



'Bills Elvis' continues generosity following theft

Dedicates GoFundMe fundraiser to Patricia Allen Fund



**BY TERRY DUFFY
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

Fans catching those thrilling Bills touchdowns in the corner tunnel end zone area at Highmark Stadium have likely seen him in the stands or on TV. He's Niagara County resident John Lang from Lockport, a true Bills diehard also known to many as "Bills Elvis" for his truly colorful getup and guitar.

A season ticket neighbor of this writer, Lang is a familiar face to fans over in sections 127-126 at Highmark and to the Bills players whenever the team scores. He, along with dozens of friends, in fact are a Bills tradition when it comes to pregame tailgating and those postgame celebrations in their private lot over on Southwestern Boulevard.

According to the social media group Niagara Action, Lang's gathering, known as "Tony's Tailgate," serves as a home base to dozens of Bills fans each year. There you can find an over-the-top assortment of food, drinks, live music and sometimes even a Buffalo Bills hall-of-famer.

"It's an absolute riot," Lang said. "It's something we look forward



'Bills Elvis' shown with his familiar guitar in the Bills corner end zone. (Niagara Action Facebook photo)

to every game, every week."

Well, last Sunday, Lang, who is also known for his generosity and helping out others, fell victim to misfortune himself out in Orchard Park. According to a Niagara Action post and WIVB-TV Channel 4 report, Lang and his "Tony's Tailgate" friends returned to their parking area only to find that they had been robbed of thousands of dollars worth of tailgating gear and equipment.

The discovery late Sunday was a devastating blow to the legendary Lockport group less than a week away from the first playoff home game of the year. Some of the items stolen included a large, 10-foot-by-20-foot tent, a 90-inch, eight-burner event grill along with four propane tanks, several Yeti coolers and various other tailgating supplies and equipment.

"The initial reaction was anger," Lang said. "It was like, 'You got

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to be kidding me.' Bills fans, we have each others' backs. We've never locked that thing up and nothing has ever happened."

"The show's gotta go on," he added. "Yeah, we have way too much fun to let a couple of dopes stop us."

And so, Lang and his buddies turned their attention to procuring replacements for Saturday night's Wild Card game against New England.

"We know we had to get it together by Saturday. I went to Home Depot. I'm looking at grills. I sent Tony, who runs everything, a picture. I go, 'I got this. I'll get you a grill.' He said, 'Too late. I already ordered one.'"

By Monday, word had also

gotten out to his many friends. Jackie Danna of Buffalo created a GoFundMe account with a fundraising goal of \$3,000 to help Lang out. Titled "Help Rebuild Bills Elvis and Tony's Tailgate," it appealed to the Bills Mafia followers for help.

"Please consider making a small donation to help ease the financial burden of replacing these items. As the city of good neighbors, we are confident that the power of the Bills Mafia will overcome this senseless and cruel act," the GoFundMe post reads.

Turns out, this fundraiser has already had an impact. As of mid-Wednesday, it had more than doubled its goal, with \$8,467 raised.

But in the spirit of true Bills Mafia generosity, Lang said the GoFundMe would continue after their losses are covered, with all remaining funds raised now going to benefit the Patricia Allen Fund at Oishei Children's Hospital. He invites the community to help out a good cause.

For more information, visit the "Tony's Tailgate" GoFundMe at <https://gofund.me/41774261>.

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Lewiston Town Hall employees, under the direction of Town Clerk Donna Garfinkel, along with Lily and Dominic Wager from St. Peter's R.C. Church religious education, collected food throughout November and December to benefit local families and Care-N-Share Food Pantry located in Ransomville.

Pictured, from left, are Linda Kreps, Lily Wager, Dominic Wager, Carole Schroeder and Tamara Burns. Also shown are some younger volunteers.

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To help reduce the spread of COVID-19, the CDC recommends wearing a cloth face covering in public settings and around people who don't live in your household, particularly when social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.

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