



NOTLer turns 100 | Page 5



Ford's Greenbelt changes threaten Niagara farms, group warns

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

A conservation group in Niagara-on-the-Lake is sounding the alarm over changes to the Greenbelt passed by the Doug Ford government.

"It's uncalled for, and it's, it's extraordinary," said Gracia Janes, a NOTL resident and treasurer of the Preservation of Agricultural Land Society (PALS).

In total, Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act,

Continued on Page 3



NOTL Gives Back supports children and charity

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

'Tis the season for giving. The NOTL Gives back donation drive returned for its third year on Saturday, collecting gently used clothes, toys and non-perishable food items.

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Revel Realty, the NOTL Minor Hockey Association and Team

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Letters arrive from North Pole

Santa's helper is busy bringing letters to the good boys and girls of NOTL



Santa's elf, Sandy Sugarswirl, is all smiles as she mails off the first North Pole replies of the season at the NOTL post office. SOMER SLOBODIAN

Somer Slobodian
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's favourite elf is back in town.

With Christmas only weeks away, the beloved elf known as Sandy Sugarswirl is ready to help Santa send off his Christmas letters.

"I look forward to it every year," she said with a smile.

Sugarswirl has been one of Santa's helpers for about 32 years and said she loves every minute of it.

She started her elf journey at Canada Post in Stoney Creek, but now she's stationed out of the post office on Queen Street in Old Town.

She enjoys each individual letter she gets and reads every single one.

She held a letter she received recently close to her face, sounding out the words as she tried to decipher the crayon writing.

"I wish ... for an Easy-Bake Oven," Sugarswirl read aloud. That letter had a homemade

ornament dangling from the corner for Sugarswirl to add to her own Christmas tree.

For the most part, the letters are fun, she said.

"Sometimes there's some heartbreaking letters, too," she said, recalling one received a few years ago from a boy who

Continued on Page 18

NOTL runner completes her 10th NY marathon

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

Margot Devlin is a woman on the run.

She's not fast, but she is determined and dedicated – and just completed her 10th New York City Marathon, an admirable accomplish-

ment at any age.

But it's phenomenal at 66 – and she has no plans to slow down.

When she's not running, she works as the COVID compliance co-ordinator at the Shaw Festival and has voluntary gigs with the annual Rotary Holiday House

Tour, NOTL Ambassadors program, Chautauqua Residents Association and the Shaw Guild.

Exhausting and inspiring. "I'm very slow, definitely not fast," Devlin says. She doesn't talk about her race time, "just that I made it over the finish line."

Completing a race that's 26.2 miles (42 kilometres) requires discipline and determination. It's roughly the distance from Old Town to Beamsville.

And so far, she's done 14 full marathons and 13



Continued on Page 5 Margot Devlin.



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Third place: 6

2021

17 awards

First place: 3

Second place: 7

Third place: 7

The Lake Report's national awards for 2020:

- Outstanding Community Service: First
- Best Feature Photo: First
- Best Sports Coverage: First
- Outstanding Reporter Initiative: Second
- Best Historical Story: Second
- Best Sports Photo: Second
- Best Photo Essay: Second
- Best Coverage of the Arts: Third
- Best Multimedia Feature: Third
- Best Business Writing: Third
- Best Agricultural Story: Third
- Best Feature Series: Third
- Best Local Editorial: Third

The Lake Report's

national awards for 2021:

- Best Local Editorial: First
- Best Historical Story: First
- Best News Feature Photo: First and third
- Outstanding Community Service: Second
- Best Editorial Page: Second
- Best Photo Essay: Second
- Best Coverage of the Arts: Second
- Best Multimedia Feature: Second
- Best Special Section: Second
- Best Business Writing: Second
- Excellence in Rural Reporting: Third
- Best Agricultural Story: Third
- Best News Story: Third
- Best National Editorial: Third
- Best Sports Photo: Third
- Best Sports Coverage: Third

“To be honoured as the most-awarded paper in the province in 2021 and now to be recognized nationally with 30 more awards really is an achievement. It's a testament to the work of our small but driven team of hard-working reporters and editors, keen-eyed photographers, fearless columnists, dedicated community contributors and residents who share their stories with us. It also shows our advertisers and people who donate to us that we're putting their money to good use. They're such an important part of what we do, for without them, we would not be.”

Richard Harley
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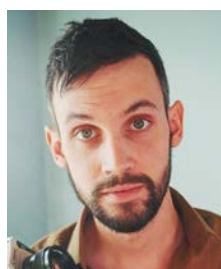
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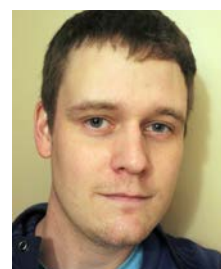
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Candlelight Stroll to **light up** Old Town

Somer Slobodian
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

And just like that, one flame will light thousands.

The highly anticipated Candlelight Stroll returns on Friday, Dec. 2 and thousands are expected to show up.

The stroll, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, kicks off at 6:30 p.m. at the old Court House on Queen Street, with opening ceremonies beginning at 6:45 p.m.

Candles will be sold for \$3 each between 3 and 8 p.m. in front of the Court House and along Queen Street between King and Regent.

This year, the money will be distributed among three recipients.

Ceto Reid, a migrant farm worker from Jamaica who was injured while riding his bike in St. Catharines in October, will be the primary beneficiary. Reid will be receiving 50 per cent of the proceeds.

"I'm really excited to go



Hannah Bodach watches the band play at the 2019 Candlelight Stroll. FILE

there because I don't really know how it is. But I'm really excited to see what it's all about," Reid said in an interview.

He is overwhelmed by the community's generosity and plans to send the money he receives back to his son in Jamaica.

The Farmworkers Hub and Niagara-on-the-Lake

Community Palliative Care agency will each receive 25 per cent of the proceeds.

Reid will lead the stroll in a horse-drawn carriage through historic Old Town with thousands of lit candles following.

Along with the singing of Christmas carols, this year there will be food vendors along the route.

Parking is available at Fort George and from 6 to 9 p.m. a complimentary shuttle service will be available. Candles can also be purchased at the fort.

As in previous years, there will be a food drive for Newark Neighbours. Items can be dropped off in bins at the old Court House or Fort George.

Greenbelt changes **threaten** Niagara farms

Continued from Front Page

which was passed Monday by the Conservative party's majority in the Ontario legislature, will remove 7,400 acres of once-protected land from the Greenbelt.

The government's changes also would add about 9,400 acres to the protected area.

The changes to the Greenbelt under the act do not directly impact any land in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

They do, however, remove some lands now designated for tender fruit growth around Grimsby, according to the amendments posted on the government's environmental registry.

Prior to the bill's passage, PALS warned the provincial government, the changes "could trigger more removals, that could eliminate the viability of the Niagara fruit belt."

Janes worries that the move sets a dangerous precedent.

"This is symbolic," she



Gracia Janes is worried Ford's Greenbelt plan could hurt Niagara's tender fruit farms. EVAN LOREE

said, adding that "the pressure will be even more than it is right now, development-wise" the next time the use of tender fruit land comes under consideration.

According to a document outlining the group's concerns with the legislation, "the boundaries of Niagara's fruit belt lands are supposed to be permanent."

Tender fruit lands are

used to grow peaches, cherries, plums and grapes. Those fruits are essential to the economy of Niagara-on-the-Lake and to the wider region, but they only make up 0.004 per cent of Canada's entire land mass.

"It's a very small area compared with the rest of the farmlands in Ontario and Canada," Janes said.

About 94 per cent of

Ontario's grapes and 90 per cent of its peaches are grown in Niagara.

The Greenbelt was established in 2005 by Dalton McGuinty's Liberal government with the intention of reducing urban sprawl and protecting farmable lands from development, according to the Greenbelt Foundation's homepage.

Sprawl is a concept city planners use to describe development that takes up a lot of land but has low population density.

The legislation, tabled Oct. 25, drew heavy criticism from conservation authorities, agricultural advocates and city planners for violating the established Greenbelt principles.

"This is supposed to be for affordable housing, not sprawl. And what they've got is going to be sprawl," Janes said.

The preservation group Janes represents has been a forceful defender of the agricultural industry since its founding in 1976.

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Left: Trench soldiers prepare to go "over the top" during one of the battles of the First World War. LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA Right: The battle that claimed Queenston's Lloyd Griffiths was fought just outside of the French town of Courcellette and lasted for hours. CITY OF VANCOUVER ARCHIVES

GO-VAXX bus rolls into NOTL on Sunday

Staff
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's chance to GO get vaxxed is this Sunday.

That's when the GO-VAXX bus rolls into town. To reserve a spot on board for your COVID-19 vaccine or booster, you can book online or by phone.

The bus will be in the Shaw Festival's main parking lot at 10 Queen's Parade Sunday, Dec. 4, from 1 to 6 p.m.

Walk-ins are welcome but appointments can be booked now through the provincial

COVID-19 vaccination portal (covid19.ontariohealth.ca) or by calling the Ontario vaccine contact centre at 1-833-943-3900.

All GO-VAXX and mobile indoor clinics provide the mRNA COVID-19 vaccine for adults and youth ages 12 and up; the mRNA COVID-19 vaccine including, booster doses, for children aged five to 11 and the bivalent mRNA COVID-19 booster for all eligible populations.

For more information, check out Ontario.ca/vaccinebus.



NOTL Hydro is ready to collect food and toy donations for local charities during the Christmas Parade. SUPPLIED

NOTL Hydro collecting food and toys for Christmas drive

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro is again collecting non-perishable food and unwrapped toy donations as part of its annual pre-Christmas charity drive.

Donors can drop off items at the utility's headquarters on Henegan Road in Virgil until Dec. 9.

And the next day, hydro volunteers will collect donations during NOTL's annual Christmas Parade through Old Town.

Hydro's float will be near the front of the parade. The main recipient of the collected items is Newark Neighbours, said hydro spokesperson Brodie Mosher.

Project SHARE and Gillian's Place also receive some of the goods collected.

"We usually have a great response and a large portion

of donations is achieved during the Christmas Parade," Mosher said.

Residents have been generous during COVID when there hasn't been a regular parade, but overall the donations were lower, he said.

"We're hopeful for good weather this year to boost donations."

He noted times are a little tougher this year.

"We've heard many stories from the United Way where people that normally donated were now in the position that they need food bank help," Mosher said.

While the United Way isn't a beneficiary of NOTL Hydro's annual drive, he expects other charities across Niagara are seeing similar levels of need.

"The drive helps a lot of people and we're happy that it's something that we can do for the community."

THE MONUMENTS MEN

Lloyd Griffiths was killed in Battle of the Somme

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

Ron Dale
Special to The Lake Report

On July 1, 1916, the First World War had been raging for almost two years when the British launched a campaign in attempt to overcome German trenches, drive off the enemy and break out into open country, chasing them from French soil.

The Battle of the Somme lasted until Nov. 18 and was one of the largest, bloodiest battles of the war.

More than half a million Germans were killed or wounded, while British, Commonwealth and French forces suffered 623,907 casualties.

Among those, 24,000 Canadians were killed, wounded or missing.

A Queenston man was among them.

Francis Lloyd Griffiths, known as Lloyd, was born in Queenston in the very early hours of Dec. 7, 1893, to Frank Griffiths and Mary Brown. Lloyd was their only son.

Frank Griffiths was a painter and once Lloyd finished school, he took up his father's trade.

In Europe, the war had been going on for a year and a half when Lloyd decided to enlist on Feb. 12, 1916.

He was already serving as a part-time militiaman in the 44th Lincoln and Welland Regiment. The officers and sergeants of that unit strongly urged the men to volunteer for the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

It was a simple matter to enlist in the 98th Battalion, of the Canadian Expeditionary Force as their recruiting office was in the same armoury as the 44th Regiment soldiers trained at on a weekly basis.

Reinforcements were badly needed in France and Belgium at the time so Griffiths' training period in Canada was short.

The 98th Battalion boarded a ship in Halifax on July 8 and landed in England on July 25, 1916.

After a few weeks of more intensive training in trench warfare, Griffiths was transferred to the 58th Battalion and sent to France to join

them in the field on Sept. 8, right at the time when Canadian units were being sent to bolster the British forces during the first several weeks of the Battle of the Somme.

He arrived at the front-line positions of the 98th Battalion on Sept. 27. He would only have 11 days to live.

In the pre-dawn hours of Oct. 8, 1916, the men of the 98th Battalion waited sleeplessly, nervously in the muddy, wet trenches of the front line. A cold rain soaked the men and turned no-man's land between their trenches and the German positions into a quagmire.

At 4:50 a.m. with Canadian artillery pummeling the German trenches, the Canadian were ordered "over the top" to struggle across the open field toward the enemy.

The men were able to capture some of the German trenches but were raked by enemy artillery fire and driven back by a fierce counterattack. The battle just outside of the French town of Courcellette lasted for hours, with attack and counterattack.

Hit by rifle fire, mowed down by machine-guns and smashed by high explosive and shrapnel shells, the Canadians were forced back to the start line in their own trenches. They were low on ammunition and had run out of hand grenades.

Casualties were heavy. Dead men and the badly wounded lay out in the swampy, cratered no-man's land which was still under heavy enemy artillery fire. Bodies could not be retrieved. Some of the dead had sunk below the waters of rain-filled shell craters; some were blown apart by high explosives.

When the roll was called after the battle, Griffiths was among the missing. None of his surviving comrades had noticed his fall. He could not be identified among the remains of men eventually retrieved from the battlefield for burial.

Griffiths was listed as "missing, believed killed."

There as a slim chance he had been captured as a prisoner of war. The German Red Cross was very good at reporting PoWs and it was determined that Griffiths was not among them. Canadian authorities waited almost a year before declaring Griffiths "killed in action" on Sept. 19, 1917.

Lloyd Griffiths' remains have never been found. His name is inscribed, along with 11,284 fellow Canadian soldiers with no known grave at the Vimy Memorial in France.

His sacrifice is commemorated on the Niagara Township Cenotaph in Queenston, a short walk from where he had once lived.



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NOTL woman celebrates a century of life

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

When Joan Morgan was born the Twenties were roaring, passenger air flight was still 15 years away and eggs were 35 cents a dozen.

On Sunday, family members and friends gathered at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre to celebrate her 100th birthday and a century of life well-lived.

Morgan reminisced about how much has changed throughout her long life, the most notable being the everyday use of automobiles – everywhere.

“We only had horses and carts,” she said in an interview.

“I think it was close to when I was 10 years old that I first saw a bus.”

Morgan grew up in the small village of Port Clarence in England alongside her eight siblings.

She and her husband Frank had six children and later welcomed eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

After moving to Niagara-on-the-Lake about 30 years ago, Morgan made an effort to help out in the town. Before the NOTL hospital closed, she was a volunteer there for over 14 years.

“You’ve got to join in.



Joan Morgan celebrated her 100th birthday at the community centre among friends and family on Sunday. She says family (and good genes) is the recipe for a long life. JULIA SACCO

Volunteering is the best way to keep yourself going,” she said.

Morgan still lives alone and proudly completes daily activities, both independently and with the help of a great support system, including caregiver Catharina Brown who visits each Tuesday.

And the secret to a long life? She cites her family and friends, among other things.

“Surround yourself with people who help you. If I

hadn’t had them, I don’t know what I would do.”

“You also have to have good genes to start with. My mother died when she was 92,” Morgan said.

Morgan’s daughter Cecilia, a professor at the University of Toronto, insists her mother’s active and determined nature has played a role in her longevity.

Until the pandemic hit, she would swim at the Prince of Wales three times a week and she biked

around town well into her early nineties, Cecilia said.

Morgan remains active in her own right to this day and notes she baked five fruit cakes from scratch for the holidays this year.

She also keeps up on the news every morning and is an avid reader of newspapers, including The Lake Report.

She emphasized that through it all, she’s had a fulfilling first century.

“I’ve had a very happy life.”

Next, she’s headed to London marathon

Continued from Front Page

half-marathons. Besides New York, she’s run London three times (two of them virtually) and did Boston virtually in 2021.

After a few weeks off since the Nov. 6 New York run, she’ll soon start training for April’s London marathon.

It’s often chilly or rainy, on race day in NY, but this year it was 80F.

“The marathon is a really cool way to meet people and experience New York,” she says.

“And the next day, everyone wears their medals around town and New Yorkers congratulate you.”

She credits her Zoom trainer, Dee Simpson of Toronto, with her success.



Margot Devlin leads the way, crossing the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge near the start of this year’s New York City Marathon. She’s finished the race 10 times. SHAUN DEVLIN

Simpson, who soon turns 80, is a big supporter. “She keeps trying to get me to go faster. No way.”

During the pandemic Devlin and her husband Shaun converted their garage into a

training facility and whether she’s pounding the pavement or in her home gym, when prepping for a race she trains seven days a week.

And she’s not stopping. Her goal is at least five more

NY marathons.

“Because after you do 15 you get to wait for the start in a heated tent on Staten Island with all the elite runners and celebrities,” she says with a grin.



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

COVID Tracker

NOTL active cases (last 28 days): 45
Region active cases: 585
Region deaths: 654
Region total cases: 48,767

**Nov. 30 data per Niagara Region Public Health. Public health warns that "Due to the surge in COVID-19 cases, limited availability of testing, and changes to case and contact management practices, case counts shown (above) are an underestimate of the true number of individuals in Niagara with COVID-19. Data should be interpreted with caution." Case data for municipalities is also now being interpreted in 28-day cycles.*



Contributed by Patty Garriock

"It is never too late to say thank you, and you never know what your show of appreciation will lead to." - Kevin M. Schmiegel

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Dec' the stores



Lake Report photographer Dave Van de Laar captured this photo of the Christmas display at Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory in Old Town. Several other storefronts are also decorated for the holiday season.

Editorial

That's the Christmas spirit

Richard Harley
 Editor-In-Chief

The holiday season in Niagara-on-the-Lake has no shortage of activities — many of them in support of great causes.

So we are highlighting some fun things you can do, while supporting NOTL charitable initiatives.

This Friday, Dec. 2, Old Town will be lit up with thousands of candles for the annual Candlelight Stroll.

Proceeds will go to Ceto Reid, a seasonal farmworker who was hit by a car, and the Farmworkers Hub and NOTL Palliative Care. Food donations are also being collected for Newark Neigh-

bours' food bank.

On Dec. 10, the Christmas Parade will return to town. Donations will be collected for NOTL Hydro's toy drive as well as for Newark Neighbours.

For the kiddos, the post office is still accepting letters to Santa — which his NOTL elf Sandy Sugarswirl will make sure he sees and responds to.

At the NOTL Legion, there will be a Christmas craft show Dec. 3 — with warm chili for all who come out.

The Legion also holds its annual Christmas ham and turkey roll after the Christmas Parade on Dec. 10. Funds support the Legion and its various programs in town.

Over at the Pillar and Post, they've turned the Monet garden into a winter wonderland, complete with a huge Christmas tree.

And there are still a few tickets left for the NOTL Rotary Club's tour of the McArthur Estate, with proceeds supporting Rotary's efforts at home and abroad.

NOTL Palliative Care will host Santa at the community centre Dec. 11, from 10 a.m. to noon. Santa will read stories for children and there will be hot chocolate and cookies (Santa's favourite).

And Virgil hosts the second annual Tractor Parade on Dec. 15.

On Dec. 18, Santas will run through town as part

of a 5K run. In partnership with NOTL businesses like the Irish Harp Pub and NOTL Realty, the race will help support the town's new youth campus.

And, of course, many other good deeds have already occurred. Kudos to the Revel Fine Estates team for helping with NOTL Gives Back. And to Joan King for the stocking for seniors project.

This just scratches the surface of the many celebrations happening in town, but we encourage readers to support them and we thank organizers for helping to make a difference in the community.

editor@niagaranow.com



Developer's commentary was a rant against Disero

Dear editor:
 I read with interest Mr. Marotta's letter of Nov. 17, ("Hoping new council will be open to discussions on development.")

A more petulant and mean-spirited rant against outgoing Lord Mayor Betty Disero would be hard to find.

Not only does he defame (his favourite word) Disero but, according to the recent municipal election polling numbers, also the majority of residents in Old Town who supported her.

Unfortunately this is all history now and, judging

by his remarks, perhaps Marotta feels he has the support of the incoming lord mayor.

I am reminded of the words in Joni Mitchell's famous song "Big Yellow Taxi":

"They took all the trees, put 'em in a tree museum

and they charged the people a dollar and a half just to see 'em.

"Don't it always seem to go that you don't know what you've got till it's gone. They paved paradise and put up a parking lot."

Richard James
 NOTL

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OPINION

Marotta's approach to development is what people dislike

Dear editor:

In response to the Nov. 17 letter from developer Benny Marotta ("Hoping new council will be open to discussions on development,"), first let me say I do not belong to the SORE group.

I read this Trumpian-style letter regarding working with the new council on development. From your engagement with the previous council it would appear this means doing it the Marotta way or we go to court.

Perhaps if you worked

with the town in a way that supports the heritage and quaintness of Niagara-on-the-Lake, you would have more success.

As the owner of Two Sisters winery, a new one coming next summer, the old Mori Gardens property and now the Parliament Oak site, I would have thought maintaining the look that has brought people to this town and the business they bring would be a good reason for you to work with that.

The town doesn't need a

seven-storey Holiday Inn-style hotel nor a Scarborough-like subdivision on the Rand Estate. Those coming to this town to build oversized houses and modern box-type houses are also harming the town's look.

I don't think the town is against development but rather the type of development you are trying to bring in.

Taking everything to court when you don't get your own way instead of listening to what the townsfolk are saying is needed and

delivering that doesn't bring you and your family any good will.

It might lead people to think that you and your family are the bullies.

I, too, look forward to you and council being able to work together so as not to cost you or the town a fortune in legal expenses and bring the type of development to the town that doesn't take away those elements that make people want to live and visit here.

Doug Johnson
Virgil

Developer's actions on Rand speak for themselves

Dear editor:

I write in response to developer Benny Marotta's letter in your Nov. 17 edition, "Hoping new council will be open to discussions on development."

His letter is so full of misinformation, it's difficult to know where to start.

I follow SORE's admirable work carefully.

SORE, which Mr. Marotta fails to mention received a prestigious award recently from the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario for its work on the Rand Estate, has never called his proposals for the Rand Estate "criminal."

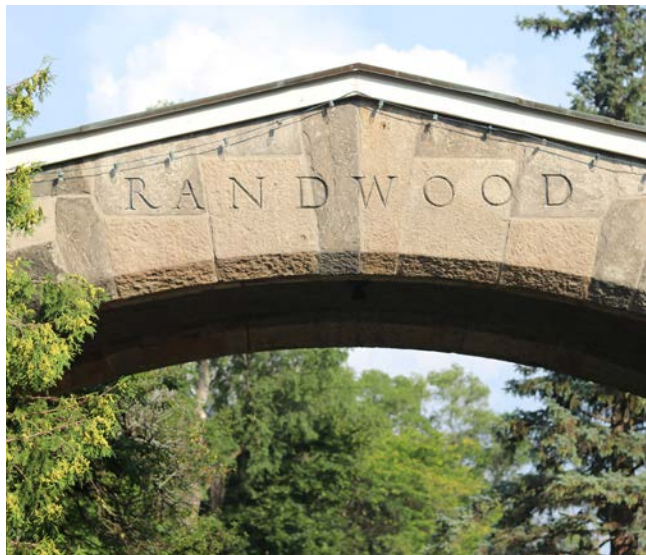
I'm not sure if the word "grotesque" has been used but if not, it certainly could have been.

As a reminder, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake went through an arduous and contentious process in 2009-2011 before a 5-4 council vote narrowly approved the Romance plan to change the designation of the front half of Randwood to commercial from residential.

The boutique three-storey hotel that council approved was carefully and tightly circumscribed in the official plan amendment permitting the Romance Inn.

Mr. Marotta knew full well what he was buying and what the town had only narrowly approved for the front half of the Rand Estate.

Instead, he proposed to build what was effectively a seven-storey convention centre and wedding factory on the most important



remaining estate lot in Old Town.

That proposal was appealed directly to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT) by Mr. Marotta without giving council the opportunity to make a decision on it.

While that appeal has now been withdrawn, few of us in Old Town believe it is gone forever.

And on the back half of the Rand Estate, Mr. Marotta proposes to pigeon-hole somewhere between 170 and 190 houses, and eradicate or trivialize most of the remaining physical and landscape cultural heritage attributes now protected by heritage bylaws.

Mr. Marotta complains about being fought at every turn. The record suggests otherwise.

It was the Marotta companies that tried to coax the town's municipal heritage committee to not recommend designation of the Rand Estate under the Heritage Act.

When the Pat Darte-led

council (not, Mr. Marotta, the Disero council), decided instead to proceed with the heritage designations, Mr. Marotta initiated a scorched earth legal assault on the town involving an appeal to the Conservation Review Board, a Superior Court challenge to the legality of the Darte council decision and an appeal to the Ontario Court of Appeal when that challenge was thrown out at every turn.

Mr. Marotta also complains that SORE never met with him. Again, misinformation. Representatives of SORE met with Mr. Marotta on Good Friday in April 2018.

That meeting was videotaped and posted on the SORE website, where it remains archived and available for viewing. Thereafter, Mr. Marotta involved his lawyers and it quickly became apparent that any further meetings were futile.

This was all during the Pat Darte-led council term, incidentally.

Mr. Marotta further fails

to mention his companies' outrageous clear-cutting of the designed landscape on the back half of the Rand Estate in the fall of 2018, in what can reasonably be viewed as a fit of pique after the previous election and right before the Disero council was installed.

The town rightly prosecuted the Marotta companies under the Heritage Act for that brazen middle finger.

It is to be hoped that the incoming council will ensure that those charges, which could result in reinstatement of any illegally destroyed landscape and trees, will be heard on their merits rather than dismissed on a technicality due to a delay in bringing them to trial.

As I noted in an earlier letter, the SORE website (sorenol.ca) contains a Benny Marotta Media Archive section outlining Mr. Marotta's past exploits across Ontario.

These exploits, as well as his actions to date in relation to the Rand Estate, speak for themselves.

It is clear that one thing is paramount in everything Mr. Marotta does – lining his own pockets. He should spare us all the pity party.

The newly elected 2022 council should continue with the course established by the Darte council and continued by the Disero council of vigorous stewardship of this enormously important cultural heritage gift given to all of us by the Rand family.

Judy McLeod
NOTL



The Festival of Carols

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323 Simcoe Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake
Sunday, Dec. 11 at 7 p.m.

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Sunday, Dec. 11, 11 a.m.
Worship, Reception of New Members

Sunday, Dec. 18, 11 a.m.

Worship, Highlighting the Children

Sunday, Dec. 24, 7 p.m.

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Sunday, Dec. 25, 11 a.m.

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It's up to the people to **stop** Doug Ford's steamroller



Brian Marshall
Columnist

For the last two weeks I have written about the Ford government's Bill 23, the so-called More Homes Built Faster Act.

We examined the negative impacts this legislation will have on agriculture, environment, heritage, culture, municipal governments and the inevitable increase in taxes that will occur as it is rolled out.

The intent of this legislation is not to build truly affordable housing but rather to expedite the ease (and costs) with which developers can build McMansions and the like.

It is blatant pandering to a sector that has contributed heavily to the provincial

Conservative party coffers.

Interestingly, the vast majority of mayors (and councils) in this province have spoken in strong opposition to the legislation.

The City of Toronto estimated it would lose in excess of \$200 million per year in revenue and similarly the City of London has suggested it would take close to a \$100-million hit.

These losses, typically directed to improving infrastructure to service the new developments, would need to be made up by taxpayers.

Days of protest organized by the Green Party in various Ontario cities were attended by thousands of concerned citizens.

Petitions by a number of organizations representing the environment, agriculture and architecture were raised and signed by many. Voices of opposition have been heard across the province.

Still, in the face of all this, the Ford government pushed through final reading of the legislation this week. But, that doesn't mean it is the end of this story.

Ford has on a number of occasions retracted and/



Doug Ford has a steamroller approach to development, says columnist Brian Marshall. FILE/EVAN SAUNDERS

or reversed the legislative steamroller he drives. Could sufficient pressure at high levels of the Conservative party cause him to do it again?

I hope that Niagara-on-the-Lake's new lord mayor and council have added their voices to those of their elected colleagues across the province.

And, once again I call on my fellow citizens to register their opposition. Call Mr. Ford ... he likes to say he actually takes calls.

And, as a point of clarification, I do not consider all developers to be the "enemy." On the contrary,

there are many real estate development companies that are both socially responsible and build in a fashion that contributes positively to a community.

But it is my experience that developers are engaged in an industry that has proven to be very profitable and I see no justification for any level of government to augment that profitability.

Further, I consider it dangerous when, as in the case with Bill 23, government oversight is reduced to a point where any business sector becomes essentially self-regulating.

Corporations, of any sort,

owe their first and primary responsibility to maximizing profitability on behalf of their shareholders.

The "public good," which includes protection of the past, present and future of its communities, is the primary justification for the existence of government and the abrogation of that charge, such as those introduced by Bill 23, is a failure to uphold the basic premise of our government.

sad day in a community that prides itself on the preservation of heritage.

This application and its hearing by the committee of adjustment fell into the "grey space" that our electoral system creates. In other words, that relatively brief period of time during which our council is in flux between who is the "watch-dog" of the community good and who is not.

However, the committee's ruling still requires council's approval. So, perhaps there could be a last-minute stay of execution.

Looking ahead, perhaps it is time for town council to introduce a moratorium period for decisions by any sitting committee within, say, 90 days (that is, 45 days prior to and 45 days after) of the actual voting date?

This simple action would eliminate the excuse that it "slipped through the cracks" that many of the worst permitted infill builds have been predicated on.

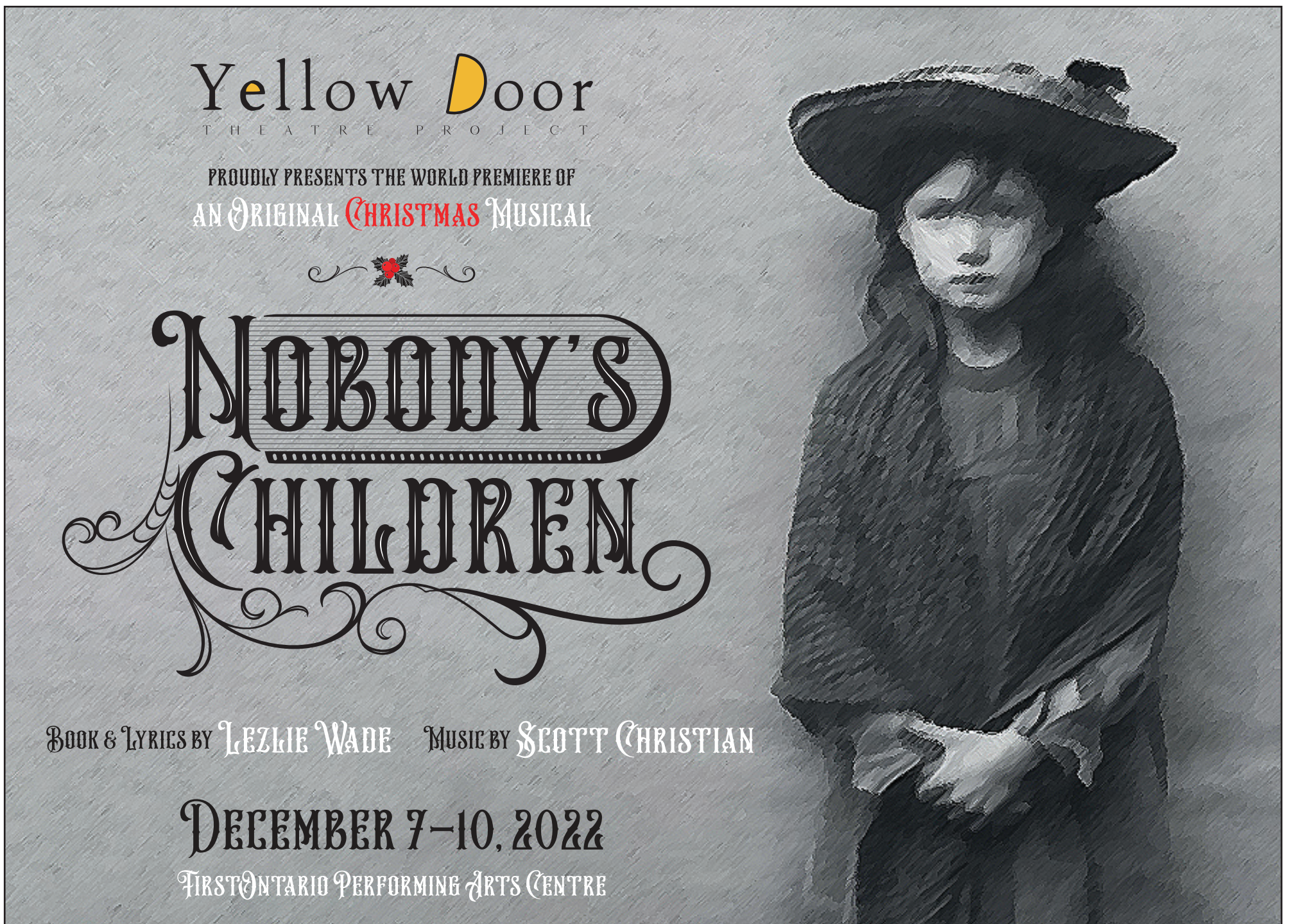
Brian Marshall is a NOTL realtor, author and expert consultant on architectural design, restoration and heritage.

SAD DAY FOR NOTL HERITAGE

Moving on to another topic of concern, four weeks ago (in my Nov. 10 column) I raised the issue of the potential loss of an historic residence at 14 Highlander in Queenston.

An application to demolish this home and subsequently sever the lot for new builds had been made. The application was scheduled to go before the committee of adjustment on Nov. 17.

I was informed today that severance had been granted and, I assume, the demolition of this irreplaceable piece of Niagara-on-the-Lake history has been permitted. It is a



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For important occasions, let's avoid the sounds of silence



Ross's Ramblings

Ross Robinson
Columnist

Time after time it happens, here and elsewhere. People gather to celebrate an occasion, to hear a speech, to enjoy a concert or to celebrate the life of a loved one.

Or, to hear the skirl of the pipes as we Scots seize another opportunity to share our ancestral music.

Plans are made, entertainers and speakers organized, and then so often, organizers forget about "the sound."

Yes, Remembrance Day by our Niagara-on-the-Lake cenotaph had so many stars aligning.

Citizens and visitors enduring a rainy morning. The weather reminded us

all that life in the World War One trenches was often miserable.

Rain, cold, sleet, wet blankets, cold canned meat, day after day, week after week, month after month. Food poisoning, head lice, lack of medical attention for the sick and wounded.

And in NOTL, most of us had umbrellas. The brave men in the trenches were at the mercy of Mother Nature. Soaking wet and chilled. Ugh! How did they keep their morale up?

So, I am not really complaining about the sound system. But please, it's time to bite the bullet and spend some money to upgrade the sound system.

Perhaps the Town of NOTL could front the money, or maybe one of our town's many generous philanthropists would see this as a worthy cause.

An adequate sound system – which could be rented out at a fair price for community centre functions, Remembrance Day and the "Candlelight Stampede" opening ceremonies and carol singing, and Navy Hall events – could



It was hard to hear speakers during the Remembrance Day ceremonies. The town used an audio professional during council's inaugural meeting. We need more of that, says Ross Robinson. FILE

be purchased on a cost-recovery basis. Trust me, it won't break the bank.

I can assure event organizers it will be a few bucks well spent to have a qualified sound technician on-site, just in case the inevitable occurs. And this pro can give a two-minute primer on the effective use of a microphone.

Frustration and embarrassment will be avoided and attendees will receive maximum enjoyment from the experience.

As a hearing-impaired person, I am resigned to

straining to hear. That's one reason I always try to sit in the front row or pew. At the Remembrance Day ceremony, only during the Minute of Silence did I not feel a bit short changed

And at this year's Candlelight Stampede, upcoming this Friday, even our singing of "Silent Night" will be more enjoyable if an adequate sound system is in place, set up and monitored by a sound technician. Just in case, eh?

As we move through our lives, we are constantly reminded of the subtle importance of sound, or

silence. Drive along Lakeshore Road toward St. Catharines and enjoy a rural break at the MacSween family's appropriately named Quiet Acres.

No need for speakers and amplifiers there. (They're closed till spring, but there's always such a variety of seasonal fresh fruit and vegetables, and such enthusiastic and knowledgeable farmers to help. Always the best.)

At our magnificent NOTL Library, reasonable noise is permitted, except in the Designated Quiet

Room. On its door, the following words serve as reminders: ZIP IT. SHH! Pipe Down. HUSH. Shush. Use Your Inside Voice. Quiet Please. SILENCE. KEEP IT DOWN.

Well-selected words. Courteously presented. Often, we need good sound. Other times, we need good silence.

Now, I'm off to attempt to replace the batteries in my hearing aids.

Life is tough, eh? And as me Mom said so often as she aged gracefully, "Old age isn't for sissies." Let's help out by overspending on sound.

Rambling Note: Congrats all round, regarding the Nov. 22 town function at the old Court House, inaugurating our new town council. Well-paced and I was sorry to miss the reception later.

Credit where credit is due. The audio system worked well and there was a professional audio technician in attendance, "just in case."

I could hear every word without straining, from Jeffersonian quotations to family introductions.

Celebrate the Season in Wine Country!



December delights

Here is a list of events taking place in the first week of December. Visit www.niagaraonthelake.com/celebratetheseason or scan the QR code below for a full list of holiday happenings!

- Dec. 1 : 1pm: Shaw Festival - White Christmas & A Christmas Carol
7pm: Shaw Festival - A Christmas Carol
- Dec. 2: 1pm: Shaw Festival - White Christmas & A Christmas Carol
5pm: Dickensian Feast
6pm: Candlelight Stroll
Holiday Market
Christmas Wonderland
- Dec. 3: 1pm: Shaw Festival - White Christmas & A Christmas Carol
7pm: Shaw Festival - White Christmas
Holiday Market
Christmas Wonderland
A Merry & Bright Christmas Tour
- Dec. 4: 1pm: Shaw Festival - White Christmas & A Christmas Carol
Holiday Market
Christmas Wonderland
- Dec. 5: 7pm: Twilight Jazz and Blues Series
Holiday Market
Christmas Wonderland
- Dec. 6: 7pm: Shaw Festival - White Christmas
Holiday Market
Christmas Wonderland
- Dec. 7: 1pm: Shaw Festival - White Christmas & A Christmas Carol
7pm: Shaw Festival - White Christmas & A Christmas Carol
Holiday Market
Christmas Wonderland
- Dec. 8: 1pm: Shaw Festival - A Christmas Carol
5pm: Dickensian Feast
7pm: Shaw Festival - A Christmas Carol
Holiday Market
Christmas Wonderland



Scan here for a full list of events!

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Button Blitz collects donations to cover Christmas Parade costs

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

Santa's helpers were out and about Saturday collecting donations for the annual NOTL Christmas Parade.

Volunteers Terry Choules and Phil Brunt took charge at Phil's Independent Grocer, while Dan Djakalovic and John Streker greeted customers at Penner's Home Hardware.

"It's nice to have (the parade) back after three years," said Brunt.

The keepsake buttons, which are being sold for donations of \$3, will help

defray parade costs, including paying for marching bands and funding a brand-new float for Santa.

In past years, button sales have raised nearly \$5,000 toward parade costs, and this year volunteers are aiming for \$6,000.

"We're asking for \$3 but most people are giving us five," said Streker. "It's going to be a successful year."

Parade day is Saturday, Dec. 10.

NOTLer Carol Dyck was happy to buy a button this year, remarking on the new design.

"I hang them on my tree

every year," she said.

Streker urged parade-goers to bring some spare cash with them, as button sales will continue along Santa's route.

"If they could bring a few coins with them to the parade, that would be great."

Until then, donation boxes will be placed at the Avondale store on Mary Street, Bricks & Barley, Sweets & Swirls in the community centre, the Grist, Hendricks Independent Grocer, the Sandtrap, Starbucks in Old Town and Virgil, and at the Tim Hortons in Virgil.



Dan Djakalovic, Carol Dyck and John Streker share smiles as Dyck purchases her yearly button in support of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Christmas Parade. JULIA SACCO

NOTL Gives Back – to help children and Newark Neighbours

Continued from Front Page

MAC Inc. worked together to maximize the donations collected at the Meridian Credit Union Arena.

"We decided to partner up to blow it up a bit," said co-organizer and Revel broker Jessie MacDonald.

To encourage donations, there was a visit from Santa, hot chocolate and freshly baked Christmas cookies.

"We're getting everybody in the Christmas spirit," said MacDonald.

Mom Lisa Lounsbury showed up with a bag of donations, including children's clothes and tasty treats.

"I realized that all the things I've given in past years are not the kinds of things I should be giving, so this year I thought, 'What are more fun and useful things besides those old

lentil cans in the back of my cupboard?'"

Lounsbury decided things like Pop-Tarts and Bear Paws would "bring a bit more joy over the Christmas season."

"We love being involved in great things in the community."

Marah Minor, the town's community engagement and communications coordinator, helped shine a light on this year's highly anticipated event.

"We originally started during COVID when the need was higher due to the pandemic, but we decided to keep it going because people love it," she said.

Clothing and food donations from this year's NOTL Gives Back drive will support Newark Neighbours' Christmas Food Hamper and Gift program and toys will be given to McMaster SickKids.



From left, Evan and Jessie MacDonald, Santa, Henry Buffington, Carrie Plaskett, William Marinis and Tania Fera-VanGent all volunteered their services during the NOTL Gives Back donation drive on Saturday. JULIA SACCO


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Chamber of Commerce holds friendly Christmas competition in Old Town

Somer Slobodian
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report



John Paraskevopoulos, owner and operator of Gyros on the Lake, outside with his tree. People can vote on the best trees until Dec. 31 at the NOTL chamber. EVAN LOREE

Who decorated it best?
The Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce is holding its first Christmas window decorating contest and Christmas tree decorating contest to get in the holiday spirit.

Twelve businesses along Queen Street will embrace the holiday spirit and decorate their windows with Christmas decor.

People can also view the 11 Christmas trees that are uniquely decorated by various businesses along Queen Street.

A NOTL business sponsors each tree and seven are still available.

Votes for the People's Choice winners can be cast until Dec. 31 at the Chamber of Commerce's office at 26 Queen St.

"The idea for the Christmas tree decorating contest was to do more than just putting white lights on a tree," said Minerva Ward, president of the chamber and Tourism NOTL.

and non-profits and other creators the opportunity to decorate those trees (and) put their own touches in a unique way," she added.
The contests are part of a larger project to transform Niagara-on-the-Lake into a Christmas wonderland, she said.

It will also bring visibility to each business and create a new creative dynamic along Queen Street, she said.
The official first-, second- and third-place winners in each contest will be determined by a judging panel in mid-December.

The People's Choice winners from the public voting period will be announced at the NOTL Icewine Festival at the end of January.
"Residents, tourists, anybody can vote at the Chamber of Commerce. We have the ballots ready for both contests," said Ward.

NOTL Legion gets into the holiday spirit



Staff
The Lake Report

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Legion branch 124 is gearing up for December, with a few holiday surprises planned.
The branch will host a Christmas craft show on Saturday, Dec. 3, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Chili will be

served in the main hall.
Euchre returns Sunday, Dec. 4 and 18 at 2 p.m.
The branch will hold a ham and turkey roll on Saturday, Dec. 10, at 2 p.m. after the NOTL Christmas parade. Chili will also be served in the club room.
And karaoke returns on Sunday, Dec. 11, from 2 to 5 p.m.



This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style.
Category: THEY'RE SORT OF A BIG DEAL

A Japanese word for "squad leader" gives us the alliterative term "head" this.

Last issue:
Category: They're sort of a big deal
Clue: "The whole" this tortilla-and-sauce food item evolved into "the big" one for somebody in charge.

Answer: What is an enchilada?
Answered first by: Claudia Grimwood
Also answered correctly (in order) by: Deb Valder, Susan Hamilton, Bob Stevens, Pam Dowling, Jim Dandy, Lynda Hosty, Margaret Garaughty, Kay Waller, Sylvia Wiens, Sheryl Christensen, Elaine Landray, Debbie Petrucci, Hedy Wiebe, Sheila Meloche, Al Brockway, Carl Nickel

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Melissa Elliot, a participant in the Valhalla Project's Learn to Live program, kisses a dove during a barnyard visit in Niagara-on-the-Lake. SOMER SLOBODIAN

'Being here I don't feel alone anymore'

Valhalla Project's Learn to Live program helps veterans, first responders through PTSD

Somer Slobodian
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Animals have a way of sensing our emotions.

Which is why this fall, the Valhalla Project's five-day Learn to Live Residential Respite Program made a stop at the farm of Randy Lakeit and Lizzie Salkauskis in Niagara-on-the-Lake for a barnyard visit.

The Valhalla Project Niagara is a non-profit agency that offers programs, guidance and resources to military veterans and first responders who live with post-traumatic stress disorder.

"Animals are very intuitive to energy around (them)," said Graham Bettes, a chaplain and ordained minister for the Valhalla Project and also a volunteer

firefighter in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Bettes served as a police officer for 30 years and also was a sergeant in Canada's Armed Forces. He was diagnosed with PTSD in 2013, but believes he had it as early as 1991.

Since animals are so in tune with other people's energy and emotions, the farm visit was a way for participants to become more aware of their own energy.

"So we can start to recognize how we think we may be presenting ourselves," he said.

Lakeit and Salkauskis have more than 300 animals, including bunnies, pigs, chickens, turkeys, alpacas and even a bull.

"I've laughed and smiled more in the last four days than I had in

two years," said Cindy Sowa, who has been a police officer for 27 years.

Sowa experiences anxiety and was diagnosed with PTSD two years ago.

"It's denial. You know, I just thought I had stress and I was overwhelmed. And just looking for some help and coping," she said.

"And then I was diagnosed with PTSD and (I) have good days (and) bad days," she added.

As Helaine Hildley walked around the farm wearing a unicorn onesie, she stopped to see as many animals as she could. Her face lit up as she gave a horse named Thunder some snacks.

Hildley has been a police officer in St. Thomas for 12 years and works on the internet child exploitation squad. She was diag-

nosed with PTSD about a year ago.

"I came as a participant the first time and got so much out of it that I came back over time. Now I do mentoring," she said.

This is her ninth time participating in the program.

She found out about the organization through the hashtag #Igotyourback911. The hashtag that was started by St. Thomas officers to help first responders who are struggling with mental health.

"I messaged them and said it (the program) was freaking amazing. And they reposted it. Some other people have come because of them," she said.

She said her police job caused her a lot of sanctuary trauma, which is when the trauma is caused by the organization itself.

When the system that's supposed to support you during stressful times doesn't, that can cause additional trauma.

The field trip part of the program is a chance to reinforce skills and to go out into the world and meet real people, said Bettes.

"One of the symptoms of PTSD is that it completely fills your life with negative emotions – sad, mad and scared, and essentially makes you blind to seeing the positive emotions," he said.

So visits like this bring them out and help them realize there are smiles to be had, he said.

From day one, participants learn management tools for PTSD and how to cope with it, as well as tools to prevent suicide.

Many of the participants

stay in touch with each other after the five days are completed.

The program is free and the organization is funded mainly by donations. During the five-day program, participants stay at Cave Springs Camp in Beamsville.

The first Learn to Live program was supposed to run in March 2020, but was delayed because of the pandemic.

They were still able to run one in 2020 and three in 2021. To date, they've run 18 programs, eight of which have been online through zoom.

This was the last one of the year, however Bettes hopes to run another five-day residential program in January.

"Being here I don't feel alone anymore," said Sowa.



Pups Cooper and Frankie pose for Santa pictures with owners Rita and Valdi Cocetta at St. David's Vet Clinic's Photos with Santa event on Saturday. JULIA SACCO

Pawsitively perfect pooches have a Santa photo op

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

Pets just can't seem to keep their paws off Santa.

At the St. Davids Veterinary Clinic on Saturday, old St. Nick met plenty of pets – naughty or nice – from

Yorkies to Westies and all those in between.

Veterinarian Stephanie Hall and assistant Julia Michitsch were happy to welcome all sorts of furry friends to "Photos With Santa" for the ninth year.

"It's a longstanding

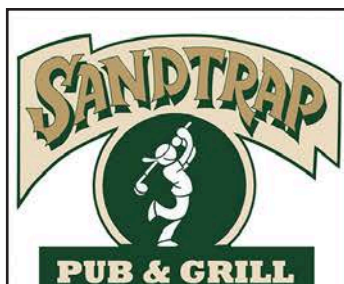
tradition for the clinic," said Michitsch.

This year's photo-op was elevated with an indoor and outdoor field, as well as a visit from the Purple Perk Coffee truck.

Two of Santa's visitors included Yorkshire terriers

Cooper and Frankie, who were on their best behaviour – other than a bit of squirming – during their photo-op with Kris Kringle.

It was all free but donations were collected to help support the St. Davids Lions Club's dog guide program.



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Urban myth or historical fact?

Researcher claims slaves are buried on Centre St. property

Somer Slobodian
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report



James Russell wants the owner of the property under renovation at 240 Centre St. to allow ground penetrating radar to be used on the historic NOTL property. Russell believes the bodies of Black slaves could be buried there. SUPPLIED

Restoration efforts at a historic home at 240 Centre St. are close to complete, but a historical researcher says slaves may be buried on the property and wants permission to investigate.

James Russell, who is leading restoration efforts a few blocks away at the Niagara Baptist Church Burial Ground, is calling for the town and the owner of the house to let him pay for a search of the property using ground penetrating radar.

The house was built in the early 1800s by John Breakenridge and has been deserted since about 1968.

It has had many owners and today it is owned by Lloyd Kelly, a lawyer based in Texas.

Brian Marshall, the lead restoration consultant on Kelly's property, said he is certain there are no slaves buried on the property.

According to Russell, a barn on property "is where the enslaved 'servants' were housed in the early 1800s."

"This whole thing about slaves being buried in the backyard is just, it's smoke and mirrors. It's a non-starter. It's an urban myth," said Marshall, who writes the Arch-i-Text column for The Lake Report.

He said Breakenridge couldn't afford slaves at that time and an archeological assessment had already been completed and found no traces of graves.

Russell dismisses the argument about Breakenridge not being able to afford slaves. "That's ridiculous," he said.

Marshall counters that, "At the time this house was built, the average cost of an adult male slave was 500 pounds."

Another Breakenridge house, the white one on the corner of William and Mississagua streets, sold for 425 pounds in 1824, according to Marshall.

"So there's no economic viability here for slaves," he said.

When Breakenridge died, he left a lot of debt to his

wife, Mary Breakenridge.

Ground penetrating radar sends radio pulses into the earth "and the reflection of those radio pulses back to the device you're using is measured," said Angus Smith, a professor of Greek archeology at Brock University.

It's a non-invasive and non-destructive technology that detects anomalies underground. That could include graves or other buried items that otherwise might not be visible, he said.

Archeological surveys have been done on the property, but when Russell asked the town for the records, he was sent a link to Ontario's archeology information website.

"I haven't been able to get a copy of that. Now, of course, the town has a copy because they wouldn't have allowed the development to go forward unless they had a copy of the archeology report," said Russell.

In an email to The Lake Report, town spokesperson Marah Minor said the archeology reports are public record and need to be obtained from the province.

As far as the report goes, it's "proprietary with my client," said Marshall.

He also noted that it's private property and the owner has no interest in allowing a ground penetrating radar search to be done on

the site.

Chief administrative officer Marnie Cluckie said the town has no authority to force a private land owner to do a search using ground penetrating radar.

And Marshall noted, "The province has seen the report and the province has registered and accepted the report."

"If he's so confident in the fact that Breakenridge couldn't afford slaves and he's confident that the archeology survey was thorough and complete, he has nothing to lose from ground penetrating radar, especially since I volunteered to pay for it."

JAMES RUSSELL

But Russell is undeterred. "If he's so confident in the fact that Breakenridge couldn't afford slaves and he's confident that the archeology survey was thorough and complete, he has nothing to lose from ground penetrating radar, especially since I volunteered to pay

for it," said Russell.

"Is he afraid that graves will actually be found?" he added.

In order to construct the back porch, the town required Kelly, the owner of the house, to pay for an archeological assessment.

"If you do archeology, you go one step further than doing ground penetrating radar," said Marshall.

As well, ground penetrating radar is considered inconclusive, said Minor.

"Archeological assessments are more accurate and conclusive in finding features like graves. Archeological assessments have been undertaken by licensed archeologists retained by the property owner," she said.

It's hard for Smith to say which is better, since he doesn't know exactly what was done on the property.

"There's just lots of different factors and they're kind of like two different techniques that are used for different reasons," he said.

An archeological assessment has four stages.

Stage one and stage two were completed on the entire property, Marshall said.

For stage one, an archeologist researches the land and surrounding area to see if any archeological sites could be on the property.

The property moves into stage two if it's determined

there could be archeological sites on the grounds.

"So, that means what they did was every X number of feet on a grid pattern they dug a pit, and looked for any signs that the ground had been disturbed," said Marshall.

The entire property was clear, except for a section beside the house where anglo-colonial items were found. Marshall described them as European settlement artifacts.

Due to those finds, the third stage of the archeological assessment was conducted in that area.

A series of much deeper and larger pits in the side yard were dug. Marshall estimates that there were about 24 pits.

"I think it's perfectly possible to miss tombs through digging test pits," said Smith.

He primarily does his work in Greece and said he's run into situations where he's dug many test pits and test trenches and still missed tombs by three feet.

"We never would have known it was there unless we had continued to do more investigation, sort of by digging a larger area around there," he said.

That said, Smith also did a ground penetrating radar search on the property in Greece, which proved

inconclusive for various reasons.

"The more different techniques you can throw at a problem, the better," he said.

The side yard where stage three was conducted on the Centre Street property is now in stage four.

"The province can either make you do stage four excavation or stage four preservation," said Marshall.

Preservation was the best route to go, so the surrounding trees didn't need to be cut down, and so the ground didn't get dug up by following the excavation route.

That part of the property, even if the house is sold, cannot be built on since it is now in stage four preservation.

Both methods of archeology have pros and cons, said Smith.

However, ground penetrating radar would typically be used once you've done a survey and determined that there is a site and you're planning to excavate, he said.

"Then perhaps the ground penetrating radar would come in to give you a better indication of where you might want to excavate in that larger area," said Smith.

The possibility of slaves being buried on the property is a bit of folklore that developed over the decades, said Marshall.

Russell argues that employing ground penetrating radar is a win-win because then the slave rumours can finally be put to rest.

He has sent letters to news organizations and authorities, including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, hoping to pressure the town into ensuring a ground penetrating radar search is done.

If all else fails, his next step is to try to bring a criminal charge against the owner for improperly interfering with human remains, Russell told The Lake Report.

While he understands Russell's mission, Marshall said there's no validity to it.

"There's no support. And it's private property," he said.



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Daytime Rotary tour sold out, McArthur Estate tickets selling fast

Staff
The Lake Report

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Rotary Club's daytime Holiday House Tour this weekend has reached its capacity of 3,000 visitors, but a few tickets might still be available for the evening tours of the McArthur Estate.

The annual fundraiser is shaping up to be the most successful one yet.

The daytime tour features six homes around Niagara-on-the-Lake. And another 1,500 tickets are available for the evening "Merry & Bright" tours of the McArthur Estate on John Street East.

"Our guests know how to bundle up to wait in the outside lineups," said 2022 house tour chair Fran Boot.

"Thank goodness the first big snow is already out of the way and the weather forecast looks seasonally



A few tickets to the McArthur Estate are still available.

suitable."

Tickets to both tours are sold online only on the Rotary Club's website, niagaraonthelakerotary.ca/page/holiday-house-tour.

All the money raised goes toward Rotary community projects at home and abroad.

You better watch out: Santa Clauses will be running through town to support NOTL youth

Staff
The Lake Report

It's time to grab your Santa suit and hit the streets running.

On Dec. 18, Santa's everywhere will be parking their sleighs and running through the streets of Niagara-on-the-Lake for the NOTL Realty Ltd. Santa 5K and 1K Elf Run.

Niagara-on-the-Lake Realty is the title sponsor for the race, which is organized by VR Pro, a race and event management company.

"With the privilege of being the title sponsor NOTL Realty was able to designate what charity they wanted the money to go to, so they picked the NOTL Youth Campus," said Caroline Polgrabia, the planning committee chair for the Youth Campus.

The campus is a space for young people ages of 12 and 18 to relax, have



A small army of Santas runs through Old Town during the 2021 Santa 5K Run. They're back Dec. 18. FILE

fun and socialize in a safe environment.

Ten dollars from each runner's registration fee will be donated to the campus.

"Each runner also has the opportunity to register their own fundraising campaign and 100 per cent of those dollars will go to the Youth Campus for 2023 programs," said Polgrabia.

So far \$1,822 has been raised.

The money will also go toward kids services, certification costs and supplies, she said.

The run can be done in-person or virtually, but everyone participating must dress up as Santa – no ifs, ands or buts.

With the purchase of a suit, entering the Santa 5K will cost \$55, or \$35 if participants already own a suit. To participate virtually, the fee is \$40 (which includes

a Santa suit), or \$30 if you have your own Santa suit.

The 1K Elf Run, for children 12 and under, costs \$25 and does not include a suit. Those participants must wear all red clothing.

The race starts at 10 a.m. Sunday, Dec. 18, at Simcoe Park.

Santas will trek through the Commons, along the Niagara River Recreational Trail and will eventually turn around at the 2.5-kilometre mark and head back to Simcoe Park.

There will also be a toy and food drive through NOTL Realty's office and the NOTL Youth Campus, with donations going to Newark Neighbours.

The Irish Harp Pub is the official host restaurant and will have free coffee and breakfast sandwiches for the tired Santas at the end of the run.

To register go to Tinyurl.com/zda9d8dn.

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Happy Holidays!



Rock on: Kids **geology club** rolls into community centre



Keeping it Green

Kyra Simone
Special to The Lake Report

Curious learners can once again have their own “Magic School Bus” experience through a Niagara-on-the-Lake geology club.

St. Davids residents Francesca and Nicholas Sorrenti have relaunched the Kids Rock Club in partnership with the Niagara Peninsula Geological Society to teach inquisitive young minds all about rocks, minerals and fossils.

IN THE ROUGH

The Kids Rock Club offers educational programming, recommended

for children ages 4 to 11. Through direct engagement with experiments and investigations, the club emphasizes fun and allows children to develop appreciation and respect for the natural world and their surroundings.

With an annual cost of \$20 per child, club membership includes monthly meetups and all materials required for crafts and activities, a National Geographic rock book, a new geological sample every month and a rock collection box to store specimens.

Before the pandemic, about 60 children took part in monthly club sessions in Niagara Falls at Firemen’s Park and the MacBain Centre. For the new set of classes, the club will take place at a rock-solid new location: the NOTL Community Centre.

The next session is Sunday, Dec. 11 at 1:30 p.m.

At its recent first session, the new iteration of the club began with an introduction to several knowledgeable rockhounds, including local geologist

Becky Olheor and geological society member Jonathan Vasilyev.

These experts helped the children to learn the difference between rocks and minerals, explore a variety of samples and create their own geological time scale.

Vasilyev brought his amazing collection of selénite and explained that the name of this crystal comes from the Greek word “selēnē,” meaning “moon.”

This month, students from Brock University’s Department of Earth Sciences will be sharing their expertise with the club.

NOT TAKEN FOR GRANITE!

The Kids Rock Club is a culmination of the generosity of many different organizations and individuals. Many knowledgeable and passionate teachers have volunteered their time to lead club sessions.

Hosts and geological society executive members Francesca and Nicholas are extremely grateful to the society for its support, as well as financial help from

Walker Industries to enable the club’s relaunch.

The club also is indebted to the St. Catharines Book Outlet for donations of rock books.

The club welcomes any additional support for this unique children’s earth science learning opportunity: if you can share any fun rock facts, or can lend or support the purchase of instructional materials, contact the club directors at cocoandclay-forkids@gmail.com.

They hope to acquire demonstration equipment, such as microscopes and display boxes, as well as field trip safety equipment and tools.

ON SHALE NOW

Registration is open and ongoing for this down-to-earth program. To enrol, go to bookwhen.com/cocoandclay.

Kyra Simone is a PhD student in environmental science, with master’s degrees in biology and science communication. When not researching climate change, she advocates for a sustainable future, picks up litter and makes recycled jewelry.



St. Davids residents Francesca and Nicholas Sorrenti have relaunched the Kids Rock Club in NOTL in partnership with the Niagara Peninsula Geological Society. The next session is Dec. 11 at the NOTL Community Centre. SUPPLIED

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Vegan food served up at Plant No. 01

Somer Slobodian
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Sustainability is at the heart of a new vegan restaurant in Glendale.

Plant No. 01 was built from the ground up with a simple goal in mind: to sell freshly made plant-based, vegan dishes while making a small environmental impact.

The restaurant is run by Carolyn Bernacci and her daughter Lindsay, who have lived in Niagara-on-the-Lake for about 13 years.

The pair do everything they can to make the restaurant as environmentally sustainable as possible.

"I can't tell you the lengths that I've gone to with the packaging," said Carolyn Bernacci.

"Every bit of it other than the aluminum, which there is no compostable alternative for at the moment for safely putting in an oven, every bit of it is compostable," she added.

This includes the masking tape, labels, Zip Lock bags, and even their business cards.

"We do spend more money on our packaging by far, but I'm not afraid to," she said.

Even with the extra costs, she still tries to keep prices down, but notes the extra dollar or two people may have to pay so that the restaurant can be more environmentally friendly goes a long way.

"So far, no one's complained," she said.

"We even have compostable tape, because we don't want to use glues and such. But I think that's worth the



Carolyn Bernacci takes the lids off of the lunch items at Plant No. 01. The new vegan restaurant in Glendale, run with her daughter Lindsay, offers items like mac and cheese, lasagna, hash and sweet potato gnocchi. SOMER SLOBODIAN

investment," she added.

Food waste is a concern across the province. Ontario residents produce about 3.7 million tonnes of organic waste every year, according to a Ryerson University study from 2018.

Bernacci is proud to say Plant No. 01 produces only about one residential-sized garbage bag a week.

"The piping bags we use are compostable. So, when we're finished, they go right in our compost bin. So we're heavy on compost and next to no garbage," she said.

They don't want to be responsible for any further garbage, she said.

"We do try our best to stick to the no-waste mandate," said Jessica Prebianca, one of the chefs at Plant No. 01.

A lot of leftovers are used

to make crusts, breads, cakes and even muffins, she said.

When customers order lunch, they get their food in containers made from palm leaves. The leaves are pressed without any chemicals, Bernacci said.

"So everything they have in here, it goes right back to the earth, and it's not creating any methane or any off-gassing," she said.

Supporting local farmers is also important to the Plant No. 01 family.

"Our produce and our additional ingredients, that's all sourced locally, supporting local farmers," said Lindsay.

Most of the interior artwork was done by Toronto artists, with a few pieces from Kitchener artists.

It was a long journey to open the restaurant on

Westwood Court.

"Almost three years from initial concept, going through site plan, going through building permits, getting sign-offs for site plans, sign-offs for building permits," said Bernacci.

This is her first time running a restaurant. However, Lindsay has been working in the restaurant industry for about 10 years.

It was important that they build the restaurant structure themselves, said Lindsay, because they wanted it to be as eco-friendly as possible.

By supervising it from the ground up, they were able to oversee everything and have it exactly as they wanted.

Upcycling has been a huge part of their design process and everyday operations. Almost everywhere you look there's something

that was repurposed.

"Every single thing here on the walls, except for the equipment, has all been repurposed and upcycled," said Bernacci.

Lindsay said her mom did all of the interior design work. "She'd be driving by a farm and say, 'You're tearing it down? I'll take that.'"

"There's beauty in garbage," her mom said with a smile.

They also operate on mostly solar panels and they recycle their own grey water and use it to water their plants outside.

"We have a lot of pollinators out there that are good for the environment and attract the bees," said Lindsay.

The duo chose the Glendale location because it is convenient for tourists and is right off the highway.

Though it's far from Old Town, Bernacci said people still make the drive.

Both said many customers have been happy with the amount of parking the restaurant offers, too. "It's easy to get in and out of," said Lindsay, who has been a vegetarian for 17 years.

Bernacci, who has been a vegan for 47 years, got the idea to start Plant No. 01 after after one too many experiences of going to a restaurant and not being able to order a vegan option.

She wanted to create a space where people can feel included, no matter what they like to eat.

"You don't need to be a vegan to come here," said Lindsay.

Lindsay graduated from Niagara College's culinary program in 2015 and her mom, with more than three decades of cooking experience, has taken many vegan cooking courses.

Though the mother-daughter duo run the restaurant, another relative, Kayla Bernacci, also helps behind the scenes in the kitchen.

Most of the menu items are dishes that many people are already familiar with, including a six-layer lasagna, mac and cheese, and baked cheesecake.

Everything is made in-house, including the butter, ketchup, bread, and ricotta and mozzarella cheese.

"We just wanted to bring plant-based options to the Niagara region and just have more options out there for people," said Lindsay.

Plant No. 01 is at 9 Westwood Court, off Townline Road, in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Santa's NOTL elf is collecting letters for the Big Man

Continued from Front Page

only had one wish – to see his mother happy.

"I was just heartbroken," she said.

She does her best to personalize every letter so that she can bring a little Christmas joy to each child.

"What I like to do, down here in the blank area, I'll write my own little special message to them," she said as she pointed to the bottom of one of Santa's letters.

Her work station is stacked with letters, hot chocolate, cookies and, of

course, the naughty and nice lists – everything an elf needs to assist Santa.

She's a busy elf, responding to 350 to 600 letters to kids across Niagara and the Greater Toronto Area each season. She even received a letter from England once.

Letters can be brought to Santa's mailbox at the post office on Queen Street or be placed in a regular mailbox where one of Santa's other elves make sure it gets to Sugarswirl.

Letters can also be dropped in a special mailbox outside the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce office.

Kids will also have a chance to give their letters to the elves during NOTL's Christmas Parade on Dec. 10.

This will be the parade's first year back since COVID-19 began.

"We usually hand out little candy canes to the kids and collect any letters on the route throughout the parade," she said.

"And then we just bring them back here and just start answering them," she added.

Surgarswirl urges everyone to get their letters in as soon as possible and to always include a return address.

"If you sent a letter and then you haven't received a reply for your child yet, please come in to the post office. If anything, I can have a letter for you that same day," she said.

She also wanted remind kids to be happy and safe and to have a very Merry Christmas.

And she had some advice for how to get on Santa's nice list this year.

"Be on your best behaviour, because Santa's watching," she said with a smirk.

Letters should be addressed to: Santa Claus, North Pole, HOH OH0, Canada.



Santa's post office elf Sandy Sugarswirl reads letters from the boys and girls of NOTL. SOMER SLOBODIAN

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Across

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- 10. German measles (7)
- 11. Chatter (7)
- 12. Anxious (7)
- 13. Emphasize (9)
- 15. Astonish (5)
- 16. Decent (11)
- 20. First prime minister of India (5)
- 22. Chinese revolutionary leader (3,3-3)
- 24. Type of chair (7)
- 26. Poorly matched (7)
- 27. Demolish (7)
- 28. Cooking vessel (7)

Down

- 1. Sterile (7)
- 2. Largest desert (6)
- 3. On an upper floor (8)
- 4. Depression from lack of company (10)
- 5. Make beer or ale (4)
- 6. Spain and Portugal (6)
- 7. Last (8)
- 8. Walked like a duck (7)
- 14. Put out (10)
- 16. Practise (8)
- 17. Wrist band (8)
- 18. Indefinite person (7)
- 19. Fishermen (7)
- 21. Yet to arrive (6)
- 23. Squalid (6)
- 25. Supporting ropes (4)

Crossword Puzzle

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Last issue's answers

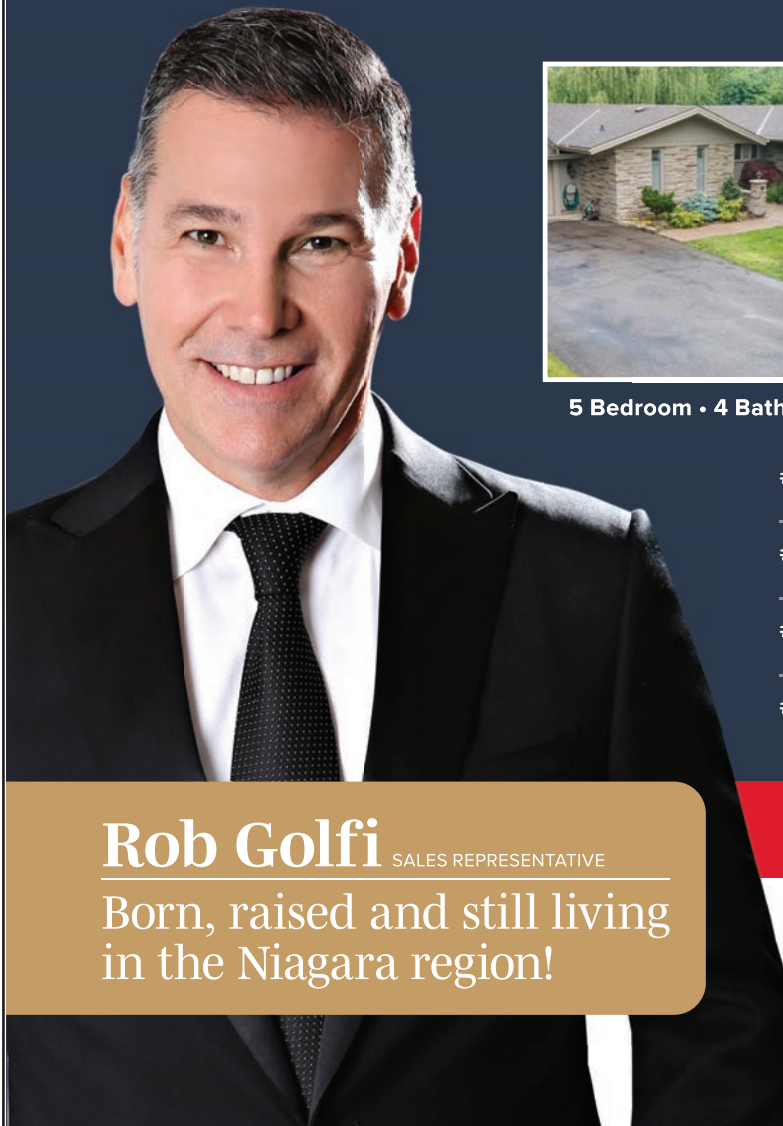
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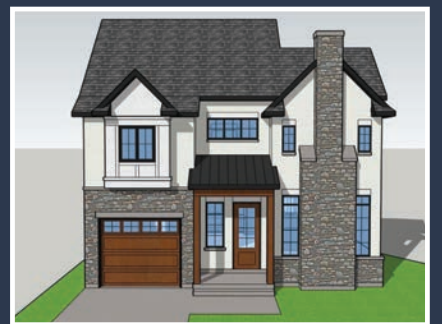
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NOTL watches **Canada's first** World Cup goal

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

They lost but they made history.

NOTLer Harry Schlange, who watched Canada play in the World Cup in 1986, was pleased the team managed to score the nation's first-ever World Cup goal during Sunday morning's 4-1 loss to Croatia.

It's a huge improvement over multiple no-goal losses 36 years ago.

Schlange and friends had gathered at Butler's Bar and Grill with high hopes for a win.

And when Alphonso Davies headed in that first historic goal just over a minute into the match, things were looking up for Canada.

"We had such a high at the beginning, but shortly after that, Croatia really took control," said Schlange.

"We're still happy they gave it everything they had," he said. "We'd rather lose 4-1 than 4-0."

Niagara-on-the-Lake sports fans were happy to witness history in the making, despite the Croatian victory.

Dedicated soccer fanat-



Spectators at Butler's Bar and Grill watch the World Cup on Sunday as Canada loses 4-1 to Croatia. Canada scored early but Croatia proved too strong an opponent. JULIA SACCO

ics donned red and white attire to take in the match at the Irish Harp Pub, the Sandtrap, Butler's and elsewhere.

Team Canada, ranked 41st in the world, was in tough against 12th-ranked Croatia, but supporters remained spirited.

Mark Cherney was at his "favourite local hang-out," the Sandtrap, to enjoy Canada's second game of this World Cup tournament.

"We were looking to take in some Canadian history

today and Team Canada delivered," he said.

Despite the strong start, by half-time Canada was down 2-1 and spirits dwindled as Croatia poured it on.

Muskoka couple Tom Hampton and Patty Gam-mage stopped by the Irish Harp to catch the game while visiting NOTL.

"It's been a great trip, except for the game," said Hampton. "We can play a lot better than we are right now."

Over at Butler's Bar and

Grill, server Frankie Caruso said the place was packed with anguished fans.

"People were screaming at the TVs."

Canada's final 2022 World Cup game against Morocco is at 10 a.m. on Thursday, Dec. 1.

Fans can stop by the Irish Harp and Palatine Hills Estate Winery, both of which will be opening early to stream the match. The game is also available for viewing on CTV and TSN.

Penalties costly for Predators as team **falls 5-4** in OT

Kevan Dowd
The Lake Report

It was so close, but victory eluded the Jr. A Niagara Predators once again last Friday night, this time thanks to players spending too much time in the box.

A 5-4 overtime loss on home ice to the St. George Ravens kept the Predators out of the win column but still earned them a single point in the Greater Metro Hockey League standings.

A hard-fought game that saw the Predators up a goal with just 14 seconds left on the clock fell to pieces thanks to a pair of ill-timed penalties.

"It was penalties, penalties hurt us tonight," said Predators' head coach Kevin Taylor.

"We dominated the game and looked good out there, we kept at it, they capitalized on their chances, but we didn't. Unfortunately certain guys couldn't keep it together at the end."

St. George opened the scoring early and Niagara's Cameron Savoie tied things up 15 minutes in with his first of three goals on the night. A few minutes later,

St. George capitalized on a Predators' penalty to reclaim the lead going into the second period.

The Ravens widened the gap with the only tally of the second period but Niagara rallied in the third, with Savoie netting his second at the 4:35 mark, and a third two minutes later.

Then Logan Ballie marker put them ahead with a little over 11 minutes left in the game.

Unfortunately, a six-on-three for the Ravens – thanks to two Predators in the box for the last two minutes of the game plus a pulled goaltender – overwhelmed Niagara leading to a tying goal and overtime that would end up going in favour of St. George.

Taylor said the most frustrating part of the loss is how well he felt his team played.

"You give up the tying goal on a six-on-three, so it's kind of tough," he said. "We just made some mental mistakes there at the end. Our mistakes cost us the game, their mistakes didn't."

Read more on the Predators at Niagaranow.com.

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37-43 Queen St., circa 1904

I have not seen a photograph like this one before and I was surprised when I realized it was actually a Queen Street building. Can you pick it out without driving by or using Google Street View? Queen Street has a few three-storey buildings, but they are built with brick or stone. This one is currently painted baby blue and is now a two-storey building. The current businesses there are Old Tyme Candy Shop, Brims & Things and Nina's Gelateria. Some time since the early 1900s the owners of the property chopped a storey off but kept the decorative roof bracket. This photo features H.C. Pratt Photographers and the Harrison Miller Company, which offered general goods for residents. Harrison later broke out on his own with a hardware store down the street.

Eleven years later, Sandtrap Pub and Grill reaches \$66,800 raised for children's charities



Sandtrap co-owner Matt Dietsch and his family drop off a cheque for \$3,250 to the Niagara Children's Centre on Friday. Another cheque for the same amount was given to the Ronald McDonald House in Hamilton. The funds were raised during the Sandtrap's 11th annual golf tournament, bringing the total to \$66,800 raised for children's charities over 11 years. Picture are Dietsch with his wife Kristen and sons Dylan and Colton, with Mandy Cavasin accepting the cheque on behalf of the Niagara Children's Centre.

Looking to the Stars

Full moon lies ahead and maybe a spiritual awakening

Bill Auchterlonie
Columnist

Thursday, Dec. 1: Both Mercury and Venus have commanding roles in today's sky ballet. How about some Venus versus Mars tension? Or some Venus and Saturn tension? (Which actually may work out for the better by slowing things down a bit.) And all this while your logical mind is overwhelmed by imagination making for confusion. It was Dec. 1, 2021, that Kennedy Center Honours were awarded to Joni Mitchell, Lorne Michaels, Berry Gordy and Bette Midler, who turns 77 today.



Friday, Dec. 2: Harmony between the moon in Aries and the sun in Sagittarius underlines the synchronicity that is ever present and also bestows a wonderful sense of patience which should play out before the day is done. Happy birthday to Aaron Rogers, quarterback of the Green Bay Packers, Super Bowl winner and MVP.



Saturday, Dec. 3: Neptune has been retrograde since the end of June. Today, Neptune turns direct, in the sign of Pisces, the sign of his rulership. Imagination steps into play with all the accumulated ideas from the past five months to show. Happy birthday #61 to Julianne Moore, who has been an award-winning actor for 30 years, including a best actress Oscar for her leading role in "Still Alice."

Sunday, Dec. 4: As we head toward a full moon in Gemini on Wednesday, we start the week with the sun and Chiron triggering a spiritual awakening today – and also with Venus

in Sagittarius in a challenging square to Neptune. Be on guard for messages that roll out of the fog and wait until a sure response is delivered with confidence. Happy birthday to Chief Crazy Horse, born Dec. 4, 1840. He, along with Sitting Bull and others defeated Gen. George Custer at the Battle of the Little Bighorn.



Monday, Dec. 5: Today is time to embrace new ideas. And there are lots from which to choose. Patience is our best friend today. Yesterday was the anniversary of Crazy Horse's birth. One year earlier (1839) and one day later, Dec. 5, was the day George Custer was born in Ohio.

Tuesday, Dec. 6: As Mercury moves from Sagittarius into Capricorn and thinking becomes more focused on all things practical, the moon moves into Gemini. That sets up tomorrow's full moon while Jupiter teases with thoughts and big ideas that, while tempting, are not easy to pull off. Dion Fortune was a British author and psychic who led a group that used magic to help the fates keep German soldiers out of Britain during the Second World War. She was born Dec. 6, 1890.

Wednesday, Dec. 7: A little past 11 this evening we are treated to the full moon in Gemini with the added bonus of the moon at the same place in the sky as Mars. This requires a nimble body directed by quick-changing feelings in order to respond to the even more nimble changing world around us. It was Dec. 7, 1979, that the first "Star Trek" film was released. It starred Canadian actor William Shatner as Capt. James Kirk, along with Leonard Nimoy. It was directed by Robert Wise.

Check out Bill Auchterlonie's podcast, Looking up to the Stars, at www.lutts.com.

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Green Christmas planters and wreaths are a great way to add colour and life to your holiday displays. JOANNE YOUNG

Dreaming of a green Christmas? Fresh-cut boughs are versatile



GROWING TOGETHER 

Joanne Young
Gardening Columnist

Decorating with live Christmas greenery has long been a tradition cherished by families around the globe.

The fragrance of freshly cut evergreen boughs as you enter a home at Christmas time is special and seems to revive memories of Yuletides past.

There are many ways that you can incorporate fresh greens into your holiday decorating.

Outdoors, there are countless uses for greens and one of the greatest things is that you do not have to compromise your style to do so.

Whether you enjoy the more contemporary, simple lines of design or a more classic look or a natural, woodland look, you can achieve the style you desire

with fresh greenery.

For instance, there is the traditional use of porch planters at the front entrance, the wreath on the door and garland around the door, windows, and trim of the house.

Also be thinking of other areas where you might add a little extra holiday cheer – such as outside the patio door or an area visible from the kitchen window.

Greenery that is used in planters with soil will usually stay fresh looking well into winter – sometimes as late as March. Other outdoor decorations that are not in soil (such as wreaths, swags and garland) will dry up a little quicker than the planters.

Inside the home, fresh greenery can be used for centrepieces, on mantels, as window treatments, on banisters or, when hosting a party you can add to the atmosphere by even just laying some on the centre of the dining room table.

Of course, in the warmth of the house, the greens will not last as long as they do outdoors. For a centrepiece done in fresh oasis, you can expect the greens to last two to three weeks.

But make sure you keep topping up the water in the container.

Greenery that is not in oasis, but just lying there, will only stay fresh for one to two weeks. Try to keep the greenery outside in the cold or at least in a cooler area and bring it in just prior to Christmas.

Here are some tips to consider when thinking about using fresh greenery this season:

* Before shopping for your boughs, take some measurements to make decisions easier and to avoid repeated trips to the garden centre.

Some measurements that you may need to know are: size of the door or wall area where you are hanging a wreath; distance around the doorway or along a railing or fence where you want garland; length of the fireplace mantel; and size of existing decorative pots so you know what pot size will fit inside.

* Are you wanting to co-ordinate colours and types of greenery across your home or opt for unique decorations in each area?

* When shopping for your boughs, make sure the foliage feels fresh to the touch. If it is dry and you are starting to see a bit of browning, these boughs or garlands will not last very long. If you see a lot of needles

dropping when handling it, this is also a sign that the greenery is drying out.

* Rehydrate your greenery. Making sure that your greenery has adequate moisture is the key to them lasting longer.

A lot of the boughs that you purchase are cut weeks in advance of you buying them. If you are using boughs to make an outdoor planter, be sure you make a fresh cut on each stem before inserting them into the soil. Keep the soil moist until it freezes.

For wreaths, garlands, and swags, it is best to spritz them every three to four days to keep them green longer. When using fresh greens inside, rehydrating them is essential to longevity.

Fill buckets with room-temperature water. Using a hand pruner, make diagonal cuts through the stems (this allows more water to be absorbed), then gently crush the exposed end with a small hammer. Set them in water for a few hours before working with the plants.

Be sure to add some fresh greenery to your decorating this season.

Joanne Young is a Niagara-on-the-Lake garden expert and coach. See her website at joanneyoung.ca.

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