Legion calls bells to action for Remembrance Day

Disero clears smoke surrounding plans for cannabis retail

Disero makes history:

A chat with NOTL’s first female lord mayor

Penny Coles
Staff

Change was what the voters wanted in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and change was what they got — there will be a new look in the council chamber when meetings resume in December.

Betty Disero will lead seven new councillors, with only John Wiens, last term’s deputy lord mayor, returning to the table — this time in fourth place.

Disero, the first female lord mayor not only for Niagara-on-the-Lake but for the country — another first for a town already steeped in historic milestones — will be joined by Deputy Lord Mayor Clare Cameron, forming a female duo at the helm, which is also a first for NOTL.

Grape-grower and retiring police officer Erwin Wiens, Gary Burroughs who also brings experience to the table, Wendy Cheropita, Stuart McCormack, Allan Bubback and Norm Arsenault will join them on council.

After one term as councillor, Disero took 4,169 votes — slightly more than 50 per cent.

Continued on Page 2

Election Results

Disero 50.14% of votes
Darte 32.99%
Turner 16.86%

Full results on Page 3.

Niagara-on-the-Lake’s cannabis industry uncertain.

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Disero clears smoke surrounding plans for cannabis retail

An information package sent to council members on October laid some basic ground rules for the privatization of cannabis retail stores — another issue that seems to be of confusion to many Ontarians.

Currently Doug Ford has approved the privatization of the cannabis industry in Ontario, meaning anyone who applies and gets a licence could open up shop — even downtown on Queen Street.

And without an updated Official Plan that includes rules surrounding marijuana stores, there “could be 30 stores that open up on the main strip,” said Disero.

According to the package sent to council, privatized stores will be able to open in April of 2019.

Disero said she simply wants to make sure there are some ground rules in place and find out what kind of power municipalities will have to govern these laws.

According to the information package, municipal governments will have the ability to opt in or out of cannabis sales in their community by Jan. 22, 2019.

“If municipalities opt out at this time, they can opt in at a later date yet to be set ... If municipalities opt in, they cannot opt out at a later date,” the report says.

Disero said this is really her main concern.

“If 10 people open shop, we can’t close them down after that’s happened.”

“If we were talking about one OCS (Ontario Cannabis Store) this wouldn’t even be an issue,” she said.

Disero said she is no prude, and admits she thinks most people have tried marijuana in some form in their lives.

Even Disero tried it when she was in high school, she said.

“But it’s not something for me. I didn’t like the feeling ... and it’s not something for everyone.”

Disero said some of her other concerns are whether or not the newly legal drug will have a negative effect on people, including minors, who may feel more “peer pressure” to try cannabis, now that it is legally acceptable to smoke, and even sold by the government.

Continued on Page 5
Betty Disero will be sworn in as lord mayor in December. (Richard Harley)
The town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has a new council. Betty Disero led the polls election night ending up with 50.14 per cent of votes. Disero will be joined by mostly new council members Clare Cameron, Erwin Wiens, Gary Burroughs, Wendy Cheropita, John Wiens, Stuart McCormack, Allan Bisback, and Norm Arsenault.

Cameron will act as deputy lord mayor to Disero. Complete election results are as follows, from the Town Clerk’s Declaration of Election Results.

The town saw a 59.06 per cent voter turnout, one of the highest for municipal elections in Ontario with 8,394 ballots cast; up nearly 10 per cent from 2014. The only results not included are the French school board’s, which saw acclaimed trustees take the positions.

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<td>Roberto Contreras</td>
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For Niagara Catholic District School Board trustee

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Penny Coles

With an election behind us, we know our municipal leaders for the next four years. We don’t get to vote for that very important position — it’s a provincial appointment, and one that has been in extremely competent, trustworthy and principled hands.

Janice Thomson, also doing an exemplary job as president of our Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce, became chair of the NPC following almost two decades of troubling reports on its governance. There had been allegations of financial improprieties, commissioners were removed and audits of board expenses and procurement and contracting processes undertaken by the NDP, Conser-
vative and Liberal provincial governments going back to the late 1990s.

Problems at the NPC became front and center when a decision was made to renew, undeterred, a 25-year lease to the Maid of the Mist for another boat operation.

As reported in the Globe and Mail in 2009, audit firm KPMG conducted a governance review and found several ethical breaches that had led to a drop in trust in the agency. One recommendation was to get it back on track was that commissioners should be appointed based on competence, not on ’the boys’ club’ method used to form political appointments.

One change in recent years, for the better, is that the NPC chair position is a limited term — it must be advertised to attract the best candidates — and the selection process is based on getting the best person for the job.

Here now’s the Province that appoints the chair, based on advice from the Tourism staff, and that doesn’t eliminate the possi-
bility of cronyism, especially following so closely on the heels of a provincial election that widened the width of widespread political change.

The mandate of the NPC is to prepare and enhance the natural beauty of Niagara Falls and almost 60 kilometer-
es of shoreline along the Niagara River corridor from Niagara-on-the-
Lake to Fort Erie, including greenspace and access to the river, all of which is of great significance to the cultural landscape of Niagara and the successful tourism industry it hopes to build up around it.

Included in the huge responsibility the NPC has to the province are the many attractions, restaurants, retail outlets, and natural trails that have been established since its inception in 1885. It is also tasked with maintaining sufficient revenue to continue funding the many ongoing projects required to maintain and upgrade its properties and environmental initiatives, and the low employees who contribute to the stewardship of NPC assets, all at no cost to the taxpayer.

Under the category of new development of Solmar Development Corp., which designs the all architecture and streetscape is uniform. The street has that same boring feel to it where no one looks with interest as they pass by. Cannery Park substitute for that. And then there’s another uniqueness to our town, that so many retired professionals from Toronto and the world come to live here.

Many of these people have spent a lifetime keeping up with current events and staying po-
litically active in the places they’ve lived.

In short, when you combine all of that, it’s no surprise the town has helped make a suc-
cess of this paper. It is my in-
tent to keep The Lake Report alive for these residents, and preserve a large part of the history of our town — a part that’s often overshadowed and overlooked.

Anyone who wants to talk further about the paper is welcome to stop in the office or get in touch with me to ask questions. I believe it is important for newspaper edi-
tors to be easy to contact and open to having conversations with readers, and intend to keep communications open. I find that believing mous, give us a call and find out for yourself.

edtor@niagararenow.com

Message to candidates

Thank you to everybody who participated in our recent municipal elections: the new candidates, the incumbents who put their names forward to run again, and those who by choice or otherwise are not returning after years of service to their community.

Those of you who attended the candidates meetings, met with them and asked questions of them, will know that not only were there a large number of candidates from whom to choose, but an extremely high caliber of candidates to make that choice difficult.

It’s now time for all of us to move forward and for those who will be doing so to collaborate for the sake of this great municipality, so it can continue to prosper as the best place to live, work and visit in this country of ours.

This very special town attracts millions of visitors each year, thanks to the dedication, skills and passion of the many who sought and accepted the responsibility of participating in municipal government in years past. Those who have agreed to bring their talents to this term of council will continue to shape the town into the future.

As your community newspaper, we at The Lake Report felt privileged to be a part of the election process. The decisions which will be made by our new municipal and regional government directly impact the quality of our lives, and we look forward to reporting on the stories of local significance in the future.

The Lake Report

Niagara Parks Commission chair must be chosen with care

One side to the ash borer disease, using 6,000 trees on parks property failed due to the disease itself. The Christmas trees, to create an 6,000 trees on parks property failed due to the disease itself. The Christmas trees, to create a barrier along the river’s edge. And under the category of fiscal responsibility to the province and for all of us who live in the area and enjoy NPC time, will likely be short.

While continuing to carry out the mandate of the NPC, there are a number of key factors that need to be reviewed and changed.

During her tenure, the commission has adopted rules for conflict of interest and conflict of interest and conflict of interest has been provided to all award winners.

Thomson has successfully sought to restore public trust and maintain a development of one that is not only beautiful but also a landmark for the future.

In response to “A Q&A with Benny Marotta”

Mr. Marotta is entirely correct when he states that NOTL “is losing the charm it’s been known for” and “that there’s a big change in the community.”

Perhaps that can be attributed directly to the factory line production process and cookie-cutter style develop-
ment of Solmar Development Corp., which designs subdivisions with bland homes that don’t fit the area.

It doesn’t seem to matter where Mr. Marotta builds, the developments all look the same — generic houses with no character, and curb appeal, and every single street has that same boring feel to it where no one looks at them with interest as they pass by. Canmore Park sub-
division is a perfect example of a huge lack of innovative designs where all the architecture and streetscape is uniform. Affordability being a huge concern that needs to be addressed, but we don’t need these types of uninspiring and tasteless developments to balloon across NOTL.

- Helen Arsenault

Letters to the editor:

I think this is the first time I’ve ever written to a

- Glenn Ashenhurst
NEWS

Cont’d: Disero clears smoke surrounding local cannabis dispensaries

Richard Harley
Editor

Continued from Front Page

With regards to marijuana being a gateway drug, Disero said she “doesn’t know” if that’s true or if there is also now a potential for people to think other drugs are fine. “It’s a legal business now,” Disero said.

Some residents have expressed concerns that the Town, if it was to not allow cannabis retail within the municipal boundary, would be — to its detriment — ignoring a proven revenue stream that could positively affect the economy of NOTL.

“Not only would it be irresponsible to ignore the potential income from the product, there are budding partnerships between Canopy Growth [which operates Tweed in NOTL] and Niagara College, which opened the country’s first cannabis production program,” said a local smoker.

Disero said she believes the partnership between Canopy Growth and Niagara College is a positive for the area in that it’s another reason for our young professionals to stay in the area.

“We’re an exporter of intelligence,” Disero said. “We need to keep some of that around.”

The cannabis industry just may peak that interest. For residents who might be disappointed, Disero notes it’s still easy to get online, and for medical patients not much is going to change at all — “and they can each grow four plants,” Disero adds.

The federal law surrounding cannabis allows up to four plants per household, and citizens can grow both indoors and outdoors. All in all, if council motions not to allow cannabis retail, it’s really about making sure the Town doesn’t walk itself into a situation it can’t undo, Disero said.

She said it’s important to make sure the cannabis industry doesn’t have a negative effect on tourism and our established wine industry.

Legion calls bells to action Nov. 11

Richard Harley
Editor

On Nov. 11, 1918 — one hundred years ago — church bells erupted across England in celebration of the end of four years of war.

One hundred years later, the Royal Canadian Legion is calling to action bells across the country to ring in solida rity and commemoration of the war and those who fought for our freedoms.

“The legion is looking to recognize the Centenary of the Armistice ending World War I on November 11, 2018, by having communities across the country ring bells at sunset on that day,” said local legion (Branch 124) president Al Howse.

“To this end, we are asking each church in and around the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake to ring their church bells at 5 p.m. on Nov. 11 as many as 100 times.”

Howse, who served in the Canadian army during the Second World War, hopes bells will be heard across town.

“It is important as Canadians for us to remember this date for the contribution that our ancestors made during the 1914-1918 conflict. Of the 424,000 that went overseas, 66,000 were killed and 172,000 were wounded. Our population at the time was only eight million people,” said Howse.

The legion will hold its Remembrance Day services at 10:45 a.m. and 12:45 p.m. on Nov. 11, gathering first at the Old Town cenotaph, and then at the base of the staircase at Queenston Heights near Brock’s Monument.

The bell event will only happen this year, notes Howse, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the armistice that ended the war.

“We hope as many as possible can participate, if only to stop at the sound of the bells and reflect on the 100 years that have past, and how it affected your family.”

“We also encourage people throughout the day to go into the local cemeteries and seek out the graves of those who served in the First World War.”

The graves of those who served will be marked with small Canadian flags.

“At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them,” said Howse, quoting the poem For the Fallen by Laurence Binyon.

Have an opinion you want heard?
Send a letter to the editor to editor@niagaranow.com
On a sunny autumn Tuesday morning, with one of the most beautiful views in the country as a backdrop, the Rotary Club of Niagara-on-the-Lake celebrated its 25th anniversary gift to the town — a limestone seating area on the beach at Queen’s Royal Park.

Rotary community service chair Paul Lalonde came up with the vision to recognize the club’s milestone, and members jumped in to back the project, helping to raise the funds to cover the $21,500 cost.

“I had the idea July 3, and we’re standing here at the end of October and it’s happened,” said Lalonde.

It’s a busy park, used by locals and visitors from all over the world, he said. The stone seating is a focal point that will give people a place to rest, enjoy the view or a beautiful sunset, “feel at peace and relax in tranquility.”

On the face of the Rotary stone, a centrepiece of the seating area, said Lalonde, will be engraved the words “Have you made somebody’s life BETTER today?”

“It’s a simple question that we hope will lead to reflection and promote goodwill that we hope will multiply within the community and the world.”

That’s the goal of the Rotary club, he said — to make people’s lives better every day, and the seating area of the park will help to do that. The stone with the plaque will even have a little ridge at the top, and it’s placed in the perfect position to rest a phone on top, to allow people to take selfies while enjoying the seating area, with the gazebo as a backdrop.

Rotary members not only raised the money for the project but gathered at the beach to do what work they could, including raking sand, aided by Roxburgh Landscaping to move the stones.

J.B. Hopkins of the Town’s parks department called Lalonde’s vision “an excellent idea effectively executed,” and said it was a pleasure working with Rotary members on the park enhancement.

The celebration was also an opportunity to announce the name of the area — it was an idea of Lord Mayor-elect Betty Disero, who came up with Rotary Rocks — fitting, since Rotary donated the rocks, and because Rotary does rock, said Lalonde.

Whether that becomes an official name or one that is used by locals, Lalonde said he can imagine a time when residents say “let’s meet at the rocks.”
Zalepa hopes to see trust, faith restored in Regional government

Penney Cole
Staff

Having a “strong voice” is an essential quality for an effective politician, but given the state of Regional government and the many issues that need addressing, Gary Zalepa knows one voice will not suffice.

Elected to represent Niagara-on-the-Lake at the Regional council table, Zalepa spoke often during the election campaign of 2006, the need to work with the mayor and Town council as a unified front. “It’s a very important time for the Region and the Town to do otherwise,” he said.

Niagara-on-the-Lake might be a small municipality, but it pays a large chunk of revenue to the Region and also provides a huge benefit, said successful tourism destination, said Zalepa. Yet it hasn’t been receiving the infrastructure investment it needs to sustain it.

“Tis why I wanted to run for Regional council, to help NOTL get what it needs from the Region. It’s an opportunity to bring my experience and the way I work to change things.”

He’s excited by the reaction he received from residents when he was out knocking on doors, he said. “There is so much more energy than when I was out there campaigning in 2006. People wanted to talk, they’d want to go get a clipboard so they could ask me questions. I’ve never seen anything like that before. People are so much more engaged, and that’s encouraging.”

It also indicates residents are concerned, and they wanted to hear answers on which to base their votes, he said. They asked about many issues, but in general, they asked him what he could do to make a difference that hasn’t been tried in the past.

Post-election, the big change around the Regional council table should provide the opportunity for change, he said, with many new people who work collaboratively to improve the public’s perception of the Region. “It’s a matter in which there is much more transparency.”

Zalepa said his initial meeting behind closed doors, he will ensure there is a valid reason under the municipal act, which has “fairly strict guidelines,” and that any decisions are made in public. “That will be my gauge, to ensure decisions are made in public in a fair and transparent manner,” he said.

“It’s so important to restore trust and faith in Regional government, for a variety of reasons. It’s so important.”

It’s secret the province is “keeping an eye” on regional governments and that there could be changing coming, said Zalepa, and it’s important for the Region to demonstrate it’s doing a good job “so we make that change, and not have it dictated to us.”

Electorating a chair will be one of the first items on the Regional agenda, said Zalepa, and with so many newly-elected councillors, there hasn’t been the early chatter that might be expected. No one has reached out to him to lobby for that position, but he said he expects lobbying to start soon.

The outcome of the controversy surrounding the hiring of CAO Carmen D’Angelo and the extension to his contract was an issue that came up often when he was campaigning, said Zalepa. “Definitely it will come up early on the agenda, but I don’t have any first-hand information. I only know what the public knows,” he said, and he will be in good company with new colleagues who will all need to be brought up-to-date on options before making any decisions.

Another question residents asked was about long-term care, said Zalepa, and he will be investigating the Regional plan. Whether it’s Upper Canada Lodge or another facility, NOTL residents need to know there will be options for them to “age in place.”

That resonated during the campaign. We need a solution for NOTL,” he said.

As for traffic infrastructure, his strategy, with the backing of the lord mayor and Town council, will be to talk about having funding for improvements moved up in the budget.

“We have to push for that. The part we play in the Region might be a small part, but we’re a significant contributor to the Region, and to the success of the Region through our own tourism success. And having the mayor and I on the same page will be the key to that.”

Having two strong voices at the Region, two votes in the same direction, working together in a constructive dialogue toward the same goal “is our strategy, and I think it will make a difference.”

Whatever the traffic solutions are, they will have to be part of a long-term multi-faceted approach that could include a third lane on Niagara Drive and improve access to Concession 6, “but we’ll let the engineers work on that. I’m a big push-toller here it’s going to happen and having the funding advanced so it can happen.”

The town’s traffic problems are interconnected, he said, and “it’s so important to have a master plan instead of a one-off solution that can cause more problems.”

Another question was often asked was regarding GO Transit, and how it would fit into the Town and Regional transportation system. Residents “have a desire to see transit integration, and with a transit hub that allows them to access Regional transit and GO Transit.”

GO Transit is not a done deal, he said — the Region needs to work on a plan, including the location of stations, that will show the Province and Metrolinks it can provide the ridership the Region requires. “That’s a key part of the puzzle. The Region needs to be committed.”

There will be an open house for the Region to show the public some preliminary plans regarding stations and hubs, he said, at the Casa Blancana Winery in Grimsby Nov. 8 at 5:30 p.m. “It’s high on Zalepa’s agenda is making the Region competitive with other regions in attracting successful investment and economic development, which requires an effective transit system to draw key employers to invest in the Region.”

“If we can bring people from the GTA, it would be a high gain for Niagara. Other regions have been doing the same. It’s time for the Niagara Region to get there too. I think we’re really close.”

Zalepa says his hope is that four years from now, with improved transportation and day care bringing good jobs to the Region, “we’ll be able to say we can live and work here, and age in place. That will be success for the Region.”

He’s excited by the opportunity to bring his experience and the way he works to change things.”

Gary Zalepa, elected NOTL’s Regional councillor, is looking forward to tackling issues that are sure to surface early in the new term of Regional council. (Penney Cole)
Darte’s community involvement to continue

Penny Coles
Staff

Outgoing Lord Mayor Pat Darte began his career in the family funeral home, where his job entailed helping people in their time of need. He learned quickly in his role as a politician and leader, understanding the importance of effective communication and engagement.

Lord Mayor Pat Darte serves up some slices of giant cake on Canada Day. (Richard Harley)

News
November 1, 2018
Page 8

A change of heart

When asked about his plans to fill the gap left by the time-consuming job of being lord mayor, spending time with his kids, grandchildren and girlfriend are at the forefront. Working on the family horse farm is also on his list. Darte has also been involved with Steffanie Bjorgan of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Fund, the Niagara Community Foundation’s municipal funds. Darte has also begun working on Growing Mental Wellness, a new initiative with Steffanie Bjorgan of Red Roof Retreat, focusing on young people. It’s early days yet, says Darte, but they want to get moving quickly and plan to offer support and counselling for youth suffering from mental health problems. Suicide prevention will be one of the elements.

He has another business to expand, a hockey tournament that brings visitors to NOTL each winter, and some ideas for a couple of new businesses that are still in his head. He has some fundraising duties coming up for the Niagara-on-the-Lake Fund, one of the Niagara Community Foundation’s municipal funds.

Lord Mayor Pat Darte serves up some slices of giant cake on Canada Day. (Richard Harley)

The experience has made him want to become more involved in the community, he said, but other than that, “I need time to do more thinking. I need to think about what comes next.”

Going to school grad is an option, as is looking for other career opportunities — he currently holds an honours economics degree from Brock University — but he’s decided to explore some other possibilities.

The services will be arranged by Red Roof and offered at its Concession 2 facility. The serious lack of such support services for youth in the Niagara area is a growing problem, says Darte, “and this is something that can’t wait. These kids need help now.”

He will continue to be interested in education, and he hopes to see more high school specialty courses such as the one on aviation he helped facilitate with the Catholic school board that will begin offering courses at the Niagara District Airport in January. He still sees that as a way to further offer educational opportunities locally, despite his leaving a local high school.

Reflecting on the last four years, Darte says of course he wishes it had ended differently. He gets that people saw what didn’t get done, rather than the many accomplishments, but blames some of that on “misunderstandings,” including the Randwood Estate issue. Council has to work within legislation, and the zoning amendment required for the John Stroot hotel proposal was only about a small difference in height — all the other details were ones that had already been approved. Yet councillors were blamed for not supporting heritage and for not stopping the development, although there was no way they could.

Another issue he says people misunderstood was the salary of the CAO, who was mentioned in attack ads during the campaign. Council voted unanimously to give her the position, so while they were still paying the previous CAO, Holly Dowd agreed to take the challenge but did get two jobs for the price of one. It didn’t cost the town more; it likely saved money, he says, and although she was new to that job, she had 37 years experience working for the Town, and has done what she was asked to do. Darte says staff morale was low. “Her first test was to get people back on its feet, and she did that.” One of his regrets, he says, is that the CAO and Town staff have been the victims of some of the nastiness that had no place in the election campaign.

Perhaps the best part of his four-year experience was that although he already knew Niagara-on-the-Lake, he got to see it first hand over and over. He saw families who needed help many times, most recently when the Virgil fire took the home of a local family, and each time, the community jumped in to help. “It wasn’t a surprise, I always knew that was the kind of community we live in, but it really touches you when you see it in person.”

Which is why Darte plans to continue his involvement in the community: “I think of the job he says loved — without the politics.

Future looking bright for Dan Turner

Penny Coles
Staff

Once you’ve campaigned to be lord mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake at the age of 23, what comes next?” Dan Turner hasn’t quite made up his mind, but not surprisingly, the confident and articulate young man has lots of options.

Although the conclusion of his election run was not what he was hoping for, he was satisfied with the campaign he ran, he says. He knocked on a lot of doors, met a lot of people with whom he was able to share his ideas, and was able to garner the support of more than 4,000 voters. NOTL has been his home most of his life, and he had some positive ideas about change to present to voters, including how to fund a world-class aquatic centre in town.

“I’m feeling optimistic about the future,” he said. “There is definitely more to come.”

The experience has made him want to become more involved in the community, he said, but other than that, “I need time to do more reflecting. I need to think about what comes next.”

Going to school grad is an option, as is looking for other career opportunities — he currently holds an honours economics degree from Brock University — but whatever he chooses to do, he has learned some valuable skills while campaigning that will help in the future, including time management.

He learned something important about himself as well. While he has always considered himself a quiet person and an introvert, “I’ve discovered I’m more of a people person, more of an extrovert than I thought I was.”

The kind remarks and compliments he was given on the campaign trail were great to hear, he adds. “A lot of people comment that I was well-spoken, and wise beyond my years. That is good to know.”

He also learned something about the community — it’s more diverse than he thought it was.

“I met a lot of people from many places in the world. The town has become more multi-cultural.”

He even met people who suggested the gap left a job opportunity for him if the election didn’t work out, or who asked him to join their groups or service clubs.

“It definitely has been a very interesting experience,” says Turner. “I have absolutely no regrets. I’m glad I put my name forward — I got to connect with so many new people in my own home town.”
Ford protesters gather outside White Oaks

Protesters gathered peacefully outside White Oaks in Niagara-on-the-Lake on Oct. 26 to voice frustration with Ontario Premier Doug Ford's decision to repeal Bill 148, which would have increased the minimum wage to $15 in the province. Ford had spoken at a NOTL Chamber of Commerce meeting about new road signs to be installed near the border. The signs read: “Welcome to Ontario, Open for Business.” Protestors carried signs advocating people to “fight for $15 and fairness.” Among the demonstrators was Kyle Hoskin, unit vice-president for Emterra Environmental with CUPE 1287 and Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Gates. (Alex Lupul/Special to TLR)

Ideas? Submit them.

In the wake of the recent municipal election, which saw a near clean sweep of the incumbent members of town council, the Lake Report would like to know what local issues matter most to residents, and how they’d like to see them solved. We have provided a blank slate for residents to identify five specific areas of concern to them. Let us know what matters to you by either filling these questions out and mailing them to PO Box 724, LOS 130 (NOTL post office) or by emailing your answers to editor@niagaranow.com with the subject line “My ideas for NOTL.”

The paper will publish the five most common issues, as well as submit them to the Town and the newly elected members of council. To be tallied and included, all responses must be submitted by Nov. 20.

1. Issue: _________________________________________
   Fix: _________________________________________

2. Issue: _________________________________________
   Fix: _________________________________________

3. Issue: _________________________________________
   Fix: _________________________________________

4. Issue: _________________________________________
   Fix: _________________________________________

5. Issue: _________________________________________
   Fix: _________________________________________

Pick five local issues that are important to you, and let us know how you’d like to see them solved.
LOCAL SPOTLIGHT: Ralph Mellanby

Executive producer of Hockey Night in Canada (1967-87)

Richard Harley
Editor

Across the globe, it's safe to say the way people view sports has come leaps and bounds since 1960.

Slow-motion replays, steady aerial shots and speed-measuring devices are just a few of the innovative breakthroughs we now take for granted when we watch our favourite players skate down the ice or hit a ball across a field.

A large part of the credit for these innovations goes to Ralph Mellanby — a local man who has five Emmys under his belt, is in eight halls of fame, has been a family legacy as an executive producer of Hockey Night in Canada for 20 years — with games, and was the executive broadcasts for 15 Olympic tournaments or two, as well as speaking at universities.

His friend Ross Robinson says, "I'm Ralph Mellanby," to which the man replied, "I'm John Denver." ("Denver" said, "how would you like a nice beer?"") Well this story, Mellanby hasn't seen one of his bags against the wall even had more than one.

There is no shortage of these stories, Mellanby said, and he seems to remember almost all of the people he's met or worked with over the years, largely crediting his tremendous achievements to the people on his team.

Across the globe, it's safe to say that hockey here ... no music before the start of the show. "[Denver] said, 'it'll cost ya.'"

"I'm producing hockey here ... no music before 10 a.m. or after 10 at night," Mellanby recalls, noting he wasn't very friendly about it.

When the stranger replied he was also there to work on the Olympics show, Mellanby said, "I'm Ralph Mellanby," to whom the man replied, "I'm John Denver." ("Denver" said, "how would you like like a nice beer?"") Well this was like manna from heaven to me. "Cause we weren't allowed to drink on the plane or anything ... she gave me a Tuborg ale. I never forgot it ... I think I even had more than one."
NOTL foundation leaves legacy

Lauren O’Malley
Staff

Barbara Walter, a member of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Healthcare Foundation Board of Directors, holds up a post-marking the opening of the Cottage Hospital in 1950. “This is an legacy for the hospital which served us well for over 60 years,” she says. “It’s sad to see the hospital go, but it was time, and we feel comfortable that the money will go to the better health of the community. Goodbye old hospital.”

The NOTL Healthcare (formerly) Foundation Hospital had a surplus of $920,000 raised in support of patient care at the former NOTL Hospital. Being a community-focused foundation, the decision was made to use the funds for legacy projects with other Niagara-based and -focused foundations.

The money has been divided into two grants of $460,000 each. One will go to the Niagara Health Foundation, the other to the Niagara Community Foundation. “These three groups are working together for one great cause — the better health of all Niagara residents,” NHF President and CEO Roger Ali says. “This is a great demonstration that a collaboration of like-minded organizations can work together for the greater good.”

The money going to the Niagara Health Foundation will go toward the foundation’s Gifts of Extraordinary Care Fund — the goal of which is to purchase a third MRI machine for the Niagara region. “With these new funds, the Health Foundation will live on well into the future,” said Bryan Rose, the gift to the Niagara Community Foundation will go toward an endowment fund and annual disbursements for health-focused charities serving Niagara-on-the-Lake, as well as an endowment fund to benefit the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Palliative Care Service.

“As we close our doors, we’re confident these significant gifts will continue to fulfill the wishes of our donors and continue supporting healthcare needs, including palliative care, in our community,” said Walter.

Newark neighbours drive a success

Lauren O’Malley
Staff

Newark Neighbours reaches into our community in a number of ways. Recently they decided to do so physically, with 15 volunteers from Rotary clubs around Ontario and New York State driving to over 50 houses in town to collect gently used goods for the charity.

This first annual “drive” was so successful Newark had to rent a classroom at the old Virgil Public School to store and stage everything the volunteers brought back. “Some houses had as many as 25 boxes loaded up for us to collect,” said Cindy Grant, a volunteer at the local organization. “The classroom is full.” Volunteers collected clothing, toys, non-perishable food, and cash donations.

“Speaking of food,” said Grant, “we distributed 28 Thanksgiving baskets to local families in need, and are now starting to collect for Christmas.”

Grant expects to have around 30 families registered for Christmas baskets, which generally include a turkey and the rest of the fixings for a fine feast, as well as new clothing for kids.

“Families with children give us a wish list and we try to accommodate that,” said Grant. “We collect things from donations here and there throughout the year to add to the baskets too.”

If you’re not able to support a family by donating goods towards a basket, there are other ways to help the charity support local people in need.

“Shop,” said Grant. “We have the best deals on clothing in town, and all the proceeds go to our food bank.” She indicates her stylish white cotton sweater and dark slacks and said, “I bought all of these here.” All of the gently used clothing is donated by members of the community.

Newark Neighbours is located at 310 John St. E., and is open from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday to Friday.

Christmas sale aims to raise funds for African school children

Lauren O’Malley
Staff

Shopping for artisanal Christmas gifts in Niagara-on-the-Lake could help to provide solar-powered lights for children in Burundi, Africa. The Christmas With Heart fundraising artisan sale takes place on Saturday, Nov. 10 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Cornerstone Community Church’s new location in the former Orchard Park church.

Virgil resident Chris Gillespie-Bridal is partnering with her adult daughters Paige Ruthford and Jess Gillespie-Bridal to create a meaningful and helpful resource for our own community, as well as for the students of Karubai School in Africa. Ronald McDonald House will also benefit, with proceeds from the event going to both charities.

The family chose the second charity as a recipient says NCF Executive Director Bryan Rose. "The gift to the Niagara Community Foundation will go toward an endowment fund and annual disbursements for health-focused charities serving Niagara-on-the-Lake, as well as an endowment fund to benefit the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Palliative Care Service.

"As we close our doors, we’re confident these significant gifts will continue to fulfill the wishes of our donors and continue supporting healthcare needs, including palliative care, in our community," said Walter.
## Sunday
- Public skating: 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. - NOTL Meridian Credit Union Arena.
- NOTL Ukesters Sunday Ukelele Workshop: 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre.
- Sunday Songs at the Church: 3 p.m. - Silversmith Brewing Co.

## Monday
- Council Workshop: 3:30 p.m. - Council Chambers.
- Table tennis: 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre.
- Rotary Club of NOTL: 12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre.
- NOTL Golden Age Club: 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre.
- NOTL Duplicate Bridge: 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre.
- The MakeShift: 7 p.m. - NOTL Public Library.

## Tuesday
- Public skating: 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. - Meridian Credit Union Arena.
- NOTL Ukesters Sunday Ukelele Workshop: 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre.
- Painting without brushes: 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. - St. Michael Catholic Elementary School.
- NOTL Social Club MOVE TO 15th!!!: 10 a.m. - Sweets & Swirls Café.
- Little Red Tail Hawks: 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. - Niagara Regional Native Centre.
- Community Pot Luck and Drumming Night: 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. - Niagara Regional Native Centre.

## Wednesday
- Tentative Sign Committee Meeting: 9 a.m. - Council Chambers.
- Outdoor obstacle course: 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. - St. Michael’s Catholic Elementary School.
- Drop-in painting: 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library.
- Knit-a-Bit: 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library.
- Wayne Gates Office: 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library.
- Drop-in Mah Jong: 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library.
- Tentative Sign Committee Meeting: 9 a.m. - Council Chambers.

## Event Information
**LEGION FISH FRY EVERY THURSDAY!**

4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre

**PUBLIC TALK: RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURAL STYLES OF NIAGARA**
- Speaker: Prof. Cecilia Morgan
- Topic: Letters of the 19th Century
- Date: Thursday, November 8th
- Time: 7 p.m.
- Location: NOTL Public Library

**NIAGARA REGIONAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY, BURNT HOUSE MUSEUM**
- Address: 721 Ridge Rd. W.
- Event: Heritage House Tours
- Dates: Saturday, November 10th
- Time: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**HEAR BETTER NIAGARA**
- Address: 1610 Niagara Stone Road
- Event: Call us to book your complimentary hearing test
- Contact: 905-468-4499

**LEGION FISH FRY EVERY THURSDAY!**
- Time: Every Thursday
- Location: NOTL Public Library
- Date: November 8th
- Details: 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre

**NIAGARA PUMPHOUSE ARTS CENTRE**
- Address: 247 Ricardo Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario
- Event: Annual General Meeting of the Legion Fish Fry
- Date: November 8th
- Time: 6:30 p.m.

**NIAGARA PUBLIC LIBRARY**
- Address: 165 King St.
- Event: Babies and Books
- Date: November 8th
- Time: 11 a.m.

**LEIPZIG MUSICIANS RESIDENCE**
- Event: Fall Trivia League
- Date: November 8th
- Time: 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

**WILLOWBANK SCHOOL OF RESTORATION ARTS**
- Event: Public Talk: Residential Architectural Styles of Niagara
- Date: November 8th
- Time: 7 p.m.
- Location: NOTL Public Library

**WINE & CHEESE SOCIAL TO FOLLOW**
**November 2023**

**Tuesday**
- Babies and Books - 11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library
- Drop-in Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
- Practical Genealogy - 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
- Minecraft Club - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
- P.A. Day -
  - Healthy Kids Community Challenge: Power Off & Play - 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
  - NOTL Duplicate Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
  - Drop-in Mah Jong - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
  - Wayne Gates Office - 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
  - Knit-a-Bit - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
- NOTL Duplicate Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
- Drop-in Mah Jong - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
- Wayne Gates Office - 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
- NOTL Public Library
- Wayne Gates Office - 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library

**Wednesday**
- Wayne Gates Office - 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
- Drop-in Mah Jong - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
- Wayne Gates Office - 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
- NOTL Public Library
- Wayne Gates Office - 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library

**Thursday**
- Babies and Books - 11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library
- Drop-in Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
- Minecraft Club - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
- Building with Brandon - 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
- P.A. Day -
  - Healthy Kids Community Challenge: Power Off & Play - 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
  - NOTL Duplicate Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
  - Drop-in Mah Jong - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
  - Wayne Gates Office - 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
  - Knit-a-Bit - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
- NOTL Duplicate Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
- Drop-in Mah Jong - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
- Wayne Gates Office - 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
- NOTL Public Library
- Wayne Gates Office - 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library

**Friday**
- Babies and Books - 11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library
- Drop-in Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
- Minecraft Club - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
- Building with Brandon - 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
- P.A. Day -
  - Healthy Kids Community Challenge: Power Off & Play - 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
  - NOTL Duplicate Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
  - Drop-in Mah Jong - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
  - Wayne Gates Office - 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
  - Knit-a-Bit - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
- NOTL Duplicate Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
- Drop-in Mah Jong - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
- Wayne Gates Office - 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
- NOTL Public Library
- Wayne Gates Office - 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library

**Saturday**
- Babies and Books - 11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library
- Drop-in Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
- Minecraft Club - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
- Building with Brandon - 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
- P.A. Day -
  - Healthy Kids Community Challenge: Power Off & Play - 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
  - NOTL Duplicate Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
  - Drop-in Mah Jong - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
  - Wayne Gates Office - 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
  - Knit-a-Bit - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
- NOTL Duplicate Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
- Drop-in Mah Jong - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
- Wayne Gates Office - 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
- NOTL Public Library
- Wayne Gates Office - 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library

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**Rent My Husband**

in Niagara-on-the-Lake

See what he can do for you at: https://www.rentmyhusband-notl.com

Or call me, Marion (905) 321-3776
Rhythm Section is celebrating Saturday night for a decade gig in your own town every working musicians, playing a like a long time — but for ours, 15 years may not sound element of familiarity. There: “Variety with a certain on to something here.’” singer. I thought, ‘Alright, I’m it was: Johnny Maxx, a pop spoke with Bruce and asked stage: “We could each indivi- calls the spaciousness of the Anchorage fondly. Norris re- calls the spaciousness of the stage: “We could each indi- vidualy swing a cat,” he says. They also recall the NRS back? “We’re getting paid the only thing the band gets to gigs. “On stage, the guest Goldberger’s studio before line-up changes that occurred through those years. “After about six months, Herb left, and Joe Ingrao joined us on keys,” recalls Goldberger. “I met Joe when he called me up and invited me on a gig,” says Goldberger. Imitating Ingrao’s trademark gravel-pocked voice and dramatic inflections, he says Ingrao called him and said, “Steve. I hear you’re pretty good. Come play with me at Casa Mia.” Goldberger asked, “What are you playing?” Ingrao answered, “Whatever you want, just come.” Ingrao, a legend in the Niagara music scene, played with the NRS for several years — until, tragically, he died suddenly of a heart at- tack in 2005. Rodger Niznik — “a mon- ster on keys” according to Norris — joined the band for a couple of years after that, often bringing his B3 organ and Leslie speaker cabinet to gigs. Guitarist Steve Grisbrook also joined the band in the Anchorage years. “He came as a guest one night, and then kept suggesting other guests to us, saying, ‘Get this guy, and I’ll come with him,” says Goldberger. Eventually Grisbrook just became a permanent fixture, and, through his extensive connections in the blues music scene across Ontario, boosted the band’s guest roster significantly. Grisbrook is evidence of the fact that these guys are musicians’ musicians. “The overwhelming rule is that guests always want to come back, which is so flattering,” says Goldberger. Jane Cripps, then manager at the Anchorage, remembers the band fondly. “They were just the greatest. Just the greatest,” she repeats. Of her memories of those years, she says, “Probably the most sig- nificant one for me was when they played for our closing. That was a really emotional night for all of us. That night was really wild.” But the boys in the NRS weren’t going to let a demolit- ion get in the way of their Saturday night winning streak. “When the Anchorage looked like it was going to close, Bob Mavridis (owner of Corks Wine Bar & Eatery) came to us and said, ‘The moment you’re done there, come and play at Corks,’ says Goldberger. “We were Bob’s guinea pigs for live music at Corks,” said Norris. After almost a year of trying, the unanimous conclusion was that the NRS plus guests were just too large a band for the configuration of the bar and restaurant. Once again, there was a suitor waiting in the wings. “Rob Glatt (co-owner of The Old Winery Restaurant) said, ‘If this thing at Corks ever goes south, we want you in our wine bar,”’ remembers Norris. “And again we didn’t miss a Saturday night — we just had to let our sched-uled guests know to go to The Old Winery instead of Corks,” says Goldberger. The core members are proud of their unbroken record of service. “I think in 15 years Dave has missed two gigs — and I’ve only missed one or two, for my heart sur- gery,” says Goldberger, who — as a member of the “zipper club” — has had a valve in his heart replaced twice. They’re also proud of another rather significant thing. “Rehearsals are not allowed,” says Norris. The only thing the band gets to get together for is espresso in Goldberger’s studio before the gigs. “On stage, the guest artist gives us a five-second synopsis of the song, and off we go. Not one rehearsal in 15 years — and only a few minor musical train wrecks.” That’s what live music is all about,” says Norris. Local musician and former winemaker Sandra Marynisen- sen is one of a few honorary members of the Niagara Rhythm Section. “Sandra is a percussion student, a protégé of Penner’s who found her way on stage.” Marynissen nestles in between MacKay and Norris on stage at The Old Winery and adds djembe and tambourine to the on-the-fly arrangements. “We’re so grateful to Bob Glatt for this gig,” says Gold- berger. “We have a wonderful relationship with him. He told us we’re there as long as he is. Not long ago he told us, ‘I have bad news for you guys: I just signed a lease for another ten years.’” Goldberger jokes, “I might be coming in on my walker,” — he minces staggering in to the club. “Alright everybody, let’s walk — I mean rock!” “We aren’t taking it for granted, that’s for sure. We get to play whatever we want, have good people around us, friends nearby, and we’re so close to home,” continues the bandleader. The only draw- back? “We’re getting paid the same as we did 15 years ago,” he says. “We’re getting paid the same as we did in the ’70s,” Norris chimes in, laughing. Raoul Bhaneja — actor, former Shaw company mem- ber, and blues singer — is the NRS’s guest on Nov. 17 at the wine bar in The Old Winery Restaurant.

Helping Niagara’s heart beat

Niagara Rhythm Section celebrates 15 years of Saturday nights

Lauren O’Malley

In a town as historic as ours, 15 years may not sound like a long time to be working musicians, playing a gig in your own town every Saturday night for a decade and a half is legendary. On Nov. 17, the Niagara Rhythm Section is celebrat- ing 15 years of weekly house gigs at local haunts like the Anchorage, Corks and The Old Winery. Singer Dave Norris, bandleader, bass player and singer, says it’s exciting to play so close to home. One night I broke a string, and it was hard for me to go home and get a different bass than to replace the string.”

The nucleus of the band — Goldberger along with Penner MacKay (drum kit and percussion) and Dave Norris (drums) — played regularly at the Olde Angel Inn. Their keyboard player at the time was Herb Nelson. One day Nelson announced he’d recorded them a musical holy grail: a weekly gig at the Anchorage Motel. They were slated to play every Saturday night for six months. The show was to end there was the Anchorage, memories of the imminent destruction of the building. Nelson and Goldberger had struck upon the idea to have a core group — the Niagara Rhythm Section — and invite a rotation of different local musical guests to join them. “Our original guest roster included Joe Ingrao, Mark Lalama, Bruce Jones, James Brown, and even Tim Hicks when he was nobody,” says Goldberger. (James Brown was a NOTL singer — not the King of Soul — and Tim Hicks is now a country music mega-star.)

Says John White, the band’s long-time member and one fan, “The first time I saw the NRS was with then local musician Bruce Jones — a Brazilian artist. There were eight or nine people on stage, including several drum kits. I spoke with Bruce and asked about his gig, and he said, ‘Oh, I’m just the guest. Next week it will be a complete different show.’” And it was: Johnny Maxx, a pop singer. I thought, ‘Alright, I’m on to something here’.”

What he likes about the weekly shows is the diver- sity: “Variety with a certain element of familiarity. There are common elements, but it’s never the same show twice.”

White has missed few of the band’s weekly shows in the last decade plus, and has taken on the role of lighting technician. Other die-hard fans include Wayne and Lorna Short, who come from Oakville every Saturday night — often bear- ing gifts of baked goods and lovingly made crafts that cele- brate the band. Wayne has become the de facto emcee of the shows at the Old Winery. “We like to put our fans to work,” jokes Norris. Goldberger and Norris remember the years at the Anchorage fondly. Norris re- calls the spaciousness of the stage: “We could each indi- vidualy swing a cat,” he says. They also recall the NRS line-up changes that occurred through those years. “After about six months, Herb left, and Joe Ingrao joined us on keys,” recalls Goldberger. “I met Joe when he called me up and invited me on a gig,” says Goldberger. Imitating Ingrao’s trademark gravel-pocked voice and dramatic inflections, he says Ingrao called him and said, “Steve. I hear you’re pretty good. Come play with me at Casa Mia.” Goldberger asked, “What are you playing?” Ingrao answered, “Whatever you want, just come.”

Ingrao, a legend in the Niagara music scene, played with the NRS for several years — until, tragically, he died suddenly of a heart at- tack in 2005. Rodger Niznik — “a mon- ster on keys” according to Norris — joined the band for a couple of years after that, often bringing his B3 organ and Leslie speaker cabinet to gigs. Norris — joined the band for a couple of years after that, often bringing his B3 organ and Leslie speaker cabinet to gigs. Graphologist Steve Grisbrook also joined the band in the Anchorage years. “He came as a guest one night, and then kept suggesting other guests to us, saying, ‘Get this guy, and I’ll come with him,” says Goldberger. Eventually Grisbrook just became a permanent fixture, and, through his extensive connections in the blues music scene across Ontario, boosted the band’s guest roster significantly. Grisbrook is evidence of the fact that these guys are musicians’ musicians. “The overwhelming rule is that guests always want to come back, which is so flattering,” says Goldberger.

Dave Norris and Steve Goldberger, members of Niagara Rhythm Section. (Lauren O’Malley)
Local acts win at Niagara Music Awards

Danny Lamb and Laurel Minnes take home first prizes for NOTL

The diminutive and powerful multi-instrumentalist and singer-songwriter was nominated for Female Vocalist and Best Original Song, and won the Songwriter of the Year award for her new project, Minuscule. This is a unique group made up of Minnes as the lead singer, with a back-up band of keyboard, drums and choir. “I have all these melodies in my head and not enough instruments — so I used voices.”

Minuscule started a year ago when Minnes applied to perform at In the Soil — a grass roots arts festival in St. Catharines. “I was approved, and then thought, ‘Okay, now I have to pull together a choir really quickly.’” She recruited friends and family, and prepared each of their parts by first recording 13 versions of her own voice singing the songs. Then she transcribed them and sent the appropriate part to each singer. She continues to use this method. “It’s time-consuming with all 14 parts plus keys and drums. But I love it,” she says.

Minnes, who also fronts rock band Magara, says, “The idea of Minuscule was that I wanted to feel control over the content. I wanted my message to be meaningful. In a band I always have to compromise my message — you can’t have a group of guys playing songs about feminism,” she says.

The choir now consists of about 12 women — family, friends and friends of friends. “I choose to write and sing about things that are really uniquely female, so keep it just women,” she says. Minnes makes exceptions for her partner Taylor Huley on drums, and her father, Blair Minnes, on the keyboard. Membership in the choir ebbs and flows. “It needs to be fun, empowering, not stressful at all,” she says.

The women practise every Tuesday at Minnes’ home. “It’s community — ladies bonding time, which is another aspect of the project. We drink wine and eat cheese and sing and talk.” In fact the band gets paid for gigs, but all the money goes back into wine and cheese, as well as gas and drinks at shows. It’s a non-profit endeavour. “I never want to think of this project in terms of money — which is kind of freeing in a way. It’s literally a passion project,” she says.

The name comes from the play on her own name — Minnuscule — and is humorous because of the sheer size of the group. “It also refers to the fact that women have been meant to feel small for so long,” says the ever-courageous and plain-speaking Minnes.

The future holds many new highs for Minuscule. Minuscule will be performing a house concert at Applewood Hollow in NOTL on Nov. 17. Minnes plans to record a full album of her original songs with the band and choir. And she has a concept album in the works. “I use music to create a space for unheard stories and bigger conversations than I know what to do with. The microphone is a pretty great superpower to have,” he says.

His anthemic song Champion was awarded for original song at the NMAs. “The song was first released at a conference around access and inclusiveness in sport. I started to form a concept of what defines a champion and what that looks like,” says Lamb.

Lamb wrote the song and Lamb says, “It’s time-consuming with all 14 parts plus keys and drums. But I love it,” she says.

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The NOTL native is an ardent activist on a number of levels. He is the Young Ambassador of the Spina Bifida/Hydrocephalus Association of Ontario, and spent two years travelling the world as a speaking and facilitator for ME to WE — a social enterprise based on empowering youth and creating social change on a global scale — with which he remains on contract. Lamb also teaches ESL online to children all over China, and teaches music, singing and performing, and songwriting in person and online. “I figured I was getting students in Niagara just based on name recognition, but when someone in San Francisco found me and then asked to set up a series of lessons after our first one, I thought, ‘Hey, maybe I am pretty good at this,’” he says. Laughing. The 30-year-old singer-songwriter now has students all over the world. Champion is an exciting departure for Lamb, in that it marks a new path with new partners. He has been collaborating with established producer and songwriter Andre Kadyn Black (Jed Dobson, Alicia Keys, One Republic) after meeting him through local drummer Andy Mackay. He has also started working with engineer Tai Vaisman (The Next Step). “I brought a song to them and they said, ‘This is your song. What do you want it to be? What role do you want to have in this,’” he says. “They also reminded me that it’s about the song so it can be heard and the story can be told. They said, ‘Let’s create a great song,’” he remembers.

“We secured a date in a studio after wrapping calendars and he came in with these words out and I think I cried a little about it,” Lamb says. “It’s not about him or about me, it was about any kid in the world who is trying to be heard. This is so much bigger than us.”

Having the song win at the NMAs touches Lamb. “I’ve achieved a personal goal through the challenge of honing my craft. Being recognized locally is meaningful,” he says sincerely. Champion is attributed to Danny Lamb and the Association. “It’s called the Association because it’s the Spina Bifida/Hydrocephalus Scene. People come and go,” he says. Members include writers, producers, and musicians such as Matt Anthony, Chris Borboros, Kayal, Jason Golden, Nick Cooper, Matt Taylor and Ferguson Landy. “I mostly just jump on the stage and get themamped up,” says Lamb.

His next project is acting as a manager for a young singer-songwriter named Jordan. “We connected through the SIBHAO — she has spina bifida and other physical challenges,” Lamb explains. “We started with just singing, then moved into songwriting. We recorded a song with Andre and Tai, and made a lyric video, which has over a thousand views on YouTube. Now Lamb is looking for the big vision. “How does it all connect? How does it best move forward,” he wonders. Perhaps we’ll find out how it moves forward for both of these local talents at next year’s Niagara Music Awards.
High school students offered boarding pass to aviation education

Penny Coles
Staff

Niagara-on-the-Lake may not have a public high school, but secondary school students are being offered a boarding pass to an education in aviation at the local airport.

The Niagara District Catholic School Board, prompted by outgoing Lord Mayor Pat Darte and in partnership with the Niagara District Airport, is offering Grade 11 and 12 students an Aviation and Aeronautics program.

Beginning in February, it will be the newest of the high skills major programs, which give students a chance to learn subjects of interest through co-operative education and placements in the community.

At the airport students can learn about careers in aviation, from the engineers who design planes, the mechanics who service them and the pilots who fly them — all that is necessary to get the airplane off the ground, said school board director of education John Crocco, who was at the airport recently to sign a memorandum of understanding that will allow the program to move forward.

“Thinking about the thousands of airplanes flying around the world daily, he said, makes it clear how many opportunities there are for students in the field of aviation and aeronautics. The program was approved by the Ministry of Education in June, Crocco said. Students will graduate with a high school certificate that includes a red seal, indicating a high skills major in aviation and aeronautics, he said, showing employers they have received a certain level of knowledge in that field and allowing them to move forward.

Students can begin taking courses as early as Grade 9 or 10, but by Grade 11 and 12 students will begin apprenticeships, which will present “realistic and authentic pathways” for students interested in careers in aviation.

With students from several Catholic high schools and St. Michael Catholic Elementary School in attendance at the airport announcement, Crocco said some of the those sitting in the room that day will one day be the pilots, the people who look after airplane passengers or any of the many people who are responsible for getting the aircraft off the ground and from point A to point B.

“There may be a student in this room who will be the next astronaut, or who will work on the next Canadarm or the space station,” he said.

Darte said he began working with Crocco years ago, hoping to bring a Catholic high school to NOTL, but eventually Crocco “planted the seed” for the aviation course. The local squadron of Royal Canadian Air Cadets have also come on board — they fly their glider out of the airport and have many members interested in careers in aviation — as are FlyGTA, with a regular service to Toronto, Brock University and Niagara College.

Having the program at the airport, he said, was another way of offering education to the community.

“It was a long time coming,” Darte said.

Terry Flynn, chair of the airport commission, spoke about the facility as a “major economic driver” for the region, and the advancements that have occurred over the years, including a regular airline service.

The new program, combined with others such as the air cadets and flying club, “can combine to be great for youth,” he said, adding it’s also positive for the growth of the airport, and may help it to receive grants for future expansion.

“We want to make sure everybody is as safe as they can be, and we can all come together to make sure youth are part of that.”

Students from several Niagara Catholic high schools and from St. Michael Catholic Elementary School gathered at the Niagara District Airport to learn about a high school aviation course. (Penny Coles)

SORE acknowledges and thanks all of those who ran for NOTL council and applauds their public service in the case of our departing councillors and Lord Mayor.

SORE also congratulates the winning candidates and acknowledges the unprecedented contributions of many groups and individuals to inform the electorate.

The clear message of this election was that the residents of NOTL seek direction and leadership on the future of our Town. We look forward to working with the new council in this regard and on responsible development of the Randwood Estate.

For the positions of our new council on the seven questions put to all candidates by SORE, please visit https://SORENOTL.ca
Cycling map leads to frustration

Lauren O’Malley
Staff

It would seem the road to cycling safety is paved with good intentions. And a few misunderstandings.

Late last summer, the Niagara Region Local Community Safety Committee launched their Cycling and Pedestrian Route Map with pride and fanfare. A joint partnership with the Town, the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) and Vino Velo Bicycle Tours, the map was a project undertaken by the committee, at the request of the Town, following many complaints by residents about safety issues they’ve witnessed, mostly on rural roads. The goal was to offer safety tips for cyclists and pedestrians, as well as to provide a clearly legible, accurate map of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s and its cycling and pedestrian routes.

As the saying goes, no good deed goes unpunished—or so some members of the committee are feeling these days.

Steve Irwin, the outspoken co-owner of Vino Velo, has raised many issues regarding the map. For instance, he feels the contributions of time and money weren’t acknowledged by the committee and the media when the map was announced and celebrated.

Irwin also has many questions about the purpose, functionality, and goals of the map, and about the committee’s focus regarding cycling in NOTL.

“This town has the opportunity to be the gold standard for cycling safety—a city in town,” he says.

Irwin sees this off-season time as a perfect opportunity for all interested parties to begin a conversation about what cycling safety looks like in town.

Rebecca deBoer, co-owner of Zoom Leisure Tours (another bicycle rental business in town) agrees. “This town has the opportunity to be the gold standard for cycling—if we want it to be,” she says. “We need signage and we need digital maps.”

There also need to be more conversation and consultation, she says. “We were never given the opportunity to consult on this—we weren’t even given the opportunity to debate, which we would have loved to have done.”

Rich Mell, co-owner of Grape Escape Wine Tours, also feels out of the loop. “We would have liked to have been consulted at the beginning,” he says. “We found out about the map by reading about it in the paper when it was already finished.”

Catharine Wickabrod and Ken Gansel of the NOTL Safety committee explain their process. “The Town was getting complaints from residents about unsafe cyclists, so we decided to address the issue.”

Gansel, an avid cyclist himself, reached out to his various contacts at the MTO and MTO to research and develop what he hoped would be the most thorough series of safety instructions available for theFlipside of a road scale map of the area. For the map itself he dealt directly with the Town. “The Town supplied a GIS—geographic information system—map. This is absolutely accurate and to scale, unlike the B&B maps we see most cyclists using around here,” says Gansel with pride.

The committee decided to include cycling routes, wineries, and historic landmarks on the map. “We had someone come to the committee and say that the main points of attraction on the bicycle safety maps were wineries,” says deBoer. Irwin and Ian Mills (Rich’s father, also co-owner of Grape Escape) also pointed out this, comparing the 37 wineries listed to the only six historical landmarks.

“It’s good to show the bike routes but it needs a companion map to show people what else is going on too—more historical sites, tourist attractions, other points of interest,” says Ian.

Even the actual printed map is a potential point of discussion. While Gansel adheres to its relevance, Irwin does a little performance. “I’m a half-millennial going on a bike tour,” he says.

“I do want this,” he flaps his hands above his head, imitating a paper map fluttering in the wind—“or this”—he looks down pensively at an imaginary smart phone in his right hand.

Gaz Wright, office manager at Grape Escape, concurs. “We send out maps with every rider, and they all come back full of problems, patches, untouched,” deBoer thunders the sentiment: “We’ve actually abandoned using maps because no one refers to them—all of our clients can download Google Maps (a smartphone app).” She continues to say that she would like very much to be involved in a group safety effort going forward, including some kind of digital map—but “it has to be digital—that would be a caveat for my involvement.”

There is a nascent digital component to the map. Gansel and the Safety Committee have launched a website—cyclenotl.ca—which is “a work in progress,” says Gansel. He foresees working on the site over the winter, adding a component which might allow people to purchase the printed map and have it mailed to them for a fee. He also plans to create PDFs of parts of the map and safety tips and offer them as downloadable files.

“Ken has poured his heart and soul into this,” says Wickabrod. The entire committee is staffed by earnest and busy volunteers, most with full-time jobs and a long list of commitments.

“Gaz and Ken poured their heart and soul into this,” says Irwin. “We’ve put so much into this,” says Mell. “We’ve been so proud of it.”

Steve Irwin, co-owner of Vino Velo. (Lauren O’Malley)

Wickabrod points to the bicycle rental businesses as lagging in safety features, each of the three owners interviewed is proud of their safety standards, and points to issues with signage and motorists. All three include a safety education before rentals are allowed out on their bikes. All three offer the option of helmets (which are not required by law for adults). All actually admit they are not to drink too much, and should their customers become inebriated all three offer pick-up in a van. All three also promote their own pick-up services, so clients “don’t feel the pressure to guzzle wine at each location,” says Irwin, and can purchase bottles at the winery for their provider to collect. And all bicycle rental companies remind their clients they must ride single file along the road.

“This last might be the most contentious issue, and the most difficult to enforce. It comes up often in discussions with the committee and residents. The cyclists businesses are well aware of this issue too, and there are many potential solutions.”

Offers Wright, “We could that includes everyone: the fellow bike rental businesses, residents, Town—everyone. He says “Yeah, I’m a bike guy and I’m stirring up trouble. This is my home town and I want to make it socially important to do this.”

Irwin imagines bylaws that would increase signage and trails, and minimize bike tour group sizes: “I come from a scuba background, where you have to keep groups small for safety purposes.” He sees cycling as equally perilous to “Groups should have a 10-person maximum by law. In the U.K. a parade license is required for groups larger than 10 people,” he points out.

The safety committee plans to make a presentation to the new council in the coming months to discuss the map and its successes and drawbacks. Irwin, Mills and deBoer would like to participate in the presentation, or at least consult with the committee prior.

“Obviously the best way to solve everything is communication,” says Wright.
Have some fun

Crossword Puzzle

Across
9. Wiggler (9)
10. Eight singers (5)
11. Curtain calls (7)
12. Trap (7)
13. Debatable (13)
20. Equipment for the reproduction of very good sound (2-2)
21. Set apart (5)
22. Irish county (4)
23. Unpredictable (13)
26. Make over (6)
32. Tolerate (7)
33. Sustain (7)
34. Awaken (5)
35. Appraising (9)

Down
1. Gem (5)
2. Dealer in foodstuffs (6)
3. Winged child (6)
4. Sweet dessert (6)
5. Simple life form (6)
6. Dwarfed tree (6)
7. Capital of Canada (6)
8. Speak (5)
9. Publish (5)
10. Intense hatred (5)
11. Hire (5)
16. Island awarded the George Cross (5)
17. A tenth part (5)
18. Celestial body (5)
19. Faithful (5)
24. General escape (6)
25. Maxed (6)
26. Make over (6)
27. Son of one's brother or sister (6)
28. Very handsome young man (6)
30. E.g. the Romanovs (5)
31. Male deer (5)

Sudoku

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

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

Niagara’s Luxury Leader

REAL ESTATE REPORT

Page 18

November 1, 2018
Biophilic World

Owen Bjorgan

Nature’s Lens: What my nature tours have taught me about Niagara

An excellent view at sunset hour can be found up along the Niagara Escarpment’s Bruce Trail, from Queenston to St. Davids. (Owen Bjorgan)

Unknown to both locals and travellers alike, the Niagara region’s natural features extend far beyond the almighty Niagara Falls. I was always intrigued by how so many people could visit our beautiful town, sometimes on repeat over the course of their lives, and yet truly understand the value of Niagara’s ecosystems.

That’s understandable, as not too many brochures or advertisements talk about salamanders or rare tree species. But mine do.

This is one of the many decisions I realized I had to start a hiking tour company, and here’s the feedback I’m getting from my clients who hike or stay in NOTL.

Consistent themes seem to be shock, surprise, and disbelief (in the positive sense) from hikers when they write a review or discuss how they feel after the hike.

Torontonians who frequent NOTL can’t believe that some of the areas I take them to have been within a 1.5 hour drive of home their whole lives.

I have toured folks from the Canary Islands, Brazil, France, and Costa Rica, and the reaction is similar. Many feel like they were swept away to British Columbia for a few hours, and some people have told me that the unique forests here remind them of the tropics.

We must consider that Niagara’s forest and wetland coverage is around 10 percent of what it originally was (the statistic is similar for NOTL). Because of the scarcity of these remnants, locals may become accustomed to their daily commutes and lifestyles which don’t encourage us to discover the remaining relics.

As mentioned in my previous article, such “relics” include places like the Niagara Escarpment between Queenston and St. Davids, the Lakeshore Road old-growth forest, and Virgil Conservation Area.

When I hike with people in these places, suddenly it doesn’t matter where they are from — they are excited by what they are seeing, and they walk away with a different perspective of NOTL and region as a whole.

In a pleasant addition to our economy, these newfound perspectives may keep people coming back to our town time and time again.

If you’re a local, there are plenty of areas within the municipality of NOTL that are accessible and offer the same experience people get out of my tours.

As my season comes to an end and I comb through the paperwork and hike evaluations, I find an interesting theme from the hikers.

When prompted to discuss or mention their favourite part of the hike, the answers come back on a beautifully fundamental level — people seem to like aspects such as fresh air, time with family, breaking free from routine, or exercising with their significant other.

This speaks volumes to the biophilic connection that humans innately have with the natural world. It is good for us, and Niagara can provide the goods.

Unless the weather is horrendous or the bugs bother you, nobody seems to leave the forest in a lesser condition than when they entered it. People get back to the trail head with big smiles on their faces, feeling physically — and perhaps spiritually — refreshed after exposure to the elements and surprising scenery.

This is why I do my job. As for now, my job is about to continue in the furthest quadrant away from where you are reading this paper.

I will be filming a nature documentary in tropical Australia, in a series titled “Hidden Corners,” on which I have been working for three years. I will continue to submit to the Lake Report from the land Down Under.

Perhaps my work with conservation and environmental awareness in the world’s oldest rainforest will conjure up discussion on what we can do in NOTL to protect our natural heritage too.

It doesn’t matter where you are in the world — it is one big ecosystem, and we are merely just a cog in the wheel.

I am about to become one of those cogs in Australia, while my heart and work remains in NOTL.

bjorgan.owen@gmail.com
Voices of Freedom Park to open Friday

By Penny Coles

During many debates about the future of the former lawn bowling greenspace on Regent Street, one concept was repeatedly mentioned — that it should honour and celebrate the town’s black history.

On Friday, the Voices of Freedom Park will officially open to recognize Niagara-on-the-Lake’s early black settlers and their contribution to the history of the community and the country.

It’s been a long time coming, with an expected opening in early September, but will now coincide with a Voices of Freedom concert Saturday night.

The design encompasses the entire park, with a path at its entrance bordered by benches and winding its way through to a communal circle. Along the way a downloaded app will tell the stories of four black people who helped shape the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The park was designed by Raymond Tung, the urban design specialist working for the Town planning department. The installation that provides the experience, called the Rite of Passage, which helps tell the story, is by Toronto artist Tom Ridout.

The property has been in public hands since 1803, when it was acquired by the government of Upper Canada, and was the site where General Sir Isaac Brock and Colonel John MacDonnell lay in state after being killed in the War of 1812.

It has been the property of the Town since the 1850s, and was rezoned by a previous council for residential development after the site was no longer required by the town’s lawn bowling club. During the last term, council stepped in to retain it for public use, and from there, the concept of the Voices of Freedom Park was developed.

The federal government contributed $388,000 of the $700,000 cost, the remainder raised by the community. The land remains a Town park and maintenance will be the responsibility of the parks and recreation department.

Black historian Wilma Morrison, a committee member and honorary chair, will be at the opening Friday. The park, and the committee that has been working on it, came about as a legacy project of the Communities in Bloom committee, chaired by Betty Disero.

The opening of the park is Friday, Nov. 2 at 2 p.m. It also celebrates the 225th anniversary of the passage of the act to limit slavery in Upper Canada.

In addition to remarks by Morrison, Oscar Peterson’s Hymn to Freedom will be performed by vocalist Alana Bridgewater and pianist Robi Boto. An excerpt of Shaw Festival’s Oh! What a Lovely War will be performed by Alalan Louis.

Bravo Niagara!’s Voices of Freedom Concert Saturday, Nov. 3 at 7:30 p.m. at the Partridge Hall, FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, hosted by Céline Peterson, will feature Molly Johnson, Jackie Richardson, Larnell Lewis, Mike Downes, Robi Boto, Joseph Callender, and the Laura Secord Secondary School Concert Choir.
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Niagara's History Unveiled

November 1, 2018
Page 22

Denise Avvento
Featured

We have two forts in our town, Fort George and Fort Mississauga, but truth be told, there is another fort that has been as much a part of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s history as the other two — Fort Denouville, a simple wooden building erected in 1679. It was built during a peaceful period with the Five Nations of the Iroquois in upper New York State. The Iroquois consisted of five distinct nations with the westernmost nation being the Seneca. The Seneca were very suspicious of these foreigners coming into their territory and these summertime fraternities became a common occurrence. The construction of the small fort was tolerated but the relationship between the French and the Seneca was tenuous at best.

During the summer of 1679, the fort building caught fire and was burned to the ground. This fort, built during a peaceful period, was abandoned by the French until 1687, when the governor of New France, Jacques de Brissy, Marquis de Denonville, made the decision that a new fort must be established once again at the mouth of the Niagara River. In March of 1687 France waged war against the Five Nations, in particular the Seneca nation. In the Rochester and Genesee Valley area, Seneca villages were burned and crops were destroyed — though it turned out to be a futile campaign as few native warriors were captured or killed. Thunking to pacify the Iroquois nation after this war, Denonville moved his army away from the Seneca area to the mouth of the Niagara River, where Fort Denouville was established.

This fort was bigger than the previous one, with a palisade enclosing eight wooden building structures. With a company of one hundred men left behind for the winter, Governor Denouville returned to Montreal.

However, with the relations between the French and Seneca being hostile, nothing was accomplished. In 1688, the Iroquois attacked the fort. Although no hunting was possible and no wood was available for firewood, many of the soldiers became sick and died. In 1689, the French troops returned and the Seneca were burned and crops were again destroyed.

In 1690, French and the Seneca were at war again when the British, now the Five Nations, in particular the Seneca nation. In 1691, the Niagara River was as much a part of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s history as the other two — Fort Denouville, a simple wooden building erected in 1679. It was built during a peaceful period with the Five Nations of the Iroquois in upper New York State. The Iroquois consisted of five distinct nations with the westernmost nation being the Seneca. The Seneca were very suspicious of these foreigners coming into their territory and these summertime fraternities became a common occurrence. The construction of the small fort was tolerated but the relationship between the French and the Seneca was tenuous at best.

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Sandtrap Open raises $9,150 for two charities

Richard Harley

The 7th annual Sandtrap Open raised a whopping $9,150 for the Ronald McDonald House and the Niagara Children’s Centre School in September.

Last week Sandtrap Pub and Grill owner Matt Dietsch, along with his wife Kristin and son Dylan, dropped off two cheques to the organizations, each receiving half the funds raised for a total of $4,575.

Dietsch said this year’s tournament was the biggest yet, with a sold out field of 76 players.

"It feels great to have so many people donate their time and money to make the tournament a success year after year," said Dietsch.

"Even before the tournament started this year we had $750 in donations from people stopping by because one or the other charities has helped their family over the years," said Dietsch.

Dietsch, whose son Dylan was born with cerebral palsy, said he chooses to donate to the two charities year after year because of the help they have given his family.

"My son was born with cerebral palsy and we had to spend some time at RMH. It is truly amazing what a feeling it is to have a home away from home after long days at the hospital, even if it’s only to have a hot shower and a home cooked meal. We have since then had to stay there for some surgery Dylan had, and once again it was a big relief to have somewhere to escape the institutional walls of the hospital. They also have a satellite room within the hospital where you can go and have a cup of coffee and any of the donated food items within."

The Dietsch family presents a cheque to the Ronald McDonald House in October. (Supplied photo)

The Dietsch family presents a cheque to the Ronald McDonald House in October. (Supplied photo)

The Niagara Children’s Centre School is where Dylan now goes to school.

"It has helped him become the shining star he is," said Dietsch.

"Their motto is ‘to weave therapy and education for student success’. They have physio, occupational and speech therapists on staff to help with the different needs of each student. They also have a therapy pool.”

Anyone interested in making their own contribution to the Ronald McDonald House or Niagara Children’s Centre School can do so at www.rmhcoco.ca/ways-to-help/make-a-donation (RMH) and niagarachildrenscentre.com (Niagara Children’s Centre). Donations to NCC can be made in honour of the Dietsch family and support individualized education and therapeutic programming in small group settings to children and youth with multi-learning and physical exceptions.

If you have ever wanted to improve your speaking skills, become a better communicator and develop your leadership skills, this is the place and time for you! Toastmasters are happy to announce we are starting a New Club in NOTL. Come to our casual and fun open house for the Wine & Dine Toastmasters Club, Wednesday, Nov. 14 from 6:45 p.m. to 9:15 p.m. at Niagara College (NOTL Campus) Room W112.

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Improving your communication and speaking skills with Toastmasters. We are a non-profit worldwide organization that helps others develop their skills in leadership and public speaking. It’s time to get that job, ace that interview, lead your team or say that wedding speech with confidence. We have the tools to help you at whatever level you’re at. For information contact Katharine.Parsons7@gmail.com or call (888)693-1270. Or visit www.Toastmastersinternational.org

Betty & Jane: Plunger Patrol

Inspecting NOTL’s bathrooms: Backhouse

In a small strip mall in uptown Niagara-on-the-Lake is one of Canada’s leading restaurants. At Backhouse, the aroma of peach wood burning in the brick oven lets guests know they’re not out just for dinner, but are embarking on a culinary journey. The art on the restroom ceiling was striking. All three rooms had fresh flowers and were consistently well appointed.

Backhouse offers a continuously evolving menu. Your gold Plunger Bathroom experience will also be as hospitable. Backhouse earns 4.5/5 plungers.

4.5/5 Gold Plungers

RIDDLE ME THIS:

I’m often running yet I have no legs.

You need me but I don’t need you.

What am I?

Last Week’s answer: An anchor.

If you answer correctly in Thursday’s edition, you win a prize!
Working with metal: Steele and Boaks profiles

Richard Steele, local metal sculptor, at his Niagara Stone Road residence and studio.

Lauren O'Malley Staff

Even in a town with an abundance of art and culture it’s surprising to find two metal sculptors less than five kilometres apart. Both Ron Boaks and Richard Steele display their works in their front yards — but the similarities might end there. There are visual icons in Niagara-on-the-Lake, ones known to everyone in town. The cenotaph, the white statue of a rearing horse on Four Mile Creek Road, the metal sculptures on Niagara Stone Road near Gales in Virgil, and the metal sculptures in the garden next to McDonald’s, also on Niagara Stone Road.

Outside McDonald’s is the work of local artist Ron Boaks. They’re called Sinnetines I, II and III, and the glossy black and red welded pieces stand guard outside Boaks’ eponymous gallery, which contains works selected from a more-than-40-year body of work. “I think most people are surprised when they come in,” says Boaks, yet confident artist of his 40-year body of work. Boaks’ sculptures have a common theme — they all have three legs, “which is the minimum number you can have for stability,” he says. “In my work that triad represents mind, body and spirit.” A piece might include a piece of aluminum, a piece of water buffalo horn, a gnarled chunk from a mulberry tree, or the branch of a tree from his old home. The Toronto native’s creativity was nurtured at a young age. “When I was in Grade 4 I had a deal with my teacher that I could draw my own class and make art,” he says. “This taught me to clear my work out of my mind first, and then create,” a method which has resulted in an organized lifestyle and profuse body of work. The 66-year-old studied art at Sheridan College in Toronto, and had his first exhibit at Montreal Forum ’76, an exhibition at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. “I’ve been showing on a regular basis since then,” he says. Boaks and his wife Lenore Richards bought a house in the Niagara region in 1998. “Lenore and I went to a really fantastic picnic on a perfect summer day, sitting at a long wooden table in a vineyard with 40 other people,” he says. “The guests included restaurateurs and sommeliers. We said, ‘You know what? We could live here.’ The couple enjoyment their home on Cave Spring Road in Vineland for about 15 years, and then heard from friends about the Nothing New Antiques property on Niagara Stone Road.

“T’ve been working for three-and-a-half years to get this property back in shape,” says Boaks, pointing out the new floors, walls, windows and even wiring. There are four buildings on the property, all now in use by Boaks as studios and gallery, as well as the late gothic Ontario farmhouse built in the 1870s the couple calls home. The work has been extensive, and Boaks has done most of it himself. “You could see daylight through the corners of the stone walls in one of the studios,” he says. “I spent months digging the walls inside out and equipping the work with wiring.” “I don’t use traditional tools in my way for the most part — I don’t use brushes very often,” he says. “I use my hands, cookie lifters, scrapers, spreaders.” Whistling tunes to inspiration, Boaks says there’s “usually a flow.”

“Sometimes two,” he says. “Flowers, lily pads, the sky. One of the things I love about living here is the sky. Every morning I just look at the sky and feel inspired.” Up the street near Four Mile Creek Rd., another local artist named Richard Steele is finding inspiration from quite different sources.

At his Raven Studios — the one near Gales — the welding artist says, “When I stand here and look at this mess, I’m looking at parts. I start moving them over, then I’ll start putting them in a pile. My son Dylan says, ‘What are you doing?’ I tell him I’m making a sculpture,” he says. “It’s in there — I’ll bring it out.”

Steele’s influences are literary and artistic. He has about 10-foot sculptures of the faces of Walter Whitman and Edgar Allan Poe, and he says he’s also sparked by the work of Jackson Pollack. “I love his stuff,” says Steele. “I think it’s fantastic. He doesn’t throw that paint, he moves his hands and uses them like fans — like a ballet dancer, like he’s dancing.” The life-long NOTL resident has been welding sculptures for some 40 years. He began creating during his spare time while working for Shepherd Boats, Genaire Antiques property on Niagara Stone Road.

“When I was sitting with my wife in the back yard when a man walks up in a suit and says, ‘someone wants to meet you,’ ” he recalls. “I see a man standing against the fence like this, with his hands folded in front of him. There are four of them like this, lined up along the driveway. The man I’m supposed to meet is looking at a sculpture. We talk. ‘You’re very good,’ he said. ‘Thank you very much.’” Steele’s work has been bought largely from his home by passers-by, and is currently on display in homes and gardens and galleries all over North America. “I figure I’ve sold about 20 pieces this year, and maybe about 2,000 in total,” he says.

For an art show in NOTL, Steele had a sculpture made of many faces. “A woman came up and had a good look at the piece. She asked me what it was about,” he says. “I told her that’s my father’s cousin John, he has schizophrenia. She started crying — her son also had schizophrenia, and was also named John. She bought the sculpture and said, ‘I think sometimes why didn’t I just give it to her?’”

This gruff 71-year-old man’s eyes tear up with the memory. “It’s really something to have somebody recognize,” he says.

Ronald Boaks, multi-media artist outside his studio.

Stagecoach Family Restaurant is today. The slightly-ironically-named Steele gets most of his material from a scrap yard. “But it’s getting expensive. They used to give us the metal, but now we have to pay for it,” he says.

He’s been selling to the public from his home studio for decades, and has many tales to tell, including the time former prime minister Stephen Harper stopped by for a visit. “I was sitting with my wife in the back yard when a man walks up in a suit and says, ‘someone wants to meet you,’ ” he recounts.

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