

Hopping for happiness

Falls resident festively spreads cheer during tough times

BY DAVID YARGER

As everyone knows, life has been a battle for many due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Life has essentially been paused and ways of living have changed. Happiness is tough to find during times like these for humans of all ages, but one Niagara Falls resident "hopped" out of her way to bring some cheer to some local youngsters.

Gina Streck, a hairdresser at Salon Diaz, took matters into her own hands to spread some smiles last week. With one of her favorite holidays of Easter coming up, Streck did drive-by visits to local children in the area dressed up as the one and only Easter Bunny.

Originally, Streck's idea stemmed from an April Fool's Day prank she played on her two kids. Once she was able to put all the pieces together, the small idea grew into an even greater feat where the community became involved.

"Originally, I kind of played a joke on my 8-year-old for April Fools, and I was like, 'Oh, you guys have school tomorrow,' and he got really upset. Then I told him I was just kidding, 'April Fools,' and then he was like 'My whole life is over; no baseball, no Cub Scouts, no school.' So, I had a real bad guilt for making him feel so sad," she said. "Then, the next morning, my daughter was like, 'When are we going to the



The Easter Bunny pays a surprise visit to a local child. (Photo submitted by Gina Streck)

store to see the Easter Bunny?' And I told her that we're not, because the store's closed. Then it hit me. I was like, 'I'm getting an Easter Bunny outfit and I'm coming here.' I made that my mission. ... So, my kids being sad and kind of lonely, they were definitely my inspiration for being a bunny."

Once the idea struck Streck, she began to search for Easter Bunny costumes online, with little luck. In the midst of her search, Streck remembered that her daughter's LaSalle Early Childhood Center had an Easter Bunny costume

and she said she quickly reached out. The center had no problem handing her the costume. Streck said with a laugh, at 5-feet-tall, it took some time getting used to the costume.

While her mission was to surprise her children with the costume, Streck's time as the Easter Bunny was just getting started.

"I texted my best friend who also has a 5-year-old daughter who was also pretty bummed about not seeing the Easter Bunny. So I told her I got an Easter outfit, and she was like, 'You're kidding me?' So I

said, 'Give me a few minutes and I'll be there.' ... At first I was just going to show up to my house and be like 'Hey, guys!' And, I live in DeVeaux, so I just said I'll throw it on my Facebook. I figured I would just walk the streets and see my son's baseball teammates and a couple of my little girl's friends," Streck said.

Little did she know, though, the venture would end up being more than just walking the streets of DeVeaux. Soon, requests began piling in to visit areas all over the city. The Easter Bunny's curbside visits started on Sunday and continued up until Thursday.

And, like a true Easter Bunny, she didn't come empty handed. From a safe distance away, Streck waved to the surprised children and tossed some Hershey Kisses to them.

"I figured Hershey Kisses would be perfect being that a bunny gives kisses, not hugs," Streck said. "So I had a little Easter bucket and I would go to the children's house and they would kind of stand in the doorway and I would throw them candy. Everybody kept their distance."

In times like these, it's hard to find happiness when there's a plethora of things going on in the world. By dressing up in the Easter Bunny costume, Streck said it's important to bring light when times are dark.

"I think it's really important. Ev-

ery time you turn on the news, or even look on Facebook, it's breaking news and COVID-19 everywhere you look and (I said), 'You know what, I'm breaking this up a little bit.' We have to have something that's happy and light and just gets everyone's mind off of it, because it is a heavy time. It's uncertain, nobody knows what the new normal is going to be. ... So, I'm like, 'You know what, no. We're going to bring this back to some fun and lightness and positivity,'" Streck said.

Additionally, Streck said she hopes her actions inspire others to do something to help spread happiness and positivity.

"It's (good) to just be nice and thoughtful right now for other people. If I can inspire someone else to do something fun and happy, then that's great," Streck said.

Streck said the Easter Bunny costume is currently retired for the year. She added on Facebook, that she wishes well for everyone and that she hopes people enjoyed her time as the Easter Bunny.

"I hope everyone enjoyed their Bina visits the last few days, this has been an absolute blast to do!" she said on a Facebook post. "I just wanted to let everyone know she is now safely back in the rabbit hole with Bick bunny & their babies where she will stay until next year.

"Be safe & healthy."

Accolades

•**Troy Toohey** of Youngstown, a Canisius High School senior who formerly attended Lewiston-Porter Central School, has committed to play soccer at St. Lawrence University. Troy is a soccer captain, an All Catholic player, and also lends his talent to the Empire Buffalo club. He is the son of Kevin and Wendy Toohey.

•**Amanda Klettke** was awarded a \$4,000 "Academic Distinction Scholarship" to attend Alfred State. Klettke, of Niagara Falls, is slated to graduate from Niagara-Wheatfield High School and has been accepted into the nursing program.

The "Academic Distinction Scholarship" is awarded to first-time freshmen students who possess an 87 or better cumulative high school average through the end of their junior year; at least an 1140 combined reading/writing and math SAT, or 23 composite ACT score is required.

Niagara River Region Chamber is here to help

BY CHRISTINE S. O'HARA

Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce Chairperson

Regardless of your type of business or organization, we know COVID-19's disruption is both costly and confusing. Our hearts go out to you and to all who have been affected both directly and indirectly by this rapidly changing crisis.

As your questions continue, and the feeling of uncertainty for the future grows, we want you to know that we are here to support you and your business.

The staff at your Niagara River Region of Commerce is working industriously to continue to serve our membership and our partners and will continue to communicate through our social media channels, as well as our website. Our website lists information about our businesses, our gift certificate program and the most

EVENT UPDATE

Both the Smelt Festival and Taste of Lewiston are canceled for 2020.

up-to-date information regarding COVID-19 from our local, state and federal governments. This information can be found at niagarariverrgeion.com.

As we enter the season of festivals and activities in our region, we are working on postponing and rescheduling as needed. We will update any and all information as it becomes available.

For now, and for the foreseeable future, the best thing we can do is support our families, friends, neighbors and local businesses.

Below are some ways to help:

✓ Support business by ordering takeout, shopping online, purchasing gift certificates and

sharing local businesses on your social media pages

- ✓ Continue to practice social distancing
- ✓ Donate to local organizations supplying services to others
- ✓ Give blood

The Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce will continue to monitor the changing situation and bring you updates as they are received. Although times are extremely difficult right now, and it will take time, we are confident that we will return to our pre-coronavirus days stronger than ever. Please be assured that your NRRCC will be with you every step of the way, doing our best to help you and the entire community be the best that we can all be.



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\$1.99
Dozen

A toasted, buttered-hard roll is the perfect bread for a formal dinner or a picnic.
Limit 4 dozen. Coupon may not be combined with any other offer or discount. Expires May 3, 2020.

Donuts
\$1.50 off
A Dozen

Old fashioned, large donuts, made fresh daily.
Limit 3 dozen. Coupon may not be combined with any other offer or discount. Expires May 3, 2020.

Dessert Cake

7" Round • Gold • Chocolate • Banana
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\$1.50 off
All 7" Cakes
Coupon may not be combined with any other offer or discount. Expires May 3, 2020.

Fresh Dough

Perfect for making pizza, bread or rolls
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Limit 6. Coupons may not be combined with any other offer or discount. Expires May 3, 2020.

Italian Bread

Scaletta "Curly Style"
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Limit 6 loaves. Coupons may not be combined with any other offer or discount. Expires May 3, 2020.

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Spring is in the Air

Spring is here. Just as the dust begins to fly inside, pollen starts to fly outside. Seasonal stresses, such as pollen sensitivity, are one of the most common problems in the United States. Pollen, a fine, yellowish powder from flowering plants, budding trees and grasses, is very prevalent in the spring air. **The beauty of spring burdens many with itchy, watery eyes, headaches, runny or clogged nose, sneezing and coughing; making this time of year miserable.**

To help cope with pollen, many people choose to limit their exposure by closing their windows, using air conditioning and showering after outdoor activities to remove pollen from skin and hair.

Chiropractic patients often remark about improvement in their sinus and allergy conditions as a result of being under chiropractic care. **Accelerated Intolerances Elimination Technique** is an effective procedure we use for helping our patients with environmental intolerances and sensitivities. It is safe, natural, non-invasive and assists the body to reset its reactivity. I personally have experienced tremendous relief from seasonal pollens, cats, foods, and molds, after doing this procedure.

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