

Child Advocacy Center of Niagara co-hosts annual Walk to End Child Abuse

In recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month, the Child Advocacy Center of Niagara (CAC), a service of Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center (NFMCC), and Focus on Families, will co-host the seventh annual Walk to End Child Abuse. The event begins at 4:30 p.m. April 30 at the Hyde Park Ice Pavilion. It is free and open to the public, "emphasizing the critical need for child safety, prevention of child abuse, and the reduction of trauma within our community," NFMCC

stated. A press release added, "This year's superhero-themed walk will feature appearances by real-life superheroes from the WNY Superheroes & Cosplayers, alongside engaging activities, giveaways, and children's crafts. The event will also include participation from Bikers Against Child Abuse, an interactive touch-a-truck program by the Niagara Falls Fire Department." Child Advocacy Center of Niagara Executive Director Shel-

ley Hitzel said, "Child abuse is a pervasive problem that thrives in silence. Anyone in the community can be a hero to a child. We must be willing to learn the facts about child abuse and take action. As instances of abuse increase in severity and number, the need for community engagement and support has never been more urgent." NFMCC stated, "Nationally, one in seven children experience abuse or maltreatment, and every nine minutes, a child is sexu-

ally abused. In 2023, the Niagara County Department of Social Services investigated over 3,500 cases of child abuse and maltreatment. Meanwhile, the CAC provided services to over 600 children in our community, offering forensic interviews, therapeutic child abuse medical evaluations, evidence-based trauma-specific counseling, and victim advocacy services completely free of charge. "In addition to direct services, the CAC provides Darkness to

Light's Stewards of Children training, designed to educate adults on proactive steps to prevent child sexual abuse within organizations, families and communities. The program combines impactful videos with guided discussions, focusing on the empowerment skills of choice-making, risk-taking, and mutual support to protect children." Those interested in supporting the CAC or attending the Walk to End Child Abuse can call the CAC at 716-285-0045.

SUNY Niagara EOP student receives Norman R. McConney, Jr. Award



Submitted by SUNY Niagara
SUNY Niagara student Kaytelynn Alsup has been selected as a recipient of the Norman R. McConney, Jr. Award for Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) Student Excellence. Alsup will be recognized at the fifth annual recognition ceremony on April 18 in Troy. The Norman R. McConney, Jr. Award is the highest SUNY honor for EOP students. The award recognizes EOP students who have shown positive academic trajectories despite challenges faced during their academic careers. The SUNY EOP provides access, academic support

and financial aid to students who are historically underserved or underrepresented. SUNY Niagara currently has 37 students enrolled in EOP. "The EOP at SUNY Niagara is dedicated to helping students in the face of challenges to achieve academic excellence," SUNY Niagara EOP Director Angela Jackson said. "Kaytelynn exemplifies the spirit of the EOP program. This award is a testament to her dedication to her own academic prowess and commitment to SUNY Niagara." Alsup will be honored alongside 52 other EOP students at the awards ceremony on April 18. For more information on the EOP at SUNY Niagara, visit: <https://www.niagaracc.suny.edu/eop/>.

Kaytelynn Alsup (Submitted photo)

Better Off Read Summer Book Festival headed to Artpark for Labor Day weekend

Artpark & Company Press Release
Join us at Artpark's lower park on from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 31, for The third annual Better Off Read Summer Book Festival. The free-to-attend, all-ages event is meant to promote reading, encourage writing, and

celebrate storytelling. The festival, presented by local writer Ian Kinney, features thousands of books on sale for \$5 or less; vendor booths by local authors, artists and merchants; a variety of food trucks and other concessions; kid-friendly activities such as storytelling, face-

painting and balloon animals; plus much more. Additionally, for the third year in a row, the festival is proud to present a special basket raffle with gifts donated by some of the world's best storytellers. This year's star-studded list of celebrity donors includes Tom Hanks,

Scarlett Johansson, Matthew McConaughey, Sarah Silverman, Neil Gaiman, Colleen Hoover, David Byrne, Wilco, Pearl Jam, Blink 182, legendary icon Bob Dylan and superstar Billie Eilish. Local sponsors to this year's festival include BirchTree Fotos, Kelly's Beauty Bar, Niagara

Sports Tournaments, Orange Cat Coffee Co., Power City Eatery, Read It & Eat, The Village Bake Shoppe and Youngstown Village Diner. To learn more, become a vendor or sponsor, or to make a donation, visit www.BetterOffReadFestival.com.



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