



A chilly dip | Page 22

Divide grows over using heritage trail in Solmar subdivision work

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

After a long meeting held behind closed doors on Dec. 15, Niagara-on-the-Lake's

council emerged with a public stance on how development should take place on the historic Rand Estate in Old Town.

The town's position puts it on a slightly different path than that of the

residents' advocacy group Save Our Rand Estate.

Town clerk Grant Bivol announced the town is prepared to allow for the construction of a new road entrance into the historic lot from the Upper Canada

Heritage Trail to facilitate the building of new homes on the former estate.

"SORE doesn't support that access," said Catherine Lyons, a lawyer representing SORE. Solmar Development

Corp., which owns the property, has a subdivision plan on the books, which proposes to build 172 units on the historic property.

The proposal has been the subject of an ongoing

dispute between SORE, the town and Solmar owner Benny Marotta since it was first brought forward in July 2020.

Marotta's development

Continued on Page 3

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023

12 months of change in Niagara-on-the-Lake

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

With new development proposals from Old Town to Glendale sparking controversy, the resignation of the town's chief administrator, and the first year of the town's newly elected council, 2023 was a year of change in Niagara-on-the-Lake. And a \$10,000 cash donation from a developer to a town councillor made headlines, however police and integrity commissioner probes found no criminal intent. But plenty more happened in NOTL in 2023. Read on:

January

Jan. 5 edition: Niagara-on-the-Lake council creates a special committee to oversee how hundreds of thousands of dollars generated by the new municipal accommodation tax will be spent, mainly on tourism-related projects.

Former Shaw Festival artistic director Jackie Maxwell is

Continued on Page 14

NOTL female farmers part of a rising tide of women in agriculture



Kim McQuhae of Gryphon Ridge Highlands and Breeze, one of her herd of 10 Highland cattle at the Larkin Road farm. RICHARD HUTTON

Richard Hutton | Local Journalism Initiative | The Lake Report

It's not just in offices where more and more women are breaking through the metaphorical glass ceiling – it's happening in agriculture, too.

Take Kim McQuhae, Linda

Grimo and Rose Bartel, for example.

They are three Niagara-on-the-Lake women – along with others such as Maureen MacSween (MacSween Farms) and Emma

Thwaites (Thwaites Farms) – who have taken charge of their own path in the agriculture industry.

McQuhae has her fingers in many pies, including cattle farm-

ing and an award-winning jam business. Grimo runs a successful nut farm (Grimo Nut Nursery) started by her father, Ernie.

Continued on Page 17



DR. BROWN

Long-term care residents can thrive on love and attention

Dr. William Brown
Columnist

My father-in-law was a good-natured, outgoing man with a sunny disposition and gifted with a lively sense of humour.

One of the many games he used to play with his daughter Jan and grandchildren was the four-liner, which began with holding Jan's hand and her father asking, "Do you love me?" Jan was expected to

respond, "Yes I do", after which Bob, would ask, How much? to which Jan would respond with a crushing grip, or for fun, a weak grip or none at all, at which point both would laugh – to be followed by another round,

this time with a more satisfying grip.

Last September marked four years for Jan in long-term care. Before that there were two years in day care and before that several years of cognitive decline marked

by progressive forgetfulness of the storylines of books she was reading, appointments and names, more errors creeping into her weaving, some of which she

Continued on Page 19



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More and more **women** are taking up agriculture

Continued from Front Page

Bartel, meanwhile, leads Bartel Organics with the help of her husband, Ken, and has been diligently working three acres of land to grow organic fruits and vegetables as well as flowers.

“In my case, I just love animals,” McQuhae said. “I bought my first two cows in 1996 before I had a farm.”

She now owns the 10-acre farm, Gryphon Ridge Highlands, where she maintains a small herd of 10 Highland cattle. She spends her days tending to the herd and making jams, jellies and preserves.

Data from the 2021 Census of Agriculture showed that female farm operator numbers increased for the first time since 1991, when the Census of Agriculture started collecting data.

In 2021, there were 79,795 female farm operators in Canada out of a total of 262,455 farms, up from 77,970 in 2016, an increase of 1,825 or 2.3 per cent.

By comparison, male farm operator numbers dropped by 5.8 per cent over



Linda Grimo of Grimo Nut Nursery said that more women taking leadership roles in farming reflects what is happening in other business sectors. RICHARD HUTTON

the same period.

Grimo, meanwhile, thinks the fact more women are taking charge in farming shows how society has changed when it comes to accepting women in leadership roles.

“The old view was that women were taking care of the kids and the home front to support their husbands,” she said.

“The new view is that we are equal partners in the farm operation, or running them on our own, with our partners, if any, supporting us.”

Women are thriving in this environment, she said, and enjoying their work and agricultural leadership roles, both on and off the farm.

Bartel, meanwhile, said Bartel Organics is a small player in the agriculture business, with most of its products being sold directly from the farm, or at the NOTL Farmers’ Market on Saturdays at Garrison Village.

She and Ben have been fixtures there for 17 years.

“The first time we went, we made \$50,” she said,

adding that with the farm now more established, it’s more common for her and Ken to come away from the market day with 10 times that amount – \$500 – in their pocket.

In a news release, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture said that despite the increasing numbers, women still face several barriers in the industry.

“We often still have to fight to have agricultural service providers, from animal nutritionists and agricultural lenders to farm equipment service managers and agronomists, view us as equal farm partners and informed decision-makers,” Sara Wood, a director with the federation, said in an online statement.

“It can also be intimidating to step forward to take on a leadership position, particularly in organizations where women haven’t previously played very visible roles,” she wrote.

Additionally, she said the women in agriculture, just like women in other sectors of the workforce, face challenges like child care.

All three women said they

have been fortunate to have not experienced some of the issues described by Wood.

“I have a really strong personality,” McQuhae said. “I exude a lot of confidence, so people don’t boss me around.”

Bartel agreed and said her dealings with seed suppliers – Stoke’s Seeds in St. Catharines, William Dam Seeds in Dundas and American company Johnny’s Selected Seeds – have all been positive.

“We haven’t really had much that was negative,” she said, adding that being a small operator helps.

Grimo, meanwhile, said she hasn’t noticed much bias in her sector, as many nut farms are led by women.

“When I am working with suppliers I personally don’t find barriers, but maybe Niagara suppliers are ‘with the times’ more than perhaps other locations in Ontario,” she said.

There have been occasions, however, where she feels she may have been treated differently if she were male.

“But honestly, this is rare for me,” she said. “I had

an old farmer once tell me, ‘Listen sweetheart blah, blah, blah.’ He lost me at ‘listen, sweetheart,’ and I was angry. I knew far more about the industry than he did, but he was ignorant and misogynistic.”

She chose not to stew over it.

“I took it for what it was: an old man who couldn’t see a woman running a farm,” she said. “Fortunately, I didn’t have to work anywhere near him and eliminated contact with him.”

Wood said there is a new federal government initiative for female farmers called the Agri-Mentor program that offers six months of individual coaching for women in the agri-food sector, matching mentees and mentors.

She encouraged women in agriculture to take advantage of resources and to take more chances in their line of work in order to prosper.

“It won’t always be easy, but when it comes to farming, I believe we can do everything a man does – we just may do it a bit differently,” she wrote.

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Christmas came a bit early in NOTL, when hundreds of Santa Clauses went running through town. The small army of red-clad Santas took to the streets of Niagara-on-the-Lake on Dec. 17 as part of the annual Santa 5K run. The run, organized by VR Pro Inc. and Niagara-on-the-Lake Realty Ltd., attracted about 400 runners, who started off at Simcoe Park. There was also an elf run for children before the Santas got moving. The run helped raise money for the NOTL Youth Collective, with donations, sponsorships and a portion of the money from each entry going to the youth group. Race director Kelly Arnott said the turnout was the highest yet, raising more than \$5,200 for the Youth Collective, plus 154 pounds of food for Newark Neighbours food bank. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Town operations leader heads Home-ilton

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report



Head of operations Rome D'Angelo is saying goodbye to Niagara-on-the-Lake and going back to Hamilton so he can be closer to his family. EVAN LOREE

There's no place like Home-ilton for director of operations Rome D'Angelo.

After more than a year of running the operations department for Niagara-on-the-Lake, D'Angelo is returning to his home of Hamilton and taking a job with Hamilton Police Services.

D'Angelo told The Lake Report he'd be leveraging his background managing facilities at the city of Hamilton in his new role.

"I've always been eyeing police," D'Angelo said. "It was only over the last three months that there was a vacancy there. And I saw it, and I thought, 'Wow.'"

Had the opportunity been open to him a year ago, he said he would have gone there instead of to NOTL. He joined the town's staff last November.

The decision to leave has been "bittersweet," he said. "Just driving in between the vineyards, like the fall

or the spring. It's just amazing. It's a touch of heaven."

Still, the regular commute to town from Hamilton is a challenge given the needs of his family.

D'Angelo said he has two adult children living in Hamilton and a mother struggling with early-stage dementia and Parkinson's disease.

D'Angelo said he needs to be "readily available" to his mom as her health declines.

Despite a short tenure, he has a few feathers to add to his cap after his year in NOTL.

"I feel that I brought value to the organization over the past year," he said.

D'Angelo said he was happy to help the town wrap up its fleet review and get it investing in environmentally friendly vehicles for the future.

He also brought up the new children's recreational activities at the community centre, another change implemented under his leadership.

For a small town, NOTL punches well above the belt and was "on the cusp of great things" in municipal

management, D'Angelo said.

The lean team delivers impressive services on things such as coastal protection, tree management and climate change preparedness, he said.

Though he would have liked to oversee a few upcoming projects at the town he looked forward to the work waiting for him back in Hamilton, D'Angelo said.

"They're (the Hamilton police) looking at a combined fire and police station in the Waterdown area.

That's a \$28 million project," D'Angelo said.

The police service is also planning to build a new marina in the Eastport area of Hamilton, he added.

"That's a whole new construction project as well that I could bring a lot of value based on my facility experience."

Looking back on his past year, he said he liked NOTL's big-city attitude and would miss the small, welcoming team at town hall.

"I think it's just a great community," he said.

evanloree@niagaranow.com

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St. Davids model maker creates miniatures of large projects

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

There's a multi-tower, 30-storey development going up right now in St. Davids, but in order to get a glimpse of it, you'd need to head down to Leslie Mann's basement.

Mann, you might say, is a "model" citizen. Through his business, Models by Mann, he has been creating scaled-down representations of buildings for developers for 40 years.

It's something he began to do shortly after graduating from art school at Sheridan College in Oakville back in 1977.

"While I was in art school, I took an elective which was actually sort of a basic model making course one semester," he said.

"That's where it all started."

Now 66 years old, Mann is slowing his pace, but keeping his hand in the model-building profession.

He is now working on a project for a developer in Barrie – the aforementioned tower project.

"I liked to build three-dimensional (things). When I was a kid, I used Lego and Mechano and all that kind of stuff. I never realized there was a career in building models," Mann said.

But what a career it has been. He created five scale



Left: Leslie Mann, with his latest project, for a Barrie developer. Above: Mann with a photo of the model that started his career — the CN Tower. RICHARD HUTTON

models of the CN Tower that were used for promotion of what was once the world's tallest freestanding structure.

It has fallen to 10th with the Burj Khalifa skyscraper in the United Arab Emirates now holding down top spot.

"They would break into pieces, and they were

mounted in suitcases. And they would take them to hotels across Canada and set them up and have somebody there handing out leaflets," Mann said.

He plies his trade in the old-school way but also uses lasers and 3-D printers.

Lasers make the work quicker and easier, but he still uses a cutting blade

for some things.

"I'm looking at it when I finish it, like a piece of art in a way. I'm critical of my workmanship and that sort of thing, whereas they're more building a car to ship it out," he said.

Probably one of the more famous buildings that Mann was tasked with creating was a model of phase one of

the Trump Plaza in Hoboken, N.J.

The facility wound up closing its doors in 2014 after losing money for years.

Since moving to St. Davids, Mann has established a working relationship with west Niagara builder DeSantis Homes and created the models for the company's Century Condos in

downtown Grimsby.

DeSantis turned to Mann after previously outsourcing its model work to China, something Mann said was a trend in the business.

That sometimes meant phone calls in the middle of the night to communicate with the model makers.

Needless to say, DeSantis was happy to be working with someone who was local, Mann said.

"Working with me, they can come here and see it, which is great for me and great for them. So it's worked out."

Creating models takes time, Mann said, with the average building taking anywhere from six to 12 weeks.

Inevitably, clients "always want it yesterday and ... don't appreciate how long it really takes to get it done," he said.

While he has made a career in building models, he is now finding time to return to creating his own art.

"Once I got busy with this, there was no turning back. It was sort of regrettable because I never hardly did any artwork, because I used to do drawing," Mann said.

Now, the model maker is slowly returning to his roots, and in the last couple of years, has been exploring the world of watercolour painting – a chance to try something different.

Niagara College gets \$50K injection to help with food innovation



The funding will support work on wet chemistry and spectroscopy to ensure the quality of various food and beverage products in the food chemistry lab. SUPPLIED

Staff
The Lake Report

If you've ever dreamed of seeing one of your home recipes hit the shelves of your local supermarket, an opportunity to hit the ground running and take your work to market is opening up at Niagara College.

The college is receiving \$50,000 from the Canadian government to fund services at its innovation centre where new food and beverages are tested before they become products available for sale.

Its Food & Beverage Innovation Centre is receiving the funding from the National Research Council of Canada's Industrial Research Assistance Program.

From there, small and medium-sized enterprises doing work in beverage production can qualify to work with the innovation centre, where they'll have the help of staff, faculty, recent graduates and students in making their products market-ready.

Some of the steps involved in making a product market-ready at the innova-

tion centre include prototyping, food safety guidance, testing and producing marketable products.

The target clients for this pilot include not just enterprises working with beverages, but also spoonable and pourable foods, including non-alcoholic, low alcohol, or alternative products (like plant-based and functional beverages like sports drinks).

Project intake is open until March 31 next year. The average project value will be between \$12,500 to \$15,000, comprised of

\$10,000 funding and industry cash.

To be eligible, enterprises must be clients of the National Research Council of Canada's Industrial Research Assistance Program, referred to by an Industrial Technology Advisor or Client Engagement Advisor.

Participants must pay an up-front service fee on average of \$2,500 before work starts.

For more information or to connect with Niagara College's Research & Innovation centre, visit ncinnovation.ca.



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