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**PUBLICATION DEADLINES: Grand Island PennySaver: Monday - 12pm**  
**Niagara County Tribune/Sentinel: Tuesday - 5pm**  
**Island Dispatch: Tuesday - 5pm**

**State support sought for libraries**

**BY SARAH POTWIN**

Niagara Falls Public Library Executive Library Director

A new year brings another round of state budget negotiations, where numbers akin to an NFL quarterback's salary are tossed around as Gov. Hochul and legislators jostle over priorities. The projected \$231 billion budget for New York's fiscal year 2024 spending plans must include funding for our state's libraries – public, schools, hospitals, and cultural organizations.

This year, libraries in New York state are seeking \$147.1 million in Library Systems Operating Aid, distributed among three types of library systems in New York – public, school and multi-type systems. Library System Operating Aid helps fund programs and services enjoyed by all New Yorkers, from Brooklyn to Western New York, from Rouse Point to Tottenville, who visit their library of choice, whether in person or online. While local funding is a factor in how libraries operate, state fund-

ing is critical for "leveling the playing field," ensuring all New York citizens – from the smallest, poorest, most remote areas of the state – get a fair share of resources to serve their residents.

Last year, operating aid for libraries was cut by the governor, from \$99.6 million to \$92.1 million. The Legislature restored funding and libraries received \$99.6 million. Over decades of flat funding is costing libraries services to our citizens, cutbacks in staffing levels and resources.

The impact is felt by all our New York citizens: seniors, youth and families, our veterans, job-seekers, small business entrepreneurs, college students, as well as people seeking help dealing with mental health and general health issues, homelessness, abuse and addictions.

Digital preservation aids the preservation of our state's historical artifacts for researchers. Health databases provide access to promote healthy choices. Wi-Fi hotspots and Chrome Books provide access to the basic needs

of the internet. Makerspaces provide access to learning new technologies for job seekers and youth to learn coding. After-school programs provide access to a safe place for youth to do their homework. Libraries provide a space for volunteer community service and skills learning. Summer lunches feed youth nutritious meals during school breaks. Downloadable e-books, videos and music provide access to cultural entertainment, as well as learning opportunities. Faxing, scanning and notary services provide access for entrepreneurs.

Public programs provide access to betterment for all New York citizens. Libraries are empowerment engines for all our New York state communities.

Libraries are essential for healthy, inclusive communities, and should be fully funded in 2024. Let your local New York legislative representative know of your support for library funding.

**IN THE NEWS**

**Lewiston Garden Club sets meeting**

The next meeting of the Lewiston Garden Club is 10:30 a.m. Monday, Jan. 22, in the Lewiston Library Community Room. After a brief business meeting, the speaker will be Carol Ann Harlos, who will talk about "Perennial plants are not perennials."

Interested individuals are welcome to attend.

Club members have started planning for GardenFest 2024, which will be held June 15-16.

**'Coffee with Chris' has update**

Niagara County Legislator Chris Voccio has announced that, as a result of a scheduling conflict, he will not have a guest speaker at "Coffee with Chris" at 9 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 20. The event will

go on without a guest. The "Coffee with Chris" scheduled for Saturday, March 16, will have a guest speaker.

"Coffee with Chris" is held at Cristoforo Colombo Society at 2223 Pine Ave., Niagara Falls. Voccio brings Tim Hortons coffee.

No reservations are required. For more information, call 716-696-0086.

**Red Cross: Emergency blood shortage may delay medical procedures**

Donors urged to give as nation faces lowest number of donors in decades

*✓ Chance to help save lives, win trip to Super Bowl LVIII*  
Submitted by the American Red Cross

The American Red Cross is experiencing an emergency blood shortage as the nation faces the lowest number of people giving blood in 20 years. The Red Cross blood supply has fallen to critically low levels across the country, and blood and platelet donors are urged to make a donation appointment to help alleviate the shortage and help ensure lifesaving medical procedures are not put on hold.

Over the past 20 years, the number of people donating blood to the Red Cross has fallen by about 40%. When fewer people donate blood, even small disruptions to blood donations – such as the nearly 7,000-unit shortfall in blood donations the Red Cross experienced between Christmas and New Year's Day alone – can have a huge impact on the availability of blood products and dramatic consequences for those in need of emergency blood transfusion.

Blood products are currently going to hospitals faster than blood donations are coming in, and in recent weeks, the Red Cross has had to limit distributions of type O blood products – among the most transfused blood

types – to hospitals.

"Small changes in blood donor turnout can have a huge impact on the availability of blood products and dramatic consequences for those in need of an emergency blood transfusion," said Dr. Eric Gehrie, executive physician director for the Red Cross. "More challenges may lie ahead as the potential for severe winter weather and seasonal illness may compound the dire blood supply situation. Donors of all types – especially those with type O blood and those giving platelets – are urged to give now."

**Who Donations Help**

Blood donations made within the Western New York Region help supply all our local hospitals and the patients they serve.

For a Horseheads resident, Dr. Kristina Workman, blood donations saved her life after what should have been the joyous birth of her second daughter, Eva, turned into complications that nearly cost Kristina her life. It took 33 units of blood to save Kristina's life and ensure that she would be there to raise her daughters with her husband, Jason Harris.

"One thing that really strikes me about blood donation is that you think about saving one person or helping one person to be

healthier, but really, I would have been gone," Kristina said. "I'm very glad that I'm here. I would have been gone and everybody else would have been left with a hole and grief. I don't know what life would have been like for my husband and my daughters."

This National Blood Donor month especially, Kristina encourages donors to make and keep appointments in the days and weeks to come to help alleviate the shortage and ensure lifesaving medical care for patients in need.

"It is just not about the life that you are saving, it is about all of the other people that care about that person – and I hope that is a strong motivation for people to donate," she said. "It is touching a lot of lives. Every single donation has that power."

Don't wait – to make an appointment, download the Red Cross blood donor app, visit [RedCrossBlood.org](http://RedCrossBlood.org) or call 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

The Red Cross and the National Football League (NFL) are partnering this January, during National Blood Donor Month, to urge individuals to give blood or platelets and help tackle the emergency blood shortage. Those who come to give blood, platelets

SEE RED CROSS, on Page 15