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HART celebrates 40 years of service

Lewiston organization fulfills need for many

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS
BY TERRY DUFFY
Editor-in-Chief

As many already know, Lewiston has become home to some dynamic organizations over the years. Groups such as Kiwanis, the Rotary, Lions all come to mind.

But did you ever hear of an organization called the Home Assistance Referral Team?

Better known as HART, this unique organization has called Lewiston home for some 40 years.

Headquartered in the First Presbyterian Church on Cayuga Street, it serves as “a nonprofit organization whose mission is to enable the most vulnerable members of our community to maintain a quality of life and remain independent in their own homes by connecting them with qualified and affordable help.”

Simply put, the focus is to help folks from all walks of life – from seniors to the disabled to those recovering from a major health event – to better handle their own affairs and maintain independence.

As noted, HART is observing its 40th anniversary in 2022. The organization has a rather interesting history, as HART board chairwoman Patricia Berggren, a long-time Lewiston resident, recalled.

“The ‘70s and early ‘80s, there was a real swing in this Niagara area,” she said. “A lot of the plants were moving out or cutting back



Patricia Berggren speaks at Thursday's annual HART celebration recognizing caregivers.

on Buffalo Avenue, and we began to see a real downturn in employment opportunities – which also meant the boomerang effect on that was when a lot of kids were going away to college out of the community they weren't coming back. They were finding opportunities elsewhere, and yet they had parents or grandparents or whatever who were aging without them.”

Berggren said many in the Niagara community began to see this as a problem that needed to be addressed. And so, the leaders at the time – those in business, in government and elsewhere – began to go to work. While HART operates as a nondenominational entity, a close working relationship with the First Presbyterian Church of Lewiston soon devel-

oped. “Rev. Dr. Paul Moore was the minister of this church at the time. And he was a very forward-thinking, fabulous man,” Berggren said. “He coalesced a real diverse group of community leaders – Dr. Merle Dyster, Dr. Maria Correa, the mayor of the City of Niagara Falls, some businesses ... some of the banks in town. And all the way down, communities, folks that were involved in the community. And they came together and he presented a grassroots model of establishing an all-volunteer – no one was paid at that time – organization that eventually became known as HART.

“And we are carrying out that exact mission to this day, that we

SEE HART, continued on Page 15

Village of Lewiston makes decision on Sutherland tribute



The Village of Lewiston plans to add a second memorial bench – this one honoring the late Bruce Sutherland – to the right-of-way at the Orange Cat Coffee Co. A similar bench exists there now, in tribute to the Wilcox family.

BY JOSHUA MALONI
GM/Managing Editor

Trustees in the Village of Lewiston have decided the best way to honor their former colleague is to memorialize him in front of his favorite spot.

At the monthly meeting on Tuesday, the board voted to purchase a new metal bench to be placed in front of the Orange Cat Coffee Co. on Center Street in memory of Bruce Sutherland. The former deputy mayor and community advocate passed unexpectedly on Dec. 27.

Deputy Mayor Vic Eydt said,

“My feeling is that the bench would be much more fitting (than renaming a roadway). Bruce went to the Orange Cat all the time. In fact, he still has a peg up there for his hat. I think this would be more fitting for him.”

Residents Tom Deal of Deal Realty and Lee Simonson, a former Niagara County legislator, led a push to rename South Sixth “Sutherland Street,” as that was Bruce's neighborhood. Deal made his case at two board meetings, while Simonson wrote, “Bruce not only served Lewiston

SEE BOARD, continued on Page 8

Niagara County drops below CDC COVID threshold for ‘high transmission’

The Niagara County Department of Health today released its weekly COVID-19 update.

“Since Aug. 31 of last year, Niagara County has been considered an

area of ‘high transmission’ for COVID-19 by the Centers for Disease Control based on the agency's metric of weekly COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents,” said Becky Wydysh, chairwoman of the Niagara County Legislature.



The CDC set a case rate threshold of 100 or more cases per 100,000 residents in the past seven days for a community to be considered to have “high transmission.” “Today, we fell below that threshold, for the first time in nearly six months. This further underscores the need for policymakers to acknowledge that, while the risk of COVID-19 will remain, it is now an individual's

responsibility to assess that risk and make one's own decisions on how to mitigate it.”

The public is also encouraged to visit <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-data-new-york> for further information. This site contains state, regional and county data on positive cases, fatalities, hospitalizations and vaccinations, along with various demographic breakdowns and the individual school district dashboard.

Current Report (Feb 23) Previous Report (Feb 16)

	Current Report (Feb 23)	Previous Report (Feb 16)
New positive cases, last 7 days	196	336
Total Cases (from start of pandemic)	47,036	46,840
Deaths (from start of pandemic)	557	550
Residents with one at least one vaccine dose	147,314	147,060
Daily new cases per 100K residents, 7-day avg.	13	23
Percent of Hospital Beds Available, 7-day avg.		
- Eastern Niagara Hospital	55%	43%
- Niagara Falls Memorial	29%	26%
- Mt. St. Mary's	25%	29%

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