The Niagara-on-the-Lake



The trusted voice of our community.



Aunt Agnes for Christmas a magical holiday page **18**

Volume 1 · Issue 49 notllocal.com **DECEMBER 19, 2019**

Santa Claus parade delights despite the rain

1107

The GateWay Community Church was one of many floats that, despite requiring umbrellas, brought a smile to the faces of the crowds of children and adults, who lined the streets of the Old Town to watch Saturday's Santa Claus Parade. (Penny Coles)

GateWay Community Church Wishing You a Merry Christmas

Council delays budget to search for savings

Penny Coles The Local

Taking into consideration council budget requests and management adjustments, staff delivered an operating budget with a 9.48 per cent Monday, after considering as-

"take a pause," as suggested by Lord Mayor Betty Disero, and wait until they reconvene in January to approve it. They committed to looking for any possible further savings to reduce that number, although increase at a special meeting they all agreed it was tough to get to that point, and they

ing, councillors agreed to to move forward in the new in 2020. year on some of the projects budget.

> With the budget as it stands now, although not approved, the operating levy is which has met five times from proposed to be \$12,786,151. October until last Wednesday

The total increase over last change after further deliberation.

The impact is around \$100 for to go over the budget line capital budget was summa- proved and some rejected,

in others.

that are included in the 2020 year is \$1,267,601, subject to prises town staff, along with chair Stuart McCormack, and Couns. John Wiens, Gary The audit committee, Burroughs, Norm Arsenault and Allan Bisback.

an average home of \$530,900, by line, was recommending rized Monday by Freeborn, with those recommendations

Councillors applauded The audit committee com- his diligence and long hours put in to arrive at a budget to meet the time table set out by council.

All discretionary grants were discussed at audit com-Both the operating and mittee meetings, some ap-

sessment growth.

to reduce the increase to that an increase. amount — it had started at

have been diligent in looking says Freeborn. But despite the struggle at every line that represented

For those within an urban capital budget and operat- the role of acting director of area who receive a storm levy ing budget, as presented, but corporate services, was given Council did, however, charge, an additional 2.48 per there were discussions about that permanent position in ect or addition to the budget about 22 per cent — at the approve a \$10,393,750 capi- cent increase of about \$4.03 savings in some areas, and October, as well as the title of end of the four-hour meet- tal budget, which allows staff comes to a total of \$119 extra about additions to the budget treasurer.

council approve the 2020 who, after more than a year in still to be approved by council. Similarly, every new proj-

Continued on page 3

New Years Eve with **Jim Witter: Piano Men II** A NOSTALGIC MULTIMEDIA TRIP FEATURING THE MUSIC OF ELTON JOHN, BILLY JOEL & MORE! FirstOntario St. Catharines FirstOntarioPAC.ca PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE

Holiday camp for kids at community centre

Local Staff

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is offering a holiday camp for kids at the community centre.

It will run Dec. 23, 27, day. 30, and Jan. 2 and 3, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the community centre on Anderson Lane.

\$35 a day.

also available from 7 to 9 a.m. and from 4 to 6 p.m., at an extra cost of \$5 per bring their own nut-free,

The camp promises an opportunity for kids to 905-468-4386, It will be offered for kids that include games, sports, tions can be made online.

ages six to 12, at a cost of arts and crafts, science experiments, theme days and Before and after care is more, including time playing outside.

> Campers are asked to healthy lunches and snacks.

For information, call email meet new friends, and have camps@notl.com, or visit lots of fun with activities www.notl.com. Registra-



Brave souls came out to watch the Santa Claus parade Saturday, some more prepared than others — incluing those under a tent outside Hendriks' valu-mart.. The Ridley College Band was back to entertain (right). (Photos by Penny Coles)

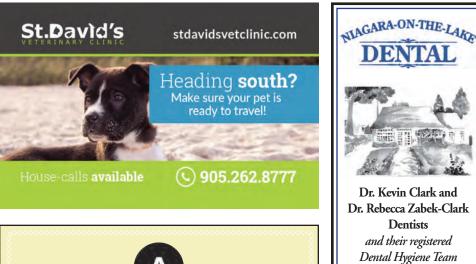


Local author writes about historic home



The historic home on the corner of Centre Street and Mississagua is well-known to locals, for many chiefly as a source of ghost stories, and curiosity about its future. Author Lissa Paul was more interested in its past, and the life of Eliza Fenwick, a woman who lived in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and turned the house into The Niagara Seminary for Young Ladies. Through a series of unpublished letters, Paul has written a biography, Eliza Fenwick: Early Modern Feminist, which was launched recently at the Niagara Historical Museum, and is for sale in the museum gift shop. Maureen Dickson was about one of 50 people to attend the launch and purchase a copy to be signed by Paul. (Penny Coles)





a glass of sparkling wine!

Reservations recommended 905.468.1222 | olivtapasnotl.com 1339 Lakeshore Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake

Warmest thoughts and best wishes for a wonderful holiday and a Happy Mew Year. **HOLIDAY HOURS:** DEC. 24 11:30 - 3:30 p.m. (last seating) **DEC. 25 CLOSED** DEC. 26 11 - 4 p.m. (last seating) TASTING ROOM DEC. 31 11:30 - 7:30 p.m. (last seating) RESTAURANT NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE JAN. 1 CLOSED

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Budget increase of 9.48 per cent could change

Continued from page 1

requested from Town departments had to be accompanied by a detailed business case, which was then agreed to or rejected by the audit committee, who went through those cases line by line.

Bisback, in the final moments of the final audit committee meeting, encouraged all councillors to look at committee recommendations for discretionary grants. He said he is concerned that "in a year like this," with a higher-than-usual recommended tax increase to forge a sustainable budget, he questions whether there should be any discretionary grants.

"We did our review, and I'm still concerned," he told his colleagues on the committee.

Discretionary grants have been approved in principle, but Freeborn explained as they are part of the operating budget, they are still subject to change

The largest discretionary grants include \$35,000 for the Shaw Festival Theatre; \$10,000 for The Friends of Fort George; \$5,000 for Music Niagara and the TD Niagara Jazz Festival; and \$3,000 for Community Palliative Care; the Education Foundation of Ontario; the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre; and River-Brink Art Museum. A request for \$5,000 for Bravo Niagara! was withdrawn due to the receipt of another grant.

There were also lesser amounts recommended, for a total of \$78,000.

In a summary to council, a staff report said about \$1.77 million in capital projects has been deferred to 2021, while about \$754,000 of funding was reallocated from other sources in an effort to achieve the final recommendations, including \$650,000 from parking reserves.

"Despite correcting most funding discrepancies projected in 2020, the years thereafter will either require significant investment to maintain forecasted project existing service levels," the that way. budget report says.

One of the items discussed Monday was the cost of a new pool for St. Davids, from the original projection fund, earmarked for modof \$3 million. Parks and recreation manager Kevin Turcotte told councillors Monday that the increase is due to some changes in design. The 2020 budget earmarks \$100,000 for the pool, with a fundraising committee charged with raising a portion of the cost. money will be spent. He will be looking for grants to offset the increase in cost, vice delivery review coming but failing that, the design can up, and some councillors felt be scaled back, he told councillors.

concerning the Simcoe Park wading pool, with a line in the budget to turn it into a splash pad.

and Gary Burroughs spoke mack. "I find searching on it passionately against the splash pad, saying a wading pool is much more appropriate for the historic park. Burroughs recalled his time on regional council when the \$100,000 be put aside as a issue of safety regulations for the wading pool first surfaced — the Province sets the regulations, and the Region enforces them.

Although there was a suggestion then to turn the wading pool into a splash pad, the public outcry convinced the Town to meet provincial regulations by providing life said. "Not doing it is not an guards, at a cost of \$25,000 a season, and emptying the wa-

who was a councillor during the previous discussion, said at that time, people from the Old Town and other areas of NOTL were strongly opposed ing its funding of \$118,000 to removing it.

"To some people it became a symbol of our herihistory of the town.

Councillors voted Monday to leave the wading pool

requests, or more deferrals/ the lifeguards, with Disero ing, Bisback and others dis- the upcoming Icewine Festi- Disero explained it's not just cancellations will be required. offering to talk to the Region agreed that this was the time val, and defer the remainder to defend against one devel-This may risk the quality of about allowing it to remain to do that.

Another discussion revolved around the need for an updated Town website. Cameron asked that some money which has risen to \$5 million from a \$725,000 provincial ernization initiatives, be set aside for staff to work on the website.

> About one/third of that grant has already been allocated, and she was concerned by the time the Town begins work on the website, the

There is a Deloitte serit imperative to wait until that review is completed and Another discussion arose recommendations made, in case the review suggests there are more important ways to spend the grant.

"I agree the website needs Couns. Clare Cameron to be changed," said McCora nightmare. But I don't want to commit money before Deloitte tells us what we should spend the money on."

> Cameron asked that "placeholder," while waiting for the service delivery review to be complete, referring to the many residents and people who are interested in moving to town who have commented on the outdated website. "We're starting to look like a bit of an embarrassment with our peers," she option."

The majority of councilter from the pool every night. lors agreed with her, noting Lord Mayor Betty Disero, the money is not coming from the taxpayers but the provincial grant.

The NOTL Chamber of Commerce came close to losfor 2020, because councillors found a recent presentation by chamber president Edutage," she said, and keeping ardo Lafforgue lacking in the it symbolized preserving the financial details they wanted to hear before approving the budget expense.

Although McCormack as it is, and continue funding was set to withhold all fund-

Admitting to being disappointed with the presentation, Bisback said, "maybe ed to withhold the funding. this is the year we do a reset," rather than withholding the the workshop, she thinks it money. "I would like to understand better the services tween the work the chamber we're funding."

was more about the chamthe money until that information is presented, councillors two cents." voted to give the chamber the

until that discussion has been held in January.

Disero was one who vot-As she mentioned during important to distinguish bedoes to support local busi-The hour-long workshop nesses, and its marketing arm, with Lafforgue and chamber NOTL Tourism. Chambers of board members last week commerce, she said, "are supposed to be self-sufficient and ber's strategic plan than the service their members. They expected budget discussion, made it clear they (the chamcouncillors said, and after ber and its tourism subsiditalking about simply refusing ary) are one, and I don't think

Regarding more than \$1 funding it needs to finance million set aside for legal fees, deferment until January.

opment, and some of the legal actions were launched by the previous council and councils before that.

If council decides not to defend their positions against inappropriate development, "we will lose total control of what happens in the council chamber, and in town," she said.

The meeting ended with Disero saying although the projected increase, as it stands, is high, and she's not sure what can be done to reduce it, "maybe we can take they should be. That's just my a pause, look at it and come back with more ideas."

Councillors agreed to a

Santa Claus arrives in NOTL



Even Santa needed an umbrella as he made his way through the Old Town Saturday, but the streets were still lined with children delighted to see him. (Penny Coles)

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December 19, 2019 3



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THE NOTL LOCAL

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Regional budget preparing for growth

Penny Coles The Local

While town councillors continue to struggle to find more savings before finalizing the Town's 2020 budget, Niagara regional council has approved a budget that sets up an overall property tax theatre and the arts. increase of 5.92 per cent.

Not unlike town councillors' efforts, regional councillors' efforts were aimed at balancing the need to catch up with infrastructure improvements, keep up with the level of service delivery and have a budget that is sustainable for the future, says Gary Zalepa, regional councillor for Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The regional operating budget for 2020 has been ture. approved with a tax levy of \$392.6 million.

The operating budget supports a \$375 million approved capital program for 2020.

The increase includes imand social services, and re- it." development for affordable facilities.

The Region has made health and social services a priority, despite the fact that the Province is no longer funding many of those pro- tion. grams, he says.

"We're protecting the collection, which is funded most vulnerable in society, per household in NOTL, spending on programs for will increase by almost 10 the homeless, and projects per cent, reflecting a new affecting families with low contract for 2020, as costs incomes," including a program through the YMCA drop in revenue for recycled that helps kids participate in material. activities that include sports,

doing some catch-up" when costs and improving waste it comes to capital projects, diversion. says Zalepa, with different priorities than councils not begin until next fall, of past years. "There isn't when the new rates will kick enough funding in reserve in. funds to meet capital needs in the 2020 budget," he explains, pushing the Region to work at finding the right facilities, says Zalepa. balance between funding capital projects and building erage property assessment of reserves for a sustainable fu- \$277,044 to put the increase

"This council was struggling with tax rates, and keeping things affordable, not necessarily the best way and catching up with reserves for the long term," he crease to taxpayers, he says.

provements to public transit and I think we're on top of cluding the regional tax rate,

Water and wastewater housing and recreational rates will also increase, by a little more than five per cent, to cover infrastructure improvements that will ensure safe drinking water, he says, and meet provincial legisla-

And the cost of garbage are critical, he says, and pub-

for collection increase and a

Collection will decrease curbside to every other The Region is "definitely week, with a goal of reducing

The new contract does

A separate levy of 1.4 per cent had already been approved for long-term care

The Region uses the avin perspective, meaning the average tax bill will increase by \$86, for a total of \$1,602, to explain the budget in-

Increases vary, according "That's been a big effort, to "many moving parts," inand assessment.

The main point he makes about the 2020 regional budget is that "it sets the stage for growth."

Investments in infrastructure for GO Transit and other projects that will attract employers and jobs

lic transit is a big part of the puzzle needed to accomplish that.

several workshops and sessions to discuss each portion of the budget before making their final decisions, he adds.

The public doesn't necessarily see the effort that goes into a regional budget, says Zalepa.

discussion. We were not taking this lightly. It's been Regional councillors had a huge amount of work and input to get to where we were at the stage to finally approve it."

But in the end, he believes it's a good budget for 2020 and the future.

"This budget is positioning the region for growth.

"We had a really fulsome We need to compete with other regions for jobs, and we need the infrastructure to attract employers and jobs. Without them we'd end up playing second fiddle to other regions in the province. The Niagara Region is putting the infrastructure in place for the future, to be ready to get through the next period of growth."

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Niagara River designation another step closer

NOTL endorsement one of two remaining next steps

Penny Coles The Local

Jocelyn Baker grew up in Queenston, just steps from the Niagara River.

She swam in it, spent hours drifting along in an inner-tube between Navy Hall and the sand docks as a teen, and feels deeply the need to recognize and preserve the significant body of water that has played a huge role, not only in her formative years, but also in her career in conservation.

"The work I do today is not just related to my profession. It's related to growing up in the river. It's something I've experienced for 50 years," says Baker.

She recently spoke to The Friends of One tion. Mile Creek in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and following that, to the Niagara Conservation Peninsula Authority, about her efforts to have the river designated as a wetland of international significance. Her next stop, likely in January, will be in NOTL, as she looks for council endorsement under the Ramsar Convention, which protects wetlands and their biodiversity in 170 countries.

A Ramsar designation is based on a convention that was held in 1971 in the city of the same name, in Iran, Baker explained.

Since it was first signed Canada entered into the agreement in 1981 — more than 2,000 sites around the world have been declared wetlands of international importance, with 37 in which signed on in 1986.

The former NPCA staff and board members did not endorse this significant designation, so the recent support is very much appreciated, says Baker, now a Niagara College instructor who is also pursuing a master's degree at Brock University.

The support of the NPCA "was a pretty pivotal endorsement. We feel we can move forward now," she says.

Baker was joined for the November presentation to the NPCA by Jajean Rose-Burney, the U.S. co-chair of the steering committee. He told board members those on his side of the river are looking forward to Canadian designa-

In 2016, when the issue of the Niagara River as a wetland of international significance was discussed by NOTL town council, a decision was deferred due to "the unknown and unintended consequences" of designation, specifically from the agricultural community, which draws water from the river, a staff report to council said.

More than three years later, Baker continues to stress that while Ramsar designation would signify the importance of the Niagara River, it carries no regulations or restrictions with it — any protections are completely voluntary, with the purpose of maintaining the ecological character of the site, and ensuring its of which has been delayed conservation.

For a site to qualify for members, Baker says. Canada and 39 in the U.S., Ramsar designation, it must meet one of nine cri- ting pushed back. We're The U.S. has already teria, which includes being now looking at March. signed off on its side of rare or unique; supports They seem to have other the Niagara River as a vulnerable, endangered or priorities." significant wetland, and threatened species; supagreement on this side ports keystone or endemic ation, Niagara Falls, Fort species; supports species at Erie, the Region and the a critical stage in their life NPCA have now given their cycles, such as migration or endorsement, she added. breeding; supports 20,000 or more water birds; supports one per cent of the which would evolve with individuals in a population of one species of water tion of the Niagara River, bird; supports a significant there would be benefits for proportion of indigenous tourism, the wine industry, fish species; is an important food source, spawning area, nursery or migration path for fish; and supports one per cent of the individuals in a population of NOTL council, she is hopone species or subspecies of ing, with an increased unwetland-dependent species derstanding of the volunthat are not birds.

When Canada achieves their nomination, the 2 sides will join, forming Ramsar site in both North & South America (the America's)

A Global opportunity for the Niagara River

the securing of the Ramsar designa

truly a bi-national effort. The Niaga

health of the Great Lakes B

Catharines Mayor Walter

Director with the Great

Cities Initiative. "Man

this designation will

our collective effe

academia and volunte

watershed is critical to the long term

sustainability of our communities, and

Jocelyn Baker, speaking at a meeting of The Friends of One Mile Creek in November, is hoping for endorsements from the Niagara Parks Commission and the Town of NOTL in support of a Ramsar designation for the Niagara River. (Penny Coles)

teria, says Baker.

NOTL is not the only support still required. While the Niagara Parks Commission agreed to be the nominating agency on the Canadian side as far back as 2015, as an owner and manager of a significant portion of the Niagara River on this side, the commission is still undergoing a legal review of its support, the completion with a new CAO and board

"That report keeps get-

Ontario Power Gener-



Very Merry Christmas!

Winter is fast approaching. Make sure you have a beautiful coat to keep you warm. Our Master Furier is on the premises to help with all your fur needs.

would make it the first trans-boundary designation, she says.

She never envisioned "Canada would not be first" in its support of designation, she says, and considers that recent step from the U.S. as being helpful in her efforts.

Baker is co-chair of the Niagara River Ramsar Designation Steering Committee, which has been working on this initiative since 2013. She is also a former NPCA project manager in the area of water restoration, but lost her job in a major shake-up before the a subject she is unable to broach publicly.

2018 municipal election, within less than one per ive. cent of the global Ramsar sites that meet all nine cri- anyone's rights," she says.

In addition to the pride and community support an international recognieducation, economic development, and resource management, says Baker.

When her committee makes its presentation to tary nature of designation, The Niagara River falls the Town will be support-

"It isn't interfering with



9 Queen Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake • 905-468-2502



EDITORIAL

Merry Christmas, happy holidays to all

With just days until Christ- important to us, our priorities to be proud to live and work in this great town with its very generous people.

We've seen over and over that while it may be a small community, Niagara-on-the-Lake has a huge heart. We've seen the kindness, the spirit, and we've witnessed the many reasons to feel so grateful for all that surrounds us.

For many, Christmas is the day that's at the core of Christianity. It's a day to celebrate for a specific reason.

But whatever our religious beliefs, whether we celebrate the birth of a child born centuries ago as the Son of God, or whether we just celebrate the to Christmas going by in a bit season that seems to foster a of a blur, there are reminders feeling of peace and goodwill, of kindness and compassion, it loving and caring, to be kinder is a time to contemplate what is and gentler.

mas, we have so many reasons not just for the holiday, but for all of you, a happy, safe holiday, the year ahead.

> For many, it's all about family, those who are closest to us, those whom we love.

For some, that's a struggle. We've lost loved ones, we may be feeling alone, but we are in the midst of a caring community, we can reach out to those in need.

It's a time to feel blessed for all that is good in our lives, especially here, in this beautiful town that millions of people love to visit, and be mindful that not everyone is as fortunate as we are.

is usually a rush for many of us, with the days leading up all around us to be calm, to be

We at The Local wish for and a time of joy however you choose to spend it.

We thank you for being so supportive over the past year, with the stories you have shared, the love we have felt, and your support with your businesses, which allows us to help bring the news to this amazing town we all treasure.

We will be starting a new year soon, another year of challenges and triumphs - mostly triumphs, of course — and we will be here to share the news with you.

We have been so proud to Although this time of year be part of this town, to have watched it grow over the decades, to meet and learn about so many of you, and to continue to be, in some small way, a part of your lives.

Penny Coles The Local

Budget deferral a gift to all

The big story this week is the much-awaited budget, already the subject of so much criticism on social media.

We have a suggestion for those of you quick to slam the tax increase.

Watch the audit committee meetings on livestream, or at least snippets - especially the last one.

Watch the council meeting that took place Monday night, with much discussion of many items, large and small. There is no question, these are difficult times, staff and councillors had a difficult task. We heard it often, but if you feel the need to

scoff, you weren't paying attention.

These councillors struggled. There was no decision made lightly, no money spent cavalierly.

This was a huge undertaking, to provide the services residents expect, at a cost they can afford. The senior citizen on a fixed income, whose property value and assessment is increasing, and an income that is not, was not forgotten.

This council was democratically elected to look after the issues NOTL residents have determined to be priorities, and to preserve the quality of life this town offers.

There is now a period of reprieve, when councillors will try to find more savings.

Do you have a solution? Making tourism pay for

more infrastructure projects is one we've heard, as councillors did by taking money from parking reserves, but that's not enough. There are smart people in this town. Is there something council is missing? If so, let them know.

The deferral of this budget seems like a Christmas gift. If you have some practical advice, let council know. If not, accept the budget for what it is, an attempt to do better by the taxpayers, even after so much has already been done.

The NOTL Local acknowledges the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, many of whom continue to live and work here today. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and is within the land protected by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum agreement. Today this gathering place is home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and acknowledging reminds us that our great standard of living is directly related to the resources and friendship of Indigenous peoples.



LOCAL FINDS

PETER JOHN STOKES 1926-2013 CONSULTING RESTORATION ARCHITECT KNOWN FOR HIS WORK AT UPPER CANADA VILLAGE, MANY PUBLIC BUILDINGS IN ONTARIO, NEW BRUNSWICK AND THE RESTORATION TO ST. MARK'S CHURCH AUTHOR AND PRESIDENT OF THE ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVANCY OF ONTARIO

> **ANN TOMPKINS 1926-2018** WIFE OF PETER STOKES

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Heritage architect buried here by Donald Combe **Special to The Local**

Peter and Ann lived for many years in the gracious 1828 house at the corner of King and Platoff Streets. They were active in raising awareness of the historic and architectural importance of this town.

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The concept of a local wealth of talented charac- Mayor, let's make this hap-

pen.

Peter Warrack NOTL

The Niagara-on-the-Lake

The trusted voice of our community

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Owen Bjorgan Special to The Local

One of my favourite components of the spring hiking tour I run is explaining to people that nature has a preplanned rulebook to follow every season.

The head of each species pushes up through the newly thawed ground in a textbook, predictable order every year. We know that trout lilies and wild leek will be first to burst on through to the other side. These two species are so determined to get that first taste of photosynthesis, that I have even seen them stick up through remaining snow patches.

After these two early bloomers, the wild ginger, Solomon's seal, Jack-in-thepulpit, and other herbaceous plants pop up in the same sequence they did last year and the thousands of years before that

Why wouldn't every plant have evolved to pop up early and get the first sun? Wouldn't it make sense to take full advantage of the first warm days, the first buzzing pollinators,

and the leafless trees above? Plants and animals don't evolve by choice. Evolution

is a background, perpetually forward-moving force that has a way of putting everything in its right place.

We would like to think all plant life favours the warm and sunny seasons, so why do some plants still live north of the Arctic circle? How did they end up there? Although millions more of their distant cousins live down in the tropics, near the equator, these hardy northern plants are, again, in their right place.

If every plant wanted to be first to the scene or live in photosynthesis heaven, it would be so competitive and chaotic that none of them would succeed. There would be too much stress on the ecosystem's resources. Imagine planning a party for four, and 40 show up? Imagine a nation or planet whose natural resources are being irresponsibly diminished too fast because too many hands are in the pot at once?

Just picture a bunch of energized school kids trying to rush out the classroom door to their goal: recess or gym class. Some kids try to "butt" aggressively to the front of the line, and bodies get squished

funnelling through the door. stopping a large pond animal simply grows. A little messy and uncoordinated. Instead, if the kids got into line and were told they would all eventually be getting to the same place, it would be a smooth and more graceful transition.

The kids all got where they wanted to be nicely, and just about every plant species has made its successful run by the time midsummer arrives.

Plants all over the world also have a funny triangle relationship with humans. Sometimes you can find a plant that can harm you, and another species within arm's reach that could cure the same harm. An example is poison ivy that can often be found growing right beside spotted Touch-me-not, which has aspects of the plant that when crushed can ease the itch of the ivy rash. Similar to our social circumstances growing older as humans, we are constantly in scenarios where we are in the same room or same town as connections that can serve us, or they don't, so it certainly helps to have knowledge of your surroundings.

Look at the diet and the mouths of some of the creatures on this planet. On a small scale, consider the snapping turtle and its formidable razor and bumped around while jaws and a big mouth. What is systems. The support network

Auchterlonie on Astrology

from devouring every fleshy frog, tasty fish, and little duckling? Of course an animal gets full and can't eat all of the time,

but for a creature that has such gluttonous capabilities and generally doesn't get bullied, it knows its place in the ecosystem and ensures that the balance is kept in check for its pond empire. Otherwise, the empire won't be able to suc-Aptly nicknamed 'glutton,'

is perhaps Canada's ultimate northern predator, the wolverine. It infamously lives in a carnivore's dreamland. It is a powerful predator with very little fear for animals larger than itself. It will not only hunt, but will gladly take any free bodily food scraps left wasting away in the harsh environment. Like the pine trees, beetles and polar bears, even the wolverine doesn't take more than it needs from its balanced world. The forest also responds

cessfully function.

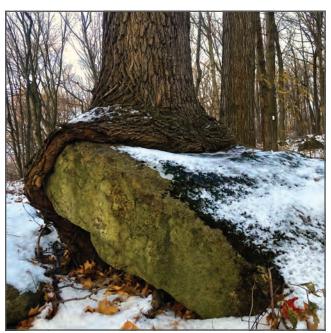
to environmental cues, and then prepares and respects itself accordingly. How, you might ask? A forest ecosystem wants to keep itself healthy, so neighbouring habitats can also stay healthy. The benefit is that adjacent natural realms blend into each other, as there are no perfect boundaries in eco-

To accomplish this health, like our daily musings, forests practise hygiene and clean up after themselves. We do this in our own homes with laundry, we brush our teeth and try to not leave rotting food around. Do you find yourself feeling more productive in a cleaner workspace? Fungus slowly but very surely breaks down the logs and leaves of the forest floor, so it doesn't sit there looking like a boneyard of wood. Good news is that, while it cleans up, it takes the

THE NOTL LOCAL

nutrients of the debris and redistributes it to neighbouring trees, and even ecosystems beyond.

I suppose the takeaway is that our society is like an ecosystem with its economies, personalities, structures and events. It only makes sense to take care of our individual selves at the base level, be somewhat orderly during the chaos, and together we can pull through to operate our best society. Not so ironically, it all comes back to our relationship with nature.



Rock, paper, scissors...tree? Nature has fine but unusual balances, much like our societies. This tree and rock can be seen along the Bruce Trail near St. Davids. (Owen Bjorgan)



Bill Auchterlonie Special to The Local

This week on Auchterlonie on Astrology I'll look at the Winter Solstice on Saturday, Dec. 21, Christmas on Wednesday and also a Solar Eclipse on Boxing Day.

On my podcast I've got some more news on the Saturnalia, the Astrology of Christmas and the real birthday of Christ.

Now, the week ahead.

pio. Then, late Thursday night, Mercury in all-knowing Sagittarius is challenged by a keenly intuitive Neptune in Pisces, leaving many scratching our heads, wondering what to believe. On this day in 1997, James Cameron, once of Niagara Falls, released his epic film, Titanic, which held the box office record for 12 years, until beaten by Avatar (also by James Cameron) in makes its furthest journey south 2009

Friday, Dec. 20: The last full Thursday, Dec.19: The day of fall for 2019 sees Mercury and the shortest day of sunlight Moon moves from discriminat- move from 'I'm in charge' Cap- in the Northern Hemisphere as ing Virgo into peace-loving Li- ricorn, into forward-looking the days become longer. In an-Aquarius. Despite the "aqua" in cient times, this was the day of ative efforts better and providing of the birth of Jesus, which was

land. Accordingly, many see Aquarius as the most humanitarian sign of the zodiac. We are entering the Age of Aquarius, which I explain (a bit) on my podcast. Today begins a month of forward-looking thoughts and conversations that look to make life better for all.

Saturday, Dec. 21: It's the day of the Winter Solstice as the Sun and begins to move northward again. It's the first day of winter use today. I explain more about this in my podcast. This first day of winter begins at 11:11 p.m. Eastern time. The day is busy from an astrological perspective, with the Moon in Scorpio making connections all day long. Emotions are deep and friendly, and a surprise is in the offing for some.

Sunday, Dec. 22: A restless night of sleep may be due to worry about a relationship, or

Sagittarius for the second part of it. The best of it is a sweet connection to Venus in Aquarius early in the evening. It's time for a party! Even if it's a party for two! On this day in 1972, the famous football play, the Immaculate Reception, takes place when Pittsburg Steelers' Franco Harris scores a touchdown on a pass thrown by Terry Bradshaw.

Tuesday, Dec. 24: Christmas Eve! Is about as lazy a Christmas worries over money. Mars in Eve as you might ask for. The Scorpio hooks up with Pluto in stockings are hung and all seems Capricorn, bringing willpower to be ready in preparation for a to physical efforts, making cre- fairly laid back day of celebration poser Franz Gruber wrote Silent *Night* on this day in 1818. Wednesday, Dec. 25: Merry Christmas! And merry it return!

promises to be, with the Moon in the upbeat constellation of Sagittarius until late in the afternoon, when she moves on to 'in charge' Capricorn. Clever thinking and a surprise or two (or three) make this a Christmas to be remembered and enjoyed. It was on Dec. 25, in the year 5 BC, that the day was adopted as the traditional birthday of Jesus. And on Dec. 5, 1223, St. Francis of Assisi built the world's first crèche featuring Mary, Joseph, Jesus, the Three Wise Men, and the shepherds and animals in a manger setting. Next week is Boxing Day, really on March 23, 7 BC. Com- New Year's Day and an Annular Solar Eclipse which is courtesy of the New Moon in Capricorn, also on Boxing Day. So please

bra early in the morning. But the big news is courtesy of Mars in Scorpio making a friendly connection to Saturn in Capricorn, bringing a serious and sexy energy to bear, especially for Scor-

its name, Aquarius is actually the the Saturnalia, an ancient Rolast air sign of the zodiac. Aquar- man festival in honour of the ius is represented by the water god Saturn, held on Dec. 17 of bearer, the mystical healer who the Julian calendar. That's Dec. in secretive Scorpio and then bestows water, or life, upon the 21 in the Gregorian calendar we moves on to the constellation

Canadä

subtle hand/eye coordination. Monday, Dec. 23: The Moon

spends the first half of the day



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Parks Parcs Canada Canada

Library activities for kids



Kasia Dupuis Children's Library Service Associate Special to The Local

When school's out, the library is the place to be.

While the library will be closed on Dec. 25, 26, 31 and Jan. 1, we still have a number of programs and activities planned to keep the family engaged and creative this holiday season

Start off the week with a showing of The Grinch (2018, PG) at 1 p.m. Monday Dec. 23, complete with in the Rotary Room. What afternoon at the library?

series. Bring in two clean, to register. 16-oz mason jars with lids,

and up, costs \$2 per par- is encouraged to save your required.

into the children's corner create the much-anticipatat the library for a variety ed Everlasting Gingerbread of drop-in crafts and ac- Houses. Create a cute and tivities, perfect for all ages. colourful faux gingerbread Kids can create, explore house with unconventionand browse our children's al materials - no food incollection while parents volved! This workshop is can get a nice change of geared for ages 6-plus, costs pace and perhaps pick up a \$5 per participant and regnew read or two for them- istration is required. selves.

Teen Literary Alliance's popular Minecraft Club monthly meeting in the will be running at its usuteen section of the library. al 4 p.m. time on Thursday, The Teen Literary Alliance Jan. 2. Registration is reis a super fun way to spend quired for this weekly proan afternoon having casual gram, and it is a great way discussions about the books to get out and meet fellow we enjoy reading. Not at all Minecraft enthusiasts. like school, plus there will be snacks. At this month's will also be a new batch popcorn and hot chocolate meeting, the group will be of drop-in activities in the discussing the classic, Lit- children's corner of the liis more cozy than a movie tle Women, by Louisa May brary, as well as a Technol-Alcott, which has just been ogy Petting Zoo from 1 to Also on Dec. 23 at 4 released as a feature length 2 p.m. in the Rotary Room. p.m., join us in The Mak- movie this month. Interest- Pop in and play with some ery for the last of this sea- ed in joining? Email Emma of the library's gizmos and son's BYO Monday Makers at eburkholder@notlpl.org gadgets, explore activities

materials needed to build our second winter break cozy winter reading sesa mason jar winter diora- movie, Angry Birds 2, in the sion. ma — a mini winter world Rotary Room with popcorn in a jar. This workshop is and hot chocolate. This is a and relaxing holiday. See perfect for kids ages six free event and registration you at the library.

ticipant and registration is space. After the movie, at 4 p.m., the Monday Mak-On Friday, Dec. 27, pop er Club will be meeting to

Is Minecraft a thing in Sunday, Dec. 29 is the your house? If yes, the ever

On Friday, Jan. 3, there in the children's corner and On Monday, Dec. 30 at of course, grab a new book and we will provide the 1 p.m., we will be showing or two to take home for a

Wishing everyone a safe



The library held a Stuffy Sleepover Friday, with Millie McGeachin, seven, and Alice Mc-Geachin, four, tucking in their stuffies for the night at the library. (Photo supplied)



JANUARY

FEBRUARY

JAN 4	Blinded by the Light
JAN 11	Wild Rose
JAN 18	Woman at War
JAN 25	Rocketman

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- FEB 8 The Grizzlies
- Jojo Rabbit (TO BE CONFIRMED) **FEB 15**
- Once Upon a Time in ... Hollywood **FEB 22**



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Mike Balsom **Special to The Local**

Driving through Niagara-on-the-Lake on a weekday afternoon, one might notice the presence of a few teens around the area of Vineridge Academy. It harkens back to those days when hundreds of local teens attended Niagara District Secondary School in that same building. But as welcome as they are in town, the great majority of those Vineridge students are not local.

Since the 2010 closure of the high school by the District School Board of Niagara, there has been little teenage presence in town weekdays, from September to June. That's because local high school students now either board

trip to Eden High.

The town's acting chief administrative see teenagers back in Nithe school year.

To that end, Randall cooperative education departments at the four area students earn two to four high schools NOTL teens credits through a comtypically attend.

generalist Sarah Stevens into that career. and community engagement coordinator Lauren arv School students, some Kruitbosch. The focus was from NOTL, are currentto provide opportunities ly contributing at animal for high school students to shelters, vet clinics, elegain valuable experience mentary schools, law ofthrough cooperative education placements with auto shops, among many town staff.

As the lead co-op

Niagara Falls, or arrange Secondary School, I welinformal carpools for the comed the opportunity to be part of this discussion.

Co-op is a program officer, whereby students leave Sheldon Randall, wants to the school on a daily basis, gaining valuable exagara-on-the-Lake during perience in the workplace manpower to work with pointed out, it is always difalongside professionals working in the field. Coreached out recently to the op placements are either half-day or full-day, and bination of on-the-job A meeting was held at and in-class learning. For the town hall last week be- many fields, a co-op placetween the four co-op pro- ment is often the only gram leaders along with chance for a high school Randall, human resources student to learn what goes

> Laura Second Secondfices, seniors homes and other sites.

able to provide. Though many organizations gento our students, others ei- able to host students. ther don't understand the young people.

students working alongside Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake staff in various capacities is an exciting development.

ing students from Laura benefit to the Town. Secord, Eden, A.N. Myer Secondary and departments.

The potential opporable to offer are seemingly endless.

a bus to St. Catharines or teacher at Laura Secord op teachers are limited in ning, bylaws, fire services, available. the opportunities they are finance, information technology, communications, and parks and recreation erously open their doors as among those possibly

The benefits to youth program or don't have the are obvious. As Randall ficult for NOTL and other The chance to have municipalities to fill vacancies for positions such as building inspectors, and to retain good employees. The chance to bring a potential employee into the And Randall, Stevens fold at such a young age, and Kruitbosch are clear- and to train that employee ly just as excited about in a low-pressure situathe prospect of welcom- tion, can provide an equal

Future job opportuni-Holy ties in the municipal sec-Cross Catholic Secondary tor cover so many differ- the first students placed Schools to their various ent skills and careers. The problem for most young people, in my experience, tunities the Town may be is that they have very little understanding of ex- toward seeing more youth actly what it is a Town or Randall floated such City corporation does, and Often, however, co- town departments as plan- what type of careers are more regular basis.

Randall, Stevens and Kruitbosch are determined to open the doors to their various departments so high school students can begin to learn first-hand what types of jobs are available.

The next step for Randall is to bring the idea to the Town's senior management team. That should result in a list of departments willing and able to host students. From there, Stevens will work with the managers of those departments to provide a list of opportunities to the co-op departments at the four schools.

If all goes as planned, with the Town could begin their experience on Feb, - 18

It's a fantastic first step in all corners of the town, Monday to Friday, on a



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Watching parade brings feelings of gratitude



Ted Mouradian Special to The Local

Last Saturday, like many of you, I braved the rain, the wind and the cold to watch the 2019 Santa Claus Parade. Luckily I was able to keep dry, because of the great hospitality of my friend Lynn Masaro, who runs the B&B at The Doctor's House on Queen Street.

As I watched the parade and interacted with the other guests, something struck me. No one seemed to be upset with the fact that it was pouring rain and not snowing. We were simply enjoying the moment and the friendship. That got me to thinking about the abundance that many of us have who live in Niagara. Unfortunately, that is not what I see on a day-to-day basis, where people complain about the smallest of issues.

There is a story about a family who arrived from a third world country, where bitterly complain about not lives we live. they literally had nothing. They were asked what struck them the most about their new home. They said



Ted Mouradian was among friends, new and old, watching Saturday's Christmas Parade from a Queen Street porch. (Photos by Penny Coles)

about that comment. Wathe world (including Canada), and we in Niagara use treated. clean drinkable water in our toilets, and simply flush it all thought more about the away without a thought.

finding a parking spot on want to enjoy what some minute to be grateful for

to flush our toilets. Think someone who is driving too slow, or a friend or relative ter is gold in many places of who didn't treat us the way we thought we needed to be more important to under-

I believe it is time we abundance we have, and Here's the rub. Then we how blessed we are for the the end of 2019 and the be-

This season, and hope-Queen Street because of fully into the next and bethose tourists who simply yond, it's time we take a

have. Of course it is importstand how blessed we are, and how fortunate to be living in this place at this time.

So, here is my hope for ginning of 2020.

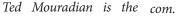
Be more grateful and less wanting. Be kinder and less hurtful. Be more open and less closed. Be more patient and less impatient. Be more helpful and less selfish. Be more giving and less taking. Be more understanding and less narrow in your thinking.

And finally be happier, and less angry with your situation in life. Remember, you really do have a lot.

Don't get me wrong last Saturday at the parade it was wet, cold and nasty, but that was secondary to all of the wonderful volunteers and parade participants who took the time to march, in order to bring others so much joy that day, not to mention the great laughs I had standing on the porch with old friends and some new ones.

that they couldn't believe would call the prettiest lit- what we have, and stop fo- the world as it truly is, we President of the 2% Factor we actually use clean water the town in the world. Or cusing on what we don't see the world only from Inc. and creator of the Law where we stand. Maybe it ant to give to others at this is time to look again, with a an author and professional time of year, but I think it is new vision, at the blessings of what we have.

of Cooperative Action. He is speaker and can be reached at ted@the2percentfactor.





The Top Hat Marching Band is one of the annual favourites Dante said we don't see at the NOTL Christmas Parade.





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Cross-lake ferry has long iourney ahead

Penny Coles The Local

Ontario Express says he has been working on a water link between Ni- roughs also brought up agara and Toronto since some of the "serious" 2014, and tried to float the idea with stakeholders in 2018, but he has in the late 1990s. A wave some obstacles to over- washed over a hydrofoil come before turning his operating from Toronto idea into reality.

Bruno hopes to use the Navy ism aboard. Hall dock as the Niagara-on-the-Lake connec- soaking the passengers tion, but has failed so - the tourism promofar to receive permission tion wasn't a success. from Parks Canada, or from the City of Toronto several factors on his to use its harbour, with- side, including a conout which, he told coun- struction cil, "there is no project. that has taught him to You will never see me pay attention to "lessons again."

The benefit to a succhiefly the time it saves ferry service has to be for commuters and visitors to Niagara, he says.

The distance across itself." the lake is 50 kilometres, versus 120 kilomeand the time of a ferry crossing is about 40 to 45 minutes, Caciagli told from one to two hours.

He is predicting 2,100 travellers per day, with timely need to reduce ve-80-passenger hovercrafts hicles on the road to proor catamarans making 14 tect the environment and trips per day, seven days reduce climate change, a week,12 months a year "weather permitting," at children and grandchila ticket cost of \$25.

round trips between To- our vehicles." ronto and Port Dalhou-

rough, the weather made services unreliable, and the costs prohibitive, al-The president of Lake though the concept was always a welcome one.

Coun. Gary Burproblems in the past. He referred to an incident to Niagara, with a pro-Caciagli vincial minister of tour-

The windows broke,

Caciagli said he has background learned."

Most important, he cessful water link is said, is that "any type of coordinated with land transit. It cannot exist by

The biggest factor to ensure success, he said, is tres along the highway, for public transit to connect with ferry dockings, to eliminate the need for parking for commuters NOTL councillors, with and encourage tourists cars and buses taking to choose the cross-lake option.

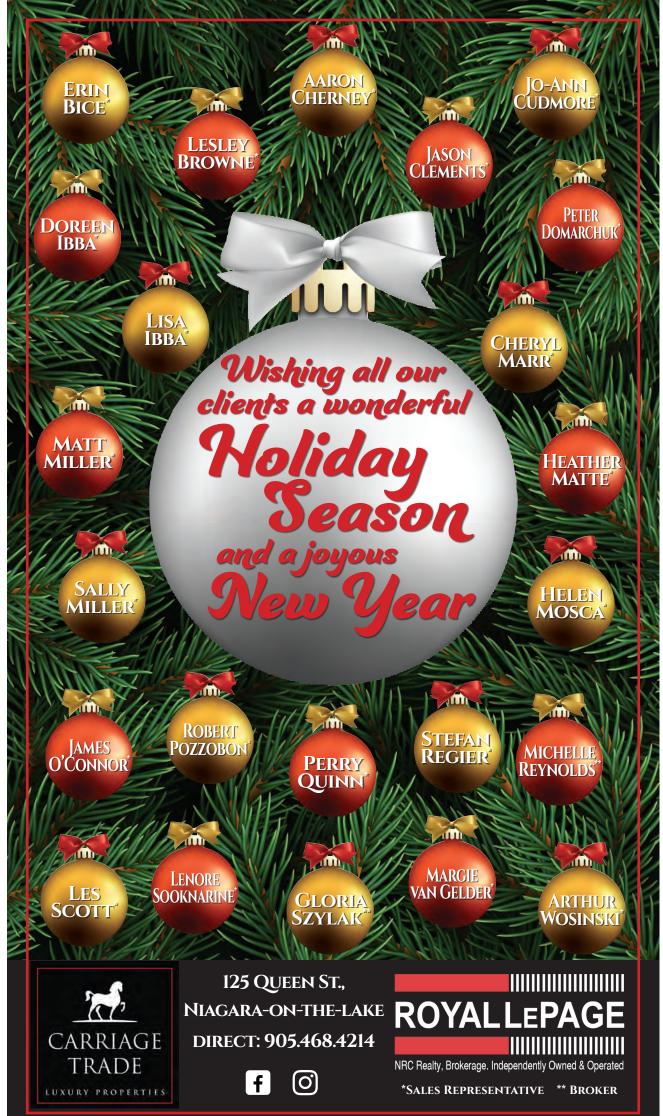
He also spoke of the "to do something for our dren. We have to start He would also like some place and one place to see the service offer to start is in the use of

He told councillors sie, and the Beacon Har- that with support in Ni-

Popular teen band braves weather



The Burlington Teen Band, always one of the most popular, didn't disappoint the crowd of stalwarts who braved the rain for the Santa Claus Parade. (Penny Coles)



bour, as well as NOTL.

ational for those coming and upper levels of govto Niagara for the Canada Summer Games in 2021.

Cheropita, while say- she finds the possibiliing the idea is "exciting ty of success "dubious," minds: "What are you included in the discusdoing differently to sions. make it a viable business that will be successful?"

failed.

The lake was often too Wiens opposed.

agara, he hopes to make He wants to be oper- inroads with Toronto ernment for funding.

"I appreciate the enthusiasm," said Coun. But Coun. Wendy Clare Cameron, saying and timely," asked the and she couldn't support question on everybody's it without Parks Canada

Burroughs made a motion to support the She was referring to proposal in principle, several efforts in recent in order to help Caciagdecades, from hydrofoils li move forward with to ocean-type ferries, at the project, subject to a similar price, and some Parks Canada approval. with shuttle service, that It passed with only Cameron and Coun. Erwin



The Bethany Handbell Choir, made up of local youth, entertained at the youth council Christmas party at the community centre Sunday. (Photos by Kim Wade)

Youth council hosts holiday party with music, crafts

Kim Wade Special to The Local

Sunday's dreary and cold afternoon was made merry and bright by the Lord Mayor's Youth Advisory Council's Christmas Party.

The party kicked off in fade. the auditorium of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre, with plenty of hot chocolate and marshmallows on hand to please the younger crowd. And coffee to warm up their parents. Children and teens were invited to decorate gingerbread and sugar cookies and eat their creations. Christmas-themed craft projects were set up and cil. staffed by youth council volunteers. Music and a flashy party atmosphere.

"New fun to be had this year," enthused Bethany Poltl, chair of the LMYAC. She explained the youth council had changed the format of the celebration this year, the third annual Christmas event. In previous years, the our town." celebration has centred on providing the audience with performances by local youth, but this year, they decided to engage younger members of the community by setting up the creative Christmas craft projects.

Poltl introduced herself, her co-chair Janvi Ganatra

introduce the acts for the performance, including the Niagara Bethany Handbell Choir, always a joy to hear, and earning enthusiastic ap-

Lord Mayor Betty Disero olin. addressed the audience after their performance, saying she makes a point of attending concerts of the youth and adult handbell choirs Before Christmas, read by when they perform. She also Moncion. thanked the youth advisory council for representing the noon's festivities by thanking young people in town and bringing their voice to coun-

Niaga-Although ra-on-the-Lake has been Mayor's Youth Advisory strobe light completed the called a town for retirees, this Council. could not be further from the truth, she said. With the Advisory Council was estabnumber of young people and young families moving to Poltl approached the NOTL NOTL, the work the youth Town Council in an effort to advisory council will do over increase the voice of youth the next three years "will be in the community. Presently so important to the future of the LMYAC consists of nine

She concluded by thanking the volunteers of the Lord is to give a voice to the youth Mayor's Youth Advisory of NOTL; encourage youth Council, Lauren Kruitbosch, involvement within the com-Community Coordinator, who works for youth to be a part of local directly with the LMYAC activities and events; provide and Town Councillor Claire leadership opportunities and Cameron, who according to experience for youth; and, and youth council member an integral role in the leader- NOTL community.

Genny Moncion, who helped ship" in the LMYAC.

Following that, the performances began, including pianist Clara De Munnich, and the sibling duo of Seungbeom Kim and Dahyeon plause as the last chimes of Kim. Seungbeom performed the March of the Nutcracker on the cello, while his sister accompanied him on the vi-

Poltl entertained the audience with her lovely soprano, followed by a dramatic reading of 'Twas the Night

Poltl concluded the afterthe audience, the volunteers, the Lord Mayor and the Town Council for their continued support of the Lord

The Lord Mayor's Youth lished in the fall of 2017 after members ranging in age from 13 to 18 whose mandate Engagement munity; offer opportunities



Lord Mayor Betty Disero thanks the youth advisory council at the community centre Christmas party, with council members Genny Moncion, Janvi Ganatra and chair Bethany Poltl.



the Lord Mayor "has played allow youth to help build the Sibling duo Dahyeon Kim on violin, and Seungbeom Kim on cello, performed at the Christmas event for youth.



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e Parking at Back Entrance off Johnson S 905.468.8400

Tuesday, December 24th 9:30 am - 3 pm Wednesday, December 25th..... CLOSED Thursday, December 26th CLOSED New Year's Eve: Tuesday, December 31st..... 9:30 am - 3 pm New Year's Day: Wednesday, January 1st CLOSED

Regular hours resume Thursday, January 2nd

Vineridge Academy planning an expansion

Local and international students benefit from small class sizes

Penny Coles The Local

The former public high school building on Niagara Stone Road is looking better than it has in decades, inside and out, and is due for an expansion that would attract about 300 more international students.

The Vineridge Academy, rebranded from the Royal Elite International Academy, as it was named when it opened four years ago, is still Chinese-owned, and has about 120 students, says Jade Winterbottom, who coordinates accommodations and activities for the students.

It's a 24/7 job for her, with students arriving as young as 13 years old, some needing more care than others, she says. She and other staff members understand that is the nature of their job, which often includes organizing outings for the students outside of school hours.

A small number of local students have registered, preferring the small class sizes that allow for one-on-one help when needed, the location in their own community, and the school's 100 per cent acceptance to the students' preferred choice for post-secondary education, whether it be university or college.

One of the three Niagara-on-the-Lake students at Vineridge is Sebastian Reese, who began his education at Crossroads Public School, before moving to Royal Oak Community School for his last two years. Reese was the first graduate from the small, not-for-profit school that was formed after Parliament Oak, the last remaining school in the Old Town, closed.

"I really liked the small class sizes at Royal Oak," said Reese. "If I needed help I could always get it, and I feel like I learned more."

Small class sizes, and the location, were factors in his choice of Vineridge for high school.

He was also attracted by the high success level of students accepted to their choice of university.

"It made me feel good, knowing that I'd get to go to the university of my choice," he said.

His choice is Webb University, on Long Island's north shore in New York. The university is a top-ranked undergraduate institution that provides a well-respected program in naval architecture, which is Reese's goal for the future.

His family moved to Niagara from Florida when his father accepted a job with the St. Lawrence Seaway as a pilot of boats through the locks, he said, so he has grown up with boats in his blood. He sees Vineridge as the school that can unlock the key to his fu-

he needs — the curriculum is the same as any Ontario high school - and class size varies from five students to a maximum of 20.

The reason for the school's high post-secondary placement rate is the guidance department, said Winterbottom. Councillors work with students right from their first year, looking at their goals, making a study plan to ensure they take the courses they need to achieve them, and then helping them apply to the schools of their choice.

We're such a small school, the councillors can sit down with students and talk about what they want to do, where they want to go, and make sure says Alex. "It was really scary ed in soothing colours. The li-

can make sure any course they need is available to them."

Alexandra Odumosu is a 15-year-old student from Nigeria. She is in her third year at the international school, in Grade 12, and arrived when she was just 13.

Her goal is to study media arts, and she is considering Brock University, the University of Windsor and Niagara College, she says.

She lives in Niagara-on-the-Green, with Ruby, a grandmother, and Ruby's husband Ben.

She's been great for Alex, "teaching me how to look after a house for when I live on my own, and to remember things that are important, like being on time, and having manners. She is teaching me the skills of living independently, to be healthy and organized."

Alex says she likes it when Ruby's adult children and grandchildren come to visit. "It's a lot of fun, and a really good experience."

Winterbottom says she believes it's been good for Alex to live in a family home, rather than in residence at the school, having arrived in Canada at such a young age.

She hasn't been able to return home since she arrived apart from the expense, He is taking the subjects Alex says, "my mother is always worried about my safety at home."

> Instead, her family has come to Canada to visit her, and she has travelled to Ottawa to visit her sister, who is at Carleton University. And she can call home whenever she wants.

> Most of the students will be on their way home by Dec. 20, but Alex will be one of those staying in NOTL, and Winterbottom will ensure she and the others are kept busy.

"We make sure their calendar is jam-packed with things to do," she said.

Last Christmas holiday, students went skating at Fort George, and at the arena.

"I fell down so many times,"

they get there," she said. "We at first. There were kids five to seven years old skating, and they were doing really well."

> But she said falling didn't hurt — much — and she was glad for the chance to try skating.

Winterbottom will arrange for a trip for those remaining in NOTL to see the Festival of Lights in Niagara Falls, for a Christmas Day dinner at the Mandarin in St. Catharines, and for New Year's Eve, festivities in the Falls.

Staff work throughout the holidays to experience Christmas with the students, she said, and the kids are able to get a bus to the Outlet Collection or the Old Town if they choose to. They know the bus routes and can also get themselves to the Pen Centre to shop or see a movie.

"These are kids who are really well-travelled. They can find their way anywhere."

Local Vineridge students are encouraged to join in if they want to, she adds.

Reese says although he still hangs out with his NOTL friends, he enjoys the time he spends with the international students. "Everybody gets to know everybody else, it's such a small school. We get to learn about each others' culture, and to realize there is a whole big world out there. I've made a lot of new friends."

The school also looks for opportunities for students to be involved in the community - they had a great experience volunteering at the Snowbirds air show, held a food drive for Newark Neighbours, and helped out collecting food at the Candlelight Stroll.

The lobby displays the many flags of countries represented at the school — students come mostly from Kazakhstan, Mexico, Nigeria, Vietnam and Turkey, said Winterbottom, although other countries have free tuition in exchange for also been represented.

The halls are much improved from the former Niagara school board high school's last years, refreshed and paint-



Alexandra Odumosu and Sebastian Reese pose between the flags of their countries at the Vineridge Academy international school. (Penny Coles)

brary remains the library, but some of the study desks have been replaced with plush furniture to give the kids a comfortable, relaxing place to hang out. The cafeteria is still downstairs, where it serves three meals a day for students who live in dorm rooms converted from Virgil wing classrooms.

In the first years of the international school, some students were housed in a residence in Niagara Falls and bused to school, others lodged with local families. But the preference for most parents, sending their young teens far away to receive a Canadian education, is to have them live in residence at the school, says Winterbottom.

In order to attract local students and find homes for international students to live as 'home stays' with families, the school started out offering lodgings, says Winterbottom, but there isn't a need for that anymore.

Although she's unsure where the expansion stands in the planning process, the

goal of the facility owner is to create enough rooms to house 400 students, with an addition from the end of the Virgil wing running parallel to East and West Line, into the back parking lot, she said.

The home-stay families have been really helpful, offering a safe environment for kids that allowed them to learn the language and culture, and develop friendships with local students, said Winterbottom, who likes to see her international students stay with families. But the majority of the parents choose the residence for the kids, and only 10 are billeted this year.

"There are so many great families, but we're at the point where we have more families than we need for students," she said.

"I think it's a great experience for students to live with Canadian families, but the majority of the parents like their kids living at the school, not having to take the bus. We will always give them the choice, but very few are choosing home stays."







Christmas glows with timeless handmade jewellery

Submitted by VandenDool Jewellers

COEUR DE LION was established by Carola and Nils Eckrodt in 1987 and has grown year by year ever since. The brand is synonymous with timelessly beautiful designer jewellery, handmade in Germany.

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Autumn / Winter season,

lery, which is handmade in petrol and sapphire blue in gold and black in the BRIL-Just in time for the 2019 LIANTCOEUR collection.

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Owners Brian and Mark VandenDool

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The Fort George kitchen was a busy place this weekend at the Garrison Christmas event, as re-enactors prepare the dishes that would have been served in the fort during the 1800s. (Fred Mercnik)







905-468-9555 | 1630 Niagara Stone Rd, Virgil Christmas Eve: 9:00-5:00 Closed Christmas Day Boxing Day: 10-6 (also Seniors Day) December 27: (Seniors Day extended to this day as well) December 31: Closing at 5:00 Closed January 1 January 2: Back to regular business hours 42 Queen St at the Clock Tower Shop Online @ beauchapeau.com Tel 905-468-8011



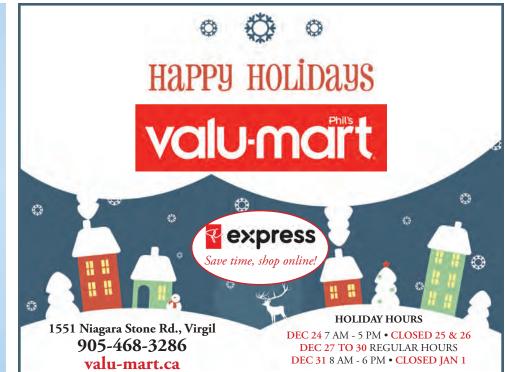


Suzanne Kavanaugh displays the cookies she baked for the Fort George Garrison Christmas, made with the same recipe that would have been used 200 years ago. The cookies were served with hot chocolate. *(Fred Mercnik)*



The Grinch also could have used an umbrella Saturday, but even in the rain, he couldn't steal the spirit of Christmas from the streets of NOTL during the town's annual Santa Claus Parade. (*Penny Coles*)





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coasters and candy canes. (Penny Coles)



The Oast House Brewers took part in this year's Santa Claus Parade Saturday, handing out At the St. Davids Lioness Breakfast with Santa, Eleanor Colvin tells Santa what she wants for Christmas, with Leo Club member Ayla Jamal on hand to help out. (Fred Mercnik)





Best wishes for a happy holiday season and our sincere thanks for your loyalty and goodwill throughout the year.



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Aunt Agnes a magical, delightful holiday romp

Mike Balsom **Special to The Local**

Somewhere in the family, everyone seems to have "that aunt."

That one who shows up out of nowhere, that one of whom everyone has a vague recollection, but many are she fits into the family dynamic.

In the world premiere of a new Norm Foster play at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, that aunt is named Agnes. She surprises the small-town Trimble couple. family with a visit just two days before Christmas. The Grade 4 student at Crossproblem is, though, that no one knows who she is.

Aunt Agnes for Christ*mas* is a magical, delightful holiday romp that continues this weekend at the Recital Hall in St. Catharines. It's a new holiday show brought to Niagara as a special extension of the Foster Festival's 2019 season.

Directed by the festival's artistic director, Patricia Vanstone, the play is set largely in the home of Sally and George Trimble, where they live with their two children, Melissa and Brian.

Sally is the town's mayor, while the eternally optimis-

tic George is a salesperson, 14-year-old daughter Me- nes with a bit of grit and a selling RVs in town. Nei- lissa, who seems mired in special zeal that allows the ther Sally nor George can boredom. She obviously remember ever having met feels she is destined for bigan Aunt Agnes before. But ger and better things than with George always seeing those on offer in such a the bright side, she is wel- quaint town. She can't wait comed into the family home to grow up and get out of ness. to celebrate the season.

The chemistry and conot exactly sure just how medic timing between Sally, veteran, Nora McLellan, as played by Cosette Derome, Aunt Agnes, to shake things and George, portrayed by up. Shaw Festival veteran Kelly Wong, is obvious from the Poppins — without the start. Not surprising, when umbrella — Aunt Agnes one discovers that Derome and Wong are a real-life which she uses to fix up

roads Public School who ly faces the prospect of the appeared in Yellow Door town skating rink being Theatre's Robin Hood last without ice for the first time year, makes his Foster Festival debut as the youngest Trimble child, Brian. His it's young Melissa who is the character doesn't say much, benefactor of Agnes' magic. but is obsessed with imitating the style of his favourite the Trimble clan aware of singers. In Act 1, he postures as a young fedora-tipping Sinatra, walking on to the Peter Hartwell-designed tutor, showing Melissa how set to maximum comic effect. In Act 2, he becomes a used for the "good of the pre-teen Elvis Presley, shaking his hips to the beat of a song only he can hear.

there.

Like a modern day Mary possesses special powers, Hayden Neufeld, a air. Those powers also come in handy when Mayor Salever.

> But more importantly, She is the only member of her aunt's abilities. Agnes takes Melissa aside and begins to act as the youngster's her special powers can be many."

It's the relationship between Melissa and Agnes Fifteen-year-old Kate where the magic of the play Peters plays the Trimbles' shines. McLellan plays Ag-

sarcasm and humour of Foster's script to connect with the audience. Think Bea Arthur as Maude, but with more heart and kind-

Peters is a revelation as In swoops another Shaw Melissa. She and McLellan take the spotlight together for much of the play, and the young Niagara Falls native holds her own with the veteran actor. She exudes a confidence she obviously has developed through appearing in a number of elaborate meals out of thin Linus Hand Productions in her hometown. That confidence also shows in her most likely honed through dance.

> convincing Melissa of the the Greater Niagara Chamvalue of her family and her ber of Commerce. In a short small town existence. She's a walk-on appearance, she tradition. bit like the Ghost of Christ- was greeted by Agnes and mas Present from Charles Melissa while taking a short the Recital Hall at the Fir-Dickens' A Christmas Car- stroll through town. The ol, working to ensure her Foster Festival is featuring young charge begins to various community memappreciate and savour the bers each evening, taking magic of the season, and the a cue from *The Nutcracker*, wonder of "now."

A highlight for this walk-on cameos. theatre-goer was a cameo



notllocal.com

movements across the stage, Nora McLellan, as Aunt Agnes, and Kate Peters, as Melissa, create magic onstage at the FirstOntario Performing Arts seven years of competitive Centre until Dec. 22. (Photo supplied)

Aunt Agnes For Christby Niagara-on-the-Lake's mas delivers its message Mishka Balsom, playing with heart, soul and hu-firstontariopac.ca.

Agnes tasks herself with herself as the president of mour —lots of humour and is sure to become a new Canadian classic Christmas

> The play continues at stOntario Performing Arts Centre until Dec. 22, with matinee performances at 2 p.m. Thursday, Saturday and Sunday, and evening which often features such performances at 7 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Tickets are available at the PAC box office, or visit







From our family to yours...

we extend our heartfelt wishes for a safe and happy holiday season.

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Music is alive and well at St. Michael



Music is alive and well at St. Michael Catholic Elementary School, and staff are excited to highlight the musical talent of our students and the many opportunities they have to share their gifts this holiday season. On Monday, Dec. 9, the Grade 6 students joined the Holy Cross Secondary School family for Christmas Together at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre. Under the musical direction of Mrs. Cumiskey and Mrs. Lingerfelt, the class sang two songs at a professional venue for the very first time, including Braden Byl, Aine O'Neill, Julia Rezza, Christine Dickens-Colling, Madison Morgan, Nieva Jacob, Gavin Contini and Jasavion Jordan. *(Photos supplied)*



At St. Michael, the season of Advent is how students prepare for Christmas. The four weeks of Advent are represented by the four candles of Hope, Faith, Joy and Peace. "As the Grade 6/7 class led these liturgies, the school choir helped



Enjoying their hot chocolate outside the Pillar & Post are Helena Kane, Dani Werner, Sierra Bartolini, Ella DeSouza and Victoria Vetrone.



This past week, St. Michael school choir joined the Grade 6 class to sing at the Pillar & Post. Students enjoyed sharing their talents with the community, and the cookies and hot chocolate were awesome too.



to focus our minds and prepare our hearts for the birth of our Lord," says principal Janice Barretto-Mendonca. "This week we lit a pink candle, reminding us that the time of Christ's arrival is coming soon. We are so very blessed to have terrific volunteers like Mr. Carty and Mrs. Cumiskey as part of our St. Michael family to lead our students in song each week."

rival is coming soon. We are so very blessed to have terrific volunteers like Mr. Carty and Mrs. Cumiskey as part of our St. Michael family to lead our students in song each week." The Holy Cross Concert Band and Choir performed at St. Michael School on Dec. 4. Many former Lightning continue to let their gifts shine in secondary school, says principal Janice Barretto-Mendonca. Pictured here are George Petrisis, J.P. Galbraith, Mary Clare Nolan, Sophie McClure, Amelie Merrill, and Hannah Kumarage.

The Music of a John Charlie Brown **McDermott** FirstOntario **Christmas** 66 It's not really PERFORMING ARTS Christmas until CENTRE A Jazz Club Cabaret with the **McDermott sings.**" Peter Shea Trio ft. Terry Clarke - THE TORONTO STAR FirstOntarioPAC.ca SUN 22 DEC 2:30PM SAT 21 DEC 2PM + 8PM **Downtown St. Catharines**



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THE NOTL LOCAL

Hydro boxes decorated, artists celebrated



These are two of the four seasons painted by Jennifer Penner, decorating the hydro box at the corner of King and Ricardo Streets. (Kim Wade)

Kim Wade **Special to The Local**

The winners of the Hydrobox Beautification Competition were celebrated during the exhibition opening and reception at Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre last Thursday evening.

About 75 people gathered for the celebration and the exhibit of all the entries on display.

"It was a great turn-out. We were very excited," says Gail Kerr, office manager of the Pumphouse.

Out of the 16 art works submitted for consideration, three were chosen. The winning submissions are *Remembrance* by Elaine Bryck, First Flora by Lindsey Kemp, and a set of four panel pieces by Jennifer Penner. The submissions to the contest covered a variety of media from watercolour, acrylic, oil, photography and textile art.

The winning works have been duplicated by using digital imagining onto vinyl wrap. The wrap has been used to cover three hydro boxes in the Old Town. Bryck's piece is in full bloom on the hydro box at Memorial Park. Kemp's work graces the box at Front near Victoria Street. Jennifer Penner's cardo and King Streets.

satisfaction of seeing their approached the Commuart on display for the public around town, each winner also received \$500 prize phouse Arts Centre. They monev.

NC to l

community-building activ-In addition to having the ity with local partners. He nities in Bloom Committee and the Niagara Pumpartnered with the Town Tim Curtis, president of to organize the competition

located at the corner of Ri- and to use this initiative as a eryone involved felt this project and partnership was a success, and want to do it again. "Next year we will do a bigger call-out," she says.

All of the submissions including the winning works are part of their own exhibit at the Niagara Pum-

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NIAGARA PLEIN AIR ART SHOW

December 1 - December 31

Niagara Plein Air Artists art show continues at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library for the month of December, during library hours: Monday to Thursday, 9 a.m. – 8 p.m., Friday to Sunday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

UGLY SWEATER HOLIDAY FOOD TOUR

December 20 to December 22 1:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Don your best ugly holiday sweater and join us on a special walking tour for a little foodie fun! This 2.5 hour tour differs from our usual Niagara-on-the-Lake culinary tour. It will include a mix of food tastings at culinary partners and a chance to pick up a last minute gift for that hard-to-buy-for person on your list. We promise a tasty bit of fun and frivolity and a takeaway gift. So grab a friend and dig out that ugly sweater and get in the holiday spirit! A prize will be awarded to the foodie with the ugliest sweater. It's a great way to spend the afternoon with friends or a nice alternative to the holiday office party. Private booking dates are available. \$60 per person. Meet at 1:00 p.m. at the Irish Harp, 245 King St., NOTL. For more info, contact: support@eztix.com or call 1 (289) 768-8717.

FIRST ONTARIO PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE

Now until December 22 The Foster Festival presents Aunt Agnes for Christmas

December 21 - 2 p.m. + 8 p.m. The Music of a Charlie Brown Christmas

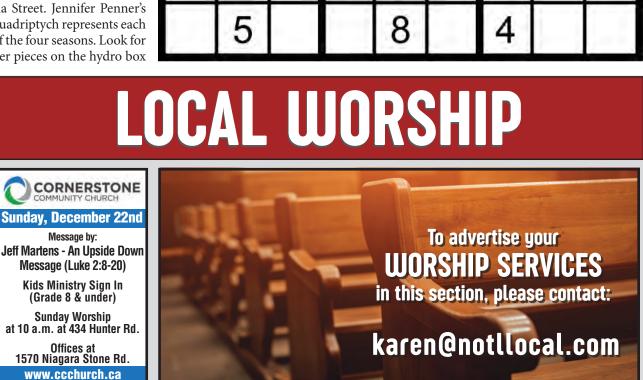
> December 22 John McDermott

December 27 Sing-a-long Sound of Music

December 31 Jim Witter - Piano Men II www.FirstOntarioPAC.ca

NEW YEAR'S DAY LEVEE

quadriptych represents each of the four seasons. Look for her pieces on the hydro box



January 1, 2020 @ 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Join the Friends of Fort George and Parks Canada as we ring in the New Year at Navy Hall! Levee celebrations start at 3:00 p.m., and include toasts, music by the 41st Regiment Fife and Drum Corps, and a cannon firing to welcome the New Year.

Call the Friends of Fort George at 905-468-6621 or email admin@friendsoffortgeorge.ca for more information.

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CROSSWORD PUZZLE



DIXON, Martina—On December 9, 2019 at the Greater Niagara General Hospital with family by her side at the age of 85 years. Beloved wife for 61 years of Frederick Dixon. Dear mother of Susan Gulley (Steve) and Debbie Hager (Butch).

Cherished "Nana" of Jamey Gulley (Beth), Tim Gulley (Aisha), Jeremy Hager (Aneesha) and Michael Hager. Great-grandmother of Makenna and Iris and Gordi.

Martina had a beautiful smile and will be greatly missed by all that knew and loved her. Arrangements have been entrusted to Morgan Funeral Home. A memorial service will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Monday, December 30th at St. Mark's Anglican Church, 41 Byron Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake. As an expression of sympathy, donations may be made to the Alzheimer's Society or to St. Mark's Anglican Church.

OBITUARY

Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com





FRIESEN, Ruben John-Passed away at the Greater Niagara General Hospital on Wednesday, December 11, 2019 in his 95th year. Ruben will always be remembered for his generosity, gentle humour, a tender heart that delighted in serving others and his ever present harmonica. Owner of Modern Dry Cleaners for 44 years, he was a founding member of Calvary Church, St. Catharines as well as a

long time member of the St. Catharines Flying Club. He was passionate in serving on the board for International Child Care and fund raising for the Grace Children's hospital in Port-au-Prince, Haiti for many years.

Ruben was the loving and dedicated husband of Velma Friesen for 68 years. He will be missed by his three daughters Jane (Brian) Andres, Marilyn (Michael) Trout of Colorado and Cathryn (Greg) Peck of Maryland. Predeceased by his daughter Debbie Wiecha in March 2019. Loving grandfather of Jamie Wiecha, Connie Wiecha Corbett, Scott Wiecha, Kit Andres and Marty Wells and Matthew Peck and great-grandfather of Naya Corbett. Survived by sisters Evelyn Epps (Selkirk), Josie Woods (St. Catharines) and Miriam Matthews (Indianapolis). Predeceased by twin sister Ruby Murdoch, Hilda Hubele of Calgary and Stan Friesen. Deeply loved by all of his nieces and nephews.

A private family interment will take place at Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery, Niagara-on-the-Lake. A memorial service will take place at Pleasant Manor Chapel in Virgil on Monday, December 23, 2019, at 1:30 pm. Memorial donations may be made out to Mission Aviation Fellowship or the Niagara Workers Welcome (niagaraworkerswelcome@gmail.com).



Overhead Door St. Catharines Ltd. is seeking a garage door installer/service person. Experience is an asset. Must have own tools and steel-toed safety shoes, be bondable and have a valid driver's licence. The job is physically demanding and requires attention to detail as well as professionalism in customer service. Must be able to lift more than 45 kg (100 lbs), work outdoors at heights. Must be punctual. Overtime may be required.

PUZZLE ANSWERS

Arson, 59 Used, 61 Shea, 64 A k a. Opium, 52 Gotta, 55 Santa, 56 Unseen, 49 Tracts, 50 Circa, 51 Para, 42 Ere, 45 And then, 47 36 Producing, 37 All, 38 Dye, 40 ,991 Ape, 32 Ash, 33 Ate, 35 Melee, Russell Crowe, 26 Clerk, 28 Bend, 11 To one 12 Arias, 13 Lasts, 21 8 Indy, 9 Cosmopolitan, 10 Enlist, Nest, 5 Gleams, 6 Ebb, 7 Rougher, 1 Aroma, 2 Labor, 3 Overthrew, 4 .nwod .nsgs2 17 ,snb3 07 ,nsm A 66 Cute, 67 Week, 68 Ten to, 69 R, 62 Rite, 63 O S H A, 65 Chins, 571POs, 58 Rut, 60 N A S C A 50 Cognac, 53 Dear, 54 U S A, Alkali, 46 Role, 47 U R L, 48 Netted, Steeper, 41 Elderly, 43 Hew, 44 95 (bs9 35, formon, 36 Pad, 39 27 Obsess, 29 Hassle, 31 Pet, 32 22 Gym, 23 In at, 24 Art, 25 Much, Obese, 18 Buds, 19 Lois, 20 Mortar, 14 Ravel, 15 Bono, 16 Nora, 17 Across: 1 Along, 6 Eric, 10 Et al,

- 1 With a forward motion 6 Guitarist --- Clapton
- 10 And others in Rome
- 14 "BolÈro" composer
- 53 Pricev

60 Daytona racing

supervisory

- 54 World's largest economy
- 57 Stock-market debuts 58 Monotonous routine
- 12 Operatic solos

64 Alias

13 Endures 21 "A Beautiful Mind" actor 26 Record keeper 28 Deform 30 Emulator 32 Fire residue 33 Consumed 35 Donnybrook 36 Bringing forth 37 Everyone 38 Stain 40 One paid to jump out of perfectly serviceable aircraft 42 Before, poetically 45 Soon afterwards 47 Invisible 49 Areas of land 50 About 51 Anything that stupefies 52 Have to 55 Generous annual visitor 56 Fire-raising 59 Pre-loved 61 Mets' old stadium

11 Common odds ending

Maurice ---

15 Lead vocalist of U2 16 Sleepless in Seattle director --- Ephron 17 Overweight 18 Embryonic flowers 19 --- Lane, Clark's love 20 Shell lobber 22 Exercise venue 23 --- the ground floor 24 Adeptness 25 A lot 27 Think constantly 29 Badger 31 Beloved 32 Anti-ageist org. 34 Pulpit delivery 36 Cushion 39 Comparatively costly 41 Getting on 43 Chop 44 Base 46 Part

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grp. 62 Established ceremony 63 Workplace regulation agency 65 Imperial sites? 66 Sweet 67 It starts every Sunday 68 Fifty after 69 ---, a plan, a canal, Panama 70 Fictional Ozzie dame 71 Author/astronomer Carl ---Down: 1 Bouquet 2 Toil

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Sudoku solution from Dec. 12, 2019

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

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Big changes for Friesen next racing season

Mike Balsom **Special to The Local**

Big changes are coming there. Niagara-on-the-Lake for the 2020 racing season kicks off in February.

After a very successful year in both the NASCAR Development (TRD). Gander RV & Outdoors Truck Series and the Super came as his team was DIRTcar Series, Friesen has no plans to rest on his laurels while away from the owner of our team, decidtrack.

and winter maintenance of his existing dirt car, which was put through the paces for 52 races this season.

Friesen drove his Halmar-Friesen #44 car to the winners' circle 14 times in ries for years to come." 2019, driving in the Big Block Modified division. season, though, as a bit upand-down this year.

"We switched to Bicknell chassis' at the end of August, so for our last bunch of big races, we made a pretty big switch, and had to scramble to put new cars together quickly," he said, on the phone from his home near Albany, New York.

The adjustments must late season first-place finish at Syracuse in the Eastern States 200, a race in which he started last and won itive move for his team. \$40,000, would suggest.

also expecting the delivery of a new racing vehicle soon to his shop. That new car will also have a Bicknell chassis, made in St. Catharines.

of his time this winter between the Albany area, and Statesville, North Carolina, where he will be preparing of wins in the series, I think race Indy Cars, you go to for his third full season on it was a pretty validating Indianapolis. If you're go-

the NASCAR Truck circuit. And some very big changes are in store for Friesen

After being part of the native Stewart Friesen when GMS Racing team the past two years, Friesen is switching manufacturers, moving from GM to Toyota Racing

Friesen says the move "searching for a little bit more. Chris Larsen, the ed he wanted to have a lit-First up will be a rebuild tle more stake to his claim, rather than lease off someone else's program. It's a little bit more of an initial investment but it will hopefully lay the future groundwork for us to be in the se-

The move means Friesen season for us." will be building a new team, He describes his DIRTcar but has managed to retain his first two wins, Friesen his crew chief, Tripp Bruce, along with many of his crew members from his GMS is disappointed in how the days.

> 'On the performance side of things," he adds, "Toyota has made us a really good offer to support us technically and with engineering and all the other stuff that goes along with it."

After having a chance have worked, though, as his to tour the TRD facility in North Carolina, and seeing the resources they can offer, how to compete in the sehe feels it will be a very pos- ries. It's a lot different than

Friesen broke through Friesen and his team are into the Truck Series winner's circle for the first chequered flag at both Eldora and Phoenix.

> two races, and to compete down to the final race," he are there, the wind tunnel, enthused. "It was definitely good to finally get a couple ogy is. If you're going to

Stewart Friesen will be back in Niagara before Christmas, before heading back to Albany. (Photos supplied) In addition to notching added 12 top five and 16 top 10 finishes. Though he championship race turned out (he finished 11th in the race, behind winner Austin Hill, and fourth in the points championship, behind three-time champion Matt Crafton), he has to be a driver to watch for in 2020.

"I learned a lot this year," says Friesen. "There's momentum, and I've learned the racing I grew up with.

Though Friesen says his full-time job is working every day on the dirt cars time this season, taking the in Albany, he'll be making regular trips this winter to Statesville to work and train "We were able to win with the Toyota team.

"We need to be in North He will be dividing much for the championship right Carolina. All the resources that's where the technol-

go to North Carolina. That's Speed Week in February, where you need to be."

getting some time on the take to the track. simulator rig that Toyota own the truck he'll be driving, he will be entitled to more time on the simulator than he ever was with GMS. He won't be able to get behind the wheel of his actu-

ing to race NASCAR, you al new truck until Daytona and all the great Canadian due to a NASCAR rule that He's looking forward to limits when a driver can

has down south. Friesen aiming to test his dirt cars, in NOTL later this month says now that his team will though, this January in Delaware.

> As he looks forward to his upcoming season on both circuits, Friesen says "it's always good to represent Niagara-on-the-Lake,

race fans, it's just great to have everybody's support from back home."

It's a busy schedule, but Friesen and his team are Friesen plans to be back with his wife and young son to celebrate Christmas with his family. Then it will be back to Albany for Christmas Day, and on to his "full-time job" working in his shop.



Stewart Friesen completed his season in the NASCAR truck series in 11th place.

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