Clean-up challenging, but staff got it done Tuesday

Penny Coles
The Local

The Pride crosswalk, defaced twice in less than a week, is now clean.

CAO Marnie Cluckie says staff were still looking at how best to clean it Monday morning, after a second round of vandalism was discovered Sunday morning, and also discussing putting up cameras to prevent further vandalism.

Cameras are looking like a possible solution. “It will likely be the first step that staff will take,” she says, and won’t require a special council meeting. The cost, she says, “will fall under my operational budget.”

She couldn’t be sure of a timeline but says “we’ll expedite it as much as possible.”

While recognizing a quick clean-up is important, it proved to be a challenge, says Cluckie.

Town staff had consulted with the company that painted the vivid colours of the crosswalk last week, she says, to ensure they would be using “best practices” to clean it, and high water pressure was recommended.

By Monday morning, staff had identified the second set of circular marks as made by tires coated with a substance, likely tar, and sought advice on how to clean it up without any further damage, Cluckie says.

They also had to wait until the police came out for a second look. — Cluckie contacted them again Monday morning to let them know their investigation included two acts of vandalism, likely made by a small vehicle, like a motorcycle, dirt bike or ATV.

But when town staff first made an attempt to clean off the tar and tire marks, it didn’t work.

However, they gave it another try Tuesday afternoon, Cluckie told The Local.

In the end it was “a combination of hot, high pressure water, and a lot of elbow grease.”

The Progressive Pride design of the crosswalk is the same as the one by the Niagara Region buildings on St. David’s Road.

“The light blue, pink and white represent trans and non-binary individuals, and the black and brown represent marginalized people of colour. The painting of this crosswalk serves as a visible reminder that all are welcome in Niagara-on-the-Lake,” says the town news release, and is intended to be a visible way of celebrating, supporting and creating awareness of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Made aware of some comments on Facebook regarding people taking their lawn chairs out to sit and watch over the crosswalk to discourage further vandalism, Cluckie says, “I don’t recommend people taking police matters into their own hands at all. But what I appreciate about that is it speaks to the overwhelming support we have in NOTL for inclusivity, respect and acceptance. That people are willing to do that warms my heart. They are saying ‘we want to stand in unity against discrimination.’”

If there is any silver lining “to this horrible defacing of the crosswalk, it’s that it brings these community members together who really care about acceptance.”

And yes, she adds, “I 100 per cent believe the people in NOTL care about creating an inclusive community. I think most people will also be quite devastated by this action that

Continued on page 3

Pride crosswalks, flag vandalism not uncommon

Mike Balsom
The Local

After hosting a celebratory and well-attended 10th annual Pride in the Park festival at Montebello Park in St. Catharines Saturday, Pride Niagara Chair Enzo De Divitiis was disappointed to learn that Niagara-on-the-Lake’s new Pride crosswalk on Anderson Lane had been vandalized for a second time.

“Disappointed, but not shocked, as many in the region’s LGBTIQ2S+ community likely concur,” De Divitiis told The Local Monday afternoon. “Everyone needs to be expecting that. The key is to be quick to fix it. That’s the whole point of being an ally, to be visual and take on the hate that normally we would take. Putting in a crosswalk is the town saying ‘look at us, we are allies’.

To De Divitiis, once that visual representation of support for the LGBTIQ2S+ community is installed, the town has to stand by it. It has to be a visible proclamation all year long, not just during June’s Pride Month festivities.

So, if a flag, a bench or a crosswalk like the one painted at Anderson Lane last week is damaged or vandalized, it has to be corrected.

“If you truly believe in it,” De Divitiis explained, “it has to be fixed right away.”

The tire marks that could only have been left purposely on the crosswalk twice last week are a common form of defacement of such installations, according to the recipient of a 2022 Queen’s Platinum Jubilee Community Service Award from the federal government.

“It’s the easiest thing for them to do,” De Divitiis said of that type of vandalism. “It happened in St. Catharines right away, too, and in Welland. Each time, they did it right away. It’s the easiest, weakest thing to do, because nobody has to see you.”

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The Niagara-on-the-Lake
The Trusted Voice of Our Community

notllocal.com  JUNE 7, 2023  Volume 5  Issue 23

TICKET TO WIN A $500 GIFT CARD TO GREG SYKES REAL ESTATE
The Niagara-on-the-Lake

Pickleball pro Adam Eatock to play in exhibition games

page 18

FREE HOME EVALUATION
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WHEN YOU CALL GREG, YOU GET GREG!
Betty Ann Chandler holds up a photo of early Mack teacher Nel-them toting their fragile nurs-night at Club Italia, some of 240 grads showed up Friday 1974 graduating year. About all Mack graduates up to the 50th anniversary of their graduation from the Mack School of Nursing in St. Catharines. It was organized by Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Betty Ann Chandler.

As the current president of the Mack Alumni Association, Chandler is tasked with organizing the annual gathering of Mack in 1873 at the St. Catharines General Hospital, The Mack School was the first such institution in Canada based on Florence Nightingale’s school in England. Originally called the Mack Training School for Nurses, it was a hospital-based facility where student nurses were trained by qualified nurses, with many of them boarding on site at the school. In 1970, it became the Mack School of Nursing, based at the St. Catharines General Hospital on Queenston Street. From 1970 to 1974, 511 nurses graduated from Mack, completing their practical education at that hospital and others in the region. After 1974, the nursing school moved to Niagara College.

Nurses Carole Hawthorn, Betty Ann Chandler and Linda Stewart look at a photo of their late roommate Karen Kennedy in Mack’s 1970 yearbook. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

The gathered retired nurses actually graduated 53 years ago. Their planned Class of 1970 50th reunion was supposed to happen in 2020, but the pandemic put the plans on hold to this year. “We’ve lost quite a few classes,” Chandler, who eventually went on to teach nursing at Niagara College, told The Local, “and some were too ill to attend Two of my roommates from our ‘East Street Gang’ are here, but the other, a sweet, beautiful girl named Karen Kennedy, passed away.”

Hagersville High School graduate Chandler, whose last name at the time was Wren, was accepted to study nursing at Toronto General Hospital. But her parents thought the big city life was a bit too hectic for their daughter. Her grandmother lived in Beaver-dams (now part of Thorold). Because she would be close to her grandmother, she applied and was accepted to begin her training at Mack.

Like many of her classmates, Chandler boarded at first in the Schmon residence and then the Leonard residence at the hospital, both of which later became hospital wings. In her third year, she and three friends rented an apartment on East Street, hence her ‘Yung’ name.

Upon graduation, Chandler worked at Port Colborne hospital for a short time before moving to the Hotel Dieu hospital in St. Catharines after she married.

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Residents saddened, not surprised by vandalism

Continued from page 1

was taken to define it. It’s vital that we stand as a community against this kind of discrimination and intolerance, and that everyone helps to create an environment where everyone feels respected and accepted, I think we’re seeing that.”

It was Laa Simpson, who grew up in Niagara-on-the-Lake but has lived and worked in Toronto for the last 11 years who saw on Facebook that the crosswalk was vandalized for a second time, and offered “to park a camping chair at the crosswalk for a 12-hour shift to protect it.” Anyone else?”

Talking to The Local, she says she absolutely meant it, and on Facebook, called on Lord Mayor Gary Zalewski to organize it.

Seeing some of the negative comments posted, she says, made her think about when she came out in NOTL and announced she was going to marry a woman. “There were those who were against it, who said it’s not acceptable.”

Making the decision to marry his partner, she adds, was the most difficult decision of his life. “I think helping to create an environment where everyone feels respected and accepted, is what we’re seeing that.”

Continued from page 1

You can just rev your engine and spin your tires and then take off.”

People in NOTL and elsewhere have expressed shock, anger and sadness in seeing the crosswalk vandalized. De Divittis says his fellow Pride Niagara board members and supporters have also expressed anger and sadness. But through many years of advocacy for acceptance of the LGBTQ2S+ community, most say they have become somewhat numb to all manner of acts such as those last week.

“When we started doing the flags in each municipality,” he recalled, “the first time we had it raised in Niagara Falls it was stolen in under an hour.” That’s about 10 years ago now.

De Divittis and others organized the raising of the Pride flag in all 12 of Niagara’s municipalities this year. Representatives from Pride Niagara toured to each municipality on June 1, meeting with municipal officials to hoist the rainbow flag at city and town halls.

“We put all the proposals in each municipality,” he explained. “We purchase the flags. It’s our initiative.”

Of the theft 10 years ago of the Pride flag in Niagara Falls, De Divittis says the city didn’t replace it right away. Since then, most municipalities have learned they have to do everything in their power to get the flag back up, or clean up the crosswalk, as soon as possible.

“Hopefully by now they’ve made a statement that says that they are going to fix it,” said De Divittis. “Hopefully they are going to do everything in their power to clean it up if they really care about it.”

There was an attempt to clean it Monday, town CAO Marnie Chuckie told The Local, but it turned out to be more challenging than anticipated, and wasn’t successful. Staff tried again Tuesday afternoon, and hot high pressure water “along with some elbow grease” got the job done.

With a Pride Month event (the Shades of Love patio party from noon to 6 p.m. followed by the Queens and Cider drag show) coming up at NOTL’s Ironwood Cider House scheduled for June 10, getting the symbol at the entrance into the town before that is crucial.

“Some people have already said they might not be comfortable coming to this event,” said De Divittis. “Hopefully with this happening, it won’t affect that show.”

Quick clean-up essential, says Pride Niagara
Newark Neighbours getting close to moving date

Penny Coles  
The Local

Newark Neighbours is getting closer to moving to its new location, which will offer the local food bank and thrift store an area three times the size of what it has now — space it very much needs.

Cindy Grant, chair of Newark Neighbours, says their client list continues to grow, with more than 160 adults and children requiring help from the food bank.

Although the large front portion of the Virgil location, formerly Lincoln Interiors, will be dedicated to the thrift store, the back will be tripled as well, says Grant, along with a new room specifically designed for client intake. Both are entered through a side door, allowing privacy for clients.

“The culture will change with this space,” Grant adds, as each area is not only more spacious but also more defined and separate for those using the food bank, and for volunteers to carry out their work.

The inside construction is well underway, much brighter with fresh paint, and the original terrazzo floor, now covered for protection from the ongoing work, has been refinished, says Grant, who is pleased with both.

Last week the team of Newark Neighbours volunteers, some of whom have been helping out on John Street for more than 20 years, had its first meeting at the new location, says Grant. “The team is really excited to see this happen,” she says. Change can be difficult, she acknowledges, “but everyone is really embracing this. They are saying thank you, they’re grateful for having more space, and feeling it will be a good move, a good change.”

Grant is also pleased with the way the work is progressing, and envisioning its completion. She can picture a donor plaque on the side wall near the front, to be seen as people enter, and a beautiful wooden counter for checking out sales from the thrift shop. There are slat walls designed for hanging things, the racks and shelving are ordered for the thrift shop and food bank spaces, so everything will have its place. And a day has been put aside for Rotary Club of Niagara-on-the-Lake members who have volunteered their help to arrive in force and assemble the fixtures.

Those who have visited the current John Street location will be able to picture volunteers behind the counter in a tiny space at the front sorting donated items as they arrive, then trying to find somewhere to put them in the small, crowded area that is the thrift shop.

Behind the new Virgil thrift shop will be an entire room to sort — volunteers are really excited about that, says Grant. It will be closed off from the rest of the space, but with one-way windows that allow volunteers to work while keeping an eye on the store out front.

The plan for the next few weeks, if work proceeds as expected, will be for the doors of Newark Neighbours on John Street to close to the public for the week beginning Monday, June 26, when volunteers will pack in preparation for the move, and then unpack and fill all the new shelves and racks. Two Men and a Truck will do the moving, says Grant. And again, if everything goes according to plan, Tuesday, July 4 will be “a soft opening” for the public.

Those who rely on the food bank will be informed ahead of time about the closure, but with food typically picked up by clients every two weeks, waiting for the reopening won’t be a problem, says Grant.

Volunteers are still needed, she says, not for the move, which is covered, but for the new space once it is open and operating.

With so much extra space and sectioned-off rooms, the process of the work will be a little different, with more assigned tasks rather than everyone pitching in together, and also extra hours of opening, including Saturdays and Sundays, and Thursday evenings. Volunteers now working at Newark Neighbours already have their days, and will likely continue them, “but we will need extra people to staff those extra shifts.”

Scheduling is flexible, and anyone interested in a volunteer application form can visit newarkneighbours.ca/volunteers.

For more information or to discuss volunteering, email newarkneighbours1@gmail.com.

A celebratory official opening is likely to be mid- to late July, Grant says, with a firm date “to be determined.”
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When a visitor from Toronto expressed concern Sunday about air quality due to smoke from the local soccer field, Quebec, I thought he was overreacting. But on Tuesday, when I received a message from Carrie Flasket, president of the NOTL Soccer Club, that all club activity was being cancelled due to poor air quality, it became real.

As a member organization of the Niagara Geopark Association, our local soccer club is required to follow all of the parent association’s directives. A message had been sent out Tuesday to all Niagara Geoparks from the provincial association, which had declared an emergency situation.

“Due to all the forest fires burning in western (sic) Canada,” said the message, “the smoke from these fires has now drifted into Ontario. The air quality from the people that message and rate air quality has said that it could be dangerous for some people to play outdoor sports tonight.”

In addition, Environment Canada placed much of Southern Ontario under a special air quality statement Tuesday morning, excluding some of the southwest area of the province.

“Air quality and visibility due to wildfires smoke can fluctuate over short periods and can vary considerably from hour to hour,” said Environment Canada. “Wildfire smoke can be harmful to everyone’s health even at low concentrations.

By mid-afternoon a murky haze and a smoky scent seemed to have descended upon

The Niagara Geopark and its organizers want to consider trails used by Indigenous inhabitants from thousands of years ago, to current trails created in the last few centuries. When Niagara Region officially becomes listed as a UNESCO Global Geopark on the world stage, visitors will get access to a trail network created by a combination of natural and human forces.

While the Niagara Geopark’s Indigenous liaison, Geopark’s Indigenous liaison, and Canadian Geopark’s mandate.

Brown of Brock University’s Geography and Tourism Studies, he has graciously agreed to share his opinions, to work, even in the most extreme situations. In the 12th century, the term “haze” referred to smoke from hearth fires, and from this it developed into a modern age of technology and tourism.

Between Davis and Brown, they really painted a picture as to how we must continue to include Indigenous geosites out of respect for past generations on the land, yet also make these sites accessible for Niagara visitors and residents.

One thing that reigns true in Niagara and around the world is the importance of protecting our environment. In the 12th century, the term “haze” referred to smoke from hearth fires, and from this it developed into a modern age of technology and tourism.

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Between Davis and Brown, they really painted a picture as to how we must continue to include Indigenous geosites out of respect for past generations on the land, yet also make these sites accessible for Niagara visitors and residents.
Let's have better healthcare with privatized services

Ted's thoughts: on Pride Month and its history

Going down road of privatization will destroy public healthcare

The Niagara Health Coalition revealed after the votes were tallied that across Niagara, 7,123 residents voted ‘No’ to privatization of our healthcare.

I first want to thank the volunteers for organizing, and want to thank the people in our community, including here in Niagara, for coming out and making their voices heard on this issue.

Let me be clear: we have a crisis in healthcare in the province of Ontario.

Today, in the province of Ontario, we have patients forced to wait months, sometimes years, for routine procedures.

We have nurses, PSWs and front-line workers on the front lines before heading into their shifts, and leaving the hospital each day, not knowing when they love how do we solve this crisis?

It starts with the following. Firstly, the government should start taking the disproportionate and hidden fees. We cannot allow this to expand and harm vulnerable seniors here in Niagara.

We need to ensure we are using our hospital rooms correctly and making sure we continue to support our publicly-funded, publicly-delivered healthcare, and here in Niagara, we do want to ensure all pressure on privatized, failed and harmful services are protected and inclusion is simply nonsense. Let me give you a little history.

Prior to 1969, being openly LGBTQ was actually against the law. You couldn’t dance together or hold hands in public. If you didn’t have at least one article of clothing that belonged to your gender at school or school dances in New York you couldn’t drink alcohol to anyone from the LGBTQ community.

In that year in New York at a bar called Stonewall a group of transexual people, drag queens and people in the community, barricaded police in the bar for three days. They had the right to get their grip on the hate and discrimination. That was the beginning of the gay rights movement in North America.

A year later people began to march on the last Sunday in June to celebrate what was small group that did at Stonewall.

Each year from then on, Pride Month and the paces have grown and grow worldwide. So what started as a political movement has now become a celebration of inclusion and acceptance.

We have operating rooms across the Niagara Region that are currently empty because we are not using our hospital system by $21 billion by 2025.

As a community, we could develop a model to deal with this crisis.

Bill 60 is the most dangerous Bill I have seen in my time at Queen’s Park. By expanding the definition of surgery, our seniors are being deprived of their usual care.

While Bill 60 will wait women and the staffing crisis we see in public hospitals across the province, for profit, long-term care homes can simply cut the care they provide and turn a blind eye to any potential violation.

When you call me, what is that government want to deal with this crisis?

It’s ending the current legislative session shortly, without the introduction of a care plan or sending the legislature home until September.

This is wrong.

We need to continue here, working for the people of Ontario and addressing the urgent crisis we face.

Bill 60 is the most dangerous Bill I have seen in my time at Queen’s Park. By expanding the definition of surgery, our seniors are being deprived of their usual care.
UNESCO geopark could push Niagara to next-level tourism

Mike Balsom
The Local

There was a definite air of congeniality in the Niagara College conference room among about 70 attendees and participants in last Friday’s Niagara Geopark Trails Summit. Even more so there was a sense of excitement at seeing all the stakeholders from various organizations, businesses and governments from across Niagara together in one room.

They were at the Dan Jill Patterson campus in Niagara-on-the-Lake for a day-long event designed to get everyone on the same page when it comes to this fall’s application to designate the region as a UNESCO Geopark.

It’s a quest begun by geographer Darren Platakis back in 2017, when he first came up with the idea. Platakis, the founder and chair of the aspiring Niagara Geopark’s education outreach working group, along with board chair Perry Hartwick and special projects coordinator Ian Lucas, organized and hosted Friday’s gathering, which was emceed by former St. Catharines mayor Walter Sendzik.

On the surface the meeting was focused on the many trails that snake through the region. But it was much more than a group of environmentalists and stewards of the land sharing their love of nature.

It was about the impact of working together on the UNESCO application, and the impact that can potentially have on local tourism and Niagara’s economy as a whole.

Looking around the room it was easy to recognize representatives from Greenbelt Ontario, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, the Niagara Parks Commission and the Bruce Trail Conservancy. There were also professors from Brock University and Niagara College, principals from businesses such as Walker Industries and Arterra Wines, and councilors from many of the region’s 12 municipalities.

After kicking off the day with some welcoming words from the geopark’s Indigenous culture liaison Pad Brown, Brock geography and tourism studies professor Dr. David Brown was the first to speak to the crowd.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake resident made comparisons of Friday’s event to a November 1992 meeting called the Niagara Greenways Trails Summit that he participated in.

“We had over a hundred people crammed into the Brock Senate room at that day,” Brown recalled. “We formed a group called the Niagara Greenways Network. It was the first systematic attempt to consolidate all the things we knew about the trails in Niagara and put it all in one book at the time.”

To Brown and others who spoke and participated in pan- els, the time is now to link all of the region’s beautiful geogra- phy together to earn recognition from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Keynote speaker Brooke Hartwick of the Bruce Trail Conservancy, also an ambassador with the World Trails Network, vowed the crowd when she displayed the website for Jeju Island UNESCO Geo Park in Korea. The site, geo.park.jeju.go.kr, is an interactive one-stop clearing house with a wealth of information about the geogra- phy of the island and the business that offer services there.

Panels included one led by Davis on Indigenous heritage trails, and a healthy living and visiting discussion led by Niagara Region landscape architect Julia van der Laan de Vries.

NOTL Local columnist Owen’s Hiking and Adventure tours, led another panel on sustainable economic benefits.

After the summit wrapped up in mid-afternoon, partici- pants and politicians gathered at the college’s Benchmark Restaurant for a reception.

Today is an example of what’s possible,” said Niagara College president Sean Kenne- dy to open the reception, “when the private sector, the public sector, educational organiza- tions and governments all come together to dream about what’s possible if we all work together.”

Regional chair Jim Bradley, Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Gates and Niagara West MPP Sam Oosterhoff all declared their support for the organiza- tion’s objectives. NDP Gates, however, couldn’t resist an opportunity to take a swipe at the current provincial government’s Bill 23.

“Our environment is under attack,” said Gates. “They want to build housing on the Greenbelt. I’m not support- ing it. We need to build 1.5 million homes, and we have enough land to build two million homes in Ontario. We do not have to build homes on the Greenbelt. We have to protect it. We’re the luckiest people in the world with our trails, and we have to protect them.”

Oosterhof responded with a dig of his own at Gates.

“It is very hot outside,” said the young MPP, referencing Friday’s warm temperatures, “but only half as hot as it is un- der Wayne’s collar.”

Hartwick, who later paid tribute to the late Keith Sim- mons, whose support of the geopark project through his posi- tion at Great Wolf Lodge was instrumental in the work done by the organization the last three years, was floored with the success of the event.

In front of a scrolling back- drop of beautiful aerial images of the myriad trails and natural attractions across the region, the geologist explained the concept of a Niagara Geopark.

“It is core to a sustainable tourism-oriented model for our region that can help us recon- cile the planet upon which our very survival depends,” he said. “The more we learn about our place in nature, the better we will be able to understand our past and positively influence our future. That’s what this is all about, promoting a sense of pride in our region.”

The geopark push can be seen as the latest progressive ef- fort to advance Niagara’s tourism industry, which Sendzik pointed out has been mired at 12 to 14 million visitors a year for ages.

When considered along with the recent extension of GO Train service to Niagara, last summer’s Niagara 2022 Canada Summer Games and the current efforts of grape growers and winery operators to turn Niagara into a premium wine destination, it’s clear that many believe the time has come to move the region into the next stage tourism-wise.

“I believe that going the UNESCO Geopark route is the best way to help that along,” said Hartwick. “There’s so much energy, effort and desire in the Niagara Region, and I think if some of that is tapped under this geopark umbrella that we can push forward together.”

Daran Platakis, Ian Lucas and Perry Hartwick at the summit.

Phil Davis leads the Indigenous heritage trails panel discussion. (Photos by Mike Balsom)
First stage of archaeological assessment complete

Release of report expected next week

Local Staff

The Stage 1 archaeological assessment of the Negro Burial Ground (now officially the Niagara Baptist Church Burial Ground) has been completed, and is anticipated to be presented by town staff to council, says a news release from the fund-raising committee.

The Stage 1 archaeological assessment, commissioned by the town and funded by Friends of the Forgotten, is the first step in mandatory due diligence required by the Bereavement Authority of Ontario in advance of potential improvements to the property, the news release says. The study, conducted by Archaeological Research Associates, includes information about the geography and history of the area, the archaeological potential of the site, and strategies to proceed to Stage 2.

“The findings may not provide new details on the site,” explained George Webber, chair of the Friends of the Forgotten committee, “but we are confident the study will officially confirm the importance of the property, the news release says. The study, conducted by Archaeological Research Associates, includes information about the geography and history of the area, the archaeological potential of the site, and strategies to proceed to Stage 2.”

George Webber at the Negro Burial Ground, after the graves and stones were discovered through ground-penetrating radar funded by James Russell.

We are looking forward to the town’s report to council. A formal Stage 2 archaeological assessment would have to be approved by council and then commissioned by the town under the guidelines of the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism and the bereavement authority. A request for proposals would be issued for this work once funding is in place. To date, funding for Stage 2 has not been secured, the news release says.

Some options for revitalizing the site include creating a memorial, say the Friends of the Forgotten, confirming the interments, mapping and possibly recovering any potential headstones.

“As we continue to learn more about the process, we recognize the many steps involved and the potential costs of each one,” explained Webber. “To fundraise for this project, we need to have specific outcomes and timelines. We also feel strongly that community input and support need to be gathered ahead of each step.”

In addition to the Stage 1 report, Friends of the Forgotten are continuing with independent research to fully understand the site’s role in the Black history of Niagara and learn more about the people who are believed to be buried on the grounds. Discussions are underway with organizations in other jurisdictions, including St. Catharines, to learn about restoration efforts that are underway on other historic burial grounds.

Friends of the Forgotten, a non-profit organization that honours the interments, mapping and possibly recovering any potential headstones, says the news release.

In addition to the Stage 1 archaeological assessment, discussions are underway on other historic burial grounds, including the Niagara Baptist Church burial ground. The Niagara Baptist Church burial ground has historically been a point of pride for NOTL, with its role in the town’s heritage and the importance of Black history in NOTL.

“The findings may not provide new details on the site,” explained George Webber, chair of the Friends of the Forgotten committee, “but we are confident the study will officially confirm the importance of the property, the news release says. The study, conducted by Archaeological Research Associates, includes information about the geography and history of the area, the archaeological potential of the site, and strategies to proceed to Stage 2.”

George Webber at the Negro Burial Ground, after the graves and stones were discovered through ground-penetrating radar funded by James Russell. (File photo)

The Highest Total Volume of Local Sales for the Past Decade

Highest volume in Niagara-on-the-Lake from 01/01/2011 to 09/21/2021. Source MLS.
Perfect casting makes Shaw’s Gypsy remarkable

Mike Balsom
The Local

It’s hard to imagine anyone other than Kate Hennig playing the role of Rose in Shaw Festival’s production of Gypsy. The nine-year Shaw veteran is a tour de force as the pushy, blindly-ambitious stage mother of two young performers, determined that first her younger daughter June, then her older daughter Louise, is to become a star.

Perhaps one reason Hennig embodies the role so well is that she stepped in for Nora Mclaffan as Rose when Jackie Maxwell directed Gypsy back in 2005, the last time it was performed at Shaw.

Experience must count for something. With both her look, her voice, her stage presence and her loud belly laugh, Hennig seems to have been born to play the mother of the well-known burlesque and striptease performer Gypsy Rose Lee. She owns the stage during the three-hour Shaw presentation, directed by Jay Turvey.

The original 1995 Broadway production, featuring Ethel Merman in the role of Rose, was based on the 1957 bestseller Gypsy: A Memoir, the often heartbreaking life story of America’s most celebrated stripper. In that book the woman, born as Rose Louise Hovick, divides her life into three acts, the third ending with her journey to Hollywood.

The play, however, largely shines the spotlight on the family’s matrarch, a three-married woman obsessed with seeing one of her daughter’s names in lights.

Act one begins with June and Louise as young children, drawn into their mother’s scheming to find success for them on the vaudeville circuit in the early 1920s. The setting is Gypsy Rose Lee’s hometown of Seattle, Washington, where Rose bullies and blackmails a local vaudeville producer, played by Allan Louis, into taking on the girls’ act.

Rose’s troupe of child dancers and singers performs the first of a series of rollicking production numbers here, with Baby June as the focus. A reluctant Louise is meanwhile relegated to one of her younger sister’s supporting cast, through incorporations as first a newsboy and then a farmer, as Rose tweaks the children’s act seemingly based on what props are available to her.

Then it’s on to Los Angeles, where she meets Herbie (an excellent Jason Cadieux), whom she persuades to become the girls’ manager. Hennig delivers a knock-out performance of Small World in her attempt to win Herbie over. He soon is hoping to be husband number four to the “pioneer woman without a frontier.”

Early in Gypsy, Louise is portrayed by the talented Hannah Otta, a 12-year-old St. Catharines actor. In another perfect casting move, Hannah is almost the spitting image of fifteen-year-old sister Sofia, who plays the younger version of Louise for the remainder of the play. It might even take a few minutes and a couple of blinks before audience members realize there has been a change.

Winnipeg-born Ariana Abudaga is the youthfully June in Gypsy. On the day The Local attended, though, Hannah’s 10-year-old sister Sofia stepped into the role and performed it superbly. It was a special treat to see the two sisters, who are heavily involved in Niagara-on-the-Lake’s Yellow Door Theatre Project, work together on the Festival Theatre stage.

Having won our welcome in California, Herbie and Rose drag the kids to Akron, which is where we first see Lumsden as Louise. In that Ohio city Louise celebrates her birthday alone in her room after Herbie and the others chase away an angry hotel manager, June is now one of Madelyn Kriese’s starring role, a star, in the process continuing to neglect the quiet and less enthusiastic Louise.

Both sisters begin to tire of traipsing across the country with their mother. They fantasize about what it would be like if Herbie and Rose married and settled down. When that doesn’t seem to be happening, June runs away to marry back-up performer Tida (a wonderful Drew Plummer).

But that doesn’t deter Rose, who comes up with a new plan to make her shy older daughter a star. Hennig belts out the well-known Everything’s Coming Up Roses to conclude act one.

Act two is almost a completely different style of play. With the first act heavy on comedy and lavish production numbers, the second delves into the pathos and the tragedy of a mother pushing her daughter a little too far.

As the Great Depression arrives, vaudeville becomes a thing of the past. Rose and Herbie struggle to find work for Louise, who knows she will never be June. Louise winds up mistakenly booked for a gig at a burlesque venue in Wichita, Kansas, and finds herself sharing a dressing room with seasoned striptease performers.

Destitute and desperate to help her mother, Louise offers to perform a striptease act to earn some money. That leads to a highlight of the second act, You Gotta Get a Gimmick, a hilariously ribald number performed by the strippers Tessie (Elodie Gillet), also Turvey’s assistant director, Mazeppa (Jenni Burke) and Electra (Krystle Chance), complete with butterfly wings, a trumpet, and a strategically lit bra, respectively.

Realizing the end of her dream is near, Rose reluctantly agrees to marry Herbie and settle down, but at the last minute offers up her daughter to fill in for the venue’s star stripper, who has been arrested. Lumsden’s face shines the spotlight on the family as Rose now has no more plans for Louise, who is completely different style of play.

Yet, that’s where the play takes an unexpected turn. Kate Hennig as Rose and Jason Cadioux as Herbie in Gypsy. (Shaw Festival, David Cooper)

Kate Hennig as Rose and Jason Cadioux as Herbie in Gypsy. (Shaw Festival, David Cooper)
About 50 vendors lined the grounds and filled the pavilions at the St. Davids Lioness Lions Club’s second annual spring market. Arts and crafts, specialty foods, homemade jams and preserves and clothing items were just a few of the items up for grabs. The tulip bulbs were flying out by the flat as the young volunteers in the Leos Club sold the hot item to raise funds for the McMaster Children’s Hospital and to support construction at Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides school in Oakville. Event organizer Lioness Lion Diane Pewer was pleased with the turnout, adding that proceeds from the event go to the Niagara Children’s Centre. Next on the agenda for the club is the annual St. Davids Carnival, scheduled for July 26 to 29. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

St. Davids Lioness Lion Spring Market a success

(left) Elorabeth Thiesen and her father Greg check out the crystals.

(right) Leos Hardi Patel, Janci Patel, Maya Dueck and Carmen Rogers sell town tulip bulbs, a popular item at the spring market.
Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa led a procession of 14 McLaren cars, ranging in value from $300,000 to $2.1 million, down Queen Street to the delight of the thousands gathered on the closed block between Gage and Victoria streets. It was a celebration of the British automaker’s 60th anniversary arranged by Alana Hurov of 124 on Queen Hotel and Spa, Jessica Taylor of the NOTL Chamber of Commerce, and Matthew Berenz, marketing manager for McLaren Toronto. Zalepa was impressed. “It’s a great machine. You could tell it really just wanted to take off. It’s very futuristic. I couldn’t even tell it was on at first, but when you push that gas pedal down you could really feel it.” Hurov said it was incredible to see all the people who came out for the event, which was pulled together quickly. “I’m taken aback by the response,” she said.
Volunteers sort and pack books, preparing them for shipment to the sale.

Penny Coles
The Local

How many readers still love to pick up a good book, rather than reading on some kind of an electronic device? And who doesn’t love a bargain?

Over the last while, volunteers have working like crazy getting about 100,000 books sorted for the 44th installment of the Book Riot, an annual fundraiser for Birchway Niagara. Formally Women’s Place, Birchway is a women’s shelter in Niagara Falls with outreach services that help hundreds of survivors of domestic violence in South Niagara every year.

About 4,000 shoppers are expected to visit the Gale Centre in Niagara Falls from Tuesday, June 6 to Sunday, June 11, says Jennifer McQuestion, Birchway’s communications manager, many of them from Niagara-on-the-Lake, with a large number of local readers returning each year.

McQuestion calls it “Canada’s best and biggest used book sale,” with everything donated by people who are aware of the sale and have shopped there over decades, and many who also, once the event is over, can start dropping off books at Apple Self-Storage units in the Falls for next year’s sale.

“People just know about it,” says McQuestion, and as books are dropped off, a core group of volunteers starts sorting books in the storage units almost every week until it’s time for the boxes of books to be transported to the Gale Centre.

“We have a space the size of an entire ice rink, with fiction on one side as you walk in and non-fiction on the other,” says McQuestion. Volunteers also sort books into sub-categories to make it easy for shoppers.

In addition there is space for rare and vintage books, lots of children’s books, and tables for CDs, DVDs, puzzles and games, she says.

There are volunteers who come to help from NOTL, including a group from Grace United Church to sort, Niagara Falls firefighters who truck the books from the storage units and deliver them to the arena, and minor hockey teams to help unload the boxes and take them into the arena. McQuestion estimates overall about 400 volunteers are involved in making this event happen.

One of them is Chamanjit Sidhu, a St. Davids woman who is on the board of Birchway, and has been a volunteer for the Book Riot for several years. Her children, an 18-year-old daughter and her nine-year-old son, volunteer as well.

“My son just asked me if we’re going to volunteer again,” she says. “He’s really excited to do it.”

Sidhu is a registered social worker, and has worked in the areas of children’s welfare and mental illness, so a position on the Birchway board seemed a natural to her. “This is rewarding for me,” she says, “giving back to the community, and making impactful decisions that help women.”

She’s been on the board for about four years, and this is her third year helping with the Book Riot.

She soon decided she wanted to get her children involved, and her daughter now takes shifts on her own, while her son “loves being at the sale. He really wants to help out.”

Sidhu says she is in awe of the enthusiasm, passion and commitment of the volunteers and the number of volunteer hours they put in, many of them returning year after year.

“I’m truly honoured to be part of this community,” she adds, especially with an increasing number of women looking for help, and 10 new beds to support, without government assistance.

This year, organizers hope to raise $100,000, which is badly needed, McQuestion says.

The call for Birchway’s shelter and outreach services has increased, and although there are those 10 more beds, both the Niagara Falls shelter and Gillian’s Place in St. Catharines are often short of spaces for those who need them, and work together to try to find places, she says.

Most items at the sale are only $3, although some may be more, says McQuestion.

There is a pre-sale Tuesday, June 6, from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. Admission is $10.

Wednesday, June 7 it opens 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Thursday is a regular sale day, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., with a daily special: buy two CDs or DVDs, and get one free.

Friday, June 9, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. the daily special is children and youth titles, buy two, get one free. Saturday, June 10, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., the daily special is hardcovers, buy two, get one free.

Sunday, June 11, the final day, the Book Riot is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and it’s Bag Day — fill a bag for $5 or 3 bags for $10.

The Book Riot, at 5152 Thorold Stone Road in Niagara Falls, has books sorted and classified by genre. (Photos supplied)

Strawberry Social

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is excited to host its annual Strawberry Social event, returning to an all-in-person gathering!

Admission is free for all attendees.

WHO: Niagara-on-the-Lake Residents (65+)

WHEN: Thursday, June 22, 2023
11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
(Doors open at 10:30 a.m.)

WHERE: Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre (14 Anderson Lane)

Registration is required. Please register online at www.notl.com/recreation-events/community-initiatives-events or by calling 905-468-3266 before Thursday, June 15, 2023. Space is limited.

1593 Four Mile Creek Road, Virgil ON, LOS 1T0
905-468-3266 | www.notl.com
A book fair showing local authors’ books to coincide once again with the St. Andrew’s Strawberry Festival. Books at the Barn will take place in front of the quaint red barn at 322 Simcoe Street on Saturday, June 17, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., across the street from the Strawberry Festival. Among those authors whose books will be for sale are Sally Baasajian, Sharon Frayne, Diane Martin, Paul Masson, Kathryn Recourt, and Richard West. In addition, Chamber offering a networking event that promises to be fun

Sharon Frayne signs her latest book, The Sound of a Rainbow, for a fan at an April book launch. It was selected by the CBC as one of the Young Adult must-reads this spring.

continued from page 6

globe is how Indigenous peo-
ple are known to show an
immense respect and care for
the land. With the Niagara
Geopark’s inclusion of both
Indigenous and natural high-
lights along the peninsula, this
will allow individuals to really
appreciate a sense of place in
Niagara and what our com-

communities and (trails) are really
built upon — the historical
and current respect between people
and the land. Quite frankly,
that is not an experience or
sensation you are likely to get
with the biggest attractions and
busiest tourist pits in the area.
So you might be wondering
how many trails are available to us
in the Niagara Region as we speak.

"We don't really know how
many trails or what their total
distances are in Niagara," said
Ian Lucas, Niagara Geopark’s
project coordinator. He spoke
with a tone of wonder, continu-
ing on to explain that the Niag-
ara Geopark team wants to "put
them all together in a database
that is accessible to everyone.
Speaking of everyone, it is no
secret that Niagara is about
to enjoy a post COVID spurt of
visitors from around the world.
Add these numbers to inevitable
population growth, quotas, and
there will be a lot more feet on
the various trails in Niagara in the
very near future.

"This current snapshot situa-
tion allowed me to ask pandants
Sue Morris of Venture Niaga-
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Bubchuck, and Phil Lucocco of
Consil Niagara how they see
their businesses leading the way
in maintaining environmental
sustainability. My second
discussion prompt was asking
how we can break the narrative
of "economy versus environ-
ment" when in reality they are
more than capable of coexisting.

This opened the floor to one of
the many productive rounds of
idea-sharing that occurred
during this summit, which is
exactly what we were all pas-
tionate there to do.

My final question for you,
the reader — where do the trails
of Niagara take you, and
how will you explore our Niag-
ara Geopark?

For more information on the
Niagara Geopark and
what it aims to do for Ni-
agara Region, please visit
niagarageopark.com.

Chamber offering a networking event that promises to be fun

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Looking deeper into the water with JudyBlue Anderson

Maria H. Klassen
The Local

Blue! The many variations of blue! True to her name, JudyBlue Anderson’s favourite colour palette is blue. Her name JudyBlue helps differentiate her from the other four artists named Judy Anderson. Her favourite subject for her artworks is the underwater sea — the many variations that lie unseen under the sea — that very few will go; that viewers will feel the swells and motion of waves crashing, or the quiet peace of the depths of the sea. She wishes to convey the human-made tension in the rhythms of nature on man-made debris of shipwrecks, she says, as the power of water and weather in nature can cripple even a large freighter.

The exhibit, in the Joyner Gallery of the Niagara Pump-House Arts Centre, is open to the public at no charge until June 25.

Strawberry Social returns to community centre

Local Staff

The town’s traditional Strawberry Social for seniors will be held June 22, with a registration deadline of June 15.

The food and fellowship event is from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the community centre for residents aged 65 years and older. Admission is free. “June is Seniors Month, and I can’t think of a better way to celebrate than to host this wonderful community event for our residents,” says Lord Mayor Marnie Cluckie. “From residents who have always called Niagara-on-the-Lake home to those who have recently joined our wonderful community, we are grateful for your meaningful contributions. This is our way of saying thank you.”

The town also thanks Seaway Farms for donating strawberries for the event, and PigOut for catering the lunch.

A dozen volunteers came out to the Newark Park Community Garden on Niven Road to help plant a pollinator garden Saturday. Working with garden coach Joanne Young, who planned the site, and volunteers from the NOTL Horticultural Society, the goal was to attract butterflies, bees and other pollinators to the area to help with the health of the vegetables and tomatoes most of the gardeners are growing. About 70 native and other insect-attracting perennials were planted in the 24-foot plot of land. “It will add some colour to the garden and will help everyone to grow more vegetables,” Young told The Local.

“Many original marks never seem to end up as they start. I just let it take me where it needs to go,” she says. The bold strokes and marks develop into images that depict the strong movement of water, and the calm it can bring. Her hope for her collection is that it will portray the influence of nature in places that very few will go; that the various groups, associations, and programs that make Niagara-on-the-Lake the special place it is. This event is a small way to show council and staff’s appreciation for our seniors and celebrate the great legacy they have established. On behalf of town council, thank you to all of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s senior residents for all you do to better the community. I look forward to seeing you on June 22!”

Registration is required and will be accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis. Please register online at notlcom/recreation-events/community-initiatives-events or by calling the town hall at 905-468-3266.

In addition to the in-person event, town staff will be delivering trays of baked goods to residents living at the three long-term care homes in town. “The Strawberry Social is a longstanding event which aims to honour the town’s senior residents,” says CAO Marnie Cluckie. “From residents who have always called Niagara-on-the-Lake home to those who have recently joined our wonderful community, we are grateful for your meaningful contributions. This is our way of saying thank you.”

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Farmerettes kept food production going through war years

Their story will be told at NOTL Museum June 15

Sharon Burns
The Local

“It is unbelievable how a tiny picture can change your life,” said Bonnie Sitter, co-author of Onion Skins and Peach Fuzz: Memories of Ontario Farmerettes. The picture, which measured two by two-and-a-half inches, showed a young woman sitting on a running board of an old car. “One had a straw hat on and one had a bandana on,” said Sitter. The only clue as to the identity of the girl was the inscription on the back of the photograph, “Farmerettes, about 1946.”

Sitter, who knew nothing about farmerettes, embarked on research that would eventually lead to finding Shirleyan English, who, as a young girl, worked on the Sitter farm. While Sitter is not one of the girls in the photograph, the two women became friends and co-authored Onion Skins and Peach Fuzz.

Sitter and English will present the rarely-told and incredible stories of Ontario’s Second World War farmerettes at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum on June 15 at 7:30 p.m. Their story will be told at the museum, when Canada went to war in 1939, just as they did in 1914, the loss of thousands of young men left farms and factories in dire need of labour. In Ontario, acres of farms, orchards and market gardens were in need of planting, hoeing, weeding, thinning, staking, picking, harvesting and canning.

Advertisements appeared showing men in uniform saying, “We Can’t Fight If We Don’t Eat!” and women were now the focus of recruitment posters. They were encouraged to throw off their aprons and join the Land Army or become Rosie the Riveter, make bombs or airplanes, and drive tractors, trucks and jeeps. Images of fighting soldiers told them “We won’t eat if YOU don’t help Ontario farmers this summer!”

In 1941, said Worthy, the Ontario Farm Service Force formed a homegrown brigade called the farmerettes. Girls were invited to lend a hand, and the slogan You Can Do It! encouraged more than 25,000 high school students to sign up. At 16 years old, Shirleyan English was one of them.

After Sitter’s husband died, she was sorting through his pictures and found the tiny picture. Sitter realized that she had a friend who was a farmerette in the St. Catharines area in 1946. The friend had kept the 17 letters that she wrote that summer, and shared them with Sitter.

Sitter wrote a story on the farmerettes for The Rural Voice, a farming magazine in southwestern Ontario. English read the article and wrote to Sitter, saying, “We brought to tears because, to her, even at the age of 88, she said it was the best summer of her life,” recalled Sitter.

English, who had worked on the Sitter farm, recognized the family name and wrote a letter to the editor of the magazine. After Sitter read the letter, she found English’s number in the phonebook and the mystery of the girls in the photograph was solved. In 1985, English, a journalist, had put a notice in newspapers all over Ontario asking for stories from farmerettes for a magazine story. She received 300 letters, but never wrote the story. When Sitter discovered that English still had those letters, she said, “We are going to write a book.”

In the beginning, the farmers thought well, this is a lousy idea, how are you going to get girls from the city or town or northern Ontario, girls who haven’t seen a farm, to do farm work,” said Sitter. “They thought their backs were broken and that they would never stand straight again. But then they started working as a team and encouraged each other. They made up songs about the camps and sang them in the field and talked about their boyfriends and movies and school. And what they were going to do on Saturday night. Were they going to go to the roller rink, or see if there was a dance. And they hitchhiked everywhere. There wasn’t gas and they didn’t have cars.”

“They lived in camps established by the YWCA and supervised by a camp mother, paid room and board, and worked up to 10 hours a day. The work could be grueling, but there was time for fun, dances, soldiers and romance. ‘Many described it as ‘the best times of their lives,’ said Worthy.”

Butts provided a local perspective. “These women, from all walks of life, gave up their summers to pitch in and pick, pack and later can Niagara’s tender fruits.”

“Many farmers were apprehensive, to say the least, to have women working on their farms, but they eventually came to appreciate the help the women offered,” said Butts. “In fact, it was said that one farmerette replaced three men. Women were needed again during WWII there was much less opposition, and the program was even extended until 1953.”

“For many of these women,” said Butts, “who were typically aged 16 and over, this was their first time living away from home, and the job allowed them to earn their own money and achieve a sense of independence. This program helped crack the glass ceiling for women entering the workforce. It didn’t break it since it still took another couple of decades for women (in the workforce) to be a common sight. But the farmerettes proved that women can work as hard and as well as men.”

The farmerettes were integral in keeping food on plates in Ontario. “If these girls hadn’t stepped up, and there were probably between 20,000 and 30,000 farmerettes between 1941 and 1952, there would be nobody working on the farms,” said Sitter. “The men were gone. In 1945, when the war ended, the men weren’t coming back to farm. They were going to university and finding other work opportunities.”

Sitter, who lives in Exeter, Ontario, has also co-authored, with Telfer Wegg, The Beauty and Bounty of Huron County and Agriculture Today: A Portrait of Family Farms in Ontario. In 2020 Sitter compiled the memories of the four Wright children who lived with their parents, Bill and Helen Wright, in a school car in Northern Ontario into a book called On The Wright Track: Memories From C.P.R. School Car #2. English’s experiences as a farmerette gave her a love of plants and working in the soil, which led to her becoming an accomplished gardener. She is past president of the Garden Club of London and the Garden Clubs of Ontario and is a judge in both Horticulture and Floral Design, both obtained through the Royal Botanical Gardens. She has competed internationally at the World Association of Floral Artists and won third prize when exhibiting at the associations show in Barbados in 2017.

A launch of Niagara Oast House Brewers’ Farmerettes Farmhouse Ale this past International Women’s Day involved a presentation by Butts about the farmerettes program, which caught the attention of Sitter and English. Sitter and English’s presentation is part of the museum’s 2023 Lecture Series. Admission is $10, and free for members. Worthy advises that seating is limited, so call the museum at 905-468-3912 to reserve a spot.

An original photo of three farmerettes. (Photos supplied)
One more open house for those interested in lawn bowling

Sharon Burns
The Local

“We hope you all come back, and the reason is, you’re all so young!” exclaimed Angela Lynch, Niagara-on-the-Lake Lawn Bowling Club secretary, as she made closing remarks to 19 members from the Niagara-on-the-Lake Social Club at the lawn bowling open house this weekend.

The social club members, who endeavour to try new activities in the area, had an hour of coaching in instruction at Canada’s oldest lawn bowling club.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Lawn Bowling Club was founded in 1877, according to the bowling club’s website. For the first 133 years, play was on grass on the grounds of the Queen’s Royal Niagara Hotel on the shore of Lake Ontario. Built in 1869, the hotel also offered tennis courts and a dance pavilion. When it closed in the early 1920s, that land became Queen’s Royal Park.

The lawn bowling club moved in 1922 to a green at the corner of Regent Street and Johnson Street, where it remained for the next 88 years. In 2011 the club moved again, this time to the community Centre on Anderson Lane.

Lawn bowling is played with a special bowl that is contoured so that the path it follows is curved. At first, the bowl moves in a fairly straight line, but as it slows it will swing to one side, explained the pamphlet that can be found in a box attached to the fence at the club.

The club is open from April to October. Bowlers can rent bowls for $10 dollars a season,” said Julie Hagan, who is on the club’s membership committee.

Hagan explained the playing schedule. “On Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays, starting at 130 p.m., we play jitney-style,” she said. A jitney is a casual game of bowls without regularly assigned teams.

“On Mondays and Wednesdays, we move play to 6:30 p.m. because of the heat,” said Hagan.

Coaches are eager to teach newcomers how to deliver a bowl, the objectives of the game, its rules, and the etiquette that goes with it. Coach Rose Connolly, a member since 2012, said that “when we have a new person come in and they are interested in the game, I get called and we spend the afternoon with them and teach them lawn bowling. We have two sessions, play a few rounds, then for the second session we answer more questions.”

“We try to get people to come out because it is a fun afternoon or evening,” said Connolly.

“We have a women’s league and a men’s league. It’s a soft exercise. It isn’t overly strenuous, but you definitely do a lot of stretching.”

Lynch, the club secretary, has been a member for 14 years, but has been lawn bowling for 30 years.

“We’ve got about 70 members this year and can handle more,” she said. While lawn bowling is perceived by some as a sport for the elderly, Lynch says all are welcome. “The oldest player we have now is probably 90 years-old,” she said. “Because we have carpet and it’s not natural grass, we can actually have people in a walker. We had one woman who was 93 who came with her walker.”

“We are very easy-going,” assured Lynch. “It’s the gentle exercise and fresh air and the social aspect we like. Every Saturday we have afternoon tea after the first game. We have a barbecue once a month for socialization.”

“You can bowl as often as you want or as little as you want, there is no commitment to a team,” added Lynch.

There is one more open house for people to try lawn bowling, which has its roots in old England and was called Bowling on the Green. It has been played since the 13th century and is very popular in many Commonwealth countries. More than 180 clubs exist in Ontario with about 11,500 members.

The next open house is June 11 from 2 to 4 p.m. “Coach will be here for people who want to learn how to play,” said Hagan.

A sign on the lawn bowling fence encourages potential players to visit, and better yet join. (Photos by Sharon Burns)

There are instructors at the club ready to help someone who might be thinking of joining.

About 130 members of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Tennis Club participated in its recent Spring Social. Organized by members Natalie Early and Nancy Marchese, it was a fun-filled day at Memorial Park, with members taking part in 3-on-3 soft-ball warm-up games and other activities that allowed members to connect and reconnect with each other on the courts. A highlight of the day was the presence of the Ontario Tennis Association’s Smash Cage. After getting a bit of instruction from Simon Burden of the association’s Club Strong, members of all ages stepped into the cage to measure the speed of their serve. To wrap up the event the members gathered under the pavilion to enjoy a dinner together.

Jeremy Pukhkalo and Sameer Levesque learn how to serve from visiting instructor Simon Burden. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

Jeremy Pukhkalo tries to hit the fastest serve of the day.

Members play a sponge-ball 3-on-3 warm-up game.
Pickleball pros demonstration adds ‘buzz’ to competition

Mike Balsom
The Local

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Pickleball Club’s head professional Adam Eatock is agoing with excitement over the three-day Pickleball Classic in Virgil this weekend. Especially for Friday night’s professional exhibition at the Meridian Credit Union Arena, which he had a hand in helping to arrange.

Eatock will be taking to the courts as one of eight pickleball pros Friday in a series of competitive matches that he hopes will build up the buzz for the rest of the weekend’s competition.

“We have some of the most well-known names in the sport coming,” Eatock tells The Local. “Matthew and Jessica Kowamoto from Hamilton are like triplets, all of whom play the same level of competitive badminton double partners six years ago.

“He told me he had tried this game that was a mix of badminton, tennis and ping pong,” remembers Eatock, “and he promised me that I would love it. I warned him, though, that the older folks would kick my butt. Sure enough I got my butt kicked.”

Despite that butt-kicking, he was instantly addicted, a sentiment common within the pickleball community.

“A lot of pickleball is drop shots,” he explains about the strategy of placing the ball just over the net and into the non-volley zone, preventing your opponents from mounting a quick attack. “And you hear the terminology called ‘dinking,’ which is a type of drop shot. It’s more strategic than tennis, where there’s a lot of whacking the ball and driving toward the net. That’s why I love it.”

As an instructor he finds that the soft part of the game, the finesse element, is what resonates with newcomers, and what leads to their pickleball addiction.

“There will be a lot of ‘dink’ from the professionals Friday night, as competitors such as the Kowamotos are known for their mastery of the finesse side of the sport. “For Jessica, her consistency is her huge strength,” Eatock says. “She doesn’t try to earn a point quickly. She uses consistency as a weapon. With Matthew’s strength is deception. You don’t know which shot he’s going to do. That can really catch a lot of people off guard.”

The 30-year-old ran into the game on the weekend’s first Canadian National Pickleball League’s eastern Canada tryouts held by Pickleball Canada in Ontario. He now knows the results of the upcoming western Canada tryouts to find out if he has made the league’s cut. Eatock competed at the national competition in Kingston in 2022 and plans to compete again this year in Regina, Saskatchewan. He is also looking forward to booking himself into tournaments across Canada and the U.S. to close out the 2023 season.

“As a club professional as well as a competitor, the Port Credit resident is dedicated to growing the game he loves. “I’ve seen a big progression,” he says. “So many people of all ages are coming out to learn the game. And this tournament will go a long way toward growing the sport’s popularity. At 30 my reflexes might be faster than some older players, but many of them challenge the younger folks with their patience and composure. Anyone can play this game.”

The Governor Simcoe Secondary School graduate says he expects to recognize many members of the NOTL and St. Catharines clubs in the stands as spectators for Friday night’s professional exhibition.

“They are so excited to see the pros players in action,” he laughs. “I can’t even tell you how many have told me that they can’t wait to see the pro exhibition, There is a huge buzz about this.”

And he’s elated that YourTV will be carrying Friday’s action, as well as the amateur competition on Saturday and Sunday.

“It’s so great that they were willing to do this,” he says of Jack Casters and the Cogeco-YourTV team. “Having people able to see this, to learn about pickleball, it should lead to them learning about their local club and getting involved in the sport. It’s super important to get the message out there.”

Admission to Friday night’s Professional exhibition is $10. The NOTL Pickleball Club is hoping to pack the seats in the Meridian Credit Union Arena. Club president John Hindle promises a 50/50 draw and door prizes and has even arranged VIP seating on the floor next to the courts for some special guests.

Players from ages 17 to 77, 300 of them, will be coming to town from Alaska, California, Florida and everywhere in between. The tournament concludes on Saturday and Sunday with six courts in both arenas. Almost 100 volunteers, mostly from the NOTL club, will be working hard all weekend to ensure things go smoothly.

Men and women’s doubles matches are Saturday from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m., while the mixed doubles competition runs Sunday from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. Admissions to those events is free.

Seasonal workers at Memorial Park for traditional cricket match

Mike Balsom
The Local

Seasonal farmworkers in Niagara-on-the-Lake and Lincoln will be dusting off their bats, gloves and wickets this week in preparation for the Caribbean Workers’ Outreach Program’s annual cricket match.

Scheduled for Sunday, June 11 at Memorial Park on King Street, the match between the Niagara Clippers and the Lincoln Lions carries on a tradition started nearly 30 years ago by the old Col. John Butler School on East and West Line.

The game has long since moved to its current home on the Memorial Park turf, where workers, farmers, cricket enthusiasts and interested onlookers gather to take in the action. It’s a big highlight for the workers, especially the many from Jamaica, where cricket is both the national sport and the country’s most popular athletic pastime.

The games are organized and officiated by Prophet Steel and Brian Burton, two of the offshore workers who contribute their labour on area farms each summer. The outreach program’s cricket committee works behind the scenes on all of the other details.

The town provides the use of the park rent-free for the day.

After playing in their regular work or street clothes for a number of years, players were given uniforms to wear a few years ago, enabling them to distinguish the teams from each other. The uniforms were provided by Azzan Anjum, the owner of the St. Catharines Poppy’s Louisiana Kitchen franchise and a huge fan of the sport, says Nancy Howse, longtime volunteer with the outreach program, in a news release about the match.

Anjum also donates trophies for each team, gifts for the players and the 66-by-eight-foot cricket mat where the bowler and batsman stand during the match, Howse says, also pointing out that win or lose, everyone goes home happy and stuffed full with a chicken dinner served by the volunteers.

The first game is slated for a 2 p.m. start this Sunday. Howse invites everyone to drop by and take in some of the exciting action. There is no admission fee to attend.
CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU

CROSSWORD

Across:
1. Aloof
6. Tip
9. Tasks
14. Maura
15. I’m a
16. Hit it!
17. Intercept
19. Erica
20. Ski
21. Rarer
22. Perky
23. Hansom
35. Andrea
37. Avoided
39. Glories
40. Manner
41. Sum
47. Peace
48. Rotating engine part
49. Notch
50. Spots
51. Scat
52. All I
53. Veil
54. To be
55. Era
56. One of New York’s finest, perhaps
57. Nautical fastener
58. To
59. Barn’s rabbit-hole explorer
61. Wise neighbor
62. Extended area of land
63. Waterproofed as many showers are
64. Affirmative vote
65. Solomn promises

Down:
1. Pennsylvania Memontos
2. Sir ---, formerly Caylon
3. Ahead of the field
4. Mineral source
5. Litter of pigs
6. Bracket
7. Stimulus
8. Security detachment
9. Arina Paquin with an Oscar for this film, aged 11
10. Spanish winds
11. The pen
12. Recall
13. Remain

SUDOKU

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

OBITUARY

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FOR RUSSELL HODGKINSON
AT THE NOTL LEGION, BRANCH 124
410 KING STREET, NOTL
FROM 2:00pm TO 5:00pm
SUNDAY, JULY 2, 2023
(RUSSELL’S BIRTHDAY)

HOPE TO SEE YOU, DEBB

BALL. William Lawrence — Bill passed away peacefully at Hospice Niagara on Saturday, June 3, 2023 in his 88th year. Bill is forever reunited with his beloved wife, Jean (1994), Loving Dad of Brenda Petrunick (Kirk), Predeceased by daughter, Cathy (2016), and son, Jim (2017). Very proud Papa to Eric, Jack and Kate.

Bill developed a love of the sea, and fishing at a very young age in Niagara, which was passed down to him from generations of family. He was the happiest on a boat with a line in the water, sharing great conversation and definitely a few fish stories, with family and friends!

In most recent years, Bill volunteered at the St. Catharines Game and Fish Association, where he shared his passion and knowledge for the sport with many, including the organization of Kids Day fishing in Port Dalhousie for many years. Bill is also remembered for his 25 years as a volunteer fireman for the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. He was proud to be an active member of our community.

Bill will be missed by his many nieces, nephews and fellow fisherman.

As per Bill’s request cremation has taken place. Service will be held at Saint Marks Church in Niagara on the Lake at 11am on Friday, June 9, 2023. Interment will follow at Saint Marks Cemetery.

In memory of Bill, donations may be made to Sick Children’s Hospital in Toronto, St. Catharines Game and Fish Association (Kids Day) and Hospice Niagara.

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

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100’s of Mysteries plus many other categories
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$929,000
6 CIRCLE ST, NIAGARA-ON-THE- LAKE

$874,000 SOLD!
42 THOMAS BURNS CMN, ST.CATHARINES
$2,575,000 AMAZING LOCATION
93 WILLIAM ST, NIAGARA-ON-THE- LAKE

$989,450 OR LEASE $3200/MONTH
$1,378,000 DOUBLE LOT IN PRIME LOCATION
390 SIMCOE ST, NIAGARA-ON-THE- LAKE

$4,950,000 270 FT- PRIME WATERFRONT 5.5 ACRES
31 WINDSOR CIR, NIAGARA-ON-THE- LAKE

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