



Truck takes a dive | Page 3



St. Davids Distillery plans to open this fall

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

When John Sobot bought property on Queenston Road in 2012, it was an overgrown, dilapidated and weed-strewn mess of forgotten grape vines. But he rolled up his sleeves and spent years landscaping nearly every inch of it. Now it is a veritable meadow of tall trees and

Continued on Page 18



Adding nurse practitioner first step in solving doctor shortage

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

While far from having the highest rate, Canada boasts one of the better medical doctor-to-patient ratios in the world.

But Niagara-on-the-Lake isn't keeping up.

According to the World Bank, Canada has an average rate of 2.4 doctors for every 1,000 citizens.

NOTL's ratio falls less than one-quarter of the

Continued on Page 9

Two men on disabled Sea-Doo rescued after hours in Lake Ontario

Molly Bowron
The Lake Report

The sun was setting on Saturday evening as Dylan Rumsey clung to a green buoy at the mouth of the Niagara River.

The water was getting cold

and boats passed without a second glance, oblivious to his emergency.

He'd already been in the water for hours and wasn't sure what would happen next.

Around 2 o'clock the afternoon of July 23, Rumsey and his friend Dan Langtang had

launched into the Niagara River in a "supercharged Sea-Doo. The thing went pretty fast," said Rumsey.

The young men, Rumsey in his 20s and Langtang in his 30s, then rode the borrowed watercraft over to Municipal Beach in St. Catharines with

gas still in the tank.

After spending a couple of hours at Municipal beach, they decided to head back to the NOTL boat launch around 5 p.m., Rumsey said.

But when they reached the



Continued on Page 5

NOTL businesses face labour shortages

'I don't know what I'm going to do,' says shop manager, as lack of staff forces early closures

Somer Slobodian
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Kathy Brown isn't sure what to do next.

The manager of the Avondale convenience store in Virgil simply can't find enough staff. And she's not alone.

Pandemic-era labour shortages have been afflicting businesses across Canada for months. And in Niagara-on-the-Lake, businesses are being hit harder than ever.

Many retailers and services in NOTL are struggling to hire workers and some are on the verge of panic.

"I don't know what I'm doing to do in two weeks. I won't have staff," said Brown.

She's worked for Avondale for 18 years and has been at the Virgil location for six. But has never experienced anything quite like this.

Currently, she has four staff but two are leaving for school



Kathy Brown, like other managers in town, is looking for staff to fill shortages. MOLLY BROWN

in a few weeks.

She's had only one job applicant in the past few weeks and is worried she'll have to work 17-hour days or shut the store

down early. Some days she's already had to do just that.

And since Brown is putting in extra hours, there's no work-life balance – and she hardly gets to

see her grandchildren.

According to Statistics Canada, a shortage of labour

Continued on Page 4

Help when dementia robs seniors of memories and mobility

DR. BROWN

Dr. William Brown
The Lake Report

It can't be easy caring for residents in long-term care facilities, especially for those who have major cognitive and mobility problems.

Some lose their memo-

ries of families and friends and even how to care for themselves. For diseases like Alzheimer's, frontotemporal and other degenerative dementing disorders, there's little hope of stopping, never mind slowing, the progression of their failing brains and mobility.

That's what makes caring for residents with dementia such a huge challenge for

their families and caregivers.

Left to their own devices, residents pace the corridors or pedal their wheelchairs about with their feet, sometimes bumping into others with barely a nod, or sit staring blankly or often fall asleep until someone or something stirs their interest.

Continued on Page 25



Lifelike robotic cats help seniors. WILLIAM BROWN

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Left: Phyllis Baker of NOTL married George Dinwiddie and followed him off to war. Right: George Dinwiddie is buried in the Moro River Cemetery in Ortona, Italy. ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 124



Radiant Care Pleasant Manor. SOMER SLOBODIAN

Pleasant Manor facing COVID-19 outbreak

Somer Slobodian
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Pleasant Manor in Virgil is in the midst of a COVID-19 outbreak.

Chief executive officer Tim Siemens said the outbreak at the long-term care facility was declared on July 21.

Five residents and three employees have tested positive and are not showing any symptoms, he said. There have been no deaths.

This is the second outbreak at Pleasant Manor since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020.

"We are following (ministry) and Niagara public health protocols and guidelines as they relate to preparing for an outbreak of COVID-19," Siemens said in an email.

Currently, things seem contained, said Siemens. He said the facility has sufficient PPE and that residents are comfortable.

"We are very grateful for the support of our loving families and community and thank them in advance for their co-operation, patience and understanding as we enter our 29th month of adhering to strict guidelines, protocols and mandates for the safety of our residents and employees," he said.

As of Wednesday, Niagara Region reported 965 cases of COVID-19, 64 of them in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Pleasant Manor's is the second outbreak in Niagara-on-the-Lake within the last few weeks. As of Monday, the Upper Canada Lodge COVID-19 outbreak was over.



NOTL firefighters on scene at a small fire on Four Mile Creek Road on Tuesday. MOLLY BOWRON

Small fire was put out quickly

Molly Bowron
The Lake Report

A small fire Tuesday morning on Four Mile Creek Road produced a lot of smoke but was quickly extinguished.

Niagara-on-the-Lake dep-

uty fire chief Jay Plato said a small burning bin caught fire and flames spread to some chemicals being used to spray trees.

No one was injured and the buildings near the small blaze were undamaged, he said.

THE MONUMENTS MEN

Separated by war, Phyllis Dinwiddie followed husband overseas

This year marks the 100th anniversary of Niagara-on-the-Lake's iconic clock tower cenotaph. In recognition of the cenotaph's century of service through two world wars and beyond, NOTL historian Ron Dale has been researching the stories of the people – all men – whose names are engraved on it. This is one in a series of stories to document and remember the sacrifices these combatants made. Future instalments will commemorate those named on the Queen Street cenotaph and on the municipal memorial in Queenston.

Ron Dale
Special to The Lake Report

In the Second World War, Canadian wives were expected to stay put, tend to the farm, run the business, raise the children or work near home while their husbands were overseas on active service.

Many women did not accept this wartime separation and went to great lengths to be near their husbands. This was the case with Phyllis Dinwiddie of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

George Charles Edward Dinwiddie, born in the British Isles on May 20, 1910, immigrated to Canada in 1913 with his parents, set-

ling in Toronto.

His father was a veteran of the British Army and had served in the Canadian Army in the First World War. George was destined to follow in his father's footsteps.

He enlisted as a boy soldier in 1925, joining the Royal Canadian Regiment of the Permanent Active Militia, Canada's full-time regular army force. At the end of his three-year enlistment, he became a painter and decorator in Toronto.

But George did not thrive in civilian life. The Great Depression meant there were few painting jobs available.

So, on Jan. 3, 1933, he re-enlisted in the Permanent Force, stationed each summer in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

It was here that he met Phyllis Baker, whose family had lived in town since 1913. George and Phyllis were married in Lewiston, N.Y., on Sept. 15, 1934.

During this period, George was promoted several times and by 1939 he was a sergeant in the Royal Canadian Regiment.

On Sept. 1, 1939, Nazi Germany invaded Poland. Canada did not declare war on Germany for another nine days, but everyone saw the writing on the wall.

On that same day, George signed up to serve in the Canadian Active Service Force. He was immediately promoted to the rank of platoon Sergeant Major.

Soon, the Dinwiddies were separated for the first time when members of the Royal Canadian Regiment were shipped to England, arriving on Dec. 30, 1939.

The unit saw little action until June 14, 1940, when they were sent to Brest, France, several days after the evacuation of part of the British army from Dunkirk.

However, high command immediately changed their strategy and the force re-embarked the following day to return to England.

Six months later, Dinwiddie, now a lieutenant, returned to Canada, escorting prisoners of war destined for camps in Canada. He was able to take leave on Jan. 2, 1942, and for three weeks he and Phyllis were able to stay together, leaving the war behind.

It was not to last. On March 1, he was boarded a ship in Halifax to return to England. There he was seconded to a training camp as an instructor.

Phyllis assumed George would be stationed in England for the duration of the war and took steps to join

him. Due to travel restrictions from Canada, she sailed to England in November 1942 from New York.

Once there, she joined the women's auxiliary of the Royal Canadian Air Force, with headquarters in London. While George was stationed at Aldershot, Phyllis was posted to Farnham, Surrey, close enough to enable the couple to get together when duty allowed.

This arrangement also would not last. George, now a captain, was sent into combat. He arrived in Italy on Sept. 24, 1943, and on Dec. 9 was transferred to the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment.

The regiment was in dire need of replacements for officers killed or wounded in the bloody battles to push the Germans from the Moro River valley, near Ortona.

Four days later, Dinwiddie was mortally wounded and he died on Dec. 13, 1943. He is buried in the Moro River Cemetery in Ortona.

Phyllis stayed in the RCAF until the war was over, then returned to Niagara-on-the-Lake. Separated from her husband for the final time, she was able to put her loss behind her and she eventually remarried.

She died on Oct. 2, 1974, and rests in St. Mark's Cemetery.



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Stolen truck ends up in unfinished pool

Somer Slobodian
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

A truck was found on its side in an unfinished pool Wednesday morning on Concession 7 Road in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

"I started looking at the property, and I'm like, how did he get here?" said Nick Dacosta, owner of the property.

Dacosta called the police at around 5:30 a.m. after he discovered the truck while letting his dogs outside.

Niagara Regional Police said the vehicle, a black GMC Sierra pickup truck, was reported stolen.

The truck was found lying on the driver's side in the under-construction pool. Police said the unidentified driver lost control, travelled through a front yard and landed in the pool.

Dacosta said the driver had hit the ditch nearby, missed several trees, then proceeded to drive over his septic bed before ending up in his pool.

When he looked at his security camera footage, he said after the truck crashed, a man crawled out and left the scene.

He said the pool was set to be finished within the next two weeks. But due to the damage, it doesn't look like it will be finished this year, let alone this summer.

Police said the Sierra suffered serious damage totalling about \$15,000.



Top: The truck inside the pool. Bottom: Police help tow the vehicle out of the pool. The pool is valued at about \$100,000, police said. SUPPLIED PHOTOS

The pool had just been filled with stone the day before, Dacosta said.

"And so when he came through, he broke through an entire wall. So, all the stones collapsed in the pool, and then somehow got himself sideways in my pool."

Damage done by a black GMC Sierra pickup truck that was found on its side in an unfinished pool.

A police report said the pool is valued at \$100,000. Dacosta said after contractors re-excavate and reorder new supplies, he's unsure what it will cost him.

Police spoke with the owner of the stolen vehicle who last saw the truck in their driveway at 3 a.m.

Police are asking anyone with information to call 905-688-4111, ext. 1022200 or contact Crime Stoppers of Niagara online or at 1-800-222-8477.

Cyclist, 11, in hospital after being hit by car

Somer Slobodian
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

An 11-year-old girl is in hospital after she was struck by an SUV while riding her bike in Virgil on Monday afternoon.

The unidentified girl was cycling along the sidewalk when a black Buick Enclave exiting the parking lot of Phil's Independent Grocer collided with her, Niagara Regional Police and people on the scene said.

The collision occurred just before 4:30 p.m. Officers said the girl had serious



A bicycle under the SUV that struck the young girl on Monday on Niagara Stone Road. SOMER SLOBODIAN

but not life-threatening injuries.

The SUV was driven by a 70-year-old Niagara-on-the-

Lake woman.

Niagara EMS and NOTL fire services personnel treated the child on the

scene.

She was taken initially to a Niagara hospital and later transferred to Hamilton for further care, police said.

A section of Niagara Stone Road was closed for about five hours due to the police investigation. It reopened about 9:15 p.m.

No charges have been laid, police said Tuesday. The investigation is continuing.

Police are asking anyone who witnessed the incident to call 905-688-4111, extension 1022200, or Crime Stoppers of Niagara at 1-800-222-8477.

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Shortages have forced **early closures** at businesses in town

Continued from Front Page

is the leading obstacle expected by businesses across Canada. Many businesses are also finding it hard to recruit and keep staff, much more so than it was 12 months ago.

“Last summer it wasn’t as hard. This summer, I find it very, very hard,” said Brown.

“I’m screwed,” she added.

Restaurants all over face similar headaches.

A manager at the Tim Hortons on Mississagua Street in Old Town said he only has nine employees and has lost six workers over the past few weeks.

Many of the workers, including the manager, are working upward of seven days in a row.

He had interviews scheduled with three prospective workers one day recently. None showed up.

So he’s been forced to close the store at 6 p.m. on several occasions.

According to the 2022 Ontario Economic Report, over half of Ontario businesses are experiencing labour shortages and expect this to be a long-term problem.

The report, by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, heard from 1,513 organizations.

In the Hamilton-Niagara Region, 49 per cent said



Hiring signs in windows are a common sight around NOTL these days. SOMER SLOBODIAN

their organization is facing a worker shortage and about 61 per cent said their business sector is facing a shortage.

Restaurants and hotels seem to be hit the hardest. According to a report from StatsCan, nearly two-thirds of businesses in accommodation and food services expect labour shortages to be an obstacle over the next three months.

The NOTL Golf Club restaurant is among those. But it’s a chronic problem, with no end in sight.

Many businesses in Niagara-on-the-Lake say they have no applicants.

And some say they’re losing out on employees who have no transportation to and from work.

“We also don’t have a scheduled public transit system,” said Minerva Ward, president of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce and Tourism NOTL.

“We have an on-demand transit system that people use, but not to the extent that they would use if they had a schedule,”

In June, the unemployment rate in Canada fell to 4.9 per cent, a record low. In the Niagara region, unemployment sank to 4.3 per cent, down from 5.5 per

cent in May.

According to the Niagara Workforce Planning Board, Niagara-on-the-Lake had a total of 453 job postings in May, with 52 postings in the retail sector, followed by food services.

“Anybody who wants a job has a job. So that’s the challenge we’re facing across the country,” said Ward.

Whether it’s the tourism sector, Pearson airport or federal passport offices, literally every sector is feeling the pinch.

“The federal government is offering basically signing bonuses. (They are offering)

all kinds of federal government benefits to come work for them. So it’s a very, very, very competitive labour market,” said Ward.

Niagara Health, which runs the region’s hospitals, has been dealing with extreme staffing shortages for months. Its website posted a statement on July 22 warning people that longer wait times will continue amid the staffing crisis.

Many shops in Niagara-on-the-Lake have had hiring signs in their windows for weeks, but no luck.

“It’s hard. We’re just not getting anybody applying,” said John Koldenhof, owner of Maple Leaf Fudge on Queen Street.

Some, like Rocky Mtn Chocolate, said it’s a struggle to find mature, responsible employees.

“Some people come in who just want the job, but don’t have a written resume,” said Kelly Culp, manager at Rocky Mtn Chocolate on Queen Street.

“It’s an employees’ world rather than an employers’ world,” she added.

Many businesses are at a loss, wondering what they’re going to do next. With fewer employees, current staff have to work twice as hard, they say.

Managers are working extra-long days – and all of this increases the risk of burnout.

“People who are showing up for work have to do more than their fair share, so there’s a risk of burnout,” said Ward.

Paying higher wages alone is not a solution, she said.

More money will contribute to higher inflation across the country, and if there’s no pool of workers, paying more is not a solution, she added.

Coupled with a record low unemployment rate, Canada also has a record high inflation rate. Last month, inflation hit 8.1 per cent, the highest it’s been in 39 years.

Bringing more staff into the country is a possible solution, Ward said.

Since Canada has a declining birthrate, immigration can help fuel Canada’s economy. As of July, the government allowed international graduates with expiring temporary status to stay longer.

And in the first quarter of 2022, Canada accepted over 113,000 new permanent residents.

But many businesses want – and need – solutions now.

Because in a few weeks, if managers like Brown can’t find more people, they might have no choice but to curtail operations or risk exhaustion by working more and longer days.

Either way, Brown and many others can’t win.

Anderson Lane will be home to **Pride crosswalk**

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

A rainbow crosswalk and rainbow benches will be installed in Niagara-on-the-Lake after council unanimously approved the plan Monday.

The crosswalk will be installed at Anderson Lane and Niagara Stone Road, across the pedestrian crosswalk on the driveway into the community centre.

Even Coun. Gary Burroughs, who has been a vocal opponent of the crosswalk in Old Town, offered his support.

“As you know, I’ve not been a big supporter of the



The crosswalk will be on Anderson Lane. EVAN SAUNDERS

rainbow crosswalk but if it’s put on Anderson Lane at that point, I can support it,” Burroughs said during the July 25 meeting.

Councillors were given a report detailing the results of a rainbow crosswalk survey done by the town.

In all, 41 per cent of 224

survey respondents said they favoured the Anderson Lane location. The second-most popular spot was at the intersection of King and Front streets with 37 per cent.

The survey also asked if there was anyone interested in donating to the project.

The town has \$15,000 allotted for the work.

Twenty-two people said they would like to donate to the project and all provided their emails for follow up communication, the report says.

Five rainbow benches also will be installed after 62.5 per cent of respondents approved of the sites.

The locations are Mary and King streets, Centennial Sports Park, the Queenston firehall, Sparky’s Park and Niagara on the Green park.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero also will be working with the diversity committee to host fundraising activities to further offset the costs of the installations.

Queen’s Royal Beach is **safe** for swimming again

Staff
The Lake Report

You can now swim at Queen’s Royal Beach worry-free.

As of Saturday, July 23, the Region of Niagara listed Queen’s Royal as safe to swim in.

The beach saw several closures over the past couple of weeks due to high levels of E. coli.

Queen’s Royal is a popular destination for visitors to swim, visit NOTL’s famous gazebo, or enjoy a picnic.

Depending on annual assessments and how many people have been using the beach, the region tests

several beaches in Niagara between one and six times a week.

According to the Swim Guide, Queen’s Royal is sampled weekly from May 17 to Sept. 15.

It is not known how long the beach will remain open for swimming.

There are many factors that can cause E. coli levels to rise, such as a large number of swimmers, high winds and high waves. Levels could also rise due to a large number of birds and heavy rainfall.

Niagara beaches are monitored not only for E. coli, but also for algae growth and safety concerns such as debris and spills.



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Town to look at Niagara on the Green parking

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

It's been more than a year since council asked Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake staff to investigate parking concerns in Niagara on the Green.

Staff were tasked with doing a report on a parking permit system in the area in order to alleviate residents' frustrations with a parking bylaw that says a car cannot park in one spot on a municipal street for more than 12 hours.

But that never happened. And now resident Daniel St-Jean is asking the town to do so once again.

"Bylaws, the way I look at them when I'm reading them on the website, are meant to protect the citizens," he told council on Monday, July 25.

"The bylaw for 12-hour maximum parking (has), in my view, nothing to do with protecting the citizens."

St-Jean pointed out a loophole around the bylaw he said he was informed of by town staff.

He said if you move your car a few feet before the 12 hours is up it resets the clock, since the car is not in the same spot it was before. Officers determine this by comparing photos of the location of the spokes on a wheel, he said.

"So, if the bylaw's purpose is to keep vehicles off the street, I'm sorry but I can leave my vehicle parked there for a month as long as I move it a couple feet," he said.

"So, it doesn't do anything for keeping cars off the street."

"What it does, though, is it really annoys the heck out of the citizens and taxpayers."

St-Jean suggested several solutions, such as repealing the bylaw entirely (his preferred outcome), asking bylaw officers not enforce the 12-hour rule in Niagara on the Green or implement a permit parking system.

"I would be totally happy with paying \$99 for a little sticker that you put on my back window that says, 'Don't bug me. I live here.'"

Treasurer Kyle Freeborn explained why the follow up report on parking permits from last May never saw the light of day.

"We believe it just kind of got lost in the throes of our outstanding items list and in the change of staff and the change of structure," he told council.

Staff will revisit the issue and "look into permits for the area," he said.

Permits could be easily implemented through Honk

Mobile or the town's annual parking sticker system, he added.

Chief administrator Marnie Cluckie said there are areas of town where overnight parking is an issue and therefore the bylaw is a necessary tool.

She cited the dock area as an example.

"They had a problem with boon-dockers in the area, which are people that come and ... park their large vehicles (where) they can't for extended periods," she said.

Coun. Wendy Cheropita said she was worried the permit system could be seen as a tax grab.

"I am not one that likes the idea of residents having to pay to park in front of their own house," Cheropita said.

Freeborn said he expects a report on the situation to come before council at the end of August.



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Lake adventure ends in rescue after hours of waiting

Continued from Front Page

mouth of the Niagara River, trouble struck.

"I suspect that the propeller bearing seized because when we were driving, we still had like three bars of gas and the whole engine just shut right off."

After failed attempts to restart the Sea-Doo, they began to wave a bright orange paddle and rummage through their safety equipment to find anything that might help them flag down another boat, said Rumsey.

Time passed quickly and with the sun starting to set, they couldn't get anyone's attention. "We passed multiple sailboats, multiple fishing boats, not a single person offered to help us."

"We were drifting so fast into the lake," said Rumsey, noting both men were wearing life jackets.

One bar of battery life was left on a phone the men had, so Rumsey quickly called his mom and got out as much information as he could before the phone died, he said.

Hours had passed since they had set out and the evening chill was starting to set in. The Sea-Doo was becoming impossible to hang onto because it was rolling over



Dylan Rumsey points out into the mouth of the Niagara River, where was stuck for hours on a buoy on Saturday. MOLLY BOWRON

in the high waves crashing against them, said Rumsey.

He felt there was no way he could keep hanging on to it.

Rumsey is a strong swimmer and has been training for a planned swim in August to raise money for Niagara's Pathstone Mental Health Foundation.

Hoping to be able to signal for help, he decided to jump in and swim to the nearest buoy, which he said was "like two kilometres from the green buoy that's in front of the mouth of the river."

After reaching it, "I flipped the buoy upside-down and I was able to get on the top of it. There was this metal bar on the top and I just wedged it in between my groin area and I was waiting for my buddy in a fishing boat to

come around the corner."

Langtang stayed with the Sea-Doo but not knowing if they were in Canadian or U.S. waters.

Little did Rumsey know that help was not coming yet, even with the precautions he took before heading out, notifying people to come looking for him if he wasn't back by 8:30 p.m., said Rumsey.

Around 9 p.m. he started to get nervous because no coast guard boats were in view and the water was getting cold, said Rumsey.

After waiting in the dark for over an hour, he finally saw the Canadian Coast Guard heading out from the direction of Port Dalhousie.

"I think I counted four coast guard boats, a helicopter and I heard there were two Niagara regionals on Jet Skis, and there was also a couple of police boats out as well."

After finding his buddy Langtang with the drifting Sea-Doo in the dark around 10 p.m., the coast guard had problems locating Rumsey, he said.

"I spent pretty much the whole six hours pretending like I was riding an elliptical, trying not to get hypothermia because my eyes went all blurry and I started getting dizzy," said Rumsey.

Then finally, luck was on his side. A helicopter spotted the buoy that Rumsey was clinging to.

"They got close enough to me, that I was just screaming my head off. I blew the (safety) whistle so hard it popped out of my mouth and it sank to the bottom of the river."

About 12:30 a.m., Rumsey was finally located by the American coast guard, he said.

But it wasn't over yet. "A Niagara Regional Police boat had to come over and pick me up and bring me back to Canada."

The rescuers weren't able to tow the Sea-Doo and had to leave it behind, afloat in the lake.

On Tuesday, three days after the incident, it was recovered and was safe in Rochester, N.Y. Plans are afoot to bring it back to Canada and return it to the friend from whom they borrowed it.

Even with safety precautions and life jackets, Rumsey notes things on the Great Lakes can take a turn for the worse.

"I just want to get that across straight because I had all my safety equipment and I had all these safety precautions in place."

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

COVID Tracker

NOTL active cases (last 28 days): 64

Region active cases: 965

Region deaths: 568

Region total cases: 43,005

**July 27 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

"Kindness is the sunshine in which virtue grows."
- Robert Green Ingersoll

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

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Fishing in the river



With the summer heat, some people aren't wasting chances to get into the cool water. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Editorial

Let the sunshine in

Kevin MacLean
Managing Editor

As we all know, "good fences make good neighbours."

At least, that's how it is supposed to work.

But sometimes it's more complicated than that. This isn't about a fence, but about a building on the other side of a fence and neighbouring properties.

The situation enveloping Lord Mayor Betty Disero and her husband Dan Williams over a complaint he filed with the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake about a neighbouring property is complicated, a bit confusing and in some ways rather disconcerting.

Mix in social media, because the concerns were sparked by the wording of a social media post, and you have an old-fashioned

neighbour dispute, with a 21st-century twist.

We're not making light of this at all. It's a serious issue, with a lawsuit and some major concerns about possible political interference.

We can't deal with all aspects of this case in one sitting, including whether town officials and the mayor ever discussed the situation (she has said she did nothing wrong). So, for now, we'll focus on the complaint process in NOTL.

Colin Telfer and Jennifer Elliott, the neighbours whose garage area is at the centre of the controversy, tried for months to find out who and what was behind the complaint.

Not that it was anonymous, like so many "gotcha" complaints typically submitted to many municipalities over possible infractions. Williams said

he signed a form and didn't try to hide his identity.

It is unfortunate that because Telfer and Elliott refused to allow town inspectors onto their property to assess the situation, they ended up losing their bed and breakfast licence. And launching a lawsuit.

Two aspects of the complaint process bother us: Firstly, if neighbours have a concern or question about something, most people are loath to speak face-to-face with the potentially offending party. We realize sometimes that guy next door isn't very amenable to conversation.

So, secondly, the default position has become to submit complaints to the town's bureaucracy, which in NOTL and many other municipalities, grants anonymity to the complainant.

This approach has never

made sense to us. Everyone should know their "accuser" so they can respond in an informed way, as necessary. It's not fair that one side has all the power and the other has no protection.

With all due respect, sunlight and transparency remain the greatest disinfectants. And everyone should be competing on a level playing field. Some people obviously prefer the cloak of anonymity, but that doesn't make it right.

So, for now, all other issues in this situation aside, we think this complaint is a case study in why keeping bylaw complaints anonymous is a foolish practice.

The Town of NOTL – and all the other entities that entertain such complaints – needs to rethink its approach and let the sunshine in.

editor@niagaranow.com

We welcome your letters

The Lake Report welcomes your letters to the editor. Please, write early and often. Letters ideally should be under 400 words long. Occasionally, longer letters may be published. All letters may be edited for conciseness, accuracy, libel and defamation. Please include your full name, street address and a daytime telephone number so that authorship can be authenticated. Only names and general addresses (eg. Virgil, St. Davids, NOTL) will be published. Send your letters to editor@niagaranow.com or drop them by our office at 496 Mississauga St., NOTL.

Correction:

A headline on a July 21 story about the pie booth at the St. Davids Lions Carnival incorrectly said the pies are baked by the Lionesses. In fact, the United Church women have baked the pies for 59 years now.



Make sure residents benefit first from tourism tax windfall

Dear editor:

There has been much misinformation, scare tactics, gaslighting, false and incomplete statements made by some councillors and tourism industry groups opposed to the town's municipal accommodation tax.

As well, there was an unsolicited, skewed tourism survey bought and paid for by tourism special interests.

So, I feel compelled to explain the tax and present the ratepayers' side of the issue.

Let's start by debunking some of the industry gaslighting. First and foremost is the notion that the tax will kill the accommodation industry, where currently in Niagara-on-the-Lake one owner controls the highest percentage of rooms and holds much influence in the Chamber of Commerce and marketing decisions.

This little chestnut is pure

nonsense promoted principally by the hoteliers and B&Bs.

Visitors to premier destinations don't make decisions based on taxes.

Every major tourist destination has an accommodation/tourism tax and the tax has never been a deterrent. Here are a few tax examples from well-known destinations that present a similar tourism profile to NOTL: Prince Edward County (wineries) 4 per cent; Napa Valley (wineries) 13 per cent hotel/bed tax; Stratford (Shakespearean festival) 4 per cent; Williamsburg, Va., (history/heritage) 5 per cent hotel tax + \$2 per day room tax.

Second is the argument (espoused by the special interests and some councillors) that this is just a NOTL tax grab to be used to offset town operations. This is completely incorrect.

Accommodation tax revenue, by legislation, must be shared with a destination marketing organization, kept separate from all other town revenue and used to promote programs, capital projects and services that visitors take advantage of when visiting NOTL (e.g. roads, culture, parks, public bathrooms, natural areas and recreation).

The tax allows the town to determine the incremental costs of these tourism services and then to offset those costs. This will ensure tourists pay their fair share of the infrastructure they use – an amount that ratepayers now wholly pay.

Tourists do not pay for tourism, as incorrectly stated by the CEO of the Chamber of Commerce. Residents pay for tourism. Period.

Now let's look at the financial aspects of the tax. In December 2019, town

staff report CS-20-001 projected 2020 revenue to be \$2 million to \$3 million annually.

Ratepayers currently pay about \$1 million per year for tourism-related costs. Here are a few documented factors:

\$630,000: Direct tourism-related initiatives as per staff report CS-20-001

\$118,000: Grant to the Chamber of Commerce

\$35,000: Grant to the Shaw Festival

Council passed a resolution and instructed the CAO to establish an accommodation tax governance group made up of tourism stakeholders, including ratepayer representatives.

This group would oversee tax-related activities and develop criteria on how to determine where funds are invested. The focus of this group will be to use the funds to benefit tourists and residents.

The use of accommodation tax revenue must be fully transparent. The town own must account for and report accommodation tax activity separate from other revenue and unused money must be held in a reserve account.

It is my belief, and that of many ratepayers, that tourism tax revenue should first be used to offset these tourism services costs that ratepayers have been funding for years.

While the allocation of the new tax revenue toward offsetting the estimated \$1 million in operating costs will reduce the ratepayer portion, it is unclear on how much of that saving will filter down to an actual tax saving since the overall operating budget includes cost increases not directly related to tourism.

However, a review of 2020 budget document FC-19-013A should give some

indication of possible tax savings.

Specifically, recommendation 1.5 states – "Council approve an allocation of \$400,000 from potential municipal accommodation revenue to the operating budget, reducing the operating levy increase from \$1,167,601 to \$767,601 (8.61 per cent increase after assessment growth reduced to 5.14 per cent)." A saving of 3.47 per cent.

The lord mayor and council must put ratepayers before the special interests by first approving a more aggressive ramp up to 4 per cent as suggested by Coun. Sandra O'Connor, expand the tax to all tourist rooms and immediately codify the use of tourism tax revenue to first offset ratepayer taxes, before any new tourism projects are considered.

Joe Accardo
NOTL

Unanswered questions and a lack of transparency

Dear editor:

Politicians and civil servants at all levels of government and of all political stripes have become more opaque in dealing with the electorate and the public. Niagara-on-the-Lake is no exception.

In a July 21 report in The Lake Report involving the denial of a renewal of a bed and breakfast licence, ("Neighbour feud: Mayor's husband at centre of civil suit against town"), the complainant on which the town officials based their denial of the renewal is the husband of the lord mayor.

In the article Lord Mayor Betty Disero in a prepared statement, indicated that "I will give you my own straightforward answers – I have acted with integrity. I have not sought to influence town employees for my personal advantage ... I have not acted in a way that would give rise to a conflict of interest, bad faith or undue influence. I have certainly not acted in a way that is illegal or improper."

In court proceedings, such general denials, which state conclusions without addressing the underlying



facts for the conclusions, are common.

However, in the court of public opinion elected officials, especially those who are seeking re-election, cannot expect blind acceptance of the stated conclusions.

In this case a number of factual questions should have been addressed in a "straightforward" manner. These include: was she informed by and/or did she discuss with her husband that he was intending to file a complaint?

After the complaint was filed was she informed by and/or did she discuss with her husband that he had filed the complaint with town officials?

Did she at any time discuss her husband's complaint with any town official? If the matter was discussed at any meeting

of council did she declare a conflict of interest and refrain from participating in the discussion?

The article also quotes from a sworn affidavit in 2021 by former chief planner Craig Lamour that, "It is the town's standard practice not to disclose the identity of individuals who make complaints to the town. This practice is in place to protect a complainant's privacy and to avoid retaliation amongst citizens."

What about the privacy of the person who is the subject of the complaint? Why is their position inferior to that of the complainant?

Has it never occurred to the town that the complaint itself might be part of a campaign of harassment, or that the complaint might have been brought by a business competitor or that it might be libellous?

I submit that the town's practice should be that, when a complaint is filed, the complainant is informed that the complaint will not be acted upon unless that person agrees that the initial meeting between a town official and the person who is the subject of the complaint

will start with "X informs us that ..."

More and more I read stories in The Lake Report that residents have sought information from town officials and have received no reply.

In my view the most egregious was when a business person requested guidance on the COVID regulations pertaining to the restarting of her wedding venue business.

For town workers, the non-response will not likely give rise to discipline but will avoid the possibility of making a mistake and being held accountable for the mistake.

Unfortunately, I believe the town needs yet another official, namely an ombudsperson. If a resident seeking advice does not get a response in what the resident considers to be a timely fashion, he or she can apply to the ombud to get the requested response.

It is time for politicians and government workers to be less opaque and more transparent in their dealings with the public.

Ron Fritz
Queenston

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NOTL woman raises \$90,000 for Ukraine relief

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

When Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Christyna Prokipchuk started planning her Steppe Up for Ukraine fundraiser, she wanted to keep the drum beating to ensure people don't become complacent about the war in Ukraine.

She accomplished a lot more than that.

Prokipchuk's cycling fundraiser was a huge success this past weekend. It brought in more than \$90,000 for Ukraine relief, \$60,000 more than Prokipchuk's original target.

"It's validating because not everyone is paying attention," she said at St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church in Niagara Falls on July 23.

Its success is a direct example of how one person can make a difference, she said.

"Sometimes we doubt if our actions are making an impact, right? We don't know if what we're doing



John DeVries and Christyna Prokipchuk at the Steppe Up for Ukraine fundraiser on July 23. Prokipchuk spearheaded the event which has so far raised more than \$90,000 for Ukraine relief, way above her original \$30,000 goal. EVAN SAUNDERS

today is going to make an impact," she said.

"But I can tell you that it is."

Dozens of people participated, riding either 19 or 120 kilometres.

NOTLer Steve Deboer was one of the first cyclists to return from the longer

route around Niagara.

"I heard about the event through good word of mouth, good advertising at the St. Catharines Cycling Club. It was the perfect local ride with friends for a good cause," he said.

Despite Saturday's blisteringly heat, Deboer said the

water stations set up along the route kept him cool.

NOTL was well-represented as Old Town resident Larry Duncan was one of the organizers.

"What we're seeing from this organized ride is that the Niagara-on-the-Lake, St. Catharines, Fonthill, rid-

ers from Niagara Falls and beyond have come together and donated and reached out to their own communities for an extremely good cause," he said.

"And that's really reassuring in the type of political climate we seem to live in. Coming together as opposed to breaking apart. So, I really find this reassuring."

More than 450 people from around the world donated to the event. One team member, Bert Mucci, raised more than \$30,000 himself, blowing way past his \$10,000 goal.

Prokipchuk said people she knows in Ukraine have been sharing the event.

"One lady here is from Ukraine, her town is being bombed constantly, she's been in touch with her friends and family back home. Her father is there, her best friends are there and they've all been talking about and sharing this event."

Prokipchuk said nearly 40 people volunteered to help run the event.

After the ride, a \$25 meal of homemade Ukrainian

food was available. Riders and supporters dined well on cabbage rolls, sauerkraut, sausages, perogies, borscht and bread.

The food was cooked by the wife of St. Mary's pastor. She also sells Ukrainian food from the church daily.

Interested individuals can call the church and order authentic Ukrainian perogies or cabbage rolls at 905-354-7876.

The event has not officially ended yet. In light of raising three times more than originally anticipated, Prokipchuk has increased her fundraising goal to \$100,000.

Donations can be made at [justgiving.com/team/STEPPEUPforUkraine](https://www.justgiving.com/team/STEPPEUPforUkraine).

An online silent auction is running until Aug. 24, which is also Ukrainian Independence Day. The auction can be found at 32auctions.com/organizations/98616/auctions/125794?r=1&t=all.

All the money raised will be going to Help Us Help, a registered charity dedicated to relief efforts in Ukraine.

Councillors say they were unaware of civil suit linked to mayor's husband

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Several councillors have confirmed they were not explicitly made aware of a civil suit filed against the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake by residents Colin Telfer and Jennifer Elliott.

"We have not passed approval of anything (relating to the suit)," Coun. Sandra O'Connor said in an interview.

"It was a surprise when it came out in the media," she said.

As reported last week, Telfer and Elliott are suing the town for \$100,000 for damages and legal fees after they were refused a bed and breakfast licence due to an anonymous complaint from a neighbour.

That neighbour turned out to be Dan Williams, husband of Lord Mayor Betty Disero.

They also want an independent investigation to



Jennifer Elliott and Colin Telfer. FILE

determine if there was any wrongdoing or abuse of power on the part of Disero.

"It was not addressed in the past. Nor would I expect it to be addressed," Coun. Allan Bisback told The Lake Report.

He suggested several reasons why the file did not need to come directly before council thus far.

"We have many files that represent litigation on both sides – either the

town defending itself or its position, or individuals not agreeing and trying to litigate against the town," he said.

"That wouldn't come to council unless it was at a point that the lawyer wanted direction or wanted a decision made."

Another reason is that Telfer and Elliott never filed an appeal about the decision to deny their bed and breakfast licence.

An appeal process would have brought the matter to the public sphere and before council for a final decision about whether to grant the B&B licence, he said.

Bisback explained how money to fight the suit could have been approved without going before council.

Chief administrator Marnie Cluckie "has the authority to engage with a lawyer," he said.

"If it's a preliminary investigation then there is money in the budget to start that because you have to respond to a complaint."

"I don't want the CAO to come to council every time to spend a couple hundred dollars to start the file," he said.

But Bisback said repeatedly that most of what he knows about the situation is from the stories in the media.

And, based on what he does know, he doesn't have any particular concerns about Disero's conduct.

During a council meeting on July 25, Coun. Wendy Cheropita asked town staff to provide an update on current litigation being handled by the town.

She and Bisback said councillors are supposed to receive such updates quarterly and the current one is a little delayed.

Disero declared a possible conflict of interest and left the council chambers when Cheropita broached the subject of litigation.

"I'm going to declare a conflict. I don't want to be put into a position where we're discussing something that I may have a conflict on," Disero told councillors during the meeting.

Elliott and Telfer filed their suit last year. So, why had it not come up in one of the quarterly reports?

Bisback said it did in May, to his best recollection.

"I actually recall that there was a reference to a claim that had started because I recognized the name

but there was no detail to it," said Bisback.

"We get claims for a fall on the sidewalk or a trip or whatever. But this didn't stand out as an issue. I remember seeing the name but I didn't connect it to a potential B&B licence issue," he said.

Media reports last week said the suit was going to be discussed in a closed session on Monday. That never happened.

"Interestingly enough, there is potentially a special council meeting being called for this week."

"So, that would suggest to me that it's decision time as it relates to a legal issue in regards to the residents in the town."

Town staff requested more time to respond to questions from The Lake Report due to the complex nature of the suit and the fact that it is in litigation.

Telfer and Elliott were unavailable for comment before publication.



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Town's per capita ratio of doctors is **well below** national average

Continued from Front Page

national average, with about 0.52 doctors per 1,000 residents, according to research done by The Lake Report.

There are only 10 registered medical doctors working in a town with a population of more than 19,000. All of the doctors are associated with the Niagara North Family Health Team as far as The Lake Report could find.

If NOTL was a country, it would rank lower than nations like Iraq, Gabon and American Samoa in terms of access to a doctor.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor has the problem in her crosshairs and has begun working with several organizations in town as well as fellow politicians to right the ship.

"We have to start planning for the future, right now," she said in an interview.

O'Connor is working behind the scenes to bring a nurse practitioner to NOTL, which she said is the first step toward improving health care infrastructure in town.

There are nurse practitioners with the Niagara North team but only patients registered with the group have access to them.



Coun. Sandra O'Connor is spearheading talks between Niagara Health and local health care providers to bring a nurse practitioner back to NOTL. EVAN SAUNDERS

And the Niagara North team has a waitlist for new patients.

But O'Connor said bringing in a nurse practitioner is within reach and conversations are going well with Niagara Health to do so.

"We're trying to cross the T's and everything as to where the individual will go and who will be managing that position," she said.

"We're in negotiations at the moment at that level. So, it's not about (will) we get it, it's about the details on how the position should be routed or managed."

The plan is to bring in a nurse practitioner who can run a walk-in clinic, some-

thing that does not really exist in NOTL.

O'Connor stressed that it won't be the town providing health care. She is working to figure out what organization's umbrella the walk-in clinic and nurse practitioner can fall under.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said a previous nurse practitioner who worked in the town was redeployed due to COVID-19 but Niagara Health told her they are ready to provide another.

"But we just need to find a place for her to practise," Disero said in an interview.

"We're working on trying to get a structure together to get her or him back into Niagara-on-the-Lake."

Getting a nurse practitioner is only the beginning of O'Connor's desire to improve NOTL's health care.

"To me, it's a health care infrastructure issue, which is much bigger. So personally, I would like to continue once we get (a nurse practitioner)."

An argument could be made that not as many doctors are needed in NOTL because of the proximity of the urban centres of St. Catharines and Niagara Falls but that doesn't cut it for

O'Connor.

"That's the problem," she said.

"It's not ideal, particularly those who don't have transportation. They're having to find a way to get to a doctor that's in Niagara Falls or St. Catharines or get to the hospitals for medical treatment."

Mary Keith, executive director of the Niagara North Family Health Team, highlighted that travelling to a neighbouring city may not even be an option right now.

"Yes, there is a shortage of doctors – not only in NOTL but across all of Niagara," said Keith in an email.

And there have been difficulties attracting a new physician to NOTL. The Niagara North team has one vacancy for an MD.

"I believe that everyone should have access to a primary care physician and the fact that we have been unable to attract a physician to the team is frustrating."

Keith said the lack of focused care from a personal doctor can be detrimental.

"Reliance on walk-in clinics, in my opinion, negatively influences continuity of care," she said.

Compounding the problem

is NOTL's large senior population. People here over age 65 comprise 30 per cent of the population, the most of any Niagara municipality, O'Connor said.

"That number is significant because the older you get the more complex your health issues are and the time you're going to need during a doctor's visit or the frequency of those visits is greater."

O'Connor said the Niagara North team told her 6,000 NOTL residents are not registered with a doctor locally.

This means NOTL's doctors are seeing roughly 1,300 patients each.

O'Connor already has one possible solution in mind for the doctor shortage.

"Fort Erie has their own committee devoted to trying to attract doctors there. Is that something we should be looking into?" O'Connor said.

Keith said attracting new physicians is complicated and the factors making it difficult are not fully understood.

"Factors such as billing and reimbursement changes for family doctors by the government have made fam-

ily practice less attractive. There is a financial commitment to having a practice," Keith said.

"I think we need to understand more fully what the barriers are to attracting physicians to the area and if there are things that we can do as a community or team to address these barriers."

"Or, if there are issues that we cannot address, do we have avenues to facilitate change at a higher level?"

O'Connor said the issue will only grow more pressing as development ramps up in Glendale, which could see NOTL's population doubled over the next two decades.

While she said she has always been interested in health care advocacy, O'Connor became particularly involved when she fought against the closing of NOTL's only hospital in 2014.

"The council of the time, they didn't feel like they should get involved in health care issues."

"We shouldn't be providing it but we have to advocate, in my opinion, to have the appropriate health care infrastructure here for our people."



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The Pillitteri Estates Team with winery proprietor and founder Gary Pillitteri. SUPPLIED PHOTOS

Pillitteri Estates Winery proprietor and founder Gary Pillitteri given **Award of Distinction** by Wine Growers Canada

Sponsored
The Lake Report

The Award of Distinction is the pre-eminent award for the Canadian wine industry and regarded as the highest form of peer recognition and appreciation.

The award was presented to Gary Pillitteri, founder and proprietor of Pillitteri Estates Winery, for demonstrating outstanding leadership, commitment and passion for the advancement of the Canadian wine industry.

This distinguished honour was presented in a virtual ceremony held on Monday, July 11, with participants from across Canada.

Gary and his wife Lena began their journey of grape growing and winemaking in the 1960s when they purchased a small piece of land along Niagara Stone Road. At that time, they farmed cherry trees and sold cherries along with other tender fruits at their roadside fruit stand, called Gary's Farm Market.

He was an early adaptor

and began planting vinifera (winemaking-style) grapes on his farm, culminating with him being crowned Grape King in 1981 for the quality of his wine grapes.

In 1993, Pillitteri Estates Winery opened on the site of the fruit market with three vintages of wine and icewine available for sale. Now with sales in 30 countries, thousands of wine awards, a national brand presence and a partnership to produce the official wines of the Canadian Olympic Team, Pillitteri Estates Winery has become a respected and renowned member of the global wine community.

Gary acknowledges that this achievement would not have been possible without the support of his wife Lena, his children Connie, Lucy and Charlie, his grandchildren and his friends. He is proud that presently there are three generations of family members working at Pillitteri Estates Winery.

He has watched the industry evolve and grow by

leaps and bounds in the last 40 years. "We were told vinifera varieties could not be grown here. But we grew them. Our wine industry was told we could not make great wine with the grapes we grew. So, we created an appellation standard, VQA, and we made great wine, red wine, white wine, sparkling wine, icewines, winning every top world wine award."

"We were told that no one would buy our wines. So, we built wineries with stores and developed agritourism, which now accounts for 50 per cent of all VQA wine sales in Ontario. We also looked beyond our backyard and exported our wines."

The challenges continue and to combat the downturn of international tourism due to COVID, Gary renovated the winery's patio into a new restaurant, BarrelHead Wine Pizza Patio. Locals and tourists enjoy traditional wood-fired pizza, icewine cocktails and live music.

Gary, now 86, says: "When I came to Canada, I was 12 years old. All

I owned was a pair of shorts and the shirt on my back. For me there was no easy path to success. If there was, I have not found it. For if I have accomplished anything in my life, it is because I have been willing to work hard."

His nominator for the Award of Distinction, Jim Clark, president of Colio Estate Wines, noted in his nomination: "Gary, you make world-class wines, have won thousands of awards worldwide and are one of the leading exporters of icewine. You have invested an incredible amount of capital, time and energy into the export market."

"While you are promoting Pillitteri wines and icewine at these shows your family is always waving the Canadian flag by telling your and our story. For that, the entire industry is grateful. Gary, on behalf of the entire Canadian wine industry, we thank you for your outstanding leadership, your commitment and service. We congratulate you on an outstanding career."



Right: Winery proprietor and founder Gary Pillitteri.

PILLITTERI
ESTATES
Winery



The river's role in **Indigenous life** and culture is centuries old

Molly Bowron
The Lake Report

It is the mid-17th century and the roar of Niagara Falls can be heard for miles.

As thousands of tons of water crash over the brink and down the Niagara River, reshaping and eroding the waterway, the Neutral Indigenous peoples stand watching the forceful rapids and ever-changing river.

Travis Hill is a member of the Beaver Clan of the Haudenosaunee, with ancestors from the Neutral Confederacy, who lived along the Niagara River and what is now Hamilton.

On Thursday, July 21, Hill told an audience at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum how important the river has been to Indigenous people.

Artifacts found in the region play an important historical role, proving the existence of the Neutral peoples and how they survived in Niagara, he said.

Water and the Niagara River have a long history, Hill said.

"Water has a spirit, an immediate connection when looking at it, like it is speaking to you. We always



Nowadays common sights on the Niagara River include jet boats, yachts and fishermen with high-tech gear. In the 17th century, it would have been a different view from the eyes of Indigenous people who relied on the river. FILE

have been drawn to water because of this reason."

His presentation was called "By Foot and Paddle" and he noted the connection between the spirit within the water and people can be negative or positive.

When looking at how water affects people today

Hill said many people feel drawn toward the water and that could be a reason why so many lives have been lost at Niagara Falls.

The Niagara River was formed by a melting glacier and "my mind always goes to our people watching it erode," said Hill, who works for Niagara Parks and is the

manager of the Old Fort Erie heritage site.

Hill also imagined what it was like for the Neutrals in the 17th century and said what they must have seen when looking at the Niagara River has always amazed him.

Because the water was often too dangerous to navigate, the Neutrals created

trails or paths that they used to migrate, he said.

Paths from that era went through Niagara-on-the-Lake, St. Catharines and as far as Hamilton, said Hill.

Artifacts showed the Neutrals might have been attracted to the area by the abundance of fish in the waters, he said.

Canoes used by the Neutrals were much different from conventional ones, he said. They had a flat piece at the stern, which Hill said was probably to help navigate all of the marshes and obstacles that were in the water.

Paddles were another artifact that allow us to understand the type of environment the Neutrals were living through, said Hill.

Fishing artifacts used by the Neutrals also have been found.

One, a spear, was made from 17th-century bone and was tied by a string to a large pole. When the Neutrals would spear a fish the bone piece would detach, allowing the string to be used like a fishing rod when pulling in dinner, said Hill.

Hill said there remains much to be learned about the Neutrals, but history books say nothing about them after the 17th century.

Toward the end of the Neutral area, many of them were adopted or forced to join surrounding Indigenous nations and most of the Neutrals were wiped out by disease brought in by Europeans, he said.



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‘Two different worlds’: Advocate fights to help Indigenous people

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Jessica Riel-Johns spends every day fighting to reduce the number of Indigenous people in the Canadian justice system.

“I actually really enjoy my job. I like working with the individuals that we come in contact with. Everybody has a story, right?” she says.

Riel-Johns is the director of the Niagara Regional Native Centre’s Indigenous Community Justice Program, which works to help Indigenous people aged 12 and up, from Hamilton to Niagara, navigate and avoid Ontario’s justice system.

“Every plan that we come up with is unique. Our stories may be similar, but our needs are different,” she said in an interview at her St. Catharines office.

Indigenous people are over-represented in the Canadian justice system.

In 2018, Indigenous people comprised 28 per cent of federal inmates but only 4.1 per cent of the Canadian population, according to a report published by the federal Department of Justice.

The Niagara program is multi-faceted in its approach. Among her duties, Riel-Johns oversees pre-diversion initiatives meant to help Indigenous people before charges have been laid.

As well, there is a post-diversion component, “when the charges have already been laid. So, we have anywhere from youth to adults right now within our program.”

Essentially, once an Indigenous person is involved



Jessica Riel-Johns, Indigenous Community Justice Program director. EVAN SAUNDERS

in the program they are momentarily out of the traditional court system.

“They do some work with us and then what happens is, if they’re successful in that program, we’ll write a letter to the Crown and we’ll say, ‘This person was successful. Can we have these charges withdrawn?’”

It ultimately is up to the Crown whether to withdraw charges but the program has been very successful, she said.

In the case where someone does not complete the program they are then returned to the traditional court system, she said.

Riel-Johns also focuses on reducing recidivism rates. All of this work aims to lessen the imbalanced rate of Indigenous people incarcerated in Canada.

One of the most important aspects of the program is reconnecting Indigenous people with their culture.

“Because a lot of times people, throughout history — Sixties Scoop, residen-

tial schools — they’ll lose their identity,” she said.

“So they don’t know who they are or where they’re from.”

It’s easy to get lost in the world when your identity is ungrounded.

“It is. It really is. I think that’s some of the struggle that people have that we come in contact with, is they don’t know who they are.”

Justice, community and identity are in some ways the paradigm around which Riel-Johns focuses the program.

Indigenous friendship centres have played an essential role in giving disparate Indigenous communities and individuals a place to reconnect with cultures that were forcibly stripped from them by centuries of violent colonial oppression, she said.

“I think it gives them that sense of community and that sense of identity and of belonging with where we are, in the Niagara region.”

“It just helps them get

back on that good path and be a part of the community.”

An important aspect of the program is its relationship with Crown attorneys.

“We have a fabulous relationship with them,” Riel-Johns said.

There are only three core staff running the program, which covers an area of well over a million people. But with understanding Crown attorneys and more than 64 volunteers, the justice program has been able to flourish.

“The program is such a success because it’s not just me. It’s about teamwork. Working with our court workers in Fort Erie and Hamilton and Brantford and here in Niagara.”

“Working as a team, it really builds that success.”

As the matters that Riel-Johns handles are the personal legal troubles of individuals, she could not talk about details on some of her success stories. But she said every one reminds her why she loves her job.

“Once I took this job and came into this position, my very first success story is always here,” she said, pointing to her heart.

“The Crown attorneys are so wonderful that they allow the individual to say something, if they want (when charges are withdrawn).”

“The individual that I had for my very first success story gave this beautiful speech about how much this has impacted their life and how they are doing so much better. I still hear from that individual and it’s been five years now.”

Riel-Johns grew up in Sault Ste. Marie, on the Batchewana First Nation. She studied criminal justice at Sault College but didn’t get involved in the work immediately.

“That was what I wanted to do and I didn’t end up doing it (at the time),” she said.

When she moved to Niagara, she enrolled in classes at Brock University and was quickly drawn to education. But she worked other jobs not directly relating to either field for a while.

She was connected with the program by one of its longtime members and now she has combined her desire for justice with her love of education to become the program’s director, a position she has held for nearly four years.

The program itself has been around for 23 years.

Riel-Johns also works with several other projects at the centre, including the literacy program, the I am a Kind Man program and a new program not yet launched that focuses on educating women and youth about violence and abuse.

Riel-Johns is in it for the long run.

“I always say, ‘My job’s not done yet. There’s still so much work to do.’”

She also advocates for the justice system to be trauma-informed so an understanding of past events that have affected an individual are taken into account.

She referred to Gladue reports, which are enabled by section 718.2 of the Criminal Code of Canada. All her staff are well versed in the code.

Gladue reports seek to present the circumstances of an Indigenous person’s life in order that the court is better informed.

The intent is to lessen the severity of sentencing Indigenous people face.

The report presents family history, issues such as residential schools, abuse and highlights trauma or intergenerational trauma that may be at play.

“Sometimes our courts are not fully trauma-informed.”

Riel-Johns takes a personal approach to her work and understands that an Indigenous person at the mercy of a colonial court institution needs a comforting presence.

“It’s hard for people just to walk into that environment. It’s very institutionalized and it’s very colonial.”

“Your going into this room and you’re sitting in front of people who are seated higher than you, above you.”

“I’ll walk them up and I’ll stand with them, too. Even if they are coming in through holding cells. They just need that extra support. As an Indigenous individual, I am an intergenerational survivor of residential schools.”

“It’s two different worlds.”

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CARRYING THE TORCH FOR NOTL

This Saturday, July 30, is a historic day as the Canada Summer Games torch comes to Niagara-on-the-Lake. A dozen people have the honour of carrying the torch on its route through town. We salute them and this souvenir edition commemorates this special day. Inside, read about the people selected to hold high the Games' flame.



BETTY DISERO

Disero has been the lord mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake since 2018. Born and raised in Toronto, she moved to NOTL in 2009. She said she loves to walk, volunteer around the community and kayak.

“I just think it’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”



GEORGE WEBBER

A semi-retired resource consultant, Webber lives in Niagara-on-the-Lake. When he’s not working, he likes to spend time with his wife and grandchildren. He plays golf and recently he started guitar lessons. He’s excited to watch the track and field events during the Niagara 2022 Canada Summer Games.

“How often does the opportunity come up? The opportunity was here and I thought, ‘Well, why don’t I submit my name and see what happens?’”



PETER FENWICK

Fenwick grew up in Scarborough and moved to Niagara three years ago. He works as an operations processing representative at Meridian Credit Union. He loves to volunteer and is a huge Ottawa Senators fan.

“The reason I love volunteering and helping out is because you just get to meet so many different people that are also there just to have a good time.”



WADE STAYZER

Stayzer lives in Beamsville with his wife and kids, and has been deeply involved with the Games. He’s Meridian’s chief people and culture officer and senior vice-president and sits on the Niagara 2022 Canada Games host society board. He’s excited for the 13 for 13 Festival, which will bring Niagara’s 13 municipalities together with Canada’s 13 provinces and territories.

“Our motto for the Games was transform, inspire and unify. I believe that the Games will have a long-lasting impact on our region.”



JOHN EASTON

An avid rower and cyclist, Easton lives in Maitland, Ont., near Brockville. Though he’s retired, he’s a rowing umpire and facilitates rowing regattas. He’s excited about the cycling and rowing events and will be making the trip to Niagara to watch them. He said he loves all the fresh fruit options available in Niagara.

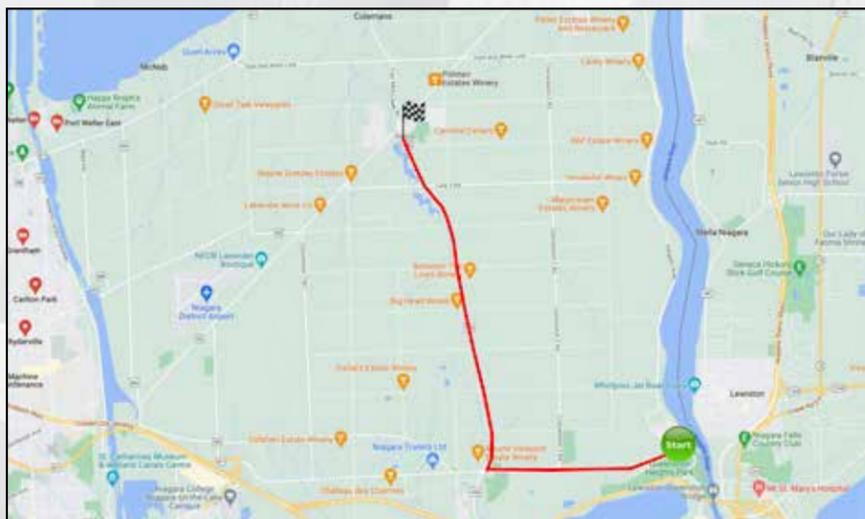
“Rowing and cycling are things that I’m especially interested in.”



LINDA CHANG

Chang has lived in St. Davids for 21 years. Originally from Toronto, she lives on a five-acre farm where they have certified organic table grapes. In her spare time, she likes to do bright and colourful modern-day quilting.

“I think it’s highlighting our region. It’s allowing the whole region to get together.”



The Route

The torch will start at Queenston Heights on Saturday with Lord Mayor Betty Disero and make its way down York Road and Four Mile Creek Road. Wade Stayzer will end the relay and bring it to its destination at the Meridian Credit Union arena in Virgil.

- Check-in: 8:30 a.m.**
- Pep rally: 9 a.m.**
- Running of the torch: 10 a.m.**
- Ending celebration 11 a.m.**





JANE MARTIN

Originally from the northwest of England, Martin has worked for Meridian Credit Union since 2005, but also has a big passion for sports. When it comes to Niagara-on-the-Lake, she is no stranger to what the town has to offer. As a fan of the Shaw Festival and wine country, like many others, she loves the beauty of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Asked what being a torchbearer means to her, Martin said, "To be a part of something so big and to be given the honour to carry the torch is amazing."



KEN SEIBEL

Seibel is a senior wealth adviser for the Meridian Credit Union. He's always been into sports such as soccer and hockey. When he turned 40, he did a triathlon in Wasaga Beach without any prior training. He said organizers wanted torchbearers that represented the spirit of the Games, and his daughter came to mind because of how hard she's worked over the years. He'll be carrying the torch with his daughter, Emily Seibel.

He is very excited to see the rowing events since he's never seen them before.



EMILY SEIBEL

A student at Westlane Secondary School, Emily likes to play soccer and recently received her black belt in karate. She also travelled to Japan to train for karate. She will be carrying the torch with her father, Ken Seibel, who was the one that put her name in to be a torchbearer.

Emily said she hopes to take in some of the soccer events.



TIM TAYLOR

Taylor, a feature writer for The Lake Report, has a background in rowing and likes to play golf. Every November and December he dresses up as Santa Claus to raise money for NOTL Community Palliative Care Services. His daughter entered him to be a torchbearer.

"I have a bit of a rowing background, which I'm excited to see. I think tennis, because it's here in town, and sailing will be fun."



CARTER SIMPSON

Carter moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake with his family about a year ago from Sault Ste. Marie. His family is very sports-minded and Carter does Special Olympics track and field, swimming, golf and alpine ski racing. He enjoys Broadway shows, Elvis and sitting on patios at local breweries. He's excited to be a torchbearer and can't wait to hear his friends and family cheer him on.

"I saw an email come through from them about nominating a torchbearer. And I just thought he was such a wonderful candidate for that," said Carter's mom, Ann Liz Simpson.



JULIAN CAVERLEY

After being nominated to be a torchbearer by a former sports coach, Caverley knew he had to take on the challenge. He will be a student at Niagara College this September in the Community Integration through Co-operative Education program. He enjoys gaming and hanging out with his friends. Along with his other hobbies, Caverley is also a busy athlete. He plays sledge hockey, wheelchair basketball, bocce ball and sitting volleyball.

"I'm just happy to be able to be a part of it!" Caverley said of being a torchbearer.





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niagara2022games.ca/13for13/

Romantic night at the library: Between the Stacks brings speed dating to NOTL

Molly Bowron
The Lake Report

Forget Tinder, OKCupid and other modern looking-for-love rituals.

The success of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library's first speed dating session has ensured there will be more rendezvous "Between the Stacks."

Sixteen people aged 28 to 41 turned out last Thursday looking to maybe find someone special. Or at least a new connection.

In fact, nine people found matches, says Debbie Krause, the library's community engagement co-ordinator.

The library's first foray into matchmaking was for straight men and women, she said, "but definitely, there's going to be for the queer community and we're going to try different age groups as well."

"And maybe even something that's a little more



The NOTL Public Library staff came to gether to plan Between the Stacks speed dating, to help the community become more socially involved. MOLLY BOWRON

geared to friendship/companionship."

After COVID, the proliferation of Zoom and enforced social separation for so long, Krause said the library is trying some different approaches, including ways to help people connect.

"I know, through some of the single people in my life, that there seems

to be a bit of a dating app fatigue," she said.

Between the Stacks grew out of conversations among the library's small staff – "a lot of chit-chat about something fun that we can do that's different."

On Thursday, when people began arriving, they were given a card on which to write names and notes.

Once everyone was there, they were directed to tables placed among the stacks in the library, creating some privacy for their seven-minute conversations said, Krause.

Between each meeting, participants could sample food and drinks and a minute to "take a breather," she said.

Konzelman Estate Winery helped sponsor the evening and contributed some bubbly to the cause.

Meanwhile, the next Between the Stacks speed dating evening has already been booked thanks to the success of the first one – and inquiries from the older crowd not wanting to be left out, said Krause.

So, on Saturday, Sept. 17, at 4 p.m. the library will host a session for those aged 60 to 75.

To find out more, or to register, go to library's event calendar on its website, notlpubliclibrary.org.

Chautauqua Open golf tournament returns



Kurt Hamm and John Gleddie. FILE

Maddy Gordon
The Lake Report

The Chautauqua Residents Association's annual golf tournament is back on Wednesday, Aug. 3, at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club.

Registration for the Chautauqua Open is at 4 p.m. at the first tee, with a 5 p.m. shotgun start.

Whether you bring a twosome, foursome or just yourself, groups will be arranged to ensure everyone has a team to play with,

said Kurt Hamm, co-organizer of the event.

The nine-hole tournament is a best-ball format.

The event is designed to bring people together and to build camaraderie among locals, said Hamm.

Cost is \$10 for golf club members and \$36 for non-club members. Proceeds help support the Chautauqua Residents Association.

While the day is centred around golfing, anyone who enjoys spending time with the community and eating dinner overlooking the

sailboats going through the Niagara River and Lake Ontario will enjoy it as well, said Hamm.

There are prizes to be won, including for men's and women's longest drive and closest to the hole.

The tournament also is seeking prize donations, so if you have one that you would like to donate, contact Hamm at kurthamm1@gmail.com.

"It's basically to gather everyone together from our community, including family and friends, just to golf. It's a very social, informal event."



This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style.

This chilled leek & potato soup is traditionally topped with chopped chives.

Last issue: When is a door no longer a door?

Answer: When it's ajar.

Answered first by: Mary Drost

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Jane Morris, Beverley Easthope, Howard Jones, Maria Janeiro, Rob Hutchison, Carol Durling, Kay Waller, Bert Dandy, Robert McKeown Sheila Meloche, Betty Humphrey, Richard Cook, Claudia Grimwood, Gordon Yanow, Maggie Davies, Elaine Landray, Margie Enns, Doug Bruce, Janet Warkentin

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Lions carnival brings fun and fundraising back to St. Davids

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The St. Davids Lions Club Carnival marked the return of fun and fundraising to the village after two years of a stifling pandemic.

"It's about time," Stacy Brown said as her daughters whirled around on a carnival ride.

Brown was at the carnival with her two daughters, Aralyn, 6, and Jazalyn, 4.

Jazlyn was a little shy but Aralyn was confidently ready to talk about what she loved about the carnival.

"The slide," she ecstatically shouted while pointing toward the attraction.

Chantal Hargreaves was visiting St. Davids from Mississauga. The Lake Report caught up with the mother just after she finished going down the slides with one of her daughters in her lap.

"It's just so lively down



Jack Marklew, 2, rides a pony at the carnival. EVAN SAUNDERS
See more photos online at Niagaranow.com

here. There's lots of people, there's lots of things to do. It's always interesting in Niagara-on-the-Lake," she said.

Gatherings like the St. Davids carnival run on volunteer power. Well over 30 volunteers worked to make this year's four-day event a smooth success.

"Oh, I just love it. I'm always involved with volunteers," said Marianne McRae at the St. Davids-Queenston Church bake

stand.

McRae is executive director of the Meals on Wheels program in Niagara.

"So, I'm always with volunteers. Volunteers are my life blood."

As detailed in The Lake Report last week, the pies and baked goods at the carnival are all provided by the church. McRae said the carnival even lets the church keep the proceeds for its own needs.

"It's a great fundraiser

for the church and for the Lions. We're so happy."

Ted Burrows, past-president of the St. Davids Lions Club, was volunteering at the food stand.

"What I love about being a Lion is what they do with the money. All the money goes right back into the community. We don't keep any of it," said Burrows.

"Our motto is, 'We serve' but also, 'Where there's a need, there's a Lion.'"

Burrows had a big smile on his face as he looked around at the carnival crowds.

"It feels great to be back. It's great to see a lot of old faces. It's great to see the general public. I've had people come up and say, 'Thank you for coming back,' and that's a big thing to hear."

"I love it myself. It's great to see the little kids having fun."

Even though Burrows lives in St. Catharines, he

said he reads The Lake Report every week to stay up-to-date on NOTL news.

The carnival brought out the positive spirit in many.

"I just want to give back and help out the community," said volunteer Brian Mullen from St. Catharines.

"It's a nice thing. The kids get to come and enjoy, the music's fantastic — what isn't there to love (about the carnival)?" said Carole Mullen, who was volunteering alongside her husband.

Brian said he thinks the positive impact of the pandemic was on display at the carnival.

"People are more generous. People haven't given enough over the last two years so they're just doing more than they would have," said Brian.

The couple were sitting alongside Katherine Reid, a Lions Club zone chair. She heads the zone that encompasses the St. Davids club.

"This is the most popu-

lar event because it's very family-friendly. It's one of the most family-friendly carnivals around," said Reid.

Erin Marklew could barely contain her enthusiasm while her two-year-old son, Jack, rode a pony for the first time.

"I love this carnival because it's close and because they have a lot of rides for kids," Marklew said.

"We also just like coming out and doing things in the community," the NOTL newcomer said. Marklew and her family moved from St. Catharines in March of this year.

She said it was a joy to see her young son experience an event like the carnival for the first time in his life — a unique narrative tied to pandemic babies.

"This is the first summer that he's really been able to do anything — to be a kid," she said.

"He's loving it."

Distillery is a long time in the making, but now has green light to move forward

Continued from Front Page

luscious grass bordered by a natural, protected stream budding with wildlife.

And soon it will be home to St. Davids Distillery. Sobot hopes to have the operation open for business by October.

"There was some kind of pull, weird kind of pull that kept us coming back to this place," he said in an interview at the site.

"We drove by it a million times and we called our real estate agent and said, 'You know what? Let's just bite the bullet.' He didn't even know where the boundaries were. Honest to God," he said.

The property was known by neighbours as "the jungle" before Sobot and his wife Katherine got their hands on it, he said.

"We hired surveyors and the bush was so thick they had a machete. They were lost for three hours down below. We were about to call emergency services," he said.

Not long after that Sobot started to get to know the area and realized there were



This composite photo shows how John Sobot has transformed his once overgrown property. EVAN SAUNDERS

many wineries operating around his new home.

"I used to go to Ravine for lunch because we had no facilities here as we were clearing the place out. And, you know, I just had an idea."

Sobot's idea was to bring something new to St. Davids and not try to open yet another winery. He noted the Grist covers the local brewery needs.

"You see all these buses and they are all going for winery tours and I thought, 'What about a distillery?'"

"That's where the idea came from. Let's do something different."

At this point there are only three distilleries in town: Spirit in Niagara,

Wayne Gretzky's and Limited Distillery in Virgil.

The transformation of the land is an integral part of Sobot's story. Pictures from before he purchased the property reveal it to be a long under-utilized and unmanaged mess of growth.

He said the property's agricultural history dates back to 1934. It has had a number of uses including being farmed as a vineyard, used as a mink farm and used to grow fruit.

"It was probably unattended for at least 25 or 30 years. So, it was really in disrepair and the big sense of accomplishment, other than the distillery approval,

is, to be honest with you, is what we've accomplished

here," he said.

"Really (we've) turned this piece of brush into agriculture. I mean, every time we pass by we're in awe. We had neighbours come up to us and shake our hands and say congrats."

Sobot said neighbours have thanked him for cleaning up the area as it makes the whole neighbourhood more livable and valuable.

"You can't buy that," he said.

But the process was time-consuming and labour-intensive.

Just one example: "We took out 2,000 (grape vine) posts one by one. And you can't take them out easily because farmers at the time were thinking no one would ever want to take these out. So they dug them two or three feet into the ground."

"What we had to do, if you can picture this, is we had to wrap a chain around each individual post and around the bucket of the Bobcat and pull it out. Do you know how long that took?"

After clearing the land, a process that took about five years, Sobot replanted every

square inch with new grass seed.

"Three weeks later we had a carpet of grass."

Sobot has been working with the town for several years now to get the distillery approved.

As this is his first time building an operation like a distillery, Sobot took his time going through the extensive application process.

"This started in 2019, essentially," he said.

"Dealing with the town, with the region, with the provincial policies and so forth. It was a significant amount of work in itself that we had to do all these studies. We wanted to do everything by the book here."

He said detailed studies were done on the site to meet governmental approvals.

"It's standard stuff for them but it was all new for us."

"It's been a long journey. At times very frustrating," Sobot said.

During a council meeting on May 30, Sobot's application received unanimous approval from town council.

That brought "a sense of relief and a sense of excite-

ment at the same time. Now the real planning starts."

"It's been a labour of love, 10 years in the works. It's not as if we just bought a property and decided to build a distillery."

"We're hoping by fall we can have the building up. It's taken 10 years, we're not taking another 10. It's full steam ahead."

Sobot wants St. Davids Distillery to be an integral part of NOTL's agricultural community. He will be using NOTL fruit for all spirits as well as pomace.

"It actually complements the wineries and the fruit farms."

Sobot also wants to keep employment localized. He said he is already perusing the ranks of Niagara College's distillery program to see who may be able to come on and help run the distilling side of the operation.

"How far do you have to go to hire people, right?"

"Keep them here, keep them local. It's all about local. We can employ our neighbours. I hate to toot our horn but it's really a perfect place to have a business like this."

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Boys night out at the fort



Lake Report photographer Janice White captured these bucks on parade near Fort George last week. Visit www.niagaranow.com to see more photos from our series, "A Year in the Life of NOTL: In Photographs."



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Olivia Sinclair-Brisbane and Andrew Lawrie with members of the Shaw Company in Fairground (2021). Photo by Peter Andrew Luszyk.



Players and coaches on the Niagara Thunderhawks paperweight team after their final game at the Pelham tourney. TRACEY HOPE

Paperweight Thunderhawks finish season with Pelham tournament

Tracey Hope
Special to The Lake Report

The Niagara Thunderhawks paperweight division lacrosse team finished their inaugural season by competing in the Pelham Future Stars tournament July 22 to 24.

It was their first-ever sports tournament for the majority of the boys and girls, which was exciting to be a part of.

In the regular season, the team, coached by Gary

Friesen, James Sticca and Jared Hope, was 3-3-1.

Competition in the tournament was stiff but the Thunderhawks played their hearts out.

A huge shout out to goalies Hunter Konopka and Benjamin Hussey for their unwavering commitment against some extremely tough opponents.

Player of the Game awards for the tournament went to Tessa Froese, Noah Sticca, Auston Cwiertniewski and Bennett Hope.

The paperweight Thunderhawks players are: Arlo Kaposy, Auston Cwiertniewski, Benjamin Kirkness, Benjamin Hussey, Bennett Hope, Brock Friesen, Carmen Coccimiglio, Colton Ferguson, Hunter Willms, Hunter Konopka, Kenny Neuhof, Mark Stewart, Nico Mirabella, Noah Sticca, Noah Werner, Nora Thorimbert, Reece Nichols, Tessa Froese, TJ Gauld, Wesley Dodd and Zenon Konopka.

U22 team wins NOTL lacrosse tourney



The Niagara Thunderhawks U22 lacrosse team continued its stellar season, rolling to a 5-0 victory over Cambridge on Sunday in the championship game of the Conradi-Engemann Memorial Tournament in Virgil. Above, Niagara scores one of its five goals in the final. The Thunderhawks' next challenge is the provincial championships in Whitby Aug. 2 to 4. DAVE VAN DE LAAR PHOTOS

LAST CALL!



NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN

A draft Transportation Master Plan (TMP) Report for Niagara-on-the-Lake, which outlines the TMP study outcome, has been prepared and is open for public review and consultation. In accordance with the requirements of the EA process, a 30-calendar-day review period is being provided for the TMP, between June 30 and August 1, 2022.

Do you want to provide feedback about the report? Here is a list of ways you can participate:

- Complete the feedback form on Join the Conversation**
www.jointheconversationnotl.org/TransportationMasterPlan
- Email feedback directly to**
ttmp@notl.com
- Mail in feedback to Town Hall**
1593 Four Mile Creek Road, P.O. Box 100, Virgil ON, L0S 1T0

Feedback can be provided until **August 1, 2022**.

To read the report, and for more information, please visit www.jointheconversationnotl.org/TransportationMasterPlan.



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**FINAL FIRST INSTALLMENT
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If payment is made at a bank or other pay station, your account will be credited only **after** the Town has received settlement from the bank. Please allow **ten (10)** working days for payment processing. A penalty of 1.25% will be added on the first day of default and on the first day of each month thereafter. To avoid penalty and interest charges, **payment must be received at the Town Municipal Office by the due date. Penalties may not be waived.**

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NOTL golfers **fall short** in tough interclub competition

Staff
The Lake Report

A dozen members of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club made the trek Saturday due across the water to the edge of the Scarborough Bluffs to renew a long-standing golf rivalry.

The destination was the Toronto Hunt Club, an exclusive private facility along the "other" shore of Lake Ontario.

The goal was to wrest the coveted interclub trophy from the clutches of the Torontonians and return it to Niagara.

After a day-long series of match play competitions over 27 holes, the NOTLers fell short in their quest, but confessed that a good time was had by all.

The long-running tourney, one of the oldest interclub competitions in Ontario, will return to NOTL next year, when the home side hopes to return to the victory podium.



Members of the NOTL Golf Club's interclub team travelled to the Toronto Hunt Club to renew their rivalry in a one-day, 27-hole match. The host team won but the NOTL squad looks forward to some vengeance at home next year. SUPPLIED

This year's competitors from NOTL were: Rob Chubey, Paul Dickson, Joe Doria, James Grigjanis-Meusel, Stephen Jenkins, Noel Morris, Dean Sanders, John Sobil, Brodie Townley, Stephen Warboys, Ricky Watson and Stuart Young.

Women's results: May

Chang was a big winner in 18-hole women's league play Tuesday. She was second in low net scoring (72), fourth in low gross (97), had the third-fewest putts (33) and won a special prize in the "Golf is a Beach" contest by landing in the most sand traps – five.

Other winners were: low gross – Valerie Chubey (94), Lisa Allen (95), Cathy Murray (96), and Marie El-lison and Sharron Marlow (99). Marlow also won low net with a 67, followed by Lynette Sanders (73), Gayle Tanner (74), and El-lison and Chubey (75).

Marlow also was closest to the pin on #4. Hitting the most fairways were: Chubey (13), Carolyn Porter (12) and Janice White, Marg Ketcheson, Susan Gagne and Allen (11).

Men's results: Kevin MacLean shot an even par 36 to score top honours in

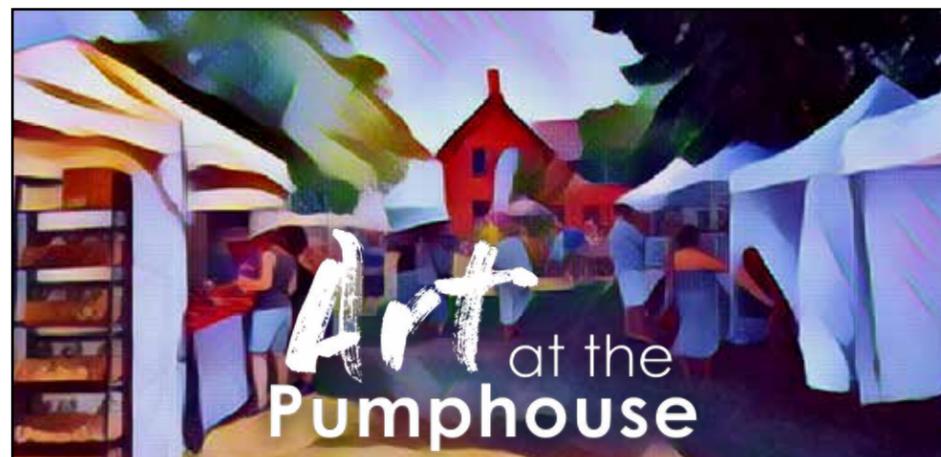
the Tuesday WOOFs league this week. Richard Cook had low net with 34, Jeff Jacques's birdie on #6 won the hidden hole and WOOFs co-ordinator Bill Katrynuk was closest to the pin on #4.

Ricky Watson continued his top-form play, shooting even-par 36 in Thursday men's league competition last week. He also was closest to the 150-yard marker on #8.

Kerry Knapp and Joe Interisano were first in Stableford scoring, with 22 points each.

Other winners were: Jim Meszaros (longest putt #2), Warren Tutton (longest drive #3), Don Allen (closest to the pin #4), Doug Hernder (longest putt #5) and Stephen Jenkins (closest to the pin #9).

Net skins went to Jack Hanna (#1), Tutton (#3) and Interisano (#4). Gross skins were scooped by Jim Panetta (#1), Stephen Warboys (#2), Sean Simpson (#8) and Jenkins (#9).



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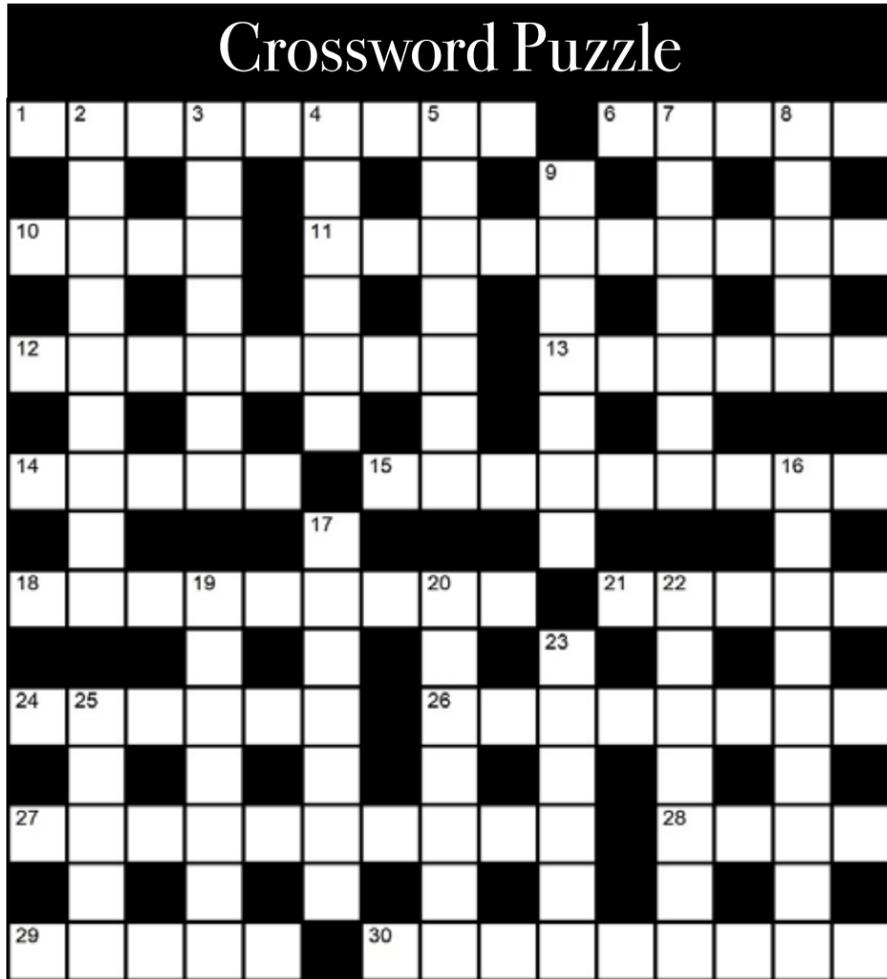


Across

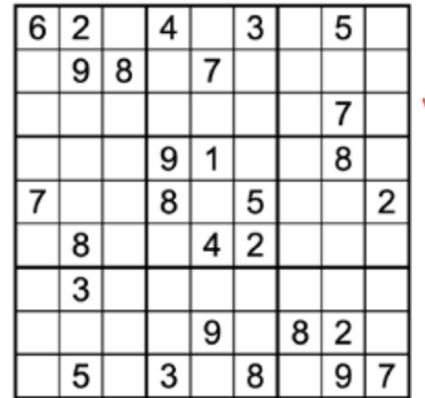
- 1. They get in the way (9)
- 6. Long-continued practice (5)
- 10. Macchu Picchu builder (4)
- 11. Resting, like actors (10)
- 12. Canes (8)
- 13. Stretched-out rectangle (6)
- 14. Embellish (5)
- 15. Strong dislike (9)
- 18. Turn on the waterworks (4,5)
- 21. Fleecer (5)
- 24. Showy decoration (6)
- 26. Amount of sugar needed to help with medication (8)
- 27. Diversion (10)
- 28. First name in French fashion (4)
- 29. Worrier's malady (5)
- 30. Advocates of land reform (9)

Down

- 2. Communication problem for musicians in narrow streets? (9)
- 3. Rotates around a kind of heater (7)
- 4. Trapped (6)
- 5. 19th century American philosopher (7)
- 7. ---, coulda, woulda (7)
- 8. Eco-conscious (5)
- 9. Raring to go (2,3,2)
- 16. Immensely powerful (9)
- 17. Suffer remorse (4,3)
- 19. Merit (7)
- 20. Hazing (7)
- 22. Husband of Eleanor of Aquitaine (5,2)
- 23. Piano (6)
- 25. Standard of perfection (5)



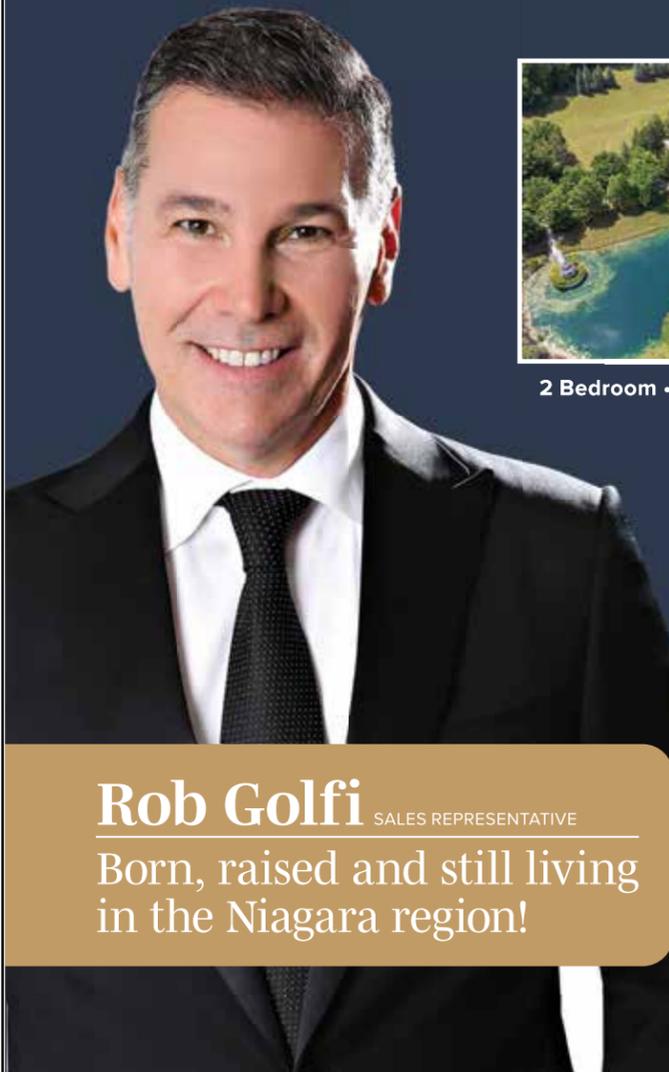
Last issue's answers



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NOTL care workers find ways to engage residents with **fun and dignity**

Continued from Front Page

Occasionally residents talk with one another but rarely for more than a few moments and often when one gets in the way of another. Television or music are on much of the time, but without a staff member in the room to engage their interest, most residents soon nod off, while others get up and wander about.

It all seems so hopeless. But that's only true if the goal is holding their own or improving. More realistic as a goal is to hire staff to create programs that engage the interest of the residents as they are and will become.

That's a tall order. But it's one that has been successfully fulfilled at a nursing home in Niagara-on-the-Lake, where my wife resides.

From my observations, programs that work best are live performances, whether musicians, visiting clergy or staff who are specifically trained to enrich the lives of the residents.

At Niagara Long-Term Care, I don't know whether the residents pay much attention to the content of the sermons of Carson Culp,

the visiting chaplain, but he never seems to stop moving and often steps toward this or that resident, sometimes calling them by name.

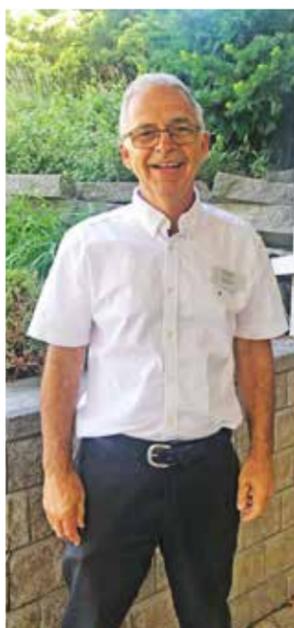
His dynamic, entertaining style and friendliness gets the residents' attention and in my view that's what's most important about what he accomplishes and well worth his time and effort.

The accompanying sing-along of familiar hymns adds to the value, especially when there's an enthusiastic, zippy musician at the piano.

Live music shows accompanied by lots of movement by the players and familiar songs also get the appreciative attention of most of the residents – you can see it in their faces, the way they move their bodies and tap their feet in time with the music.

Niagara Long-Term Care has now purchased several robotic cats and dogs and from what I've seen, they are a big hit.

The animals look and feel real enough and have an astonishing repertoire of familiar movements in response to stroking – especially the cats. Residents respond as they would have



From left: Chaplain Carson Culp has a dynamic, entertaining style. Emily Howcroft and Pam Cashmore are Niagara Long Term Care staff members who are trained to create programs for the residents. CODY COWBROUGH/SUPPLIED

with a favourite cat or dog in past times and would probably hold on to them for hours were it not for failing batteries in the robots.

But perhaps the best of the lot are two staff members, Pam Cashmore, and Emily Howcroft, who are trained to create programs for the residents.

Remember, this is a hard group to entertain and hold their attention. So, whether the program involves a

game of trivia, bingo, painting flowers, folding towels, or painting the nails of female residents, unscripted, disruptive moments happen.

Sometimes on impulse, residents get up and wander out of the room, or others join in. At other times, out of the blue, a resident might walk over to Pam or Emily to get their attention about something unrelated, or perhaps someone else begins to slide out of their

chair.

But whatever happens, each and every interruption is calmly handled and the show goes on with most residents paying attention, most of the time. Often Emily and Pam are surrounded by residents on all sides.

What amazes me is that they seem to have eyes in the backs of their heads to keep track of the residents, even those behind them. It's a real skill and depends on

experience and familiarity with the interests, capability and behaviour of all the residents in their charge. Not easy.

I regularly witness these programs at the Wellington Street facility and to me they accomplish exactly what is needed: they bring interest, cognitive challenge, variety, fun and dignity to the lives of residents who struggle to make sense of the world they inhabit.

That's no small achievement.

More and greater variety in programs are essential to enrich the waking hours of residents. It's the least we can do for those who in earlier years contributed so much to our society.

Caring for residents in long-term care is a challenging, tough, demanding vocation but because that care takes place out of sight of the wider community, those caregivers often don't receive the recognition they so richly deserve.

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

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Peach graders, 1948

Peach season has arrived! This sketch by John D. Shawe features fruit growers from 1948 preparing the peach harvest for market. Peaches were shipped from NOTL's docks to Toronto on the Canada Steamship Lines passenger ship *Cayuga*. Mr. Shawe was born in 1885 in Edinburgh. He arrived in Canada prior to the outbreak of the First World War. While living in Niagara-on-the-Lake he completed many oil paintings of local scenery. He mounted a display in the former town hall, the current Court House, for the community to enjoy. This artwork was for sale for \$45 in 1950.

A home brought back from the brink



Brian Marshall
Columnist

The threatened historic houses of Niagara-on-the-Lake is a topic this column has spoken about many times over the past few years.

I find it unconscionable that irreplaceable pieces of our shared built-heritage are allowed to undergo demolition by neglect. Off hand, I can think of at least a dozen examples of this currently occurring.

That said, when one of these threatened houses are pulled back from the brink of destruction, I feel compelled to congratulate the owner. It's a cause for community celebration.

Out on York Road, near the Homer Bridge, an old house had been slowly deteriorating for some years.

Partially hidden by big spruce trees, most people would likely not have given it a second glance if they noticed it at all. But, for an architectural historian, this battered old soldier told a different story.

Between 1830 and the early 1860s, an architectural style called Greek Revival was in vogue.

Designs in this style came in two broad forms of expression: Monumental



Heritage saved. BRIAN MARSHALL

(NOTL examples being Willowbank and Glencairn) and Temple which, as it happens, this York Road house was, in my opinion, a late-period example.

The Temple form was the modest version of Greek Revival. In its common expression the form typically presented a front-facing gable roof with broad undecorated raking eave mouldings that sloped into returns from the side eaves to suggest a pediment.

The main entry was generally placed either in the right or left bay of the first floor with balancing window(s) to the other side. Second-floor openings were normally unranked, that is, not set directly above the first-floor openings.

A colonnade, veranda or porch was always included and this might be abbreviated to the main entry opening (quite rare), across the whole facade (normal), or wrap two or three sides of the house (rare).

In about 20 per cent of the surviving examples of this form in North America the first-floor window openings on the facade were full height and of a width that would accommodate French windows (doors) that let onto the covered porch, supported by classic column forms.

Finally, the main entry surround usually included sidelights, transom and some form of classical order pilasters.

Now, generally viewing the existing facade of this York Road house, we can easily see it conforms to many of these criteria. It presents the front-facing gable with eave returns. The first-floor main entry is set to the right side of the facade with two openings to the left and the second-floor openings are not ranked to the first floor.

It had a porch that spanned the facade and wrapped around onto the right side wall. The original window openings were wide and sat on the watertable

while the front door surround has sidelights, transom and modest pilasters.

It's interesting to note that when this home was built, it was the fashion to "dress" the facade with a more expensive Flemish brick bond (the other walls are cheaper common bond), limestone sills, lintels and watertable as a success statement such as seen on this house.

Now, I estimate that sometime during the 20 years between 1890 and 1910, the building was renovated. Its cold, leaky French doors were removed and replaced by much smaller gothic-style windows (the original openings bricked in around the smaller windows).

The original porch pillars were replaced with trelliage supports, also in the gothic style. And it is very likely the glass in the sidelights and transom were replaced with the then-popular stained glass inserts. All of these gothic features were present when the current restoration commenced.

In my wheelhouse I'd like to see the house returned to its original Greek Revival presentation, however there are those who prefer a restoration that shows the changes to the home over time.

In either case, I applaud the current owner for saving this part of NOTL's built-heritage.

Looking to the Stars

Slow-moving Jupiter has big influence on our lives

Thursday, July 28: Today, we have a new moon in Leo. This is a highly optimistic new moon that is trine Jupiter in Aries. Jupiter's energy is amplified since the big planet is now stationary. The July-August lunar cycle is the best time of the year to take a chance and go big with your projects, especially if they involve travel and/or education. For classical music lovers, July 28 is often called "Black Day" due to the deaths of Antonio Vivaldi and Johann Sebastian Bach. They died on the same date, nine years apart.

Friday, July 29: Today, Jupiter goes retrograde in Aries. When a slow-moving planet like Jupiter changes direction, we all notice it. Jupiter rules our beliefs, goals, and our "raison d'être." When it goes retrograde, we are invited to take a step back and re-evaluate the reasons we're doing what we're doing. It was July 29, 1609, that Samuel de Champlain shot and killed two Iroquois chiefs, setting the stage for 150 years of French/Iroquois wars.

Saturday, July 30: Whenever the moon is opposed by Saturn, things get stubborn. That is today in a nutshell. Wait and be honest with yourself. Happy birthday to Phoebe Buffay of "Friends" aka Lisa Kudrow who turns 59 today.



Sunday, July 31: Today we see the exact north node-Uranus conjunction in Taurus. This conjunction is further fuelled by Mars in Taurus, so at the end of the month we have a very intense Mars-north node-Uranus conjunction. When we have a Uranus transit, we "expect" the unexpected. In reality, this means that what we expect to happen will not happen – what will happen is something completely different, something that is not even on our awareness radar.

Astrology is a form of entertainment, not a science.

The good news is that the north-node Uranus conjunction will only bring us those events, opportunities and people that serve our highest good. The best advice? Don't plan anything, don't expect anything. In July, destiny is knocking on the door – so let it in. Happy birthday to Joanne Kathleen Rowling, creator of Harry Potter and lots more. Today she is 57.



Monday, Aug. 1: In spite of a lack of clarity, this is a super positive Monday where both Venus and Mars are working to open up new future potentials that promise long-term gains. English chemist Joseph Priestly announced his discovery of oxygen on Aug. 1, 1774.

Tuesday, Aug. 2: It may require some soul searching but opportunities today open doors to true passion. Is it someone? A new vocation or hobby? All of these? It was Aug. 2, 1961, that the Beatles first performed as the house band at Liverpool's "Cavern Club," which is why the St. Catharines-based Beatles cover band is called the "Caverners."



Wednesday, Aug. 3: With the moon in Libra, it's not surprising that relationships are strained. Try to relax and let things unfold. Considered the greatest quarterback of all time, Tom Brady celebrates 45 years today.

Check out my podcast where you will find more astrology, ad libs, music and offers. It's at www.lutts.ca



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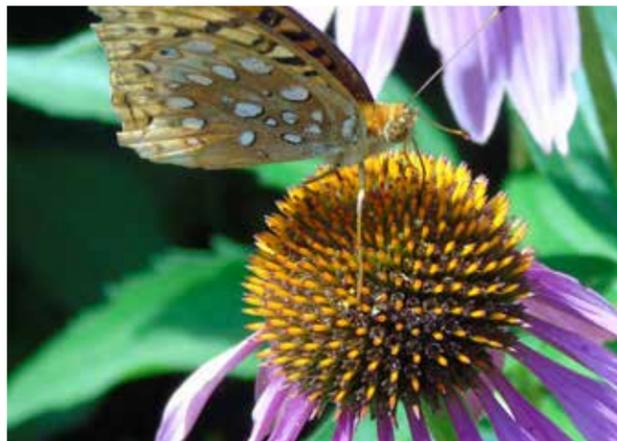
All Along the Waterfront

Xeriscaping techniques can help conserve watering



GROWING TOGETHER 

Joanne Young
Gardening Columnist



A fritillary butterfly on a coneflower. JOANNE YOUNG

Last week, I wrote about some proper watering techniques that will help to keep your plants thriving throughout the summer, including some ways of conserving water, (“Many of us are watering our trees and plants all wrong”).

This week, let’s focus again on some water-saving practices, referred to as xeriscaping.

Xeriscape is a philosophy of conservation of water through creative landscaping. It is derived from the Greek word xeros, meaning dry combined with landscaping, thus Xeriscaping.

The Front Range Xeriscape Task Force of the Denver Water Department coined the term in 1981. The task force was set up after the drought of 1977 throughout the western U.S.

The goal of a xeriscape is to create a visually attractive

landscape that uses plants selected for their water efficiency. Sometimes we confuse the term xeriscaping with zeroscaping.

Xeriscaping uses a wide variety of water-efficient plants to create an oasis-like feeling. It can be used with any look or theme of garden.

Zeroscaping, on the other hand, uses a lot of rocks and usually only junipers, cacti or Yuccas. It typically has that sparse “Arizona look” to it. Today we will look at what xeriscape is and how to start to implement it into your garden.

How can you incorporate some of the Xeriscape principles into your garden?

Reduce Your Lawn Area

Lawns have the highest maintenance requirements of any plant in your garden.

There is no other plant in your garden that needs to be cut or watered as much as a lawn.

Although our use of pesticides is falling, we are still using a great amount of them on our lawns. According to the federal environment ministry’s (One-Tonne Challenge) a gas-powered lawn mower emits about 48 kilograms (106 pounds) of greenhouse gas in one season.

Gas lawn mowers are very inefficient, which means that despite their small size they produce a lot of air pollution. In fact, running an older gas mower for one hour can produce as much air pollution as driving a new car 550 kilometers.

One gas-powered lawn mower that runs for an hour puts out about the same amount of smog-forming emissions as 40 new automobiles running for an hour.

By reducing your lawn area, you are not only conserving water, but you are helping to reduce the use of

pesticides and pollution levels. You are also saving time and money. So, definitely, a win-win-win situation.

One way of reducing the grassy area is to use mulches or more drought-resistant groundcovers such as: creeping thyme, creeping sedums, hen’s and chicks, bearberry, creeping potentilla, carex (sedge), periwinkle, cranesbill and white clover.

Use Native and Drought-Tolerant Plants

Using native and other drought-tolerant plants will also significantly cut water use. A properly maintained xeriscape can easily reduce landscape water use by half and, therefore, cut the time you spend watering.

By using native trees, shrubs and perennials you not only have lower water needs, but also have fewer maintenance requirements and less need for chemical supplements such as fertilizer and pesticides.

Some drought-tolerant native plants include: yarrow, blanket flower, coneflower, rudbeckia, agastache and butterfly weed. Some non-native, drought-tolerant plants are Russian sage, catmint, salvia, lavender, sedums, hens and chicks, and dianthus.

When you are planting any new garden area, make sure you group together plants that have the same water requirements.

If you are planting some water-loving plants beside some plants that prefer to be on the dry side, it is very difficult to keep everyone happy. By placing like-plants together, you can concentrate on just providing water to the ones that require more instead of having to water everything in the garden the same.

For example, if you have some hydrangeas, which are moisture-loving, planted next to some sedums that love it dry, you will either be overwatering the sedums or underwatering the hydrangeas.

These are just a couple more ways that you can be conserving water while being more environmentally aware.

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

Obituary

Arno Letkemann



Arno Manfred Letkemann October 25, 1937 - July 24, 2022

With heavy hearts, the family of Arno Letkemann (84) announces the passing of a gentle, caring soul who loved the outdoors, the laughter of children, the beauty of nature, and the company of friends and family. Arno was born into

a household of 4 boys, 10 to 16 years older than himself in Leader Saskatchewan. His family moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake in 1939. He went to Parliament Oak school, attended Stamford Collegiate, and played the trumpet in the Port Dalhousie Guardsmen Marching Band. On July 21, 1962, he married the love of his life, Charlotte Neufeld. He leaves his loving children, Timothy David and Ingrid Marie and three beautiful grandchildren, Alex, Sydney and Ryder. He is survived by his brother Ernst (Ernie) and sisters-in-law, Lettie and Elizabeth (Betty), many nephews and nieces, great-nephews and great-nieces, a great-great niece and a great-great nephew. He was predeceased by his parents, Henry and Mary Letkemann, and his brothers, George, Erich and Harry. Arno worked as a technician for Bell Canada to 36 happy years and even managed after his retirement to work overseas for the telephone companies in Spain and Britain. In the 1970s and early 1980s Arno also developed his skills as an accomplished professional photographer and built his own studio in their first home in Niagara-on-the-Lake. He enjoyed portraiture and emphasized the importance of family portraits. His renovations in their homes showed his love of architecture and skills as a designer and builder. He and Charlotte enjoyed travelling and began cycling in their 50s and 60s. They took many trips on their bicycles to the Rockies, the Oregon Coast, the Maritimes - including the Cabot Trail, and many areas closer to home. In recent years, they continued travelling by car and in the last years walked almost daily near their home in Virgil or the downtown Niagara-on-the-Lake visiting neighborhoods where they spent their childhoods, their teen years, and most of their married life. The celebration of his life will take place on Friday, July 29. Visitation will be Thursday evening from 6 pm to 9 pm at Morgans Funeral Home in Niagara-on-the-Lake and from 1 pm to 2 pm. prior to the service at Morgans which will begin at 2 pm. Friends and family are invited to attend the celebration of a life well-lived after the service. Location will be announced. Feel free to share your favourite stories about Arno with us all.



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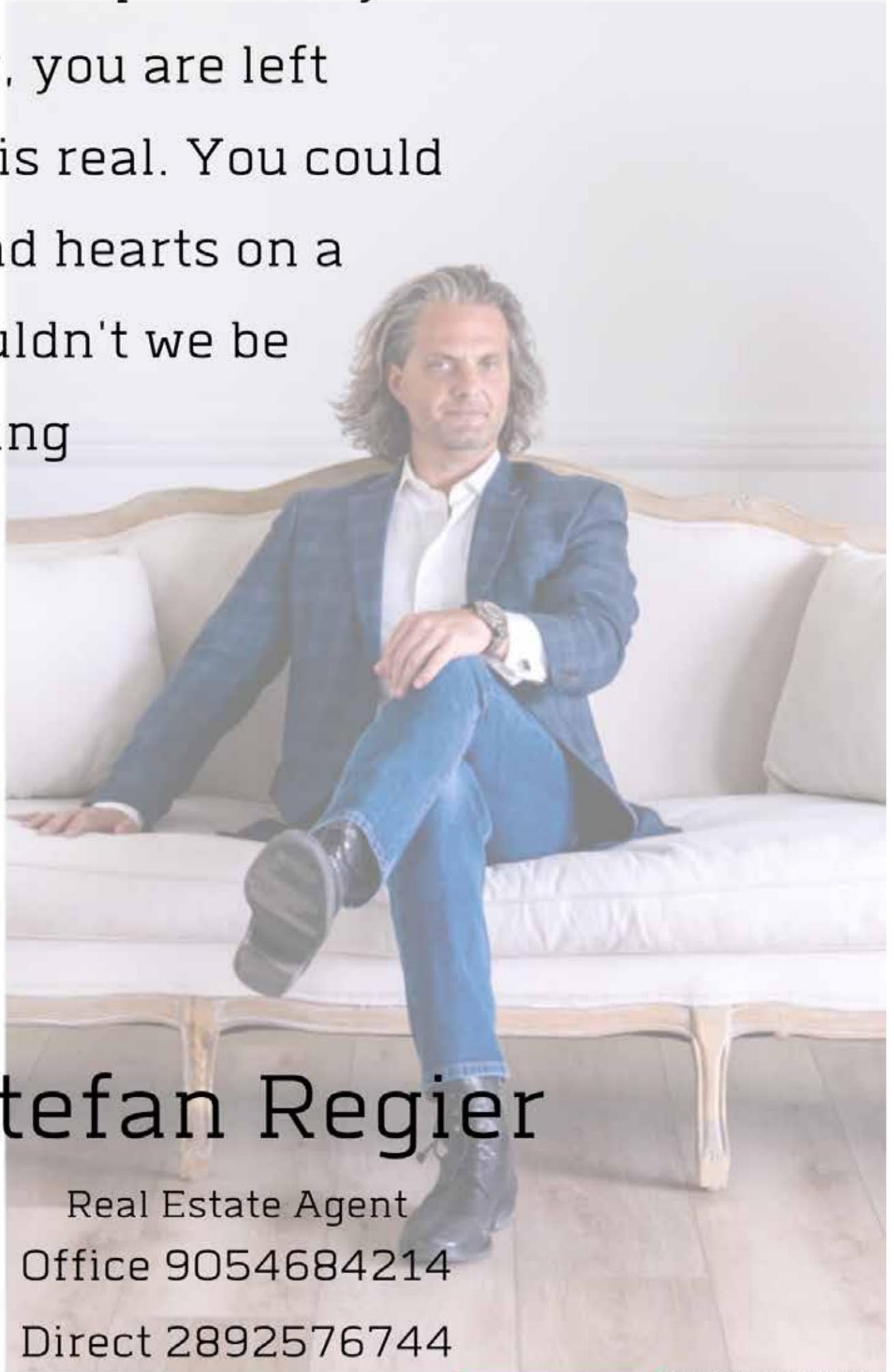
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In a day and age where media affords anyone the possibility of being anything, you are left guessing what is real. You could rely on likes and hearts on a screen, but wouldn't we be better off meeting in person?



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