



Christmas trees going quickly | Page 9

## Santa's helper eagerly awaits letters



Sandy Sugarswirl helps Santa Claus respond to Christmas letters from NOTL children. RICHARD HARLEY

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

For 27 years, Santa's elf Sandy Sugarswirl has been the big man's lead hand in responding to letters from the children of Niagara.

Twelve of those years have been spent in Niagara-on-the-Lake, writing back to girls and boys across town.

"It's my favourite time of the year," says Sugarswirl, dressed in her Christmas gear as she replies to three letters Friday morning at the NOTL post office, where she is known as Sandy Godard.

"The big man, you know, he always wants us to do the letters for him because he's so busy with the elves and everything at the North Pole," she says.

"So he sends down boxes of mail. And whoever wants to volunteer here at the office, can. They give me a little elf guide of the do's and don'ts for when you're replying to the letters."

The letters typically come in with gift requests. Boys tend to ask for things like Lego, hockey equipment or video games and consoles. Girls tend to ask for things like Barbies, though LOL

Dolls have been especially popular of late.

"Some of them ask for treats for their dogs or cats," Sugarswirl says.

Santa also gets some personal questions, like how old he is, whether he had a good summer, and the quintessential question — what's his favourite cookie. She said chocolate chip is Santa's favourite — though he's not picky.

Typically Sugarswirl helps Santa respond to between 200 and 300 letters. And this year, with concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic special precau-

tions are being taken, she says.

Santa has a strict rule that the elves aren't allowed to promise any particular gift — that would spoil the surprise.

The return letters are mostly written by Santa himself, but Sugarswirl and fellow elves add some personal touches.

For a letter from Lennon McTaggart on Lakeshore Road, who drew a picture of an elf, Sugarswirl writes back that she really likes the drawing.

*Continued on Page 9*



Dorothy Wilson of Virgil gets her first flu shot at the drive-thru clinic Saturday. RICHARD HARLEY

## Drive-thru flu shots help NOTL clinic prepare for delivering COVID vaccine

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

About 300 people got stuck in the parking lot of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre Saturday.

The afternoon was the final of three drive-thru flu shot days at the community centre, offered by Niagara North Family Health Team.

About 300 people came to get the influenza vaccine Saturday and in total about 1,000 people were given flu shots during the drive-thru, said Mary Keith, executive director of Niagara North Family Health Team.

"It's been great. Everybody is excited, we've had lots of positive feedback from patients who have enjoyed just staying in their car and keeping everyone safe," Keith said Saturday as cars pulled through and people got their shots.

"People are bringing their elderly parents and their

kids, and everybody can get done and just sit in the car. It's very easy."

Keith said the drive-thru shots are a good rehearsal for distributing a COVID-19 vaccine, which the province announced Sunday it is preparing for.

"I think we're all hoping that we'll be using this as practice for when we have a COVID vaccine. Certainly with the positive feedback I could see us doing this again next year with the flu shots."

The shots were done from a trailer donated for the event by Niagara Trailers, for which Keith said she was extremely grateful.

"This has been a godsend. They donated the trailer both to the St. Catharines flu clinics and the Niagara-on-the-Lake, so it's six all together. And it's been a bit chilly for the last few, so it's been

*Continued on Page 3*

## Dr. Brown: Now there are three vaccines and two antibody treatments

Dr. William Brown  
Special to The Lake Report

It took seven years to develop an effective polio vaccine, nine years for a measles vaccine and 34 years to develop a chicken pox vaccine.

But with COVID-19, the time between the initial proposal and completion of phase 3 trials has been a stunningly short one year for the first three vaccines.



The first to complete a major phase 3 trial was a joint effort from Pfizer and BioNTech, the second was

from Moderna partnered with the U.S. National Institutes of Health and on Monday this week, AstraZeneca partnered with Oxford University and announced that they had completed their phase 3 trial.

Each vaccine posted impressive efficacy rates — 95 per cent for the first two and 90 per cent for Oxford University's vaccine. Those numbers far exceed the 60 to 70 per cent levels

the experts hoped for before the clinical trials began.

Of the three, the Oxford vaccine is much cheaper and easier to handle in the distribution chain thanks to less-stringent temperature requirements for storage. And there's more good news to come.

As this report goes to press, there are 13 vaccines working their way through phase 3 trials, 17 in phase 2 trials and 37 in phase

1. Given that this specific coronavirus was unknown outside China this time last year, that's amazing progress. And the first deliveries are slated for sometime in December for those most at risk.

The main goal of the more than 100 vaccines now in development is to protect people from developing COVID-19, especially those over age 60 and those at any age with significant comor-

bid conditions.

The other goal is to block the spread of the disease by reaching levels of immunity within communities that are sufficient to achieve herd immunity. To achieve those goals at the cellular level, vaccines must stimulate both arms of the immune system: B-cells to produce antibodies to the virus and T-cells to destroy infected

*Continued on Page 17*



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# Christmas stockings for seniors project a heart-warming success

## Community's generosity ensures every resident of NOTL long-term care homes receives gifts and cards

Brittany Carter  
The Lake Report

A simple idea to provide Christmas stockings for the residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake's long-term care facilities was met with "overwhelming" support.

And Joan King says she was "blown away" by how quickly the community stepped up to pitch in.

"It's just a simple thing. We put these messages out and this is how great the community is: they just jumped on board to do everything. It's amazing," she said.

King said she was inspired by a similar project she participates in Niagara Falls and thought the concept would be appropriate in NOTL.

She put the call out for donations on her personal Facebook page and a couple of local groups on Nov. 19, and she said she was surprised by the fast responses.

Within a day she said she had more than 140 people reach out and offer to help in some way. Now, she has enough donations to provide a stocking to each resident



Joan King holds up Christmas stockings for residents of NOTL's long-term care homes. SUPPLIED

in the three long-term care facilities in town.

"What I thought was that this time of the year, especially because of COVID, it's a lonely time for a lot of people, and especially these seniors. Visitation is probably so limited and maybe family members can't even get there, and maybe some people don't even have family members," she said.

With Christmas coming, she said she asked

what could be done in the community to help perk up the residents or make them smile.

"It's just a simple ask: fill a Christmas stocking with a few items and we'll have them delivered to the homes in time for Christmas," she said.

As well as the generous response from people in the community, she said NOTL Community Palliative Care volunteers have

knitted hearts, which will be included in each stocking with small sanitizer bottles.

The Town of NOTL has also offered to include the cards from its Christmas card contest this year in each stocking, she said.

"They (the town) were going to give one to each member of the retirement homes. So, they're going to put them in the stocking now," King said.

"One idea, domino effect.

So, now these cards that they were going to send to the retirement homes, instead, we'll just put them all in the stockings. It's a special card made by the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake," she said.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said she "loves this time of year."

"Anything the town can do to bring a little joy, or even just some recognition that people are out there,

thinking about residents of long-term care facilities, I think is a good thing," Disero said.

King said Lynn Howell of Driverseat Niagara offered to help pick up and deliver the stockings.

"We help many seniors in our community with appointments, outings etc., and have always offered services to help our community free of cost, like shop and drop for seniors and vulnerable citizens of Niagara," Howell said. "This is our Christmas gift to the amazing cause and initiative."

King said she has enough donations to supply every resident in NOTL's long-term care homes and will not be asking for more. If anyone who would still like to contribute to the community this holiday season, she recommends donating to the town's "Give Back" Christmas program.

On Saturday, Dec. 5, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., town staff will be at the NOTL Community Centre collecting donations of food, warm clothing and gifts for the Give Back project.

# Kids make cards for Pleasant Manor residents

Marion Griese  
Special to The Lake Report

Up until last March, before restrictions were put in place, I was volunteering with Therapy Tails every week, visiting the residents at Pleasant Manor in Virgil with my dog Oliver.

I witnessed how much joy these seniors got from petting and cuddling with our big, gentle golden doodle while talking with me.

I have missed my visits and my conversations and I can only imagine how much more difficult it must be for these and so many other residents in our community who have been isolated for months.

While looking through one of my old sketchbooks last summer, I came across this quote by Picasso that I had jotted down: "Art washes away from the soul



Christmas cards will be going to Pleasant Manor residents. SUPPLIED

the dust of everyday life."

These words had rung true for me back then, but now they seemed even more relevant. As an artist and arts educator, I was inspired to create an art project that could help uplift, inspire and connect with others.

This past fall I had the opportunity to share my "Spark Joy Postcard Project" at Culture Days in St.

Catharines. More recently, my Grade 1 to 3 Wheatley School students completed the same project as their first art lesson of the year.

With much enthusiasm, they each created two colourful, original postcards based on the work of abstract artist Romero Britto. Then they wrote personal messages of hope and encouragement on the back. One card was meant for a

loved one, while the other was made for the residents of Pleasant Manor.

I can't wait to deliver these postcards to my friends at Pleasant Manor.

And I'm also touched and encouraged by the joy I witnessed in my students as they created these colourful cards, knowing they were going to grandpas and grandmas who needed a smile at a difficult time.

# NOTL kids design Christmas cards for seniors

Brittany Carter  
The Lake Report

Children of Niagara-on-the-Lake are bringing a little cheer to 227 long-term care residents thanks to the town's first Christmas card contest.

The winning designs will be made into Christmas cards and the mayor will sign each and every one before they're delivered.

"I'm going to be signing each one individually. And whether it's 200 or 300, I'm happy to do it," Lord Mayor Betty Disero said.

Of the 21 submissions, the five winning designs were made by Kya B., Graham S., Michaela A., Vivienne A., and Brylee M.

This is the first time the town has held the contest and Disero said she's thankful to the communications team for dreaming up the idea.

"I think people should send Christmas cards more. I'm still thrilled every time I receive a Christmas card from anywhere. I'm happy the town is doing this and I think it might bring a little bit of happiness to people. So that's a good thing," she said.

And though this year face-to-face gatherings won't be possible and the "new norm" of social media and internet connection helps bring people together, Disero said she's happy to have this old-school connection to reach some members of the community.

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# Fundraiser supports NOTL Cats Rescue

Brittany Carter  
The Lake Report

If Tanya Rice's two cats were to ever get out, she says she's certain NOTL Cats Rescue would be integral in keeping them safe. It's one of the many reasons she's held a fundraiser at her Virgil home on the evening of the Candlelight Stroll for the past several years.

This year, that fundraiser is going to look a little different.

But Rice said she won't let the pandemic stop her and her husband Peter from collecting donations for the local cat rescue. On Dec. 4 from 5 to 8 p.m., a Christmas tree will be lit on the front porch of 456 Line 2 Rd., and donations will be accepted in the driveway.

"We just wanted to let our friends and neighbours know that although we've closed off our home this year, we haven't closed off our hearts to the cat rescue," Rice said.

Previously, the couple has opened their home to more than 30 people for a small celebration after the Candlelight Stroll in Old Town each December.

The post-stroll open house served hot chocolate and snacks, and all they would ask was for friends, family and neighbours to bring a donation for NOTL Cats.

This year, they are asking the community to consider donating anyway. There will be a small, socially distanced get together in the driveway after the virtual Candlelight Stroll. She en-



Tanya Rice sits with her two cats under her Christmas tree. BRITTANY CARTER

couraged community members to make a donation at any time until then, or to come by on Dec. 4.

Erika Buchkowsky, a NOTL Cats rescue volunteer, said COVID-19 made it difficult for the group to hold any of its regular fundraisers.

"We are 100 per cent non-profit, 100 per cent volunteer. Adoption fees go directly to pay for vet bills, food, litter, etc. We are totally dependent on donations and have donation boxes at Pet Valu in Virgil, Creek Road Paints in Virgil and Global Pet Foods Glendale in St. Catharines," she said.

Buchkowsky said Tanya and Peter Rice "have been so wonderful fundraising for our little rescue group."

"Tanya is a huge cat lover and on her 50th birthday several years ago told everyone coming to her party to bring a donation for NOTL Cats instead of gifts for her," she said. "We are

thrilled that Tanya and Peter have decided to hold this additional fundraiser for us."

Items most needed by the NOTL Cats are wet food, dry food, cat treats and kitty litter. Monetary donations are also appreciated, though Rice asks for people to wait until the night of the fundraiser to donate money because she may not always be there to collect.

NOTL Cats Rescue is a volunteer-based rescue group in the Niagara region specializing in helping stray cats and kittens, placing them in foster homes, giving them required medical attention and helping to find their forever homes.

Rice said she's always been an avid animal lover. When she discovered a small litter of kittens from a feral cat in her backyard, there was no question as to what was to be done with them.

"They were orphaned in our garden 12 years ago.

And when we trapped the three of them, we decided that they were going to be ours," she said.

One of the three, Boots, died about three years ago of kidney failure, she said. But the other two, Jasper and Indiana, are going strong.

"We are not the everyday volunteers for Niagara-on-the-Lake Cat Rescue. We are just people who love animals. We love cats," she said.

She hopes this year more donations can be gathered. Last year, they collected about 35 pounds of cat food and \$320 in cash.

She said she knows it's been difficult this year with COVID.

"People are struggling to put food on their own tables ... but our community has a lot of animal lovers. If they can give whatever they can, you know, a \$2 can of cat food. Just to add some warmth in their heart to know that they've also helped the four-legged animals in our community," she said.

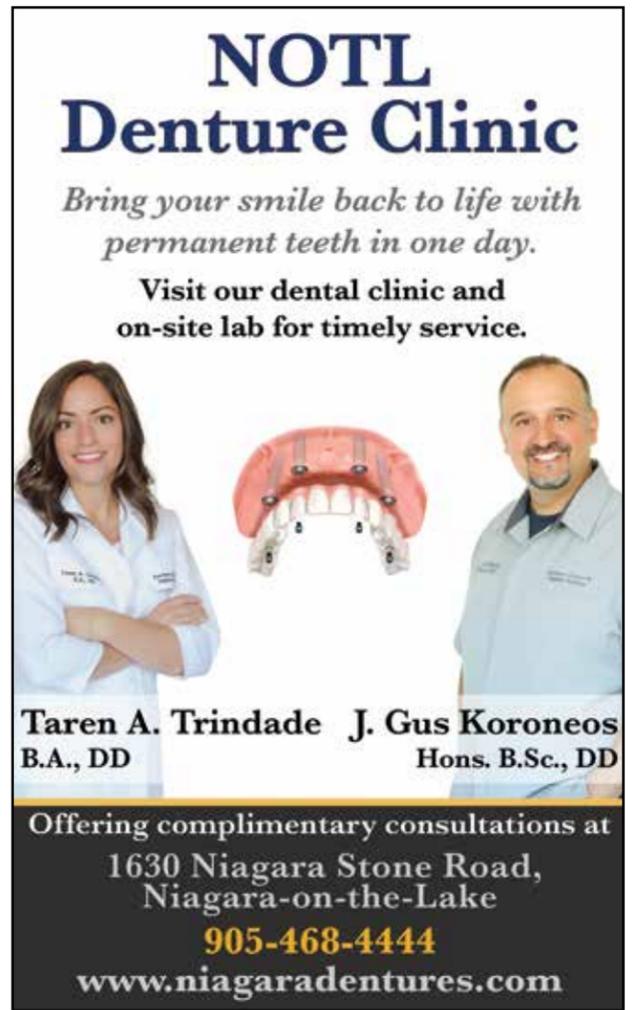
Right now, NOTL Cats is trying help Murphy, a kitten found by Town of NOTL maintenance staff. His head is tilted due to an ear infection and bulging ear drum. He is on six medications and has seen three different veterinarians.

"This little guy is a fighter and has come a long way since he was found. Your generous donations will help us with his vet bills and medications," a statement from NOTL Cats says.

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# About 1,000 people got drive-thru flu shots

Continued from Front Page

so nice to be able to have a place to put the vaccine and to get out of the cold."

Phil's Valu-mart also donated juice boxes and water for people to have after their shots. People were asked to wait a few minutes in the parking lot after getting the vaccine in case they didn't feel well after the shot. Emergency medical services were also on site.

Volunteers from the Niagara-on-the-Lake Rotary Club also helped out to greet people and guide traffic.

"A big thank you to everyone in our team who put out their time to organize this and got up early and braved the cold," Keith said.

"It's been a real team effort. And we've had lot of volunteers from the Rotary. And a big thank you to them, too."



The Niagara North team distributes flu shots via a drive-thru station at the community centre. RICHARD HARLEY

## NOTICE



Newark Neighbours is temporarily closing the Thrift Store effective Nov. 30, 2020. The Food Bank will remain open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:30 a.m. until 12 noon. Food donations can be dropped off during those times. Donations of clothing and household items can no longer be accepted after Friday, Nov. 27, 2020.

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**Contributed by Patty Garriock**  
 "Advice is what we ask for when we already know the answer but wish we didn't." - Erica Jong



**Contributed by Norm Arsenault:**  
 Did you know? Plastic is polluting our rivers, lakes, and oceans, harming wildlife, and generating microplastics in the water we use and drink. Every year, Canadians throw away 3 million tonnes of plastic waste, only 9% of which is recycled, meaning the vast majority of plastics end up in landfills and about 29,000 tonnes finds its way into our natural environment. Change your habits...reuse and recycle!  
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## Editorial: Rental homes are home to **no one**

Richard Harley  
 Editor-In-Chief

Our town council deserves massive applause for taking a head-on approach to tackling the issue of short-term rentals in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Council is moving to restrict all short-term rentals to be owner-occupied by 2024, among other rule changes.

Bravo!

As pointed out in the past by many frustrated letter writers, neighbours, young families pushed out of town, our editorials and now our lord mayor, these types of commercial properties in residential neighbourhoods hurt our town.

There's no way around it, over-saturation of short-term rentals hollows out a community in several ways.

They drive young people out of town, forcing housing prices up based on what boils

down to a commercial investment. They take away space for long-term renters. They drive local owners to sell and leave town. And, eventually, once the damage is done, the attraction of an area fades as the culture that once made the place unique and attractive disappears.

Sure, you'll get a few golden years, while some small business owners struggle to try to capitalize on the tourists. But in the long term it's unsustainable and ends up hurting the housing market, too. The only people who win are the people who sell and get out of Dodge.

We wonder is those who ignore and play down the problem in the name of making a quick profit really care about the future of this beautiful town.

One only needs to look at other popular tourist destinations, like Venice, to see the devastation of local culture

that short-term rentals have caused.

While NOTL is not Venice, it's right beside one of the top tourist destinations in the world, Niagara Falls. We're lucky enough to get the backwash of visitors to our quaint, little town. But we'll lose that if there aren't any locals here to make NOTL a unique place to visit.

Arguments have been made that it's not the licensed rental homes that cause problems, or that stopping the intrusion of short-term rentals could harm businesses like the Shaw — but those arguments are unproven. What we do know for sure is, if the town becomes stagnant, all will suffer.

Having noisy, rude guests at short-term rentals is only half the battle. The real battle is a loss of culture and identity.

Let's not forget what made this town the way it is — the

local residents.

Locals living here, shopping here, having their own diverse needs, which leads to more local business and innovation to meet those needs.

If all of those locals are driven out of town by an escalating housing market, there is no NOTL.

Having properties that can be purchased for a profit, rather than for a family to live in, is the problem.

So, we have an ask: It seems clear rental owners are encouraging their guests to send letters to town council opposing this decision. We ask residents to do the same — send letters to the lord mayor and councillors and to The Lake Report if you are in favour of these changes.

A rental home is home to no one. So let's help make sure NOTL residences are for NOTL residents.

editor@niagaranow.com



## 'Me' society and **selfishness** amid the pandemic

Dear editor:

In this day and age, the human race has changed from a caring race of people to a "me" society. For people to say we have a right to live and crowd in to a restaurant, bar or a park shows a complete lack of caring for others, who also have a right to live but may not because of those who won't wear a mask or follow the mandatory social distancing rules.

I have been appalled with the sights of huge crowds gathered together without a care in the world or a thought of what their selfish act could do to the front-line workers who may end up giving their lives trying to save these same people or people they have infected. How selfish is this?

And then what is wrong with our leaders who fail to follow the guidelines set out by our doctors and scientists? Have we as humans lost our minds or are we just so self-centered that we have forgotten to respect the rights of others who inhabit this Earth?

I'm 83, with not too many years left to be on this Earth,

but maybe that's a good thing because I won't have to see just how disgusting our fellow humans might further become in future years. Shootings with automatic weapons, hit-and-run driving, child abuse, spousal abuse, sexual abuse and abuse of our elderly — and now viral abuse is just one more way we've seen the collapse of our society.

If this is your attitude toward your fellow human beings I hope you can live with yourselves. Is this what our military gave their lives for so that the arrogant people they protected can live in peace and enjoy the life they say they are entitled to?

Is this any way to show respect and appreciation for our front-line protectors, who in some cases have given their lives while you go out and party without caring for the safety of your fellow man, woman or child? Another example of pure arrogance and selfishness.

I listened to a man, who for 60-plus days was in a coma and had only a 1 per cent chance of survival, tell

of how the selfless doctors and nurses struggled all those days to keep him from dying.

Then I heard a young person partying with hundreds of other young people say, "So, I get this flu bug and maybe everyone else here gets it, no big deal." Wait until you can't get your breath and are coughing up your guts and you'll see just how big a deal this flu, as you call it, is.

Rioting in various cities in the U.S. again shows just what some have become. Protesting for a cause is a right, but burning and looting is nothing less than pure insanity and a lack of good judgment. Have you no shame or are the innocent killed or maimed by you just no big deal? I'm ashamed to call you my brothers and sisters.

And then the soon-to-be ex-president of the United States made remarks that only incite people to riot through his taunting remarks. He has done nothing to calm the situation, but has made remarks that further

inflammate the already out-of-control situation. America is a divided country with an elected leader who was incapable of healing the wounds that divide.

When they took prayer out of schools, when it became acceptable to disrespect the law, our parents and our teachers, when discipline and having to accept the consequences for our acts left our country, that was the beginning of the end for our civilization and the world as it was intended by our creator.

I saw a slogan on the internet that had merit. "Click-it or Ticket" worked for seat belt usage. How about "Mask-it or Casket" to make people realize the necessity to cover up?

Yes, you have rights, as long as those rights don't kill others, then your rights are forfeited. Get a grip on reality. You have a duty not a right to care for those who share the space around you. You have a duty to help rid your world of this pandemic. It isn't fake news.

Tom Thornton  
 NOTL

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# OPINION

## Council needs to **stick** to short-term rental plan

Dear editor:

Those of us who live here want a vibrant community where we have real neighbours rather than those who come here as tourists and stay in short-term rental homes and who have no vested interest in the welfare of those who actually reside here.

It is a delight, therefore, to see that NOTL council, led by our good Lord Mayor Betty Disero, is seriously

addressing the issue of the hollowing out of our town by the growing number of short-term rentals.

Our community and, more importantly, our sense of community, are at risk as we continue to lose neighbours and neighbourhoods to commercially operated houses in the midst of residential homes.

More families, retirees, couples and singles could live here if all of the exist-

ing short-term rental homes were available for them to call home.

The operators of short-term homes will, no doubt, lobby hard with many real or implied reasons why they should be allowed to continue to operate them.

But council needs to keep focused on the basic question: What type of community do we want to be in the future? One, we would hope, where our homes are

occupied by neighbours who have a real attachment and commitment to our community and town.

So council, stay the new course and make the changes needed to rebuild our neighbourhoods. Our and the future generations will appreciate what you are about to do to make our community much more than a tourist town.

**Bill Garriock**  
NOTL

## Is **principal residence** rule for short-term rentals helpful?

*John Foreman is president of the NOTL Bed & Breakfast Association. Jason Clements operates Niagara Holiday Rentals.*

John Foreman  
Jason Clements  
Special to The Lake Report

The town is proposing changes to the short-term rental bylaw that would require all short-term rental properties to be principal residences.

The intent of the changes to the bylaw is to address some of the problems that have been experienced by NOTL residents who live near short-term rentals.

However, we believe that the principal residence requirement is excessive and would trigger adverse consequences, not just for short-term rental owners, but for the community at large.

We all agree there are problems with NOTL's short-term rental bylaw, but a complete reversal of the current rules, which stipulates that cottage rentals must not be principal residences, would completely disrupt this portion of the tourist accommodation sector in NOTL.

This would have severe financial implications for the owners of about 175 licensed cottage and villa owners. It would also reduce the town's capacity to accommodate tourists by about 1,000 visitors per night, with negative impacts for the town's tourism industry overall.

If the proposed principal resident requirement were to move forward, this could be more than

100,000 visitors not being able to stay in NOTL on a yearly basis.

The typical cottage rental visitor stays an average of three to four nights and visits many of the restaurants, the wineries and the shops on Queen Street. They also attend Shaw Festival plays, visit Fort George, the NOTL Museum and support all other local businesses that we, as residents, are also able to benefit from and enjoy.

What do you enjoy about NOTL? What restaurants, wineries, cultural and historical attractions would you miss the most if they were to disappear?

Without the income brought by visitors staying in short-term rentals, a lot of businesses and attractions would simply not be able to continue to operate.

There seems to be a lot of assumptions that a principal residence requirement for short-term rentals could somehow solve all the problems attributed to the industry, such as noise and the alleged "hollowing out" of the community.

The majority of short-term rentals do follow the town's bylaw and do not receive frequent noise complaints. Therefore, the majority that are following the rules should not be penalized for the few that are not. Unlicensed short-term rentals need to be fined and forced to license or cease operation, and the noise bylaw needs to be properly enforced.

The Lake Report article, "Bylaw changes to require short-term rentals to be owner occupied by 2024"

provides a perfect example. The featured photo was of a property on the corner of Byron Street in Old Town. This property is a known "party house" and also an unlicensed short-term rental.

The problems caused by this type of unlicensed property needs to be addressed, but currently it appears there is little the town can legally do to stop unlicensed rentals from operating.

The already proposed change to the short-term rental bylaw allowing the town to fine any property for advertising without a licence, as well as properly enforcing the current noise bylaw after hours would be enough to solve the problems caused by "party houses" like the one on Byron Street. Noise complaints aren't exclusive to short-term rentals.

The principal residence requirement for short-term rentals is also meant to solve the "hollowing out" of our neighbourhoods.

Are short-term rentals causing a "hollowing out" of NOTL? Looking at some numbers from the 2016 census, NOTL had 7,964 private dwellings. Of that number, 7,089 were permanent or principal residences. So, in 2016, there were 875 properties that were not someone's principal residence. The most recent public data from the town shows there are 340 licensed short-term rentals in all of NOTL.

Of those, 175 are cottages or villas. This amounts to only 2 per cent of all private dwellings operat-

ing as licensed, unhosted short-term rentals (cottages or villas).

The remaining 535 secondary residences in town (accounting for 7 per cent of all private dwellings) would be vacation homes, but not used as licensed short-term rentals. How often do all these property owners visit their vacation homes? How often do these homes sit empty? How many are neglected?

Historically, Niagara-on-the-Lake has had many residents who purchased vacation homes in town before moving here permanently. NOTL is indeed a well known retirement community and there are many secondary residences where the owner's intent is to be able to call NOTL home in the future.

In order to help with the expenses, some have decided to offer their property as a licensed short-term rental while they're not using it. This helps cover the costs of maintaining the property and ensures that it is not sitting empty for extended periods.

Enforcing a principal residence requirement isn't the solution, it will only cause more problems. The short-term rental industry would like to see this requirement officially removed from the proposed changes.

We would like to sit at the table with the town to discuss what the problems are and what changes can be made to the current short-term rentals bylaw for the benefit of the residents, short-term rental owners and visitors.



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# OPINION



## Friends of Ryerson Park **canvassing** Chautauqua

Dear editor:  
The Friends of Ryerson Park is a very large group of NOTL residents that has identified the issues and remedies to the extensive problems in the area around Ryerson Park (during tourist season).  
The Chautauqua Residents Association, which has represented the interests of residents in Chautauqua since 1952, has agreed that the Friends will lead the

advocacy on all aspects of the Ryerson Park issues to the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake with the full support of the CRA.  
This makes great sense because the park issues and consequently participation in the Friends extends beyond strictly the Chautauqua area.  
In turn the Friends will support the work of the CRA on other community issues where appropriate.

John Gleddie, president of the CRA and myself, as spokesperson for the Friends, informed the lord mayor and acting CAO on Monday of the new arrangement which serves to underscore the solidarity of this storied community toward essential solutions to the critical issues confronting the vicinity of Ryerson Park.

**John Scott  
NOTL**



The tiny non-official beach attracts lots of guests.

## Town needs to deal with rentals that **cause problems**

Dear editor:  
My husband and I have rented Marrakech Mansion for a week three out of the past four summers. While I very much sympathize with residents who are disturbed by loud and thoughtless visitors to their town, I would like to urge a reconsideration of the proposal for short-term rentals to be operated from principal residences only.  
We used to come to NOTL only for day visits but after years of searching for a perfect summer retreat, we realized that it was in our best interest to splurge on a week at Marrakech Mansion. We are a family of seven and that house is the right size for us.  
We could never afford hotel rooms in NOTL for an entire week, nor would we want to stay in a place with little space, little privacy and no room for the whole family to gather. Our short-term rental allows us to live like we are at home in a home that is considerably nicer than ours – and in a town that is consider-

ably nicer than ours, too!  
We are also able to host a few extra friends. Despite the size of our group, we are quiet tenants and care very much about the comfort of our neighbours. We are responsible visitors and are grateful that we can come to a place that offers such beauty and respite.  
We love the history of NOTL, the greenery, the architecture, the waterfront and we love that it is close to, but far enough away from, Niagara Falls. We love pretending, for even just the week, that Niagara-On-The-Lake is our home, too.  
I believe we contribute much more to the economy of Niagara-on-the-Lake than if we were just coming for day visits. We attend the theatre at least three times during our stay and we always bring our friends and sometimes our kids. We visit the wineries for meals and tours and purchases. We love Fort George.  
We shop at Hendrik's Valu-mart for the meals we can make at "home" and frequent a number of

restaurants from the Sunset Grill to Zee's. We shop for fine foods (Greaves, Oliv), for fantastic clothing (Frankie Sez, Beau Chapeau, Allure, The Scottish Loft), and for lovely housewares (Serendipity and the Butterfly Gallery).  
We support many more shops than those that I have mentioned but I don't know their names. I don't need to know their names because we have become so familiar with the shops on Queen Street that we find them by feel rather than by signage.  
I do very much appreciate the need for NOTL residents to have peace and quiet in their own homes. Our "real" home is in a university neighbourhood and we have certainly had our share of unruly behaviour coming from student houses.  
We have a student house right next door to us and for a few years I was in the position of having to call the bylaw officers. Luckily, due diligence on the part of landlords, improved communication between the

residents and the university, and bylaws that set a very low tolerance for noise issues can make a great difference. (I have visited university towns in which the students are ghettoized into one particular part of town and that is NOT a good solution.)  
I know that income from local businesses is important to the town and I can honestly say that my family would not come, stay for a week and spend as much as we do in NOTL if we were confined to a hotel or to a residence where the owner was present.  
We want to imagine that while we are in NOTL, we are actually staying in our own home. It's a lovely fantasy and one which Marrakech Mansion has been able to provide for us.  
Please reconsider the proposal and find ways that would curb the noise and thoughtlessness of some visitors without limiting the visits of those who truly love and respect your town.

**Anne Pollard  
Hamilton**

## Proud to be a senior who still **exercises**

Dear editor:  
I had to read Mike Kennan's Oct. 26 column "Should seniors engage in regular exercise?" twice to decide if was he simply poking a little humour at Nike's brand, "Just do it," along with spandex, (which I slightly agree with – it is not for all). Regardless, I still think the article deserves comments.  
Growing older is not for the faint of heart, so investing in one's self to be the best you can be is worth the effort. Staying active emotionally, mentally and physically is the foundation to aging.



increased overall health, from not having to take those nasty high blood pressure pills recommended by the medical profession, to controlling the onset of diabetes, to increased strength and energy. This allows me to get out and enjoy my many hobbies, including gardening, golf, hiking and cycling. When you enjoy it "Just do it."

I am proud that I exercise regularly with a mindset that I am contributing to my life insurance policy and I applaud those who do the same.  
Through my commitment to regular exercise, I have been rewarded with many benefits, starting with

So, while I will be conscious of my choices in attire, not only spandex, I will continue on my journey to regular exercise to be the best I can be, all the while investing in my life insurance plan. And I welcome sharing this mindset with anyone who wants to join me.

**M. Jane Catcher  
NOTL**

## Texas visitors **support** short-term rentals

Dear editor:  
We have come to NOTL almost every year since 1998 and spend between one and two weeks there each summer and additional visits in the fall.  
We subscribe to the Shaw, support the Music Niagara festival and spend lots of money on everything from jewelry to ice cream.  
Our children and now grandchildren look forward to it each year and coming

from Texas does take commitment.  
The proposed action to limit short-term rentals to owner-occupied dwellings will eliminate our visits due to the restrictions that will cause our landlord to sell his property.  
With as much money as vacationers like us spend, it seems like it would be irresponsible to go forward with this.

**Billy Hill  
Austin, Texas**

## Two **suggestions** for council's consideration

The following is a letter sent to Lord Mayor Betty Disero and members of NOTL council:

My very practical wife Pamela made some very practical suggestions the other day, which I believe deserve consideration:  
1. Wouldn't the best place for a new day care

centre be the site of the former Parliament Oak School?  
2. Wouldn't the best place for the new Niagara North Family Health Care Centre be the site of the former NOTL hospital?  
Sincerely yours,  
**Will Wilson  
NOTL**

## 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.

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# Rob Grindlay: Helping bring ‘magic’ to the Shaw stage

Veteran Shaw production crew member anxiously waiting for new season and debut of ‘Charley’s Aunt’



Rob Grindlay is a production supervisor at the Royal George, helping to bring Shaw’s magic to theatre-goers for almost 35 years. TIM TAYLOR

Tim Taylor  
The Lake Report

When Rob Grindlay left work as the supervisor of the setup crew at the Shaw Festival’s Royal George theatre, on Tuesday, March 17, he thought the recently declared pandemic might keep him away for a couple of weeks.

He didn’t even take his tools or his work boots.

Grindlay, 54, has been breathing, eating and sleeping the Shaw theatre for 35 years, one of the longest-serving members of the entire production team.

He’s only been back to the Royal George once, to pick up his tools. “It was an eerie feeling,” remembers Grindlay. “The ghost light was on. The rest of the stage dark. With a mask on. Walking out on the stage. Quiet. Nobody around at all.”

The set for “Charley’s Aunt,” a celebrated farce by Brandon Thomas, was largely in place, when everything went dark. The backdrops were hung and Tim Carroll, the show’s director and his technical team, were fiddling with props, working to get everything exactly right for the first preview performance just six weeks away.

Today, everything is still on stage, just as they left it nine months ago, ready to

be remounted when performances are allowed.

“Once we get a call, it will all be there,” says Grindlay. “I imagine it’s going to be dusty.”

Grindlay is locally grown. Born in the Wellington Street hospital. Attended St. Vincent de Paul Elementary School and vocational high schools in St. Catharines and Niagara Falls. His father was a plumber in Niagara Falls; his stepmother, a secretary at a Niagara Falls high school.

“I actually went to see movies in the Royal George when it was the Brock Theatre. I remember seeing a lot of Disney shows when I was four or five years old.”

“High school is really where I learned to use my hands,” Grindlay explains. “Basically, I got all kinds of different trades: automotive, landscaping, welding, carpentry, right down to floor polishing.”

But his best subject was baking. “When I got out of high school, I went to the Pillar and Post. I was apprenticing to be a baker.

“I was up at 4 o’clock in the morning, every day. And I got to the point where I didn’t like the heat of the kitchen.”

So, in 1986, he moved to the maintenance department at the Shaw Festival, making better use of all the skills he

had learned in high school. It was a return of sorts.

Grindlay had worked part-time at the Shaw as a high school student.

“I was all over the place fixing things, tightening up seats, changing light bulbs and stuff.”

*“The joy of this career is how we make people feel.”*

ROB GRINDLAY

“One day when I was on stage, I thought to myself, ‘Wouldn’t it be great if I could create magic with these people, who do it for a living.’”

He applied and was accepted as a member of a setup crew.

“It is amazing,” Grindlay says, seemingly part mystified, part enthralled by his role. “You’re involved in putting something together for hundreds of people to enjoy — a little bit of magic.”

The setup crew of three helps rig in the shows. “Anything that hangs. The lights. The walls that fly in. The curtains. The backdrops that fly in. That happens in March.”

“Once we are up and running, we come in at 8 o’clock in the morning, set

up the show that is going to happen at 1 o’clock. When that show is done, we come in at 4:30 to take that away and we set up the show that is going on that night. After that, we go home. And start over in the morning.”

Grindlay describes the setup task at the Royal George as extremely challenging because the backstage area is so small, sometimes housing all the onstage needs of three or four productions.

“There were times when we had to go from a hotel suite to a jungle — in one scene. Really creative. You have a chest of drawers on one side and when you turn it around, it’s a bush.”

“There’s kind of a Tetris feel to the stage. The designers want so much, we have to build paths through the stored scenery because there is so much of it. We need to think ahead for the next few moves.”

Tetris was a popular video game in the 1980s. Players move differently shaped pieces into the field trying to make them fit. Grindlay is describing what has now come to be known as the Tetris Effect.

Grindlay lives with his girlfriend just a couple of blocks from the Royal George, across Regent Street from the Olde Angel Inn, in a house his family pur-

chased in 1967.

“My house is actually built out of the same materials that were used to build the Royal George Theatre at the turn of the last century.”

When Grindlay was growing up, his great-grandparents lived in the house where Cheese Secrets is now.

“When I was a child, I used to watch (Shaw) do the set offloading at the Court House. In the parking lot back there. It was the early ‘70s.

“I said to my great grandmother: ‘One day I think I want to work in the theatre.’ I had my opportunity and here I am. I’m a theatre guy.”

And Grindlay likes to see shows. “Some put me to sleep. But there are shows that are absolutely exciting. My favourites have been shows like “Sweeney Todd,” “Peter Pan,” I like that stuff.”

Grindlay has found the transition from 80-hour weeks to the idleness of the pandemic incredibly challenging.

He’s pleased the Shaw took advantage of pandemic insurance and government programs to keep everyone employed until the end of August. Now it’s unemployment.

Executive director Tim Jennings and artistic director Tim Carroll “have been

great. Jennings has got to be a superstar, for what he’s done for everybody.”

Grindlay has spent his downtime completing renovations on his 104-year-old home and taking a few weeks at a cottage near Cochrane, Ont.

“It’s OK, I guess,” says Grindlay. “But the mind melts a little as you’re sitting there wondering what your future is.”

“I’m more than ready to go back. I’ve missed the theatre. You don’t know what you got, until it’s gone.”

The Shaw has announced a shorter, more focused 2021 season, highlighting many of the shows that were under development for this year, including “Charley’s Aunt.”

Grindlay is almost wistful when he considers the future.

“If we hold on to what we feel about the theatre and what we do, how we make people feel, it will come back. The joy of this career is how we make people feel.

“A lot of the social aspect of the theatre will not return for a very long time. I hope people have learned how much they really need the theatre,” he says.

“I wouldn’t have been there for 35 years if I didn’t love what I do. I love what happens in the theatre. The magic is incredible.”



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# Christmas trees **selling quickly** at annual St. Davids Lions fundraiser

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Everywhere man Terry Flynn says the Christmas trees at the St. Davids Lions annual fundraiser are hot sellers this year.

“It’s been a crazy and I know it’s gonna stay crazy,” he said as a steady line of people rolled up to purchase trees Saturday in the parking lot of Cornerstone Community Church in Virgil.

The only problem is this year there weren’t as many trees available, with the nursery cutting back 10 per cent of its stock, Flynn said. “So, I’ve had to get a little creative because it’s the Frasers and the balsams in the regular six to eight foot that they’re short.”

Instead he’s got some smaller trees, from four to



Linden and John Weinseis stuff a Christmas tree into their vehicle. RICHARD HARLEY

six feet tall and some larger ones, 10 to 12 feet.

Prices are from \$45 for a smaller tree to \$200 for a 12-foot Fraser.

Last year he said they were sold out by Dec. 12.

The fundraiser also has a massive new 60-foot sign out front that says “CHRISTMAS TREES” so

there’s no mistaking what’s going on.

The sign is also a tribute to longtime Lions member John Skubel, who died in August. Skubel was the chair of the Christmas tree fundraiser back when there was a Virgil Lions Club, Flynn says.

“After Johnny passed

away I decided to squirrel a little money away each month so I could have a proper sign that you can see on 55. It’s 60 feet long, four feet wide, and I did it specifically in memory of John Skubel and we made sure that we put that on the bottom of it as well. It’s my tribute to Johnny.”

# Send your letters **(with address)** to Santa for a reply

Continued from Front Page

“See you on Christmas Eve,” she writes.

Santa has given Sugar-swirl three different letters, just in case multiple siblings write in. The letters usually get sent back out the next day after being received, Sugar-swirl says, to make sure they get to the families before Christmas.

One problem that the elves run into, she says, is some people forget to include a return address, which means Santa doesn’t know where to send his letters.

She reminds anyone sending a letter to be sure to include their address.

Sometimes, even if there isn’t an address, Sugar-swirl uses a little bit of Christmas magic to try to track down the writers.

If she recognizes a name, she’ll see if she can get in touch in some way. One time she received a letter from someone with the last name Hendrik, so she took a stroll over to Hendrik’s Valu-mart across the street and asked around. Luckily, she was able to figure out who it was and was able to send a reply.

“I try and go above and



Sandy Sugar-swirl holds up Christmas cards from local kids. RICHARD HARLEY

beyond.”

Sugar-swirl says she’s a bit worried there won’t be as many letters sent in this year. As of Friday Santa had only received three at the NOTL post office.

Typically a lot of letters are dropped during the town’s traditional Christmas Parade, she said. But it is cancelled due to the pandemic.

She hopes everyone will read this story and send in their letters.

Santa has a drop-off box for letters in the front of the NOTL post office.

She also helps the big man send out letters to classrooms, which are big posters with all the students’ names on them.

Being in NOTL, she said

sometimes they receive letters from around the globe.

“We are so close to Niagara Falls, and when that parade happens, you have people coming from the States, and we’ve got tourists here all the time. So, you get them.”

Even one from England. “There was a lady, she lived here, but her granddaughter was over in England. She says ‘If I get a letter from her, will you answer it and send it on to England?’ I said, of course. So she brought it in, I did it up. She got it about eight days later, which is the norm for mail going overseas.”

Sugar-swirl is also able to answer letters in French, if she receives them.

The letters received

are not kept by Santa, but instead are shredded for privacy reasons.

Sugar-swirl started her elf duties in 1993 at the post office in Stoney Creek. She’s also written in St. Catharines and co-ordinated letter delivery at various Christmas parades in past years.

Over time, she’s made friends who even deliver letters right to her mailbox.

“(For) people who are friends with me on Facebook, I just put a little something in there saying, ‘anyone can feel free to drop off a letter, your child will get a reply letter.’”

Sugar-swirl, who has been with Canada Post for 30 years and recently had a new granddaughter, Zaniyah, said she plans to retire in 2021. When she does, she hopes another one of Santa’s elves will take over.

“I’m sure they won’t go to the extremes that I do because I just love Christmas. And the kids, that’s what’s important.”

She wants to encourage parents to drop off letters at any post office, but to include a return address.

Just address letters to Santa Claus, North Pole, Canada, HOH OH0

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# RIDDLE ME THIS

Two in a corner, one in a room, zero in a house, but one in a shelter. What am I?

Last week: You throw me out when you want to use me, but take me in when you don't want to use me. What am I?

Answer: An anchor

Also accepted: Fishing lure, umbrella

Answered first by: Margie Enns

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Jason Baker, Julia Klassen, Margaret Garaughty, Pam Dowling, Pat Young, Sheila Meloche, Katie Reimer, Robert Wilms

Email answers, with your name, to [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com) for a chance to win a prize. (Subject line: Riddle me this)

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Image Detail: Lauren Stewart Harris, Study for "In the Ward 1, City Paintings", 1918. Collection of Samuel E. Weir ©RiverBrink Art Museum  
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<p><b>COVID-19</b></p> <p>Due to COVID-19, many events are now virtual. Find a list of NOTL events here week to week.</p> <p>Stay safe, wash your hands, wear a mask and distance whenever possible.</p> <p><b>LEGION FISH FRY EVERY THURSDAY!</b> From 4 to 6:30 p.m.   Drive-thru only   Cash only</p>			
<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
	<p><b>Community Wellness Committee</b> - 10 a.m. - Virtual: <a href="http://livestream.com/notl">livestream.com/notl</a></p> <p><b>Niagara's Name that Tune</b> - 7 p.m. - The Irish Harp</p>	<p><b>Rhyme Time: Virtual circle time for infants and toddlers</b> - 11 a.m. - Virtual: <a href="http://notlpubliclibrary.org">notlpubliclibrary.org</a></p>	<p><b>Irrigation Committee</b> Virtual: <a href="http://livestream.com">livestream.com</a></p> <p><b>Virtual STEAM Story</b> a.m. - Virtual: <a href="http://notlpubliclibrary.org">notlpubliclibrary.org</a></p> <p><b>German Conversation</b> a.m. - Virtual: <a href="http://contactaol.com">contactaol.com</a></p> <p><b>Nobel Prize: Zoom Series</b> - 2 p.m. - Virtual: <a href="http://notlpubliclibrary.org">notlpubliclibrary.org</a></p>
<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>
<p><b>Artful Treasures</b> - 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre</p> <p><b>Rotary Enchanted Wonderland Stroll</b> - McArthur Estate 210 John St. E</p> <p><b>Shaw Festival Me and My Girl pre/post show entertainment</b> - 6 p.m. - Queen's Landing Hotel</p>	<p><b>Holiday House Silent Auction</b> - 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Regal Florist and Garden Centre</p> <p><b>Committee of the Whole: Planning</b> - 6 p.m. - Virtual: <a href="http://livestream.com/notl">livestream.com/notl</a></p> <p><b>Niagara's Name that Tune</b> - 7 p.m. - The Irish Harp</p>	<p><b>Transportation Advisory Committee</b> - 2 p.m. - Virtual: <a href="http://livestream.com/notl">livestream.com/notl</a></p> <p><b>Municipal Heritage</b> - 6:30 p.m. - Virtual: <a href="http://livestream.com/notl">livestream.com/notl</a></p> <p><b>Rhyme Time: Virtual circle time for infants and toddlers</b> - 11 a.m. - Virtual: <a href="http://notlpubliclibrary.org">notlpubliclibrary.org</a></p> <p><b>Holiday Wreath Workshop</b> - 6 p.m. - Lakeview Wine Co.</p>	<p><b>German Conversation</b> a.m. - Virtual: <a href="http://contactaol.com">contactaol.com</a></p> <p><b>Communities in Bloom</b> Virtual: <a href="http://livestream.com">livestream.com</a></p> <p><b>Virtual STEAM Story</b> a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - Virtual: <a href="http://notlpubliclibrary.org">notlpubliclibrary.org</a></p> <p><b>Nobel Prize - Zoom Series</b> - 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. - Virtual: <a href="http://notlpubliclibrary.org">notlpubliclibrary.org</a></p>

Know of a local event? Tell us. Submit it directly to [www.niagaranow.com](http://www.niagaranow.com)

# The Lake Report

# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Nov. 26 - Dec. 12



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Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>26</b> <b>Minecraft Club: Virtual Building Challenge</b> - 4 p.m. - Virtual: notpubliclibrary.com <b>Niagara's Name that Tune</b> - 6 p.m. - NOTL Golf Course <b>Sketching Techniques</b> - 1 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre	<b>27</b> <b>Kill Bill the Band</b> - 8 p.m. - Club 55 <b>Bacchus Lounge Entertainment</b> - 6 p.m. - Queen's Landing Hotel	<b>28</b> <b>A Star is Born Wreath Workshop</b> - 1 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre <b>Bacchus Lounge Entertainment</b> - 6 p.m. - Queen's Landing Hotel
<b>2</b> <b>Free</b> - 2 p.m. - notpubliclibrary.com <b>Wine Time</b> - 11 p.m. - notpubliclibrary.org <b>Wine Group</b> - 10 p.m. - notpubliclibrary.com <b>Lecture Series</b> - notpubliclibrary.com	<b>3</b> <b>Environmental Advisory Committee</b> - 6 p.m. - Virtual: livestream.com/notl <b>Minecraft Club: Virtual Mini Game</b> - 4 p.m. - Virtual: notpubliclibrary.com	<b>4</b> <b>LIVE Stream.LOVE.JAZZ Series: Faith Amour Duo</b> - 7 p.m. - @jazzniagara/live <b>NOTL Cats Donation Drive</b> - 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. - 456 Line 2 Rd <b>Virtual Candlelight Stroll</b> - 7 p.m. - Virtual: www.yourtvtv/niagara <b>Artful Treasures</b> - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre <b>St. Davids Lions Fish Fry</b> - 4:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. - St. Davids Lions Club	<b>5</b> <b>Artful Treasures</b> - 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre <b>Rotary Enchanted Wonderland Stroll</b> - McArthur Estate 210 John St. E <b>Holiday House Silent Auction</b> - 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Regal Florist and Garden Centre <b>NOTL Give Back Christmas Drive</b> - 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
<b>9</b> <b>Wine Group</b> - 10 p.m. - notpubliclibrary.com <b>Wine Time</b> - 11 p.m. - Virtual: notpubliclibrary.com <b>Lecture Series</b> - Virtual: notpubliclibrary.com	<b>10</b> <b>History in the Vineyard</b> - 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. - Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery <b>MINECRAFT Club Virtual: Mini Game</b> - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. - Virtual: notpubliclibrary.com	<b>11</b> <b>Coffee with the Curator: Adopt an Artwork</b> - 11 a.m. - Virtual: manager@riverbrink.org	<b>12</b> <b>Shaw Festival Me and My Girl pre/post show entertainment</b> - 6 p.m. - Queen's Landing Hotel <b>Knitting for Beginners: Infinity Cowl</b> - 10 a.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre

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# NOTL firefighters receive medals for **years** of volunteer service

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

A long list of firefighters have earned exemplary service medals for a combined more than 280 years volunteering for the Niagara-on-the-Lake fire department.

Dave Jones, assistant district chief at Station 4 in Queenston, who was recognized for 40 years of service, said he feels fortunate to have been able to contribute to fire safety in NOTL.

For him, he said it's not about the amount of time.

"I really don't think about the number of years. It's something that I started doing when I was in my early 20s and I've just kept doing it," Jones said in response to emailed questions from The Lake Report.

The fire service "has changed dramatically" in the time he's been involved, he said.

"The equipment and training is so much better than 40 years ago. Fire-fighting techniques have also changed and so have the responsibilities of the (firefighter).

And though it's a difficult job, he said he's happy to be serving a small town.

"Many of the memories are of times when other people are having their worst day. In a small community like NOTL we often know the people that are in need of our services and it is helpful for the people to know the responders are sometimes neighbours and friends," he said.

The best memories, he said, are the community events that firefighters hold throughout the year.

"Queenston is a small



Fire chief Nick Ruller, deputy chief Darren Trostenko, Queenston assistant district chief Dave Jones and deputy chief Jay Plato. **See Niagaranow.com for more photos.** SUPPLIED

village and the fire department is kind of the hub. We have spaghetti dinners in the spring and fall, a chance for the local residents to sit together and either talk about old times or meet new neighbours. When there is an event in Queenston, the firefighters usually supply the barbecue. Halloween at the station has always been a big hit, kids parading around to music hoping to win the big prize. During Fire Prevention Week, we go to as many houses as we can, checking smoke alarms and CO detectors. Feedback is always positive."

Another great memory is the firefighters he has met over the years from all five NOTL stations. "We would meet throughout the year for Family Day, Spouse Appreciation Night and Christmas get togethers."

The most challenging part of the job is balancing family life with the commitment to the fire service.

"You can plan all you want for how your day is going to go, but if the pager goes off then things change very quickly."

Dealing with some of the

things they see on the job can be difficult for some firefighters, he said.

"I have been to some very troubling calls, but have always been able to separate them from my personal life. At the station we are very good at looking out for each other, talking through hard times, supporting each other when needed. Every person is affected differently with each situation. We try hard to gather as a group and talk about anything that may affect any one of us. The town has support services for us and we encourage our group to use these services."

The 62-year-old is still active at the station and noted that retirement is mandatory at age 65. If all goes well, that's when he'll call it quits.

Fire chief Nick Ruller lauded the service's firefighters and their significant contributions to our community.

"In a time where we all experience competing demands between personal, career and family responsibilities, these milestones are exceptionally impressive," Ruller said.

"The volunteer fire department is a strong community institution that contributes to community integration. The value of these recipients' service cannot be overstated."

"On behalf of Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire & Emergency Services, we want to congratulate our members that reached these significant milestones."

Firefighters who received awards for long service included:

Cort Day, District Chief, Station 1 – 20 years

Michael Mitchell, Captain, Station 1 – 20 years

James Maw, Firefighter, Station 1 – 20 years

Vic Martens, Firefighter, Station 1 – 35 Years

Rick Gray, District Chief, Station 3 – 35 years

Dave Rigby, District Chief, Station 2 – 25 Years

Dave Jones, Assistant District Chief, Station 4 – 40 years

Frank Digweed, Firefighter, Station 4 – 40 years

George VanderMeer, Captain, Station 4 – 20 Years

Darren Trostenko, Deputy Fire Chief – 30 years



Tristan Ibbotson, back home and working at the Niagara-on-the-Lake golf course, after 11 months pinned down in Costa Rica. TIM TAYLOR

## Tristan Ibbotson is back home, **finally**

Tim Taylor  
The Lake Report

After 11 months knocking about rural Costa Rica waiting for COVID restrictions to ease, Niagara-on-the-Lake native Tristan Ibbotson is back in town, once again working a few restaurant shifts at the historic town golf club.

Ibbotson left Niagara in late 2019 to help his father Simon and now stepmother Joanne refurbish and open a small four-bedroom inn and restaurant the couple had purchased just a few weeks before.

(The story of Toucan Lane Inn appeared in the May 21, 2020, edition of The Lake Report.)

It was not unusual for Ibbotson to get out of town when the Niagara golf club closed for the winter. For some years he would grab a backpack and wander the beaches of Central America until the time came to return to town in the spring for the club opening.

This past winter was different in so many ways.

In addition to helping the new hosts open their new business, Ibbotson was a groomsman for their wedding last New Year's Eve.

A few hyperactive weeks of painting and fixing and planning later, the property reopened — only to be closed almost as quickly by the rapidly spreading pandemic.

"In March, we shut right down" says Ibbotson, sitting at the golf club, just before his dinner shift. "Everything closed at that point. There was not a restaurant, no bar, nothing. Nothing was open except for grocery stores."

Costa Rica was able to steer clear of the first wave,

experiencing only 50 or so cases a day, according to Ibbotson.

It reopened the borders to international visitors in August. "Then it went to 400, 500, 600 to over a 1,000 a day, by the time I was able to leave."

Ibbotson tried several times to get home to Niagara. One of the repatriation flights in June was completely booked and cost \$8,000 one-way.

He just couldn't get home. And by then, Ontario protocols made it unclear if he would have a job to return to, anyway.

So, he hunkered down, and helped the new hoteliers complete refurbishing projects that hadn't been scheduled for months or even years.

"We took the opportunity to continue the renovations. They had planned to do them over five years or so. But COVID gave them the opportunity to move very quickly," Ibbotson says.

"We started ripping things out. Redid the bedrooms and put in new bathrooms. And there were lots of days that I just sat by the pool reading and having a beer. But even that gets boring after a while."

The property is still not open fully, offering a few rooms to wandering tourists and keeping the restaurant closed.

All in all, he's happy to be home reuniting with his friends and relatives. Still, he can't help but wonder if he's not just doing the same things here, as he would be in Costa Rica.

Except it is colder here. As for what he'll do this winter, he simply shrugs and says: "We'll just wait and see, I guess."

## Retiring firefighters **honoured** by town

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Two retiring firefighters were given special honours from the town for their years of service during a recent council meeting.

Vic Martens from Station 1 in Old Town, received a plaque for 35 years of service, as well as being a recipient of the Federal Fire Service's long serve Service Medal, and the provincial exemplary service medal.

And firefighter Charlie Burland from Station 2 in St. Davids was recognized for 17 years of service.

"We are truly blessed in Niagara-on-the-Lake to have a very successful fire department in our town,"

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said.

"And it's because of the likes of people like Vic Martens and Charlie Burland, that we are able to look after and serve the community in such an outstanding way."



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COVID-19 has taken its toll on Niagara-on-the-Lake, and The Lake Report wants to help businesses that are struggling. We're offering FREE short stories to help businesses during these trying times. If you would like to be included, simply send us 150 words about your business and a photo to go with the story. We know everyone is suffering and this is just our small part to give back to the community that supports us. Send stories to [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com)

## Konzelmann Estate Winery

Submitted  
The Lake Report



Konzelmann Estate Winery. SUPPLIED

Konzelmann Estate Winery has long been heralded for providing one of the most friendly, informative and educational experiences in Niagara's Wine Country. Located just five minutes from historic Old Town, Konzelmann sits directly on the shores of Lake Ontario and boasts stunning views of the Toronto skyline.

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carefully handcraft'ed by fourth-generation winemaker Herbert Konzelmann, who strives to produce high-quality wine from grapes grown on the family-owned lakefront vineyard.

Be sure to look for exciting experiences over the winter months, including our brand new outdoor Fire-

side Flights experience, as well as the introduction of our Icewine Dome Experience beginning in early January. As always we will continue to offer free delivery to Niagara-on-the-Lake residents using promo code NOTL20 (minimum two bottle purchase). <https://www.konzelmann.ca>

## WOW Me

Submitted  
The Lake Report



Annette Bellinghofen and Shannon Berardi. SUPPLIED

WOW Me is a specialty boutique in the heritage district of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Being unique and different is what we do. WOW Me is your one stop shop for that distinctive gift.

For the misses, we carry a collection of purses, totes, jewelry and fashionable accessories. Come shop as if you were walking the streets of Spain, Italy, Germany or the Netherlands. For the gentlemen, you can find collective whiskey glasses, bar equipment, puzzles, grooming supplies, handcrafted chess and backgammon sets, and an assortment of

gizmos and gadgets.

Lastly, our pride and joy, we have 3-D crafted wooden maps. These beautiful bathymetric nautical charts are made locally in St. Davids. The depths of the water

are laser-carved in balsam wood. The layers are then stained and assembled by hand to create a descending effect. Come visit us at 15 Queen St. and let us WOW you! <https://wowmetoo.ca>

## Stone Road Pharmacy

Submitted  
The Lake Report



Julie Dyck, pharmacist, and Sherrie Gonta, operations manager. SUPPLIED

Stone Road Pharmacy opened last year in the heart of Virgil. When entering the pharmacy you're greeted with a friendly welcome and the over-arching mantra "caring beyond the prescription."

We are very grateful for the wonderful support of our community. Customer service is a priority and patients are treated with personable service. Our patients and customers mean so much to us and we are committed to helping you in any way we can.

After a year of being open, we still maintain our independent pharmacy sta-

tus while joining PharmaChoice – allowing us to offer a greater selection of products, including a generic line called Option+.

We are open at 8 a.m. during the week to accommodate picking

up products before work or school. We look forward to continuing to serve you, our cherished community.

Come visit us at 1630 Niagara Stone Rd. or virtually at <http://stoneroadpharmacy.com>, 905-468-3000.

## NOTL Health and Wellness

Submitted  
The Lake Report



NOTL Health and Wellness. SUPPLIED

Niagara-on-the-Lake Health and Wellness is a multidisciplinary health clinic located in the heart of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Chiropractors Gary and Breanne Friesen opened their clinic in 2014 and their practice has grown with the addition of physiotherapy, naturopathy and registered massage therapy.

NOTL Health and Wellness reopened again in June, following a three-month COVID-19 shutdown. We have introduced comprehensive and efficient screening protocols to ensure that patient safety is maximized. This includes: patient screening,

the installation of plexiglass barriers, routine cleaning and sanitizing, eliminating wait time in the building with a new savvy text-alert system to notify reception that patients have arrived.

Local businesses need your support now more than ever. Call 905-468-0614 and book your appointment today.

Need some gifting ideas? During the holiday season the best gift is a relaxation massage to reduce holiday anxiety and stress. NOTL Health and Wellness is offering gift cards, which make great stocking stuffers. Stay safe and healthy, NOTL. <https://www.notlhealthandwellness.com>

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# Awe and shock at Niagara Falls OPG Winter Festival of Lights

Ross Robinson  
Special to The Lake Report

Do yourselves a favour, and enjoy an incredible evening drive to Queen Victoria Park in Niagara Falls. Trust me on this one.

The pleasant enjoyment of an evening drive along the lower Niagara Parkway from Niagara-on-the-Lake to locally world-famous Betty's Restaurant in Chip-pawa came to a sudden and unexpected halt as we waited at the Clifton Hill traffic light.

What a treat. A surprise COVID-19 highlight.

Effulgent, brilliant, dazzling. It was a truly overwhelming spectacle, looking south toward the illuminated falls. So many lights. So many creative displays. Trees trunks and branches lit up with thousands and thousands of glittering lights.

From 1996 to 2008, I volunteered as a director of the this annual attempt to bring visitors to Niagara Falls in the "off-season." Each year, the festival got a bit better. Glistening, gleaming, glowing. Tour buses from Ontario and "the four



The Winter Festival of Lights has more than three million lights. FILE/RICHARD HARLEY

border states." Three of us even took a overnight road trip to Pennsylvania and West Virginia to look and learn at three other similar events, one sponsored by Yuengling, America's oldest brewery.

Year after year, we made progress, offering a more luminous and lengthier visual smorgasbord. I don't know what happened this year, but Niagara Falls Tourism has hit a major

league home run. I'll bet there are 10 times as many lights as last year.

Last Saturday evening, tears welled up in my eyes. We were so fortunate, such a treat.

Unfortunately, I had not anticipated such Saturday evening congestion. It took us 40 minutes to creep along the Parkway, finally passing Dufferin Islands.

Frustrating, but perhaps fortunate. We were treated

to display after display, creative, unique, and some stereotypically Canadian, eh?

Three very large moose and the requisite Mounties saluting us and our American neighbours across the river. Scintillating, shimmering and along the slope under the lustrous Skylon Tower, twinkling lights created the illusion of thousands of fireflies.

For some reason, the

historic Canadian Niagara Power building was dark. Were they, inconceivably, out of power? Joe Misk, my pal at Betty's, asked me anxiously if the arch under the Rainbow Bridge was at long last a magnificent rainbow, perhaps fabulous, showing a special, prideful welcome to our LGBT visitors. No, I muttered, still a major missed opportunity.

The Saturday night

gridlock kept me from taking the Dufferin Islands loop. Fish and chips and friendly, physically distanced service were patiently waiting for me at Betty's. I arrived there 25 minutes late, to enjoy yet another wonderful meal.

We are working to get through this global pandemic together. Take advantage of this wonderful opportunity, so luckily local. Be wise, though. Take the short cruise from Sunday to Thursday evening. Avoid Friday and Saturday. "Nobody goes there now. It's too crowded," Yankee catcher Yogi Berra once said about a saloon in Manhattan.

This OPG Niagara Falls Winter Festival of Lights is a joyously positive, feel-good evening.

May I suggest you take 10 or 20 bucks as a fair per vehicle donation. Thank Niagara Falls Tourism president Janice Thomson and her co-worker, Winter Festival of Lights maestro Chantal Suthons.

Truly a magical evening, with the backdrop of our world famous, illuminated Niagara Falls.



## Tennis has got to stay

Ross Robinson  
Special to The Lake Report

Even on a very chilly Saturday in late November, the Memorial Park tennis courts were full of fun-loving former athletes. After their matches, they performed a physically distanced air guitar version of Johnny Cash's "Man in Black," using tennis racquets as instruments. From left: Jan Sapp, Richard Coyne, Keith Stuart, Terry Francis, Patrick MacNeill and Rob Lamond. In the background are Shan Jain and Les McFarlane, who might have wished they had worn their black warm up gear. Many NOTL tennis players hope to have fun amid the COVID-19 pandemic and play this winter, whenever court conditions and temperatures permit.

## NOTL band performing online show Saturday

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake band Back in the Daze is bringing an online performance to people across town and beyond this Saturday.

The five-piece cover band is known locally for playing various festivals, including Peach Festival, Icewine Festival, Oast House events, Village Supper Market, NOTL Sailing Club gatherings and Pumphouse picnics.

They play music from the '60s, '70s and '80s, and are known for covering bands like the Beatles, Eagles, Billy Joel and Stevie Wonder.

Bass player Scott Robinson said the online show is a chance to connect with fans and people in town who would normally see them live in concert.

This year presented a challenge for the band,



Back in the Daze members Joel Lewczynski, Scott Robinson, Billy Sadler, Jesse Day and Cole Shennan. SUPPLIED

with most live music being cancelled due to COVID-19. So, the band has been forced to rethink how they can share their music and performances.

"Since the pandemic began, we've shifted our whole strategy from what used to be playing at bars and weddings and events across the region, to now being an online engagement band. So, we started out

at the beginning of the quarantine with doing a weekly video series, which was really popular. And then a month ago we tried out the livestream and found that to be a great success. So, we're bringing that back."

Robinson said they played another show about a month ago and it was really successful, with more than 7,000 views of the video. "People really loved it,"

he said. "So we're excited to bring it back now, especially as restrictions are being put in again, to bring some joy into people's homes."

"And it's totally fun. It's a great time to get together with my best friends, play music and bring joy to people."

Anyone who wants to tune in can do so at the band's Facebook page, Back in the Daze, at 8 p.m. Saturday.

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# Jam queen Kim McQuhae scores big at Royal. Again

Brittany Carter  
The Lake Report

An heirloom box of recipes helped Kim McQuhae of Gryphon Ridge Highlands secure first-place at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair for her Plum Nutty jam this year.

She submitted the passed-down recipe for the heritage jam category, one which she says she skips every other year. She decided to throw her hat into the ring after she was given her late grandmother's box of recipes.

"She gifted it to her daughter, this whole box of recipes. And her daughter, my aunt, who lives in the States never made jam because she said it would be too much work. But she found out that I did, so two years ago she gave me the collection," McQuhae says.

For the heritage jam category, contestants must provide documentation to prove the recipe is older than 1967.

"I was looking through the recipes out of curiosity and I found this one. So, I made it and it won champion," she says.

She submitted selections in all 11 categories for the professional jams and jellies tier and placed in every single one. She says she was



Kim McQuhae of Gryphon Ridge Highlands took home three first-place awards at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. BRITTANY CARTER

surprised to win champion for her plain strawberry and plain raspberry jams as well.

"I find those kind of boring because I like to do strange things. I don't do plain very well," the colourful McQuhae says.

But the judges didn't agree; she also took home third place for her Blueberries and Cream jam in the plain blueberry category.

In the single or mixed fruit conserve or preserve category she was third, fifth and seventh for her Nutty Nectarine Conserve, Kiwi Strawberry Almond Conserve and Apricot Almond Conserve. For the single

or mixed fruit jams she placed eighth 11th and 14th for Spiced Apple Rhubarb, Vanilla Nectarine and Blue Fig. In the fruit jam or preserve made with no refined sugar category she took seventh for a Maple Raspberry Walnut jam and ninth for Honey Ginger Nectarine.

Her Vanilla Blueberry Jelly and Kiwi Lime Coconut Jelly took fourth and fifth places in the fruit jelly single or mixed category. For the savory jam or jellies she placed seventh and her My Thai jelly and Herbes de Provence Jelly Rouge was eighth. An Amaretto Orange Almond Marmalade came in fifth in the marmalade category and a Cherry Chardonnay and Kir Royale Jelly took second and fourth places in the spirited jelly category.

McQuhae has been making jams and jellies since 2006 and says she has no plans to slow down. As for how she comes up with each unique blend and flavour?

"They just come to me. I keep a list on my fridge of new ones I want to try out," she says.

At the moment, her favourite is the Spiced Apple Rhubarb.

"I just find it tastes really good. I like the combination, I throw a lot of nutmeg, cloves and cinnamon in

it too, so it gives it a nice warm feeling," she says. All of her small-batch jams are made with very little refined sugars, she says.

Gryphon Ridge Highlands is a livestock farm with registered purebred highland cattle, naturally raised beef and the award-winning jams, jellies and preserves. The farm is operated solely by McQuhae, who also works for a construction company in St. Catharines and serves at a local restaurant.

She initially purchased the farm so she and her horse, Rusty, could live together.

"This would be our spot ... but he actually never got to live here," she says. He died before she was able to move him over from a farm down the road where she kept him.

After he died, she says she became interested in highland cattle.

"I got my first two and then, during the first year or so my little bull was born, and he was my favourite. His name is Bucky, his official name was Julian of Gryphon Ridge, but somehow he became Bucky," she says.

She says he lived to be about 17 years old. And although he is gone, he's never forgotten. She has incorporated various images of Bucky on all of her jam labels.

"He was just so kind and we had such a bond. He's actually buried out there (on the farm on Larkin Road). He was my favourite and that's why he is on all the labels," she says.

McQuhae says she won't be participating in any other markets this year, as the pandemic has forced many to either close or move outdoors throughout winter. If anyone is interested in purchasing her jams, follow her on Facebook at Gryphon Ridge Highlands.

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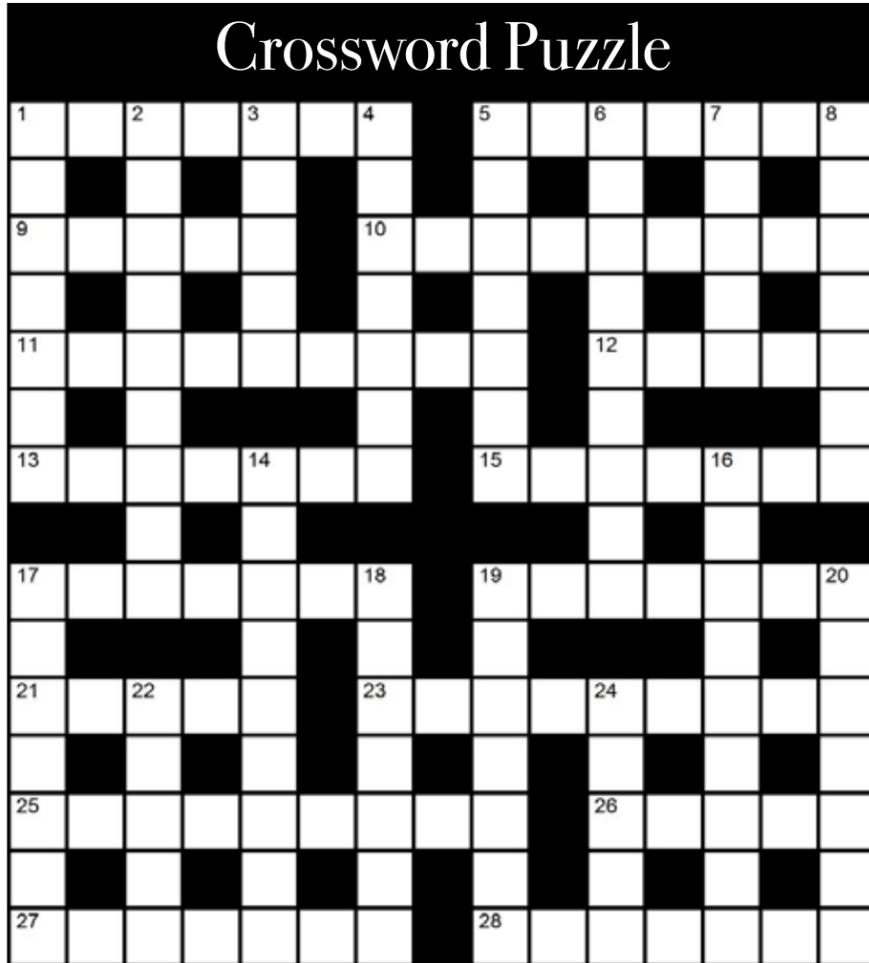
*Have some fun*

**Across**

- 1. Cavalry soldier (7)
- 5. Sawbones (7)
- 9. Middle Eastern bread (5)
- 10. Game show player (9)
- 11. How bidding goes in bridge (9)
- 12. Topic (5)
- 13. Unintended discharge of a fluid (7)
- 15. Green-eyed (7)
- 17. Live together (7)
- 19. Offensive (7)
- 21. Money bag (5)
- 23. Where dolly mixture can be bought (5,4)
- 25. E.g. the DUKW (9)
- 26. Harvests (5)
- 27. Convent (7)
- 28. Packed (7)

**Down**

- 1. Average (7)
- 2. Bone manipulator (9)
- 3. Long flat piece of timber (5)
- 4. Contemptible person (7)
- 5. Genuine (7)
- 6. Kinsfolk (9)
- 7. Best of a group (5)
- 8. Chats (7)
- 14. Lake Windermere town (9)
- 16. Picked up accidentally (9)
- 17. Skipper (7)
- 18. Bear witness (7)
- 19. Maritime (7)
- 20. Laid open to view (7)
- 22. Mature (5)
- 24. Trunk of the human body (5)



Last issue's answers



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# 'Plogging' along for environmental change



*Kyra Simone is a NOTL-born nature lover with a master's degree in biology. In her spare time, she advocates for sustainable change, picks up garbage, makes recycled jewelry, and transforms furniture bound for the landfill.*

Kyra Simone  
Special to The Lake Report

My family and I have enjoyed lakeside hikes in NOTL for many years. However, over time, we began to notice the volume of pollution washing ashore.

About three years ago, we focused our hikes on picking up litter and without realizing it, we had started "plogging." This global movement is a way to help nature while already out enjoying it.

**What is plogging?** This intentional litter cleanup while hiking, running or

even cycling was coined by jogger Erik Ahlström. It is a combination of the Swedish words plocka upp (pick up) and jogga (jog).

With over 160,000 Instagram posts using the hashtags "plogger" or "plogging," the concept has really gained momentum.

Through this practice, each outing is like an Easter egg hunt. Ploggers post artistic photos of their "loot" after a cleanup, similarly to food bloggers or fashion accounts.

Plogging is a good way to raise awareness about pollution. Initially, witnesses to this practice may be confused, but reactions tend to be overwhelmingly positive.

**A "Lake Report":** Last week, I began to keep a tally as I picked up litter along 700 metres of shoreline at Firelane 1. Some items turn up much more frequently than others.

Bottle caps are one of the most common finds: I collected 42. Plastic caps must be attached to containers before recycling and cannot be recycled separately.

However, lids made from different material than the container must be removed before recycling.



Litter collected at Firelane 1 last week, including 17 straws and 42 bottle caps. KYRA SIMONE



I collected 10 balloons on this hike alone, many attached to plastic ribbon. Balloons can entangle wildlife and should never be released.

Straws quickly degrade into small plastic slivers in sunlight. Unless necessary for mobility reasons, one can forgo them or try a reusable alternative.

Styrofoam is also a common beach problem, because it rapidly breaks into tiny spheres.

The Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup estimates

that 3,000 tampon applicators are found on Canada's beaches every year. I think this is an underestimate: I collected more than 100 from Firelane 1 in 2020.

Like the medical needles we also find, tampon applicators likely were flushed down the toilet discreetly. Even though these items carry some needless social stigma, disposing of them this way ends up creating an unsightly beach environment.

Takeout coffee cups were also prevalent along the path. These waxed "paper" cups

actually contain a plastic layer and will not biodegrade.

**Holy Smokes!** Cigarette butts and cigar tips are extremely common as well. I picked up 36 that were probably discarded by folks out hiking.

Smoking litter releases toxins and microplastics, but can be recycled through a company called Terracycle. It provides free shipping labels and rewards for shipments.

It's easy to stick with what's familiar, but rethink-

ing habits can reduce their impact on natural spaces.

**Try It Out:** You can safely try plogging by wearing gardening gloves or using a grabber tool. Most litter that has been out in the elements for some time no longer harbours risky bacteria.

Take the extra step to separate recyclables. If you go plogging, please email editor@niagararow.com with a list of your finds.

As the movement's founder Ahlström says, "With knowing comes caring; with caring comes changes."

## Dr. Brown: Now there are **three vaccines** and two antibody treatments

Continued from Front Page

cells before the virus has a chance to hijack each cell's machinery to make thousands of copies.

One of the most impressive features of the frenetic search for an effective vaccine has been the novelty and variety of some approaches. While some developers stuck to the tried and proven method of employing tame or killed whole versions of the virus to provoke an effective response, others used the shell of the virus emptied of its genome or bits and pieces of the virus's spike proteins to create effective immune responses.

But perhaps the most novel approach has been to use selected pieces of messenger RNA (mRNA) bio-engineered to create copies of one or more of



PIXABAY PHOTO

the virus's spike proteins to stimulate an effective immune response.

In the case of Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech, the mRNA was packaged in tiny fat bubbles. Once injected into the subject, the mRNA enters the host cells where the mRNA directs the cell's machinery to create copies of the spike proteins, which when released into the host's circulation provoke the desired immune response.

Oxford University and AstraZeneca elected to use a tame virus rather than fat bubbles to carry their engineered version of mRNA into the body's cells.

Other companies coupled the mRNA to nanoparticles to safely deliver the mRNA to the body's cells. But whatever the means for delivering the mRNA, the basic approach is elegant, as are dozens of other novel approaches in the works for achieving effective immunity.

So far, the best part is that all three first-out-of-the-gate vaccines based on mRNA technology have proven to be very effective at preventing the disease, including among older test subjects.

Vaccines of widely differing designs and targets may turn out to be necessary. For example, some vaccines may be more effective than others for different age groups and those with certain comorbid conditions.

And vaccines with different virus targets to those initially employed may turn out to be necessary as backups should the immune response to the initial vaccines not last long enough to continue to protect some individuals and the community at large.

Supplies of the most promising vaccines will be limited for several months. In view of this, Western

countries more or less agreed that the first to receive vaccinations should be front-line health care workers followed by patients and caregivers in long-term care and nursing homes, then those age 65 and up, and those with comorbid conditions such as obesity and diabetes, followed by the healthy young and perhaps children, once it's shown that the vaccines are safe for the last group.

On an entirely different note, on Nov. 22, The FDA in the United States granted emergency authorization for an antibody treatment manufactured by the biotech company Regeneron. The recommendations suggest that this drug is best given to those who test positive for the coronavirus who are judged to be at high risk for developing severe COVID-19, but not those

already severely ill.

The following day Health Canada announced that a similar monoclonal antibody treatment produced by Eli Lilly was approved, and like the recommendations for Regeneron, Eli Lilly's product is designed for those at risk for developing severe disease. But it is not authorized for those already hospitalized or in need of oxygen.

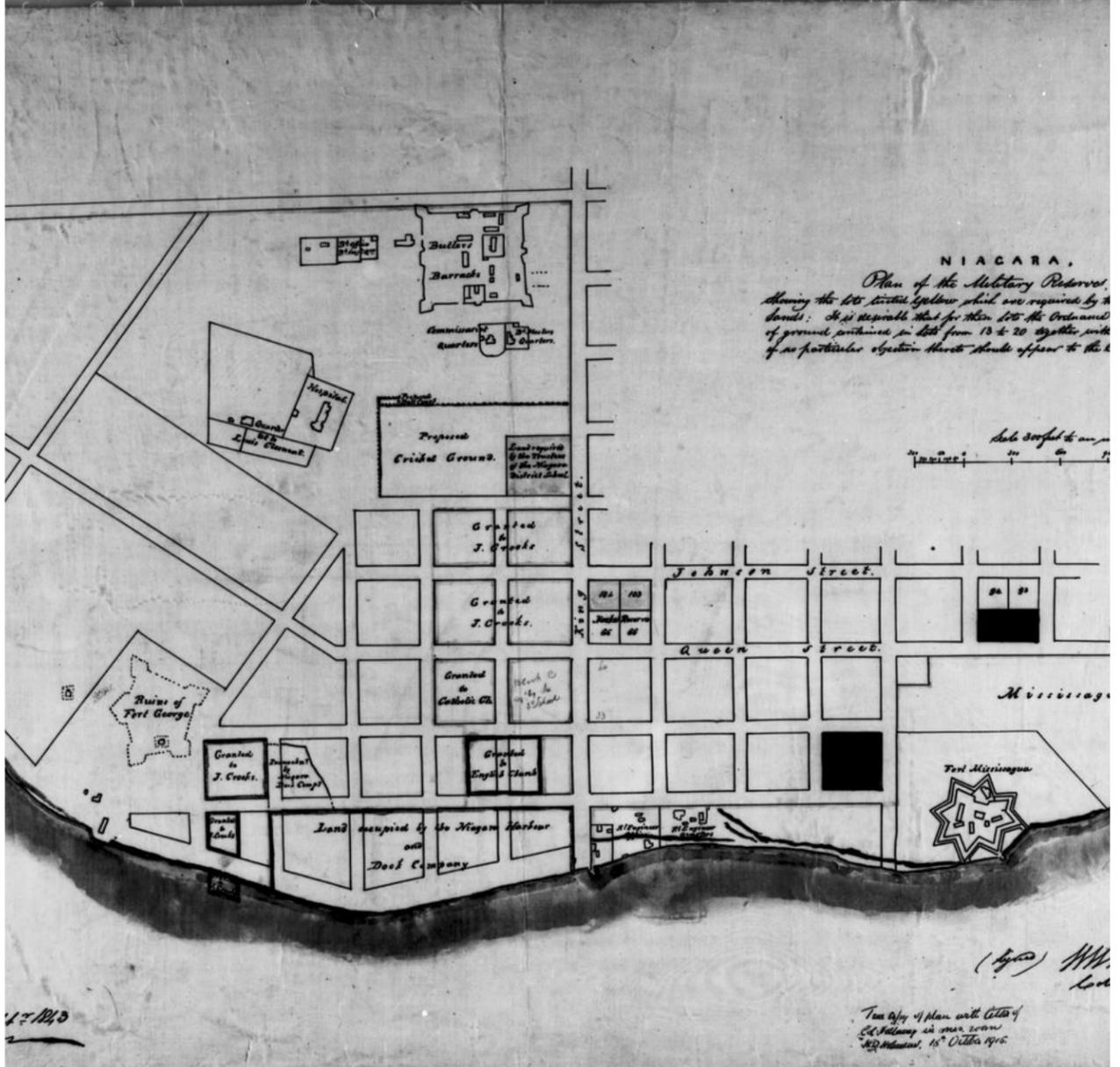
That's a lot of progress in a short time with much more to come on the vaccine front. The progress has been so rapid on so many fronts that the media reports are well ahead of official announcements and health journals.

*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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# NIAGARA'S HISTORY UNVEILED



Left: Rev. T. D. Phillips. Right: An 1843 sketch shows the proposed location of the cricket grounds. SUPPLIED PHOTOS

## The Schoolmaster's House and **cricket** in NOTL

Steve Ferley  
Special to The Lake Report

The history of The Schoolmaster's House (307 Mississauga St., at Gage) stretches back to around 1818.

By 1846, the property was owned by H.N. (Horatio Nelson) Phillips and his son Thomas D. Phillips. The father, Rev. H.N. Phillips, operated a local school in the house with himself as headmaster and his son T.D. Phillips as an assistant. This was actually a predecessor of the Niagara High School which operated from 1875 out of the current Niagara Historical Museum building.

So how and when did cricket come onto the scene?

H.N. Phillips had arrived in Canada from England, so it was perhaps

only natural that the new school would have its own cricket club. In the 1850s it was known as the Niagara Grammar School Cricket Club. They probably played their games in what is now Memorial Park (a layout sketch from 1843 indicates a "proposed cricket ground" in that location).

The seminal work by John Hall and R.O. McCulloch, "Sixty Years of Canadian Cricket; 1836-1896," records that on Aug. 20, 1853 Niagara (H.N. Phillips' school club) beat St. Catharines by an innings and 27 runs. Niagara scored 113 in their one innings (Phillips contributing 10) and in two innings combined St. Catharines managed only 86 (50 and 36).

Recent research by local amateur sports historian Tady Saczkowski – often

using valuable archival information from the excellent NOTL Historical Museum – reveals that the Niagara Grammar School Cricket Club was "reorganized" in the late 1850s, perhaps as a result of some financial difficulties.

Headmaster H.N. Phillips chaired a meeting at which a group of sponsors each agreed to contribute \$1 to the help the cause. The group consisted of F.A.B. Clench, Major Grange, John Powell, H. Paffard, J.M. Lawder, Rev. Dr. McMurray and A. Montmorenci.

Slightly later, in May 1861, the club's committee made T.D. Phillips an honorary member, presumably because he was already seen as a very talented cricketer having represented Canada internationally. The reorganized club was successful in games against

St. Catharines and Stamford. Others playing on the Niagara team in those days were James Flanigan, C. Baxter, J. Clench, F. Long, W. Paffard, F. Paffard, J. Phillips and R. Conner.

The Saczkowski research shows that a second organization – the Niagara Cricket Club – was then constituted at a slightly later meeting on June 27, 1862. J.B. Plumb was elected as the new club's president with E.C. Campbell as secretary – and the records show that H. N. Phillips and A. Montmorenci also attended that first 1862 meeting of the Niagara Cricket Club.

T.D. Phillips was the new club's leading figure. He had learned his cricket in the late-1840s as a student at Upper Canada College in Toronto and was acknowledged as one of the most accomplished cricket-

ers of his time. He played across Ontario and was even selected for a tournament in Halifax in 1874, when travel in the eastern part of the new country must have been a real challenge with the Intercolonial Railroad existing in only isolated sections.

The Hall and McCulloch work lists many of the games in which T.D. Phillips represented Canada against the U.S. from 1857 to 1879, often with distinction, and in 1872 he was even selected for Canada against a visiting English team featuring the legendary W.G. Grace.

So we can see that the Schoolmaster's House and the sport of cricket in NOTL enjoy a closely connected history.

And the linkage to cricket continues to this day even as the town's economic ba-

sis evolves. The Shaw Festival's cricketers, under the guidance of leading lights Ian Joseph, Tim Carroll and Jeff Irving, maintain the tradition by playing the home games of their annual fixture against the Stratford Festival very near to the Commons ground which hosted cricket games in the 19th century.

And NOTL's migrant workers are welcomed every summer to play their games on that same ground.

**NOTE:** While conventional spelling of the family surname in this article might be "Phillips," the vast majority of the historical records (including an article written by T.D. Phillips himself) use "Phillipps."

**More Niagara's History Unveiled articles about the past of Niagara-on-the-Lake are available at: [www.niagaranow.com](http://www.niagaranow.com)**



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## EXPLORING PHOTOS WITH NOTL MUSEUM



### Youngstown/NOTL ferry

Long before 9/11 and the COVID crisis, crossing the border was a lot simpler for locals. One could catch the ferry, shown here, which ran between Youngstown, N.Y., and Niagara-on-the-Lake from the dock at the corner of Melville Street and River Beach Road. The former Customs Shed was located there and if you wanted to summon the ferry boat from Youngstown, there was a light switch on the side of the building which would activate a signal light for the boat operator.

### ARCHITEXT

### Locks and lock-rails

Brian Marshall  
Columnist

I requested quotations recently on the construction of a historic reproduction front door for a heritage house.

Foolishly thinking to save myself some time, rather than do a drawing of the six-panel door itself, I provided a verbal description that included proportional ratios for the panels and size of the lock rail.

To my surprise, their shop drawings showed correct panel proportions but a lock rail of modern dimension. While this error was inadvertent, I realized that the supplier did not understand the functional importance of a prominent lock rail on



All brass rimlock. BRIAN MARSHALL

historic doors.

Let's start by identifying that the lock rail on a panel door is the horizontal member that divides the lower panels from the upper panels. Different than today's small locksets that are mounted in a door's vertical stile, the lock hardware of the late 18th and first half of the 19th century required a fair amount of real estate, necessitating a mounting across both the stile and the rail; hence the term "lock rail."

Here in Niagara prior to

1850, the most common (and affordable) lock was a spring latch; a relatively simple affair made of strap and sheet iron with a brass spring and knob.

Essentially, the spring latch was comprised of a backer plate to which was affixed a pivoting latch bar that travelled within a bracket. A brass spring mounted directly above the latch bar kept it down and in place on a door frame-mounted hook.

Made by the local blacksmith, spring latches varied

in size from a relatively modest 3.5 x 5 inches, to a "fancy" keyhole shape that might be 4 x 8 or even 10 inches. In most cases, the workings of a spring latch were exposed to view, but for a higher cost one could purchase a rim-latch (basically a spring latch enclosed in a case).

During the same period, at a higher cost, one might install a factory-made rim-lock. These large lock-sets (plus/minus 5 x 7 inches) mounted on the interior of the door might have been cast-iron cased with a brass knob or even completely brass and keyed for a deadbolt. Both the latch and deadbolt sat into a frame mounted keeper.

Finally, if you had the pocketbook, you could order a mortise lock from England or France; something typically found only on interior doors in the very finest homes.

That prominent lock-rail did its job until the Victorian era.

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Help those less-fortunate in Niagara. We are accepting food and new unwrapped toy donations at our office at 8 Henegan Road until Friday December 11, 2020. Food donations will support Newark Neighbours and are in great need. Toy donations will support other local charities where accepted.

**We normally get the bulk of our donations at the NOTL Christmas Parade. If you are not able to drop off a donation, we will pick it up on December 9th. Call our office at 905-468-4235 or email us at [fooddrive@notlhydro.com](mailto:fooddrive@notlhydro.com) to arrange a pickup. Please leave your donation outside your front door as our staff will not enter households.**

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