



NOTL to the rescue | Page 7

Missing cat Zeus found, police say **no crime committed**

Richard Wright
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

A St. Catharines man who admitted to trapping a neighbour's cat in his backyard and dumping it

in a rural area of Niagara-on-the-Lake will face no criminal consequences. "The matter has been investigated and concluded and no charges have been laid," Niagara Regional Police spokesperson Const.

Jesse Vujasic said in an April 23 statement. The three-year-old black and white male named Zeus was found by owners, the Clout family, on the evening of Wednesday, April 17 near Church and

McNab roads in rural NOTL. This was after extensive searches in that area and near the family home on Bowstead Drive in St. Catharines. He had been missing since March 4.

The Clouts first suspected the neighbour after overhearing a conversation between him and another neighbour April 10. They say they heard him



Zeus is back home.

Continued on Page 11

Niagara Foundation **buys** the Wilderness

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

After years of intense negotiations, the Niagara Foundation has obtained full ownership of the Wilderness property in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The organization announced Monday that it has acquired 100 per cent of the property, thanks to a \$1 million donation from the Goettler Family Foundation, as well as "several other significant donations from Niagara-on-the-Lake residents."

The forested property is located at 407 King St. in Old Town.

The Wilderness, "as it has been known for more than 100 years," is about five acres and "has significant historic, cultural, environmental and botanical importance within the Niagara region," said a news release from the Niagara Foundation.

The ownership of the property has been debated

Continued on Page 4

Room to grow

Niagara-on-the-Lake urged to do more for aging residents



Left: Amy Bolduc, NOTL's new nurse practitioner, began seeing patients on Monday. SUPPLIED Right: Dr. Anne Wilson joined the Niagara North Family Health Team in October. She says NOTL is in need of more family physicians. RICHARD HUTTON

CODE GREY

"Code Grey" is one in a series of stories in The Lake Report about health care in Niagara Region. In hospital parlance, "Code Grey" means loss of essential service.

Julia Sacco | The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake is home to one of the largest populations of seniors in the province, but it may not be the best place for those who want to age in place. At least, not yet.

Compared to the rest of the province, NOTL has almost double the percentage of people aged 65 and older — 36.2 per cent compared to 18.5 per cent provincewide.

People aged 85 and older make

up 4.3 per cent of Niagara-on-the-Lake's population, again nearly double the province's 2.2 per cent, according to Statistics Canada.

In St. Catharines, for example, StatCan says people aged 85 and

up make up 3.2 per cent of the population while in Niagara Falls it is 3 per cent.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa thinks one reason NOTL is so

Continued on Page 5

Rand heritage landscape elements **called into question** at tribunal

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Which parts of the Rand Estate include historic Dunington-Grubb landscape elements?

It depends on who you ask, said a landscape architect retained by Solmar, which wants to build a 191-unit subdivision on the site.

Tim McCormick, an associate principal senior landscape architect and

certified arborist with Arcadis (once IBI Group), gave his testimony on day 10 of an Ontario Land Tribunal hearing, held Monday, concerning Solmar's proposal for the estate lands.

The proposal has met stiff

opposition from the town and some residents since it was first floated in 2018.

The development wound up before the tribunal after the town refused to grant Solmar permission to demolish structures on

the site, including the pool garden, the Calvin Rand Summer House and the old stable house.

Under questioning from Solmar lawyer Mark Flow-ers, McCormick said fea- tures such as the panhandle

and whistlestop could not be proven to be designed by Howard and Lorrie Dunington-Grubb.

Throughout the early to mid-1900s, the Dunington-

Continued on Page 2



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NOTL has a shortage of physicians

Continued from Front Page

popular with seniors is because it has a lot to offer aging Canadians.

“I would say number one is climate,” Zalepa told The Lake Report, citing the warm summers and idyllic autumn season.

“I’ll say services as well,” he added, such as the community centre, library, a strong sense of volunteerism and ample community events that take place in town.

Despite its many draws for seniors and retirees, Niagara-on-the-Lake might not be the perfect place to settle down in old age as there are numerous factors to consider.

Starting with housing: Zalepa says one of the town’s greatest downfalls is addressing housing needs.

“We have a challenge there because we have a lot of older-style, single-family homes which are on what you might call larger lots. Those are not what seniors are looking for,” he said.

Cindy Grant and a group of concerned community members in collaboration with Niagara College conducted an in-depth survey earlier this year to gather insights from residents aged 55 and up on the housing struggles they face.

Results of the survey haven’t yet been released, but Grant said the need for improved seniors housing is obvious.

“It’s clear from the conversations that myself and the committee have had over the last several months that there is a need for alternative supportive housing for seniors to either age in place or have an alternative to move to that would allow them to stay in the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake,” Grant told The Lake Report.

She doesn’t think there will be a one-size-fits-all solution, but rather a combination of different forms of alternative housing.

Addressing those concerns is something that town council is working on by boosting housing affordability and developing more homes to meet the needs of the town’s older residents, the mayor says.



The walk-in clinic at the Village Medical Centre opened to patients on Monday . FILE

Transportation and walk-ability can also be improved, Zalepa said.

“We are very fortunate in Niagara-on-the-Lake to have good connectivity with paths and walkways. We’re going to continue investing in that,” he said.

Council is dedicated to adding sidewalks and connecting different subdivisions and neighbourhoods in town, he noted.

Medical care is another factor seniors should take into consideration when moving anywhere and NOTL is struggling with a doctor shortage.

Dr. Anne Wilson, with the Niagara North Family Health Team, has been practising in Niagara-on-the-Lake since last October.

And objectively, the biggest problem she has noticed is the lack of family doctors in town.

“What I’m hearing from patients is that they’ve lived here a long time and haven’t been able to get into a family practice,” she said.

When Wilson and Dr. Michael Grasic started in NOTL last year, there were already many patients on their waiting lists.

“Because they hadn’t had a doctor, some of them were travelling back and forth to where their previous doctors were or they were doing remote care.”

This is especially problematic for older patients who tend to have more chronic conditions like diabetes or heart failure. Without access to a family doctor, those patients are more likely to end up in a hospital.

For specific checkups, NOTL falls a bit short.

“I’ve noticed a difficulty with accessing imaging and this affects older patients as well,” Wilson said.

For smokers in particular, CT scans to check for lung cancer are beneficial.

“When I’m ordering these CT scans locally, it is over a year for the first scan to get booked,” she said.

“And this is a population again who didn’t have family doctors and maybe weren’t getting their regular screenings done and now we’re having difficulty accessing scans.”

This affects overall care, Wilson said, especially since many of the older patients cannot drive to different cities for scans, or rely on family members for transportation.

But she says there are many positives and she doesn’t discourage seniors from moving to Niagara-on-the-Lake for retirement.

“I think that people with complex problems can move here, but we need to be on top of what those problems are and we need to advocate to the government to help fund these family health teams.”

With increased government funding, Wilson said the family health team will be able to create special programs catering to the needs of seniors.

“For example, when I worked more rural, I worked for a family health team as well and we were able to get funding for a heart failure program,” she said.

A nurse practitioner who helped patients monitor their weights and adjust medications, ultimately reduced emergency room visits.

While health care is far from perfect in Niagara-on-the-Lake, improvements are being made with the introduction of Wilson and Grasic, as well as the newly opened walk-in clinic staffed by nurse practitioner Amy Bolduc.

It opened to patients this past Monday, April 22.

Karen Stearne, executive director of Heart Niagara, echoed the goals of Wilson and Zalepa, saying that heart health is something to be mindful of everywhere.

But for those aged 80 and over, a nice place to live drastically improves quality of life.

“Fundamentally what people need is somewhere to live. They need something to do and someone to love,” Stearne told The Lake Report.

“Niagara-on-the-Lake has it in spades in that area,” she added, noting the tight-knit community allows seniors to build plenty of meaningful connections.

Her suggestion is simply to make living in NOTL more accessible for people with different levels of income.

“It has to not just be a friendly neighbourhood, it has to be affordable,” she said.

If you or someone you know lives in NOTL and does not have a family doctor, stop in to the Niagara North Family Health Clinic for an application (or download one from www.niagaranorthfht.ca).

Wilson’s and Grasic’s practices are filling up fast and the clinic wants to include as many NOTL residents as possible before opening up to patients outside the area.

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