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Niagara County continues to reopen, welcome people back to popular sites

I have been fascinated by the number of different articles I have read speculating about whether we are on the cusp of a new "Roaring 20s," similar to what was experienced a century ago when an era of fun and a seemingly never-ending party followed the end of the Spanish-flu pandemic. I'm not sure about that, but I am very happy with each new step that gets us back to living our lives the way we want.



Becky Wydysz
Chairwoman

To that end, the Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) announced the Niagara County Fair will indeed be held this year. The fair will be held from Aug. 4-8 at the Niagara County Fairgrounds in Lockport. Under the plans being put in place, attendees can expect midway rides and games, live music, ground acts and 4-H shows and exhibits. And of course, lots and lots of our favorite fair foods.

The CCE is working closely with the Niagara County Health Department to make sure a safety plan is in place that allows everyone to have a good time at the fair while being mindful of the



Pictured, from left, at the new Oppenheim playground are: DPW Commissioner Garret Meal, Park Director Jeff Gaston, Legislator Jesse Gooch and Parks Supervisor Frank Rotella.

fact we aren't completely out of the woods on COVID-19 yet. This partnership between CCE and the health department is not about limiting activities, but rather finding a way to do all the activities that typically go on at the fair in a way that keeps everyone safe.

Also, the Niagara County Parks Department has now officially opened all five county parks: Burmaster, Krull, Oppenheim,

Royalton and West Canal. All amenities in the parks, including playgrounds, shelters and splash pads, as well as the disc golf course at Burmaster Park, are ready to go.

Compared to where we were one year ago when the park openings were delayed and amenities were limited because of the pandemic, it's exciting to fully open our parks for the season on time

and welcome Niagara County residents to enjoy all that they have to offer. A big thank you to Public Works Commissioner Garret Meal, Parks Director Jeff Gaston and the parks team for getting everything ready.

One new addition to our parks opening is the animal-themed playground at Oppenheim Park. The animal theme is a fun way to remember the history of when the park was next to Oppenheim Zoo. We expect the new playground will get a lot of usage.

Speaking of parks, I was informed of some exciting news regarding the Bond Lake Disc Golf Course at Burmaster Park. Udisc.com – the leading website and app for disc golfers across the globe – has ranked our course No. 1 in New York state and No. 33 in the world. That is quite some recognition, but not totally surprising, given the tremendously positive feedback we have received about the course and how it attracts people from all over to come play.

The County Fair, playgrounds, splash pads and disc golf... I'm not sure if that qualifies as the "Roaring 20s," but I am more than happy to take it. Let's hope we continue with more announcements like these.

Power of dance seen in local performer

SUBMITTED BY JULIA VICTOR

Theresa Victor is a senior at Niagara Wheatfield High School. On June 5, she will participate in her 16th dance recital. This is her sixth year with Jaclyn Carol Dance Academy (JCDA) in North Tonawanda.

Theresa has needed to work harder than most. She has autism with intellectual disabilities. JCDA has given Theresa an opportunity to shine and flourish with confidence. When the pandemic of 2020 shut everything down, Theresa was devastated that her one constant enjoyment was going to be taken away forever. She was no longer able to see any of her special-needs classmates due to significant respiratory issues. The world was put on pause and



Theresa Victor

Theresa regressed. Within weeks, however, Theresa was given notice that the dance studios in NT and

Newfane were going to go virtual. She was not too happy being stuck at home, but it was something for her to look forward to each week!

Within a month, the studios were upgraded to meet all CDC regulations. They went above and beyond what was required to keep their students and teachers safe. Theresa was back to classes with masks and she was so grateful! Classes went into the summer of 2020 and an outdoor recital was performed. After many challenges in getting costumes and three changes in venues, it was a great success!

Fast forward to summer of 2021. Theresa has been so grateful to have danced all year in-person leading up to her outdoor recital June 5 at Cardinal O'Hara High

School. She has five dances on stage and lives for the applause and screaming from the audience!

Theresa hopes to become a special needs dance teacher someday in the future. We cannot thank all the teachers and staff enough, especially the owners – Jaclyn, Josh, Julianne and Miss Shari – for including Theresa in all forms of dance and treating her like one of their own.

Never stop learning and reach for the stars. Your mom, dad and five older siblings (Kaitlyn, John, Christopher, Thomas and Daniel) are so proud of you! Keep on dancing. You are perfect, just the way you are! We will always be cheering for you!

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