



The Lake Report

Issue 2

June I Edition

Niagara-on-the-Lake

RANDWOOD



Part I: The Background
Richard Harley
Editor

It wouldn't be hard to write a book about the controversy behind the proposed development of Randwood Estate.

There would be a long chapter about boxwood hedges, and at some point one of the characters would give a metaphorical soliloquy about stone walls. It would be a decent mystery novel — a timeless one where people debate who the villain is, even in the end, with the overall plot centring on how one development could manage to cause a fissure in a small town so deep it will likely shape the future of the town's council.

You'd have to find out what happens in the sequel though. In 2017, when Two Sisters Resort officially announced it was moving forward with a proposal for a hotel on John Street, a line was drawn between those opposed to it and those who are either supporters of development on that property or who don't really understand what the fuss is all about.

In the last year, leading up to the municipal election, that line has grown thicker.

In December 2017, a local grassroots activist group

called Save Our Rand Estate (SORE) began urging town residents to fight a six-storey development at Randwood.

The group does not have a leader, said core members Lyle Hall and Duff Roman, during meetings earlier this month.

Roman and Hall both said it started as a group of neighbours who found they share a common belief that the Randwood Estate should be preserved as a historical site.

wood, and if the estate were to be developed, it would be less than 10 metres away from his yard.

The group began gaining supporters for their movement by knocking on doors, said Hall, and publishing a website called Sorenott.ca.

On the website, the group claims to give people the "real facts" about the Randwood development, published through dozens of articles for which no one

said, is that such a large hotel would be a juxtaposition to the historic Old Town.

"Imagine how it would look, peeking above the tree line."

In other words, it would be aesthetically displeasing.

SORE is currently not a legally registered entity, and although core members have been identified, to date nobody has come forward as the face of the SORE organization, and the

incorporating, but said the group is not sure who will be its president.

The Randwood Estate was, as the title reflects, once home to the Rand family, who purchased it in 1908.

Since then, at times it has been a school, a conference centre and an executive retreat.

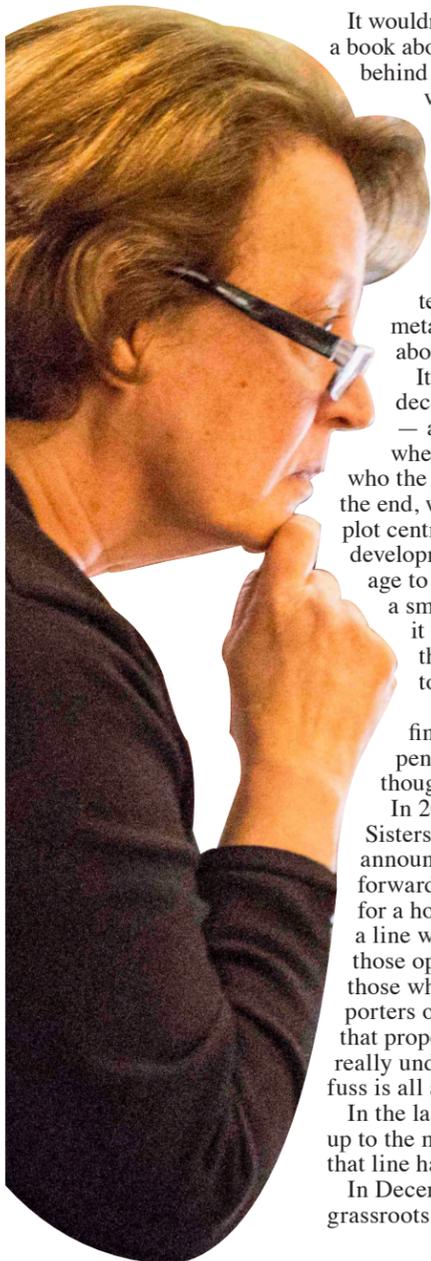
The property eventually ended up in the hands of Trisha Romance, her husband Gary Peterson and a St. Catharines developer, with a proposal submitted to the town in 2011 for a three-storey hotel.

The property is considered by many to be a valuable heritage location in the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake for a number of reasons, including the former uses of the main estate house, a stone wall that surrounds the property, century-old trees and shrubs, and a protected stream that trickles through the property and into the nearby Commons.

In addition to the original estate home, there is also a coach house and a guest house known as the Devonian.

The property was sold to Benny Marotta of Two Sisters Resort in 2017. He is also the owner of Solmar Development, the company that developed the St. Davids subdivision called Cannery Park, and owns several other properties in town, including two which are neighbours of Randwood.

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The development that divided a town.

By neighbours, they are referring to those living in the vicinity of the property who started meeting to discuss a development that could end up in their backyards.

Roman, who lives on Weatherstone Court, said his property line borders Rand-

person takes responsibility.

SORE claims a six-storey hotel would destroy the heritage value of the Randwood property and, in turn, the heritage of the town.

Another concern is the impact the hotel would have on traffic.

But the main issue, Roman

group insists there is not one person that makes executive decisions — they say decisions are made by a collection of concerned residents who co-ordinate weekly group phone calls to discuss the path of SORE.

Hall and Roman said SORE is in the process of

Town to revisit noise bylaw



Niagara-on-the-Lake Town Hall. (Richard Harley)

Penny Coles
Staff

Despite a noise bylaw that was approved after extensive consultation and debate six years ago, Niagara-on-the-Lake still has difficulty handling the large number of complaints from neighbours of outdoor events, town councillors heard in May.

And those who organize events have problems meeting the requirements of the bylaw and dealing with angry residents, they were told.

Coun. Betty Disero said she spoke to staff about how to solve the complicated problem after an increasing number of complaints from residents last season, and a meeting to discuss outdoor event permits which drew a crowd of people with noise concerns.

She was advised to make a motion at council asking for a review and report to help give bylaw staff the tools they need to deal with complaints.

She tried at a council meeting in May to pass a motion asking staff to review the bylaw and report on how noise from outdoor events could be regulated and enforced, but met some resistance.

Councillors hesitated to open a can of worms, some of them recalling the difficulties of getting the bylaw written and approved in 2012 and hesitating to put the extra work on staff who already have a full plate.

Lord Mayor Pat Darte explained there are issues on both sides — the special event organizers who try to work within the framework of the bylaw and the neighbours who are disturbed by

the noise — and pointed out improvements in technology since the bylaw was written, now available at little cost and easily accessible, could help quantify the problem and provide solutions.

Grape grower Ed Werner, with two Lakeshore wineries as neighbours, told council he was sure special occasion permits, which allow wineries 24 events a year, had not been designed with the intent of putting residents such as himself in the position of having 48 noisy events nearby each season.

He spoke of sitting down with winery representatives and reaching a compromise for an appropriate decibel limit — he suggested 45 — to be included in the bylaw to simplify enforcement.

Paul Harber of Ravine Vineyards in St. Davids said he agreed with working out a solution with neighbours, but said that isn't always possible — some residents repeatedly complain even though he's careful to adhere to the terms of the bylaw, which puts him in the difficult position of enforcer with those who are holding their event at his winery.

Coun. Jamie King, although he said he was sensitive to the issues Disero was trying to address, had problems with her motion, especially as the busy season for wineries and special events is about to begin. "When it comes to the

rights of our wineries and their ability to run events, there are business rights that need to be protected," he said.

"I fear the discussion that will emanate from this is a very significant undertaking. I know we're going to have every winery in town lining up to speak to the report and any recommendations related to it."

At this point in council's term and the other business at hand, King said, "I think we need to take great care."

"A noise bylaw takes a lot of effort and work and time and energy," agreed Coun. Maria Bau-Coote.

"I'm not against trying to figure it out but it's not something we can do overnight."

Disero said she didn't want to cause a "kerfuffle" and agreed that if some minor adjustments could be made within the existing bylaw to help with enforcement, she'd be content to put off a full review until the next term of council.

When planning director Craig Larmour said the new town bylaw supervisor has some suggestions about how other municipalities handle noise complaints that might help, and he was looking for some direction from council to make some changes, Disero thanked him for finding a solution to her dilemma by helping to get through the summer with some additional tools for bylaw officers, and her motion carried.

SUMMER SAFETY TIPS

- Stay hydrated and keep in the shade
- Wear UVB and UVA sunglasses
- Wear at least 30 SPF sunscreen
- Use DEET insect repellents
- Keep a safe watch on children in water
- Never leave your children or pets in the car
- Pack an emergency kit at home and in the car
- Watch for cyclists and pedestrians while driving
- Wear a helmet when cycling
- Wear a lifejacket on the water
- Take shelter when you hear thunder
- Lock your vehicles and homes to prevent thefts



FROM TERRY FLYNN
AND THE NOTL
SAFETY COMMITTEE

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Collard presents new gavel to council as parting gift



Jim Collard is leaving a gavel for council as a parting gift, and as a replacement for one he once broke during a meeting with an unruly resident. (Penny Coles)

Penny Coles
Staff

When the next Niagara-on-the-Lake town council is sworn in, Jim Collard might be fishing. Or playing golf.

Whatever he's doing, it won't be taking his seat at the council table, as he has so many times before.

And when he exits the council chamber for the last time as a municipal politician, he will leave behind a memento of 30 years at the table — one he made himself, that he hopes will serve as a reminder to other councillors of the many responsibilities attached to the job.

About 20 years ago, he recalls, as chair of the planning committee — during a meeting on some controversial development; he can't remember which, but those meetings are not unusual in NOTL — he was trying unsuccessfully to control an unruly resident.

Gavel in hand, he declared the person out of order, banging the gavel block so hard he broke it, and pieces of it went flying.

"Look what you made me do," he said to the resident. "Now sit down."

And he did.

"I always intended to replace it," Collard said of the gavel, "so finally, I decided I better do it before I go."

In January, having made a decision this would be his last term, he presented a new gavel block to the town.

This one, Collard said, is not likely to split "in this millennium."

"I made it to last," he said, pointing to a beautiful piece of walnut he saved from a tree that had grown over his driveway which was cut down, and a piece of a wild sour cherry tree from his back yard, salvaged for the block.

Retiring from council has been in the back of his mind for a while now — he and his wife Patty want more time to do things together, and he doesn't want to be tied to Monday evenings and the many hours a week that take up council business.

"I've always worried about the town and the things that needed to be done. Now it's time to let others do it."

"I like to think I've done some good work along the way," said Collard. "Everyone wants to think they've made a difference."

One of his disappointments, he said, is coming to the realization that change at the regional level of government wasn't going to happen while he's serving.

He has been outspoken about Niagara-on-the-Lake property owners being charged more than their fair share of taxes for regional services, based on assessments determined by market value, but said "eventually you have to dismount the horse."

He said he's come to terms with the fact that although he feels there is more to be accomplished, there will always be more to do, and there will always be other people to do it — people who, like him, care deeply about their community and will do their best to try to get it done.

He's going to miss it, he said, but again, "someone else will do the job."

Collard plans to continue to work with the Community Schools Alliance, which helps municipalities work with the province and school boards on decisions regarding opening and closing schools.

He will also continue as a resident member of the

Town's Active Transportation Committee, which he now chairs.

On a personal note, he said he plans to spend more time travelling with his wife, and more time in Florida in winters, without feeling he should come home for council meetings.

He said most people know he's crazy about golfing, but they don't know that when he's away, fishing is also a favourite past-time.

Looking back over his career, Collard said, "I can honestly say I enjoyed every moment of it, well, almost every moment."

He has worked with some really good people, he said, even though they haven't always agreed, and he has learned the important lesson of listening, and trying to find the middle ground.

As for new councillors that will come to the table when this term ends, he said his advice would be to heed the words of the Serenity Prayer, another lesson he had to learn and one that doesn't always come easily in politics — "to change what I can, realize what I can't, and have the wisdom to know the difference."



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No life jacket for indoor pool



Niagara's hopes of getting an indoor pool seem to have sunken. (Supplied photo)

Penny Coles
Staff

Coun. Paolo Miele wasn't able to keep a report on the feasibility of an indoor pool in Niagara-on-the-Lake afloat for the future, despite reassuring council that simply forwarding it to a consultant looking at the town's recreational facilities wouldn't cost a dime.

The report included recommendations that it be considered in next year's budget and forwarded to be looked at as part of the town's facilities master plan study.

A committee was formed last summer at the request of Miele, who made a promise during the 2012 election campaign to look at the possibility of building an indoor pool in NOTL.

The majority of councillors did not support including it in next year's budget, although a four-three vote at a May operations committee meeting allowed it to go forward as part of the facilities study, with the expectation the vote would be ratified

by council — which Miele said would have meant the information would be available should an indoor pool be considered in the future, if the time comes when there is more support for it.

However Coun. Jim Collard, who did not support either recommendation last week, reiterated Monday he thinks an indoor pool is too expensive and added it is not supported by 49.3 per cent of the residents who responded to a survey saying they don't want to see taxes increase to pay for it.

Collard made a motion that the report be shelved.

"It seems to me by continuing on the course we're going, we're leaving it for some future council to discuss. I wonder why we're doing that," he said.

Town staff looked at similar municipalities with indoor pools and reported they're running at large deficits, he added.

An indoor pool could cost between \$6 million and \$12 million to build, with an estimated annual operating

cost to the town of \$500,000 to \$800,000, "and if you're going to build a pool in Niagara-on-the-Lake, you have to build something special," said Collard.

That means it's not going to be the cheapest, and will add to everybody's taxes, he said.

"As much as we would like it, we don't need a pool, and we can't afford a pool ... It's a nice idea, but it's an idea whose time has not come."

Coun. Terry Flynn agreed this might not be the time, but suggested sending the report to the facilities study so the information will be there for the future.

There was a time, he said, when the decision might be based solely on population to support a pool, but that's no longer the case — demographics and geography are also factors.

And it's also not a case of "building bigger costs more," Flynn said, suggesting building better could cost less in operational costs.

"A lot of the work is already done, the foundation set, the information in

place. I don't feel we should just leave it on a shelf some place."

He suggested forwarding it to the facilities committee to decide when it's time to bring it back to the table.

To counter the concern over the expense of the pool, Miele said, "we're not voting today on building a pool or spending money on a pool. We're looking at making this report part of the facilities master plan."

Swimming, he said, is part of a healthy lifestyle choice, and not just for three months of the year.

"Maybe some people in NOTL some time in the future — not this council — might want to have a healthier lifestyle."

In recent months, the pool discussion has been "diluted" by other issues of the community, such as heritage, Miele said.

"This was an investigative report. We're not spending any money but there's a lot of good work there."

Coun. Jamie King agreed with Collard, said with the large deficit the town is facing, it would not be fiscally responsible to pursue the concept of a pool.

Despite Miele's repeated assertion that the "report does not say we're building a pool, we're not spending a dime," councillors voted five to four at not to include it in the town's facilities master plan, with Coun. Maria Bau-Coote, Betty Disero, John Wiens, King and Collard voting to shelve it and Coun. Miele, Flynn, Martin Mazza, and Lord Mayor Pat Darte wanting to see it go forward for future councils to consider.

Niagara Foundation to purchase half-interest in "Wilderness"

Richard Harley
Editor

The Niagara Foundation is hoping to buy a half-interest in a historically designated property at 407 King St. in Niagara-on-the-Lake to protect it from further development.

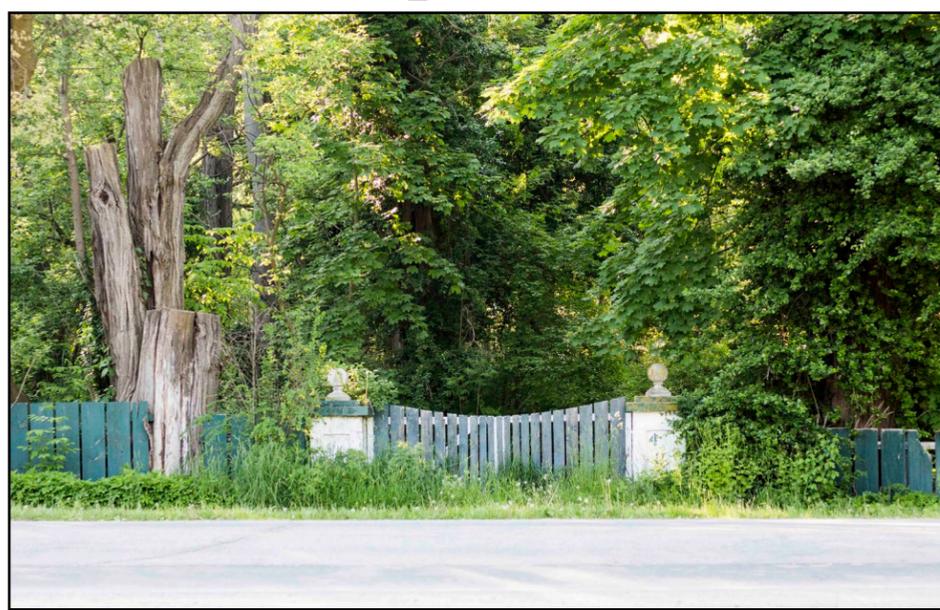
The 5.5-acre area, known to many locals as the Wilderness, is historically significant to Canada and "must be preserved," according to the Foundation.

Brad Nixon, vice-president of Niagara Foundation, said there is a signed agreement of purchase and sale, though the sale still needs to be approved by a court.

He said a final price tag won't be certain until the court approval.

"We're quite excited about this," said Nixon.

"What we hope to see is something like an urban park with a lot of heritage restoration and preservation and history."



407 King St. in Niagara-on-the-Lake, known as the Wilderness. (Richard Harley)

The property, located across the road from the Royal Canadian Legion, was given historical designation by the Town of NOTL in 1994, including

the heavily wooded area and the building structures such as a house built in 1816.

"If we can acquire it and clean it up, we can transform it into a really

important urban park," said Nixon.

He said the forest is original Carolinian forest, with a protected creek that runs through it.

"It's not only important buildings and history but it's important land," he said.

The creek connects to Lake Ontario near Ryerson Beach in Chautauqua and runs to John St. and through the property of Randwood Estate.

Nixon said a conservation easement prevents the creek, the creek banks and the land around the creek from being altered without approval from the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority.

Michael Howe, Niagara Foundation president, said the area is "also important to Indigenous people and our region's military and political history, as far back as the 18th century."

The property was once home to William Claus, deputy superintendent of the Indian Department and one of the three trustees of the Six Nations, whose wife Nancy Johnson was originally given the land by the Six Nations "in token of her

many deeds of kindness," said a Niagara Foundation news release.

Nancy's father Sir William Johnson was responsible for negotiating the Treaty of Niagara with 24 Indigenous nations in 1764, a treaty that would — according to the Foundation — form the basis for the original treaty relationship between Indigenous peoples and settlers in Eastern North America.

The "Wilderness" site also provided shelter for soldiers and a family in a root cellar during the War of 1812 after NOTL was razed by the fleeing American forces in 1813.

The property is the former jointly-owned estate of two NOTL sisters, Ruth Parker and Fran MacKay. MacKay's interest was transferred to her daughter Kea Reid, who is also now deceased, so the other interest is owned by her estate.

Nixon said the Foundation will be purchasing Parker's interest.



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The Lake Report

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Publisher: Niagara Now

Design: Richard Harley

Contributors: Richard Harley, Penny Coles, Jer Houghton, Denise Ascenzo, Beckie Fox, Mori Gardens, Writer's Circle

Editorial: TLR goes bi-weekly



The Lake Report will be publishing bi-weekly starting this June.

Richard Harley
Editor

It's been a busy month.

When Niagara Now received the first shipment of The Lake Report May 3 and our small crew set out to hand-deliver the first 5,000 copies around the community, we didn't entirely know what to expect.

I had heard the word from people who told me they wanted a newspaper they felt was theirs again — something they could open up and see their friends, family and familiar faces, while finding out the truth about local issues; something hyper-local, not mixed with regional content.

Even though I had heard it, I couldn't have predicted just how much support we'd receive in just a few short weeks.

I would like to share a bit of that with you, starting with a hand-written letter we received launch month.

From Selina Appleby:
"Our thanks for the new newspaper."

You have given us a gift — a newspaper that brings us the news in an elegant format. It says 'read this, it is important.'

Welcome to our town.
We need you."

From all of us at The Lake Report, to all who sent emails or letters: thank you.

We wish we had room to print them all — though, as an office project, in the name of positive reinforcement, we've taken many and had them printed out and put up on the walls.

And it isn't just the letters, it's the people coming out of their houses, coming up to us when they see us to ask for a

copy, shaking our hands and sitting down to read as we drive away.

At the Legion on fish-fry-Thursday I was welcomed with warm hearts and the smell of crispy batter and fries.

I talked friends and neighbours, and with people whose families have been in town for generations.

If you've never stopped in the Legion, you should. The fish is phenomenal (trust me, they've been doing it longer than anyone in town) — but remember to take off your hat!

I've chatted with new residents over delicious roast beef sandwiches at the Community Centre — residents whose families will now help shape the future of this small town.

Many have reached out with their story ideas, photos, events, contributions.

Some have even made donations — which have helped us move from a monthly edition to a bi-weekly faster than we'd ever imagined.

As well, we'll be delivering to homes starting in July.

It's truly been an overwhelming month.

Niagara-on-the-Lake is a wonderful place to live and have grown up. I'm grateful for that, and for a chance to give back.

editor@niagaranow.com

A little bit of history dies when a newspaper closes



Old ads are pieces of history that get lost when archives are thrown away.

Penny Coles
OPINION

In this age of turning to Google with any question you have, you expect an instant answer.

It can be pretty frustrating when you can't find it.

And if you are a regular reader of your community newspapers, you may have become accustomed to finding town news online.

Likewise, if you are seeking information about something that happened in recent years, you would expect to find it in an archive.

That situation changed somewhat last November when the Niagara Advance — Niagara-on-the-Lake's community newspaper for almost a century — closed.

Suddenly, instead of two local newspapers online, there was one, and it was if that other newspaper, the one that had been around for almost 100 years, had never existed.

It not only failed to turn up in your driveway, but any trace of the stories that had been posted online also disappeared.

And that is happening across the country, as newspapers in small communities like ours are shut down, taking a bit of local history with them.

In Niagara-on-the-Lake, it was a large chunk that disappeared, and it will be missed.

Over the years, we had many residents come to our office to look for something published years ago — it was important enough for them to sometimes spend hours pouring over the past editions that were bound together and dated by year.

Occasionally, if they didn't find what they were looking for, they'd come back another day and continue their search; it could take a long time, which I completely understood because if I had to look up something in the bound copies I would get caught up reading old articles, looking at pictures of people from decades ago, checking out the ads to see which stores were in business and how much (how little, really) they charged for their products.

I remember searching for

the editions that contained articles on the controversy of where the Shaw Festival should be located, or when NOTL held its first Santa Claus parade — I was surprised to find the early parades were in Virgil, not along Queen Street.

The Advance office had a few bound copies going back to the 40s, although it wasn't until the 70s that we could count on finding any date we were looking for.

We even — for some reason — had back issues of the Guardian, a competing newspaper that was published for a few years in the early 90s.

Around this time last year I was trying to find photos from the old bed races, leading up to their revival for the 150th celebration in Virgil — and I did find a couple, a little yellowed but with some familiar faces of people obviously having a lot of fun.

The online articles, which only went back about 10 years, would be helpful to have now to look up how many candidates ran in the 2014 municipal election, or what was approved by the Town when there was a 2011 application for a hotel on the Randwood Estate.

That information is still available somewhere, but not from Advance archives, and not as readily as it once was.

The Advance would have celebrated its 100th anniversary next February, 2019.

We were just a small staff, but we had talked about what we might do to commemorate the occasion — maybe an open house, a cake, nothing fancy but enough to recognize it as a milestone.

We did that for the 80th — Art Viola stopped by and took a photo for us for that week's edition, which also contained a little history of the newspaper and the town.

That's gone now.

And so many memories for all of us, of the struggles of a growing town; of the residents and their accomplishments; the happy faces of kids who hit a home run or scored a goal in minor sports; the tragic loss of friends, neighbours and loved ones; all part of the fabric of the town.

The memories remain, but the record of them is gone.

The editions may have been thrown out or they may exist in a basement somewhere, and the online news may still be sitting in that great cloud of information.

Perhaps one day it will surface again.

There is a site called archive.org which has copies of the Advance that were available online in an e-edition, although they're not in any particular order and if you want to look something up, you'd have to know the date.

However looking at all those front pages was a little bit of a trip down memory lane, and it's reassuring to know they've been preserved somewhere.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library is working to digitize their microfilm, and will send out their microfiche to have it done for them — they are apparently two different processes, and both are time-consuming and labour-intensive.

Interpret that to mean expensive.

Government grants would be helpful, so hopefully whichever party forms the provincial government will believe in the continuing importance of libraries and all they do to make information available, if they have the resources they need to do it.

When the work is done back issues of the Advance as far back as the 40s should be available online through a library portal, and staff promise to keep us updated on a public launch, hopefully by the end of the year.

The Niagara Historical Museum staff say they get some requests for early newspapers, but they mostly have copies of special historic editions or newspapers that were kept because they were tied to an important event in town, such as the celebration of the centennial.

For anything else, they direct people to the library to search through microfilm.

And of course there are many books that have been written about the early days of NOTL, some by local authors, and they're important sources to turn to for the history of the town.

But you won't find the kind of history that community newspapers provide: the photos of events, the school and minor sports news, the letters and discussions over issues that wouldn't be important to anyone else but those who lived and worked in those communities.

Now in Niagara-on-the-Lake we have The Lake Report, another newspaper to record the happenings of our town.

The paper may be small in size, but it's huge in its heart and soul. We should treasure our ability to pick up a newspaper and read about what is important to us — many communities in our country and around the world, whether for financial or political reasons, are denied that opportunity.

And as for me, I'm going to make a point of saving each edition of the paper, which I failed to do with the Advance, and hope it will have a long and successful run at printing the stories and photographs that will provide a record of another era of the history of this community.

Letter to the editor: Public libraries



File photo.

Madeleine Lefebvre
Submitted

On behalf of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library Board, I would like to thank the provincial election candidates for responding to the library funding question at the May 16 all-candidates meeting. I would also like to thank the audience for their strong show of support for your local public library.

Public libraries are Ontario's farthest-reaching, most cost-effective resource for creating positive change in education, poverty reduction and economic development.

Today's public libraries are treasure troves of print and digital information and are equipped with technology citizens can use to empower themselves and reach personal goals, often from home on a 24/7 basis. Survey after

survey ranks public libraries in the top three public services, along with fire and ambulance.

The numbers tell the story; 12 million more people visited Ontario public libraries than attended all NHL, NFL and NBA games in North America combined. That's 1.4 million visits per week, 198,000 per day, 8,276 per hour and 137 per minute. Here in Niagara-on-the-Lake, we had 299,099 in-person and online visits last year and 82,699 items borrowed.

Niagara-on-the-Lake Municipal Council recognizes the importance of library services and their impressive return on investment and has consistently funded local library operations. The same cannot be said for the Province of Ontario. Provincial funding for Ontario's public libraries has been frozen for the past 20

years and was only recently increased in the pre-election budget.

Twenty years of provincial underfunding have left public libraries with a considerable need for infrastructure renewal, especially for electronic information systems to keep pace with a new generation of users with fundamentally different information needs. Municipalities do not have the resources to address library requirements for periodic and ongoing facility, technology and accessibility updating.

The next government of the Province of Ontario must commit to adequate, sustained funding of public, First Nations and school libraries.

As community hubs, public libraries provide safe, inclusive spaces where everyone is welcome to learn, work, connect, create and collaborate. Public libraries deliver collections, programs and services that support provincial initiatives such as poverty reduction, lifelong learning, skill development, economic development, health literacy, equitable access to provincial government online services and reconciliation with indigenous peoples.

We ask Ontario's citizens to support candidates who are committed to supporting our libraries.

- Chair of NOTL Public Library

SATURDAY JUNE 16, 2018

30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Join us at Konzelmann Estate Winery from 7pm - 9pm
as we officially kick off our 30th Anniversary. \$30/person

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A rundown of the provincial debate in NOTL

Penny Coles
Staff

As the incumbent, MPP Wayne Gates is the candidate with a target on his back, but his experience at debates and passion for his job seemed to help him rise above the barbs thrown his way at May's all-candidates meeting for the June 7 provincial election.

PC candidate Chuck McShane and Liberal Dean Demizio and their parties were also on the receiving end of some sarcasm and criticism from each other, but were united in their attacks on the NDP and Gates.

They accused him several times of taking credit for the accomplishments of the Liberals, with Demizio offering to give Gates his red Liberal tie.

But there were occasions when their jabs backfired, drawing boos from the audience, and the support for Gates and his popularity with the crowd was sufficient to give his opponents reason to be nervous and combatant.

Also at the table was Green Party candidate Karen Fraser, who stuck to her notes and platform, refraining from stooping to the political nastiness of the night.

The four are candidates vying to win the Niagara Falls riding, which includes Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie.

The meeting, hosted by the NOTL Chamber of Commerce at the Community Centre, drew a small and polite crowd of a little more than 100 people, who provided written questions before the meeting that each candidate in turn drew from a box.

Each candidate was given two minutes to respond, and then their fellow candidates had a minute to answer the same question.

Fraser said the Green Party, is international and has a platform that addresses many issues, not just the environment, and does not vote as a block in Queen's Park.

"We vote according to our constituents and our conscience," she said.

Demizio spoke of the Liberal success related to the growth in the economy, low unemployment, and improved quality of life for residents of Ontario and Niagara.

"The Liberal government is bringing growth to Ontario," he said.

Gates said his work as MPP has had a positive impact on Niagara, including the wine industry.

He said his party, if elected, would make hydro more affordable, would improve health care by providing more hospital beds and staff, including nurses, to eliminate "hallway" medicine, and would provide universal health and dental care.



Provincial candidates Wayne Gates (NDP), Chuck McShane (PC) and Karen Fraser (Green Party). The upcoming provincial elections are June 7. (Penny Coles)

His party is also the only one talking about lowering the price of gasoline.

Chuck McShane, who accused the Liberals of being racked by scandal, corruption and back-room deals, "propped up for years by the NDP," said it is time for "real change" in Ontario, adding "we trust people with their hard-earned money and we want to put more of it in their pockets."

Hydro was a big topic of the night, and is an issue that forms a large part of the NDP platform, which criticizes the Liberal government for the decision to sell it without the support of their electorate.

New Democrats are running on the promise to buy Hydro One back if elected, and that, combined with the strong opposition to the Liberals' handling of hydro, provided questions that were tailor-made to suit Gates, although his explanation of how the NDP would finance the purchase of shares in Hydro One — if they are even for sale — attracted scornful comments from his Liberal and PC opponents.

The NDP platform is to spend "about a billion" to buy back shares over four to six years.

He asked the audience to put their hands up if they supported privatization of Hydro One, and when no one did, he said that was why the residents of Ontario spoke out in opposition.

Gates said he would never run a business the way the Liberals run the government, allowing hydro bills to increase 300 per cent, and McShane agreed that as a small business owner he would "certainly not run a business the way this government has."

But McShane drew boos from the crowd when he added, "Wayne Gates has worked his whole life off other people's backs."

If elected, the PCs wouldn't spend money to try to buy it back, McShane said.

"It won't work. We didn't support selling Hydro One but we can't buy back shares if someone doesn't want to sell them."

"Let's do the math," said Demizio, questioning where the money would come from.

Other issues address included: developing the greenbelt; the provincial physical health and education curriculum that teaches gender identification in public schools; minimum wage increases; health care; municipal property taxes; support for libraries; and even the absence of a flag at the NOTL community centre.

The question regarding sufficient funding for library services took some candidates by surprise.

McShane said no, funding isn't enough, admitting, "I don't know where the dollars can come from but it's something well worth looking at."

Demizio drew some jeers from the audience when he asked, given the increase in technology, "are people still going to the library? Are you going to borrow books?"

He quickly back-pedalled when he heard the audience response in support of libraries, and said, "we need to make sure the money is there."

Fraser pointed out that library funding has been frozen for the last 20 years, and library staff trying to get by with limited resources wish they could do more.

"Libraries are places to learn and grow, and the

Green Party will support them," Fraser said.

Gates earned points when he referred to the 80 per cent of NOTL residents who use their public library, and said how important the facility is to "young minds and our seniors."

He promised the NDP would support libraries, including the one in NOTL.

The question about children being able to choose their gender identification in Grade 3 brought up another unexpected topic, but Demizio used it to shoot down the PC's opposition to what they continually refer to as 'sex ed.'

"It's not sex ed, it's physical health and education," said Demizio.

"If kids want to make a choice, as parents we have to listen to them."

It's a "different day and age we live in," he said, adding it's good to know kids are learning what they need to know from their teachers.

Fraser said it's important to deal with kids on their level and teach them until they're old enough to decide for themselves. The Green Party would provide everybody with the health services they need, including mental health services, she said.

McShane stuck to the PC platform, opposing a curriculum "allowing teachers to talk to kids in Grade 3 about what gender they should be."

Teachers should stick to subjects such as math and science, and let parents teach their kids about sex, he said, to applause from the audience.

A question about developing the greenbelt, after PC leader Doug Ford was reported to have told his developer friends they could build on protected land, was

one candidate could sink their teeth into.

McShane said Ford, "after listening to the people," changed his mind about building on the greenbelt. He said he favours more growth in the southern tier to take pressure off the greenbelt, but there will have to be infrastructure to support it, and without it, "there will be a lot of six-storey apartment buildings," including in NOTL, because of initiatives undertaken by the province.

Demizio said he'd like to see redevelopment and a "clean-up" of existing development. Under the PCs, he said, "the greenbelt will be gone," adding Ford is "ready to pave paradise."

Fraser said residents need to look to their city councils and the region to be more defiant against provincial regulations, but said if that doesn't work, "it's up to us."

She also said she's very committed to affordable housing and basic income guarantees, and talked of the Green Party's program that would eliminate poverty.

The NDP party does not believe in developing the greenbelt, said Gates, or wetlands, referring to a Niagara Falls development that was recently approved by its council.

He also referenced NOTL's historic Randwood Estate, the site of a hotel development proposal, drawing applause when he said "if we're going to protect Niagara-on-the-Lake we have to make sure the developers listen to the residents. You have to stand up and say enough is enough."

Asked what he thought was the most important issue affecting Niagara, Demizio talked about health care and the need to build the new

hospital in Niagara Falls and add more long-term beds.

That, he said, would alleviate long waits in hospital emergency rooms, backlogs for treatment and "hallway" care.

Gates agreed health care is a priority, requiring more hospital beds, more staff, including nurses, and more home care for "the seniors who built our country," so they can stay in their homes longer. He spoke of the need to attract more doctors, and also one of his causes — to ensure the unification of couples in separate long-term care facilities.

"Seniors who have spent their entire lives together deserve to spend their last days together," he said.

McShane said the PCs are also dedicated to building the new hospital in Niagara Falls, to more long-term care beds, and to helping seniors stay in their homes longer.

Responding to a question about the minimum wage increase enacted by the Liberals this year, the PC candidate was the only one who wasn't completely supportive of the move, with more increases to come.

"We never disagreed with the minimum wage increase," he said. "But it was too much too fast. Did seniors' pensions go up when the minimum wage went up? I don't think so."

He spoke of people with jobs in the hospitality industry who had their hours cut, and restaurants that closed because "business owners lost 35 per cent off the top."

"Could you afford to lose 35 per cent off the top of your salary?" he asked Gates, and answered for him, "Yes, I guess you could."

The final question of the evening was another surprise and the only one they could all agree on — when their attention was drawn to it, they all said yes, the community centre auditorium should have a Canadian flag.

The flag should be properly displayed, said McShane. "Why isn't there one here? I don't know but I certainly would like to see it here."

Demizio said he has flags at his office and his home. "We live in a great country and we have to pay homage to that."

"It's important to have flags front and centre. It teaches our kids patriotism, and I feel better when I see a flag," said Fraser.

"It promotes civic pride. It should be here and hopefully tomorrow it will be."

Gates said he would talk to Lord Mayor Pat Darte about getting a flag in the community centre.

"It should be here to celebrate not only Canada but the great history, including that of the First Nations, Niagara-on-the-Lake has given us."

Firefighters to go door to door



Smoke alarm. (Supplied photo)

Richard Harley
Editor

Niagara-on-the-Lake firefighters will be going door to door again this year as part of the Safe Home, Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Program.

Firefighters from all five NOTL stations will be out the first two Mondays in June (June 4 and 11) between the hours of 7 p.m. and 9 p.m., checking smoke and carbon monoxide alarms and talking with residents about the importance of having working alarms.

Home owners are encouraged to let firefighters in to confirm their alarms are functional and that they haven't expired.

Firefighters will also be educating residents on the importance of having a working alarm and to ensure they are placed in the appropriate locations.

"Home owners often forget that it is actually against the law to not have working smoke and CO alarms in their homes," said NOTL Fire Chief Rob Grimwood.

"The Safe Home, Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Program is not about identifying and pursuing those home owners, it's about bringing them back into compliance and ensuring our residents are safe."

The program will once again be conducted with the support from Penner Home Hardware Building Centre, which helps by donating funds for the purchase of smoke alarms, carbon monoxide alarms and batteries.

If firefighters do not make it to your home but you would like for someone to confirm you are in compliance, you can make sure by contacting the Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire and Emergency Services prevention division at 905-468-3266.

Step Challenge to get feet moving in NOTL

Penny Coles
Staff

If you live or work in Niagara-on-the-Lake, it's time to get moving.

The Town is once again offering rewards to those who participate in its Step Challenge, which is now open for registration.

The challenge runs from June 1 to June 30, and participants — who can register as individuals or on teams of up to six people — are asked to monitor their steps with an activity tracker, such as a Fitbit, Garmin or smart phone.

Coun. Jim Collard encouraged town residents to get involved in the challenge at a May council meeting.

Participants can record their steps on the challenge website or sync their smartphone or activity tracker. The Town's challenge website will include a leaderboard so participants can check out the top teams and individuals with the highest average of steps.

Collard announced the opening of registration Tues-

day, and encouraged NOTL residents to take part.

He thanked Lord Mayor Pat Darte for sponsoring the program and challenged other councillors to each form a team, as he has.

Several local businesses have donated prizes, he said, including Coun. John Wiens who is contributing NOTL Golf Club gift certificates, Niagara College and the Niagara Outlet Mall have also donated prizes, he said.

The team with the highest average of steps, and the top two individuals with the most steps throughout the challenge will win prizes.

Also, each of the four weeks a prize — an Ecobee smart thermostat donated by Enbridge Gas Distribution — will be donated to the person with the most steps that week, said Collard.

The Town wants to see its residents — and their visitors, suggested Collard — to get walking, encouraging them to "be healthy."

To register online go to, notl.compasscms.com/content/step-challenge.

Continued: Randwood Part 1: The Background

In 2011, when the property was still owned by Romance and Peterson, a rezoning application for a hotel on the Randwood Estate, which was then next door to their home, went before town council and was approved.

At that time, there was a similar heated debate about whether to allow the rezoning and what would be allowed with regards to development.

The Town agreed to amend its height bylaw to allow the back of the (then) proposed hotel to be four storeys, where the landscape sloped down. There was also to be a spa, a 106-room hotel, and a 200-seat restaurant. Shrubs on the property — the boxwood hedge — were to be preserved.

The 2011 report said the new building should not "dominate and overwhelm the existing buildings," that the property should be designated under the Ontario Heritage act, and that final designs and plans be subject to approval by the Municipal Heritage Committee.

To move forward with his proposal, Marotta needs a zoning amendment to allow for the height of his 145-room hotel. It's currently zoned at 57 feet, which is considered sufficient for five storeys, but his plan is to build higher and within a smaller footprint of the Romance design, he said.

He believes he should be able to develop his own property, and maintains he thinks of Randwood as a "paradise," one that needs to be preserved and refreshed, pointing out no one else has come forward with a plan or the money to do that.

Marotta said he believes his stance is in the best interest of the town, and said he has no interest in removing any of the historic buildings.

He said he has received extensive criticism for cutting heritage trees on the site, but can personally name and point out several species he hopes to protect and has had extensive work done to preserve the trees, some which are more than 100 years old, planted as part of the original estate.

He acknowledged they only add to the value of his property and future hotel.

He said he paid arborists \$87,000 last summer to maintain trees on the property so they would thrive, and to identify emerald ash trees infested with borer beetles.

He has also planted some trees of his own choice on the property, which he said is a plan for the future, when the older trees inevitably die.

There are two sides to the story of the boxwood hedge, which is protected in the town's official plan in a 2011 amendment — some SORE members believe a section of it has been cut down, and have photos they believe they support their claim, which Marotta disputes.

Marotta said nine of the stumps are boxwood, but that they were not healthy enough to survive a move closer to the property line — which is his plan for the hedge. The rest of the stumps, he said, are cedars.

A town report is in the works, which will hopefully clear up that particular part of the mystery.

Designation is another divisive issue — SORE has been fighting for historical designation at the Randwood Estate since December and failed to see any progress so far, despite Two Sisters having previously agreed to designation.

Roman said because there still has been no report on any efforts made to follow through — nor has council requested the designation — he wonders who the group is fighting.

However, council members have supported designation, but will not direct the town staff to move forward until they have the Municipal Heritage Committee's recommendation before them, which is expected in June.

Coun. Betty Disero attempted at the May council meeting to change the wording of the motion she'd made in April, but failed, as council members said it would not be procedural.

Disero, a seasoned councillor, was accused of grandstanding by Coun. Martin Mazza, who said he believes Disero knew she wouldn't be able to amend the wording of the motion, but wanted the discussion to take place with a room full of Randwood development critics.

While some SORE members accuse councillors of trying to prevent historical designation of the property before it goes to the provincial tribunal, Roman and Hall admitted they are uncertain "whether it is collusion or just incompetence," at the council level.

Marotta said he thinks Disero could silently be backing SORE, as a political tool for the municipal election, in which she is running for Lord Mayor — an accusation she vehemently denies.

Along the way, the group admits it has gotten advice from Disero.

Marotta said he believes many of SORE's talking points have been organized by somebody with a deep knowledge of political landscapes, reminiscent, he says, of "Toronto politics."

"(Disero) is a seasoned politician," Marotta said.

Disero, who was a Toronto city councillor from 1985 to 2003, said she doesn't have the "time or money" to back any such campaign.

She said she's been open about the fact she's spoken with SORE members "as concerned residents" and has given them advice, and "would offer help to any-



A large boxwood hedge is tied up so it can be safely transplanted. (Richard Harley)



A cedar stump (left) and a boxwood stump (right). Nine boxwood stumps can be counted near a protected boxwood hedge. (Richard Harley)

body who asked for it."

Her support of Randwood opposition has caused a division on council.

Disero claims other council members don't even talk to her anymore.

She has voiced frustration that development has been removed from the hands of the town, while other councillors have voiced frustrations with her, saying she isn't following procedure and is grandstanding — to the detriment of her own cause.

Coun. Martin Mazza said he believes her cause was never Randwood, but in fact, was a much larger ploy from the very beginning — one to become lord mayor.

Marotta said he's waiting for the staff report, which will include the heritage committee's recommendations, before he agrees to a town-initiated designation, or moves forward on designation himself.

He said his preference is to wait until the site plan is approved, and then designate the site.

There is a likelihood, if the rezoning process is not completed and approved, that Marotta will appeal to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal, which has replaced the Ontario Municipal Board, and which gives more weight to decisions of the municipality and its committees.

Marotta said he wants to clear up some rumours he's still hearing that aren't true about the development — people have been coming up to him under the impression he is intending to demolish the buildings on the property.

That's not the case, he said, and those accusations are

"entirely false."

He said he will not be demolishing any of the buildings on the site, and that he plans to renovate and maintain them, as well as the wall surrounding it, and the nature and history of the property. He believes he will be preserving the characteristic of the property while fulfilling his plan.

The project, he said, is meant to bring the hospitality of NOTL to a "higher level," and that the design is intended to achieve a five-star hotel.

He said he would be happy to meet with anyone to address any issues or misunderstanding that has caused this negativity (regarding the proposal).

"It is important that people in the town understand the only way to achieve success is working together in order to protect a unique estate within the town."

This is the first chapter of the Randwood story, intending to go over the background, with more to follow on the remaining unsolved mysteries, including a further investigation of the conflict on council and how it could shape the fall municipal election, the real story of the boxwood hedge, the likelihood of a residential subdivision bordering the property, and what could occur if (or when) the new planning provincial appeal tribunal deals with the zoning application before the town.

Stay tuned.

editor@niagaranow.com



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 GARDENING

GARDEN PROFILE: Linda Baines



Linda Baines in her Nassau Street garden. (Supplied)

Beckie Fox
Garden Making
Submitted

Designing a low-maintenance garden doesn't mean sacrificing beauty: Linda Baines' Nassau Street garden proves that.

Filled with the colourful

foliage of perennials and compact shrubs, it will be one of eight private gardens open to the public June 9 as part of the Shaw Guild's 13th annual Garden Tour.

Baines said her garden is an easy one to care for, being filled with many perennials and shrubs,

which she's artfully arranged to contrast each other.

"My busiest time is in early spring, when I'm tending the beds," she said.

After that, she enjoys the contrasting colours — a mix of purple chartreuse and the blue foliage of 'black lace' elderberries, next to bright green Japanese forest grasses and hostas.

Deep, sweeping beds are anchored by beautiful specimen trees throughout the relatively small corner of her property, including a weeping purple beech and several Japanese maples.

A gradually stepped-down terrace at the back of the house ends with raised planting beds featuring purple barberries, white echinaceas and creeping blue junipers.

As a life-long gardener, Baines has cared for much larger gardens in Muskoka and Toronto over the years, but sought to downsize when she began planting this garden in 2012.

"It was a non-garden when we started with just the 90-year-old red pine

and a ginkgo tree in the back," she says.

She said she focused on compact shrubs and perennials because "annuals are too much work."

Baines is also a firm believer in mulching.

"Mulching cuts down maintenance because it helps discourage weeds and conserves water."

Shaw Guild Garden Tour

The 13th annual Shaw Guild Garden Tour is from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, June 9.

This year's tour will feature eight private gardens on properties dating from the 1930s to 2006.

Master Gardeners will also be volunteering at each of the gardens to provide horticultural info.

Tickets are \$25 per person and are available at the Shaw Festival box office, Mori Gardens, the Chamber of Commerce or can be purchased at any of the garden locations on tour day.

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Dreams of outdoor living



Flowers along Queen St. in Old Town. (Richard Harley)

Catharine Skinner
Submitted

I am not a seasoned gardener.

In fact, after leaving city life behind, I'm facing the chore of creating a front garden and backyard living space in our two-year-old home, where all we've got by way of landscaping is some sod and a skinny little tree at the side of the road.

Up until now, my green thumb has only ever been used to plunk cheerful annuals into balcony containers.

Enter Joanne Young, Garden Designer at Mori Gardens, who kindly walked me through the overwhelm of planning an outdoor space. She's honed the process into a few easy steps that even a city gal like me can manage.

Make a wish list.

Include every element you'd love in your oasis. Dream big, and see how your outdoor space can evolve over time.

Consider budget.

Divide your list into stages you can tackle each year. Take into account the most economical use of your resources. For example, if you need brickwork for a shed, a pathway, and a patio, it may be more affordable to tackle all of the brickwork at once than to hire someone for each job.

Hone your style.

Japanese, English Cottage, Woodland...these were terms I'd heard, but was hard pressed to define.

Pore through magazines, Pinterest, and sites like Houzz.com. Collect images that appeal to you, and you'll notice common themes emerge.

Use the five senses of gardening.

Joanne's key to beautiful garden design includes: sense of entry (something that invites you in to see more); a sense of welcomeness (equate the space with a relaxing

atmosphere); enclosure (defined space that creates shade and privacy); place (compliments the architecture of your home), and a sense of flow (lines direct the eye around the garden).

Draw a bubble diagram.

This rough sketch of your space is ideally drawn to scale. Add existing elements, and then allocate 'bubbles' to plot new features. Play around before making permanent decisions. Note sun and shady spots, and experiment with lines.

Make a plant list.

Remember that you can purchase smaller versions of the plants you love and let them grow in. Other considerations include maintenance, problem areas (turn them into features!), your hardiness zone, seasonal transitions, sunlight, and colour.

I've got everything I need to start dreaming up my backyard sanctuary.

If you're still intimidated by tackling an overhaul on your own, book in with a Mori Gardens designer — They offer a no obligation appointment to find the service that's right for you.

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The Lake Report

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
<p>27</p> <p>Family Friendly Drop-In Art Studio - 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. - Niagara Pump House Arts Centre</p> <p>Nikki Chooi and Tony Yike Yang - 7:30 to 11 p.m. - Stratus Vineyards</p>	<p>28</p> <p>NOTL Library: Cyber Security Part 3 - Setting Security and Privacy - 11 a.m. to noon</p> <p>Tours of St. Mark's Cemetery - 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. - St. Mark's Cemetery</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>The SuperMarket (Every Wednesday) - 4:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. - Garrison Village</p>
<p>3</p> <p>Positive Living Niagara: Migrant Workers Health Fair - 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>St. Davids Lions Club Charity Golf Tournament - 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. - Eagle Valley</p> <p>Walking Tours of Old Town - 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. - Niagara Historical Society & Museum</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Fundraiser for Amy Janzen - 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. - Community Centre</p> <p>Janet Carnochan Day - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Niagara Historical Society & Museum</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Senior Activities: Golden Age Club - 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>Author Reading: Alexis Koetting - 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. - NOTL Library</p> <p>Big Bike Event for Heart & Stroke - Noon to 8 p.m. - Pillar & Post</p>	<p>Simply Steam Story Time - 11:45 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>NOTL Library: Move - All the M in the World - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - Public Library</p> <p>NOTL Foodie Tour - 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. - Niagara Culinary Tours</p>
<p>10</p> <p>NOTL Writers' Circle: Writers' Lab - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Napoleonic Weekend and Re-enactment at Fort George - 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. - Fort George</p> <p>Polish Sunday Annual Pilgrimage - 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. - Polish Military Cemetery</p> <p>CWOP Cricket Match for Local Farm Workers - 2 p.m. - Veterans Memorial Park</p> <p>NOTL Cats Rescue Silent Auction Fundraiser - Pet Valu</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Cosmo Condina "Photographic Works of Sicily" - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Niagara Pump House Arts Centre</p> <p>Town Council Meeting - 6:30 p.m. - Town Hall</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Senior Activities: Golden Age Club - 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>The Makeshift - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p>	<p>InfoHealth: Genomic Testing and Health - 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Simply Steam Story Time - 11:45 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p>
<p>17</p> <p>NOTL Writers' Circle: Writers' Lab - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Famous & Infamous: Richard Feynman - 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. - Niagara Historical Society & Museum</p> <p>Niagara Homegrown Wine Festival - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.</p>	<p>18</p> <p>NOTL Seniors Strawberry Social - 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. - Community Centre</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Senior Activities: Golden Age Club - 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>The Makeshift - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>NOTL Chamber of Commerce Golf Tournament - 11:30 a.m. - Royal Niagara Golf Club</p>	<p>Open House: Queenston Community Centre Playground Public Consultation - 2 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. - Queenston Community Centre</p>
<p>24</p> <p>Family Friendly Drop-In Art Studio - 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. - Niagara Pump House Arts Centre</p> <p>NOTL Writers' Circle: Writers' Lab - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Family Croquet Tournament in memory of Kevan O'Connor - 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. - Red Roof Retreat (Con. 6)</p>	<p>25</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Senior Activities: Golden Age Club - 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>The Makeshift - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p>	

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Day	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30	31	1	2
<p>Legion Fish Fry (Every Thursday) - 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. - NOTL Legion</p>	<p>Knit a Bit - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p>	<p>Ragnar Niagara 2018: Running Event - 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. - Niagara</p> <p>The Big Night 2018 - 5:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>Central Community Church: Volunteer Appreciation Picnic - 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. - Centennial Park Pavillion</p> <p>The World of Perennials - Mori Gardens</p> <p>RiverBrink TALKS Series - Peter Mulcaster - A Railway History of Niagara-on-the-Lake, 1854-1959</p>	<p>Jackson Triggs Summer Concert Series: Sam Roberts Band - 7 p.m. - Jackson Triggs Estate Winery</p> <p>13th Annual Shaw Guild Garden Tour - 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Shaw Festival</p> <p>Grand Bazaar at Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre - 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre -</p> <p>Jolly June Jam-Boree - 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. - Grace United Church</p> <p>Napoleonic Weekend and Re-enactment at Fort George - 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. - Fort George</p> <p>Kinsmen Club: Spring Fever - 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. - Virigl Sports Park</p> <p>Annual Yard Sale St. Davids - 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. - Creekside Senior Estates</p>
6	7	8	9
<p>Senior Drop-In: Casual Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>Dock Area Shoreline Protection Public Consultation - 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. - Community Centre</p> <p>Jackson Triggs Summer Concert Series: Sam Roberts Band - 7 p.m. - Jackson Triggs Estate Winery</p> <p>The Makeshift - 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Provincial Election Voting - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>Legion Fish Fry (every Thursday) - 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. - NOTL Legion</p>	<p>Jackson Triggs Summer Concert Series: Sa.m. Roberts Band - 7 p.m. - Jackson Triggs Estate Winery</p> <p>P.D. Day? Make & Play! - 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Knit a Bit - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Neighbourhood Walks: Dock Area - 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. - Niagara Historical Society & Museum</p> <p>Trius Red Presents: Movie Night in the Vineyard - Grease - 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. - Trius Winery & Restaurant</p>	<p>Jackson Triggs Summer Concert Series: Whitehorse - 7 p.m. - Jackson Triggs Estate Winery</p> <p>Trius Red Presents: Movie Night in the Vineyard - Risky Business - 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. - Trius Winery & Restaurant</p> <p>Tours of St. Mark's Cemetery - 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. - St. Mark's Cemetery</p>	<p>St. John Ambulance Babysitting Course - 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Jackson Triggs Summer Concert Series: Broken Social Scene - 7 p.m. - Jackson Triggs Estate Winery</p> <p>35th Annual Strawberry Festival - 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. - St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church</p> <p>Konzelmann 30th Anniversary - 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. - Konzelmann Estate Winery</p> <p>Two Sisters Vineyards Movie in the Vineyard - 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. - Two Sisters Vineyards</p> <p>MORI GARDENS: Privacy Plants/ Living Walls - All day - Mori Gardens</p> <p>Car Show @ Farmers' Market - 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.</p>
13	14	15	16
<p>Practical Genealogy: Beginner Class & DNA Workshop - 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Family Story Time - 11 to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>The Antisocial: Electronic Autopsy - 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>White Effect Dinner - 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. - Queenston Heights</p> <p>Legion Fish Fry (every Thursday) - 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. - NOTL Legion</p>	<p>Senior Drop-In: Casual Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>Minecraft Club - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Legion Fish Fry (every Thursday) - 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. - NOTL Legion</p> <p>Upper Canada Drystone Festival - 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Red Roof Retreat (Con. 6)</p>	<p>Jackson Triggs Summer Concert Series: Serena Ryder - 7 p.m. - Jackson Triggs Estate Winery</p> <p>Trius Red Presents: Movie Night in the Vineyard - Pretty Woman - 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. - Trius Winery & Restaurant</p> <p>Upper Canada Drystone Festival - 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Red Roof Retreat (Con. 6)</p>	<p>MORI GARDENS: Xeriscaping - All day - Mori Gardens</p> <p>The Makery: Summer Kickoff and Birthday Bash - All Day - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Laura Secord Walk 2018 - 9 a.m. - Secord Homestead</p> <p>Niagara Homegrown Wine Festival - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.</p> <p>Art in the Vineyard - 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. - Frogpond Farm Winery</p>
20	21	22	23
<p>Senior Drop-In: Casual Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>Minecraft Club - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Legion Fish Fry (every Thursday) - 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. - NOTL Legion</p> <p>Upper Canada Drystone Festival - 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Red Roof Retreat (Con. 6)</p>	<p>Knit a Bit - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Trius Red Presents: Movie Night in the Vineyard - Forrest Gump - 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. - Trius Winery & Restaurant</p>	<p>Knit a Bit - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Trius Red Presents: Movie Night in the Vineyard - Forrest Gump - 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. - Trius Winery & Restaurant</p>	<p>Artistry by the Lake - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Queen's Royal Park</p>
27	28	29	30
<p>Senior Drop-In: Casual Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>Minecraft Club - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p>	<p>Knit a Bit - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Trius Red Presents: Movie Night in the Vineyard - Forrest Gump - 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. - Trius Winery & Restaurant</p>	<p>Knit a Bit - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Trius Red Presents: Movie Night in the Vineyard - Forrest Gump - 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. - Trius Winery & Restaurant</p>	<p>Artistry by the Lake - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Queen's Royal Park</p>

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NOTL Farmers' Market kicks off with a bang

Richard Harley
Editor

The first Niagara-on-the-Lake Farmers' Market of the season saw a steady crowd when it kicked off in May.

The morning was filled with conversation, coffee and local vendors selling a variety of products like fresh veggies, plants, and gourmet butters and preserves, while Niagara musician Cory Cruise entertained the crowd with mellow tunes.

Market coordinator Sharon Brinsmead-Taylor said there are a bunch of new vendors this year, offering a wide selection of local products, as the market continues to grow.

A popular trend this year is micro-veggies — mainly different types of sprouts, which she said are “packed with nutrients.”

Bee Inspired Farms, started by NOTL residents Bill and Cherie McMillan last February, is one of the vendors selling micro-veggies.

All of the sprouts are grown in their home, in a dedicated “grow op” room Cherie said.

Some returning locals this year are Kim McQuhae, selling her award-winning Gryphon Ridge gourmet jams and preserves, and Bartel Family Farms, a vendor Brinsmead-Taylor said has supported the market since day one.

Another returning vendor is Lindsay's Gourmet Compound Butter, which makes a series of flavour-packed butters, such as blue cheese



Lindsay Rose of Lindsay's Gourmet Compound Butter sells her flavour-packed spreads at the first Niagara-on-the-Lake Farmers' Market of the season. (Photos by Richard Harley)

chive or Latin spice.

Daniela Kovacevic, a regular market-goer, said all the new vendors were “wonderful,” and that everybody seemed to jive perfectly.

Joyce and Mike Higgs, owners of Plants and More, first-time vendors at the market, said the traffic was steady throughout the day, unlike other markets which they said typically have spikes in attendance times. They also said they were extremely impressed with the quality of the market, crediting Brinsmead-Taylor for running something truly local and unique.

Local resident Paul Staz, who was at the market with



Market-goers were able to sample Lindsay's gourmet butters, including blue cheese chive, roasted garlic, lemon caper, Latin spiced and a variety of sweet butters.

his son Graham, said he's there every Saturday, and that it's a perfect way to start off the weekend.

“I've got my coffee, music

and people.”

The market is every Saturday from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. outside the Garrison House, on Niagara Stone Rd.



Cherie and Bill McMillan, owners of Bee Inspired farms sell micro-veggies at the NOTL Farmers' Market. The first-time vendors started the company in February this year.



Kim McQuhae of Gryphon Ridge Farms sells her gourmet award-winning preserves at the first Farmers' Market of the season.

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St. Davids students get tech upgrade from firefighters

Richard Harley
Editor

Students from St. Davids Public School got a tech upgrade in May, courtesy of the St. Davids Firefighters Association.

The Association purchased 10 additional Google Chromebooks for students to use.

The school's budget only allowed for 20, which caused the need for partnering up and didn't provide students with the full ability to use the computer to study, said S DFA president Derek Rooney, who heard about the school's need from a parent on the school's parent council.

Now, each student will have access to a Chromebook, Rooney said.

“We have had the opportunity to go to the school and meet with some of the students who study with these computers, and it was fantastic to see how happy they are to be able to have access to their own computer to study.”



Members of St. Davids Public School student council show off their new Chromebooks, gifts from the St. Davids Firefighters Association. (Back) Mallory Doppenberg, Ayla Jamal, Maya Dueck and Xander Anderson. (Front) Sierra Kelly and Valerie Yaremchak. (Richard Harley)

He said he himself remembers being in grade school and having to share computers in the lab and wanted to make sure the students all had access to their own computers.

All in all the price tag of

the Chromebooks, for all brand new, top-of-the-line models, was \$2,629, he said.

The St. Davids Firefighters Association holds fundraising events throughout the year, including a community breakfast on the last Satur-

day of each month where the public can enjoy a home-cooked buffet-style breakfast at the fire hall.

Other events include the annual turkey roll each December, where firefighters auction off turkeys and



Derek Rooney (left), president, and Rob MacLeod, treasurer, of St. Davids Firefighters Association. (Richard Harley)

hold a prize draw, a tradition Rooney said members are very proud to keep alive.

“Every year is different; we have done boot drives in the past as well as other fundraising initiatives that provide our community with an opportunity to donate to local charities,” said Rooney.

S DFA donates to many local charities and minor sports leagues each year,

including Red Roof Retreat, Epilepsy Niagara, the Canadian Cancer Society, NOTL Minor Hockey, NOTL Minor Lacrosse, NOTL Minor Baseball, NOTL Minor Soccer, NOTL Air Cadets, and Canadian Red Cross Disaster Relief.

This year, they chose St. Davids school after deciding the students would benefit most from their donation.

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Local talent to flood provincials



(Back row) Carlo Rescigno, Madison Marino, Alexandre Brillon, Victoria Ferreira, Naomi Shad, Alexis Bowman, Morgan Hilliker. (Front) Alya Jamal, Gioia DeLeonardis, Emily Draper. The group of Niagara musicians will head to the Ontario Music Festival Association's provincial competition in June. **(Richard Harley)**

Richard Harley
Editor

When the Ontario Music Festival Association holds its annual provincial music competition this June, Niagara will be making a splash.

Twelve Niagara singers involved in Niagara Musical Theatre & Voice Festival will head to the competition, which takes place from June 11 to 16 at various venues in Hamilton.

The competitors, from 48 member festivals across Ontario, must be recommended

by an adjudicator to attend, and only two competitors per discipline are recommended, said Lisa Brillon, director of NMTVF.

From Niagara-on-the-Lake are singers Gioia DeLeonardis, Alya Jamal and Alexandre Brillon, Lisa's son.

DeLeonardis will be singing in the Junior Musical Theatre division, while Jamal will sing in the Elementary Musical Theatre Division and Alexandre will compete in both the Intermediate Musical Theatre and National Musical Theatre; Geena Prestia for Junior Musical Theatre; Maya Boccinfuso for Elementary Musical Theatre; Alexis

Alexandre is a past overall winner of the Junior Musical Theatre division as well as placing third for the past four consecutive years.

From the region are Morgan Hilliker and Emily Draper for Senior Musical Theatre; Paige Hergott and Milo Boccinfuso for Intermediate Musical Theatre; Naomi Shad for Intermediate Musical Theatre and National Musical Theatre; Geena Prestia for Junior Musical Theatre; Maya Boccinfuso for Elementary Musical Theatre; Alexis

Bowman and Victoria Ferreira for Grade 6 voice; Carlo Rescigno and Milo Boccinfuso for Grade 7 voice; and Sydney Cornett and Madison Marino for Grade 9 voice.

The Niagara Musical Theatre & Voice Festival has been running for five years, founded by Lisa Brillon.

This year the festival was held at the Yellow Door Theatre in Virgil in February.

The festival provides more than \$4,000 in scholarships to young singers and is a member of the Ontario Music Festival Association.

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NOTL Legion celebrates 90 years of community service



From left, Harvey Hall, Barb Cole, Jeff Hall, Al Howse (Legion president), Victor Packard and Chris Toye cook up food for those who came out to celebrate the Legion's 90th anniversary on Victoria Day weekend. **(Richard Harley)**

Spirits were high and the smell of the grill was in the air as the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124 in Niagara-on-the-Lake celebrated nine decades of community service anniversary with a barbecue in May.

It was in 1918, after the November 11 armistice of the First World War, when 600,000 Canadians returned home to their communities and civilian lives, "scars and all," said Legion president Al Howse.

Not long after that, veterans in the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake formed the Niagara Veterans Association, and along with other groups like the Independent Order of Daughters of the Empire, began the work of veteran support.

A decade later, the Association applied for a charter to the Canadian Legion of the British Service League and on May 18, 1928, the NOTL Legion Branch 124 was created, with the mission to support veterans, promote remembrance and

serve the community.

The torch has since been passed on to the veterans who fought for democracy in the Second World War, said Howse.

"We took the torch and stayed true to the cause, despite some struggles. Ninety years later we still hold the torch high."

Howse said the Legion will also honour its 90th anniversary by refreshing the look of the building, with work mainly being done to the monument out front to make it more accessible.

"We want to keep our look welcoming to all," said Howse, noting the monument out front is currently in the middle of the front lawn, with no pathway surrounding it.

He said it would be nice for all members to be able to appreciate it.

Also, Legion members will gather information to update book about the Legion that was published in 1988.

The book, Howse said, contains stories about local service men and women.

"We are going to build on our work to document the stories and pictures of our local service men and women ... to update and put all information we have in digital form for wider distribution," said Howse.

"There are many brave men and women from this area enlisted, and have stories and pictures to go with the adventures."

Howse encourages all NOTL residents, both new and old to stop by and see what the Legion is all about.

"Come in and see our Branch. It is important to us that all of the town knows we are still in their service," said Howse.

"We have achieved this together, so we should celebrate together."

The Legion is located on King St., near Memorial Park.

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THE VIRGIL STAMPEDE 2018



The 52nd annual Virgil Stampede took over Centennial Sports Park during a Victoria Day Long Weekend filled with rides, games, barbecues and family fun. (Photos by Richard Harley)

Penny Coles
Staff

It's been 52 years since a neighbourhood fireworks display for locals grew to become the Virgil Stampede.

It's now a three-day festival that draws thousands of people to one of the most successful family events in the Niagara region.

Its enduring popularity is evident in the numbers, said Virgil Business Association president Richard Wall.

And although the final numbers aren't in for this year, he said it appeared to be one of the best-attended events yet.

The weather co-operated two of the three days, and even though Saturday's forecast scared people away, Sunday and Monday the grounds were packed and the rides were busy.

He said judging by the sales at the food booth — which is always a good measure of the turnout — those two days made up for poor showing Saturday.

The decision to open Sundays about five or six years ago has proven to be a wise one with weekends like this year, said Wall.

With a three-day event, it's possible to make up for a poor day.

And people seem to be getting used to the idea that Sunday is as good a day as any to come to the stampede, he said.

"I would say overall, based on the traffic Sunday and Monday, this year's event would be up there with one of the best years ever."



The Pannicia and Majka families enjoy some carnival snacks at the Virgil Stampede during the Victoria Day long weekend in May.

The outdoor market, new this year, was cancelled Saturday, but from those Wall spoke to the rest of the weekend, the feedback was mostly positive, unlike attempts at indoor markets in the arena in previous years, he said.

Saturday's demolition derby managed to pack the bleachers despite the weather, and with more heats and more cars to watch than previous years.

"A lot of people were saying it was the best show yet," said Wall.

"And because of the rain, there was mud flying into the stands, which apparently the kids thought was pretty cool."

The organizers of Mon-

day's miniature horse show were also delighted with the turnout — more horses registered this year, allowing the show to continue throughout the day.

The food booth was so busy after the fireworks Monday night that there was just one bag of fries left — some onion rings.

"You can't get much closer than that. And you couldn't move through the crowd. It was a packed house, and a great show."

Wall, whose father Dave was the president of the VBA in the early years of the stampede, said he's noticed a continuity of three generations both helping out with and attending the stampede.

And after a skirmish last year on the grounds that made the VBA decide to have police on site, the event ran smoothly with "just a few minor issues that were dealt with," he said.

In the decades since the first Stampede the VBA has raised more than \$1.2 million to put back into the community.

In early years, proceeds went to help fund the first hockey arena at the Virgil sports park.

This year money is being put aside to support the concept of a pump track for cyclists and skateboarders, which is still in the early stages of discussion as an addition to park.



Adrian Poapst and Holly Neuhof ride the dragon roller coaster, one of the many popular rides at the annual Virgil Stampede.



The rain provided the perfect terrain for cars to splash mud around during the derby.



The children's derby kicked off the mud-fuelled frenzy on the Saturday of the Virgil Stampede.



Bridgette Dingman and Lauren Davidson get thrown around on the Scrambler, a Virgil Stampede classic.



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Four-way stop now a go



Town Coun. Paolo Miele, NRP traffic enforcement sergeant Adam Carter and Lord Mayor Pat Darte were out to see how traffic responded to the two new stop signs creating a four-way stop on Four Mile Creek and Line 2 roads. (Photos by Richard Harley)

Richard Harley
Editor

The Niagara Region has put up a four-way stop at the intersection of Four Mile Creek and Line 3 roads in May, after what some claimed to have been the 29th collision at the corner in April caused a stir amongst town council.

Coun. Miele went live with a Facebook video in April to show just how bad the accidents can be, and attended regional council with Lord Mayor Pat Darte to demand a solution to try to make sure nobody else gets hurt.

The Region agreed to the four-way stop, saying the intersection, which technically didn't meet the standards for a four-way, is unique and warranted an immediate solution.

The four-way was officially unveiled a couple of days after being installed.

The signs had been bagged before that while the Region painted the proper road lines.

Darte and Miele, who were both out the day the first day



A stop sign on Line 3 hasn't been enough to prevent multiple collisions at the intersection of Line 3 Rd. and Four Mile Creek Rd. in Virgil.

the signs were uncovered to talk to neighbours and see how traffic was responding, said it's about time something was done at the corner.

Passersby agreed — during the short time a reporter was on scene, a handful of people stopped to express their thanks to the lord mayor and Coun. Miele for getting the stop signs put up.

Lydia Plett, a retired elementary school teacher

who has lived on the corner of Line 3 and Creek Rd. for more than 35 years — 13 of them on the actual corner — said she is "extremely grateful."

She said living so close, she's "seen and heard" all of the accidents that have happened.

"You hope it's not your kids," Plett said.

"But it's somebody's." Darte said he hopes people

will spread the word around that the four-way is now active, so traffic will start to get used to the signs.

Niagara Regional Police officers were on scene the first day to make sure traffic got the message.

Traffic Enforcement Sergeant Adam Carter said he issued more than two dozen warning tickets.

He said around one in 15 cars was ignoring the signs, but that it was likely just because it's unknown.

The speed limit on Creek has also been lowered to 50 and 60 km/h coming from Niagara Stone Rd.

Coun. Terry Flynn agreed that the speed reduction would be a help in preventing accidents along Creek Rd.

Flynn, who doubles as superintendent of operations for Niagara EMS, said although it might impede the flow of traffic, he'd rather be slightly inconvenienced that have to get another call about an accident and wonder "who is it this time?"

He said the trouble the town originally had with the intersection was the road is controlled by the Region, not the town.

He said town council had battled with the Region for years about the intersection, having to fight tooth-and-nail to get a flashing light installed above the stop sign on Line 3, and to put up a sign warning traffic that through traffic on Four Mile Creek doesn't stop.

None of that helped.

Plett thanked Miele for his Facebook video, which seemed to be the catalyst in finally seeing some solution.

Now, the struggle will be enforcement, said Carter, noting the intersection is still not the most ideal spot, and that even stopping, drivers can see if the person headed down Line 3 is intending to stop.

He said there will be a bit of a learning curve for town residents.



NOTL Nationals logo. (Supplied)

Richard Harley
Editor

After nearly two years of negotiations, Niagara-on-the-Lake is officially getting its own Junior A hockey team.

The team, the NOTL Nationals, will call Virgil's Meridian Credit Union Arena its home and will play games on Friday nights and some Sundays, said team owner Spencer De Wolfe, who is a

long-time hockey player and coach, himself.

"It's not just going to be a hockey game, it's going to be a family event," De Wolfe said. "It's entertainment for people to enjoy and look forward to on Friday nights."

Players will be trained in development skill sessions by former NHL players Zenon Konopka and Dave Cowan and will be coached by former Hamilton Bulldogs coach John Grossi. Two other coaches, both from Toronto, will also be named in the coming weeks.

De Wolfe said NOTL was the "right fit" for the team, which he's been wanting to start for some time.

"We thought Niagara-on-the-Lake is a fabulous town ... It's somewhat surprising how driven the community is,

and it was important for us to find a town that was accepting."

Putting a Junior A team together, he said, can get "quite expensive," and although there isn't an exact price tag yet, there is a lot to do — from setting up branding and franchising to renovating the arena and purchasing equipment.

He said the team and town have worked together to put the "best product on the ice."

"The whole staff of the town has been awesome in negotiating and working things out."

The team logo is currently being added to the arena's changing rooms, ticket booth and coaches' doors.

De Wolfe said painting the NOTL Nationals' logo on the ice hasn't been negoti-

ated yet, but they've signed a three-year lease for the arena and intend to stay around.

The team will travel to play other Ontario Junior A teams, though De Wolfe said the furthest they would likely go is around two hours away.

NOTL Lord Mayor Pat Darte said he's "enthusiastic about another opportunity that brings youth to the town."

"I know my family will be establishing a new tradition of being at the arena on Friday nights to cheer on the NOTL Nationals," Darte said.

Team tryouts were held at the end of May for players aged 16 to 20.

For information on other ways to get involved go to, www.notlnationals.com



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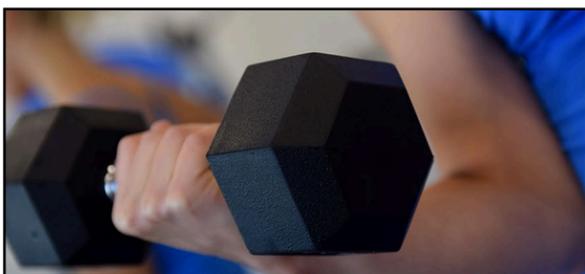



FAMILY FRIENDLY DINER

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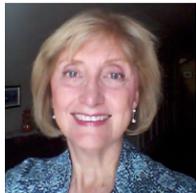
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The old NOTL steam engine



Denise Ascenzo
Featured

Imagine hearing a bell ringing in the distance, but it isn't from a bell tower.

Imagine hearing a strange whistle way off across the fields, and then feeling a rumble under your feet as a mighty monster comes into view.

Bell ringing, whistle blowing, steam billowing from its sides — it is 1854 and here comes the very first steam locomotive train into Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The railway system, owned by the Erie & Ontario Railroad, was the first railway in the area and the train only ran a short run, from Chip-pawa to Niagara Falls to the escarpment above Queenston, where it would descend down to Concession 2 (crossing what is now Queenston Rd.) and into Niagara-on-the-Lake (NOTL).

Once in NOTL, the train headed through the intersection at King St. and John St. towards the Niagara Docks, swinging to the right as it reached Front St. and finally crossing Delator St. on a wooden trestle bridge to arrive at the dockyard.

Remnants of the railway line can still be seen today at two intersections in NOTL (Charlotte St./Pafford St., and John St./King St.) and although the trestle bridge is long gone, you can still follow the trains route at Front St. by walking along Riverbeach Dr., passing Balls Beach to Turntable Way.

At the Niagara Docks, cargo and passengers bound for Toronto would make their way onto the steamers that crossed the lake three times a day.

Most of the cargo would be shipped during the summer, comprising of peaches, cherries and other delicate fruits grown in the region, while the passengers mainly consisted of business men from Buffalo, anxious to tap into the lucrative Toronto markets. Tourists also used the steam boats to take their summer vacations.

Once unloaded, the mighty steam locomotive would then be moved onto a turntable where a rotating bridge allowed the engine to be turned around to be loaded again for its return journey. If there were any problems with the



An illustration of the old train that once passed through downtown Niagara-on-the-Lake. (Supplied)

engine, it would be shunted into the locomotive barn for repairs.

Remnants of the turntable and the barn are still visible today. In fact, this area of the old docks has been designated as a "Site of Historical Importance" in NOTL.

On April 8, 1960, a rockslide along the Niagara Escarpment destroyed about 70 feet of the rail line, ending any possibility that rail service might come back to NOTL.

Niagara-on-the-Lake was also home to the train's only conductor, George Patrick Miles (Paddy Miles) who worked on the train from 1863 to 1901 and made an impression on the people of the town.

Even though the railway changed names throughout the years as it passed between companies, most of the town's people called it "the Paddy Miles Express."

Miles became a familiar figure, standing at the docks in his blue suit, brass buttons and brass-trimmed blue cap, greeting all passengers boarding the train in a friendly manner.

Even after he retired he could be seen on the front

porch of his home on King St. watching for the train to pass by.

Besides transporting people and cargo from Toronto to Buffalo, the train was also heavily used during the First and Second World Wars as a troop transport.

The spur line (a secondary track for loading and unloading railcars without interfering with other railroad operations) for Camp Niagara turned off the main line at King St. and Mary St. and ran along John St. as far as Paradise Grove.

On this line you would see raw young recruits step off the trains, and months later you would see well-trained soldiers board the troop trains to Toronto, where they would then be sent to Halifax for

transport to Europe.

Remnants of this line and the loading platform are still visible as you walk along the path, through the Commons parallel to John St.

The railway line was extended to Fort Erie and across to Buffalo in 1863, and the daily train service was implemented in 1864, running from Buffalo to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The schedule posted was: "departure from Buffalo at 7 a.m. and arrival in NOTL by noon." Once in NOTL, passengers could then take steamers across Lake Ontario to Toronto.

The return trip to Buffalo left NOTL at 2 p.m. arriving in Buffalo at 7 p.m. — how civilized they were to travel by train and then steamer be-

tween Toronto and Buffalo.

The Erie & Ontario Railway, in 1869, became a division of the Canadian Southern Railroad, which formed a partnership with the Michigan Central Railroad to better access the American Market.

By 1873, the Canadian Southern Railroad was offering three daily trips between Buffalo and NOTL. One advertisement even offered passengers a 15-20 minute stop in Niagara Falls for site-seeing.

By 1882, the assets of the Canadian Southern Railroad were taken over completely by the Michigan Central Railway, who then leased the railway lines from the Government of Upper Canada for 21 years. Before the lease was up, the Michigan Central

Railway renewed it for the railway lines for 999 more years. The lease still exists to this day.

Passenger service to NOTL ceased in 1926, except for the use of transporting troops during the two World Wars, though the rail line was used for cargo until 1959.

On April 8, 1960, a rockslide along the Niagara Escarpment destroyed about seventy feet of the rail line, ending any possibility that rail service might come back to NOTL.

It must be noted that the train station on King St., now Balzacs Coffee House, is unrelated to the railway. It was built in 1913 and served as the station for the electric streetcar that ran down the centre of King St., paralleling the rail way tracks.

The electric streetcar connected Niagara-on-the-Lake to St. Catharine's and Niagara Falls, though by the 1950s the service was discontinued and several years later all tracks and electric overhead wires were removed from the town.

Today, the abandoned railway line in NOTL is now called the Upper Canada Heritage Trail and runs from the intersection at John St. and King St., all the way to St. Davids.

Many sections of the Upper Canada Heritage Trail have been lost due to rock slides, soil erosion and over growth of vegetation. However, there is a group called the NOTL Canada Sesquicentennial Committee who are committed to rehabilitating the trail as part of a project to commemorate Canada's 150 years of confederation. For more information on this project you can go to their website, notlegacytrail.ca.

Niagara-on-the-Lake, in 2017, received a Canada 150 grant for restoration work to assist with the completion and rehabilitation of the Erie & Ontario Railroad culvert.

This culvert is one of the last remaining structures of the first railway line built in Ontario and is located in NOTL at Balls Beach, near Ball St. by the Niagara River.

To learn more about the topic of this story you can visit the Niagara Historical Society & Museum website at, niagarahistoricalmuseum.com, or visit the museum for yourself.

The Niagara Historical Museum is located at 43 Castlereagh Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake in Memorial Hall.

Give them a call at 905-468-3912.

Find more of Denise's work at niagaranow.com.



A photo of the old steam engine passing by what is now Simcoe Park. (Supplied)

Niagara Historical
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COMMUNITY

All local residents are welcome to submit photos and letters for consideration in this section.



Train Ticket

Richard West
Writer's Circle

In the summer of 1997 I found myself a long way from Niagara, standing in the crowded Kobe Railway Station lobby.

Like all the people waiting patiently in the lobby, I needed to buy a ticket.

My destination was Tokyo, travelling on one of the famous Skinkan-sen trains. These trains can reach 320 km/h (200 mp/h).

I had arrived in this part of Japan on one of these impressive trains and was looking forward to the return ride. Except on the way back I was travelling alone. That was why I had to queue for a ticket.

For the last two days I had been negotiating an important contract with a local manufacturing company.

Now I needed a railway ticket to go home, with my

newly signed contract.

I am not overly tall but in the lobby I was amongst the tallest people. The crowd was slowly inching forward. Although I could not detect a proper queue, it seemed that due consideration was being afforded to those who deserved to reach the ticket office first.

A small voice spoke to me from about my right shoulder. Turning, I found a smartly dressed woman of about twenty.

She repeated her question. 'Excuse. Do you need help?'

'Thank you. But I think I will manage.'

'Where do you go?'

'Tokyo.'

'Oh. Are you an American?'

By now I could see many of the gathered travellers were listening to our conversation.

'No. I am Canadian.'

'Oh. May I tell these people what you said?'

'Go ahead.'

The young woman spoke in a surprisingly loud high pitched voice. Our audience listened and nodded, while many broke out in broad smiles.

I was not sure if the smiles were because they thought it funny I was travelling alone or because they were pleased that I was Canadian.

'Where do you come from?'

'I live near Toronto.'

She immediately announced this new wisdom to the ensemble. More nods and smiles.

'Where near Toronto?'

'I come from a small village which I doubt you will know. It is called Niagara on the Lake.'

'Oh. I have been there.' She said with a delightful smile.

Then she translated for my new lobby friends.

To my amazement about a quarter of the people

in the lobby put up their hands.

'They have been there as well.' She told me.

I asked. 'How many have been to Niagara Falls?'

She spoke in Japanese and approximately forty percent of the people raised their hands.

I was truly proud so many people on the opposite side of the Pacific Ocean knew about Niagara.

It occurred to me, the people in the lobby were not representative of all Japanese. Perhaps these people travel more widely than the average person in Japan.

As my situation had been shared, the smiles convinced me they had not only enjoyed their visits but had taken home a positive impression of the Niagara region. As we host the visitors to Niagara we may be doing a little to foster understanding and goodwill across many divides.

Strawberry Festival 2018



There will be no shortage of strawberries at the annual Strawberry Festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake June 16.

The 35th annual Strawberry Festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake returns to St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church on June 16.

As is tradition, the event will include plenty of strawberry shortcake, crepes and jam and a barbecue.

As well, the event will hold its annual strawberry sale, silent auction, bake table, used nickel sale, along with a children's area, tours of the historic church constructed in 1831 and day-long entertainment.

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Scene of the week

This edition's Scene of the Week is by Antonetta Tremonte, who took a drive through Niagara-on-the-Lake in May. "At the time of the year, I love driving along the country roads of NOTL and marveling at how the blossoms and dandelions paint the orchards with the colours of spring."



Cleaning the lake

Volunteers gathered Saturday morning to show a little bit of love to Lake Ontario by cleaning up the waterfront.

Tires, plastics, cans and other garbage was pulled out of the lake in just a short time.

If everybody in the community spent one summer afternoon picking garbage out of our lakes, just think how much cleaner (and safer) our swimming spots would be, for us, and for wildlife.

Make a change. It doesn't take much.

JOKE OF THE MONTH

JUST SPENT 2 HOURS NEGOTIATING TO BUY A NEW PADDLE FOR MY BOAT...



WHAT AN OAR DEAL!

@DAVIDGREENCOMIC

By David Green. Check out Monday Pundays with David Green, only at niagaranow.com.



Happy 50th Anniversary



Richard James Steele born in 1946, Susan Mary Doris Steele born in 1949 are celebrating their 50-year anniversary in 2018. Susan met Richard when she and her friend prank phone called Richard while they were babysitting. She was a high school freshman and he was a senior. They were inseparable after that and married in 1968 in the St. Mark's Anglican church in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Their children Candace and Dylan wish them many more happy years.

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Featured Local Story

Local girl helps save kitten's sight



Eight-year-old Claire Vanderlee holds Darcy, a kitten born with a condition that made it painful for him to open his eyes. The picture is before his surgery. (Richard Harley)

Richard Harley
Editor

When eight-year-old Claire Vanderlee found out about a small kitten who was in pain, even at her young age, she knew she had to do something.

So she set out to raise money for Darcy by selling pipe-cleaner bracelets to friends and neighbours.

Since then, she's raised more than \$460 towards a life-altering surgery for the kitten, named Darcy.

Darcy, was born with entropion, a condition that resulted in his eyelids getting folded under, leaving them infected and making it too painful for him to open his eyes.

Claire first heard about Darcy from NOTL Cats, a local cat rescue group.

He was one of six kittens rescued from underneath an above ground pool enclosure on East and West Line in January.

If his condition had gone



Darcy can now open his eyes after his surgery. (Supplied)

untreated, vets said the infections would have continued until he lost his eyesight completely.

As Claire's mother Megan puts it, Claire "knew she had to help."

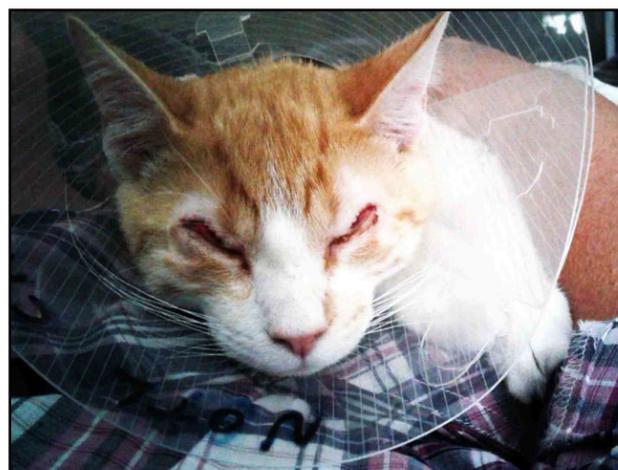
That's when she started making the bracelets and selling them for donations, Megan said.

Claire even managed to get them for sale in Pet-Valu in Virgil, where she raised most of the money.

With Claire's help, as of press time, NOTL Cats has raised more than \$2,400 towards the surgery.

Darcy underwent the operation in May.

With the surgery, he is ex-



Darcy resting after his surgery. (Supplied)

pected to live a normal life.

He is currently healing up at his foster home in St. Catharines.

Cathy Spence, a cat "foster parent" who is currently taking care of Darcy, said he's like a new cat, opening his eyes wider than ever.

She said she will miss him when he leaves, but that's

her job, and she'll be doing it again for other cats in need, as she has for the past six years..

The donations have been "remarkable," said NOTL Cats volunteer Marian, who didn't want her last name published.

"It was amazing how people came forward."

The group has kept the GoFundMe page active to help cover any additional costs — after check-ups, medication and potential complications are factored in, the price could vary widely.

NOTL Cats said anything left over will support other cats in need.

The GoFundMe can be found at, [gofundme.com/darcy039s-eye-surgery](https://www.gofundme.com/darcy039s-eye-surgery).

Darcy has another visit to the surgeon in two weeks.

As far as where Darcy will find a home, NOTL Cats said they would love for Darcy to be adopted with his sister, Dagne.

"She is such a comfort to him, cuddling, washing him and sleeping with him. She seems to understand his struggle."

If all goes according to plan, Claire will be adopting Darcy and Dagne.

Megan said after everything, it's hard to imagine a more fitting home.

News that



Hits home

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