



Concession stand at arenas is now open

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Rick Mills runs from the water to the trailer to warm up at the 47th annual Boxing Day Penguin Dip at Balls Beach. (Mike Balsom)

Brrrrring on the cold for 47th Penguin Dip

Mike Balsom
The Local

Temperatures of -7 C (-15 C with the wind chill) greeted 32 hearty souls at the 47th annual Niagara-on-the-Lake Penguin Dip on Boxing Day.

As Penguin Club member Rick Mills said, "These are prime conditions. It's cold and it's snowy. It makes it that much more of a challenge."

Already an official member of the Penguin Club, Mills was back at Balls Beach for his fourth dip, his first since 2015.

"I told my wife a few years ago that I was done," he laughs. "I said I was old enough, and not as stupid as I used to be. Well guess what? Today I have proven that wrong."

A last-minute decision by Chris Bjorgan and other veteran members of the Penguin Club moved Monday's dip to familiar territory.

Originally slated to take

place at Queen's Royal Park, once Bjorgan and others arrived it was clear that the ice along the shore at the foot of King Street would make the plunge too dangerous. So the hearty veterans and Penguin hopefuls were redirected down the path to the annual tradition's usual home.

Still, Ed Ball needed to spend a few moments chipping away at about two feet of ice at the northwest entrance closest to the groyne, or rock barrier, to ensure safe entry.

That entry point was far enough from the road, where the warming trailer was set up to be used between each plunge, to force each participant to run the gauntlet, albeit a friendly and supportive one, that was about 100 strong.

Bjorgan gathered everyone at the trailer shortly after 1 p.m. to explain the rules. As always, each participant was

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Local couple shares their Christmas dinner

Penny Coles
The Local

It began with a Facebook post, which led to a Christmas dinner shared, and the start of new friendships.

Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Andrew Campbell posted before the holiday that he and his wife Rachel would be home, just the two of them, on Christmas Day, and thought there might be others who might benefit

from a meal out and some company, rather than having dinner alone. "Sitting on your own is no good," he said. "People who live alone don't always cook for themselves."

The Campbells live in Garrison Village, and are both in their early 50s, "but act much, much younger," he joked.

Rachel is from England, and all of her family is there. She is accustomed to large

family gatherings at Christmas. Andrew's mother lives a two-hour drive away from NOTL, and wasn't able to get to town for the holidays this year.

"We weren't looking forward to a Christmas alone — we like a full household," he said, "and we had food to share."

It turns out that although the dinner was much appreciated, the companionship was even better.

Shirley Madsen, who has been helping Ukrainian immigrants who have recently arrived in Niagara, knew of someone who might be interested.

Natalie, 47, came from Ukraine about six weeks ago, and is on her own here. Madsen thought she would appreciate both the meal and the company, so she connected her with the Campbells, who offered to pick her up and drive her to

their home for Christmas dinner.

Andrew also learned of a senior, Louise, living in NOTL on her own, and invited her as well.

Louise loves being around people, and jumped at the chance to meet the Campbells and have Christmas dinner with them.

On Monday morning, Andrew told The Local he had picked up the two women at about 2 p.m., and drove

them home at 11 p.m.

Rachel is the cook in the family, and made a traditional English Christmas dinner, with turkey, stuffing, parsnips and mashed potatoes, and of course minced tarts to finish up, along with a Ukrainian dessert brought by Natalie, and "a few bottles of wine that were opened," Andrew said.

The conversation covered

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No New Year's Levee at Navy Hall

Penny Coles
The Local

The Friends of Fort George will not be holding a New Year's Levee at Navy Hall this year, hoping 2024 will be the year the three-decade long tradition resumes.

Tony Chisholm, president of the organization that hosts the annual levee,

says there were several discussions about whether this would be the year to offer the celebration after two years of cancelling it due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the verdict was to wait another year.

It's always a popular event, and very crowded, he says.

"We asked ourselves, do 150 people want to be jammed in to Navy Hall?"

The decision was no, the hall is not conducive to holding the event at this time, he says.

Also, Canadian legislation directed at controlling fire arms now prohibits firing heritage cannons, so having people outdoors without the ability to offer the traditional firing of the cannon was another rea-

son for cancelling it for this year, with the hope that by next year there could be an agreement in place to allow the ceremonial firing of cannons.

"There hasn't been a cannon fired at Fort George all

this year," says Chisholm. "It's a big part of enactments. We're hopeful it will work out for next year."



There will be no levee or cannon firing at Navy Hall to welcome in the New Year. (File photo)

Help for Ukraine



Virgil artist Jo Ann Voogt donated two of her paintings commissioned by Dave Dick of Niagara Motors, one of sunflowers and one of a school in Ukraine that his grandmother attended. Dick raised \$1,200 from the sale of the paintings to give to George Dyck, treasurer of Friends of the Mennonite Centre in Ukraine, to help those in the war-torn country. (Supplied)

Royal Canadian Legion going ahead with Levee

Penny Coles
The Local

Al Howse, president of Niagara-on-the-Lake's Royal Canadian Legion, remembers celebrating New Year's Day at the legion hall in the 1970s, but he's not certain when the tradition of an annual levee at Branch 124 began.

The levee is a uniquely Canadian military tradition held on New Year's Day, says Howse, with military officers representing the Crown.

Although many municipalities hold levees, and in Niagara-on-the-Lake, the Friends of Fort George and Parks Canada have been holding one at Navy

Hall for decades, it is also a tradition for legions to host them. Howse says that Branch 124 typically tries to co-ordinate the timing so it doesn't interfere with the Navy Hall event. This year the Friends of Fort George have decided not to hold their levee — they hope to resume in 2024.

The legion's levees are open to the public, and are seen as an opportunity to meet and greet legion and municipal representatives and friends, he says.

"It's a chance for communities to gather on the first day of the new year, and renew acquaintances — it usually includes the singing of *Auld Lang Syne*," says Howse. "A lot of com-

munities combine a municipal and legion event."

And a lot of members from other legions typically attend the levee in NOTL, he adds, and are expected to do so again after two years of pandemic restrictions.

Branch 124 in NOTL also uses the annual levee as an opportunity to welcome new members, says Howse, which will be part of the 2023 event.

The legion hall on King Street will open Jan. 1 at 1 p.m., with a welcome ceremony beginning at 2 p.m. for members who have joined during the last two years. They will take their oath publicly, and then at 3 p.m. those present will gather in a large circle to toast the king, the country, fallen comrades, and friends and visitors.



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75 couples and individuals tried their luck in an attempt to win a romantic dinner for 2 at Ginger Restaurant in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Chef Thane Garth and Manager Seth Garth shook the draw box and selected the 2022 winner **Rose D'Agostino**. Rose will be contacted about her win by Manager Seth Garth. Congratulations and thank you so much to everyone who participated and supported local businesses in Niagara-on-the-Lake.



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Money collected goes to Red Roof Retreat

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expected to take three plunges: one to get their head under water, another as a freestyle entry, and finally, as a group, lined up along the beach and backing into the water together. To become an official Penguin, this routine has to be done in three different years.

Because of the icy conditions and the high number of participants, Bjorgan broke the throng up into 30-and-under and over-30 age groups.

Niagara Falls resident Aaron Burrows was one of the first 18 participants to take the plunge. The 27-year-old newlywed had been encouraged to try it by his brother-in-law, Derek Beatty, a veteran back for his sixth dip.

Burrows lost a shoe in his first swim. A fellow Penguin found it and brought it back to the trailer for him, but not before he had already hustled back to the trailer without it.

"I think I lost all feeling in my left foot," he said, out of breath at the end of his chilly adventure. "The second dip was the hardest one. I already had wet hair, and it was frozen by the time we got back to the water. The third time wasn't too bad because we were huddling up with other people and doing it together."

Burrows wasn't sure he would take the plunge again next year, saying he would give himself a year to make a decision.

Another first-timer, 26-year-old Hudson Corby of St. Catharines, was energized and proud of his accomplishment when it was all over.

"Yes, exhilarated, but only at the end," he laughed. "I'll be back next year. I want to get that Penguin (status)."

The second group to leave the shoreline included former NOTL town councillor Clare Cameron and her husband Mackenzie. The NOTL Local suggested to Clare that since she's no longer on council, she



The older group backs into the water for their third and final dip. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

could have sat the dip out this year.

"Let's get it straight, I didn't do it because I was on council," she said of taking the dip for the first time in 2019 with Mackenzie. "Let's dispel that myth. The way I see it, when you have the opportunity to do something like this, you have to do it, no matter how crazy it is."

Adventurer Stan Wall, a rural St. Davids resident known for his powered paragliding adventures above the NOTL landscape, was one of the first-timers in the second group.

"I just wanted to try it," Wall said. "It was a great experience; it was thrilling. I never thought I would do something like this. I'll be back next year."

Wall's wife, Carlee, chimed in, "His fear was always ice-cold water. He's been taking ice baths at home to get ready for this. It's crazy."

Bjorgan was heartened to see so many people taking part, as well as the return of spectators, for the first time since 2019. The Penguin Dip, originally started by Bjorgan's brother Lorne and his friends, was held the past two years, but it wasn't promoted in any way due to the pandemic. Last year a small group of eight showed up on Balls Beach.

"I'm really happy," Bjorgan told The Local. "We do this for Red Roof Retreat every year. We always have more watching than we do swimming, and seeing so many people here today after two years is great."

The hat was passed during the event and Red Roof's founder and executive director Steffanie Bjorgan told the Local that close to \$900 was raised Monday.

"That's the most in a long time," she said. "It will go toward our Gifts From the Heart holiday campaign."

Chris Knox, one of the die-hard Penguins who was there in 2021, wore a hockey jersey representing his Niagara Detention Centre team for his third entry into the river Monday. He promised his co-workers there who supported his fundraising efforts that he would wear the jersey. Knox actually took a fourth solo dip when someone handed him a late donation

for Red Roof Retreat.

The younger dippers outnumbered the older ones this year, not too surprising to the 65-year-old organizer.

"Apparently," joked Chris Bjorgan, "the old guys are just getting smarter. The younger

ones did a lot of complaining today, but they'll get over it. You learn with experience that it takes real fortitude to do this over and over and over again."

Tips from Chris for anyone thinking of coming out

for the first time in 2023: "Wear as little as possible because you don't want water hanging on to you. Don't dawdle, get in and out and back to the trailer. Psyche yourself up. It's a good time, not a painful time."



The younger group makes their way out of the water.



Owen Bjorgan on the long trek from the trailer to the water at Balls Beach with Aaron Burrows right behind him.



Stan Wall, an enthusiastic novice, heads to the water at Balls Beach followed by veterans Rick Mills and Chris Bjorgan.



Chris Knox takes a fourth and final dip to raise a little extra for Red Roof Retreat.



Former town councillor Clare Cameron and her husband Mackenzie have waited two years to participate in their second Penguin Dip. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

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Andrew Campbell took a photo of the three women at Christmas dinner: Louise from NOTL, his wife Rachel, and Natalie, recently arrived from Ukraine.

Guests thankful for good company, good food



The Campbells prepared a traditional dinner, along with appetizers. (Photos supplied)

Continued from page 1

all kinds of topics — Louise has some Ukrainian heritage, and Natalie shared the story of her journey to Canada. They talked about all there is to do locally, and were able to fill Natalie in on what's available. "And there was a lot of general conversation about life," added Andrew.

"I even found myself a Canadian Tire buddy." He learned it's Louise's favourite store, as it is his, but she doesn't get there often. He's promised her a trip to the big Canadian Tire store in Welland, and he expects there will be more visits with

both women.

Louise said although the idea of going to the home of complete strangers for Christmas dinner seemed a little — well, strange — given the choice between staying home and reading a book, or meeting new people, she decided to give it a try, and was glad she did.

Natalie admitted being at home alone on Christmas Eve was hard for her. She had decided to come to Canada in October, "when Russia's attacks were very aggressive," and bombs were exploding close to her home and to her mother's. "We decided we had to do something, but my mother didn't

want to come with me, so I took her to Poland."

Christmas Eve was difficult for her on her own, with her family so far away, although she was able to talk on Zoom with her mother, she said.

She's settling in, and has begun training for a job she expects to start soon. She has three master's degrees, in journalism, psychology and pharmacy, and has been training at a St. Catharines drugstore, hoping to begin work as a pharmacy technician in a couple of weeks.

She was glad to go to the Campbells' on Christmas Day — the food was plentiful, and being with oth-

er people was good — the conversation was interesting and very cheerful.

When asked what they talked about over dinner, she laughed and said, "it would be easier to say what we didn't talk about."

The afternoon and evening was a good opportunity "to meet new people, learn new traditions and have a new experience," she said.

Sharing their Christmas dinner, said Andrew, or any holiday meal, is something he and Rachel will likely continue to do. "It was good to have people around."

It went so well, he added, "there is no reason not to do it again."

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Natalie provided a Ukrainian dessert: a fruit and nut cake with some added icing.

Arena concession stand finally back in business

Sweets & Swirls owners take over

Mike Balsom
The Local

It's official. Hockey and skating fans can now purchase a snack at the concession stand at the Meridian Credit Union and Centennial Arenas in Virgil.

The town announced just before Christmas Day that the concession stand was to reopen on Tuesday, Dec. 27. A press release promised that warm coffee, tea and hot chocolate, along with snacks and baked goods, would be available for purchase that day.

The concession stand will be open during public skating, Niagara-on-the-Lake Skating Club activities, Niagara-on-the-Lake Minor Hockey games, and possibly during the Friday night home games of the Niagara Predators.

Sweets & Swirls Cafe will be the concession operator this season, making the arenas their second town location, in addition to their setup at the NOTL community centre on Anderson Lane.

James Cadeau, who runs Sweet and Swirls along with his wife Erinn Lockhard, said the town reached out to them with one simple instruction: "Get it open."

"They came to us about a month ago and asked us if we would run it until April, when they will put it up to an open bid," Cadeau tells The Local. "So we've been busy getting it ready."

Lockhard adds that it's amazing some of the supplies you don't realize you need until the last minute. Just before the

stand's scheduled 2 p.m. opening Tuesday during a public skate, it dawned on her that she didn't have important things such as tape and scissors.

Nevertheless, Lockhard rolled the concession door open shortly after 2 p.m. to little fanfare. Just seconds later, though, three young boys walked gingerly up to the counter on their skates to be the first customers to check out the wares.

Chocolate bars and chips were on their list, as well as hot chocolate. Lockhard had to ask them politely to come back in an hour or so as the first batch of the sweet treat wouldn't be ready until then.

"I'm so excited this is open," said Dean, who is also a minor hockey player. He plunked down some cash for a bag of chips. "I'm going to have to bring some money to every hockey game from now on."

Dean promised to be back at the end of his skate to get that hot chocolate, and Lockhard suggested that he perhaps think about also buying a coffee for his 'chauffeur' Tuesday.

Cadeau said it will take a while to figure out exactly what items will be in demand as they move forward over the next four months. He promised that some of the familiar fare from their community centre location will find its way to the arena.

"Erinn has such a wonderful array of things that she provides at the community centre," said Cadeau. "She's going to try some different things here."

For at least the first few weeks Cadeau explained that one of the most popular items in the past, french fries, will not be available. Right now Erinn and the couple's two children, Liam and Daphne, are covering most of the shifts at the arena and they need some training on the deep fryer.

The concession stand has been closed since March 2020, and only reopened in September when the arena hosted an Ontario Hockey League game between the Erie Otters and the Niagara Ice Dogs. That night it was staffed by volunteers with NOTL Minor Hockey.

The extended closure of the concession stand came up often during October's municipal election campaigning, and it seems it became one of the new council's first orders of business.

"Sweets & Swirls Cafe is a beloved location in town, and on behalf of town council, we are thrilled to see the cafe open up at the arena," said Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa in the press release. "The arena is a busy place this time of year, and I know that residents and visitors will enjoy having a place to get food and drinks."

Cadeau said it will be a bit of a balancing act for him and Lockhard to operate the two locations, but they know they will be looking to hire some young staff to help at the arena.

And they have four months to figure out how to run both locations and not lose money doing so. If they are successful



Erinn Lockhard with Liam and Daphne work the concession stand during a minor hockey practice. It closed in March 2020, at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and didn't reopen until Tuesday.

at that, they will be one of the bidders on the chance to go forward into next winter.

"Concession stands are a tough business model," explained Cadeau. "I'm cautiously excited and optimistic. I think

that because we have the cafe, if we move slowly, we should be able to make it work."

"We'll analyze the situation by April," he added, "and see what the revenue is and what the labour costs are. We're hap-

py to provide this service to the community, but we don't want to do it at a loss."

The stand's hours of operation will be posted outside the concession and on the town's website.



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EDITORIAL

Expectations for NOTL in 2023 and beyond

As we wrap up 2022, and wish everyone a happy 2023, can we say it was a good year?

COVID-19 of course is still in our news, and in our community. It hasn't disappeared, but vaccinations have reduced the seriousness of the illness, leaving most with mild cold symptoms. While it doesn't carry the same fear as it did early on, we are still being asked to keep up with booster shots — it that likely won't change any time soon.

It's safe to say that in 2022 we learned to live with COVID, probably the best we can expect.

Most, although not all, of the events and socializing we so missed have resumed, which is healthier for us mentally, and that's significant.

Our businesses are open, with no restrictions, and while they might not have exactly bounced back, they are on the track to recovery.

We have gone through an election, a pretty nasty one, and we like to think the divide it created is behind us. We have a new council to get to know, with old issues still to be resolved and no doubt many new ones to face as well, hopefully with less acrimony than we've seen in the past.

Two developments that have raised the ire of some residents, one on the John Street E. and Charlotte Street lots, the other on the former Parliament Oak School site, have escaped amicable solutions. And both are now owned by Solmar. We should see a resolution, considering the time line, for the John Street subdivision, while the conversation, likely heated, will begin from scratch on the King and Centre Street property.

There is hope among some that our new lord mayor and council will find ways to reach a compromise, and at the same time, there is fear among some of what that compromise might look like.

And of course there is the work that needs to be finished in the dock area; the project at the end of Mississagua Street that should be moving forward — or not; there is that drafted transportation master plan that is so important but pleased nobody except the consultants who were paid handsomely for creating it; there is the much-discussed zoning review that gives the town back some control over streetscapes; there will be the matter of some property in Queenston that is likely to come under the microscope, and those are just the challenges we know about.

There are definitely bright spots on the horizon: the town has adopted some measures toward inclusivity and diversity, although sadly not everyone is happy about them; there has been talk and a limited amount of forward movement toward environmental action; and there is the opportunity to do more, now that the basics have been ironed out.

And we have a youth campus — let it not be said there is nothing for young people in town to do, when there is a strong movement of determined volunteers underway to ensure there is.

The promise of our new lord mayor to have listening sessions in all communities is really encouraging — it was obvious during the recent election campaign that some residents feel their corner of NOTL has no voice. Hopefully that is about to change, so every resident, no matter which village they call home, feels heard.

But what seems most desperately needed is for those who have shouted the loudest, voicing their discontent with no holds barred, to take a step back, bury their aggression and allow some time to see what unfolds before they resume their social media complaint posts.

They may be pleasantly surprised to see the results, and this community would be much the better for it.

Penny Coles
The Local

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa's hopes for next four years

Lord Mayor
Gary Zalepa
Special to The Local

Hello, Niagara-on-the-Lake Local readers!

As the year ends, I want to reflect on my short time as lord mayor of this great town.

I was honoured to be elected as lord mayor during the October 2022 municipal and school board election. I have had many years of political and public service-type experience and thoroughly enjoy serving constituents and fellow community members. As such, running for the lord mayor of a town I am proud to call home was an easy decision for me, one that was well supported by my

family and friends.

Becoming the lord mayor of NOTL has filled me with great pride and further ignited my passion for this town and those who live here, work here and visit here.

NOTL has many unique aspects that make it one of the most special places in North America, even the world. These aspects include its rich heritage and architectural landscapes, its world-renowned tourism industry and its tight-knit community, to name a few. I look forward to working hard with my fellow council members, town staff and community partners to uphold and preserve everything that makes NOTL so special, while continuing to

move forward with enhancements and various modernization efforts.

I want to share a bit about my experience thus far as your lord mayor. Since being elected, council members and I have completed a vigorous training and orientation schedule organized by staff. These training sessions were designed to help ensure that all council members are prepared and have the resources required to embark on a successful 2022-2026 term of Council.

The training helped set council up for success, as our recently completed committee of the whole and council meetings were executed well, with many business items ac-

complished. I look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with my colleagues on council to advance business and work in the best interest of our community members.

This past month I have also had the opportunity to meet with each elected town councillor and Regional Coun. Andrea Kaiser, to discuss how my office and I can support them in their role.

It is my goal to be collaborative and supportive and to lead our town by example, setting a tone of mutual respect, understanding and a willingness to listen to the thoughts and opinions of others.

I also wanted to hear from my colleagues about what is important to them, what concerns they have for the community, what they value about strategic planning and what they would like to see involved in developing a strategic plan. Their feedback was incredibly important to me, and from those conversations, I was able to relay council's ideas to staff.

I am looking forward to the strategic planning process, which will begin soon. Throughout this process, council will be tasked with reviewing the community's vision, focusing on core strategic items, and delivering a value-driven action plan for Staff to implement throughout this term of council, frequently



Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa (Photo supplied)

reporting on their progress.

The strategic plan will help inform the organization and establishment of committees of council. The first step in our process will commence in the coming weeks and involve a call for volunteers for our statutory committees, including a skills-based qualification selection process with council deciding on committee composition and membership.

Another activity I am excited to introduce in the upcoming years is the creation of village open forum sessions. These sessions will be conducted regularly in each of our villages (Glendale, Old Town, Queenston, St. Davids, Virgil) and focus on improving communication and transparency throughout the municipality. I envision an open forum-style meeting with two-way communication: more listening and less speaking.

Four years from now, I want council members to say they have enjoyed the experience of serving the community, that their opinions mattered, and that they accomplished what they set out to do. Most importantly, I hope they say that given a choice, they would do it all again.

I am proud to be the lord mayor of this town and will remain committed to strengthening and growing relationships, building trust and providing fair and effective leadership to council.

With a new year comes a new beginning, and I am excited to work hard to accomplish all the goals set before us.

I appreciate your support, Niagara-on-the-Lake. It is an honour to serve you.

Happy New Year.



View from the couch

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

Last Chance Harvey (Prime, 2008) is a highly improbable tale that has been made totally believable by the

charm and wit of the two brilliant performances of Dustin Hoffman and Emma Thompson. I shamelessly admit to being completely captivated.

Donald Combe is a retired English teacher who loves to

go to the movies. Until he resumes going to theatres, he has graciously agreed to share his opinions, through "short and sweet" exclusives, of Netflix series and movies for The Local.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake
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COMMENT

Chambers: Consider planning for end-of-life care

Dr. Larry Chambers
Rebekah Sibbald
Special to The Local

Queen Elizabeth II died at home on her Scottish estate. Although few details of her passing were shared with the public, one imagines her lying in a fourposter bed, a roaring fire in the hearth, with family taking turns at her bedside. If the nurses disapproved of the corgis guarding the foot of her bed, nobody dared reproach her. Even at this vulnerable moment in her life, she was still the Queen after all.

It's a peaceful ending — a beautiful picture, yet it is not one that many of us can hope to share. Despite our preferences, most Canadians do not have the privilege of dying at home. A 2013 British Columbia study showed that only 17 per cent of people receive this option, with the remainder of individuals dying in extended care and hospital settings.

As in the Queen's case, wealth plays a significant role in determining where one dies. A 2017 study in Ontario showed that the likelihood of dying at home increased by 69 per cent for those living in the highest-income urban areas. The same study showed that home death was significantly decreased for those living in rural municipalities, as well as in lower-income urban settings.

Historically, dying in an institution is a recent phenomenon. In the early 1900s, most people died at home; but from 1950 to 1994, death in Canadian hospitals increased from 51 per cent to 81 per cent. The direction shifted by the mid-2000s, with hospital deaths falling to 61 per cent, due to the increased availability of community-based, end-of-life care.

Trends aside, current preferences are clear: recent studies reveal that 96 per cent of Canadians aged 65 and old-

er would do everything they can to avoid spending their final years in a long-term care home.

These preferences are not unfounded. Compared with those who die at home, individuals who die in institutions are more likely to have unmet needs for symptom management, as well as concerns with physician communication, continuity of care and emotional respect.

Former Niagara-on-the-Lake resident and geriatrician Dr. Ronald Bayne expressed his preference in perhaps the most powerful way possible. Faced with a terminal cancer diagnosis at 98 years old, he went so far as to end his life with medically assisted dying (MAID) rather than be placed in a nursing home.

In an op-ed, former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson reported that she would like to remain in her community for as long as she is alive. In addition to home and community-based care being less expensive for government, she also highlights the positive aspects of avoiding institutional care.

She writes that, "As I become older, I become more and more certain that the one thing I want is to stay in my own home for as long as I can. I want to be among my familiar things, do my regular shopping, and watch my neighbours walk their labs and cockapoos."

At a systemic level, solutions are complex; however, greater investment in regionally-organized, collaborative, home-based palliative care is a strong starting point.

Studies suggest that access to palliative care is associated with greater likelihood of death at home: Ontario patients who receive palliative care are twice as likely to die at home, as well as experience reduced emergency department visits, and fewer

admissions to both hospital and intensive care units. Any systemic solution would also need to account for those living in substandard or inadequate housing, for whom dying at home may be challenging or even unsafe.

For example, some communities have been more successful than others at responding to the conditions that lead to homelessness in the first place. Safely housed or not, support for all aging individuals is a community's responsibility, and lack of support can place an unfair burden on caregivers.

At an individual level, the path is more straightforward. Although it is not possible to guarantee a good death, it is possible to reduce your risk of a bad death by thinking and talking about end-of-life care, as well as preparing the documents that will help you and others make the right decisions.

For example, a living will, also known as an advance care directive or personal directive, is a province-specific form that lets you choose or refuse future medical care in the event you become unable to make decisions for yourself. Despite their critical importance, such documents remain an under-used tool.

In a recent Ontario survey, only 20 per cent of respondents reported an existing written advance directive, with only four per cent having discussed the topic with their family doctors.

Thinking through end-of-life care can be daunting; but as you advance in age, consider these three questions as a starting point:

1. Where are you in your health journey? Especially if you have been diagnosed with a terminal illness, consider others' experiences, what treatment and care is right for you, and questions for your health team.

2. How can you have the conversation? Talking about your wishes can help you make informed decisions, give you control over your care, and give you peace of mind. If possible, bring your family doctor into this conversation.

3. How can you plan for your treatment and care? Consider recording your wishes in an advance directive and appointing a substitute decision-maker. Ensure loved ones and future caregivers are aware of your wishes.

Many resources are increasingly available online, including the Advance Care Planning Kit, developed by human rights non-profit Dying with Dignity Canada and NOTL Community Palliative Care Service.

Rebekah Sibbald is a medical student in the Niagara Regional Campus of the Michael



Larry Chambers (File photo)

G. DeGroote School of Medicine, McMaster University.

Larry W. Chambers has authored more than 200 articles and books concerning living longer better. He is research director of the Niagara Regional Campus, Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine,

McMaster University and maintains appointments at the Bruyere Research Institute, the Faculty of Health, York University, and ICES, an independent, non-profit corporation for health services research and population-wide health outcomes research in Ontario.

Where is Ben?



The Local co-op student, Ben Foster, is discovering new locations in NOTL and wondering how familiar others may be with them. If you know where this photo was taken, email penny@notllocal.com. Last week, John Vermeer recognized Ben was in a carriage at the Pillar & Post Garden.

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St. Davids students present *Snow Way Out*

Mike Balsom
The Local

It was leading up to the holiday when St. Davids Public School principal Carl Glauser stepped up to the front of the room and raised his right arm. Almost 200 excited Grade 4 to 8 students sitting in chairs in the gymnasium, abuzz with excitement, raised their arms in response. The crowd noise immediately dropped to a whisper.

Moments later, about 70 Kindergarten students filed out of a side door and assembled on risers facing the audience. An older student, Avery Janzen, stepped to the microphone to introduce the storyline for the school's holiday production, *Snow Way Out*.

The recorded musical accompaniment began, and Grade 1 teacher Patricia King and other staff members led the Kindergartners through the singing of the play's title song.

The young performers, most dressed in Christmas sweaters or their Sunday



Kindergarten to Grade 3 students presented two performances, one for the rest of the school and then for parents in the evening. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

best, some topped with festive bows in their hair, gleefully sang in unison, making accompanying hand gestures and dancing enthusiastically.

It was the first chance the approximately 225 Junior Kindergarten to Grade 3 St. Davids students had

to perform the musical for their older peers, and a trial run in front of an audience — later that day their families would file into the gymnasium to enjoy the delightful performance.

King and the St. Davids staff, along with help from older students such as

Janzen, had been planning the musical since October, with the first practices and rehearsals taking place in November.

During the hour-long performance, groups of students from each primary grade filed in and out of the gym to take to the risers to

deliver songs such as *Please Let it Snow*, *Angels in the Snow* and *Old Man Winter*.

The energy level amongst the singers was electric. They were clearly happy to be together, singing joyously and belting out the seasonal tunes.

On stage in between

songs, students playing Jack and Jackie Frost, owners of the Winter's Wonderland Inn, were working to get ready for the grand reopening of their resort. Their staff, the Frostbites, got busy cleaning the inn, hop-

Continued on page 9



Frostbites clean the inn in preparation for visitors.



A group of Kindergartners on stage at St. Davids Public School's presentation, *Snow Way Out*.

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First performance for Kindergarten to Grade 3 students

Continued from page 8

ing for the arrival of snow to accommodate the winter activities their guests have been promised.

One guest in particular, Sunny Holiday, was particularly disappointed in the lack of the white stuff,

having never before experienced it. Spoiler alert — Old Man Winter arrives just in time, bringing with him the promised wintry weather, in this case in the form of snowflakes projected onto the stage.

Glauser told The Local every staff member at St.

Davids contributed to the musical in some way. With a beaming smile on his face, Glauser said, “It’s just so great to be able to bring everybody together like this for the first time in so long.”

The students enjoying the afternoon performance certainly felt that way, if

their applause and cheers after every song was any indication. And the performers on stage ate up the adoration, taking multiple bows at the end of the play.

That evening, the parents gave *Snow Way Out* rave reviews, as well, said Glauser, who heard com-

ments from audience members that included “It brought tears to my eyes;” “Totally got us in the Christmas spirit;” and “So happy to be in the school to see a live performance again.”

“So awesome to see students’ talents shine through

in the arts,” said another parent, and probably the best reaction a principal could hear, “We are so happy our children are part of the St. Davids community.”

And from one of the students Wednesday night, “I am so sad it’s over. I had so much fun.”



Sunny Holiday wishes for snow, contemplating what it might look like. (Photos by Mike Balsom)



Jack and Jackie Frost, owners of the inn, hope for guests.

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LocalSPORTS

Tennis program for kids moving to St. Davids

Lessons to be offered at the public school

Mike Balsom
The Local

Karen Wright is on a mission to build St. Davids into a tennis community, and it all starts with the kids.

A successful trial run of sessions held at the Anderson Lane community centre this fall convinced the retired teacher that she is on the right track. Starting Jan. 19, sessions for kids will start up again, this time at St. Davids Public School.

It began as a grassroots effort. Wright was contacted late last summer by a local parent, Gina Moore, who was looking for something for her seven-year-old son to do to stay active in the winter.

Wright was able to book some time at the community centre, and Moore sent the information out to her friends and contacts via social media. The program was at capacity within

minutes. The participants enjoyed three monthly sessions of instruction and fun games between October and December.

"All we want is for kids to feel good about playing tennis," an enthusiastic Wright tells The Local. "In every other sport you have a game and you have a practice. We want to do the same thing for tennis."

To that end Wright decided to concentrate on ages seven to 12, breaking them up into two groups. As she explains, at those ages they are old enough to grasp some of the rules and they have the motor skills to successfully use an age-appropriate racquet.

Wright shows off four tennis racquets ranging in length from 17 to 23 inches. The smaller ones, of course, are designed to be used by younger players. She also demonstrates tennis balls marked with red, orange and green dots. They're the



Tennis instructors and kids enjoyed the fall program, which will hopefully be as successful at its new location. (Photos supplied)

same size as conventional tennis balls but bounce at a range of 25 per cent to 75 per cent lower. The equipment is designed to make tennis fun for early players.

"We ran three sessions, once a month, and had a big party at the end," Wright says of the fall sessions. "They left knowing how to score and play, and they left loving tennis."

"He loved it," Moore says of her son, who was at all three sessions. "He just loves tennis and all racquet sports. And Karen is such a great teacher."

Wright didn't really pick up a racquet until she retired from the school board. She joined the NOTL Tennis Club and formed a connection with past president Rosemary Goodwin, who is currently the Ontario Tennis Association's south-west regional tennis representative.

Goodwin had started a program out of St. Davids Public School in 2016. When her husband Don became sick with cancer, the program was suspended. Wright says she is simply picking up the torch now that COVID has made



Kids from seven to 12 received instruction at the community centre this fall. The program begins in January in St. Davids Public School on York Road.

it possible to return to the school.

Wright's enthusiasm for the sport is palpable. She became a Tennis Canada certified instructor herself and also teaches the game at the Youngs Sportsplex in Welland. She has also worked with physical education teachers at a number of DSBN schools as a guest tennis instructor.

"I'm like the travelling tennis woman," she laughs. "You open up my car door and all this tennis equipment falls out."

To make it work at St. Davids, Wright is recruiting older teens and adult players to help out as tennis volunteers. Each will start out by taking the SafeSport training program offered through Tennis Canada. She says it's a great way for high school students to earn community hours and to build leadership skills. Many parents of children involved have also taken the SafeSport program and are ready to help out.

At St. Davids, participants will be divided into

groups aged seven to nine and eight to 12. The overlap is to give room to move children based on skill level, as some of them will be returning from the fall sessions at the community centre. The capacity is from 12 to 15 students per group.

Overseen by Wright, the volunteers will work with the groups on three small courts with mini-nets mapped out in the school gym. The program follows the Tennis Canada curriculum.

The activity is divided into two seven-night sessions, scheduled to accommodate the March Break. They run from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. for the younger age group and 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. for the older kids, both on Thursday nights, with the final session scheduled for May 11.

"That's the perfect time to end, as they can start to get out and use the community tennis courts," Wright says. "And the NOTL Tennis Club offers great youth and adult tennis programs in the spring, summer and fall. This program will get

new kids started earlier and hopefully keep them playing year-round."

Wright hopes to continue the program in the warmer months on the courts at the St. Davids Lions Club park.

"St. Davids is a growing community," she adds, "and when you factor in the expected growth of the Glendale area, there are a lot of potential future tennis players that are going to be living in this town. And the park in St. Davids is a great place for the community to come together."

For information regarding the Community Tennis Facilitator volunteer program and registration, which costs \$70 and can be paid by e-transfer, cash or cheque, contact Wright at kidstennisniagara@gmail.com.

"Tennis is a very affordable sport," says Wright. "All you need are two kids, a right-sized racquet, and a couple of balls. And we have some great public courts in town. This is a sport for everyone."

HAPPY New Year

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- Across:**

1 Scorch

5 Constructor

10 Antarctic sea

14 Trusted assistant

15 Handy

16 Very dark

17 Please answer

18 Civil wrongs

19 On-screen Bean

20 Tire inflation measure

21 Close

22 Ready to entertain

24 Brace

26 Circumspect

27 Closer

29 Prickly seed vessel

30 Musical collections

31 Type of lamp

32 Campus house, maybe

36 Troubles

37 Inordinate

39 Make over

40 Sediment

41 Short dog with a flat muzzle

42 Taken in

44 Surrender

45 Not alee
- 46 Close to the coast

50 Held fast

51 People found in the Horn of Africa

52 Puts on

53 Global currency body

56 Fine

57 Yellow-green color

59 Hard up

60 Sack

61 Enthuses wildly

62 Toothpaste container

63 Minnesota ---, pool player

64 Moves back and forth

65 Aide (Abbr.)
- Down:**

1 Complain

2 Convicted spy Alger ---

3 Recommended

4 Agent

5 Convent heads

6 Entangled

7 "Slaughterhouse Five" author --- Vonnegut

8 Time in Boston

9 Ability

10 Vertical pipe

11 Upright

12 Edible ray
- 13 Ecclesiastical council

21 Appear

23 Average golf score

25 Tie up

26 Recognized leader

27 Pin down

28 Fashion magazine

29 Emblem

32 Scowl

33 Spiritual

34 Yemeni port

35 Sweeney ---

38 Uncovered

43 Literary work

44 Mountain pass

46 Has gone

47 Cell maker

48 Well turned out

49 Ira ---, Iwo Jima flagraiser

50 Small flock

52 Prima donna

54 Rabbles

55 Abrade

58 Statute

59 Harper Valley org.

PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from Dec 21, 2022

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

Down: 1 Carp, 2 Hiss, 3 Advisable, 4 Rep, 5 Mother superiors, 6 Afoul, 7 Kurt, 8 E S T, 9 Resourcefulness, 10 Riser, 11 On end, 12 Skate, 13 Synod, 21 Seem, 23 Par, 25 Truss, 26 Gurn, 27 Nail, 28 Elle, 29 Badge, 32 Frown, 33 Religious, 34 Aden, 35 Todd, 38 Nude, 43 Opus, 44 Col, 46 Is off, 47 Nokia, 48 Smart, 49 Hayes, 50 Covey, 52 Diva, 54 Mobs, 55 Fret, 58 Law, 59 P T A.

Across: 1 Char, 5 Maker, 10 Ross, 14 Aide, 15 Of use, 16 Inky, 17 R S V P, 18 Torts, 19 Sean, 20 P s i, 21 Shut, 22 Open to, 24 Steel, 26 Guarded, 27 Neater, 29 Burn, 30 Albums, 31 Arc, 32 Frat, 36 Ills, 37 Undue, 39 Redo, 40 Lees, 41 Pug, 42 Fooled, 44 Cede, 45 Upwind, 46 Inshore, 50 Clung, 51 Somali, 52 Dons, 53 I M F, 56 Okay, 57 Olive, 59 Poor, 60 Fire, 61 Raves, 62 Tube, 63 Fats, 64 Sways, 65 Asst.

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Hydro outages in NOTL repaired quickly

Fort Erie is hard-hit by power failures

Penny Coles
The Local

A winter storm that brought chaos to Ontario roads in the lead-up to Christmas also left thousands in southern Ontario without power, including some residents in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

There were four areas with outages in NOTL Friday, and two on Saturday, said NOTL Hydro president Tim Curtis, all fixed fairly quickly during the day. Once power was restored locally, two NOTL crews offered to head to Fort Erie to help out.

Trees and branches falling on power lines were the worst culprits, said Curtis — fortunately there was no build-up of ice to down wires. On Saturday, Niagara Region declared a state of emergency due to dangerous weather conditions in the southern end of the

region. “Many municipalities in Niagara continue to have blizzard-like conditions, including blowing snow, whiteout conditions, and at times zero visibility. These conditions, combined with widespread power outages, have created treacherous conditions in many parts of the region, especially Fort Erie, Wainfleet and Port Col-

borne,” a news release said. The worst of the local power outages Friday was in St. Davids and was cleared up quickly, said Curtis. On Saturday, one of the two power failures was on Lakeshore Road and affected 12 customers. The biggest problem over the two-day period was in north NOTL, leaving “sev-

eral hundred customers” in the dark. Both of those outages were restored in 90 minutes, he said. The two crews who travelled to Fort Erie to lend their assistance did so voluntarily — NOTL Hydro employees would not be sent to another municipality, said Curtis, and they will be paid by Fort Erie, not NOTL.



NOTL crews assist with restoring power in Fort Erie. (Supplied by NOTL Hydro)



A NOTL Hydro crew works on restoring power to residents in St. Davids.

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