

# Hey kids, let's put on a show!

## LP and local high school alums reunite to raise funds for nonprofits

BY LORI CASO

Special to Niagara Frontier Publications

My phone rang over the summer, and it was my old high school English teacher, Frank Scelsa, with the message I've been waiting to hear for 40-plus years: "Lori, we need you back on the stage!"

What vehicle would bring me back to the footlights? A unique fundraiser for the Lewiston & NOTL Rotary Club!

"Neil Simon's The Odd Couple" will be presented "cabaret-style" on the last two weekends in October at the Lutheran Church of the Messiah in Lewiston. "Cabaret-style" means you'll be enjoying a personal charcuterie, along with a beverage, while you watch the comedy.

All proceeds will benefit HART, Care-n-Share Food Pantry, Heart, Love & Soul and Lutheran Church of the Messiah. Tickets are \$40 a person (or a special price of \$35 a person, if you can gather enough friends to make up a table of eight.)

This was the brainchild of Scelsa, who is a veteran director of local theater productions. He ran the idea past fellow Rotarian Ron Danielewicz (another L-P English teacher of mine) and enlisted the help of current L-P English teacher



A production of "Neil Simon's The Odd Couple" will be presented as a fundraiser for the Lewiston-NOTL Rotary Club the last two weekends in October.

Lisa Scelsa as box office manager (is anyone else seeing a pattern here?). The local cast of characters involved in this production is a "who's who" in the community and may likely be someone you knew from high school. ...

•Lewis Bean (Oscar Madison) operates Hill of Beans Coffee Shop in Youngstown and has

appeared in local productions at the Fort Niagara Post Theatre.

•Jack Agugliaro (Felix Unger) has been performing and directing plays in Western New York for over 20 years. He was part of the Class of 1971 at NFHS.

•Mark Roy (Roy), a 1976 L-P alum, was in the 1975 LPHS production of "The Odd Couple" as Felix! He's now a retired English

teacher from the Newfane School district.

•Leo LiPomi (Vinnie) is an accounting manager for Gurney, Becker and Bourne Real Estate by day, and an active participant in local theater companies on nights and weekends. He graduated from NFHS in 1989.

•Sam Graneri (Murray) has been involved with a plethora of

local stage productions and has been self-nominated for a few nonexistent acting awards. A NFHS grad from 1975.

•Taylor Ruckh (Speed), another L-P alum (Class on 2007), who was cast in a LPHS production of "The Odd Couple," was so keen on being a part of the project he attends rehearsals virtually from his home in New York City.

•Anne Belin (Cecily), a former paralegal, now retired, is a veteran actress with Theater in the Mist. She graduated from Madonna in 1971.

•Matt Lord (stage director), an L-P alum and formerly part of the high school stage crew, is now a successful film director with Mighty Niagara Productions, and obviously has a soft heart for Frank Scelsa productions.

•Lori Caso (Gwendolyn), L-P Class of 1981, is not an actress or a cook ... but sometimes I play one on TV.

Please join us for a night of laughs that will benefit four wonderful nonprofits in our community.

Show times are 7 p.m. Oct. 18, 19, 25 and 26, and 2 p.m. Oct. 20 and 27. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit <https://www.onthestage.tickets/show/rotary-club1/66b11b24b1d6db12be1b2693#localtheater>.

## American Legion Band of the Tonawandas to present Veterans Day concert with premiere of 'Virtues of Mankind'

Press Release

The American Legion Band of the Tonawandas announced its

annual Veterans Day concert, set to take place at 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 3, at the Cardinal O'Hara

Performing Arts Center, 39 O'Hara Road, Tonawanda.

Organizers said, "This year's concert will be a special tribute to our veterans, featuring a diverse program of patriotic and classical music. The highlight of the evening will be the world premiere of 'Virtues of Mankind,' a new composition by acclaimed composer Rossano Galante who will guest conduct the work at the performance. Known for his evocative and powerful orchestral works, Galante's latest piece promises to be a moving addition to the

band's repertoire."

The American Legion Band of the Tonawandas, an award-winning concert band with a history dating back to 1929, performs up to 30 concerts and parades annually. The group is the current American Legion concert band national champion.

"We are thrilled to present this concert in honor of our veterans and to premiere Rossano Galante's 'Virtues of Mankind,'" said the band's president, David Abrahamian. "This piece is a testament to the enduring values

and spirit of humanity, and we are honored to share it with our audience for the first time."

Tickets for the Veterans Day concert are available and can be purchased at the door or in advance at the following locations:

✓ Walker Bros. & Monroe Jewelers, 84 Webster St., North Tonawanda

✓ Mid-City Opticians, 968 Payne Ave., North Tonawanda

✓ Tonawanda Senior Center, 35 Main St., Tonawanda

For more information, visit [www.tonawandalegionband.com](http://www.tonawandalegionband.com).

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## Niagara Pride hosting silent auction/basket raffle to fund WNY LGBTQ+ scholarship

On Saturday, Oct. 12, Niagara Pride will host its largest silent auction and basket raffle ever, with proceeds going to the Jean Hopkins Scholarship, designed

to help LGBTQ+ youth pursuing higher education.

This year's silent auction and basket raffle features over 60 baskets and a list of incredible items to bid on, such as autographed Keon Coleman and Dalton Kincaid Buffalo Bills jerseys; an autographed Dylan Cozens Buffalo Sabres hockey stick; several signed Bills, Sabres and New York Giants items; original pieces of art from local artists; a hotel and meal package from Russell's; tickets to "& Juliet" at Shea's; unique collectibles; home goods and small appliances; and much more.

Also, one individual will win "The Wall of Wine" – 36 bottles of various wines and the wine display rack.

Funds raised will go directly to the Jean Hopkins Memorial Scholarship. Since its inception,

the scholarship has been awarded to a number of local WNY LGBTQ+ high school students pursuing higher education. Niagara Pride hopes this event will be successful enough to allow the organization to expand the scholarship to also be able to offer funds to those currently enrolled or those looking to return to school or a training program.

The event will run from 5-9 p.m. at The Kenan Center Mansion, 433 Locust St., Lockport. Tickets cost \$5, which includes a glass of wine and light fare.

Pamela Carnes will serve as special guest emcee.

For more information about the silent auction and basket raffle, as well as to prepurchase tickets, go to [www.niagarapride.org/auction](http://www.niagarapride.org/auction).

Niagara Pride Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit serving LGBTQ+ individuals and families in Niagara County and WNY by providing a variety of programs and services. For more information about Niagara Pride, go to [www.niagarapride.org](http://www.niagarapride.org).

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