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Niagara County tourism is OPEN!



Operators reopening this week; share safety protocols for summer

BY JOSHUA MALONI
 GM/Managing Editor

The 2020 summer tourism season has begun in Niagara County, with Western New York now into phase four of Gov. Andrew Cuomo's "New York Forward" reopening process.

Though the season's start comes more than a month after Memorial Day weekend, local leaders on Wednesday expressed hope a strong July and August could make up for lost time.

Speaking at a press conference inside the Niagara Falls Official Visitor Center, Destination Niagara USA President/CEO John Percy said, "We are finally seeing the bright face at the end of the rainbow - finally."

Niagara Falls Mayor Robert Restaino said, "Right now, if I could express exhaling in a loud way, I would do that. Because here we are in phase four, it's July 1, summer is beginning in the City of Niagara Falls. I know all the people in this room, I'm among the happiest folks that you can see."

He explained, "I believe that
SEE LEADERS, on Page 9



Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours President John Kinney, left, and Old Fort Niagara Executive Director Robert Emerson were among the speakers at Wednesday's press conference.



The Maid of the Mist (top) and the Cave of the Winds are once again open to the public.



Rock Burger owner/culinary genius Jason Lizardo is shown at the grand opening of his Niagara Falls location in 2019. (File photo)

Rock Burger

4 years of great tastes –
 AND A DELICIOUS-LOOKING FUTURE

BY MICHAEL DEPIETRO
 Interim Tribune Editor

Four years ago this week, Rock Burger made its debut in Niagara Falls – and waistbands throughout the area are still yet to recover.

With a unique menu specializing in stuffed burgers, the restaurant, which began as a fledgling burger joint operating out of the back of Players Sports Bar on Niagara Street, quickly became a local favorite. Now just four years later, Rock Burger is on its way to becoming one of the fastest growing chain of restaurants in Western New York. A number of new locations are expected to open by early fall.

2020 marks one year since the eatery moved its main operations from Players to its current location at 8529 Niagara Falls Blvd., Niagara Falls. That site is set to open up an outdoor patio in the next few weeks once fencing arrives. It features specially designed picnic tables embossed with the company's logo.

Looking back on the company's beginning, owner Jason Lizardo says he never anticipated the success the restaurant has garnered in its short lifetime. He's been "humbled" by the overwhelming

"You never expect anyone to do anything for you, you just expect the product and the customer service to speak for itself," he says. "If people appreciate the quality of food and the effort that people put into it, and the customer service is good, you know, all that other stuff follows."

"It's not expected from anybody, but it's obviously well appreciated and humbling."

In a post shared on Facebook, Lizardo further reflected on his company's progress through the years: "When I started this business 4 years ago I had no idea what the future held. I gave up a well paying job to pursue a dream. I was clueless, but I had ideas. Through trial and error I came up with a product that I loved enough to share with everyone. I had to teach myself everyday and learn from mistakes made along the way."

"I can write a lot more but most of you all have come (sic) along this journey with Rock Burger since the beginning. At times I wanted to quit, give up. But it's all worth it in the end. Sacrifice, get good people behind you, positivity can make things possible."

Despite the sentiment, however, Lizardo isn't shy about the response.
SEE ROCK, continued on Page 11

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