint a picture of what each town and city was beholden to before their boundaries were scripted onto a map.

My hometown of Niagara-on-the-Lake was a lakebed bottom, but only following the sluggish retreat of the Laurentide Ice Sheet approximately 12,000 years ago. With all of that ice grinding and melting itself away, it exposed the archaeological wondor of the Niagara Escarpment. The newly released water, from solid to liquid form, revealed itself as historic Lake Ontario, lapping the base of the Niagara Escarpment along York Road and Queenston Road. It was unlikely to be a sandy beach, but rather, a series of waves pounding a rocky shore once covered in coniferous trees.

When the water retreated and the climate warmed, the area blossomed into a rich, sandy loam forest, as deciduous trees from the south advanced northward to outcompete their evergreen kin of Niagara Peninsula. The woods were likely rich in beeches, maples and oaks in a remarkably flat forest. Sweeping sections of white pine along the modern day Lake Ontario shoreline would have taken hold, and that’s where you can find some of them to this day.

St. Catharines, Niagara’s largest and Ontario’s seventh largest city, was historically very similar to its neighbour across the canal, what is now NOTL. The Welland Canal, before becoming a man-made feature, was likely a natural conduit where post-glacial water flowed from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario. When its construction began in 1913, the workers were perhaps unknowingly taking advantage of the ancient waterway’s depression in the land. After all, Lake Erie is historically proven to have entered Lake Ontario in many ways before the Niagara River and Niagara Falls even existed.

Similar to NOTL, St. Catharines was flat as a table top, except for areas in the south of the city near the Niagara Escarpment. St Catharines showcased four completely separate and unbelievably dramatic moments of change: from a lake bottom, to a deciduous forest, to farmland, to sprawling city.

Lincoln fits the same mould as the previously described municipalities. However, it was once home to some of Niagara Region’s most pristine waterways. Modern day 15, 16, 18, and 20 Mile Creeks all started with their headwaters flowing through the marshes and swamps of West Lincoln. As these creeks picked up steam, they cascaded over the edge of the Niagara Escarpment through dark valleys of eastern hemlock and sugar maples. As these creeks spilled their way into the lake bottom lowlands below, they carved out valleys of considerable magnitude. If you ever look at the banks of Jordan Harbour, you’ll understand that it once took an aquatic force to make those big banks — not the current day shallow water that quietly flows into there.

Head to toe, these particular creek ecosystems would have been seriously rich in fish species given the habitat variety they flowed through. Grimsby is the westernmost of the municipalities below the Niagara Escarpment, and nearly the fastest-growing in Niagara Region. Like its other Lake Ontario neighbours, settlers quickly descended upon the top tier sandy loam soil for agricultural use. It is no wonder Grimsby is known for its peaches, and its local hockey club known as the Grimsby Peach Kings.

Balls Falls may be a popular tourist and local attraction, but prior to European settlement, it may have been one of the most biodiverse waterways Niagara Region. (Owen Bjorgan)

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

Zoey, a bright college student, falls in love with The Other Zoey (Prime, 2023), an amnesia victim who believes she is his girlfriend and who happens to also believe she is his girl. Donald Combe is a retired English teacher who loves to go to movies. Until he resumes going to the theatre, he has graciously agreed to share his opinions, through “short and sweet” exclusives, of Netflix series and movies for The Local.

Historically speaking, the Niagara Gorge, pictured here, was not the only conduit of water between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. (Owen Bjorgan)

WHERE’S Ben?

Eiden student Ben Foster continues to discover new locations in NOTL, wondering how familiar others may be with them. If you know where this photo was taken, email penny@notlocal.com. Last week, as Crispin Bottomley right pointed out, Ben was at the historic McFarland House in the Niagara River Parkway.

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

Van from the couch

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The Niagara-on-the-Lake Local
The Trusted Voice of Our Community

P.O. Box 430, 1966 Four Mile Creek Road, Virgil, L0S 1T0
Editor: Penny Cole penny@notlocal.com 905-246-5878
Publisher: The Niagara-on-the-Lake Local Village Media Regional Publisher (online sales)
John Hammill
John@villagemedia.ca 905-988-5999 ext 1157
notlocal.com facebook.com/notlocal instagram.com/thelocal onethelocal

Advertisement: Joy Sanguedolce - NOTL joy@notlocal.com 416-817-0920
Julia Coles - outside NOTL julia@notlocal.com 905-934-1040
Graphic Designer: Rosie Gowzell composing@notlocal.com
News Tips: news@notlocal.com

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view from the couch

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Historically speaking, the Niagara Gorge, pictured here, was not the only conduit of water between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. (Owen Bjorgan)
**Easy to see why people relish pickleball**

John Hindle greeted us near the stage, offering us the use of club-owned paddles and showing that he was clearly impressed we had brought our own.

You would be hard-pressed to find anyone more enthusiastic for and knowledgeable about the sport than Hindle.

I first met John in June, 2019, when the club was getting set to open the new outdoor courts at the Vinigil Sports Park. On assignment that day, I was urged to grab a paddle and join him on one side of the court to take on the team of Jim and Ann Sifton for a fun match.

I remember being intrigued by the sport and its fast, yet easy-going pace. I quickly picked up the rhythm of the game and eventually figured out the seemingly strange method of keeping score. My notes from that day show that John and I beat the Siftons, and if I recall correctly, it was all his doing.

Hindle was then our point man for The Local, the organizer of the tournaments at the massively successful NOTL Pickleball Classic Tournament that drew close to 300 players to our local area from across the province and beyond for three days of pickleball play and exhibitions from professionals.

Those experiences made me familiar with pickleball, but it was this weekend that got me hooked.

On Sunday, the mild-humoured Hindle, busy-keeping all of us newcomers into the activity.

He began by instructing us to hold the paddle out in front horizontally. Then we were urged to bounce the ball up and down the air, testing out our hand-eye coordination. Then we were to put a little more oomph into it, bouncing it higher and keeping the rhythm steady.

Next was a review of the proper use of the v-drop to hold the paddle.

“V should line up with the side of the handle,” explained Hindle. “And you don’t have to grip the paddle hard. In fact, some of the pros only use their thumb and two fingers to hold their paddles.”

We moved on to the serve, bounce, then the wall bounce, again focusing on hand-eye coordination. They were basic warm-up drills that anyone could complete.

Soon we were on the courts, learning about the drop-shot and the dink-shot, the no-volley zone (aka the kitchen) and the two-bounce rule, which states that when the ball is served, the receiving team must let it bounce before returning, and then the serving team must let it bounce before returning. After that, the ball can be volleyed, or hit back before it bounces on the floor. Hindle repeatedly reminded us to keep our paddles off the court.

Hindle repeatedly reminded us to keep our paddles off the court. Not only is it rude, it’s a safety aspect of pickleball, the thing that keeps people coming back to play.

Next it was on to the serve routine and rotation. We leisurely practised serving then volleyed back and forth, before he stopped us to explain the scoring system.

For many, that can be the most confusing aspect of the game to get the hang of. But with practise we were beginning to catch on.

With about 25 minutes left in Sunday’s 90-minute session, we were ready to play a game. We didn’t finish it, but suffice it to say that my very competitive wife and her partner were beating my partner and me handily.

After only one lesson, I remain very much a newcomer to the sport of pickleball, but that one lesson was enough for Mishka and me quickly book a court for some social play this coming weekend.

And contrary to what many may lead you to believe, it was a good afternoon of physical activity. I did feel it the next day. As with any new exercise, there were muscles and tendons I used Sunday that hadn’t been used in that way in quite some time.

My legs were a bit rubbery Monday, but it felt good, and we can’t wait to get back onto the court.

The NOTL Pickleball Club operates courts at both the community centre and Central Community Centre on York Road. The next beginnings session to learn the game will be in January. Newcomers to the sport are entitled to three free beginners sessions without having to join the club. Club membership, including registration with Pickleball Ontario and Pickleball Canada, is $50 per year. Visit their website at sites.google.com/view/notlpickleball.ca.

And, to the best of my knowledge, there are no copies of the game available in many categories, such as rentals. Or train service.

Some variables were included, such as grocery store proximity — no large store or high-end grocery. Distance to library — excellent. Clearly not enough points in major categories to score close to other Lake Ontario communities such as Burlington, at fifth place, Pickering at 26, Oakville at 29, Hamilton at 39, Lincoln at 48, Toronto at 64 and Whitby at 85.

Let’s see some action from our leaders here!

Nigel Napier-Andrews

**Local LETTERS**

**NOTL doesn’t make top 100 livable cities**

Mike Balsom

The Local

If it seems everyone and their dog is joining the Niagara-on-the-Lake Pickleball Club, well, that’s just a myth.

Yes, membership in the club has easily smashed the 500 mark, a testament to the game’s popularity. But I did the math. With the town’s population estimated at about 18,000 people, that equates to only 2.8 per cent of NOTL taking on the quickly-growing sport.

You can include my wife Mushka and me as one of the two newest members.

People have been telling me for years that all I had to do was try pickleball and I would be hooked. They were right.

This past Sunday afternoon the two of us signed up to participate in a beginners session at the NOTL community centre. Armed with a set of medium-priced pickleball paddles (not racquets, I was reminded pedantically through the afternoon) acquired through, yes, Amazon, we walked in and joined 11 other neophytes for an introduction.

Current club president Mike Balsom watches as club president John Hindle demonstrates a return. (Sari Paje)

We’re very pleased to announce we’ve surpassed our fundraising goal for 2023!

With the support of the community, local businesses, volunteers and our families we’ve raised $6,484.

NOTL Cats Rescue would like to recognize and thank the following local businesses for their support and contributions to our fundraiser: Pitsil’s Your Independent Grocer, Real Estate Wrigley, 505080 Backery Café, Maple Leaf Fudge, Vinigil Pet Valu, Hendriks Your Independent Grocer, Coconut Quartz and of course The NOTL Local. We are so grateful for your generosity and loyalty to our community’s animals. Before giving any animal as a gift ensure the recipient is serious about caring for the animal and that they have the time, willingness, ability and resources to care for their pet for their lifetime.

Tanya Rice

NOTL Cats Rescue volunteer

P.S. Pets are not Christmas gifts, they are a life commitment.

**Food & Toy Drive**

Bring Your Food & Toy Donations to the Christmas Parade on Sat Dec 9, 2023

Supporting Neighbourhoods.

Niagara on the Lake Hydro

**COMMENT**

**Thanks for supporting NOTL Cats**

Mike Balsom

The Local

Housing — overpriced or unavailable in many categories, such as rentals.

Deregrowth — over-weighted by retired people, none of the young people who work here can afford to live.

Community — mostly focused on keeping the tourists happy.

Healthcare — closed the hospital, long waiting times for a doctor or a procedure.

Safety — excellent, but where’s the police station?

Education — closed the high school, most students have to be bused.

Community — mostly focused on keeping the tourists happy.

Climate — excellent micro-climate.

Amenities — poor, no indoor swimming pool, blue lanes are scarce.

Transportation — no bus or train service.

Some variables were included, such as grocery store proximity — no large store or high-end grocery.

Distance to library — excellent.

Clearly not enough points in major categories to score close to other Lake Ontario communities such as Burlington, at fifth place, Pickering at 26, Oakville at 29, Hamilton at 39, Lincoln at 48, Toronto at 64 and Whitby at 85.

Let’s see some action from our leaders here!

Nigel Napier-Andrews

NOTL
NOTL Hydro collecting toys, food for Newark Neighbours

Kris Dube
The Local
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Staff at Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro have first-hand experience when it comes to seeing residents deal with financial difficulties.

That’s one of the reasons the utility company is continuing with its 20-year tradition during Saturday’s Christmas Parade — collecting toys and food along the route for Newark Neighbours, says Jody Keus, a customer accounts representative who has been a lead organizer of the effort since it started.

The hydro company has also been gathering items at its headquarters in Virgil since last month for the local charity.

“We see the struggling throughout the year just with payments of hydro bills — let alone people having to get groceries or necessities for their family,” said Keus.

Representatives from Newark Neighbours, who she met with earlier that day, told her they are “short on everything,” she said, and that there isn’t one or two specific food items needed the most.

Starting in October, NOTL Hydro reminds its customers about the annual Christmas initiative by placing flyers in monthly bills about the food and toy drive.

“We’ve had some great years and we’ve had some years that aren’t so great,” she said.

So far, “a lot of toys” have been collected for the cause, and there has been “some food but not as much as in the past,” Keus told The Local, adding that toys can be geared for infants to teenagers.

The parade also includes the popular Burlington Teen Tour Band with their 130 members marching behind their majorettes and band leaders.

Other bands include Top Hats, Ridley Cadet Corps, York Lions, Niagara Militarys, Lincoln and Welland Regiment Band and A.N. Myer Marching Band.

St. Michael Catholic Elementary School students will be following their winning snow plow entry from a regional contest, with their own school float.

Niagara College, Brock University, Royal Oak Community School, Crossroads and St. Davids Elementary Schools, will all bring their enthusiastic school spirit to the parade, and local sports groups will be well represented by Thunderhawks Lacrosse players, Wolves Minor Hockey, and the NOTL Skating Club.

Expect both horses and dogs strutting their finery, and the NOTL Fire Services and other volunteer fire associations will be blaring their horns with both new and antique trucks.

Saturday’s parade starts at 11 a.m. at the intersection of King and Centre Streets and travels throughout its traditional route down Castlereagh, Wellington, Byron/Prideaux, Simcoe and Queen Streets.

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Christmas Day
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Love Where You Live: SUPPORT Local
Mike Balsom
The Local

Tributes to Niagara wine pioneer Paul Bosc Sr. have been pouring in since his death was announced last weekend by Chateau des Charmes Winery.

“Paul Bosc came here with a plan,” said Debbie Zimmerman, CEO of the Grape Growers of Ontario, on Monday. “He invested in the vineyard, he invested in research. He brought winemaking here. He was the one that pushed for that varietal change.”

Inniskillin Winery founder Donald Ziraldo, another principal in the early days of Niagara’s wine industry’s change to vinifera grapes, remembered his colleague fondly.

“He was a real dynamo,” Ziraldo told The Local. “He was a great innovator, especially in the vineyard. He did a lot of experimentation with different clone selections. He would carry it right through from the vineyard right into the wine production. This is a huge loss to the industry.”

His legacy lives on in the form of his son, Paul-Andre Bosc, the current president and CEO of Chateau des Charmes Winery, founded by his father. Though Paul-Michel, who died at 88 years old, is being remembered as a giant in the industry, his son remembers him simply as a great father and mentor.

Paul-Andre tells The Local. “They were airlifted back to France. The year they spent there was very chaotic. He wasn’t able to make inroads into the French wine industry at that time, and then an opportunity came up to come to Canada.”

By that time a few extended family members had made their way to Quebec. They convinced Paul-Michel to follow them to Canada with his wife Andree and son Paul-Andre in 1963. The couple’s second son, Pierre-Jean, was born while they lived there.

“The move to Canada was all about economics,” says Paul-Andre. “Getting back to growing grapes and making wines was the furthest thing from his mind. He was just focused on earning a living.”

In Quebec, Paul-Michel took a job in quality control with that province’s equivalent of Ontario’s LCBO, earning $65 per week. When an offer came 10 months later for him to work as a winemaker at Niagara Falls-based Chateau Gai Wines for $125 per week, Andree was adamant he take it.

Once in Niagara, he recognized how crude Ontario’s wine industry was.

Mike Balsom
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Formal education helped make Bosc Sr. a success

Continued from page 10

loyal employee continued to produce sherry, crackling wines and Alpenweiss, many of these attempts to counter the popular Baby Duck and Moody Blue labels from competing producers.

“At the same time he was able to extract some concessions from Chateau Gai for growing high quality grapes,” says his 63-year-old son. “He would pull out an acre and plant chardonnay or pinot noir where he thought it would grow best.”

The family settled in Niagara Falls, and in 1973 Paul-Michel bought his first farm across the border in Lockport, New York, using it for growing experiments with vinifera varieties.

“I was 13 years old,” laughs Paul-Andre. “I lost my summers, no baseball for me. I helped plant the vines, and there was an old farm house on the property, restored it all by hand. He was so obsessive. That was my introduction to farming.”

Five years later Chateau des Charmes was born.

“He hit the ground running,” says Paul-Andre. “By the time he opened Chateau des Charmes it was in his DNA combined with his formal education. In that era nobody around here had anything close to that. He was convinced that he had done enough research and development by then that he felt he could grow fine wines with a European taste here.”

Paul-Michel planted 60 acres of vinifera grapes on the Niagara-on-the-Lake property at a time when his son claims there were fewer than 200 such acres across the province.

Soon, grape growers and winemakers in the area were turning to Paul-Michel for advice. Recognizing it was worthwhile for the development of the industry as a whole to help other winemakers, he turned no one away.

Paul-Andre became involved in the family business in 1982, while a student at the University of Toronto considering pursuing a law degree.

“He saw that I was a very social guy, with a lot of energy,” says Paul-Andre. “He saw that maybe I could help sell the wines. He was invited on a food and beverage trade mission to Los Angeles with about 50 small companies. He didn’t have high expectations, and he was too busy, so he sent me.”

Paul-Andre had some minor success and enjoyed the connections he made in California, deciding to put aside law school and take on a more active role at the winery, learning the business at his father’s side in a partnership of sorts.

“Learning from a legend, one who just so happened to be his father, had its ups and downs,” says Paul-Andre. “He was the most uncompromising man I’ve ever known,” says Paul-Andre. “When I wanted to suggest something to him, I figured out I had to establish credibility and trust first. I discovered that the key to breaching that wall was preparation. Through it all, though, the person he was toughest on was himself.”

He can’t pinpoint the day when his father, who held an honorary doctorate from Brock University and was the recipient of the Order of Ontario, the Queen’s Golden Jubilee Medal and the Order of Canada and shared the 2006 Niagara-on-the-Lake Citizens of the Year Award with his wife Andree, fully stepped away from Chateau des Charmes.

“It really happened kind of gradually,” says Paul-Andre. Until recently Bosc Sr. could often be found con- ferring with winemaker Amelie Boury, always interested in what was happening in the vineyards and at the winery. It was only a few weeks ago when his health took a turn for the worse.

Paul-Michel’s death follows the passing of Andre in March 2021 and Paul-Andre’s wife Michele in April 2019.

“We’ve been through a lot in the last five years,” says Paul-Andre. “Nobody has been through more grief than my son (Alex), who lost his mother at the age of 11.”

Paul-Michel Bosc is also survived by his son Pierre-Jean. At press time the family was putting final touches on funeral arrangements, which are expected to happen next week at Our Lady of the Scapular Roman Catholic Church on Thor-old Stone Road in Niagara Falls. A private reception will also be held at Chateau des Charmes Winery.

“His decision to come to Niagara changed my destiny,” says Paul-Andre. “Yes, people say he had a huge impact on so many people. You can start with his family. That decision alone would change the course of all of our lives.”

Paul Bosc Sr. in the barrel room of Chateau des Charmes Winery. (Supplied)
The FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre is your home for the holidays

When it comes to catching the holiday spirit, the PAC in downtown St. Catharines earns a top spot on Santa’s nice list. Here are just a few of the ways to celebrate the season.

The Essence of Christmas

Celebrate the holidays with the familiar sounds of the most enchanting season as the Niagara Symphony Orchestra celebrates its 75th anniversary season with two performances of NSO NOW!; Brad’s Home for the Holidays on SAT 16 DEC and SUN 17 DEC featuring vocalist Kaylee Harwood and Sayer Roberts, and the Laura Secord Secondary School Choir. Chorus Niagara also celebrates its diamond jubilee season with a presentation of Handel’s Messiah: A Messiah for the 21st Century on WED 13 DEC.

A Sweet Christmas Classic

Niagara Ballet School brings back a beloved tradition in its performance of The Nutcracker, a tale of a young girl’s quest to save her Nuttercracker Prince that brings her to the Land of Sweets on Christmas Eve. MON 18 DEC | 7:30 PM + TUES 19 DEC 7 PM.

Holiday Birthday Bash

Canada’s Queen of Rock, Sass Jordan makes her PAC debut as she celebrates her birthday with us this month. Sass is known for her powerful, gritty, blues-infused rock and roll and crowd-pleasing performances and this birthday bash is sure to be a rockin’ good time! WED 20 DEC | 7:30 PM.

Holiday Magic

Chris Funk The Wonderlist has been blowing minds since his first appearance on America’s Got Talent. See why this magician has been called the best by some of the world’s most renowned illusionists. You’ll be scratching your head for years to come! THURS 28 DEC | 7 PM.

Joy and Inspiration

Each and every time The Next Generation Leahy takes the stage, their singular goal is for audiences to walk away from the performance having been inspired by the players, energized by the music, and excited for their return. And this is no truer than when The Next Generation Leahy performs at Christmas. Fiddle, accordion, singing, piano, and French-Canadian step-dancing all find a voice on stage in this high-energy, infectious Celtic performance. THURS 14 DEC | 7:30 PM.

Do-Re-Mi!

Don’t miss this very special Sing-A-Long Sound of Music screening complete with a costume parade and lots of audience participation. This event has become a holiday tradition at the PAC and sells out early – get your tickets today! FRI 29 DEC | 2 PM.

Fa-la-la-la Film House

The Film House is serving up holiday treats for the season including Paw Patrol: The Mighty Movie (SUN DEC 17 at 3 PM and WED 27 DEC at 2:30 PM), National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation (THURS 21 DEC at 7 PM), A Christmas Story (SAT 23 DEC at 7 PM) and Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour (FRI 29 DEC at 6 PM, SAT 30 DEC at 6 PM and SUN 31 DEC at 2:30 PM). Find the full lineup of holiday screenings at firstontariopac.ca.

New Year’s Eve with Jim Witter

Raise a glass to the old and new year and ring in 2024 at the PAC with Jim Witter’s The Piano Men – a musical celebration of the ’70s – year by year, hit by hit, from the songbooks of Billy Joel and Elton John. SUN 31 DEC | 7:30 PM.

For the full calendar of upcoming shows and to order tickets and gift certificates, go to firstontariopac.ca or call the Box Office at 905-688-0722.
Give the gift of the arts.

The 23/24 FirstOntario PAC season features an exceptional lineup of music, comedy, dance, theatre and more to gift to family and friends this holiday season. Find the full season schedule on our website.

Memberships also make great gifts for lovers of live performing arts and film. Visit our website for details on PAC Presents and The Film House memberships.

Order tickets and find membership details at firstontariopac.ca or call the box office at 905-688-0722.

GIVE JOY

Give a child their first arts experience.

Help inspire our youth. Allow them to be moved by a powerful performance or discover a passion, all for the low price of $10 a ticket you can make this possible.

Make an impact – give JOY by December 31st – by donating directly towards our youth programs at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre.
Arts and Entertainment Gift Giving

Delight with the timeless gift of Music

The Niagara Symphony Orchestra, celebrating their pivotal 75th Diamond Anniversary Season, is getting in the festive spirit! This gift giving season, let the NSO help Santa out by crossing those hard-to-buy-for loved ones off your giving list early. Sponsor an NSO Musician in your loved one’s name for a unique gift they’ll be talking about for years. Musician Sponsorships are now half price for the remainder of the 23/24 Season!

And fill those stockings with a gift certificate to the concert of your loved one’s choice, or raffle tickets to the glittering Diamond Raffle. With a prize of diamond earrings from VandenDool Jewelers, Dinner at Bolete Restaurant, and NSO concert tickets, it’s the coveted prize of the Diamond Season.

For the children in your life, give them the unforgettable experience of music by gifting a place at the NSO’s Summer Music Camp!

On December 16 & 17, make it a family festive event worth remembering. Kaylee Harwood, Sayer Roberts, and the Laura Secord Secondary School Choir join the NSO on stage with holly, mistletoe, and sweet sugar plums! While you’re there, browse the beautifully decorated trees, wreaths, and garlands (generously donated by the May Court Club of St. Catharines), participate in the raffle and silent auction, and take a photo with Santa Claus by the fireplace. It’s an event not to be missed!

For gift inquiries, contact Lisa Donati: lisa.donati@niagarasymphony.com or 905.687.4993 ext. 224. For concert tickets to “Brad’s Home for the Holidays,” call the PAC Box Office at 905.688.0722 or visit firstontariopac.ca.
Arts and Entertainment Gift Giving

Santa Breakfast
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9TH | FROM 8 - 11 AM AT THE GATE HOUSE
Celebrate The Christmas Parade with us. Treat the whole family to a gourmet breakfast, arts & crafts, a candy bar, pictures with Santa and much more!

QR Code with the booking link - RESERVE TODAY!

$50 ADULTS | $22.50 KIDS | FREE KIDS 2 AND UNDER
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by treadwell farm to table cuisine
3 course plated brunch
$65 per person
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

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presents
NIAGARA NOEL:
A SWINGIN’ CHRISTMAS WITH THE TORONTO ALL-STAR BIG BAND
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14
7:30 P.M.
PILLAR AND POST
48 John St. West, NOTL in Upper Canada Hall

Tickets: $45 + HST
buy tickets online at musicniagara.org

The Toronto All-Star Big Band: Immerse yourself in the revival of the golden age of big bands, featuring swinging arrangements from Les Brown, Louis Armstrong, The Andrews Sisters, and Harry Connick Jr. This festive concert offers a refreshing departure from the usual holiday fare.
Small ways you can nurture communities through local shopping

Supporting local businesses is more important than ever. The onset of the pandemic forced many Canadians to witness the direct impact of their spending after watching numerous small businesses in their communities close their doors.

Now, Canadians understand that supporting local businesses is vital in helping generate revenue that stays within their communities.

If you're interested in supporting local and don't know where to start, here are some small ways you can support your community today.

**Order takeout or delivery directly from the restaurant**
It can be tempting to use food delivery services when looking for something to eat. But ordering directly from the restaurant – and picking it up instead of having it delivered – will put a lot more of your money into the restaurant itself, and your hometown Mom and Pop shops will thank you for it.

**Take the guesswork out of shopping local**
There are plenty of tools to help us become better shoppers. An app like One Red Maple helps you find your favourite everyday items in locally owned stores, so you don't have to turn to big box chains. They also have a browser plug-in that lets you shop any e-commerce site and compare real-time price and product.

**Recommend locally owned hot spots**
Word of mouth is always a great way to build trust in a business. If you enjoy an experience, talk about it. A post on your social channels or leaving a great review also goes a long way. Your peers are more likely to try a restaurant or coffee shop if they know it’s been vouched for by someone they know. It’s also a great way to support local if you don’t have a lot of disposable income to spend – words are free, after all.

Small businesses are often seen as the lifeblood of communities and supporting them in simple and affordable little steps can offer more help than we realize.

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**Keep holiday shopping and shipping simple**

There’s no denying it’s been a tough year for many of us. And with rising costs, we’re feeling a pinch in our wallets. But, with the holidays upon us, many Canadians are still looking forward to celebrating the season.

In fact, according to a recent survey, 84 per cent of us are feeling the holiday spirit as much or more than we did last year and, for the majority, it’s our most cherished time of the year.

Whether you are being more frugal or generous this year, you might be ordering gifts online or from local stores to spread holiday cheer. Just remember, if you’re shipping these gifts to friends and family, make sure to send your packages early enough so they arrive on time for the festivities.

If you’re shipping with Purolator, you can find their send-by cut-off dates – as well as 24/7 self-serve locations, packing tips and holiday offers - online at purolator.com/holidays.

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**LERNER AND LOEWE’S BRIGADOON**

**NOVEMBER 15 – DECEMBER 23**
Celebrate the holiday season with the return of one of the most romantic and magical musicals! Boy meets girl – in an enchanted Scottish village. This feast of song and dance from Lerner and Loewe has been entrancing audiences for more than seven decades.

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Another successful house tour for Rotary

Rotary Holiday House Tour co-chair Rose Campbell has finally been able to take a breath after another extremely successful event.

Despite two dismal, rainy tour days, it was well-attended, there were many positive comments and almost $200,000 was raised to help fund local and international Rotary causes.

It's the first time both days of the event have rained, she says, so Rotary is pleased to have done so well — the only downside was scrambling to keep houses dry inside from dripping umbrellas.

The McArthur Estate tours “were amazing, as always,” and significantly add to the fundraising total, she says.

The Gate Street Studio, not surprisingly given the beautiful arrangements and cakes, was decorated by The Village Flower and Willow Cakes and Pastry. (Rose Campbell)

This exquisite Prideaux Street home was decorated by the homeowner and her team, along with Regal Florist and Garden Centre. (Rose Campbell)

The Garden Club of Niagara members took on the historic McFarland House with a theme of Christmas Through the Ages, each room or area for decorating representing a decade. The dining room (above left) is early 1800s, with place settings for David Secord and his wife Jessie and Ralph Cienche and his wife Elizabeth. The decorations are made of natural material, much of it from members’ gardens, dried and hung in the summer to be used for the McFarland House, including a corner (above right) paying tribute to the role of Indigenous Peoples in the 1800s. (Penny Coles)

St. Mark’s Anglican Church was on the house tour as a place to enjoy a hearty lunch, much appreciated on a dismal day. The lunch (above left) and a Christmas market were open to house tour participants and the community. In the kitchen (above) were Susan Peacock, Tim Taylor, Carol Baker, Rosamund Hennessey, Gary Burnoughs and Kathy Taylor, putting together a scrumptious lunch. Looking after the market event were Anne Tonisson (above right), Sally Mitchell, Elizabeth Jamieson and Nancy Kimball. (Penny Coles)

At Willowbank Estate, volunteers such as NOTL Rotary Club president Carol Lipsett (above right) were telling participants the story of Willowbank, that the decorated salon has not been refinished, purposely leaving sections that expose its layers over the decades, such as the wall behind Lipsett. Willowbank was decorated by Garden Club of Niagara volunteers. (Rose Campbell)

The York Road home on the tour was likely originally a farm house on property owned by David Secord (Laura’s brother-in-law). It was decorated by Gauld Nurseries with their gardening coach Joanne Young, in collaboration with owner Elaine Bartolini. (Rose Campbell)
McArthur Estate tour makes for a magical evening

Mike Balsom
The Local

The weekend’s dreary weather couldn’t put a damper on the experience for visitors to the McArthur Estate’s annual house tour.

People came out in droves to walk the beautiful property, the spectacular home of Brenda and Blair McArthur decorated inside and out for the Rotary Holiday House Tour, one of the Niagara-on-the-Lake club’s biggest fundraising events of the year.

Tour guides greeted visitors just beyond the bright entrance on John Street West, ready to walk them through the grounds with a stop at the bridge in front of the well-known nativity scene. That was the first reminder to many of the home’s previous owner, Trisha Romance, who was known for displaying that same nativity scene in the exact spot every December.

After enjoying carols sung outside by the Avanti Chamber Singers, visitors were greeted by Brenda McArthur herself as they filed into the piano room to meet the Grinch, who was sitting with pianist Eddie Pizzo at a white grand piano.

The next nod to the home’s previous owner was standing right next to the brightly decorated Christmas tree, not far from where Santa was posing for photos with visitors of all ages. Tanya Peterson, the daughter of Trisha Romance and her husband Gary Peterson, grew up in the home, and was there to share stories of her younger days.

“I swear I could see (her sister) Whitney coming running out of that room,” Peterson told The Local. “This is bringing back so many fond memories.”

The tour wound its way through each ornately and tastefully decorated room, past some wonderful seasonal music played by the Soenen Sisters on flute, harp and cello, before exiting the house and moving on to the stables. That’s where Santa’s reindeer were to be found, resting up in anticipation for the big night on Dec. 24.

The sold-out event certainly capped a festive weekend in NOTL, with proceeds from the McArthur Estate tour helping to fund both local and international causes for the NOTL Rotary Club.
Public Participation Meeting

Proposed Street Name Change
Townline Stamford Road (Regional Road 61) to Niagara Townline Road (Regional Road 61)

Niagara Region has received a formal request to consider changing the name of Townline Stamford Road (Regional Road 61) to Niagara Townline Road (Regional Road 61).

On The proposed change would provide that Townline Stamford Road be renamed to Niagara Townline Road.

The public participation meeting is being held during Niagara Region’s Public Works Committee as follows:

Date: Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2024
Time: 9:30 a.m.
Location: Council Chamber, Campbell West Entrance, Regional Headquarters

To provide input orally at the Public Meeting, please pre-register with the Regional Clerk by sending an email to clerk@niagararegion.ca before noon on Monday, Jan. 8. To provide written input, please either mail your comments to the Office of the Regional Clerk, Niagara Region, and 1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way, Ontario, L2V 4T7 or send an e-mail to clerk@niagararegion.ca by 9 a.m. on Friday, Jan. 5.

Direct any inquiries with respect to the proposed street name change of Townline Stamford Road (Regional Road 61) to Mr. Graeme Guthrie, Associate Director Transportation Engineering at 905-980-6000 ext. 3249 or graeme.guthrie@niagararegion.ca or Mr. Petar Vujic, Manager Road Safety at ext. 3238 or petar.vujic@niagararegion.ca.

Notice of Proposed Adoption of the Street Name Change By-law:
It is the intention that the proposed street name change by-law will be forwarded to Regional Council for consideration on Thursday, Jan. 25, 2024.

Accommodations for Participation
If you require any accommodations for a disability in order to attend and participate in the Jan. 9, 2024 meeting, please let us know in advance so that arrangements can be made in a timely manner. Special accessibility accommodations and materials in alternate formats can be arranged by contacting Niagara Region’s Accessibility Advisor at 905-980-6000 ext. 3252 or accessibility@niagararegion.ca.

Personal Information Collection
Any personal information collected at public meetings or submitted in writing is collected under the authority of the Municipal Act, 2001, will be collected, used and disclosed, where applicable, by members of Regional Council and Regional Staff according to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. The written submissions including names and contact information and the report of the public meeting will be made available to the public. Any information you share will only be used for the intended purpose for which it was provided. For questions or comments about privacy practices, or for more information about the administration of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act in Niagara Region programs see niagararegion.ca/government/foi.
Don’t be a victim of scams — just say no

Sharon Burns
The Local

Just say no, until you have checked with people you trust.

That’s the message from Crime Stoppers about how to avoid elder scams, presented by the Virgil Women’s Institute and the St. Catharines-based Women Empow- ered. Women’s organization.

Brooklyn Mercer addressed the group of members from the two organizations, a town councillor, and the public assembled in the Mary Snider Room at the Centennial Arena last Wednesday evening.

Mercer, administrative coordinator for all Crime Stoppers programs, started with a clip from Frank Abagnale, an American public speaker with a clip of Frank Abagnale, Stoppers programs, started Wednesday evening.

The centennial Arena was full, and the public assembled in organizations, a town councillor, and the public assembled in the Mary Snider Room at the Centennial Arena last Wednesday evening.

Mercer mentioned that every con, fraud or scam, convicted scam artist, is not provided, there will be consequences.

Government agencies will not request immediate payment, e-transfer or payment by credit card, said Mercer.

Don’t believes everything you’re told, advised Mercer. Check their information with three people you trust and know personally, and look up their information, phone number and company online before making any de-

Don’t believe everything you’re told, advised Mercer. Check their information with three people you trust and know personally, and look up their information, phone number and company online before making any decisions.

Just say no, you’re not interested and shut the door or hang up. You are not obligated to them, she said.

There are several types of scams which, at first glance, may appear to be a legitimate business.

Telemarketing, direct marketing and door-to-door requests can be misleading. If it sounds too good to be true, it is,” Mercer said. In March 2018 Ontario banned door-to-door sales of nearly all household appliances.

If someone comes to your door unexpectedly and they claim to be a public util-

ity inspector, for example, ask to see their credentials, then let them know that you will be phoning the company to confirm that their presence is warranted. Look up the number yourself, rather than using the number they pro-
vide, advised Mercer.

Bank-related scams might send a notification to an older adult’s cellphone, informing that the recipient follow the links to rectify or confirm a banking situation.

Thieves by deception involve more than one scam artist, said Mercer, and often one person distracts the homeowner at the door while the other looks in windows or sneaks into the backyard for further surveillance.

Cyber scams and identity theft is when personal infor-

mation is used without con-

sent or knowledge. A software company will not call about a virus on a home computer and ask for access to it. Mercer suggested updating laptops and comp-

uters, changing passwords regularly and cleaning cook-

ies so that companies can’t keep your data.

Get on the ‘do not call’ list, she advised. Signing up is simple, quick and free by calling the toll-free number 1-866-580-3625.

When it comes to getting work done around your home, more than 55 women at her first annual Women’s Social to opened her home to more members.

Sue Danychuk recently opened her home to more members.

On Nov. 20 the family’s lives were deeply impact-

ed when Jeff Hardiman, husband of Missy Drohan and father to two, suffered a serious workplace injury. Jeff underwent life-saving neurosurgery within hours of the accident, however he is a long road of recovery and uncertainty ahead.

In times of crisis, com-

munities have the power to come together to make a profound difference in the lives of those facing unexpected challenges, says Danychuk, a partner of Vision Mortgage Group & Vision Capital Partners.

She organized the fundraiser to help alleviate the financial burden on the Hardiman family by rallying her local community. The event raised $1,300 and collected gifts for the family members to add some light to their holidays. The response from the event exceeded all expectations.

Danychuk says, “and the success serves as a heartening example of the incredible impact collective action can have on those facing adversity.”

Missy Drohan’s sister has organized a GoFundMe page for Jeff, Davis, Macara and Missy to help the family through the difficult time ahead of them.

There is a GoFundMe page for Jeff, Davis, Macara and Missydrohan.com/f/pct-dac-the-hardiman-family. (Suppled)
(NC) During times of economic uncertainty, many of us worry about our financial stability today and for the future—especially how we’ll be able to manage in retirement. Independent reviews conclude that the Canada Pension Plan, relied upon by more than 21 million contributors and beneficiaries, is in excellent shape for the generations to come. However, public opinion polls reveal that many people believe that the fund will run out of money before many Canadians are ready to retire. Where did this myth begin and why does it persist for some Canadians?

The program started in 1966 but as the number of people receiving benefits grew, the plan ran into difficulty. During the mid-1990s, it was estimated the fund would no longer be sustainable by the mid-2010s. Many Canadians remember that dire forecast, but they don’t remember the dramatic action taken to correct the situation. Working together, the federal government and the provinces came up with a solution: raise contribution rates and create a new, independent organization known as CPP Investments. Its role is to invest excess funds not needed to pay current benefits to help grow the pension plan’s resources.

A quarter-century later, the organization manages $575 billion in a diverse group of assets designed to achieve growth over the long term. It’s now rated as the best-performing pension fund in the world during the past decade according to Global SWF, an international consulting and research firm that tracks the returns of public pension funds. Every three years an independent body in the federal government reviews the state of the pension plan. The most recent review, completed December 2022, concludes that the pension plan will continue to be sustainable for 75 years and beyond. Find more information at cppinvestments.com.
Spice Islands Odyssey: A 32-Day Journey of Marine Wonders

In 2025, Holland America Line will reach its impressive 150th anniversary, an extraordinary feat for any company and a testament to its unparallelled reputation as a world leader amongst cruise lines. To celebrate this milestone, Holland America is elevating its 2025 cruise offerings with the launch of an exciting new category of cruises titled Legendary Voyages.

Let’s face it, many travellers have long bucket lists that may exceed the time and energy they have available for travel. Legendary Voyages are 25 – 59 days in length and offer cruisers the opportunity to discover multiple destinations on their bucket list during a single voyage, without having to endure long flights between destinations. We love this concept and are quite sure that many of our travellers will too!

Craig Travel is excited to announce our participation in the Legendary Voyages program, and we are pleased to offer a mesmerizing 32-day “Spice Islands” journey, departing from Singapore on January 1, 2025. The stunning ms Noordam, with its lavish staterooms, museum-quality art, renowned dining, and meticulous attention to detail, will be our luxurious home away from home. And what a perfect time to leave our cold Canadian winter!

The Spice Islands itinerary explores both the epicentre of global marine diversity and the vibrant cultural heritage of coastal communities in the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, and Australia. Holland America collaborated with a marine biologist who is an expert in the region’s marine ecosystem to craft this itinerary. By incorporating the fascinating narrative of the area’s volcanic geology, this journey becomes particularly exciting.

Without question, cruisers are in for an exceptionally, enriching, positive, and exclusive experience. By visiting such unique ports, our guests will sail waters that are home to over 30% of the world’s coral reefs and 70% of its coral species. In addition, the itinerary includes three significant volcano experiences. First, there’s Rabaul in Papua New Guinea, home to the highly active Tavurvur volcano. Also planned is a sail by Batu Tara Volcano in the Flores Sea, known for erupting approximately every 20 minutes. Lastly, there is the infamous Krakatoa, whose historical eruptions have famously inspired Impressionist painters with their vivid red sunsets.

This innovative itinerary goes beyond the usual exploration by offering extended opportunities to delve deeper into the story of the destinations. This is achieved through unique ports of call and carefully designed programming that includes iconic theme parties, memorable sailaways, and classic cruise activities. There will also be time to explore port cities further with overnight stays. To enhance the culinary experience, a new hyper-focused menu inspired by the regions the ship sails through will be featured. Newly curated onboard lectures will be presented by destination experts and local cultural specialists from each region. These lectures will provide in-depth insights into the places and cultures visited during the voyage.

As with all of our journeys, you can expect a carefree experience with included airfare, all meals and entertainment, the services of a Craig Journey Leader from Canada, baggage handling shipside, all gratuities for shipboard services, all cruise line and airline taxes and fees, transfers between airport and ship, airport transfers in Canada and more! We encourage you to call our office and reserve your space early, as this special voyage is expected to fill quickly, and the best staterooms always sell first. Visit our website for full details at craigtravel.com!

THE MANY BENEFITS OF GROUP CRUISING
Imagine cruising without a care in the world - joining a group cruise unlocks a treasure trove of perks you never knew you needed.

Exclusive Deals and Unique Add-Ons
Private group departures usually mean special group pricing. In addition, special amenities may be negotiated with the cruise line, perhaps a shipboard credit, a complimentary dinner in the ship’s fine dining restaurant, a complimentary shore excursion, or perhaps a bottle of wine in your stateroom. Private groups often receive an invitation to a complimentary, private cocktail party, a great opportunity to get to know your fellow group members and share experiences.

The Gratuities Conundrum Solved
What many cruisers find to be the greatest advantage to group cruising is the inclusion of shipboard gratuities paid prior to departure, removing the uncertainty of what to give to those who have served you well onboard. The gratuities are presented to the crew at the end of the voyage, on your behalf.

Dining and Bonding
While many of the ships today have multiple dining venues offering the opportunity to choose where to eat, most groups have the opportunity to enjoy group seating in the main dining room, for those who choose to dine with members of their group. Some cruisers are more comfortable knowing who they will be dining with each night. Others prefer to eat on their own in a different venue each evening.

Journey Leader Support
One fabulous benefit of group cruising is having a journey leader travel with you from the airport at the start of your vacation to the time when you arrive back home. All the hassles and stress of getting to your destination disappear when you have a leader to look after the details. Even on board, where most things are looked after, it is reassuring to know that there is someone you can go to, to answer your questions, offer advice, plan special social gatherings, and take care of any issues that could arise. A friendly face from home can be the difference between a good cruise and a great one. Generally, your journey leader will arrange a daily meeting place and time onboard where group members may go to share their stories of the day, discuss tomorrow’s plans, answer your questions, and simply enjoy each other’s company.

View from the top of Kelor Island, Indonesia.
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(NC) Throughout the course of our lives, many of us look forward to retirement. However, some people experience a loss of purpose, boredom or isolation. If this sounds like you, you may want to consider rejoining the workforce.

Here are four reasons why some people are pressing pause on retirement:

**Earn additional income**
Working after retirement to earn additional income is not uncommon. Many retired individuals rely on a part-time job to bring in some extra cash to give them more financial freedom.

**Grow your self-fulfillment**
In addition to the money, being at work and feeling passionate about what you do can create feelings of self-fulfillment, which can contribute to your overall happiness.

If you're struggling to find meaning in retirement, consider a job where you can make a difference.

**Build a healthy routine**
While retired, it can be challenging to come up with a well-rounded schedule. Having a part-time job or a full-time job can help you create a healthy routine, while also keeping you busy and limiting boredom.

**Build meaningful relationships**
Rejoining the workforce can mean making new, meaningful connections with colleagues or clients. If you’re a retired nurse looking to rejoin the workforce, Indigenous Services Canada offers various nursing opportunities where you can extend your career that fits with this stage of your life. Learn more at canada.ca/nursesforfirstnations.
A comprehensive survey is now available, asking Niagara-on-the-Lake residents about their housing needs as they age. The survey is available online and for those without a computer or internet access. It is completely anonymous and administered by Niagara College. Please make your views known.

Option 1: Scan the following QR code with your phone's camera

Option 2: Link to the survey with your browser using this URL:
https://forms.office.com/r/fqxerb7fJv

Option 3: Respondents without the internet, please call 905-468-7498

Maya Webster lights the candle of Devon Botbyl while Devon’s dad, Scott, looks on. Devon was the recipient of proceeds from the 2021 Candlelight Stroll. Volunteer Stan Harrington begins lighting candles for the crowd. (Photos by Sharon Burns)

Avery Webster, Mr. and Mrs. Claus, Minerva Ward, Jeff Webster and Maya Webster, with Santa Claus assuring the crowd that “nobody’s getting coal in their stocking this year.”

Members of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment Association Band entertain the crowd.

Members of the Niagara Bethany Bell Choir perform from the porch of the Doctor’s House.

Continued from page 1

extra 200 decisions every sin- gle day.

Maya is a youth ambas- sador and fundraiser for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation of Canada, and was instrumental in getting the province to cover the costs of continuous glucose moni- tors, “but we still need to fight for everyone that does not currently qualify” she said.

Andrew Noven, chair of the Chamber of Commerce, believes the Candlelight Stroll really brings the community together for one evening. “My favourite moment is just watching the recipients literal- ly ignite a community,” he said. Funds raised from can- dle sales go directly to Dylan, whose family plans to install a chair lift in their home to ease the transition from one level to another, and to Maya, who will donate her share to the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

Ward instructed the crowd to “reflect on the significance of this event. It’s not just a stroll, it’s a celebration of com- munity, of coming together for a common cause and of shining a light on those who embody the strength and resolve that make Niagara-on-the-Lake such a special place.”

“It is in moments like these that we truly see the heart of our community coming to- gether in rain or shine to sup- port each other. Thank you for your unwavering spirit, your generosity, and for making the candlelight stroll a beacon of hope and community solidar- ity.”

“Let’s continue to light up the night, not just with our candles, but with our collec- tive commitment to making a difference in the lives of those around us,” she finished.

For more photos visit notl- local.com

Matt Dietsch in a selfie with Dylan, his friend John Dixon, Dylan’s brother Colton and his mother Kristen.

Couns. Enmen Wiens and Tim Balasius, MP Tony Baldinelli handing a commemorative plaque to Dylan Dietsch, mother Kristen, dad Matt and brother Colton, along with Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa and Minerva Ward.

Where do you want to live?

Tell us

A comprehensive survey is now available, asking Niagara-on-the-Lake residents about their housing needs as they age. The survey is available online and for those without a computer or internet access. It is completely anonymous and administered by Niagara College. Please make your views known.

How to access the survey?

Option 1: Scan the following QR code with your phone’s camera

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**Local Happenings**

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Happy Anniversary

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**SPORTS**

**Preds face tough test to close 2023**

Mike Balsom
The Local

With eight games on their schedule against Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League teams at or near the top of their division, the Niagara Predators would close the calendar year with their toughest test yet.

Between now and Dec. 22, they play North York, Durham and the Bradford Bulls twice each, and face the North Division's Timminsing Titans and West Nipissing Lynx once each in the league's annual showcase tournament. The Titans and Lynx hold down the third and fourth positions in their divisions, while the other three teams, with a combined record of 49-16-2, hold down the top three spots in the Preds' own South Division.

With all of that facing them, coach Kevin Taylor could have used a positive result in their only game last weekend. But a tough 5-2 loss to the South's fourth place Tottenham Lightning has left him once again searching for answers.

"I never thought in a million years that we'd have been the situation we're in now," Taylor told The Local Tuesday. "I have no explanation for what's happening. I've been trying to reflect on whether it's me or the guys. I talk to Rob (owner Rob Turcich) about four times a day and we just can't figure it out."

Sunday's loss leaves Niagara with a record of 8-11-1, placing them second from the bottom in their division, three points behind St. George and Northumberland, who are tied in fifth.

The Preds struck first Sunday in Neenah, with the team's leading scorer Luce Fernandez beating the Raylers' goalie with 2:22 remaining in the period. But before they could skate off the Magna Centre ice, Tottenham's James McLean was left undivided in front of Preds netminder Zane Clusen just long enough to tie it up at 19:31.

McLean scored again early in the second, then teammate Ryan Anderson put the Raylers up 3-1 less than four minutes into the second. Isaac Lockur closed the gap to 3-2 when he scored with five minutes remaining.

"Niagara kept it close for much of the third period, but the result of a bit of a melee in the last five minutes led to a long power play opportunity for Tottenham."

"We were actually on our own power play," Taylor explained. "One of our guys finished a check, and it should have been a penalty on us, but it wasn't called. They jumped on our guy and started punching him, then another guy jumped in, then Cam Savoie got in there. The referee didn't know who was on the bottom, and we got a five minute penalty."

That opened the door for Anderson's second goal and another insurance marker from Emile Martin less than a minute apart.

"Though the shots on goal were almost identical, 48-47 in favour of the Raylers, Niagara never really mounted a consistently steady attack against Tottenham. Many of their drives into the Raylers' end resulted in turnovers followed by retreats back into the defensive zone."

"They played bad," said Taylor of the Raylers, "but we played worse."

It was a disappointing result against a team whom the Predators are in reality evenly matched. Especially disappointing in light of the challenges facing them over their next eight games.

"We have to play better, from the goalie to the centre position, right to the bench," Taylor said. "Our coaching has to be better as well. We are losing games we shouldn't be losing. Am I preparing them well enough for these games? It falls on me. But you can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink."

On the positive side, Sunday's game marked the return of Claussen, Niagara's number one goalie. The North Dakota native has been rehabilitating a lower body injury since last appearing between the pipes in a 7-1 win at home against the Northumberland Stars on Oct. 27.

"With Zane now playing the games he should be playing," said Taylor, "we hopefully won't be having these nail-biters. We should have a little more swagger in our step."

The Preds host the first place North York Renegades, who boast a 19-1-1 record, Friday night at the Meridian Credit Union Arena. Niagara has lost all four games thus far this season against North York.

That's followed by three games in three days, starting Monday in Oshawa against the 16-2-1 Durham Roadrunners.

Tuesday and Wednesday the action shifts to the Gale Centre in Niagara Falls, where all 15 teams in the league will convene for the annual GMHL showcase. The Preds take on the 13-9-1 Timminsing Titans at 12:15 p.m. Tuesday, and are back on the ice at 9 a.m. Wednesday against the 13-8-2 Lynx. Admission to those two games is free.

Mike Balsom
The Local

In an earlier family of school tournament, the Lightning placed second. That was good enough to allow them to advance to the NCDSB tournament, which was held at Niagara College. St. Michael knocked off Mary Ward Catholic Elementary School of Niagra Falls to capture the gold medal.

"They clinched the championship in a thrilling display of teamwork, determination, and skill," says principal Emma Fera-Massi. "Through unwavering commitment and exceptional sportsmanship, these talented young athletes showcased their prowess on the court, executing precise serves, strategic plays and impeccable teamwork."

Fera-Massi says the final game saw a precise number of intense rallies and pivotal moments, and the girls' mutual support for one another throughout the volleyball season served them well on their way to the title.

Their hard work, unity and passion for their sport was inspiring for their school and the broader community," she added, also giving much praise to coach Julie Scalleta for her work with the team.

**St. Mike's girls win volleyball championship**

Leah Luton (top left), Mia Vanderspek, Natalie Simpson, Nadia Roso, and Vanessa Razza (bottom left), Angelina La Valle, Avery Williams and Grace Vani win their volleyball championship game for St. Michael School. (Supplied)
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