



**Newark
helps out at
Christmas**
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Santa started his trip through the villages of NOTL in Glendale, before heading off to visit children in the rest of the town. (Mike Balsom)

Perfect day for Santa Claus to visit NOTL communities

**Mike Balsom
Special to The Local**

Travelling around the world carrying a sack of toys and climbing in and out of chimneys surely builds up a big appetite for Santa Claus. As he toured around Niagara-on-the-Lake Sunday, Santa made sure to remind the excited children lining the streets to leave him a chocolate chip cookie and a glass of milk on Christmas Eve.

Beginning in Glendale, Santa rode on his sleigh throughout all areas of the town, finishing off the afternoon in Virgil.

Sunday proved to be the perfect sunny day for the visit, after Saturday's high winds forced plans for that day to be postponed 24 hours.

"We had trouble getting our sleigh into the Niagara District Airport yesterday," Santa told The Local Sun-

day. "I had to stay an extra day in the North Pole, but I was very excited to visit today when I saw the sun shining. It was a long wait, but it was worth it."

This year and last, in lieu of the usual NOTL Santa Claus parade, the jolly old man has taken a tour through the town's neighbourhoods, visiting local children right where they live.

"It is special to see the children in front of their own houses," he said. "They made up signs that Santa got to see today. What's nice, too, is we can stop our sleigh and have a little conversation with them."

Families gathered in front yards, driveways and on sidewalks eagerly awaiting the visit from Mr. Claus.

A large group composed of seven families gathered together in

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Crossroads officially opens its inclusive playground

**Penny Coles
The Local**

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.

Dyck 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 disabilities," 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

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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 not 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 is "100 per cent probably" going to run in the 2022 municipal election — the 'probably' depends on his wife — but says he hasn't decided whether it will be for lord 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 boards are up, but a drop in temperature is needed before the plastic lining is installed and the skating rink flooded. (Photo supplied)

Car crashes through bank window



It's not an uncommon occurrence in NOTL — a car crashed through the window of the CIBC on the corner of Garrison Village Drive Tuesday, driven by an elderly gentleman. He was shaken, but thankfully nobody was hurt, reported John Hawley, who heard the crash just as he was turning into the shopping centre. After hitting the window the car then slowly headed along the sidewalk, but there was nobody around, and the damage was physical only and can be repaired, said Hawley, adding he was impressed by how quickly the NRP, EMS and fire department, including Fire Chief Nick Ruller, arrived. (Photos by John Hawley)



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ADDRESS CHANGE NOTIFICATION

The Inter-Disciplinary Health Professionals (Chiroprody, Nurse Practitioner etc.) will be remaining at the Niagara Medical Centre at 1882 Niagara Stone Road until the Village Medical Centre is complete.

Please note that effective January 1st, 2022, Dr. Tim Bastedo will be working out of the NOTL hospital site at 176 Wellington St., Niagara-on-the-Lake. After January 1st, please contact 905-468-9189 if you need to book an appointment with Dr. Bastedo.

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, but not warning of the difficulty of getting appointments, resulting in angry people taking their annoyance out on pharmacists and doctors who are struggling to do the best they can in a difficult situation.

Bruno Laliberte is among those in the 70-plus age group who was frustrated at not being able to find an appointment for a booster shot, but he was persistent.

The St. Davids resident had his two COVID-19 shots more than six months ago, and once he became eligible for his third dose, he began trying to find out where he could get it.

"All day long, all we hear on TV, news, social media, and other places is for people who are eligible to get their booster shot," he said. "I even received a phone call telling me that I'm eligible for the booster shot and to get it as soon as possible."

"This must be the biggest farce, or sick joke, as far as I am concerned," he continued.

Laliberte said he tried "over and over to book an appointment for the booster shot," but there were no locations or clinics in the area offering appointments.

He called local pharmacies and his doctor's office, and was given varying reasons why there was no availability.

Many of his neighbours are in the same boat, "and some are very upset and angry about this."

Laliberte understands that "eligible children should be vaccinated as soon as possible, and that is a must at this stage of the

game," but with all the seniors in the region, and the province "pounding on us" to get a booster that is nowhere to be found, the experience has been "somehow contradictory, misleading, and very disappointing."

After going on several pharmacy websites to try to find an appointment, with no luck, Laliberte was finally successful late Monday in booking his booster shot at the Pen Centre for Monday, Dec. 20 through the provincial booking site — at a clinic with some appointments recently opened up by public health.

As happy as he is to be getting the shot, he's still frustrated by what he had to go through. The province should be "more transparent and honest, and tell people the truth that they don't have the resources, and perhaps wait until all this mess is sorted out before telling us about the increasing importance of receiving boosters."

Pharmacist Sean Simpson is hearing daily from people who don't understand why they can't get the booster they're being told is so important. He has a waiting list that could take him weeks to get through, he said.

He just doesn't have the capacity to meet the demand for third doses, but people are having a hard time understanding that.

"It's almost like the good old days," he says, referring to the time last winter when the province was opening up eligibility to certain ages and groups of people, but there was no vaccine available.

The demand is increasing as the third dose is becoming more important because of Omicron, the new variant, he says, but there was a time in late September and through October when the demand waned, and clinics were scaled back.

Now, with Niagara Health having completely removed itself from vaccinations, and public health focusing on children, "the availability is limited." But the "talking heads" we see on TV don't seem to realize that, as they urge people to



Adriana Miele took her 10-year-old son Michael to the NOTL community centre for his COVID-19 shot Sunday. The clinic was quiet, with only about four other kids there, and the nurse, Austin, was fantastic, she said. "He took the time to explain to Michael how the shot works in his body, and made him feel relaxed the entire time. I really appreciated that." Michael, a Grade 5 student at St. Davids Public School, said he was happy to be vaccinated, to keep himself and others safe, and also happy it didn't hurt. Adriana said there was no hesitation about the vaccine, with Michael's five to-11 age group currently the most affected by COVID-19. Michael has two older sisters, both vaccinated, as is the family dog, who arrived from the U.S. already vaccinated. (Mike Balsom)

get their third dose, increasing the anger and confusion of those who want that shot, said Simpson.

"People are getting quite demanding," wanting their vaccination immediately, either because they want to travel, or get together with family over Christmas. He gets frequent calls and emails from people who are angry about the delay.

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.

"Going back to the early days, we would have put in all the time in the world to get people their first vaccinations, but we're exhausted. The demand is more than we can handle."

Simpson, who sits on the region's vaccination task force, says while the region's initial focus on the five to 11 age group was the right decision, once the number of

appointments diminished, the clinics could have been used to accommodate those adults who wanted and were eligible for their third dose. "We can't prioritize people who are hesitant," he says, "while keeping people who want to be vaccinated on the sidelines."

The excess demand, while 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 also suggests 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 custom-

er 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's a combination of factors, lack of vaccine and lack of resources, she says. They are seeing many patients who because of COVID

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Vaccination protester 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.

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 Pub-

Continued on page 9

Public Health gearing up for more adult appointments

Continued from page 3

haven'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 have declined, public health clinics began offering some of those appointments to adults, beginning last weekend, 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 becoming 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 expecting a better uptake for children, and has been "a little bit disappointed" 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 maybe new vaccination requirements in places such as malls and retail stores might be coming.

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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.

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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. She looks forward to seeing you soon, and helping you out with all your denture needs.

In her spare time Julia enjoys spending time with family and friends, exploring the outdoors, and staying active.

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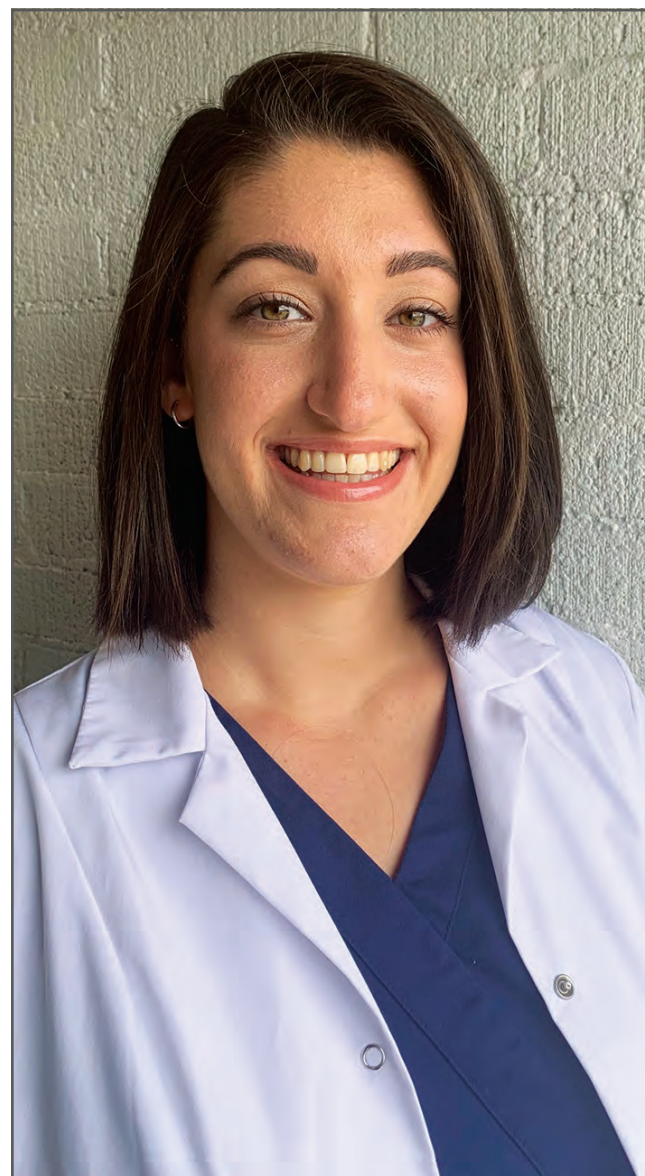
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EDITORIAL

Children hardest-hit group of mounting cases

It will come as no surprise to those reading this that the COVID news is not good. Everything we read or see on TV is telling us cases are mounting as Omicron continues its rapid spread across the country, and with its reproductive rate, today's news will likely be that it is now the dominant strain.

Hospitals across the country are getting closer to capacity, intensive care units are filling up, surgeries are being cancelled.

Some provinces are announcing new restrictions. Ontario is tightening up its protocols in long-term care homes to protect the elderly. They won't be allowed to leave to visit their families at Christmas, and the measures for testing and for vaccinations for staff and visitors are being enhanced. New measures take effect Dec. 22.

At the other end of the age spectrum, the news of our young students is heart-breaking. As some parents — actually a small number, representing about 26

per cent of the ages five to 11 group — race to get their kids vaccinated, they can't get there soon enough. The number of cases in schools is escalating.

The province announced Tuesday there are a record number of cases in schools — 20 per cent have at least one COVID case, and 28 public schools in Ontario are closed due to outbreaks. One-fifth of all active cases in the province are linked to schools.

And in NOTL, where our schools have done a great job of keeping their students and staff safe, more bad news.

Two schools are reporting cases of COVID — one is considered an outbreak, the other is not.

According to the District School Board of Niagara Tuesday, Crossroads Public School has three cases, not broken down by staff or students, and two classrooms closed. Although the provincial website distinguishes between staff and students, it lists

only two cases, both students, with positive test results at Crossroads.

One class of kids are expected to be out of quarantine and back to school Dec. 20, the other Dec. 22.

St. Davids Public School has one student who has tested positive for COVID, and one classroom closed, expected to reopen Dec. 17.

Board spokesperson Kim Sweeney was clear that according to the public health definition of an outbreak, there is no outbreak at St. Davids, but couldn't explain the distinction.

Dr. Mustafa Hirji, the region's acting chief medical officer of health, was quick to explain why: an outbreak is based on transmission occurring in a particular setting. Usually that will mean two cases, e.g., two people in a school have COVID-19, and the one got infected from the other at school — that's an outbreak.

If, on the other hand, there are two cases with no connection,

one person infected in class A (infected from a family member), and another infected in class B (infected from an extracurricular activity), that is not an outbreak, since transmission didn't occur in the school.

Neither the board nor public health will release information about the health of those who are infected — we have to hope they and their families are all doing well, and the students will be back at school when their quarantine is lifted, just in time to enjoy a day or two before the holiday break.

These kids, in NOTL and across the province, are the victims. They're not just numbers or percentages, they are our sons and daughters, our grandchildren, and each time one is tested positive it is not only scary for them, but for whole families, and extended families. Each time one student tests positive, about 30 other kids are also kept home from school to quarantine, they and their families waiting nervously until the test results are known.

Whether old or young, these people who are being impacted by COVID are those we love, and want to protect.

In Ontario, we are hearing recommendations to keep gatherings small at Christmas. There may be more in the way of restrictions today or later this week. And in the meantime we're being reminded about masks, physical distancing, and staying away from crowded places.

We are also being told, with an increasing sense of urgency, to get our kids vaccinated. To get the booster shot as soon as we're eligible.

It seems Ontario hospitals are being asked to get back in the business of vaccinating. No guarantee they will have the staff or the vaccine to make much of a dent in the number of people now eligible, but at least it's an effort being made to get more shots in arms.

All of this is pretty depressing

news, in a season of good cheer, when we like to concentrate on goodness and light.

On the bright side there is a decorated traffic parade in Virgil tomorrow, organized by Dorothy Soo Wiens, and Saturday morning, an opportunity for kids to visit with Santa at the community centre. For details, check last week's Local e-edition.

As we go about our holiday activities we can only do what we're asked, take precautions in our own lives, and keep trying to get those shots, whether for our kids or ourselves. Make the sensible decisions that will keep our friends and families safe.

And please, don't take fear and frustration out on those who are doing their best to help us, and have been for almost two years. They are stressed, exhausted, and as frustrated as we are.

Anger doesn't help, and it can never hurt to be kind.

Penny Coles
The Local

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-

sive cold front, stretching from Georgia in the U.S. to Quebec, bulldozed its way eastward across the continent. This violent and unforgettable weather system was created by unusually warm air from the Gulf of Mexico colliding with the crisp, cold air of the Canadian arctic.

Whether we talk about nature or our own human species, while this is imbalance and di-

vide, there is chaos attempting to reach equilibrium.

I set aside the afternoon to drive out to Lake Erie with my camera gear to document what was arguably a once-in-a-lifetime event. A storm surge (storm surges are abnormal rises of water generated by a storm, over and above the predicted tides) of greater than two metres was creeping up, which later notched wind gusts of 117 km/hr in Port Colborne. With a previously saturated ground due to a wet autumn, the perfect storm was quite literally about to take place.

I sipped a cold pint and enjoyed a delicious sandwich at Crystal Beach's South Coast Cookhouse. I was waiting for the wind to pick up, and wondered if I was going to miss prime wave action before dark.

The lights started flicker-

ing. I paid my bill, tipped generously, and started hitting up my predetermined spots with a two-hour window to film.

I started by getting my face and eyeballs sandblasted from Lake Erie at Crystal Beach. I then accessed several dead-end roads with public beach access. At this point, Lake Erie was reaching for the cottages with her terrifying tempest.

Then, I saw something I have never seen, unless in the tropics. Fort Erie's Six Mile Creek was flowing in reverse and upstream, as Erie defiantly pushed her way inland. I parked my car in a small gravel parking lot, and could already see how the backward stream had begun flooding all of the associated low-lying areas.

I hiked through a small but ancient patch of old-growth forest towards the lakefront.

The hiking trail was flooded to the rims of my boots, and I witnessed the adrenaline-inducing visual and sound of not one, but three trees snapping and falling in the area. As I was always told in hockey, it was time to "keep my head up."

Continued on page 8



Owen Bjorgan got a shot of his van, on the brink of flooding at Six Mile Creek in Fort Erie.

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The Niagara-on-the-Lake

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The Trusted Voice of Our Community

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Local LETTERS

Hoping for consideration from post office

Once again, we are to confront the experience of long lineups for the posting and pickup of our mail and parcels at the Queen St. post office.

This year, as well as last year, will once again pose these long lineups and expose us to the cold, wintery conditions we so often endure.

Can we not make an arrangement to allow customers to line up through the door to the right of the building that leads us past our mail boxes? We could assemble through one door, then proceed out the other door — all done in an orderly fashion.

I'm sure NOTL's elderly, and even some disabled, would appreciate this consideration.

JoAnn Beneteau

View from the couch

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

In spite of the terrible reviews for *Red Notice* (Netflix, 2021), I was engaged by the overworked, silly plot of this film. There were numerous times when I was ready to switch it off, but the quirky, and at times charming banter between the two con artists Ryan Reynolds and Dwayne Johnson more than held my interest. The film was fun.

Donald Combe is a retired English teacher who loves to go to 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.

COMMENT

Local VOICES: Hope Is Essential For Wellness

Doreen Bell
Special to The Local

In this season of hope, all of us can use a good measure of optimism, especially with the ongoing pandemic. In my previous 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 either didn't know about post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or have some of my symptoms; some have sought help since. These discussions 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 tread daily. While on this path, we see no hope, and we seem trapped in a vicious circle, living in two worlds. But there is hope for each of us. Something can traumatize you and me, and we don't know; that's my personal experience. 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 mourn, 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 leave 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 settled down to sleep, my body started shaking. I believe it happens when painful memories surface, which crop up 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? Why should I continue living? I know this is illogical, 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. They 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 refreshed and alive!

My Search for Help Begins

Where and when did I discover help and relief? Diagnosed with PTSD in November, 2019, my desperate search for someone with firsthand experience of PTSD led to retired Canadian General Romeo Dallaire's book, *Waiting for First Light*. I devoured it. The atrocities he witnessed as Force Commander of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda, prior to and during the 1994 genocide, left him with PTSD.

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 continuing search unearthed Bessel Van der Kolk's book, *The Body Keeps the Score*, EMDR, and my counsellor, Hiba Khatkhat.

Words cannot express my brief, but incredible, journey with Hiba and her tremendous help. 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 begun: I became a new person, and I am now learning about this individual.



Doreen Bell

Local LETTERS

Another way of looking at Rainbow Crosswalk

I'm surprised and saddened to read that the editor of The Local is being accused of bias, and equally surprised to read time and again that the majority are being ignored and not heard from. The number of letters that have been printed in our two community papers weighing in against the notion of Inclusivity in the form of (for one thing) a Rainbow Crosswalk, tends to take the wind out of those sails completely.

Jordon Williams' letter and his reasoning that there would be a financial payoff from the installation of the crosswalk, gets quite a bit of criticism in the letters in the most recent edition of The Local. To many, it may seem a bit of a reach that he is resorting to, apparently, mercenary facts and figures. But I suspect that Mr. Williams is utterly exhausted from trying to appeal to the humanity that he desperately hopes resides somewhere inside the hearts of "the majority."

Booker T. Washington said, "A lie doesn't become truth, a wrong doesn't become right, and evil doesn't become good just because it's accepted by a majority." Now, I'm not sug-

gesting by any means that the writers of the letters to the editor are 'evil', and the majority is a rightly powerful constituent. However, with great power comes great responsibility. Parliamentary procedure, for example, allows the majority to operate only as long as it protects the rights of the minority.

One writer says, "I don't see how the crosswalk would increase the LGBTQ traffic in any substantive way." It might be helpful to remember that, along the Underground Railroad, there were signs displayed along the way that secretly indicated to the escaping slaves the people who could be trusted, and the places that were "safe" locations of refuge.

And, in case one is tempted to think that 'safety' is not important to the LGBTQ+ community, you might remember, for just one of many, many examples, Matthew Wayne Shepard - a gay student at the University of Wyoming - who was beaten, tortured, and left to die near Laramie on the night of October 6, 1998... because he was Gay.

The Bible speaks eloquently and fittingly about 'safety.' In Matthew 18: 12-14, nine-

ty-nine of the man's sheep, the majority, are safe and secure; but it is that 'other' one, that is in danger of being attacked, or just... disappearing. That's why we need to support and learn to understand those who are not part of what many consider to be the majority.

If we in NOTL are such a welcoming and inclusive community, why would a Rainbow Crosswalk be in any danger of being "damaged?" And if we are being realistic, \$7,000 is a drop in the bucket to our population of 17,511 (as of 2016). That's \$2.50 per person to say, "You are safe and welcome here." And, in the final analysis, what actual harm would the crosswalk do? And, if not now, when?

I am just one more straight, old, white, privileged man who is very grateful to be able to live and work and create in this amazing community, but I'm pretty sure that it took a great deal of courage for the editor of The Local to publish her editorial two weeks ago. For my part, at least, it was a fine example of journalistic integrity. And I applaud her for it. Thanks for listening.

Peter Millard
NOTL

Regional On-Demand transit a good experience

We would like to share our recent, and first, experience using the NOTL Niagara Regional Transit (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's on 7th Concession Road. What a bonus to have door-to-door service, especially with the winter weather approaching. We had appreciated the former local bus transit, of fixed route and times, but this On-Demand

Regional service has more flexible options to travel 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 doing so. The driver was very pleasant and accommodating. NRT On-Demand is very open about their

current monitoring of the NOTL demand, as this is a newish 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 protocol, as well as developing information: <https://niagararegion.ca/transit/on-demand/>

Ann Dempster & Bill McKinstry
NOTL

Letters! We want letters!

If you have a letter to the editor you'd like to see published, please send it to penny@notllocal.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.



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Library reclassification includes increasing inclusivity

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 ac-

cess, 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 updated over the years to address the system's racism, sexism, anti-Semitism and other biases and some libraries have

abandoned it altogether.

We recognized Dewey's biases, knew the numbering system was cumbersome and not taught in schools anymore. For these reasons, we switched our children's collection in 2013 and the rest of the collection when we renovated in 2017 to a new system developed by the Markham Public Library: Customer Centre Classification, or C3, has modern, user-friendly subject categories, colour-coded spine labels and shorter, simpler call numbers. The system makes it easier for readers to find the non-fiction books they want and for staff to sort and return books to the shelves.

The public and staff embraced C3 the way Dewey's system was embraced over 150 years ago, but we realize all systems and collections need to be reviewed and improved to stay useful. In the spirit of constant improvement, we applied for a grant for a collection development assistant to audit our collection for inclusivity and diversity. This audit is tied to our first strategic direction, "inspire lifelong learning, discovery and creation," and specifically to this direction's third goal, "develop the collection to reflect our growing and diverse community."

Our grant application was successful, and we hired Ariana Ferry, a Niagara local who's studying at Mohawk College in the library and information technician program, is looking at the library's collection titles to make them more inclusive. (Photo supplied)

in the library and information technician program. Ariana has a BA in writing, rhetoric and discourse from Brock University, and has designed and run literacy programs at the Centre for Family Literacy while she lived in Alberta.

Ariana began this summer and started her audit in our fiction collection. She looked at the content and writers of new fiction titles, and compared them with a list of criteria based on emerging standards for diversity and inclusion. She found 13 per cent of new titles contained at least one element of diversity, which is lower than the diversity of Canada's population. Based on her findings, Ariana recommends increasing the diversity of new fiction

to 18 per cent, with a focus on increasing titles by authors from marginalized groups.

Ariana is now looking at our non-fiction collection, and replacing outdated subject headings for Indigenous topics with ones that are more current and inclusive. As she describes it, "this involves researching current and past terminology to determine the accepted language for the records, while keeping them in the universally accepted format so records are still easily retrieved."

Other libraries in the Libraries in Niagara Cooperative (LiNC) are also working to update their subject headings, including the Welland Public Library, which shared their Decolonization Project. This proj-

ect is a response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and aims to replace subject headings that align 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. As we work 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/pdfsdocs/StrategicPlan202>



Ariana Ferry, a Niagara local who's studying at Mohawk College in the library and information technician program, is looking at the library's collection titles to make them more inclusive. (Photo supplied)

Old-growth trees help keep certain species robust

Continued from page 6

not just lapping, but pounding the shoreline sand dunes. The beach was gone. Erie's 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 level markers (just a couple of wooden stakes I previously put in the ground) had completely 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.

Selfishly but honestly, I really had to use a washroom, and I

couldn't get into any of the fast food places. The power was out, and while some people drove goofily through intersections, with no power, others gathered to watch Lake Erie breach the break wall and push her chilly waters onto the Niagara Parkway.

I drove home with wet pants (from the flooding, to be clear) and then sat back in amazement. I thought about old growth trees.

With a storm like that, it is a universal marvel that oaks, maples, and tulip trees between 200 to 250 years old, some older, haven't yet toppled. The same trees that saw the colonization of Ontario, the War of 1812, and the existence of black bears and wolves, have stood an undeniably profound test of time.

You've got to ask yourself how many wind storms, ice storms, droughts, floods, and tornadoes have these trees endured in their lifetime? How are they still standing, converting carbon dioxide into oxygen? Why did the 70 year-old tree topple, but not these 250 year-old magnificent giants?

Here comes one of the ultimate arguments for preserving old-growth forests and champion trees. They are genetic superpowers of the landscape, harbouring the resiliency to withstand multiple severe events over the past two centuries and then some. They still

continue to spread their pollen and seeds around the peninsula, sharing genetics with their kin in order to keep populations of certain species robust and healthy.

Naturally, their time will come, too. But until then, why don't we give such trees greater protections?

Wind storms are the great equalizers of tree society. Sound familiar to the state of the world these days?

It is a powerful show of force that doesn't discriminate, weeding out the weakened and further testing the strong. New habitats form as new canopies open, and true champions continue to live on.

On an end note to this article, elected officials and the authorities on both sides of the Niagara Peninsula might want to seriously reconsider the indisputable value of shoreline forests and wetlands. All I have seen is increased net losses in both NOTL and Fort Erie alike over the past handful of years.

I just spent the weekend watching these ecosystems in action, live. Soaking up floodwaters. Creating protective barriers to neighbourhoods. And, without asking a question to our often short-sighted society, they are precious habitat corridors for some of our nationally rare species that were here thousands of years before us.



Owen Bjorgan's shadow against an old-growth tree in Short Hills Provincial Park, which withstood another round of high winds.



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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

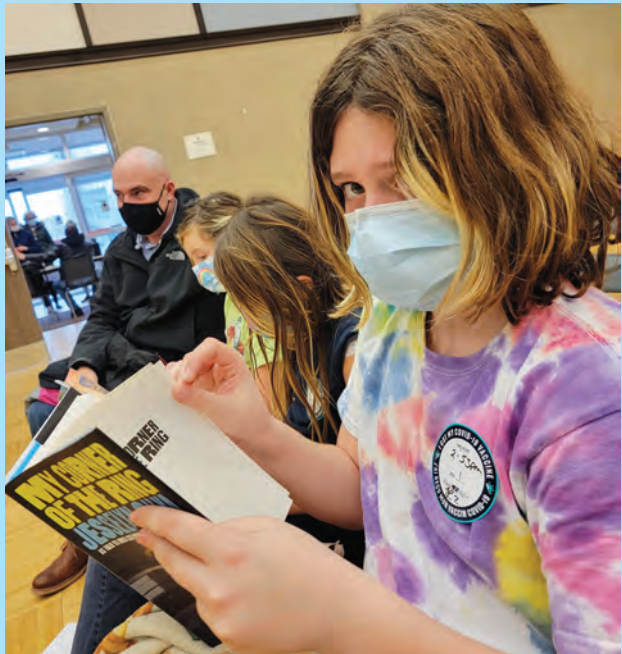
province to create “safety zones” to protect hospitals, health care workers and those entering hospitals or health care locations from protesters. “It’s absolutely terrible that kids can’t feel safe go-

ing 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 workers, “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)



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Submitted by
Royal Henley

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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. Last Friday, the NOTL Gives Back campaign wrapped up, with about 20 to 30 vehicles using a drive-through drop-off for generous donations to Newark Neighbours, but that was just one example of a very giving community. More than 40 individuals, groups, residents' associations and other organizations have dropped off food and gifts, says Cindy Grant, Newark Neighbours food bank manager.

And then there are the unique gifts: hand-knitted hats and scarves, quilts from the Cornerstone Church quilting group, and about 20 original oil paintings from a local artist. Ruffino's Pasta Bar & Grill has donated gift cards, the Royal Canadian Legion has provided vouchers for their fish and chips dinner, and the local schools have donated "an enormous" amount of food, says Grant. Walker's Country Market is donating 50 home-made pies — they come warm, straight out of the oven; Dave Dick of Niagara Motors has donated 15 turkeys, and Alitura Fine Foods and Market has donated 20 hams.

St. Andrew's and St. Mark's Churches were also generous with donations; Steve Hardaker of St. Davids-Queenston United Church dropped off food as well as mittens, gloves, hats and scarves collected as part of their White Gift Sunday appeal; and King's Point residents also collected a huge amount of food. 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 they'd get, but it took four of us to unload 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 still needs, it would be a few 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



Cindy Grant helps Steve Hardaker of St. Davids-Queenston United Church unload food and gifts collected by the church. The drop-off, held Friday, was part of the town's drive-through NOTL Gives Back initiative to help Newark Neighbours. There to help out are town CAO Marnie Cluckie, Coun. Allan Bisback, Lord Mayor Betty Disero and Marah Minor, the town's community engagement and communications coordinator.

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Life is Better In Comfortable Shoes!

**Submitted by
Ara Shoes &
Accessories**

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 walks 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.

The Queen Street store has two annual clearance sales, one coming up after

Christmas and one at the end of summer, so be sure to check them out!

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Shop your Christmas List Locally

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 Candlelight 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

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YELLOW DOOR
Theatre Project

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 often falls in the spring months. After all, many people hunker down during the winter months or are too busy with the holidays to think about purchasing a new home. And don't forget, people like to start 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 most ideal time, BUT the holiday season does have its benefits—provided you position your home in just the right way. You might not get in 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 Housing Inventory During Winter

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 holidays as family time.

Whatever the reason, don't discount the holidays. Serious buyers won't have 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 house to give off the comfy 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 adorn their homes with festive lights and decorations. That is also true of local communities where lit-up snowflakes and wreaths can be found on lampposts up and down the main streets.

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 tugging on the heartstrings. People who buy during this time of year may be more prone to emotional purchases, so it bodes well if there are plenty of triggers that can reel them in from an emotional standpoint.

5. Year-End Job Transfers

Another good reason is timing. The end of the year is typically the time when people get notified they will be moving because of a job transfer, or perhaps an offer comes through from another company that's just too good to pass up.

Those people are 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 listing during the holidays can get the home sold—and sold quickly.

6. End-of-Year Tax Breaks

Reducing the property tax bill may not be the main reason buyers purchase a new home, but it could be why serious buyers make a move 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 may be able to command a higher price.
- Buyers tend to be more serious during the holidays.
- You can make your house comfy 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.



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Inclusive playground most comprehensive in DSBN

Continued from page 1

heart has always been sensitive to others, and despite a diagnosis of autism, she has a strong desire to connect with her peers and form meaningful relationships.”

The accessible playground, the most comprehensive in the District School Board of Niagara’s jurisdiction, helps children do just that, and the sight of Megan and her friends playing together on it “brought tears to my eyes.”

“In a life filled with constant struggle and pain, the opportunity to laugh and play takes on even more meaning,” she continued. “As our principal, Kate Fish, recently said to me, ‘play is powerful.’ It definitely is, and so is a community that is committed to allowing all children the opportunity to play.”

With support from the school’s parent council, money from the school’s major fundraiser, the annual Home Show was put towards building an inclusive playground addition. Local businesses were generous in their support, making direct donations or acting as sponsors for the Home Show, knowing their funds would go directly to the playground project, said Dyck.

“We hit a monumental turning point when we approached the Virgil Business Association. They encouraged us with their words and finances to dream bigger, and our original idea of the addition of a single piece of accessible equipment became a whole new accessible playground.”

Gerda Klassen, the principal at that time, collaborated with the DSBN to

make it happen, said Dyck, and current principal Kate Fish “has definitely picked up the torch and carried on the vision, and with our incredible administrative staff made today happen.”

Each family and business that supported the Home Show and contributed to the project “supported the dream, and allowed it to come to life so much sooner than we could have imagined.”

While COVID-19 prevented the school community from fully using the playground and expressing its gratitude publicly sooner, “it also gave us time to reflect on what collaboration and kindness can accomplish. My hope is that this playground continues for many years to tell the story of what teamwork, creativity, compassion and perseverance can build, and that it is through these things that barriers to inclusion will continue to fall.”

“From the depths of my heart,” she concluded, “thank you.”

Principal Fish also spoke to the crowd, thanking the dignitaries for attending, and all those who donated to help fund the playground. To the Crossroads Coyotes who helped out with the opening, she said, “thank you so much for your contribution to our event today. As always, you bring us such joy, and humbly remind us that you have so much to teach us.”

“There are many people to thank for this amazing structure that allows our students to excel at what they do best,” Fish continued, “be a kind, compassionate, respectful community, that recognizes the unique brilliance of each and all of its members, and finds creative



Educational assistant Olivia Allen, students Lily Kanter and Sienna Larmet (back), Dylan Dietsch (front) Megan Dyck, Felix Vollmer and Brooke Whyte cut the ribbon on the new, inclusive playground. (Photos by Penny Coles)

and progressive ways to include everyone.”

In the short time she has been at the school — Fish took over as principal in January, 2021 — Crossroads community has “eagerly and heart-warmingly demonstrated how much they care for one another, and the great lengths they will go to to ensure everyone is being included, cared for, and shown kindness and respect.”

The building of the inclusive playground, she added, “epitomizes Crossroads’ deep and exemplary sense of social responsibility.”

Credit is due to former principal Klassen, she said. “I just arrived on the scene in January, after Gerda’s well-deserved retirement, to find a brand-new, sparkling playground just begging to be used, and children begging to use it.”

Fish thanked committee co-chairs, Amber Dyck and Matt Dietsch, the

Virgil Business Association, the Home Show organizers, parent council and the community, for their support and desire “to make inclusion a priority in our

community.”

The inclusive playground, said Fish, “represents exactly what public education is designed to be . . . a need for progress,

identified by a conscientious and compassionate community, that then uses all of its unique strengths to come together to make it all possible.”



Felix Vollmer and Brooke Whyte speak about how much they love Crossroads’ playground.



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



Parent Amber Dyck thanks contributors for making a dream become reality.

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 the fire pole, the rock-climbing wall, and playing games with his friend. “Everyone laughs and gets to run around and has a great time,” said Brooke. “Before,

it used to make us sad that some of our friends couldn’t play with us, and would only be able to watch us having fun without them.”

“We are so happy that we have this new playground now because everyone can be included in the fun during recess,” said Felix. “It is completely accessible by anyone who wants to play on it with all of their friends.”

The new accessible playground has many features, such as a rocking boat, two accessible ramps for those in a wheelchair, and beside the boat, a step so you can get on and off quickly,” said Brooke.

There is also a music centre, with “a drum set, a xylophone and chimes where all kids can make music together, because everyone can reach it,” said Felix. “There are also many games on the playground, such as tic tac toe, 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.”

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 on the Rotary Holiday House Tour.

Masson's series feature Hamish Cameron, a retired judge-turned detective, in the picturesque Nova Scotia town of Ashcroft-by-the-Sea. *Hamish Cameron Investigates* begins in an upscale retirement home. When one of his friends dies, Hamish is suspicious, and what he discovers confirms his fears. In *A Chorus of Evil*, he's hired by a woman to locate her daughter. An abduction occurs in the same neighbourhood. What else do the girls have in common? The answer leads Hamish in a surprising direction. In *Evil Through the Spyglass*, a school

principal hires Hamish to find the source of drugs plaguing his school. The trail leads to a sailing ship for at-risk teens and unexpected danger. Masson's three novels are available on Amazon.ca as separate ebooks and together in a paperback. His fourth, *Evil Ever Lives*, will be issued in the spring.

Author Terry Belleville went to his cousin's hotel in his hometown, Melbourne, Australia, for a family gathering. He was struck by the warmth and laughter as stories were told and retold about his parents. Those hasty notes from the pub ended up being the genesis of his novel, *Raising the Bar*, the story of how his parents, Paddy and Molly, restored 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 public 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&i=stripbooks&ref=nb_sb_noss

Patricia Nicholls-Papernick has released two new publications. She says, "Our home was where neighbourhood kids gathered when extreme weather

chased us in. Otherwise, we were outside. During alone times, I was never bored or lonely, but happily immersed in drawing, painting, reading and writing. Then, such pursuits were not followed as a career path, so I entered the business world. Years later I left, attended art school and became a portrait and landscape artist."

When her mother developed Alzheimer's, Patricia got to know her as Annie, not just as mum. After her mother died, Patricia began to write about her. With support from her husband Allan, and the NOTL Writers Circle, her biographical novel *Annie & Fred* was self-published. It spans over 100 years of life's love, struggle and laughter, through two world wars and Alzheimer's. Her second novel, *A Season of Miracles*, is now published. Both are available through Amazon.

An occasional writer for The NOTL Local, Randy Klaassen writes and publishes mainly memoirs with Canadian history themes through his company, People's History Publications. While some people are interested in sharing their life story solely for family, others have fascinating stories to share with general readers. Memoirs are a way of validating a life lived, and of inspiring future generations. Memoirs written by Klaassen include: *Quartermaster Jack: Jack Hunter's Story*; *I Did It My Way: That's Why Nothing Works - Blanche Quinn Story*; *Maxine Ross: Memories of a Dancer*; and *Wall's of Virgil: Dave Wall's Story*.

Works published for local authors by People's History Publications include: *Berries, Tickles and Saltwater Ice*, and *Under the Trembling Aspen*, both by Reg Faust (stories of Newfoundland), *The Cost of Freedom*, by Madalyn Neufeld (a young reader's Underground Railroad story) and *Hero For a Hundred*, by Mark Dobell (a post-Second World War suspense).

For information on book purchases, or inquiry for assistance to write or publish a story, contact php.notl@gmail.com or see the website, phpnotl.com.

Originally from Scotland, author Marie Kelly brings a different genre to the group — contemporary romance. She started writing in 2010, and became an iTunes bestseller with over 30 novels. Her two recent books, *Secretary for the Billionaire*, and *Fiancée for the Billionaire*, are part of her romantic



A book-lover stopped by the recent Writers Circle book sale, buying Paul Masson's *The ABC Files* book. With him is author Sharon Frayne. (Photos supplied)

Billionaire series. Kelly's themed novels prove that love does indeed conquer all—a fitting message at this time of year.

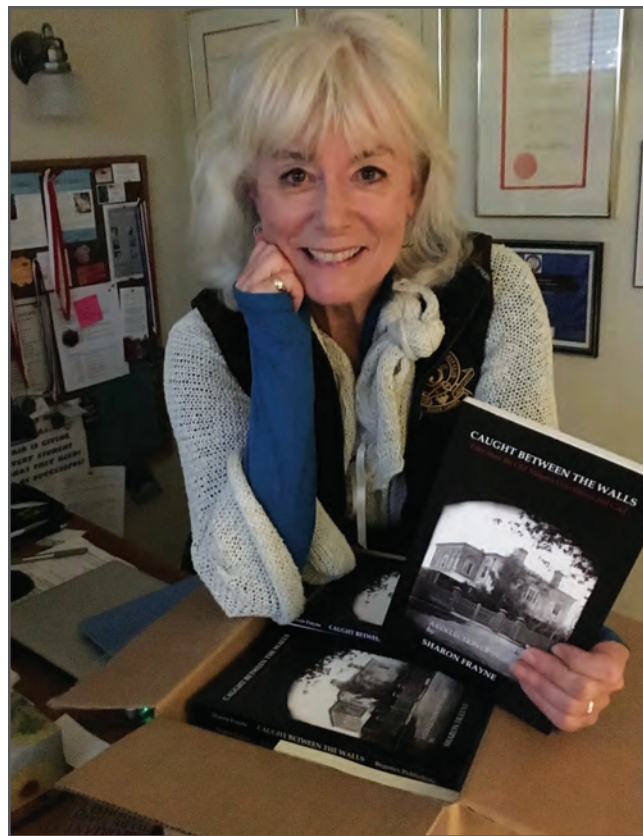
Check out her books at www.mariekellybooks.com and prepare to have your heart taken on a roller-coaster ride.

Kelly has led the club in several workshops, including cover design using Canva. Her books are also available on Goodreads and Amazon.

Jean Baker is a long-time member, and well-known author of books, magazine articles and newspaper reviews. *Albatross Hall*, Baker's thoroughly researched historical fiction novel set in England, is available in local stores and through Baker. Following a recent health scare, Baker unfortunately could not attend the Books in a Barn Sale.

Richard West, the club's treasurer, has self-published four books in five years: *Lightning People Discovered*, *Lightning People Entangled—Book Two*, *Recollections of War*, and *The Hive Revealed*. 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 as ebooks, or in print through Amazon.

As a Niagara native who wrote for my high school newspaper, and the St. Catharines Standard as a teenager, followed by a career as an English and art teacher in Halton, I returned to NOTL and my love of writing and painting flourished. *Caught Between the Walls* is an award-winning 2016 historical fiction novel, set in the former NOTL Courthouse and jail. This building formerly stood in the historic Rye Park before demolition. With the help of a ghost, 10 tales of its famous and infamous inhabitants come to life. My second award-winning novel, *The Sound of a Rainbow*,

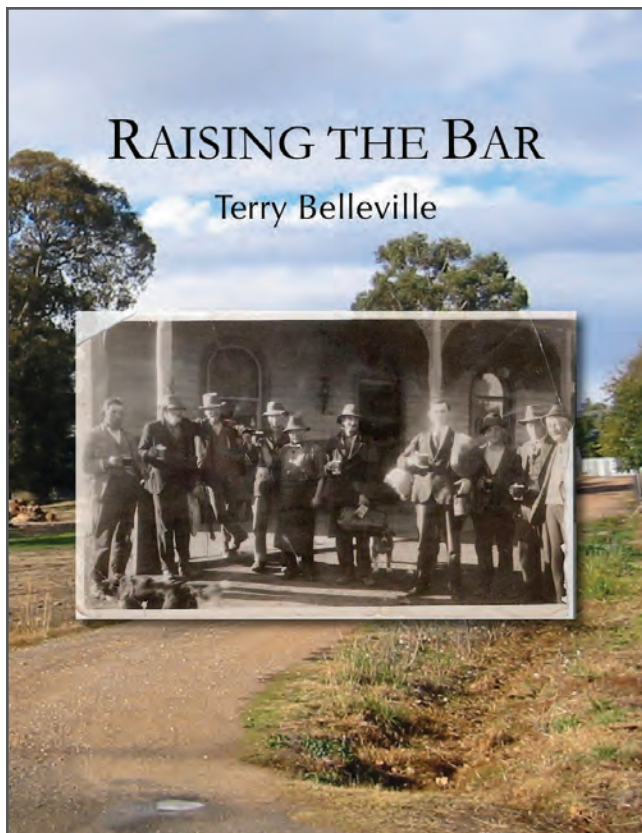


Author Sharon Frayne has written two award-winning books, one of them, *Caught Between the Walls*, an historical fiction novel.

is set for release in 2023 by Latitude 46 Publishing. I like to think of myself as an imaginative craftsman who builds strong characters, rich settings and suspenseful situations. Currently the president of the Niagara Branch of the Canadian 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.

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 rwst1564@gmail.com if interested in joining the NOTL Writers Circle.



Raising the Bar is the story of Terry Belleville's parents restoring a ramshackle country pub in Australia in the 1930s.

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Bravo Niagara! presents Molly Johnson’s holiday collection

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 with her band (Niagara-on-the-Lake pianist Robi Botos, drummer Davide Drenzo and bassist Mike Downes) Dec. 20 in a Bravo Niagara! Festival presentation at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre in St. Catharines.

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 glut of seasonal songs that hit radio airwaves in late November each year.

The upbeat opening single, *Don’t You Know It’s Christmas*, features Donna Grantis, formerly of Prince’s late-career band, on guitar, and lush strings reminiscent of the Nelson Riddle Orchestra arranged by Toronto violinist Drew Jurecka.

What Are You Doing New Year’s Eve flirtatious-

ly looks ahead to that big night, while *Winter’s Got Spring Up Its Sleeve* gazes even further into the future, to a time when the snow melts and the magic of the cold months is in the rear-view mirror.

Christmas in Hometown is a slow torch song in the manner of Billie Holiday, while *I Don’t Like Christmas (When You’re Not Around)* is a traditional blues number.

Johnson raves about her band and the guest musicians, including singer Billy Newton-Davis and guitarist Rob Pilch, as well as producer John ‘Beetle’ Bailey.

“They’re the best musicians in Canada,” she says, “and John is the secret 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



Molly Johnson is ready for the holidays. (Chris Nicholls)

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, Drenzo and Downes certainly rise 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 it as he is to do a drum solo.”

For *Snow Globe*, Drenzo collaborated with Welland’s Mark Lalama to write the sad, mournful *Maybe This Year*. The trio gels together on the track, with Botos’ work on the piano truly taking the spotlight.

“Not everyone is happy at Christmas,” Johnson laments about the theme of the song. “For some people, it’s a really 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 brightly-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 a kind of 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.”

Johnson promises some surprises for the Bravo Niagara! concert, including a few special guests who have never appeared with the local festival. There’s no guarantee, though, that she will be climbing inside a snow globe at Partridge Hall.

Tickets for the Dec. 20 performance are \$50 and are available at bravoniagara.org. Bravo Niagara! is partnering with Niagara Airbus to offer a shuttle from Niagara-on-the-Lake to St. Catharines for the show. It departs the NOTL Community Centre at 6:30 p.m. There are limited shuttle seats available at \$10 each. Call 289-868-9177 to reserve.

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LOCAL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

January 24, 2021

LOCAL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT: BRICKS AND BARLEY

It's the beginning of a new year, and it's time to start fresh. Bricks and Barley is a new restaurant in the heart of Niagara-on-the-Lake, offering a variety of local ingredients and a warm, inviting atmosphere. The menu features a mix of classic and contemporary dishes, all prepared with locally sourced ingredients. The restaurant is owned and operated by a local couple, and they are committed to supporting the local food community. Bricks and Barley is a great place to enjoy a meal with family or friends, and it's a perfect spot for a special occasion. The restaurant is located at 1573 Four Mile Creek Rd., and you can reach them at 905-468-8808 or bricksandbarley.ca.

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January 24, 2021

LOCAL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT: SWAG HAIR COMPANY

If you have been looking for a new hair salon, Swag Hair Company is the place to go. Swag Hair Company is a new hair salon in Niagara-on-the-Lake, offering a variety of hair services and a warm, inviting atmosphere. The salon is owned and operated by a local couple, and they are committed to supporting the local hair care community. Swag Hair Company is a great place to get a haircut or a hair treatment, and it's a perfect spot for a special occasion. The salon is located at 1573 Four Mile Creek Rd., and you can reach them at 905-468-8808 or swaghaircompany.ca.

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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 Mahtay Cafe 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 Blooz Series, with a special launch show on Dec. 23.

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

Shea's partner Juliet Dunn played the official opening party at the distillery this fall. Having played owner Arnie Lepp's Christmas parties at Konzelmann Estate Winery in the past, Dunn had no idea when she was contacted that he had opened Spirit in Niagara.

She knew from the moment she walked in that it would be the ideal venue to host the series of seven shows

programmed up to March 21, 2022.

"The first thing I saw was the label, it looked so Art Deco, you know, from the 1920s," says Dunn on the phone from her north St. Catharines home. "It's like a juke joint from back then. And it's accessible. With COVID, the bigger the space the better right now. And there's enough space to bring in one of the two grand pianos we have in our home studio."

The Kawai grand will be the centrepiece for the Christmas performance, as well as *January Blues* shows by Juno Award winner Julian Fauth and bassist Thomas Nelson, February's *Spirit of Sax* performance by Alistair Roberts, and the Dames in the Distillery sessions featuring Cheri Maracle, Betsy Tauro and Heather Bambrick.

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



Pianist Peter Shea loves playing the jazzy pieces in *Charlie Brown's Christmas*. (Photo supplied)

hasn't seen 1965's *A Charlie Brown Christmas* on television? Try this - open Spotify, Apple Music, Deezer, or whatever streaming service you might use. Enter 'Linus 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 hunched over his piano and Snoopy's facial expression and 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's 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 is a personal quest. When it's suggested that the jazz legend is known by most non-musicians as 'that Charlie Brown guy,' he agrees it's unfair.

"He was an incredible piano player," Shea says. "He was

phenomenal in the bossanova scene back in the '60s. It's a shame that he doesn't get enough recognition for that. As long as I've got breath in my body I'm going to try to advocate for him, just to make sure people know how great a musician he was."

It's been a tough year for both Shea and Dunn, who continued to work tirelessly during the pandemic to keep the TD Niagara Jazz Festival alive via online performances and small, physically-distanced outdoor shows via their In Your Own Backyard series.

Shea is still recovering from a hip replacement he recently had, and he fought cancer last year, undergoing both chemotherapy and radiation. As well, the couple helped his father convalesce at their home after he underwent heart surgery, and Dunn lost her 51-year-old sister to cancer this September.

Dunn turned to Wellspring Niagara for counselling, and says the installation of a sauna at their home was instrumental in her staying positive. And of course, the music continues to play a huge role in keeping them grounded.

"Music is healing, it's won-

derful," raves Shea. "It's keeping me really afloat to be able to play these gigs. It's really helping my mental health, and the mental health pulls the physical body along in tandem."

He's still not strong enough to play the entire show on Dec. 23, which is why fellow pianist Mundy will be joining him. 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 Blooz 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 whitetailed 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.



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‘Just one cookie’ with milk, Santa says

Continued from page 1

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. Others in the group were hoping for Hatchimals, Fidgets and slime.

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.”



Lara Dutra, Nevyn Reid, Nathan Reid, Theo Alberti, and Isabela Alberti in Glendale. (Photos by Mike Balsom)



The Versteegen family: Nova, Yuna, Kazu, and Fern with Mom in the Old Town.



The Billones in Glendale were one of the first families Santa met on his trip around town Sunday.



Santa stopped to speak with Edith Pietruniak, 2 years old, says her mom Stephanie, because he said he loved the sign she had made for him. “It was such a touching community moment. My daughter was tickled pink.” (Stephanie Pietruniak)



Caroline, Kaitlyn, Jayden, and Mark Polgrabia in the Old Town.



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

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

Kids

Actual Kid-Friendly News

GAZETTE



SILLY PET PHOTO

Merry Christmas
**Duke, Lulu,
and Zilla**

DECEMBER 2021

Volume I • Issue 4

FIND THE SMILEY FACE HIDDEN ON THIS PAGE!

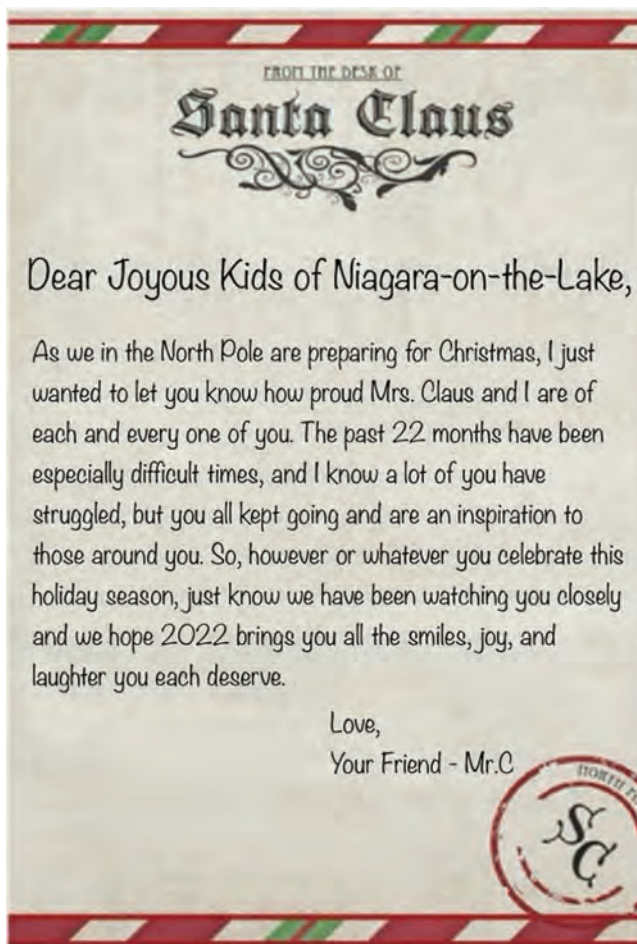
Local News

Taleah Bucci, 11
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.



Letter from Santa



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 was excited. 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.

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 build 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

to socialize with them and maybe invite them over.

Q. What's something that makes you special?

A. I really like doing water stuff. Like, every year I jump into the water in March. That's kind of random. I love going fishing with my dad. I love going tubing. I haven't tried wakeboarding, I am really excited to try that this summer.

Q. How did you keep yourself busy during the COVID lockdowns?

A. I did a lot of things, I started skateboarding. I skateboard a lot of places. Sometimes I skateboard on my deck, at the skateboard park, and on the road.

Q. What is the best thing to happen to you lately?

A. Probably going to Great Wolf Lodge. I like doing the MagiQuest, but my favourite thing is the arcade. There's this one fishing game, you just stab fish and you get infinite tickets.

Q. What's something you could teach me right now?

A. One thing, which is really random, is I could teach you 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.)



Westin Ridesic, 10



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

Famous Figures with Birthdays in December

Jane Austen: Dec. 16, 1775
Ludwig Van Beethoven: Dec. 16, 1770

Find the Differences

There are 10 differences in these photos. Can you find them?



RIDDLE

Q. Where do snowmen go to dance?

A. The snowball.

Winter Fun Facts

- The largest snowflake ever recorded was 38 centimeters wide. It was found in the U.S., in Montana.
- At least a septillion snowflakes fall from the sky every year, that's 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 snowflakes.

SUBMISSION INFO

The hope for this page is to get kids involved and interacting with the community in a positive way. We welcome submissions for all categories from kids of any age. Please keep the reviews positive and all submitted content appropriate for kids of all ages. Please send all submissions to joyousnotlkids@gmail.com and in the subject line please put the category for which you are submitting. Thank you

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 Windsor 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, though. With Niagara's Brett Lee in the penalty box, Windsor's Evan Ferguson notched an unassisted power play marker 44 seconds in. Dante Massi replied for the Predators just 39 seconds later to maintain the three-goal margin.

From there, it was back and forth for the remainder of the period. Windsor's Kory Silverio, the GMHL's top sniper, collected two more unassisted goals, then Jesper Eriksson replied for Niagara. That was followed by another Aces goal, then Insulander's second of the night, but Evan Ferguson kept pace for 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 transition 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. No 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 we got a bit better goaltending 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



Defenceman Brenden Morin eyes forward Alessandro Massi for a pass from behind the Windsor net. (Mike Balsom)

squad of 12 players, Windsor borrowed 18-year-old forwards Jacob Campbell and Ryan Hanson from the Plattsville 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," he explained. "I thought they were bringing one up. It's to help the league. I'm okay with it, but I just have to make sure that it's being exercised properly."

General Manager Jesper 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 afternoon's road game against the Flyers in Streetsville.

"He really lost it on them in the locker room," Eriksson told The Local. "On Sunday, they came to play. We were again meeting a team that was near the bottom of the standings, but we wanted to see our guys not just taking points, but actually playing the game the right way. And we did, from start to finish."

Insulander added two more goals Sunday in an 8-2 decision in favour of the Predators. Madsen, Kholmovsky and

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

"We really played the puck around and tried a few different lines," Johan Eriksson said. "And Nathan Fehr was amazing. He had about six big, big hits. He was just going in and dominating. He's one of the youngest guys we have, but by far he's the most physical."

Eriksson admits that sometimes the team has a bad habit of playing down to their competition.

"When we face a team that is low in the standings, some of the boys remember how many goals we scored the last time, and aim to score their own personal hat trick. When you go into a game thinking that way, it's not going to end well. The only thing to be happy about Friday's game was getting the two points. We closed the gap Sunday, but we have to make sure we figure it out before the playoffs."

They'll have a chance to improve on the terrible performance against Windsor this Friday, Dec. 17, as the Aces return to town. But the temptation might be for the third-place Predators to look ahead to their Sunday afternoon contest in North York, their last game of the 2021 calendar year.

"We feel that if we are just up to standard with ourselves, we can beat anyone," Eriksson said. "We're a different team over the last month. We've probably added about nine players since then. We had a really short bench when we lost to St. George and North York."

Niagara last faced the Renegades on Oct. 29, losing 5-2 at Virgil's Meridian Credit Union Arena. Santino Foti scored four of his 37 goals, second highest in the league, that night.

"They had four even lines

that night, and we only played with two," recalls Eriksson. "Foti was on fire that night. Without him, we win that game. He's one of those guys you don't even notice out there. He's so smart and knows where to position himself."

"Last time we went into the game with a lot of respect for them," he added. "We (Turnbull, Shipton and himself) 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:

- Congratulations to former head coach Andrew Whalen and his partner Taylor, who recently welcomed their fourth child, Andrew, to their family.
- Josh Pieuxoto, Josh Davidson and Henry-Pierre Jayet 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 welcoming two new acquisitions this week: forwards Jaleel Adams of St. Catharines and Mackenzie Okumura of Toronto, following a deal with the St. George Ravens.
- GM Eriksson says goaltender Jacob Sanders of Florida should also arrive this week from the Bellingham Blazers of the Western States Hockey League.
- The Friday and Sunday games marked the first live-streams for Niagara, with NOTL native Michael Frena calling the play-by-play. Eriksson credits goaltender Jacob Collaco's father Conrad for figuring out the technical aspects to get the games up and running. Visit gmhl.tv to watch this Friday's 7:30 p.m. home game and Sunday's 1:45 p.m. start in North York.

Meet the Predators

Name: **Reese Bisci**
Jersey number: **29**
Age: **19**
Birthdate: **June 3, 2002**
Hometown: **Welland, Ontario**
Nickname: **Bisc or Bisee**
Favourite hockey player: **Jeff Skinner**
Favourite 'hype' song: **Stop 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)!**



LocalHAPPENINGS



Niagara Pump House Arts Centre presents the **NOTL Arts Collective Group Exhibition**

Dec. 14, 2021 to Feb. 6, 2022
Everyone is invited to attend the **Artists Meet & Greet on Dec. 19th, 2-4 pm.**
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niagarapumphouse.ca/exhibitions



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LocalWORSHIP



CORNERSTONE COMMUNITY CHURCH
Sunday, December 19th
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Online & In-Person (Registration Required)
Message: Matthew Unruh - Making Room for Worship
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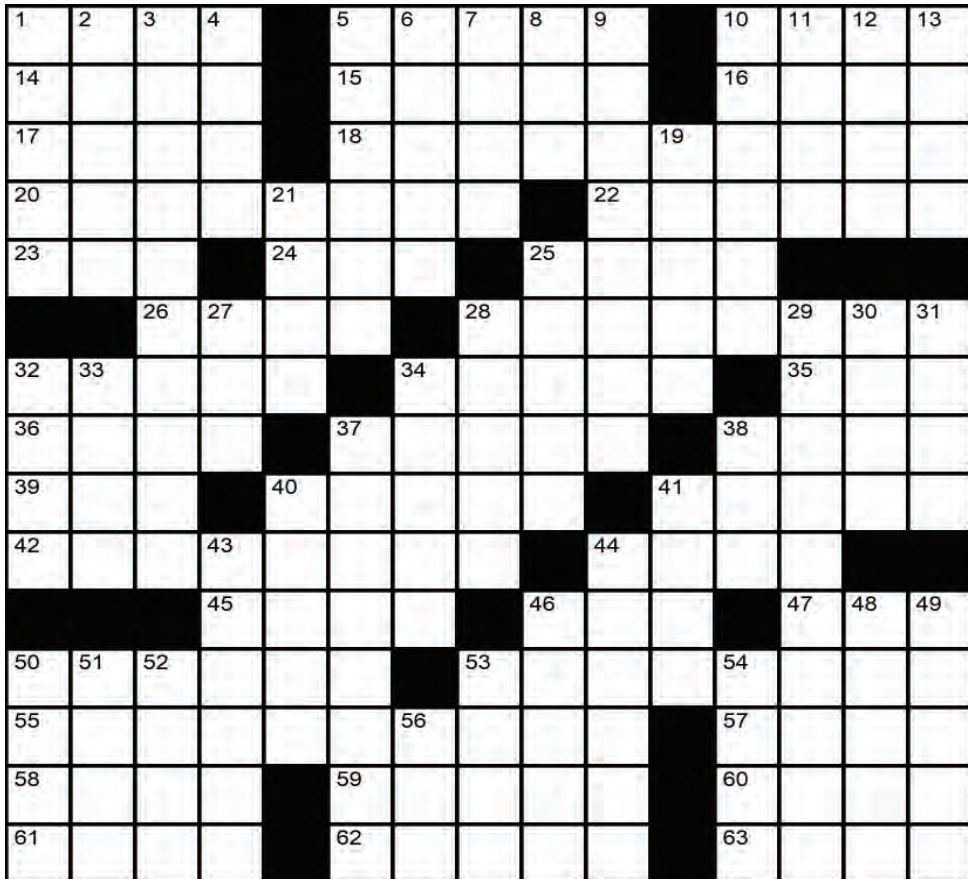
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CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU



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

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
- 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 Eyeshades, maybe
51 Flair
52 Michigan college, and
where it is
53 Leo's locks
54 Fissure
56 --- + dam = lamb

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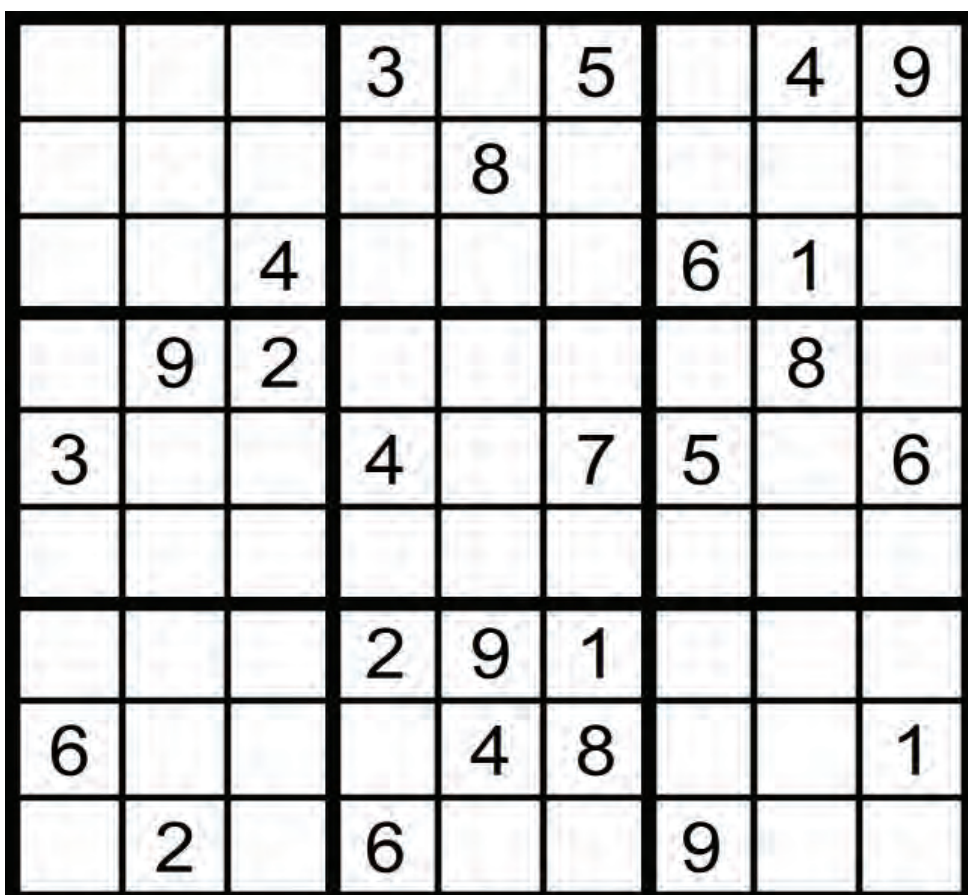
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PUZZLE ANSWERS

Across: 1 Tbsp, 5 Hoard, 10 Dave, 14 Race, 15 Angie, 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 Fiat, 61 Snag, 62 Smear, 63 Toto.

Down: 1 Traps, 2 Basra, 3 School days, 4 Peep, 5 Hassan, 6 On-key, 7 Ages, 8 Fl P, 9 Detained, 10 Deceit, 11 Amin, 12 Visa, 13 Elms, 19 Irwin, 21 Owns, 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 Alm at, 49 Plato, 50 Lids, 51 Elan, 52 Alma, 53 Mane, 54 Riff, 56 Ram.



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The Niagara-on-the-Lake
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LocalSPORTS

Wolves always excited to play, whatever the score

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."

