Q&A with developer Benny Marotta

Pages 10 and 11

Hyper-local news for Niagara-on-the-Lake
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What really matters to you?
Heritage? Infrastructure? Agriculture? Quality of living?

The Lake Report

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October 18, 2018
Niagara-on-the-Lake

VOTE SMART

With Monday’s municipal election looming, we have had several good opportunities through many different organizations and outlets to find out about all the candidates running for this term of council. Now is the time to make sure you get out and vote, but before heading to the ballot box, remember to consider what is most important to you during this next term of council — the issues, how certain candidates will deal with them, their experience, and what you find most important when choosing someone to represent you and guide your municipality. Then you have to vote for those who tick your most important boxes, the candidates who are most likely to deliver what’s important to you. The candidates have all told us their priorities — what are yours?

It’s important to remember not all groups which have been providing information on candidates share the same values. Some are more business-focused, others are dedicated to heritage preservation or are experts on agriculture. They have all provided us with important information. But where do their focus fit with yours? Are their issues on the top of your list? They should matter to all NOTL residents, but each candidate might have a different approach.

Now is the time to carefully considering all candidates and what they will bring to the table in the next four years. As for candidates who were part of the previous council, we should bear in mind that all council members are responsible for the past four years of decisions, both the good and the bad, and that no one person can be held responsible for what is decided by a majority.

Many residents have expressed concerns about council not coming together to resolve issues that have been left unaddressed in Niagara-on-the-Lake. It is the duty of all members of council to come together on important issues and make decisions, learn to work together and to foster an environment suitable to get work accomplished, and the ability to work together has been a common theme among candidates. Something else to consider.

While we may be quick to blame incumbents for a series of problems we’ve seen — including generally not getting along, to the point where it appears that personality conflicts interfere with decision-making — each and every council member has the ability to decide to work as part of a team. We hope, when our new council meets, to see nothing but collaboration and respect for each other at the council table.

The job of a politician is one performed in public for the public, by diverse group of people chosen by the public, who bring various skills to the table. 

We should not vote for a single-issue candidate that only kicks into gear when our heritage properties are threatened, or one that purports to stop unwanted development, but judging by what we’ve seen throughout this campaign, that’s not likely to happen.

Ask someone who has served a term on council what is most frustrating about the job, and this is the scenario that you will likely hear: In business, or as part of a household, you can look at a problem, consider the solutions, make a decision and implement it, or delegate others to get it done. Sitting at the municipal council table you are presented with a problem that has many sides to it, you carefully consider solutions that have to be guided by municipal, provincial and sometimes even federal legislation, there are several components to the process, such as studies that have to be done, staff that research and provide recommendations based on legislation, public meetings where residents can’t agree on solutions, and then, when you think you have figured out the best option of those legislation allows, you need a majority vote to support it. It is not as quick or easy as residents sitting at home might think.

That said, perhaps one of the most important considerations is communication skills, and the willingness of councillors to explain the process to residents, so if they don’t get what they want, they at least understand why.

That’s a reason for carefully considering what candidates promise and what critics of government might say. It’s also a reason for considering the experience of candidates and understanding what they realistically can accomplish.

One thing on which we can all agree: We need a council that won’t wait until the next election to start working for residents.
Mayoral candidates get down to business

Penny Coles
Staff

At the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce candidates meeting Oct. 11, the three people hoping to lead the community during the next term of council were asked just one question, which they were given in advance – what would they do to support business.

“We recognize decisions made by council as they relate to land use, planning, bylaws and so many others all have an impact on business,” Paul Machtyer, chair of the chamber and next year’s candidate, said.

Pat Darie, hoping for a second term as head of the council table, said he has two successful businesses in town – one an agri-business, and one in sports tourism. “I get it,” he said. “I’m the only mayoral candidate who can understand first-hand how important business is in a community.”

To correct some misconceptions amongst other candidates, he reiterated the oft-repeated statement that the Town does have an Official Plan. “We do, and it’s being updated,” he said, waving a copy. “I hope you are as interested as I am to understand how one can do even better.”

Bisy Disero, hoping to win the right to lead the Town, said the next four years is about “finishing unfinished business.”

Dario said she would want those two members of the public working with young, successful entrepreneurs and those with a successful career, to create a master plan that would select desirable industries, talk about how to entice them to the community and look at ways to help businesses already located in the community succeed and prosper.

She suggested some short-term remedies, such as deferring development charges. The Town already does that for some, she said, “but if we’re getting to do it, then it has to be for everyone, not a select few.”

The Town should also look at master plans for transportation, recreation, irrigation, culture and economic development, she said. She watched over the last four years as the economic development community continued to form, “with two people from the public I know and respect a great deal,” who were supported by Town staff and politicians. When the project was finished, they had a $5,000 video, but had no idea who to target, how to get those industries, or what criteria should be used to ensure the Town would see a return on its investment.

Dario said she would want more businesses in NOTL. To attract industries, she said, would be to build a world-class aquatic centre. “I’d look outside of town for those industries, to attract buyers with remedies such as under-ground or satellite parking, which would take traffic off busy streets.”

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The community has to stand united, in the rural and urban areas, together as one voice to look out for the safety of the region. She’s watched the community succeed and prosper.

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Simpson’s Pharmacy robbed
Richard Harley
Editor

The Pharmasave Simpson’s Apothecary in Old Town Niagara-on-the-Lake was robbed in early October. A witness said a man entered the Street pharmacy of the town’s tourist district shortly before 9 p.m. and demanded narcotics. The suspect, described as skinny, white and around six feet tall, carried a bottle of narcotics before fleeing out the back door to an awaiting black GMC Terrain. Police responded to the incident shortly after it occurred.

There were no injuries as a result of this incident. The accompanied photo is helpful and supported the suspect.

Anyone with information is requested to contact police investigators at 905-688-4111, ext. 2200.
Community still giving after fire destroys family’s home

Lauren O’Malley
Staff

Harvest Barn sale a rumour no more

Mayors, neighbours, hockey players — just about everyone in town has joined in to help Rachel Spiewak and her family since they lost everything they owned to a devastating house fire in September.

Mayor Pat Darte says he was talking with his friend and neighbour retired NHL player Zenon Konopka about the fire, and they decided they needed to do something to mitigate such a terrible loss. They began planning a fundraiser, and reached out into the town for support.

Corks, Kegs & Ears was chosen as the venue. “We thought it would be a good place to give,” says Maria Mavridis, owner of the restaurant. “It was more than happy to be involved.”

Darte says less than an hour after posting about the event on Facebook he was swamped with locals begging to help. “It’s NOTL and this is what we do. We always come together as a community. Our businesses have been exceptionally generous. We have so much more to give, so much more to silently auction,” says Darte.

Silent auction items include a pig roast for 50 from Pig Out Roasters; two e-scooter rentals for one full day from eSkoot Niagara; a pair of Maui Jim sunglasses from Dr. Robertson-Woods & Associates; and a $500 gift basket from Sephora, among many others.

“There’s truly something for everyone,” says Mavridis. Both Darte and Mavridis say Spiewak is feeling the brunt of the loss these days, having recently also suffered the death of a close friend. “She’s getting through as best she can. I told her this is an elephant she has to eat one bite at a time,” says Darte.

There is some irony that Spiewak herself is a known for giving a lot to the community, having won the Town’s volunteer of the year award in 2012. “Rachel is so used to giving that receiving is very difficult for her,” Mavridis says. “In that spirit, Spiewak says she intends to use a portion of the proceeds from this event to purchase smoke detectors for anyone in town who doesn’t have enough of them. She would specifically like to see everyone have one in their garage as well as several in their homes.

The fire that destroyed her house started in the garage, where there was no smoke detector. It is currently not mandated by Ontario law to have a smoke alarm in an attached garage.

Spiewak has trained as a sommelier, and her parents were retail management specialists for anyone in town who lost everything they owned to a devastating house fire in September.

Rather than working in the family business, they wanted to “spread their wings, create their own vision,” said Fabian. And after doing some travel- ing and studying, they came back to Niagara-on-the-Lake, where they took on the management of a local vineyard.

“We wanted to make wine,” said Stephanie, who has trained as a sommelier, and together they began a virtual winery.

The next step of the journey that brought the two couples to this point was an annual guys’ snowmobiling weekend, where the two men met for the first time, and hit it off. They had a similar vision, said Fabian. It wasn’t just about growing grapes or making wine, it was about “quality, quality, quality. Our visions are so similar. It’s tough in life to find people who are on the same page.”

Thomson, executive director of the NOTL Chamber of Commerce, if the chamber would like to get involved. “She says, ‘Okay, let’s do it!’” Thomson sent an e-blast out to all of the members of the chamber, who promptly responded, sparking a large reaction.

“We’ve had so much stuff dropped off,” says Mavridis. “This is the Niagara-on-the-Lake I grew up in.”

The fundraiser takes place on Oct. 19 at the Niagara-on-the-Lake community centre, from 8 p.m. to midnight. Spiewak’s family will all be there — children are welcome to attend. All proceeds from the entry, bar and auction go to the family.

There will be a live band, and local DJ Trevor Leguit will keep things hopping between sets. Corks will be supplying free snacks, and the cash bar will be running throughout.

Organizers are asking that anyone with pictures of the family bring them to share. “They lost all of their family photos in the fire,” explains Mavridis.

Tickets are available online through the chamber of commerce website, or in person at Corks. If you can’t attend the event but would like to contribute, you can visit the family’s page on gofundme.com.

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FOR THE FUTURE OF NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE
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Editorial: “Our opinion”

Richard Harley
Editor
The Lake Report

The Lake Report would like to address an ad recently placed in the Metroland-owned Niagara Advance by local resident Joe Accardo. The ad — a smear campaign against mayoral candidate and incumbent lord mayor Pat Darrie — offers the following misleading statement: “By his own admission failed to lead the updating of the Official Plan. In our opinion developing free reign to challenge council.”

Underneath the statement there is an attribution to The Lake Report’s recent special election edition. To Mr. Accardo and the Niagara Advance: Considering the ad is signed by Accardo alone, what is meant by “our opinion?”

The phrasing is misleading and could lead residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake to believe The Lake Report published such a statement. As is plain in the election edition, the paper made no such claim, and is endorsing no particular candidate in the 2018 municipal election. When contacted by the Lake Report, Accardo said the phrasing was not intended to mislead residents. “The opinion, as you rightly point out is mine not that of the Lake Report,” said Accardo. “The ‘our’ is akin to my royal ‘we’ and not meant to be attributed to the Lake Report.”

We’re not sure what that means. The misleading nature of the ad is based on the grammatical rules of person and predicate. Regardless of Accardo’s intentions, The Lake Report responded that we expect a public retraction of this statement, along with an explanation of who was meant to be implicated by the phrase “our opinion.” Accardo said he would be cooperative. The Niagara Advance did not respond. The Lake Report, as always, holds itself to the highest standards of journalism and will not tolerate misleading or libellous statements directed towards itself, staff of members of our community.

In that regard, we must also state the paper does not support the types of ads Accardo is running, and ensures residents they will not see such petty politicking in this paper. We must also point out that Accardo did not purchase a similar smear ad against Disero, a sitting member of council during the time the Official Plan was neglected. All of council is responsible for the lack of an up-to-date Official Plan. It is our hope that nobody is fooled by these ads — which are both poor in taste and questionable in their accuracy — but will rather make their own decisions. It brings some relief that many residents have contacted us to express they don’t believe in this type of attack campaign in local politics, especially in our friendly little town.

For better or worse, Accardo has likely done the candidates he’s smearing a favour with those residents.

editor@niagaranow.com

October 18, 2018

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Letter to the editor:

My wife volunteers for a local NOTL group and wrote a welcome letter to all members. Problem — not all addresses in her list from the organization’s head office included post box numbers. We explained our dilemma to a post office staff member. Sorry, she could not give out that information nor could she provide a solution. If we sent the letters without the post office box numbers, they would be sent to the dead-letter site. Our only solution was to fill our gas tank and personally deliver the letters in Virgil, Niagara-on-the-Lake. St. David’s, Glendale and St. Catharines. Mission accomplished!

Surprise — several days later, we received in our post office box a brochure from the provincial government about the upcoming election. It had our correct street address but no post office box number. Someone, perhaps a postal employee, had added our box number in pen on the envelope.

I find it odd and frustrating that personal mail is not deliverable without a box number but government mail is? There definitely appears to be a different set of rules for different senders.

-Bud Moulson

Letter to the editor:

Terry passed the torch to us and the Niagara-on-the-Lake community honoured his request.

Sincere thanks to all the participants, the students from St. Michael’s Catholic Elementary School, the volunteers for the Lewiston-Niagara-on-the-Lake Rotary Club for providing the barbecue, Sandtrap for donating pizza, Cows and Cheers for the ice cream, Tim Hortons and Walkers fruit market for giving the participants nourishment for the run. Special thanks to all the volunteers who gave of their time to help us honour our Canadian hero.

The Terry Fox Run in NOTL continues to be successful through the efforts of Joe and Mike Piliitteri. They achieved their goal of raising over $60,000 for cancer research. They made it fun yet meaningful while inspiring a whole community just like Terry Fox.

So grateful to each and everyone’s support and continued belief in Terry’s legacy.

-Joan King, organizer of the local Terry Fox Run

Correction from TLR

In our recently released special edition there have been a couple of errors spotted by readers. The number of private dwelling in Niagara-on-the-Lake was reported to increase by 7099 from 2011 to 2016. In fact, the reported number is the total number of households in NOTL, as of 2016, calculated when the most recent Town survey was completed. The number of doctors in town was also questioned and we are looking into it. The information was not available by press time.

What am I even voting for?

Public School Board Trustee
School Board Trustees manage the public school board system, including the second-largest budget ($400 million) in the Niagara Region. While school board elections often get overshadowed by the runs for mayor, regional and town councilor, the school board election is an important part of our governing system for all, even those without children.

Regional Councillor
Regional Councillors (NOTL has two, one, and the lord mayor who automatically takes a seat at the Regional) represent our municipality at regional council, which oversees the municipalities of the Niagara Region and governs the budget for organizations such as the DSBN, NRP, NPCA. The Region is responsible for a large portion of infrastructure throughout NOTL and similar towns.

Town Council
Town council members (consisting of the lord mayor and eight councillors) govern bylaws, oversee planning projects and vote on decisions that affect the community. Council instructs Town staff how they should manage the corporation. Council members also make recommendations and form committees to get public opinions, do research, and in turn offer suggestions about how council should direct staff or act on various motions brought to the table.

VOTE
OCTOBER 22

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Not much changed now that pot is legal

Names have been removed from this story as requested by the people interviewed.

Richard Harley
Editor

Cheers rang out like it was the first minute of January; parties were held like it was the first of July; and in quiet Niagara-on-the-Lake, residents across town were driving to buy a beer in the LCBO, then sure I’ll be able to buy a beer in Ontario. “The LCBO, then sure I’ll be able to buy a beer in Ontario. I can buy a beer in Ontario,” said Joe. “I can get it in a legal method.”

So I think the poor implementers of the system poorly, which will get it in a legal method. “I think that will let up. It shouldn’t affect your job, in the way that your employer can’t ask you ‘do you drink while you’re off work.’”

“There is a kind of taking the fun out it.” While most smokers seem to be rejoicing that it’s legal, many still aren’t sure how to handle the new laws yet. Joe said he plans to keep his smoking life private. “For me, I’m going to treat it the same way I treat alcohol, or any drug use for that matter — I don’t brag or broadcast my use of alcohol while I’m at work or in public settings.”

“I believe there will be a continued stigma with marijuana use, but I believe that’s been on the decline for the last few years now regardless... I’m sure there will still be cases where it affects (jobs) because it does now... I think that will let up. It shouldn’t affect your job, in the way that your employer can’t ask you ‘do you drink while you’re off work.’”

“Technically, if you had a picture of you smoking a joint on Facebook and your employer fired you because of that, couldn’t you take them to court? I’m sure there’s going to be a lot of issues with that.” It seems evidenced by the fact nobody wanted their name mentioned in a story about marijuana legalization that Joe may be right about a lingering stigma.

“The world isn’t going to stop turning,” Joe said. “If anyone has an issue, just point them in the direction of any one of the states or countries that has legalized it before.”

While it the celebrations stayed mainly private in NOTL, smokers across Canada held events to celebrate historic day.

Oct. 17 saw the legalization of cannabis across Canada. (Richard Harley)
High hopes for grape harvest washed out

Jill Troyer
Special to TLR

Niagara’s hot dry summer sowed the seeds of high hopes for a magnificent grape harvest in 2018 — then came September, bringing rain, warm temperatures, and humidity — a perfect storm of conditions to threaten grapes with mildew and sour rot.

That meant that “timing was crucial, we had to be very careful about when to spray, when to thin, when to pick” according to Jackson Triggs winemaker Marco Piccoli. His approach was to pick the thin skinned varietals (gewurztraminer, sauvignon blanc, chardonnay, pinot) early, sacrificing nay, pinots) early, sacrificing sugar levels to get healthy grapes off the vines.

In one case, Robertson reports that a block of chardonnay vines that yielded four to 4.5 tonnes per acre last year produced less than half the harvest this year, due to “a combination of naturally lower yields after last year’s bumper crop and the rot we had to drop on the ground.”

Still, winemakers are pleased with the quality of the harvest so far, Piccoli explains that “wines will be different each vintage, for example this years’s sauvignon blanc might be more of a grapefruit flavour, where other years could be more peachy, pinot noir is very fruity this year, with darker colour than other years.” Each vintage has a different personality from Mother Nature,” said Piccoli.

Skilled winemakers in Niagara have different challenges each season. As Robertson put it, “it’s disheartening, but it keeps it stimulating as a winemaker.”

Everyone takes the season in stride, even if it does disappoint in some ways. “This is my 28th year, I’ve seen extremes from every perspective. This is not the most difficult year we’ve had. The quality is amazing. Every year throws us curve balls we don’t expect” said Schmidt. There is still a considerable amount of grapes left to harvest. Merlot is coming in now, cabernets a little later. “Cabernets are beautiful, fruity this year, with darker colour than other years.”

Gavin said. According to Environment Canada, September was much wetter than usual, with rainfalls for the month in the Niagara region more than 25 per cent above average.

With the harvest in for most white grapes and the lighter reds including pinot noir, the chair of Ontario Grape Growers Martia Op- penlaender estimates the yield for 2018 will amount to just two thirds of the tonnage picked in 2017, lower than expected.

Last year was a bumper crop, in fact the largest ever, weighing 87,567 tonnes. This year the number is expected to come in at around 60,000 tonnes.

The scene has been similar at Vineland Estates, where winemaker Brian Schmidt has some good news for cabernet lovers. “Cabernets are beautiful, small supercharged berries, extraordinary quality” according to Schmidt. All the winemakers we talked to were of the same sentiment, and all have their fingers crossed for a good couple of weeks of hang time for the cabernet grapes, wishing for warm days, cool nights, morning breezes — and no rain.

Every year throws us curve balls we don’t expect” said Schmidt. There are lots of big chains out there, lots of competition. We want to make sure this stays the same local Harvest Barn.”

“We didn’t expect to get into this business,” added Stephanie. “We’ve become very passionate about it, and about enhancing that local, community feel.”

The transition to the new owners will appear seamless for locals, but the winery has been closed for about a week, with a reopening likely this weekend. It needs a little sprucing up, said Dorothy. It has a bit of a neglected look about it, and they want to give it a little TLC. When they open, they will be selling Rancourt wines for now. Their Ferox vintage is on the shelves of Reif Estate Winery, thanks to the support of Klaus Reif, and is available online and on the wine list of The Pie Plate in Virgil and a few other restaurants.

There will be an official opening of the winery in the future, but for now, the new owners are encouraging locals to stop in for a visit. As for the wine they will sell once Ferox becomes the winery name and brand, “we’ve set the bar high,” said Fabian.

And we can honestly call it a family estate winery,” said Dorothy.

For Fabian, “this is part of the story now, our story.”

Continued: Harvest Barn officially sold

Continued from Page 5

To make it even more of a fixture in the community, “to enhance the local experience,” said Dorothy. They will start with some ‘welcome back, we appreciate your support’ type of events, they plan to sell local products, and make it once again about loyal local customers.

“The grocery store business is not the easiest,” said Fabian. “There are lots of big chains out there, lots of competition. We want to make sure this stays the same local Harvest Barn.”

“We didn’t expect to get into this business,” added Stephanie. “We’ve become very passionate about it, and about enhancing that local, community feel.”

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Continued from Page 5
Big band benefit to support IPF patients

Richard Harley

When Terry Hardy was diagnosed with IPF (idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis) two years ago, he felt like he won the world’s worst lottery. He was told by his doctor that his condition was extremely rare, which didn’t exactly help lift his spirits. He felt isolated, and the nearest support group was in Hamilton, with classes that ran from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. For an older man with a debilitating lung disease, the travel time and the hours made sure that wasn’t an option.

But Hardy, with the support of his wife Susan, decided that wasn’t good enough. The two organized a support group in town, open to IPF patients across the region.

Even though the disease was apparently so rare, Hardy says at the first meeting at the Niagara-on-the-Lake community centre, he was shocked to see 25 people arrive — all of whom were equally surprised.

“When they walked in they had no idea there were this many people in the Niagara Region. And this is just NOTL and St. Catharines. So I met with the hospital in St. Catharines. So it’s not as rare as they say. It’s becoming more and more common and I think say. It’s becoming more and more common and I think I was astounded that in the whole of the Niagara Region there is only one place, and that is the hospital in St. Catharines. So I met with them and said, ‘look, you’re the only people around that have anything. It needs to be expanded.’

The hospital agreed. “I said to the hospital, ‘well, if I was able to raise some funds, would you go ahead? And they agreed?’” Now Hardy, with support from the Niagara Jazz Festival, is organizing an event to help raise money towards his goal of benefitting IPF patients across Niagara.

“In conjunction with the support group, I wanted to have a fundraiser to increase awareness for this disease,” said Hardy, while his oxygen tank hums in the background.

The fundraiser will be a night of big band music at the NOTL community centre, organized and presented by the TD Jazz Festival.

Juliet Dunn, owner of the festival, is donating 50 per cent of the proceeds towards Hardy’s cause.

Hardy, who came down with pneumonia when he was trying to organize his own fundraiser, ended up calling Juliet to let her know he was just too weak to continue. “I said, ‘as much as I would like to do this, I just don’t have the energy to do it. We’ll have to forget about it.”

Dunn came to the rescue, taking the initiative on as part of the jazz festival’s big band fundraiser.

The night will include live jazz, dancing, a free swing class with Niagara Lindy Hop, silent and live auction items, door prizes, cash bar and performances by Alex Pangman, The Jimmy Stahl Band, Juliet Dunn and Peter Shea.

Sweet and Savoury tapas will be provided by The Heat Catering.

Hardy’s IPF support group meets at the community centre at 11 a.m. on the third Thursday of every month.

There are around 2,000 people living with IPF in the Niagara Region,” Hardy said. “The only thing we can do is exercise.”

An auction is also available online with proceeds supporting Hardy’s initiative. Donations are also accepted to purchase a ticket, donate or make a bid in the auction, visit https://niagarajazzfestivalval.com/big-band-fundraiser.

To purchase a ticket, donate or make a bid in the auction, visit https://niagarajazzfestivalval.com/big-band-fundraiser.

Terry Hardy. (Richard Harley)

Laughing a path to a better wellbeing

Lauren O’Malley

How many times have you said, “I wish there was summer camp for adults.” Well, it lasts an hour per week, there’s something very close.

Carolyn Shannon is the sunny and warm health professional who leads the classes on Friday afternoons at the community centre.

“Laugh Yourself Healthier” classes on Friday afternoons at the community centre.

Some might find the idea of laughing for an hour a bit, well, laughable, but there is sound science in the physical health advantages of laughter.

The Mayo Clinic website lists benefits including the stimulation of endorphins, increased immune system, pain relief and, of course, better mood.

Shannon also makes a point of waking up the lymph nodes and hitting acupressure points with a specific form of hand-clapping throughout the class for further health gains.

So the “healthier” aspect is quite undeniable. The surprise side-effect is the joy that comes from feeling like a young uninhibited child again.

The class is held seated, and involves a series of gently physical exercises, most of them with a vocal component. There is genuine laughter, as well as the singing of popular songs using laughing sounds — “ho ho ho,” “ha ha ha,” and “hee hee hee” — and some repetitive, uplifting chants a bit like nursery rhymes.

Gloria Messenger Harman — who has been participating in these classes with Shannon for about eight years — says, “This gives us a new language, actually.”

There are many statements of positive reinforcement throughout the class, which many of the women say they use throughout their day-to-

day lives. Laughter as the foundation frees the students from their self-consciousness — much like young children. “If it’s imperfect it’s funny, and that’s a good thing,” says Shannon.

Shannon says further health benefits include mitigating or preventing dementia. “I do versions of this program in assisted living facilities all over the region, and it’s amazing to see how enthusiastic the residents are about the classes, and how much they just shine during our time together. It touches my heart,” she says.

The weekly classes typically host between four and 10 participants, most of whom know each other from their years with the program. Angie Domenech attends her second class, and finds herself laughing frequently throughout. “New students yawn a lot,” says Shannon.

Not because they’re bored, but as a result of the dramatic increase in oxygen in their systems.

“At first you feel silly, this is so childish,” says Messenger Harman. “And then you give yourself permission to be childish — and you also feel like you get a good workout.”

Shannon points out this program works well for people in NOTL because it can be done by those who are less able-bodied as well as those in their prime, and, “it’s great for people who are recovering from all kinds of different things,” she says.

Messenger Harman says, “I had a pacemaker inserted — after that I really felt like my head actually woke up during the class.”

As one of the faithful participants, says “Who doesn’t need more laughter in their life?”

Laugh Yourself Healthier classes are $20 for 5 sessions; the drop-in rate is $10.
New candidates say no to freezing development, maybe to privatizing services

Peony Cole, Staff

At the fourth and final meeting for new candidates hosted by FocusNOTL at the Royal Canadian Legion hall last Tuesday, Gus Koroneos, Crispin Bottomley, Mark Brown, and Katherine Reid answered questions about what dealt with that they could deliver to council, and whether they would support privatizing public services.

Reid introduced herself as a Queenston resident with a career in the wine industry, now winemaker for Joseph’s Estates Winery.

She is the president of the Garden Route Lions, has been on its board since 2000 and has served two terms as regional chair of the Niagara division. She volunteers to help with local youth dances and also holds a Crossroads Public School, and collects eye glasses to be sent to underdeveloped countries.

She is also a member of the Town’s safety committee, which tackles road safety issues, bike tours, e-scooters, crosswalks, and one-day events, and sees that group as “what work” to help the community, including an annual event to improve bike safety for migrant farm workers.

As a member of the Town’s agriculture planning department, she’s concerned about the changes she’s seen in agriculture, said the Town needs to have a plan to help farmers.

She supports heritage protection and the agricultural base, managing tourism, growth, and Glendale intensification.

“I want people in this town to be proud of this town.”

Increased traffic problems are not limited to Regional Rd. 55 — there are also problems in St. Davids, Queenston, and the Niagara Region. The Town is working on a master plan to set direction for staff and residents, said the Town should be in the next 10 years.

He would push for a transit service.

The Town also should be considered regional and focus on industrial base, managing tourism and regional review that could be part of the review, he said, referring to the 1970s, when several municipalities in Ontario “were wiped out overnight.”

The ward system is a possibility for the next election, Brown said, “but we have to deal with disenfranchised residents now and not wait for that solution.”

Cannabis legislation and retail outlets have to be considered; urban boundaries, the agricultural sector and tourism have to be protected; and the grape and wine industry “are integral for our quality of life,” said Brown, who promised to be accessible to residents, “because that’s what we’re being paid to do.”

Goettler says she feels the Town needs to be part of the review, she said. She believes a ward system could be considered regional, but “right now the town needs to come together.”

A fresh face and a new leadership is needed on council, she said, promising to represent all stakeholders and interests groups in town.

Koroneos is from the Niagara Region, and was raised on a poultry farm in Smithville. He has a business science degree from University of Waterloo, and has opened hearing clinics in Niagara Falls and Virgil.

He suggested undertaking a traffic study that would be part of the review, he said, referring to the 1970s, when several municipalities in Ontario “were wiped out overnight.”

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Cont’d: candidates say no to freezing development, maybe to privatizing services.

need to spend $100,000 on consultants for the St. David’s Park, as councillors argue to recently, but rather should spend the $100,000 toward a park.

As for trees, he said, the best time to plant them was 20 years ago, “and the next best time is today.”

He asked for support from voters “so we can all enjoy those beautiful, mature trees 20 years from now.”

Reid was asked the first question of the evening, which was what the “single most important deliverable” was that she could bring to council. Her answer was the existing people in the community, by listen- ing what they have to say and working for them. “I believe I listen well.”

Bottomley said he would bring commitment, which he’s shown previously through his actions and com- mitment to the community, he said.

Brown said he would listen to both sides of debate before making the best deci- sion possible for all residents, which is ultimately what councillors are elected to do.

Goettler, referring to a meeting that previous council had held to discuss the current Official Plan. He is unbiased, he said, and looks an equitable Official Plan. He agreed with privatization of pub- lic services.

Koroneos said his most important deliverable of the past term was the controlling development with an equitable Official Plan. He is unbiased, he said, and looks at data to drive his conclu- sions. “That way I can defend my conclusions to residents.”

The next question was whether council should freeze development until guidelines are in place, and all responded they would not.

Bottomley suggested slowing new development by ensuring a number of steps, including public consultation. “We would not be able to stop development, but we need to have our Official Plan and secondary plans in place the first year of the new term.”

Brown said it would be “wonderful” if a town could stop development. Unfortu- nately it can’t be done but there are mechanisms to slow it by, controlling sewer and water allocations within the urban boundaries. “Don’t agitate for more sewuage-cap- acity to be built,” he said. “I believe we’ll have a very active council” who will work together to get the Official Plan done.

“I don’t think we can stop it, but I’m not sure that we can’t slow it down,” said Goettler, suggesting the Town should arrive at a vision of what NOTL should look like before handing out building permits.

Koroneos agreed develop- ment can’t be stopped, but can be controlled. Urban boundaries need to be pre- served, and he would push for a mid-peninsula corridor that would curb local development as a “next-generation plan.”

Reid agreed the Town can’t stop all development but through infrastructure deci- sions could slow it down.

Asked if he would agree with privatization of pub- lic services, Brown said he would look at each service to see if it makes sense. Typical- ly, he said, government looks after the services that are so expensive no one else can do it profitably. Snow plowing, he said, might be cheaper handled by the private sector.

“If it makes sense, contract it out, if it doesn’t, don’t.”

Goettler agreed if a service can be delivered cheaper by the private sector, privatize it — look at it and do whatever’s best for tax dollars.

Koroneos said it would have to be looked at on a case-by-case basis, with a focus on val- ues for money. Any privatized service would need careful scrutiny to ensure the provision isn’t being short-changed.

Reid agreed privatization could be beneficial in some cases, but not always. She pointed to hospital cleaning being privatized; delivering a service that might be cheaper but not better. Agitation for more com- petitiveness is a possibility but public-private partnerships should also be considered, and the town staff would need to be ready to monitor privatized services.

Goettler asked about the delivery of health care in NOTL, said she’s not crazy about it. When you move to town you don’t get a choice of doctor in the family health team, you have to take who is available, she said, and you’re not able to switch within the same practice. She is in favour of having all the doctors and services in one building, she said, although she’s not sure it’s going to be in the best location.

“It’s definitely a hassle” trying to get a new doctor, agreed Koroneos, and the Town needs to do a better job of attracting more doctors, both family physicians and specialists.

Reid also likes the idea of having all doctors and services under one roof, but she doesn’t like the location they chose, because of safety concerns with its location beside a school.

Bottomley spoke of not having enough long-term care beds, given the expected clos- ing of Upper Canada Lodge, although Pleasant Manor is getting more beds. He would also like to see more doctors encouraged to relocate to NOTL.

Brown says the popula- tion growth, the Town needs to work with the Local Health Integration Network to attract new doctors and specialist. Although the Province says the town is adequately served, now is the time to recruit for the future, he said.

Asked about an urban tree bylaw and whether there should be one for the rural area as well, Koroneos said a tree bylaw should be incor- porated in the Official Plan. While most property owners want mature trees on their property, the Town needs something in place to prevent people from doing something “radical.” Anything dealing with rural areas would have to recognize that farmers have a responsibility to pro- vide “good stewardship” on their land.

Koroneos said that a tree bylaw is needed but has to be more practical than what was proposed, and without requir- ing an arborist.

Bottomley agreed there should be two separate bylaws, that trees on private property need to be man- aged, and if a tree is causing a safety issue a property owner should be allowed to remove it.

The tree bylaw the previ- ous council was considering was an intrusion on people’s property rights, said Brown. Most residents would want to be responsible, and the require- ment for an arborist needs to be looked at. Root protection during construction is a con- cern, he said, “but I’d have a hard time telling someone they can’t put a pool in their backyard because of a tree.”

Goettler said she is “100 per cent in favour of a tree bylaw, and she doesn’t find the one proposed to council too intrusive. If you have a sick tree, she said, you get a permit to remove it. If you have a healthy tree, you have to have a good reason to take it down. And if you have a mature property and want to take trees down, “maybe it’s not the property for you.”

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Niagara Now’s printer sources 100 per cent of its paper fibre from industry leading paper mills, which use quick-growth, sustainable, renewable plots of land, rather than clear-cutting forests. The ink is also vegetable based.

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Hear Better Niagara
Richard Harley
Editor

TLR: “Tell me what’s been up with you lately Benny — the good and the bad.”

MAROTTA: “On the positive side, I’m proud and excited that my daughters’ winery Two Sisters Vineyards was recently was awarded the title of Best Performing Smaller Winery in Canada for 2018 by Wine Align (a company that hosts a national wine competition). This is a great accomplishment for my family and for Niagara-on-the-Lake. When my daughters and I started Two Sisters, this was the quality we strove for. It’s great to see it being recognized from international and national wine experts.

On the negative side, I’m disappointed that the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is losing the charm it’s been known for. I’ve noticed that there’s a big change in the community, in that there’s an obvious split — and that should not have happened. The town should come together and try to — or, make sure — that it doesn’t fall into the hands of people who are not considering what is best for the town now and for future generations.

TLR: What is your general opinion of Niagara-on-the-Lake at the moment? It’s a bit vague, but I’m talking about development and the political climate.

MAROTTA: “I think that 90 per cent of the people in NOTL are starting to understand what is happening (in politics). There’s a realization by people who don’t want anyone else to come into this town. They understand what progress is the future. I remember when I built the Cannery Park subdivision in St. Davids, the intent of that project was to give homes to the young generations in NOTL, and also to attract professionals and hard working people from other municipalities, and to keep the city as the future of the town — we have to understand that new generations are the future of society … Cannery Park has given an opportunity to first time buyers and second time buyers, who could not have otherwise afforded high-priced homes for stopping their chance of owning a home, raising children and being a part of the beautiful and safe community as NOTL.

Benny Marotta, owner of Solmar Development Corp. (Supplied photo)

TLR: To clarify, you’re saying young people can’t afford to come here and live here if we don’t have affordable housing?

MAROTTA: “No, it is impossible, homes in NOTL are based on the current market value. Prices of homes are over $1 million, which makes home ownership unaffordable to many families. So how do we find homes for young generations? if you don’t do that, then in 10, 20, 30 years, what happens?”

TLR: How much is the average house selling for at Cannery Park?

MAROTTA: “Cannery Park, when we built it, were priced from $300,000 to $450,000. Today these same homes are now selling between $500,000 and $800,000. So to me, I’m very proud that I did that. It is very difficult today for the young generation to make money on homes. So anytime I drive by and see young families with children playing in the park, I am happy they have made some money on their homes. Maybe in the future they can sell it to buy a bigger home for their families or invest in new businesses to help NOTL flourish. This would help create jobs and overall growth.”

TLR: What types of people are you seeing move into Cannery Park? Are they mainly young families?

MAROTTA: “Yes, mainly young families. There are some retirees that cannot afford to buy a home over $1 million — some buyers are from the city of Toronto, Oakville, Milton, Mississauga and Niagara Region. Not everyone can afford to buy a house for over $1 million — not only the younger generation but also the middle-aged buyer.

TLR: Do you have an idea of what the average house is selling for in other municipalities like St. Catharines or Niagara Falls — new builds in subdivisions in those areas?

MAROTTA: “They are less costly than NOTL. Niagara-on-the-Lake has a reputable name, created by the residents that have been here for generations. The community as a whole has succeeded in making NOTL a sought after tourism destination visited by millions of people a year, not only because of the vibrant wine and culinary attractions and its industry, but also because of its unique charm made possible by generations of local members of the community. If it was not for them, NOTL would not be NOTL.”

TLR: Moving on, what is your plan now with the Rand Estate?

MAROTTA: “Always as it has been, we are going to build a beautiful hotel that will be timeless and make this community proud. We are going to build something that will complement the surrounding natural (landscape), and add to the historical and sophisticated elegance of NOTL. There has been some resistance from a small group of people, where they’re claiming that we own the Rand Estate — called SORIE (Save Our Rand Estate). I didn’t know I had partners, but I guess people can just come out and claim ownership. When they have proclaimed ownership and control, I have no idea, although I can understand why a politician would use this opportunity for their own agenda and a way to manipulate peoples’ perception. One thing that I’m disappointed about, is that some people have managed to distort the truth. This is common with politicians that have an agenda. At times there are politicians who are moved by personal agendas instead of the best interest of the community that they represent. As a result these politicians often need someone one they can use to become popular within their community. I guess the Rand Estate problem is moving developers and the Marotta family has given a perfect opportunity. I wanted to use these types of tactics to act on. TLR: In your opinion, how do you feel you’ve been painted to the public?

MAROTTA: “I think that people have disappointed that the group SORIE has personally attacked and bullied us on many levels, even after the efforts we have and continue to make to the greater Niagara Region, in particular NOTL. We have built an award winning hotel, and donated $1 million towards a new agrifood innovation centre at Niagara College. As a family we are proud members of the community, raising our children in this beautiful town. We are hopeful that they too can prosper with the next generation that is now proud to call NOTL home. I question that members of the SORIE group have contributed to NOTL as of today.”

TLR: There have been other hotel developments approved by your application. What are your thoughts on hotels like Hawley hotel in the Village?

MAROTTA: “Well I think that anybody should have the right to do what they want. In this case I have a high respect of the owner of the hotel, so I don’t question them in which they get the approval for that.”

TLR: Why do you think the Rand hotel didn’t receive much fight back and was moved through fairly quickly?

MAROTTA: “To fight a local at election time is very damaging to a company. TLR: What happens to the Randwood properties if they’re not developed?

MAROTTA: “Well the question that I have for all those people that are opposing the development of the Rand Estate is: What’s their plan? (The properties were) on the market for three years. No one had made efforts to purchase it. Everyone who is claiming to be purchasing SORIE … has ignored the opportunity to make efforts for rightful ownership. So what is their plan for the property? Are they going to inflict in affect they have no interest or ownership of? I would have respected them if they had approached me in a civilized manner and worked together to discuss a common solution.

TLR: What is your opinion of the Rand Estate if you don’t build on it?

MAROTTA: “Well no one is going to do what I’m trying to do. No company is going to come into town on a business level and try to get involved with people of this nature. One needs it and no one wants it. This is an embarrassment to the town.”

TLR: Do you have anyone interested in buying the property?

MAROTTA: “I did have two groups interested in acquiring the property. The question that the town, and I put them on hold for a year. TLR: And what’s the name?

MAROTTA: “It’s to a religious group.”

TLR: What religious group?

MAROTTA: “There’s two of them, and I put them on hold for a year. TLR: And who was it?

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TLR: Also, what happens to the current market value.

MAROTTA: “In NOTL has always went through the proper process used for Cannery Park and the homes down on the main street, The Rand Estate proposal has been sabotaged from the beginning. I never had an intention of appealing, I just wanted to sit, meet with staff and try to come up with a compromise. The problem I have is every project (I’ve done) doesn’t make its way through the proper process which involved heritage committees, religious groups,”

TLR: “Hm. You don’t need to tell me the name of the group, but tell me what they are?”

MAROTTA: “No.”

TLR: “That’s interesting. So both of them are religious groups?”

MAROTTA: “Yes …”

TLR: “And who was it?

MAROTTA: “There’s two of them, and I put them on hold for a year.”

TLR: “Tell me about your decision to appeal to project.”

MAROTTA: “As far as the appeal, I never had the intention of appealing, I just wanted to sit, meet with staff and try to come up with a compromise. The problem I have is every project (I’ve done) doesn’t make its way through the proper process which involved heritage committees, religious groups.”

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Cont’d: Marotta Q&A

M: “Well not really. It held (the development) up.”

TLR: “But through the appeal board, you still should get the hotel height you want?”

M: “Yes, of course. The hotel, we have all the studies done that when it’s built you won’t even see it. It’ll be behind a wall and trees that are 200-feet high, and it’s only 60 feet ... the board is doing everything the Town asked us to do, so when we’re at the board I think we’ll have no issues. The only thing I feel bad about, is it’s going to cost the town a minimum of $1 million in legal fees — to get exactly what we have. That’s what politics does.”

TLR: “So where are you in the appeal process?”

M: “Well we appealed it. One to argue that the homes that were designated are not heritage. I said before, we believe in young innovation. Niagara College is a place where a lot of young talented students are graduating and entering into the workforce with various skills. We need to support the College so it can continue to provide students with the tools they need to succeed in their chosen fields and careers. As members of the community we should all contribute and support various endeavours that assist younger generations in following their dreams for a better and prosperous life, in the hopes that they will continue to contribute to this economy. The problem is, if things are going the way they’re going — what’s next? People are tired of the charades played in politics. You need people to come and invest money in every community.”

TLR: “Final thoughts?”

B: “I caution and remind new and future residents in town, that we are guests of NOTL and should respect and contribute to this culture. As well, to SORE members and the community, make your own choices when you are at the voting booth — for the benefit of the Town.”

This interview has been edited for clarification due to a minor language barrier and to discard the names of any candidates running in the 2018 Municipal Election.
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<td><strong>Silversmith Brewing Co</strong>&lt;br&gt;Sunday Songs - 3 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</td>
<td><strong>Legion Fish Fry Every Thursday!</strong>&lt;br&gt;Public skating - 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. - Meridian Credit Union</td>
<td><strong>Silversmith Brewing Co</strong>&lt;br&gt;Sunday Songs - 3 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</td>
<td><strong>Photography Society &amp; Museum</strong>&lt;br&gt;5 p.m. - Niagara Historical Society &amp; Museum</td>
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<td>See what he can do for you at: <a href="https://www.rentmyhusband-notl.com">https://www.rentmyhusband-notl.com</a></td>
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<td>Or call me, Marion (905) 321-3776</td>
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<td>Knit-a-bit - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</td>
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<td>Minecraft Club - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</td>
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<td>Community Fall Social - 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. - Niagara Regional Native Centre</td>
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<td>Niagara Rhythm Section with Dylan Wickens - 9 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. - The Old Winery</td>
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<td>Family Harvest Party - 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. - 14 Anderson Ln</td>
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<td>Public skating - 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. - Meridian Credit Union Arena</td>
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<td>Niagara's Great War Remembered - 7:30 p.m. - St. Mark's Church</td>
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<td>Knit-a-bit - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</td>
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<td>The Old Winos with Duane Rutter and Andrew Aldridge - 9 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. - The Old Winery</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>NOTL Social Club - 10 a.m. - Sweets &amp; Swirls Cafe</td>
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<td>Babies and Books - 11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</td>
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<td>Drop-in bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</td>
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<td>Practical Genealogy - 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</td>
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<td>DNA Workshop - 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</td>
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HAPPY HALLOWEEN
Know of a local event? Tell us. Submit it directly to www.niagaranow.com or send us an email at events@niagaranow.com
Eddie Dijon would tell you the common human flea is more intelligent than any other species of flea. And after he told you about his former flea circus, you may be left scratching your head.

In a past life, Dijon, now 85, retired, and living in Niagara-on-the-Lake, was a world-class entertainer, with acts that specialized in the strange and mysterious. His most famous act was his flea circus, in which he had fleas perform various circus tricks such as chariot races, or having a flea pull 160,000 times their own weight.

If you're sceptical of it all, you wouldn't be the first to be, but that's half the allure of his show. Dijon's flea act took him around the world, landing him on The David Letterman Show five consecutive times, a fact he's proud of, as well as being featured at the Canadian National Exhibition.

Diijon also performed a variety of other acts which took him around the globe, earning him a name as successful magician, who still has a following today. One of his other successful acts was as a tarot card reader, touring with a hypnotic show. In his career as a tarot reader he’s read for some big names, including JC Moore, several times for Madonna, Paul Anka, and for Jack Layton - yes, former head of the NDP. He said he thinks he’s done more than 50,000 performances.

Dijon, now retired, has given up some of the secrets to how he trained his fleas. The secret, he said, is to break their habit to jump.

To do this, he would put the fleas into a small sealed glass tube for a couple weeks. When the fleas jumped, they would bang into the top of the glass. Eventually, they stopped jumping.

Next Dijon has to carefully put a harness on the fleas — and these fleas were in style — Dijon made them out of gold. Gold was more malleable he said.

For some of his famous tricks, like having a flea named the Amazing Armando juggle a cork ball, Dijon would have to get creative. His secret? Dijon used to dip the cork ball in Listerine. The substance was repulsive to flea, so it would naturally kick the cork away.

“So I kept doing that until it learned how to juggle.”

Dijon said he still has a small following to this day, and every once in a while somebody will ask him to do a performance, though his flea act has been retired for around 12 years. This weekend he will be in Hamilton for a psychic fair at the Crown Plaza Hotel.

The entertainer performed a real-life escape act of sorts in 2017, when he was pinned between a car and the inside railing of Silks Country Kitchen after an elderly woman drove through the window where he was sat eating breakfast. Dijon told Lake Report (then Advance) reporter Penny Coles that he thought his neck may have been broken when the incident happened. Luckily, himself and another man at the table walked away without serious injuries.

“I was having a corned beef sandwich, and I was sitting beside the window, and this woman came crashing through the window.”

“But I still go back to Silks because I enjoy their corned beef sandwiches — but I don’t sit near the window.”

Dijon ended up in Niagara after moving to Toronto from Hong Kong. He used to take drives down into the country to explore.

“When I hit Niagara-on-the-Lake, right away I fell in love with it, and I thought ‘this is the place I want to be.’ And it was a good decision.”

Dijon has lived in town for 18 years now. From stories of being attacked by the 14K Triads in Hong Kong and being rescued by Two Gerka soldiers, his flea circus, tarot reading and corned beef close encounters, Dijon has certainly earned himself a name as one of this town’s unique locals.

Niagara-on-the-Lake isn’t just home to world-class wineries. Some of its residents have also left distinguished marks on the globe in astounding ways. We’re fortunate to live in a place that’s so beautiful it attracts unique professionals from all walks of life. Local Spotlight will be a regular feature about some of our impressive locals, their careers, family lives and the paths that led them to one of the most beautiful places to live in the world — Niagara-on-the-Lake.
To harvest by machine, or by hand?
A talk with local winemakers to settle the age-old debate. Does picking by hand make wine fine?

Lauren O'Malley
Staff

The hardest-working comedian in NOTL is busy harvesting laughter these days. Joe Pilitteri—who in “real life” owns Lakeside Vineyard Equipment—has been busy harvesting grapes too.

Pillitteri was on high alert recently when September’s vicious cycle of sun and rain finally let up and left vineyards full of ripe-to-bursting grapes.

“This weather causes the acceleration of the breakdown of the ripe grapes. That means rot,” explains Pillitteri. Not the common grape growers and winemakers, and avoiding it at GW Wiens Farms means a rush to harvest.

“Emergency picking creates pressure on every level of the process,” Pillitteri continues. “Someone is taking a pay cut just because of the weather.”

Gary Wiens, the farm owner, nods knowingly.

Wineries have specific criteria in terms of sugar levels and volatile acidity—the former determined by the ripeness of the fruit, the latter by the berry level of rot. Trimming the affected grapes helps to mediate the effect, but a prompt pick has been deemed necessary in the Wiens vineyards.

The atmosphere is all-systems-go as metal, with state-of-the-art equipment that gleams with newness and promise.

The name Gregoire GL8 (a heavy-duty grape picker) is said with awe and reverence by the men here. Four harvesters cover the 20 acres, and the whole year’s growth is picked in a matter of hours.

Technology can keep improving, but humans will always be better.—DEAN STOYKA

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Residents around NOTL are fed up with people speeding

Lauren O’Malley
Staff

Local lawns are well decorated with signs these days, but one of them isn’t asking for a vote — it’s urging motorists to “Please drive slow.”

“If the police would park in our driveway, they could buy a whole new stadium for the town with the money from the tickets they would be able to give out for driving infractions,” says frustrated Chautauqua resident Dave Lilly. He and his partner Carla Kloosterhuis have a spectacular view of the junction of Circle and William streets — and of all of the driving shenanigans that go on there.

“I contacted the Town,” says Kloosterhuis, “and they recommended I start a petition and get concerned neighbours to sign it. I don’t have time for that, so I just had signs made up.”

They had 10 of the green and white signs made, and have given almost all of them away.

“People come to the house and ask us for them,” says Kloosterhuis. “People from all over town,” says Lilly. One of those people was Christina Patterson, a resident of Shakespeare Avenue.

“If I could, I would have 10 signs on my lawn,” she says, noting she had to “play detective” to find out where the signs came from. “And then we knocked on the door and asked for one.”

“People speed up and down our street day and night. I’m afraid to walk our dogs here,” Patterson says, indicating her two shaggy Golden Retrievers, “especially since there aren’t any sidewalks to escape to. I feel like I’m taking my life in my hands.”

Patterson’s frustration extends to what she sees as a lack of policing in the neighbourhood, and poor signage.

“There aren’t enough speed limit signs, and no one ever seems to get a ticket around here even though they’re obviously speeding,” she says. “People just want to boot it. She believes it’s as much a local issue as a tourist one: “Many of the speeders are people who live here rushing off to work in the morning.”

Candidate for council Al Bisback was campaigning in the neighbourhood when Kloosterhuis and Lilly told him about their concerns. “They said I should come one morning and see the danger for myself, especially when the school buses come to pick up kids.”

Bisback went back a few days later. “I sat at the curb at 7:15 a.m. with my Timmy’s mug of coffee in the other,” he says. “One person blew right through the stop sign, and was made aware of a lot of blind spots on the circle, some of them due to trees and shrubs. He says of Kloosterhuis’ signs, “It’s an excellent local initiative.”

Kloosterhuis says, “It’s small, but it’s my own personal initiative to control speed in the neighbourhood — because there are kids here, and my own kids. I was almost taken out myself recently.” She points out that there are no sidewalks, “which is part of the charm of this little neighbourhood, but it makes it risky,” she says. “The neighbourhood is full of kids on their bikes and whatnot, and there have been some crazy drivers around here.”

Linda Ciszew, traffic administration support at Niagara Regional Police Services, says the most productive thing to do is register traffic complaints with the police. “You can do so on the NRPS website at niagarapolic.ca, by calling their traffic hotline: 905-688-4111, ext. 5555. The webpage actually says, “NRPS wants traffic complaints.” Alleged speeding zones are flagged for local officers who can chose to observe the situation. If they do so, and see enough transgressions, they will inform their sergeant, who can in turn approach the Town’s traffic management person regarding the possibility of making requisite changes.

An official statement regarding this issue from the Town reads: “The Chautauqua area is being looked as a whole, not just specific streets. Traffic speed and volume counts are pending which will provide the Town with empirical data to share with the Niagara Regional Police. Once that data is completed, remedial strategies will be reviewed. The Chautauqua area will be highlighted as an area of special concern in the Town’s 2019 Master Transportation Plan. Niagara Regional Police enforce speeding laws and the Town recommends contacting the Niagara Regional Police with any speeding concerns.”

In the meantime, “please drive slow.”
Lauren O’Malley
Staff

Sometimes tragedy can motivate positive change. The recent high-profile deaths by suicide in St. Catharines has prompted a great deal of conversation around mental health. In Niagara-on-the-Lake, they won official impetus Pat Darte needed to launch his new initiative.

“The last, for a year or so, I started working on a plan to bring mental health services to the youth in town,” says Darte. “I was just seeing too many lost kids, hearing too many sad stories, so I decided to do something about it.”

Darte says he began consultation with various leaders in the mental health industry, including Dr. Robin Williams, Ontario’s Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health at the time.

In the spring of this year, Bethany Polt and the Lord Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council were coordinating the NOTL Grade 8 Mental Health and Wellness Conference, and found a glaring gap in local health services.

She sent a email to Darte regarding her disappoint- ing search for mental health professionals in NOTL who could “address the needs of NOTL youth and their families.”

She had been told there was no such service in town — not even a local psychiatrist speaking at the conference, and promising to make change.

She wanted to talk to people in the youth health of young people in town.

Over on Concession 2 Road, Steffanie Bjorgan was looking at the basement of her Red Roof Retreat facilitator and Wellness Conference, and found a glaring gap in local health services.

“I sawemail to Darte and was so excited about what he said,” says Bjorgan. “It was something about it.”

Darte says he was excited about the meeting. “When Pat came to me and suggested a mental health initiative for youth, it just felt like a perfect partnership,” says Bjorgan.

On Thanksgiving day, Darte was having a conver- sation about the recent suicides at home with Bob Mavrides and his niece and not many of the new mental health in their immediate family. “My dad said, ‘Every- one know someone who’s suffering — what can we do to help them?’” says Maria. “We made the donation to the initiative started,” she con- tinues. “As the program evolves, we are committed to do the fundraising or whatever it takes to keep it going and working.”

Other partnerships are being secured with orga- nizations and community members for further financial investment and support.

The issue of better mental health support for young people in NOTL has clearly been on a lot of minds. Darte is currently announc- ing the “Growing Mental Wellness” initiative. A November date will soon be released for an information night with Darte, representa- tives from the Red Roof Retreat, and the Lord Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council. The community will have the op- portunity to learn more about the goals and objectives of this initiative, and learn ways to help make services avail- able to those in need.

The Red Roof Retreat will provide the physical space for Growing Mental Wellness, and will handle the coordina- tion and administration of services and programs. It will also be responsible for the clinical support for people in need of services. “We’ll be providing crisis counselling, mental health counselling and more,” says Bjorgan.

“One of the first programs we’re planning to offer is safeTALK suicide preven- tion training,” she says. “The biggest part is we just have to start.”

The initiative will be in full operation by spring 2019, and there is a plan to have some counselling services available in the coming months.

“This is a community initiative,” says Bjorgan. “We want to hear from anyone who wants to get involved in any way.”

Polt is in support of this initiative. “I feel that NOTL youth need a safe and welcoming environment to address any mental health cu- risiosities they might have,” she says. “As we all can see from recent events close to the town, we need to address mental health with actions, not just words. Action includes providing an accessible place for our youth where they feel they can go and are protected from future support free of judgment.”

Speaking specifically of that judgment, Maria says, “We need to get rid of the taboos and open discussions — people need to talk about it and remove the stigma. The best thing we can do is to talk about it.”

Fortunately, those conver- sations have started to happen in NOTL.

If you would like to be involved in or support the initiative, you can contact Pat at patstayf@telus. com or Bjorgan at steffanie@ redroofretreat.com. A website with more information is in the works.

If you are in need of imme- diate mental healthcare, there are options available for you. Pathstone Mental Health has a 24/7 crisis hotline at 1-800-263-4944. The Path- stone website also has many resources.

Distress Centre Niagara 905-688-3711.

Youth Advisory Council. The “Growing Mental Wellness” initiative is a not-for-profit group, using annual fees and game fees to maintain supplies. “The money stays in the club. We also subsidize lessons to bring in new members, and held two social events a year,” says Muriel. “All the money goes to back to members. We want to make sure our members are getting the best they can get.”

The Tremblays have made a lifestyle of the game, travelling the world on cruise ships in exchange for teaching duplicate bridge to fellow passengers. “We like to visit local clubs when we’re on vacation — it doesn’t matter where we are, bridge is a universal language,” says Muriel. Experienced players are welcome to join on Tuesday or Friday afternoons. The game begins at 1 p.m., and registra- tion is required, beginning at 12:45 p.m. If you find yourself without a partner one will be provided. The fee for each game is $5 for members, $7 for non-members, and the annual membership fee is $20. For more information, please call 905-688-3711. for more information, please call 905-688-3711, or at kidshelpphone.ca. The Tremblays include an anomaly as a married couple duplicate team. “It usu- ally puts too much stress on a couple to play on the same team, but the rules say there are no anomalies in this group. “It’s a great social environment, a great way for people to connect,” says Claude.

According to the Tremblays and medical research, playing duplicate bridge helps ward off dementia, and keeps the mind sharp, which is well for the centre’s 140-strong member- ship. “It’s not easy to learn and play — it’s a challenge,” says Muriel, “but it’s worth it.”

The NOTL Duplicate Bridge Centre is a not-for-profit group, using annual fees and game fees to maintain supplies. “The money stays in the club. We also subsidize lessons to bring in new members, and held two social events a year,” says Muriel. “All the money goes to back to members. We want to make sure our members are getting the best they can get.”

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Have some fun

Crossword Puzzle

Across
1. E.g. a ketch (3-6)
6. Copper and zinc alloy (5)
9. Item (7)
10. Not friendly (7)
11. Nail-like fastener (5)
12. Carry (9)
13. Bony structures (9)
15. Burning gas (5)
16. Forbiddingly (5)
18. Environmental fouling agent (9)
20. Deadlock (9)
22. The Lake Report is looking for puzzle makers who would like to help develop this page. We are seeking both standard and cryptic crossword writers.
23. Arabian Nights hero (3,4)
25. Northern Canadian island (9)

Down
1. Melts (5)
2. Exterior (7)
3. Satan (9)
4. Larceny (5)
5. Practice session (9)
6. Defeats (5)
7. Grand Canyon state (7)
8. Confection (9)
13. In good order (9)
14. Home for abandoned children (9)
15. Ornamental water jets (9)
17. Conceive (7)
19. Sanction (7)
21. Make law (5)
22. Peer (5)
24. Move rhythmically (5)

Want the answers early? Scan the puzzles using HP Reveal. (Must be following Niagara Now’s channel.)

Sudoku

Last issue’s answers

Niagara’s Luxury Leader

ROYAL COMMONWEALTH

MLS# 30690935
Michelle Reynolds** & Stefan Regier*

213 John Street, NOTL, $979,000

MLS# 30686584
James O’Connor* & Margie van Gelder*

20 Autumn Place, NOTL, $749,900

MLS# 30684005
Helen Mosca* & Aaron Cherney*

92 Loretta Drive #20, NOTL, $525,000

MLS# 30691472
James O’Connor* & Margie van Gelder*

92 Loretta Drive #9, NOTL, $525,000

MLS# 30666782
Dan Stefels*** & Katie Redekopp***

19 Ridgeview Drive, St. Davids, $658,000

MLS# 30685655
Dan Stefels*** & Katie Redekopp***

21 St. Andrews Lane, NOTL, $749,900

MLS# 30685790
Michelle Reynolds** & Stefan Regier*

285 Wellington Street, NOTL, $1,425,000

MLS# 30683854
James O’Connor* & Margie van Gelder*

25 Wellington Street, NOTL, $1,395,000

MLS# 30690328
Helen Mosca* & Aaron Cherney*

2 Samuel Street, NOTL, $1,395,000

MLS# 30692300
Jo-Ann Cudmore*

92 Loretta Drive #17, NOTL, $574,000

MLS# 30691470
James O’Connor* & Margie van Gelder*

9 Autumn Place, NOTL, $699,000

MLS# 30659790
Michelle Reynolds** & Stefan Regier*

21 Loretta Drive #14, NOTL, $589,000

MLS# 30686476
James O’Connor* & Margie van Gelder*

26 Vincent Avenue, NOTL, $759,000

MLS# 30664876
James O’Connor* & Margie van Gelder*

213 John Street, NOTL, $979,000

MLS# 30666782
Dan Stefels*** & Katie Redekopp***

19 Ridgeview Drive, St. Davids, $658,000

MLS# 30682089
Dan Stefels*** & Katie Redekopp***

2 Stoneridge Crescent, St. Davids, $1,125,000

MLS# 30666185
Dan Stefels*** & Katie Redekopp***

20 Autumn Place, NOTL, $749,900

MLS# 30686584
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26 Vincent Avenue, NOTL, $759,000

285 Wellington Street, NOTL, $1,425,000

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Dan Stefels*** & Katie Redekopp***

Dan Stefels*** & Katie Redekopp***

Dan Stefels*** & Katie Redekopp***

Pauline Reimer-Gibson, Audiologist

Call today to schedule your FREE hearing test
905.468.9176 | 504 Line 2 Road, Virgil, ON

Christine is a Hearing Aid Specialist and Audiologist. Call her today to book a free hearing test.
As the 29th Wallbanger Hockey season officially opens this Sunday at 7 a.m. in the Meridian Credit Union arena in Virgil, a good number of Blue Team and Red Team players are totally unaware that Canada has new Red Team players are totally behind their effulgently top priority for either team.

Backchecking is encouraged and talked about, but not the unique phenomenon, all play-ers like to be able to keep up.

Wallbangers Hockey is a new players are required to fill out the rosters. All ages are

As each season starts, a few the future."

Don't come to my front door

I was afraid to scare him.

can't stop me. I've been known to蕞tter a mango for a few days. I noticed an evening visitor was just climbing the front door and stood about a foot away. He is thinking about me. I think Stewie has left me.

I couldn't sleep wondering if he was thinking about me. I wanted to open my window as I love the fresh night air, but I had a horrible fear that he might scale the walls and climb inside my bedroom and join me.

My front door! He's hiding beside my front door! We're trapped inside the house. What if it is a she, and she has babies? What if the rest of the family is arriving later and plans a party in my bed? I should have warned my partner that this is a dangerous time.

I didn't sleep wondering what was going on. I wanted to open my window as I love the fresh night air.

Mr. Skunk — now that we are living in such close proximity, I'm going to call you by a first name and I’ve dubbed you Stewie. Stewie waddled up to the door and stood about a foot away from me. Then he turned right and climbed behind the big cedar tree that guards our entrance way.

I was afraid to scare him away so we spent the night together.

The game of hockey has broken out plays.

The game of hockey has changed so much during the past two decades. Gone are the brilliant, meandering end-to-end rushes by Bobby Hull and Bobby Orr, or the light-ning break over the blue line by Yvon Cournoyer or Guy Lafleur. Now the game is built around quick, smart passes.

As for offside, whichever team scores quickest and fastest gets the call. The puck is dumped back in, and play continues.

This year, this year has seen break out plays.

the return to very early Sun-day morning action by Dan Fournier, the pride of Wawa and the world's biggest goose. Rafael Aparicio is back and quicker than ever after a sum-mer of power skating lessons.

Also, he has learned to release his shots from several points of his skating stride, which confuses the goalies.

Blue Team Captain Mark Shantz and Red Team Captain Carl Glauser have done a very fair job of selecting evenly matched teams. Pre-season scores have been high, but close. Anto Bay, fellows, thank you for both taking some of the load off League Commis-sioner Bill Dickson. Inciden-tally, Bill and Cathy Dickson celebrated their 34th wedding anniversary on Oct. 17. Love to you both.

So, the pre-season sched-u-ule is over, and the official opening game is scheduled for Sunday, Oct. 21 at 7 a.m. No one will get ripped off by Stub Hub or Ticketmaster. Specta-tors are welcome, and the hot chocolate is very tasty. Get two seats for the price of one. Yes, free. Slow motion hockey at its best.

Plans are already being final-ized for a luxury motorcoach road trip in June of 2019 to Toronto for the Stanley Cup Parade down Yonge Street.

The street has been measured, and it is wide enough to ac-commodate many floats. The end of the 51-year drought is apparently nigh.
Bringing back the soccer “ball”

Lauren O’Malley
Staff

Now that you’ve packed away the kids’ cleats, it’s time to pull out your own formal wear.

Kurt Hamm, longtime coach and new board member of the NOTL Soccer Club, is very excited to be bringing back the soccer dances of yore. “We want to bring coaches and parents together for a really classy night to remember the season, and to have a great time.”

At a meeting of coaches and NOTL Soccer Club volunteers last year, there was talk of folding the club. Hamm asked, “Are we broke?” The answer was no. “Is attendance down?” Again, no. “But they said we didn’t have enough volunteers. So we said, ‘There are 14 of us here right now — put us to work.’” That’s how Hamm joined the board.

During one of his first meetings as a board member, when the chair asked the room if there was any new business, “I shot up my hand and said, ‘We have to bring back the soccer dances — they were legendary!’”

Among the highlights of the dances, says Hammin, were action photos of the kids, taped to the walls. “We’d gather around the pictures and talk about that game, that play, that day. That’s what I want to bring back — a celebration of the whole soccer season,” he says.

The event is named for the traditional colours of a soccer ball, of course, and also for the formal attire people are encouraged to wear. Keeping with the black and white theme, Hamm’s friend and neighbour Roddy Heading designed and created a dramatic poster for the event. Says Heading, “Kurt’s a good man, he’s always got good projects. It’s easy to say yes.” Heading also illustrated the tickets.

Book your babysitter now — if history can tell us anything, the event will be very popular and sitters will be much in demand. Says Mary Lou Turner, chair of the original soccer dances, “We sold out every year — we packed the place.”

The place — then and now — is the Grand Hall in the historic Court House on Queen St. On November 23 it will bounce with the sounds of an eight-piece band and local DJs. Hamm tried to book local musicians but was stumped by scheduling conflicts, so he found a funky 8-piece band from Burlington — Mixed Liquor. He also hired local DJs the Rezza Brothers, who are promising great tunes and maybe even a surprise guest performance.

Of course the event is a fundraiser for the club — the $20 tickets and earnings from the raffles and cash bar will go to help pay for referees and other club expenses. Robin Howe catering will provide warm hors d’oeuvres. “I’m a huge fan of that whole family,” says Hamm.

The NOTL Soccer Club has been around for over 40 years, and has teams for kids from four to 15 years old. “Soccer is a beautiful sport — all you need is a ball,” says Hamm. “It’s a great way for kids to get to know each other outside of their schools and neighbourhoods. I still have friends from soccer — we met playing when we were seven or eight, and we still talk about those glory days.”

Turner remembers her experience running the soccer dances fondly, and is happy to see them return. “I think it’s wonderful that Kurt has resurrected this great community event,” she says.

Tickets are available through Hamm at kurt.hamm@gmail.com, through the soccer club’s email — niagarasoccerclub@gmail.com — or by calling 905-658-4360. All members of the community — not just soccer parents and fans — are welcome.
Pat Darte

"I will continue to work to preserve the heritage of our beautiful community of Niagara-on-the-Lake in order to maintain the lifestyles of our residents and future generations."

"Respect, Lead, and Listen"

**Vision**

- **Airport**
  - We have the ability to expand our airport and possibly partner with the Region

- **Trees and Nature**
  - A new tree bylaw needs to be put together first thing
  - I have been working with a couple of groups (NPCA, Harmony Group, Owen Bigrigg) to put together a plan to plant 10,000 trees in 10 years

**Achievements**

- **Fiscal responsibility:**
  - Delivered 4 years of surplus budgets and established lowest hydro rates in the Niagara region.

- **Smart Growth**
  - Led development plan for Glendale area which includes commercial and residential development, residential and the creation of jobs.

- **Education**
  1. Established Vineridge Academy secondary school, which provided our youth an option to continue their studies in the town.
  2. Launched Youth Advisory Council.
  3. Introduced Specialist High Skills Major in Aviation (with Ministry of Education), classes will be taught at the Niagara District Airport.

- **Recreation and Leisure**
  - In order to attract/keep young families we must have recreational facilities that will encourage them to be actively involved in the community and build long lasting ties to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

- **Tourism**
  - Our tourism is one of the envies of the world and grows daily
  - We need to make sure tourism mixes better with residential living
  - We are on our way to making NOTL a winter wonderland, one of our residents can enjoy

- **Economic Growth**
  1. Introduced expansion of Niagara District Airport services with the introduction of daily business flights to Toronto.
  2. Developed a plan to entice prestige industrial firms to set up their businesses in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

- **Support System From Charities**
  1. Founding member of the Niagara Community Foundation (2000) which has raised in excess of $50 million for local projects to date.
  2. Established Town Fund to assist local nonprofit organizations and have raised $500,000 to date.

Vote Pat Darte For Mayor
Niagara’s History Unveiled

Four notable women of NOTL: Part 2

Denise Ascenzo
Featured

Another formidable woman was born in 1857. She lived to be 94 years old, and in all those years she made sure people knew she meant business. In 1897, she moved to a new shop on Queen Street but she also owned property that ran down to Niagara River. There is a delightful tale of her suing the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake for stealing her property.

The town gave her permission to dredge the river to remove the excess sediments so that the dock company could continue to operate their business, however Boulton claimed her property line extended 10 feet into the river. She had not given permission to the town to dredge her shoreline, therefore she believed they had stolen her property.

Boulton won her case.

Throughout her life she seemed to be in one battle after another with the town, evidenced by the many letters Boulton sent to the town in 1903 about a property she owned.

She had rented the property to a widow, Mrs. A Clement, and her two children and apparently the widow was having great difficulty with paying the rent.

However, Boulton did not keep up the payment of taxes on this property which forced the town to go after the rent money directly to pay the tax debt. Letters from Boulton regarding the show of force by the two town’s tax collectors (Reid and Burns), indicated how much she despised the two men. She wrote they should go after other properties that were in arrears and even suggesting they be removed from their positions.

In another letter from 1903, she references that Mayor James Aikens suggested she was not a lady, but a woman who had tried to do good and carry on with her business.

Sounds like Boulton would fit right in with today’s women leaders of today.

Boulton passed away May 7, 1951.

Some of the town’s people might have been relieved at her passing, or maybe not, as quite a colourful character had left their lives.

***

Finally I shall tell you the story of Elizabeth Ascher — kind of heart, but with a backbone made of steel.

It was during World War One that Ascher saw the plight of the Polish soldiers that were training at a Niagara camp. The soldiers did not have proper kits for winter training with only two wool blankets having been issued to keep them warm as they slept in canvas tents out on the commons.

Ascher was determined that these young Polish men should not be forced into such appalling conditions, especially knowing that many would die in the trenches overseas in Europe, so she set herself and the town’s people to task to get every single one of those young men in proper beds. Schools, town offices, churches, warehouses, the canneries and private homes were made into temporary barracks.

If Ascher found out you had spare room, even if it was your dining room, she badgered you into taking in a couple of Polish soldiers.

Ascher organized letter writing sessions for the young Polish men. Many were not literate so she would pair them with someone who could write for them. She even had the library bring in Polish books and arranged music concerts with a Polish repertoire.

In July 1918, Ascher had the Polish Army Veterans of the Polish Army and was inducted as a life member in the Polish Army Veterans Association.

Ascher died in April of 1941 at the age of 62.

In October of 1922, she received one of the highest honours from the Polish government.

Commander Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta (the equivalent of a Knight-hood).

In November of 1923, she received the Hallard Medal, in May of 1926 the Order of Muscie Halierowskiet; and in May 1934 she received the Cross of Merit.

Ascher was the first woman and non-Polish citizen to receive these honours.

Elizabeth Ascher (to be included in Part 2). (Supplied photo)

Note of interest: Elizabeth Ascher’s last name is spelled incorrectly on her grave marker. It is spelled Asher.

The Niagara Historical Society and Museum has a wonderful exhibition commemorating the 100th anniversary of Camp Kosciousko, the Polish Army that trained at Niagara Camp. From November of 1917 until the last camp closed in March 1919, over 22,000 Polish men trained in NOTL. Of these, 21,000 of the men were being shipped to France to serve in the Polish “Blue” Army. The World War One exhibition runs until November 2018.

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

The Niagara Historical Museum is located at 43 Castlereagh St. in Old Town, in Memorial Hall, Visit, or give them a call at 905-468-3912.

Denise is a regular Niagara Now contributor. Her full profile can be found at niagaranon.com.
Local resident Jennifer Gardener didn’t do much barbecuing this summer, so a clever squirrel decided it would use it to store pinecones for the winter season. Unluckily for him, Gardener cleaned the barbecue out. (Submitted)

Betty Disero will work with all sectors of Niagara on the Lake to finalize the Town’s Official plan; one united voice, one united plan, one united vision, building on the foundation of a farming community and the town’s historical significance. Betty Disero can lead Council to the completion of the Master Plans, (transportation, irrigation, culture, recreation and economic development) the guidelines to reach our vision.

Our community deserves proven leadership that Betty Disero can bring to Council. Through running focused meetings and setting needed agendas, Council will be able to prioritize, motivate and direct staff in order to efficiently accomplish these goals.

She listens to the concerns of the community, she does her research and comes forward with thoughtful solutions.

On October 22nd – Vote Betty Disero for Lord Mayor – Ready to Lead

For more information:
www.bettydisero.ca email: info@bettydisero.ca
Twitter: @bettydisero
Facebook.com/bettydisero
Paid for by the Betty Disero campaign.

Photo: Pinecone stash busted

SCENE OF THE WEEK

Jackson-Triggs Winery

When you need me, you drop me. When you don’t need me, you bring me back.

What am I?

Last Week’s answer: Corn on the cob.

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

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Dave Perkins is something of a Renaissance man, in that he has a tendency to rebirth. In the past, he's been a musician, nutritionist, chef, farmer of crops and livestock, and has worked for Niagara Regional Police Services. His current passion though, was sparked entirely by his wife Nancy Thompson-Perkins and their animals.

Perkins and Thompson-Perkins rescue racetrack horses — mainly retired standardbreds, huge animals with a body-full of aches and pains — on their purpose-built farm on Concession 2 Road. “We’re athletes. When they come to us they’re pretty beat up,” says Thompson-Perkins. “They’re sore, they have arthritis.” They also have issues related to their sport, which involves pulling a cart carrying a person very quickly around an oval track. “They’ve had poles along their necks and things pulling on their jaws for most of their careers,” says Perkins, “They’re physically imbalanced.”

Thompson-Perkins has also reinvented herself for this purpose. “I learned everything on the fly. I think the pair are intelligent and stalions — and they don’t do things by halves. So when they decided to pursue becoming a horse stable, they both dove deep into research and education. Perkins went the clinical route, and achieved a veterinary certificate from the University of Guelph and the Royal Veterinary College in Edinburgh. Thompson-Perkins, the gentler soul of the two, delved into animal bio-mechanics, herbal remedies, essential oils, animal acupressure, infrared therapy and other alternative modalities.

As they pursued this new full-time passion, they decided their small horse needed a companion. They approached the Ontario Standardbred Adoption Society and found out about a famous racehorse named Carsocton Harmony. He’d done well at the races, retired at eight years old, and needed a new home. This is when they were ready. Although it might be inappropriate to say one is ever completely ready to care for large-breed animals. As the couple has learned, there are always surprises. The weight and care alone on these noble racetrack beasts can create unusual circumstances.

Another of their rescues, Buddy — another retired high-stakes standardbred — presented one evening with the symptoms of colic. Thompson-Perkins was at her shift-work job with the NRPS, so Perkins was on duty. “He wasn’t eating, and that’s usually a sign of colic, which can be fatal in a horse,” says Perkins — who thoroughly enjoys telling stories. “Any other horse would have a leg dangling by a thread and say, ‘Oh, I’m fine,’ but Buddy-the-diva’s colic was the end of the world. Drama, drama, drama.”

He continues, “You can’t leave a horse with colic, so I stayed with him all night, following traditional veterinary protocol. Nancy gets home from work in the morning, observes Buddy carefully for a few minutes, and says, ‘It’s TMR.’” Perkins went inside the house for a quick break, and “when I came back out there’s Nancy lying on the floor of the stall, pressing on his feces. ‘I realigned his meridian,’ she said. I said, ‘Well, it’s not that I’ve spent 10 hours following the colic protocol with no results, and you just pressed on his leg — and now he’s fine?’”

She’ll be really good at watching their body movement and seeing the subtle cues,” says Perkins of his cherished wife of 25 years. “The Perkins currently have four horses in their care. Some they’ve had for many years, and one they just acquired in April. Reinett is two years old, half standardbred and half quarter horse. They followed her gestation on Facebook — particularly when her mother captured a pubic tendon during pregnancy. ‘We know the owners of the mother,’ says Thompson-Perkins, “so we were watching with interest.” It was a dramatic pregnancy which normally would have been terminated at that point, but the decision was made to experiment with restorative treatments. Baby and mother survived — and now "baby" is a terrible-two-year-old mare at Wyndym Farm. "Having a two-year-old horse is like having a giant toddler," says Thompson-Perkins. "Good we got her now — we couldn’t have handled her before."

Fifteen years of learning about horses has prepared the couple for the most of large and small things that can go wrong while raising, training, and keeping horses. Even things like when a mutant amber-headed heinously took a chunk out of Old Gunner’s belly and it became infected immediately. Perkins applied the infrared pad on the spot, and Thompson-Perkins later applied her homemade salves to heal it almost instantly.

Wyndym Farm has a bit of a reputation in the horse world. "We get jokingly asked, ‘So how are things at the spa,’” says Perkins. People poke fun at the relatively luxurious amenities, and the constant care and treatment the horses are given. But the community respects their work too. "I asked our farrier what to do about the fly bites on a new horses’ legs," says Perkins. "He said, ‘You do the same thing with this horse as you do with all of your horses, and when I come back he’ll be fixed.’"

To Perkins’ advantage, "Dave was my guinea pig with infrared treatments, fascia work, special bodywork based on the central nervous system, traditional Chinese medicine (the oldest medicine there is), and I Touch (an integrative approach to handling, training and understanding animals)," says Thompson-Perkins. They practice what they preach — on themselves.

They also love simply: “We make it ourselves, build it ourselves, grow it ourselves, cook it ourselves, fix it ourselves,” says Perkins. “We’re pretty self-sufficient. That extends to the way we care for the horses. They only bring in the vet when things are dire. And even then we usually find we can manage better without their treatments.”

“Really, it’s just about being here all the time, being with them, watching them,” says Thompson-Perkins, who has been known to lose track of time while tending to the horses. “She’ll say she’s just going out to the barn for fifteen minutes, so I get the rice going for supper,” says Perkins — the former chef. "Two hours later I’ll be scrubbing rice goo onto her plate," he says laughing and aping the gesture. Thompson-Perkins seems to care more about the horses than her support. “They come here, and that’s it. Once they’re here don’t they have to go anywhere. We give them everything they need for an ideal life,” she says. “It’s really rewarding.”

Perkins sees it scientifically as well. “The luxury of having just a few horses on your own property is a bit like living in a research facility with everything on-site, monitoring everything they eat and do.”