

Leon praises local arts community

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“We’re always trying to get better, obviously, but this is the one where we look out into the audience and we just see so many people rocking with us and enjoying it. Grandma, grandpa, the kids, the grandkids – they’re all there.”

Leon added, “We also keep it intimate, as well, and that’s just a surprise people are going to have to come see in the show; because we do all the big stuff I’ve done on ‘America’s Got Talent,’ on Jimmy Fallon, on ‘Penn & Teller: Fool Us,’ ‘Masters of Illusion’ – all the TV show stuff that I’m kind of known for in the public eye. But then there’s a bunch of surprises mixed into that no one’s ever seen me do on TV. And part of one of those sequences is retaining that intimacy that you experienced in Niagara Falls – and we have a very creative way of doing that.”

Originally from Utica, Leon has performed all over the world – and is often on tour. That motivated him, and his partner, Chelsea La-Congo (who’s from Orchard Park), to stay a little closer to home over the summer. They took up shop at the NACC with the hope of returning on a more regular basis.

“Niagara Falls was absolutely incredible,” Leon said. “It was everything I could have imagined and more. The locals really, really showed up and showed out. It was great. The reviews from the show were incredible.”

In fact, audience members told Leon, “‘Hey, thank you for being here. We don’t typically get anything remotely close to this kind of production value and quality on our side. Thank you for being in the USA.’”

“We’re definitely looking for-

ward to returning to the Falls,” Leon said.

While here, he learned Western New York – and Niagara County, in particular – has a strong, participatory and supportive arts and cultural community.

“It seems like everybody has everyone’s best interest in heart. They just want more good art,” Leon said.

“The Kenan Center actually sponsored one of my magic camps this summer, which is something we always love to do every year – and this is exactly what it is. It’s like going to Hogwarts for kids during the summer. They spend a week with us; they learn magic the entire week; and then at the end of the week, we put on a big, public show for their family and friends. And the transformation we see in these kids over the weeklong process is just, it’s unbelievable, you know? And then we hear all these great stories of them going back to school and blowing people’s minds, and I get pictures and videos of them entering the talent show at school and winning it. It’s like some of the most rewarding work we’ve ever done.

“But because Keenan sponsored that magic camp, they’re like, ‘By the way, if you have a spot for us in your fall tour, we’d love to throw something over at the Palace,’ because I haven’t even stepped foot in the Palace Theater, but they tell me it’s amazing. So, I’m looking forward to doing it. And Keenan is – talk about working together – they’re trying to expand their programming and reach out and begin to work on a more frequent basis with the Palace. So, it’s really cool to see the Lockport arts community working together.”

For a magician, an engaged audience makes a “world of difference.”

“The energy the audience gives to you, you are only going to give back tenfold,” Leon said. “And then that energy just keeps building throughout the show so that, by the end of the night, you’ve all gone on this crazy, fun ride together.”

“So, if you have that lack of attention, I mean, the show’s just going to suffer no matter what. But, specifically, magic is one of those things that has to be viewed live. And I tell people this all the time, because we get a lot of people commenting like, ‘Oh, I saw you on this show and that show. I can’t quite make it to this show.’ And I always encourage them to try, when I’m back in the region, to come to a live show. You can view magic through the phone, you can view it through the TV, and it’s fun, and it works for that genre, but there’s nothing like experiencing it live in person.

“I tend to find most people naturally kind of put those phones down and just rock with us, because that’s the whole reason they’re there. And that’s part of the mission statement, even in the magic camps, is to get people off these electrical devices ... and bring us all back together and connect on a real, human level, which is what the world needs.

“That is magic. When I say, ‘Magic – the world needs magic now more than ever,’ I don’t necessarily mean magic tricks. I mean we just need to all get back together. And for me, magic is the vehicle that does that.”

The Historic Palace Theatre is located at 2 East Ave. Find tickets at <https://lockportpalacetheatre.org/>.

Town of Niagara budget

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Outside the general fund

While the proposal for the general fund shows a changing economic landscape for the town, some of the special districts are proposed to spend less than what was approved in late 2023.

Most notable is the fire protection district, which received approval last year for \$700,000 in 2024. Virtuoso is projecting a drop to \$564,000.

Another slight decrease comes in the lighting district, dropping from \$125,000 approved in 2023 to a proposed \$100,000.

The proposals for the Highway Department and both water improvement and sewer operating districts request bumps in spending. Highway is requesting a budget of \$1.7 million (\$1.5 million approved in 2023); water improvement is requesting \$1.25 million (\$1.2 million approved in 2023); and the sewer operating district is seeking \$2.5 million (\$2.4 million in 2023).

Paying for this would require district taxes for those living or operating in these special zones. Internal revenues are expected to pay about \$3.1 million, if approved, while taxes would generate the remaining roughly \$3 million in revenue needed to balance this budget.

Rates won’t be finalized until the rest of the process is complete, but

Virtuoso is proposing a residential tax of \$2.64 per \$1,000 valuation for the highway fund and non-homestead tax of \$5.31 per \$1,000 valuation.

In total, she said, the tax rate increase remains within the state’s 2% tax cap.

Update on property value reassessments

Virtuoso said the town’s ongoing efforts to adjust property values and bring the municipality to realistic figures is progressing well.

Residents and business owners will receive letters in March 2025, she said, which would open a period for contesting the finalized values.

If the process proceeds quickly, the plan is for school taxes in October 2025 to be the first bills covered by the new values. Any 2026 town taxes would follow suit.

Taxes collected are based on a levy, which sets the total amount to be collected from property owners. Officials set the tax rates based on the levy, meaning new values could drop or increase overall tax bills. They may also remain the same for residents.

Kara’s Korner: Town of Porter news and notes

BY KARA HIBBARD
Porter Town Clerk

Hi everyone! I hope everyone is enjoying this beautiful weather; I can’t believe everything is still so green.

- Just a reminder that Porter Town Hall does not collect school taxes. There is a mailbox at the Lewiston-Porter Central School District where you can drop your payment off. If your school district is Wilson, please refer to your bill.

However, your town and county taxes, which are mailed out in the beginning of January, can be paid in person at the Porter Town Hall. There is a black box in the front of the building where you can drop payments off after hours.

- Final brush pickup for the year will be Nov. 4-8. You can refer to the town website for brush guidelines at www.townofporter.net. Starting in October, there will be a roll-off container located in the Porter Town Hall parking lot where residents can dispose of their leaves. It will remain

there until the end of November. This container is for leaves only.

- For those of you who like to hunt, state hunting licenses are now on sale. There are a few changes this year, so please be aware. We do have the state DEC hunting and trapping magazine, which includes the 2024-25 official guide to laws and regulations, and you can also go online at www.dec.ny.gov.

- If you have questions about bulk pickup, trash pickup, or which day your recycling is on, we have Modern service calendars on the counter at Town Hall.

- We have been notified of lost, abandoned and stolen dogs that have been “dropped off” in the town. If you happen to see a dog that appears to be lost, please reach out to the Niagara County SPCA and let them know. The Niagara County SPCA is the official “dog catcher” for the Town of Porter and can be reached at 716-731-4368 or online at www.niagaraspca.org.

All dogs that reside in the town

must be licensed. The cost is \$18 for a dog that is unspayed/unneutered, or \$10 if neutered/spayed. Please bring in a copy of the rabies certificate to register your dog that is 4 months of age or older. You can even bring your dog in, too!

- Need a copy of a birth, marriage or death record? There are forms available online at www.townofporter.net to fill out, or you can stop by Town Hall and fill them out. The cost is \$10 per copy for a certified transcript.

- And did you know that the town’s gazebos and pavilion are available for rental at Porter on the Lake? It’s a beautiful park for weddings, birthday parties or any other type of event you may wish to have. The rental forms are available on the town website, at townofporter.net, or you can call us at 716-745-3730.

The Youngstown Village Diner

425 Main St., Youngstown • 716-745-9858

~ WEEKLY SPECIALS ~
MON CLOSED

TUE 6AM-2PM - Spaghetti & Meatballs, Chicken Parm, Eggplant Parm, Spaghetti Parm
WED 6AM-2PM - Pulled Pork Sandwichs or Fish - Haddock: Breaded-Battered-Baked
THURS 6AM-2PM - Steak & Cheese Hoagies or Fish - Haddock: Breaded-Battered-Baked
FRI 6AM-2PM - Haddock, Fish Sandwiches, Tuna Melts & New England Clam Chowder
SAT & SUN OPEN AT 6AM - Eggs Benedict, Banana Walnut Pancakes, Spinach & Feta Omelet & Our Full Breakfast & Lunch Menu
STOP IN AND TRY OUR HOMEMADE SOUPS

“Lori & Friends”



Gary Gaffney
Niagara Region Theatre Guild

hosted by Lori Caso

LCTV Channel 1301
Sept 23rd - Oct 6th

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Thur 3am, 10pm • Fri 10:30am
Sat 3:30am, 5:30pm • Sun 11:30am, 10pm



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