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(Food Network photo)

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Growing Business & Community

Get involved in Leap of Kindness Day 2024

2024 is a leap year, and this means we all get one extra day next week, on Thursday, Feb. 29, 2024 – Leap of Kindness Day.

Leap of Kindness Day's goal to inspire communities to use their extra day to do something kind for someone else.

Invented in 2016 by the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce, in Saratoga Springs, Leap of Kindness Day started with hundreds of area organizations helping thousands of local people by donating their time, talent and treasure to support area nonprofits, seniors, first responders, health care workers, veterans, animal shelters, etc. In 2020, the initiative expanded with more than 200 communities in the U.S., Canada and Ireland participating in Leap of Kindness Day.

For 2024, the goal is to continue growing Leap of Kindness Day into a global celebration of kindness with a powerful positive impact.

The Upward Niagara Chamber of Commerce has pledged to participate in Leap of Kindness



Jennifer Pauly
President

Day by showcasing the needs of our local nonprofit organizations and pairing them with people who can help! It is our hope that others in the community will want to be a part of Leap of Kindness Day, as well.

Here are some ideas of ways to participate in Leap of Kindness Day 2024.

✓ Organize a drive for essential items and personally deliver the collected goods to a local charity.

✓ Express gratitude to first responders by delivering meals or snacks to your local fire, police or EMS station.

✓ Dedicate Feb. 29 to enhancing a public space – a park, trail or playground – by cleaning, beautifying or fixing amenities in need.

✓ Encourage your children to write and deliver heartfelt thank-you notes to educators, custodians, bus drivers and others.

✓ Reach out to local care facilities, hospitals, senior or youth centers, and agencies assisting those with unique needs. Collect and deliver items tailored to their specific requirements.

A full listing of organizations that can use your help (as well as details) is available online at www.UpwardNiagara.com.

• **Artpark Bridges, Artpark's community outreach program**

/ **art supplies drive** – Help Artpark Bridges launch the 2024 season of therapeutic community arts programs by donating designated art-making supplies.

• **Big Brothers Big Sisters** – Become a mentor, a Big Brother or Big Sister. Go to BiggerTogether.org or give them a call at 716-873-5833. There is a child who is waiting to meet you.

• **Heart, Love & Soul** – The agency is accepting nonperishable food items and personal care products. The Chamber office is a drop-off location for donations.

• **Inter-Community Services** – The organization is accepting donations for a basket.

• **Lewiston Porter Youth Football & Cheer** – The LPYF is in need of new pop-up tents and a commercial popcorn popper. Email lewportyouthfootball@gmail.com for more info!

• **Mount St. Mary's Neighborhood Health Center at 3101 Ninth St., Niagara Falls** – The health center serves many families in need of diapers, personal care items, and toilet paper.

• **Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center** – NFMCC is offering a chance to utilize unused space within its facility to set up and sell food and beverages. Email michael.pace@nfmcc.org.

• **Niagara Gospel Mission** – The executive director of Niagara Gospel Mission (NGM) will be rucking 222 miles to raise funds for the NGM RECON program that is recovery specifically designed for homeless veterans.

• **Niagara Hospice** – Are you able to help deliver bouquets to businesses/schools? How about selling bouquets at one of Niagara Hospice's walk-up locations?

• **Sanborn Area Historical Society** – This group needs volunteers to help at the museum with events, dinners, and Christmas for the kids! Contact Bonnie at 716-957-4851

• **United Way of Greater Niagara: Day of Caring sign-up** – Use this bonus day to sign up for United Way's 2024 Day of Caring, which takes place June 5. For more information, contact Will Briggs at william@uwgn.org.

• **Village of Youngstown give or take table** – Help volunteers restock this table with food and personal care products. No expired products please!

• **Women United of United Way of Greater Niagara** – The 2024 baby supply drive runs March 1-31. Drop off items to the United Way office at 6420 Inducon Drive W., Suite B2, Sanborn.

Norris & Morinello: Infrastructure must be a top priority

Legislative column from Assemblymen Mike Norris (R-C-Lockport) and Angelo Morinello (R-C-Niagara Falls)

Having safe roads, bridges, sewers and culverts is essential to public safety and to our economy. Not only does having our infrastructure well maintained ensure people can get to work and their appointments safely and on time, run their errands and deliver their children to school, but it also ensures the food, goods and services we all need and rely on can easily and readily be accessible. Well-maintained infrastructure protects us against emergencies and can lessen the response time in emergency situations as well. It is essential.

Under Gov. Andrew Cuomo, funding for our local infrastructure – through the program known as the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) – was basically held flat. In fact, during his decade as governor, Cuomo held funding flat for CHIPS except for one increase in fiscal year 2013-14.

That was until we worked together with our partners in the highway department here in Western New York, held rallies with our colleagues at the State Capitol and throughout the state, and sent a loud and clear message that local infrastructure matters and is essential. Finally, in fiscal year 2021-22, we succeeded in delivering a historic \$100 million increase for CHIPS, and \$60 million more in 2023-24.

While this funding increase was well-needed, well-deserved and much-appreciated in our local communities, when you are talking about a state budget that spends hundreds of billions of dollars annually, this funding is simply a drop in the bucket.

Though this funding increase was good news, we all know it wasn't enough. New York is famous for its pothole problem, coupled with years of difficult winters plus the occurrence of natural disasters across our state. Here in Western New York, we faced extreme flooding along

Lake Ontario's southern shore, but so many communities in our state have been impacted by similar events of their own.

Add to that the crushing burden of inflation. As the rising costs of diesel and gasoline, salt, maintenance and repairs, labor costs and more strain our local highway crews, the less they can accomplish – and the less our tax dollars stretch when it comes to the actual repairs we need.

This is why we are disappointed and surprised that Gov. Kathy Hochul has proposed to eliminate the \$60 million CHIPS increase while at the same time handing out billions in taxpayer dollars to illegal aliens.

We don't accept that. We want this budget to get back to basics, and we should be investing in services that help everyone, like our infrastructure. Everyone benefits from having safe roads and bridges, drinking water, and clear sewer and drainage systems. They are essential. We're calling on the governor to change course

and to reconsider her priorities.

As we all know, budgets are about priorities. Our priority in representing you is ensuring Western New York is a safe place to live and do business. That starts with good infrastructure, and this is why we're asking for a full restoration of CHIPS funding as well as an additional \$200 million investment in this budget to position our communities with the resources they need to maintain our infrastructure, help us sustain and grow our economy, and ensure public safety for years to come.

Assemblymen Norris and Morinello represent the 144th and 145th Assembly districts, respectively, which include portions of Erie and Niagara counties. Norris also serves as the chairman of the Assembly minority conference and as the ranking member of the Assembly Transportation Committee. Morinello is the ranking member of the Assembly Codes Committee.

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