



## Lights, tractors, action

Farmers starting to prepare for annual Tractor Parade in Virgil



Jason Hicks, Baraka Allen and Leslie Mann prepare tractors at the farm of Dorothy and Erwin Wiens for the Virgil Tractor Parade on Dec. 12. The parade has become a popular annual tradition in Virgil, held in the evening so the lights shine extra bright. **Read more about this year's parade on Page 7.** DAVE VAN DE LAAR

### Survey claims most NOTL residents support culture hub at old hospital

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The James. A. Burton & Family Foundation has an interest in developing at the site of Niagara-on-the-Lake's old hospital at 176 Wellington St. and insists no funding will come from the town.

The possible multimil-

lion-dollar project is looking to turn the old building into a hub for a handful of arts, education, culture and heritage groups.

During Tuesday, Nov. 19's committee of the whole meeting, the foundation presented findings through Abacus Data, along with its own separate presentation, aiming to prove to council why a potential cultural hub

for both residents and tourists would be a good fit for the site.

According to the survey results, presented by Abacus Data vice-president Eddie Sheppard, the NOTLers surveyed are in favour of the possible development.

Out of the 331 residents questioned in early October,

*Continued on Page 3*

### Draft budget proposes 14.4% tax hike

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Coun. Wendy Cheropita is focused on maintaining services and improving town infrastructure when considering the 2025 operations budget.

Nov. 20 marked the first of three meetings where finance staff presented a draft budget with a total operating levy of around

\$18.4 million increasing by around \$2.3 million more than 2024.

The operating budget summary included a potential impact of \$204 annually for the average resident based on a home assessed at \$544,000, making for a 14.4 per cent tax increase.

In an interview with The Lake Report, Cheropita confirmed this increase is just a starting point and is by no means final.

"What I feel is that this is a year when I don't want to have a tax increase if at all possible— this is not a great time for most families," she said.

Rather than looking to enhance services, Cheropita said she hopes to maintain services.

During the presentation's question period, Cheropita said that the

*Continued on Page 2*



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# Budget focus should be on infrastructure, Cheropita says

*Continued from Front Page*

service she is most focused on with the 2025 budget is infrastructure. "I always go back to the town mission and that's all about providing dependable infrastructure," Cheropita said.

Cheropita cited a resident survey regarding the town budget conducted in October in November. "The only areas where (residents) were looking for enhancement were roads and infrastructure, nothing else," she said.

"For me that said the number one priority here is infrastructure both in our mission and in the resident request," Cheropita said.

Cheropita also highlighted flooding storm water management. "We've identified issues relevant to climate and also development," she said.

Kyle Freeborn, the town's director of corporate services, said that 98 per cent of the total levy increase is due

to an increase in salaries and volunteer firefighter compensation along with insurance increases, a capital transfer increase, parking funding for transit subsidy, one-time reserve transfers, revenue reductions, vehicle maintenance and road maintenance.

Salary increases and firefighter compensation see the highest increase, rising by \$1.9 million.

The town has also yet to calculate its legal expenses for 2024, but it has "proven difficult to accurately budget," Freeborn said.

The legal budget currently stands at \$650,000 for corporate needs, he said.

Freeborn walked councillors through areas in spending that could be cut to save cash.

Cuts to the dock area reserve, eliminating the parking transfer to transit reduction, eliminating or reducing the use of discretionary grants and a blanket reduction on all contracted services were all options posed by Freeborn.

# Abandoned puppies on road to recovery

Steve Hardaker  
Community Correspondent

It has been nearly three months since a litter of eight puppies were born in the Niagara-on-the-Lake neighbourhood of Niagara on the Green.

Four of the puppies were found abandoned in the neighbourhood park last week.

The four pups were found by a resident that was out for a walk in the park. She immediately took them to the Humane Society of Greater Niagara.

When they were found, they were extremely thin and malnourished. They are currently under veterinary care. They are believed to be a mastiff/shepherd mix.

After their rescue, the Humane Society took to social media in an effort to find who abandoned the dogs. That post was in turn shared on the private Niagara on the Green Facebook page by a resident.

That lead two residents of the neighbourhood to reach out to this correspondent with information about the puppies, including where



Pepper and Backup are two adopted female pups that are doing well and growing in a loving home. SUPPLIED

the other four puppies and adult were.

They were both advised to contact the Niagara Regional Police and the Humane Society and use Crime Stoppers if they wished to remain anonymous. One resident had already contacted the Humane Society.

One of the two residents reported that she had adopted two of the pups, before the four were abandoned. Those pups, now named Backup and Pepper are doing well in a loving home.

They are both females. It was learned that the person who abandoned the pups still had possession of the female dog and two remaining pups. However, tragically one of the two pups died.

It was reported that the deceased pup had been placed in the resident's green bin and placed at the curb.

On Nov. 20 the police, the Humane Society and a representative from the Provincial Animal Welfare Services (PAWS) visited the house as part of their investigation and to discuss this event with the owner. They confiscated the green bin, which was still at the curb.

It is unknown whether they confiscated the adult dog and remaining pup.

In a telephone interview with Britney Howard of the Humane Society, she said the four pups discovered in the park are doing well and responding to treatment. She said they are gaining weight and will be ready for adoption soon.

She said she could not say much more as this is still an active investigation by PAWS.

PAWS did not respond to emailed questions by publication time.

Of the eight puppies that were born nearly three months ago, seven survived and are now in good care and getting stronger by the day.

The Humane Society stresses that help is available for pet owners finding it difficult to care for their animals.

"If you are struggling to care for your pets, please reach out to us for assistance, including surrender options, advice and information about local support programs," the organization posted on its Facebook page last Tuesday.

The Humane Society of Greater Niagara can be reached at 905-682-0767 or via email at [hello@hsgn.ca](mailto:hello@hsgn.ca).

Steve Hardaker has lived in the Niagara-on-the-Lake's community of Glendale since 2010. He is involved in a number of community organizations.

**Editor's note:** The names of the residents who intervened in this near-tragic event are not being revealed in order to protect their privacy.

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## Three NOTL post offices **still open** amid strike

Richard Wright  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Thousands of Canada Post workers have been on strike since Nov. 15, following a year of negotiations on a new collective agreement between the union and the corporation's representatives.

Workers are seeking job security when it comes to working hours and pension security in the form of defined benefits.

"Our concern is that they are opening the door to gignifying all of our jobs," said Zach Lepp, vice president of Canadian Union of Postal Workers Local 614, which represents NOTL Queen Street postal workers.

A gignified workforce is one mainly made up of part-time, temporary or freelance employees.

In a Nov. 22 media release, Canada Post said it recorded a 2024 third-quarter loss of \$315 million.

Other estimates are that the postal service has lost over \$3 billion since 2018.

That doesn't fly with Lepp, who said the organization has spent consider-



Striking NOTL postal workers at the Old Town post office on Nov. 27. RICHARD WRIGHT

able capital investments in recent years.

Hundreds of millions of dollars invested in a new plant in Scarborough, for example, he said, don't paint a picture of a struggling organization.

"Well, that's an investment, not a loss."

"If you want to talk about investing in infrastructure, why not invest in your workers?" he asked.

Workers from the NOTL office refused to comment on the strike.

### Virgil, St. Davids and Queenston post offices

While the NOTL Old Town post office on Queen St. is closed due to the strike, the outlets in St. Davids, Virgil and Queenston remain staffed and open but with limited services.

Residents can still get their mail that was delivered before the Nov. 15 start of the strike and The Lake Report can still be picked up at each location on Thursdays.

The difference in services is due to the unions representing the locations.

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers represents the Queen St. workers and is the organization that led the national walk out, while the the Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association represents more than 3,000 rural post offices across the country and is not part of the collective bargaining efforts of the CUPW.

## Mail delivery to Santa will continue throughout Canada Post strike

Perhaps hoping to stay off the naughty list, striking Canada Post workers in NOTL have committed to making sure Santa Claus gets his mail this Christmas season.

With the nation's postal strike now two weeks old and mediation talks between the two sides temporarily suspended as of Wednesday, negotiations

between Old Saint Nick and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers Local 614 have reached a deal.

"Santa is so joyous that we're still going to be able to get the letters to him in the North Pole," said LouAnne Binning, president of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers Local 614, which represents workers in NOTL.

It didn't take long for Binning and her team to come to an agreement with Santa.

In fact, the conversation on the part of the union was more of a reassurance than a negotiation.

"We as the Canadian Union of Postal Workers have always helped Santa out as Santa's helpers and we decided that we are not going to let our work dis-

ruption affect getting those letters out," said Binning.

Children can drop their letters to Santa in a bin outside the Queen St. post office from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Monday to Friday throughout the work disruption.

"They are going to be sent up to Santa on a weekly basis, so that Santa gets everybody's letters every week," said Binning.

## Abacus Data survey sample was **300 people**

*Continued from Front Page*

three in four stated they want the site to keep its community use zoning and 82 per cent are in favour of transforming the site into a "vibrant community centre," said Sheppard.

Twelve per cent remained in strong opposition to the idea.

Abacus Data is the polling firm that was also behind a survey presented to council in September, which found the majority of the town's residents — the ones who responded to the randomized survey of 300 people — feel tourism is important to the character of NOTL.

Later in the meeting, councillors agreed to conduct their own survey via a

consultant, consisting of a phone survey, focus groups an open house and an in-person meeting to gather resident opinions on what they would like to be done with the property.

This will cost around \$85,000, funded through the town's parking reserves with \$50,000 coming from the 2024 budget and \$35,000 from next year's budget.

James Burton said his purpose is to create a "multi-generational legacy of giving and philanthropy," using the pillars of education, mental health support, art and music to create vibrant communities.

"And we're actively involved in the process," Burton said. "We're not just giving money away."

Burton emphasized that the planned social hub should be an economic advantage to the town.

To fund this redevelopment of the old hospital, the foundation will be looking and applying for federal and provincial grants.

"But we don't expect and don't envision that part of the process is the town putting money into this," he said.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor asked what Burton's views on heritage preservation are within the proposal — meaning, how the cultural hub would play a role in promoting the preservation of NOTL's history.

In response, Burton said the hub can use an integrated approach, using the

location as a gateway for other learning opportunities by partnering with other cultural hubs in town, such as teaching visitors about the War of 1812 and local Indigenous history.

"(It) doesn't replace everything that we presently have, but asks 'What can we do to bring it to life?'" Burton said.

Speaking at the end of the foundation's presentation, Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said the town has "a long road ahead" in the process of repurposing the old hospital site.

"This council has benchmarks to hit for discussion on this property and I hear that you are respecting that," he told Burton.

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# Barbara Worthy and Melissa Achal win big at Women in Business Awards

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Two Niagara-on-the-Lake residents took home honours at this year's Women in Business Awards.

Barbara Worthy, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum's community outreach co-ordinator, received the Cultural Arts Award while Melissa Achal, owner of NEOB Lavender, took home the Entrepreneurship Award and the Excellence in Hospitality and Tourism Award.

The awards are given out by the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce.

"I'm stunned, very very surprised and honoured," Worthy told The Lake Report.

Worthy said she owes a great deal of thanks to those who wrote support letters for her and to Sarah Kaufman, the museum's curator, who nominated her.

It's Worthy's way of bringing NOTL history alive for residents that she is most proud of and why she believes she was nominated.



Barbara Worthy, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum's community outreach co-ordinator, and Melissa Achal, owner of NEOB Lavender, were recognized for their contributions to local commerce at the Women in Business Awards on Nov. 21. SUPPLIED

"I do firmly believe that keeping those stories alive and having them available to the public and making them attractive to people is how we attract people to history — it's how we bring people to this area," she said.

Worthy is so proud to be able to work with the museum, because it is an institution that offers experiences that educate and have people leave feeling changed, she said.

She was one of 13 award winners last Thursday evening.

"I felt honoured to be among such brilliance and innovation, women who have broken so many barriers and done such incredible work," she said.

One of those other women was Achal, who took home two awards this year — a first in the chamber's history.

"It was so inspiring to be in a room with all of these

amazing women with their stories," Achal said in an interview.

Achal brought her 11-year-old daughter Zoey with her to the award ceremony, who found it inspiring too, she said.

Her perseverance with the operation of NEOB Lavender's five stores and farm and all that she has been able to accomplish in the last 15 years is something that Achal is proud of, she said.

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## Have an opinion you want heard?

Send a letter to [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com)

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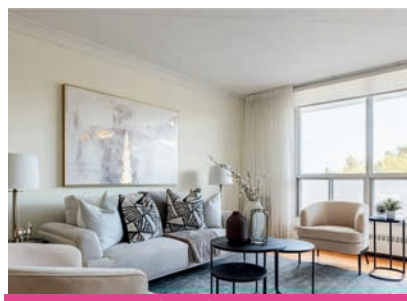


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# Healing Cycle raises \$64K for palliative care

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The organizers behind the Hummel Family Healing Cycle have announced that this year's fundraiser has exceeded its \$60,000 donation goal, raising a grand total of \$64,685 for Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Palliative Care.

Going into the Healing Cycle, executive director Bonnie Bagnulo said she was hoping to reach \$25,000, making \$50,000 with a matched amount from the Hummel family, who match donations up to that amount.

As of Nov. 19, this amount was well surpassed.

"We are so incredibly blessed by the many



Front row: Crystal Riddle, Bonnie Bagnulo, Jeannie Manning and Sheryl Lepp. Back row: Ron Kassies, Vaughn Goettler and Chris Hatch. SUPPLIED

people who believe in the services that we provide here in our hometown and showed their support. Both the town's people and the sponsors generously pushed us beyond our set goal of \$60,000," Bagnulo said in an email.

Donations were matched up to \$25,000 from the Hummel family, along with

another generous donation from the Goettler Family Foundation.

All funds raised will be used to cover all bases at NOTL Palliative Care.

"General donations are needed across the board, for equipment, for programs," Bagnulo said in a past interview.

Thanks to the numerous

donations, NOTL Palliative Care is going to continue its free services and programming this fiscal year with a little more relief, she said.

"This year's donation amount is the largest to date," she said.

The marathon, held on Sept. 22 this year, could be completed as a five-kilometre, 10-kilometre or 25-kilometre bike, run or walk.

Of all the hospice palliative care organizations that held a Healing Cycle, NOTL's team was the highest fundraiser for the fifth year in a row.

"We all came together to serve the people of our beautiful town who are experiencing any life-limiting illness, they are not alone," Bagnulo said.

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# NOTL police officer charged with assault

Staff  
The Lake Report

Niagara police have charged one of their own an alleged altercation at a home in Niagara-on-the-Lake following a police

service call on Aug. 5.

Police said they "determined that an on-duty member of the NRPS had been involved in an altercation with a suspect," in a news release Tuesday.

Const. Ben Tomiuck, a 23-

year member of the police force, is charged with one count of assault. He was assigned to patrol NOTL at the time of the incident.

Niagara police have requested Hamilton Police Service to investigate the

incident to "eliminate any potential conflict of interest," police said.

Tomiuck, who is suspended with pay, was released from custody and is scheduled to attend court on Jan. 2, 2025 in Hamilton.

## Have an opinion you want heard?



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# NOTL company lights up Christmas for Virgil family

Richard Wright  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

A Niagara-on-the-Lake company went out of its way to bring joy into the life of a 15-year-old who has an aggressive form of cancer.

Like almost everyone else, NOTL's Amber Dyck has a specific image of Santa Claus engrained in her brain from childhood.

This year, however, with her daughter Megan suffering from a terminal illness, Father Christmas has taken on a new look thanks to the generosity and love of a NOTL company and its employees.

Megan was born with the rare genetic condition known as trisomy 8 and, earlier this year, was diagnosed with clear cell carcinoma, an aggressive form of cancer.

It is not likely the 15-year-old will experience another Christmas past this one.

On Nov. 25, at the start of the work day Santa and his helpers — Joe Pillitteri and employees from Lakeview Vineyard Equipment — swooped in to grant



Amber and Megan Dyck outside their Virgil home that is now fully decorated with Christmas lights and displays thanks to Lakeview Vineyard Equipment. RICHARD WRIGHT

Megan a Christmas wish by draping the family home in seasonal lights and displays.

"I was saying to my husband Santa looks a little bit different this year," said Amber from the porch of her Cherry Street home as Lakeview employees scurried about like elves to create the Christmas scene.

"Joe and his guys are definitely the face of Christmas magic," she added.

While Dyck had prior knowledge of the miracle

unfolding on her property, daughter Megan — in bed resting — didn't see what was happening until most of the work had finished a few hours later.

"I had mentioned to a few friends and family that Megan loves lights and to see if anybody wants to help us get some up to make it feel cheery this year," said Dyck.

"Joe just showed up big time like he does with his huge heart and is mak-

ing our season a whole lot brighter," she added.

For Megan, when she finally did view what was happening, the scene was unbelievable.

"Honestly, it doesn't feel real," she said after being led outside by her mother to witness the property's transformation.

"It feels too good to be true," she added with a big smile.

She wasn't surprised by Pillitteri and the crew's kind

gesture and hard work.

She and her family have known the Pillitteris for years as part of the community and because of Joe's volunteer involvement with the Terry Fox Foundation.

"Joe makes a brighter light for all kids with disabilities," said Megan.

For Pillitteri, the decision to call in the troops and give Megan her wish of a brightly lit Christmas was an easy one.

"Watching them as a family, how they face this — unfair is the only way to describe it," he said.

"But to look at the grace and love that they have handled their journey with, it really is an inspiration to us," he said.

"Anything we try to do for their family, I swear we have gotten it back 10-fold by using them as an example of how to live and how to celebrate each other in the days that we can, in health and in illness," he added.

Pillitteri's actions also come from a recognition that at times like what the Dycks are going through now, there is precious little

extra time for the things people normally take for granted.

"They are at the stage where they want to be able to celebrate Christmas but their hours are precious and are spoken for with Megan's care and the fact that life still goes on."

"We thought if we could take this one little burden off their shoulders we would feel good doing it."

Dyck certainly feels good about it, not only about what Pillitteri did on this day but also for the tireless volunteer hours and support he spends on helping to raise money for cancer research with the Terry Fox Foundation.

"This is so special and totally is making our lives merrier this season," she said.

"But Joe's relentless work with the Terry Fox Foundation is even more special to us."

"Our Christmas hope is that no family has to go through what we are doing and that there will be continued research so that one day all children will have a cure."

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# Museum celebrated for Cooley exhibition

Richard Wright  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Slavery in Canada — here in Niagara-on-the-Lake — was real.

In 1793, Chloe Cooley, a black woman who was owned by a Queenston man named Adam Vrooman, became the impetus for new legislation to limit slavery in Upper Canada.

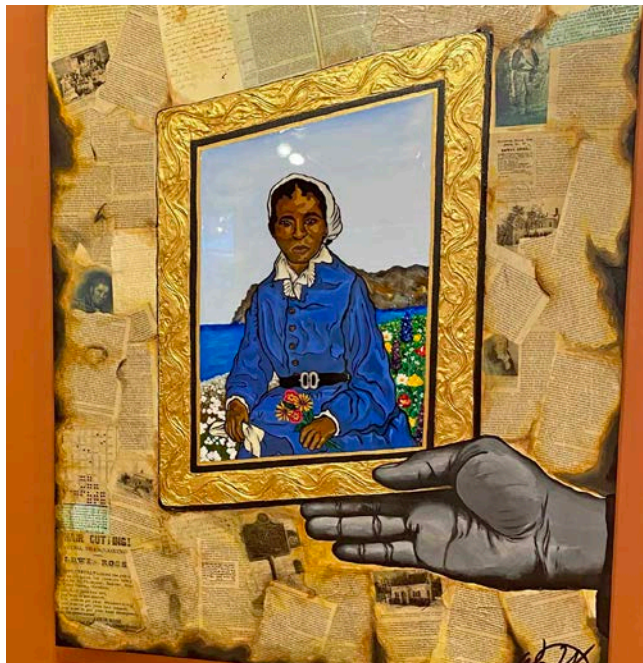
Just over 230 years later, on Nov. 22, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum became the recipient of the Ontario Museum Association's Award of Excellence in Exhibitions for telling Cooley's story.

"We are very proud of the exhibit and the topic it was highlighting for the community," said museum curator Sarah Kaufman.

"A lot of Canadians don't realize that there was any enslavement at all in Canada, and we thought this would be a great opportunity for us to highlight our community's history and shed light on Chloe."

The story of Cooley is, of course, a tragic one.

Fearing that abolition was coming to Canada,



A portrait of Chloe Cooley by artist Wayne Moore is featured in the exhibition. RICHARD WRIGHT

Vrooman — a United Empire Loyalist — decided to transport Cooley against her will across the Niagara River so she could be sold in the United States.

The violent struggle that ensued while transporting her to a waiting boat was witnessed by a black Loyalist named Peter Martin and a white employee of Vrooman's.

Approximately a week later, on March 21, 1793,

the two men — knowing that Lt. Gov. John Graves Simcoe was an abolitionist — testified to her violent abduction before Simcoe and two members of the Executive Council of Upper Canada.

Simcoe responded by leading the charge to pass An Act to Prevent the further Introduction of Slaves, and to limit the Term of Contracts for Servitude within this Province, also

known as the Act to Limit Slavery in Upper Canada, into law later that year.

"This the first act in British North America of its kind, and it happened here in Niagara-on-Lake, which is really significant," said Kaufman.

As the title of the act indicates, it did not abolish slavery in Upper Canada.

Those who were enslaved at the time of its passing remained enslaved for life.

"But if those individuals had children, they were free by the age of 25 and then the children of them were free at birth," said assistant museum curator Shawna Butts.

"What it also stated was that those enslaved people that were brought to Upper Canada at the time, they were free when they were brought into the province."

Cooley was never seen again and her whereabouts never known.

She was named a National Historic Person in 2022.

The abolishment of slavery in Canada became law on Aug. 1, 1834 — a day officially known in this country as Emancipation Day.

[wright@niagaranow.com](mailto:wright@niagaranow.com)



# Tractor Parade returns to Virgil on Dec. 12

Staff  
The Lake Report

What began as a one-off during the pandemic to share Christmas joy with shut-in residents of Pleasant Manor in Virgil has become one of the most anticipated annual events for all of NOTL.

The fourth installment of the Christmas Tractor Parade will take place Thursday, Dec. 12.

"The first year we had 19 tractors and it was a huge success," said organizer Coun. Erwin Wiens.

"It has now grown to about 70 vehicles."

Harvesters, tractors, wheel loaders, backhoes, transport trucks, farm trucks and even vintage tractors will all be dressed in their festive best for the tour around the community.

The parade leaves Centennial Sports Park at 6 p.m., heads north on Four Mile Creek Road to Pleasant Lane then to Eldon Street before taking a left onto Penner Street.

From Penner Street, it crosses Niagara Stone Road, to Concession 4 Road then on to Line 2 Road back to Four Mile Creek Road where it will return to the arena.

# THANK YOU, NOTL!

## With your help we were able to raise \$64,685.13 to support palliative care services in NOTL

We are so incredibly blessed by the MANY people who believe in the services that we provide here in our hometown and showed their support. Both the town's people and the sponsors generously pushed us beyond our set goal of \$60,000. A special thank you to our major sponsors, as donations were once again matched by the Hummel family up to \$25,000, and another large donation was generously given by the Goettler Family Foundation. This crucial service is going to continue its programming this fiscal year with a little more relief. This is our largest fundraiser. We rely on these donations to support our FREE services and programming. This year's donation amount is the largest to date.

Here is a list of all corporate sponsors (\$500 or more).

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The Healing Cycle Foundation is designed to support all hospice and palliative care organizations through the "Healing Cycle" that is held in Mississauga, ON. All hospice and palliative care organizations are invited to participate. Of those who did this year, our small but mighty team was the highest fundraiser for the fifth year in a row.



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## Humane Society sees **spike in abandoned pets**

Richard Wright  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The Humane Society of Greater Niagara is reporting that 2024 has been a disturbing year for pets being surrendered by owners or being dropped off by members of the public who have found abandoned animals.

Statistics provided by the humane society show that 990 surrendered and 1,628 found as strays/abandoned animals have been recorded in 2024 with five weeks to go until the end of the year.

Those numbers are up from 900 surrendered and 1,406 strays/abandoned in all of 2023 and 757 surrendered and 1,078 strays/abandoned in 2022.

The Lake Report has reported on three cases in NOTL involving eight abandoned animals in the past eight months with the most recent being a litter of four 10-week-old puppies left for dead in Niagara-on-the-Green Park on Nov. 19.



Ria Rosenberg in her home with two of the three kittens found on Lakeshore Road on Oct. 22. RICHARD WRIGHT

In late October, three eight-week-old kittens were found on a walking trail near the water treatment plant on Lakeshore Rd.

And there was the case of Zeus the cat.

That story made headlines in April after the adult St. Catharines feline was abducted by a neighbour and dumped on the NOTL side of the Welland Canal.

Zeus was eventually found near Church and McNab roads and returned home after the neighbour revealed where he had dumped the cat.

Despite an investigation by both police and Provincial Animal Welfare Services, also known as PAWS, no charges were laid.

"It's been a busy year," said Cortnie Welychka, senior manager of operations at the humane society.

"Typically, we have a couple of lulls, especially in the beginning of the year and around this time ... but the shelter is absolutely full of animals."

Welychka said when it comes to puppies, 2024 has been the highest post-COVID year for the intakes.

The four puppies — suspected to be a shepherd mastiff cross — that were abandoned last week arrived at the humane society underweight, infected with parasites and in very poor health.

One weighed only two kilograms.

They are now being cared for 24/7 by humane society staff and are mending well.

"They are stable," said Welychka.

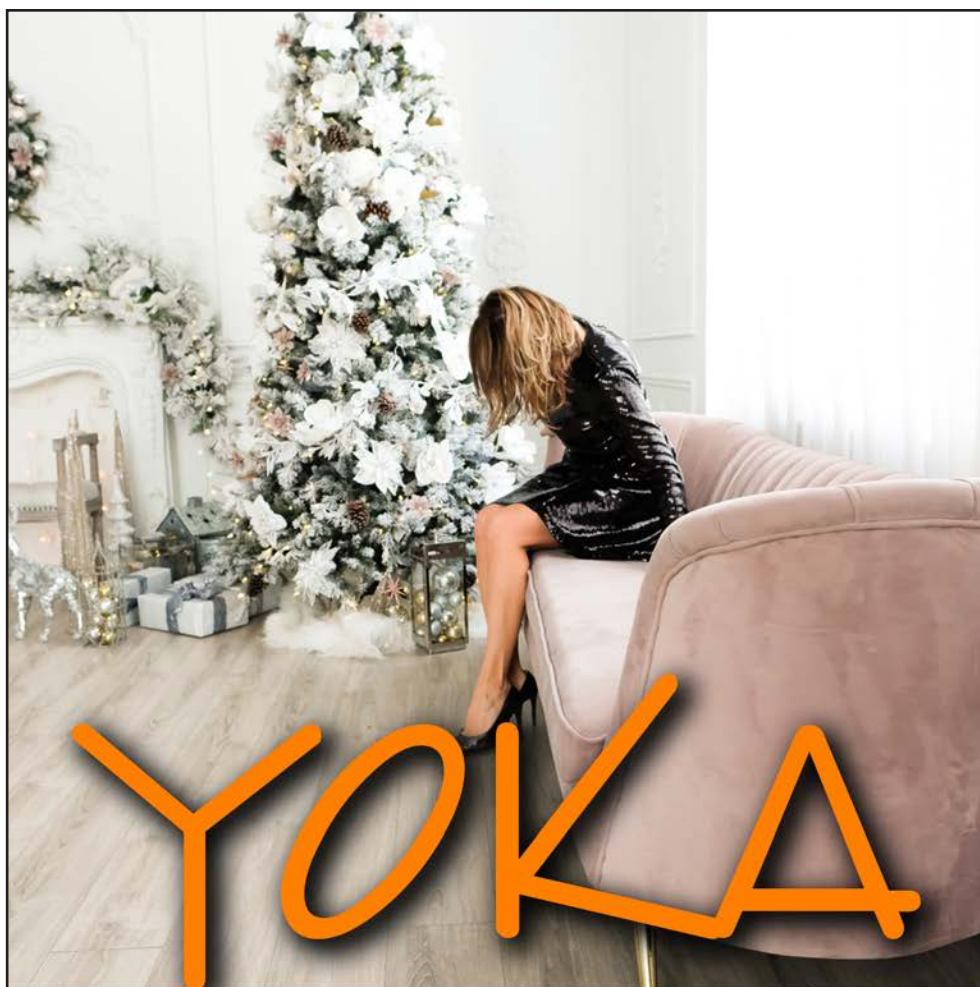
The fact that they were left for dead in a cold park and not brought to the shelter is curious to her.

No animals are refused at the humane society, she said.

"I think people are nervous about our process and things like that and scared to have a communication," she said.

"If someone is struggling to care for their pet, we encourage them to reach out so we can discuss options and provide assistance wherever possible."

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# Rain doesn't dampen animal fundraiser

Paige Seburn  
The Lake Report

Tanya Rice expressed both her appreciation and optimism on Saturday, Nov. 23 outside her home, where she hosted her fifth annual fundraiser to support animals in need.

"My favourite quote is from 'Field of Dreams': 'Build it they will come,'" she said. "Even though it's raining, it hasn't kept people away from coming."

The fundraiser, held from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Rice's home in Virgil, saw a strong community turnout despite the rain.

Rice, alongside her husband Peter and a team of volunteers, organized it to raise money for the Niagara Spay Neuter Assistance Program and REBEL Dog Rescue.

"The community's response has been amazing," said Rice, pointing out how visitors came from as far as Stoney Creek and Beamsville.



Student volunteers from Vineridge Academy, David Mansour and Chloe Lee, lend a hand by carrying donations and supporting the fundraiser. PAIGE SEBURN

All of the proceeds from Saturday's fundraiser — made through the sale of holiday planters, wreaths, bracelets, baked goods, jams and more — will go to the two organizations, which help abandoned animals.

This comes at a time when the dumping of animals in Niagara-on-the-Lake has been on the rise.

REBEL Dog Rescue has rescued and rehomed more than 900 dogs since 2020.

"We're so thankful they chose us to be one of their recipients," said Kori Bowlby, a volunteer for the dog rescue group.

"This fundraiser helps our mission to rescue dogs in dire situations and give them a second chance at life."

While the fundraiser has seen great community support, Rice emphasized the ongoing need for supplies like cat litter and other essentials to sustain animal rescue efforts.

Student volunteers from Vineridge Academy, Chloe Lee and David Mansour, assisted with carrying dog food donations and helping shoppers.

Both dog owners themselves, the students said they were eager to support the cause.

"It feels good to help," said Lee, while Mansour added that they're happy to use their muscles for a good cause.

The fundraiser featured handmade bracelets from Cheryl, the creator and curator of Coconut Quartz. She donated a portion of her sales to the animal welfare cause, said Rice.

Local businesses also played a key role in the fundraiser's success, she said. Virgil's Pet Valu donated pet food samples, while Phil's Independent provided soil for the holiday planters.

Rice hopes to raise \$5,000 this year, matching last year's total.

The fundraiser will continue this Saturday and will also feature a vendor booth at Reif Estate Winery's Christmas market on Dec. 7 and 8.

If you're planning to stop by next Saturday, consider swinging by the nearby Pet Valu — just three minutes away — to pick up a bag of cat litter for around \$10.

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## Short mats, big potential for NOTL

Paige Seburn  
The Lake Report

Ian MacPherson watched the ball roll during a crucial match as the Canadian Short Mat Bowls Association Seventh National Championships wrapped up at the Virgil Community Hub and Gymnasium on Saturday.

The championships, held from Monday, Nov. 18, to Saturday, Nov. 23, weren't just about local pride — they served as one of two key qualifiers for the Canadian team heading to the 2026 Short Mat World Championships in Norway.

MacPherson, a passionate advocate for short mat bowling, has worked tirelessly to grow the sport in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Though the NOTL Short Mat Club isn't part of the national association, MacPherson hopes the championships will show the town's potential to contribute to the national scene.

This tournament isn't just about winning, said MacPherson, who practices in St. Catharines and Niagara Falls due to the lack of local facilities.

It's about showing Niagara-on-the-Lake's ability to be a key player in the short mat bowling community.

"I wanted somebody to take notice. Maybe the town



Chris Empey is a passionate advocate for short mat bowling and has worked tirelessly to grow the sport in Niagara-on-the-Lake. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

could push the Niagara-on-the-Lake Lawn Bowling Club to try to expand — because nobody in the town really knows about short mat," he said.

During the competition, MacPherson wore a shirt representing the Niagara Falls Short Mat Bowls Club, the team of behalf of which he was playing.

The championships saw intense competition across multiple categories. In singles, David Llewellyn took home the gold, with Alan Bell finishing second and Bill McCollam securing third.

The pairs competition saw Gary Pickering and Peter Stuart Sheppard emerge as the champions, followed by Mike Healey and Jules Marsen in second place, while Fred Wallbank and Lynn Frost earned third.

In triples, Pickering, McCollam, and Sheppard dominated, claiming the top spot. The silver medal went to Terry Bradshaw, Alan Bell, and Laura Mounce, while Obed Nnewe, Fred Gundel, and Dave Burrows came in third.

The fours division ended with Pickering, McCollam, Patrick Cote, and Sheppard taking the gold. Marion Brunton, Sophie Burrows, Penny Heneke, and Burrows finished second, and MacPherson's team — joined by Ryan Pascoe, Chris Empey and Tim Jones — took third.

Canadian Short Mat Bowls Association president Dave Burrows' short mat bowling journey began in 2015 when he learned about the world championships online.

Within 24 hours, he

had assembled a team of nine and was on a plane to England.

Although Canada's team lost, it sparked the movement to form a national team, said Burrows.

Now, the Canadian short mat bowling community has grown to 85 players across 24 clubs, with Burrows optimistic about the sport's future.

"Now they say, 'You can't take Canada for granted,'" he said.

Val McWilliams, president of the St. Catharines short mat club offered a tip for short mat bowlers: "You need to have your weight with your bowls. That's a big thing when playing."

While many short mat bowlers also play lawn bowls in the summer, McWilliams said the dynamics are different.

"There's a big difference between playing on a 120-foot green outside and these 45-foot mats," she said.

For MacPherson, the championships are just the beginning. If they keep this momentum going, something quite special can happen for the sport in the community, he said.

With spots on the Canadian team for 2026 on the line, these championships marked a critical step in the participants' journey to the world stage.

## Unwrapping treasures at antiques open house

Paige Seburn  
The Lake Report

As Berndt Meyer stood in his room at the annual Lakeshore Antiques & Treasures Christmas Open House on Saturday, he watched the steady stream of visitors moving from table to table, browsing through the treasures on display by local dealers.

For Meyer, it was more than just a chance to showcase his items — it was a way to share his passion for antiques with the community.

It's great to have people come in and enjoy the atmosphere, said Meyer, who has participated in the open house for years. It's a chance for businesses in the area to come together and showcase their treasures.

Lakeshore Antiques & Treasures held its annual Christmas open house and sale from Nov. 22 to 24, open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., offering a storewide discount of 20 per cent.



Charms of the past on display at Lakeshore Antiques & Treasures.

Each room at Lakeshore Antiques & Treasures is independently owned, with dealers working together through a cooperative business model. Meyer explained how the model allows each dealer to manage their sales while assisting others when needed.

"We rotate shifts. Each person works an average of five days a month," he said. "On those days, we not only manage our own sales but also help with others, making sales and showing

items from the other shops as best as we can."

This collaborative approach adds to the sense of community which makes the open house special, he said.

As someone who has explored the different rooms many times, Meyer offered his thoughts on the variety of antiques displayed.

"You can really see the history and value in each piece," he said, his appreciation evident as he pointed out specific items, such as the delicate porcelain in one room and a vividly coloured piece that came to life under a black light in another.

"Each room tells different stories," he said, pointing out the craftsmanship and care given to each piece.

"It's wonderful to see people coming in," said Dianne Moody, who greeted guests at the door and assisted with transactions.

Moody said it was great seeing the community enjoy the antiques and leave with something that tells a story.

Meanwhile, as people strolled through the different rooms, the hum of chatter filled the air, blending with the scent of fresh-baked goods.

"We really look forward to doing it every year," said Betty Ann Lepp, who ran the apple cider stand and baked goods table. "We anticipate a nice turnout."

The cider, which was sourced from Palatine Hills, proved to be a hit among guests.

As the day progressed, the variety of unique offerings became more apparent, with John Monaghan's Japanese room standing out as one of the highlights.

Monaghan, who specializes in European and Japanese antiques, said the open house provided great exposure for his room — which even has a presence in Japan.

Although his shop wasn't part of the sale, he welcomed the opportunity to share his collection with the crowd.



# Spreading joy, one gift basket at a time

Paige Seburn  
The Lake Report

Beautifully wrapped gift baskets, perfect for the holiday season, drew Hayley Long and Allison Lloyd into Grace United Church's Christmas market on Saturday morning.

Both were visiting from Sarnia, Ont. and couldn't resist the festive display.

"I bought two little coffee mugs with candies and decorations and some dishcloths," said Long. "It's great to see everyone supporting the local community."

Lloyd, who picked up a penguin-themed gift basket, appreciated the sustainable touch.

"It's a great way to get people to recycle because it's already packed up," she said. "It's a great idea for Christmas."

Held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Nov. 23 at the church hall, the Christmas market offered jams, preserves, baked goods, handmade



Volunteers with Grace United Church hard at work wrapping up gift baskets, filled with gently used, regifted and brand-new items for its Christmas market. PAIGE SEBURN

items and, of course, the popular gift baskets.

The baskets, assembled by volunteers, were filled with gently used and re-gifted items as well as new items.

Pauline Miller, chair of the church council, said the market not only helps raise funds for the church but also fosters a sense of community.

"It's an opportunity for us to open our doors and wel-

come people—sometimes we even see new members as a result," said Miller.

The market's proceeds, which help support the church's ongoing operations, were expected to reach between \$10,000 and \$12,000, she said.

Miller, who has coordinated the market for three years, emphasized the effort put into the gift baskets.

"A team of volunteers

works for several nights in October to create themed baskets from gently used and donated items," she said. "People love them. We even had someone today say they found their Secret Santa gift."

The church continues its tradition of hosting this market each year, with hopes of keeping the community spirit alive for years to come, said Miller.

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<p><b>COMMUNITY FAVOURITES:</b></p> <p><b>Legion Fish Fry</b>                      Every Thursday   4 to 7 p.m.</p> <p><b>Duplicate Bridge at the Community Centre</b>                      Tuesdays and Fridays at 1 p.m.</p> <p><b>Legion Progressive Euchre</b>                      First and third Sunday of the month   2 to 5 p.m.</p>			
<p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>Floral Festivities: Ornaments &amp; Ales - 12 p.m. to 2 p.m.</b> - Silversmith Brewery</p> <p><b>A Sacred Christmas with The Undercovers - 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.</b> - Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery</p> <p><b>Holiday Open House - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.</b> - Caroline Cellars</p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>Twilight Jazz &amp; Blues Series - 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.</b> - Hare Wine Co.</p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>LET US KNOW OF YOUR UPCOMING EVENTS</b></p>	<p><b>Charity Bingo for M</b>  <b>Retreat - 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.</b> - Harp Pub</p>
<p><b>8</b></p> <p><b>Holiday Market - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.</b> - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre</p> <p><b>Reif's Holiday Market - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.</b> - Reif Estate Winery</p> <p><b>A Merry &amp; Bright Christmas - 12:30 to 6:30 p.m.</b> - McArthur Estate, 210 John St. East</p> <p><b>Christmas Charcuterie Art Workshop - 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.</b> - Reif Estate Winery</p> <p><b>Seasons Chorale Christmas Concert - 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.</b> - Bethany Mennonite Church</p> <p><b>Christmas Concert - 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.</b> - St. Mark's Anglican Church</p> <p><b>Karaoke - 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.</b> - Legion Branch 124</p>	<p><b>9</b></p> <p><b>Holiday Market - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.</b> - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre</p>	<p><b>10</b></p> <p><b>LET US KNOW OF YOUR UPCOMING EVENTS</b></p>	<p><b>Holiday Market - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.</b> - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre</p> <p><b>Holiday Wine Glass Workshop - 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.</b> - Queenston Mile Winery</p> <p><b>Christmas Trivia - 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.</b> - Exchange Brewery</p> <p><b>Beer And Books - 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.</b> - The Old Winery</p>

Know of a local event? Tell us. Send us an email at [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com)



# Report

# CALENDAR

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Nov. 28 - Dec. 14

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**RIDDLE ME THIS**

This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style.  
 Category: WELCOME TO FANTASY ISLAND

A tropical island seems nice for a new post-apocalyptic society, but I fear a few British boys won't see the end of this 1954 book.

Last issue:  
 Category: CHINESE FOOD  
 Clue: A popular ingredient in stir fry recipes, its name means "white vegetable" in Cantonese.  
 Answer: What is bok choy?  
 Answered first by: Lynda Collet

Also answered correctly (in order) by:  
 Claudia Grimwood, Sue Rautenberg, Bob Wheatley, Susan Hamilton, Catherine Clarke, Marjory Walker-Barone, Jim Dandy, Jeff Lake, Margaret Garaughty, Nancy Rocca, Lynda Hosty, Esther VanGorder, Wade Durling, Edna Groff, David Spencer, Katie Reimer, Margie Enns, Daniel Smith, Jane Morris, Howard Jones, Sheila Meloche,

Email answers to editor@niagaranow.com, with your name, for a chance to win a \$25 Irish Harp Pub gift card every week. (Subject line: Riddle me this)

\*REMEMBER TO PUT "WHAT IS" FOR JEOPARDY QUESTIONS!

Love games? Join us for fun events every week at the Irish Harp Pub.  
 Details at [www.theirishharppub.com](http://www.theirishharppub.com)

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>
	<p><b>Open Session Art Workshop</b> - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre</p> <p><b>Wine and Words with Terry Fallis</b> - 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. - Caroline Cellars</p>	<p><b>Tea with Teddy</b> - 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. - St. Mark's Church</p> <p><b>Paint Like the Group of Seven</b> - 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. - RiverBrink Art Museum</p> <p><b>Holiday Open House</b> - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Caroline Cellars</p>	<p><b>Buffet Breakfast</b> - 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. - St. Davids Firehall</p> <p><b>Community Initiative for Animal Rescue</b> - 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. - 456 Line 2 Rd.</p> <p><b>Holiday Open House</b> - 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. - Clare's Harley Davidson Niagara</p> <p><b>Christmas Craft Show</b> - 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Legion Branch 124</p> <p><b>Christmas Toy Drive</b> - 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. - Revel Realty</p> <p><b>Christmas Bazaar and Bake Sale</b> - 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. - Pleasant Manor</p>
<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<p><b>Red Roof</b> - 9 p.m. - Irish</p>	<p><b>LET US KNOW OF YOUR UPCOMING EVENTS</b></p>	<p><b>Holiday Market</b> - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre</p> <p><b>Candlelight Stroll</b> - 6 to 9 p.m. - Downtown NOTL</p> <p><b>St. Davids Firefighters Association annual Turkey Roll</b> - 7 to 9 p.m.</p>	<p><b>Holiday Market</b> - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre</p> <p><b>Festive Fare</b> - 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. - St. Andrews Church</p> <p><b>Rotary Holiday House Tour</b> - SOLD OUT</p> <p><b>Reif's Holiday Market</b> - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Reif Estate Winery</p> <p><b>A Merry &amp; Bright Christmas</b> - 12:30 to 6:30 p.m. - McArthur Estate, 210 John St. East</p> <p><b>The Great Taste of Canada Experience</b> - 4:30 to 8:30 p.m. - Fort George (Navy Hall)</p>
<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
<p><b>0 a.m. to 5 p.m.</b> - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre</p> <p><b>Painting</b> - 8 p.m. - Terry</p> <p><b>5:30 p.m. to ?</b> - 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. -</p>	<p><b>Holiday Market</b> - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre</p> <p><b>Niagara on the Lake Christmas Tractor Parade</b> - 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.</p> <p><b>Coast to Coast: Canada's Survivalist Women</b> - 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. - Laura Secord Homestead</p> <p><b>NOTL Community Palliative Care - Information Sessions</b> - 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p><b>Cooking Class: Italian Feast</b> - 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. - Inniskillin Wines</p>	<p><b>Holiday Market</b> - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre</p> <p><b>Jane Austen Tea Party!</b> 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. - Fort George (Navy Hall) SOLD OUT</p> <p><b>Holiday pop up Market</b> - 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. - Limited Distilling</p> <p><b>Beef on a Bun &amp; Games</b> - 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. - St. David's United Church</p> <p><b>Martin Murray</b> - 6 to 9 - Legion Branch 124</p>	<p><b>Holiday Market</b> - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre</p> <p><b>NOTL Christmas Parade</b> - 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. - Old Town</p> <p><b>A Garrison Christmas</b> - 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. - Fort George (Navy Hall)</p> <p><b>Christmas open House</b> - 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. - Joseph's Estate Winery</p> <p><b>Beaded Holiday Tree Workshop</b> - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - RiverBrink Art Museum</p> <p><b>Christmas Ham &amp; Turkey Roll and Penny Raffle</b> - 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. - Legion Branch 124</p>

**St. Davids-Queenston United Church**


1453 York Rd. St Davids  
 905-262-5242  
[www.stdavids-queenstonuc.ca](http://www.stdavids-queenstonuc.ca)  
 Minister: Rev. YongSeok Baek

**Sunday Worship**  
 10:30 a.m.  
 Also online  
 Visit our website

  
**Christmas Craft Show**  
 Saturday, November 30: 10am- 4pm

Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 124  
 410 King St, NOTL  
 905-468-2353 [legion124@gmail.com](mailto:legion124@gmail.com)

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m. Special thanks to Rob Harris at GoToNiagara.com for our list of events.





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



Your Lake Report is the proud winner of 112 national and provincial awards for journalism and advertising excellence.

**BKind BGrateful** #6: Thank a life mentor who has helped shape who you are today. Let them know how much their guidance has meant to you.

*This tiny column gives tips to help promote kindness in our lives and spread joy and happiness.*



**Contributed by Patty Garriock**  
 "It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see." - Henry David Thoreau

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 Call 905.359.2270 or send an email to editor@niagaranow.com

## Joyous NOTL spreads warmth



Friends and family gather together to celebrate the holiday season at Joyous NOTL's Jingle Mingle party on Sunday, Nov. 24 at Konzelmann winery, where good food and good times were enjoyed by all. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

## Editorial

# Celebrate for a myriad of reasons

Richard Harley  
 Editor-in-Chief

Can you believe it? Another year has almost passed and it's now settling into the season of Christmas trees, holiday lights and comfort foods.

However we got here so fast, along with the snowy season (we might get some flakes this week) we can look forward to a couple of bright events in our community.

Literally. The Virgil Christmas Tractor Parade will return to light up the streets on Dec. 12 from 6 to 8 p.m. Visit the town's website to find out route details.

And then there's the traditional Christmas Parade that's been running for 54 years now, give or take.

It hits the streets of Old Town on Dec. 14 at 11 a.m. As usual, it will be a massive parade for a little town, showcasing marching bands, tons of local businesses and the Big Man himself.

And if you haven't already got yours, this year's parade buttons (a major source of fundraising for the event)

are designed by NOTL's own renowned artist Trisha Romance.

They're sure to be collectors items and we're told they're available at Phil's Independent in Virgil while you're cashing out.

There's also a plethora of holiday-related events you can check out in our revived calendar centrespread. We highly recommend using it to plan out some of your winter adventures — though it will be changed up on Dec. 19 for our last paper of the year to include our annual holiday wrapping paper.

We're working on a special project with Crossroads school for that, so stay tuned for more positive news.

And for everyone excited about winter (We know, there are dozens of you ...) you can look forward to the newest instalment of our winter tourism guide, "NOTL: A Guide for Distinguished Explorers" which hits the streets Dec. 6.

For the third time, the paper has partnered with Tourism NOTL to bring a guide for visitors to all things NOTL.

If you run a business and missed out on the chance to be a part of the guide, send us an email to reserve your spot in our summer issue.

And wait — what other bright event happens on the first Friday of December every year? Oh yeah, the mammoth Candlelight Stroll celebration.

If it's even possible that someone in town hasn't checked that out before, it's something you simply have to do. A huge crowd of people light up thousands of candles and take a stroll through Old Town to hear dozens of musical acts playing and singing Christmas songs. It's a bright treat, and it's right here in our town. So don't miss out.

As usual, the stroll will collect food donations for Newark Neighbours (which is having a Black Friday sale this Friday and Saturday for the thrifters out there).

While the recipients of the stroll fundraising haven't been finalized this year, we can be sure it will go to someone deserving.

If all that isn't a reason for

some cheer, then perhaps your heart may be two sizes too small.

But just in case, here's a few more winter events to lift your the inevitable depression caused by 4 p.m. darkness:

The Legion Branch 124 will host a Christmas Craft Show on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Pleasant Manor will also be hosting its annual Christmas Bazaar and Bake Sale on Saturday from 10 a.m. to noon.

The Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre is hosting a holiday market starting Dec. 6.

Reif Estate Winery will also host a holiday market with a charcuterie art workshop on Dec. 8. Sounds tasty.

Fort George will also welcome visitors Dec. 14 for its "Garrison Christmas" event, featuring historical holiday traditions, and, of course, musket demonstrations.

And that's really just scratching the surface of all there is to do in town this year.

editor@niagaranow.com



Pauline Reimer Gibson  
 Audiologist

Pauline Reimer Gibson is an Audiologist with over 20 years of experience who loves helping people of all ages in the community. Julia Dick is the Front Office Coordinator and a longtime resident of Virgil. Call Julia today to book a complimentary hearing test.

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### LETTER OF THE WEEK

## Roundabout is **not top priority** for St. Davids

Dear editor:  
 Your Nov. 20 editorial ('Round and 'round we go) on the proposed St. Davids roundabout was spot on and I heartily endorse it.  
 I'd like to add a comment. Any organization,

from a large corporation to a medium-size government (i.e. Niagara Region) to a small household, has limited resources. Any well-run organization, when developing its capital spending budget, will first

identify its needs and then prioritize them so as to most effectively use those limited resources.  
 I ask the Niagara Region why it feels spending \$4 to \$10 million on a roundabout in St. Davids is more

important (i.e. needed more) than using that money to repair its water infrastructure which, according to its own staff reporting, is in very poor condition?  
**Bob Wheatley**  
 NOTL

## Town continues to be **compromised by 'cabal'**

Dear editor:  
 Recently, with the advent of late fall, I've been streaming more. Some shows are cowboy stories with grand vistas, unresolved family tensions and, you guessed it, cattle rustlers.  
 Having heard nothing back (apart from continued residents' support) about recent calls to action — that councillors should ensure transparency by declaring self interests, consult citizens most impacted by arbitrary changes to the official plan and ensure the NOTL economic strategy is more than just tourism — I did more checking on various rumours and spoke with authorities on civil and criminal law with access to the federal Secretary



NOTL town council, minus Andrew Niven. FILE

of State (concerns about cultural properties).  
 I also had a deeper read of the Municipal Act, the responsibilities of councillors for declaring conflicts of interest, as well as the best practice guide for integrity commissioners and the ombudsman.  
 Have a look — they're all public documents.  
 The conclusions I drew

(validated by knowledgeable sources) substantiated several rumours that have been circulating about behaviour and relationships and frankly reinforced the impression that our town (not just the Old Town) has been and continues to be compromised by "the cabal."  
 Calling this out by letter writing and occasional demonstrations appears to

be insufficient.  
 A concerted effort is needed if our council leadership and, for that matter staff, are to be held to account.  
 Expanding the metaphor, the corral has been breached, guardrails ignored, and the rustlers are making off with prize stock.  
 And no amount of sunny press releases negate that evidence. It's time to call up the posse and give coordinated chase.  
 I came across a very good quote in Saturday's Globe and Mail — it read something like, "There's a flavour present of local superiority laced over by a sociopathic disregard for truth."  
 That rang a bell.  
**Terry Mactaggart**  
 NOTL



**Newark Neighbours**  
**Black Friday Sale**

**Friday, Nov. 29**  
**Saturday, Nov. 30**  
**10 a.m. - 4 p.m.**

**2-for-1 on clothing and footwear**  
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# The government's infrastructure games



Brian Marshall  
Columnist

So, I want to start off this week's missive by talking about the Niagara Foundation.

Established in 1962, this organization has played a pivotal role in the preservation of Niagara-on-the-Lake's heritage over the last 62 years.

Not only has this completely volunteer-staffed not-for-profit outfit been instrumental in saving and restoring multiple historic built-heritage sites — the highlights of which might include the Niagara Apothecary on Queen Street, the William & Susannah Stewart House on Butler, St. Mark's Rectory and their latest project, the Wilderness on King Street — the foundation has also underwritten a multitude of lower profile projects in accordance with their mandate to promote "the preservation of the architectural, cultural and environmental integrity of Niagara-on-the-Lake."

Cherry-picking from the foundation's less visible overtures over six decades, please consider their vital role in establishing NOTL's historic district, the photographic inventory of 20 graveyards in NOTL — a very important historical reference — and financing the publication of Peter Stokes book, "Early Architecture of the Town & Township of Niagara," as an effort to inform the general public of the historic legacy which has been bequeathed to us.

In short, for more than six decades, Niagara Foundation volunteers have been one of the primary stewards of our town's history.

And, based on my

understanding, their many activities have principally been financed through fundraising.

Now, in 1982, the town acquired a property on the riverfront at 99 River Beach Dr. for \$20,000.

Both the dwelling and the lot had been neglected and were in a sadly derelict condition.

That said, this piece of built heritage was considered to be a vitally important historic anchor within NOTL's Docklands envelope and, recognizing the need for its preservation, Niagara Foundation stepped up and, in 1986, signed a lease to take over the property.

In the years since, the foundation has spent over \$200,000 to restore and preserve the building and lands.

They also paid into the town coffers more than four times the amount that the foundation actually earned out of the property — these "earnings" incidentally were paid forward into other heritage projects they were involved in.

So, the current lease — signed in 2022 — has a one-year extension clause, which the foundation applied for.

I can only imagine their surprise when, concurrent with the processing of the application, town staff presented a written recommendation signed by the manager of parks and recreation Kevin Turcotte, that the lease not be renewed after its conclusion in 2026.

Apparently, the justification for the staff recommendation is based on an annual shortfall of \$4,500 in covering the costs of town, regional and school board taxes during the current lease period.

It seems to me an odd recommendation given that a new lease would be open to negotiation of the terms and this matter could be addressed.

Nope, instead, the town staff and council simply decide to deal the foundation out.

And, as a final observation on this topic, if



Columnist Brian Marshall says if the town has its "knickers in a knot" over a \$4,500 shortfall for the Foghorn House, it should be "absolutely apoplectic" over the costs being incurred to keep the old hospital on Wellington Street up and running. FILE

a \$4,500 shortfall has their knickers in a knot, they should be absolutely apoplectic over what the old hospital on Wellington Street (and other underutilized town properties) must be costing annually — but, I haven't heard anything about that.

In the same Nov. 19 council meeting, during which the Foghorn lease recommendation was voted on, there were two other matters discussed which deserve comment.

The first was a presentation by Frank Tassone, the Niagara Region's director of transportation services, addressing the St. Davids roundabout.

Mr. Tassone spoke in very positive terms relative to contributions made by roughly 80 residents who attended the Public Engagement Workshop held on Nov. 13, commenting that the event was "really successful."

I am forced to observe that since the region staff had made it very clear that this meeting was not a forum in which any opposition to the roundabout could be voiced — a project which they appear to be very committed to ramming through despite its drawbacks — one suspects

that at least a portion of the citizen participants were there to mitigate damage to the community.

In other words, if we're going to get it anyway, let's attempt to make the best of a bad situation by ensuring the design is at least compatible with the history and character of St. Davids. Let me take the opportunity to thank all the citizens who attended and contributed to this effort.

A point raised by Coun. Erwin Wiens regarding the new sidewalks vis-à-vis who funds the cost of construction was quickly answered by Tassone: The town.

Indeed, I'd also suggest that the bike lanes and green spaces will also be on the town's nickel.

Furthermore, the cost of annual maintenance of any plantings and the sidewalks/bike lanes will rest on the town's future operating budgets.

All that spending for a roundabout that will result in tailbacks on York Road — a situation that will, according to the region's own projections to 2050 data, get continually longer as the traffic load on Four Mile Creek Road continually grows.

These and other issues regarding roundabouts were

visited by this columnist in the Nov. 13 edition of this paper ("Arch-i-text: Of roundabouts and other things"), so I will not beat that drum again.

The next presentation to council on Nov. 19 was from the region's director of water and wastewater services, Phill Lambert.

This presentation can be found on the town's website, at notl.com/council-government/meetings-agendas-minutes, clicking on the Nov. 19 committee of the whole general meeting and checking out the video recording of this meeting.

I would strongly urge every taxpayer in Niagara-on-the-Lake (and the Niagara region) to take the time to watch it.

In short, Mr. Lambert points out that 44 per cent and 49 per cent of the region's water and wastewater facilities, respectively, are in "poor to very poor" and "declining" condition statuses.

And, that 77 per cent of water comes from plants that are approximately 100 years old, while 90 per cent of wastewater is treated in facilities more than 50 years old.

And, as we all know, the older facilities get, the more money it takes to keep them

operational.

Now, if that's not scary enough, Lambert goes on to point out that current annual funding investment in Niagara is approximately half of the \$50 million required to properly address the water operations needs and an astounding 20 percent of the \$115 million required in the wastewater operations.

To be clear, he is talking about the cost of halting the decline in the condition of these facilities and, even at full funding, it would take a decade to clear the backlog.

Niagara-on-the-Lake, with the exception of St. Davids, is blessed by relatively modern wastewater plants. St. Davids' wastewater, of course, is handled by the Niagara Falls facility — which currently running at or over capacity.

Provided that sufficient funding investment is committed, Lambert suggests that it will be 2033 before a solution is put in place to address pumping stations and force main issues in St. Davids.

Oddly, however, no one raised any question regarding the elephant in the room that was left unaddressed — the Niagara Falls facility.

There is a new secondary treatment system due to come online next year but my understanding is that it will not increase capacity.

In the face of newly approved developments in St. Davids, it's a question that should be answered.

Be that as it may, after decades of chronic underinvestment by local governments, they will not be able to address the investment necessary to bring Niagara's water and wastewater systems up to date.

Unfortunately, it will require more spending by the province and federal governments ... and more government debt.

Another fine illustration of the cost of saving money on a short-term basis coming home to bite us.

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

## We welcome your letters Niagara Foundation deserves our respect

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.

Dear editor:

After the article in last week's paper (The Lake Report, Nov. 21, "Town's report on Foghorn house called misleading, disrespectful"), I am annoyed

that the Niagara Foundation is not getting the attention that it should.

If it were not for the Niagara Foundation, most of our heritage would be lost.

Mr. Fred Masters was the last person to run the Foghorn. The building was in a very bad state. Since the Niagara Foundation has taken it over it is very solid and attractive now.

As a fourth-generation resident of this town, I find it disturbing to see all the changes that are happening.

*Hope Bradley  
NOTL*



# Living rough in the time of Trump



## THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner  
Columnist

“They push their things down to the bottom,” Jane said. “So they don’t get stolen in the night.”

We were sitting at a head table in a hotel banquet room. Wine, roast beef, chocolate cake, name tags. It seemed incongruous to talk about sleeping bags. And women living rough in St. Catharines. But there it was. Reality.

There are 560, she said — and an unknown number of men, many over 65 — homeless and in tents in a city of 140,000.

Jane runs a shelter (Westview Centre 4 Women) where stressed people, a growing number of whom

are sex workers, get fed, showered, clothed and (maybe) put on a better path.

She was in this room, sitting beside me, to receive some help from the group I was speaking to. It costs \$300,000 a year to care for 200 daily visits. That’s four bucks per day, per woman. Of that annual budget, she must troll for \$260,000. The United Way chinks in the rest.

So this night, I was asked to come and discuss the effect of Donald Trump on Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara and the well-off people who live here.

As we know, the lion’s share of the economy is tourism and half those folks are Americans. They come for beauty, stability, history, much wine and to spend their \$1.30.

In weeks, Trump will take office. His aggressive cabinet picks suggest what he said in the campaign is what he’s going to do. That has a bunch of economists losing their lunch. The consensus is his agenda will end up whacking Canada.

Worrisome are tariffs. If



Columnist Garth Turner says Trump tariffs could mean bad news for Canadians.

imposed on all imports (as promised), our country suffers. The economy’s barely growing now, so that would suggest recession and job loss. Lower tax revenues, too. Bigger deficits. Economists at Scotiabank, Desjardins and BMO see our GDP falling, but at the same time, inflation may return as the dollar slumps against the surging greenback.

Interest rate cuts would slow or stop, lest the loonie decline more. In the United States, big tax cuts (on corporations, tips, overtime,

retirement incomes) would be stimulative, along with decreased regs and higher incomes resulting from the mass deportation of lower-wage migrant workers.

More U.S. inflation means rates there would likely edge higher, again pushing the dollar while protectionism sheltered American companies and tariffs increased consumer prices. The bottom line is an overheated economy to the south, while we feel some freeze.

You’re a big winner if

you have a portfolio of U.S. equities (the S&P 500 might leap another 20 per cent because of Trump), but if you restock grocery store shelves in St. Catharines, not so much.

Scotiabank warns Trump will ultimately double inflation in Canada and later bump up interest rates almost two points. Local realtors wouldn’t be happy campers if mortgages travel into the five to six per cent range again.

And, finally, the experts are saying all that Trump

bravado and America-first fist-pumping will backfire in a couple of years. The bond market’s already pricing in higher yields, expecting a bout of inflation and inevitable Fed rate increases.

What should you do to protect your retirement funds, for example? Ensure you have a balanced and diversified global portfolio, ideally of low-cost exchange-traded funds, or ETFs. (If you want to see mine, gratis, just send me an email.)

But wait. What about shepherd Jane’s flock? If you already have nothing, what have you got to lose?

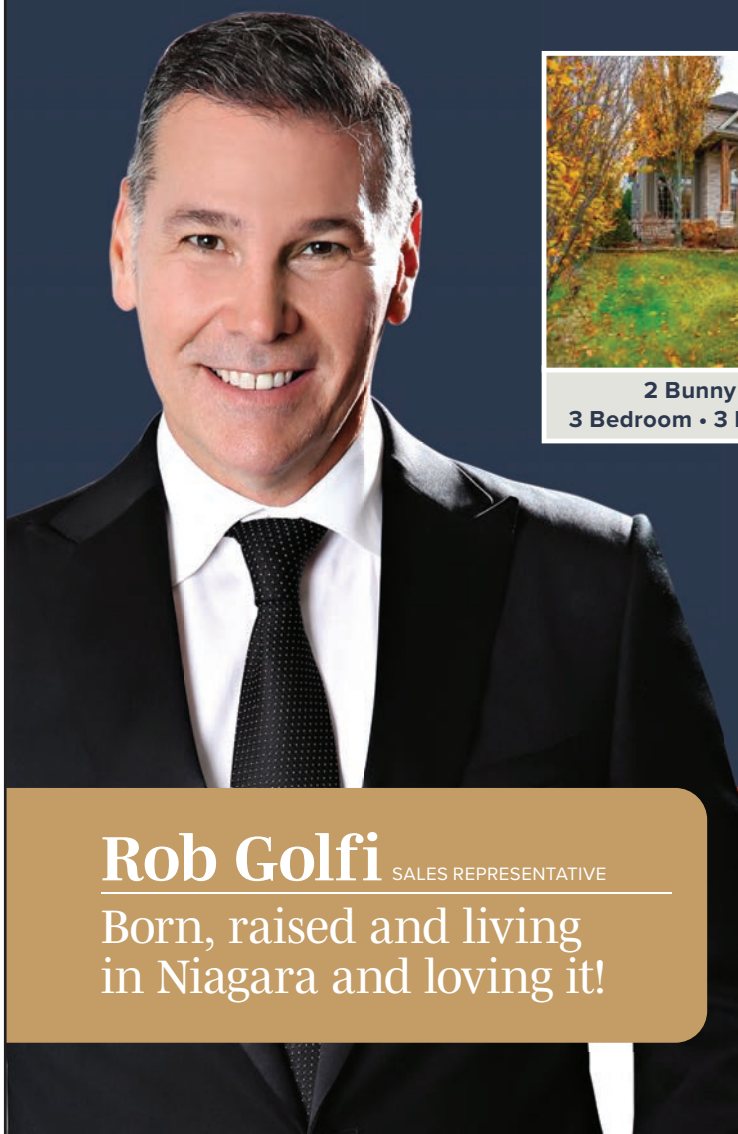
Only everything. Support, opportunity, chances and self-respect. Nobody should have to stuff their clothes or last sandwich into the bottom of a sleeping bag for safety, or a tent with a dog protector on a cul-de-sac shadowed by the QEW. But hundreds do, close by.

We should make them great again.

*Garth Turner is a NOTL resident, journalist, author, wealth manager and former federal MP and minister.*

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# Niagara's hospital system is **in crisis**

## Councillor's care in emergency room reflects experience of many patients



Wendy Cheropita  
Special to The Lake Report

I read with great interest Kevin MacLean's Nov. 21 commentary on a lengthy visit to the St. Catharines hospital, ("The Waiting Game: Observations from a long night spent in a Niagara hospital emergency room").

I had two visits (two days in row) to the St. Catharines emergency department in mid-September after I fainted and fell straight back onto my kitchen floor.

Fifteen minutes later I regained consciousness and in shock made my way to bed (it was early on a Thursday morning).

I had a splitting headache, a big gash in the back of my head, was bleeding and in excruciating back pain. I fainted again.

When I finally gained consciousness for the second time we called an ambulance. I had a four-inch gash on the back of my head, there was a pool of blood on the kitchen floor and more on my pillow, and my back pain was 10 out of

10 from the top of my cervical spine to the sacrum.

We called an ambulance.

At the hospital, I was on a stretcher in the hallway with the paramedics for an hour or so.

What I didn't know was what lay ahead of me. This was my first visit in 10 years. MacLean's articulation of the process that patients experience was so accurate.

From the hallway, I was transferred to the main waiting room and given a metal wheelchair with no padding.

I waited quietly for five hours and was then transferred to area B2 in the emergency department, only to sit for two more hours as I watched one person after another called into the exam room.

It felt like my spine was collapsing. I was in unbearable pain.

I could not sit there any longer and the number of patients ahead of me could have extended the wait for another seven hours. I left the hospital and decided I would call my doctor the next day.

My doctor was not in his office, so an assistant booked me to see Michelle Goodburn, a nurse practitioner at the Garrison Village medical clinic.

Michelle was the bright light in my health care journey. When she looked at my head, she said I had a four-inch gash and it was



Long waits for emergency room medical care are common at Niagara Health's St. Catharines site — and at most hospitals across Ontario. FILE/KEVIN MACLEAN

very wide. She said that it should have been stitched. After eight hours, it's too late, though.

She would not let me leave her office and she called the paramedics. Hesitantly, I accepted.

**“It felt like my spine was collapsing. I was in unbearable pain.”**

WENDY CHEROPITA

She looked at my report from the hospital visit the night before and remarked that I was not given the care I needed even from the paramedics who were in a hurry to leave me since their shift was over.

She insisted I get a head CT scan and back X-rays. Thank God for Michelle.

This time I waited for 13 hours (including 11.5 hours

sitting on a hard surface).

No blood tests were taken, which might have provided some insight as to why I fainted.

I exercise every day, eat healthy and was a perfectly healthy woman before this incident. But the doctor didn't seem interested in finding out why I fainted in the first place.

I was released on Saturday at 4:30 a.m. after seeing the only doctor for three minutes. He remarked, "You're good to go home."

So, I thought I was fine. The unbearable pain continued. I couldn't find a comfortable position. Monday afternoon I got a call from Michelle, the nurse practitioner, who delivered the diagnoses.

I was not fine. I had a concussion, a serious anterior wedge fracture in my L1 vertebrae and my heart rate, which is consistently 120 over 80, was spiking at 140 and 147.

The type of fracture I had changes and reshapes the spine. No wonder it felt as though my spine was collapsing. It was.

I lost one inch of height that day alone from the spinal compression.

Making matters worse, I was diagnosed with osteoporosis 14 years ago, with the most serious bone loss in my spine. I should have been advised about the fracture and to limit any movement as even the slightest activity can cause further damage.

All throughout the emergency department, there are posters on all the walls warning there is "Zero tolerance for bullying and harassment." I certainly agree with that.

What I experienced was a health care system in crisis. It was a traumatizing experience for most of the people waiting just like me.

As well, there were people waiting who come to the emergency room often. They file in with their bag of pharmaceuticals and know exactly how to manipulate the system.

They claim there is pressure on their heart or that they can't breathe. "That's how you get in first," they told me. They were right, they did.

I saw a lot of nurses, but I did not see any compassion or concern for the patients' well-being at all on either day that I visited the hospital.

The nurses sat behind their computers chatting, flirting and generally ignoring everyone. Maybe that's what survival mode looks like. I did see a few busy nursing assistants checking blood pressure and vital signs. They were working hard.

When I was leaving the hospital I asked one nurse how do you approach health care in this busy environment. Her answer: "Process. It's all about process."

I asked Michelle, who works in a private clinic paid for by our health care system, the same question.

Her answer: "I am patient-centred and outcome focused. I want to get to the bottom of my patients' concerns and find solutions to correct the issue."

I think there are solutions to the health care crisis.

Maybe the issue is not more money thrown at a broken system but an entire reworking of the approach to health care.

More wonderful talented professionals working in community clinics with an approach and compassion like I experienced with Michelle would be a good start.

Wendy Cheropita is a Niagara-on-the-Lake town councillor.

**Have you had a positive or negative experience with health care in Niagara? Tell us about it by email at [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com)**

# Architect says Mary Street condo is a **'totally dysfunctional project'**

Dear editor:  
Council is considering approval of this totally dysfunctional project at 223 and 227 Mary St. ("Moving forward with the OLT is a matter of 'right and wrong,' Burroughs says," The Lake Report, Nov. 14).

All apartment buildings require laneways for moving vans and need space where large service vehicles used by painters, plumbers, electricians, furniture delivery trucks, UPS,

Amazon Prime, Purolator etc. can maneuver and park.

Because this building is so large, none of these vehicles will fit on the property.

I don't think that the official plan, zoning and bylaws should be changed to accommodate a bad building that is far too large for the land.

Deliveries cannot be made on site meaning that most of the service vehicles will have to park on Mary

Street blocking the intersection.

Should any of these trucks park on the main driveway, they will block emergency vehicle access, contrary to the building code, and block access to the Owners' parking garage.

Garbage is also a problem. With 41 apartments, there will be hundreds of garbage bags and grey, blue and green bins every week requiring a large garbage truck, which regrettably

can't fit on the property on the small roads all with an inadequate turning radius.

Again, garbage trucks will probably have to pick up from the curb, which will block the most important intersection in town and the only one with a traffic light.

In conclusion, there is no reason for council to approve a building that is so large none of the practical requirements of an apartment building can

be accommodated on the property.

Council should reject the project entirely and request the proponent prepare a revised design that recognizes that the day-to-day requirements of a typical apartment building can only be met with a larger property or a smaller building.

Council should appreciate that the official plan, land-use zoning and bylaws were developed by experts and are not an arbitrary

set of rules that they can change on a whim.

Council should reject this proposal and require the proponent to redesign the project preferably to meet the existing bylaws, zoning and the official plan.

The new design must also meet the functional requirements of an apartment building, which would be insisted on by any other municipality in Niagara.

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# Have some fun



**Across**

- 3. Ringed (7)
- 8. --- Goldberg, actress (6)
- 9. Highway (4)
- 10. Lax (5)
- 11. Last (8)
- 12. Heavy blow (4)
- 16. Predicted (7)
- 19. Spark off (7)
- 20. Belonging to us (3)
- 21. Old match (7)
- 23. Its capital is Montevideo (7)
- 24. Involuntary muscular contraction (3)
- 25. Up-to-date (2,5)
- 26. Covered (7)
- 30. Young lady (4)
- 34. Instruction to keep cool (4,4)
- 36. Tyrone county town (5)
- 37. Forbidden action (2-2)
- 38. Vortices (6)
- 39. Learned the ropes (7)

**Down**

- 1. North Wales seaside resort (4)
- 2. Incentive (6)
- 3. Shrill chirping insect (6)
- 4. Canons (5)
- 5. Landlocked SE Asian nation (4)
- 6. Sketched (4)
- 7. Father (4)
- 11. Spreading out (9)
- 13. Top brass (4-3)
- 14. Death for a cause (9)
- 15. Place (4)
- 17. Earthquake scale (7)
- 18. Value (5)
- 19. Armistice (5)
- 22. Smoke duct (4)
- 27. Approached (6)
- 28. Assent (6)
- 29. Grey (5)
- 31. "Prince ---", Borodin opera (4)
- 32. Spoils (4)
- 33. Individual facts (4)
- 35. Sediment (4)

### Crossword Puzzle

1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
8							9		
			10						
11						12	13		14
					15				
16		17			18		19		
			20						
21			22			23			
				24					
25						26	27		28
					29				
30	31		32		33				35
			36						
37						38			
			39						

Last issue's answers

1	P	Z	P	U	B	H	P									
8	R	O	M	A	N	I	A	N	U	N	D	U	L	Y		
	L	G	L	S		I	B	M	T	A						
11	P	O	T	R	O	A	S	T	P	V	A	N	E			
	O	E	T	Y												
16	R	A	B	B	L	E	S		C	R	E	W	C	U	T	
	T	O	E						U	H	L	A				
20	R	E	M	O	V	E	R		P	R	E	D	A	W	N	
	A	B	E	E					S	I	G					
23	I	N	A	H	E	A	P		O	P	T	I	M	A	L	
	T	R	S						A	L	N	E				
28	S	O	D	A					S	Q	U	A	S	H	E	D
	N	I	O	A	K	N	A	A								
35	V	E	N	D	O	R			E	U	G	E	N	I	C	S
	S	E	E						W	E	E					

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	8				5		3			
5						8		9		
9	3							4	2	
	6		5							1
		2		4					8	
	9	5	6	3						
	7									





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# How **work with worms** led to eight Nobel laureates



**DR. BROWN**

Dr. William Brown  
Columnist

This year's Nobel Prize in medicine celebrates another big step toward understanding a mystery in biology.

How do cells carrying the full suite of genetic instructions manage to differentiate into many hundreds of very different appearing and functioning cells such as those that line the gut to the many types of brain cells that differ in size, shape and connections?

Yet, that is precisely what young cells do beginning with the fertilized egg, part of which develops into the placenta and the other part of which develops into the body — step by step, developing into cells that take on different jobs and appearances.

The answer is that while the same genomes are capable of directing cells down different developmental paths such as, say, Purkinje cells in the cerebellum, they must also be capable of turning off (silencing) whole suites of genes related to

the many other cells in the genome's repertoire, while retaining generic properties common to other nerve cells and general functions such as energy production, which are common to all cells in the body.

That may have been the working hypothesis, but how did scientists prove it?

The answer was often to turn to simple biological systems, banking on the now well-established proposition that the kingdom of all life, while varying wildly in how its members look and behave, goes about its business by sharing many proven genetic solutions to life's diverse challenges across the broad spectrum of evolution's lifeforms — past and present.

This approach of studying simple organisms to understand better more complex ones has paid off handsomely.

For example, to sort out the biophysical basis of the transmission of nerve impulses in nerve fibres, Alan Hodgkin and Andrew Huxley chose the giant squid axon because it was sturdy and much easier to insert electrodes within the giant nerve fibres than would be the case with smaller diameter mammalian nerve fibres.

The tack paid off handsomely and led to a Nobel Prize in 1963.



An adult *Caenorhabditis elegans*. WIKIPEDIA

Or what about turning to aplasia, whose nervous system is relatively simple, to solve the physical and chemical basis of memory, as Eric Kandel did?

His efforts laid the groundwork for our current understanding of the molecular basis memory for which he was awarded a Nobel Prize in 2000.

More to the point of this year's Nobel Prize in medicine, if we want to understand how cells go about developing and specializing, why not choose *Caenorhabditis elegans* (*C. elegans* for short) a tiny, one-millimetre worm

with precisely 302 nerve cells and 959 somatic cells in one version and the same number of nerve cells, but 1,031 somatic cells in the other version, as well as a variable number of germ cells in each version, each cell countable and visible through the transparent worm?

*Elegans* was just the right mix of simplicity and complexity to solve big questions whose answers were generalizable to far more complex lifeforms like you and me.

Sidney Brenner chose *C. elegans* as his tool for understanding some of the most mysterious and puzzling questions in biology and in so doing together with worthy colleagues, he became one of the most outstanding biologists of the 20th century and chose other promising cell biologists to join the growing team.

Their collective studies led to eight Nobel laureates beginning in 2002 and most recently this year's 2024 laureates in medicine or physiology, Victor Ambros and Gary Ruvkun, all for work inspired by Brenner.

Brenner and his colleagues Robert Horvitz and John Sulston won their Nobel Prize in 2002 for their studies of programmed cell death and the genetics of organ development.

In the case of programmed cell death, some cells play interim roles in development — products of less differentiated cells but not yet fully specialized and destined to serve for a time and then die.

Other cells are casualties of competition to make the best connections with other cells in which process the best survive and the losers disappear without a trace.

This year's laureates discovered small snippets of RNA, which they called microRNAs that silenced genes, not by silencing genes directly, but by blocking the messenger RNA (mRNA) the genes created.

It was elegant collaborative work by Ambros and Ruvkun, but when they published their findings they were greeted by silence.

No one was interested, that is until thousands of other microRNAs were discovered in a wide spectrum of species, and it became clear that microRNAs played a large role in evolution.

It's not the end of the story of the biology of differentiation — that exquisitely choreographed sequence of events between the first cell and the complete organism, but it was a big step forward by Ambros and Ruvkun.

Sidney Brenner was the key to the many pivotal

discoveries made using *C. elegans* for good reasons. Brenner was a prodigy who showed his talents early.

He was brilliant, imaginative, focused, determined and had a winning way with people. He led by example with hard work and integrity and a knack for bringing out the best in others. He also possessed a wonderful sense of humour.

Brenner inspired people — they wanted to work with him and hence the Worm Society, which continues to this day to meet and trade stories, many about Brenner and share their studies with those in the *C. elegans* club.

Brenner's leadership skills were very similar to another great chemist, Carolyn Bertozzi who won her Nobel Prize in 2022.

In the sciences where teamwork often makes the difference between success and failure, Brenner and Bertozzi stand out as does Madame Marie Curie, who possessed many of the same qualities and managed to win two Nobel Prizes, one in physics and the other in chemistry in the early 20th century.

*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.*

# A chance to **make people feel good** about their hometown



**Ross's Ramblings**

Ross Robinson  
Columnist

Many people visit Niagara-on-the-Lake and quickly get defensive about their hometown.

Too often when we ask visitors where they come from, they reply, "Oh, just Winnipeg," or "just Buffalo," or "just Hamilton."

They have been conditioned by people from Florida or B.C. or California, who usually stick their chests out a bit before naming their place of residence.

For the past half-decade or so, I have been kindly going on the offensive about

hometowns. The psychological result of this tactic has always been positive and sets up much more pleasant conversations.

For example, earlier this week I had two middle-aged visitors from Manitoba arrive for my free walking tour. On the front steps of the Court House just before 10 a.m., I asked them if they were locals. They sorta looked like locals.

"No, we're just here from Winnipeg for a few days. We love it here."

To their surprise, I quickly said, "I lived in Winnipeg for five years as a kid. What a fantastic place to grow up. The community centres are so active, for children and adults, and Assiniboine Park is such a great place."

Subtly and proudly, their postures changed, and they agreed that it's great to live on the Prairies. It's a dry cold and almost everyone is happy to live where they live.

And, I have always been



Columnist Ross Robinson encourages people to make others feel good about where they're from.

willing to stretch the truth just a smidgen.

For example, just last week we had six people on our tour from Winnipeg, and we were all enthused about camping at Victoria Beach. Not to mention their pride in the Winnipeg Jets. And the Blue Bombers and the Winnipeg Goldeyes.

Not every American is from Florida, Texas or California. For sure, sunshine is great, but sticky hot sweaty

summer weather and gated communities are not for everyone.

This summer especially, it seems like half the population of Pennsylvania has visited our pleasant corner of the world. The wineries and the Shaw Festival seem to be the "primary demand generators." Not to mention the limitless amounts of water constantly cascading over the cliff near Table Rock.

And remember, this is only one-third of the water that should be going over. The other two-thirds is diverted upstream to flow through large tunnels to spin the turbines for the generation of hydroelectric power.

Young Serbian student Nikola Tesla was prescient when he said in the late 19th century he would use the waterfall on the Niagara River to power the world. Water is heavy and we can use a lot of it cheaply.

Isn't that amazing to pon-

der? Now, we have two-slice toasters, hair dryers, amazingly cheap plug-in Christmas lights and so many other handy things to make our lives more comfortable.

Even plug-in automobiles, I read.

Oops! I'll ramble back to my thoughts about making people feel good, just by verbalizing that I love their hometown.

Pennsylvania is a lovely state. Yes, politically a battleground state, but there are so many nice small towns and smaller urban centres.

Have you been to Latrobe, the home of the late Arnold Palmer, and State College or Altoona or Williamsport? Or diamond-shaped downtown Boalsburg?

When someone tells you they are from Pittsburgh or Philadelphia, or Gettysburg or Lancaster in Amish Country, tell them you have visited their area. Immediately, you will have made a new friend.

Yes, we are lucky to live in Canada's prettiest town, but let them know they are lucky to call their hometown home, too.

Their mood will change. They will walk with a slightly more positive spring in their step.

You will have made a random person feel better. You will have been kind, which is a very good thing.

It doesn't cost anything, and you will have made our troubled world a slightly better place.

We have reason to worry about the future of planet Earth in many ways. Politically, climate-wise, and otherwise, doing a subtle good deed can make a difference.

Do yourself a favour. Go ahead and step out of your comfort zone if you get a chance this week.

No matter where a visitor is from, make them feel they are lucky to be from where they are from.

I have found they almost always agree.



# How to grow **amaryllis**



**GROWING TOGETHER** 

Joanne Young  
Columnist

The amaryllis flower has long been one of the top three flowers at Christmas along with the poinsettia and Christmas cactus.

They are definitely one of the showiest flowers with their large, bell-like blooms on tall stalks. The name amaryllis comes from the Greek word for “to sparkle.”

Some flowers come with mysterious mythological stories attached to them and the amaryllis is no exception. Its blood-red shade has a tragic tale behind it, with the story of a nymph called Amaryllis and a handsome shepherd called Alteo.

The story goes that Amaryllis was in love with Alteo and planned to let him know just how strongly she felt by piercing her heart every day with a golden arrow.

Alteo wasn't that impressed by this gory declaration of love and on the 30th day, he opened his

door to find a red amaryllis flower had grown in her place, from her blood.

Growing an amaryllis requires no special skills. In fact, once a bulb is ready to bloom, it will flower with or without you.

When the bulb has finished flowering for the season, the new flower bud will already be developing inside the bulb for the next year.

Even though the bulbs look after themselves for most things, here are a few tips that will help you get the best possible results from these impressive, winter-blooming bulbs.

The key to having multiple large flowers is in the bulb itself. The larger the bulb is, the more flower stalks and flowers you can expect to see.

You can purchase amaryllis bulbs almost anywhere — but remember, you get what you pay for. Less expensive bulbs are usually less mature and will not put on the show that larger, more mature bulbs will. Some bulbs can be as large as 12 inches in diameter.

Many people treat amaryllis bulbs as a one-time thing and throw them away, but they will continue improving with time.

When purchasing an amaryllis bulb, inspect each bulb before you buy and leave the damaged ones at the store. It's OK if leaves



Amaryllis, from the Greek word for “to sparkle.”

or buds are already growing from the bulbs. The most important thing is to make sure the bulbs are dry, firm, and free of mould and spots.

If you are not planting the bulb right away, store the bulbs in a cool, dry place away from sunlight until you're ready to plant them.

You can buy amaryllis bulbs either on their own or sold as a kit containing everything you need for planting them. If you are purchasing or have been given a bulb without the kit, here are some things to consider.

Amaryllis have long stems and big flowers and tend to be top-heavy. So, a heavy pot with a wide base will help the plant stay upright.

Choose a pot that is about two inches wider than the bulb. If you are planting several bulbs in one container, they can be planted about an inch apart.

Use a light, soilless potting mix to plant the bulb into, leaving the top one-third of the bulb exposed above the soil.

After you plant your bulbs, water well to help settle them into their pots. Then keep the soil barely moist, applying no more than a quarter-cup of water per week.

For best results, grow your amaryllis in a relatively cool room with bright, indirect light. The first thing to emerge from the bulb is usually a bud. Leaves and additional stems will follow.

As with all fresh flowers, cool temperatures will extend their life. Amaryllis also make excellent cut flowers. Cut the stems right before the buds are ready to open and display them in a vase with greens or other seasonal blooms.

Rotating the pot every few days will help keep the stems straight. After planting, be patient. It usually takes a month or two for the bulbs to wake up and begin growing.

To enjoy a long bloom season, you can plant different varieties of amaryllis or plant bulbs at various times for staggered blooms.

All that is left is to sit back and enjoy.

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

## **EXPLORING HISTORY** WITH NOTL MUSEUM



### **O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree**

There has been a lot of discussion around the size of the Christmas tree in front of the cenotaph in the Old Town area of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Today, Canadians spend the Christmas season elaborately decorating their homes to the delight of many of us. However, historically decorations have not been as grand as they are today. You'd be hard-pressed to find a Christmas tree in most Upper Canadian homes in the early 1800s. German soldiers, such as those in the de Watteville Regiment who arrived here in 1813, are believed to have brought the Christmas tree tradition to Canada during the War of 1812. It is also possible that a few German families in Niagara would have carried the tradition. The Christmas tree was not popular in English society until 1841 when the Royal Family was illustrated gathered around one in the newspaper. Queen Victoria married the German Prince Albert, who put up a Christmas tree in Windsor Castle and coincidentally, they were seen in the homes of all English families from that time on. The first record of a Christmas tree in Ontario was in 1855 when a young George Boulton wrote to his mother about a tree he had seen at a friend's house. Along with handmade decorations, the trees were also decorated with lit candles, which could of course be very dangerous. By the end of the 19th century, the attitude towards the Christmas holidays and decorations had significantly changed. Simple greenery decorations were now replaced with more extravagant trees, wreaths, poinsettias and even mistletoe. With heritage and traditions in mind, hopefully, residents will calm their frustrations with our modest tree and instead consider donating to the Tommy Holiday Mission. The museum is open from 1 to 5 p.m. daily, so feel free to drop gifts by for the program!

*Image credit: Engraving from the Illustrated London News showing Queen Victoria and Prince Albert around the Christmas tree, 1848, England © British Library Board. P.P.7611*

## Obituary

### George Warkentin



George was born on April 3, 1948 in Hanover, Germany to George and Mary Warkentin. At three months old his family immigrated to Canada, working first on a farm in Manitoba, then settling in Ontario. In 1962, they purchased their first farm near Virgil, Ontario. George was driven by his adventurous spirit and fascination with muscle cars. He began driving transport trucks in his late teens, a career that would quickly fuel his love for independence and the open road. He was always quick to build rapport with strangers along his journey, sharing stories that showcased his vast experience and knowledge of his well-travelled routes. In his fifties, when most people are getting ready to retire, George set out to build his own shop, creating a space for restoration projects of classic cars that he dreamed of as a boy. He had a strong faith and devotion to Jesus. Through his struggles with battling cancer, he managed to continue driving truck and staying active. He had a big heart, always wanting to help out friends and family whether it be lawn care, detailing vehicles, or providing storage at his shop. He will ever be known for his deep love and fiery

spirit, his quick-witted jokes, and dedication to his family and friends.

George Warkentin passed peacefully with his loving family by his side on Tuesday November 26, 2024 at the St. Catharines General Hospital at the age of 76. Devoted father to Justin (Lynsey), Jamie and Kimberley, Grandpa to Whitney and Connor, leaving behind former wife and mother of their children, Debra. Loving brother to Alfred, Gertrude Hildebrand, Elvira (John) Goertz. Uncle to many nieces and nephews. Predeceased by his parents George and Mary Warkentin.

Where there is deep grief, there was great love. Forever in our hearts.

Cremation has taken place. Visitation will take place on Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2024 at the Vineland Chapel of Tallman Funeral Homes (3277 King St.) from 2 to 4 p.m.. Online condolences at [www.tallmanfuneralhomes.ca](http://www.tallmanfuneralhomes.ca)

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