

# The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL



Local  
musician  
releases  
new single  
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Santa says his ride through town, including the village of St. Davids, was long but comfortable, and he was happy to see all the smiling faces of kids and parents. (Penny Coles)

## NOTL recognized with National Trust award

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake has been awarded the 2020 Prince of Wales National Trust prize, recognizing “its sustained commitment to heritage conservation over time.”

The town is being celebrated for “its exemplary and effective revitalization practices, and demonstrated results in bringing heritage to life,” the announcement of the prize says.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero says she was very surprised and thrilled to get the phone call from the National Trust, telling her of the award. Town heritage planner Denise Horne had nominated the town, filling out the application with the help of Disero’s executive assistant Beth Audet, without telling anyone else.

“It was Denise’s plan,”

says Disero. “She took it upon herself to nominate the town. When I got the call, I was thrilled. As much as I love Niagara-on-the-Lake, I couldn’t believe we’d won the award. I didn’t even know we’d been nominated.”

The recognition is all about the town, and the citizens’ “continuing efforts to uphold our heritage, and ensure it’s protected,” says Disero.

“This is about volunteers and staff working together. It’s about the town coming together.”

Disero says it adds one more award, similar to Communities in Bloom, that will attract visitors, who come for many reasons.

“They come for the Shaw Festival, the wineries, so many reasons, but everyone who comes is aware of how historic our town is, even if

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## New CAO getting up to speed on important initiatives

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

While starting a new job during a pandemic isn’t ideal, the Town’s new CAO is making it work.

Marnie Cluckie says she has decided to work at the town hall office, “while taking all the necessary precautions,” but adds, “it is very quiet, with a lot of people working from home,” for safety reasons.

“It’s a very unusual way to start a new job,” she says, with so few staff at the office, but after just a few short days, she has met in person with senior management team members, all wearing masks and physical distancing.

She’s used different methods to introduce herself safely to the rest of the staff, including a virtual town hall-style meeting with “a good chunk of people,” and others through Zoom

or Microsoft Teams, the group-chat software used for virtual Town meetings.

“It’s lucky we have such good technology,” she says.

She has also in her first few days on the job attended emergency control meetings, she says, with COVID a priority for the municipality.

She was ready to hit the ground running, having come from a municipal sector job where she was involved in COVID response.

“It wasn’t so difficult a transition as you might expect.”

She had been working as director of strategic transformations for the Halton Region, with a group formed to improve service delivery for residents, including looking at modes of communication.

That initiative was suspended by the pandemic, and she became focused on COVID response, ensuring

community members and staff were “safe and secure.”

Once behind her Niagara-on-the-Lake desk, she jumped right in with senior management team members, who she says were “great in bringing me up to speed on where they are with various initiatives,” including the strategic plan, which was approved a year ago to take council and staff through to 2022, focusing on long-term planning and

innovation, defining priorities and providing council with direction.

She is also briefed on the Deloitte review of the Town’s service delivery, and its recommendations for improvement. When the findings of the review was presented to council in July, councillors agreed some short-term changes could be implemented, but most

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## ROTARY BOTTLE DRIVE

The Rotary Club of Niagara on the Lake is conducting a Holiday Bottle and Can Drive to support our president’s Challenge, and Feed The Children theme. We are collecting empty wine, liquor and beer bottles, as well as beer and pop cans. All proceeds will directly support our Feed The Children initiatives both locally and internationally.

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# Town to look for location to amalgamate two fire stations

**Penny Coles**  
**The Local**

As a follow-up to the review of the Town's master fire plan, councillors at Monday's planning meeting approved in principle the future consolidation of St. Davids and Queenston stations, once the current facilities come to the end of their lifespan, estimated to be about 2030.

Councillors also directed the fire chief to limit future investment in those stations to critical components only, and improvements related to health and safety. The recommendations included asking the fire chief to report back to council once a suitable property for a consolidated fire station has been found, and to work on a funding strategy for the new station.

Councillors approved those recommendations, and agreed with Coun. Sandra O'Connor's request to also ask for an investigation into the viability and cost associated with combining the stations through an expansion and renovations to the St. Davids site. Although, as Fire Chief Nick Ruller pointed out, using that station to cover both villages would mean

a reduction in service, and likely an impact on the morale of volunteer firefighters if the Queenston station closes. A consolidated station at an appropriate location would not reduce the level of service to the two villages, the report says. The discussion of combining the two stations goes back about 40 years, but with the deteriorating state

of the buildings, council acknowledged in 2018 they would be required to make a decision about replacements, and asked staff to look at an analysis and viability of both stations. The consultant who recently reported on a review of the 10-year fire department master plan suggested both a new fire hall and a new location, combining the two stations. After re-

viewing an addition to one station, he found some problems with that, reporting that both are aging, and will need major structural work in the future. Also, it would be better for staff morale to consolidate the two groups of firefighters in one new location, which would be very different from moving one group to another, existing station, he said.

# Councillors agree to short-term rental bylaw changes

## Committee to look at further issues such as capping numbers

**Penny Coles**  
**The Local**

After an almost five hour discussion at Monday's planning committee, councillors agreed to changes to the short-term rentals, and to forming another working group to continue looking at other issues, such as enforcement of existing by-laws, and future capping of new licences. Councillors listened to several accommodation rental owners with concerns, including their opposition to a primary principal

residence requirement for the owners, but that requirement had been removed from the recommendations in response to the strong opposition received by staff. John Foreman, president of the NOTL Bed and Breakfast Association, and David Levesque, past-president, were among those asking for a deferral of the decisions before councillors Monday, and a further review of changes to the bylaw with a committee that includes stakeholders. "At the end of the day," said Levesque, "I believe

what is being presented is getting close to an end product, but reading it now from an industry perspective, I just know this is not ready to be voted upon as is." Levesque asked council to "push pause," and allow industry representatives to formally weigh in on this topic. "Part of these proposals could possibly be voted forward as is, and other parts just need more attention," he said, adding, "2020 has been so difficult; everyone I've been dealing with is tired, scared, on edge, and barely holding it together frankly."

Although they didn't get a deferral of the recommendations on the table, they did get the formation of a committee to continue looking at other issues. One of the topics councillors discussed was spending \$45,000 to hire a third-party company to acquire data on unlicensed rentals operating in town. That recommendation was approved, although councillors were warned by Coun. Erwin Wiens that the information would be "anecdotal only," and town staff will still have to deal with it. The compliance and data collection service, to be contracted for a one-year pilot, includes "24/7 support for complaint resolution," the staff report says. "Residents will be able to use the compliance hotline in order to file a complaint at anytime of day. The third party compliance company will contact the operator or property manager to advise them of the complaint. The operator or property manager will be required to respond to the complaint within forty-five

minutes. Failure to respond may result in applicable fines." Town staff will be required to do any follow-ups resulting from the collection of data. One service the majority of councillors supported was having data that provides evidence of advertising by rental establishments who are not licensed. The bylaw requires licensed rental ads to include their license number in their marketing and advertisements. Councillors also approved having two interim reports prepared by staff on the pilot project in 2021, with a final report due in November. The discussion included councillors' concerns about "hollowing out" of certain neighbourhoods, where a high percentage of homes are short-term rentals, many owned by part-time residents who plan to retire and live in town permanently one day. That means that during the winter months, many of those homes are empty, said Lord Mayor Betty Disero.

Another concern, expressed by Coun. Clare Cameron, is the impact of short-term rentals on the availability of housing stock for families, and it was agreed that future discussions should include capping the number of rentals and possibly limiting them to certain areas. Councillors agreed that the issues are complex, and the bylaw needs more work. A working committee will include three members of the industry, two residents and two councillors will look at issues not included in the bylaw changes for a report in April. Although the report recommended a fee increase to \$40 a room, an amendment by Coun. Norm Arsenault asking an increase in the per-room licensing fee to \$175 was approved, as was lifting the current moratorium on licensing. Council will meet again next week to ratify or make changes to Monday's approvals.

## ROLLIN' DOWN THE RIVER

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\*\*\*\*\*

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Podcast to follow

Niagara Region



# Town says 'make some noise'

**Local Staff**

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is organizing another Make Some Noise event, to once again thank front-line workers.

After 10 months of living in a pandemic, it's also a time for a message of unity, and to "celebrate the resilience of the NOTL community," specially during a difficult holiday season, says Lord Mayor

Betty Disero. It will be held this Saturday, Dec. 19 at 5 p.m., and residents are asked to go outside, "raise your voice, honk your horn, and make some noise."



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# CAO 'fortunate to work with a great team'

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of the recommendations were put off until staff and councillors could have input from the new CAO.

While emergency response still has to take priority, says Cluckie, staff have to work on other items and accomplishments, including the budget, to ensure there is an "alignment of resources" to support the strategic plan and other projects, even in the face of COVID.

She has a long list of initiatives to tackle quickly, she says, "but first I need to learn. I'm so fortunate to work with a great team here to help me."

In addition to the strategic plan and service review, she's looking at the budget and at timelines "to see what can we realistically achieve, and how we prioritize to use our resources in the best way possible."

She's also reading up on the transportation study and fire master plan, under-

standing that many recommendations have been put on hold to wait for the new CAO to be part of the decision-making process, such as the one before councillors Monday to consolidate two fire stations. Her signature was on that report.

Cluckie says she wants to be sure she's ready when recommendations come forward and decisions have to be made.

"That's one of the reasons I wanted to start at this time of year, rather than early in the new year," she says. She admits she'll be taking home some reading material over the holiday, to be prepared for discussions that will come forward in the new year, but adds she will be sure to also make time to enjoy holiday festivities with her family.

She has met with Lord Mayor Betty Disero, will be meeting with all of the councillors over the next few days to understand their priorities, and is eager to get

out in the community to meet with various groups and understand what they are looking for, when that can be done safely.

"I see my role as helping to remove barriers, and helping to support the needs of the community," she says.

Before taking her job with Halton Region, Cluckie worked for the Niagara Region for three years, and during that time learned about Niagara-on-the-Lake. She says when she and her family are looking for a local vacation, "this is where we like to visit."

It's a beautiful town, it has a great identity with a distinctive personality, and "a unique local flavour that I don't think you can find anywhere else in Canada," she says.

"It's a dream job for me, because it's such a wonderful community in so many ways."

She is currently living in Norfolk, with her husband, who is in sales with the

agricultural industry, her 16-year-old son, who is interested in a career in journalism, and her 12-year-old daughter, "the gymnast."

Cluckie says she would like to be a part of the community where she works, and plans to relocate to NOTL.

With all the disruption of COVID this past year for her kids, she doesn't want to uproot them right away. The family plan is to look for a home in NOTL in the summer of 2021, and until then, she will be commuting.



CAO Marnie Cluckie is settling in to her new job, meeting staff and learning about what is on her plate for the new year. (Photo supplied)

# 'Very prestigious award'

Continued from page 1

it's not their principle reason for being here."

The recognition will also inspire people to continue putting their energy and efforts toward the preservation of the town's history, she says. "It will inspire us to continue to protect what we have."

The announcement says that in keeping with The Prince of Wales' commitment to architecture, the environment, and inner-city renewal, he agreed to lend his title to the creation of the National Trust prize in 1999. It's awarded annually, recognizing communities and their local governments for the successful heritage stewardship of a town, city, rural region, First Nations reserve or community.

"Niagara-on-the-Lake is a compelling example of resilience grounded in built heritage. It is the recipient of the National Trust's 2020 Prince of Wales Prize, which recognizes communities and their local governments for the successful heritage stew-

ardship of a town, city, First Nations reserve or community, rural region, or district," the announcement says.

It's a community "proud of its past," and "a living illustration of early 19th century Upper Canada."

A National Historic Site of Canada, the town "boasts an extraordinary collection of residential, commercial, ecclesiastical and institutional buildings, many on their original sites close to the street. The town's earliest citizens made a strong commitment to the restoration of local heritage structures, and to the active conservation of the town's cultural heritage resources, which has led to the conservation and restoration of many early buildings by private property owners as well as local heritage organizations."

In 1962, residents formed the Niagara Foundation, a local advocacy and fundraising group dedicated to preserving the town's landmarks – including the Niagara Apothecary, then Ontario's oldest continuously operating pharmacy. "The actions

of these heritage advocates galvanized and inspired others in the conservation movement in Canada," the announcement says.

Brad Nixon, vice-president of the foundation, says the organization had nothing to do with the awarding of the prize, although it is a member of the National Trust. "It's a great recognition, and a very prestigious award," he says. "It's a real boost for people who are concerned about heritage preservation."

It's also a recognition of the work that's been done in the past, and gives credit to all efforts of all the townspeople who have put their efforts into preservation, says Nixon, mentioning groups such as SORE (Save Our Rand Estate) and Chautauqua residents who have come together to protect their community. "I think the cooperative work of our town council also has to be commended," he says.

For more information about the award, visit [www.nationaltrustcanada.ca/awards/prince-of-wales-prize](http://www.nationaltrustcanada.ca/awards/prince-of-wales-prize)

# The colder the day, the better Steve McNeil likes it



Skater Steve McNeil got what he wished for as he stepped on the ice at the Gretzky Estate Winery on a cold winter morning, just past midnight Tuesday, to skate for 19 hours and 26 minutes to raise awareness for the Alzheimer Society of Niagara. He does that every year, for Alzheimer associations across Canada, in memory of his mother, who battled dementia the last 20 years of her life. She was born in 1926, and he skates every year on Dec. 15, which has become National 1926 Skate Day for Alzheimer's. He was joined on the ice Tuesday afternoon by Tina Kindt (left), CEO of the Alzheimer Society of Niagara. Nicole Court (right) of Niagara Falls joined the skate at 3 a.m. and skated off and on during the day. She's known as the Beer League Beauty on Instagram. To donate, visit <https://alzheimer.ca/niagara/en/home>.

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## This holiday season needs to be different.

**The safest way to celebrate indoors is only with the people who live in your home. People who live alone can get together only with one other home.**

**Gatherings with friends and extended family can carry an increased risk of getting and spreading COVID-19. Consider celebrating outdoors or virtually with others that are not part of your household.**

**Know the gathering limits in your area before you choose to entertain with family and friends indoors. Indoor gatherings are not permitted in regions in Grey-Lockdown.**

**For all gatherings with anyone you do not live with:**

- maintain 2 metres physical distance
- wear a face covering
- avoid potlucks or shared utensils
- ensure everyone washes hands regularly, including before and after meals

**Self-isolate if you are sick, even if your symptoms are mild and ask guests to stay home if they feel unwell.**

**Follow provincial and local public health advice to keep you and your loved ones safe this holiday.**

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# Update on COVID includes likely move to red zone

**Penny Coles**  
**The Local**

As coronavirus cases rise in the region and in town, Niagara's acting medical officer of health is expecting an announcement Friday of a move from orange to the red zone of COVID restrictions.

Dr. Mustafa Hirji says he doesn't expect any advance notice of the decision, which will likely be made by the provincial cabinet Friday morning, followed by a public announcement in the afternoon.

That would mean increased provincial restrictions to local businesses, among them a reduction to only 10 people allowed indoors at restaurants, bars and event spaces.

Cases in the region spiked over the weekend, with 65 new cases Saturday, 71 on Sunday, a dip to 35 on Monday and another big jump on Tuesday, with 62 new cases reported.

In Niagara-on-the-Lake, which has seen numbers creeping up slowly, the total number of cases had climbed to 71 by Tuesday. Last Tuesday the number of cases in town was 63, making this the biggest jump in the space of a week.

Hirji says the impact on hospital capacity, with hospitalizations tending to increase two to four weeks after cases increase, may not become apparent for a few weeks.

However, there is a concern about the strain on resources for contact tracing, he says.

"Our ability to do timely contact tracing is now overwhelmed. For close to 30 per cent of cases from this weekend, we have not yet been able to follow up in

detail. This means that on an ongoing basis, we will have less data to understand how infection is spreading in our community, so that we can address it. We are also more likely to miss contacts and not identify all chains of infection, which will mean more persons will continue to spread infections," says Hirji.

"We unfortunately don't see a clear single cause for these infections," he adds.

"About 45 per cent are in outbreaks in long-term care homes, retirement homes, hospitals, and other congregate settings," he reported Monday.

"For the other 55 per cent, many are those whom we have not yet been able to do follow-up, so we don't know. Where we do know, spread within households is the largest group. Spread to friends, co-workers, and extended family are also significant."

Young people "remain the plurality of infections, however, there are large numbers of infections across all age groups, except for children," he says.

Hirji says the transmission is both from individuals from the Niagara area going to Toronto to see family and friends, and bringing it back with them, and from people coming here, not to shop, but to see family and friends.

Regarding the increase in December cases in NOTL, he says, there is no particular pattern.

"Some are linked to health care outbreaks outside of NOTL, and others were infected from close contacts in their households, extended family, co-workers, and friends."

As for more Section 22 regional restrictions that would be on top of those imposed by the Province, Hirji says, "we are looking for areas of focused risk where we could bring in additional measures. At present, we have not identified areas conducive to that."

COVID-19 spreads primarily when people have social interactions,

he says. "Reducing social interactions by limiting it to just households is how we will stop the spread of COVID-19. The best way to achieve that is for individuals to choose to limit their social interaction to just their households, to limit opportunity for infection to spread more widely. This is particularly important as we head into the holiday season." Restrictions on businesses, he adds, "are usually just ways to try and break up such social interaction in public places."

Lord Mayor Betty Disero says regional councillors were given an update by Hirji at a virtual meeting last Friday, and warned of the likelihood of the region moving into the red zone, with accompanying restrictions.

Town staff are looking at differences in the restrictions, she says, and will be ready to communicate changes if they're announced Friday, as expected.


Red zones will impact town facilities, such as the arenas and community centre, with further details expected from staff.

There was also discussion at the regional meeting about the vaccine that has arrived in Canada, with details of distribution being rolled out by the Province.

The Pfizer vaccine is expected to be delivered to 21 to 23 hospitals in the province with adequate freezer space, and although St. Catharines has sufficient capacity to qualify, it wasn't known at press time whether St. Catharines was being considered as a destination for the vaccine. Disero said Monday she expects that announcement to come this week.

During a meeting last week with Ontario mayors, municipalities were told that by April there should be more vaccines, and different kinds of vaccines approved, "to take us to the end of 2021 and into 2022, when we should have enough for everyone who wants one."

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# Santa promises to return Christmas Eve

**Penny Coles**  
**The Local**

Santa Claus says he was very comfortable travelling around Niagara-on-the-Lake in his sleigh, even though it took him several hours to complete his route.

He started at 9:15 a.m. in Glendale, and made his way through all five villages, finishing up around 4:15 p.m. There were streets where a lot of adults and kids came out to wave at him, which he enjoyed enormously. "I was really happy to see the num-

ber of people who came out. It was great to see all the kids with their names on signs for me." Standing up and waving helped to keep him warm, and although there were also long, cold stretches where there were few people waiting for

him, it was worth it, he says, to have seen all the smiling faces. "It felt really good." He was a little stiff and sore at the end of the day, but

Mrs. Claus was waiting for him in the North Pole with a heating pad. By the next day he felt great, ready to get back to

work helping his elves get toys ready for Christmas. He will be back in NOTL on Christmas Eve with presents to deliver, he promises.



Nicholas, Ryan and mom Lora Riddle, Margot, Coco Eli, and Harry with mom Crystal Perng, and Simon, Isaac, and Benjamin, with mom Melanie Marull were pleased to have Santa visit them in their St. Davids neighbourhood. (Penny Coles)



Luke Fratangelo, Charlotte Mannella, Sam Kallio, Gemma Fratangelo and Leo Mannella love the opportunity to wave at Santa as he makes his way through the streets of a new St. Davids subdivision. (Penny Coles)



Sophie Slingerland also gets to wave to Santa from her rural home. (Photo supplied)



Dr. Julia Friesen, Michael Zappitelli and their year-old daughter Michaela were thrilled that Santa took the time to drive along rural roads, including Concession 2. (Photo supplied)

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# EDITORIAL

## Look around, we're surrounded by goodness

There is little doubt now that the end of the pandemic still feels a long way off.

We keep hearing the politicians saying there is light at the end of the tunnel, the end is in sight, there is reason for hope, the future looks positive.

We know all that to be true. It just can't come quickly enough. It may be that by summer, the numbers of vaccinations will be sufficient for us to think herd immunity has been reached, but right now, summer seems a long way away.

We are facing a pandemic holiday, no doubt about that. The vaccine is being dangled like a carrot — we just have to be good until we get it.

Kinda like the Christmas naughty and nice list. This is not the time to be naughty.

Being nice means doing what we're told, which is about to become a whole lot more difficult, if the predictions about entering the red zone are correct.

The recent chatter on Queen Street is also worrisome. It's about businesses on the move, some who are doing well to a new, better

location which is great, but also about others who have moved out. Empty storefronts, buildings for sale, and not a lot of interest in starting up a business. The vaccine can't come soon enough for the business community, which now has to ride out the hardest months of every year, never mind during a pandemic.

There is a role for us to play, albeit a small one, which is helping out in any way we can to support local businesses and events. It may not be enough, but it's all we can do.

Kudos to the Shaw Guild for their efforts to help local merchants with their gift boxes, to the Shaw Festival for giving us a virtual concert of holiday songs, and to Music Niagara, for a Christmas concert to enjoy.

Every day we hear of a new initiative, a new fundraiser, a new way for events to be held and businesses to adjust so they can operate safely. Organizers and businesses keep coming up with more incredible ways to astound us. We are fortunate to live and work in a community of

so many creative people.

And congratulations to Santa and all the town staff who were part of organizing his journey through the streets of NOTL. It took a while, but every time Santa sees a group of kids, he has to slow down, wave, and call out to them. We know he'll be back Christmas Eve to deliver presents, and when he's done, will enjoy a much-deserved rest with Mrs. Claus.

So many cool stories around us: an Olympic swimmer spreading a message of love and compassion with her children's book; a NOTL man travelling around Ontario to help the Red Cross as part of their emergency relief team, and, as we discovered on Facebook, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire Department donating an old truck to the town of Sosua in the Dominican Republic. What a great story!

There is so much around us to make us feel hopeful and positive about the future. We all understand how difficult it is to face a Christmas without the fam-

ily celebrations that mean so much to us, but for now, we have only to look around us and feel grateful that we live here, in Canada, where

the pandemic is frightening but could be so much worse, and where we can always be inspired by so many people doing so much good. Thank

you to all who are helping to spread holiday cheer.

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

## With vaccine so close yet so far, waiting patiently isn't a plan



**Wayne Gates, MPP**  
MPP for Niagara Falls Riding  
Special to The Local

On Monday, residents from around the province breathed a collective sigh of relief as the first COVID-19 vaccination in Ontario was given to a front-line healthcare worker in Toronto. The vaccine marks the end of a dark era of uncertainty, and shines a light at the end of the tunnel of this pandemic, which has dominated 2020.

However, contrary to some of Premier Doug Ford's actions, now is not the time to sit back and put the province on cruise control.

In fact, now, more than ever before, we must act decisively to beat back this pandemic, and the reasoning for that lies in the words of Dr. David Williams, Ontario's chief medical health officer. Dr. Williams, though encouraged by the arrival of the vac-

cine, was honest with the residents of Ontario that the vast majority of us would not likely have easy access to it until late in 2021. That means that even though some will be vaccinated, our community is still facing one of the most dangerous parts of this saga for at least a few more months. Unfortunately, worldwide demand for the vaccine has made any other route an impossibility. As cases rise exponentially in our community, we cannot act as though we are out of the woods.

I have said this to Ford and I say it now - waiting for an accessible vaccine isn't a plan.

We cannot condemn more people to agony and tragic loss before they get to the same light at the end of the tunnel we're all chasing. To date, there continues to be almost \$10 billion sitting in the provincial treasury that is already earmarked for COVID relief that has yet to be dispersed. Ford isn't hiring the staff and infection control experts urgently needed in long-term care. He isn't using the Christmas break to reset schooling programs by cap-

ping class sizes or rolling out in-school testing. Testing and contact tracing continue to be rationed instead of funded. Workers continue to go without paid sick days and thus spread the virus in their workplaces. Businesses remain without the vital lifeline they need to make it over this final hurdle without debt or bankruptcy.

To make matters worse, Ford has shut down the Ontario Legislature until mid-February. Given the enormous need before us, no politician should be having any extended holiday right now. Voters in Niagara-on-the-Lake sent me to the Ontario Legislature to pass laws and allocate funding. That is needed now more than ever. Ford must immediately recall the legislature, push through any holidays and allocate the money that's already sitting there so that by the time the vaccine is widely available, we have averted as much loss, suffering and economic damage as possible. Waiting isn't a plan, so let's get back to the Legislature, do the job we were elected to do and create a real plan.

## LETTERS

### Santa Around the Town

Our family would like to thank the NOTL Christmas Parade Committee for keeping the Christmas spirit alive amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, and in a way that kept us safe from the coronavirus that large crowds could easily spread.

Santa around town stopped at my sister's rural driveway on Concession 2, and we, with our granddaughter and extended family, were able, while distanced, to continue to be

part of a many decades-long tradition to either be part of the parade or to enjoy it as spectators.

Santa and his elves deserve our appreciation for what started in Glendale as a three-hour tour and ended up in Virgil likely six-plus hours later in the dark.

Santa was atop a wide open sleigh, and was a real champ in the frigid, windy weather that was whipping over the vineyards.

Being from the North

Pole it must have been easy (not) for him.

Thanks to those who created an app that made it much easier for us, the more timid Icewine veteran spectators, to arrive at the end of the driveway just a few minutes ahead of Santa's arrival.

Merry Christmas to all and to all please stay safe, Cheers!

**Jamie and Connie**  
Slingerland  
NOTL



## View from the couch

**Donald Combe**  
Special to The Local

*The Prom* (Netflix 2020) is a feel good musical fantasy where Broadway meets small town Indiana. Several out-of-work Broadway stars rally

behind a teen, who wants to go to her high school prom with her girlfriend. The film energetically proclaims hope, decency, fairness and fun. And when it was over, I did feel hopeful, and I did "feel good."

*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.*

### The Niagara-on-the-Lake

# LOCAL

The trusted voice of our community

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The opinions expressed in submitted commentary, and letters to the editor, are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of The NOTL Local.

# COMMENT LETTERS

## No homes for residents to rent

I've been listening for several weeks to the back and forth regarding Niagara's current Airbnb situation. I understand the income potential, especially in a town like Niagara-on-the-Lake. But at what cost do we continue to exploit this town? When is enough, enough? The little town that boasts of being the pride of Ontario is becoming a kind of façade. It's so overrun with tourists that I'm reminded of a quote by Yogi Berra: "Nobody goes there anymore. It's too crowded." I've already heard people complain about lines, crowding, traffic . . . and they are tourists. I can't even begin to speak for those of us who live here year-round.

When my husband and I moved here 13 years ago, it was to escape Toronto's noise. Both of us were born within the region, and with elderly parents close by and a job for me at the Shaw Festival, it only made sense to stay. At that time, the town boasted several hotels and a plethora of bed

and breakfasts which seemed to satisfy the needs of visitors.

As an artist who has worked primarily as a director at the Stratford Festival, buying a home was out of the question, and so we rented. At the time, there were several options, and all of them were reasonable. Since then, we've been evicted twice. In one instance, the home was being sold and torn down (it never was.) Instead, the house underwent renovations and was then rented out for more money.

On Dec. 1 this year, we received our second eviction, this time so the landlord can move in. We are the collateral damage of not only COVID-19, but the influx of short-term rentals. On our street alone, 25 per cent of the homes are Airbnb. What we are currently facing is an insurmountable attempt to find a new place to live. Letters to the paper from out of towners who want a "home away from home" for two weeks means that someone like myself (de-

spite losing a contract at Stratford, we continued to pay rent all through COVID-19) can't find a "home" at all.

We citizens of NOTL are at a crossroads here. Do we choose to live in a town that is exclusively for the wealthy? Or do we choose to live in a community that includes people from different walks of life? Supposedly people come here to enjoy the Shaw Festival, but if artists like myself cannot live here, what does that say? Stopping or limiting the Airbnb situation in NOTL may deter some people from coming here, but in the end, it may benefit this town as a whole. There are plenty of ways to make money in this town. Perhaps some enterprising individual could purchase land and build actual cottages? Must affordable, available housing be eliminated at the expense of, what in some instances is, greed?

**Lezlie Wade  
NOTL**

## 'Waste of time and money'

I totally disagree with your slant on the 5G controversy (The Local, Dec. 10).

Our elected officials who supported the motion will not be getting my support in

the next election for wasting taxpayers' time and money on such a ridiculous consideration.

What you have described as an attack on one of our town

councillors shows me that you are as bad as her. You should be ashamed of yourself.

**Lezlie Wade  
NOTL**

## Cheropita is doing her job

I was pleased to see your coverage of the 5G discussion and the recent media attack on Coun. Wendy Cheropita.

Your article provided a much clearer picture of what the issue is – what led up to it, how it was introduced in

the first place to council (by another councillor) and the fact that Niagara Falls council had asked their city staff to reach out to other municipalities. I congratulate The Local on doing their job, which is reporting the facts, not offering their opinions.

**Cathy Rye  
NOTL**

## Residents still waiting for dust solution

The residents of Hickory Avenue, abutting Dyck Lane in St. Davids, have been waiting many years to be given the ability to enjoy their backyards. Town Council has the power to provide this but for some inexplicable reason can't, or won't, come to a decision. St. Davids resident Bill Krahn has been working endlessly and tirelessly on our behalf and we all deserve a resolution.

Council has all the information and has heard all the arguments. They're tired of us? Well, just imagine how tired we are of living with this miserable situation. It would be wonderful in the summer of 2021, to be able to open our windows, garden, entertain and sit in our backyards without worrying about getting covered in dust or having to hear vehicles blasting down

Dyck Lane.

Please, council, close Dyck Lane to all non-emergency vehicular traffic and re-route it through the intersection of Dyck Lane and Hickory Avenue.

Hope springs eternal that the Christmas spirit will finally move council to make the right decision.

**Gracia Janes  
NOTL**

## Songs for a Winter's Night fabulous

I saw the Shaw's *Songs for a Winter's Night* last week. OMG they're good - so very, very, very good. Kimberley Rampersad's rendition of *Oh Holy Night* had us weeping.

We've been fortunate enough to catch previous performances, including Duke Ellington, and another time, Cole Porter. This ensemble of Kimberley Rampersad, Kyle Blair, An-

drew Broderick, James Daly, Kristi Frank, Elodie Gillett, Alexis Gordon, Olivia Sinclair-Brisbane and Jonathan Tan is awesome.

This last take (for the holidays) features ensemble members performing Christmas favourites for a socially-distanced crowd of 50 people in the Jackie Maxwell Studio Theatre. Tickets were free, if you believe it, so I had better thank the Fed-

eral Development Bank.

The show only lasts for 35 to 45 minutes, but it is so fabulous. Any chance we can keep it going?

**Carol Beckmann**

*Editor's note: The Shaw Festival announced Monday it is offering a one-time virtual performance of Songs for a Winter's Night on YouTube, Friday, Dec. 18 at 8 p.m.*

## Questions a duty, getting answers difficult

It seems such a long time ago.

Sometime in the 90s a group of us (NOTL citizens) protested the expansion of the communication towers. We disliked the arrogance of a government which could dictate to a local community the location of these

ungainly structures, but we also distrusted the certainty expressed by the higher authority that the radiation emitted by these towers was completely safe.

So time goes on . . . and we seem to be unaffected.

I wonder if there were any effects from the towers.

I wonder if the 5G technology will have any effect.

To ask these questions is a citizen's duty. To get the answers is more difficult. Good luck to those who try.

**Cynthia Rand,  
NOTL**

## Correction

Last week's story about Bravo Niagara's *Sounds of Hope*, which commemorates the 75th anniversary of the end of the Holocaust, included the Hebrew names of two pieces of music.

The letters of the Hebrew text were reversed. They should have read: *ברכת שבת* and *קדש יתום*. The Local apologizes for the error and any inconvenience it may have caused.



## 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](mailto: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.

**HAPPY**

*Holidays*

The Niagara-on-the-Lake

**LOCAL**

**All the best for 2021  
from all of us at**

# Newark volunteers organize mountain of donations

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

Newark Neighbours volunteers have been hard at work sorting food, toys and other gifts, ready for delivery Monday to those on their list for help over Christmas.

Laura Gibson, board chair of Newark Neighbours, says the response from a very generous community has been overwhelming. Although the piles of food and toys to be sorted seemed a bit daunting, the volunteers were working quickly and efficiently.

"It's amazing how quickly it's all come together," she says, with volunteers ahead

of schedule by the end of the day Monday. "We've had a lot of help, and it's worked out better than we expected."

With all the major food drives completed, and the list of 46 clients, including 13 families, volunteers were putting food boxes together first, before going to work sorting toys.

Families with children will receive brightly coloured Christmas bags of gifts, but parents will also be given wrapping paper and tags for anything they want to wrap, says Gibson.

"We do have more than last year, because of the generosity of the community. We'll make sure everything is put to good use."

NOTL Hydro staff, who usually collect food during the Christmas Parade, held a very successful food drive, which contributed to the mountain of goodies to be sorted.

The Town's 3-in-1 donation drive also brought in some food and toys, says Gibson, remarking on the top quality of all the donations.

Clients who receive special items for Christmas dinner will also be given food boxes to last for two weeks, and if Newark has food left over, the shelves of the food bank on John Street will be filled.

Those who receive food and gifts, thanks to a very generous community, Gibson says, "will have a wonderful Christmas."



Newark Neighbours volunteers had a mountain of food to sort for Christmas, spread out where they could work easily and quickly in the basement of the Cornerstone Church Niagara Stone Road campus. (Photos by Penny Coles)

# Quilters furiously stitch quilts for Newark Neighbours

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

When local women were no longer able to meet at Cornerstone Church to quilt, they missed the social time with friends they have come to count on, after decades of gathering weekly for stitching sessions.

Quilting groups are a tradition of the many Men-

nonite churches, and in NOTL, that tradition has become so important to local women, many of whom remember the examples set by their mothers, as they socialize while they stitch, knowing their quilts will go to those in need.

This year, the women missed out when sessions were cancelled due to COVID last spring, but as soon as they were permitted to gather again in small groups, says quilter Dorothy Soo-Wiens, they began meeting again, moving from the Niagara Stone Road church building to their Orchard Park campus on Hunter Road.

Since then, with women physical distancing and wearing masks, each with their own work station, they

began stitching furiously to make up for lost time.

In the last few weeks, they have completed 11 quilts, just in time to donate to Newark Neighbours to be distributed at Christmas.

"The relationships we've developed are tightly-built, and we missed each other when we couldn't meet," says Soo-Wiens.

She references a speech made at a quilting convention recently by the husband of a quilter who spoke, tongue-in-cheek, of their all-consuming obsession for their collection of fabric and their craft, and the loyalty they have for each other, which he compared to motorcycle gangs and cult members.

"It was very funny, but so true," says Soo-Wiens.


"That's exactly what we're like."

He also spoke of the skill that goes into their craft, and the generosity of spirit as they give away their quilts to assist others in need.

That too perfectly describes the group of NOTL women who didn't want Christmas to go by without their donation of quilts to locals in need.




Newark Neighbours volunteers Cindy Grant (left) and Pat Hicks (right) help display the quilts dropped off at Cornerstone Church by quilters Luanne Kulchar, Isolde Kroeker, Dorothy Soo-Wiens, and Dori Wiens, to be distributed with Christmas baskets.



# MAKE SOME NOISE

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# Icewine Village cancelled for health and safety reasons

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

Eduardo Lafforgue, the president of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce, says he was disappointed to have to cancel the January Icewine Village, but knows it had to be done.

It was a difficult decision, but the right one to make, he added.

The decision came after discussion between Chamber representatives, town staff, and event stakeholders, and was ultimately made in the best interest of the community's health and safety.

"Health and safety is paramount," says Lafforgue.

"When we realized we couldn't guarantee that for our guests, we had no choice but to cancel it."

He says although they initially felt they could control the number of visitors, as COVID cases rose in the

GTA, they realized even if they hadn't advertised the event, they would likely have people from Toronto attending, and they had no control over that.

"We hoped to make a safe version of the event, but it was decided to look for other options."

The Icewine Trail at local wineries will be held throughout the month of January, providing a great icewine experience in 2021, he says.

The Icewine Village is expected to return to downtown in 2022.

"I would like to thank the Chamber for coming to the

decision," says Lord Mayor Betty Disero. "While Niagara-on-the-Lake is a proud host of the Icewine Village, we know this is the best decision in light of ongoing restrictions within the second wave. The health and safety of our residents is of the utmost importance."

## Interesting gifts, limited editions at Fort George gift shop



The Friends of Fort George Gift Shop will be open weekends from noon to 4 p.m. until Jan. 3, with stocking stuffers and gifts, including new Fort George Christmas ornaments, candy, mugs and chinaware, children's toys, musical instruments, and books, including some limited editions. Throughout December, the gift shop is offering a private shopping experience. You can book a time any Monday between 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Email [admin@friendsoffortgeorge.ca](mailto:admin@friendsoffortgeorge.ca) to book a time, enjoy a cup of tea and find some great gifts. Or shop online at <http://friendsoffortgeorge.square.site> (Photo supplied)

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# Music Niagara to present Christmas performance

**Mike Balsom**  
**Special to The Local**

A perennial Music Niagara Festival favourite returns just in time for a *Cool Yule* virtual party.

On Wednesday, Dec. 23, the Toronto *All-Star Big Band - A Christmas Celebration* will be aired via the Music Niagara website and YouTube channel.

The band's artistic director, Zygmunt Jedrzejek, is looking forward to a return to NOTL as their usual summer appear-

ance at Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery for Music Niagara was cancelled in August.

"Music Niagara audiences have been wonderful for us," Jedrzejek says. "At Ravine, year after year, the tent is filled and the audiences have been enthusiastic, which fuels the young performers as well. It's a win-win situation. We enjoy coming to a spectacular part of Ontario, and the audience seems to enjoy the brand of music that we play."

The Toronto All-Star Big

Band (TABB) has become known over the years as one of the most intense and stimulating youth music programs in Canada. They've worked with some of the biggest Canadian and international names in jazz and swing, and many of their members have had success in their own bands as well.

TABB usually plays approximately 80 dates per year, with 30 of them happening during the summer months. All of their summer gigs were cancelled, as was their regu-

lar Music Niagara Christmas show, usually held at St. Mark's Anglican Church. Music Niagara general manager Karen Lade says both of TABB's yearly appearances sell out quickly, filling up to 250 seats each.

Jedrzejek assumed the Christmas show wouldn't be happening, and was delighted to get the call from Lade about next week's virtual performance.

Out of necessity, the big band becomes a not-so-big band for the upcoming pro-

gram. "Bringing a big band with the protocols that are necessary would be almost impossible," explains Jedrzejek. We've had a handful of recent performances, mostly virtual, but we haven't even tested having 17 musicians on stage with two metres separation, trying to perform safely. So we are bringing a combo instead."

That combo includes 2020 Juno Award winning drummer (with his band Turboprop) Ernesto Cervini, and TABB conductor and pianist Jesse

Whitely. Saxophone phenomenon Anthony Rinaldi and Juno nominee Daniel Fortin on double bass round out the instrumentalists. The musicians are joined by two vocalists: recent Humber College Bachelor of Music graduate Alisha Oliver and Donovan Locke, a member of TABB since 1999.

Jedrzejek says he and the musicians love to do these swinging Christmas concerts. "The majority of the Christmas repertoire was written in the 1930s and 1940s," he says, "which of course would lend itself to big band music. In the 30s and 40s, big band music, jazz and pop were basically the same."

The performance was recorded this week in the beautiful setting at Willowbank Estate, beginning a new partnership between the School of Restoration Arts and Music Niagara Festival. Jedrzejek promises a mix of swinging Christmas favourites, chestnuts that people may not have heard before, and well-known big band standards to get you up cutting a rug in your living room. Expect arrangements from the likes of Les Brown, Louis Armstrong, the Andrews Sisters and Harry Connick Jr. as part of the show.

The Toronto All-Star Big Band - A Christmas Special can be seen Dec. 23 at 4 p.m. on Music Niagara Festival's website or YouTube channel.



The Toronto All-Star Big Band, which traditionally performs at Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery as part of the annual Music Niagara line-up, will present a special Christmas show this year instead. (Photo supplied)

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# Elaine Tanner shares message of love and kindness

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

Each time Elaine Tanner signs one of her books for someone, she has the opportunity to share the message that is so much a part of who she is and all she has learned: the importance of being kind and loving unconditionally.

At her home in Niagara-on-the-Lake one morning last week, Tanner, the swimmer who won two silver medals and one bronze in the 1968 summer Olympics, had visitors lined up, wearing masks and physical distancing, on the sidewalk outside her home. They were waiting for copies of the book she wrote and self-published in 2015. A couple from Niagara Falls, a woman from Welland, and two others from NOTL arrived, one after another, each coming for autographed copies of the *Monkey Guy and The Cosmic Fairy*, to give to their children or grandchildren for Christmas.

Usually, around this time of year, she says, she would be doing book-signing events in time for Christmas. "I can't do that now, during a pandemic."

It's quickly evident that Tanner, gracious, warm and welcoming, loves to meet people, taking the opportunity to chat with each one about her message, which can resonate with readers of all ages.

"I wrote it not just for children, but for all of you, parents and grandparents who will read it to their children," she tells them.

Tanner, 69, and her husband John Watt divide their time between their Prideaux Street "cottage," as she describes their small, quaint home just steps away from King Street, and a house in B.C., where she grew up, and where her children and grandchildren still live. Watt is from The Beaches area of Toronto, and has family in Ontario. After visiting Niagara-on-the-Lake, they decided to make it their part-time home, Tanner explains.

They spend their winter

in the Old Town, when the streets are quiet. They enjoy the sunshine even on wintery days, which Watt prefers to the grey, rainy days of B.C. Summers are spent on the west coast, with her family close by.

While she sells some books, which help pay for the cost of distribution — she's spent "tens of thousands of dollars" on shipping donated books, she says — about 90 per cent are given away, to schools, including Crossroads Public School, to the Niagara Emergency Medical Services, the NOTL Fire and Emergency Services, the Niagara Children's Centre, and to local hospitals. The same is true for similar locations across the country — anywhere they might be enjoyed not only by children, but people of all ages who may benefit from her message of love, friendship and positivity.

"This is really an enterprise of love," she says. "Sometimes you can't put a monetary value on kindness."

Tanner says she has learned many lessons on her journey through life, and wanted to leave a legacy for her three grandchildren, Graysen, Alex and Mason.

Monkey Guy is named after a stuffed monkey given to her by Watt, about a decade ago, she says.

They were in Dundas, Ont., and had stopped at a country market, where she admired the monkey. It was around this time of year, and he insisted on buying it for her.

In the story, Monkey Guy is a toy created by Santa's elves, and sprinkled liberally with magic stardust. He became a special Christmas gift for Lewis, who needed a friend.

The time came when Monkey called on the Cosmic Fairy to help him fulfill a wish for Lewis, and what ensues is an emotional story of love and kindness.

"It has real meaning to it," Tanner says, "and is intended to engage the adults who will read it to their kids."

Although Tanner en-



Elaine Tanner and John Watt, with the magical Monkey Guy, who represents the love and compassion she writes about. (Photos by Penny Coles)



Elaine Tanner signs books for people who have dropped by her Prideaux Street home, planning on giving copies to their children and grandchildren.

joyed a successful career as a swimmer, it came with its struggles and challenges, she says, once those days were behind her.

"I was left a hollow shell. Swimming was my identity, and as athletes, we're left with a need to figure out who we are. We have to find our identity, and our purpose in life. Humans are very complex people, and what we achieve or do doesn't define us."

As she came to that realization, she says, she evolved and grew, and has written about her personal journey candidly, to help

and inspire others, on three websites, [elainetanner.ca](http://elainetanner.ca); [questbeyondgold.ca](http://questbeyondgold.ca); and [teammunderdog.ca](http://teammunderdog.ca).

"I don't regret anything that happened to me, because I wouldn't be the person I am today if those things hadn't happened to me. There is a reason behind every struggle."

Long before COVID came along, Tanner says, "I learned to prioritize the important and valuable things in life, simple joys such as the love you have for family, friends and nature, and finding happiness in those simple things, by

being mindful, being present and being grateful."

She's hoping that through COVID, "we'll learn to stop, take a moment to pause and prioritize, to re-evaluate what's important in life, such as communicating with friends, with family, and being kind, patient and tolerant."

The pandemic, she says, seems to bring out either the best or the worst in people.

"We all react differently when we're under stress, and we show our anxiety in different ways."

The message in her book, she says, is timeless, and more meaningful now than ever, when it's so important to remember to act with kindness.

If each of us could do that, she adds, "the world would be a much better place."

In addition to her Olympic medals, Tanner has been awarded the Order of Canada; she is a five-time world record-holder in swimming; has been voted one of Canada's all-time 50 greatest athletes; and has been inducted into seven sports halls of fame.

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*We hope everyone has a Happy Holiday and a wonderful New Year*



Elizabeth Pereira, Scott Robinson, Bernadette James, Jesse Day and Billy Sadler will be carolling in NOTL Dec. 23, fundraising for the Rankin Cancer Run, which was cancelled this year. (Photo supplied)

# Carollers raising money for cancer research

**Penny Coles**  
**The Local**

A group of young people has been surprising Niagara-on-the-Lake residents with door-to-door carolling for several Christmases, spreading cheer and collecting donations for the Rankin Cancer Run.

Carolling Niagara began in 2014, and since then, says organizer Jesse Day, they have raised more than \$16,000 for cancer research

and treatment, for the Canadian Cancer Society and Rankin Cancer Run.

This year, instead of going door-to-door, five carollers are asking residents to register for a visit.

“Obviously the 2020 holiday season looks different in every regard,” says Day. “We were faced with a difficult decision. Do we throw in the towel for a year, or get back to the drawing board, reimagining what carolling can look like in this unprecedented time?”

The decision was to make some changes to ensure safety during carolling.

“We love carolling in NOTL. Christmas magic is always alive in NOTL,” says Day. “It’s a town that celebrates Christmas, and we’ve always had an excellent response there.”

The carollers have been friends since they went to Laura Secord High School in St. Catharines, where they were all heavily involved in several music programs.

“We all have music backgrounds. We’re all musicians who are very passionate about our music.”

One of the members, Scott Robinson, is from NOTL, the others from St. Catharines and Thorold.

The group will be carolling three nights, two in St. Catharines, and the third night, in NOTL, from 5:30 to 9 p.m.

Once a registration form has been filled out online, confirming that they will be home. The car-

ollers will contact them on a first-come first-served basis, he explains, and will try to work out from the response, plotting their route on a map, how long each will take, and how many they can do in a night.

They are hoping to visit 15 to 20 homes, and will sing two or three carols at each stop, says Day.

If contacted, participants will have 48 hours to confirm their availability, and will be asked to donate directly to the Rankin

Cancer Run online. “We won’t be accepting physical transactions when carolling,” and there will be no minimum or maximum donation amount, he says, and every cent that is collected is spent in the region on cancer research.

Carollers will be physically distanced from doorsteps, and wearing masks, he says, with safety their priority.

To learn more visit: <https://carollingniagara.com/>



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# Shaw Guild boxes support local businesses

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

A LOT O' NOTL, another successful initiative by Shaw Guild volunteers, saw 100 boxes filled with beautiful gifts purchased at local stores, delivered to residents Friday.

In November, "word was leaked out on social media" that 100 boxes were available, at a cost of \$100 each. That,

added to the list they had of people who had participated from their first gift box project, made the quick response overwhelming, says Cheryl Morris, Shaw Guild communications chair. The boxes sold out well before the deadline for orders, with several orders for more than one box.

This project, intended to be just in time for holiday gift-giving, was build-

ing on the idea conceived in August by Shaw company member Emily Lukasik, who approached the Shaw Guild with an initiative to support Niagara-on-the-Lake merchants, who were suffering from the decline of tourism as a result of COVID-19 restrictions.

Guild members assembled boxes filled with "carefully curated items" from local merchants, says Morris, showcasing a variety of products representative of our town.

It was so successful, she says, with such positive feedback, "we decided to do it again," increasing the number of boxes from 50 at \$50, offered only to guild members, to 100 at \$100 still selling out in record time.

Volunteers visited many stores, carefully choosing suitable items that not only represented the town but fit in the boxes perfectly, making a beautiful, creative display when they were open, as envisioned by Lukasik. The assembly of the boxes took the longest time, says Morris.

Reviews from purchasers following the first project were enormously positive, says Morris. Two key factors were the element of surprise, which was repeated this time, with purchasers not knowing what was inside the boxes



Members of the team who worked on the project include Caroline Kindness, Laurie Harley, Gail Kendall, Betty Longlade, Glenna Collins, and kneeling, team lead Emily Lukasik, a Shaw company actor, and Brenda Weafer.



LOT O' NOTL Holiday Edition Boxes, a surprise package to those who ordered them, were delivered Friday. (Photos by Cheryl Morris)

until they opened them; and items including freshly-baked goodies that were picked up the morning of delivery.

"The A LOT O' NOTL team was so excited by the enthusiasm with which the pilot was received that we simply couldn't resist creating a holiday edition," says Lukasik. "During such an isolating and challenging year, I'm so grateful for the sense of communi-

ty I've felt through the A LOT O' NOTL project."

Laurie Harley, Shaw Guild past-president, says, "the guild's mandate has always included promoting the Shaw Festival in the community and Emily's idea to help local merchants was a perfect match. It's the kind of project we love — creating new relationships, supporting the community, and having fun

at the same time. Our sincere thanks to Emily. She is our inspiration and her creative talents made this all possible."

"The team loved it, the merchants were happy to participate, and don't discount us doing it again," says Morris.

The Shaw Guild is a large group of volunteers who support and promote the Shaw Festival. Visit [shawguild.ca](http://shawguild.ca) for more information.

Your support means so much to us!

Wishing you a wonderful holiday season and all the best for 2021!

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# Volunteer with Red Cross helps farm workers

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

As Bill French sits in a hotel room in Windsor, he speaks highly of the organization that has taken charge of the group of offshore workers he can see kicking a soccer ball outside his window.

They are men who have come to Canada to work in the agricultural and industry, and have been moved from their workplace due to a COVID-19 outbreak. The Canadian Red Cross has stepped in and stepped up, sending an emergency response team to look after them.

French is a volunteer with that team. The men he is there to help have either tested positive for COVID, or are showing symptoms and have not yet been tested, and are being cared for in a red zone of the hotel. There is also a yellow zone for those who have come in contact with those who have tested positive, and then there's the green zone, for French, the only volunteer who is not local and going home at night.

"I'm also the only logistics guy here, but doing back-up for the others."



Ramon Ettienne, site manager, Donna Girard, field operations team leader, and Bill French, logistics responder on a grey morning in Windsor, where they are working with the Red Cross to help with the isolation of farm workers. (Photo supplied)

He cannot share the name of the hotel, or the number of workers in isolation. But it is clear from what has been reported in the news that Windsor Essex, which entered the provincial lockdown zone Monday, has a soaring number of COVID cases, a significant number from the farming community.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake resident is known in town as an active, involved volunteer, chiefly in his role as a Niagara-on-the-Lake Rotarian, and as a past president of the service club.

But he says he found himself looking for something more to do, and began researching other hu-

manitarian organizations. "The Red Cross kept coming to the top of the list," he says, "so I gave them a call."

The organization offers a number of volunteer avenues to pursue, from community health and wellness, preventative and education programs, and emergency relief, which

he chose.

That program also offers choices of five levels of disaster, from local to regional, national and international.

A local disaster would include situations such as Saturday's house fire in Port Colborne, French explains. A Red Cross volunteer would have been

called to pick up a kit with all the necessities to provide immediate help for that family, including accommodation, clothes, and enough cash for personal items to get them through 72 hours, until their insurance companies take over. The volunteer

Continued on page 15

An advertisement for Oliv Tasting Room. It features several bottles of olive oil arranged in a star-like pattern, decorated with pinecones and a large bow. The background is a snowy winter scene with evergreen trees.

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An advertisement for Peninsula Flooring Ltd. It has a festive, light-colored background with pinecones and a circular logo featuring a stylized leaf. The text is in a mix of elegant script and bold sans-serif fonts.

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An advertisement for Hendriks Valu-Mart. It features a red background with white and green text. Two cartoon hands are shown holding the central text box. The text includes holiday greetings and specific holiday hours.

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# Home again, waiting for next assignment

Continued from page 14

who responded to the call would also have sat with them in the car while they watched their house burn down, French says. "It takes a special kind of person to be able to do that."

French chose instead to be one of the 31 people who make up Niagara's emergency response team, and when the pandemic hit, he became a Red Cross volunteer during "its first level 5 national disaster in the history of Canada."

After a "fairly eclectic" business career in senior management, he says, "I've had no background in this," and he continues to be amazed by the ability, efficiency and readiness of the Red Cross organization.

His first call was to Winnipeg to help Indigenous people during flooding. He worked alongside university students who were taking time from their studies, and other individuals of all ages and from all walks of life, some with full-time jobs who spent their two days off volunteering with the Red Cross. They are all "fascinating people, with their

hearts in the right place," he says.

Another of his deployments was to take a truck of supplies from the Red Cross Mississauga warehouse to CFB Trenton, for the first group of cruise ship people in isolation. "We took everything we thought they could conceivably need," he says. He was alone onsite at CFB Trenton for its second round of cruise ship passengers in isolation, looking after logistics and supplies.

He has done a couple of stints in the Mississauga warehouse, helping to restock the Emergency Response Unit, a field hospital that is on 24-hour notice for deployment. It includes tents, beds, medical supplies, ventilators — anything that might be needed, ready to be sent anywhere in the world. "That was a fascinating experience," he says. "It's amazing, having it all ready to be rolled into a transport truck." One was sent to Montreal, and set up in a parking lot to function as a hospital.

In August, he was deployed to the Windsor/Leamington area, and has been back there for the

last three weeks, coming home to NOTL Monday. Although his role is again logistics and supplies, the support the Red Cross is offering involves the overall care and safety of migrant workers while they're in isolation.

"There are 8,000 workers in the Windsor area at any given time," says French. "I was gobsmacked to see how many there are in this area. I know there are about 5,000 seasonal workers who come to Niagara, and I thought that was a lot. This is definitely a very different situation."

With the large number of greenhouse operations requiring temporary workers year-round, there is a regular rotation as they leave after their eight or nine-month contracts are up, and others arrive.

Some at the hotel will return to work when they are finished quarantining, others will have completed their contracts, and are anxious to be home for the holidays, says French.

In the meantime, he says, they are well looked-after. One group of volunteers is in charge of the "care and well-being" of the men. EMS staff look

after routine medical care, and WINMAR looks after cleaning. The volunteers deliver prepackaged meals three times a day, along with snacks, and organize recreations sessions outside, including the soccer games he can watch from his window.

If people start to feel ill, volunteers are the first contact, and they arrange appropriate care. "We've had to manage several 911 cases," he says.

His job is making sure there are sufficient supplies, to meet their basic daily needs. If there is anything the workers ask for, the requests go to him.

He also helps check the workers in and out, and figures out the logistics of sending them home.

There isn't an opportunity for much communication with the workers, but they seem very appreciative, he says. When they're outside, "they're in masks and we're in PPE, but we can talk to them. They're grateful for the level of support. They all want to know when they can go home, but generally they're in a pretty positive state of mind."

The farmers are also doing a good job, tak-

ing accountability for their workers and taking COVID "very seriously, in keeping with the times."

French says his evenings are quiet, often spent watching football — more than he's ever watched before or even knew was available, but with so many sports cancelled, there's not much else to watch. The days, however, are busy, and go by quickly. There's always something new coming up to look after, including an influx of workers, who can arrive at all hours on a bus or in a taxi, and with little notice.

"It's not glamorous work, but it's necessary work, and at the end of the day, these are people who are in a different country, away from their families, during a pandemic, and they're vulnerable."

By now, he will be home in NOTL, on standby for redeployment within 24 hours notice, to go anywhere in Ontario.

"I've said I'll happily drive anywhere in the province, but I'm uncomfortable getting on an airplane at this point."

He can't say strongly enough how impressed he is by the commitment and

the efficiency of the Red Cross, and the volunteers, "all wonderful people with their hearts in the right place."

"If you have it in your heart to volunteer or donate, this is a great organization doing great work, helping the most vulnerable."

There are many different opportunities to help, from community need to the national and international.

"If you can't see yourself volunteering, then please, donate," says French.

There are many initiatives of the Red Cross in cities and rural communities in every province across Canada during COVID, and a huge range of services they provide, include helping in long-term care homes, providing assistance with basic daily living activities; helping Indigenous communities; and ensuring those without access to food or other supplies are cared for.

More information about volunteering or donating can be found on the Niagara Red Cross website at <https://www.redcross.ca/about-us/contact-us>.

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# Singer-songwriter discovers healing properties in music

**Mike Balsom**  
**Special to The Local**

Though she currently lives and works in the west end of Toronto, singer-songwriter Michaela Bekenn is very much a child of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The 28-year-old, who is also a certified sound therapy practitioner, yoga and meditation guide and youth facilitator, practically grew up at the Shaw Festival Theatre.

Bekenn, whose new single release, *The Earth Has Music*, is available on all streaming platforms, is the daughter of long-time Shaw Festival regulars Anthony Bekenn and Sharry Flett. In fact, the Parliament Oak and Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School graduate walked the boards herself, appearing at the festival in *Gypsy* in 2005, and *A Little Night Music* in 2008.

Growing up with those experiences, and with parents who are members of the theatre world, informs much of her new song, the first from her full album planned for a spring, 2021 release. But other experiences seem to have brought her music and its role in her life into another dimension.

"It was really through the discovery that music

has been a part of my own personal growth, and personal healing," says the University of Toronto grad.

Her grandmother is 93 years old, and living in a long-term care home in the Oakville area. Bekenn has become one of her essential caregivers, using music to break through the barriers to communication that dementia has put up.

"Giving music to my grandmother as an offering of care made me discover, through our connection to music, that it was a language to reach her," she explains. "That became a real pivot to me, in realizing it's not just music as performance, but music as healing."

Up to that point, like many musicians, music and theatre to her had been performance-oriented. But as she began to study the effect of music on the nervous system and the brain, she realized that beyond entertainment, music actually had the power to change somebody's quality of life.

She describes another experience with a family member that had a direct influence on her first single.

"The moment when my father fell from the roof a number of years ago," she says, "the sense of anything being expected just sort of



Michaela Bekenn lives in Toronto but is very much connected to NOTL, through family and through music. (Catriona Spaven-Donn)

dissolved. The awareness that uncertainty is the most certain thing in this human experience."

She describes taking long walks in nature with Anthony during his recovery from what could have been a fatal accident. As the two walked together, they began to listen to the music of the earth in new ways. Those discoveries are reflected in the lyrics of *The Earth Has Music*:

*Sometimes in life there comes a knocking at your door  
You stand alone on the edge of this world  
This world and something more*

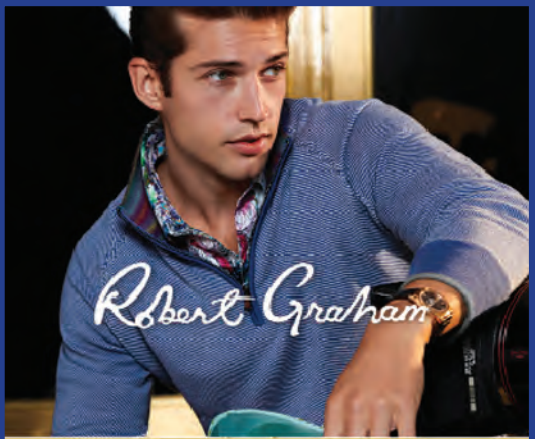
The video for the song, shot at Decew Falls and at Ryerson Park (down the road from her childhood home in the Chautauqua area), sees Bekenn dancing, singing and playing her guitar in nature, emphasizing the healing power of the land. The lyrics continue:

*The Earth has music for those who listen  
The answers you seek are underneath your skin  
Embedded in this moment*

Bekenn's graceful dancing in the video is most definitely informed by her study to become a yoga practitioner, as well as her theatre background. Sonically, *The Earth Has Music* draws upon her experience in sound therapy and meditation.

The song starts with a quiet, spiritual-sounding rhythm, played by Bekenn on her acoustic guitar. It builds slowly to a climactic instrumental passage, featuring a soaring electric

Continued on page 17



Robert Graham

'Tis mask and social distancing season.

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# New album recorded in Garrison Village studio

Continued from page 16

guitar solo by Niagara guitarist James Moore. The song, as well as the entire new album, was recorded and produced by Fred Gabrsek at his Garrison Village area studio.

Gabrsek, a sound designer and operator at Shaw, has watched Bekenn grow up. He became her guitar teacher when she was given the instrument for her 16th birthday, and he is still astonished at how quickly she picked up the six-string.

"She was just like from beginner, to, nine months later, a rocket," Gabrsek reflects. "I did a one-hour lesson once a week when she came to me, for about six months. Then she went away for summer vacation. When she came back, she said, 'I've written a bunch of songs, what do you think?' And it was amazing."

Some of those songs she wrote 12 years ago have found their way back to his studio, and will be on the 2021 release. She and Gabrsek laid down some very raw tracks as a demo back then. They've now been embellished with the accompaniment of guitarists Moore and Gabrsek, Allan and Dave Colavecchia on

bass and drums respectively, and keyboardist Larry Swiercz. Gabrsek says she quickly took to the studio process, and by the end of the sessions she was offering up her own technical advice to him.

Bekenn refers to Gabrsek repeatedly as "the wizard." As much as he is impressed with her, she's equally impressed with the range of sonics he was able to come up with.

"He created sounds that were almost cathedral-like in their echo, and others that were much more intimate and close up," she says. "All of the songs on the forthcoming album really do have their own tone, personality and character. Some have more of a folk-rock influence, some of them are meditation music, a little bit of children's music (featuring a choir of students from Royal Oak School in NOTL), and some very bare-bones, Joni Mitchell-inspired folk songs."

Other tracks on the album came out of a retreat she attended in British Columbia. "I went to Kootenay Bay in B.C.," she explains. "There's a good chunk in the songs that came out of the days I spent there in solitude on this songwriting

retreat, but surrounded by a community of people on the mountains, in an ashram there, writing day-in and day-out."

A visit to Bekenn's YouTube channel will reveal a video for another song, called *Sky Dancers*, which has been reworked for the new album. Very different than *The Earth Has Music*, here she sings of the raven while playing a Tibetan singing bowl, which gives the number an eerie, spiritual feel, reminiscent of an Indigenous chant. As well, recently she has begun mastering a set of 12 crystal singing bowls that she uses in her sound therapy practice, and in her *Self Love Sound Bath* livestreams that can be seen on her Instagram page. These bowls can be heard on the new album, as well.

The response to the first single, which was released at the end of October, bodes well for the future album. A number of blogs, including Higher Plains Music and Vents Magazine, have written features and reviews, while Volatile Weekly refers to *The Earth Has Music* as her "gorgeous new single."

As she navigates the waters of promotion and public relations as a totally independent artist, Bekenn



*The Earth has Music* is Michaela Bekenn's newest single. (Stacey Koudys)

plans to release another single some time in January to build more buzz for the full set of songs. And she promises to remain staunchly independent, giving her the

freedom to wear all the hats she likes to adorn as an interdisciplinary singer-songwriter, sound therapy and yoga practitioner, dancer, storyteller, and soon-to-be

music therapist. Yes, she plans to earn her masters in music therapy to further her mission to offer healing to the world through her music.

Wishing you a  
pleasant holiday  
and Godspeed 2021!



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# Shaw offering virtual Songs for a Winter's Night

**Local Staff**

The Shaw Festival's holiday concert, *Songs for a Winter's Night*, is going digital on Friday. "Audiences have been loving it, says Katie MacCabe, digital engagement specialist. "The Shaw would be remiss if we didn't share this performance with as much of our community as possible."

The public is invited to enjoy the free, hour long concert on YouTube, Dec. 18 at 8 p.m. The concert will only be up for the duration of the event.

The Shaw Festival added the festive twist to its

popular concert series earlier this month, featuring favourite melodies from the holiday season. Directed and choreographed by associate artistic director Kimberley Ramper-sad, with music direction by Paul Sportelli, *Songs for a Winter's Night* includes holiday favourites such as *White Christmas*, *The Prayer* and *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas*. The concert features the talents of Festival ensemble members Kyle Blair, Andrew Broderick, James Daly, Kristi Frank, Élodie Gillett, Alexis Gordon, Olivia Sinclair-Brisbane, Jonathan Tan and associate music director Ryan deSouza.



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### Spreading joy at Christmas



COVID could not stop Christmas carollers from Niagara United Mennonite Church sharing the joy of Christmas songs with residents of Pleasant Manor Sunday evening. The carollers sang with masks, and spaced out for physical distancing. (Randy Klaassen)

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**December 30:** 9 - 9 (also Senior's Day)  
**December 31:** 9 - 5 (also Senior's Day)  
**January 1:** Closed  
**January 2:** Back to regular business hours



# Mystery Monet making the town merrier

**Aimee Medina**  
Niagara Pumphouse  
Arts Centre

The holidays are a little different this year but thanks to a mystery artist, Christmas-themed artworks posted on some neighbourhood streets are making the town a little merrier.

The future Banksy has secretly been hanging artworks on lamp posts in Niagara-on-the-Lake for the public to enjoy this season. This piqued the curiosity of residents, including the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre board chair.

"I was enjoying my walk when I came across not just one, but a series

of Christmas-themed artwork hanging on the lamp posts. What a lovely gesture to give to the community at a time when we need it most," says Lise Andreana, Pumphouse chair.

"I was pleasantly surprised by this impromptu art show that brought a smile to my face."

The holiday-themed

paintings can be found in Rye, Paffard and Charlotte Streets.

Niagara Pumphouse is encouraging the artist(s) to reveal his or her identity. As a reward for promoting art in the community, the mystery Monet will receive a complimentary family membership to the Arts Centre.

The Niagara Pumphouse can be reached at [office@niagarapumphouse.ca](mailto:office@niagarapumphouse.ca) or 905-468-5455 to claim the prize.



The Pumphouse is looking for NOTL's own Banksy (an England-based street artist), and is offering a reward to the artist decorating NOTL for the holiday. (Photos supplied)

Wishing you and your family a very happy and safe holiday season!



**Wayne Gates**

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and a Joyous Christmas  
All the best in 2021!*

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**JO-ANN CUDMORE**  
sales representative

I was privileged to provide essential services this year to my clients and I sincerely thank them for their trust. To my colleagues, friends, and all residents I wish you all good health and a safe 2021.

*Merry Christmas*



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**SUBWAY**

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS**

We will be closing on December 23 for remodeling and will re-open on January 6, 2021.

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# Projects at Fort Missisauga complete, including walking trail

**Tony Chisholm**  
**Special to The Local**

Parks Canada has recently been doing a lot of work restoring Fort Missisauga National Historic Site. At this point, the work on the preservation of the fort's brick tower is complete. This restoration work included the installation of a new roof. The roof design is similar to an earlier style and will allow the walls, which had been

flooded, to dry out over the coming years. Repairs were also made to the inside and outside brick walls. Solar panels were installed on the roof to charge a battery system that feeds the new lighting systems.

As well, near the fort there was extensive shoreline protection to address recent erosion which included adding 600 metres of new break wall at the edge of the lake. To restore this area,

Parks Canada also planted more than 400 native Carolinian tree species and shrubs along the shoreline. They will maintain these plantings and ensure they successfully take root in the next few years. Dead trees and bushes will be replaced with new ones.

The slope and earthworks of Fort Missisauga have also seen the removal of non-native and invasive plants to protect the earthworks and archeology. This

will help restore historic views to highlight the fort's prominent position at the mouth of the Niagara River. Parks Canada is finishing up the work by removing stumps and planting grass on the slopes.

The last phase of the project includes constructing a new walking trail, providing a safe route for pedestrians along the shoreline while accessing the Fort Missisauga tower and earthworks. This

work is essentially complete and will be open to visitors in early 2021.

These major projects at Fort Missisauga will help preserve this precious national historic site well into the future.

The Friends of Fort George is a non-profit organization that works in partnership with Parks Canada to preserve and promote the heritage of Niagara National Historic Sites. Through

special events and the operation of two gift shops, the Friends of Fort George generate awareness and funds to support summer student employment at Fort George and Brock's Monument at Queenston Heights. Please consider becoming a member of the Friends of Fort George. See: [www.friendsoffortgeorge.ca](http://www.friendsoffortgeorge.ca)

*Tony Chisholm is the president of the Friends of Fort George.*



A new walking trail provides a safe route along the shoreline while accessing the Fort Missisauga tower and earthworks. (Photos by Tony Chisholm)



The work on the preservation of the fort's brick tower is complete, with the installation of a new roof part of the restoration project.

HOLIDAY

*greetings!*

WITH MANY

*good wishes*

FOR THE

HOLIDAY SEASON...

... AND THE

*coming year.*

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**and joy**

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Christmas

and Happy New Year

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# LOCAL SPORTS

## Despite COVID, Friesen has a busy and successful year

**Mike Balsom**  
Special to The Local

Looking into the rear view mirror at his 2020 season, Niagara-on-the-Lake native Stewart Friesen is amazed at how it all went down.

Despite an interruption in both his Modified Stock Car and NASCAR Camping World Truck Series loops due to COVID-19, Friesen ended up having his busiest as well as one of his most successful racing years ever.

"It was crazy," Friesen says from his home near Albany. "We kind of shot from the hip and just hit races as they were scheduled. We ended up doing 68 races altogether, and we had a bunch of wins, a bunch of top fives. We had a really strong year."

Those top five finishes on the DIRTcar circuit helped Friesen capture his first Hoosier Racing Tire Weekly Championship (formerly Mr. DIRTcar), ending rival Matt Shepherd's six-year hold on the title.

mar Friesen Racing team for making it possible for them to vie for some of the same titles. When they are both on the track, their son Parker, who just celebrated his fifth birthday, is watched by either Jessica's or Stewart's parents (when they were able to cross the border this year) or (crew member) Tom Conroy's wife.

"We have a pretty good staff that we try to rotate to take care of Parker," says Friesen. "He's a wild man. He's just starting to get into the racing, and really pays attention now. But we have a good group of people who help out when we're on the track."

Jessica also grew up in a racing family, so both parents are familiar with the long stretches on the highways travelling from race to race.

"It's something we've grown accustomed to, and adapted to, through the years. It can be tough, but summers mean being at the racetrack. We love it, that's the life we chose, and we wouldn't have it any

says he was just finding his groove when that circuit concluded. He chalks that up to learning and adapting to his new Toyota truck, after running Chevrolets for the past few years.

"It was a building year for us," Friesen says. "It was big, you know, moving into a new shop, hiring

the right people, building trucks from the ground up. We have a new engineer, Jonathan Leonard. When he came on it kind of righted the ship for us. We ended the year really strong, with a bunch of top fives and running up front, which was awesome. Hopefully we'll carry that

momentum into 2021."

Aside from all the positives on the track, Friesen is probably happiest about the efforts of the Halmar Friesen Racing team to raise funds for local charities this summer. Every top five finish by Friesen and other teammates resulted in a donation to lo-

cal food banks.

"The fundraising campaign (Halmar Racing to Beat Hunger) was spearheaded by Chris Larsen, who owns Halmar International in New York City," he says. "We had a lot of people join us and donate

Continued on page 22

**“ We love it, that’s the life we chose, and we wouldn’t have it any other way. ”**

*Stewart Friesen*

"It takes your best finishes at all the DIRT-sanctioned big-block tracks," he explains. "We started down at Volusia (in Florida) in February, had some good runs, had a couple wins at Orange County in Middletown, New York, and a bunch of wins (four) up at Albany-Saratoga as well. Beating Matt Shepherd was definitely a highlight of my year."

Coming from a racing family in NOTL, it's no surprise Friesen and his wife Jessica have begun a racing family of their own. For many of his starts this summer, he found himself competing against his wife on the track.

"It's stressful," he admits. "Her team operates first-class and top-notch, just like we do. She had some really strong runs. She had a third-place finish in Middletown in a big block race, and beat me that night. That was really cool."

He credits his Hal-

other way."

With the COVID break, Friesen, like many others, had a couple of months of down time at home when all races were postponed. And once things got moving in mid-May, changes to the NASCAR Truck schedule actually played into his family time as well as his ability to enter more DIRTcar races.

"It was different this year," Friesen explains. "Usually I travel three days for each truck event. There's practice, there's qualifying that takes place beforehand. This year they streamlined the schedule. We didn't practise, we didn't qualify, they used a seeding system. It was nice. I could catch a commercial flight in the morning, race that night, then take a red-eye back home to Albany. I was gone for less than 24 hours, which was key for New York State's travel restrictions."

A little slower to get moving in his number 52 NASCAR truck, Friesen

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# Away in a Manger



**BENEFITTING:**  
**Youth Mental Health**  
via Niagara Community Foundation (cash)  
**3F Pediatric Cancer Ward**  
(toys)  
**Newark Neighbours**  
(canned goods)

**Food Drive | Fundraiser Event | Toy Drive**

*join us*

Enjoy a drive-through **Living Nativity Scene Experience** set to music. Take pictures, make special memories and raise funds, toys and food for great local charities.

**WHEN**  
December 19-20      3pm-9pm

**WHERE**  
Benchview Equestrian Centre  
Concession 6 Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake  
Corner of Queenston Road

**\$10 OR \$20 PER CAR** (suggested donation)  
**To make donations in advance and for more information, contact**  
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# LOCAL HAPPENINGS

## EDUCATION FOUNDATION OF NIAGARA

Education Foundation of Niagara presents "Portabackyarda" to help support students in need. Purchase tickets for your chance to win one of two luxury Lowe's Canada sheds. See the display at the Pen Centre until draw date of March 12, 2021. Purchase tickets online at portabackyarda.ca



### FISH FRY

**Thursday, December 17**  
**4 - 6:30 p.m.**  
**TAKEOUT ONLY | CASH ONLY**  
1 or 2 piece dinner  
with fries and coleslaw  
Drive-thru to order  
**DON'T MISS THE LAST FISH FRY OF 2020**

A heartfelt thank you to our wonderful community for your support!

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

## HAVE FUN WITH "LIVE" NATIVITY SCENE & SUPPORT LOCAL CAUSES!

**December 17 @ 8 a.m. - 8 p.m.**  
Benchview Equestrian Centre is looking for cast members to star in a "LIVE" Christmas experience; "Away in a Manger". December 19th & 20th from 2 pm to 9 pm. Providing an opportunity to make Christmas memories with a drive-through nativity scene that is being organized to support three local charities: Pediatric Cancer, Youth Mental Health and Newark Neighbours. Cast member cost for eight people to participate as a group is \$200. Businesses, Families, Churches, Kids or Service Groups are all welcome to have fun and give back to the community. Those who drive through to view the nativity scene are asked to bring non-perishable items for the local food bank. They won't need to get out of their cars, there will be someone on hand to safely accept toys, food or cash for the three charities. Donations of \$10 to \$20 per car and business sponsorships are also being accepted. Coffee, tea and doughnuts will be provided. It will all be done safely, with physical distancing, music, lights, goats, Jenny the Donkey, and lots of Christmas spirit! For more information, please visit: <https://notllocal.com/2020/12/05/have-fun-with-live-nativity-scene-support-local-causes/>

## COVID-19 DIARIES

**December 18 @ 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.**  
For those of you who like to write and journal, the Niagara Historical Museum is looking for your insight. You can participate in the recording of our history, today. In 50 or 100 years we may just have an exhibition on the COVID-19 Pandemic and your journals will help us tell the stories of how Niagara-on-the-Lake made it through. Please visit: [www.nhsm.ca](http://www.nhsm.ca) for details or call 289-719-1918 to record your audio diary.

### ST. DAVIDS FISH FRY RETURNS

**Friday, December 18<sup>th</sup>**  
**4:30 - 7 p.m.**  
**Take-out!**  
**1 piece \$9 2 piece \$13**  
**Fish, our famous crispy fries and coleslaw!**  
**Sorry no pan fried fish or baked potatoes available!**  
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# Team fundraised for local causes

Continued from page 21

in raising money. All in all we raised over \$117,000 for local food banks." Friesen enthusiastically describes accompanying his Halmar crew in the 53-foot truck hauler packed full of food as they drove into the Bronx to stock local food banks. He fondly remembers the reaction of passersby as they spotted the big truck rolling through the packed streets.

They also helped stock food banks in Connecticut, Montgomery County and Maryland. The team plans to continue to support food banks next year as well. Stewart and Jessica also successfully raised more than \$70,000 to support the Crossroads Center for Children in Schenectady, New York. Parker, who was diagnosed on the autism spectrum at just over a year old, attends the school. In April, for Au-

tism Awareness Month, the Friesens sold puzzle pieces to put on Stewart's truck for his May 3 race in Dover. They also sold T-shirts and stickers to support the cause. It is the largest single donation the school has ever received. As 2020 winds down, Friesen is a bit disappointed he won't be able to visit his parents in NOTL this Christmas. With the border closed, they'll be staying home in New York for a quiet Christmas celebration.

Then it's back into the shop to get the stock car ready, and some time on the simulator to practice with the truck for the 2021 season. Friesen will be on the dirt track in mid-January with four races at Bubba Speedway in Ocala, Florida followed by the Sunshine Nationals at Volusia Speedway near Barberville, Florida, before heading to Daytona on Feb. 12 for the first race in the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series schedule.



Stewart Friesen, his wife Jessica and Parker (centre) in the winning circle of the Sunshine Swing contest in Florida in February. (Photo supplied)



## Auchterlonie on Astrology

**Bill Auchterlonie**  
**Special to The Local**  
*The full week of Auchterlonie on Astrology can be found on the Facebook page for The NOTL Local, and on the website <https://www.auchterlonieonastrology.ca>. In Part II of my podcast, thanks to AstroButterfly, we get the conjunction of Jupiter*

*and Saturn at 0 degrees of Aquarius, a new world order.*  
Monday, Dec. 21: This is the most important day of the year as Jupiter and Saturn are in the same place in the sky at 0 degrees of Aquarius. Check out my podcast at [www.auchterlonieonastrology.ca](http://www.auchterlonieonastrology.ca) for a 10-minute analysis of this rare and powerful game changer which I have, courtesy of AstroButterfly. In one sentence, everything is much better, starting today. Oh, and today is the winter solstice too. It happens at 6:02 a.m. It's also the day of the first quarter Moon in Aries which happens at 6:41p.m. Today is the 129th anniversary of the first game of basketball. The game was played in Springfield, Massachusetts, invented by Canadian James Naismith.  
Tuesday, Dec. 22: The Moon is in Aries, a fire sign. Venus is in Sagittarius, also a fire sign. It is about as charming and creative and lovely as a Tuesday can be. And Lord Voldemort, aka Ralph Fiennes, turns 58 today.

# LOCAL WORSHIP



**Sunday, December 20th**  
10 a.m. Worship Gathering  
Speaker: Kevin Bayne  
Message: Love (Fourth Advent)  
Pre-registration is required to attend in-person worship  
Please be advised that with the current state of COVID-19, your safety is of utmost importance to us. We will now be live streaming our service at 10:00 a.m. on Sundays.  
[www.ccchurch.ca](http://www.ccchurch.ca)



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1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14					15						16			
17					18						19			
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			25		26				27		28			
29	30	31					32	33						
34						35				36		37	38	39
40					41				42		43			
44				45		46				47				
			48		49				50					
51	52	53					54	55						
56				57		58				59		60	61	62
63			64		65				66		67			
68					69						70			
71					72						73			

**Across:**  
1 Arabian ruler  
5 Following  
10 Some providers of wood for furniture  
14 Prepare  
15 Larry --- in "The Iceman Cometh"  
16 Largest island in the Marianas  
17 Stage accessory  
18 Fire prodger  
19 A single time  
20 Abandon  
22 Overhaul  
24 Aeronautics group.  
25 --- Lama  
27 Round Table leader  
29 Baseball official  
32 Lowest of the low  
34 Eye defects  
36 Notes  
40 Heel  
41 Sheltered spots  
43 Short written reminder  
44 Ethiopian capital --- Ababa  
46 "The --- Dancers" (Jean Thesman)  
48 About the eye  
50 Did, once  
51 "--- and her Sisters" (Woody Allen movie)  
54 Intriguing group

56 --- Annie ("Oklahoma!")  
57 Battalion XO, often  
59 Moves cautiously forward  
63 Names  
65 Author Evelyn ---  
67 It replaced the French franc  
68 Noted scat singer --- Fitzgerald  
69 Boredom  
70 Former Mrs David Bowie  
71 Move  
72 Palm tree fruit  
73 Sports defeat

**Down:**  
1 Smartphone programs  
2 Brandy made from pressed fruit  
3 Matinee idol --- Novello (d. 1951)  
4 Disavowal  
5 Egyptian cobra  
6 Roman flower goddess  
7 Consider  
8 Garden west of Nod  
9 Go over again  
10 Self-esteem  
11 Middle meal  
12 Former Portuguese territory in China  
13 Slander  
21 Comedian Roseanne ---  
23 Warrant

26 Bony  
28 Deceptive decorative paintwork  
29 Where the Wizard of Westwood coached  
30 One of three in "The Mikado"  
31 Formerly known as shell-shock  
33 Inquires  
35 Escherichia ---, potentially dangerous bacterium  
37 Dweeb  
38 Give off  
39 Alone  
42 Counterfoil  
45 Irritating email  
47 Straight --- arrow  
49 Melted  
51 Underworld  
52 No longer a minor  
53 Type of metal or gas  
55 Debate  
58 Country singer and actress --- Kramer  
60 Japanese heavyweight contest  
61 Subdivisions of eons  
62 Male heirs  
64 Plant juice  
66 Not hers

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**Deadline is Mondays at noon.**

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

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**Deadline: Mondays at 3 p.m.**

PUZZLE ANSWERS

**Sudoku solution from December 10, 2020**

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

**Across:** 1 Amir, 5 After, 10 Elms, 14 Pave, 15 Slade, 16 Guam, 17 Prop, 18 Poker, 19 Once, 20 Scrub, 22 Renew, 24 C A  
A, 25 Dali, 27 Arthur, 29 Umpire, 32 Nadi, 34 Cataracts, 36  
Tones, 40 List, 41 Nooks, 43 Memo, 44 Addis, 46 Last April,  
48 Optic, 50 Used to, 51 Hannah, 54 Cabal, 56 Ado, 57 Major,  
59 Noses, 63 Dubs, 65 Waugh, 67 Euro, 68 Ella, 69 Ennu, 70  
Iman, 71 Step, 72 Dates, 73 Loss.

**Down:** 1 Apps, 2 Marc, 3 Ivor, 4 Reputation, 5 Asp, 6 Flora, 7  
Take info account, 8 Eden, 9 Reread, 10 Ego, 11 Lunch, 12  
Macau, 13 Smeat, 21 Barr, 23 With, 26 Lean, 28 Trompe l'oeil,  
29 U C L A, 30 Maid, 31 PT S D, 33 Asks, 35 Coll, 37 Nerd,  
38 Enit, 39 Solo, 42 Stub, 45 Spam, 47 As an, 49 Thawed, 51  
Hades, 52 Adult, 53 Noble, 55 Argue, 58 Jana, 60 Sumo, 61  
Eras, 62 Sons, 64 Sep, 66 His.

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Extraordinary,  
Happy, Healthy  
Holiday!

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