

Project Connect Niagara to support local providers in wake of COVID-19

Project Connect Niagara, an annual effort designed to connect local residents with critical services, has pivoted during the time of COVID-19. This year, instead of an in-person event, organizers will partner with local providers to make an impact through the distribution of care packages.

Project Connect Niagara has taken place each of the past four summers at Heart, Love & Soul Food Pantry & Dining Room in Niagara Falls, as a one-day, one-stop event. On that day, approximately 300 local residents would

attend to engage with as many as 50 different resources on-site. The 2019 version featured a simultaneous job fair at the nearby Niagara Falls Train Station, partnering with the New York State Department of Labor.

With current public health regulations preventing such gatherings, the event's planning committee shifted its focus to meeting the needs of local residents more directly. Therefore, efforts have been focused on providing more than 400 bags to local food pantries containing food, hygiene

items, and gift cards for those that find themselves in need.

"For the past four years, Project Connect Niagara has provided access to community resources to benefit local residents," the planning committee said in a statement. "This year has presented unforeseen and unprecedented challenges; however, we still wanted to respond and make an impact in some way. We are glad to partner with Heart, Love & Soul, Community Missions, Pinnacle Community Services, and the North Tonawanda Inter-

Church Food Pantry to support their efforts in meeting the needs of those they serve."

Project Connect Niagara is presented by the Niagara County Coalition for Services to the Homeless, in conjunction with its annual Compassionate Niagara Conference. With a goal of making a positive impact on the community, the project aims to form a partnership between community volunteers, city government, nonprofits, and the private sector to provide help for those in need throughout Niagara County.

Partner organizations involved in the event's planning include The Service Collaborative of WNY, Community Missions, Field and Fork Network, Heart, Love & Soul, Catholic Health, Mount St. Mary's Hospital, Niagara Alliance for Restorative Practices, Niagara University and the NYS Department of Labor.

For additional information about the event, call 286-8750 or email projectconnectniagara@gmail.com.

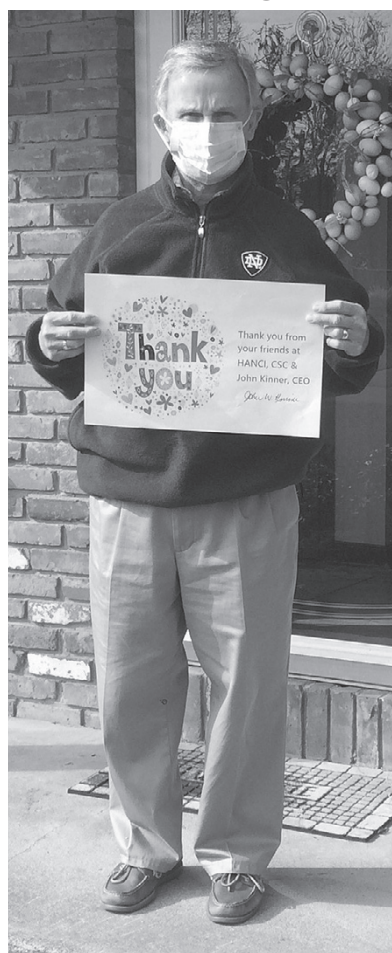
HANCI recipient of KeyBank / First Niagara Foundation grant

The Health Association of Niagara County Inc. – better known as HANCI – announced Tuesday it is the recipient of a \$30,000 grant award from KeyBank, in partnership with the First Niagara Foundation. The grant was awarded to the nonprofit to implement a frontline worker education and care coordination/telehealth program.

"During this nationwide pandemic, our agency has stepped up our efforts to serve the community and expand our services," said John W. Kinner, president and CEO of HANCI. "COVID-19 has brought about unique challenges to health care delivery, especially to the chronically ill elderly, that we have not seen in the almost 94 years we have been serving the Niagara County community. We have been challenged with finding ways to adapt and grow, and telehealth will be a part of that plan thanks to this grant."

Kinner continued, "On behalf of our board of directors, our staff and patients, I want to sincerely thank KeyBank, in partnership with the First Niagara Foundation, along with their executive director, Elizabeth Gurney, for their extremely generous support of our agency. Because of their support, HANCI will be able to provide better care and services to the people of Niagara who are depending on us now more than ever."

A press release said, "Telehealth was widely used during the pandemic to expand access to essential health services. It is both patient-centered and conducive to self-quarantine, and can allow physicians and patients to communicate 24/7, without exposing staff and patients to conta-



Pictured is HANCI President and CEO John Kinner holding up a "Thank you" sign for the KeyBank and First Niagara Foundation boards.

gions. Further, telemedicine can provide for an important evaluation step before patients visit a hospital or clinic, and can provide quick access to specialist who are not immediately available in person."

HANCI has immediate plans to utilize this funding by upgrading workforce technology as well as implementing telehealth services for the agency's most at-risk patients.

'In the Loop' with the Lewiston-Porter Board of Education

Lew-Port fall sports returns

BY JODEE RIORDAN
Board of Education President

Lewiston-Porter celebrates the return of sports to our campus. For the fall season, varsity/JV soccer (boys/girls), varsity golf (boys/girls), varsity tennis (girls), and varsity cross-country (boys/girls) are all on. Athletics move forward in a limited fashion, in alignment with the Niagara Frontier League and following strict state guidelines.

All guidelines and information for the season can be found at the Lewiston-Porter website (www.lew-port.com), on the athletics page.

Superintendent Paul Casseri, who sits on the executive board of the Niagara Frontier League, worked hard with the full support of the Board of Education to return athletics to our schools. Athletics is a critical component to engaging and inspiring so many of our kids (including all of mine), and we remain ever hopeful to return as many as possible as the year progresses.

The Lewiston-Porter Community Education program is now up and running. A full slate of virtual classes has begun, but there is still time to register for many interesting courses that will be held over the next two months. The full Community Ed catalog is posted on the Lew-Port website (under the "Community" tab), and registration can be completed online. Spring planning is now in the works.

Interested in becoming an instructor, or have a great idea for a class? Contact Anita Muzzi at amuzzi@lew-port.com.

Superintendent Casseri has been sending weekly updates to

the school community via email since March as the COVID-19 shutdown began. This past week, he changed things up and shared a YouTube video. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oe1havvjg8&feature=youtu.be>). It is full of detail about the implementation of the reopening plan and some really great virtual backgrounds. The video is posted to the district's own YouTube channel, where you can also view Board of Education meetings, educational presentations, and sporting events and celebrations. Subscribe to the channel on YouTube at Lewiston-Porter Schools.

The video is also posted to the district website, under the COVID-19 REOPENING tab, along with the full archive of his COVID-19 updates dating back to March 15.

The district will be closed Monday, Oct. 12, in observance of Indigenous Peoples' Day/Columbus Day. There will be no school for students in either the hybrid or remote learning models. For

hybrid students, there will be no remote instruction or remote activities on this day (normally Mondays follow a remote learning schedule). Normal hybrid and remote learning schedules will be followed for the rest of the week.

Green team Lancers Day on campus will be Tuesday and Wednesday, and white team Lancers on campus Thursday and Friday. We will continue to keep you "In the Loop" of calendar and schedule changes as we move forward with the 2020-21 school year.

Enjoy the long weekend!

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