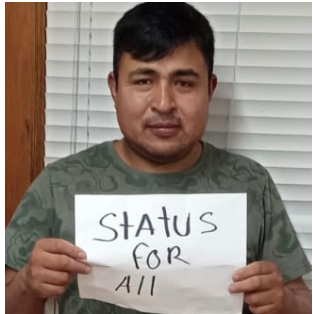




Cocoa for kids toys | Page 10



## NOTL farmer fined **\$500** in crash that killed pedestrian

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

A Niagara-on-the-Lake man has been convicted of failing to report an accident that killed a 40-year-old

pedestrian.

Robert Enns, 55, was found guilty last Friday in Welland provincial offences court and fined \$500. He also was sentenced to nine months of probation.

Justice of the Peace Mary Shelley ruled that Enns did not do enough to determine the seriousness of the crash nor whether he had struck a person.

Matthew Wilson's body

was found in the southside ditch the next morning.

"Was Mr. Enns diligent in the actions he took? I don't think so," Shelley told the court in finding him guilty.

"He would have been

diligent if he had done a more thorough examination of the damage that night" and then quickly reported the crash, she said.

*Continued on Page 5*

## Mexican workers accuse Canadian farmers of **mistreatment**

Somer Slobodian  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Seasonal farm workers are speaking out over what they describe as inhumane treatment from their Canadian employers.

Mexican agricultural workers have written an open letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the president of

*Continued on Page 3*



## Christmas trees **sparkle** on Queen Street

Molly Bowron  
The Lake Report

Outdoor Christmas trees in downtown Niagara-on-the-Lake are lit, illuminating NOTL with the glow of a friendly holiday decorating contest.

Queen Street is awash in a wintry wonderland as 11 businesses have helped decorate Christmas trees for the competition.

*Continued on Page 16*

## Candlelight Stroll **lights up** NOTL

Warm flames, bright spirits and songs as people fill the streets of Old Town



Ceto Reid and Julia Buxton-Cox pose for a selfie during the Candlelight Stroll on Friday. SOMER SLOBODIAN

Somer Slobodian  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

By the end of Friday night's annual Candlelight Stroll, Ceto Reid didn't want to leave.

Reid is a farmworker from Jamaica who was struck by a car in October while riding his bike in St. Catharines.

He is also one of three beneficiaries of the Candlelight Stroll, along with the Farmworkers

Hub and Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Palliative Care Service.

On Friday, just before the Candlelight Stroll began, Reid was inside the old Court House's mayoral office with the rest

of the recipients, looking very nervous surrounded by lights, cameras and people.

"I can't find words to tell you how much I feel," said

*Continued on Page 2*

## NOTL sisters relive **childhood memories** at McArthur Estate

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

Magical.

It's a word that can conjure up an image of something memorable, meaningful, special.

For two sisters who grew up in Niagara-on-the-Lake

more than half a century ago, visiting the McArthur Estate for the Rotary Club's Merry and Bright Christmas Tour on Friday night really was "magical."

It was a "walk down memory lane" for Barbara Baptiste and Irene Howarth, and a chance to relive a bit

of their youthful days in NOTL.

They were friends with two daughters of Shaw Festival co-founder Calvin Rand, who lived at historic Randwood next door – and they often babysat for guests

*Continued on Page 15*



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# Annual Candlelight Stroll lights up Queen Street

Continued from Front Page

Reid. "I've never experienced something like this before."

Thousands of people swarmed Queen Street in Niagara-on-the-Lake, totting red and green candle holders – some with a flame already flickering inside.

Farmworker advocate Jane Andres and Julia Buxton-Cox from the Farmworkers Hub have both been Reid's rocks throughout his recovery.

"If it wasn't (for) them, then I wouldn't be here tonight," said Reid.

He said he doesn't know how he would have managed if it wasn't for the two women.

"I should thank everybody for the support that they are showing me (and) giving me," said Reid.

It was welcoming to see so many people and how much support he's received, he said.

As the clock approached 6:30 p.m., the energy inside the Court House and on the streets grew and Buxton-Cox was thrilled for what was to come.

She hopes this helps raise awareness for migrant workers, since "they've been the invisible workforce in many towns across Canada," she said.

"The bottom line is, and this is what I'm going to say tonight, is the people who feed you need you," Buxton-Cox said before the Candlelight Stroll began.

Nothing could prepare Reid for the number of people he was about to see – all there for the stroll and to support him and the other recipients.

The shock was written all over his face as he moved to the front of the crowd.

A NOTL Chamber of Commerce spokesperson estimated there were more than 6,300 people in attendance.

Collectively, the stroll raised \$7,985 for the beneficiaries.

Reid will receive half of that amount, while NOTL Palliative Care and the Farmworkers Hub will each receive 25 per cent.



People were shoulder-to-shoulder on Queen Street for the annual Candlelight Stroll. Bottom left: NOTL politicians and friends pose with Candlelight Stroll honoree Ceto Reid. SOMER SLOBODIAN Bottom right: Harley Morgan lends Betty Morgan a light for her candle. JULIA SACCO

NOTL Palliative Care board chair Patricia Whitwell and executive director Bonnie Bagnulo both expressed their thanks for the support the agency gets from the community.

Outside on Queen Street, visitors and residents, children and adults, and the occasional dog were squished together like sardines in a can as the beneficiaries of the candle sales gave thanks from atop the Court House steps.

"Wow, what a crowd. Can we get a woohoo for all the farmworkers!" said

Buxton-Cox to the swarm of people.

One family huddled together under the awning of a nearby building had come from Dundas to bask in the Christmas spirit.

They were quietly sharing their candlelight while the sound from speakers atop the Court House steps was barely audible above the crowd chatter.

The father, Eric Rogers, sees Christmas as an opportunity for friends and community to get out and spend time together.

He turned to his daughter

Brooke to ask her what her favourite part of Christmas was.

With a mischievous smile, she said, "Spending time with my family."

Dad that what she really loves is opening gifts on Christmas morning.

Rogers' wife, Anouk Masters-Leniveau, said this was the third year they've come to the Candlelight Stroll.

It is becoming a tradition for the family and they usually stay a night at one of the town's hotels.

As the stroll began

through Old Town, Reid was smiling from ear to ear as he waved and shouted "Merry Christmas!" to the crowd from the carriage.

Along the route, people passed carollers, harpists and musicians.

The Lincoln and Welland Regimental Band, in full uniform, played classics like "Jingle Bell Rock" and "Frosty the Snowman."

A mother and her son stopped at the corner of Regent and Johnson to watch the band play.

"He loves music," Aurora Bachert said as her son

Lochlan stared wide-eyed at the military musicians.

First-timers Kristi Lu, Rima Roco with their five-year-old daughter, Kristi Roco, were excited by the experience.

Young Kristi was fascinated by the flickering flame in her candle holder.

It was undeniably a special night for not only the recipients, but the crowd as well. By the end of the stroll, Reid was smiling uncontrollably and was disappointed it was over.

"It's wonderful! I don't want to leave!" he said.

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# Farmworkers send **open letter** to Trudeau

‘We endure shouting, racist comments, insults,’ workers allege

*Continued from Front Page*

Mexico, outlining conditions they say they face working in the Canadian agriculture industry.

“For more than half a century, our well-being has not been thought of and we are still treated as disposable objects for employers,” the workers wrote in their open letter.

About 47 workers from 40 different farms across Canada collaborated on the Nov. 8 letter, but only 26 signed their names.

Of the 26 who signed, one was from a Niagara-on-the-Lake vineyard.

One of the demands from workers is permanent status for all, including for seasonal workers who come to Canada through the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program.

“Employers threaten to fire us, deport us and kick us out of the program. Without permanent status, employers have the power to get rid of us whenever they please as if they owned us,” the workers said in the letter.

Some workers have been coming to Canada for upward of 20 years, but only have temporary status. They say this can make it hard for them to defend their rights.

“There’s always the fear of being sent back or not coming back next season,” said Luisa Ortiz-Garza, an organizer with Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, who worked closely with the workers to produce the open letter.

The workers are also members of Migrant Workers Alliance for Change.

According to Leonel Nava, a Mexican worker who works at a Christmas tree farm in Nova Scotia, about 10 workers have been deported since September for speaking up about their concerns at his farm.

“The mistreatment or abuse of temporary foreign workers is unacceptable,” a spokesperson from the office of federal employment minister Carla Qualtrough said in an email to The Lake Report.

“The experiences detailed



Farmworkers from Mexico have written an open letter to the Canadian and Mexican governments outlining their concerns about mistreatment at farms. SUPPLIED

in this letter from Mexican migrant workers are disturbing and inhumane.”

Qualtrough’s ministry oversees Employment and Social Development Canada and the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program falls under its jurisdiction.

“Our government is working closely with all partners to improve this program and ensure that workers are protected at all times,” the ministry spokesperson said. This open letter comes not long after workers from Jamaica wrote and signed a separate letter to the Jamaican and Canadian governments in August, outlining what they described as “systemic slavery.”

“They got really inspired (by) that letter and also they wanted to show unity,” said Ortiz-Garza.

One of the demands made by workers is for the Canadian government to implement a national housing standard across the country.

One of the most common complaints Ortiz-Garza heard from employees was about their living conditions.

“We sleep in bunk beds with bed bugs, in houses full of rats, sharing the bathroom with more than 10 people. We have no privacy,” the workers wrote.

Nava worked in British Columbia from 2014 until 2021, but wasn’t invited back by his employer after

he raised some concerns about his living conditions.

“My house was destroyed by a fire, then he sent me to live in a basement without (a) washroom,” said Nava.

The employer put three other workers in a hotel after the fire but Nava and another worker had to live in a basement.

“I complain about that. He don’t apply for me anymore,” he added.

Nava now shares a house with about 20 people in Nova Scotia, with five to a room. They share everything, he said.

Living with so many people makes it difficult for Nava to have a private call with his wife and two children back home in Mexico. He doesn’t see them for half the year.

The letter described the inability to communicate privately with their families back home as “humiliating.”

Qualtrough’s spokesperson said this year she “convened two meetings with provincial and territorial governments, international governments, migrant worker organizations, and other partners to improve the regulations around accommodation” for temporary foreign workers.

Workers are also asking for open work permits, so they can easily switch farms, and for a system where workers can report abusive employers anonymously.

“The abuse at work that we experience is inhumane. We have to endure shouting, racist comments (and) insults,” the workers said in their open letter.

Employment and Social Development Canada operates a confidential telephone tip line in more than 200 different languages so that workers can report employers for wrongdoings.

But sometimes workers aren’t told about the tip line, said Kit Andres from Migrant Workers Alliance for Change.

Other demands outlined in the letter included better job security, access to the benefits they pay for, better protection from Mexican consulates, the ability to represent themselves during contract negotiations and being better informed about the contracts they sign.

Workers want to be able to decide their own futures and if a new opportunity shows up, be able to take it, said Nava.

Canadian citizens can choose where they want to work, said Nava.

“We can’t,” he said.

Along with the open letter, the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change released a video that details some of the conditions outlined in the letter.

The annual review of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program between Canada and Mexico will be held in the coming weeks.

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Left: Canadians march through a French town during the First World War. LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA  
Right: The 21st Battalion cenotaph in Kingston. ROBERT RUSAW



## Christmas Parade returns to NOTL after two years of drive-bys

Evan Loree  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Let's hear those sleigh bells jingling, NOTL!

The annual Niagara-on-the-Lake Christmas Parade starts this Saturday at 11 a.m. at the corner of King and Centre Street.

The big man in the red suit will be shaking his brand new float this year.

Santa is making a dramatic return to his favourite town on the lake after spending the last two years doing

drive-by visits to NOTL. People who wish to catch a glimpse of the famous cookie thief should head to Old Town early as parking is limited, though the town is waiving parking fees for December.

Santa will be following his usual route from its starting point at King and Centre, down Castlereagh, Wellington, Byron, Prideaux, Simcoe and Queen streets, before finishing back on King Street.

People can support the parade by buying a button on the parade route for \$3.

# THE MONUMENTS MEN

## Ernest Houghton died for freedom and honour

*This year marks the 100th anniversary of Niagara-on-the-Lake's iconic clock tower cenotaph. Two years later, in 1926, the Township of Niagara unveiled its own memorial in Queenston. In recognition of those who fought and died in two world wars and beyond, NOTL historian Ron Dale has been researching the stories of the people – all men – whose names are engraved on the two cenotaphs. This is one in a series of stories documenting and remembering the sacrifices of those commemorated on the municipal memorial in Queenston.*

Ron Dale  
Special to The Lake Report

In October 1920, Sarah Ann Houghton of St. Davids received a painful reminder of the First World War.

The government of Canada had sent her a silver Memorial Cross medal, given to the wives and mothers of men who died in service during the war.

Undoubtedly this would have renewed the tears that flowed for her lost son three years earlier. Just before Christmas, two months after receiving the medal, William and Sarah Houghton received another memento of their son's sacrifice, a beautiful scroll suitable for framing.

A year later, again just in time for Christmas,

they were sent a memorial plaque.

It was a 120-millimetre bronze disc with their son's name engraved on it along with the sentiment that he had "died for freedom and honour."

The plaque was known among veterans as a "dead man's penny."

William and Sarah Ann had emigrated from Manchester, England, in June 1912 and settled in St. Davids. William worked as a wallpaper printer. With them were their sons Joseph, Ernest and Norman, and daughter Marie.

Their son Ernest became a military man shortly after the Houghtons settled in St. Davids, enlisting as a part-time militiaman in the 44th Lincoln and Welland Regiment.

He was 17 when the family immigrated and was able to work with his father as a wallpaper printer.

When the First World War broke out on Aug. 4, 1914, militia regiments like the Lincoln and Welland increased the intensity of training while putting increasing pressure on their members to enlist in the Canadian Expeditionary Force for overseas service.

Ernest enlisted in the 76th Overseas Battalion on July 27, 1915, and immediately underwent much more involved training with that battalion before

being shipped to England on April 23, 1916.

On June 28 he was transferred to the 21st Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, which already was fighting in France. After crossing the channel to France, he found himself on the front lines with that battalion.

Houghton was assigned duties as a scout in the 21st Battalion, primarily active in crawling out into "no man's land," the shell-cratered battlefield between the Canadian and German trenches, to reconnoiter enemy defensive works and gather intelligence on the numbers of Germans manning their positions.

On Oct. 1, 1916, Houghton was wounded while scouting enemy positions. It took a little over two months to recover and he was back on duty with the battalion on Dec. 8, 1916.

He was sent away on course a few days later to train as a machine-gunner.

Houghton showed leadership qualities and on April 16, 1917, was promoted to lance corporal. His luck was soon to run out.

The 21st Battalion fought at the Battle of Vimy Ridge, April 9 to 12, 1917, and suffered heavily with 64 men killed and 130 men severely wounded. But Houghton and his machine-gun crew survived.

The next big attack on German lines was the Battle

of Fresnoy, May 3 to 9, 1917, but the 21st Battalion did not take part. Its members was employed in a support position as work crews behind the lines but still subjected to German artillery fire from time to time.

On May 11, Houghton's battalion moved back into the front lines for the next two days.

While the Germans occasionally shelled their positions with high explosive and shrapnel shells, this stint on the front lines was described in the battalion war diary as being "a fairly quiet tour."

Not for Lance Corp. Houghton. As the 21st Battalion was being relieved by the 22nd Battalion and members were in the process of being sent to a rest camp far from the front lines, the Germans fired trench mortars at the Canadian front-line positions.

A mortar bomb exploded near Houghton, severely wounding him in his right shoulder and head. He was rushed to a first-aid post and then to the 2nd Australian General Hospital, the closest hospital to the Canadian position.

He lingered there for the next 55 days, finally dying from his wounds on July 7.

Lance Corp. Ernest Houghton lies buried in the Wimereux Military Cemetery near Boulogne, France, and is commemorated on the cenotaph at Queenston.

## Newark Neighbours prepares to fill dozens of hampers for Christmas

Somer Slobodian  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Christmas is around the corner and Newark Neighbours is getting its Christmas hampers ready.

Much like Thanksgiving, Newark Neighbours will be providing between 55 and 60 families with a hamper full of food – enough to enjoy a nice Christmas meal.

Each hamper will have a turkey or ham, a bag of potatoes, onions, carrots, canned non-perishables and a freshly baked pie.

Hampers will also be full of Christmas goodies – like cookies and candy.

The shelves were quite bare before Thanksgiving, but now they are "full to the rafters," said Newark Neighbours board chair Cindy Grant.

"It's a good problem to have," she said.

The more donations the agency gets, the more families it can help.

Along with a nice meal, Newark will be sending families home with Christmas gifts.

"We also give gifts to all of our families, and particularly to the children. So we've asked for their wish lists. And we do our best to

provide what's on the list," said Grant.

Gifts are needed for infants right up to teenagers, she said.

Kids have asked for items like toys, Barbies, games and electronics. One even asked for a telescope.

"Somebody from the community donated a full carton of adorable little stuffed animals," said Grant.

She wants to try to do gifts for the parents as well, like sweaters, socks and other necessities.

An organization called Toolbox Project Niagara also donates men's toiletry kits to Newark every year, said Grant.

A women's group that meets every Tuesday at Cornerstone Community Church also recently donated about 20 hand-quilted blankets, which will be handed out to families.

The hampers will be distributed on Dec. 21 and people can contribute donations up until Dec. 19.

Newark Neighbours will be closed on Dec. 16 for a staff and volunteers celebration but will reopen on Dec. 19. The agency will be closed over the holidays starting Dec. 20 and resume operations on Jan. 3.



## Christmas ornaments in support of Newark Neighbours!

Christmas is just around the bend, and The Lake Report wants to pay it forward this year by helping families in need.

You can help us by purchasing an ornament with your name on it for \$25, to be published in our Dec. 15 issue.

50% of the proceeds will be donated to Newark Neighbours. Email [advertising@niagaranow.com](mailto:advertising@niagaranow.com) to book a space.





Matthew Wilson died after he was hit by a truck driven by Robert Enns. Wilson was walking home on Lakeshore Road late at night on April 4, 2021. His body wasn't discovered until the following morning. SUPPLIED

# Driver **fined** in death of pedestrian

*Continued from Front Page*

Wilson, also from Niagara-on-the-Lake, died after he was struck by Enns' pickup truck on Lakeshore Road east of Stewart Road just after 10:30 p.m. on Sunday, April 4, 2021.

After a lengthy investigation by Niagara Regional Police, Enns did not face any criminal charges in Wilson's death, only the relatively minor charge of failing to report an accident.

He called police the morning after the incident, when he realized the damage to his truck was extensive and when he heard police had closed Lakeshore to investigate a fatality, Enns told the court at his trial in October.

Enns testified he thought he had hit a deer in the late-night collision, though he also admitted he thought it could have been a person.

He was not in court for Friday's ruling and was represented by his lawyer, Vijai Singh.

Shelley rejected Enns' contention that he had done enough to determine if he had hit a person or to assess the amount of damage caused to his truck.

At the time of the fatal crash, any accident involving damage of \$2,000 or more had to be reported

"forthwith" to police. Whether Enns had done so "forthwith" was a point of contention during his trial.

Enns testified he thought there was about \$1,500 in damage, though the repairs ended up costing more than \$10,000.

The law has now been changed to require an accident in which there is at least \$2,000 in damage or personal injury be reported to police "immediately."

The maximum fine for failing to report is \$1,000 and Crown prosecutor Henry Limheng sought a penalty of \$400 to \$600, plus 12 months of probation.

"Mr. Enns failed in his duty" to report the crash "forthwith," as the law at the time required, Limheng said.

While Enns' driving record shows convictions for some minor offences such as speeding, the prosecutor told the court Enns needs "a reminder that there are rules."

"Driving is a privilege and a privilege comes with obligations," he said.

"His lack of compliance led to tragic results," Limheng said in arguing for the probation order. "Minutes and seconds can matter."

Defence lawyer Singh said he had no issue with the suggested financial penalty

but argued that probation is "not meant to be a reminder, not meant to be a punishment."

He described Enns as a "hardworking" farmer and suggested probation is designed to rehabilitate an offender. "And that's not required here," he said.

After a recess to consider the sentence, Shelley included the probation order, stating, "I think there is a deterrent factor in probation."

At his trial in October, Enns testified that because he thought he'd hit a deer, he didn't report the incident until the next morning, about 10 hours later.

He called police just after 8 a.m. the next day, after seeing the damage was more serious than it looked at night, reading a post on Niagara 411's Twitter feed about a police investigation into a fatality on Lakeshore Road and receiving a phone call from his daughter asking about the road closure on Lakeshore, Enns testified.

Singh argued at trial that Enns' behaviour showed he reported the accident "forthwith."

But Limheng contended Enns' testimony was "filled with inconsistencies and self-interest" and that he was being "wilfully blind to

the extent of the damage" to his truck.

He also questioned Enns' credibility in coming up with a damage estimate that "was just under" the \$2,000 total, which would have required him to report the incident right away.

While Enns testified he thought he had hit a deer, he admitted to Limheng he also feared he might have struck a person.

"To be honest, maybe I suspected" it was a person he had hit, Enns said, but emphasized that in the dark he saw "a tannish, brown form" he thought was a deer.


The collision occurred as Wilson was walking east toward NOTL along the unlit south shoulder of Lakeshore.

Minutes after the crash, Enns returned to the scene, looking for a sign of what he had hit.

He was driving a black Ford F-150 pickup and was headed to his home nearby on Irvine Road, about 1.5 kilometres from where he struck Wilson.

Enns had been out for dinner earlier that evening and said he was returning from his girlfriend's home in St. Catharines.

He said he had one glass of wine a few hours before the crash.



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**Managing Editor:** Kevin MacLean

**Design & Layout:** Richard Harley

**Advertising:** Megan Vanderlee

**Contributors:** Evan Saunders, Jill Troyer, Somer Slobodian, Evan Loree, Tim Taylor, Joanne Young, Denise Ascenzo, Brittany Carter, Linda Fritz, Elizabeth Masson, Dr. William Brown, Brian Marshall, Molly Bowron, NOTL Museum, Kyra Simone, Gail Kendall, Patty Garriock, Bill Auchterlonie, Steve Hardaker, Ross Robinson, Penny-Lynn Cookson, Dave Van de Laar, Janice White and many more members of the NOTL community



The Local Journalism Initiative is funded by the Government of Canada.

## COVID Tracker

**NOTL active cases (last 28 days): 43**

**Region active cases: 542**

**Region deaths: 661**

**Region total cases: 48,948**

*\*Dec. 7 data per Niagara Region Public Health.*

*Public health warns that "Due to the surge in COVID-19 cases, limited availability of testing, and changes to case and contact management practices, case counts shown (above) are an underestimate of the true number of individuals in Niagara with COVID-19. Data should be interpreted with caution." Case data for municipalities is also now being interpreted in 28-day cycles.*



**Contributed by Patty Garriock**

"Optimism is a happiness magnet. If you stay positive, good things and good people will be drawn to you." - Mary Lou Retton

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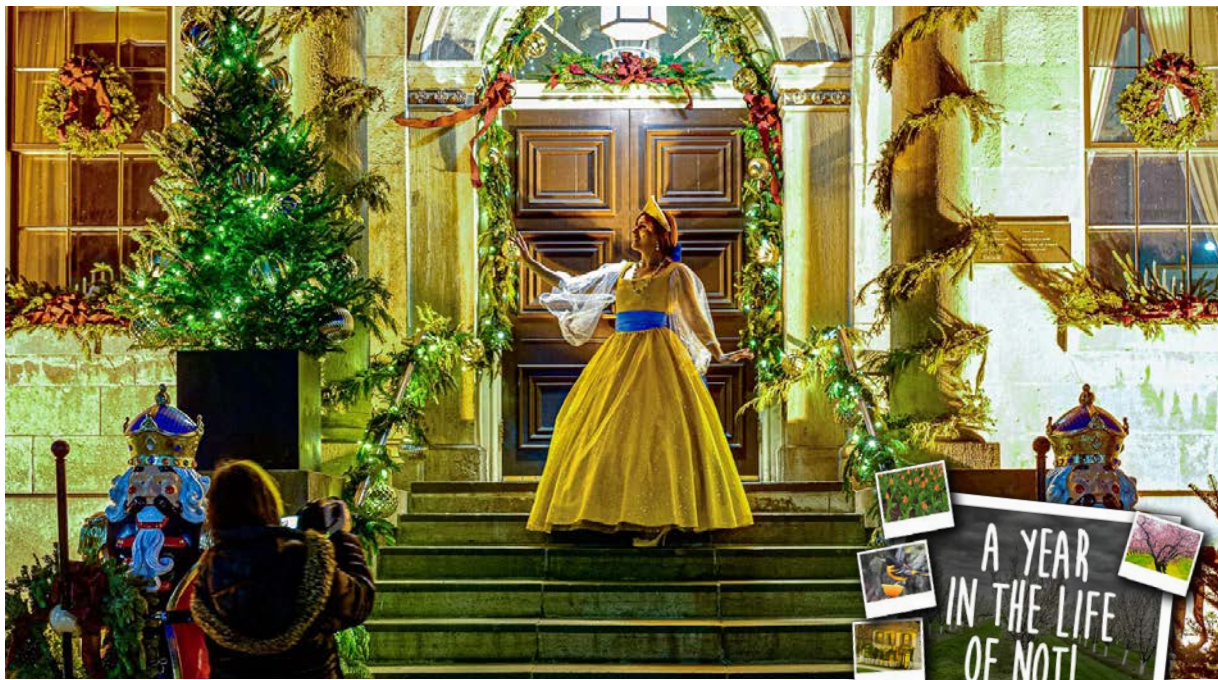
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## Anastasia on the steps



Lake Report photographer Dave Van de Laar snapped this shot of a fellow photographer named Beth taking a picture of Molly Flora as Anastasia on the steps of the Court House.

## Editorial

# Do the right thing for seasonal workers

Kevin MacLean  
Managing Editor

It is never easy for an employee to speak up when they feel their boss is not treating them fairly.

In most cases, there's a huge power imbalance. Even if there's a confidential phone line, a union or other mechanism for workers to rely on, lodging complaints about the boss can be a tricky business.

When you are a foreign national – a seasonal farmworker – toiling in the fields, doing the type of work that Canadians shun, you have little or no protection if you encounter a bad boss or a workplace situation that is intolerable or unfair.

Do not misread our sentiments: We love and respect farmers, and the essential work they do.

Farmers feed cities, farmers literally put food on our tables, farmers are integral to our economy, especially in places like Niagara-on-the-Lake.

But are there bad farm bosses? Just like in every business or industry, no doubt there are. We have long heard rumblings about

some farmers who routinely mistreat their workers – and, of course, that is not right or just. Finding evidence of it is difficult.

But those who violate the rules or trample the rights of employees need to be identified and dealt with.

However, as migrant worker advocates will tell you, it's not wholly about the farmers. Rather it is about the system that we – Canadians – and our elected governments allow to flourish: seasonal workers returning to the fields of NOTL and other agricultural areas year after year after year, hired (or not) at the discretion of farm bosses and having no concrete alternatives.

Because they don't have permanent status here in Canada, they don't have the same rights as the rest of us. Even if they've been doing the job here for decades.

That is something we – the people – need to call on our government to fix. The federal and provincial bureaucracies grind slowly and take an eternity to change.

And the only way change will come is with serious

pressure from communities like ours to stop turning a blind eye to the second-class treatment we visit upon those seasonal workers who are crucial to the success of our agricultural sector.

It is shameful that Canadians allow these workers – overwhelmingly men and overwhelmingly visible minorities, from Jamaica and Mexico mainly – to be effectively indentured so that we can enjoy NOTL wines and peaches and other fruits.

But that is "the system."

On our front page this week, injured farmworker Ceto Reid is rightly celebrated as one of the recipients of the money raised by the annual Candlelight Stroll. That is an excellent and happy outcome.

On the same page also is a story about complaints by seasonal farmworkers from Mexico, including at least one from NOTL, accusing their Canadian employers of mistreatment, modern-day slavery and poor working conditions.

Ceto Reid is from Jamaica and works at P.G. Enns Farms in NOTL. He has not complained about the conditions he faced, but

his situation tells us all we need to know.

In October, riding his bike in St. Catharines, his clean laundry in a large bag, he was headed to his bunkhouse, preparing to return home to Jamaica, when he was struck by a car and badly injured.

He's recovering and receiving lots of help from the community, and for that he is forever thankful.

But the fact he had to ride his bike some eight kilometres, each way, to find adequate laundry facilities in a very simple way illustrates how the plight of seasonal workers face is an afterthought.

Bed bugs, bad bosses and crowded bunkhouses aside, we can't even make it mandatory that people who work in the dirt must have proper laundry facilities.

Yes, congratulations to our generous community for helping Ceto Reid and the Farmworkers Hub with donations raised by the Candlelight Stroll. But shame on us if we continue to support a system that lets such major and minor inequities persist.

That system has to change.  
editor@niagaranow.com

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## A beautiful town but I wonder about some attitudes

Dear editor:

Niagara-on-the-Lake is indeed a beautiful town and my husband and I have enjoyed living here for the past five years.

However, reading some of the responses to Benny Marotta from both Keith Williams ("Let residents have final say on development plans") and Sue and Kip Voegel ("Marotta's anger is misdirected") in The Lake Report dated Nov. 24, makes me wonder.

On several occasions I have heard references to



"not wanting people from Brampton here in NOTL." And Mr. Williams' com-

ment that "... SORE and our hard-working former lord mayor's whole intention was to keep this town from looking like Brampton or Bramalea ..." makes me ask what exactly that statement means.

Is this strictly a comment about suburban-style housing developments? Or is this a reference to the people from Brampton?

In spite of the physical beauty of this town, there seems to be much toxicity dwelling here.

I am beginning to wonder

who really is welcomed to live in NOTL? I have also wondered about the members of "Save Our Rand Estate."

"Our" estate? Are they part-owners of the Rand Estate with Mr. Marotta?

Are they members of the Haudenosaunee, who can confidently use the term "our" when referring to land in this country?

Hoping things will change for the better with the new council.

**Doreen Bell  
NOTL**

## Hoping Village grocery store offers 'specialty' goods

Dear editor:

I would like to offer some advice to John Hawley about his plans for a grocery store in the final phase of the Village development, ("Village plaza set to expand with grocery store, hotel, more retail," The Lake Report, Nov. 24).

While I am thrilled that you are planning a grocery store in your development, I am a little worried about two things.

First, the small size of the store at 14,000 square feet means that it could become a small format convenience store.

Grocery stores are typically at least 38,000 square feet and usually much larger but small formats range from 12,000 to 25,000 square feet.

Small-format grocery stores typically carry a limited range of everyday products and that is exactly what we already have in the Old Town.

So, because we can't get some products, we need we have to drive at least to Virgil for basic needs but usually to St. Catharines or



Preliminary work has begun on the expansion of the Village commercial development. Letter writer Jackie Bonic wants to see a specialty grocery store included. SUPPLIED

Niagara Falls for anything beyond that.

What we actually need is a "specialty" grocery store that carries the products that the other stores don't.

If you are able to entice a new, big grocery chain to enter the market it likely will just test the market with a convenience-type

store and a limited range of products and we'll still be driving to St. Catharines.

I think you've done a spectacular job on your development so far. You have even made those apartment buildings look not too bad.

My second concern is if you are building a store before you have a tenant. You

should never do that.

Most developers have no idea what a retailer needs to make a store work efficiently. You would severely limit your options.

Deliver to us the right type of grocery store and we will be happy!

**Jackie Bonic  
NOTL**

## Assault weapons are deadly and should be banned

*This is a letter to Niagara Falls MP Tony Baldinelli. A copy was submitted to The Lake Report for publication.*

Dear editor:

As a surgeon, I am well aware of the significant injury caused by gunshot wounds. Some people die.

This is a major public

health issue in Canada.

Numerous studies have proven that lives can be saved when assault weapons are removed from society.

That is why I applaud the federal government's recent amendments to the proposed gun control legislation (bill C-21) that will

permanently ban assault weapons in Canada.

Guns capable of killing and injuring many people very quickly have no place in our community.

I urge Parliament to pass this bill.

**Dr. Ted Rumble  
NOTL**



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### The Festival of Carols

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Sunday, Dec. 18, 11 a.m.  
Worship, Highlighting the Children  
Sunday, Dec. 24, 7 p.m.  
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The ink is also vegetable-based.



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## Christmas ornaments in support of Newark Neighbours!

Christmas is just around the bend, and The Lake Report wants to pay it forward this year by helping families in need.

You can help us by purchasing an ornament with your name on it for \$25, to be published in our Dec. 15 issue.

50% of the proceeds will be donated to Newark Neighbours. Email advertising@niagaranow.com to book a space.





Left: An 1823 Breakenridge Regency. Middle: An 1819 Breakenridge NeoClassical. Right: An 1816 Breakenridge Georgian Cottage. BRIAN MARSHALL

# There is **no historical evidence** that Breakenridge owned slaves



**ARCHITEXT**

Brian Marshall  
Columnist

A teacher selected a group of 10 students and instructed them one after another to whisper the sentence she gave the first child into the ear of the next and so on until it reached the last student in line.

Then, when that last student was asked to voice the sentence, what he said bore no relation to what the teacher had originally whispered.

In repeating, each child had inadvertently altered what they thought they had heard.

This is often how actual history mutates by verbal repetition over the passage of time. Truth is lost, urban myth is born and gradually mistaken for fact.

For instance, the urban myth that John Breakenridge, the individual who was responsible for the construction of three of NOTL's finest surviving early 19th-century houses, was an immigrant from Virginia.

This story is completely false but it was dutifully repeated in Margaret Dunn's book, "Historic Niagara on the Lake," where she refers to Breakenridge as a "Virginia lawyer" and in Tom Cruickshank's book, "Old Ontario Houses – Traditions in Local Architecture," in which he writes in reference to Breakenridge: "His roots were in Virginia ..."

In fact, John Breakenridge was born in Leeds County, Upper Canada, in 1798. He was the sixth child born to David and Hester Breakenridge.

A Vermont Loyalist, David, having served in the King's Royal Rangers, posted in Lower Canada during and after the American Revolution subsequently moving to Upper Canada circa 1783.

He was an ordained Methodist minister and served as a justice of the peace in both Lower and Upper Canada.

In 1812, John Breakenridge is listed in the Common Roll of the Law Society of Upper Canada as a "student at law" and there is evidence he read law in the York offices of William Baldwin.

While studying law, John met and in 1816 married William's youngest sister, Mary. The young couple purchased the lot at 363 Simcoe St. in Niagara-on-the-Lake and built their first home, a year prior to John being called to the bar.

As his fortunes improved, John purchased the one-acre lot at the corner of William and Mississauga and built this larger home for his growing family in 1819.

As both his success and family size continued to grow, he purchased the vacant one-acre lot fronting on Centre Street and, in 1823, built a larger, more socially impressive residence into which he, Mary and their children moved in February 1824.

In 1828, at 39 years old, John died, leaving Mary a widow with five children and a substantial debt that took her many years to clear.

Now, let us visit another extremely important event in the history of Upper Canada.

In 1793, the sale and forced transportation of Chloe Cooley by her owner, Adam Vrooman (a Loyalist immigrant residing in Queenston), provided Upper Canada's Lt.- Gov. John Graves Simcoe and Attorney General John White, both avowed abolitionists, the opportunity to move through the assembly legislation the "Act to Limit Slavery in Upper Canada."

Given royal assent in Newark (Niagara-on-the-Lake) on July 9, 1793, this was the first legislation to limit slavery in any British colony.

While it did not abolish the institution for those enslaved prior to its enactment, among other things the legislation prohibited the importation of enslaved persons and freed the children of slaves upon majority.

This act directly reflected the strong and growing social attitude against the institution of slavery across Upper Canada.

At the time of the law's passage, there were be-

tween 500 and 700 persons enslaved in Upper Canada (the vast majority being owned by Revolutionary War Loyalists) and this count dropped continually thereafter as it became ever increasingly socially unacceptable to own another human being.

The last recorded sale of a slave in Upper Canada occurred in 1824. Ten years later, the British parliament passed the Slavery Abolition Act, which outlawed the institution of slavery in all British holdings and colonies.

Being of a somewhat cynical nature, I might suggest this trend was significantly supported by the importation of indentured servants from Britain. An indentured servant required no personal investment, whereas the price of a slave exceeded the cost of a handsome house and land in Upper Canada.

Which brings us back to another urban myth that there are slaves buried on the 240 Centre St. property.

John Breakenridge was less than four years old when the Act to Limit Slavery in Upper Canada

was given royal assent. He was raised in a time when slavery was socially unacceptable and bluntly, uneconomic.

There exists no historical records that he ever purchased a slave. The one-acre property he purchased at Mississauga and Centre streets was vacant and no survey from the period shows any building having been previously constructed on the plot (eliminating the possibility of a previous slave-owning householder).

Another urban myth which, with proper research, can easily be demonstrated as blatantly incorrect.

And, to avoid another urban myth being spawned, the 240 Centre St. "barn" was built mid-20th century by the Bernard family who owned the property at that time.

\* Grateful acknowledgement to D. Phibbs U.E., B.A. (Hons), J.D. for his legal/historical research on John Breakenridge.

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

## Good sound is important, but **not too loud, please**

Dear editor:

Kudos to columnist Ross Robinson for his Ramble on sound quality, (Ross's Ramblings, "For important occasions, let's avoid the sounds of silence," The Lake Report, Dec. 1).

Good sound reproduction is critical to both oratory and music, yet so often overlooked.

Many adults have some form of hearing impairment and some of us are used to filling in the blanks when we hear amplified mumbling or we join the "What did he say?" crowd.

My complaint leans the other way – to excessive volume.

I have left many ven-

ues due to the ear-damaging volume. I have also noticed others voting their displeasure with their feet.

Wedding receptions are a classic example.

This is where long-out-of-touch relatives get to finally reconnect. It's so wonderful to see them outside the hall talking, although a few of

them may stay inside and shout to each other over the chicken dance.

I learned long ago to travel fully equipped with ear plugs, hearing aids and walking shoes.

Thank you Ross for your perceptions.

*Joost Vandelinde  
St. Davids*





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# Family and friends pack native centre for Christmas party

Evan Loree  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

There were smiles aplenty at the Niagara Regional Native Centre on Saturday as a team of dedicated volunteers fed breakfast to almost 400 people, including 172 children.

“It’s absolutely incredible. So we posted the media on the Monday and the registration would open Wednesday,” said Willow Shawanoo, the native centre’s program co-ordinator.

“By the time I came in at 8:30 in the morning (Wednesday), our second timeframe, 1 to 3, was already full.”

In the kitchen, Chayan Dehghan and Wanda Griffin were frying eggs and pancakes, and baking breakfast sausages.

Dehghan also fried up a batch of sausages because he was worried the ones in the oven wouldn’t be ready in time to serve the next family.

Griffin was flipping pancakes on the flat top while a big bowl of batter sat next to her, pancake mixture run-



Left: Lucca (middle) and Brenton are excited to meet the Gingerbread Man during the Niagara Regional Native Centre’s Christmas event on Saturday. Right: Chayan Dehghan and Wanda Griffin share a laugh while cooking up a breakfast of pancakes and sausages in the kitchen. EVAN LOREE



ning down the sides.

Together they estimate they went through 720 eggs and 750 sausages to feed the morning crowd.

Melanie Newman and Claudette Cort were both there with their sons Jackson and Eli.

Cort was eating with family members, Wilf and Karin Wiens.

Both mothers are involved with the centre’s Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound program.

“It’s really just helped me have support when being a single mom and returning to school,” Newman said.

It’s a four-year program designed to support mothers with unstable housing as they go back to school or launch careers.

Newman’s son was drawing snowmen on the table and excitedly talking about his love of Buzz Lightyear.

While Karin Wiens took Eli to meet the Gingerbread Man, Cort shared some of

her favourite memories of Christmas.

She remembers how she and her family used to pick out a tree together and how her mom would bake Christmas cookies this time of year.

“I’m Christian. And my family brought me up with that,” she said.

Cort said the message of Jesus Christ is an important part of how they celebrate Christmas.

Larissa Engels was vol-

unteering at the party with a couple of other members of the Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound program.

She was dressed head to toe in red and green, looking very much like one of Santa’s little helpers.

Engels said Christmas is for “connecting with family and connecting with community like this. And just being in the spirit of giving.”

“When you receive, you should also give,” she

added. She described “the idea of reciprocity” as being “deeply embedded” in Indigenous communities.

A small group of volunteers went shopping on Black Friday to get a toy for every child who signed up for the Christmas party.

Shawanoo said the children’s gifts would have cost about \$6,200 at regular price, but thanks to Black Friday sales, they only spent about \$2,900.



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# ‘Selfless’ St. Davids girl brings **toys and joy** to sick children

Somer Slobodian  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Nine-year-old Inalis Medina is bringing joy to lots of children this Christmas.

“She’s a very selfless child,” says her mother Annalisa Medina.

This year Inalis and her mother, who live in St. Davids, made and sold 609 jars of homemade hot chocolate.

With her persistence and dedication to bring toys to children in hospital, Inalis raised \$4,245.

The toys – six large grocery carts overflowing with items – will go to patients at McMaster Children’s Hospital, SickKids Toronto, Ronald McDonald House and Pathstone Mental Health.

Inalis couldn’t contain her excitement about being able to buy so many toys for other children.

“It felt like ... oh, my gosh, we got like a lot,” she said excitedly.

She said she had one message for the community and that was to thank everyone for their support.

“This is her passion project,” said her mom.

In 2017, Inalis spent Christmas in St. Catharines General Hospital.

She was sick with a bad case of influenza, which turned into pneumonia. It eventually caused one of her lungs to collapse.

One thing Inalis remembers about that Christmas is waking up to toys from the nurses.

The following Christmas, Inalis woke up and saw her mother crying. Her mom explained they were happy tears because she was glad they were able to spend Christmas at home.

Inalis remembered how the nurses had brought her toys and she asked her mom if they could bring toys to the children, too.

“So, before we even had breakfast that morning, we drove to St. Catharines General and she donated two bags of toys,” said her mother.

Inalis gave away toys she had received for her birthday in October. She wanted kids in the hospital to enjoy them.

The tradition continued into 2019. After many talks and planning, Inalis saved her chore money for the year – about \$5 a week – and raised \$200.

“She bought \$200 worth of toys and donated that again to St. Catharines hospital,” said her mother.



Main photo: Brendan Burns, left, general manager of the Canadian Tire on Morrison Street in Niagara Falls, stands with Inalis Medina and store owner Paul Medeiros and shopping carts full of toys. Clockwise from right: The toys and treats Inalis collected for distribution to sick children. Inalis hands out her jars of homemade hot chocolate at the Shaw Festival after “A Christmas Carol.” Inalis and her mother Annalisa made creative snowman hot chocolate jars as part of the fundraiser. And Inalis, decked out in red, with one of her jars of hot chocolate. SUPPLIED/SOMER SLOBODIAN

Every year, Inalis and her mother discussed how they could do more – how they could get more toys for more children to open on Christmas.

When she was sick she was at the St. Catharines hospital, however every time she got sick afterward her parents would take her to McMaster.

As she got older, she questioned why they’d go to McMaster and not St. Catharines.

Her parents explained McMaster specializes in caring for children and many patients there have critical illnesses.

“So she started understanding (and) she’s like, ‘Well, Mom, they need the

toys more. Why don’t we start donating to them?’ ” said Annalisa.

In 2020, she saved up her money once again. Only this time, she reached out to some family members for help.

She knew there would be more children at McMaster and she wanted to bring as many toys as she could.

It was all hands on deck.

“This time she asked Grammy, Grampy, all of her aunts and uncles if they would help provide toys and everybody gave her money. And she raised \$500,” her mother told The Lake Report.

Each year her fundraising efforts have grown.

In 2021, through saving

her money and having a garage sale, she raised \$1,200.

Now, in 2022, she knew she had to think big. She saved up her allowance again and decided she wanted to make jars of hot chocolate and sell them.

The jars were filled with hot chocolate powder, chocolate chips and marshmallows.

She sold small jars for \$5. She also decorated some jars to look like Santa and had a small quantity of larger jars, which she decorated as snowmen and sold both for \$10 each.

Her parents, Annalisa and Inocencio Medina, matched what she raised in her allowance so she could buy the materials and put 100

per cent of the proceeds from the jars toward buying toys for children.

Their goal was \$1,500 but they almost tripled that total. And while she sold a lot of hot chocolate mix, Inalis also received about \$900 in donations alone.

With \$4,245 raised, she went to Canadian Tire on Morrison Street in Niagara Falls to buy the toys – and the store stepped up “in a big way,” said Annalisa.

The store manager spent one-on-one time with Inalis to make sure she got as many toys as she could with the money she had.

By the end they had six carts full of toys – five carts that she purchased with the money she raised and

a sixth cart that Canadian Tire donated.

Of the 609 jars she made, Meridian Credit Union bought 250 to hand out at the Royal George Theatre after a performance of “A Christmas Carol” on Dec. 1.

The crowd was thrilled to get the surprise gift and Inalis was just as thrilled to be giving them away.

Inalis is involved with every step of the fundraising effort and it’s amazing watching her throughout the process, her mother said.

“I want people to really understand the effort and the heart she puts into this,” she said.



# Thank you!

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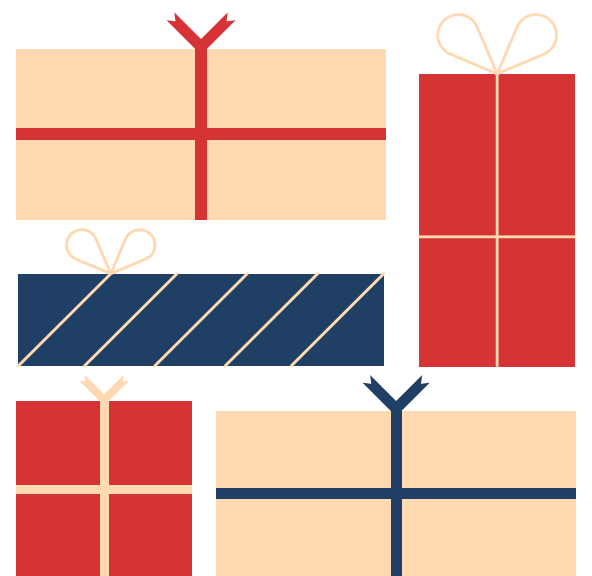
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# NOTLers open their homes for annual **Holiday House Tour**

Julia Sacco  
The Lake Report

Have you ever driven past a beautiful home and just wished you could see how it looked inside?

Last weekend, on Dec. 2 and 3, the Rotary Club's Holiday House Tour allowed ticket holders to do just that.

This year marked the 23rd anniversary of the event and featured six properties including 15526 Niagara Parkway, 265 Ricardo St., 28 Cottage St., 83 Shaw's Lane, 95 Wall Rd. and 1354 York Rd.

Other participating sites around town were stops in the tour, including the NOTL Museum, McFarland House, Pumphouse Arts Centre and RiverBrink Art Museum, which were all decorated for the holidays.

Each of the properties featured on the tour had something that stood out about it and drew visitors in.

"It has to be interesting and have a story. There has to be something about it that's unique and unusual or particularly beautiful," said Rotary member Katie Aeby.

One property that particularly stood out to visitors was the one on York Road.

Ticket holders lined up across the driveway and sidewalk to catch a glimpse of interior designer Karl Pacey and Richard Mell's showstopping holiday home.

Mary Allworth, Jane Tuzi, Mary Warren and Lucie Sautner came from Oakville and Burlington to take the house tour and when asked their favourite stop, declared York Road took the cake "by far."

"This one was the most highly decorated and it



was really awesome," said Sautner.

"It was about celebrating the spirit of Christmas."

The magical decorations didn't just happen on their own, of course. Pacey began the process in October.

"It was a lot of work. Each garland takes between 10 and 15 hours."

"I wanted people to come in when they were cold and to leave warm and with a smile. And they did," said Pacey.

Mell said the most rewarding part of the experience was hearing from guests who attend the Holiday House Tour every year, that theirs is the only home that they returned to more than once.

"That was my favourite comment."

The McFarland House was another unique stop on the tour, not only for being the

oldest home but featuring the special holiday theme of "Settlers in Canada."

Jim Hill, senior manager of heritage, declared the house's return to the tour after three years away a great success, noting "almost 450 people came through" on Saturday alone.

At least 20 people from the Niagara Garden Club were at McFarland House each day doing up different rooms with decor from Ukraine, Scotland, Indigenous Canada and more.

Those who wanted an even more special experience with their Holiday House Tour could book tickets to the McArthur family's "A Merry and Bright Christmas Tour" which granted guests a tour of the John Street estate and its property, including the beloved reindeer stables.

"The kids all come out

beaming at the end," said Jamie Knight, chair of the Rotary Club's community services committee.

"The McArthurs have been very generous over the years in including their home on the tour."

The Holiday House Tour is a popular attraction in Niagara-on-the-Lake every year, so much so that Rotarian and committee chair Pam Boot said they had to reduce the number of tickets being sold.

"We want everybody to be happy so we capped it at 3,000."

Aeby added that the tickets sold out incredibly fast, showing "that people are very interested in it."

With the help of almost 300 volunteers, the Rotary Club was able to hold a successful event that Boot said for many is "their launch to the Christmas season."



Top left: The McArthur family's John Street manor was lit up for the "Merry and Bright Christmas" tour. Right, from top down: Karl Pacey was largely inspired by Willy Wonka when decorating his York Road property for the Holiday House Tour. Many little details made up the home's fantastic decor. The home's "gingerbread estate" was a huge hit with Holiday House Tour visitors. JULIA SACCO

  
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Sisters Irene Howarth and Barbara Baptiste greet Santa at the McArthur Estate last Friday evening. SUPPLIED

## McArthur house tour reminds sisters of youth

*Continued from Front Page*

of the Logans, who lived in what is now known as the McArthur Estate.

Excited and thrilled to be inside the Logans' former home for the first time since they were teenagers, Howarth said they loved the opportunity to "reminisce and laugh and retell stories of the very unique experiences of the time we spent babysitting in that home many, many years ago."

"For me, touring the estate was not so much about the decor as it was about just being in the home again – to see the library again or walking up the grand staircase to where the kids' bedroom was," Howarth said.

"It also rekindled awesome memories of spending time, in elementary school, at the Rand Estate next door."

The sisters also visited

homes on the Rotary Club's daytime tour and took in the Candlelight Stroll.

Howarth lives in London, Ont., now but Baptiste returned to live in NOTL after retiring in 2020 during COVID.

Baptiste recalled how the Logans often opened up their home to people from the Shaw, so parties and gatherings were a common occurrence. And babysitters were needed.

As young teenagers, they didn't pay much attention to the stars and artists who dropped by the estate, though she remembers a few big names who visited.

Among them were actors Barry Morse and Paxton Whitehead.

Morse, famous at the time for his role as a detective in the TV series "The Fugitive," also served as the Shaw's second artistic director, in 1966.

Whitehead was artistic director from 1967 to 1977.

"It was just a magical time because a lot was happening with the development of the Shaw Festival," said Baptiste.

"All these sort of grand and dramatic kinds of things were happening, so it was fun."

They were known as the "Ricardo Enns" family, six siblings raised in Old Town on Ricardo and then Delatre Street.

"It was a good time to grow up," Baptiste said.

While she's retired now, she travelled the world for business and founded a company, Rehabilitation Management Inc., which specializes in care planning for people with serious brain and spinal injuries.

Baptiste credits another famous NOTL persona for inspiring her to become an entrepreneur.

When she was in Grade 9, John Drope toured her through what is now the Pillar and Post, and spoke

of his plan to turn the old canning factory into a top-tier hotel.

"He said, 'This is my dream. I'm going to turn this factory into this hotel.' And I always was totally intrigued by entrepreneurial kinds of things," she said.

She's happy she chose to retire to her old hometown, where, among other things, she can play golf and get involved in organizations like the NOTL Writers' Circle.

While Irene lives a few hours away, she also still enjoys the chance to visit.

"Niagara is such a beautiful and unique town and, even though it has changed over the years, it hasn't lost its charm for me."

"And when visiting I like to make a point of walking past our old home on Ricardo Street," she said.

"That inevitably leads to all kinds of stories about our neighbourhood and growing up there – the six Enns siblings."



This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style.  
Category: 3-LETTER VERBS

**To deplete something's energy or weaken it gradually.**

Last issue:

Category: They're sort of a big deal  
Clue: A Japanese word for "squad leader" gives us the alliterative term "head" this.

Answer: What is honcho?

Answered first by: Jane Morris

Also answered correctly (in order) by:  
Susan Dewar, Carol Durling, Rob Hutchison, Sylvia Wiens, Sheila Meloche, Lynda Collet, Jim Dandy, Hedy Wiebe, Bob Stevens, Yvonne DeSouza

**\*REMEMBER TO PUT "WHAT IS" FOR JEOPARDY QUESTIONS!**

Email answers to [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com), with your name, for a chance to win a \$20 Irish Harp Pub gift card every week. (Subject line: Riddle me this)

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# Christmas trees **bring light** to Niagara-on-the-Lake

*Continued from Front Page*

In the spirit of competition, we looked at what inspired each entry and how the people who decorated them brought them to life.

The Chamber of Commerce and Tourism NOTL organized the contest and wrapped its tree with large, flowing royal blue ribbons along with small silver and blue ornaments.

Office co-ordinator Kim Fletcher said she and the rest of the chamber team came up with a design that is meant to “kickstart the Celebrate in Wine Country campaign in Niagara-on-the-Lake.”

Warm hues with red and golden ribbons are featured in Gyros on the Lake’s tree. Red shimmer and matte round ornaments add an extra touch.

A tree by Solmar Development Corp. has a sparkling blue and red theme to bring the medium-sized conifer to life.

“We wanted the tree to be bright, cheerful and full of holiday spirit,” said Lindsey Thompson, the marketing manager for Two Sisters Vineyards.

Its gold and red ornaments reflect the personal touches of several team members, she said.

“We hope to spread a little bit of joy with this tree. It is so special to be a part of Niagara-on-the-Lake and we are happy to add a little bit of sparkle to the downtown during this beautiful time of year,” Thompson said.

More gold is brought to the scene within Canada Post’s entry, which includes miniature passports printed with gold writing among gold ribbons.

A unique tree was created by artist Sandra Iafrate of Gate Street Studio. If you look closely, numerous pieces of art are sprinkled amid the pink-themed décor.

The pieces include ornaments filled with paint, miniature paintings and an artist’s palette with a paintbrush tied to it resting on the top of the tree.

With just 24 hours to complete its tree before the deadline, Sentineal Carriages opted for a red colour



Main photo: The women from the NOTL Chamber of Commerce with their Christmas tree on Queen Street. Middle left: Celayna Martin and Sean Sentineal pose with the tree sponsored by Sentineal Carriages. Middle right: Cheryl Munce, a realtor with Engel and Volkers, stands by the tree her company decorated. Bottom left: John Paraskevopoulos, owner of Gyros on the Lake, with his tree. Bottom right: Madison Gawel, Amber Theriault and Raghav Luthra from the 124 on Queen Hotel and Spa with their entry for the Christmas tree contest. SUPPLIED/SOMER SLOBODIAN/EVAN LOREE

scheme, with red and black plaid ribbons.

The crowning touch is a black top hat.

“Megan, Sean and Celina jumped into action,” said Laura Sentineal.

“Everyone had great

ideas. We busted out the glitter and glue guns and got to work.”

They were really happy with how the tree turned out and she said inspiration for the design came from the way they decorate the

company’s horse-drawn carriages.

A musical theme brings light to the streets of NOTL with the Niagara Jazz Festival’s tree. Tiny records and green and gold ornaments line the tree.

Fittingly, the Irish Harp Pub’s entry “has an Irish/Christmas theme, the green shamrock bows and the Harp for the Irish feel, embellished with Christmas décor,” said owner Jovie Joki.

With a decorated tree and pub, Joki said “We have already received so much positive feedback about how festive and warm the pub is.”

Purple, blue and gold attract the eye to the NOTL Bed & Breakfast Association’s tree. Look closely and you’ll see the purple ribbons are embroidered with shimmering gold designs.

In designing Royal Oak Community School’s tree, assistant head Laureen Dennis said “because we are a community school and we take pride in being a part of this wonderful community, we felt it was imperative that we as a school put together a tree that reflects who we are.”

With a sparkly blue ribbon topping the tree, Dennis said their theme revolved around a winter school day of fun.

In keeping with the winter spirit, “our students have done some wonderful writing pieces about what they like to do in the winter at school and they have made them into paper Christmas balls that we have hung on the tree,” Dennis said.

Not only did the students help decorate the tree, but parents also participated as everything was donated for the tree, said Dennis.

The Royal Oak tree was a team effort and enabled the school to recognition work it does in the community.

“Along with our other initiatives like the Newark Neighbours food drive, the NOTL Christmas Parade participation and a partnership with Pets Alive Niagara to raise money and donate supplies to their wonderful organization, the students of Royal Oak School really try to help out the wider community.”

Winners of the competition will be selected by a judging panel in mid-December and the People’s Choice winners will be announced during the Niagara Icewine Festival in January.

To cast a People’s Choice vote for one of Queen Street’s decorated trees, drop by the Chamber of Commerce office downtown in the old Court House.



## Christmas ornaments in support of Newark Neighbours!

Christmas is just around the bend, and The Lake Report wants to pay it forward this year by helping families in need.

You can help us by purchasing an ornament with your name on it for \$25, to be published in our Dec. 15 issue.

50% of the proceeds will be donated to Newark Neighbours. Email [advertising@niagaranow.com](mailto:advertising@niagaranow.com) to book a space.





Sandra Iafrate in her NOTL studio. EVAN LOREE

## Artist donating portion of December sales to Red Roof Retreat

Evan Loree  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

A Niagara-on-the-Lake artist is giving back the best way she can this year for Christmas.

Sandra Iafrate, who paints out of Gate Street Studio, in her garage at 358 Gate St., is donating 10 per cent of her December art sales to Red Roof Retreat.

People who happen to stop by with kids can also make their own Christmas ornaments by pouring paint into clear decorative bulbs and mixing it about.

Iafrate has set up a small table on one side of her brightly lit studio with a spread of paint and ornamental balls.

“So when families come in with kids, they could do their own ornaments.”

Iafrate said they can take their decorations home with them, or they can hang them on a Christmas tree she has set up on Queen Street for the Chamber of Commerce’s Christmas tree contest.

To participate in the activity, Iafrate is charging a small fee of \$5, all of which will also go to Red Roof Retreat, she said.

Iafrate said her charity drive is off to a positive start after raising \$200 in the first two hours of the Candlelight Stroll, Friday night.

Red Roof Retreat provides support and respite

for families in Niagara that have children living with special needs.

It serves about 200 families and is mostly funded by charitable donations.

Iafrate said she works with a few different charities throughout the year, previously having helped groups like Kids Help Phone and the Children’s Aid Foundation.

“It’s really special to focus on someone who’s growing up and learning and if I can help support them, I will,” she said.

Iafrate’s gallery includes a series of paintings depicting women with flowers. Some of them peer out of the canvas from behind colourful roses and lotuses, their vision slightly obscured by leaves and flower petals.

The portraits are inspired by the Greek character Pygmalion, whose story was adapted into a play by George Bernard Shaw in 1913.

She also has a series of nature-themed paintings depicting Niagara scenes such as the Horseshoe Falls. She describes some of these as works in progress.

Iafrate wasn’t sure how much she’ll be able to raise for Red Roof Retreat, but said, “Last year with the Kids Help Phone I think it was around \$600.”

She has been painting for about 28 years, but her gallery is relatively new on the block, having been open for about three years.

## Museum patrons grab a selfie with Santa

Julia Sacco  
The Lake Report

Every year the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum decks its halls with festive decorations from wreaths to bows, but this year special guests brought even more holiday cheer.

Santa and Mrs. Claus greeted visitors with a smile and a square of homemade shortbread and welcomed them to pose for a photo with the cheery couple.

Tim Taylor of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Palliative Care service and museum volunteer Pam Mundy volunteered their services as Santa and Mrs. Claus to add some extra joy to the museum stop on last weekend’s Holiday House Tour.

Aside from the photo-op, the museum was beautifully decorated thanks to many hours of labour by about 10 volunteers.

“They’ve been decorating this museum for many



Deborah Paine happily poses for a picture with Santa and Mrs. Claus during Selfies With Santa at the NOTL Museum on Saturday. JULIA SACCO

years,” said community engagement co-ordinator Barbara Worthy. “Some of these decorations date back to the 1930s. They’re family heirlooms.”

Margaret Teare and Peggy Bell led the team of volunteers who lent hours

of their time toward crafting labour-intensive handmade wreaths and decking the halls with festive decor.

One of the many dedicated women lending a hand was Deborah Paine, who despite not being “decoratively inclined,” enjoyed

the camaraderie the most.

Worthy hoped that most of all, the seasonal decor and friendly photo-op would give guests a familiar festive feeling.

“It should just invoke the spirit of nostalgia for community spirit.”

## Artisan works prove popular at Pumphouse market

Julia Sacco  
The Lake Report

Holiday markets are everywhere in Niagara-on-the-Lake at this time of year and the Pumphouse is providing a unique experience for Christmas shoppers this season.

Lining up perfectly with the Rotary Club’s Holiday House Tour last weekend, the Pumphouse’s Holiday Market opened Friday to give tourists and NOTLers alike an opportunity to shop for a variety of handmade goods.

Susan Holly, visual merchandising lead and a Pumphouse member for 15 years, put together the arts centre’s first-ever Holiday Market with a special shopping experience in mind.

“It’s a market that shows the product you can buy, without the artist actually having to be here,” said Holly.

Each of the 25 artisans was carefully curated to ensure the best selection possible, she said.

“They have been invited rather than entering.”



The Pumphouse’s first Holiday Market on Saturday allowed customers to purchase handmade goods without the vendors having to be there. JULIA SACCO

The care and attention given to the products on display were reflected in the customers’ reactions.

Kathy Stevens and Maryanne Nasca travelled from across the border to take part in some “Canadian craft shows” and were pleased with every item for sale.

“It’s so cute,” said Stevens gesturing to a glass ornament. “And the location is

beautiful,” added Nasca.

NOTLer Helen Young was enjoying her first-ever visit to the Pumphouse after moving to town in March. “I’m thrilled and I think all the items are absolutely wonderful.”

Young purchased a wooden sign boasting the phrase “Old Town Christmas,” as a loving homage to her new neighbourhood.

“I think I will continue to

come (to the Pumphouse),” Young said.

The Pumphouse Holiday Market continues until Sunday, Dec. 11, during regular Pumphouse hours.

Susan Holly insists that after the overwhelming success of this year, the Holiday market will be making a return.

“It was our first-ever market and I have a feeling it won’t be the last.”



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# Jeepers load up a ton of **donations** for Newark Neighbours

Julia Sacco  
The Lake Report

With the help of a large group of car lovers and a festive “Christmas Jeep,” the Niagara Area Jeep Club was able to accept loads of donations for Newark Neighbours.

A large group of Jeep enthusiasts gathered outside Phil’s Independent Grocer in Virgil on Saturday to brave the cold and wind in the name of helping the community.

“We’re Jeepers. We’re used to the cold weather,” said Steve Gulley, president of the Niagara Area Jeep Club.

Customers at Phil’s were greeted with the “Christmas Jeep,” a member’s vehicle lovingly decorated with tinsel and lights, to get those in the holiday and donating spirit.

It seemed to work. This was the eighth annual food drive for the club and Gulley said members were able to collect close to 2,000 pounds of food and \$385 in cash donations for Newark Neighbours.

It took a full-sized pickup truck plus four Jeeps loaded to the brim to transport all of the donations, he added. From 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

generous shoppers could grab a list from the Jeepers, including items like canned peas, peanut butter, toiletries and more, to shop for and then donate.

“Unfortunately, the list is getting longer and the number of people that need assistance from Newark Neighbours is also getting larger,” said Gulley.

Luckily, those increasing needs were met with enthusiasm and generosity, he noted.

“It’s nice to see Niagara-on-the-Lake, even though it’s considered ‘wealthy’ people, are chipping in. It’s good to see.”



The “Christmas Jeep” drew plenty of attention to the Jeep Club’s Newark Neighbours food drive on Saturday at Phil’s Independent Grocer in Virgil. JULIA SACCO

# NOTL writer publishes his first **mystery novel**

Staff  
The Lake Report

A Niagara-on-the-Lake writer has drawn on his years as a thoroughbred horse groom and as a journalist to produce his first mystery novel.

“The Pale Horse,” by Old Town resident T. Lawrence Davis, is an intense racetrack drama that was called “a winner” by Kirkus Reviews.

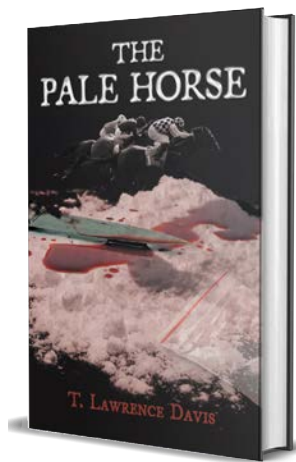
“It was exciting to get such a good review,” said Davis. “Not only for the positive feedback on my work, but also because it increases the likelihood that my book will be read and enjoyed.”

Davis began writing the mystery shortly after moving to Niagara-on-the-Lake in 2015 and based “The Pale Horse” on his own life experiences.

He worked as a groom at Woodbine Racetrack as a teenager and young adult to help pay his way through university, prior to running his late mother’s thoroughbred horse farm and his own horse breeding business for several years.

Along the way he assisted vets called out to the farm to treat the family’s horses, cattle, dogs, cats, pigs and pet ducks.

Unable to make a good living raising and selling thoroughbred yearlings, he went back to school in



Top: The cover of “The Pale Horse.” Right: Author T. Lawrence Davis. SUPPLIED



1984 to study journalism.

“I ended up doing work that I really enjoyed – writing and editing – and met some really interesting people during my career,” Davis said.

“When I retired, trying my hand as a novelist seemed like a logical next step, and I’ve loved it.”

Davis is a former managing editor of several industry publications, including Canadian Thoroughbred magazine. He also worked as a regional communications director

for Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

He drew on his personal experience to produce the novel, including his first summer job away from his mother’s farm, at 18.

It was 1973 and he worked at Blue Bonnets Race Track in Montreal.

His boss, Margaret Allain, who was the leading trainer at the track that year, imparted a wealth of knowledge about caring for horses and horseracing to the young groom.

He later spent five years

managing his family’s farm and undertook all aspects of its operation, from foaling mares and preparing yearlings for the horse sales in Toronto and Saratoga, to making hay and caring for the farm’s 26 horses and small herd of beef cattle.

“The Pale Horse” is available through Davis’s website at [www.tlawrencedavis.ca](http://www.tlawrencedavis.ca). For more information on the author, visit his Facebook or Instagram pages.

Davis plans to hold a book launch and book signing in the near future.



Young Eli Kerr is mesmerized by Roberta Rigby’s skills during Make a Pizza With Santa on Sunday at Ruffino’s. Children’s pizza-making sessions continue Dec. 11 and 18. JULIA SACCO

# Santa brings the gift of **pizza** to Ruffino’s

Julia Sacco  
The Lake Report

Santa was busy last weekend spreading holiday cheer – and pizza sauce.

Sundays until Dec. 18 between the hours of 11 and 4, children can visit Ruffino’s Pasta Bar & Grill to make a pizza and grab a photo with Santa Claus, with proceeds benefiting the Niagara-on-the-Lake Youth Campus.

Kiddos who attend are granted the opportunity to assemble their own custom pizza, watch it go into the oven, enjoy an ice cream sundae for dessert and, of course, take a few photos with Santa.

Santa, aka Steve Gilchrist, has been donning his red suit for the holidays for 38 years and was

happy to help out NOTL causes.

“This is a great way to raise money for the youth centre. I’m happy to help wherever I can,” said Gilchrist.

Alongside “Mrs. Claus” (aka Roberta Rigby), he guided kids while they topped their pizza with their choice of cheese, pepperoni, pineapple and more.

Three-year-old Eli Kerr was especially in awe at his own handmade pizza being placed into the oven for him to watch bake.

Gilchrist emphasized just how much fun it was to make pizzas as Santa.

“And I managed to not get any sauce on my suit.” Make a Pizza With Santa is back on Dec. 11 and 18. Cost is \$20 per child and reservations are required.



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# Fight-filled game leads to coach, player suspensions

Kevan Dowd  
The Lake Report

Last Friday night's home game for the Jr. A Niagara Predators cast a long shadow over the rest of the week and contributed to a hefty loss the next night.

Fans at the Meridian Credit Union Arena were treated less to a hockey game between the Predators and visiting Northumberland Stars and more to a series of on-ice boxing matches.

The game ended in a 5-2 win for Niagara, plus 12 game disqualifications (four for Niagara), coaches suspended from both benches and 98 penalty minutes between the two teams.

With a minute left in the game, Northumberland cleared their bench, while off-ice a physical altercation occurred between fans from both teams, joined shortly by a pair of Northumberland players who left the ice.

With the Stars instigating



Niagara's Cole Ellis (#23) was one of several Predators, including coach Kevin Taylor, suspended after last Friday's game. Most of the mayhem appeared to be instigated by the visiting Northumberland Stars. KEVAN DOWD

most – if not all – of the fights, Predators head coach Kevin Taylor felt his team handled themselves well, but hot-headedness led to suspensions when his players were drawn into fights.

"That's not our style of game," Taylor said later.

"We don't go out and do stuff in that aspect, and if we did, there is going to be serious repercussions and that's not just from me, it'll come down from ownership as well. We don't want

to build a program on guys being goons."

The game started innocently enough with just three minor penalties in the first period. Niagara's Nolan Wyers netted his team's first goal six minutes in followed almost eight minutes later by teammate Cameron Savoie to match a pair by Northumberland.

Declan Fogarty scored a third for the Predators at the 11:48 mark of the second period with Wyers' second

of the night at 15:14. But fights and penalties would drag the period out by over 20 minutes.

The first fight of the night meant suspensions for Niagara's Tyler Gearing and Northumberland's Justice Scheltgen 7:41 into the period. But the royal rumble came in the closing minutes of the second.

A cross-check by Northumberland's Thomas Murphy sparked a fight between the two teams.

That led to game disqualifications for Murphy and two of his teammates, Niagara's Cole Ellis and brother Riley Ellis, who left the bench to join the scrum. That resulted in a three-game suspension for Taylor for failing to "hold the bench."

A final game DQ that period would go only to the Stars after a slash to the face by Tommy McQuiston.

Things seemed to cool down during the final period with Niagara's Reese Bisci notching his team's final goal of the night with 9:10 left on the clock.

But things got nasty in the closing four minutes, with a fight that led to suspensions for Niagara's Nick Savoie and Northumberland's Aiden Dale.

The game ended with 1:09 still to play when the Stars cleared their bench, earning them an additional three suspensions, including their head coach, the only one on the bench.

Taylor was familiar with Northumberland's reputation going into the game but said his players were never looking for a fight.

"This team is the team that pushes everyone around," he said.

"I didn't tell my guys to go out and do anything. I didn't tell them to go out and fight. I just told them to go out and play hard and heavy, and I think we sent the message the first shift out."

Feeling the effects of the suspensions the following night on the road, a short bench led by assistant coaches Connor Shipton and Greg Wilson suffered a 10-1 loss to the North York Renegades – the top team in the Greater Metro Hockey League's south division.

Niagara's sole tally came from Leo Savin after nearly 44 minutes of play.

The Predators return to the Meridian Credit Union Arena against the Windsor Aces this Friday, Dec. 9, at 7:30 p.m.



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# Soccer, hockey, tennis, whatever – our kids need to **play more**



## Ross's Ramblings

Ross Robinson  
Columnist

There are just under 3 million citizens in Qatar. Some 74 per cent are male. Go figger.

The FIFA World Cup is being staged in this sovereign and independent state in the Middle East.

It is a semi-constitutional monarchy and is allowing World Cup soccer fans to enjoy non-alcoholic Bud Zero beer in the stadium zone. This no-booze decision was made at the very last minute, creating what Budweiser marketers described as an “awkward” situation.

I have always been a fan of top-level sports and have paid attention to championship games

around the world. Having said that, I have been flummoxed by the drama in Qatar.

To read our newspapers for the past few months, as they hyped this World Cup, I was convinced our Canadian side stood a good chance of making a respectable showing.

Alphonso Davis and his mates, guided by coach John Herdman, were ready to take on the world in Qatar. Our block with Belgium, Croatia and Morocco was well-balanced and our sports writers had me pumped. Sort of.

At the urging of several of my soccer-loving friends, I showed up for the Croatia match at one of our local sports bars. The lack of enthusiasm was overwhelming. Palpable.

Very few fans, very little noise and a sense of impending defeat. The match stumbled to an end with Croatia winning 4-1.

With the great Canadian skill of finding sunshine on a cloudy day, my pal Harry summarized, “At least we didn’t get shut out. And we scored a goal.”



One evening earlier this fall, after tennis club members had long gone home, four enthusiastic locals enjoyed a foggy evening of tennis under the lights in Memorial Park. From left, Scott Moore, Lindsay Tessis, Kanny Gordon and Cu Van Ha. ROSS ROBINSON

Croatia has about 5 million people. Canada has over 36 million, give or take.

What has my analysis shown to be the difference? Simply put, young people in Canada “don’t play any more.”

Unless it’s an organized clinic, practice or tournament, our kids don’t just show up at a soccer field and play. Municipalities waste money creating and maintaining soccer fields, as an expected recreational activity for the young citizenry.

Indeed, as an active tennis player here in Niagara-on-the-Lake, I spend dozens of hours each summer on the wonderful courts of Memorial Park.

Many times, four or five or six of our courts are all being used by aging athletes having way too much fun.

Nearby, the soccer fields sit silent, with no balls being kicked among players. No laughter. No fun.

No kids, no dads or moms. Nada. Sadly quiet, day after day.

Once a week or so, the

parks and rec department shows up with landscaping machinery to groom the pitches. Every autumn, every last leaf gets raked up. Each spring, fertilizer is applied.

One or two evenings a week, a noisy crowd of athletic offshore farm workers come out to noisily play their league soccer matches.

Lots of skill, lots of fun, lots of exercise. The way it should be, eh? Does the heart good to see the activity.

So, what can we do? I

remember the words of the great American hockey coach Bob Johnson, whose mantra was, “It’s a great day for hockey.”

His teams won NCAA titles, Stanley Cups and Olympic gold medals.

Back in about 1970, Coach Johnson was asked his opinion of AAA hockey, where kids get selected for elite-level travel teams and spend hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars travelling to games and tournaments.

His answer: No kid ever got better at hockey sitting in the back of a minivan.

Somehow, let’s get our kids playing.

Kids in Croatia and Senegal and Ecuador play, on corner lots and streets, without coaches and structure. They play, day and night. They play.

And they love it. And they are better than us.

Let’s think this through, Canada.

Before little old Finland or Sweden win another World Junior Hockey Championship.

It’s time, NOTL. Let’s play!

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# History, wine and food served during evening at vineyard

Somer Slobodian  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Guests took a step back in time at Ravine Vineyards for a night of History in the Vineyard.

The last time it was held in person was three years ago at Ravine.

Due to COVID-19, the last two years have been all virtual – where people pick up their freshly cooked meal and eat it from the safety of their own homes, while participating via Zoom.

Everyone was happy to finally be back in-person this year for the educational fundraiser organized by the Friends of Fort George, the NOTL Museum, Ravine Vineyard and Parks Canada.

“I’m excited to be back,” said museum curator Sarah Kaufman.

Guests were dressed to the nines as they mingled in the events centre ballroom and sipped wine.

About 90 people attended, enjoying a gourmet meal, wine, a silent audition and, historical speakers for the \$150 ticket price.



Peter Martin engages the crowd during the Weapons of the War of 1812 featured talk. SOMER SLOBODIAN

From each ticket purchased, \$25 goes to the NOTL Museum and \$25 will go to the Friends of Fort George.

The total amount raised isn’t known yet, however the two charities will share about \$6,000, museum

president Mona Babin said in an email.

“Our main job is to hire students, summer students, to work at the fort. This year we were able to hire 11,” said Tony Chisholm, president of the Friends of Fort George.

He hopes to be able to hire more next year and the money from the fundraiser will help.

At the museum, the money will go to the museum’s programming, exhibitions and care of the historical collection, said Babin.

The museum has about 50,000 artifacts.

There were six historical speakers and each guest got to attend two of the 20-minute sessions.

Guests chose from among Bad-Ass Women of Niagara, Breweries of Niagara, He

Cast a Big Shadow: The Life and Times of Sir Issac Brock, Scandal and Gossip in NOTL, Things You Didn’t Know About the Queenston Quarry and Weapons of the War of 1812.

“Unfortunately, I could not bring a cannon,” said Peter Martin from Parks Canada as he taught the crowd about the weapons of the War of 1812.

“It just wouldn’t fit in the back of my car. I tried but wouldn’t fit.”

So instead, he started with an artifact that did fit – an 1813 flintlock smoothbore musket, the weapon most soldiers carried, he said.

It was one of many weapons Martin brought along.

One artifact was a rare grenade thrower from the 1700s. Martin explained that soldiers would attach it to the end of their muskets to then fire a grenade.

After the 20-minute sessions, guests went back to the main ballroom to enjoy a night of laughter, food and entertainment.

It was undeniably a delicious, fun and educational evening.

# New owners have ‘no intention’ of tearing down Cobbler’s House

Evan Loree  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

For two Niagara-on-the-Lake newcomers, living in a historic house is a dream come true.

Keri Rickwood and husband Aris Zackinthinios are the new owners of the old Cobbler’s House at 329 Victoria St. in Old Town.

The couple took possession of the property Oct. 27 and are thrilled to be spending their retirement days on the historical property.

Town council was initially concerned for the future of the property after it went up for sale and was listed as a possible tear down property in August.

“I sure would not like to see the Cobbler’s House torn down,” Lord Mayor Betty Disero told an Aug. 19 council meeting.

At the time, the council asked the heritage commit-

tee to review the historical significance of the Cobbler’s House, so it might be listed as a heritage property.

Rickwood contacted The Lake Report after reading about council’s concerns.

“We are not going to demolish the Cobbler’s Cottage and hope to spend the next 50 years (we are in our early 50s) as the caretakers of the Cobbler’s Cottage,” Rickwood wrote in an email.

“The purpose of buying this house was as a retirement home when the kids finally left,” Zackinthinios said in a phone interview.

The couple have been together 26 years and have been frequent visitors to Niagara-on-the-Lake, drawn to it by its storied history.

They decided 10 years ago that when they were ready to retire, it would be in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Rickwood is a special education teacher and

Zackinthinios works in a senior role in the technology industry. They are moving slowly from Toronto as their 14-year-old daughter Nora continues her high school education.

The couple started house hunting in 2016, but didn’t get serious in their search until last August.

Six weeks later, they found their dream home.

“Why would you want to tear down this piece of history that seems – kind of – kind of bizarre,” Zackinthinios said over the phone.

As they move slowly into their new property, they have plans to preserve the historical character of the building while doing some renovations to a free-standing garage on the property.

They said they look forward to being able to walk to Queen Street from their front door and are happy for the change of pace after spending their professional lives in Toronto.



Keri Rickwood, Aris Zackinthinios and their daughter Nora are happy to take possession of the Cobbler’s House in NOTL. EVAN LOREE

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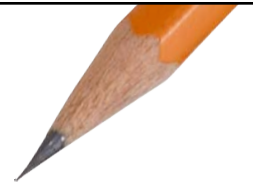
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  - Sets of equipment (4)
  - Female big cat (10)
  - Herefordshire town (10)
  - Type of heating fuel (4)
  - Reprimand (5)
  - Contented (9)
  - Waist band (4)
  - Volume for preliminary artistic studies (10)
  - Steam locomotive (4,5)
  - One of these means almost cloudless (5)
- Down**
- Truce (5-4)
  - Isolated (5)
  - Snow vehicle (7)
  - Notion (4)
  - Fabricated (7-2)
  - Hangman's knot (5)
  - Emphasize (9)
  - Wig (9)
  - Ignorant person (9)
  - Whipping boy (9)
  - Makes journeys (7)
  - Gaiety (5)
  - Legend (5)
  - Capital of Norway (4)

### Crossword Puzzle

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Last issue's answers

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# Caution and oversight needed when **messing with Mother Nature**



**DR. BROWN**

Dr. William Brown  
Special to The Lake Report

You may have heard of gene editing and CRISPR. But what about minibrains, embryos without fathers, mothers and placentas, and brain implants?

The pace in biological research has been astounding in the last few decades, never more so than with the introduction by Emmanuel Charpentier and Jennifer Doudna of a reliable, relatively cheap, and precise method for editing the genome called CRISPR.

For their pioneering studies they shared a Nobel Prize in 2020.

Their method and modifications to the original method introduced by others have been widely adopted around the world and for good reason. They work and possess huge, as

yet barely tapped, potential to treat hereditary diseases and some forms of cancer.

Not so well-known are studies in 1962 by John Gurdon and later by Shinya Yamanaka which revealed it was possible to nudge well-differentiated adult cells into what are called induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs). For their efforts the two shared the 2012 Nobel in medicine or physiology.

It wasn't long before scientists employed iPSCs derived from human fibroblasts to create bits of human neocortex, several millimetres in size and grown in dishes.

This wonky idea turned out to be useful because it made it possible to track the genetically orchestrated development of the early neocortex into its several layers of specialized cells as well as the connections between those cells in the cortex.

By knocking out specific genes one at a time, scientists were able to figure out what those genes contribute to normal development of the neocortex. And by introducing mutant versions of those genes found in genetically transmitted

diseases, known to affect the human brain, it was possible to learn how those mutant genes produced diseases linked to each mutant protein.

Interesting to me, were studies in which Neanderthal versions of human brain-related genes were introduced into minibrains to learn how Neanderthal brains might differ from those of modern humans, with the ultimate goal of answering questions such as: did they think differently than humans, and if so, in which ways?

As useful as they are, minibrains don't last long, partly because they lack a blood supply. To extend the lifespan of minibrains, scientists recently implanted human minibrains into the brains of young rats whose immune system was suppressed.

The result was that the minibrains became vascularized from the host's brain and some nerve cells in the implants developed func-

tioning connections with the host's brain.

Then this year, two teams, one at the University of Cambridge in the U.K. and the other at the California Institute for Technology, working independently of one another, managed to create synthetic mouse embryos grown without the aid of eggs or sperm.

Stem cells were used to create the embryos, which lasted longer

if placental stem cells were added to the mix. The longest recorded survival for these budding embryos was 8.5 days – long enough for development of the brain to begin and the heart to beat but not much further. You might well ask, as I did: Why?

Because, like the minibrain studies, these studies offer the opportunity to study in great detail the genetically choreographed development of the brain.

Or, in this case, other organs, in fine detail, far beyond what could be learned from embryos attached to

their placentas – with the goal of better understanding the how and why of birth defects and perhaps how mutant genes sidetrack the development of the brain and other tissues.

Those are worthy goals and at this stage hold great promise and little risk. But messing with Mother Nature, especially at the genetic level is risky.

Genes often serve multiple functions, only one of which may be understood. In the case of gene editing, there's the added worry the RNA template designed to target one specific gene might latch onto to other regions in the genome with similar base sequences – with unknown and undesirable consequences.

Most neuropsychiatric diseases lack specific pathologies. That was, until now. Recent post-mortem studies of brain biopsies from patients with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) revealed dysfunctional changes in regulatory genes and other gene expression pathologies.

This and recent evidence that cognitive and behavioural differences between

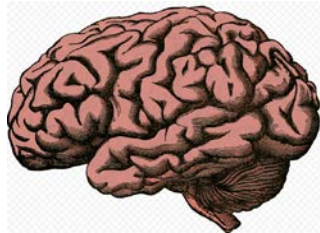
Neanderthals and modern humans might be attributed to differences in a few genes, suggest we are on the threshold of understanding how the modern human brain came to be and how dysfunctional changes at the molecular level may explain some neuropsychiatric diseases and behaviours.

Manipulating Mother Nature at the genetic and developmental levels offers great hope for better understanding interspecies differences in brain function and the management of neuropsychiatric disorders.

Some of the recent methods used to get there may look a little bizarre and may be associated with some risks, especially when it comes to altering the genomes of humans and other species.

What's needed therefore is caution and oversight, without unnecessarily stifling breakthrough methods, studies and research.

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



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## Peeling potatoes at Niagara Camp, Second World War

This photograph features David Seitz and Bill O'Brien peeling potatoes for the troops at Niagara Camp here in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Here I thought peeling potatoes for my Irish brood was exhausting. Imagine peeling potatoes for hundreds of soldiers! The food at camp was made on-site and consisted of wholesome meals. Stews or soups were made to use up any leftovers. Even the peels from David and Bill's hard work were incorporated into the meals, according to one oral history. Waste not, want not as they say. Soldiers experiencing rigorous training would be ready to scarf down anything put in front of them.



From left, Norma Price, Joan King, two-year-old Fern Versteegen and Amika Verwegen. EVAN LOREE

## Stockings for seniors are filling up

Evan Loree  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Donors and volunteers across Niagara-on-the-Lake are filling up 222 Christmas stockings worth of goodies to be distributed to people

living in the town's three long-term homes.

Joan King, best known for her work as the organizer of the Terry Fox Run, again teamed up with people all over town to provide essentials, treats and fun activities for seniors living

in Niagara Long Term Care Residence, Pleasant Manor and Upper Canada Lodge.

With the collection stage all wrapped up, King and her team of volunteers are filling the stockings before delivering them to the senior centres Dec. 16.

"I just want to thank the community for being so generous, so kind, so thoughtful," King said in an interview at the NOTL Community Centre.

"It's very heartwarming to see the response," she added.

## Looking to the Stars

### Venus connects with Jupiter and brings positive energy

Bill Auchterlonie  
Columnist

**Thursday, Dec. 8:** The energy of yesterday's full moon is very much active today, with connections to Mars, Saturn, Neptune and Pluto. It's like planetary bumper cars. Try not to burn out. Don McLean wrote the song about "The day the music died." It was Dec. 8, 1980, that former Beatle John Lennon died after being shot outside his residence at the Dakota Hotel in New York City.



**Friday, Dec. 9:** Later today, Venus leaves Sagittarius and moves into Capricorn. Before she does that, she makes a connection with Jupiter that fills the day with a bright optimism and brings new people, projects and possibilities to life. Happy birthday to Clarence Birdseye, the inventor who redesigned a method for freezing food that he adapted from his travels with the Inuit in the Canadian Arctic. Within a few years he was marketing his products all over the world. Birdseye was born, Dec. 9, 1886.



**Saturday, Dec. 10:** Mercury and Saturn make a connection that promises to put the brakes on serious projects and make it more difficult to get them moving forward. The bigger the idea, the more stubborn the problem. One of America's greatest poets, Emily Dickinson, was born Dec. 10, 1830. Unpublished during her lifetime, she is famous for ideas like "Old age comes on suddenly, and not gradually as is thought."

**Sunday, Dec. 11:** Even though both Jupiter and Neptune are working to make this an

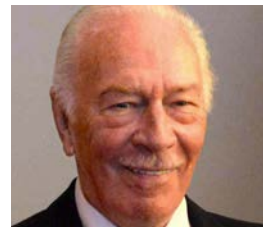
exuberant start to the week, it is not easy to relax and not obsess about how someone feels about you. Maybe my saying these words makes this easier. It was Dec. 11, 1931, that the Statute of Westminster gave full legislative independence to former British colonies, including Canada and Newfoundland.



**Monday, Dec. 12:** The sun in Sagittarius gets a helping hand from Saturn in Aquarius to move a project forward in a steady and sure-footed way. The first trans-Atlantic radio signal was broadcast on Dec. 12, 1901 by Guglielmo Marconi from Cornwall in England to Newfoundland.



**Tuesday, Dec. 13:** Tension and ease. On the same day? At the same time? Be patient and wait for the tension to soften. The late Christopher Plummer was born in Toronto on Dec. 13, 1921, and is most famous as a Shakespearean actor and for his role in "The Sound of Music."



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**Wednesday, Dec. 14:** Venus and Saturn. Mercury and the moon. Together they set the stage for a serious and inspirational day of discovery. It was Dec. 14, 1546, that Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe was born. His contributions are still legendary, especially his calculations for the orbit of Mars.

**Have a listen to my podcast, Looking up to the Stars, at www.lutts.com.**

*Astrology is a form of entertainment, not a science.*



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# Popular Christmas traditions – and plants – are steeped in history



**GROWING TOGETHER** 

Joanne Young  
Gardening Columnist

Mistletoe, poinsettias, holly and wassailing were not always part of our Christmas traditions. Here is a bit of history.

**Mistletoe:** The whole idea of mistletoe started in the days of the ancients Druids (around 3rd century BC). So, even before the era of Hallmark Christmas movies.

Druids believed mistletoe, especially a rare species that grew on oak trees, to have sacred powers, including the ability to heal illnesses, protect against nightmares and even predict the future.

The romantic act of kissing under the mistletoe is rooted in Norse mythology and the plant itself has had cultural significance for far longer. The berries were used to create an elixir that was believed to cure all poisons and make any person or animal fertile.

During the Roman era, enemies at war would reconcile their differences under the mistletoe, which to them represented peace. Romans also decorated their houses and temples with mistletoe in midwinter to please their gods.

In Victorian England, kissing under the mistletoe was serious business. If a girl refused a kiss, she shouldn't expect any marriage proposals for at least the next year.

Today, we take a much more lighthearted approach to the tradition.

It should be mentioned, however, that the plant contains toxic amines – and eating its berries can cause vomiting and stom-



"Blue Princess," in winter. JOANNE YOUNG

ach pain. So, best to stick to kissing under it.

**Poinsettia:** How did a tall, gangly weed get to be the accepted official Christmas plant?

The poinsettia, a native of southern Mexico and Central America, is considered to be a tall, weedy plant in that climate. Definitely not the compact bushy plants that we have come to know.

So how did it become associated with Christmas? As the old Mexican legend goes, a young girl named Pepita was sad that she didn't have a gift to leave for the baby Jesus at Christmas Eve services.

Her cousin tried to comfort her by saying Jesus would love anything that she brought for him even if she had no money to buy a real gift. Pepita picked a bouquet of weeds that she was walking past on the way to church.

When she got there, she set the weeds down at the bottom of the nativity scene. As the story goes, the weeds suddenly transformed into beautiful red flowers. From that day on, they became known as "Flores de Noche Buena" or "Flowers of the Holy Night."

Poinsettias owe their common name to Joel R.

Poinsett, who introduced them to the United States when he was the first American ambassador to Mexico, from 1825 to 1829.

Poinsett, who was an amateur botanist, noticed the euphorbias with red bracts growing wild in the hills of southern Mexico. He sent a few of the plants home to South Carolina for his personal collection, where he began propagating them in his greenhouses and giving them to friends and botanical gardens.

It still took about another 100 years before the poinsettia became a traditional holiday decoration when the Ecke family started promoting them. Paul Ecke Jr. sent free poinsettia plants to TV studios across the country, including "The Tonight Show" and Bob Hope's holiday specials.

Eventually, the trend caught on, making them the familiar live Christmas decoration that they are today. Over many years, breeders have developed the plants so that they are much fuller, shorter growing varieties that come in array of different coloured bracts.

**Holly:** Long been used as a symbol of Christmas, holly was considered sacred by the ancient Romans. It was used to honour Saturn,

god of agriculture, during their Saturnalia festival around the winter solstice.

The Romans gave each other holly wreaths and they would carry them in parades, decorating the images of Saturn with them. During the early years of the Christian religion in Rome, many Christians continued to deck their homes with holly to avoid detection and persecution by Roman authorities.

Gradually, holly became a symbol of Christmas as Christianity became the dominant religion of the empire.

**Wassailing:** Most of us are familiar with the Christmas song, "Here we go a wassailing among the leaves so green ..."

If asked what "wassailing" is, we would most likely say that it is the tradition of going from house to house carolling, eating, drinking and visiting with friends.

But wassailing was originally an important part of a horticultural tradition in England, with a focus on apple orchards.

A group would gather around the biggest and best apple trees in the orchard. The wassailing, or blessing of the fruit trees, involved drinking and singing to the health of the trees in the hope that they would provide a bountiful harvest the next year.

People would then travel from orchard to orchard, carolling as they went. In each orchard, trees were selected, and cider or liquor was sprinkled over their root systems.

Along with singing, shouting, banging pots and pans, and even firing shotguns could be heard, making as much noise as possible to both waken the sleeping tree spirits and to frighten off any evil demons that might be lurking in the branches.

Whatever traditions you observe, make sure you take time to enjoy the season.

Joanne Young is a Niagara-on-the-Lake garden expert and coach. See her website at [joanneyoung.ca](http://joanneyoung.ca).

## Obituary

### John (Ian) Ness



NESS, John (Ian) — Passed away peacefully on December 2, 2022, at the St. Catharines General Hospital, at the age of 98. Devoted father of sons John (Suzan) of St. Lazare, QC, Donald (Lynn) of Fort Lauderdale, FL, and daughter Margaret of Vancouver, BC. Adored grandfather of Leigh-Anne, Michael, Alexandra and

Andrew, and loving great-grandfather of Zoey. Ian came to Canada from Scotland in 1966 at the prompting of his beloved sister and war bride Isabel and her husband Elmo Schaefer. Pre-deceased by his cherished wife of 50 years, Nancy, now reunited in their heavenly home, enjoying watching a game of fitba.

Cremation has taken place, arrangements entrusted to Morgan Funeral Home.

A service to celebrate the life of Ian, will be held at St. Andrew's Presbyterian church (Simcoe Street) in Niagara-on-the-Lake on December 17, 2022 at 11:30 a.m.

In lieu of flowers, those who wish may make a memorial donation to the Niagara Health System. Memories, photos, and condolences may be shared at [www.morganfuneral.com](http://www.morganfuneral.com).



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Niagara-on-the-Lake has long been a magical place over the Christmas season. Quaint shops, coffee or drinks in the evening...time with friends and family. Life is far more than just being, life here is living...

Let me introduce you to life here in our beautiful community.



**Stefan Regier**  
sales representative



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