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Niagara County

# Tribune/Sentinel

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## Lewiston's LaDuca raises funds for small businesses, makes donation to St. Mary's



Artist Michael LaDuca, center, is shown with Mount St. Mary's Hospital Foundation Executive Director Julie R. Berrigan, MS; and C.J. Urlaub, president of Mount St. Mary's Hospital and senior vice president of strategic partnerships, integration and care delivery for Niagara County.

Lewiston native, artist and entrepreneur Michael LaDuca recently created an on-line campaign to support local businesses. He raised funds through a GoFundMe initiative, where, for a \$50 donation, people could purchase an 11-by-39-inch print of his famed Lewiston landscape watercolor photo.

Earlier this week, LaDuca presented Mount St. Mary's with 40 \$50 gift certificates and 20 \$25 gift certificates to Lewiston establishments. He also gave this same donation to Our Lady of Peace.

C.J. Urlaub, president of Mount St.

Mary's Hospital and senior vice president of strategic partnerships, integration and care delivery for Niagara County, said, "We are so incredibly grateful for this initiative by Mike LaDuca. His watercolor painting of Lewiston is spectacular, and his talent moved this fundraiser forward to help our community. We are grateful not only for the generous gift certificates for our health care workers, but also that this collaboration with the Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce will help local businesses."

SEE LADUCA, continued on Page 5

## Niagara County legislators offer affordable meals to Wheatfield and North Tonawanda seniors



Niagara County Legislator Jesse Gooch, left, is shown with partners from J&L Boulevard BBQ. (Submitted photo)

BY MICHAEL DEPIETRO

Interim Tribune Editor

In the early weeks of the lockdown, Niagara County Legislator Jesse Gooch knew he wanted to do something for his district's senior community. He partnered up with local food truck vendor J&L Boulevard BBQ to begin "Meals with Heart from 6 Feet Apart" to offer seniors \$5 dinners (pickup only) from 5-6 p.m. each Wednesday at the Wheatfield Town Hall, 2800 Church Road.

The initiative has been a resounding success. After selling a respectable 67 meals in its first week, the program quickly gained popularity on social media. Sales have now totaled in the hundreds every week since, and last week's grilled pork chop dinner sold out in less than a day. The initiative has been so successful that Gooch, as well as fellow legislator Richard L. Andres, have brought the event to North Tonawanda with pickups available from 5-6 p.m. each Thursday at the

Fairhavens Church, 7337 Ward Road.

While perhaps no one is more stunned by the program's success than Gooch, he said he's just thrilled to have been able to bring something positive to the community.

"The results are a million times more positive than I ever thought it would be. It really just exploded," Gooch said.

Many customers have been going out of their way to pay the good deed forward, often paying for the meals for the cars in line behind them. Others in the area have gone even further. A few weeks ago, town prosecutor Mat Mosher helped ensure that the barbecue rib dinner would remain at \$5 by paying off the overall cost difference. One extra charitable resident who wished to remain anonymous donated \$500 to pay for 100 meals.

Even local businesses are looking to help. West Seneca-based company Gold-N-Ham donated hams while Goodman's

SEE GOOCH, continued on Page 5

## Niagara County and COVID-19: Wydsh encourages everyone to get tested

BY JOSHUA MALONI

Managing Editor

Niagara County Legislature Chairwoman Becky Wydsh is encouraging all residents to get a COVID-19 diagnostic test. She said this is a prudent move to ensure public health, as well as a necessary component required for reopening Western New York.

Speaking Monday to elected leaders in the River Region, Wydsh said, "I think it's a great idea for anyone to get tested. Again, you can have no symptoms and still be a carrier of the virus. And if that's the case - especially if you're working, even if you're just out shopping, if you're out and about in the public, for the safety

of your own family, if you're carrying the virus, it would be good to know that. So, I encourage it for everyone.

"It's good for different reasons, for different people. But it would be good for anyone to know if they're carrying the virus."

One of Gov. Andrew Cuomo's CDC-inspired seven metrics in

determining when a region can reopen from his "New York State on PAUSE" order is "Average daily diagnostic testing over the past 7 days must be sufficient to conduct 30 tests per 1,000 residents per month."

Wydsh explained, "We have to show that we've tested a certain number of people in the area, so

we do encourage everyone to go out and get tested - whether they have symptoms or not - especially talking about businesses that are looking at reopening and trying to come up with reopening plans.

"It not only helps the businesses to know that their employees are

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