

The Lake Report

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Christmas cannelloni recipe!
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Hyper-local news for Niagara-on-the-Lake



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Niagara-on-the-Lake's most respected newspaper

December 12, 2019

Candles burn brightly at annual NOTL stroll

Page 24



Hannah Bodach, 6, watches the band play at the annual Candlelight Stroll. Find more photos on Page 24, at Niagaranow.com and on the Facebook page for The Lake Report. RICHARD HARLEY

After 3 years, sewage plant is **almost** ready – again ...

Contractor could face up to **\$3 million** in penalties due to delays

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

After years of delays, the Niagara-on-the-Lake sewage treatment plant could finally be on the verge of working properly as regional staff say all problems should be rectified by the end of this month.

The \$43.2-million facility, which originally was supposed to be operational about three years ago, has

had several projected “ready” dates since then, but missed them all. In November 2014 the contractor received the “go-ahead” from the region to begin construction.

The delays could prove expensive for Varcon Construction Co. Ltd. Under its contract with the region, Varcon could forfeit anywhere from \$1,000 to \$3,000 for every day the project is late, said Niaga-

ra Region's associate director of water and wastewater engineering Tony Cimino.

With the project three years overdue, that means the region could be holding back between \$1 million and \$3 million.

Cimino said he could not provide details on the exact amount of money held back as the region could be moving forward with litigation.

Continued on Page 2



Doug Johnson is Niagara Region's associate director of wastewater operations. BRITTANY CARTER

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Regular hours resume Thursday, January 2nd

Wastewater plant delays have been ongoing for more than three years



Aerial photo of the new NOTL sewage treatment plant. RENE BERTSCHI

Continued from Front Page

“We may be proceeding into litigation with some of the project stakeholders so I would not be permitted to provide it to you at this time,” he said in a statement to The Lake Report.

Regional officials say the new plant on Lakeshore Road has been operational since June 25 of this year, but the region still isn't satisfied with some technical flaws in construction and won't sign off on its completion by Varcon until all major problems are fixed.

The region's associate director of wastewater operations, Doug Johnson, said he expects final problems will be cleared up soon.

The digester, the machine used to break down organic waste at the end of the treatment cycle, has been “one of the biggest issues” throughout the entire build of the plant, Johnson said.

“Getting it back up and running is our biggest concern,” he said.

Varcon has completed work on the digester and is now undergoing testing, he said. Barring any further complications the digester should be operational “soon,” Johnson said, though he said he doesn't have an exact date the testing should be complete yet.

“Whether it will be up and running this week, I can't say, but it's close. We're doing the commissioning and testing, and it's close,” Johnson added.

“Right now, we're filling

it with water. We'll feed it and when we're sure we're happy with it we'll start putting sludge through it. We'll start feeding the sludge into it slowly,” Johnson said.

Cimino said the plant has been accepting wastewater from the town since June and has been meeting all provincial compliance standards.

However, former NOTL town councillor Paolo Miele said he has been closely following the plant's slow progress and said it is not operating as it should.

“I can tell you for certain that I'm involved still, and I'm keeping an eye on everything. It's not accepting raw sewage – they're trucking the sewage away,” Miele said.

Johnson said the plant is in fact accepting and treating all the town's wastewater and sewage – it's just the final step of the process, which breaks down the solid waste, that isn't yet fully operational.

“Construction is done, deficiencies have been looked at and we're re-doing some testing, and hopefully we don't run into anymore snags,” he said.

The undigested sludge is being transported to another plant until the NOTL facility's digester is finished with testing and can be fully commissioned, Johnson confirmed.

“We are hauling all the sewage to the factory in Port Weller and running it through their system,” Johnson said. The Port Weller facility is a similar waste-

water treatment plant owned by the region.

After being broken down at Port Weller, the solid waste is then sent to the Garner Road biosolids facility in Niagara Falls, which stores all the “digested sludge” from wastewater facilities across the region to be converted into soil fertilizers.

The new NOTL plant is “doing what it's supposed to be doing. We just have an issue with the last piece of the treatment train,” Cimino said, adding that the treated water is testing cleaner than that of the old plant.

Problems over the last few years of construction included leaks in walls throughout the facility and misaligned pumps, he said, but the digester has been a main concern from the beginning.

Despite the constant delays, Cimino said the project is within its \$43.2-million budget, though he added that it's “tight” and the region won't approve any more money for the project.

He said Varcon is accountable for “liquidated damages” as a result of the delays.

The liquidated damages clause in the contract between the region and Varcon penalizes the company “from about \$1,000 to \$3,000 a day for any delays past the date expected,” Cimino said.

Representatives of Varcon could not be reached for comment despite several attempts by The Lake Report, but a media announcement



A mechanical bar screen removes incoming large debris, or “rags” from the sewage. BRITTANY CARTER

on the company's website stated the project was expected to be complete by December 2016.

“We hold back the liquidated damages off every payment certificate. Every month's payment we hold back some money matching the number of days the project has been delayed,” Cimino said.

“We're virtually done – there's no payment going out anymore. It's just the deficiency work that (the contractors) are cleaning up.”

When the region is satisfied that the plant is in “perfect working order,” he said officials will sign off on the project's completion. At that time, Varcon will be responsible for a one-year warranty, which Johnson said will cover “anything that breaks down electrically or mechanically.”

“They're (the contractor) very eager for us to take

over the plant,” Cimino said.

When a reporter toured the plant with Cimino on Monday of this week, there were few workers on site except for the person who oversees operations to ensure everything continues to run smoothly. Once the facility is running, Johnson said there will typically be one systems operator on-site during the day, plus dedicated maintenance staff.

“When operation staff are not on-site the plant will be monitored by the operations staff at the Port Weller plant as we do now with the lagoon plant,” Johnson said.

At this time, Cimino said, the effluent water, or treated water, is being run through the lagoon system of the old plant, which is located nearby. The water is treated through the new plant and being run through the old plant as “backup.” It will soon be redirected to the new outfall to the lake.

“It's just a way for us to control it while the plant is getting online in case something was to go wrong while we were constructing. If it wasn't operating properly, we always had the lagoon as a safeguard, and we could have it go through the lagoons for treatment,” Cimino said.

“That concern is now gone.”

Johnson said a traditional lagoon system usually has two ponds. The sewage comes into one pond and is broken down by germs in the lagoon.

The sun and wind provide light, warmth and oxygen to the water to help grow bacteria and algae, which breaks down the sewage, cleaning the water. The clean water overflows into the second lagoon.

“They're just working like a digester would. The solids settle and then it moves over to the next pond,” he said.

Now, the treated water runs through the second pond to the lake, but that will soon be bypassed and the lagoons will be decommissioned, he said.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said her main concern is that the plant must be fully operational before the old one is decommissioned.

“My point is – it's got to work or fix it before you open it. That way our residents won't have to deal with a broken treatment plant. They're working on it. As long as everybody's toilets continue to flush – I'm happy,” she said.



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\$25 ferry service proposed between NOTL and Toronto

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake residents could soon have a new, fast way of getting to Toronto for only \$25 – via a ferry.

Lake Ontario Express president Bruno Caciagli asked town council Monday night to add NOTL as a terminal for a Waterlink Ferry Service that would connect the lower Niagara Peninsula – including NOTL, Port Dalhousie and Beacon Harbour – with Toronto.

What makes Caciagli's project different from other ferry services that have been proposed and failed to receive approval is he wants to integrate his service with Metrolinx, the provincial transit authority. Caciagli doesn't want to compete with local transit services, he said.

"Any type of ferry service has to be co-ordinated with the land transportation system, with the train, with buses," Caciagli said. "It cannot exist by itself."

The passenger-only service would help commuters avoid traffic on QEW, save time, and reduce travel costs and levels of CO2, said Caciagli, who has been working on the project since 2014.

The idea is to use Navy Hall's docks for arrivals and departures of two 80-passenger vessels. These ferries, such as hovercraft or catamaran, would make 14 crossings a day and are predicted to serve a total of 2,100 passengers daily.

The cost of a one-way ticket would be \$25. Crossings would be seven days a week, year-round, weather-permitting.

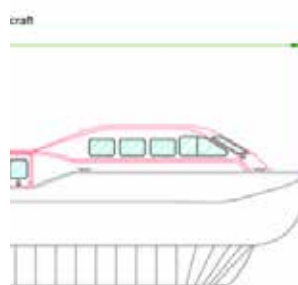
In a 7 to 2 vote, council approved the project in

principle, subject to Parks Canada's also approving it. Counc. Clare Cameron and Erwin Wiens voted against it.

A fast ferry can cover a 50-kilometre distance in about 40 to 45 minutes, Caciagli said. The vessels would be powered by a hydrogen fuel cell or a diesel engine with hydrogen injection in efforts to minimize emissions.

Arrivals and departures would be co-ordinated with local transit services. Caciagli said he'd also like to have the service running by April 2021 before the start of the Canada Summer Games, which will take place in Niagara in August 2021.

Caciagli, who already pitched the idea to the previous council in 2017, said the project also needs approvals from the City of Toronto for a dedicated dock in the



A sketch of a proposed 80-passenger hovercraft. SUPPLIED

Inner Harbour, as well as from Parks Canada, which owns the pier at Navy Hall.

"If Toronto says no, there will be no project, that's it. You will never see me again," Caciagli told councillors Monday.

Coun. Gary Burroughs said the service would be a great benefit to the town and he would support it, but he was concerned as there was not sufficient parking at Navy Hall. Caciagli said there would be off-site parking for passengers.

Cameron said she was dubious and couldn't support the project without having Parks Canada on hand.

Roads, traffic key concerns, budget survey finds

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake council hopes to finalize its 2020 budget with what could be a marathon session on Dec. 16.

Meanwhile, on Monday night, councillors released the results of a survey that shows what some residents would like to see how the town spends taxpayers' money next year.

Out of 107 respondents, 55 per cent were between the ages of 50 to 69. Fifty-six per cent also lived in Old Town.

When asked what the town should start or spend more money on in 2020, the most common responses were road infrastructure, maintenance and traffic control, tourism strategy and resident services.

"Beautifying Niagara Stone Road in Virgil would enhance NOTL by providing a pleasant entrance instead of the unattractive

strip malls," was one of the comments provided through the survey.

"It is disappointing to find out that the (NOTL) Museum currently receives almost the same amount of money as the beautification of Queen Street does," was another comment. "Spend less on the beautification."

Most responses also said the town should stop or spend less on tourism and beautification, as well as legal fees and consultants next year.

"When we have a tight budget, the last thing you want to do is get into a lawsuit. Pick the battle, can't win them all," was another comment from the survey.

Residents also chose newspapers as their preferred source of information, followed by the town website and the Join The Conversation webpage.

The purpose of the survey was to help councillors take comments and suggestions into consideration when

finalizing the 2020 budget, town staff said in the report.

The 2019 operating budget was \$11.5 million and the capital budget was \$9.4 million.

Property taxes in NOTL are split among three levels of government: the town of NOTL, the Region of Niagara and the province.

About 23 per cent of every property tax dollar is spent on the town, the rest is divided between the region and the province, the report says.

The majority of the town's 2019 revenue – 39.6 per cent – came from user fees and services, followed by 37 per cent from property taxes. The rest accounted for reserve funding, federal and provincial grants, bylaw charges and sales, and other sources. The smallest amount of revenue came from bylaw charges and sales – it accounted for 2.2 per cent.

Twenty-one per cent of taxes went toward parks and recreation. Another 21 per



NOTL council will finalize its 2020 budget at the special council meeting Monday, Dec. 16. DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA

cent was spent on roads, 15 per cent on infrastructure, 13 per cent on corporate services and 11 per cent on fire and emergency services. The rest was spent on NOTL Public Library, planning and development, and council and administration – each receiving five per cent. Street lighting had four per cent of the revenue allocated to it.

From the 2019 budget expenses, 35.6 per cent was spent on salaries, benefits, protective clothing and development. The town also spent 25.4 per cent on contracted services, 23.5 per cent on transfers to reserves, and 10.8 per cent on operational services and supplies. The rest was allocated toward community partners, boards and agencies, grants, financial expenses and interest on long-term debt.

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Contributed by Norm Arsenault:

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Contributed by Patty Garriock

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– F. W. Robertson.

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Editorial

Don't let social media spread **misinformation**

Brittany Carter
 The Lake Report

Social media is a wonderful resource for spreading news and information and connecting with the community. Every media organization, including The Lake Report, relies on social media to help disseminate the news.

It is a great tool that expedites the sharing of relevant issues and helps create a well-informed, intelligent public – when used judiciously.

This week, I stood witness as social media gave a platform to the rapid spread of misinformation. It's not a new phenomenon, but when it happens, speculation and rumours are often touted as fact. He said, she said stands in for a reliable source when quick-to-type keyboard warriors opt for posting their best guess about a situation before waiting for the facts.

Of course, not every NOTLer posting on social media jumped to conclusions or used the medium to gripe about perceived slights on this earth-shaking topic: After all, it seemed free parking in Old Town during the month of December had been cancelled.

It's understandable that residents were frustrated at not having the facts in a timely manner. I agree that,

after reading the town's posting about parking enforcement for the month of December, people deserved answers. The public was confused.

That's why as soon as The Lake Report heard about enforced parking this December, we immediately reached out to town staff, council and the chamber for answers. We, like you, wanted to know why there wouldn't be free parking, as the posting suggested, and what had changed this year.

During our research, we discovered new Chamber of Commerce president Eduardo Lafforgue immediately requested free parking as soon as he learned a formal request was required. It was an oversight he was in a hurry to remedy, he said.

We discovered that council would be taking the matter to Monday night's council meeting and a resolution would emerge then. While council supported the idea of free parking, the change requires action by councillors. Due process needs to be followed.

We knew that in order to accurately inform the public, we would need to wait for a resolution and not publish our best guesses at the results. While residents deserve quick answers, it can be irresponsible to publish information without all the facts.

In the meantime, cries of "This

isn't fair!" and "Blame so-and-so!" and even remarks about council being "greedy opportunists" flooded local Facebook groups.

Freedom of expression means many have no fear of voicing an opinion and that certainly can have its place. And while some of the initial questions about the demise of "free parking" were expressed without rancour, the situation quickly morphed into something else as reckless informants ran wild with possible outcomes and suspected reasoning. All that does is create more confusion and misinformation.

While some may call Monday's decision a "win" for social media, the resolution was in the works regardless, and social media contributed to the confusion and havoc.

We can't promise the answer will always come out exactly when you want it, but we can guarantee if an issue is relevant and important for the residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake, The Lake Report will actively pursue the answer.

Bring your concerns to us to find the answer, write a letter to the editor, email us, and, by all means, continue voicing your concerns on social media. But please let's not spread speculation, opinion and misinformation as fact.

editor@niagaranow.com



Thanks to NOTL Rotary

The Lake Report's Richard Harley and Kevin MacLean, centre, spoke at the December meeting of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Rotary Club this week. Rotarians Randy LeGallais and Ken Schander said the club made a donation to Rotary's End Polio Now campaign on the paper's behalf. The club also announced a \$2,000 donation to the Raft, a youth agency in St. Catharines. DARIYA BAIGUZHIYEVA

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NEWS

Party over for short-term rentals

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report



Town council is in the midst of reviewing the current short-term rental bylaw. DARIYA BAIGUZHIYEVA

The party might soon be over for operators of some short-term rentals in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

After months of complaints from neighbours of Airbnb-style rentals about loud parties, poor behaviour and parking problems, a committee of NOTL council came up with proposals that will mean major revisions to the town's bylaw governing short-term rentals.

On Monday night Dec. 9, councillors adopted the recommendations produced by the Glendale task force committee, the group given the job of trying to solve the short-term rental problem.

"If we can get proper information out, proper education out to people that are renting, make them understand we're serious about this kind of bylaw, we're serious about controlling behaviour, it will resolve itself over time. This bylaw will need to have teeth, for sure," Coun. Norm Arseneault said at the Glendale task force meeting on Nov. 12.

The proposal would mean a NOTL resident could use their home as a cottage rental if that property is their main residence. Proof of it being the owner's principal residence would be required before the town would issue a licence.

Homes owned by non-residents would only be allowed to operate as a short-term rental if the property is managed by a rental management company or if the owner

lives NOTL and is available 24/7, 365 days a year to address any concerns.

Rental managers and owners will be responsible for addressing any complaints or bylaw infractions.

The committee also recommended restricting cottage rentals to a maximum of three bedrooms, requiring cottages with pools to have a pool inspection, hiking annual fees to cover increased enforcement and requiring cottage rental licences to be renewed yearly.

If owners were to operate without a licence 60 days after the new bylaw comes into effect, they would be charged, see their licence application denied and prohibited from applying for a new short-term rental licence for five years, the task force committee suggested.

There is a long list of issues that prompted the bylaw changes, including noise, overnight street parking, lack of bylaw enforcement on weekdays, evenings and weekends, no limits on the number of guests per unit, an abundance of

cottage rentals in residential areas, lack of accountability and good neighbour agreements, and no code of conduct for renters.

The proposed new bylaw includes provisions enacted by two other municipalities that attract a lot of tourists, Kelowna, B.C., and the Town of Georgina, on Lake Simcoe.

The committee report suggests the updated bylaw should ensure that homes are not turned into "party houses," minimize public safety risks and reduce parking, trash and noise issues, ensure residential neighbourhoods don't become tourist areas and that regulations of short-term rentals don't affect property values and property tax revenues.

"Not all rentals are like that, just some of them," Arseneault told The Lake Report. "They are doing a great job but they need a bit of control and that's what we're trying to do."

The proposed changes would not affect any motel, hotel, bed and breakfast establishment, tourist

cabin, hospital, commercial resort unit or village commercial resort unit in town, some of which fall under the current bylaw.

Instead, a short-term rental could be a building or any part of a building that rents out space for less than 28 days and is considered commercial or non-residential, the committee said.

Under the existing bylaw, a short-term rental is a building used for "overnight guest lodging" for no more than 28 days and includes bed and breakfast homes, cottage rentals, villas, country inns and vacation apartments.

At the committee of the whole meeting Monday, Dec. 2., Coun. Wendy Cheropita complimented the staff and the committee, saying the document had some "excellent points."

"I was very impressed with the revisions you were making and the details that you touched on that I think will be very helpful. And I think you're going to find we'll have great support from the residents," she said, also asking to make the language in the document firm and clear.

Town staff is also in the process of reviewing a new long-term rental draft bylaw. The town currently doesn't have any bylaws related to long-term rentals.

Following council's approval, the town staff will now circulate the document to all town departments and will bring forward an information report with recommendations on how to move forward.

NOTL resident pushes for Harriet film screening at FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre's Film House

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's Betsy Masson took a stand to mark Harriet Tubman's local historical ties by recommending a screening of the film Harriet, which was released in November.

At Masson's request, the film will have five showings from Dec. 12 to Dec. 17 at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre's Film House.

"I wanted to draw atten-

tion to the Salem Chapel on Geneva Street which was founded by Harriet and other blacks in St. Catharines," Masson said in an email to The Lake Report.

"Last time I visited was eight years ago and was told that there were only 14 members of the church at that point and they were all over 80 years old," Masson said.

When she looked into the church recently, she discovered it no longer gave tours.

"They are very much

in need of money for the repairs."

Masson reached out to NOTL town staff, who then forwarded the request to Sarah Fraser, program and audience co-ordinator for St. Catharines.

Fraser said in an email response that she was "excited" to be screening the film at Masson's suggestion, noting the local ties to the Salem Chapel British Methodist Episcopal Church in St. Catharines, which ap-



Harriet will play this week and next. SUPPLIED

pears briefly in the movie.

Harriet will be screened on Dec. 12, 13, 14, 15 and 17. Tickets are \$9.50 or \$7 for children under 13 and Film House members and can be purchased online at the arts centre's website.

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The Lake Report

Correction: Our Dec. 5 review of the Shaw Festival's presentation of "A Christmas Carol" contained some incorrect information. Sanjay Talwar is playing the role of Christmas Present and Peter Fernandes portrays Scrooge's nephew Fred. The roles were originated by Jeff Meadows and Jonathan Tan respectively.

A symbol of a town clearly **divided**



Half the street seems brighter to Filomena Pisano. SUPPLIED

Dear editor:
Friday night's Candlelight Stroll was lovely.

I usually take many photos when I am at an event, my photographer self can't help it. I am compelled to record history.

When one stands behind a lens as long as I have one begins to see more than what is present.

This photo of people headed to the Stroll is nothing really, just a quick shot with my iPhone.

But, yes there is a but. For me this photo exemplifies what I have observed as a recent resident of this beautiful town. (The irony of this photo – the downtown area is glorious, and a big shout out to the volunteers who put up the decorations. I wanted to join in this year but was ill. I hope to next year!)

What is ironic in this photo is that one side of the street was profusely lit up with glorious lights, while the other was so dark I could barely see the shops.

I stood in awe of this symbolism; a small town clearly divided.

I take no sides as I am new and do not understand the politics of it all, but it's been my observation that the town is divided. I've listened to many and I have watched and observed.

It's all so sad. I didn't expect to see this in such a small town.

For me, the landscape of this glorious town outweighs the dif-

ferences among its residents.

When I walk along the streets I am in awe, I am in a perpetual state of gratitude.

While I gaze at the vineyards and fruit farms, I hear myself reciting prayers of gratitude.

There is so much beauty, so much to be grateful for.

I am humbled and while I walk you may hear me repeating my single prayer.

Thank you. And, no, I'm not crazy talking to myself. I'm just so happy to be here.

Who am I to speak, one may think. I've only lived here for a year. I have been privy to outlandish stares, have been told I'm not a local. Of course not. I was not born and raised here.

But I am here now, with complete investment as it is my forever home.

I hope that at some point I will see the street lit up on both sides, and people casting aside their personal differences to become a town united for the greater good.

Perhaps I'm a dreamer. Regardless, I wish you all a joyous season celebrating this beautiful place.

Merry Christmas and, to those who do not celebrate Christmas, Happy Holidays.

Filomena Pisano
NOTL

People with **disabilities** can't escape bird cannons

Dear editor:

I would like to respond to the past articles and letters in The Lake Report regarding the issue of bird cannons.

Firstly, to the gentleman's response about using cannons in the 1950s: They used DDT and other deadly sprays as well. Research is there in black and white. Did it help? Does the use of loud bird cannons make the wine taste better?

Is this why some of you support the use of these obnoxious and toxic units?

If so, then please come sit with me with a bottle of bird-banged grape wine so that I may clearly understand and taste the difference.

We also invite you to come to our home from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. for 16 weeks of the year and tell me how calm you feel at the end of the day and I can guarantee you I know where that bottle of wine will end up.

We won't even touch Niagara wines, especially if we know that the grapes came from growers using bird cannons.

To this day we are still being affected by the mistakes, misconceptions and bad choices made by growers, using so-called deterrents, whether they are pesticides or cannons to aid in growing crops.

Bird cannons are not the solution.

I personally prefer to live in a clean, quiet area without feeling threatened by the very folks that originally farmed to grow food.

Bird Cannons are the DDT to our health. They are rude, scare wildlife, are unnecessary and do not help to feed the people.

So, before you accuse someone of cooking their own goose, ask yourself how can one cook a goose that isn't there because the bird cannons scare them as well.

It shocks me how some of you are truly cynical of someone's human right to live in harmony.

We have activists that want to stop the horse carriages because they feel it is not fair to the animal.

Maybe we need to alert those animal rights activists to how the bird cannons are without a doubt scaring all the wildlife in our community, including those of us humans who have moved here for a quiet life.

For myself, it is not OK to sit here day in and day out for 16 weeks to have to be exposed to this noise.

I am a writer and musician and a major part of my day needs to be dedicated to create and to rest. It is my livelihood.

Did I mention that I am disabled and in a wheelchair? Part of my healing is to meditate to clear my mind, how can one do this when they are exposed continually to the sound of bird cannons?

We live above Line 9 and Tanbark and have five growers all with cannons going off continually throughout the day.

I cannot just get up and drive away to get away from the noise. I cannot even sit on our porch to breathe the air and enjoy the beauty around me. The sound of the cannons literally shakes me.

Continuous cannon blasts do affect one's health in many ways. If my wife needs to go out she literally has to put headsets on me to deaden the sound of bird cannons so I may rest.

Would all of you who support the use of bird cannons like to be in my shoes or chair for a day to learn how it feels to be violated continually.

I have the right to become well and the use of bird cannons is literally paralyzing me.

I am not looking for pity. I ask that those of you that support or use bird cannons understand clearly the impact that this has on those of us who do not have the ability to change our situation and that we too have the right to be safe and happy.

You have the power to change this. There are other ways to deter the birds.

I have the right to live out the rest of my time in peace. Please respect that.

Ray Auld
NOTL

The sad **assault** of farmers' bird cannons

Dear editor:

I just read about two children who were able to have their photos taken with Santa Claus.

The boys have autism spectrum disorder, and their time and photos with Santa was made possible by an enlightened and thoughtful, Britney Conlon, event co-ordinator at Seaway Mall in Welland.

Britney arranged for a quiet environment, prior to the mall opening, so sensory triggers like noise, did not affect the children in a negative way.

This enlightened, thoughtful thinking and action is in stark contrast with the uncaring, money-driven, unethical farming practices of growers who use propane-fired cannons that sound like howitzers, for three-plus months of the year, with no regard

whatsoever for the impact that loud explosive noise can have on children with autism, and adults and people struggling with, or being treated for PTSD, living in Escarpment bench neighbourhoods and adjoining lands.

Three growers use cannons that impact the residents of the Escarpment from Queenston to east St. Davids. Five other growers using cannons impact the Escarpment west neighbourhoods of north Tanbark Road, Sandalwood Crescent and Stoneridge Crescent.

What a sad assault on a landform that was designated in 1990 as a World Biosphere Reserve. What a violation of our human rights and property rights.

Jim and Irene Fisher
Queenston



Pauline Reimer Gibson
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NOTL woman is on a mission to **unite** the town for good

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Julia Buxton-Cox has had enough of negativity and division – and she hopes to unite the town by creating a new social media group on Facebook.

“The town has struggled a bit with some divisiveness, so it’s time,” she said in a phone interview.

Having been an administrator of the “NOTL Today” group on Facebook for almost two years, Buxton-Cox said she has debated shutting down the page for several months because of negativity and drama on the social media platform.

The appearance of copycat Facebook pages that mimic NOTL Today and another Facebook group – NOTL Bulletin Board, run by Gail Kendall – has prompted her to launch a new group to provide an opportunity for area residents to get together.

The goal is to create a Buy Nothing Group on Facebook, where people can look for, lend or offer free services and goods while meeting and interacting with each other face-to-face.

The Buy Nothing Project is a worldwide program started in 2013 by Rebecca Rockefeller and Liesl Clark in Bainbridge Island, Wash. The project now has 3,000 groups in 30 nations.

“It is all about gratitude,” Buxton-Cox said. “I wanted



Julia Buxton-Cox is working on launching a new Facebook group where NOTL residents can look for and offer free items and services. SUPPLIED

to spend my time doing something good that would bring people together.”

Group members can provide or ask for whatever they need as long as it’s civil and legal, from asking for a ride home and giving away a handcrafted item to offering gardening services.

The group is not about business or self-promotion, and no trades and barter will be allowed, Buxton-Cox said.

One of the founding principles of the hyperlocal group is also to “give where you live.”

“There’s nothing in it for me. I don’t get paid. I don’t get advertising dollars. It’s about volunteering for the community,” Buxton-Cox told The Lake Report.

“I think the town is ready for the goodness and unity rather than anonymous posts on Facebook.”

Once she completes seven days of training and is chosen as a group admin, an announcement will be made on NOTL Today and NOTL Bulletin Board sometime

in the next week and half. Only NOTL residents who have Facebook accounts will be accepted to the group.

Buxton-Cox said on top of spreading goodness and giving back to the community, she also likes that the project is an environmental initiative that allows people to recycle and divert waste.

“We have a lot of good people in this town and a lot of good skills. I think people are ready to jump on board of something that’s good and doesn’t have anything to do with politics or money or business.”

There will be a learning curve as the project launches, Buxton-Cox said, noting she hopes the group will bring something good to NOTL and will last for many years to come.

“Maybe in this world of social media where everyone’s sitting behind the keyboard, it’s time to come back to the face-to-face community and this allows us the opportunity to do that.”

Obituary

Cheryl Ann Phillips



PHILLIPS, Cheryl Ann — With family by her side, on Dec. 4, 2019, lost her battle with pancreatic cancer at the age of 65. Beloved wife of the late Jim (2014). Loving mother of Michael (Sarah), Bobby (Erin) and Christopher. Proud Gramma of Adrianna, Madelynne, Eric and Evie. Dear sister of Carol (Bert) and aunt of Brent (Andrea) and the late Adrienne. Caring niece of Irene.

Cheryl happily retired to Niagara-on-the-Lake a year ago and became an active member of the community. She will be missed by many friends.

At her request, cremation has taken place and a celebration of her life will be held in Niagara-on-the-Lake at a later date. For those who wish, memorial donations may be made to the Canadian Cancer Society. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com.

New online **burial map** lets people search cemetery plots around Niagara-on-the-Lake

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

Finding the location of your loved ones’ burial plots at the Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery has become easier thanks to the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s new online map.

It allows people to look up their family members by simply searching their name. The results will show green markers for the plot location, who was interred there, their death date and age, and a photo of the memorial.

The project came about through a collaboration with two Niagara College students, Kelsea Dawn and Mireya Mosquera, who got engaged in the work as part of the thesis project for their geospatial management program.

Dawn and Mosquera worked with town staff



An online burial map shows the location of burial plots at the Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery. SUPPLIED

on creating a geodatabase and a web map. The students also spent about 350 hours preparing a final report, Kevin Turcotte, the town’s manager of parks and recreation, told The Lake Report.

The town used its database of interred people for the online site, he said.

“It’s a great resource for people interested in people who are interred in our cemetery,” Turcotte said. “And it allows people who can’t visit the site on a regular basis a chance to

connect with their loved ones (who) passed.”

The Lakeshore cemetery is the only active burial ground in town. There are also 10 inactive cemeteries within the municipality.

“We have proposed (to do) that project on the abandoned cemeteries. We’re just waiting to see if any of those gets selected from the college program,” Turcotte said in a phone interview.

The online map can be viewed here: bit.ly/33QRg4b.

Sweets and Swirls Café tries **apple straws** alternative

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

The Sweets and Swirls Café is sticking to its core values and experimenting with a new drinking straw alternative made from apples.

The café, located inside the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre, has always favoured reusable dishes, opting for washable plates and cups whenever

possible, co-owner Erinn Lockard said.

The plastic-straw replacement is the best alternative that co-owner and husband James Cadeau said they have tried out so far.

The “Superstraw” sold by Planet Kitchen is made with wheat gluten and apple fibre, and closely resembles uncooked pasta.

Cadeau said he wasn’t sure of the cost yet but doesn’t think it would be

prohibitive. A small box of the straws was provided for the café to test out, he said.

Right now, Planet Kitchen’s website sells a bulk package of 1,200 straws for \$119, or about 10 cents each.

While that may be too steep for many bars and restaurants, Cadeau said because of the nature of the products they sell, they wouldn’t go through them too quickly. The apple

straws would be a “good alternative” if they decide to stock them continually, he said.

In an effort to limit waste, the café already recently stopped offering plastic straws for beverages.

“We used up what we had and haven’t gotten any more,” Cadeau said.

“We noticed once we took the box of straws off the counter, people weren’t as inclined to take one,”

Lockard added.


Cadeau said the use of straws seems to be more habit than anything else.

Now, the couple is gauging the opinions of their customers and determining if the apple straws will be feasible to stock full-time.

“It has the right mouthfeel,” Cadeau said. And the straws will last much longer than paper because when it does soften you can just “take a bite” off the top.




Alexis Smith shows off apple straws. BRITTANY CARTER



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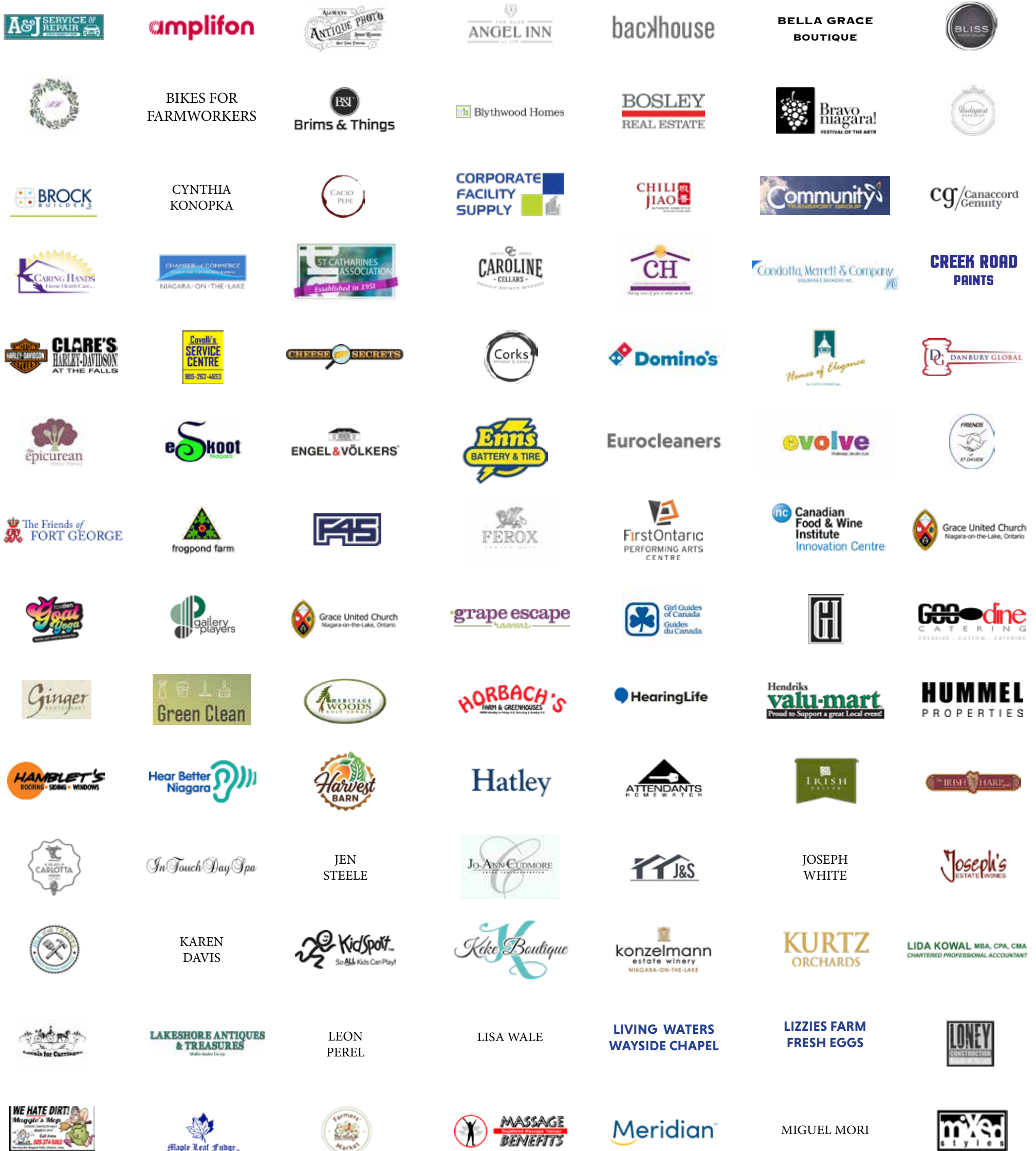
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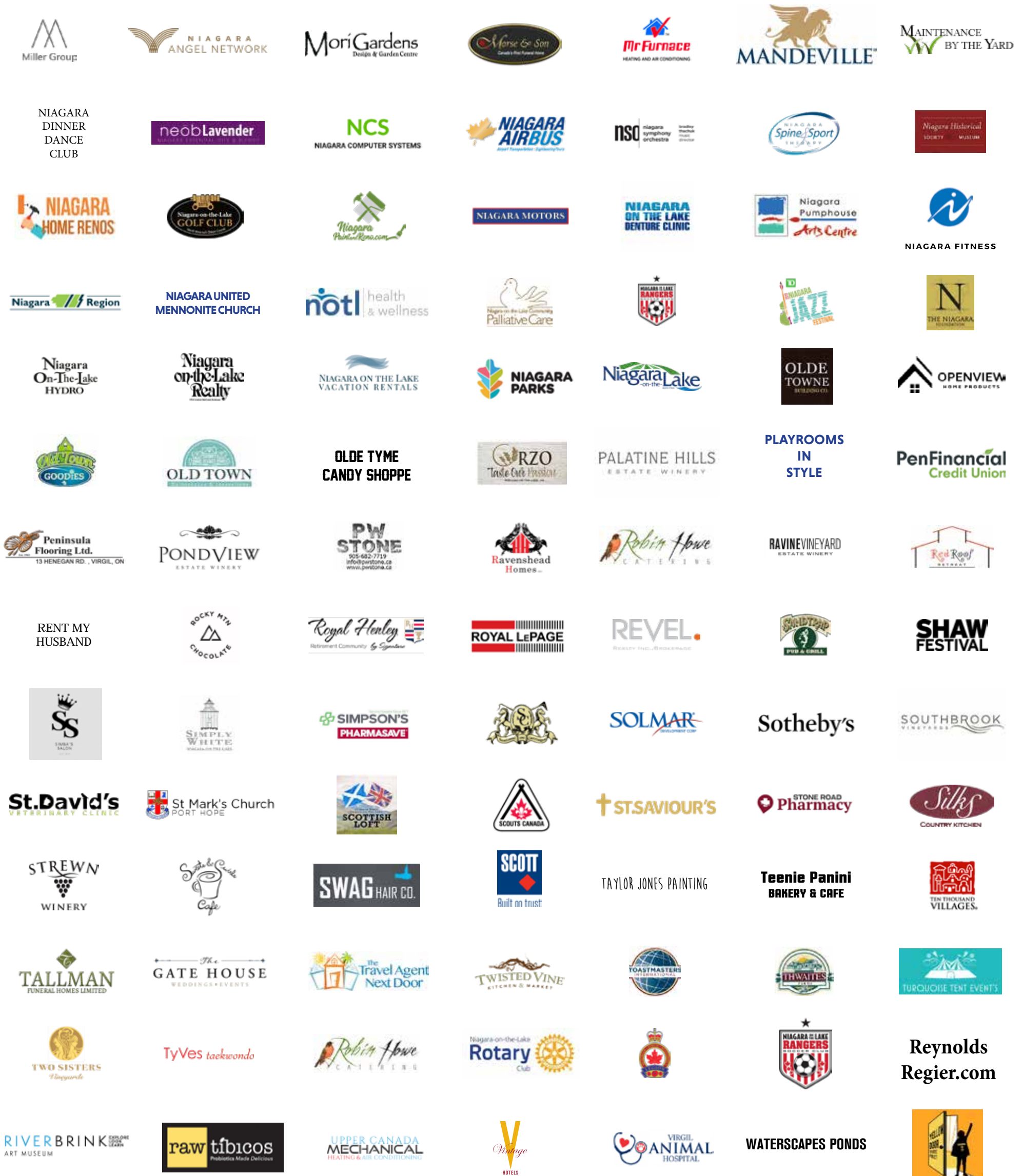
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Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from all of your friends at the newspaper!

The Lake Report

Ruffino's: New pop-up restaurant offers a taste of **Napoli** in Niagara-on-the-Lake

Richard Harley
Editor
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Looking for a taste of Italy in Niagara-on-the-Lake? Look no further, Chef Ryan Crawford of Backhouse has you covered.

This year for the first time since the opening of Backhouse, Crawford has decided to try something a little different, by opening an Italian pop-up restaurant during the winter downtime, instead of closing his restaurant for part of the week.

Starting Jan. 7, Crawford and staff are going to transform Backhouse into Ruffino's Pasta Bar & Grill in "Naples-on-the-Lake" every Tuesday and Wednesday for the winter season.

Having made 1,000 litres of tomato sauce this year alone from his home garden, Crawford says his love of all things Italy is apparent. He has two Spinone Italiano dogs, one of which he's naming the restaurant after – Ruffino. He cures his own prosciutto, he's learned how to make wood-fired pizza from Pieza Pizzeria's Maurizio Cesta, and now he's ready to roll up his sleeves and roll out some home-cooked pasta just like Nona does.

Crawford says the feel of the restaurant will be reminiscent of the former Stone Road Grille, where he made a name for himself as chef before opening Backhouse. He's even bringing back the old front door to "REST," as a throwback to older times in town.

The menu at Ruffino's is the real difference, though, with all traditional Italian dishes including wood-fired pizzas, home-made pasta, and Italian-inspired grilled meats and fish. "We're still going to use all the great vegetables from our farm – just in an Italian way! It's the same local love, except now we're using olive oil and parmesan cheese."

"Backhouse is focused on hyperlocal Ontario foods. We don't use lemons and limes, olives or olive oil, and I miss them, and I really missed making risotto, so we said, 'Hey, let's do Italian a couple of days a week, keep it cheap and cheerful and make it accessible to everyone.' It's a chance for the chefs to kind of play and have fun. Backhouse doesn't use vanilla or coffee in desserts, we don't use chocolates, but now anything is a go, and as long as it's Italian. It's going to be different, but in a great way! We're going to keep our mandate of supporting local. We're just going to do it Italian!!"

Crawford says he wants the environment to be somewhere people can bring their kids for dinner – they'll have a children's menu, crayons and reasonable prices for decent-sized portions.

"I want to see kids come in and run around. We want people just to have fun, come in for a quick pizza, come in for a family-style meal. We're just going to feed you like you're in Nona's house."

"We're going to open at like 4 p.m. so if there are kids going to hockey or dance or whatever they can come in before and have a snack – I want it to be completely different than Backhouse. We have pink checkered table clothes, Chianti wine bottle candle holders, we're going to serve Italian wines. I want it to be that little Italian trattoria just around the corner from your house."

Staff will wear T-shirts – no chef coats. "We aren't taking reservations, unless it's a party of six or more."

"All the pasta is going to be hand-rolled. We even have a chitarra, from our friend Mike Commisso. It looks like a guitar and makes great spaghetti-like noodles."

The bar will also have



Chef Ryan Crawford and the staff at Backhouse are busy preparing for the launch of the new pop-up Italian restaurant Ruffino's on Jan. 7. The restaurant will offer a taste of Naples in Niagara-on-the-Lake. RICHARD HARLEY

more Italian-inspired cocktails, and the wines will be mostly Italian, he says. Wine prices will be affordable, with bottles for \$49, \$59 and \$69 and glasses for around \$10.

"Basically, I'm opening a new restaurant two days a week – the kind of restaurant I would love to eat at with my family. It's the same space, but it's a different restaurant."

"I want it to be for families. If I could bring Ruffino my dog in here, and have him running around, I totally would ... But I'm not allowed to. We have a Ruffino statue that's going to come in instead."

Crawford says he hopes to see more locals come into the restaurant, not just for special occasions as they tend to do with Backhouse, but for everyday meals as well. "I want them to come in all the time, sit at the bar, have amaro, have some grappa, have a pizza or risotto, and chat a bit. I want to invite them into my home. I want to cook for them."

Ruffino's will be open Tuesdays and Wednesdays from Jan. 7 until May.



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Council approves free parking in Old Town for December

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

A major car-tastrophe was barely averted in Old Town this past week after NOTL shoppers were faced with the prospect of no free parking for the month of December.

A Facebook posting from the Town of NOTL about renewing residential parking permits warned that “parking will be enforced throughout December” by NOTL’s notoriously efficient parking gendarmes.

The post ignited a firestorm on social media that took several days to quell.

Monday’s council meeting put rumours and speculations to rest: town council unanimously approved free parking in Old Town until the end of December, except for the old hospital site, where four parking machines will still be accepting payments.

Paid metered parking will remain at the hospital site because the Shaw Festival is running additional programming this month, so the town doesn’t want Shaw patrons “taking up the spaces” at the hospital site, said interim chief administrative officer Sheldon Randall.

The process of approving free parking has been different every year, Lord Mayor Betty Disero said. Last year, town council didn’t have meetings in October and November, so



Council approves free parking in Old Town for December. BRITTANY CARTER

she said parking was free in December because it never went to council for a decision.

In previous years, parking downtown was free all December at the request of the Chamber of Commerce, town spokesperson Lauren Kruitbosch said early last week when the town’s warning about enforced parking was posted.

“The town did not receive a request from the chamber this year, nor was there any direction from council. Therefore, unless otherwise advised by council, staff will continue to enforce parking throughout December,” Kruitbosch said in an email response.

NOTL Chamber of Commerce president Eduardo Lafforgue said he wasn’t aware a request needed to be made but added when he spoke with town staff last month he was told there

would be no free parking downtown this December.

“When I was told a request needed to be made I put the request in right away,” he said.

Lafforgue said he made an official request for free parking downtown in December to Randall on Thursday.

However, he added, parking meters were covered, and parking appeared to be free for the first few days of the month.

“It’s hard to make a request for free parking when parking is already free,” he said.

On Dec. 5, town staff received a letter requesting free parking in Old Town from the chamber.

“I don’t want to get into all social media stuff back and forth on misinformation nor am I trying to point any fingers anywhere,” said Coun. Allan

Bisback. “But it’s important for residents to understand there’s been a lot of confusion, a lot of misinformation, but no tickets have been issued since Dec. 1.”

When asked by Bisback, Lafforgue told councillors he supports free parking.

Following council’s approval, town staff will review free parking every year in October.

Randall said town staff will also reach out to the chamber and major industry leaders to get their “official opinions” on free parking in December and will discuss whether it benefits Queen Street businesses. Staff will then come back to council with information next October or earlier.

Disero said it’s nobody’s fault. “It is what it is. We will correct it ... Any inconvenience or concern this has caused anybody in the town, I would like to apologize on behalf of all of us for whatever’s happened to add to discomfort to anyone’s life in the last three or four days.”

Out of 54 parking machines, 50 have already been programmed by an outside consultant to not accept payments.

Coun. Erwin Wiens said it was a miscommunication and there was “no blame to be laid here” but councillors were “unfairly attacked.”

With files from Dariya Baiguzhiyeva

Virgil tree lighting ceremony livens up town hall

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

Virgil brightened up on Thursday evening as the lights on the large pine tree in front of the town offices on Four Mile Creek Road were lit; a symbolic start to the holiday season in Virgil.

The NOTL Ukesters performed a selection of festive songs to a small crowd. Hot apple cider and snacks, provided by Dan Williams, were available to warm up onlookers as they eagerly awaited the tree’s lighting.

Just as the lights on the tree were switched on, Santa Claus appeared to take photos with the crowd. The tree lighting was an initiative by the Virgil Business Association which was adopted by the town this year.



Virgil residents bundle up for the tree lighting last Thursday evening. BRITTANY CARTER

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<h2>The Lake Report</h2> <p>COMMUNITY FAVOURITES: Legion Fish Fry every Thursday 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. (CLOSED DEC. 19 - JAN. 9) Duplicate Bridge at the Community Centre Tuesdays and Fridays at 1 p.m.</p>			
15	16	17	18
<p>S. Davids Lioness Breakfast with Santa - 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. - Newark Singers and Orchestra - 4 p.m. - St. Saviours Anglican Church, Queenston</p> <p>Youth Advisory Council Holiday Event - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>Garrison Christmas - Fort George</p> <p>Art Exhibit and Sale - 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Gate Street Studio</p>	<p>Free Youth Walk in Mental Health Clinic - 11:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. - Red Roof Retreat</p> <p>Fun Duplicate Bridge - 9 a.m. to noon - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>Italian Conversation Group - 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>French Conversation Group - 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>Special Council Meeting - 6 p.m. - Council Chambers</p>	<p>Heritage Trail Committee - 2 p.m. - Council Chambers</p> <p>Niagara-on-the-Lake Safety Committee - 4:30 p.m. - Duplicate Bridge (ACBL Sanctioned) - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>NOTL Rotary Club - Noon - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>Niagara Golden Age Club: Seniors Euchre - 1 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p>	<p>STEAM Story Time - 11:45 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>German Conversation Group - 9:45 a.m. to 11:20 a.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>NOTL Toastmasters - Niagara College NOTL</p>
22	23	24	25
<p>Art Exhibit and Sale - 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Gate Street Studio</p> <p>Sunday Brunch - 11:30 a.m. - Queen's Landing Hotel</p>	<p>The Grinch Movie - 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Free Youth Walk in Mental Health Clinic - 11:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. - Red Roof Retreat</p> <p>Fun Duplicate Bridge - 9 a.m. to noon - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>Italian Conversation Group - 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>French Conversation Group - 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p>	<p>Library and Community Centre closed</p>	<p>Christmas Day Library and Community Centre closed</p>

Report

CALENDAR

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Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	12 Seniors Drop in: Casual Bridge-1 p.m. to 4 p.m.-NOTL Community Centre Willowbank Holiday Open House-7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.-Willowbank Community Christmas Dinner-5 p.m. to 7 p.m.-Niagara Regional Native Centre Pumphouse Annual General Meeting - 5 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre	13 Duplicate Bridge (ACBL Sanctioned)-1 p.m. to 4 p.m.-NOTL Community Centre Stuffy Sleepover-4 p.m. to 4:45 p.m.-NOTL Public Library Holiday Open House - 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. - NOTL Denture Clinic	14 Christmas Parade-11 a.m. to 2 p.m.-King Street, Castlereagh Street, Wellington Street, Byron Street, Prideaux Street, Simcoe Street, Queen Street Garrison Christmas--Fort George Newark Singers and Orchestra - 7 p.m. - St. Mark's Anglican Church
18 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. - NOTL Public Library Seniors Drop in: Casual Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Niagara PF Support Group - 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Committee of Adjustment - 6:30 p.m. - Council Chambers Parents and Tots Play Group - 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - GateWay Community Church	19 Seniors Drop in: Casual Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Niagara PF Support Group - 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Committee of Adjustment - 6:30 p.m. - Council Chambers Parents and Tots Play Group - 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - GateWay Community Church	20 Duplicate Bridge (ACBL Sanctioned) - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Heart of Christmas Past - 7:30 p.m. - Grace United Church Knit a Bit - 2 p.m. - NOTL Public Library The Wild: Firepits - 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library	21 Ryan Langdon live at Club 55 - 10 p.m. - Club 55 Indoor Holiday Goat Yoga - 1 p.m. - Fox Den Yoga Art Exhibit and Sale - 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Gate Street Studio
25 Community Centre	26 Boxing Day Library and Community Centre closed	27 Duplicate Bridge (ACBL Sanctioned) - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Knit a Bit - 2 p.m. - NOTL Public Library	28 Indoor Goat Yoaga - 1 p.m. - Fox Den Yoga Goodbye 2019: A Year of Beer - 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. - Exchange Brewery

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Scott Finlay visited St. Davids Public School in early November to talk about Brock's life. DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA

Tall boots to fill: **Scott Finlay** is Isaac Brock

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

Scott Finlay wears many hats – although he probably is best-known across Niagara as the man wearing the tall boots of Sir Isaac Brock.

A Parks Canada employee, Finlay, 64, says he's been performing all his life, from kindergarten through high school and his entire adult life.

Born in Hamilton, he lived in Bevan Heights for three months while attending Grade 1 at St. Davids Public School. His family then moved to Niagara Falls, where Finlay still lives.

He graduated from York University with a degree in visual arts and, before joining Parks Canada, he founded a company that performed at conferences by interacting with audiences and creating unique presentations for the speakers.

Incorporating humour in his work helped him to get corporate messages across to people, Finlay says.

"People may not remember statistics – but you

attach a joke to it, they do," he told The Lake Report.

His passion for storytelling, great communication skills and interest in history brought him to Parks Canada in spring 2009 where he works as a corporate programming coordinator and what he calls his "dream job."

He says ever since he was a child having picnics with his family at Queenston Heights, he's been interested in Brock.

Finlay received his first general's uniform in 1995. He wore it for corporate events but it wasn't until 2011 that he started volunteering to play Brock.

He is now a frequent visitor to schools and community events where he shows up dressed in Brock's full War of 1812 regalia.

Finlay sees Brock as a great, fearless – even tragic – hero who had progressive views and was well ahead of his time. But, simultaneously, he was a man of his time.

While other leaders used strict punishments, like whipping, for errant soldiers, Brock realized, "You're not

getting the best out of men when you're harsh with them," Finlay says.

Brock encouraged his soldiers to go fishing in the river in their downtime or go hunting using their muskets, and he also created recreational activities for his soldiers by setting up a court for a game.

"Nobody does that for another 50 years. They don't think in those terms and here he is, putting thought forward," Finlay says.

"The impact on people today is similar to what it was then. He still resonates that strongly."

Finlay says Brock lived a big life and says if Brock could have chosen how to die, he would have likely wanted to go while leading soldiers.

Brock was also a great orator who could draw people in. The general felt his job was "to look big and sound loud," Finlay adds.

One of his best experiences portraying Brock occurred during Bicentennial celebrations at Fort Malden National Historic Site in Amherstburg, Ont., where Brock met Shawnee chief

Tecumseh.

That was one of the most moving experiences, Finlay says, because of people's reaction and how re-enactors kept everything "the way it was."

In Windsor, Ont., there is a Tecumseh-Brock statue in the middle of the Old Sandwich Town roundabout. It depicts chief Tecumseh sitting on a horse and Brock standing beside him looking through a spyglass at Detroit.

When sculptor Mark Williams asked Finlay to pose for the statue, Finlay agreed and together with his daughter drove to Williams' studio outside Amherstburg.

It took Williams more than two years to complete the project, which was unveiled in September 2018. Finlay himself got to see the statue this past summer.

"My Brock is about seven feet high. Everyone said, 'It kind of looks like you.' And yes, it does kind of look like me," he says. "It's kind of fun that it took place."

Preparing to play a historic character takes a lot of time researching and

reading books, he says.

"That's what history is all about. We think we know it, but we know just the big things. We don't know those nuances. That's what's fulfilling about it."

Was Brock better than a lot of the men of his time? Yes, Finlay says.

"But would he stand up to scrutiny today in terms of what was expected? No."

"He had a firm belief in the structure of the British Empire and understands the concept of empire through the eyes of the people of the time," Finlay explains.

Audience reaction can also vary depending on who is watching – adults and children react differently, he says. When youngsters come to a place like Fort George, they can get overwhelmed.

"When kids first see a musket demonstration here, they're like, 'Wow!'" Finlay says. "And parents seem to be a little bit more jaded about it. At least, they might be thinking, 'Wow' inside, but they internalize it all."

In his spare time, Finlay reads a lot and likes paint-

ing and doing leatherwork.

"As you get involved, it's a really interesting process," Finlay says about working with leather. "There are so many different solutions of how to use leather in different ways. (When) you do something that works out, there's a real sense of accomplishment."

He's made a wide variety of leather items: sword belts, folios, telescope cases, cross belts, a travel book cover. Right now, he is working on a pistol holder that soldiers used while riding a horse.

Having four children and three grandsons, Finlay says his household can also get busy.

If he could give any advice to anyone, he would tell them to find their passion.

"Find it and do it. There's no such thing as work," Finlay says. "You come, you show up at someplace and you can't wait to get there. For me, this experience has been very, very much that."

"It's very fulfilling, it's so interesting and surprising sometimes. So, find that passion and hold on to it."

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Kids, adults have breakfast with **Santa** for Palliative Care

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake residents and tourists got treated to a special breakfast with Santa Claus on Saturday morning.

A portion of the proceeds from a special breakfast, which included scrambled eggs, home fries, sausage, bacon, toast, fruit and a drink, served at the Epicurean restaurant went toward Niagara-on-the-Lake Palliative Care Service.

Some diners said they didn't know about the charitable drive behind the event, while others came out to specifically show their support – but all agreed it was a great cause and they were happy to support it.

Santa handed out candy canes, striking up a con-

versation with customers and posing for photos with both adults and kids alike, while Gregory Upshaw and John Chisholm played holiday tunes.

NOTL resident Tim Taylor was the jolly man in the red suit.

Taylor, who also writes for The Lake Report, has been attending many community events, organizations and businesses dressed as Santa while raising money for Palliative Care. This month, he has about 30 gigs to attend as the iconic Christmas character, with events spread out across the Niagara region.

"I like seeing smiles on children's faces," Taylor said about his experience dressing up as Santa while supporting Palliative Care. "I do it anyway but it's nice to have a reason behind it."



Santa Claus entertains Kennedy and Brooklyn Peressotti at the annual Breakfast with Santa event at The Epicurean Sunday. DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA

Taylor said he connected with the Epicurean owner Gina Angelakopoulos last year and when he learned she was looking for a Santa for the event, he offered his services.

The second annual breakfast had a "fantastic turnout" and drew more people than last year, said Palliative Care program manager Bonnie Bagnulo.

"I'm overwhelmed with

the support," she told The Lake Report. "Thank you to the many volunteers that came out and all the new faces in the community. And a super huge thank you to Gina and her staff."

Angelakopoulos said she was also very pleased and happy with the turnout.

"Getting into the spirit and bringing the community together in order to raise the awareness of the Palliative Care in the area," she told The Lake Report. "It's just the matter of everybody really enjoying themselves for a good reason. Smiles and cheers are always a happy thing especially in times like these because there are other people who are less fortunate."

One of the Palliative Care volunteers, Margaret Walker, said she brought four friends with her to show support to her "favourite charity."

Another volunteer, Marlene Bridgman, said it was a great cause and Palliative Care is very much needed in the community.

Town urged to **preserve** historic ordnance boundary stones

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

Some of the oldest historic artifacts in Niagara-on-the-Lake are being lost to heavy construction equipment and need to be preserved, a Niagara Historical Society official told councillors Monday night.

Ted Rumble, secretary of the Niagara Historical Society, asked the town to document, protect and celebrate the ordnance boundary stones, which were used to designate British military property.

Twenty-five of the 36 original stones are missing. Some of the 11 remaining stones in NOTL have sunk into the ground.

In 1796, John Graves Simcoe ordered four parcels of land in Newark (now NOTL) to be set aside for military use, Rumble said.

The stones have initials "B.O." engraved on them with an arrow above on one side, and a number on the other side. The initials stand for the Board of Ordnance, founded in the 1600s under



An ordnance boundary stone at the entrance of Simcoe Park. DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA

the reign of Charles II. The arrow was used to designate the property of the British government.

The British Army and the royal engineers placed the boundary stones around the perimeter. The four military reserves in town were called Garrison, Mississauga, Lots 79, 80, 89 and 90, and Vacant Town Lot A.

The Garrison reserve is known today as the Commons. The Mississauga reserve was located at what is now the NOTL Golf Club. Across from the golf course were the lots 79,

80, 89 and 90, which had four boundary stones. The Vacant Town Lot A, now known as Simcoe Park, also used to have four stones on its corners.

At Simcoe Park, one remaining stone is located near a bench at the park's entrance.

"This stone is clearly vulnerable to damage from snow removal equipment because it's completely unprotected," Rumble said.

For another stone at the entrance at Queen's Royal Park, it will only be a couple of years before it

disappears, he said.

A stone at the corner of Johnson and Nassau streets has also been affected by heavy equipment being used in construction in that area.

Rumble asked council to recognize the historical value of the stones, repair and reposition them, and place a protective barrier around the stones to prevent further damage.

"It would be necessary for the town to work the Historical Society and Parks Canada since three of these stones are on Parks Canada land," Rumble told councillors.

"It's an amazing part of history that I certainly didn't know about and I think we all take pride in," said Coun. Gary Burroughs.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said she will work with interim chief administrator Sheldon Randall and will let councillors know whether Rumble's presentation should be referred to town's municipal heritage committee or to a committee that's already working on preserving Butler's Burial Ground.

Tidbits

Town adopts ombudsman's recommendations

- As the Town of NOTL is looking to hire a new chief administrative officer, town council approved 15 recommendations from the provincial ombudsman's report Monday night to ensure transparency and "high ethical standards" during CAO's recruitment process. Town staff will also report back on the progress of implementing the recommendations.

Zalepa, region invited to speak about garbage changes

- Regional Coun. Gary Zalepa and regional staff have been invited to speak to town council about the region's move to biweekly waste collection. Councillors said having regional officials speak in a public forum will allow the public to learn more about the every-other-week garbage collection, which was approved by Niagara Region in October.

Report will outline possible hotel tax options

- Town staff need to prepare a detailed report regarding a possible hotel room tax, town councillors decided Monday. The report will provide options to council regarding the possible implementation of the municipal accommodation tax. No decision on instituting such a levy has been made yet.

Nominate homes, businesses for holiday decor awards

- Residents are being encouraged to nominate the best-decorated home or business in NOTL. Volunteer judges from the town's Communities in Bloom organization will be giving out Holiday Decoration Display Awards and local winners will be announced in the local newspapers. The contest will include daytime and nighttime decorations and will run until Dec. 15. To nominate, go to the town's Join The Conversation webpage.

Local snaps



Even the statue of Shaw is getting into the holiday spirit. RICHARD HARLEY



Maltese Tom and Coton de Tulear Sawyer sit with Santa for pictures at St. Davids Vet Clinic Saturday morning. SUPPLIED



Carol Shore and Fran Burdett at the annual NOTL Ukesters Christmas party held at the NOTL Community Centre Sunday. DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA



Yvonne Newton browses the Queenston Annual Christmas Bake and Decor Sale on Saturday. BRITTANY CARTER



Each week, the staff of Ravine Winery share their expertise and offer a brief explanation about an aspect of wine. So, whether you're an expert oenophile or a newbie just finding your way around wine country, we trust you'll enjoy. Cheers!

Life cycle of the vine



Grape vines covered in snow. BRITTANY CARTER

There is no rest in wine country for our vines or our winemakers. So the next time you enjoy a glass of your favourite vintage, think of the year the grapes had with Mother Nature and then moving into the hands of the winemaker and, finally, to you, so you can enjoy the fruits of their labour.

When winter is coming

Once the fall harvest is over, growers get the vines ready for winter. Vines are "hilled" with soil to insulate and protect them from harsh temperatures. Vineyard workers also create a sort of trench so excess water drains away from the vines as too much water can kill them.

The key now is to hope for a winter that is not too harsh because at -22C vines will die. The wind machines in Niagara help circulate the air and move warmer temperatures down into the vineyard.

March to May: Pruning and bud break

When it seems the extreme cold of winter has passed, pruning starts to get the vines ready for the growing season. As the temperatures get milder and sap starts to flow in the vines, pruning gets the vines ready for bud break.

Depending on where the vineyard is in the Niagara area, timing of bud break can vary. In Niagara, that usually means mid-May.

You may notice that the soil gets turned in most vineyards. This is to help bring oxygen into the earth to enhance the upcoming rapid growth period.

June: Flowering

You will see rapid growth in June. If you look closely at the vines in mid-June you will notice little clusters of what looks like tiny grapes. They will actually become flowers soon (when we get enough heat and sun). These flowers will eventually lead to fruit set. Vines are self-pollinating and don't need bees to make that magic happen.

July: Fruit Set

As flowering finishes, green fruit appears (just like apples/pears). At this time the fruit clusters are being watched for good health and growers may remove some bunches to promote better quality in other fruit.

August: Getting ready for Veraison

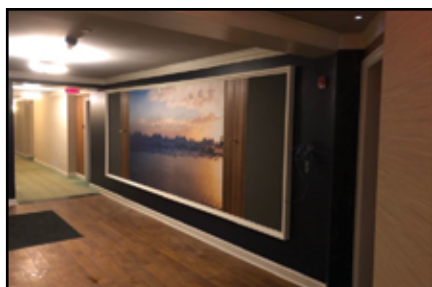
Grapes become enlarged and develop sugars in August. This is also time to get ready for Veraison, (when the grapes turn colour and start maturing) which typically happens later in August. Growers will often cut back the leaves at this time to expose the grapes to more sun and wind to keep them dry (preventing fungus, etc.). All grapes start out green, however, as Veraison continues, white varietals become translucent green, with varying degrees of yellow and gold, while red varietals develop different shades of red to dark blue to black, depending on the grape.

September: Maturation and maybe an early harvest for sparkling

Fall is hugely important to growers. Starting with September, it is all about increasing the sugars and the development of flavour in the grapes. Warm and dry is the ideal weather at this time, as most of September winemakers are getting ready for harvest. Grapes used for sparkling wine are usually harvested first.

October/November: The harvest

This is the time of year our winemakers are testing the grapes to get that ideal chemistry of sugar and acid that indicates it is time for harvest. White varietals are harvested first and Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon are usually harvested last. Icewine grapes are kept on the vine and protected with nets to prevent birds from eating them. They are harvested anytime from December to March.



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A council Christmas poem

By Coun. Clare Cameron

This NOTL rendition of "A Night Before Christmas," by Coun. Clare Cameron, was read at the Dec. 9 town council meeting.

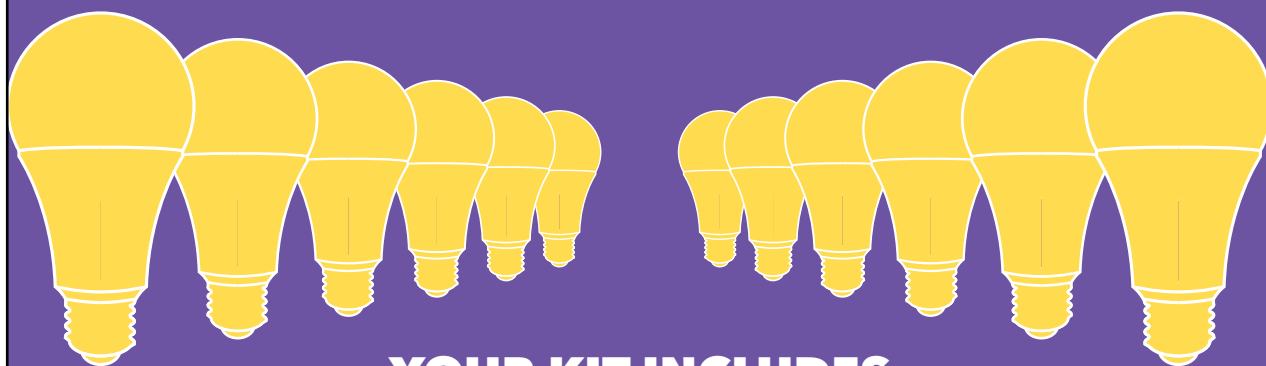
This Christmas reading was written with good intentions, genuine affection and festive wishes to everyone who makes Niagara-on-the-Lake such a fantastic place to live. All the best for a very merry holiday season!

'Twas the last council before Christmas, when all through town hall
 No scandal was stirring, no drama at all.
 The agenda was prepared by the clerk with great care,
 In hopes that the ombudsman would not be there.
 The papers insisted, "Journalism isn't dead!"
 While visions of Grant LaFleche danced in their heads.
 And some people in PJs, and some in their toques,
 Had just settled on a name for their new Facebook group.
 When out on Stone Road there arose such a clatter,
 I ran out to Silks for a cabbage roll platter.
 Then away to the Avondale I flew like a flash,
 Tore open some corn chips and got out some cash.
 The moon on the breast of the new traffic light
 Made Virgil look urban in the middle of the night.
 When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
 But a white BMW with a hatch in the rear!
 With a little lady driver, with freshly done hair,
 I knew in a moment it must be the Lord Mayor.
 More rapid than mice fleeing a TTC train,
 She whistled, and shouted, and called us by name:
 "Now, BURROUGHS! Now CHEROPITA! Now McCORMACK and WIENS!
 On, ARSENAULT! On, BISBACK! On, CAMERON and...that other WIENS!
 To the top of the clock tower! To the swish Outlet Mall!
 Now dash away Costco and suburban sprawl!
 As people that disappear in Penner's for hours
 Fall under a spell from that store's superpowers

So up to the region like councillors they flew,
 With a sleigh full of official plan amendments, and Gary Zalepa, too.
 And then in the clinking of empty wine glasses
 Came a fresh crop of people from sommelier classes.
 As they drew out a corkscrew and asked for more rounds
 Down to the cellar Donald Ziraldo came with a bound.
 He was dressed to the nines in a powder blue suit,
 And his clothes were all tarnished with grape skins and juice.
 A bundle of bottles was flung on the bar,
 And he laughed like a Kinsman in a really old car.
 His eyes – how they twinkled! His dimples, how merry!
 His jokes were so funny, was this Joe Pillitteri?
 He carried a magnum in each of his arms,
 And on land use he said, "We need acreage for farms!"
 Meanwhile in St. Davids under bright orange light
 A new crop of something was growing all night.
 As neighbours experienced an odour indelible,
 Snoop Dogg toured the site with a bowlful of edibles.
 He wasn't chubby or plump, and at risk of being bored,
 So got visitor tips from Eduardo Lafforgue.
 With a promise to keep overtourism at bay,
 And a stack of brochures in a shiny red sleigh.
 I spoke not a word, but went straight to my work,
 And read a few hundred emails; it's a political perk.
 And as Lord Mayor Disero saw this year's legal bill,
 And giving a nod, said it is the people's will;
 She sprang to her Beamer, with a nod to the feisty
 And away they all flew like the seeds of phragmites.
 But I heard her exclaim, and it was no mistake,
 HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL,
 IN NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE!



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Have some fun

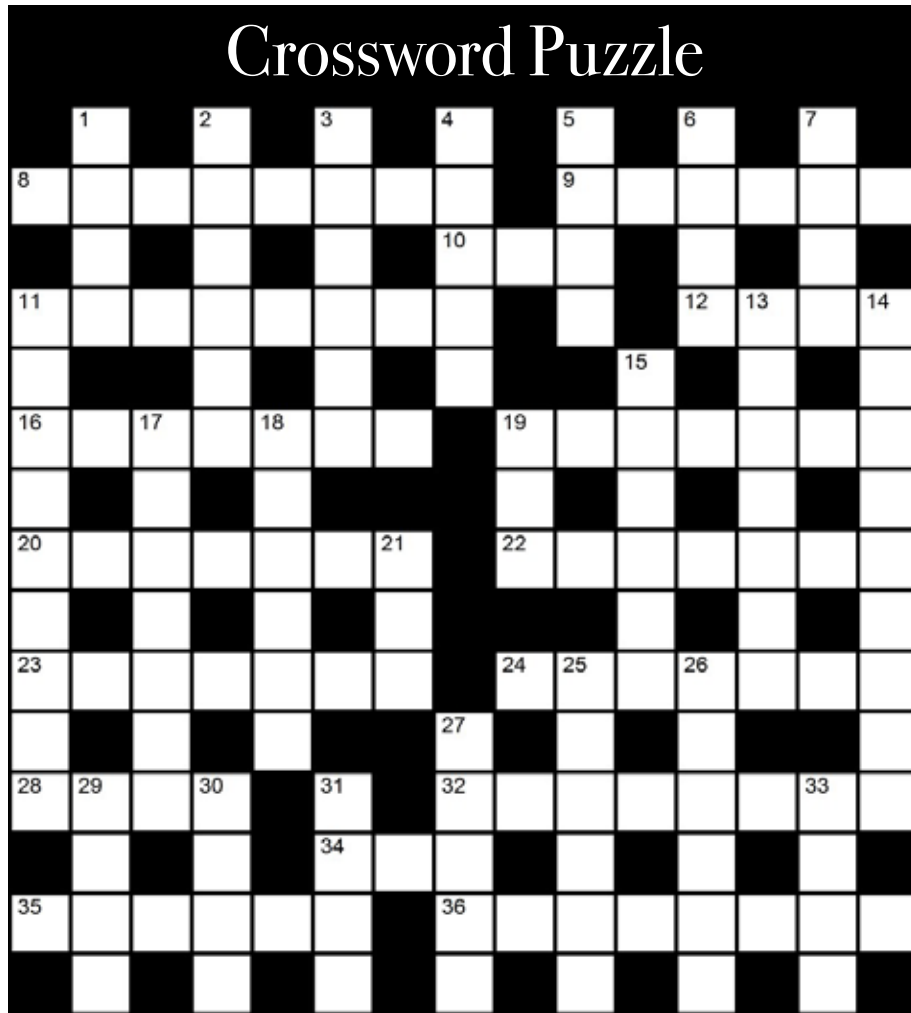
The Lake Report is looking for puzzle makers who would like to help develop this page. We are seeking both standard and cryptic crossword writers. editor@niagaranow.com

Across

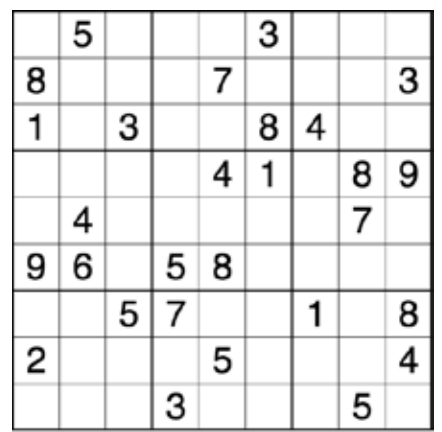
- 8. Bucharest resident, for example (8)
- 9. To an excessive degree (6)
- 10. Company known as "Big Blue" (1,1,1)
- 11. Hearty Sunday lunch (3,5)
- 12. Fan blade (4)
- 16. Mobs (7)
- 19. Close-cropped hair style (4,3)
- 20. Solvent (7)
- 22. Before sunrise (7)
- 23. Piled carelessly (2,1,4)
- 24. As good as it gets (7)
- 28. Scotch partner (4)
- 32. Flattened (8)
- 34. Hard, durable wood (3)
- 35. Seller (6)
- 36. Science of heredity (8)

Down

- 1. Game played on horseback (4)
- 2. Capital of Croatia (6)
- 3. He asked "What is truth?" (6)
- 4. One (5)
- 5. Knock (4)
- 6. Very detailed picture receiver (1-1,2)
- 7. Scheme (4)
- 11. Pictures of people (9)
- 13. Applaud (7)
- 14. Twisted into a confusing mass (9)
- 15. Command (6)
- 17. Pepper (7)
- 18. Morning assemblies (6)
- 19. Drinking vessel (3)
- 21. Salesperson (3)
- 25. Nosedive (6)
- 26. Cracked (6)
- 27. Wonky (5)
- 29. Singles (4)
- 30. Assistant (4)
- 31. Tender (4)
- 33. Apiece (4)



Last issue's answers



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Wallbangers **back on ice** for season

Ross Robinson
Special to The Lake Report

Yes, sports fans, the irrepressible Wallbangers are well into their 35th season of early Sunday morning hockey.

The teams started playing in 1984 and Commissioner Bill Dickson ensures the founding principles endure.

It is intergenerational (grandfathers, sons, grandsons, Blue Team versus Red Team, with the teams being modified each week, dependent upon who shows up and, as importantly, who doesn't show up.)

We have never had a referee, on the premise that they only enable players to act dumb.

Self-policing, and in the case of an offside or disputed goal, whichever team yells first and loudest gets the call. "The players know." We will continue to take the high road.

Our founder Dave Wall, a.k.a. Captain Hook, was inducted into the NOTL Sports Wall of Fame earlier this year, and he seized the opportunity to remind us to "Never surrender. Fight them

on the ice, fight them in the pubs, but never surrender."

Several Wallbangers attended the Induction, and Dave spoke passionately about our town, our sports volunteers, and his life and family and friends.

Since then, Dave passed away, and we will attempt to perpetuate his legacy of love, fair play and sportsmanship.

While listening to Dave's induction speech, I was reminded of Pinehurst founder Richard Tufts, who penned "The Creed of the Amateur."

"An amateur is one who competes in a sport for the joy of playing, for the companionship it affords, for health-giving exercise, and for relaxation from more serious matters. As a part of this light-hearted approach to the game, he accepts cheerfully all adverse breaks, is considerate of his opponent, plays the game fairly and squarely in accordance with the rules, maintains self-control, and strives to do his best, not in order to win, but rather as a test of his own skill and ability."

Sort of says it all, eh? Go Wallbangers.

As an aside, the Blue Team was treated to an impromptu fashion show just after Black Friday.

To remind us all of Christmas shopping, several Brooks Brothers shirts were modelled, followed by the very latest in striped boxer shorts. Reaction was mixed, as players were trying to get psyched for that morning's contest.

Which brings us to the current state of Canada's favourite game. Hockey culture is under serious pressure, as "what was accepted behaviour then is unacceptable now."

Revelations and accusations are painful to hear and the path forward must be more aligned with our base Canadian values.

We can talk all we want about Maple Leaf land. There can be no doubt that better times are ahead, and how reassuring it was to listen to the post Mike Babler news conference, with GM Kyle Dubas repeatedly calling MLSE president Brendan Shanahan "Shanny."

Incoming coach Sheldon Keefe then summarized his coaching strategy, "When we

lose the puck, we wanna get it back." (I am not making this up, folks. He said that, and the media talking heads all nodded, and rushed off to file their stories.)

Coach Keefe then went into more details, emphasizing more focus in the D zone, intensity, creativity and confidence, and more effort down low in the O zone. The Leafs will work on the PP and PK, and try to get a Shorty.

Sorry, I got carried away again. Wallbanger Blue Team and Red Team have both won three games, with one game undecided because of some confusion at the score clock. Was the score 10 - 9 or 9-10? Does anybody really care?

Early in that game, the score was 5-1 for Red Team. Team captains Mark Shantz and Carl Glauser had a short meeting at the checkered red line. My captain Mark gently and tenderly asked me to change sweaters with Joe Doria, a much younger and more intense skater on the Red Team. He assured me this move had nothing to do with relative skill levels, so I agreed to the trade as long as the Red Team would throw in a bucket of pucks, and "the



After each early Sunday morning Wallbangers game the teams and players line up to exchange clenched teeth congratulations. SUPPLIED/ROSS ROBINSON

rights to Carl Brewer?"

Interesting, but that game ended up a one-goal win by Blue Team.

Let's end this article with a comment on the Don Cherry situation. This was a big deal, apparently, and my thoughts on his espousal of Rock 'Em, Sock 'Em hockey, violence and fighting are well known. Migawd, is fighting really allowed in the national game of our wonderful, peaceful nation? In 2019?

I never met Don Cherry, so cannot comment. However, I have been with Ron McLean twice, and he is a humble, gracious, kind and very likable man.

All things being said, I respect the fact that Don and Ron developed a schtick

over 30 years ago. They rode that schtick to great fame and fortune.

Just like Howard Cosell and the greatest, Muhammed Ali, Sonny and Cher, Johnny Carson and Ed McMahon, the Smothers Brothers, Payne Stewart in his sartorially effulgent plus fours, and the list goes on. Good on them all, eh?

Just the other day I asked a few people at Valu-mart what they thought about the firing of Cherry. Their responses: I didn't agree with him all time, but he was entertaining. He spoke his mind, and really supported our military and our veterans. He seemed a bit old school. Don Who?

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COOKING WITH COLLIN

Christmas Cannelloni is a family tradition



Collin Goodine
Special to The Lake Report

Christmas to many is about spending time with family, eating, drinking wine and being merry. It is about bringing together past and future generations so they may share in the way things were and welcoming in new ideas. This time of year is about getting together and celebrating family

traditions.

I have been blessed with the opportunity over the past five years to share in one of my family's favourite Christmas traditions – making the Christmas dinner.

There are a few recipes that I could share for this meal but one that sticks out the most is the Christmas cannelloni. You will need a pasta machine for this recipe or can buy fresh pasta

sheets from a local vendor.

This is a time that old and young can gather in the kitchen and sing and talk about everything and nothing at all. Each year I share this tradition with my wonderful mother-in-law and it is by far one day that I cherish and look forward to each year.

I hope that this may inspire you all to start the same family tradition. Enjoy.

Ingredients:

Tomato Sauce

- 4 litres crushed tomatoes
- 1/3 litre water
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tbsp white sugar
- 2 oz vegetable stock
- 1 red pepper
- 1 white onion (halved)
- 1 red onion (halved)
- 2 oz olive oil

Simple Pasta

- 1 lb all-purpose flour
- Pinch salt
- 5 farm fresh eggs (large)
- 1/2 cap full vinegar
- 1 tsp olive oil

Filling

- 1 litre Ricotta cheese
- 1/4 cup powdered Parmesan
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan
- 3 tbsp Italian parsley (chopped)
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp garlic (pureed)
- Salt to taste
- 1 farm fresh egg (large)
- 1/2 cup apple cider vinegar

Directions:

For this recipe, I suggest making the tomato sauce first, pasta second and filling last. The tomato sauce can be made well in advance.

Tomato sauce

Place the tomatoes, water, salt, sugar and vegetable stock into a medium, thick-bottomed pot and simmer on low.

In a second, smaller pot, saute the peppers, onions and olive oil until the vegetables are tender.

Once the vegetables are soft, add them to the simmering tomato sauce. Allow to simmer for about 45 minutes.

Add any fresh basil or oregano that you wish (if desired) at this point.

Allow the tomato mixture to cool.

Carefully pour the tomato sauce into a blender and puree the sauce until complete.

Jar the sauce and set aside in the fridge.

Pasta

In a food processor, add the flour and salt.

Crack all the eggs into a bowl, removing any shells that may fall in. Add the vinegar and the olive oil to the eggs.

Turn on the food processor and slowly

add one egg at a time. Each time an egg is added allow the mixture to absorb the egg. Continue until all the eggs are gone and the flour mixture looks like corn meal.

Remove the contents onto a clean surface and knead by hand until a smooth-textured pasta dough is formed.

Wrap in plastic wrap and set aside for at least an hour or two. While the dough is resting, make the filling.

Filling

Drain the ricotta and gently squeeze out any moisture by hand or in cheese cloth.

Add all ingredients into a large bowl without the egg and mix with a wooden spoon. Season to taste.

Once you are happy with the flavour, add the egg and mix.

Set aside in the fridge until ready to assemble the cannelloni.

Making the cannelloni for baking

Cut pasta dough into quarters.

Roll out one quarter as flat as possible with a rolling pin or wine bottle.

Using a pasta machine, put the flattened dough in starting on setting 0 and continue to run through each time going up on the settings until you reach desired thickness (usually 6 or 7).

When you have pasta rolled out in a long sheet, cut 3 by 3 or 4 by 4-inch squares from the dough, removing any waste.

Place the ricotta in the middle of the square 1/2-inch thick from one side of the square to the middle (to resemble a white belt across the pasta sheet).

Wet the top of the pasta square with a little bit of water with a pastry brush.

Fold the bottom of the pasta over the ricotta and roll to the top of the pasta sheet. The end result will be a pasta tube filled with ricotta (cannelloni).

Continue this whole process until the desired number of cannellonis are made.

To bake

Cover the bottom of a casserole dish with a thin layer of tomato sauce.

Place cannellonis from top to bottom, touching each other, like a box of cigars.

Once the dish is filled, pour tomato sauce over the top of the cannelloni until covered.

Wrap with plastic wrap, then foil.

Bake in oven at 350F for 45 minutes.

Remove the cover, add cheese on top if desired.

Serve at the table with grated Parmesan, hot tomato sauce and basil pesto.

STAY FIT NOT!



Jaclyn Willms demonstrates a bird-dog workout.
STAY FIT NOT!

Core exercises for all levels

Jaclyn Willms
Special to The Lake Report

Want to learn how to strengthen your core with no equipment at all?

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Bodyweight exercises are a great way to tone and

strengthen the muscles in your stomach.

Your core provides a muscular framework that protects your low back, posture, and helps control all the movement of your body while providing balance and stability to your whole body.

Try this circuit below at home or at the gym twice a

week and feel the change.

Complete as many reps as possible of each exercise for 30 seconds.

Repeat for three rounds total, resting for 30 to 60 seconds between rounds, depending on your fitness level.

Reminder: When work-

ing on your core remember to brace by pulling your belly button into your spine to maintain a neutral spine position. If you start to feel your back you may need to tone the exercises down to ensure you are using your core not your back to perform the exercises correctly.

1. V-Up
2. Russian Twists
3. Bicycle Crunches
4. Plank
5. Lying Butterfly kicks
6. Bird-dog



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EXPLORING PHOTOS

WITH JIM SMITH



McFarland House

The War of 1812 brought complete destruction to our town. Two members of the McFarland family, James and John, were very active in that conflict. However, John was taken prisoner at the battle of Fort George. This picture shows John McFarland's home, which was used as a hospital for both sides of the conflict. The house was built in 1800 but was badly damaged by cannon fire, after which it was rebuilt to what we see today.

SUPPLIED PHOTO/JIM SMITH



Compromising the Ranch

Brian Marshall
Featured



A classic side-split Ranch design. SUPPLIED PHOTO

To suggest that urban developers didn't care for ranch bungalows might be an understatement.

The Ranch, requiring a lot with at least 90 feet of frontage and a depth sufficient for backyard entertaining, tended to wreak havoc on a revenue model based on the much smaller lot requirement of the designs that preceded it.

Add to this the higher expense of building a single-storey house compared to a one-and-half or two-storey form of equivalent square footage. And, the understated design didn't exactly lend itself to high-end pricing.

Still, as a reflection of the mid-20th century lifestyle, it had become wildly popular across middle-class North America. So, how does one provide all the livability elements of the Ranch interior, including its inside/outside flow, but in a smaller footprint?

The answer was the sidesplit; essentially a ranch bungalow containing only the "public space" (kitchen/living/dining rooms) attached to a two-storey section set partially below grade.

This form retained the low horizontal lines and the inside/outside transition from

the public space of the Ranch while shortening the overall length by pushing the family and utility rooms down onto the sunken first floor of the two-storey section.

Initially, the garage was typically an extension of the public space, but the developer imperative toward an ever-smaller footprint often led (where topography allowed) to replacing the first-floor family room with a garage.

Then, in a perfect example of pushing a workable compromise too far, some bright camper came up with the backsplit. Simply take a sidesplit, turn it 90 degrees

so the end wall of the bungalow section presents to the street, shift the main entry and garage to the new facade, and finally, eliminate the all-important inside/outside entertaining transition, which made the Ranch popular.

While this may sound self-defeating, it accomplished three important things.

First, it preserved the less-expensive build cost of the sidesplit.

Second, it fit quite comfortably on the developers' then-current ideal target of a 50-foot lot.

Finally, taken in combination, these factors allowed the developers to offer a backsplit at a lower price (per square foot) than either the ranch bungalow or the sidesplit while still tenuously leveraging on the popularity of both.

Ingenious? Yes, but as always, designs born of compromise invariably come up short.

The Lake Report

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The Lake Report would also like to acknowledge and thank those who have made financial contributions to the paper. **Your donations and contributions help support young, local journalists, as well as student interns, local charities, and so much more.**

We encourage all residents to support The Lake Report through an annual "voluntary" subscription. We suggest just \$50/year (less than \$1 per issue) per household. **That's less than most people spend on coffee.**

Larger donations are also greatly appreciated.

Donations can be made online at www.lakereport.ca, or cheques can be mailed to the NOTL Post Office, L0S1J0, PO Box 724.

Please make cheques to The Lake Report.

- Richard Harley

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Occupation, frustration and devastation

Part 1: The Americans' invasion of Canada during the War of 1812 met fierce resistance



Denise Ascenzo
Exclusive/The Lake Report

On Dec. 13, 1813, the red glow in the sky could be seen from as far away as St. Davids.

The smell of the smoke came shortly thereafter.

Word soon arrived, the town of Niagara (now NOTL) was being burned to the ground by the retreating American forces.

Many wondered just what could have justified this heinous act by the Americans, who had been occupying the town and region for over seven months. War at this time was supposed to only involve fighting armed men, not women and children.

The town of Niagara had been invaded by the Americans on May 27, 1813, and they occupied the town until December.

The town's people, mostly women, children, the elderly and infirm, had to suffer the unwanted visitors who took over homes.

For the most part, the American soldiers paid for everything, as looting was not permitted within the town. However, the outlying farms were not so lucky.

It might seem that the American forces should have been satisfied with their occupation of the town but in fact the strategy of the American government was to use Fort George as a launching centre to gain total control over the Great Lakes.

Taking Fort George did cut off the portage of supplies of the British



Fort George Squad members in U.S. uniforms representing the American occupation for the filming of 2013 video "Niagara on Fire."
COURTESY TONY CHISHOLM

from Lake Erie and the Detroit Frontier. Seizing Burlington Heights would effectively cut off the secondary portage route that was from Burlington to the Grand River.

British forces retreating from the Battle of Fort George (May 27, 1813), under Maj.-Gen. John Vincent, had made their way to Burlington Heights where they were encamped.

Burlington Heights was a naval supply hub on Lake Ontario (where Dundurn Castle is located).

Word came to Vincent that the American forces, who were in pursuit of the British, had reached Stoney Creek.

The British launched a bold attack, at night. The Battle of Stoney Creek, on June 6, 1813, was a dismal

failure for the American forces who suffered a great loss.

Although York had been taken by the Americans on April 27, 1813, it had been abandoned after three days of occupation.

It was part of the American strategy that once Burlington Heights was taken, they would march to York and it would once more be theirs.

The frustrated American forces, after their defeat at Stoney Creek, had to retreat to Niagara. Although York was attacked by the Americans twice more in the summer of 1813, it was never occupied by them permanently.

The Battle of Beaver Dams was another failed attempt by the Americans, thanks to Laura Secord,

who famously walked from Queenston through St. Davids and on to Beaver Dams to advise Lt. James Fitzgibbons of a planned attack by the Americans.

On June 24, 1813, with 500 American soldiers advancing on Beaver Dams, 300 Indigenous allies surrounded them.

The Americans' fear of capture by Indigenous warriors prompted them to willingly surrender to Fitzgibbons and his 50 regular British soldiers.

A sad fact is that Fitzgibbons was given credit for this win when in fact it was John Norton and the Indigenous men who were engaged against the Americans and had won – not the British soldiers.

During the summer of 1813, the battle for control

of Lake Ontario became a cat and mouse game between the British and American naval fleets.

There were small skirmishes back and forth, ships built, ships lost, but no clear victory for either side. The Americans became more frustrated with their lack of victory on the lake.

That became apparent when, in August of 1813, St. Andrew's Presbyterian church was burned down by the Americans. They claimed British troops were using the bell tower to spy on the town. The church we see today was built in the 1830s.

Two more battles, this time at the eastern end of Lake Ontario and into the St. Lawrence River, also were failures for the

Americans.

The first was Oct. 26, 1813, the Battle of the Chateaugay. The second was the Battle of Chrysler Farm (near Cornwall, Ont.) on Nov. 11, 1813.

With these two losses Montreal would not be captured by the Americans. The British would remain in control of the St. Lawrence River.

Next: Frustrated American forces grew weary of being defeated by the British and their allies.

I would like to thank Ron Dale and the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum for their continued support when researching my articles.

More Niagara's History Unveiled articles about the past of Niagara-on-the-Lake are available at: www.niagaranow.com



COMMUNITY



We invite you to submit photos and stories for consideration in this section. Send your submissions to editor@niagaranow.com for a chance to be featured.



Community photos



Samuel Challen and Wayne Renaud show a musket demonstration during Revolutionary War Winter Garrison Sunday. DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA



Frank and Michele Guglielmi peruse Sandra Iafrate's paintings during her Gate Street Studio open house last weekend. BRITTANY CARTER



Dylan Baulcomb is tucked after the morning waiting in line for the Holiday House Tours. BRITTANY CARTER



Eleven of the 13 Niagara Plein Air Artists who are showcasing their art all December at the library. BRITTANY CARTER



THE GOLDEN PLUNGER

With Betty and Jane

Bacchus Lounge



Michael Tomczuk accepts Golden Plunger award for Bacchus Lounge, Queens Landing. THE GOLDEN PLUNGER

This venue has married the old with the new by preserving bits of 1831 historical Georgian opulence and adding elegant, modern facilities. There were a number of full-service restrooms to choose from and all were accessible, privately located and welcoming. Each had ample room, soft soothing music, private stalls and beautiful marble countertops. The user could choose paper hand towels, or electronic hand dryers with plenty of warm H2O for the final handwashing ritual. The mirrors were sink to ceiling and provided the patron with an excuse for a perfect must have "selfie," which we enjoyed. This venue provided the delightful opportunity to be "Queen for a day," or at least an hour or two.

4.5/5 Golden Plungers



NOTL DART LEAGUE

Each week, dart teams face off at local restaurants and pubs. Find scores here weekly, exclusive to The Lake Report.

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Tarot of the week

Lisa Tache/Special

DATE: Dec. 12, 2019

The Sun gives you strength and assures you that your good energies will accompany you and bring you happiness and pleasure no matter where you go. Radiate who you are and

what you stand for. Shine your love. The Sun brings you the message that things will get better, a lot better! You're confident and you know everything's going to work out – Love your life! This is an energetic card. It demonstrates a time when you can expect to experience a lot of physical energy, vitality and general positivity. You explode with optimism and are embracing good health, prosperity, optimism and abundance.

ASK YOURSELF THIS.

What do you feel really good about right now?

RIDDLE ME THIS

I'm an English word that has three consecutive double letters. What am I?

Last Week: When I grow I get closer to the ground. What am I?

Answer: An icicle

Also accepted: Hair, grapes

Answered first by: Margie Enns

Also answered correctly by: Gary Davis, Britiney Turasz, Sadie Willms, Kathy Neufeld, Tammy DeRocco, Katie Reimer, Marilyn Milani

Email answers to editor@niagaranow.com for a chance to win a prize.



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FEATURED LOCAL STORY



Candlelight Stroll benefits farmworker who had stroke

Brittany Carter
Tim Taylor
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's annual Candlelight Stroll shone its light on longtime farmworker Delroy Castella this year, raising \$7,500 to support him after a traumatic stroke and arduous recovery.

In early September, Castella cycled to the Virgil walk-in clinic immediately after working his entire shift, even though he was feeling "distinctly unwell" throughout the workday. He was quickly diagnosed at the clinic as suffering from a stroke and taken to the Greater Niagara General Hospital.

The stroke left most of his strength and physical skills intact, but it had stolen his ability to speak.

After almost two months at the Niagara hospital and Hotel Dieu Shaver Hospital in St. Catharines, he is just now recovering some of his speech.

NOTL Chamber of Commerce's events organizer Nicole Cripps said Castella's story resonated with the board. She said it was an easy decision to award

this year's benefit to him to continue his recovery back home in Jamaica.

"This year Delroy's story just really struck a chord with everybody and just how important the migrant workers are in all aspects of Niagara-on-the-Lake. We'd be kind of lost without them and I think they get forgotten sometimes," Cripps said.

"So, I think it's really important to focus on them as well."

Cripps said though the stroll has been growing steadily over the last few years, this year wasn't as well attended as a couple years ago, when more than 30,000 responded as "attending" to the Facebook event page.

"We had probably about 15,000 that year," she said.

Castella led the lighting of the candles before boarding the horse-drawn carriage for a ride along the stroll route. Chair of the board and Konzelmann Estate Winery's director of marketing Andrew Niven said it means a lot to people to have Castella there at the stroll.

"They can really see who is benefitting from the money raised, it makes the whole thing more real and



Derick Scarlet and Delroy Castella during the Candlelight Stroll Friday evening.
BRITTANY CARTER

meaningful," he said.

For the past 35 years, 58-year-old Castella left his wife Joan and six children in a small district of Clarendon Parish, called Longbough, west of Kingston, Jamaica, to work in the orchards and vineyards in Niagara for the season.

He's been in Niagara's fields longer than most of the men he works with have been alive. For the last six years, he has worked on farms owned by George Lepp. He lives with seven others in a house on Creek Road, north of East West Line.

Now, Castella faces a long recovery, and may not

return to work in Niagara.

His wife chalks up his slow but steady recovery to her own persistence and the loving help he has received from local families who shared their homes with the couple since his release from hospital. He continues his rehab at Shaver, twice weekly.

Joan managed to find enough money for airfare to come to her husband's side in early October. She said he has difficulty finding the words to say sometimes.

"He was a very big talker. He get's very frustrated."

She is a farmer in their small community, raising four pigs, 200 chickens and

harvesting a small market garden.

"We plant the fields before Delroy leaves and then harvest them when he returns."

Before joining Castella in Canada, she discovered he loved to hear her sing hymns when she connected by Skype. "I am a good Christian," she says.

He had tears in his eyes. So, I started to sing hymns to him, 'Be not dismayed, God will take care of you.'

Now she tries to get him to sing as part of his recovery, but he just shakes his head as if to say he never could sing, anyway. "We practise speaking all the time," she says.

"We repeat one word over and over. Then we do a sentence over and over and over."

Cripps said she's happy to see the money this year go to such a meaningful cause. Each year, the chamber asks for community involvement to choose the recipient of the organization's fundraising event.

This year, the chamber is also donating a portion of the money raised to purchase farmworker welcome kits.

"Whatever we make tonight, all of that will go to Delroy, but \$1,000 will go to the welcome kits," Cripps said. She added the chamber was approached by Julia Buxton-Cox about funding for the kits. She has recently become involved with the welcome kits through Niagara Workers Welcome.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said she couldn't think of a better way to celebrate the annual Candlelight Stroll tradition than by "listening to the beautiful carols and raising funds for a worthy cause."

Find a full gallery of photos at Niagarano.com, or on our Facebook page for The Lake Report.



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