First-timers looking forward to Boxing Day Penguin Dip

Penny Colos
The Local

The annual Penguin Club dip will continue this Boxing Day, as it has for more than 40 years, with at least two new participants hoping to become penguins.

Coun. Clare Cameron and her husband Mackenzie have decided to take the plunge into the frigid waters off Ball’s Beach. That decision was made before she realized there will be three dips on Boxing Day, to be repeated for three years, to become an official member of the Penguin Club.

“We’ve never done it before,” says Clare. “I’ve always admired the people who have the courage to do it. We talked about it and decided this is something we want to do. And it’s a fundraiser for a good cause.”

Even after hearing the details about what the dip entails, she says, “for some crazy reason, I’m looking forward to it.”

She hopes, after all the eating and celebrating on Christmas Day, it will be an invigorating way to recover from the holiday.

She was planning on talking to organizer Chris Bjorgan for some tips on what to expect, joking about hoping to avoid a “massive coronary or going into shock.”

Bjorgan is hoping for a good turnout, after last year’s showing of about a dozen people, when numbers traditionally are around 50 or 60.

“He started to hear from people and I said, ‘Wait, it’s coming together.’ So, we thought we’d try it for three years at least.”

Continued on page 2

Skating and music at Fort George

Kim Wade
The Local

Niagara’s own Madhatters band played an outdoor concert for skaters in the Agora at Fort George on Sunday afternoon. The stage was set up rink-side to provide entertainment for families taking time out from holiday preparations to enjoy an afternoon of skating.

Frank Pietrangelo, lead singer and guitarist of the band was happy to have his children skating while the Madhatters performed. “What a gorgeous day,” he said after the band finished their first set. Pietrangelo was clearly enjoying watching his sons on the rink, wearing their Toronto Maple Leaf jerseys. “It’s great when the kids can be here and watch dad play,” he said, especially when most of The Madhatters’ shows take place long after his sons are already in bed.

It was a busy day at the Fort George skating rink Sunday, with Zuma, from the popular Paw Patrol kids’ show, on the ice to entertain kids. (Fred Mercnik)

Continued on page 2

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The Agora was the place to be Sunday

Continued from page 1

eastern side of Australia, near Brisbane. It is most likely beaches where she lives, she says, and the temperature at this time of year is closer to 30 degrees Celsius than seven. They have been in Canada since the beginning of the month, and she remarked on how happy she was that it snowed the first day they arrived. Since then, they have been capitalizing on every snowfall by ticking off all the snow-related activities on their list to accomplish before they return to Australia. She was thrilled her daughter was able to build a snowman and go tobogganing. Accompanied by her Aunt Courtney, Lucenti’s four-year-old daughter donned skates at Fort George for this skating adventure, the last item on their list.

The sun was just beginning to lower and shine through the trees as the concert ended. People started to migrate inside The Agora to put their boots back on and grab a snack. Others, like Holly-Rose Shields-Dandy, came in to warm up with a hot chocolate by the fire. Shields-Dandy, a student at Western University in London, has returned home to Niagara for the holidays. She said since coming home, she felt she had to “get into the Christmas spirit as fast as possible” in six days. She started by getting dressed up and attending the Candlelight Tea at the Prince of Wales with her mother on Saturday afternoon, where “the decorations are amazing.” She and her mother then took a stroll through town and went shopping at Just Christmas, and then, with her parents, decided skating at Fort George was another good way to get into the spirit of the season.

The Vintage Hotels – Parks Canada skating rink is open over the holidays, including Christmas Day. Skate rentals are $5, helmet rentals are free and the concession, dedicated staff and activities are available during specific hours.

Please be aware of the special holiday skating rink hours by checking the website: https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/lnh-nhs/on/fortgeorge/activ/calendrier-calendar. As for what’s next for The Madhatters, they will be performing on Dec. 26, 27, and 28 at the 365 Lounge at the Fallsview Casino, and on New Year’s Eve at the Spa&Casino lounge at the Niagara Falls Hilton.

For more information, visit madhattersband.ca or contact Frank Pietrangolo at 905-328-2344 or by email at info@madhattersband.ca.

Dip should be well-attended

Continued from page 1

people who plan on taking the dip, so he’s counting on a good crowd. His nephew, Owen Bjorgan, who was in Australia last year at this time, plans on bringing some friends to participate in the swim.

Bjorgan himself, at 62, is a grandfather of five — with two more on the way — and plans on participating again, as he has for at least the last 40 years. Several of his family members are also regulars, and the event has become a fundraiser for Red Roof Reuse, dedicated staff and concessions, dedicated staff and activities are available during specific hours. Please be aware of the special holiday skating rink hours by checking the website: https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/lnh-nhs/on/fortgeorge/activ/calendrier-calendar. As for what’s next for The Madhatters, they will be performing on Dec. 26, 27, and 28 at the 365 Lounge at the Fallsview Casino, and on New Year’s Eve at the Spa&Casino lounge at the Niagara Falls Hilton.

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The first dip is the hardest. It’s a tough one. Hard on the breathing, but that’s normal. It’s important to just take it on full blast, really get into it, that first time, and the second and third will be easier.”

Burroughs says he’s thrilled to hear Clare and Mackenzie are taking part in the dip. His advice to them, and anyone considering doing it for the first time, is this: “You do recover, and it’s a wonderful experience. You’ll be proud of your accomplishments, and you’ll be glad you did it. The camaraderie is the best part.”

The dip is at 1 p.m. Dec. 26, at Ball’s Beach.

The Madhatters entertain from an outdoor stage at the Fort George skating rink. (Kim Wade)
Virgin families celebrate their ‘Christmas miracle’

After two open-heart surgeries in less than 24 hours, Zachary Spione is home with his family.

Penny Coles  The Local

Zachary Spione has touched the heart of this community since he was a youngster. Locals watched him grow and flourish, and couldn’t help but feel his open friendliness, his enthusiasm for life and the warm-hearted smile he shares easily.

A graduate of St. Michael Catholic Elementary School and Holy Cross Secondary School, he has been working in local stores, coffee shops and businesses since he was 14 — Phil’s Valu-Mart, coffee shops and businesses since Holy Cross Secondary School, he Catholic Elementary School and flourish, and couldn’t help the hearts of this community.

“I knew I was loved,” says Zac. “I had no idea I had touched so many people.” Maria recalls the day she and Marco decided to buy a lot and build a house in NOTL — the best decision they ever made.

“Not only will I be alive, I will feel stronger than ever. Zachary Spione, with his mother Maria, sister Alexa and father Marco, is recovering at home, and feeling stronger than ever. (Penny Coles)

“Zac and I were able to accept the reality of what has happened, and realize how lucky you are to be alive.”

As hard as that experience was, it all happened so quickly, says Maria. Zac seemed to be doing well. He also saw golden gates, but they were closed. “I thought it was because God was showing me it wasn’t my time, that I still had work to do.”

So when he was told he required surgery, he was calm, he says. On Dec. 5, he was rushed into surgery about 10:30 p.m., and in the wee hours of Dec. 6, his family was told that he had warm, he says. “Zac’s recovery has been miraculous, and we are so grateful for the care he received.”

“Zac says he was actually feeling a little better, as another round of antibiotics and released.”

“Zac was in the hospital, Zac listens to the words of his heart to pump. I’m already feeling so grateful that you’re still alive,” he says. “Even though the fear is gone, it takes awhile to accept the reality of what has happened, and realize how lucky you are to be alive.”

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Families celebrate with Santa

The NOTL Mamas and Babies group, which meets weekly at the library, held its last gathering of the year Saturday. Thirteen families, including dads, grandparents, and nannies, came out with their children to meet Santa Claus. New books were given to the kids, donated by a Scholastic employee and family member of Natalie Cooper, who founded the group. Jason Chow, husband of member Fiona, and father of Declan and Paige, took photos and agreed to share them with The Local. His website is http://jasonchow.com.

Jennifer Moledina (right) and son Kiaan enjoy the holiday get-together of Mamas and Babies.

Santa has a chat with Declan Chow.

Santa visits NOTL

Santa Claus makes an appearance at an evening skating party at Fort George. The rink will be open over the holidays, but check the Fort George website for times. (Fred Merion)

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Wide range of services available close to home

Penny Coles  The Local

Do you have some new electronics, possibly Christmas gifts, you’re having trouble setting up? A new laptop or other device that’s stumping you? You can ask an expert for help nearby, and at a really good price — the advice is free.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library has a host of programs you can access at no charge. One of them is Ask a Tech.

There are specific dates when an IT staff member will be available to answer your questions, says Matt Furlong, IT coordinator at the library.

Just bring the device for which you need help, and if they can’t fix your problem, they can help by suggesting where you can go to get it fixed.

The next date for Ask a Tech is Jan. 17, at 11 a.m., but you don’t have to wait for one of the scheduled sessions — although it’s a regular program, you can call and make an appointment, says Furlong.

As an example, he says, a common question he is asked is how to transfer photos from a phone to a laptop or computer. While it may seem daunting to some, it should be fairly simple, and will free up space on your phone.

That’s just one of all the services and bits of advice you can find at the library.

Want to learn about genealogy, ancestry and DNA testing? That’s available from expert David Hemmings — at the library.

How about local health care, and services you might need as you age? Learn from Dr. Bill Brown, along with doctors and medical students associated with McMaster University. They are at monthly InfoHealth sessions — also at the library.

Learn to be creative with Knit-a-Bit, socialize and make friends while you’re learning, all over a cup of tea. “It’s something we offer, organized by what has become a tight group of people,” says library tech Sarah Bowers.

For new moms who want to get out of the house and hang out with a laid-back, no-judgment group of women, there’s a Mamas and Babies group — sometimes including fathers — organized by a local mom and offered through the library.

Wine and Words, a library program that invites authors to talk about their books at local wineries, is so popular it is usually sold out, and the Beer and Books club, held at The Old Winery, is well-attended, says Furlong.

There’s also a drop-in coffee break for seniors, some of whom are suffering from memory issues and come with their caregivers. It provides a bit of respite for both, says Bowers, and a chance to enjoy free coffee and cookies while chatting.

“It’s a place that is safe and welcoming, where people can meet each other and chat. We set up tables and chairs in the Rotary Room, and it’s very informal.

Most of the people who come are alone, but it would also be a great opportunity for couples to get out and talk to other people. We feel there is a need for seniors who are looking for a place that is safe and warm, at no charge.”

As an added bonus, if there is a senior who needs help or a family member looking for assistance, library staff can direct them to the right source.

“We can provide a bridge to the resources that are out there for people with health problems, such as dementia,” says Bowers.

“Libraries of today are really about being a general hub for the community,” says Furlong. “Books are secondary, a small part of what we do.”

“If someone comes to us with a suggestion, we’re open to ideas,” Bowers adds. “Some programs are a result of a particular suggestion from the public, some are from staff who get an idea from dealing with the public.”

A recently launched children’s chess club was a combination of that — a volunteer who was interested in teaching chess, and a staff member who knew there were kids interested in learning, says Bowers.

“It makes it easier if people come to us with suggestions — then we know what is needed and that there will be some interest in it.”

Other programs and workshops have been held to talk about zero household waste, beginners’ gardening, and beeswax food wraps. One that turned out to be pretty popular was the Repair Cafe, which will be repeated Feb. 1, at 11 a.m.

That gives you time to pull out all your old electronics, such as toaster, toaster ovens, computers, weed-whackers — even lawn mowers — to bring to the library, says Bowers. Jewelry and sewing repairs will also be available.

When the first Repair Cafe was held in the fall, there was a shout-out for people with repair skills to help, not only to fix things but to teach how to do the repairs.

The response was overwhelming from people who wanted to help, says Bowers — they may have had more volunteers than items to repair.

But with a little more publicity, she expects it will be a program that will take off — those who did attend were impressed with the help they received, including Furlong, who is very knowledgeable about computers but needed help to fix a lamp.

Repairing, rather than throwing away, ties in with zero waste, recycling and the interest in a greener future, says Bowers. If the item is something you don’t need, you could bring it in for repair and then pass it on to someone who does, possibly through Nesvaut neighbours.

There is also a coordinator for children’s programs at the library, with some aimed at the family, such as movie events, and The Makery, which encourages parents and kids to put their heads together to create something.

“People are often surprised at the wide range of services available at the library,” says Furlong.

For more information about programs, dates and times, check out the library website at notlpubliclibrary.org.

Shree and Bharti Gandhi receive assistance from IT library staff member Justin Okasam. (Photo supplied)

OLiv Tasting Room & Restaurant located in Strewn Winery, NOTL

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Warmest thoughts and best wishes for a wonderful holiday and a Happy New Year.

HOLIDAY HOURS:
DEC. 24 11:30 - 3:30 p.m. (last seating)
December 26 Closed
DEC. 26 11 - 4 p.m. (last seating)
DEC. 31 11:30 - 7:30 p.m. (last seating)
JAN. 1 CLOSED
OLiv Tasting Room & Restaurant located in Strewn Winery, NOTL

Lighting up the neighbourhood

This York Road home near Queenston is always a Christmas event to visit, with cars parking and people walking across the front and back yards in awe of the lights. (Penny Coles)
Take the plunge, try volunteering

The evidence of the value of volunteers surrounds us in Niagara-on-the-Lake, never more so than during the holiday season.

The work of Newark Neighbours may be one of the greatest triumphs of this community, but it wouldn’t happen without the volunteers who run it and the generous community members who support it.

The programs which help the migrant worker community — Caribbean Outreach, which has existed for decades, many others working away at making the town safe for them through efforts to supply bikes and safety vests; The Friends of Fort George who stage so many worthwhile events that bring history to life, all those who help make it possible for the museums, art centre and even the Shaw Festival to exist; the gardening club, horticultural society and Communities in Bloom volunteers who all work to beautify our town, there are way too many to mention, but all help to make NOTL a great place to live, work and visit.

We’re all so busy, it can be hard to even think about finding the time to offer our services, but the benefits can be enormous, and not only for the recipients. Volunteers become connected to the community, meet new people and learn new skills. Helping others also broadens our perspective about the need that exists in the community, focuses our priorities and gives us a sense of purpose.

For those who may be thinking about New Year’s resolutions that include being more involved in the community, there is no shortage of need. The Town has a volunteer talent bank that could be helpful, but really, all we have to do is look around us at the possibilities, and the opportunities that might interest us. It can be simple, and doesn’t have to take a lot of time.

Take the plunge, and by this time next year, you could feel like a new person.

Penny Coles
The Local

LETTERS

It takes a village

As I write this, I’m sitting at McMaster JP Child and Youth Clinic, Von Paton and myself have just driven through a fierce snowstorm to deliver your generous donations to the second annual toy drive for paediatrics cancer patients.

I can’t say enough on how your donations made an overwhelming difference this year. I’m truly, wholeheartedly thankful to each of you.

I would like to say a special thank you to Pat Darte of Bendview Equestrian Centre, Kevin Lunn of Kevin Lunn Salon, Jason McKee, Von Paton and Martin Flynn of VinMar Floral Boutique for your continuous support throughout this journey.

I would also like to say thank you to the anonymous donors from NOTL, along with Kevin Ripska, Phil Leboudec, Angie Carillo-Burgos, Dr. Gary Friesen, Penn Poynton and the ladies from Live Breathe Pilates of NOTL, and Penny Coles of The Local for the wonderful article, along with all of my friends who made contributions to the toy drive.

May you and your families have love, health and happiness . . . Merry Christmas. It takes a village.

Jane Neaves

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LOCAL FINDS

Oldest monument at St. Mark’s
by Donald Combe
Special to The Local

Elizabeth (Johnson) Kerr was the daughter of Sir William Johnson and Molly Brant, her uncle was Joseph Brant, leader of the Six Nations people, and her husband was Robert Kerr, physician with the Indian Department in Upper Canada. Elizabeth’s funeral was the first conducted in Niagara by the Rev. Robert Addi-son. We believe Elizabeth’s cemetery monument to be the oldest in Ontario.

A Man Goes to the Movies

Knives Out is a wonderful, traditional “whodunnit.” Everyone in the Thrombey family has reason to “do in” the family patriarch but . . . Daniel Craig leads an all-star cast in chomping through the scenery in this wonderful throwback to another cinematic time. Enjoy!

A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood

Well-known, well-loved Mr. Rogers valued people just the way they were, accepting them without judgement. Mr. Rogers said, “if it is mentionable, it is manageable, and every human is mentionable,” thus giving hope to all.

He lived kindness, changing many lives, including mine as well as the lives of all others who see this film. It is a must-see for everyone!

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

Donald Combe is a retired English teacher who loves to go to movies. His Facebook reviews have become popular with his friends and followers, and he has graciously agreed to share his opinions through “short and sweet” exclusives for The Local.

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The trusted voice of our community

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December 28, 2019
Turn of the decade projects and awareness

Owen Bjorgan
Special to The Local

As 2019 comes to a close, I’ve been reflecting on what opportunities to raise environmental awareness, what may lie ahead in the new year, and where they are picking up from this year. It’s been a wild one!

Since April, I’ve been sitting in front of this 13-inch screen picking away at editing Hidden Corners. Tropical North Queensland, from last winter’s filming excursion in Australia. Life lopped into the fast lane, and the documentary went on the back-burner for some time as environmental work unfolded on the forefront here in Niagara, which I am happy to call home for the holiday season.

With the majority of the films creative work done, and some finishing touches to go, re-viewing the footage has reminded me of what 2020 needs more of as an environmental context, and how I plan on using my time and resources to make it happen.

There are some upcoming potential filming expeditions I plan to use as a conservation tool. Jamaica has been on the list as an affordable and com-municating candidate spot to film my series, Hidden Corners, over the past couple of years. Its geographical isolation means that Jamaican cooks up a lot of natur-al wonders typical of islands. Surrounded by water, but large enough to sustain a variety of ecosystems and its own micro-climate, there is potential for unique life forms to thrive here. Because these species have been physically limited to expand their genes to other areas of the planet, the endemism rates are exceptional. This just means that a relatively high percentage of the species here are found nowhere else in the world, which is extraordinary for biodiversity on the global scale. Plus, who isn’t humanly fascinated by something rare, unique, or exclusive?

The following reminders are probably not the holidayJa-maica’s candidate spot to film scene of birds on found on that island and nowhere else on the planet, not blinking its two-metre body silently through the lush vegetation. About a quarter of the country’s plant species are found strictly on this land mass. Regarding my personal favorite group of organisms, reptiles, the Jamaican iguana is not only restricted to the island, but specifically to one type of limestone forest ecosystem in a small pocket of protected land. It is therefore one of the rarest species in the world.

There is the elusive Amer-ican crocodile, which patrols the saline waters off the Jamaican coast. The creature remains instrumental in regulating the ecosystems, as it has done for millions of years. This is a salt water machine, built much like its massive close cousin in Aus-tralia, the saltwater crocodile (which I was fortunate to film in close quarters for the upcoming documentary, where you can watch one effortlessly smash open with its jaws in the river).

The biggest high I can chase in life, is the chase of finding a particular species. I crave that meeting, face to face, with an animal that has existed on the planet for far longer than I have. There is always a story in just trying to make this meeting happen, and it’s super cool to show people why that matters. This Hidden Corners for-mula is always productive. By searching for rare or unusual species, you’re often forced to go into their neighbourhoods, areas where nature is still the boss and in charge. These are usually wil-derness areas or locations that are daunting to access for the determined human. Thank-fully, good for rugged mountains, for if they were more complex, we would likely have already gotten there and wreaked havoc on these biological refuges, our natural heritage.

Mountains and valleys, as I experienced first hand in Ecua-dor and Peru, not only shelter populations of plants and ani-mals removed elsewhere, but also independently continue to produce their own species. It’s almost like evolution itself is sheltered in the hills and deep valleys of the world.

Let’s fly to the other side of the world to another island, considerably bigger than Jamaica, where the wild species and animals are on a greater scale. It’s not to say that Sri Lanka is automatically higher ranked as a candidate for a filming project, but it would certainly be differ-ent and require a different level or preparedness for safety reaasons. I love the rush of that.

This also has my mind wander-ing and wondering about Botswana or Madagascar perhaps. Both are amidst a conservatism crisis, as their superlative bio-diversity is being eliminated or pushed deeper into the moun-tains of the island. There is an immense opportunity here to highlight this, the global impli-cations, and why the heck our natural world should matter more than the turn of the decade than ever before.

Let’s be resilient, like those island mountains, and not let the environment slip away on us in the new year.

I hope everyone has a safe and eco-friendly Christmas holiday. Thanks for your readership and being a thoughtful part of our community.

Bill Auchterlonie
Special to The Local

This week in Auchterlonie on Astrology I’ll look at Boxing Day and the Anunnaki Solar Eclipse on Boxing Day. This is also the day of the New Moon in Capricorn.

On my podcast I’ve got some more news on the Saturnalia, the Astrology of Christmas and more news on the Saturnalia, the Christmas holiday. The name of the holiday is initially thought to be derived from the day after Christmas, com-monly known as Boxing Day, the day after Christmas, coming from the Latin word “boxa” which means “to open a box”. The day after Christmas is known mainly as a day to give presents to our servants, and employees, and to trade people, on Dec. 29. Today in Canada, Boxing Day is known mainly as a day for commercial shopping, a day which has become more popular in the past couple of years. Its effect will be evident throughout the world when we give boxes to ourselves.

One thing after another. The last day of 2019 ends, and as a person. Tiger Woods turns 44 today. Tuesday, Dec. 31. The last day of 2019 ends with the Sun in serious Capricorn and the Moon in emotional Pisces. Party time? Yes! It can be a celebration, if friendliness is the objective and if part of the party is about planning for the future. It’s time to make reso-lutions that look ahead and are believable. Today is the birth-day of the French explorer who named a distant land the Can-dian. Jacques Cartier was born on this day in 1491. And it was Dec. 31, 1904 that the first New Year’s Eve celebration was held in Times Square, New York.

Wednesday, Jan 1: Happy New Year! As the Moon con-tinues its transit of Pisces through most of this first day of 2020, it may feel like a continuation of yesterday. Fortunately, there is lots of energy, willpower and common sense to make this a better day than we start to new year and a new decade. It was New Year’s Day, 1902 that the first Rose Bowl football game was played in Pasadena, Califor-nia. Michigan shut out Stanford 49 to 0.

The First Quarter Moon is Jan. 2, and I’ll have that and a whole lot more here. The Local with another editions of Auchterlonie on Astrology. And a reminder – please check out my podcast on my website at https://www.lookin- gapsthroughbill.com/podcasts.html

It has the astrology of Christ-mas and the real birthday of Jesus – and ideas for Christmas and birthday presents from me. As Joni Mitchell said: “We are stardust. We are golden.” So show on!

Auchterlonie on Astrology

Mountains coated in clouds and forests are places to visit at the turn of the decade, for the sake of ex-posing their conservation value. This is a canyon entrance near Mossman, Australia. Austra-alia, which I am happy to call home for the holiday season. This is the New Year! As the Moon con-tinues its transit of Pisces through most of this first day of 2020, it may feel like a continuation of yesterday. Fortunately, there is lots of energy, willpower and common sense to make this a better day than we start to new year and a new decade. It was New Year’s Day, 1902 that the first Rose Bowl football game was played in Pasadena, Califor-nia. Michigan shut out Stanford 49 to 0.

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December 26, 2019

Ted Mouradian
Special to The Local

Well, it is now the day after Christmas—possibly, depending on when you get your paper and how quickly you sit down to read it—and many of you are relaxing, enjoying leftovers and thinking about what the last week has brought you.

Many will have had wonderful family gatherings, but some will have had a bit of a sad week has brought you. You are relaxing, enjoying leftovers on when you get your paper Christmas—possibly, depending on what you were feeling when opened.

Remember the little baby you received from that nice woman when you held the door for her.

Remember the smile you received from the one with all of those wonderful moments in time that really made 2019 worth living. My hope is that even though some of the memories might have not been so pleasant, the really special ones will be what you carry with you today, and in the future.

Ted Mouradian is the President of the 2% Factor, creator of the Law of Cooperative Action. He is an author and professional speaker and can be reached at ted@the2percentfactor.com.

Hope for the gentler, kinder NOTL community to prevail

Just over a year ago, it all came together. When we moved from Montreal to Toronto, we happened to be in need of a getaway place to escape work, celebrate a birthday or anniversary, and we became acquainted with Niagara-on-the-Lake.

That was many years ago. We especially loved coming in the off season, last fall, when we would walk with the setting sun and the arena of wood burning fireplaces would tickle the nose, the quietness of the town would surround us, and a church bell would chime. It was bliss.

On, in the early spring, before the enormous plenars were erected in town, the grass was just beginning to sprout and one would witness the arrival of spring flowers showing off their glory. All troubles seemed to evaporate here. Whatever the season, smiles lingered longer, the heart was happier and all was well.

We continued to come, saw many a change in this town and in many ways grew with this. Somewhere along the line, we started to think, what about when we can leave Toronto, what if we moved here? Well, there was many a conversation about this, and many a home was looked at on Queen Street in the heart of the town indeed, even with its hiccups.

We feel privileged to have Niagara-on-the-Lake as our address, and just wanted to share this story with our community.

Joe-ann Bartha

Higher taxes do not equal sustainability

Just as the Lord Mayor has said, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake needs to become self-sustainable. In effect, it needs to achieve a balance between the funds it spends on law enforcement requirements, the town’s critical infrastructure, the town’s need for new sources of revenue, such as an accommodation tax, to ensure that visitors meet the needs of local residents and businesses.

Unfortunately, it does not appear likely that council will find the balance needed for the town to be self-sustainable in the near future, if the proposed 2020 municipal budget is anything to go by.

The time has come for council to take a much harder look at discretionary grants, including those that have become line items in the budget such as the NOTL Chamber of Commerce. It must also come to grips with the need for new sources of revenue, such as an accommodation tax, to ensure that visitors to NOTL contribute in a fair and reasonable way to maintaining the area’s unique story, sharing this special town. It is a very special town, indeed, with its liquor-cups! We read the local news, so much better than any other city news, and hope the heart and soul of this town will not change.

Certainly, as time goes on, there will be modifications, but I sincerely hope the quaintness, the architectural gems, be it on Queen Street or in the community, do not change, and that the gentle, kinder feel, the less hurried atmosphere, always prevails.

I believe we have attended almost all of the goings-on in this town we proudly call home, and we are beyond thrilled to be a resident. Naturally, everyone wants to visit, and we are happy for them to come and experience and share this special town of ours.

Many people speak of Napa, Sonoma and I always ask them, have you been to Niagara? If they haven’t, I tell them you should really explore your backyard and see how vibrant the wine country is here. How far the wine industry has come from when we first visited, and there was maybe a handful of wineries. And the wine is oh so much better now!

We feel privileged to have Niagara-on-the-Lake as our address, and just wanted to share this story with our community.

Terry Davis

Helping the needy at Christmas

Newark Neighbours had a space about 25 feet long with bags of food on the table, and on the floor underneath, for about 50 families. Singles and couples. Gifts and toys were piled high underneath, for about 30 families, with bags of food on the table. Newark Neighbours had a space about 25 feet long with bags of food on the table, and on the floor underneath, for about 50 families. Singles and couples. Gifts and toys were piled high underneath, for about 30 families, with bags of food on the table. Newark Neighbours had a space about 25 feet long with bags of food on the table, and on the floor underneath, for about 30 families, with bags of food on the table.

It was looked at on Queen Street in the heart of the town indeed, even with its hiccups.

We feel privileged to have Niagara-on-the-Lake as our address, and just wanted to share this story with our community.

Joe-ann Bartha
Levee will welcome in new year

Local Staff

Ringing in the New Year with friends and neighbours, music, refreshments, a roaring fire, and a cannon firing at Navy Hall has become a favourite tradition for many. The Friends of Fort George and Parks Canada for many.

The Heart of Christmas Past

This annual event was held at Grace United Church Friday, with a concert of favourite holiday stories and songs from the Gallery Players. The Heart of Christmas Past is based on the work of legendary author and illustrator John Langstaff. The Gallery Players’ adaptation includes the work of Langstaff and others. The event is a holiday celebration with a musical performance by the Fort George Fife and Drum Corps, and a reading of the Heart of Christmas Past story. The event is a community celebration caroused with friends and neighbours. The Heart of Christmas Past will be offered to all in attendance. The event is a wonderful Christmas experience. (David Gilchrist)
Declan Chow looks in wonder at Santa Claus at the Niagara Nursery School Christmas party, with his classmates looking on. (Jason Chow)

Hope Herman and Maple Brown were emcees at Crossroads’ Holiday Concert. (Photos supplied)

Intermediate students from Crossroads enjoyed a local treasure at the Shaw Festival, A Christmas Carol.

St. Davids students perform in A Gingerbread Christmas: A Holiday Music for Young Singers, to the delight of their family members. (David Gilchrist)

The heart of this bungalow is the expansive living/dining room area and open plan kitchen, which blends in perfectly with the well-conceived design inspired by low maintenance living. If you are looking to sell your home, call Nancy Bailey at 905-371-4234.

Engel & Völkers, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Brokerage is a proud supporter of Niagara-on-the-Lake Special Olympics.

For more information on how you can help to transform lives through donations, volunteering, being a coach, or to participate as an athlete, please contact: Nancy Bailey, Broker - Engel & Völkers, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Brokerage 905-371-4234 • nancy.bailey@evrealestate.com
Before the start of the holiday, Royal Oak students proudly show off their new Indigenous-authored and focused book collection. Each class at Royal Oak has learned about Indigenous history, perspectives and contributions this year and this beautiful library will support their continued learning. (Photos supplied)

Anessa Raso and Juliet Pilitteri were Santa’s helpers at the family fun event at St. Michael. (Photos supplied)

St. Michael students Vanessa Rezza, Natalie Simpson, Maria Francis, Clare Vanderlee, and Ashlyn Woods-Grin were angels in the NOTL Santa Claus Parade.

The Three Wise Women in the NOTL Santa Claus Parade were St. Michael students Maria DelCampo, Mikailah Amico, and Simone Rezza.

Reindeer Noah Mendoza enjoyed St. Michael’s Christmas Family Fun Night.

Before the start of the holiday, Royal Oak students proudly show off their new Indigenous-authored and focused book collection. Each class at Royal Oak has learned about Indigenous history, perspectives and contributions this year and this beautiful library will support their continued learning. (Photos supplied)

Even the wettest NOTL parade on record couldn’t stop ROCS students from smiling and sharing their school spirit.
December Membership Specials

**ANGEL INN**
Get $5 off a premium bottle of wine, with the purchase of two dinner entrees

**SWAG HAIR CO**
Swag manicure and pedicure for $85

15% off Antrim, Stanton, Rosecore and Hibernia factory-finished area rugs.

Buy one, get one free, tours and seminars. Valid for up to 4 guests.

**Kurtz Culinary Creations**
20% off all regular priced merchandise

10% off a minimum purchase of $15

**evolve**
Half price infrared sauna

10% off shareable sandwich

**EXCHANGE**

**SOUTHBROOK**
Buy one Southbrook Organic Vineyards Grand Tasting and get one free

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**In Touch Day Spa**
20% off food (regular 10% local discount)

**RaVINE VINEYARD ESTATE WINERY**
10% off all in-store wine purchases, 20% off in-store non-wine purchases, online access to wine club member exclusive wines, free wine-of-the-month tasting when dining in the Ravine Restaurant, free tasting flight for up to six people in the Ravine Boutique Winery

**Peller Estates**
Buy one, get one free, tours and seminars. Valid for up to 4 guests.

Swag manicure and pedicure for $85

**SiMPSON’S**
Buy 1 Riversol skin care product, get 2nd of equal or lesser value at 50% off.

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10% off all regularly-priced items

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Interested in having your business be a Local Membership partner? Call Karen at 905-641-5335 or email karen@notllocal.com.
Willowbank looking to a bright future

Penny Coles
The Local

A holiday open house held at Willowbank School of Restoration Arts recently was an opportunity to share news with the public about plans for the future.

About 100 people — Queenston residents, Willowbank board members and those interested in the estate and the school — crowded into the upstairs drawing room to celebrate the season, and learn a little more about the growth of the school and where it is going.

It was also an opportunity to publicly launch the school’s new website, which was badly needed and has school staff and supporters excited, says Caitlin Wooll, education coordinator.

Although most of the students had left the area for the holiday, before returning in January for the next semester, on hand was one of a group of five students who had recently returned from an exciting second-place finish at the Association of Preservation Technology and design competition in Miami. Meghan Lenz was happy to share some of the details of their accomplishment, against much larger institutions with engineering-based programs. The international competition included designing an arch, and building it to ensure it was weight-bearing.

Lenz says as challenging as the hands-on portion of the competition was, students were also required to talk about their model, and to make a presentation that represented a big portion of their scoring. They felt like they had done “really, really well.”

Continued on page 15

Willowbank student Meghan Lenz was one of five who came second in an international design competition held in Miami. She attended a holiday open house to talk about her experience.

Janice Holmes, Maggie Neuroth and Joan King are fans of Willowbank and the work it does. (Photos by Penny Coles)
FOWLER, WILLIAM “BILL”—Peacefully, surrounded by family on December 21st, 2019 at the age of 88. Beloved husband of the late Pegi. Loving father of Claudia Jantz (Larry), Michael (Heidi), Leanne (Kevin), and Braeden (Elaine). Grandfather of Halen, Cassidy, Mieka, Ryker and Cole. Bill was a longtime resident of Niagara-on-the-Lake, volunteering as a firefighter and ambulance attendant for 35 years. He coached hockey and baseball, was an umpire and king scout. He was an avid golfer and enjoyed fishing. He worked for NOTL Hydro for 41 years, retiring in 1997. Special thanks to Dr. Bastedo and the staff of Upper Canada Lodge. At Bill’s request, cremation has taken place. Private family interment. For those who wish, memorial donations may be made to the Alzheimer Society. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com. In loving memory of a special husband, father, uncle and twin brother who passed away into God’s Glory two years ago, Dec. 31, 2017. I have walked along with Jesus in a fellowship divine. Never more can earth allure me. I am His and He is mine. Lovingly remembered by Helen and family and by Fred and Betty and family.

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FULL TIME FARM WORKERS required for fruit farm April-Oct. No experience or education required. Must be available 7 days/week in all weather conditions. Job entails pruning, thinning, harvesting fruit plus heavy lifting and considerable ladder work. Must have own transportation, minimum wage $14.00/hr. Please mail resume with references to Dan Serluca Farms | 1038 Concession 2 Road, NOTL. Only candidates to be interviewed will be contacted.
School is growing

Continued from page 13

since the Queenston program is so focused on questions and discussions, rather than engineering.

“It was a good lesson for us, that these people from other schools are not the enemy. We can get along and work together. For the most part, everyone was working to support each other, and it would seem that’s the way it should be, all of us working together with our different skills,” says Lenz.

Although a portion of the trip was funded by the school, the students were on their own paying for the bulk of it, and continue to fundraise to offset the costs by selling items they’ve made, such as slate cheese boards, coasters and blackboards.

The school is also looking at ways to raise money to offset tuition costs for students, and to further connections with the community. There will be a music series beginning Jan. 26, with concerts on Feb. 23 and March 22, says Wooll.

The school is also examining new avenues to reach prospective students, and to develop funding partnerships, said Craig Crane, the managing director of Willowbank.

“The school is running pretty smoothly now, and my job is getting easier. We are also working on the process of re-imagining the lower campus (formerly Laura Secord Memorial School), and talking about what that could look like. And we’re active in Toronto. We’re growing. The future is starting to appear.”

Sydney Holmes, Caitlin Wooll (with Georgia), and Craig Crane address a group of supporters at a recent open house at the Willowbank School of Restoration Arts.

Carol Hutchison, Cosmo Condina, Judy MacLachlin, Charlotte Lewis and Jackie Kevill enjoy the Willowbank Holiday Open House.

The NOTL Minor Hockey peewee AE Wolves fought hard and came close to scoring several times, but lost to the Stoney Creek Warriors 5-0 Saturday. (Fred Mercnik)

Wolves don’t give up

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