Crossroads officially opens its inclusive playground

It has been a bittersweet time since an inclusive playground was installed at Crossroads Public School in the summer of 2020. After successful fundraising that helped pay for the $114,000 structure, it sat in the playground “all new and shiny,” said parent Matt Dietsch, while his son Dylan and others who had been so excited to try it out could only look at it. When schools opened in September, 2020, playground equipment had been declared off-limits due to COVID-19 restrictions. Friday morning, a small crowd gathered at the back of Crossroads to finally officially open and celebrate the new accessible equipment.

Dietsch was instrumental in helping to raise money to build the new structure, and couldn’t be happier for Dylan, who was excited to play on it, as were other students who were finally going to be able to play with their friends.

Amber Dyck, with Dietsch one of the co-chairs of the fundraising committee, asked to speak at the opening, because, she said, “I wanted to express my deep gratitude, and how much hope I see for my daughter and her future when I look at this project, and all of the amazing people who made this happen.” Her daughter Megan was one of the children who looked longingly at the playground, waiting for the day she could try it out.

Dyk said she wanted to remind Megan, now 12, “of how much goodness and generosity and love there is in this world. I want her to know that there is a collaborative desire to allow all children to play regardless of ability, and to have equal opportunities. I want every child to know that they are seen and valued. On this journey I discovered that most people want to see and want to help. What a beautiful thing.”

As the proverb says, “It takes a village to raise a child,” said Dyck, but when a child has complex special needs, “it definitely takes a community.”

Megan’s “amazing resilience and positive attitude have helped her endure life with a rare genetic disorder that has caused both physical and cognitive disabili- ties,” Dyck said.

Megan, explained her mother, “lives in chronic pain, with a fragile spine, and joints that dislocate and have continual irritation. Academics are also challenging, as her brain processes differently so reading and fundamental math skills are still goals to be achieved. However, her...
Drop in temperature needed for rink’s next step

Penny Coles
The Local

The boards are up for an outdoor skating rink in the Virgil sports park. Now all we need for great family fun, says former town councillor Paolo Miele, is cold weather.

The town is allowing Miele and his team of volunteers to use the infield of the baseball diamond closest to the Centennial Arena. The bleachers can be used for putting on skates, the washrooms at the arena will be open, and the rink will be open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. — the diamond has lights that will come on when it gets dark.

Miele says he’s paid a $1,750 deposit for the supplies and installation of the boards for the 40-foot by 80-foot rink, and the greenhouse-grade plastic will be laid in a couple of weeks when there is cold weather in the forecast, and then the flooding can begin.

He has received donations to pay for the boards and the insurance — he had hoped town insurance would cover the outdoor rink, but is having to pay for it himself.

“Two businesses in town, Phil’s Independent Grocer and Andrew Perrie of Revel Realty have each donated $1,000 to get the project off the ground. Miele was also hoping for a rink in St. Davids and at the community centre as well, but has to be content with hoping if the Virgil rink is a success this year, maybe those locations will have a rink next winter. And maybe enough money can be raised for a chiller, so there will be an outdoor rink that can be used all winter long, he adds.

“If people are willing to donate it would be awesome to have an entirely publicly funded rink we could use all winter, with the town’s participation,” says Miele.

“And if we get this done right, we can build up enough of a volunteer base to have other rinks next year.”

Although without a chiller the weather only allows for a short season, maybe a month or a month and a half, he says, “we’ll use it to get families together for a community event, another activity to get people outside.”

The sports park rink will be unsupervised, except for parents who might be there with their children, Miele says, but there will be signage, paid for by the town, stating the rules, including that helmets are required. Other than that, “it will be skate-at-your-own-risk skating.”

“The hope is that parents and other adults will supervise the children. This is a community that looks after each other,” he says. And that’s what he is hoping to accomplish with the outdoor rink, he adds, “bringing back that sense of community.”

He would love to see some speakers at the rink for music, and since the town hasn’t opened the concession stand in the arena, he suggests possibly it could be leased to someone who would run it as a private business, buying the supplies and staffing it for hockey games as well as indoor and outdoor skating. “It doesn’t have to be another budget line.”

When Miele speaks about the town’s decision to keep the concession stand closed, the former councillor in him emerges, and he begins to sound like his days as a politician are over.

He is critical of the current council for money spent on lawyers’ fees to fight development, and says it’s time the town started thinking about spending some of that on local families and kids.

“Hopefully future councils will pay for these things,” he admits. He adds he is “100 per cent probably” going to run in the 2022 municipal election — the ‘probably’ depending on his wife — but says he hasn’t decided whether it will be for mayor, town councillor or regional councillor.

“I want to get things done for kids, get back to our roots and traditions, get that small-town feeling back.”

If donations exceed the cost of the rink, the money will go towards next year’s projects, he says.

Donations can also be made at the Virgil Avondale, or to Martin Mazza at Italian Pizza and Subs, and Andrew Perrie at Revel Realty.

The other physicians within our team will be remaining at their current locations.
Frustration evident over lack of booster appointments

Penny Coles
The Local

While Niagara has been focusing on getting children aged five to 11 vaccinated against COVID-19, adults eligible for third doses are becoming increasingly frustrated over the difficulty of getting their booster shot.

Each day, national news outlets are featuring health experts urging people to get that third dose, to protect against the rapidly-spreading Omicron variant. Despite this, many local residents who have been waiting for appointments in good faith are finding they aren’t available elsewhere, and they are in the same boat, “and that’s when they take appointments for the follow-up shot for my son,” said Simpson.

He is estimating it will take until mid to late January to get through his list of those in the first round of eligibility, with the staff he has available.

The excess demand, waiting for the public health clinics to ramp up for boosters, is creating a drain on resources for pharmacists with the number of phone calls and emails from people anxious for those boosters, said Simpson.

“We are seeing people with the expectation they will walk in the door and get it. We just ask them to be patient and get on the waiting list,” he said.

He also suggested that if appointments become available elsewhere, they should take the first opportunity to get their booster. He said he’s hearing the same level of frustration from pharmacists across the province — the problem isn’t unique to Niagara.

Down the road, at the Garrison Village Shoppers Drug Mart, technician Brenda Matthews is experiencing similar problems. She says staff have people yelling at them regularly, angry that they can’t make appointments. The local pharmacy doesn’t keep a waiting list — the issue is the amount of vaccine and not knowing how much they will receive. They’ve been getting a shipment of 120 doses once a week, on Thursday afternoons and that’s when they take appointments for the following week, for Mondays and Wednesday. But on Thursdays, people start calling or coming into the store, lining up to make appointments. And as hard as they try to treat everyone fairly, people are really angry at the delay, she says.

“We had one customer standing at the counter crying. She was going to be travelling, and she said she needed it to feel safe. We’re trying to do our best, trying to accommodate everyone, but it’s very stressful on the staff. If we could get more doses we could accommodate more people. We keep asking for more.”

Dr. Karen Berti of the Niagara North Family Health team is also feeling the frustration of patients wanting booster shots. The health team has a small number of appointments available for the elderly and shut-ins, and those who are having trouble manipulating the COVID booking system. But they don’t have the capacity to offer booster shots to all their patients.

“It is a combination of factors, lack of vaccine and lack of resources, she says. They are seeing many patients who because of COVID

Continued on page 4
Continued from page 3

Vaccination protesters didn’t hang around

Penny Coles
The Local

Friday morning, the first of three days of children’s vaccination clinics at the Niagara-on-the-Lake community centre, public health officials had to deal with a protester.

The Niagara Regional Police were called, and an officer who arrived reported there had been an “unwanted” person at the clinic, however she had left, and there were no further calls.

“As we’ve moved into providing vaccines to the now eligible five to 11-year-old cohort, we have noticed some individuals and groups in our community have strong reactions to children being vaccinated, and very often promote misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines,” Courtney Westerhof, Public Health communications consultant, said in a statement to The Local.

“While Niagara Region Public Health recognizes the right to peaceful protest, the harassment of young children and their families attending vaccine clinics is disappointing and unacceptable.”

The five to 11 age group currently has the highest rate of COVID-19 infection in Niagara, and the vaccine is a safe and effective way to provide them with some very welcome protection,” she said.

“The well-being and safety of our clients and staff is of prime importance. We monitor these situations and work with Niagara Regional Police for response and action.”

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said although staff were alerted to the incident, they didn’t have much information about it.

“It was one protester, and Niagara Region Public Health is looking for more adult appointments”

Continued on page 9

Public Health gearing up for more adult appointments

 hadn’t been getting the care they need, and getting caught up is taking a lot of manpower.

She reminds people that we still need to abide by all the public health rules. “Vaccinations are good, but we have to try to keep our numbers down at gatherings, stick to small groups, and keep following all the other protocols, especially over Christmas.”

The responsibility for adult vaccinations that has fallen on pharmacies and family physicians, while public health departments prioritized vaccinations for children, comes at a time when 175,000 adults in the Niagara Region have become eligible for boost-er shots, says acting chief medical officer of health Dr. Mustafa Hirji. As the requests for appointments for kids’ vaccinations have declined, public health clinics began offering some of those appointments to adults, beginning last week-end, but it will take some time before there is enough capacity in the system to accommodate all those who want their third dose.

In January, the system will be further taxed when those 18 and over become eligible for boosters.

In September, many of the large areas used for clinics, such as arenas and gyms, became unavailable, and the demand for adult vaccinations started to slow down. “We just don’t have those larger sites now,” said Hirji.

Staffing is also a problem, with nurses leaving, retiring or taking medical leave due to burnout. Also staff is needed for contact tracing — with the increasing number of people infected and their level of activity “people have a lot of contacts.”

Public health is looking at other options to ramp up for additional appointments, he said, “but with 175,000 people 50 and up now eligible, it’s not something we can do in a few weeks. It’s likely to take five to seven weeks to vaccinate that many people.”

The clinics that are taking appointments for adults are now open for first, second and third doses, but it’s the group that has their first two that are “really enthusiastic” about being vaccinated, and who are now looking for boosters, he said.

“I still say the first and second doses are more important to get that base level of immunity, but with Omicron, the value of boosters is become higher than it used to be. The booster makes a bigger difference against Omicron.”

With the number of new cases in Niagara the highest in the last “several months,” those in the hospital with COVID-19 are “overwhelmingly” those who are not vaccinated. “There is close to a 20-times higher risk” for the unvaccinated.

Hirji said he was “really enthusiastic” about promoting the vaccine, and has been seeing an increase in the numbers. He was hoping about 50 to 60 per cent of parents would want their kids vaccinated, but only about 26 per cent in Niagara have had their first shot, falling well short of what he was expecting.

He is hearing that some parents are waiting until after the holidays, he said, whereas as cases go higher, it’s important to have more children vaccinated before the holidays.

There is no shortage of vaccine, he says, for kids or adults, although the province hasn’t been shipping to pharmacies in the numbers they’ve been asking for.

His advice is for people to be patient and keep trying to book appointments — as more become available they will be listed on the Niagara Region Facebook page and through the provincial portal, and in the meantime, to be cautious over the holidays, don’t go to crowded places, limit the number of people in social gatherings to no more than 10, and make sure those attending family gatherings are vaccinated.

Although that can’t be enforced, Hirji added, “we’re really relying on people wanting to keep their parents and grandparents safe, wanting to keep everybody safe.”

He is anticipating there could be more restrictions or recommendations announced by the province this week, and although he doesn’t know what they will be, he suggested may be new vaccination requirements in places such as malls and retail stores might be coming.
Dental Care Niagara would like to introduce Julia Iapichino, our newest team member, to our lovely community. Julia is a licensed denturist who studied at Oxford College in Toronto, and Queen’s University in Kingston, achieving her Bachelor of Science in biology. A member of the College of Denturists of Ontario, the Denturist Association of Ontario, and the Denturist Association of Canada, she is celebrating over five years of successful denture fabrication.

Julia is a firm believer that when working with a patient, no detail is too small. She respects that every patient has different needs, and makes sure that each is completely satisfied, and able to smile with confidence after denture work is complete. Throughout Julia’s career so far, she has helped many patients feel better about themselves with the right denture solutions. She believes choosing the right professional for denture care is not something to be taken lightly, and takes great pride in the work she provides to each and every patient, ensuring they are not only comfortable with their overall appearance, but their oral function as well.

Julia was born and raised in the Niagara region and is thrilled to be back serving her home community. In her spare time Julia enjoys spending time with family and friends, exploring the outdoors, and staying active. Dental Care Niagara has been serving Niagara-on-the-Lake and the Virgil areas for the past seven years, with a staff that finds it a pleasure and an honour to serve such a great community. The local clinic offers full family dentistry, with services that include cleaning, bleaching, fillings, root canals, crowns, extractions, implants, dentures, bridges and other esthetic services. The facility is fully IV-certified for those who fear dentistry. IV-conscious sedation is one of the most effective techniques available to a general dental practice. The dentist will introduce intravenous drugs into the blood stream to help patients relax and adopt a carefree attitude, even when faced with situations that would normally be quite stressful. Because the patient is so relaxed, most end up falling asleep during their appointment; our patients have found comfort while being IV-sedated.

The team of experts at Dental Care Niagara takes pride in education and case presentation so each patient can truly understand their oral needs. Dr. Ramez Salti takes care of all the surgeries, including start-to-finish implant dentistry for those who are fully or partially edentulous — whether you are missing single or multiple teeth, Dr. Salti can restore your smile and give you your confidence back. Dr. Daniela Matijevic recently began offering full therapeutic Botox services to qualifying patients to alleviate long-lasting tension headaches and symptoms associated with TMD pain due to clenching and grinding. Botulinum toxin is highly purified protein without any live bacteria, and its purpose is to relax the muscle (and not to paralyze it) so that it no longer goes through severe contractions, producing extreme pain. Find out if you are a candidate for Botox on your next visit.

When you visit Dental Care Niagara, you will be treated as family. Everyone at Dental Care Niagara is grateful for this wonderful community and the trust and support their patients place in them, and looks forward to restoring future smiles. Call today to book your appointment at 905-468-5656, or email info@dentalcareniagara.com.

Dental Care Niagara is open Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Thursday 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., and Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Wind storms are teachers, especially those like Saturday’s

Owen Bjorgan Special to The Local

This past weekend’s wind storm was one for the books. It was forecasted days in advance, as an appreciably mas-}

stive cold front, stretching from Georgia in the U.S. to Quebec, blanketed its way eastward across the continent. This vi-o- lent and unforgiving weather system was created by unus-}
In this season of hope, all of us need a good measure of optimism, especially with the ongoing pandemic. In my recent article I mentioned that my husband Michel’s heart attack in 2018 was the tipping point that led to my PTSD, from which I have recovered.

During the past few months, individuals who contacted me neither knew about post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or have some of my symptoms; some have sought help since their anguish helped me realize my situation wasn’t unusual. That’s why I share below some real, contradictory, painful, and frightening excerpts from my journal to show the challenging journey we who live with trauma daily. While on this path, we see no hope, and we seem trapped in a vicious circle. Living in trauma, there is hope for each of us.

Many people share some of my symptoms without experiencing PTSD. For 18 months, before knowing it, I lived in the darkness of PTSD nightmares, severe anxiety, depression and constant headaches were some of my debilitating experiences, which continued — some less intense — until I was rid of PTSD. Though I knew something was wrong, I did not know I had PTSD.

I have a loving and supportive family. But often my behaviour contradicted this, as many journal entries show. Maybe that is why I never contemplated taking my life, even though daily I struggled with wanting to live, while craving to die. Still, I kept searching for an escape hatch to flee from my bondage.

**Selected Journal Entries**

**Dec. 26, 2020:**

Michel: You have been my love and life for the past 60 years. We have done life together. And we have been through many joys, sorrows, and challenges, yet always present, celebrate, and overcome them. You have been my strength when I was weak, always trying to help me through our difficult times. Even when I wanted to give up trying, you refused to let me in my struggles, and always found just what I needed to guide me through. Thank you for your loving patience and tenderness.

**May 19, 2021:**

Last night, as soon as I tied down to start my body shaking, I felt it happens when painful memories strike, which I do every night. Moving to the sofa somehow suspends the shaking, but the memories continue. I believe, too, some relief comes because I can rest against a solid surface and feel grounded, and less isolated. I have been researching eye movement desensitization and reprocessing therapy (EMDR), and will look for a psychotherapist who uses it.

**May 20, 2021:**

Today, I believed, was going to be a great day. But the hope I thought would exist vanished, now the day looks pretty dreadful. I am sitting on the deck wanting to relax when, without warning, I find I am transported back to a place of painful memories. These are awful and frightening feelings. Am I going to be abandoned? Should I continue living? I know this is illegal, but I can’t stop these thoughts. They are real to me, and I am trying to figure out what I will do when I am abandoned and be on my own. Where and how will I survive... if I survive?

**May 27, 2021:**

Okay, so it’s night and the witching hours are here. I am feeling alone, lonely and abandoned, like I do each night. I am sleeping on the couch again, but as soon as I lie down, the spasms begin. Then I always begin in my stomach and move to my upper body — an awful feeling I can’t control. I am so tired of it all. Oh, how I wish I could go to bed and get one restful night, and awake re-freshed and alive!

**My Search for Help Begins**


Dallaire’s book documented his 20- year struggle with PTSD. At 71, I didn’t want to spend the rest of my life on medication and therapy. Not satisfied with the outcome in that book, my continuous search resulted in reading Besel Van der Kolk’s book, The Body Keeps the Score, EMDR, and my counsellor, Hiba Khuthat.

Words cannot express my brief, but incredible joy, journey with Hiba and her tremendous support. At the outset, I ventured outside my comfort zone and made a crucial decision to trust her and EMDR therapy wholeheartedly, thus becoming vulnerable. Now I realize how important that decision was for my healing.

Today, I am healed of PTSD and all traumatic experiences, and I am off all PTSD medications! But a new journey has began. I became a new person, and I am now learning about this individual.

We would like to share our recent experience using the NOTL Niagara Regional Transit System (NRT) On-Demand Service:

At the reserved time we were picked up at our front door in Old Town, and delivered right to where our car was being repaired. Richard on 7th Concession Road. What a bonus to have door-to-door service, especially with the winter weather approaching as well. We had appreciated the former local bus transit, of fixed route and times, but this On-Demand Regional service has more flexible options to transport us conveniently within NOTL, or to join other Niagara transit services. There’s great value with its reasonable price of $3/person within NOTL, or $6/person extending outside. The NOTL boundaries are being adjusted as use increases.

Their app is very simple to sign into, with Live Customer Service available if any questions arise while we are travelling. The driver was very pleasant and accommodating. NOTL On-Demand is very open about their current monitoring of the NOTL demarcation as this is a new service here. They are adapting and refining the number of cars and drivers required throughout Niagara. It’s great to see that this service is popular and being used by NOTL locals and visitors.

Check out their website. It’s very informative with general details about hours and protocols, as well as developing information: https://niagararegion.ca/transit/on-demand/ Ann Dempter & Bill McKendry NOTL

**Letters! We want letters!**

If you have a letter to the editor you’d like to see published, please send it to penney@notlocal.com. Please try to keep it to about 350 words. Sorry, but we won’t publish anonymous letters. And please stick to the issue at hand, rather than attacking those involved. The deadline is Monday at noon.

**Local CHRISTMAS GIFT GUIDE**

**Advertise your business!**

**Special Christmas section!**

**Local个乡镇holes in the hearts of us, and I am very grateful to be able to live and work in this amazing community, but I’m pretty sure the majority of us are not planning to give for the editor of The Local to publish her editorial two weeks earlier. For my part, at least, it was a fine example of journalistic integrity and a very brave step! Thank you for your loving patience and your understanding those who are not hearing from. The number of those who are not heard from. The number of those who are not heard from. The number of those who are not heard from. The number of those who are not heard from. The number of those who are not heard from. The majority, the majority is a rightly powerful constitu-
Ariana Ferry, a Niagara local who’s studying at Mohawk College, wanted to do an audit of the library’s fiction collection. She found that it wasn’t fully reflective of the community, so she decided to change that. She realized that the collection needed to be more inclusive, and she did her research to create a more diverse collection.

She also wanted to change the way the books were organized. The Dewey Decimal System, which is still used in many libraries, can be difficult to navigate and doesn’t always reflect the diversity of the community. Ariana wanted to use a more user-friendly system that would make it easier for people to find the books they want.

She started by looking at the books in the children’s section and created a new system that was more reflective of the community. She then worked with the library’s staff to implement the new system, which has already led to a more diverse and inclusive collection.

Ariana’s work is still ongoing, but she has already made a significant impact. She has helped to make the library more welcoming to people of all ages and backgrounds, and she is continuing to work on improving the collection and the way it is organized.

Library reclassification includes increasing inclusivity

Old-growth trees help keep certain species robust

NotLongLocal.com

December 15, 2021

Cathy Simpson
CAO, NOTL, Public Library

You may remember the Dewey Decimal System from your school days. American librarian Melvil Dewey developed his classification system in the mid-1870s to group books by subject, rather than size and date.

At the time, most library book stacks were closed to the public, so browsing by subject wasn’t considered important. As part of public libraries’ ethical commitment to information access and equality of access, stacks gradually opened, and Dewey’s system was embraced by librarians and the public, who could now search for books themselves.

The world was much different when Dewey developed his classification system, and we see his biases and those of mid-19th century society in the system. This is important because the way we organize information has a profound impact on how we learn. Dewey has been embraced by librarians and the rest of the collection alignment with the colonial narrative, and that could create barriers to accessing information. For example, Off-Reservation Boarding Schools become Residential Schools.

No system will ever be perfect, but we’re always looking to improve it. We need to include more voices, our collection becomes more inclusive and reflective of our growing and diverse community. This in turn helps us learn more about our neighbours, and understand each other better. To see the complete strategic plan, visit https://notlpubliclibrary.org/pdfs/StrategicPlan2022.

Ariana began this summer working on increasing titles by authors from marginalized groups. For example, Off-Reservation Boarding Schools become Residential Schools.

Old-growth trees help keep certain species robust

With a storm like that, it is not just lapping, but pounding the shoreline sand dunes. The beach was gone. Erie storm surge made me feel primal and had my brain kicking into high alert mode; I realized I needed to get back to my van, at the rate things were going.

As I retraced my steps back through the old-growth forest, I realized that my water levels marker (just a couple of wooden stakes I previously put in the ground) had already washed away. I then proceeded to walk knee deep in ice cold Lake Erie water, but in a place that it almost never reaches.

When I waded my way out to the parking lot, I was nervous and delighted to find the water levels just inches from my vehicle doors. My van sat in a sea of murky water, and it barely made it out of the parking lot.

At this point, driving down Thunder Bay Road toward the border for more filming, not a single house or business had lights on in downtown Fort Erie. Sellishly but honestly, I really had to use a washroom, and couldn’t get into any of the fast food places. The Nicolet Ranger Station was closed, and the rest of the collection didn’t have anyone around.

Continue from page 6

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No danger, but protest still inappropriate

Continued from page 4

lic Health are very familiar with this person. They contacted the NRP, she said. “There was no real danger, but it’s pretty bad when someone goes to a clinic where there is already a lot of angst, particularly when they’re children.”

MPP Wayne Gates says NDP leader Andrea Horwath has proposed a bill in the legislature asking the province to create “safety zones” to protect hospitals, health care workers and those entering hospitals or health care locations from protesters. “It’s absolutely terrible that kids can’t feel safe going to a clinic to get vaccinated,” he said.

Once Premier Doug Ford announced Ontario would be implementing a vaccine mandate, protests erupted across the province, and became a safety issue in front of hospitals. The NDP has called for protesting at health care spaces to be a provincial offence, with a fine high enough to discourage protesters, says Gates. Whether it’s young kids, or health care work-ers, “our heroes,” said Gates, they shouldn’t be harassed. “There should be laws in place that if people are going to do that, they should be punished.”

Three siblings vaccinated

The Ferguson sisters, Peyton, 11, Olivia, 10, and Emily, 8, were vaccinated at the community centre Friday. The clinic was very well organized, and staff were wonderful, handling the girls with respect, says mom Brenda Ferguson. They were especially patient and kind with Peyton, who was nervous, and helped her relax. (Photo supplied)
**Worried about the Winter Months?**

With our Winter Staycation you can enjoy:
- Gourmet Meals and snacks
- Weekly housekeeping and linen service
- Meet some new friends
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What our Residents have to say:
"The staff here are great, if you move in to Royal Henley, you are treated like family" - Helen

"The Royal Henley is a wonderful place to live. It provides luxury in a comfortable setting that really sets it apart from other Retirement Communities. It is situated close to beautiful Port Dalhousie and its many walking trails. Royal Henley provides a clean, healthy environment with great food, amenities and activities. The competent staff are very warm, caring and friendly. As a resident we are all seniors who are VERY happy to be here. You can participate in scheduled activities and programs or just relax in your suite. The choice is yours!" - Tony Rap

Submitted by Royal Henley

While the sparkling white snowflakes can be beautiful, winters can be long and lonely. We all know what comes with the winter months; icy paths, and winter worries that can lead to cold isolating days.

It is important to prepare for the colder days ahead. Royal Henley's WINTER STAYCATION can be your all inclusive, winter wonderland. Our winter staycation is a low-commitment way to experience retirement living.

**Newark Neighbours overwhelmed with generosity of donations**

Penny Coles
The Local

The donations just keep coming, ensuring those in need in Niagara the Lake are being cared for this holiday season.

It’s a busy time for a group of dedicated volunteers who ensure those who are struggling to make ends meet in town are looked after, with food and gifts.

The number of those in need, families, couples and individuals has increased from recent years, but there is still more than enough for all those who have registered for help at Christmas.

And then there are the donations dropped off at the Candlelight Stroll. "Oh my gosh," says Grant, "I really wasn’t sure what kind of a turn-out we’d get, but it took four of us to upload what they brought in a van."

The generosity of donations this year “has been overwhelming,” she said, and not just the quantity, but the quality of donations.

Newark Neighbours has 48 homes to visit with deliveries, with 140 people to receive food, including a ham or turkey, and gifts for adults and kids. If there is one thing Newark is good at, it is to feed more turkeys, says Grant.

The store is closing this Wednesday, Dec. 16 at 2 p.m. to give volunteers time to organize the food and gifts Thursday, to be delivered Friday. The food bank and thrift store will remain closed until Jan. 4.

When Grant speaks of the number of people who have donated to Newark, and the number of volunteers who will have had a part in seeing the food and gifts delivered to those in need, she says, “it truly takes a village.”

And when the volunteers get back to work in January, it will be time to start thinking about a new space for Newark Neighbours.

With a 50-year history of serving Niagara on the Lake residents, it has far outgrown its current space, and in November, reached out to the community about the need for a new location and space to better serve their growing needs.

There is a wish list of needs to be met, says Grant, including 2,000-plus square feet in space, ground floor accessibility, privacy for food clients, and running water.

They have had some offers of help, she says, and by getting

**Continued on page 14**
Ara Shoes opened its doors in 2015, and has been thriving ever since. It is a family-owned business, proud to offer their customers European brands such as Josef Seibel, Rieker, Remonte, Bueno, Caprice, and Volks Walkers.

You will find men's and women's shoes, accessories and apparel, with a focus on affordable, comfortable, good quality footwear, as well as great customer service and a team ready to help you with the right fit.

Located across from the Royal George Theatre, Ara is in the heart of the Niagara-on-the-Lake main street, and in addition to comfort, promises fashionable footwear in a colourful assortment, wide to narrow fitting, in unique and fun styles that cater to all age groups. Their loyal clientele come from Toronto, Buffalo and Rochester to buy their footwear at Ara, knowing they will find an eclectic array of styles they can't resist, and won't see closer to home.

Perfect for this time of year, their winter selection of boots include water-resistant and fleece-lined options that have excellent grip for walls in the snow, as well as a new line of ice-grip boots with spikes on the bottom. With people enjoying more activities outdoors due to the pandemic, Ara fills the need for more durable winter boots, so if you're in the market for a new pair of boots for a trek outdoors, it is the store to visit first.

As well as footwear, this year Ara has introduced a new line of outerwear from Claire Desjardins, a Quebec designer whose abstract artwork inspires her unique clothing, which includes reversible jackets. Come spring, you will find her new line of colourful prints.

Volks Walkers is a unique, popular footwear line, made in Turkey and Portugal. Their wide-fitting styles and colourful assortments attract a lot of attention. With leather uppers and cushiony insoles that are removable, when customers try them on they say they feel like they're walking on air. In the spring, Ara will carry their cork line of shoes made in Portugal. Cork is a vegan alternative, and environmentally-friendly. You will also find cork bags and accessories at Ara, all made in Portugal.

Dec 26-Jan 2
11-5PM
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Volks Walkers
The European Comfort Shoe

Ara Shoes & Accessories
Submitted by

ARA SHOES & ACCESSORIES

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Give the Gift of Creativity

Submitted by
Yellow Door Theatre

What better Christmas present than an Experience for Life? Yellow Door Theatre Project (YDTP) has been helping children in the Niagara Region find their passion for the arts for the past seven years. The Not for Profit Registered Charity organization offers dance, musical theatre, and acting classes as well as performance opportunities that include the popular Summer Camp Program and the Fall Performance Company. Students at YDTP are encouraged to be themselves while learning important life skills like teamwork, public speaking, confidence, and creativity. YDTP is located in the heart of Niagara-on-the-Lake and the heart of founder and Artistic Producer Andorlie Hillstrom.

Yellow Door Theatre Project is proud to be an active member of the Niagara community! You may have seen our talented youth performing at the Shaw Festival, on television, at the McArthur Enchanted Wonderland this year or at the Candelight Stroll or Santa Claus Parade in previous years.

Open the Door of creativity for those artsy kids in your life and sign them up for a class at Yellow Door Theatre Project! Check out our website for more information on Yellow Door Theatre Project and our RECREATIONAL Classes. www.yellowdoortheater.com

Merry Christmas from the Miller Group

Submitted by
Miller Group

Sally, Will and Matt of The Miller Group wish all their Clients and the good people of Niagara-on-the-Lake a well deserved Merry Christmas and Happy Holiday! These past two years have been challenging for everyone — they have illustrated just how important family is during uncertain times and how critical it is to live each day to the fullest. They’ve also shown us that life and business must and will carry on.

The Miller Group is delighted to share with you their two new listings for this week.

450 Nassau St., Unit 3, NOTL puts you steps from the action of Old Town. With 2+1 Bdrm, 3 Full Wshrm, Open Concept LR and Kitchen, fully finished basement and professional hard scape and soft scape Bkyd courtyard, this Town-home offers perfect turnkey living. Please contact Matt or Will for more information.

Suite 201, 61 Paffard St. is NOTL’s hidden gem of Condo living and we mean gem! Cradled in an extraordinary private setting, this 1390 sq ft, 2 Bdrm, 2 Bath Condo is available for long term lease, available immediately. Please reach out to Matt or Will for more information.

Think of The Miller Group as your personal NOTL Real Estate Advisors. As a Mother and Sons family team, they are committed to helping your family with all your real estate needs.

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Why the Holidays Are a Good Time to Sell a House

Submitted by Greg Sykes

When it comes to real estate, the ideal time to sell your home is often the spring. After all, many people hunker down during the winter months and are too busy during the holidays to think about purchasing a new home. And don’t forget, people like to stop shopping in the spring to make sure they are settled in their homes before the start of a new school year.

But what if you can’t wait until the weather warms up to get your house on the market? Should you consider putting your house up for sale around the holidays?

It may not seem like the ideal time, but the holiday season does have its benefits—provided you position your home just the right way. You might not get to the middle of a bidding war, but you are going to deal with serious buyers who are ready to close a deal.

Here are six reasons why the holidays are a good time to sell a house.

1. There’s Less Inventory

Conventional wisdom says people should wait until the spring to get the most from a home sale. After all, inventory normally picks up in the spring as the weather gets warmer. This often leads to price wars breaking out in coveted neighborhoods. A home in a great area with a lot of potential buyers can sit on the market for just a few weeks or, in some cases, even days.

But that doesn’t mean people don’t look—or buy—at other times of the year. In fact, there are plenty of homes listed around the holidays that may command more money, even if the inventory is limited. If you play your cards right, you may even be able to sell your home quicker than the ones listed in the spring.

One reason is the lack of competition during the holidays. Many sellers don’t want to list their houses just before or during the holidays—some don’t want people tracking in snow and dirt during each showing, while others just want to enjoy the holiday season as family time.

Whatever the reason, don’t discount the possibilities. Serious buyers won’t be waiting for an endless list of homes from which to choose, so there’s more time for them to focus on yours. Furthermore, the limited range of options available to buyers means you may be able to command a higher asking price for your property.

If you do your research, stage your home properly, and price it right, you could attract the perfect buyer and be on your way out the door into a brand new home.

2. Winter Buyers Are More Serious

Most open houses take place during the spring and early summer. It isn’t unusual to see people saunter into a property without a clear plan to buy. People often check out homes just for the sake of looking. After all, hitting open houses is a favorite pastime for many Canadians.

But if your house is up for sale in the winter and someone is looking at it, chances are that person is serious and ready to buy. Anyone shopping for a new home between Thanksgiving and New Year’s is likely going to be a serious buyer—they aren’t going to spend their precious time around the holidays seeing how the other half lives. Putting your home on the market at this time of year and attracting a serious buyer can often result in a quicker sale.

3. That Warm and Cozy Feeling

The holidays are often a time when people gather around fireplaces, drink hot chocolate, and bake cakes and cookies. Homeowners who put their houses up for sale during the winter months can stage their houses to give off the cozy and homey vibe that appeals to many buyers. Some people may argue that showing a house in the winter is hard to do because there’s snow on the ground, the house is drafty, and the curb appeal is lacking. But turning the heat up, having a yummy treat in the oven, and keeping the sidewalk and driveway clear of snow and ice can boost a home’s appeal.

Not to mention that buyers tend to be more emotional during the holidays and may be more likely to make decisions based on the feeling a house conjures up. During the spring, there is a lot more foot traffic in homes that are up for sale. Some buyers may not be able to do a thorough walk-through with so many distractions.

Hiring a reliable real estate agent can help bring more serious buyers to the table during the holidays.

4. Festive Neighborhoods Are Inviting

One of the staples of the holiday months is that many people adore their homes with festive lights and decorations. That is also true of local communities where lights and decorations adorn their homes with festive cheer during the holidays.

People purchasing a home during that time may see the neighborhood in a different light—more festive and cheerful—and may be more willing to consider an area that they may have been on the fence about.

Again, this is all about tug-of-war. Both holidays and transactions are highly emotional. It isn’t unusual to see people buying because of a job transfer, or perhaps an offer comes through from another company that’s just good enough to go up to.

Those people going to need a home sooner rather than later and, as a result, they’ll be hunting for a new home during the holidays. These buyers can’t wait for spring, which is one reason why serious buyers may be more likely to put their homes on the market during the holidays. That’s because buyers can deduct the mortgage interest, property taxes, and interest costs of the loan if a sale closes on or before December 31. New tax laws limit the deduction, of course, but the tax benefits could still prompt a buyer to move during the holidays instead of waiting until spring.

The Bottom Line

Nobody wants their home to languish on the market nor do they want to have to lower their asking price. And while many fear that reality if they list their home during the holidays, this often isn’t the case.

When you sell your home during the holidays, you will face less competition, find more serious buyers, and may even be up for a quicker sales process. It also presents a unique opportunity to create a warm and cozy environment that you can’t present during the spring and summer months.

KEY TAKEAWAYS
- Inventory is low during the holidays so, while you may not end up in a bidding war, you will still have to command a higher price.
- Buyers tend to be more serious during the holidays.
- You can make your house cozy and homey during the holidays, creating an emotional connection for buyers.
- The holidays may be a time for potential buyers to consider job transfers and end-of-year tax breaks.

This market is wild and the average sale price of a Niagara-on-the-Lake home is now nearing $1,200,000. If you want to know what your home is worth, call Greg now for a free evaluation.

FREE HOME EVALUATION
CALL OR TEXT GREG DIRECT
905.329.3484

This market is wild and the average sale price of a Niagara-on-the-Lake home is now nearing $1,200,000. If you want to know what your home is worth, call Greg now for a free evaluation.

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BUSY VOLUNTEER HELPS KEEP NOTL RESIDENTS HEALTHY

Francyne Chenier, Genevieve Lawrence and Pat Hicks show off the crowded food shelves at Newark Neighbours. There was also a large pod outside also full of donated food. (Penny Coles)

Newark Neighbours volunteers Mary Anne Novoco and Marilyn Rickard, Cornerstone In Stitches Quilting Group members Dori Wiens, Cathy Dick, Luanne Kulchar, Pat Household, and Julia Griffiths, Newark’s Pat Hicks (bottom), with quilter Dorothy Soo Wiens, and Sharon Brinsmead-Taylor of Newark Neighbours, hold the 10 quilts made by the Cornerstone quilters and donated to be given away at Christmas to Newark clients. (Photo supplied)
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Inclusive playground most comprehensive in DSBN

Students love playing with friends on accessible equipment

Penny Coles
The Local

Brooke Whyte and Felix Vollmer, Grade 7 students who spoke at the opening of Crossroads Public School’s inclusive playground Friday, both said they love the school’s playground.

Brooke likes the slides and the monkey bars of the original equipment, and Felix loves all the accessories, such as a rocking boat, a step so you can get on the tire, a number-solving game, and a marble game, all of which can be easily accessed from the ground by everyone.

“We are so grateful to be able to play together,” Brooke told the crowd, “and would like to thank everyone here for making the Play For All Inclusive playground happen.”

Students Lily Kanters and Sienna Larmet open the ceremony with a land acknowledgment.

Educational assistant Olivia Allen, students Lily Kanters and Sienna Larmet (back), Dylan Dietzch (front), Megan Dyck, Felix Vollmer and Brooke Whyte cut the ribbon on the new, inclusive playground. (Photos by Penny Coles)
Writers Circle hoping for more members, public readings

Sharon Frayne Special to The Local

Being a successful writer doesn’t mean you have to be alone—we help and encourage each other, and it’s great to have a supportive audience.

Throughout the pandemic, I’ve watched as members of the NOTL Writers Circle, of which I am one, have continued to connect for motivation and to improve our writing. Recently, Paul Masson, a retired economist, wanted a way to promote his newly-released book, The ABC Files, so the club brainstormed how to help all the members promote their novels, and also encourage new members to join. The idea of Books in a Barn was born, and seven authors took part.

On Saturday, Dec. 4, the Writers Circle pitched a tent at Masson’s red barn on Simcoe Street, and sold novels to visitors at the Rotary Holiday House Tour.

Masson’s series feature Hamilton Cameron, a retired judge-tapped detective, in the picturesque Nova Scotia town of Aulchofi-by-the-Sea. Hamilton Cameron Investigates begins in an upscale retirement home. When one of his friends dies, Hamilton is suspicious, and what he discovers confirms his fears.

An abduction occurs in the story, the how of his parents, Paddy and Molly, re- stores a ramshackle country pub in the 1930s. They battled doubts, isolation, deadly fires and Aussie heat that showed no mercy. Yet, along the way, they discovered riches they had never expected. Terry set out to see the world in 1976; he settled in Niagara-on-the-Lake to work at the Shaw Festival, where he ultimately became director of publicity and pub- lic relations. His wife, Donna, became a prominent member of the Shaw acting company. The Amazon link connects to a site that lists his numerous novels and short stories. https://www.amazon.ca/s?k=Terry+Belleville&ref=nb_sb_noss

Evil Ever Lives, a novel, is set for release in 2023 by Latitude 46 Publishing. Originally from England, West is a retired engineer and long-time NOTL resident who enjoys science fiction, and contributing to local newspapers. West’s books are available on Amazon.

The NOTL Writers Circle meets monthly to provide support and feedback to members. Regular writing workshops, public readings, open mic sessions and social events occur year round. Their website: www.notlwriterscircle.com provides more information. New members are welcome. Please contact Richard West at rwest1564@gmail.com if interested in joining the NOTL Writers Circle.

Author Sharon Frayne has written two award-winning books, one of them, Caught Between the Walls, an historical fiction novel. The novel is set for release in 2023 by Latitude 46 Publishing. I love to think of myself as an imag- inative craftsperson who builds strong characters, rich settings and suspenseful situations. Currently the president of the Niagara Branch of the Canadi- an Authors Association, I love to speak to school groups, and book clubs in Niagara.

My books are available at www.fraynesharon.com or on Amazon.
Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

She’s had a recording career spanning more than 40 years, so it would be easy to assume Molly Johnson must have released a Christmas album somewhere along the line. But the Oct. 29 release of her latest record, It’s a Snow Globe World, marks her first foray into a full-length holiday collection. It follows 2020’s EP This Holiday Season, whose four tracks all appear on the new 10-song album.

The Officer of the Order of Canada appears on the phone from her Toronto home, Johnson says the idea for the album came from chairman and CEO of Universal Music Canada, Jeff Remedios.

“Jeffrey and I had a conversation about crappy Christmas records,” Johnson laughs, “especially the abundance of them. I went away and thought about that for about a year. Then I began to think about how multicultural, and multi-faith, Canadians are. Muslims, Jews, Christians, they all celebrate joy and light and love this time of year.”

To that end, only three of the 10 tracks on It’s a Snow Globe Christmas mention Christmas. Winter Wonderland is the only recognizable Christmas classic, given a big-band spin in this version. Most of the numbers are original compositions and lesser-known songs, brilliant new additions to add variety and spice to the ghost sauce of this record. He’s been on every solo record I’ve ever made (Snow Globe is her ninth). He has exceptional ears. I nominated him for a Juno for producer of the year for this record.”

Always striving for musical excellence, Johnson says she puts as many great players as she can on each of her records. She claims her expertise isn’t so much her distinctive vocal styling, but instead her ability to put together a great team, something she learned from her father.

“He was a gym teacher and coach at Ryerson,” she explains. “As a kid, I used to watch him from the bleachers. Basketball, volleyball, hockey, swimming. He did it all. I learned that the way to put together a great team is to get the very best players you can get, and give them enough room as possible to be brilliant.”

The team of Botos, Direnzo and Downes certainly rose to the occasion on the new record, and Johnson indeed provides them enough space to shine. The short Christmas tour that finds her in Niagara Dec. 20 gives her a chance to “spend so much time with those three knuckleheads.”

She continues, “Robi has got the craziest sense of comedy, and his knowledge of different kinds of music is phenomenal. Mike Downes has really become one of Canada’s best bass players. And Davide is just as likely to get up from his drum kit and run around as he is to do a drum solo.”

For Snow Globe, Direnzo collaborated with Welland’s Mark Lalamà to write the sad, mournful Maybe This Year. “The trio gals together on the track, with Botos’ work on the piano truly taking the spotlight.”

“Not everyone is happy at Christmas,” Johnson promises some surprises for the Bravo Niagara concert, including a few special guests who have never appeared with the local festival. “For some people, it’s really a tough time of year. And I think that’s why I took a year to think about it. I needed the year to think about all those things.”

Completely conceived, written and recorded during the pandemic, it was inevitable the album would reflect the times. That includes the album cover, featuring a bright-eyed dressed Johnson trapped inside a snow globe.

“We’re all in a bubble,” she laughs, “so Molly put everyone in a snow globe, which is kind of a bubble. But a way happier, prettier one. We shot the photo, and I thought I looked like I was in a snow globe. So I wrote the line ‘there’s a snow globe world that’s spinning around’ and asked them to put me in one for the cover.”

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Charlie Brown’s Christmas: A holiday jazz festival performance

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

The TD Niagara Jazz Festival has brought its Twilight Jazz Series back to the Mahlty Café in St. Catharines, kicking it off with a Dec. 12 performance at the downtown venue by the John Neudorf Quartet.

But closer to home, Spirit in Niagara Distillery on Lakeshore Road becomes the host of the festival’s new Jazz and Blues Series, with a special launch show on Dec. 23.

That night, festival co-founder Peter Shea and well-known Niagara musician Doug Munday will trade off time at the piano in a performance of the music of the beloved Charlie Brown Christmas album.

Shea’s partner Juliet Dunn played the official opening party at the distillery this fall. Having played owner Arnie Lepp’s guitar at the official opening performance at the downtown venue Cafe in St. Catharines, kicking off the TD Niagara Jazz Festival’s new Jazz and Blues Series, with a special launch show on Dec. 23.

This will be the sixth time for the Charlie Brown show for the TD Niagara Jazz Festival. It originated at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, where they played Partridge Hall three times, and once in Robertson Hall. Last year, out of necessity, it took place online.

It’s a popular event each season, to say the least. Who hasn’t seen 1965’s A Charlie Brown Christmas on television? Try this - open Spotify, Ap-Ple Music, Deezer, or whatever streaming service you might use. Enter ‘Luna and Lucy’ in the search box and hit play. As the opening piano riff takes hold, close your eyes and try not to picture Pigpen kicking up a storm of dust as he strums the bass strings, Schroeder hunching over his piano and Snoopy’s facial expression tapping toes as he plays guitar, while the other Peanuts characters dance to the rhythm.

It is one of the most iconic scenes in the history of animation. And the music is jazz, through and through. “Some people, you ask them to come to a jazz concert, and they say they don’t even like jazz,” laughs Dunn. But they love Charlie Brown. So that’s what we love, is getting people to come out to see and hear The Music of Charlie Brown Christmas for other reasons, nostalgia perhaps. But also educating them to not be afraid of the word jazz. Then they might come out to other shows.”

For Shea, a pianist and drummer, spreading the word about Vince Guaraldi, “He was an incredible pianist,” says the installation of a sauna for counselling, and Dunn lost her 51-year-old sister to cancer this September. They will be accompanied by Waterloo-area musicians Adam Bowman on drums and Tyler Wagler on bass. Dunn will step in on vocals for Christmas Time Is Here.

Opening the show with a short set will be Kyra Sophie Oszlai. The young, classically-trained pianist, one of the festival’s 2021 Jazz 4 the Ages youth winners, is a Grade 8 student at a Markham elementary school. She will play Beethoven’s Für Elise (which is part of the Charlie Brown Christmas repertoire) as well as a few other numbers.

Tickets for the Dec. 23 performance include dinner at Spirit in Niagara. To reserve your seats, and for complete details on both the Jazz and Blues and Twilight Jazz Series, visit niagarajazzfestival.com.

Nature at its finest

The Local’s nature photographer Dave Gilchrist spotted this deer near the Niagara River Parkway in the Oak Forest area. People should be aware of our population of white-tailed deer, and be more cautious passing forested areas, he suggests. He also captured our “resident domestic geese,” who live on the wild side, cruising up river, honking loudly.

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

The TD Niagara Jazz Festival has brought its Twilight Jazz Series back to the Mahlty Café in St. Catharines, kicking it off with a Dec. 12 performance at the downtown venue by the John Neudorf Quartet.

But closer to home, Spirit in Niagara Distillery on Lakeshore Road becomes the host of the festival’s new Jazz and Blues Series, with a special launch show on Dec. 23.

That night, festival co-founder Peter Shea and well-known Niagara musician Doug Munday will trade off time at the piano in a performance of the music of the beloved Charlie Brown Christmas album.

Shea’s partner Juliet Dunn played the official opening party at the distillery this fall. Having played owner Arnie Lepp’s guitar at the official opening performance at the downtown venue Cafe in St. Catharines, kicking off the TD Niagara Jazz Festival’s new Jazz and Blues Series, with a special launch show on Dec. 23.

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The Atwood, Cater, Froese, Marull, Perng, Pillitteri, and Riddle families watch for Santa in St. Davids.

‘Just one cookie’ with milk, Santa says

St. Davids. They had the inside tip as to when Santa would arrive on their street, as their parents were checking his location on the live interactive map available via the town’s website.

Loretta Cater knew Santa wasn’t coming down her street this year, so she and her family joined the gathering with some of her friends from school. She is hoping Santa brings her the Grand Hotel Lego set this year.

Many of the children along the route shouted out their names in hopes that Santa would remember them from last year. One little girl asked Mr. Claus what Japan was like. Another handed him one of those cookies he likes, too. Santa asked them if they had sent their letters to him, and a few stepped up to hand him their letters in person.

He figures he will be very, very busy Christmas Eve, due to so many of NOTL’s children making the right list this year.

“Everyone I talked to said they had been good,” Santa raved. “It didn’t matter if I was in Glendale, Queenston, St. Davids, Virgil, or Old Town. All the children I spoke to said they had been very, very good.”

He promised to be back on Christmas Eve, and encouraged all the children to make sure they go to bed early that night. And he doesn’t want anyone worrying about him eating too many cookies.

“I just asked for one cookie,” he assured The Local, “and a glass of milk which helps neutralize it. It’s a long night, a busy night. I don’t want to overdo it. One little chocolate chip cookie at each stop just makes my evening go by nicely.”

Send your Season’s Greetings and Best Wishes for 2022 to the residents and businesses in NOTL by placing an ad in our Season’s Greetings section.

Publication Date: December 22
Booking Deadline: Friday, December 17 at noon

NOTL businesses contact Karen at 905-641-5335 or karen@notllocal.com
Businesses outside NOTL contact Julia at 905-934-1040 or julia@notllocal.com
Dear Joyous Kids of Niagara-on-the-Lake,

As we in the North Pole are preparing for Christmas, I just wanted to let you know how proud Mrs. Claus and I are of each and every one of you. The past 22 months have been especially difficult times, and I know a lot of you have struggled, but you all kept going and are an inspiration to those around you. So, however or whatever you celebrate this holiday season, just know we have been watching you closely and we hope 2022 brings you all the smiles, joy, and laughter you each deserve.

Love,
Your Friend - Mr. C.

Interview with Westin

Q. What is your favourite thing about Niagara-on-the-Lake?
A. The community. The community is good because it’s just a welcoming community.

Q. What is your ideal day in Niagara-on-the-Lake?
A. I’d do all of my favourite things like socializing and seeing my friends. In the summer, I would wake up and go to the beach and maybe go to the skatepark. Probably go to the Angel, it’s my favourite restaurant in town. I like their wings, garlic bread, and deep-fried pickles. It could be winter too. For example, in the winter a really good day would be seeing a friend, maybe be an igloo. It just depends on the season.

Q. What do you do to help others?
A. Different things for everyone basically. It really varies from person to person. For example, if I want to help out my parents, I babysit my sisters. If there is a new kid in school I’ll try my best.

Q. What is something that makes you special?
A. Probably going to Great Wolf Lodge. I like doing the MagiQuest, but my favourite thing is the arcade. There’s this one game called the Fishing game, you just grab a rubix cube. I just so happened to find one in my pocket right now. He taught me how to solve a rubix cube. I just so happen to have one in my pocket right now. (Westin then pulled a rubix cube out of his pocket to show me. He then continued to solve it before we finished our conversation.)

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Westin Ridesic, 10

Local News

Taleah Bucci, II
Kids Gazette

The Candlelight Stroll was a little different this year because we had to wear masks, but still a lot of people participated. The crowds were filled with activity: dogs barking, cameras flashing, people talking, laughing, singing, and cheering, bells ringing, and candles glowing. There were some fun characters in the crowd, too.

2021 MacNeill’s Christmas

Declan MacNeill, 8
Kids Gazette

’Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house not a creature was stirring except for a mouse. The mouse was stirring because Granddad had left behind a piece of cheese on his plate and the mouse didn’t know, though, that inside that house there lived two kittens named Tiger and Grayson, and a border collie puppy named Mack. It was getting late and the fire had gone out.

The mouse took a moment to take in the Christmas tree lights, but it was a bad idea and he got a big fright, because out through the presents pounced Tiger and Grayson! They chased the mouse running toward the kitchen. The mouse danced by Nana’s chowder, the oysters, and granny’s plum pudding. He danced by my Star Wars advent calendar, the record player, mom’s wreath, and my Lego table. He danced fast by the piano with Tiger hot on his heels, only to be caught by Grayson a little later, where he let out some squeals. He looked up at the kittens, fearing the worst, then to his rescue sprung Mack the border collie, to see what was the matter. Then the kittens explained they were just chasing him for fun, and to wish him a Merry Christmas! And they all had a party with gingerbread cookies and eggnog and went to bed happy. Later that night Santa Claus came and gave them all presents for being good, and not fighting, even. Mack who had eaten Dad’s shoes and gloves.

Happy Birthday to all our Joyous NOTL Kids!

Jeff Romeo is celebrating his birthday on Dec. 17
Sarah Jade is celebrating her birthday on Dec. 20
Aspen Ziraldo is celebrating his 9th birthday on Dec. 27
Ben Jiles is celebrating his birthday on Dec. 31

2021 MacNeill’s Christmas

Local News

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Famous Figures with Birthdays in December

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Sarah Jade is celebrating her birthday on Dec. 20
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Predators stretch winning streak to 10 games

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

With their biggest test since Nov. 13 coming up against the second-place Renegades in North York this Sunday afternoon, the Niagara Predators must be careful to not let their 10-game Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League (GMHL) winning streak get to their heads.

That could have been what happened last Friday night when the short-staffed Wind- sor Aces came to town and pushed the Preds to squeak out an 11-8 victory.

Niagara jumped out to a 3-0 lead Friday, with goals by Alexander Insulander, Brenden Morin and Georgy Kholmovsky, and it seemed it would be a repeat of the previous Friday’s 10-3 thumping of the same team.

The second period was a completely different story, thought. With Niagara’s Brett Lee in the penalty box, Wind- sor’s Evan Ferguson notched an unsanctioned power play marker 14 seconds in. Dante Massi re- plated for the Predators just 39 seconds later to maintain the 1-1 margin.

From there, it was back and forth for the remainder of the period. Windsor’s Kory Sil- verberg’s power play with 1:10 left on the clock collected two more unsan- ceted goals, then Jeppe Erik- sson replied for Niagara. That pushed the Preds to squeak out the Aces, making it 6-5 heading into the second intermission.

It was more of the same for the third period, as the Predators left the neutral zone wide open during their attack, leaving the Aces to win the transi- tion game. Windsor capitalized on Niagara’s repeated mistakes, tying it up at 8-8 midway through the final frame.

“When they (Windsor) were playing stretch hockey, where were our guys?” head coach Robert Turnbull asked after the game. “They were all down in the Windsor end. Where were they when they were breaking out wide-to-wide stretch? We had three skaters on one side of the ice. So one took the wide man.”

“The kids got their heads down, lost their confidence,” Turnbull continued. “Between the second and third periods a few things were said. They did a better job of taking their man and made a bit better passing for the first time in the third period to win the game.”

Luckily, the Predators closed out the game with goals by Pontus Madsen, a second by Brenden Morin, and Insulander’s third of the evening to come away with the victory, their ninth straight.

“I’m happy with the win,” Turnbull concluded. “But they beat us to the puck, they beat us to the man, and they beat us to the net. They outplayed us. A few of our guys did not play up to their expected level, and a few guys sat because of that.”

To field a minimum-roster squad of 12 players, Windsor borrowed 18-year-old former Jacob Campbell and Ryan Hansen from the Platts- ville Lakers. It’s not something that Turnbull welcomes, but it happens in the GMHL from time to time.

“When your team has a lot of injuries or is short players, or there are exams going on, you still have to roster a 12-man team,” explained the coach. “They were bringing up one kid. We were late to the league. I’m okay with it, but I just have to make sure that it’s being exercised properly.”

General Manager Jeppe Eriksson said assistant coach Connor Shipton ripped into the team following the embarrassing showing in front of a home crowd. It might have been exactly what they needed.

Heading into Sunday’s road game against the Flyers in Streetsville.

“Johan Eriksson said assistant coach Connor Shipton ripped into the team following the embarrassing showing in front of a home crowd. It might have been exactly what they needed.

“ When your team has a lot of injuries, you have to play with a lot of respect for your opponents. That’s something that we have to keep in mind when we face them.”

Eriksson added singles, as did assistant captain Dante Massi and his younger brother Alessandro. Noah Capcher- one, returning to the ice after a week off with a knee injury, scored the eighth Niagara goal in a game that saw the Preda- tors outshot the Flyers 45-21.

“We really played the puck around and tried a few different lin- es,” Johan Eriksson said.

“last time we went into the game with a lot of respect for them,” he added. “We (Turn- bull, Shipton and myself) have watched a lot of video now and we know how they play. And we will have more stamina with our current lineup.”

PREDATORS NOTES:
• Confirmations to former head coach Andrew Wha- len and his partner Taylor, who recently welcomed their fourth child, Andrew, to their family.

• Josh Piesco, Josh David- son and Henry-Pierre Jay- et continued to sit out this past weekend with injuries.

• Defenceman Alexander Jarnikov has taken some time off from the team to concentrate on his studies, as has backup goaltender Justin Appleton.

• The Predators will be wel- coming the new acquisitions this week: forwards Jaelen Adams of St. Catha- rines and Mackenzie Oka- murra of Toronto, following a deal with the St. George Ravens.

• GM Eriksson says goal- tender Jacob Sanders of Florida should also arrive this week from the Belling- ham Blazers of the Western States Hockey League.

• The Friday and Sunday games marked the first live- streams for Niagara, with NOTL native Michael Fre- na calling the play-by-play. Eriksson credits goalden- der Jacob Collacott’s father Conrad for figuring out the technical aspect to get the games up and running.

Visit gmhl.tv to watch this weekend’s games for Niagara, with both games at 3:00 p.m. home games and Sunday’s 1:45 p.m. start in North York.

Meet the Predators
Name: Reece Bisci
Jersey number: 29
Age: 19
Birthdate: June 3, 2002
Hometown: Welland, Ontario
Nickname: Bisc or Bisee
Favourite hockey player: Jeff Skinner
Favourite type: Stopping Breathing
by Playboi Carti
Hockey highlight: Getting the game-winning assist in double overtime back in minor hockey. Other sports you play: Soccer
Favourite ‘cheat’ meal: Dave’s Triple Meal at Wendy’s
Secret talent: I am the king of FIFA (a soccer video game)
To place your classified ad, contact Karen: classifieds@notllocal.com
Deadline: Mondays at 3 p.m.

To place an Obituary or In Memoriam in our Classifieds, please contact Julia at: julia@notllocal.com or 905.934.1040
Deadline is Tuesdays at 1 p.m.
Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

The lights went out momentarily Saturday afternoon at Virgil’s Centennial Arena, just long enough to reset the scoreboard back to zero on all accounts.

That didn’t bother the boys and girls on Jamie Kallio’s U11 team #2, who aren’t scoreboard watchers anyway:

“They don’t really care about the score,” he tells The Local. “They love coming out to the arena to play hockey. They’re excited about it, they enjoy the sport, and that’s what it’s all about. We’re not worrying about wins and losses. We’re developing kids to move up, maybe to rep hockey or beyond.”

Kallio’s young charges were more surprised than scared when their surroundings went into near-total darkness, never having been in such a large building after hours. There were some laughs and giggles on the bench as those on the ice skated back to the boards to marvel at the power outage with their friends.

Coaching this age group is a new challenge for Kallio, a one-time Port Colborne Sailor Junior B hockey player and former coach of the Chippawa Riverhawks Junior C team. He jumped at the opportunity to help further develop a love for the game in his own sons, Lucas and Sam, who are playing together this winter, and other nine- and 10-year-olds in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Kallio says the 12 kids are excited to come out for every Monday practice, as well as the home or away games on the weekends. They share the ice Mondays with the other U11 developmental team, giving the coaches an opportunity to group players by ability level to further their skills.

“At the local league, there can be such a difference between players that are starting out and players on the cusp of moving up,” Kallio explains. “It’s a good chance for them to mix and play, try different drills and skill sets. We make the most of our one-hour ice time.”

On Saturday, the Wolves were first on the scoreboard against the Welland Tigers, something Kallio talked about after their previous game against the same team.

“We got going right off the hop,” affirmed Kallio. “That came from a conversation we had in the dressing room. We wanted to get something going right from the opening face-off. They took to that right away. I tried to keep things simple for them.”

Kallio’s strategy was to have his team keep the puck out of the middle of the ice and try to get lots of shots on the Welland net. With a couple of really good skaters on the Wolves, the focus was to dump the puck into the Tigers’ zone and beat them to it, then to crash the net to get the shot. It paid off early on.

As the game progressed, though, the Wolves’ chances to score dwindled, as they repeatedly had difficulty moving the puck beyond their own blue line. Despite the scoreboard showing no score at the end, Welland won the game 5-1.

Still looking for their first win this season in their division of the Niagara District Local League, the young hockey players weren’t affected by the loss, and all left the ice energized and smiling.

“It’s a good age to be teaching them fundamentals and skills,” Kallio says. “Their spirits seem status quo for the most part. I never have to worry about them not wanting to play hockey, or not wanting to come out to the arena. They’re having fun.”

The Wolves came out early, scoring the first goal of their game against Welland. (Photos by Mike Balsom)