



Rock Steady
Boxing at White
Oaks a must
for people with
Parkinson's

page 15



Santa Claus travelled through the streets of the Old Town Saturday, with what may have been a record crowd enjoying the parade on a balmy December day. For more parade photos please see pages 18 & 19. (David Gilchrist)

Tractor Parade will be best yet

Kris Dube
The Local
Local Journalism
Initiative Reporter

Members of the Niagara-on-the-Lake farming community will be harvesting holiday spirit Thursday night during the third annual Christmas tractor parade.

Started in 2021 by Coun. Erwin Wiens and his wife Dorothy, the procession has grown significantly since its inaugural event, held while some COVID-19 restrictions remained in place and the town put its Christmas parade on hold for a second consecutive year.

The idea started when Dorothy was watching TV news one night and saw a story about a small group in Selkirk, Ont. hosting a parade involving farming equipment.

“We’ve got to do something,” was her mindset about local holiday activities at that time.

The first year brought out almost 20 floats, and nearly twice that number in 2022.

“Then, the creativity came out,” she said, referring to the equipment being decked out with holiday cheer.

This year’s edition will feature 54 entries, said Dorothy, showing off a large front-end loader decorated with a Mickey Mouse theme, as well as one highlighting the Ontario Grape Growers Association and Erwin recently being crowned this year’s Grape King.

Last year’s parade drew an estimated 4,000 people coming from all the town’s five villages to line the route through Virgil and

Continued on page 9

Upper Canada Lodge creates cloud of uncertainty

Penny Coles
The Local

Four years ago, when Andrew Henwood’s wife Gayle was moved to Upper Canada Lodge, they were both struggling. She was unhappy, which was difficult for him.

The situation worsened for both of them during COVID, when visiting was restricted. But he knew she was close by, safe and being well-cared for.

Gayle has Alzheimer’s, and when she got to the stage where she required 24-hour care, Andrew could no longer look after her himself, so he made the decision to move her into long-term care. He could walk from his Old Town home to the lodge daily to visit, and at first during COVID, would wave to her from outside. When that was no longer allowed, they spoke on Face-Time, but conversation was difficult, he says.

However it was better than what he is facing today, with the imminent closure of Upper Canada Lodge. It’s expected in February, but it may be later, he says — and for Gayle, the longer she can stay there the better. “We don’t know exactly when it’s going to close. Every time I ask I get a different answer. I only know it’s up in the air.”

Originally the 80-bed facility was expected to close in 2022. At the time, it was determined it was not feasi-

ble to redevelop the property to align it with provincial standards.

Since then the date has moved, most recently to early 2024, but other plans have also changed. Pleasant Manor’s long-term care expansion was once expected to be completed in time to take UCL residents, but after several delays, the ground was finally broken just recently. Gilmore Lodge, a regional long-term care home in Fort Erie which might

have taken some UCL residents, has also been undergoing an expansion, doubling in size, but is said to be behind schedule. And Andrew was quick to point out that would not suit him at all, given the travelling distance.

Linhaven in St. Catharines was also once considered an option for UCL residents, but that has been under construction as well and the most recent completion date released is

April 2024.

A question to the region about any changes in plans for the closure of UCL brought this response from a spokesperson: “We do not have any updates about Upper Canada Lodge at this time.”

In addition to not knowing where Gayle will go, Andrew has no inkling of how she will handle it. “I comfort myself thinking she won’t

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CAO says leaving NOTL will be difficult

Penny Coles
The Local

Marnie Cluckie had a busy few days last week during a holiday that was intended to be spent with family members who were visiting, but instead the news of her leaving her job as CAO of the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake was announced, and that took away some of her focus.

Last Thursday was the time set aside for interviews with the media, which gave her the opportunity to explain in detail why she is moving on, and how she feels about leaving the community and a job she began during the pandemic, steering staff through restrictions and the recovery that followed.

She has been appointed city manager of the City of Hamilton by Mayor Andrea Horwath under Ontario's "strong mayor" powers, and she is looking forward to taking her skills and experience to a larger municipality, she says, but adds "it's going to be difficult to leave NOTL."

A big part of the reason why it's going to be difficult to go "is I'm absolutely passionate about this unique and special community, filled with such amazing people," says Cluckie.

"I cannot think of an-

other town that could have so many wonderful, experienced and intelligent people who are so eager to pitch in and offer their insight, their time and their volunteerism to help preserve and enrich this beautiful place."

She calls her time in NOTL "an incredible journey for me, filled with many shared accomplishments and partnerships," including those forged with staff, council and residents. "Who could ask for anything more?"

And yet Cluckie is moving on for a reason.

"It's an opportunity for professional development," she says. It's a bigger municipality, and offers "opportunities in terms of scale in my professional journey."

She is in the municipal sector "because I want to make a difference, because I want to contribute to community-building and feel like I have personal and meaningful work where I'm giving back. That's a real driver for me."

Hamilton, Cluckie continues, "has potential, and it has unique problems that need to be solved. I'd like to be part of those solutions."

She talks of being proud of working with the town council to determine NOTL's strategic plan through to 2027, as a road map to guide



Marnie Cluckie says she is looking forward to new challenges, but is sad to be leaving NOTL. (Supplied)

"I think we're on a very strong trajectory, and I know this council and this team are on that path and will continue on that path," she says. "I believe we've built a solid foundation and I hope I have contributed to that. And I have every confidence this incredible team and council will continue on that."

"I really feel like I hit the jackpot coming here," she says, referring to NOTL as a "small town that in many ways is operating like a big city, because of expectations here, and the sheer volume of things that get done."

"My big takeaway is my learning from the community," she adds, "and working with so many incredible community members. We have a veritable think tank here."

Having community members with so much insight, and who work well together, is also something she hopes to take with her to build on those kinds of relationships "that collectively succeed. Whether it's a municipality that's big or small, I think that's a valuable lesson. It's such a value added, and it's what makes NOTL special and continue to thrive."

In trying to convey how grateful she is to have developed those relationships, she says, "that's what makes it so difficult to go — the relationships I've formed and the passion I have for the community. I'm happy and excited to take on this new challenge and this new opportunity, but sad to leave incredible people behind."

Cluckie doesn't leave her position in NOTL until Jan. 14, and in the weeks leading up to her departure, she says, she hopes to be able to have some input and advice to give about who will replace her, "although ultimately it will be council's decision."

And leaving no stone unturned, she will have a transition plan in place for whom-ever that may be.



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Hefty police budget increase trimmed by just \$2 million

Kris Dube
The Local
Local Journalism
Initiative Reporter

The Niagara Regional Police \$188 million budget has been approved, but without support from either Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa or Regional Coun. Andrea Kaiser, Niagara-on-the-Lake’s two representatives on regional council.

In late November, the NRP chief came to the region’s budget review committee with a \$190-million budget that represented a 7.1 per cent increase, but was sent back to the police services board so reductions

could be made. This resulted in the police making some revisions and trimming it down to \$188 million — a six per cent increase, which regional council voted in favour of Thursday night.

The region also approved its general levy of about \$485 million, which consists of about \$283 million for regional departments, and \$202 million for agencies, boards and commissions. This represents a 7.02 per cent increase approved by the budget committee, which will now go to a vote of regional council on Dec. 14.

One of the mitigation steps Chief Bryan MacCulloch said

police took to cut costs is staggering the hiring of 20 new frontline officers, opting to start 10 in July and the other 10 in September of 2024.

Kaiser asked if new officers will be a regular or annual request in the coming years as Niagara’s population expands.

MacCulloch didn’t give a definitive answer — but also didn’t appear to rule out that possibility.

“We will come forward with an evidence-based request that will provide some rationale and justification for any additional resources,” MacCulloch told Kaiser.

Kaiser said she appreciates the police effort to reduce its spending request, but that she

doesn’t like that mitigation measures include a transfer from the police contingency fund reserve of \$500,000 to fund one salary day, to cover an additional day of payroll due to 2024 being a leap year.

She said she’s “not comfortable” with the final pitch.

“Six per cent is still too much,” she said.

During the Nov. 23 regional budget meeting, Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said he was concerned that business cases related to the new positions were not being part of the police’s presentation.

“I have yet to see what I was looking to see,” he said Tuesday when asked about the most recent cuts made by

the police. He said he was unsure of whether this information would be provided when MacCulloch and his team are back in front of regional councillors next Thursday.

The details he was looking for were not provided in the report Thursday. Zalepa did not ask questions or make remarks during that portion of the budget meeting, but voted against the budget at the end of the discussion. A recorded vote was not taken, but Zalepa confirmed with The Local on Friday that he did not support the police budget.

Niagara Falls Regional Coun. Joyce Morocco saluted the police for their efforts, as well as their service to resi-

dents, saying that “crime is just unbelievable” in Niagara over the last few years — pointing to the opioid crisis, homeless encampments and gangs from the Hamilton, Brampton and Toronto areas making their way to the region.

“For me, making sure you have all the tools you need to do your job is number one,” said Morocco.

St. Catharines Regional Coun. Sal Sorrento asked the chief if the budget trimming they’ve done will put public safety in jeopardy.

“We’re comfortable with what we’ve presented to you — that public safety is not going to be compromised,” said MacCulloch.

Agreement forged to give NOTL Tourism its money

Kris Dube
The Local
Local Journalism
Initiative Reporter

Christmas has arrived a bit early for Niagara-on-the-Lake Tourism as its share of funding generated through the Municipal Accommodation Tax is on its way.

Council has approved a transfer agreement between the town and its Destination Marketing Organization, the body entitled to half of what the program generates.

Last month, NOTL Tourism chief executive officer and president Minerva Ward came to council asking for a loan of \$226,000 to cover their share from MAT for 2022.

Council turned down the loan, but on Tuesday, during a committee-of-the-whole planning meeting, approved the agreement that would allow her to have the money she was looking for.

Ward told The Local Thursday that she is delighted the funds will be transferred soon, adding the

tourism board should be in receipt of their share of the money that has been collected by the end of the year.

“It’s a major relief because this has been a year-and-a-half delay,” said Ward, who is also president and chief executive officer of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce. The chamber has for many years formerly worked in tandem with Tourism NOTL, but has recently been divided as a separate entity, an essential part of the agreement to become the recipient of the

accommodation tax.

Tourism NOTL has been the town’s Destination Marketing Organization since 2013, and has been eligible to receive half the funds generated by MAT since 2022, according to Ward.

Ward has previously told council that both organizations would now need to operate with separate board of directors.

An amendment to the agreement made by Coun. Maria Mavridis was supported by council, specifying that no individual can sit

on both boards.

Ward said this will be an open process and that she expects a new tourism board will be in place by the end of the first quarter in 2024.

“We’re going to go out and try to recruit a whole new board,” she said, also adding it will be an “open process.”

Ward said she is relieved the agreement has been rubber-stamped because it means the chamber no longer has to underwrite expenses for the tourism organization — and also because

it signals an ability to move ahead with tourism-related efforts — something that could not be done in full force recently because the money was not available.

“We’ve done a lot of stuff in-house — but now we have the budget,” she said.

The accommodation tax program was launched in July 2022 and started generating funds in the third and fourth quarters, resulting in the town collecting \$453,148 in revenue that year.

Continued on page 5



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DSBN grad plans receive an F from local students

Mike Balsom
The Local

A move by the District School Board of Niagara to bump high school graduation from late June to a date prior to the completion of final exams has a number of students up in arms.

Ann Gilmore, a board superintendent of curriculum for secondary schools, says the first communication about the change of date went out in October, with principals of the DSBN's 16 high schools sending out their chosen dates for graduation exercises to parents and students in November.

According to Gilmore, each principal was to choose a date between May 21 and June 14, with the added option of pushing the ceremony to the following fall. None of the DSBN schools currently have a fall graduation.

"There was some clarification that we had to do about awards," Gilmore tells The Local. "After the dates were sent out, there were a handful of principals who had to clarify, but it was again all about awards. We reassured them that they were not

going to lose them."

But the idea of having to return to classes and still write final exams after their graduation ceremony did not sit well with Eden High School student Olivia Gillespie, who launched a change.org petition asking for the DSBN to reconsider the graduation date. At press time there were 3,377 signatures on the petition.

Her Eden classmate, Luke Midgley of Niagara-on-the-Lake, is one of those 3,377.

"I was a little surprised," Midgley says. "When I think of graduation, I think of a culmination, or an end to something. It doesn't feel the same that we have to go to class the next day."

"When I heard about it I was confused about it," says St. Davids resident Ayla Jamal, a member of Laura Secord's class of 2024 and co-president of their student council. "It makes me upset that it's happening before exams, and that we won't even get our diplomas at that time. And we were the first class that didn't get a Grade 8 graduation, either."

Jamal's classmate, rural NOTL resident Mackenzie Overweg, is also disap-



Laura Secord students Mackenzie Overweg and Samantha Fretz speak out about the school board's change in plans for graduation. (Mike Balsom)

pointed.

"I feel like we're not getting the full graduation experience," says Overweg. "We won't have those classes finished. It's a special day to get acknowl-

edged; those who have put in the hard work and dedication deserve that. We should have the chance to walk across the stage with all of our classmates who have also put in that work."

Gilmore explains that there are two reasons behind the DSBN's change.

The first is operational. Gilmore says it's difficult to hold graduations for all of the DSBN's schools in one evening. And with the board growing to the point that some of the secondary schools have graduating classes of as many as 300 students, the schools are not able to host graduation ceremonies on site.

"It creates a wider window for schools to share rather than compete for those larger venues," says Gilmore, "so that schools can invite more guests. It also gives staff more time to make thoughtful decisions around the board."

The second reason relates to the DSBN's new 2023-2028 strategic plan.

Released in October, the new five-year plan is called Redefining Excellence. It stresses the value of the uniqueness of each individual, with a key tenet being that the DSBN wants to be a "place where students can learn and grow at their own pace, in their own way."

The plan goes on to focus on inclusion and full participation in learning, while the board promises to "examine and change policies, procedures and practices through an equity, inclusion and human

rights lens to eliminate differential treatment and outcomes for sovereignty seeking and equity deserving groups."

"Belonging is one of our priorities," says Gilmore. "So, redefining grad is more of a commencement and a celebration of a student's journey and accomplishments leading up to Grade 12. It creates that sense of belonging for everyone. We will continue to honour those traditional awards and graduation elements, but this will be an opportunity to create some new traditions that are more inclusive of all student experiences."

That doesn't sit well with Old Town resident Annika Janzen, another member of Laura Secord's class of 2024.

"I want to have a proper graduation," says Janzen. "I don't like the idea that people who haven't earned the right to graduate are going to be walking across the stage. If they can't graduate this year then they should do a Grade 12B and have the experience next year."

Her classmate Samantha Fretz feels a similar way.

"The whole point of graduation is to walk across the stage and get your diploma," says Fretz, a Crossroads grad. "We didn't get a graduation in Grade 8, and this feels sort of the same. It's not a proper graduation. I hope they change it back, but if they don't, I will probably still go."

"When we get to a cer-

tain level of inclusivity," Midgley adds, "I think we lose the value of what graduation really is. We're supposed to be celebrating hard work and success. So it's difficult for me to see this change."

Gillespie, the originator of the petition, along with her classmate Manuela Jarrin, made an eloquent, impassioned appeal to the DSBN at the board's Dec. 5 meeting in an attempt to urge them to revert back to a late June graduation.

Though Gilmore insists that the DSBN strives to find ways to embed the student voice when and where it can and as often as possible, she says the decision to change the grad dates is firm.

"There are still many choices for schools to make with regard to planning these early celebrations," adds Gilmore. "I encourage schools to create student grad committees, similar to prom committees, to help guide those decisions. It's one of the reasons why we announced it so early, so we could give voice where we could give voice."

But Midgley, for one, doesn't feel the student voice is being heard, especially in light of the number of people who have signed the petition.

"To see such a movement and a desire for change, and to hear that, it's very surprising," says Midgley. "The fact that there is no attempt to hear us out, it doesn't feel too empowering."

Local

HOME of the WEEK

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Set your heart on this charming bungalow situated in a most desirable corner of Niagara-on-the-Lake, boasting an unbeatable location within walking distance of both the old town center and the waterfront. The large picture windows facing the Niagara River provide stunning views and an abundance of natural light, making the bright living room with fireplace the perfect place to relax and unwind. The galley kitchen, convenient main level laundry, 4-piece bathroom and primary bedroom complete the welcoming main level. With a separate entrance from the rear patio, the lower level offers flexible office or bedroom space, a spacious living room, modern 3-piece bathroom and storage area, all with ample natural light thanks to the sloping grade of the property. Additionally, the property includes two outbuildings - a garage and a studio/storage located at the lower level driveway - providing plenty of additional versatile space.

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Tourism NOTL will have to seek out a new board

Continued from page 3

Half that amount, \$226,574, represents Tourism NOTL's share before administrative expenses.

For the first two quarters of 2023, the town has collected \$719,860, equating to a 50 per cent share of nearly \$360,000 for Tourism NOTL.

Ward said she expects the 2023 funds will also start coming in early next year.

At the start of Tuesday's committee-of-the-whole meeting, council went into

closed session to discuss three matters — one of them regarding Tourism NOTL and the chamber, according to the meeting agenda.

No discussion about what took place behind closed doors followed when council returned to open session.

Later in the meeting, when the agreement was up for approval, only a brief conversation ensued.

Mavridis' motion to amend the agreement so that no individual can sit on both the tourism and chamber boards brought a question from Coun. Wendy Chero-

pita, asking if Mavridis' intention was to hold off on the agreement being finalized until both boards are formed.

"I'm not hoping to hold up the MAT agreement," Mavridis responded, adding that her amendment is an attempt to create "more comfort" when it comes to accountability.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa and Coun. Erwin Wiens were not in attendance Tuesday. The remainder of council all voted in favour of the agreement.

One provision of the

agreement is that it will operate on a five-year term, which shall automatically renew for another five years unless either party gives a one-year written notice that the agreement will not continue.

It also comes with a one-year notice period in the event the town wishes to terminate the agreement for any reason.

All MAT revenue will be placed in a separate fund controlled by Tourism NOTL and disbursements by the town will occur quarterly, a staff report about the agreement says.

An annual review of Tourism NOTL's work plan and alignment with the town's tourism strategy will occur, the report also says.

In 2017, the Ontario government issued the Transient Accommodation Regulation, which provides provisions for municipalities across Ontario to implement an accommodation tax if they choose to do so.

Last June, town council approved a MAT bylaw, resulting in this new tax of two per cent applying only to accommodation establishments with five or more

rooms and for bookings made on or after July 1, 2022.

Starting in January, short-term rentals with less than five rooms will also have to pay the tax.

Accommodation providers will see the tax rise to three per cent in 2024, and four per cent in 2025.

In August 2021, council passed a motion to implement the tax within the 2022 budget for tourism projects, and to place any revenue generated into a special reserve for tourism promotion, town capital infrastructure and tourism initiatives.



A SPECIAL THANK YOU

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Cenotaph Committee would like to thank the community and the following donors for their generous contributions to repairing and maintaining the historic Cenotaph Clock Tower on Queen Street in Old Town. The goal of raising \$150,000 has been achieved, and the fundraising campaign has officially closed.

\$80,000 will be used for the upcoming spring repairs and restoration of the Cenotaph, while the remaining funds will be set aside in a reserve to ensure ongoing maintenance of the Cenotaph in the future.

A special thank you to Lord Mayor Zalepa, Town Council and Staff for their support. The Committee would also like to recognize King Street Gallery, Hendriks YIG, Irish Design, Oliv, Beau Chapeau, Scottish Loft, Irish Harp, Karen Taylor-Jones, and Pierre Corbiere for their assistance in the campaign.

Thank you to all the donors to make this possible:

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EDITORIAL

Make the most of all NOTL offers, including shopping

This has to be the best time to live and work in this beautiful town.

Queen Street is always magical at this time of year, especially after dark, and there is no shortage of homeowners decorating their beautiful homes that are a treat to see.

The Christmas Parade was once again the best — you will hear people say NOTL's Santa Claus float is better than the one in the Toronto parade. It was a beautiful day Saturday, and congratulations to all the volunteers who created a spectacular parade.

And who has a tractor parade? Niagara-on-the-Lake does, that's who. There may be other farming communities parading decorated tractors at Christmas, but the assortment of entries and the heart-warming atmosphere created as it goes by Pleasant Manor and through Virgil has to be the best. It's coming up this Thursday, Dec. 14. Don't miss it. Thank you Dorothy and Erwin Wiens!

Many events at this time of year are supported by our local businesses. Those in need are supported by local businesses. Kids' sports schools and other activities and programs benefit from the generosity of business owners.

Let's remember we in turn can support them. Let's think about what we can do for them instead of what they can do for us. Amazon doesn't need our support — it will make out like a bandit at the holidays.

We can make the most of all this community has to offer not just by attending events but by shopping locally, or giving gift cards for the local establishments we love to frequent.

This is a beautiful place to live, work, visit and shop at any time, but never more so than at this time of year.

Penny Coles
The Local

Niagara's midsection: pre-settlement tour continued



Owen Bjorgan
Special to The Local

In an attempt to describe and profile what each municipality was like before the first European axes felled a tree, I invite you to continue the voyage back in time as we adventure across the central and southern towns and cities of Niagara.

We've hopped up the Niagara Escarpment into West Lincoln, Niagara Region's largest municipality in terms of area. What would this massive swath of land have looked like before the first farm field?

Most of Grimsby and Lincoln's major creeks actually originate from West Lincoln. The forests would have been both diverse and beautiful, with mixtures of soft loam soil and clay, creating a mosaic of dry and wet forests, respectively, over an unending range of rolling hills. All of these gently wavy landscapes were partially created by the retreating glacier, but also by the rushing young headwaters of the various creeks on their way to plummet over the escarpment. There would have been many babbling brooks and gentle valleys, with some of those valleys flattening out over time due to father erosion himself.

Hopping eastward across Victoria Ave, we enter Pelham. I would venture to say that once upon a time, Pelham was Niagara Region's most diverse municipality in terms of habitat types — close to its rival, which I'll explain later.

In the middle of Pelham lies a giant hump in the land. Most of us recognize this mound as Fonthill, but many aren't aware that it is actually a giant glacial kame — a giant sandy rock pile deposited near the end of an ice sheet's retreat. It would have been a critical travel ridge for mammals that use such isolated high outcrops to their advantage, such as wolves and black bears. Just as animals could travel down any side of the hump, so could water.

To this day, the kame releases precious groundwater through springs which travel northward into the rugged Short Hills Provincial Park. The hills and valleys in this particular area of Niagara would have been a sight to behold, as they remained sheltered from the adversity of Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. Their slightly higher elevation and shady canyons would have housed more coniferous species than anywhere else in Niagara, I imagine. The feeling would be close to what we currently refer to as "up north" in Canada's deep south.

However, to the south of the kame and down toward Welland, you would have areas of Pelham that represented what the entire midsection of the peninsula would have looked like: a giant swamp forest flanking and feeding the Welland River.

Which, appropriately brings us to Welland. This would have been, and still is, one of the flattest areas of the Niagara Peninsula. It once sat at the bottom of a historic shallow lake, where water barely drained out toward either Great Lake. As the water resided and lowered, it continued to sit in endless clay grooves across the landscape. As settlers discovered Welland, they would have wished for rubber-boot technology. The entire area was likely an enormous swamp, that is, a wetland dominated by trees.

Welland's popular Woodlawn Park, for example, is a relic of time. The reason families can skate in that forest's waterlogged areas is because that water feature was created by a glacier carving its way over clay, where water can't easily drain away. Thank a glacier for your next pond hockey session if you ever skate there!

Neighbouring Niagara Falls has a lot in common with Welland in terms of geographical history. Also clay-dominated, much of Niagara Falls was part of the Willoughby muck plain. It's exactly what it



Owen Bjorgan's photo shows his friends Thomas Giguere and Sean Hudson (R.I.P., Owen says) exploring one of Pelham's many unique ecosystems in the midsection of Niagara Peninsula. The photo was taken in spring of 2016. (Owen Bjorgan)

sounds like, a super-swamp you would have had to walk through to hear the roar of Niagara Falls.

Niagara Falls has the almighty and obviously impressive Niagara Gorge. It took 12,000 years for the falls to recede to its current location. It was the last stronghold for timber rattlesnakes up until the 1940s.

Despite the rocky and turbulent chaos of the Niagara Gorge, the rest of Niagara Falls was a flat, muddy swamp harbouring rare black gum and pin oak trees, and an abundance of amphibian life as far as the ear could hear. I recollect going to Cineplex Odeon Theatre as a kid off Montrose Road, and marvelling at the frog sounds calling from the clay ponds of the surrounding forests. All of Niagara Falls and the midsection of Niagara once sounded like that from every March to May, for thousands of years.

Besides the swamps, we should take note of one hilly exception. The Lundy's Lane and Drummond Road hilltop is very similar to the glacial kame mound of Fonthill, as this unexpected rise in the land is a glacially-created oddball of earth left behind from thousands of years ago. If you go to Stamford Collegiate or have ever tobogganed in the area, you can thank a glacier for that, too!

Initially, I thought I could succinctly wrap up the tour of Niagara's municipalities in two articles. However, my passion and interest in this analysis has gotten the better of me, and I want to leave ample room for Wainfleet, Port Colborne, and Fort Erie next week, Canada's south coast. As it turns out, this Lake Erie coast is also where my next published nature documentary is focused.

To be continued.

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View from the couch

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

The two seasons of *Fisk* (Netflix, 2023) provide a refreshingly honest and painfully unglamorous view of an Australian law practice.

Helen Fisk, the heroine, is more or less out of step with everything and everyone as she attempts to reinvent herself after a divorce. If you like witty and quirky Fisk is for you.

Donald Combe is a retired

English teacher who loves to go to the movies. Until he resumes going to theatres, he has graciously agreed to share his opinions, through "short and sweet" exclusives, of Netflix series and movies for The Local.

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

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

Publisher:
The Niagara-on-the-Lake Local

Village Media Regional Publisher (online sales)
John Hammill
John@villagemedia.ca
905-988-5599 ext 1157

Advertising Sales:
Joy Sanguedolce - NOTL
joy@notllocal.com
416-817-0920

Julia Coles - outside NOTL
julia@notllocal.com
905-934-1040

Graphic Designer: Rosie Gowsell
composing@notllocal.com

News Tips: news@notllocal.com

notllocal.com facebook.com/notllocal instagram.com/thenotllocal @thenotllocal

Where's Ben?

Eden 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@notllocal.com. Last week, as Joe Pirosko told us, Ben was at the monument commemorating General Brock's horse, Alfred, in Queenston on the boulevard off Clarence Street.

COMMENT

— *Local* LETTERS Canadians are mostly silent in the face of atrocities —

According to police and independent monitors, anti-semitic incidents in Canada have spiked dramatically in 2023. Many Canadians will satisfy ourselves with the idea that this is merely an unfortunate consequence of overseas events. Jewish Canadians, we are confident, need not worry. These are

political acts, not real hate crimes.

We would never discount the experiences of any other group in this fashion. Only Jews. That should be evidence enough of a problem.

Moreover, the explosion of antisemitic rhetoric and incidents is clearly a sign of a larger problem. Other over-

seas conflicts do not lead to measurable spikes in domestic hate crimes. Why does this one?

Finally, and more importantly, there is a significant strain of undeniable Jew-hatred and even genocidal threats in the anti-Israel perspectives we are hearing in mainstream public discourse.

The omnipresent slogan “From the river to the sea” is a call for the elimination of the Jewish state and maintains only the weakest plausible deniability against the idea that it is an overt call for extermination. More unnerving is the chant, “Intifada! Revolution! There is only one solution!” — an outright call for

violence and a deliberate echo of the “solution” attempted against the Jewish people just a few decades ago.

Decent Canadians are mostly silent in the face of these rhetorical atrocities — even though we know that words have consequences. And that is precisely why our Jewish neighbours are

alarmed. It is not so much that a small number of activists perpetuate deeply hateful antisemitism. It’s that seemingly every other person marching for Palestine is utterly untroubled by the company they keep.

Pat Johnson
Director, Upstanders Canada

— *Local* LETTERS Two sides to every story — Palestine included —

Hand-written letters are always more sincere; so it’s my hope of hopes that on rallying support for the people of Palestine this is received with such sincerity and open ears.

The Palestinian people of the Gaza Strip are being indiscriminately killed.

Even though we are a small town, by speaking out against genocide I believe this can make a great impact.

Over 20,000 Gazan civilians have been killed and the West Bank is now under siege. While we cannot fathom that in our own comfort and privilege, no longer can we afford to let any Palestinian woman, man, LGBT-identifying citizen go unheard.

Yes, we are a small farm town. We can’t relate directly to their strife. But to further remain silent on this global

catastrophe, is to deny our own children truth in world history. It denies them compassion, true-meaning of decolonization, and the will to be that loud, incessant voice of change.

Entire families, going back approximately 2,000 years, have been completely erased from Palestine’s civil registry. Entire crops of olives, the trees averaging 600 years old, have been burnt to

ash. Can you imagine what that could do to your family? How deeply it would cause despair here if we lost our grapes, peaches and cherries forever?

This letter is to demand that our government speak up. That they ensure the cause for Palestinian liberation is global. That even in our little town, decolonization means increasing funding to Indigenous peoples,

and support and amnesty to farmworkers. It means speaking out against all apartheid, genocide, oppression and divestment of our budget in favour of billionaires.

We are reaching a crucial point, as a town that represents the confederation of the settler-colonial state of Canada. If not us, then who? If not now, when? Gaza’s elementary school system has

indefinitely shut down as most of their students have been killed by Israeli bombardment. Entire future generations lost. We must help them survive so they can see a free Palestine. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. Let Niagara stand on the right side of history. Ceasefire now!

Freddie Ratkovsky
NOTL

Library interview: Animation artist Ruxandra Buture

Ilze Andzans
Library Board member

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library board and staff are interested in exploring the special place books, reading, storytelling and libraries hold in the hearts of our community members. The power of the written and spoken word, the enchantment of libraries and childhood memories of time spent with books, creates a profound tapestry of emotions and experiences.

This questionnaire prompts introspection and reflection, offering a unique lens through which to examine the bond between readers and their connection to books, storytelling and libraries.

Ruxandra Buture is a 30-year-old who works as a 2D layout artist in the animation industry, which she claims is just fancy wording for drawing backgrounds for cartoons! Having immigrated from Romania at the age of 10, she attended school in Toronto and Niagara, ultimately obtaining her degree from the highly acclaimed Bachelor of Animation at Sheridan College. Her work brings her back and forth from Toronto, where the animation industry is centred, and home to NOTL where she has been living with her family since the start of the pandemic. Ruxandra is an avid fan of books, film, concerts, travel and ‘all things nature.’ Her love of reading has followed her around the world.

Q. Where does your love of reading come from?

I grew up a pretty solitary kid. In ’90s Romania, we didn’t have many TV channels, video games or the tech we have today. I sought

creativity and escapism in all that I could, especially books and cartoons from the one kid-friendly channel we had on TV. I distinctly remember never having seen the Disney animated movies growing up, but I read their books so it felt like I had.

Q. What childhood memories do you have related to library visits?

When we first came to Canada in 2004, everything was new to us. We weren’t familiar with anything in Toronto’s east end, but my mom would take me to swim at the local community centre and there was a tiny public library right across from the pool. I didn’t know much English at the time, but books always seemed familiar despite the language difference.

Q. How do you interact with the library today?

I am a big fan of the public library. Ever since I got a Kobo e-reader and the Libby app, I’ve been unstoppable. I borrow books with a single click on the Libby app on my phone, which automatically syncs to my Kobo e-reader. This makes it very easy to take out books for longer periods, extend if I’m not done with them and to keep track of what I’ve read before.

Q. What is your favourite book of all time?

It would have to be *Kafka on the Shore* by Haruki Murakami, which is about a 15-year-old boy who runs away from home and takes shelter in a library of a distant town. Despite the magical realism and complete chaos that takes place in the character’s life, the time he spends living in the attic is really calming.

Q. What kinds of books

are you reading now?

When the world shut down during the pandemic, I picked up a new adult fantasy called *A Court of Thorns and Roses* by Sarah J. Maas at the recommendation of a bookish friend. It revived my love of reading after a long break, and I’ve been obsessively absorbing fantasy and romance novels ever since. Contemporary romance is a new thing for me. I really enjoy Ali Hazelwood’s romance novels about women in STEM and get excited whenever she releases a new one.

From time to time, I also enjoy a good non-fiction book. I’m currently listening to an audiobook about mushrooms called *Entangled Life: How Fungi Shape Our Worlds, Change our Minds & Shape Our Futures* by Merlin Sheldrake, and one about moss called *Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. I go on a lot of hikes and learning about nature makes them even more exciting.

I also read a lot of comic books, from simple and cute ones like *Hearstopper* by Alice Oseman (which is now a great Netflix series!) to ones dealing with humanity and mortality like *The Many Deaths of Laila Starr* by Ram V.

Q. Do you recommend books to family and friends?

Constantly. Books have had a pretty big resurgence for my generation. There are bookish communities on all parts of the internet, like YouTube and TikTok, where everyone recommends their favourites and we all chat about books, especially con-

temporary, fantasy and romance fiction. Many of my friends are part of these virtual communities with me; it is like having a book club that is active all the time.

Q. Do you read to any children in your life?

I would read to my kids if I had any. I recently gifted my librarian friend about a dozen books when her baby was born. She just told me that one of them, *A Potato on a Bike* by Elise Gravel, is now her child’s favourite book, which really warmed my heart.

Q. What book should every kid/person read?

I feel like *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry should be mandatory reading for all ages. I find it magical, how people from different generations each take something away from that book. Also, *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho is a good source of direction and inspiration for adults.

Q. Are there any professional reads that have helped to shape you?

I work in animation and we had a lot of books recommended to us at school. There were three big ones that stood above the rest. *Disney Animation: The Illusion of Life* by Frank Thomas is the tome when it comes to Disney’s art. *The Animator’s Survival Kit* by Richard Williams is basically a Bible when it comes to my industry. And *Film Directing Shot by Shot: Visualizing from Concept to Screen* by Steve Katz is not only mandatory for everyone in animation, but lovers of film in general.

Q. Do you have a favourite author, dead or alive, that you would invite to

dinner?

Definitely. My favourite graphic novel series is called *Nana* by Ai Yazawa — one of the bestselling Japanese manga of all time. It is a story about two very different girls with the same name, who end up sitting beside each other on a train as they’re both moving to Tokyo, and their lives are forever intertwined. The series went on a seemingly indefinite hiatus in 2009 due to the author’s ill health and readers were left with an immense cliffhanger that will probably never be resolved. What I

wouldn’t give to sit down with the creator and get even a vague idea of how she intended to end that series.

Q. Do you have a favourite quote?

“And once the storm is over you won’t remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won’t even be sure, in fact, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm you won’t be the same person who walked in. That’s what this storm’s all about.” — Haruki Murakami, *Kafka on the Shore*



Ruxandra Buture loves reading. (Supplied)

Town council preparing for amalgamation discussion

Kris Dube
The Local
Local Journalism
Initiative Reporter

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa will take the lead on a delegation to the province in the new year, offering the feedback he's received from councillors about the possibility of amalgamation of the region's 12 lower-tier municipalities.

As provincial plans for merging regions into one municipality move forward, a standing committee overseen by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing will begin receiving input from local governments in the new year.

A special meeting was called for Tuesday afternoon to give Niagara-on-the-Lake politicians the opportunity to share their ideas.

The provincial committee will be in St. Catharines on Jan. 10 and the town will be taking part in those meetings.

But the deadline to apply is Jan. 3, which means action needed to be taken soon so Zalepa and his fellow councillors could decide what they want to say on behalf of the town, he told *The Local* recently.

No formal position was



Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa will attend the provincial meeting in January to discuss amalgamation, but he will take councillors' ideas with him. *(File photo)*

part of a recommendation, but several concerns were shared during the 40-minute discussion on Tuesday.

Coun. Gary Burroughs said a report created in 2019 for the province about potential impacts of amalgamation in Niagara has yet to be released. The Region has formally requested that report, and Burroughs said Niagara-on-the-Lake councillors should be able to see it as well.

“That was supposed to be a public document, but

it never has been," said Burroughs, adding it could be a good "starting point" for local councils.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor said when several municipalities in the Ottawa-Carleton regional municipality became one in the early 2000s, it was supposed to bring cost savings.

"It didn't. It increased the cost of things," she said, also noting the importance of Niagara-on-the-Lake's history.

“We don’t want that to be

lost," she added.

Coun. Wendy Chero-
pita said even though the
town only has a population
of 18,000 people, the 2.5
million tourists it welcomes
annually make it unique to
the region. She also point-
ed to the number of visitors
Niagara Falls welcomes each
year.

She believes looking further into shared services is the way to go, and doesn't like the idea of one megamunicipality.

"I think that's just a mas-

sive project that would be so complex and complicated," she said.

Coun. Erwin Wiens raised multiple concerns, such as what impact amalgamation would have on the local volunteer fire department.

He also doesn't see the benefit of the region as one city, having a mayor and paid councillors throughout, an idea that was floated by former Niagara Region chief administrative officer Harry Schlange earlier this year in a report he prepared highlighting what he said would be the benefits to Niagara.

"I don't buy that," said Wiens, also questioning what would happen to municipally-owned assets such as NOTL Hydro and the town's irrigation system used by the local agricultural sector.

Wiens also said re-opening the conversation about there being too many politicians at the region and in Niagara's 12 lower-tier municipalities is something that could be explored.

Zalepa told council it is his intention to gather feedback from his colleagues on council to talk about the importance of local representation and decision-making, as well as how vital

the roles of elected officials are in their separate lives within the local business community.

It's all about improving service levels and a "focus on the ratepayer" as well, he said.

"I want to take a uniform position to the committee," said Zalepa, adding he wants to provide a greater understanding to the province about how municipal governments operate differently in smaller towns and cities, compared to places like Toronto.

"I've found that those who haven't worked in municipal government don't know how that functions," he said.

In the past, Zalepa has expressed the opinion that stripping villages, towns and cities of their identities is not a measure to be taken.

He has suggested that shared services, such as what the town and region recently agreed on with certain planning duties, is the best way to save money.

In September, Zalepa told The Local he doesn't feel "single amalgamation" is the best approach when compared to continuing the exploration of shared services and modernizing government.

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Canal to close Jan. 7, same as last year

Kris Dube
The Local
Local Journalism
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The Welland Canal, running between Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, will close Jan. 7, which has typically been the case since 2019, when a canal “optimization program” was started. Historically, it closed later than this, said St. Lawrence Seaway spokesperson Sam Pane. The optimization pro-

gram involves “all of the planning, operational and technical decisions that go into improving efficiency and maximizing ship transits in the Seaway,” said Pane. The St. Lawrence Seaway system as a whole, from Port Colborne to St. Lambert Lock in Montreal, will close later than in previous years. Bridges spanning the Welland Canal will be closed on a number of occasions this winter as the seaway conducts work on them.

“The decision about navigation closing dates is dependent on many factors, including environmental and operational considerations,” Pane told The Local. “We’ve been using bubblers and other technology to manage icing in the Welland Canal. It’s more challenging in the Montreal-Lake Ontario section since on average we get earlier icing and colder temperatures there,” he added. The Montreal-Lake Ontario section of the Seaway

will close on Jan. 5, weather permitting, which is “later than usual,” said Pane. Together, the navigation closing dates represent a “system-wide season optimization,” he said. During the winter pause, the seaway will undertake infrastructure renewal work as part of its annual investment program. In 2023, about \$36.5 million in maintaining the Welland Canal has been invested, which includes essential bridge maintenance.

“These ongoing investments ensure the safety and reliability of our infrastructure, while providing economic benefits to communities and businesses in Niagara,” the seaway said in a news release. The Carlton Street bridge in St. Catharines/Niagara-on-the-Lake will be closed to pedestrians and vehicles from Jan. 15 to Feb. 16. Also in that part of the region, the Glendale Avenue bridge will be off limits Jan. 8 and 9, as well as Jan. 16 to

18. It will also be closed Feb. 14 to 22, and March 4 to 13. The Allanburg Bridge in Thorold will close Jan. 17, and as Feb. 7 to 15. In Port Colborne, the Mellanby Avenue Bridge will be shut down Jan. 15 to Feb. 4. The Clarence Street Bridge will close Feb. 21 to 28. These closures are “standard for the winter pause,” and are used to conduct maintenance to ensure the system remains “safe, resilient and reliable,” said Pane.

This year’s parade is fundraising for Terry Fox Run

Continued from page 1

take in the unique event. It’s also a chance for the local agricultural industry to come together for a cause. “It’s a great time because everyone knows each other. It’s a great party,” she said. The Wiens family has recently been impacted by cancer, which is why the event will also raise money for the Terry Fox Foundation. Erwin and local comedian Joe Pillitteri have a friendly challenge to see

who can raise the most money — which will then be matched by an anonymous donor, said Dorothy. Donations will be collected along the route and can also be made online at run.terryfox.ca/team/teampillsy. The parade will go through the parking lot of Radiant Care’s Pleasant Manor, a long-term care home where residents embraced the parade, and where many seniors who were at one time part of the local farming community currently call home, said Erwin.

“Almost all of them would have a connection,” he said, adding the long-term care home has been “splendid to deal with” while organizing the event. The parade starts at 6 p.m. at the Virgil arena before making a right on Four Mile Creek Road, right onto Pleasant Lane, continuing to Elden Street, then left on Penner Street/Line 1 Road. From there, the parade will turn right on Concession 4 Road, right onto Line 2 Road, right onto Four Mile Creek Road, and return to the arena.



Dorothy Soo-Wiens with a Disney-themed tractor ready to roll. (Kris Dube)



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Continued from page 1

be overly distressed when she moves,” he says. “She might be fine, unaware of what is happening. Or she might be distressed with a change of routine she won’t understand. Until the time comes, I have no idea what to expect.”

She is unable to communicate, although recently he was delighted to hear her put together some words that made sense. “I was telling her what I’d been doing in my workshop and in the garden, and she said, ‘that’s all right then.’”

“Some months ago,” he says, he was asked to provide some choices of places for her. He wants her kept nearby, at Niagara Long Term Care, just down Wellington Street from where she is now.

He was supposed to list his top three preferences, and chose Niagara Long Term Care with a private room as first choice, and semi-private or more as second and third — he thinks the maximum to a room at that facility is three. He was advised that was the best way to ensure she would stay in the area. “I want her as close as possible,” he says, so he can continue visiting



Gayle and Andrew Henwood during better times, he explains. She was already living at Upper Canada Lodge at the time of the photo, and he had taken her out for the evening to for the Candlelight Stroll. He took her back to the house for a short visit and had her at the lodge by 8 p.m., he recalls. (Supplied)

her daily.

He worries that once a bed there becomes vacant and is offered for Gayle, he’ll have to make a choice quickly, without knowing how much longer she could stay at the lodge, or how

long it will be before he is presented with another opportunity to move her. If he turns it down, feeling it’s too soon, Gayle goes to the bottom of the list, he says. Because of that, he feels the best decision will be to

make the move when a bed is offered.

He dreads her leaving the private room she has now — it is as close to home as Andrew could make it, with paintings of his, some artwork by one of their

daughters, and a nice comfortable chair for visitors. “It’s so familiar for her — it seems to be part of her own home.”

It’s familiar to him as well, and more important, he knows the people who

regularly care for Gayle. When she moves, “they won’t be there for her. They’re going to be out of both our lives. I’m going to have to get to know a whole new group of people. I’m sure they will be loving and caring, but initially, it’s going to be difficult.”


Niagara Long Term Care has few private rooms, he adds. But on the plus side, he can ask for her to be moved soon as one is open.

And it would mean he will be able to keep up his routine of visiting her every day before lunch, without having a long drive to somewhere he might be unfamiliar with — he’s fine driving, as long as he knows where he is going. But as for directions, “at 84, my brain is getting a little patchy.”

Perhaps what is stressing him the most is that he has been told he will be responsible for moving her. A patient transfer vehicle will be involved, and the staff will help as much as possible, but Gayle needs assistance going from bed to a wheelchair and back to bed — and ultimately the transfer, when it comes, will be up to him to oversee.

“Every time the phone rings, any day, I think it could be the call to say Gayle has to move.”


Holiday Doors of Niagara-on-the-Lake



Submit a photo of your Holiday Door for a chance to win over \$500 worth of prizes from local businesses.

Merry Christmas & Happy Hannukah!

Submit your photos to joy@notllocal.com
Entries & the winner will be published December 27




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



Option 2: Link to the survey with your browser using this URL:
<https://forms.office.com/r/fqxeb7fJv>

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

Arts and Entertainment Gift Giving

The NSO Brings You Home for the Holidays

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 Jewellers, 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



Photograph by Robert Nowell

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.



BRAD'S HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Saturday, December 16 | 7:30pm
Sunday, December 17 | 2:30pm

Featuring Kaylee Harwood, Sayer Roberts, the Laura Secord Secondary School Choir, Santa, and more!



NEW THIS YEAR! *The Snowman* animated movie and its heartwarming soundtrack played live by the NSO!

BOOK NOW! Tickets as low as \$30.
Call the PAC Box Office at 905.688.0722
or visit niagarasymphony.com





Each year, the **May Court Club of St. Catharines** presents their annual fundraising tradition: the popular **"Win a Christmas Tree"** raffle! This year, they are partnering with the NSO.

During **Brad's Home for the Holidays**, browse the beautifully decorated trees, wreaths, and garlands in the PAC lobby, participate in the raffle and silent auction, and take a photo with Santa Claus by the fireplace!

Since 1935, the May Court Club of St. Catharines, a women's service organization serving all of Niagara, addresses the needs, primarily of women and children, through volunteerism and fundraising.

All proceeds of the Christmas Tree Fundraiser will go to the NSO's Educational programs.

Arts and Entertainment Gift Giving



Small ways you can nurture communities through local shopping

(NC) 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 ser-

vices 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 real-time price and product compare between chain

and local stores.

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.

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.

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musicniagara.org

Speed cameras begin working in new year

Local Staff

Niagara Region is moving forward with its red light camera programs and automated speed enforcement — cameras that record vehicles speeding — soon.

At this time, Niagara-on-the-Lake will only be impacted by the speed camera which has already been installed by Crossroads School, through the community safety zones. Tickets will be issued to drivers who run red

lights, and to those who are speeding, says a news release from the region that was issued Monday. The use of the red light cameras has been approved for 10 signalized intersections throughout Niagara, and the program

has “a proven history of improving intersection safety through a reduction in the frequency and severity of collisions,” the news release says. “They are particularly effective in reducing right-angle collisions, which more commonly result in injuries, fatalities and high societal costs.”

None of the 10 chosen intersections are in Niagara-on-the-Lake. The region will also be installing and testing cameras throughout December and January to enforce speed limits. Signs indicating the presence of the cameras will be installed and visible during the testing period, but cameras will not be enforcing infractions until they are activated in January. The region’s four automated speed enforcement cameras will be moved to new community safety zones for the week of Jan. 8. In NOTL, the cameras are on Niagara Stone Road between Concession 6 and Four Mile Creek Road,



caption (Shutterstock)

designed to catch drivers if they speed past Crossroads Public School, posted at 40 kilometres per hour. Community members may notice work being done to make changes to on-road signs in preparation for the move, the news release says. Early data collection and monitoring of the automated speed enforcement program is underway, it continues, and preliminary information will be shared with regional council in spring. The two programs are focused on the reduction and eventual elimination of serious injuries and fatalities on the regional road network, the release says.

MPP Wayne Gates says ‘get your flu shot’

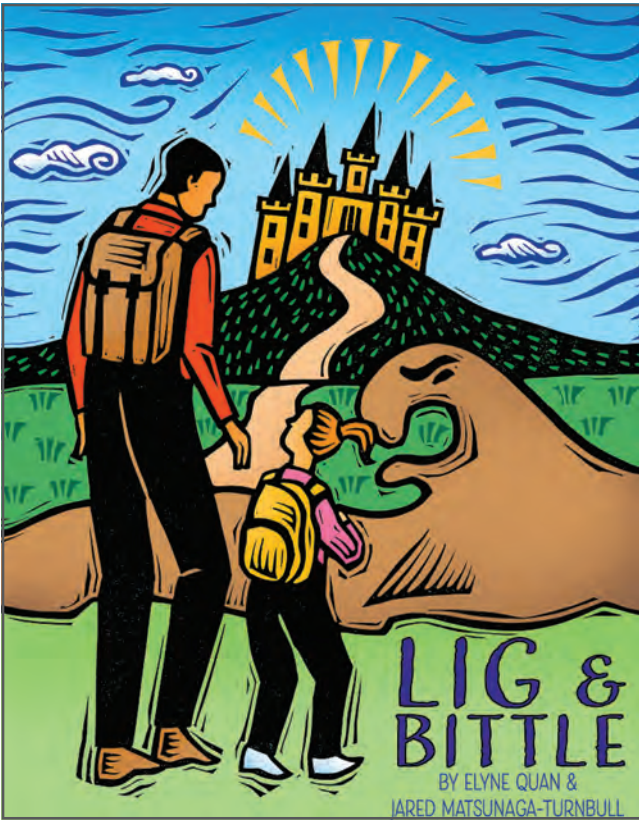


Wayne Gates was at Simpsons Pharmasave this week, getting his seasonal flu shot. “Getting your flu shot is more than just about protecting yourself, it’s about helping to protect your family and community,” says Gates. “When we do everything in our power to reduce spread and severity, we help to reduce the overall burden on our healthcare system this time of year. Its easy and accessible—get your flu shot today.” (Penny Coles)

Arts and Entertainment Gift Giving

Carousel Players, Celebrating Creativity

For over 50 years, Carousel Players has been bringing imagination, creativity, and play to young people in Niagara through live theatre and drama education. From touring productions, to community performances, to drama classes and summer acting camps, Carousel Players is committed to ensuring that the benefits of experiencing live theatre are accessible to all. This spring we are launching a NEW opportunity to experience arts in culture in your own backyard! The Niagara Children’s Festival — happening May 11, 18 & 19, 2024 — is an exciting explosion of creativity, offering a weekend of live theatre, performances and arts-based activities for young audiences from early years to teens. Hosted at venues across the Niagara Region, we invite families to spark their imaginations and create joy together through theatre. This holiday season, give the gift of creativity with Carousel Players tickets, Festival Passes, or even theatre classes for kids! Our Theatre Schools Programs are happening all year long in community centres, schools, and at our Arts Education Centre in downtown St. Catharines! Share the joy of creativity, imagination and play with the young people in your life.



Carousel Players
NIAGARA CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL

ARTS & CULTURE FOR
THE WHOLE FAMILY
COMING MAY 2024

Give the gift of Live Theatre
Passes On Sale Now!

carouselplayers.com

Boxing improves quality of life for those with Parkinson's

Penny Coles
The Local

"Who are we? Rock Steady Boxers. Why are we here? Fighting Parkinson's!"

That's the rally cry of a group of people who know what it's like to live with Parkinson's disease, each cheer getting louder as they raise their fists in the air.

They meet regularly for a program that focuses on boxing drills and other exercises designed to reduce the progression of their disease.

It is also very clear there is far more going on in the gym than exercise: what is quickly evident is the support members offer each other mentally, emotionally and physically as they fight a debilitating disease that has no cure.

The rally cry ends every single hour-long session of Rock Steady Boxing, three days a week, 52 weeks a year. The only class that is cancelled is Christmas Day, says Mario Toffolo, the program's head coach of the classes held at The Club at White Oaks Resort and Spa.

The battle begins when members walk through the door. Each one is greeted warmly, welcomed as a much-loved family member — joining the group means becoming part of a community of people who help each other as much as they help themselves.

The program trainers are not just gym employees, they are passionate and committed to fighting with and for their members, boxers, and also some spouses who attend with them, fighting every bit as hard as their partners.

Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Heather Beckman has been helping her husband Henry fight Parkinson's since he was diagnosed 10 years ago.

The couple had been members of a White Oaks exercise program with Toffolo even before that, when they learned about a program in Indianapolis to help those with Parkinson's. It was founded by a young lawyer with early onset Parkinson's, and has been featured on both 60 Minutes and CBC.

There are now 800 such affiliates offering programs around the world, with all trainers both trained and licensed through Rock Steady Boxing.

Heather heard the testimonials from many who found their lives changed by joining the Indianapolis program, and brought that information to Toffolo, who looked into it. Soon he and his wife were in Indianapolis themselves to learn more about it, and returned to ask White Oaks to offer it at their fitness centre, at a special price so that non-members wouldn't have to pay for a



Cheryl Smith is considered "the boxer" of the program for the way she attacks her exercises and helps others.



Oresta Simpson begins her routine with stretching, with Mario Toffolo watching over her.

membership. White Oaks agreed, and thus it began, the first and only one in Niagara.

What is really important about the program at White Oaks, Heather says, "is the commitment Mario and his wife Linda have made to this endeavour. Everyone loves them and so appreciates all they do for us. Unless they are out of town — and then they have other trainers take over — they are there, no matter the weather, no matter the holiday. They are

truly caring and so committed and involved. We are very lucky."

The program has grown to include 34 regulars from across the region, but Toffolo knows there are many more potential boxers in Niagara who could benefit. The only one nearby opened recently in Hamilton, started by a couple who learned about it by participating in Toffolo's sessions.

"There are about 1,000 people in Niagara Region diagnosed with Parkinson's," Toffolo says. His goal is to reach many more of them and to see the program grow across Niagara.

The testimonials from those interviewed on the CBC documentary are no different than what you hear at White Oaks, says Heather.

Her husband Henry is now 90, and doesn't miss a class. She attends to support him, and also does some boxing herself.

While a hand tremor is often the first sign of Parkinson's disease, the symptoms can be very different for each individual, "unbelievably different," explains Toffolo, and can go for years undiagnosed, which means they aren't get-

ting the help they could.

"And a lot of people are in denial. They don't want to know, and they don't want to talk about it."

Once diagnosed, "many say they had seen the signs, but just thought it was due to aging."

Parkinson's is a neurodegenerative disease with no cure, caused by a lack of dopamine, explains Toffolo, and as it progresses, it can rob people of coordination, balance and strength.

Research has shown Rock Steady Boxing can slow down the progression of the disease, as Henry firmly believes it has for him.

Like the disease itself, everyone in the class will see individual results. It can reduce symptoms — for some, their tremors disappear. Boxers in Toffolo's sessions speak of feeling stronger, and with improved balance are less likely to fall. And it's typical to develop a confidence in themselves to do what they thought they couldn't.

Rock Steady Boxing improves their quality of life, he says, and not only because of the boxing, but because of the support they feel from everyone around them.

"The exercise plan we have here with Rock Steady Boxing is a life-saver," says Henry. "I truly believe that."

"And if we hadn't been living here in Niagara and working out at White Oaks, with our connection to Mario, Henry wouldn't be here today. He'd be in Upper Canada Lodge or some other such location like it," says Heather.

Henry still shakes a little, "but not as much as I would without this," he says of the boxing program. "There is no cure, so what is the alternative? It's not magic. You have to work at it."

He won't miss a class. "Parkinson's doesn't take a rest, so neither do we," a refrain heard throughout the class.

During COVID, some members continued their workouts online, says Toffolo, helping to maintain their fitness levels, but "those who didn't went down hill quickly."

Many people in the class say they come regularly, three days a week, and won't miss one. When they travel, they seek out a gym to continue to exercise, as Heather and Henry do.

"I'm committed to exer-

Continued on page 23



Heather and Henry Beckman work out together. (Photos by Penny Coles)



Cheryl Smith helps out — she climbs on Parker, the Parkinson's dummy, while Henry Beckman boxes.



Rick Mills lends a helping hand to Peggy Thorne as she boxes.



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4 tips to look and feel your best this holiday season

The holidays are meant to be a time of joy and merriment for many of us. Whatever you celebrate, from Hannukah, to Christmas, to the Winter Solstice, here are some tips to help you enjoy them to the fullest.

Embrace the spirit of the season

Even if you're more of a natural grinch than one of Santa's elves, leaning into the festive season can help you appreciate small joys – which in turn could improve your mental health. Getting involved with your family and your neighbourhood can help you feel more connected to others too.

By building a gingerbread house with the grandkids, spearheading a secret Santa gift exchange at work or doing a charity clothing drive, you can warm hearts at home and in your community.

Choose a go-to outfit you feel great in

Uncomfortable clothing can quickly ruin what should be a good time. Instead of scrambling to find a decent fit right before the occasion, go through your closet a few weeks beforehand and put together at least one look you feel confident in. This could be like something of a uniform for seasonal celebrations to come – knowing you've got this look in your back pocket can eliminate a major source of stress and leave you feeling great even at a last-minute event.

Be kind to yourself

It's easy to overextend yourself with parties, festive dinners, gift shopping, children's recitals and more all demanding attention at this time of year.

So, make sure you set aside time to let your mind and body rest and recharge in positive ways. Try reading a book, playing with your dog or talking to a friend. Don't give yourself too hard a time if things don't go quite according to plan.

Aim for moderation

The holiday season can be extra hectic, making it easy to let your otherwise average or healthy eating habits slide and then feel sluggish or moody as a result. But, even if we indulge in more sweet treats than usual, it's always a good idea to strive for balance. So don't forget about your fruits and veggies and try to keep a short-list of easy, pantry-based meals on hand for nights when you're at risk of chowing down on cookies, chocolates and chips for dinner – your body will thank you later.

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Perfect day for a perfect parade



Santa and his reindeer make their way through NOTL, ensuring they have lots of time to get back to the North Pole to prepare for Christmas Eve. (Photos by Penny Coles)

Penny Coles
The Local

The weather was the topic of Saturday’s Niagara-on-the-Lake Christmas Parade, as the 100 entries of floats and bands, horses,

dogs, and schools with lots of children made their way through the streets of the Old Town on a positively balmy December day. Enthusiastic people of all ages lined Old Town streets to greet them. It’s consid-

ered one of the best parades around for a reason! As always, the parade was organized by a group of volunteers — many of them marshalling, some fundraising — and aided by the support of town staff.



Randy Klaassen and Terry Nord of the local Air Rescue Association which operates with volunteers out of Niagara District Airport.



NOTL Minor Hockey Wolves filled their float with players and coaches.



Some of the younger hockey Wolves decided to stop for a short rest.



Barbara Webber, Betty and Jamie Knight with Luna and Fran and John Boot representing the NOTL Museum.

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What's a parade without dogs, horses and kids



Dogs were well-represented in the parade.



What's a parade without horses?



MP Tony Baldinelli rides in style.



The Top Hat Band, always a favourite.



Sparky with NOTL volunteer firefighters.



Joe Typer and Betty Snider with the St. Davids Lions.



Niagara Foundation's Living Landmark award winners Gary Burroughs and Richard Merritt.



St. Michael Catholic Elementary School float.



St. Davids Dragons (David Gilchrist)



The Burlington Teen Band.



St. Davids Dance members.



Fort George is represented in the parade.



Dorothy Soo-Wiens, Tammy Zalepa and Coun. Sandra O'Connor in a Sentineal carriage, with Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa and Coun. Wendy Cheropita walking behind. (Sharon Burns)



Grape King Erwin Wiens with former grape royalty Jamie Slingerland, Doug Hernder, Albrecht Seeger, Doug Whitty, Kevin Watson and Peter Buis.



MPP Wayne Gates walked the parade, as he always does, but this year was special — he was accompanied by his two daughters, Jacqueline and Tara.

Red Roof preparing for bake sale Saturday

Sharon Burns
The Local

Put down your whisks and spatulas, folks, you will find everything you need for the holidays at Red Roof Retreat's second annual Christmas bake sale Thursday, Dec. 21 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

According to Christa Rawsthorne, program coordinator and assistant to executive director Steffanie Bjorgan, staff and clients have been busy baking since the beginning of December.

"Baking is something we like to do in the program,

but doing it for the bake sale makes it that much more special," she said.

Last year, a group of women from Cornerstone Church's Orchard Campus volunteered their time and involved Red Roof Retreat clients with the baking of squares, pies and cookies, "which helped us raise \$990," said Rawsthorne. "We also had donations of homemade jams and gingerbread houses."

Carole Wiens and Dorothy Soo-Wiens from Cornerstone Church have organized another group of women to help out for

this year.

If anyone would like to donate baked goods, contact Rawsthorne at Christa@redroofretreat.com.

The bake sale will be held at Cornerstone Community Church, Orchard Campus, 434 Hunter Road.

"People can fill either a plate or a box of baked goods of their choice and leave a donation," said Rawsthorne, who reminds the community that the Gifts from the Heart campaign is on until Jan. 12. They hope to raise \$60,000 to help support Red Roof Retreat's annual budget.



These are the bake tables from last year's fundraiser.



As part of the Red Roof Retreat day program at Cornerstone Community Church, client Jeremy works with help from staff member Maria Denbak to make baked goods for the bake sale. (Photos supplied)



Red Roof Retreat client Katelyn helps out with baking.



Last year Raymond had a baking lesson from staff member Bethany Langelan.

Sally McGarr celebrates 35 years



Sally McGarr recently celebrated the 35th anniversary of her brokerage surrounded by friends, family and the many people she has worked with over the decades. She obtained her broker's licence with only two years in the business behind her, which enabled her to open Sally McGarr Realty Brokerage in 1988, a rarity for a single woman at that time. In 2005, McGarr opened her office on Niagara Stone Road in Niagara-on-the-Lake in order to better serve this community, she said at her celebratory event recently, and is very grateful to all those who have supported her over the years — clients, family, friends and staff included. At the event, her daughter Raiana Schwenker, also a real estate representative with the brokerage, presented McGarr with roses to celebrate the anniversary. (Supplied)



Julia Coles, now a sales representative for The Local, congratulated Sally McGarr on her milestone anniversary. Early in her career, Coles helped McGarr with her print ads in one of Niagara's dailies.

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Voices raised in song at Christmas



Sing-along brings neighbours together

Despite being busy preparing for Christmas Eve, Santa spent a lot of time in Niagara-on-the-Lake last Friday. The night before the parade he stopped by the Chautauqua Residents' Association gathering at Chautauqua Park. As residents sang Christmas carols, roasted marshmallows and enjoyed a cup of hot chocolate, children took turns going on carriage rides with St. Nick, who gave his reindeer a night off back at the North Pole.



Santa arrives at Chautauqua Park for a carol sing-along. (Photos by Mike Balsom)



Ricky Watson serves hot chocolate with marshmallows and cookies.



Mary Jane Domik on the jingle bells, Doranne Minotti on the keyboard, Heather Miller leading the singing and Tim Miller on guitar were helping out a the park.



Ruth Denyer, Wayne Patterson, Marilyn Crow, Brian Crow and Sally Mitchell join the sing-along.



A group of neighbours sing holiday music at Chautauqua Park.



An afternoon sing-along at Wayside Chapel

A group of carollers gathered at the Wayside Chapel on the Niagara River Parkway Saturday afternoon, organized by Rick Meloen. It was the second year for the event, and better weather than last year.



Dianne Ticknor leads the carol singing at the Wayside Chapel for the second year in a row. (Photos by Mike Balsom)



A group of about 30 showed up to sing Saturday afternoon, not as many as last year but there was a lot going on in town.



Albrecht and Anja Seeger with Gisela Bertelmann. It was Albrecht's idea to hold the singalong, says organizer Rick Meloen.

Tara Rosling in *Mistletoe Bride* coming up

Mike Balsom
The Local

With a capacity of 70, Ironwood Cider House will host the biggest single audience yet for Tara Rosling's *The Mistletoe Bride*.

The dark tale has become a Niagara-on-the-Lake holiday tradition over the past decade since Rosling first worked with veteran theatre director Peter Hinton to bring his adaptation of author Jeanette Winterson's haunting short story to life.

The 2014 debut at Silversmith Brewing Company proved more popular than either Rosling or Hinton would ever have expected. So many showed up for the theatrical reading that Rosling had to add a second performance that same night.

This month's two performances, a sold-out return to Silversmith on Dec. 19 and the Ironwood show two days

later, will be the ninth year for *The Mistletoe Bride*, with one year skipped during the pandemic and the 2021 version performed virtually.

Rosling, a veteran Shaw actor with countless film and television credits on her resume (most recently she played President T'Pol in *Star Trek: Discovery*), calls *The Mistletoe Bride* the antithesis of *A Christmas Carol*, in a way.

British author Winterson's version of the folk tale was first published in her 2016 collection *Christmas Days: 12 Stories and 12 Feasts for 12 Days*. It's the story of a bride who hides in a chest from her groom on their wedding night. Unable to escape from her confines, she is doomed to bear witness as he carries on with another woman.

The story is believed to have originated in the early 1800s. The saga provided the inspiration for a Charles Somerset play, stories by

Henry James and Susan E. Wallace, and the plot of the 1948 Alfred Hitchcock film *Rope*, starring James Stewart, John Dall and Farley Granger.

"It's based on an old English folk tale," says Rosling. "It's a ghost story, a rite of passage story, about a woman who gets locked in a chest. It's a very intimate evening of good old-fashioned storytelling."

Though the subject matter is indeed dark, Rosling says ultimately the story is positive.

"It's like a movement from the dark to the light," she claims. "She finds freedom in the end. It's a hopeful story."

Previous reviews of Rosling's readings have focused on the way she builds fear and tension through the more grim

Rosling, who will be stepping into an assistant director role for Shaw's 2024 productions of *One Man, Two*

Guvnors and *The Orphan of Chao* as part of the company's intern directorship program, is pleasantly surprised at the increasing popularity of the macabre reading every December.

"It's really become a special thing," she says of the annual event. "I enjoy the tradition of it, I think, as much as the audience members who come back every year. It's very special to me, too, because it was created with an artist for whom I have much regard for. That it's become what it has means a lot to me."

The performance at Silversmith for this year sold out quickly. As always, admission to *The Mistletoe Bride* is on a pay-what-you-can basis, with all proceeds going to Gillian's Place, which provides safe refuge and support programs for victims of domestic violence.

"There are thematic elements in the story that made



Tara Rosling will perform at Silversmith Brewing Company and Ironwood Cider House. (File photo)

us decide that the proceeds would go there," Rosling explains. "There is a sexual assault poetically embedded in the story. At this point, we've easily raised more than \$20,000 for the cause."

Bringing *The Mistletoe Bride* to Ironwood makes perfect sense, too, as owner

Richard Liu and his staff have supported Gillian's Place with previous events as well.

Seats for the Thursday, Dec. 21 reading at Ironwood Cider House, located at 1425 Lakeshore Road, can be reserved for no charge through Eventbrite. The doors open for the show at 6 p.m.

Program participants speak of improved quality of life

Continued from page 15

cise," Henry says. "I like to follow the routine." Even at 90, he adds, "I find it invigorating, not exhausting."

And, he adds, "I feel like I belong here. It's like a second family."

Toffolo, retired from GM, says he has always worked out to stay fit, running marathons and lifting weights. Now his workouts are with his boxers.

"These guys keep me young," he says.

Visiting the gym during a session means greeting familiar faces from NOTL, as they work through their exercise programs. The class is divided in half, one group doing flexibility training, the other in the boxing room.

Overseeing one group is Cathy Mills from NOTL, group exercise director at The Club at White Oaks — she is

one of the trainers, and her husband Rick Mills is a volunteer, helping to put boxers through their paces.

"I do this because it takes such bravery, such courage to come here," says Rick. "If I am able to be of any help, that's what I want to do."

Oresta Simpson, one of the more recent members, is doing some stretches, and as Toffolo watches, he notices she is able to bend her knees

and lower herself considerably farther than when she started. She laughs that it's because she has an audience — she's chatting with The Local as she stretches.

If you don't exercise, she says "you regress."

Since she started Rock Steady Boxing, "I feel much more confident," she says.

Her symptoms began with "freezing," a situation where she couldn't move her legs. "It feels like being cemented to the ground."

She heard about the program through a friend, she says, a psychologist.

"This program has been amazing. At one point I couldn't go shopping. I couldn't do anything. I felt awful. Then I was diagnosed with Parkinson's and everything fell into place."

As Toffolo watches her exercise, he says, "I can see the difference. I can see her becoming more independent."

Cheryl Smith, 64, comes from Thorold to attend the program — she was there the day it started, Oct. 16, 2016.

She had been diagnosed about a year before that. "This has helped me big time," she tells The Local.

"I see a difference when I don't do it. If you go away you have to find a gym, otherwise you lose it."

She too won't miss a session, and Heather says the benefits for Smith are noticeable. "You would never know she has Parkinson's. It seems like she hasn't declined at all."

Smith says she has, "a little bit," but she has also been able to reduce her medication, and she attributes that to the boxing.

Peggy Thorne comes from St. Catharines. When she was diagnosed she was

told she should keep active. "This has been phenomenal," she says. "I feel it helps me focus. It's amazing what you thought you couldn't do, and you get here and find out you can. And you have a whole community of people to work with. They help to make you feel good emotionally and physically. I love these people!"

Noel Morris, at 62 one of the younger participants, is from NOTL. He was diagnosed recently, and he too has already seen a difference.

"You feel better when you learn and through the stretch

routine. It also helps clear some of the brain fog that can come with Parkinson's — and that feels good."

As he says that, the boxing group has just finished a group exercise led by Rick Mills, and with each movement they shout out the multiplication table — they are making sure they exercise their brain as well.

The price of the program is a monthly fee of \$140, about \$11 per session. There is a drop-in fee, but it is seldom used — Toffolo welcomes those who want to try it out the without charge.



Noel Morris boxes, while in the background trainer Linda Toffolo helps Henry Beckman.



A group boxing exercise is accompanied by shouting out the multiplication times table to give the brain a workout as well.

The Advent and Christmas Season
ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
 323 Simcoe St., NOTL
 905-468-3363 | standrewsniagara.com

The Festival of Carols
Sunday, December 17th at 7 pm
 Celebrating the birth of Christ in style with music, words, carols and candles and with family, friends and neighbours
 Guest Storyteller: Corrine Koslo – Veteran Shaw Festival Actor
 'Rachel' in TV's Anne with an E

Sunday, December 17th, 11 am
'The Third Sunday of Advent'
Sunday, December 24th, 11 am
'The Fourth Sunday of Advent'
7 pm – The Christmas Eve Family Service

During the Advent/Christmas Season, the sanctuary is open for Quiet Prayer each Thursday at 11 am

Donald Ziraldo brings authentic taste of Italy to Niagara

Mike Balsom
The Local

Having been one of the founding pioneers of Niagara's wine industry, knocking down doors worldwide to popularize icewine, one might think Donald Ziraldo would be done with innovations. But with the release of his new Ziraldo Prosecco, that notion can be laid to rest.

The fruity, refreshing, lightly sparkling new wine, available to purchase locally at the Pie Plate in Virgil and at the LCBO's Vintages store on Vansickle Road in St. Catharines, was produced in Italy from Glera grapes grown about 90 minutes northeast of Venice.

Ziraldo Prosecco becomes the first officially recognized wine with the Prosecco designation from a Niagara-based producer, one who is linked to an area of Italy that is near and dear to his heart.

Ziraldo's father, Fiorello, emigrated to Canada from Fagagna in that same Friuli

region of Italy in 1923. On a trip back to Fagagna in 1947, he met and fell in love with his future wife, Irma. The pair travelled back to St. Catharines where they began working on a farm that Fiorello had recently bought there.

The rest of Donald Ziraldo's story — working with winemaker Karl Kaiser and other local growers to plant vinifera grapes, starting Inniskillin Wines and becoming the face of Niagara's icewine industry around the world — has often been written about. And on some of those travels to promote wines he often brought his parents with him.

Ziraldo remembers once visiting a nun, a family relative who lived in a monastery in the town of Valdobbiadene, on one of those trips back to northern Italy. Valdobbiadene is the epicentre of the production of Prosecco, the largest selling wine from Italy.

When Ziraldo's longtime friend Mario Schwenn, the former proprietor of the Dievole

Estate in the Chianti region of Tuscany, recently turned to him for help selling some of his brands outside of Italy, one particular brand stood out.

"I looked at the list of wines he wanted help with," Ziraldo recounts. "Out of the five, one was a Valdobbiadene Prosecco. I took that as a message, maybe from my parents, and I told him that was the one I wanted to work with."

So rather than just helping him sell the wine, Ziraldo took out a lease on a vineyard on the Al Canevon Estate, a 40-hectare hill between the towns of Conegliano and Valdobbiadene that holds a UNESCO world heritage site distinction.

"I control the vineyard, and my winemaker, Fabio, makes the wine," explains Ziraldo. "The first time I tasted it, it was so fresh. He was trained as a brewmaster and a winemaker. He explained that the big difference is winemakers make wine and put it in a barrel. As a brewmaster, he takes the wine out of a big tank, bottles it, and the sooner it gets to the customer the better."

The Charmat winemaking method has earned Ziraldo Prosecco a DOCG (denominazione di origine controllata e garantita) designation, the highest classification in Italy.

Wine critics and sommeliers have been impressed. The first vintage of Ziraldo Prosecco won a 2022 Sommeliers Choice Awards silver medal. It received a 91 rating from Wine Align and Canadian wine expert Natalie MacLean calls it "a refreshing dry Prosecco with a lively mousse, so easy to love and enjoy to either toast in your holiday guests or to pair with brunch dishes like eggs Benedict and salads."

Ziraldo left Inniskillin in 2006, three months after the winery was sold to Constellation Brands. It's now part of Arterra Wines Canada. The Member of the Order of Canada continued to produce riesling icewine under his own label in a partnership with Klaus Reif, but in 2019 moved that production back to Inniskillin, where it all began.

He maintains a small riesling vineyard and purchases vidal grapes from other grow-

ers to produce his two varieties of icewines. And he continues to promote both his own Ziraldo icewine and icewine in general around the world.

He tells The Local that less than a month ago he had to miss a special pouring of the new Ziraldo Prosecco at a Woodbridge-area Vintages store, one of 268 LCBO locations that sell the wine. Instead, he was in Las Vegas for the Formula 1 Grand Prix where his 2019 Ziraldo Vidal Icewine was featured at a charity event hosted by Cirque du Soleil founder Guy Laliberte.

But it's his "Italian blood in Canadian skin," as he says, that is driving his forays into the Friuli countryside as of late. The new Prosecco follows his Ziraldo Bianco Di Fagagna, a picolit (a white Italian grape) wine first vinted in 2008 in the same Friuli region where he was given an honorary citizen-



Donald Ziraldo is at the Pie Plate on Four Mile Creek Road with his Ziraldo Prosecco. (Mike Balsom)

ship in 2004.

He also remains politically involved, still hoping to one day witness the building of a mid-peninsula highway atop the escarpment and looking forward to seeing what comes of the provincial government's review of governance coming this January.

But most importantly, he

remains an ambassador and a storyteller. And no one can deny that there's a great story behind his new Ziraldo Prosecco.

"It's from my homeland, and that's the interesting part of the story," says Ziraldo. "To sell a wine, you need a good story, and you can't get much better than this."

Region hands over responsibility for Blue Box recycling

Local Staff

Niagara Region is about to change how recycling material is collected.

Beginning Jan. 1, the region's residential recycling program will be handed over to Circular Materials, a producer organization administering contracts for Blue and Grey Box material in Niagara and across the province, says a regional news release.

The provincial program is in response to changing regulations which call for the transition of recycling responsibility to primary producers of food and beverage products and packaging that end up in the residential recycling program.

Starting in the new year, if residents have recycling program questions or require new or replacement Blue or Grey Boxes, they will need to contact the collection contractor for their area, which in Niagara-on-the-Lake is Miller Waste Systems at 1-833-621-0726, or email area19@millerwaste.ca.

For information about

what is accepted in the Blue and Grey Box, residents can visit Circular Materials' website. Niagara Region will also continue to promote program information on the Region's Waste App.

Niagara residents should experience very little change to their recycling routines, says the news release. There will be no change to collection days, frequency or collection time. Residents should continue to have materials at the curb by 7 a.m. on collection day. Residents can also continue to use the same Blue and Grey Boxes and recycle the same materials (with the exception of books).

This transition does not affect other waste services. Niagara Region will continue to collect garbage, Green Bin, leaf and yard waste and large household items and distribute Green Bins and Kitchen Catchers.

At this time, the Region will continue to provide recycling collection to industrial, commercial and institutional industrial properties and operate drop-off depots which will continue to accept Blue and Grey Box material,

the news release says.

For these services, continue to contact Niagara Region's Waste Info Line at 905-356-4141 or 1-800-594-5542, wasteinfo@niagararegion.ca or Niagara Region's website.

"We have been working with Circular Materials to ensure the transition of the Blue Box program is as seamless as possible. Residents in Niagara can continue to expect their recycling and waste collection to remain consistent over the transition," says Catherine Habermehl, director of waste management services.

Regional chair Jim Bradley says he applauds the provincial move to an "extended producer responsibility Blue Box program across Ontario."

In the short term, he says, "service level consistency will be maintained for residents, and in the long-term this transition provides opportunities to standardize recycling programs, improve diversion targets and accountability and encourage a circular economy while also helping to reduce the burden on municipal taxpayers."

Not to late to drop off goodies for stocking fillers, says King



Every year Amika Verwegen with her children (clockwise) Nova, Yuna, Kaznhiro and Fern Versteegen, make handmade cards for each of the seniors in long-term care. They are included in the stockings Joan King delivers to seniors. The kids are almost finished for this year, with the stockings going out next week. King would like to remind all those who indicated they would fill stockings for her project to please drop them off, by Friday if possible, to her home in Queenston at 17 Dumfries St. There is a hamper to leave them in if she isn't home. Also Apple Hill Apothecary at 758 Niagara Stone Road is collecting stockings for King if that's more convenient. King says if everyone is filling stockings who said they would, along with 60 being assembled by Crossroads students, she will have enough for all the seniors on her list. (File photo)



HOLIDAY EARLY DEADLINES

DECEMBER 27TH ISSUE

Classified, display advertising and editorial deadline:
Thursday, December 21st @ noon

The printed edition of The NOTL Local for the week of Christmas will be delivered Thursday, Dec. 28 to accommodate the holiday schedule of the press.

JANUARY 3RD ISSUE

Classified, display advertising and editorial deadline:
Friday, December 29th @ noon



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(businesses outside NOTL)
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905-934-1040

Editorial
penny@notllocal.com
905-246-5878

Wright's Olympic quest back on track with Montreal win



Coach Jesse Sallows (left, back) applauds as the referee declares Mckenzie Wright the winner Sunday. (Photos supplied)

Mike Balsom The Local

After topping the field at last weekend's Boxing Canada 2023 Olympic Team Trials in Montreal, St. Davids boxer Mckenzie Wright is back on the road toward qualifying for Paris 2024.

Having already represented Canada in the 50 kg weight class in October's Pan American Games in Santiago, Chile, Wright entered the weekend's five-day tournament with a first round bye as the top seed.

"I was confident going into Montreal," Wright said Monday afternoon. "That whole Pan Am experience helped me grow so much. I came into this tournament knowing that the gap between myself and the domestic competition just keeps getting bigger."

Losing her final match at those Pan Am games to American Jennifer Lozano meant that Wright had to win in Montreal to preserve her spot on the Canadian team. When she arrived home from Chile in late October she went right back to City Boxing Club in Niagara Falls to work hard for five weeks with trainer Jesse Sallows in preparation for the trials.

"There was some disappointment, of course," said Wright about losing to Lozano in that final Pan Am match. "But getting that close proved to me that I am at that level, that all I needed was to keep going. It gave me the determination and motivation that I needed over those five weeks."

She demonstrated that confidence in her first fight Friday against Toronto's Jacklyne Irvine, who had beaten Valentine Wilson for the chance to take her on.

"It was a busy fight,"

Wright recounted. "I went in with much more experience. I looked at it as an opportunity to try some things and get settled. It was a shutout, with an eight-count in the second round. Pretty much everything I threw at her landed, and I kept throwing for nine minutes. She was tough, and took it, but everything I wanted to throw landed."

Though she could have taken the opportunity to scout Irvine in her Thursday match with Wilson, Wright said she rarely does that.

"I perform better when I focus on myself instead of who is in front of me," she told *The Local*. "I let my coaches watch, and if they see some adjustments I might have to make, they let me know. I just prefer it that way."

Wright also didn't watch the fight immediately after hers, during which Quebec's Anne Marcotte got past Alexis Kubicki from Alberta to earn a spot in the final Sunday.

Marcotte would be a step up competition-wise for Wright. Back at the national championships in early 2023, Marcotte won the 50 kg weight class while Wright prevailed at the lighter 48 kg class. But Wright later won the Pan Am trials to bump Marcotte down to second seed at 50 kg.

"She has national team experience," Wright, who was out of boxing for about five years between 2017 and 2022, explained. "She was competing when I wasn't on the circuit. We fought for the first time last year, about my third fight back, and I beat her hands down."

Wright expected Marcotte to come out guns blazing, seeking revenge for having lost their previous battle. Instead, the 33-year-old from

Sherbrooke, Quebec played it cautious right from the opening bell.

"I needed to stick to my jab," Wright said. "I established that immediately, and she started backing up in the first 15 seconds. Right then I knew I had her by the way she reacted to my jabs. Every single judge gave me every single round. It was kind of a blowout."

Wright was happy to have Sallows in her corner in Montreal, along with her friend and former Olympian Mandy Bujold and national team coach Samir El Mais.

"They know me in and out," said Wright of Sallows and Bujold. "When tensions are high, it's important to have someone who knows how you will respond in a good way, who knows the right things to say when things go to plan or when they don't go to plan. It was super important to have them both with me for this one."

"It really settles her down and gives her the confidence she needs when she has us there," says Sallows. "I know Mandy has really worked with her on her mental preparation over the years. We all work well together."

Neither Sallows nor Bujold will be with Wright on her next step toward Olympic qualifying, a tournament scheduled for Feb. 29 to March 12 in Buseto Arsizio, Italy. A top-four finish there will punch her ticket to Paris. Otherwise she will have to try again at the second Olympic qualifier May 23 to June 3 in Bangkok, Thailand, where another top-four placement will do the job.

Wright is planning to take a few days off to decompress before heading back into the gym with Sallows. She'll enjoy Christmas in St. Davids

with her parents Dow and Judy while studying for her final nursing exam, which she hopes to write in January.

"I really haven't had a break since September," Wright explained. "My body and my mind need to be out of the gym for a week, or at least as long as I can last, because I am

addicted to going. Next week we'll start slowly, working on the corrections I need to make from this tournament, mostly on technical stuff."

After that, it's a lot of hard work with Sallows on conditioning to get ready for Italy. And it's not just Wright herself who has the confidence that

she'll be representing Canada at Roland-Garros next summer.

"She'll be going right to the Olympics," Sallows says. "She will make sure she at least grabs that top four in Italy. I am fully confident that she can win both of these next tournaments coming up. She definitely has what it takes."



Mandy Bujold and Jesse Sallows were in Mckenzie Wright's corner for both of her fights at the Canadian Olympic Team Trials last weekend.



Mckenzie Wright in the ring against Anne Marcotte at the Canadian Olympic Trials in Montreal.

Preds turn things around in three straight games

Mike Balsom
The Local

A meeting last week between Niagara Predators president and owner Robert Turnbull and his team seems to have been the spark for them to turn their season around. After a loss to the Tottenham Railers bumped Turnbull's team to seventh place in the Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League's South Division, the Preds skated to a 3-3 tie Friday at home against a powerhouse North York Renegades team, losing 4-3

in the last minute of overtime. They followed that with a 4-3 win over second place Durham on the road Monday, then notched a Tuesday afternoon 5-3 victory over the North Division's Temiscaming Titans at the Gale Centre in Niagara Falls as part of the league's showcase tournament. In all three games Niagara demonstrated the ability to play smart, thoughtful hockey for a full 60 minutes against tough competition, something coach Kevin Taylor hadn't seen much of over the team's first 20 games.

Friday's overtime loss was significant because the Predators stormed back with two goals in the third period to tie the game and force the extra five minutes. In four previous losses to the Renegades, Niagara had scored early and even held a lead before North York blew things wide open late in the game. "I felt we played well," Taylor said of Friday night, when the Renegades outshot them 61-27. "The guys worked hard, they battled, they didn't give up, and they got a point against a team we didn't think we would get a point from. At this stage, every single point is important."

Goaltender Zane Clausen kept the Preds in the game, making some key saves on North York's Jake McInstry, Nikolai Salov and Christopher Rende. Georgy Kholmovsky got the Preds on the board first in the opening period, but Joseph Martino replied twice in the second for North York. With Tyler Gearing serving a penalty for cross checking midway through the third, Salov scored and seemed to have sealed the deal for the Renegades. But Luca Fernandez had other ideas. The team's leading scorer netted two goals just 53 seconds apart in the final three minutes, leaving the Renegades speechless and sending the crowd at Virgil's Meridian Credit Union Arena into a frenzy. And they were just 36 seconds from going to a shootout to decide the victor when McInstry, who has been a thorn in the Preds' side for much of the season, popped in the game winner in overtime. "I told the guys before the



Shane Kaplan celebrates with teammate Georgy Kholmovsky after Kholmovsky scored Friday's first goal vs North York, (Mike Balsom)

LocalHAPPENINGS



LAST FISH FRY OF 2023
Thursday, December 14th
AND WILL RESTART
Thursday, January 11th
from 4 - 7 p.m.
EAT IN OR TAKE OUT
CASH ONLY
1 piece \$12 2 piece \$17
with fries
and coleslaw
taxes included
Legion
BRANCH FOR
NIAGARA ON THE LAKE

Royal Canadian Legion Br. 124 | 410 King St.,
905-468-2353 | legion124@gmail.com

St. Davids and District Lions Club



Friday
Fish Fry
December 15
4:30 to 7:00 pm
1 Pc Dinner - \$13.00
2 Pc Dinner - \$17.00

EAT IN or TAKE OUT
Haddock & Chips or
Baked Potato, Coleslaw,
Tartar Sauce, Bread,
Tea or Coffee
Refundable Bottle & Can Drive
EVERY FISH FRY FRIDAY
St. Davids LEOs will be on
hand to receive your empties!

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Cornerstone Kids Sign In
(Nursery - Grade 8)
10:00 a.m.
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Online & In-Person
Message:
Kevin Bayne
When God Feels
Absent & Silent
www.ccchurch.ca

To advertise your
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in this section,
please contact:
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NOTL skaters do well in Keswick competition



For NOTL Skating Club members who attended the Keswick Invitational Skating competition Nov. 24 to 26, it was their first competition of the season to have their scores tracked to be ranked for the Provincial Championships, which are in March. Mary Lamky (left), Katharine VanderKaay, Samantha Frydryk, Darah Adeyiwola, Jamie Doucet, Abigail McCabe, Kayla Thwaites, and Hailey Mitchell competed in Keswick. Results are as follows: Hailey Mitchell - 1st in STAR 5, U10; Kayla Thwaites - Gold Assessment in STAR 3; Jamie Doucet - 3rd in STAR 5; Samantha Frydryk - 4th in STAR 6; Abigail McCabe - 7th in STAR 5 U13; Katharine VanderKaay - 12th in STAR 6; Darah Adeyiwola - 15th in STAR 5 U13; Mary Lamky - 16th in STAR 8.

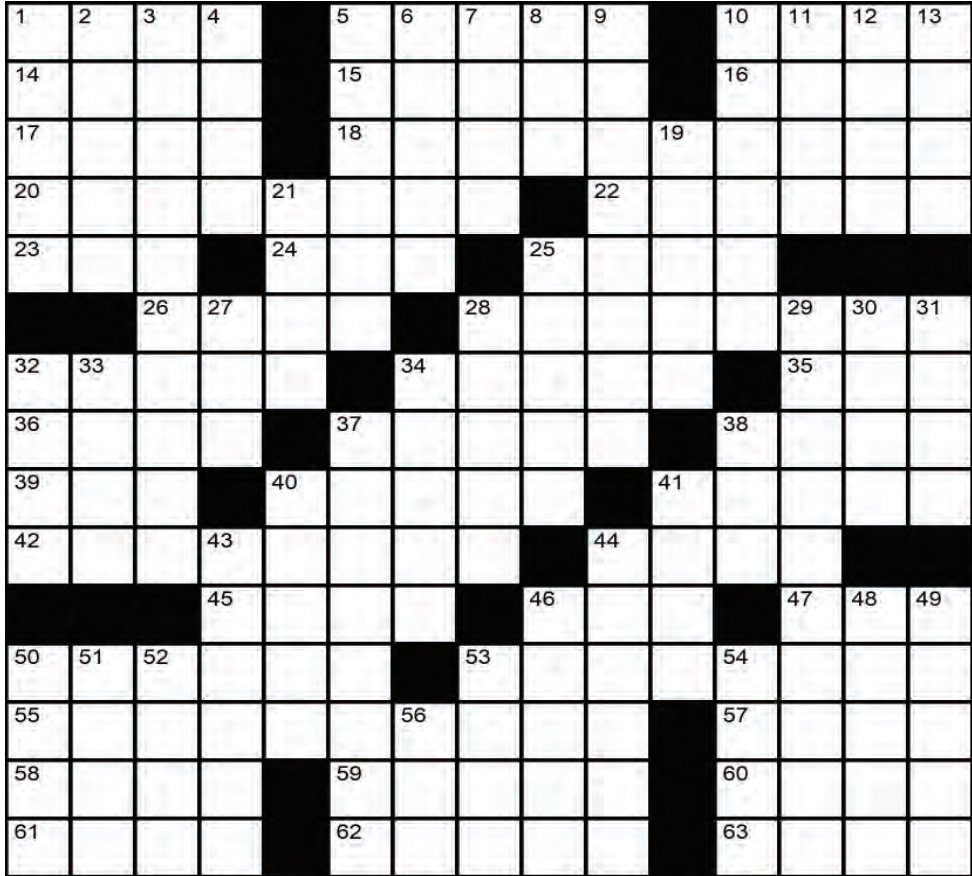
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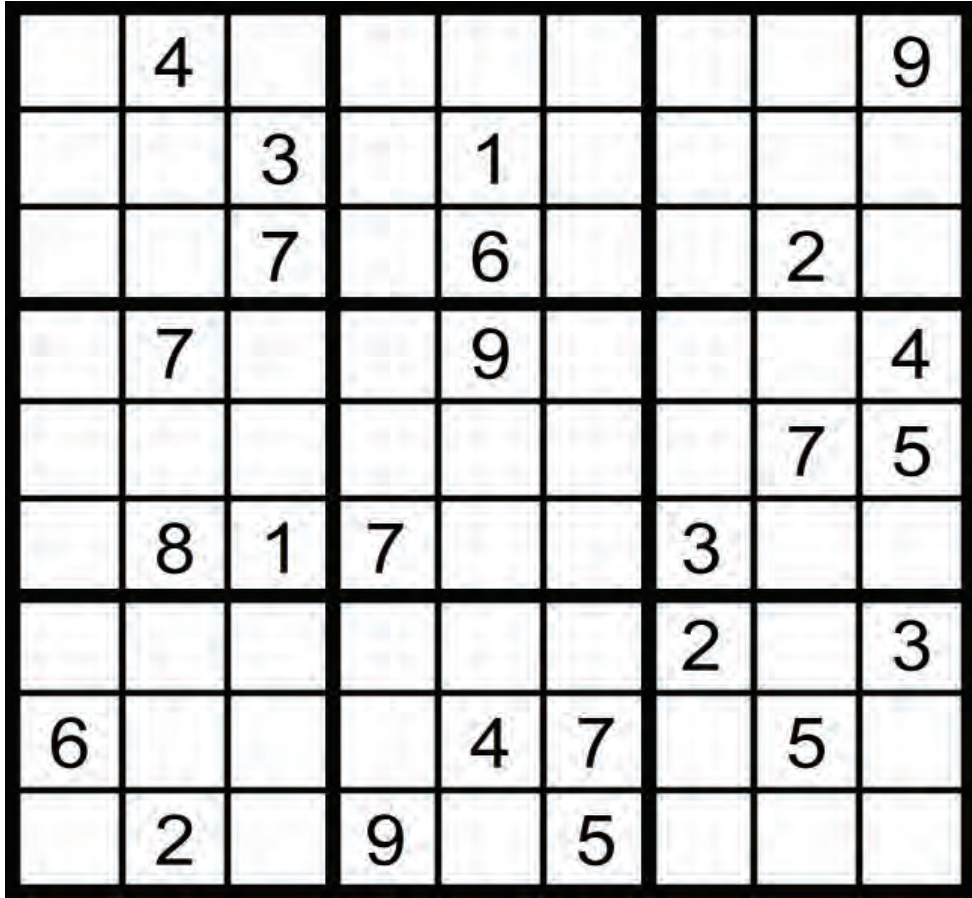


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- Across:
- 1 1/2 fl. oz.
 - 5 Accumulate
 - 10 Comic Chappelle
 - 14 Dash
 - 15 --- Hicks, who co-founded an eponymous online "List"
 - 16 --- Jannings, first Oscar winner
 - 17 "But, --- was ambitious, I slew him" (Shakespeare, "Julius Caesar")
 - 18 Doubtful attitude
 - 20 Pops the question
 - 22 Fight sites
 - 23 Brazilian saint
 - 24 "--- cool!"
 - 25 Chinese gooseberry
 - 26 Coal Miner's Daughter Loretta ---
 - 28 Castigatory
 - 32 Plaudits
 - 34 "Peace on earth, good will ---"
 - 35 "Air America" lead --- Gibson
 - 36 "Death --- Expert Witness" (P D James)
 - 37 "... my --- days, when I was green in judgment ..." (Shakespeare, "Antony and Cleopatra")
 - 38 Australian national gemstone
 - 39 "Holy cow!"
 - 40 Of high grade
 - 41 Former first lady of France --- Bruni
 - 42 Attars
 - 44 Democratic right
 - 45 Sawbones, briefly
 - 46 Salon goo
 - 47 Sucker
 - 50 Three miles
 - 53 Disturb oilman, or sabotage form of transportation
 - 55 Unlettered
 - 57 "The Joy of Cooking" author Rombauer
 - 58 "--- the torpedoes!" (David Farragut)
 - 59 "Divine Comedy" writer --- Alighieri
 - 60 Decree
 - 61 Dead tree
 - 62 Dirty political tactic
 - 63 Dorothy's doggy
 - 11 Former Ugandan dictator
 - 12 Passport endorsement
 - 13 Boston's Liberty Tree, and others
 - 19 Eighth moonwalker
 - 21 Possesses
 - 25 Stoner paired with Harold
 - 27 " ... from --- far country blows" (Housman)
 - 28 Gondoliers' propellers
 - 29 Such as Flo Ziegfeld
 - 30 Schnitzel meat
 - 31 She, in Sonora
 - 32 Japanese beef considered a delicacy
 - 33 Mysteries on high
 - 34 Watergate evidence
 - 37 Turns out well
 - 38 Bran source
 - 40 End of a glacier
 - 41 Centennial St.
 - 43 Salvage
 - 44 Pretense
 - 46 We --- Get Out of This Place
 - 48 Target
 - 49 Pupil of Socrates and teacher of Aristotle
 - 50 Eshades, maybe
 - 51 Flair
 - 52 Michigan college, and where it is
 - 53 Leo's locks
 - 54 Fissure
 - 56 --- + dam = lamb
- Down:
- 1 Golf hazards
 - 2 Port on the Shatt al-Arab river
 - 3 Choosy lads play havoc with study periods
 - 4 Quick look
 - 5 Long-time Moroccan king
 - 6 Properly pitched
 - 7 Matures
 - 8 Final wish?
 - 9 Kept in custody
 - 10 Chicanery



OBITUARY



Wiens, Donna — On the evening of Thursday December 7th, 2023, following an early Christmas celebration in the comfort of her home as per her request Donna passed peacefully surrounded by family. Loving wife of 51 years to Ed, caring mother to daughter Amanda (Graham) and sons Corey (Sara) and Brad (Hannah), and lovable Nana to Jordan, Braden, Ruby, Mitchell, Carson, Tanner, Wesley and Beau. The family is grateful for the exceptional and above and beyond care provided by Nurse Helen from ParaMed and PSW Lynn from Saint Elizabeth. We would like to thank the staff at the Walker Centre and Dr. VanderMeer for the excellent care she received over the past 8 years.

Donna's family will receive visitors at Butler Funeral Home, 424 Niagara Street, St Catharines on Tuesday December 12th from 4pm to 8pm. Funeral Service will be held in the chapel at Butler on Wednesday December 13th at 11 am. Donations to the St Catharines Salvation Army Food Bank and Community Care would be greatly appreciated.

Online condolences may be left at butlerniagara.ca



Burd, Paul William — Passed away peacefully in his sleep, after many health issues, on Friday December 8, 2023, at Douglas Memorial Hospital, Fort Erie, Ontario, at the age of 90. Beloved husband of Trudy for 67 years. Treasured father of Nancy and her husband Barry and Ronald. Adored grandfather of Jessica and her husband Cameron, Stephanie, William and his wife Amanda, Matthew and his wife Peng, Paul Jr., Sarah, Martin and his wife Melanie, and Tanya and her husband Lou, and great grandfather of Raelyn, Escher, Mila, Heath, Vera, and Livi.

Fondly remembered by many nieces, nephews especially Garry and Nancy, cousins and friends. Predeceased by his parents Greta and Tom Burd and his sister Eleanor.

Paul worked with Bell Canada for 35 years. He loved gardening, travelling, sailing and family get togethers.

The family will receive friends at MORGAN FUNERAL HOME, 415 Regent St., Niagara-on-the-Lake, on Saturday, January 6, 2024, from 1-4 p.m., with refreshments and hors d'ourves being served. Cremation has taken place and a private family inurnment in Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com



SUDOKU ANSWER

Sudoku solution from
December 6, 2023

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

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PUZZLE ANSWERS

Across: 1 Tbsp, 5 Hoard, 10 Dave, 14 Race, 15 Angle, 16 Emil, 17 As he, 18 Skepticism, 20
Proposes, 22 Arenas, 23 Sao, 24 Way, 25 Kiwi, 26 Lynn, 28 Punitive, 32 Kudos, 34 To men,
35 Mel, 36 Of an, 37 Salad, 38 Opal, 39 Boy, 40 Super, 41 Carla, 42 Essences, 44 Vote, 45
Docs, 46 Gel, 47 Sap, 50 League, 53 Monorail, 55 Illiterate, 57 Irma, 58 Damn, 59 Dante, 60
Flat, 61 Snag, 62 Smear, 63 Toto.
Down: 1 Traps, 2 Basra, 3 School days, 4 Peep, 5 Hassan, 6 On-key, 7 Ages, 8 R, 9
Detained, 10 Deceit, 11 Amin, 12 Visa, 13 Elms, 19 Iwin, 21 Ows, 25 Kumar, 27 Yon, 28
Poles, 29 Impresario, 30 Veal, 31 Ella, 32 Kobe, 33 U F Os, 34 Tapes, 37 Succeeds, 38 Oat,
40 Snout, 41 Colo, 43 Edging, 44 Veneer, 46 Gotta, 48 Aim at, 49 Plato, 50 Lids, 51 Eian, 52
Alma, 53 Mane, 54 Rift, 56 Ram.



Time with Santa organized by Palliative Care

Mike Balsom
The Local

Santa stopped in at the Niagara-on-the-Lake community centre Saturday to share some Christmas stories with the kids and to indulge in some cookies and hot chocolate.

The event was in support of NOTL Community Palliative Care Service.

Before posing for pho-

tos, children participated in some craft and colouring activities and received an early Christmas gift from the volunteers in attendance.

The event, with free-will donations accepted, was held to raise awareness about the services provided by the organization, and, as executive director Bonnie Bagnulo said, because “children matter to us too.”



Ethan MacMillan and Joseph MacIntyre pose with Santa. (Photos by Mike Balsom)



Santa shared a Christmas story with the children.



Jaysen Fletcher-King did some colouring before meeting Santa Claus.



Santa was pleased to meet Nathaniel and Theodore Jansson.



Santa got some help ringing the jingle bells from Declan and Paige Chow.



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