



That's a wrap for 2023!

Like many of you, The Lake Report is taking a break for the holidays. We'll be back on Jan. 4. Happy Holidays!

Plus pull out our holiday wrapping paper in the middle of this edition!

Community group **demands action** on excessive speeding

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

The leaders of a community group that's been working quietly behind the scenes for three years to prompt Niagara-on-the-

Lake to take action about excessive speeding on town streets say they have run out of patience.

Being refused the opportunity to speak to council this week — after earlier being urged by town staff

to prepare a presentation — was the final straw.

The Friends of Ryerson Park, with support from the Chautauqua Residents Association, are focused on excessive speeding along the Chautauqua neighbour-

hood's narrow streets, but emphasized that speeding is a problem in many areas of NOTL.

And they are upset that the town has yet to take any action.

Brian Crow, one of the

spokespersons for the group, noted that in a Lake Report story last April Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa stated that speeding concerns are "widespread" and not limited to Chautauqua.

Zalepa also said at the

time he had asked town staff to investigate the situation.

"We'll get some actual hard numbers on that. We'll have some recommenda-

Continued on Page 5

Opportunity in Hamilton a chance for Cluckie to **return home**

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

There's more to Niagara-on-the-Lake than meets the eye, Marnie Cluckie says.

She should know: for the past three years, Cluckie has been NOTL's chief administrative officer.

She will be leaving the position come Jan. 14 when she heads down the QEW to Hamilton to take over as the Steel City's chief administrator and city manager.

"People think Niagara-on-the-Lakes is this little, sleepy town," Cluckie said in an interview with The Lake Report, almost three years to the day she started her job in NOTL. "But it's an engaged community with residents who are intelligent and thoughtful."

When the new job opportunity arose in Hamilton, Cluckie decided to toss her hat in the ring.

A native of Hamilton, she

Continued on Page 8

Parade crowd **exceeds expectations**



Huge crowds gathered to watch the NOTL Christmas Parade, the largest crowd since the pandemic. **More photos on Page 7.** DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Newark benefits from **anonymous donations**

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Just as Santa does while making his rounds on Christmas Eve, a pair of anonymous donors came to

Newark Neighbours bearing gifts, not wanting to make a scene.

The two donors — both men — slipped into Newark Neighbours' Niagara Stone Road location and, with no fanfare, dropped off sizable donations

of cash — one for \$1,000 and another for \$5,000.

Both donations were welcomed by Cindy Grant, the organization's director. Cash donations, she said, go a long way toward purchasing more food, especially

items that are not high on the list for most donors, such as coffee.

"Both Phil Leboudec at Phil's Independent and Tony (Hendricks) at Hendricks

Continued on Page 4



Boxer headed to Italy | Page 25

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Mixed density, 383-unit subdivision is latest proposal for Glendale area

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Big projects continue to come through the pipeline for Niagara-on-the-Lake's council.

NOTL's elected officials heard a pitch for a new subdivision with 383 units to be built in Glendale, on Concession 7 between Queenston and York roads at a meeting Dec. 5.

A few residents who live near the proposed development received the news tepidly.

"We're used to having very few neighbours," resident Eric Galloway said.

And his neighbour Ben Bartel said he didn't "really want to be intruded on" by the future neighbours.

The joint proposal from Hummel Properties and Marz Homes provides a range of housing types in the form of 55 single-family dwellings, 121 townhouses, 183 condominiums and 24 units in a mixed-use building.

"There's an opportunity here to meet the entire demographic of people who are in need of a house," said Danny Gabriele, president of Marz Homes.

There would also be a 7.5 acre public park on site, and some local amenities for residents in the mixed-use building, he said.



Danny Gabriele, president of Marz Homes, gives council an idea of what the homes will look like in the proposed subdivision. EVAN LOREE

Gabriele said the businesses in the mixed-use buildings might struggle to stay afloat in the future given the remoteness of the development.

He planned to build the denser lots closest to the commercial lots to help make them more viable.

The project has been on the books since April 2022, but Jennifer Vida, a planner representing Hummel properties, said the applicants have been waiting for the Glendale secondary plan to move forward before commencing with their plans.

Vida said the plan had now progressed enough for

the developers to continue.

Galloway suggested that the proposed building with the greater density be situated further away from the existing single-family homes in the area, to reduce negative impacts on privacy and property values.

Vida said there would be anywhere between 100 and 150 feet between the rear lot lines of the houses on Queenston Road and the new ones.

Bartel also expressed concern about the subdivision's impacts on traffic.

He said there were already speeding problems on Concession 7.

"The existing transportation infrastructure in the area can adequately accommodate the traffic volumes projected to be generated by the proposed development," stated a traffic report from Paradigm Transportation Solutions Limited, which was submitted with the application.

The report estimated the subdivision would generate 195 new car trips in the morning and 248 trips in the afternoon, but only on weekdays.

The subdivision will be accessible through two intersections.

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Amalgamation? NOTL council weighs in

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The town's elected officials are entering the holidays with ideas of big-city Niagara-on-the-Lake top of mind.

News of a provincial committee coming to St. Catharines to collect feedback on amalgamation triggered talks at a meeting Tuesday afternoon on what it could mean for NOTL.

The committee's public hearing was announced in November.

Chief administrator Marnie Cluckie told council

it was "not uncommon" for the province to assign tasks with quick turnarounds so close to the holidays.

Council decided to send Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa to the provincial committee's public hearing Jan. 10 to present council's concerns about being absorbed into a larger city.

"I want the province to hear us loud and clear," said Coun. Erwin Wiens.

"We've done everything they've asked us to do."

"For them to disband us is not fair," he added.

Zalepa said people seem to misunderstand municipal politics when they've never

been a part of it.

He said the locally elected system "functions very well here, in a manner that is very respectful of the local resident."

If cost savings were an issue, Wiens said the town could reduce its councillors.

However, Wiens said he "never bought the argument" that one paid councillor would better represent a town than a council of eight.

"Amalgamation has never, in any form, ever found cost savings," Wiens added.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor said much the same, recalling she was in Ottawa when it was amalgamated into the

Ottawa-Carleton region and costs went up.

She and Coun. Wendy Cheropita both raised concerns about how amalgamation would impact the town's ability to preserve its heritage.

"I would really like for Niagara-on-the-Lake to stay independent," Cheropita said.

Coun. Gary Burroughs and Wiens both worried the town's volunteer fire department would disappear if the town amalgamated.

"There are so many questions and it appears we have no time to respond," Burroughs said.

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Above: A view of the new proposed south landfill Phase 2, east of the existing dump across Taylor Road and south of Mountain Road. It is now a working limestone quarry for Walker's aggregate operations but will close once the new landfill is approved by the Ontario government. STEVE HARDAKER Below: Darren Fry is overseeing Walker Industries' plan to open a new landfill near Glendale. SUPPLIED

Approval sought for **new landfill** near Glendale

Steve Hardaker
Community Correspondent



With only eight years remaining in the life of Walker Industries' major landfill overlooking Niagara-on-the-Lake's Glendale community, the company has started planning to develop the next phase of the dump.

Located on top of the Niagara Escarpment, what's known as the south landfill has been in operation for more than 15 years.

But it is reaching full capacity and must be phased out.

The proposed south landfill's phase 2 is east of the existing landfill, across Taylor Road and south of Mountain Road.

It is now a working limestone quarry for Walker's aggregate operations which will close once the proposed new landfill is approved by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment.

An initial open house will be held Dec. 14, from 4 to 8 p.m. at Club Italia on Montrose Road in Niagara Falls.

Walker's 2,000-acre sprawling Niagara campus on top of the Niagara Escarpment initially started as a small limestone quarry and aggregate operation more than 136 years ago.

Today, it is home to a multi-faceted waste collection and recovery operation

where materials like wood waste, railway ties, asphalt shingles and clean soils are recycled to produce new products. It handles about 75 per cent of Niagara's garbage.

Walker is also a leader in modern composting where municipal green bin organics are converted into quality compost products.

The Niagara campus is home to a biosolid organic waste facility where organic waste is processed to recycle nutrients for agricultural production.

The facility also receives the region's blue and grey bin materials. What cannot be recycled, reused or composted is sent to the landfill.

Methane gas is a natural product of the decomposition of any organic materials in any dump. For the last 15 years, Walker has collected this gas through a series of wells and pipes and that methane can be used to generate renewable energy.

The company now has the largest renewable natural gas from landfill gas facility

in Ontario. When commissioned near the end of 2023, the facility will produce enough energy to heat more than 8,700 homes annually through Enbridge Gas' distribution system, Walker says.

It has been managing landfill gas projects for over 20 years. And because it is being extracted from landfill, the natural gas produced is a renewable resource.

That landfill gas is now being supplied to the neighbouring General Motors propulsion plant in St. Catharines, which will help the automaker reduce its carbon footprint by approximately 70 per cent, making it one of GM's cleanest propulsion plants.

Before Walker Industries can open its proposed new landfill, a rigorous environment assessment needs to be done. That could take up to eight years.

Despite recycling and green bin composting efforts, there is still a need for landfill space for non-recyclable materials.

Darren Fry, the project director overseeing the development of the phase 2 landfill, said, "Ontario has some of the strictest ground water protection laws in Canada or even in North America for that matter."

In designing the new facility, "We will look at

how to protect water. We will study air quality. We will look at traffic. We will look at ecology. We'll look at visual impacts," he said.

"There are about 14 studies we will be undertaking as part of the environmental assessment," Fry said.

Once the environmental assessment is approved by the province, the new landfill can be designed. It is not as simple as starting to dispose of waste into a hole in the ground or, for this site, the abandoned quarry.

Modern landfills are designed to ensure groundwater and the environment are protected and safe.

The company says it will use a state-of-the-art, 12-foot-thick liner system, to make sure waste in the landfill is contained. The liner is made up of many layers, each playing a role in protecting the environment.

Walker says it will conduct extensive consultation with the public, agencies like the conservation authority, Indigenous communities and others.

The first open house on Dec. 14 will be used to introduce the project, review, and discuss the environmental assessment process and gather feedback. More open houses are planned.

Steve Hardaker has lived in Glendale for over 13 years and is active in many community organizations.



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Anonymous donors show up in **big ways** for Newark Neighbours food bank

Continued from Front Page

give us (food) almost at no cost," she said.

That means more food on the shelves to help the 131 families in Niagara-on-the-Lake that are relying on Newark Neighbours' food bank to keep their pantries stocked.

Additionally, 105 families will be receiving Christmas hampers from the agency filled with everything needed for a holiday dinner including a turkey or ham.

A separate toy drive means Christmas will be brighter for the 77 children from families helped by Newark Neighbours.

The cash donations come at a time when the town has rallied to help the organization for its Christmas campaign and beyond, Grant said.

"Most of the wineries, Two Sisters, Peller, Jackson Triggs," Grant said. "I just made a pickup from the Irish Harp. Niagara Motors has (completed) a huge collection."

Others coming through for the agency included Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro, the Shaw Festival, Exchange Brewery, the Pumphouse Holiday



Newark Neighbours director Cindy Grant says cash donations are put to good use, helping them purchase sought-after items such as coffee. RICHARD HUTTON

Market, Pleasant Manor, St. Mark's Church, St. Andrew's, St. Vincent De-Paul and all the public and Catholic schools.

"It goes on," Grant said. All of the help will mean Newark Neighbours will

be able to provide families with what they need over the holidays thanks to the community. By all accounts, donations – food, toys and cash – have surpassed those collected in 2022.

"Last year, we had a substantial amount by the end of the season," Grant said. "We had a substantial amount of cash donations. This year, it seems to be the pattern again."
hutton@niagaranow.com

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DEC. 25 AT 10 A.M. AT THE NOTL COURTHOUSE

Waiver to **protect town** from service fee refunds

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The town is hoping a new waiver it's created will protect it from future financial penalties if it fails to make decisions on development proposals in time.

The waiver would be presented to developers in cases when the municipality is not able to process applications before provincial deadlines pass, Kirsten McCauley, the community and development services director, told council at a meeting on Dec. 5.

If signed, the waiver would prevent developers from requesting refunds on project application fees.

This would allow staff to work with developers past decision deadlines on project

proposals and give them enough time to recommend options to council, McCauley said.

The provincial government introduced a refund system under Bill 109, the More Homes for Everyone Act, which came into effect on July 1 this year.

The town must respond to every development application within set deadlines, which vary depending on the application.

If the town is a day late, it owes 50 percent of the application fee back to the developer, according to a staff report attached to the meeting agenda.

This rate rises to 100 per cent the longer it takes the town to make a decision.

Spokesperson Marah Minor later told The Lake

Report the refunds would be problematic for the town's budget and would force the town to make up for its losses "through alternative funding sources."

Coun. Gary Burroughs raised some concern over the potential efficacy of this waiver as a tool for the municipality.

"Why would any developer agree to such a waiver?" he asked.

McCauley said some applicants would be "willing to continue to work with the town and not request the refund."

The town would reach out to applicants to "determine potential interest" in signing the waiver, Minor later told The Lake Report.

McCauley said Staff could recommend council reject

projects in cases where developers refused to sign the waiver, McCauley said.

The town could also use holding provisions to make developers address concerns before moving forward with them, she added.

Holding provisions can be applied to lots to prevent development from moving forward until certain conditions are met.

McCauley told council other towns are starting to introduce similar waivers.

"The waiver does not necessarily indicate that council needs to make a decision in favour of an application," she added.

Council voted unanimously to give McCauley the power to sign the waiver with developers on behalf of the town.
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John Scott, Weston Miller, Brian Crow and Shaun Devlin, shown in the middle of Niagara Boulevard in Chautauqua, say the town needs to reduce speed limits to make the narrow roads safer for pedestrians. KEVIN MACLEAN

Resident group frustrated with lack of action by mayor and council on speeding problem

Continued from Front Page

tions, including various measures, which could include adjusting speed limits," he said.

It's unclear what happened with that request.

But, as Crow noted, nothing concrete has happened.

He acknowledges that town employees are busy – and some departments may be understaffed – so after discussions with some councillors and staff, the Friends group was encouraged to pull together information and details on the speeding problem.

As part of that, the group researched what other municipalities have done and they unearthed a motherlode of information and have shared it with the town.

Rome D'Angelo, the town's director of operations, said as part of the 2024 budget his department is proposing to do a "comprehensive" rural and urban road safety study.

"This study aims to investigate the intricacies of road safety, analyzing various factors that contribute to accidents and hazards," he said in response to questions from The Lake Report.

If it is approved by council, "staff will accelerate the road safety review and submit recommendations to council in a timely manner in 2024," he said.

"Although information from other municipalities is

helpful, the town wishes to commence its own studies to ensure that data is accurate and reflects the specific community needs in Niagara-on-the-Lake," D'Angelo said.

The Friends of Ryerson Park questions the necessity of another study.

As the group told town clerk Grant Bivol last week via email when he suggested they present to council in January or February, "Our work has been carefully researched, explained and discussed at length with senior operations staff in the past few months in accordance with the proper procedure for an approach to the town."

Senior staff "have known for some time of our intentions to present to council in December" but the group was told six days before the Dec. 12 meeting that "council has a number of items that must be addressed before the holidays."

So the Friends were bumped.

They were urged three years ago by a councillor to "have patience" but now they are looking for action.

Weston Miller, president of the residents association, said the group has done everything right.

"You've got a neighbourhood that has been vocal about a safety issue. We, as a group and a neighbourhood, have not just sat back and barked at the town, saying, 'We want them to do

something we want them to do something,'" he said.

Instead, they took it upon themselves "to actually do the work, to make their job easier and be respectful of the process."

The mayor and others have said it's a widespread issue, Miller noted, "Then what the hell is being done if it's a widespread issue? You're still not doing anything about any of it."

The Friends say studying and writing reports is not necessary because they have compiled information from municipalities around Ontario showing what easily can be done.

International studies over the past 20 years have shown that lowering the speed limit by even 10 km/h substantially reduces fatalities and injuries, said Shaun Devlin, another leader of the Friends.

"There is a 9 in 10 rate of survival for a person hit by a vehicle travelling at 30 km/h or lower. At 50 km/h, the survival rate drops to 1.5 in 10," the group says in its presentation for council.

The Friends compiled information from St. Catharines, Lincoln, Hamilton, Burlington, Waterloo, Kitchener, Guelph, Mississauga, Cambridge and Toronto – "all of whom have done extensive surveys and presented them to their councils to support the reductions in the speed limits," said Devlin.

The group's leaders said they're happy to use Chau-

tauqua as a pilot project but are urging the town to shift the speed on the area's streets to 35 km/h and install other traffic-calming measures.

There are no sidewalks or paved shoulders in the neighbourhood, where some streets are only 13 feet wide. Typical residential streets are 20 feet or wider.

"Vehicles should not be travelling in this area at 50 km/h," the group's report says.

"Several municipalities have taken an approach that the industry studies showing speed reductions reduce fatalities and severe injuries justify a general reduction of speed limits on their residential streets to 30 or 40 km/hour," the presentation says.

In some cases this was done right across the municipality, while in others it was implemented in specific neighbourhoods, it says.

Summarizing their plea for action in NOTL, Crow and Devlin noted that when excessive speeding worries were brought up at a May 9, 2023, Niagara Falls city council meeting, councillors spent exactly two minutes and 41 seconds on the issue – ordering staff to delve into it and report back.

While they feel their group has already done that footwork for the town, they're hoping town council will agree to act quickly on it and reduce speeds before next summer.

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Left: NOTL Horticultural Society members delivered poinsettias to residents of long-term care homes Dec. 7. From left are Alice Rance, Ingrid Regier, Hilda Ellard, Kim Mustill, Susan Dodd and Joanne Draper. Right: Regier presents a poinsettia to Pleasant Manor resident Connie Rudzitis. In back is Chelsea Bilton from Pleasant Manor. RICHARD HUTTON

Spreading Christmas cheer – one **plant** at a time

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Sparking joy during this grey time of the year can be as simple as adding a touch of colour – and sometimes, it’s the simplest gifts that go the furthest in brightening someone’s day.

That is the idea behind

Flowers for Seniors, an initiative of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society to bring some warmth to NOTL’s long-term care homes.

It’s something the group does twice a year, in the spring (when flowers begin blooming) and in December for the holidays.

“There are a lot of people (at the homes) that do

not get any visitors at all,” said Susan Dodd, a society member and organizer of the Dec. 7 event. “It’s just a little bit of reaching out from the community.”

In total, 224 potted poinsettias in pink, red and yellow were distributed to residents at three homes – Chartwell Niagara, Upper Canada Lodge and Radiant Care

Pleasant Manor.

Dodd has been involved for the past five and was on hand at Van Noort Flower Studio to ready the plants for the next home with a group of volunteers.

One of those volunteers, Ingrid Regier, said the residents look forward to delivery day.

“They look forward to it and say things like, ‘Have

the plants come? Have the plants come? When are they coming?’”

Pleasant Manor resident Connie Rudzitis was thrilled when Regier dropped by with her plant. “They’re beautiful,” she said.

Chelsea Bilton, therapeutic recreation supervisor at Pleasant Manor, said the society’s efforts

are appreciated by the residents and staff alike.

“It’s always great to receive them. Residents love them,” she said. “It puts a smile on their face.”

To Regier, that means everything.

“For us, it’s the satisfaction of knowing that we’ve put a smile on their face because of us.”

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The Blue Springs Team



PHOTO GALLERY
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CHRISTMAS PARADE



Dozens of groups from NOTL and beyond took to the streets on Saturday for the annual Christmas Parade. Santa was the main attraction but the Grinch was everywhere too. It was one of the largest crowds in recent memory, thanks in part to the balmy 15C weather. The huge turnout was a return to normal after the COVID years. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

2024

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The Toronto All-Star Big Band: Immerse yourself in the revival of the golden age of big bands, featuring swinging arrangements from Les Brown, Louis Armstrong, The Andrews Sisters, and Harry Connick Jr. This festive concert offers a refreshing departure from the usual holiday fare.

Date: Thursday, December 14, 2023
Time: 7:30 PM
Venue: Pillar and Post - 48 John St. West, Niagara-on-the-Lake in Upper Canada Hall
Concert Tickets: \$45 +HST
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Resigning Cluckie 'grateful' to have worked in NOTL

Continued from Front Page

had worked for the city in several different positions for a decade from 2005 to 2015, including as manager of strategic planning and capital delivery.

She has also held senior administrative positions with Halton (strategic transformation group director) and Niagara (director of construction, energy and facilities management) regions.

"It will be a homecoming of sorts for me," she said of her decision to head back to The Hammer.

She is leaving behind a town and staff that has come a long way while she was at the helm, she said, working over the past three years on ways the municipality could better provide customer service and respond to the needs of residents.

"We actually listened to the feedback (from residents), which impacted changes," Cluckie said.

Some of that was driven by necessity. Cluckie began her time with the town on Dec. 9, 2020, as the town



Outgoing chief administrator Marnie Cluckie, while sad to be leaving her job in NOTL, is excited about heading home to Hamilton as its next city manager. FILE/EVAN SAUNDERS

— and the world — was in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With town hall closed to the public and town staff working remotely, that meant finding new ways for the town to conduct its business.

"It was our biggest (challenge)," she said. "It was unprecedented. We could not meet with people."

That meant modern-

izing and digitizing a host of town services, ranging from obtaining permits to purchasing dog licences.

Most notably, updating to an online portal for building permit applications proved to be a hit, Cluckie said.

"It helped people see where their building permits were at. They could check on the progress."

It was so successful that the town was asked

to make a presentation about the software at the 2023 Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference in Ottawa this past August.

"It's much more accessible," Cluckie said.

Other accomplishments she is proud of include the completion of the town's strategic plan for the current term of council, laying out the vision and goals for

Niagara-on-the-Lake for the next four years and a new tourism strategy that Cluckie said "balances the needs of the tourism operators with the needs of residents."

The past three years, pandemic aside, have not been without challenges.

"There's been planning challenges," she said, adding that staff and council have always had to look at potential developments while wanting to maintain the town's heritage characteristics.

Dealing with the regulation and enforcement of rules around short-term rentals has also been a challenge. The town is currently looking to implement its municipal accommodation tax on rentals. That tax will go into effect in January.

While Cluckie said she is looking forward to the new challenge in Hamilton, she will miss Niagara-on-the-Lake.

"I'm excited about the next chapter but it's also very sad," she said. "There's a bittersweetness to it."

She also said she is

"grateful to have had the opportunity to work with so many great people" in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

And while she'll no longer be working out of town hall in Virgil come Jan. 16, she will continue to keep tabs on what is happening in NOTL.

"I will be watching," she said.

In a news release announcing Cluckie's appointment, Hamilton Mayor Andrea Horwath said she wanted the city's next top bureaucrat to be someone who knows Hamilton and is passionate about its success."

Cluckie, she said, meets that criteria.

"Marnie brings all of that and more to this role, and I'm looking forward to working with her," Horwath said.

It will be up to council to select an interim chief administrator and then embark on the process of recruiting a permanent CAO.

That is expected to start in the coming weeks and is a process that can typically take several months.

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Tenant won't leave, NOTL woman is on outside looking in

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Shirley Jenne says she now knows she made a mistake back in 2014 when she allowed a man to live in a house she was renovating in St. Catharines.

In her mind, it was a short-term thing when she let the man — who said he was about to be homeless — in Jenne's words, "hang out" in the home until he found a new place to live.

"He hung around a little longer than I anticipated," said Jenne, a Niagara-on-the-Lake native who works in town. "He was supposed to be looking for a place."

When the weather turned colder, she said the man agreed to pay \$400 a month toward the cost of utilities — heat, hydro and water. That was in January of 2015.

Fast-forward to two years ago when Jenne, after going through a divorce, said she wanted to move into the house she has been renovating "paycheque to paycheque" for years.

The man refused to leave and stopped paying anything nearly a year and a

half ago, Jenne said, and by her estimation, the man owes her \$6,800 based on the \$400 per month.

Jenne took her case to the Ontario Landlord Tenant Board Tribunal, which ruled in favour of the man and said he was not obligated to leave.

So, he is still there today, Jenne said.

"I had no intention of ever renting again in my life," she said. "I was just helping this guy with a roof over his head because I'm one of these people that do this."

As it turned out, that agreement for the man to chip in for the cost of the utilities was crucial in the tribunal's decision.

"Once I accepted that \$400 towards the utilities, that became a contract (in the eyes of the tribunal)," she said, officially making her a landlord in this situation.

She is appealing the decision.

"Obviously, nobody rents out a house for \$400 a month," she said. "That's just strictly chipping in for utilities."

Jenne said she realized her intentions, however



Shirley Jenne shows of the photo of the home she is renovating. RICHARD HUTTON

good, worked against her. She wants her story to be a cautionary tale to other landlords or people who think they might want to become one.

Landlords being unable to

remove tenants is "happening more than everybody knows," Jenne said.

The Lake Report contacted both the Niagara Community Legal Clinic and the Toronto-based Landlord's

Self-Help Centre for this story. Both organizations declined to comment.

A spokesperson for the legal clinic said the organization does not comment on landlord issues and referred inquiries to the self-help centre.

In turn, the self-help centre said its staff "does not provide an opinion on active litigation as we do not want to speculate on the potential outcome."

The centre does, however, produce fact sheets for landlords that include information on the tribunal and how to end a tenancy.

It also includes a section regarding basic information a landlord should consider before renting, including "security of tenure."

"Landlords should realize that in Ontario tenants have security of tenure. This means that a landlord cannot end the rental agreement unless they have reason to do so as defined by the Residential Tenancies Act," the website reads.

A shortage of rental housing has made affordability an issue and resulted in increased rental costs, putting the squeeze on people

looking for a place to live.

According to a report by rentals.ca, rent for a one-bedroom apartment in St. Catharines as of November is \$1,685 a month, up five per cent over last year.

Niagara-on-the-Lake Coun. Gary Burroughs has spoken with Jenne and said she is not the only landlord he knows of facing issues with unwanted tenants. Despite that, he was surprised such situations happen.

"I don't know why it is happening, but it's happening," he said.

He knows of at least two other cases in town where landlords are having a problem getting tenants to leave.

"There's something wrong with the (landlord-tenant) system," Burroughs said, referring to landlords being unable to remove tenants who are causing them problems.

The whole situation has been a cause of great stress for Jenne.

"I've been forced to rent and pay bills elsewhere and I'm still paying my mortgage and bills at the house that I can't have back," she said.

hutton@niagaranow.com



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As another great season comes to an end, we want to wish our clients, suppliers, and staff a wonderful holiday season and a happy new year. Thank you to clients who trusted us and to all who supported us over the past year. We can't wait to see what's in store for 2024!

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Contributed by Patty Garriock

“If you can remain calm in the midst of great chaos, it is the surest guarantee that it will eventually subside.” - Julie Andrews Edwards

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

FROM



The Lake Report is taking a holiday break, too. We'll return with NOTL's best news on Jan. 4. Until then, please pull out our special wrapping paper in the centre of this week's issue for your last-minute gifts. ALPEREN ALBAYRAK

Editorial

Council needs to **act on speed limits**

Kevin MacLean
Managing Editor

Niagara-on-the-Lake residents have a tradition of loudly – and repeatedly – telling town councillors and officials what's best for the town.

People are passionate and engaged on issues affecting where they live.

The Friends of Ryerson Park is a passionate and engaged group. But its leaders have spent three years quietly and professionally working with the town to get something done about excessive speeding on the streets and narrow laneways of the Chautauqua neighbourhood (where there are no sidewalks or road shoulders).

The group is led by three professional individuals – Brian Crow, Shaun Devlin and John Scott – who as a result of a great deal of research now have some expertise on issues related to speeding and residential safety.

They've played along with the town's leaders and when senior staff urged them to compile a report – because town staff have the very real problem of not enough



It's time for our council and mayor to listen to residents and act on speed limits.

time or people – the Friends complied.

As our Page 1 story outlines this week, they have looked at what more than 10 other municipalities (some in Niagara) have found (through studies) and determined that a 10 to 15 km/h speed reduction is needed on NOTL's residential streets (or at a minimum in Chautauqua).

They did the grunt work for the town – at the town's suggestion. And they've shared the results over the past few months, so the town should be well aware of the data.

It was enough to convince all those other towns and cities to act.

Last week when the Friends were told they had been bumped from presenting their findings to council, well, that was the final straw.

This is not a new issue. Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa told The Lake Report last April that excessive speeding concerns were “widespread” in NOTL and he'd asked town staff to look into the situation.

“We'll get some actual hard numbers on that. We'll have some recommendations, including various measures, which could include adjusting speed limits,” he said.

So, what happened? Nothing official, it seems.

There wasn't a directive from council and we do understand that town staff have a lot on their collective plates. But who doesn't these days?

Here we are eight months later and the town says it is hoping a rural and urban street safety study is approved in the 2024 budget. With all due respect, that sounds like needlessly reinventing the wheel and it could just delay action even further.

Here's an idea: If council

is not prepared to use its power to declare 40 km/h the new default residential speed limit on municipal roads across all of NOTL, then use Chautauqua as a pilot project (as the Friends have suggested).

Post signs reducing the limit to 35 or 40 km/h in the neighbourhood and see if the sky does indeed fall.

We're betting it won't.

As for those who wonder, “What about enforcement?” – well, that argument is a red herring in our view.

Because no one enforces the limit now. Niagara Regional Police won't bother to assign officers to run radar on Shakespeare or Vincent or any other residential street under any circumstances.

But signs warning drivers of the new limit will grab drivers' attention. And the town can use monitors to gather data on what effect the change has.

So, please Mr. Lord Mayor and town council, use your power and act ASAP. We don't need another study or a made-in-NOTL solution on this issue.

Just do it.

Let's make it your top New Year's resolution.

editor@niagaranow.com

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

Finally, more beer sales in more stores. Eventually

Dear editor:

The news that the Ontario provincial government is finally living up to its promise to allow beer sales in more grocery stores is good news indeed.

Perhaps we also will be able to buy beer with smiling good service at the corner store.

The CBC this week reported that the Ford government would soon announce these changes – but they might not take effect until 2026.

The Beer Store, a foreign-owned oligopoly, seems determined to propagate an environment of “customer lack of service.”

Store staff seem to be trained to be unhelpful and dismissive (in my limited experience) and outlets no longer post a list of beers available.

It closed its store in Niagara-on-the-Lake (where Butler’s Grill now provides both excellent service and beer, but sadly doesn’t ac-



cept bottle returns).

It’s more than 15 kilometres to the nearest Beer Store from NOTL.

That’s a long way for elderly citizens to drive to return a few wine bottles for refunds and pick up a six pack.

So, bring on beer in grocery stores, but also give a thought to providing more outlets for bottle returns.

Nigel Napier-Andrews
NOTL

Santa and carols in Chautauqua

Ruth Denyer, left, Laura Jeffrey, Bill Smelser and Andrew Henwood join in during the Chautauqua Residents Association’s annual Christmas carol gathering on Friday. About 100 residents turned out and Santa was also on hand for carriage rides.

KEVIN MACLEAN



Artificial intelligence is used far and wide

Dear editor:

I want to thank Dr. William Brown for his excellent column (“Science and the gods of the 21st century,” *The Lake Report*, Dec. 7) and his review of scientific advances and inventions that have made the last few centuries so amazing and interesting.

That’s certainly the sort of information that will benefit all of us in this

technological age.

However, I was stopped in my tracks when Dr. Brown apparently introduced politics into his fine scientific story.

Suddenly he included this paragraph, “We’ve heard how threatening AI can be in China these days as a means of tracking dissenters using data on smartphones and facial recognition technologies.”

Surely the good doctor has read news items regarding law enforcement organizations in Canada and the United States that also seize phones and use facial-recognition in the pursuit of troublesome citizens.

Perhaps politics, in this instance, was just an unnecessary distraction.

George Dunbar
Toronto



How getting the flu shot saved my life



COVID, flu and other bugs are making a resurgence now. Medical experts are warning people to get vaccinated. And when Lake Report columnist Dr. William Brown wrote Nov. 30 about the value of vaccines and urged everyone to get a flu shot, it brought to mind this story, which has been updated since its original publication in the Toronto Star in 2014.

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

If it wasn’t for the flu shot, I almost certainly would be dead now.

The flu vaccine itself didn’t save my life, but getting the shot certainly did.

It was 2009, long before COVID, but the H1N1 virus was threatening the world with a pandemic. By early November, I still hadn’t found time to get myself “shot up.”

Despite repeated entreaties from my wife, a hospital

administrator, and my own admonitions to our three grown children, I just hadn’t got around to it.

Fate intervened. While driving through Woodbridge on a sunny day off, a flu clinic sign beckoned me into one of those ubiquitous GTA suburban plazas. I was the only patient at that moment and was whisked inside, where a doctor administered the H1N1 vaccine.

The young physician did the usual check of my vitals — blood pressure, lungs, heart etc. — then turned to me and said, “You know, you have a heart murmur?”

Or something like that. It’s all a bit of a blur, since, no, I had no idea I had a murmur. And what the heck does that even mean?

The doctor assured me it was probably nothing to be alarmed about, but suggested I get it checked out. “It was very faint. Probably no big deal,” he said. Or something like that.

A few minutes later, sitting in my car in the parking lot, I was on the phone to my family doctor, arranging to see him that same day.

This all occurred at a rather inconvenient time

in my life. I had been an editor at the Toronto Star for nearly 25 years and, at age 52, was seriously considering taking an early retirement buyout the company was dangling.

The deadline to file my retirement papers was just over two weeks away. So, all this health crisis stuff was really an unwanted complication.

In a matter of days, a battery of tests showed a genetic anomaly — a bicuspid aortic valve — meaning that the main heart valve has only two prongs instead of the three usually installed at the “factory.”

This sloshy, noisy valve accounted for the murmur. Not a big deal, I was assured again.

But there was something else: a weakness in the wall of the aorta — known as an aortic aneurysm.

Now THAT was serious, like having a time bomb ticking away in your chest. You just never know when it might explode. So, my heart was broken, but otherwise healthy.

Biking, walking, working out, just everyday living — it could rupture at any time. Had it not been discovered, I have no doubt that I would

be dead by now.

As a cardiac surgeon at St. Michael’s Hospital told me: “If your aorta ruptures while you’re here at the hospital, you have about a two per cent chance of survival. If it happens out on the street or at home, well ...”

What to do? Should I follow through with my early retirement plans? Stay on so my family would have insurance and benefits in the event of my demise? Or just live my life and take each day as it comes?

I opted for the latter. The doctors told me they would monitor the size of my aneurysm (it was about 4.7 centimetres at that time, shy of the 5-centimetre threshold for surgery, but much expanded from the 2.5-centimetre diameter of a

“normal” person’s aorta). Eventually I would need open heart surgery to graft a Dacron (plastic) insert to my aorta.

For more than two years, life went on: I left the Star in August 2010 and began a new career teaching journalism part-time at what was then Ryerson University.

The aneurysm grew slowly, I stayed healthy, and on April 30, 2012, a new chapter in my life opened



Kevin MacLean made it to London in time for the 2012 Olympics, three months after heart surgery. MAY CHANG

when I received my Dacron aorta at Trillium Health in Mississauga.

The bicuspid valve that started it all was deemed healthy, if a bit noisy, and it didn’t need replacing.

My recovery went smoothly, we made it to London that summer for a long-planned holiday to cheer on Canada at the Olympics and our daughter’s fall wedding in NOTL was spectacular.

But I owe my life to the sharp ears of the young doctor at the Woodbridge clinic where I got my flu shot.

All these years later, I remain healthy, happy, fully recovered and I do things — bucket list and otherwise — that I might not have made time for previously.

And I get my flu shot every year. You should, too.

Kevin MacLean is managing editor of The Lake Report.

Trees and parks and the world's changing climate



Brian Marshall
Columnist

Over the past few days, I have been battling a particularly nasty cold, which has reduced my energy levels to a mere ghost of what I consider normal.

Work of any sort was just not something I could contemplate so, rather than staring at the ceiling and feeling sorry for myself, I decided to catch up on reading the various trade journals I subscribe to.

In one of these publications – ArchDaily – I came across a short article, entitled: “What Is an Urban Oasis?”

As it turns out, the author of this article answered this question in the following fashion: “In an optimal project, the urban oasis constitutes a shaded area — preferably adorned with trees — equipped with suitable furniture for individuals to rest and access government-provided drinking water.”

If that definition sounds suspiciously akin to what most of us call a public park, it might be because that is exactly what is being talked about.

You see, the rapacious development model followed by most jurisdictions around the globe during the last 70 years has simply ignored the benefits of public treed green spaces in favour of creating higher-density buildings.

Parks became a superfluous indulgence in the drive to cover every iota of land with bricks, concrete, steel and glass. And the practice of developers paying municipalities a calculated fee in lieu of creating parks became the rule rather than the exception.

The human race has a sad propensity to forget the lessons of history and how



Columnist Brian Marshall says towns should expect more greenspace, parks and trees with new development proposals. FILE/TONY CHISHOLM

our actions can adversely impact the ecosystem which supports our lives.

It seems to me that I was about eight or nine years old when my maternal grandfather told me about the cedars of Lebanon and the forests that once covered many parts of the Middle East.

He described the benign climate engendered by the pine and cedar forests that carpeted wide sections of the region, and its biodiversity teemed with wildlife.

The desertification of the Middle East, he said, was purely a result of blind and ignorant deforestation by human beings.

He believed that given indiscriminate logging practices, the concentration of urban centres in areas that had historically been the most bioproductive and the generalized reduction of healthy biodiverse green spaces would inevitably lead to similar desertification on a much wider, even global scale.

I also recall an occasion when my paternal grandfather and I were walking his farm. I asked him why he left so much good land to woodlots and windrows.

He answered, “Trees make the air sweet for us to breathe, manage the water and help to moderate the

temperature. The wild critters that live in and under the trees help the land we work to be healthy. Cows that shelter in woodlots give better milk in larger quantity. Hogs that forage along the margins and amongst the windfalls yield superior meat.”

He concluded as such: “And besides,” he said with a sad chuckle, “come a strong blow or wind storm, those trees make sure my topsoil remains on my land and not my neighbour’s. That was something a lot of folks in the Dirty ‘30s had forgotten about until they were forced to watch their farms dry up and blow away.”

It seems that both of my grandfathers were prophetic in their own ways, as the European Union’s Copernicus Climate Change Service announced in November that 2023 is virtually certain to be “the hottest year in the last 125,000 years.”

This year, we watched 16.5 million hectares of forest burn, a significant portion of which was second and third-growth sterile monoculture tree plantations.

And, while climate change activists the world over wring their hands and proclaim we must cut our

carbon emissions – which is true as far as it goes – they seem to forget that healthy biodiverse green spaces are the world’s second-largest (behind healthy oceans) carbon sink.

Well, to be fair, it hasn’t been totally forgotten. In the 2019 election, the Liberals promised to plant two billion trees by 2030.

But, according to an audit report issued in April of this year, the program is unlikely to achieve even one-tenth of that two-billion tree commitment by the promised deadline.

Further, if this program is to preserve and protect biodiversity, the planting must include multiple tree species randomly placed and there is no indication that current seedling production is being ramped up and diversified to meet the two billion tree target.

So, once again, it becomes clear that government promises will not be kept.

Moreover, here in Ontario, we have just forced our provincial government to step back from gutting the Greenbelt and associated ecologically sensitive green spaces.

However, this week Premier Doug Ford’s government has given the go-ahead to cut down over 850

mature trees and clear the vegetation to make way for the planned redevelopment of Ontario Place.

Clearly, it devolves upon us as individuals to work together and preserve the green spaces we have while increasing the natural biodiversity on our lands.

Here in Niagara-on-the-Lake, we are blessed to have urban oases such as Simcoe Park in Old Town.

However, beyond the general awareness engendered by Paradise Grove and the Niagara Parkway Oak Necklace, most of us are unaware of the full natural heritage assets in town.

Selected examples of these assets might include the Scarlet Oak Grove in Queenston, the only “big tree” old-growth grove of Scarlet Oak identified anywhere in North America outside of the southern Appalachians.

Then, close by is the Birthplace of Niagara Walnut Grove: one of North America’s last surviving old-growth black walnut forest groves.

A couple of miles from there is the Gray Forest Shumard Oak Grove, which is one of only two old-growth Shumard oak (an endangered species) groves in Canada and one of three such groves outside of the

southern United States.

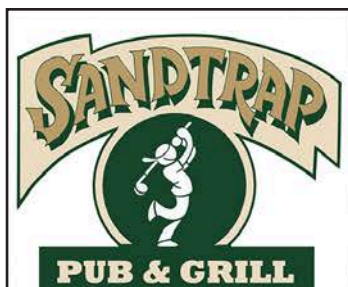
And, while our urban tree cover is reasonable (not extensive), it continues to be whittled away at by development projects, a small example of which might be the one proposed for 474 Simcoe St. that calls for the removal of eight mature trees.

In addition, wind rows in vineyards may have benefits: Joan Davenport, an emeritus professor of Washington State University, suggests that climate change is increasing wind and wind events, and as such, recommends planting biological windbreaks in spots around vineyards where the natural vegetation (fast-growing trees, hedges or other plants that will be a safe haven for beneficial insects) can block the prevailing winds.

Let’s make more parks and deep-six the fee instead of an option. Let’s plant more native trees and other Carolinian shrubs. And, let’s save the precious natural heritage resources we have.

The planet will thank you for it — and so will future generations.

Brian Marshall is a NOTL realtor, author and expert consultant on architectural design, restoration and heritage.



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Charities have chance to get **\$5,000** boost, courtesy of Goettler Foundation

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Charitable organizations looking for a little help are being encouraged to apply for funding from the Goettler Family Foundation.

The funds, in the form of a \$5,000 grant, will be awarded to help non-governmental organizations make needed changes, whether to improve business practices, serve clients more effectively, or launch a pilot project.

"I'm excited to see who comes out to apply," said Lauren Goettler, who along with her husband, Vaughn, created the foundation when they sold their home heating and cooling business.

"We thought it would be great to help people with the grants," she said. "\$5,000 is a lot of money for somebody with a great idea who needs help getting over the finish line."



Lauren and Vaughn Goettler want to give charitable organizations a helping hand in the form of a \$5,000 grant. Eligible groups have until March 31 to apply. SUPPLIED

The foundation has helped fund a wide range of projects abroad and back home in their native Niagara-on-the-Lake: everything from supply water to villages in Africa to creating a fish farm in Bolivia.

Back home, the Goettlers most recently helped fund a film school at the Yellow Door Theatre.

The idea for the initiative, Goettler said, came from grant advisor Jodey Porter, who called it "something

new and different" for the Foundation.

"We've kept it pretty open," said Porter. "Our foundation is entrepreneurial philanthropy. We don't want brass plaques. What we want is change."

The program, she said, is meant to give organizations a boost.

"We just want to help NGOs that don't have the latitude to do what they want."

Organizations wishing for more information or who are interested in applying for a grant can send an email to GFFInnovation@gmail.com.

Applications should include details of what the funds would be used for and the organization's charitable registration number.

The competition will be open from Jan. 1 to March 31. Successful applicants will be announced in April.

hutton@niagaranow.com

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Youth Collective is **charity of choice** for January's Black Tie Gala



The Black Tie Gala is on Jan. 27. Tickets are on sale now for \$199 each, plus additional fees. SUPPLIED

Staff
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's annual Black Tie Gala will make its return at the start of 2024, with the proceeds this year going to help out the young people of this community.

The gala is set to be held on Saturday, Jan. 27 at the NOTL Community Centre on Anderson Lane, from 8 p.m. to 1:30 a.m.

Guests take part in a night of sophistication, dressed to the nines in an elegant atmosphere, and enjoy live music, dinner and other entertainment.

Each year since the gala's inaugural year in 2020, a

community organization or cause is chosen to receive the profits of the event proceeds, and for this January's gala, it will be the NOTH Youth Collective that will receive support.

Caroline Polgrabia, a member of the collective's planning committee, said their team was "absolutely thrilled" when they were told they would be 2024's supported cause.

The youth collective was started last year. The money raised through the gala will be used to fund the collective's programs for 2024.

"We have learned so much in this first year about what is needed right here in NOTL to support

the youth," Polgrabia said in a media release. "This donation will really help us take the program to the next level.

Last January, coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic during which both the 2021 and 2022 galas were cancelled, the gala raised more than \$117,000 for Pathstone Youth Mental Health.

That money went to helping young people recuperate mentally from the struggles of pandemic lockdowns and re-entering the post-pandemic world with success.

Carson Tucker, a Niagara-on-the-Lake resident, is one of the event organizers and works with a group of friends to plan for, organize

and run the annual gala.

"It's been really great for us to come together and network, and it feels good to be able to have a goal in mind and a way to help," he said in a media release.

Tickets for the gala are available as part of a sponsor package or an individual purchase for \$199 each, plus additional fees. Those interested in purchasing one can visit Eventbrite and searching "NOTL Black Tie Gala."

More details about the 2024 will be revealed periodically on the organizers' social media pages: you can follow them on Facebook and Instagram, @Black-TieGALA. This event is presented by Interatlas.

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A SPECIAL THANK YOU

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Cenotaph Committee would like to thank the community and the following donors for their generous contributions to repairing and maintaining the historic Cenotaph Clock Tower on Queen Street in Old Town. The goal of raising \$150,000 has been achieved, and the fundraising campaign has officially closed.

\$80,000 will be used for the upcoming spring repairs and restoration of the Cenotaph, while the remaining funds will be set aside in a reserve to ensure ongoing maintenance of the Cenotaph in the future.

A special thank you to Lord Mayor Zalepa, Town Council and Staff for their support. The Committee would also like to recognize King Street Gallery, Hendriks YIG, Irish Design, Oliv, Beau Chapeau, Scottish Loft, Irish Harp, Karen Taylor-Jones, and Pierre Corbiere for their assistance in the campaign.

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Parkway house **lights up** for Christmas

What is perhaps the most spectacular Christmas light show in Niagara has returned. The display, at the home of Wanda and Terry Nord on the Niagara Parkway near Line 2, was illuminated on Saturday night during a fundraiser for the Niagara Foundation. About 75 people paid \$100 each to be on hand for the colourful unveiling. DAVE VAN DE LAAR



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‘The best defence is a good offence,’ says falls prevention specialist

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

One of the most common ways people experience falls is ascending and descending stairs, says vestibular therapist Trevor Kwolek – but it could happen anywhere.

During the last Learn & Live session on the season titled “Spin City: Dizziness and Falls Prevention,” Kwolek addressed attendees at the NOTL Public Library.

Because everyone lives their lives so differently, Kwolek’s approach to each patient at risk for a fall is different.

“I don’t try to prepare everyone for a certain situation,” he said. “I tend to take an individualized approach.”

In the example of falling down the stairs, he gave a variety of factors that can be considered when preparing for a fall in one’s home.

“What’s your home situation like? How many steps does it take to get into your house? Once you’re in your house is it a bungalow or do you have a three-storey home? How about the number of chairs?” he said, stating some of the questions



Trevor Kwolek performs a balance test on Chris Phibbs. She said the Learn & Live session was a “great resource for quite a few people who came.” JULIA SACCO

one should ask about their environment.

“Talking about some of the environment and some of the things around them that may be a risk, that’s a conversation I have,” he said.

Almost one-third of all people over the age of 65 will experience a fall within a year, Kwolek said, with 85 per cent of those falls resulting in hospitalization.

“We don’t know the causes of them necessarily, but we know they’re going

to happen,” he said.

Kwolek touched on a variety of different factors that can increase one’s risk for a fall, like impaired balance, a variety of vestibular disorders, medication side effects, or even things as simple to address as footwear.

“The best defence is a good offence,” he said, emphasizing that if you think you are at risk, the best mode of action is to make an appointment with him or visit a fall prevention class.

“Falls prevention (classes) don’t necessarily have the time to assess the 40 people who come into a falls prevention class, they need a more broad scale,” he said.

Kwolek added that in an appointment with him, he can more specifically analyze risks on a case-by-case basis.

The vestibular therapist operates out of Great North Physiotherapy at 1882 Niagara Stone Rd. and can be reached at trevor@great-northphysio.ca.

juliasacco@niagaranow.com



This week’s riddle is “Jeopardy!” style.
Category: REALITY TV

We kept up with this family for 14 years, but in 2021 Kim, Khloe & Kompany bid farewell as their show came to an end.

Last issue:

Category: ONE SYLLABLE OR TWO?

Clue: As a flower, it’s one syllable.
As a pale type of wine, it’s two.

Answer: What is rose?

Answered first by: Claudia Grimwood

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Bill Hamilton, Jane Morris, Bob Wheatley, Susan Hamilton, Lynda Collet, Dan Fleck, Margie Enns, Jim Dandy, Pam Dowling, Linda Becker, Margaret Garaughty, Wade Durling, Sylvia Wiens, Catherine Clarke, Marla Percy, Susan Pohorly, Clive Buist, Rob Hutchison, Nancy Rocca, Danielle Gault, Nancy Broerse, Susan Scheid-Jackson, Sheila Meloche, Elaine Landray, Paulette Kennedy

*REMEMBER TO PUT “WHAT IS” FOR JEOPARDY QUESTIONS!

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'River's Perfect Christmas' helps teach kids core values

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

Al Huberts has a mind for business and a passion for creativity, both of which came into play when working on his latest project, "River's Perfect Christmas" — a children's book.

When he first had grandchildren, he noticed "they would learn at an earlier age than I learned them. But there were other things that I was more concerned about," Huberts told The Lake Report.

The premise for "River's Perfect Christmas" was inspired by Hubert's upbringing with immigrant parents and his values around receiving gifts.

"I think some people aren't exposed to certain things at a young enough age. Not that (the book) is going to fix everything, but it can help," he said.

Huberts, president of Nature's Aid, a natural health products company, is no stranger to combining his



Becca Marshall and Al Huberts combined their skills to create "River's Perfect Christmas," a simple story that kids and parents can both enjoy. JULIA SACCO

entrepreneurship with his imagination.

He's written books before and even created a board game, Build-iT With Bryan Step By Step, which launched in 2018.

When deciding how he would approach writing this book, Huberts' business mind activated.

"One of the best-selling books of the last six years, maybe even a little longer, is 'Goodnight, Goodnight, Construction Site,'" Huberts said.

He took inspiration largely from how the children's book was written.

"The key to it was making it rhyme," he said.

The story features rhyming and simplicity, which appeals to both kids and parents.

Bringing it all together are illustrations done by Becca Marshall.

"Becca and I are partners in this: she's not just the illustrator," Huberts said.

Marshall also works as a

high school teacher, Huberts said, so she understands the way children and young people process information.

"Seeing a lot of the students lately, it's about coming back to those core human values, being a good person," Marshall said. "This story pulls on that simplicity of 'What's the next good thing you can do?'"

Marshall's husband, who teaches younger kids, provided some insight as well.

"He told us kids are so attuned to your faces, so with some of the images we decided to zoom in a little more and try and play on how much a simple action can impact the change on someone's face," she said.

"At the end of the day," Huberts said, "it's a pretty simple story."

Huberts and Marshall had a long process of finding the best way to launch their book release.

"We're looking at a couple of options, those options from a business perspective

have merged a bit," he said.

"The negative side is ten years ago, there weren't a lot of Kickstarter projects, now there's thousands of projects so how do you stand out?"

Huberts' ultimate goal, he said, is to go beyond just the book and build a solid audience based on this release.

The writing and illustration duo have put together a website for supporters of "River's Perfect Christmas," which will inform you when their Kickstarter page is live and instruct them how to get a copy of the book.

"It is going to be a combination of a funding site before the book comes out. You don't need a lot to get momentum and Niagara-on-the-Lake has a lot of grandparents," Huberts said.

"River's Perfect Christmas" would be a great gift for grandchildren, children and loved ones while supporting a NOTL author.

Find the webpage at riverperfectchristmasbook.com. juliasacco@niagarano.com

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Lezlie Wade talks **beating the odds** with COVID comeback

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

Award-winning director, writer, lyricist and actor Lezlie Wade has been breaking records throughout her career.

Just this September, her production of “Spamalot” became the second-longest-running play at the Stratford Festival, a milestone in Wade’s career.

“I feel like if I was writing an autobiography, there would be a very large chapter called ‘Spamalot,’” she told The Lake Report.

“Spamalot,” a stage musical based on the classic 1975 comedy film, “Monty Python and the Holy Grail,” came to Wade shortly before COVID-19 effectively shut down the entire Stratford Festival.

“In January of 2020 I had a play called ‘The Tale of the Gifted Prince’ and it was optioned in New York,” Wade said.

In order to accurately tell this story, she said, the play had an entirely Asian cast, some of whom had recently returned from China, where the first cases of COVID-19 originated.



Lezlie Wade has had a long career in the arts, but her record-breaking production of “Spamalot” post-COVID takes up a “large chapter” of it. JULIA SACCO

“We all got super sick,” she said.

When she was heading back to Canada after completing the workshop, she heard whispers of incidents of COVID-19, she

explained.

“Then, when I started back at the Stratford Festival, we were two weeks into the rehearsals when I got a call from my stage manager saying ‘I think you should

get here as fast as you can,’ and this was at 7 o’clock in the morning,” Wade said.

The door was already locked when she arrived at the theatre at 7:30 a.m., she said.

“At that point, people were saying, ‘Will it be a week? It might be a week, it might be ten days.’ We were still optimistic that we were coming back,” Wade said. “And then we weren’t.”

Because “Spamalot” is such a big show, she explained, they decided to delay it until everyone could properly recover.

“It was an interesting show to do for a struggling festival.”

In fact, Wade said she heard whisperings of people wondering why Stratford would put on a comedy show like “Spamalot,” which she called “ridiculous.”

“Ultimately, theatres need to do shows that sell tickets,” she said. “People want to laugh. Actually, it was better that we did it later because it was even more popular than it would have been. People want an escape and that’s what ‘Spamalot’ is.”

The show was not without its difficulties, with the entire staff catching COVID at certain points, leading to a tight rehearsal schedule and little time to prepare.

However, it all came together in the end — and in time for them to receive news of a special guest set to attend their performance.

“We got the call that Eric (Idle) was coming to the Saturday preview before opening,” Wade said.

Idle, one of six members of the legendary Monty Python comedy troupe, co-wrote the music for “Spamalot” with John Du Prez, and wrote the script and song lyrics.

She said that she was able to attend a — rather nerve-wracking — dinner with Idle before the show.

“I grew up with the Pythons, my dad was a huge Python fan,” she said. “He was so lovely, he was so gracious, it was fantastic.”

Afterwards, Wade said that Idle was “absolutely over the moon with the show.”

“We are the second longest-running show now: ‘Rocky Horror’ has just squeezed a little ahead of us by six days.”

While she hoped the show would be a success, she never expected this level of response, she added.

“I’ve never seen anything quite like it.”

Nowadays, Wade is at home in Niagara-on-the-Lake and working on several different projects.

She is hoping to continue working with Yellow Doors Theatre this upcoming season and her play “The Tale of the Gifted Prince” is getting a production at a major Canadian theatre, which has yet to be announced.

Wade also has a new musical adaptation of “Macbeth” in its early stages, which she worked on with a theatre company in Maryland alongside Jonathan Monroe.

“An artist is like Sisyphus. I think an artist is always pushing that boulder up the hill and maybe that’s the effort,” she said. “And when the boulder rolls back down that’s when you start thinking about your next project, it’s a never-ending process.”

More information on Lezlie Wade and her work can be found on her website at lezliefwade.com.

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TEAM OF THE WEEK

Initiation Program 1



Members of the NOTL Minor Hockey Association's Initiation Program 1 team are this week's Lake Report Team of the Week. Front row: Harper Herriman and Catharine Hope. Standing: Reece Nichols, Theodore Jansson, Giacomo Kauzlaric, Leo Biega, Milo Hipwell, Samuel Moes, Connor Muir, Hunter Willms, Mark Stewart and Nevyn Reid. Absent: Scott Petch, Dominic Miele, Kenny Neuhof, Jolie Skubel and Linkon Jackson. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

NOTL figure skaters compete in Keswick



Members of the NOTL Skating Club skaters attended the Keswick Invitational Skating competition Nov. 24 to 26. It was the first competition of the season for those in qualifying events to have their scores tracked to be ranked for the provincial championships in March. Hailey Mitchell was first in STAR 5 U10. Other results: Kayla Thwaites (gold assessment in STAR 3), Jamie Doucet (third in STAR 5 O13NQ), Samantha Frydryk (fourth in STAR 6), Abigail McCabe (seventh in STAR 5 U13), Katharine VanderKaay (12th in STAR 6), Darah Adeyiwola (15th in STAR 5 U13) and Mary Lamky (16th in STAR 8). SUPPLIED

Unpredictable Predators bounce back big

Kevan Dowd
The Lake Report

The Jr. A Niagara Predators faced one of their toughest challenges this past week but rose to the occasion against two top-notch teams in as many games, jumping up two spots in the standings.

Niagara took on the first-place North York Renegades at home last Friday and the third-place Durham Roadrunners on the road Monday, taking the Renegades into overtime, losing 4-3 and then the Preds beat the Roadrunners 4-3 on the road three days later.

To sweeten the deal, the Predators bested the Temiscaming Titans of the Greater Metro Hockey League's North Division 5-3 in a special league showcase game Tuesday at the Gale Centre in Niagara Falls.

"I thought the boys worked hard. They battled and didn't give up and that's what we're looking for all year," head coach Kevin Taylor said after Friday's game. "They battled back and got the point."

Niagara's Georgy Kholmovsky put the Predators ahead 5:36 into the game, a lead they held for almost 30 minutes before North York netted their first. A second by the Renegades two minutes later had Niagara down by one going into the third period.

The Renegades pulled ahead by two with eight minutes to go, but a pair of goals in one minute by Luca Fernandez had things tied up with less than two minutes left to force overtime.

Holding on in three-on-three OT against a trio of some of the league's top scorers, the Predators came 36 seconds shy of a shootout finisher.

With Niagara's goaltender Zane Clausen stopping a total of 57 shots over the course of the night, that may have been just what the Predators needed to pull off the win.

"It's disappointing but it's disappointing in a positive way because they deserved better," said Taylor.

"I know the shots were stupid for them, but I thought we played well. Certain guys struggled and it was frustrating, and those are the guys we

expect to step up their game but they didn't come to play tonight. But other guys did."

Monday's game was equally dramatic with Durham holding a two-goal lead by the end of the first period, but it was all Niagara in the second. Fernandez, Shane Kaplan and Reese Bisci pitched in to turn the tide.

Durham tied it midway through the third but Fernandez notched the winner just seven seconds before the final buzzer.

"There's heart and character now," said Taylor. "They're on top of the world right now. They're starting to see what we've known all along."

Nolan Wyers, Nicholas Nicoletti, Kholmovsky and Dylan Denning all scored Tuesday against Temiscaming – with two by Denning – to keep things on track and put the Predators two points ahead of the Northumberland Stars, and even with the St. George Ravens at 22 points with five games in hand.

"When we looked at the schedule, I don't think anybody had us for any points," said Taylor. "The guys needed a couple of wins under their belt to get their swagger."

Although the Predators have never beaten North York, this is both the second time they have forced the Renegades into overtime.

But with Niagara now partway through a stretch of games against top-tier opponents, the wins – and overtime loss – serve as a timely confidence boost for a team that has been struggling. Taylor had noticed a marked change in his team's attitude, even before Tuesday's game.

"You could just see everyone walking a little taller," he said. "They're excited for the team to do well."

The Predators still face a tough road ahead with Durham up next on the schedule, North York on Sunday and the second-place Bradford Bulls the following week. A much-earned break for the holidays will come after that.

The Niagara Predators host Durham this Friday, Dec. 15 at the Meridian Credit Union Arena. Game time is 7:30 p.m.



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NOTL lacrosse team **plays before thousands** at Rock game

Tracey Hope
Special to The Lake Report

A group of Niagara-on-the-Lake lacrosse players got to show off their skills and hang out with the pros Saturday night before a crowd of 7,100 fans at the Toronto Rock's home opener.

The Niagara Thunderhawks U9 Sixes team, coached by Jared Hope, James Sticca and Matt Dietsch, hit the floor during the intermission in the Rock's first game of the 2023-24 season at Hamilton's FirstOntario Centre.

"The whole experience was awesome and the smiles on the kids faces during the game said it all," Dietsch commented afterward.

Parent Liana Moore added, "This was the perfect way to end off the year for the kids." The team's season wrapped up in October.

On Saturday, the Rock beat Philadelphia 11-7, but the NOTLers arrived at the arena before the game so they could drop off their equipment before all of the fans showed up.

This allowed our kids to have a behind-the-scenes



Members of the U9 Niagara Thunderhawks enjoyed a tour of the Toronto Rock's facilities in Hamilton prior to the pro team's home opener. TRACEY HOPE

view of the facility, meet the Toronto Rock cheerleaders, mascot Iggy and tour the arena.

For a lot of the families, it was the first time attending a professional lacrosse game and for the kids, their first time ever playing on an artificial turf floor.

It was also the largest crowd anyone on the team had ever played in front of.

At professional lacrosse games, music is played the entire time so it adds an energy

level to the crowd you don't typically see at other professional games, like the NHL.

As an added bonus, about two weeks before the game, the Toronto Rock reached out to see if one of NOTL's goalies was interested in being in net for the ceremonial first shot.

Ethan Sticca was the perfect choice.

He is the grandson of Mary Sticca (vice-president of minor box lacrosse for the Ontario Lacrosse Asso-

ciation) and son of U9 team coach James Sticca (scheduler with the Thunderhawks board of directors).

The Sticca family combined has dedicated hundreds of hours to help make lacrosse programs locally and provincially a success.

The memorable night came about after I contacted the Rock in October about having our team play during an intermission.

We had hoped to do it Dec. 30 when Jay Thorim-

bert (Niagara Thunderhawks' board treasurer, 2023 NOTL U11 coach and pro player with the New York Riptide) was playing against the Rock.

It wasn't available, but on Saturday Thunderhawks alumnus Ryan Wagner of the Philadelphia Wings was in town for the match against the Rock.

So, we quickly snatched that up.

With coach Dietsch donning the referee's shirt, the Thunderhawks had about a 10-minute scrimmage, with all players participating – team white vs. team blue.

Prior to the game, one of the team parents got the inside scoop on where to meet the pros after the game, which allowed the kids to meet and get autographs from various Rock and Wings players (including NOTL alumni Ryan Wagner and Chris Weier).

As well, some of the team saw recently retired Toronto Rock legend Dan Dawson in the crowd and got some photos with him.

As if all that wasn't enough, the team was included in a short clip on TSN.

And thanks to a reshare by the Ontario Lacrosse Association, an Instagram video of the NOTL team entering the field has been viewed more than 4,100 times so far.

That's a huge accomplishment for our small but mighty club as we've gained many new followers as a result.

For any kids looking to try out the sport, registration for a free Try Lacrosse program opens in mid-January.

It lets kids experience lacrosse over multiple sessions before the season. Details on how to sign up will be available at niagaralacrosse.com and on the team's social media accounts in the new year.

The Thunderhawks roster includes goalies Weston Stewart and Ethan Sticca, and players Rily Chan-Hill, Auston Cwierniewski, Colton Dietsch, Reed Francis, Brock Friesen, Sydney Herriman, Bennett Hope, Smith Kaposy, Hunter Konopka, Nico Mirabella, Theo Moore, Noah Scaringi, Noah Sticca and Noah Werner.

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St. Davids boxer another step closer to Paris Olympics

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

Next stop, Italia. St. Davids boxer McKenzie Wright continued her quest to represent Canada at the 2024 Summer Games by beating a three-time national champion in an Olympic team qualifying tournament in Montreal on the weekend. It's the latest step on the long road to making it to the Paris Olympics next July. The win over former Quebec's Anne Marcotte in the 50-kilogram means Wright will travel to Italy to compete in a tournament Feb. 29 to March 12. The top four finishers there will qualify for Paris. As the top seed in Montreal thanks to her bronze medal in the Pan Am Games in Chile in October, Wright got a bye through to the semifinals. There she trounced Ontario's Jacklyne Irvine 5-0 in their three-round bout, including a standing eight-count in the middle round. She then dominated

against Marcotte, winning another unanimous decision in the final. The former national champ is taller than Wright and "she's got she's got a longer reach than me so we needed to establish the jab and keep her at my distance." "Then boom, when I started landing the first few shots and first few combinations my confidence went through the roof. I knew I had her." It also helped having Canadian boxing icon Mandy Bujold and coach Jesse Sallows, of Niagara's City Boxing Club, in her corner in Montreal. With only three rounds and nine minutes of boxing, everything happens quickly, Wright noted. But her experience, especially on the international stage, has been key to helping her handle pressure and adversity. In a fight, "everything's going 100 miles an hour. But you have to be able to react at 100 miles an hour. So, if plan A is not not real-

ly working, I'll jump to Plan B. If Plan B is not working, I have Plan C" – and she adjusts in the moment. While she is clearly one of Canada's best amateur boxers and has represented the country on the world stage, the entire financial burden of doing so falls on her as an athlete – at least until she qualifies for the Paris Olympics. "Everything is out of pocket," she said. A Niagara College nursing graduate, who still has to write her final board exam in the new year, she'll have to do some fundraising to help cover her costs. "I'll have to be funding a training camp in Montreal in January. Then a training camp in Italy and the competition in Italy," she said. "There is another mandatory trip in Colorado sometime in the spring." And then she's not sure what all else will be required leading up to Paris. "Canada is just not a boxing country. We're a hockey country. If I was on the national hockey team, no



Coach Jesse Sallows was in McKenzie Wright's corner in Montreal. SUPPLIED

problem." "Other countries set up their athletes a lot better. Like the U.S. The U.S. pays for all of this." But she won't let that deter her and remains confident in her ability. "At the Pan Am Games, I was so close to qualifying. And I still believe I won

the first and second round of that qualifying fight" against American Jennifer Lozano. But the judges saw it differently. Looking back on it, "If I got that close, then I think that really proves to me and shows I can qualify. I am at that level." "So I just need to keep do-

ing what I'm doing and keep elevating, keep getting that international experience." With Christmas approaching, she's taking one week off ("definitely not two") and she'll be back at the gym Monday, working on making her Olympic dream a reality. kevin@niagaranow.com

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Start to finish – what happens to us as we age



DR. BROWN

Dr. William Brown
Columnist

From the simplest cells to complex creatures gifted with language, imagination and creativity, life has a beginning, interims and an ending.

There's no escape. Good genes, a healthy lifestyle, timely and effective intervention, treatment for threats along the way and luck may put off the inevitable for a while — but in the end, there is an end.

The fact that there is an end, however, is out of sight and mind for most people, except for illnesses and death that affect their parents or grandparents.

Life between birth and the early 30s is spent learning and honing increasingly elaborate motor skills, learning language, how to

read the intentions and emotions of others, developing a sense of self-awareness, fitting in with increasingly large, and complex social communities and adopting family, cultural and community norms.

Then come the middle years between the early 30s to the late 60s. This four-decade period is, for the most part, a period of consolidation and continued learning from experience, and like the earlier period, a time when most take for granted good health and adapt to new challenges in the workplace and home with relative ease.

Even so, there are warning signs: MRI studies suggest that during this middle period, the neocortex begins to shrink, even if there are few if any obvious functional correlates.

Physiological studies by Alan McComas at McMaster University in the 1970s suggested that the sixth decade marks the beginning of losses of motor nerve cells in the spinal cord.

If so, there are probably similar losses, affecting other nerve cells in the



brain and spinal cord even though studying the latter cells is harder to do.

Losses of nerve cells are accompanied by losses of the connections those cells had with other nerve cells and, in the case of motor nerve cells in the brainstem and spinal cord, with muscle fibres.

Despite these losses, the impact on function may, initially, be minor because surviving related nerve cells manage to cover the functional deficit — until those initial survivors begin to succumb, too.

The period in the 60s and

70s is also marked by the beginnings of degenerative changes including microvascular changes, continued atrophy of the neocortex and other structures in the brain, and for some subjects, the accumulation of malformed proteins in the brain in the form of beta-amyloid and tau — even if there are no relatable symptoms yet.

What sets the 80s apart from the 70 is that degenerative changes and beta-amyloid and tau depositions become common in the brain become common, and clinically significant cognitive and memory changes eventually affect one-third of those in their 80s.

The 80s are also marked by the cumulative impact of other challenges such as the increasing prevalence of deafness, macular degeneration and significant degenerative arthritis in the lower back, hips and knee joints, which coupled with cognitive and memory losses, lead to significant functional disabilities and limit mobility and social activities.

By this time in life, atrophy of the brain is very obvious and marks the loss

of large numbers of nerves and other supporting cells in the brain.

The impact of cognitive changes on social activity is very apparent among those with dementia in long-term care facilities.

My observation is that residents with dementia rarely form meaningful relationships with other affected residents, despite living together in the community for many months and even several years.

With social isolation comes a withering of their social and language skills that compounds the problems of isolation. That's where well-trained and motivated staff can make a big difference by making efforts to talk to individual patients and listen to their responses.

Residents do respond to cheery, literally hands-on staff members, but not so much to group activities.

While it may be useful for clinical purposes to separate the cognitively healthy from those with early signs of dementia, the fact that the percentage of those with dementia continues to rise

in the 90s suggests that the spectrum is seamless and that eventually, the majority of those in their 90s will suffer from significant cognitive impairment made worse by social isolation as friends of the same age become similarly affected or die and their social world contracts.

I doubt there will be a truly effective drug for dementia anytime soon and given that most people have developed several impairments that limit their quality of life in the last two decades, it's important that the province plan for far more creative living space for seniors, much as some European countries have pioneered for humane care for elders.

That means higher training standards and salaries for those who provide care for those who are out of sight and mind for most Canadians in late life.

Dr. William Brown is a professor of neurology at McMaster University and co-founder of the InfoHealth series at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library.

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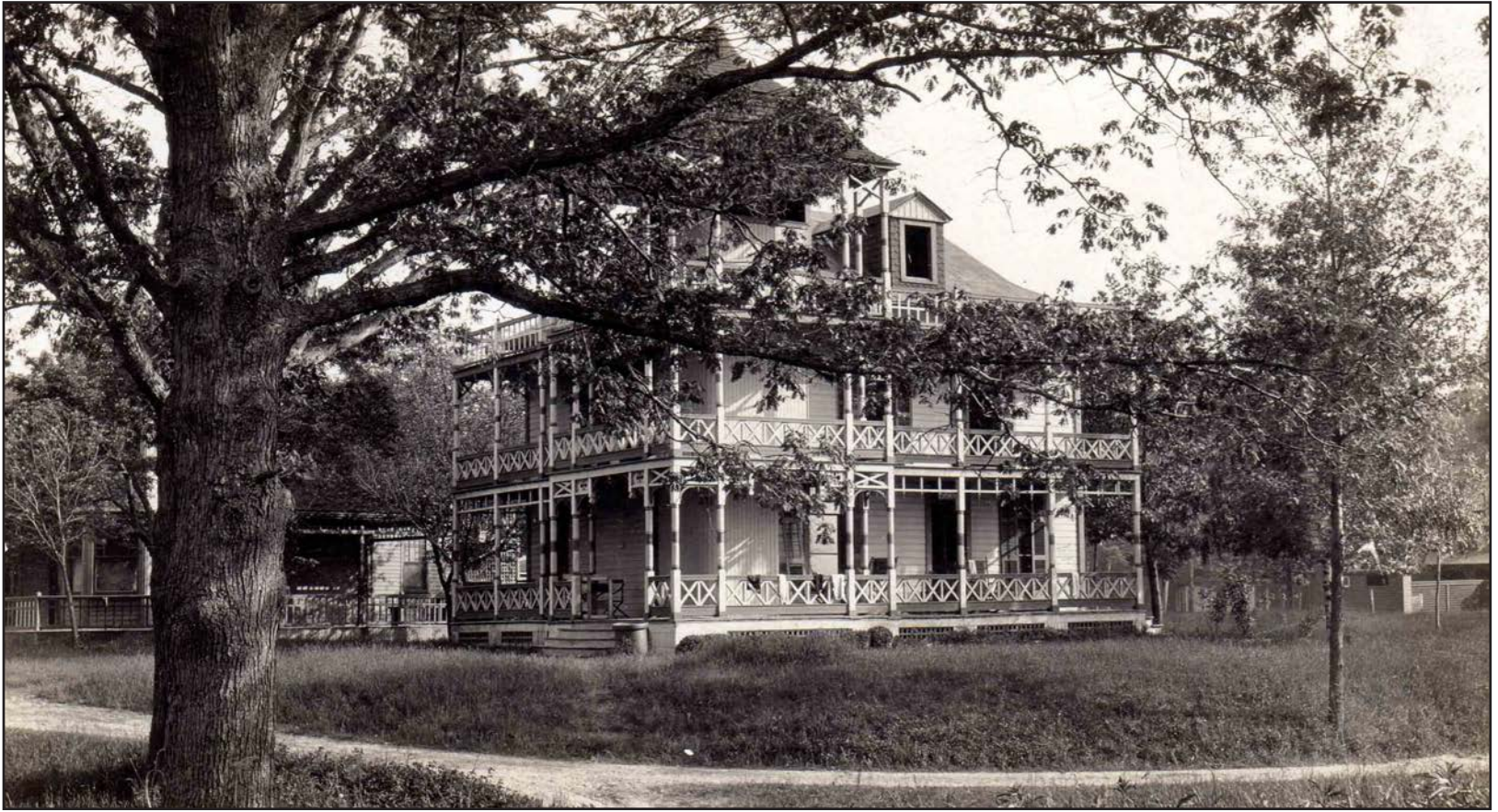
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EXPLORING HISTORY WITH NOTL MUSEUM



Robert Warren's Cottage, Chautauqua

In the early 1880s, Robert Warren, postmaster for Niagara, and others from Toronto wanted to establish a summer camp based on the ideas of the Chautauqua movement. They founded The Niagara Assembly (formerly the Fort George Assembly) and purchased the Crooks property in 1886 so they could build the Canadian Chautauqua. This cottage no longer exists — it is believed to have burnt down in 1958.

Our town shines as a **primo** holiday season destination



Ross's Ramblings

Ross Robinson
Columnist

So much to do, and so many spirited local folks making Christmas-y things happen.

Last weekend, visitors from nearby towns and far-away countries descended on Niagara-on-the-Lake, enthusiastically getting into the holiday spirit.

People plan short road trips around the many events we tend to take for granted.

Take some time and hang out on Queen Street. The red mailbox for letters to Santa, well located in front of the Court House, is a magnet for nervous youngsters.

They hesitantly approach and then shyly deposit their carefully written envelopes, lovingly addressed to "Santa Claus, North Pole." Hohoho.

And again this year, every letter will be answered by Santa and his helpers. What a wonderful and pure contribution to the season by Canada Post employees, apparently all across our unique and fortunate nation.

Out at the Living Water Wayside Chapel, the little white church next to Walker's Country Market, Rick Meloen and Albrecht Seeger organized their third-annual carol sing-along, under gray but dry skies.

Happily, these were still skies and there was not a cold wind like last year.

How Canadian, when a flock of Canada geese flew over, loudly honking and heading somewhere.

I recently learned why one side of their V formation is always much longer than the other side. Why, you ask? Because there are more geese on that side of the V.

Setting the scene was talented chanteuse Dianne Ticknor, dressed so festively for the Christmas season in layers of cozy red clothing.

Her pitch pipe was at the ready, and skilfully used, which gave us less reason to be singing off-key.

Seeger and Meloen organized a portable mini generator that was deftly attached



The Gamble children from Welland mailing their letters, with anticipation, to Santa Claus. ROSS ROBINSON

to a portable microphone to bring everyone together in song. Hurray, they overspent on sound!

Copies of the world's best Christmas Carol songbook, appropriately titled "Favourite Christmas Carols and Songs" were distributed to each warmly dressed caroler, in large type — to help those of us who get frustrated by church hymnals that try to squeeze too many words onto each page.

"Deck the Halls" was a rousing start, and later we got serious and religious with "O Holy Night." What a treat to have a well-amplified professional singer leading us through all three verses, and even some descanted melodies and choruses. We finished in good voice with "We Wish

You a Merry Christmas."

Life is not perfect, even along the fairly world-famous Niagara Parkway. Our dulcet tunes were occasionally interrupted by hot cars and noisy, macho motorcycles passing by and revving up their engines.

Do they just do that to make a statement? To bug us? Let's give them the benefit of the doubt, wave to them and wish them a Merry Christmas. Be forgiving.

At this time of year, I remember my mom, dad and older sister, all gone now. I really became aware of family and Christmas traditions during our five years living in Winnipeg.

Each summer, we would take a family drive through different parts of the city,

from River Heights to North Kildonan and other neighbourhoods. Then, to the huge and magnificent Assiniboine Park for a family walk. Wasn't life simpler then?

The four of us had no trouble entertaining ourselves by commenting on new buildings or points of interest in different parts of the city, then a hike along the Monkey Trails by the prairie draining river.

No portable car phones with an antenna on the window, or electronic devices. No video screens, and we would chat and discuss. Seriously, can you imagine? And not that long ago.

My mom and dad were very different and memorable. Values were not taught: values were caught! Mom from Cochrane in Northern Ontario, and Dad from Regina and some long-forgotten rural town in Saskatchewan.

They were both solid people, 100 per cent Canadian, strong, kind and grateful for our life in Canada.

I have always remembered one August car ride in Winnipeg, when we came upon a street with several houses that still had

Christmas lights along the eaves troughs and around the windows. In the middle of summer.

"My goodness," said Mom, "those people aren't taking very good care of their houses."

"Whaddayamean?" said Dad. "Those people are really organized. They have their Christmas lights up early."

Lessons learned from my family. It's all how we think and interpret, as we go through life. The Good Lord makes chocolate, vanilla and many other flavours.

Just outside of the south end of Winnipeg, we saw a two or three-story building with lots of little kids outside playing. When I asked what the name of the school was, my dad casually replied, "Oh, that's the Indian school."

It was never mentioned again. And not that long ago, eh?

Is that wine glass half empty or half full? Whatever. Either way, there's still wine in it?

Enjoy the festive season, and say hello to all you know.

Spread the love.
Be kind.






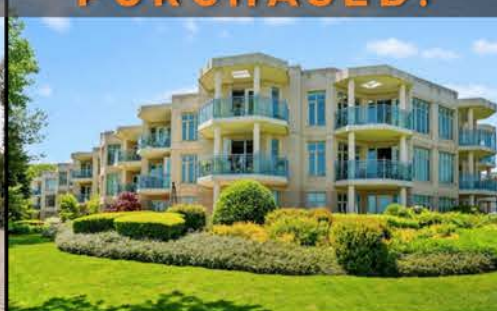




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TO ALL OF OUR NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE NEIGHBOURS!



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Spruce up your winter garden



GROWING TOGETHER 

Joanne Young
Columnist



Weeping white pine. On the bottom, it is covered in snow. JOANNE YOUNG

Now that our gardens are all cleaned up for the winter and things are tucked away, what is left in your garden for you to enjoy during the winter?

Does it look like a barren wasteland with nothing to catch your attention? Now is a great time of year to stop and analyze your winter garden.

Just because we are now spending more time inside for the winter doesn't mean that you can't enjoy your garden by looking at it through the window.

Do you realize that for at least five months of the year, we are looking out at our gardens from inside our home?

For you gardening addicts, that is too long of a stretch to go without getting a garden high.

I love to go to the window first thing in the morning, even in the winter months, to see what has changed or what is showing off in the garden.

Here are some of my favourite specimen evergreens that will spruce up any winter garden:

Weeping white pine (*Pinus strobus* 'Pendula')

If you are looking for an evergreen that provides a unique form and fantastic texture, weeping white pine may be the plant for you. It is one of my favourite evergreens.

Its pendulous branches give it a graceful appearance that looks great as a standout specimen plant in any garden.

It also looks great in a rock garden or near a waterfall. The long, fine needles add to the soft texture of the plant.

The four-inch to six-inch cones in winter add an

extra element of interest. Pines prefer a location that receives full sun to light shade and they prefer well-drained soil.

The white pine is hardy to Zone 3, so it is hardy to most gardens in Ontario. A great addition to any garden.

Slender hinoki false cypress (*Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Gracilis')

Are you looking for an alternative to the regular pyramid juniper or cedar? Something with a bit more character?

The slender hinoki false cypress will provide this and more. Its dense, deep, rich green colour and cupped foliage make it stand out among the rest.

It retains its colour well throughout all seasons. Its sporadic branching habit adds to its overall charm.

The slender hinoki false

cypress will grow to 10 to 12 feet in height and spread about five to six feet wide. It will thrive in a part shade to full sun location and will tolerate most soil types.

I find that it works well in many different styles of gardens: woodland, Japanese or contemporary style.

Threadleaf cedar (*Thuja occidentalis* 'Filiformis')

If you are looking for something quite different to add to your winter garden, you may want to consider threadleaf cedar, or as I like to call it, Cousin It (from "The Addams Family").

Its long, string-like, curling, thread-like foliage has a unique texture and it is more yellow-green in colour, which helps it to stand out even more in the garden.

It slowly grows by

mounding up reaching a height of about eight feet tall and five to six feet wide. It prefers a sunnier spot and requires at least five or six hours of sun per day.

So, take some time this winter to study your garden and see if there is a spot where you could benefit from adding an evergreen or two.

It may be somewhere that is viewed every day – out the kitchen window or patio door. Or, it might be in your front yard as well.

There is no reason why you can't still be enjoying your garden all winter, even if it is from inside while you are enjoying a nice, cozy fire.

Joanne Young is a Niagara-on-the-Lake garden expert and coach. See her website at joanneyoung.ca.

Obituaries

Paul Burd



BURD, Paul William – Passed away peacefully in his sleep, after many health issues, on Friday December 8, 2023, at

Douglas Memorial Hospital, Fort Erie, Ontario, at the age of 90. Beloved husband of Trudy for 67 years. Treasured father of Nancy and her husband Barry and Ronald. Adored grandfather of Jessica

and her husband Cameron, Stephanie, William and his wife Amanda, Matthew and his wife Peng, Paul Jr., Sarah, Martin and his wife Melanie, and Tanya and her husband Lou, and great grandfather of Raelyn, Escher, Mila, Heath, Vera, and Livi.

Fondly remembered by many nieces, nephews especially Garry and Nancy, cousins and friends. Predeceased by his parents Greta and Tom Burd and his sister Eleanor.

Paul worked with Bell Canada for 35 years. He loved gardening, travelling, sailing and family get togethers.

The family will receive friends at Morgan Funeral Home, 415 Regent St., Niagara-on-the-Lake, on Saturday, January 6, 2024, from 1-4 p.m., with refreshments and hors d'ourves being served. Cremation has taken place and a private family inurnment in Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com



Bruce Dixon



Bruce Dixon passed away peacefully on Monday December 4, 2023. After a successful career in management at Smucker's Canada, Bruce retired to Niagara-on-the-Lake, where he played golf and darts almost as badly as his friends. Bruce was predeceased by his parents (Vernon and Rhoda) and his brother Kirk. He

is survived by his loving wife Linda, his children Tom (Alycia) and Jennifer (Landon), his grandchildren Harper, Naia and Hawkins, his brother Jim (Claranne), sister Elizabeth (Steve), and his many nieces and nephews. Always positive and generous in sharing his love, Bruce had an endless supply of warm smiles and amusing stories. He will be sorely missed by his family and friends. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Historical Society. A celebration of life will be scheduled at a later date. Memories, photos, and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com



For obituary and memorial inquiries, please contact editor@niagaranow.com.



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I'd like to personally wish you and your family all the best during this festive season. May your home be filled with warmth and joy as you create cherished memories and tender moments of merriment. My hope is that you are able to experience warmth and happiness year-round in the home you love. In the New Year, should you have any questions about the home buying and selling process, it would be my pleasure to speak with you.

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