

Niagara Falls AOH celebration, O’Riordan Parade among local favorites

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A few this week that just might spur your interest include: a make your corned beef workshop at a cafe on Elmwood; Shamrock metal-sculpturing programs at a Buffalo east side shop; an Emerald Isle celebration in Hamburg; a St. Patrick’s wine and whiskey weekend on the Wine Trail in Niagara County; a “Sham-Rockin’” Village Mingle Irish Fest in Angola; the fourth annual Buffalo LepreCon Bar Crawl downtown; and an Emerald Isle celebration at Larkinville.

And that’s just scratching the surface.

There are many Irish-flavored programs, activities and events around – close to three-dozen at last count – to whet your St. Patrick’s Day appetite. And of course it leads to next weekend’s major parades in Youngstown, the Old First Ward and in downtown Buffalo.

So what of next week? Well, there’s some good ones close by.

•Leading off, the Niagara Falls Ancient Order of Hibernians chapter, Rev. James J. Brown Division, will host the return of its mammoth St. Patrick’s Day party in the Niagara Falls Convention Center, 101 Old Falls St., following a two-year lapse. This is set for St. Patrick’s Day itself, Thursday, March 17.

Kevin O’Brien, president of Division 1 for the Falls AOH, spoke of the excitement that’s been brewing among locals for the return of this favorite.

“We are very excited to once again host this fun-filled celebration of Irish culture and heritage,” he said. “In 2020, as we were setting up the party, we received word that the public health situation would force us to cancel this beloved event. We never expected that circumstances would force us to also cancel in 2021. That’s why we are so excited for (this) announcement, and hope that this is a sign of a greater return to normalcy for all of us.”

As in prior years, the Falls AOH St. Patrick’s celebration opens at 4:45 p.m. with the “World’s Shortest Parade,” steps from the

corner of Old Falls and Second streets. It ends at the Convention Center doors. Patricia Mahoney of Lewiston, a long-time member of the Ladies AOH, will serve as grand marshal.

Inside the family-oriented celebration, visitors will find Irish culture at its best, with themed foods, beverages and entertainment. Renowned Irish musical acts Poor Ould Goat and Crikwater will perform on stage, and the award-winning dancers from the McCarthy School of Irish Dance will serve up traditional step dancing between sets throughout the evening.

The AOH celebration continues to 11 p.m. Tables for visitors will be available on a first-come, first served basis. For tickets, visit www.aohnf.com/tickets, or purchase at the door. For more on this event, visit www.aohnf.com.

•On Friday, March 18, fine Irish culture continues with the presentation of the Irish Wake Band with Jamie Holka on stage at the Rapids Theater, 1711 Main St., Niagara Falls.

“Please join us for the biggest St. Paddy’s Day event in Niagara County,” said Dave Stayner, one of several Niagara County musicians who comprise this unique group of traditional Irish entertainers.

For ticket information, visit www.outhousetickets.com.

•And for those true lovers of St. Patrick’s Day, this happening segues rather nicely to that next “must attend” celebration in Niagara County: the 10th annual O’Riordan St. Patrick’s Parade, starting at noon Saturday, March 19, on Main Street in Youngstown.

Presented by the Youngstown Business and Professional Association, this community happening has grown from its simple beginnings to what one can call a full-fledged happening.

YBPA President Cheryl Irish Butera said, “Our very first parade was merely a handful of people and one decorated shopping cart. Today, we are now a ‘legitimate parade!’

“We’ll start on Hinman Street,



Pictured are scenes from past St. Patrick’s Day events. (Submitted file photos)

march north towards Falkner Park, turn around and stop at the corner of Main and Lockport streets, where Bob Emerson with Fort Niagara soldiers will demonstrate a military salute to our former Mayor Neil Riordan for whom this parade is dedicated.”

The event is open to just about anyone. Marchers – those with the traditional St. Patrick’s decorated shopping carts or just walkers – typically gather at Main and Hinman streets. There, Emerson and his staff of Red Coats will lead the parade. Town of Porter Councilman Timothy Adamson will again serve as grand marshal and lead a host of local elected officials and a vast number of marchers.

Participants expected this year include Youngstown Police Department as well as the Youngstown Volunteer Fire Co., the Youngstown Lions, the Youngstown Free Library, the Ransomville Speedway, Porter Empty Return Center, and Lower Niagara Moose Lodge No. 584, which will have a 40-foot float.

“Niagara Clown Alley clowns will be marching with us, Skydive The Falls, VFW Lake On-



tario Post No. 313, the McCarthy School of Irish Dance will be participating and dancing, and music will be provided by the MacKenzie Highlanders’ Pipes and Drums,” Butera said. “Also, all YBPA member businesses as well as locals will be participating, wearing their distinctive green attire showing off their own businesses offerings.”

The parade concludes at the steps of the Ontario House, aka “Stone Jug,” on the corner of Main and Lockport streets

where parade judges, Niagara County Legislator Irene Myers, Town of Porter Justice Judge David Truesdale, and Dotty Riordan (wife of the former mayor) will judge the participants.

“There will be a prize for the best children’s float (provided by Old Fort Niagara), and a prize for the best adult ‘float’ provided by YBPA members called, ‘A taste of Youngstown,’” Butera said. “Bear in mind, the term ‘float’ is used loosely as in a decorated wagon/bicycle/golf cart or even an individual costume constitutes a winning idea.

“Following the judging, the Jug will host everyone for an after-parade party with food, green beer, and live music. All are welcome to come out and celebrate St. Patrick’s Day being outside and sharing our beautiful community with all who attend!”

Those interested in joining the Youngstown parade are asked to meet on Hinman Street where the parade will begin promptly at noon. YBPA said it has six shopping carts available to use to decorate as “floats.”

For more information, call 716-745-7989 or email YBPA at ybpa@youngstownny.com.

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