

# Niagara County SPCA kicks off fundraising season with 'Bark Day Bash'

BY MICHAEL DEPIETRO

Tribune Editor

The Niagara County SPCA kicked off its fundraising season on Wednesday with its first "Bark Day Bash" event at the Sheraton Hotel in Niagara Falls. The event provided a lively, yet-COVID-19-friendly and well-organized affair for attendees to celebrate St. Patrick's Day whilst raising money for one of the area's foremost animal welfare organizations.

The event, which was spread out across the hotel's main floor and adjoining restaurants, featured dinner, drinks, basket raffles, silent auction, as well as an appearance from a local celebrity. Honorary chairperson of the evening was Western New York native and 2020 "The Voice" contestant Cami Clune, who posed for photos, signed auction memorabilia, and even treated attendees with a few songs.

"It means a lot to be a part of



(the event), because I love animals – and anything I can do to help them get adopted and raise awareness for the SPCA, I'm happy to do," Clune said.

While figures are still being tallied, Niagara County SPCA Direc-



Unique raffle items and an appearance by "The Voice" singer Cami Clune highlighted the first "Bark Day Bash" for the Niagara County SPCA.

tor of Business Development Pat Proctor said the event was a resounding success. On Thursday, he said tickets for the event had sold out and early returns indicated roughly \$12,000-\$15,000 was raised for the organization.

"I can't get over it; we're so grateful. I mean, we're still in the midst of a pandemic and the support was, not just awesome, it was a miracle," Proctor said. Given the COVID-19 situation, he said he did have some fears as to how the event would be received and what the attendance numbers would like.

"I had a nightmare the night before – I'm looking at my watch, it's 9:30 and no one was there,"

Proctor laughed. "But it turned out amazing. It was like a party in every room."

He went on to offer an immense amount of gratitude for the staff at the Sheraton for facilitating the event and ensuring it was run safely throughout.

With the fundraising season underway, the SPCA has a couple upcoming events that it's looking forward to. Currently, plans are in the works for two planned fundraisers heading into the warmer months with more information to be released soon.

√ On May 1, Derby Day, the organization plans to send out tickets to supporters for a fundraising effort featuring a large cash prize.

√ On July 17, in conjunction with WNY Hot Rods Customs and Classics, the organization will hold an event called "The Fast and the Furious" on the SPCA premises.

In the meantime, for those looking to donate now, the SPCA is always seeking donations via its website, [www.niagaraspca.org](http://www.niagaraspca.org), or by calling 731-4368. To stay up-to-date with all the news related to the SPCA, visit its Facebook page at [facebook.com/niagaracountyspca/](https://facebook.com/niagaracountyspca/).



## Niagara County summer youth employment program now accepting applications

Niagara County Employment & Training announced applications are being accepted for the department's summer youth employment program (SYEP). In order to be considered for the program, applicants must be a county resident, be between 14-20 years-old (must turn 14 by May 14 and cannot turn 21 until after Aug. 27), and meet income guidelines.

"Through this program, we strive to provide young people with the opportunity to earn money and gain meaningful work experience," said Donald Jablonski, director of Employment & Training. "It is imperative that youth learn and develop the skills, attitudes and commitment necessary to succeed in today's world of work. Through this program, youth are able to gain exposure to various career industries while interacting with working professionals in a positive work environment."

Applications for the SYEP are available at high school guidance offices throughout the county, as well as online at [www.worksource1.com](http://www.worksource1.com). They may also be picked up in-person at Niagara County Employment & Training, located at 1001 11th St., Niagara Falls.

Participants in this year's program will earn \$13.50 per hour, one dollar over the state's current minimum wage. Applications and all related documents are due by May 14. They may be returned to the Trott Center, located at 1001 11th St. Niagara Falls; faxed to 278-8149; or scanned and emailed to [dawn.cody@niagaracounty.com](mailto:dawn.cody@niagaracounty.com).

Jablonski stated that, while there are worksites available throughout the county, more sites are needed, especially in the eastern end and more rural areas of the county.

"As the program is funded through a TANF grant, there is zero cost to the employer," he said. "The youth are paid directly by our payroll provider, and expenses such as Workers Compensation are completely covered. The responsibility of the worksite is to simply provide meaningful work and supervision, offer 20-29 hours per week to participating youth,

and to complete a time sheet weekly and send it to NCET."

Jablonski noted youth selected for the program are prescreened by Employment & Training staff.

"This is literally free summer help for the employers, an extra set of hands to get things done" he said. "All while helping to mentor the next generation of talent."

Businesses or organizations interested in learning more about becoming a worksite, or to receive an application to be a worksite, may contact Dawn at 278-8182 or [dawn.cody@niagaracounty.com](mailto:dawn.cody@niagaracounty.com).



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