Mothers latch on to bring awareness

By VICTORIA NICOLAOU
STAFF WRITER

As the saying goes, breast is best. Just ask the ladies of the Niagara Breastfeeding Challenge. Seventy-three mothers from the Niagara Region came together last weekend to participate in the 12th annual Breastfeeding Challenge, part of a world-wide event sponsored by the Quintessence Foundation to have as many mothers as possible breastfeed simultaneously.

Each mother had their own reasons for attending, but one goal was evident: to encourage and support a mother’s decision to breastfeed. “The woman that came to this event, most of them are very passionate about breastfeeding,” said Carrie Chopp, a Niagara Region Public Health nurse who helped organize the event in Niagara. “Some of them, if they’re a little unsure, I think this event helps support them and make them feel more comfortable.”

The annual event provides a sense of community for families that breastfed by bringing them together and giving them an opportunity to support one another. “I’ve done it every year since I had my first almost eight years ago,” said Kirstin Kennedy, a volunteer and mother of three who took part in the challenge. “It gets moms out to meet other moms… getting the word out there that breastfeeding is a good choice and it comes with benefits. We just want to celebrate moms who made that choice.”

Women at the challenge want breastfeeding to become the norm, rather than the exception.

Continued on page 2
Continued from page 1

Until now, the ability to take public transit from Niagara-on-the-Lake to Welland and back was only available to students with a college bus pass. “We had a stronger regional system than the region had itself,” says Kosh. The transition to a regional transit system included the consolidation of routes that were especially useful to students. The routes consolidated included the #21 (Niagara Falls to Welland) and #27 (St. Catharines to Welland). Regional buses now stop at both Niagara College campuses. The 40/45 route includes a stop at the Niagara-on-the-Lake (NOTL) campus and the 60/65 and 70/75 routes now include stops at the Welland Campus. According to NCSAC, the college experienced an increase in numbers of 800 to 1,000 students more than what was expected. In a college of 11,000 students, a sudden and un- expected increase of almost 10 percent is striking. For the number of students we need to move, our students weren’t paying enough for transit said Kosh, explaining that due to the increasing surge of students, a sudden and unexpected amount students pay for transportation, the college ultimately began losing money. During the past five years, the college went from losing $40,000 to $50,000 per year to losing almost half a million dollars in 2017 in transportation fees. The imbalance of students who are able to walk to school and the students who need to commute to school affected the equilibrium of financial needs towards student transit. Ten years ago the rider- ship was 50/50. The mix that is coming to the college now is no longer 1/1, it’s three or four to one. The vast majority of new students are, or live in, Niagara Falls. Of the 11,000 students attending Niagara College more than 4,100 of those are taking the bus in from Niagara Falls. To address the problem, NCSAC chartered two private buses to bridge the gap between the demand of riders and the availability of buses. As of Sept. 20, one bus will pick up students from Niagara Falls and take them to the Welland campu- s and the other will take them home. But the NOTL campus through private stops. These chartered buses are a temporary solution as NCSAC and the Region are working on a more perma- nent solution. The first step toward a solution is assessing the availability of buses and driv- ers in the region. It’s a task easier said than done for a region that has never had to work together on transit. In a statement to Niagara News, the Region echoed their partnership with NCSAC. “Niagara Region Transit is working with your NCSAC and college administration to identify student pres- sure points and we are collaboratively seeking op- portunities to improve the system.” More updates are expected soon as NCSAC and the Region are currently formulating a plan for the rest of the this and subse- quent years.

Breastfeeding brings mothers together

Continued from page 1

Breastfeeding brings mothers together

Mothers, and children, from the Niagara Region participated in the Breastfeeding Challenge Sept. 29. PHOTO BY VICTORIA NICOLAU

Tamsynn Rypstra and her three-year old daughter Av- ey, mother and husband Bill, wanted to be a part of the challenge. Rypstra wore a “Lactivist” t-shirt and Carson wore a onesie that said “Mommy makes -ogen-dairy.” Rypstra also brought her three-year old daughter Avery, mother and husband Bill, to what she calls an important “family event.” Rypstra believes it’s im- portant to include Avery in the challenge. “She needs to see how this is normal and that this is okay because I’ve gotten people coming up to me telling me it was inappropriate,” said Rypstra. “We need to ban together.”

But for many mothers, finding a way to breastfeed successfully is a challenge. Kate Bartlett is a mother of three attending her fifth challenge. She has become an advocate for breastfeeding despite the struggles she faced. "I turned to the challenge because I didn’t know any different," said Bartlett on why she kept trying despite the diffi- culties. “I always wanted to breastfeed my children and I definitely it was hard...but I knew it was best for them.”

"With my first I was a lot shyer (in public) and now I’ve become such an advo- cate and every time I see a mommy out there breastfeed I think that it’s just the greatest.” As a nurse Chopp un- derstands the benefits of breastfeeding and hopes the challenge encourages mothers to breastfeed their children for up to two years and beyond. “It’s the best things you can do for your baby,” said Chopp. "The benefits of breastfeeding are immense. It’ll decrease health-care costs in the future as well because they’ll be less ill- neesses in breastfed babies and it also really improves the health of woman who breastfeed." Allison Bowman, a mother of two and a five- year participant in the challenge, experienced struggle- s when breastfeeding her son. But after receiving help from the Niagara Region Public Health, Bow- man discovered a passion in making sure other moms feel supported in trying to reach their breastfeeding goals. "(The challenge) has been increasing every year since I’ve been involved with it,” she said. “It’s also really exciting to see other moms that are extended breastfeedingers.” And for six-year old Kory, one of the extended breast- fed children, breastfeeding is now more about comfort and attachment. "I’ve been involved with it," says Kory. "(The challenge) has been great. It’s made me feel so much stronger and I’m just happy when I can breastfeed my kids."

Breastfeeding brings mothers and students together

The Quintessence

The City of Niagara Falls may see a larger voter turnout for the upcoming municipal election Oct. 22 than they have in previ- ous elections, according to the City Clerk.

Niagara Falls City Clerk Bill Matson says he believes there’s a possibility the city may see a larger voter turnout for this election because there’s a strong mayoral race, which always tends to bring more people out to vote. “It’s hard to predict,” says Matson. “One of the things that perhaps does drive voter turnout is a strong (mayoral) race, so I think anybody who’d consider there to be more well- known candidates, and we have that in Niagara Falls.”

The mayoral candidates for the upcoming election include Kim Craitor, Kip Finn, Dinah Lilia Mansour and Jim Diodati, who is the current mayor of the city. Diodati was not present to show up based on previous statements he made about an early campaign. Niagara Falls is expected to have a “great turnout” of 1,077 voters.

Matson says municipal elections usually have the lowest voter turnout in comparison to provincial and federal elections, and Niagara Falls tends to get around 40 per cent. The Niagara Region has released a statement on their website explaining to residents on the voters list that they should expect to receive a voting information notice in the mail before the day of the election. Matson says these notices are not a ticket to vote, but will inform residents of the Niagara Region where they will be able to vote for the upcoming municipal election.

In order to vote, residents must bring one piece of identification that has his or her address on it to the voting location. The Region also stated that bringing the voting information notice card will help make for a “seamless voting experi- ence,” because many Ni- agaras municipalities will be sending them in place of a voting notice to issue the ballots. Domestic students who are in the Niagara Region for post-secondary education will be mailed a notice to issue the ballots. Domestic students who are in the Niagara Region for post-secondary education will be mailed a notice to issue the ballots.

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By LINDSAY LARABEE-STAFF WRITER

Voting options for students

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Dozens protest at Marineland
Animal activists unite to protest against amusement and game park following death of owner

By MADISON JUDSON

As cars drove by honking and blaring their approval at protesters lining the Niagara Falls street, dozens of people chose to spend their Thanksgiving weekend fighting for animal rights.

The last protest of the season, activists wanted to make sure Marineland heard their voices.

“We stand up for animals who can’t speak for themselves,” said Karita Kelf, who drove from Toronto to participate in her first Marineland demonstration with daughter Aida.

“It’s so wrong. There’s no excuse that says exploitation of any animal is acceptable.”

Melissa Hayward has been organizing the Marineland demonstrations for two years, but the protests have been going on much longer, always held on opening day, Labour Day, and closing day of each Marine-land season. Activists gather on Portage Road to protest.

Kelf and her daughter have become animal activists during the last year, participating in other animal rights protests, including Cube of Truth and demonstrations outside slaughterhouses.

But this was the first chance they had to join the protesters in Niagara Falls. Kelf and fellow activist Marina Decker, want to see Marineland close their doors and give the animals a chance to live a better life.

“We’re not better than these animals. They feel the same things that we feel. And they have no voice and we need to speak for them,” said Kelf. “They have lives and they have rights and they have feelings and emotions and families just like we do.”

Hayward and Decker said they believe there are numerous ways for Marine-land to remain profitable without using animals as entertainment.

“It’s not that you want someone out of jobs. You can totally have an amusement park. You can have everything,” said Decker. “It doesn’t need to have ani-mals in there as well.”

Whether Marineland becomes a ride park similar to Canada’s Wonderland, or turns into an outdoor concert arena, Hayward strongly believes that Marineland needs to make a change.

“Their business model right now isn’t doing so well so they should really recon-sider… We’re watching the attendance dwindle,” said Hayward.

“Obviously we’re doing something right, but it’s a little up in the air right now with what they’re going to be doing especially after the passing of the owner.”

Marineland founder John Holer died this past sum-mer. Since Holer’s death, no Marineland official has spoken publicly about the park’s future. This has left some protesters and activ-ists uncertain, but hopeful, about the park’s future.

“We’re waiting to hear what Marineland plans to do next… and that’ll let us know what we’re doing next as well,” said Hayward.

Hayward said there are big plans in the works for opening day if Marine-land does open again next spring. But Hayeys and the other protesters were clear about one thing:

“We’re not going anywhere,” said Hayward. “We will return again and we will continue to return as long as they’re open.”

Niagara Regional Police were on site to help with traffic, protect protesters and maintain order.

Marineland officials have always maintained their an-imals are properly cared for and that the park complies with rules and regulations as mandated under law.

Marineland did not respond when reached for comment.

Are prices in the new cafeteria too high?

By MADISON JUDSON

Day after day, the cafet-earias at Niagara College are flooded with students buy-ing food for the day ahead — but sometimes it is at a steep price.

Many of the prices on the food offered at the cafeteria are what one would call expensive.

“Okay, yeah, it’s overpriced,” said Child and Youth Care program student Kayaha Alkema.

“It’s way cheaper.”

The cafeteria on the Welland campus offers a variety of eating establish-ments to make your choice. From Tim Horton’s to Sub-ways, burgers, sushi to Chef’s Cuisine, the selection is vast and caters to a variety of eating establish-ments tend to be pricier.

“Everyone has different eating habits for students. Some students do not have a lot of money and they have to pack their own lunches for the day and often buy food from other locations. Some even go off campus to get food. There are a lot of students who can’t pay the prices of cafeteria food.”

By VICTORIA NICOLAOU

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United Way goal: $40,000

By BRIENAH CASSAR

The United Way campaign is back at Niagara College with a variety of annual fundraising events.

Niagara College has already made signifi-cant progress with about $27,500 raised so far.

The goal for this year is $40,000 says Carolyn Triemstra, the college’s dean of Community and Health Studies.

“Every dollar counts and goes towards support for those in need within the Niagara region,” said Triemstra.

“Please donate what you can. We appreciate your generosity.”

The college has been run-ning United Way campaigns since 1991.

Since then, Niagara Col-lege has raised more than $750,000 for the United Way.

United Way is a non-prof-it, charitable organization that works to help those in need. Their goal is to support the newly-merged United Way Niagara and to support locals in the region.

The new United Way was formed in Denver, CO in 1887 by a small group of people who believed there was a better way to help others.

Several campaign events are lined up for October and parts of November.

Some of those events include:

Chartwells 5 Pancake Breakfast at the Welland campus cafeteria on Oct. 16 from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m.

Bench-To-Go Coffee Drive from Nov. 5 to 9 with a por-portion of all sales supporting NC’s United Way workplace campaign.

Chartwells dining services advertising their event in the new student cafeteria at the Welland campus.

NIAHGA NEWS • Oct. 12, 2018
Children spending too much time on screens

With each day, technology advances and more and more kids are living their lives through a screen. Between television, computers, game consoles, tablets and phones, among others, the amount of screen-time for any kid or teenager should be monitored by a parent.

Technology is used for various reasons. It’s an easy way for kids to connect with friends, seek entertainment and do schoolwork, among many other things. But there are many risks to spending too much time on a screen. That’s something parents need to keep in mind.

This includes depression, along with other mental health issues. According to research done by Jean Twenge, the most depressed teens were those who spent more than 20 hours a week using electronic devices. Compare that to the happiest teens who prefer to interact in person as they only spend around five hours a week using electronic devices. It also has an effect on physical health. According to the American Heart Association, kids suffering from too much screen time can have high cholesterol and gain weight. Cardiologist Tara Narula believes that kids typically snack when they are in front of a screen. And because they are so focused when playing a game or watching a movie, they don’t listen to their ‘body’ telling them to stop eating.

Finally a study from Childwise found that 23 percent of kids have felt tired or missed sleep because they were connected to either an electronic device or their social media accounts. These are just a few risks that kids experience when they experience too much screen time. Maybe it’s time for parents to limit it. Or at least it’s time to discuss the risks of it with their children.

And the parents can’t just talk about the risks to their kids, they also need to set an example. It’s tough for them to do that though, mainly because they are addicted to social media and their phones just as much as the kids.

It’s so common to see parents on their devices when they are in the community with their kids. Nowadays at a restaurant, you glance around to tables and instead of talking to one another, every family member is on a phone or tablet. Maybe it’s time for people within a family to spend quality time with each other instead of constantly being connected to their phones or social media during those moments.

Again, there is no denying the benefits of electronic devices and technology. But be smart about it. Monitor it. Talk about it.

RILEY RADOBENKO

Women deserve leadership roles

Over the last few years, Canadians have been waiting to see a big change when looking at who holds power within their country, both in political office and in the boardroom. There have been many more women trying to achieve leadership positions within their jobs as a career goal for themselves.

This is a large step in the right direction, but we still have a very, very long way to go. According to the Canadian Women’s Foundation website, women make up more than half of the population in Canada. So why is it that we see the majority of positions of power obtained by men?

Out of the top 100 listed companies in Canada in 2015, only 0.5 percent of the highest-paid positions are obtained by women, according to a story done by CBC. Although this statistic is a few years old, we know that the current per centage is still not very high.

Not only do we need to see more women in power to provide an equal treatment between both genders, but women have a lot of offers for these positions - contrary to what some people may believe. There have been numerous studies done to try and come to a conclusion on whether men or women are ‘better’ leaders.

A study done in the United Kingdom that assessed 3,000 managers based on personality and characteristics came to the conclusion that they believe women make better leaders than men for many reasons. This study, led by Professor Øyvind L. Martinsen, head of Leadership and Organisational Behaviour at the BI Norwegian Business School, concluded that the women they assessed had ‘outperformed’ the men in four out of the five categories that were studied. These categories included initiative and clear communication; openness and ability to innovate; sociability and supportiveness; methodical management and goal setting; and dealing with work-related stress.

If women are outperforming men in most of these categories, shouldn’t they have an equal amount of representation in positions of power? If not more than men? If women can offer more initiative, more openness, more support, etc., within the workplace and society, we should be pushing to have them in all kinds of leadership positions.

Some large, very successful companies in Canada have their chief executive officer positions occupied by women. Linda Hasenfratz is the CEO of Linamuc, the second largest manufacturer of car parts in Canada. She has held this position since 2002. Brenda Rideout is the CEO of Tangerine, a banking branch of Scotiabank. She has held this position since 2012. There are many men who are good candidates to hold positions of power, but we need more women to obtain leadership roles in the country. This will help to balance gender equality and possibly improve the overall leadership throughout Canada.

Both genders should be able to work together in these leadership positions in order to create a successful display of power in Canada, without any hesitation. Women have a lot to offer to the leadership world and they deserve the chance to prove it.

LINDSAY TARRANT
Women still denied access to power roles

NIAGARA NEWS • Oct. 12, 2018

And in the end, she encour-
and fights WITH women.

humans. She said discrimi-
gion closed. After years of
state of Tennessee, one
endorsing two democratic
her Instagram account
strong statement through
night. Swift released a
years, I wasn't sure if I
Reputation tour. Yes I'm
than a few t-shirts and
editions. I am not reluctant
then repurchased special
attended every concert. I've
in pop. She has towed
her career as a country
transition was over,
has reached that point.
true to who we are and do
and celebrities speak their
minds, not only about poli-
tics but with the #metoo
movement.

There comes a point
when you have to make a
choice. Are you going to
stand up and say the truth,
care about taxes, health care or
the people around you? Or
do you stand with. You are
either with Trump and the
people who support him
(a politics that is resonat-
ing in countries around the
world, not just the U.S.) or
you are against him.

You either stand against
the hate being put into the
world or you are with it.

And during the last few
years we have seen athletes
and celebrities speak their
minds, not only about poli-
tics but with the #metoo
movement. It appears Taylor Swift
has reached that point.
After the U.S. leg of her
Reputation Tour was over,
she finally spoke her mind.
Swift knows the world we
are now living in. Speak-
ing out about her political
beliefs will no doubt cause
her to lose fans and money
– who knows how many fans
when all is said and done.
Because this isn’t a fight for Katy
Perry. It’s not a petty argument
with a reality TV star.

This is about politics and
there is no middle ground
acceptable.

Swift decided enough
was enough. Consequences
were drawn. It seems that
at 28 years old, Swift will
no longer bow to the middle
line. She has bought the
most fans, if we go by social
media followings. The trolls
are already out in full
force.

Neo-Nazis who have
claimed Swift as their own
are brokenhearted. But according
to Buzzfeed, vote.org “experienced an
unprecedented spike in new voter
registrations nationwide” in the hours after
Swift’s post. Almost 75,000 new people have
registered to vote since Sunday night.

And if that’s all that
comes from it, just those
few extra people deciding
to take a stand and show
up to the polls in November,
it might not be enough.
But I think Swift would
say: "It’s time we had a
powerful figure that
can inspire a generation of
young girls to use their
hard-fought right to vote.

She can handle the trolls.
You are giving them too many
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Minimum wage increase scrapped

By JORDYN BOSTROM Staff Writer

The recent decision by the ruling Ontario Progressive Conservative party to scrap a scheduled minimum wage increase has been met with mixed reactions. One such reaction has been rallying and lobbying organized by the anti-poverty group Fight For $15 and Fairness. The group’s website features stories from those affected by the minimum wage halt and resources for individuals who want to join the movement.

By contrast, Ontario Premier Doug Ford’s decision to halt the increase has been met with approval by many small business owners and even some minimum-wage earners. Mitch Schram, owner of M & D Contracting, believes Bill 148 was unnecessary. “The reform resulted in an increase from $11.60 to an extra 40 cents and there’s nothing the other side can do to account for the change.”

Ford government vague on labour reform plan

By RENATO PEDRESCHI Staff Writer

Not only is the minimum wage not going up to $15 an hour on Jan. 1, but other worker protections made law by the previous Liberal government may be at risk as well.

Premier Doug Ford said he was going to scrap Bill 148 – the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act. Now his government is reviewing the bill in its entirety and is deciding which parts to keep.

“We’re getting rid of Bill 148,” said Ford in the Legislature on Oct. 2. “We’re going to make sure we protect the frontline workers, because 60,000 people lost their jobs under Bill 148. Bottom line, it’s an absolute job-killer.”

As well as raising the minimum wage from $11.60 to $14.15 (on Jan. 1), Bill 148 also mandated equal pay for part-time and seasonal workers, three weeks of vacation time for employees with tenure of at least five years, additional emergency sick days (now 10 with two paid) and 48 hours of notice of shift cancellation or three hours pay.

Economic Development Minister Jim Wilson said Ford is going to protect the frontline workers by lowering their hydro rates, by lowering their (gasoline) by 10 cents a litre.

All part of his campaign platform – minimum wage, hydro rates and gas prices – but rolling back sick days and vacation time with an overhaul of Bill 148 was unexpected and has attracted criticism and concern from across the aisle.

“Doug Ford is wrong,” said Wayne Gates, the New Democrat MPP representing Niagara Falls. “Bill 148 protects frontline workers and is not responsible for the job losses his government claims.”

“What kind of business can’t give their employees two paid sick days in a year?” asks Gates, clearly not buying Ford’s comments that Bill 148 hurts businesses.

“The claim that 60,000 jobs were lost due to the bill is just misleading,” according to Statistics Canada, from November 2017 to August 2018, Ontario has gone from 8.2 million jobs to 8.4 million. “That number spiked at 8.5 million in July, but there’s nothing from Bill 148 that kickin in to account for the change.”

Without a clear plan from the government, NDP Leader Andrea Horvath said she is concerned about the instability this might cause for workers across Ontario.

“At the end of the day, dragging us backwards to the days when people couldn’t get three weeks vacation or they couldn’t get sick time off when they were sick at work, these are things that we worry about,” said Horvath.

Ontario Premier Rob Ford addresses a standing-room-only crowd at Welland’s Royal Canadian Legion in this February 2018 file photo. PHOTO BY BETH AUDET

Ford government vague on labour reform plan

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GIRL (AUTOMOTIVE) POWER

Goal is to get more young women to get involved in auto trades, hands-on repair

By TALA MUHTADI
Staff Writer

Female Niagara College students know more about their cars because of workshops that Girls Mechanic Team (GMT) did at the Welland campus’s green automotive lab Oct. 9-10.

For the first time ever, Niagara College has hosted a workshop with the help of Girls Mechanics Team to educate female Niagara College students and high school students on automotive.

“We are hoping to do it once a semester at least so we can get more girls involved in the auto trades and girls more hands-on with their cars,” says Zoe McGhie, program co-ordinator and head of Women in Trades at Niagara College.

The condensed workshop runs for three hours and covers the basic knowledge of cars like oil changes, tire changes, diagnosis and fluid checks.

In the morning it’s hosted for high school students and in the afternoon for Niagara College students. GMT was founded in May 2018 by a York University student.

“The goal and the motive is to get females more educated in to the automotive industry and make them feel more confident about cars,” says the founder of GMT, Jowana Burgan.

The team has held a little more than 20 workshops since the summer. Fifteen people was the maximum number of attendance. Burgan recommends seven to eight people per workshop.

“I want everybody to get hands-on experience and I can’t have too many people doing so,” says Burgan.

Burgan is intimidated to go to mechanics because of the look of “Oh you’re a female! What are you doing?”

So she decided to learn by going to her regular car mechanic in January.

After getting her basic knowledge down she decided to start a team that would help females in similar situations.

Burgan and her team of three hold the workshops for free because they want it to be affordable and easy accessible.

“This is something that hasn’t been done around here so I want it to be easily accessible to people,” says Burgan.

Mahtay becoming community hotspot

By MARIANA WINZER
Staff Writer

A community that remains close has a community hub at hand.

The Niagara region, specifically St. Catharines, has Mahtay Café - a place to make friends, try new drinks and feel like you belong.

Right in the middle of St. Paul Street, Mahtay has heavy foot traffic and is always full of life.

“I always manage to see someone I know here,” says Sam Renshaw, 23, on Mahtay being a popular hangout place for her and her peers.

Emma Victoria Smith, 23, recalls fond memories she made at Mahtay and relationships she kindled.

“I had my first date with my ex-boyfriend at Mahtay and we sat on one of the couches here; we’ve just called it our couch ever since,” says Smith. “We wouldn’t have gotten as close as we did if it weren’t for it.”

This popular café appeals to a large portion of the Niagara region’s community, not only due to the comforting ambiance but also the type of food they serve.

Smith says she finds appeal in Mahtay and the products they offer due to its inclusivity.

“Mahtay is very accommodating. They can make most (food items) vegan,” she explains.

All of their many menu items range from vegan, vegetarian and even gluten-free options. Visitors can always feel like there’s something for them.

The feeling of belonging does not stop at neighbourly service and a wide range of treats, but they host many different types of events for Niagara to enjoy.

From “Open Mic” night, small singer/songwriter gigs, and choir club, Mahtay holds an event almost every day, 365 days a year.

Artists and onlookers alike are always welcomed.

Local art is displayed on the walls of Mahtay, featuring new exhibits every month for all patrons to enjoy.

Mahtay is everything a great community hub could possibly be. Their tasty treats, constant enjoyable events, art, and a great sense of hospitality and neighbourly service have kept many members of the Niagara region coming back for many years and many more years to come.
The Niagara Grape & Wine Festival adds "colour and motion" to the 67th annual event by installing a theme and inviting five dance schools to move in and out between the floats during the popular parade.

The event took place Sept. 29. For the first time, the festival has an art director that set a theme to the parade to give it a more stimulating, artistic look. The four seasons of a wine country, to celebrate the harvest of wine.

"I noticed the seasons were beautiful and every season has a bright colour that was different from the other season and that’s what made me think about Niagara," says Alice Burke, art director for the festival and the dance animator at the Performing Arts Centre.

Seventy-seven entries were included and most of them were in autumn and fall, however, the directors wanted to balance the seasons by looking at the number of walking groups, marching bands and floats in each section. According to Burke, she has contacted every dance school in the region and the first five that replied are the ones who got the part. However, she noted that she got feedback from a number of other schools and now they’re waiting for next year’s festival.

"I just had the idea on how to make it visual to the audience so that it has more excitement to it," says Burke.

The parade included some circus performers on floats, The Burlington Teen Tour Band, which has won many awards, along with the Grape Ring, Chris Van De Laar, wrapped up the end of the parade.

"They’re always a big part, so they raise tons of thousands of pounds of food and donations that gets them through the winter," says the Executive Director of the Niagara Grape & Wine Festival, Dorian Anderson.

"Construction in downtown St. Catharines caused the parade to change routes and be shortened as Anderson said they wanted to make sure it was safe for everyone watching.

"I’ve already got all my ideas for next year’s (festival)," says Burke.

"I just wanted to keep going with the theme of the original parade, but also keeping up that rhythm of visual stimulation."
Smart starlings paint Niagara purple

By GUNCE AKPINAR Staff Writer

Starlings, who have been dotting North America’s skies since 1890, and travel through Niagara in their migration route, eat whole grapes and are infamously known for their purple-colored droppings.

“They like to park under trees because of the shade. But before they get to park under a tree you get bombed by purple poo from all the grapes,” says Melissa Achal, co-founder of NEON Lavender Boutique.

Starlings came to North America in 1890 for the first time. Eugene Schieffelin, a drug manufacturer, brought 60 starlings from England to New York City’s Central Park. In 1891, he brought 40 more starlings. According to some sources, the reason he wanted to introduce starlings to North America because starlings are one of the bird species that Shakespeare used in his plays.

But according to Lynne Freeman, president of the Ontario Field Ornithologists, during the 1800s a group of people in the United States wanted to bring millions and millions of whole grapes and are infamously known for their purple-colored droppings.

“They adapted. Now there are millions and millions of them in North America,” says Freeman. She adds, starlings took the places of a lot of birds here already. They push other birds away and can be quite aggressive. Starlings eat insects and worms inside of the soil. Grapes are also a nutritious and tasty favourite for them, says Freeman. “They’ll eat whatever they can and (that’s) why (there’s) a lot of them,” she adds. They give trouble to grape growers, says Achal, because they fly over Niagara eating as much from the grape fields as possible. Farmers use propane cannons, scrameners and scare crackers to keep birds away. They hide in the trees, fly to the grapes, eat the grapes, get scared away by the (propane) gun shots farmers use to try to protect their crops and then they fly back to the trees. “So it’s an endless cycle back and forth,” Starlings mostly stay in Niagara from September to the beginning of the winter. “They just moved places where they can find more food,” says Freeman. “They just might go a little bit further south.”

One Niagara-on-the-Lake farmer had this to say of the tricky little birds: “Everyone likes birds, but starlings are not indigenous to North America. They were brought here, and they have no natural predators to keep the population,” said the farmer, who didn’t want to share his name. “Says Freeman: “You have to admire them (starlings) because they’ve done so well. They’re here to stay.”

Creative posters make bathrooms cleaner

By GUNCE AKPINAR Staff Writer

Niagara College started to use posters about proper use of toilets after cleaning staff experienced hygiene issues in bathrooms. But the posters have created concerns about being directed toward different cultures.

Lynette Leblanc, supervisor of Commercial Cleaning Services Ltd. (CSS), explains the hygiene issues as dirty and broken toilet seats because there have been students standing on the toilets, putting dirty toilet paper in sanitary bags and spreading toilet paper all over the bathroom floors. According to Leblanc, after starting to use the posters in bathrooms, things have improved but are still not enough.

The cleaning staff have found the posters in the garbage. When they added the college’s logo to the posters, that reduced the incidence of the posters being discarded.

“A bigger problem, explains Baker, is that ignorance causes the improper use of toilets - not lack of knowledge.”

But the situation raised questions among some, who wondered if the posters were “racist.”

“It’s different in their culture and we don’t dis-criminate against that,” says Leblanc.

Some students come from countries that use squatting toilets, which are used in a squatting position, opposed to toilets with seats.

Another source of confusion comes from not having garbage baskets in toilet stalls. This is used when plumbing systems cannot handle the flushing of paper products.

“They (the students) come and ask us where the toilet paper goes,” says Leblanc. “They’re not aware that (it) goes inside the toilet.”

Patricia Baker, a second-year Child and Youth Care student originally from Barbados, says she doesn’t believe it’s an issue about culture shock or differences. It’s about how much an individual is sensitive to environment and able to empathize with other people, she says. A bigger problem, explains Baker, is that ignorance causes the improper use of toilets - not lack of knowledge.

“If you take all the international students out of the school, you’ll still have the same problem,” says Baker, adding it’s not fair to hold cultural differences responsible for all the hygiene issues in bathrooms.

Ralph Scholz, director of Facilities Management Services, says since last spring posters have been used in the common areas during the first two weeks of each semester.

“The posters have had positive results, he says. “We decided to try them again on a temporarily ba-sis, and we found them very successful,” says Scholz.

Ontario not ready for cannabis legalization

By THOMAS HUNDAL Staff Writer

With less than a week until legalization, Ontario is clearly not ready to sell marijuana or enforce its use.

Brick-and-mortar retail stores are not expected to be in operation until April of 2019 leaving a six-month gulf during which the Ontario Cannabis Store website and delivery service will be the only way to procure legal cannabis in Ontario. The OCS website is still tightly under wraps without so much as a media preview with just days to go until Ontarians will be able to buy cannabis products through the website.

No delivery courier has been formally announced for OCS. Some believe that Canada Post will handle delivery although with potential labor action on the horizon consumers may not be able to have their legal cannabis until much later. One Niagara-on-the-Lake farmer had this to say of the tricky little birds: “Everyone likes birds, but starlings are not indigenous to North America. They were brought here, and they have no natural predators to keep the population,” said the farmer, who didn’t want to share his name. “Says Freeman: “You have to admire them (starlings) because they’ve done so well. They’re here to stay.”
Dream becomes movie reality
A friend’s mission to Cambodia inspires Christopher Bessette to make movie about sex trade

By MICHAEL HANEMAAYER
Staff Writer

The original idea for the film, Trade of Innocents, was born in a Niagara Falls coffee shop where Christopher Bessette says his heart was “broken” when a friend told him about her mission work with orphan children in Cambodia.

Bessette says, “My heart was broken for the Cambodian people and their plight, what they’ve been through.”

“I said to her… you know we could make a movie and just bring hope, reconciliation and redemption to these hurting people.”

When he received a phone call from a company that he had worked with for 17 years before requesting his help on a project in Cambodia.

Bessette had a story to tell. He was on board.

When he returned home from Cambodia, his heart was ‘broken’, and he continued to attempt to try to make connections that would help him tell the story of an organization that rescued children from the sex trade.

A couple of producers in Toronto contacted him asking if he would be interested in working with them on their project.

He said he would but that he also had a project that he wanted to help on. When he shared his idea with them they said that they were interested in the idea as well.

Several months went by and Bessette was going to accept the offer, but he heard a small voice which he perceived to be the voice of God tell him not to call the producers in Toronto.

That night Bessette had a dream.

Bessette says, “In my dream I dreamt of a man that I met three times, three years earlier. I see him in the role of producer in the dream. And in the dream, I dreamt of a map, a very unique map of Cambodia, like the colours and everything (were unique).

And then a watch and the time on the watch says 2:10, 2:15, and 2:20 but quivered back to 2:10. And I thought… I couldn’t tell what time it was but then I heard God say to me in the dream now is the time.”

He reached out to the man in the dream and they decided to skype. Bessette told the man about the dream and the man produced the map of Cambodia that Bessette had seen in his dream.

That was how Trade of Innocents came about.

Trade of innocents, which was released in 2012, follows the story of a couple who, mourning their own daughter’s death, work to save children sold into the sex trade.

Bessette says that he has been a story teller from a very young age.

“It was a process of discovery, really, to really be able to say, a passion for storytelling. For me I can trace that all the way back to pre-Kindergarten… with Marvel comic books and my parents cutting out the characters… I asked them to do that so that I could make my own stories. And just slide them around on a desktop.”

Captain America is his favorite Marvel hero.

Bessette says, “He was a hero before he was a hero, you know? He just had the attitude of justice and being right for everyone. I love that about him.”

Bessette teaches Dramatic Script Writing and Directing for the Screen to students at Niagara College. Bessette says, “I tell them that if this is their passion they need to stick to it and pursue it.”

When asked if he was working on anything right now, Bessette says that he has a series that he has written and is talking with a very successful executive in California. Stay tuned.

Marvel, DC race for cinematic superiority
Two titan superhero companies try to out-do one another with trailers for upcoming movies

By ARJUN SINGH SAROY
Staff Writer

First it was the Captain Marvel trailer that stormed the internet and then it was Joaquin Phoenix Joker look-test video that took the house down.

It all began with Warner Bros. dropping a trailer of Shazam!, which was widely criticized for missing the DC fan base.

WB also posted the Aquaman trailer around the same time to gather more awe by its fans, to which Marvel responded by dropping the Captain Marvel trailer, which won the internet and all of its 41 million viewers.

Marvel also dropped the Spiderman: Into the Spider-Verse trailer to create some more momentum and ended the game by dropping the new Venom trailer.

Just when everyone thought that WB had no chance of returning from this, WB leaked a look-test of Joaquin Phoenix for the very hyped movie, Joker, where he played the Joker himself.

So far, it has worked out well for WB as the Joker has been trending worldwide for days and is the talk of every town.

Gagandeep Singh, who has been a fan of Marvel for 10 years, says, “Warner Bros. does not stand a chance against Marvel. [Marvel] have become too big for WB to overcome, especially after Avengers: Infinity Wars.”

He continued: “The way DC Entertainment Universe works is they need Superman in every movie, so he is the only power-house they have, unlike Marvel. People have multiple superheroes that they are rooting for in Marvel Cinematic Universe.”

Sahil Jagdeo, who studies tourism and hospitality at Niagara college, says, “I feel DC has made some really stupid decisions, which automatically put Marvel in the lead, although the Joker look-test has really intrigued me and I can’t wait for it to release.”

Marvel and DC are looking forward to their individual releases, Venom that released last week and Aquaman that releases in December.
By SARAH HOOKEY

It’s the story that contin-
ues to enthrall the world.
Thirty-eight planes—
nealy 7,000 people—are
directed to a small town
in the northeastern part of
Newfoundland with no way
to leave or to contact their
families.
For days, they’re stranded
with only the clothes on
their backs and each other
to rely on until the towns-
pople rally together to help
these complete strangers
with the comedy of tragi-
folding around them.
The date was Sept. 11, 2001,
and the world was collectively
holding its breath as everything
around it began to change and bend
irrevocably.
It’s a true story, and now,
it’s a Tony Award-winning
musical.
Titled Come From Away,
the show details the days in
which the people of Gander
welcomed thousands of strangers
from all over the world with open
arms and kind hearts.
Its first workshop took
place at Sheridan College in 2012,
later being brought to the
engagement in Toronto before
securing Broadway’s Ger-ald Schoenfeld Theatre for
a successful run since Feb-
uary 2017.
Now, Toronto has seen
its triumphant return, once
again featuring Canadian cast
members and crew and
performing to sold-out
audiences.
Playing at Ed Mirvish’s
Royal Alexandra Theatre,
Come From Away has
continued its run since it
began earlier this year and
now plans to move to the
Elgin Theatre in February 2019,
until April 2019.
It’s a production that,
for all intents and purposes,
shouldn’t work, but it does.
Come From Away is differ-
ent than other shows and
it’s these differences, all
bundled together, that make
it a success.
Instead of the average
run time of a Broadway
musical, typically just over
two hours, Come From Away
is only an impressive
100-minutes long.
This change in run time
does nothing to hinder the
show’s pacing, nor its impact
on its view.
Song-writing team, and
marking people, Sankoff and
d David Hein, seemingly
did the impos-
sible, compressing what
easily could have been two
hours’ worth of material
into much less without sacrificing any of the beauty.
Come From Away moves
quickly and succinctly
through its plot, giving no
time for reflection or even
appause in between scenes.
Now a Companion of the
Manuel Miranda, of Hamilton,
An American Musical, family
contin-
ued the production on
Twitter for this method.
Instead of allowing view-
ers to praise performers as
soon as the song finishes,
their admiration and affec-
tion accumulates until
the very end, leading to stand-
ning ovations, shed tears,
and smiles as blinding as the
stage lights.
Another impressive detail,
noticed before by the show’s
director Christopher Ashley,
is that the show has no
main antagonist.
It directs the audience’s
focus not onto characters to
hate, but characters to love.
‘Come From Away is a
show about acceptance and
love, so it only makes sense
that it practices what it
preaches’ said Liz Smith,
a theatre fan from Niagara Falls,
who has seen the show not
twice, but three times.
This isn’t just a show for
one character to another,
continuing to tell the story
of all characters. Nothing
is fake with these perform-
escenes or cheapened by the
pausing. Instead, everything
feels genuine.
‘By using the same actor
for so many roles, it really
connects the characters,’
Smith continued. ‘They’re
all like two sides to the
same coin - all connected
by this incredible event.’
However you choose to
interpret it, there’s no deny-
ing that Come From Away
has been incredibly success-
ful so far.
Nominated for seven Tony Awards, the show
recently took home the Tony Award for
Best Musical, in addition to
Ashley’s outstanding
directorial work.
What really marks
the success of the piece how-
ever, is not the number of
awards it takes home, but
the reaction it has garnered
from not only Canadians,
but from those all over.
‘The show has grown
from this little Canadian
production to something
that people travel from all
over the world to see,’ said
Broadway fan Jackie Fisher,
who has seen the show’s
Broadway production.
‘It doesn’t matter if you’re
Canadian, or American, or
something else, we all can
come together on one
level, and the message never
changes.’
Fisher now plans to open on an
Austra-
lian production, while mem-
bers of the show’s original
team are reportedly
working on a film adaptation.
It’s a show about love.
It’s a show about unshak-
able kindness.
Most importantly, it’s a
show about understand-
ing that, as they say in the
show’s closing number, ‘We
all come from away.’
Basketball CEO Posts Up at Niagara College

After being President and CEO of Canada Basketball, Michele O'Keefe accepts position of Associate Athletics Director at Niagara College. Story by Riley Radobenko

Throughout her career, the thought of coming home has always been in the back of Michele O'Keefe's mind. With a job opportunity available at Niagara College, O'Keefe knew it was a chance to make that thought a reality.

After serving as President and CEO of Canada Basketball, the Welland native will be now be leading the Niagara College Athletic Department as the new Associate Director of Athletics and Recreation.

"There was always a thought in the back of my mind that I would like to come back to Niagara at some point," said O'Keefe. "There's not always jobs that would be suitable for my experience available, so I thought I'd throw my name in to the hat and see if I would be considered and when they offered me the job I thought if I don't take it now, it might not come up again."

To most, leaving the top position at a national organization to work at a college seems like a step down, but to O'Keefe, the new job is full of opportunities and a chance to continue doing something she enjoys.

"For me, it's an opportunity to come back to Welland. It's an opportunity to have a less busy life. It's an opportunity to have a more-balanced life," she said. "And I still get to work in sports and try to help people reach their goals, which is ultimately what I want to do."

Although she is excited about her future in Niagara, leaving Canada Basketball was a difficult decision for O'Keefe. In three different stints since 1996, O'Keefe has held athletic positions and has formed many friendships within Canada Basketball. Overall, she's proud of the work that was accomplished during her tenure.

"You always want to make sure you're leaving it when the right time to leave," said O'Keefe. "I think I did as much as I could do for Canada Basketball and it was time for the next person to come in and see where they could take it."

Although directing a national organization has its differences from directing an athletic department of a college, there's a glaring similarity that correlates the two roles.

"The grand picture of building a system," she said.

To build a good system at Niagara College, O'Keefe plans to bring the traits she preached at Canada Basketball. That includes using resources to the fullest, communication, teamwork and alignment.

"I am obsessively passionate about alignment," said the Welland native. "When people do not work together, I don't think we are as productive. It is alignment," said O'Keefe. "And just trying to figure out where things are. I think of Canada Basketball and it was time for the next person to come and help them accomplish their dreams."

As she continues to learn the processes of her new job, O'Keefe has enjoyed getting to know everybody within the Athletic Department and helping them accomplish their dreams.

"I am really enjoying, from a day-to-day perspective, getting to know the students and the student-athletes and our coaches and the people around," said O'Keefe. "And just trying to figure out where people are trying to go with their lives and how could I help?"

And though she finds the nomination, and ultimate victory, very humbling, O'Keefe knows there is far more work that needs to be done.

"What they say at the Academy Awards is true, it's always nice just to be nominated," she said. "The fact it was a lifetime (achievement award) is a little mind-blowing because I still got lots to do."

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Not only was she a part of the 2016 class that was elected to the Welland Sports Wall of Fame, she has just recently won the Leadership in Sport Award. Essentially, it is a national lifetime achievement award that honours an individual's leadership, innovation and values within a sport.

O'Keefe was caught off guard when she was nominated, but that soon became a mind-blowing experience when she won the award.

"To be nominated for a national award was kind of like, you raise your eyebrow and say really? People all across the country know who I am and they think I've been doing a good job with leadership," she said. "Then I actually won. That was a little mind-blowing."

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Can anyone stop Red Sox?

The Boston Red Sox have defeated the New York Yankees in the first round of the 2018 Major League Baseball post-season, winning the series three games to one and remain the favourites to win the World Series. SUBMITTED PHOTO.

Be humble, stay hungry!

First-year manager Alex Cora muddled those four words to the media after his Boston Red Sox started the 2018 Major League Baseball season with a win-loss record of 17-2. The team lived by those words throughout the season. Every night they came to play, every night they came to win. And whether you love the team or hate the team (as there usually is no in-between), the success of the Red Sox was one of the storylines of the league throughout the season.

This success includes the team capturing the American League East division, and it wasn’t even close, while also setting their franchise record for most wins at 108. Their success has even surprised people who cover the team on a daily basis.

“I knew they’d be good and I knew they’d contend for the division," said Jared Carrabis, Red Sox and MLB blogger for Barstool Sports. "But I didn’t think they’d have a better record than the Astros, and I didn’t think they’d win 100 games or break their single-season win record. To be that successful in any sport, a lot of things have to work out during the season. Players have to produce good statistics on a nightly basis. Multiple players did that for Boston. I’d argue that almost every player on the roster had at least one big moment during the season to contribute to the success of the team.

Those big moments happened on a nightly basis for Designated Hitter and Outfielder J.D. Martinez. Throughout his career, he’s had a lot of success, but when he signed his five-year contract with the Red Sox prior to the season, I wasn’t expecting the statistical numbers he ended up producing.

As the season concluded, his final slash line was .330/.402/.629 while hitting 43 home runs and 130 RBIs. He became the much needed power bat the Red Sox have lacked in their lineup since David Ortiz retired at the end of the 2016 season. And although the Red Sox won the American League East division in 2016 and 2017, the team didn’t feel, or preform, like a World Series winning team in the postseason those years. The addition of Martinez, and the impact he has had was like adding in the final piece of the overall greater puzzle.

"J.D. Martinez has made a huge impact from what he himself brought to the table," said Carrabis. But it goes beyond the players. Any successful team needs to have a good coaching staff, and ultimately a good manager that can teach, communicate and be open with the roster. Those were just a few traits Alex Cora excelled at. He developed a winning culture in the locker room and was a new, young voice leading the team. That’s a change the Red Sox needed more than anything.

"You can’t possibly overstate the impact that he’s made by changing the culture in that clubhouse," said Carrabis. "They needed it badly." And though a good coaching staff and player production is a necessity on a winning team, we need to remember that the Red Sox play in the American League, which is generally full of weaker teams. That’s the thing about any good team; it’s essential they beat the bad ones. And it’s something that Carrabis attributes a lot of the Red Sox success too.

“If we’re being honest, a lot of it has been because of how bad some of the other teams in this league are," he said. “But that’s part of it. You have to beat the bad teams, and the Red Sox did that better than anybody.”

And though a good coaching staff is necessary to help the team achieve success. The team. It can all happen. But it can’t all be forgotten should the Red Sox fail to reach the bar that was set for them in the post-season.

And because they were statistically the best team in the league this season, the bar has been set so high by the fans, it’ll be disappointing with anything but a World Series championship.

"They have to win the World Series," said Carrabis, who also hosts the Section 10 and Starting 9 podcasts. "It’ll be a colossal failure if they don’t go all the way." And although he wouldn’t call it a wasted season if the Red Sox don’t win the World Series (I would), Carrabis realizes that nobody will remember the team’s success should they struggle in the post-season.

“They’ve been the best team in baseball from start to finish,” said Carrabis. “But they won’t be remembered as the best team in baseball in 2018 if they don’t win a championship.”

To win a championship, you have to make it out of the first round. That’s something the Red Sox have not been able to do during the last two seasons.

In 2016, they were swept by Cleveland. In 2017, they were knocked out by Houston. This year, it’s no easier. With a shaky bullpen and questionable health of key players, the Red Sox had their work cut out for them against their longtime rival, the New York Yankees.

But with the dramatic game four win against the Yankees, Carrabis believes they will be bringing a World Series championship back home with the Boston. "If the Red Sox win the division series, I think they will win the World Series," said Carrabis. “They’re better than every team in the National League, and I think they’ll edge out the Astros in a best of seven.”

Time will tell whether or not that happens, but regardless of the outcome, Carrabis used one word to describe the Red Sox 2018 season, and I couldn’t agree more with him. 
Win streak continues for women’s soccer

The team won their fourth match in a row, giving them the much needed lead on the charts this season.

By TONI WHITE and BREANNE ELRICK

The Niagara Knights women’s soccer team defeated the visiting Redeemer Royals, Oct. 2, at Youngs Sportplex, in Welland.

Sam Serno from Redeemer broke the stalemate in the second half of the game at 50 minutes. Two minutes later, the Knights came back full-force as Kara Latham scored her second goal of the season.

“We answered right back, within minutes we scored and then you could see that goal just made our team click,” said Head Coach Rob Lalama.

Twelve minutes later, Michelle Maecker extended her scoring record, claiming her 12th career goal and putting the Knights in the lead at 2-1. This goal was her 6th of the season.

NC’s Alexis Hebert secured the lead by shutting down many Redeemer attempts at a goal.

“That one goal lead is something new for a lot of these girls because the team is having success,” said Lalama.

“The pressure is to stay composed and not panic and not worry about the other team scoring another goal. You have to kind of still play your game and still try to score a goal.”

The victory marked the ladies’ fourth win in a row.

“It’s always good to win,” said Lalama.

The women’s team was scheduled to take the field against the first-place Fanshawe Falcons in London Oct. 9.

By LISA KELLEY

It was a Big Win for Niagara Knights men’s soccer team as they posted a 4-0 win over the Redeemer Royals, at Youngs Sportplex, in Welland, on Oct. 2.

The Knights needed this win to cement a second-place standing, to qualify for the 2018 men’s soccer championships.

“We were close in points with this team and if we lost they will go ahead of us,” said Knights Captain, Jordi Amores.

Head Coach Frank DeChellis said: “Jordi has been leading our team. He has been a leader on and off the field since the injury of Captain David Fimiai.”

Knights intense training was a passing moment for Harrison Fyke as he fired his first goal into the net and his first goal of the season leaving the score 1-0 for the Knights after the first half.

The game was moving well in the second-half as Oti Frigole buried the ball into the net twice, but three times, which ended the night with a 4-0 win for the Knights.

“It’s the best passing performance of the season,” said the coach. “Our guys are starting to figure out, working together gets us a heck of a lot more than 11 guys just doing their own thing.”

Goalie Nolan Bradshaw got his chance in net, surpassing the team’s expectations.

“He was amazing, he played really well, he is our second goalie,” says Amores. Goalie Romario James was injured during the last game against Mohawk Mountainers.

The Knights have trained hard for the past three weeks to reach a five-point margin over the Royals.

The Knights are on a winning streak. They have won their last three games, but “their biggest challenge will be next week, when we play Fanshawe Falcons,” says DeChellis.

Oti Frigole scores hat-trick

Knights men’s soccer team defeats Redeemer Royals 4-0 to qualify for championships

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Student athletes compete on and off field

Athletes talk about importance of sports in life and how it helps them study better

By ALEIGH ROBERT

From scholarships to game nights and school spirit, sports are a huge part of university and college life.

With the school year in full swing, student athletes are getting settled into their classes and finding a balance between their sports and academics.

With varsity sports being a multi-billion-dollar industry and a large portion of enrollment at many schools, it’s important to ensure these students are able to balance their life and maintain their academic enrollment.

“I think sometimes I’ll just put more effort into dance rather than my homework,” says Kara Latham, an Environmental Science student and dancer at Trent University.

“But I find that if I plan my week out ahead of time I’m able to balance everything I need to get everything done.”

These athletes have more to balance than the average student, and each of them find their own way to weigh out their priorities to be successful.

Playing sports while at school is not all stress, as it can be beneficial, too.

“This opportunity gives students a chance to socialize more than the average student, and helps form lifelong friendships,” says Kara Latham. “Rugby gives me the structure I need to organize my class schedule and be accountable for finishing them on time so that I stay eligible to play.”

Shannon Northey, a Concurrent Education student and basketball player at Brock University, says she finds that it’s important for her to get rest and a balance.

“You barely have free time, you can’t stay up late doing work at night because if you don’t get enough sleep you can’t function properly in class and in practices.”
In fairy tales, you often need a key to open the treasure. But over the last month, the keys were the treasure themselves. Sprinkled across Niagara Falls were 14 decorated pianos, all designed and painted by 14 different artists from the Niagara region. The pianos were part of a community event presented by the Niagara Falls Culture Department called the Niagara Falls Street Piano or PlayPlayPlay!! Niagara Falls.

Located in parks, gazebos, shopping malls and street corners (to name just a few), the Niagara Falls street pianos invited the public – both locals and tourists alike – to get involved and share their musical talents by finding and playing the public pianos from Sept 4 through Oct 9. "The community has really enjoyed the project and really gotten behind the idea that intrusions of culture can be something that's fun, that's interesting, engaging and satisfying," said Clark Bernat, manager of culture and museums in Niagara Falls.

When beginning the search for the city's summer art experience, the Niagara Falls Culture Department wanted an event that could involve and captivate the public in art and culture. We wanted this year, 2018, to have a really good art project. One that certainly engaged local artists but also engaged the community in cultural activities - and try to find a way to do it across the city in every corner of the city," said Bernat.

"We felt [street pianos] would tackle all those objectives... and was accessible, fun and engaging." The locations chosen throughout Niagara Falls were carefully selected. The Culture Department wanted to make sure to include local artists as well as tourist destinations. It was also important to place pianos in areas the public would not expect.

"It was fantastic that we didn't forget about some neighbourhoods and small parks that people don't frequent as much," said Bernat. "We got outside of the tourism core to ensure that the people in Niagara Falls really took advantage (of the pianos)." Interested artists were invited to submit an idea and design earlier this spring. A committee then selected the designs they wanted, and assigned a location for each artist.

Melanie Pyke was one of the artists who took part in PlayPlayPlay!! Niagara. Her piece, Rockin' Robin, blended visual art and music together, featuring local birds from the Niagara Region. The committee placed Pyke and her piano in a local Niagara Falls neighborhood, on Main Street, near the bus transfer depot. Pyke wanted to get a week to paint her piano on location, creating a unique environment for both artist and community. The outdoor painting allowed Pyke, and the other artists painting throughout Niagara Falls, to engage with both locals and tourists.

"People were really thrilled to see something like that out there for them," said Pyke about painting her piano on location. "It was kind of neat because it was for all ages too. So it didn't want to be up and want to see what I was doing and come play the piano as well as seniors and everybody in between. It was really neat."

Artist Carey Baglieri's piano was placed at the Canada One Shopping Centre, a popular tourist destination. The piano caught the attention of shoppers ranging from young boys to teenage girls, each stopping to spend a few moments playing the painted piano. "I saw for a week straight... and want to see what I was doing and come play the piano as well as seniors and everybody in between. It was really neat," said Bernat.

"A lot of them were really cool," but hadn't had a chance to see any of the other pianos in Niagara Falls. Connor waited his turn to play the Baglieri designed piano, while the rest of his family finished shopping.

All pianos came as donations from the local community according to cultural program assistant Kim Stygeren. As the event wraps up, four pianos will remain at their current locations including the pianos: outside the Victoria Ave Public Library, the MacBain Community Centre, the Niagara Institute of Music and Arts, and the museum on Victoria Ave. The remaining pianos have either been sold, or will head to the dumpster. "A lot of them were really beyond their shelf life before they even got to us," said Stygeren. "The better locations got the better pianos and subsequently those are the ones being saved. We really did give, fortunately, a last hurrah to a number of these pianos."

"As the month-long event wrapped up, Bernat was very pleased with the community's reaction to the beauty of the pianos and the paintings, but also the music itself. "I saw for a week straight some guy just biked up to the community event presented by Other cultural departments across the Niagara Region."

"We had an accomplished pianist who was travelling from Montreal and saw it and ended up hitting all of the pianos in the community... people searching out the pianos and going around the town and trying to find them. That accomplished a lot of what we wanted to get out of it."

When asked if the Niagara Falls Street Piano's had fulfilled expectations Bernat said: "Absolutely, 100 percent! Stygeren hopes to pass on all the knowledge she learned from fostering this event with other cultural departments across the Niagara Region."

"I'm so willing to share this opportunity and all the knowledge I've amassed... maybe it will be picked up next year as well," said Stygeren.