

Seniors Shine!

Shirley Jaynes enjoying A LIFE WELL LIVED

BY CHRISTOPHER WARNER

It takes a lot to slow down Shirley Jaynes. Not even a hip fracture, the result of a recent fall, can dampen the spirits of the energetic, 86-year-old resident of North Tonawanda. In fact, she counts “staying positive” as an essential life lesson she’s learned over the years, something she advocates for others to embrace like an old friend. Sage advice, indeed.

Shirley (nee Williron) was born on July 6, 1938, in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania – the town known for its famous weather-predicting groundhog. As one of eight children, she experienced the hardships of growing up during the Great Depression, followed by food and gas shortages due to World War II.

“I remember going to the A&P (grocery store) with my mother and using rationing stamps,” she said. “Times were hard.”

Life would only get harder following the death of her father from tuberculosis when Shirley was just 10 years old. Shortly afterward, the family packed up and moved to Western New York, where her mother remarried. Shirley credits her devout faith in helping her overcome adversity while also having a strong role model for a mother.

“She was such a wonderful woman,” she said. “My mother brought us up to never hold prejudices against anyone.”

In 1962, Shirley married Douglas Jayne from North Tonawanda, an enterprising WWII veteran. The couple eventually raised two daughters, Kim and Sandra. Grandchildren and great-grandchildren would follow.

For 21 years, the husband-and-wife duo operated Doug Jayne’s Park Grill, a restaurant and bar located at 384 Schenck St., across the street from Pine Woods Park.

“It was a lot of hard work, but I met so many nice people,” Shirley said.

On Friday and Saturday nights, hungry patrons lined up for the 75-cent fish fry, “complete with Cole slaw and choice of French fries or potato salad.” The popular tavern also served as a hub for local politicians. Doug served two terms as a North Tonawanda



Shirley Jaynes

alderman and later became the Democratic elections commissioner for Niagara County.

When not hosting guests, the Jaynes enjoyed dining out at eateries such as Danny Sheehan’s Steak House in Lockport and the historic Clarkson House in Lewiston. Originally constructed in 1818, the Clarkson was one of the first commercial structures built after the British burned down the Village of Lewiston during the War of 1812. Amazingly, those sturdy walls remain standing.

Shirley’s compassion for helping others led her to embark on a career as an assistant in Niagara County’s Office of Aging. She held the position until her retirement in 2004, the same year Doug passed away from leukemia.

Like most locals, Shirley is a loyal Bills fan. Her generation still fondly remembers when the team won AFL Championships in 1964 and 1965 and attended home games at the legendary “Rockpile” stadium. True to her optimistic nature, she likes Buffalo’s chances this season and expects Josh Allen to have another big year. But if the superstar quarterback struggles to lead his team to the Promised Land, Shirley has a backup plan: praying. After all, she’s a former deaconess.

Since the mid-1960s, Shirley has been an active member of the Payne Avenue Christian Church. The house of worship was first erected in 1888 and has been known by many names and denominations through the decades. But its

steady flock of parishioners, women such as Shirley Jayne, all share in keeping its robust history alive. According to the church’s website, “They may have been your grandparents or your parents, your neighbors or your friends; maybe they are just names to you, but they left behind something good here at 1459 Payne Avenue, North Tonawanda.”

In addition to church activities, Shirley attends the Lewiston Senior Center, which offers a wide array of programs and services, including art and fitness classes. And it’s there she can be found regularly, spreading her year-round positivity.

Recently, the facility’s coordinator, Melinda Olick, had this to say about the outgoing octogenarian: “I first met Shirley early in my career, many years ago. Imagine my surprise when I began working at the Lewiston Senior Center and was able to reconnect with her!”

Reassessment efforts on schedule for 2025 debut in Town of Niagara

BY TIMOTHY CHIPP

Progress is slow but steady regarding the Town of Niagara’s reassessment project for all property owners.

Set to go into effect for the 2025 tax bills that begin July 1, the preliminary values should be complete March 1, according to Town Assessor James Bird.

If Bird’s timeline comes to fruition, the gap between March 1 and July 1 would allow for any challenges or grievances to be raised and settled, especially regarding residential properties.

“It’s been more than 40 years since these properties were adjusted,” Bird said during the Town of Niagara board’s work session Wednesday.

Bird and F. Cindy Baire, co-president of Williamsville-based GAR Associates Inc., first presented the reassessment plan to town officials in June 2023.

GAR Associates has been running the reassessment efforts since.

At the time of their presentation, the town estimated it was taxing residents and businesses at about 37% of the true market value. It meant properties valued at \$100,000 were on the tax rolls for \$37,000 value.

Efforts to fix this, primarily to rebalance the tax rolls so residents and business owners pay their fair share, would adjust the

amount of tax paid by everyone, including those who qualify for programs like the STAR and the Enhanced STAR rebates.

It’s possible those programs could increase in value to taxpayers with better realization of market rates, Baire said at the time.

But when values change, there will definitely be challenges, Bird said. One way the town could combat many of the projected grievances would cost an extra roughly \$17,000.

Piggybacking off the process already underway in the towns of Lewiston and Porter, he said the town could send GAR Associates out to photograph the fronts of buildings from the street to use in recordkeeping.

It’s a process similar to how Google takes photographs for use in its popular “Street View” feature on Google Maps, Bird said. A vehicle with a mounted, 360-degree camera snaps photographs as it drives through neighborhoods.

“The pictures we have on file right now, some of them are 12, 14 years old,” Bird said. “It seems pretty crazy to be spending the money on all of the new assessments but not to have new pictures to go along with them.”

Town officials are expected to consider the added expense at the upcoming regular meeting set for 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, at Town Hall, 7105 Lockport Road.

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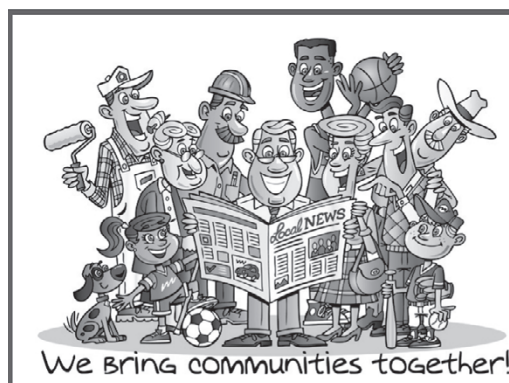
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Dear Mom,

In our hearts your memory lingers, always tender, fond & true. There is not a day, Dear Mom, that we do not think of you.

We miss you Mom.

Love,
Teresa, Rosann, Maryanne
and Dominic and families