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Friends of Youngstown fundraiser

Submitted by Friends of Youngstown

On Sunday, July 26, the Friends of Youngstown will host its third annual celebrity bartending fundraiser at Griffon Brewing in Youngstown. Proceeds from the event will benefit the renovations of the recreation center (formerly called the "teen center") at the Red Brick building.

Four bartending teams will compete for cash tips, and attendees will have the opportunity to participate in a 50/50 and basket raffle. A portion of the proceeds from well drinks and several beers will also be donated to the organization.

Board member Shana DiCamillo said, "We're grateful that Griffon is collaborating with us again to raise funds for projects in Youngstown. Thank you to our volunteer bartenders for donating their time as well – we have a great group representing residents, families, and local businesses in and around Youngstown."

Advanced tickets for the grand prize and the Youngstown quilt prize are available online at https://www.foy14174.com/events-1. Anyone interested in donating an item or basket for the raffle can contact Jeff Gruarin at jgruarin@youngstownny.gov.

The event itself is free, and open to the public.

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Meet Youngstown Mayor Mike DeDario

By Senior Contributing Writer
BENJAMIN JOE

Mike DeDario is the new mayor in the Village of Youngstown. A former social studies teacher on Grand Island, DeDario had never run for public office before putting his hat in the ring for the mayor's office this year – though he did serve as commadore for the Youngstown Yacht Club during the COVID-19 pandemic and the flooding in 2019, which was a challenge as well.

"I've lived here for 10 years now, but I've been coming here my whole life. I've been sailing out of here. My grandparents lived here and I've always loved it and always wanted to live here," DeDario said. "We bought a cottage in 2010 and then knocked it down to build a house so we could live here permanently."

DeDario said being mayor is a challenge, but he has time to devote to this job. He noted Youngstown is a "special place" and he wants to "maintain what we already have."

"It would be nice to bring in some more business," DeDario said. "It's tough with a small population, but it'd be nice to have some more nice places to eat, maybe a store for essentials. It could be a pharmacy or a convenience store … something so people can get essentials without having to go to Lewiston or Ransomville. Being a little more self-sufficient and being able to stay home a little more.

Village of Youngstown Mayor Mike DeDario.

"Our location is amazing. It's kind of a secret to most people in Western New York. They think it's so far away from Buffalo. It's really not. We have this wonderful waterfront, and I'd like to utilize that waterfront more. Maybe develop some resources … like a kayak launch or fish-cleaning station. The people use the waterfront for recreation, and I'd like to support that with some resources for them."

The new mayor also envisions an expanded recreation department, a well-funded library, and systems and resources in place to answer citizen questions and solve problems "as they come up," he noted.

DeDario said he's always been a leader, though that may not be what people think it is.

"I don't take sides," he explained. "I'm a good listener and good decision maker."

DeDario said his goal is to make the best decisions for the village – and he's capable of doing so. But that's not in a vacuum, he noted. DeDario said he intends to listen to everybody in the village before making those decisions.

"That's really my goal. Make sure everybody has a voice and we are calculating a decision that makes the most sense for the village," he said.

DeDario was born in Lewiston and went to high school on Grand Island – but he is passionate about the Village of Youngstown – a "small, tightknit community" where "people know each other.

"When you're from a small town, you have a tendency to really care about it – maybe more than a big city, because you have those connections to people. You have connections to places in the village."

"Everybody has to chip in a little bit to do this," he said. "We have the Garden Club; and we have the Friends of Youngstown; and we have the Friends of the Library. A small village can't support all those things all on its own, necessarily. And you can't do those things unless you have the people to put in the time and the effort and run those organizations – which supports what we can do and take the burden off the village government by supporting us in that way. That's part of what makes this a special place, as well."

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Youngstown Village Diner marks 25 years

Popular eatery a part of village life

√ Diner to host anniversary celebration

Photos and story by Editor-in-Chief
TERRY DUFFY

Nothing like keeping a good thing going.

Such is the mindset of Cathy Pasquantino of the Youngstown Village Dinner – an iconic eatery, located at 425 Main St., that is marking its 25th anniversary this year.

A long-time favorite in the community, Pasquantino and the Village Diner have been part of the Niagara County hospitality scene for decades. Her resume includes restaurant and lodging operations in Niagara Falls and Lewiston. She took over the former D.J.'s Restaurant on Main in the early 2000s and the Village Diner grew into the village fabric in the quarter-century that followed.

Open for breakfast and lunch six days a week, the diner quickly became known for its delicious eats. It has become a favorite hangout in the community – a place where residents and visitors alike gather, chat and enjoy the comfortable atmosphere overlooking the lower river. In fact, this eatery is such a destination that customers are known to dine in twice a day.

The Youngstown Village Diner celebrates 25 years on Main Street. • A western omelet with home fries at the Youngstown Village Diner. (File photo)

The story behind the success? Pasquantino credited family and staff.

"I have the best – all veterans," she said of her staff, as she pointed to the diner's servers working a busy crowd for breakfast and lunch. "Shiela's been with me 20 years; Margaret's been with me for 25 years; and my son since he was 16. He's 41 now. Margaret's retiring this year at the end of summer, but she'll be a celebrity server every now and then."

"My staff is excellent, and I wouldn't be here if I didn't have them," Pasquantino added.

The diner has also become well-known for its specially prepared meals, festival and holiday offerings, including:

•The Thanksgiving dinner to-go feast of turkey, stuffing and all the fixings – a personal favorite.

•Serving chowder at Youngstown's St. Patrick's Day Parade celebration each March.

•The diner serves beer, wine and food at the annual YBPA "Beginning of Summer Street Dance."

The diner is a favorite for families on hand for soccer and lacrosse at Fort Niagara; for visitors and those sailing at the Youngstown Yacht Club; tourists attending historical celebrations at Old Fort Niagara; and those fishing the lower Niagara River.

One thing the diner doesn't do anymore is serve dinner – though not for a lack of public interest.

Pasquantino laughed and said it would be "phenomenal, because people have been dying for me to open back up for dinners. If I was 20 years younger, yeah."

The Youngstown Village Diner will hold a get-together beginning at 5:30 p.m. Monday, Aug. 3, to celebrate its 25th anniversary. This event is open to the community.

"We'll have the place open for the evening. Come and enjoy some complimentary hors d'oeuvres. Beer and wine will be available," Pasquantino said.

The Youngstown Village Diner is serving "Good Food for Fine Folks" from 6 a.m. until 2 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and from 6 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. Sunday. Eat in or takeout.

For more information, visit online at www.youngstownvillagediner.com, call 716-745-9858 or just stop in and enjoy the food.

Youngstown leaders celebrate new pavilion, longstanding concert series

On July 3 – opening night of the free summer concert series at Youngstown's Falkner Park – local leaders gathered to celebrate enhancements to the stage area – and 25 years of music in the village.

Anchor Spirits co-owner and Youngstown Business and Professional Association board member Cheryl Butera explained the municipality was the recipient of funding via the William G. Mayne, Jr. Business/Community Enhancement Program. Those funds went to widening the Falkner Park pavilion entryway to allow for better performer access, improved lighting, and resetting the ancillary green space. Construction was conducted by contractor Ben Boltz.

The YBPA also presented a $250 donation to Dottie Riordan, whose husband, the late Mayor Neil Riordan, started the concert series a quarter-century ago. Riordan has continued the series since his passing.

A ribbon was cut to mark the occasion.

"It's to recognize that the pavilion is done, and to celebrate 25 years of free concerts in Youngstown," Butera said of the occasion.

YBPA President Melissa Kudel said, "Through the William G. Mayne grant, we are able to upgrade the pavilion, open it a little wider, better lighting, better sound. It should be rocking and rolling."

1st District Niagara County Legislator Irene Myers presented Riordan with a proclamation "for all that she's done and continues to do for our community."

The declaration noted Riordan's "extraordinary dedication, leadership and unwavering commitment to the Village of Youngstown through her stewardship of the Youngstown summer concert series."

Celebrating 25 years

Speaking of the concert series, Riordan said, "We started in 2001. My husband had been on the Village Board then 20 years – and every year he asked to do concerts in the park; and every year they said we couldn't afford it. So, when he became mayor, he said, 'I'm not asking. I'm telling. We're doing concerts in the park; we'll see how it goes.'

"It's all done by donations, so it doesn't cost (residents anything). It's free to everybody, which is wonderful; and it's highly successful."

The YBPA's Cheryl Butera with 1st District Niagara County Legislator Irene Myers and Dottie Riordan.

Those interesting in making a donation can submit funds to the Village of Youngstown, 240 Lockport St.

"They have a trust fund set for that," Riordan said. "That's all it goes for – nothing else."

Opening night featured a performance by the Mackenzie Highlanders Pipes and Drums.

The family-friendly event continues from 6:30-8:30 p.m. each Friday. The lineup includes

2026 Falkner Park summer concert schedule

√ Friday, July 17: The Taverners
√ Friday, July 24: Claudia Andres and Friends ("Jazz for Dennis")
√ Friday, July 31: Joe and the Schmoes
√ Friday, Aug. 7: Creek Bend
√ Friday, Aug. 14: 2nd Time Around
√ Friday, Aug. 15: Marsha and Monte
√ Friday, Aug. 21: Brass Chance with Jerry Andres

Visitors are encouraged to bring lawn chairs or blankets.

Falkner Park is located at 340 Main St. Parking is available along the side streets. The park is also accessible via the free Discover Niagara Shuttle.

For more information, call the Youngstown village office at 716-745-7721.

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