Local health care workers adjust during pandemic

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

For Niagara Health employees Lisa Laughton and Maria Roberts Ramos, both Niagara-on-the-Lake residents, it was the uncertainty of the early days of the pandemic that caused them much stress back in March and April.

Now, approaching the 10-month mark, they’ve both settled into the routines that have become a way of life in Niagara’s health care system.

Laughton, a registered nurse, works in the recovery room at the St. Catharines site of the Niagara Health System. It’s a position she took on about three years ago, after a number of years in the emergency room.

“It’s really different working in a pandemic,” reflects Laughton. “The biggest thing was the fear of the unknown. In the beginning, we were seeing the media from other countries with mass casualties and strained health care systems. For a lot of us it was fear of the unknown, fear of not enough PPE (personal protective equipment), and fear of having to be separated from my family.”

Though as a nurse, Laughton was already well-trained in infection control measures, she says she very quickly learned new methods that would keep her two high-school aged daughters and her husband Rob, a retired teacher, safe.

“In the beginning, I was coming home, getting undressed outside and going straight into the shower before even talking to anyone in the family,” she says. “At the hospital, we’re all well-versed in infection control. When the hospital administration put policies and plans into place, it wasn’t hard to execute them, and that gave us more confidence and made us all feel a little better.”

As the focus around the world turned to health care professionals and the fight against the novel coronavirus, Laughton and her colleagues circled the wagons in the effort to control the spread. “We’re pretty tenacious,” she tells The Local. “We look at this virus as our enemy, just like the rest of the world. I feel like.

Continued on page 10

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Small Penguin Dip makes an official 45th

Penny Coles
The Local

Although the Boxing Day Penguin Dip was cancelled to avoid crowds of people gathering at Ball’s Beach, veteran Penguin Chris Bjorgan says there was an official 45th annual swim, albeit a small one, to ensure the annual tradition carried on uninterrupted.

“It would have been sad to see that come to an end,” he says. “Now we can say it’s been continuous. It was an official swim.”

Bjorgan, 63, and two friends took their customary plunge, with no crowd to watch except for a few passersby. One of them stayed to watch, and took some photos for them, he says.

His two fellow swimmers were also long-standing veterans and official Penguins, having done their three swims “over and over again,” a requirement to be a member of the club. They asked not to be named, although, as Bjorgan points out, they weren’t breaking any lockdown rules by being there.

“There was nothing we did that was even remotely against COVID restrictions,” he says. “We were all just out getting a little exercise, which is what the government is encouraging us to do.”

It was a good day for a swim, he adds. There was a little bit of snow on the ground, there were no waves or wind, and although it was a crisp winter day, “when you come out of the water, it feels quite comfortable.” The water “does something to your skin” so that the air temperature feels warmer than it actually is, he says. “It felt really good.”

There was no large, heated truck to warm up in, as there

Continued on page 13

Chef Penny Coles
The Local

Continued on page 3

Registered nurse Lisa Laughton works in the recovery room at the St. Catharines site of the Niagara Health System. (Photo supplied)
Herdige designation will help protect John Street properties

Penny Coles
The Local

Two John Street East properties, which include the historic Randwood Estate and other significant heritage attributes, have been designated by the Town under the Ontario Heritage Act.

A bylaw to designate the properties, which comes following the property owner’s October withdrawal of an appeal to prevent the designation, was approved by council at their last December meeting.

The protection afforded by designation is important, says Lord Mayor Betty Disero, especially with the properties up for sale. Should anything come of proposals to develop either of those properties, she says, "we know what needs to be protected, and we can talk about any changes to that property within the heritage context.”

The designation of the properties should have been undertaken by council when the former owners had a 2011 hotel proposal approved, she says. "But they didn’t, and we’ve done it now," says Disero, adding an earlier designation “could have saved a lot of tension.”

The town-initiated process to designate the other two properties, and the owner’s appeal, will continue, with the next step being a hearing before the Conservation Review Board, which “is taking a really long time,” says Disero. There is only one member of the board to cover the entire province, and hearings were cancelled for a time early in the pandemic, she says.

Town staff have been inspecting the site and will know what has been damaged on the property during the designation process, anything, says Disero. “They have a record of everything that’s happened”

Shelling pebbles peeking in windows thought things were being removed, such as the fireplaces, which are actually just boarded up but still there.

There was a report of things being thrown out of upstairs windows at one point, and staff investigated and took photos, she says.

In addition to the appeal of designations on other properties, Disero says she believes charges against the property owner for damages to the historic Dunington-Grubb landscape have yet to be settled.

The Town began the designation of all four properties with a notice of its intention in the summer of 2018, when council decided not to wait for the property owner, who said he supported designation, to proceed at his pace.

The Marotta group of Two Sisters Resort and Solmar Development Corp., owner of the four properties, filed an appeal of the Town process early in 2019.

The appeal withdrawal, which coincided with the owner’s announcement he intends to sell 144 and 176 John Street East, does not include 200 John Street or 588 Charlotte Street lots, which remain the subject of a subdivision application. Town planning director Craig Larouche said in October that application was not complete.

The property owner’s appeal to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal over the lack of a decision on the application to build a six-storey hotel and event centre was also dropped when the two John Street properties were put up for sale, listed at $19 million.

Property owner Benny Marotta told The Local at the time he was "sick of dealing with the politics” of Niagara-on-the-Lake, and the group of people supported by the politicians. He said his intention all along was “to preserve the integrity of this heritage property and enhance its already robust landscape for guests and the community to enjoy, while creating a beautiful establishment that would elevate hospitality in Niagara-on-the-Lake.”

The 13-acre property at 144 John St. E., and the lot next to it at 176 John St. E., the two that are now designated of heritage significance, were purchased by Marotta in 2016 for $8 million.

After a two-day hearing before the Ontario Superior Court last January on Marotta’s attempt to put a stop to the town-initiated designation process on all four properties, Madame Justice Linda M. Walters ruled against the property owner, saying the matter should proceed to a hearing before the Conservation Review Board.

Included in the designation of the two John Street properties are the main residence (Randwood), a local landmark which was owned by the Rand family from 1919 until 1980, a wooden gazebo, and a modern brick pavilion.

There are also other buildings and many landscapes featuring the wooden and stone foot bridges, stone pathways, and water fountain, the report accompanying the designation bylaw says.

The heritage value includes the Rand summer house, as well as the concrete, brick and stone wall found along John Street East and Charlotte Street.

The report mentions the many historical associations of the properties, from the early owners, to the Rand family in more recent times, and ties to the Devonian Group (now part of the Devonian Group of Charitable Foundations) and The Niagara Institute (now part of the Conference Board of Canada), which used the property for conferences, seminars and as a place of teaching.

The Niagara Institute was established by Calvin Rand in 1971.

The designation report also references the Canadian landscape architect team of Howard Dunington and Lorrie Dunington-Grubb. The couple designed and worked on various areas and landscapes on the property, and “were pioneers and well-repected in the Canadian landscape architect community. The property also has historical/associative value as it demonstrates or reflects their work and ideas.”

The red brick pillars which mark the entrance to the property on John Street and the mature trees and plantings and boxwood hedge are also of historic significance, the report notes.

Lord Mayor’s robocall explains this lockdown

Penny Coles
The Local

Some Niagara-on-the-Lake residents will have received a robocall from Lord Mayor Betty Disero, who explained the shutdown that may be a cause for concern. But we all must do our part to slow the spread of COVID-19, she says.

The calls were made over two days, Dec. 23 and 24, and went to those with landlines only.

The idea for the calls originated from the Region, with Penny Coles sharing was that which resulted from the Region did, and chose not to use the automated calls, thinking they might just confuse some people.

It was the Town’s emergency control group that made the decision to use them this time.

Disero says she hasn’t heard any response from anyone who received a call, and neither she nor her mother, both with landlines, had received one. The calls were organized by a vendor through the Region.

In a very unscientific survey on social media, The Local asked residents if they had received a call, and about 30 per cent of those who weighed in said yes.

Disero shared that which residents have been receiving through the media from the Town and Region.

“The situation is serious, and this is a call to action for all of us to take the necessary steps to protect one another,” she says.

“I want to thank everyone who has followed public health’s directives over the last nine months. It continues to make a difference and save lives,” Disero also uses the robocall to remind residents what is expected during the shutdown.

She asks them not to gather with anyone outside their home, to go only shopping for necessities and consider curb-side pickup and delivery to support local businesses; and to wear a mask, and wash and sanitize hands frequently.

“Lastly, if you have any symptoms, get tested, and stay home,” she says.

“I know the holidays will make this difficult, and news of the province-wide shutdown may be a cause for concern. But we all must do our part to slow the spread of the virus.”

Not following these directives may result in fines, while also putting lives at risk, she says.

For more information visit NiagaraRegion.ca/COVID19 and notl.com/covid-19.

Disero can be reached by phone at 905-468-3266, or by email at bettydisero@notl.com.
Health care workers learn to feel comfortable in their roles

Continued from page 1

we’re at battle, and we won’t be beaten. We have a job to do, our patients are number one, and that’s why we go to work every day.”

During the earlier lockdown stages of the pandemic, Niagara Health postponed all elective and non-emergent health care procedures to protect patient safety and increase capacity for the response to COVID-19. That meant for the most part things were a bit slower in the recovery room where Laugh ton works. “It helped us to get Niagara Health for making wise decisions, which enabled local hospitals to reduce the number of critical care beds, take on coronavirus patients in the intensive care unit.

Now, with the volume closer to normal on the elective surgery front, the hospital is working through the list a little quicker than they once did. “We’ve learned since the spring, we’ve tweaked things, and at the same time, we’re still able to take the second wave,” Laugh ton explains.

She notes the decision by Premier Doug Ford to move Ontario into the grey zone on Dec. 26 was the correct one, given that the high COVID-19 numbers recently. “We needed to do that,” Laugh ton confirms. “I think we all let our guard down in the summer, but it’s winter time, and we’ve moved inside. I’m confident that we’ll keep plug ging away; a vaccine will soon be distributed, and that things will improve if we keep doing what we’re doing.”

She credits the teams at Niagara Health who put policies in place for alleviating those early fears of the unknown that she and her colleagues had. “I’m positive about the organization, and how we’ve all pulled together. We feel confident in what we’re doing, and we’re all supportive of each other. I either work with you in my inner circle, or in the hospital as a whole. You can just tell that we’re there for each other. We feel like this virus is the enemy, and we’re at war. It’s not going to stop us from doing what we do.”

Though Laugh ton says the praise that has been heaped onto health care workers since March makes her proud of her role as a nurse, she deflects some of that praise onto others in the community. “We’re all in this together. I feel like we’re all in the front lines. If we don’t all do what we need to do, then we’re not going to have the best outcome. We all have to work together to do this, not just the health care professionals.”

Similarly for Maria Roberts Ramos, a speech language pathologist, the impact of the unknown at the onset of the pandemic has been replaced by a confidence that up graded infection control methods and procedures are effectively allowing her to continue in her role in the health care system.

Though Roberts Ramos is employed by Niagara Health, her position is overseen by the Niagara Preschool Speech and Language Program through the Niagara Children’s Centre. Her office is at the Greater Niagara General site in Niagara Falls, though she doesn’t actually have to enter the hospital building itself. Like Laugh ton, her job was never interrupted during the first wave of the outbreak, though there were some changes to how she delivered service to families.

Before COVID-19, Roberts Ramos would arrive at her office at 8:30 a.m. Throughout each day she would work with between four and five families, helping children, with an average age of two years old, with early speech development. This involves face-to-face meetings with the children and their families, working on communication strategies for those who have been assessed as experiencing difficulties in language and communication development.

Like many in the health care system, she was ready for any changes to her role, including being shifted to other duties to support the overall goals of Niagara Health if necessary. “We were told we might be moved, but because we were always able to maintain contact with our families and continue offering service, we weren’t.”

For the first two to three months of the pandemic, Roberts Ramos shifted to telephone consultations with her client families. “I’ve been going into the office all through this,” she says, “I would call families, ask how things were going, the parents and I would talk. We would problem-solve, I would give them suggestions through these phone conversations.”

She admits she worried somewhat that some of her client families would not be able to receive the guided help with communication strategies that they would have via her usual in-person role. “But parents who had an assessment would have to wait a much longer time to get the help they needed. That’s the impact of COVID that a lot of people don’t think about. Kids need rehab. We did the best that we could, but there was some impact on the ability of some children to move forward with their development and connections to other resources.”

Over that early stage of the pandemic, Roberts Ramos and her colleagues were able to learn new techniques to move into a virtual method of delivering services to families via Zoom Health, a more secure form of the Zoom platform used by health care professionals.

“It’s new to us, but it’s not new to the profession,” explains Roberts Ramos. “Up north, where people can’t travel, this is how they provide therapy. Our focus shifted early on to developing materials and learning ourselves how to do virtual therapy online with pre-schoolers.”

She has clearly enjoyed learning the new techniques, and felt very supported by both Niagara Health and the Children’s Centre in developing new methods. She even sees some advantages to the virtual platform for continued future use.

“You get to see the children in their home environment,” she enthuses. “You can talk to the parents and say ‘show me what that looks like in your kitchen,’ you can coach them right online on how to get through to the child. Or they have siblings, who want to be in on it, so you can include them right there.”

Now, more than nine months in, Roberts Ramos is back in her office and has been seeing clients for face-to-face sessions since early fall, while still offering virtual options. “Though a COVID-19 outbreak was declared at the Niagara Falls site on Dec. 24, she is not worried about working out of her office.”

“Now, more than nine months in, Roberts Ramos is back in her office and has been seeing clients for face-to-face sessions since early fall, while still offering virtual options. “Though a COVID-19 outbreak was declared at the Niagara Falls site on Dec. 24, she is not worried about working out of her office.”

“I’m not in the right hospital,” she says, “and when we started seeing families in person again, NHS was really good with providing masks, gog glu es, face shields, gloves, everything we needed to feel protected. There’s a screen-er downstairs as well, and we disinfect toys, tables, chairs, doorknobs and all touch points. And I’m not dealing with sick people in my role.”

As Roberts Ramos heads back to work Jan. 4, she has yet to hear if the province’s month-long lockdown will allow her to continue with those face-to-face sessions. But she is optimistic.

“The hospital is trying very hard to maintain their outpatient services,” she says Roberts Ramos. “We do have protocols now, we know how to keep people safe. They understand how important services are. I think everybody recognizes the importance of keeping these services available.”

Lisa Laugh ton has settled into her role, feeling safe with the protocols provided by Niagara Health. (Photos supplied)
Niagara Foundation recognizes citizens of NOTL

Annual Living Landmark Award goes to all residents who help preserve town's heritage

Penny Coles
The Local

The Niagara Foundation, which annually recognizes individuals who have contributed to the reservation of heritage and cultural landscapes, has taken a different approach with its 2020 award.

“In this unusual year, the board of The Niagara Foundation, led by president Michael Howe, decided it would be most appropriate to recognize the resilient and co-operative spirit of all citizens of Niagara-on-the-Lake who strive to live in unity as one unique community,” says a recent announcement from the foundation.

The decision of the foundation “is consistent with” this year’s National Trust Prince of Wales award to the town, which also recognizes the work that’s been done in the past, and gives credit to all efforts of all the townspeople who have put their efforts into preservation, says Brad Nixon, vice-president of the foundation.

It too celebrates the town’s sustained commitment to heritage conservation over time. Like the National Trust property, the foundation’s Living Landmark Award recognizes the many preservation projects and all those who put their efforts into preservation, past and present, says Nixon.

“In both cases they’re recognizing the work people have done in the past, and the way the town and the people have come together to support so many projects.”

The foundation, like other organizations, has been unable to hold its traditional events, such as its customary three summer auctions, but the lack of fundraising won’t hamper any of its ongoing initiatives, he says.

Chief amongst those at the moment is the effort to purchase what is known locally as the Wilderness, five and a half acres of heavily wooded property that stretches between King Street and Regent Street in the heart of the Old Town.

“The purchase, which has been in the works for more than two years, remains in litigation, says Nixon.

“The decision of the board was to proceed with the purchase, to protect and preserve the property from development.”

Like the National Trust property, the foundation “is consistent with” the town, which also recognizes the work the property is to be put on it represents a value of the property if it could be developed. Foundation members maintain development on that property is not realistic.

“We’re looking at the existence of a conservation easement to protect One Mile Creek, that covers about 40 per cent of the property,” he says, “and we’re also mindful of a municipal heritage bylaw designation of the property.”

The Town designated the Wilderness a heritage property in 1994, including the land and the exterior and interior of the house on the site, as well as the carriage house and the archaeological remains.

No one can “change the use or character of the property” without permission from the Ontario Heritage Trust, says Nixon.

The foundation wants to purchase the property, rich in historical significance, to protect and preserve it from development.

“We see the significance of the property and want it protected,” says Nixon.

The buildings on the property are 200 years old, and also worthy of saving, he says. “They have a lot of heritage value, and some of the huge, mature trees on the property have cultural value.”

The property was once the home of William Claus, deputy superintendent of the Indian Department and one of the three trustees of the Six Nations, The Wilderness was originally given by the Six Nations Indians to Mr. Claus’ wife Nancy Johnson “in token of her many deeds of kindness.”

Her father Sir William Johnson negotiated the Treaty of Niagara with 24 Indigenous nations in 1764. The treaty formed the basis for the original treaty relationship between Indigenous peoples and settlers in Eastern North America, says a Niagara Foundation description of the property they hope to preserve.

Sir William Johnson met with more than 2,000 chiefs from all of eastern North America in Niagara in 1764 to negotiate the treaty. It was considered the high point of colonial relations with Indigenous peoples. It was specifically conceived as a treaty of sharing of the land, not conquest.

The question to be settled by the court remains the value of the property today.

The foundation is not going to pay for development potential they believe does not exist, with the levels of protection on the property, says Nixon.

“We believe we have the law on our side, but the court rules.”

In the meantime, although fundraising opportunities have been limited, the goal of the foundation members has not changed.

“It’s full steam ahead.”

Living Landmark Awards from previous years are:

2006
Gerry Woon and Norm Howe
2007
Donald Combe
2008
Calvin Rand
2009
John Walker
2010
Roy Oramby
2011
Christopher Newton
2012
Scott Stokos
2013
Jim Smith
2014
Debi Pratt
2015
Gary Burroughs
2016
Norma Jean Lowrey and Blair Harper
2017
Dr Richard Merritt
2018
Judy MacLachlan
2019
Gracie Janes

IN THE MATTER OF THE ONTARIO HERITAGE ACT R.S.O. 1990, CHAPTER 0.18

AND IN THE MATTER OF THE LAND AND PREMISES AT THE FOLLOWING MUNICIPAL ADDRESSES IN THE TOWN OF NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE IN THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

NOTICE OF PASSING OF BY-LAW
TAKE NOTICE that the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has passed:

By-law No. 5284-20
By-law No. 5285-20

Designating the following properties as being of cultural heritage value or interest under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act R.S.O. 1990, Chapter 0.18

176 John Street East
(Lot 144 RCP 692 Niagara; Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake)

144 John Street East
(Lot 144 RCP 692 Niagara; Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake)

Dated at the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake this 31st day of December, 2020
Peter Todd, Town Clerk

The Niagara Foundation’s goal for this year is to complete the purchase of the Wilderness on King Street. (Penny Coles)
Changes to Conservation Authority Legislation a Concern

Penny Coles
The Local

Although the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority and others across the province, asked for more time and discussed about recent changes to legislation that overshadows their work, their requests were unheeded.

The bill passed in December, with significant changes to the provincial Conservation Authorities Act that are concerning, says Niagara-on-the-Lake Regional Councillor Gary Zalepa.

One change that has garnered attention and opposition requires conservation authorities to issue a development permit when the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing issues the provincial Zoning Orders (MZO), which can override conservation authority decisions that have been determined by the board. Zalepa says, “I don’t know why it didn’t happen. I can’t read the government’s intentions. It doesn’t appear to be a fulsome process, and I think process is really important.”

The other issue of concern is the new requirement for mem-
"bers of conservation authority boards to be elected officials, says Zalepa.

How do we address such complex issues? Best to address what we can, for example, if we are worried about funding for mental health care, successive governments, pulled back funding and provincial governments decline its participation. How many times did local governments wish to make investments in housing only to have the provincial government decline their participation? “Which can override conservation authority decisions that may or may not be in the best interest of local residents. It’s a broken model that does not disappear, and today we have a cumulative result generated by our federation’s structure and provincial implementation pol-
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Embracing the new year with hope and optimism

It was exactly a year ago the World Health Organiza-
tion received news of cases of pneumonia in Wuhan City of the Hubei Province, thought to have been spread from an out-
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they are loved.

We can be hopeful, embrace the
future and our opti-
mism into the new year.

We look forward to a year of sharing all your ups and
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and healthy new year for all.

Penny Coles
The Local

Embracing the new year with hope and optimism

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Wayne Gates, MPP Niagara Falls rising
Special to The Local

Writing a year in review column this year is impossible without returning to the very subject which has dominated so much of our lives over the past 10 months. This has been a trying time for so many in our community, and the damage of this virus is unquestionable. So many times over the last 10 months I have been heartbroken by the stories of suffering and loss this virus has caused, and yet so many times I have been lifted up by the care and compassion of this community. Throughout all it, My team and I have done the best we can to be attentive and responsive. Where it has been needed, I have stood with Premier Doug Ford to offer a united fight against this invisible enemy. Wonderfully, I have heard members of my own community rally in voice in opposition to some of his plans which I believed were reckless, misguided, or in some cases, unnecessarily cruel.

In the earliest parts of this pandemic, we focused on ensuring no person who lost income due to COVID would have to withstand hardship or debt to stay afloat. I introduced legislation to ensure the WSIB stopped fighting employees about coverage when they contracted COVID in the workplace.

As the summer months came and it seemed in Niagara that we were on top of this virus, I returned to some of the immediate healthcare legislation that had been pushed through for this. Included funding to reduce MRI wait times, so resi- dents no longer have to wait three months for a life-saving MRI.

My voice in opposition to some of his plans which I believed were reckless, misguided, or in some cases, unnecessarily cruel.

Despite all political parties coming together to work on the needed emergency response to the pandemic, we still hesitated the serious ethical lapses and poor judgement from our prime minister. Justin Trudeau in a new under his third ethics investigation, and the WE Charity scandal forced the Liberal government to go through a major in-year audit. I will continue to press the Trudeau government to deliver these critical support measures, when Parliament re- sumes in the new year.

Our vitally important wine industry has also suffered greatly due to the COVID-19 pandemic and, the failures of the Trudeau government to address these, I have tabled a bill to protect the hundreds of people who have called this year in our industry.

Until vaccines and rapid testing are deployed widely around our country, we must continue our individual responsibility to keep ourselves, and each other, healthy and safe. So many of us have made great sacrifices in 2020 to protect our health and loved ones. I am committed to seeing this through as we enter 2021.

While many businesses and our border remains closed, we must also remember to support and shop local. For years, local businesses have strengthened our communities by giving. Now is the time for us to support and shop local. For years, local businesses have strengthened our communities by giving.

It’s been a tough year, but as dark as it’s gone and as hard as these days have been, I have been uplifted up every day by our community. By the residents who are shaping local to support our neighbours. By the healthcare workers who are continuing to fight this crisis but wear their masks and wash their hands to save their grandparents. We are fac- ing tough times, but this holi- day season is worth remembering that these times brought out the very best in our neigh- bourhoods. I hope this community I hope we never forget. Have a safe holiday, and I’ll see you in 2021.

See the light at end of dark tunnel
Wayne Gates, MPP Niagara Falls rising
Special to The Local

February 2020 was a turning point in my career. After being a long-time analyst, I was appointed to the position of Director of Strategic Planning and Policy Analysis for the Ontario Ministry of Long-Term Care. During that time, I had the opportunity to work with many of the most talented and energetic staff and policy analysts in the government.

As the pandemic started to take hold, I had the opportunity to contribute to the government’s response. I had the chance to work on a range of initiatives, including the development of the Pandemic Support Program for Long-Term Care Homes. This program provided financial support to long-term care homes to help them manage the impact of the pandemic.

During this time, I was struck by the resilience and courage of the residents and staff of long-term care homes. They were working tirelessly to keep their communities safe while also providing essential care.

I was also inspired by the work of the many volunteers and caregivers who were stepping up to help during this difficult time. Their dedication and commitment were a beacon of hope for many.

As the pandemic continued, I began to focus on strategies to help communities recover and build resilience. One of the key initiatives I was involved in was the development of a framework for long-term care homes to reopen.

This framework included a series of steps that homes could take to ensure that they were ready to safely welcome residents back into their communities. It was a collaborative effort between government, long-term care providers, and experts in public health and infection control.

As the vaccine rollout began, I was part of the team that helped to coordinate the distribution of vaccines to long-term care homes. This was a critical step in the recovery process, as it provided a way for residents to finally receive the protection they so desperately needed.

During this time, I also had the opportunity to work on initiatives aimed to support the mental health of long-term care workers. This was a daunting task, but it was one that I felt strongly about.

Finally, as the pandemic began to wind down, I had the chance to start thinking about what the future of long-term care would look like. This involved working on strategies to improve the quality of care and the experience for residents, as well as ways to support the sustainability of the sector.

Throughout this challenging time, I was reminded of the strength and resilience of our communities. I was inspired by the work of so many, and I am grateful for the opportunity to have been a part of this journey.

As we move forward, I am hopeful for the future. I am hopeful for the resilience and innovation that will help us to build a better system. I am hopeful for the day when we can all feel safe and supported in our homes.

Finally, seeing pandemic progress being made
Donald Combe Special to The Local

Colin Firth is a fine actor. In A Single Man (Primo, 2009), he convincingly portrays a de- pressed, homosexual professor living in California in 1962. Following the death of his long-time partner, he struggles to find peace and a way of belong- ing. It is a tortured struggle, but in the end he is able to “feel rather than “think.”

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Students look to nature for playground entertainment
Special to The Local

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This year changed our nature, and nature itself

It changed our attitudes, knowledge and appreciation towards the green world. Niagara has been an exemplary microcosm of how the pandemic has shifted our relationship with the outdoors, and how it may never be the same.

We start this time warp in Wainfleet Bog, where the notification went off. My partner and I were standing deep in the 568 acres of wetland and forest. We were about to eat a delightful little meal over a stove on a balmy, incredibly pleasant spring day, while enjoying the sounds of spring peepers and western chorus frogs. I was then alerted that even the conservation areas were officially closed because of COVID.

Perplexed, in a "what a time to be alive" sense, little did we know what Niagara's woods were about to endure over the next several months. A week later, I remember hiking near Fireman's Park in Niagara Falls, where I found myself ducking back into the woods at the sight of a by-law officer patrolling the vacated park. It was such a foreign concept. A couple of months down the road, even beaches were temporarily closed. The waves of news were lapping our screens. The waves of Lake Ontario lapped at the eroding shoreline. As all of these events just keep happening, while we've been learning lots about our human behaviour, as a species, and as a part of nature.

Deep appreciation and connection with the outdoors came to the forefront during the first wave. The spring weather naturally enticed Canadians out of their homes to come out and play. Considering many services and activities were shut down, many took their first step onto one of Niagara's numerous trails. Quickly, the trails were fuller than they've arguably ever been.

It was wonderful to witness so many people, especially families with kids, immersing themselves into our rich and scenic forests. These are timeless experiences for young... Continued on page 9
In fall, Niagara trails were discovered by visitors

Continued from page 8

ers, as much as they are for adults who simply go there for the first time. Nature is a classroom, while our current classrooms have arrows and rules and boundaries.

Noting the volume of people on the trails, I can confidently say there are now that many more people in our communities who appreciate and respect nature that much more.

The people of southern Ontario moved like sand in a changing river. For summer and fall, restrictions in Toronto helped shine a light on the liberations in Niagara. Niagara’s summer and fall, restrictions in Toronto helped shine a light on the liberations in Niagara. Niagara’s summer and fall, restrictions in Toronto helped shine a light on the liberations in Niagara. Niagara’s summer and fall, restrictions in Toronto helped shine a light on the liberations in Niagara. Niagara’s summer and fall, restrictions in Toronto helped shine a light on the liberations in Niagara.

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New Year’s Eve: Thursday 31st
9 am – 3 pm
Closed
Saturday, January 2nd
9 am – 5 pm
Closed
Sunday, January 3rd
Closed

We will resume our pre-holiday schedule as of Jan. 4, remaining open as an essential service during lockdown.
Continued from page 1

by Queen’s Royal Park. Sisters Rebecca and Rachel Saylor first joined the event nine years ago, with their uncle Rick Mills and some of their cousins.

They have been back every year since, except for one, making the Ball’s Beach event part of their Boxing Day tradition.

“Our first dip was in 2012,” says Rachel. “As a family, my sister and I, with Uncle Rick and his son Alexander, did three years in a row to become official penguins. Then my sister and I continued on. We did miss one year in 2017. Yesterday marked our eighth dip in nine years.”

This year, they wanted to see the tradition continue, but that was only part of their motivation.

“We had talked about it when we found out it was cancelled,” says Rachel.

“Part of what we like about it is doing something not everybody else is doing. We like the tradition, and we like that it’s a community event. So much else during COVID has been taken away from us or changed, and we figured this was something we could still do. We didn’t have the community present, but it was still fun.”

Their mother Kim was at the beach to take pictures, so the women would have proof they had done the dip. They saw only one other person, who was parked near the beach, and stayed to watch.

“He gave us a little ‘good for you’ when we got out,” says Rachel.

“They chose to go into the water by Queen’s Royal Park because they found last year’s event at Ball’s Beach a little challenging. There are large boulders there now to climb over in order to get in and out of the water,” and when you’re coming out and your legs are numb, it’s difficult. Rebecca had a little slip, and didn’t realize she scraped her leg. ‘You can’t really feel anything,’ says Rachel.

“Lion’s Beach is easier to get in and out of, and it’s sandy.”

The only problem is that the water is shallow, and the women had to go a long way out to take the plunge. They did that three times, although they didn’t come all the way back to the beach between dips.

“It looked really cold, with the snow, and we were psyching ourselves to get in. Once we were in, we thought, ‘it’s not that bad, but then the numbing starts and it’s hard to catch your breath. But it’s very refreshing, and I always come out feeling good.’

The Saylor sisters say they both missed their grandmother, Vi Mills, who passed away last February. Mills taught swimming, life-guarding and supervised the local public swimming program up until her retirement at 80 years of age, in 2014, teaching generations of children how to swim.

They followed in her footsteps, teaching swimming and life-guarding for the Town, with Rebecca taking on the job of supervisor of the summer swim program in recent years. Rachel was working at the YMCA pool at the Mc-Bain Centre until December, when staff was laid off due to COVID. With the exception of some Niagara Falls city staff who have offices in the building, the centre is closed, and Rachel is uncertain what the future holds for her. “I have to believe something better will come along,” she says.

Rachel is working as a supervisor in child care for the YMCA.

Mills used to go to the beach to support her family members and cheer them on when they joined the Penguin Dip, says Rachel, and in the last few years, would be at home on Castlereagh Street waiting for them when they were finished. “We’d get out of our frozen bathing suits and shed have hot chocolate waiting for us. We definitely missed her this year. She was on our minds.”

They were close to their grandmother, she says, and have missed her presence this year.

Their grandmother never participated in the dip, says Rachel, “but loved to bundle up and come watch her family.” Plus, she knew many more participants in the community, including the Bjorgan family, and having her there was part of the tradition.

COVID, which began shortly after their grandmother’s death, “hit us hard. It numbed a lot of things for us. There was no candlelight stroll, no Christmas Parade, and we always did those things with her.”

Although they miss their grandmother, it feels good to think about her, says Rachel, and to know they were able to carry on one of the traditions that reminds them of her.
Couple cross Niagara to minister to local farmworkers

Jane Andres
Special to The Local

It wasn’t what they expected when they moved to Niagara. It has only been a year and a half since Antonio Illas first set foot on the most fertile soil in Canada, but it feels like he has lived a decades worth of life-changing experience crammed into that short time.

Although Christ Church Mc Nab began reaching out to the Spanish-speaking farmworkers in 1988, it began a more concerted program in 2015, welcoming workers by providing church services and other support programs.

In response to growing awareness of the needs of these hard-working people, the Anglican Diocese of Niagara hired Father Antonio Illas in the spring of 2019 to run the Migrant Farmworker Program. It is housed in one of three parishes, St. Al- baris in Beamsville, St. John’s in Jordan, and Christ Church Mc Nab in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

He brought with him a wealth of cross-cultural ex- perience that has spanned the globe, having his formative years in Puerto Rico, his family travelled widely, preparing him for a career of travel and adven- tures as a chaplain in the U.S. military.

Cela Tecamachalitl de Illas, Antonio’s wife of 31 years, is his partner in ministry. Her childhood years are full of special memories growing up in the state of Veracruz, Mexico. Her life was heavily influenced by her father, a pastor who served Mexico’s most vulnerable peo- ple with a deeply committed love and compassion. She is also an ordained minister in the U.S. Presbyterian Church, and enjoyed preaching and as- sisting in the mass celebration in their first year here.

“Although Antonio and Cela have crisscrossed the back roads of Niagara, reaching out to the hundreds of Spanish speaking men and women who work on Niagara’s farms and greenhouses. Men and women from here are on eight- month contracts with SAPW (Seasonal Agricultural Work Program). However those from Guatemala and Hondo- ras are here under the Tempo- rary Foreign Worker program, with contracts ranging from one to four years.

Cela has been impacted by the stories of the women, moth- ers and grandmothers who are away from their children for as long as eight months. As a mother of an adult daughter living in the U.S., she finds the stories of long sepa- ration from families and loved ones resound with her.

Although separations, separations, separations—cally when involving young children, and isolation due to language barriers, are the two concerns that quickly be- came apparent during their first year of ministry.

Farmers report hit-and-run accident in August 2019, that took the life of Ze- naida, a mother of two young children, brought a painful awareness of these issues in a new way. Another concern with more serious immediate conse- quences was the growing food insecurity. The weekly food basket is already stretched thin due to the many remittances deduct- ed from their minimum wage, and the money sent home to support their families.

Many of the women in par- ticular have large gaps in their employment. Some are strand- ed here for up to three months between greenhouse work in the spring and fall and farm work in the packing barns in late June or early July. Although they pay into employment insurance they are unable to collect.

In recent years, wom- en employed by some green- houses have no longer received an advance when they arrive, waiting almost three weeks for a paycheck to buy groceries. For them, hunger is a stark re- ality.

What Antonio and Cela witnessed first-hand during their farm visits prompted them to step up efforts to try to provide adequate nutrition.

With the growing impact and uncertainty of the pan- demic this past year, this issue has consumed most of their time and attention.

“When COVID-19, the farm worker project experi- enced a metamorphosis, as we could not continue to operate the clothing bank, medical clinic and religious services. A wholesaler from Burlington called us to offer food for the farmworkers so that it would not go to waste,” says Antonio.

“We started to pick up the food and the grocery bag drop-off program started. Then other generous donors started to do- nate food and the diocese gave us a grant to continue with the operation. Finally a grant from the federal government of Can- ada also provided funding.”

Cela reinforced his com- ments. “We take groceries to the farms because we don’t want food to be missing on their tables. It is necessary to be able to subsist. They have to be able to eat, and meet the eco- nomic needs of their families in Mexico.”

Cela helps to organize the grocery bag drop-off program, focusing on the St. Catha- rines-area farms. The teams from the churches were careful to adhere to all safety protocols when preparing the deliver- y and taking them to farms, where the men and women were eager to connect. Re- usable, washable masks were given out, she says.

“The biggest challenge has been COVID-19 restrictions, as it has prevented our meet- ings from taking place, and not being able to share the Sunday meal with the farmworkers,” says Antonio. “The meal pro- vided a vital social space to connect, develop friendships and have a great time. We get to party, and COVID-19 has prevented us from those im- portant celebrations.”

“We are grateful to have survived the pandemic this season. Although some farm- workers have tested positive to COVID, they continue fighting, attempting to make it and survive,” Cela says.

“The highlight for the past year and eight months has been to assist in time of needs, for ex- ample the fire at Pioneer Flow- er Farms, when the men lost all of their belongings just before they were to return home,” continues Antonio. “This year, the winter and starting their new ways to connect and develop relationships with the migrant farmworkers safely, in spite of the challenges of COVID.”

Developing new ideas to provide a much needed cloth- ing, delivery and grocery bag drop-off program will continue well into the winter as they pre- pare for 2021.

To take a lot of time and energy to meet the needs of a population that does not have the opportunities or the rights that most Canadians take for granted.

Based on conversations with their parishioners, what recommendations would they like to share? They are both in agreement here.

If they had three wishes to make changes to the farm- workers program they would be:

1. Permanent resident status to prevent family separation and breakdowns
2. Decent living wages, and employment of 35 to 40 hours a week, with overtime benefits.
3. National standards that are consistent, and more accountable for decent housing.

“I was surprised just now how much and how quickly this ministry can grow! When I arrived I had no training manual, it was on the job train- ing. A leap in faith and so much goodwill have supported this ministry,” says Antonio.

They both say they did not expect that in little more than a year, they would develop such deep and meaningful relationships with the men and women who work so hard in our vineyards and greenhouses.

They did not expect their lives to be impacted in so many meaningful ways, or discover how God would provide, even in even a pandemic.

They didn’t expect their lives would be so quickly root- ed in Niagara, but then again, this is not only the most fertile area in Canada for growing the best tender fruit, but a caring community as well.

For more information visit their website at www.migrant- workers.ca, migrantr- workers@gna.org.ca,

Family separation, especially during the pandemic. The heart-wrenching hit- and-run accident in August
Kim Wade
Special to The Local

“Inspiration is spread around the globe, across space and time, in the places we love and with the people of our past.”

This quote introduces the Google Arts & Culture website and application to the online world. This online platform seeks to engage art lovers and historians by providing easy access to images and videos of artworks and cultural artifacts from museums and cultural organizations throughout the world.

Our own Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum has joined the ranks of other art museums and cultural organizations in this online world, along with such esteemed museums as the Tate Museum in London, the Smithsonian in Washington, and the Musée de Louvre in Paris.

Sarah Kaufman, managing director and curator, explains the NOTL Museum was actually the first small community museum in Canada to create virtual exhibitions on Google Arts & Culture. On the museum’s Google Arts page, there are 22 online exhibits along with 330 items to view such as artifacts, sketches, photographs and paintings dating back over 200 years in NOTL history. These items have been collected and maintained by the Niagara Historical Society for 125 years.

The NOTL Museum’s newest online addition to the Google Arts platform celebrates this 125-year heritage. The milestone anniversary exhibit was created to promote the beginning of the Niagara Historical Society and “honour 125 years of collecting and sharing our local history,” says Kaufman.

“We were looking at innovative ways to celebrate, and an online exhibition is one of the ways we can put the organizational history out there,” she continues.

Kaufman says Shawna Butts, assistant curator at the museum, has been responsible for the museum’s virtual exhibitions. Butts has been collecting, organizing and uploading these exhibitions on both the museum’s own website and on the Google platform.

She explains it takes several weeks to complete an online exhibit from “narrowing down the images, selecting which text to include, and trying to be concise.”

She proudly states that even though the Google system of uploading exhibits to the application is complicated, Butts has “mastered the task.”

Kaufman believes the importance of this exhibition celebrates the fortitude and advanced thinking of the founders of the Niagara Historical Society.

“In the beginning, the society kept the history alive and present in our community through historical markers, commemorative events and publications about our history. Early members were constantly advocating for artifacts and archives related to our history to remain in our community, rather than sending them out of the area,” says Kaufman.

Janet Carsahan, our first president and later a curator, fought to get significant pieces into the collection, such as Brock’s Hat, the Servos Indian Department uniform, the Laura Secord collection, and significant war trophies of the World Wars, she says.

“Throughout the 125 years, the organization has continued these traditions, but has also adapted to the times. Today we keep the history alive by continuing to work on public markers, hosting a permanent exhibition of our chronological history, two temporary exhibitions each year, and several engaging programs. We also maintain a collection which has started to become more accessible online through a collections database and virtual exhibitions,” such as the ones on Google Arts & Culture.

Over the past 125 years, the Niagara Historical Society has grown from a small community-minded group of volunteers who “mounted small displays in the Queen Street Courthouse,” to an established museum with three full-time staff, one part-time, 100 active volunteers, and more than 600 individual members, who run at least 80 programs per year.

The museum boasts over 53,000 archives and artifacts. Kaufman sees that the future for museums will be interesting. In the recent past, before COVID, there was a movement toward more interactive activities to engage visitors with history. Unfortunately, she laments, these types of interactive exhibits and activities have been restricted or cancelled due to the pandemic. She explains that the online world has become much more important during this time, and will continue to be in the future.

She says that the NOTL Museum has pivoted to online in order to continue to reach our mandate by boosting our virtual exhibitions, social media engagement, online lectures and shows and more accessibility to online collections.

Kaufman says Shawna Butts has “mastered the task.”

“Throughout the 125 years, the organization has continued these traditions, but has also adapted to the times. Today we keep the history alive by continuing to work on public markers, hosting a permanent exhibition of our chronological history, two temporary exhibitions each year, and several engaging programs. We also maintain a collection which has started to become more accessible online through a collections database and virtual exhibitions,” such as the ones on Google Arts & Culture.

“One thing is for sure, museums are realizing that our presence in the online world has become equally important,” she says. “At the NOTL Museum, we quickly pivoted to online in order to continue to reach our mandate by boosting our virtual exhibitions, social media engagement, online lectures and shows and more accessibility to online collections.

This will continue to be a priority for us in the coming years, as we look at how we can expand our online engagement with our community.”

The 125th anniversary exhibit celebrates the contributions and the Niagara Historical Society’s efforts to maintain and promote the importance of preserving the history of the town.

Kaufman and the staff of the NOTL Museum remain dedicated to this task, and through the advancement in technology, they are going beyond Janet Carnochan’s expectations by being able to share everything that has been accomplished for the past 125 years with the world.

“In NOTL, the residents recognize how significant the local history is, and we’re doing our best to continue to promote it and maintain it on the community’s behalf,” says Kaufman.

“Further, in 2021, we’re looking at growing even more by expanding and renovating our facilities to better meet the needs of our community. We’re working on creating a world-class museum for a world-class community. We will continue to be the stewards of NOTL’s history, and their collection into the future.”

This 1927 photo shows the interior of the museum’s Memorial Hall. (Photo supplied)

General Isaac Brock’s hat is one of the most iconic artifacts in the NOTL Museum. (Kim Wade)
Icewine demand down, but table wine sales increase

Penny Coles
The Local

Many wineries made the decision to harvest their grapes for table wine, rather than netting them for icewine, says councillor and grape-grower Erwin Wiens.

The market for the expensive, sweet dessert wine has declined, as COVID-impacted international markets and other avenues for icewine sales, while consumption for table wines has increased, especially in the $10 to $20 range, says Wiens.

The icewine harvest will likely be decreased by up to 70 per cent, he says, although the actual grape harvest will be the same as other years, "although for different products.

Vidal, cabernet, riesling, all grapes that would be used for icewine, would have been picked in the fresh market season. The decision was made early in the season not to net, and to pick instead for regular table wines."

While wineries may be selling more of less expensive products, these wines are also cheaper to produce, he explains.

"The cost of making icewine is way more expensive, with netting, harvesting and pressing, all more time consuming. Plus a tonne of grapes can make 850 litres of regular wine, while a tonne of grapes will make only 200 litres of icewine."

Most years, about 6,000 tonnes of grapes are grown across the province for icewine, he says. This year it's down to about 1,000 tonnes, says Wiens.

With the drop in tourists who would typically buy the product, and the reduction in outlets selling it, most wineries likely have a good supply left over from previous harvests.

Andrew Niven, director of marketing for Konzelmann Estate Winery, says they are going forward with their icewine grape harvesting, watching for the temperature to drop, which would typically occur around this time of year.

The market for the product has been shrinking, with the lack of tourism and "complicated" shipping to international markets, but the winery is still selling it onsite, he says.

"We're trying to look at the positives, really focusing on giving the guests who come to the winery a great experience," says Niven. "That includes selling wines, icewine and mulled wine."

The winery is building a dome on the outdoor observation desk, to allow for safe tastings outside. It's also focusing on the individual guest experience for the icewine trail, as are other wineries.

"The Icewine Festival has been 25 years in the making. We're just doing it differently this year. We're concentrating on opening in a safe manner, and we're not marketing in Toronto.

"We've increased complimentary shipping, concentrating on local areas, and using all safety protocols on site, going by all regional and provincial guidelines as we've done since reopening in May, and there has been no transmission of COVID that I'm aware of."

Dave Mines, the manager of grower relations for Vidal, cabernet, riesling, is producing wines ever smaller than other years. "Although the actual grape harvest has increased, estimated shipping, concentration and pressing, and there has been no transmission of COVID that I'm aware of."

There are several factors that went into the decision, he says, including the decline in travel for Asian tourists due to COVID.

"A lot of wineries are in the same boat. There just hasn't been the traffic," he says.

But Peller wants to have a 2020 vintage, even if it's smaller than other years.

He's hoping for a good cold spell soon so the grapes can be harvested before dehydration, and hungry birds have a significant impact on the crop.

Greg Berti, the vice-president of global markets for Andrew Peller, says wine consumption is down in restaurants and retailers which are suffering from closures during COVID, but local wineries are doing well through online sales.

"More grapes than ever" are producing wines people want to drink, "but not so much the expensive wines," he says.

Another change is the increasing popularity of larger boxes, one and four-litres, around the world.

Icewine marketing opportunities have decreased sales, with restaurants and retailers, duty-free shops closed, fewer people passing through airports and cruise ship tours cancelled, all places where icewine is a popular item.

But the product itself has been growing in popularity. "That hadn't changed, until COVID put a stop to it," says Berti.

There is less demand for icewine, but the good news is online sales are going up, and the grapes are being used for value-priced wines. "Growers are finding a home for all their grapes," he says.

The other good news he sees is that many of those who are purchasing icewine are in the 20 to 30 age group, and have no problem paying $70 to $80 a bottle.

"That tells me the younger generations have grabbed the magic of icewine, and there will continue to be a market for it in the future."
Musical tells story of Niagara River and its local impact

Kim Wade
Special to The Local

Rollin’ Down the River is a musical look at the Niagara River, its history, and influence on the region.

Performed by the Great Canadian Songbook Band, the online musical event was scheduled to be part of a fundraising effort put on by Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery in support of The Friends of Fort George and the Niagara Historical Society earlier this month. Unfortunately, due to the increase in COVID-19 cases, the in-person dinner of the History in the Vineyard fundraiser was required to become a take-away event.

The musical portion that was to be presented at the fundraiser was recorded and eventually uploaded to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum’s YouTube channel on Dec. 23. It was written and directed by Barbara Worthy, an experienced writer, director, producer and performer. She was a drama and documentary producer for CBC Radio for two decades, and enjoyed a 20-year association with the Shaw Festival. She teaches at both Brock University and Niagara College, and is a creative producer and content provider for many local arts organizations in Niagara. Over the years, she has worked with the museum on specific projects and contracts, but joined staff in the fall of 2019 as the visitor and members services assistant.

Along with the musical and acting talents of Aaron Berger, Juliet Dunn, Laurel Minnes, and Joe Lapinski, Worthy takes the audience on a historical voyage down the Niagara River and its impact and influence on the Niagara area. Starting with the earliest records of original inhabitants, the group presents history through song, skits and stories. The accounts chronicle the river’s impact on trade, commerce, smuggling, and slavery. Highlights from the video include Juliet Dunn’s solo performance of Imma Gonna Take ‘em Back, which was both thought-provoking and touching. The song expresses the anguish of a black slave whose children have been taken from her, and her determination to get her children back. This song and the one that follows, I Have Faith, punctuate the role of the river in the Underground Railway for slaves escaping from the U.S. to freedom in Canada. Other performances include an animated story by Aaron Berger, Laurel Minnes, and Joe Lapinski about prohibition and fishing rights in the river. Berger’s rendition of a maritime ditty was an entertaining way to bring this period of history to life. The group also highlighted the impact of steam boats on the lake and the river, by concluding with a song about the most famous steam boat, The Cayuga, when it sailed Lake Ontario from 1906 to her last voyage in 1957, carrying more than 15 million passengers from Niagara-on-the-Lake to Toronto and other ports on the lake.

Worthy explains that she originally formed the Great Canadian Historical Songbook Band to perform historical songs and stories. They have a history of telling local stories through song, with support from the NOTL and the Niagara Falls Culture grant. The NIC program has been invaluable to local artists, and especially now, when everyone is scrambling to create digital content and be COVID-resistant.

The full event can be watched on YouTube at https://youtu.be/JxaezsiID-k.

Bill Auchterlonie
Special to The Local

The full week of Auchterlonie on Astrology can be found on the Facebook page for The NOTL Local, and on the website https://www.auchterlonieonastrology.ca. In part II of my podcast, thanks to AstroButterfly, we get the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn at 0 degrees of Aquarius, a new world order. Thursday, Dec. 31. The last day of 2020 is here! And it ends much as it has unraveled so far – with emotional tension making everything not so celebratory. It’s a good idea to not push, but to wait and respond. He was born in Winnipeg in 1911, and was a professor of communication theory at the University of Toronto when his small book, The Medium is the Message, changed the way we see the world. Marshall McLuhan remains a towering figure in Canadian history. He died in his sleep on New Year’s Eve, 1980.

Friday, Jan. 1. Mercury in Capricorn is pals with Neptune in Pisces today, and that means a day of ideas that benefit both from imagination and a steady sense of practicality. It was 157 years ago today that Abraham Lincoln signed The Emancipation Proclamation, setting all former slaves free. This was Jan. 1, 1863, while the Civil War was still raging.

LOCAL WORSHIP

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Sunday, January 3rd

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Message: All New

www.cccchurch.ca

strounger

TOGETHER

BUT 6 FEET APART!
**CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU**

**Across:**
1. Turnpike exit
5. Reverential
9. Frrown
14. 60% of us live here
15. Of sound judgment
16. Carried
17. Former CIA director
20. Goals
21. Central
23. Crimson
25. Shuns
29. Kvetch
30. Hot air
31. Street guide
32. Sever
34. Spark generator
35. Scotch companion
36. Perfectly
37. Take pictures
38. Oil well firefighter Red ---
39. Legs it
40. Thr---
41. Corrosive chemicals
42. Since
44. Surrealist Jean ---
45. Short musical passages
47. Electrical devices
48. Goals
49. T----
50. Rider Haggard romance
51. Crash
52. Narrow road
53. The Queen City
55. Otherwise
56. Oil well firefighter Red ---
58. flowering
59. T---
60. Morose
61. The --- small hours
62. Fencing stake
63. Storm centers

**Down:**
1. Fumed
2. Together
3. Minor crime
4. Travel documents
5. Get up
6. Rubbed off
7. Spot
8. Destructive computer key
9. Stiffener
10. Shell which can be blown
11. How some stocks are traded (Abbr.)
12. The --- small hours
13. S.L.C church
19. One way to preserve food
24. Scurried
26. Peed whose work led to "Cats"
28. Asia
29. Wise
30. Toted
31. Goss
32. Appliances
33. Ends
34. Key
35. N R C
36. Deep red
37. Eschews
38. Moan
39. Blah
40. Map
41. Stark
42. Stern
43. Coils
44. Soda
45. To a T
46. Shoot
47. Aten
48. Runs
49. Cast
50. Acids
51. Ago
52. Trot
53. Miro
54. Phrases
55. Famines
56. She
57. Jar
58. Lane
59. Cincinnati
60. Else
61. Ot C
62. Wee
63. O T C
64. L-D S
65. In salt
66. Ran
67. Eliot
68. Emotionally
69. Waded
70. Spans
71. Boost
72. Strap
73. Tough
74. Chaos
75. Sacrilege
76. Screen
77. Aim
78. T-shirt
79. Marine
80. As S C I I
81. Fatal
82. Ensue
83. Seems
84. Java
85. Cat
86. I do
87. Naw
88. Nip.

**IN MEMORIAM**

**ANDRES, ART**

**JUNE 22, 1936 - DECEMBER 31, 2017**

In loving memory of a wonderful husband, father, uncle and brother who passed away into God’s Glory three years ago, Dec. 31, 2017.

Lovingly remembered by Helen and family and by Fred and Betty and family.

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**PUZZLE ANSWERS**

**Crossword Answer:**

Across:
1. Ramp, 15 Awed, 9 Scowl, 14 Asia, 15 Wise, 16 Toted, 17 Goss, 18 Appliances, 20 Ends, 21 Key, 22 N R C, 23 Deep red, 25 Eschews, 29 Moan, 30 Blah, 31 Map, 32 Stern, 34 Coil, 35 Soda, 36 To a T, 37 Shoot, 38 Aten, 39 Runs, 40 Cast, 41 Acids, 42 Ago, 43 Trot, 44 Miro, 45 Phrases, 47 Famines, 50 She, 51 Jar, 52 Lane, 53 Cincinnati, 57 Else, 58 Adair, 59 Ivan, 60 Glum, 61 To wit, 62 Pale, 63 Eyes.

Down:

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**Sudoku Answer:**

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

To place an obituary in our Classifieds, please contact Julia at: julia@notllocal.com or 905.934.1040

Deadline is Tuesdays at 10 a.m.
Stop the Spread
COVID-19 can be deadly. Stay home. Stay strong. Save lives.

Queenston golf pro earns Master Kids Coach designation

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

For golf pro and instructor Brody Wetham, it’s all about having fun, enjoying the game, and teaching life-long golfers. A self-described big kid at heart, he brings that outlook to golfers of all ages across the Niagara region.

The Queenston resident’s philosophy has once again paid dividends. For the third straight year Wetham has been named a U.S. Kids Golf Foundation Top 50 Worldwide Kids coach, earning him the Master Kids Coach designation. It’s the highest honour an instructor can receive from U.S. Kids Golf. And the title puts Wetham in a rarefied company: since 2008 only 197 coaches in the world have received this honour, and only a handful in Canada can boast to be a master.

Wetham says he’s had his sights set on being named a Master Kids Coach since his mentor, Doug Lawrie of Oakville’s Focus Golf Group, earned the same designation in 2015. “A few years ago, when I first started teaching, he urged me to get certified with this, so I did. It became one of my big goals, and I'm pretty excited about it.”

Wetham, like others in the golf world, are coming off one of the busiest seasons ever. With golf being one of the only recreational and athletic options available for all ages during the pandemic, courses were jammed with people either returning to the game or picking up clubs for the very first time. That includes Wetham’s junior program run out of his Niagara Golf Academy at Sawmill Golf Course in Fenwick.

“I taught full bore all summer,” he raves. “I was crazy busy. People had time on their hands. Our junior program at Sawmill had over 330 kids and a waiting list. We also did our first full fall program, which took us into late September, and that filled up in three days.”

Wetham continues, “we had more kids who had never touched a club before, because they had been playing baseball or soccer. They came out with their parents, and now they’ve got the bug. Many told me they can’t wait to get back out next summer.”

That meshes perfectly with Wetham’s overall notion of the game. “U.S. Kids is all about making sure they’re having fun. They could be sitting in their basements playing video games. I like to create an environment for them to get out and have fun. And this year it was more important than ever that they get outside and connect with other kids with some physical activity.”

For Wetham, when working with kids, it’s all about skills, drills and games. With COVID protocols there were a few changes to the way he coached the youngsters this summer. Still, Wetham’s program involves kids in games that are group-based and draw on items such as hula hoops, pool noodles, baseballs and frisbees to get them active and enjoying themselves.

“The main thing about golf is when kids want to come back, Mom and Dad begin to come out. Moms take some lessons, they visit the club house, and golf becomes part of the family fabric. One of the best things is when I go to the range with a new group of kids and I see other kids I taught out there with their families.”

The lockdown stage of the pandemic forced Wetham to move to online private lessons last spring, something he plans to continue during the current provincial lockdown.

While a number of his regular students are now involved in competitive golf, he’s clear that not everyone is going to be a Tiger Woods or a Rickie Fowler. “I'm trying to create golfers,” he asserts. “Hopefully some of these kids will play competitive golf, but it's more important to me that I create lifetime golfers. I want to teach the average Joe to get better. The adults I teach, if I can get that guy who's never had lessons before come back and say ‘Brody, I just shot the best game of my life,’ then I done my job.”

During the winter months, Wetham usually continues teaching out of Sawmill, and also at Niagara Golf Warehouse in St. Catharines. He credits Jeremy Julie and his family, owners of Sawmill, and Niagara Golf Warehouse’s Tony Haney and Brad Graham, for their support of his programs.

“Right now we're shut down,” he says. “We should be able to return to Sawmill once we move into the Red Zone, but at the Golf Warehouse, because it's primarily a retail operation, I can't teach there until we're in Orange.”

In the meantime, he will continue developing his own skills as a golf instructor. “I'll be taking some courses, including a program through PGA Canada for coaching the competitive stream. And I just bought a new Flight Scope, a golf ball launch monitor, so I'll learn a bit more about how to use that to help enhance my teaching.”

He’ll also continue delivering lessons via FaceTime and Zoom to both kids and adults, and will use his website, niagaragolfacademy.com, to post tips. Unfortunately, his annual trip to Florida for the PGA Show and Convention won’t happen, but he will take part in the virtual version of that event.

Under normal conditions, Wetham would be receiving his Master Award at a ceremony during that convention, but he’ll have to wait until January 2022 for that moment in the spotlight.

Brody Wetham's goal is to teach kids and adults to enjoy the game, hoping they will become life-long golfers. (Photo supplied)

For golf pro and instructor Brody Wetham, it’s all about having fun, enjoying the game, and teaching life-long golfers. A self-described big kid at heart, he brings that outlook to golfers of all ages across the Niagara region.

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